

G.W. LEITNER'S* CERTIFICATE FOR NATURALIZATION (Documents)

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ABSTRACT:

Leitner was Hungarian by birth and “an Austrian Subject”. As an intelligent young student he learnt the major languages of the Islamic countries (e.g. Arabic, Turkish, Persian and later on Urdu) and completed the Islamic studies from the well-known *madrasahs* of Istanbul. After migration to England (September 1858), he first got admitted in King's College, London, where, later on, he became the Professor of Arabic studies.

In 1862, he decided to surrender his Austro-Hungarian citizenship and tried to get the naturalization of England. For this purpose, he completed all the relevant procedural formalities and finally succeeded in becoming citizen of Great Britain afterwards. Luckily, all the hand-written documents relating to his case of naturalization are safely preserved in the library of the Public Record Office, London.¹ Still unpublished, all the material, contained in this file is being revealed in this article.

Keywords: G. W. Leitner, Naturalization, Hungarian, Godesburg, India Office, King William, Petitioner, Public record office.

Dr. Gottlieb Wilhelm Leitner was born in Pesth, capital of Hungary, on 14 October 1840 when this country was an integral part of Austro-Hungarian Empire that was collapsed on 8 February 1918. He was, naturally gifted with an extraordinary ability in European and Islamic languages. At the age of eight he migrated to Turkey with his parents and then in the *madrasahs* of Muslims in Istanbul he learnt Arabic and Turkish and completed with distinction almost all the different aspects of Islamic studies. At fifteen, he was appointed First Class Interpreter to the British Commissariat in the Crimeas with the rank of Colonel. When the Crimean War ended (February 1856), he soon left Turkey permanently

* The Founder of the University Oriental College, Lahore (1870).

and settled in London where he first studied at King's College and afterwards was appointed Professor in Afrabic , Turkish languages and literatures in the same institute at the age of twenty-three.²

Soon, Leitner was appointed as the first Principal of the newly-established Government College at Lahore (1864) and during his long stay here (1864—1886, with certain gaps) he founded the Anjuman-i Punjab (1865), the University Oriental College (1870) and had the honour of first Registrar of the Punjab University (1882). After his retirement he went back to England and there he bought a vast area for his Oriental Institute and also built a beautiful mosque for the Muslims in Woking (1889) which is still under the control of the Pakistan High Commission under the name of Shahjahan Mosque.

In 1898, he became sick and, on medical advice, he travelled to Bonn to bath in a spa at Godesburg. He contracted pneumonia during a cold spell in February, and on 22 March 1899, he died in Bonn. His body was returned to England and was buried on 6 April, 1899 in the Cyprian Avenue of the Brookood Cemetery (Woking).³

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As stated above, Leitner was an Hungarian by birth and “an Austrian Subject”. As an intelligent young student he learnt the major languages of the Islamic countries (e.g. Arabic, Turkish, Persian and later on Urdu) and completed the Islamic studies from the well-known *madrassahs* of Istanbul. After the migration to England (September 1858), he first took the admission in the King's College, London, where, later on, he became the Professor of Arabic studies.

In 1862, he decided to surrender his Austro-Hungarian citizenship and tried to get the naturalization of England. For this purpose, he completed all the relevant procedural formalities and finally succeeded in becoming the citizen of Great Britain. Afterwards, he was selected as the first Principal of the Government College, Lahore, and as genuine passport-holder of England he faced no problem to travel abroad and took the charge of his new assignment. Luckily, all the hand-written

documents relating to his case of naturalization, are safely preserved in the library of the Public Record Office, London.⁵ Still unpublished, all the material, contained in this file is being revealed here. Provides valuable information concerning a very significant aspect of Leitner's life before he sailed for India.

Now, all the documents for Leitner's naturalization are going to be submitted as under:⁶

(1)

India Office, SW⁷
31st August, 1864

Sir,

I am directed by the Secretary of State for India in Council to inform you, in reply to your letter of the 24 [August] instant requesting Sir Charles Wood's⁸ opinion as to whether a License to reside in India should be granted to Dr. Leitner, a *Naturalized British Subject*, that no information has so yet been received in this office as to Dr. Leitner's appointment to the Principalship of the Government College at Lahore, but Sir Charles Wood has no reason to doubt that if Dr. Leitner gives the proper testimonials to the Home Office, his application may be complied with.

I am
Sir,
Your Obedient Servant
Herman Merivale⁹

[on the back side of the page, the following stamp]

Home Office
1st Sept. 1864
No. 7295
to Dr. Leitner, 5th Sept.

Report on application of Dr. Leitner for a license to reside in India. Let me see his original Petition.

H. W.

Better wait till he is appointed. I think he may show his application when he is appointed.

