

# The Emergence of a Modern Pilsen and Struggle of the Czech National Party for the National Emancipation of the Czech Majority in Pilsen in the Latter Half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Using the Krofta Family as an Example

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This paper aims to describe the influence and fate of the prominent Pilsen family Krofta in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and, based on his biography, show the typical process of the formation and development of national capital entrepreneurship and finance. It also attempts to illustrate the penetration of Czech influence into the city administration and local politics and capture the changes in the lifestyle of townspeople and the intelligentsia during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The history of the Krofta family is a typical example of how the process of the National Revival reached its peak in a local setting outside Prague.

[Josef Krofta; Pilsen in 19<sup>th</sup> century; Czech National Party and Old Czech political club; The City Savings Bank in Pilsen]

## Introduction

Few Czech cities experienced such rapid development, be it economic, industrial, building or demographic, as Pilsen in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. From being a predominantly artisan-agrarian medieval town, within a few decades it had developed into a centre of modern industry. The population rose from 5,246, as recorded in the census of 1787,<sup>1</sup> to

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<sup>1</sup> J. STRNAD (ed.), *Listář královského města Plzně a druhdy poddaných osad, Plzeň 1901*, p. 910.

100,000 recorded in 1917.<sup>2</sup> During the Napoleonic Wars Pilsen grew relatively quickly to extend far beyond the erstwhile medieval fortification walls, which had been uncompromisingly removed in the 1780s. The beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw rapid housing development spreading northwards into the Saxon district; similar development was only slightly slower in the south-eastern Prager district. In the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the new construction of modern tenement blocks filled the Imperial district, extending some distance south-west from the former fortification walls. This construction work was forced by industrial development, which above all gradually changed a once medieval town into what in modern times is known as “black Pilsen”, the metropolis of the west of Bohemia. During this period Pilsen became the second largest and richest city in the Czech kingdom, immediately after Prague.

In the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century industry was still emerging within a traditional framework of crafts typical of medieval Pilsen – drapery, tanning and from the 17<sup>th</sup> century also small-scale ironworks and ceramics. In 1836 pottery painter Karel König founded a ceramics factory in Lochoťín; in 1857 there appeared the stove-making factory of Tomáš Khüry in the then Střelecká, now Pallova, Street. The beginnings of large-scale production could also be seen in the food industry – milling, sugar, distilling. Hýra Mill in Prokop Street was the first factory in Pilsen to use steam-powered machinery. Jewish capital featured regularly in the first Pilsen factories; the most successful entrepreneurs included, amongst others, the Lederer brothers and David Leopold Levit. In 1839 a committee of townspeople with brewing rights decided to found a modern brewery in a location known as Bubeneč in the Prager suburb. It was here in 1842 that brewing began of what later became the world famous Pilsner beer.

In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there gradually appeared proper industrial factories. In addition to the well-known Waldstein ironworks there was also the engineering works of the Belani Brothers, Bartelmus foundry and enamel works, state railway workshops, Hirsch nail and wire works, Pilz engineering works, Brožík coach

<sup>2</sup> I. MARTINOVSKÝ et al., *Dějiny Plzně v datech od prvních stop osídlení až po současnost*, Plzeň – Praha 2004, p. 122.

workshop, Klotz brickworks, Piette paper mill, Gambrinus brewery company and many others.

Industrialisation required the development of transport, infrastructure, building, education, health care, culture – especially the press, theatre, social life, sport.<sup>3</sup> It also brought an interest in national emancipation. As early as the 1840s there were visible signs of a struggle between German and Czech capital. This was accompanied by an increasingly intensive political involvement of Czech townspeople at both city and regional level, as well as in the power structure as a whole.

On 30 June 1850 Pilsen abolished the regulated town hall, which was replaced by an elected local council. Although the last administration of the incumbent burgomaster Martin Kopecký had defended in exemplary fashion the interests of Pilsen people, council elections still offered a new political opportunity and the possibility of fighting to increase Czech influence over German interests, which might have

<sup>3</sup> By way of illustration, here are some significant dates in the development of the economy, society and national life in Pilsen in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: 1860 saw the ceremonial opening of railway transport in Pilsen, initially privately owned; in 1850 the Pilsen Chamber of Commerce and Trade commenced its activities, followed by the City Savings Bank in 1857; in 1858 a Pilsen – Mariánské Lázně telegraph line was set up; 1883 brought the first Pilsen telephone network for 11 participants; 1860 saw the ceremonial lighting up of the first gaslights in what is today Kopecký and Smetana Gardens; in 1889 a new municipal waterworks in Homolka commenced operations; in 1854 J. M. Schmid started publishing the modern periodical *Der Pilsner Bote*; in rapid succession city discussion clubs appeared – first Slovanská lípa (Slavic Linden), then Měšťanská Beseda (Burghers' Club), Řemeslnická Beseda (Craftsmen's Club), Občanská Beseda (Citizens' Club), Hlahol, Sokol, the Vlastimil Reading Association, National Pošumavská Association and many others, including for workers; new schools appeared, especially high schools with Czech as the language of tuition: the best known included the Czech higher realschule in Veleslavínova Street, built in 1865, soon upgraded to a realschule-grammar school and later converted to the first Czech realschule; specialised schools appeared: from 1876 there was a German state industrial school (the second in Bohemia as a whole after Liberec) with engineering and construction departments; from 1886 there was a Czech business school with two classes; in 1876 the city library was founded; thanks to the efforts of Pavel Švanda from Semčice and Vendelín Budil the Pilsen Czech Theatre was emancipated; in 1893 after lengthy efforts there was success in starting the construction of a museum; from 1832 a new city hospital was opened at the end of Veleslavínova Street in the direction of today's 5<sup>th</sup> May Gardens etc. For more on the development of Pilsen in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, see especially works by Ladislav Lábek, Jaroslav Schiebl, Fridolín Macháček, Václav Čepelák and Miloslav Bělohávek listed in the literature.

been in a minority but were supported by Vienna. After the collapse of the Bach regime in the 1860s, there was a considerable increase in Czech political strength in Pilsen too. As early as 1864 Czech candidates were winning elections to the local council, Landtag and Imperial Council at lower level committees and in 1897 to the highest, so-called supreme body, which hitherto had favoured German candidates.<sup>4</sup> True, Czech politics was to some extent weakened by a splintering into Old Czechs, who for years occupied key positions on the council, and Young Czechs, whose influence became more prominent towards the turn of the century; nonetheless, despite minor disagreements, in 1893 all Czech politicians in Pilsen, with the exception of the Social Democrats, came together in the Czech National Club.<sup>5</sup> Their common efforts contributed to the transformation of Pilsen into a prosperous modern city. Patriotism and the struggle for national emancipation were strong unifying elements. For a long time members of the council had the support of voters and enjoyed considerable popularity. This in turn gave them a sense of satisfaction from the extensive and often exhausting commitment to their job which was frequently required in an era burdened with patriotic struggles.<sup>6</sup> Only political disagreements following initial successes in the effort for Czech emancipation, plus an increase in social tension linked with the appearance of a left-wing opposition in the form of workers' unions and parties at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, broke what up to that time had been basically a united political bloc in Pilsen. Nonetheless, it should be noted that representatives of the Czech National Party in Pilsen played a significant role in modernisation of the city during the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and its transformation into a prospering industrial metropolis of the region. They contributed to promoting the power of the Czech majority in politics, economics and culture.

Now let us focus on one of the politicians involved, burgomaster Josef Krofta and his family. The history of this family and the biographies of its prominent members are a characteristic illustration of the typical career development of Czech national politicians, entrepreneurs and intellectuals, often in the shape of one person, from the

<sup>4</sup> Archiv města Plzně (further only AMP), Okresní výbor a okresní zastupitelstvo collection, Box Seznam členů výboru a zastupitelstva okresu 1868–1899, inv. no. 4823.

<sup>5</sup> Ibidem, Zápisy ze schůzí zastupitelstva 1865–1921, inv. nos. 4805, 4779–87.

<sup>6</sup> See the Pilsen press of the time, especially *Der Pilsner Bote* and *Plzeňské noviny*.

19<sup>th</sup> century up to and including the period of the First Czechoslovak Republic.

### The Krofta Family

The Pilsen Krofta family came from the small village of Potvorov, near Kralovice, in the north of the Pilsen region. This poor village was in no way exceptional apart from its Church of St Nicholas. This valuable single-nave Romanesque construction with an apse and four smaller annexes is one of the oldest preserved buildings in the region. According to available sources, it appeared between 1220 and 1240 and was clearly inspired by Bavarian-Romanesque architecture. Maybe it was from the strength of this genius loci, or maybe the influence of the rural chronicler Hruška, who was his father's grandfather on the maternal side,<sup>7</sup> that from a backwater rural setting there emerged an educated and passionate lawyer, future mayor of Pilsen and deputy of the Imperial Council and Landtag, Josef Krofta, father of the First Republic emissary and minister Kamil Krofta. In the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries the family spread considerably; today its ranks contain many prominent lawyers, doctors, teachers and artists, including the prominent Strettio family of creative artists.

