

ST. VITUS CATHEDRAL AT PRAGUE CASTLE DURING THE PERIOD OF NORMALIZATION

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ABSTRACT

This paper deals with the building modifications in the building of the Cathedral of St. Vitus, St. Wenceslas, St. Adalbert and St. Mary during the period of normalization - the 1970s and 1980s. This period has so far been neglected by researchers, although many articles and publications have been written about the history, development and artistic decoration of the cathedral. Normalization, like the entire period of communist rule in Czechoslovakia, meant the oppression of church leaders, the suppression of sacred themes in religious buildings and in everyday life. Nevertheless, the cathedral was the scene of necessary reconstruction works, as well as modifications aimed at improving the use of space and interventions based on the change of the Roman Catholic liturgy.

St. Vitus Cathedral is the most important Catholic church in the Czech Republic, formerly in Czechoslovakia, and even earlier in the Czech Kingdom. Its construction, spanning almost 700 years, demonstrates the development in culture, technical possibilities, architectural and building art. The cathedral is an essential part of the Prague Castle complex and the Hradčany panorama. Prague Castle was and still is the center of secular and ecclesiastical power. This connection was symbolically fulfilled by the most important ruler ceremonies (coronations, funerals, marriages, christenings), which took place in the cathedral.

One of the most beautiful and most photographed views of Hradčany is dominated by the silhouette of Prague Castle and especially the cathedral. The St. Vitus Cathedral rises from the base formed by the uniform design of the facades of Prague Castle, which was created during the reign of Empress Maria Theresa. For a long time, the cathedral itself looked like a torso, as only the bell tower with a Renaissance and later Baroque helmet was built. The transept and the towers in the facade were not completed until the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

On the basis of archival research, interviews with witnesses and the study of specialist literature, the reader is introduced to the interventions in St. Vitus Cathedral and the associated change in the space for the celebration of the liturgy, as well as the space for ordinary visitors to this church during the period under study. Further attention is given to the unrealised designs and other sacred buildings in the grounds of the Castle.

KEYWORDS

Prague Castle, St. Vitus Cathedral, Sacral Buildings, Building Modifications, Reconstruction, Liturgical Modifications, Normalization

INTRODUCTION

Between 1948 and 1989, Czechoslovakia was ruled by the Communist Party, which enforced the totalitarian character of Czechoslovakia and later the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. An anti-religious policy was applied. It was manifested by the crackdown on religious men and women in the 1950s, the suppression of religious and Christian themes from ordinary public life, the emphasis on atheistic education of children and youth, and the holding of civil ceremonies [1],[2]. One of the typical elements of the communist persecution was "the dilapidation, sanitation and profanation of existing

sacred buildings, efforts to minimize sacred architecture, and, on the contrary, alternative offerings in the form of civil ceremonies and quasi-sacred spaces" [1]. At the turn of the 1950s and 1960s, some churches were even expropriated (for example, the Basilica of St. George at Prague Castle) [1], [3]. In the 1960s, "there was a gradual relaxation of the cultural policy of the state, which heralded the development and significant success of Czechoslovak artistic creation, the adoption of Western cultural patterns and a broad social relaxation" [1]. In 1968 the believers rode the wave of enthusiasm of the whole society, they also experienced a very intense period when they expected the correction of the state's ecclesiastical policy. This period was followed by the so-called normalization, when there was a return to "the violent suppression of expressions of discontent and dissent in the public space, the displacement and real persecution of groups of citizens with different and critical views, although the draconian nature was not equal to that of the 1950s" [1]. For the Church, normalization meant the end of promising prospects; it was once again persecuted by the state, this time in the form of working for the widespread atheization of civil society, rather than through public trials of Church leaders [1], [4].

St. Vitus Cathedral is the seat of the Archbishop of Prague, the highest representative of the Czech Roman Catholic Church. Quite naturally, together with Prague Castle, "it has become a kind of the center and heart of the Czech lands, an obvious sign of Czech national and state identity" [5]. The cathedral is also a major attraction for tourists from all over the world. The pre-Romanesque rotunda, dedicated to St. Vitus and built by Prince Wenceslas, gradually became a chapter, bishop's and finally archbishop's church. It has undergone two major structural and architectural transformations from a Romanesque Basilica from the late 11th century to a magnificent torso of a Gothic cathedral [6]. The Czech national revival led to ideas for the completion of the extensive western part of this building. The completion took place from the end of the 19th century until 1929 on the occasion of the St Wenceslas Millennium (900 years since the martyrdom of St Wenceslas). The medieval construction of the cathedral and the 19th and 20th century completions, the artistic decoration of the exterior and interior, the liturgical and musical programme became an important "part of the artistic and social discourse, a symbolic and cultural phenomenon. It retained its position even in times that were not conducive to the development of cultural and religious activities, and it has not lost its significance even today" [7].

The strategic location in the middle of the castle, where first the prince, later the king and the president resided, brought the connection of secular and ecclesiastical power, thus another important and functional characteristic of St. Vitus Church. "It became the site of the most important ceremonies associated with the life and function of the monarch - coronation ceremonies, royal funerals, marriages and baptisms. Meetings and assemblies connected with the function of the feudal state and its internal and foreign policy were held here" [6].

The Cathedral of St. Vitus together with Prague Castle form the dominant feature of the so-called Hradčany panorama. The most frequently observed and recorded view of Hradčany is from the Charles Bridge or from the embankment leading from the National Theatre to the Charles Bridge, as shown in the attached picture Figure 1. Several towers rise above the small historic houses of the Lesser Town (St. Nicholas Church, St. Thomas Church, Lesser Town Bridge Tower, and others), the horizontal roofline of Paccasi's South Wing (rebuilding and unification of the facades under Maria Theresa) rises above them, and the main motif is the richly articulated silhouette of St. Vitus Church [8].



Fig. 1 – Hradčany panorama (Prague Castle, Charles Bridge, Lesser Town) [9]

SACRAL BUILDINGS AT PRAGUE CASTLE IN HISTORY

The Rotunda of St. Vitus was built by Prince Wenceslas as the third Christian building at Prague Castle and the fifth in the then Czech Principality [7]. The oldest Christian building in the Castle was the Church of Our Lady. According to tradition, it was built during the reign of Prince Bořivoj at the end of the 9th century, and rather surprisingly it was built outside the central part of the future Přemyslid Castle. Around 920, a second Christian building, the Basilica of St. George, was founded on the eastern elevation (today's St. George Square) [10]. "In 972-973, when the Prague bishopric was founded, the rotunda of St. Vitus became the bishop's church. It is very likely that the bishop must have been given space to build his residence at that time, first in wood, later in stone, with the Chapel of St. Moritz. It looks as if the space that would become the spiritual center of the country during the 11th century had already been defined in this early period" [7].

