ISSN 2729-7640

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ALFA ARCHITECTURE PAPERS
OF THE FACULTY OF ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN STU
www.alfa.stuba.sk

1/2024 (Vol. 29)
DOI: 10.2478/alfa-2024-0004

Appraisal of the historical impact of neglected, modernised small-scale architectural objects by Rudolf Frič

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Article information
Sent: Feb 2, 2024
Accepted: Mar 12, 2024

Abstract: The context of interwar period Czechoslovakia lacks a formal on both the personality and built artefacts on the often overlooked Bratislava builder, Rudolf Frič. Small-scale architecture tends to be undervalued because of its size, utility, multiplicity, or related momentariness, and because of the automatic consideration of its banality. This paper aims to analyse their architectural qualities presented in concrete typologies and realisations. Tram shelters, gas stations, mausoleums, and small detached houses are thus researched. Their architectural values, both in construction and in form, are identified and clarified. On the other hand, it is noted that the scale and ephemerality conditioned by the utility character are the crucial reasons for their undervaluation. This is especially the case of traffic buildings, where the same dynamic that initiated their origin also resulted in their end, as they become obsolete rather soon. Some of these projects by Frič such as: Rybáček House, Polák Tram stop, the Zikmund Brothers' gas station, as well as the Frič family tomb, are confronted with other relevant realisations, prove that small-scale architectural objects and peripheral typologies have the architectural qualities for which they would deserve the public and professional interest. Moreover, these objects reflect their variety, being situated in diverse urban situations, from the architecturally and historically intact city centre, through to newly urbanised dwelling area, urban periphery up to a provincial town. Additionally, they illustrate the asymmetric position of the Slovak situation compared to the Czech one, particularly in transport architecture. The presented works characterise the style of Frič based on the high-quality craftsmanship details rather than explicit architectural forms. This transfer of new typologies and structural forms with partial urban impacts, underscores the neglected and crucial contribution to architecture by Frič.

Keywords: Frič, interwar Czechoslovakia, gas station, tram shelter, tomb, mausoleum, small-scale architecture

INTRODUCTION

Small-scale architecture tends to be undervalued due to its size, utility, multiplicity, related momentariness, and automatic consideration of its banality. On the contrary, these are the great masterpieces which usually receive both the public and the scientistic interest. However, several small projects have already proven that their significance may be equally valuable, sometimes even greater. There are historical examples such as the Art Nouveau Paris metro entrances (1900s) by Hector Guimard (1867–1942) (des Cars, 2006, pp. 432–437) or the Texaco gas station in Skovshoved (1937) by Arne Jacobsen (1902–1971) (Larsen, Staunsager, 2020), to name a few. Moreover, this proof is evident among various architectural typologies implemented in different urban contexts.

In the context of the Czechoslovak interwar architecture and the great complex changes, some of those typologies were traditional while some others were revolutionary modern. The architecture comprising gas stations, public traffic shelters, tombs and even detached family houses and represents a significant and diverse architectural set additionally varied in structure and materiality. In addition, concrete typologies, such as gas stations and partially public transport shelters, contributed unprecedentedly to the modernisation of towns and cities, and mobility. The new transport architectures used to occur at urban radials, along which the cities spread significantly. That was precisely the case of Bratislava, which began to spread exactly in this way in the interwar period. (Moravčíková et al., 2020, pp. 95–105) The rapid construction of the traffic architecture reflecting the same rapid modernising process was embodied in dynamizing architectural forms and in innovative structures which enabled it. That was, for instance, exemplified by the constructionist and functionalist designs by Josef Gočár. (Lukeš et al., 2010)

However, the same dynamic which initiated that architecture unfortunately resulted in their end, as they soon obsoleted. On the contrary, tombs considered fundamental ancient architecture obsoleted as typology, but the concrete realisations, most in conversative design, have been physically preserved. Finally, houses, in our context often referred to as 'family houses', as essential forms of individual living, varied the most, reflecting the demands and the position in urbanisation processes. In

these processes, prestigious villa complexes were confronted with workers colonies, urbanistically segregated. (Moravčíková et al., 2020, pp. 581–611) That was happening both in the city centres and in the then slightly urbanised peripheries. A contribution to this field would be attributed to the construction entrepreneur Rudolf Frič (1887–1975).

Although Slovak historiography exclusively presents him as a builder of civil engineering structures, such as the water power station in Ladce (1932–1935) designed by Jindřich Merganc and Václav Houdek, the Bratislava fortifications (1934–1938) and self-designed Kopráš viaduct (1942–), or structures for the construction of the Lanfranconi school dormitories (1928–1933) designed by Klement Šilinger and heavy industry factories in Brno, Podbrezová, Ladce, and elsewhere, Frič is author of a wide variety of architectural designs, including small-scale designs in the aforementioned typologies. Their architectural value is being examined in confrontation with the work of the same typology and approximate architectural and structural characteristics authored by other architects within the Czechoslovak interwar context.

Rudolf Frič was born on 21 March 1887 in Nová Ves pod Pleší, a small village on the outskirts of modern-day Prague. He graduated from the Czech Technical University in Prague, back then called 'C. k. Česká vysoká škola technická v Prahe'. He completed the early internships in Moravia, Hungary, Slavonia and Galicia, in construction companies specialised in water engineering structures, such as Velflík and Kunz companies. During the Great War, Frič joined the newly formed Czechoslovak legions: and it was from this formation where many of his future clients would come from later. Shortly after the arrival to interwar Czechoslovakia, he moved to Bratislava, where he cooperated in the establishment of the country branch of the Bank of Czechoslovak legions, which helped consolidate the economic situation in Slovakia.

As the director of the technical and construction department, Frič was responsible for the initiation and construction of social and developer projects financed by the bank. (Khýn, 1947, pp. 16–18) Soon after in 1921 Frič set up his independent technical, design and construction company, residing on Dunajská, Špitálska, and since 1928 on Štefánikova Street, in the Kittler and Gratzl villa (1897). (Kiaček, 2022) Frič's work counting more than 100 projects is found beyond the Slovak borders, both in Czechia and in the Subcarpathian region. Until the era of the Nazi-allied Slovak State, Frič was the chairman of the Slovak Builders Association, and from that position he initiated the first Slovak magazine reviewing architecture, called 'Slovenský staviteľ – revue architektúry a stavebného umenia' (Slovak Builder – Magazine of architecture and construction art). (Harman, 1947, pp. 13–15)

He was a member of the Bratislava City Council and a long-serving member of the City regulation committee, which defined the city urbanisation and construction process. For his participation in the Slovak National Uprising where he built ephemeral military structures, he was arrested by gestapo. In consequence of the Czechoslovak coup d'état in 1948, Frič's company and plants were nationalised and incorporated into the Czechoslovak construction works, national corporation. (National Council of the Republic of Czechoslovakia, 1948) Frič's corporate archive is currently part of unsystematised and inaccessible resources in the archival fond titled 'Československé stavebné závody, n. p.' (Czechoslovak Construction Works, national enterprise) in the Slovak National Archive.

In fact, the fond consists of the archives of all nationalised construction companies. If it were inventoried and accessible, it might have enriched the research notably. Included in 'Action B' in 1952, Frič was resettled in the village of Rimavská Baňa in south-east Slovakia. (Oravcová, 2020, p. 178) In the late 1950s he was allowed to return to Bratislava, where he worked in elementary positions until his late 80s. The personal possession confirms that he made a living from designing small wooden detached houses inspired by imported Swedish catalogues. He died in the Evangelic hospital on 4 October 1975.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The starting point of the study is a company publication by Ján Slabihoud (Slabihoud, 1947) that contains a list of Frič's works with a selected graphical addendum. The debt of the Czech and Slovak historiography owed to Czech and Moravian architects of Slovak interwar architecture, also involving Frič, is partially reduced by a collective publication Zapomenutá generace. (Dulla et al., 2019) The book is inspirational for its message and structure. In a holistic historiographical work, Matúš Dulla and Henrieta Moravčíková (Dulla, Moravčíková, 2002) provide an analytical overview of the greatest of Frič's building projects with added contextual and background explanations. However, his contribution is not directly mentioned, nor evaluated, and the book just mentions one of the buildings from among those being researched in our paper.

