

**Identification**

<u>Nomination</u>	Spišský Hrad castle and the cultural monuments in its environs
<u>Location</u>	Spiš Region
<u>State Party</u>	Slovak Republic
<u>Date</u>	26 September 1991

**Justification by State Party**

The area forms a unique urban-architectural and natural landscape unit of high artistic and aesthetic value, a true masterpiece of the creative genius (criterion i).

The castle is a characteristic ensemble, representing cultural, social, and artistic developments, and is at the same time comparatively intact. The military, political, ecclesiastical, and social elements are closely linked with the surrounding landscape (criterion iv).

**History and Description**History

Spišský Hrad (castle) stands on a dramatic site, a hill rising out of the plain of western Slovakia. The earliest occupation on the site dates back to as early as the Neolithic period (5th millennium BC), and it was subsequently occupied in the Bronze Age and in the 1st century AD, when a fortified settlement was built there, serving as the political and administrative centre of the contemporary Púchov people. It was also fortified during the Great Moravian Period (9th century AD).

Construction of the present castle began in the early 12th century, but the original structure collapsed, having been built on a geological fault. The present castle was built in the first half of the 13th century, as a defence against Tatar incursions from the east. The Romanesque palace was completed in 1249 and the keep in 1270. Following severe damage from the armies of Matthias Cak in the early 14th century it was rebuilt in the Gothic style and extended by the addition of a large settlement with its own access gate. Additions were made in the 15th century, and major emergency repairs had to be carried out in the 17th and 18th centuries. It served as a garrison until 1780 when it was abandoned after a disastrous fire and left to subside into ruins.

The town of Spišské Podhradie was founded as a settlement in the 12th century, at the base of the castle mound, which was

already fortified at that time, but it quickly became independent of the castle. The first church, destroyed in a Tatar raid, was rebuilt in Romanesque style in 1258-73, probably by the same Italian masons who constructed the first castle. It was granted town privileges in 1321 and became an important textile centre for its large Saxon community during the 15th century, when much of the town was reconstructed and fortified, but it fell into economic decline after the Reformation. The street pattern was laid out formally in the 14th century and extended in the 15th century. Following a fire in the 16th century most of the houses were rebuilt in Renaissance style.

Spišská Kapitula began as a small fortified settlement in the 12th century overlooking Spišské Podhradie, of which it now forms part. It was the site of the residence of the Provost of the castle, in the no longer extant St Martin's monastery, and later became a capitulary. This was destroyed in by Tatars in 1241-3, but the pilgrim's chapel, in rotunda form and dedicated to the Virgin, survived until the 18th century and the monastery until the 15th century. Building of the cathedral began in 1285 as a three-aisled Romanesque basilica with a chancel at the west end and a double spire. The Provost's residence was completed in 1281 and further religious buildings were added. Frequent raids by marauding Bulgars and others led to its being fortified in the 14th century. The cathedral was rebuilt in the later 14th century. In 1776 it became the residence of the Bishop and four years later a seminary was established. In 1819 the first teacher training centre in Hungary was founded there.

Žehra is one of the earliest Slovak settlements in the region. In the later feudal period it formed part of the castle domain, with a manor in the village. The Church of the Holy Spirit was largely built after 1275.

### Description

Spišsky Hrad Castle consists of the upper keep and its courtyard, two Romanesque inner baileys with internal fortified access gates, the outer bailey, with the main entrance gate and remains of the garrison's quarters, and the large barbican area, now largely ruined. Excavations in front of the castle have revealed the remains of the earlier moated circular fort, a ritual building of the Púchov culture, and the foundations of later outbuildings. The foundations of the Captain's house have been discovered by excavation in the outer bailey. The remains of a circular tower, believed to have been a gunpowder store, have been discovered in the upper inner bailey. The upper keep and its courtyard are accompanied by the castle chapel, a cistern, remains of an earlier residential tower, and other features.

The central point of Spišské Podhradie is the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary, surrounded by town houses. A number of stone two-storey 14th century houses still survive, embedded in the fabric of later (largely Renaissance) structures. The town square assumed its present form in the 15th century, round the church. A block of 18th century Baroque houses, along with the church and monastery of the Order of Brothers of Mercy, has

closed the southeast side of the central square. A new dominant feature was introduced in the early 19th century in the shape of the Evangelical Church.

