

Contribution of Rudolf Frič to the social architecture of interwar Czechoslovakia

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Abstract: Social policy in the interwar Czechoslovakia focused on the development of social housing. In Bratislava the establishment of new institutions and the related arrival of the Czech middle class of civil servants induced social change in the city population and its housing conditions. This necessitated the construction of modern residential blocks, which stabilised the internal urban structure and urbanised the outer city. A significant contribution to that field would be attributed to construction entrepreneur Rudolf Frič. Although the Slovak historiography exclusively presents him as a builder of civil engineering structures, his portfolio was more complex. The aim of the paper is to identify and critically evaluate Frič's both architectural and construction work in the field of social housing in interwar Bratislava. The study focuses on projects of housing cooperatives, private rental blocks and partly on examples of city social housing. Cooperatives with the highest socio-economic relevance were set by the Bank of Czechoslovak Legions, for which Frič designed or constructed several buildings, such as the residential urban structure "Legiodomy", housing colony in Koliba or the polyfunctional buildings of Legiopožišťovna and LUXOR. Frič's construction portfolio also includes individual projects of rental houses for smaller cooperatives, both in the compact city centre and at the then urbanising outer city peripheries. A specific case was housing for members of the army, like the residential blocks for military veterans in Bratislava. A critical category was social housing for the poorest and unemployed represented by the City rental house with habitable kitchens and the smallest-size flats. Finally, the paper examines private houses, the rental residential block of Irma Hanke and Helena Hudečková and the Trojan & Švarc polyfunctional department. Frič, as a construction entrepreneur, designed rental houses for his own employees, which all reflect the influence of private investors on the social and urban changes of the then modernising Bratislava metropolis.

Keywords: social policy, social housing, housing cooperatives, block of flats, apartment block, rental house, interwar Czechoslovakia, Rudolf Frič

HOUSING AS THE SUBJECT OF SOCIAL POLICY IN INTERWAR CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Social policy during the First Czechoslovak Republic was characterised by a focus on the development of institutional health and social care and social housing. Thus, the state took over the task previously performed by non-state institutions, philanthropists, and the church. (Falisová, 2004) The task reflected the socio-economic, cultural and political changes brought about by the continuing industrialisation and urbanisation of the population. Social housing was a complex issue that expanded beyond the housing conditions of workers with a view to accommodating the needs of the dynamically growing middle class, especially civil servants.

Bratislava is a special case – with the establishment of the republic, it became the capital of the land administration for Slovakia and the associated state authorities. The establishment of new institutions and the related arrival of the Czech middle class and intelligentsia of civil servants, employees, teachers, and army officers induced a significant social change in the composition of the population as well as the necessary improvement in its social

and housing conditions. This necessitated the construction of modern residential buildings and urban units, which stabilised the internal urban structure and urbanised the outer city along the urban radials and in Koliba. (Moravčíková, Szalay, Haberlandová, Krišteková, Bočková, 2020, pp. 589–597) Compared to workers' colonies, which were constructed as a result of Bratislava's industrialisation already at the turn of the century, the new development was directly associated with the social policy of the state and the relevant legislation. The single and generally applicable legislation enshrined framework standards for architecture and urbanism, social standards, as well as legally binding conditions. This gave rise to a unified and binding model of high-quality and accessible social housing.

Social policy and housing development was supported by new legislation; in the second half of the Republic, this was mainly the Construction Act – Act No. 45/1930 Coll. (National Council of the Republic of Czechoslovakia, 1930) Under specific conditions, the Act provided the building owner with a state guarantee for mortgages, a house tax exemption for 15 to 25 years or exemption from other charges. The tax exemption was limited to small and the smallest-size flats; for family houses the limitation was a

habitable space of up to 80m² or a maximum duration of construction. The Act provided support primarily for local governments and private building owners, especially individual entrepreneurs, businesses, and the then-progressive newly-emerging cooperatives, which represented a relatively new model of accessible housing. (Haberlandová, 2022, p. 178)

A significant contribution to the construction of accessible social housing and the urbanisation of Bratislava was made by entrepreneur in the field of construction, Rudolf Frič (21 March 1887 Nová Ves pod Pleší – 4 October 1975 Bratislava). Although some of Frič's building projects are well known, his work has not been studied or published comprehensively in the historiography of Czechoslovak interwar architecture. In relevant papers he is mentioned only marginally and exclusively as a builder. The present study is grounded in research into Frič's architectural and construction projects of residential architecture. Its focus lies in projects of cooperative and private rental blocks, or residential colonies, and partly in examples of urban social housing. The aim of the paper is to identify and critically evaluate Frič's architectural and construction work in the field of social housing in interwar Czechoslovakia in the social and urban context of Bratislava.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The issue of the welfare state and forms of social housing was characteristic of 20th century architecture. The issue 3-4/2022 of the *Architektúra & urbanizmus* scientific journal also deals with these topics (Dudeková Kováčová, Haberlandová, Benko (eds.), 2022). The papers focus on social housing, health care and their reflection in land planning. The case study by Katarína Haberlandová deals with housing cooperatives and the supporting legislation. (Haberlandová, 2022, p. 174-185) Period Slovak architectural journals also reflected the issue of social housing, particularly *Slovenský staviteľ*, which partly forms a basis of the present research. As founder of the journal and head of the Builders Community Land Department, Frič himself published in it, too. The starting point of the study is a company publication by Ján Slabihoud (Slabihoud, 1947), which contains a list of Frič's works with a selected graphical appendix. The debt of Czech and Slovak historiography towards Czech and Moravian architects of Slovak interwar architecture, which includes Frič, is reflected in the collective publication *Zapomenutá generace*. (Dulla, Mrňa, Haberlandová, Ščepánová, Pavel, Bartošová, Pohaničová, Šoltéssová, 2019)

In their holistic historiographical work, Matúš Dulla and Henrieta Moravčíková (Dulla, Moravčíková, 2002) provide an analytical overview of dozens of Frič's building projects including context explanations. However, his contribution is not directly mentioned or evaluated. The recent monograph *Bratislava (un)planned city* (Moravčíková, Szalay, Haberlandová, Krišteková, Bočková, 2020, pp. 589-597) examines urban housing in the context of period urbanisation, land planning, urban typology, and legislation. Specifically, the urbanisation of Dunajská štvrť (Danube District), where Frič's residential projects are situated, is the subject of the study by Katarína Haberlandová. (Haberlandová, 2021, pp. 14-20) Similarly, the issue of social housing in that period is described in the thematic chapters of two publications on the architecture of interwar and wartime Bratislava. (Szalay, Haberlandová, Andrášiová, Bartošová, Bogár, Králik, Urban, 2014, pp. 106-213)

The paper uses qualitative architectural and historical research with a continuous validation of the results. The main method of the study was archival research carried out in the State Archives in Bratislava, Slovakia, and the Bratislava City Archives in combination with the study of the above-mentioned publications. Complementary methods included comparison, photography, field

research, and oral history, which was limited to Frič's surviving employees and tenants. The initial identification of the buildings was performed by combining archival research and comparison of Slabihoud's list with holistic historiographical publications. This allowed for Frič's architectural and construction projects to be distinguished and his direct contribution to be assessed.

HOUSING COOPERATIVES AND RUDOLF FRIČ

Cooperatives were established in large numbers in the early 1920s and most of them with the aim of building a specific residential block. There were much fewer large cooperatives that would systematically build several residential and commercial structures. These were represented by cooperatives with a high economic and socio-economic relevance, and an equally high political significance. They included especially cooperatives founded by the Bratislava branch of the Bank of the Czechoslovak Legions (Legiobanka), namely the Construction Cooperative of the Czechoslovak Legionaries and the Construction Cooperative of Civil Servants and Railway Workers. (Haberlandová, 2022, p. 178)

Cooperatives had several benefits. They provided their members with more affordable social housing, and unlike in the case of workers' colonies, without a direct dependence on a specific employer. After paying a registration fee and a non-refundable deposit, the members received a share in the cooperative and an ownership right to a flat. In case of losing a job and not being able to pay the cooperative fees and rent, the cooperative members lost their membership along with their housing. Unfortunately, this shortcoming, which manifested itself during the economic crisis, affected the most vulnerable groups of people, which is in conflict with the very concept of social housing. The financial advantage of cooperatives also lied in an advantaged provision of loans by banks and a higher financial stability of the cooperative itself. The cooperative's financial capital consisted of registration and membership fees, term deposits, non-refundable construction deposits, loans, excess profits, donations, and other funds. (Haberlandová, 2022, p. 178) As required by law, a cooperative had an elected board, an oversight committee, and a general assembly. Finally, cooperatives formed communities with deeper relationships and organisation. Community life meant identifying oneself with a place and a shared responsibility for the cooperative and its property.

