

Perspektive der Frauen selbst ihnen persönliche Erfüllung, ihre Berufstätigkeit und ihr öffentliches Engagement dem Land, in dem sie lebten, ökonomischen und gesellschaftlichen Nutzen. Und die Frage der Standesgemäßheit hatte sich nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg nicht nur für die Emigranten erledigt.

SUMMARY

*“Useless, Emancipated, and not even Befitting
[our] Rank”. Studies and Doctorates of Baltic
Women at German Universities up to 1918*

Since women were not allowed to study at Russian universities (and they did not regard the higher women's courses as true equivalents), many went to West European countries in order to take a degree. From 1902 to 1918, 290 women from the Russian Empire received their doctorates at German universities. 34 of them had been born in the provinces of Kurland, Livonia and Estland. The education of these women fell into two patterns: Whereas 24 Jewish women had completed a Russian *gimnazija* for girls in the Baltic provinces and then began their studies at the age of 17-21, the Baltic German women had attended private *Töchtereschulen* where German was the language of instruction and where they could not take the *Abitur* (*attestat zrelosti*). They rather passed exams for becoming teachers in girls' schools and began their academic studies only at the age of 25-30, after additional private lessons and exams at Russian boys' *gimnazii* or even German institutions. Only one German woman had completed a Russian *gimnazija* (and in addition, a woman who was either Latvian or German from an acculturated Latvian family). The career choices of the two groups were also different: Whereas 21 Jewish women studied medicine, only two of the German women did so (and, in addition, the 'Latvian' woman). Due to the anti-Jewish legislation, becoming a doctor was the only realistic choice for a Jewish woman who wanted to earn her living in an academic profession. (Therefore, in the overall group of female 'Russian' graduates of German universities, of whom 75% were Jewish, the share of medical students was 85%).

Against this background, the article discusses the long and winding routes of German women. Their incomplete education was, in the last end, a result of the Russification of the Baltic provinces because a woman's task was to make a German home and, unlike their sons, parents did not send their daughters to German girls' *gimnazii* in Petersburg, Moscow and Khar'kov). Women had not only to compensate for their educational

deficits. They also had to overcome received attitudes concerning academic training for women, in particular from noble families. Thus, Margarete von Wrangell's relatives considered her idea of studying at a university as "useless, emancipated and not befitting [the family's] rank". However, some women whose fathers had died early, were able to realize their plans with the help of their mothers (of whom some had already displayed a certain degree of independence themselves).

Considering these mental as well as the institutional obstacles (in education) the women's success is surprising. Margarete von Wrangell became the first female full professor in Germany (in 1923), another one was the director of a large institution for professional training for girls, and a third woman taught at institutions of higher education in Shanghai. In addition, two doctors practiced in Germany for decades. What is more, three of these women supported various parties in the newly established Weimar Republic by writing pamphlets for them.

Their national attitudes ranged from a pronounced Baltic German stand that was repentant not to have won over the Latvians and Estonians, to a Baltic German identity that clearly marked the difference to an imperial German one and an anti-Russian nationalist German one. Though there were very few statements by Jews, a pronouncedly Baltic position can be found among them, too.

In a way, the assessment of the Wrangell family was right: Studying at a university was the result of an emancipation that had already begun – and was then continued leading to a (financially) independent position. Thus, it was "useless" only from the perspective of a traditional noble woman who was expected to organize a cultivated manor house. In every other way, both for the women themselves and for society at large, their efforts were very useful. The question whether an academic education befitted their rank, was out-dated anyway, not only after World War I, but by the revolution of 1905 at the latest.