



# War and Higher Education in Riga, 1914–1920

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*Abstract.* The First World War, the Russian Revolution, the Bolshevik coup and the subsequent establishment of the Bolshevik regime, the German occupation and independent Latvia followed one another in quick succession within the territory of Latvia over the course of six years. The change of regimes significantly affected all spheres of life, including higher education. In late 19th century Riga had become an important centre for higher technical education in the Russian Empire. The conditions of war and German occupation brought significant changes in the work of Riga Polytechnical Institute, as it was evacuated to Russia. As the powers changed, the institute was not restored; however, its human resources and, to an extent, material base served as foundations for the creation of the Baltic Technical University (*Baltische Technische Hochschule*), the Bolshevik Higher School of Latvia (*Latvijas Augstskola*), the Technical Higher School in Riga (*Technische Hochschule in Riga*) and the Higher School of Latvia (*Latvijas Augstskola*; later University, *Latvijas Universitāte*). Over a short period of time, four political regimes sought to establish higher education institutions appropriate to their system of political values and governance. This article will compare circumstances and goals, as well as provide an overview of how the respective regimes initiated and implemented the activities of the universities in these extraordinary circumstances (war and revolution).

**Keywords:** *First World War, War of Independence, higher education, Riga Polytechnical Institute, University of Latvia.*

*Anotācija.* Pirmasis pasaulinis karas, Rusijas revolūcija, bolševiku perversmas ir vēlāku bolševiku režimo ieviešana, vokiešu okupācija ir Latvijas neatkarības atgūšana pār šēšus gadus gandrīz sekmīgi vienā citā Latvijas teritorijā. Režimu maiņa būtiski ietekmēja visus dzīves aspektus, ieskaitot augšējās izglītības sistēmu. 19. gadsimta beigās Rīga bija kļuvusi par svarīgu tehniskās izglītības centru Krievijas Impērijā. Karš un vācu okupācija radīja būtiskas izmaiņas Rīgas Politehniskā institūta darbībā, jo tā tika evakuēta uz Krieviju. Kad mainījās varas, institūts netika atjaunots; tomēr tā cilvēkstarpniecība un, mērķa ziņā, materiālā bāze kalpoja kā pamats Baltijas Tehniskās universitātes (*Baltische Technische Hochschule*), Bolševiku Latvijas Augstskolas (*Latvijas Augstskola*), Tehniskās augstskolas Rīgā (*Technische Hochschule in Riga*) un Latvijas Augstskolas (*Latvijas Augstskola*; vēlāk Universitāte, *Latvijas Universitāte*). Īsā laika periodā četras politiskās sistēmas mēģināja izveidot augstākās izglītības iestādes, kas atbilstu to politiskajām vērtībām un valdīšanas sistēmai. Šī raksta mērķis ir salīdzināt apstākļus un mērķus, kā arī nodrošināt pārskatu par to, kā katrā no šīm sistēmām tika ieviesta un īstenota universitāšu darbība šajās ārkārtīgajās apstākļos (karš un revolūcija).

aukštojo techninio mokymo centru Rusijos imperijoje. Karas ir vokiečių okupacija atnešė reikšmingų pokyčių Rygos politechnikos instituto darbe, nes jis buvo perkeltas į Rusiją. Pasikeitus galioms, institutas nebuvo atkurtas, tačiau jo žmogiškieji ištekliai ir tam tikra prasme materialinė bazė buvo pagrindas kuriant Baltijos technikos universitetą („Baltische Technische Hochschule“), Latvijos bolševikų aukštąją mokyklą, Rygos technikos aukštąją mokyklą („Technische Hochschule“) ir Latvijos aukštąją mokyklą (vėliau – Latvijos universitetas). Per trumpą laiką keturi politiniai režimai siekė įsteigti aukštojo mokslo institucijas, atitinkančias jų politinių vertybių ir valdymo sistemą. Šiame straipsnyje bus palygintos aplinkybės ir tikslai, taip pat apžvelgta, kaip atitinkami režimai inicijavo ir įgyvendino universitetų veiklą šiomis ypatingomis aplinkybėmis (karas ir revoliucija).

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**Esminiai žodžiai:** *Pirmasis pasaulinis karas, Nepriklausomybės kovos, aukštasis išsilavinimas, Rygos politechnikos universitetas, Latvijos universitetas.*

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## Introduction

In recent years, the interest in the research of Latvian history during the most significant changes of the 20th century has grown significantly, with attempts to provide a new, perhaps deeper understanding of events, often emphasising the process of the First World War, the War of Independence, and the formation of the Latvian state.<sup>1</sup> It is clear that the effects of the prolonged war and radical political change have been profound and diverse, however, only in recent years has there been an increased focus on issues beyond the traditional military and political conditions and outside the political elite and ideological currents.

The territory of Latvia underwent several significant changes in political, military, economic and social relations between August 1914, when the First World War began, and 1920, when the war of Independence ended formally and in reality. These changes were accompanied by the elimination of state administration and various institutions, their re-establishment and the re-evaluation of their functions. The changes were also accompanied by various constraints, shortages, rapid political changes, and polarisation of society caused by the conditions of war. Each of the five regimes (Tsarist Russia, Russian

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example: ŠILINŠ, Jānis. Pirmā pasaules kara nozīme Latvijas valsts tapšanas procesā. *Varas Latvijā. No Kurzemes hercogistes līdz neatkarīgai valstij*. Rīga: Latvijas Universitātes apgāds, 2019, 408.–498. lpp.; JĒKABSONS, Ēriks. Military Processes Which led to Latvia's Statehood (1918–1920). *Latvia and Latvians*. Collection of scholarly articles. Rīga: Latvian Academy of Sciences, 2018, pp. 445–475.

Provisional Government, German occupation, the Bolshevik regime and independent Latvia) initiated and implemented often very different, broad and sometimes far-reaching reforms. Each of these regimes had a different list of political priorities, and in each of them the political elite changed.

One of the essential elements (both as a facilitator and as an indicator of the success of modernisation) during the modernisation of the territory of Latvia in late 19th century was the Riga Polytechnical Institute (RPI). Riga among other Russian cities had a unique position. A highly industrialised centre for various businesses, having a population which had one of the highest literacy levels and geographically and culturally relatively close to the Western Europe, Riga and Baltic provinces in general developed into the centre for the distinctive western Russian region. Ethnic and religious diversity along with the previous history of local autonomy and Baltic German dominance in almost every sphere of life contributed to the specific conditions.<sup>2</sup> Higher education in Medicine, Theology, Arts was already organised at the oldest institution of higher learning – Iur'ev (formerly Dorpat, later Tartu) University which became regional and undisputed centre of academic research and all activities related to university life. However the place for the university level engineering centre was vacant, and Riga was obvious choice.

The presence of a modern, competitive university in Riga was an important contribution to the recruitment of qualified specialists for economic enterprises. There were a lot more opportunities for the local community to become involved in the process of obtaining education, and a large number of Latvians and those in the surrounding provinces actively made use of opportunities to study, and thus (at least theoretically) opportunities to improve their economic and social status. The Institute also created a highly educated intellectual environment (though specialising in technical and applied fields). RPI became an important factor in the development of Riga and its region.