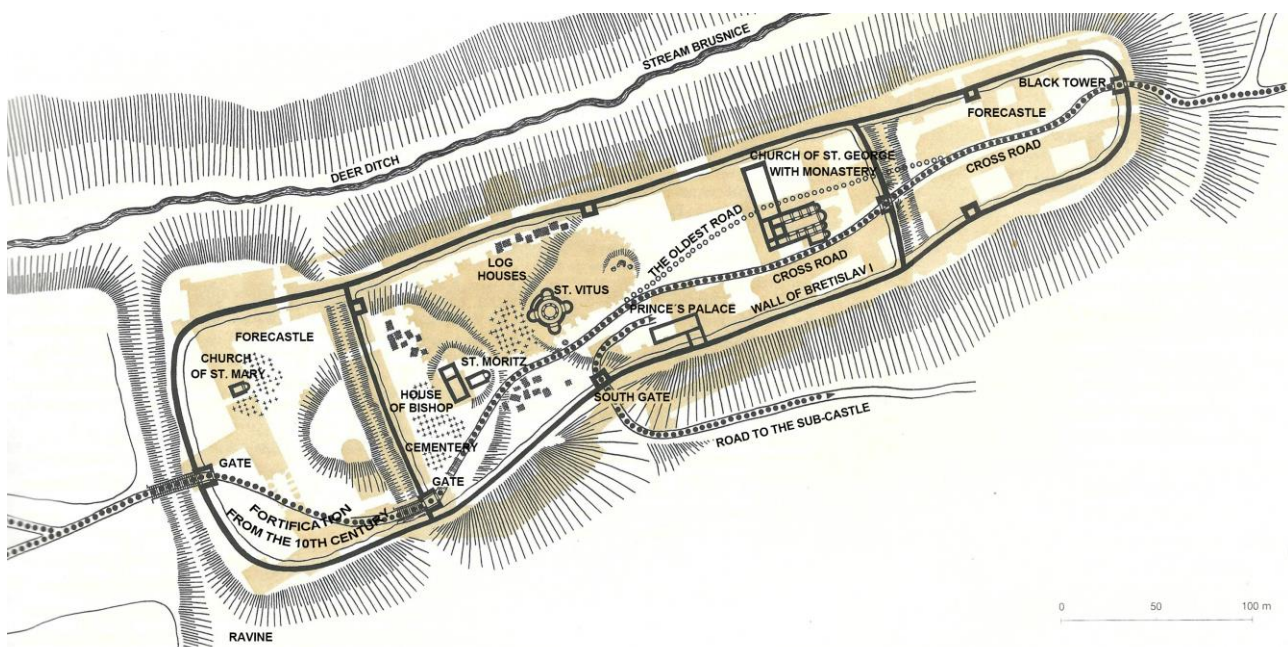


Fig. 2 – Reconstruction of a pre-Romanesque hillfort – the predecessor of today's Castle. The main buildings are: the princely palace, the rotunda of St. Vitus, the three-nave basilica of St. George, the bishop's house with the chapel of St. Moritz, several towers and gates, log buildings of peasants and servants, cemeteries. Colour suite according to the stable cadastre of 1879 [8]

Subsequent rulers of the Přemyslid family supplemented the ground plan of Prague Castle with other sacral buildings, see Figure 2. The Rotunda of St. Vitus ceased to be sufficient, and it was

decided to replace it with a new church. Starting in 1060, a two-chambered, three-aisled Romanesque Basilica with two towers, crypts, a transept and several attached or related chapels was built over a period of about 30 years. By the second half of the 13th century, the episcopal complex with the basilica had been extended by several other buildings. On the north side of the basilica a chapter house with an ambit and the chapel of St. Thomas was added. The Romanesque bishop's house with the Chapel of St. Moritz was gradually expanded to the west. In the south, the basilica was connected by a long corridor with the church of St. Bartholomew (located in the excavation area under the third courtyard, excavations were carried out in 1920-1922). The disappearance of parts of this complex was related to the construction of the Gothic cathedral [7]. In the second half of the 12th century, Prince Spytihnev built a new princely palace in the south and also new walls, which were essentially part of the palace. The castle chapel of All Saints was added to the eastern side of the palace [11]. In 1142, the church and the monastery of St. George burned down, after which both buildings were rebuilt. "The original short, three-aisled basilica with a crypt under the altar was extended (...) and a south tower was added to the north tower" [8]. To the east of the basilica, a monastic hospital with the Church of St. John the Baptist was built, but it soon disappeared, see Figure 3.

