

My wanderings through the North Bohemian Region

Sometimes it happens that fate stumbles you wherever you don't even want and need will lead you to places you never wanted to visit. It's been exactly a year today, since I started living in an insignificant North Bohemian town at the foot of the Central Mountain Ridge of Bohemia (České středohoří). The town does not stand out, it has no monuments or important natives. When its Catholic priest was murdered there a few years ago, the town donated to him huge bronze board with bust, no doubt happy that after some sixty years could find itself in newspapers; I reckon the last previous time it was there in 1938, when the demarcation line for secession of Sudetenland was being debated and written about.

Where is a parish priest, there must be a church, and church there is really, even four of them: An enormous catholic one probably gothic-or-something-after-that huge barn-like building, unformed, almost without windows, with several baroque altars inside and quite dignified interior furnishings; and - of course - also a new parish priest who is – as quite too many in the Diocese of Litoměřice - from Poland and his ability to communicate with anyone outside of vestry (meaning metonymically) is zero (and I don't mean just his pure language skills). Never I saw him in a store, in the street, at any public event. That can be enough to sketch his portray.

Then here's a large evangelical church with a pointed tower. Undoubtedly it used to be German Lutheran church, so it hasn't been used since the war. But compared to many similar churches here in the north at least there is no danger of devastation - it houses the city museum, which is said to present mainly grenades. They continue to be even industrially mined at the time from one hill just outside the city, which means that the hill up to now has been already half mined off and it looks like a hollowed-out tooth. I wrote "is said to", because to me in this case, autopsy is missing: I am in principle against visiting houses of God transformed into museums. (I guess I have been instigated against them by the former Soviet "muzeji atěizma"). Only a little further opposite it is one of the only two nice or remarkable things in T. – a dadaist art nouveau house, undoubtedly influenced by popular art imagination. The other building is a baroque chapel at the crossroads near the old cemetery, in fact only a few doors apart from my residence. It has beautifully measured, rather early baroque proportions, slightly but gracefully deforming its basic rectangular morphology.

And then there is home of the evangelical congregation, where the turnout is rather good and a it makes a relatively vivid human gathering, But it's terribly tucked away – I was looking for it myself for about a month. It's on such backed out corner together with the firehouse and now demolished Sokol gym, which is an excellent place to park trucks and

collect all sorts of waste. The building itself is already at places bursting but – it has an apsis!

The town has a fairly decent “civil equipment”. Four pubs are contravening four churches – true, only one in which meals are served and sometimes even apt to be eaten. One of them after the smoking ban voluntarily closed and converted into “publicly inaccessible club.” There are two Vietnamese vendors: the better one is closing and moving now, the dirtier one is going to remain. Then a bakery manufacture with shop – whose products are not worth much, but it's nice when in the evenings baking smells draw through the village. Then a chemistry, a post office, a (large and good) hardware store, a small electro, a pharmacy(!), florist's (!) and a butchery, which is only open for a few days in the week.

A river flows through the town, but it's rather a stream with a ghastly name, at the source of which a few miles above the town I have been. There's a baroque chapel there and once they even held pilgrimages there! It wouldn't be an ugly place if it weren't currently considered a “water source” and as such surrounded by all sorts of fences and dams, although it practically has no effect – see below.

Town residents, unless they work in factories, which there are really many in the vicinity enriching our optical, olfactory and taste (water can not be drunk due to the cement nearby works) perception, and do not commute there, being equipped for that purpose by their cars, a bus stop and roaring motorcycles, starting already from five in the morning, deal mainly with gardening and agriculture. Scenes can be seen here which you don't see elsewhere: For example the whole family stuffed on the “lizard” runabout (this is a garden tractor with only three wheels controllable merely by a pair of rods that deflect the whole engine connected firmly with the front wheel), the head of the family sitting proudly at the handlebars, behind him on the hull his better half with an extra of a child or dog. And it's all going with a huge rumble and fifteen mph speed up to Košťál hill.

Košťál (the Cabbage stalk) is beautiful. A typical steep basalt cone the like of which there are many in Středohoří, but crowned with a fairly well preserved castle, where anyone is free to climb, who can manage his or her legs and breath (me so far so) and can scramble anywhere where he or she has the courage to go. In addition, there are various steep ravines and stone formations below, which resemble now a couple of people or trees, now a shepherd or a devil. I'd like to explore them too, but it would mean to have good shoes and someone to take me back down after the climb. A nice belt of large gardens stretches underneath it, often equipped with a cottage or homestead. Some are beautifully decayed with orchards romantically devastated, but at others you would probably like to live more than down in the village, however the ones in lower position must suffer from the noise from the sub-motorway, which separates

them together with Košťál from the town. It can be overcome only in two places: through one fairly long tunnel and then near the picturesque upper railway station.

With the railway it is in T. as follows: the town lies on the so-called *Švesková dráha* (*Plum track*), i.e. route Lovosice – Čížkovice – Obrnice – Most, which met the better fate than her foothill colleague *Kozí dráha* (*Goat's career*: Děčín – Oldřichov near Duchcov; I knew its deplorable state during a trip to Krupka, see below), because it was bought by a company that has a lot to do with the railways and railways business and it has refined it into an amazing state. Neither mass demolition of picturesque old buildings nor the aesthetic devastation has taken place, which the state ruled agency SŽDC has got so notorious of in its "European standards based modernizations", although even here something had to be torn down. But the tracks are as clean as a new pin, glowing with white gravel, the three intermediate stations on the route (one of them is the lower station in T.), where meeting of trains may be in view, are amazingly equipped with automatically positioned switches and light signals for all tracks (!), moreover, there is also a small information panel on the platform (well, is there such for instance in Litoměřice?), which accurately shows the next train, even with the date, because if you come to the station on Monday, you have to wait for the train five days. – The region have not subsidized public transport here, so there are only three pairs of services at weekends.

And the railway comes in handy as connection with the region I've promised to describe, instead of which I'm constantly wagging myself up burrowing in this uninteresting town. The rail connection is definitely more pleasant than local green buses, which on one hand go usually punctually on time, and if you see to be at home until seven, also relatively often, but also will leave exactly for a minute and let you down, although your – only slightly – delayed train is already entering the station. What's more, to endure in them anything above the minimum distance of 7 km to Lovosice is a terrifying gamble to your inner organism; and the whole route to Most can be compared to martyrdom of ancient Christians. So let's rush and fly on the rails of the diesel car – wroom and zoom – to the wildest region in the country.

