

From Agricultural Village to Socialist Industrial Town

Od agrárnej dediny
k socialistickému
priemyselnému mestu

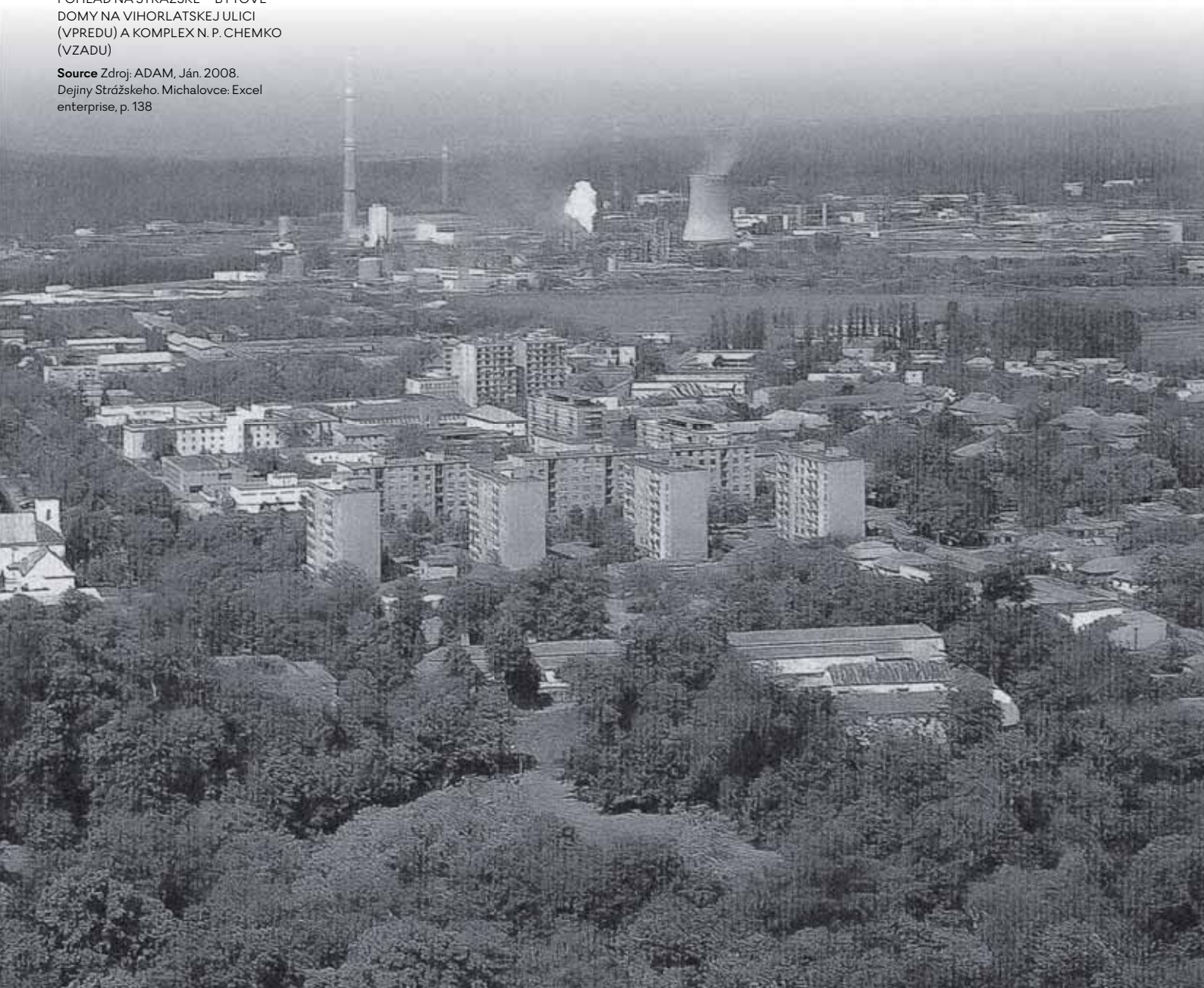
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**VIEW OF STRÁŽSKE – APARTMENT
HOUSES ON VIHORLATSKÁ STREET
(FOREGROUND) AND THE CHEMKO
COMPLEX (BACKGROUND)**

POHLAD NA STRÁŽSKE – BYTOVÉ
DOMY NA VIHORLATSKEJ ULICI
(VPREDU) A KOMPLEX N. P. CHEMKO
(VZADU)

Source Zdroj: ADAM, Ján. 2008.
Dejiny Strážskeho. Michalovce: Excel
enterprise, p. 138



Strážske, mesto v regióne Horného Zemplína na východe Slovenska, je dnes neslávne známe pre silné zamorenie PCB látkami produkovanými v n. p. Chemko Strážske v sedemdesiatych rokoch minulého storočia. Nás zaujalo svojím urbánnym vývojom po roku 1952, keď Komunistická strana Československa (KSČ) ako vládnuca strana rozhodla o výstavbe chemickej továrne – národného podniku Chemko Strážske. Tento moment navždy ovplyvnil smerovanie hospodárskeho, demografického a územného rozvoja bývalej poľnohospodárskej obce a ovplyvňuje ho dodnes. Predkladaná štúdia sa venuje urbanistickému vývoju Strážskeho od 50. rokov 20. storočia až po súčasnosť s prihliadnutím na kľúčové faktory ovplyvňujúce rýchlu urbanizáciu a neskorší úpadok urbánnej štruktúry ako protichodné procesy. Urbánnu štruktúru preto skúmame z pohľadu zlomových udalostí, ktoré determinovali smer jej vývoja. V päťdesiatych rokoch minulého storočia ide o socialistickú industrializáciu, ktorá bola katalyzátorom populačného a územného rastu. Za ďalší zlom považujeme revolučný rok 1989 a nástup socioekonomických procesov, ako vznik brownfieldov a pokles populácie – znižujúce sa mesto. Podkladom pre morfológický výskum boli vybrané historické mapové podklady so zvážením ich čitateľnosti, dostupnosti, mierky a relevantnosti. Naše zistenia a výsledky sú prezentované v súhrnných schémach – schwarzplanoch s uličnou sieťou, vodnými tokmi a naznačeným funkčným využitím (podfarbením) vyjadrujúcich rast urbánnej štruktúry v skúmanom období.

Situácia po 2. svetovej vojne bola pre Slovákov náročná. V porovnaní s Českom tu boli väčšie škody na dopravnej a technickej infraštruktúre (mosty a železničné trate boli úplne zničené), veľké škody na domovom a bytovom fonde a zničené alebo poškodené strategické priemyselné podniky (odvlečené stroje a zariadenia a pod.). Sovietsky zväz, ktorého súčasťou sme sa stali v spoločnom štáte s Čechmi, nám ponúkal riešenie v podobe riadenej industrializácie, ktorou sledoval plnenie svojich vyšších záujmov. Rovnako mala orientácia hospodárstva na priemysel zmierniť veľké ekonomické aj kultúrne rozdiely medzi priemyselne rozvinutým Českom a agrárnym Slovenskom. Socialistická industrializácia sa dotkla všetkých kútov našej republiky, a malá obec Strážske nebola výnimkou. Pred rokom 1952 sa väčšina obyvateľov živila roľníctvom, menšia časť remeslom a prácou v miestnej rafinérii, ktorá bola počas bojov zničená. Urbánna štruktúra pozostávala z jednotraktových rodinných domov sústredených pozdĺž hlavnej ulice a neskorobarokového (pôvodný) a renesančného (nový) objektu kaštieľa s veľkostatkom Széchenyovcov. 1. augusta 1952 bol podpísaný dokument o založení n. p. Chemko Strážske a ešte v tom roku sa začala jeho výstavba na zelenej lúke, západne od železničnej trate. O 3 roky neskôr sa začalo so skúšobnou prevádzkou a v roku 1956 už závod vyrábala prvé chemické produkty.

