

THE BEGINNING OF INDUSTRIALIZATION IN THE BOHEMIAN COUNTRIES

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The Industrialization of the Bohemian Countries which was pursued up till the end of the 19th century mainly shows features characteristic to those of Central Europe, making only slow progress until the middle of the 19th century. Since the 17th century there was a preceding period of manufacturing establishments which developed from old export enterprises and, from the 18th century, became known as factories. Old and modern techniques both remained in existence side by side for a considerable time. Bohemian countries were chiefly leading in the industrialization of the Hapsburg Monarchy. This was due, in the first place, to activities of the aristocracy and immigrated investors and, secondly, to those of German citizens. The most important textile trade, especially the production of linen in the region of the surrounding highlands, became mechanized much later

and was pushed into the background due to the increase of production of the cotton-industry which employed English machinery first. (1797). About 1850 the production of Bohemian spinning-mills surpassed that of Lower Austria, which was leading first. In Moravia weaving was developed relatively better. The position of superiority of the Bohemian countries in the entire national cotton industry was chiefly evident in their control of the Hungarian market and an increase of exports.

The sheep-wool industry suffered extreme losses, as far as home resources were concerned, by the intensity of agriculture but was able to convert itself into a vital industry in the original centers of manufacture of woollen articles. Thanks to foreign contractors Brünn was added. In Reichenberg native artisans introduced machines. The position of Bohemian countries in the woollen industry, finally also became superior, yet exports suffered from the competition of the German Empire.

Other textile industries developed to a far less significant degree, yet Bohemian countries were also leading in these. For instance, in the silk-industry, which was set up only just after 1850, especially in Moravia, following its removal from Vienna and also in the jute-, knit-wear, and clothing industries. After 1850, heavy industries rose to greater importance, too. Due to coal-deposits and the favourable situation of communication (Witkowitz), the introduction of English inventions, (about 1820), Bohemian countries achieved an advantage, as compared to the countries of the Alps which, for centuries, dealt in exports of iron and hardware, so that, finally, they became the main-centre of heavy industry of Austro-Hungary. Less apparent is their importance in the machine-industry which, in some branches, dealt in exports, yet, generally, very much depended on imports. An insignificant line was copper, brass, zinc and similar metals. The complete Bohemian chinaware industry attained a monopoly and exported a large part of the production.

The glass-ware industry, chiefly located in the hill-forests of the Sudeten, was developing from a medieval trade and also dealt in considerable exports. The only vital industry in which Austro-Hungary played an important part in the world-market was the sugar-beet industry located in the Bohemian countries, first during the continental embargo and finally since 1830. The Bohemian countries produced slightly more than half of the entire beer-production which was exclusively reserved for home-consumption and of no less importance. Similar was their position in the paper-producing industry which was also based on the Middle Ages. Paper with cellulose represented a significant export-article already at the end of the 19th century. The chemical industry of the monarchy had had its centre in Aussig since 1856 and was much less and later developed in comparison with western countries. Rubber and electric industries were not yet considered vital industries.

Therefore, Bohemia was industrially the most significant and versatile country of the monarchy. Her degree of industrialization was similar to that of the German Empire. The unity of the Bohemian countries, besides the general features of the industrialization of Central Europe, also showed the special ones of the external situation as compared to less developed areas in which she found her chief buyers. The industrial progress of the Bohemian Countries as compared to those of the Double-Monarchy began to decline after the year 1900.