The paper takes a qualitative architectural-historical approach to the research and a continuously verifies the results. The main research method of the study was a comparative method mostly based on archival research carried out in the Bratislava City Archives. The comparison with relevant architectural workpieces in the Czechoslovak interwar context was crucial to identify and review the architectural value of the Frič's examined works. The confrontation examples were chosen appropriately for the precise typology and approximate architectural and structural characteristics. Study of period magazines, specifically 'Slovenský staviteľ" (Slovak Builder), elucidated Frič's work through the then propaganda.

Complementary photographs and accompanying field research notes were applied in those cases where no archival materials or period magazines were accessible or preserved. They are most appropriate to demonstrate the quality of craftsmanship details and building materials: as that is being examined to characterise the designs by Frič. The Frič family tomb is the best example to apply the method and to prove the claimed qualities. Therefore, it was included in the paper, despite of being typologically ancient compared to the rest of new typologies, which the paper focuses on. Contemporary publications subsequently mentioned in the paper's body were most applied in the comparable examples research. The paper preparation work consisted in the initial identification of the buildings, which was performed by combining archival research and a comparison of Slabihoud's list with holistic historiographical publications. (Dulla, Moravčíková, 2002) This allowed for Frič's architectural projects to be distinguished and his direct contribution to be evaluated.

THE DETACHED HOUSE FOR A FRIEND

Even though Frič is better known as a builder of predominantly civil engineering structures, he both designed and constructed several detached houses of different scale and in various urban situations. Among them is the house of the civil engineer

Rybáček on Kubániho Street in Bratislava (1933–1934). The detached house is situated in an upper corner of a gently sloping plot in the then newly urbanised north-west city hills – the Westende. The location in the neighbourhood of Horský park, sparsely built by garden cottages, had potential for a villa district, similar to the modern Baba Colony in Prague from 1930s. (Ulrich et al., 2013) However, even though the concentration of social elites and financial capital in Bratislava after 1918 intensified, the local environment did not provide monetary resources and cultural self-confidence that could generate the creation of such a colony of puristic and functionalistic villas. (Moravčíková, 2014, p. 137) Actually, Rybáček's house was the pioneer and only house based on modern puristic aesthetic built in the area, described as the most absorbent there. (Dulla, Moravčíková, 2002, p. 378)

The local identity of the former vineyards is transferred to the vine that crawls the façades. The design is based on an architectural composition of prisms in puristically austere style with some nautical allusions. Such allusions are the horizontal tubular railing, the terraces on both levels as decks, the semicircular terrace end resembling a nautical bridge, and the winter garden as a pilothouse. The nautical allusions reflected a steamship as the contemporary symbol of modernity. (Dulla, 2010, p. 85) The structure of the narrow winter garden with the plain wall behind is based on the Trombe wall concept, heating the neighbouring interior. (Fig. 1) Had it been designed intentionally, it would have been a rare application of the Trombe wall in then Czechoslovak architecture.

Fig. 1. Rudolf Frič, House of the civil engineer Rybáček, Kubániho Street, Bratislava, now Slovakia, 1933–1934. (Photo: Slovak Academy of Sciences, 2024)

Rybáček's house shares similarities with Villa Tománek (1929) by Friedrich Weinwurm (1885–1942), as both were placed in slightly urbanised locations. Designed on puristic aesthetic, both contrasted with the neighbouring architecture. Both Frič and Weinwurm preferred to connect the interior and exterior by large terraces rather than glazed walls, keeping modest ordinariness compared to European functionalism. (Moravčíková, 2014, pp. 136–138) The Tománek Villa was thus appreciated by Moravčíková and in the period Dutch magazine on European and American architecture. (Wattjes, 1930, pp. 158–160) On the other hand, the asymmetric composition of prisms and horizontal elements that Frič applied make it differ from Weinwurm's moderate style.

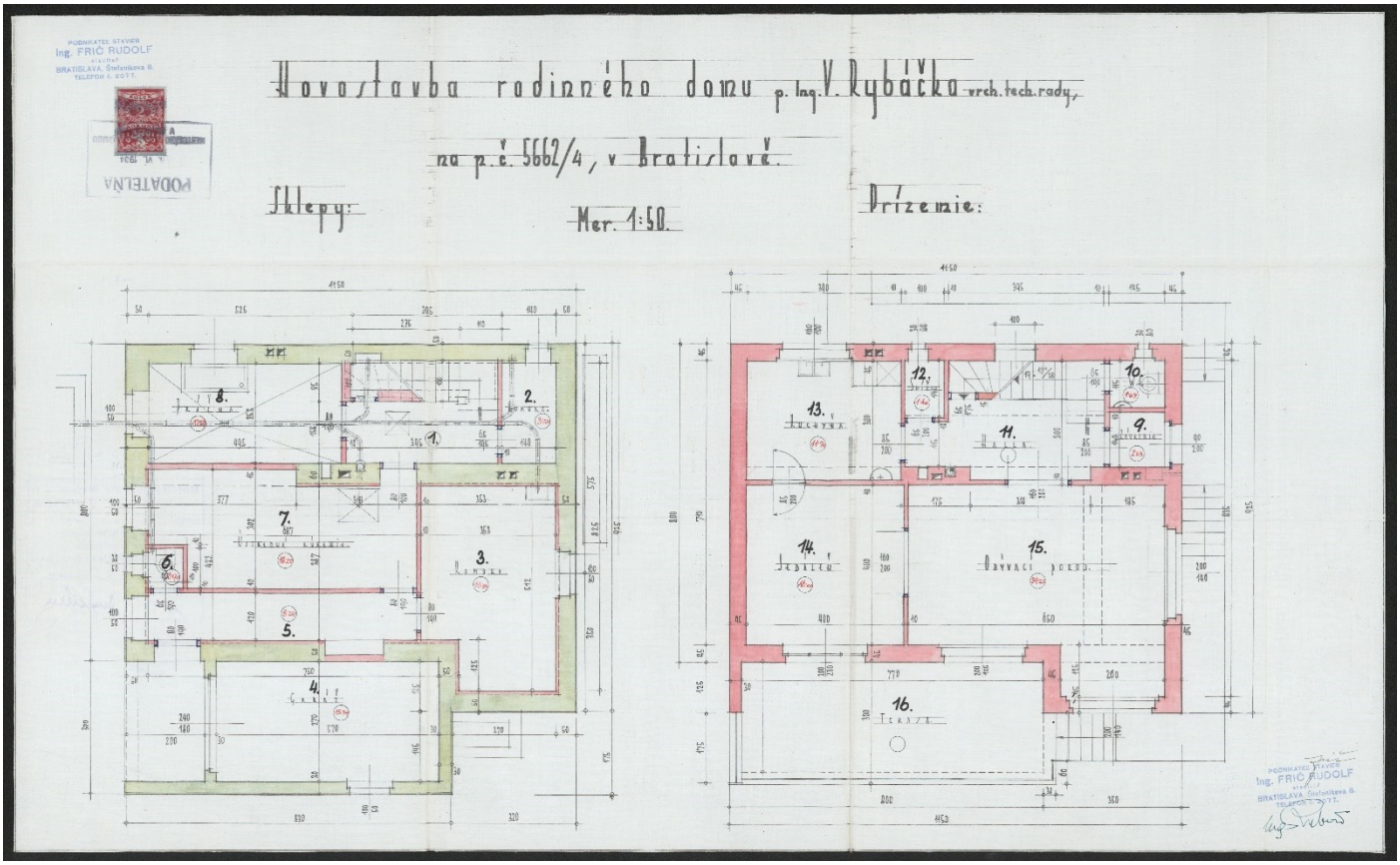

Fig. 2. Rudolf Frič, House of the civil engineer Rybáček, Kubániho Street, Bratislava, 1933–1934. Basement and ground floor. (Source: Bratislava City Archives, 1934)

