Poland

9.1 The Gypsy Kings

9.1.1 *King Jan Michałak-Michailescu*

Cygańska lista wyborcza

Warszawa, 11 stycznia. Wczoraj zgłosił się w sekretarjacie generalnego komisarza wyborczego p[ana] Cara “król” bandy cyganów Jan Michałak–Michailescu. Oświadczył on, że przychodzi w sprawie wyborów do parlamentu i deklaruje listę cygańską kandydatów do sejmu i senatu. Jako motyw tego bądź co bądź ciekawego wystąpienia podał “król” cyganów, że cyganie w Polsce są upośledzeni i prześladowani, tak dalece, iż tylko ich własni reprezentanci w izbach ustawodawczych mogą przeprowadzić uregulowanie spraw cygańskich. M[ichałak-Michailescu] i cyganie chcą przeprowadzenia reformy rolnej, aby osiąść już na stałe na ziemi i zacząć uczciwie pracować.

Sekretarz gen[eralny] Komisarza dr. Chechliński udzielił Michałakowi żądanych informacji co do sposobu i terminu zgłaszania list kandydatów. Już wczoraj Michałak-Michailescu rozesłał wici do wszystkich obozów cygańskich, aby zebrać tysiąc podpisów, potrzebnych do złożenia listy. Podobno w całej Polsce koczuje 12 tysięcy cyganów. Agitacją wyborczą kierować będą starostowie band.

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Gypsy Electoral List

Warsaw, January 11. Yesterday, the “King” of a pack of Gypsies, Jan Michałak-Michailescu, reported to the secretariat of the General Election Commissioner, Mister Car. Michałak-Michailescu stated that he had come regarding the parliamentary elections and declared a list of Gypsy candidates for the Sejm and Senate. According to the “King” of the Gypsies, his decision stems from the fact that Gypsies in Poland are mistreated and persecuted to such an extent that only their own representatives in the legislative chambers can act to regulate the issues that involve their people. Michałak-Michailescu and the Gypsies want to implement a land reform in order to make permanent settlements and begin honest work.

The secretary of the General Commissioner Dr. Chechliński supplied Michałak with the requested information on the manner and date of submitting the lists of candidates. As early as yesterday, Michałak-Michailescu sent out messengers to all the Gypsy camps to collect the thousand signatures needed to submit the list. Apparently, there are 12,000

Gypsies roaming all over Poland. The campaigning will be led by the Edlers of Gypsy packs.

Source: [No Author]. (1928). Cygańska lista wyborcza. *Ilustrowany Kuryer Codzienny*, An. 19, No. 13, 1928, January 13, p. 10.

Prepared for publication by Adam Bartosz and Natalia Gancarz.

9.1.2 *King Michał Kwiek in Krakow*

Jego Królewska Mość Władca Cyganów w Krakowie.

Wizyta w “Pałacu Prasy”.

[...] wgłębniony w wygodny fotel w poczekalni “Pałacu Prasy”, w eleganckim, europejskim garniturze Michał Kwiek, autentyczny władca polskich cyganów. Tylko niepokojący, egzotyczny profil, oraz lekko opalona cera, świadczą o cygańskim pochodzeniu. Oczywiście, jak dwa węgle rozżarzone, połyskujące dziwnym ogniem, oraz uśmiech odsłaniający zdrowe, białe, jak kreda, mocne zęby, przy falowaniu kruczonych włosów, składają się na piękny typ wschodniej urody.

Dzieje życia “Jego Królewskiej Cygańskiej Mości” są historią, jakiej nie wymyśliłby o niepospolitej fantazji pisarz. Życie tylko może dyktować tak ciepłe karty historii człowieka. Coś, jak typ Gorkij’a, żywcem przeniesiony z jego przejmujących opowieści.

Michał Kwiek urodził się w gminie Bielcza, pow. brzeski, woj. krakowskie w r. 1878. Dziś Jego Królewska Wysokość liczy 52 lat. Wcale jednak jego zdrowa, surowa w swojej sile postać nie wskazuje na to. Dzieciństwo spędził na łonie natury, korzystając z pełnej swobody. Mając 18 lat, począł szukać jakiegoś praktycznego zajęcia. Wstąpił no praktykę do kotlarza. Odtąd żywa natura gnała go z miejsca na miejsce w poszukiwaniu za pracą.

Od kotlarza do Królewskiej Mości

Wyjechał do Niemiec, tam bawił jakiś czas, a następnie wyruszył do Francji. Z niekłamnym zachwytem opowiada o Paryżu. Metropolja świata z całym swym przepychem, żywnością, bogactwem zewnętrznym olśniła przyszłego władcę cyganów. W międzyczasie pojął żonę cygankę. Opuściwszy Francję, wyjeżdża do Anglii. Zagranica bardzo miłe zostawiła wrażenie w jego wspomnieniach. Nabywszy doświadczenia zagranicą, w chwili, kiedy dzienniki rozniosły po świecie wiadomość, że Polska powstała wolna, jako obywatel polski, wrócił do kraju. Podkreśla to z dumą. Odtąd zaczyna uwijać się wśród cyganów polskich, co przychodzi mu tem łatwiej, że ojciec jego Grzegorz piastował podówczas godność króla cyganów. Zdobywa coraz więcej sympatii i uznania wśród swoich. Aż 25 stycznia 1930 r. w Piastowie zostaje wybrany przez aklamację na króla cyganów polskich, jako król cyganów Michał II. Kwiek, gdyż poprzedni król Grzegorz, ojciec jego, złożył koronę z powodu podeszłego wieku.

Obecny król cygański posiada trzy córki, z których jedna 14-letnia uczęszcza do gimnazjum w Poznaniu; podobnie, jak i 17-letni syn. W Poznaniu znajduje się właściwa siedziba

królewska. Tam, w kamienicach będących własnością Kwieka, znajdują się apartamenty, oraz centrala administracji.

Marzenia i rzeczywistość

Kwiek, chcąc ulżyć ciężkiej doli swej braci, zamierza urzeczywistnić swe bardzo ciekawe projekty, związane z organizacją przyszłego życia cyganów, których chce zachęcić do życia osiadłego. Jest to swego rodzaju rewolucja wprowadzona w dotychczasowy tryb koczowniczego bytowania cygańskiego. Mianowicie chce urządzić im warsztaty pracy, gdzieby razem zgromadzeni, mogli w sposób uczciwy, pracować na chleb. Jeden z tych warsztatów jest już w ruchu, mianowicie fabryka w Poznaniu, dająca zatrudnienie 550 cyganom. W dalszym ciągu zamierza Kwiek budować fabryki, a przy nich urządzone nowocześnie osiedla robotnicze, w których znajdą pomieszczenie pracownicy, oraz niezbędne instytucje oświatowe i kulturalne. Marzeniem Kwieka jest stworzenie szkoły powszechnej dla cyganów w Cieszynie i Sosnowcu, oraz gimnazjum w Poznaniu. Wszystkie szkoły oczywiście prowadzone w duchu polskim, z językiem wykładowym polskim. Szkoły te chce stworzyć i wybudować własnym kosztem dlatego, aby wychowankowie czuli się więcej swobodni i w atmosferze napoły rodzinnej.

Obecnie Kwiek bawi w Cieszynie, gdzie rejestruje cyganów z polecenia ministerstwa. Jak wynika z jego spisów, cyganie polscy liczą 14.000 głów. Podzieleni są na gminy, na czele których stoją wójtowie. W Poznaniu urzęduje trybunał cygański, złożony z trzech sędziów, prokuratora i króla, rozstrzygający wewnętrzne sprawy wśród cyganów. Sąd ten nakłada na winnych grzywny, które następnie idą do kasy wspólnej, służącej celom ogólnym. Trybunałowi przysługuje nawet prawo nakładania aresztu, nie więcej jednakże, niż na 4 dni. Wszelkie sprawy kryminalne oddają policji państwowej. Prócz sędziów, przy boku króla pracuje 5 wójtów, 5 policjantów cygańskich, oraz 4 sekretarzy, załatwiających korespondencję bieżącą.

Na przyszłość, jak zapewnia obecny władca cyganów, stosunki wśród cyganów poprawią się na lepsze i wszyscy będą pracować na odpowiednich stanowiskach, ku jak najpomysłniejszemu rozwojowi Polski, której obywatelami czują się wszyscy.

[Note]: Wywiad skończony. Król cyganów żegna się, połykując prześlicznym pierścieniem z grubego kutego złota, toczzonego w kształt węży, z drogocennymi kamieniami, tym jedynym symbolem władzy królewskiej, odróżniającym go od eleganckiego skrzypka z modnej kawiarni.

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His Majesty the Ruler of Gypsies in Krakow [1].
Visit in the "Press Palace" [2].

[...] sinking into a comfortable armchair in the waiting room of the "Press Palace", can be found Michał Kwiek in his elegant European suit, an authentic ruler of the Polish Gypsies.

Only a disturbing, exotic profile, and slightly tanned skin, testify to his Gypsy origin. Eyes, like two glowing coals, shining with a strange fire, and a smile revealing healthy, white, chalk-like, strong teeth, with wavy raven hair, make up a beautiful type of eastern looks.

The history of “His Gypsy Majesty” is a story that would not be invented by a writer with an unusual fantasy. Only life can dictate such warm pages of human history. Something like Gorky type [3], word for word taken from his heart-breaking stories.

Michał Kwiek was born in Bielcza commune, Brzeski county, Krakow province in 1878 [4]. Today His Majesty is 52 years old. At the same time, however, his healthy, raw strength does not indicate that. He spent his childhood in the bosom of nature, enjoying full freedom. At the age of 18, he began to look for a practical occupation. He began an apprenticeship at the cauldron-maker. From then on, living nature rushed him from place to place in search of work.

From a cauldron-maker to the Royal Majesty

He left for Germany, he spent some time there, and then moved on to France. He talks about Paris with real admiration. The metropolis of the world with all its splendour, food, and external wealth dazzled the future ruler of the Gypsies. In the meantime, he took his wife – a Gypsy woman. After leaving France, he went to England. Foreign countries left a very good impression in his memories. Having acquired experience abroad, at a time when the dailies spread news around the world that Poland was free [5], as a Polish citizen, he returned to the country. He emphasises that fact with a pride. From then on, he begins to wander among Polish Gypsies, which was easier for him as his father Gregory at that time was the King of the Gypsies. He gains more and more sympathy and appreciation among his own. Until on 25th of January 1930, he was elected in Piastów [6] by acclamation as the King of the Polish Gypsies, as the King of Gypsies, Michał II. Kwiek, because the previous King Gregory, his father, resigned the crown because of his advanced age.

The current Gypsy King has three daughters, one of whom, a 14-year-old, attends the gymnasium in Poznan; same as his 17-year-old son. In Poznan, there is a proper royal residence. There, in the tenement houses owned by Kwiek, apartments and administration headquarters can be found.

Dreams and reality

Kwiek, wanting to alleviate the heavy burden of his brothers, intends to implement his very interesting projects related to the organisation of the future life of the Gypsies, whom he wants to encourage to a sedentary life. It is a kind of revolution introduced into the current mode of nomadic Gypsy existence. Namely, he wants to arrange for them workshops where, together, they can honestly work for bread. One of these workshops is already in motion, namely a factory in Poznan, giving employment to 550 Gypsies. Kwiek still intends to build factories, and with them, modern housing estates for workers where they will find their quarters, as well as the necessary educational and cultural institutions. Kwiek's dream is to create a general school for Gypsies in Cieszyn and Sosnowiec,

and a gymnasium in Poznan. All schools, of course, are run in the Polish spirit, with the Polish language as the medium of instruction. He wants to create and built these schools with his own money, so that the pupils feel more relaxed and in a family atmosphere.

Currently, Kwiek resides in Cieszyn, where he registers Gypsies by order of the ministry. According to his census, Polish Gypsies number 14,000 persons. They are divided into municipalities, at the head of which are the heads of the camps. A Gypsy tribunal, consisting of three judges, a prosecutor and the King is in Poznan, and it decides on internal affairs among Gypsies. This court imposes fines on the guilty party, who then go to the common coffers, serving general purposes. The Tribunal even has the right to arrest, but no more than for four days. All criminal cases are handed over to the national police. In addition to the judges, 5 heads of the camps, 5 Gypsy policemen, and 4 secretaries, who deal with current correspondence, are working alongside the King.

For the future, as the current ruler of the Gypsies assures, relations among Gypsies will improve for the better and everyone will work in the right positions, towards the most prosperous development of Poland, whose citizens all of them feel.

[Note]: Interview finished. The King of the Gypsies is saying goodbye, shining with a lovely ring of thick forged gold, turned into the shape of serpents with precious stones, the only symbol of the King's power distinguishing him from the elegant violinist from the fashionable cafe.

Notes

1. Krakow was a formal capital of Poland until 1795. It is the second-largest city in Poland.
2. 'Press Palace' is a colloquial name of one of the most characteristic buildings located in the centre of Krakow; in the interwar period, it was the headquarters of the press corporation of Illustrated Daily Courier.
3. Maxim Gorky (1868-1936) was a Russian and Soviet writer and publicist, author of famous stories devoted to Gypsies.
4. In the second half of the 19th century, the territories encompassing the present-day Krakow province were under Austrian annexation in the Austria-Hungary state.
5. Poland disappeared from the map of Europe in 1795 as a result of the third partition. In 1918, after 123 years it regained its independence. The struggle for its borders lasted until 1923.
6. Piastow is a small town, until 1926 the city was called Utrata. Currently, it is part of the Warsaw agglomeration.

Source: [No Author]. (1930a). Jego Królewska Mość Władca Cyganów w Krakowie. *Ilustrowany Kuryer Codzienny*, An. 31, No. 259, 1930, September 25, p. 7.
Prepared for publication by Alicja Gontarek.

Comments

The article is one of the first to appear in the Polish press, which extensively presents the figure of Michał II Kwiek as the Polish Gypsy King, in which a journalist re-tells the interview conducted with him. It has a propaganda character, indicating the need for a reform among the Gypsies, the most important of which is the abandonment of nomadism. The text showed the King as a proud Polish citizen who knew the world, who in

no way resembled the Gypsy nomads who lived in Poland. It is characteristic that even his biography, which evidently indicates that he led a nomadic way of life, is shown as a commendable stage of life in which he collected experience, not only professional, as a cauldron-maker, but also in life. Therefore, it is not directly said that he came from a nomadic group. The article suggests that especially his staying abroad, in France or England, significantly influenced the shaping of his worldview. This description should be understood as a direct postulate of the “Europeanisation” of the Gypsies, who should become similar to their compatriots from Western Europe.

An important element of propaganda is also the theme of patriotism. Kwiek’s love for the homeland causes that in 1918, when Poland, after more than 100 years, was returned to the map of Europe – he also returns to this land and together with his father, who had remained in Poland, organise the life of Gypsies. It is significant that in this way Kwiek, through a journalist, reinforces his authority, pointing to the continuity of his power. It gives him a greater mandate to manage Gypsy affairs in Poland and to draw up a vision of the future of the Gypsies.

Undoubtedly, Kwiek himself wanted to be presented in that way. The key to the future of the Gypsies is his reformist projects (encouraging a sedentary lifestyle, professional productisation and education, and institutionalised cultural activities). Unfortunately, he did not achieve any plans of this type in Poland (no evidence that a factory and school was created), but the mere propaganda of this type of solution was of great importance in the way of shaping the vision of the future of the Gypsies. The journalists who talked with him created a convenient channel of articulation for him, and popularised his ideas. The sudden presence of Kwiek in the press is, after all, a specific manifestation of mutual education of the Gypsies and Poles. Thanks to it and thanks to the Kwieks, such as Michał II and the positive attitude of the Polish government to the Gypsy elites, Gypsies in Poland ceased to be a silent mass in the early 1930s, and began to participate within the mainstream social life, revealing their intentions and activities under slightly different names, but essentially similar or the same as the majority civilian organisational forms.

However, the progress and sanation of the Gypsy life in Poland were blocked by the realities in which Gypsies lived. For both Kwiek and the Polish party nomadism was a burden, so both sides – Polish and Gypsy – agreed that only far-reaching changes could improve their existence. This rhetoric, although it testified to far-sightedness, was not encased with any tools that could be used to carry out reforms, hence plans of this kind should be treated primarily as a record of the state of consciousness of the Gypsy and Polish elites about the direction in which Gypsy life should go in Poland.

Alicja Gontarek

9.1.3 *Chancellor Rudolf Kwiek*

Na marginesie cywilizacji. Z wizytą w obozie polskich cyganów na Marymoncie
Rozmowa z kanclerzem Rudolfem Kwiekiem, prezesem Wielkiej Rady Cygańskiej

[...] Weszliśmy między barwny lud, i postanowiliśmy dowiedzieć się, co myślą sami o sobie.

Wieczór już zapadł, kiedy dotarliśmy do kwatery głównej władz cygańskich w Polsce, na Marymoncie. Będąc tu po raz pierwszy, nie mogliśmy domyślić się, gdzie tu może się mieścić tabór. Przy podmiejskiej uliczce stoją zwykłe domki parterowe, zamieszkałe przez ludność polską. Trzeba przedostać się na tyły jednego z nich, tam w kotłince widzimy szereg drewnianych klitek i płóciennych szatr. Dwa największe domki zajmują: król Bazyli Kwiek, oraz kanclerz bezpieczeństwa narodu, prezes Wielkiej Rady Cygańskiej – Rudolf Kwiek. Król jest nieobecny w Warszawie – wyjechał na inspekcję. Mamy zamówioną audjencję u kanclerza.