The participation of Tsarist Russia in the First World War and its influence on the territory of Latvia provides the first period from August 1914 to February 1917. During this period, part of Latvia came under German occupation, while the rest was subjected to special near-frontline conditions. Although the political system was the previous one – the conservative autocracy of Tsarist Russia – war conditions imposed many restrictions, including on the functioning of educational institutions. A large part of the Latvian population and institutions were evacuated, the normal order of life was disrupted. The revolution of February 1917 resulted in the rapid democratisation of Russia; the October coup d'état resulted in Bolsheviks coming to power and the Civil War breaking out. All these events had a direct impact on Latvia, but since 1915 part of Latvia's territory was under the occupation of the German army.

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<sup>2</sup> On the population and general developments in Riga, see, for instance: OBERLÄNDER, Erwin, WOHLFART, Kristine (Herausgeber). *Portrait einer Vielvölkerstadt am rande des Zarenreiches 1857–1914*. Paderborn-München-Wien-Zürich: Schöningh, 2004.

After the fall of Riga to the Germans in September 1917, and even more so after the Brest-Litovsk peace treaty signed in March 1918, Latvian territory came under the control of German army, which was the only serious military force in Kurzeme (Kurland) and Vidzeme (Livland). Although the Germans ruled various parts of Latvia for a shorter or longer period, the administration was governed by the laws of another country, including the creation of a completely new institutional framework for local life. Consequently, as far as possible, the Germans sought to bring the organisation of public administration in line with German regulations.

On November 18, 1918, the independent Republic of Latvia was proclaimed as an alternative to tsarist, Bolshevik, anti-Bolshevik Russia and German occupation. It was the fourth attempt to create a system of governance suitable for the conditions of war but with markedly different orientations of political values, with the ideas of Latvian nationalism and democratic liberalism in the foreground.

Alongside the German occupation regime and the ideas of an independent Latvia, there was also the Bolshevik regime's project of Soviet Latvia. Attempting to radically change existing social relations by creating a conceptually new political and economic system, the Bolsheviks unsuccessfully pursued the process of building a socialist state. The Bolshevik regime in Vidzeme and Kurzeme (most importantly in the context of this study – in Riga) lasted no longer than half a year. By the summer of 1919 the Red Army had already been pushed back to Latgale.

All of these regimes implemented their own projects for the establishment of a higher education institution. Each of the regimes had different interests and priorities in supporting the university, as well as different approaches in the creation of its content and staffing. The composition of students also differed in each era. However, at the same time, the plans of each regime were influenced by local conditions, the availability of various teaching aids and academic staff, the ability to attract qualified personnel, matriculate a sufficient number of students, and ensure an academic reputation for the newly established higher education institution. By comparing various higher education institutions in one city, this study will attempt to track the formation process of higher education institutions and to provide an insight into the interaction between regime and university: what was the attitude of the changing political and military regimes towards the establishment (or existence) of a higher education institution, and how administrative and academic staff dealt with the changing situation.

## **Riga Polytechnical Institute before 1914**

The number of students at RPI, the oldest Russian institution of higher education of engineering sciences, its material assets and the quality of studies was impressive for the scale of Russia. It was founded in 1862 by local municipal and private organisations but

supervised by the Ministry of Finances and its curator was governor-general of Baltic provinces. However funding was provided by different, mostly private local industrial institutions. In 1896 when new statutes were adopted, it changed its name to the Riga Polytechnical Institute and became an official state education institution, which however retained some autonomy and was still largely funded by local private institutions, although it received state support too.<sup>3</sup> Within the Russification campaign, the Institute gradually changed its instruction language from German to Russian and became an even more attractive study place for students from all over Russia. Prior to the First World War, local students (that is, students who originated in Baltic provinces) constituted the minority of all students at the Institute. Between 1862 and 1895 students from Baltic provinces constituted about one third of all students,<sup>4</sup> however, later their number, according to the *Album Academicum*, increased, reaching 53% (mostly due to the influx of the increasing number of ethnic Latvians and Estonians).<sup>5</sup>

Unlike all other Russian institutions of higher polytechnical education, RPI had a teaching system which was based not on courses but on subjects students could choose freely. In February 1914, shortly before the war, the RPI library contained 60,838 volumes of books, a large number of specialty cabinets, laboratories, museums, machine models and collections. RPI consisted of 36 professors, 33 associate professors and 24 assistants. The RPI budget was 467,415 roubles a year, of which more than half (277,900 roubles) was from tuition fees and the remainder from state aid (95,000), other income (78,505) and donations from local population groups (16,000).<sup>6</sup> RPI was a private educational institution but, like others, periodically received government support.

Despite the success of RPI, the Russian education system as a whole lagged significantly behind the European level at that time. The restrictions imposed by authoritarian Russia in various spheres of life were also reflected prominently in the field of higher education. It was not until the early 20th century that special higher education institutions – higher courses – were created for women. Neither RPI nor the University of Iur'ev allowed the admission of women.

Restrictions were also imposed on some other groups. There were percentage restrictions on enrolment for Jews, the so-called *numerus clausus*. In October 1913, the curator of the Riga school district reported to the heads of the Riga's higher and secondary educational institutions on the efforts of the Jews to formally convert to Lutheranism in order to circumvent these restrictions. Heads of the institutions were urged to pay

<sup>3</sup> On the history of institute, see: *Augstākās tehniskās izglītības vēsture Latvijā*. I. daļa. Rīgas Politehnikums, Rīgas Politehniskais institūts. 1862–1919. Rīga: RTU, 2002; *Album Academicum. Rīgas politehnikums 1862–1919.g.* Rīga, 1938, 13–22. lpp.

<sup>4</sup> RAMANIS, V. d. E.. Rīgas Politehnikums kā organizatorisks faktors Latvijas tehnikas attīstībā. *Album Academicum. Rīgas politehnikums 1862–1919.g.* Rīga, 1938. 29. lpp.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 30. lpp.

<sup>6</sup> RPI review, March, 1914. LNA LVVA (Latvijas Nacionālais arhīvs Latvijas Valsts vēstures arhīvs; Latvian National Archives Latvian State Historical Archives), 7175. f., 1. apr., 61a. l., 69. lp.

attention to the certificates of faith issued by Finnish Lutheran pastor Arthur Pier. The authorities considered them to be fake and ordered the Jews “baptised” with them to leave the university and expelling them if they did not comply. Re-admission was only allowed when “the correctness of the conversion to Christianity was recognised by the authorities.”<sup>7</sup>

The other group that often faced restrictions and was viewed with suspicion by the Russian authorities, was Poles. The Polish efforts to fight the Tsarist regime and their longing for their own state led to a serious confrontation with Russian authorities. Students were often at the forefront of Polish activities. On July 2, 1914, the Deputy Director of the Russia’s Department of Police, Lerche, reported to the Department of National Enlightenment that former students of the Kiev Polytechnic Institute, nobleman Boleslaw Szacki and citizen Adam Sawicki had asked to be enrolled in the RPI and allowed to live in Riga. Both potential Polish students were described as supporters of the Polish socialist party, who promoted the liberation of Poles from “the ‘Russian yoke’ and ‘the restoration of an independent Poland with extensive democratisation’”.<sup>8</sup> While the curator of the Riga school district had no objections to admitting them both to the RPI, in many other cases the Poles and Catholics were officially and unofficially restricted.<sup>9</sup>

## Riga Polytechnic Institute in Riga and after evacuation

The first half of the war brought major changes to the RPI budget. The RPI income increased from more than 467,000 to 531,173 roubles. The first year of the war did not bring about any dramatic change in the work of RPI. The number of volumes in the Institute’s library even had increased by 2,000 compared with the beginning of 1914, the number of professors had increased by three, and the number of assistants by two, although the number of associate professors had decreased by three.<sup>10</sup>

On January 1, 1915, the RPI had 1,827 students (172 in the department of construction, 258 in engineering, 455 in mechanics, 271 in chemistry, 360 in agriculture and 311 in commercial sciences). In the 1915/1916 academic year, after the evacuation to Moscow, the number of students reached 2,626 (220 in construction, 299 in engineering, 831 in mechanics, 472 in chemistry, 382 in agriculture, 422 in the commercial sciences

<sup>7</sup> LNA LVVA, 7175. f., 1. apr., 336. l., 265., 284. lp.

