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Ernst Plischke and the Dixon Street Flats

Ernst Plischke's life and work have been thoroughly researched and written about. However, one crucial moment still remains uncertain – and it seems that, for New Zealand Architectural History, much hinges on this one uncertain episode: the project in question is the first high-rise housing block in Wellington of 1942, the Dixon Street Flats.

New Zealand-based architectural historians have spent much time and effort to establish the facts, asking: was the project mainly designed by Ernst Plischke, or by the Head of the Department of Housing Construction, Gordon Wilson? Linda Tyler did not question Plischke's version of the events. Later, Robin Skinner has argued one way, Julia Gatley the other way. It is Plischke's position within the Department of Housing Construction that is the cause for this uncertainty. As the department's head, Gordon Wilson was responsible for the buildings designed in the department. And as such, he received a New Zealand Institute of Architects Gold Medal for the Dixon Street Flats in 1947. The bigger issue behind this one event is whether modernist architecture in New Zealand did develop from 'within' or whether it was mostly introduced via the input from European emigrants, specifically Ernst Plischke.

Through the study of private archival material and through the revisiting of published and unpublished material, this paper extends the current knowledge on the circumstances of the designs of the Dixon Street Flats and other projects by the Department of Housing construction, thus adding to the larger lines of development of modern architecture in New Zealand, and to aspects of Ernst Plischke's involvement with the project of state modernisation in New Zealand.

Introduction: The Dixon Street Flats – a significant building

Austrian architect Ernst Plischke lived and worked in Wellington, New Zealand, from 1939 to 1963, as a refugee from the Nazi Government in Austria. During his first years in New Zealand he worked in the Department of Housing Construction (DoHC), under its head, Gordon Wilson. During this time, the Dixon Street Flats were designed and built by the DoHC, a remarkably modern slab block of flats. To start with, this paper is based on a question that may never be fully resolved: how much of the design of the Dixon Street Flats can be attributed to Ernst Plischke? To attempt an answer means to seek clarification, via the history of a single building, of a crucial phase in the development of New Zealand architecture. This paper, however, can only be a search for traces and circumstantial evidence since even with access to private papers of Plischke, the situation remains enigmatic.

Given New Zealand's overall preoccupation with the freestanding single-family house, one might confer that the housing projects of the 1940s – of which the Dixon Street Flats are the largest enterprise – were a means to an end, unwanted but necessary. The contrary seems to be the case for this particular building.

The Dixon Street Flats were part of a large initiative of the DoHC, newly founded in September 1936. One of the Department's first activities was to conduct a housing survey throughout the whole country to reveal substandard accommodation and to be able to improve the housing situation. In its 1943 *General Report on State Housing in New Zealand*, account of this survey and their further activities is given. The report clearly states the aim of reducing the high unemployment rate through a large housing programme:

Nothing had ... done more to solve the unemployment problem in Great Britain than housing, and unemployment was one of the diseases the Ministry of Housing was asked to help cure, and therefore it had to find out to what extent it was justified in designing an all-New-Zealand house.¹

With this assignment, the Department set out to indeed design a New Zealand house, receiving help from the New Zealand Institute of Architects and in consultation with providers, trades and craftsmen.² A main decision was, "in order to take up the slack of employment, to incorporate as far as possible all New Zealand materials in the State houses, while at the same time retaining sound construction."³ Therefore, concrete foundation, brick veneer, tiles – and of course the timber core – were all seen as essential elements of the houses to provide work for the respective craft or trade. Since, as the Department claimed, "in the whole world of housing there was no scheme quite suited to the New Zealand temperament and to the physical conditions of our towns and country," and since both the erection of "rows of identical houses" and of "the huge barrack-like tenements of the Old World would also have been unpopular and undesirable,"⁴ individual houses were preferred, and these houses were conservative both in their planning and in their appearance; they were solidly built but not modernist. The New-Zealandness of this endeavour is impressive. In many ways it makes the engagement of overseas architects within the department even more remarkable.

