

Die Sowjetisierung des Faches Geschichte setzte sich jedoch weiter fort. Die Lehrkräfte der Abteilung für Geschichte bekamen häufig den Vorwurf zu hören, dass die Thematik ihrer fachspezifischen Lehrveranstaltungen in politischer Hinsicht nicht aktuell genug war. Daher wurden die Themen „aktualisiert“, indem man die Rolle der Russen und die Bedeutung der Völkerfreundschaft in der lettischen Geschichte ausdrücklich in den Vordergrund schob. Die „bürgerliche“ Vergangenheit und bestimmte historische Protagonisten wurden entsprechend verurteilt. Als Thema wurde nun auch der Atheismus genannt. Die Erforschung der jüngsten Geschichte der Lettischen SSR konnte sich faktisch jedoch nur auf mündliche Quellen stützen, da andere Materialien kaum zugänglich waren. Die mündlichen Aussagen wiederum wurden aber zunächst im „Rat der alten Revolutionäre“ (*Veco revolucionāru padome*), der am Institut für Parteigeschichte am ZK der LKP angesiedelt war, sorgsam zurechtgeschneidert.

SUMMARY

The Historians of the Latvian State University in Riga and Their Relations with the Communist Party, 1954–1964

During the period of de-Stalinization (1953–1958) a group of orthodox Stalinist teaching staff and their influence in the Department of History of the Faculty of History and Philology of the Latvian State University was removed. Partial de-Stalinization prompted by the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in February 1956 also changed the personnel policy of the Communist Party of Latvia that resulted in an altered structure of the teaching staff of the Department of History.

The knowledge of Latvian and ability of using it as the language of instruction was the new main criteria for selecting teachers. The old Stalinist generation lost its position – a few had submitted resignations, some were dismissed, but others successfully integrated into the Latvian speaking community. The newly recruited professors were communists with teaching experience who were born or lived in Latvia before the Second World War, but were educated in the USSR during Stalinism. They spent the war in the rear of the Red Army or fought in its ranks and were already loyal to the ruling regime. Those people were selected from the allegedly ideologically irreproachable Republican Party School of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Latvia. Nevertheless they were national communists or simply more liberal communists compared to the orthodox

Stalinists. Also a few professors from the “old, bourgeois” elite were given teaching jobs. The other group of younger recruited lecturers with “clean” biographies were those, who were school children during the “bourgeois” period in Latvia and whose parents belonged to the working class or the peasantry. Those parents were active supporters of the Soviet regime during its first year of power (1940/41) as members of the state apparatus while their children joined such Soviet organizations as the Young Pioneers and the Komsomol. They received a higher education already after the Second World War graduating from the Latvian State University and were already at that time members or member candidates of the Communist Party. Thus communism was dominating the social-political environment of the Department of History. All the staff of the Chair of the History of the USSR were Party members. Only a few professors of the Chair of General History who did not belong to the Party and who had been teaching already in “bourgeois” Latvia could keep their jobs because of their professional knowledge and competence.

This communist-style Latvianization was ended by the Plenum of the CC of the Latvian Communist Party held in July 1959. The process of elimination of the influence of national communists was completed in summer of 1962, when Valentīns Šteinbergs, the new Head of the Latvian State University demanded that Veronika Kanāle, the Head of the Chair of the History of USSR resign from her post because of disobedience to the Party since she participated in the funeral of Pauls Dzērve, a former Head of the Institute of Economics of the Academy of Sciences of the Latvian SSR, who was regarded as disloyal. Although the influence of national communists was diminished, the principle introduced during the de-Stalinization period to select personnel from local people who spoke Latvian was not changed. The “old bourgeois” teaching staff not only kept their posts, but managed to strengthen their position by publishing monographs that corresponded to the soviet ideological viewpoints. They became the legends of the time.

In the beginning of the 1960s, personnel that did not have any biographical connections to the USSR got promoted. Non-party member Mārgers Štepermanis, one of the “old bourgeois” people, was admitted to the position of the Head of the Chair of General History (1960) and Igors Greitjānis, member of Communist Party of Latvia, as the Head of Chair of History of USSR (1962). During the period from 1944 to 1964 all Deans of the Faculty of History and Philology were either Latvians or Russians who had left the Soviet Union for Latvia after the Second World War. Moreover, at least for the first 10 years of this period, the Deans were under direct monitoring from the Chair of Marxism-Leninism. Only in 1964, Alberts Varslavāns was the first appointed Dean who was a Latvian, born and brought up in Latvia. It was the time when the strained atmosphere changed for a more open and creative working environment in the Department of History.