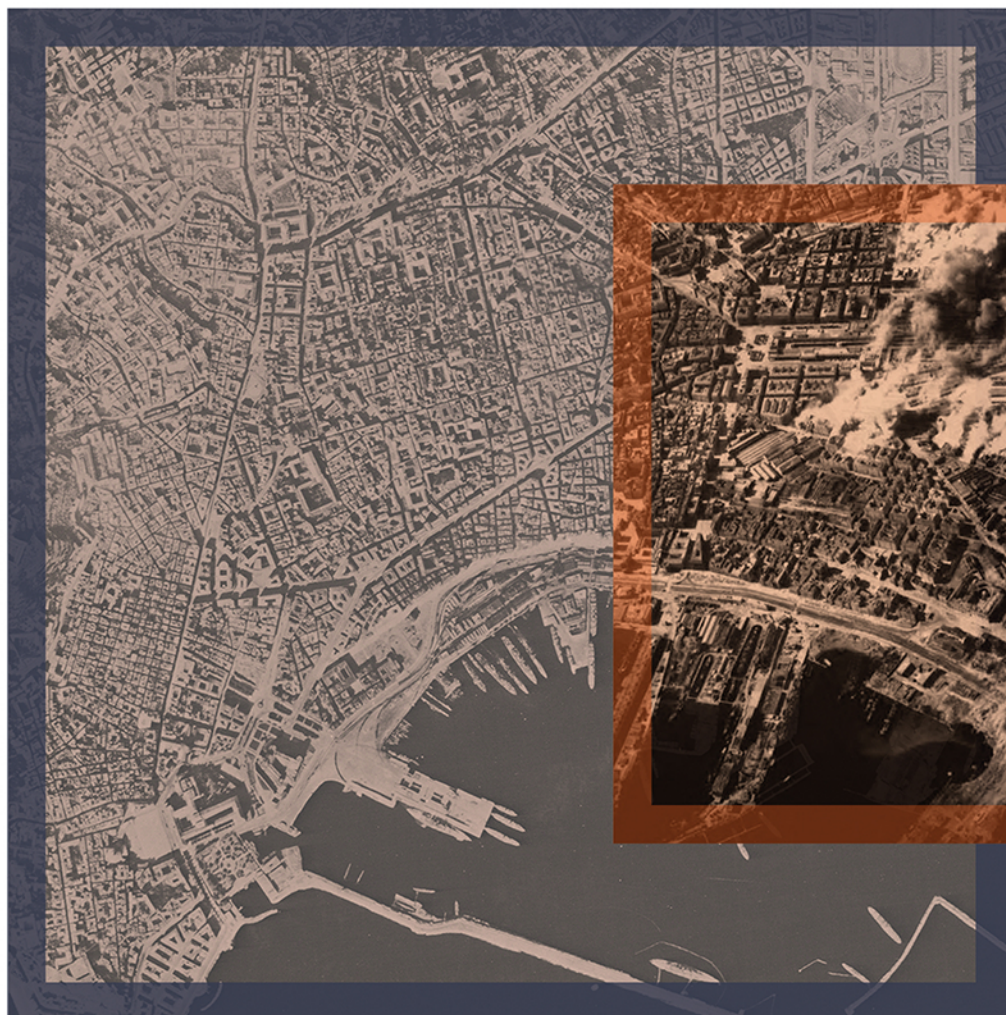


# CITTÀ E GUERRA

DIFESE, DISTRUZIONI, PERMANENZE  
DELLE MEMORIE E DELL'IMMAGINE URBANA

## CITY AND WAR

MILITARY DEFENCES, RUINS, PERMANENCES  
OF URBAN MEMORIES AND IMAGES



Tomo secondo

## TRACCE E PATRIMONI

a cura di  
Raffaele Amore,  
Maria Ines Pascariello,  
Alessandra Veropalumbo

Federico II University Press



fedOA Press

Federico II University Press



e-book edito da

Federico II University Press

con

CIRICE - Centro Interdipartimentale di Ricerca sull'Iconografia della Città Europea

