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Latvia's Architectural Heritage and its Protection 1880-1940

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Abstract: The subject of this article is the protection of architectural monuments in present-day Latvia from the second half of the nineteenth century up to the year 1940. The intention here is to look at these activities as part of the process that shaped the national identity of the Baltic Germans, the Latvians, and of Latvia's Russians, each of whom were influential in economic, cultural and political issues in Latvia to varying degrees during the period. In accordance with the well-known historical background of the times, my account is divided into two parts, investigating how the modification of mentalities affected the preservation of historical buildings in the Baltic provinces from 1880 to 1914, and in the Republic of Latvia during the interwar period.

To establish a heritage protection system is to set up a structure through which certain functions can be carried out in a given social milieu. In his writings on this subject Winfried Speitkamp (1996, 17) has proposed the following four principles that one should take into account when preparing a study of this issue. First, the history of cultural heritage protection should not be based on the objects concerned, that is, the monuments themselves, as the benchmark of the research; rather, it has to focus on the concepts and intentions that construct the social and political background, and to investigate the ideological abuse of protection policy as well. Secondly, such a study should not confine itself to "thick descriptions" of single objects, but should emphasize the clash of interests which appear during the process of transformation from a theoretical concept to action: this concerns measures taken by experts, politicians, property-owners and other members of a society seeking to preserve its historical heritage. Thirdly, due attention must also be paid to the institutionalization of the heritage protection movement -- that is, the way in which state officials gained control over it. This is a substantial issue in the history of monument protection. Since in the modern age individuals and experts engaged in this proceed through the medium of institutions, it is important to focus more on official and individual perceptions of monuments than on the formal qualities of the buildings. Finally, the above considerations mean that, in order to investigate the development of

cultural heritage protection, one should turn to inter-disciplinary research including elements of political, cultural, and social history as well as the history of art and religion. This approach seems to be particularly appropriate for research on common attitudes towards cultural heritage, and the way in which such attitudes reflect the "politics of the past" approved in a given society.

The history of the protection of architectural monuments in Europe can be traced back as far as the first century AD if one takes account of measures adopted in Ancient Rome, but in most countries the historical preservation movement developed much later. Initially advocated by private individuals and associations concerned with historical studies, it achieved institutional forms only during the nineteenth century. This development was linked to certain aspects of modernization, such as the emergence of both popular and state-supported nationalism, the threat posed to traditional landscapes by industrialization, and the broad growth of social mobility arising simultaneously with these processes (Ipsen 2001, 13).

In an investigation of the role played by cultural heritage and notable monuments of architecture in the course of the self-determination sought by the different ethnic communities of Latvia in the age of modernization, the analysis should be conducted through the concept of cultural memory (Friedman, 1992). Cultural memory is not a matter of giving an accurate testimony of past events, but is rather about making meaningful statements about the past in a given cultural context of the present; or, to put it more simply -- giving the past significance in the present. For the way in which a certain community has wittingly focused on its historical experience (grounded in both provable evidence and historical myths) demonstrates distinctly the nature of its need for a suitable explanation for its own past, something which is once again mostly brought on by the current traits of social reality.

There are many factors which might prompt the community to strengthen protection of historical buildings and sites, including the symbolic dimension of architecture as a representation of historical consciousness shared in that community. In this sense the symbolic meaning borne by historic buildings actually makes them monuments of architecture (Gadamer 1990, 153-55). In this particular space of signification, different and often contradictory explanations of heritage meet in arguments over historical rights and priorities. In support of such a point of view one could also agree that what we see in heritage protection activities is to some extent nothing but a competition of political ideas using the aesthetic functions appropriate to historical objects (Bacher 1994, 35).

In sum, the comprehension of architectural monuments is largely influenced by the contents of cultural memory, while the main task for cultural heritage protection -- as a part of state-applied cultural policy -- is to identify, evaluate and preserve these objects, thus ensuring a sense of historical continuity (Lang 1996, 61). In this respect the protection of historic architectural monuments is related to the development of history and historiography, which by analogy could also be treated as mirrors reflecting the self-portrait of society.

The Beginnings of Architectural Heritage Protection

The first systematic measures for the protection of historic buildings on the territory of present-day Latvia took place in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. They were inspired by the activities of Baltic German architects and historians, most of them members of the Society for History and Historical Research in the Baltic provinces of Russia (*Gesellschaft für Geschichte und Altertumskunde*), established in Riga in 1834 (Hackmann 2002; Redlich 1982).

The growing awareness of the need for cultural heritage protection in the Baltic provinces was inspired first and foremost by a new approach to history and fine arts which emerged among the local Baltic German elite. Growing cognizance of the historical value possessed by the buildings of Old Riga became apparent during the period 1857-64, when there were extensive discussions concerning the system of fortifications around Riga. At this time the local dailies carried articles hailing the great perspectives now open for Riga's further development and prosperity, as well as calls to protect the city's historical heritage (P.H. 1863).

