

ALFRĒDS MILTIŅŠ

## PROFESSOR PĒTERIS SNIĶERS – PHYSICIAN AND PATRON OF ART

Professor Pēteris Sniķers was an outstanding physician, a general, a professor and a scientist. He was a well-known worker in society, a patron of the arts, and a founding member of the student fraternity *Fraternitas Metropolitana*. Sniķers' name has been mentioned frequently in various periodicals [3, 38, 42, 49, 52, 59]. However, some specific periods of his life and work need additional investigation. The full character of this versatile and active personality has not yet been properly studied.

Sniķers was born on November 25 (December 7), 1875 in the "Kazbuļi" farmstead of a rural area near Skulte. He was the eldest of eight children in the family of the district elder, Mārtiņš Sniķers, himself a descendant of Barenti, and the former Trīne Draudiņa. Mārtiņš Sniķers owned a farmstead called "Mežgaili" in the Skulte district, but "Kazbuļi" belonged to Trīne Draudiņa's father.

Baron Freytag von Loringhoven had organized a private school on his estate for the education of his son and other children of noble birth. After finishing a parish school, Pēteris Sniķers, as son of the district elder, also studied there for a short while. These studies gave Sniķers the chance to enter the Nikolai I Gymnasium in Riga, from which he was graduated with a gold medal. This, in turn, helped him to become an undergraduate at the Imperial Military Academy of Medicine in St. Petersburg. He studied there from 1896 to 1901 and was graduated with honors. Following a competition, he was allowed to continue his studies in dermatovenerology at the Institute of Academy Doctors Training. By 1901 Sniķers was performing clinical residency duties under the guidance of T. Pavlov (1860—1932), the head of the clinic for dermatology and syphilology. Sniķers joined the Russian association of syphilologists and dermatologists, and while continuing his clinical work, he managed to complete the examinations for an MD degree. In 1902 Sniķers was sent to Berlin for six months of training so that he might receive experience in research centers and clinics. He also visited Vienna and Paris, becoming acquainted with the work of many well-known professionals, including the world-famous syphilologist Alfred Fournier (1832—1914) [38, 52, 59].

Sņķers' research work at the Academy clinic was devoted to problems which were of interest to many Latvian scientists living and working in St. Petersburg at the end of the 19th century. His scientific work was heavily influenced by the activities of such specialists in microbiology and infectology in Russia as Kristaps Helmanis (1848—1892), Eižens Zemmers (1843—1906) and Kārlis Krēsliņš (1860—1929). Sņķers was personally acquainted with all these scientists and joined them in corresponding with such world-renowned authorities as Rudolf Virchow (1821—1902), the founder of cellular pathology; Louis Pasteur (1822—1895), a pioneer in microbiology and immunology; and Robert Koch (1843—1910), a prominent German microbiologist and Nobel Prize recipient. Among those Latvians to work at the St.Petersburg Institute of Experimental Medicine were veterinary doctors K.Helmanis and E.Zemmers and pharmaceuticals specialist K.Krēsliņš. The first director of the institute was Eduard Sperk (1837—1894), a venereal diseases specialist from the Kalinkin hospital. Later Krēsliņš set up a modern private pharmacy (its current address is in Neva Prospekt, and it is called Pharmacy No. 6). Krēsliņš' pharmacy was well equipped with chemical, bacteriological and aerodiagnostic laboratories.

Helmanis, meanwhile, maintained close contacts with Louis Pasteur. Pasteur's first work station abroad was established in Latvia in July, 1886. Pasteur associate A.Loiard (1862—1941) worked with Helmanis and with the support of Pasteur himself to establish a center for the treatment of rabies patients in Latvia. Helmanis himself made important discoveries, including the discovery in 1891 of malein – a diagnostic means for malignant glands – which can be considered the greatest medical discovery made by a Latvian physician. Malein made it possible to distinguish infected horses from healthy ones and isolate them. Helmanis also worked on studying the properties of various tuberculin preparations which he created in St.Petersburg and in collaboration with Koch, who was working in Germany. After Helmanis' death, his research was continued by Zemmers and Krēsliņš[54, 55, 56, 67].