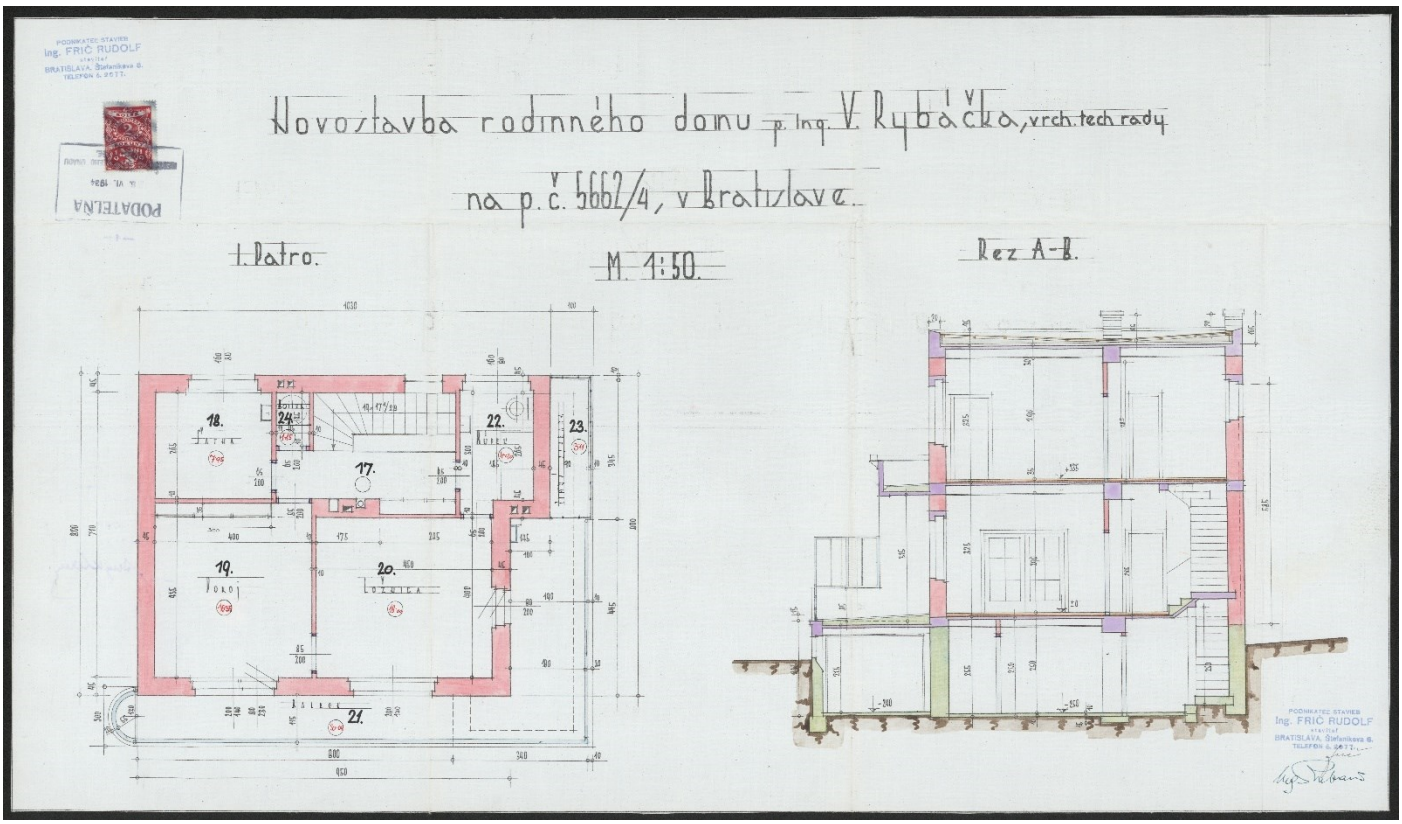

Fig. 3. Rudolf Frič, House of the civil engineer Rybáček, Kubániho Street, Bratislava, 1933 – 1934. First floor and cross section. (Source: Bratislava City Archives, 1934)

A modern concept of a house that turns its back on the street, but opens up to the private garden, was applied. The façade facing Kubániho Street is the most functional one with utilitarian spaces behind. It is dominated by a large glass block wall which lightens up the interior staircase. The most significant element is the winter garden on the corner of the street. The façade facing the garden is the most articulated and perforated, with prism volumes receding by terraces. All windows are all shaded with Eslinger wooden roller blinds. The façade was originally plastered in pure white combined with high-quality artificial stone plinth, entrance framing, and terraces. The main spaces are orientated to the garden and partially to Čerešňová Street, while the utilitarian rooms are oriented to Kubániho Street. The largest space in the ground floor is the living room with a deep niche in the ejected corner prism. The adjacent dining room leads to the partially sheltered terrace. (Fig. 2) The upstairs rooms have both access to the upper terrace, however, the dominant winter garden is accessed only from outside. (Fig. 3)

Houses in a provincial town

In Myjava, on a hill above the town steam baths, Frič designed a detached house the evangelic priest Valášek, called 'The house of Sun' (1933). (Anon, 1933a, pp. 37–38) Contrary to the prevailing historicizing architecture, both the baths and the priest's house were rare representations of the interwar purism in the town. The provincial identity is partially reflected in the design, in the replacement of a terrace by a traditional glazed porch, separate entrances, and in personal heating. (Fig. 4) In comparison to the Rybáček's vila in Bratislava, the architectural composition is limited to a trivial addition of prisms. (Fig. 5) The façade is plastered in pure white combined with artificial stone details and fire clay tiles. The name 'The house of Sun' can be interpreted in two ways – as the house of God and the belief embodied in the priest's personality, or as the house of modernity. As a consequence of the urbanisation after the war, the house has not been preserved.

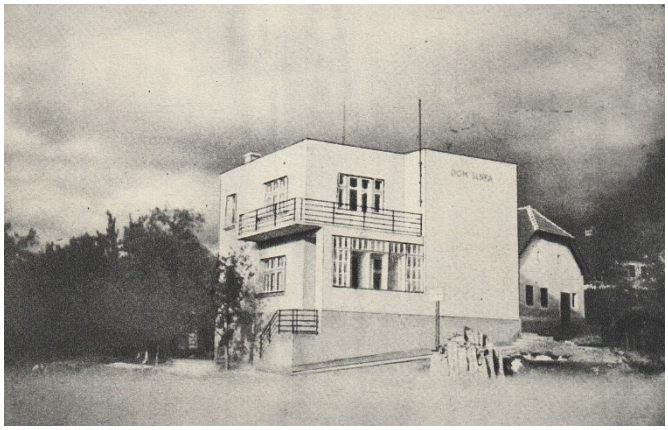

Fig. 4. Rudolf Frič, House of the evangelic priest Valášek, 'The house of Sun', Myjava, 1933. (Photo: Frič's personal possession, author's personal archive)

Frič's design proposal for an anonymised Doctor's B detached house with a surgery, in the same town of Myjava (1933) got published subsequently. (Anon, 1933c, p. 34) (Fig. 6) The two-storey building is shaped as a composition of two prisms, one rounded at the corner, and an ejected semicircular volume of the inner staircase. The corners are articulated in several positions, those are the rounded corner, the corner windows, the cut surgery entrance on the left, and the ejected house entrance on the right. The larger left side of the ground floor is dedicated to the surgery. Compared to the size of the town, the surgery is relatively large, containing two separate waiting rooms, a general surgery and a dentist surgery, which may indicate the suc-

cess of the doctor. The surgery is connected to the private resting part by a great hall with a staircase and a glazed porch accessing an ejected terrace oriented to the back garden. Next to the porch, there is a kitchen to serve summer gatherings. Upstairs there is a spacious flat with an enfilade of representative rooms on the staircase axis. The bearing structure is partially made of reinforced concrete skeleton.

Despite its attractive design and innovative layout, the house was not a rare hybrid typology, as that was also applied in Doctor Polony's terraced house with surgery (1937–1938) in Senica, designed by Czech functionalist architect Jan Gillar (1904–1967). On the contrary, Gillar's design is more radical, with continuous fenestration bands to the entire width of the façade. (Dulla, Moravčíková, 2002, p. 396) The aforementioned examples present the minor human-scale part of Frič's portfolio and prove his design abilities. The fact the design proposal by Frič was published in the period magazine proves its architectural significance and acknowledgment of that time.