Západne od železničnej trate vznikalo funkčne vyhranené územie priemyslu, ktoré už vtedy začínalo plošne dominovať nad vlastnou štruktúrou mesta. Umiestnenie veľkého chemického závodu v doposiaľ poľnohospodárskom kraji nebolo možné bez výstavby potrebnej infraštruktúry ako pridružených funkcií priemyslu: bývania, občianskej vybavenosti a neskôr aj rekreačného zázemia. Súčasne s výstavbou Chemka a Chemkostavu prebiehala výstavba sídliska Okružná pozostávajúca

z dvojpodlažných bytových domov na okraji zastavaného územia obce Strážske. Ubytovanie bolo pridelené najmä rodinám s deťmi. Chemkárom bola veľká časť bytov pridelená aj v okresnom meste Michalovce a čiastočne aj v Humennom pre dobre dopravné prepojenie a krátku dochádzkovú vzdialenosť. Špecifickým druhom bývania pre mladých slobodných ľudí boli slobodárne, na tieto účely boli najprv prestavané pôvodné kasárne a neskôr vybudované 3 nové bloky pri futbalovom štadióne. V neskoršom období slúžil dočasným a slobodným pracovníkom robotnícky Hotel Chemik (1980) na Námestí A. Dubčeka (pôvodne Námestie budovateľov).

Neodmysliteľnou súčasťou novej výstavby bola základná občianska vybavenosť nutná pre chod mesta a zabezpečenie základných potrieb obyvateľov a pracovníkov. Ako prvé vznikli objekty dočasnej materskej školy a jasli, pošta, nákupné stredisko a zdravotné stredisko. V roku 1958 už uviedli do prevádzky aj Kino Chemik poskytujúce hlavne zamestnancom Chemka kultúrne vyžitie priamo v obci. Začiatkom 60. rokov sa nedostatok kvalifikovanej pracovnej sily odzrkadlil na založení strednej priemyselnej školy chemickej, ktorej priestory boli priamo v areáli Chemka, no o niekoľko rokov školu premiestnili do Humenného. Tento krok potvrdil, že aj keď sa Strážske hospodársky a územne vzťahovalo, prirodzeným centrom regiónu Horného Zemplína bolo Humenné.

S ambíciou premeny poľnohospodárskej obce na socialistické priemyselné mestečko bola veľká časť pôvodných rodinných domov asanovaná a v priebehu sedemdesiatych a osemdesiatych rokov na tomto území postavili nové bytové domy a objekty občianskej vybavenosti, formujúc tak moderné mestské centrum. Katalyzátorom tejto premeny bol úspešný rozvoj Chemka, v ktorého areáli rovnako pribúdali nové výrobné odzrkadľujúce rozširujúce sa portfólio produktov. Najprv svoju tvár zmenilo Námestie A. Dubčeka s koncentráciou objektov občianskej vybavenosti a kultúry, ako Kino Chemik a Závodný klub ROH. Námestie sa v roku 1968 stalo dejiskom osláv udelenia štatútu mesta, ktoré malo utvrdiť pozíciu Chemka ako dôležitého podniku národného hospodárstva. Napriek tomu si Strážske dodnes zachovalo vidiecky charakter zástavby s dominanciou zástavby rodinných domov, čo bolo spôsobené aj zvýšeným dopytom po kvantite výstavby bytov pre značné povojnové škody na domovom a bytovom fonde. Tie neskôr v sedemdesiatych rokoch doplnila zástavba bytových domov na uliciach Vihorlatská, Mierová a Komenského.

Investičná činnosť v sedemdesiatych a osemdesiatych rokoch sa zameriavala najmä na zlepšenie dopravnej aj technickej infraštruktúry a občianskej vybavenosti. Od začiatku 80. rokov v meste vznikli nové menšie podniky alebo sa tu usídlili pobočky niektorých väčších národných podnikov. Okrem základnej občianskej vybavenosti začala vyrastať na okraji zastavaného územia nová športová zóna so zimným štadiónom, kolkárňou a letným kúpaliskom. Výstavba už nemala podobne rýchle tempo ako v prvých dekádach po založení Chemka, no neustále pokračovala najmä v oblasti technickej infraštruktúry, občianskej vybavenosti a individuálnej bytovej výstavby.

Transformácia po roku 1989 zapríčinila vznik radu socioekonomických procesov, ktoré z dlhodobého hľadiska negatívne

ovplyvnili hospodársky, demografický a územný vývoj Strážskeho. Prvé roky po revolúcii sa niesli v znamení dokončovania začatých investičných projektov a ďalšieho budovania technickej aj dopravnej infraštruktúry. Od začiatku 21. storočia sa tento rozvoj obmedzil na menšie súkromné investície a rekonštrukcie. Krátko po roku 1989 začali krachovať menšie podniky, ktoré sa usídlili v Strážskom iba začiatkom 80. rokov. Po nich sa dostalo do problémov aj Chemko, ktoré na voľnom trhu nebolo dostatočne konkurencieschopné, čo spustilo viaceré vlny prepúšťania s výsledkom historicky najvyššej nezamestnanosti v roku 2001, a to 30,59 % v okrese Michalovce. Dôsledkom je odlev obyvateľov do prosperujúcejších regiónov Slovenska alebo zahraničia a kontinuálny pokles populácie. V súčasnosti sa Strážske radí k zmenšujúcim sa mestám. Ďalším negatívnym vplyvom deindustrializácie je vznik priemyselných brownfieldov a pre nízku konkurencieschopnosť regiónu je náročné prilákať investorov. Aj v prípade nových investícií v priemysle sa výstavba koná na nezastavaných územiach, ako to bolo aj v prípade malých oceliarní Slovakia Steel Mills, ktoré medzičasom krachovali.

Brownfieldy nevznikajú len v priemyselných areáloch, ale aj v samotnej urbánnej štruktúre mesta. Špecifikom pre

zmenšujúce sa sídla je rušenie jaslí a materských škôl a zvyšujúci sa dopyt po zariadeniach sociálnej starostlivosti pre seniorov. V Strážskom sa tento trend prejavil transformáciou slobodárne na Námestí A. Dubčeka na domov sociálnych služieb a odpredajom objektov materských škôl a jaslí súkromným vlastníkom. Podobne aj Kino Chemik zápasí s nedostatkom financií na údržbu a je dlhodobo mimo prevádzky. Úspešnou transformáciou prešiel Závodný klub ROH na Centrum voľného času a kultúrny dom.

V súčasnosti je z podnikov založených v druhej polovici minulého storočia v prevádzke už len Chemko, ktorému hrozí krach. Novou investíciou je otvorenie pobočky francúzskej paličkárne Smart Wood Slovakia, ktorá sa usídlí v areáli bývalého Chemkostavu a zamestná približne 100 zamestnancov. Ani takýto ekonomický stimul však nebude schopný opäť pozdvihnúť mesto Strážske k bývalému hospodárskemu, demografickému a územnému rozvoju. Je potrebné zamerať sa na udržateľný rozvoj z pohľadu nevyhnutného ďalšieho poklesu populácie a vzniku brownfieldov. Na mieste sú otázky: Aké má byť ďalšie funkčné smerovanie mesta Strážske? Ako územne a ekonomicky rozvíjať zmenšujúce sa mestá na Slovensku?

