

# The Clementinum. A Baroque Monument in the Capital of Socialist Czechoslovakia

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## **Abstract**

The remarkable monument of the Clementinum in the Old Town of Prague involves two basic historical phenomena, namely the Baroque style and Jesuit culture; both contributed in a fundamental way to the character of the material and spiritual culture in the lands of the Bohemian Crown. In the official line of Marxist-Leninist interpretation of history, these phenomena were evaluated critically. Using the example of the representation of the Clementinum, college of the Society of Jesus in Prague, in professional art historical and popular publications, the article explores the strategies of the authors or publishers in dealing with this ideologically precarious heritage during socialism.

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## **Introduction**

[1] The prominent monument of the Clementinum in the Old Town of Prague involves two basic historical phenomena, namely the Baroque style and Jesuit culture; both contributed in a fundamental way to the character of the material and spiritual culture in the lands of the Bohemian Crown. At the same time these phenomena represented elements that were in conflict with the official line of Marxism and Leninism introduced in Czechoslovakia as official ideology after the political coup in February 1948. For this reason I consider the Clementinum here as a quasi materialized essence of values then considered to be adversarial to the ideological course established by the new political system. Due to its cultural significance I shall use the evaluation of the Clementinum under the communist regime as a case study for the measurement of the level of application of dogmas and theoretical constructions based on Marxist-Leninist principles. On the basis of an analysis of scholarly as well as popular art historical literature, published in Czechoslovakia during the Cold War era, I will focus on the discussion of the

importance of the Clementinum as a representative of Baroque Jesuit culture in the Czech lands.

### The cultural position of the Clementinum on the map of Prague

[2] The large complex of the Clementinum is situated in the Old Town, in a heavily frequented locality at the entrance to Charles Bridge that until the nineteenth century was the only route for traffic across the Vltava. This exposed location in the centre of the historic city alone made it impossible to wipe the monumental architectural complex from the collective memory of the society, much less threaten its physical existence as was done in the case of many more peripherally located sacral buildings.<sup>1</sup> Despite this fact, over time the original ecclesiastical history of the Clementinum had become neutralized rather successfully by assigning the complex new functions. This transformation is demonstrated in a nutshell in Vilímek's popular tourist guide to Prague from 1948, where it is stated that the former "massive Jesuit 'fortress', today however [serves as] a 'castle' of culture".<sup>2</sup>

[3] The complex of the Clementinum had been built gradually under the patronage of the Jesuit Order over a period of two centuries. Members of the Society of Jesus had been invited to Bohemia by Ferdinand I in 1556 and began to construct their first headquarters with the church of Saint Clement on the site of an originally Dominican monastery.<sup>3</sup> The total size of the plot made it the second largest building complex right after Prague Castle. The majority of the popular literature regularly emphasized that 32 burgher houses had to yield to the construction of the Clementinum.<sup>4</sup> The construction of the Jesuit college took place in several stages from the middle of the sixteenth century onwards until the first decades of the eighteenth century and involved leading architects such as Bonifác Wohlmut, Carlo, Francesco and Antonio Lurago, Giovanni Domenico Orsi, František Maximilián Kaňka and apparently also Christoph and Kilian Ignaz Dientzenhofer.<sup>5</sup>

[4] Within the walls of the Clementinum the Jesuits built the churches of Saint Saviour (Salvator) and Saint Clement, several chapels, school areas for the Jesuit

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.

Luděk Krčmář, Zdeněk Procházka and Jan Soukup, *Zničené kostely. Průvodce historií západních Čech*, č. 14 [Destroyed Churches. Guide to the History of Western Bohemia, No. 14], exh. cat., Domažlice 2004; *Zničené kostely severních Čech 1945-1989* [Destroyed Churches in Northern Bohemia 1945-1989], exh. cat., Ústěk 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Jiří Čarek, *Vilímkův průvodce Prahou* [Vilímek's Guide to Prague], Praha 1948, 46.

<sup>3</sup> Pavel Vlček and Ester Havlová, *Praha 1610-1700. Kapitoly o architektuře raného baroka* [Prague 1610-1700. Chapters on Architecture of the Early Baroque], Praha 1998, 127-135.

<sup>4</sup> Václav Hlavsa, *Praha. Průvodce městem* [Prague: Guide to the City], Praha 1960, 75; Ctibor Rybár, *Co je co v Praze* [What is What in Prague], Praha 1989, 103.

<sup>5</sup> Pavel Vlček, ed., *Umělecké památky Prahy: Staré Město, Josefov* [Artistic Monuments of Prague: Old Town, Josefov], Praha 1996, 199-205.

university (from 1622 on: Charles-Ferdinand University), the Library Hall, a convictorium (shared dwellings for scholars), a pharmacy, a printing press and a planetarium with an astronomical tower.

[5] In 1773, however, Pope Clement XIV disbanded the Jesuit Order with the bull *Dominus ac redemptor noster*.<sup>6</sup> Now a new use for the Clementinum had to be found. Corresponding to the book collections already deposited here that had served the students of the Jesuit university, field marshal Franz Joseph Count Kinský initiated the foundation of the *Öffentliche K. K. Universitätsbibliothek/C. k. Veřejná a Universitní knihovna* (Public Imperial-Royal University Library), which was administered by the state from 1777 on.<sup>7</sup> Other institutions such as the Archiepiscopal Printing Press, the picture gallery of the *Gesellschaft patriotischer Kunstfreunde/Společnost vlasteneckých přátel umění* (Society of Patriotic Friends of Art) and the *Akademie výtvarných umění v Praze* (Academy of Fine Arts in Prague) followed during the nineteenth century.<sup>8</sup>

[6] Immediately after the foundation of Czechoslovakia in 1918, the art historian and leading official of the Ministry of Education and National Enlightenment, Zdeněk Wirth, built on this intellectual tradition and initiated the adaptation of the historic complex for the needs of the State library and scientific institutions.<sup>9</sup> Finally, in October 1929, the first part of the newly built library was opened as part of the official celebrations of the eleventh anniversary of the state's independence.<sup>10</sup>

## Ideological context

[7] In 1951 a general professional meeting of art historians was held in the castle of Bechyně with the objective of defining the future programme of the field. This event was marked by a declaration that pronounced a radical distancing from previous developments.<sup>11</sup> Earlier art historical research was labelled as “bourgeois”. From the developmental perspective of Marxism it therefore was considered to have become obsolete. In the keynote speech, Jan Květ, professor of art history at Charles University in Prague, set out the priorities of future scholarly research that would be in accordance with the principles of Marxist

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<sup>6</sup> Ivana Čornejová, *Tovaryšstvo Ježíšovo. Jezuité v Čechách* [The Society of Jesus. The Jesuits in Bohemia], Praha 2002, 212.