Sņķers worked closely with Krēsliņš when the latter worked on the continuation of his predecessors' work in learning more about the chemical and biological properties of malein and tuberculin. Tuberculin research became his primary focus[10, 30, 37, 42, 67].

Following advice given by his chief professor, Pavlov, Sņķers did research on tuberculin-caused reactions in patients with *Lichenis scrofulosorum* and *Lupus vulgaris*, comparing such patients to healthy persons. Tuberculin was produced at the St.Petersburg Institute of Experimental Medicine. Acting on Sņķers' request, Krēsliņš prepared soap containing 5% and 10% levels of tuberculin. Tuberculin was introduced both in patients and in healthy individuals (Sņķers and his assistant) by means of injection and by use of



the specially-made soap. Clinical observations demonstrated that in patients with *Lichenis scrofulosorum* and *Lupus vulgaris*, positive reactions occurred when tuberculin was introduced by injection or through the use of the soap (i.e., the site of introduction became inflamed). Healthy individuals, however, demonstrated a negative response to tuberculosis. For biological studies, 10.000 preparations were taken from sites of inflamed skin where the researchers had observed tuberculosis-like changes. Observations were made, analyzing a series of histologic samples. The researchers were very cautious about making any conclusions. They used the term "tuberculosis-like picture" because investigations turned up no caseous processes or necrosis, which are characteristic for tuberculosis. Moreover, tuberculosis bacilli could not be diagnosed. On the other hand, patients were found to be suffering tuberculosis processes elsewhere in their bodies – in their lungs or joints. The research was summed up in Sņiķers' thesis, "On the Nature of *Lichenis scrofulosorum*", which he defended at the St.Petersburg Military Academy of Medicine in 1904[53, 60, 66].

The first use of tuberculin in diagnosing tuberculosis, according to encyclopaedic data, was attributed to the German pediatrician E.Moro (1874—1951), even though he described the method four years later than Sņiķers. Moro proposed rubbing 50% of "old tuberculin" on the skin, and today this diagnostic test is known as the Moro reaction. In his *curriculum vitae*, knowing that the tuberculin test was attributed to Moro, Sņiķers nevertheless pointed to his own priority in the application of the tuberculin test.

Sņiķers' later research was largely successful, though the investigations he described in his thesis may be considered to be his most significant achievement. Undoubtedly a significant role in this research was played by the atmosphere which governed at the St.Petersburg Academy of Medicine, in Professor Pavlov's clinic, and at the Institute of Experimental Medicine. Also helpful was Krēsliņš' assistance in developing the work of Helmanis and Zemmers.

Sņiķers' professional development occurred mainly in his career as a military physician. He joined military service in 1898, while an undergraduate at the academy, and after graduation in November of 1900, he was promoted to the rank of councillor and registered as junior physician at the Tarutina infantry regiment No. 67. A few months later Sņiķers was appointed to the academy clinic where, after he received his MD degree in 1904, he was promoted to the rank of Council assessor. While continuing his work at the academy clinic, Sņiķers also published several scientific papers on dermatovenerology[3, 6, 30].

After graduation, Sņiķers performed his compulsory service in the Daugavgrīva Riflemen's regiment, beginning in 1904. He worked as a



Professor Pēteris Sņiķers

physician, but some months later was transferred to the Riga military hospital. He was promoted to the position of court councillor in 1908, while later he rose to become the junior resident and then the director of the department of dermatovenerology[3, 6, 11, 30].

From 1903 to 1914 Sņiķers lived in Latvia, working at the Riga military hospital and running his private practice on the side. Sņiķers kept the local community of Russian physicians informed about his research and practical innovations. Among the most important achievements made by other researchers in this time were the work done by A. Wassermann (1866—1925) on the use of complement combining reactions in the diagnosis of syphilis (1906) and the development by Paul Ehrlich (1854—1915) of the salvarsan 606 preparation which was successfully used in the treatment of syphilis (1909)[15, 59].



The papers of Riga's various physicians' societies report that on April 29, 1909, J.Eliasbergs (1896—1945) delivered a report on the use of Wassermann's reaction in the diagnosis of syphilis and leprosy[36, 65].