For those who might also wish to fly, and not just between lines of this report, I note that the diesel car departs not from T., but of course from Lovosice, which is a small railway junction on the ancient (1850) Prague-Dresden railway (later Prague-Podmokly, now Prague - Děčín – Bad Schandau). From Prague to Lovosice it is a quite boring way, if we do not count canyon of the lower Vltava River (but this is still completely in the Prague region), Říp and Roudnice. Nor those, even though they are also nominally in the North Bohemian Region, I count. Roudnice is an amazing town full of cultural events, but by no way north-Bohemian. (It belongs to Prague also ecclesiastically and not under very close Litoměřice.) But beyond Lovosice, the train route passes to Ústí through a wonderfully picturesque gorge called proudly Porta Bohemica and even Ústí itself is

quite nice situated. It's a little worse after it, where the devastation of Sudeten borderland country starts to be seen. In this direction, however, my paths have not yet been aimed, but towards the other end of the diesel car track, to Most and beyond, where you find the real northern Bohemia – the region of power plants, mines, dumps, vagueness and desolation. All these attributes of the landscape will be seen, too, if we climb one from the high hills of the Středohoří, or we get to the end of it.

My the description of this region will be fragmentary, because I have not yet tramped nor voyaged it in whole and seen everything I wanted. Still, a certain overall picture starts appear to me which I'd like to present here first. **So**

North Bohemia –

- the landscape

Practically all North Bohemia lies between two mountain ranges (which also undoubtedly belong to it): Between the picturesque and characteristic **České středohoří**, which, however, is not everywhere a continuous mountain ridge; it looks like that only from apart, if we come closer or directly immerge in it, we see that it's composed of more or less densely scattered steep basalt volcanic hills and between them there are still quite many "passages" where it is possible to pass through the ridge without making any considerable climb; and between the long stretching Krušné hory (Ore Mountains), which as a whole are much less picturesque and so far also outside my action range. Both of these belts are almost always well to see from the North Bohemian Basin, because the area between them is not very wide. On the west, however, it expands wider, as the basalt hills of the Central Mountains gradually disappear, and opens to Poohří, which is actually kind of a forgotten district; it looks like the large Elbe flat without the Elbe; it's almost an absolute plane with villages, towns and small towns, where nothing happens, and I reckon they are probably quite similar to T. Further west, the Doupov Mountains rise and the wrinkled landscape of Střela valley; but they are already different regions, not only nominally (Karlovarský and Plzeňský) but also factually, because they really belong to the truly abandoned Sudetenland.

The landscape in North Bohemia itself is strange, as a matter of fact it doesn't exist; it misses the common structures we're used to. Normally, the simplest landscape formations are in the mountains: They are determined by the course of the mountain valleys, on the bottom of which and along the watercourses all settlements are concentrated, making often extremely long villages and towns. In the highlands and hills, the decisive elements are forests (also forested ridges and forested valleys) that separate particular settlements and/or homesteads or their larger groupings, while in the planes again almost regular network of settlements arises (dense or scattered) which used always to be connected mutually by paths, now also through the roads; that is practically every one with every one, because, there are no natural obstacles except

big rivers. This, of course, does not apply in North Bohemia. I mean none of these variants. North Bohemia is organized along *the transport corridors* and is often viable only by and along them. Besides them there are only two or maybe three types of landscape:

Most common are vague groves of young birch and hazel, in nicer places interwoven with meadows – and very desolate: This is what betrays old re-cultivated dumps. In the places of the very mines there are ponds and swimming pools, which often reveal themselves by their exotic names (e.g. "Leontýna") the name of the original mine. There is, of course, no mark of original mining facilities or structures there any more. And if the community takes care about these locations, quite pleasant places can arise there. Younger heaps are mostly overgrown with an impenetrable and compact thicket of a young vegetation.

Then there are functional mines and quarries themselves (not only coal mines!, with their discharge heaps, dumps and mud ponds.). They are much worse accessible and there are even not many places from where they would be clearly visible. I explain it by that that they are, on the one hand, if they have served for a long time – surrounded by re-cultivated belts, whose greenery covers them, and also by the fact that they are joint with other industrial and semi-industrial areas (for example, power plants), which are – of course- as well as the mines themselves - closed and inaccessible places and you need some special skill to penetrate there. On the map you can see in their places large white spots. The 1:50000 maps at least indicate with familiar jagged lines the course of their levels or floors, but even if you get into sight of some living quarry, or mine, you'll be somehow embarrassed: It's just a vast grey mass, where you can barely spot some roughness, but as a whole, is not structured at all, makes no sense. Yes is Mordor: total destruction of nature, denial of its creational – or if you wish an evolutionary work. The thing is not that the mines just disfigure the landscape as for example, motorways or factories and large motorway expedition halls, or the well-known "horizontally designed block of flats": They completely annihilate it. Even an industrialized landscape – for example of such Kladno or Jablonec can be interesting in a way and one can watch peculiar interlacing of natural formations with artificial ones – mountains with viaducts, small woods with sidings and industrial tracks, factories with streams, etc. But a surface mine does not leave anything, any trace of it at all; you can not even guess the original composition of valleys and watercourses preceding it, not to mention roads and settlements.

And then (already in the proper northern Bohemia – I am not talking now about their lowland part and about the villages of the Central Mountains Středohoří) there is only one more type of "landscape" - cities. I deliberately speak of cities, not settlements, because villages as such practically do not exist here: Either they have merged together with the nearest city through continuous extensive building, or were destroyed

by surface mines, which, as is well-known, over the years move themselves, so they successfully swallow more and more places and villages and now virtually all of them. Sometimes they even reach at cities, touch and lick them, even brush something of them off (in Duchcov they swallowed the castle pavilion) and in the period of normalization they dared to devour one whole big city. I therefore recommend everybody to go to Most, that is both to the remnants of its ancient part with the famous shunted church and the new city, it is an amazing material to be studied. Thus, only cities, and thanks to the aforementioned merging into agglomeration clusters, they are practically all medium sized or big cities. It is clear that each city has its own specific character, yet all north Bohemian cities have something in common, I think: They lack coherency (they do not have a proper urban center – but this is usual with cities of mining districts at all times – such are also Kladno, or perhaps Kutná Hora, too!) and often contain more than one centres. Therefore they are also everywhere strongly permeated with - in part living, partially declining - or already declined industry. And of course, they are considerably or outwardly large cities, they cannot go without any of modern attributes: motorways and huge supermarkets, secondly vast open areas available to cities as inheritance after extinct mines have them to construction of amusement parks, recreational areas, huge swimming pools and zoos.

- the nature

I'm no expert in nature, and certainly not in the part of it that moves and so you can not have a good look at it, that is, the fauna. This part will therefore be very brief. The Lowland Elbe basin and the Poohří are strongly agricultural areas, with an insignificant proportion of non-agricultural vegetation. Somewhere, like on the slopes around T. we find partially gone-wild orchards, which then continually pass into deciduous forests of the Central Mountains, in which, of course, there are also nice places, but tend to be at certain seasons quite infested with various small insects, that make the pilgrim's life quite bitter. Some steep hills of the Středohoří (Central Mountains) are also bare, which gives a special impression – the closest such one from here is Sutomský vrch. To the north from the Středohoří (Central Mountains) then only the already mentioned uncultivated thickets stretch, or a kind of special mixture (already more cultivated) of small woods and meadows. In the fields in the foothills of the Central Mountains you find often a lot of deer. During my the melancholic hike from Hrob to Duchcov, I was in turn accompanied by a high-flying bird-of-prey, a hawk maybe. Overall, however, I found the bird populace of Prague, where I had lived behind the wall of Vojanovy sady, more diverse than here. That's just my impression of a layman.

