

Susana S. Martins and Anne Reverseau (eds)

PAPER CITIES
URBAN PORTRAITS
IN PHOTOGRAPHIC BOOKS



LEUVEN UNIVERSITY PRESS

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Urban Portraits in Photographic Books

Edited by Susana S. Martins and Anne Reverseau

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Nazi Stereoscopic Photobooks of Vienna and Prague

Geopolitical Propaganda Collides
with a Distinctive Visual Medium

DOUGLAS KLAHR

Stereoscopic photography is distinct from other photographic formats, for it precludes simultaneous viewing and discourse between multiple viewers, requiring the use of a stereoscope to focus and then merge the two photographs into one. The quintessential *individual* visual medium, it offers a vivid, immersive, three-dimensional experience. During the Third Reich, a new format of this medium was created: the stereoscopic photo album, wherein a folding stereoscope and collection of loose stereographs accompanied each book. Three factors arose that potentially undermined these books' propagandistic value: the inability to view them simultaneously, freedom of choice regarding viewing sequence, and a break between image and caption that prevented the viewer/reader from experiencing the potentially synergistic reinforcement between image and text that was a cornerstone of Nazi photographic propaganda. This chapter examines these tensions in stereoscopic books about Vienna and Prague, whose incorporations into the Greater German Reich were important geopolitical victories for Hitler.

During the Third Reich, stereoscopic photography, which had reached its heyday in the late 19th century, was transformed by the regime into a tool of propaganda by creating a new format: the stereoscopic photo album. This chapter examines how two cities that were geopolitical victories for Hitler—Vienna and Prague—were presented in books of 1941 and 1943, respectively: *Wien, Die Perle des Reiches* (*Vienna, The Pearl of the Reich*) and *Das Hunderttürmige Prag. Die alte Kaiserstadt an der Moldau* (*Prague of One Hundred Towers: The Old Imperial City along the Vltava*). Small-scale stereoviews and folding stereoscopes were integrated into books, usually stored in pockets hollowed out of thick front and back covers (fig. 1). The Prague book of 1943 was an exception: it was a *Notausgabe* or hardship edition that was softbound with the stereoviews presumably stored in a cardboard box. Stereoscopic photo albums about 22 different topics were produced by the Third Reich's major stereoscopic publishing house, the Raumbild-Verlag Otto Schönstein, whose controlling partner was Heinrich Hoffmann, Adolf Hitler's personal photographer.

These books continued a decades-long tradition of photographing cities as static, architectural stage sets, the basis for city view books from the turn of the 20th century, whether in Europe or America. In an essay about Boston, Amy Johnson



Fig. 1. Douglas Klahr, Photograph of a Folding Stereoscope and Stereoview from Vienna, *The Pearl of the Reich*, 2014. Public domain.

described this *fin-de-siècle* static style: ‘Turn-of-the-century photographers intentionally captured street views with little human activity or photographed from a high vantage point to minimize human presence. This effectively emphasized the monumental stature of the building while simultaneously presenting a controlled, orderly city’ (Johnson, 2013: 39). During the 1920s, especially in Weimar Germany, more ‘dynamic’ methods of photographing cities became well-known. However, a nuanced appraisal of the period that gazes beyond the innovative brings one to the realization that many photographic essays about cities adhered to the traditional formula. An Paenhuysern observed this about Sasha Stone’s 1929 book *Berlin in Bildern (Berlin in Pictures)*, wherein Stone did not follow the avant-garde methods of photographing German cities that had arisen in the 1920s: ‘The camera was kept static, avoiding zooms and dizzying angles, recording a striking emptiness that recalls early 20th-century photography, which reduced the most vibrant boulevard to a lifeless, motionless, empty scene’ (Paenhuysern, 2010: 15).

Vienna, The Pearl of the Reich and *Prague of One Hundred Towers: The Old Imperial City along the Vltava* can be placed within this tradition, albeit to varying degrees, as will be discussed later. It is worth surmising that, whereas avant-garde urban photographers of the 1920s and 1930s may have considered a traditional, static approach to be tired, it is questionable whether purchasers of Heinrich Hoffmann’s stereoscopic photobooks held the same opinion, for they most probably were well-off, conservative members of society. The *Statistics Yearbook of 1940* for the city of Nuremberg provides an example of how the 35 Reichsmarks purchase price of *Vienna, The Pearl of the Reich* was targeted towards an elite audience. During that year, a total of 336 four-room apartments came on the market for the first time, meaning that they either were new constructions or apartments carved out of single-family homes. Of those 336 apartments, 85 percent had a monthly rent of between 30 and 60 Reichsmarks (Statistisches Amt Nürnberg 1940: 15).