The first mention of the family name Krofta refers to a farmer, undoubtedly of German origin, in the tax register from 1654,<sup>8</sup> where he declared ownership of 19 strychs at Nynice in the Pilsen region. In the Theresian Cadastre of 1713 the owner of the farm is given as Matouš Kroft. In the cadastre from the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century there appears the name Vojtěch Krofta. One of the bearers of the surname Krofta, who was born according to the birth register 5 August 1820 in Obora near Plasy in a farmhouse known as Fránovský grunt, got married accord-

<sup>7</sup> Masarykův ústav a Archiv Akademie věd České republiky, v. v. i. (further only MÚA AV ČR), Kamil Krofta collection, Box 22, inv. no. 640, R. KROFTA, "Data k životopisu zemřelého Josefa Krofta a ke charakteristice jeho působení a doby", typescript, 36 sheets, unnumbered, 1925. Additional copy: AMP, Literární pozůstalost (further only LP) Josef Krofta collection, sign. 64/16.

<sup>8</sup> O. BAUER (ed.), *Berní rula*, Sv. 1, K edici berní ruly: úvodní pojednání, Praha 1950, p. 129; M. DOSKOČILOVÁ (ed.), *Berní rula*, 23, Kraj Plzeňský, Díl I, Praha 1952, p. 442; A. CHALUPA et al. (eds.), *Tereziánský katastr český*, Sv. 2, Rustikál (kraje K-Ž), Sumář a rejstřík, Praha 1966, p. 523. Cf. also F. MACHÁČEK, "Rod a rodina", in: J. WERSTADT (ed.), *O Kamilu Kroftovi, historikovi a diplomatu. Stati psané k jeho šedesátinám*, Praha 1936, pp. 11–19.

ing to the marriage register 24 November 1840 in another village near Plasy, namely Potvorov. He took as his wife Anna Hrušková, a widow after Jan Hruška but also the daughter of Josef Hruška, a farmer in Potvorov (no. 46) and Barbora, daughter of Jakub Koza, likewise a farmer from Potvorov (no. 47), and Marie, née Machovcová (Potvorov, no. 6). It was into this marriage that the afore-mentioned Josef Viktor Krofta was born.<sup>9</sup> Anna was from the chronicler Hruška's family, as noted in the memoirs of their descendants Kamil and Richard Krofta.<sup>10</sup> This concludes our brief summary of the Krofta family. The next section will take a more detailed look at Josef Viktor Krofta.

#### JUDr. Josef Viktor Krofta (1845–1892)

Josef Viktor Krofta was born 27 February 1845 as the first of seven children of farmworker Jan Krofta (1820–1911) and his wife Anna, née Hrušková (1818–1910) in Potvorov, building no. 46.<sup>11</sup> This house no longer exists, having been destroyed by fire shortly after Josef Krofta's death. Josef's mother was a native of Potvorov; his father came from Obora near Plasy and originally earned his living as a carter.<sup>12</sup> The afore-mentioned ancestors of Jan Krofta had once been German settlers who came to Bohemia during the Thirty Years' War; by the 19<sup>th</sup> century, however, the family was completely Czech.<sup>13</sup> Father Jan was a simple peasant who in his youth had even experienced forced labour and was unable to read or write.<sup>14</sup> Mother Anna, however, was a cultivated and well-read woman who led the young Josef to a respect for

<sup>9</sup> "Porta fontium. Sběrka matrik západních Čech. Matrika Církve římskokatolické, farní obvod Potvorov", <http://www.portafontium.eu/iipimage/30067478?x=-337&y=-40&w=1603&h=901> [2015–12–20].

<sup>10</sup> MÚA AV ČR, Kamil Krofta collection, Box 22, inv. no. 640, KROFTA, "Data k životopisu zemřelého Josefa Krofty a ke charakteristice jeho působení a doby"; K. KROFTA, *Vzpomínka na rodiče. Památce JUDra Josefa Krofty a jeho choti Marie*, Plzeň 1932; AMP, LP Josef Krofta collection, sign. 59/1. Birth certificate of Josef Viktor Krofta.

<sup>11</sup> AMP, LP Josef Krofta collection, sign. 59/1. Birth certificate of Josef Viktor Krofta.

<sup>12</sup> MÚA AV ČR, Kamil Krofta collection, Box 22, inv. no. 640, KROFTA, "Data k životopisu zemřelého Josefa Krofty a ke charakteristice jeho působení a doby".

<sup>13</sup> KROFTA, *Vzpomínka na rodiče*, p. 4.

<sup>14</sup> He was not, however, "simple-minded", as JUDr. Richard Krofta recalls literally in his memoirs. Private archives of Mrs Johana Matějčková, great-granddaughter of Richard Krofta, R. KROFTA, "Ze starcovy paměti a zásuvky. Výstřižek ze života jedné rodiny a její doby", typescript, 1950, p. 6.

literature.<sup>15</sup> The boy's knowledge and potential for learning were spotted by local priest Leopold Droz, who recommended the parents send their son at the age of 11 to the main school in Rakovník. The parents heeded this advice and enrolled their son at the school, which he subsequently attended for one school year, 1855–1856. He performed with distinction and tried to master especially the basics of German. Soon he was recommended for the German premonstratensian grammar school in Pilsen.<sup>16</sup> Before this, however, he spent a language-orientated stay in Germany, since teaching at the grammar school was conducted exclusively in German, of which the young Josef still did not have a sufficient command.<sup>17</sup> He was accepted at the grammar school, where he subsequently performed excellently.<sup>18</sup> Among his teachers at that time there were such prominent names as, for example, Josef František Smetana,<sup>19</sup> the well-known Pilsen revivalist and cousin of

<sup>15</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>16</sup> The building of today's Education and Research Library in Smetana Gardens, Pilsen.

<sup>17</sup> "Learning German was necessary for study since at that time there was no secondary school offering tuition in Czech. For this reason Josef was sent to Germany as part of a deal, whereby he was given to a farmer in a nearby German village in order to learn German, and in exchange the Krofta family accepted a boy from the said farmer's family. The boys received full protection in their guest families, with neither having to pay anything extra; however, in their new setting they had to serve as a replacement for their counterpart, with whom they had exchanged places." Private archives of Mrs Johana Matějčková, great-granddaughter of Richard Krofta, KROFTA, "Ze starcovy paměti a zásuvky", pp. 6–7.

<sup>18</sup> AMP, LP Josef Krofta collection, sign. 59/19. School-leaving examination certificate of Josef Krofta from 1864.

<sup>19</sup> Josef František Smetana (1801–1861), secondary school teacher, Premonstratensian. He studied at grammar school in Hradec Králové, from 1819 went on to study philosophy in Prague, transferring two years later to the Archbishop's seminary, then in 1823 entered the Premonstratensian Order at Teplá near Mariánské Lázně. During his novitiate he studied theology in Prague, on 23. 10. 1825 he took the vows of canons regular and assumed the name Josef. 14. 8. 1827 he was ordained as a priest. In his further studies (natural history and physics) he continued in Vienna, passing his teacher's examinations in 1831 and in 1832 worked as a physics teacher at the Philosophical Institute in Pilsen. In 1849 he transferred to the Pilsen grammar school, where he taught both physics and natural history. His revivalist patriotic activity was extensive. He organised lectures about the Czech language and Czech literature, established Czech libraries (e.g. in Lochotín), organised amateur theatre performances and during the holidays looked for Czech language monuments in German-speaking regions. He also had a great influence on the nationalist awareness of his cousin Bedřich Smetana, who studied in Pilsen 1840–1843. Since he had been an active participant in the revolution of 1848 (he was local mayor of Lípa slovanská in Pilsen, wrote for the *Konstituční pražské noviny* newspaper, participated in the Prague

Bedrich Smetana, or the literatus Hugo Jan Karlík.<sup>20</sup> Another teacher of the young Josef Krofta was the revivalist intellectual Jan Nepomuk František Desolda.<sup>21</sup> All these men ignited within him a passionate patriotism, especially Smetana who, in addition to natural sciences, liked to educate his charges in Czech history and literature. 22 September 1864 Josef Krofta passed his school-leaving examination<sup>22</sup> and in the

Slavic Congress), in February 1849 he was banned from political activity and placed under police surveillance. He wrote for various publications, such as *Lumír*, *Časopis Českého musea*, *Živě*, *Rodinná kronika*, *Radbuza*, *Vlastimil*, *Květy* and *Časopis pro katolické duchovenstvo*. He was an author of professional literature as well as poetry. On 12 November 1874 a monument to him was unveiled in Smetana Gardens consisting of an above-lifesize statue with a commemorative plaque. The sculptor was Tomáš Seidan; the pedestal was designed by Tomáš Nechutný. Cf. "Regionální databáze osobností Knihovny města Plzně", <http://lanius.kmp.plzen-city.cz/clpr56.htm> [2015–12–20].