- the people

are in North Bohemia unquestionably harder and as a whole more closed and less friendly than in other parts of the Republic. I remember, how I felt nice and friendly

when I six years before had moved from Prague to Kutná Hora, how warm and friendly had appeared to me the locals there compared to anonymous Prague-dwellers. Here I would have preferred to have the latter around me, at least that civilized part of them you meet at cafés or other meeting places of intellectuals. Of course that everywhere there are people, who are friendly and open-hearted, and others who are pronounced bastards, but what I'm trying to sketch here, is a kind of overall "standard", a type of behavior and approach, which no one in the locality is surprised by and this "standard behaviour" is undoubtedly here cooler and more closed. People seclude themselves a lot; they remain within the walls of their houses behind drawn shutters and outside them they move from place to place in their cars with roaring combustion engines inside, mostly of cheap older types, which produces the effect of positive feedback: when willing to escape from almost continuous roaring that echoes in the entire country – I do not exaggerate; the main road acoustically affects the landscape in a stripe of five to ten kilometers wide along it and a single motorbike has an even profounder long-range effect – people have no choice but to flee behind their locked up shutters and curtains.

Further it's my feel that they're a little bit more aggressive than elsewhere -- and it does not pertain just to the male population whose aggressiveness is generally higher. I've also experienced mothers here attacking teachers (yes, that can be found elsewhere too, but here it's also kind of "standard") and then there is another generally shared collective resentment: towards Gypsies. If someone commanded here: "At the Gypsies!", no one would hesitate and take up a stick, a club or something and would go to demonstrate his frustration. If kids break something there is always an excuse: "Gypsies did." When I was looking for a place to sit down at train station in Obrnice (it is not a small station, in a way even a "local junction") the stationmaster explained me: "For whom? For the gypsies? " And you can guess, how I fared when I elsewhere looked for toilets: (For the gy...s to shit there?!) So it came to pass that the people of this region at one time have a very useful and comfortable excuse which releases them from any obligation to put things right and every individual from his/her own duty to help others even according to the measure of duties of his/her profession and vocation. (However in the neighboring L. I got a pleasant surprise that its mayor - I've seen him: looks pretty like a rich upstart from the 90s, who goes hunting and has somewhere a posh bungalow – had have installed all over the city flower pots brimming with green plants and flowers and that he even arranged people to goes around the town with a small van and water them.)

After this introduction I suppose nobody will be surprised, if I say that there are no public activities taking place here. Whenever one of the better-to-do locals celebrates something, its quickly settled by a drinking garden party; occasionally with firecrackers. Humble public events have similar character, if they are held at all. It is characteristic and somewhat comical that the only cultural event in L. worth of such name in the whole year is a folklore festival, but it is not organized by the municipality, but – by local

Hungarians; who have extremely agile cultural association. It reminds me of the old student short film *Přišel k nám Old Shatterhand*, if you happen to know it.

With this we have also referred to the character of the region in its cultural aspect, and it is indeed miserable: There are no artists living scattered over the country (I found some only as far as in Kadaň), no amateur theater associations or choirs and I guess that also no desire for education. Career-hungry youth place themselves according to the gradient of their ambition on the scale Litoměřice – Ústí – Prague. There is also zero interest in the past or in traditions. But that is nearly as bad in the whole country; however a little bit better just in the neighbouring Sudeten. You can understand it: the desolate country in the Sudeten borderland just openly provokes you to ask questions about the local past. Related to this is probably also the delicate question of the degree of autochthony of the population. I have not dared to ask directly anyone here about it. I am all the same an absolute fresher, but I don't know how this case stands with the neighbors: have they had their house here for one generation, two generations? I know as much that T. were nationally mixed and certainly a large part of the population had to leave after World War II. Who are the “ancients” and who those who came to replace of the expelled Germans? Do these two groups of the population have different personal characteristics? I haven't fathomed it yet.

With the cultural poverty of this region however contrasts the grade of *technical and civilization development* (these are two completely different or even contrary concepts, see e.g. <http://andresius.cz/de-variis-rebus-index-generalis/moralia/social-tripartity-as-union-of-three-principles/>) which is no way behind other parts of the country. I have already written about the shops in T. And large supermarkets are here as elsewhere, of course, in the larger of villages there are post-offices open (at least for a couple of hours per day). In towns and cities you have money machines of all common types. Slightly worse is the situation with eating-out. You don't find many establishments where they cook meals even in towns. But there is, in addition to two "human-operated" pizza stations in L. and one pizza restaurant, even one pizza slot machine. Such machine I haven't seen even in Prague.

There are local internet providers to be found all over the region, from whom people can get internet connection. (I personally have the bad luck, that my house immersed in the middle of T. - not verbally yet, because I have not experienced the stream of M. to tear off the banks - cannot get any internet signal; even radio is difficult to tune on.)

- the buildings

I have written already about the structure of settlement in North Bohemia. In the villages of its lowland part the houses are not different from similar ones all over Bohemian country: Houses, some small, only ground-floor, some rebuilt to two or three storey

ones, here and there a more pronounced house of a pre-war or older origin. The biggest structure in a village is usually the school, sometimes it can be seen from afar. Practically everywhere you can find a couple of concrete or brick blocks-of-flats, sometimes newly built facilities like kindergartens, post-offices etc. The original urbanist concept of villages is usually preserved undamaged. The appearance of houses is a matter of wealth and tastes of their inhabitants: very often you can find the grey brizolite, but recently there has been tendency to colouring of in particular small houses in a marked, bright coating, which might shock a cultivated artistically feeling individual, but I find it quite merry and positive.

On the other hand in towns new structures (of 1950s and on) prevail and go on in suppressing over the older city-like bourgeois style, if the representatives thereof have been preserved at all. (Teplice represents here a special case, but about them later.) By this fact North Bohemian towns approach paradoxically to German towns and cities, where the symbiosis of the old and the new has been established by war destruction. I cannot say insomuch also North Bohemian cities suffered by the war and in what extent is their devastation due to post-war developments. There was no open, shooting war in the Bohemian area, but there were, of course, air raids.