<sup>7</sup> Petr Voit, *Pražské Klementinum* [The Prague Clementinum], Praha 1990, 83.

<sup>8</sup> Voit, *Pražské Klementinum*, 86-87.

<sup>9</sup> Kristina Uhlíková, *Zdeněk Wirth. První dvě životní etapy (1878-1939)* [Zdeněk Wirth. The First Two Stages of His Life (1878-1939)], Praha 2010, 116-118.

<sup>10</sup> Voit, *Pražské Klementinum*, 113.

<sup>11</sup> *Za vědecké dějiny umění a novou kritiku. Projevy z pracovní konference československých historiků umění a výtvarných kritiků v Bechyni 1951* [For a Scientific Art History and New Criticism: Speeches from the Working Conference of Czechoslovak Art Historians and Art Critics in Bechyně, 1951], Praha 1951.

theory. In his directive speech he defined four central epochs in the history of Czech culture that were worthy of further professional interest: the beginnings of local art, Romanesque art, and the art of the Hussite period, but mainly the realistic tradition of the nineteenth century.<sup>12</sup>

[8] At the same conference Jaromír Neumann, assistant professor of art history at Charles University, made a distinct appearance with a manifest-like paper that speaks of his ambition to codify the thematic context and the scholarly methods of socialist art history. In the spirit of the conventions of the Stalinist period he also included self-criticism and criticism of his colleagues in his speech. The latter took among others aim at a recent anthology issued for the celebration of the jubilee of Antonín Matějček, professor of art history at Charles University and director of the art department at the Ministry of Education.<sup>13</sup> Neumann particularly attacked the free choice of the subject of research, when he stated that “as a consequence of an incorrect conception of art history, material was selected in such a way that already its selection distorted the real course of history and the importance of our artistic past”.<sup>14</sup>

[9] Already from the definition of the four preferred epochs (Květ) and the selective approach to the topics (Neumann) of art historical research, it becomes clear that neither Baroque style nor Jesuit cultural heritage could suit the programme of Marxist-Leninist art history as presented in Bechyně. In Marxist-Leninist reading both phenomena, Baroque and the Jesuits, represented absolutism, and therefore could hardly contribute to the preoccupation with “urgent cultural and ideological problems of the day”,<sup>15</sup> which was defined as the ultimate task of Marxist-Leninist art history. Baroque culture, understood to represent mainly a foreign nobility and the Catholic Church, according to the ideological narrative could become the subject of art historical research only if it focused on the work of local artists who in their work tended to realism.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Jan Květ, “Úvodní projev [Introductory Speech]”, in: *Za vědecké dějiny umění a novou kritiku. Projevy z pracovní konference československých historiků umění a výtvarných kritiků v Bechyni 1951* [For a Scientific Art History and New Criticism: Speeches from the Working Conference of Czechoslovak Art Historians and Art Critics in Bechyně, 1951], Praha 1951, 9-18, here 16.

<sup>13</sup> Oldřich Blažíček and Jan Květ, red., *Cestami umění. Sborník prací k počtě 60. narozenin Antonína Matějčka* [On the Paths of Art: An Anthology of Works in Honour of the Sixtieth Birthday of Antonín Matějček], Praha 1949.

<sup>14</sup> Jaromír Neumann, “Boj o socialistický realismus a úkoly naší výtvarné kritiky a historie umění [The Battle for Socialist Realism and the Tasks of Our Art Criticism and Art History]”, in: *Za vědecké dějiny umění a novou kritiku. Projevy z pracovní konference československých historiků umění a výtvarných kritiků v Bechyni 1951* [For a Scientific Art History and New Criticism: Speeches from the Working Conference of Czechoslovak Art Historians and Art Critics in Bechyně, 1951], Praha 1951, 19-79, here 46.

<sup>15</sup> Neumann, “Boj o socialistický realismus”, 45.

<sup>16</sup> Vladimír Wagner, “Úkoly slovenského dějepisu umění [The Tasks of Slovak Art History]”, in: *Za vědecké dějiny umění a novou kritiku. Projevy z pracovní konference*

Therefore it is not surprising that monographic works devoted to the Clementinum and the activity of the Jesuits in Bohemia and Moravia were not published until the 1990s.<sup>17</sup>

[10] However, the Clementinum did not entirely disappear from scholarly and popular art historical publications. What is more, the arguments given in the individual mentions of this Jesuit complex illustrate the possible spectrum of addressing problematic or downright rejected chapters of Czech cultural history under socialism. The example of the representation of the Clementinum's college of the Society of Jesus in the mentioned media allows us to track the strategies of authors or publishers when dealing with an ideologically precarious legacy.

### The cultural importance of the Clementinum in the epoch of Marxist-Leninist art history

[11] However, the distance towards the Jesuits and their presence in the Czech lands, materialized in the Clementinum, was hardly invented by the new political system. Already during the process of Czech national emancipation in the nineteenth century, the Society of Jesus had been perceived as the chief representative of a violent Catholic Counter-Reformation and in this sense as an influential ally and supporter of the absolutist Habsburg rule.<sup>18</sup> The Baroque style was closely associated with the political situation after the Battle of White Mountain in 1620 that was interpreted as a historical discontinuity and decline of the Czech statehood.

[12] This narrative with its emphasis on the simplified division of Czech history into before and after 1620 had a skilful advocate in the person of Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk (1850-1937). The philosopher and first Czechoslovak president in his conception of Czech history linked the national emancipation movement directly to the Hussite tradition.<sup>19</sup> Masaryk therefore could not admit any positive interpretation of features related to the "Temno" (dark period), a term coined contemporarily by the canonical Czech writer Alois Jirásek (1851-1930) in his historical novel situated in the period of the 1720s.<sup>20</sup> This schematic conception

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*československých historiků umění a výtvarných kritiků v Bechyni 1951* [For a Scientific Art History and New Criticism: Speeches from the Working Conference of Czechoslovak Art Historians and Art Critics in Bechyně, 1951], Praha 1951, 80-88, here 84.

