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Student life and discipline at the Riga Polytechnic School and the Riga Polytechnic Institute (1862–1919)

Das Studentenleben und die Disziplin
am Polytechnikum zu Riga und am Polytechnischen Institut zu Riga (1862–1919)

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What we call today "the Liberty of Research and Teaching" as the criteria of a functioning university has very early on in history of universities developed into the right of self-administration of all internal processes of universities. This didn't only mean the teaching process, the qualification of teaching personal, the regulations for doctoral dissertations, but also all things concerning students and student life. How to behave in public, but also how to behave on the grounds of the university.

Regulations about student behaviour at the Riga Polytechnic School (1874)

1874 the administrative commission of the Riga Polytechnic School worked out a set of regulations about student behaviour and miss-behaviour under the chairmanship of its first director Dr. Ernst Nauck and his secretary Hugo von Stein and here we find as one form of punishment the "carcer" (Latin word for prison).



Director of Polytechnicum zu Riga (1862–1875)
Ernst Nauck (1819–1875)



Disciplinar-Vorschriften

für die

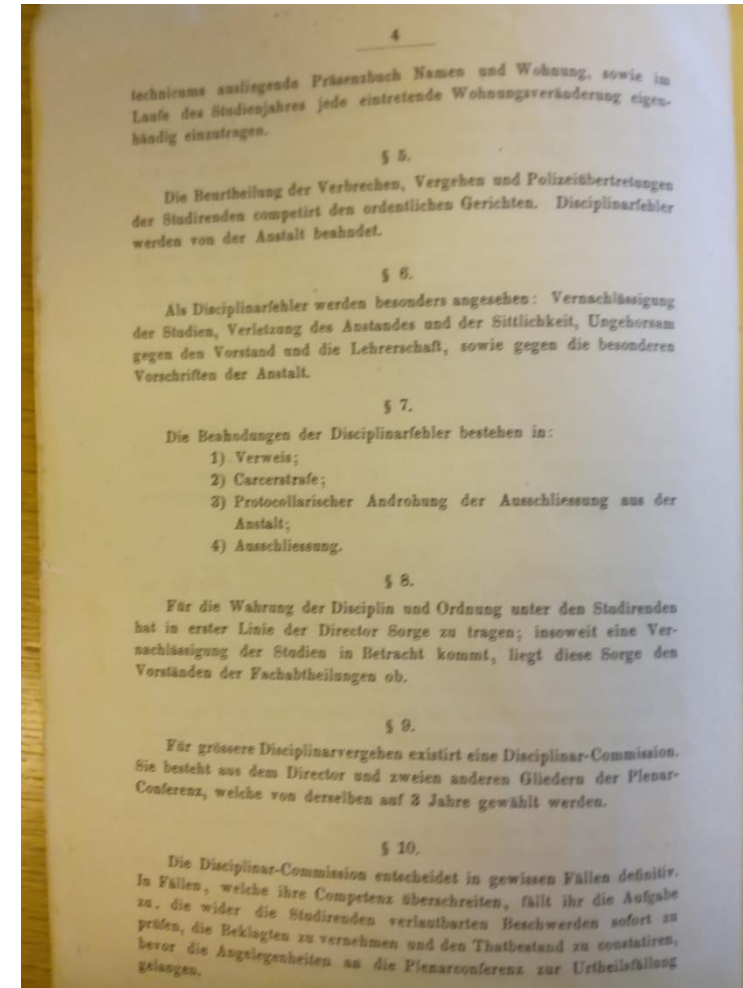
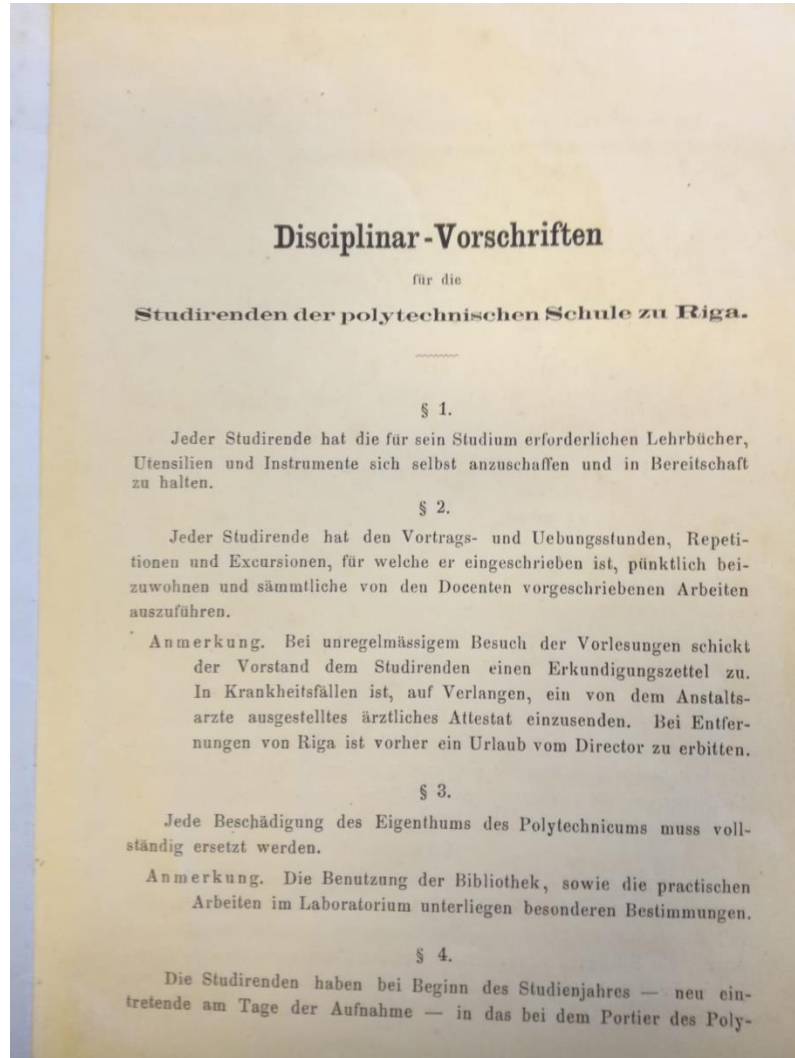
Studierenden der polytechnischen Schule

