

EGONS RASMANIS AND LUDVIGS REITERS

LATVIAN ACADEMIC FRATERNITIES AND MEDICINE. THE CASE OF *FRATERNITAS METROPOLITANA*

Redakcijas piezīmes

Latvijas intelektuālās dzīves attīstībā ievērojama nozīme bija studentu korporācijām, kuras Baltijā sākušas veidoties 19 gs. sākumā Tērbatas Universitatē. Daudzi izcili latviešu mediķi bijuši korporāciju biedri vai filistri Tērbatā, Rīgā, Pēterburgā, Maskavā. Īpaši daudz ievērojamu medicīnas zinātnieku nācis no korporācijām *Lettonia* un *Fraternitas Petropolitana* (vēlāk – *Fraternitas Metropolitana*). Tādēļ arī šajā krājumā ievietots divu metropolitāņu – pašreizējā *Fraternitas Metropolitana* globālā seniora Egona Rasmaņa un šīs pašas korporācijas ilggadējā locekļa un vēsturnieka Ludviga Reitera (abi – Bostonas konventā, ASV) stāstījums par šīm korporācijām. Okupācijas vara Latvijā šīs korporācijas bija aizliegusi jau 1940. gadā. 1989. gadā, "trešās atmodas" laikā, sākās korporāciju atjaunošana Latvijā. Tagad šīs korporācijas (ieskaitot arī sieviešu korporācijas, kas ir Latvijai un Igaunijai specifiska parādība, kurai nav analoģu citās Rietumeiropas valstīs) Latvijā apvieno apm. 2000 aktīvu biedru un filistru. Šīs korporācijas plaši pārstāvētas trimdā, kur tām bijusi liela nozīme latviešu izcelsmes akadēmiski izglītoju cilvēku audzināšanā un apvienošanā. Tabulā sniegta ziņas (nosaukums, dibināšanas gads un vieta, globālā konventa mitne, dalībnieku skaits emigrācijā) par korporācijām trimdā 1991. gadā; vīriešu korporācijas apvienotas Latviešu korporāciju apvienībā (LIK!A!), sieviešu korporācijas – Studenšu korporāciju apvienībā (SIK!A!).

LIK!A! korporācijas trimdā:

| | | |
|---|--------------|-----|
| 1. <i>Lettonia</i> (1870; TU) | Ņujorka | 600 |
| 2. <i>Fraternitas Arctica</i> (1880; RPI; krievu) | Grandrēpidsa | 50 |
| 3. <i>Selonija</i> (1880; RPI) | Melburna | 700 |
| 4. <i>Lettgallia</i> (1899; TU) | Ņujorka | 300 |
| 5. <i>Talavija</i> (1900; RPI) | Mineapolisa | 500 |
| 6. <i>Fraternitas Lettica</i> (1902; MU) | Ņujorka | 150 |
| 7. <i>Latvia</i> (1917; Tērbatas VMI) | Toronto | 90 |
| 8. <i>Ventonia</i> (1917; TU) | Linkolna | 120 |
| 9. <i>Beveronija</i> (1922; LU) | Ņujorka | 250 |
| 10. <i>Tervetia</i> (1922; LU) | Sietla | 200 |
| 11. <i>Philyronia</i> (1924; LU) | Brisbena | 80 |
| 12. <i>Fraternitas Metropolitana</i> (1896 Pēterburga; atjaun. 1924; LU) | Bostona | 250 |
| 13. <i>Fraternitas Vesthardiana</i> (1924; LU) | Ņujorka | 60 |