The complex of buildings at Spišská Kapitula is based on the Cathedral of St Martin, founded in the 13th century but owing its present form to successive remodellings and additions in the Gothic, Renaissance, and Baroque styles. The main body of the cathedral is Gothic, with some surviving Romanesque elements. The Bishop's Palace is largely Baroque, with some excellent interior decorations, like many of the religious buildings in the group. The oval ground plan of the centre of the town is due to its having been fortified in the 14th century. The various religious buildings had defensive functions in this early period. New monastery buildings were erected in the 17th century, when the Provost's residence was rebuilt and the whole area fortified. The earlier central fortifications were removed in the 18th century.

The Church of the Holy Spirit at Žehra was originally built with a square presbytery and external tower; it was later reconstructed with a vault and central pillar. Its medieval wall paintings are especially noteworthy: they are in five distinct phases, from the third quarter of the 13th century to the 15th century.

## **Management and Protection**

### Legal status

Spišsky Hrad is in State ownership and is administered and managed by the Spišské Museum in Levoca. Of the 72 designated cultural properties in Spišské Podhradie, two are owned by State-owned companies, 15 by official bodies (municipal authorities, school administration, etc), three by cooperative organizations, nine by the Roman Catholic and Lutheran Churches), and 43 by private individuals. All 23 properties at Spišská Kapitula and the Church of the Holy Spirit at Žehra are the property of the Roman Catholic Church, two being managed by the Roman Catholic Faculty of Theology in Bratislava and the remainder by the Diocese.

The Spišsky Hrad group of monuments are protected under the Slovak Law on State Care of Historical Monuments 1987 and associated regulations. The castle itself has been a National Cultural Monument since 1961, its protective zone having been created in 1987.

Spišské Podhradie is about to be designated as an Historical Zone; the most important buildings are already on the Central Register of Historical Monuments. Spišská Kapitula has been an Urban Memorial Reservation since 1950. The Church of the Holy Spirit at Žehra has been a National Cultural Monument since 1985.

## Management

Ultimate responsibility for the protection and care of monuments is vested in the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic. It works through municipal offices at Spišské Podhradie and Žehra and the Spišské Museum in Levoca, as well as bodies such as the Slovak Institute for the Care of Historical Monuments (SUPS), based in Bratislava.

Before 1989, in the period of socialist planned economy, plans were prepared within the five-year plan framework, and these applied equally to monument protection and management. With the introduction of the market economy, work is continuing on existing lines while a comprehensive management programme is being prepared. This will form part of the Territorial Plan of the Spišské Podhradie Zone, prepared by URBION, Kosice.

## **Conservation and Authenticity**

### Conservation history

Restoration work began at Spišsky Hrad in the 1970s, but has been suspended for the past two years owing to lack of funds. This included archaeological and architectural recording as well as conservation work, under the supervision of SUPS Bratislava.

The monuments of Spišské Podhradie and Spišská Kapitula were well maintained by their individual owners until they were nationalized. Thereafter, many began to decay rapidly, especially the religious buildings at the latter and many town houses at the former. Some State-funded restoration was carried out in the 1970s and 1980s, notably the Cathedral, Bishop's Palace, and seminary in Spišská Kapitula. Restoration and maintenance work was carried out at the Church of the Holy Spirit at Žehra in 1928, 1954, and 1990.

### Authenticity

The castle escaped the excesses of 19th century restoration and so it has retained its successive features without extraneous "improvement". Recent survey and excavation has brought a number of important historical elements to light. The other components of the proposed World Heritage Monument are reasonably authentic, given their long history of use and consequent remodelling and adaptation.

## **Evaluation**

### Qualities

The castle is one of the largest in eastern Europe and is important because of its Romanesque and Gothic elements, which make it comparable with contemporary castles in France and the British Isles rather than those of central and eastern Europe, most of which underwent substantial modifications in the centuries following their initial construction.

Spišská Kapitula is a unique fortified ecclesiastical ensemble, whilst Spišské Podhradie is a good example of medieval town planning, with some well preserved early buildings. Žehra church is notable for its exceptional medieval wall paintings.

Individually the monuments and sites would not qualify for World Heritage status. However, a strong case can be made for them as a group, consisting of an unusually complete and intact ensemble comprising military, political, religious, and social elements that are closely interrelated.

#### Comparative analysis

There is no group of this kind in eastern or central Europe that is comparable in terms of its ensemble value.