Professor H.Buduls (1882—1954) first applied Wassermann's reaction in 1911[9]. In years to follow, much was done to improve the serodiagnostics of syphilis. This work was done by Sņiķers' students J.Galejs (1884—1951) at the Riga military hospital and J.Brants (1889—1944) at the Aleksandra Augstumi hospital. These matters attracted the interest of doctors at other hospitals, as well[12, 13, 38, 43, 44, 58, 62].

Doctors E.Schwarz (1855—1922) and I.Springenfeld (1873—1930) reported on the use of salvarsan in the treatment of syphilis in Riga, using information collected in their own observations, as well as experience gained in clinics in Frankfurt and Berlin. On December 13, 1910, on the premises of the Riga Russian Physicians Society, Sņiķers displayed two patients suffering from syphilis who were being treated by salvarsan. Some months later he delivered a report based on observations made in 116 cases[59, 65].

At the beginning of the 20th century, Riga had a number of medical institutions. In 1912, Sņiķers made an attempt to transfer the Tartu University School of Medicine to Riga. In the same year, Sņiķers was promoted to the rank of colonel in his military service. Before the beginning of World War I, Sņiķers traveled to Vienna to work in the clinics of Professor Finger and Professor Ehrmann[52, 59].

When war broke out, Sņiķers was called into military service and walked from East Prussia to Insterburg and then traveled to St.Petersburg, where he was appointed the chief physician for 320 field ambulances. Later he headed the evaluation station No. 10 and reserve hospitals No. 25 and 399. In 1915 Sņiķers was promoted to the rank of council councillor and, on November 5, 1916, he was appointed to work as a physician in the second riflemen's regiment. From October 1916 to February 1918, while in charge of the Elva military hospital for dermatovenerologic diseases near Tartu, Sņiķers delivered lectures on syphilology to fourth and fifth-year students[15, 47].

Sņiķers saw battle action in East Prussia in the fall of 1914, and then later at Ložmetējkalns in 1916 and at Ropaži, Inčukalns, Nitaure and Sigulda in August and September, 1917[6, 49]. Sņiķers won several decorations for his work as a field physician, including the Russian orders of Stanislav (category III and category II with swords), Anna (category III with swords and category II with swords) and Vladimir (category IV with swords) (orders with swords were awarded for merits in the battlefield). He was demobilized from the Russian army on March 1, 1918[6, 11, 49].

In 1918 Sņiķers spent some time working as a physician in Valka, where he dealt with the prevention of the spread of venereal and other infectious diseases[18, 19, 20].

Latvians used the world war, as well as revolutions in Germany and Russia, to begin a struggle in support of the idea of a free and independent nation. Accordingly, Latvian armed forces were established, and these had the need for physicians and medical stations. On May 25, 1919, shortly after Riga was liberated from the Bolsheviks, a military hospital was established in the facilities of the Red Cross hospital (at first it was known as the Military Hospital of the Latvian Army). A unified system of military medicine was begun on July 19, 1919, when a sanitary department was established in the Latvian armed forces. Sņiķers was appointed to head this department. His task was to establish the department, organize a network of military medical institutions, and provide health services in the military units. A field hospital at the Liepāja garrison was established following an order on July 25, 1919, by the commander of the Liepāja regional force. By January, 1920, the Liepāja facility had 400 beds.

Because of an increasing number of patients, the Latvian military hospital was moved in August, 1919, to the former premises of the Russian military hospital. There, the number of hospital beds increased from 300 (in September) to 1,600 (at the beginning of 1920), and departments were established to provide internal, surgical, gynecological, infectious, and ear nose and throat services, as well as treatment of eye diseases and nervous and venereal disorders.

On April 9, 1920, Sņiķers issued an order to establish a 150-bed field hospital at Daugavpils[6].

