

About the Paris Course for Teachers

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Throughout the 19th century the name of Marie Riegrová-Palacká¹ was evident in philanthropic activities by Bohemian women. In the article I will try to describe her public activities and contributions to the development of the first Czech language kindergartens in Prague based on the French model.

At the beginning of these public activities we find Marie, the nationally-conscious daughter of František² and Terezia Palacký- at that time as a wife F. L. Rieger³ and mother of three children — hard working in organizing lottery in favour of Zdenka Havlíčková, managing a collection for the Cyril and Methodius church in Karlin, later she started working for the St. Ludmila Society. After a futile attempt to transform the original intent of the St. Ludmila Society away supporting poor widows in helping to ensure gainful work for poor girls, Riegrová-Palacká began to find new ways to help the waking Czech nation. She did not have to go far for inspiration.

Since the 1860s she had co-operated with Vojta Náprstek,⁴ who had introduced her to English philanthropic writings and additionally, due to her teacher and educator František Schneider,⁵ she was also directly connected to the teachings of the philosopher

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- 1 Marie Riegrová-Palacká (1833–1891) was the first born daughter of František and Terezie Palacký. In 1853 she married her father's co-worker František Ladislav Rieger with whom she had 3 children (Marie, Bohuš and Libuše). Literature dealing with Marie Riegrová-Palacká is as follows: Anna Lauermannová-Mikschová, *Lidé minulých dob. Kniha lidských a básnických osudů*, Prague 1941; Maryša Radoňová-Šárecká, *Ozářené krby. Vlastenecké rodiny české*, Prague 1945; Marie Pavlíková, *Bolzanovství v rodině Palackého a Riegrově*. In: Strahovská knihovna, *Sborník Památníku národního písemnictví* 11, 1978; Helena Volet-Jeanerret, *La femme bourgeoise 1860–1895 à Prague. De la philanthropie à l'émancipation*, Genève 1988; Pavla Horská, *Sladká Francie*, Prague 1996; Milena Lenderová, *K hříchu i k modlitbě. Žena v minulém století*, Prague 1999; Marie Bahenská, *Počátky emancipace žen v Čechách. Dívčí vzdělávání a ženské spolky v Praze v 19. století*, Prague 2005; Milena Lenderová, *Radostné dětství? Dítě v Čechách devatenáctého věku*, Prague and Litomyšl 2006; Jana Malínská, *„My byly, jsme a budeme!“: české ženské hnutí 1860–1914 a idea českého národa*, Prague 2013.
 - 2 František Palacký (1798–1876, Prague) was a Czech historian and politician, the most influential person of the Czech National Revival, called „Father of the Nation“.
 - 3 František Ladislav Rieger (1818–1903) was a Czech politician and publicist made famous for his leadership of the early Czech nationalist movement.
 - 4 Vojtěch Náprstek (often called Vojta) (1826–1894), was a Czech philanthropist, patriot and politician.
 - 5 František Schneider (1794–1858) was a Catholic priest and personal student of Bernard Bolzano.

Bernard Bolzano.⁶ On the theoretical list of priorities relating to the charity of Bolzano, the first were the creation of associations and the support of neglected and poor children.

The entry of not only Marie Riegrová-Palacká but other Czech women into the public sphere saw a growth in charitable activities and it was an area where “Czech girls and ladies” established themselves with unprecedented confidence and entrepreneurship. Marie Riegrová-Palacká is an example of a woman who in her work did not seek personal credit or income. The social status of the family at that time would not admit to such an ambition. Riegrová-Palacká was solely led by Christian principles to help her neighbours which she considered almost as her duty in society. It was her part of the family’s work in the formation of the Czech nation. Although Marie Riegrová-Palacká always tried to act anonymously her long-term work for the elimination of the worst manifestations of poverty, including a number of preventive measures to help children and later single mothers, can be hardly overlooked. Her efforts are also revealed in letters sent to Mary Pape-Carpantier,⁷ the director of the French Institute for kindergarten teachers in Paris, whom she corresponded with from 1867 to 1877 and who got the credit for the training of the first female Czech kindergarten teachers in the French style. In her letters Marie informed Madam Pape-Carpantier about all the obstacles and successes of these philanthropic and patriotic actions.