Nonetheless, since 80 per cent of the urgent demand for housing occurred in the cities of Auckland and Wellington, the second part of the Government initiative was the erection of blocks of flats or “multi-units.”⁵ The architects of the Department were well aware that convincing their fellow countrymen of the benefits of living in apartments would be difficult, admitting that:

Unfortunately, the standard and type of multi-unit dwelling that has been erected in England and this country, until quite recently, has been such that the objection raised against it has been well founded and to the average layman has been a very real factor in influencing him to consider the single-unit dwellings – that is, the cottage as the ideal.⁶

Therefore, it was essential to the DoHC that the new multi-units were situated centrally so that they could realise all the advantages of closeness to the city centre in terms of cost and time for transportation and proximity to amenities. All this means that the Dixon Street Flats, as the building in question came to be known, had to fulfil a number of demands, and to be of a high standard, in order to be acceptable both for the public and the prospective tenants. As the report proudly proclaims, it had been the architects’ aim “to develop a multi-unit block scheme that would provide the advantages that flat-planning makes possible, without the disadvantages. How near this has been realized can be judged after a visit to the site.”⁷

And indeed, this begins with the land on which the Dixon Street Flats were built between 1941 and 1943. Important to the architects’ argument, the site is not anywhere in the suburbs, but in the city of Wellington, promising the future occupants stunning views over Wellington Harbour. Being the Hunter Estate, a former Wellington mayor’s own land, the site seems to be equipped with the necessary *gravitas* for a project of national significance.⁸ But the building did not only allow a view out, it was also very visible from the city.⁹

The block contains 116 one-bedroom apartments which all provided optimum privacy, despite the use of open gallery access to the flats – however just kitchens and bathrooms were orientated towards the “open-air gallery,”¹⁰ while bedrooms and living-rooms faced the city-side. Each flat gained maximum access to sunlight, through the building’s general orientation; and through the in-situ cast concrete structure, enough sound insulation was provided for each flat, as well. “The impression gained after an inspection of the block is that of small individual houses placed in rows and one above each other, each with its separate front door and private outlook.”¹¹

Further, the DoHC was able to employ a number of technical devices that went beyond standard practice. Here, at Dixon Street, they were able to install a radio system that linked a separate amplifier in every single apartment to one main antenna for the whole building, so that the Report could proudly state: “The provision made for radio reception in the flats is the first of its particular form to be used in this country.”¹² Also, the lift system chosen was automatic, the most modern, and was proudly referred to as of the same type as the elevators in the new Government Building.¹³ The incinerator (which however caused serious

health problems to some tenants¹⁴) was not so uncommon in public buildings, but taken altogether, the image appears of a building that the DoHC was visibly proud of and that could be advertised as a political success for the Labour Government.¹⁵

These observations gain in weight when the project is compared with state projects like the multi-units, which Ernst Plischke had been assigned to design for Orakei, Auckland. As I have noted before, Plischke had to face radical changes, in particular simplifications, in the process of realising the Orakei units. This was clearly a result of war-time restrictions.¹⁶ In stark contrast, the Dixon Street Flats received plenty of attention and necessary funding, working as a lighthouse project. As Julia Gatley has remarked, more is therefore at stake: “the authorship of the Dixon Street Flats has ramifications concerning the establishment of a New Zealand modernism. Was this a New Zealand building or was it a building displaced from Europe?”¹⁷ It surely marked a bold move towards recent international developments in apartment architecture, as for example Walter Gropius’ 1929 scheme for flats in Siemensstadt, an industrial precinct of Berlin.¹⁸ Plischke’s mysterious remark that “In Dixon Street in Wellington, my department built the first continental European block of flats,”¹⁹ also points in this direction. It was clearly not the parallel project to the Department’s ‘New Zealand House’. Rather, it was a European building that had been adapted to New Zealand conditions.

Some 15 years after completion of Dixon Street, historian Nikolaus Pevsner undertook to compare the newest architectural developments in Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand, in the *Architectural Review*’s Commonwealth Issue of 1959. He pointed out that although only very few blocks of flats had been built in New Zealand, it was the Government that had pushed this development, an unusual situation in comparison to the other Commonwealth countries:

It is perhaps the most characteristic feature of the architectural situation in New Zealand that the Government Architect’s Department is responsible for nearly all the major work in the country, and that in addition the department, under its head, Gordon Wilson, who died prematurely a few months ago, represented the spearhead of modern enterprise instead of being safely in the rear as one would expect in Europe and as is, for instance, the case in South Africa.²⁰