The Bank of Czechoslovak Legions housing cooperatives

In the beginning, Frič's work in the area of social housing was indeed closely linked to cooperatives, especially legionary and railway ones. After coming to Bratislava, Frič and Pavel Varsík (1891-1939) (Čaplovič, 2003, pp. 639-642) directly contributed to establishing the local branch of the Bank of the Czechoslovak Legions ("Legiobanka"), which, as the base of Slovak banking, consolidated economic conditions in Slovakia. (Khýn, 1947, pp. 16-18) The bank's key task was establishing businesses and cooperatives, which fell directly under the responsibility of the industrial department led by Frič. Cooperatives established in this mode formed the basis of the social policy of the bank and its affiliated institutions.

The architecture of the bank and its institutions, including the cooperatives, reflected the bank's position of a socio-economic and political pillar of the new state. This was expressed symbolically by adopting the rondocubist architectural style. Projects were created directly in the technical department or were outsourced to private architectural firms. An early project of a cooperative's social housing was the terraced development of two-storey family houses with one and two-bedroom flats in Tehelná and Kukučínova streets (1921) in the then suburbs of Bratislava. The

flats had local heating, separate sanitary facilities, and a maid's room. The architecture, still made of bricks, had a modest expression with a regular rhythm of polygonal bay windows. (Fig. 1)

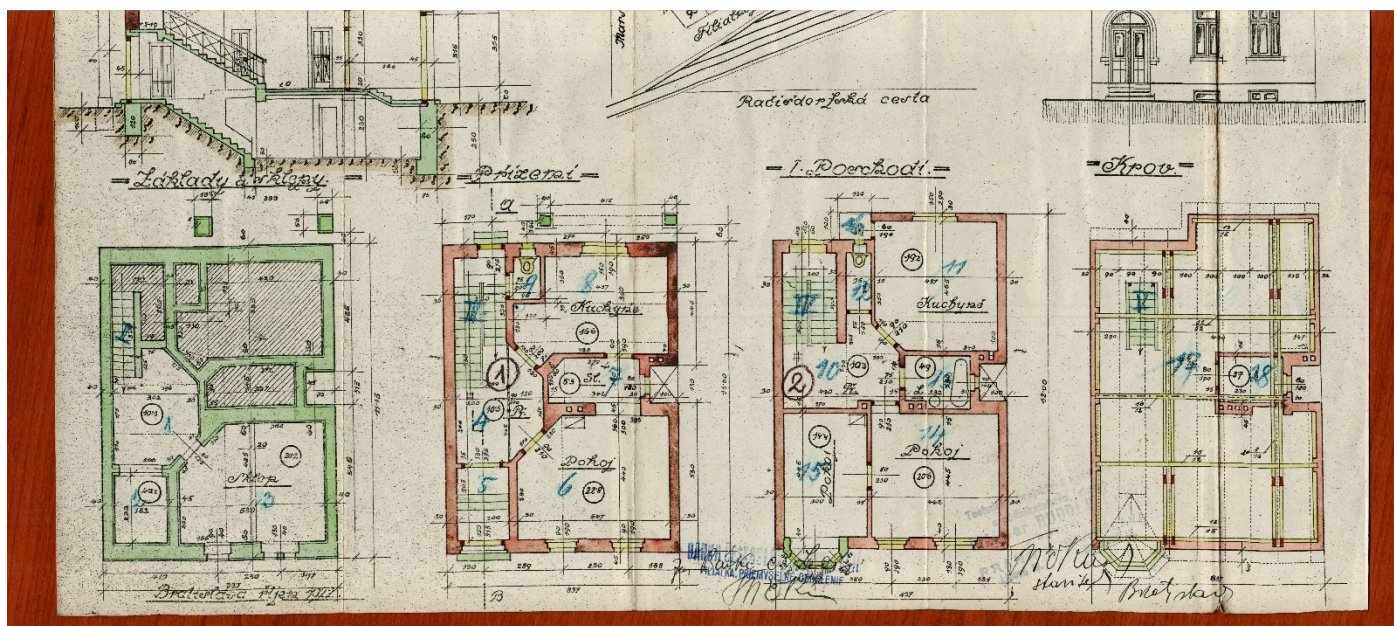


Fig. 1. Terraced houses in Kukučínova Street, Bratislava. (Source: State Archives in Bratislava, Slovakia, fund "Daňová správa Bratislava", box 196, no. 1771, 1921)

After leaving "Legiobanka" and founding his own practice, Frič designed and constructed also buildings other than residential, for the cooperatives and enterprises of the bank. The most extensive block development of residential houses, the so-called "Legiodomy" (1923–1924), was already managed by Frič's private firm following the project of Dušan Jurkovič (1868–1947) and Jan Pacl (1877–1938). (Bořutová, 2009, pp. 266–270) The traditional urban scheme of four blocks of five to seven-storey rental houses urbanised the former Bratislava suburbs and pastures along the Račianska radial road (then the road to Račišdorf). The architecture did not correspond to the bank's characteristic rondocubism, but to Jurkovič's characteristic style with allusions to folk patterns, such as the layout with a large, illuminated square hall and the morphology of the façade. Despite the traditional architectural-urban design, the "Legiodomy" authentically materialised the bank's social policy, offering the then standardized one- and two-bedroom flats with local heating and their own sanitary facilities.

In the early 1930s, Frič's office designed and built a legionary colony of family houses with a functionalist elementary school in the newly-founded Bat'ov (historically Batu) in Subcarpathian Ukraine (historically Carpathian Ruthenia) for the bank. The town was founded on the railway section Chop – Mukachevo connecting Košice with Lviv. The town had a strategic location on the railway and adjoining the Hungarian border, both from the military and economic point of view. The loose development of isolated standard single-storey family houses with one- and two-bedroom flats formed the urban and social basis of the community settlement. The colony and the town itself are among the few examples of planned Czechoslovak settlements in Subcarpathian

Ukraine. It thus provides a potential for further research. (Popelka, 2013)

On the threshold of the Second World War, when Frič's firm concentrated on the construction of transport and security infrastructure, it carried out the last two projects for the Legionary Cooperative in Bratislava. At the corner of Vajanského nábrežie and Kúpeľná Street, a polyfunctional residential house of the Legiopoist'ovňa (1939) was built according to the project of the Prague architect Vojtěch Kerhart (1892–1978). (Fig. 2) The building with six stories on average, a colonnade in Kúpeľná Street and an elevated corner, together with the neighbouring building of the Kotva Insurance Company (1930, Bedřich Brettschneider) created an accentuated intersection of the two streets and stabilised the newly-urbanised Danube embankment. The position at the embankment and high groundwater level required caisson foundation, in which Frič's company has specialized since the construction of the Slovak National Museum (Michal M. Harminc, 1926). The second project is the polyfunctional LUXOR department store (1939) designed by Jan Víšek (1890–1966) in Štúrova street. (Víšek, 1945) Similarly to the previous building, this one was built on an important urban axis of a compact city centre that was undergoing modernisation. Despite the multiple functions with a predominance of offices and commercial spaces, the law made it possible to obtain tax relief for social housing even for these buildings. At the same time, both buildings simultaneously present the peak of the social and economic prosperity of the legionary institutions embodied by the already mature functionalist architecture.