Z mroku wyłania się postać młodej dziewczyny, z wielkimi, mosiężnymi kolczykami w uszach, która czekała już, aby wskazać drogę. Wchodzimy do mieszkania kanclerza Rudolfa, który wita nas uprzejmie i z godnością. Niska izba zbudowanego z desek domku, ma w sobie coś z wnętrza koczowniczego, wschodniego namiotu. Pod ścianami leży pokotem na barwnych derach i pierzynach liczna progenitura dostojnika, od maleńkiego drobiazgu, aż do kilunastoletnich dorodnych cór. Ściany zdobne w zawieszono wachlarzowato pocztówki, fotografie i portery rodzinne. Na środku niziutki, okrągły stół, na którym małżonka Rudolfa Kwieka podejmuje nas herbatą i pączkami. Gospodarze, oraz kilku młodych cyganów zasiadają dookoła po turecku, dla nas przynoszą niziuteńkie stołeczki.

Tu, w tych niepozornych szałasach na dalekich przedmieściach Warszawy, zbiegają się nici rządów wiążących kilkanaście tysięcy cyganów, rozproszonych po całej Polsce, tu jest jedna z filii władzy międzynarodowego cygaństwa, sprawowanej na całym świecie przez królewski ród Kwieków, którego głową jest wielki "imperato", mieszkający we wspańniętych pałacach w Londynie, Janosz Kwiek.

Nasz rozmówca, mąż stanu i polityk, w ciągu swego żywota zjeździł cały świat i włada językami: polskim, serbskim, greckim, macedońskim, tureckim, bułgarskim, rosyjskim, gruzińskim, portugalskim (w narzeczu europejskim i brazylijskim), hiszpańskim, francuskim, rumuńskim, czechosłowackim, madziarskim, włoskim, trochę angielskim.

Na zapytanie, gdzie posiadał tak wielką ilość języków, mówi:

– A cóż "kochanie". Cały świat zjeździłem. Ojciec mój i króla, to był bardzo bogaty człowiek. Złoto łopatą można było przerzucać. To całe bogactwo zrabowali potem bolszewicy. Urodziłem się w Brzesku pod Krakowem. Jak doszedłem do lat, postanowiłem cały świat zwiedzić. Ojciec dał mi worek złota i pojechałem. Poznałem wtedy jak żyją wszystkie narody. I jak się powodzi naszej braci we wszystkich krajach. Rozmawiałem z królami i wójtami, z samym wielkim Janoszem. Teraz dążę do tego, do czego oni wszyscy, żeby zdobyć szczęście dla całego cygańskiego narodu.

Jak szczęście to wyobrażają sobie cyganie, do czego dążą i jaka jest ich obecna organizacja napiszemy jutro.

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At the fringe of the civilization. A visit to the Polish Gypsy camp in Marymont [1]
 Conversation with Chancellor Rudolf Kwiek, president of the Great Council of Gypsies.

[...] We entered among the colourful people, and decided to find out what they think about themselves.

The evening has already fallen when we arrived at the headquarters of the Gypsy authorities in Poland, in Marymont. Being here for the first time, we could not figure out where the camp might be. In the suburban street stand ordinary ground-floor houses, inhabited by the Polish people. You have to get to the back of one of them, there in the valley we see a number of wooden cubicles and canvas caravans. The two largest cottages are occupied by: King Basil Kwiek, and the chancellor of a stateless nation, the president of the Great Gypsy Council – Rudolf Kwiek. The King is absent from Warsaw – he went to an inspection. We have ordered a chancellor's audition.

From the dark a figure of a young girl emerges, with huge, brass earrings, who have already been waiting to show us the way. We enter the apartment of chancellor Rudolf, who welcomes us kindly and with dignity. A small house built of wooden boards has something inside of a nomadic, eastern tent. Under the walls, there are numerous dignitaries on colourful rugs and eiderdowns, from a small thing, to a dozen or so year-old, fine-looking daughters. Walls decorated with fan-shaped postcards, photographs and family portraits. In the middle of a low place, the round table on which the wife of Rudolf Kwiek offers us tea and donuts. The hosts, and a few young Gypsies sit around with their legs crossed, for us they bring low stools.

Here, in these inconspicuous shacks in the distant suburbs of Warsaw, there are threads of government binding several thousand Gypsies scattered all over Poland, here is one of the branches of the power of international Gypsy themselves, held throughout the world by the royal family of Kwiek whose head is the great "imperator" living in the magnificent palaces in London, Janosz Kwiek.

Our interlocutor, statesman and politician, throughout his life travelled the whole world and speaks the following languages: Polish, Serbian, Greek, Macedonian, Turkish, Bulgarian, Russian, Georgian, Portuguese (in the European and Brazilian dialects), Spanish, French, Romanian, Czechoslovakian, Magyar, Italian and some English.

When asked where he learnt such a large number of languages, he says:

– Well, "darling." I travelled the whole world. My father and King, he was a very rich man. We could shovel the gold with a shovel. All the wealth was then robbed by the Bolsheviks [2]. I was born in Brzesko near Krakow. When I came to years, I decided to travel the whole world. My father gave me a sack of gold and I went. I learnt then how all nations live. And how our brothers in all countries prosper. I spoke with Kings and camp heads, with great Janosz himself. Now I am striving for what they all wanted, to get happiness for the entire Gypsy nation.

How luck is imagined by the Gypsies, what they are striving for and what their current organisation is, we will write tomorrow.

Notes

1. Marymont – the name of the estate complex in the northern districts of Warsaw. From the end of the 19th century, a permanent Gypsy settlement flourished on Marymont.
2. Reference to Polish-Soviet War of 1919-1920.

Source: [No Author]. (1931a). Na marginesie cywilizacji. Z wizytą w obozie polskich cyganów na Marymoncie. *Gazeta Polska*, An. 3, No. 144, 1931, May 28, p. 8

Prepared for publication by Alicja Gontarek.

Comments

The report from the journalist's visit to the Gypsy camp of Basil Kwiek is one of the most interesting ones that appeared in the Polish press: the King's residence is described in detail, especially the interior, full signs of attachment to family history (family photographs and portraits). The King and his closest supporter, Rudolf Kwiek, belonged to this group of Gypsies, who even though declared their intention to abandon nomadism, continued partially to live in shacks and caravans, in a place where Gypsies had stopped for over 100 years. Together with their families, they were both immersed in nomadic culture, accepting at most temporary stops. At the same time, they were also modernised and integrated, and reflecting on their future. Undoubtedly, frequent trips abroad inclined comparisons of the life of Gypsies in different countries. It appeared that they wanted to introduce some changes in Poland. The system of organisation was subject to modernisation. Although the Kwieks used the archaic royal title, in the typically Polish Gypsy camp of Basil, Rudolf acted as the chancellor of the Great Council of Gypsies, which was associated with a certain type of modernisation, signalled even in the name. Although it is difficult to determine from the lack of sources what that body actually was, it is not without significance that Rudolf refers in the interview to supranational structures, with a supposedly official residency in London. Another symptom of changes setting the direction of activities is also the fact that in this short interview Rudolf Kwiek calls the Gypsies a nation. As part of this and not another concept, he thought about the need to improve the existence of Gypsies.

Alicja Gontarek

9.1.4 The Gypsy Baron

Prawdziwy "baron cygański"

Poznań, w sierpniu. [...]

W poznańskim oddziale "Ilustr[owane] Kur[yer] Codz[ienny]" zjawił się niezwykle gość. Wysoki, smukły mężczyzna. Na rękach pierścionie złote z wielkimi koralami. Cera prawie brązowa, czupryna czarna. Typowy cygan. Ale czyż cygan? Ubranie na nim miejskie, dobrze skrojone, na nogach modne, dziurkowane na wierzchu, żółte półbuty. Takich cyganów się nie widuje.

A jednak to prawdziwy cygan. Co więcej – to członek królewskiego rodu, człowiek w swoim plemieniu prawie noszący tytuł “barona”. Dowiedzieliśmy się o tem, gdy gość przedstawił się: “baron Matejusz Kwiek”.

Przybył z interesem. Chodziło mu o zamieszczenie w “I.K.C.” ogłoszenia, zawierającego wezwanie do wszystkich członków jego rodu, by się z dokumentami rodzinnymi do niego zgłosili. Treść ogłoszenia spowodowała wdanie się z gościem w rozmowę.

– Jakież cel ma ogłoszenie, które pan chce zamieścić w “I.K.C.”?

– Cel – odpowiada wcale dobrą polszczyzną p. Kwiek – jest taki: Zadużo jest wśród cyganów w Polsce rodzin, noszących nasze nazwisko rodowe. Nie ulega wątpliwości, że wiele z tych rodzin zalicza się do naszego rodu niesłusznie. Nasz ród jest starym rodem cygańskim. Stanowi on u cyganów arystokrację. Z Kwieków pochodzi król cygański. Jest nim Bazyli Kwiek, przebywający obecnie w Czechach. Ród musi dbać o siebie.

– Na pieczęci pańskiej, jaką pan zaopatrzył podpis na ogłoszeniu, jest po francusku wypisany tytuł barona cyganów na całą Europę. Czy został on zalegalizowany?

– Nie. Tytuł ten to tylko określenie arystokratyczności rodu. Wagę swoją ma on u nas, u cyganów.

– Więc organizacja społeczna u cyganów jest oparta ...? – rzucamy pytanie.

– Jest oparta na rodach. Właściwie nasze życie wewnętrzne jest zorganizowane monarchistycznie. Jest szlachta, po naszymu “move” i gmin – “netoci”. W obozie władzę sprawuje wójt. Sądy sprawuje starszyzna pod przewodnictwem wójta. Wójtowie są podlegli baronom. Baronowie królowi. Jeśli np. ja jestem w obozie, to władza należy do mnie. Sprawują ją oczywiście przez wójta. Gdyby w obozie był król, władza należy do niego.

– Jakież jest stosunek cyganów do państwa?

– Jesteśmy obywatelami Rzeczypospolitej tak, jak cyganie np. na Węgrzech, w Grecji, w Bułgarii, Hiszpanji, czy Czechach, są obywatelami tych państw. Niedawno, podczas zjazdu w Łodzi, odstawiliśmy kilkunastu naszych młodych ludzi do władz, aby odbyli służbę wojskową. Między innymi na tem właśnie tle, że ród nasz stoi jasno na stanowisku spełniania wszelkich obywatelskich wobec państwa obowiązków, a pokazało się, iż niektóre obozy, nawet noszące nasze nazwisko, inaczej na tę sprawę patrzą, wyłoniła się konieczność skontrolowania, czy te obozy noszą nazwisko nasze rodowe słusznie, czy niesłusznie.

– Obowiązki wobec państwa – odzywam się – to dużo. Ale jakże jest z obowiązkami wobec społeczeństwa? Przyzna pan, że opinia jaka mają cyganie, nie jest najlepsza. Żebranina, złodziejstwa ...

– Panowie muszą zrozumieć – oświadczam na to “baron” Kwiek – że cyganie, jacy są w Polsce, dzielą się na pięć klas.

Jeśli mowa o żebraniu, o złodziejstwie, to niech panowie wiedzą, że chodzi tu tylko o obozy czwartej i piątej klasy. Porządne obozy takimi procedurami się nie trudnią.

– A z czegoż żyją?

– Z pracy. Cyganie są dobrymi pracownikami. W Polsce to przeważnie kowale i kotlarze. Z tego żyją. A że roboty w jednym miejscu na długo niema, więc wędrują. Obecnie np. głównych robót dostarcza cyganom wojsko.

- Jakich robót?
- Właśnie kotlarskich. A kotlarstwo – powiada p. Kwiek z dumą – to nie byle co. Żołnierzowi potrzebny jest na wojnie karabin, ale też potrzebny jest kocioł, aby w nim można mu było w kuchni polowej ugotować strawę.
- Pan także zajmuje się kotlarstwem?
- Oczywiście. Właśnie idę do pułku artylerji na Sołacz, gdzie spodziewam się dostać robotę.
- Prawie wszystkie cyganki trudnią się procederem takim jak wróżbiarstwo ...
- No tak – odpowiada p. Kwiek – bawią się. To też forma zarobkowania. Ale muszę powiedzieć, że są u cyganów kobiety, specjalnie dla wróżbiarstwa kształcone. Kształcą się w Jerozolimie. Niech się panowie nie śmieją – dodał – mogę przyprowadzić cygankę, która z ręki wyczyta każdemu z panów wszystkie, najtajniejsze nawet myśli. Pewnie, nie każda cyganka, narzucająca się z wrózeniem, ma o wróżbiarstwie pojęcie. Ale są wróżki, przygotowane do tego.
- A życie religijne u was?
- Jesteśmy greko-katolikami. Dzieci chrzczymy w cerkwiach, na nabożeństwa chodzimy do cerkwi, o ile cerkiew jest tam, gdzie się obóz znajduje.
- A jakże z kształceniem dzieci?
- Jeżeli obóz zatrzymuje się gdzieś na dłużej, to chętnie byśmy dzieci posyłałi do szkoły. Ale cyganie przecież wędrują. O normalnej nauce nie może więc być mowy. – Więc rosną analfabeci?
- Przeważnie. Są jednak cyganie, umiejący czytać. Ci uczą dzieci sami, oczywiście chłopców.
- A kobiety?
- Kobiety – odpowiada p. Kwiek z uśmiechem. – Czy im to potrzebne? Kobieta ma się zajmować dziećmi, ma dbać o rodzinę, ma więc dosyć zajęcia.
- Więc o równouprawnieniu kobiet u was niema mowy?
- Panie – to nie dla nas. Rządzić musi mężczyzna.
- No, a nie zdarza się, że kobieta czasem rządzi mężczyzną?
- Może się zdarzyć, ale my takiego za mężczyznę nie uważamy.
- Więc kobiet wcale nie cenicie?
- Przeciwnie. U nas, gdy się chłopak chce ożenić, musi za żonę jej ojcu zapłacić i to wcale ładną kwotę, 25, czasem 50 dukatów złotych.
- A cóż się dzieje, gdy np. mąż żonę porzuci?
- To się u nas prawie nie zdarza. Takiego sąd starszyny uznaje za łajdaka. I taki nie ma co robić w obozie. Dla porządnego cygana on przestaje istnieć. Zresztą – traci pieniądze, jakie dał za żonę.
- A gdyby żona męża porzuciła?
- Czeką ją to samo, a nadto ojciec jej musi zwrócić mężowi dwa razy taką kwotę, jaką od niego za córkę otrzymał. Jednak takich porzuceń u nas prawie niema. Wogóle dziewczęta trzymane są ostro. Gdyby dziewczyna u nas złajdaczyła się, obcina się jej włosy. To jest napiętnowaniem jej. Z dziewczyną, której włosy obcięto, nikt się nie ożeni. W obozie,

jeśli ma odwagę w nim zostać, toleruje się ją, ale jest ona tam jak piąte koło u wozu. Gdy panowie widzą cygankę z krótkimi włosami, wiedzą, że to jest ulicznica.

– Ilyż jest ogółem cyganów w Polsce?

– Około 1,200 osób – odparł p[an] Kwiek. – Czechach będzie ze 400, mniej więcej tyle jest w Grecji, mniej jeszcze w Hiszpanji. Niewielka liczba jest też w Ameryce, mianowicie w Brazylii. Tam naczelnikiem ich jest mój brat.

Na tem zakończyli rozmowę. “Baron” Kwiek spieszył się bowiem na Sołacz.

J. R.

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The Genuine “Gypsy Baron”

Poznań, in August. [...]

In the Poznań branch of *Ilustrowany Kurjer Codzienny* an unusual guest appeared. A tall, slender man. Golden rings with big beads on hands. Almost brown complexion, black hair. A typical Gypsy. But is he a Gypsy? He wears urban clothes, well-cut on the legs, fashionable, yellow shoes punched on top. You do not see such Gypsies!

And yet he is a real Gypsy. What is more – it is a member of the royal family, a man in his tribe almost bearing the title of “Baron”. We learned about this when the guest introduced himself: “Baron Matejasz Kwiek”.

He came with an interest. He meant to post in IKC [1] an announcement, containing a call to all members of his family, to contact him with family documents. The content of the announcement resulted in a conversation with the guest.

– What is the purpose of the announcement you want to include in IKC?

– The purpose – Mr. Kwiek responds with the good Polish language – is: Too many of the Gypsy families in Poland are bearing our family name. There is no doubt that many of these families wrongly fall into our family. Our family is an old Gypsy family. It is the aristocracy among Gypsies. The Gypsy King comes from Kwiek. It is Basil Kwiek, currently in the Czech Republic. The family must take care of themselves.

– On your seal, which you have provided with the signature on the announcement, there is in French the title of Gypsy Baron for the whole Europe. Has it been legalised?

– No. This title is only a term for family aristocracy. It has its weight with us, with Gypsies.

– So the social organisation of the Gypsies is based on ...? – we ask the question.

– It's based on families. In fact, our inner life is organised in a monarchic manner. There are nobles, in our language ‘move’ [2] and communes – ‘netoci’ [3]. The camp authority is held by the *wójt* [4]. The courts are exercised by elders led by the head of the camp. Heads of the camps answer to Barons. And Barons to the King. For example, if I am in a camp, then the authority belongs to me. They do it, of course, through the head of the camp. If there was a King in the camp, the authority belongs to him.

– What is the attitude of Gypsies towards the state?

– We are citizens of the Republic of Poland, just like Gypsies in Hungary, Greece, Bulgaria, Spain or the Czech Republic are citizens of these countries. Recently, during the congress in Łódź, we left a dozen of our young people to the authorities to have military service. Among others in that regard, our family stands clearly in the position of fulfilling all civic duties towards the state, but it turned out that some camps, even those bearing our name, are looking at it differently, there is a need to inspect whether these camps bear the surnames of our ancestors rightly or wrongly.

– Duties to the state – I say – are a lot. But how is it with duties towards society? You will admit that the opinion regarding Gypsies is not the best. Beggars, thieves ...

– You must understand – declares “Baron” Kwiek – that Gypsies, as they are in Poland, are divided into five classes.

If you are talking about begging, about thievery, I must let you know that these are only about the fourth and fifth class of camps. Good camps do not bother with such practices.