<sup>20</sup> Jan Hugo Karlík (1807–1894), cleric, Premonstratensian, pedagogue. Studied at grammar school in Jindřichův Hradec, philosophy in Prague and theology in České Budějovice. In 1830 he entered the Premonstratensian monastery in Teplá. After ordination as a priest there he taught history and clerical law. 1849–1860 teacher of Czech language at the Pilsen grammar school. Also worked as a vicar and priest in Úherce and until 1874 in Dobřany. From there he returned to the monastery in Teplá. He was the author of textbooks and religious literature. Cf. "Regionální databáze osobností Knihovny města Plzně", <http://lanius.kmp.plzen-city.cz/clpr56.htm> [2015–12–20].

<sup>21</sup> Jan Nepomuk František Desolda (1811–1885), patriotic priest, pedagogue. After studying in Klatovy and Pilsen he entered the Premonstratensian Order and in 1837 was ordained as a priest. Worked as a chaplain in Litice and Dobřany. From 1847 he was a teacher of Czech at the German grammar school in Pilsen, where he later became head. As a teacher he aroused in young Czech people a sense of patriotism. He shone primarily as a translator. He was the first to provide a Czech translation of Plato's dialogues *Phaedo* (1867), *Euthyphro* (1871) and *Protagoras* (1871), which appeared in Kvíčala's *Bibliotéka klasiků řeckých a římských*. He translated numerous works by clerical writers, e. g. Tomáš Kempenský (*Zlatá kniha o následování Krista*, 1870), Alphonsus Maria de' Liguori (*Uctění velebné Svátosti oltářní*, 1871), St. Irenaeus (*Patero kněh proti kacířství*, 1876), Jan Zlatoušský (*O kněžství kněh šestero*, 1885), František Saleský (*Bohumila*, 1893). From German he translated *Základní pravidla katolického vychování* (1878), the work of Friedrich Clerico on raising children in the family. He also translated and compiled prayer books (*Svatý Alois, vzor a ochránce křesťanské mládeže*, 1871, *Kytice rajská, Svatyně sionská*, 1858 aj.). He published several shorter translations in the Catholic weekly *Blahověst*. As a translator he also participated in the completion of Frencl's edition of the Czech Bible (1861–1864), which was based on a German translation of the Bible. Cf. "Regionální databáze osobností Knihovny města Plzně", <http://lanius.kmp.plzen-city.cz/clpr56.htm> [2015–12–20].

<sup>22</sup> AMP, LP Josef Krofta collection, sign. 59/19. School-leaving certificate of Josef Krofta from 1864.



same year enrolled as an outstanding student at the Law Faculty of Charles University in Prague.

Krofta's university lecturers again included some famous names: historian and archivist Antonín Gindely; historian and politician Václav Vladivoj Tomek; historian and archaeologist Jan Erazim Vocel, whose subject Krofta signed up for additionally out of interest; lawyer and politician Antonín Randa; lawyer and politician Josef František Frič, father of the writer Josef Václav Frič. There were also several prominent names amongst Krofta's fellow students: Czech lawyer and politician Ignác Hauschild; politician and deputy Karel Adámek; well-known Prague advocate Bedřich Jahn senior; Sudeten German politician and minister Gustav Schreiner; future mayor of Pilsen and Krofta's direct successor Václav Peták; future professor at the Law Faculty Jiří Pražák; state prosecutor in Pilsen Josef Částek; grandson of Josef Jungmann and advocate in Kostelec nad Černými Lesy Jaroslav Musil, plus many others.<sup>23</sup> Krofta completed his studies in 1868<sup>24</sup> and, after passing all postgraduate examinations, was declared a qualified doctor of law of all categories 10 November 1870.<sup>25</sup> In the colloquium on theses from jurisprudence and state law which preceded his graduation, he defended modern democratic and liberal ideas.<sup>26</sup>

Coming from a modest background, Josef Krofta greatly appreciated the opportunity to study and the sacrifices made by all his family. While still a student he tried to gain some income of his own so as to ease his family's burden. Immediately after passing his first postgraduate examination in the spring of 1869 he applied for the post

<sup>23</sup> MÚA AV ČR, Kamil Krofta collection, Box 22, inv. no. 640, KROFTA, "Data k životopisu zemřelého Josefa Krofty a ke charakteristice jeho působení a doby"; KROFTA, *Vzpomínka na rodiče*, p. 6; Private archives of Mrs Johana Matějčková, great-granddaughter of Richard Krofta, KROFTA, "Ze starcovy paměti a zásuvky", p. 7.

<sup>24</sup> AMP, LP Josef Krofta collection, sign. 59/33. Final examination certificate of Josef Krofta from 1868.

<sup>25</sup> Ibidem, sign. 59/38. State doctoral examination certificate of Josef Krofta from 1870.

<sup>26</sup> Richard Krofta in his memoirs cites the credo of Josef Krofta, which was one of the ideas borne by these theses: "Common sense requires that appropriate human rights be granted to everyone in equal measure. All the power is from the people. The death penalty is neither just nor useful. It is desirable that enlightened persons be granted greater influence over the administration of church assets. A free-thinking constitution and advancing welfare are the main pedestals for increasing the population." Private archives of Mrs Johana Matějčková, great-granddaughter of Richard Krofta, KROFTA, "Ze starcovy paměti a zásuvky", p. 7.

of regional secretary in Manětín but was unsuccessful. Thus after his final examinations he began work at the advocate's office of JUDr. Jindřich Steinschneider, a Czech Jew, in Pilsen and remained there until May 1876.<sup>27</sup> From May to November of that year he continued to obtain the necessary practice as an articulated clerk at the regional court. Neither his work at the advocate's office nor that at the court was paid. At that time Krofta was being supported by the family of his wife, Marie Svátková, who had pledged herself to him at the age of 14, while Krofta was still a student. He married her soon after finishing his studies on 31 January 1871, once she had come of age. Krofta at that time was 25 years old.<sup>28</sup> Marie came from a well-situated family of merchants in Pilsen: her parents were the respected townspeople František Adalbert Svátek and Josefa Svátková, whose financial support of their son-in-law was no problem.<sup>29</sup> Another source of support and a friend to Josef Krofta was his brother-in-law, Richard Svátek, who was just one year older. Richard later became a district mayor in Pilsen, as well as a successful entrepreneur and member of the administrative board of the Burghers' Brewery in Pilsen.

The young married couple initially lived on the first floor of a house belonging to the bride's parents, which Krofta's father-in-law had set up for business purposes on the corner of Palacký Avenue and Kramář Gardens (today 35<sup>th</sup> Regiment Gardens), no. 70, directly opposite the barracks of the 35<sup>th</sup> regiment.<sup>30</sup> It was here that their children were subsequently born: Richard (1873), Marie (1874) and Kamila (1876). When Josef Krofta was finally able to open his own advocate's office, the family moved in 1878 to the so-called Tušnerovský house on the

<sup>27</sup> As Richard Krofta states in the above-mentioned typescript, even in those days Josef Krofta came across as a fearless fighting politician. He had to face minor disciplinary proceedings after criticising his opponent, Dr. Čečil in court for using the word "swindle"; however, his comments were made in anger under the influence of the "infectious atmosphere" of the office of Dr. Jonák. He returned briefly to Schneider's office as an articulated clerk in 1877. Ibidem, sheets 4 and 5. For more, see AMP, LP Josef Krofta collection, sign. 59/58. Statement of Josefa Krofta about his work as an articulated clerk from 1877.

<sup>28</sup> MÚA AV ČR, Kamil Krofta collection, Box 22, inv. no. 640, KROFTA, "Data k životopisu zemřelého Josefa Krofta a ke charakteristice jeho působení a doby".

<sup>29</sup> For further details see the section on Marie Svátková-Kroftová.