### *Collana*

Storia e iconografia dell'architettura, delle città e dei siti europei, 8/II

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### **CITTÀ E GUERRA**

*Difese, distruzioni, permanenze delle memorie e dell'immagine urbana*

*Tomo II - Tracce e patrimoni*

*a cura di Raffaele AMORE, Maria Ines PASCARIELLO, Alessandra VEROPALUMBO*

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ISBN 978-88-6887-176-5

### *Si ringraziano*

Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II - Dipartimento di Architettura, Dipartimento di Ingegneria Civile, Edile e Ambientale, Dipartimento di Studi Umanistici, Scuola di Specializzazione per i Beni Architettonici e del Paesaggio, Seconda Università degli Studi di Napoli, Università degli Studi del Molise, Fondazione Ordine Ingegneri Napoli, Associazione Italiana Ingegneri e Architetti Italiani, Associazione *eikonocity*, Unione Italiana Disegno.

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## *Monuments on stamps: propaganda, destructions and restoration works in Germany over the 20th century*

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### **Abstract**

*This paper aims at examining the use of images of monuments on stamps as an instrument of propaganda. Especially, the case of Nazi Germany and its post-World War II recovery is, here, investigated. The latter is a time during which the newly established political systems had to confront themselves with the crucial issue of rebuilding economy and their cities, along with monuments. Reflections of this into themes bore on stamps, which are, here, understood as clear messages aimed at depicting state ideology, will be presented and debated.*

### **Keywords**

Monuments, restoration, stamps.

### **Introduction**

Since their introduction in 1840, and throughout the nineteenth century, stamps bore the state coat of arms or the image of the sovereign, along with their face value. Only between the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, we can observe an increasingly use of the so-called commemorative stamps. These were intended to remember people, places or commemorate important events bound to national pride [Diana 1961, 37-39; Zeri 2006]. Since almost all information and communications were delivered by post at the time, stamps gradually acquired a great power of communication beyond mailing. This was also used as a tool for political propaganda, commercial advertising and at times, for raising funds for charitable or public utility works.

One might speculate on the fact that stamps are, indeed “the most concise and concentrated figurative craft for propaganda, almost a mural manifesto reduced to a minimum, from which the social and political substratum is revealed with extreme clarity and meaning” [Zeri 2006, 10] and it is acting at different levels over society.

Even Aby Warburg, a passionate collector, was fascinated by the iconography and communicative power of stamps, as they had an artistic value and were one of the first truly global tools of communication through the image. He believed that the “history of stamp art” was an important element to be considered in cultural history studies [Fleckner, Woldt 2012, 151; Zöllner 2019].

The communicative power of stamps was widely exploited, especially in the years from the rise of democratic dictatorships to the post-World War II (WWII) recovery of Europe.

In this paper, I intend to deepen how the images of monuments on stamps were used for propaganda purposes and to celebrate and support the post-WWII reconstruction of Germany.

### **1. Regime propaganda and war**

There is a common understanding on the fact that stamps were used as an effective propaganda tool both in Italy by the fascists [Zeri 2006, 20-34; Torelli 2010] and in Germany by the National Socialist Party. Here, Hitler personally voiced into the selection of themes bore on stamps. As



1: Stamps issued in Germany during the Third Reich: annexation of Danzig, 1939: St. Mary's Basilica and the Crane Gate; re-annexation of Eupen and Malmedy, 1940, views of the two cities; eighth centenary of the city of Lübeck, 1943.

for images of monuments and city views, the Third Reich used stamps so to celebrate the achievements of the new politics and territorial expansions. Particularly, in 1939, the annexation of Danzig under the motto "*Danzig ist Deutsch*" was impressed on stamps. Same applies for Eupen and Malmedy – "*Eupen-Malmedy wieder Deutsch*" and, in 1941, for the annexation of Styria and Carinthia [Martens 1989; Wischnewski 1998, 109; Tröger 2019] (fig. 1). The outbreak of WWII made the needs of the political propaganda more urgent, with the celebration of the Rome-Berlin Axis and the military power of the respective countries. In many of the belligerent countries, several stamps were issued depicting the images of the destroyed cities and monuments so to cause a reaction of citizens against the enemy. For instance, the Polish government-in-exile, as earlier as in 1941 had images of the destruction of Warsaw represented on stamps. While France, in 1945, issued stamps depicting views of Dunkirk, Rouen, Caen and St. Malo.