– And what do they live from?

– From work. Gypsies are good workers. In Poland, they are mostly blacksmiths and cauldron-makers. That is what they live from. And as work in one place is not for a long time, so they wander. Currently, for example, the main works are provided to the Gypsies by the army.

– What works?

– Cauldron-making. And cauldron-making – says Mr. Kwiek with pride – it’s not just anything. A soldier needs a rifle for a war, but also a cauldron is needed so that he can cook a meal in the field kitchen.

– You are also involved in cauldron-making?

– Of course. I am just going to the artillery regiment on Sołacz [5], where I expect to get a job.

– Almost all Gypsy women are engaged in the practice of fortune-telling ...

– Well, yes – says Mr. Kwiek – they play with that. It’s also a form of making money. But I must say that there are Gypsy women specifically educated for fortune-telling. They are educated in Jerusalem. Please do not laugh – he added – I can bring a Gypsy woman who will read every, even the most secretive thoughts from your hands. Sure, not every Gypsy woman that is dealing with fortune-telling knows how to do that. But there are fortune-tellers, prepared for this.

– And what about your religious life?

– We are Greek-Catholics. We baptise children in Orthodox churches, go to the church for services, if the church is where the camp is.

– And how about the children’s education?

– If the camp stops somewhere for longer, we would gladly send the children to school. But the Gypsies are wandering. They can forget about normal education.

– So the illiteracy grows?

– Mostly. There are, however, Gypsies who can read. They teach children themselves, of course, boys.

– And women?

– Women – says Mr. Kwiek with a smile. – Do they really need it? A woman is supposed to take care of the children, she has to take care of the family, so she has enough to deal with.

– So there is no question about the equal rights of women?

– Sir – it's not for us. Man must rule.

– Well, does it not happen that a woman sometimes rules a man?

– It can happen, but we do not think of him as a man.

– So you do not value women at all?

– On the contrary. In our community when a boy wants to get married, he has to pay for a wife to her father, and that is quite an amount, 25, sometimes 50 gold ducats.

– And what happens when, for example, the husband leaves his wife?

– It almost does not happen with us. He is regarded by a court judgment as a bastard. And there is nothing to do in the camp for him. For a decent Gypsy, he ceases to exist. Anyway – he loses the money he gave for his wife.

– What if the husband's wife left?

– The same is waiting for her, moreover, her father must pay her husband twice the amount he received from him for his daughter. However, there are almost no such abandonments. In general, girls are kept closely. If a girl would lead a dissolute life, her hair would be cut off. This means stigmatising her. With a girl, whose hair was cut off, no one will get married. In the camp, if she has the courage to stay in it, she is tolerated, but she is there like the fifth wheel. When you see a Gypsy woman with short hair, you should know that she is a streetwalker.

– How many Gypsies are there in Poland in total?

– About 1,200 people [6] – said Mr. Kwiek. – There will be around 400 [7] in the Czech Republic, more or less the same in Greece, and slightly less in Spain. A small number is also in America, namely in Brazil. My brother is their leader there.

We have finished the conversation. "Baron" Kwiek was in a hurry to Sołacz.

J. R.

Notes

1. An acronym of *Ilustrowany Kuryer Codzienny* newspaper.
2. Illegible word, may be misheard by the journalist.
3. With this term were designated the poorest and most despised Gypsies in Wallachia (cf. Popp Serboianu, 1930, p. 51).
4. In Poland, this was a title of a hereditary head of town and is used until now as a title of elected head of rural commune. In this case, it is used as a title of the head of a Gypsy camp.
5. Sołacz is a district of the city of Poznań, located in its north-western part.
6. This is probably a typographical error and the number should be read 12,000 Gypsies. Otherwise, maybe the number is correct and "Baron Kwiek" may refer only to the Gypsies who belong to his, *Kelderari* community.
7. Probably here he is speaking only about his kin of Gypsies too.

Source: J. R. (1932b). Prawdziwy "baron cygański". *Ilustrowany Kuryer Codzienny*, r. 23, No. 229, 1932, August 19, pp. 2-3.

Prepared for publication by Alicja Gontarek.

Comments

The published article is a very important source documenting the process of knowledge transfer about the life of Gypsies in Poland, which had been taking place since the early 1930s between the majority society (Poles) and the Gypsy elite. In the previous period, i.e. in the 1920s, neither side was interested in entering into close interaction. There were many reasons for this. The most important is the one related to political causes. Until the mid-1920s, the Polish government circles represented a nationalist tradition, reluctant of all national and ethnic minorities. They even tried to introduce in the Sejm an order to expel the Gypsy population from Polish lands (Gontarek, 2017a, p. 54). In 1926, when the power in the country was taken over by one of the founding fathers of the Polish state – Józef Piłsudski (1867-1935), the political climate for national minorities changed radically. When the new authorities and the largest pro-government party (Nonpartisan Bloc for Cooperation with the Government) have strengthened, from the beginning of the 1930s they began to build a broad coalition composed of representatives of various communities, including Gypsies (Gontarek, 2017b, p. 3). It was organised as part of a concept called “State consolidation”, which included also national and ethnic minorities in the political and social life. There was even a plan for the Gypsies to issue their list for the parliamentary election (Ibid., pp. 5-6). For this initiative, the government was severely criticized and ridiculed by the opposition (Gontarek, 2017a, pp. 66-69). However, these voices were not taken into account and did not prevent further Polish-Gypsy collaboration. From 1926 to 1937/1938 Gypsies and Polish authorities cooperated on varied levels and areas (Gontarek, 2017b, pp. 1-21). As a result of the political changes, the so-called “National Consolidation”, in the end of the 1930s the Gypsy elite, represented by Kwieks, which had been already formed by then, could not be active in the public forum because it was not allowed to enter it.

Let us turn our attention to some of the questions posed to Kwiek. In addition to the obvious ones, which aim to familiarise with the internal organisation, there are also those concerning the attitude of Gypsies to the state and women. Regarding the first issue, Kwiek puts a lot of emphasis on focusing on civic duties, including the duty of military service. The Gypsy leader is aware that citizenship creates obligations. Gypsies, like any other group, are also supposed to be subject to state – this declaration challenges all stereotypical ideas about Gypsies. The loyalist attitude of Kwiek to the ruling circles is underlined, which resulted from the fact that the Polish Gypsy leaders did not know other mechanisms of managing Gypsy life than those referring to the authority of the Polish government. This comes to help them to build a strong and centralised authority of own leadership, as an indispensable element of the internal consolidation of the Gypsy community.

Kwiek's words reveal also attitudes in the community towards women. This topic was very rarely discussed in Polish press apart of exoticising articles in the 1930s about the romances of “Gypsy princesses,” who fled from camps and tried to live differently than before, with Poles, but the sensational dimension of this type of events was stressed above all. This phenomenon evoked opposition from Gypsy elders, who feared this will

lead to disintegration of the community (Gontarek, 2017, p. 12). Kwiek, who wanted to reform Gypsy life, in this case supported the position of elders. It seems that modernisation and reorganisation of Gypsy life according to his vision was to take place without the participation of Gypsy women. Judging from published newspapers articles, in the inter-war period the phenomenon of women leaving the community in a desire to become independent and self-standing was probably more and more frequent.

Alicja Gontarek

9.2 Rivalry among Kings

9.2.1 *New Elections*

Z pośród 80 tysięcy cyganów, którzy żyją jeszcze na świecie, blisko jedna trzecia zamieszkuje Polskę. Cyganie polscy mają zorganizowane własne życie społeczne, prawdziwą władzą jest dla nich tylko wybrany przez nich samych król, który zresztą nie ma swej godności dożywotnio, lecz wybierany jest na 5 lat. I oto w najbliższym czasie ma się właśnie odbyć nowa elekcja.

Już dzisiaj chodzą słuchy o gorączkowej propagandzie przedwyborczej. Wszyscy cyganie są zdania, że zbliżające się wybory będą miały specjalnie doniosłe znaczenie. Ostatnie lata były bardzo burzliwe w życiu polskich cyganów: rewolucje pałacowe, detronizacja i monarchowie konkurencyjni byli na porządku dziennym. Po nowej elekcji więc spodziewają się wyjaśnienia sytuacji.

Wasył Kwiek, który jeszcze nie dawno rządził w Warszawie, na Marymoncie, nie pozyskał powszechne go uznania. Wybuchnęła nawet swe go czasu rewolucja pałacowa, ale król świadomy swej odpowiedzialności potrafił ją zgnieść. Usunięci dworacy przenieśli jednak walkę w szerokie masy. Powstały dwie partje: t[ak] zw[ana] legitymistów, broniących Wasyla Kwieka i zw[ana] partja porządku, agitująca za Andrzejem Kwiekiem, jednym z licznych krewnych króla Wasyla. Wielu przypuszcza, że już najbliższe wybory doprowadzą Andrzeja Kwieka do zdobycia tronu. Wasył Kwiek grozi jednak, Andrzej drogą prawną nie zdobędzie tronu.

Dla uniknięcia więc bratobójczej walki, w którą niewątpliwie wmieszałaby się policja, musi być znalezione jeszcze trzecie wyjście z sytuacji. Zwolennikiem tego rozwiązania jest baron Matejas Kwiek. Zjawił on się w Polsce przysłany przez międzynarodwą organizację cyganów. Jego zadaniem jest pogodzenie dwóch zwaśnionych partyj. Dla spełnienia tego zadania ma on bardzo daleko idące możliwości, których użycie jest uwarunkowane ostateczną koniecznością. W misji bar[on] Kwieka godny jest podkreślenia zwłaszcza fakt, że poddany jednego z królów cygańskich w Europie ma gościć dwóch poważniejszych pretendentów do tronu.

Baron zabrał się do dzieła z wielką energią. Zwołał nadzwyczajne zgromadzenie wszystkich dygnitarzy cygańskich z Polski, coś jakby wielki sejm cygański. Zebranie uchwaliło ustąpienie obu przeciwników. Następny kongres, zwołany do Łodzi wybrał na króla na nowe pięciolecie dawnego rewolucjonistę Andrzeja.

Ale minęło pięć lat i cyganie stoją przed nowymi wyborami. Wasyl Kwiek jest znowu pretendentem do tronu i stara walka znowu rozgorzała. Obecnie partje są przekonane o zwycięstwie swego kandydata. Bar[on] Matejas Kwiek zjawił się więc znowu na widowni. Elegancki ten i światowy pan znowu gruntownie rozpatruje sprawę, ale stanowisko cygańskiego rozjemcy napawa go coraz większym sceptycyzmem.

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Of the 80,000 Gypsies who still live in the world, nearly a third live in Poland. Polish Gypsies have organised social life, the real authority for them is only the King chosen by themselves, who does not hold his office for life, but is elected for five years. And in the near future such a new election is about to take place.

There are already rumors about feverish pre-election propaganda. All Gypsies are of the opinion that the upcoming elections will be of particular importance. Recent years have been very turbulent in the life of Polish Gypsies: palace revolutions, a de-throning and competing monarchs were on a daily agenda. After the new election, they expect the situation to be made clear.

Wasyl Kwiek, who has recently ruled in Warsaw, in the Marymont district, failed to win widespread recognition. He even had a palace revolution aimed at himself, but the King, aware of his responsibility, was able to crush it. However, his courtiers who had been removed, moved the struggle to the broad masses. Two parties were formed: the [so called] legitimists, defending Wasyl Kwiek, and the [so called] party of order, backing Andrzej Kwiek, one of the relatives of King Wasyl. Many assume that the next election will result in Andrzej Kwiek ascending to the throne. However, Wasyl Kwiek is threatening that Andrzej will not win the throne in a legal course.

So, to avoid a fratricidal fight, in which the police would undoubtedly be involved, a third way out of the situation must be found. Baron Matejas Kwiek is a supporter of this solution. He was sent to Poland by an international organisation of Gypsies. His task is to reconcile the two feuding parties. To fulfill this task, he has very far-reaching possibilities, the use of which is conditioned by the ultimate necessity. In Baron Kwiek's mission it is worth emphasizing, in particular, that a subject to one of the Gypsy Kings in Europe is to reconcile two serious pretenders to the throne.

Baron set to work with great energy. He convened an extraordinary gathering of all Gypsy dignitaries from Poland, something like a great Gypsy *Sejm*. The meeting resolved to ask both opponents to step down. The next congress, which convened in Łódź, chose the old revolutionary Andrzej as the King for the new five-year term.

But five years have passed and the Gypsies are facing new elections. Wasyl Kwiek is again a contender for the throne, and the old struggle has started again. Currently, the parties are convinced of their candidate's victory. Baron Matejas Kwiek showed up again in the audience. This elegant and global man is considering the matter thoroughly again, but the position of the Gypsy peacekeeper makes him more and more skeptical.

Source: [No Author]. (1934). Baron Matejas Kwiek rozsądza pretendentów do tronu cygańskiego. *Expres Zagłębia*, An. Ig, No. 278, 1934, October 10, p. 2.

Prepared for publication by Adam Bartosz and Natalia Gancarz.

9.2.2 *The President of the Council of the Gypsies*

Z Równego donosi (SP): Niedawno temu ukazał się w “IKC” wywiad z wodzem cyganów “baronem” Matejaszem Kwiekiem, który zapowiedział wielkie reformy w życiu cyganów.

Jak się okazuje, wódz nie próżnuje. Z ramienia jego wyjechał po Polsce “prezes Rady cyganów”, Józef Kwiek, który onegdaj zjawił się w oddziale “IKC” w Równem i opowiedział szerzej o swej akcji.

[...] Pan Józef Kwiek poszukuje specjalnie jednego uciążliwego dla cyganów rodaka, Michała Kwieka, który jest głównym organizatorem wielu kradzieży a ostatnio samozwańczo nazywa się królem cyganów i próbuje ich skomunizować. Nosi się nawet Michał Kwiek z planem wielkiego zjazdu w Stanisławowie, gdzie chce próbować objąć stanowisko “króla”. Niebezpieczny Michał Kwiek organizował już i komunizował cyganów w Czechach i Rumunii.

Nasz rozmówca Józef Kwiek podjął się trudnej roli wypłenicia wśród cyganów złodziejstwa, a już specjalnie ściga samozwańca Michała. Następnie wyjedzie do Brazylii, aby odwiedzić tamtejszych rodaków.

Przy końcu zwierzył nam się, że cyganie są obecnie na drodze do zrealizowania swych marzeń o własnej ojczyźnie. Oto ich delegat wyjechał do Ligi Narodów, by starać się tam o część Afryki Południowej, gdzie by chcieli się osiedlić. Z początku noszono się z myślą założenia państwa na naszym Polesiu, ale na to trzeba by zbyt długo czekać i jak się wyraził, zbyt wielu kandydatów na to Polesie.

Na Wołyniu cyganów jest około 4 tys. w stosunku do cyganów całej Polski (15 tys.) jest liczbą znaczną.

Józef Kwiek jeździ ze swoją policją, przy pomocy której wyłapuje złodziejasków.

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Reports from Rivne [1] (SP): Recently in “IKC” appeared an interview with the leader of the Gypsies – “Baron” Matejasz Kwiek, who announced great reforms in the life of Gypsies.

As it turns out, the leader has been busy. On his behalf, “the President of the Council of Gypsies”, Józef Kwiek, who once appeared in the “IKC” branch in Rivne and talked more about his action.

[...]. Mr. Józef Kwiek is looking for one especially troublesome compatriot to the Gypsies, Michał Kwiek, who is the main organiser of many thefts, and recently he has self-proclaimed the King of the Gypsies and tries to introduce communism to them. Michał Kwiek even has plans for a big congress in Stanisławów where he wants to try to take the position of “King”. Dangerous Michał Kwiek already organised and introduced communism to Gypsies in the Czech Republic and Romania.

Our interlocutor Józef Kwiek took on the difficult role of eradication of the thievery among the Gypsies, and he is already chasing the pretender Michał. Then he will go to Brazil to visit his compatriots there.

At the end, he confided to us that the Gypsies are now on the way to realize their dreams of their own homeland. Here their delegate went to the League of Nations to seek for a part of South Africa, where they would like to settle down. At the beginning, he had an idea of establishing a state on our Polesie [3], but it would be too long to wait and, as he put it, there are too many candidates for this Polesie.

In Volhynia [4], there are about 4,000 Gypsies which, compared to Gypsies in Poland (15,000), is a significant number.

Józef Kwiek rides with his police, by means of which he catches thieves.

Notes

1. Rivne is a historic city in western Ukraine and the historical region of Volhynia. In the inter-war period Volhynia was a part of Poland.
3. Polesia is geographical and historical land currently located mainly in the territory of Belarus and Ukraine. In the interwar period, western Polesia with Brest on the Bug, Pinsk and Luninets belonged to Poland.
4. Volhynia is historical land; currently part of Ukraine. The text refers to the Volhynia region, which in the interwar period was part of the Polish state. The eastern part of Volhynia during this period remained with the USSR.

Source: [No Author]. (1935c). *Silna ręka wodza cyganów. Ilustrowany Kurjer Codzienny*, An. 26, No. 64, 1935, March 5, pp. 4-5.

Prepared for publication by Alicja Gontarek.

Comments

In the 1930s, the self-proclaimed Gypsy leaders from the Kwiek clan were also competing with each other. The article shows that in the 1930s they learned how to use accusation of crimes and anti-communist slogans popular in Poland to discredit their opponents.

These activities fit into the broader context of various activities of the Polish state police whose task was to discourage Gypsies from pursuing a nomadic lifestyle. They included: individual registration of Gypsies, registration of caravans and marches of Gypsy camps, surveys and inspections of camps, removal of illegal camps, ban on camping in cities, border zones and compulsory dactyloscopy as well as introducing bans on vagrancy and begging by local administrative authorities (*Dziennik Ustaw*, 1927; *Na Posterunku*, 1932, p. 708).

