

16 | MODŘANY—A SUGAR FACTORY IN THE BEGINNING

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The first written reference to Modřany originated in 1178. Soběslav II, the prince of the Premyslides, mentions it in the donor charter of the Vyšehrad Chapter, which owned most of the estates and farmsteads there until the Hussite Wars. Possession then transferred to Nové Město pražské (the New Town of Prague) for about two hundred years, and, after the Thirty Years' War, to the Cistercian monastery in Zbraslav. Modřany was a small agricultural village (tax authorities in 1655 say 13 farmsteads), with vineyards—of which one exists still today—traditional farming, and, thanks to its location on the Vltava River, fishing and a miller's trade. The only architectural landmark of the pre-industrial period is the Church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary in the centre of Old Modřany from the first half of the fourteenth century, rebuilt in a baroque style in 1726–54 (Beranová, 2009). Due to a renaissance in Modřany's long viticulture tradition, the viticulturist's house, an example of indigenous farmsteads from the beginning of the nineteenth century, was recently reconstructed and is worthy of mention.

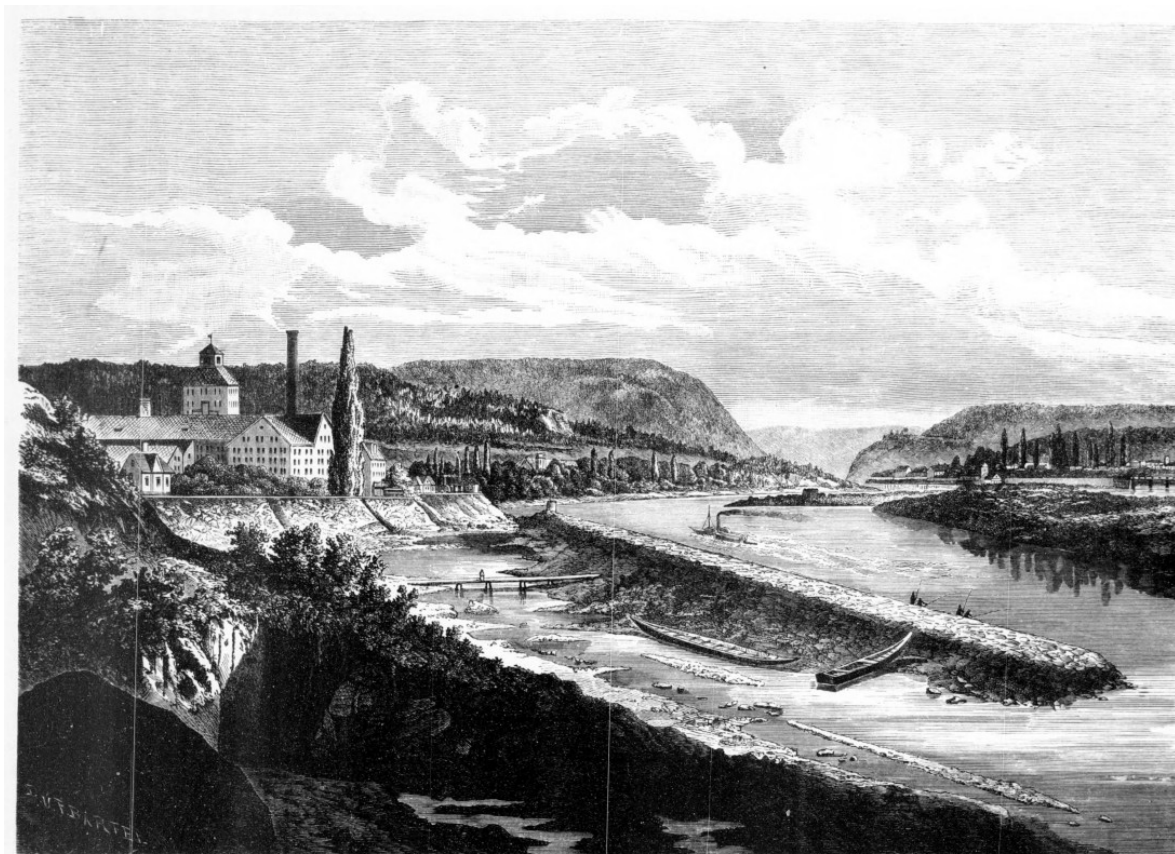


Figure 16.1: Modřany's sugar refinery around 1880.

Source: Fotohistorie.cz (2020).