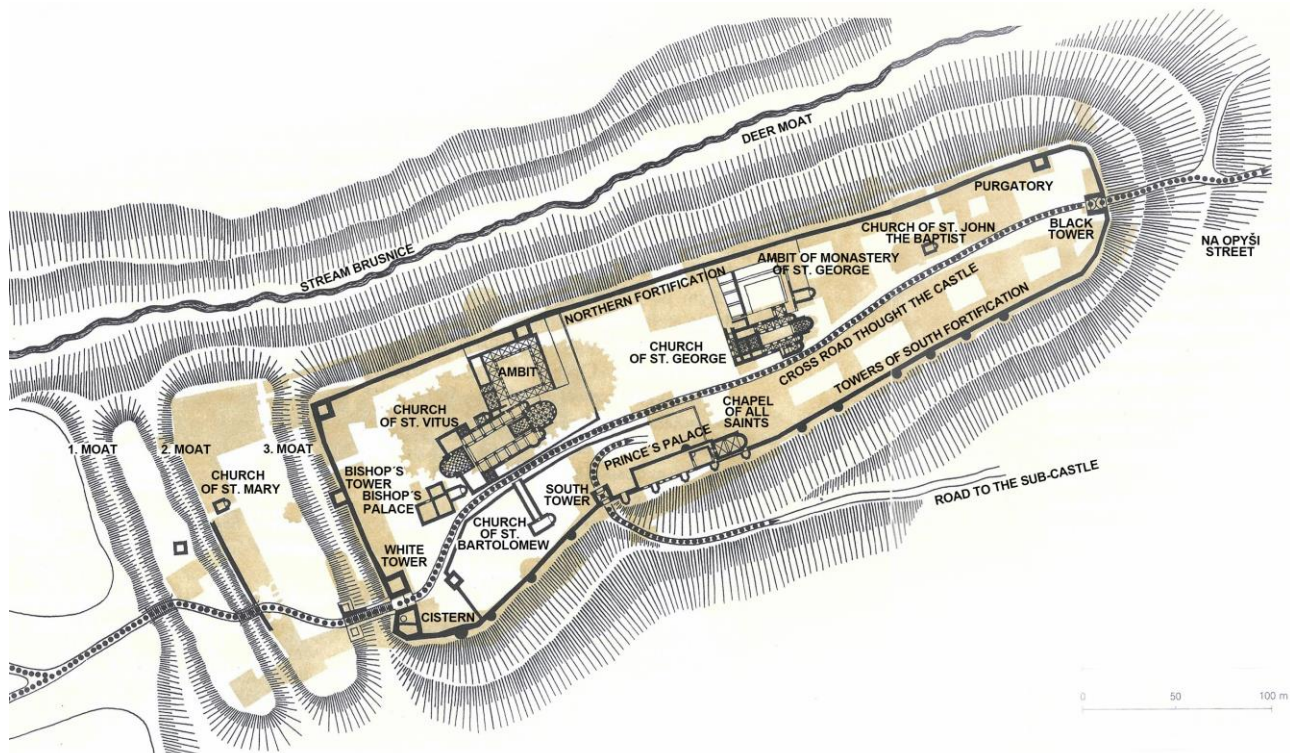


Fig. 3 – Reconstruction of Prague Castle during the last Přemyslids at the end of the 13th century, drawn in the contour lines of today's Castle. Three main buildings stand out: the Romanesque Basilica of St. Vitus with the bishop's house next door, the three-nave Church of St. George with the monastery and the paradise court, and the princely palace, which is flanked on the south side by the wall. It is reinforced by square towers, 2 of which are the gates of the Castle, the White (west) and the Black (east) [8]

The reign of Charles IV (1346-1378) brought unprecedented prosperity to the Bohemian lands, but also to Prague Castle. The old Romanesque castle, similar to the German Falci, was rebuilt according to the principles of French Gothic. A Gothic church of All Saints was built on the eastern side of the palace on the site of the original Romanesque chapel. The builder was Petr Parléř and his model was the Sainte-Chapelle in Paris. Unfortunately, the church was severely damaged by fire in 1541 and the subsequent rebuilding was done in a soberer Renaissance style. It has

retained this appearance to the present day, serving as the private chapel of the adjacent Institute of the Nobility since the mid-18th century [8]. The monarch had the Chapel of Our Lady created within the first floor of the royal palace and was also instrumental in the elevation of the Prague bishopric to an archbishopric. The foundation stone of the new cathedral was laid on 21 November 1344. The famous French architect Matthias of Arras was chosen for the construction, but he died prematurely (1352) and the construction was continued by an unknown master. At the same time the old basilica was being demolished [12]. By the time the new young architect, Peter Parléř, arrived, the nine pillars of the arcade around the choir, the eight choir chapels at the end of the church and the eight bays of the choir gallery had already been built [7]. Petr Parléř completed the sacristy with the treasury, built the chapel of St. Wenceslas, the south vestibule (Golden Gate) with a new sacristy on the first floor, completed the perimeter chapels on the north and south sides, and began the construction of the Great South Tower. Work on the cathedral was stopped by the Hussite wars. During the Jagiellonian reign, many successful and high-quality building interventions are associated with the name of Benedikt Ried (Rejt). He was responsible for the creation of Vladislav Hall, a magnificent Gothic airy hall with ribbed vaulting and Italian Renaissance windows. During the construction of this hall, the partitions between the three existing rooms on the floor of the royal palace were demolished. The original hall, the Chapel of the Virgin Mary and the Charles Room were thus lost [8]. Towards the end of the 15th century a new oratory was built in the cathedral in place of the Luxembourg oratory (probably under the direction of Hans Spiess or Benedikt Ried) [7]. Vladislav Jagiellon attempted to complete the cathedral, and the north tower was founded (Figure 4) [13]. Only a part of the new tower was built, it was badly damaged by fire, so it was demolished and the construction was never continued. A huge fire in 1541 also affected the cathedral, the fire spreading from the Great South Tower, which was temporarily covered with a shingled roof. The fire subsequently spread to the roof of the western part, with the entire roof trusses burnt and the interior furnishings damaged [7]. The fire also affected the church and the monastery of St. George.

PRAGUE CASTLE AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 16TH CENTURY

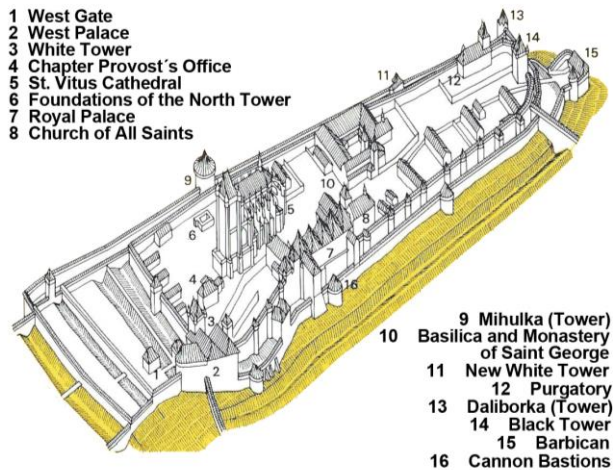


Fig. 4 – Prague Castle during reign of Vladislav Jagellonsky (early 16th century) [14]

PRAGUE CASTLE AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 17TH CENTURY

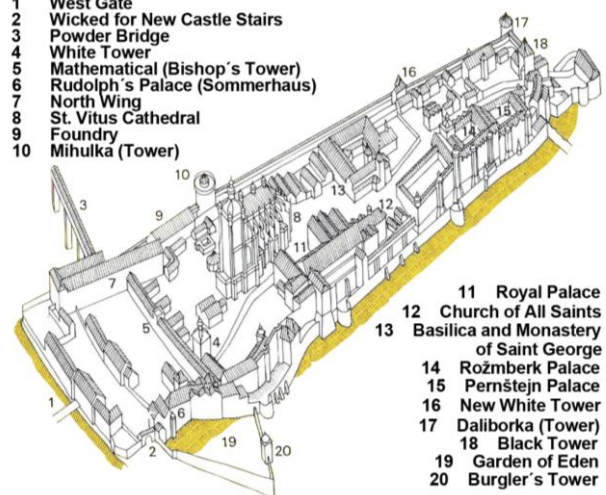


Fig. 5 – Prague Castle during reign of Rudolf II (early 17th century) [14]

