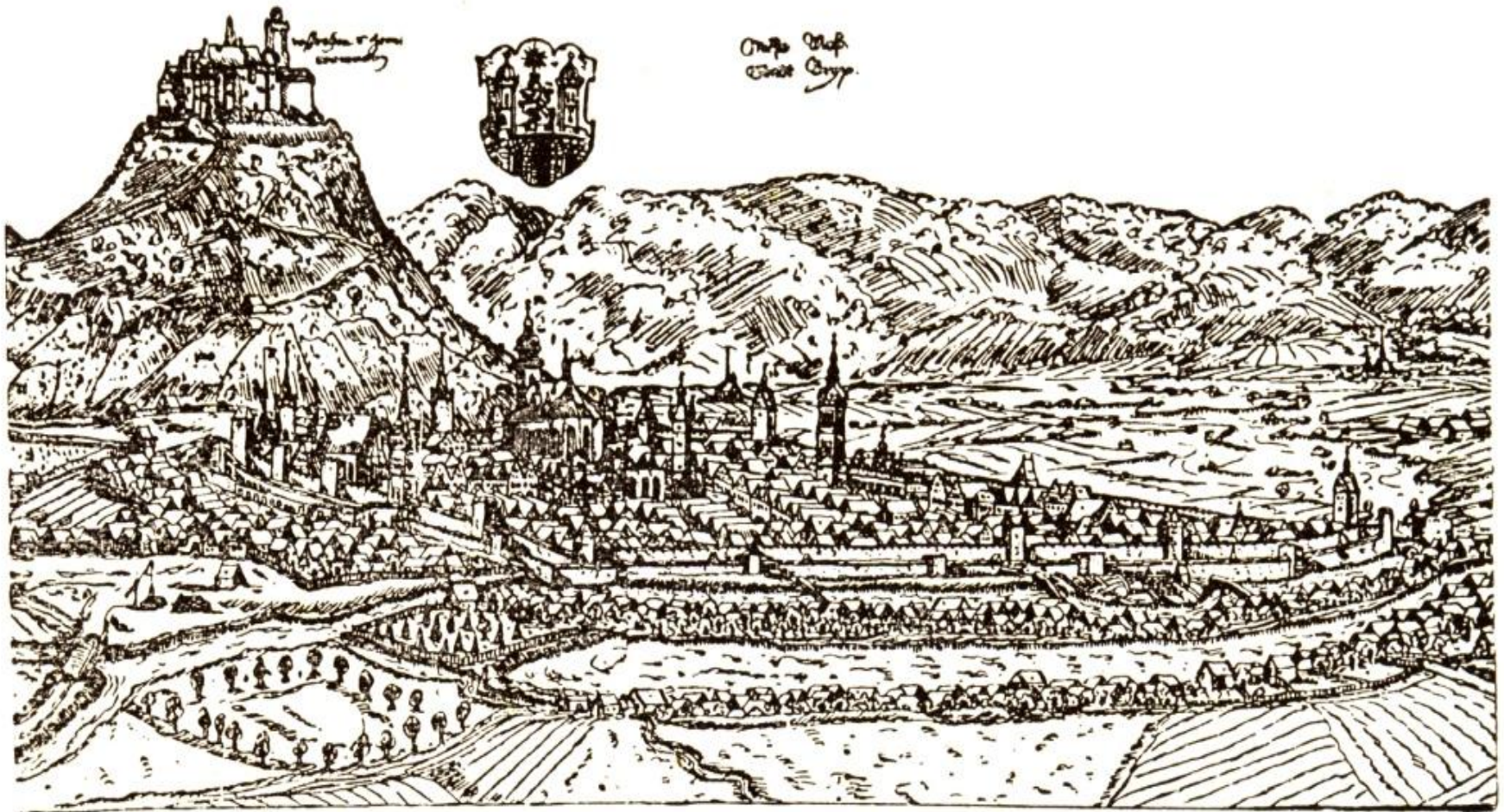


# A History of the City of Most (Brüx): A Laboratory of Ethnic, Social & Environmental Engineering

# Early history

- Citadel of Hněvín dates to 1040
- Original town surrounded by marshland
- Built to protect trade routes
- Decisive development around 1225-50 under the last of the Přemyslovec dynasty
- Becomes a royal town in 1253
- Besieged by Hussites in 1421 but not captured
- Rebuilt after a massive fire in 1515. Construction included Assumption of the Virgin Mary begun in 1517