A Heinrich Hoffmann stereoscopic photobook therefore was a luxury item. This elevated market niche corresponded with Hoffmann’s singular status within the Third Reich. Hoffmann established a close personal relationship with Hitler that surpassed in longevity and constancy that of any other high-ranking Nazi. From the early 1920s in Munich until 1945, he was not only Hitler’s personal photographer, but also part of the Führer’s innermost circle, having lunch with Hitler on a daily basis—something Joseph Goebbels and Hermann Göring did not do. As the historian Richard J. Evans noted regarding Hitler’s daily habits, ‘Lunch was

routinely prepared for one in the afternoon ... Guests would generally consist of Hitler's immediate entourage, including his adjutants, his chauffeurs and his photographer, Heinrich Hoffmann. Göring, Goebbels and Himmler attended with varying degrees of frequency, and later on Albert Speer, but most senior Ministers were seldom to be seen' (Evans, 2005: 612).

Indeed, as Rolf Reuth observed, 'Hoffmann was arguably the most influential man in the field of photography in Germany' (Reuth, 2011: 14). Moreover, Hoffmann was not accountable to Joseph Goebbels's Ministry of Propaganda: he reported directly and only to Hitler. The stereoscopic publishing house, a small part of Hoffmann's photographic empire, was classified as a *Wehrwirtschaftsbetrieb* or army-associated economic business, thereby securing all necessary materials and excusing its workers from military service (Reuth, 2011: 30). In his history of the Otto Schönstein Raumbild Verlag—the only scholarly study to date about the publishing house—Dieter Lorenz noted: 'The connection with Heinrich Hoffmann and later with the armed forces also had its advantages for the stereoscopic publisher and its survival through the war ... Moreover, as domestic paper and printing capacity became restricted, orders could be shifted to occupied France, at times through illegal paths' (Lorenz, 2001: 5). Historian Rudolf Herz noted, 'the firm functioned apparently quite well as a system of governance and self-censorship out of sight of those in power in the Ministry of Propaganda'. Herz documented the expansion of Hoffmann's photographic publishing enterprises from the original office in Munich to branches in Berlin, Düsseldorf, Vienna, Prague, Posen, The Hague, Strasbourg, Paris and Riga. By 1943, total annual revenues were 15.4 million Reichsmarks, making Hoffmann a multi-millionaire (Herz, 1994: 13, 53).

The stereoscopic photobooks about Vienna and Prague discussed in this essay would have been sold at Heinrich Hoffmann's stores, which featured large display windows. Hoffmann was also the editor of a monthly magazine about stereoscopic photography called *Das Raumbild. Stereoskopisches Magazin für Zeit und Raum* (*The Stereoview. Stereoscopic Magazine for Time and Space*). Advertisements for his stereoscopic photobooks appeared in the publication from time to time, and in the July 1939 issue Hoffmann's high status with the Reich was underscored in an article written by Pitter Gern that trumpeted Adolf Hitler's visit to the stereoscopic publishing house that Hoffmann controlled (Gern, 1939: 145-149). Hoffmann's prestige therefore added to the appeal of his stereoscopic photobooks. Although I have yet to discover whether these were given as diplomatic

gifts, it is reasonable to surmise that they would have been coveted items to own and display in German households.

Two paradoxes characterized stereoscopic books produced by Heinrich Hoffmann: the process of viewing stereoscopic photographs and the peculiar notion of a *stereoscopic* photo album. Stereoscopic photography offered a viewing process that radically differed from that of non-stereoscopic photography, for it utilized cameras in which dual lenses were positioned at approximately the human interocular distance to record dual images. Once developed and processed on cardboard, glass or tissue paper, the stereograph or stereoview—the terms are used interchangeably by scholars—was inserted into a stereoscope. The viewer first adjusted the distance of the stereograph from the apparatus' dual lenses until the images came into focus. The next step was to merge the two images into one, accomplishing this through a series of ocular adjustments. This is an exercise that approximately four out of ten persons have difficulty mastering, a deeply ironic circumstance considering that all one is trying to do is to restore one's normal binocular vision. The goal is to produce a single image that is characterized by receding planes, often providing an intense sensation of depth. Most importantly, the stereoscopic experience is different from other visual experiences, for it is quintessentially *individual*. True simultaneous discourse is precluded: one cannot point and exclaim to someone else, 'Look at that!' Moreover, the stereoview never merely *depicts* a subject like a painting, film or non-stereoscopic photograph: rather the viewer must *synthesize* the view anew each time.

