

Summary

Chomutov was built on the left bank of the river originally called Úzká (today Chomutovka) at the junction of local paths with an important long-distance path from Leipzig to Prague. The first record about it dates from 1252 when its owner, Bedřich of Chomutov, gave it to the Order of German Knights. At that time, Chomutov was dominated by the Church of St. Catherine. The axes of the transept and the nave followed the direction of both the business paths at the crossroads of which Chomutov was established, and therefore, they document the planned inclusion of the religious structure into the developing town.

German Knights surrounded the Church of St. Catherine with a large building. The so-called *commendata* (building where the commander of the order lived) and its grounds broke the links between the Church of St. Catherine and the former population centre which was probably located north-westward from it. A new central area of the developing town was established on the south-eastern side of the *commendata*. There was a business path towards Prague and on each of its sides a row of fourteen equal plots intended for houses was marked. On the border of the assumed original and new part of Chomutov, another religious structure was built (the present Dean Church of the Assumption) and a cemetery. Both the church and the cemetery were surrounded with a wall and together with the *commendata* they formed two fortification points of an otherwise un-fortified population centre.

Fortification walls, towers and moats around the town were built in the 14th century. The line of the town walls was interrupted by three gates. In front of the Horní (Upper; sometimes also called Kadaň) Gate there was Horní (Upper) Suburb which might have been a remainder of the original Chomutov from the first half of the 13th century. Dolní (Lower) Suburb with the Hospital Church of St. Spirit adjoined the Dolní (Lower; sometimes also called Prague or Kloboučnická) Gate. This was the largest suburb in Chomutov already in the 14th century. The smallest Vinné (Wine) Suburb was situated in front of the gate of the same name along the north-eastern portion of the fortification walls. The fourth Chomutov suburb called Dlouhá Ulice (Long Street) followed the one-half kilometre long street running along the right bank of Chomutovka between the Horní and Dolní Gates.

In 1411 the Order of German Knights had to assign Chomutov to King Wenceslas IV. On 16 March 1421 the Hussites conquered Chomutov and burned it down. It took several decades before the town recovered from this disaster. In November 1457 Ladislav Pohrobek gave a coat of arms to Chomutov. Just after the mid-15th century, pledgors of the town stopped changing so frequently and since 1456 the town belonged to the lords of Weitmile.

At the end of the 15th century and at the beginning of the 16th century the appearance of Chomutov changed significantly. The *commendata* was turned into a castle, the cemetery was relocated to the suburb and the Dean Church was completed – a town tower was added. After the fire of 2 August 1525 the fortification system of the former *commendata* was pulled down. This resulted in expansion of the inner town and the fourth town gate, called Chlebná (Bread) Gate was erected near the presbytery of the Church of St. Catherine. This gate connected the square with the Dlouhá Ulice suburb. In the 1530s, Hřbitovní (Cemetery) Suburb was established under the eastern side of Vinohradský Hill. This neighbourhood documents economic development of Chomutov in the first half of the 16th century. It was larger than the area of the fortified centre and it was large enough to cover the growth needs of the town till the late 19th century.

Jan of Weitmile sold Chomutov to Arch-Prince Ferdinand of Tyrol from whom it was purchased by Bohuslav Hasištejnský of Lobkovicz in 1571. He attempted to change Chomutov into a residential town by renovating the local castle and modifying the Church of St. Catherine into a family vault, however he did not succeed. In December 1588 Jiří Popel of Lobkovicz acquired Chomutov from Felix's son Bohuslav Jáchym.

Popel's name is connected with the establishment of the Jesuit College. Its construction was first prevented by an uprising of Chomutov people in July 1591 and subsequently by a fire on 24 July 1598. At that time Chomutov was newly owned by Rudolf II who confiscated Popel's property in 1594. At the end of 1605, Chomutov bought itself out of serfdom and became an independent town. The college and the Church of St. Ignatio were completed at the turn of the 1670s according to the design by Carl Lurago.

At the very beginning of the 19th century the first manufacture was established in Chomutov and in the 1830s also other production plants. Kamencové (Alum Stone) Lake was created after the former alum stone quarry was filled up with water in the 1820s. In 1837–1838 all town gates were pulled down, and moats, ramparts and fortification walls provided space for the construction of new ring roads or they were acquired by owners of houses in the inner town whose gardens adjoined town walls. From the second half of the 19th century Chomutov started building modern school and public buildings. During the reform of the state administration in 1848–1850 Chomutov became the seat of the District Court and since 1868 it was also the capital of the political district.

In October 1871 town gasworks was put into operation and a new ironworks was established nearly at the same time. Their establishment is closely related to the completion of a railway which connected Chomutov with Prague, Ústí nad Labem, Karlovy Vary and a large railway network in Germany. From the late 19th century the territorial development of Chomutov speeded up; new neighbourhoods with rows of houses were built between the historic centre and the train station; a new villa suburb grew near Vinohradský Hill. At the beginning of the 20th century two large industrial plants (a brewery and a steam mill) situated in the town centre were closed down.

In the second half of the 19th century the number of inhabitants grew four times: from 4,014 in 1843 to 15,896 in 1900. The growth was accompanied by implementation of various hygienic measures. From the 1880s the bacteriological quality of water in public wells was monitored, from 1898 all Chomutov houses were obliged to have impenetrable concrete sumps, and in 1898 the Municipal Council decided to dam Kamenička Stream to obtain a source of drinking water. At the same time as the dam was put into operation in 1904, a water supply system and a sewerage system were put into operation. The newly opened public swimming centre in Kamencové Lake which was opened in 1894 and the healing spa in the former alum stone plant contributed to the improvement of hygienic conditions in the town. The most significant factories in the town were: Mannesman's rolling mill (established 1890) and a branch of Poldi Kladno Steelworks which started its operation in 1918.

