

Matěj Spurný

Making the Most of Tomorrow



A Laboratory of Socialist
Modernity in Czechoslovakia

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Published by Charles University, Karolinum Press

Translation by Derek and Marzia Paton

Cover and layout by /3. dílna/

Typesetting by Karolinum Press

First English edition

Reviewed by Michal Kopeček (Institute of Contemporary History, Academy of Sciences, Prague), Eagle Glassheim (Department of History, University of British Columbia, Vancouver), and Jakub Bachtik (Institute of Art History, Charles University, Prague)

The Czech edition is the result of a postdoc project, 'A Great Experiment in Socialist Modernity', which, as project no. P410-12-P596, was supported by the Grant Agency of the Czech Republic. The making of the English version of the book was supported by the European Regional Development Fund project 'Creativity and Adaptability as Conditions of the Success of Europe in an Interrelated World' (No. CZ.02.1.01/0.0/0.0/16_019/0000734).

Originally published in Czech as *Most do budoucnosti. Laboratoř socialistické modernity na severu Čech*, Prague: Karolinum Press, 2016.

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ISBN 978-80-246-4017-4

ISBN 978-80-246-4018-1 (pdf)

ISBN 978-80-246-4071-6 (epub)

ISBN 978-80-246-4070-9 (mobi)



Charles University
Karolinum Press 2019

www.karolinum.cz
ebooks@karolinum.cz



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KAROLINUM PRESS

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Czech original of this book, *Most do budoucnosti*, was years in the making and could never have been written without the support of family, friends, teachers, and colleagues. The idea of writing a book about the strange fate of the town of Most was born during long evenings spent in a cell of the Cistercian abbey in the north Bohemian town of Osek (Osegg), where, in 2006, I was working for an NGO called Antikomplex, recording conversations with people from villages that had been demolished to enable the mining of brown coal. I succeeded in making this idea a reality only several years later, thanks to the support of the Institute of Contemporary History in Prague and the Grant Agency of the Czech Republic. The writings of the historians Michal Pullmann and Michal Kopeček helped shape its conception, and both of them, as well as Ondřej Matějka, later also provided useful comments on various parts of the book as they were being written. In the passages concerning the environmental contexts of the Most story, Eagle Glassheim provided essential stimulus, and regarding technocratic thinking, I profited greatly from consultations with Jakub Rákosník and Vítězslav Sommer. For help with the context of the preservation of historic monuments, I am indebted to Jakub Bachtík for valuable advice. For making it easy to access records, I owe a debt of gratitude to the staff of the State District Archives in Most, especially Martin Myšička. I am also grateful to have had the opportunity to discuss the topic with a number of eyewitnesses, particularly the architect Václav Krejčí, the historian František Šmahel, and the archaeologist Jan Klápště. In the last stage of writing the book, I was helped by an informal group of friends, including crucial editing, in particular by Adam Šůra. For their meticulous translation, which entailed the addition of a good deal of new information, up-dating, and generally making the work more accessible especially to the non-Czech reader, I thank Derek and Marzia Paton.

PREFACE: COAL UNDER THE PAVEMENT

From a distance, the city, cobbled together from prefab concrete panel buildings, looks a bit as if someone had built it out of match-boxes. It is shot through with a regular grid of wide streets along which cars drive with ease. A church, separated from the town by a four-lane motorway, quietly looks on from a distance as people live the future they dreamt of. Instead of a church, an eighteen-storey tower now dominates this once regional metropolis, today a city of 60,000 people. It is the headquarters of a mining company. Everyone who visits the city quickly understands that something extraordinary has taken place here and may perhaps still take place. But what, actually? And why?

It is good to begin the account just outside the prefab concrete city, on the north slope of Hněvín Hill (399 metres above sea level). It was here that the royal borough of Most was founded in the Middle Ages. Today, below the hill there is only a lake. Its shimmering waters mercifully conceal an extraordinarily dramatic story of Czech history after the Second World War.

A human settlement was wiped off the face of the earth here. Another town of the same name was built on greenfield land a few kilometres away. One of the most valuable historic towns of north Bohemia vanished. Gothic and Renaissance monuments, the houses of burghers, convents and monasteries, churches, three town squares, stately buildings and boulevards – all gone. All of them were demolished and carted away as part of the worthless overburden. In compensation, a rationally organized city was built, the kind that not only Czech modernist architects and urban planners dreamt of. It was a city that was meant to open the way for people to a life with dignity.

The reasons seem obvious. The main reason was the ‘black gold under the town’. Coal, thanks to which Most had become rich and grown, now, after the Second World War, in the years of single-mindedly

building a ‘fuel energy base’, became fatal for the old town. Mining was moved from deep shafts to the surface, from the outskirts of the town right into the streets at its centre.

But to be satisfied with an answer like that would mean accepting the logic of the engineers of the state-owned company called Severočeské hnědouhelné doly (SHD – North Bohemian Lignite Mines). From their point of view, the existence of a coal seam under the city did not raise the question of what to do. Rather, it was in itself the answer: mine it. As a historian, not as a mining engineer, I start from the premiss that coal under the pavement of a historic town can be dealt with in various ways, and therefore that the story of the old Most could have developed in a number of ways. I am convinced that inquiring into the roots and circumstances of the decisions that determined the story of this town after the Second World War has not lost any of its urgency today. What at that time actually justified swapping a whole historic town for coal? Was it the context of the former Sudetenland, the local sense of uprootedness and lack of a real home? Was it the Utopia of progress and a life with dignity for everyone? Or was it rather a special form of the technical thinking of engineers, which reduced the world to economic indicators? What was particularly Communist and what was universal about the modernist discourse of the 1960s and 1970s? Can one find similar stories in the East and the West? During those three decades, when the destruction of one city and the building of another were under consideration and were then eventually carried out, was there a substantial change in the predominant way people thought about their environment, and about the meaning of the signs of being civilized and everything that belongs to a life with dignity? What aspects of the *Sinnwelt* (mental world or symbolic universe) of that time were reflected in the officially approved narratives about the fate of the city of Most and what was reflected in critical journalism and art?

We won’t find the answer either below the surface of the lake, where the old houses once stood, or amongst the concrete walls of

the new city. We have to travel back a few decades into the past and try, by following traces in the sources, to understand the *Sinnwelt* of the time, which was created by stories like the one of Most. And that is the aim of this book. It does not seek merely to tell the story of one north Bohemian town in the times of state socialism. It is about more than events that are several decades remote in time and about more than a single town. It is about understanding the world we live in and help to shape.

The Story



Where is Daedalus, so that he could search, cry out, and lament?
Daedalus is not here; for decades now he has been standing at the steam hammer in the Louny workshops, making insulators in a porcelain factory, and has already somehow forgotten a bit about his wings. His son has set out alone, without him; he didn't need him; he listened only to his own voice, which invented wings for him, so that he reached the centre of his will and mastery, of seclusion and joy, his own heart. And maybe it was Daedalus who followed him with a sigh; maybe with a bit of envy, maybe with a knowing smile or sadness, which you will scarcely drive out even with a gulp of fire in your throat, gasping at a recollection. Daedalus was not here; he couldn't see that broken trunk, those wings broken apart, those bare bones, stripped of flesh [...] And after that blow the mountain did not even shudder.