There are a lot of industrial plants in the region and these cluster - which is different from old industrial areas like below the Giant Mountains of around Liberec - into vast complexes at the edge of cities or outside them, sometimes they form whole impenetrable cities themselves. A huge chemical plant in L., for instance, occupies a large part of the bank of the Elbe and hinders people from coming to it. Large exhibition halls as well as shopping centres also keep emerging at city or town outskirts, however in a little smaller extent than around Prague. Inside the cities also large shopping centres can be found, interconnected complex structures - yes, they are the well-known "malls". Which are also - how could it be else - favourite destinations for country-dwellers, who like making there their Saturday or Sunday trips (and I put them even into no quotation marks - for why, what other choice do they have...?)

That's how much I am able to write about the region of North Bohemia in general. Now, I am going to describe places, I've seen. To remain loyal to my typical itinerary, which always begins with that *Švesková dráha* (*Plum track*), I'll turn first to:

Most (and Litvínov)

The route to Most leads along most of the western part of Středohoří, which makes a nice continuous background on your right and some scattered hills on your left, too. Before you arrive at Most, you must pass through Obrnice, which present themselves first by the steep Zlatník that towers above it, second it is quite an idiosyncratic railway junction lying off the main line. All right, I mean, once it was on the main line - it was the Prague-Duchcov railway, but this had lost its importance long before and if

somebody remembers it nowadays, then only for the historically-technological curiosity, which represents its part leading through the Hlubočepy valley, under so-called "Prague Semmering" at the beginning thereof. Some segments of it are now without traffic altogether, to which also the part from Bílina (practically already from Obrnice) to Duchcov belongs, having been cut through by the pit of the Bílina surface mine, some have sunk to nothing more than local lines (Podlešín - Louny) or routes with a mere tourist operation (Rudná - Podlešín). Still, you can - theoretically - go from Obrnice in five directions: By a short one-track connecting line to Most, by an even shorter connecting line (which is the original Duchcov railway) to so-called Turnout České Zlatníky, from where to Bílina the main railway artery of North Bohemia is three tracks wide, by a two-track line (!) to Postoloprty (two tracks there are probably because of supplying of the near Pocerady power plant), by a one-track line to Louny and by our *Švestková dráha* to Lovosice. The last three lines lead for a considerably long time together, which presents an impressive look of a four-track fundamental body.

But even that short connecting line to Most is in a way interesting: it leads along the Bílina river, here already with pretty artificial bed (probably a result of corridorising - see above) next to the village of Chanov, above which blocks of the urban unit of the same name loom, belonging formally already to Most.

Most has an interesting atmosphere. Probably everybody knows, that the city is completely new and that from its old predecessor only the church had been preserved, which they transported on wheels several (precisely eight) hundred meters from its original place. But this is not wholly true. The new Most, which stretches to the south of the transport corridor, is a city organised on a rectangular principle, but not wholly contemporary now, because it started being built even before the demolition of the old one, somewhere in the 1970s, so it is marbled with older blocks seamed by more modern concrete houses. Towards the Hněvín hill a vast necropolis stretches surrounded by a whole settlement of small houses, Most is actually rich in cemeteries. Another one, but little used is placed on the reclaimed area near the translocated church - which means more or less in the place of old Most. The Hněvín one has a lot of mass graves, since there are and were a lot of mines and industrial plants in the region of Most and there often a good many worked non-deliberately - (POWs etc.) and also under various circumstances - as during bomb attacks - died. Of course, this new Most is surrounded by necessary attributes of modern cities: a motorway (even that could be stuffed into the old traffic corridor) and the omnipresent super-, hyper and superhypersupermarkets, with car parks, fast food facilities, oil stations as it usually is. They are practically in every town of North Bohemia.

North off the traffic corridor and north-east off the city itself and the station a small part of the old Most remains. It is not only the celebrated transferred church, however it makes the dominant of the whole and really is worth seeing - even worth the fuss of

being rebutted several times from there by the Heritage care (because you've come too early, too late, in winter etc.) before you manage to get there. This large and wondrous church is together with another small one, originally part of an infirmary, which crouches nearby managed by the state Heritage institution, not by the Church. And - wonder of wonders - this St.John's and the infirmary are on their original place! They represent the only tiny bit, which has remained of the old Most, its eastern brink. And to it the vast gothic hall of the St.Mary's was transported from the middle of the town. They added to it some baroque statues, wells and sculptural groups from the entire Most, so a kind of small open-air museum has arisen, complemented in some more modern sculptures. The whole composition of originally not locally connects items feels quite nice. But the interior of the Assumption of the Holy Virgin church in Most, which is its full title, is breathtaking and this applies even to someone who has spent one half of his life in Prague and the other in Kutná Hora. A gothic hall in (the Central European variant of) the perpendicular style with a baroque altar placed freely within the eastern end of the nave, i.e. not adjacent to the wall, with an emporium round the *whole* church, which implies also on its eastern side, and a series of small votive chapels underneath, which have been used by the Heritage care to gather smaller gothic (!) altars and carvings there from churches of the whole region, which mostly also perished, decorated alongside it (on its whole length) by late gothic or renaissance carvings. Astonishing! In all of these carvings scenes from the Bible are represented, although Most and its domain remained always catholic. I have been able with one or two exceptions identify them all and I couldn't not to remember the cycle of Prague Emmaus. These carvings in Most are however not organised on the principle of antityposis as in Emmaus or Třeboň (Wittichenau). Moreover, there are two organs on the emporium, minimally one of which is functioning - I've heard it playing. They are both placed in rather clumsy, brown painted and unified baroque cases, but their sound is good. (I had little opportunity to form a judgment, since it was played on by not an exceedingly skilled organist.) The spire standing next to the west wall of the church wasn't transported with it, but newly built including modern construction elements; in my lay opinion perhaps in order to serve as reinforcement to the adjacent church. Every visitor can ascend it and view a series of inspiring photos from Most before its redevelopment and from its progress. But I was disappointed from the view from its top. The tower is not very tall, so you cannot glimpse from it even - now relatively hidden - surface mines in vicinity, shaded by neighbouring heights. And also quite a lot of land has been already reclaimed, in the proximity of Most and elsewhere in the region, so instead of them you would find swimming pools, ponds, groves etc.

Adjacent to this miniature open-air museum you can find also something, what has escaped ruin, too, and it is the original hospital of Most (no more in its function) and the factory RICO producing cotton wool and bandages, so even at this - one is tempted to say - archaeological horizon, centenary and millenary tradition is confirmed, leading

from a medieval town infirmary to a socialist-era hospital. Beyond these buildings you can feel by an open, unused space and remnants of level-crossing gate the location of former Most station.