The founding of a sugar refinery in 1861 significantly influenced the transformation of the small village into the distinct suburban industrial settlement it became in the second half of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth. The Modřany municipal chronicle (Pamětní, 1895, p. 30) declared, “For the further development of Modřany, the year 1861 is a kind of turning point between a calm and quiet village and a bustling and busy industrial municipality. Since then, the municipality of Modřany has been steadily growing and progressing. The life of local people was and has been flowing differently from the past, making the surroundings appear changed. Outside workers come to stay here as well as the clerical intelligentsia.” At the end of the nineteenth century, the sugar factory provided up to two hundred job opportunities and as many as six hundred in the processing period from the end of October to the end of February. This seasonal job offer was beneficial for the farming population prevailing in Modřany and neighbouring municipalities (Hrušková, 1986). The development of the municipality was significantly increased through the creation of infrastructure, mainly vehicular, needed by the sugar refinery. Moreover, the building of the railway connecting Praha-Vysočany and Modřany, co-financed by the refinery, was crucial. The railway came into service in 1882 and then was extended to Dobříš and Čerčany. Its importance to the industrial development in the first half of the twentieth century was huge. Both the sugar refinery itself and other enterprises had railway sidings. The development required the reconstruction of road and fluvial transport and, above all, building ferries across the Vltava River. The electrification of Modřany was also provided by the sugar factory’s energy sources (until 1930), after which it was connected to the power-distribution network of Prague. As the municipality of Modřany is closely connected to the sugar refinery, there is a symbolic sugar loaf in today’s municipal coat of arms.

Modřany belonged to the remote, outer-rim suburban municipalities with poor accessibility—a state which did not improve until the beginning of the twentieth century. Only in the second half of the century did Modřany become a part of Prague. The *Reichsstraße* (imperial road) and railway led along the left bank of the Vltava River as the other bank was rocky and the tunnel (through the Vyšehrad Rock) was not opened until 1904. Starting in 1865, a connection to Prague was also made possible using steam navigation (in 1924 there were 11 links daily) and via a poor-quality road through Braník and Krč. The Modřany area did not have a bridge connecting the left bank, only a number of ferry boats. The situation was improved by railway and road building on the right bank of the Vltava. Bus transport was also becoming more and more important in the 1920s, with lines leading to the centre of Prague or to the tram terminal in Podolí (1921) and then to Braník (1924). Since 1995 there has been a direct tram connection between Modřany and Prague.

The fundamental requirement for the further industrial development and urban settlement of Modřany was improved interconnection with Prague. Besides the sugar refinery, traditional woodworking was first developed in connection with its fluvial transport on the Vltava River—for example, the steam-powered Schwarzenberg sawmill in the area of Pod Vinicí started processing wood in 1892. There were a lot of small new businesses that turned into significant

industrial enterprises during the first half of the twentieth century. In 1913 Ing. Karel Schulz set up a machine factory (later Modřanské strojírny; Modřany machine works) within the confines of Modřany and Komořany. In 1935, Ing. Vinopal transferred the production of X-ray devices (built by a firm named Meta, later Chirana) from Žižkov to Modřany, and his brother brought the production of aeronautical appliances (later Mikrotechna) from Vinohrady in the same year. Besides other firms, Modřany has always been connected, above all, with the production of confections, even at the symbolical level. In 1932, Rudolf Pachl repurchased the main production premises of the liqueur factory Damas-Hobé (in Modřany since 1922) and expanded the production of chocolate and candy from his factory in Nusle. In the second half of the 1930s, the firm RUPA employed four to seven hundred workers. After nationalisation in 1948, it became the part of Pražské čokoládovny, and within the framework of reorganisation in 1952, it took over the production schedule of the well-known Vinohrady chocolate factory Orion, trademark included. In the 1970s, the factory in Modřany produced nearly half of the entire Czechoslovak production of chocolate and confections (Bečková, 2014). These examples of production enterprise development in the Modřany area illustrate the gradual transfer of industry from the central parts of Prague, with its lack of space, to a rather remote suburban habitat. The entire transformation of Modřany into a significant industrial Prague suburb was also accelerated by the Second World War (military production) and socialist industrialisation. While only one enterprises had over 200 employees in 1938 (RUPA), by 1955 two of them had over 1,000 (Pražské čokoládovny and Modřanské strojírny) and others had over 500.



Figure 16.2: Čech district 1930. Typical example of inter-war housing development.

Source: Praha 12 (2020a).