<sup>30</sup> MACHÁČEK, p. 14; MÚA AV ČR, Kamil Krofta collection, Box 22, inv. no. 640, KROFTA, "Data k životopisu zemřelého Josefa Krofta a ke charakteristice jeho působení a doby"; KROFTA, *Vzpomínka na rodiče*, p. 6.

corner of Pilsen's main square and Zbrojnická Street. The building had undergone reconstruction to combine what had originally been two existing houses, nos. 109 and 110, previously rented out by Krofta's father-in-law (this building is now no. 229). The Krofta family had both their home and an advocate's office at this address and more children were born here: Otakar (1878), twins Josefa a Marta (1881), Libuše (1883) and Anna (1888).<sup>31</sup> In 1877 JUDr. Josef Krofta passed his advocate's examinations and was officially registered on the list of defence lawyers valid from 1 January 1878.<sup>32</sup> As a deputy and later also mayor of the city of Pilsen, Josef Krofta was active primarily in legal matters concerning national economy and finance – e. g. weights and measures reform, improvement of brotherhood cash offices, or the issue of the Pilsen railway station.

Marrying into a prominent Pilsen family helped Josef Krofta acquire the respectability of an honourable burgher. For all the undoubted personal qualities of the young advocate, who was an active participant in social life, patriotic issues and work in clubs, as well as a frequent contributor to newspapers, his marriage was beneficial for obtaining a favourable position amongst the townspeople and his subsequent election to the Landtag at the start of 1876, when he was still only 31 years old. The following year he was also elected to represent Pilsen on the Imperial Council. Although, along with other Czech deputies, he did not participate in the meetings for two years as a gesture of passive resistance, he did become active as a deputy as he was repeatedly elected up to 1890<sup>33</sup> when he resigned his imperial mandate in order to focus fully on his work as Pilsen burgomaster. He continued to carry

<sup>31</sup> Altogether the Kroftas had ten children; however, three died prematurely (unbaptised twins František and Josef (b. 1871, d. 1871) and Libuše (b. 1884, d. 1888). Today the house no longer exists, having been replaced in 1910 by the building which still stands today. After Josefa Krofta's death in 1892, the family moved to a smaller flat at no. 922, Nerudova Street. Cf. MÚA AV ČR, Kamil Krofta collection, Box 22, inv. no. 640, KROFTA, "Data k životopisu zemřelého Josefa Krofta a ke charakteristice jeho působení a doby"; KROFTA, *Vzpomínka na rodiče*, p. 6; MACHÁČEK, p. 15.

<sup>32</sup> AMP, LP Josef Krofta collection, sign. 59/57. Advocate's licence of Josef Krofta from 1877.

<sup>33</sup> Several times he was praised by the City Council for his excellent work as a deputy and motivated again to accept an Imperial mandate. Cf. AMP, LP Josef Krofta collection, sign. 62/28. Letter from the City Council of the royal city of Pilsen to JUDr. Josef Krofta dated 27 April 1885. Additional copy: AMP, LP Josef Krofta collection, sign. 607/157a, 157b. Anniversary of the Czech Deputies Club for 1876 and 1877.

out responsibly his work as a Landtag deputy until his death. Here it is worth noting a comment by Karel Krofta on how his father, along with two other young Pilsen politicians, František Schwarz, also a close personal friend and closest collaborator, and Václav Peták, were strong supporters of active politics from the very beginning.<sup>34</sup>

As a local politician and deputy Krofta demonstrated repeatedly that he was a passionate patriot who would not shirk from work or sacrifice where Bohemia was concerned, whether it be a question of culture – patriotic clubs in Pilsen or Czech education; economics – support for Czech capital and doing business in the country; or the political struggles of the age between a strengthening Czech majority population and the traditionally influential German minority in Bohemia's second most important city. Throughout his political career, Josef Krofta, as a member of the National Party and Old Czech political club honoured the Old Czech political programme. And this was true even in an era when he felt, especially with the signing of the so-called Punkta agreement in Vienna in 1890, that the times were moving in a different direction. His loyalty to his Old Czech mandate never wavered. One particular great authority for him, and at the same time a personal and family friend, was František Ladislav Rieger.<sup>35</sup> Rieger considered Krofta a very capable and reliable party member and thus was happy to entrust him with important Old Bohemian political tasks in the Pilsen district. He relied on him completely, proof of which is the following letter from Krofta's literary remains:

<sup>34</sup> KROFTA, *Vzpomínka na rodiče*, p. 7.

<sup>35</sup> The memoirs of Adolf Srb (1850–1933), journalist and Old Czech politician working for the dailies *Politik* and *Plzeňské listy*, reveal the interesting circumstances of Josef Krofta's entry into politics: "At the time decisions in the Old Czech Party concerning the list of candidates were taken by a small panel of confidants, headed by Dr. Rieger – in fact by Dr. Rieger himself and the panel willingly accepted his suggestion. It quite often happened, especially in the 1860s, that the panel only got to know their future deputy at the election itself, or even that they did not know him at all. [...] With Dr. Krofta, however, it was different. Having settled in Pilsen and married into the respected Svátek family, he soon achieved widespread popularity and his nomination as a parliamentary candidate was greeted with joy. It was in 1874 or 1875, when Dr. Rieger gave me the task of going to Pilsen and compelling Dr. Krofta to take over a parliamentary mandate, which however at that time was not carried out in practice because of the policy of passive opposition. Dr. Krofta hesitated, being reluctant to devote himself to politics, but in the end agreed to be a candidate and at a time when elections were often repeated, he was always elected by a large majority. In 1879 when Czech deputies entered the Imperial Council, Dr. Krofta was one of them and soon made his mark." A. SRB, *Z půl století. Vzpomínky Adolfa Srba*, Praha 1913, p. 162.

*“Esteemed Sir,*

*Requiring sincerely that the political persuasion of the Czech nation be allowed to take its course, a committee of trustees of Czech deputies declared that prior to the forthcoming elections to the Imperial Council in all judicial regions, as well as in directly enfranchised towns, electoral committees be established, consisting of men who enjoy particular respect among the population and devote special attention to the political interests of the Czech nation, men who would see to it that they also recognised voters’ political opinions as well as men who, having gained the trust and favour of the voters, are able and willing to defend the rights of the nation in such fashion as the majority of deputies acknowledges as good. [...] Therefore I turn to you with an appeal, should it be possible, that through your direct personal involvement, you would organise and run such an electoral committee in the towns and administrative districts which you represent in the Council.*

*With the greatest respect,  
F. L. Rieger  
Prague, 24 May 1879”<sup>36</sup>*

The committed and faithful Old Czech Krofta did not disappoint Rieger. He considered adherence to the Old Czech philosophy a matter of honour and morality, regarding New Czechs in a certain sense as renegades. Nonetheless, more than once the New Czechs tried to win him over to their side. Evidence of this appears in a letter from the prominent politician, Imperial Council and Landtag deputy JUDr. Jakub Škarda,<sup>37</sup> who himself had transferred from the Old to the New

<sup>36</sup> AMP, LP Josef Krofta collection, Box 607, sign. 142b. Letter from F. L. Rieger to J. Krofta.

<sup>37</sup> JUDr. Jakub Škarda (1828–1894) came from Skvrňany near Pilsen, from a prosperous farming family. He studied law in Prague and became one of the most prominent Czech lawyers of his time. He worked in Prague and also became involved in politics in the Prague City Council, and as a deputy in the Landtag and Reichsrat. He was also a law theorist, whose work concerned mainly the emerging modern local administration. He was a member of the National Party but in 1874 he left the Old Czechs since he considered the politics of passive resistance ineffective and misguided. He did not transfer immediately to the Young Czechs, first attempting to establish a third Czech party, sometimes even referred to as the Škarda Party; this, however, did not take root. Only at the end of the 1880s did he join the National Liberal Party. Throughout his life he had numerous links with Pilsen and the young local politicians there; he was a good advisor and tutor especially to Krofta and Schwarz.

Czechs. Through persistent pressure on Krofta, Škarda's intention was to gain his support for the New Czechs and convince him of the harm caused by passive politics. In a canvassing letter dated 10 March 1875 he wrote:

*"Dear Sir,*

*For my part, I have long been of the firm conviction that by inaction we shall achieve nothing; the current inaction is no passive resistance, the conduct of which in this country has become a futile endeavour: it is idleness. Anyone will persuade me that idleness will lead nowhere in one's private life; how, then, could it possibly succeed in public life? We can see the fruits of many years of such idleness. Once we were fighting a common enemy; now we are maybe fighting more fiercely – but brother against brother. Idleness is the source of all evil. I remain firmly convinced that there will be no change in the miserable conditions, which sadden the heart of every true Czech, until once again the entire Czech nation rises to action worthy of it. Would that it were to happen soon! Now I have strayed from my topic and must request your forgiveness for allowing my thoughts free rein; I considered it necessary for you to know my opinion before you carry out an important right, namely voting for deputies to the Landtag. I make no secret of my political views and would not want to receive votes from anyone who disagrees with me. Decide now for yourself to whom you will give your vote and pay no heed to others. The matter is simple. If you believe it is possible and probable that deputies will achieve something for their motherland and nation by staying at home, then vote for whoever promises to remain inactive; if, however, based on your own experience, you consider that without work nothing grows, that every farmer must work with sweat on his brow so that his land will yield some crops, then you will realise that also in public life the much longed-for fruit will not fall into one's lap on its own, that it needs to be worked for with sweat on one's brow, and that the work is all the more intense when here and there lurks an enemy who would ruin the fruits even of the hardest labour. And when you realise that, you will vote for someone who tells you he wants to work on the land which was meant for him. [...]*

*I remain your respectful servant,  
JUDr. Jakub Škarda"<sup>38</sup>*

<sup>38</sup> AMP, LP Josef Krofta collection, Box 607, sign. 143. Letter from Jakub Škarda to Josef Krofta.