In the 1880s several steps were taken in response to growing concern about the historic legacy of the Baltic provinces. One was the comprehensive 1883 exhibition of cultural and historical antiquities in Riga, which gained wide attention not only from Baltic Germans themselves, but also from the Latvian and Russian population (Bienemann 1883, 598). This exhibition provided to be just the right stimulus for the first purposeful activities in the field of the preservation of architectural monuments in the Baltic provinces, starting with the foundation of the Association for the Reconstruction of the Dome Cathedral in Riga (*Dombau-Verein*, 1885). This enterprise would last for some twenty-five years (Grosmane 1999) and was led by three successive architects. By the time the Association closed in 1910 it had brought international recognition to its last director, Baltic German architect and art historian Wilhelm Neumann (1849-1919) (Lenz 1970, 546)

At the same time attention was paid to the situation of historic buildings in the countryside. Although these rural areas were less affected by the rapid economic growth of the late nineteenth century than was, for instance, the historic city centre of Riga (Becker 1898), a number of voices nevertheless warned against a growing trend towards heedless reconstruction that sometimes decisively changed the shape of old churches and the manor houses of the landed gentry (Neumann 1911, 10-13).

Circumstances in the eastern part of Latvia, the three districts of the Province of Vitebsk, were different from those in the Baltic provinces. Viewed historically, this was a part of medieval Livonia, retaining, at least in theory, some evidence of the cultural ties it had had with the rest of the country in the past. Nevertheless the Society for History and Historical Research in the Baltic provinces of Russia seemed to be quite wary of undertaking activities on this terrain: partly because of the lack of observable German nobility living there, and perhaps also because they wished to avoid drawing unwanted government attention by, as it were, crossing internal borders. Apart from some regional studies devoted narrowly to medieval castles (Neumann 1890) and sacred buildings of the baroque epoch (Manteuffel 1897), all that was published was a short description (Сарухов 1903) of various local "monuments of antiquity," which appeared in Russian at the turn of the century. Nor is there evidence of any systematic practical attempts at preservation of historic architecture in the area, apart from the everyday renovation of churches organized by the local Roman Catholic clergy.

Activities in the area of cultural heritage protection advocated and undertaken by some members of the Baltic German community were also intended as a declaration of a specific political position, as well an attempt to uphold the remnants of German cultural autonomy in the Baltic provinces. To this end the Baltic Germans sought to consolidate resistance to the centralizing policies of the Imperial Russian administration by stressing the need to preserve the "legacy of German culture" in the region (Redlich 1960, 165). According to Bernhard von Hollander (1856-1937), President of the Society for History and Historical Research in the Baltic provinces of Russia from 1902 to 1909, this had been the main task of this organization from the very beginning (Hollander 1923, 4).¹ Although the Russification policies affecting the administration and educational system did not totally eliminate the cultural autonomy of the Baltic provinces (Haltzel 1977, 157), the activities undertaken by the Baltic Germans in relation to their cultural heritage nevertheless acquired a certain political subtext, both for themselves and in the perception of the majority of Latvians and Russians living there.

It is quite evident that the general ethos of these activities was rooted primarily in the movement of *Heimatkunde*, which emerged in Germany in the 1880s and reached its peak around 1905. Primarily the result of a new approach to problems of historical conservation, it was also intended to elicit greater public support by focusing mostly on middle class intellectuals, artists, teachers and others (Huse 1996, 152). The social milieu supporting the monument protection movement in the Baltic provinces was of the same kind. Starting in the late 1880s with some reflections on the concept of *Heimat* itself (Erdmann 1888, 187-99), the golden age of this movement in the Baltic provinces came around the first decade of the twentieth century, when various miscellanea including collections of historical essays, itineraries, and related poems and stories appeared (Hunnius & Wittrock 1904-1912; von Schilling and von Schrenk 1908). The bibliographic index of publications produced in this field up to 1924 contained 1216 items (von Hollander 1924, 89). As the conceptual formulations of *Heimatkunde* gradually slipped from romantic admiration of antiquity towards more ideological and nationalistic perceptions of monuments, the possibility arose that one day local history associations might lose the rather impartial stance they had originally created for themselves.

Yet for the Baltic Germans an affirmation of their identity expressed, for example, in attraction to medieval history, where the legal and spiritual origins of the “special relationship” they claimed with other communities in the Baltic were grounded (Garleff 1978, 341), and including the preservation of characteristic buildings and sites, did not result simply in a narrow nationalistic interpretation of regional cultural heritage. In fact, starting with the first efforts to establish a central museum of cultural history in Riga in 1884, a conception was sustained which also provided for the investigation and preservation of the region’s ethnographic heritage (Gahlnbäck 1912, 217-224). This idea almost became a reality in 1912, when, in co-operation with the Society of Architects in Riga, plans were drawn up for what would later become the first ethnographic open-air museum to be founded in the northeastern part of the Baltic, in order to preserve the evidence of Estonian and Latvian folk traditions in crafts and buildings (Jansons 1988, 243).