Introduction

In recent years, the town of Strážske has received notable public attention, specifically because of its heavy contamination with PCBs produced in the 1970s at the Chemko Strážske plant. However, Strážske itself is also an interesting case study in light of its rapid transformation from a small agricultural village into a socialist industrial town. Industrialisation was made possible by the political situation after the Czechoslovak coup d'état in February 1948, after which the nation's political and economic direction was subordinated to the higher interests of the Soviet Union. Until the present, the number of inhabitants more than tripled after the construction of Chemko, yet the growth of the urban structure had an even more rapid development, which Adam¹ described as follows: "Thanks to the good cooperation between the local government and the company management, the originally agricultural village was transformed in a relatively short time into a modern industrial city." The original rural single-family houses were replaced by modern housing estates, public amenities, recreational facilities, and new family housing zones. With the growing importance of the national enterprise (n. e.) Chemko in the Czechoslovak economy, new recreational and cultural facilities became available for Chemko's employees, and the town undeniably prospered². After the Velvet Revolution in 1989, Chemko's chemical production could not compete in the free market and many workers were laid off. Some of the factory buildings were abandoned due to obsolescence and decreasing production output, leading to their dilapidation. The abandonment of many buildings continues to this day throughout the whole urban structure of Strážske, not only in industrial areas. These adverse economic changes have resulted in the migration of inhabitants to more prosperous regions of Slovakia and even abroad, causing urban shrinkage³.

The aim of our article is to present a comprehensive picture of the urban development of Strážske from the 1950s to the present day, considering the key factors influencing the rapid urban development of the town followed by the later emergence of brownfields and the town's overall decline. Consequently, we examine the urban structure in terms of historical turning points and their impact on it, based on Hines's approach⁴. The first key historical event was the decision to establish the Chemko chemical factory in Strážske in 1952 and the subsequent rapid construction of the factory and its necessary housing estates. Thus, we can say that socialist industrialization was the catalyst for the urban development of Strážske in 1950s. The second historical event was the Velvet Revolution in 1989, which started socio-economic processes such as deindustrialization leading to the emergence of brownfields, the overall economic and spatial decline of the city, and the city's shrinking (population decline)⁵, i.e. features typical of post-socialist post-industrial cities⁶. Historical maps from 1950, 1952 – 1957, 1957 – 1971, 1989, 2010 and the present (2022) were the basis

Historical event	Diagram name	Used map	Period	Source
Before industrialization	1950, Before the Chemko construction	Historical orthophotomap of Slovakia	1950	Center of Excellence for Forest and Landscape Decision Support, TU Zvolen
Socialist industrialization	50s, The beginning of the Chemko construction	Military topographic map 1:25 000 1st edition	1952 – 1957	National Geoportal of Slovakia, Historical mapping
	60s, Building a city centre	Military topographic map 1:10 000	1957 – 1971	National Geoportal of Slovakia, Historical mapping
	80s, From the village to the town	Base map 1:25 000	1989	Geatetic and Cartographic Institute Bratislava (GKÚ), Archive, Base maps
Deindustrialization, Urban shrinkage	early 2000s, Emerging brownfields	Historical orthophotomap of Slovakia	2010	Center of Excellence for Forest and Landscape Decision Support, TU Zvolen
	The present	Orthophotomosaic ZBGIS	the present	Geatetic and Cartographic Institute Bratislava (GKÚ), Cadaster, Orthophotomosaic and National Forestry Center

LIST OF DIAGRAMS AND SOURCES OF MAP MATERIALS

ZOZNAM SCHÉM A ZDROJOV MAPOVÝCH PODKLADOV

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for the morphological research. Considering the readability, extent, availability, and relevance of cartographic materials, we combined them from several sources (see Table 1), all of which are freely available. The mapped results of the transformation of the urban structure are presented through diagrams showing the respective periods of growth and decline. The diagrams represent the urban structure in the schwarzplan, the street network and watercourses, and the functional use. The schwarzplan and the street network present the situation across different periods without indicating the current situation. The functional use is divided into 5 categories: industrial zones, public amenities, housing estates, family houses, other functions, depicted by the colouring of the zones.

The Situation after World War II

Before the construction of Chemko, Strážske was an agricultural village without even the status of a town. In 1950 it had 1,422 inhabitants⁷ while in 2001 the town recorded the peak of its demographic development with 4,474 inhabitants⁸. During World War II, the economic structure in Strážske was diverse. Most of the inhabitants were engaged in agriculture as smallholding peasants or labourers on the Széchényi estate, and a few inhabitants worked as craftsmen and labourers in local businesses. These included the Mineral Oil and Crude Oil Refinery (Rafinéria minerálnych olejov a naftových vrtov) and the Cardboard Factory (Továrňa na kryciu lepenku)⁹. However, these enterprises were destroyed during the battles in the village and were not restored after the Second

ORIGINAL URBAN STRUCTURE OF THE VILLAGE OF STRÁŽSKE (1950S)

PŮVODNÁ URBÁNNÁ ŠTRUKTÚRA V OBCI STRÁŽSKE (50. ROKY 20. STOROČIA)

Source: Adam, J., 2008, p. 94



DIAGRAM OF THE URBAN STRUCTURE IN 1950 – BEFORE THE CONSTRUCTION OF CHEMKO

SCHÉMA URBÁNNEJ ŠTRUKTÚRY V ROKU 1950 – PRED VÝSTAVBOU N. P. CHEMKO

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World War. In the buildings of the former refinery, grain warehouses were built for Strážske and the surrounding villages¹⁰.

During military conflict in 1945, many buildings in Strážske were damaged or destroyed, including housing (35 houses damaged), but the urban structure slowly began to recover. The typical urban structure of single-family dwellings was concentrated along Mierová Street (current name), Vihorlatská Street, 1. Mája Street and Alexander Dubček Square (námestie A. Dubčeka, then the Square of Builders – Nám. Budovateľov). Along Mierová Street, a chestnut alley led to a historical park with an originally Baroque and later Secessionist manor house serving as a primary school after the war. To the west of the family houses was the ruined refinery complex and behind it, the railway line with the station. There were 2 churches: the Roman Catholic Church of the Ascension of the Lord and the Greek Catholic Church of the Ascension of the Lord. In the village of Krivošňany, then still an independent municipality but later administratively merged with Strážske, the family houses were concentrated around the village square with the church. The area of today's Chemko complex area was still arable land, which provided the citizens of Strážske a living without any indication of the future industrialization of the town.

Socialist Industrialization and the Construction of n. e. Chemko Strážske

The economic disparities between the Slovak and Czech parts of the interwar First Czechoslovak Republic were already enormous, and were only worsened by the greater war damages suffered by Slovakia (e.g., the German army looting machinery and supplies from factories, destruction of transport and technical infrastructure, more than 58% of villages witnessing damage to their housing units)¹¹. As Slovakia accounted for only 8% of industry (per share of workers) in the First Republic¹², the Communist Party had to intervene forcefully, as the basic idea of socialist planning was equality¹³. Slovakia's new economic direction was "inevitably connected with strengthening the share of industry in the economic structure"¹⁴. Industrialization thus became a tool for constructing a socialist society transformed into five-year plans¹⁵.

