

Chapters in the History of Karlovy Vary.

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1. The Spa Founded by Emperor Charles IV.

The origin and development of Karlovy Vary has always been inseparably linked with the beneficial effects of its local thermal mineral springs. They have marked its history, architecture, economy, and its entire genius loci. The popular legend about the discovery of the local springs in the middle of the 14th century by Charles IV, King of Bohemia and the Holy Roman Emperor, while deer hunting has to be relegated to the realm of fantasy. The establishment of a little spa town on the confluence of the Ohře (Eger) and Teplá (Warm) Rivers during the reign of Charles IV surely wasn't such a random and romantic enterprise as told in the old legend, but it was the almost expected developmental consequence of a place that had been long known for its curative and cultic traditions. The exact date the town was founded is unknown. The beginnings of a permanent settlement at the thermal site should be placed sometime around the year 1349. However, traces of man's presence in the vicinity of Karlovy Vary are much older. Archaeological explorations discovered evidence of several settlements situated in the current territory of the town that date back to prehistoric times. It has been clearly shown that people already populated the immediate surroundings of Karlovy Vary in the 13th century. It is presumed that they were already well aware of the healing effects of Karlovy Vary's thermal waters and were using them for treatment.

The written history of the thermal town commences on the 14th of August 1370, when Emperor Charles IV granted the existing settled location freedoms and rights, the same freedoms and rights as the nearby royal town of Locket had been enjoying. Legend has it that before this, in 1358, the monarch had a hunting castle built in Karlovy Vary (today's Castle Tower).

The privileged position of Karlovy Vary as one of the major Bohemian spa towns is supported by numerous other privileges bestowed upon it, continuously confirmed by Bohemian monarchs up until 1858. However, it is necessary to add that Karlovy Vary citizens often had to tenaciously defend these privileges. Great difficulties set in for Karlovy Vary and its autonomous settled area during the reign of the Šlik countship in Locket between 1434 – 1547. These feudal lords usurped the right to wilfully interfere in the longstanding jurisdiction and privileges of the thermal town. They more or less only respected the free selection of Karlovy Vary town councillors and endeavoured to limit the other rights of the town in their

favour. The endless and often arbitrated in Prague court disputes between Karlovy Vary citizens and Locket margraves culminated on 6 February 1503 in the so-called Bloody Wedding. On that day, when the wedding banquet of Jilji of Štampach, who was marrying a daughter of the Locket margrave, was taking place in the Karlovy Vary castle, the wedding guests got into an argument and a bloody fight ensued, during which many people were injured.

2. Catastrophes under the Signs of Water, Fire and War.

The Šlik control of Karlovy Vary via a right of lien ended in 1547 when the spa became the property of the Royal Chamber of Bohemia. Even after this, for several centuries, Karlovy Vary administratively fell under the jurisdiction of Locket, which was the seat of the Regional Authorities.

From medieval times to the close of the 16th century, Karlovy Vary spa treatment consisted of primarily long baths. Drinking treatment at Vřídlo was markedly promoted only at the impetus of Doctor Václav Payer, who published the first expert book on treatment in Karlovy Vary in Leipzig in 1522. Besides bathing, he also advised drinking the mineral spring water in the book. After the year 1600, other ardent promoters of drinking treatment at Karlovy Vary were local doctors Michael Reudenius and Johann Stephan Strobelberger. During the 17th century drinking treatment began to predominate over bathing and culminated in extremes, when around the year 1750, in some cases, patients had to drink 50-70 cups of thermal waters daily.

The prosperity and urban development of the spa were fatefully affected at the end of the 16th and beginning of the 17th centuries by two natural disasters. On 9th May 1582 Karlovy Vary was devastated by a great flood. On Friday 13th August 1604 the town was completely destroyed by fire, during which 99 out of 102 houses burned down.

Even Karlovy Vary, as a spa with a privileged position, did not escape the ravages of the Thirty Years' War. During the war the town was subject to the rampages of armies, fires, diseases, and hunger.