Krofta was not convinced by Škarda's arguments: he had his own ideas about passive resistance but remained faithful to Old Czechism and the Rieger line.

His relationship towards the Realists and Masaryk was more complex. Initially he had also rejected them as unpatriotic but later, thanks mainly to Masaryk, they gained his growing respect. Kamil Krofta recalls how his father, influenced by Masaryk, even began shortly before his death to learn English with Professor Klostermann.<sup>39</sup>

Of course, from a Pilsen perspective, Krofta's work for the benefit of the local community was more important than his activity as a parliamentary deputy. Josef Krofta was first elected to the municipal council of the Pilsen region in 1876<sup>40</sup> in place of the deceased Jan Kleissl.<sup>41</sup> Shortly thereafter he was named deputy mayor. He was a member of committees, especially that of finance. After the death of the municipal mayor, Karel Hahnenkamm in 1882, Krofta was chosen as his replacement, thus becoming a member of the city council. 7 May 1888, following the death of the short-term mayor JUDr. Karel Houška,<sup>42</sup> he was elected Pilsen burgomaster by Czech votes against German.<sup>43</sup> Since he took this office very seriously, he resigned from his positions as municipal mayor and member of the Imperial Council

<sup>39</sup> KROFTA, *Vzpomínka na rodiče*, p. 8.

<sup>40</sup> He then remained a member of the district council for 16 and a half years. Cf. AMP, LP Josef Krofta collection, sign. 62/9. Electoral certificate of Josef Krofta.

<sup>41</sup> Jan Kleissl (1829–1876), also known as Jan Kleisl, was an Austrian and Czech entrepreneur and politician from Pilsen, in the 1860s and 70s he was a deputy of the Bohemian Landtag. He came from a family of immigrants to Pilsen from Tyrol at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century but identified himself with the Czech National Movement. By profession he was an entrepreneur and trader in Pilsen, where he was also active in public and political life. He was a member of the city council, deputy mayor and chairman of the local Sokol organisation. He first became a Pilsen councillor in 1864. In 1865 in the local administration he advocated support for the Czech theatre in Pilsen. In 1866 when the invading Prussian army was approaching Bohemia, Kleissl was entrusted with the transfer of valuable public property and important documents to safety in Linz. At the time he was one of the leading representatives of the young generation of Pilsen Czech politicians. He was also a rival of Emanuel Tuschner, who became mayor of Pilsen at the end of the 1860s. At the beginning of the 1870s he supported the beginning of the construction of a public water supply system in Pilsen.

<sup>42</sup> JUDr. Karel Houška (1833–1889) became Pilsen burgomaster in 1888, following the death in that year of Pilsen burgomaster František Pecháček (in office 1873–1888). Less than eight months later, however, Houška himself died after a sudden stroke.

<sup>43</sup> MÚA AV ČR, Kamil Krofta collection, Box 22, inv. no. 640, KROFTA, "Data k živo-

in order to devote himself fully to affairs of the city of Pilsen. After 16 years service in regional administration Krofta left behind him a relatively respectable legacy. He was destined to be burgomaster for a mere three years; however, there should be added to this the period when he was influencing the burgomaster's office via his friend and predecessor František Pecháček, with whom he consulted numerous issues.<sup>44</sup> In Krofta and such friends of his as Václav Peták, František Schwarz or Josef Čipera, Pecháček appreciated the views and opinions of the younger generation on the Pilsen political scene.

A review of Josef Krofta's legacy in the administration of Pilsen shows the extent of his influence. Under his leadership, Pilsen obtained a special city status which hitherto in the empire had been granted only to some German cities. It was thanks to Krofta's support during his time in office that Pilsen was transformed into a modern city: he supported the costly completion of the city water supply; there continued the construction of a sewage system and paving of the city; Krofta also supported repair work and the completion of new important roads throughout the region. New highways appeared, for example, from Pilsen via Lobzy to Božkov and Letkov, from Chrást via Kyšice and Letkov to Starý Plzenec, and from Pilsen to Štěnovice via Losiná; other roads to be built included Bolevec-Ledce-Tlučná, Horní (then Německá) Bříza-Hromnice and Nynice-Darová. Krofta supported the construction of new bridges, especially the Pražský and Saský bridges; construction work commenced on new bridges in Doudlevec, Doubravka and Radobyčice. He supported the development of a railway network running through Pilsen, as well as nationalisation of the railways. He was also active in improving public

topisu zemřelého Josefa Krofta a ke charakteristice jeho působení a doby".

<sup>44</sup> Similar to the memoirs of accounting board members Čeněk Bílý and Jan Kessler, Richard Krofta also notes in his own memoirs: "In recent times under the mayorship of Pecháček the director of the fate of the Pilsen community has in fact been Dr. Krofta, or at the very least he exerts great influence on Pecháček. I judge this by their frequent friendly conversations and mutual visits. Every year Pecháček would visit Krofta at his summer residence in Richardov near Chrást (municipality of Smědčice, district of Rokycany) and Krofta would go to Pecháček's place for supper, where they were served the hunter's prey of the mayor, prepared in a variety of ways through the celebrated culinary art of the mayor's wife. My father went on a trip with Pecháček to the Giant Mountains and paid frequent visits to the Pilsen forests, for which Pecháček was a responsible official on the city council. The company of these two friends was usually supplemented by František Schwarz, MUDr. Josef Tyl, city doctor and personal doctor of all the afore-mentioned, as well as pharmacist Alois Formánek." Ibidem.



administration, arranging a review of all public property. He fought for a separate building for the industrial museum, a modern hospital building, supported the establishment of a city insurance company and played an active part in the process. He promoted changes in social areas, such as a new law on the Colliers Brotherhood Cash Office insurance company and a statute on public charity; he also had a new almshouse set up. In 1889 he became the initiator in the local administration and also the president of the preparatory committee for a public kitchen. This institution was first a cooperative, then from 1891 an association under the patronage of the municipality. Krofta was elected chairman of this association, which also operated a so-called soup charity that provided free food, at the authority's expense, to poor children.<sup>45</sup> Krofta was also active in the Kreutzer Association, founded in Pilsen in 1890 and based on the Sušice model: this served to support children at city schools, whose parents were poor. Thanks to Krofta, permanent grants were established for poor and diligent children.<sup>46</sup>

During Krofta's time on the local council he and his friend Václav Peták ensured great attention was devoted to education in Pilsen. Peták in particular, an admirer of Pestalozzi's views on education, had an excellent knowledge of the monarchy's laws on education and as a deputy of the Landtag he was entrusted with the division of national education between 1875 and 1899. Both Peták and Krofta were convinced of the need for new, better Czech secondary schools for a Pilsen which was developing both industrially and commercially, and both men committed themselves to the cause. Thanks to their efforts during this period, Pilsen's first Czech realschule was set up at no. 42, Velešlavínova Street. The school was ceremoniously opened in 1864; then in 1871 it was transformed into an imperial-royal Czech state grammar school. It was one of the first Czech secondary schools of its kind.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>46</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>47</sup> Until that time Pilsen had had only a German grammar school, Premonstratensian, which in fact Krofta himself had attended and he respected the institution. But that also made him more aware of the fact that the times demanded a Czech secondary school, even though many teachers at the German grammar school were committed Czech patriots and led their students, as Krofta himself had experienced, towards love and respect for the Czech nation. Putting through the proposal for a Czech grammar school was not easy as many people were calling for another German in-