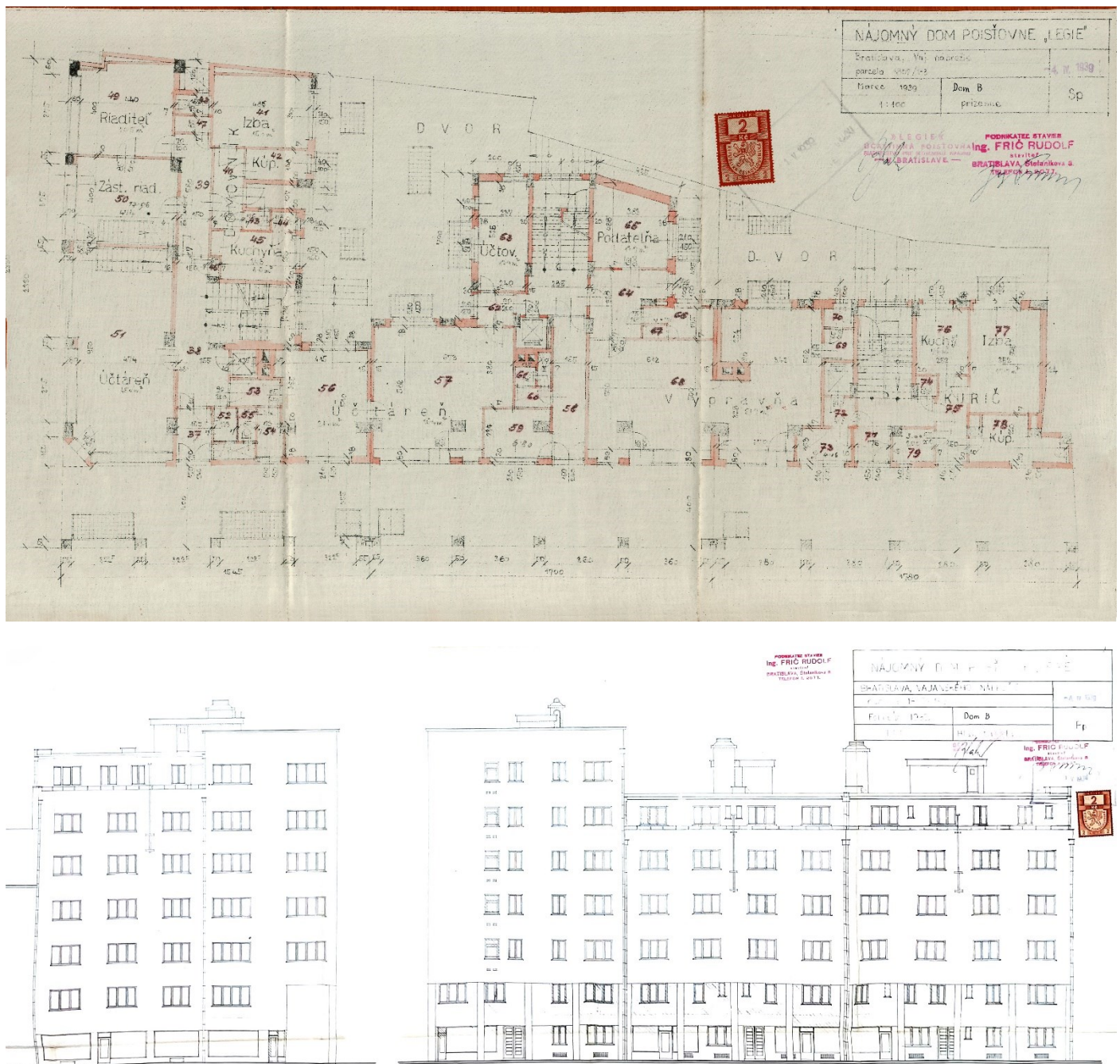


Fig. 2. Polyfunctional residential house of Legiopoist'ovňa in Kúpeľná Street, Bratislava. Above: ground-floor plan; below: street elevation. (Source: State Archives in Bratislava, Slovakia, fund "Daňová správa Bratislava", box 209, no. III-89, 1939)

Housing cooperatives of civil servants and railway workers

In the 1920s, Frič was simultaneously designing and building cooperative rental houses for the Construction Cooperative of Civil Servants and Railway Workers. The State Railways were one of the most prosperous businesses in Czechoslovakia and they ensured the highest quality of social care for civil servants. (Haberlandová, 2022, p. 178) The railways are also connected with Frič through the personality of Ján Slávik (1886–1953), the director of the State Railways, who was his close friend and a co-father-in-law. Frič's work for the cooperative of railway workers, which has not been examined in much detail, is the project and construction of a colony of terraced houses in Koliba (1923). (Fig. 3) The colony fills the block between Jeséniova – Hlavná and Tretia – Bellova Streets on the then still non-urbanised suburban slopes.

It consists of smaller two-storey family houses and semi-detached houses in combination with three larger villas. The layout of the houses predominantly includes two rooms, a kitchen, sanitary facilities, and a mansard roof. The urbanism is based on the ideas of the garden city and the receding workers' colonies. Frič applied a similar concept to the colony of family houses for the municipal power plant in Machnáč.

In Hausbergl (Palisády), likewise undergoing urbanisation, he built a cooperative residential block (1929) with one- to four-bedroom flats according to a project by Vojtěch Šebor (1890–1968). (Fig. 4 a, b) Similarly to Jurkovič's Legiodomy, the flats had spacious and well-lit entrance halls, local heating, kitchens with maid's rooms and separate toilets and bathrooms. The building was thus ranked among residential buildings with a higher

standard. An added value at that time was provided by the integrated garages in parts of the parterre. The building and its architectural and construction design was published by Slovenský staviteľ. (Frič, 1933) It is characterised by a simple façade with full textured balconies and experimentation with new thermal insulation blocks, then frequently being accomplished by the Frič building company.



Fig. 3. Colony of terraced houses of the Construction Cooperative of Railway Workers in Koliba, Bratislava - view from Tretia Street. (Source: private archive of Elena Frič, The personal estate of Rudolf Frič, 1923)

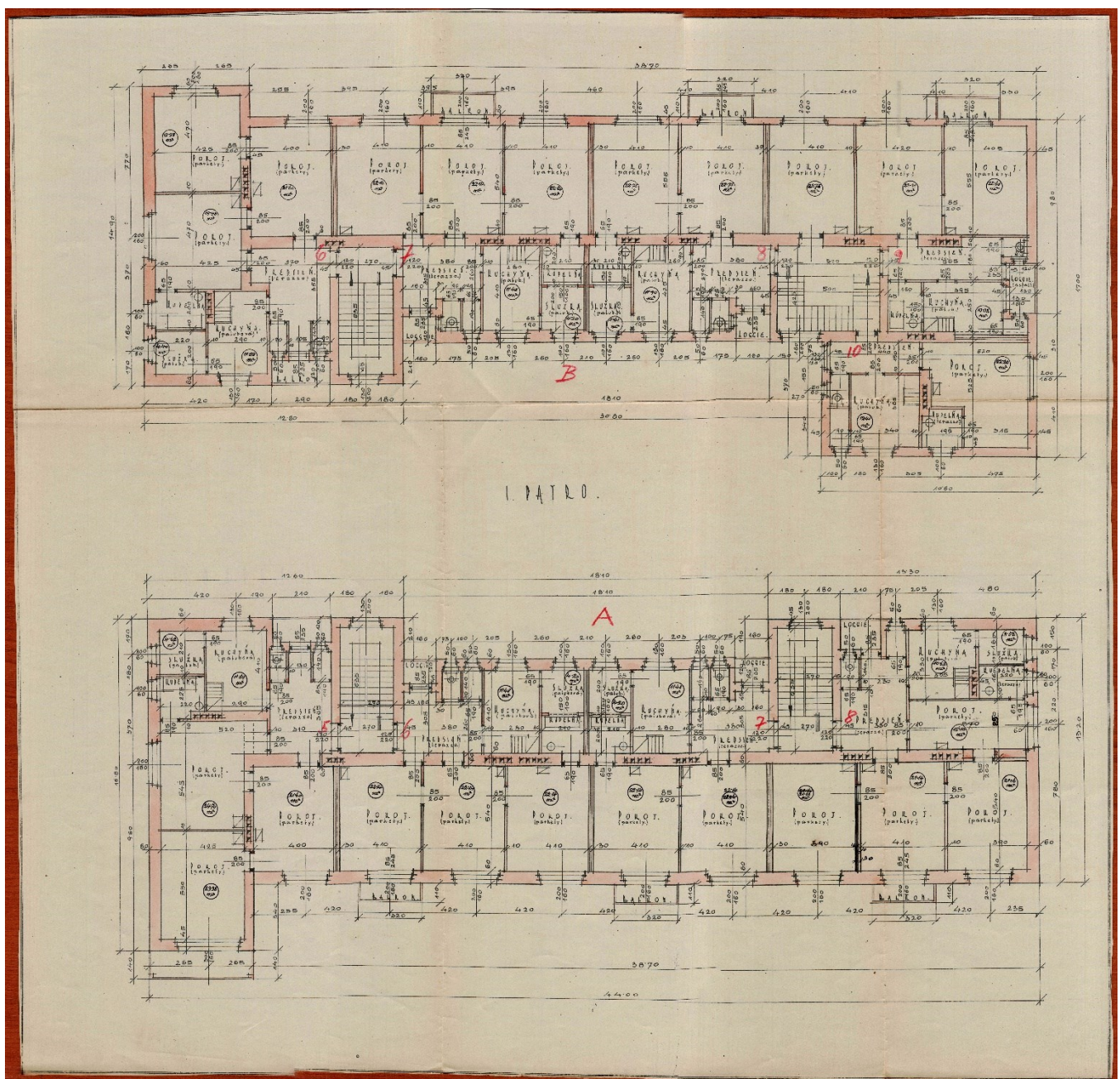


Fig. 4 a. Apartment house of the Construction Cooperative of Civil Servants and Railway Workers in Palisády, Bratislava - 1st-floor plan. (Source: State Archives in Bratislava, Slovakia, fund "Daňová správa Bratislava", box 55, 1929)