Pevsner’s remark puts the New Zealand situation in a larger context. It emphasises that Gordon Wilson’s contribution as the department’s head architect is not to be underestimated, as he managed to bring together a group of motivated and able architects from New Zealand and overseas. The group of emigrants – refugees from the Nazis in Czechoslovakia, Germany, Austria – was considerable. These were, amongst others, architects named Cohn, Schwarzkopf, Frederick Farrar from Vienna (Friedrich Feuer), Ernst Gerson from Hamburg, Frederick Newman (Friedrich Neumann)²¹ and Ernst Plischke. Particularly Newman’s and Plischke’s contributions are remembered today, but it should not be forgotten that Cohn, Gerson, Schwarzkopf and Farrar contributed their share to the work of the Department. Ernst Gerson, for example, later worked as assistant (!) for the 13 years younger Ernst Plischke

in his function as Community planner. However, he had, in the practice of his two brothers Hans and Oskar Gerson in Hamburg, co-designed important large expressionist brick office buildings in the 1920s, such as the well-known “Ballinhaus”. Thus, Wilson had managed to gather well-trained and highly experienced European architects in the Department, while amongst these Plischke was probably the one with the strongest understanding of modernist architecture.

Existing scholarship

Linda Tyler must have picked a tone of self-assured conviction about Plischke’s authorship when she recorded her interviews with Plischke for her 1986 University of Canterbury Masters thesis. She claims:

Dixon Street is Plischke’s only major Housing Department design to be built largely according to his conception; it was altered only slightly with flowerboxes being provided for each unit, and applied to the front façade of the block in a manner that seems apologetic for the severity of the form ... Dixon Street was a success for Plischke, although he received no credit personally for the design, he felt it had been his chance to express his ideas and show what could be accomplished within the strictures of a war-time budget. However, even Plischke’s plans for Dixon Street were altered, so that he felt they were no longer wholly his.²²

It is obvious that Tyler received from Plischke the notion that he, Ernst Anton Plischke, had had major input into the Dixon Street Flats project. If it was only for these recordings, there would not have been any reason for further discussion of its authorship. But because of its elevated position, both literally and politically, the Dixon Street Flats have received further close attention from New-Zealand based architectural historians. Specifically Julia Gatley and Robin Skinner have attempted clarification of the authorship of this building, Gatley studied the history of the design of the Dixon Street Flats within the broader context of New Zealand Labour politics during the Second World War.²³ In a reply to Gatley’s research, Robin Skinner’s article of 2008 revisits documents, clarifies and speculates on the question of the authorship.²⁴ Eva Ottilinger’s and August Sarnitz’s 2003 important volume *Ernst Plischke. Das neue Bauen und die Neue Welt*, however, does not add new knowledge that would help answer this question.²⁵

In her own research on this question, Gatley found no evidence that Plischke had even been involved in the design of the Dixon Street Flats at all. She concluded that it was Gordon Wilson who, as the architect responsible for the project, also had to be called the designer since no drawings had been found at all that carried Plischke’s signature; they just showed the draughtsmen’s signatures and Wilson’s as the checking authority.²⁶ And the only drawing that did bear Plischke’s signature, the overall perspective of the building, she found to have been produced in 1942, after the building’s construction had already begun – hence she concluded that this was purely a representation drawing and not for design decision making. Thus, Gatley opened the debate by asking what role Plischke might have played

in this project at all. She further argued that it would have been difficult to commission an enemy alien with the design of such a politically significant building as the Dixon Street Flats were: “Was this ‘child of the State’, this expression of the progressive nature of the Labour Government, the work of a New Zealand architect or was it the work of a German speaking refugee who was a potential spy and an ‘enemy alien’?”²⁷ No matter whether this is a useful argument or not, it needs to be put into perspective: Plischke had actually been found suitable by the Government to represent New Zealand in two projects of national importance: the Abel Tasman Memorial (1942) and New Zealand’s present to Great Britain, the desk for Crown Princess Elizabeth (1947-49).

Robin Skinner replied in 2008 and was able to rectify the date for the perspective, having noticed that it had already been published in late 1940.²⁸ This significant finding opens up the possibility that Plischke’s perspective could indeed have contributed to the design development. Skinner further points at a remark by Graham Dawson that, although he thought that Dixon Street was designed before Plischke “joined the team”; “in discussions with the team and with Wilson, Plischke’s influence must have been considerable.”²⁹ Skinner also made suggestions as to Plischke’s interest in Le Corbusier’s *tracés régulateurs*, the regulating lines with which proportional harmony of a façade could be achieved, and concluded that the design as built was possibly bearing signs of these regulating lines. Thoroughly interested in Le Corbusier’s work, Plischke had made use of regulating lines in earlier projects, in particular in the façade of the Employment office in Vienna Liesing of 1930-31. But Skinner was not able to resolve the question of authorship either way.

