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JAN VILÉM PEXIDER

JINDŘICH BEČVÁŘ

The parents of Jan Vilém Pexider were Jan Pexider, a druggist, and Vilemína Pexiderová nee Ballingová. Her father was an iron works director Josef Balling, and her mother was Marie J. Lerchová. To be able to judge the family conditions and traditions that influenced Jan Vilém Pexider, we first summarize the basic information about the Pexider, Balling, and Lerch families.

The Pexider family came from Protivín. They were Catholics, who earned their living as butchers and later druggists. The grandfather Kašpar (January 2, 1797, Protivín no. 41 – October 29, 1873, Karlín no. 155, now Sokolovská street no. 155/60) was a master butcher in Protivín; his wife was Anna Švehlová, also from Protivín. They had a son Jan Nepomuk Antonín (May 21, 1835, Protivín no. 41 – February 1, 1878, Karlín no. 233), father of the mathematician J. V. Pexider. Until his death, he owned a drugstore in Karlín, where he bought the house no. 233 at Královská street (now Sokolovská no. 233/37). This was probably the place where his relative Ignác Pexider, later the owner of a renowned drugstore in Vinohrady, was serving apprenticeship. A distant relative Jan Pexider (November 9, 1831, Protivín – October 2, 1873, Zagreb) was a secondary school (gymnasium) professor of mathematics in Zagreb, and a member of the Union of Czech Mathematicians.¹ The origin of the surname Pexider (also written as Pexieder, Pexidr, Peksyder, Peksider, Peksidr, Beck-sieder) is the German word *Pechsieder* (pitch-burner).

Mother of J. V. Pexider, Vilemína Eleonora Ballingová (July 12, 1844, Plasy – October 14, 1881, Karlín no. 233), came from an ancient German family whose members worked in iron and metal industry. Her father was Josef Balling (around 1809–1873), a ganger in Františkovodol near Třeboň, and later a director of the iron works in Plasy; he was the son of Michael Balling (1776–1848), a director of the mine in Zbiroh. Josef's brothers were Bedřich Balling (1803–1859), a smeltery director, and the famous Karel Josef Napoleon Balling (1805–1868), a chemistry professor at the Prague polytechnic during the period 1835–1868, and a world-recognized expert in metallurgy. The son on K. J. N. Balling was C. A. M. Balling (1835–1869), a professor at the mining academy in Příbram, and chief counsellor of mines.²

Vilemína's mother Marie Josefa Lerchová (August 15, 1814, Nepomuk no. 148 – around 1873) married Josef Balling on 15th May 1837. One of her siblings was Dr. Josef Oldřich (Florian) Lerch (1816–1892), a pharmacist and zoochemistry professor at the German university in Prague and at the university of Cracow, a world-renowned chemist and an officially appointed expert, who had been awarded the Knight's Cross of the Franz Josef Order. Together with his wife Johanna, they owned the houses no. 316, 250, and the pharmacy *U českého lva* (At the Czech Lion) at Kinského street (later S. M. Kirova, now Štefánikova) in Smíchov (the houses 316/8 and 250/6 are still standing, including the pharmacy in the latter one). One of their two sons was Lev Lerch

(1856–1892), a Czech painter, portrait painter and illustrator, who studied at the Prague academy. He visited Munich, Paris, Italy and Northern Africa; a posthumous exhibition of his work was organized in Prague in 1894. The other son was Josef Lerch (1862–?), a pharmacist and chemist. The brother of professor J. O. Lerch, Jindřich Lerch (1825–1878), owned together with his wife Mathilde Lerchová (1840–?) the house no. 557 at Karlova (now Seifertova) street in Žižkov, and the pharmacy *U bílého lva* (At the White Lion) at Příkopy no. 969.³ The famous mathematician Matyáš Lerch (1860–1922) had probably no blood relationship to this family.

Vilemína's brother Karel Gabriel Bartoloměj Balling (August 24, 1838, Františkov or Františkodol no. 1 – March 29, 1913, Vinohrady no. 814)⁴ graduated from the Prague polytechnic, later became a director of the mine in Duchcov and chief counsellor of mines. After retiring in 1896, he lived in Vinohrady, Prague (Jungmannova no. 365/10, later Hálkova no. 814/68). It is interesting that the wife of professor J. O. Lerch was Johanna Ellenbergerová Röttleinová (1830–1899), while the second (?) wife of Jindřich Lerch was her sister Emanuela Roza (around 1834–1863), and the first wife of Karel Balling was their niece Marie Anna Ellenbergerová Röttleinová (around 1851–1875).⁵

Melanie Ballingová (1875–?)⁶, a daughter of Karel G. B. Balling from his first marriage, became a co-owner of the villa Nikolajka (Smíchov no. 174); she kept in frequent contact with the Pexider brothers. She was listed as a concert singer in the Prague directory from 1937–38.

Vilemína, wife of Jan Pexider, gave birth to three sons, whose godfather was their uncle Karel Balling; he was substituted by Ig. Pexider, a merchant, on the baptism of the youngest child. The oldest son Karel Leo Jan (November 15, 1873, Karlín no. 158 – June 12, 1892, Smíchov no. 316) had also Mathilde Lerchová as a godmother. He died probably of tuberculosis at the age of eighteen. The second son was the mathematician Jan Nepomuk Vilím (December 22, 1874, Karlín no. 227 – November 4, 1914, Prague II no. 460). The third son, Josef Vilím Jan (December 9, 1876, Karlín no. 233 – April 1955) worked as an assistant of the state railways in Horní Černošice, and later as an inspector of the Czechoslovak Railways.⁷ His son was Ing. arch. Zdeněk Pexieder (1909–?), who slightly changed the spelling of his surname. After the death of their parents, Karel, Jan, and Josef (aged 8, 7, and 5, respectively) were brought up in the family of professor J. O. Lerch in Smíchov, Kinského street no. 316. Karel Balling became legal guardian of his nephew Jan V. Pexider. The house no. 233 at Královská street in Karlín was still in the possession of the Pexider brothers in the 1880's.

Jan Vilém Pexider was of a Czech-German descent and fluent in both languages. Neither he nor the Czech society were probably sure whether he should be considered Czech or German. He was of medium-high stature, slender, and good-looking. It seems that his temper was fiery and unbalanced, his reactions often inadequate. He was said to be eccentric and bohemian. He also inclined to art and tried to paint (perhaps under the influence of Lev Lerch). The social positions of his relatives (university professors, pharmacists, mine directors) made him feel that he is predestined for a similarly successful career.

J. V. Pexider started his studies at *Realgymnasium* in Smíchov and later proceeded to a Czech gymnasium in Malá Strana, where he became one of the best students of professor Augustin Pánek (1843–1908). In 1893, as an 8th grade student, he solved math problems published in the volume 22 of *Časopis pro pěstování matematiky a fysiky*.⁸ He passed the final exams on 7th July 1893.

He spent three semesters (winter semester 1893/94 and both semesters in 1894/95, missing the summer semester 1893/94) at the German university in Prague, where he attended lectures of G. A. Pick (1859–1929) – differential calculus, algebraic equations, number theory, calculus of variations, and mathematical seminar – and those of K. Bobek (1855–1899) – projective geometry, differential and integral calculus, geometric construction problems. He also visited the courses of E. Mach (1838–1916) and G. A. J. Jaumann (1863–1924) in physics, and those of F. Jodl (1848–1914) and A. Marty (1847–1914) in philosophy and logic.

After that, Pexider passed five semesters (from winter semester 1895/96 to winter semester 1897/98) at the Czech university. He attended the lectures of F. J. Studnička (1836–1903) on differential and integral calculus, analytic geometry, algebraic equations, numerical solution of equations, spherical trigonometry, and bounded integrals; he also attended the mathematical seminar of F. J. Studnička and F. Kolářček (1851–1913), and the lectures of Eduard Weyr on plane algebraic curves, surface theory, and projective geometry. He passed the courses in physics of F. Kolářček and Č. Strouhal (1850–1922), the lectures in astronomy of G. Gruss (1854–1922), and the philosophy course given by T. G. Masaryk (1850–1937) and J. Durdík (1837–1902).

Pexider was a seminar library custodian for a few semesters. He obtained a scholarship of 30 guildens for his work in mathematical seminar in winter semester 1895/96.

On 9th July 1896, the professors of the Faculty of Philosophy unanimously approved the proposal of a committee whose members were Studnička, Kolářček, and Strouhal to award a mathematical-physical scholarship of 300 guildens to Pexider:

... that the mathematical-physical scholarship... be awarded in 1896/97 to Mr. Jan Pexider, a third grade student of the mathematical-physical branch at our faculty.

He is a native of Prague, orphaned, and is supported mainly by his relatives. Intending to devote himself especially to mathematics, he stands out due to his diligence and industry as well as knowledge in that branch, which justifies the hope that he may later qualify himself as a docent, which substantiates our proposal given above.

In winter semester 1897/98, he again obtained a scholarship of 15 guildens for his work in the seminar.

In 1898, Pexider completed his dissertation thesis *Theorie variačního počtu dle Weierstrasse* (Theory of the calculus of variations according to Weierstrass); the reports were written by Studnička and Kolářček. On 24th May, he passed a

two-hour *rigorosum* (final examination) in mathematics and physics (excellent grade – Studnička, excellent – Koláček, sufficient – Strouhal; overall result *per majora* – excellent). On 11th July, he took a one-hour *rigorosum* in philosophy (excellent – Masaryk, excellent – Hostinský); the overall result was excellent, and Pexider graduated doctor of philosophy on 12th July 1898.⁹

Pexider was also registered as an extraordinary student of the Czech polytechnic during the school year 1895/96 (he registered to the lectures of *Descriptive geometry*, *General and technical physics – first course*, and *Architectonic drawing*), but was dismissed because he failed to pay the tuition fees for the summer semester 1896.¹⁰ Since 1896, he was member of the Union of Czech Mathematicians. During his studies, he was still living with the Lerch family in Smíchov, Kinského street no. 316.