# Most 1602



Stadtansicht von 1602, v. J. Willenberger



# Assumption of the Virgin Mary



# Early modern development

- City gates removed in second quarter of 19<sup>th</sup> century
- City developed around its three squares up until industrialisation
- Large scale city expansion and building development from 1880s onward, e.g. neo-renaissance town hall, schools, administrative buildings, military barracks, modern rows of houses, secessionist style theatre (1911), palatial villas at base of Hněvín, etc
- Connected by electric street car to Litvinov from 1901
- Building history ends in the 1930s



# 1<sup>st</sup> Square



# 2<sup>nd</sup> Square





# 3<sup>rd</sup> Square





# Old Townhall



# Ringstrasse Promenade

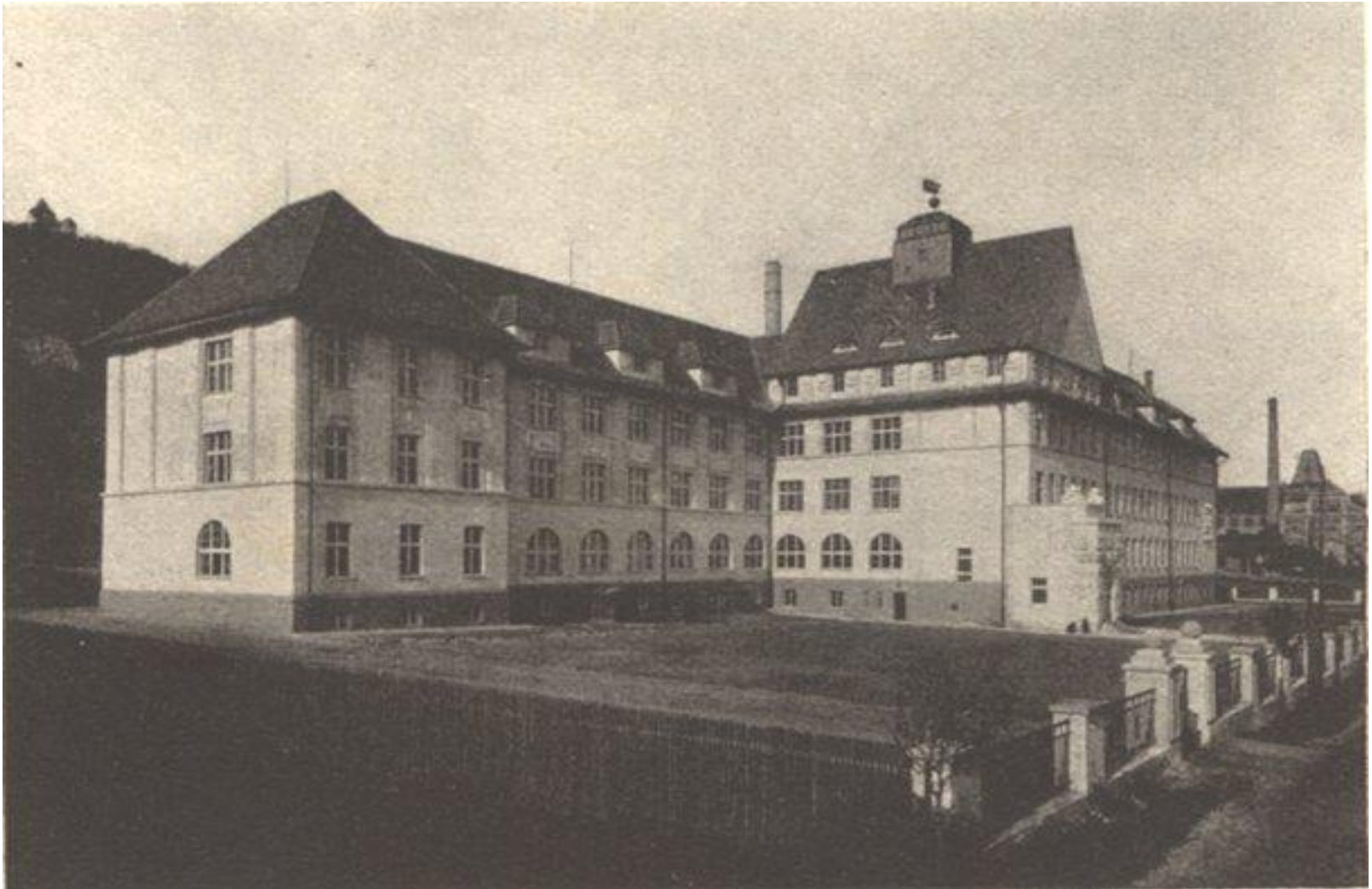




# Monastery



# German grammar school

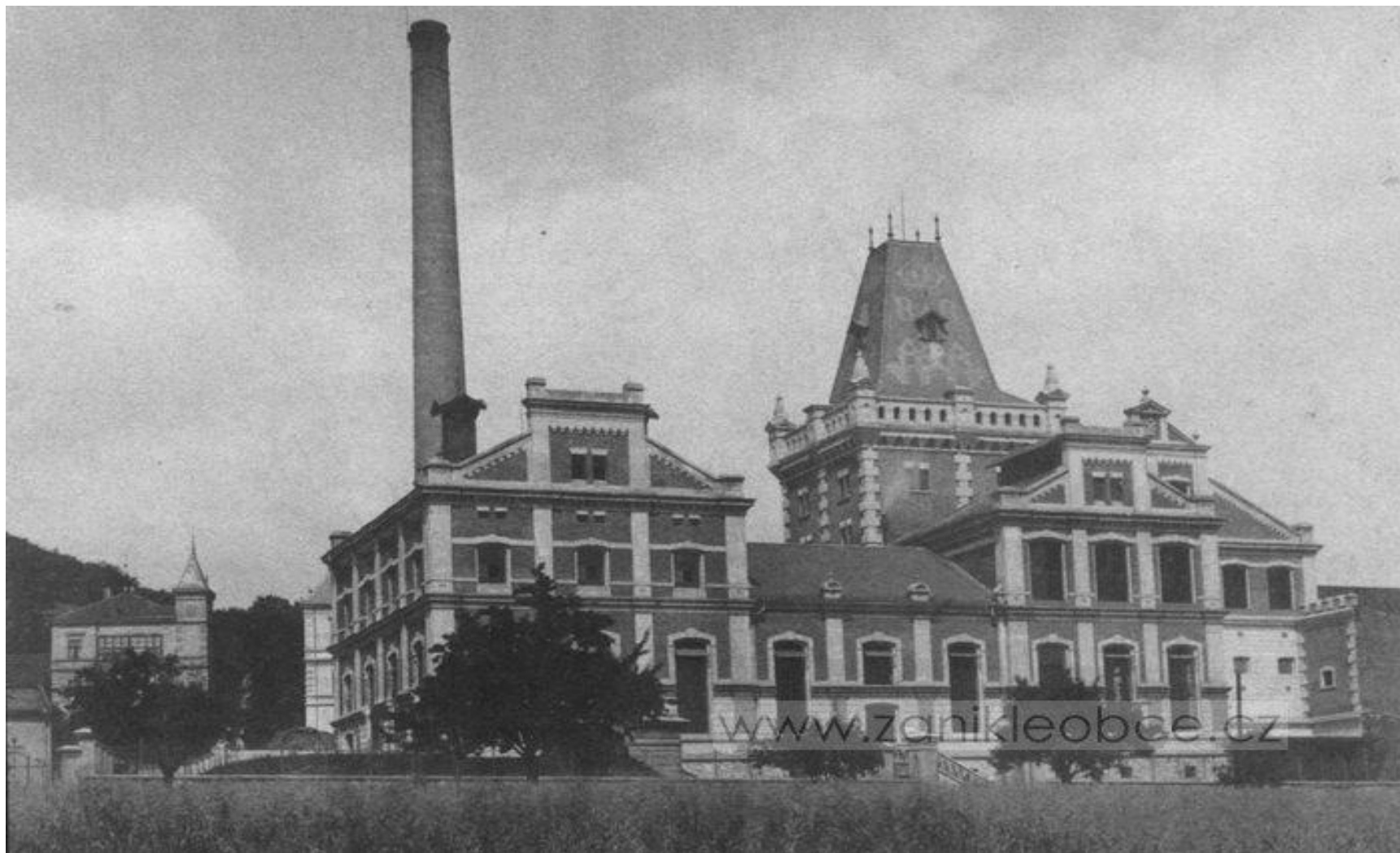




# District orphanage



# Brewery





# Mining house



# Post office

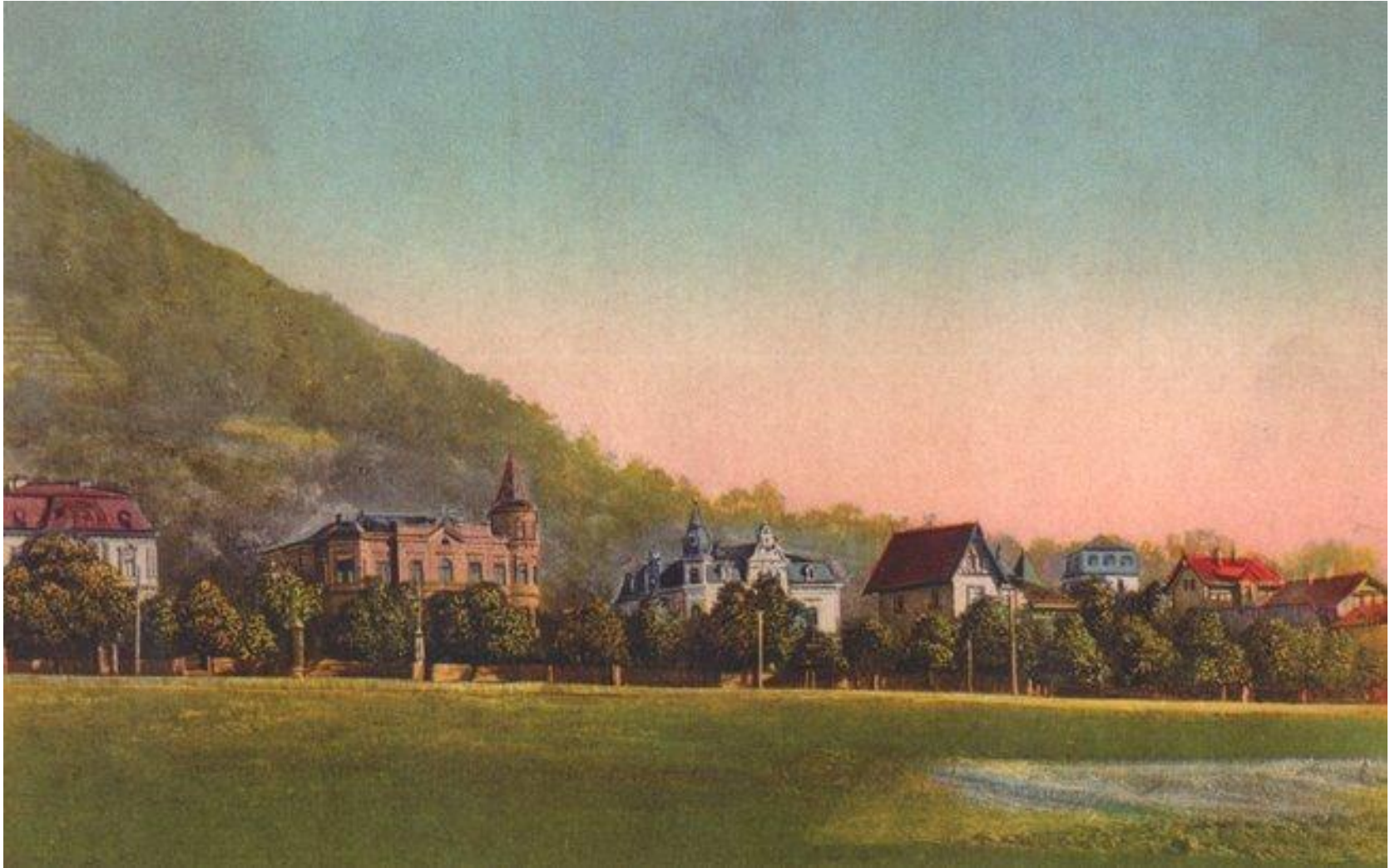




