

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF TOWN DĚČÍN - SUMMARY

Děčín lies in a closed basin at the boundary of Děčínská vrchovina (upland) and České středohoří with the Elbe as an axis. The territory was settled already in the prehistory and the Slavonic settlement dates back to 7th to 8th century. The settlement structure used to change considerably in the course of time and it added dynamism to the overall development. In 993 Děčín region was mentioned as one of border administrative areas of Přemyslid state with roads connecting Bohemia with Meissen lands, Lausitz and so-called Záhvzd near Zittau. The hillfort in Děčín creating the core of the settlement agglomeration was first mentioned in 1128. It seems that there used to be a St. George Church there. Under the hillfort there was a place for the collection of the customs duty on salt transported over the Elbe from the central Germany (notices from 1146 and 1183).

With the disruption of the Přemyslid castle administration in the first third of the 13th century the governor owned only the hillfort which gradually changed in the medieval stone castle (traces were found out during later reconstruction). A part of Děčín province came to the ownership of the nobleman dynasties of Markvartice and Ronov who settled there and built the foundations of land domains in the 13th century. This brought about a conflict with the King Přemysl Otakar II (1253-1278) who took away Šarfenštejn castle from Markvartic dynasty and in order to strengthen his power he made the medieval town founded under the Děčín castle.

The town arose on an unsettled territory south of the castle at the fall of Ploučnice river to the Elbe. The system of water tanks and ditches determined the area of about 7 ha which was fortified with a stone wall. Archaeological surveys revealed the remains of systematic buildings in the area of the complex (at lots of about 9 x 36 m flanking a paved road from the gate to the square). The oldest dwelling houses from the last third of the 13th century were replaced by houses of different appearance at the turn of the 13th and 14th century. Mostly these were wooden timbered houses on stony foundations. In the south-west of the square there used to be a church and on the south there used to be a cemetery bordered by a stony wall. Approximately 60 to 80 lots were located in the complex and the number of people probably did not exceed 500. After the establishment of the town at the beginning of the last third of the 13th century its development culminated at the turn of the 13th and 14th century. Then the life stagnated till the destructive fire after which the buildings were not renewed. Drifts in the western part of the complex prove floods. Irregularities in burials probably related to the plague in the turn of 1363-1364. Sometime in that period a settlement was deserted. The written notices mention the town whose governor was the King Wenceslas II in 1283. Přemyslid dynasty owned Děčín till 1306 and then it was taken over by the noblemen of Vartenberk, who were a part of Markvartic dynasty. The difficulties in the co-existence of the city and new noblemen were the reasons of the stagnation and later the elimination of the city.

Děčín domain of Vartenberks included 5 castles and 60 villages. The legal status of Děčín as a servile town had to be specifically determined. That seemed to be the main reason for the movement of the settlement to a new location north of the castle rock: in 1368 at latest the Church of St. Wenceslas had the function of a parochial church. The first mentions about the Church of Virgin Mary date back to 1389: the determination of the location „*in antiqua civitate ... sub castro iacenti*“ proves that it used to be originally a city church which maintained a number of its original functions. The term *antiqua civitas* proves that there had already existed a new town. The certificate of the town council from 1384 indicates by its language and names of witnesses that the core of the population was German. The process of the creation of a new servile city culminated in two privileges granted to Děčín in 1407 by Jan IV and in 1412 by Zikmund I of Vartenberk. This privilege guaranteed to immigrants from „that city extinct due to the danger of floods“ retaining of all rights they used to have in the past. The new city took over from its royal predecessor also the coat of arms. For a certain period of time the Church of St. V. Mary preserved from the original structures and as it stood alone the location was called Frauenwiese. On the contrary in the suburb south of Ploučnice the settlement did not lapse and it was called Altstadt.

