

ACHIEVEMENTS AND TASKS OF THE HISTORY OF FORESTRY IN BOHEMIA

Heinrich Rubner

The period of the history of forestry in Bohemia which has been covered most extensively thus far is that of the early modern era, from early capitalism to the bourgeois revolution of 1848. This is the case not only for the forms of utilization of wood, but also for the legal forms of the forestry code and for the beginnings of forestry science. A key role was played here

by the intensive research of Nožička, who above all exploited material from manorial archives. Firbas' handbook deserves credit for the fact that the pre- and early history of the Bohemian woodlands is another well-covered area. Thus intensive research in this field remains to be done principally for the Middle Ages and the later part of the modern period.

It would, for example, be necessary to extend the work done by Firbas to cover the decay of the virgin woodlands of Bohemia. The main factors to be examined in this case are the consequences of activity of human agents, through timber felling, burning and pasture land, as well as climatic variations, such as those which have already been demonstrated for the 11th and 16th centuries. Another aspect deserving attention is the structure of the medieval forestry code and its social consequences; in particular it would be worth exploring how the old Slav hunting and military code was penetrated by elements of the Franconian-German forestry code, and why the Bohemian peasants were unable to defend their rights to the common forests against their lords.

A third and very extensive task would be the publication of the data on wood prices contained in the municipal and estate archives. Going beyond the basic treatment of cycles of prosperity and crisis, a framework of data on transport and export could be built up, thereby providing insight, in statistical terms, into the structure of a rational forest economy. By means of a large-scale collective effort, it would, moreover, be possible to present the chronicle of calamities in the Fichtenwald. A fourth problem is that of the step-by-step elimination of large forest property holdings in Bohemia and its consequences for forestry workers and employees in the period from 1919 to 1947.