| | | | |
|-----|---|-----------|-----|
| 14. | " <i>Fraternitas Academica</i> " (1925; LU) | Toronto | 140 |
| 15. | " <i>Fraternitas Lataviensis</i> " (1926; LU) | Toronto | 200 |
| 16. | " <i>Patria</i> " (1926; LU) | Melburna | 200 |
| 17. | " <i>Fraternitas Livonica</i> " (1926; LU) | Čikāga | 200 |
| 18. | " <i>Salgalia</i> " (1927; LU) | Toronto | 100 |
| 19. | " <i>Vendia</i> " (1927; LU) | Hamiltona | 100 |
| 20. | " <i>Lacuania</i> " (1927; LU; latgaliešu) | Toronto | 100 |
| 21. | " <i>Ruthenia</i> " (1929; LU; krievu) | Ņujorka | 26 |
| 22. | " <i>Fraternitas Imantica</i> " (1947; BU) | | 60 |
| 23. | " <i>Gersicania</i> " (1947; BU) | Toronto | |
| 24. | " <i>Fraternitas Cursica</i> " (1947; BU) | Toronto | 50 |
| 25. | " <i>Fraternitas Vanenica</i> " (1947; UNRRA univ.) | Ņujorka | 60 |

SIKĻA korporācijas trimdā:

| | | | |
|-----|---|-------------|-----|
| 26. | " <i>Daugaviete</i> " (1921; LU) | Ņujorka | 600 |
| 27. | " <i>Gundega</i> " (1923; LU) | Ņujorka | 450 |
| 28. | " <i>Dzintra</i> " (1924; LU) | Ņujorka | 550 |
| 29. | " <i>Imeria</i> " (1924; LU) | Ņujorka | 650 |
| 30. | " <i>Selga</i> " (1927; LU) | Mineapolisa | 250 |
| 31. | " <i>Gaujmaliete</i> " (1927; LU) | Detroita | 300 |
| 32. | " <i>Varavīksne</i> " (1927; LU) | Ņujorka | 150 |
| 33. | " <i>Sororitas Tatiana</i> " (1932; LU; krievu) | Ņujorka | 20 |
| 34. | " <i>Aurora</i> " (1933; LU; latgaliešu) | Toronto | 50 |
| 35. | " <i>Spidola</i> " (1947; BU) | Sidneja | 250 |
| 36. | " <i>Zinta</i> " (1947; BU) | Sidneja | 100 |
| 37. | " <i>Staburadze</i> " (1947; UNRRA univ.) | Ņujorka | 50 |

Tabulā lietoti saīsinājumi: TU – Tērbatas Universitāte; Tērbatas VMI (Tērbatas Veterinārās medicīnas institūts); RPI (Rīgas Politehniskais institūts); MU (Maskavas universitāte); LU (Latvijas Universitāte); BU (Balijas universitāte, darbojās Pinebergā, Vācijā, 1946–49); UNRRA univ. (UNRRA universitāte, darbojās Minhenē, 1945–48). Vairākums korporāciju, kas darbību uzsākušas trimdas apstākļos Vācijā, kopš 1990. gada izveidojušas savus konventus arī Latvijā. 1993. gadā par korporāciju atzīta arī Latvijas Mūzikas Akadēmijas studentu korporācija "Līga" (dib. 1928. g.).

At the beginning of the 19th century, the University of Tartu was the only university which offered ethnic Latvians the opportunity to receive an academic education. Beginning in the 1880s, Latvians could, and did, attend Russian universities at St. Petersburg and Moscow, as well as in western Europe.

When Latvia began its national awakening in the late 19th century, Latvian students began to assemble for "literary evenings" which later developed into academic fraternities. The oldest Latvian fraternity, *Lettonia*, was organized at Tartu in 1870. *Fraternitas Petropolitana* was organized by students in St. Petersburg in 1896 (today it is known as *Fraternitas Metropolitana*), while students in Moscow organized *Fraternitas Moscoviensis* (now *Fraternitas Lettica*) in 1902. In later years, too, students organized



General Assembly of *Fraternitas Metropolitana* after the restoration of its activities
in Riga. January, 1990

associations based on their area of study. Thus students at the School of Pharmacy at the University of Tartu founded *Lettgallia* in 1899, while students at the Institute of Veterinary Medicine in Tartu formed *Latvia* in 1917. Both of these fraternities later moved to Riga and began accepting members from other schools and areas of study. The prominent nature of Latvian student fraternities in general meant that a majority of the country's successful scientists and statesmen belonged to one or another fraternity during their studies. Detailed information about individual members may be found in the archives of individual fraternities, as well as in the periodical journal *Universitas*, which is published in New York.