The committee of aldermen of Prague approved on 28th March 1866 a plan for establishing a new nursery, to be called St. James Nursery. After a delay due to a military emergency, the plan and budget were finally submitted to the committee on 2th September 1867 to establish the nursery according to the German Fröbl kindergartens. Since this date we can trace the effort of Marie Riegrová-Palacká to change the committee’s decision. Her efforts were focused on throwing out the Fröbl kindergarten system and instead establishing Czech as the teaching language and also appointing female teachers instead of male teachers and adapting the tuition to suit pre-school children from Prague’s poorer classes. She did not reject Frobel’s method because of its German origin but because she did not feel that it was suitable for children from a poor environment who were intended to spend most of the day in kindergarten whereas German kindergartens were accustomed to dealing with middleclass children to whom teachers only had responsibility for a few hours. Additionally, Marie Riegrová-Palacká was afraid of “the Germanization” of Czech children and took steps which were intended to change this possibility.

6 Bernard Bolzano (1781–1848) was a Catholic priest, a professor of the doctrine of Catholic religion at the Philosophical Faculty of the University of Prague, an outstanding mathematician and one of the greatest logicians.

7 Mary Pape-Carpantier (1815–1878) was born to a poor widow in the small French town La Flèche. After a grim childhood, at nineteen she was offered the position of manager of the newly opened nursery for poor children. She worked from seven in the morning to eight in the evening and every day took care of over 200 children. She used her experience there and in Le Mans to write two technical manuals which led to her later becoming a director of the Institution for Pre-school Teachers and also the General Inspector of French nurseries. Author of her modern biography is Colette Cosnier. The book is called *Marie Pape-Carpantier, Fondatrice de l’école maternelle* and was published in 2003.

Marie Riegrová-Palacká had started studying the nursery and kindergarten issue from the 1850s. She was familiar with German, French and Dutch works dealing with philanthropy and social problems in general and later on she became familiar with Anglo-Saxon models. In the beginning of 1866 Marie Riegrová-Palacká turned to the Dutch pedagogue Hendrik Suringar,⁸ with who she had already started a written communication in 1865, asking him for advice concerning the visiting of poor people and using such an opportunity to its best advantage.

When Riegrová-Palacká became aware of the intention of the city of Prague to establish a kindergarten in the St. James monastery, she began to consider setting up a special association to support kindergartens. She asked Hendrik Suringar for detailed information regarding the charity associations run by women to take care of kindergartens abroad. Suringar answered her in May 1866 and unequivocally recommended the establishing of new schools and also pre-school institutions aimed at children from poor environments.⁹

WORLD EXPO INSPIRATION IN PARIS

An inspiration for Marie Riegrová-Palacká was attending the World Expo in Paris in the spring of 1867¹⁰ which she visited with her father and husband. Whilst both men used the 12 day long stay in Paris mostly as an opportunity to speak with French politicians and representatives of Polish exiles, Marie visited some Parisian philanthropic institutions and particularly studied the exhibition devoted to problems in the French education system including pre-school institutions. The Exhibition, to a much greater extent than previously, documented not only economic and technical skills but also art, culture and, indeed, all modern ideas in the social sciences.

The then Minister of Public Education, Victor Duruy, made a contribution to this new independent exhibition which was devoted to contemporary knowledge in the field of education. It dealt with new teaching methods, books, textbooks, school supplies, school equipment and classrooms, the school library, original work of pupils and much more. Although this was a modest topic for such a world exhibition, it gave all interested persons a unique opportunity to explore and compare the different education systems in countries participating in the World Expo in 1867.

Experience not only from France but also from the United States, Saxony, Sweden and Prussia was shared. The surprise for many of them was the American school system in which it was normal to have co-education of boys and girls without any re-

8 Hendrik Suringar (1790–1872) contributed to the establishing of many charitable institutions particularly dealing with the moral correction of convicts issue in Holland and he personally worked with the poor.

9 Marie Červinková-Riegrová, Marie Riegrová, rodem Palacká, její život a skutky, Prague 1892, p. 68.

10 The World Expo in the year 1867 in Paris was the fourth of this popular exhibition to have taken place in the 19th century. This big international industry exhibition was held from 1st April to October 1867 in Paris.

sulting moral harm. Among many other things, attendees had an opportunity to learn more about the Gosselin method for deaf children in which Marie Riegrová-Palacká had started to be interested in a few months earlier.