(Emil Juliš, 1969¹)

1 From Emil Juliš, 'Ikarova proměna', in idem, *Pod kroky dýmů*, Most: Dialog, 1969, pp. 11–13.

It is reasonable to see the history of old Most as evidence of the self-destructive power of modern humankind. But it is also fair to see it as an example of the willingness to take a laboriously made, but already worn out, human creation and to sacrifice it to the newly built, better, and more rational world that is supposed to emerge on its ruins. It is fair to tell it as a story about pride coming before a fall, or as a modern variation on the theme of rising from the ashes. Though the history certainly contains a hint of both myths, of Icarus and the phoenix, it is wise to free oneself of these preconceived notions and to seek to become acquainted with the circumstances and environments in which the drama of the city took place. In other words, it is more useful to search for the answer to the questions of what kind of town old Most was, what the relationships were amongst coal mining, society, and politics in north Bohemia, what ideas guided the actors who played the key roles in taking decisions about the fate of the town in the 1950s and 1960s, and how its story was projected into the lives of the people who were at home there. The aim is not to confirm one's initial admiration or disgust, nor to make sure the story makes a simple point, but to seek to reconstruct what was probably the most dramatic period in the history of Most in its broader contexts, both with its contradictions and with its ambiguities.

OLD MOST

I do not wish to describe in detail, nor can I, the history of old Most (Brůx in German, Pons in Latin), from its foundation in the first half of the thirteenth century to the demolition of the last house just before the spring of 1987. Yet to grasp the context of the destruction of the town, one must get an overall idea of the historic traces that the old town represented, and of the state of the town in the late 1950s and early 1960s, when its fate was decided.

The history of the town of Most was, from its royal founding in the early thirteenth century, carried along by a principle that endured in different versions until the twentieth century. That principle was the interest of the powers that be in the existence of the town and its exact form. Most was founded as a royal borough at the impetus of King Wenceslas I (*reg.* 1230–53) of Bohemia, who, considering the strategic position and economic potential of the settlement, decided to build a new power base at the foot of Hněvín Hill in north-west Bohemia. Old Most was built on an urban plan with predominantly rectilinear divisions, though, owing to the shape of the terrain and the rapid growth of the town in the thirteenth century, this concept was not entirely adhered to. The interest of the powers that be in the existence of the town played an absolutely fundamental role also in one of the most difficult moments of its existence, the period after the fire of 1515, which in the course of two hours had destroyed almost all of Most. The rebuilding of the town was supported by King Vladislav II (Vladislav Jagiellon, *reg.* 1471–1516), and even the pope, Leo X (*reg.* 1513–21), contributed to it. It was at this time of unique restoration that most of the historically valuable buildings of Most were erected – the Renaissance houses of burghers and mainly the Deanery Church of the Assumption, an exceptional work of Gothic architecture and one of the largest churches

in Bohemia – and these remained until the last third of the twentieth century.²

Apart from the monarch's, and then the State's, interest in the town, its development was determined from the beginning also by the mining of minerals in the Ore Mountains (Krušné hory) in the last two centuries, mainly brown coal (lignite), which existed even under the town of Most. The desire to mine intensified considerably in the second half of the nineteenth century, at a time of revolutionary changes in technology and the operation of capitalism. New actors entered into the planning of the town and its immediate environs. Their plans, needs, and opportunities opened up completely new and in some respects contradictory prospects, ranging from dynamic expansion to the complete elimination of the town. As we shall see in some detail, the life of the town and its people began largely to be subject to the needs of the market for coal. The existence and appearance of Most was thus again fundamentally influenced by a growing power, this time economic (which can reasonably be talked about in a special sense also in the period of state socialism).

The city did not of course comprise only a power structure beyond individual people, even though such structures have played an extraordinarily more important role in the history of Most than in other towns in the Bohemian Lands (Bohemia, Moravia, and Austrian Silesia). Here too, the people who have lived in the town have determined the particular form of its life and architecture. It is in this connection that we encounter the second distinctive factor that helped to determine the life of old Most – namely, heterogeneity. This consisted in a social diversity that had been present from the beginning, and helped to shape the town, both in the linguistic sense (of ethnicity) and – at least in the key period of the boom and

² Karel Kuča, *Města a městečka v Čechách, na Moravě a ve Slezsku*, 4, Prague: Libri, 2000, pp. 161–201.

renewal of the city in the fifteenth and the sixteenth century – in the religious sense.

Most was from its beginning not only a royal borough but also a place with an intensive religious life. The Ves Svatého Václava (Villa s. Wenceslai, Wenzelsdorf), one of the core settlements of the future town, had not only the first church on the territory of the future Most, but also had a commandry of the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre and then the Knights of the Cross with the Red Star. Gradually churches and convents of the Order of St Mary Magdalene and the Minorites were built in the town, and, in the eighteenth century, a Piarist *collegium* was established. During the Hussite Wars (c.1419–34), Most was a bastion of Catholicism. It defended itself against a Hussite siege and, apart from the commandry of the Knights of the Cross with the Red Star, it was not destroyed. In the late sixteenth and the early seventeenth century, however, thanks also to the influence of the neighbouring land of Saxony, Lutherans dominated here for a while.³ The struggle between the Lutherans and the Catholics left its mark on the long drawn-out construction of the central ecclesiastical building in Most, later known as the Church of the Assumption (kostel Nanebevzetí Panny Marie) or the Deanery Church. In the late Gothic style, it has an extraordinary design, with a remarkable interior that was, for its time, aesthetically modern.⁴

It is exceptionally difficult to determine the ethnic composition of the Most population before 1848. Indeed, in a certain sense it is impossible, even though Czech and German historians have for decades been happy to do so in the interest of justifying one claim or another. Until the mid-nineteenth century, ethnicity (*národnost* in Czech, *Nationalität* in German) was not important for individual or collective identity. Consequently, we now have little evidence

³ Kuča states that 'Lutheranism [...] completely prevailed in about 1590'. Kuča, *Města a městečka*, p. 174.

⁴ For more on this, see the 'Reconciliation' section.



1. The town of Most in the troubled times of social protests as a still mainly German town. Sternegasse in the 1930s.

of it, unlike religious affiliation. The history of Most was, however, clearly shaped both by people whose mother tongue was Czech and by people whose mother tongue was German. As a royal borough, Most was not founded in connection with the German settlement of the borderlands of Bohemia. But, beginning in the fifteenth century at the latest, the German language was making itself felt both in official records and amongst the population thanks to the influence of Saxony and, eventually, also the Lutheran Reformation. In the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth, Most was linguistically a German town. Czech influence began to increase only in connection with the development of coal mining, when workers were recruited from more distant regions. This trend initially tended to change the ethnic structure of the countryside; the town itself remained mainly German (even in the 1880 census, ninety per cent

of the people of Most declared German as their ethnicity, and in 1910 the proportion was eighty-five per cent).⁵ Though this situation changed quite fast between the two world wars (in the 1921 census, already 9,261 people out of a population of 27,230, that is roughly one third of Most, stated their ethnicity as Czech, and in the 1930 census, 9,740 people out of a population of 28,212 did so),⁶ by the Second World War, the vast majority of the Most bourgeoisie (that is, the stratum of owners of land and of houses) was German. Social divisions and conflicts thus to a certain extent overlapped with ethnic composition (though besides Czech miners and German ‘coal barons’, there were of course German miners and, less numerous, members of the Czech middle and upper-middle classes).