New details on Plischke’s contribution to the DoHC

Ernst Plischke received a visa for New Zealand in December 1938. This had been obtained through the intervention of Dr. Theo Herzberg-Fränkell, a former Austrian client of Plischke, and his brother Otto Frankel who lived in Christchurch. The visa had been made possible since Plischke had been offered a job in the DoHC. He and his family arrived in Wellington on 15 May 1939. He entered into the Department’s service just two days later, on 17 May 1939. The first weeks he spent developing interior designs for the Centennial Exhibition.³⁰ He was given a relatively big job by Gordon Wilson already in mid- to late August, the design of the ‘theme and variations’ of multi-units for Orakei, Auckland.³¹ He was also given the task to design low-rise blocks of flats in Mt. Eden and Parnell, Auckland.³² At the same time, the DoHC had already prepared a first version of a future block of flats. This was exhibited as a model at the Centennial Exhibition in Wellington, 1939.³³ In the following months, the DoHC architects will have tried and tested a number of alternatives for the Dixon Street Flats building.

Shortly after his arrival in Wellington, Plischke drafted and sent several letters to his Austrian friend Lucie Rie (who had emigrated to London in 1938), explaining his new situation and the new work he was doing; therefore his contemporary designs for Orakei, Auckland got explained in detail. Neither the Dixon Street Flats nor the McLean Flats however find any mention in the surviving correspondence. It is unclear why this is. The only letter that could

give a hint is an undated draft letter of circa January 1940 to Lucie Rie, still written in German. It shows a growing frustration about the reactions Plischke receives in the department to his attempts at designing in a manner he regards as essential – could this relate to the Dixon Street project at all?

All the young architects here are fully enlightened of course and to them, architecture is exclusively a question of the price of the respective building materials, the rent and the land value, and what results from those is modern architecture. And when they have brought all these components together in one design they are proud and fully satisfied.

And anyone who might think of real proportions or, god forbid, even space or a sculptural expression [Bauplastik], is not just a poor fool and artist but first and foremost vermin of the socialist community, who needs to be eradicated from the root – something which they do with Le Corbusier to start with.³⁴

During his first years in the department, Plischke kept private time sheets of his daily work, covering the time between 22 August 1939 and 14 February 1941.³⁵ These time sheets mostly document the work spent on the multi-units for Orakei, Auckland, with which he started on 23 August 1939.³⁶ He drew many versions of them, and thus the time sheets end on 14 February 1941, with his comment “start with working drawings of Orakei 32.” Interspersed are mentions of his engagement with the project for an apartment block in the suburb of Mount Eden in Auckland, starting on 1 April 1940: “Beginn mit Mt. Eden Rd.” (in German), until 8 November 1940: “afternoon Mt. Eden flats.” However, nowhere in these time sheets is there any mention of the Dixon Street Flats – which read as a strong indicator that Plischke did not contribute to Dixon Street at all. Still, there is a considerable gap in these sheets, between 16 April and 9 September 1940. No entries exist for this period. It is possible that the sheets in question are simply missing.³⁷ However, consulting the surviving blueprints of the Orakei project one finds that these were produced between 8 May and 4 June 1940, drawn by E. A. P. (Ernst Plischke) and traced by R. M. Y. (Martin Yeoman).³⁸ This means that the gap is reduced to circa three months from early June to September 1940. If the argument for his part-authorship was to be based on his time sheets as record, then he could only have contributed to the Dixon Street Flats between early June and early September 1940.

Similar drawings for two different projects

Plischke filed photographs of his projects, both in New Zealand and in Austria.³⁹ Each project received its own folder of photos, and there exists a thin folder called “Dixon Street Flats.” It contains photographs of drawings – of the well-known perspectival presentation drawing of the Dixon Street block, and of the interior of one of the flats.

The interior drawing (Figure 1) is important. It was drawn by Ernst Plischke (it bears his signature) and contains, as demonstration object, one of the armchairs he had designed in his Viennese years (this appears closest to the one in Hans and Lucie Rie’s apartment of

1928/29). The interior also contains inbuilt furniture, as Plischke designed in every one of his houses – here in form of sideboard, bookshelves and inbuilt radiator. In slightly altered form, these were indeed built for the units. Although this is not proof of Plischke’s authorship of the interior design, it points strongly into this direction.⁴⁰



Fig. 1 Interior perspective for Dixon Street Flats, drawn by Ernst Plischke. Private archive, Vienna.

