



THE HRZÁNSKÝ PALACE



Úřad vlády České republiky



Facade of the palace as seen from Loretánská Street

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The Hrzánský Palace is located at the midpoint of Loretánská Street, which connects Hradčany Square with Pohořelec. The building is built on a rectangular floorplan around a small courtyard. The property's main entrance is on its north side. A two-story wing runs to the southeast, toward Úvoz Street, with a rooftop terrace accessible from the first floor. While the facade toward Loretánská Street is one story high, due to the marked height difference between it and Úvoz Street, which runs parallel to it, the rear part of the building is five stories tall. The two buildings are separated by large second courtyards.

It is unclear when construction began at the location; neither the precise dates of construction nor the architect are known. But the Hrzánský Palace is among the oldest buildings in the Hradčany [Prague Castle] area; a torso of a Gothic bastion and part of a rampart wall were preserved in its foundations, the remains of the castle's fortifications. The oldest mention of a building at its location date from 1359, when Petr Parlář, Charles IV's builder, bought a house from Henslin, the emperor's doorman. Parlář lived in the building until 1372, when he sold it to a new owner. The building was probably plundered during the Hussite wars; it was marked as empty by the end of the 15th century. Evidence of the building's existence can be found again in 1539, when its owner at the time, Václav Častolar of Dlouhá Ves, sold it. The building was repaired for the first time by Adam the Elder of Šternberk, who farmed there between 1588 and 1600. In 1601, the building was purchased by Oldřich Desiderius Pruskovský, Emperor Rudolf II's lord



Period view of the north facade, circa 1916

in waiting. He had the building remade in the Renaissance style around 1608, adding a floor to it, and at the same time bought some of the small buildings on Úvoz Street to add to the property.

The building also remained in the hands of noblemen in the period after the Battle of White Mountain. But its owners frequently found themselves in financial difficulty; the large building's ever-demanding operations played a large part. Vilém Albrecht Krakovský of Kolowrat was one of its richer owners; the building gained its early Baroque appearance under his ownership. The count purchased more parcels on Úvoz Street to add to the property, upon which he built the lower multi-floor building and the connecting wing with the existing upper building. Vilém Albrecht's son, Jan František, completed the building of his family's mansion in 1688, when he joined the large property with its neighbouring building, today's Dietrichstein Palace. When the Kolowrats fell into debt, Sigismund Valentin Hrzán of Harras gained the complex of buildings in 1708. But only four years later, the two previously-joined properties had to be separated again, both in ownership and in construction. Hrzán also died in debt, and although his wife, Claudia, saved the palace at auction, she also later fell into financial difficulties and the building was sold in bankruptcy.

After complicated talks, the indebted building was transferred to the ownership of the Metropolitan Chapter of St. Vitus in 1756. The building gained its current exterior appearance during the time it was run by Provost František



The Hrzánský Palace and part of the Dietrichstein Palace in Langweil's Model of Prague, 1826–1837



View of Prague from the terrace, circa 1916





Fountain with statue of Hercules, circa 1916

Kazimír Strachovský, knight of Strachovice. During extensive construction work from 1775–1780, the street facade gained a late Baroque appearance, but the Renaissance portal with its segmented shield remained preserved, enriched only by the insignia of provost of St. Vítus.

In 1856, the Metropolitan Chapter sold the building to Josef Kozlák, who built rental apartments there. The most important tenant was Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, a university professor at the time and the future president of the Czechoslovak Republic. He lived on the building's fifth floor, above Úvoz Street, from 1894 to 1896. His family lived in a four-room apartment, part of which included a terrace with an enchanting view of the city.



In 1915, Building No. 177 was purchased by painter Ferdinand Engelmüller, who occupied the entire top floor of the large complex of buildings. In addition to a painting school in the back building, he also arranged to have his apartment there. He then had an atelier and a permanent exhibition of his paintings in the front part of the building, which was entered through the terrace. When Engelmüller discovered in 1916 that Baroque stucco and painted ceilings from the 18th century were preserved in some of the rooms, he decided to repair the building under the supervision of Vienna's State Monuments Office. The first phase of the reconstruction took until October 1918. The facades with sgraffito, symbols on the portal, period gates, frescos and interiors of the residential rooms were gradually completed.