Děčín as a centre of Vartenberks domain enlarged in the 15th century by region Česká Kamenice developed into a city with an advanced legal system based on Litoměřice (Magdeburg) right. We have a number of monuments preserved from the beginning of the century (steal stick, city library). The city board consisted of a viscount and 12 aldermen. There are also old documents of guilds and school available. The development of the city was slowed down by Hussite wars and consequent Vartenberk wars between 1433-1444 with domestic neighbours, Saxons and mainly with Six-towns' alliance in Lausitz whose armies besieged Děčín in 1444. New bloom of the city was enabled by the support of Zikmund II of Vartenberk (+1518) who granted a number of privileges to burghers. The King Vladislav granted the right of two annual markets to the city (1480 and 1509). In 1492 the renewed Church of St. Wenceslas was consecrated in 1492 (consecration was expanded to St. Blasius). Based on the archaeological survey the Church was built in another place than where its predecessor used to stand. Till the 16th century we know just a little about the urban development of the town north to the castle rock. The city was raised on the increased Elbe terrace of the area of about 12 ha. It was closed by stone walls and its protection was strengthened in the east by moors and a system of ponds. Three gateways provided for an access to the city: from the south (from Litoměřice and the Elbe ford) the road went via the bridge over Ploučnice. The core of the industrial activity of the city was a square with seven streets going towards the walls. Behind the walls there were suburbs. The neighbouring villages fell under the authority of a viscount of Děčín and city parochial district.

Zikmund II of Vartenberk sold in 1511 the Děčín domain to Mikuláš Trčka of Lípa who soon (1515) ceded that to noblemen of Salhausen coming from Saxony. In 1534 the property was assigned to noblemen of Bünau. New nobility accelerated the process of Germanisation of the city and wider region. The development of Děčín in the 16th century got the city to the level comparable with leading northern Bohemian royal cities. Trading on the Elbe (with corn, fruits, wine, wood), rights to brew beer, customs duties - all that represented good sources of an income. The craftsmanship expanded (9 guilds) and very specialised fields of work flourished. In 1595 the city was gran-

ted the right to the third annual market by Rudolf II. Merchants from Děčín got as far as Hamburg via the river and they established their warehouses along the Elbe. Trade contacts reached as far as Holland, Denmark, Hungarian Lands and Turkey, however, the majority of economic activities were carried out in Saxony. The construction activities were renewed especially in the second half of the 16th century. In Děčín there were between 170 and 180 town lots. The square was dominated by a town hall and a merchant's house - *Gewandhaus*. The settlement outside the city walls represented about 120 houses at the turn of the 16th and 17th century (the most populated was the Elbe suburb). About 40 skirt districts were a part of the legal unit of the city. The city had totally 330-340 houses in which 1500 to 2500 people lived. The cultural bloom of Děčín is related to the spread of humanistic and Renaissance ideas as well as localisation of Lutheran reformation pursued by the establishment. Noblemen of Bünau and burghers maintained the contacts with Saxon environment they were related to.

The period of holding the domain by the knights of Bünau was typical by its intensive economic, business and construction activity but also worsening relationships with the nobility and the city council. The most difficult period was the entry of the competition of newly established manorial breweries. Conflicts intensified (for land, ferrige, salaries, taxes and customs duties) because the city council stood against the restriction of rights and freedoms and the arguments culminated in 1602 with Jindřich of Bünau. The consequences of lost conflicts with the nobility, Czech estate uprising, Thirty-year War and recatolisation (departure of a part of Lutherans to Saxony) crippled the economic development of the city. In 1654 there were only 244 houses in Děčín in cluding the suburb, out of that 39 were empty. In 1682 the city was hit by a fire: 107 houses burnt down as well as the church with parsonage, town hall and school.

Since 1628 the Děčín domain was in the ownership of Tyrolean dynasty of Thuns (later counts Thun-Hohenstein). Its members held important military, court and diplomatic posts in Habsburgs monarchy. The importance of the dynasty was reflected in their nobly reconstructed seat in Děčín. Early Baroque reconstruction of the castle and its foreland under Maximilián Thun (1638-1701) facilitated the creation of a number of remarkable architectonic works (so called Long ride, Rose garden, castle Church of Elevation of St. Cross). It had a major impact also on the ground plan of the city (purchase of city lots and demolition of about 30 houses). Loretto Chapel with a countship crypt was so monumental that it dominated the square (1670). Děčín changed into a small not too important town. In 1707 the nobility hit the city by the construction of a new noble brewery. The fire in 1749 destroyed almost the whole city with the exception of 10 houses. The reconstruction continued very slowly and it was completed as late as about 1765 where in 189 houses there were 1007 inhabitants.