<sup>8</sup> LNA LVVA, 7175. f., 1. apr., 336. l., 338., 339. lp.

<sup>9</sup> Historians Ēriks Jēkabsons, Arkadiusz Janicki and Michał Łaszczkowski discussed in details conditions of Polish students at the Institute in: JĒKABSONS, Ēriks. Poļu studenti Rīgas Politehniskajā institūtā (19. gs. II puse–1915. gads). *Latvijas Vēstures Institūta Žurnāls*, 2005, Nr. 3, 56.–83. lpp.; JANICKI, Arkadiusz, ŁASZKOWSKI, Michał, JĒKABSONS, ĒRIKS. *Polentechnikum* [Rīgas Politehnikums]. Warszawa: Ministerstwo Kultury i Dziedzictwa Narodowego, 2012. On Lithuanians, see: JĒKABSONS, Ēriks. *Lietuvieši Latvijā*. Rīga: LU Filozofijas un socioloģijas institūts, 2003.

<sup>10</sup> LNA LVVA, 7175. f., 1. apr., 61a. l., 83. lp.

department). On the eve of the Revolution in January 1917, the number of students in Moscow dropped significantly – to 1,593 (122 in construction, 168 in engineering, 520 in mechanics, 319 in chemistry, 207 in agriculture and 257 in the commercial sciences department).<sup>11</sup> After the evacuation, the proportion of students from the Baltic provinces fell. In October 1916 out of all students just 6.3% were ethnic Latvians, 14.5% Estonians, 15.6% Germans (most probably, majority of them Baltic Germans), 25.9% Russians, and 22.9% Jews (according to the *Album Academicum* biographical data, most Russian and Jewish students did not originate in Baltic provinces).<sup>12</sup> No significant changes took place in the study process; lecture courses were largely implemented according to pre-war principles, even after evacuation.

Inevitably, students were involved in warfare, both as a result of mobilisation and as volunteers. A certain number of them died on the battlefield. Institutions of higher learning in the Western part of Russia suffered particularly from the effects of mobilisation. Mobilisations took place gradually, with the last major one taking place on 31 January 1917.<sup>13</sup> The RPI sought to identify fallen students, but this was practically difficult to do because military authorities refused to compile such information due to being preoccupied. Information about fallen students was provided by relatives and student organisations. For example, the Russian student fraternity *Fraternitas Arctica* reported on February 24, 1915, the death of its member, *praporshchik* (ensign) of the Lithuanian Guards Regiment *Leontii Nasakin* on December 18, 1914, in a hospital in Warsaw from his wounds sustained in battle. On April 28, 1915, the RPI Council decided to place a marble slab to honour former and current students that had fallen.<sup>14</sup>

In addition to the many existing official and unofficial restrictions, the conditions of war reinforced political and religious restrictions for RPI students. In April 1915 various railway authorities offered traineeships to senior students on steam locomotives. Given the strategic importance of the railroad during war, “impeccably reliable” students were invited to take part in the traineeships. Unofficially, RPI received notice that “believers of Roman Catholic and Jewish faiths” could not be accepted into the traineeships. Professor of mechanical engineering Charles Clark announced the restrictions to the students on a bulletin board, which caused much dissatisfaction among Polish and Lithuanian students. The curator of the Riga school district reprimanded Clark for breach of confidentiality.<sup>15</sup> Russian authorities in general closely followed political developments within Baltic German community, deporting number of their leaders to the Inner Russian provinces. However deportations did not include only politically active leaders. Around 40,000

<sup>11</sup> LNA LVVA, 7175. f., 1. apr., 380. l., 81.-100., 111. lp.

<sup>12</sup> *Jaunais Vārds*, 26.01.1917.

<sup>13</sup> For the good general overview, see, for instance: SIZOVA, A. J. *Rossijskaja visshaja shkola v 1917 godu. Mezhdū samoderzhavijem i bolshevikami*. Prospekt, 2017.

<sup>14</sup> LNA LVVA, 7175. f., 1. apr., 7186. l., 11., 26. lp.

<sup>15</sup> LNA LVVA, 7175. f., 1. apr., 337. l., 53.-55., 100. lp.



Jews from Kurzeme, and around 2,000 Baltic Germans (including foreign nationals and recently settled German colonists) were deported, together with 18,000 more people of Baltic German origin from Vidzeme.<sup>16</sup> It seems however that those deportations did not have a significant impact on the student population and academic staff.

Nationals of hostile states were also subject to various restrictions. The first decision on the citizens of hostile nations was to exempt German and Austro-Hungarian students from attendance of lectures until their parents could take their documents from the RPI.<sup>17</sup> Meanwhile, Czechs from these countries could attend lectures while their parents received Russian citizenship. It was forbidden to carry German and Austro-Hungarian awards. German professors Kirstein, Bruno Doss and Henning had to leave Riga, but the RPI honorary membership status of former RPI professor Wilhelm Ostwald had to be revoked. Restrictions on Turkish nationals were not applied to Orthodox Greeks, Slavs and former French government “protégés” in Turkey. The German student union Marcomannia requested the word “German” to be removed from its statutes and said it is ready to welcome any immatriculated RPI student.<sup>18</sup> The 1917 revolution and the general democratisation of society brought about some changes in the operation of the RPI. The student immatriculation was no longer restricted by *numerus clausus*, ethnic, religious, political or gender considerations. This meant that the number of students could increase significantly.

In the summer of 1915 the RPI was evacuated to Moscow, on 8 October the evacuation was completed and the institute began to operate under new conditions in Russia. However, RPI management considered the situation to be temporary, with the expectation that it would be possible to return to Riga sooner or later. The signing of the Brest-Litovsk peace treaty between Germany and the Bolshevik Soviet Russia in March 1918 affirmed the Bolshevik relinquishment of Russia’s western areas to Germany. That meant that there were no longer any hopes of restoring the RPI in Riga. In May 1918, RPI ceased operations in Moscow following the announcement of Rector Paul Walden that the Institute would be transferred to Ivanovo-Voznesensk, where the Ivanovo-Voznesensk Polytechnical Institute would be established. The RPI had to send a commission there to “study the matter” and help set up the new institute.<sup>19</sup> The new institute was established, but the traditions of RPI were not continued at this new educational institution.

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<sup>16</sup> DRIBINS, Leo. Vāciešu un ebreju deportācija no Kurzemes un Vidzemes guberņām Pirmā pasaules kara gados. *Latvijas Vēstures Institūta Žurnāls*, 2015, Nr. 1., 70.-87. lpp.