Two further photos in this folder deserve attention: they show similar perspectival presentation drawings as for the Dixon Street project, but here, the block of flats is more clearly separated into two buildings, one of five stories and the adjacent block of nine stories plus a garage level underneath the main entrance. They are clearly from Plischke’s hand (the way the car is drawn serves as proof).⁴¹ The two drawings represent two variations of the same project; only the form of the balconies differs. One drawing shows them as loggias, whereas the other drawing shows them in form of projecting balconies, grouped in pairs with semi-circular ends. The resemblance of these drawings with the Dixon Street block is striking: both main blocks contain ten stories, both show one main stairway, expressed in a vertical series of glass windows, each separated into nine glass sheets.

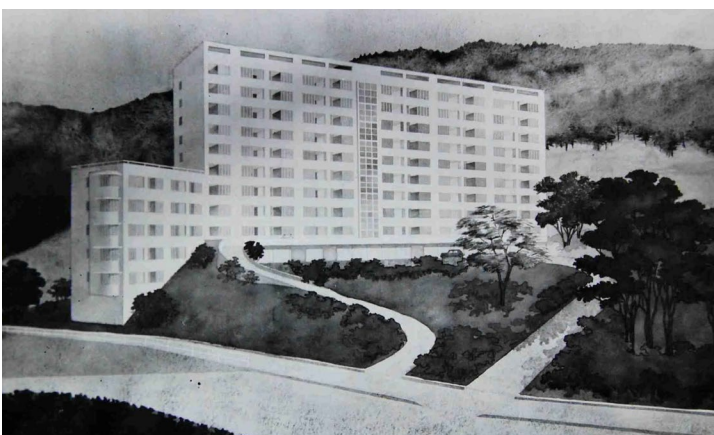


Fig. 2 One of the alternative perspectives for the McLean Flats, drawn by Ernst Plischke. Private archive, Vienna.

What differs are the parapets, and the arrangement of the entry. The Dixon Street Flats are entered directly from ground floor level, whereas the other project contains two ways of access: a road to the garages on the ground floor, and a generously swung ramp for

pedestrians to enter the building on the first floor, from a projected ‘street in the air.’ And whereas Dixon Street gradually, and irregularly, steps down from ten to eight to seven storeys (the latter plus level for a caretaker flat), this project also contains, as an annex to the road, a five-storey block with a vertical series of bay windows at its lower end. Since the drawing is labelled “Flat Development no. 308 the Terrace Wellington,” it is clear that this second project (Figure 2) shows the McLean Flats in a form never built.⁴² What was built in 1945 instead is the lower part of this project – the relatively small block of five storeys. As Gatley has identified, the layout of these flats is identical with the Dixon Street Flats.⁴³

Performance review

The comparison of the three perspectives in question demonstrates a family likeness of the projects that is not immediately visible in the buildings as executed. Did Plischke possibly work on both projects or on none of them? A note from his own files might add to the debate. In 1943, Gordon Wilson had assessed Plischke’s work in form of what we would nowadays call a performance review. The original of the document seems to no longer exist, but Plischke carefully copied the double-sided sheet by hand, even including the instructions to the supervisor who was to fill in the form. The document dates from 23 August 1943. Firstly Plischke records Wilson’s general remarks on his abilities: “Mr. Plischke is a very capable architect especially valuable to the Dept. for his planning and designing ability.”⁴⁴ He further notes that, according to Wilson, his duties to date had been: “Planning of blocks of flats for Mt. Eden – Auckland // Parnell Road Auckland – Mc.Lean Estate (Main-Block) Wellington. Development of new multi unit houses. Perspective drawings of flat developments.”⁴⁵

If Wilson does not mention Dixon Street here, is this not the final proof that Plischke was *not* involved? If we suspend judgement at this point, the argument can be carried further via a slight detour, this being the McLean Flats. Indeed, the Plischke Archive in Vienna (Albertina Museum) contains a set of blueprints of the McLean Flats, in part drawn by “P. R. B.” and in part drawn by “E. A. P.” – Ernst Plischke. Unfortunately they are undated, but together with Wilson’s statement this must serve as clear evidence that it was Plischke who designed the McLean Flats.⁴⁶