A request for the establishment of a three-year upper secondary level Czech realschule was made by Emanuel Tuschner<sup>48</sup> at a meeting of the council on 22 November 1862. In fact his proposal was only for an upper secondary level realschule but the campaign for Czech as the language of tuition soon followed. The proposal contained a plan to finance the construction of the school by means of a so-called “beer kreutzer”, whereby for every mug of beer pulled one kreutzer would go to the city coffers to be spent on building costs: this was to be in effect until 1878. As early as October 1865 teaching commenced in the newly-built school. Its first head was František Částek, who came to Pilsen from the realschule in Locket. Částek was an outstanding pedagogue and patriot; a further fact in his favour was that the battle of the nationalist representatives, Krofta, Peták and Schwarz, for the Czech character of the realschule had ultimately been successful. Částek also held the position of a local school inspector in the Pilsen region and in the course of his work encountered an interesting project by Václav Křížek, a native of Strážov na Šumavě. In the town of Tábor, Křížek had established the first realschule-grammar school in Bohemia and elaborated a special study plan for this new type of school. The first two years of teaching were common for pupils of both the realschule and grammar school; then from the third year onwards tuition was split into a five year programme for the realschule students and six years for the grammar school. Částek was taken by the project and

stitution. The situation surrounding nationality was highly specific in Pilsen, as publicist Adolf Srb interestingly notes in his memoirs: “It used to be said that there are really three nationalities in Bohemia – Czechs, Germans and Pilseners (which, however, was true only of the propertied classes). The last mentioned could not decide on one or the other nationality, contributing nothing to either and caring only about their own welfare. This explains why, despite the enormous numerical superiority of the Czech population over the German, it took one much longer than in Prague to recognise that Pilsen is a Czech city.” SRB, *Z půl století*, pp. 136–137.

<sup>48</sup> Emanuel Tuschner (1828–1882), Pilsen burgomaster 1868–1873, Landtag and Reichsrat deputy. His time at the town hall saw the construction of an extensive water supply system, modification of the banks of the River Mže, building of new streets, renewed activity of the Czech theatre by Pavel Švanda from Semčice, girls’ high school established, etc. He purchased various property for the city of Pilsen, whose cost was covered only by promissory notes and the city’s budget showed a deficit. In 1873 he resigned from his position. He was arrested and charged but the court found him not guilty. He moved to Vienna, where he worked as a clerk for the Slavia Insurance Bank. He also died in Vienna.

persuaded the municipal council that Pilsen request details of the plan from Tábor. The Landtag school council ultimately decided in favour of this change and by the beginning of the 1871/1872 academic year, Částek had already set up a realschule in Pilsen. It was located in a newly constructed building at the end of Veleslavínova Street and built according to a plan by a Vienna architect with roots in Křimice, Moritz Hinträger.<sup>49</sup>

Another important deed, for which both Krofta and Peták deserve credit, was the German realschule in Resslova Street, where patriot and writer Karel Klostermann taught; there was also the state industrial school at no. 931, Tylova Street. While this latter school was German, it had a majority of Czech students and teachers. From 1892 the newly formed Pilsen Czech Pedagogical Institute was also based here. In 1886 there appeared the Czech Higher Business School, later Business Academy, where Josef Krofta was also the chairman of the curatorium and committed himself to changing the status from private to state school and ensured significant financial support from the municipality.<sup>50</sup> In 1892, after lengthy preparation and thanks to Krofta's

<sup>49</sup> This was an educational institution of very high quality and is linked with the names of several renowned teachers: Tůma (Tomáš) Cimrhanzl, teacher of history and geography, propagator of Šumava history and geography; František Alois Hora, well-known Pilsen polonophile; composer and founder of the Pilsen Sokol organisation, Hynek Palla; music teacher Julius Koráb and many others. Many well-known names can be found amongst former students too, e.g. notable chemist Zdeněk Jahn; writer and pedagogue Josef Kožíšek; folklorist a supporter of Czech-Serbian solidarity Josef Zdeněk Raušar, and others. Both elder sons of Josef Krofta, Richard and Kamil, graduated from this school. The youngest son Otakar also started here but transferred to military school. V. SPĚVÁČEK, "Základy novodobého českého školství v Plzni", in: V. ČEPELÁK et al., *Dějiny Plzně II, od roku 1788 do roku 1918*, Plzeň 1967, pp. 127–132; F. ČÁSTEK, "Kronika obecní vyšší reální školy v Plzni. První roční zpráva obecní vyšší reální školy v Plzni", in: M. HRUŠKA, *Knih pamětní královského krajského města Plzně*, Plzeň 1883, pp. 869–882; V. ČEPELÁK, "K stému výročí budovy Pedagogické fakulty v Plzni", in: *Sborník PeF v Plzni: MXL a D*, Vol. 6, Plzeň 1965, pp. 5–32; M. SUCHÁ, "Plzeňské Klementinum. Historie jedné budovy", in: *Minulost Plzně a Plzeňska*, Vol. 3, Plzeň 1960, pp. 149–174; N. MORÁVKOVÁ, "K působení Františka Aloise Hory (1838–1916) – milovníka polského jazyka a kultury v západních Čechách / Wpływ Františka Aloisa Hory (1838–1916) – miłośnika języka i kultury polskiej w zachodnich Czechach", in: J. LIPOWSKI – D. ŻYGADŁO – CZOPNIK (eds.), *Podzwonne dla granic: Polsko-czeskie linie podziałów i miejsca kontaktów w języku, literaturze i kulturze*, Wrocław 2009, pp. 61–71.

<sup>50</sup> In 1913 Antonín Kostinec devoted the following words of thanks on the occasion

support, a second classical grammar school, Czech, was opened on Husova Street. Preparations were also begun for setting up a rural school, as well as a reform school for disturbed and problematic young people; here, however, success was not achieved during Krofta's lifetime.

For the support of education and culture, as will be seen below in the case of the Měšťanská Beseda building, Josef Krofta used all the means available to him, including for example his political status, or his position in the Pilsen City Savings Bank, where he held the position of manager. He put through the construction of a new savings bank building, kept the company prosperous and consistently led it to support the city, education and various patriotic and charitable institutions.

Primarily, though, Krofta was a thoroughly patriotic mayor. As he himself stated at his inauguration: *"I am a child of my times and with every vein of my heart I cling to my nation, to which I shall remain faithful till the very end."*<sup>51</sup> He eloquently expressed his passionate patriotism in a commemorative speech on the occasion of the opening of new rooms at the Měšťanská Beseda building on 28 December 1876. Amongst other things here he associated himself with the legacy of his favourite grammar school teacher Josef František Smetana and his predecessor in National Revival matters, Josef Vojtěch Sedláček. In his speech he stated: *"Social life resembles a stream which quietly flows between its two banks, leaving parched the extensive meadowland alongside. But when it finds the strength to climb above its banks, it bears fresh greenery wheresoever it spills. Would that Czech society in our city could be given the chance of that much desired development which from days of yore was the striving of patriotic men who cared for the welfare of our nationality. [...] It was a farmworker who at the beginning of this century ensured the first trivial school and Czech kindergarten, institutions which by educating in the*

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of the ceremonial opening of the business academy: *"The main credit for supporting this new institution belongs to the late JUDr. Josef Krofta who died so suddenly. When elected chairman of the curatorium, he willingly devoted himself to the function and used his influence to gain substantial support for the school from both the community and the regional committee and also other corporations, thereby ensuring the long-term existence of this modern institution."* MÚA AV ČR, Kamil Krofta collection, Box 22, inv. no. 640, KROFTA, "Data k životopisu zemřelého Josefa Krofta a ke charakteristice jeho působení a doby".

<sup>51</sup> KROFTA, *Vzpomínka na rodiče*, p. 12.

mother tongue were the first to build a dam against the German flow. Then yet more powerful was the work in this direction done by his successor Smetana. It was from Smetana's heart here in Pilsen, at that time still strongly Germanified, that there came every nationalist movement, even the barely perceptible, and every patriotic act, both great and small. It was Smetana who first focused around himself in the 1840s the Pilsen townspeople at the Měšťanská Beseda – not an club but merely a venue for patriotic purposes in what was then the White Rose inn. In the end it was he who in 1848 initiated the requisite literary and collective activity in Pilsen and supported it as strongly as he was able. He it was who preserved our time-honoured city for the nation. May these men be blessed with eternal fame."<sup>52</sup>

For all his strong sense of Czechness, Krofta as mayor treated Germans correctly and advocated a policy of mutual respect.<sup>53</sup> He even made reference to this in his inauguration speech: "These gentlemen may not have honoured me with their votes; nonetheless, I promise them that I shall treat the German minority in the city in such a way as I would wish Czech minorities be treated in German cities."<sup>54</sup> In further elections in 1890, Krofta even obtained German votes and was elected unanimously.