<sup>17</sup> Voit, *Pražské Klementinum*; Čornejová, *Tovaryšstvo Ježíšovo*; Alena Richterová and Ivana Čornejová, eds., *Jezuité a Klementinum* [The Jesuits and the Clementinum], exh. cat., Praha 2006.

<sup>18</sup> Jiří Rak and Vít Vlnas, "Druhý život baroka v Čechách [The Afterlife of the Baroque in Bohemia]", in: *Sláva barokní Čechie. Stati o umění, kultuře a společnosti 17. a 18. století* [The Glory of the Baroque in Bohemia. Essays on Art, Culture and Society in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries], ed. Vít Vlnas, Praha 2001, 13-60, here 17.

<sup>19</sup> Rak and Vlnas, "Druhý život baroka", 34.

<sup>20</sup> Alois Jirásek, *Temno* [The Darkness], Praha 1915.

was strongly criticized, and it polarized local historians in the famous discussion on the meaning of Czech history.<sup>21</sup>

[13] The inconsistent approach to the cultural legacy of the Jesuits in Bohemia can already be detected at the end of the 1920s in a text by the initiator of the transformation of the Clementinum into a public institution of independent Czechoslovakia, Zdeněk Wirth (1878-1961).<sup>22</sup> Wirth's text, devoted to the adaptation of the main college of the order in Prague, clearly echoes the need to rehabilitate at least some positive aspects of the activity of the Society of Jesus:

*The builders and intellectual creators of the Clementinum's block are the Jesuits. Guided not only by religious fanatics and politicians but also by landlords and financiers, these priests succeeded everywhere with a rational approach and prudent tactics to realize enterprises for which otherwise only the will and the means of sovereigns sufficed. The construction of the Clementinum, imbued with deep faith in the results and with a view focused on the aims set out before by several generations, is the proof of this. It is not an architectural idea here, which in the spirit of Baroque would have built to a single powerful effect the symmetrical shape, but an economic and construction enterprise, executed in stages in an irregular frame given by the medieval ground plan, on the basis of a construction programme that is further perfected and enriched with the growing power and expanded area of activity, and it is only the natural result of the long construction period that the external forms of this enterprise change with the advancement of art from the Renaissance all the way to the mature Baroque.*<sup>23</sup>

[14] After the Second World War Zdeněk Wirth, while directing the National Cultural Commission in a rather authoritative way,<sup>24</sup> repeatedly underlined the – previously by him neglected – artistic significance of the Clementinum. In a study published in 1949,<sup>25</sup> Wirth assessed positively the radical intervention in the organism of the Old Town that architecturally and urbanistically defined the Jesuit territory and furnished it with Baroque means of expression:

*Among the greatest artistic credits of Kaňka, it is necessary to underline mainly that he completed the architectural construction of the block of the Clementinum as a part of Baroque Prague. The unification of the medieval urban organism, turned into five squares and streets and interlaced with public passages, is a*

<sup>21</sup> Notably the acknowledged historian Josef Pekař stood in opposition to Jirásek and Masaryk: Josef Pekař, *Smysl českých dějin. O nový názor na české dějiny* [The Meaning of Czech History. On a New Opinion on Czech History], Praha 1929; Miloš Havelka, *Spor o smysl českých dějin. 1895-1938* [The Dispute over the Meaning of Czech History. 1895-1938], Praha 1995, 7-60.

<sup>22</sup> Uhlíková, Zdeněk Wirth, 116.

<sup>23</sup> Zdeněk Wirth, "Klementinum", in: *Styl* 10 (1929-1930), 59-71, here 59-60.

<sup>24</sup> Kristina Uhlíková, *Národní kulturní komise 1947-1951* [The National Culture Commission, 1947-1951], Praha 2004, 66.

<sup>25</sup> In this context the question arises of whether Wirth's text was or was not exposed to censorship or at least to a certain self-censorship.

*piercing intrusion of the Renaissance and Baroque into the medieval Old Town, begun at the end of the sixteenth century and completed in 1726. [...] This architectural unification is accompanied by several ingenious artistic motifs, which resolve the local situation with a view of the bends of the block in the street network of the Old Town. Kaňka masterfully combined the central-plan building of the Italian chapel with the longitudinal church of Saint Clement by placing a portal common to both sanctuaries in a corner created here from the Middle Ages and made of it the most beautiful viewpoint of the passage from the corner of Seminářská Street endowing both towers of the church of Saint Saviour with a new shape and building a great dormer window above the Italian chapel.<sup>26</sup>*

[15] Both quotations from Wirth's texts can be used as an initial frame of reference for analysing the interpretation of the Jesuits and Baroque culture in the period of the socialist state system and the related ideological orientation of Czechoslovakia. If the first one does acknowledge the managerial skills of the Jesuit commissioners, but does not say a word about artistic achievements, the other celebrates the aesthetic values of the Baroque architecture. Still, the continuity in Wirth's career before and after the Second World War reflects the persisting continuity of the leading narrative in art history.

[16] In the inter-war period, art historical research on the Clementinum had culminated in studies by Václav Richter on the architectural development of the church of Saint Saviour,<sup>27</sup> by Vladimír Novotný on the decoration of the same church by Jan Jiří Bendl,<sup>28</sup> and by František Kop on the Mirror Chapel<sup>29</sup>. Here, any negative connotation of the Jesuits has disappeared, and Kop, for instance, explicitly relates the expansion of the power of the Society of Jesus to the flourishing of the Baroque style.<sup>30</sup>

[17] Yet, in comparison to the limited impact of scholarly art historical writings, the principal shift in the perception of the Baroque style by the public was launched by two well-attended exhibitions organized in the 1930s in Prague. The exhibition project *Albrecht z Valdštejna a doba bělohorská* (Albrecht von

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<sup>26</sup> Zdeněk Wirth, "František Maxmilián Kaňka. Náčrt k monografii barokového architekta [František Maxmilián Kaňka. Outline of a Monograph of the Baroque Architect]", in: *Cestami umění. Sborník prací k počtě 60. narozenin Antonína Matějčka* [On the Paths of Art: An Anthology of Works in Honour of the Sixtieth Birthday of Antonín Matějček], red. Oldřich Blažíček and Jan Květ, Praha 1949, 161-175, here 166.