# Town theatre



# Villas





# Street scene





# View of Most from castle

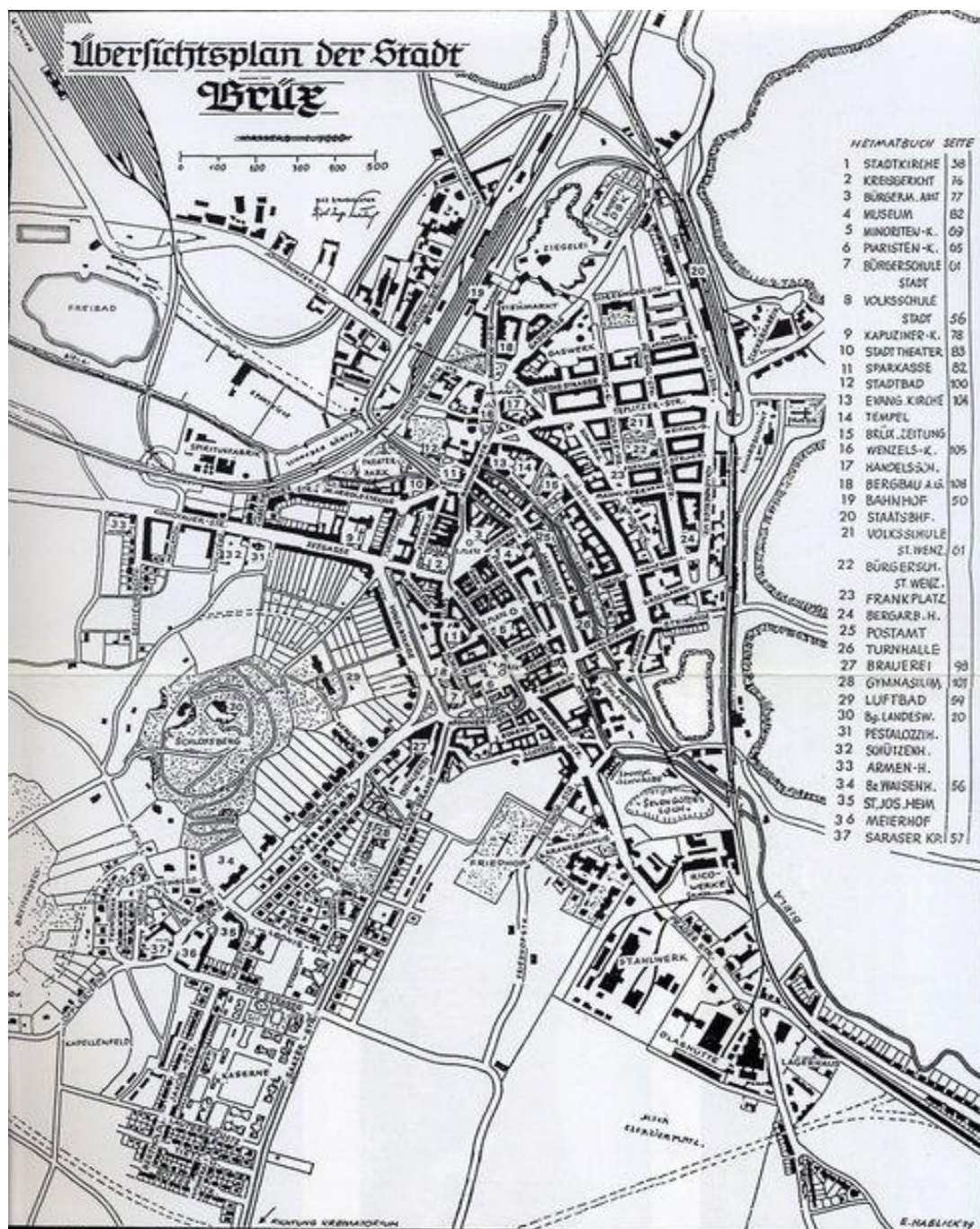




# Hněvín Castle



# Übersichtsplan der Stadt Brux

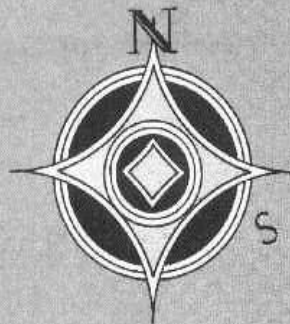
HEIMATBUCH SEITE

1	STADTKIRCHE	38
2	KIRCHGERICHT	76
3	BÜRGERK. AMT	77
4	MUSEUM	82
5	MINORITEN-K.	69
6	PARISTEN-K.	65
7	BÜRGERSCHULE STADT	61
8	VOLKSSCHULE STADT	56
9	KAPUZINER-K.	78
10	STADT THEATER	83
11	SPARKASSE	82
12	STADTBAD	100
13	EVANG. KIRCH.	104
14	TEMPEL	
15	BLIX-ZEITUNG	
16	WENZELS-K.	105
17	HANDELS-SCH.	
18	BERGBAU u. d.	108
19	BAHNHOF	50
20	STAATSHF.	
21	VOLKS-SCHULE ST. WENZ.	61
22	BÜRGER-SCH. ST. WENZ.	
23	FRANKPLATZ	
24	BERGARB.-H.	
25	POSTAMT	
26	TURNHALLE	
27	BRÄUEREI	98
28	GYMNASIUM	101
29	LUFTBAD	59
30	g. LANDESW.	80
31	PESTALOZZI-H.	
32	SCHÜTZENH.	
33	ARMEN-H.	
34	St. WAISEN-H.	56
35	St. JOS. HEIM	
36	MIEHROFF	
37	SARASER KR.	51