At the other end of Kwieks' activity were the slogans concerning the creation of a Gypsy state. It mainly concerned southern African areas, under the British administration. Attempts were also made to support a permanent settlement in Polesia, but as it became clear from the article these projects also failed. In a nutshell, the article perfectly, in a way, illustrates the goals and directions of the activities of the Kwieks in the 1930s.

Alicja Gontarek

9.2.3 *The Leader of the Gypsy Nation*

“Wódz narodu cygańskiego”, “Król” cyganów Mateusz Kwiek, którego nazwisko często widnieje w prasie, doszedł do przekonania, że nie powinien nazywać się już królem, albowiem władza monarsza w Polsce nie istnieje. Toteż na zjeździe w Warszawie wystosował orędzie do swoich poddanych, w którym zrzeka się tytułu króla, jako podlegający wraz z całym plemieniem cygańskim rządowi Rzplitej polskiej – i odtąd zapowiada, że będzie nosił tylko tytuł “wodza narodu cygańskiego”.

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The ‘Leader of the Gypsy Nation’, and ‘King’ of Gypsies Mateusz Kwiek, whose name often appears in the press, came to the conclusion that he should not be called a King, because a monarch power in Poland does not exist. Consequently, at the congress in Warsaw he sent a message to his subjects in which he renounces the title of King, as along with the tribe of the Gypsy people he is subject to the government of the Republic of Poland – and from that time he announces that he will only use the title of the ‘Leader of the Gypsy Nation’.

Source: [No Author]. (1935b). Wódz narodu cygańskiego. *Ilustrowany Kuryer Codzienny*, An. 26, No. 45. 1935, February 14, p. 10.

Prepared for publication by Adam Bartosz and Natalia Gancarz.

9.2.4 *The Revolution in the Gypsy State*

Revolucja w państwie Cyganów

[...] Władca cyganów, baron Matejasz Kwiek, okazał się nieoczekiwanie sprytnym i przewidującym politykiem i ... dobrowolnie zrzekł się władzy królewskiej. Abdykował i już! Dowiedzieli się o tem na zjeździe cyganie w lutym w Warszawie.

Na tym zjeździe Matejasz Kwiek odczytał komunikat tej treści:

“Niniejszym komunikuję, iż na Zjeździe Cyganów, co miało miejsce w dniu 14 listopada 1934 roku, zostałem wybrany przez cyganów z Polski i innych państw, jako Wódz Narodu Cygańskiego, co potwierdzam protokołem. W imię prawa, jako Wódz Narodu Cygańskiego, baron Matejasz Kwiek, niniejszym komunikatem unieważniam dotychczasowy tytuł “króla” wśród Narodu Cygańskiego, ponieważ cyganie, jako naród nie posiadający własnego Państwa, nie mogą tworzyć monarchji królewskiej. Wszyscy więc zamieszkujący na terytorium Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej podlegamy rządowi Pana Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej. Nieustanne spory między cyganami o dynastję w narodzie koczowniczym stale narażają nas na ogromną krytykę.

Zastrzegam sobie, że o ile nadal ktokolwiek z cyganów używać będzie tytułu “króla”, należy uważać to za kłamstwo, a jego samego za samozwańca. Wszelkie oszczerstwa rzucane pod mój adres należy uważać jedynie za akt zemsty.

Warszawa, dnia 7. Lutego 1935 r.

Wódz Narodu Cygańskiego (podpis) Baron Matejasz Kwiek.”

[...] “Król cyganów” przeszedł do historii. Jego miejsce zajął “wódz narodu cygańskiego” w postaci barona Matejasza Kwieka, wyposażonego w ubiór galowy, buławę, szarfę, sztandary cygańskie, pieczęć oficjalną i nowoczesne wizytówki z koroną baronowską, wydrukowane ... złotymi literami.

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The Revolution in the Gypsy State

[...] The ruler of the Gypsies, Baron Matejasz Kwiek, turned out to be an unexpectedly clever and predictable politician and ... voluntarily relinquished royal power. He abdicated and that's it! Gypsies learned about this at the congress in Warsaw in February.

At this meeting Matejasz Kwiek read this message:

“I hereby communicate that at the Congress of Gypsies, which took place on November 14, 1934, I was elected by the Gypsies from Poland and other countries, as the Leader of the Gypsy Nation, which I confirm by protocol. In the name of the law, as the Leader of the Gypsy Nation, Baron Matejasz Kwiek, this communication annuls the current title of “King” among the Gypsy Nation, because Gypsies, as a nation without their own state, cannot form a royal monarchy. All of us residing on the territory of the Republic of Poland are subject to the rule of the President of the Republic of Poland. The constant disputes between Gypsies about the dynasty in a nomadic nation constantly exposes us to huge criticism.

I reserve, however, that should any of the Gypsies still use the title of “King”, it shall be considered a lie, and he shall be named a usurper. Any slander against me should be considered only as an act of revenge on his part.

Warsaw, February 7, 1935.

Leader of the Gypsy Nation (Signature) Baron Matejasz Kwiek.”

[...] So the “King of the Gypsies” is no more. His place was taken by the “Leader of the Gypsy Nation” in the person of Baron Matejasz Kwiek, equipped with gala clothing, a baton, a sash, Gypsy banners, an official seal and modern business cards with the Baron crown, printed ... in gold letters.

Source: [Lech]. (1935). Rewolucja w państwie Cyganów. *Ilustracja Polska*, An. 8, No. 9, 1935, March 3, pp. 192, 203.

Prepared for publication by Adam Bartosz and Natalia Gancarz.

Comments

Members of the Kwiek family from the *Kelderari* group, who have lived in Poland since the mid-1920s, fought among themselves for the position of the 'King' of the Gypsies which they established. The Kwiek family started declaring themselves Kings and in the 1930s they even staged public coronations (see below). The ensuing Kings fought and accused their predecessors. There were times when two or more Kings from this family 'reigned' simultaneously. This and the previous newspaper articles reveal, that Matejasz Kwiek officially renounced this title on behalf of the future Kings announcing himself 'the leader of the Gypsy nation' underlining Gypsy loyalty to the Polish Republic. This was 'clever and a predictable' act, having in mind the competition among Roma Kings and the wave of Fascism-related sentiments in Poland, that widespread at that time.

After Matejasz Kwiek's death (see below), another Gypsy King Janusz Kwiek was crowned in the same year (Kurjer Wileński, 1937, p. 4).

Adam Bartosz and Natalia Gancarz

9.2.5 *The King's Funeral*

Co włożono do trumny króla cyganów?

Z Warszawy donosi (le): Warszawa w dalszym ciągu żyje jeszcze pod wrażeniem pogrzebu wodza cyganów Matejasza Kwieka. Pogrzeb odbył się przy udziale 7000 osób. Ponadto na ulicach, które podążał kondukt żałobny, gromadziły się nieprzejrzane tłumy, a na cmentarzu ludzie wdrapywali się nawet na drzewa, aby zobaczyć cygański pogrzeb.

Zwłoki Kwieka złożono do trumny sosnowej. Obok zwłok położono czarny melonik, puderniczkę, drobne monety, szklankę, rozpylacz z wodą kolońską, buteleczkę z perfumami i wieczne pióro. Poza tym włożono do trumny fotografię gen. Franco i gen. Queipo de Llano, które znaleziono po śmierci w ubraniu zmarłego. Pochodził on bowiem z Hiszpanii i za życia wyrażał życzenia, aby po śmierci przewieziono go do Hiszpanji, gdzie w Sewilli znajduje się jeden z nielicznych w Europie cmentarzy cygańskich.

Kwiek kochał bardzo Hiszpanję i wielbił gen. Franco. Podobno – jak twierdzą jego krewni – oddał cały swój majątek na cele powstania. Matejasz Kwiek miał znać osobiście gen. Franco. Gdy był młodszy jeszcze grywał w jednej z restauracji madryckich, dokąd przychodził często młody jeszcze wówczas oficer armji hiszpańskiej Franco, będący wielkim zwolennikiem muzyki cygańskiej. Pogrzeb Kwieka wywołał wielkie zainteresowanie zagranicą. Do Warszawy przybyli fotoreporterzy wielkich pism zagranicznych, cały pogrzeb sfilmowano.

Rodzina zmarłego zachowała w czasie pogrzebu kamienny spokój, jedynie brat wodza bardzo rozpaczał. Kondukt pogrzebowy otwierało dwóch mężczyzn z chorągwiami, na pierwszej czerwonej widniał złoty napis: "Wolna, niezależna, mocarstwowa Polska". Na drugiej błękitnej widniały żółte litery, mówiące: "Zjednoczenie cyganów podlegających Panu Prezydentowi Rzeczypospolitej pod przewodnictwem wodza narodu cygańskiego barona Matejasza Kwieka." Poniżej widniała 7-pałkowa korona.

Za trumną postępowaly dwie córeczki zmarłego, jego żona, szła również Lola, mimo-wolna sprawczyni śmierci barona. Na trumnę rzucali ziemię jedynie cyganie.

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What was placed inside the coffin of the King of the Gypsies?

(le) reports from Warsaw: The inhabitants of Warsaw are still impressed by the funeral of the leader of the Gypsies, Matejasz Kwiek. The funeral was attended by 7,000 people. In addition, throngs of onlookers gathered along the streets to watch the funeral procession, and at the cemetery people even climbed trees to see the Gypsy burial.

Kwiek's body was placed in a pine coffin along with a black bowler hat, a powder box, small coins, a glass, a cologne spray, a bottle of perfumes and a fountain pen. In addition, photographs of General Franco and General Queipo de Llano that had been found in the deceased's clothes after his death were also put in his coffin. Matejasz Kwiek came from Spain and during his life he had expressed his wish that after his death he would be transported to Spain, where in Seville there is one of the few Gypsy cemeteries in Europe.

Kwiek adored Spain and worshiped General Franco. Apparently – as his relatives say – he gave all his assets for the purposes of the uprising. Allegedly Matejasz Kwiek knew General Franco personally. When he was younger, he used to play in one of Madrid's restaurants, which was frequented by young Franco, an army officer and a great supporter of Gypsy music. Kwiek's funeral arose great interest among foreign media. Photoreporters from famous foreign magazines came to Warsaw and the whole funeral was filmed.

The family of the deceased kept stone calm during the funeral, only the Gypsy leader's brother showed his despair. Two men with banners opened the funeral procession. The first, red banner had a golden inscription: "Free, independent, superpower Poland". On the other, the blue one, there were yellow letters, saying: "The union of Gypsies subject to the President of the Republic under the leadership of the Gypsy baron Matejasz Kwiek." Below there was a 7-spike crown.

The coffin was followed by two daughters of the deceased, his wife, and Lola, who involuntarily had caused the baron's death. Only the Gypsies could throw a piece of soil on the coffin.

Source: [le]. (1937). Co włożono do trumny króla cyganów? *Ilustrowany Kurjer Codzienny*, An. 28, No. 90, 1937, April 2, p. 11.

Prepared for publication by Adam Bartosz and Natalia Gancarz.

Comments

Matejasz Kwiek, who officially renounced this title on behalf of the future Kings (Ilustrowany Kurjer Codzienny, 1935b, p. 10) announcing himself "the leader of the Gypsy nation" was killed in an accident by a Gypsy woman in Warsaw in late April 1937.

His funeral at the Warsaw Orthodox cemetery was a great event, gathering thousands of Gypsies and numerous journalists, eager for sensation. The items inside the grave of Matejusz Kwiek reveal his political sympathies and once again underline his adherence and loyalty to the Polish Republic.

Adam Bartosz and Natalia Gancarz

9.3 Coronations

9.3.1 *The Election of the Gypsy King in Warsaw*

Elekcja króla cygańskiego w Warszawie

W oczach naszych dokonał się akt wyboru władcy królestwa, najdziwniejszego chyba ze wszystkich królestw na świecie: bez ziemi, bez stolicy, bez zamków i pałaców, z poddanymi rozsianymi po drogach całej Europy. Królestwo trochę jak z bajki, trochę jak z operetki, jednym słowem, królestwo Cyganów.

Cyganie, wiadomo, dziś tu, jutro tam, tu zagrają, tam powróżą, kocioł wyklepią, zalutują, tu coś zciągną, tam wyżebrzą, ot, żeby jakoś żyć. Ale wreszcie powiedzieli sobie: dość tej włóczęgi, dość poniewierki, koczowania pod gołym niebem! Dosyć tej opinii nierobów i ... cyganów! Chcemy mieć swoje państwo, chcemy króla, któryby nam to państwo jakoś urządził.

Jak tam dalej będzie z temi szerokimi planami, niewiadomo. Na razie jest król, Najautentyczniejszy król w złotej koronie, z berłem w dłoni, ukoronowany uroczyście w ubiegłą niedzielę na Stadjonie Wojska Polskiego w Warszawie, w obecności kilku tysięcy widzów, sfilmowany, transmitowany przez radio na cały świat.

Kandydatów do tronu było pięciu, wszyscy wywodzący się z rodziny polskich Cyganów Kwieków, z których też pochodził niedawno zmarły tragicznie baron cygański, Matjusz Kwiek. Wyboru dokonało trzydziestu senatorów cygańskich, wśród nich przedstawiciele Cyganów rumuńskich, węgierskich, portugalskich i hiszpańskich.

Widowisko jedyne w swoim rodzaju. Pośrodku stadjonu ustawiono duże podium, przybrane purpurą i wstęgami różnokolorowych bibułek. Na razie królestwo cygańskie nie posiada jeszcze zdecydowanych barw na państwową flagę. Na podium stanął tron, wypożyczony na ten cel z rekwizytorni teatralnej. Z uderzeniem godziny szóstej, wejściem dla zawodników, wkroczyli na arenę kandydaci na króla oraz senatorowie – wyborcy. Fraki, smoki, tużurki, cylindry, szapoklaki, białe gorsy, zdobne ryszkami, białe motylki. Publiczność bije brawo. Mistrz ceremonii o ognistych oczach i sprytnym wyrazie twarzy, w migdałowym garniturze, prosto z pod igły, rozdziera arkusz papieru na drobne kartki i rozdaje wyborcom. Po dłuższej chwili megafony obwieszczają wynik wyborów. Większością głosów zostaje wybrany Janusz Kwiek, okazały Cygan z krótką bródką, z zawodu, jak przystało na takie demokratyczne królestwo, kotlarz.

Teraz następuje kulminacyjny punkt uroczystości. Na trybunę wchodzi, w kapach lśniących od złota, duchowieństwo prawosławne z protoprezbiterem na czele. Rozpoczynają się modły i śpiewy. Dwaj usłużni senatorowie narzucają królowi na ramiona płaszcz koronacyjny.

Protoprezbiter wkłada na skronie Janusza Kwieka królewską koronę i wręcza mu berło. Król w całym majestacie zasiada na tronie. Z dołu spoglądają ku niemu rozradowane dumnie czarne, błyszczące oczy. To oczy ładnej, młodej cyganki Rozy, drugiej żony króla Janusza pierwszego. Królowa trzyma na ręku małego, zamorusanego dzieciaka. "Następca tronu" – mówi Cyganka. Tron ma być dziedziczny, ale niewiadomo, jak to będzie. Król ma z pierwszej żony dwóch jeszcze, starszych synów.

Według programu koronacyjnego ma teraz zagrzmieć dwadzieścia jeden strzałów armatnich. Królestwo cygańskie, z musu najpacyfistyczniejsze państwo na świecie, nie rozporządza jednakże nawet najskromniejszym taborem wojennym. Pocziwe petardy spełniają wobec tego z pełną huku i dymu godnością to szczytne zadanie. Rozpoczyna się składanie darów i hołdów. Niedoszli królowie i senatorzy przyklękają na jedno kolano przed królem, składając przysięgę na wierność i posłuszeństwo, król każdemu podaje łaskawie rękę. Głośniki ryczą jakiegoś marsza weselnego, czy aby nie z "Lohengrina", publiczność bije brawo, król wygłasza swą pierwszą mowę tronową, mianuje z miejsca jednego z niedoszłych królów, Sergjusza Kwieka, swym adiutantem, zaś Aleksandra prezesem Cyganów i w uroczystym pochodzie obchodzi ku wielkiej ucieście publiczności całe boisko dokoła.

Pierwsza część uroczystości zakończona. Król już w swym zwykłym stroju udziela prasy wywiadu. Ze wszystkich stron wyciągają się kartki z prośbą o autografy. Słychać zapytania we wszystkich językach. Zjechali się przecież dziennikarze z całego niemal świata. Co to można w dzisiejszych czasach wiedzieć? Jak się tacy Cyganie zbiorą w jedną wielką gromadę, to nie żarty! Jest ich przecież, jak powiadają, ponoś sześć milionów, a "za morzem" jeszcze osiemset tysięcy. Króla już mają, nadzieję na kawałek Abisynji też. Nie zawadzi zapisać się dobrze w pamięci władcy przyszłego Państwa Cygańskiego.

A tymczasem w garderobach stadjonu wre gorączkowy ruch. Stoi się młodzież cygańska do występów, mających uświetnić ten uroczysty dzień. Na trybunę wchodzi barwny tłum. Długie, szerokie spódnice, fantazyjne szale, czarne włosy zaplecione w cienkie warkocze, na małych rasowych stopach jedwabne pończochy i nowomodne sandały. Chłopcy w czerwonych koszulach i kolorowych spodniach. Zapala się czerwone światło, mające imitować cygańskie ognisko i rozpoczynają się śpiewy. Płyną znane cygańskie romanse, pełne niewysłowionej melancholji dalekich, bezmiernych dróg, którymi chadzają od wieków Cyganie, pełne tej tęsknoty, która ich pędzi z miejsca na miejsce. Potem tańce niewyuczone, a jednak porywające. Trochę z czardasza, trochę z kozaka i trochę z "góralskiego". Wszystko na cześć króla! A starsze Cyganichy wmieszały się między publiczność. "Daj powróżyć piękna pani. A pojedziecie zagranicę. A dożyjecie siedemdziesiąt siedem років. Daj panoczka powróżyć ... powróżyć ... powróżyć ...".