<sup>27</sup> Václav Richter, "Stavební vývoj kostela sv. Salvátora v Klementinu [Architectural Development of the Church of Saint Saviour within the Clementinum]", in: *Památky archeologické* 34 (1924-1925), 336-371.

<sup>28</sup> Vladimír Novotný, "Účast Jana Jiřího Bendla na výzdobě kostela sv. Salvátora v Praze [Jan Jiří Bendl's Participation on the Decoration of the Church of Saint Saviour]", *Památky archeologické* 4-5 (1937), 41-55.

<sup>29</sup> František Kop, *Zrcadlová kaple v Pražském Klementinu* [The Mirror Chapel in the Clementinum in Prague], Praha 1938.

<sup>30</sup> Kop, *Zrcadlová kaple*, 11.

Waldstein and the Period of the Battle of White Mountain) took place in the Waldstein Palace and in the Museum of Applied Arts in 1934 on the occasion of the tercentenary of Waldstein's assassination. In 1938 followed the exhibition *Pražské baroko* (Prague Baroque) that was also displayed in the Waldstein Palace. Both projects, based on latest historical and art historical research, intended to reshape the perception of the complicated period and were successful in driving the attention of the general public towards Baroque culture.<sup>31</sup>

[18] After the Second World War, despite the frequent obligatory proclamations of the academia in regard to its participation in the building of socialism,<sup>32</sup> the scholarly discourse in specialized art historical publishing was much more stratified and Socialist rhetoric was recognizably less applied. The personal continuity in the leadership of many academic and cultural institutions from the inter-war period onwards was a common phenomenon as the uninterrupted career of Zdeněk Wirth himself shows. Likewise, the research topics in art history were never completely different from the ones before the war. Convincing evidence for this is provided by the official periodical of Czech art history, the journal *Umění* (Art), which was issued from 1953 on by the Seminary for the Theory and History of Art at the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences. Besides the certainly more welcome works devoted e. g. to the preferred topics of Romanesque architecture or the iconography of Master Jan Hus, studies focussed on the issue of Baroque architecture appeared on its pages as well.<sup>33</sup> Even in 1955 two out of four covers of *Umění* (Art) displayed details from Czech Baroque paintings.<sup>34</sup>

[19] Likewise, Baroque did not disappear from the shelves of the bookshops, not even in the form of monographic works. In April 1948, the National and University Library in Prague published the small monograph *Pokladnice věků. Klementinum a universitní knihovna* (A Treasury of Ages: the Clementinum and the University Library) by Jan Sajíc.<sup>35</sup> Two months after the Communists had seized power, Sajíc presented the Clementinum college as one of "the most sophisticated and the

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<sup>31</sup> Rak and Vlnas, "Druhý život baroka", 43-45.

<sup>32</sup> Zdeněk Nejedlý, "Ideové směrnice naší národní kultury [Ideological Guidelines of Our National Culture]", in: *Komunisté. Dědici velikých tradic českého národa* [Communists. Heirs of the Great Traditions of the Czech People], Praha 1978, 198-229, here 213.

<sup>33</sup> Miroslav Korecký, "Poznámky k pražskému Dienzenhoferovu prostoru a klenbám [Notes on Dienzenhofer's Space and Vaulting in Prague]", in: *Umění* 1 (1953), 261-285; Oldřich Stefan, "K otázce klenby kostela sv. Mikuláše v Praze III [On the Question of the Vaulting of the Church of Saint Nicholas in Prague III]", in: *Umění* 2 (1954), 259-260; Věra Mixová, "Mikuláš Rossi a stavba piaristického kostela v Litoměřicích [Niccolò Rossi and the Building of the Piarist Church in Litoměřice]", in: *Umění* 3 (1955), 164-166.

<sup>34</sup> Namely details from Petr Brandl's *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 1704, as cover of *Umění* 3 (1955), No. 2; and Karel Škréta's *Portrait of a Painter*, probably Nicolas Poussin, 1634-1635, as cover of *Umění* 3 (1955), No. 4.

<sup>35</sup> Jan Sajíc, *Pokladnice věků. Klementinum a universitní knihovna* [A Treasury of Ages. The Clementinum and the University Library], Praha 1948.

most magnificent Renaissance-Baroque sites in Prague”.<sup>36</sup> Such a positive assessment of the Baroque might be related to the impact of the 1930s exhibitions and to the appreciation that the representatives of the Library showed for their seat’s beauty. Concerning the political situation after the coup in February 1948 it must be kept in mind that the book was with all probability written before the communist takeover.

[20] Yet in most of these specialized publications the authors focused on the description of the stylistic characteristics of the Baroque period. Ideologically charged terms like Counter-Reformation or recatholisation would usually appear in the introductory lines defining the political paradigm of the period and thus satisfying the requirements of the official Marxist-Leninist interpretation of history. For instance in the preface of his classic work *Umění baroku v Čechách* (Art of the Baroque in Bohemia) from 1971, Oldřich Blažíček writes that Baroque came to Bohemia “at the time of the Thirty Years’ War as an art serving the new society of the post-White Mountain victors and engaged particularly in the extensive Counter-Reformation efforts”.<sup>37</sup> In a similar way Blažíček addressed Baroque still in 1986 in the conference proceedings *Itálie, Čechy a střední Evropa* (Italy, Bohemia and Central Europe), where he states that “in humbled and extensively destroyed Bohemia art production was needed not only for the pleasure of a few, but it was needed as an ally in the Counter-Reformation struggle for the soul”.<sup>38</sup> Here Blažíček assimilated the prevailing stereotypes concerning the national and cultural development in Bohemia since the second half of the seventeenth century as they had been revived already in 1946 by one of the chief ideologists of Marxism-Leninism and later Minister of Education, Zdeněk Nejedlý.<sup>39</sup>

[21] In the texts, however, the authors usually provided a synthesizing list of specific works and artists, mainly focusing on stylistic development and artistic influence, but did not relate them directly to the specific social or political circumstances of their time.<sup>40</sup> Illustrative for this is a description of the church of Saint Clement, “the second Jesuit church in the Clementinum in Prague (1711-1715), [that] excellently documents [František Maximilián] Kaňka’s ability to reach the maximum of impressions by employing the most economical minimum

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<sup>36</sup> Sajíc, *Pokladnice věků*, 4.