In the school year 1898/99, Pexider undertook a journey via London to Paris, where he studied at Collège de France and Sorbonne (Faculté des Sciences). He also kept contact with Czech artists in Paris – Mucha, Kupka, and Dědina, who painted a portrait of Pexider.¹¹

Pexider spent the next school year probably in Prague. During 1898–1900, he published four papers [P1]–[P4] in *Časopis pro pěstování matematiky a fyziky*, while the work [P5] was published at his own expense. On 11th May 1900, he delivered a lecture *O první práci Abelově* (On the first work of Abel) for the Union.¹²

In spring 1900, Pexider applied for habilitation for the first time, and offered his work *Studie o funkcionálních rovnicích* (A study on functional equations)¹³ as a habilitation thesis. The members of the habilitation committee nominated by the Faculty of Philosophy on 10th May 1900 were Studnička, Weyr and Koláček.

After an announcement (made probably by Eduard Weyr) that the thesis lacks sufficient quality, Pexider complied with the recommendation of Studnička and withdrew his application. F. J. Studnička later recalled in his dissenting opinion:

Two years ago, he applied for habilitation at our faculty, but on my suggestion, he withdrew his application after a reproof that the enclosed habilitation thesis “Studie o funkcionálních rovnicích” lacks sufficient quality.

In autumn 1900, Pexider completed his studies in Paris (*assembling notes*) and proceeded to study at the Vienna university in winter semester 1900/01, participating in the seminars of professors Escherich, Mertens and Gegenbauer. In 1901, he published a treatise *Abelův teorém...* (Abel’s theorem...) [P6] at his own expense.¹⁴ In this period, he lived in Nové Město, Táborská no. 63 (now Legerova); he is listed as a candidate professor in *Index Časopisu pro pěstování matematiky a fyziky za ročníky I.–XXX.*, a journal index compiled by Augustin Pánek in 1901.

On 16th April 1901, Pexider applied, for the second time, for habilitation at the university in the branch of mathematics, namely in function theory. He submitted the work *Abelův teorém...* [P6], which (as he stated) was the content of his Vienna lectures given at professor Escherich’s seminar, as the

habilitation thesis. He also listed his publications [P1]–[P5], and stated that he is prepared to deliver lectures on *calculus of variations (general as well as according to Weierstrass), infinite series theory, elliptic functions theory, theory of unbounded integrals, theory of Abelian integrals, the foundations of Riemann's function theory etc.* A habilitation committee comprising Strouhal, Studnička, and Weyr, was elected on 2nd May 1901.¹⁵

On 18th September 1901, Pexider submitted to the Ministry of Cult and Education an application for scholarship in mathematics and national economy at German universities. He pressed for the settlement of his request on 28th October 1901; at that time, he departed to Göttingen, where he remained for the whole school year 1901/02.¹⁶

On 1st October 1901, the office of the Czech governor referred the scholarship application to the faculty. Studnička, who was asked by the dean Zubatý to make a proposal, warmly recommended to grant the scholarship of 1000 crowns since ... *there is hope that he may become a brave docent.* The subsequent vote took place on the meeting of professors on the 3rd November; 25 professors supported the proposal, while Král, Frič, Brauner and Raýman voted against it. Král and Brauner declared that the proposal is not so urgent and can be postponed to the next meeting; no final agreement was reached. A committee to pass judgment on the application consisting of Gruss, Weyr and Studnička was elected on the next meeting on 12th December. Weyr's report from 7th January 1902 reads:

The three enclosed treatises of Dr. J. Pexider, published at his own expense, are of an entirely compilation nature, the first two being in addition very elementary; these, in my judgment, do not prove any exceptional mathematical talent or ability for independent scientific research. I thus suggest that the proposal should be left in discretion of the ministry.

Gruss' report from 20th January contains the same recommendation (probably influenced by Weyr). However, three days later, Gruss added on the same sheet of paper (!) a curious postscript: *In case the illustrious professors will not accede to my proposal, I suggest... to recommend the application... to be accepted.*

Professor Mourek suggested that Pexider's application should be returned to the committee; his colleagues agreed on the 23rd January that the committee should decide in one week. Studnička was indignant because of the doubt cast on his report from 31st October, and on 26th January, he refused to join the committee:

... thereby indirectly expressing a distrust to me, even a tacit reproach that my proposal wasn't just and unprejudiced... how can it be expected from me that I enter the committee appointed to elaborate a new account, and thus admit myself that I refereed in partiality...

G. Gruss and Ed. Weyr declared on 29th January 1902 thus:

Upon a repeated comprehensive consideration, the signators make this proposal: With respect to applicant's endeavor to further scientific education, the

committee members suggest: Let the illustrious professors recommend the application of Dr. Pexider for a scholarship to be accepted.

The second vote took place on 31st January. 21 votes supported granting the scholarship, Brauner and Raýman were against it. Again, no final decision was made.

These events, and especially Pexider's letter to the dean Zubatý¹⁷ from 29th January 1902, illustrate that the relations between Pexider and certain professors were not ideal. It seems that already then, Pexider and Eduard Weyr became enemies; it can be assumed that he already asked the dean Zubatý not to nominate Weyr to the habilitation committee. From the letter, we also feel Pexider's impatience and irritation.

The habilitation committee failed to reach an agreement on the 3rd March session. Weyr's report from 3rd March 1902, signed also by Strouhal, refers to Pexider's works [P1]–[P3] as worthless and containing mistakes. According to Weyr, the other works [P4] and [P5] suffer from stylistic solecisms, do not contain anything new, and their results are immediately obvious. The habilitation thesis [P6]

... deals with a very important and subtle subject; this sudden change from considerations, which are partly insignificant and partly quite elementary (i.e. the papers [P4] and [P5]), to Abel's theorem is explained by the fact that the last work is a compilation in the fullest sense of the word, obtained mainly from the works cited at appropriate places by the author.

Weyr subsequently claims that Pexider's habilitation thesis is not original, and that certain parts of the treatise [P6] are mere transcriptions of other works, e.g.:

... on page 28, in accordance with the English text, the author refers to exponent as to index, which evidences the verbatim transcription... Apart from slight notational changes, the paragraphs VIII and IX agree with pages 742 to 746 of the cited Rowe's work.

Summarizing the antecedent reports concerning the enclosed works of Dr. J. Pexider, the signed members of the committee come to the view that the works are not in compliance with the requirements set for a habilitation writing, as beseeemed, and thus make a proposal that the illustrious professors reject the application of Dr. J. Pexider for habilitation.

Studnička did not sign Weyr's report; on 5th March, he submitted a four-page dissenting opinion, which reads:

... the committee... decided not to recommend his application to be accepted; being not able to agree, I am forced to submit this dissenting opinion containing a proposal to allow Dr. J. Pexider to the following acts of the habilitation process. That I can't sign the referee's proposal I explain by the fact that I find his report mistaken in form and one-sided in content, thus insufficient...

... such a report should, in the first place, contain an analysis and a review of the habilitation thesis, and only later mention the appendices... Thus, the

judgment of non-experts, who form a majority of the faculty, is more or less led away from the direction of the habilitation. . . . the deficiencies, greater or less, real or apparent, are mentioned everywhere, but nowhere it is clearly said what is right, thus the true resultant being missing. . . .

In this way, it would be possible to reject every habilitation writing. . . . The referee talks in his report about compilation and transcription, not of a plagiarism, but, in this case, he did not diminish the value of the habilitation writing; according to the nature of the subject, the writer could not have treated anything else than what the various mathematicians had judged and written. . . .

And the referee would surely not claim that his recent writing on the differential calculus contains only the results of his own research; it is also a compilation, even though very meritorious. . . .

Considering these and also many other circumstances which have their place in Pexider's matter, I cannot accede to the majority proposal, and I suggest that the illustrious professors, in accord with the previous practice, decide to accept favorably the corresponding application; it deserves that. . . .

This time, I am reproached for having too lenient criteria in habilitation assessment, while the objection should have been raised against the habilitation rules instead. . . .

But when I used the same lenient criteria in former habilitations, e.g. that of Dr. Vlad. Novák, I wasn't reproached for that. . . .

(We remark that Studnička's son František Karel (1870–1955) applied unsuccessfully for habilitation at the Faculty of Medicine of the Czech university in 1898. After that, he published at his own expense a 16-page brochure *Seznam vědeckých pojednání, jež uveřejnil MUDr. Frant. Karel Studnička* (A list of scientific treatises published by MUDr. Frant. Karel Studnička), which contains a list of his 23 scientific works, their world response, and a list of all 13 works of Prof. Janošík, who stood against his habilitation.)

The following agreement was reached on the meeting of professors on 6th March 1902 (neither Weyr nor Studnička were present):

The dean Zubatý reads the committee's report concerning the scholarship application of Dr. J. Pexider. As suggested by Prof. Raýman, the next subject of the order of the day is going to be discussed before voting about the scholarship. [!!!!] Privy Councillor Strouhal reads the proposal of the majority of the committee concerning the habilitation application of Dr. J. Pexider, and then the dissenting opinion signed by Privy Councillor Studnička. The majority of the committee proposes: Let the habilitation application of Dr. J. Pexider be rejected. Agreed on unanimously. The scholarship application of J. Pexider was dealt with afterwards. The committee suggests that the application should be recommended to the ministry. The proposal was approved by 13 votes; 12 of the present members voted against it.

The result was communicated to the ministry on 10th March, together with a description of the whole procedure, thus justifying the lengthy processing of Pexider's scholarship application.

On 26th March, a note on rejecting Pexider's habilitation was submitted to the ministry, which acknowledged it on 29th April, and communicated the result to Pexider on 12th May. On 14th May 1902, the office of the Czech governor notified the offices of the Faculty of Philosophy that the scholarship was not awarded to Pexider.

As Pexider later stated, he took pains to persuade the minister A. Rezek in Vienna not to confirm the rejection of the habilitation. After having failed (see the undated letter to Dr. F. Soukup¹⁸), he asked for a new review of his habilitation thesis on 19th June. He writes that he asked the Privy Councillor Ed. Weyr for a permission to read his report (he corroborated this fact by sending Weyr's permission¹⁹ to the dean Zubatý), and that the report does not correspond to the real state of affairs. He asks the professors

... to decide that the habilitation thesis should be considered again, and that for the given reason, the former referee won't be nominated anymore.