From his youth Josef Krofta was active in a number of Pilsen's clubs and associations. Obviously one of the most prominent was the aforementioned Měšťanská Beseda, of which he was a member, agent and ultimately chairman, and whose building fund he helped gain substantial financial sums and material gifts. He did not live to see the new building in its modern form but his contribution to the club and its building are indisputable.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>52</sup> AMP, LP Josef Krofta collection, sign. 62/1, Ceremonial speech of JUDr. Josef Krofta on the opening of new rooms at the Měšťanská Beseda, 28 December 1876.

<sup>53</sup> AMP, Okresní výbor a okresní zastupitelstvo collection, Box Protokoly schůzí výboru z let 1865–1921, inv. no. 4805.

<sup>54</sup> MÚA AV ČR, Kamil Krofta collection, Box 22, inv. no. 640, KROFTA, "Data k životopisu zemřelého Josefa Krofta a ke charakteristice jeho působení a doby".

<sup>55</sup> The Měšťanská Beseda club in Pilsen, whose original name was Spolek měšťanů, was established 6 August 1862. It followed on from the Slovanská lípa club which, thanks to the efforts of Josef František Smetana, František Pecháček, Ignác Schiebl and Bernard Guldener was formed in July 1848. The Beseda club was founded by the drawing up and issuing of constitutional documents and allocation of registry number 40,247, applied for by its founder members (especially František Pecháček and Ignác Schieblem, also Emanuel Tuschner, Tomáš Nechutný, Antonín Holub, Jakub Sýkora and other representatives of revivalism in Pilsen) from the Měšťanská

Another prominent group in which Krofta played a significantly active role was the Czech Political Association, founded in Pilsen in 1871. Its aim was the strengthening of political and national rights and liberties of Czechs. Krofta's friends and colleagues took turns at its head – František Schwarz, MUDr. Vilém Šel, JUDr. Václav Peták and finally Josef Krofta himself. The group set up a reading room with political and didactic literature, arranged lectures and meetings, organised

Beseda in Prague. The club's first headquarters was the home of the entrepreneurial Belani family at no. 170, Vaňkova Street. The first meeting was held here on 3 November 1862. From the beginning the club had a large membership; it continued to grow rapidly and consequently lack of space became a major problem. There was an initial attempt to solve the situation by renting a further part of the house on Vaňkova Street, but even this was insufficient to accommodate the growing interest in the club's activities. Dr. Jan Maschauer, who was Pilsen burgomaster at the time, was elected as its first chairman as the club continued to expand apace: within the first year of its existence membership reached 260 and more appropriately spacious headquarters were required. After lengthy negotiations, a committee (according to Maschauer, it consisted of Antonín Feyerfeil, Emanuel Tuschner, František Pecháček and Antonín Federmayer) decided to buy a plot of land for the construction of a new Beseda building in Kopecký Gardens, on the site of Hässlerovský House, which was the headquarters of the Central Financial Office. In the early days, the club's finances were complicated – and not only because of the decision to construct a new building. Subscriptions were low and affluent members initially had no interest in investing more private money in the club. The Měšťanská Beseda commenced its activity with a debt of 350 gulden, which gradually rose to 740 gulden. Precisely here Krofta's significant merit becomes clear: from 1875 he was a member of the new building committee, later becoming its president in 1890, and during this period he not only made generous personal donations but also by the patriotic persuasion of influential entrepreneurs and important townspeople gained financial means for the building as well as generous gifts in kind, such as building materials. He also used his political influence to the same end. In 1888, for example, he obtained for the Beseda a donation of 10,000 gulden and a large quantity of bricks from Emil Škoda in return for an order for the Škoda firm to construct the city's water supply system. He also secured the construction a financial loan from the city, which, however, was realised by his successor, František Pecháček. Thanks in part to the financial activities and donations from Josef Krofta, today's Pilsen Měšťanská Beseda was opened to the public 29 December 1901. By then, however, one of its most important benefactors, Josef Krofta, was no longer alive. Cf. R. NESTL, *Pětasedmdesát let Měšťanské besedy v Plzni: 1862–1937*, Plzeň 1938, p. 5; AMP, *Měšťanská beseda v Plzni 1862–1949* collection, Box 1248, inv. no. 178, "Vzpomínky Jaroslava Schiebla na vznik a počátek Měšťanské Besedy", p. 17.; *Výroční zpráva Měšťanské besedy v Plzni. Za padesátý správní rok 1912*, Plzeň 1912, p. 15; MÚA AV ČR, Kamil Krofta collection, Box 22, inv. no. 640, KROFTA, "Data k životopisu zemřelého Josefa Krofty a ke charakteristice jeho působení a doby".

public assemblies and petitions; it also set up a special consortium<sup>56</sup> which as a free group of voluntary contributors supported a minimum monthly levy of 30 gulden from each person to fund the publication of a Czech newspaper in Pilsen: this began life as *Plzeňské noviny* and later became *Plzeňské listy*. In the name of the Czech Political Association Krofta also managed to gain for Pilsen the above-mentioned special status of a city.

Josef Krofta was a founder member of the National Pošumavská Association; he also established its Pilsen branch which came into existence on 15 November 1884. He was elected chairman of this branch, whose members included Václav Peták and František Schwarz.<sup>57</sup> Thanks mainly to Krofta's efforts and his unique tirelessness, the Pilsen branch strove to support effectively patriotic activities in the region, as well as cultural, social and political events.

Josef Krofta remained politically active right up until his death. In addition to the above-mentioned institutions he was also, for example, a representative of the patron of St. Bartholomew's Church in Pilsen, he chaired the curatoria of city museums, the city orphanage, the health council, was an inspector and honorary captain of the Sharpshooters' Club and founder member of the Association of Czech Journalists in Pilsen.<sup>58</sup> He was an honorary member of the Pilsen Sokol organisation, the Pilsen Association of Veteran Soldiers, the Association of Mutually Supportive Workers from Pilsen and the surrounding area, Reading and Entertainment Club in Nýřany,<sup>59</sup> as well as an honorary citizen of the villages of Radnice and Sulislav.

According to the memoirs of both his sons, Richard and Kamil, Josef Krofta was a keen reader, especially of patriotic literature and newspapers (regularly *Plzeňské listy*, to which he contributed and whose famous editor Adolf Srb was Krofta's good friend; also the reviews *Vlast* and *Čas* (*Native Land* and *Time* respectively)). He was interested in na-

<sup>56</sup> The negotiator and organiser of the consortium was again Josef Krofta. MÚA AV ČR, Kamil Krofta collection, Box 22, inv. no. 640, KROFTA, "Data k životopisu zemřelého Josefa Krofty a ke charakteristice jeho působení a doby".

<sup>57</sup> Cf. F. J. MALÝ, *Čtyři desetiletí národní jednoty pošumavské v Plzni 1884–1924*, Plzeň 1924, p. 13.

<sup>58</sup> AMP, LP Josef Krofta collection, sign. 607/137. Certificate of founder member of the Association of Czech Journalists for Josefa Krofta.

<sup>59</sup> MÚA AV ČR, Kamil Krofta collection, Box 22, inv. no. 640, KROFTA, "Data k životopisu zemřelého Josefa Krofty a ke charakteristice jeho působení a doby".

tional history, which he studied diligently in his free time or while on holiday at Richardov. He supported Karel Klostermann and read all of his works that were published during Krofta's lifetime. In the early days he even arranged for Klostermann to publish anonymously in *Plzeňské listy* under the pseudonym Faustin, thanks precisely to his friendship with the afore-mentioned Adolf Srb.<sup>60</sup> In fact Srb liked to remember Josef Krofta and wrote the following about him in his memoirs: *"I have fond memories of the Franciscan monastery. [...] Often after lunch an amicable group would gather there for a pleasant meeting. One of those who would attend was the unforgettable Dr. Josef Krofta, who sadly passed away much too soon. [...] The centre of Czech society was in the smallish rooms of the Měšťanská Beseda in Vaňkova Street,<sup>61</sup> where every evening in the winter months leading personalities would meet for friendly conversation. It was especially lively in the bar, decorated by a large number of humorous illustrations related to Pilsen people and events; most were by teacher Knor from the Czech realschule and Böttinger, owner of the well-known photography studio. In this cosy room there were frequent discussions about everything connected with public life in Pilsen; hence came an initiative for all social and national enterprises. Almost every evening mayor František Pecháček participated in the discussions, a very pleasant fellow guest was Dr. Josef Krofta, later the mayor of the city of Pilsen."*<sup>62</sup>

There is no doubt that Josef Krofta took serving the nation and Pilsen very seriously. He set great store in his honest and honourable profile; he respected the truth, even if it was unfavourable to him and sources agree that he brought up his children in the same spirit. His public functions, including work in the Imperial Council, Landtag, Pilsen council and also the role of Pilsen mayor, certainly did not in themselves bring him any financial profit; on the contrary, more than once he subsidised activities out of his own pocket. Had it not been for the material base acquired through marriage, he would hardly have been able to devote himself to politics and patriotic activities and leave his law practice in the hands of articulated clerks. His last will covers predominantly property of the Svátek family<sup>63</sup> acquired through mar-

<sup>60</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>61</sup> Today Jungmannova [author's note].