At the very beginning of his service in the Sanitary Department, Sņiķers hired Gen. Alberts Brambats (1881—1934), as well as many physicians who had extensive experience in military medicine due to their service in the Russian army. Students were employed, as well. The sanitary department had to be organized from nothing. Its situation grew especially critical during German attacks in the autumn of 1919. There was a general lack of medicines, medical staff and hospitals for the sick and wounded. Support was offered by public organizations and private persons who donated cash, medicines, clothes, food and other necessities. The mission of the U.S. Red Cross gave aid, as well. The Sanitary Department worked not only to provide treatment to the wounded, but also to prevent the spread of infectious diseases. Between January and September, 1920, for example, 2,329 cases of typhus were diagnosed, along with 707 cases of relapsing fever and 1,799 cases of dysentery. The department provided treatment not only to infected soldiers, but to civilians,





Professor P. Sņiķers. Painting by J.R. Tilbergs

as well, especially in the eastern Latvian region of Latgale. Mobile bathhouses (in wagons) were established, people were supplied with disinfectants, and quarantine was introduced. The battle led to the infection and death of numerous medical workers.

In setting up its work, the Sanitary Department at first used regulations from the Russian army, but these were gradually amended, and new regulations were introduced. When Latvian independence was stabilized in the early 1920s, the Sanitary Department had managed to establish five military hospitals (in Riga, Daugavpils, Liepāja, Bauska and Valmiera), three division-level field hospitals, a sanitary train, a sanitary transport system and a warehouse for sanitary supplies. Bandaging and ambulatory stations had been set up in separate military units and at some garrisons. Training programs for medical personnel had been established[3, 6, 39].

The Sanitary Service Department was reorganized on April 1, 1921. It became the Military Sanitary Department and contained three divisions – medical, pharmacy and veterinary services. Sņiķers, by now a colonel, was appointed to head the new department, which operated under the supervision of the Ministry of War.

When peace was finally declared, only three military hospitals remained open (in Riga, Daugavpils and Liepāja). Medical commissions still functioned in the hospitals. In peacetime, attention was turned to the perfection of health services and personnel training, as well as setting up sanatoriums for veterans and facilities for their children. Military units maintained local hospitals-with 5 to 30 beds. Some 60 physicians served in the armed forces. Army leaders repeatedly recommended that Sņiķers be elevated to the rank of general, and this was done on April 1, 1923.

In 1933 the Military Sanitary Service Department was attached to the Military supplies department in 1933, and Sņiķers was enlisted in the military reserves. In January, 1934, he was retired from military duty according to his own wishes.

Sņiķers' role in the liberation struggles earned him numerous awards, including the Order of Three Stars (Category III in 1926 and Category II in 1928); a medal commemorating the tenth anniversary of the liberation struggle in 1928; and the Order of the Latvian Red Cross (Category I)[6, 11, 16, 17, 3, 51].

The establishment of an independent Republic of Latvia caused great upheaval among Latvian scientists. In 1919, two rival universities were established: a Soviet university in February, and a Latvian national university in September. Sņiķers worked with the agronomist Pēteris Nomals (1876—1949) to write up regulations for the University of Latvia and submit them to the government. Sņiķers was also among the founders



of the university's Faculty of Medicine and one of the first lecturers at the school. He served as dean from 1933 to 1937, and again from 1937 to 1939[5, 40, 41, 42, 50, 68].

Sņikers' work dealt primarily with military medicine, but he also worked as a practicing physician in civilian medicine. He was also a lecturer and working scientist. In February, 1919, Sņikers was appointed head of the university's Department of Dermatovenerology. Dermatovenerology was included in the curriculum of medical students, and the department's clinic served as a training ground for students and physicians. In 1921, Sņikers became the clinic's senior docent. He first laid the groundwork for the establishment of a chair in dermatovenerology, and then, in 1923, he was elected professor. He became a full-time professor after he left the military in 1933[52, 58, 59, 60]. Sņikers may be considered the founder of dermatovenerological studies in the Baltic States, along with Prof. Alexander Paldrok (1871—1944) in Estonia and Prof. Jorgis Karužas (1866—1953) at Vitautas the Great University in Lithuania[32, 33].