Z. Ord

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We have witnessed an act of choosing the ruler of the kingdom, the strangest of all the kingdoms in the world: without land, without capital, without castles and palaces, with subjects scattered all over Europe. A kingdom a bit like a fairy tale, a bit like an operetta, to put it shortly, the kingdom of Gypsies.

Gypsies, it is generally known, have no permanent place to stay, today they are here, tomorrow they will be somewhere else. They will play some music, foretell you your future, repair your pots, solder things for you, get something from one place, beg somewhere else, just to get by. But finally, they have said to themselves: enough of this vagrant, miserable, nomadic life under the stars! We have had enough of being called lazy-bodies and ... Gypsies! We want to have our own state we want a King who would provide for our needs.

How will they fare with their bold plans, I do not know. For now, there is the King, a genuine King in a golden crown, scepter in hand, crowned solemnly last Sunday at the Polish Army Stadium in Warsaw, in the presence of several thousand spectators, with the crowning ceremony filmed and reported by radio stations around the world.

There were five candidates for the throne, all from the family of Kwiek, Polish Gypsies from whom the late Gypsy leader, Matjasz Kwiek also came. The election was carried out by thirty Gypsy senators, including representatives of Romanian, Hungarian, Portuguese and Spanish Gypsies.

A unique spectacle. In the middle of the stadium, there was a huge podium, adorned with purple fabric and ribbons of multi-coloured papers. For now, the Gypsy kingdom does not yet have their own colours for the state flag. In the middle of the podium, there was a throne, borrowed for this purpose from the theater props. As the clock struck six, the candidates for the King and the senators – voters – entered the arena using the competitors' entrance. Tailcoats, tuxedos, frock coats, top hats, opera hats, white starched shirts and bowties. The audience applauds. The master of ceremonies with fiery eyes and a clever expression on his face, in an almond suit, straight from under the needle, tears a sheet of paper into small pieces and gives them away to the voters. After a while, the results of the election are announced. Janusz Kwiek, a prominent Gypsy with a short beard wins the majority of votes. As befits such a democratic kingdom, he is a tinker by profession.

Now the climax of the ceremony begins. Wearing copes shiny with gold, comes the Orthodox clergy led by the proto-priest. Prayers and singing begin. Two senators put a coronation mantle over his shoulders.

The proto-priest puts a royal crown on Janusz Kwiek's temples and places a scepter in his hand. The King sits on the throne in all his splendor. From the bottom, proud, black, shiny eyes look up to him. They are the eyes of a young Gypsy named Roza, the second wife of King Janusz I. The queen is holding a small, begrimed child. "The successor to the throne", says the Gypsy. The throne is to be hereditary, but nobody knows how it will be. The King has two older sons with his first wife.

According to the coronation program, now it's time for twenty-one cannon shots. The Gypsy kingdom, this most peaceful country in the world, however, does not have even the most modest war gear. Consequently, ordinary firecrackers therefore fulfill this noble task with a full roar and smoke. The gift-giving ceremony and homage begins. The other candidates for the King and senators kneel down to one knee in front of the King, swearing the oath of loyalty and obedience. The King gives his hand to everyone. The loudspeakers roar a wedding march, maybe the one from "The Lohengrin"? The audience applauds, the King makes his first throne speech, appoints one of the other candidates, Sergjusz Kwiek, his adjutant, and appoints Aleksander as the chairman of the Gypsies. Then the grand procession make its way around the stadium in great solemnity.

The first part of the ceremony is over. The King, now in his usual outfit, gives an interview to the press. People hand him slips of paper asking for autographs. You can hear inquiries in all languages. Journalists from all over the world came down. What can you learn these days? It's no laughing matter when Gypsies gather in large numbers! There are, as they say, six million of them, and eight hundred thousand more overseas. They already have a King, and they hope to get a piece of Abyssinia too. Also, it does not hurt to write down this event well in the memory of the ruler of the future Gypsy State.

Meanwhile, in the dressing rooms of the stadium, one can observe a hectic movement. Gypsy youth are getting dressed in their fancy attire for performances to mark this festive day. A colourful crowd enters the grandstand. Long, wide skirts, fancy scarves, black braided hair, silk stockings and new-fashioned sandals on small feet. Boys in red shirts and colourful trousers. The red light is switched on to imitate the Gypsy fire and singing begins. There are well-known Gypsy romantic ballads, full of unspeakable melancholy of distant, endless roads that Gypsies have roamed for centuries. Songs full of this longing that makes them wander from place to place. Then the dances, unschooled and yet thrilling. A bit of Czardasz, a bit of Cossack and a bit of "Goral (Highlander)'s" dance. Everything in honor of the King! And the older Gypsy women got mixed up between the audience. "Let me tell you, a beautiful lady. You will go abroad. And you will live to see seventy-seven years. Give me your hand and I will foretell you your future ... foretell ... foretell ...".

Z. Ord

Source: Z Ord. (1937). Elekcja króla cygańskiego w Warszawie. *Światowid*, An. 14, No. 28 (674), 1937, July 10, p. 4.

Prepared for publication by Adam Bartosz and Natalia Gancarz.

Comments

As mentioned before, Matejusz Kwiek officially renounced the King title on behalf of the future "Kings", announcing himself "the leader of the Gypsy nation". However, another candidate for the leader of Polish Gypsies, Janusz Kwiek, made his coronation a sensational event. The ceremony took place on July 4, 1937, at the Polish Army Stadium in

Warsaw, with the participation of a few representatives of government elites, a crowd of journalists. The very act of coronation was performed by the Warsaw chief priest of the Orthodox Church, Terencjusz Teodorowicz. The ceremony had been advertised with posters, and the admission was ticketed. Officially, a dozen or so candidates had been nominated for the elections. Secret voting was held with the help of cards with the names of the King elect. The whole event described in detail in this article, had a theatrical setting: the throne and the crown were theater props, and elegant suits of the electoral committee came from a clothes rental company. The coronation was broadcast by the Polish radio and the reports from the ceremony included many local and national magazines. Janusz Kwiek was the last 'King' of the Gypsies. His fate during the Second World War remains unknown.

Adam Bartosz and Natalia Gancarz

9.3.2 *The Coronation of a Polish Gypsy King*

The Coronation of a Polish Gypsy King
Ignacy Soller, of Lwow

Seven years ago, in February 1930, with much pomp and circumstance, Michael Kwiek was elected 'King of the Gypsies' at Warsaw, and apparently was still holding his some, what precarious throne as the 'true' monarch in October 1932 (see JGLS (3), IX: 147-2488; X: 150-151; XI: 206-207). In March, 1937 the throne again became vacant through the death of 'King' Mateyas Kwiek [Reported by the Warsaw correspondent of the *Observer* for July 4, 1937, as 'Michael Kwiek, who for five years was the ruler of the Polish Gypsies' – Footnote], who at the age of forty-six was shot in a family feud. At his funeral on March 30, attended only by some thirty relatives, this King's riding-boots, razor, cap and scarlet *diklo* [1], were placed in the coffin.

There then arose five claimants to the throne: four of them Kwieks – Jerzy, Rudolf, Janus and Serge – and the fifth, Anton Cickerski, a Hungarian Gypsy cousin of the dead King. In Poland, there have been elections of Gypsy 'Kings' and 'Barons' on several previous occasions, and no one has paid very much attention to the battles among the rival candidates both before and after such events. But when the news was broadcast that, on this occasion, after his election the new King of the Gypsies would be crowned by the Metropolitan of the Orthodox Church, thousands of spectators flocked to the Army Stadium in Warsaw to attend the unusual ceremony.

The coronation took place at six o'clock in the evening, and official invitations to witness the ceremony (most of them written by Janus Kwiek himself) were sent to the chief Government authorities and representatives of the press and diplomatic circles at Warsaw.

In the middle of the camp was erected a throne decorated with banners of various colours, and near it stood the altar upon which lay a velvet pillow to hold the crown and sceptre and the coronation robes. The crown, made of gilded bronze, is said to have been

designed by a famous Cracow artist, but the Coronation Chair and robes were borrowed from the Warsaw Opera House.

Suddenly there is a stir among the huge crowd of excited Tziganes, who for the first time for a thousand years are about to see their King crowned by the Church and recognised by the State. The five candidates, discarding their traditional costume, have arrived – and very strange they look in their evening dress coats, white ties and top hats. Following them come the thirty elders, whose votes will decide the election. Each in turn – among them Lazor, Alexander, Joska, Josof Sandulor, Josef Potako, Michael and Jean Wladyslaw from Budapest, Worso Karolare – solemnly places his vote in the golden urn. The Master of the Ceremonies calls through his megaphone for silence and the votes are counted. Janus Kwiek has been elected King. Mass is then celebrated by Archbishop Teodorvic assisted by ministers of the Orthodox Church. After the Mass the Bishop anoints the new King and places the crown on his head and the sceptre in his hand. The King bows humbly before the Bishop, who reverently kisses his hand, and the senators then place on his shoulders the royal robe decorated with fleurs-de-lis. In his address to the Throne the Bishop reminds the audience that their kingly tradition dates from prehistoric times and that now, after an interval of a thousand years, it has been revived. 'May the election of this King unite the Gypsy Race throughout the world and strengthen their social, moral, and family foundations. And may the Tziganes be true to the Polish Republic, which in giving permission for this coronation of a King of the Gypsies, has shown its regard for the whole race.'

King Janus then ascends his throne, and is supported on either side by the Gypsy senators who, one after another, do homage to their newly crowned monarch and, kneeling, take the oath of fidelity to him. At this moment, a salute of twenty-one guns is fired in honour of the Gypsy King.

Amid deafening cheers the King then rises from his throne and addresses his Gypsy subjects in Romani. In their election manifestos all the candidates had promised to preserve 'the true Gypsy tradition' and 'the honour of the Gypsy race', but King Janus, a fifty-two-year-old Tinner from Rembertowo, outvies them all in his declaration.

'First', he announced impressively, 'I will send a delegate to Mussolini, asking him to grant us a strip of territory in Abyssinia, for the settlement of the Gypsy race. Our people have had enough of wandering through the ages: the time now has come for our nomad life to cease. Let us but send our children to the Polish Schools to be educated, and we shall soon have our representative in the League of Nations.'

The King then leaves the stadium, and his departure is followed by traditional songs and dances among the thousands of his subjects who have come to see him crowned.

But alas for the schemes of Royalty! In less than a month after his coronation King Janus's right to the throne was disputed by Rudolf Kwiek, youngest of the rival candidates, who has now put himself at the head of the Polish Tzigane malcontents; while at Nitra, in Czechoslovakia, the Gypsies have passed a resolution refusing to acknowledge the sovereignty of a Polish Tinner.

Note

1. A 'scarf' in Romani language.

Source: Soller, I. (1938). Coronation of a Polish Gypsy King. *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*, Third Series, 17 (2): 71-73.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

Comment

This document is a detailed account of the coronation published in an academic journal. It included notice which gives the event international dimensions, mentioning that among the "five claimants to the throne" one was "a Hungarian Gypsy cousin of the dead King", and from the "thirty elders, whose votes will decide the election" were two who come from Budapest. It is obvious, however, that the international participants were from the same *Kelderari* community, which is proof not of the international character of the Kwieks Kingdom, but of the transnational existence of the *Kelderari* community.

Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov

9.4 Attitudes of the Gypsies towards the Idea of Kingdom

9.4.1 *An Appeal to the Monarch's Heart from a Poor Provincial Gypsy*

Najjaśniejszy Panie, Korono Cygańska, ulituj się!

Apel do monarszego serca biednego cygana prowincjonalnego

Stosunki polityczne w obozie cygańskim w Polsce są bardzo skomplikowane. Przeciętnie uświadomiony obywatel wie, że pracowitym monarchą jest Bazyli Kwiek, że opiekunem narodu cygańskiego z ramienia "zagranicy" jest baron Matejusz Kwiek, że wreszcie istnieje cygański "samozwaniec" książę Michał Kwiek, który żadnych praw do korony rościć sobie nie może.

Skąd o tych zawikłanych sprawach wiedzieć mogą biedni cyganie prowincjonalni, do których z rzadka tylko dochodzą wieści z głównej rezydencji?

Wpadł nam w ręce interesujący list cygana Kazimierza Bielawskiego, zamieszkałego w Sopoćkiniach – do "Najjaśniejszego Pana Korony Cygańskiej w Polsce. Króla (?) Michała II-go".

List ten będący właściwie podaniem, brzmi jak następuje:

"Cygane Kazimierz Bielawski, syn Mateusza, urodzony na Litwie, obecnie zamieszkały w Sopoćkiniach, ulica Browarna, powiat augustowski, województwo białostockie, mający 86 lat.

Pokorna prośba.

Dowiedziałem się przypadkowo, iż my Cyganie doczekaliśmy mieć prawowitego obrońcę i opiekuna nad losem cyganów w osobie Króla.

Wobec powyższego ja, stary Cygan, i patriota losu Cyganów, składam najserdeczniejsze życzenia i życzę z łaski Boga jak najlepszego zdrowia i długowiecznego utrwalenia Korony Cygańskiej.

A więc Najjaśniejszy Królu, chciałbym ci złożyć swe życzenia naocznie, lecz nie pozwalają mi materialne zasoby na podróż.

Lecz mam nadzieję, że ja, biedny stary cygan, będę miał możliwość otrzymać zaopiekowanie się osobą moją z łaski Jego Królewskiej Mości, gdzie ginę z nędzy i bez opieki.

Przy tem nadmieniam, że pomimo mego wieku 86-letniego, jestem w zupełnym zdrowiu i chciałbym ci Mości Królu na stare lata wiernie służyć i umrzeć u twoich stóp.

To co miałem na myśli to opisałem i racz Najjaśniejszy Panie, nie odrzucać mej prośby, a mieć mnie na względzie jako szczerego i wiernego, lecz biednego cygana.

Padam do nóg i całuję nogi twe,

Kazimierz Bielawski (niepiśmienny, na jego żądanie podpisał A. Klicki)".

Jeśli ten staroświecki apel tak niefortunnie skierowany dojdzie do rąk Najjaśniejszego Pana, sędziwy cygan prowincjonalny niewątpliwie otrzyma zasłużoną pomoc pieniężną.

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Your Highness, Gypsy Crown, have mercy!

An appeal to the monarch's heart from a poor provincial Gypsy

Political relations in the Gypsy camp in Poland are very complicated. An average conscious citizen knows that the industrious monarch is Basyl Kwiek, that the guardian of the Gypsy nation on behalf of the "abroad" is Baron Matejasz Kwiek, and finally that there is a bohemian "self-proclaimed" prince Michael Kwiek, who cannot claim any rights to the crown.

How can the poor provincial Gypsies, who only rarely hear the news from the main palace, know about these complicated things?

An interesting letter from a Gypsy, Kazimierz Bielawski, who lives in Sopoćniki fell into our hands – to "His Highness, Gypsy Crown in Poland. King (?) Michał II".

This letter, which is actually an application, reads as follows:

"Gypsy Kazimierz Bielawski, son of Mateusz, born in Lithuania, currently residing in Sopoćkinie [1], Browarna street, Augustowsks county, Białostocks province, having 86 years old.

A humble request.

I accidentally found out that we, the Gypsies, have finally lived to see a legitimate protector and guardian over the fate of the Gypsies in the person of the King.

In view of the above, I, the old Gypsy, and the patriot [1] of the fate of the Gypsies, send my best wishes and I wish God's grace, the best health and long-lasting preservation of the Gypsy Crown.

And so, the Brightest King, I would like to give you my wishes personally, but material resources do not allow me for the journey.

But I hope that I, poor old Gypsy, will be able to receive the protection of my person from the grace of Your Majesty, as I am dying of poverty and without care.

I would like to mention that despite my 86-year-old age, I am completely healthy and I would love to serve you and die at your feet for my old years.

What I meant was what I described, and please Lord, do not reject my request, and keep me in mind as a sincere and faithful but poor Gypsy.

I fall to my feet and kiss your legs,

Kazimierz Bielawski (illiterate, at his request signed by A. Klicki)".

If this old-fashioned appeal so misguidedly directed reaches the hands of His Majesty, the old provincial Gypsy will undoubtedly receive well-deserved financial help.

Notes

1. After the First World War the village of Sopoćkinie was located within the Polish state as the headquarters for the Wołłowiczowce municipality in Augustowski county (Northern Poland). Sopoćkinie belongs historically to the Suwałki Region. Nowadays the village is situated in Belarus.

Source: [No Author]. (1931). Najjaśniejszy Panie, Korono Cygańska, ulituj się! *Goniec Wielkopolski*, An. 55, No. 263, 1931, November 13, p. 4.

Prepared for publication by Alicja Gontarek.

Comments

The specificity of Polish sources that relate to the Gypsies in the interwar period is that they hardly reflect the postulates and problems of the Gypsy masses. The voice of the Kwieks, the great individualists, who became the leaders of Gypsy life in Poland, dominates, although their power was illusory.

The original source for this subject is the request of an old, poor Gypsy from the province, located in the north-eastern areas of Poland, who, having learned about the existence of a royal institution, sent an application for financial support to the King. Most likely, he was permanently settled – the north-eastern areas from which he came, served the Polish Gypsies as the so-called lair where they went for the winter, temporarily limiting travel. From such semi-nomadic groups, a part of the Gypsies has moved to a sedentary lifestyle.

His request confirms the fact that ordinary, provincial Gypsies, perhaps not all, in the early 1930s did not know that there was a royal institution in Poland, and that the activity of Kwiek had a large reach at that time. This Gypsy appealed to royal duties, desiring to be under the King's protective wings, which should be interpreted as a sign of full acceptance of this form of leadership in the life of Gypsies in Poland. In addition, the old-fashioned style of the writing begs attention, referring to the style of "subservient" applications written for the Russian Tsar, which also have their own meaning. The royal

title is closely related to monarchism and not, for example, to chieftaincy or other form of power.

