

Dutzend Industrieunternehmen, von denen manche auch im europäischen Maße von großer Bedeutung waren. Es war ein wichtiger Verkehrsknotenpunkt mit großem Hafen, dem Sitz des Bezirksamtes, des Bezirksgerichts, einer Reihe von Schulen, Banken und weiterer Institutionen. Es strebte die Rolle eines der führenden Zentren der Deutschen in Böhmen an.

Der Ausruf der eigenständigen Tschechoslowakei am 28. Oktober 1918 traf auf Missbilligung und gleich einen Tag später traf sich in Ústí nad Labem die Versammlung der Vertreter der deutschen Bevölkerung. Diese stellte sich voll hinter die Schlüsse der deutschen Nationalversammlung, laut welcher die grenznahen deutschsprachigen Gebiete Böhmens im Rahmen des deutsch-österreichischen Staates eine Provinz bilden sollten. Die Unsicherheit und Anspannung wurde im November und Dezember 1918 von der Plünderung der Lager und Läden begleitet, welcher erst das Eintreffen der tschechoslowakischen Armee im Dezember 1918 Einhalt gebot. Im Laufe des 20. Jahrhunderts genossen die deutschen Sozialdemokraten größte politische Bedeutung, gefolgt von der Deutschen Nationalpartei und der Deutschen nationalsozialistischen Arbeiterpartei. Die Wirtschaftskrise und deren besonders im Grenzgebiet spürbare Folgen sowie die Entwicklung im benachbarten Deutschland brachten eine grundlegende Veränderung mit sich. Bei den Parlamentswahlen 1935 dominierte in Ústí nad Labem eindeutig die Sudetendeutsche Partei. Trotz dieser Ergebnisse blieb die Kommunalpolitik der deutschen Sozialdemokraten bis Sommer 1938 unverändert. Die Verteilung der politischen Kräfte bestätigte auch die Tatsache, dass die häufigen antifaschistischen Demonstrationen der Volksfront, die 1936–1938 zu verschiedenen Ereignissen organisiert wurden, was die Teilnehmerzahlen betrifft den nationalsozialistischen Aktionen eindeutig unterlagen.

Die Stadt lebte jedoch nicht nur von politischen Ereignissen. Es wurde umfangreich gebaut. Ein Symbol dafür war zum Beispiel der **Bau des Verwaltungsgebäudes des Vereins für Chemische und Metallurgische Produktion** von 1929 bis 1930, welches bis 1934 den Status des höchsten Gebäudes der Tschechoslowakei innehatte. Errichtet wurde auch das Gelände des Masaryk-Krankenhauses (1927–1936), die **Edvard-Beneš-Brücke** (1934–1936) und die **T.-G.-Masaryk-Schleuse** (1923–1935). Auch eine Reihe neuer Schulgebäude und Finanzinstitute wurde erbaut. Es entstanden Villenviertel, aber auch Wohngebiete für Angestellte und Fabrikarbeiter. In den Filmateliers der Werbeabteilung der Firma Georg Schicht wurde zum ersten Mal in der Tschechoslowakei der **Tonfilm** präsentiert, der 1929 im damaligen Revue Alhambra, dem heutigen Schauspielhaus Činoherní studio lief. In der Stadt fanden erfolgreiche Künstler aus Deutschland Zuflucht, welche zu Beginn der 20er Jahre aufgrund der schlechten wirtschaftlichen Situation und später auch wegen der rassistischen Verfolgung das Land verlassen hatten.

Eine der bedeutenden Früchte der aktivistischen Politik der deutschen Sozialdemokraten war das Augenmerk auf die Sozial- und Wohnungspolitik. Ústí nad Labem wurde Anfang der 30er Jahre zur sechstgrößten Stadt in den böhmischen Ländern mit nahezu 80 Tausend Bewohnern. Deshalb baute die Stadt in den Zwischenkriegsjahren (1919–1938/1939) insgesamt 100 Wohnhäuser, von denen einige bis heute architektonisch wertvoll sind. Sie umfassten knapp 1400 Gemeinschaftswohnungen.

Das Münchner Abkommen vom September 1938 bedeutete das Ende dieser Phase. In Ústí nad Labem ging diesem Ereignis eine sehr angespannte Situation mit Demonstrationen unter Beteiligung mehrerer Tausende mit der Forderung „Heim ins Reich“, den grenzüberschreitenden Überfällen des Sudetendeutschen Freikorps und der Mobilisierung der tschechoslowakischen Armee voran. Am 9. Oktober betreten die ersten Einheiten der Wehrmacht die Stadt und wurden umschwänglich willkommen geheißen. Der Gipfel der „Befreiung“ waren die Nachwahlen in den Reichstag, die gleichzeitig eine Art Volksentscheid waren. Insgesamt 99,54 % der abgegebenen Stimmen stimmten dem Anschluss an das Reich zu. Es entstand der **Reichsgau Sudetenland** mit Liberec (Reichenberg) als Hauptstadt. Das Gebiet wurde administrativ in drei Regierungsbezirke mit Sitz in Karlovy Vary (Karlsbad), Ústí nad Labem und Opava (Troppau) unterteilt. Im Mai 1939 wurden die Stadt Střekov und die Gemeinden Bukov (Pokau), Hostovice (Hottowies), Předlice (Prödlitz), Stříbrný (Ziebornik) und Trmice (Türmitz) in die Stadt Ústí nad Labem eingemeindet. Es sollte ein sogenanntes „**Groß-Aussig**“ entstehen. Nach der Okkupation der böhmischen Länder lebten in der Stadt rund 2000 Tschechen, die dem Rest der Bevölkerung nicht gleichgestellt waren. Sie waren etlichen Einschränkungen ausgestellt. Gegen die Juden wurden harte Maßnahmen eingeführt. Die letzten wurden 1941–1942 in Krásný Les (Schönwald) interniert und in Vernichtungslager deportiert. Den Familien Petschek und Weinmann gelang es noch vor der Okkupation zu emigrieren. In der Umgebung der Stadt wirkten Widerstandsgruppen aus Reihen der Kommunisten und Sozialdemokraten. Gegen Ende des Krieges im April 1945 trafen die Stadt **schwere Luftangriffe** der amerikanischen Armee. Ziel war die Vernichtung des Aussiger Bahnhofs und der Brücken, doch die Stadtbauung wurde stark getroffen. Die Bombardierung vernichtete 165 Häuser, mehrere Hundert wurden beschädigt. Mehr als 600 Personen kamen ums Leben und Ostrov (Ostervorstadt) verschwand nahezu von der Landkarte. Ústí nad Labem war nach Pilsen die durch die Luftangriffe am zweitstärksten zerstörte Stadt.

