

Adéla Klinerová

Church of St. Cyril and Methodius in Prague-Karlín. From its conception to architectural realization

ANNOTATION

This article concerns the architectural realization of the Neo-Romanesque Church of St. Cyril and Methodius in Prague-Karlín and the circumstances of its foundation in the context of the historic and urban development of Karlín. The aim of the construction reflects the ambition of Prague first suburb on its own representation and attempts of its autonomous ecclesiastic administration. The developmental process of Karlín church can be generally traced to the preserved architectural proposals. Construction progress can be reconstructed on the basis of several important events, such as the consecration of the building site and laying the foundation stone, and with the use of the Chronicle of Karlín and of the parish church. The aim of the author is not only the art historic evaluation, but also the cultural dimension of this realization.

SUMMARY

The church of St. Cyril and Methodius in Prague-Karlín is the first large church of Prague suburbs and an important example of ecclesiastic architecture of the historicism period in the 19th century. It was realized in 1854–1863 after the proposals of the Viennese architect Karl Rösner with alterations by Ignác Ullmann, the architect who led the construction of the church.

Karlín became the first suburb of Prague in 1817, and the unstable situation of spiritual administration in this area, and representation reasons, instigated the construction of a parish church. Consecration to the missionaries and Bohemian national saints St. Cyril and Methodius is connected with the personality of Václav Štulc, the later provost of the Vyšehrad chapter, who proposed this consecration in 1850 in the Catholic union and was greatly instrumental in the realization. In the same year Bedřich Schwarzenberg was promoted as the archbishop of Prague, who was keen supporter of the new church building. Due to the lack of finances a provisional timber chapel was built at Karlín square, after the proposals of master builder J. Kudláček, and consecrated by the archbishop Schwarzenberg in 1851.

In the same year the proposal, in Neo Gothic style, of St. Cyril and Methodius church new building was submitted by the architect Joseph Andreas Kranner, which was not been accepted mainly due to the great cost. Soon afterwards Byzantine, resp. Romanesque style was recommended concerning the consecration of the church. During the architectural competition proposals were submitted by architects Bernhard Grueber, Josef Niklas and Ignác Ullmann. During his visit to Vienna in 1851 the archbishop Schwarzenberg entrusted the local architect Karl Rösner with this task.

Rösner proposed a three nave basilica with two towers by the choir with apsis, and his basic conception has remained unchanged. The front façade is broken by three funnel-shaped doorways with a sculptural gallery and a rosette window. The building is further divided by lesenes and corbel tables. In the presbytery there are blind arcades and dwarf galleries. Ullmann's changes in Rösner's proposal mainly concern the proportional context, in the transformation of the towers, and reinforcement of the horizontal structuring of the building. Ullman also suppressed the Gothic features in Rösner's proposal in order to unify the style of the building.

Within Ullmann's work parallels in the Romantic modifications of castles can be found in his early period. He was not very active in the field of ecclesiastic architecture and his proposals of the church St. Wenceslas in Smíchov from 1870s are rather distant to the Karlín realisation. Rösner on the contrary was a significant representative of ecclesiastic architecture mainly in the Vienna region. His references could have been his church of St. John of Nepomuk in Leopoldstadt and the church of the same saint in Meidling. Realization of the church in Karlín has reflected in the appearance of Rösner's early proposals for the cathedral in Ďakov and probably affected the award of this project. Outside the Vienna region ecclesiastic architecture in Munich, represented by churches of St. Louis by Friedrich von Gärtner and St. Boniface by Georg Friedrich Ziebland, shall be considered in this context.

The construction of the monumental church of St. Cyril and Methodius, the most important building realization of a

new suburb, unique in its period, was accompanied by celebrations at significant stages of the construction, such as the resurrection of the gable cross, completion of the vault and consecration of the church. The imperial couple, Francis Joseph I and Elisabeth from Bavaria were present at the consecration of the building site and the laying of the foundation stone. The church of St. Cyril and Methodius in Karlín also played an important part in the establishment of the Cyril and Methodius cult in the millennium years 1863, 1869 and 1885 commemorating the arrival and death of the missionaries.

This text is based on documents preserved in the Archive of the Roman Catholic parish at the church of St. Cyril and Methodius in Prague-Karlín, the chronicle of Karlín, original plans by the architect Ullmann and the copies of the proposals by the architect Rösner. Photocopies of Rösner's original plans enable us to identify the share of both architects Ullmann and Rösner on the final realization and to conclusively associate Rösner's proposals for Karlín with the following plans for the cathedral of St. Petr in Ďakov.