The spa town experienced a short respite from the chaos of war and substantial financial income from accommodation and meal services during the visit of Albrecht of Valdštejn (Albrecht von Wallenstein). The renowned general of the Thirty Years' War, Duke of Friedland and Meklenburg, arrived in Karlovy Vary with a large entourage for a three-week spa treatment in May of 1630. The general's arrival in the spa was a spectacular event. The parade comprised of 50 noble six-in-hand coaches, 40 four-in-hand coaches,

and 10 plain six-in-hand coaches for servants. Nine hundred horses had to be stabled and fed. While we have quite detailed records of the culinary aspect of Wallenstein's stay, only vague information is available regarding his health problems or his treatment. However, it is certain that the general, also afflicted with syphilis, came to the Vřídlo to treat his gout.

After the Battle of White Mountain (1620), the Czech lands had to endure a long and difficult catholic reformation process. This was characterized by radical political and economic changes in society. Many feudal estates were confiscated. Karlovy Vary was also affected by economic restrictions imposed by the Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand II, who even revoked the town's ancient privileges as punishment for a lasting inclination to Lutheranism.

3. The Spa during the Baroque Period.

The turbulent period and unfavourable economic conditions of the Thirty Years' War mainly manifested themselves in an appreciable decline in the visit rate of the spa, affecting the overall economic growth of the town. The situation forced Karlovy Vary residents to seek other ways to earn a living besides the spa trade. As a result, four trades typical for Karlovy Vary gradually developed in the 17th century – the making of pewter, rifles, needles, and cutlery. A marked revival of the spa life in Karlovy Vary only occurred at the end of the 17th century due to the influx of rich noble visitors from the circles of the Saxon and later also Russian and Polish royal courts. The two visits of Peter the Great, Czar of Russia, who came to the spa in 1711 and 1712, greatly promoted Karlovy Vary.

Up until the close of the 17th century, Karlovy Vary retained its compact gothic character of a small provincial settlement with ports and the close proximity of houses around the Vřídlo. The town's dominant feature was the Gothic tower of the former hunting lodge of Charles IV standing on the rocks above the market place. In 1520, a Town Hall was built underneath the tower; next to it used to stand the municipal pharmacy; and opposite was the Hospital of the Holy Spirit built in 1531. The late-Gothic half-timbered Church of Mary Magdalene, first mentioned in 1485, used to stand on the right bank of the Teplá River above the Vřídlo. Around 1500 St. Andrew's Church was consecrated on the slope of the Hill "U tři křížů" (Three Roods Hill). Houses of the town were for the most part half-timbered with shingle roofs.

In 1707, Emperor Josef I confirmed all of Karlovy Vary's privileges, and he explicitly declared it a free royal town. In the first half of the 18th century Karlovy Vary was a favoured destination of the Habsburg royal family, especially by the Empress Maria Theresa.

The loyalty of the town to the Royal Court in Vienna positively resulted in financial subsidies for its urban development. The town council passed special municipal laws in 1719 governing the life in the spa town down to minute details. In 1739, a new Municipal Code “*Instructio politica*” was passed. In connection with the increasing spa trade, new community buildings and spa facilities were built; for example, Saský sál (Saxon Hall) was built in 1701, and Český sál (Bohemian Hall) in 1728. Later, the Grandhotel Pupp was built on the location of these halls. In 1711, the Mlýnské lázně (the Mill Spa), the very first public spa house in Karlovy Vary, was built on the site of today’s Mlýnský pramen (Mill Spring). At the beginning of the 18th century the town began to expand outward and houses were built on Stará Louka (Old Meadow), which became the heart of the social life of spa guests. In 1717, the spa town had its first modest theatre. Between 1732-1736 the new Baroque cathedral of St. Mary Magdalene, designed by the architect Kilian Ignaz Dienzenhofer, was built on the site of the former Gothic church.

Essential for the advancement and modernization of balneology in Karlovy Vary was the lifetime work of Dr David Becher (1725-1792), the most meritorious doctor of the town. He introduced a number of new treatment methods (drinking the water directly at the spring, therapeutic walks, balanced drinking and bathing cures, etc.) and he also contributed to the urban development of Karlovy Vary.