Most has one more peculiarity, which only a few cities of its expanse have, namely tram. It is virtually only a single tram line, but quite long, with a short branch line to the new Most station. Its line leads not only through the whole new Most, but it crosses the railway and the corridor and along the western edge of the splinter of old Most it continues further, going for a long time (on its own corridor) alongside the huge area of chemical plant in Záluží to neighbouring Litvínov. But even there, at its brink, it doesn't stop, but goes through the whole town as far as so called Horní (upper) Litvínov, to a nice housing establishment with unmistakable features of German building style and to the famous hockey stadium of Litvínov. The relation of a little smaller Litvínov to Most is therefore similar to the of Jablonec (Gablonc) and Liberec (which are also connected by a tram line). I have been in Litvínov only shortly, so you will have to wait eg. for description of the Jezeří castle, which is at its western edge, till I make my way there, but my general impression from it was, that it is a civilised culturally developed place. A small centre is there with some churches and necessary department stores and then houses reminding of those in western part of Prague. What's more, the construction and disposition of the tram line, position of loops and depot show unequivocally, that this amenity belonged originally to Litvínov and was only "lent" by it to Most. There is even a connecting track between the station tracks and the tram line at Litvínov station, having an ordinary, manually operated and even not locked(!) turnout (at the side of the tram line). I had really itching in my hands and had to hold myself not to do the mischief and not to turn the switch. (I made up for it later in Kadaň - see below). From a little devastated station in litvínov (but which station nowadays under the management of SŽDC is not devastated?) you can still go in three directions: south to Most (the track is placed on the same corridor as the tram line, but it has to attend to enormous marshaling yards of the chemical plants), east to Teplice (precisely Oldřichov u Duchcova) and eastnortheast, by a famous Moldava line with a dead end at Dubí, but along this I haven't traveled either - service was suspended there in summer and to be transported to Moldava by buses lacks all beauty. Only southwest, to Jirkov and Chomutov there is no way any more, it ends dead immediately beyond the station and I didn't try to follow it along the track base. If you want to get to Chomutov, you must via Most.

You can go on from Most either east or to NEE towards the core of North Bohemia or west towards its margin. Well head first there, i.e to

Chomutov (and Jirkov)

The bulk of coal mining in this region is still placed between Most and Chomutov, but when traveling by train from Most to Chomutov you can see little or nothing of these

vast mines. Yes - it's again the corridor, a straight embankment, which is on both sides followed by young deciduous vegetation. Only in Komořany you can glimpse a huge old cokery, with really presentable looks for the old industrial era, and remnants of the original line, too, which apparently lead more to the south than the present one, but besides it there is nothing more to be seen than "taiga" to both ends of the line (Most and Jirkov zastávka). In one place the view south opens on a huge lido, a flooded mine pit.

Jirkov has practically melted together with Chomutov; it's connected to it with several trolleybus lines and you can't tell one from the other, for the same block of flats are here and there, blocks, blocks and again blocks. But nonetheless in the core of Chomutov a small historical town is hidden - and it's charming. A not big square - of the average size of Czech country towns, three churches, of which only the Jesuit one, a lunette baroque structure, can be considered standard. The town parish church is probably a renaissance or late gothic one and it looks kind of miniature of the Most church. Here, too, we find emporium with carvings, however there is practically no choir, only a tiny ribbed gothic apsis with a squeezed in altar. General impression - stunning. And the most ancient of the three is a church that was originally a part of commandery of the Teutonic Knights (nowadays the city authorities), wherefore it is closed for public except at selected predetermined hours. (But Sunday afternoon according to the councillors of Chomutov evidently doesn't belong to hours suitable for opening a museum.) I must therefore limit myself to describing the outside, but even this is magnificent. The nave of the church emerges from the mass of the once keep in a little similar way as the Saints Chapel at the Prague castle does and its comparable in size with it. Unadorned outside, of weathered stone with brick parts. But there is still a lot of space under the cathedral-style windows for niches and - hey really - there is one whole house in them! From which follows that there used to be merchants' booths there and one of these remained there, transformed into a house.

Besides this, there used to be in Chomutov also one of the most prominent Jesuit colleges. It hasn't perished yet (meaning the buildings, of course) and forms nowadays a small "town" surrounding the Jesuit church. Today it houses a large library and other cultural institutions and it enjoys a pretty trimmed french-styled front garden.

Further west from Chomutov, at the foothills of Doupov mountains, that is at the entrance to rugged, denuded, bleak and desolated Sudeten, lies a town full of history

Kadaň

which I have walked around just cursorily. It is not placed on the main line, which goes on to Carlsbad and Cheb(Eger), but on a branch, which originally was a railway to Doupov and still leads there - minimally on the map. Yet now is in use only its secondary branch, and only for tourist traffic, that one, which swerves again back inland towards

Podbořany. Kadaň has got a relatively large historical centre in form of a square with a small tail protruding west on the northern bank of Ohře. The settlement continues with housing areas consisting of houses and small block of flats, which wind between knolls and hills that begin rising behind Kadaň and so make the view of the town a little confused. West off the town under Křížová hora (Mount Cross), to which once stations of the cross lead, from which now only fragments are preserved - but valuable fragments in form of two or three chapels with renaissance carvings¹, a Dominican convent had settled and built a lofty late gothic church. I haven't got into it either, because now it's the diocesan museum, which is unfortunately that type of museum, where you may be let only at certain hours and with a guide.

In the town itself there is a big parish church, a baroque hall accessible from all sides. The large rectory, apparently with a gothic chapel inside, is behind it in a lane adjacent to barbican. Kadaň's city walls are actually largely preserved, along the whole southern and eastern side. On the eastern side there is even a barbican, nowadays built up. This eastern wall is also cut by the famous Hangman's lane (Katovská ulička), which is said to have served only for a single man - the hangman passing towards his home. It is really not much broader than for one person, and a very romantic place. Opposite, on the other side of the gorge below the city walls one more church rises, whose age nor dedication I was able to tell, not even with help of the baroque sculptures of saints in front of it. Next to it is an 19th Century orphanage now used as retirement house for priests.

At the southern wall there is a considerable gap, certainly result of demolition(s), and beyond there is only one historical street, built up only on one side ending at the infirmary church (which is just under reconstruction) and Ohře with a weir, in summer usually full of canoes and paddlers. At the bank there is a replica of the Prague great astronomical clock, with visible mechanical parts, since recent studies have its construction attributed to master Nicholas of Kadaň. Now, what was pulled down in this place is not difficult to guess - certainly it was the "Städtl", the Jewish quarter, which often was situated near the infirmary and these both made up the shanty town. To north and northwest beyond the walls common town buildings continue including several small churches of various denominations.

The local railway runs east of the town and there are two stations on it. The big, classical station is to the north-east from the centre, linked to the bus station and serves rather to modern parts and blocks of the town. Beyond it, there is a big, double-track line from the station Kadaň-Prunéřov (on the main line) heading to a big power plant EPRU I, lying east from the town. The local line however goes further on south, and there, near the historical part of the town, there is a tiny station which pleases the heart. It's really a station, not a mere stop, because it has two tracks for trains and one siding, and all of them are used. The trains of the official Czech railway (České dráhy) - unlike the

1 haven't checked that, but I deem these may be the very oldest outdoor stations of the cross in Bohemia.

tourists' ones, which go further - terminate just here, and since the traffic may be dense in summer, they must meet and pass the tourists' ones just here. Many ordinary trains must therefore turn from the main track and give way and wait for their regular return on the side track. It is usually done only over one turnout (the small platform is all the same behind it, towards the open track), which is manually operated and locked, and the one to do it is naturally the conductor, since there is nobody else from the rail company there (except the engineer, of course). So, when I saw a very short conductress, rushing with keys from the tiny station building, I couldn't refrain myself and offered courteously help. (For those who have never done it: the turnout weight weighs some 20 kilos, since it must be balance to the weight of shifted point tongues and that is not small either.)