The aforementioned fire facilitated the arrival of the Renaissance in the area of Prague Castle. From 1541 to the middle of the 19th century, the silhouette of the cathedral did not change significantly. Around 1560, a Renaissance porch and the complex Renaissance helmet of the Great South Tower (architect Bonifác Wohlmut) were added (Figure 5) [8]. The helmet was replaced in 1769-1771 by a Baroque cupola which remains on the cathedral to this day. The high choir was covered by a much lower roof with three spires [13]. A temporary wall was built to the west of the Gothic cathedral before the Hussite period. Between the wall and the cathedral was the Chapel of the Holy Trinity adjacent to the Great Tower (demolished 1887) and the central Renaissance chapel

of St. Adalbert (demolished 1879) [7]. The nave of the cathedral consisted of a Renaissance royal mausoleum, which was and still is surrounded by an iron grille [15]. During the Baroque period (after the Battle of White Mountain in 1620), new furnishings were created, new decorations were added to the chapels and altars (mural, paintings) [7]. The Baroque period brought the reconstruction of the main façade of St. George's Basilica (around 1671) and also a new building of the Chapel of St. John of Nepomuk (1718-1722, F. M. Kaňka), which was added to the façade of the basilica. The early Baroque façade has been preserved to this day. The Archbishop's Palace moved outside the Prague Castle but remained very close to Hradčany Square [8].

The reign of Maria Theresa and Joseph II in the second half of the 18th century meant the reconstruction of the Castle into office space and a change of the facade towards the city. Nicolo Pacassi created a single long façade in the French Classical style, a façade that has survived to the present day [8]. The Chapel of the Holy Cross was built in 1758-1763 on the site of the building office with the kitchen in the second courtyard, according to the same architect's design. The marble high altar with statues of angels and the Crucifixion painting have survived. The other furnishings date from 1852-1856, when the church was refurbished for the exciseman Ferdinand [14]. Joseph II abolished the monastery of St. George and had it converted into a barracks, and the basilica began to decay [8].

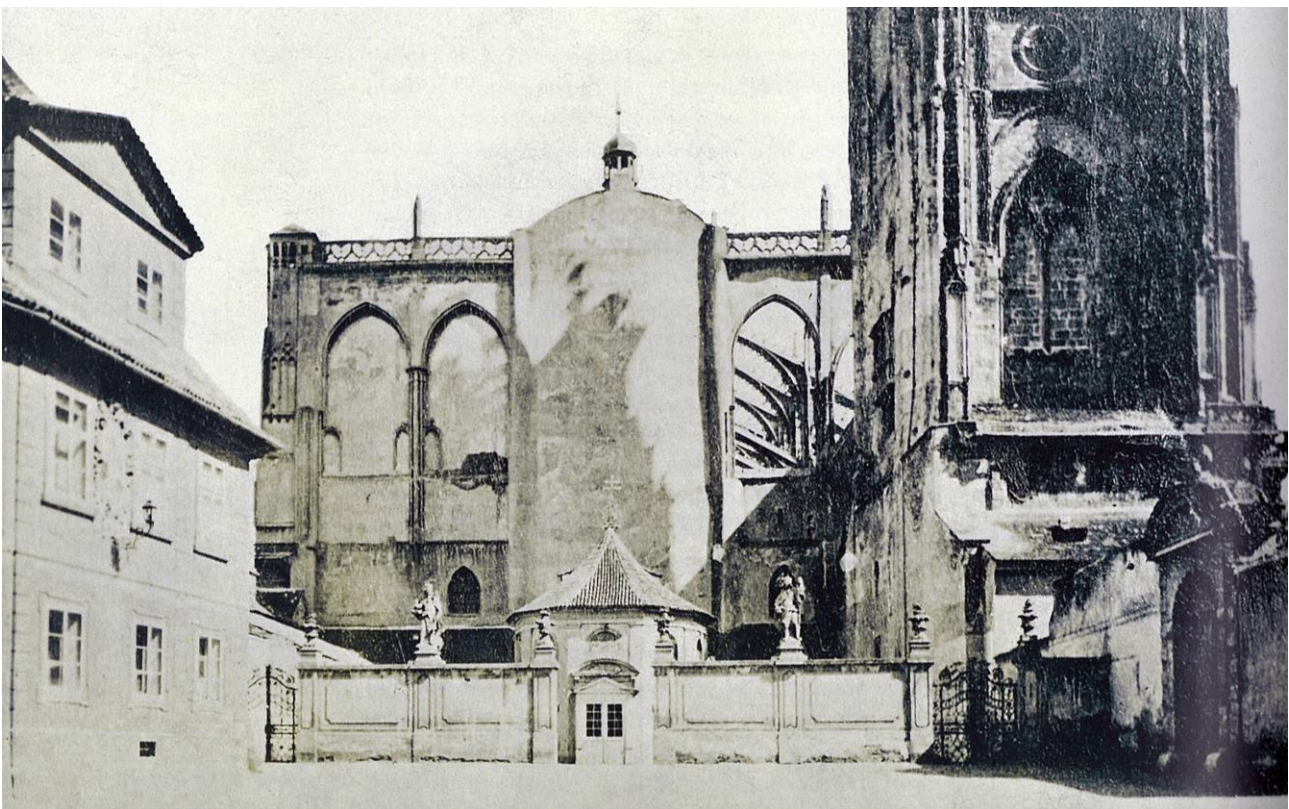


Fig. 6 – St. Vitus Cathedral with the Chapel of St. Adalbert, 1860s [16]

The middle of the 19th century brought ideas for the completion of St. Vitus Cathedral. The condition of the cathedral at this time can be seen in figure 6. In 1859, the Unity for the completion of the main cathedral of St. Vitus at Prague Castle was founded, and in 1873 the foundation stone of the completion was laid. The first builder of the cathedral was Josef Andreas Kranner in 1861. He built a stonework on St. George's Square, in the first phase he started with the repairs of the medieval part - he began with the reconstruction of the choir chapels, then he dealt with the placement of the neo-Gothic gargoyles, finally the work moved to the high choir and its support system. After Kranner's death, Josef Mocker became the second builder. He presented a new plan for the completion of the cathedral - a five-aisle version (as opposed to Kranner's three-aisle version), a west front with two

towers and three portals. Mocker worked on his concept until his death in 1899, commissioning additional gargoyles and sculptural decoration. He added neo-Gothic altars to the interior, restored the royal oratory, and modified the choir for the high altar. The last builder was Kamil Hilbert, who reworked some parts of the design and completed the whole process of completion by 1929. He continued the reconstruction of the tower, built the staircase to the first and second bell towers, finished some chapels, and the restoration of St. Wenceslas Chapel was a major task. He often used the motif of a spiral staircase [7].

