

In Remembrance

František Roubík (1890-1974)

Modern Czech historical scholarship lost one of its architects when František Roubík died in Prague on May 5, 1974, at the age of 83. In the fifty years of research and writing that fate allotted to him, Roubík produced 23 books and monographs, over 350 articles and papers, and a dozen works which he coedited or coauthored. His specialty was *vlastivěda*, the history and geography of the homeland, which to him meant the evolution of the Czech nation since the seventeenth century. He elaborated on this theme with amazing versatility in studies on urban history, transportation, cartography, agrarian and industrial technology, the Jews of Bohemia, and the revolution of 1848-1849. Roubík was a "historian's historian." Having a superb knowledge of archival sources, he stimulated both colleagues and students to seek new, uncharted avenues of research. On occasion, however, he could divulge the fruits of scholarship to the book public in eminently readable prose.

František Roubík was born into a family of modest means on July 31, 1890, in Jindřichův Hradec, in south-central Bohemia. During the First World War Austrian authorities imprisoned him for an alleged conspiratorial association with his brother-in-law, the Slovenian activist Ljudevit Pivko. (Roubík translated Pivko's memoirs into Czech in 1924 under the title *Proti Rakousku* [Against Austria].) After the war Roubík completed his doctoral studies at Charles University, under the sponsorship of Josef V. Šimák. Like many other young historians whom academia then could not absorb, he entered the service of the ministry of interior. Work in the ministerial archives prompted his first published article (1923) on the impact of the French Revolution on the Bohemian countryside in 1793. Two monographs followed in the *Sborník archivu ministerstva vnitra* [Proceedings of the Archives of the Ministry of Interior] series: the pathbreaking administrative study *Počátky policejního ředitelství v Praze* [Origins of the Police Directorate in Prague] (1926) and the authoritative history of the western frontier people and region, *Dějiny Chodů u Domažlic* [History of the Chods of the Domažlice Region] (1931). His catalog indexes of Bohemian newspapers and periodicals, *Časopisectvo v Čechách v letech 1848 až 1862* [Journalism in Bohemia from 1848 to 1862] (1930) and *Bibliografie časopisectva v Čechách z let 1863-1895* [Bibliography of Journalism in Bohemia from 1863 to 1895] (1936), immediately became standard works.

During World War II Roubík was instrumental in preserving vital archives from Nazi confiscation, and upon the liberation of Czechoslovakia he helped reestablish an organizational basis for systematic

historical study and research. From 1949 on he directed the State Historical Institute, and from 1953 until his retirement in 1960 he headed the department of historical geography of the Historical Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences.

Roubík's scholarly energies crested in the postwar decade. His brief, innovative *Přehled českých dějin* [Survey of Czech History] (1947) emphasized socioeconomic and intellectual rather than political developments. In the commemorative year 1948 *Český rok 1848* [Czech Year 1848] and *Rok 1848 v obrázcích a karikaturách* [1848 in Cartoons] appeared. His *Z českých hospodářských dějin* [From Economic History] (1948) was the last pre-Marxist attempt in Czechoslovakia to synthesize economic history with geographical, legal, and organizational factors. His encyclopedic grasp of cartography was evident in *Soupis map českých zemí* [Inventory of Maps in the Czech Lands] (2 vols., 1952-55) and *Soupis a mapa zaniklých osad v Čechách* [Inventory and Map of Extinct Settlements in Bohemia] (1959). Many articles on the growth of industry and transport, including the readable survey *Od nosítek k trolejbusu* [From Litters to Trolley] (1956), established Roubík as a pioneer in the history of technology in Czechoslovakia.

Roubík served as docent in Czechoslovak history in the philosophical faculty of Charles University from 1934 onward; later the university awarded him the degree of doctor of science. In 1953 he was elected corresponding member of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, which bestowed on him its František Palacký citation for service to the social sciences. After his formal retirement he produced no fewer than fifty published items and continued to advise many colleagues and scientific publications. A complete list of his writings appeared in *Zprávy Společnosti přátel starožitností za rok 1973* [News of the Society of the Friends of Antiquities for 1973].

One of the learned giants who matured in the waning years of the Habsburg empire and the infancy of the Czechoslovak Republic, František Roubík has placed several generations in his debt through his written works, his teaching, and his active life as a dedicated scholar and Czech patriot in the best sense of these words.

*New Jersey Institute
of Technology*

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