About 1,200 metres north-east of Chomutov Square, the village of Horní Ves was established probably in the late 13th century. In 1842 Horní Ves comprised two quite small settlements situated on both banks of the Chomutovka along paths from Chomutov to Saxony. At that time the total number of inhabitants was 511 people living in 72 houses.

The life of Horní Ves changed significantly in the last quarter of the 19th century when it lost its rural features. The demographic growth of Horní Ves was extremely abrupt in the second half of the 19th century: from 1843 till 1883 the number of people rose three times (1 596 people and 116 houses in 1880) and during the next forty years the number of inhabitants grew four times (6 887 people and 472 houses in 1921). The fast growth of Horní Ves resulted in its mingling with Chomutov and forming a homogenous unit; subsequently this trend was confirmed by authorities when they declared Chomutov including its suburbs a single political municipality in August 1928.

During 1918–1938 the growth of Chomutov was not as intense as before 1914. The arrival of Czech people in Chomutov after 1918 disrupted the nearly homogenous German environment. The language segregation became apparent even from the designs of municipal and government blocks of flats and public buildings. Both the nationalities built them separately and only with regard to their own needs.

After the connection to Nazi Germany, more than a hundred houses were built in Chomutov during 1939–1943 with the help of significant subsidies from the German government. At the very end of the war, on 19 April 1945 an air raid by allied airplanes seriously damaged the local train station and the Poldi steelworks. About 25 houses were destroyed in Chomutov during the war.

The number of inhabitants shrunk considerably after the resettlement of Germans (28,848 inhabitants in 1950) and it took over fifteen years to grow back to the pre-war number (33,070 people in 1961). Demolition of the original buildings namely in old suburbs was typical of the four decades of the communist era in Chomutov. The number of houses destroyed in Chomutov during 1945–1989 is not known exactly, however, the estimate somewhere between five and eight hundred is not exaggerated very much.

During the first post-war years the construction of another drinking water source was planned: Křimovská Lake near Kamenička. The dam-wall was completed ten years later, in November 1957.

In 1947 a new land-use plan started being prepared and it was supposed to replace the invalid original regulation plan of Chomutov from 1898 and of Horní Ves from 1927. Since the plan did not take into consideration the coal deposits under Chomutov which were strategic for the communist economy, the preparation of the plan was interrupted. The geological research in 1951 discovered that nearly the whole town was situated on coal beds. This fact influenced the new land-use plan created in 1956. It introduced a so-called "coal pillar" for Chomutov behind which construction activity was supposed to be permitted for the next fifteen years – and it was planned that after the expiration of the expected life of the new structures, sometime in 2040, it would be permitted to carry out surface mining even there.

Due to the delayed land-use plan, the planned construction could only start in Chomutov in 1957. (Some new housing estates comprising prefabricated blocks of flats were constructed already after 1951, but their design and layout show significant urban deficiencies.) During the first phase of the planned construction, free spaces in the neighbourhoods between the Chomutovka and the local hospital and on Vinohradský Hill were filled up. Subsequently the construction activity continued by building prefabricated houses on undeveloped plots.

At the beginning of the 1960s demolition started and the construction of the main street (Palackého Street) started. The tallest building in Chomutov, a 51-metre-tall high-rise building Armabeton was built there in the second half of the 1970s.

The south-east part of the former Hřbitovní (Cemetery) Suburb was significantly changed after the premises of the former Mannesmann rolling mill were expanded by one house block; the renovation started at the end of the 1950s and the last phase – the construction of a so-called hygiene zone separating the factory from the town was completed in 1990. Seven streets were completely destroyed and five others were shortened due to this project.

In the 1960s a large housing estate was erected in Horní Ves (specifically its part situated on the left bank of the river); the housing estate was gradually enlarged during the 1970s and 80s and it resulted in spreading the settlement of Chomutov all the way to the very base of the Krušné Mountains. On the right bank of the river the development was much less intense (except the area of Kadaňská Street and Nové Spořice neighbourhood) since further development was prevented by an underground coal bed. This suburb (and also the slopes under Strážáňský Hill) were gradually covered up with family houses.

The largest settlement unit comprising five parts was built in the 1970s and 1980s in the area between Chomutov and Jirkov. First Březenecká housing estate was built. The housing estate comprised two parts and the older of them was dominated by three eighteen-storey houses designed by Le Corbusier. In the mid-1970s construction work started in Jirkov, in Pisečná (Sand) Housing Estate and continued towards Chomutov via Zahradní (Garden) Housing Estate where both the "construction streams" linked forming thus another housing estate (Kamenná). Due to the increasing number of flats, the number of Chomutov inhabitants increased significantly (51 769 in 1980 and 53 191 in 1991).

The change of political situation in 1989 prevented further construction of housing estates in Březenecká neighbourhood (this construction project was supposed to be a part of the preparations for coal mining in Chomutov in the second quarter of the 21st century) and implementation of other projects devastating the town (tram rails connecting Chomutov and Jirkov, replaced with trolleybuses in 1995). Prefabricated houses ceased to be built and the construction of family homes started instead. The reduction of heavy industry after 1990 resulted in decreasing the number of inhabitants (51 709 in 2001). The appearance of Chomutov was changed by large shopping centres and a new industrial zone at the edge of the town. In 1992 the land-use plan for Chomutov-Jirkov started to be updated and the new version was approved four years later. The greatest burdens for the town are the large premises of the rolling mill and ironworks with adjoining sedimentation facilities and chutes whose revitalisation will be demanding, in terms of both money and time; however, it is a necessary prerequisite to enable Chomutov to become a place friendly to its inhabitants and visitors.