The situation changed radically shortly after the end of the Second World War in May 1945. Only a few hundred Germans remained in the town, most of them badly needed miners and specialists, together with their families. The pre-war structure of Most society had thus changed definitively. Unlike regions with continuous settlement, a sudden secularization took place here: religious life and, with it, the perceived reason for the existence of historic Church architecture almost completely vanished after 1945. In addition to the returning Czech inhabitants who had left with the German occupation, and newcomer Czechs from the interior, settlers also came here from afar, and would have a hard time becoming accustomed to life in an industrial and urban environment. Thousands of them would also leave in the coming years. Most and the Most district would never become their true home.⁷

But this history comprises more than just discontinuities. Even after the end of the Second World War we can trace continuities,

⁵ In 1880, Most had a population of 10,136, of which 1,026 were Czechs. In 1910, out of population of 25,577, only 3,965 were Czechs, and 21,267 were German. Kuča, *Města a městečka*, p. 164.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ For more on this, see the ‘Alienation’ section.

particularly in the key influence that political and economic power had on Most. Although May 1945 marks a milestone in Czech history, we can still see the successful and uninterrupted development of the system on which Most had, in the fifty years before the war, become entirely dependent – namely, the mining and distribution of brown coal and the coal-fired generation of electricity. Whereas in a number of villages in the north Bohemian border regions the first weeks after the Liberation were marked by Czechs' unbridled murder and expulsion of their German fellow-citizens, in the Most district it was, in particular, long-time Czech inhabitants who concentrated on continuing the extraction of coal from shafts and large pits, continuing the production of fuel in the chemical plant in Záluží (Maltheuren, 5.5km north-west of old Most), and continuing the generation of electric power, in other words maintaining the basic functioning of industries essential for the existence of modern society. Some people disappeared and others arrived. Monasteries, convents, churches, and whole urban structures became anachronisms, but the system, the basic relationships between industry, politics, and society, which had been forming the town of Most and its environs for decades before the war, was kept intact. Its operation was interrupted neither by the war nor by the Liberation, the expulsions, the resettlement, the post-war confiscations, and the nationalizations of the 1950s.

The characteristic contrasts of the old Most of the 1950s and 1960s were the resultant force of all these influences. They are the contrasts with which the town entered the period when the regional and state-wide economic and political elites would decide about the existence and non-existence of Most. First, there is the contrast between the great historic and architectural value of the old town and the neglect of its monuments, houses, and public space. The images of a dirty, dingy city, as old Most is still recalled today by many a visitor and former inhabitant, are not only the result of later efforts to justify what happened there. Testimony about the disastrous

state of the city is provided by historical writings, photographs, and many period surveys and inquiries documenting what shape the city was in.⁸

On the basis of these materials, no matter how much some of the descriptions in them may be intentionally exaggerated, one can get a good idea of how old Most looked in the last two decades of its existence and what life was like there. About 15,000 people, more than 5,000 families, lived in Most at that time. More than one tenth of those inhabitants did not live alone: two or more families were squeezed into one flat; 60 per cent of the population lived in one-room flats, the vast majority of which were without bathrooms. Larger flats too were usually without bathrooms. Three hundred of the 1,300 houses were in serious disrepair, and required immediate repairs to their roofs and structures to make them habitable, including reconstruction of the plumbing and sewage. In the spring of 1963, several houses on Mírové náměstí (Peace Square) collapsed, which not only confirmed the relevance of the inquiries and reports, but also, indeed mainly, intensified the atmosphere of anxiety and discontent.⁹ That was also the result of water and power cuts (the town water supply had been without real repairs for between forty

8 This was mainly a question of the detailed plan for the demolition of Most, of 4 February 1963, drawn up, tellingly, more than a year before the government decision to eradicate the town (Národní archiv, henceforth NA, fond 960, Ministerstvo paliv III, 1963–1965), inv. č. 430, sv. 419 and 420, Likvidační záměr města Mostu, 4. 2. 1963), Zpráva o efektivnosti likvidace starého Mostu from 1965 (NA, fond 1261/0/4, Předsednictvo ÚV KSČ, aj. 110, sv. 107), Důvodová zpráva byra KV KSČ v Ústí nad Labem ke zrušení staré části města Mostu a uvolnění uhelné substance v mosteckém uhelném pilíři a dalších náhradních investic (NA, fond 1261/0/43, Kancelář 1. tajemníka ÚV KSČ A. Novotného /1951–1967/, inv. č. 193, kart. 146). For documentation of the current state of historic monuments and various accidents (like the collapse of houses on Mírové náměstí [Peace Square]), see the record group of the State Institute for the Preservation of Historic Monuments and Environmental Protection (NA, Státní ústav památkové péče a ochrany přírody – nezpracovaný fond). Despite the impression that is made by some of these documents, there is no reason to assume that the numbers they are based on are irrelevant. Evidence of the state of the buildings is also provided by period photographs. The problem of the total lack of investment in the town is also mentioned earlier, before the decision to eradicate the town, indeed, even before the war.

9 See the chapter 'Everyday Life'.

and eighty years). The state of the historic monuments basically corresponded to the state of the other buildings, though several hundred thousand Czechoslovak crowns (Kčs) had been allocated for their repair in the course of the 1950s.¹⁰

The cause of this poor state of affairs was by no means only the cessation of all investment here in connection with the decision to demolish the town (most of the reports preceded the decision). Nor was it the public thematicization of reflections about this step, which began roughly in the second half of the 1950s. The state of the city was not the result of five, ten, or even fifteen years of intentional neglect. Rather, it was the consequence of half a century of uncertainty about its future. In the period between the two world wars at the latest, politicians, experts, and even members of the general public suspected that the future of the old Most was an open question, whose answer would reflect not necessarily the will of the population of Most, but rather the dynamics of economic development, which in turn stemmed from the needs of the population of the whole country or possibly the aims of those who would profit most from mining the coal.

This economic development, practically continuous from the late nineteenth century onwards, despite all the different economic systems, from liberal capitalism to the centrally controlled state capitalism of the Nazi years to the command-control economy of state socialism, is linked to the second contrast – namely, the contrast between the considerable strategic importance of the town and the interests of industry. This conflict is essentially paradoxical, because Most was of strategic importance to the development of industry. One of the largest towns in the North Bohemian Basin, Most continued to be an important place of settlement of miners and other members of the work force. The coal, from which the strategic

¹⁰ See the newspaper articles 'Statisíce korun na obnovu starého Mostu', *Svobodné slovo*, 2 March 1957, and 'Most dohání zmeškané', *Práce*, 27 October 1957.

importance of the town was ultimately derived, was, nevertheless, also under the town. In an environment where mining and industrial identity gained the upper hand over everything, this simple fact became the decisive argument determining the future of the town.