Die Befreiung der Stadt gelang am 8. Mai einer Handvoll Aussiger Tschechen zusammen mit ein paar deutschen Antifaschisten. Die sowjetischen Truppen trafen am darauffolgenden Tag in Ústí nad Labem ein. Kurz danach trat bezüglich der deutschen Bevölkerung eine Reihe von Maßnahmen in Kraft, die bereits im April im Rahmen des Kaschauer Programms genehmigt wurden. Begleitet wurden sie von einer Menge an Exzessen, die in der bis heute ungeklärten Explosion

einer Lagerhalle in Krásné Březno am 31. Juli 1945 gipfelte. Beim darauffolgenden sogenannten Massaker von Aussig kamen rund 100 Deutsche ums Leben. Es dauerte bis Frühling 1946 bis die nach den Luftangriffen übrig gebliebenen Ruinen und Trümmerstätten beseitigt waren. Bis Ende 1946 war der Großteil der **deutschen Bevölkerung aus der Stadt vertrieben** und die Deutschen bildeten nun lediglich knapp vier Prozent der gesamten Einwohnerzahl. Vor dem Krieg hingegen waren es 78 Prozent gewesen. Die Vertreibung der Deutschen wurde durch die Ankunft von Bürgern aus dem Inland der Tschechoslowakei und Repatrianten ausgeglichen. So gelang es, den Bevölkerungsrückgang nach dem Krieg von rund 44 Tausend im Jahre 1930 auf 57 Tausend im Jahre 1950 zu wenden. Bei den Wahlen zur Nationalversammlung im Jahre 1946 gewann die Kommunistische Partei der Tschechoslowakei (KSČ) in Ústí nad Labem mehr als die Hälfte der Stimmen. Auch die Ereignisse im Februar 1948 verliefen in Regie der Kommunisten. Im Jahre 1949 wurde Ústí nad Labem zu einer der Kreisstädte. Nach der Zusammenführung der Region Ústí und der Region Liberec wurde die **Stadt zum Sitz des Nordböhmischen Nationalausschusses** (1960–1990). Neben der Maschinenbau-, Lebensmittel- und Glasindustrie entwickelte sich auf dem Gebiet dieser neu entstandenen Verwaltungseinheit vor allem die Chemieindustrie, der Braunkohleabbau und die damit verbundene Energetik.

Die neue Verwaltungsanordnung erforderte Räumlichkeiten für eine Reihe an Institutionen in der Stadt. Obwohl die ersten Studien zur zukünftigen Entwicklung der Stadt bereits kurz nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg zu entstehen begannen, wurde die erste detaillierte **Regionalplanung** erst 1956 genehmigt. Geplant war die Beseitigung der Folgen der Bombardierung, die Eindämmung der verkehrstechnischen und hygienischen Mängel und der Ausbau der technischen und sozialen Infrastruktur. Die Bebauung wurde durch die Planung in zwei Richtungen unterteilt: **in die Bebauung der Baulücken (mit Sanierung der Altstadt) und die kumulierte Bebauung freier Flächen**. Dabei ging man von einer weiteren Entwicklung der Industrie, einem Bevölkerungsanstieg und stärkerem Verkehrsaufkommen aus. Die richtungsweisende Regionalplanung wurde bereits 1962 in Zusammenhang mit der Einarbeitung der Planung für nordböhmische Beckenstädte aktualisiert. In den 60er Jahren fand die Kritik der aktuellen Zustände und die Bemühung um eine Reform im Bereich der Wirtschaft Anklang. Im kulturellen Bereich sind das Wirken des Theaters Kladivadlo und das kulturell-politische Monatsblatt Dialog in diese Strömung einzuordnen. Den Prozess der Lockerung im Bereich des öffentlichen und politischen Lebens, in dessen Rahmen neue Organisationen entstanden (z. B. die Vereinigung ehemaliger politischer Häftlinge K 231 und der Klub engagierter Parteilooser), beendete der Einfall der Armeen des Warschauer Pakts am 21. August 1968. In Ústí nad Labem forderte der Einfall der Besatzungsmächte ein Menschenleben. Der von politischer Säuberung und Gesinnungsüberprüfung begleitete Normalisierungsprozess war im Norden besonders deutlich. Die Aussiger Kultur gehörte trotz der ungünstigen politischen Bedingungen zu den damaligen Spitzenreitern – zum Beispiel dank dem Festival Porta oder dem Schauspielhaus Činoherní studio.

Die Luftangriffe, die unterbrochene kulturelle Entwicklung, die komplizierte Nachkriegsbesiedlung, die Veränderung der Bevölkerungsstruktur und die Politik der KSČ – all das zeichnete sich 1952–1990 deutlich im urbanistischen Antlitz der Stadt ab. Vor allem der historische Stadtkern litt in den 70er und 80er Jahren stark unter der gefühllosen „Umzingelung“ mit Plattensiedlungen. Die wachsende industrielle Produktion und die hohe Anzahl der Betriebe hatte negativen Einfluss auf die Umwelt. Dazu trug auch der seit den 60er Jahren immer intensivere Braunkohleabbau in der Umgebung der Stadt bei, welchem mehrere Gemeinden weichen mussten. Der schlechte Zustand der Umwelt wurde Ende der 80er Jahre Bestandteil der Widerstandsbekundigungen gegen das bestehende Regime. Auch die Bewohner Ústí nad Labems beteiligten sich allmählich an den Protestaktionen gegen das Regime, vor allem nach dem 17. November 1989. Eine bedeutende Rolle spielten dabei die Studierenden der Pädagogischen Fakultät. Bezeichnend ist, dass den Großteil der Bürger der Stadt nicht die Unfreiheit, sondern der katastrophale Zustand der Umwelt zum Aufstand gegen das Regime animierte.