Significant economic differences also existed between individual regions of Slovakia. Firstly, the greatest industrial development was in the western and central regions of Upper and Lower Považie, Pohronie, Upper Ponitrie and the city of Bratislava, where more than half of Slovakia's industrial production was concentrated¹⁶. Therefore, the government developed a more detailed plan for the industrialization of eastern Slovakia¹⁷ with the building of a metallurgical base and extensive expansion of the chemical industry. The priority of the Communist Party became "equalizing the standard of living of the inhabitants of the state"¹⁸. Since there were no large industrial enterprises extant in Strážske that could be nationalized and further developed, at the IX. congress of the Communist Party on the industrialization of Slovakia and the tasks set for the 1st five-year plan, it was decided to establish a new national enterprise, n. e. Chemko Strážske¹⁹. The town was chosen because of its good railway connection, its geographical location relatively close to the Soviet Union (supplier of primary raw materials), proximity to a strong watercourse and enough cheap labour (from an agrarian background).

The "birth certificate" of n. e. Chemko places the day of its establishment on August 1, 1952, and construction began that year on previous farmland, west of the built-up area of the village. In order to supply construction and assembly works, another national enterprise was established, Chemkostav, which later became the contractor for most of the state-constructed buildings in Strážske, as well as in eastern Slovakia²⁰. The date for the start of trial operation at Chemko was set for December 31, 1954, but the construction work did not proceed according to plan. The first trial operation began on December 31, 1955²¹ and the first products – formalin and utropin - were produced a year later²², when Chemko finally started proper operation.

The railway divided the town into two main parts: the functionally and spatially defined industrial area in the west and the urban structure itself in the east. From this point onward, functional zoning divided the town into the town centre, the housing areas and industrial areas and agricultural cooperatives at the outer borders of the built-up area. The need to provide housing for new chemical works employees as well as temporary construction workers was to be met by the construction of the first housing estate in Strážske – the Okružná housing estate. The chosen location for its construction was northeast of the village centre, at that time on its outer edge. Another quick solution for providing new housing was the transformation of the former barracks on Dubček Square into a collective house (slobodáreň). New public facilities such as Cinema Chemik

DIAGRAM OF THE URBAN STRUCTURE – 1950S, BEGINNING OF THE CONSTRUCTION OF CHEMKO

SCHÉMA URBÁNEJ ŠTRUKTÚRY – 50. ROKY, ZAČIATOK VÝSTAVBY N. P. CHEMKO

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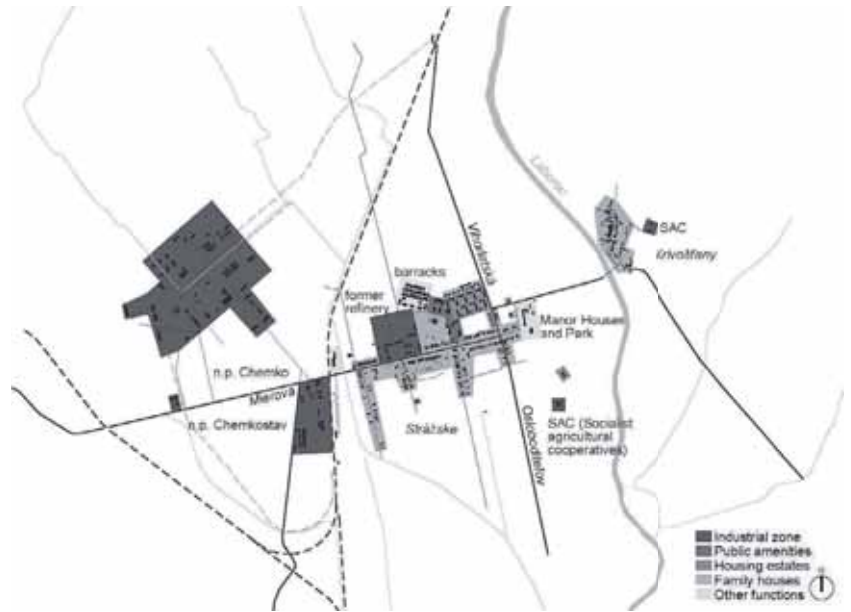
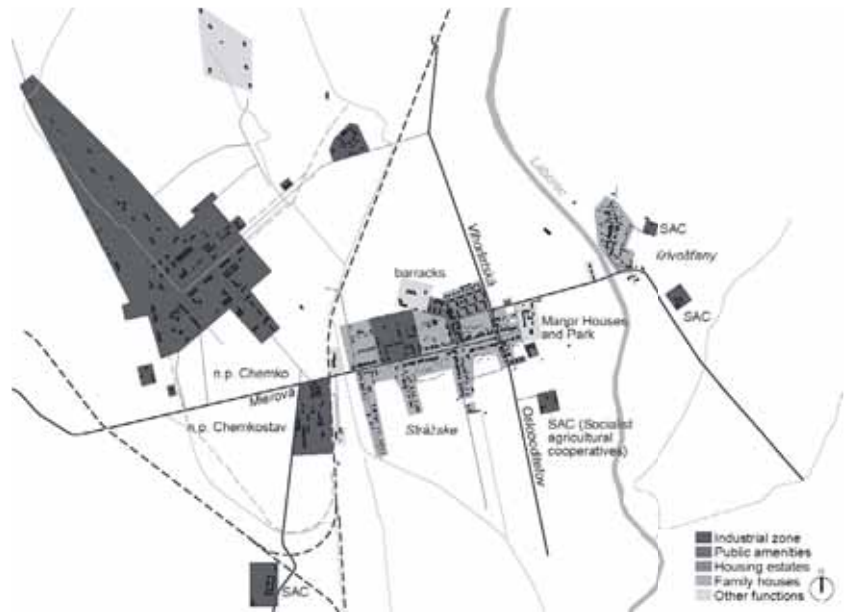


DIAGRAM OF THE URBAN STRUCTURE – 1960S, BUILDING THE CITY CENTRE

SCHÉMA URBÁNEJ ŠTRUKTÚRY – 60. ROKY, VÝSTAVBA MESTSKÉHO CENTRA

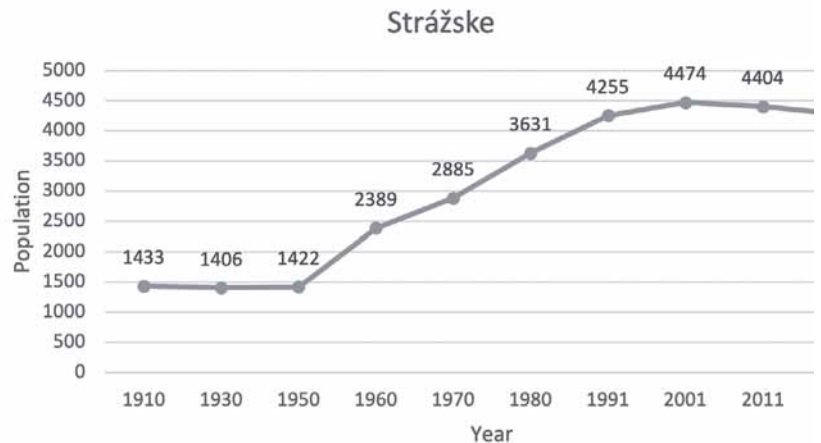
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POPULATION GROWTH FROM 1910 TO THE PRESENT

POPULAČNÝ RAST OD ROKU 1910 AŽ PO SÚČASNOŠŤ

Source of data Zdroj dát: SO SR, 2022





VIEW OF CINEMA CHEMIK AND THE ENTERPRISE CLUB OF REVOLUTIONARY TRADE UNION MOVEMENT IN THE FOREGROUND, AND IN THE BACKGROUND THE OKRUŽNÁ HOUSING ESTATE (LEFT) AND APARTMENT BUILDINGS ON DRUŽSTEVNÁ STREET (RIGHT)

POHLAD NA KINO CHEMIK A ZÁVODNÝ KLUB ROH (REVOLUČNÉHO ODBOROVÉHO HNUZIA) V POPREDÍ A VZADU SÍDLISKO OKRUŽNÁ (VLAVO) A BYTOVÉ DOMY NA DRUŽSTEVNEJ ULICI (VPRAVO)

Source Zdroj: MARKOVIČ, Ján. 1977. Chemko národný podnik Strážske: nositeľ významenia Za zásluhy o výstavbu: 1952 – 1977. Košice: Východoslovenské vydavateľstvo

(Kino Chemik) and a temporary kindergarten building arose near the square. The construction of single-family dwellings helped to supply the necessary housing units and was often quicker than construction of housing estates. Strážske's development was slow, and the construction of housing estates and public amenities had a single goal - to support the development of the chemical industry, Chemko Strážske. Economic and spatial development was reflected by an increase in the population, which rose to 2389 during the decade of 1950s – 1960s (1960). This figure also matches the national evidence that from the 1950s to 1961, the biggest population growth (50%) was in villages and towns with population from 2000 to 5000²³. Population movement was directly supported by the communist regime, which aimed to increase the percentage of the urban population in Czechoslovakia by concentrating investments and development in more rural regions²⁴.

