

Věra Majerová

New Czech Books on the Agriculture and Countryside

This contribution is not an exhaustive enumeration of books published in the above mentioned field. Some titles, introduced within the past two years will present the current state of affairs.

Contemporary period is influenced by the continuing transition in all spheres of human activity. The strong impact on the economy affects everyday life and gives rise to rather paradoxical situations. The publication of books seems to be influenced by this fact.

While the transition of agriculture and the countryside offers an incredibly sliding scale of social phenomena and processes, the tools of their description are, for various reasons, limited. The economy is only one aspect of changing reality.

The supply of books which can present today's situation show continuity in certain partial topics — history of agriculture or architecture in the countryside. Newly emerging themes are the rules and laws concerning restitution, privatisation or enterprise in rural areas but these are mostly edited like manuals or handbooks. The economic analysis of the household are available, however, there is not yet an original summarised study of Czech agriculture and countryside which could give the more complex picture of the evolution of contemporary transition. If such works are beginning to emerge they are prepared, above all, as comparative studies in international collaboration.

The editorial series *Renewal of Countryside* is a collection of books bringing important information, instructive and giving deeper knowledge of some topics. All these books are published in the Czech language.

The book *Tourism in the Village* (Ministry of economy of CR, Ministry of Agriculture of CR, Institute for Economic Policy of CR, Prague 1994) [1] consists of the following three chapters:

1. Agrotourism.
2. Tourism in the Village.

3. Other enterprises.

Essential judicial and financial advice are included and give the necessary minimum advice to start business activity in the village.

These chapters focus on all the basic rules and laws surrounding business affairs. Special attention is given to ideas for business opportunities and how to prepare a business plan together with information concerning state financial support. Information regarding insurances, taxes, addresses of specialist firms and advisory centres is all included as well as the addresses of responsible people in the regional departments of the Ministry of Agriculture.

The Economy of the Czech Farmer from Central Bohemia in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century by Josef Křivka (Ministry of Agriculture of CR, Prague 1994) [2] belongs to the historical section. The historical study analyses the economy of progressive farming that Jan Antonin Prokupek used on his own farm. The farm was located in the fertile lowland of the river Labe. The preserved book-keeping presents natural and financial results from his plant production. The Prokupek farm evidently belonged to an above average agricultural enterprise in comparison to general statistical data from other farms. The economical changes which were typical for the comparable larger farms in the second half of the 19th century are shown very objectively in this example. The farmer Prokupek is characterised as a good old Czech farmer.

The biographical diary does not only describe the farm economy. Much attention is given to the agriculture which provided the grounds of his existence, which gave sense to his life.

The Prokupek notes give one of the best pictures of transition from the old three stripped system to improved sowing system to modern rotated system in rising capitalism.

The second book from the historical series, *History of Agriculture in Czech Lands 1* by Antonin Kubačák (Ministry of Agriculture of CR, Prague 1994) [3] gives us the history of agriculture from the tenth century to 1990. The first short chapter describes the beginning of agriculture from a worldly view as well as in our own country. The second and third chapters present a consistent enumeration of the main events which formed rural development in Czech lands.

The Slavic period of our countries dated from the fifth century and was characterised by relatively developed agriculture. In the Middle Ages, came the so called German colonisation. However, later historical sources define with more precision that the colonisation — especially in the main wave during the 13th century — was nationally mixed with a big share of Czech people. With the colonisation came the application of the new field system — the division of villages into field shares. The insurrection of the Czech nobility 1618 and consequent war events caused deep changes

in the Czech countries. The worst result of the thirty years war was the significant decrease of inhabitants which was caused, not only by the war but by plague and other epidemics. The specialists left the Czech countries as emigrants and turned their influence on agriculture in other countries (Saxony, Lusatia, Silesia). Their agricultural books were edited in these foreign countries.

The most important changes came at the end of the eighteenth century. The 'Patriotic Economical Association', which was established in the Czech countries in 1770 helped to extend education and the agricultural progress. The first fixed ground of agricultural experiments and research was given. The first stage of institutionalisation of agricultural sciences began. In 1771, the department of agriculture was opened in Prague University and the first specialised books and exhibitions were produced with the help of the 'Patriotic Economical Association'.