THE SMALL PUBLIC TRANSPORT ARCHITECTURE

In Hviezdoslavovo Square in Bratislava, in front of the monumental representative architecture of the Carlton Savoy hotel, then the largest in central Europe, Frič designed the very opposite – a utilitarian kiosk and tram shelter (1928). (Anon, 1933b) (Fig. 7) It was built on the edge of the alley in a place where in the early 1920s other construction was forbidden, claiming: *'Here located orchards are appreciated in the image of the city, which must be preserved. In the future, the intention to build a new bridge that ends in Rybné Square will make this place a traffic centre. For these urbanistic goals, existing unbuilt areas must remain free.'* (Bratislava City Archives, 1921) The kiosk replaced a wooden shelter at the traffic nod of the city's most prominent promenade space, enclosed by historicizing architecture of the 18th and 19th century. In such a position, the kiosk was architecturally banal and infrastructurally crucial.

The architectural composition combines vertical volumes with horizontal lines, and rectangular, circular, and polygonal geometry. The two vertical elements, the hexagonal pillar, and the elevated prism, are horizontally joined with the semicircular shaped roof above the waiting space. The composition is finished with an elevated cornice at the volume of the kiosk prism. The wide plinth is organically shaped and serves as a bench. (Fig. 8) Although the space was sheltered, there was no sufficient wind and cold protection, which was criticised for by public. It was the municipality, in cooperation with the Monument Protection Authority, who ordered to shrink the shelter and to construct one instead of the originally intentioned two ones.

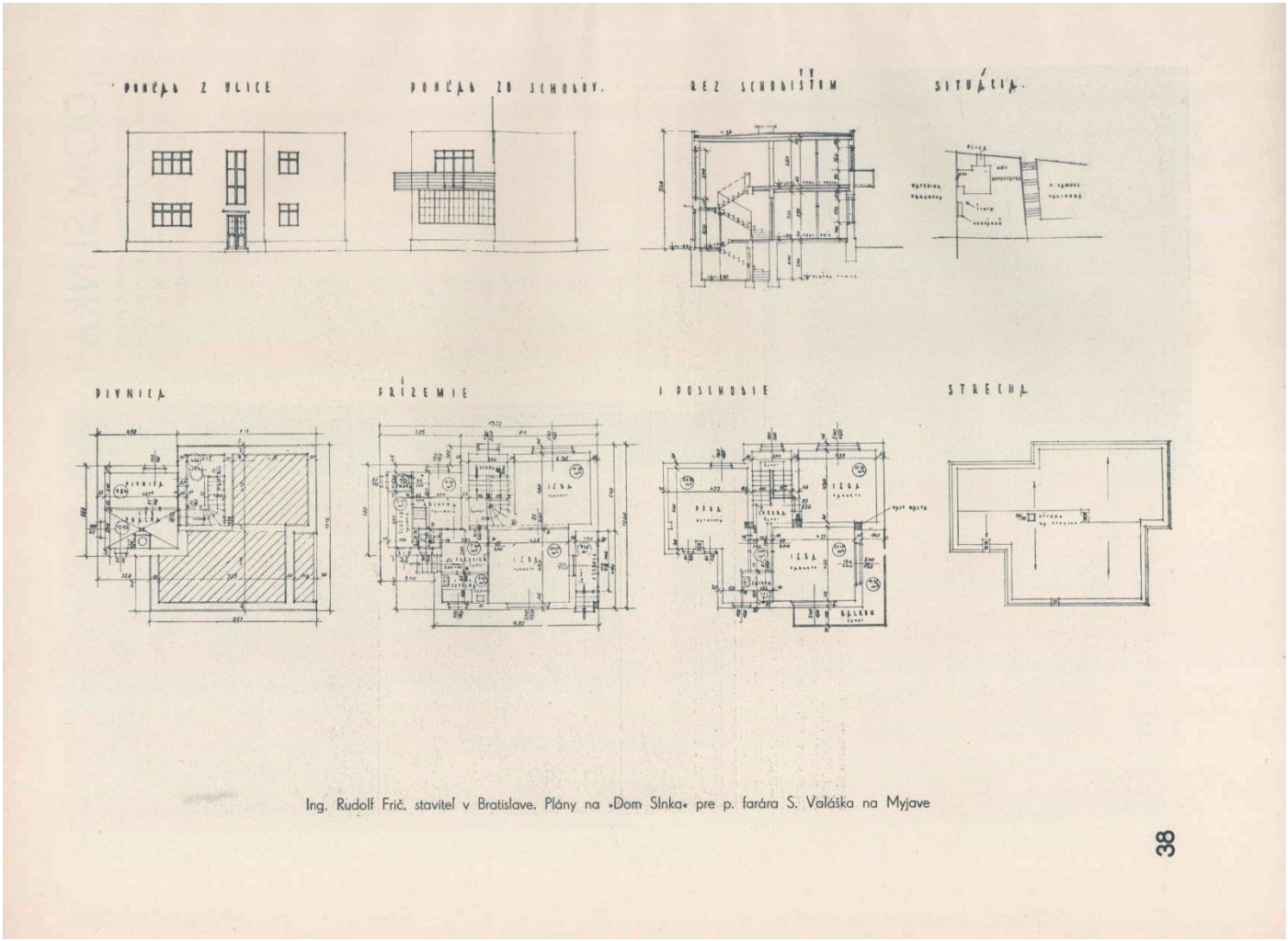

Fig. 5. Rudolf Frič, House of the evangelic priest Valášek, 'The house of Sun', Myjava, 1933. (Source: Anon, 1933a)