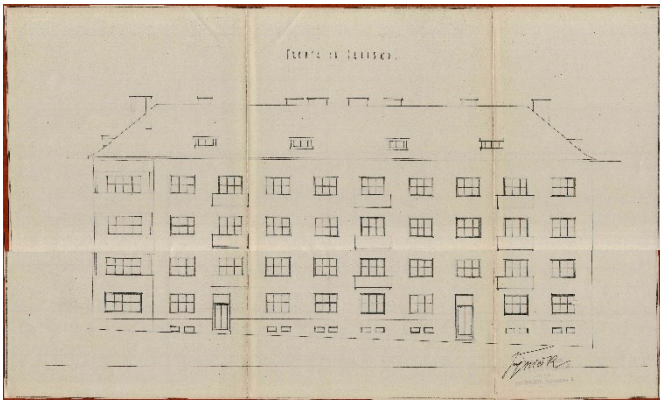


Fig. 4 b. Apartment house of the Construction Cooperative of Civil Servants and Railway Workers in Palisády, Bratislava - elevation from Palisády Street. (Source: State Archives in Bratislava, Slovakia, fund "Daňová správa Bratislava", box 55, 1929)

Individual housing cooperatives

Frič's construction portfolio in the field of social housing also includes individual projects of rental houses for smaller cooperatives. From the urbanistic point of view, they can be divided into two groups: those in the compact city and those urbanising the outer city radials. The first group is represented by the rental

house for the Slovak National Theatre members in Klemensova Street (1922, Jindřich Merganc) and the rental house of the "DŽOS" agricultural cooperative in Gajova Street (1934, Josef Nowotný) in the Danube district. (Haberlandová, 2021, pp. 14–20) The second group includes the rental houses of the "Práca" cooperative in Radlinského Street (1934, Dezider Quastler), the rental houses with courtyard balconies of the "Svojomov" cooperative in Vajnorská Radial (1933, Jan Runt) and the rental houses of the Construction Cooperative in Šancová Street (1930, probably Rudolf Frič). The last one combines standard flats on the floors with substandard social flats with shared bathrooms on the underroof floor. (Fig. 5 a, b)



Fig. 5 a. Apartment house of the Construction Cooperative in Šancová Street, Bratislava - elevation from Šancová Street. (Source: State Archives in Bratislava, Slovakia, fund "Daňová správa Bratislava", box 100, 1930)

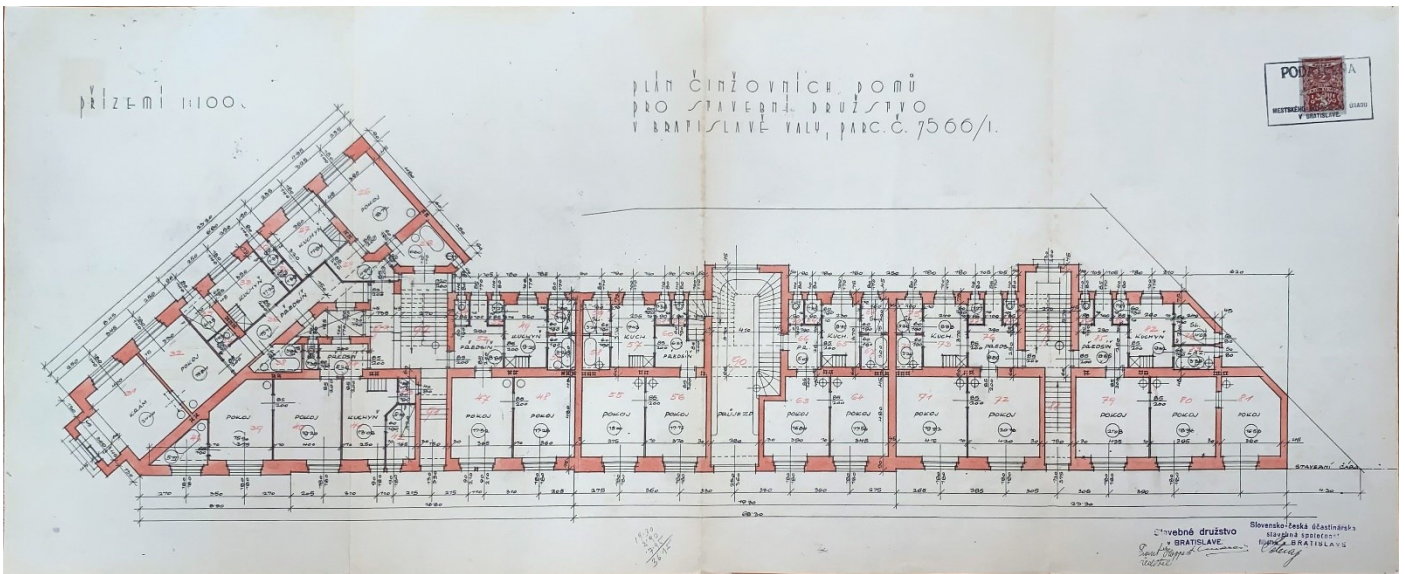


Fig. 5 b. Apartment house of the Construction Cooperative in Šancová Street, Bratislava - ground-floor plan. (Source: State Archives in Bratislava, Slovakia, fund "Daňová správa Bratislava", box 100, 1930)



Fig. 6. Apartment house of the Svojomov Housing Cooperative in Vajnorská Street, Bratislava - view from Vajnorská Street. (Source: private archive of Elena Frič, The personal estate of Rudolf Frič, 1933)

To ensure fully-fledged urbanisation of the radials, the design of these houses includes amenities in the parterre. With the exception of the house for the "Svojomov" cooperative, all rental houses have a classic sectional composition with a continuous street façade. They are thus still based on the traditional block urbanism. Only the architectural-urban concept of the house for the "Svojomov" cooperative partly reflects the principles of modern linear urbanism. (Fig. 6) The main masses are perpendicular to the street, thus letting airflow into the depth of the plot and into the flats. On the other hand, connecting the transverse masses by a continuous parterre along the street supports the traditional street line. (Anon. 2, 1933, pp. 29–32) In spite of the mentioned differences, the distinctive architecture and layout of the flats, all the above-mentioned residential blocks are united by

the progressive idea of accessible social housing, achieved by a cooperative functioning in the community.

URBAN HOUSING FOR PROFESSIONAL ARMY MEMBERS

A specific category of social housing directly financed by the state during the First Czechoslovak Republic was housing for members of the army. Although Frič is responsible for the construction of many barracks in Trebišov, Trenčín, Čemerná, Hájniky, Bratislava, Zvolen, Nemšová and elsewhere, more relevant to the subject of the study are the residential blocks for officers and military veterans in Bratislava. They provided accommodation identical to that in the cooperative residential blocks and had a generally civilian character. They differed only in being subject to different legislation and directly funded by the state. They created a new foundation for block urbanism in the territory of the former northern suburb between Mýtna and Šancová radial streets. Houses for military veterans (1924), designed by Frič, form a part of the Škovránčia – Žilinská urban block. (Fig. 7 a, b) They have a monotonous horizontal façade with a regular rhythm of identical windows and cordon cornices on each floor. The floor plans of the repetitive sections are also simple, with large two- and three-bedroom flats with full facilities and maids' rooms. The Officers' Houses (1927), forming part of the Anenská – Povraznícka – Benediktiho block and designed by Alois Balán and Jiří Grossmann,

are similar in layout. (Štěpánová, 2019, pp. 151–153) However, they are architecturally more impressive with their façade with varied volumes, which combines face-work masonry with plaster.