The period after the Second World War, and especially with the advent of the communist regime, is associated with the decay, sanitation and profanation of existing sacral buildings [1]. There was no dilapidation and destruction at Prague Castle, but there were several adaptations and conversions of church buildings. This was related to the process of desecralization. The premises were to serve other than ecclesiastical purposes. This was to symbolically contribute to the separation of the state from the church. The cathedral began to be referred to as a mere burial place of Czech kings, and even the transfer of the crown jewels to other premises was considered [17]. The Church of All Saints was modified in 1952-1953, the Baroque grille was moved from its original position separating the chancel from the nave to a new position, which closed off the space of the Baroque tomb of St. Procopius. A Baroque Gothic organ was installed in the same building in 1964. They were transferred from the church in Skapce near Kladruby [14]. A Memorial to the History of the Czechoslovak People was to be built in the Monastery of St. George (considerations began in 1959, the project ran from 1961-1967), but due to construction complications this project was never completed. Another example was the conversion of the Chapel of the Holy Cross into a jewellery store, a project that was undertaken by the architect Studený in 1960. Another example was the reconstruction of the refreshment chapel in the Kajetán Garden according to the implementation project by architect Hrubý in 1966. At the turn of the 1950s and 1960s, churches were also expropriated as part of the atheisation process. In the Castle, this concerned the Basilica of St. George [3].

The newly elected first communist president, Klement Gottwald, attends a Te Deum mass in the cathedral in 1948. It was the last time a communist president attended a solemn mass, other presidents preferred other rituals after their election. In the 1950s, the primary religious character of the cathedral was suppressed. The spiritual center moved to several Prague churches where popular priests preached [7]. According to Government Decree No. 55/1954 Coll. on the protected area of Prague Castle, all real estate (including church buildings) became the property of the Czechoslovak state. In 1957 it was stipulated by contract that "the Metropolitan Chapter will continue to take care of the management and preservation of the internal facilities of the Metropolitan Cathedral" [18]. The interior furnishings, except for the objects of worship, were handed over to the administration of the Office of the President of the Republic. There were many disagreements between these two institutions in the administration of the Cathedral, as their rights and duties were not clearly defined. There were few spiritual activities in the cathedral, which improved only in the second half of the 1960s with the arrival of the apostolic administrator František Tomášek, which was of course also related to the social change [7].

The artistic activity in the St. Vitus Cathedral was very limited, the last action connected with the Unity was the completion of the south portal according to the architectural competition won by Jan Sokol and Josef Wagner. The work had been going on since 1950, completed in 1959 only under the direction of Sokol, as the sculptor Wagner died in 1957. Of the few other completed projects, mention can be made of the carving and installation of the relief tympanums of the west portals, the central one was installed in 1953, the southern one in 1956 and the northern one in 1966. During the total renovation of St. Wenceslas Chapel, which took place between 1964-1967, new stained-glass windows were installed by the well-known Libenský and Brychtová duo and Josef Soukup [7].

SACRAL BUILDINGS AT PRAGUE CASTLE IN THE PERIOD UNDER STUDY

Even during the period of normalisation, the process of desacralisation begun in the 1950s and described above was not stopped. Adaptations and conversions of religious buildings continued. Most of them did not serve their original purpose. After the unsuccessful project of the Memorial of the History of the Czechoslovak People in the monastery of St. George, it was decided to use this monastery for the needs of the National Gallery. Between 1969-1975 the monastery was adapted for exhibition purposes for the exposition of old Czech art from the Middle Ages to the end of the Baroque period (fig. 7 and 8). "Professor František Cubr and architect Josef Pilař designed the restoration to create a set of exhibition spaces. The sightseeing circuit was extended to include part of the ambit and the chapel area. In the interior and on the south façade, the architecture of the various stages of development was retained. The western and southern parts of the ambit, together with the Paradise Court, served as entrance and relaxation areas (...) The monastery was previously composed of several smaller rooms, which was not suitable for exhibition purposes. The partitions between the rooms were demolished and the whole space was unified" [19].



Fig. 7 – View of the exposition in the monastery of St. George – Gothic part [20]



Fig. 8 – View of the exposition in the monastery of St. George – Baroque part [21]

Another sacral space within the monastery of St. George was also newly designated for exhibition purposes - the Chapel of St. Anne. The implementation project was completed in 1973 by the aforementioned architects. The Chapel of the Holy Cross was used as a treasury, and only after the revolution (in 1991) was the entrance and information system of this chapel redesigned. The architect Miloslav Burian was in charge of it [22]. In the Church of All Saints, restoration work was carried out in the late 1980s (1987-1988). The younger paintings were removed and the original gilding was restored [14].

MODIFICATIONS IN THE CATHEDRAL IN THE PERIOD UNDER STUDY

The end of the 1960s was marked by social relaxation, and in 1969 a funeral mass was celebrated in honour of the late Cardinal Beran, who had died in Rome. It was considered to bring his body back to Bohemia, to the cathedral. The new people in the Communist Party leadership, however, did not want this to happen, and they had been trying for more consistent atheist propaganda since childhood. Their attitude towards the cathedral remained the same even during this period, as evidenced by the words of historian Jiří Burian, who was employed in the Office of the President of the Republic, in 1975: "St. Vitus Cathedral, as part of the National Cultural Monument - Prague Castle - has been the subject of constant care by the socialist state for two decades, which has maintained it as a jewel of Czech architecture, the scene of significant events in national history and an unrepeatable collection of cultural values of the past" [6].

The beginning of the 1970s brought serious thoughts about adjustments to the liturgical space, which should adapt to the liturgical requirements arising from the Second Vatican Council, which took place between 1962 and 1965. This modification was completed in 1973 and will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter. The celebration of the St. Adalbert's Millennium in the same year was greatly reduced. The year 1978 played an important role for the further development and promotion of the importance of the cathedral in the eyes of the faithful, when the Archbishop of Cracow, Karol Wojtyła, was elected Pope and chose the names John Paul II. He encouraged Cardinal Tomášek and the whole community of the faithful to greater activity. In the 1980s, there was a growing interest in spirituality, especially in large cities and intellectual circles. The cathedral became "a space of spiritual resistance to the regime, moreover, naturally connecting the Catholic faithful with people of other beliefs" [7]. Once again, it became a spiritual centre during major church festivals and celebrations of the country's patrons. Masses of people gathered in the cathedral and its immediate surroundings, even turning into spontaneous demonstrations at the end of the 1980s, which, of course, did not please the state authorities [7].