The request raises the most important issue for Gypsies in the early 1930s – the poverty, which had become a serious problem in the era of global economic crisis, having a huge impact on Poland. The newspapers reported this, noting that the number of impoverished camps and encampments had increased, as evidenced by the modest clothing of Gypsies and simple, unornamented carts. The number of criminal acts among nomads had also increased. The Kwieks were not interested in these problems. They rather cut themselves off from those who were at the lowest level of the Gypsy social hierarchy. There are no traces of their activity towards solving flaming social issues.

The poverty became more visible when in the second half of the 1930s an emigration wave from neighbouring countries came to Poland. The rise of nationalisms in Europe had pushed them to the margins, and the development of technology took away work. Nevertheless, it was in interwar Poland that they found a reasonably safe haven considering the developments in Europe in the second half of the 1930s.

Alicja Gontarek

9.4.2 *The Poznan Gypsies – Enemies of King Kwiek*

Poznańscy cyganie – wrogami króla Kwieka

Od kilkunastu dni panuje między cyganami w Polsce znaczne ożywienie. Wszędzie, gdzie tylko mieszkają i koczują cyganie, dotarły wici "króla cyganów" Michała Kwieka, który wezwał swoich poddanych do Równego na Wołyniu, na uroczystości koronacji.

Uroczystość ta odbyć się ma za kilka dni. Jeżeli wierzyć doniesieniom, to pod Równem powstało już gwarne miasto z wozów i namiotów cygańskich. Na drogach obserwuje się teraz liczne wędrowniki cyganów, zdążających na Wołyń.

W związku z koronacją w Równem zainteresowaliśmy się, czy też poznańscy cyganie wysyłają na tę uroczystość swoich delegatów. W Poznaniu – nie każdy o tem wie – mieszka stale siedem rodzin cygańskich, pochodzących z dwóch odrębnych szczepów. Jedna grupa żyje w podwórzu Barlebena (przy ul. Szyperskiej) i zajmuje się handlem końmi, a druga w domu przy ul. Wenecjańskiej 5. Głównym źródłem utrzymania drugiej grupy ma być muzyka.

Cyganie poznańscy są już silnie spolszczeni. Wielu z nich urodziło się w Poznaniu. Młodzi cyganie odbywają służbę w wojsku polskim, a dzieci cygańskie chodzą do polskiej szkoły powszechnej i uczą się razem z dziećmi obywateli poznańskich – języka polskiego i zasad religii katolickiej.

Zresztą religia jest u poznańskich cyganów podstawą rodziny. Chlubią się, że mają dzieci ślubne. Mieszkania swoje zdobią obrazami świętych, a do Matki Boskiej Częstochowskiej mają szczególne nabożeństwo.

– Czy jedzie kto z was na koronację "króla" Kwieka? – pytamy jednego z cyganów na podwórzu Barlebena.

– Hm, król – odpowiada zapytany – głupszy ode mnie. – My nie zajmujemy się wyrabianiem patelni – podkreśla z dumą.

– Więc wasze zajęcie jako handlarzy koni jest godniejsze, niż “króla” Kwieka?

– A pewnie. My uczciwie zarabiamy na chleb – oświadczył cygan i wskazał na stajnię, pełną dobrze utrzymanych koni.

Cyganie w domu przy ul. Wenecjańskiej 5 mieszkają na poddaszu. Trzeba iść pionowemi, wykrzywionemi schodami. W klatce schodowej słychać grę na skrzypcach.

W domu są tylko kobiety, schludnie ubrane, gromada dzieci i wyrostek, wygrywający jakieś smętne melodie. Dorośli mężczyźni poszli na miasto muzyką zarabiać na chleb.

Gdy wspomnieliśmy o Kwieku, nie chciano z nami rozmawiać. Cyganie z ulicy Wenecjańskiej odnoszą się z zawiścią do “cygańskiego króla”, który “bezprawnie” sięga po berło.

– Nie potrzebujemy króla! – mówią. – Polskim cyganom wystarczy Prezydent Polski.

Przy tej okazji dowiadujemy się, że dwa lata temu bawił “król” Kwiek w Poznaniu osobście i starał się pozyskać głosy poznańskich cyganów dla swojej sprawy. Jego królewska mość Kwiek na próżno stracił trzy dni na pobyt w Poznaniu. Niczego nie uzyskał i wyjechał do innych miast czynić propagandę za swoją osobą.

– Kwiek może polować na koczowników i złodziei, a nie na porządnym ludzi! – oświadczyła dobitnie młoda cyganka, siedząca z robótką w ręku pod piecykiem.

– A co byłaby pani zrobiła, gdyby teraz sam Kwiek tu przyjechał?

– To samo, co panu mówię: zbiłabym go na kwaśne jabłko, ażeby mu się odechciało królewskiego panowania.

Jak się okazuje, poznańscy cyganie są wrogami “monarchii”. Usposobienie ich jest nastawione raczej po republikańsku. Wobec tego nie jadą też na uroczystość koronacyjną do Równego.

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The Poznan Gypsies – Enemies of King Kwiek

For a dozen or so days there has been a significant revival among Gypsies in Poland. Everywhere, where only the Gypsies live and stay, a message arrived that the “King of Gypsies” Michał Kwiek invited his subjects to Rivne in Volhynia for the coronation ceremony.

The ceremony will take place in a few days. If we were to believe reports, at Rivne a bustling city of carts and Gypsy tents is already created. On the roads there are now numerous journeys of Gypsies heading for Volhynia.

In connection with the coronation in Rivne, we were interested in whether Poznan Gypsies would send their delegates to this ceremony. In Poznan – not everyone knows about it – there have always been seven Gypsy families, coming from two separate tribes. One group lives in the Barleben yard (at Szyperska Street) and deals in horse trading and the other in the house at Wenecjańska 5 Street [1]. The main source of income of the second group is music.

The Poznan Gypsies are already highly polonized. Many of them were born in Poznan. Young Gypsies serve in the Polish army, and Gypsy children go to a Polish general school and learn together with the children of Poznan citizens – the Polish language and the principles of Catholic religion.

Besides, the religion is the foundation of the family among Poznan Gypsies. They pride themselves that none of their children has ever been born out of wedlock. They decorate their homes with paintings of saints, and they have a special devotion to Our Lady of Czestochowa [2].

– Is anyone of you going to the coronation of the “King” Kwiek? – we ask one of the Gypsies in the Barleben yard.

– Well, the King – the respondent answers – is more stupid than me. – We do not make pans – he emphasises with pride.

– So your occupation as horse traders is more valuable than “King” Kwiek’s?

– Definitely. We earn money honestly, said the Gypsy and pointed to the stable, full of well-kept horses.

Gypsies at home at Wenecjańska 5 Street live in the attic. You have to go upright, on crooked stairs. In the staircase you can hear the violin.

There are only women in the house, neatly dressed, a group of children and an adolescent, playing some melancholic melodies. Adult men went to the city to make a living.

When we mentioned Kwiek, they did not want to talk to us. Gypsies from Wenecjańska Street refer with envy to the “Gypsy King” who “unlawfully” reaches for the sceptre.

– We do not need a King! – they say. – Polish President [3] is enough for Polish Gypsies.

On this occasion, we find out that two years ago, “King” Kwiek stayed in Poznań, where he tried to win the votes of the Poznań gypsies for his cause.

His majesty Kwiek lost three days in vain by staying in Poznan. He did not get anything and went to other cities to do a propaganda for himself.

– Kwiek can hunt for nomads and thieves, not for decent people! – a Gypsy girl, sitting with the needle in hand under the stove, said emphatically.

– And what would you do if Kwiek himself came here?

– The same thing as I tell you: I would have marmalised him so that he would not feel like reigning anymore.

As it turns out, Poznan Gypsies are the enemies of the “monarchy”. Their disposition is rather republican. Therefore, they do not go to the coronation ceremony to Rivne.

Notes

1. Both streets are located in the centre of Poznan, in the Old Town.

2. This is one of the cults of Mary, the mother of Christ, widespread in Poland since the end of the 19th century. It was founded on the basis of the miraculous painting found in the most important Polish Marian sanctuary in Jasna Góra in Czestochowa. Our Lady of Czestochowa is one of the most important cult for the community of Polska Roma.

3. In the years 1926-1939, the President of Poland was Ignacy Mościcki (1867-1946).

Source: [No Author]. (1936). Poznańscy cyganie – wrogami króla Kwieka. *Orędownik: ilustrowane pismo narodowe i katolickie*, An. 66, No. 60, 1936, December 12, p. 8.

Prepared for publication by Alicja Gontarek.

Comments

In interwar Poland, the subject of settled Gypsies and their lives, and even more, their worldview, was very rarely discussed, thus the greater the value of the published article.

Lack of interest in this topic resulted from the fact that the phenomenon of Gypsy settlements, especially in cities, had an extremely limited scope in interwar Poland and was a barely noticeable spontaneous process of passing small groups of Gypsies from a nomadic to a sedentary way of life. Most settled Gypsies lived in villages and suburban areas. In the interwar period, statistics in this respect were carried out only by the state police, which, however, did not have full data, and from these circles, let us add, there were postulates aimed at carrying out a general census of Gypsies in Poland.

According to police data from the early 1930s, there were 7,000 Gypsies registered in Poland (Strzelecki, 1932, p. 708). Certainly, they were not just the settled ones, but rather the number of those who were counted. In the Poznań province, whose capital was the city of Poznań, there were only 279 Gypsies, but we do not know how many of them lived in this city centre.

The recurring motif in the press related to the description of the settled Gypsies is their distinct distance, or even their dislike, to nomadic groups, an ardent Catholic faith, far-reaching assimilation and polonisation. Settled Gypsies, according to the interpretation of the press, did not create an organisation and did not integrate into their environment. Their new identity was built primarily on a sedentary lifestyle and on cutting off from a nomadic lifestyle, as a kind of achievement that testified about the advancement of civilization.

The attitude of Poznań Gypsies, and probably other similar groups, to King Kwiek and his initiative to organise the Gypsy Congress in Rivne illustrates that the royal institution and its way of acting were anachronistic, old-fashioned and grotesque for them. They did not want this kind of representation, rejecting, as it seems, the need to create it at all. Rather, they referred to the criterion of citizenship. They wanted to operate outside the organisational system proposed by Kwiek.

Alicja Gontarek

9.5 The International Activities of Gypsy Kings

9.5.1 *The Polish “King of Gypsies” Expelled from Czechoslovakia*

Polski “król cyganów” wydalony z Czechosłowacji

Znany w Polsce “król cyganów” Michał Kwiek, przyjechał ostatnio do Czechosłowacji celem spisania swych poddanych mieszkających w Czechosłowacji. Kwiek zamieszkał

w Morawskiej Ostrawie i przyjmował liczne odwiedziny zastępców cyganów z krajów sąsiednich, j. Rumunji, Węgier, Jugosławii i z Bałkanu. Odwiedziny te niechętnie były widziane przez władze czechosłowackie, które odmówiły Kwiekowi prawa dalszego pobytu w Czechosłowacji, wobec czego wyjechał on do Hiszpanii i Portugalji, a następnie udać się ma do Brazylii.

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The Polish “King of Gypsies” expelled from Czechoslovakia

Known in Poland as the “King of Gypsies” Michał Kwiek, came to Czechoslovakia recently to make a census of his subjects living in Czechoslovakia. Kwiek stayed in Moravian Ostrava and received numerous visits from deputies of Gypsies from neighbouring countries, from Romania, Hungary, Yugoslavia and the Balkans. These visits were reluctantly seen by the Czechoslovak authorities, who refused Kwiek the right to stay in Czechoslovakia, so he went to Spain and Portugal, and then he travelled to Brazil.

Source: [No Author]. (1932a). Polski “król cyganów” wydany z Czechosłowacji. *Ilustrowany Kuryer Codzienny*, An. 23I, No. 148, 1932, May 30, p. 10.

Prepared for publication by Alicja Gontarek.

Comments

Michał II Kwiek was the only Polish Gypsy King crowned in Poland, who had been known to have a group of supporters outside of Poland, although we do not know how large it was. The only source of knowledge on this subject in the light of the sources of Polish provenance is the press that reported about his journeys to the countries of southern Europe, looking more closely at trips to Czechoslovakia.

From reflections in the press (cf. Gontarek, 2017b, pp. 1-21) we can speculate that because Kwiek aimed to encompass under his authority Gypsies living mainly, except Poland, in three countries (Czechoslovakia, Romania and Hungary), the authorities withdrew their support for him as the King of the Polish Gypsies in the 1930s, seeing in his actions the danger resulting from the fact that his foreign activity escaped governmental control. One can suppose that the government's idea concerning the Gypsy case was such that it would create a strong Gypsy leadership in Poland that would be able to keep the Gypsy nomads in check and possibly change their habits. The system of government of Michał II Kwiek presented in the article promoted a settled lifestyle among Gypsies, education and professional productivization and that could be an explanation why the Polish government and pro-government press looked at him kindly and with curiosity, because his goals appeared convergent with government intentions. However, no support was given for creating supranational structures centered in the Polish state, even as primitive and vague as the royal institution represented by Kwiek.

The article contains information that Kwiek's fame also reached Yugoslavia and the entire Balkans, which presupposes the scale of his activity, the ultimate goal of which was to create a state for the Gypsies.

The press coverage informs us about the unkind approach of the Czechoslovak authorities to Kwiek's visits in this country, but it should be noted that there is no criticism of him. One can even get the impression that this pro-government newspaper (as well as any other press related to the authorities) deliberately did not report the actual course of events related to this visit to Czechoslovakia, to not discredit the King and not reveal the backdrop of his stay.

According another press report, Kwiek had a coronation in the Czech Republic (Nowy Kurjer, 1934, p. 3) and he could do this because in Poland he was dethroned by Basył Kwiek. His visit in those territories coincided with the resolution introduced by the Czechoslovak authorities, according to which all the Gypsies were obliged to enforce dactyloscopy (Nowy Kurjer, 1930, p. 7; 1934, p. 3). It provoked a violent opposition from Kwiek. For this reason, he was expelled from Czechoslovakia. When he again crossed the border illegally, he was arrested (Nowy Kurjer, 1934, p. 3). This short history of his resistance is a very important aspect of the activity of this Gypsy leader, showing his active fight against discrimination of Gypsies. No other Polish Gypsy King took the floor in this matter, nor did they object to the public fingerprinting, rightly perceiving it as a form of persecution of the Gypsy population.

Fingerprinting in the 1920s also came into force in Poland, but this action was not vigorously carried out (Misztal, 2008, pp. 63-71).

Alicja Gontarek

9.5.2 *The King of Gypsies Michał II Kwiek in Romania*

“Król” cyganów Michał II Kwiek z Poznania w Rumunji

Korespondencja własna “Ilustr. Kuryera Codz.”

Czerniowce, w październiku

Rumunja dostąpiła nielada zaszczytu! – W jej granicach bawi obecnie *Czobazimos* (co znaczy “Jego Królewska Mość” w języku cygańskim) Michał II Kwiek. Król Michał II przybył do Czernowiec z okazji odbytego przed kilku dniami kongresu cygańskiego w Radowicach, w którym wzięło udział około sześć tysięcy Cyganów z Bukowiny oraz delegacji innych prowincyj.

Miałem sposobność zetknąć się osobiście w Konsulacie R. P. w Czerniowcach z “królem”. Michał II to człowiek dziarski, barczysty, w wieku około 50 lat. Włada kilkoma językami.

Michał II Kwiek jest następcą swego ojca, Grzegorza, który z powodu swego podeszłego wieku (75 lat) abdykował. Cyganie obwołali Michała II w sali “Niespodzianki” w Piastowie pod Warszawą królem Cyganów.

Król wyjmuje ze swego skórzanego portfelu dwa dokumenty i daje mi do przegłądnięcia. Jeden to zezwolenie władz polskich na odbycie elekcji, a drugi do dokument świadczący o jego wyborze, zaopatrzony w setki podpisów i odcisków palców.

Zaciekawiło mnie, jak król Michał sprawuje władze nad swoim niesfornym narodem. W odpowiedzi oświadczył król, że posiada obok siebie sztab, złożony z siedmiu “mini-strów”, na których czele stoi Rudolf Kwiek, kuzyn “króla”. Posiada też swego “ministra spr. zagranicznych”, którzy ma za zadanie komunikowanie się z organizacjami cygańskimi różnych państw. W “rządzie” Michała II jest też i “minister pracy”, którego zadaniem jest pośrednictwo pracy.

Czobazimos dba również o podniecenie oświaty wśród Cyganów.

Cyganie posiadają swoją szkołę początkową w Poznaniu, rezydencji króla. Przy tej sposobności nadmienię, że król Michał II jest kotlarzem z zawodu i posiada fabrykę kotłów w Poznaniu, gdzie pracuje około 450 pracowników-Cyganów. Dla dzieci tych pracowników właśnie założył tę szkołę. “Minister oświaty” Michała II ma poczynić kroki, ażeby uzyskać zezwolenie na otwarcie gimnazjum cygańskiego w Bukareszcie.

Na pytanie, dlaczego właśnie w Bukareszcie, otrzymałem odpowiedź:

– W Rumunji jest chyba najwięcej Cyganów. Dla łagodzenia sporów posiada król trzech sędziów i prokuratora, którego nazywa czasem “ministrem sprawiedliwości”.

Jak mi powiedział, posiada również swoje więzienie. Karać może tylko jednak przestępstwa, nieobjęte kodeksem karnym.

– Jak wykonuje władzę nad cyganami, zamieszkałymi w innych państwach?