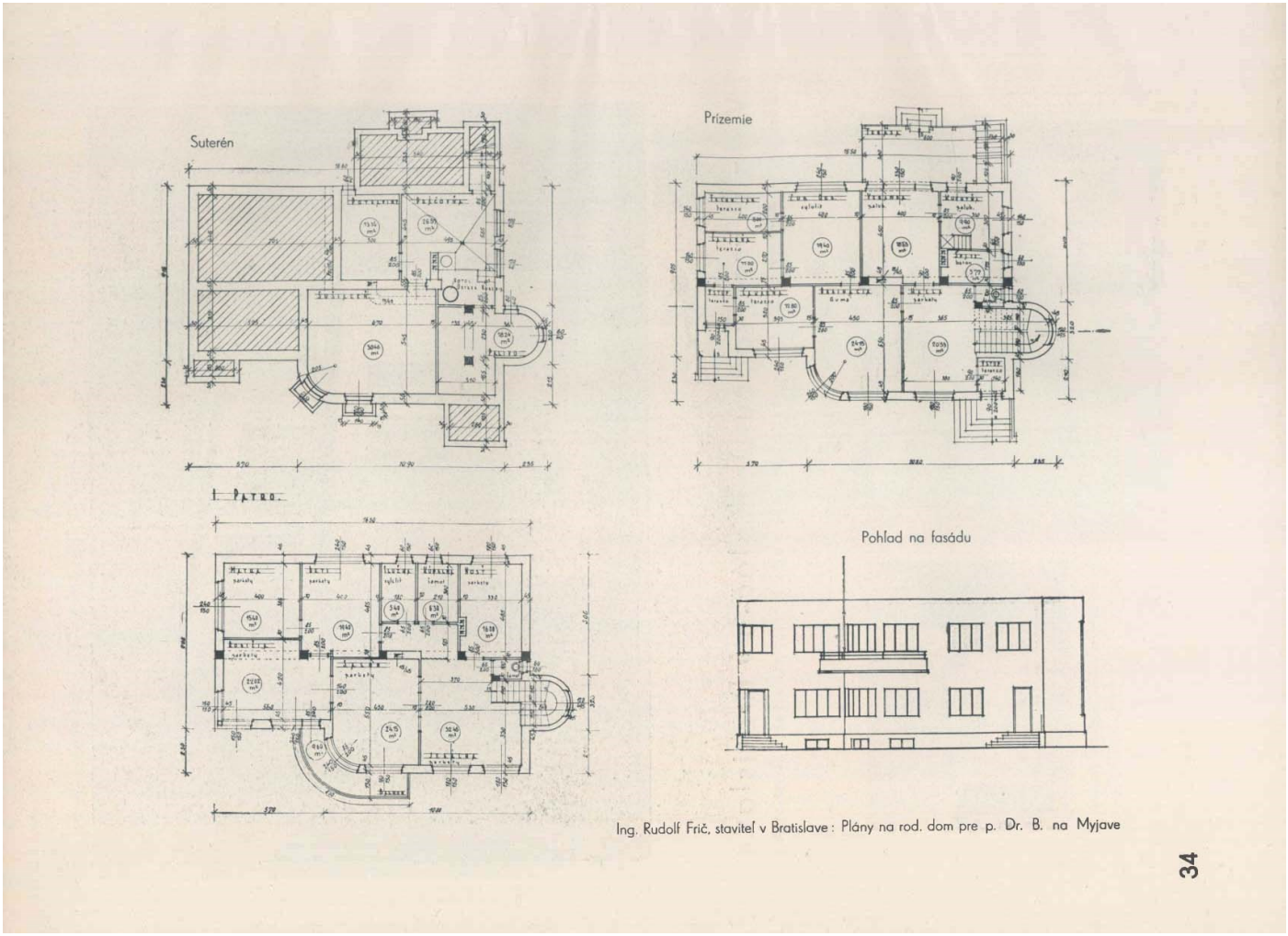

Fig. 6. Rudolf Frič, Doctor's B house with surgery, Myjava, 1933. (Source: Anon, 1933c)

Fig. 7. Rudolf Frič, Tram shelter with kiosk of Kazimír Polák, Hviezdoslavovo Square, Bratislava, 1928. (Photo: Frič's personal possession, author's personal archive)

Moreover, it ordered to raise the volume of the kiosk to split the attic. (Bratislava City Archives, 1921) The interior of the kiosk was just for the staff, offering services through the window. Due to its urban position and transit point to the Bratislava – Vienna intercity tramline, the kiosk provided traffic and tourist information about both cities bilingually. The entire structure is made of reinforced concrete covered with artificial stone with high-quality details which was required by the municipality. (Bratislava City Archives, 1921) The fact that the Slovenský staviteľ (Slovak Builder) magazine published an article about the kiosk ten years later recognises its architectural value and it may be assumed that there was no such a structure even so much later.

In the Czechoslovak interwar context, an appropriate comparable contemporary selection of works is a series of tram shelters and waiting rooms by Oskar Pořiska (1897–1982) in Brno. (Vrabelová et al., 2016, p. 290) From 1924 until 1937, Pořiska worked as an architect in the Brno Municipality Building Office and was commissioned to design four shelters with adjoining facilities, such as public toilets, a kiosk, and a traffic office (1925–1932). The four shelters are characteristic of the purely presented structure and gentle curves, typical for Pořiska design. (Pelčák, Wahla, 2011) In materiality, they combine plastered concrete with artificial stone, ceramic tiles, glass blocks, and fillings, all resistant to exposed public use. (Anon, 1929) The curves are applied in circular or semicircular floorplan, similar to Frič design, or in cross section. Although considering the multiplicity, scale, and additional facilities involved, the Brno tram shelters substantiate that the specific typology was evolving more in the Czech than in the Slovak environment. Furthermore, while in Brno it was the municipality to commission and finance the design of the shelters, in Bratislava, both the developer Kazimír Polák and the builder Rudolf Frič were private entrepreneurs. Gas stations were a similar case; they embody the motorising and modernising process in cities.

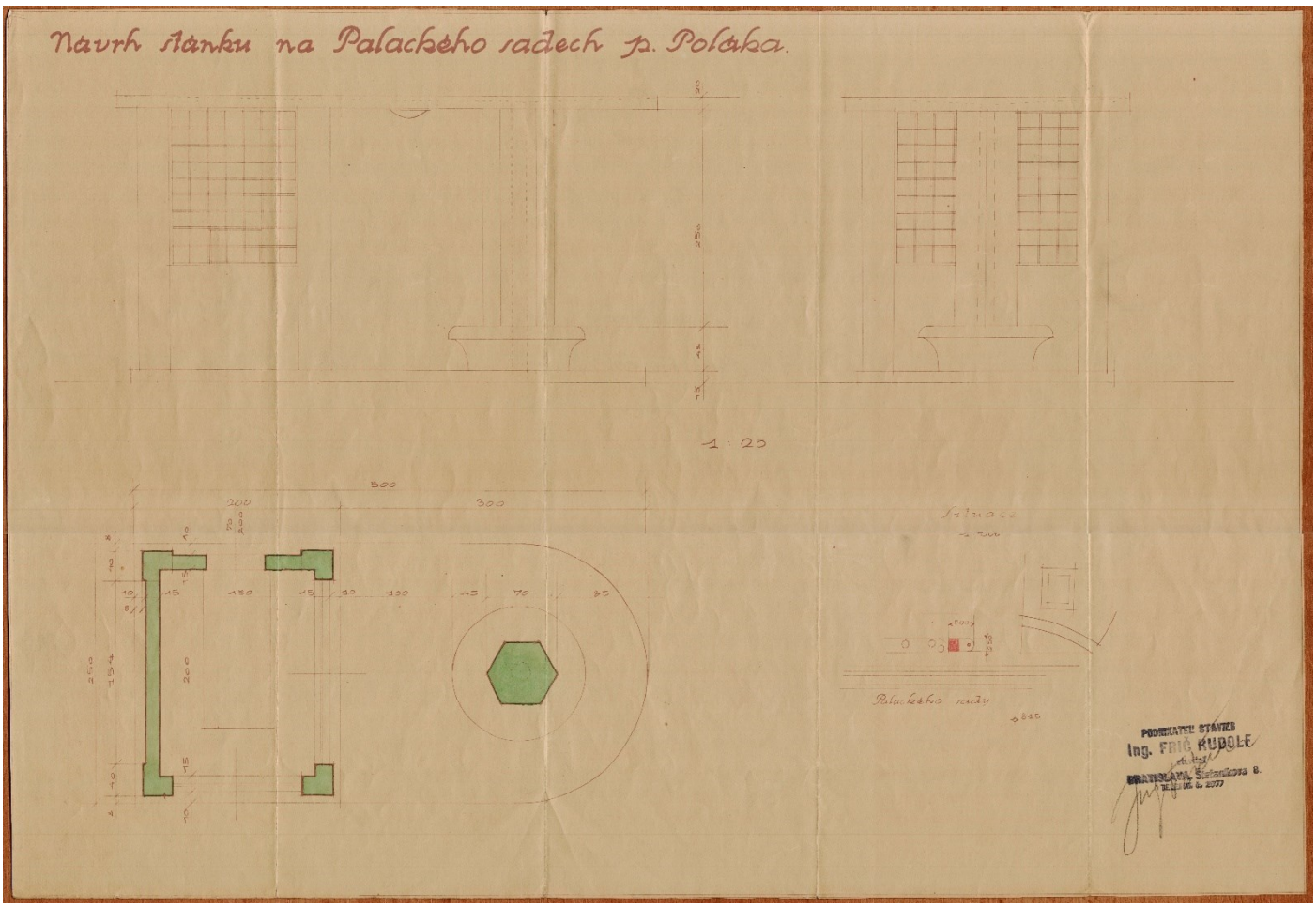

Fig. 8. Rudolf Frič, Tram shelter with kiosk of Kazimír Polák, Hviezdoslavovo Square, Bratislava, 1928. (Source: Bratislava City Archives, 1921)

Fig. 9. Oskar Poříska, Tram shelter, Obilní trh, Brno, 1926. (Photo: Archiweb, 2024)

The prevalence of larger-scale architecture, the exposed urban position and public use, and the architectural decay in this specific typology caused that, except for the one in Obilní trh (1926, renovated 2017 by Tomáš Rusín and Ivan Wahla from RAW studio), (Fig. 9) none of Frič's and Poříska's tram shelters have been preserved. However, the recognition of both designs in period magazines on architecture, 'Slovenský stavitel" and 'Stavba' (Construction), confirm their appreciable contribution to architectural discourse in that unique typology. Still, architecture of other means of transport, such as ferry wharfs (1930) by Emil Belluš (1899–1979) were of a wider and more adequate public and professional interest especially for their higher architectural value, acclaimed author, and appealing story, to which we may attribute their preservation. (Dulla, 2010, p. 86)

