

FARM EMPLOYEES IN THE SUDETEN LANDS:
AN HISTORICAL — SOCIOLOGICAL —
FOLKLORE CONSIDERATION

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The author chose the second half of the 19th century for this study of the historical, social and folklore aspects of domestics in Bohemia and Moravia-Silesia; in this period some of the social conditions that arose after the emancipation of the peasantry from serfdom were still operative, but at the same time the road had been paved for the massive industrialization that was to create a completely different type of social development. Social legislation to protect employees in case of inability to work due to illness or old age only began to take root at the beginning of the 20th century and to prevail after the First World War, but farm employees in the Sudeten lands, provided they were not unwilling to work, had their old age secured — this by virtue of their sharing in the life of the peasant family and the peasant's right of tutelage (Muntrecht) over all persons living under his roof. Only with the abolition of the Muntrecht and after various wage-scale agreements were introduced was the patriarchal bond between peasant and domestic servants dissolved. The rapid proliferation of materialism left no room for them to find a common meeting ground in working for the good of the farm. The result was above all to isolate the farmhands, who for the most part lived in places offering no opportunities for urbanlevel entertainment; this in turn only encouraged them to seek other occupations.

This study is based on detailed questionnaires conducted for some 500 Sudeten German localities, selected so as to give as broad a sample as possible.