

THE RURAL POOR IN THE LATE 18th AND EARLY 19th  
CENTURY: A STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS BASED ON THE  
EXAMPLE OF THE BUQUOY DOMAIN OF GRATZEN  
IN SOUTHERN BOHEMIA

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The domain of Gratzen in southern Bohemia, which encompassed 14 parishes, is used as an example to analyze the structure of the rural poor and to demonstrate early forms of social security. What makes this case notable is the fact that all the poor within a larger area who were below precisely defined living wage (one-third of a day-laborer's wage) were recorded — and this for a relatively early period of time (1781—1809). This was done in the descriptions of the poor in the so-called „*Armeninstitut*“ founded by Count Johann von Buquoy in 1779, the first comprehensive and systematic program for care of the poor in Central Europe, a preform of public welfare. These represent an initial form of poverty statistics dealing with the poor on an individual basis; they provide data on the degree of need and the causes of poverty, thus reflecting the interest of the social reformer Buquoy, who was influenced by the Catholic Enlightenment, in prophylactic measures. Data on more than 400 poor persons permit reasonably well-founded conclusions on age structure, number of children, subsistence, financing of dwellings and heating, earning possibilities, mobility, and the causes of poverty. In addition of the new form of public care of the impoverished, the poor also benefited from such traditional charitable institutions as infirmaries, as well as from medical and

economic innovations ranging from free medical care to the foundation of a hospital for incurables (*Siechenhaus*), the opening up of new lands through colonization, and the establishment of a lending bank, and — this the most significant prophylactic measure of all — the educational reform of Ferdinand Kindermann.