The transformation of the mining industry and the concomitant power of those whose thinking about the land was determined by the thickness of the coal seam could, up to a certain point in time, lead to an argument for the preservation of Most. The situation changed when it began to seem realistic to quickly build a substitute for old Most. The replacement town would not only provide housing for many more workers than hitherto, but would also have all the functions of an independent city. Particularly in this respect, the situation at the end of the 1950s differed from what it had been before and just after the Second World War, and even somewhat in the Stalinist years. The new reality was not, however, a direct result of the Communist takeover, nor even of the restoration of the Czechoslovak State or the resettlement of what used to be called the Sudetenland. It stems rather from the long growing influence of industrial interests, which in the twentieth century began to be decisive in the formation of the relationship between human beings and the land.

DEMOLITION

The Idea

If we searched the history of the old Most for the critical moment when the mineral wealth to which the town owed both its restoration after the 1515 fire and also its later boom turned against it, we would not get very far. Like most grandiose plans and projects, the idea of extracting the coal from under the town was not long in taking shape. It definitely was not born in 1964, which is often considered the turning point, nor with the start of the socialist dictatorship in 1948 and the concomitant emphasis on heavy industry and raw-material self-sufficiency.



2. Coal, especially in the second half of the nineteenth century, contributed to the development of the town of Most. The wealth generated by mining enabled the building of boulevards and impressive houses. Soukenická ulice (Tuchrahme) in 1905.

Though it is hard to demonstrate this precisely, the awareness of coal under the town very likely had an influence on the architecture and urban development of Most already in the late nineteenth century, and particularly on the inhabitants' growing reluctance to invest in the town. The rich bourgeoisie were therefore building their homes on the slopes of Hněvín, outside the original town boundaries, in places that were safe from possible plans to mine coal. Thus was born the district of Zahražany (Saras, in German). After 1910, it was the only large-scale investment of any real importance in the town. Still in the 1950s, as a whole it constituted about 90 per cent of the houses built here during the Austro-Hungarian Empire.¹¹ At the latest by the outbreak of the Great War, little was being invested in new construction or in the repair and modernization of flats or in public amenities and public utilities. With the development of surface mining, uncertainty grew and the memory of houses falling into mine shafts faded in the face of the ever more likely possibility of 'mining out' (*vyuhlení*) the town as a whole.

That possibility appears immediately in political discussions and particularly in internal plans of the mining companies which after the war were gradually merged into the SHD. Czech society and its politicians were distinctly of two minds about Most at that time. It had been mainly a German town, but from the late nineteenth century onwards was experiencing an influx of Czechs, particularly from the lower social strata. The town, the site of the largest strike in the history of interwar Czechoslovakia, was also a symbol of working-class struggles against oppression and social insecurity.¹²

The press of the period is full of the determination to make Most a living city again and a centre of the mining region. 'Come and see

¹¹ Václav Krejčí, *Most: Zánik historického města, výstavba nového města*, [Ústí nad Labem]: AA 2000, 2000, p. 38.

¹² For more on this, see the 'Alienation' section.

Most today!’ runs a headline in the Communist regional weekly *Sever* (North) in early 1947. After the author of the article describes the atmosphere of destruction right after the war, he or she continues with a picture of a town that has already definitely recovered: ‘The bustle of streets full of pedestrians, cyclists, motor vehicles, at all times of the day and night, illuminated signs above shops, restaurants, and cafés, the merry jingle of the bells of full trams, the ceaseless buzzing of places of the arts, entertainment, and sport – this is the mining town of Most today, after its resurrection [...]’.¹³ The eulogizing tone and the theme of resurrection reveal no doubts about the future existence of the town. Yet in government materials from as early as November 1945, comments appear to the effect that ‘a great part of the town of Most, and also the surrounding villages, are certainly destined for mining within the next five to twenty years,’ and that the town of Most must, with regard to housing for north Bohemian miners, be therefore considered a stopgap.¹⁴

More specific proposals and mainly the persistent pressure on ‘fully extracting the coal pillar under Most’, which in ordinary language meant the demolition of the whole town or at least the greater part of it, first originated at the SHD in the second half of the 1940s and particularly in the 1950s. It was the engineers in the service of the mining company who, regardless of the political takeovers, soon after the war counted on the demolition of not only villages but also the whole town of Most, which would have to yield to their interests.

¹³ ‘Kousek nedávné historie’, *Sever*, 14 January 1947, p. 3.

¹⁴ NA, Archiv Ústředního výboru Komunistické strany Československa (AÚV KSČ), f. 23 (Osídlovací komise), arch. j. 193, stručné poznámky vládního zmocněnce pro účastníky schůze svolané úřadem předsednictva vlády ohledně osídlovací akce na Mostecku a Falknovsku, 22. 11. 1945.

Negotiation

Not until the mid-1950s did the SHD plans for the elimination of old Most, or most of it, run into criticism from the Most Municipal National Committee. Thus, not only in the period of the ‘Third Republic’ (from early May 1945 to late February 1948), but also, indeed mainly, in the period of ‘building socialism’ during the dictatorship of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, the local authorities were faced with the interests of industry, and tried to reach a compromise by eliminating only a smaller, peripheral part of old Most. This attempt at compromise offers remarkable insight into the negotiations amongst key players in the politics and economy of the country in the period of ‘Czechoslovak Stalinism’.

By 1949 at the latest, representatives of the SHD at meetings of the Most Municipal National Committee openly declared their interest in mining on the territory of the old town centre. The representatives of the Most Municipal National Committee reacted quite angrily. The dispute came to head in 1951, when the representatives turned to the district and regional committees, demanding a decision on whether ‘coal will be mined under Most and thus also whether the whole town will be moved southwards and south-eastwards’, or ‘whether coal will be mined only in part of the town, to be determined by the “Baseline Plan for the City of Most” [Směrný plán města Most], that is, to Stalinova třída [Stalin Avenue]’. The municipal national committee and the district national committee were unequivocally against the SHD plan, which at that time consisted in, first of all, the beginning of surface mining, which would separate the Podžatecká housing estate (then under construction) from old Most, followed by the demolition of the old city core. In addition to the ‘incalculable consequences’, which, according to a letter from the Municipal National Committee to the North Bohemian National Committee, would be manifested in the health and hygiene of the population, the chairman of the Municipal National Committee,

Václav Bubák (a brother of one of the miners shot dead during the general strike in 1920, who was from a mining family that had settled in Kopisty [Kopitz, in German], in the Most district, before the First World War), described the whole plan as unacceptable also in view of the high demand for housing for the work force, which, after all, the mining company needed. The SHD plan was thus described, in the event that it were implemented, as an ‘absolutely disastrous intervention in the development of the town today and in the future’, adding that ‘from the standpoint of the Most Municipal National Committee and of urban planning, one cannot accept this act’. Even the historic value of the town was brought in as an additional argument: ‘this regional centre has historically valuable buildings from various style periods, which are today irreplaceable and in themselves constitute a characteristic whole of medieval origin’.¹⁵ According to research from that period, moreover, it seems that most of the population of old Most at that time tended to be critical of the possible destruction of the town or were at least highly sceptical about it, yet not because of the historic value of the town but because there were still no examples of an existing housing estate that could provide the thousands of people of old Most with a decent place to live. This attitude to the grandiose, complex plan would not begin to change until the second half of the 1950s.¹⁶

Though it discussed the matter, the North Bohemian National Committee, the available records suggest, came to no definite decision. At the meeting, representatives of the North Bohemian National Committee and the Most District National Committee gave presentations with neutral conclusions, for instance, that it was

¹⁵ Státní okresní archiv (SOKA) Most, f. ONV II, inv. č. 858, ev. j. 317, Budoucí vývoj města Mostu vzhledem k plánovanému těžení uhlí SHD v prostoru Most. Dopis MěNV adresovaný plánovacímu referátu KNV Ústí nad Labem, 22. dubna 1951.