The Association for the Protection of Apprentices and Children Working in Manufactory and even one for the Protection of Animals had their own stands at the exhibition. The World Expo was the place where the life paths of Marie Riegrová-Palacká and Mary Pape-Carpantier intersected. Both women participated in the World Expo, Marie Riegrová-Palacká as a visitor and future organiser of new tuition method in Czech schools, Madam Pape-Carpantier on behalf of the French minister as a director of the Institution for Pre-school Teachers and General Inspector of French nurseries. However, although both women participated in the exhibition, they did not actually meet. Mary Pape-Carpantier already had a wide range of experience by this time – as well as her position as Director and General Inspector she was also well-known as the author of two pedagogic writings intended for foster mothers in nurseries in which she described a new method of illustrative demonstrative teaching.¹¹

The Minister of Public Education Victor Duruy authorized Mary Pape-Carpantier to give a series of lectures to nursery teacher colleagues at the Sorbonne explaining the illustrative/demonstrative method in five conferences between 21st August and 19th September 1867. Madam Pape-Carpantier, to the amazement of all the men present, demonstrated a remarkable rhetorical talent and high theoretical and practical expertise. All that at a time when the acceptance of women in the audience at the Sorbonne was absolutely out of the question.

All activities connected with schooling and tuition in the context of the World Expo were grandiosely concluded on 19th September 1867. Based on the indisputable merit of Mary Pape-Carpantier the French Science Academy decided to award her for the 1867 Halphen prize in the field of pre-school and elementary education.¹² This award was made every three years to the author, who by his work or personnel practice, contributed or developed new methods and approaches to schooling and education. The reaction to this award was so wide that it reached Prague and Marie Riegrová-Palacká, in her notes about Mary Pape-Carpantier, mentioned this several times.

The daughter of Marie Riegrová-Palacká very well described the impressions of her mother from the World Expo: “At the exhibition I have realized that learning philanthropy is much more difficult than I had imagined. I thought I knew a lot from some of those books I managed to obtain. Soon I was surprised by the difference between the dead written word and practicing institutions. I cannot describe my reaction when I saw in the class 90. X. an exhibition of big volumes; simple looking at the titles I felt how much still remains to be learnt about the philanthropy of the French.”¹³

11 It is *Rady řídicím pěstounkám* and *Praktické vyučování ve školách mateřských a prvých třídách obecné školy*. Both works translated into Czech and came out in Prague in 1877.

12 Achille Edmond Halphen (1825–1856) acting judge in Versailles and secretary of Israelite Consistory in Paris. In June 1856 he bequeathed to Science Academy annual rent 500 francs to be paid each year, two or every three years in form of award to author for his achievements in the field of elementary education.

13 Marie Červinková-Riegrová, Marie Riegrová, rodem Palacká, pp. 60, 61.

Marie Riegrová-Palacká did not plan to keep all the acquired experience from the exhibition and her later gained experience from reading the texts she brought back-only for herself. Already in August 1867, when the exposition was still on-going and Mary Pape-Carpantier was preparing for her first conference, Marie Riegrová-Palacká sent her husband a letter with an article to be published in *Světobzor* dealing with "Industrial girls' schools in France". In this article she fought against the prejudices preventing the establishing of profit-making work for women. At the same time she prepared several other articles about French nurseries.¹⁴ The aim of her articles, signed with the initials M.P.R., was to pass on in an understandable way her acquired knowledge about French philanthropy and the functioning of local nurseries which she saw as a model for developing Czech kindergartens. Articles by Marie Riegrová-Palacká about French institutions were also published in the following years 1868 and 1869.

In the autumn of 1867 the most important issue for Marie Riegrová-Palacká was the question of the French nursery model. What was of most interest for her at the World Expo while visiting the philanthropy exhibition and in her visits to institutions of pre-school education in France? What French institutions did she consider to be the best models to follow? It is likely that 1867 was the first time that Riegrová-Palacká had actually visited these French institutions personally. Her current ideas came not only from reading literature on the subject but also from her newly-acquired personal experience which confirmed her suppositions and as a result she could better intervene with the Prague Council to establish a new nursery in the French style. She especially highlighted the unquestionable suitability of women for this work and the importance of French philanthropy in relation to nurseries. She was influenced by the model of the French Lady's Committee when establishing the Lady's Committee in Prague at the first Czech kindergarten. The Lady's Committee was in harmony with her concept of women working within the philanthropic character of the first kindergartens. The Prague Lady's Committee as well as the French were in communication with the City Council under whose patronage the kindergarten belonged and who provided most of the practical aid in the form of clothes, shoes and regular food distribution or the managing of various celebrations for children during the whole year.