Among specialists to work under Sņikers' guidance were reader Jēkabs Širons (1870—1945), Jānis Brants (1899—1944), Jūlijs Galejs (1884—1951), and assistants Minna Zušmane-Mazkalniņa (1892—1956) and Milda Knostenberga-Čerņavska (1896—?). Širons defended his dissertation in 1914 in St. Petersburg, but Brants and Galejs, working under Sņikers' supervision, at the University of Latvia in 1929[62, 64].

Primary areas of research at the chair of dermatovenerology were the response of the human organism to a combination of arsenic benzol and bismuth; morphologic changes in the blood of syphilitic patients; the serology of venereal patients; and the morphology and biology of pathogenic agents of venereal diseases.

During the years of the independent Latvian state, dermatovenerological studies usually involved the perfection of a student's skills and the development of research experience at the leading clinics of Europe. At Sņikers' suggestion, Jūlijs Galejs carried out research and made assessments about the effectiveness of arsenic benzol and neosalvarsan in the treatment of syphilis. Pharmacology Professor C.Amsler (1881—1965) and Assoc. Prof. J.Maizite (1883—1950) were among those to act as consultants in this project. Research was carried out mainly at the Riga military hospital, with the support of the facility's chief physician, Col. Pēteris Kalniņš (1874—1940).

Jānis Brants, meanwhile, learned about a therapeutic method of syphilis treatment at the Vienna clinic of Nobel Prize winner J.Wagner-Jauregg and then became the first to apply it in the treatment of progressive paralysis in Latvia. Brants drew inspiration for his dissertation at the

Fournier clinic in Paris – the clinic in which bismuth preparations were first used in the treatment of syphilis (1921). Brants' dissertation contained extensive material on morphologic changes in the blood of patients undergoing bismuth treatment. The data, acquired from laboratory studies, convincingly demonstrated the importance of an individual approach in treatment[12, 13, 27, 62].

A Latvian Dermatologists' Society was established in 1924 to activate research and introduce new ideas in dermatovenerology. Sņiķers was the initiator of this organization, and more than two thirds of Latvia's specialists in the field joined the society.

Even before World War I, Sņiķers began working as a "seasonal" physician – offering his services at summer resorts. In later years he worked at the Ķemeri resort, which rendered help to people with skin and venereal diseases. In 1912 there were approximately 19 physicians at Ķemeri, including eight dermatologists, among them the resort director, Aleksandr Lozinskii (1868–1961). The next director, Dr. Jānis Libietis (1885–1946), favored Sņiķers' activities in balneology and, with the help of Prof. Jānis Kupcis (1871–1936), investigated the curative properties of mud and mineral springs. Sņiķers suggested that mineral water be filled in bottles and sold in shops[25, 48, 52].

In 1937, the dermatovenerologic society of Hungary elected Sņiķers as a corresponding member. He participated in many conferences, congresses and seminars on military medicine, dermatovenerology, and other topics. Over the years he visited 16 countries in Europe and North America.

Sņiķers headed the chair of dermatovenerology for much of Latvia's independence period, and during this time research work done in the department was among the most visible in the entire university. The latest knowledge was used in the training of specialists as well as for the implementation of innovations in clinical practice. In order to become a dermatovenerologist, one had to spend three years in practical work at the clinic in addition to one's studies. In 1927 there were 49 dermatovenerologists in Latvia, but that number increased to 77 by 1938. Seven of those achieved MD degrees. One of the chief accomplishments of the entire system was its program of preventive measures undertaken to stop the spread of syphilis. These did, indeed, secure a stable decrease in the incidence of the disease among the population.

Sņiķers was also active in various civic affairs. He was instrumental in the work of a charity organization called the Latvian White Cross. It was established on October 31, 1921, in a ceremony at the Riga city hall (the international White Cross had been active in Latvia since 1899, and with significant results). Besides Sņiķers, board members of the Latvian White



Cross included Dr. P.Jurjāns, Mrs. A.Sūna, Schools Department Vice President P.Zālite, Archbishop Jānis Pommers, clergymen K.Irbe, Edgars Bergs and P.Šuberts, and other people. The chairman of the organization was K.Irbe. The White Cross had affiliate organizations in towns throughout Latvia. The organization sponsored lectures in Latvian, Russian and German on such problems as venereal diseases, alcoholism, morality and ethics, and other themes. Others included such academicians as Vasilijš Kļimenko (1868—1941), Eduards Gartjē (1872—1959), Jēkabs Alksnis (1870—1957) and Romāns Adelheims (1881—1938), as well as numerous clergymen. Sņķers was one of the lecturers. The lectures were supported by voluntary donations[26, 29].