¹⁶ Státní oblastní archiv (SOA) Litoměřice, f. 668 (SKNV), kart. 598, inv. č. 123, Důvodová zpráva o uvolnění uhelné substance v ochranném piliři města Mostu, o výstavbě nového Mostu a dalších náhradních investic, pp. 13–14.

necessary to mine coal as part of raising the standard of living, and to decide on the concrete approach, but with the community as the main planner. The local government of the town and also the inhabitants thus had to wait in uncertainty. The local political authorities nevertheless had so far, in what is generally called the Stalinist period, to resist much more powerful actors, including the SHD. This was especially true because old Most so far had at its disposal substantial, if poor-quality, housing for thousands of miners and other workers. It had a functional city centre with a transport infrastructure, the necessary services, and cultural institutions.

It began to be clear to the managers of the SHD, and indeed to the whole economics and technology lobby, that if their efforts were to succeed (that is, if they were to get to those millions of tonnes of brown coal under old Most), it would be necessary to come up with a more sophisticated strategy. Among the necessary steps, they would offer (in collaboration with urban planners and architects) a complex solution to the problem and seek gradually to persuade the central Party institutions in particular of the inevitability of the whole operation and its benefits. That meant winning the support of a considerably wide range of influential actors, from experts in various fields to representatives of political power. The development of the Czechoslovak economy, the technological capabilities, and the *Sinnwelt* of that period nevertheless played into the hands of the engineers and officials of this mining enterprise. By the late 1950s and early 1960s, no obstacle stood in the way of their ambitions.

In the mid-1950s, with de-Stalinization and generational change, new people were hired in a number of enterprises or were elected to national committees and other political bodies. Revolution ceased to be the key concept of the times and a number of politicians and experts began instead to put emphasis on economic performance and efficiency. Consequently, there was of course greater pressure on extracting more raw materials and making the process more efficient. This, in turn was projected in thinking about the future of old

Most. Already in March 1954, the district planning committee divided the town in two, and each part was to have a completely different future. The committee was at that time already anticipating that the ‘old town of Most, lying on a coal seam [...] should be completely or mostly mined out (*vydolováno*)’.¹⁷ Although the Regional Planning Guidance of 1955 noted that it was ‘necessary to weigh up the economic and technical possibilities of preserving the historic core [...], mainly because of its heritage and cultural values,’ it still counted on the ‘gradual demolition of the greater part of the old town in the interest of the indispensable mining of coal’.¹⁸

Only a couple of months later, towards the end of 1956, a general regional plan for the larger area (called a *generel*) of the North Bohemian Basin foresaw the ‘extraction of the protective barrier pillar of coal under the town of Most’ and the use of the resulting ‘mined-out area’ for spoil tips of the advancing pit.¹⁹ The general plan, however, was influenced considerably by the management and engineering elite of the SHD mining company, which at that time no longer accepted any alternative to the complete elimination, that is, the mining out (*vyrubání* or *vyuhlení*) of the old town.

The fate of old Most was jointly decided by a wide variety of actors, ranging from the Municipal National Committee and the District National Committee to the SHD to the central bodies of the Communist Party and the Government. Indeed, it was the Government, the central institution, which was still trying, even in the second half of the 1950s, to prevent the destruction of the town, particularly its historic core. On the basis of the Government’s efforts, at least to

¹⁷ SOkA Most, f. ONV II, inv. č. 858, ev. j. 317, Charakteristika města Mostu (OPK), 3. března 1954.

¹⁸ SOkA Most, f. ONV II, inv. č. 736, ev. j. 286, Technickohospodářské směrnice pro zpracování územních projektů města Mostu – podrobné rozvedení hlavních zásad (30. červen 1955), p. 21.

¹⁹ SOkA Most, f. ONV II, inv. č. 352, ev. j. 112, Generel SHR na léta 1957–1970, 1956/1957, p. 6.

stall the whole process,²⁰ the Most Municipal National Committee, for example in 1957, decided on a number of repairs to historic buildings and the re-landscaping of public areas of old Most. This entailed investment of about one million crowns to restore an area that, on the basis not only of the ideas of SHD engineers but also of expertly elaborated and binding plans, was in a few years to yield to mining.²¹

The political representatives of the town and of the district nevertheless acceded to the SHD plans because, among other things, the continuing provisional status (that is, of the town that was about to be literally undermined) put them in an extremely difficult position. The disproportion amongst the various ideas about the future of the town was reflected in the diverging plans of the architects, the municipal, district, and regional national committees, and the mining company. In such a situation it was practically impossible to govern the old town rationally. At the same time, however, it was difficult to determine the desirable size and form of the new town. The declared aim of building a town for between 90,000 and 100,000 people would no longer make sense if old Most were not destined for destruction. At a time of a rapidly rising demand for energy and, consequently, for coal, it was unlikely that the decision to rescue the whole town of old Most would be the desired solution. The situation thus irreversibly developed towards a decision, the germ of which had been present from the beginning of coal mining in the Most district – namely, to extract the coal under the town and, in order to achieve that, to demolish it first.

A decision of this scale and consequence naturally required official agreement and concrete steps to be taken by the Czechoslovak

20 On the basis of Government Decision No. 142, of 6 February 1957, the territory of old Most was to be partly mined, but in two stages, with the demolition of part of the historic town to be done only in about 1975.

21 For more on this topic, see 'Statistice korun na obnovu starého Mostu', *Svobodné slovo*, 2 March 1957, and 'Nová tepna severočeské hnědouhelné pánve', *Lidová demokracie*, 4 April 1957.

Government. But the Government, even at the start of the 1960s, was reluctant to take such a step, probably because it feared the foreign-policy consequences.²² The preparations for the elimination of the historic town, which had a population at that time of 15,000, were thus made with no legal basis that would have allowed the operation to be carried out. But amongst the main power holders in the region at that time there was already a consensus on the elimination of the town, in particular between the SHD mining company, the local and regional Party bodies, the municipal and district national committees, and ultimately even the Government (which, though it had not yet attended to it legislatively, had taken a number of steps that enabled the project to get under way).