Other than having woman teachers at Parisian nurseries, Riegrová-Palacká most appreciated their being spacious with plenty of fresh air, good hygiene and regular gym classes. Fresh soup at midday was another essential requirement for the new Czech kindergarten at the St. James monastery.

CONTACT WITH THE FRENCH ENVIRONMENT

Marie Riegrová-Palacká after her return from the World Expo she decided that, as well writing her published articles, she would make contact with Hortense Cornu,¹⁵

14 Marie Riegrová-Palacká, O opatrovnách vůbec, a francouzských zvláště, *Světobzor* 1867, p. 98.

15 Hortense Cornu, wife of a French painter was a long-time companion from childhood of the Emperor Napoleon III. Madam Cornu had great influence and was highly respected in

whose name she knew from French philanthropy. In a letter from September 1867 she asked for advice on improving charitable institutions in the French style. All the letters from each side were written in French which Riegrová-Palacká knew perfectly. Hortense Cornu immediately replied and referred her to the Nursery Teacher Institution's Director and the General Inspector of French Nurseries Mary Pape-Carpantier.

The first extant concept letter from Marie Riegrová-Palacká is not unfortunately dated¹⁶ but according to Madam Pape's reply from December 1867 it can be assumed that Riegrová-Palacká made contact with her in October or November 1867. At that time Riegrová-Palacká did not know that Madam Pape-Carpantier was the promoter of the educational method called "illustrative/demonstrative" teaching.

This method was especially designed for poor children to encourage their enthusiasm for learning and at the same time eliminate any bad habits they may have acquired. Riegrová-Palacká in the letter to Pape-Carpantier asked for detailed information regarding the French concept of pre-school education and the functioning of nurseries as charitable institutions. Madam Pape-Carpantier was used to the fact that many people or students turned to her for advice. She had girls in her course from all French regions and also foreign students. The request of Riegrová-Palacká was quite natural for her and in the same time surprising because it came from a country which she was most likely not very familiar with.

In her reply she already outlined a convenient solution for the whole situation.¹⁷ The simplest way to absorb the French method in pre-school institutions seemed to be by sending one or more candidates to the teacher course in Paris. The situation in Prague was not so easy. The City Council on 19th November 1867 approved the new method and the female management of the kindergarten but refused to send the chosen candidates to Paris due to the high cost. But this was a crucial condition for Riegrová-Palacká because it would be very difficult to introduce a method that nobody could properly understand. Due to this Marie Riegrová-Palacká submitted a request to the City Council to approve the necessity of future foster mothers being properly qualified. She showed that the acceptance of Czech candidates to the French course linked with nurseries had been already guaranteed by the kindness of Madam Pape-Carpantier.

Marie Riegrová-Palacká demonstrated a highly distinctive opinion as to the changing of the kindergarten concept and the need of a woman teacher and a new educational model. She was also aware of how to deal with such a situation. All negotiations with the City Council were led by her husband František Ladislav Rieger together with Vojta Náprstek who both followed her instructions. They managed to persuade Prague Councillors to accept not only the pre-school educational concept

Paris. Marie Riegrová-Palacká knew her in the field of philanthropy as a member of central Lady's Committee connecting all women's associations which took care of nurseries. Madam Cornu was appointed by the Emperor to the Commission dealing with assessing the department devoted to the French educational system in the World Expo 1867.

¹⁶ National Archives [NA], collection Marie Riegrová-Palacká, file 8, archival unit 405.

¹⁷ NA, collection Marie Riegrová-Palacká, file 6, archival unit 268.

developed by Marie Riegrová-Palacká but, after the discussions of the organizing committee held on 21th October 1867,¹⁸ it was also agreed to give the management of the nursery to women and to send two candidates to the French course led by Madam Pape-Carpantier.

The City Council advertised for candidates. A special committee had been established to choose the two most qualified women for the Parisian course.