Seit den demokratischen Wahlen 1990 erneuert die Selbstverwaltung der Stadt die Strukturen der Zivilgesellschaft und es entwickelt sich eine grenzübergreifende Zusammenarbeit mit Sachsen im Rahmen der Euroregion Elbe/Labe. Ein unumstrittener Schritt nach vorn war die Gründung einer neuen Hochschule, der **Univerzita Jana Evangelisty Purkyně** (1991), die an den Betrieb der hiesigen Pädagogischen Fakultät anband. Derzeit verfügt sie über acht Fakultäten, einen eigenen Campus und wird von nahezu 8000 Studierenden besucht (Stand 2020). Die Umwelt hat sich im Vergleich zu den vorhergehenden Jahrzehnten bedeutend verbessert. Die Marktlöcherung unter Bedingungen der inneren Unbereitschaft und niedrigen Konkurrenzfähigkeit mündete in einer nicht besonders erfolgreichen Reaktion auf die Restrukturalisierung der Wirtschaft. Die ersten Bemühungen auf der Suche nach einer neuen Bedeutungs- und Urbanisierungsvision für die Stadt versiegten recht bald. Im Zusammenhang mit der überstürzten Privatisierung und einigen misslungenen Investitionsaktionen hinterließ das letzte Jahrzehnt des 20. Jahrhunderts auch einen Rückgang der Industrie. Im Falle der damals größten Arbeitgeber Spolchemie, Setuza und Tonaso handelt es sich um eine Verringerung der Arbeitsplätze um einige Tausend, einige verlassene Industriegelände (eine kürzliche Inventaraufnahme spricht von knapp einhundert) und Residenzen. Seit der Bevölkerungsspitze im Jahre 1990 verlor Ústí nad Labem rund zwölf Prozent seiner Einwohner (das bedeutet einen Rückgang von rund 106 auf 93 Tausend Einwohner), womit es sich unter den Kreisstädten direkt hinter Ostrava (Ostrau) einordnet. Ein kontroverser, aber in der gegenwärtigen Landschaft Tschechiens keineswegs außergewöhnlicher Gegenpol des Verfalls

sind neue Produktionsgelände auf der grünen Wiese am östlichen Stadtrand, sowie suburbane Wohnzonen im Elbtal und in höheren Lagen oberhalb der Stadt (Skorotice/Gartitz).

Die geringen Wohnkosten in den Randvierteln lockten in den letzten Jahren Investoren an, die ihren Profit aus der dort herrschenden Armut ziehen. Es kam auch zu einigen Desintegrationen. Die Städte Chabařovice und Trmice sowie einige weitere Gemeinden spalteten sich ab. Somit sank die Einwohnerzahl der Stadt um einige Tausend. Auch zu dieser Zeit ging der Abriss leider weiter, zum Beispiel in Předlice, Neštětice (Nestomitz) oder im ehemaligen Gelände des Masaryk-Krankenhauses. Nach 1990 wurde der Bau der Plattensiedlungen beendet. Obwohl man zum Beispiel im Rahmen von Nové Skorotice ursprünglich mit Wohnbauten rechnete, begann man hier im großen Stil Einfamilienhäuser zu errichten. Als außerordentlich nützlich für Ústí nad Labem und die gesamte Region zeigte sich der Bau und die Inbetriebnahme des neuen Areals des Bezirkskrankenhauses auf der Severní Terasa (Nordterasse). Zu den gelungenen Bauten der nachwendlichen Zeit gehören im Stadtzentrum das Gebäude der Tschechischen Nationalbank (1992–1994), der Kommerzbank (1995–1997) oder des Palác Zdar (2004–2009). Kontrovers diskutiert wird hingegen der große Bau des Einkaufszentrums Forum neben der Kirche Mariä Himmelfahrt sowie einige Verwaltungsgebäude. Das Stadtzentrum wird leider ebenso wie in anderen Städten Schritt für Schritt entvölkert. Ein weltweit geschätzter Verkehrsbau ist hingegen die **Mariánský most** (Marienbrücke, 1994–1997) vom Architekten Roman Koucký, die nach ihrer Fertigstellung zur Dominante der Stadt Ústí nad Labem wurde. Im Jahre 2006 wurde die Autobahn zwischen Ústí nad Labem und Dresden eröffnet. Der letzte Abschnitt wurde nach langwierigen Schwierigkeiten erst im Dezember 2016 in Betrieb genommen.

Die Elbe spielte für die Stadt von Urbeginn an bis ins 20. Jahrhundert eine grundlegende Rolle. Dieser Fluss gab dem einstigen Provinzstädtchen im 19. Jahrhundert die Rolle eines der bedeutendsten Flusshäfen Europas und sein Wasser war die Voraussetzung für zahlreiche Industriezweige. Der romantische, in die Landschaft des Böhmisches Mittelgebirges eingebettete Fluss wurde schrittweise zu einem ein Ingenieursprojekt mit befestigtem Ufer, Hafenterrassen und im 20. Jahrhundert auch mit dem Fahrwasserniveau der Masaryk-Schleuse. Trotz sämtlicher Bemühungen den Flusslauf zu bändigen zeigt die Elbe von Zeit zu Zeit durch vernichtende Hochwasser ihre Kraft. Die ältesten katastrophalen Hochwasser sind bereits aus den Jahren 1118, 1342 und 1432 bekannt. Zu Überflutungen in der Zeit der industriellen Blüte der Stadt kam es 1845 und 1890. Die aktuellen Hochwasser von 2002, 2006 oder 2013 erinnerten erneut an die Kraft des Elements Wasser. Trotzdem bleibt das Elbtal in der direkten Umgebung der Stadt an vielen Orten eine romantische Landschaft, die in der Tschechischen Republik einmalig und für viele Besucher überraschend und unentdeckt ist.