This shift and the consensus did not, however, mean an end to disputes. The main division was now between, in particular, the representatives of the Most Municipal National Committee, trying for the smoothest possible course for the whole gigantic undertaking and the most architecturally imposing new town possible, and, on the other side, the leading officials of the SHD mining company, primarily concerned to achieve the quickest possible extraction of tonnes of 'high-quality' coal from under the old town. The Municipal National Committee repeatedly criticized the continuously changing plans of the SHD and the fact that the SHD was repeatedly presenting the town and the district with a *fait accompli*. The regional plan of 1961, which did not correspond to the current aims and hypotheses of mining, also turned out to be confusing. The members of the Municipal National Committee, furthermore, criticized the necessity of building new Most on the basis of the regional plan as a city for 100,000 people for whom the delimited area was not sufficiently large.²³ Even at the end of 1961 there were still fears at the mining company that

²² For example, the position of the country in UNESCO, of which Czechoslovakia was a founding member in 1945. For more on this, see Krejčí, *Most*, p. 83.

²³ SOKA Most, f. ONV II, inv. č. 781, ev. j. 03, Zpráva o současné situaci ve výstavbě nového Mostu vzhledem k širším souvislostem podle předběžných návrhů rajonu SHP, 21. listopadu 1961.

the whole project would be stopped, as in 1957 when the Government came out against the hasty, overall demolition of old Most.

This time, however, the fears were not justified. The disputes were no longer about the existence or non-existence of historic Most, but only about the timing and way it would be demolished. The idea to eliminate old Most in the interest of mining would thus, on the threshold of the most liberal period of Czechoslovak state socialism, the 1960s, go from being a foggy alternative to be carried out at some future date, or an engineering vision, to being a real agenda of political and economic planning. From that point onwards, we can trace how the major actors of regional and state-wide politics related to the idea of demolition and how, considering the broad consensus, attention was shifted from whether it made sense at all to the technicalities linked with carrying it out as efficiently as possible.

This new chapter of the story is introduced by a few events that preceded the government decision on the elimination of old Most and the construction of the new town. They were to include the mining of the coal from under the town into the long-term plan of the fuel sector for the years 1960 to 1980, the elaboration of the plan to demolish old Most, the central Party bodies' discussion and approval of the gigantic project to 'move' the town, and the concurrent creation of the Government Commission for the Coordination and Oversight of the Demolition of Old Most and the Construction of New Most (Vládní komise pro koordinaci a kontrolu postupu při likvidaci starého Mostu a výstavbě nového Mostu).²⁴ To reverse these steps, which had been prepared by experts and were of considerable political consequence, was hardly possible. None the less, events of the following years provide extremely interesting testimony about the dynamics of the *Sinnwelt* of state socialism and, to some extent, also of Europe in general in the 1960s and 1970s.

²⁴ Established by Government Resolution No. 1115 of 28 November 1962.

Organization

The moment that the decision about the demolition of Most went from being a question of the existence or non-existence of the old town to being merely a technical task is generally considered to be when the Government took the relevant decision in March 1964. Nevertheless, the fate of the town had actually already been decided between 1960 and 1962. This is not merely a matter of chronology. An apparent detail, it illustrates the opaque, chaotic manner of taking decisions on fundamental questions in socialist Czechoslovakia with its two decision-making hierarchies, that of the Party and that of the State.

The demolition of old Most was not ordered by the people of Czechoslovakia, the political headquarters of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, or the Czechoslovak Government. The Party and State bodies had no general knowledge of the logic of surface mining and they of course had to rely on information and proposals from the SHD mining company. The SHD in 1959–60, in the documentary materials for the general plan for the development of the fuel sector up to 1980, which was drawn up by the Ministry of Fuel and Power, presented the mining of the coal pillar under old Most as an indispensable part of the subsequent process. The planned SHD approach was incorporated into the overall conception of the next step for the mining,²⁵ and thus once and for all became the planned, binding reality. But because it entailed the demolition of the historic town, the moving of thousands of people, and a whole series of extraordinary investments, this step obviously required a political decision.

During 1961, regional planners discussed, concurrently and to some extent independently of each other, documents related to three broad

25 NA, f. 955 (Ministerstvo paliv a energetiky III, 1960–1963), kart. 189, inv. č. 249, Výpis základních ukazatelů generální perspektivy rozvoje do r. 1980; Návrh rozvoje SHR – Most, 28. 10. 1960.

areas: the North Bohemian Basin, the new Most, and the demolition plan for old Most. All three documents start from the same long-term perspective of mining all the coal under old Most, even though this prospect did not yet have the political backing of the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party or the Government. The key role in debating the district plan was played by the North Bohemian National Committee, based in the town of Ústí nad Labem. The actual form of the plan in the Most district was strongly shaped by the district national committee and other district institutions.²⁶ The plans for the construction of the new Most, which started from the fact that the old town would be gradually demolished, were mostly a matter for the municipal and the district national committees, and in part also for the district and the municipal committees of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, as well as a number of other institutions at the city and district levels.

It is reasonable to see 13 May 1961 as the fateful date. On that day, with the consent of the North Bohemian National Committee and other bodies, the deputy director of the SHD, Josef Hojdar (1919–2000), sent a letter to the head of the Ležáky Mine, Karel Šamberger:

Dear Comrade,

Considering the intentions of the long-term hypothesis about the development of the North Bohemian Mining District (Severočeský hnědouhelný revír – SHR) and in connection with it and the mining plans for the pillar under the town of Most I enjoin you to ensure at your state enterprise the elaboration of the demolition plan for the old Most by the end of 1961. Because this is a problem without precedent in our country or even abroad, consent was given, at the proposal of the Regional National Committee, to the State Planning Committee

26 SOkA Most, f. 207 (ONV Most II 1960–1975), inv. č. 781, ev. j. 294, Schůze Rady Severočeského KNV a materiály Odboru výstavby SKNV.

for the State Institute of Regional Planning (Státní ústav rajónového plánování) also to participate in the elaboration of the demolition plan, especially concerning the replacement construction [of the new Most] and the political and economic conclusions. I enjoin you at the same time therefore, in the spirit of the effective agreement between the Regional National Committee and the State Planning Committee, to get in touch with the State Institute of Regional Planning and order the work. I ask you to inform me by the end of June about the measures you have taken to guarantee [the carrying out of] the task.

With comradely greetings,

Hojdar²⁷

In the spring of 1961, the mining engineers and economists of the SHD then set to work on the now specific steps for the ‘mining out’ of the area of the old town and thus for its demolition in the interest of economic development. In the first phase, in May and June 1961, they elaborated a long report laying out the reasons for the elimination of Most.²⁸ This became the basis for the key plan for the demolition of the town.²⁹ And, following a decision of the SHD management, members of several SHD committees began to work on the plan before a political decision was taken. The Regional National Committee and the SHD therefore also prepared background materials both for the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party (the supreme Party body) and for the Government for a government resolution.

27 SOkA Most, f. 207 (ONV Most II 1960–1975), inv. č. 781, ev. j. 294, Korespondence odboru výstavby KNV a Sdružení SHR.

28 SOA Litoměřice (pracoviště Most), f. SHD – generální ředitelství, spis 440 (Investice: likvidace starého a dostavba nového Mostu, přesun kostela), kart. 1, Důvodová zpráva k záměru na rubání zásob v ochranném pilíři města Mostu a přidružené materiály, červen 1961.

29 For the arguments for the elimination of old Most used in the accompanying report and in the demolition plan, see the chapter ‘The Destruction of the City as an Investment Plan’ in the ‘Numbers’ section.