Czech agriculture continued to develop during the 19th century. Servitude was abolished in 1848, which opened the way to a capitalist system in agriculture which was based on the free market and hired labour. The change from feudal to capitalist farming brought a very deep organisational conversion. The social structure of villages was strongly influenced. Knowledge of these events helps one understand the historical roots of today's processes in agriculture and in rural areas.

The Programme of Village Renewal (Mze CR, Praha 1994) by Radim Perlin [4] is a very useful book for decision makers on a local level. The programme was prepared as a type of support for the stability of inhabitants in rural areas. The programme of village renewal can be used by any countryside village. It provides opportunities for small villages which lack basic infrastructure and basic amenities. If new local activities can flourish, they provide a springboard for other enterprises bringing security to declining villages. The programme can be founded on opportunities for recreation, for living in the background of big towns or on the enterprising person who establishes a business in the village.

If local representatives are interested in the Programme, application forms are available from the district office. The application must be based on detailed surveys and analysis of seat, country and ownership. The survey should include the ecological situation, the quality of soil, localities, evaluated countryside and ecological point of view, protected zones of line buildings like roads. The indication of problematic places is very important. Proposed ranges are the position of the community, the climate, living conditions, agriculture, technical equipment, transport conditions, economical resources, infrastructure and recreation.

The particular action of the local programme of renewal are financed from various sources. The main source are always the assets of the owners — e.g. assets of municipality. However, other financial means can be gained

from the district office budget or directly from government. Details are given in the book about how to apply and to what extent an application will be financially supported.

The important part of the programme is the support of citizens within the village. The opportunities to support club activities are analysed. The historic tradition and the creation of cultural milieu are strengthened. The opinion of citizens is the most important aspect of village development, which is why a questionnaire survey about the future of village life is introduced.

The appendix describes the scheme of realisation of the renewal programme and the model of contract to local implementation and texts of government documents.

Associations of Villages — The Rise of Natural Regions (Mze CR, 1994) by Václav Patričný [5], serves a similar function to the previous book. Readers can find brief information and simple methodical recommendations about the establishment and emergence of associations, its statute and articles, activities of association, about common land planning and enterprising activities of villages in the natural rural region.

Villages can associate for various reasons and different purposes. The following are the most common:

1. The solution of problems from the past which spread from the frontiers of one village to another.
2. The realisation of purposes which can significantly influence the quality of life of the inhabitants of associated villages (natural rural region) including the economic power of these villages.
3. Common protection of rights and interests in negotiation with government bodies, entrepreneurs, NGOs, non profit making organisations etc.
4. Common procedure in land planning and renewal of rural features of villages.

The list of concrete activities to which solutions are needed in villages is helped by common negotiation. The appendix involved the requirements means and outcomes of land plans concerning the programme of village renewal. Brief characteristics of enterprise subjects are included.

The two following books have a similar range of interest — urbanism and architecture. *Historical Maps of Villages and Land Adjustment in the Czech Lands* (Mze CR, Praha 1994) by Jarmila Podzimková [6] reflects the changes in the documentation of land tenures and creation of land maps in the Czech Lands. Urbanism was not the original target of mapping. All cadastral maps in the past (except the map of Czech and Moravia by Jan Amos Komensky which was created for touristic and patriotic purposes 1627) serve mostly military and economical purposes — to specification of land taxes.

The first, more detailed figure appears in the 14th and 15th century in Europe. We can assume that the maps exist although they were not preserved. The instruction for the creation of maps including the co-ordinating tables was discovered in the monastery and university archives. The first known map was published in Nürnberg (Germany) in 1500 for pilgrims.

The series of independent Czech maps began in 1518. The land castre was the base for the proscription of land taxes and was changed over various historical times. However, the first systematic mapping of all seats in the Czech Lands began during the government of František I at the beginning of the 19th century. The reasons were clearly economic — how to assess better, thoroughly and fairly tax the land owners, peasants and clergy.