<sup>17</sup> LNA LVVA, 7175. f., 3. apr., 7. l., 87. lp.

<sup>18</sup> LNA LVVA, 7175. f., 3. apr., 7. l., 91., 96., 103., 109. lp.

<sup>19</sup> LNA LVVA, 7175. f., 3. apr., 8. l., 63. lp.



## Baltic Technical University

However, many RPI teaching staff members chose not to stay in Bolshevik Russia, and many of them returned to Riga under the leadership of Rector Walden. It was they who, under the conditions of German occupation, decided not to restore the old name of the institute, but to continue their work under the name of the Baltic Technical Higher School (*Baltische Technische Hochschule*; BTH). The word “Baltic” in BTH was well in line with Baltic German political intentions. The local Germans opposed the efforts of the Latvians (or Estonians) to create their own national states. The logical continuation of the Baltic German cultural and political dominance in the Baltic States in 1918 seemed to be a form of state encompassing not only Latvia (or Estonia) but the entire Baltic provinces. The BTH fitted this concept very well. Undoubtedly, the former RPI teaching staff members, the absolute majority of whom were of Baltic German or German origin, thought similarly. The BTH existed from August 1918 to January 1919, that is, until Riga was occupied by the Bolsheviks.

Formally, the BTH administration tried to resume work also after Riga was liberated from the Bolsheviks in May 1919. Unlike the RPI, the BTH did not receive financial support from the state (i.e. the occupation authorities), professional associations or local governments. As a result, the tuition fees in the autumn semester of 1918 were significantly higher than at RPI and reached 500 marks, which was considered to be a significant amount.<sup>20</sup> The correspondence of the university was done practically entirely in German, but certain documents of record keeping were accepted also in Russian. This was a significant difference from the times of RPI, when after the beginning of Russification 1890s, Russian became the only official language at RPI (both in administration and in lectures). This was also the case during First World War. None of the BTH documents preserved in the archives are in Latvian.

In the conditions of war it was unclear what had happened to the RPI – whether it was still operating in Moscow, Ivanovo-Voznesensk or had returned to Riga. RPI student Alexander Orlovsky asked these questions in a letter dated September 30, 1918 to the RPI/BTH administration, which illustrates the overall picture. Does the RPI still exist? If so, where? Will it be possible to become a student if the tuition fee is paid?<sup>21</sup>

In fact the RPI's existence had ended in Moscow after the transfer of its material assets to the newly formed Ivanovo-Voznesensk Polytechnical Institute. At the same time, it was also clear that the existing faculty (almost all of them were the former RPI teaching staff) as well as a large proportion of former RPI students represented the presence of the RPI in the new university.

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<sup>20</sup> *Latvijas Sargs*, 07.07.1919.

<sup>21</sup> LNA LVVA, 7175. f., 4. apr., 8. l., 23. lp.

The staff of BTH was largely made up of former RPI employees who had remained in Riga. They came from various ethnic backgrounds, but most of them were Germans. Of course, the most prominent among them was chemist P. Walden, who had come from a family of Latvian farmers and ethnically was representative of the Latvian Germanisation process. A few ethnic non-Germans also worked at the BTH, for example the Latvian Mārtiņš Prīmanis and the Jew Baruch Ziwiān. In order to carry out the study course during the semester, a shortened programme and examination procedure was created based on the model of German technical universities.<sup>22</sup> The lack of interest from the German occupation authorities in the development of the local environment and the confusion and turmoil in Germany itself in the final phase of the First World War prevented faster progress in this direction.

The number of students in the university grew very quickly, even despite the lack of information. BTH welcomed students of both genders. During the only semester of its existence, women were also allowed to study (for example, Kristīne Purmale, who graduated from the Valka Gymnasium in 1916 and studied commercial science from September 1, 1917, to August 31, 1918).<sup>23</sup> The total number of students significantly exceeded one thousand. According to some reports, it reached 1,500 students,<sup>24</sup> yet the list of matriculated students (between October 1, 1918, and February 22, 1919) available in the archives showed a lower number of 1,033 students.<sup>25</sup>

After the proclamation of Latvia's independence on November 18, almost no changes were made in the activities of BTH. The only change was that, at the request of the students, Russian also became the language of instruction. The use of the Latvian language in education at the time was unimaginable due to the ethnic composition of the teaching staff and their lack of knowledge of the Latvian language. At this point, the already proclaimed independent Latvian Provisional Government did not have any resources at its disposal to transform the university. Shortly before the Bolshevik invasion of Riga (January 2, 1919), the Higher Education Section of the Latvian Education Society convened a meeting of academic staff and interested parties, but in light of the military threat, it was concluded that no "practical steps" were to be taken regarding the establishment of a Latvian university.<sup>26</sup>

The imminent Bolshevik invasion did not cause an immediate disruption in the existence of the university – the BTH continued to exist. On January 25, 1919, RPI Rector M. Wittich (not BTH; apparently the name RPI was used as a more politically neutral term for the university in contrast to the German-oriented BTH) on behalf of the council

<sup>22</sup> *Latvijas Sargs*, 11.07.1919.

<sup>23</sup> LNA LVVA, 7175. f., 4. apr., 7. l., 127. lp.

<sup>24</sup> *Latvijas Sargs*, 07.07.1919.

<sup>25</sup> LNA LVVA, 7175. f., 4. apr., 6. l., 2.-34. lp.

<sup>26</sup> Overview of the idea of the university before the establishment of Higher School of Latvia taken from: DĀLE, Pauls. *Vēsturisks pārskats Par Latvijas augstskolas nodibināšanu un viņas darbību pirmā (1919./1920.) mācību gadā*. Rīga: Latvijas augstskola, 1921, 11. lpp.

of the teaching staff asked the food commissioner of Soviet Latvia to assign professors to the 1st category of employees so they could receive an adequate amount of food,<sup>27</sup> but on February 6, the RPI council asked for Professor Richard Hennig's furniture to be removed from requisition.<sup>28</sup> The Bolsheviks allowed to conclude the semester and began reorganisation of the university starting from February 1, 1919.

## Bolshevik Higher School of Latvia

On February 8, the Pēteris Stučka government of Soviet Latvia announced the establishment of the Higher School of Latvia (in Latvian: *Latvijas Augstskola*) on the foundations of the former RPI and BTH. All former BTH teaching staff were dismissed and all students were expelled. In February and March, the staff of the newly established university was assembled anew. Almost all previous BTH teaching staff members applied, as well as a certain number of Latvian educators and scientists who had not previously been associated with RPI or BTH. Most of them were indeed hired by the Higher School of Latvia, despite their "political views and past", as noted several months later by the newspaper *Latvijas Sargs*, representing the Provisional Government.<sup>29</sup> On March 1, the Higher School of Latvia officially began work.

The Department of Higher Education was the structural unit of the Commissariat of Education, which aimed to organise the establishment and supervision of the higher education institution, primarily, the reorganisation of the Riga Polytechnical Institute. The official name of the new higher education institution was the Higher School of the Socialist Soviet Republic of Latvia, shortened to Higher School of Latvia. The Commissariat also had a special Council of Higher Education Institutions with representatives from other departments. Commissioner E. Eferts explained the regulations on the Higher School of Latvia approved on March 15 in the Commissariat's 16.03.1919 publication *Izglītība*: "The institute, in the form it operated during the occupation and earlier, could not be satisfactory in any way."