THE FIRST GAS STATION IN THE CITY

Despite growing urbanisation and motorisation of the city, till 1940s there was no gas station in Bratislava. Although there were gas pumping facilities, they missed one crucial architectural element, the roof. The first one to be built in Bratislava was the Zikmund Brothers' gas station on Račianska Street (1940), at that time located on the city periphery. It was designed by the Czech architect Jan Slavíček and built by Rudolf Frič who was assumed to be the author at the beginning of the research. Being the first gas station in the city automatically makes it unique and progressive. The design cooperated in establishing a new typology and its architectural forms and principles. The incline-kinked trapezoid roof fluently continuing to two bearing pillars dynamises the architectural composition and materialises the idea of a vibrant motorising city. (Fig. 10) Its steel structure of beams is on the other side supported by reinforced skeleton of the adjacent kiosk. (Fig. 11) The kiosk is shaped as a lowered perpendicular mass with semicircular glassed end. In the glassed space there is cash desk, in the back there is staff space. (Fig. 12)

A different concept with a perforated slab supported by four corner columns and a round kiosk built around one of them was applied by Slavík in a gas station built on Koutníkova Street in

Hradec Králové (1939), now Czech Republic. (Valchářová, 2012, pp. 36–37) In addition to Zikmund Brothers, there were other four largest oil companies in the interwar Czechoslovakia. Among them, the Fanto oil company was most aware of the importance of promotion through the high-quality architecture of gas stations. Therefore, its design was commissioned from the prominent Czech architect Josef Gočár (1880–1945). (Lukeš et al., 2010) The gas station on Klárova Street in Praha – Malá Strana (1930s) has a structurally comparable design to the one of the Zikmund Brothers in Bratislava. (Fig. 13) In comparison, there the roof is more prominently and smoothly curved, constructed as a console with no support. The kiosk, similarly semicircular at the ends, is arranged in parallel, not perpendicular to the road. In the 20 years of interwar Czechoslovakia, the gas station architectural designs established a new typology and its principles, reflecting the utility demands and representation of the then motorising and modernising cities.

Fig. 10. Jan Slavíček, The Zikmund Brothers' gas station, Račianska Street, Bratislava, 1940. (Source: Frič's personal possession, author's personal archive)

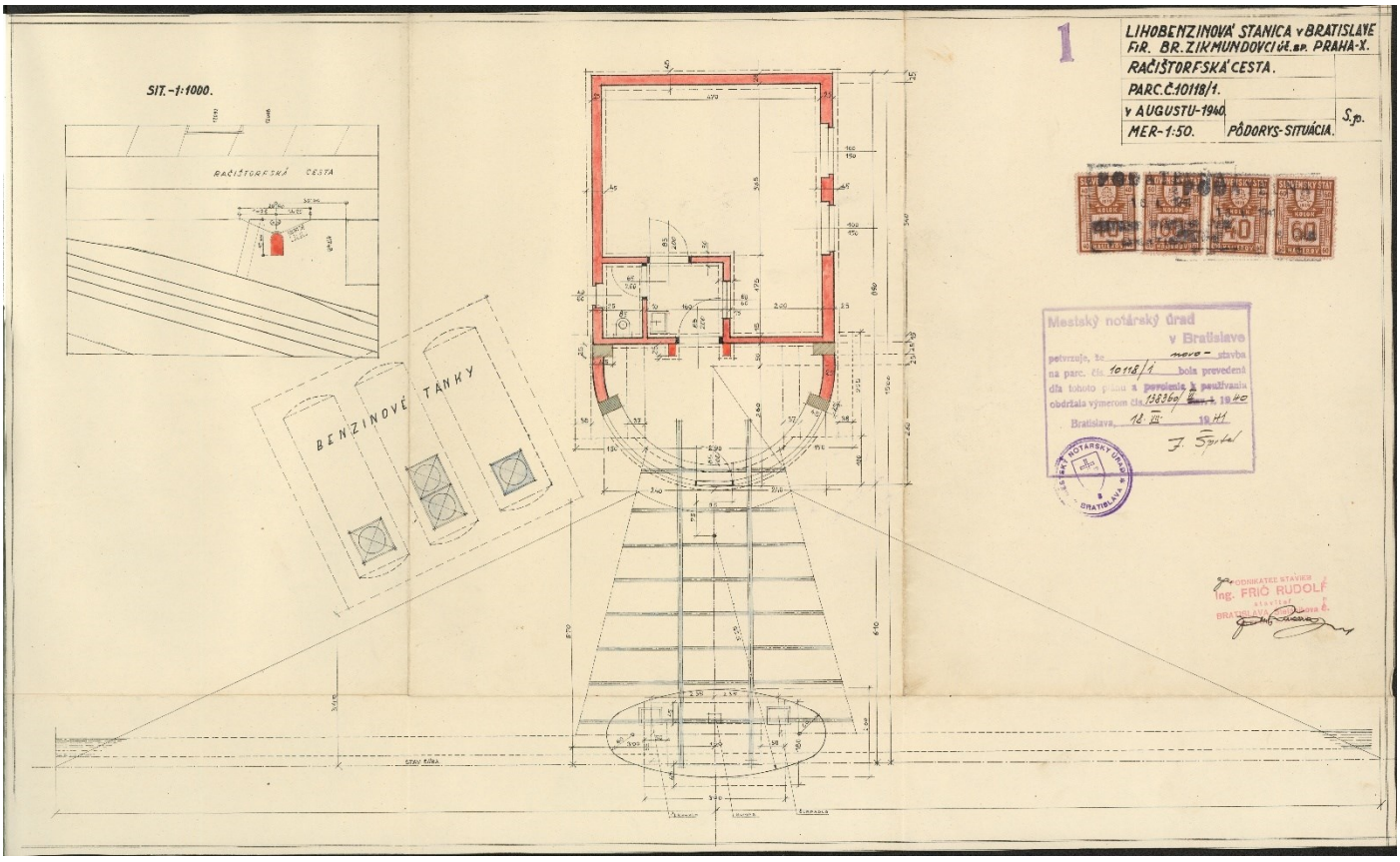

Fig. 11. Jan Slavíček, The Zikmund Brothers' gas station, Račianska Street, Bratislava, 1940. Ground floor and site plan. (Source: Bratislava City Archives, 1940)

