



Volume 4. Forging an Empire: Bismarckian Germany, 1866-1890  
Yearly Sums Paid to Those Claiming Damages from Air Pollution near Freiberg in Saxony  
(1855-67)

The Ore Mountains [*Erzgebirge*] ran along the border between the Kingdom of Saxony, in Germany, and the Bohemian territories of the Habsburg Empire. Silver mining in and around the city of Freiberg had been a great source of wealth for the Saxon state long before the nineteenth century. But as smelting works grew larger and more numerous during the course of that century, environmental damage occurred and citizens filed claims for state compensation. Among the worst polluters were the smelting works in Halsbrücke and Mulden, near Freiberg. One of the works had a woefully inadequate 60-meter smokestack. (An image of a 200-meter smokestack, erected in 1889, is included in this volume.) In 1855, the Saxon state parliament formed a commission to investigate compensation claims. After visiting the Halsbrücke and Mulden sites, the members of the commission designated four “damage zones” [*Schadensgebiete*]. Compensation to pollution victims varied according to their proximity to the plants. The table below shows that compensation payments from 1855 to 1867 amounted to almost 137,000 Thaler.

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**Compensation for Damage from Smelting Plant Smoke**

| Year  | Total sum<br>[in Thaler] | Halsbrücke<br>smelting works | Mulden<br>smelting works |
|---|--------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1855  | 4,884                    | 4,481                        | 403                      |
| 1856  | 5,520                    | 4,722                        | 798                      |
| 1857  | 5,552                    | 4,231                        | 1,321                    |
| 1858  | 5,413                    | 3,789                        | 1,624                    |
| Voluntary supplementary<br>payment                  | 980                      | 725                          | 255                      |
| 1859  | 6,449                    | 5,049                        | 1,400                    |
| 1860  | 9,774                    | 7,229                        | 2,545                    |
| 1861  | 12,722                   | 8,622                        | 4,100                    |
| 1862  | 9,809                    | 6,965                        | 2,844                    |
| 1863  | 8,746                    | 6,746                        | 2,000                    |
| 1864  | 14,383                   | 10,620                       | 3,763                    |
| 1865  | 10,015                   | 7,690                        | 2,325                    |
| 1861-65 Supplementary<br>payment for forest damages | 24,785                   | 1,479                        | 23,306                   |
| 1866  | 8,426                    | 6,176                        | 2,250                    |
| 1867  | 9,181                    | 7,124                        | 2,057                    |
| Total   | 136,639                  | 85,648                       | 50,991                   |

Source: *Jahrbuch f. d. Berg- und Hüttenwesen im Königreich Sachsen* [Yearbook for Mining and Metallurgy in the Kingdom of Saxony] (1890), Table 1.

Original German data reprinted in Franz-Josef Brüggemeier, *Das unendliche Meer der Lüfte. Luftverschmutzung, Industrialisierung und Risikodebatten im 19. Jahrhundert* [The Neverending Sea of the Skies. Air Pollution, Industrialization, and Debates about Risk in the 19th Century]. Essen: Klartext, 1996, pp. 171.

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