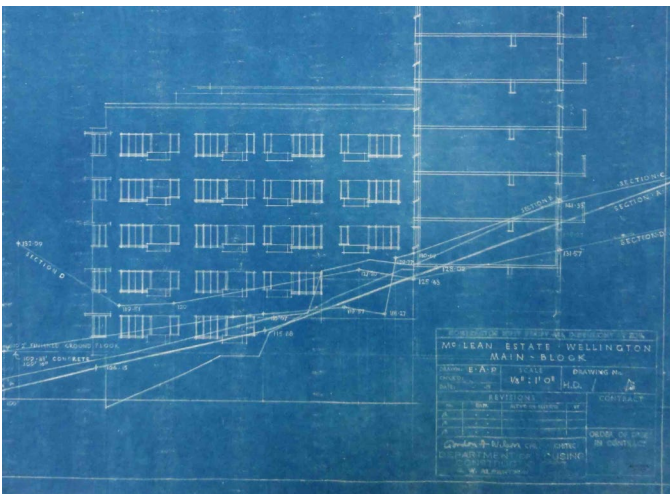


Fig. 3 Combined facade and section for the McLean Flats, drawn by Ernst Plischke. Plischke Archive, Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna.

The last and possibly most important piece of circumstantial evidence, however, stems from the project for the Mt Eden Flats in Auckland, which Plischke worked on from the 1st of April at least until November 1940 (as per his time sheets above). The Mt Eden project contained a number of differently sized flats, amongst them one-bedroom flats which, in plan, resemble the flats in the Dixon Street design almost down to the last dot. In his autobiography, Plischke remembers: “The four wings of the block [for Mt Eden] on the one hand consist of the open-gallery type, already developed for Dixon Street ... and on the other hand of the ‘Zweispänner’ (two flats entered from one staircase), as developed for Orakei ...”⁴⁷ Therefore one could suggest that Plischke used someone else’s plan floor plans for his Mount Eden designs. The use of passive voice might indicate this. But it is Plischke’s typical way of talking about his own designs. It also needs to be remembered that he had designed, from scratch, every single one of the Orakei floor plans; thus it is much more plausible that he used his own pre-designed floor plans – from Orakei and Dixon Street – for the Mount Eden project.

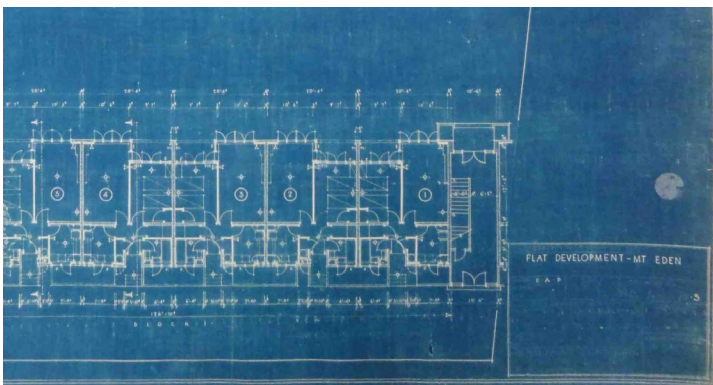


Fig. 4 Mt Eden block – wing with one bedroom flats, drawn by Ernst Plischke. Plischke Archive, Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna.

From Plischke’s perspective

Much later, in his autobiography of 1989, Ernst Plischke retells John Beaglehole’s comment to Joseph Heenan in 1942, “to give E. A. P. a fair chance,”⁴⁸ while adding that “my personal difficulties during the planning of the first big block of flats in New Zealand for Dixon Street would have been familiar to him.”⁴⁹ Obviously unwilling to speak openly about these problems regarding the project, Plischke leaves it open for his readers to guess what might have been behind these “personal difficulties.” At the same time it must have been perfectly clear for Plischke himself. He had conveyed to Linda Tyler his version that the Dixon Street Flats as built largely followed his own design. Further to this, in three consecutive *curricula vitae* written over a time of about 40 years, he repeatedly states his design activity for blocks of flats during his time at the DoHC. In his 1947 application at Auckland University, he writes: “From the beginning of my work with the Department I was concerned with the design and working drawings of houses, multi-units and blocks of flats.”⁵⁰ In his 1960 application at the Academy in Vienna, he says: “In the beginning I prepared designs and working drawings for multi-units [EAP: ‘grouped single-family dwellings’], then designs and working drawings for blocks of flats. Containing similar types of units, they varied in their height from two to

ten stories.”⁵¹ There was only one ten-storey block of flats, and those are the Dixon Street Flats. And similarly in a last CV from the 1980s, he writes about himself in the third person: “He emigrated with his wife and one son to New-Zealand in 1939. First he designed in the Government Housing-Department three to four multi-unit types of houses followed by high-rise blocks of flats.”⁵² This does not sound as if there were any doubts about his involvement – and no need to prove anything: they are just a matter-of-fact statement, as should be in a CV.