ÚSTÍ NAD LABEM

Only in a few places do the slopes of the pleasant Elbe valley in the Central Bohemian uplands provide a space suitable for developing a larger settlement. One of these places is the confluence of the Elbe and Bílina rivers, which in the earlier epochs took over the valley previously carved and later abandoned by the river Ohře. It was in this area, in which several flat levels of old river terraces, separated by steep slopes and surrounded by relics of the young Tertiary volcanic mountains, appear above the confluence, that the royal town of Ústí nad Labem was founded in the thirteenth century on the site of older settlements which was the centre of a larger inhabited Ústí region.

It is impossible to get any information regarding Ústí nad Labem from historical sources for the period before the Přemyslid unification of Bohemia. Roughly from the middle of the tenth century, it is possible to define the Ústí region as the north-eastern part of the Bílina Castle Province: settlement there led to the creation of the Chlumec and Ústí fortifications. After the establishment of the royal city of Ústí nad Labem before the middle of the thirteenth century, the Ústí region can be perceived as an economic spatial area within a radius of one Czech mile, i.e., up to a distance of 11 km. From the church administration point of view, however, there was a much broader territory of the Ústí diocese in the Middle Ages, which included not only the Ústí region itself but also the left-bank part of the Děčín region and even the dominion of Königstein castle, which was an integral part of the Czech state from the thirteenth century to the turn of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

The **landscape** of the city of Ústí nad Labem and its immediate surroundings can be rightly considered as one of the most diverse in Central Europe. The individual phases of young volcanism are documented by volcanic mantles of solid basalt rocks alternating with deposits of incoherent volcanic material and solitary phonolite and trachyte hills exposed by long-term erosions. From the highest positions at an altitude of almost 600 meters (e.g. Vysoký Ostrý peak) it descends to steep rocky slopes and cliffs (e.g. Střekovská Rock, Mariánská Rock, Kozí Mountain) to the bottom of the valley at only 150 meters. The river Elbe is bordered by a narrow strip of Quaternary river sediments and only their older remains appearing all the way along the Mariánská Rock illustrate how much time and work it took nature to excavate the Elbe canyon into its present form. From the west the city is characterised by sedimentary basin protrusions. They stretch further west, through almost the entire Podkrušňohofí and foreshadowed the unprecedented development of the industry of local towns from the nineteenth century – caused by the presence of large brown coal seams caused by the plant deposition in the Tertiary swamps. North of the city, the Ore Mountains (Krušné hory) form

a natural wall for the Czech territory. This wall is made of older minerals but became elevated to its current height only in the Tertiary epoch by tectonic movements. It was from their peaks that the newcomers from Saxony first saw a once small town at the confluence. The diverse landscape is closed by protrusions of Mesolithic sediments that only emerge in the town's territory itself, and more extensively as rock defiles of the nearby Elbe sandstone. That is also why the area was a paradise for geologists and mineralogists. It entered world literature through mentions in the works of Alexander von Humboldt and because of the unique rock names that were based on places in the Ústí region – for example, the name marienbergite has long been used for the rock from Mariánská Rock. Thanks to this geological diversity, the city inhabitants probably never suffered from a lack of building materials. On many of the significant dominant rocks, long-term stone mining in progress is clear in the city - both in the active quarry on Mariánská Rock and by the number of abandoned quarries Na Kramolně, Vrkoč or Holoméř.

The climatic conditions of the Elbe Valley, which between Litoměřice and Ústí is an area with a relatively higher average annual temperature, were also favourable. This, together with lower rainfall accumulation under the Ore Mountains, enabled the historical development of agriculture, including **fruit growing and wine-growing**. In the higher positions immediately above the Elbe Valley, the average temperatures decrease but rainfall totals increase, which results in a longer-lasting snow cover during winter. This is also why the prehistoric and later medieval settlements were concentrated in the warmer and more viable localities at the confluence of the Elbe and Bílina rivers.

The oldest human footprints in the Ústí region can be dated back to 20,000 years ago near Stadice where hunters belonging to the current type of human *Homo sapiens sapiens* were camping. It can be assumed that the habitat of these hunters could have been on the site of today's city centre, where mammoth and rhino bones have been found. However, the continuous settlement in the Ústí region began from the sixth millennium BC, in small areas with the most favourable conditions for agriculture around the river Elbe, the lower reaches of the river Bílina and their tributaries. Roads played an important role in the development of the settlements – the **Elbe waterway** and the **Srbská or Chlumec route** (Kulmer Steig or Kulm Trail) across the Ore Mountains ridge. Its estuary on the Czech side had been controlled since the Early Bronze Age by the fortified settlement on Horka mountain near Chlumec. Neolithic farmers with Linear Pottery culture, whose settlement is documented in the city centre, were replaced by people with Stroked Pottery culture who built a 'roundel' – a circular platform area used for gathering and religious purposes in today's Mírové Square around 4700 BC. In the immediate surroundings of the city, there's a documented settlement of the Eneolithic period (Trmice), and then more significantly of the Early Bronze Age (Trmice, Střekov). There is also evidence of a settlement from the Celtic and Germanic times. After their departure, in the first half of the sixth century, the local landscape remained without a trace of a settlement for some time until the Slavs arrived. They arrived here in the later settlement phases sometime in the second half of the seventh century. Until the middle of the tenth century, there was not much evidence of any Slavic settlement.