He lists the following reasons for his request:

- An excerption of his habilitation thesis was accepted for publication in the journal *Bibliotheca mathematica*.
- The work *Über symmetrische Funktionen*... was not taken in consideration by Weyr, despite it was accepted for publication in the journal *Archiv der Mathematik und Physik*.
- Weyr's report contains *downright untruths*.

Pexider elaborates on his reasons in the subsequent paragraphs. He also asks for a transcript of Weyr's report to be able to defend himself.

... I would consider it an act of deep generosity of the illustrious professors if they offered me a possibility to defend myself completely, and if they kindly decided that, after my request, the illustrious faculty authorities delivered me a transcript of the mentioned report.

Two days later, the dean Zubatý passed Pexider's request to Eduard Weyr (!!!), whose statement from 4th July reads (among other things):

- *That journal [Bibliotheca mathematica] is devoted to the history of mathematics, and the fact that it accepted an excerption of the applicant's work for publication doesn't prove its originality from the standpoint of science and mathematics.*
- *... the applicant stated in his habilitation application that his work with the given title [Über symmetrische Funktionen...] is going to be published in "Mathematische Monatshefte", but he didn't deliver the work itself...*

(Pexider's habilitation application from 16th April 1901 makes no reference to the cited work. The only possibility of explaining Pexider's objection and Weyr's response is that the work was mentioned in one of the 13 supplements.)

Weyr accepts one of Pexider's objections, but qualifies the other as idle. He suggests

... that the request of Dr. Pexider for a new review of his habilitation writing should not be accepted, that he should be referred to the ministry by way of recourse, and that the requested transcript of the review, as an official act intended exclusively for professors and the ministry, should not be provided to the applicant.

Pexider's request for a revision of habilitation was rejected on the meeting of professors which took place on 10th July. (On this meeting, the habilitation rules were the subject of a stormy discussion caused by the problems in the habilitation of Dr. J. V. Prášek.) The decision was communicated to Pexider on 19th July.

In September 1902, Pexider published a text called *Vědecká úvaha kritická* (A critical scientific reflection) [P7], in which he heavily criticized the new textbook of Eduard Weyr, *Počítání diferenciální* (Differential calculus), especially its non-originality. He stated that Weyr's textbook is essentially a transcription of three similar books by J. Tannery, A. Genocchi and J. Serret, and, moreover, contains serious factual deficiencies, inaccuracies and misprints.

Eduard Weyr composed *Odpověď...* (Response...), in which he cleverly shifted attention to the discussion of factual deficiencies and refuted them, for the most part, in 29 paragraphs. He also played down the non-originality of his textbook easily:

... the agreement... between the paragraphs of my book and the paragraphs of other books is a natural thing; it concerns the same subject, treated by the same or similar method...

Pexider immediately published an even more acute *Protiodpověď* (Counter-response) [P8], in which he responded to the objections in Weyr's *Odpověď...*, and also expressed himself about the moral qualities of Eduard Weyr. It can be said that Pexider paid him back for his reproaches against the compilation nature of the thesis *Abel's theorem...* in the same coin. The whole affair, which acquired certain publicity and grew into a scandal in scientific circles, only worsened Weyr's poor health, and closed door to the Czech institutions of higher learning to Pexider.

The paper *Weyrův spor s Pexiderem* (A controversy between Weyr and Pexider, see [Be]) is devoted to the encounter between Pexider and Eduard Weyr, contains a detailed description of the progress of events, and the whole matter is judged there from the scientific point of view.

In 1902, in response to the dispute with Weyr, Pexider completed the work [P9] concerning the representation of numbers by lengths and vice versa; it was published two years later in *Časopis pro pěstování matematiky a fyziky* [P9a] and also separately [P9b]. Since that time, he published no mathematical papers in Czech.

On 24th May 1903, on a proposal of the Italian mathematicians E. Pascal (1865–1945) and G. B. Guccio (1855–1914), he became member of *Circolo matematico di Palermo*.²⁰ The journal *Rendiconti Circolo matematico di Palermo* published Pexider's work [P13] in 1903. Another two papers of Pexider, [P10] and [P11], were published that year; it is due to the work [P12], *Notiz*

über *Functionaltheoreme*, which continues the discussion of problems from the Czech papers [P4] and [P5], that a certain type of functional equations is named after Pexider.

On 2nd June 1903, Pexider submitted another application for habilitation in the function-theoretic branch of mathematics, and offered the work *O symetrických funkcích na sobě nezávislých argumentů* (On symmetric functions of several independent arguments) [P11], which was already accepted for publication in *Archiv der Mathematik und Physik*, as a habilitation thesis. He enclosed the works [P12], [P10], [P13], [P9a] (in this order), and also the manuscript *Über den Verlauf reelen Züge von speziellen algebraischen Curven 4ter Ordnung* as supporting documents; he also mentioned his works [P5], [P6] as well as the papers published in *Časopis pro pěstování matematiky a fysiky*. He stated that he is able to lecture *not only function theory, but also all related parts of mathematics*.

On 18th June, the dean B. Raýman asked some of his colleagues whether the application *should be taken into account*, despite the *well-known public attacks made by Dr. Pexider*. The habilitation committee comprising Gruss, Koláček and Petr was elected on 30th June, and on 9th July, Pexider's application was rejected a limine (i.e., rejected by majority vote at the very beginning) with regard to the sixth paragraph of the habilitation rules.²¹ B. Raýman communicated the conclusion to Pexider one day later.

Let us now describe the situation at the Faculty of Philosophy in more detail.

In the beginning of 1903, the questions concerning mathematics education at the philosophical faculty needed to be solved urgently. The 67 years old and ill Studnička, the only ordinary mathematics professor, was no longer able to manage the continuously growing teaching duties, and Eduard Weyr, substituting professor, was long-term ill.

A committee (consisting of Koláček, Studnička, Raýman) for the habilitation of Karel Petr (1868–1950) was elected on 8th January 1903. Its proposal for transferring Petr's habilitation from the Czech polytechnic in Brno to Prague was unanimously accepted at the meeting of the faculty on 29th January. We cannot exclude the possibility that the speed with which the habilitation was completed was also influenced by Pexider's obstinacy with which he urged his own affair.

Studnička died on 21st February; the lectures, seminars and proseminar exercises were assigned to Karel Petr at the meeting of professors on 12th March. On 18th July, the professors unanimously accepted the nomination of Karel Petr for extraordinary professor of mathematics as well as the director of mathematical seminar and proseminar. This promotion indeed took place on 28th August.

In the beginning of the 20th century, after a lengthy effort, there seemed to be a possibility of establishing a second mathematics professorship at the Faculty of Philosophy. The ministry declared (based on the proposal of the Czech university from 1902) willingness to nominate Eduard Weyr for ordinary professor since 1st October 1903, and to commission him with the organization of a second mathematical seminar. Nevertheless, Eduard Weyr died in July 1903.

Since autumn 1903, the extraordinary professor Karel Petr became completely responsible for the mathematics education at the Faculty of Philosophy. The situation again needed to be solved urgently. On 29th October 1903, the professors elected a committee (consisting of Kolářček, Gruss, Petr) which prepared the necessary documents to be submitted to the ministry. The committee nominated Jan Sobotka, a professor of the polytechnic in Brno, for the vacant chair. Matyáš Lerch, a professor of the university in Fribourg (Switzerland), was nominated for the second professorship, should it be constituted.

Matyáš Lerch tried to support his professorship application in Vienna. In his letter to the ministry, he sent not only his biography and a list of his publications, but also the transcript of letters which he received from Prague, and which were concerned with Pexider's attacks on Weyr's textbook. In these letters written in 1902, he was asked by Ed. Weyr as the author and by Čeněk Strouhal as the president of the Union of Czech Mathematicians to defend the textbook in *Časopis pro pěstování matematiky a fyziky*. Lerch complied with their request, while Pexider reproached him for that.

Lerch intended to take advantage of the fact that all three addressed him as a great authority, and thus wanted to support his nomination. However, the ministry sent the documents to Prague, where they aroused embitterment among the professors. It's no wonder; Pexider's letter to Lerch from 12th December 1902 reads:

After the first brochure concerning the book of Prof. Weyr, I allow myself to send you also this counter-response, although in the meanwhile, you have condemned me in the treatise which appeared in Časopis. I am aware that I was condemned unjustly, and it hurts even more as it is written by you, whom I held in great esteem, even if I haven't met you personally, for your fundamental mathematical works.

My public opposition against Prof. Weyr had more weighty reasons, as is perhaps clear, and I hope it will be once acknowledged. Almost a year ago, you yourself, professor, have notified me in your letter about your meaning concerning the local circumstances, and stated that they need a radical intervention; that evoked in me a great respect. That's why I'm not going to send any reply to Časopis, just a protest, so that I won't be forced to enter a polemic with someone whom I consider the greatest Czech and one of the most prominent world mathematicians. Dear Professor, these lines are by no means a flattery, you would have hurt me if you thought that, it should be just a sincere expression of my feelings after having suffered injustice. Please, devote kindly a few minutes of your precious time to my counter-response.²²

Lerch denied his contacts with Pexider, e.g. in his letter to Emil Frída (the poet J. Vrchlický) from 12th October 1903:

There is a rumor circulating among some members of your faculty that the well-known Pexider's attack against Weyr's Differential calculus took place on my suggestion or under my leadership. Although this rumor is in a harsh discrepancy with the well-known fact that, according to the wish of certain persons, I had published an unbiased report regarding that book under my name

in Časopis, that the report was written in positive wording and refuted Pexider's objections, I consider it necessary to ask your Eminence as the dean of the Faculty of Philosophy to acknowledge this statement:

I don't know Dr. Pexider personally, I had no written correspondence concerning Weyr's writing with him directly or indirectly, and I consider everyone who would allege the opposite as morally obliged to present a proof.

Due to the fact that Dr. Pexider is currently applying for habilitation at the Czech polytechnic, no difficulties can prevent the investigation of the real state of affairs.