Housing Estate Construction and Social Policy

In general, the urbanization of agricultural areas and the transformation of peasants into factory workers were considered the priority of many communist states and the policies they termed rationalization²⁵. In consequence, industrialization became a tool for manifesting the desired transformation. For the Communist Party, the main aim was not only to solve the housing crisis, paradoxically exacerbated by the rapid industrialization, but also to manipulate public opinion toward a positive image of the high living standard of the working class under the Communist regime²⁶. Because of high quantitative demand for newly built housing units, housing became an industrial product supporting development of heavy industry and creating the “material values” of society²⁷. Also, housing served as a sort of motivational tool to reward the best performance in the workplace: an incentive to increase the performance of workers, who were allocated the best accommodation on the basis of their performance, thus simultaneously creating “upper and lower classes” and ending the equality promoted by the Communists²⁸. The high level of industrialization and typification was also reflected in housing construction. The original standardized model was based on Slovak rural housing, as an ideal prototype of standardized simple dwellings²⁹. In Strážske, however, the situation soon shifted from the standardized family farmhouse to the standardized apartment building. In the 1950s, the Okružná housing estate consisted of two-storey gable-roofed brick apartment blocks without elevators, containing small-sized apartments with individual sanitary facilities. Later, in the 1970s, housing estates were mostly constructed using prefabricated concrete panel construction in the form of 6 to 8-storey apartment buildings with an elevator and 2 to 3-room apartments with their own sanitary facilities.

The construction of a large chemical plant in a previously agricultural region was not possible without building the necessary infrastructure such as the “associated” functions of industry: housing, public amenities, cultural facilities, and recreational facilities. At the time of the construction

A VIEW OF THE COLLECTIVE HOUSE ON DUBČEK SQUARE

POHLAD NA SLOBODÁREŇ NA NÁMESTÍ A. DUBČEKA

Source Zdroj: DROTÁR, Michal and GRMOLCOVÁ, Gabriela. 1982. Chemko národný podnik Strážske 1952 – 1982. Nositeľ radu práce. Košice: Východoslovenské vydavateľstvo, p. 38



of Chemko, the Okružná estate was still under construction and the first four of all housing blocks were put into use in 1955³⁰. The apartments were mainly given to workers with families who moved here for work from across the entire territory of Czechoslovakia, but also local workers. Workers without families lived in collective houses – dormitory-like housing, with rooms for 2 and more persons and shared sanitary facilities. For these purposes, the main building of the barracks on Dubček Square was rebuilt into a collective house (including a new hotel part for 57 guests) and three new collective houses were also built near the football stadium³¹. Another type of temporary accommodation for factory workers in the later period was the worker’s hostel on Dubček Square – Hostel Chemik (Ubytovňa Chemik) (finished in 1980). Accommodation for Chemko workers was also allocated to a large extent in Michalovce and partially in Humenné, as the district towns and centres of Upper (Humenné) and Lower (Michalovce) Zemplín. A large part of the population during construction and afterwards was made up of temporary workers, as evidenced by the situation in 1968, when Strážske had 2,648 inhabitants and up to 1,500 temporarily accommodated persons³². In the next decades, the construction of apartment buildings proceeded on previously cleared land, when from the beginning of the 1970s six 7-storey apartment buildings were built between Mierová Street and Komenského Street and four 8-storey and two 6-storey buildings on Vihorlatská Street, thus ending the construction of housing estates in Strážske. The ownership of the apartments was shared between Chemko, the District Housing Cooperative, state property and State Forests.

In the socialist city, the housing estates were socially mixed with a high proportion of young families³³, corresponding to the wider demographic development in Strážske. However, the society in the housing estates was “significantly differentiated according to occupation and age”, which was typical for industrial cities, where residents moved from the whole region³⁴. In the years 1955 – 1957, the state built a temporary kindergarten, a health centre, and a day-care centre. A year later, a new shopping centre³⁵, the first post office building and the Cinema Chemik were built. At the beginning of the 1960s, due to a lack of qualified labour, the Industrial High School of Chemistry was established in Strážske, though it was relocated to Humenné four years later³⁶. This move confirmed that even though Strážske was growing economically and spatially, Humenné was the natural centre of the region, even though it was less industrially developed at that time.

Transformation of an Agricultural Village into a Socialist Industrial Town

More than a decade after the full operation of Chemko was launched, the transformation of the urban structure of the village of Strážske was still continuing. In order to transform an agricultural village into a socialist industrial town, the process of “reconstruction” had to take place. In actuality, the term reconstruction meant the demolition of the original urban structure and the construction of the new one to ensure the desired “rationalization and modernization” and additionally to

SULFURIC ACID PRODUCTION PLANT AND ACID DUMP (LEFT), PART OF THE AMMONIA PRODUCTION PLANT (RIGHT)

ZÁVOD NA VÝROBU KYSELINY SÍROVEJ A SKLÁDKA KYSELINY (VĽAVO), ČASŤ ZÁVODU NA VÝROBU ČPAVKU (VPRAVO).

Source: Drotár, M. and Grmolcová, G., 1982, p. 35



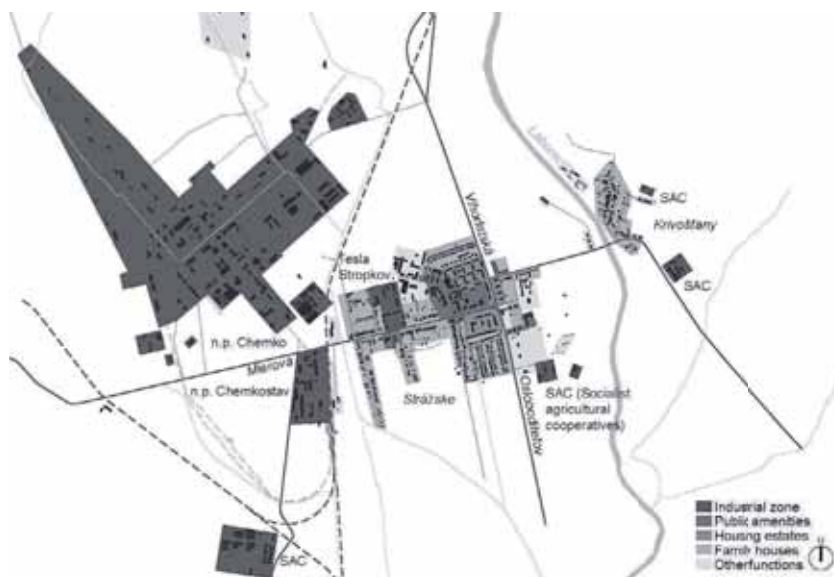
establish and maintain authority as was common in many socialist states³⁷. To begin a new era of urban development in Strážske, the original family houses in the section from Vihorlatská Street to Dubček Square were demolished, freeing space for new construction in the city centre. In total, almost 80 original family houses were demolished³⁸.