Somewhat paradoxically, however, at that time the Latvian community itself paid much less attention to material objects thought to be of value to its national identity. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Latvian intellectuals still continued to primarily stress the significance of Latvian language, folklore traditions and customs; this led them to develop a national model based on a purely ethnic conception of the nation and, accordingly, of its history as well (Priedīte 1999, 4-17). It is, therefore, not

surprising that the first publication calling for protection of peasant buildings designated as part of the Latvian national heritage only appeared in the summer of 1918 (Kundziņš 1918, 478-491).

During the period of national emancipation, relations between Latvians and Baltic Germans were influenced by a particular confrontation that resulted in a long-lasting denial of any Baltic German cultural heritage on the part of Latvian intellectuals (Šimkuva 2001, 407). The two opposing interpretations of history were manifested very clearly in 1901 during the celebration of Riga's 700th anniversary. For the Baltic Germans this seemed to be one more opportunity to demonstrate their historic role in the city's destiny. The Latvian press held a different view, emphasizing the contribution of "the original inhabitants." Hence the theatrical reconstruction of the seventeenth century buildings and fortifications of Riga presented in the anniversary exhibition met with universal rejection in Latvian newspapers (Greitjāne 2001, 5-16).

For members of the local Russian community, the lack of symbolic objects with which they could associate themselves fostered a deprecatory attitude to the cultural heritage of the Baltic provinces, which was expounded as "foreign" or "alien." In the conservative Russian newspaper *Rizhskii Vestnik* (*Рижский Вестник*, *Russian Messenger*) one can find frequent declarations about the poor selection of historically significant objects in the region, together with sarcastic complaints about the arrogantly wide-ranging activities of excessively numerous Baltic German history associations (Абызов 1993, 388, 398-9). Of course, there was a certain ideological background for such statements which reflected the German-Russian tensions common in the Baltic at that time. However, some more moderate articles did pay attention to historic structures preserved in Libau, and in Mitau as the former capital of the Duchy of Courland; they even discussed the little town of Jakobstadt situated on the border of Courland and Livland, usually because of the Russian Old-Believer settlement founded there in the seventeenth century (Greitjāne 2001, 13-53, 492-497, 498-519, 520-524). The Tenth All-Russian Congress of Archaeology that took place in Riga in 1896 increased interest in the architectural legacy of the Russian Orthodox Church in the Baltic provinces, initiating the first efforts to prepare a general survey of the history and present condition of Orthodox Church buildings (*Выборка*, 1896).

It was, however, Baltic German architects and historians who remained at the forefront of monument protection during the period up to the outbreak of World War I, and it was they who laid the actual foundations for modern perceptions of architectural heritage in Latvia. Since there was no generalised official system for the protection of cultural heritage in the

Russian Empire, it was due to these Baltic German activities that professional standards emerged with regard to the investigation, registration and technical preservation of historic buildings. All these issues were discussed repeatedly at meetings of historians of the Baltic provinces in Riga in 1908 and in Reval in 1912. During the first registration campaign in 1901, a hundred monuments of architecture were identified in Livland, twenty-six in Courland, and fifty-three in the province of Estland (Neumann 1914, 288). Moreover, the authority of the Society of Architects was so great, that from 1913 Riga Polytechnic became the first institution of higher education in the empire to offer a special course on the preservation of historic buildings (Clara Redlich, see Jansons 1998, 51).

Developments within the Republic of Latvia

The outcome of World War I changed the international constellation of power and gave new impetus to processes of national self-determination in the eastern part of the Baltic region, not only in terms of ethnic communities' political status, but also -- and very importantly -- in terms of their comprehension of their own cultural identity. In all of the newly born states along the Baltic Sea, great efforts were made to formulate what national identity should comprise in different areas of everyday life. Consequently, changes of structure and content also occurred in the field of Latvian cultural heritage protection.

The legal basis of the national monument protection system in the Republic of Latvia was "The Law on Monument Protection" passed by Parliament in 1923 (Valdības Vēstnesis 1923). This created the Monument Board of the Department of Education, which began work in the field of registration and protection of cultural heritage. The Monument Board was composed of experts in history, ethnology and architecture elected from among representatives of the University of Latvia, the State Historical Museum and the Academy of Arts (Apinis 1992, 21-22). Its functions included both approval of reconstruction projects and control over restoration works carried out on historic buildings. In total, 280 objects under reconstruction and renovation were inspected. All projects relating to historic buildings had also to be approved by the Department of the Interior. The Monument Board had the last word on such issues, but because it was permanently under-funded and as a consequence had a remarkably small staff, the terms imposed by the Board could not always be fully enforced. The protection measures that were undertaken therefore tended more towards renovation of the contingent aesthetic image than to preservation of the authenticity of the objects. In fact, the Monument Board

abstained from formulating detailed general regulations, considering it best to make a decision on each case separately.