*In hope that your Eminence will possibly use this statement in my own defense...*²²

The committee members expressed their regret that they had to occupy themselves with Lerch's correspondence, demurred at his behavior, and stated that Lerch's return to the Czech university became more difficult. It seems that the committee supposed that the ministry wouldn't establish the second professorship immediately, Lerch would be out of the game, and the professorship will be granted to K. Petr. And that indeed happened. The second professorship was established in 1908, and Karel Petr was appointed ordinary professor of the Faculty of Philosophy.

The issue of mathematics professorships at the Czech university in the beginning of the 20th century is discussed in greater detail in the paper of J. Mandlerová *K příchodu J. Sobotky na českou universitu v r. 1904* [Ma], which is based on the study of archive documents.

Let us return to Pexider's destinies. On 10th September 1903, shortly after the death of Eduard Weyr, Pexider asked the Ministry of Cult and Education to take him into consideration when filling vacant posts at institutions of higher learning. Apart from biographical facts, he also summarized his publications; he noted the dispute with Weyr, which *took an acrid form from the side of Prof. Weyr*, and noted that he carried on his educational visits abroad solely at his own expense. He probably took pains to support his request by personal interventions.

The ministry referred his request to the Czech Faculty of Philosophy on 3rd October 1903. On 29th October, it was passed to the committee responsible for submitting the proposal for granting the ordinary professorship in mathematics (Kolářek, Gruss and Petr). The committee concluded the matter on 4th January 1904 noting that Pexider's *... scientific qualification, as compared with the ones of Sobotka and Lerch, inevitably recedes into the background*. On 14th January, the professors unanimously decided not to take Pexider's request into account, which was acknowledged by the ministry on 19th February. The decision was subsequently communicated to Pexider.

On 5th July 1904, the academic senate of the Czech polytechnic was discussing Pexider's request to permit his habilitation at this school. Prof. Karel Pelz (1845–1908) reminded Pexider's controversy with Eduard Weyr, the rejected application for his habilitation at the university, and suggested to reject his application with regard to the sixth paragraph of the habilitation rules. Prof. Josef Šolín (1841–1912) opposed this suggestion.

*Prof. Šolín cannot join the proposal of Prof. K. Pelz. He sincerely regrets the polemic between the candidate and the immortalized Privy Councillor Weyr, and cannot approve it. But it seems to note that even a worm will turn when trodden upon. Even elsewhere, there exist polemics which transcend the proper boundaries. Thus it won't be desirable to punish a young promising man for his hastiness in such a cruel manner. Professor Šolín wishes the candidate's scientific abilities to be comprehensively examined, and submits a proposal to pass the matter to the habilitation committee.*²³

Professors Gabriel Blažek (1842–1910) and Julius Stoklasa (1857–1936) had similar opinion. However, the majority voted for Pelz's proposal, and thus rejected Pexider's request.

In the beginning of the 20th century, the issue of habilitations was often debated. The following citations, which are quoted from the periodical *Přehled* and from the booklet of Kamil Lhoták (1876–1926), Czech physician and pharmacologist, professor and head of the Pharmacology institute in Prague, serve as examples.

At the Czech university, the habilitation represents the first and safe step towards university career: A docent only has to sit tight until being nominated for professorship. Consequently, the habilitations are limited, so that in every discipline, only those candidates are accepted who have prospects to become professors in the foreseeable future. Then, of course, an untimely death of a professor and every unexpected personal change can lead to the orphanation of the whole scientific discipline.

(*Přehled* 1 (1902–03), p. 630, no. 39 from 29th August 1903)

Habilitations of new docents are even more important for the future of the university than appointing assistant professors, since an incompetent docent almost always means an incompetent professor, while rejecting a qualified applicant means certainly a ruined scientific existence...

There is usually no secrecy as concerns habilitation procedure. It won't be even possible, taking into account the numerous assembly of people and the intensive interest displayed, as a rule, by the candidate. A multi-member committee works out a content report concerning the submitted publications. The professors accept the proposal of the committee, and the ministry in turn accepts the professors' proposal. In case of such a smooth procedure, it is formal accuracy that is most decisive.

The strict form of the habilitation rules becomes menacing for the rejected candidates. The habilitation procedure remains an official secret, at least in the sense that the candidate has no right to enforce his objections – because he shouldn't know the content of the official report. If he decides, after all, to defend himself in the only possible way, i.e. in a public appearance, he will worsen the situation for good. For sure, he will exasperate all the official counsels of the secret habilitation procedure, and eventually also the unprejudiced opponents. Even though he has the possibility to appeal to the ministry, this possibility concerns only the form of the habilitation and not the content of the committee's report. The ministry (according to the decree from 18th January

1869) acts as an advocate of the committee's report against the protesting applicants. Here, even the strongest arguments of the protesting are useless – as we have witnessed for several times.

(K. Lhoták: *Práce přírodovědecká a její organizace u nás*, Prague 1907, 24 pages, pp. 14–16)

During the period 1897–1903, Pexider appears on the list of members of the Union of Czech Mathematicians as a *candidate professor in Prague* (or *in Paris* during 1898–99), contributing 4 crowns per year. During 1903–04, he is listed as *Dr. Pexider Jan in Prague* among the members contributing 8 crowns per year. His membership in the Union ended that year.²⁴

In the years 1903 and 1904, Pexider acted as an external worker (in insurance mathematics) in the central office of the Foncière insurance company in Prague.

On 4th January 1905, he applied for habilitation in the branch of number theory at the Faculty of Philosophy of the cantonal university in Bern, which was founded in 1834 (incorporating also the Faculty of Theology founded in 1528). He supplemented the application by his works [P12], [P6], [P10], [P11], [P13] and [P9a] (in this order), and as a habilitation thesis he offered the treatise *Über die zahlentheoretische Funktion $\mathcal{E}(x)$, die Gauss mit $[x]$ bezeichnet hatte* (this treatise was later published, maybe in a modified form, as [P18]). Pexider didn't mention his unsuccessful habilitation attempts in Prague neither in his application nor in the enclosed biography.

In February 1905, he indeed became a privatdocent of higher mathematics at the university in Bern. On 25th February, he delivered a trial lecture at the meeting of the 2nd section of the Faculty of Philosophy, and took part in a colloquium. His habilitation was unanimously recommended by the faculty, and three days later, Pexider received *venia docendi* in mathematics, especially in number theory.²⁵

In this period, Pexider became member of the local natural science society; his membership lasted from 1905 to 1908.²⁶ His contacts with home were limited to the correspondence with Eduard Babák and to the periodical *Přehled*, which he was receiving regularly, and which had published a note on his habilitation in Bern.²⁷ However, it is probable that the publication of the note was arranged by Pexider himself.

The habilitation of a Czech mathematician Dr. J. V. Pexider at the university in Bern, Switzerland, is an event which casts a strange light on our scientific conditions.

Mathematics is being cultivated at the Bern university; the lectures are delivered by three ordinary and two extraordinary mathematics professors (compare with the poor representation at the Czech university, which is large compared to the one in Bern). The habilitation of Dr. Pexider is an evident acknowledgment of his scientific ability. Thus it is beyond doubt that his rejection at the Czech university as well as the polytechnic didn't happen because of scientific and factual reasons. – It is a very sad phenomenon that in our country, good young workers are, as the past years have shown, suppressed because of personal and often quite paltry motives; on the other hand, average people, who

suit the needs of the individuals and coteries among the professors, are allowed to enter the habilitation process without any protests. It is grim to imagine the state of our colleges in ten or twenty years. – And this happens at the time when it is so much spoken about a second university!

(Přehled 3 (1904/5), 462, no. 26 from 25th March 1905)

Pexider used to read the periodical in detail, glossed it in his letters, and tried to contribute to it. In June and July 1905, *Přehled* published his two short contributions, *Neúčast české vědy v mezinárodní organizaci vědecké práce* (The absence of the Czech science in the international organization of scientific work), and *Rektor Woker o univerzitě v Praze a v Bernu* (Rector Woker on the university in Prague and Bern) ([P20] and [P21]). The author's acrimony and aggressivity is apparent in both articles.

As follows from his letters, he liked walking in the open and enjoyed mountains, forests, lakes and glaciers. He visited Prague only rarely (e.g. in the spring and autumn 1905); he was probably in Nice from the end of February to the end of April 1906.

Pexider's paper *Fundamentale Beziehung zwischen den Prämien der Lebens-, Invaliden- und Todesfallversicherung* [P14] was published in the journal of the Swiss statistical society in 1905. It is the first of the three Pexider's works devoted to insurance mathematics.

In a letter to E. Babák from 19th June 1907, Pexider writes on his teaching duties in Bern:

Since 1905, February, I am a docent of the Bern university, and I have lectured for 3 semesters; 1st semester 3 hours per week, 2nd semester 5 hours per week, 3rd semester 7 hours per week.

This concerns the summer semester 1904/05 and the school year 1905/06. In the next year 1906/07, Pexider asked for vacation; he went to Munich, as follows from his letter to Eduard Babák. There he devoted himself probably to the study of insurance mathematics, as he later stated.

On 29th June 1905, a manifestation meeting of the Czech university students for establishing a second university in Brno took place in Klementinum (Prague). F. Hodáč,²⁸ a law student, criticized in his speech (among other things) the practice of the professors of the Faculty of Philosophy in the case of Dr. Pexider. The vice-rector Strouhal defended the case stating that *the habilitation rejection was unanimously based on an expert report; that he succeeded with the habilitation elsewhere might be due to his better qualification at later time...* A report on the event was published in the newspaper *Národní listy* and also in *Přehled*, with subsequent discussion concerning also the Pexider case.²⁹ Pexider responded in a letter published in *Přehled* (see [P22]).

On 12th July 1905, Pexider sent an open letter to Prof. Strouhal, and two days later he submitted a copy of this letter to E. Babák for a possible publication in *Přehled*.

Honorable Privy Councillor!

I have learned from no. 41 of the weekly Přebled that you, Privy Councillor, have claimed two untruths about me in my absence at the public meeting of university students. You know very well that the first rejection of my habilitation application was not unanimous, and that the second was based on § 6 of the habilitation rules, i.e. that for the second time, I was rejected from personal reasons, not for an insufficient qualification, as you have wittingly suggested in your speech. Because of this completely gratuitous humiliation from your side, I ask you politely, Privy Councillor, for a public retraction of both untruths by simply stating the truth. My respect towards you goes so far that I am going to wait until the next meeting of university students; in the opposite case, I will defend my honor in a foreign journal, even to the shame – regrettably – of the names of the Czech university professors.

