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The book of the historian Ladislau Gyémánt *The Jews of Transylvania in the Age of Emancipation* has appeared at Bucharest (Editura Enciclopedica, 2000). There are at least two reasons for a survey of the Jewish society of historical Transylvania in the age of the emancipation (1790/1867): “On the one hand whereas the western parts of nowadays Transylvania [...] have been thoroughly investigated in the historiography dedicated to the emancipation movement of the Hungarian Jewry, The Great Principality of Transylvania has not represented, with quite few exceptions, a topic of major historiographic concern. On the other hand, while the researches on the evolution of the Jewish society in historical Transylvania have lately focused especially on the 17<sup>th</sup> -18<sup>th</sup> centuries and the period following the emancipation until the tragedy of the Holocaust, the period between 1790/1867, crucial for the demographical and social evolution, for the crystallization and renewal of the institutional structures and for the struggle for legal emancipation, hasn’t been particularly investigated [...]”. From a third point of view, like Andrei Oisteanu observed, after 50 years of communist censure, when any discussion about Jews had become taboo, the study of the history of Romanian Jews becomes a necessity.

From my point of view, this book is no just a referential study for any historian interested in Romanian Jewish history, like a tool, but also a living book, coloured by “the picturesque nuances of the relevant detail and the subjective overtones characteristic of the memoir”. Like a puzzle, pieces of living history are reconstructed from documentary sources. A relevant example of this is the story of the merchant Löbel Deutsch (pp. 104-108).

Löbel Deutsch was the first Jewish settled at Cluj with his family. We know that, in Cluj, the Jewish presence until the end of 18<sup>th</sup> century was scanty and transitory: The Jewish merchants were allowed in the city, but only for a few days (reserved for trade); they were allowed to sell their products, but only “open-air”; if someone was allowed to sell in a store, this store had to be a tent; if someone was allowed finally to sell in a real store, in a building; this store must not have the front on the street.

Thanks to the Josephinist reforms, the merchant Löbel Deutsch opened a shop, supplied the local tradesmen with raw materials (hemp, pelts, wax, etc.), exported their products, paid the taxes like the other townspeople and worshipped in his own house. But *the merchant from Cluj* became “the main tragic character in the most famous case which brought face to face the Transylvanian supporters and the enemies of the policy of tolerance initiated by Joseph II”. (We have to mention that one of the most important partial measures inspired by the Josephinist policy was the interdiction to baptize the Jewish children without their parents’ consent and before the age of 18, when they were deemed to have the required capacities to choose or to change religion.) In the summer of 1791, his 11 years daughter was abducted and sequestered in the house of the Catholic priest in order to be baptized.

The whole story is reconstructed from the official correspondence between Gubernium, Imperial Chancellery, the catholic bishop, Ignatiu Batthyányi, Löbel Deutsch, etc., reports, petitions, etc. The catholic bishop related the discussion on “the prestige of the catholic religion” and on “the good cause” *versus* “the Jewish heresy” and his “superstitions” (that could affect the new baptized “Carolina Lebel”). In the same time, the officials related

the discussion on “the respect of the imperial dispositions”, “not *so much* the situation of that Jewish girl, but the guilty of disregarding the imperial orders”.

This *disturbance* ended in 1798; once with the bishop too. The Gubernium paid the reparation (2000 florins to Löbel Deutsch, for those years when his daughter was sequestrated, sent to a monastery, married, declared “mentally ill” by the official physician of Cluj, declared “healthy” by another commission, etc., etc.); later the Gubernium retrieved the money from the legacy of the bishop.

We can clearly see from this example the fact that the fight for the emancipation of Jews was carried out like it had not anything to do with the Jews. It was a fight “for humanism”, “for progress” or “for respect of sovereignty of emperor”. This is the way it appeared in Hungarian press or in the German, Romanian or the Jewish one; this is the way it appeared in legislation; and even in the internal disputes of Jewish communities – between the Chief Rabbi of Alba Iulia and the local communities, some of them more traditionalist, some of them less conservative even than the Chief Rabbi.