In the first decade, Chemko experienced many problems with production, work efficiency and construction, but by the early 1970s Chemko had consolidated its position as a chemical giant in Czechoslovakia. The inevitable expansion of the product portfolio brought further construction to the Chemko complex. First, in 1959, the products expanded to the production of the infamous polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) as intermediates for manufacturing paints and varnishes³⁹. In 1965, construction continued on an oxygen and compressor plant and a year later on a nitrogen and sulfuric acid plant. Later in the 1970s and 1980s, work continued toward the intensification of production, as evidenced by the introduction as products of Diakol II and Formalin IV⁴⁰. Changes in the urban fabric are no less visible in the Chemkostav complex, which grew along with the demand for construction development in Chemko, the town of Strážske, and eastern Slovakia in general.

DIAGRAM OF THE URBAN STRUCTURE IN 1989 – THE 1980S, FROM VILLAGE TO TOWN

SCHÉMA URBÁNNEJ ŠTRUKTÚRY V ROKU 1989 – 80. ROKY, OD OBCE K MESTU

Author Autor: Romana Hajduková, 2022





VIEW OF THE SHOPPING CENTRE IN STRÁŽSKOM NA DUBČEK SQUARE

POHLAD NA OBCHODNÝ DOM V STRÁŽSKOM NA NÁMESTÍ A. DUBČEKA

Source Zdroj: JANTO, Jozef. 1972. 20 rokov n. p. Chemko Strážske. Bratislava: Tatran, p. 43



CURRENT VIEW OF DUBČEK SQUARE AND THE SHOPPING CENTRE

POHLAD NA NÁMESTIE A. DUBČEKA A NÁKUPNÉ CENTRUM V SÚČASNOSTI

Source Zdroj: Romana Hajduková, 2021

After the demolition of the original urban structure, the centre of Strážske was slowly transformed through new development. Typically for the socialist period, the favoured forms were free-standing buildings for public amenities and panel apartment buildings set in a broad open space, often not respecting the original street line and spatial composition. New development of public amenities was concentrated on the eastern side of Dubček Square, where the buildings of the post office, shopping centre and the collective houses were finished. A larger cinema hall, a café and a restaurant were added to the original Cinema Chemik building, and of course, the works club of the official state union, the Revolutionary Trade Union Movement (Závodný klub ROH) was built. This organization brought together various clubs and groups (folk dances, etc.) where Chemko employees spent their leisure time while building the local communities⁴¹. Chemko thus slowly became the central element of the citizens' lives, providing job opportunities, housing, cultural enjoyment, yet all the while using these attractions as a tool for ensuring the socialist order's vaunted "equality, harmony and authority". To the south of the original city park, other amenities were built: an elementary school and a kindergarten. South-west of the city, the Pláne Socialist Agricultural Cooperative – SAC (Jednotné roľnícke družstvo JRD) was established for pig breeding, and south of the city park, another SAC was established on the site of the former sheep farm.

While the urbanization of Strážske began with the rapid construction of apartments, the 1960s were dominated by single-family dwellings. The construction of apartments continued in the 1970s, but the development of single-family dwellings still dominated. This type of development was supported by Chemko as an alternative to the provision of employee housing⁴². The notable dominance of the single-family housing development compared to the Czech situation was rooted in the war damages and speed of development: Slovakia had more significant housing damage than Czechia after WWII, causing higher demand. Compounding the situation was the faster pace of individual development (more than half of all newly built housing units) compared to the construction of housing estates⁴³. The rurality of Strážske was not only preserved but also enhanced. This difference may be also related to the characteristic relative underdevelopment of Slovakia in the field of industrialization and the traditional tendency of the population to live in smaller settlements⁴⁴.

The construction boom led to an administrative merging with the surrounding municipalities, when in 1960 the municipality of Krivošľany was annexed to Strážske and 8 years later Strážske was granted the status of a town⁴⁵. However, the economic and spatial growth did not significantly affect the inhabitants of Krivošľany during socialism with the exception of the establishment of two SACs in the eastern part of the village.

The most famous industrial town in Slovakia regarded as a "greenfield" development – Partizánske (formerly Baťovany) – was not actually on unused land. The Baťa corporation transferred shoe production from Bošany to Šimonovany⁴⁶, later renamed after the company to Baťovany. Many Slovak industrial towns followed the same pattern, including the villages that were

transformed into urban districts through socialist industrialization. The premise of the village-to-town transformation is crucial for us, since while the obvious economic centres and previously industrially developed areas had a necessary infrastructure, the rural areas were forced to create such a development.

A select list of examples of villages that turned into small industrial towns in eastern Slovakia includes: Hanušovce nad Topľou, Giraltovce, Spišské Vlachy, Veľký Šariš, Čierna nad Tisou and other. Towns without an economic base before socialist industrialization were Hanušovce nad Topľou and Giraltovce, where brick factories were established (Východoslovenské tehelne n.p. Košice, Duklianske tehelne). By contrast, Spišské Vlachy and Veľký Šariš were market and crafts centres with their population peak in the 20th century, but also became industrialized in the second half of the 20th century (Spišský Priemyselný Podnik v Levoči – Závod Spišské Vlachy and Východoslovenské pivovary a sladovne n.p. Košice). Čierna nad Tisou fulfilled the role of a railway traffic transport hub. Compared to the Chemko area in Strážske, the industrial areas in mentioned towns are spatially proportionate to the town itself, except in Čierna nad Tisou with its extensive area of railway lines. The urban structure in Hanušovce nad Topľou and Giraltovce is very similar to Strážske: the reconstructed town centre with public amenities, and apartment buildings is surrounded by housing zones and on the outskirts are industrial areas. Spišské Vlachy and Veľký Šariš have retained their rural character with industrial areas situated on the outskirts. However, Čierna nad Tisou, the youngest of these towns, has its urban structure mostly consisting of apartment buildings, public amenities and one small housing zone. When we compare the type of industries established, there is only one heavy industry enterprise – the machine works in Spišské Vlachy⁴⁷; moreover, the brick factories in Hanušovce nad Topľou and Giraltovce are no longer in operation. As we can observe, the process of transformation of a village into a town during the socialist period was not exceptional, especially in the agrarian rural areas of eastern Slovakia. For instance, the establishment of a chemical factory in a previously industrially underdeveloped area was used as a way of promoting the harmony between the environment and industrial production as a base for the ideal socialist city. As Bernhardt⁴⁸ writes, the image of “deer grazing behind the pipeline” became the embodiment of such harmony in the East German town of Schwedt, where a chemical factory was also established.