Yours faithfully, Dr. J. Pexider

On 19th July 1905, Pexider writes to E. Babák again. First, he depicts how the dean Raýman rigged the proceedings of the professors meeting when voting on his habilitation, and then he writes about his feelings in Bern:

... I know from the words of the court vicepresident Řipka, my relative, that Prof. Strouhal told him that he can secure only a minority for me (for the second time), not a majority; that Prof. Raýman, as a dean, suggested rejection a limine, that Brauner, Vrba etc. agreed, that a majority voted for it, and a minority did not. Hence Prof. Raýman asked, "Who votes against the majority opinion?" And because nobody raised his hand, Raýman ordered to write down "unanimity".

Nevertheless, those who haven't voted in either way, needn't have agreed with him (and they didn't, I know the names). But, say it in public! They are able to deny everything.

... But how is everything petty against the conditions that I now live in. I am ceasing to understand the hell-raising in Prague. My desire not to return to Prague anymore, to stay within people and not to go back within half-rapacious savages, grows stronger. And I wish this from my soul to eventually happen... To write in Czech – ?! I had a great fun reading a lengthy confabulation concerning the expediency or in expediency of Czech scientific treatises. For everyone who has something worthwhile, it is best to go into the world; the one who is still searching and creating something should better write in Czech, and announce to the world only if he finds the core. Those whose writings are paltry must stay in Bohemia; the world wouldn't have accepted it. There were so many deep wisdoms! – Don't resent me; I consider the Czechism somewhat "g'spassig"...

The conditions in Prague show that a terrible purge will be necessary before improvement becomes possible. An apparent fear of confident learners speaks from Strouhal, as well as from almost all of our scholars. They have no idea that abroad, a professor doesn't conceal that he doesn't know everything; and that's why he tries to find the best teachers so that together, they would know everything. Our professor knows everything and understands everything; pupils

can believe him that, but not the students. Thus, be pupils, or restrained! And outsiders, get out. – This will proceed slowly...

In December 1905, *Přehled* published Pexider's paper *Zbytek inkvisice* (The rest of inquisition) [P23]. The text heavily criticizes the Austrian habilitation rules.

Up to the present day, there remains a suspicion that the rules have been created at a moment when the one-sided ministerial glasses were pink-tinged: Not only the future of science, but also the future of science-eager young people has been passed, without any possibility to protest, into the hands of venerable, state-paid researchers.

... even an autonomous scientific institution, if uncontrolled by reliable public, can become a self-styled absolutism of a few people, who increase their number from themselves and the circles of their henchmen...

Regulations such as § 6 of the Austrian habilitation rules, which leave even people who have satisfied all the law-prescribed requirements... at the mercy of arbitrariness and personal ambitions of a random group of individuals... degenerate into an official protector of scientific augury and haughtiness of those who, because of their petty conceit or fear of their own scientific qualification being inspected, can't stand other cultivators of the same field than blindly devoted slaves.

Under the leadership of a committee, whose reports are secret, with the installed practice that the meetings must be kept in secret, so that the candidate under consideration is absent and cannot defend himself neither against poor denunciation nor against an untrue bordereau – in such a case, the judgement of the faculty, irresponsible of their deeds, can change into a coward inquisition...

It will be in favor of the Czech academic circles if the mentioned paragraph is put right before the Austrian habilitation rules, as well as the vice hidden under it, is noticed in the world.

On 6th February 1906, Pexider writes to Babák again:

*... I don't want to say goodbye to *Přehled*, since one sometimes really needs a journal which grants him a few lines if he has to defend himself – and in my case it is almost certain that I will need them. The threat in “*Zbytek inkvisice*” will not end up in vain. I have secured two foreign journals, and I will bring those Prague “*Mercièrs and Henrys*” to justice before wide public for their bordereau and condemnation.³⁰ But I am going to delay this campaign until you're back in Prague...*

On 14th June 1906, Pexider writes again to Babák, who is in then Paris. He recalls his stay in Paris in 1899. A long letter indicates his bad mental state:

... From the lines of your February letter, I have picked up much too well that I have saddened you; forgive me, please, frankly – I use to be in an odd mood, as if the world irked me. And then it is difficult to control oneself...

And if you somehow remember me in Paris, do not compare them with the bum, who had seen everything there in his youth, didn't learn anything for life

from them, and who now soaks his pen to write about past, as a plaster for the present which he doesn't know how to live.

On 21st June 1906, Pexider wrote a letter to the prime minister Beck, in which he asked him to put through the publication of Weyr's report from 3rd March 1902 in order to make verification of its truth preferably by foreign experts or by court. The answer was written by minister Pacák, who had stated that he couldn't comply with Pexider's request; that's why in July and September, Pexider asked the Czech political representatives in the Vienna imperial council to submit a proposal to the parliament which would authorize the government to make the report public. He describes his plan to Babák on 8th August 1906. Again, he criticizes the conditions in Prague:

... In case the "Academy" is renewed by younger ones who will vote for Petr, Nušl, Kučera etc., nothing will change. The polytechnic, too, has become younger due to a new power, Mr. Vaněček, as a docent. There used to be scientific nobodies there, but now it is shifting to mathematical minuses. But a new hedge against Swiss heretics goes beyond all qualification differences!...

In autumn, I am going to start the battle which I have notified you about in February. During spring, I secured the aid of foreign journals in Bern, Zurich, Munich, Frankfurt and Vienna, and I was waiting for the reviews of my four papers from 1903, whose Czech version was critized by † Weyr. The reviews, written by Berlin experts, appeared in "Fortschritte der Math. für d. J. 1903" in 1906; my papers have been found completely correct and new in content. Consequently, in June, I submitted a request to the prime minister asking him to offer the Prague review to the public or to the court, and I also notified Dr. Pacák. When he communicated to me that, according to a certain decree, the minister of education isn't authorized to do that, I announced to Dr. Pacák that in autumn, I am going to submit a well-documented request to the imperial parliamentary clubs in Vienna to authorize the government to release the Prague bordereau. At the same time, I am going to offer the parliament several proofs of unusual consenescence of Weyr's writings published lately by the Czech Academy. Then I asked Dr. Pacák to arrange that the Czech club submits the corresponding proposal; otherwise, it will be submitted by a foreign party.

On 20th July, I communicated everything to Prof. Mareš, and asked him to keep his protecting hand on me when the uproar starts and the Czech bitches pounce on me. I received no answer from him, but as I sent the letter by registered post, I take his silence as consent. – If I were wrong, will you notify me, please.

The imperial council's meeting will take place in September, and I plan to carry out my first attack in Munich. I hope that the Austrian parliament will engage itself in the matter, even if just of Skandalsucht, since the participants will be accused directly of falsification of the truth and of other vices. Before that, I intend to awake interest in the matter with help of foreign journals. This time I won't surrender, even if it goes to court; I took vacation for the winter semester to be free even for a longer stay in Vienna.

In September and October 1906, Pexider fiercely exacts Weyr's letter from 1902, which authorized him to see the report, from Prof. Zubatý.³¹

In the meanwhile, Pexider's letter from 21st June 1906 had been passed to the university. With respect to an unanimous standpoint of the professors from 25th October, the faculty offices didn't recommend the acceptance of Pexider's request. A letter for the ministry was drafted by Prof. Strouhal (who was commissioned by the dean F. Drtina on 7th August). Among other things, he stated that

- Pexider didn't use the possibility of a recourse to the ministry in any single case,
- after the public conflict with Weyr, *he lost almost all sympathy and discredited himself*,
- the violent polemic between Pexider and Weyr *ceased after Prof. Weyr's death, and since that time, the Czech scientific world had no reason to occupy themselves with Dr. Pexider, and of course, there was no such thing as foul vituperation mentioned by Dr. Pexider*,
- Pexider's letter contained numerous invectives against the professors and aroused embitterment among them.

Strouhal concluded the letter by writing that

... the faculty offices chose to take no action, being convinced that the ministry itself, when attending to the letter, is going to disclaim the arrogant expressions of Dr. Pexider appropriately.

In the beginning of 1907, Pexider is still in Munich. On 1st January, he writes a letter to the emperor; he asks for a revision of his habilitation and for protection and justice. He describes the progress of events concerning his attempts for habilitation since 1901. Among other things, he states that after the rejection of his recourse from 19th June 1902, he wanted to discuss Weyr's report with several professors, but he was always answered that *everything what the referee says must be right, and so there was nothing left to him than to point out the harmfulness of this blind faith of the Czech mathematical community in authority, and to write a treatise concerning the recently published scientific work of Prof. Weyr*. He writes that *after having exposed this grand plagiarism, he had to face a brazen manhunt, which had its beginning in the imprecated Odpověď...*, although he only *honestly discovered a great theft of intellectual property, and thus he offered, on behalf of the honest part of the Czech nation, a necessary satisfaction to the injured foreign scholars*. He complains that he was *infamously disgraced, expelled from his homeland, and criticized during a public meeting on 29th June 1905 by Prof. Strouhal and later also in the press*.

On 18th February 1907, Pexider wrote a second letter to the emperor, in which he further supplemented the information from the previous letter. He emphasizes his scientific qualification (positive reviews in *Jahrbuch über die Fortschritte der Mathematik* and citations of his results in the German encyclopedia of mathematical sciences). He again expresses himself on Weyr's report from 1902.

During the end of February, the dean Sobotka notified Pexider that his request for Weyr's report from 1902 was rejected. Subsequently, on 1st March 1907, Pexider wrote a letter to the ministry; its content was similar to the one sent on 18th February to the emperor.

