

BESKYDSKY BUNDAS

**THE FORGOTTEN HISTORY
OF THE BESKYDY MOUNTAINS
CZECHOSLOVAKIA**



Ing. Jozef Surkovsky

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*Dedicated to my two wonderful daughters,
Elly and Hanka.*

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

In 2015, I got a Caucasian Shepherd puppy. He was named Bundáš. Before that year, I hadn't really looked into the origin of the name. I had known the name since childhood. It was a commonly used dog name throughout Slovakia, Moravia, and the Beskydy Mountains. Since my childhood, I frequently encountered this name for dogs. Almost every other dog in eastern Slovakia, in the vast pastures and mountains around the Tatry Mountains and beyond, could boast this name. It was such a common dog name that it eventually became mundane for people. When someone said Bundáš, everyone immediately imagined a tough but mainly furry dog. Only such a dog could be given this name. This assumption was somehow deeply rooted in the subconscious of almost everyone. Naturally, as a child, I also longed to have my own dog named Bundáš. A strong, brave, and furry dog. My Caucasian Shepherd puppy, which I brought home, had all the qualities to receive and bear such a noble name. From the very first days together, it was clear that this little puppy would not disgrace its name and would wear it with great pride. With the pride of "oh, the lord of dogs!"... He was our Bundáš.

In the area where I lived (i.e., the Moravian-Silesian region), the name for a dog was somewhat unusual and peculiar. I often encountered questions about the origin of this name, which I didn't fully know at the time. Interestingly, the closer I got to the Beskydy

Mountains, the less unusual or strange this dog name was for my friends and acquaintances. This regional knowledge disparity led me to delve deeper into the meaning and origin of this dog name. My very first inquiry into the word "Bundáš" brought me to the forgotten history of sheepfolds in the Beskydy Mountains, or more precisely, to an integral part of the entire Wallachian history that had been forgotten. Suddenly, a vast chest full of treasures and jewels in the form of historical facts about the personalities of shepherds, the people of the Beskydy regions, opened up before me. An integral part of their lives was the long-forgotten herding dog with exceptional qualities and incredible resilience. A dog with untamed courage and devotion to its master – the Beskydský Bundáš.

I immediately embarked on studying historical sources about this breed with great enthusiasm. However, the initial conviction I had that it would be no problem at all to find some historical sources about this herding dog gradually faded. At certain moments, it was almost impossible to discover anything or find new information. Overwhelmed by the initial hints available, I fell into the mistaken belief that it wouldn't be impossible to find more precise information. However, that wasn't the case. The information generally repeated itself, offering nothing new about this breed of dog. The biggest problem that subsequently arose was obtaining any photographic documentation from that period. In my effort to acquire any photographic documentation, I also turned to the

general public through social media and other communication channels, requesting period photographs if people had any available, where the dog would be captured in the photo. This was because, in the commonly available historical sources, there was only one photograph circulating that realistically depicted a Beskydský Bundáš. This photograph became the cover photo of this book as well.

I believe that, with great effort and despite significant difficulties, I have managed to uncover all available historical sources and organize and connect them chronologically. Thus, dear reader, you now hold in your hands a book that creates a comprehensive image of the Beskydský Bundáš. An image as people knew it when this dog roamed the Beskydy pastures, serving as an excellent herding dog, but most importantly, as a loyal friend to the mountain people. This book captures the lives of such people. Lives in which this dog faithfully served humans for several decades and was an irreplaceable part of their history, namely sheep farming in the Beskydy Mountains. I am very pleased that it is I who brings you this small fragment of the history of our region of Wallachia. A history that still shapes us and leaves behind images and legacies of our grandfathers and grandmothers. A history that forms the foundation of our moral values, which we should accept and continually return to even today.

Author: "I have made every effort to trace and contact all rights holders. I will gladly correct any mistake or omission that is brought to my attention at the earliest opportunity."

"Surrender yourself to the mountains, and the mountains will make a man out of you."

(Ing. Jozef Surkovsky, 2021)



INTRODUCTION

Life in the mountains has always been difficult. It brought everything but what a modern person would desire today. It was mainly hard work that provided people with a means of subsistence and allowed them to survive in these regions. Short summers and long winters influenced every aspect of life. Besides worries, the mountains also brought the people of these regions a lot of joy. These were quite different joys from those known by people living below the mountains. Selfishness had no place in the mountains. If it did appear, it soon backfired cruelly on the person. Relying on a neighbor's help in times of need was nothing but human and natural. Even so, from time to time, there was someone for whom nothing was sacred, but such a person ultimately faced a harsh fate. Everyone was aware that the mountains would always make it clear who was in charge and who ruled there. Given the conditions that always prevailed in the mountains, it was necessary to subordinate and adapt every aspect of life, and especially the type and manner of work, to the conditions created by nature. Everything depended, for example, on the weather, the harvest, or many other factors. This also gave rise to numerous proverbs that described what the weather should be like in each season and how people should prepare for it. Even so, it was not always easy to predict, which brought a certain discomfort to the daily lives of these people, a discomfort that modern people would find difficult to cope with. For these reasons, many young people left for bigger cities in search

of work and higher earnings. Unfortunately, many of these young people never returned to the mountains and the rustic way of life. As a result, much of the folklore, which was passed down from generation to generation, was irretrievably lost in the mists of history. Traditions, crafts, and folk skills had no one to be passed on to and gradually ceased to exist, fading from people's awareness. The history and existence of the Beskydský Bundáš suffered the same fate. Although some things were partially preserved, they are only fragments of what our ancestors possessed. All of this should inspire today's modern person with respect and admiration for these ancient inhabitants of the Beskydy Mountains. It highlights the contrast that always existed between the beautiful nature and the challenging life of the local shepherds and inhabitants. This landscape has inspired many writers.

"If you looked at that piece of land in eastern Moravia from a great height, you would see rolling hills, as if a shepherd had driven sheep out of the sheepfold. Wallachia is an open palm full of furrows and ridges," ^[4] wrote Oldřich Šuleř in his book *Je to chůze po kotárech!*

And perhaps one of the few who most accurately captured the character of this region and described its beauty. Mountain meadows full of sheep scattered across the hills and, in the distance, a shepherd's hut—this is indeed a theme that appears in many paintings by local artists. A shepherd or Wallachians accompanied by a dog also became a typical image of this landscape. Yes, shepherds accompanied by a herding dog, which became part of

many stories and the enduring history not only of the Beskydy Mountains and Wallachia but of the entire former Czechoslovakia—the Beskydský Bundáš.