4. The Birth of the Modern Town after the Great Fire of 1759.

The promising development of the spa in the first half of the 18th century was abruptly interrupted on 23rd May 1759 by a catastrophic fire that destroyed 224 houses. The subsequent reconstruction of the burned down town was planned and generous. The former half-timbered houses were replaced with posh stone-built houses of several storeys with rich stucco facades and mostly gutter tile roofs. The ancient ports were not restored as they hindered urban development. An ever increasing number of spa visitors kept pouring in to the renovated charming town, filling the pockets of the local townsfolk so they could afford even more sumptuous house improvements leading to the ever better appearance of the town. The house improvements were also financed from the revenues of the spa tax implemented in 1795. The Mlýnské lázně (the Mill Bath) was rebuilt in 1762. In 1777, the modern Hall of the Hot Spring was opened in Karlovy Vary as a reflection of Dr Becher’s therapeutic principles emphasizing the importance of drinking the waters directly by the springs. Since 1764, also at the impetus of Dr Becher, the production and export of Vřídlo mineral salts has been taking place. The money acquired from the sales of these salts partially financed the construction of

a new stone-walled theatre in 1788. In 1791, the Poštovní dvůr (the Post Yard), a popular excursion destination of spa visitors, was built. Later on it was renowned for the concerts performed by the Joseph Labitzky orchestra and the musical performances of many other famous musicians.

By the end of 18th century, the most popular social centre of nobility became the Bohemian Hall (Český sál). Johann Georg Pupp, confectioner, purchased the building in 1775 thus laying down the foundation for the development of the ultimate restaurant and hotel establishment of Karlovy Vary - the Grandhotel Pupp. The growing spa visit rate motivated the town council to keep a register of spa visitors called "Kurlists". The first extant lists are from the end of 17th century. Until 1794 the Kurlists were handwritten. Starting in 1795 they were published in print.

Karlovy Vary acquired an extraordinary reputation during the Baroque period thanks to the superior skills of its local pewterers. During the 18th and first half of the 19th century their products were famous far beyond the Czech border. Karlovy Vary pewter-making reached its artistic and craftsmanship mastery in the second half of 18th century, especially during the rococo period. However, the end of that century saw the slow but inevitable decline of the fame of the pewterers' guild. The pewter trade could no longer keep up with the booming porcelain industry in the Karlovy Vary region and disappeared altogether sometime around 1850.

5. The Flowering of the Spa Trade Around 1800

In 1791, the Poštovní dvůr (the Post Yard), a popular excursion destination of spa visitors, was built by Josef Korb, the Karlovy Vary postmaster. Later on it was renowned for concerts performed by the spa orchestra conducted by Joseph Labitzky and his son August and the musical performances of many other world-renown musicians. A year after the Post Yard was built, the wooden colonnade of the Nový pramen (the New Spring) was built in 1792. It was the first structure of its kind in Karlovy Vary. It enabled spa guests to go to the springs even during bad weather. In 1811, the colonnade was reconstructed by Giessel, the master architect of the Dresden court, into the appearance depicted by the popular gravure by G. E. Opitz from 1812. Spa facilities in Karlovy Vary expanded in 1794 via the opening of the first modest steam-bath facility. 1788 was an important year for the development of social and cultural events in the spa. This was when the Schönfeld-Franieck Company opened a book printing shop in the Maltese Cross House at Stará louka (Old Meadow). The Franieck dynasty of printers and publishers had an important role in forming the cultural life of Karlovy Vary up

until 1945. Franz Franiček (1800-1859) was the best known member of the dynasty. In the time period after 1800, step by step, the access roads to Karlovy Vary started to improve, the appearance of the town grew ever more modern, and new spa amenities and facilities were built (e.g. the stone reinforced walls on the banks of the Teplá River, bridges, spring water catchments and the pavilions above them, colonnades, spa houses, parks and promenades in the woods, and new shops and restaurants). Deserving merit in the modernization of Karlovy Vary were the regional margraves Count Rudolf Chotek, Count František Antonín Kolowrat-Liebsteinsky, and most of all, Count Karel Chotek. In order to cover the costs of the maintenance and expansion of spa facilities, a special fee called the “spa tax” started being collected from guests in 1805. Exempted from this tax were doctors, low-ranking soldiers, children under the age of thirteen, servants, and poor people. Lower income tradesmen and businessmen, clerks, and farmers were eligible for a tax reduction. A major construction event for Karlovy Vary was the building of the so-called Prague Road between the villages of Hůrky and Rybáře between 1804-1811. At that time the new road, and especially its daring hairpin bends under Hůrky, was considered a technical wonder of road engineering. The construction of the modern state road initiated by Francis I of Austria cost 160,000 gold coins. An important addition to spa facilities was the new modern steam bath, created near the Vřídlo in 1825 at the impetus of Doctor Jean de Carro.