The committee was made up of the city councillors Alois Weit, Josef Wenzig, village elder František Tesař, Václav Nykles and the director of girl's schools. Relatively high demands were required of the candidates. They had to have a proven a general education, dependable character, a knowledge of singing and gymnastics, teaching experience with children, be aged between twenty and thirty, of solid health and also a knowledge of both the Czech and French languages was further assumed. The City Council recommended to the commission to look for "natural talent and the natural gift of knowing how to treat the children kindly, gently and tenderly above the written testimony submitted by candidates".¹⁹

Barbora Ledvinková and Marie Müllerová were chosen from sixteen candidates. Barbora Ledvinková²⁰ had started school at Amerligova Budeč, later she attended the private girls' institute of Svatava Amerligová. In 1857 she finished a two year long teacher course²¹ and one year later she passed a French and handiworks exam. For ten years she had worked as a private teacher in the Štěpánková institute and in the family of a merchant by the name of Roll. Marie Müllerová, friend of Barbora, was also a graduate of a two year long teacher course at a German school.

CANDIDATES IN THE PARISIAN COURSE

On 14th February 1868 both candidates set off via Munich and Strasbourg, with a one-day sightseeing tour of each city, to Paris. After their arrival at the Parisian train station they used the omnibus to get to the house at No.10 Voršilská Street where they were allocated a room by the janitor. From their arrival both girls regularly, and in detail informed Marie Riegrová-Palacká about the course and their personal experience of the metropolis.

They met Mary Pape-Carpantier in the afternoon after their arrival and the theme of the discussion was mostly concerning Marie Riegrová-Palacká. There were still some days remaining before starting the course which both girls used to get

18 Less than a month after the mentioned letter when she was still unsure of the enforcement of male teachers for nurseries.

19 NA, collection Marie Riegrová-Palacká, file 13, archival unit 513.

20 Barbora Ledvinková (1840–1922) After her return from the Parisian course, the management of the first Czech kindergarten at St. James was entrusted to her. From 1874 she taught the Czech course "For education of foster mothers in nurseries", which was established at k. k. State institute in Prague. She was the author of writings dealing with the history of nurseries and kindergartens.

21 She finished the course at the German Normal School for Girls.

acquainted with the nursery assigned to the school and, because they came in the fasting time, they also experienced the Shrovetide festivities. Barbora Ledvinková wrote to Marie Riegrová-Palacká that “yesterday being Shrove Tuesday there was no school, but in the evening Madam Pape cleared the school hall where we were entertained by dancing, music and singing until 11 o’clock. Madam Carpentier recited one of her poems and her children, a son and two daughters, and some of the girls were dressed as mummers.”²² Barbora Ledvinková was apparently unsure how Marie Riegrová-Palacká, who mostly tried to avoid such festivities, accepts such reports. Therefore just to justify theirs and Madam’s Pape-Carpantier’s behaviour she added: “Today, on Ash Wednesday we spent two hours in church and we washed away all sins, Madam Pape-Carpantier with us.”²³

The girls did not neglect romantic walks around Paris and before the course started they visited the Louvre, The National Residence of the Invalids, the Pantheon, the Place de la Bastille and one of the most famous Parisian churches St. Sulpiz.

Marie Müllerová did not mention the Shrovetide festivities at all and wrote to Marie Riegrová-Palacká in the middle of March when the course had already started. There were forty candidates in the course with twenty three of them living with Marie and Barbora in the dormitory while the others had their own accommodation provided in the city. The eldest candidate was forty years old and the youngest one was nineteen. The girls came to the course from different French regions and also from Switzerland, Corsica and even one from Athens in Greece. The subjects learned concerned religion, biology, geography, art, pedagogics, cosmography, singing and fonomimics²⁴. The teaching was held in the French language and girls had to know French geography into detail. Classes were held every day except Sunday and theory was always balanced with practice in an assigned nursery. As a result, the girls had four hours of specialized subjects and four hours of practice in a nursery every day. The day was precisely divided by hours and the girls had to strictly go to bed at the required time of 9.30. They could enjoy a free afternoon only on Thursdays and Sundays.