In 1930, there were 27 fraternities in Riga, including six for German and two for Russian students. Students wishing to join this academic tradition chose their particular fraternity partly based on the urgings of friends and relatives, and partly because of professional affiliation. It became a virtual tradition, for example, that *Lettonia* attracted students of theology and medicine. *Fraternitas Metropolitana*, in turn, became the fraternity of choice for students of medicine and engineering. To some extent this happened because many well-known professors and university deans were members of these fraternities, and joining up provided students with an opportunity to establish closer contact with the academicians.

It is impossible to list all of the contributions made by Latvian academic fraternity members in the areas of education, sciences and government. We will mention only a few of the most outstanding personalities.

The first rector of the University of Latvia, Prof. Ernests Felsbergs, was a member of *Lettonia*. In fact, all of the pre-war university rectors excepting Prof. J. Auškāps were members of fraternities. The deans of the university's faculty of medicine were outstanding scientists as well as fraternity members: Dr. Mārtiņš Zīle and Jēkabs Alksnis (*Lettonia*) and Dr. Pēteris Sniķers and Dr. Jēkabs Primanis (*Fraternitas Metropolitana*). The prorector of the University of Latvia from 1936 to 1940 was the prominent hydrologist Alfrēds Vitols (*Fraternitas Metropolitana*).

The first bishop of the Lutheran Church of Latvia, Kārlis Irbe, was a member of *Lettonia*, while the last archbishop of the church in exile, Arnolds Lūsis, was a member of *Latvia*. Roman Catholic bishop Jezups Rancāns belonged to *Lacuania*. Several ministers of education in the Latvian government, including Prof. E. Felsbergs, Prof. A. Tentelis and Prof. L. Adamovičs, were all members of *Lettonia*.

Lettonia also attracted a number of prominent scientists in various fields of medicine: Dr. Jānis Ruberts, a professor of ophthalmology; Dr. Ernests Putniņš, a specialist in obstetrics and gynecology; Dr. Viktors Milenbachs,

a hygienist; Dr. Aleksandrs Baidiņš and Dr. Raimunds Pavašars, both specialists in orthopedic medicine and surgery; Dr. Oskars Voits, director of Riga's second municipal hospital; and Dr. Jānis Lediņš, a specialist in x-ray diagnostics.

The most prominent members of *Fraternitas Metropolitana* who were medical scientists and instructors at the University of Latvia Faculty of Medicine were Prof. Pēteris Sņiķers, Dr. Pauls Stradiņš, Dr. Jēkabs Primanis, Dr. Kristaps Rudzītis, Dr. Miķelis Veidemanis, Dr. Jēkabs Romans, Dr. Kirils Jankovičs and Dr. Jānis Libietis. They were all graduates of the St.Petersburg Academy of Military Medicine. It is impossible to list all of the successful physicians who were educated by these men at the University of Latvia. Suffice it to say that many of these younger scientists became successful in their own right.

Prof. Pēteris Sņiķers was among the founders of *Fraternitas Petropolitana*, and he was joined by many other medical students at the university. The history of *Fraternitas Petropolitana / Metropolitana* differs from the histories of fraternities founded at Tartu or Riga. For that reason, the story of *Fraternitas Metropolitana* merits separate consideration. As was already mentioned, 19th century Latvian students had the option of studying at universities in Tartu, St.Petersburg, Moscow and Riga. Naturally students who found themselves in foreign cities began to seek friends with whom they shared interests, goals and native countries. Most Latvian students of the day were nationalistically inclined. The development of a fraternity required that the organization be affiliated with the university located in its city. Therefore it is quite understandable that the two oldest Latvian fraternities developed in the university towns of Tartu and Riga.