Again Poland, after WWII (1945-46), was printing a series of stamps boring the views of Warsaw before and after the war.

In Italy, it is well known the series of stamps on "destroyed monuments" issued by the Social Republic in 1944. Here, the Loggia dei Mercanti of Bologna, the Basilica of S. Lorenzo fuori le mura of Rome, S. Ciriaco of Ancona, the abbey of Montecassino and the church of S. Maria delle Grazie of Milan were depicted on stamps under the motto "*hostium rabies diruit*", "The anger of the enemies destroyed".

However, Germany was the country that suffered the greatest devastation. This is due to the precise will of the Allies of annihilating the production system linked to the military industry, but also to destroy cities, and citizens, so to break down the spirit of the population with the so-called "moral bombing". The result was that many German cities were almost completely destroyed by means of extensive air-raids and carpet bombing with a studied combination of disruptive and incendiary bombs. The first city on which this technique was tested was Lübeck, where in the night between 28 and 29 March 1942, 80% of the historic center was destroyed, together with the churches of St. Mary and St. Peter. Hamburg, Dresden and many other cities suffered from the same fate [Diefendorf 1993a, 5-13; Jörg 2002, 51ff., 160].

Despite the scale of the destruction and civilian losses, the bombings failed both to significantly reduce war production and the resilience of local citizens. The propaganda, directed by Goebbels, continued to support the possibility of victory and, after each bombing, they tried frantically to remove the rubble so as to restore normality as much as possible and not to give the impression that Germany was losing the war [Speer 1969, 365-382; Diefendorf 1993a, 18; Jörg 2002, 411 ff.]. In this context, the Ministry of Propaganda considered the possibility of

issuing stamps depicting the destruction suffered, but Goebbels prevented him from doing so as he believed that such images would have been demoralizing the population rather than stimulate a feeling of revenge [Tröger 2019, 414].

In 1943, when it was decided to issue a stamp for the eighth centenary of the city of Lübeck, the city was depicted in its characteristic skyline portrayed by the seven bell towers of its churches. However, in 1943, five of them didn't exist anymore (fig. 1) [Martens 1989, 334; Tröger 2019, 412].

## 2. The reconstruction

At the end of the war, the military occupation of Germany made winners to keep a punitive attitude towards defeated Germany. This is so to "denazify" the country and eliminate industrial production capacity, especially warfare [Sandford 1983, 23 ff; Diefendorf 1993b].

Soon, after the start of the Cold War, it was apparent a need for restoring economy in Europe so to establish a lasting tightening of the Western bloc with the United States [Wala 1993, 2-6]. The Marshall Plan for the redevelopment of Europe, made Americans actively involved in the reconstruction of cities, since political and economic reconstruction could not be split apart from the reconstruction of cities, as Walter Gropius, in his position of consultant invited to Germany, was also arguing [Diefendorf 1993b, 335].

Similar to war time, when the restoration of a "normal life" after bombing was considered crucial by the regime for propaganda issues, the reconstruction of West Germany was the occasion for a radical break with a past that should not be repeated, and the opportunity for building new, healthier and more functional cities [Treccani 2001; Spelsberg 2004, 265; De Martino 2011, 38-39].

A number of historic buildings were restored, while cities in their entirety were built *ex novo* in modern forms [Denslagen 2009, 203; BMVBS 2010, 24-25]. We can believe that the removal of rubble and the reconstruction of the cities was also functional to another type of removal, that of the memory of the destruction carried out by the Anglo-Americans with the devastating bombing of urban areas that had intentionally caused a disproportionated number of losses in the civilian population.