On 5th April 1907, the ministry passed Pexider's three letters (from 1st January, 18th February and 1st March) and a minister's directive to the dean's office of the Faculty of Philosophy. According to the directive, Pexider should be notified that he can apply for habilitation at the Czech Faculty of Philosophy again. The matter was discussed at the meeting of professors on 2nd May 1907, and a five-member committee (Koláček, Sobotka, Petr, Raýman, Strouhal) was established to judge the matter. In his extensive report from the 4th July 1907 (7 pages), Karel Petr starts by judging the scientific qualification of Pexider, and then evaluates Weyr's report from 1902 once again. He concludes that Pexider's statements *are almost without exception false*, and that

... the objectives of Dr. Pexider against the habilitation report of Prof. Weyr are quite groundless, and that Dr. Pexider failed to refute or even weaken the main as well as the subsidiary admonitions; actually, the objections of Dr. Pexider are of such a nature that they confirm Weyr's conclusion concerning the scientific qualification of Dr. Pexider once again.

On the same day, the five-member committee accepted Weyr's report from 1902 unanimously, and, with regard to Petr's report, arrived at the conclusion that it would recommend to reject Pexider's prospective application for habilitation.

As the committee members are unable to reconcile their opinions on scientific and moral principles of a normal university teacher with the behavior of Dr. Pexider in mathematics and scientific community in the past years, ... it suggests ... that the dean ... should append a note that Pexider's prospective application for habilitation at our faculty will be rejected immediately with respect to § 6 of the habilitation rules.

After the approval of other professors on 4th July, the conclusion was sent to Bern on 10th July; Pexider received it on 21st July.

On 27th July 1907, the dean Sobotka returns the three Pexider's letters to the ministry and communicates the following. He doesn't know Pexider personally and has never seen him. After he orientated himself in the matter, he gained conviction that the conclusion was most objective and right. He explains that he couldn't communicate the answer from the ministry to Pexider, but had to ask professors for their opinion. The five-member committee considered the whole matter closely, so that the ministry could acquire a perfect judgment concerning the scientific activities and behavior of Dr. Pexider, and, in case it will have to deal with this uncomfortable case, to be able to have the whole matter examined by a noncommitted expert. The ministry acknowledged Sobotka's letter on 10th August.

At that time, Pexider still remained in Munich. On 19th June 1907, he wrote to Babák:

Already in winter 1905/6, I arranged with Prof. Lerch orally in Fribourg that I will not apply for professorship in Brno, and he will in turn propose me as a successor of himself. "If I propose something, it's like a rock falling!" I kept my promise and didn't apply, even if there was also a strong opposition to him, so that I could have already succeeded the last year. Being full of hope, I congratulated him after his nomination, and asked him to recommend me as his successor immediately. A card arrived from him: I am sorry, I won't be consulted; I fell out with these idiots. Appeal to Prof. Gráf, he will help you. I wish you good luck! – Tableau! I got an answer from Fribourg that they would not fill the vacant professor chair, or only since 1907/8. – When I learned that Prof. Blažek is willing to retire, I wrote again to Prof. Lerch: I will do everything to bring you to Prague; please, nominate me to your place. He answered: I would have a chance – but I don't aspire to get to Prague. Nevertheless, I wrote to Chalupný to mention Lerch in Přehled, hoping that if Lerch eventually gets to Prague, he will help me to Brno. Dr. Chalupný didn't answer. – So I went to Prague. I told you almost everything orally. In Prague, I learned from Prof. Pánek that neither he nor Prof. Blažek are going to nominate Lerch. "A bad character, he cheated on both of us..."

A week ago, I received a card from Prof. Lerch, answering my letter from March, that he would communicate important facts to me if he had my postal address. I answered by return mail, and asked him directly whether he would go to Prague and nominate me to Brno. The answer arrived three days ago: Go to Fribourg, flatter the women; the one has a daughter, the other has a daughter as well; they are the gods of Fribourg. "You will win through." Not a word concerning Brno or aspiration to Prague. Only: "In Prague, I could (!) be perhaps (!) more beneficial to you than I am here; since if they see that I won't stifle you, then the opposition against you will probably (!) cease (!)" ...

I will always honor his prestige – but whenever I recall our arrangement in Fribourg, I remember the German proverb "Nichts verdirbt den Charakter so sehr, als Beleidigungen unerwidert ertragen zu müssen." He was suffering in Fribourg for 10 years, as I have seen and heard with my own ears when I visited him the last year and the year before. The humiliation must have had consequences. Prof. Stoklasa himself claims: "He is the greatest cynic that I know."

... Last week, I was invited by the rector of the Vienna university, Dr. Meyer-Lübke, to participate in the congress of German university professors in Salzburg on 8th September. I accepted the invitation and announced my theme: § 6 of the habilitation rules and its misuse by the Prague faculty.

On 28th July 1907, a week after receiving the communication concerning the definitive rejection of his habilitation at the Faculty of Philosophy, Pexider writes another letter from Munich to Babák. Its content indicates that he is losing his judiciousness even more:

On 17th July, I wrote to Dr. Chalupný and asked him to publish the following note in "Přehled":

Professor Pánek, who is already in the possession of two professor chairs

at the polytechnic, mathematics for engineers and mathematics for chemists, is now applying for a third professorship. We were shocked by the message that, “for the meantime”, Prof. Pánek was entrusted to substitute for Privy Councillor Blažek, who is going to retire. Since there are persons whose qualification greatly surpasses the scientific value of Prof. Pánek, who are famous abroad, and who are ready to renounce their posts and to take over the vacant professorship, we hope that all modest Czech people, still possessing a spark of decency and conscience, will prevent unanimously the definitive take-over of three systematic chairs by a single, still-ailing and physically impossible power, and that they will instead enforce that the vacant place be filled by one of the most qualified Czech mathematicians, whose scientific works have gained reputation for our homeland abroad.

We also notify the public that, after numerous sacrifices, the Prague institutions of higher learning had been fought out in Vienna thanks to the whole nation, and thus belong to the property of the nation, not to the domain of a few stingy hoarders. We hope that our note will disturb the lethargy not only of the responsible circles, but also of all honest people, who aren't indifferent to the ability of our engineers, and that it will in flagranti hinder the prostitution of science at one of our foremost national institutes.

Dr. Chalupný didn't answer, didn't publish the note. ...

... In case the bluster of the Prague gang against me continues, I'll become exactly the same cynic as Lerch; it is a psychologically inevitable ending. ...

I also wish to inform you about the latest crookishness of the Faculty of Philosophy; in reaction to my request to the government and the emperor for a revision of the habilitation act from 1902, the government issued a decree (on 5th April 1907) certifying that I can submit the application for docendi again, and that a new proceedings and consideration of my [works?] will take place. The decree was sent to the Faculty of Philosophy, which informed me as late as on 21st June, together with a resolution that, despite the decree, each new application for habilitation will be a limine rejected. This famous resolution was accepted on 4th July 1907. I have nothing to add. But I think that this vandalism entitles me to everything, and I will act correspondingly.

...

I will remain here, I dislike going to Bohemia. I plan to make longer trips in the Tirol and Salzburg Alps. ...

The periodical *Přehled* didn't publish Pexider's note concerning A. Pánek. It criticized the situation in mathematics education at the Prague polytechnic, but only much later.³²

Four Pexider's papers were published in 1907; two of them are devoted to insurance mathematics ([P16] and [P17]), the other two ([P15] and [P18]) to analytic number theory. His last publication is the work *Über Potenzreste* [P19], which appeared in 1909. However, it was written in 1906 (as well as [P15] and [P17]), while [P18] is from 1907. The work [P16] is undated.

In winter semester 1907/08, Pexider was registered as an extraordinary student of the faculty of law of the German university in Prague.

On 18th June 1908, he asked for an extension of his habilitation at the Faculty of Philosophy in Bern to include insurance mathematics.

Der unterzeichnete Dozent... ersucht... um eine Erweiterung seiner venia docendi für Mathematik, die ihm bisher nur für die Zahlentheorie verliehen war, auf die Versicherungsmathematik und zwar auf die Invalidenversicherung.

To support his request, he enclosed his works [P14], [P16] and [P17]. Among other things, he stated that he devoted himself to the study of insurance mathematics, general insurance science, economic policy and statistics during his studies in Prague, Vienna, Paris and Göttingen, that he calculated new premium tables for the Foncière insurance company in the years 1902–4 and 1907, and that in winter 1907/8, he participated in processing the balance of the pension fund of the Austrian northern railway, and in determining the reserves of the Austrian state insurance institute for private officials. He also mentioned that he was able to deliver a yet unpublished paper *Die unterjährigen Praemien der Versicherungsrechnung* with the corresponding tables.

His request was approved on 6th July (with the duration of four semesters, starting from the next winter). Pexider thanked for the extension of his habilitation on 5th September. He announced that his insurance lectures would take place in summer semester 1908/09. At the same time, he asks for a vacation in winter semester 1908/09, because he intends to study law in Austria. Two days later, the vacation was granted by the university directorate.

We have no other information on Pexider; he was no longer registered at the faculty of law. It seems plausible that he terminated the employment in Bern because of his state of health (and didn't lecture in summer semester 1908/09 anymore). After 1908, he is no longer a member of the local scientific society.