#### Additional comments

At its 16th Meeting in Paris in July 1992, the Bureau of the World Heritage Committee deferred the examination of this property to allow the competent authorities to establish a management plan for this ensemble. The present position is that there is no management plan in force, although the overall conservation and restoration plan of the previous political administration is still operating. A detailed structure plan for the region has been prepared, which takes into account the proper preservation and presentation of this ensemble, and it is proposed to formulate the specific plan without delay. In the circumstances, it would appear that the Slovak authorities have taken all the preliminary steps necessary and that a management plan for the ensemble will become a reality in the relatively near future. For that reason, ICOMOS believes that inscription should not be further delayed, although the Slovak authorities should be urged to complete and implement the management plan without delay.

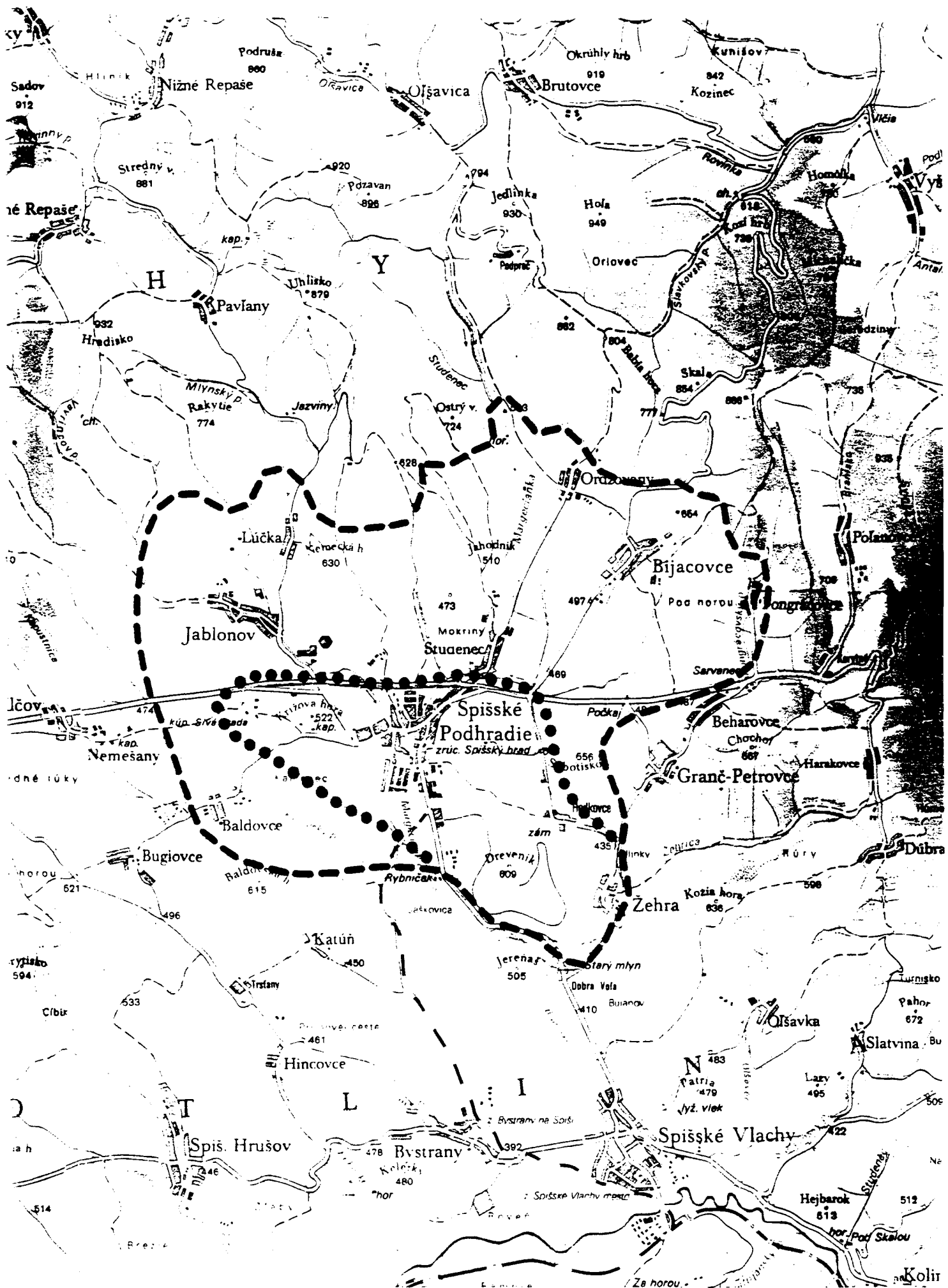
The Slovak authorities have nominated the property for inclusion on the List under natural criterion iii. ICOMOS has no opinion on this subject, beyond the fact that the justification put forward in the nomination dossier does not suggest that the property would qualify under the revised "cultural landscape" criteria.