We are not going to move in this direction any more here, because, as we have said, we would come to another country, to mysterious and empty Sudeten and right into their darkest and eeriest part, the Doupov district. But if I get there once, I'll write about that too.² Now, we'll have to go back to Most and steer from there to north-east, to the heart of the North-Bohemian basin. Logical first halt there would be Bílina, a spa town in the west corner of Středohoří, but I haven't visited it yet, so I'll have to write about it another time. Bílina is also surrounded by enormous mines - one of the largest at all bears its name and stretches to north-west from it, between Bílina and Duchcov. Almost directly north of it there is the Bílina power station and to south there are vast dumps of the power station and others. But instead of Bílina I have visited

Duchcov,

which is a relatively small town, but rich in its history. It developed - likewise neighbouring Teplice - from a borough subject to the local lord and it never could equal its powerful and rich neighbour from the other side, Most. But fate is unpredictable: While big medieval Most is no more, not one stone was left upon another, as the proverb goes, Duchcov is still there. The giant pit of the Bílina mine has crept to its very western rim, and, maybe, the town itself was in danger for some time, but eventually it had to let fall in its throat only a part of castle garden with a valuable baroque pavilion...

Duchcov has quite a curious shape. The historical part is shaped as an oval rectangle with square in its western part. To the south and east then quite normal humble town buildings stretch (a workers' neighbourhood probably), bordered in east by railway, nowadays only a siding, and - once - a probably large and attractive station, which they already started pulling down. Thanks to re-directing of the railway line this once terminal station of *Pražsko-Duchcovská dráha* (Prague Duchcov railway) has ended up away from the main line and there are no trains today. The tracks are interrupted in direction south, towards

² In fact, a small trip there is described at <http://andresius.cz/o-nas/auctoris-peregrinationes/cum-verba-desunt/doupovsko/>

Prague, immediately behind the station by lands of the Bílina mine, now largely reclaimed, just beyond the famous *Viaduct of Duchcov*, commemorated due to the bloody encounter of pre-war police with demonstrating miners. The viaduct is still standing, but there is nothing, no plaque or other on it. Duchcov is thus bordered in east by railway and there has been no possibility to stretch further south or west either, because there was - and still is - the mine. Only north and northwest remained then, but actually only northwest, because approximately one quarter of today's town perimeter in northeast is filled by quite a big lake - there used to be also a quite big mine. Small block of flats of Duchcov had consequently to cram opposite the centre, to north from the castle garden. The "perimeter" I talked about is today quite well delineated by a series of small sandy ponds, which, although being today a quite convenient holiday area, must be remnants of plenty of small mines and pits, which, according to old maps and photos, permeated whole Duchcov. I didn't understand it well, but according to what the exposition of the town museum showed, Duchcov lay on a line of outcrop of coal seams, which stretched through it like a kind of crumpled ribbon, so one mine after another was opened there and these have left behind such void spaces. The result is, that Duchcov has a shape of a kind of double loop (shape of "eight") or of an insect body. At the connection point in the middle, which is situated to the north of the centre, there are several really imposing buildings, of which the city grammar school building with a large garden may be the best. Just next to there, there is the protestant (Lutheran) church with a tall steeple. Nowadays it serves - as most of Lutheran churches in the region - to the Czechoslovak Hussite church, which is known to gather the leftover shrines of the expelled or killed off ones: Inland it after the war usually "aristated" synagogues, but here a lot of big, splendid, even modern German churches stood open for it. Well this church is at least tended by it, but others... we'll have our say about it once more. There is a small parkland near the church, probably it originally was surrounded houses, but they now stretch only along one side of it. In the middle of it there is a nice romantic monument to Walther von der Vogelwiede, a well-known medieval minstrel. It was a close thing for it to escape destruction. After the war it was removed from there for being "ideologically wrong", but with a bit of luck it survived in repository. Only lately it has been re-installed to its former place, and this still only under mild pressure from the German exiles.

The houses in the historical centre are usually humble, sometimes decrepit due to common factors. A little bit of town walls with the north gate remains, too. And at the north-east end of the centre, now beside a large lake, there is a small baroque church with graveyard, nowadays turned already to a garden, where a big plate announces that there it was, where the most renowned, however only partly deliberate inhabitant of Duchcov was laid: Giacomo Casanova. He dwelt of course in the castle, but this I reserved for some another visit of mine. Its front looks over the square, which I didn't like very much. It even has not been touched by any communist "finishing", which is often the case all over Bohemian country, but it was - somehow - shabby. And the houses there are a little too tall for it, because the square is not big, so you feel to lack space there. Its western side is occupied by the castle and next to it a big, sturdy baroque church with two towers, obviously built

together with the castle and in the same style (ad for example in Jaroměřice, our Czech Versailles). So I expected also the appropriate furniture, but I was very surprised, when I entered it! The church looks like ten days after bombing: no furniture only blackened grey walls, dust and dirt; no altar, no seats or banks, not even any broken ones, the floor dug up at places. A terrible and abandoned place to look upon.

Not far to north-east from Duchcov there is also the renowned Osek monastery. But what it looks now, I won't tell you, because I haven't been there yet. Actually I came to Duchcov from the North, by a quite interesting way leading through empty flat meadows and grooves, then around an (also deserted) golf area, and finally through mining landscape with closed sidings, mines and viaducts, by a way, on which I had a continuous company of birds of prey above me, from an equally interesting place, that is

Hrob

(whose name sound ominously to Czech ears, since its meaning is "grave") is one on small towns which skirt the southern foothills of Krušné Hory and whose names are (from west to east) Jiřetín, Litvínov, Osek, Háj, Hrob, Dubí and Krupka; also Jirkov on the utmost west, but that has practically grown together with Chomutov and in the east we already get close to Ústí nad Labem and Krušné Hory are there continued by a ridge called, I deem, Děčínský sněžník.