The prevailing view of scientific communism was that of the temple as a historical monument and burial place of Czech rulers. This is probably why very few new interventions were made in the cathedral, but restoration work and many repairs were carried out. In the 1970s this included a new altar table by Professor Jan Sokol in connection with liturgical reforms. In the 1980s, the only new work of art was a figural sculpture of Agnes (the future saint) by Karel Stádník. It was placed in the chapel of the Bartons of Dobení [7].

Unfortunately, repairs and maintenance work were not carried out in the 1950s and 1960s, although the Department of Historic Preservation (later the Department) of the Office of the President of the Republic often pointed this out. The beginning of the repair's dates back to 1968-1969, when the Central Bohemian Enterprise for the Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Monuments repaired the top floor, the roof of the Great South Tower and structurally secured the Royal Oratory [7]. Pavel Mošťák was the architect of the reconstruction of the Renaissance gallery of the tower, and other collaborators took part in the project. The architect Karel Kovář and Marie Plachtová were responsible for the survey, the statics were designed by Dr. Jan Rudolf, the scaffolding by Miroslav Hurych, and the budget by Matěj Drofa. Photo documentation was provided by academic painter and restorer Jiří Novák. The technical report described "the reconstruction of the surface treatment of the Renaissance gallery of the main tower of St. Vitus with the creation of a suspended scaffolding system (fig. 9 and 10) for the survey and repair of the tower helmet" [23]. The report began with a brief historical overview of previous modifications to the tower. It assessed the condition at the time and proposed a solution: "In recent decades, the plastered surface of the arcaded gallery has deteriorated to the point that it threatens the safety of traffic and the plastic members of the lower structure at the exposed location of the main south portal with the so-called Golden Gate. Also, the copper cover of the tower is considerably loose at the joints as a result of rotten formwork" [23].

The actual design of the individual modifications is described in detail, firstly the surface treatment of the gallery arcade of the main tower (careful removal of the plaster, cleaning of the exposed brickwork - with emphasis on washing out the salt deposits, dampening of the brickwork, spraying with hydraulic mortar and filling the joints, execution of a one-layer plaster with a tightened surface - manually processed using an oak and then iron trowel, restoration repair of the plastic links of the ionic heads with new plaster, execution of the internal plastering according to the same principles, cleaning of the reinforced concrete structure's surface, finally careful cleaning of the gallery of tower from all impurities, all surfaces preserved about a month after the end of the work with a mist hydrophobizing spray LUKOSIL L). The recipe for the preparation of the new mortar was also described here. This was followed by adjustments to the plumbing work, as the Gothic profiles of the medieval section overhanging the outer outline of the Renaissance arcade were to have their plywood and brick covers removed and replaced with covers of hard copper sheeting. A detailed survey of the copper bath was also to be carried out. The last reference was to the modification of

the stonework (products). It was proposed to clean the stone parapets, stone repairs to minor damage, and treatment with multiple saturation with lime water solution [23].

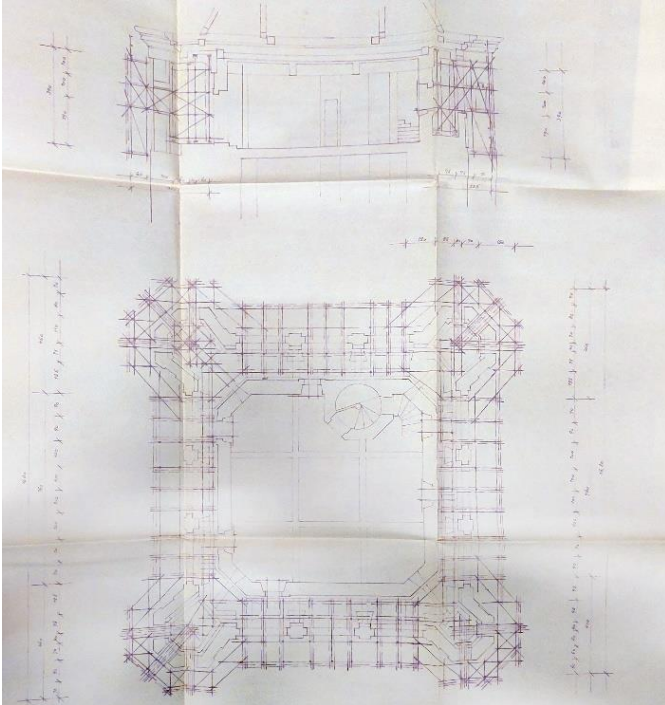


Fig. 9 – St. Vitus Church – perimeter scaffolding of the gallery – floor plan and vertical section [24]

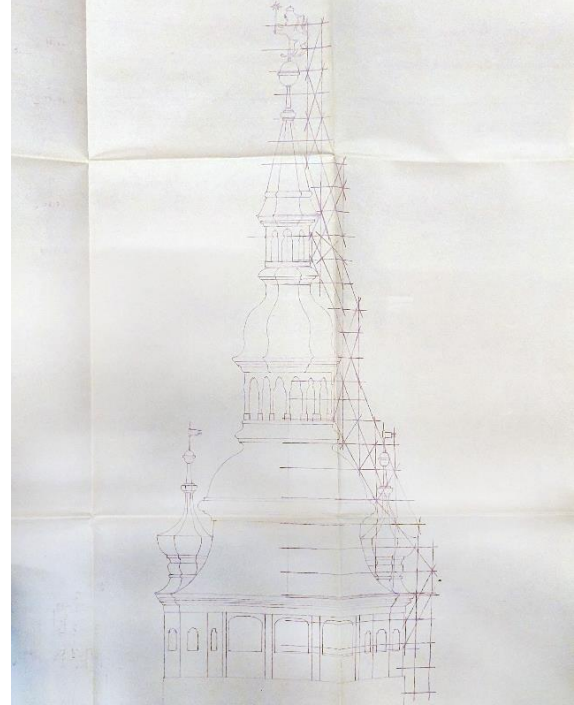


Fig. 10 – St. Vitus Church – perimeter scaffolding of the gallery – view of the scaffolding [24]

The following year was full of explorations, measurements and tests with new materials (e.g. artificial sandstone). In the following years, loose stone elements were brought down, weeds and trees were removed, the sandstone surface was cleaned and joints were restored, without the use of scaffolding. Businesses with climbers were used. The wooden trusses of the choir and Great Tower, as well as the steel truss over the completed section, were treated in this way until 1974 [7].