Na to pytanie odpowiedział “król”, że w każdym państwie stoi na czele cyganów “wojewoda”, bezpośrednio mu podległy.

– W końcu zapytałem, czy ruchu cygańskiego nie należy traktować jako tworzenia nowej mniejszości?

– Cyganie nie są kastą – odrzekł *Czobazinos* Michał II. – Cyganie są narodem, jak każdy inny. Moje zadanie widzę nie w tworzeniu nowej mniejszości, co przy silniejszym ruchu cygańskim pominąć się nie da, ale dążę do utworzenia państwa cygańskiego w Azji nad Gangesem, do której to ziemi mamy zresztą historyczne prawo. W tym też celu udaję się z Rumunji przez Ateny i Azję Mniejszą do Indji. Po drodze będę, podobnie jak i w Rumunji, odwiedzał cyganów.

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“King” of Gypsies Michał II Kwiek from Poznan in Romania
Own correspondence *Ilustrowany Kurjer Codzienny*
Chernivtsi, in October

Romania was granted a great honour! – Its territory enjoys the presence of *Czobazimos* [1] (which means “His Majesty” in the Gypsy language) Michał II Kwiek. King Michał II

came to Chernivtsi on the occasion of the Gypsy Congress in Radowice [2] that happened a few days ago, which was attended by about six thousand Gypsies from Bukovina as well as delegates from other provinces.

I had an opportunity to personally meet the “King” at the R. P. Consulate in Chernivtsi [3]. Michał II is a lively and broad-shouldered man who is around 50 years old. He speaks several languages.

Michał II Kwiek is the successor to his father, Grzegorz whom because of his advanced age (75 years old) abdicated. The Gypsies proclaimed Michał II the King of Gypsies in the hall of “Niespodzianka” in Piastów near Warsaw.

The King takes two documents out of his leather wallet and gives them to me to have a look. The first one is a permission of the Polish authorities to hold the election, and the second one is a document testifying to his election, supplied with hundreds of signatures and fingerprints [4].

I wondered how King Michał exercises authority over his unruly nation. In his response, the King declared that he has a staff composed of seven “ministers”, the leader of which is Rudolf Kwiek, the “King’s” cousin. He also has his own “minister of foreign affairs”, who is tasked with communication with Gypsy organisations from various countries. In the “government” of Michał II there is also a “minister of labour”, who is tasked with job mediation.

Czobazimos also deals with the improvement of education among Gypsies.

The Gypsies have their own initial school in Poznan, at the residence of the King. At this point I would like to mention that King Michał II is a cauldron-maker by profession and he owns a cauldron factory in Poznan, where around 450 Gypsies are employed. This school was set up for the children of those employees. Michał II’s “Minister of education” is to take steps to obtain a permission to open a Gypsy gymnasium in Bucharest.

For the question, why in Bucharest, I was answered:

– The largest number of Gypsies is probably in Romania. To mitigate the disputes, the King has three judges and a prosecutor, who is sometimes referred to as the “minister of justice”.

As he told me, he also has his prison. However, he can only punish crimes which are not covered by the penal code.

– How does he exercise power over Gypsies living in other countries?

To this question the “King” answered that in every country the leader of the Gypsies is a “voivode”, directly subordinate to the King.

– Finally, I asked whether the Gypsy movement should be treated as a creation of new minority?

– Gypsies are not a caste – replied *Czobazinos* Michał II. – Gypsies are a nation, as any other. I do not see my task as creating a new minority, which with a stronger Gypsy movement cannot be omitted, but I strive for the creation of a Gypsy country in Asia near the Ganges, to which land we have historical rights. For this purpose, I am traveling from Romania through Athens and Asia Minor to India. On the way, I will visit Gypsies, just like in Romania.

Notes

1. *Czobazimos* – illegible word, may be misheard by the journalist.
2. Radowice was the Polish name of the Romanian city Rădăuți.
3. The Consulate of the Republic of Poland in Chernivtsi from 1933 was headed by Marian Witosław Uzdowski (1890-?), who belonged to the circle of people closely related to Józef Piłsudski (1867-1935), the founder of the Polish state.
4. These documents were not discovered in the Polish archives yet.

Source: Kolbusz, S. (1934a). “Król” cyganów Michał II Kwiek z Poznania w Rumunji. *Ilustrowany Kurjer Codzienny*, An. 25, No. 291, 1934, October 20, p. 4.
Prepared for publication by Alicja Gontarek.

Comments

The published press coverage is an important record based on the participation of the Polish King Michał Kwiek in the Gypsy Congress, which took place in Radowice, Romania, where Gypsies sought to build a uniform, effective organisation. The event is one of many he attended, gaining knowledge and experience about the self-organisation of the Gypsy community, which he intended to transfer to Poland. However, he lost the support of the Polish government, the possibilities to do so were limited.

Observing intently the course of the meeting, he shared his plans with the Polish journalist, who was interviewing him, revealing his direction of thinking about the future of the Gypsies. He considered the crystallisation and formation of Gypsies as a new national minority as an inevitable stage, but at the same time a minimalist action. His declared personal goal was to support the aspirations to create their own state. It should be recognised, therefore, that this was a very modern postulate. He wanted to create it in India, probably guided by the knowledge of the origin of the Gypsies from these areas. Later, he became more involved with the vision of establishing Gypsy statehood in Africa.

Michał Kwiek's words about his far-sighted plans are a unique record, although very short, in which we can get to know almost *in extenso* the manner of the King's argumentation, not subjected to far-reaching journalistic processing.

Certainly, Kwiek wanted to modernise management of his rule and maybe to reproduce good Romanian Gypsy patterns, as evidenced by the presentation of the organisational structure of his power, divided into “ministries”. However, he went much further in his plans. The progressive and innovative approach to the future of Gypsies in Europe shows that he propagated the ideas of primary and secondary education among Gypsies and professional productisation. Undoubtedly, he promoted the most modern solution among all Polish Gypsy Kings, not so much in the spirit of integration but a well-understood nationalism. His presence at the congress meant that he himself had entered the path of this consolidation, not joining Romanian Gypsies but trying to look for his own solutions, more as a representative of the Gypsy elite than the Polish Gypsy leader.

Alicja Gontarek

9.5.3 *The Office of the Central Gypsy Organisation to be Established in Warsaw*

Biuro centr[alnej] organizacji Cyganów ma powstać w Warszawie

Nowoobрани król Cyganów Janusz Kwiek, nie zważając na protesty pewnego odłamu swych rodaków, którzy byli niezadowoleni z jego wyboru na króla, postępuje coraz bardziej po dyktatorsku. Do władz administracyjnych król Janusz składa liczne podania, które mają na celu ujęcie w karby władzy królewskiej rządów nad narodem.

Niedawno wpłynęło podanie króla Janusza, aby otrzymał on przywilej wyznaczania Cyganom miejsc na obozy. Wczoraj król Janusz złożył nowe podanie tym razem z prośbą o zezwolenie na otwarcie w Warszawie biura centralnej organizacji państwa Cyganów. Ma ono załatwić różne sprawy podwładnych króla Janusza, a między innymi ma zająć się również i rejestracją Cyganów nie tylko w Polsce, ale i w całej Europie.

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The office of the central Gypsy organisation to be established in Warsaw

The newly-elected King of the Gypsies Janusz Kwiek, despite the protests of a certain faction of his own folk who were dissatisfied with his choice as King, is acting more and more like a dictator. Janusz inundates the administrative authorities with numerous applications, which are aimed at making his royal power over his nation stricter and more formalized.

In his recent petition King Janusz requests to be granted the privilege of designating places for Gypsy camp sites. Yesterday, King Janusz submitted a new application, this time with a request for the permission to open an office of the central organisation of the Gypsy state in Warsaw. It is supposed to deal with various matters of Janusz's subordinates and, among other things, it is also supposed to deal with the registration of Gypsies not only in Poland but throughout Europe.

Source: [No Author]. (1937). Biuro centr[alnej] organizacji Cyganów ma powstać w Warszawie. *Mały Dziennik*, An. 3, No. 194, 1937, July 15, p. 5.
Prepared for publication by Adam Bartosz and Natalia Gancarz.

9.6 The Dream about Our Own State

9.6.1 *The Gypsies' Dreams about Their Own Country in Egypt*

Na marginesie cywilizacji

Marzenia polskich cyganów o własnym państwie w Egipcie

Na rozesłanej w szafasie macie, siedzi przed nami po turecku krępy, wąsaty cygan, Rudolf Kwiek. Pochodzi z królewskiego rodu, jest kanclerzem i prezesem Wielkiej Rady Cyganów Polskich.

Zaczyna mówić o historii swego narodu, nieco naiwnej, nieco zmyślonej, która przechowuje się w podawanej z ust do ust legendzie.

– Wierzmy, że naród cygański niezawsze cierpiał poniewierkę i tułaczkę jak teraz. Cyganie panowali kiedyś nad światem. Należało do nich potężne państwo starożytne – Egipt. Faraon, to był nasz car najwyższy i władca. Dlatego w naszym herbie mamy kołpak Faraona, a pod nim młotek, kowadło i bat – godła naszego późniejszego tułaczego życia.

Dwóch wtedy było największych wodzów na świecie: Mojsiej żydowski i Faraon cygański. Oni wojowali ze sobą. Ale żydzi, taksamo wtedy jak i dziś mieli więcej oświaty od cyganów i zwyciężyli. To wszystko Biblia opisuje. Kiedy Mojsiej wyprowadzał żydów z Egiptu i musieli przejść przez Morze Czarne, a nie mieli okrętów, powiedział Dieł (Bóg) do Mojsieja: „Weź pan dwie pałeczki i uderz pan po morzu, a rozstąpi się.” Żydzi przeszli suchą nogą, a cygańskie wojsko woda zalała. Część jednak ocalała, rozbiegła się po świecie i tuła do dziś dnia.

Ale już dość mają cyganie wędrowki. Chcemy powrócić do swojej ojczyzny i stworzyć własne państwo. Tak, jak żydzi dostali Palestynę, tak my chcemy, żeby nam przyznano Egipt, albo inny kraj w Afryce. Właśnie przed paroma miesiącami byłem w Afryce, żeby na miejscu zbadać możliwości kolonizacji cygańskiej.

– W Afryce koczuje trochę cyganów – mówi dalej kanclerz – i doskonale im się powodzi. Za pobicie kotle murzyny płacą złotym piaskiem. Ale my chcemy osadzić cyganów na roli.

– A czy nie zatęsknią oni do dawnego życia?

– O, już dawno sprzykrzyła się nam włóczęga! Wszędzie przepędzają cygana, niema gdzie głowy złożyć.

– W jaki sposób dążą cyganie do zrealizowania idei własnego państwa?

– Przede wszystkim na całym świecie przeprowadzamy rejestrację cyganów. Teraz złożyłem podanie do Komisarjatu Rządu o pozwolenie przeprowadzenia rejestracji w Polsce. *Jeszcześmy* tej rzeczy nie przeprowadzili, ale, jak obliczamy znajdzie się w Polsce około 19 tys. naszych rodaków, a na całym świecie – ze 30 milionów. Nie tak to łatwo przeprowadzić. Bo jak cygan pojedzie do lasu to i benk (djabeł) go nie znajdzie. Z tego samego powodu *mamy wielkie* kłopoty ze sprawowaniem władzy. Musimy stanowczo skupić cyganów na jedno miejsce. Ale nie mamy gdzie.

– Mówił pan o sprawowaniu władzy. Kto rządzi cyganami?

– Mamy organizację międzynarodową i krajową. Na szczycie tej władzy stoi król królów, wielki imperator Janosz Kwiek w Londynie. Rozsyła on rozkazy telegraficzne w różnych językach, przeważnie po hiszpańsku, do królów cygańskich we wszystkich krajach. W Polsce królem jest mój brat, Bazyli Kwiek. Sprawuje on władzę nad wszystkimi rajbaro (wójtami), stojących na czele butromów (taborów). Każdy rajbaro jest wybierany na rok przez swój butrom. Wójtowie tworzą Wielką Radę, której jestem prezesem. Prócz tego jest sąd z 12-tu sędziów-Krisban. Sąd ten sądzi sprawy cywilne. Kryminalne oddajemy sądom państwowym, bo jesteśmy lojalni wobec kraju, w którym mieszkamy. Rajbaro musi meldować królowi o każdorazowym dłuższym postoju w jakiejś miejscowości. Ale

dużo jest takich co ukrywają. Teraz właśnie król pojechał ścigać dezerterów i opornych. W Bydgoszczy aresztował tego bandytę, Michała Kwieka.

- Czy wszyscy cyganie należą do jednego narodu, mają wspólny język i religię?
 - *Religję mamy rozmałą*. Język jest wszędzie jeden, ale różne narzecza.
 - A czy jest jakieś piśmiennictwo?
 - Pisma własnego jeszcze nie mamy. Dopiero teraz Janosz Kwiek chce wprowadzić własny alfabet, według pisma egipskiego, które odnaleziono w grobach faraonów.
 - Jeszcze jedno, niedyskretne pytanie: z czego utrzymują się władze cygańskie?
 - Królowie są bogaci, Janosz w Londynie najbogatszy i nas wspomaga. Teraz naprzykład przysłał pieniądze na budowę pałacu dla króla Bazylego. Pałac stanie na Bielanych. Ale chcemy wprowadzić podatki, np. po 25 zł. od ślubu.
- Prosimy przyjechać do nas w święto.

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On the margins of civilisation The Gypsies' dreams about their own country in Egypt

In front of us, on a mat spread in the shack squats a moustached Gypsy – Rudolf Kwiek. He comes from the Royal family, he is the Chancellor and president of the Great Council of Polish Gypsies.

He begins to talk about the history of his nation, a bit naïve, somewhat imaginary, which is kept in the legends passed from mouth to mouth.

– We believe that the Gypsy nation, much like now, has always suffered misery and wandering. Gypsies once ruled over the world. A powerful ancient state – Egypt, used to belong to them. Pharaoh, this was our supreme tsar and ruler. That is why in our coat of arms we have the cap of Pharaoh, and under it there is a hammer, anvil and whip – the emblem of our later wandering life.

There were two greatest leaders in the world back then: Jewish Moses and Gypsy Pharaoh [1]. They fought with each other. But Jews, just like today, had more education compared to Gypsies and won. This is all described in the Bible. When Moses was leading Jews out of Egypt and they had to cross the Black Sea [2], and they did not have ships, God said to Moses: "Take two sticks and hit the sea and it will part." The Jews went through on a dry ground, and the Gypsy army was flooded. Some, however, survived, they were scattered around the world and they wander to this day.

But they have had enough of Gypsy migration. We want to return to our homeland and create our own state. Just as the Jews got Palestine, we want us to be granted Egypt or another country in Africa. Just a few months ago I was in Africa to investigate on the ground the possibilities of Gypsy colonisation.

– In Africa, some Gypsies lead a nomadic life – the Chancellor continues – and they are doing well. For the whitening of the cauldron, black people pay with golden sand. But we want to settle Gypsies on the land.

- Won't they miss their old life?
 - Oh, we have been done with roaming for a long time! They chase away the Gypsies everywhere, no place to lay your head.
 - How do Gypsies achieve the idea of their own country?
 - First of all, we register Gypsies around the world. I have now applied to the Government Commission [3] for permission to conduct a registration in Poland. We have not carried this out yet, but as we calculate, in Poland there will be around 19,000 of our compatriots, and around the world – around 30 million. This is not an easy thing to do. Because if a Gypsy goes to the forest, then even a demon cannot find him. For the same reason, we have *great problems* with exercising power. We must definitely focus on getting the Gypsies in one place. But we do not have that place.
 - You spoke about exercising power. Who rules the Gypsies?
 - We have an international and a national organisation. At the top of this power there is the King of Kings, the great emperor Janosz Kwiek in London. He sends out telegraph orders in various languages, mostly in Spanish, to Gypsy Kings in all countries. In Poland, my brother, Basil Kwiek, is the King. He exercises power over all *rajbaro* (the *vojts*) [4], standing at the head of the *butrumi* (tabors) [5]. Each *rajbaro* is chosen for a year by its *butrum*. The heads of the camps form the Grand Council, of which I am the president. In addition, there is a court with 12 judges – *Krisbans* [6]. This court judge civil matters. We leave criminal prosecutions to state courts because we are loyal to the country in which we live. *Rajbaro* must report to the King every time he stops in a town. But there are many who hide themselves. Now the King has gone to chase the deserters and those who are stubborn. In the city of Bydgoszcz, he arrested this bandit, Michał Kwiek.
 - Do all Gypsies belong to one nation, have a common language and religion?
 - We have many religions. Language is one, but in different dialects.
 - Is there any writing?
 - We do not have our own writing yet. Only now Janosz Kwiek wants to introduce our own alphabet, according to the Egyptian writing, which were found in the graves of the pharaohs.
 - One more, indiscreet question: How are the Gypsy authorities supported?
 - Kings are rich, Janosz is the richest in London and he supports us. Now, for example, he sent money to build the palace for King Basil. The palace will be located in Bielany [7]. But we want to introduce taxes, for example 25 zlotys from a wedding.
- Please come to us on the holiday.

Notes

1. The legends about the origin from Egypt and Gypsy King Pharaoh were widespread among Gypsies in all studied region since the Middle Ages. They are best preserved in Roma folklore in South-Eastern Europe (cf. Chapter 2 and 3).
2. Instead of the Black Sea should be the Red Sea.
3. Commissariat Government for the Capital City of Warsaw – in the interwar period a separate administrative unit dedicated to administering the capital city of Warsaw. The Government Commissioner was directly reporting to the Ministry of the Internal Affairs.

4. From Romani language, *Raj* means a signor, *baro* big. The term here is used as designation of head of the camp.
5. From Romani language, *but* means many, *rum* is a phonetical version of the word Rom (Gypsy). The term here is used as a designation of the entity of nomadic camp members.
6. This is a reference the traditional Gypsy court, known as *Romani Kris*.
7. Bielany – the northern district of Warsaw.