#### **Recommendation**

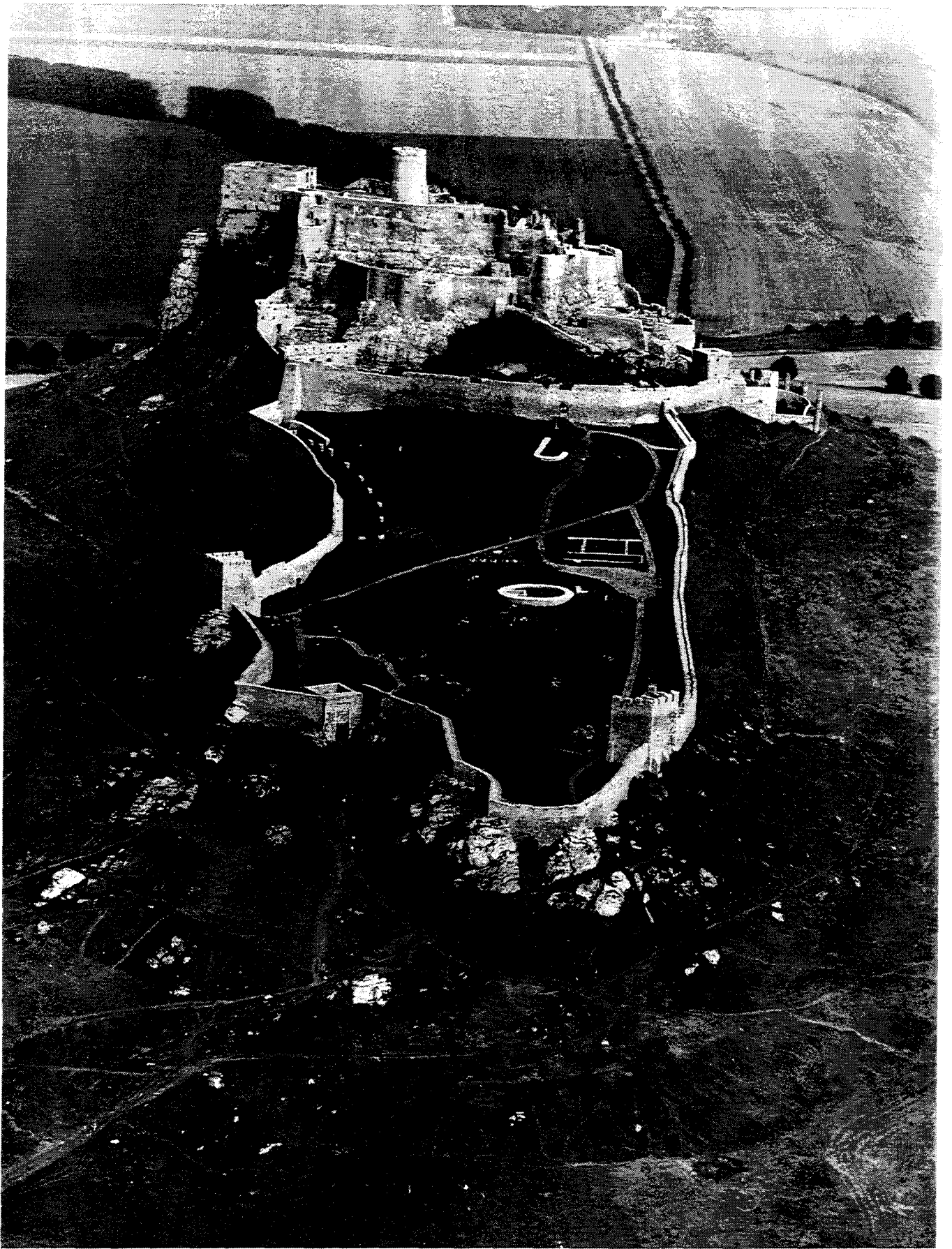
That this property be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of criterion iv:

- Criterion iv The castle of Spišsky Hrad and the associated sites of Spišské Podhradie, Spišská Kapitula, and Žehra constitute a remarkable ensemble of military, political, and religious elements of a type that was common in medieval Europe but of which almost none have survived in so complete and unaltered a state.