The change in situation was caused by incorporating the Ústí region into the Czech Přemyslid state, which is also linked with a legend conveyed by the chronicler Kosmas which connects the founders of the Přemysl Oráč (Přemysl the Ploughman) dynasty with the area of Stadice. The fortified settlement of Ústí was probably built around the middle of the tenth century and its origin was connected with the new administrative organization of Bohemia under Duke Boleslav I. The Ústí region was incorporated into the **Bílina Castle Province** and local relations can be learned from several counterfeit stories from documents for the Benedictines from Břevnov and St. George at Prague Castle, and from the oldest version of the founding document of the Litoměřice Chapter from 1057. These documents related to the customs office on the river Elbe represent the oldest written evidence of the existence of Ústí nad Labem.

Only after the middle of the twelfth century did the Ústí region undergo a more fundamental transformation – when King Vladislav donated considerable assets in the area to the Johanner Order who colonised this territory. Magnate Měšek and Hroznata from Peruc also played an important role in this process. The growing importance of the Ústí fortified settlement is evidenced by a report from 1086 about the marriage of the Duke Bedřich's daughter during the St. Vojtěch feast, which took place here probably in a church dedicated to this patron. The expansion of the settlement and its economic potential resulted in the establishment of a **royal city** after the first third of the thirteenth century. The documents issued by Přemysl Otakar I from the years 1227–1228 do not explicitly mention the city; they only speak of the collection of customs duties and the market 'in Vzk'. A document of King Wenceslas I from 1249 clearly refers to the existence of the city. The original fortified settlement did not disappear from the city plan either. Its acropolis has been preserved in it as a castle which was commemorated in 1283. In the course of the fourteenth century during the reign of the House of Luxembourg, the growing importance of commercial and craft-production activities enabled the smooth development of the city which the rulers supported by granting several town privileges. King Jan Lucemburský (John of Bohemia) started the construction of **Střekov castle** in order to supervise the collection of customs duties and safeguard voyages on the Elbe. At the beginning of the **Hussite wars** in 1423, the city was pledged to Friedrich, Margrave of Meissen, and became an important anti-Hussite centre. The turning point was the Battle Na Běhání near Ústí, where in 1426 the united Hussite army destroyed the Saxon army

and then turned against the city. It was largely burned and ruined. Life only returned to normal slowly, and it was not until the late thirties of the fifteenth century that the city administration was restored and the city thrived economically again. The ruined Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary was also being restored with the help of indulgences announced by the papal curia. At this time, the city was dominated by the Czech-speaking population with a prevailing Ultraquist faith which mainly centred on the Church of St. Vojtěch. The oldest preserved Judicial and Memorial Book (1438–1514) includes entries regarding the city's development, its craft structure, and the assets of the individual inhabitants. The townspeople's wealth was also partly connected with the profit from the mining activities in the Ore Mountains and the supply of the mining towns, but crucial for the city's finances was the collection of customs duties and tolls. In the mid-1540s Ústí nad Labem was in 25th place among the royal towns ranked according to the property declaration for tax purposes, thus belonging amongst the smaller and poorer cities. Information about the size of the city at the end of the sixteenth century provides an overview of the number of houses from 1598, when there were 368 houses of which 106 were in the suburbs. Among long-term problems were limited agriculture background and competition from the surrounding liege towns (Chabařovice) and royal cities (Litoměřice) and also from the nearby settled nobility. The Catholic faith was still being professed here, both the Ultraquist Hussite and, in the last decades before the White Mountain Battle, inhabitants of the Lutheran faith also lived here; the Lutheran faith had been brought to the city by the surrounding nobility. As in other royal cities of the Rudolfian period, a humanist society was formed in Ústí nad Labem, represented by the members of wealthy city families, who also participated in the city administration. In 1614, one of the prominent members of the local humanist group, Jan Augustin Tichtenbaum, published an extensive composition *Usta ad Albim delineata carmine rebusque suis memorabilibus illustrata* in Prague, which describes the history of Ústí in seven chapters and at the same time comments on its Renaissance form. It describes the renaissance houses, the fountain on the square, the city hall and the local churches, including their furnishings. At the end of the pre-White Mountain Battle period, a tragedy took place in the city, during which the Burgomaster (mayor) Jan Arnošt Schösser, a distinguished Catholic accused of ill-treatment of the city property, was thrown out of a window and stabbed to death. The dramatic events on the eve of the White Mountain Battle foreshadowed further developments that transformed the city of Ústí. After the defeat of the Bohemian Protestant army and the issuance of the Renewed Land Constitution, several non-Catholic families were forced to leave the city. However, the exile did not affect the predominantly Catholic city further, unlike other royal cities. In 1631 the town was occupied by the Saxons who were subsequently replaced by the Wallenstein's garrison. During the **Thirty Years' War** the city was under constant pressure from troops passing through or staying here for some time. At the end of the war, Ústí nad Labem was in poor condition. The population dropped by about a half in the middle of the seventeenth century. The city's economy was disrupted; the craft structure was very limited. Only at the beginning of the eighteenth century, was there an increase in the population; nonetheless the level at the end of the sixteenth century had not been reached by that time.

Not even in the following century did the city avoid the results of war – especially during the War of the **Austrian Succession** (1740–1748) and then in the **Seven Years' War** (1756–1763) troops were passing through the city, which always meant enforced housing placements, confiscation of grain, hay and straw and paralysis of the whole life of the city.

A feature of the wars during the eighteenth century was the repeated visits by military investigators looking for strategic places to build military forts. Mariánská Rock above the city was being considered, but it was marked unfavourable and a location near Litoměřice was chosen, where the Terežín fortress was eventually built. After the Seven Years' War, the situation in the city stabilised and the economy slowly developed, especially the food, textile and clothing crafts.