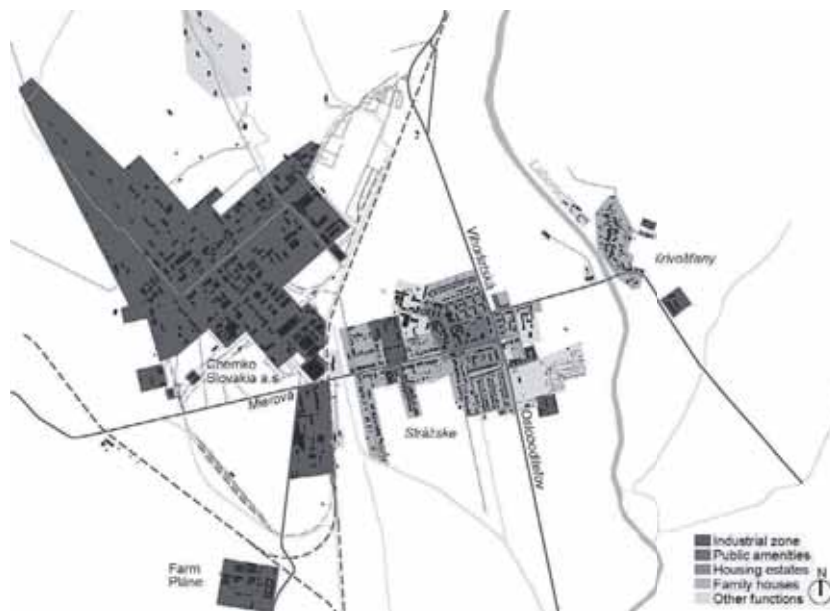
Further Industrial and Spatial Development

Investments in the 1970s and 1980s focused mainly on improving the transport and technical infrastructure, public amenities, and the housing situation. In 1973, builders completed the construction of 6 and 8-storey panel apartment buildings near Vihorlatská street, and the construction of housing estates, along with the gasification of the streets, continued in the following years⁴⁹. At the end

DIAGRAM OF THE URBAN STRUCTURE – EARLY 2000S, EMERGING BROWNFIELDS

SCHÉMA URBÁNEJ ŠTRUKTÚRY – ZAČIATOK 21. STOROČIA, VZNIK BROWNFIELDOV

Author Autor: Romana Hajduková, 2022



of 1980, a total of 1,123 apartments were in use in Strážske. The collective housing for workers called Hostel Chemik had three residential blocks and a 1-storey part with public amenities. This panel construction with small flats, mostly studio apartments, was built to quickly supply the missing housing units and provide temporary accommodation⁵⁰. However, there was still a large amount of development in the single-family housing zones, especially because of the construction speed: north of Okružná housing estate and south of the apartment buildings on Mierová Street, other houses were built mainly on vacant land within the built-up area.

A kindergarten with a playground, a new shopping centre, an Otex clothing store and a House of Services (Dom služieb) were built between Dubček Square and Vihorlatská Street, where a vacant plot remained after the demolition. In this period, the popular Chemik Cinema underwent its first renovation to expand its capacity. In this way, the town and the enterprise gradually provided public amenities with the main increase in the opportunities for sports and leisure activities. Between 1976 and 1978, new sports facilities were opened in Strážske for the first time: a mini golf course, the ice rink and bowling alley, and the summer swimming pool began construction.

Of course, construction also continued at the Chemko complex to intensify production. Though Chemko Strážske was the largest but not the only factory in the town, together with Chemkostav, these two state enterprises were the only drivers of the town's economic development for many years and can be considered as paving the way for the later establishment or location of small and medium-sized state enterprise branches. Most of them were established in the 1980s, including the automotive service of the District Enterprise of Local Industry in Michalovce (Auto-servis Okresného podniku miestneho priemyslu Michalovce), a branch of the Eastern Slovak People's Automobile Association in Prešov (Východoslovenské ľudové autodružstvo Prešov), a branch of the Tesla Stropkov electronics factory, a branch plant of the Bratislava Peat Plant (Rašelinové závody Bratislava), Technomat and others^{51, 52}.

Post-Socialist Transformation in Strážske

The transition from a planned economy to a market economy after the Velvet Revolution influenced the further development of industrial entities and the urban structure of Strážske. After 1989, Chemko was still the largest chemical plant in eastern Slovakia, but the formerly state-owned national enterprise Chemko Strážske was transformed into a joint-stock company on April 1, 1996⁵³. Chemko was divided into several companies operating in different fields under the name Chemko Slovakia, a. s., which soon found themselves unable to compete in the free market, which led to the inevitable layoffs of hundreds of workers. The smaller enterprises founded in Strážske since the 1980s faced similar issues, and many of them ceased operations shortly after the transformation. Currently, among the enterprises founded during the socialist period, only Chemko is still

**VIEW OF THE WORKERS'
HOTEL, HOSTEL CHEMIK,
WHICH CURRENTLY SERVES AS
SOCIAL HOUSING WITH SMALL
APARTMENTS**

POHLAD NA ROBOTNÍCKY
HOTEL, UBYTOVNŮ CHEMIK,
KTORÝ V SÚČASNOSTI SLUŽÍ AKO
SOCIÁLNE BÝVANIE S MALÝMI
BYTMI

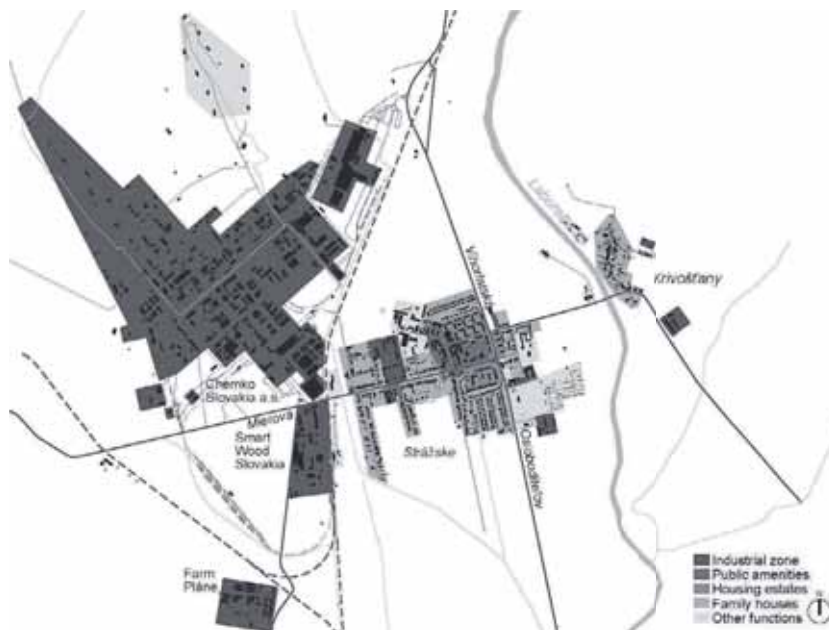
Author Autor: Romana Hajduková, 2021



DIAGRAM OF THE URBAN STRUCTURE – THE PRESENT

SCHÉMA URBÁNEJ ŠTRUKTÚRY – SÚČASNOSŤ

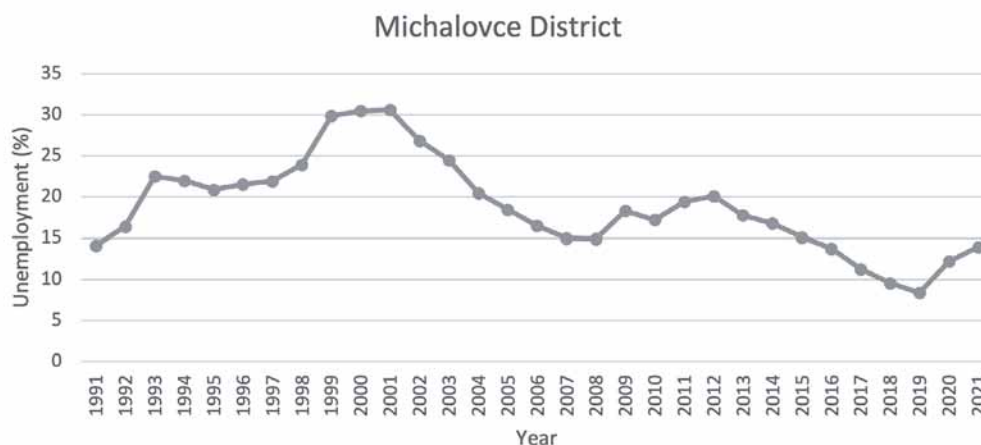
Author Autor: Romana Hajduková, 2022



DEVELOPMENT OF THE REGISTERED UNEMPLOYMENT RATE FROM 1991 TO 2021

VÝVOJ ZISTENEJ NEZAMESTNANOSTI OD ROKU 1991 DO ROKU 2021

Source of data Zdroj dát: Centre for Work, Social Affairs and Family, 2022



operating. Unemployment was officially zero until 1989, but the following years showed a sharp increase in the Michalovce district from 2.9% in 1990 to 14.1% in 1991. In the following decades, unemployment fluctuated, with the historical peak in 2001 when it reached 30.59% and the historical low in 2019 with 8.40%⁵⁴. This unfavourable development has led to massive migration from Strážske and the entire region, resulting in urban shrinkage.