Together with its production function, there was also a growing residential one, mainly in the inter-war period. The build-up of large blocks of family houses was connected with both the increasing number of workers in industrial enterprises and the demand for cheap living in pleasant surroundings from the city people. In the 1930s' newspaper *Modřanský obzor* there were many advertisements encouraging city tradespeople and civil servants to buy villas there. Low housing costs contributed to attractiveness of the area. Before the First World War, family house prices in Modřany ran from 5,400 to 8,400 Czechoslovak korunas (CSK). Plot-prices in 1939 ranged from 80 to 180 CSK/m², which in both cases was less than nearby Prague neighbourhoods. Housing development was regulated by the Austro-Hungarian plan from 1903, which did not correspond with the needs of mass housing construction. This reflected the poor development of the manufacturing distribution network. From the beginning of the twentieth century local councillors struggled with the water supply infrastructure. Building finally started in the 1950s, and it has been fully functional since 1962. The sewer system was gradually built after the municipality's incorporation into Prague in 1968. The quality of the local road network was, according to the local chronicle (Pamětní, 1919), inadequate as well. A further period of massive housing development and considerable change in the spirit of Modřany was the decade of 1980–90 when a Prague-wide approach to housing development implemented the building of a complex of prefabricated housing estates.

Over the course of 150 years, a distinct and clear urban structure (see the map) was created in Modřany, with its contours the strongest in the late 1980s. It was formed by a historical core with residential and utility functions, where each stage in its progress left a mark. Even in the 1960s, visible features connected with the original agricultural functions could be seen. This centre was extended by a zone along the Vltava River for industry. Towards the north, as far as the Hodkovičky perimeter, there was a number of small and large enterprises, and southwards, the historical sugar refinery. Another industrial area reaches the perimeter of Komořany in the south (Modřanské strojírna, Interpharma). And yet Another feature of the urban structure is the family house area (mostly from the inter-war period), which more or less surrounds the central part from the south, east, and north. Finally, the last feature is the housing estate area from the 1980s—the farthest from the Vltava River. Nowadays, it occupies the largest part of the Modřany cadastral area. In the last 20 years there has been a lot of rather important changes in the industrial areas. A number of noted firms ended their production activities or ceased to exist, and residential complexes are growing in their place. The list of all settlements within Modřany cadastre is available in Table 16.1.

Settlement	Character	Number of houses	Population
Modřany	village	901	5,827
Vošahlíkova Kolonie	cluster of houses	13	118
Schulzova Kolonie	cluster of houses	12	95
Ve Srážce	dispersed houses	7	69
Schulzova Továrna	cluster of houses	7	58
Křečková Cihelna (alias Na Komořansku)	seclusion	3	13
V Píšovcích	seclusion	2	10
Na Beránku	individual house	1	6
Na Průhoně	individual house	1	5
V Dolech (alias U Kopkána)	individual house	1	4
Modřany—total	village	948	6,205

Table 16.1: Settlements forming the cadastral territory of Modřany (Census 1930).

Source: Statistical Lexicon (1934).

Development of the number of inhabitants, houses, and apartments

The development of the number of inhabitants, houses, and apartments is, of course, an integral part of the general historic development of Modřany, including the two most important periods mentioned above, 1920–39 and 1980–90—periods which saw the highest increase in population and housing.

The more extensive housing construction at the edge of the original residential centre had already begun before the First World War. The housing cooperative built 27 family and working-class houses and, shortly after the war, another 43. This is how Čechova čtvrť (the Čech quarter) originated in the southern part of Modřany. Further house building went on northward from the centre as far as the Hodkovičky perimeter, giving rise to Tylova and Tyršova čtvrť (the Tyl and Tyrš quarters). The total number of (predominantly detached family) houses built between 1920 and 1939 was 1,200. The population census in 1961 revealed 2,357 apartments built in the 1920–45 period, which is roughly 70% of the available housing of that time. Data from the previous census in 1950 shows the general structure: 1,658 residential buildings, 51.5% ground floor buildings, 42% with two storeys, and the rest of them are higher (Kronika – Chronicle, 1945). In this respect, Modřany represents a rather specific territory, where, in spite of the considerable progress in industry, there was not a massive build-up of tenement houses, and even working-class people lived predominantly in family houses.



Figure 16.3: *Modřany at the beginning of the new millennium. The riverside industrial zone is gradually transforming into a residential one. Behind is the inter-war villa area and, on the horizon, are the housing estates from the 1980s.*

Source: *Praha 12 (2020b).*

The inter-war building boom was followed by 30 years of recession. 216 family houses and 483 apartments in tenement houses were built during the 1940–70 period. The comprehensive housing construction—planned housing estates within the bounds of the capital of Prague—in Modřany started after 1975. The Modřany-Komořany (Mo-Ko) housing estate in the eastern part of the territory was situated right next to the Lhotka-Libuš housing estate in the adjoining cadastral territories. About 8,500 apartments—mostly prefabricated, 5–11 storeys buildings—were built just in the cadastral territory of Modřany in the 1980s. After 1990, there was a deceleration in the growth of housing and rather smaller projects were realised in already existing residential areas or in the recently closed industrial enterprises (the sugar factory or Orion). During the 1991–2011 period, there were 1,192 new apartments built. Practically no large non-residential buildings exist except for the new town hall complex with some commercial premises about to be finished.

Housing development corresponds with the development in the number of inhabitants. Available data shows that the number of inhabitants in Modřany in the first half of the nineteenth century was between four and five hundred. According to *The Description of the Czech Kingdom* by František Palacký (Palacký, 1848), in 1843, Modřany had in total 506 inhabitants and 66 houses. Together with the first industrial activities (the sugar refinery,

sawmills) in the second half of the nineteenth century, the number of people increased up to nearly three thousand (2,976 inhabitants in 1910) before the First World War. After a slight decline caused by the conflict, Modřany became important industrially—a residential suburban municipality with a corresponding rapid growth in residents that reached nearly ten thousand in 1939. This was followed by 30 years of stagnation, maintaining a population of approximately the same size. It is during this period that the disparity in the number of job opportunities offered by the evolving industrial enterprises and the number of residents significantly deepens (Votrúbec, 1965). According to the 1961 census, 8,326 people worked in Modřany's factories, 2,916 locals and the rest (5,410) commuting from Prague or other municipalities. At the same time, 2,302 economically active people worked outside Modřany. Between 1970 and 1980 the number of inhabitants even decreased, which might be connected with a regression in the number of apartments presumably caused by the demolition of houses removed to make space for the building of new housing estates. Contrarywise, the subsequent decade belongs to the period of the highest growth in residents. The number of inhabitants rose by nearly 24,000—up to 32,561 (1991)—due to the construction of new housing estates.

Development of the social environment and age structure

As Modřany did not become the part of Prague until 1968, more detailed data concerning its inhabitants prior to that time barely exists. When evaluating the structure of the inhabitants, we must make do with only incomplete information from secondary sources. The long-term trend in the Modřany age structure development is a close connection to the stages of residential expansion or stagnation. These are probably the most clearly documented by changes in the volume of housing development and related changes in the growth of the population. Specific development in the observed area is, in a simplified manner, illustrated by changes in the shares of three basic age categories and the age median in table 16.2. Although information about the age structure in the inter-war period is not available, the presumption is that thanks to the growth of inhabitants, which reached nearly seven thousand during the 1921–39 period mainly due to migration (e.g., the annual average migration growth in 1933–36 was 365 people). The 20–40-year-old age group was probably above-average. After the Second World War the population was gradually ageing. Yet in 1950, the proportion of people over 55 equalled that of the rest of Czechia. In 1970, this comparison was clearly manifested in Modřany's elderly population. This is also confirmed by the age median—for Modřany, 38.2, and for Czechia, 33.4 years. The situation dramatically changed during the 1980s. The initial population of roughly ten thousand people rapidly increased its number by more than 20,000 over just ten years thanks to people moving into the newly built housing estates. This was, of course, reflected in the formation of a specific age structure typical of the large housing estates of the 1960–80 period. Its character and evolution have been described in a number of publications (e.g., Ouředníček, Jíchová, 2017). In the case of Modřany, the age structure mirrors the considerable rejuvenation of the population in 1991, with an above-average share in the age groups 30–39 and 5–14 years, which means young families with children. Since the 1990s, these age groups have been shifting to higher ages and again the population is ageing.

In 2019, the age parameters of the population were roughly equivalent demographically—an ageing population—with the rest of Czechia. Even recent targeted housing stimuli and an increasing infusion of younger people will probably not stop the gradual ageing of the population in the near future.

	Modřany (in percent)					Czechia (in percent)			
Age	1950	1970	1991	2019		1950	1970	1991	2019
- 19	27.4	24.4	34.8	20.2		31.2	29.9	29.5	20.4
20 - 54	55.4	46.8	52.1	47.5		51.2	45.6	47.6	47.6
55 +	17.2	28.7	13.1	32.3		17.5	24.5	22.9	32.0
Age median	-	38.2	31.7	41.6		-	33.4	34.4	41.8

Table 16.2: Age structure of Modřany and Czechia 1950–2019.

Source: *Kronika* (1945), *SLDB* (1970, 1991), *CZSO* (2020).

As the statistical data of the state and progress of the social structure before 1970 are inaccessible, we can only glean indirect information. Since the mid-nineteenth century, Modřany has been transforming into an industrial suburban municipality with an important residential function, little by little losing its agricultural character and function, which had existed there even as late as the early 1940s. From a total cadastral area of 738 ha, 280 ha was held as arable land with 45 farmsteads. However, the share of people working in agriculture in the 1930s was probably low. In accordance with the 1950 and 1961 censuses, we can also use posterior information whereby the number of workers employed in this sector was about a hundred. We are able to assume that from the standpoint of the 1930s' social structure, Modřany could definitely be profiled by a social stratum of workers, middle-class clerical workers, and traders (business people). This is documented in a statement from the period's local press (*Modřanský obzor*, 1933, p. 1) where, in annotating the social issue of the early 1930s (the depression), they state, "All municipalities can feel this burden of the time, doubly suburban municipalities such as Modřany with a prevailing number of workers and middle-class employees." We are also able to conclude the structure of inhabitants from elections results. In the parliamentary elections in Modřany in 1929, 70% voted for socialist parties (including the Communist Party), and in 1935 it was 60%. The partial labour disposition of Modřany can be clearly seen in the achievements of the Communist Party in both years—approximately 25% of the votes—which was high above the average. We have already mentioned above the uniqueness of the working-class housing being in predominantly family houses, which led to a different lifestyle in comparison with the working-class districts in the central parts of cities. Typical features were gardening and the breeding of small domestic animals. We also have information from the livestock register in 1942 claiming 1,742 hens and 6,548 rabbits. According to another register in 1942, 28,500 fruit trees were on file (Pamětní, 1938).

The industrial function of Modřany was intensified even after the Second World War, which was also reflected in the social structure of the inhabitants. Both in 1961 and 1970, the share

of economically active people in industry exceeded 50%. This is a figure more than double that of Prague as a whole and also higher than the average for the former Czechoslovakia. The figures concerning the socio-vocational structure of the inhabitants—52% employed in labour professions in 1970—are, again, significantly above the Prague average. Other characteristics concerning socioeconomic status are the level of education. In 1970, only 23.4% of Modřany residents over 15 years of age had reached a secondary or university level. The figure for Prague was higher: 30.5%. Based on this data, it appears 1970s' Modřany belonged among the Prague districts of lower socioeconomic status.

However, there is a cardinal turn in the following decade of 1980–90. The 20,000 inhabitants who came to live in the newly built housing estates were not predominantly bound to Modřany's industrial base but were closely connected to the Prague-wide labour market. In this way, a varied social mixture, typical of socialist housing estates, was created (Musil, 1985). According to the statistical information of the 2011 census, the share of those employed in the industrial sector of Modřany was 10.8% (Prague 9.4%), and the share of people with secondary and university education reached 61.2% (Prague 58.9%). Thus, in the observable parameters of socioeconomic status, Modřany equalled the average values of Prague. After 1990, we also observe a new phenomenon in the social structure—a growing number of foreigners. In 2018, Modřany's share per number of inhabitants was 9.7%, which in comparison with Prague (15.2%) and, above all, its central parts is a considerably lower figure (Cizinecká policie, 2019; Přidalová, Klsák, 2017). The proportions of foreigners living in Modřany is 35% Ukrainian, 17% Vietnamese, 15% Slovak, and 7% Russian. A unique characteristic is the high percentage of Vietnamese connected with the nearby Vietnamese marketplace SAPA. This community is concentrated in the neighbouring hinterland (e.g., the housing estate Lhotka–Libuš). It is also interesting to observe the social differentiation within the cadastral territory and its changes. One of the maps captures the situation in 1970, the state of affairs before the building of the housing estates. Two zones in the northern part of the cadastre with family houses—Modřany-sever (north) and Modřany-východ (east), locally named the Tylova a Tyršova čtvrť—reached the highest socioeconomic status (represented by the level of accomplished education and work position). These are the quarters which during the inter-war period held a housing location profile of a rather middle-class social stratum. At the same time, these quarters have the lowest representation of foreigners. Parts of the historical centre and some other family house localities in the southern parts, built before the First World War, have a higher percentage of workers and a lower level of education. According to the data on the level of education structure from the 2011 census, the disparity among the zones lowered. Most interesting is the practically complete absence of disparity between the housing estates and the original housing. There are bigger differences within both types. Only in the number of foreigners within the housing estates and the central part's mixed housing do we see higher percentages than in family housing zones: 11.2% versus 7.4% respectively.

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