The Commercial science department (*Komerczinību departaments* in Latvian) was abolished at the Higher School of Latvia, and was to be replaced with a Department of Economic Sciences. Other departments were incorporated in the Higher School of Latvia with "certain changes". The continuity of the university is confirmed by the fact that the students of the former Commercial science department were left with a small number of courses so they could complete their studies. In the next semester, it was planned to establish Medical and Pedagogical Departments as well as to supplement the Agricultural

<sup>27</sup> LNA LVVA, 7175. f., 4. apr., 8. l., 202. lp.

<sup>28</sup> LNA LVVA, 7175. f., 4. apr., 8. l., 207. lp.

<sup>29</sup> *Latvijas Sargs*, 07.07.1919.

Division with forestry and land development.<sup>30</sup> The content of studies did not change significantly compared with BTH. A more radical transformation of the study content was planned for the autumn semester of 1919. Despite the radical slogans and rhetoric of the Bolsheviks about the transformation of society, it is likely that the content of lectures during the classes changed very little. There were few members of the teaching staff with Bolshevik sentiments and those who were prepared to adopt to the new regime had too little time for that.

The new regulations provided for the admission of students without formal restrictions. Students were not asked for certificates of previous education. There was no tuition fee. According to E. Eferts, this served as a reason for the university's popularity. Unlike in the BTH, in which, according to E. Eferts, there were about 700 students in the autumn of 1918, the number of students in Higher School of Latvia "approached 3,000" (around 1,100 in the Department of Agriculture, about 600 in the Department of Chemistry).<sup>31</sup>

Unlike in RPI and BTH, almost all internal correspondence was in Latvian (in exceptional cases also in Russian). However, lectures were also given in German and Russian, as most of the teaching staff did not speak Latvian. According to the regulations, the language of the lectures was Latvian and Russian, other languages were allowed, but in that case there had to be a parallel lecture in Latvian or Russian.<sup>32</sup>

The conditions in Soviet Latvia meant drastic targeting of both political opponents and those who could become such. The shortage of teaching staff was exacerbated by arrests. For example, Oskar Masing was arrested in February and K. Hansen was arrested in March. On February 21, a representative of the Education Commissariat in Higher School of Latvia asked the Riga Political Department (Bolshevik political police) to find out whether it was possible to release the lecturer. On March 21, the same request was made about K. Hansen: "If Hansen's liberation would not be possible, the university does not know where to find another specialist for the work noted."<sup>33</sup>

These concerns highlighted one of the major problems – the shortage of staff. Unlike RPI and BTH, the Higher School of Latvia was chronically short of suitable, qualified staff. Consequently, it was extremely difficult to ensure a normal study process. There was

<sup>30</sup> During the Soviet occupation, medicine historian Arnis Viksna, seeking evidence of the beginning of medical studies at this university with the aim of associating the beginnings of higher medical education with the Bolshevik rather than independent Latvian university, discovered that on April 30 the first anatomy lesson was announced under the guidance of Professor Alfrēds Zommers for those interested in medical studies. See: *Padomju Mediķis*, 15.02.1979

<sup>31</sup> EFERTS, Ernests. *Latvijas Izglītības Komisariāta Augstskolu Nodaļa*, 16.03.1919. A little later UL lecturer Pauls Dāle noted a more accurate figure – 3041 students. Overview of the idea of the university before the establishment of Higher School of Latvia taken from: DĀLE, Pauls. *Vēsturisks pārskats Par Latvijas augstskolas nodibināšanu un viņas darbību pirmā (1919./ 1920.) mācību gadā*. Rīga: Latvijas Augstskola, 1921, 13. lpp.

<sup>32</sup> Regulations of the Education Commissariat on the Higher School of Latvia. *Latvijas Sociālistiskās Padomju Republikas Dekrētu un Rīkojumu Krājums*. 15.03.1919.

<sup>33</sup> LNA LVVA, 7175. f., 1. apr., 61. l., 444., 502. lp.

a lack of clarity on how to implement staffing. Attempts were made to use administrative methods to involve specialists both in Riga and those who had ended up in various parts of Russia as a result of the war. A March 1919 letter to Professor Lepik in Petrograd (possibly meant to be engineer Arvids Lepiks) stated: “You have been appointed as a lecturer at the Higher School of Latvia. Please come immediately.”<sup>34</sup> Attempts to involve the former RPI faculty in Higher School of Latvia were unsuccessful due to the conditions of war and the repressive regime of the Bolsheviks. On April 29, shortly before the Bolsheviks were driven out of Riga, it was attempted to address the staffing problems by involving senior students in the educational process.<sup>35</sup>

Officially, however, E. Eferts in March expressed clear optimism when characterising the situation with teaching staff. New staff had been attracted (for example, Fricis Roziņš-Āzis in agricultural policy, Edgars Lejnīeks in higher mathematics, Jānis Bergs in arable farming), as well as “many” who had come over from the Riga Polytechnical Institute (for example, P. Walden, M. Centnerszwer/ Centneršvers, Alvilis Buholcs).<sup>36</sup>

Lack of material supplies also caused great difficulties. During the war, the university’s assets were evacuated, lost and requisitioned in the winter of 1919. A request of Education Commissariat’s representative at the Higher School of Latvia to the Requisition Commission on February 18, 1919, vividly illustrated the sad state of affairs: “Being in an impoverished condition, Professor M. Wittich of the former Riga Polytechnical Institute gave a box of drawing supplies over to the Ernst Gernsdorf optics store (Riga, Šķūņu street) to be sold in his name for 100 roubles. However, as Wittich has now been confirmed by the Soviet government as a teacher at the Higher School of Latvia, I now turn to the Requisition Commission with a request: release this item from requisition and return it to the worker, as it is necessary for comrade Wittich to perform his duties.”<sup>37</sup> The Higher School of Latvia administrative and teaching staff lacked even ordinary stationery – pencils, ink-pots, erasers, rulers etc., which were supplied from items obtained in the requisition.

The “Basic theses on the proletarian university” prepared in the form of a project in early April included a new concept on higher education – a proletarian university should be the centre that would help the working class to free themselves mentally, along with their economic liberation. All the best theoretical and practical forces of Latvian revolutionary socialism would be involved in this work. General control over the higher education institution would be exercised by the Education Commissariat in accordance with the Central Committee of the Latvian Social Democratic (Communist) Party. Further elaboration of the university programme was to be done by students and lecturers

<sup>34</sup> LNA LVVA, 7175. f., 1. apr., 61. l. 1., 471. lp.

<sup>35</sup> Announcement of the representative of the Education Commissariat at the Higher School of Latvia with a call to involve senior year students as sub-assistants. LNA LVVA, 7175. f., 1. apr., 61. l., 548. lp.

<sup>36</sup> EFERTS, Ernests. Latvijas izglītības Komisariāta Augstskolu Nodaļa. *Izglītība*, 16.03.1919.

<sup>37</sup> LNA LVVA, 7175. f., 4. apr., 8. l., 114. lp.

together with the Education Commissariat. A council would be set up to ensure the operation of the university, consisting of representatives of the Bolshevik Central Committee, the Education Commissariat, the local council of deputies, lecturers, students and workers' cultural and professional centres. An important element was the division of the institution into two "courses": general (secondary education) and base course ("broad, rigorous scientific basis for the establishment of a proletarian worldview"). The university was to have branches in several major centres in Latvia and members of the party, youth and workers' organisations, delegates of the Soviet authorities and, "according to circumstances", others were to be enrolled as students.<sup>38</sup> In essence, it was planned to create a dogmatic educational institution suitable for one-party dictatorship with the aim of building an obedient totalitarian society whose content had nothing to do with academic research and the transfer of the resulting knowledge to students.

