

Jewish "patriarch" from brandy

In 1924 I visited a department of the former Pozemkový úřad /Land office?/ in Prague. I was interested in a remnant estate. I went to see a friend of mine, who was employed there.

When I talked to my friend for a while, the door opened and an elder sturdy man entered, whose appearance revealed his Jewish origin. He looked oldfashioned, but the massive golden chain on his vest revealed that he is a rich Jew.

I had the intention to leave the room discretely in order not to interfere with their negotiations. But the Jew asked me to stay, he had nothing to conceal. He just wanted to show the official a photograph of his portrait to prove that he is a Czech Jew who supports Czech artists.

So I stayed. The Jew showed us then a photograph. At first sight it was evident that it was a pen-and-ink drawing by one of our most prominent artists. In the right corner of the photograph there was his signature and the year 1918. The pen-and-ink drawing was consequently made in the year 1918.

The Jew left soon. After he had left, I asked my friend who it was. He is a Jewish patriarch. At least they call him so. He is interested in the allocation of a remnant estate. He keeps persuading our office that he is a Czech Jew. He owns a beautiful house near the museum. His name sounds Hebrew: LEOPOLD JERUSALEM. My friend took out of his desk a book, on the first page of it there was the inscription in decorative writing "Leopold Jerusalem's memories". He gave it to me recently to read it. He described there his family life, from which I can see that he is a Czech Jew.

I was interested in the patriarch. I requested therefore my friend to lend me the "Memories". Since I met occasionally the Jewish patriarch and I even read that he visited the former president T.G.M. with a Jewish deputation.

I didn't, however, read the "Memories". I put them in my desk together with other documents. There they remained several years. Only after about 6 years ago I saw the well known photograph of Leopold Jerusalem's portrait in a Jewish freemason magazine. I namely studied the history of the Prague Jewish freemason lodges and so Leopold Jerusalem came into my mind again, who was a member of the order since 1894 and held the most important ranks in the lodges. Among lots of old documents I again found the "Memories", written by the Jew to prove that he was a Czech Jew. In the style of the Jewish narrator Vojtěch Rakous he disclosed here his memories, a piece of family life. I verified a few matters out of Jerusalem's memories and so I got the image of a Jew, who became a patriarch Jewish patriarch out of his father's gin-shop.

"My father was MARKUS JERUSALEM" the author of the "Memories" begins. "He was born in Dřevnice near Chrudim, where my grandfather owned a spirit distillery, to which belonged a gin-shop. That time -until 1848- country estates had the exclusive right to produce and sell liquor, a privilege named PROPINATION. This refers to country estates, which performed patrimonial jurisdiction in the place concerned. The country estates were allowed to let this right out. So my grandfather and then my father became hirers of the "propination", which belonged to the ^{baron} of Medlešice. After the year 1848 my father bought the mentioned distillery from the baron. He enlarged it, added great stables for horses and also a big shop,

where everything the locality needed was being sold. Also liquor. It was my mother who kept the shop. The financial situation of my parents became better from year to year. My father bought further land, so that when my younger brother Vilém was born, he already owned 25 ha of fields, what corresponds to a medium sized peasant estate. As our house proved to be too small for the whole family, my father built on the other side of the locality Dřenice a one storey house with a storehouse and farmhouses. The building was of huge appearance. In the village it looked like a palace."

Jerusalem goes on to explain how he attended a Czech/^{agricultural?} commercial school in Chrudim, as he wished to devote himself to agriculture. His father acquired three agricultural estates in Bylany. From the fact that he attended Czech agricultural /commercial?/ schools, Jerusalem deducted that he was a Czech Jew

As I already said, I verified different statements which I read in the "Memories". From the material, which I gained this way, the following picture emerged:

LEOPOLD JERUSALEM was born on January 13th, 1849 in Dřenice near Chrudim. His grandfather and father became rich from the production and sale of liquor. Many peasants in the Chrudim region lost their land /"propilo své grundy"/ in Jerusalem's gin-shop.

The young Jew attended the secondary school /"gymnázium"/ in Litomyšl up to the 4th term. Then he attended the agricultural /commercial?/ school in Chrudim. At the age of 20, he took over the administration of the estate from his older sister, who died. During the management of the estate he realized that it was possible to earn money, as that time agricultural workers were poorly paid. For the money his grandfather and father earned on liquor, he hired a big estate in Veleň near Čakovice, which he had in tenancy continuously for nearly 50 years, i.e. until the land reform of 1924.

In Veleň the Jew Beykowsky lived. He had a daughter Camila. Leopold Jerusalem came to agreement with Beykowsky about the value of the dowry and got married with Camila. Thus he gained more money, which he invested in hiring further estates in Gbely and Satalice near Prague. In this way he gained three big estates /Veleň, Gbely, Satalice/, which yielded him big money. The Czech peasant had to labour on a small piece of land, whereas the Jew ruled over three estates.

Later he exchanged the house in Satalice against the estate of Letňany near Prague. Leopold Jerusalem was the type of a Jewish tenant of estates, of which quite a number dwelled on Czech soil also during the period of the former republic. From Czech soil he gained during the years millions, but he was not interested in Czech culture. It is true that he had himself portrayed by a Czech artist, but only because the named artist was well known already at that time and it was in fashion to have a portrait made by him. The "patriarch" Jerusalem devoted himself from the year 1894 to Jewish freemasonry. He was a founding member of the Prague lodges "Praga" and "Humanitas" three times president of the lodge "Bohemia" and finally he became vicepresident of the Jewish freemason grand lodge in the former republic. He had two brothers. One of them JOSEF JERUSALEM became a lawyer. The second VILÉM JERUSALEM studied philosophy. The Jews said that he was a clever Jewish philosopher. And all that for money their grandfather and father earned on liquor.

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