In St.Petersburg, the situation was different. It was a city of many different institutions of higher learning, not just one single university as was the case in Tartu and Riga. St.Petersburg was the capital city of the tsar's empire, so much stricter security prevailed in the city than in Tartu and Riga. This was particularly true as regarded non-Russians in the city. One result was that despite many attempts to organize student fraternities, none was successful. In 1837, for instance, students founded two groups – *Fraternitas Baltica* and *Ruthenia* – but by 1848 both had disappeared. There were other attempts to organize fraternities (*Polonia*, *Hippocratica* and *Teutonia* were a few examples), but still, in 1860, there were no fraternities excepting a German one called *Nevania* which had received special permission from Prince A. Suvorov to display its colors.

Latvian students had their first gatherings in St.Petersburg in 1872, when several students from the University of Tartu had transferred there. These students happened to be close associates of Atis Kronvalds, the Latvian nationalist leader who organized the oldest fraternity, *Lettonia*. Early meetings in St.Petersburg were more or less just groups of students coming

together for literary discussions. These loosely organized groups were not organized as a continuous entity. In 1896 there were 15 Latvian students at St.Petersburg. Of these, one was indifferent to Latvian national interests, while two others were not interested in any kind of organization. The remaining 12 decided to organize *Fraternitas Petropoliensis*, using the same principles that governed *Lettonia* in Tartu and *Selsonia* in Riga. The first meeting of *Petropoliensis* took place on December 18, 1896, at the home of a student named Freijs. The minutes of the meeting record that *Petropoliensis* was declared a student fraternity.

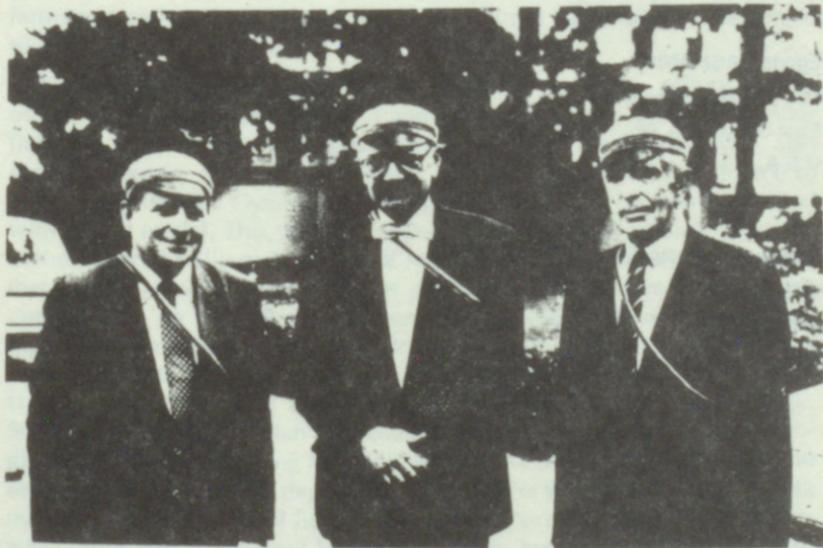
Conditions in St.Petersburg were averse to organizing a fraternity. *Lettonia* in Tartu and *Selsonia* in Riga were able to organize more easily because there was only one university in each city and therefore only one administration to deal with. In St.Petersburg, however, there were more than 20 institutions of higher learning, and *Fraternitas Petropoliensis* (renamed *Fraternitas Petropolitana* around 1899) wanted to have all Latvian students become members of the group. A further problem was that Latvian students often participated in student strikes and various anti-administration activities. This made it next to impossible for a Latvian group to receive any kind of recognition or permission to operate. The possible legalization of the fraternity was discussed on many occasions, but the conclusion was always the same: continue the fraternity underground and hope that someday conditions would change so that the fraternity could come out of hiding.