The second paradox was the design of these stereoscopic photobooks, for it challenged the notion of things being bound together in a specific, predetermined sequence; aspects that usually characterize a book, even digital ones and contemporary stereoscopic photobooks. The collection of loose, individual stereoviews contained within the covers of these books comprised a format that encouraged individual freedom of choice, undermining one of propaganda's major tenets: control. Certainly, with regard to a conventional photobook, one can view the pages in any order, but the pairing of images—left-hand page/right-hand page—is still predetermined. Certainly one could tear out the pages of a conventional photobook, but that would destroy the format, and there would still remain one final aspect of control: the pairing of images on the opposite sides of a single sheet of paper, recto/verso.

Another freedom occurred in these stereoscopic photobooks: breaking the link between image and caption. Because the captions were printed on the reverse side of the dual images, the viewer/reader was prevented from experiencing the symbiotic and potentially synergistic simultaneous reinforcement between image and text that can be a very powerful propaganda tool. These freedoms did not exist in conventional propaganda photobooks produced during the Third Reich, especially those published by Hoffmann, which usually featured large-scale photographs with stirring, patriotic captions beneath them.¹ The interaction between caption and image is part of what Abigail Solomon-Godeau termed the 'supporting editorial environment' of photographic books and magazines, noting that this factor, the sequencing of images, and the competing mass of other images 'variously influence the way in which the images will be read and interpreted' (Solomon-Godeau, 2009: 179-180). Freed from these aspects, the stereoscopic photobooks that I examine therefore were works of propaganda that were ambiguous: control was compromised, yet the format offered a potentially *more immersive visual experience* than conventional photobooks due to the kinesthetic demands of the stereoscope and the intense sensation of depth it offered. It is this ambiguity that I explore and analyze in my research.

The Situation in Vienna

The political situation in Vienna in 1940-1941 served as the impetus for the first book that I analyze, *Vienna, The Pearl of the Reich*, the English translation of its German title. Although the Nazi regime rapidly began to persecute Vienna's Jewish population after the *Anschluss*, Hitler's 1938 incorporation of Austria into Greater Germany, it still had to contend with two masses of opposition: former socialists and the city's Catholic establishment. Hitler and Goebbels regarded the continuing opposition in Vienna as a threat. At the end of June 1940, Hitler decided to replace the *Gauleiter* or district leader of Vienna, Josef Bürckel, with Baldur von Schirach, the head of Hitler Youth, who incidentally was married to Heinrich Hoffmann's daughter Henriette. Hitler felt that Bürckel lacked the necessary tact needed to navigate the political situation, and according to Schirach's memoirs as recounted by historian Thomas Weyr, Hitler assured Schirach that he would be in complete charge: not even Goebbels 'will be allowed to contradict you' (Weyr, 2005: 170).

Schirach's task was two-fold: to quietly continue to eliminate political opposition, and to recast Vienna as an economic powerhouse of the southeast Reich, thereby diluting the cultural hegemony it had long enjoyed among German-speaking cities. Schirach therefore would have to both flatter the Viennese regarding their cultural history yet remind them that Berlin was now the cultural capital of the Reich. It was in this unsettled political environment of 1940-1941 that *Vienna, The Pearl of the Reich* was produced. Accompanying this situation was the freedom from the Ministry of Propaganda that both Schirach and his father-in-law enjoyed. The result was an ambiguous piece of propaganda in which Nazi ideology played a minimal role and a large amount of freedom was given to both the essay writers and the readers/viewers.

The 1941 photo album about Vienna followed a late 1938 stereoscopic book whose title translated into English is *Greater Germany's Rebirth: World History Hours on the Danube*, which featured between 100 and 120 stereoviews taken by Hoffmann, depending on the edition. This 1938 book recapped the *Anschluss*, documenting Hitler's passage through Austria in March 1938 that culminated with his triumphal entry into Vienna. It was overtly political regarding not only its text, but also the majority of stereoviews, which are grouped in a section labeled 'Political Part'. This featured views such as Austrian police taking an oath to Hitler and a giant banner urging Austrians to vote 'Yes' in the 10 April 1938 plebiscite. Chronicling Hitler's travels through Austria, Hoffmann obviously had a dramatic subject and historic moment to document—Hitler and his adoring crowds—thereby making tight correlations between text and image easier than in a more static representation of a city without the Führer's presence, as in *Vienna, The Pearl of the Reich*.

