

THE ORIGINS AND EXPANSION OF THE BOHEMIAN MANUFACTORIES UP TO THE BEGINNING OF THE 19TH CENTURY (1820)

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This study is a supplement to the documentary publication „The Oldest Bohemian Statistics on Industry and Trades“, which appeared in *Bohemia-Jahrbuch*, Vol. 5. Going beyond the evaluation of the statistics presented there, the present study gives an outline of the development of the Bohemian manufactories — arranged by branches — from their beginnings and artisan antecedents up to the year 1820.

The statistical data of the manufactory tables already clearly show how the industrialization of Bohemia took place in the second half of the 18th century out of largely modest rudiments. In this manufactory era in Bohemia, the focal points were to be found in the widely spread domestic system of the linen and wool manufactories, as well as in the glass, paper-making

and chemical industries, while the cotton and silk industries, and the iron and metalworking enterprises still lagged behind. Toward the end of the 18th century, an increasing number of factories were built thanks to the entrepreneurial spirit of noble and spiritual manorial lords. The great economic power of the domains of the Bohemian landed nobility, the labour potential of their subjects — above all the women and children — was completely exhausted for this purpose, with the feudal obligations of the subjects frequently supplying a convenient legal lever. To the same degree that these obligations were abolished, however, the domestic system of the large domains began to disintegrate.

In the first two decades of the 19th century, the transition took place from the manufactory to the factory age. This sweeping transformation was evident, for example, in the fact that homespun work done by hand was supplanted by spinning mills, while, on the other hand, production was concentrated in a small number of larger enterprises, with the number of factories ceasing to grow. The bourgeois merchant increasingly appeared on the scene alongside the noble manorial lords, but he was ennobled for his services. The previously neglected cotton industry overtook wool and linen, both of which encountered marketing difficulties. The transformation was also expressed in a great upswing of the iron and metalware industry. The food industry, especially sugar beet production, achieved great importance.