Already in 1972, due to the fall of the cross cover, a protective scaffolding was erected, which was gradually enlarged, and as other stone elements also fell down, this led to systematic care of the entire shell and the support system under the direction of the Štuko cooperative. The repair of the first pillar was not completed until November 1977. Between 1978 and 1985, seven more pillars were successfully repaired. This was followed by the reconstruction of the main roof between 1985 and 1989, during which the slate roofing was replaced. It was possible to extract rock from the same quarries as in the 19th century. The pattern was also preserved, which is made up of stencils with two colours. The interior underwent changes during an extensive electrical renovation in 1983-1987. An archaeological survey was associated with this action. In the following period between 1988-1991, interior defects were removed and conservation of the exterior parts was resumed [7].

THE MOST SIGNIFICANT MODIFICATION

The greatest change in the interior of the cathedral came in the early 1970s, when it had to be modified in response to the liturgical reforms of the Second Vatican Council. It took place, as the name suggests, at the Vatican, and had four sessions from October 1962 to December 1965. It brought about a major liturgical reform, bringing many initiatives to express the Church's relationship to the ever-evolving world, to other faiths, to individual believers. The Council made possible the use of national languages in the liturgy (previously the Mass had been celebrated in Latin), provided more space for reading from the Bible, dealt with liturgical singing and music, emphasized the

simplification of the rites, their greater clarity and shortening, but also the active participation of the faithful. The new conception of liturgy brought requirements for the worship space, and more detailed requirements were provided by the publication of liturgical instructions. A huge change occurred in the celebration of the Mass, as the priest now served facing the people. This change necessitated a new altar in the form of a table (mensa) as the center of the presbytery, and an elevated place called the ambo was to be created for the reading and singing of biblical texts. The nave of the church is also described, but it did not undergo major changes [1].

The Archbishopric of Prague, and hence the Metropolitan Chapter, requested modifications in the interior of the cathedral according to the liturgical reform. The request argues that the altar is too far from the pews where the faithful sit. Thus, there is no active participation of all the faithful and the formation of a community during the service [25]. The Department of Heritage Conservation (part of the Office of the President of the Republic) had drawn up conservation guidelines stating that "any attempt to reanimate and functionally adapt the cathedral space must be based on a historical and architectural-spatial analysis of the cathedral interior" [26]. The question of the modifications was discussed on behalf of the Metropolitan Chapter by its canon Miroslav Vlček, while the architectural aspect was entrusted to Professor Jan Sokol, who had been thinking about changes to the cathedral's interior (fig. 11 and 12) for some time [7]. Archival documents show that interior work began in December 1972 and was completed in June of the following year [27].

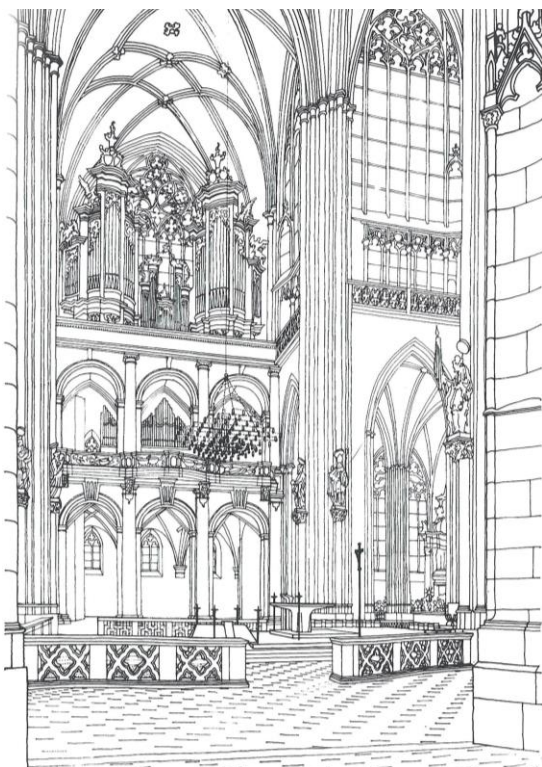


Fig. 11 – Perspective of the Considered Altar in the Nave Crossing of the Cathedral [28]

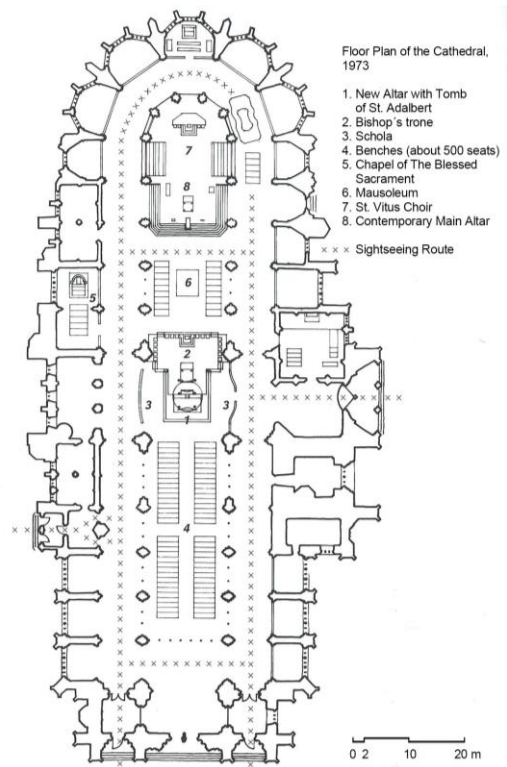


Fig. 12 – Considered Plan of the Cathedral, 1973 [28]

Sokol's ideas about the St. Vitus Cathedral did not correspond to the perception of the then communist society. For him, the cathedral represented above all the first church in Czechoslovakia, a sacred object. Sokol had been thinking about interior modifications for a long time. The original design was drawn up after the Second World War. He considered moving the royal mausoleum in front of the organ chancel to the north arm of the nave. A new high altar would have been built on the vacant site, which would have included the tomb of St. Adalbert. In a new design in the 1970s, he continued with the original ideas, but abandoned the idea of moving the mausoleum and no longer considered a table altar because of liturgical regulations. He would have used the mausoleum as a

backdrop for the new altar and as a separating element between the new and older sections. The new mensa (mensa Domini = altar table) was to be located at the crossing of the nave, was to become the spiritual center of the cathedral, and was to house the tomb of St. Adalbert. It was also to be used during visiting hours. The center of the cathedral would be closed to tourists, while the side aisles would be used for sightseeing tours. This proposal received the support of the Archbishopric, but the Conservation Commission (more accurately called the Subcommittee for History, Art History and Archaeology) gave its opposition [28].