<sup>37</sup> Oldřich Blažíček, *Umění baroku v Čechách* [Art of the Baroque in Bohemia], Praha 1971, 7.

<sup>38</sup> Oldřich Blažíček, “Čechy a Itálie v baroku [Bohemia and Italy in the Baroque Period]”, in: *Itálie, Čechy a střední Evropa. Referáty z konference pořádané ve dnech 6.-8.12.1983* [Italy, Bohemia and Central Europe. Proceedings of the Conference held 6-8 December 1983], Praha 1986, 201-215, here 202.

<sup>39</sup> Zdeněk Nejedlý, *Komunisté. Dědici velikých tradic českého národa* [Communists. Heirs of the Great Traditions of the Czech People], Praha 1946.

<sup>40</sup> Blažíček, *Umění baroku v Čechách*, 9, 12, 14, 87, 116.

of means".<sup>41</sup> Blažíček comments on the aesthetic values of the architecture and lists the church in Kaňka's oeuvre without connecting it to its commissioners and their possible intentions. Blažíček's approach seems to be a kind of a common strategy avoiding any conflicting connotations with the subject.

[22] Jaromír Neumann formulated his approach to Baroque culture differently. His fundamental work *Český barok* (Bohemian Baroque) which was published in 1974 attempts to loosen the firm association of the Baroque with the ideology of Counter-Reformation Catholicism by considering the wider contexts of the period, which were formative for the local artistic production at that time.<sup>42</sup> He writes that

*the experience of modern art history, however, has also demonstrated that if Baroque art was interpreted mainly as a means of religious instruction and as an instrument of ideological political activity, the knowledge and appreciation of precisely the most important components to which Baroque owes its exceptional artistic values have been missed.*<sup>43</sup>

[23] Under the expression "the most important components" Neumann understands a new creative process based on a relation between a human being and the world itself that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries significantly shaped European civilization. Furthermore, Neumann continues that in the Czech context Baroque culture was initiated by an original intention of education and intellectual manipulation of the population that, however, soon developed into a specific means of communication among the Czechs themselves in the times of "threat of national existence".<sup>44</sup> He paradoxically concludes that Baroque art in Bohemia does not mean "national subjugation".<sup>45</sup> In these comments on the meaning of Baroque art Neumann proves a radical shift from his early ideological proclamations on the appropriate tasks of Socialist art history.

[24] Another kind of elaborate approach towards Baroque was applied by Milada Vilímková in her monograph on Kryštof and Kilián Ignác Dientzenhofer.<sup>46</sup> Here, Vilímková outlines the personal networks, economic situation and political background to sketch the situation in which the Jesuits' monuments were built in Prague. She is able to contextualize the art and architecture produced and commissioned by the order. Such an attitude towards the topic dissolves any

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<sup>41</sup> Blažíček, *Umění baroku v Čechách*, 87.

<sup>42</sup> Jaromír Neumann, *Český barok* [Bohemian Baroque], Praha 1974, 10-17.

<sup>43</sup> Neumann, *Český barok*, 10.

<sup>44</sup> Neumann, *Český barok*, 11.

<sup>45</sup> Neumann, *Český barok*, 11.

<sup>46</sup> Milada Vilímková, *Stavitelé paláců a chrámů. Kryštof a Kilián Ignác Dientzenhoferové* [The Architects of Palaces and Churches. Kryštof and Kilián Ignác Dientzenhofer], Praha 1986.

purely ideological stance, although Vilímková's text occasionally shows a rather negative stance towards the Jesuits.<sup>47</sup>

[25] The question of artistic value was of central interest also to Věra Naňková in her contribution to the fundamental work *Dějiny českého výtvarného umění II* (History of Czech Fine Arts II).<sup>48</sup> Concerning the Clementinum she wanted to determine the authorship of the architects of the individual construction phases and to highlight the artistic principles that characterize them. For instance Naňková comments on Lurago's works at the Saint Saviour church that his "interventions were first rather utilitarian than of an artistic importance".<sup>49</sup> Similarly, Věra Naňková, Mojmír Horyna and Milada Vilímková focused on the role of the architects, based primarily on existing archival sources, secondary literature and on stylistic analysis.<sup>50</sup> Yet, they did not hesitate to express their admiration towards the artistic performance of Christoph Dientzenhofer, who was able to "conjure up a glorious church space from a longitudinal 'barn'".<sup>51</sup> On the contrary, Neumann in his book began the entry on the Clementinum with the formulation: "[...] for its dimensions and almost fortress-like layout, it became an expressive symbol of the hard Counter-Reformation approach of the Jesuits and their spiritual dominance in the post-White Mountain period."<sup>52</sup>

[26] In specialized studies solely dedicated to the Clementinum, these rather simple equations made way for more complex considerations,<sup>53</sup> detailed descriptions of the architectural development and particular equipment of the

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<sup>47</sup> Vilímková, *Stavitelé paláců a chrámů*, 28, 29.

<sup>48</sup> Věra Naňková, "Architektura 17. století v Čechách [Architecture of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century in Bohemia]" and "Architektura vrcholného baroka v Čechách [Architecture of High Baroque in Bohemia]", in: *Dějiny českého výtvarného umění II. Od počátků renesance do závěru baroku* [History of Czech Fine Arts II. From the Beginnings of the Renaissance till the End of the Baroque], ed. Rudolf Chadraba, Praha 1989, 249-278, 391-454.

<sup>49</sup> Naňková, "Architektura 17. století", 255.

<sup>50</sup> Věra Naňková, Mojmír Horyna and Milada Vilímková, "Umění baroka. Architektura [Baroque Art. Architecture]", in: *Praha na úsvitu nových dějin* [Prague at the Dawn of the Modern Age], ed. Emanuel Poche, Praha 1988, 287-518, here 298, 299, 308, 367, 393, 394, 396.