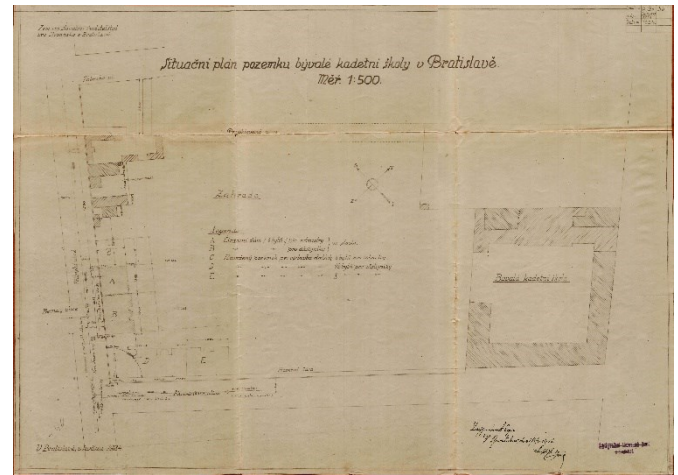


Fig. 7 a. Apartment house for military veterans in Škovránčia Street, Bratislava - site plan of the urban block. (Source: State Archives in Bratislava, Slovakia, fund "Daňová správa Bratislava", box 189, 1924)

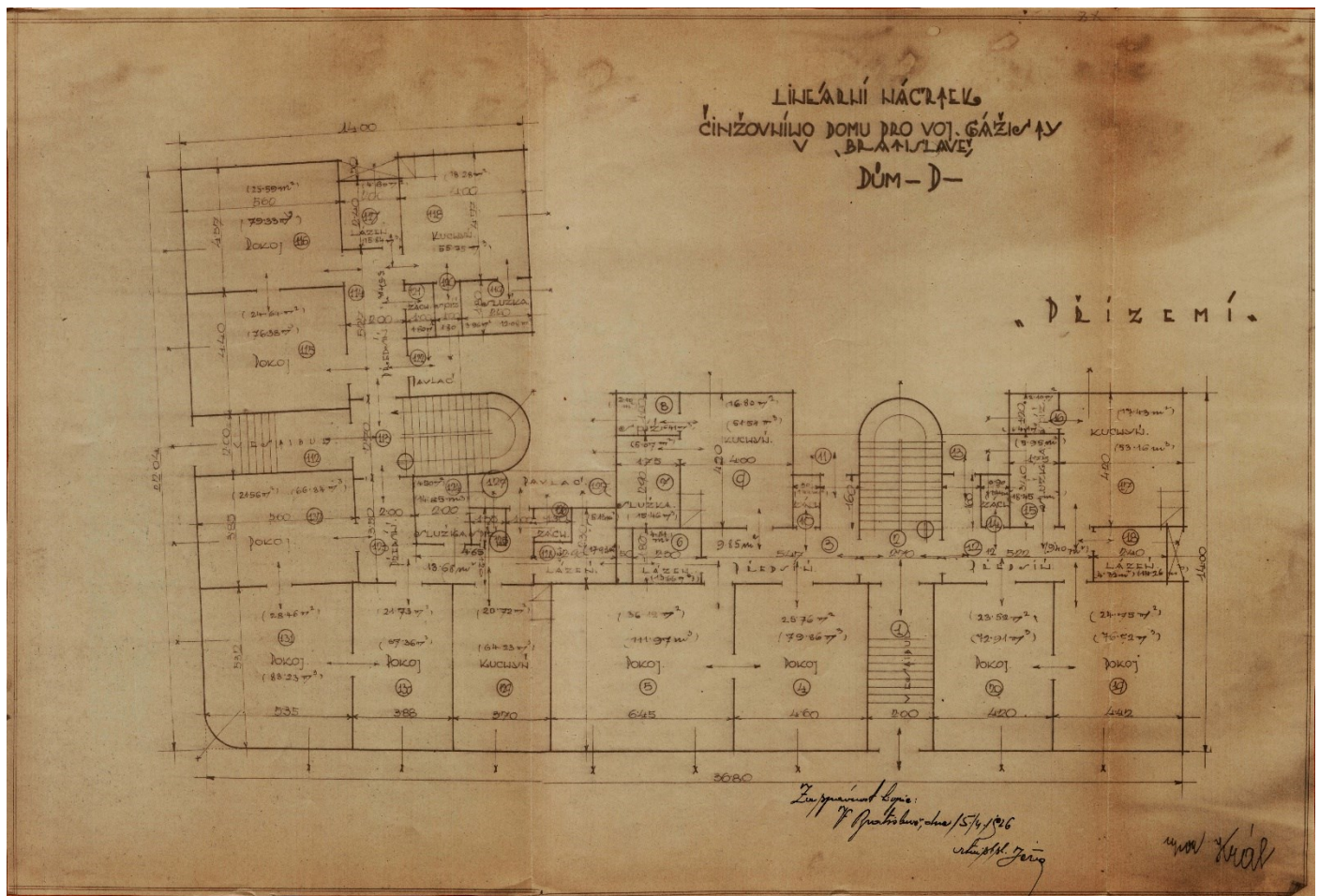


Fig. 7 b. Apartment house for military veterans in Škovránčia Street, Bratislava - ground-floor plan. (Source: State Archives in Bratislava, Slovakia, fund "Daňová správa Bratislava", box 189, 1924)

MINIMAL SOCIAL HOUSING FOR THE POOREST

A critical category of social housing was social housing for the poorest, and especially for the unemployed and homeless. A representative example is the City rental house with habitable kitchens and the smallest-size flats (1936), designed by Josef Marek and built by Rudolf Frič and Ján Petri for the Bratislava City Hall. (Fig. 8) The architecturally austere building is situated at the corner of Bartoškova and Športová Streets near the Vajnorská radial. The substandard flats are accessible from the courtyard balcony and have a minimal layout with one bedroom, a vestibule, and a separate toilet. Corner flats have separate kitchens. The flats have neither private nor shared bathrooms. The building is a rare example of minimal social policy in Bratislava. The state's social

policy also intended to improve the living conditions of seasonal workers coming to Bratislava. For this purpose, the city established a lodging house and a dormitory in a new city block at the corner of Jelenia and Železničarska Streets. (Fig. 9) The project was designed by Vojtěch Šebor and built by Rudolf Frič (1930). Social amenities included centrally heated rooms, modern sanitary facilities, a dining room, and a roof terrace for sunbathing. In order not to depress the place socially, the building's design also included flats for single civil servants and offices. The building is characterised by its functionalist architecture with a progressive reinforced concrete load-bearing frame and high-quality materials, including stone plastering. (Anon. 1, 1933, pp. 26–28)