Fig. 1. Prague 8-Karlín, the church of St. Cyril and Methodius, general view from the park onto the main façade (photo P. Cibulová, 2005).

Fig. 2. Prague 8-Karlín, the church of St. Cyril and Methodius, view into the interior of the main nave towards the altar (photo L. Bartoš, 2016).

Fig. 3. Plan of Karlín. A section of The Latest plan of Prague and the suburbs, 1880/1886, coloured print (Prague City Archives, Collection of Maps and Plans fond, sign. MAP P2 F/65; copied from Míka 2011, 56).

Fig. 4. Josef Kudláček, 1850: Plans of the provisional timber chapel at the square behind the Špitálská gate, front façade and the side view. Ink drawing, 600 × 820 mm, a section (Prague City Archives, Collection of Maps and Plans fond, sign. MAP PIX 3/1478; copied from Míka 2011, 39).

Fig. 5. J. Böhm, 1852: View into the interior of the provisional chapel. Oil painting, linen, 525 × 703 mm (The City of Prague Museum, sign. 1 990; photocopy of The Archive of the Roman Catholic parish at the church of St. Cyril and Methodius in Prague-Karlín).

Fig. 6. Wien, Leopoldstadt, Praterstraße. The church of St. John of Nepomuk, 1841–1846, after the project by K. Rösner (photo by the author, 2012).

Fig. 7. View of the church of St. Cyril and Methodius in Karlín after the proposal by K. Rösner. Lithography, marked as Church of the Lord in Karlín, Ústav kamenopisní J. Jelínka in Prague (copied from ŠTULC 1854, unpagged).

Fig. 8. K. Rösner, 1851–1852: Proposal of the church of St. Cyril and Methodius in Prague-Karlín, groundplan (photocopy deposited in a private archive in Prague, reprophoto archive of the author, 2011).

Fig. 9. I. Ullmann, 1856: Proposal of the church of St. Cyril and Methodius in Prague-Karlín, groundplan with a longitudinal section (The Archive of the Roman Catholic parish at the church of St. Cyril and Methodius in Prague-Karlín, unsigned, scan 2016).

Fig. 10. K. Rösner, 1851–1852: Proposal of the church of St. Cyril and Methodius in Prague-Karlín, front façade (photocopy deposited in a private archive in Prague, reprophoto archive of the author, 2011).

Fig. 11. I. Ullmann, after 1852: Proposal of the church of St. Cyril and Methodius in Prague-Karlín, front façade (The Archive of the Roman Catholic parish at the church of St. Cyril and Methodius in Prague-Karlín, unsigned, scan 2016).

Fig. 12. K. Rösner, 1851–1852: Proposal of the church of St. Cyril and Methodius in Prague-Karlín, side view (photocopy deposited in a private archive in Prague, reprophoto archive of the author, 2011).

Fig. 13. I. Ullmann, after 1852: Proposal of the church of St. Cyril and Methodius in Prague-Karlín, side view (The Archive of the Roman Catholic parish at the church of St. Cyril and Methodius in Prague-Karlín, unsigned, scan 2016).

Fig. 14. K. Rösner, 1851–1852: Proposal of the church of St. Cyril and Methodius in Prague-Karlín, the choir (photocopy deposited in a private archive in Prague, reprophoto archive of the author, 2011).

Fig. 15. I. Ullmann, after 1852 : Proposal of the church of St. Cyril and Methodius in Prague-Karlín, the choir (The Archive of the Roman Catholic parish at the church of St. Cyril and Methodius in Prague-Karlín, unsigned, scan 2016).

Fig. 16. K. Rösner, 1851–1852: Proposal of the church of St. Cyril and Methodius in Prague-Karlín, cross section (deposited in a private archive in Prague, reprophoto archive of the author, 2011).

Fig. 17. I. Ullmann, about 1856: Proposal of the church of St. Cyril and Methodius in Prague-Karlín, cross section (The Archive of the Roman Catholic parish at the church of St. Cyril and Methodius in Prague-Karlín, unsigned, scan 2016). edral in Đakov, the choir (copied from DAMJANOVIĆ 2007, 17).

Fig. 23. Munich, Bavaria, Ludwigstraße. The church of St. Louis from 1830–1844 after the project by Friedrich von Gärtner (photo by the author, 2011).

Fig. 24. R. Müller: Ceremonial laying of the foundation stone of the church of St. Cyril and Methodius on the 10th June 1854 with the Emperor Francis Joseph I and the Empress Elisabeth present (photocopy, Archive of the Roman Catholic parish at the church of St. Cyril and Methodius in Prague-Karlín, reprophoto archive of the author).

Translated by Linda and Patrick Foster