Between 1812-1847, four spa facilities for commoners were opened in Karlovy Vary – a hospital for poor foreigners, a hospital for servants and tradesmen, a military health facility, and a hospital for poor Jews. The hospitals were financed from foundations, subscriptions, gifts, fines, taxes, and government securities.

6. Goethe and Karlovy Vary

If we were to create an imaginary top-ten list of the most popular visitors to Karlovy Vary, then top honours would clearly go to the German poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. His name is inscribed in the cultural history of Karlovy Vary in golden letters. Just as Prague has its Franz Kafka, Karlovy Vary has its Goethe. Goethe’s cult takes on various forms here by the Vřídlo. It started not long after the poet’s death in 1832. Goethe’s relationship with Karlovy Vary and other West-Bohemian spa towns has been described, so far, in about 50 books, hundreds of expertises, and thousands of articles. The subject keeps inspiring more and more explorers. Travel agencies organize many trips each year in Goethe’s footsteps in West Bohemia. The reason for the undying admiration of Goethe is the poet’s fascination in the West Bohemian spa region, expressed in his poems, diary records, drawings, geological

studies, and passionate exploration of natural and historical beauties. During his spa stays in Karlovy Vary, he always found time to take trips to some interesting destinations, for example to the “Svatošské scaly” rock formations, to Locket, Andělská hora (Angel’s Mountain), Horní Slavkov and Jáchymov. He then included his findings and impressions in letters to his friends throughout Europe. This was excellent advertising for Bohemia. Goethe truly fell in love with Karlovy Vary and its environs. Well known is his statement that he could live only in Rome, Weimar or Karlovy Vary. Goethe visited the town of the Vřídlo 13 times between 1785-1823. In total he spent nearly 3 years of his life in Karlovy Vary. Many of Goethe’s literary works were born in Karlovy Vary. Karlovy Vary and Mariánské Lázně are also wedded to Goethe’s last emotional outburst. At the age of 74 he fell deeply in love with the nineteen-year old Ulrika von Levetzow. After he was politely refused by her in Karlovy Vary in 1823, after several years of friendly acquaintance, he returned to Weimar and never returned to Bohemia again. Goethe’s spa stays in Karlovy Vary are commemorated primarily by the five houses where he sojourned (Bílý zajíc, Mozart, Madrid, Tři mouřeníní, and Strauss). Goethe’s name is inscribed on many plaques throughout the town, there is his bust, and one of the most charming trails bears his name – Goethova stezka (Goethe’s Trail). Goethe admired Karlovy Vary so much that he considered settling down here. In 1807, he seriously contemplated the purchase of the Zlatá studna house (the Golden Well House) at the end of Stará louka Street, close to where Grandhotel Pupp stands today. In the end, cosmopolitan Goethe did not become a citizen of Karlovy Vary; however, due to his faithful affection for the town, he acquired the right of domicile and honorary citizenship of the town forever.

7. Karlovy Vary Pastimes, Pubs, Restaurants, Cafés, and Hotels.

The fact that cultural and social events are also an inseparable part of a pleasant spa stay was well known already in 17th and 18th centuries. That is how far back the oldest preserved records go regarding the social pastimes of local spa guests. This always included musical and dance performances, entertainment programmes, and festivities with jugglers, circus performers and fireworks. Sometimes the nobility passed time playing chess with live figures, at picnics in the country or by hunting. The ancient chronicles of the spa town describe a wide variety of local guests’ pastimes - in more or less good taste. Shortly after 1700 theatre shows were performed in Karlovy Vary during the summer seasons by strolling theatre companies, though sometimes their quality was quite poor. The history of the aristocratic pastimes in Karlovy Vary has been mapped by local archivist Dr Karl Ludwig. In his book “Alt-Karlsbad” (The Old Karlovy Vary) from 1920, he describes in detail the most

original and splendid festivities organized in Karlovy Vary by aristocratic visitors during the 17th –19th centuries. It is really interesting reading and one sometimes regrets that all the glory is long gone.