The successful economic activity of the Thuns contrasted with the stagnation of the city. Podmokly settlement on the left bank of the river became the economic centre of the domain in the 18th century (in 1793 there were only 11 servile houses there). It was surrounded by large Dominical land lots which contained also the largest manorial court, brewery, sawmill and hunting castle with an armoury. Before 1823 the Thuns brought the administration of the domain to Podmokly and in 1832 they established a post office there. František Antonín Thun (1786-1873) rationalised the economy and he offered vacant land lots and buildings for the establishment of manufactures. He also offered material support to the pioneers of industrialisation. His efforts included also the mitigation of the service (since 1823) and care for education (besides other things also the establishment of peasant school in Libverda in 1850). Děčín castle became an important centre of the social and cultural life.

The construction of roads started in the 20s and had a major importance for the development of towns and neighbouring villages. Since the 40s the importance of the river transportation increased - the first steam boat came to Děčín in 1838 from Saxony and a regular transport of people was opened between Děčín and Drážďany. The decisive change was brought about by the construction of a railway from Prague via Podmokly to Dresden in 1851. Podmokly became a political town in 1850 (connected to 9 neighbouring villages). Villages Pípeř and Horní Žleb remained independent and the Thuns established there well-known St. Joseph Bath. In the 19th century Děčín region became a popular area of tourists and summer holidays. The romantic name Czech-Saxon Switzerland became well-known. In 1855 the chain bridge provided for the first time a fixed connection between Podmokly and Děčín. The city walls were removed and a large landing place was formed on the Elbe.

Connection of Podmokly to one of the most important railways stimulated fast and intensive change of the town into a transportation, industrial and trade centre. It was supported by a suitable location near Saxony and interconnection of railway and water transport. The construction of transport systems was finalised by railway routes: 1869 - Podmokly - Děčín - Varnsdorf, 1871 - Podmokly - Duchcov. Together with a new Podmokly railway station (1865) a large complex of a railway crossing was created. The construction in Podmokly was carried out in accordance with an urban plan till 1866 and in the 90s the industrial zone was functionally separated. Between 1890 and 1914 the industrial development culminated. The foundations of almost all large and medium size enterprises were laid down. The economic development reflected in the fast growth of the number of houses and inhabitants. Podmokly became the city. Before the World War I they were completed as a valuable urban and architectonic unit (Art Nouveau). With granting of the title of the city (1901) Podmokly got also a coat of arms (1903).

Děčín developed differently as larger industrial enterprises were not established there. On the contrary the administrative function of the city was strengthened when in 1850 Děčín became the seat of new public authorities and centre of the political district. It was connected to a railway network as late as in 1869 (route Děčín - Podmokly - Varnsdorf) and in 1874 the railway from Lysá nad Labem was completed. New landing facilities were constructed, namely a transit shed in Loubí. Thanks to the interconnection of the railway and ship transportation Děčín became one of the most important transport cross-roads in the territory of Bohemia. The transportation function of the city was influenced by its construction development. Railways took a large space and divided the territory into several different districts. The urban plan from 1874 was based on this si-

tuation. Since 70s new streets with the central Nádražní třída (Railway street) were built between the city and two railway stations. Further construction concentrated mainly in the south and east from the city. Since the 90s the villadom was established as well as the New Town with the city hospital (1900). Till 1914 the reconstruction of some streets and houses changed the centre of Děčín including the square. The construction of new schools, especially secondary ones, supported non-industrial character of the city. Buses became the main means of the city public transport since 1906 (connection Děčín - Podmokly).