## Technical Higher School in Riga

In 1919, after the liberation of Riga from the Bolsheviks, the Provisional Government of Latvia gradually started to form the public administration in Riga. However, in practice many bodies remained under the control of the German authorities or the so-called Andrievs Niedra's government. The Bolshevik Higher School of Latvia formally ceased to exist, but the institution and its administration continued to function, considering it a logical continuation of BTH and also RPI. In the summer of 1919 the administration of the university continued to work in conditions that had changed once again, and the German language was again dominant. Professor P. Walden, Rector of the Technical Higher School in Riga, submitted the new name of the educational institution to the list of educational establishments in German – "Technische Hochschule in Riga".<sup>39</sup> It is not clear why the name of the institute was changed to replace "Baltic" with "Riga". Most likely, although in the first half of the summer of 1919 German occupation troops still had a significant influence on the events in Riga, the founders of the university were forced to take into account the reality that the Provisional Government of the Republic of Latvia was increasingly assertive in setting up government structures and controlling territory.

At the same time, without coordination with P. Walden and his German administration, on June 7 the newspaper *Lidums* published reports from eight former lecturers of the Higher School of Latvia that on May 24 there was a message on the university's blackboard with the rector's signature about the continuation of work at the university as before, and that the lectures should start on May 26. However, a day later, information emerged that work at the Technical Higher School in Riga had been suspended. On June 1,

<sup>38</sup> *Izglītība*, 07.04.1919.

<sup>39</sup> LNA LVVA, 7175. f., 1. apr., 313. l., 132. lp.



all Latvian lecturers appointed during the Bolshevik period (J. Bergs, A. Kirhenšteins, P. Lejiņš, E. Gēliņš, Fr. Gulbis, E. Lejniēks, P. Nomals, M. Vegners) were dismissed. A few days later, information appeared that the Technical Higher School in Riga would resume work, but without these Latvian lecturers.<sup>40</sup> Indeed – all officials appointed during the Bolshevik period were dismissed by the May 24 order of the Commander of the Baltic Landeswehr. The self-proclaimed leadership of the new Technical Higher School in Riga in the person of Rector P. Walden, Vice-Rector M. Wittich and acting deans extended the order to the staff of the university and called on them to hand over the material assets at their disposal.<sup>41</sup> The protesting Latvian lecturers objected to such a swift and ill-considered interpretation of the military order and pointed out that the issues of the university as a state institution could be decided only by the state, that is, the Provisional Government of Latvia. These lecturers continued to hold meetings once or twice a week, where they gradually outlined plans for the establishment of a new, independent Latvian higher education institution. In parallel, they entered into close cooperation with the Provisional Government's Minister for Education Kārlis Kasparsons and made preparations for the creation of a new university. With the establishment of the Latvian state administration and the foundation of the University of Latvia, P. Walden's Technical Higher School in Riga ceased to exist.

## Higher School of the Latvian Republic (University of Latvia)

Discussions on the establishment of a higher education institution among those supporting the Provisional Government of Latvia began soon after the liberation of Riga, in parallel with the creation of Technical Higher School in Riga. The newspaper *Latvijas Sargs*, which represented the views of the Provisional Government, emphasised that “the university will play a role of utmost importance in the internal structure of our free state.” However, it does not need to be created completely anew, but should be based on the Riga Polytechnical Institute, which had existed in Riga under different names until the summer of 1919.<sup>42</sup>

Although the plans of the Latvian Higher School (renamed the University of Latvia (UL) in 1923) began to materialise only in independent Latvia in 1919, the idea of providing higher education in the Latvian language began to develop rapidly in 1917 in discussions of Latvian public organisations.<sup>43</sup> Already in February 1916, Pauls Dāle had presented a

<sup>40</sup> *Līdums*, 07.06.1919.

<sup>41</sup> *Baltijas Ziņas*, 12.06.1919.

<sup>42</sup> *Latvijas Sargs*, 11.07.1919.

<sup>43</sup> Overview of the idea of the university before the establishment of Higher School of Latvia taken from: DĀLE, Pauls. *Vēsturisks pārskats Par Latvijas augstskolas nodibināšanu un viņas darbību pirmā (1919/1920.) mācību gadā*. Rīga: Latvijas Augstskola, Rīga, 1921, 3–11. lpp.



report on a Latvian university at a meeting of Latvian intelligentsia in Moscow. In 1917, after the revolution in Petrograd, an informal “Latvian higher education interest commission” formed in the Vidzeme Land Council under the leadership of Miķelis Valters, which discussed at several meetings the need for such a higher education institution and what faculties it should have. In June 1917, the Latvian Teachers’ Congress in Tartu had a higher education section. It more systematically addressed the necessity of a higher education institution in Riga, starting from the premise of establishing an autonomous Latvia. On July 13, the congress adopted a resolution in a general session on the necessity of establishing a university in Riga, envisaging the need for workers with higher education in Latvia. An important element of these discussions was the role of the Latvian language, whose task was to ensure Latvian parity with other dominant languages in the region – Russian and German. To ensure the implementation of these ideas, a Higher Education Committee consisting of eight higher education institution employees was established. Rapid identification of ethnic Latvian teaching staff was carried out so that the staff of a future university could be assembled, if the necessity arose. The planned conference of Latvian academics on August 24 and 25 did not take place due to the offensive of the German army. The establishment of a Latvian university was practically impossible in the environment created by military and political conditions. The university courses in Valmiera created by Jānis Lapiņš in September 1917, could be considered as an alternative and a continuation of the idea of the university. In late 1917, the Higher Education Section of the Latvian Education Society in Riga organised a “people’s higher school”.

On July 11, 1918, the joint meeting of the Latvian Education Society and other Latvian organisations was interrupted by German occupation officials, preventing the adoption of the planned memorandum on the necessity of a Latvian higher education institution to ensure the interests of the majority of the population (ethnic Latvians), the provision of local government employees and the promotion of the Latvian language (which at that time had become the language of education in many secondary schools). The society and its Higher Education Section were forced to cease operations until November 1918, when independent Latvia was proclaimed.<sup>44</sup> On July 14, the Higher Education Section submitted a document to the Minister of Education proposing that “the Government should invite all the best Latvian scientific and organisational personnel, both in Latvia and abroad, to assist in the organisational work of the university”<sup>45</sup> “When founding the university, the best universities in the world should be taken as example, especially the universities in small countries close to us, like Denmark, Scandinavia and Finland.”<sup>46</sup>

On February 9, 1921, member of the Organising Committee Spricis Paegle noted that when discussing budget issues, the public was of the opinion that the Faculty of Law and

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 10. lpp.

<sup>45</sup> DĀLE, Pauls. *Vēsturisks pārskats Par Latvijas augstskolas nodibināšanu un viņas darbību pirmā (1919/1920.) mācību gadā*. Rīga: Latvijas Augstskola, 1921, 17. lpp.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

Economics paid too much attention to theory, but significantly less to practical issues, placing more emphasis on law than the science of commerce. Dean Ernests Birkhāns explained that such differences did exist because education levels had fallen during the war, some lecturers were young and inexperienced, but the main reason for this was that in the past, RPI's commercial sciences had a separate department in RPI, but now they were in the same faculty with law.<sup>47</sup> It should be noted that even in later years there were frequent criticisms of the UL about "not preparing students for practical life" and excessively "theoretical" approach to higher education.