In *Vienna, The Pearl of the Reich*, essays written by scholars explained the history of Vienna's architectural, theatrical and musical legacies. The most overtly propagandistic elements of the book were three short dedications: several sentences spoken by Hitler when he was in Vienna in April 1938, and dedications by Baldur von Schirach and Hanns Blaschke of the *Kulturamt*. The book's title derived from Hitler's sentence, 'In my eyes, this city is a pearl', which was part of his response to the welcome speech given at the Burgtheater by Vienna's mayor (Weyr, 2005: 72). Schirach opened his dedication by praising the city's cultural significance, but then rapidly shifted tone, noting that Vienna was a harbor and trade center, underscoring Hitler's desire to recast the city as the economic powerhouse of the southeast Reich and thereby mitigate it as a cultural competitor to Berlin.

The book utilized the services of four photographers: August Makart, Ellen Rörig, Hans Schreiner and Fritz Wisberger. All four had to contend with the square format of stereoscopic photos, which differed from the rectangular format of non-stereoscopic film. A stereoscope restricted a viewer's peripheral vision to begin with, and the film's square format synergistically interacted with the stereoscope to intensify the three-dimensional experience. Skillful stereoscopic photographers therefore understood that filming tall structures or panoramic scenes would often fail unless some identifying feature in the foreground of the composition could 'ground' the viewer and provide the first of the receding planes that characterize a successful stereoscopic photograph. Moreover, regarding stereoscopic photography in general, if a diagonal element could be located in the foreground, it would guide the viewer's eyes rearward, increasing the sensation of depth.

In *Vienna, The Pearl of the Reich*, photographer August Makart understood that in comparison to iconic photographic view book images of the city's St. Stephan's Cathedral, which took care to show the front of the church and its tower in one image, the stereoscopic square format precluded that. He therefore provides a



Fig. 2. August Makart, View 6. The Center of the Inner City: St. Stephan Square. The Little Stand of the Flower Seller is Typical of this Part of Vienna, c. 1941. Public domain.

close-up view of the tower, photographing it from below with a great deal of foreshortening, and a partial view of the building without the tower (fig. 2). To enliven this second image, which is bereft of the famous tower, he focuses not on the monumentality of what is left in view—the body of the cathedral and a neighboring building—but rather upon a street scene of a flower vendor. The foreground is awash in diagonal elements, the most prominent being a large sign affixed upon a lamppost. As this sign thrusts out toward the viewer, the viewer is pulled into the scene, experiencing a vivid sense of depth. What might be an annoying scene in a conventional photograph—get those people out of my view of the cathedral!—is transformed into a brief story of daily life in Vienna that the viewer is invited to enter when viewed through a stereoscope.

Throughout the remainder of the book, although most of Vienna's architectural highlights were covered, three of its most important cultural institutions were not photographed: the Musikverein, Volkstheater, and Konzerthaus, all prestigious music and theater venues. This is surprising, considering that one of the book's essays—'Vienna as a Theater- and Music-City'—comprised 40 percent of the book's text. The buildings' omission is puzzling, especially since Vienna's famous Karl-Marx-Hof housing complex is included, the so-called *Ringstrasse of the Proletariat* that was constructed during Vienna's socialist years in the 1920s (fig. 3). Renamed by the Nazis, its inclusion perhaps can be read as a symbol of Nazi triumph over socialism, yet ambiguity remains, for an unambiguous work of propaganda would have ignored the building. Given Baldur von Schirach's and Heinrich Hoffmann's independence from ministerial oversight, perhaps this stereoview was intended as a conciliatory gesture toward the Viennese, acknowledging a powerful architectural manifestation of what was political anathema to Nazi ideology, yet was a singular achievement in Viennese postwar housing.

Conciliatory gestures are not usually associated with the Third Reich, yet this one appears to be an example of what historian Thomas Weyr has termed 'Schirach's expansive cultural policies', meaning that despite Schirach being responsible for the deportation of 65,000 Jews from Vienna, on cultural matters he often defied guidelines established by Joseph Goebbels. Thomas Weyr notes that in mid-1942 Hitler 'was queasy about Schirach's expansive cultural policies and shared his feelings with Goebbels who stoked his doubts' (Weyr, 2005: 202). A prime example of an expansive cultural policy occurred in December 1941—after the publication of *Vienna, The Pearl of the Reich*—when the city held a Mozart Week to



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Fig. 3. Ellen Rörig, *View 77*. One of the Large Public Housing Projects that the Viennese Community erected after the World War, c. 1941. Public domain.

commemorate the 150th anniversary of the composer's death. Goebbels feared that this festival 'might have Austrian, Viennese, or even worse "separatist" overtones'. Not only did the Viennese seize upon the festival to indirectly assert their pre-Nazi history, but Schirach also internationalized the occasion by letting the event's music director, Walter Thomas, invite artists from other nations to perform. Goebbels was livid, and his letter to Thomas was an indirect assault upon Schirach: 'You support Vienna separatism. Your policies are hostile to the Reich ... This Mozart Week is a scandal that has nothing to do with us. It had only one aim—to give Vienna a monopoly on the arts. You go ahead without my permission to invite Frenchmen, Belgians, Romania, Hungary and God knows who else in order to swindle the Viennese illusionism' (Weyr, 2005: 212).