<sup>62</sup> SRB, *Z půl století*, pp. 146, 159, 162.

<sup>63</sup> Even if the Krofta couple, just like two other siblings of Mrs Marie Kroftová (née Svátková), built a new recreational villa on the family land. At the time of Josef



riage; this was bequeathed to his wife and children.<sup>64</sup> Just as he spared no personal expense, nor did he look after his health. He was known for putting his public and political activities before himself. Having suffered a serious rheumatic illness, he ignored the advice of doctors to slow down a little, avoiding stress and demanding activities since the illness had taken its toll on his heart and circulatory system. The first major bout of illness occurred towards the end of 1891. In the spring of that year Krofta, together with his daughter Marie and the Rieger family travelled to the Italian resort of Arco near Lago di Garda for a relaxing healthcare stay. This did indeed benefit Krofta; subsequently, however, he returned to his previous exhausting work routine and this proved fatal. On 10 August 1892, despite the hot weather and feeling unwell, he still travelled to Sulislav, where he was an honorary citizen, to support a Czech candidate against a German rival in the community elections. As a result, he collapsed, horrifying both his colleagues and those close to him, and in fact he was never to recover. He spent the remainder of that summer as a patient in Richardov with his wife dutifully looking after him; in the autumn he was in Pilsen, under the supervision of Dr. Josef Tyl and again tended by his wife. He died 3 November 1892 at the age of 47 with his whole family gathered around him. He left behind a wife who had barely turned 40 and seven children, only two of whom were adults: the eldest child, Richard, was still a student; the other was Kamil, also a student, who had just turned 18. Josef Krofta entrusted the guardianship of his underage children to his brother-in-law Richard Svátek.<sup>65</sup> His sudden death meant a huge loss not only to his family but also to the city of Pilsen. The respect and gratitude of the city as well as of the nation's wider political and social representation were expressed in the numerous obituaries which soon appeared and were by no means limited to the Pilsen press. All of them laud Krofta's selfless patriotism and diligent work for society.<sup>66</sup> Further proof of the respect he enjoyed is evident in a decision taken at

Krofta's death, however, it was not ready and completion of the construction work had to be arranged by his widow.

<sup>64</sup> MÚA AV ČR, Kamil Krofta collection, Box 22, inv. no. 640, KROFTA, "Data k životopisu zemřelého Josefa Krofta a ke charakteristice jeho působení a doby".

<sup>65</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>66</sup> Most obituaries and death notices can be found in the AMP and in the personal remains of the Josefa Krofta collection, partly also in the MÚA AV ČR and the Kamil Krofta collection. Cf. MÚA AV ČR, Kamil Krofta collection, Box 22; AMP, LP Josef

an extraordinary session of the municipal committee of the royal city of Pilsen held on 5 November 1892 and chaired by Krofta's deputy, JUDr. Václav Peták. It was unanimously agreed that a grand funeral for Josef Krofta should be arranged at the city's expense and that the city would also pay for a worthy tomb in Pilsen's Central Cemetery.<sup>67</sup>

From the numerous obituaries, the following words by the editor of *Plzeňské listy*, Karel Jonáš,<sup>68</sup> will serve as an illustration: "As soon as he assumed the role of mayor, he sought to introduce a new, more active style into local administration. He himself worked with exemplary diligence, keeping a record of everything that was happening in the city. Although he faced incredibly difficult tasks, he carried them out with admirable assiduity, overcoming hundreds and hundreds of obstacles in his path. He turned his main focus to ensuring that all the various developments did not lead to new, huge debts for our city and in that sense he was a proponent of rational economics. In this respect his efforts were not always understood by everyone but the more perspicacious citizens were grateful to him for it. During the relatively short time in which he was mayor, Krofta did much that was beneficial to our city. From a whole range of worthy deeds, let us mention only completion of the water supply system, building of a grammar school and industrial secondary school, reform of public charity, elaboration of statutory issues, and so on and so forth. As mentioned earlier, he himself studied every issue, was actively involved in its being dealt with and therefore almost all his time was devoted to the good and well-being of the community. Yes, it may be stated that it was precisely his selfless endeavours which exhausted the very best of his strength and brought him to his death-bed."<sup>69</sup>

Krofta collection.

<sup>67</sup> Before the tomb was constructed, the remains of Josef Krofta were deposited in Pilsen's Mikuláš Cemetery, in the Svátek family grave. AMP, Okresní zastupitelstvo a okresní výbor v Plzni collection, Box Protokoly schůzí výboru z let 1865–1921, inv. no. 4805.

<sup>68</sup> Karel Jonáš (1865–1922), journalist, writer, poet, dramatist. He studied at grammar school and later turned to journalism. 1885–1887 he worked in Soběslav, then in 1888 in Brno as the Moravian correspondent of *Národní listy*, briefly edited the *Boleslavan* papers. 1889–1894, with breaks in between, he ran *Plzeňské listy*; in 1896 he worked on the editorial board of *Národní politika* in Prague. In 1897 he edited *Budívoj* magazine in České Budějovice, then returned to Pilsen. In 1906 he edited *Venkov* (*Country*), the paper of the Agrarian Party in Prague.

<sup>69</sup> Private archives of Mrs Johana Matějčková, great-granddaughter of Richard Krofta, KROFTA, "Ze starcovy paměti a zásuvky", p. 50.

### Conclusion

In order better to appreciate the enormous importance of Josef Krofta in Pilsen, in an era when the city was transforming itself to become the modern Czech economic centre of the region, a process which this paper attempts to capture, it is again important to realise the starting position in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. A remarkable feature of the history of Pilsen has always been a certain conservatism amongst its townsfolk. To a considerable extent this is given by the geographical location of the city, close to German influence and its easy entry into all spheres of life, whether economic, business, political, religious or cultural. The German inhabitants in Pilsen might have been in a minority but at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century they still had significant influence. They were much more progressive and bolder in business than the townspeople declaring Czech nationality. Moreover, many Czechs in Pilsen, just like all over Bohemia at that time, especially those from the upper classes, usually spoke German. The National Revival was still in its infancy. German capital was spreading in quite a determined manner. A significant proportion of the investment capital was also Jewish. A look at some of the largest enterprises with which the early days of capitalist enterprise in Pilsen are associated will make the situation clear: Waldstein engineering works, Belani Brothers carriage works, Bartelmus malthouse, paper mills of Piette and Fürt & Gellert, Halb-mayer steam mill, Hirsch wire works, Gambrinus and Prior breweries, Lagerhaus warehouse and business enterprise, König ceramic works in Lochotín, Klotz brickworks; the Lederer brothers from Bušovice, who brought to Pilsen the production of marocain and saffian; David Leopold Levit, who built a successful tannery in the area of today's Na Rychtářce Street, then Moric Auer who opened a distillery in the Prager district where today Nádražní and Sirková streets lead towards the Prazdroj brewery. Jewish capital was making itself felt in the financial sector; Germans controlled the Chamber of Commerce in Pilsen. The conservative nature and excessive caution of the Czech townspeople in Pilsen, combined with the fact that in those days the state demonstrably gave preference to German entrepreneurs, led to a situation in which Czech capital, as well as Czech political and social influence in the city and regional administration in Pilsen, had to struggle long and hard for its place in the sun. Success came slowly and in very fragmented form. There can be seen a gradual implementation of

Czech influence in industry: the Waldstein ironworks and engineering works were transferred to the ownership of Dr. Emil Škoda; in 1856 the steam rolling mill of František Hýra appeared in Prokopova Street; Khüry's ceramic works in the Prager suburb was taken over in 1870 by Hugo Jelínek; König's ceramic works in Lochotín was bought by Ferdinand Bauer; Czech capital was invested in beer brewing in Pilsen. Most important, however, was the entry of Czech capital into the financial sector and banking. The City Savings Bank and Pilsen Bank at the beginning were significantly connected with Josef Krofta. Moreover, the political influence of Josef Krofta and his work not only as a Pilsen burgomaster and in the Pilsen local administration but also in national and imperial organs and in the Old Czech movement (as described in this study) played a fundamental role in the Czechification and development of economic and social life in Pilsen. It can certainly be stated that Josef Krofta ranked among the names who stood behind the transformation of Pilsen from a conservative, primarily agrarian-artisan "German" city, with many remnants of a medieval economic system, into a modern Czech industrial and cultural metropolis of the West Bohemian region.