<sup>51</sup> Naňková, Horyna and Vilímková, "Umění baroka", 394.

<sup>52</sup> Neumann, *Český barok*, 134-135.

<sup>53</sup> Ivan Šperling, "Obnova štukové výzdoby Klementina v Praze [Renewal of the Stucco Decoration of the Clementinum in Prague]", in: *Památková péče* 23 (1963), 259-262; Ivan Šperling, "Obnova průčelí kostela sv. Salvátora v Praze [Renewal of the Facade of the Church of Saint Saviour in Prague]", in: *Památková péče* 25 (1965), 225-232.

complex,<sup>54</sup> artistic attribution,<sup>55</sup> stylistic and iconographic analysis of interior decorations,<sup>56</sup> and a summary of the latest archival research.<sup>57</sup> Yet only on rare occasions the authors supplemented their descriptions with the slightest artistic assessment. In this sense exceptional is Pavel Preiss' evaluation of the main library hall in the Clementinum as "a perfect incorporation of High Baroque style according to the artistic ideas of the Jesuits".<sup>58</sup>

[27] In general, the studies dedicated solely to the Clementinum or to its parts avoided any ideological context. In this sense, the authors mostly continued the tradition of pre-war articles. In contrast to the intentions manifested by Jaromír Neumann on the application of Marxist theory in art history, art historians were already since the late 1950s able to publish on the Clementinum without applying the officially dictated Marxist approach. On the other hand, scholarly articles differ from the richly illustrated monographs dedicated to the Baroque style. In these books, that could attract a much wider range of readers beyond academic circles, the strategy of inserting the official narrative prevails, mostly in the form of a few introductory phrases employing the negative evaluation of the Jesuit heritage. However, over time, especially during Perestroika, this trend diminished in favour of an emphasis on the Baroque beauty.

### The Clementinum for the public

[28] Much clearer evidence of the validity of the common Marxist-Leninist interpretation of the period comes from popular literature on the Clementinum. Here the subject of refusal was not the Baroque style itself but its commissioners, the Jesuit Order. The essential guidebook *Prahou krok za krokem. Průvodce městem* (Step by Step Through Prague: A Guide to the City) by Emanuel Poche and Josef Janáček (1963), which might still be found in every bourgeois household of the city, manifests an uncompromising negative attitude towards the role that

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<sup>54</sup> Jiří Čarek, "Z dějin staroměstských domů - předchůdci Klementina [From the History of Old Town Houses - The Predecessors of the Clementinum]", in: *Pražský historický sborník* 11 (1978), 20-39; Jan Bárta, "Tambur kostela sv. Salvátora v Klementinu [The Tambour of the Church of Saint Saviour in the Clementinum]", in: *Staletá Praha* 8 (1977), 145-154; Bedřich Polák, "Freskové sluneční hodiny v nádvořích Klementina [Frescoed Solar Clocks in the Courtyards of the Clementinum]", in: *Staletá Praha* 13 (1983), 157-166.

<sup>55</sup> Ivan Šperling, "Jan Hiebel a Andrea Pozzo [Jan Hiebel and Andrea Pozzo]", in: *Itálie, Čechy a střední Evropa. Referáty z konference pořádané ve dnech 6.-8.12.1983* [Italy, Bohemia and Central Europe. Proceedings of the Conference held 6-8 December 1983], Praha 1986, 294-305.

<sup>56</sup> Pavel Preiss, "Freska Jana Hiebla v knihovním sále Klementina [Jan Hiebel's Fresco in the Library Hall of the Clementinum]", in: *Pocta dr. Emmě Urbánkové* [Homage to Dr. Emma Urbánková], Praha 1979, 285-306.

<sup>57</sup> Věra Mixová, "Archivní příspěvky k dějinám stavby a výzdoby kostela sv. Klimenta v Praze I, [Archival Contributions to the History of the Building and the Decoration of Saint Clement Church in Prague I]", in: *Umění* 7 (1959), 68-69.

<sup>58</sup> Preiss, "Freska Jana Hiebla", 285.

the Jesuits played in the history of the Kingdom of Bohemia.<sup>59</sup> It is cited here in detail because of its generic Marxist-Leninist interpretation of the Clementinum and its connection to the revolutionary history of the working class:

*[29] The Jesuits came to Prague at the direct impetus of King Ferdinand I and a new epoch of Habsburg counter-reformation policy began with their being called to the capital city of the kingdom. With the full support of the Habsburgs and their loyal feudal lieges the Jesuits soon developed an extensive Counter-Reformation propaganda and at the same time did not stop even at overt political conspiracies, aimed against the opposition to the Habsburg dominion. They had the foremost position in the battle of the Habsburg-Catholic camp and therefore were banished from Prague at the time of the Bohemian Estate Uprising in 1618-20. They returned soon after the Battle of White Mountain and became not only the most zealous preachers of a forceful Counter-Reformation but also the greatest plunderers. No Prague monument speaks as convincingly of the expansionism and greed of the Jesuits as the Clementinum itself. Into the slightly built-up area of the medieval town, where there had stood 32 homes until then, the cloister, two gardens and three churches, they wedged a monumental building representing the strength and power of the Catholic Church. At that time, called the dark ages for the Bohemian nation, the Jesuits dominated schooling, censorship and the foremost places in the battle against non-Catholics. More than fifty years of their ideological domination meant a deep cultural decline for the Czech people. [...] If the Clementinum and its history until 1848 can be directly identified with the negative traditions of our national history, it became in 1848 the focus of the June Uprising long after the Jesuits had to leave it. The students made the Clementinum into a real fortress, defended on all sides by barricades, in which also the gubernatorial president Count Thun was held in captivity for a short time. For the entire time of the June Uprising, the Clementinum was the main headquarter of the advanced student body, which along with the working class of the Prague factories represented the most revolutionary components of the uprising. The connection of the students with the workers was sealed on the barricades with blood and mainly in this connection we see one of the most advanced features of the Revolution of 1848. The student body of this year had nothing in common with the student legions of the Jesuits, who had defended Prague against the Swedes in 1648. The students then were only soldiers, recruited under the school banners, but in 1848 they themselves were a political component of the revolution with their own aims and a solid will to break the intolerable shackles of the feudal state.<sup>60</sup>*

[30] In its first edition, however, written by Emanuel Poche (1903-1987) alone and published in 1958, a briefer description of the structure is given, clear of any form of criticism on the Jesuit Order.<sup>61</sup> Poche's later co-author Janáček (1925-1994), though, in a tourist guide for foreign visitors to Prague, issued almost two

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<sup>59</sup> Emanuel Poche and Josef Janáček, *Prahou krok za krokem. Průvodce městem* [Step by Step Through Prague: A Guide to the City], Praha 1963.