A possible answer but the question remains open

As mentioned before, the State Housing Report pointed out the careful development of the Dixon Street Flats, assuring that: “The Architects of the Department of Housing Construction made many studies of the problem before the design was finalized.”⁵³ This is a strong indication that not just one architect worked on the scheme but that the input of several architects was used to develop the building. Since many alternatives had been explored, it is entirely possible that Plischke had suggested the version that was built – or at least a version that is very close to what has been built. A block of flats offers very limited design options. Once the main circulation decisions and decisions about the structure (concrete/steel/masonry) have been made, there are few design moves left. Still, it is possible that Plischke had made the crucial suggestion that changed the design from the 1939 Centennial Exhibition model to what was built: introducing the one-stairway solution with open-gallery access to each flat, designing the plan for the one-bedroom flats, including the in-built furniture, and suggesting ways of presenting the façade. If this was the case, Skinner’s suggestion that the overall proportions of Dixon Street are following *tracés régulateurs* as used by Plischke in many of his other designs would sit well with Plischke’s complaint to Lucie Rie that “anyone who might think of real proportions or, god forbid, even space or a sculptural expression [Bauplastik]” was simply considered a fool in the department, and it would support the overall impression that the Dixon Street Flats show Plischke’s hand in many aspects. However, the fact that no contemporary comment by Plischke to self or to his friends can be identified that would speak about the Dixon Street project, does not help to substantiate any argument for his authorship. And thus the question of Plischke’s involvement with the Dixon Street Flats has to remain open.

1 Department of Housing Construction (DoHC), *General Report on State Housing in New Zealand* (Wellington: Ministry of Works, 1943), 24.

2 DoHC, *General Report*, 24-25.

3 DoHC, *General Report*, 26.

4 DoHC, *General Report*, 29.

5 DoHC, *General Report*, 33.

6 DoHC, *General Report*, 33.

7 DoHC, *General Report*, 37.

8 Archives New Zealand, file W 4357 / 504/ 79/62.

9 See the remark by Julia Gatley in “Labour Takes Command: A History and Analysis of State Rental Flats in New Zealand 1935-1949” (Masters thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 1997), 13, with respect to the political significance of the project.