zu Riga.

Von Sr. Erlaucht, dem Herrn Curator mittelst Rescripts

vom 6. Mai 1874 Nr. 672 bestätigt.

Regulations about student behaviour at the Riga Polytechnic School (1874)



The treatment of the disciplinary errors consisted in:

- 1) Expulsion
- 2) Carcer (student prison)
- 3) Threat of exclusion from the institution by protocol
- 4) Exclusion



This institution "carcer" existed already at universities in Germany and in Tartu (Dorpat). They have a long tradition in university life. All punishments were decided by the "Disciplinary Commission" which oversaw the proceedings and decided on the degree of punishment. (hours or days or more than one day in the carcer). The director of the Riga Polytechnic presided over the proceedings and was assisted by two co-presidents of the commission. To keep the order in the house of the student side the Riga Polytechnic had administrative personal called "Pedel", (plural Pedelle)' who were a sort of internal police. Students had to obey when they were called to order by a "Pedell". They roomed around where students were active on the ground of the Polytechnic. The regulations comprise amonishments and punishments. These written down and published regulations were necessary so that every student would be treated equal befor the law.



Students who came to Riga had been living with their parents at very different locations from all over Russia. So these students didn't come only from Livonia. They had all been under the regulations of their parents. So having arrived at the Riga Polytechnic they all smelled the air of liberty, but they had to be put into a new order. The order the university requires for functioning without problems. Among the bad behaviours were marked: Drinking in public and infighting. In general students didn't commit crimes.



So among the punishments were: Expulsion from the university, but this was very rarely done, because the students families had to pay fees for the students. so this punishment is a two sided sword, because the university would punish itself by loosing a student and loosing his fee . The Riga Polytechnic School was financed by the town of Riga and several other towns of Livonia and by the fees of its students, so the expulsion of a student would in a certain way reduce its finances.



The expulsion of students was also due to the events of the 1905 revolution. For example, meetings were held in the auditoriums. The gendarmerie was not allowed to come to the university. It turned out that people had entered the street, so ID cards were introduced in the future, which had to be handed in at the entrance door.



The carcer ha been closed at the beginning of the 20th century, but the Disciplinary Commission existed up until the last days of the Riga Polytechnic Institute when it was dissolved in 1919 to be reborn as the Latvian University



Thank you!