Marie and Barbora had difficulties with French usually only when encountering specialized subject terminology. The girls were enthusiastic about the school and education and only a few minor annoyances spoiled their overall good impression. The stumbling block was the French geography “we enjoy learning very much except for the fact that we must know all details about France and chant later the geography without a map.”²⁵ A completely new subject was the fonomimics taught by Mr Grosselin. Marie Müllerová in her letter commended its benefit either for deaf-mute children or children who had started to learn to read. The teacher Mr Grosselin was very enthusiastic about the subject and he so did not realized that some pupils could not follow the speed of the lecture. Marie complained: “Mr Grosselin presents very fast and too much information at once, even today he re-

22 NA, collection Marie Riegrová-Palacká, file 6, archival unit 249 and file 8, archival unit 549.

23 Ibid.

24 Fonomimics — works with pictograms

25 NA, collection Marie Riegrová-Palacká, file 6, archival unit 249.

peated the whole alphabet, showed all movements for deciphering and the whole stenography.”²⁶

Marie and Barbora spent free days with the daughters of Madam Pape-Carpantier. They went to the Parisian Botanic Garden or visited local fairs where they without success tried to find out the secret of mushroom growing “we did not find out anything, it is the secret of those who grow them”.²⁷ The biggest obstacle in the Parisian course was not the complicated terminology, geography or high speed of education but the impossibility of having a relaxed conversation with one another except on Sunday: “and this is the biggest sacrifice for us”.²⁸ Whilst Marie in her letters to Marie Riegrová-Palacká was focused on the technical part, e.g. the education itself, Barbora Ledvinková informed her about accommodation and food quality and similar everyday events.

If Marie Riegrová-Palacká ever had some concerns about the girl’s morality in Paris, Barbora Ledvinková in her letter completely dispelled them. The order of the school and the dormitory was very strict. Barbora Ledvinková even highlighted that since the course had started they had lived like “nuns”. It is no wonder that there still was a church in the house which had supposedly been previously inhabited by the mistress of Louis XIV. The girls slept in a collective bedroom on iron beds. They had to wake up at six every day. At eight they were given a hot chocolate and at twelve the lunch were served. The lunch mostly consisted of soup with bread, fish and lentils or beansall in the French eating style. Even a dessert consisting of apples or figs was not forgotten. Another dish was served at five which was soup again and then rice or potato mash. Except for fish the menu did not differ from the Czech dietary habits and the girls did not complain about it. An obligatory part of the day’s schedule was evening preaching. At the end of the fasting period the girls used to walk to the church every day instead of three times a week.

After several months in Paris unexpected trouble appeared. The City Council sent the money only until 18th June 1868 which could have resulted in the girls being unable to finished the course by taking the final exams which would have meant that their whole efforts would have been wasted. Barbora Ledvinková was unpleasantly surprised by this and wrote to Marie Riegrová-Palacká: “We assure you if we had means we would stay contrary to the Council decision that is mean in that area where more generosity ought to be and generous where there is no need.”²⁹ A justified indignation can be heard from these words concerning the inertia and unwillingness of the authorities to encourage a greater level of education in future teachers. Fears of a premature departure were not fulfilled. Both girls informed Marie Riegrová-Palacká of their finishing the course and passing the exams. The final examination took place at the Paris City Hall and both Czech candidates were among the best. Marie Müllerová commented that from all forty six candidates eighteen French girls failed. The course graduates received a diploma with the Paris Sorbonne seal of confirmation.

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid.

29 NA, collection Marie Riegrová-Palacká, file 5, archival unit 232.

Barbora Ledvinková and Marie Müllerová before their departure met Hortense Cornu, who invited them to Versailles and recommended the best Parisian nurseries to visit. They had only four days left for these visits. The departure from Paris was set and in conformity with the City Council instructions they were required to learn more on visits to German nurseries in Frankfurt, Berlin and Dresden on the way back. Barbora and Marie found it hard to say goodbye to Paris, to Madam Pape-Carpantier and the friends they were leaving but “their beloved Prague” awaited them and above all the opening of the first Czech kindergarten. The travel to Prague and the visits to the German nurseries took seventeen days and on 16th August 1868 Marie Müllerová was writing a letter to Marie Riegrová-Palacká from her Prague flat in Růžová Street.

THE ST. JAMES KINDERGARTEN OPENING

The first Czech nursery school in the French style was ceremonially opened on 1st January 1869 in premises within St. James monastery in Old Town Prague. On 19th January 1869 it was consecrated by Cardinal Bedřich of Schwarzenberg. The City Council provided the financial means for refurbishment of the premises thanks to Mayor Dr Klauďy who also established the first women’s committee.

