

Jahre seine Tätigkeit an der Historischen Fakultät nicht weiter entfalten. Hier tat sich dann die Lücke auf, die durch Lehrkräfte lettischer Herkunft geschlossen wurde.

SUMMARY

*The Teaching Staff of the Faculty of
History at Latvian State University and
the Communist Regime, 1944–1953*

During the years of late Stalinism, the body of lecturers at the Faculty of History at Latvian State University in Riga was significantly modified under the auspices of the new regime. Basically, new staff members were recruited from groups loyal to the regime, many of whom only recently had been sent to the Latvian SSR from other parts of the USSR. The question of professional skills was only given secondary importance. From the point of view of the Soviet regime, historians had to fulfil their role in imposing the Soviet ideology on Latvia's history. Therefore they were tools in the propaganda schemes of the regime used in terms of academic writing and university teaching.

The process of the Sovietisation of historical science as such and of the interpretation of the particular Latvian past was not as easy as it may have seemed from the onset. People with no command of Latvian and no idea of the local history were of no use for the regime in making Latvian history "Soviet". Lecturers coming from other parts of the Soviet Union primarily taught so-called "Russian study groups" consisting of only Russian speaking students. Latvian students still did not speak Russian to the extent that would have enabled them to follow Russian language lectures. Therefore, the regime needed local historians to fill in the gap, even if their biography was tightly connected to the Latvian republic of the 1930s (e.g. Teodors Zeids). Yet these were exceptions, since basically, one's social background counted more than professional expertise. In this context, after returning to Riga Jānis Zutis, a well-known Soviet historian of Latvian descent; became the historian with by far the greatest authority among his colleagues. He even was able to use his authority in order to distance himself from orthodox Stalinist positions and save colleagues from ideologically motivated accusations.

Thus, on the one hand, the repressive nature of Stalin's regime sometimes did not even allow loyal historians to publish studies and to participate in academic discussions if they raised any doubt. On the other hand, any propaganda has to be plausible. Therefore, historians had to provide

at least some degree of academic quality, even in the years culminating in the Stalinist terror during the late 1940s and early 1950s. A special case was the fate that Jewish historians suffered under the anti-Semitic campaigns of late Stalinism. After Stalin's death in 1953 changes were about to come since the academic milieu in the Riga Faculty of History created during the chaotic post-war years was incapable of facing the challenges during the years of de-Stalinisation.