From the Middle Ages up to 18th century, noble spa visitors brought along their own chefs and confectioners. Local residents used to eat at home and for beer they went to pubs operated by citizens with a brewing license. Public eating establishments became more common in Karlovy Vary only starting in the second half of the 18th century. Until then only few modest eateries existed here. The oldest pub in Karlovy Vary called “U červeného vola” (At the Red Ox) was established by Hans Müller in 1612 at the impetus of the town council. It used to stand behind where the theatre building stands now. Around 1780 local confectioners began making the delicacy called “oplatky” (wafers).

By the end of the third decade of the 19th century, Karlovy Vary already had dozens of eateries, pubs, wine bars, cafés, and restaurants. Most of them were named after an animal with the tag “zlatý” (golden). The oldest eating establishments include the Černý medvěd (Black Bear), Zlatý vůl (Golden Ox), Veselý sedlák (Merry Farmer), Zlatý štít (Golden Shield), Zlatý lev (Golden Lion), Zlatý strom (Golden Tree), Ráj (Paradise), Jitřenka (Morning Star), and Zlatý slon (Golden Elephant). Karlovy Vary had a long tradition of community dance halls (Saxon Hall 1701, Bohemian Hall 1728) and garden restaurants (Malé Versailles (Little Versailles) 1770, Poštovní dvůr (Post Yard) 1791, and Myslivna (Forester’s Lodge) 1821).

The growing visit rate of the thermal spring town led to the building of new accommodation and eating establishments in the 19th century. Gastronomically typical for the spa town became excursion and garden restaurants, and also many cafés.

The greatest restaurant and hotel boom was triggered by the building of the railway to Cheb and Prague in 1870-1871, rapidly boosting the spa visit rate. At that time, most of the hotels and restaurants that exist today in Karlovy Vary were built, including the excursion cafés of the Jelení skok (Deer Jump), Výšina přátelství (Diana), St. Linhart, Tři kříže (Three Roods), etc.

8. Karlovy Vary in the 19th Century.

In 1807, the renowned digestive liqueur Becherovka began being made in Karlovy Vary. In 1819, an important conference of ministers took place by the Vřídlo, presided by the chancellor of Austria, K. V. L. Metternich. Karlovy Vary experienced another boom in the spa trade at the beginning of the 19th century. The prosperity of the spa was not greatly

endangered during the uneasy times of the Napoleonic wars. The manner of treatment prescribed by Doctor David Becher was further developed by a number of outstanding Karlovy Vary spa doctors in the first half of the 19th century. The most meritorious include Dr Jean de Carro (1770-1857), Dr Rudolf Mannl (1812-1863), and Dr Eduard Hlawaczek (1808-1879).

The generosity and flamboyance of wealthy visitors to Karlovy Vary enabled the quick expansion of the walking trails in the spa's environs. Around the year 1800, the Scot Lord James Ogilvie Findlater was a noteworthy patron and lover of the thermal spring town. He financed the building of many forest promenades. By World War I the total length of spa walking trails around Karlovy Vary reached 130 km.

The society that gathered in Karlovy Vary in the 18th and at the beginning of the 19th century acquired a more and more international flavour. Besides aristocracy, the elite of European culture also came to the Vřídlo. The poet Goethe characterized the cosmopolitan thermal spring town as the "*chessboard of Europe*" around 1800. The visits of celebrities has always been a tradition specific to Karlovy Vary and significantly marked the history of the town. The most noteworthy visitors at the turn of the 19th century, besides Goethe, included Friedrich Schiller, Theodor Körner, Ludwig van Beethoven, Frédéric Chopin, and Nicolo Paganini. An important moment in Karlovy Vary history occurred in 1844 when the thermal spring water began being exported in large quantities.