- 10 DoHC, *General Report*, 37.
- 11 DoHC, *General Report*, 37.
- 12 DoHC, *General Report*, 39.
- 13 DoHC, *General Report*, 38.
- 14 Letter of architect Jorgensen (ex DoHC) to Minister of Works, April 10, 1944. Archives New Zealand, file HD W1353 124/10/2 Part IV.
- 15 See Gatley's discussion of Labour Housing Politics in "Labour Takes Command," particularly 47-57.
- 16 See Christoph Schnoor, "Between Werkbund and Wartime Sobriety: Ernst Plischke's Designs for Orakei," in *Proceedings of the Society of Architectural Historians, Australia and New Zealand: 31, Translation*, ed. Christoph Schnoor (Auckland and Gold Coast, Qld: SAHANZ and Unitec, 2014), 805-816.
- 17 Julia Gatley, "Privacy and Propaganda: The Politics of the Dixon Street Flats," *Interstices* 4 (1996): 7 (Digital copy).
- 18 Gatley has pointed at the similarities between Gropius' design and the Dixon Street Flats. See Gatley, "Labour Takes Command," 146.
- 19 Ernst A. Plischke, *Ein Leben mit Architektur* (Vienna: Löcker, 1989), 249. Translation by author.
- 20 Nikolaus Pevsner, "New Zealand," *Architectural Review* 126, no. 752 (October 1959): 205-206.
- 21 On Newman see Andrew Leach, *Frederick H. Newman, Lectures on Architecture* (Ghent: A&S Books, 2003). Also see Archives New Zealand, file AAAR 493 Box 4, "Enemy Alien: Ernst Anton Plischke, 1940-1942", memorandum dated June 12, 1942, which names architects Farrar, Neumann, Cohn, Schwarzkopf and Gerson as staff members of the Department of Housing Construction.
- 22 Linda Tyler, "The Architecture of E. A. Plischke in New Zealand: 1939-1962" (Masters thesis, University of Canterbury, 1986), 47 and 49.
- 23 These are: Gatley, "Labour Takes Command"; Julia Gatley, "Privacy and Propaganda: The Politics of the Dixon Street Flats," *Fabrications* 7 (August 1996): 77-98; Gatley, "Privacy and Proganada," *Interstices* 4 (1996): 1-11 (Digital copy).
- 24 Robin Skinner, "Further Investigations into an Authorship: Reassessing the Dixon Street Flats Archive," *Interstices* 9 (2008): 60-73.
- 25 Eva Ottilinger and August Sarnitz, *Ernst Plischke. Das neue Bauen und die Neue Welt* (Munich: Prestel, 2003).
- 26 Gatley, "Privacy and Propaganda," *Interstices*, 7.
- 27 Gatley, "Privacy and Propaganda," *Interstices*, 7.
- 28 Skinner, "Further Investigations into an Authorship," 66.
- 29 Skinner, "Further Investigations into an Authorship," 64.
- 30 Family letters and other evidence, also see Orosz, "Biografie," in Ottilinger and Sarnitz, *Ernst Plischke*, 273.
- 31 Ernst Plischke, undated draft letter to Lucie Rie, c. August 25, 1939, private archive, Vienna. See Schnoor, "Between Werkbund and Wartime Sobriety," 811.
- 32 This qualifies Gatley's claim that "Plischke was given little responsibility during his first couple of years in the Department of Housing Construction." Gatley, "Privacy and Propaganda," *Interstices*, 4.
- 33 As Skinner has pointed out, see "Further Investigations into an Authorship," 66-69.
- 34 Ernst Plischke, draft letter to Lucie Rie, undated, probably January 1940.
- 35 Plischke Archive, Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna, Box "Staatsdienst NZ". Eight hand-written pages, numbered through from I to VIII.
- 36 "Grundriss v. horizontaler Type fertig gestellt" – floor plan of horizontal type finished.
- 37 The last entry of time sheet V ends at the bottom of the page, stating "16 April 1940. Final spurt Orakei. Mr Brimb. joins the work", with time sheet VI starting on 9 September, at the top of the new page, stating: "Sketches for new 4 unit block. ORAKEI 2."
- 38 Plischke Archive, Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna.
- 39 Ernst Plischke, Photo Collection, private archive, Vienna.
- 40 Compare Linda Tyler's mention of the interior drawing in her article "Built to Last," *Build* (August/September 2004): 30-34.
- 41 Originals of these drawings: Plischke Archive, Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna. See Eva Maria Orosz' significant oeuvre catalogue in Ottilinger and Sarnitz, *Ernst Plischke*, 285-368. This catalogue is only published in the German version of Ottilinger/Sarnitz. Orosz dates the drawing as 1942, unfortunately without further explanation.
- 42 Ernst Plischke, Photo Collection, private archive, Vienna.

- 43 “The floor plan and the north and south elevation of the McLean flats derive directly from a portion of the Dixon Street Flats in three, four and five storeys. The 12 single-bedroomed units within the McLean block are almost identical to the Dixon Street units.” Gatley, “Labour Takes Command,” 183.
- 44 Handwritten copy of performance review of Ernst Plischke, dated August 23, 1943. Plischke Archive, Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna, Box “Staatsdienst NZ”.
- 45 Performance review Plischke, Box “Staatsdienst NZ”.
- 46 This claim is not diminished by the observation that Newman later drew and traced a large number of its contract drawings. See Gatley, “Labour Takes Command,” 179.
- 47 Plischke, *Ein Leben mit Architektur*, 283. Translation by author.
- 48 Plischke, *Ein Leben mit Architektur*, 259. Comment written in English. This led to Plischke being commissioned with the design for the Tasman Memorial.
- 49 Plischke, *Ein Leben mit Architektur*, 259. Translation by author.
- 50 EAP, Plischke Archive, Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna, Box “Staatsdienst NZ,” document dated February 3, 1947, 3.
- 51 EAP, Plischke Archive, Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna, Box “Staatsdienst NZ”.
- 52 EAP, Box “Staatsdienst NZ”.
- 53 DoHC, *General Report*, 37.