ICOMOS, October 1993

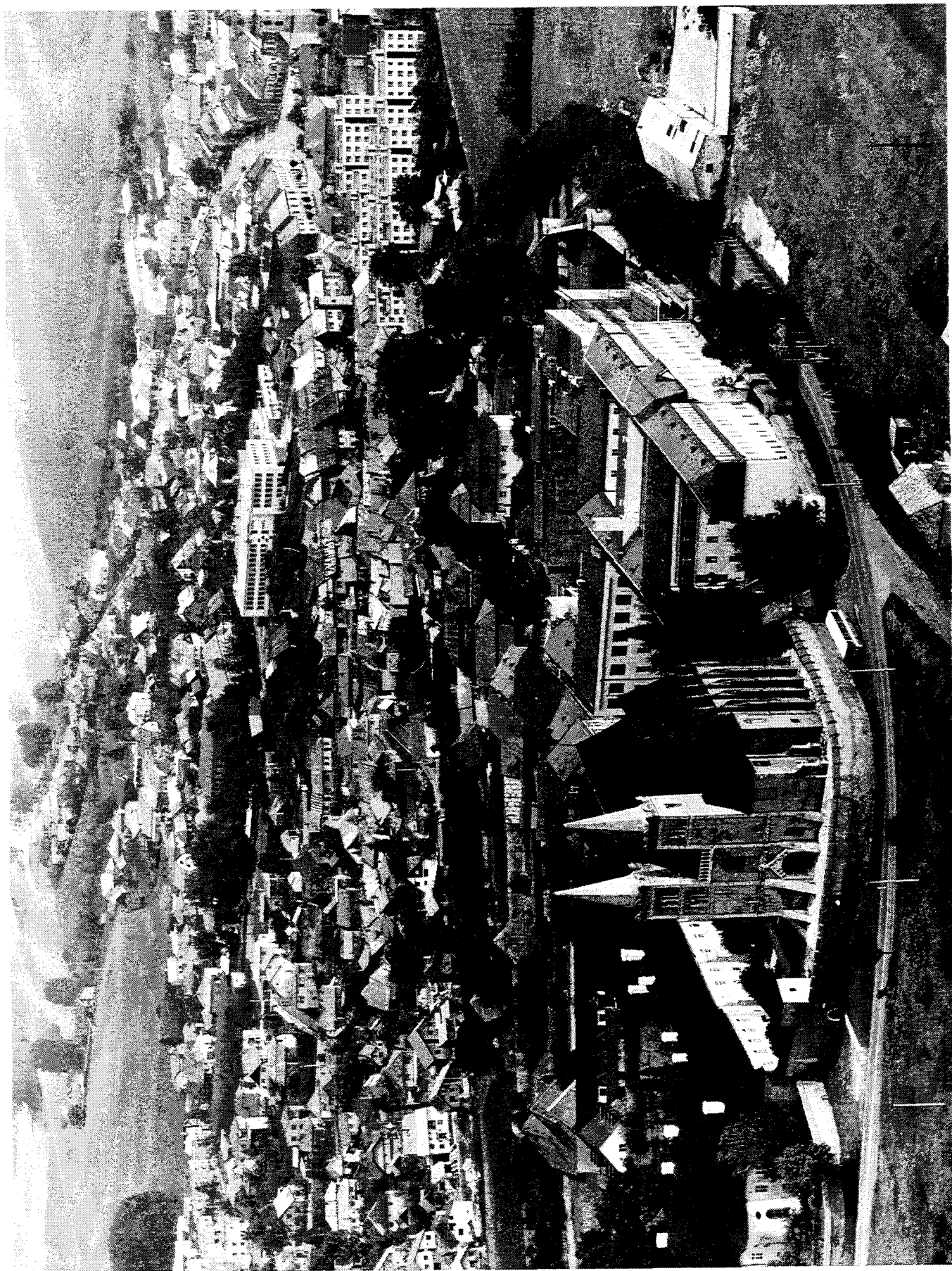


Spissky Hrad : carte indiquant le périmètre du site et la zone tampon /  
 map showing the perimeter of the site and the buffer zone



