

Tin of “Moslem” Brand Cigarettes by the Problem Cigarette Company (c. 1912)

Abstract

The Mahala-Problem cigarette factory was one of the premier Berlin cigarette manufactures before the First World War. Founded in 1889 by the Jewish entrepreneur Szlama Rochman, it followed contemporary German habits of taking on an “Oriental”-sounding firm name. While it possibly referenced the Turkish origin of the raw tobacco its cigarettes contained, the exoticism of the brand name was certainly also supposed to make it seem worldly and sophisticated to German smokers. The firm introduced its “Moslem” brand of cigarettes in 1912 and hired the graphic designer Hans Rudi Erdt to design their packaging and advertising posters. Erdt, who had been trained at the Munich School of Applied Arts, was a graphic designer working for a premier Berlin design firm (Hollerbaum & Schmidt). His design was visually striking and exotic and Problem Moslem became one of the most well-known cigarette brands in pre-war Imperial Germany. Szlama Rochman's sons, Heinrich and Carl, sold first the brand and then the company to the Reemtsma firm in 1930/1932; Heinrich managed to escape to England in 1934 but Carl and his wife Else were murdered in Auschwitz in 1942.

Source



Source: "Moslem" brand cigarette tin by the Problem-Mahala cigarette company, c. 1912. Courtesy of Jewish Museum Berlin, <https://objekte.jmberlin.de/object/jmb-obj-103344>

Jewish Museum Berlin

Recommended Citation: Tin of “Moslem” Brand Cigarettes by the Problem Cigarette Company (c. 1912), published in: German History in Documents and Images, <<https://germanhistorydocs.org/en/wilhelmine-germany-and-the-first-world-war-1890-1918/ghdi:image-5387>> [September 26, 2025].