After the establishment of the Czechoslovakia in 1918 the life in the city changed. The new public administration attracted more Czech people to come to Děčín and supported the investments. As late as in the 20s and 30s the urban plan was almost completed. Individual parts of Děčín were interconnected and enlarged by new constructions especially in the place of the former castle garden. In 1932 the Thuns sold the castle to the state and since then it was used as barracks. A number of new public buildings were erected in the city (local authority, hospital, Czech school) confirming the character of Děčín as a centre of administration and education.

The economic and construction development of Podmokly after 1918 was much more dynamic in comparison with Děčín. Post-war housing crises was solved by the intensive construction which was so fast that Podmokly had the highest annual increments of new houses in the country. In 1923 Podmokly enlarged by the integration of other villages. New construction concentrated mainly into the southern and western parts of the city. A number of city, co-operative and company houses was built as well as the whole quarters of detached houses. In the centre of Podmokly new department stores, hotels, banks, local authority and other buildings were erected.

The difference between Děčín and Podmokly can be seen in the number of houses and inhabitants:

Year	Děčín		Podmokly	
	Houses	Inhabitants	Houses	Inhabitants
1857	336	2 785	268	2 276
1880	482	5 612	441	6 049
1910	759	10 640	851	13 412
1930	1 037	12 855	1 730	22 658

As the social and national structure of the population was different, their social and cultural conditions were also different as well as their political development. In Podmokly the majority of the population consisted of factory workers, then there was a strong group of employees in the transportation, small craftsmen and traders. The administration staff was good-sized. In Podmokly there were always quite many Czech people (18-20%) but in Děčín the Czech minority was weak and it was strengthened as late as after 1918. Social and national conditions were reflected in the political life as Děčín became one of the centre of German national movement and the strong influence of national parties was remarkable also in the political development before 1938.

On the 3 October 1938 the German troops besieged both cities which were connected to Germany in accordance with the Munich Agreement. Several thousands Czechs had to leave for the inland. An important milestone was the year 1942 when German authorities ordered the official integration of Děčín, Podmokly and Staré Město. The new city was called Tetschen-Bodenbach and it was one of the largest cities in the Northern Bohemia.

On the 9 May 1945 the Polish-troops came to Děčín and the Soviet army to Podmokly. After the liberation German inhabitants were removed and new Czech people came to the city. In 1947 the joint name Děčín was confirmed. In the following decades 50 neighbouring villages were integrated with the city and in 1981 the integration process culminated by the establishment of so called Large Děčín (Děčín I-XXXV). The main target of the integration was to get the sufficient background for the further economic and construction development of the city but the industrial potential did not increase and the construction of new housing estates started as late as around 1960. At that time Děčín became the centre of the large district which included also the territory of Šluknov (former Rumburk district). Since the 70s the housing construction concentrated mainly in the skirt city areas where the concrete housing estates were established. The centre of Děčín went through changes and insensitive urban solution caused the disruption of the historical ground plan. The transport network changed considerably. New bridge over the Elbe (1985) provided for faster connection of basins under Krušné hory and Ještěd.

The new chapter of the history was written by changes in 1989. Neglected housing fund has to be reconstructed as well as the castle which was given to the local government after the evacuation of the Red Army. The issues which are currently discussed include the construction of a central sewage treatment plant and heating sources and the preparation of a new urban plan of the city. The number of inhabitants decreases which is also due to an unhealthy environment. Today almost 54 000 inhabitants live in the city. The city maintains its importance of the road, railway and shipping transportation crossing. The discussions today focus on the construction of a shipping route on the Elbe. With the construction of a speed corridor the railway system will be reconstructed. Děčín is also an industrial centre (mainly engineering and metalwork) but the privatisation and restructuring of companies brings about changes (some firms were liquidated). School tradition was followed up in 1995 by the establishment of a workplace of Faculty of Transportation Sciences and Faculty of Nuclear Sciences and Physical Engineering in Prague. Děčín has changed considerably by reconstruction of the housing fund and also with the development of the business activities and higher density of shops and services. Děčín entered the journey of the European integration by means of its integration into the Elbe Euroregion.