Socio-economic changes have had a significant impact on the development of the urban structure, which has shifted from the completion of a few buildings to the emergence of brownfields in the last three decades after the 1989 transformation. During the first years after the revolution, several buildings were completed: reconstructions and construction of new roads and finishing the Municipal Office building on Dubček Square. After January 1993, the construction of a swimming pool and a new bus station near the town centre continued. Chemko began to divest itself of its assets and handed over all civic and recreational amenities to the city on a rent-free basis, and later transferred the company flats and commercial buildings to private or municipal ownership. The original 'Square of Builders' (Námestie budovateľov) was renamed Dubček Square in 1994⁵⁵.

The turbulent economic development in the first decade after the transformation dampened the construction boom and at the beginning of the 21st century the urban structure in Strážske had relatively stabilized into its present form. The largest interventions were in the Chemko complex,

where development focused on increasing the efficiency of production. In the urban structure of the town itself, new development was limited almost exclusively to reconstructions of single-family dwellings. The first brownfield areas appeared after the cessation of industrial production, especially on in the Chemkostav complex and the former Refinery area. The unfavourable economic and demographic development is also confirmed by the low activity in new development in the last two decades. The only major investment was the establishment of a small steel plant – Slovakia Steel Mills. Construction began in 2010, but after only few years of operation the company went bankrupt. In 2018, the steel holding Max Eicher bought the company, but has not resumed production⁵⁶. Currently, most of the private and public investments includes the reconstruction and maintenance of existing buildings.

Until 1989, development concentrated on functions that were strongly related to industrial development and the promotion of a high standard of living for the working class. These became redundant after the revolution and were abandoned or transformed into other function. The Chemik Hostel was transformed into an apartment building with small-sized apartments for low-income tenants, the works club of the Revolutionary Trade Union Movement was transformed into a Leisure Centre and the House of Culture and the collective house on Dubček Square became a social services home. A decreasing number of children manifested itself in the closing of kindergartens and nurseries. However, these buildings have a high maintenance cost, forcing the town administration to sell its property. Some of them were later rented out, but most remain unused. Likewise, many other objects have not been successfully transformed and are partially or completely unused. Recently, the original building of the manor house was demolished, and the vacant land was divided into parcels for the construction of family houses. The later Secessionist manor is abandoned despite the intention of transforming it into a retirement home. Buildings in the areas of the former refinery, Chemkostav, the military barracks and others are also neglected⁵⁷. By contrast, even after the transformation, the urban part of Krivošľany has hardly changed its appearance and still has its rural character, though the agricultural cooperative in Krivošľany underwent many changes and is currently unused.

Chemko announced a mass layoff of 75 employees at the end of 2021⁵⁸, due to financial problems. The company faces a high risk of bankruptcy, which may cause a further increase in unemployment in the district, as well as the creation of a huge area of brownfields. An even more pressing problem is the heavy environmental burden posed by the Poša sludge pond and the Chemko complex itself. A new stimulus for the Strážske's economy can be the investment of a French woodworking company – Smart Wood Slovakia, which will settle in the northern part of the former Chemkostav grounds and employ about 100 employees⁵⁹.

Conclusions and Discussion

Before 1952, Strážske was an agricultural village which, after the decision to establish n. e. Chemko, quickly transformed into a modern socialist industrial town. The industrialization of a former agricultural village without a strong industrial background led to unexpected population and spatial growth. The inevitable transformation of urban structure was closely connected to promoting the high standard of working-class living conditions under the Communist regime. However, the revolution in 1989 was the starting point for many unfavourable socio-economic changes, manifested in the emergence of brownfields, along with economic and population decline, characteristics typical for post-industrial shrinking cities such as Strážske.

The original image of Strážske changed radically from a village to a post-socialist industrial town in the decades after the establishment of n. e. Chemko Strážske. The town area is dominated by the extensive industrial area of Chemko and the former Chemkostav complex. The two separate parts of the town are the industrial area to the west and town's urban structure to the east, kept firmly divided by the railway. Functional zoning is typical, with public amenities concentrated in the town centre, surrounded by apartment buildings and housing zones.

Strážske, despite acquiring town status in 1968, has an urban structure of simple single-family houses and largely preserved its rural character. The dominance of single-family dwellings was caused by the high demand for housing, which was supplemented by quicker individual development. Since the housing crisis was constantly present in these years, many different measures were taken to solve it. Housing was provided for Chemko employees and their families in apartment

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buildings in Strážske, but also in the district town of Michalovce and partly in Humenné. Employees without families and temporary workers had accommodation in collective houses and, after 1980, in the Chemik Hostel. Chemko itself supported the construction of single-family dwellings. From the mentioned facts, we can presume that despite the quick economic development, there was no ambition to create a regional centre due to the geographical location of Strážske between the two centres of the Zemplín region. The urbanisation of Strážske was supported by concentration of public amenities on Dubček Square, such as department stores, services, educational and medical facilities, and specific functions formed in industrial towns during socialism: the Závodný klub ROH (works club of the Revolutionary Trade Union Movement), the Cinema Chemik, the Chemik Hostel and collective housing. Every development project in town had a single goal – to support the industrial development, but also create equality and harmony and to establish and maintain authority.

The planned economic and spatial growth was significantly interrupted by the revolution in 1989 and later socio-economic changes. Chemko was transformed into a joint-stock company and its poor competitiveness on a free market caused a mass reduction in production and layoffs. The peak in numbers of unemployment was in 2001, after which we see a continuous decrease in the population in Strážske. The low quality and attractiveness of job opportunities as well as the polluted environment have led to migration. Other smaller enterprises, established mainly in the 1980s, have not survived the transformation and became brownfield areas. Low attractiveness for investors is paralleled by low demand for new investments in industry, further confirmed by the rapid construction and even more rapid bankruptcy of the company Steel Mills Slovakia, a.s..

The transformation of a village into an industrial town was considered a tool to increase the ratio of the urban population under the communist regime. Unfortunately, previously undeveloped industrial areas had no prospect of becoming economically strong, which after 1989 led to their decline.

Due to declining population and global aging, kindergartens and day-care centres are often abandoned or transformed into social services homes. Reduced purchasing power is the reason for the closure of many shops and services, particularly in the town's centre and the closure of Cinema Chemik due to low demand. Their partial or total abandonment is causing the gradual decay of the city centre. Since it is uncertain whether the new economic impulse from the French "stick factory" may help local economic development, therefore the questions arise: Is a change in the primary functional focus of the town and the region relevant? How to restart the urban development of economically stagnant or declining cities in Slovakia?

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