# Sudeten-Czech tensions

- Economic development of northern borderlands late 19<sup>th</sup>C – early 20<sup>th</sup>C not accompanied by social development.
- Majority of local mines and industry in German hands
- Ethnic conflict not improved by collapse of Austria-Hungary and establishment of independent CS (viz. Deutschböhmen)
- Wall St crash 1929 & rise of Nazis in Germany
- North Bohemian Region comprised 19% of Sudetenland
- 1930: Most 64% German – 17,549 Germans vs 9,740 Czechs (some towns 90% German)
- 1938: Annexation of Sudetenland led to mass exodus of Czechs (1943 Nazi census: 20,000 Germans vs 3,700 Czechs)



# Sudetenland

----- Sprachgrenze der deutschen  
Siedlungsgebiete  
—— Staatsgrenze



EGERLAND



WEISKAUER SPRACHINSEL



# Second World War

- Emphasis placed on heavy industry under Nazi regime
- All natural resources and industrial, agricultural & human resources placed at disposal of Protectorate
- Sudetenländische Treibstoffwerke AG Oberleutensdorf 1939
- Massive expansion of mining and chemical plant, plus location of Czech armaments & engineering works for German army.
- 40,000 tons of benzene per month by 1944
- Targeted bombing by allies
- No repair & maintenance of building stock, environment, cultural cooperation or social considerations – start of material & spiritual devastation.

# 1945 expulsion of German population

- Political concentration, economic consolidation & ethnic reorganisation started by Nazis accelerated by returning CS government
- President Beneš: “We must liquidate the German problem definitively”. CS’s diversity had undermined its democratic foundations, leading to events of 1938.
- Expulsion of Most’s Germans began in May 1945
- Government confiscated German houses, businesses & industrial concerns.
- Nationalisation decree of 24 October 1945 transferred mines & chemical plant to the state to create Northern Bohemian Brown Coal Mines (SHD).



# Celebrating the nationalisation of the mines



MOST  
Oslava  
znárodnění  
dolů

Skenoval v r. 2000: FUR-SEAL, Most

# Repopulation of borderlands

- 'Wild Transfer' of 1945 led to over 700,000 ethnic Germans being forced from all CS in summer 1945
- Czech settlers poured into borderlands
- Remaining Germans often relocated or expelled by local officials to ease housing problems.
- Communist-controlled Settlement Office organised removal of 2m Germans on transports & arrival of 1m Czechs 1946.
- Influx of 'gold diggers' destabilised region, but majority of settlers came to stay for patriotism, conviction & economic opportunism.
- Labour shortages endemic in mining & glass production due to loss of German skilled labourers.



# Population diversity

- Substantial German minority remained into 1950s and beyond for various reasons: ‘irreplaceable specialists’, spouses of Czechs
- Many towns settled by other ethnic groups or foreign Czechs, e.g. 39,000 Czech speakers from Volynia, 42,000 Magyars from Slovakia, 100,000 ethnic Slovaks, 16,000 Slovak Roma
- Fluctuating diversity created barrier to consolidation as many later departed

# Further impediments to cultural unity

- Different interpretations of what it meant to be Czech, e.g. old vs new settlers – old settlers marginalised by Communist administrators
- Tension between first new settlers and later settlers – barrier to identity building and solidarity
- All new arrivals lacked historical connection to the land, customs & architecture, but they were surrounded by reminders of German culture
- One common bond was rules governing economic & material interests



# Creating a new identity

- Emphasis placed on ‘undoing’ legacy of 1620 Battle of White Mountain & ‘odgermanisovaní’
- Assertion of Czech history in borderlands  
important goal of Settlement Office – tried to build a new regional patriotism in order to: consolidate conditions in housing & labour market, stabilise economy, subvert international attempts to reverse expulsions, control content of new regional identities

# The great socialist vision

- Communist planners consciously sought to negate the old Sudeten *Heimat* romantic & anti-modern narrative – advanced an anti-romantic regional identity stressing cities, labour, industry
- New order to be based on workers and machines, not soil and mountains
- Imprinted Czech culture of labour & industry on economic infrastructure inherited from Germans – new order to be an organised socialist one privileging labour & planning in contrast to exploitative & chaotic capitalism of Sudeten Germans