The White Cross supported the maintenance of an asylum in the Sarkan-  
daugava neighborhood of Riga. The society also owned two treatment facilities at the Riga No. 1 Hospital where treatment was offered free of charge. One facility, for male patients, was headed by Haralds Kiršentāls (1897—1978), while a second, for female patients, was headed by Marta Zušmane (1892—1956). Similar facilities existed in Liepāja and Daugavpils[29, 61]. A series of postage stamps was issued on December 28, 1936, in honor of the White Cross. There were four stamps altogether, and the theme of the stamps was the battle for morality and against the spread of perversity and venereal diseases. It was the only series of its kind in the world. Part of the profit earned by selling the stamps was given to the White Cross[37]. In 1937 the organization became a branch of the Health Promotion Society which was headed by Prof. Pauls Stradiņš. The organization was liquidated when Soviet authority was imposed on Latvia in 1940[28, 39].

In reviewing the work of the White Cross, it must be mentioned that a great many specialists were active in the group. It promoted policies promulgated by the state in the fight against immoral conduct, the spread of venereal diseases, and the elimination of the consequences caused by same. On the other hand, the organization also pointed to the failings of the state by rendering moral and physical assistance to people who were in need but whose needs were not met by the state or other institutions.

Prof. Jānis Stradiņš, working on studies about the development of research in Latvia and the activities of Latvia culture, has pointed out that unfavorable conditions beginning in the 19th century led to extensive exile of Latvians and the establishment of a deeply rooted exile culture. Latvian intellectuals living far from home joined together, often in student fraternities[42, 47]. The fraternities *Lettonia* and *Lettgalia*, for example, had close ties to the university at Tartu. *Selonija*, *Talavija* and *Fraternitas Arctica* were associated with the Riga Polytechnical Institute. And *Fraternitas Lettica* and *Austrums* were active in Moscow. St.Petersburg was an especially important center in the development of Latvian science

and culture. The Latvian fraternity active there, *Fraternitas Petropolitana*, played a significant role in the development of history, culture and the career of Sņiķers.

On December 6 (18), 1896, Sņiķers and 11 other men established *Fraternitas Petropoliensis* (later renamed *Petropolitana*) in St.Petersburg. Its goal was to develop Latvian traditions and maintain close contacts with Latvia. Sņiķers was the first secretary of the fraternity's presidium, and then its head (1897—1902). The fraternity's headquarters were located at St.Petersburg's Jesus Church, where a Latvian clergyman and religious reformer, Jānis Sanders (1858—1951) did a lot to help the new group. Later he was succeeded by Bishop J.Grinbergs. *Fraternitas Petropolitana* was supported by H.Visendorfs (1861—1916), a well-known publisher and member of the St.Petersburg town council, as well as by other prominent Latvians. Because of the tsarist politics of the time, *Fraternitas Petropolitana* could work only underground.

*Fraternitas Petropolitana* existed until 1918, when the World War I and the Russian revolution interrupted its activity. In the early 1920s Sņiķers began to think about reviving the fraternity, and in 1924 students working under Sņiķers at the Military Sanitary Department. Under the name *Fraternitas Metropolitana*, the fraternity found its home with the University of Latvia. Sņiķers arranged a meeting space for the fraternity in his home on Riga's Brīvības street, and the group functioned there until 1940. *Fraternitas Metropolitana* began post-war work in 1948 in Western Europe, but during the "third renaissance" of the Latvian people *Metropolitana* was renewed and accredited at the Riga Technical University in 1989.