There was also a change in the system of political, judicial and economic administration in Ústí nad Labem in the 1780s in connection with the administrative reforms by Joseph II. From 1788, the city administration was headed by a regulated municipality, which was subject to the regional office in Litoměřice. In 1800, Ústí nad Labem had 1,350 inhabitants. It remained bordered by city walls with four gates. The relatively peaceful city development was disrupted by the **Napoleonic Wars**, specifically in 1813 with the battle of Chlumec, which also affected the city. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the city's appearance had been transformed, and it also expanded, especially as a result of the **demolition of the medieval walls**. The image of the city was also changed by the construction of the railway which separated the centre from the river with a massive embankment. Since 1850 Ústí has been connected by the state **railway** with Prague and Vienna, and since 1851 with Dresden. The development of **river transport on the river Elbe** was of similar importance. It gained a modern character in 1841 when the steamer Bohemia began a regular voyage from Prague via Ústí to Dresden. As a result of the abundance of **coal**, also mined directly in the city, Ústí nad Labem became the centre of modern steam transport. The beginnings of **industrial development** are connected with unsuccessful efforts to grow silkworms at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the establishment of laundries and silk makers. The first Industrial enterprises began being established in Ústí in the 1840s when Carl Georg Wolfrum came here and founded a dying plant with the first steam engine, which he later, in 1876, transformed into a weaving mill. Subsequently, other weaving mills were established, and, to further support textile industry development, a weaving school was opened.

The production of pottery was also being developed in the city; in 1841 Adolf Bähr founded a company here for the production of luxury decorative goods, artistic terracotta and majolica. His successor created a large company focused on exports to several European and overseas countries and was also famous as a manufacturer of garden figures, especially gnomes. In 1847, a yeast factory was established, which was followed by the distillery and yeast factory of Louise and Hermann Eckelmann in Krásné Březno. Later on, this plant became the property of the Wolfrum family and started producing brands that still exist today (Klášteří tajemství or Stará myslivecká). In 1926, this company controlled almost 30 % of the Czechoslovakian market; at the beginning of the twenty-first century, all production in Ústí nad Labem was gradually stopped.

The city development was significantly influenced by the Revolutions of 1848/1849. Because of the changes, the City Hall began to be used for the needs of the district court and the district governor's office in 1848. The foundations for municipal self-government were created during the revolution; however, they were not operative until the 'February Patent' in 1861. In the course of the second half of the nineteenth century, the city population grew dramatically. While in 1850 there were 3,349 inhabitants in Ústí, in 1880 the population was 16,524. As a result, the city expanded beyond its original medieval platform. The **population growth** until 1890 was caused by new inhabitants who had come to the city for work mainly from the surrounding agricultural districts. Further growth of the city's population was associated primarily with the affiliation of surrounding municipalities (Klíše, Krásné Březno). At the turn of the century, the population reached 37,000 and Ústí nad Labem became one of the largest cities in Bohemia – behind the cities of Prague, Plzeň and České Budějovice.

The city's development was also significantly influenced by shipping and rail transport, so the city formed an important communication hub. Since the mid-1870s, brown coal had been the prime commodity for the Elbe shipping. The cargo turnover in the Ústí ports on the river Elbe even surpassed the largest seaport of the monarchy in Trieste. In 1858, a regular railways line between Ústí and Teplice was started, and it was gradually extended to Chomutov and Cheb. In 1874, the line known as the Elbe Railway was opened from Nymburk to Děčín with a branch line from Lysá nad Labem to Prague, which included the first **Elbe bridge** in Ústí nad Labem combined for both pedestrians and carriages, with the railway on the upper level. This bridge was demolished in the middle of the twentieth century and replaced with a rail bridge only. The coal trade was an important source of wealth for well-known Ústí entrepreneurs such as **Ignatz Petschek and Eduard Weimann**; it led to the creation of the Ústí Coal Stock Exchange in 1895, but its importance declined after 1910 and completely disappeared after World War I. In 1856, the joint-stock company **Austrian Association for Chemical and Metallurgical Production** was founded, which was essential for the later construction of structures necessary for the Czech chemical industry and for the development of the city of Ústí itself. After ten years, it was one of the most important companies on the European continent. Another notable company was the **Schicht company**, which developed into a major European industrial plant. Besides growing soap production, Schicht gradually introduced production of candles, vegetable fats, soft drinks, oil, water glass, stearin, glycerine, varnish and paraffins, etc. In the 1930s, the plant complex included over 120 buildings in a large complex in Střekov. After nationalisation, the company was renamed the North Bohemian Fat Company, and remained in the leading position in the Czechoslovakian fat industry even during the communist regime. After 1989, there were several confusing property transfers and eventually the collapse of the successor company, Setuza. An important sector for the city was the food industry, especially beer brewing, the sugar industry and the service of mills and associated services. The metal industry and mechanical engineering have also been developing here since the nineteenth century. The oldest company was the F. Helda steam boiler factory founded in 1857. Following the needs of the Association for Chemical and Metallurgical Production, which shipped a large part of its products in a liquid state, a glass factory specialising in the production of container glass was established in the 1870s, the first of its kind in the monarchy. The dynamic development of industry and the entire city is evidenced by industrial and general exhibitions which took place in Ústí nad Labem in the second half of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The city's development required the development of public transportation.

From 1899 trams running in Ústí nad Labem gradually connected the city centre with the city suburbs and the more distant surroundings. At the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Ústí nad Labem had one of the largest tram networks in the Czech lands, which was supplemented by regular bus transport in 1929.

During the nineteenth century, there was also a development in education – the municipal school with primary and lower secondary sections (today's Municipality Museum building) and the girls' school were built, the latter of which was later transformed into a grammar school. In 1886, a business school was established. The city hospitals had ceased to be sufficient as early as the middle of the nineteenth century – a new hospital was built in 1856 on today's Špitálské Square. Twenty years later, the building was no longer sufficient either and another new hospital was built which opened in 1894.

