

## A fictional interview with Jonas Basanavičius personified by Mag.Vaidas Šeferis, Dr.phil.



### 1) What attracted you the most in Bohemia? Timea

It the Czech lands, the atmosphere in the country was much liberal than in Lithuania and there was relatively freedom of speech National revivalists promoted Czech language and they were not afraid to speak Czech at the offices and with authorities. I especially liked the most the fact that Czechs were proud of their language and Czech was promoted at schools. I found there a place from which I was able to influence my language - Lithuanian. I contributed to the attempts to introduce hooks and acutes like in your language, but only with a few consonants...

### 2) Did you personally know our first Czechoslovak president Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk?

I have just met him in the spa, where he often stays due to his bad health, however we didn't talk to each other. (Natalie Š)

### 3) Which famous people of the Czech National Revival did you meet in Bohemia? (Honza)

In the Czech lands I met a few celebrities of public and social life. For example Václav Brožík, who is a painter - the author of the picture Master Jan Hus in front of the council in Konstance. The I also met Mr. František Ladislav Rieger, who was a renowned and respectful Czech politician. I was also a friend with the writer Jan Neruda.

### 4) What was the political background like in Lithuania in that time?

My parents belonged to the generation of peasants who were relieved out of serfdom, and that's why I could study. Many young people finished the grammar school and started to study at the university during the period of my life. It wasn't possible before. That was the biggest change in lives of Lithuanians in my period of time.

### 5) What was the life in Bulgaria in your period like? (Jirka)

I lived in Bulgaria for 25 years and I consider it as my second mother country. Also I am better known in Bulgaria than in Czechia (the Czech Republic). Bulgaria offered many possibilities and work opportunities. As a doctor I had quite high status in the society. I was also a personal physician of the Bulgarian king. I took part in the Bulgarian politics. I am an author of the reconstruction of the historical centre of Varna. Bulgaria was a place where I could realize who I am and what I want to do.

### 6) Did you speak Czech? If so, was it difficult for you to learn Czech language?

Not really. I spoke German and Russian. I never mastered Czech language. I just knew Czech passively - I could read, as I was sitting around libraries studying. I understood, but I didn't actually speak the language.

### Did you meet Mr. Alexander Teodor Balan?

No, I've never met him.

### 7) Who was your friend in Prague?

I've always been a loner. My best friend lived in Lithuania and it was my future wife Gabriela Eleonora Mohl, a Prague German, who was my best friend in Prague. I loved her very much, but she died of tuberculosis just 5 years after we got married. I was quite reserved, not very talkative and sociable. I was really rational and dry, I took my mission very seriously.

### 8) Where did you like going for a walk or trip in Prague?

I liked to go for long walks with my wife - to Canal Garden in Prague (it doesn't exist nowadays, there is Riegrovy Sady area) and to Olšany graveyard. I spent most of my time in dusty libraries. My wife often reproached me for spending so much time there because I was not very fit and the dust did not do me good.

**9) Did you ever use to come back to Bohemia? And if so how often? Markéta**

I came back every two years. My health condition wasn't good so I visited Czech baths for many times. I also came back to Prague. Where I was at places where I was happy and fell in love with my wife, who unfortunately had died. Then I met there her sister. After that I've never gone back because it would only revived my painful memories.

**10) What did you write about in your "Aušra" magazine? Veronika**

I mostly wrote historical articles. Medieval fortresses were my favourite topic. I also wrote about Pagan religious customs and rituals. I also wrote about waging wars in oriental eastern countries. I proded to authorities to using the articles in Lithuanian churches. I was also an ethnographer. I collected a lot of legends, fairy-tails, sayings and songs, which I published in my magazine. Generations of Lithuanian children grew up on my fairy-tales

Thank you Mr Basanavičius (Mr. Šeferis) for the interview and your time.