<sup>60</sup> Poche and Janáček, *Prahou krok za krokem*, 39-40.

decades later in 1980 in Leipzig, in much the same words repeats the negative judgement on the Jesuits' historical role.<sup>62</sup> Poche on the contrary in another guidebook to Prague, published in French in 1965, went again without any criticism on the Jesuit Order and only factually described the complex of the Clementinum.<sup>63</sup> Yet, the quoted negative evaluation of the Jesuits cannot be attributed to Janáček alone. Poche in his contribution to an extensive book, *Architektura v českém národním dědictví* (Architecture in the Czech National Heritage), also outlined the quasi dialectical historical meaning of the Clementinum: its negative historical role as a seat of the Jesuits and its positive historical role as a centre of the Czech emancipation movement.<sup>64</sup> This concept, it seems, was based on the exhibition *Architektura v českém a slovenském národním dědictví* (Architecture in the Czech and Slovak National Heritage) that took place in an exhibition space called *Dům U Hybernů* (The Hybern-House) in Prague already in 1952. This event was organized under the aegis of *Ministerstvo školství, věd a umění* (Ministry of Education, Science and Arts) and *Ministerstvo informací a osvěty* (Ministry of Information).<sup>65</sup> Having been supported by these ministries, the exhibition might be understood as an influential ideological tool intended for an efficient shaping of the public opinion. Targeting the general public, Poche repeated his negative attitude towards the Jesuits in another representative book dedicated to Prague architecture and published in 1958.<sup>66</sup> There he criticized the Societas Jesu for its arrogance and its need for representation culminating only in grand scale projects instead of achieving real artistic values.

[31] Other popular guidebooks continuing this dialectical argumentation followed. In 1960, Václav Hlavsa described the former Jesuit college as a representative of

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<sup>61</sup> Emanuel Poche, *Prahou krok za krokem. Uměleckohistorický průvodce městem* [Step by Step Through Prague: An Art Historical Guide to the City], Praha 1958, 31.

<sup>62</sup> Josef Janáček, *Das alte Prag* [Old Prague], Leipzig 1980, 214.

<sup>63</sup> Emanuel Poche, *Praha. Petit guide artistique et historique* [Prague. Small Guide on Art and History], Praha 1965, 81-83.

<sup>64</sup> Emanuel Poche, "Architektura barokní [Baroque Architecture]", in: *Architektura v českém národním dědictví* [Architecture in the Czech National Heritage], ed. Zdeněk Wirth and Augusta Müllerová, Praha 1961, 106-137, here 106.

<sup>65</sup> Zdeněk Wirth and Augusta Müllerová, eds., *Architektura v českém národním dědictví* [Architecture in the Czech National Heritage], Praha 1961, 11; on the exhibition and its catalogues: Michaela Marek, "Baudenkmäler im tschechoslowakischen Grenzland nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg. Strategien der (Wieder-)Aneignung [Architectural Monuments in the Czechoslovak Borderlands after the Second World War. Strategies of (Re-)Appropriation]", in: *Deutsche, Tschechen, Böhmen. Kulturelle Integration und Desintegration im 20. Jahrhundert* [Germans, Czechs, Bohemians. Cultural Integration and Distintegration in the 20th Century], ed. Steffen Höhne and Ludger Udolph, Köln, Weimar and Wien 2010, 193-229.

<sup>66</sup> Emanuel Poche, *Prahou včerejška i dneška* [Through Prague of Past and Present Times], Praha 1958, 18.

the period of “darkness”,<sup>67</sup> adding the information that it was here, where the infamous Jesuit priest Koniáš (“páter Koniáš”) had burnt some 30.000 Czech “heretic” books. At the same time Hlavsa ingeniously stresses the existence of several libraries in the Clementinum, especially the valuable collection of the medieval manuscripts deposited there.<sup>68</sup> By listing several of the manuscripts he turns the attention from the Baroque epoch to medieval culture. A similar strategy – emphasizing the negative impact of Jesuit activities and the listing of medieval manuscripts – was employed by Alois Svoboda in 1968.<sup>69</sup>

[32] A different approach was taken by a series of foreign-language guidebooks, which were issued by the publishing house *Olympia*. These books by Michal Flegl (born 1940) have maintained a neutral position to the described buildings including the Clementinum.<sup>70</sup> In 1985 the same publishing house issued a shorter guidebook for Czech readers and tourists that gives a brief history and description of the Clementinum and is likewise free of any ideological background.<sup>71</sup>

[33] In this, Flegl’s books correspond with the content of various pre-war and inter-war guidebooks. The famous *Vilímkův rádce a průvodce Prahou* (Vilímek’s Advisor and Guide to Prague) provides in the first editions only an extremely limited information on cultural monuments, in the case of the Clementinum it focuses mainly on the library service and all information is summed up in mere four lines.<sup>72</sup> First in 1914, when the name of an author, Karel Bělohlávek, appears for the first time, the Clementinum’s history is briefly introduced and its particular sites are described in some detail.<sup>73</sup> Yet the Baroque or the Jesuits are not associated with any further interpretation or judgement. A similar structure

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<sup>67</sup> Hlavsa, *Praha*, 75; yet, in its previous edition of 1948 Hlavsa dedicated four pages to an elaborated description of the cultural heritage in the Clementinum, commissioned by the Jesuits: Václav Hlavsa, *Praha. Průvodce ulicemi a památkami hlavního města* [Prague: A Guide to the Streets and Historic Sites of the Capital], Praha 1948, 63-66.

<sup>68</sup> Hlavsa, *Praha*, 76.