The management and supervision of the nursery school was carried out by Prague district and the head of the women’s committee, later renamed the Lady’s Committee for Municipal Schools and Nurseries, was Marie Riegrová-Palacká.³⁰ The kindergarten was established as “an institution for the bodily and moral upbringing of children between two and five years old of both sexes. Particularly those whose parents work outside their house and cannot take care of the children during the day.”³¹ The education was held in the Czech language and the children’s activities were handicrafts, art, religion, singing, gymnastics and other exercises and the older children also learnt reading, writing and the basics of arithmetic. The teaching took no more than fifteen minutes and was regularly swapped with gymnastics, games and singing. The caring and education was the responsibility of foster mothers. In each class was always present one foster mother³² and one paid assistant in case of need. Foster mothers and assistants were accepted by the City Council. The maid’s work was done by hired maids³³ who were chosen by the Committee.

30 Among first members further belonged: J. Bělohorská, Marie Cífková, Anna Engelmayrová, Františka Hulešová, Albertina Janoušková, Kilchesová, Karolina Klauďyová, Žofie Krejčová, Miss Boh. Macháčková (Vávrová), Karolína Neumannová, Louisa Olivová, Harriete Půhonná, Marie Riegrová, Ant. Šimková, baroness Rosa from Švarcenfeld, Anna Tallovciová, Anna Urbánková.

31 NA, collection Marie Riegrová-Palacká, file 13, archival unit 531.

32 The foster mother was defined as: a single secular female person. If she wanted to get married she had to announce it to the City Council which decided whether she can stay at school or not.

33 The maid salary was 15 florins a month. The Assistant was given 250 florins a year.

The City Council created a commission for accepting foster mothers which consisted of a managing director, managing foster mother, one lady from the Committee, a municipal school teacher and a pastor. For the position of foster mother only a girl over eighteen years could apply. The Lady's Committee could make proposals in matters concerning the nursery: a subcommittee was chosen consisting of three members who created an educational ensemble called "kindergarten's mothers". The Committee collected voluntary gifts from philanthropic institutions or people, supported poor girls who wanted to become foster mothers and approved and dismissed maids.

Children were accepted on St. Wenceslas' day and St. Joseph's day. A child could also even be accepted beyond these days after discussion with the parents. Children were required to be healthy and "the foster mother must admonish parents to bring their children washed, combed and in clean and orderly clothes."³⁴ Due to the financial difficulties of the kindergarten the soup at midday was served to only the poorest children, others had as necessary equipment a tablet a writing implement and food basket as well as a cup and at least bread or other adequate food to have something for a snack. The St. Jacob's kindergarten was opened daily from St. Wenceslas to St. Joseph's day from seven in the morning until half past five in the afternoon. The kindergarten was closed only on Sundays and holidays. No physical punishments were allowed.

In January 1869 the St. Jacob's kindergarten accepted 154 children into two classes. The interest of parents in the kindergarten grew steadily and in April two new assistant teachers had to be employed because the number of children reached 313. The St. Jacob kindergarten was attended by children not only from the Old and New Town but also children from the Josefský and Vojtěšský districts and from St. Peter, František and Rejdiště. The kindergarten was closed during national holidays. When the kindergarten was first opened only 30 children were given food but at the end of the year that amount had reached 106 children. In the following years the kindergarten was attended by an average of 290 to 300 children, from which amount around 100 or more children were given meat soup or mash in the noon and bread in the afternoon. Ladies from the Committee divided between themselves the days of the week in such a way that on each day one of them supervised cooking and feeding the children. The poverty of the family and the distance between the home and kindergarten were taken into account when selecting boarders. A principle was accepted that food should not be provided without the personal examination of the family situation.

The City Council in co-operation with the Lady's Committee also organized the annual "Christmas Tree Celebration" in which children were given sweet bread, apples, nuts, ginger bread and icons. The Annual Report from 1870 noted that factory owner Urbánek provided for this celebration small sugar cones and Archbishop Bedřich of Schwarzenberg also attended the celebration. In the kindergarten Christmas Tree Celebrations were usually held on 23th December, on 5th December the Nicolaus celebration and then at the end of May the summer celebration when children were again given clothes, toys and a pastry.

34 NA, collection Marie Riegrová-Palacká, file 13, archival unit 531.

The kindergarten expenses were steadily growing because the kindergarten strictly focused on poor children whose number was also growing. Children whose parents could not afford to pay the tuition were preferentially accepted which demonstrates the charitable nature of the kindergarten. Marie Riegrová-Palacká continued to work in the Lady's Committee, but already at that time she began to think about other projects, such as the creation of Czech infant schools and care for poor mothers and new-borns. In such work she became engaged later on.