The revolution in 1848 brought changes. Except for the repeal of the corvee, new laws were established — the amendment of land tax, the revision of land cadaster, new weights and measures.

The Czech countryside was impoverished and relatively overpopulated because of the uneven division of the land at the end of the 19th to the beginning of the 20th century. The land was always divided — the average acreage for one allotment was about 0.4 hectares. So called 'agrar operations' — the set of economic-technical acts was begun. They removed the defects in order and division of forest and agricultural land by consolidation of allotments and revision of land frontiers.

Modern development of land revision in Czech, Moravia and Silesia is connected above all with land reforms after 1918. In the last pages of this book are the references about land reform from 1947 and law about land reform from 1948. In the appendix are relevant laws and instructions and the illustration of cadastral maps.

Alfréd Knopp et al.: *Village, buildings and country have their own order* [7] belongs to the editorial series of Programme of village renewal. The book focuses on the spacial and aesthetic aspects of artificial and natural environment of the village and its wider neighbourhood. The questions of conservation, renewal and preservation of village buildings, public space, improving the infrastructure and technical networks are 'solved'. The traditional picture of village life is complemented by analysis of the present state of village life and trend of its development. The book introduces the urbanistic and architectural rules of building development in the village, preservation of historical objects and sets — churches, monasteries, manors, mills and inns — space for village greens and roads. The functions of village houses and building elements are described.

Examples of national architecture from 11 regions of Czech, Moravia and Silesia are included. The most important laws of land planning are added.

Income Position of Farmers and their Household (RIAF, Praha 1995) [8] by Emil Divila is a study which focuses on one of the most important aspects of contemporary development of rural households. Various data sources are used for quantitative expression of income parity or disparities of agriculture. The presented study which deals with the income position of this sector in transforming Czech economy is evaluated with respect to the development of total income of the population — with separate studies on incomes in agriculture — and the development of wage structures in the national economy.

Special attention has been devoted to the analysis of the income position in agricultural households compared to other social groups of households in the Czech Republic. The author tried to defend this analysis and to differentiate between agricultural households and existing entrepreneurial forms and various types of occupations in the given sector. This has been successful, partially due to the basis of primary data classification, for the time being, the last statistical microcensus — income surveys in households of the Czech Republic of 1992. Data from the microcensus shows, among other things, that there is great variability in the amount of incomes of households of private farmers (8% of these households were below the level of official subsistence minimum) while in the case of co-operative farmers, only 1% in the highest investigated income group — over CZK 5,000 of net monthly income per member of the household — the representation of private and co-operative farmers was analogously 15.9% and 3.0%.

In the future, further development of various forms of family enterprise in Czech agriculture can be predicted. Systematic studies of income position of farmers and their households will require a collection of more differentiated and detailed data. The network of testing enterprises (with corresponding accounting), designed in the agricultural sector should serve as their basis.

The description of the main features of transformation in agricultural and rural areas continues step by step. We can expect more convincing reflection in published material in the near future.

REFERENCES

1. *Turistika na vesnici*, Ministerstvo hospodářství ČR, Ministerstvo zemědělství ČR, Ústav pro hospodářskou politiku ČR, Praha 1994.
2. J. Křivka, *Hospodaření českého sedláka ze středních Čech ve 2. polovině 19. století*, Mze ČR, Praha 1994.
3. A. Kubačák, *Dějiny zemědělství v Českých zemích, díl I a II*, Mze ČR, Praha 1994.
4. R. Perlin, *Program obnovy vesnice*, Mze ČR, Praha 1994.
5. V. Patříčný, *Sdružení venkovských obcí — vznik přírodních regionů*, Mze ČR, Praha 1994.

6. J. Podzimková, *Historické mapy obcí a pozemkové úpravy v Českých zemích*, Mze ČR, Praha 1994.
7. A. Knopp a kol., *Vesnice, stavby a krajina mají svůj řád*, Ústav územního rozvoje, Brno 1994.
8. E. Divila, *Příjmové postavení zemědělských domácností*, VÚZE, Praha 1995.