The removal of the past can also be noticed in the almost total lack of celebration of the reconstruction on stamps. This is with the exception of some local stamps occasioned by the need for a financial support of some restoration works that, however, are not included in the "official" philatelic catalogs. In this regard, it is worth the case to mention the stamp issued in 1953 especially for the reconstruction of the Ludwigskirche of Saarbrücken and in 1956 a series with a surcharge of the face value especially for the reconstruction of the Winterbergdenkmal – a monument celebrating the Franco-Prussian war, which however remained in a state of a ruin. Another local case was that of Baden, located at the border between Germany and France and thus part of the French occupation zone. Stamps were issued so to finance the reconstruction of the monuments of the city of Freiburg. For the Cologne cathedral a series was issued celebrating the 700th anniversary of its foundation, with a surcharge so to finance its restoration works (fig. 2). A particular case is that of the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church of Berlin, whose ruins were consolidated and redeveloped into a much broader concept that integrates with modern forms and materials, all the while keeping ruins still in a state of remain. Between 1957-63, a new church was designed side by side to the old one so that, in the dialectical comparison between the old and the new, this could constitute a testimony of the destruction suffered during the war and perhaps of the need for a new beginning [Sette 2001, 172, 178; Fiorani 2006, 27; De Martino 2011]. To raise the necessary funds for the new construction, in 1953, four stamps were issued boring the design of the church before and after bombings (fig. 2) [Schulz 1998, 31].



2: From the top: Allied Occupation Zone, 1948, series for the 700th anniversary of Cologne Cathedral; French area of occupation, Baden, the series for the reconstruction of Freiburg in 1949: the granary, the bell tower of the cathedral, the angel with the tuba, the fish fountain; Saarland: the stamp for the reconstruction of the Ludwigskirche in Saarbrücken in 1953 and the series for the reconstruction of the Winterbergdenkmal of 1956; West Berlin, 1953, series for the restoration of the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church with the representation of the building before and after the destruction.

On the other hand, reconstruction was different in the territories controlled by the Soviets, where a policy of denazification and restoration of the essential functions for the survival of the population was also pursued. However, the widespread plundering of goods and industries as compensation for war damages, in addition to the precarious economic conditions of the Soviet Union, did not allow for a rapid reconstruction as in the western area [Sandford 1983, 23 ff.; Pirazzoli 2008].



3: Berlin and Brandenburg, Soviet sector of Berlin, 1945, the Berlin bear that rebuilds the city; East Saxony, 1946, series for the reconstruction of Dresden, the Zwinger and the New Town Hall; German Democratic Republic (DDR), 1953, series for the five-year plan, the Zwinger in Dresden; 1955, series "reconstructed historic buildings": Magdeburg Cathedral, Berlin Opera House, Leipzig Old Town Hall, Berlin Red City Hall, Erfurt Cathedral, Zwinger Wallpavillon in Dresden.

Many damaged buildings or monumental complexes were simply turned down. The Frauenkirche of Dresden was instead intentionally left in the state of ruin as a war memorial, so that the past could not be repeated. The church was finally rebuilt between 1994 and 2005, following an open debate on the appropriateness of such an operation [Traeger 1994; Denslagen 2009, 83 ff.; Pretelli 2011].

As regards communication through stamps, in the Soviet occupation zone there is a different approach if this were compared to the one implemented in the western territories. Here, there





4: Local issues of the Soviet occupation zone, series for reconstruction: Plauen, 1945, the town hall, the statue of St. George and the dragon, the entrance to the theater; Finsterwalde the "city of singers", 1946, series with the town hall and the city coat of arms.

were numerous series of stamps depicting monuments so to celebrate or finance the reconstruction. This is also due to the need for funds for this purpose.

First, in 1945, the district of Berlin – Brandenburg issued a stamp that depicts the Berlin bear removing rubble and rebuilding with the shovel, beam and bricks (fig. 3) [Schulz 1998, 11].

The building that somehow became the symbol of the reconstruction of monuments in the Soviet zone was the Zwinger of Dresden. This can be addressed as one of the most important monuments of the German Baroque that still houses important museum collections and that, in 1945, was almost completely destroyed by bombing [Ermish 1954; Jörg 2002, 314 ff.; Pretelli 2011]. In 1946, two stamps were issued, one with the image of the Wallpavillon of the Zwinger and the other with the representation of the Neues Rathaus. The surcharge was intended to finance the restoration of the buildings. One can reasonably interpret the motto "*Wir bauen auf!*", "We rebuild!", written on the stamps, as a statement that the new administration was concerned with rebuilding what the Americans and the British had destroyed.

The securing and reconstruction of the Zwinger, strongly desired also by the Soviets [Magirius 2006, 146], began immediately after the WWII and it was included in the first five-year plan of the DDR (1951-55) which was also celebrated with several stamp issued over the 1950s. One of them was, of course, depicting the image of the Zwinger.