<sup>69</sup> Alois Svoboda, *Praha. Intimní průvodce po pražských památkách, krásách, zajímavostech i romantických zákoutích* [Prague. An Intimate Guide to Prague’s Historic Sites, Beautiful Spots, Places of Interest and Even Romantic Places], Praha 1968, 31-33.

<sup>70</sup> Michal Flegl, *Prague*, Praha 1988, 46-49; Michal Flegl, *Prag*, Praha 1988, 44-47.

<sup>71</sup> Ctibor Rybár, *Praha* [Prague], Praha 1985, 119-120.

<sup>72</sup> *Vilímkův rádce a průvodce Prahou. Praktická příruční knížka pro cizince a Pražany* [Vilímek’s Guide to Prague. A Practical Handbook for Foreigners as well as for Prague Residents], Praha 1905, 106; *Vilímkův rádce a průvodce Prahou. Praktická příruční knížka pro cizince a Pražany* [Vilímek’s Advisor and Guide to Prague. A Practical Handbook for Foreigners as well as for Prague Residents], Praha 1907, 99; *Vilímkův rádce a průvodce Prahou a Jubilejní výstavou* [Vilímek’s Advisor and Guide to Prague and the Jubilee Exhibition], Praha 1908, 94; *Vilímkův rádce a průvodce Prahou. Praktická příruční knížka pro cizince a Pražany* [Vilímek’s Advisor and Guide to Prague. A Practical Handbook for Foreigners as well as for Prague Residents], Praha 1909, 94.

and amount of information is provided by the popular guidebooks by Jan Emler<sup>74</sup> as well as in books by other publishers from the pre-war and inter-war period.<sup>75</sup> In 1920, Emler and Luboš Jeřábek in several statements underlined the positive impact of the Jesuits on the cultural production (“pompous theatre performances [...] excellent disputations [...] splendid balcony”).<sup>76</sup>

[34] Oldřich Stefan in his photographic publication *Pražské kostely* (Prague Churches) from 1936 even claims a conciliatory integration of the Catholic confession in the Czech lands:

*Step by step and generation by generation, the originally foreign ruling religious formulation, brought to the country by a violent dictate, has converged with the inner content of the domestic milieu all the way to that basis on which the idea and the domestic creative force found a new, long sought-after harmony.*<sup>77</sup>

The presentation of the Clementinum in popular guidebooks from the first five decades of the twentieth century demonstrates a certain continuity regarding the content. Apart from some exceptions, the vast majority of the books provides only limited information and a rather neutral or positive attitude towards the Jesuit heritage. Yet, such an approach dramatically changed in the 1950s when the new rulers implemented the new official ideology. Then, the most radical statements can be found in the first books, but over time the negative judgement on the historical role of the Jesuits and their artistic legacy tended to dissolve. However, the intention to manipulate the public opinion becomes particularly evident when comparing editions that were published both in Czech and in foreign languages. In the Czech version one can find the principal negative narrative on the Jesuits that in the guidebooks prepared for foreign tourists disappears completely. Moreover, in comparison to academic writing, one can see that in popular media propaganda had a much larger impact as their purpose was not only to provide information but also to influence and form the public opinion.

## Conclusion

[35] The Clementinum as the focus of Jesuit power and at the same time Baroque culture in Bohemia did not become a platform for a deeper criticism on social

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<sup>73</sup> Karel Bělohávek, *Vilímkův rádce a průvodce Prahou. Praktická ilustrovaná příruční kniha pro cizince i Pražany* [Vilímek's Guide to Prague. A Practical Illustrated Handbook for Foreigners as well as for Prague Residents], Praha 1914, 63-64.

<sup>74</sup> Jan Emler, *Průvodce po Praze* [A Guide to Prague], Praha [1912], 19-21; John Emler, *A Guide to Prague*, Praha [1913], 17-19.

<sup>75</sup> B. Kočího *Průvodce Prahou* [B. Kočí's Guide to Prague], Praha 1908, 192; *Průvodce Prahou a několik vděčných výletů po Čechách* [A Guide to Prague and Several Rewarding Trips around Bohemia], Praha 1932-1933, 18-19; Emil Hlávka, *Praha a okolí* [Prague and its Surroundings], Praha 1939, 74.

<sup>76</sup> Luboš Jeřábek and Jan Emler, *Malebné pouti po krásné Praze* [Picturesque Walks through Beautiful Prague], Praha 1920, 42-43.

<sup>77</sup> Oldřich Stefan, *Pražské kostely* [Prague Churches], Praha 1936, 13.

relations in the spirit of Marxist ideology for art historians, although it provided an almost ideal point of departure for such an intention. On the contrary, the main Jesuit college in Bohemia was placed in art historical works side by side with other architectural monuments which created the narrative of a linear stylistic development. This usually went without an ideologically conditioned evaluation of the specific buildings and their ecclesiastical or aristocratic commissioners. The negative judgements then have to be seen as rather obligatory phrases that often stand out from the body of text in an irritating or disturbing way. Furthermore they must partly be judged as a legacy of the Czech national discourse of the nineteenth century. However, there are exceptions, particularly in popular literature, where the message of the text appears to be much stronger conditioned by ideology. The popular guidebooks for Czech and Slovak readers together with other media addressing the general public as films or exhibitions might have been more strictly censored, controlled and steered to convey the appropriate ideological message. According to the results of this preliminary study it seems that the tendency to indoctrinate the masses was much more intense than the influence wielded over academic writings.

[36] Today, it is possible only with difficulty to re-evaluate the specific intentions and the room for manoeuvre that the individual authors and publishers had in view of the obviously shifting degree of necessity to apply the dogmas of Marxist-Leninist ideology. Given the Clementinum's significance for the local cultural development, however, the fact that monographs focussing on the Jesuits in general and their college in Prague's Old Town in particular could only be issued after 1989, is the most telling evidence of the effect of the negative assessment of the Jesuit heritage in the Marxist-Leninist historical narrative.

### **Guest Editors of Special Issue**

Michaela Marek (†) and Eva Pluhařová-Grigiene, eds., *Prekäre Vergangenheit? Barockforschung im östlichen Mitteleuropa unter den Bedingungen des Sozialismus*, in: RIHA Journal 0211-0217.

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