The Holocaust Education and Archive Research Team expounds upon this aspect, noting that Schirach's 'unorthodox cultural policies in Austria soon aroused Hitler's distrust, with promptings from Bormann, and after a visit to the *Berghof* in 1943, where he pleaded for a more moderate treatment of the eastern European peoples and criticised the conditions in which Jews were being deported, he lost all real influence'.² This decline in his status occurred after *Vienna, The Pearl of the Reich* was produced, so it was within this context of seeking cultural accommodation with the Viennese that I propose the image of the Karl-Marx-Hof housing complex was included. In 1941 in Vienna, there was room for nuance and ambiguity, especially when the product was produced under the aegis of Baldur von Schirach and his father-in-law, Heinrich Hoffmann.

The Situation in Prague

By contrast, no such room for nuance existed in either the political or cultural contexts in which the 1943 book, *Prague of One Hundred Towers: The Old Imperial City along the Vltava*, the English translation of its German title, was produced. Nazi dismemberment of Czechoslovakia in 1939 resulted in three entities: the Sudetenland region was absorbed into the Reich, Slovakia became an independent entity, and Prague became the capital of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. The Nazi regime had a clear vision for the Protectorate: it would become one of the principal industrial powerhouses of Nazi-dominated Europe, since most of Czech industry was located in that region. In his study of Prague under the Nazis, Chad Bryant explained this important context, noting that interwar Czechoslovakia was the world's tenth largest per capita producer of industrial goods. 'Now 70 percent of Czechoslovakia's industry lay in the Protectorate ... Czechoslovakia had been the seventh largest supplier of armaments in the world. Its arms were among the best in Europe, and its workers among the most highly trained on the continent' (Bryant, 2007: 76-77).

Prague became the lynchpin of Hermann Göring's *Grossraumwirtschaft*—a greater Central Europe area of economic unity—and the goal that he and Hitler had was to have the Protectorate's important industries function unimpeded by internal opposition or even by war. By 1943, when the book in question was published, Hitler had attained this goal, as a German visitor from the Reich noted: 'A trip to Prague at the end of 1942 was a trip to tranquillity ... Surrounded by war, a truly worldwide conflagration, the Protectorate was the only Central European land living in peace' (Bryant, 2007: 179). These words about 'tranquillity' and 'living in peace' should be taken within the specific contexts in which they were written: observations by a member of an occupying nation whose brutal campaign of terror directed against the residents of Prague had indeed produced the outward appearance of a calm, orderly, placid city. This tranquillity was achieved by a Nazi policy that superimposed a regime of precisely calculated terror while letting signposts of Czech culture such as the theater, film and fashion industries to continue uninterrupted, albeit under the watchful eyes of the Nazi occupiers. Once again, it is the appearance of tranquillity and peace that is the focus, not an appraisal of the inner feelings of Prague's non-Germanic population segments. Chad Bryant explained how the apex of this policy

of achieving this through terror functioned upon the arrival of Reinhard Heydrich in September 1941 to become head of the Protectorate:

‘He began by terrorizing the population. Within days of his arrival buildings across the Protectorate were splattered with red posters listing the names of people—ninety-two in the first three days of Heydrich’s rule—sentenced to death ... Heydrich made the most of the terror by increasing the “optical effect” of the arrests and executions. Radio announcers blasted news of the arrests, newspapers detailed the trials of prominent individuals, and the lists of the executed were posted through the Protectorate ... Other “optical effects” aimed at placating workers and separating them from the rest of society. In the course of Heydrich’s rule workers received ration increases, better welfare services, free shoes, and for a time, Saturdays off’ (Bryant, 2007: 143-144).

Heydrich’s assassination in May 1942 unleashed a wave of retaliatory terror that culminated in the massacre of Lidice. Historian Peter Demetz, born of a Jewish mother and German father in Prague in 1922, recounted the extent of Nazi retribution following Heydrich’s assassination, terming it ‘an avalanche of terror’. He writes: ‘During the night of 28 May 1942, twenty-one thousand SS and Wehrmacht troops search the city house-by-house for the assassins ... 1,331 people, including 201 women, had been executed.’ In addition, 3,000 Jews ‘were sent at that time from Terezín to Auschwitz’ (Demetz, 2008: 170).