At the June meeting of the development department of the SHD a timetable of the individual steps was drawn up, containing not only the elaboration of the demolition plan and other background materials for superior bodies, but also a suitable date, from the point of view of the mining company, for the anticipated approval of the plan – that is, by 30 June 1962.³⁰

Not until 1962 did important political actors at government ministries responsible for mining and construction, together with officials of the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, begin to deal more systematically with the plan. In keeping with the general plan of the fuel sector and with their own continuous urgings that coal mining had to be increased and made more efficient, and also under the pressure of circumstances and the decisions already taken at the regional, district and enterprise levels, decisions were made in an attempt to put an end to the longstanding uncertainty about the demolition of the old town of Most and the form of the new town once and for all in favour of mining. It took a few more months before the Government and the Party took their final decision. In 1962 (within the period originally set by the SHD as suitable for the final approval of mining) the North Bohemian National Committee requested the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Party to take a binding position on the matter.³¹ Though it was not a rule, the members of the Politburo who had been assigned the matter sought to ensure the prior agreement of other Party bodies and the state authorities. A consensus was thus prepared to ensure that none of the powerful political players would attack the resulting decision and again threaten the principal aim of the operation, that is, the extraction of all the coal from under Most.

30 SOKa Most, f. 207 (ONV Most II 1960–1975), inv. č. 781, ev. j. 294, Záznam z porady konané dne 6. 6. 1961 v odboru vývoje SHD.

31 SOA Litoměřice, f. 668 (SKNV Ústí nad Labem), inv. č. 2, k. 9.

The final decision (or rather the approval of the operation that was already under way) was thus taken by representatives of a few departments of the Central Committee of the Party (including planning, construction, finance, energy, and transportation), experts from the State Planning Committee, and representatives of the individual ministries and the Presidium of the Government. The final decision of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Party, Resolution No. 215, of 2 October 1962, thus essentially substituted for the still non-existent government decision – it expressed consent with the beginning of the preparatory work for the demolition of the old parts of Most and bound individual members of the Government (Prime Minister Viliam Široký, and the ministers Alois Indra, Lux, and Oldřich Černík) to specific steps, in particular, to appoint a coordinating committee, to prepare the government measures, and to ensure the elaboration of the demolition plan.³²

After long debates amongst the representatives of the ministries in Prague, of the Regional National Committee, and of the mining company, which took place concurrently with the internal-Party approval of the plan to demolish Most, the Czechoslovak Government, on 28 November 1962, appointed the Government Commission for the Coordination and Oversight of the Demolition of Old Most and the Construction of New Most'. In the Commission statutes, the Government expressly refers to the Party Central Committee resolution of 2 October 1962, thus, at least formally, conceding the primacy of the Party in an area that should in normal circumstances be legislatively attended to (that is, decided on by the legislative or executive body of government).³³ The Commission was meant to coordinate the creation of the plan for the demolition of old Most

32 NA, f. 1261/0/11 (Politické byro ÚV KSČ), arch. j. 458, sv. 365, Usnesení 213. schůze politického byra ÚV KSČ ze dne 2. října 1962.

33 NA, fond Úřad předsednictva vlády (dále ÚPV) – běžná spisovna (nezprac.), kart. 165, sign. 356/1/12, Statut vládní komise pro koordinaci a kontrolu postupu při likvidaci starého Mostu a výstavbě nového Mostu.

and assess it. It was also supposed to oversee the timely building of replacement housing for the population of the old town and the smooth moving of the inhabitants and also of the industrial plants, 'without disrupting production and in harmony with the needs of the workers'. The statutes also expressly mention that the Commission would oversee the thorough 'discussion of the demolition plans with the inhabitants'. It also points out that the Commission was not taking the place of the central bodies or national committees, which were fully responsible for carrying out their tasks in connection with the demolition of the old town and the construction of the new one.³⁴

Though the first chairman of the Commission, which was supposed to coordinate, for perhaps the next two decades, the moving of several thousand people, the demolition of their former homes, and, mainly, the creation of a respectable new environment for their future lives, was the minister of construction, Josef Korčák (1921–2008), a few months later Josef Odvárka (1920–?), the minister of fuel and power took over as head of the Commission and would lead it for a long time to come. This 'detail' about who would be in charge of the Commission was hardly the result of random events – internal debates³⁵ were held about who would occupy this post endowed with considerable power and the result speaks volumes about the power relations amongst the individual departments and ministries and their briefs. The ten to fifteen members of the Commission usually included several ministers, deputy ministers, high-ranking members of the North Bohemian National Committee, the district, the City of Most, and the SHD mining company. Among them was Oldřich Černík, a future prime minister (1968–69). One of the members of the Commission who was also appointed at this time was the then little-known head of the Central Office

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

for National Committee Affairs, Miloš Jakeš (b.1922, who would, in 1987, become the last general secretary of the Communist Party while it was in power). He was, however, dismissed during the winter of 1963, when the office he represented on the Commission was abolished.³⁶

The plan for the demolition of old Most lay down two fundamental principles for the process of moving and demolition. The first stemmed from the necessity to build a new infrastructure and an arterial road linking Most with other large towns in the Ore Mountains. For that reason the SHD was first meant to mine the coal from under the part of old Most adjacent to Hněvín Hill, so that the utility corridor could be built there. The inhabitants of this part of town were supposed to move to new housing by 1967, when demolition was to begin. The second principle was the necessity to leave the centre of the old town standing as long as possible. But this was not a matter of hesitating about whether actually to save the historic monuments; rather, it had to do with the fact that in this part of town institutions and services were still operating and were used by the inhabitants of both the old and the new Most. Consequently, demolition did not begin here until the second phase, in the early 1970s.³⁷

Though the demolition plan did not deal with certain details (like the exact timing of the demolition of individual buildings), it did present a number of specific problems that required solving, ranging from the buying up of real estate that was still privately owned to finding replacements for the individual places of business, services, and shops to, for example, 'moving' the cemetery. The authors of the plan dealt with the cemetery as a technical task of the same magnitude as dealing with the rubble from the demolitions or the diversion of the River Bílina.

36 NA, fond ÚPV – běžná spisovna (nezprac.), kart. 165, sign. 356/1/12, Dopis předsedy vlády V. Širokého ministru paliv a energetiky J. Odvárkovi, 15. ledna 1963.

37 NA, f. 960 (Ministerstvo paliv III), inv. č. 430, sv. 419, Most – likvidační záměr, červen 1963.



3. Intentionally neglected and dilapidated, the town of Most in the 1960s. The photo is dominated by the Piarist church (originally the Church of the Order of St Mary Magdalene) on the third square (Šmeralovo náměstí).

The awaited government resolution was finally issued almost a year and a half after the Politburo decision. It was so far the only official document about the decision to demolish old Most in order to mine coal, at least at the state-wide level. In other words, it was at a time when dozens of experts and politicians at ministries in Prague, bureaucrats of the regional, district, and municipal national committees, and several departments of the SHD had already been systematically working on the elimination of the old town for more than a year. Government Resolution No. 180, of 25 March 1964, on the completion of the construction of new Most and the

demolition of the old town, is thus essentially the expression of the Government's consent to a project that was already under way. The government resolution remarks that 'the housing in the old part of Most is superannuated and dilapidated', which, without costly repairs, would anyway soon make the town uninhabitable, that the 'freeing-up of the Most pillar for mining' would make it possible to obtain a hundred million tonnes of high-quality coal, and that the 'use of the freed-up space for a spoil tip' would markedly improve the spoil management of the open-pit mine called Ležáky.