The exterior restoration was scheduled for completion in 1955 [Ermish 1954, 102], however, works continued for many years. In 1955, at the end of the five-year plan, a celebratory series was issued of the historic buildings in its reconstructed configuration with images of the Magdeburg Cathedral, the Berlin Opera House, the Leipzig Old Town Hall, the Berlin Red City Hall, and the Erfurt Cathedral and the Zwinger Wallpavillon (fig. 3).

There were also numerous local stamps issued by provinces and cities, which were located in the Soviet occupation zone, so to finance reconstruction with a surcharge [Adler 1998, 150-151]. Many stamps depicted houses, bridges and factories, but there were numerous ones with images of monuments, such as these of the city of Plauen in Saxony (1945), the ones of Finsterwalde in Brandenburg (1946) (fig. 4) and the very particular ones of the city of Cottbus, still in Brandenburg (1946), with many views of the city and the elements of current interest (fig. 5).



5: Local issues of the Soviet occupation zone: Cottbus, 1946, series for reconstruction, views of the city and neighborhoods

## Conclusions

The illustrative examples presented in this paper are significant for having a proper understanding on how stamps have been used, especially in the past, as an instrument of political legitimation and representation of state ideology. Their characteristic of being an instrument of mass communication means that they have served to disseminate a “shared culture of memory”, guiding ideas and ideologies. This is also to “promote the construction of a national symbol by referring to a past yet to be built, and therefore to give legitimacy to a newly founded nation”. [Smolarski, Smolarski, Vetter-Schultheiß 2019, 18-19].

As Walter Benjamin wrote, stamps “are the calling cards that large states present in the children’s room” [Benjamin 1928, 59].

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The examples debated in this paper demonstrate how stamps actually contributed to the political propaganda of the Nazi regime and that of the states that emerged from the division of Germany. The representation of the monuments on stamps and their neglect as well as their celebration other the silence on their destruction and reconstruction can be interpreted as a clear cultural and political message. Particularly significant is the almost total absence of stamps on the reconstruction in the Federal Republic of Germany. Only many years later, on the fiftieth anniversary of the end of World War II, the weight of memory became less burdensome, and a stamp was issued with the image of the destruction of cities.

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In un momento così significativo per la storia europea e mondiale, questo volume vuole essere la raccolta di riflessioni scientifiche condotte sui rapporti tra le scelte politiche, le azioni militari e la fisionomia delle città e del paesaggio urbano, sull'evoluzione delle strutture e delle tecniche di difesa, sulla rappresentazione della guerra e dei suoi effetti sull'immagine urbana, sul recupero delle tracce della memoria cittadina.

Da una parte il campo delle Digital Humanities apre nuove prospettive per studiare l'immagine della città prima, durante e dopo la guerra, dall'altro le tecnologie digitali impegnano studiosi e ricercatori di varie discipline: in particolare nell'ambito del disegno viene esplorato il ruolo della rappresentazione nella formulazione dei progetti urbani di difesa e nella documentazione degli eventi bellici e delle tracce lasciate dai conflitti, mentre nell'ambito del restauro vengono approfondite le sfide teoriche e pratiche imposte dai danni arrecati dai conflitti ai centri storici, passando in rassegna casi studio, soluzioni e dibattiti relativi alla conservazione del patrimonio urbano coinvolto in azioni di guerra, con un'attenzione particolare all'identità e alla memoria collettiva.

*At such a significant moment in European and world history, this volume aims to be a collection of scientific reflections about the relationships between political choices, military actions and the physiognomy of cities and the urban landscape, about the evolution of defence structures and techniques, about the representation of war and its effects on the urban image, and about the recovery of the traces of city memory.*

*On the one hand the field of Digital Humanities opens up new perspectives to study the image of the city before, during and after the war, on the other hand digital technologies engage academics and researchers from various disciplines: In particular, in the area of drawing, the role of representation in the formulation of urban defence projects and in the documentation of wartime events and the traces left behind by conflicts is explored, while in the area of conservation, the theoretical and practical challenges imposed by the damage caused by conflicts to historic centres are explored, reviewing case studies, solutions and debates relating to the conservation of urban heritage involved in wartime actions, with a focus on identity and collective memory.*