SB.

(2)

Dr. Leitner
6 Sept. 1864

Home Office
8 Sept. 1864
Nr. 7461

Has been appointed Principal of the Govt. College at Lahore, and renews offer for a Certificate of Naturalization, while wishes shd. contain a special clause as to travelling.

[In a different handwriting].

What he wants is the (*sic.*) of the clause as to forfeiture after more than six months absence without leave. That cannot be given. He must make special

[With this the following letter of Leitner is attached].

7 Belgrave Road
Abbey Road, NW
6 September 1864

Sir,

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of yesterday's date and to thank you for the direction which in it you convey in the name of the Secretary for the Home Department. In complying with it I beg not only to state that I have been appointed to the Principalship of the Government College at Lahore, but also to enclose for your satisfaction the Duplicate of the Indenture drawn up between myself and the Government of the Punjab. I also beg respectfully to suggest that the License to reside in India should contain a clause enabling me to travel to and from that country through the Continent without forfeiting the Certificate for Naturalization, when on furlough or otherwise. The maintenance of the Certificate of Naturalization seems to be of special advantage in rendering the purchase of property valid and it would be a great hardship if by means of a technicality which is neglected, such as advantage should be forfeited.

I am, Sir
Your very obedient servant
G. W. Leitner

To,
H. Waddington Esq.¹⁰
Whitehall

(3)

7 Belgrave Road
Abbey Road, NW
14 September 1864

Sir,

In reply to your letter I beg to reply for the grant of a passport for twelve months to enable me to go and return from India within that period. I have the honor to be Sir,

Your very obedient Servant

G. W. Leitner

H. Waddington Esq.)

[on the other side of this page].

London

14 September 1864

Dr. Leitner

Home Office

15 Sept. 1864

Nr. 7633

Applies to grant of a passport for 12 months to enable him to go to India and back.

Decline to depart from the usual course.

H.W.

(4)

7 Belgrave Road
Abbey Road, NW
9th August 1864

To the

Right Honorable the Secretary
For the Home Department.

My Lord,

The petition humbly sheweth,

That your petitioner is a naturalized British subject and that he has held the appointment of Professor of Arabic at King's College, London up to this date.

That your petitioner has been offered by the Indian Government the Professorship of the College at Lahore and that he intends proceeding to that destination within a few weeks by the Overland Route.

That your petitioner being unable to state the exact time which he will spend abroad in Her Majesty's dominions or in foreign countries yet in consideration of his having been in Her Majesty's service during the late Russian War, of his now

being in it and of his intending to continue in the same, requires and will require a Passport enabling him to travel in foreign parts, without having to renew such Passport at the end of six months, which privilege depends on your Lordship's permission.

That your petitioner therefore respectfully solicits your Lordship to grant him the permission stands in need of and your petitioner will then be enable to obtain the Passport in question from the Foreign Office and your petitioner will ever pray etc. etc.

G. W. Leitner, M.A., Ph.D.
Hon. Fellow of King's College, London
Principal of the Government College
at Lahore, India

[on the other side of this letter]
London, 9 August 1864
Dr. Leitner
Professor of Arabic at King's College

Home Office

20 August 1864

[by different hands]

& Naturalized Subject having been appointed Principal of the College at Lahore, also for an extension a time to be abroad, with British Passport.

He means to begin with a long trip in the continent. I suppose.

When was he naturalized? If before he got terms of appointment and had the prospects of it (?) the request since has made. Besides, I presume the appointment is one heads by the Governor General for India, the application may be referred to him for his opinion as to should be granted.

25 August

(5)

King's College, London
4th June 1862

To,

The Right Hon. Sir George Grey,¹¹
H. M.'s Principal Secretary
For the Home Government

Sir,

I have the honor to enclose, in accordance with your direction, a Declaration as to my age and residence in the United Kingdom, which you deemed necessary before my renewed request for a Certificate of Naturalization could be taken consideration.

I have the honor to be.

Sir
Your very humble and
Obedient Servant
G. W. Leitner

[On attached papers with this letter]

I Gottlieb William Leitner of No. 7 Belgrave Road, Abbey Road, St. John's Wood and of King's College, London, both in the Country of Middlesex, a Householder, do solemnly declare that I am in the twenty-second year of my age and have resided in England for three years eight months and upwards and that I intend permanently to reside within the United Kingdom.

And I make this solemn Declaration conscientiously believing the same to be true, and by virtue of the provisions of an Act made and passed in the Sixth year of the Reign of His late Majesty King, William the Fourth, instituted "An Act to repeal an Act of the Present Session of Parliament, instituted an Act for the more effectual abolition of Oaths and Affirmations taken and made in various Departments of the State and to substitute Declarations in lieu thereof and for the more entire suppression of voluntary and extra-judicial Oaths and Affidavits and to make other provisions for the abolition of unnecessary Oaths."