The new era enchanted by technical inventions started to influence Karlovy Vary at the end of the 1860s. Picturesque gas lamps lit the streets of Karlovy Vary for the first time on 8th August 1867. According to a census, Karlovy Vary had 7,276 inhabitants as of 31st December 1869. The connection of Karlovy Vary to the European railway network, which commenced on 19th September 1870 via the Karlovy Vary – Cheb railway line, was of crucial importance for the further development of the town. A year later, on 9th December, the Prague – Karlovy Vary railway line began operations. The railway connections resulted in the significant stimulation of the economy and also in an increase in the visit rate, which grew even more rapidly after 1865 due to Karlovy Vary's reputation for successfully treating diabetes. By the end of 19th century, the prosperity of the spa was so great that this period is referred to as the Golden Age of Karlovy Vary. The only dark date during this famous period was 24th November 1890, when the centre of Karlovy Vary was severely damaged by a massive flood and during which the mayor, Eduard Knoll, died

9. The Golden Age and Its End in the Flames of War

The final third of the 19th century was a period of extensive urban development and the building of modern spa facilities in Karlovy Vary. This urban development gave the town the architectonic appearance it has today, having the marked imprint of historicism and Art Nouveau features. Viennese architecture had a major influence on the architectonic character of the spa, which was personified in Karlovy Vary by two architects, Ferdinand Kellner and Hermann Helmer. These two designed 20 noteworthy structures for Karlovy Vary, for example, the Municipal Theatre (1886), the Colonnade of the Hot Spring (1879), the Imperial Spa (1895), and the Market Colonnade (1883). This extensive urban development culminated before World War I with the building of the large international Imperial Hotel (1912). At the turn of the century the regional railway network was extended with local lines from Karlovy Vary to Mariánské Lázně (1898), Johannegeorgenstadt (1899) and Merklín (1902).

The lifestyle change that occurred around the year 1900 introduced a new kind of pastime to Karlovy Vary – sports. It was a trend introduced mainly by patients from overseas and England, and spa patients adopted this fad according to their physical abilities. And so the town soon got new tennis courts, a golf course, a swimming pool, and a horse racecourse.

The largest number of spa guests to visit Karlovy Vary in its history occurred shortly before World War I. For example, in 1911 a total of 70,935 people were treated here. During this boom, the town was very active economically and culturally, attested to by, among other things, the many clubs that were active at the time. Period directories attest to this. There were 700 charitable, professional, artistic, political, sports, and special interest clubs active here.

The seemingly idyllic and endless Golden Age of Karlovy Vary ended in 1914 via the fateful gunshots fired in Sarajevo. World War I resulted in many wasted lives (515 men from Karlovy Vary lost their lives on European battle fields), an economic depression, and a great decline in the visit rate. The war hit Karlovy Vary in its most sensitive spot – it reduced the inflow of spa visitors to a minimum and seriously impaired the life of the town. Since then its development, in many ways, has had a more or less declining tendency, along with a few fluctuations. The worsened supply of food during the war meant indigence and hunger even in the privileged spa. Church bells were removed and used for war purposes, dogs suitable as draught animals were confiscated, and coupon rationing was introduced for food, soap and tobacco products. During World War I, Karlovy Vary turned into a major military hospital town, treating the men of the Austrian army. The dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the creation of Czechoslovakia in 1918 was a shock to the German residents of Karlovy Vary who were loyal to the Habsburgs and Vienna.

10. Between the World Wars and in the Shadow of the Swastika

Despite the fact that spa life in Karlovy Vary was quickly renewed after World War I, the town never reached its pre-war visit rate again. Even Karlovy Vary did not escape the great economic depression, which affected all of Europe, in the thirties. During that time the indebtedness of the local owners of hotels and boarding houses increased immensely. Small businessmen and entrepreneurs went bankrupt. Just in 1936 over one thousand judicial distraints took place in Karlovy Vary. In order to survive, the town greatly indebted itself to the government. Despite the hardships of the economic depression, several costly construction projects were completed in Karlovy Vary during the time period between the World Wars. The most significant was the dam built on the Teplá River in Březová (1936), intended to ward off the floods endangering the town once and for all. The modern building Lázní VI (Spa VI) increased the spa capacity of the town in 1927. New buildings, the health insurance company building (1931) and the monastic Redemptorist church (1933), enriched the commercial district of Karlovy Vary. A technically admirable reinforced-concrete bridge situated in the direction of the Upper Railway Station, bridging the Ohře River, opened in 1932.

In October 1938, Karlovy Vary, in the spirit of the Munich Pact, was seized and occupied by the German army as part of the Sudetenland and annexed to the “Third Reich”. Between 1938-1939 some of the German Jews of Karlovy Vary voluntarily emigrated, some were forced to emigrate, and some were deported to concentration camps.