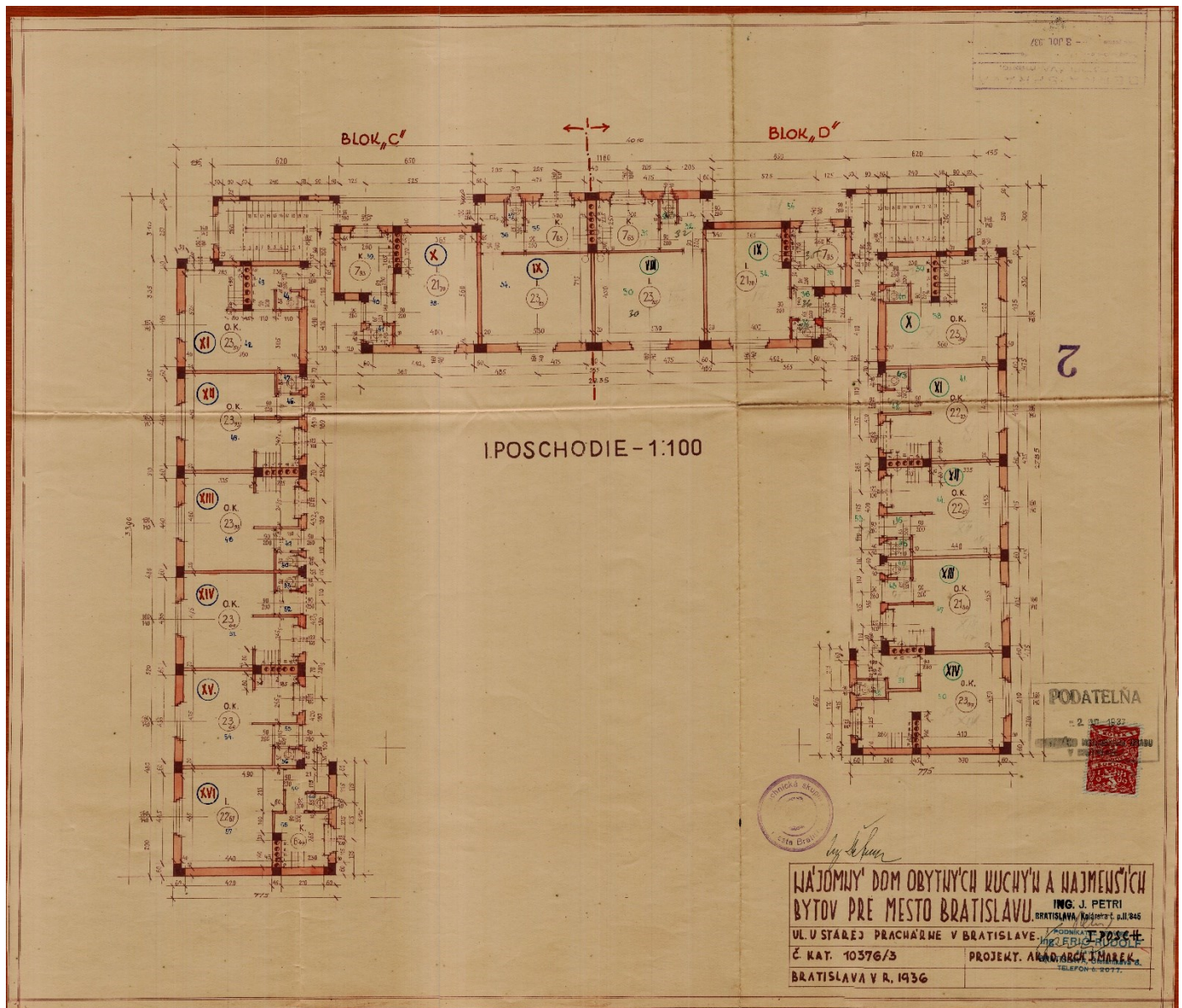


Fig. 8. City rental house with habitable kitchens and the smallest-size flats in Športová Street, Bratislava - 1st-floor plan. (Source: State Archives in Bratislava, fund "Daňová správa Bratislava", box 68, 1936)

PRIVATE RENTAL RESIDENTIAL BLOCKS

Besides the state, the cities and cooperatives, private investors – entrepreneurs played a significant role in the construction of

social housing. Owning a rental house was also a stable investment and security for them, especially after the experience of the economic crisis and the stock crash. The attractiveness of the investment was also increased by the adoption of the Construction

Act – Act No. 45/1930 and related tax exemptions. Thus, the new building owners were no longer just big factory owners building workers’ colonies, but also small investors. They did not build rental houses for their employees, but for a diverse and anonymous urban clientele. The new clientele of tenants consisted of a growing middle and educated class, the members of which could afford renting commercially. This was directly reflected in the social and architectural standards of the rental houses themselves, which responded to more diverse residential demands.



Fig. 9. Lodging house and dormitory in Jelenia Street, Bratislava. (Source: private archive of Elena Frič, The personal estate of Rudolf Frič, 1930)

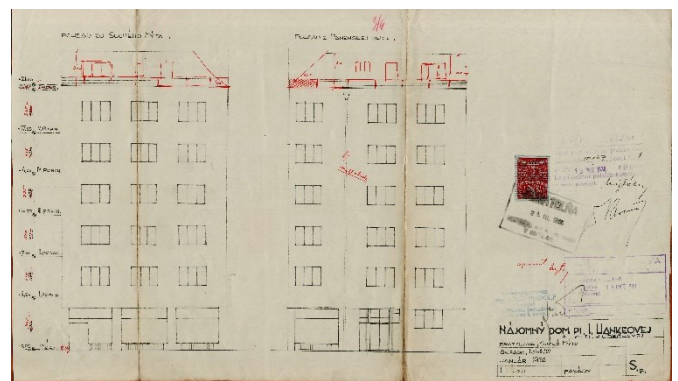
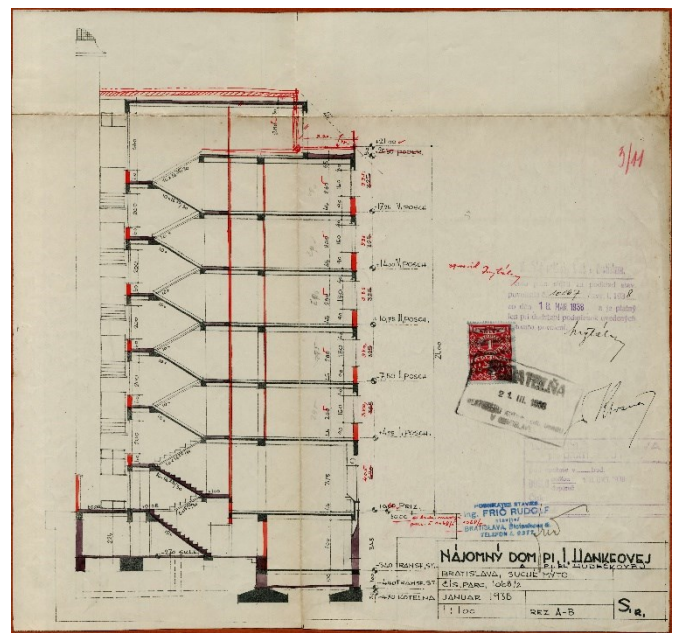
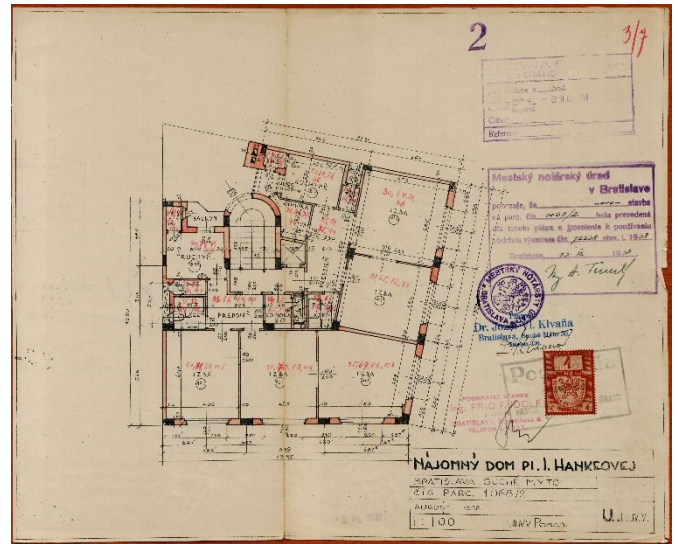
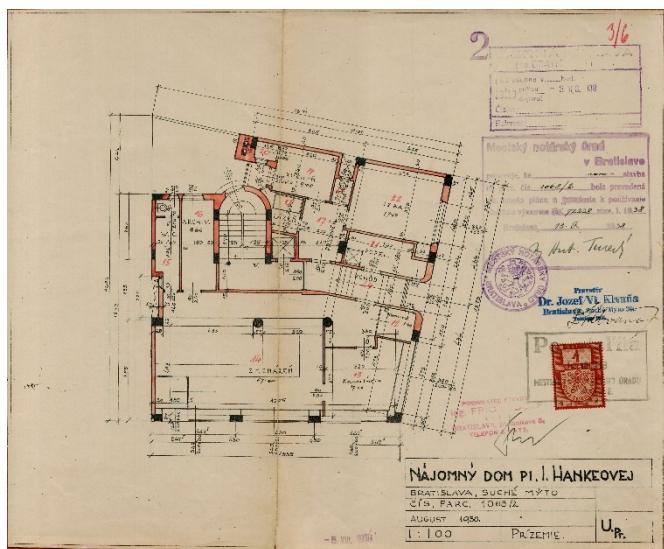


Fig. 10. Rental residential block of Irma Hanke and Helena Hudečková in Panenská Street, Bratislava. Left: ground-floor plan; right: 1st-floor plan, elevations, cross section. (Source: State Archives in Bratislava, Slovakia, fund “Daňová správa Bratislava”, box 185, no. II-34, 1938)



The rental residential block of Irma Hanke and Helena Hudečková (1938) serves as an example. (Fig. 10) Frič designed the seven-storey building on a cramped square plot at the corner of Suché Mýto and Panenská Street on the site of the former vineyard houses. Building on the late 19th-century block development, it brings a new urban scale to the site of the former gardens and vineyards of the northern suburbs. It is not limited either by

the conservation authority or height regulations, as was still the case in the 1920s with Weinwurm's Astoria Café project. (Moravčíková, 2014, pp. 42–47) On the ground floor there is a parterre with an exchange office with large glazing in steel frames; in Panenská Street it is interrupted by the entrance and the caretaker's flat. The individual floors include spacious two- and three-bedroom flats with an enfilade of habitable rooms facing the street. On one of the floors, both flats are merged into one large five-bedroom flat. Sanitary facilities, kitchens, utility loggias and a semi-circular staircase with a lift are turned to the narrow courtyard. The last recessed storey has minimal studio flats with a roof terrace. The building has a reinforced concrete load-bearing framework with hollow ribbed ceilings. The simple floor plan is reflected in the regular rhythm of the purist façade with three-panel windows. Only the shop windows in the parterre have a modest stonework framing.