Reinhard Heydrich’s assassination was the last notable act of resistance within the Protectorate until the closing days of the war, so by the time *Prague of One Hundred Towers* went into production in 1943, the city truly was an island of tranquility. Aimed at German-speaking citizens of the Reich, the book commenced with a dedication by Josef Pfitzner, Deputy Mayor of Prague and also a professor of East European history at the German university in the city. Pfitzner emphasized the Germanic character of the city and closed his dedication by hoping that new benefits would emanate from ‘this thousand-year-long bulwark of German power output’ (Pfitzner, 1943: 7). This adherence to Nazi racial doctrine was further manifested in the leading role that Pfitzner played in the deportation of Prague’s Jewish population to concentration camps. After Heydrich’s assassination in 1942, Pfitzner became a leading figure in the Heydrich memorial cult within Prague’s Nazi circles.

Three years before he wrote this dedication, Pfitzner had authored his own study about Prague, complete with standard, non-stereoscopic photographs. In the text of that 1940 book, the dominant role that Prague's German-speaking population played in terms of politics and business for centuries preceding 1918—a historical reality—was cast by Pfitzner within the racial doctrines of Nazism: 'In their cultural template [*Kulturzuschnitt*], the Czechs exhibited an Eastern imprint and displayed no capabilities for the development of a high-level economic life, with German business people filling in the breach' (Pfitzner, 1940: 8). The selection of him to write the dedication for the 1943 stereoscopic photobook therefore was a politically astute maneuver for, as a professor, he possessed academic credentials that Heydrich's successor and Pfitzner's superior, Kurt Daluege, did not. Thus although *Prague of One Hundred Towers* and *Vienna, the Pearl of the Reich* contained essays by established scholars, only the Prague book featured a dedication by a high-ranking Nazi who also was a scholar. When the war ended, Pfitzner was arrested and tried in a People's Court and then hanged in front of 30,000 spectators.

Throughout *Prague of One Hundred Towers*, its scholars forthrightly acknowledge that Prague's history had been defined by three population groups: Germans, Czechs and Jews. Continuing Pfitzner's line, they recount the hegemonic role that the German segment played until the mid-19th century, while discounting the impact of the city's other two segments.³ In discussing how Prague had changed, Rudolf Schreiber began by provocatively using the propagandistic term *Lebensraum* to state that the city lay not on the periphery of German living space, but rather 'directly in the intersection of essential, inner German connecting lines'. Later in the essay, the rise of Czech nationalism in the late 19th century was depicted as a 'struggle for the spiritual orientation of this Germanness itself', once again underscoring what was regarded as the Germanic quintessence of the city (Schreiber, 1943: 9, 36). In another essay, Walther Michalitschke stated that 'the art richness of Prague did not come from outside, but evolved organically', repeating the book's theme that Prague was essentially a Germanic city and alluding that other influences—Czech and Jewish—therefore were alien (Michalitschke, 1943: 43).

The alien nature ascribed to the Czech and Jewish residents of Prague was reiterated in other publications as well, notably in Anton Zankl's introduction to the 1943 edition of Slovak photographer Karel Plicka's famous series of 208 photos of the city taken before and during the occupation. Contrasting the western origins of Prague's Germanic population segment with the eastern identity of its



Fig. 4. Hermann Schoepf, View 24. *The Golden Grape or so-called Kepler House*, c. 1942. Public domain.

Czech-speaking element, Zankl wrote: ‘... the light that illuminated the first walls of Prague was not from the East; it was the world-radiant light of the West that began over the heads of humanity, which supported the scaffold of the first and last stones of the old city’ (Zankl, 1943: XI).⁴

Czech contributions to the architecture and arts of Prague were acknowledged throughout the book, but they were always placed as secondary achievements in a city historically dominated by its German-speaking population segment. Prague was referred to as a German *Sprachinsel* or island of the German language, whose centuries-long connections with the other German-speaking regions of Europe were torn asunder in 1918 upon the creation of Czechoslovakia and the ‘Czech Mafia’ that took over the city (Schreiber, 1943: 38-39). The two decades that followed were characterized as the time when ‘German spirit and creative capability were reduced to inaction. German Prague silently wore this shackle, alone as a witness of past centuries until happier times arrived when the gates were opened wide by the reintegration of this space into the Reich’ (Michalitschke, 1943: 60).