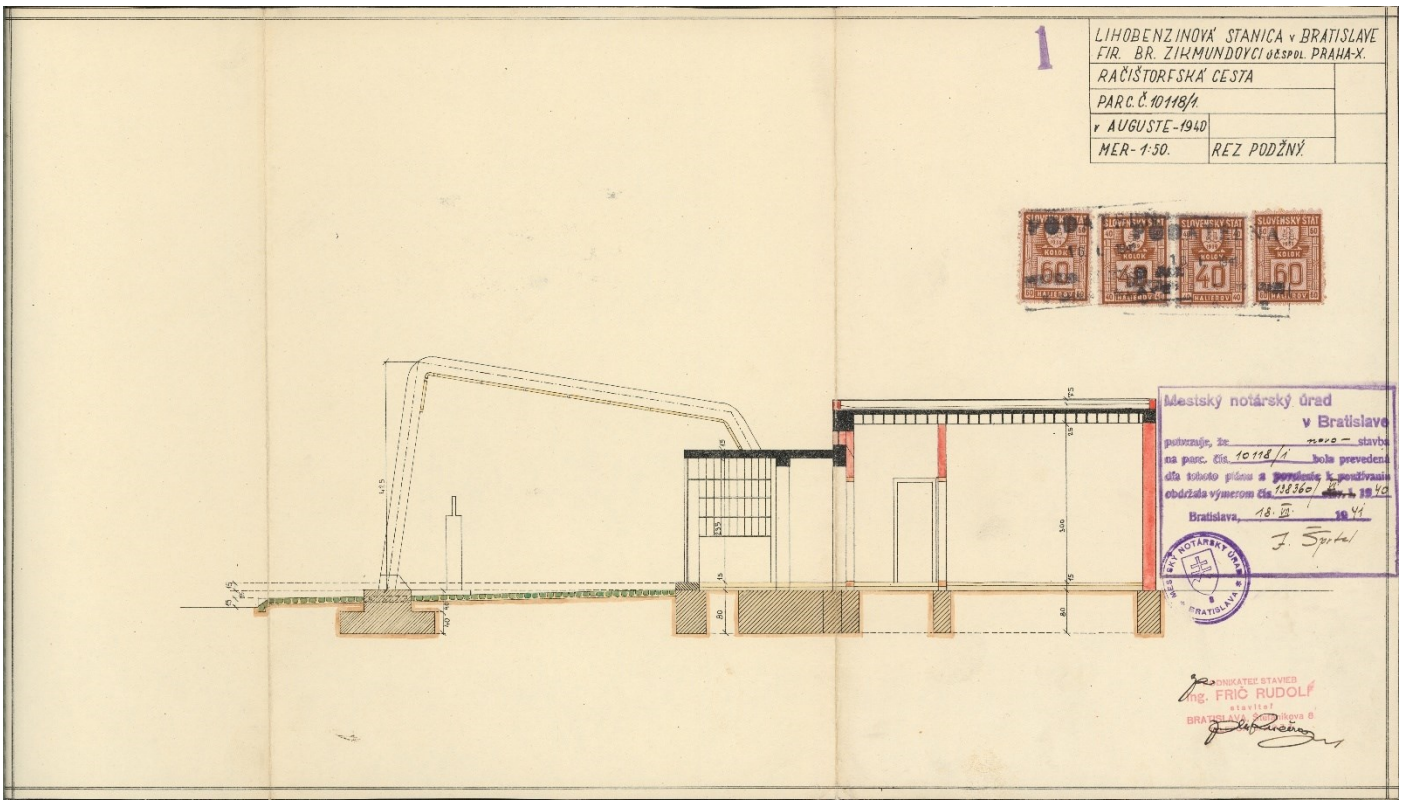

Fig. 12. Jan Slavíček, The Zikmund Brothers' gas station, Račianska Street, Bratislava, 1940. Cross section. (Source: Bratislava City Archives, 1940)

Fig. 13. Josef Gočár, Fanto gas station, Klárova Street, Praha – Malá Strana, 1930s. (Photo: Vyšehradskej jezdec, 2020)

THE SMALL SEPULCHRAL ARCHITECTURE IN DOBŘÍŠ NEAR PRAGUE

The only sepulchral architecture in Frič's portfolio is the family mausoleum in Dobříš (1937) near Prague (now Czech Republic), where the family moved in early 1890s. There Frič spent his childhood and, as a young man, left for studies in Prague. Since the 17th century, all generations of the Catholic family were teachers; unlike Frič. The mausoleum design is based on a square geometry and symbolism, significantly repeating the square arrangement. Square has traditionally been symbol of rationalism, stability, and order; in religion the symbol of divinity; and in design and architecture the symbol of equality. The square also represents the physical essence of a human being, and inserted in a circle it symbolizes the physical and mental complexity of the being.

However, Frič was also a freemason; therefore, the square might have been intentioned as a symbol of the growth, production, honesty and truth, as it is for the freemasonry. The square then represents a person who is in control of their thoughts, actions, and emotions, thriving complexly. The mausoleum is shaped as a simple cube of three metres in size, flat roofed, with a below-ground crypt and an above-ground chamber in the main volume. The façades are divided by a simple rhythm of vertical ribs made from artificial-stone and filling stripes of yellowish plaster stripes arranged in a square bond. (Fig. 14) The same pattern is repeated in the bronze cassettes of the entrance double wing door. (Fig. 15)

At the lateral axis, the spaces between the ribs are filled with stained glass in the same pattern. The rhythmically repeated square pattern unifies all four façades making the tomb's volume facing all the four world corners equally. The widened plinth rounded at corners is secondarily designed as a flower pot for ivy and white rose, symbolising the rebirth. The chamber floor is tiled with mosaic arranged in a square pattern in a traditional colour range of prevailing blue and white with black and yellow borders and crosses. The walls are plastered in white. At the sides of a simple wooden altar there are bronze urns, while the coffins are in the crypt below. Frič's profession as a builder is reflected in high-quality materials and craftsmanship details.

The mausoleum may be compared with the Nedelco and Klimko family mausoleum (1937) at Saint Rosalia Cemetery in Košice (now Slovakia), designed by Ľudovít Oeschläger (1896–1984), a renowned representative of regional modernism and functionalism. (Priatková, 2012, p. 16) Oeschläger received traditional architectural education from the Budapest Polytechnic, where the students were focused on structural design rather than innovative architectural forms, keeping the historicizing forms. (Priatková, 2012, p. 12) The knowledge of structural design and

the high-quality craftsmanship details then characterised Oeschläger's highly rated pre-functionalist and functionalist interwar architecture. *'He was typical for a deep sense of detail. He was among the architects who could design the modern building with a stamp of a truly completed building. Interwar modernism was economical and efficient, but it lacked the 'spice' that had been the detail throughout the history of architecture.'* (Šlachta, 1988, p. 41)

Fig. 14. Rudolf Frič, The Frič's family tomb, Dobříš near Prague, 1937. (Photo: Kiaček, 2024)

The emphasis on craftsmanship detail is typical for both Oeschläger's and Frič's work, including the sepulchral designs. In comparison to Frič, the Nedelco and Klimko family mausoleum has a less diluted functionalist aesthetic. (Priatková, 2012, p. 16) The simple concrete cube cladded with stone has the entrance façade inserted deeply into the volume with a three-step staircase to the façade width. (Fig. 16) It works as a modernised allusion to the ancient Greek in-antis temple. At the sides of the iron glazed double-wing door leading to the chamber there are black granite gravestones. The concept with a central axis and a dominant façade is the opposite of the Frič's design. In the Saint Rosalia cemetery, which is protected for its unique historicizing, secessionist, modernist and functionalist tombs, there is also a conservative cube-shaped Krčméry family mausoleum (1937) by Emil Gottesmann (1900–1944). (Kapišinská, 2015) On a smaller scale the concept of a cube volume based on square geometry and symbolism is applied to the architect Maximilián Scheer's (1902–2000) gravestone in the Nitra cemetery. (Dulla, Moravčíková, 2002, p. 475)