Polyfunctional department store of the Trojan & Švarc company

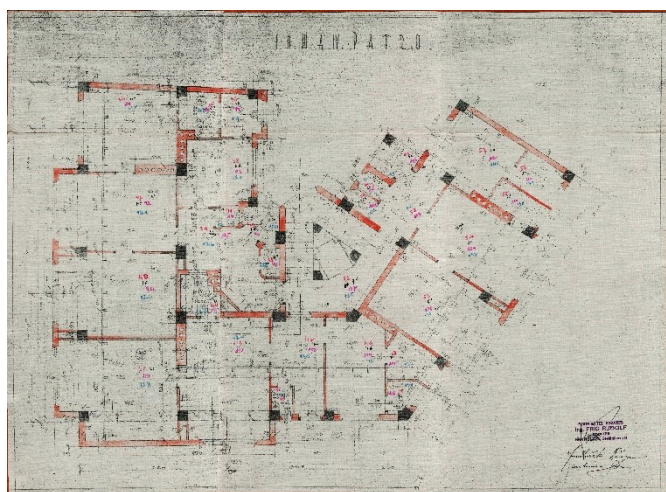
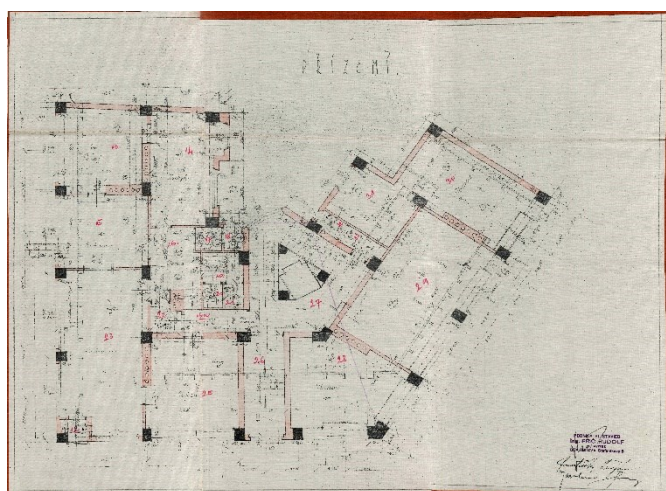


Fig. 11. Polyfunctional department store of the Trojan & Švarc company in Mýtina Street, Bratislava. Above: ground-floor plan; below: 1st-, 2nd-, 3rd- and 4th-floor plan. (Source: State Archives in Bratislava, Slovakia, fund "Daňová správa Bratislava", box 118, no. V-148, 1929)

At the urbanistically exposed crossing of Mýtina and Šancová radials on Račianske mýto, the Trojan & Švarc company built a polyfunctional department store with small flats (1929). (Fig. 11) Together with the rondo-cubist cooperative houses of the postal workers (1922, Klement Šilinger), (Dulla, Mrňa, Haberlandová, Ščepánová, Pavel, Bartošová, Pohaničová, Šoltésová, 2019, pp. 86–88) the two buildings form the compositional basis of the modernising urban node. The department store set a new height level for both streets, which, paradoxically, has not been resolved

in the immediate vicinity of the house even today. As in the case of the cooperative houses built along the radials of the outer city undergoing urbanisation, it was necessary to provide basic amenities alongside housing. Vojtěch Šebor thus designed a six-storey house with shops, a restaurant, and flats. After the construction, Frič published the building in *Slovenský staviteľ* (Slovak Builder), where he described the structure of the reinforced concrete framework with infill masonry made of modern "Isolar" thermal insulation bricks. (Frič, 1933) The framework structure freed up the layout of the commercial parterre and spacious two and three-bedroom flats with facilities of a higher standard. The reinforced concrete bearing skeleton with ribbed ceilings (Asimoulin) and lightweight heat-insulating masonry together with high-quality craftsmanship details had characterized Frič's construction practice since the end of the 1920s. The most interesting spatial feature is the fan-shaped staircase with a central cage lift. Šebor's early experience with rondo-cubism can be seen in the purist façade with its distinctive sculptural shadow of the projecting masses of the balconies and massive bay windows.

Rental houses for own employees

Private enterprises and offices were established in Bratislava alongside state institutions, and intellectual and administrative workers were coming to find employment there. The workers' colonies that had been built during the city's peaking industrialisation would no longer be suitable for their needs. Large private enterprises, following the example of state institutions, built urban rental houses with modern social amenities. Alongside the new forms, the older concept of workers' colonies continued to evolve. (Moravčíková, Szalay, Haberlandová, Krišteková, Bočková, 2020, pp. 588–594) Frič, as a construction entrepreneur with dozens of permanent administrative workers, designed and built rental houses for their needs in Lazaretská Street (1937). (Fig. 12 a, b) The project was based on the adopted regulatory plan, which provided that the city block between Špitálska – Dunajská and Lazaretská – Kamenné námestie was to be urbanised and integrated into a compact inner city. (Moravčíková, Szalay, Haberlandová, Krišteková, Bočková, 2020, pp. 215–220)

Height restriction was set at six full storeys. Together with the neighbouring building and the Police Headquarters (1922, František Krupka), Frič's rental houses form the most stable part of the area. The rental houses have seventy mostly one-bedroom and a few two- and three-bedroom flats with good sanitary facilities and fully electrified kitchens without chimneys. An above-standard social amenity was provided in the form of a rooftop community terrace. The partially glazed parterre provides a space for commercial establishments and a restaurant with a summer terrace. The smooth courtyard façades are in contrast with the more traditional street façade with bush-hammered plaster and stonework details. The houses have many well-preserved original features and materials, including cage lifts. Most of the flats have retained the original white brass door fittings, white and yellow terracotta tiles, and rectified bathroom tiles with rounded profile mouldings and inbuilt sanitaryware.

He designed and built rental houses for the junior employees on the outskirts of the town at the intersection of the Račianska Radial and the branch railway line. The periphery was sparsely built up with one-storey warehouses, small factories, and residential barracks. The houses were situated on the eastern edge of the company's technical and warehouse complex. According to archival plans, Frič planned to move the complex and replace it with a linear urbanism of rental houses, of which only two street sections were realized. Together with the neighbouring building and the "Legiodomy" closer to the centre, they formed the basis of the new urbanism of the transforming area. They offered one-bedroom flats with basic social facilities, local heating, and

amenities in the parterre. He designed further social housing for employees in the neighbourhood of the earlier railway colony in Koliba. Three urban villas with smaller flats (1941) were situated on the slope of Hlavná Street, which formed the axis of the newly emerging district of villas on the site of former vineyards and orchards. (Fig. 13) For the employees responsible for the building materials shipment, he designed a smaller tenant house in Novohradská Street (1934). (Fig. 14) Overall, the social housing of Frič's employees reflects the influence of private investors on the social and urban changes of the modernising metropolis in that period.