It is within this type of rhetoric—and these historical, political and cultural contexts—that we now can briefly examine how *Prague of One Hundred Towers*

presented the city to its readers in 1943. The book generally followed the order of places photographed that was established in pre-Nazi Prague when photographer Karel Plicka first published a bilingual French/English book in 1930 entitled *Prague en Images: in Photographs*. Consisting of 208 large format photographs, Plicka's book became the iconic photobook of Prague for the next half century, being published in various German-language and Czech-language editions in 1933, 1940 and 1943, as well as numerous postwar editions.

For the 1943 stereoscopic book *Prague of One Hundred Towers*, Munich-based photographer Hermann Schoepf had to contend with the small square format of the medium, which limited some of his views in comparison to those of Plicka, especially regarding monumental structures and panoramic views. Yet he often utilized the medium skillfully, departing from what had become Plicka's iconic vantage points to gain a greater impression of depth that was the *raison d'être* of stereoscopy. The modest street that contains the house of the German mathematician and astronomer Johannes Kepler offers an excellent example of this (fig. 4). Schoepf knows that if he pulls back from Plicka's stance, two elements will come into view that will enhance the impression of depth: a bit of the opposing sidewalk on the left, and the sharp rise of the roof on the extreme right. Likewise he knows that by placing his camera over royal tombs in St. Vitus Cathedral, he will give his readers an impression of immediacy and three-dimensionality that Plicka did not provide in his lateral view.

The book was careful to exclude three important symbols of Czech nationalism: the National Theater of 1881, the National Museum of 1891, and Wenceslas Square, where opposition gatherings in the early days of the Nazi occupation had occurred. Moreover, the final 12 images were of locations within and outside the city of Prague *not* contained in Karel Plicka's iconic pre-Nazi photobook: the fortress of Vyšehrad; country estates built by Bohemian royalty, the building where Mozart stayed when he visited in 1787 and 1791; the castle where the regalia of the Holy Roman Emperor was stored for a brief time in history; and a monument to a Prussian general of the Seven Years' War designed by the Prussian architect Karl Friedrich Schinkel (fig. 5). The Germanic heritage of these sites was clearer than that of many buildings in Prague; hence their inclusion can be read as a final flourish of emphasizing the city's Germanic past.

The fortress of Vyšehrad serves as an example of how *Prague of One Hundred Towers* attempted to emphasize Germanic contributions to the city while downplaying those by Czech architects and artists. The tallest structure within the fortress is the Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul, a 19th-century, neo-Gothic church designed by the German-speaking Bohemian architect Josef Mocker, whose professional education occurred solely within German-speaking institutions in Prague and Vienna. These credentials would seem to warrant a photo in the book, but the most noteworthy aspect of the building is not its exterior, but rather the painted decoration inside by the Czech painter František Urban and his wife Marie Urbanová-Zahradnická. Rather than acknowledge the dual German-Czech contributions to this building, Heinrich Hoffmann, who had final editorial status, omitted any view of the basilica and instead offered views of only two structures within the fortress: Romanesque-era St. Martin's Rotunda and the Leopold Gate from the Baroque period. Presumably, these structures presented 'purer' Germanic origins.

In conclusion, the Nazi-era stereoscopic photobooks of Vienna and Prague were produced under significantly different geopolitical and cultural circumstances, and their dedications, essays and image selections reflected this. In terms of Vienna, the book offered a balancing act: while it lauded Vienna's past achievements in the arts, it reminded readers that this cultural powerhouse was now part of a Reich whose capital, Berlin, was accorded primary cultural status. Vienna was slated to become the Reich's economic gateway to Southeast Europe, a region which would furnish the Reich with agricultural products and raw materials necessary for industry. In a sense, the stereoscopic photographs in *Vienna, The Pearl of the Reich* therefore can be seen as a celebratory look backward while preparing readers for the future. *Prague of One Hundred Towers* told a different story: a relentless, insistent glorification of the accomplishments of the city's German-speaking citizens while downplaying those of its Czech population segment. This claim of Germanic primacy was, in a sense, a political self-reinforcing maneuver, for the intended audience obviously was that comprised of German and not Czech readers.

One final measure of the differences between these two books can be gained by analyzing the distribution of images within each book. For this purpose, I divided the photographs into four categories: views devoid of people and traffic, views with people and/or traffic, interior views, and views in which it would be difficult to discern activity whether photographed from a distance or upward along the façade of a building. Each of the books contained 100 images, and each



Fig. 5. Hermann Schoepf, View 95. Sternbohol near Prague, Soldiers Cemetery, c. 1942. Public domain.

contained approximately the same number of views devoid of people and traffic: 50 in Vienna and 58 in Prague. Each also contained about the same percentage of distant/upward views: 17 in Vienna and 20 in Prague. It was in the categories of interior views and views with people and/or traffic that the two books sharply diverged. Regarding interior views, all of which were devoid of people in both books, Prague contained 20 whereas Vienna contained only eight. This large number of interior views in Prague further contributed to the impression of it as a still and silent—if not mute—city. Vienna was presented as a livelier city, featuring 25 views of people and/or traffic, whereas in Prague the number plunged to only two, and one of those was of a street artist with his back to the photographer, his easel displaying a painting of the streetscape.