# Painting the empty canvas

- Capitalists were gone, but capital remained, offering great opportunity to build advanced socialism without class struggle
- Began establishing a state-controlled, planned economy & identity based on rationalisation, labour, industry & new socialist man
- Coal & coal miners became icons of this new identity – publicity campaigns to populate key coal towns of Most & Chomutov
- Coal was “the blood pouring into the arteries” of the country’s industry (*Rude pravo*)

# Support for communists

- Appropriation of northern borderlands identity strengthened Communist domination of post-war public life – northern Bohemia a bastion of Communist support before & after 1948 (50-60% of 1946 free vote)
- By 1950s heavy industry had become central to state's Communist identity - privileges of miners & other 'heroes of labour'.
- Huge (official) pride in north Bohemia's contribution to economic growth of Czechoslovakia
- Materialist ideologies, policies & popular attitudes shaped development of borderlands for decades



# Reshaping Most

- Opportunistic and mechanistic settler attitude to Most example of materialist relationship to region's landscape – came to work in factories & mines & acquire German property
- Little connection to natural & built environment – succumbed to productivist Industrialisation & urbanisation speeded up after Communist takeover

# Expanding the mines

- Early 1950s Most a centrepiece of Stalinist heavy industry
- Regime built on Nazi efforts to increase coal production – coal extraction doubled 1950-64 to 50m tons p.a.
- By 1965 surface mining was 78% of total coal production (50% 1944, 15% 1910)
- By late 1950s mines swallowing towns & villages in Most region & displaced residents moved to new housing blocks in city

# Decision to move Most

- 1961 mining & party officials begin to advocate moving Most itself as it sat on 86m tons of coal
- Engineers calculated net profit of 2.6b crowns with cost of demolition, new construction & mining offset by value of coal
- 18,000 residents would have to leave Old Most



# Rationale to demolish Old Most

- Most mine would free up space to discard excess overburden from Ležáky mine rather than disposing 8km away.
- Overburden dump would serve as attractive barrier between New Most and new pits
- Old Most antiquated, unsightly, decaying & expensive to maintain. Cheaper to demolish it & build new housing (75% of Old Most housing in state hands thanks to post-war confiscations).
- Would save millions for transportation as railroad & highway corridors could be straightened.

# Lack of popular opposition

- 1966 city study showed 90% of residents aware of bad environment, but 80% said economic importance of mines outweighed bad conditions
- Less than 1% preferred to live in Old Most – wanted new apartments with central heating & modern plumbing
- Residents shared materialist premises of communist planners

# The destruction of Old Most

- [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5fxo\\_pzLV Dc&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5fxo_pzLV Dc&feature=related)
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iD8AxfE7I CA>