On 11th August 1913, Pexider was hospitalized in a psychiatric asylum in Kateřinky (Prague 2, no. 460); before that, he was in a convalescent home in Krč, and it is said the he was trying to escape from there. Jan Vilém Pexider died in the asylum on 4th November 1914, not having reached his forties; a priest B. Helebrant visited him already on 17th September 1914. The obituary refers to his last employment (a secretary at *Breitfeld, Daněk & comp.*) and residence (Prague – Žižkov, Libušina 4/15 – now Kubelíkova). He was buried in the family tomb at the cemetery in Olšany on 7th November. His brother Josef donated the books from the decedent's property to the library of the Union of Czech Mathematicians.³³

NOTES

- 1) An extensive family tree of the Pexiders was compiled by MUDr. K. Pokorný in Protivín in 1942.
In 1878, the paper *Národní listy* published an advertisement for DAVIDOVO TĚ (David's tea) and HOŘKÝ VINNÝ NÁPOJ (bitter wine beverage) of J. Pexider (against cough, catarrh, body weakness, tuberculosis) – e.g. on 13th, 20th and 27th January, on 2nd and 21st February.
Jan Pexider, a mathematics professor in Zagreb – see *Věstník JČMF* 1 (1873), no. 1, p. 5, no. 4, p. 35, 41, 50, 51; 2 (1874), no. 1, pp. 2, 13–14. Three of his Zagreb letters from the period 1868–69 are in LA PNP (collection M. Hattala).
- 2) K. J. N. Balling and his son C. A. M. Balling – see *Ottův slovník naučný*, A. Velflík: *Dějiny technického učení v Praze* (pp. 210, 254, 383–386, 519, 532–533 etc.), F. Jílek and V. Lomič: *Dějiny ČVUT* (pp. 313–314, 427–431 etc.), L. Nový et al.: *Dějiny exaktních věd v českých zemích* etc.
- 3) J. O. Lerch – see *Ottův slovník naučný*, L. Nový: *Dějiny exaktních věd v českých zemích*, *Časopis pro průmysl chemický* 2 (1892), 147–177 (A. Bělohoubek states that Lerch was *the first Czech who cultivated chemistry using a scientific method*), *Listy chemické* 16 (1892), 218–219 (B. Raýman writes: *It is to be heartily regretted that a man of such qualities didn't become a teacher of the Czech youth in scientific chemistry, that he didn't come closer to our nation, so much grateful to him. He was a Czech of an older generation, but he kept track of our scientific development, and brought up Czech sons, one of them being an artist with great reputation, while the other one is a diligent chemist.*), *Světozor* 26 (1892), 204 etc.
The birth of Marie J. Lerchová, Josef O. Lerch and Jindřich Lerch as well as the marriage of Josef Balling and M. J. Lerchová – see the register of the Roman-Catholic parish in Nepomuk: The birth record vol. 18, pp. 69, 74, 102; the marriage record vol. 18, p. 26 (SOBA Plzeň).
Lev Lerch – see *Ottův slovník naučný*, P. Toman: *Malý slovník čs. výtvarných umělců*, *Světozor* 21 (1887), 414; 26 (1892), 309 (a photo); 30 (1896), 336 (an article *Hanačka*) etc.
- 4) The birth of Karel G. B. Balling – see the birth record of the Roman-Catholic parish in Rapšach, 1829–76, the municipality of Nová Ves u Klikova and Františkov, section Františkov, p. 15 (SOBA in Třeboň). For his death, see the death record of the parish of St. Ludmila in Prague, Z VII, 1913–20, p. 5 (ObÚ Prague 1, Vodičkova 18).
- 5) The marriage of Karel G. B. Balling and Marie Anna Ellenbergerová – see the marriage record of the parish in Jičín, no. 3354 from the period 1844–81, p. 386 (SOBA Zámorsk).

The death of Marie Anna Ellenbergerová – see the death record of the parish in Duchcov, sign. 36/9, p. 46 (SOBA Litoměřice).

The second wife of Karel Balling was Alexandrina Limbecková (1851–1936); their marriage took place in the church of St. Vojtěch in Prague on 15th August 1877.

- 6) The birth of Melanie Ballingová – see the birth record of the parish in Duchcov, sign. 36/9, p. 46 (SOBA Litoměřice).
- 7) The birth of the three Pexider brothers – see the birth records of the Roman-Catholic parish church of St. Cyril and Metoděj in Karlín: 1872–1875, sign. KAR N 9, fol. 171, 322; 1875–1878, sign. KAR N 10, n. pag. (Prague City Archives). The mathematician Pexider is listed as Jan Nepomuk Vilím; in his adult age, he wrote himself in Czech as Jan or Jan Vilém.

The death of Kašpar Pexider, his son Jan and his wife Vilemína and their son Karel – see the death records of the Roman-Catholic parish church of St. Cyril and Metoděj in Karlín, 1867–1875, sign. KAR Z 3, fol. 221; 1875–1887, sign. KAR Z 4, n. pag.; the death record of the Roman-Catholic parish church of St. Václav in Smíchov, 1886–1892, sign. SM Z 15, fol. 291 (Prague City Archives).

- 8) See ČPMF 22 (1893), pp. 215–216 (Pexider's solution of the 3rd problem), 221, 288, 352. Pexider's younger brother Josef, a pupil of the 7th grade of the same secondary school (gymnasium), was also among the problem solvers – see ČPMF 24 (1895), 156, 265–266 (his solution of the 25th problem is published there), 342.
- 9) The information on Pexider's studies at the Faculty of Philosophy of the university in Prague have been gathered from the materials deposited in the Archive of UK (*Katalogy posluchačů české a německé univerzity, Protokoly schůzí profesorského sboru FF 1882–1901*, cardboard no. 1, *Rigorosa I, FF, 1882–1915, Posudky disertačních prací FF, 1898–1906*, cardboard no. 106, etc.).

The materials concerning Pexider's habilitation attempts which are cited in the following pages (if not stated otherwise) – see *Habilitační žádosti FF 1898–1939*, cardboard no. 131, i. no. 1348 (Archive of UK); among other things, Pexider's volume contains: Pexider's application for habilitation from 16th April 1901, Weyr's report from 3rd March 1902, Studnička's dissenting opinion from 5th March 1902, the letter from the office of the Czech governor to the faculty concerning Pexider's scholarship application from 2nd October 1901, Weyr's statement from 7th January 1902, Gruss' statements from 20th and 23rd January 1902, voting records from 3rd November 1901 and 3st January 1902, communications to the ministry concerning Pexider's scholarship and habilitation from 10th and 26th March 1902, Gegenbauer's letter to Ed. Weyr, Pexider's request for a new review of his habilitation from 19th June 1902, Weyr's report from 4th July 1902, Pexider's habilitation application from 2nd June 1903, Pexider's application for a job

from 10th September 1903, Pexider's letter to the prime minister from 21st June 1906, the answer of the faculty offices from 30th October 1906, Pexider's letters to the emperor from 1st January and 18th February 1907, Pexider's letter to the ministry from 1st March 1907, Petr's report and the statement of the habilitation committee from 4th July 1907, and Sobotka's statement from 27th July 1907. Information has been also obtained from *Protokoly schůzí profesorského sboru FF 1901–1918*, cardboard no. 2 (Archive of UK).

For Pexider's mathematical-physical scholarship, see *Spisy FF 1895/96*, cardboard no. 149, i. no. 930. For the scholarship received for the work in the mathematical seminar in winter semester 1895/96, see *Spisy FF 1895/96*, cardboard no. 149, i. no. 749; for winter semester 1897/98, see *Spisy FF 1897/98*, cardboard no. 152, i. no. 996, everything deposited in the Archive of UK. (For the materials on the mathematical seminar, see also SÚA in Prague, collection *MKV/R 5A Prag, Semináře K-O*, cardboard no. 132.)

- ¹⁰⁾ See *Katalog c. k. čes. vys. školy tech. v Praze, 1895/96* (ČVUT Archive).
- ¹¹⁾ In 1988, the painting was owned by Marie Pexiederová, the second wife of Ing. arch. Z. Pexieder; it is in the possession of her niece now.
- ¹²⁾ See *Výroční zpráva JČM, 1899–1900*, p. 21.
- ¹³⁾ It is not clear whether this was [P4], [P5], or a summary of both. The work [P5] as well as the habilitation thesis [P6] were printed at Pexider's own expense. It is interesting that he doesn't list the work [P4] in his second habilitation application from 16th April 1901 – was it because it didn't have a sufficient quality?
- ¹⁴⁾ The Union was selling this treatise to its members for a reduced price 1K 30h – see *Výroční zpráva JČM 1900–1901*, p. 6.
- ¹⁵⁾ Professor Kolářek, who had been elected to the habilitation committee after the first Pexider's habilitation application, left in the meanwhile for Brno; since 1902, he was again in Prague. Eduard Weyr probably asked the Vienna professor L. Gegenbauer (1849–1903) for his opinion on Pexider. This is suggested by an extant letter (UK Archives, see the note 9), in which Gegenbauer communicates certain facts to Weyr. Unfortunately, the letter is undated; a not very clear date stamp seems to be from 1901.

Some time ago, Dr. Pexider handed me a small note on symmetric functions for Monatshefte, which, however, needs to be reworked and expanded... according to my opinion, this work couldn't play a decisive role in the habilitation. I expressed my willingness to Mr. Pexider to publish a German translation of a part of his habilitation thesis on Abel's theorem in my journal; in case you find it worth publishing, typesetting can begin immediately, so that Mr. Pexider would be able to present a proof to your collegium during the next month.

... in winter semester, he was working really hard... that's why I can give only positive reference for him, but he is not especially outstanding.

The letter probably refers to a preliminary version of [P11] and an excerpt from [P6] (perhaps in the form [P10]) – however, none of these works appeared in the journal *Monatshefte der Mathematik und Physik*.

- 16) For Pexider's scholarship application and its rejection, see *Spisy FF 1901/02*, cardboard no. 160, i. no. 1564 (Archive of UK).

In a letter to E. Babák from 19th June 1907 (LA PNP, see the note 27), Pexider recapitulates his studies:

I was attending the lectures of the following professors: Pick, Bobek, Mach, Jaumann, Marty, Jodl (Prague, German University); Gegenbauer, Escherich, Mertens (Vienna); Darboux, Goursat, Raffy, Jordan, Hadamard, Borel, Levasseur, Picard (Paris); Hilbert, Klein, Bohlmann, Zermelo, Blumenthal (Göttingen).

- 17) Pexider's letter to the dean Josef Zubatý (Archives of AV ČR, collection J. Zubatý, Korespondence L–R):

Highly esteemed Dean!

Please kindly lend your ear to the following lines.

I deeply regret that your goodness feels offended by my letter. I don't know why, but please accept my assurance that nothing was so far from my intention than to hurt you or the illustrious professors.