The religious composition of the population had also changed and the number of non-Catholics had risen in the almost Catholic only city. During the second half of the nineteenth century, the number of Jews in Ústí was also growing; a new Jewish cemetery in today's Městské sady was opened from 1866 and a synagogue in Malá Hradební Street, in 1880. Despite the increase in the number of evangelicals and Jews, Ústí nad Labem remained predominantly Catholic. From

a nationality point of view, the city was predominantly German throughout the nineteenth century, but the Czech element had been increasing through immigration from the inland territory. The expansion of industrial production also affected the emergence of a social movement. The beginnings of the workers' movement here date back to the 1850s. The most important workers' association in Ústí nad Labem became the local workers' learning association (*Arbeiterfortbildungsverein Aussig*) which started its own activities in 1872. The German Workers' Party (*Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*) was founded in 1903.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Ústí nad Labem was already an **important regional centre** which had significantly outpaced the once clearly dominant city of Litoměřice. It housed several dozen industrial companies, some of which were important on a European scale. It was an important road junction and a large port, the seat of the district governor's office, several schools, banks and other institutions. It could be considered to be one of the leading centres of Germans in the Czech lands.

The Czechoslovakian declaration of its independence on 28th October 1918 was met with disapproval and the day after that an assembly of representatives of the entire German population met in Ústí nad Labem. It fully supported the conclusions of the German National Assembly, according to which the bordering German-speaking territories of Bohemia within the German-Austrian state were to form a province. The uncertainty and tension were accompanied by the looting of warehouses and shops in November and December 1918, which was halted by the Czechoslovakian army in December 1918. During the 1920s, the German Social Democratic Party held the greatest political importance in the city, followed usually by German nationalists (*Deutsche Nationalpartei*) and the Nazis (*Deutsche nationalsozialistische Arbeiterpartei*). The economic crisis and its consequences, which were severe in the industrial border regions, and developments in the neighbouring Germany, brought about a fundamental change. The parliamentary election in 1935 in Ústí nad Labem was clearly dominated by the Sudeten German Party (*Sudetendeutsche Partei*). Despite these results, the municipal policy by the German Social Democratic Party remained unchanged until the summer of 1938, and the distribution of the political forces was often shown by frequent anti-fascist demonstrations by the People's Front held on various occasions in 1936–1938, which, however, already clearly exceeded Nazi ventures in terms of the number of participants.

However, the city was not just about political events. The symbol of the extensive construction that was being conducted here, was the construction of the administrative **building of the Association for Chemical and Metallurgical Production** in 1929–1930, which held the record for the tallest building in Czechoslovakia until 1934. Among other prime examples of extensive construction were the modern complex of Masaryk Hospital (1927–1936), **Dr. Edvard Beneš Bridge** (1934–1936) and the **T.G. Masaryk Sluice** (1923–1935). Several new school buildings and financial institutions were also built. Residential areas were created, including housing development for employees and workers. For the first time in Czechoslovakia, a **film with sound** was presented in the studios of Georg Schicht's advertising department; it was screened at the Revenue Alhambra, today's Činoherní Studio in 1929. Major artists who left Germany in the early 1920s because of the poor economic situation and later because of racial persecution found refuge in the city.

One of the most important achievements of the German Social Democrats activist policy was the emphasis on solving the social and housing policy. At the beginning of the 1930s, Ústí nad Labem became the sixth largest city in the Czech lands and had a population of almost 80,000 inhabitants. Therefore, the city in the interwar period (1919–1938/1939) built hundreds of apartment buildings, some of which are still architecturally valued, and in which almost 1,400 communal apartments were created.

The Munich Agreement of September 1938 marked the end of that period. In Ústí nad Labem, it was preceded by a very tense situation accompanied by thousands of demonstrations demanding the 'return to the empire', cross-border attacks by the Sudeten German 'freikorps' in the area and mobilisation of the Czechoslovak army. On 9th October, the first Wehrmacht units entered the city to a huge welcome. The completion of the 'liberation' was a by-election to the Reichstag carried out by a referendum. A total of 99.54 % of the cast votes agreed to join the empire. The **Reich Sudetenland District** (*Reichsgau Sudetenland*) with the capital in Liberec was established. Its territory was further administratively divided into three government districts based in Karlovy Vary, Ústí nad Labem and Opava. In May 1939, the town of Střekov and the villages of Bukov, Hostovice, Předlice, Stříbrníky and Trmice were annexed to Ústí nad Labem and the **'Greater Ústí'** was established. After the occupation of Czech territory approximately two thousand Czechs lived in the city; their position was unequal, and they were exposed to several restrictions. Tough measures were applied against the Jews, the last of whom were interned in Krásný Les in 1941–1942 and deported to extermination camps. The Petschek and Weinmann families emigrated before the occupation. Resistance groups from the communist and social democrats were active in the city environs. At the end of the war in April 1945, the **city was heavily air raided** by the US military. Their goal was to destroy Ústí nad Labem railway stations and bridges but the urban area was also severely affected. The bombing destroyed 165 houses and damaged hundreds more properties. At least 600 people died and the suburb of Ostrov town was almost wiped off the map. After Plzeň, Ústí nad Labem became the most damaged city in the country as a result of the extent of the second air raid.

The city liberation was carried out on 8th May by a handful of Czechs from Ústí nad Labem, together with several German anti-fascists; Soviet troops arrived in Ústí nad Labem the following day.

Shortly afterwards, several measures began to be applied against the German population, which were approved in April in the Košice government programme. It was accompanied by several excesses which culminated in the yet unexplained explosion of a warehouse in Krásné Březno on 31st July 1945. About one hundred Germans lost their lives during the subsequent 'Ústí massacre'. The removal of the wreckage and ruins lasted until the spring of 1946. By the end of 1946, most of the **German population had been expelled** from the city and the Germans made up less than 4 % of the total population, compared to almost 78 % before the war. The expulsion of the Germans was compensated by the inhabitants from the inner parts of Czechoslovakia and repatriates. The post-war decline in the population from about 44,000 in 1930 was thus reversed to 57,000 in 1950. In the National Assembly elections in 1946, the Communist Party in Ústí nad Labem won an absolute majority of votes. The communists also controlled the February events of 1948. In 1949, Ústí nad Labem became one of the regional cities. After the Ústí nad Labem and Liberec Regions merger, **Ústí became the seat of the North Bohemian Regional National Committee** (1960–1990). Besides the engineering, food and glass industries, the chemical industry and lignite mining connected with energy production were primarily developed in the territory of this newly established administrative unit.