In September 1919, a month after the university had started accepting applications, there were already 540 students matriculated (by ethnicity: 310 Latvians, 210 Jews, 12 Russians, 7 Germans and one Lithuanian).<sup>48</sup> The hardships of wartime caused restrictions for students to continue their education – secondary education certificates had been lost, many potential students had failed to complete high school in the conditions of war. Already in September 1919, at the first meeting of the Deans' Council, it was decided to admit graduates of all Russian "secondary" educational institutions, unless the name of these institutions contained "Soviet school" ("sovetskaya shkola") or "Labour school" ("trudovaya shkola"), that is to say, they were not ideologised Bolshevik educational institutions with a specific curriculum.<sup>49</sup> From 1919 until 1921, 1922 exceptions were made to the admission of students and each case was assessed individually by the Dean's Council. Formal documents, Latvian language skills, citizenship, and in some specialisms also knowledge of Latin, were taken into consideration when evaluating applications. Exceptions were often made for retired Latvian Army soldiers who participated in battles, Order of Lāčplēsis recipients, disabled war veterans, refugees who had returned to Latvia and children of university staff. Particular exceptions were related to individuals' social activities, despite the lack of formal education. In this way, renowned journalists Arveds Švābe, Jānis Grīns, Arturs Kroders and Pāvils Rozītis became law students in 1921.<sup>50</sup>

The establishment of the new Higher School of Latvia was based on institutional and ideological foundations. First of all, the material assets, staff, study content, in a sense tradition and also reputation of the aforementioned RPI, BTH, Higher School of Latvia and Technical Higher School in Riga. Second, the ideas and plans of Latvian public organisations and the ideological position of a "Latvian higher education institution oriented towards the needs of the Republic of Latvia". In his research on the process of the founding of the University of Latvia in the context of nation-building and statehood,

<sup>47</sup> Protocol of Organising Committee session, 09.02.1921, LNA LVVA, 7427. f., 6. apr., 1. l., 278. lp.

<sup>48</sup> Protocol of Higher School of Latvia Organising Committee, 23.09.1919. LNA LVVA, 7427. f., 6. apr., 1. l., 29. lp.

<sup>49</sup> Protocol of the Dean's Council meeting, 18.09.1919. LNA LVVA, 7427. f., 6. apr., 7. l., 7. lp.

<sup>50</sup> Rationale for their admission: "These individuals, through their articles in newspapers and in selected books, have demonstrated a level of education that makes one hopeful that they will be able to successfully study the disciplines taught at the university." Protocol of the Dean's Council 03.10.1921. LNA LVVA, 7427. f., 6. apr., 7. l., 193. lp.

historian Per Bolin Hort wrote that the establishment of the University of Latvia provided answers to three different expectations. First, its task was to provide the new state with Latvian academics, professionals and administrators. Second, to promote the use of the Latvian language at the higher education level. Third, to reformulate, rewrite, and re-examine important aspects of the nation's past and culture.<sup>51</sup> Bolin Hort associates the creation of the new university with the surge of nationalism, examining in finer detail the difficulties of the first years and the efforts to provide the university with Latvian staff and the dominance of the Latvian language in the teaching process. He proves that not all academics of Latvian origin were interested in a national idea, and often academic, professional or other interests prevailed. As a result, many potential Latvian educators did not hurry to return to Riga. A clear and radical example, which the author of the study examines in greater detail, is the case of P. Walden. The prominent Latvian-born chemist Walden, who became deeply integrated in the Baltic German society (in other words – assimilated), did not respond to the invitations and offers of the Higher School of Latvia/University of Latvia Organising Committee. Instead, he preferred to pursue a career at the University of Rostock, symbolically breaking the not-yet-formed ties with both Latvia's academic environment and independent Latvia.<sup>52</sup> As a result, the process of establishing the UL was accompanied by inconsistencies and conflicts, the essence of which resulted in contradictions between national and academic values.

## Conclusions

Warfare and rapid political change created preconditions for a continuous process of change in Latvian higher education. Although higher education institutions continued to exist almost continuously throughout these years, their content and names changed.

Prior to evacuation, the Russian Empire-era RPI continued to maintain peacetime levels both in terms of student numbers and tuition fees. The evacuation of the Institute to Moscow was due to the threat of an invasion by the German army. The conditions of war further increased the restrictions that existed on various groups (among them citizens of states at war with Russia, along with ethnic Germans, Roman Catholics and Jews), but did not radically change the student environment. The teaching staff and their study programmes were even less affected. In general, the level of teaching remained the same, and the study process did not change considerably even after RPI was evacuated

<sup>51</sup> BOLIN HORT, Per. The Latvian Nation and the Intellectuals. The Forming of Latvia's University during the First Republic in Re-inventing the Nation. *Multidisciplinary Perspectives on the Construction of Latvian National Identity*. Ed. Mats Lindqvist. Multicultural Centre, 2003, p. 168.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 147–149. On the complexity of the “Latvian” identity in the academic environment, see also: ŠIMKUS, Roberts. National universities and attracting academic staff. Why didn't Eduards Volters choose the University of Latvia? *Latvijas Vēstures Institūta Žurnāls*, 2017, Nr 4., 70–94. lpp.

to Moscow. Still open to question is how consistent was the discrimination towards “enemies” or national, ethnic and religious groups that tsarist Russia after the war started trying to discriminate against. What is clear is that this policy was flexible, it often was dependent on the efforts of the administration to follow general line of the official policy. Bearing in mind the fact that the majority of professors were of Baltic German origin with close ties to the local Baltic German community, the administration of the institute in general was reluctant to expel German nationals but at the same time tried to accommodate RPI to the new conditions. However what is also obvious is that the administration tried to avoid involvement in politics in order to preserve what remained of the institution’s internal autonomy.

The creation of BTH was linked to the liquidation of the RPI in Russia, but also to the desire to create a new higher education institution in Riga, adapted to the new political conditions of German occupation. The short period of existence of BTH (basically, the autumn semester of 1918) was characterised by a large number of students and the involvement of former RPI teaching staff in the study process. Lack of state support and difficult conditions for private organisations made student tuition fees crucial for BTH’s operation. Most (but not all) of the administration and professors again were Baltic Germans and it made it easy to open the institution under the occupational regime. Available sources did not allow to create a clear picture of political background of the founding of BTH, but it is obvious that the initiative came from the former locally based RPI administration. Lack of financial support from the occupational regime might be explained by both general lack of funding and probably also by the reluctance or disinterest of the military regime. Unlike RPI, BTH became a more regionally oriented institution of higher learning. Most students were of local origin, mostly of Baltic German, Latvian, Jewish and to lesser extent Russian origin and since the tuition language was German it was clear that the administration of the BTH did not hope for massive influx of Russian speaking students. It is also an indication that local BTH staff at that time most probably expected geopolitical changes and loss of the previous connection to Russia.