World War II commenced with the German Wehrmacht attacking Poland (Gdansk) on 1st September 1939. After the initial euphoria of its German citizens, economic problems began burdening Karlovy Vary during World War II. Spa operations were severely limited due to the war. The first food supply problems arose as early as 1940. Fewer and fewer spa visitors came and many spa buildings were turned into military hospitals. In 1942, only 36,646 people came for treatment, mostly from Germany. The last year of war meant the total collapse of the spa trade in Karlovy Vary. Records show that only 3,794 spa guests came to Karlovy Vary during all of 1945.

On 12th September 1944 and again on 17th and 19th April 1945, Karlovy Vary was the target of several air raids of allied bombers causing heavy damage to both the Upper and Lower Railway Stations. The suburbs of Rybáře and the northern edge of the spa town also suffered much damage. Several hundreds of people were killed during the bombings.

On 6th May 1945 the 1st Czech National Revolutionary Committee, consisting of 28 men, was established in Karlovy Vary. Two days later this committee, assisted by the

American Army, peacefully took over administration of the town. The Red Army entered Karlovy Vary on 11th May 1945.

11. Through the Socialism Era to the Threshold of the 21st Century

Between 1945-1946 the German residents of Karlovy Vary had their property confiscated and were displaced, i.e. thrown out of their houses, on the basis of the Potsdam Agreement and the Decrees of the Czechoslovakian President E. Beneš. Simultaneously with the displacement of Germans, the very complicated process of populating the town with Czech residents was taking place. Czechs gradually found new homes here in which they commenced building a new existence. The modern development of Karlovy Vary was strongly influenced by all the former phenomena of the so-called “building socialism” epoch after 1948. Spa treatment in Karlovy Vary was centralized and nationalized after 1948. The curative mineral springs and spa facilities were nationalized. Year round comprehensive spa treatment started being applied in Karlovy Vary, which was inspired in many ways by Soviet examples. Karlovy Vary treatment, elaborated on the basis of hundreds of years of practical experience and current scientific knowledge in the field of balneology, achieved outstanding results, even during the socialism era. The Karlovy Vary spa again opened up to the entire world after the fall of socialism in 1989, and its former lustre is returning, along with the prosperity of a world-renowned spa. Each year the appearance of the town, the facilities and equipment of spa houses, restaurants, and stores improve. The selection of cultural events and opportunities is expanding. Every year the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival takes place in the spa. Karlovy Vary, with clientele from all continents (spa guests with three-week treatment programmes come here from 60 countries throughout the world, and guests who stay here for a shorter period of time come from more than 80 countries of the world), belongs among the most international and cosmopolitan spas in the world. The number of foreign spa guest is constantly growing and has exceeded the number of domestic clients. Clientele from the entire world, speaking many different languages, repeatedly keeps coming to Karlovy Vary. Some spa resorts have guests, particularly from German-speaking countries, who stay with them even twice a year. There even exist clients who have stayed in Karlovy Vary more than fifty times! After 1990 many noteworthy historical buildings and structures in Karlovy Vary were, extensively and at great expense, renovated, adapted, or replaced with replicas (the Market Colonnade; the Post Yard; Little Versailles; Grandhotel Pupp; the Bristol Palace Hotel; the Main Post Office; the Imperial Hotel; the Felix Zawojski House; the Mozart House; the Sirius Hotel; the Kriváň Spa Hotel; Sanatorium Kriváň; the chateau in Doubí; the Eliška,

Kolonáda, Central, Dvořák, Jean de Carro, Olympia, Smetana-Vyšehrad, Venus, Pavlov, and Richmond hotels; Thomayer Spa; Castle Spa; Hotel Carlsbad Plaza; and others)

Karlovy Vary, the most renowned Czech spa, is today, just as it was in the past, a popular gathering place of both the ill and healthy from all around the world, thus carrying on the tradition that started many centuries ago during the reign of the wise King Charles IV. The international atmosphere of Karlovy Vary and the renown of its healing springs give one hope that the town of the Vřídlo will remain, beside Prague and the town of Český Krumlov, one of the most renowned and most visited places in Czech Republic, even in the 21st century.