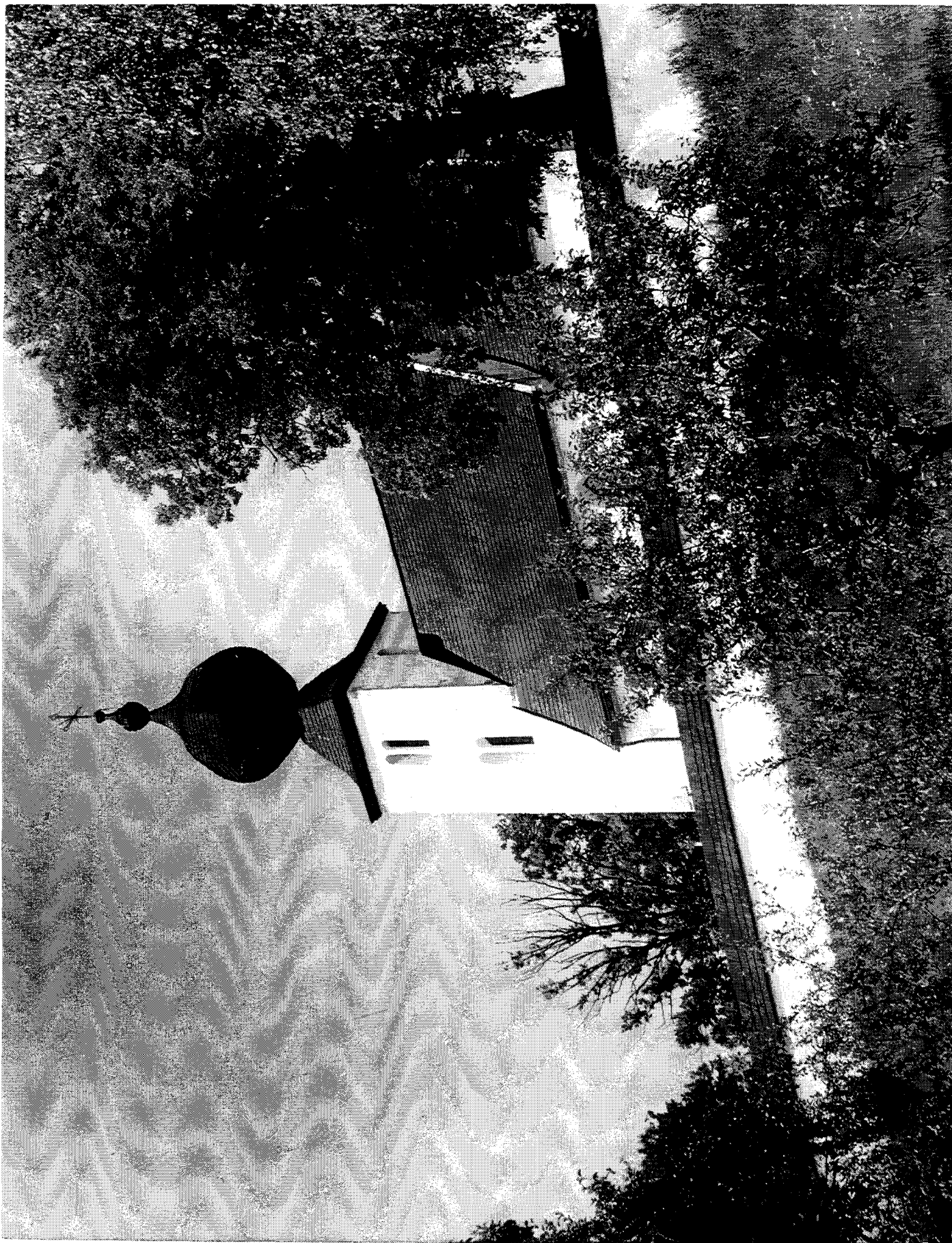
Spissky Hrad : château de Spissky Hrad / Spissky Hrad Castle





Spissky Hrad : Spissky Kapitula avec la cathédrale Saint-Martin  
et Spiske Podhradie à l'arrière-plan /  
Spisska Kapitula with St Martin's Cathedral and  
Spiske Podhradie in the background





Zehra : église du Saint-Esprit /  
Church of the Holy Spirit