Source: [No Author]. (1931b). Na marginesie cywilizacji. Marzenia polskich cyganów o własnym państwie w Egipcie. *Gazeta Polska*, An. 3, No. 145, 1931, May 29, p. 8.
Prepared for publication by Alicja Gontarek.

Comments

There are several points in this article. Although Kwiek's statements on the willingness to set up a state for Gypsies appear in the Polish press many times, in this case we have to deal with the rare arguments accompanying these plans. It is interesting because they were mentioned in an interview given by Kwiek himself. Based on his knowledge, he indicates the reasons for the state-building action. The basis of activities is the knowledge about the history of Gypsies, dating back to the biblical times, when, as Kwiek argues, they had their state in Egypt, competing as a powerful nation with Jews. Otherwise, it is the Jewish *casus*, i.e. their efforts in the interwar period for the national place in Palestine, which is a kind of inspiration for Kwiek. This is a very important topic in the context of Gypsy efforts for their homeland. This imitation shows a close observation of the Jews' actions by the Gypsy elite. The more important is that Poland was the largest centre of Jewish life in Europe in the interwar period. In addition, the search for their own state was induced by a reluctant attitude to traveling Gypsies, which was experienced by almost every one of them. The desire to find a home country was not dictated, however, by a literal understanding of the Egyptian legend – it could have been created in another African country, which is proof of some flexibility among the Gypsy elite.

The means to achieve this goal, as we learn from Kwiek, was the global registration of Gypsies, and it seemed to be a program for him at that time. Unfortunately, it has never been carried out in Poland. The Kwieks themselves did not know how many of them there were in Poland, nor were the Polish institutions – governmental or scientific – interested in this issue. The Polish party has never taken a similar action. Therefore, if the tool for achieving the long-term goal of a national dwelling place was the mentioned registration, Polish Gypsies were slipping away from the attempts of statistical calculations. In this context, surely the nomadic way of life has made the integration process more difficult, as Kwiek himself said in the interview. However, the fact of articulating such difficulties indicates that in the 1930s also Polish Gypsies entered the path to initial consolidation. Asking themselves questions about numbers and registration attempts indicate that the Gypsy elite was aware that this was one of the first steps to modernise.

Alicja Gontarek

9.6.2 *The King of the Gypsies, Michał Kwiek, Asks for Land in Africa*

Król cyganów Michał Kwiek prosi o ziemię w Afryce

(z). Prasa angielska donosi, iż król cygański, Michał Kwiek, który – jak donosiliśmy – został wydany z granic Czechosłowacji, przybył do Londynu, gdzie zwrócił się do rządu angielskiego z prośbą o prawo osiedlenia się 15 tys. rodzin cygańskich w Afryce.

Król cyganów przygotował w tym celu specjalną petycję, która zaopatrzona jest w kilka tysięcy podpisów cyganów.

Onegdaj wygłosił on w londyńskim Hyde Park propagandową mowę, w której omawiał szczegółowo życzenia cyganów i oświadczył, iż cyganie pragną na zawsze osiedlić się w Afryce.

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The King of Gypsies, Michał Kwiek, asks for land in Africa

(z). The English press reports that the Gypsy King, Michał Kwiek, who – as we reported – was expelled from Czechoslovakia, came to London where he asked the English government for the right to settle down 15 thousand Gypsy families in Africa.

The King of Gypsies has prepared a special petition for this purpose, which is provided with several thousand signatures of Gypsies.

Of yore, he gave a propaganda speech in London's Hyde Park, in which he discussed the wishes of the Gypsies in detail and declared that they want to settle down in Africa forever.

Source: [No Author]. (1934b). Król cyganów Michał Kwiek prosi o ziemię w Afryce. *Ilustrowany Kuryer Codzienny*, An. 25, No. 309, 1934b, November 7, p. 6.

Prepared for publication by Alicja Gontarek.

Comments

Efforts to create a Gypsy state in Africa belonged probably to the most popular slogans used by Gypsy Kings in Poland in the mid-1930s. Michał Kwiek, who popularized that, was followed by other leaders. They were so strong that they penetrated the Polish press, which reported the problem abundantly, referring to it, however sceptically, in terms of the dreams of the Gypsies that could not be fulfilled. On the other hand, the Poles understood these slogans, as did the Jews, having aspirations to create a Jewish state in Palestine.

Efforts to search for a new national residence were accompanied by numerous foreign arrivals of Gypsy leaders who tried to engage in talks with state dignitaries. Their effects were mediocre. The most active among Polish Gypsy leaders was Michał II Kwiek.

In the 1930s, in the context of the Polish Kwieks, two ideas emerged to create a Gypsy homeland – in South Africa, and, in the face of the failure of this concept, in North

Africa, in the Abyssinia area, which was under Italian rule. The Kwieks announced in 1938 that they would turn to Benito Mussolini for permission for the Gypsy settlement in this area (Nowy Kurjer, 1938, p. 6). He points out that Michał II Kwiek presented the number of settlers (15,000) he wanted to bring to Africa. It seems that he thought about Polish Gypsies and his supporters who lived in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Romania. Michał II Kwiek was therefore a regional Polish Gypsy leader who, on his own, without an agreement with other leaders, applied for a new country for Polish Gypsies. These activities, though not embedded in the realities of Europe of the 1930s, and which do not take into account the internal diversity of Gypsy communities and specificity and interests of individual groups, are of great importance for building the identity of the Gypsy minority in the interwar period. They are also an echo of the nationalist tendencies that emerged in Europe in the 1930s, which in the case of Gypsies and Jews turned out to be a positive phenomenon and accelerated the process of their maturing as nations.

Alicja Gontarek

Additional Comments

The case with the so-called Gypsy Kings in Poland differ more or less from other forms and pursued goals of the Roma civic emancipation movement in the countries of Central, South-Eastern and Eastern Europe during the interwar period. The very idea of Gypsy Kings is not new and unknown to Poland. It has its roots in the existing practice of the Middle Ages in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, where in the 17th and 18th centuries there were more than two dozen 'elders of the Gypsies' (often titled 'King') designated by royal decrees. They were from Gypsy origin or non-Gypsies, bore some governmental functions (e.g. collection of taxes), had the right to execute internal self-government (i.e. to resolve controversial issues within the community), and represented respective Gypsy communities before the authorities (Danilowicz, 1824, pp. 98-100; Каманин, 1916, pp. 109-128; Ficowski, 1985, pp. 32-59; Mróz, 2001, pp. 188-219).

The interesting thing about this case, however, is that this form (Gypsy Kings) was being taken over by representatives of the Gypsy community from the *Kelderari* group, which were new migrants to the Polish lands (at that time in the composition of the Russian Empire) from Romania and Transylvania and Banat (then in Austro-Hungarian Empire). This migration is likely to have taken place in the second half of 19th and early 20th centuries (before the First World War). The first Gypsy King mentioned in the published sources, Jan Michałak-Michałescu, bore a double (Polish and Romanian) surname, and the subsequent Kings are noted to have been born in Poland. In this way, new migrants adopted (more precisely, demonstrated in public space) forms of a community organisation that was well understood by the macro-community in which they sought to integrate successfully and fully. Moreover, this form was not completely alien to the *Kelderari* Gypsies, as it largely corresponds to forms of representation known to Gypsies in Central and South-Eastern Europe in the past (cf. Chapter 1). This tradition continues to this day, the most famous case being the Gypsy Kings of the Cioaba dynasty in Romania.

We should emphasise that the Gypsy Kings in Poland were to a large extent a media phenomenon, which revealed to the public their visions about the desired future of the Gypsies in Poland. In fact, until now, no authentic texts have been discovered except invitations and programs of coronations, business cards, stamps, etc., i.e. all attributes intended for public presentation and display. All information about their visions, wishes, and intentions are known only from the press, which suggests that it should be approached critically, for two main reasons. On the one hand, the media sought, when presenting the Gypsy Kings, the sensations, curiosity for the audience, and always focused on the aforementioned, without attempting to analyse the reliability of the Gypsy Kings' statements. On the other hand, the Gypsy Kings themselves recognised this very well, and there was always a great deal of exaggeration in their public messages, presenting what was desired as reality, future intentions and hopes, etc. In fact, the Gypsy Kings in Poland were self-exoticizing themselves in their public appearances, in accordance with the prevailing mass social stereotypes, and this media strategy has proved to be extremely successful. Of course, such usage of media is inherent in every social and political movement in the modern age, which always has its media dimension, but in the case of the Gypsy Kings, this was particularly pronounced, and largely determined the overall phenomenon. As a consequence of this, press material relating to the Gypsy Kings in Poland must be approached very cautiously and critically, and it should always be borne in mind that the ideology of the Roma civic emancipation, expressed through the Kings' public messages, largely reflects desires and intentions, but not historical events that actually happened. When, for example, a Gypsy King stated that he would ask for land from Benito Mussolini for the establishment of his state in Abyssinia, this does not mean that he was indeed in Italy and made such a formal request; also, when another Gypsy King stated that 120,000 Gypsies in Bulgaria have acknowledged his authority and have already organised themselves in support of him (Venkov, 1938), this does not mean that any of the Gypsies in Bulgaria were aware of his existence at all.

A logical question is whether the Gypsy Kings in Poland took any real steps to promote their ideas among Gypsies (both in Poland and abroad, as their visions were not restricted within the country, but suggested the unification of Gypsies from different countries around the world) apart from participation in and organising of public events (and especially the coronation), press releases and interviews aimed primarily at the macro-society.

In the press releases of Gypsy Kings, one can also trace their similarly unsuccessful efforts for the transformation of their traditional organisation of dispersed wandering group of *Kelderari* to a modernised form of a united nation. Thus, in the published sources, we can see on the one side descriptions of the *Kelderari*'s traditional heads of nomadic camps within the institution of the so-called Gypsy court, along with the newly introduced institution of Kings, presidents, chancellors, and ministries. Almost all Gypsy Kings came from large extended families of the *Kelderari* group, from which individual members constantly compete with each other as to who is the true leader of the Gypsies in Poland. As it became clear even from the brief journalistic description published

above, in this rivalry they tried to use their traditional conflict resolution institution, best known under the term *Romani Kris* (Marushiakova & Popov, 2007c, pp. 67-101), but did so in vain. The case presents a mixture of attempts for modernisation with a simultaneous attempt at the preservation and use of their traditional potestary institution. This approach appeared inadequate at the time and, thus, in the end unsuccessful.

Very little is known about the impact of the activities of the Gypsy Kings on local Gypsies, who had long been living on Polish lands, and which included two main groups, namely the nomadic or semi-nomadic *Polska Roma* and settled *Bergitka Roma*. The fact that in their speeches, the Gypsy Kings themselves have repeatedly emphasised that they have been recognised as such by all Gypsies in Poland, and therefore had the right to represent them and to speak on their behalf, proves nothing. The materials published here reveal two opposite ways of the reaction of local Gypsies, that belonged to the *Polska Roma* group (judging from the descriptions and their names, in the above published press articles), towards the *Kelderari* Kings, namely of welcome and support, and of total rejection. The latter option seems much more likely, and the former is rather an exception, due to the traditional distance between individual Gypsy groups, in this case intensified by relations between 'old' and 'new' Gypsies in Poland. There is no reason to believe that traditional relations in interwar Poland had changed dramatically in the direction of establishing a common Gypsy unity within the country as a result of the media popularity of the Gypsy Kings.

Various Gypsy Kings in interwar Poland have repeatedly emphasised in their public statements that their influence, as well as their plans, were not limited only within the country but had an international dimension. It is difficult to assess whether their international contacts were real or whether they were only proclaimed as such to the media in order to raise their international prestige, e.g. it was announced that representatives of the Romanian, Hungarian, Portuguese and Spanish Gypsies had participated in the election of a new Gypsy King in 1937 (see 9.3.1) and that there was a representative from France among the candidates for the throne (NDA, sign. 1-P-2312-4). Indeed, there is historical evidence (including published above) that some have attempted to expand their activities in Hungary (Nowy Kurjer, 1936, p. 4), Czechoslovakia (Ilustrowany Kuryer Codzienny, 1930b, p. 13; 1932a, p. 10), and Romania. These activities, however, were mostly confined in the frames of the *Kelderari* group members, and in general followed a pattern known from Poland: organisation of public events to arouse the interest of the press.

Particularly illustrative in this regard is the case in Chernivtsi (at that time in Romania, today in Ukraine), which is worth discussing. In early 1935, the press in Poland reported that Gypsy King Michał Kwiek intended to organise a major international Gypsy congress in Chernivtsi, where would be present representatives of Gypsies from 9 European countries, the US and 3 countries in South America, and also that a delegation of Romanian Gypsies led by Gheorghe Lăzăreanu-Lăzurică (Head of the General Union of Roma in Romania) would take part; the Congress would establish an International Union of Gypsies to defend the interests of Gypsies and deal with citizenship and passport matters (Ilustrowany Kuryer Codzienny, 1934a, p. 4; 1935a, p. 9). Accordingly, in Romania,

a police report based on the press reports states that the Gypsy King Michał Kwiek of Poland intended to visit Chernivtsi, from where he planned to go to Bucharest, where “he intends to ask for an audience with the Soviet plenipotentiary representative [Mikhail] Ostrovskiy, to find out about the organisation of the Gypsy state in Soviet Russia, to effectuate a pan-Roma movement for the foundation of a Gypsy state in India, on the banks of the Ganges” (Nastasă & Varga, 2001, doc. 72, p. 177). In the end, it turns out that there is no evidence at all that anything of these impressive plans was actually implemented and in Romania itself the General Secretariat of the General Union of Roma in Romania adopted a decision that the Union will have no part in the Gypsy Polish King elections because Romanian Roma’s sole devotion and loyalty was only to the Romanian Crown (see Chapter 6).

In their plans, which were widely covered by the media (not only in Poland but also in many other countries around the world), the Gypsy Kings promoted the idea of creating an independent Gypsy state. Its future location was sought on three continents – Asia (in India), Africa (indicated alternatives were: Egypt, Abyssinia, Eritrea, Somalia, Uganda, Namibia) and South America. The very emergence of this idea is not surprising in the context of the colonial aspiration of Poland and widely discussed plans in the public space (and especially in Poland itself) of international Zionism to create a Jewish state in Palestine. An interesting question that cannot be categorically answered is whether the Gypsy Kings themselves believed this to be realistic or whether they used this motive only to attract public attention in order to raise their own authority before the state authorities in Poland (in any case, the latter seems more likely).

The fact that, especially in their international activities (often only declared ones), they have always had in mind the opportunity that through this they could exert some influence on Polish authorities is beyond any doubt. The very first Gypsy who declared himself (or was declared by the press) as the Gypsy King, Jan Michałak-Michałescu, presented to the Government Commissioner Dr. Lyfovski address on behalf of the Polish Gypsies, in which they informed about the choice of their king, whose royal residence would be Żoliborz (now a district of Warsaw), and in the first place emphasised their loyalty to the Polish state (Die Drau, 1928, p. 3). Jan Michałak-Michałescu announced also in a letter to the General Election Committee in 1928 that he had prepared a Gypsy list to run for the Seim (Parliament) elections and the Senate, and appealed for a legal reform that would allow Gypsies to settle (Wielkopolska, 1928, p. 2). In fact, the need for the settlement of nomads and the constant emphasising on Roma as being full citizens of Poland, who should perform their civic duties, including serving in the army, are found in one form or another in all public messages of all Gypsy Kings and applicants for this position. The desire to secure the support of the main political leaders in Poland, including Józef K. Piłsudski himself (with some successes achieved in this regard), is also a constant theme. This indicates that the aforementioned approach was considered to be a way to achieve a position in the state power structures as representatives of the Gypsies.

What exactly was the balance between the domestic and international dimensions in the Gypsy Kings’ visions of the future of the Gypsies is difficult to estimate from a

present-day perspective. However, there was no real contradiction between these two dimensions, i.e. the Gypsy Kings used them both simultaneously or put in the forefront one dimension or another, depending on the specific condition of the moment. In some cases, they may even have pursued very pragmatic goals, such as in the case of King Michał's visit to Czechoslovakia in 1932 (see 9.5.1.). The following year, a group of Gypsy families (a total of about 200 people) led by King Michał with visas issued for three months tried to settle permanently in Czechoslovakia (the first time in Prague, the second time in Czech Silesia), but were deported by the authorities after the expiration of their allowed period of stay in the country. However, King Michał did not despair and, in 1934, announced that he would visit the "Gypsy School" in Uzhgorod to give gifts to the pupils, and for the teacher to award him the title of "Gypsy Baron", but "the King and his entourage" were again deported (Janas, 1994, pp. 64-65).

There are also reports in the press about the international contacts of "Gypsy Kings", which are not confirmed by other data and for which doubts remain about their authenticity. Such is e.g. the case of the report in the Hungarian newspaper *Órai Újság* about a "battle" between King Michał of Poland and Rajmund Laubinger of Moravia (who, judging by his name, was a Sinto) for the Eastern European Gypsy throne (Nečas, 1997b, p. 61). If in this case there is no journalistic mystification (which is very possible), then this message is an interesting evidence of the relations between the various Gypsy groups during the interwar period in Central Europe.

From all of the above, it is clear that despite the fact that the case of the Gypsy Kings in Poland, was a specific one, especially when compared to the processes in the Roma movement in other countries of Central, South-Eastern and Eastern Europe, some common traits could also be outlined.

As already discussed, the creation of any nation during the modern era in this region begins precisely with the formulation of basic ideas about its future development in the circles of its elite, and their propaganda among the masses (cf. Hroch, 2005). This is exactly what the Gypsy Kings in Poland were doing, using the media of the time in an extremely successful way, and there is no reason to withdraw their case from the general processes of Roma civic emancipation in the region.

Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov