What else established the town's special character was its development towards a textile industrial center by the end of the 18th century, growing in intensity until World War II and lasting in the form of a few still functioning textile factories and a Museum of textile up to these days. In point of fact, the invention of the first weaving machine in 1834 and of the first mechanical weaving mill in 1864 within the Austrian Empire took its place right in the town of Aš. However, neither this part of the town's past was the one to reconfigure the urban memory around. Even though the material evidence, old and new textile factory buildings are a dominant built environment in the town. Several factors could be taken into consideration. The Aš district was part of the Sudetenland (in Czech it is not a proper but generally accepted designation for the border areas of today's Czech Republic in which from the Middle Ages until 1947 the German settlement prevailed) and as such most of the local textile manufacturers were Germans. The wealth of local textile manufacturers supported the propaganda of Konrad Henlein which led to the strengthening of his Sudeten German Party and the seizure of power in the district in May 1938 which meant de facto annexing it to the German Empire before the Munich Treaty was signed in September 1938. This led Czech inhabitants to leave the town. After the end of World War II, the German population was displaced not only from Aš district but also from the whole of the former Czechoslovakia. Despite efforts for immediate resettlement with mostly Czech residents, the population of Aš fell by more than half and many factories had to be closed. The settlement structure totally changed and the newcomers had no place memory linked to the town of Aš and they were in the process of forming their new local identity.