Hrob is a quite nice small town, of course marked by the overall north-bohemian atmosphere, which means: a lot of roads, a certain disorder and unfinishedness, but it has kept its small square with a (catholic) church a small manor house and monuments of counter-reformation in form of catholic sculptures. Why do I stress so much this denominational character? Because the main valuable of Hrob lies a little apart to north-east from the tiny centre and it is a ruined church, better to say only foundations of a church, about which it can be claimed, that it caused the Thirty Years' war. Very well - even average learned ones in history know that they were just the protestant churches in Broumov and in Hrob, which were closed for their users - their protestant subjects, by the landowners, abbots from Broumov and Osek - here, in Hrob, where the miners' population was utterly protestant, even with military assistance - what provoked the protestant lords lead by count Thurn to an action, later called the third Prague defenestration. The place lay long in oblivion and was newly discovered only in towards the end of 19-th Century. Soon after that, a beautiful new protestant church of black stone in a decorative style, reflecting the influence of German *Jugendstil* was built at the eastern end of Hrob, which, due to the used black stone, makes it bit romantic, gloomy or even terrifying impression. The construction was financed from Saxony and without doubt it was used for the few years between its construction and the birth of the Republic by Germans. After the Second World War it came into hand of the Czechoslovak Hussite church, but its present condition is not good. Even the information panel, installed probably by the municipality next to the church complains of it, which provokes a question: Is the Czechoslovak Hussite church still now that much Czechoslovak, meaning nationalist and that little Hussite, or Protestant, in order

not to esteem an eminent monument of the history of Protestantism at large? Or is it only general disorder and irresponsibility to be blamed? A similar church in neighbouring Duchcov is open even with a couple of guides, collecting fees and letting people to climb the tower. I regretted a lot at this place, that I didn't take photos, or, better that I didn't have equipment to do so, by which I could preserve a picture of this place or convey it to readers, because it has an intense atmosphere. Perhaps you will be able to find some on Google Earth or Mapy.com.

In the previous paragraph, a lot of small towns have been mentioned, of which, apart from Hrob, I've been shortly only to Litvínov (see above) and

Krupka.

Krupka has now grown together with neighbouring Bohosudov, and because these two boroughs have swallowed a few other villages, too, and thanks to industrial precincts they have also stretched south towards the station on the main line, which is now the only "port" to enter Krupka, since there is no hope now, that so-called *Kozí dráha* (Goat career - see at the beginning), which lies to the north of the main line and goes through the centres of both Krupka and Bohosudov, and whose stonework is overgrown now, will be opened again, they make a fairly bog agglomeration now. Moreover, it's not more than a mile to the edge of Teplice, which - for change - has practically swallowed the neighbouring Dubí. North Bohemia is simply densely populated.

Krupka is a typical mining township of Krušné Hory, partly already squeezed into a mountain dale, with three white gothic churches or chapels and a castle. Further there is, of course, the square with town hall and a statue (it has been recently wrenched by one exuberant lorry, but is already being repaired) and other attributes typical for a town. But of all this I have named only the castle id open to public, and it's because it's a ruin -quite big, with a considerable mass of preserved masonry, which betray its former large extent. And there is a pub, too, which means business and that would be a shame to close, wouldn't it? I was in Krupka in the middle of summer in full tourist season - and look, this! They have here i Krupka also a kind of firefighters' museum. It crouches just next to the large parish church, but they don't have the keys of the church thre and they don't know where could they be. There isn't a slightest mark or label on the churches of services, guided tours or any other use of them. All of them are however well tended and repaired (at least to external sight), even shiny.

The one lying in the middle between the other two, on crossroads is a total mystery. I haven't learned its name. It looks like once an infirmary church, so it could be *Johanniskirche*, which was once common name for churches of that purpose. Of course, I wasn't able to look inside as well.

The largest of them, the parish church at a rather confined but beautiful square is remarkable as far as concerns its architecture. A late gothic nave with presbytery of the same height - from outside you cannot see more - is closely adjacent to neighbouring houses on both sides,

undoubtedly due to lack of space. It bears a plaque of a certain ophthalmologist and professor of medicine which was installed there in the war time, so one doesn't know what the related professor's attitude to the then masters and overlords was. But if you climb the opposite standing castle hill you discover from this top perspective also a - surely beautiful - gothic transept, which is hidden to view from the square. It must have a noteworthy inner space, but it seems that in north Bohemia nobody cares about such things: *"Of course we'll repair it, for we have funds for it from the European budget. We'll take some photos then and place it on a website; that'll make good image. Visitors, guided tours? Then we'd have to pay the guides or other staff. And is anybody interested about it at all?"* - Well, there is an information centre In Krupka virtually - at least there is a place thus labeled, but it's empty without any trace of opening hours. You can explain it as you can.

A tiny bit of information a traveler gets at least about the wonderful St. Anna's church at the graveyard, which is raised on a small promontory, so it can be seen from afar from the Bohosudov side, and this is due to the fact, that it's just being repaired (on the ground of European funds :-D). It is reported to have a beautiful chamber vault and the place makes a really pleasant, warm impression.

This contrasts sharply with the only church complex, which is open for use in the double township, the basilica in Bohosudov. It is open and even pilgrimages are made there. I have experienced a mighty Sorabian (Lausitian) pilgrimage there, but the place itself made a hopeless impression. It is a classical catholic shrine devoted to the Holy Virgin, which had been systematically built with beginnings already before the Thirty Years' War and massive recatholisation as a foothold of anti-reformation ideology. (In a similar way also Stará Boleslav in the same time was misused and by "finding" of so-called Palladium entangled in the anti-reformation struggle, but that really had a spiritual fundament and couldn't be thus easily broken, retaining its spiritual treasure.) The Bohosudov basilica is a huge baroque barn with enormous altars, which may be not entirely shapeless, but the whole looks depressive. It is surrounded by a pilgrims' yard or cloister with - I think - five (definitely an uneven number) chapels, which were again dedicated by neighbouring towns or noble landlords. They may be interesting as far as concerns the history of art, but they all betray a rather shallow and schematic purpose in re-catholisation ideology; everywhere there is a miraculous image or conversion of a proud and defiant Lutheran... in the nearby standing building there is the Bishopric grammar school in Bohosudov. It is - as far as I know - being upheld by the Jesuits (who are once again here, in one of their former sites active notwithstanding their numerical scarceness) only with extreme difficulty. No wonder in that. I am no confirmed opponent of church school institutions - if their management is enough broadminded, they can open vast cultural horizons to their students that they might have a difficulty to discover otherwise. But here, in this region? What interest can the local youth have in something called culture, moreover if it is tinged of an air of Catholicism? Young people here, including their most urban part, have a single aim: to make career and money. I have traveled enough with them on trains and buses, to be assured of this from their mutual debates.

But in order not to be too asperse to Bohosudov -just next to the church there is really pleasant bakery.

North Bohemia is really densely populated - we have just seen, that Krupka has melted together with several neighbouring settlements. That however hasn't taken place yet as far as concerns Teplice, still a large city. But it's from there only a stone throw. Let's then steer our promenade just there.