The time Sņiķers spent in St.Petersburg left a considerable mark on him, and the contacts with Latvian artists he made there played a role in his medical work when he returned to Riga. Professor Jēkabs Primānis, a member of *Fraternitas Metropolitana* and an instructor of anatomy at the Latvian Academy of Arts, helped develop this role. Sņiķers, for example, worked with his former student Jēkabs Širons, by now the director of the Riga leprosorium and head of the chair of dermatovenerology at the University of Latvia, to continue the work of the Riga leprologist M.Hiršbergs (1869—1940), who had started collecting dummies of lepers. The artist Arturs Bērnieks (1886—1964) made these dummies beginning in 1926. In the 1930s his wife, Marta, learned the skill and assisted him. Sņiķers financed this work. When the leprosorium was closed in 1937, the unique collection of dummies was transferred to Talsi. It survives to this day and provides documentary evidence concerning the physical defects and suffering of leprosy patients in Latvia from the beginning of the 20th century to the late 1930s. It also testifies to the extensive work invested by Sņiķers and the artists to make the collection a reality. Its importance was recognized by the European Association of the Museums of the History of



Medical Sciences, as well as by museum workers. They often spoke to the value of the collection and its significance in education, historical development, and artistic merit[2, 31, 34].

Sņiķers was generally a great collector of art. His porcelain collection was immensely valuable and a great rarity in Riga. His collection contained the work of no fewer than 366 Latvian painters. One could see original paintings of several Russian painters, such as V.Petrov ("Two boys"), K.Brilov ("The girl's head"), I.Levitan ("Street"), I.Repin ("Drawing" and "Stories of Finland"), I.Aivazovski ("Sea"), V.Vereščagin ("Street" and "Camels"), M.Vrubel ("Angel") etc. Collection of paintings included some Latvian painters whom Sņiķers knew already from St.Petersburg period. These were, J.Rozentāls ["Dabasskats" (Landscape), "Ainava" (Landscape), "Bērzi" (Birches), K.Ubāns ["Kanāls pie Brīvības bulvāra" (Canal near Brīvības Boulevard), ("Skats kāpnēs") (On the Stairs), "Priekšpilsētas iela" (Street in Suburb)], K.Miesnieks ["Čakstes portrets" (Portrait of Čakste)], J.Valters ["Vējdzirnavas" (Windmill)], J.Jaunsudrabiņš ["Daugava" (The Daugava)], G.Šķilters ["Dabas skats – akvarelis" (Landscape – a water-colour)], V.Irbe ["Puķes" (Flowers) and "Ainava" (Landscape)], A.Bērnieks ["Raganu deģa" (Dance of witches) and "Gaiju kauja" (Cocks' fighting)] etc. Sņiķers left his entire collection of art and other valuables to the University of Latvia (the register of the items ran to 53 pages and 1,603 items). For some time after the Soviet occupation the collection was kept intact, but after Prof. P.Stradiņš was dismissed as dean of the university, corrupted communist leaders at the university took possession of the treasures and sold them off, often at ridiculously low prices. Today the assessment of Sņiķers as a collector and patron of art has just begun[42].

Sņiķers had six brothers and two sisters. Three of the brothers died in childhood. Brother Jānis was a merchant, while brother Reinholds Voldemārs earned an MD and worked as a professor of otolaryngology at the University of Latvia. His clinical work was conducted at the Children's Hospital. Sister Anna was a teacher, sister Alma – a physician. Sņiķers' wife Lūcija (as a widow she went by the name Žubeckis) was a dentist who for many years headed the women's committee of *Fraternitas Metropolitana*. She died in March, 1962, in the USA. Sņiķers' only son, Alfs (1920—1942) was deported to Siberia on June 14, 1941, as a third-year medical student. He died in confinement on November 18, 1942, in Usollag[1, 7, 30, 37, 38].

Until the last days of his life Sņiķers continued to work at the chair of dermatovenerology at the university. He died on December 5, 1944, and was buried at Riga's Forest cemetery. A memorial plaque was unveiled by the Faculty of Medicine a year later.

Sņiķers' activities are linked to the fortunes of Latvian intelligentsia, as well as to the formation and development of the Republic of Latvia. His life and work will have a lasting place in the history of Latvia.

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