# Relocation of residents

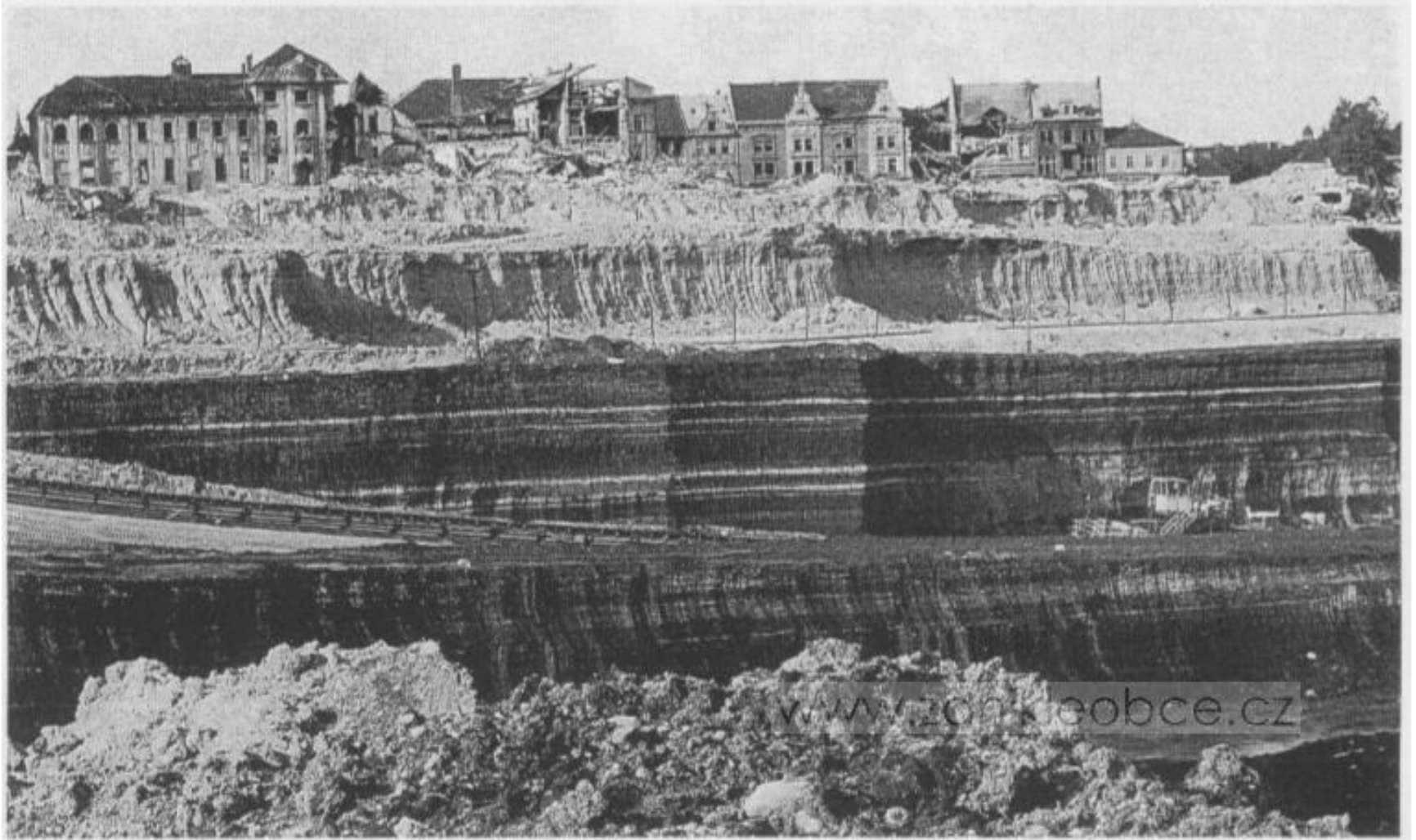
- First 767 families moved 1965-67
- Demolition began 1967
- By 1970 another 2313 families relocated
- By 1975 only a few hundred families left – mostly Roma
- Church of Assumption moved in 1975
- Last buildings demolished early 1980s
- Last residents left 1977

# Mining encroaching on Old Most





# Mining around Old Most





# Rebuilding Most

- Emphasised modern planning principles of efficiency, flow & separation of functions
- Aligned with post-war urban renewal in UK, US & France and trend for low-rise tenements
- A modern city on a world standard providing efficient housing, services & transportation
- City recast to reflect socialist, productivist & materialist values of regime – remnants of discredited capitalism & German domination replaced with modern, socialist city

# The 'Gypsy Problem'

- One outstanding problem: the Gypsies
- Promising start – thousands moved into Most from rural Slovakia looking for jobs & housing.
- From itinerancy to controlled setting
- BUT not cured of bad hygiene, illiteracy & poor work habits
- Officials at a loss how to deal with them & imminent destruction of Gypsy ghetto in Most

# ‘Gypsy Problem’ continued

- 1950s-60s Party concentrated on eliminating nomadism & improving Gypsy living conditions
- Perception that Gypsies rejected modern organisation & control irritated communist state
- Integrating Roma into mainstream was a priority to banish their ‘backwardness’

# Resolving the 'problem'

- Education & urbanisation failing by mid-1960s
- Stock take of Roma 1965 divided them into 3 categories. Category III: 'recidivists, half-wits, alcoholics', criminals & jobless or uninterested in work predominated in Most (1892 of 4038)
- State adopted policy of 'dispersion' within general population to make them more susceptible to re-education & assimilation



# Policy failure

- Roma didn't want to live isolated among non-Roma & few people wanted Roma neighbours
- Districts put up bureaucratic barriers to relocation
- Most officials changed course: concentrated Category II & III Gypsies in Old Most as non-Roma families moved out
- Only Category I Roma eligible for New Most housing but they formed only 26% of Roma population with over 83% in Category III

# Final solution

- Old Most a Gypsy ghetto by 1975
- Dispersal & integration totally discredited
- Special district built to house Old Most's Roma population – Chanov – to yield 'a change of value system for Gypsies'
- Same problems continued & buildings fell into disrepair
- Relentless materialism provided regime with only limited insight into what makes a healthy human community.

# Chanov



# Chanov





# Let's go to Hollywood!

- All Quiet On The Western Front 1979
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SXtsiqrhqs>  
U

THE END