The new administrative arrangement required space for many institutions in the city centre. Although the first studies regarding the city's future development began shortly after the World War II, the first detailed **ground plan** was not approved until 1956. It called for elimination of the bomb sites, the easing of traffic and hygiene problems and the completion of a network of engineering and civilian facilities. It also divided the construction into two directions – **the infilling of spaces between houses to improve health and sanitation of the old city and construction in open areas**. It was expected that industry would develop further, which would increase the population and traffic. In 1962, the master ground plan had to be updated in the context of new elaborate plans for North Bohemian coal basin cities. In the 1960s, the city responded to the criticism of the situation and efforts to reform the economy. In the cultural field, this activity included activities of the 'Kladivadlo' theatre and the cultural-political monthly journal 'Dialog'. Liberalising public and political life, in which new civic organisations were being established here (e.g. The Club of Former Political Prisoners – K 231 and The Club of Committed Non-Party Members), was ended by the Warsaw Pact invasion on 21st August 1968. In Ústí nad Labem, the occupying forces' arrival caused one death. The normalisation process, accompanied by purges and inspections, was vigorous in the north. Despite the unfavourable political conditions, culture in Ústí was among the top at the time – for example, thanks to the Porta music festival and the Činoherní Studio (Theatre).

The air raids, the interrupted cultural development, the difficult post-war settlement, the change in the population structure and the policy of the ruling Communist Party all had a significant impact on the urban face of the city from 1952 to 1990. The historic city centre, in particular, suffered considerably. It was insensitively transformed in the 1970s and 1980s and was gradually encircled by panel housing estates. Growing industrial production in several companies very negatively affected the environment. The increasingly intensive surface mining of brown coal in the city environs, because of which several municipalities had to be pulled down, also contributed to its terrible state. The poor environmental situation became part of the resistance against the current regime in the late 1980s. The Ústí nad Labem residents also gradually became involved in the anti-regime protests, especially after 17th November 1988. The students of the Faculty of Education played an important role. It is interesting that the catastrophic state of the environment rather than the desire for freedom united most of the Ústí inhabitants against the regime.

Since the democratic elections in 1990, the city's self-government has been gradually restoring the structures of civil society and developing cross-border cooperation with Saxony within the Elbe Euroregion. One of the undeniable positives was the establishment of a new university – the **Jan Evangelista Purkyně University** (1991), which continued the activities of the local Faculty of Education. Today, the university has eight faculties, its own campus, and is attended (in 2020) by almost 8,000 students. The environment has improved drastically compared to previous decades. Because of internal unpreparedness and low competitiveness, the market liberalisation resulted in an unsuccessful reaction to economic restructuring. The initial effort to find new purposeful and urban visions for the city subsided relatively quickly. Along with the hasty privatisation and some unsuccessful investment projects, the last decade of the last century also experienced the decline of industry – at the former largest employers Spolchemie, Setuza and Tonas, it meant a decrease of several thousand jobs, and abandoned industrial sites (recent inventories show figures reaching almost one hundred) and residential localities. Since its population peak in 1990, Ústí nad Labem has lost about 12 % of its population (i.e. a decrease from approximately 106,000 to 93,000 inhabitants), ranking it just behind Ostrava among the biggest regional centres. Controversial, but alas, in the current Czech climate not unusual, new industrial premises are being built on greenfields on the eastern foreland of the city, and residential suburban zones in the Elbe Valley and in the higher positions above the city (Skorotice municipality).

The low flat prices in the suburbs in recent years attracted landlords who trade in poverty. Several areas also became devolved towns – the towns of Chabařovice, Trmice and several other municipalities became independent. The city population has thus decreased by several thousand. The demolitions unfortunately continued during this period as well – for example in Předlice, Neštětice and the for-

mer complex of Masaryk Hospital. After 1990, the construction of the panel housing estates was finished. Although it was originally planned that the area of Nové Skorotice would be predominantly an apartment construction, eventually people built detached houses on a large scale here. The construction and commissioning of a new area of the regional hospital on the North Terrace has become extremely beneficial for Ústí and the entire region. Among the successful buildings of the post-revolutionary period in the city centre are the buildings of the Czech National Bank (1992–1994), Komerční Banka (1995–1997) and the Zdar Palace (2004–2009). The large construction of the Forum Shopping Centre close to the Church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary and some other administrative buildings is rather questionable. Unfortunately, the city centre is gradually becoming depopulated. On the other hand, the **Mariánský Bridge** (1994–1997) created by the architect Roman Koucký, is a world-renowned transport construction and became a new dominant landmark of Ústí nad Labem. In 2006, a motorway was opened in the section between Ústí nad Labem and Dresden. Its last section was finally put into operation in December 2016 after long term problems.

From the beginning until the twentieth century, the river Elbe played a crucial role for the city and its environs. In the nineteenth century, this river gave the once provincial town the role of one of the most important river ports in Europe, and its water was a precondition for many branches of industry. The romantic stream squeezed into the landscape of the Central Bohemian uplands and was thus gradually transformed into an engineering project with paved banks, port walls and in the twentieth century also with rapids at the Masaryk Sluice. Despite all these efforts to bind and conquer the river, the Elbe reminded people of its power from time to time by devastating floods. The oldest disastrous floods are known to have been in 1118, 1342 and 1432; there were also extreme floods in 1845 and 1890 during the industrial boom of the city. The most recent floods of 2002, 2006 and 2016 reminded us again of the power of the river. The Elbe Valley in the city's vicinity is still in many places a romantic landscape which is unique to the Czech Republic, for many visitors surprising and still undiscovered.