Teplice

was nearly till the beginning of the 19-th Century only a small township subject to local landlords, who in this case was an ancient , but also small nunnery, of probably Benedictines. (I haven't managed to go and see it yet.) But then suddenly their fame spread as of a spa (spa industry had been steadily on rise since the baroque era, becoming really popular first among nobility, then - in the 19-th Century also among common citizens), where even Beethoven gave concerts, including premiere of one of his symphonies. Still there is an orchestra today and there it was where for example the quite widely known baroque ensemble Musica Florea was founded. But - to say the truth - I have found any marks of their activity there during my visit - no placates or anything; I may have not wandered to the right places.

I can't utter any judgment whether the fame of the spas and spa industry is justified; according to my knowledge there is no "Teplice Water" on the market, nor can be such got from pharmacies - in contrary to the next door "Bílinská kyselka". Definitely is there will to uphold the tradition of spas there. I myself occurred - partly by mistake - at an opening event of the spa season, which was a terrible kind of a funfair taking place in the whole centre and everywhere in streets, which and the noise thereof you couldn't escape. Spas surely have an inclination to such events - I had to pass through Karlovy Vary once in time of its "festival" and the impression was nearly as terrible as this one - only there had been less noise.

To understand contemporary Teplice one must become aware just of its past two centuries. Teplice had not remained a mere spa for long, but the city developed during the 19-th Century to one of biggest industrial centres in the region, which meant that everywhere huge factories rose (some of which still work nowadays), that a typical city style in masonry influenced a lot by German culture spread over the former city centre , new parts appeared, churches including an enormous synagogue were built. (This only hasn't survived the Germans and the war, by which it rendered a beautiful place in a very suitable place - on a little knoll practically in the very middle of the city - to today's developers.) And, really a lot of the capital invested here was Jewish. This I have learned at an exhibition devoted to Jewish Teplice located - how symptomatic - in an empty and abandoned church, formerly Lutheran, which stood and still stands in the same hill as the synagogue. Maybe the industry concentrated here also due to the fact that in the nearest vicinity of the city the weren't (and aren't) any mines, so there was no danger that the factories would have to be pulled down again and give way to continued mining. But in the same time it lays in a mining region

with a good supply of coal, which provided the main thoroughfare for coal transport of then, the **Ústecko-Teplická** railway. There was also a change in population, of course: from an international spa (which meant then mostly permeated by french culture) to a german (or german-Jewish) industrial city (with a not insignificant part of Czech speaking cheap workforce). More or less the same conditions were the also in the first republican period between the 20-th Century wars. You can be reminded thereof for example by a posh lounge of the Teplice main-station, which is otherwise tiny and insufficient for means of nowadays' traffic, wherefore even a small traffic closure delays all trains from Ústí as far as Cheb. The lounge boasts with an art nouveau sgraffito and has - see! - a roofed gangway for carriages - which is a convenience to be seen only with the noblest buildings as for example Rudolfinum in Prague (where it was installed not because of artists to whom it belonged then partly and fully nowadays, but because of MPs to whom it belonged under the monarchy).

From that what I have written practically everyone may guess what happened to Teplice after the war. Depopulation, of course, due the forced evacuation of Germans. I don't know and even can't imagine, how the city looked immediately after that. The vacuum remaining after it logically lured there the weakest and most dubious layers of population and - this haven't much changed even now. The city blocks are today inhabited mainly by families of Roma, Asian, Ukraine or Czech origin, but who all share the same low social and cultural standard. Well there is an exception to this rule - I don't know why, but lately have Teplice been in favour of rich Arabian families, so some parts of the spa complex abound in inscriptions in Arabian and shops oriented at this specific kind of customers. It's extremely difficult to buy ordinary bread in Teplice on Sunday, but this is not the case with „hallal food“. Money gambling automat parlours are open too, of course.

I see I haven't described Teplice yet. It is not very easy. First, it's a large city and I haven't walked it through entirely and second, it's rather chaotic. It is situated upon several hillocks (and fills also the deeps between them, of course). Most boarding houses and spa institutions and parks are in the vale of a small river Bystřice. The rest of the city is then formed by city buildings of the described type, but by no means on a rectangular plan - the streets intersect in various angles. There are also parts of the city with beautiful large detached houses. But nor Teplice with its manifold history can be bereft of the chain of surrounding concrete blocks., All these heterogeneous elements , also with neighbouring Dubí, Řetenice and several small sites, formerly independent, are interconnected by city transport, whose base is formed (like in further North Bohemian cities - Ústí, Chomutov) by trolleybus lines. But I have a feeling that the contemporary policy of the city is not in favour of maintaining of this network, so there are in many places replaced by buses.

With this section my description has reached practically its end. Further east from Teplice a vast city agglomeration of the regional centre Ústí stretches, which I have visited, even regularly visited it, but still I do not dare to describe. It is an enormous tangle in first place of factories, with an annihilated city centre. The present situation is such, that the late gothic hall vaulted church is from three sides of four surrounded by a mall. The main square

had been "modernised" already in communists' times. It has again a tiny main station (five tracks altogether and one dead track - for an engine) but curiously it manages to swallow all the transport in many directions (in passenger service, of course; mighty flows of freight transport are collected and absorbed chiefly by the West and North stations, partly also by the Střekov station on the other bank of Elbe). In front of it you can find among the paving a piously preserved meter of a tram track. (One is tempted to form an opinion, that trams were a symbol of German culture and civilisation!) Further there is a housing estate spew seamed with white housing blocks, to which the beautiful cliff of Mariánská skála dominates looming immediately above the station and on the other bank little further upstream the Střekov castle (housing the Wagner Restaurant - the famous composer really was there and got reputedly even some not insignificant inspiration there). But there is another horror just below it: so called Masaryk's lock chamber (The name betrays that it was built by the Czechs after the WWI.) It's practically a dam. To the final count you will have to add also a lot of beautiful houses (of German provenience, of course) and ugly blocks or houses (of Czech provenience, built after the war). But this all is only a fleeting glance - I haven't cruised the whole Ústí by far.

Between Ústí and Teplice, there is a small township called Chabařovice, which I haven't seen so far too. It's a historical place and according to the map it should have also a museum, but rather hard to get to: Although it and its standard looking station lies directly on the main route, accurately on a relocated route (Chabařovická přeložka) which was built under the communists because otherwise the line would be disrupted by an enormous mine Milada, a mine that had even swallowed another historical site - the battlefield where an important battle (Bitva u Ústí) was fought by the Hussites in 1426, no passenger service exist there, even the trains stopping everywhere, don't stop there. For me, it's a mystery.

The description of North Bohemia should include also a mention on Děčín, an undoubtedly interesting city with a large castle - manor and also a theatre with permanent ensemble. But from this, too, I have had only a fleeting view. Therefore I leave description of it, together with description of Ústí, Chabařovice and the eastern part of České středohoří (for instance Ústěck) to subsequent part of this wandering, which however may not come at all. Who knows where his ways will lead?