The military-political conditions in Riga changed dramatically in January 1919 with the emergence of the Bolshevik regime. This regime sought to develop a significantly different approach to the concept of higher education. The abolition of tuition fees may have contributed substantially to the influx of students, but the Bolshevik Higher School of Latvia struggled with a shortage of teaching staff for most of its existence, with most still being former BTH faculty members. However, due to the brief existence of the Higher School of Latvia, the planned changes in the content of the university failed to be implemented. A significant innovation in higher education in Higher School of Latvia was the use of Latvian language both in its administration and as the language of instruction. The short-lived Bolshevik experiment did not prove successful in creating the beginnings of a functioning higher education system. The easy and swift change of

loyalties during later months by academic staff showed that there was very little if any support for the Bolshevik efforts.

The conceptual return to the traditional understanding of higher education took place in September 1919, when work began on establishing the University of Latvia. Rapidly growing student numbers, liberal student recruitment policies and ambitious goals for a state-run university of all major disciplines as one of the symbols of the new state gave a significant boost to its development. A significant difference is related to the fact that for the first time the Latvian national factor had an important role in higher education in Latvia's territory. However, at least at the very beginning the University of Latvia faced a considerable shortage of academic staff. Former RPI professors of Baltic German origin, and even those who could be considered by some of Latvian origin, were often quite reluctant to take positions to further their career at the new university and to lecture in Latvian.

In the RPI and BTH the expressions of Latvian ethnic nationalism were ignored, regarded as revolutionary, sometimes even Bolshevik, and thus to be countered. On the other hand, the nationalism of the Baltic Germans or Russians, the "cultural nations", was considered perfectly acceptable, as only German and Russian languages could meet academic standards and only through them could truly profound knowledge be provided in a higher education institution. The Bolshevik Higher School of Latvia started to change this approach, but it was completed by the University of Latvia with full implementation of studies in the Latvian language. However it meant also that at the very beginning academic standards both in lecturing and immatriculation policy were lowered to meet the requirements of the Latvianisation policy.

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# Karas ir aukštasis išsilavinimas Rygoje 1914–1920 m.

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## Santrauka

Laikotarpis nuo Pirmojo pasaulinio karo pradžios iki Nepriklausomybės karo pabaigos Latvijoje buvo beveik nenutrūkstamas karas ir okupacija. Pagrindiniai destabilizuojantys veiksniai buvo Vokietijos kariuomenės invazija į Latvijos teritorijos dalį, Rusijos revoliucijos įtaka ir po bolševikų perversmo, Brest Litovsko sprendimai ir vokiečių okupacinis režimas, po kurio buvo įkurta nepriklausoma Latvijos Respublika, vėliau – sovietų Latvija, o paskui sekė visos Latvijos teritorijos išlaisvinimas.

Šiame straipsnyje analizuojamas Latvijos aukštasis mokslas: kaip jis toliau veikė nepaisydamas įvairių kliūčių ir apribojimų, kokia buvo tuomečių valdžios institucijų reakcija ir kaip pasikeitė studentų ir akademinio personalo gyvenimas tais metais.

Straipsnyje aptariami Rygos politechnikos instituto (RPI) patirti pokyčiai prieš ir po perkėlimo į Maskvą 1915 m., Rygos politechnikos instituto pakaitalo įsteigimas (kai buvo aišku, kad perkelti nebus įmanoma) Rygoje 1918 m., vokiečių okupacijos metu, eksperimentas kuriant bolševikų Latvijos aukštąją mokyklą sovietų Latvijoje ir pagaliau Latvijos laikinosios vyriausybės įsteigimas Latvijos universiteto.

Iki perkėlimo Rusijos imperijos laikų RPI ir toliau išlaikė tokį patį studentų skaičių ir studijų kainą. Dėl karo dar labiau padidėjo egzistuojantys apribojimai įvairioms grupėms (tarp jų – su Rusija kariaujančių valstybių piliečiams, taip pat etniniams vokiečiams, Romos katalikams ir žydams), bet studentų aplinka radikaliai nepasikeitė. Dėstytojai ir studijų programos dar mažiau nukentėjo. Apskritai mokymo lygis išliko toks pat, studijų procesas smarkiai nepasikeitė net ir po to, kai RPI buvo perkeltas į Maskvą. Instituto administracija stengėsi išvengti ištraukimo į politiką, siekdama išsaugoti šios institucijos vidaus autonomijos liekanas.

„Baltische Technische Hochschule“ (BTH) įkūrimas 1918 m. buvo susijęs ne tik su Rygos politechnikos instituto Maskvoje likvidavimu, bet ir su siekiu Rygoje įkurti naują aukštojo mokslo įstaigą, pritaikytą naujoms politinėms vokiečių okupacijos sąlygoms. Trumpam BTH egzistavimo laikotarpiui (iš esmės 1918 m. rudens semestriui) būdingas didelis studentų skaičius ir buvusio instituto dėstytojų įtraukimas į studijų procesą. Dėl valstybės paramos trūkumo ir sunkių sąlygų privačioms organizacijoms veikti studijų mokesčiai turėjo lemiamą reikšmę BTH veiklai. Naujoji institucija tapo labiau orientuota į regionus aukštojo mokslo institucija. Panašu, kad tuo metu vietiniai „Hochschule“ darbuotojai greičiausiai tikėjosi geopolitinių pokyčių ir gailėjosi dėl ryšių su Rusija praradimo.



Rygoje 1919 m. sausio–gegužės mėn. egzistavęs bolševikų režimas siekė sukurti gerokai kitokį požiūrį į aukštojo mokslo koncepciją. Studijų mokesčio panaikinimas galėjo reikšmingai prisidėti prie studentų antplūdžio, tačiau Latvijos bolševikų aukštoji mokykla („Latvijas Augstskola“) beveik visą egzistavimo laiką jautė dėstytojų trūkumą, dauguma jų vis dar buvo buvę BTH dėstytojai. Svarbi naujovė Latvijos aukštojoje mokykloje buvo latvių kalbos vartojimas tiek administracijos darbe, tiek kaip mokomoji kalba. Trumpalaikis bolševikų eksperimentas nebuvo sėkmingas kuriant aukštojo mokslo sistemą. Lengvas ir greitas lojalumo pakeitimas vėlesniais mėnesiais, kurį atliko akademinis personalas, parodė, kad bolševikų pastangos buvo labai mažai remiamos.

Konceptualus grįžimas prie tradicinio aukštojo mokslo supratimo įvyko 1919 m. rugsėjį, kai buvo pradėti kurti Latvijos universitetai. Sparčiai didėjantis studentų skaičius, liberali studentų įdarbinimo politika ir ambicingi valstybinio visų pagrindinių disciplinų universiteto, kaip vieno naujosios valstybės simbolių, tikslai suteikė reikšmingą postūmį jo plėtrai. Reikšmingas skirtumas susijęs su tuo, kad latvių kalba ir kultūra pirmą kartą atliko svarbų vaidmenį aukštojoje mokykloje Latvijos teritorijoje. Tačiau bent jau iš pradžių Latvijos universitetas susidūrė su dideliu akademinio personalo trūkumu. Buvę baltų vokiečių kilmės profesoriai ir net tie, kuriuos kai kurie iš latvių galėjo laikyti, dažnai labai nenoriai tęsdavo karjerą naujajame universitete ir skaitydavo paskaitas latvių kalba. Tik po Nepriklausomybės karo universitetui pavyko išplėtoti studijų turinį ir grįžti prie įprastų studijų, buvusių prieškario laikais.

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