The result of these distributions is that 75 and 98 percent of the views of Vienna and Prague, respectively, were of the static, *fin-de-siècle* style of photographic city view book. The 25 percent of Vienna's images that captured scenes of urban vitality therefore somewhat differentiated *Vienna, The Pearl of the Reich* from photobooks about Vienna—or most European cities—published four decades earlier. *Prague of One Hundred Towers*, by contrast, presented the city overwhelmingly as an empty

stage set. This in turn differentiated it somewhat from Karel Plicka's famous photographs of the 1920s and 1930s, in which people and traffic are shown in quite a number of views. Heinrich Hoffmann's 1943 book about Prague therefore was somewhat of a throwback to a pre-World War I manner of presenting a city via a view book. That is not to claim that this photographic presentation was intentionally designed to elicit memories of Prague's bygone days within the Austro-Hungarian Empire, for an equally valid motive might have been to indeed present the city as an 'island of tranquility' in the midst of war-torn Europe to its German readership. What better way to do so than photograph the glories of Prague's architecture devoid of people or traffic? Images of people or traffic would have interjected moments of contemporaneity, thereby potentially reminding the reader of the war.

Concerning how well these books—or any visual medium—could capture the essence of a city, an observation by Nancy Stieber provides some perspective: 'Indeed, some argue that the "city" as such exists only as a representation since the material artifacts and functional acts that constitute any city are in constant flux and the city as a whole can be encompassed only by the representational terminologies of the spatial and visual arts' (Stieber, 1999: 387). As visual documentation of two cities that were geopolitically important to Adolf Hitler, Heinrich Hoffmann's stereoscopic photobooks of Vienna and Prague ostensibly served the regime well. In both books the 1918-1938 period was depicted as a gross aberration, a defiling of each city's Germanic soul, whether via the succession of socialist and then authoritative governments in Vienna or the de-Germanization of Prague as the capital of the new nation of Czechoslovakia. The *Anschluss* of 1938 and the establishment of the Protectorate in 1939 were trumpeted as correcting two decades of misguided political experimentation.

Yet the resolutely individualistic aspect of viewing stereoscopic photographs offered readers visually immersive experiences: using a stereoscope, they peered deep into the streets and buildings of these cities, charting their own routes, freed from the predetermined, serial sequence of images in non-stereoscopic photobooks. They likewise were freed from having these views accompanied by captions or propagandistic messages: all they saw was a moment within the life of a city. The idiosyncrasies of this distinctive visual medium therefore imbued these hallmarks of Nazi propaganda with ambiguity, embodying the notion of individuality and free will within a regime that strived to eliminate these aspects of human nature.

Notes

- 1 Examples by Heinrich Hoffmann include *Hitler in seinen Bergen: 86 Bilddokumente aus der Umgebung des Führers* and *Parteitag Grossdeutschland: 79 Bilddokumente vom Reichsparteitag zu Nürnberg*, among many others.
- 2 <http://www.holocaustresearchproject.org/holoprelude/bvs.html>.
- 3 Whereas in the mid-19th century Prague's German-speaking population had been a near-majority, it shortly thereafter began a steady decline. In 1880 it was 13.52 percent, in 1910 it was 5.97 percent, and by 1930 it accounted for only 4.88 percent. Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Prague. In his 1940 book, Josef Pfitzner stated that 777,615 Czechs and 41,701 Germans lived in Prague in 1930. Regarding the city's Jewish population, the authoritative Yivo Institute Encyclopedia cites a 1930 figure of 35,463: <http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Prague>. Prague of One Hundred Towers did not mention the historical reality that the city's Jewish population had long split into German-and Czech-speaking segments. In his 1971 book about Prague, Joseph Wechsberg stated that in 1900, for example, of the city's 25,000 Jews, 14,000 spoke German and 11,000 spoke Czech. Moreover, as a Jewish resident of Prague, Wechsberg reminisced how little contact generally occurred between these two subgroups. Joseph Wechsberg, *Prague the Mystical City* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1971).
- 4 Depending upon the language of the edition, the photographer's first name variously is spelled Karl, Karel or Karla; likewise his family name variously is spelled Plicky or Plicka.

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