

Raj Apples

These apples would be easily mistaken for the Rajka apples currently grown in the Czech Republic, but they're not, because Raj apples are very, very rare. This variety of apples is grown in **one** orchard at **one** obscure farm outside of Libochovice. And they are absolutely not for sale.

If the people who maintained the orchard were interested in talking to nosy strangers, they would say that the Raj apple comes ultimately from what is now Iraq, and that it was brought to what is now Czech lands in the 13th Century by either Franciscan monks or Crusaders from the Holy Lands. But since they're **not** interested in talking to nosy strangers, the orchard staff will instead signal for a rapid response squad from the Papal Swiss Guard to suddenly manifest and escort the interlopers to a place where the Guards can provide a very stern lecture about the virtues of minding one's own business.

That the Pope has actual armed forces in the highly irreligious Czech Republic is remarkable; but what is even more remarkable is that the Swiss Guard have openly operated there during the entire 20th Century, very much

including the Nazi and Soviet occupations. Although 'openly' is misleading: it's as if the Guard was simply *overlooked* by the occupiers, as long as they stuck solely to guarding the orchard. In fact, the Guard is **still** overlooked by both the European Union and NATO, despite the fact that the Vatican belongs to neither organization.

Any attempt to bring this situation's attention to the authorities simply fails. Nobody in the local, national, or international community will care enough to even respond. Traditional media outlets are likewise disinterested. Trying to put the word out via social media never manages to take off, and the sites that host information about the orchard tend to have fairly specific data-retention issues. And anybody who violently attacks the orchard is never seen again.

All over a few crates of *apples*. Every harvest, the orchard loads up a few pickup trucks, the trucks drive off into the night, and that's the end of it. It is, indeed, an absolute mystery -- which makes the sudden presence of a Raj apple such a subtly disquieting experience. There the apple sits. Somehow, people who look at it know that it's special. What are its properties? What does it signify?

Well. There's an obvious way to at least try to end one's ignorance. Take a bite, and see.

- © Moe Lane. All rights reserved.
 - <http://www.moelane.com>
- <https://www.patreon.com/MoeLane?ty=h>