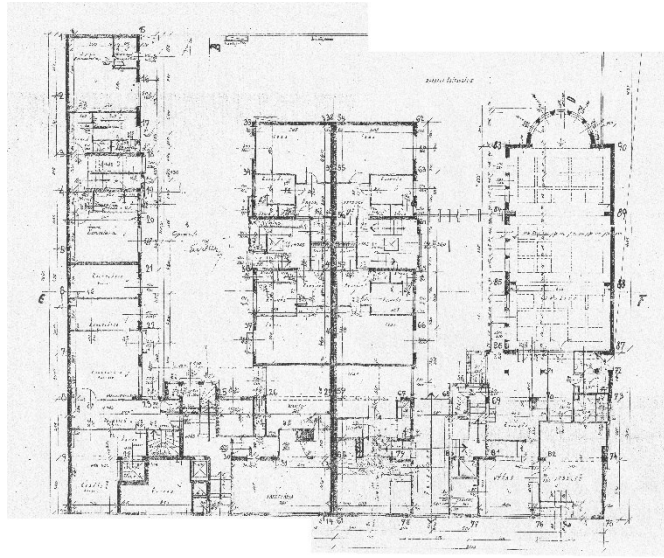


Fig. 12 a. Rental residential block of Rudolf Frič in Lazaretská Street, Bratislava - ground-floor plan. (Source: private archive of Elena Frič, The personal estate of Rudolf Frič, 1937)



Fig. 12 b. Rental residential block of Rudolf Frič in Lazaretská Street, Bratislava - courtyard view. (Source: private archive of Elena Frič, The personal estate of Rudolf Frič, 1937)

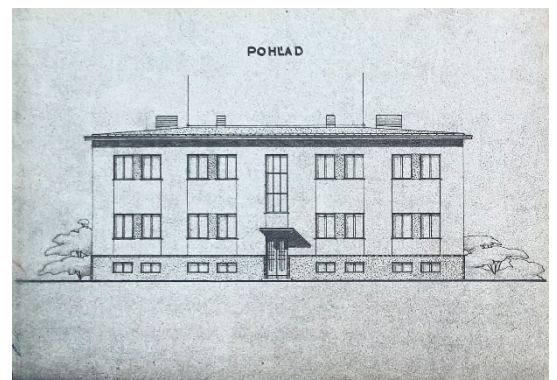
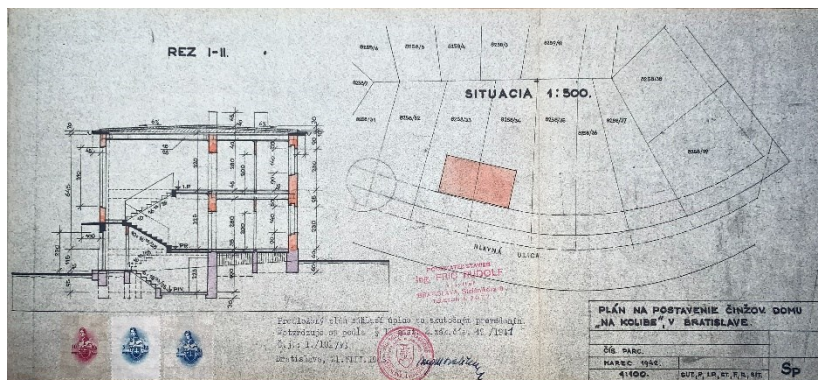
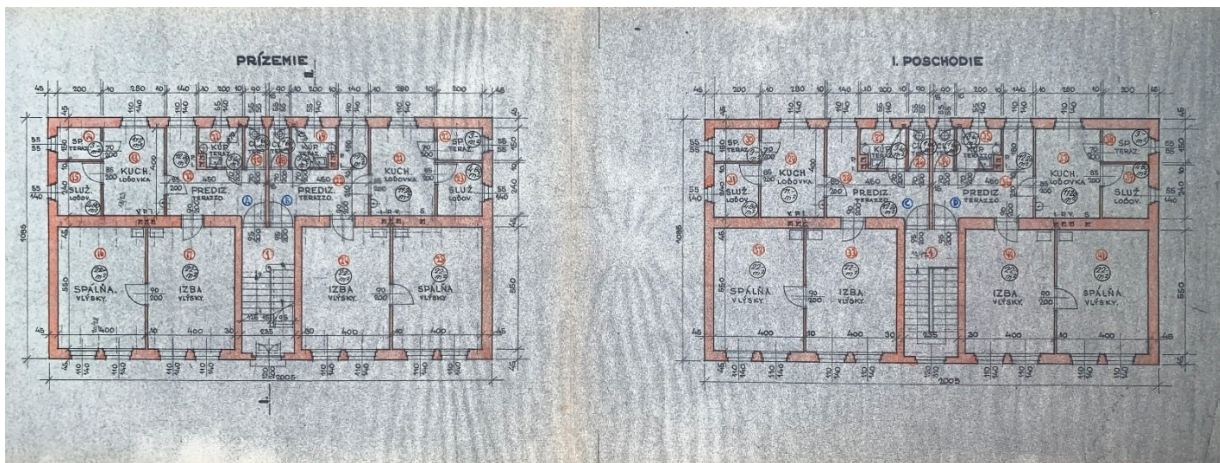


Fig. 13. Rental urban villas of Rudolf Frič in Hlavná Street, Bratislava. Above: Ground-floor plan; below: 1st-floor plan, section, and street elevation. (Source: State Archives in Bratislava, Slovakia, fund "Daňová správa Bratislava", box 52, 1941)

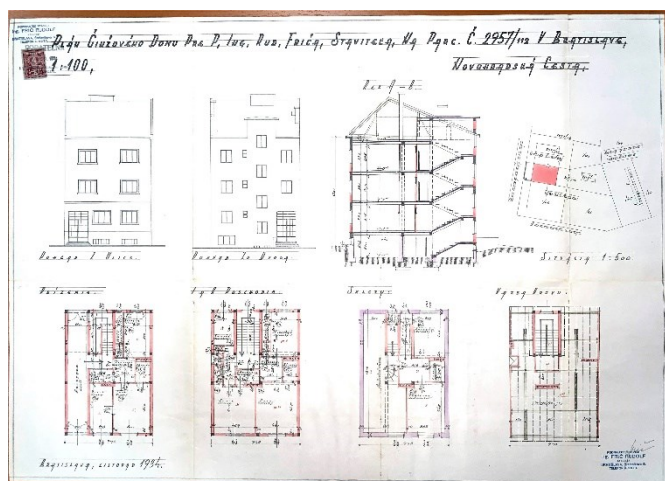


Fig. 14. Tenant house of Rudolf Frič in Novohradská Street, Bratislava - ground-floor plan, complete plans. (Source: State Archives in Bratislava, Slovakia, fund "Daňová správa Bratislava", box 129, 1934)

RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

The social policy of interwar Czechoslovakia was based on the concept of the welfare state. Its main themes included accessible social housing and health care. Social housing was supported by new state legislation and institutions, which was reflected in new forms of housing and their financing. State and municipal social housing, cooperative rental houses, housing colonies and private rental houses were constructed. In Bratislava, their construction was accompanied by the stabilisation of the inner compact city and the urbanisation of the suburbs along the city's radial streets. Research has shown that Rudolf Frič made a significant contribution to this process. Through his work in Legiobanka, he was instrumental in establishing the Legionary Cooperatives, which built the first cooperative houses in the city (Legiodomy, 1923–1924). As a construction entrepreneur, he designed and built cooperative houses for state housing cooperatives, especially for legionaries, railway workers, and civil servants (Hausberg, 1929). These established a new standard of housing in social terms and in terms of layout. With the project of the railway colony (1923), he contributed to the starting urbanisation of Koliba. The project of the legionary colony with a school in Batu (1930), in turn, is a rare example of Czechoslovak interwar urbanism in Ukraine.

The newer rental houses of the independent housing cooperatives of the 1930s had a progressive framework structure, central heating, a commercial parterre, and specifically the Svojudomov Cooperative House (1933) reflected modern linear urbanism. They demonstrate Frič's quality as a builder, such as the early application of progressive building materials, structures and details. Particularly, the caisson foundation enabled a more efficient urbanization of the Danube embankment (Legiopoist'ovňa, 1939). On the other hand, the city rental house with the smallest flats (1936) and the lodging house with the dormitory (1930) are examples of minimal social housing that proved to be socially necessary. The concept of private rental houses, supported by tax exemptions, also became successful. The rental residential block of Irma Hanke and Helena Hudečková (1938) and others confirm Frič's architectural ambitions. Furthermore, his own rental houses for the employees (1937) are a manifestation of a shift away from workers' colonies. The post-war introduction of regulated rents eliminated this model economically.

The paper, based on the research of Frič's selected construction and architectural projects, demonstrates the influence of the interwar social policy on the field of housing and its positive results, especially in Bratislava. It confirms that social policy and housing of the First Czechoslovak Republic reflected the social

changes of urban society, slowly transforming from an industrial to a post-industrial society, and the related growth of the middle class and intelligentsia. At the same time, the paper complements the modest references to Frič in the Slovak historiography of interwar architecture, which almost exclusively presents him as a builder of civil engineering structures. Initial research on Frič's buildings shows a more comprehensive contribution of his work. It mainly lied in the transfer or application of innovations; on the other hand, the selection of his own designs and their quality also required Frič's direct architectural contribution. In conclusion, the research assumes Frič's comprehensive contribution to Czechoslovak interwar architectural production, and not only in the field of residential architecture and in the territory of Bratislava. Moreover, the research allowed for Frič's architectural and construction projects to be distinguished and his direct contribution to be assessed.

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