Another opportunity was provided by his collaboration with Canon Miroslav Vlček to create a new altar according to the conclusions of the Second Vatican Council. Sokol tried to extend this task to the reconstruction of the entire choir (presbytery), which demonstrates his efforts to save at least some of the previous study. He proposed an extension of the choir platform where a new altar could be placed along with a lectern (ambo) and cross. A new staircase would be built in front of the podium leading to the side aisles. The bishop's throne was going to be placed on the enlarged stage of the main altar, which was built by Josef Mocker. He was not too fond of this altar, but there was no possibility of removing it, so he wanted to use it as a backdrop to the cathedral. From the back of the altar, a stone spiral staircase leads to the upper porch, where the monstrance was formerly displayed. Behind these stairs was the tomb of St. Adalbert. In the space between the main altar and the tomb, a back room with church supplies was built. Sokol proposed to remove this facility and to remove the staircase by the main altar in order to restore dignity to this part of the church. He again submitted his plans to the castle monuments, but again received a negative opinion [28].

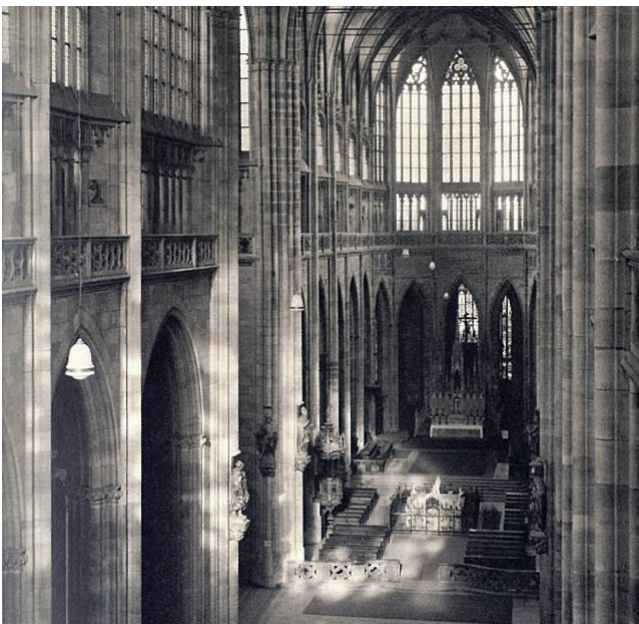


Fig. 13 – View of the church presbytery in the 1920s [29]

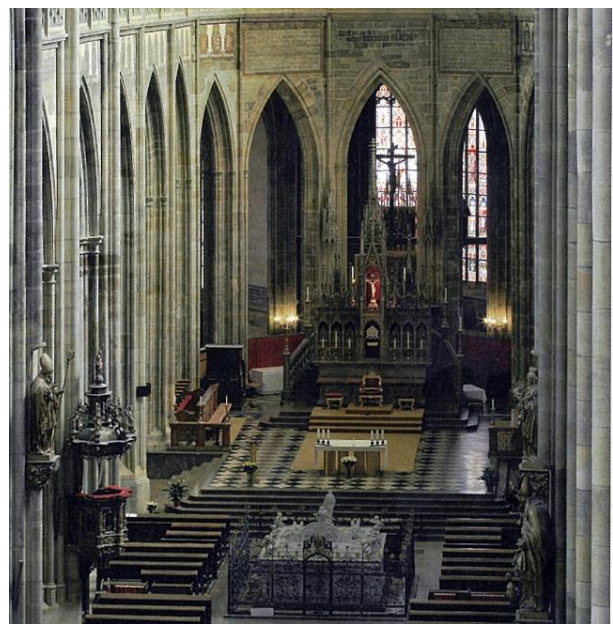


Fig. 14 – View of the Presbytery after Modifications Designed by Architect Jan Sokol [30]

Although the grandiose ideas did not come to fruition in the end, at least a relatively minor but significant modification of the presbytery (the space for priests and assistants) with a new altar table and lectern (ambo) was implemented (fig. 14). Architect Sokol, in cooperation with architect Jan Fröml, used a simple but inventive solution. He envisaged the mensa as a marble altar slab supported by six legs made of gold-plated steel I-profiles, see Figure 15). The altar was successfully constructed, but the marble slab was replaced by a slab of Romanian limestone during the execution, to the displeasure of Sokol [28].



Fig. 15 – Altar Table and Pulpit, Gilded Rolled Profiles, Limestone Slab [30]

CONCLUSION

The history of Prague Castle has been associated with sacral buildings since the earliest times; over the centuries several new ones have been built, several have disappeared and several have changed their original function. The Rotunda of St. Vitus was the third building of this type to be built on the Castle grounds, which was first converted into a basilica and then into a cathedral. It became the spiritual center of the Bohemian kingdom, and later of Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic. The exception was the period of the communist regime, which includes the period under study (1970s and 1980s). During this period, there was an attempt to suppress the religious dimension as much as possible and, on the contrary, to give priority to its other functions - a burial place of Czech rulers, a document of outstanding Gothic and Neo-Gothic architecture, a repository of other cultural and historical monuments of the past, a tourist attraction. It was not until the end of the 1980s that the restoration of a leading role in the spiritual direction of Prague and the whole country was brought about.

The communist government marked a period of decline and disinterest for church buildings. Sacred monuments fell into disrepair, were destroyed, and were converted for other profane purposes (exhibition halls, music halls, etc.). The transformation of religious buildings did not avoid the Castle either. An unambiguous example of this principle is the approach to the Monastery of St. George, which was first to become a Memorial to the History of the Czechoslovak People and eventually became the exhibition space of the National Gallery. Thanks to its presence on the Castle grounds, the sacred buildings were spared dilapidation, although, for example, repairs and building maintenance of the cathedral were neglected in the 1950s and 1960s despite the proclaimed care of the socialist state. However, the period under review brought about a change in this respect and systematic restoration and conservation work began to take place.

The times did not favour the construction of new religious buildings or new interventions in them. Apart from the interventions in the context of conversions, the only significant modification was the new design of the presbytery with the altar table and lectern (ambo) in the Church of St. Vitus by Professor Jan Sokol. This architect worked on the interior of the cathedral for several years, first after the Second World War and then especially in the 1970s, when new liturgical regulations appeared in connection with the Second Vatican Council.

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