G.W. Leitner

Declared at No. 15 Grays Inn Square
In the Country of Middlesex,
The 4th day of June 1862

Before me
Samuel Denton

A London Commissioner of Administration
Oaths in Chancery

4. June/62
G.W. Leitner
Granted 12 June 1862
Home Office, June 5, 1862, No. 5082

(6)

King's College, London
28th May, 1862

Sir,

About eighteen months ago I applied to Sir G. C. Lewis¹² for titles of Naturalization and sent in my own affidavit together with the one of four householders. The answer was, that owing to my being under age at the time of my application as well as the time of my residence not being quite sufficient, the request could not be granted. Then I have since become the householder of No. 7 Belgrave Road, Abbey Road, St. John's Wood and have altogether settled in this country, where my family, several of my relations and most of my friends reside. I trust that the consideration together with the circumstances of my having resided in London ever since September 1858, will induce you kindly to grant titles of Naturalization to me, without having again to ask my lawyer to show up affidavits.

The points in my favour are:

- 1) that I am of age (since October 1861),
- 2) that I have resided in England nearly four years.
- 3) that I have served H.M. during the Russian War in H.M.'s Commissariat in the capacity of a First Class Interpreter and have been highly commended by my superior officers.

- 4) that, owing to having had the great fortune to achieve at this early age literary tasks of some reputation the authorities of King's College, London, have relaxed with regard to myself their rule for limitation of age and conferred the Professorship of Arabic upon me, which office I am now holding at that College.

My education, associations and connections having been British as well as all my prospects laying in this country, where I have the honor of being a householder, makes me serious of becoming a citizen of Great Britain, when I could purchase property and inherit etc. and will make the renewal of my application to become a Naturalized British Subject intelligibly to you. I beg to add that I am a native of Pesth, capital of Hungary and an Austrian Subject. I am a member of the Church of England.

I have the honor to be, sir

Your most humble Servant,
G. W. Leitner

To the Rt. Hon.
Sir Georg Greg

28 May 62
G. W. Leitner

Home Office

May 29, 1862

Nr. 4948

Renew request for Cert. of Naturalization – being of age, and having resided nearly 4 years.

There must be a Declaration etc. applicable to the present time.

H.W.

(7)

To,

The Right Honorable Sir Georg Cornwall
Lewis Baronet, Her Majesty's
Principal Secretary of State
for the Home Department
The Memorial of Gottlieb William Leitner
of Nr. 21, Hunter Steel, Brunswick Square,
London

Humbly Sheweth,

That the Memorialist is a Subject of Austria. That he is in the twenty-first year of his age.

That he has served the Majesty during the Crimean War as a first class Interpreter to the Commissariat of the Osmanli Irregular Cavalry.

That he has resided at Malta for seven months and in England two years and four months.

That he is unmarried.

That he is Lecturer in the Arabic and Turkish Languages and Literatures at King's College, London, and intends to reside permanently with the United Kingdom of Great Britain.

That he is desirous of obtaining a Certificate of Naturalization for the purpose of being better enabled to settle within the United Kingdom.

May it therefore please your Honor to grant your petitioner a Certificate of Naturalization conferring on him such rights and capacities of a natural born British Subject as by the Act 7th and 8th year of Her present Majesty in that behalf you may be authorized to grant.

And your Memorialist will every pray

G. W. Leitner

[by another hand]

I, Gottlieb William Leitner of No. 21, Hunter Street, Brunswick Square, Middlesex, Lecturer in Arabic and Turkish at King's College, London, do solemnly declare that I am a subject of Austria – that I am in the twenty-first year of my age –

that I have served Her Majesty during the Crimean War as a first class Interpreter to the Commissariat of the Osmanli Irregular Cavalry – that I have resided seven months in Malt and in England two years and seven months – that I am unmarried – that I am Lecturer in the Arabic and Turkish languages and Literature at King's College, London – that I intend to reside permanently within the United Kingdom and that I desire to obtain a Certificate of Naturalization for the purpose of being better enabled to settle within the United Kingdom. And I make this solemn declaration conscientiously believing the same to be true and by virtue of the provisions of an Act made and passed in the sixth year of the reign of this late Majesty King William the Fourth instituted “An Act to repeal an Act of the present session of Parliament instituted an Act for the more effectual abolition of Oaths and Affirmations taken and made in several Departments of the State and to substitute Declarations in lieu thereof and for the more entire suppression of voluntary and extra-judicial oaths and affidavits and to make other provisions for the abolition of unnecessary oaths.”