Work on the new Most as a single planned city was to continue, and 'life would be transferred' there, the document states, from the old town. For the inhabitants of old Most, the government resolution – besides the statement that the Government, too, considered desirable what had been prepared for several years now – casts light on the years that were to follow. The moving of the inhabitants from the old town to the new was, like the systematic demolition, thus meant to begin in 1965. At least some people would, consequently, have to leave their homes in less than a year. Mining was meant to begin two years later.³⁸

The idea to build a complex modern city a stone's throw from old Most emerged shortly after the Czechoslovak Government had, in 1957, indefinitely postponed the plan for the complete demolition of old Most. In other words, this was not only long before the formal government resolution, but even before the decisive Politburo resolution and the elaboration of the crucial demolition plan of the SHD. Who, then, was behind that plan? Who pushed it through and in what form?

No matter what the future of old Most was meant to be, one thing was certain already by the 1950s: the overpopulated and dilapidated old town would in future definitely not hold more people than had hitherto lived there. Yet mining and other related industries would

38 SOA Litoměřice, f. 668 (SKNV Ústí nad Labem), kart. 9, inv. č. 2.

need more and more workers and it was Most that, for various reasons, was meant to be the main centre of the North Bohemian Basin, the place where these newcomers, mostly miners and industrial workers, were to find a home and have their needs met. Still in the first half of the 1950s, Most was growing quite unsystematically, and now, in the late 1950s, that was meant to be stopped. The hitherto adding of housing estates to the historic town certainly did not correspond to the socialist State's demands for an emphasis on rational planning. People at all levels of government were aware of that. In the summer of 1958, a conference of the Most municipal, district, and regional national committees, together with planners and other experts, resulted in a straightforward conception:³⁹ the new Most would be a modern, rationally organized city with a suitable centre offering services for 100,000 people.

And, even in the conditions of state socialism, the relevant bodies admitted that 'this complicated, demanding task for urban planners can be solved only with a study obtained in a competition'. Its general terms and conditions on the course and requirements for the future centre of modern Most were, however, set by the North Bohemian National Committee, which had at its disposal the relevant experts in spatial planning. According to the official rules, specific teams or individuals (ultimately eight architectural practices from Ústí nad Labem, Prague, and Bratislava, the capital of Slovakia) were to be invited to the competition, which was to be held in two rounds.⁴⁰ On the commission to select the winning proposal sat well-established architects from throughout Czechoslovakia and representatives of the national committees of the town, district, and region.

In early January 1959, the architect Václav Krejčí (b.1928) received a telephone call from Jiří Porš, a member of the department

39 The conference is mentioned in the *Usnesení schůze ONV Most z 22. 8. 1958*, in SOKA Most, f. 207 (ONV Most II, 1960–1975), inv. č. 244, ev. j. 48.

40 SOKA Most, f. ONV I (1945–1960), inv. č. 56, sign. 127.3, kart. 4, Program výstavby na zpracování podrobného územního plánu Středu nového Mostu, odůvodnění, 7. 6. 1960.

of spatial planning at the North Bohemian National Committee in Ústí nad Labem. To his surprise, Krejčí, who was just then working on the spatial plan of Litvínov, the second largest town of the Most district, was told by Porš that if he were interested, he should choose people to work with and within three days enter the competition for the design of the centre of a brand new town. Krejčí accepted the offer without hesitation and approached his colleague Jaromír Vejl.⁴¹ Though he was not a Party member and was clearly not as established as some of his fellow competitors, Krejčí won the competition. Thereby began, five years before the official decision to demolish the historic town, the history of the new Most – no longer only as a makeshift housing settlement, but as compact city built on the basis of complex considerations and a comprehensive urban plan. We shall return to this story later⁴² – but it was important to mention here the architectural competition for the new Most as a whole, mainly because it opened the door not only to the construction of the new town, but also to the complete demolition of the old town. In a situation where replacement buildings were still in short supply and, except in the old centre, there was no infrastructure, the demolition of the old town would have been unthinkable if it had only meant worsening the social circumstances of the town's inhabitants, that is, the workers, most of whom were miners.

The large-scale plans for the gradual demolition of the old town, in which the town is divided into zones to be wiped off the face of the earth, look more like battle maps. They show the front lines (the coalface), the direction of their advance, the dates of the planned evacuation of the population and of the 'capture' of the territory.⁴³

⁴¹ Krejčí, *Most*, pp. 20–21.

⁴² See the chapter 'City of Roses' in the 'Utopia' section.

⁴³ See SOkA Most, f. 207 (ONV Most II, 1960–1975), inv. č. 777, ev. j. 291, Postup skryvky lomu Most (mapa, 1972); SOkA Most, f. 207 (ONV Most II, 1960–1975) – odbor výstavby, arch. j. 92, Studie dokončení likvidace Starého Mostu (plán, 1971); SOkA Most, f. 130 (MěNV Most), inv. č. 864, Vyklizování objektů ve starém Mostě pro postup Lomu Most (1976–1984).

The advance of the demolition depended on three factors: the needs of the mining company (that is, uninterrupted extraction), the tempo of building the 'replacement' housing (particularly the ability of the new Most to receive the displaced inhabitants of old Most, which depended on the number of completed flats for the new tenants) and the efficient organization of the legal and other steps (the purchase of real estate, the moving of the people and institutions). It was a task of dimensions no European state or industrial enterprise had ever been faced with in peace time. The old town, which was still inhabited by more than 15,000 people, could boast five churches and a number of other late Gothic and Renaissance buildings, and it had one of the best known theatres in north Bohemia, an important district hospital, another fifty buildings used by the health and welfare services, a spa, twenty office buildings occupied by important municipal and district institutions, twelve schools, fifteen restaurants, four hotels, 240 shops, 630 offices, seven industrial plants, a railway station, and more than 6,500 flats.⁴⁴

The moving and demolition commenced according to plan at the beginning of 1965. The first task was mining out the space where the utility corridor was to be located. This included all the infrastructure and motor and rail transport that was meant to link the new Most with the rest of the Ore Mountains, in particular the town of Chomutov about 23 kilometres to the west and Bílina about 15 kilometres to the north-east, and Teplice another 14.4 kilometres north of there. In the direction of Chomutov, the corridor was meant to run along the foot of Hněvín Hill, that is, through a still built-up area of the old town, which was therefore, in the sequence of the individual steps of the project, the first that needed to be demolished. And, in 1965, it was here that demolition began, from the foot of Hněvín to

⁴⁴ SOA Litoměřice, f. 668 (SKNV), kart. 598, inv. č. 123, Důvodová zpráva o uvolnění uhelné substance v ochranném pilíři města Mostu, o výstavbě nového Mostu a dalších náhradních investic, pp. 5–6.