After the founding of the Czechoslovak Republic, the building continued to be used for apartments, but shops, a wine bar and a laundry could be found there. In 1925, the complex of buildings was officially divided. The upper building remained preserved as No. 177, and the lower building, which was recorded as No. 296, was sold by Irena Engelmüllerová to Mr. and Mrs. Klecanda. Division General Vladimír Vojtěch Klecanda, a soldier and an important leader of Czechoslovak scouting, lived on the entire fifth floor with his wife, Anna. Painter Jan Slavíček opened his atelier one floor below in 1937. He painted a number of well-known views of his beloved Prague from a window which he had knocked out on the east side.

In 1948, Ferdinand Engelmüller's heirs sold Building No. 177 to the state. From

1949-1952, the property was radically adapted by Ing. Arch. Vilém Lorenc and Ing. Arch. Rudolf Ječný for representative uses by the Ministry of Information and Education. The reconstruction removed the entire courtyard tract, and on the floor near Loretánská Street all dividing walls were knocked down and today's halls were created. At the same time, a representative staircase to the first floor was built. The newly-built arcades, were again exposed to the courtyard facades, and the halls with stucco ceilings were rehabilitated on the first floor. The right wing underwent changes in its layout, supplemented by a new staircase. Due to the construction changes, the destitute apartment building with many flats was again transformed into an showcase palace.

Artworks celebrating the ideology of the Communist Party were callously placed among the decorations of the Hrzanský Palace: In the music salon, a mosaic titled Pioneers by Vojtěch Tittelbach decorated a wall; a sgraffito was placed on the facade wall of the first courtyard titled With the Soviet Union for All Time by Adolf Záborský, and the courtyard was dominated by a sculpture, The Miner made by Alois Sopr. These artifacts were gradually removed. However, artworks recalling two important residents of the building were preserved: A relief with a portrait of Ferdinand Engelmüller by Emanuel Julian Kodet and a bust of Jan Slavíček by sculptors Břetislava a Milana Benda. The Baroque alterations to the building to this day are recalled by the fountain in the small courtyard, a rectangular sandstone pool with a statue of Hercules. In 1961, ownership of the Hrzanský Palace was

transferred to the Office of the Presidency of the Government of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. Building No. 296 was confiscated from Anna Klecanda and later transferred as a rental building under the management of the City of Prague. State visits are received at the Hrzánský Palace, ceremonial lunches and dinners are held there, and important meetings and conferences also take place there. It has already become a tradition that the new prime minister has his office there during talks on the government, while the outgoing prime minister holds office in Straka's Academy. The general public has had the opportunity to view the spaces of the Hrzánský Palace in 2007 during the „Symbols of the Republic“ exhibition, which presented the roots of Czech state symbols, or in 2009, when the honours of European Union member states were presented there as part of the „Beauty of European Faleristics“ exhibition.



*Detail from the small courtyard
after its adaptation, 1951*



Dining room, 1953



Gobelin tapestry hall

Opposite:

Gobelin tapestry of Judith and Holofernes, France, mid-17th century



The prime minister's office





Small music salon



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Office of the Government
of the Czech Republic

The Office of the Government of the Czech Republic is the central body of state administration. The Office fulfils tasks connected with the expert, organisational and technical provision of the activities of the government, and also immediately ensures the conditions for the work of expert bodies of the prime minister and members of the government organisationally included in their structures.

The Hrzánský Palace serves as a representative space for the prime minister of the Czech Republic and is among the buildings which the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic uses for the fulfilment of tasks related with the government's activities. These buildings include Straka's Academy, the Lichtenstein Palace, the Kramář Villa and the villa of Hana and Edvard Beneš in Sezimovo Ústí.



*Overall view of the Hrzánský Palace and the building above Úvoz Street
Back page: Emblem of the Provost of St. Vitus*