[signed by Leitner]

G. W. Leitner
Lecturer in Arabic
and Turkish,
K.C.L.

Declared at the Police Court, Bow Street
in the Country of Middlesex, on the Thirtieth
day of January 1861. Reference

J. Henry

Magistrate in the said Court

I, John Hall Gladstone,¹³ Ph. D., F.R.S. of 28 Leinster Gardens, Bayswater, a natural born British subject and a householder, do solemnly and sincerely declare that I believe that Gottlieb William Leitner of 21 Hunter Street, Brunswick Square is a subject of Austria [above-stated Declaration without any change] enabled to settle within the United Kingdom and moreover I have known the said Gottlieb William Leitner about since his arrival in England and can vouch for his respectability and loyalty and I make this solemn declaration conscientiously believing [above-cited Declaration] oath.

H. Gladstone

Declared this fourth day of
February 1861 at the Police Court,
Marlborough Street, before me.

W.W. Beadon

One of the Magistrates of the
Police Court of the Metropolis

I, Charles Henry Purday¹⁴ of 13. St. Petersburg place Bayswater Music Publisher and Seller, a natural born British Subject and a householder do solemnly and sincerely declare that I believe that Gottlieb William Leitner of 21, Hunter Street, Brunswick Square, is a subject of Austria.

[reproduced entirely H. Gladstone's above-cited declaration upon oath]

[signed] Charles Henry Purday

Declared at the Police Court,
Marlborough Street, this
29th Day of January 1861
before me.

W.W. Beadon

Magistrate for Middlesex

I, William Hart,¹⁵ of 59, Doughty Street, Meclenborough Square...Secretary to the Colonial Church and School Society, a natural born British Subject and a householder do solemnly declare [above-cited Gladstone's affidavit].

[signed] William Hart

Declared at the Police Court,
Bow Street of Middlesex, this
first day of February 1861,
before me.

J. Arnuf

One of the Police Magistrates
of the Metropolis

[Gladstone's affidavit, op. cit.]

I, John Thomas Fry, of Nr. 7, Great Borain Street, Country of Middlesex, Solicitor, a natural born British Subject, a householder, solemnly declare.

[Gladstone's affidavit, op. cit.]

[signed] John Thomas Fry

Declared at the Police Court,
Bow Street, in the County of Middlesex,
this first day of February 1861, before me

J. Arnuf

One of the Police Magistrates
of the Metropolis

[All these Declarations have been put together in a thick blue envelope]

No. 3843

Granted 12 June 1862

G. W. Leitner

Home Office Feb. 61 1861 Nr. 1087

An Austrian, in his 21st year – a Lecturer in Eastern Languages, has resided 2 years and 4 months, and intends to do so permanently.

Insufficient residence and under age
[order issued]
Decline on the above grounds
H.W.

References:

- ¹ Document Nr. HO1/105/3843.
- ² In this college, he laid the foundation of “The Oriental Section” in 1861.
- ³ For detail see my books entitled: *Writings of Dr. Leitner*. Lahore 2002; *G. W. Leitner (1840-1899)*. Lahore 2018 and *Dr. G. W. Leitner alias Maulawi Abdur Rashid Affendi*. Lahore 2019 (in print).
- ⁴ For detail see my books entitled: *Writings of Dr. Leitner*. Lahore 2002; *G. W. Leitner (1840-1899)*. Lahore 2018 and *Dr. G. W. Leitner alias Maulawi Abdur Rashid Affendi*. Lahore 2019 (in print).
- ⁵ Document Nr. HO1/105/3843.
- ⁶ With this original hand-written text of the documents, my explanatory parts are in square brackets [].
- ⁷ I have followed the arrangement of the present file.
- ⁸ 1st Viscount, Halifax, statesman (1800-1885) (see *Dictionary of National Biography*=DNB, s.v.)
- ⁹ English civil servant and author (1806-1876) (cf. DNB, s.v.; Buckland; *Annual Register*, 1876; *Encycl. Britannica*).
- ¹⁰ Unidentified.
- ¹¹ British statesman (1799-1882) (cf. DNB, s.v.; *The Annual Register*, 1882).
- ¹² Unidentified.
- ¹³ Ph.D., F.R.S. (1827-1902). English chemist and educationist (DNB, Supplement vol. IV, s.v.
- ¹⁴ English composer, musician and writer (1799-1885) (cf. Grove: *History of Music and Musicians*, 1940).
- ¹⁵ Scottish-American painter (1823-1894) (cf. *Dictionary of American Biography*, Joseph Irving: *The Book of Scottish Statesmen*, 1881; *Encycl. Britannica*, 1911).