

Schulwesen in Livland erst im 19. Jahrhundert reif und damit in der Lage, dauerhaft positive Ergebnisse zu zeitigen.

SUMMARY

*The Idea of Elementary Schools in the Discourse
of the Power Structures in the Livland
Province during the 17th and 18th Centuries*

In Latvian and Estonian modern history, the impression has gained ground that during the so-called Swedish times, i.e. in the 17th century the Swedish government had taken special care of peasant education in the Baltic provinces. As a result, the level of peasants' education is said to have experienced a rapid growth. In its turn, the Great Northern War brought not only the scourge of war, but also the decline of education. However, some scholars at the beginning of the 20th century began to question this assumption. Archival documents in fact clearly indicate that during the 17th century no significant attempts to improve peasant education were made, whereas only in the 18th century, changes are detectable in a number of acts that indicate the relatively rapid growth of the network of peasant schools and rising peasants' literacy.

The first interest in peasant education in Livland, however, was indeed demonstrated during the 17th century. The Swedish government's concern, although based on the law manifested in the issuance, can lead to the assumption that there had been some real progress. Yet, in reality the Swedish educational policy in the Baltic provinces had little efficiency and basically remained a good idea only on paper. There was one unique case when the prominent pastor of Marienburg, Ernst Gluck, most well known for his translation of the Bible into Latvian, opened several schools for the peasants of his parish. The most important act was an order of the Swedish King Karl XI, issued in 1687 that next to each church a school had to be built on the so-called sacristan ground (of a plough) so that the teacher could earn his livelihood. Thus, the foundation was laid for the opening of peasant schools, but that was all, because the real construction and operation of schools did not take place in this century.

Historiography usually treats the turn of the 18th century as a time of intellectual decline, hence there was little promise for progress in peasants' education. However, one of the first orders of Peter I at the end of the Great Northern War required the review of the management of schools. By force of this order a number of activities aimed at improving the education of peasants were carried out throughout the century. Livland

Governor-General George Browne was even convinced that education was closely related to the morals and delinquency of the peasants. Thus, since 1765, he paid much attention to schools, especially to rural ones. During his reign, the province consistently tried to control the progress of peasant education. Pastors and nobles were responsible for education, and there were regular inspections of the achievements of the new generation of peasants in the schools. Originally, in the 1760s, peasants' children had to go to the parish school, manor schools or had to be trained at home. During the 1770s and 1780s, in many parts of Livland, parish schools were left empty and almost all children were taught at home by their parents or other relatives, who had attended school earlier. At the same time, the success rate did not decrease. However, since in the 18th century, the government still had not yet passed strict public education laws, the foundation of schools and children's training, especially in rural areas, depended on private initiatives. It was only in the 1830s that the Russian Empire introduced a state-designed and funded system of education in Livland.