Please forgive me that I dared to bother your goodness by the first letter, which is followed by this one. But being aware that I always fulfilled all the wishes of the respectable Privy Councillors and professors Studnička, Strouhal and Weyr, that I went to Paris when I was suggested to, that I published my habilitation thesis in Czech (at the request of Prof. Ed. Weyr) only to be later criticized that I didn't publish it in German, that I hadn't been allowed to even support my application with a treatise which was now warmly welcomed abroad, of course abroad, that instead of being encouraged in my scientific efforts, I was rather disgraced (in this case, Prof. Masaryk kindly gave ear to me), that during my absence in Prague, somebody treated me in a manner which offended me deeply (Prof. Gruss kindly labelled one of these things as gossip, while I turned to Privy Councillor Strouhal with another one), that the only scholarship which I asked our government for is being denied by the illustrious professors to their own student, that the habilitation committee failed to process my application in one way or the other, while I have been working abroad already for four years since my doctorate, so that it has become necessary for me to ascertain whether I should expect anything from Prague or not – these trifles, of course trifles, have made me perhaps somewhat bitter, nothing else!

I am here in Göttingen, again an ordinary student; to be able to obtain a German doctorate, I have to renounce my Austrian citizenship before vacation, so that I could acquire the German one and apply for

habilitation here, until it's too late for me, because under permanent deprivation, the versatility of my spirit will necessarily grow feeble.

The chairman of the illustrious committee, Prof. Ed. Weyr, knows very well what the result of my request will be; why does he let me wait so long?

Even if in the end I ask the illustrious professors for a transcript of the report in case it is prepared by Privy Councillor Ed. Weyr, it will be only to quiet my conscience, so that if I have to break the relationships with everything Czech, I will be honestly convinced that I did everything I could.

Turning with confidence to the illustrious professors and not to the ministry, I am going to show clearly that I don't intend to hurt them by my request. I know that the professors won't admit anyone who doesn't conform to them, but also that the Germans won't admit a foreigner to intrude on them; unfortunately, I don't speak neither Polish nor Russian.

Written with a deep esteem to the illustrious professors and you, highly revered Sir, as their dean.

Pexider

Göttingen, 29th January 1902

- ¹⁸⁾ A letter from Dr. František Soukup to Pexider (in private hands):

Dear Dr. Pexider!

Upon receiving your letter, I conferred with numerous members of parliament, including professors Drtina and Masaryk, and we have all come to agreement that nothing can be done in your case. I must say frankly that all your steps are useless, and there is nothing else you can do than to repeat your request later.

Yours faithfully, Dr. Frant. Soukup

- ¹⁹⁾ Weyr's letter to Pexider (Archives of AV ČR, collection J. Zubatý, Korespondence S-Ž):

Prague, 11th March 1902

Dear Dr. Pexider,

I have already told you my opinion on your habilitation writing "O Abelově teorému etc." during your visit last summer; I repeat that the main defect is that the work is not an independent one, but instead a mere compilation in the fullest sense of the word.

I am not able to send you the report; please ask the faculty offices for a permission to have a look at it, I have no objections against that.

Yours faithfully, Prof. Ed. Weyr

- ²⁰⁾ See Rend. Circ. Mat. Palermo 17 (1903), 386, 387.

- ²¹⁾ The habilitation rules, which were valid at the time (and also during the era of the First Republic), were issued through a decree of the Ministry of Cult and Education from 11th February 1888 (imperial

decree no. 2390, article 19). The mentioned 6th paragraph contains this formulation:

*... in case the conferment of a *venia docendi* turns out to be impermissible due to different causes concerning the applicant's personality, the habilitation application will be rejected immediately.*

See e.g. O. Placht, F. Havelka: *Předpisy pro vysoké školy Republiky Československé*, Prague 1932, p. 1102. See also F. Weyr: *Výklad a kritika rakouských řádů habilitačních*, Časopis pro právní a státní vědu 1918.

At that time, Pexider probably appealed to Masaryk in a written request for help. Masaryk sent to Pexider the following short letter (in private hands):

Dear Dr. Pexider,

I missed the meeting that you refer to; I took vacation during the last part of the year, and I learned about the case only from your letter. By the way, I can't refrain from saying that I find your tactic mistaken, in particular, I don't understand why did you apply for habilitation immediately again? In my opinion, this was a mistake.

Yours sincerely, T. G. Masaryk

13th October 1903

- ²²⁾ See SÚA, MKV/R 5, Prag Phil. Prof./108, Jan Sobotka.
- ²³⁾ See the protocol of the academic senate from 5th July 1904 (ČVUT Archive).
- ²⁴⁾ See *Výroční zprávy JČM* from 1897–1898 to 1903–1904.
- ²⁵⁾ See the publication *Die Dozenten der bernischen Hochschule. Ergänzungsband zu: Hochschulgeschichte Berns 1528–1984. Zur 150-Jahr-Feier der Universität Bern 1984*. Brief information on Pexider and his activities in Bern is given on p. 187. He is listed as a pupil of Hilbert and Klein (this information has been taken over from Pexider's habilitation application). All documents concerning Pexider's activities at the University of Bern, particularly his habilitation application (including a short biography), a later request for an extension of the habilitation, requests for vacation etc. are kept in the State Archives of Bern under signature BB IIIb, 619. Pexider's name appears on the list of teachers and students in the period 1905–1911 (BBB IIIb, 1180f). It appears on the list of lectures only in winter semester 1905/06 and in summer semester 1906 (*Vorlesungsverzeichnisse*, BB IIIb, 1065). Two notes on Pexider concerning his vacations are in the senate protocols (*Senatsprotokolle*, BB IIIb, 949, pp. 394, 459).
- ²⁶⁾ See *Mitteilungen d. Naturforschenden Gesellschaft in Bern 1905*, pp. XLIV, XLVI; 1906, pp. III, VII, XXV; 1907, p. XXIV; 1908, p. XX.

Pexider gave a lecture on his work [P15] at the society's meeting on 27th January 1906.

- 27) Eduard Babák (1873–1926), a Czech doctor of medicine, biologist, comparative physiologist and experimental morphologist. Since 1907 an extraordinary professor, since 1917 ordinary professor of the Czech university in Prague, since 1919 ordinary professor of the Masaryk University in Brno. He was the author of important papers and book publications. He founded the journal *Biologické listy* and was an editor of *Přehled*. The journal *Přehled. Týdenník věnovaný veřejným otázkám* was founded in 1902. One of the founders, the first publisher and editor was Augustin Žalud (1872–1928). In the period 1906–1910, the editor-in-chief of *Přehled* was Emanuel Chalupný (1879–1958), a Czech philosopher, sociologist, lawyer and economist, the author of numerous works. Many important persons contributed to *Přehled*, e.g. Ed. Beneš, K. Čapek, K. Krofta, M. Lerch, A. Novák, T. Nováková, F. Nušl, F. Peroutka, V. Posejpal, E. Schoenbaum, O. Srdínko, K. Vorovka. LA PNP (collection E. Babák) archives 7 letters and one card that Pexider sent to Babák in the period from 14th July 1905 to 28th July 1907 from Bern (Thunstrasse 88) and Munich (Türkenstrasse 92); one of Pexider's letters to the editorial board of *Přehled* (from 13th December 1902) is in the collection of Zdeněk V. Tobolka.
- 28) František Xaver Hodáč (1883–1943), a Czech lawyer, politician, economist, journalist.
- 29) See *Národní listy*, 30th June 1905, no. 177, p. 2; *Přehled* 3 (1904/05), pp. 704–705 (no. 41 from 8th July 1905); p. 729 (no. 42 from 15th July); p. 772 (no. 45 from 5th August).
- 30) In this sentence, Pexider makes an allusion to the Dreyfus affair. Both Major Hubert-Joseph Henry and General Auguste Mercier played an important role in the trial against Alfred Dreyfus, a French officer of Jewish background. The conviction was based on a handwritten list known as the *bordereau*.
- 31) Let us cite Pexider's letters to Prof. Zubatý (Archives of AV ČR, collection J. Zubatý, Korespondence L–R).

21st September 1906

Dear Professor!

In 1902, I submitted to you a private letter addressed to me by † Prof. Weyr, which was concerned with granting me a permission to see the habilitation report of the mentioned professor at the faculty offices. Dear Professor, you forgot to return the letter to me. I ask you kindly to return this property, within a short time if possible.

Yours faithfully, Dr. Jan Pexider

Munich, Türkenstr. no. 37, 2nd floor

Highly revered Professor, considering the time that passed since your letter of 22nd September, I conclude that the letter, which I dared to ask you for, is not in your hands. Because the thing was so important for me, I remember quite well that I wanted to take it back, but you have requested it from me in order to present it as a document at the meeting when announcing that you have shown me the report. You also didn't show me the report immediately, but asked me to come a week later, after you would have discussed it with † Prof. Weyr by yourself. I haven't received the letter back any more, and I wouldn't bother you neither with my request nor with this letter if I didn't need it so urgently, as I dared to notify you already in the first letter.

The loss of this letter is palpable to me and I'm sorry that, in time of need, I won't be able to avoid the inconvenience of using as a document the letter which you sent to Dr. Lerch from Smíchov in 1902, and which was concerned with the voting on my habilitation application. In this matter I beg your pardon in advance.

Yours faithfully, Doz. Pexider

Munich, Türkenstr. no. 92, 2nd floor, 14th October 1906

The situation is also illustrated by Zubatý's card to Jan Hudec, a clerk of the Czech university office (Archive of UK, see the note 9):

26th October

Dear official,

please search the registry and check whether the documents related to the habilitation of Dr. J. Pexider (1901–2, rejected 1902) include a letter of † Prof. Weyr addressed to Dr. J. Pexider with a permission to grant him his report. If yes, please send it to me kindly as fast as possible. The letter went without doubt into a trash can, but check it just to be on the safe side.

Yours faithfully, Prof. Zubatý

³²⁾ See *Přehled* 6 (1907/08), p. 243 (no. 14–15 from 1st January 1908), pp. 302–303 (no. 18 from 24th January), pp. 377–378 (no. 22 from 21st February).

³³⁾ See the record of patients accepted in 1913–1917, patient no. 2981; among other things, Pexider's brother Josef is listed as his conservator (the archives of the psychiatric asylum in Prague, Kateřinská 460). Pexider's death: See the death record Kateřinky Z I, 1911–1925, p. 55 (ObÚ Prague 1, Vodičkova 18).

Grave: Olšany, cemetery 2, section 3, grave 33.

Donation of the books from the decedent's property: See ČPMF 45 (1916), p. 469, and *Výroční zpráva JČM 1915–1916*, p. 15.

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