The members of the new fraternity chose violet, gold and green as their colors, and they defined their charter and goals. In 1899 there were a few students who did not like the very strict rules of the fraternity, and they wanted to reorganize into a much more nationalistically oriented group of Latvian students and patriots with the goal of uniting all Latvian students from the many different universities and working toward a free and independent Latvia. The three liberals were expelled from the fraternity for 99 years – the maximum sentence available in the fraternity's internal code. A similar situation occurred in 1908, when a group of students left the fraternity to organize under the name "Ziemeļis" with ideals more along Marxist lines of thinking.

During World War I, almost all members of the fraternity were mobilized. A few obtained permission to finish their studies, but by 1918 the fraternity was forced to discontinue its activities due to the war and the Russian revolution. Members of the fraternity were scattered all over the world. A few members who found themselves in Riga participated in the building of the newly founded Republic of Latvia. Dr.P.Sņiķers, for example, was one of the organizers of the University of Latvia, while Pāvils Dreimanis served as an officer in the military force fighting to expel German and Communist introducers.

Members of *Fraternitas Petropolitana* met for their first post-war session on September 9, 1922, in the Riga home of Dr. Sniķers. Seventeen members of the fraternity were present – all of them graduates of various institutions of higher education. There were no active students. Under these circumstances it was decided to rename the organization *Fraternitas Metropolitana* and to accept students from the University of Latvia as members. They, in turn, would renew the activities of the student fraternity. This plan succeeded, and in 1924 eleven active students officially began their work as *Fraternitas Metropolitana*. In 1926 the fraternity was officially recognized as a member of the organization uniting all Latvian fraternities. So, after 30 years spent underground, *Metropolitana* could finally fly its colors openly and coexist with the other Latvian fraternities.

Fraternitas Metropolitana was active in Riga for 18 years – from 1922 until 1940, when the invading Soviet regime declared fraternities to "be "bourgeois institutions", unwanted and therefore banned. During its 18 years, however, the fraternity was very successful. Its members were active in academic, industrial and commercial undertakings. When such operations were largely shut down by the Soviet regime, many members turned to the work of re-establishing a free and independent Latvia. After



Three new members of FIMI – J.Stradiņš, K.Ē.Arons and J.Slaidiņš. May, 1990

World War II, the fraternity renewed its activities in Esslingen, Germany, in 1948. The fraternity has been active in several American cities since 1951. Fraternity members have distinguished themselves throughout the world in science, engineering, medicine and the humanities.

On December 18, 1989, *Fraternitas Metropolitana* was accredited at the Riga Technical University, thus restoring its activities in Latvia. In 1991 it celebrated its 95th anniversary in Boston, Riga, and many other cities in America, Europe and Australia. Attempts are underway to collect more detailed materials about the fraternity's history in connection with its centenary in 1996.

REFERENCES

1. Latvijas Korporāciju Apvienība. – Ņujorka, 1990. – 96. lpp.
2. *Fraternitas Metropolitana* / Edit. J. Ansbergs. – Lincoln, [1965.] – 207 pp.
3. *Album Lettonorum: 1870—1882—1930.* – Rīga, 1930. – 170 lpp.
4. Stradiņš J. *Fraternitas Metropolitana* kultūrvēsturiskā misija // *Fraternitas Metropolitana*. Interns izdevums. – 1987.—1992. – Nr. 36. – 4.—11. lpp.
5. Stradiņš J. Latviešu zinātnes saknes Pēterburgā. Misija Latvijas labad // *Universitas* (New York). – 1992. – Nr. 69. – 21. – 24. lpp.; – 1993. – Nr. 70. – 46.—49.lpp.

Egons RASMANIS
151 Westwood Drive
East Greenwich, RI
U.S.A.

Ludvigs REITERS
9 Ridge Ave.
Natick, MA
U.S.A.