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THE FOREST ECONOMY OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Engr V. Borovoy

The forests of Czechoslovakia were distributed among the provinces as follows as of May 1947:

	Forest Area (1,000 ha)	Forest Area (%)	New Growth (1,000 cu m)
Czech Provinces	2,350	30	8,000
Bohemia	1,560	30	4,700
Moravia and Silesia	790	29	3,300
Slovakia	1,650	31	5,500
Total	4,000	31	13,500

Czechoslovakia is one of the most heavily wooded countries in Central Europe. The annual growth per hectare of wooded area amounts to 3.45 cubic meters, as against an average European growth of 1.61 cubic meters. Fir is the most prevalent of the coniferous trees. Coniferous species occupy 46 percent of the area, deciduous 26 percent, and mixed 13.6 percent. The remaining area is covered with brush.

The principal coniferous forests are in the Czech Provinces.

The deciduous forests, found principally in Slovakia, are composed largely of oak and beech, distributed rather evenly. Slovak oak is highly valued. Most of the Slovak forests are on high mountain slopes, far from the railroads.

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In the past intensive logging was practiced in Czechoslovakia. Considerable destruction of the forests resulted from extensive smelting of iron ore with charcoal. About 100 years ago coke was substituted for charcoal, and the advent of blast furnaces put an end to the destruction of the forests.

The Czechoslovak government before 1948 was unable to organize the timber industry properly. Private owners regarded the forests only as a source of profit without labor. They cut them down, and did practically no reforestation. After being cleared, the land was usually put to the plow. Washouts on the mountain slopes increased, and soil was washed into the valleys by streams of water. As a result, the once fertile forest-protected plains were gradually transformed into steppes. During the period of capitalist ownership, 40 million cubic meters more timber was cut than was in keeping with the resources of the country. Indiscriminate logging led to the further destruction of 17 million cubic meters of wood by fire and insects.

For a period of 5 years during the Nazi occupation, the forest economy suffered an additional loss of 26 million cubic meters of wood. As a result of the German occupation, there are 100,000 hectares of unreforested clearings and sparsely wooded areas in the Czech Provinces alone.

In replanting the forests which were cut down during the war, Czechoslovak foresters rely upon the experience of leading Soviet agrobiological science.

It is essential to secure an increase in growth in all the old coniferous plantings where resin was collected during the war. These forests suffered heavily from drying out and from wood parasites. During the past 2 years, foresters also have tried to save approximately 11,000 hectares of deteriorated forest land. In order to make up for all the losses to the forest economy by the usual methods, logging would have to be suspended for 10 years.

At present, favorable conditions are being developed in the forests for planting and for protection against soil erosion. Efforts are being made to increase the growing of the most desirable species, of the proper size and quality. Wind-resistant plantings are also being developed. Forests are to be planted in all areas not suited for other purposes. Plantings are planned for the upper reaches of rivers and streams to provide the proper flow of water, and to utilize the new forests as a climatic factor. Following the example of the USSR, forest planting is being undertaken in those nonwooded areas which have suffered from drought and soil erosion.

The Five-Year Plan has given the forest economy the task of supplying raw materials to the lumber and to the cellulose and paper industries, and for construction, machine building, etc. The export of coniferous lumber and finished wood products occupies a considerable place in Czechoslovak foreign trade. The "Ligna" Enterprise has been established to handle the export of lumber.

By 1947, 32,500 hectares of forests had already been set out. Seed for further planting will be available from forest nurseries -- which will be expanded by 1,732 hectares -- and from forest preserves.

Many borderland forests are endangered by bark beetles and other insect pests, since, during the occupation period, lumbering areas were not kept clean. The forests of Czechoslovakia frequently suffer from windstorms. Forest fires are even more dangerous.

In Czechoslovakia a forest-protection week is held every year in April. Information about the proper care of forests and of new achievements in the lumber industry is disseminated over the radio and through the press during that week. In 1949, during forest-protection week, a campaign was begun for setting out fruit trees.

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Forestry workers are given a house and a small plot of ground. They are provided with an issue of work clothing and shoes, and they take special courses to learn about power saws, cultivators, and other machines and implements.

According to the journal Czechoslovakia, in 1947 the following scientific research institutes were in operation: Institute for Forest Protection (in Prague), specializing in combating forest insect pests from airplanes; Institute for Forest Biochemistry and Soil Study, specializing in the chemical and biological aspects of forest soils, and in reclamation problems; Institute for Forestry and Forest Biology (in Brno), specializing in tree-seed problems, the development of rapid-growing trees, and acclimatization of exotic trees; Institute for Wood Utilization and Forest Technology, working on forest conservation, on obtaining cellulose from beechwood, and on new methods for sawing wood; Institute for Forest Management and Appraisal (in Brno), working on problems of technology and organization of the forest economy, and also on methods of appraising and estimating forest growth; Institute for Policies and Administration in Forestry, studying over-all problems of forestry and lumbering; and finally, the Institute of Game Preserves (in Prague).

There are several similar institutes in Slovakia, which cooperate with the Czech institutes.

The land reform of March 1948, limiting private land holdings to 50 hectares, also applied to forest lands. In the border regions of the Czech Provinces (the former Sudeten region), approximately one million hectares of forests were confiscated, and in the internal regions, about 250,000 hectares, most of which was transferred to the state. In accordance with a law approved in December 1948, the Czechoslovak State Forests Enterprise was established to administer the state forests.

The Five-Year Plan for 1949 - 1953 envisages lumbering on the following scale (in million cubic meters):

	<u>Coniferous</u>	<u>Deciduous</u>
Round beams	24.0	3.2
Ties	0.02	1.6
Timber supports	3.4	--
Cross beams	7.7	1.1
Telegraph and other poles	0.6	0.2
Pulpwood	0.1	0.4
Firewood	4.18	8.5
Total	40.0	15.0

The plan does not call for lumbering in excess of the annual growth. Single-species forests covering an area of 22,800 hectares are slated for conversion into mixed forests.

In order to increase the growth of forests and to preserve and improve the fertility of forest soils, thinning is planned for an area of 328,000 hectares and pruning over an area of 938,000 hectares.

In nonwooded areas, to conserve moisture and protect plantings from wind, the creation of forest windbreaks is envisaged over an area of 76,000 hectares.

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The forestation program for Czechoslovakia (in thousand hectares) is as follows:

	<u>1947</u>	<u>1948</u>
To re-establish normal output	30.4	31.8
Windbreaks	1.5	1.54
Afforested areas	2.0	2.0
Total	33.9	35.34

The 1947 reforestation plan was fulfilled 118 percent, and the plan for new plantings 116 percent. In 1948, the reforestation plan was fulfilled 108 percent, and for new plantings, 156 percent. In accordance with the Five-Year Plan, an area of 231,000 hectares is to be reforested.

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