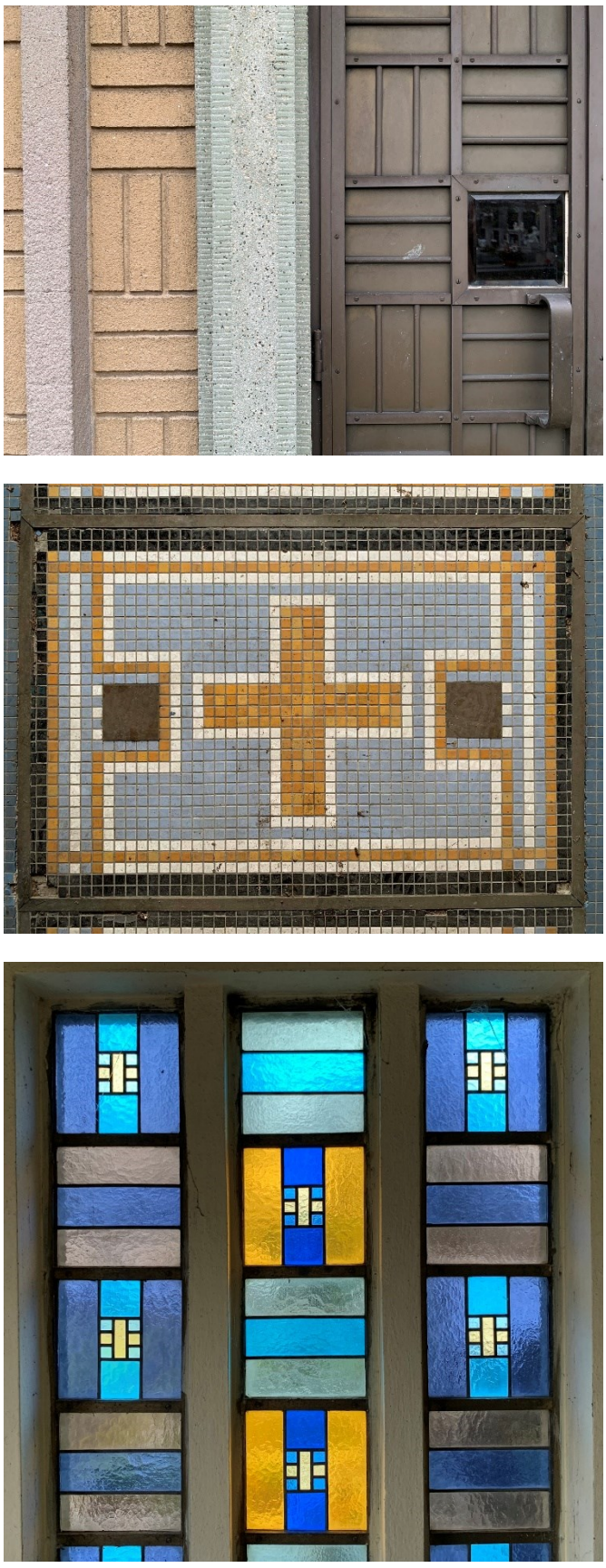

Fig. 15. Rudolf Frič, The Frič's family tomb, Dobříš near Prague, 1937. Details. (Photo: Kiaček, 2024)

Fig. 16. Ľudovít Oeschläger, the Nedelco and Klimko family mausoleum, Saint Rosalia Cemetery, Košice, 1937. (Photo: Luppa, 2018)

The last confrontation is with Adolf Loos's design proposal for a mausoleum of the Austrian Czech art historian Max Dvořák. The mausoleum has a simple chamber built in a cube volume made of blocks of Swedish black granite, with a ziggurat-shaped roof. (Fig. 17) The interior was to be decorated with frescoes by the expressionist artist Oskar Kokoschka. (Foster, 2004) Loos himself claimed that 'Only a very small part of architecture belongs to the realm of art: The tomb and the monument'. (Loos, 1910, p. 334) In the end, all the aforementioned tombs endorse the architectural and aesthetic value of even the smallest architectural work piece.

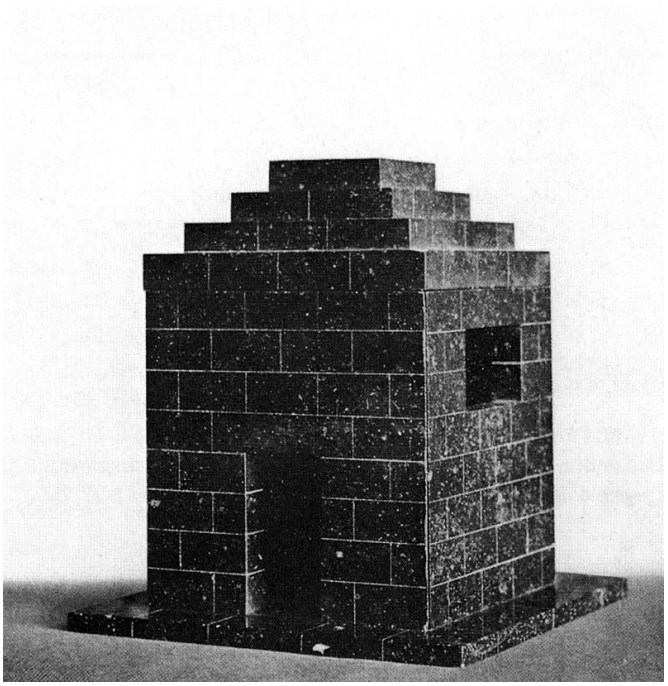

Fig. 17. Adolf Loos, Max Dvořák's mausoleum, unrealised design proposal, 1920s. (Source: EMAP, 2015)

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the architectural value of small-scale typologies in the Czechoslovak interwar context, both in construction and form, has been identified and clarified. On the other hand, the scale and the ephemerality conditioned by the utility character are the crucial reasons behind their undervaluation. Especially in the case of traffic buildings such as gas stations and tram shelters, the same dynamic which initiated those architectures indeed resulted in their end, as they soon became obsolete, left in a dilapidated state, or demolished, these objects became lost to the collective urban memory. However, the aforementioned architectural works have proven that small-scale architecture and peripheral typologies have the architectural qualities for which they deserve both public and professional interest. Moreover, they reflect an inherent variety, being situated in very different urban contexts: from an architecturally and historically completed city centre through a newly urbanised dwelling area, an urban periphery up to a provincial town. Additionally, they illustrate the asymmetric position of the Slovak situation compared to the Czech one, particularly in transport architecture.

The detached houses built in urbanised cities, such as Rybáček's house in Bratislava, differed from those built in provincial towns, such as Valášek's house in Myjava, which was reflected in their variances in design ingenuity, typological features, and urban position. Being the only one to be mentioned and evaluated in architectural historiography, Rybáček's house surpasses the other designs by Frič. Its positively evaluated architectural form proves Frič's ingenious adoption of puristic aesthetic while its pioneer position in the then urbanising city periphery makes it urbanistically valuable. The period publication of the design proposal for Doctor B's house declares its position in the period discourse, but in confrontation with Jan Gillar's terraced house for doctor Polony it shows that it was not a rare hybrid typology. Furthermore, the comparison indicates that Frič was more conservative in architectural design compared to Gillar.

However, considering the more extravagant design of Rybáček's house, it may be concluded that Frič did adapt to the concrete environments; or that he did not create a recognizable specific style that would characterise his work. In the typology of traffic shelters, considering the multiplicity, scale, and additional facilities involved, the comparison of the Frič's shelter in Bratislava and the Brno tram shelters by Poříska substantiates that the specific typology was evolving more in the Czech than in the Slovak environment. Nevertheless, both adopted dynamising curves reflecting their function. Gas stations that embody the motorising and modernising process in cities, followed a similar path.

The Zikmund Brothers' gas station, as the first in Bratislava, was unique and progressive. Thus a new typology and its architectural forms and principles were established in the Slovak context, based on dynamics determined by steel curved structures. The transport architectures in general accompanied urban modernisations based on higher mobility. Finally, the Frič family tomb represents a fading ancient typology, built in a conservative and symbolical design. More than the previous workpieces, it characterises Frič's specific style based on high-quality craftsmanship details rather than explicit architectural forms. Except the tomb, all aforementioned workpieces contrasted in form with the environment and determined the change of its peripheral image.

Finally, a contribution of Rudolf Frič to the small-scale typologies in the context of the Czechoslovak interwar architecture has been identified and discussed. It has also been proved that although the Slovak historiography exclusively presented him as a builder of civil engineering structures, his portfolio was more complex and architecturally valuable. In addition, the disparate architectural qualities of Frič's aforementioned works prove his unstable even absent architectural style or signature, which may indicate that the projects were not designed by him personally, but in his company's name. This finally shows that Frič was a

fervent construction entrepreneur whose contribution to architecture was organisational rather than direct architectural.

This conclusion is supported by his early career in the Bank of Czechoslovak legions where he directly initiated construction and development activities of the bank, by the complex technical, designing, and construction services of his later independent company, his own developing businesses, the memberships in construction associations and in the regulation committee of the City of Bratislava, and last but not least the direct initiation of the first Slovak revue on architecture and construction. The paper rediscovers and declares Frič's significant contribution to architecture as a highly productive, organised, and complex creator. It has been proved nevertheless that his architectural and construction portfolio is hard to be unequivocally characterised and valuated.

Acknowledgements

This paper was published within Project VEGA no. 1/0286/21 "Innovations in architecture of the 20th century in Slovakia" at the Faculty of Architecture and Design STU and at the Institute of History of the Slovak Academy of Sciences (Bratislava, Slovakia). Great acknowledgement to the Bratislava City Archives for providing scans of the original projects.

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