Altogether the Monument Board arranged twelve preliminary expeditions to prepare the inventory list of state-protected historical buildings in Latvia, which now extended to the eastern part of the country. By the start of 1940, 232 monuments had been registered on this list: churches of Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox denomination and preaching-houses of the Old-Believer congregations, former manor houses of estates expropriated from the Baltic German landed gentry after 1920, historic castles and ruins, individual public buildings and residential houses or details and interiors of historic value, as well as decorative constructions in gardens and parks.² Separate lists for architectural monuments in Riga were prepared by the Monument Board in 1925 and 1935; these expanded to contain 215 further objects, but the listings were voluntary, and in practice only seven historic buildings in Old Riga were formally legally protected in accordance with a special instruction passed by the city council in 1933. These were the main Riga churches (St Peter, St James, and the Dome Cathedral), the two historic Guildhalls, the Town Hall, and the House of the Blackheads.³ In other cities and towns of Latvia, the Board limited itself to superficial inventories of historic buildings, and could do little more than obtain a general overview of the situation there.

The wide spectrum of objects falling within the protective classification suggests that the Monument Board used objective comparative criteria in its attempts to protect the country's architectural heritage. However, the situation was more complicated than it might seem, since the Board was only under legal obligation to care for those monuments whose preservation served the interests of the Latvian state and nation. The basic standard set by the Monument Board for the award of monument status to a historic building included two parameters relating to the historical and commemorative value of the given object (*Izglītības Ministrijas Mēnešraksts* 1938, 585).

In this regard, Latvia displays many similarities to the Weimar German Republic as far as the ideological background to the protection of historic monuments is concerned. A similarity in Latvian and German conceptions of *Heimatkunde* is again apparent during the interwar period when it came to determining the commemorative value of monuments. These concepts had now gained a manifest political function: monuments were to be used within the educational system in order to legitimate the new national identity and demonstrate full coherence between state and nation (Speitkamp 1996, 51-53, 90). The potential consequences of this approach for work on the protection of monuments in Latvia led the historian Hermann von Bruiningk (1849-1927) (Lenz 1970, 113-114) to predict in

1920 that problems would arise in monument preservation and interfere with cooperation between national communities, because of “the mutual distrust widespread between different nationalities living in Latvia.”⁴ His suspicions were proved to be well-founded by the contents of a manual entitled *Let Us Protect the Antiquities of Our Nation* (Štāls 1924), published by the Monument Board as early as 1924.

In the early 1920s some efforts were still made to ensure continuity with the earlier activities of the predecessors of the Monument Board; however, the determinant trend of heritage protection in the Republic of Latvia is best described as a kind of “autonomy movement.” As noted by the historian Edgars Andersons (1920-89), there was little grounds for optimism regarding the potential for cross-cultural communication during the interwar period: “Some [Baltic] German intellectuals were interested in Latvian culture to a certain extent, while some Latvian intellectuals also showed an interest of sorts in the culture of the Germans and the Russians living in Latvia, and that was the whole story. In other respects all the nations were unfamiliar to one another in both their cultural and their religious life” (Andersons 1984, 531).

Aside from the decision made by the experts of the Monument Board to continue the training of prospective architects in matters of historical preservation, there were few other cases of cooperation in this field. The Society for History and Historical Research in Riga proceeded to organize exhibitions separate from those created by the Monument Board, and devoted them to the architecture of Protestant churches and former estates in the countryside. In doing this, the society used the traditional historical and geographical classification of the three Baltic provinces and drew on the rich materials gathered in its Archive of Architectural Monuments (Celmina and Romang, 2001, 87-88, 144-145).

It might be helpful here to look at the example of a study made by architect Heinz Pirang (1876-1936) (Lenz 1970, 592) in the 1920s using the data collected in the society archive. This case exactly reflects the questions posed by every attempt at research in cultural history in Latvia at that time. Pirang’s study *Das Baltische Herrenhaus* was devoted to the manor houses that appeared to be the most typical features of the “German” heritage in the Baltic, but Pirang nevertheless felt himself to be standing simultaneously on two different shores. He accepted in principle the contemporary appeal to nationality evident in the work of the state monument protection system in Latvia and Estonia, but at the same time he rejected the use of this concept in regard to the subject of his study. On the one hand, Pirang acknowledged the symbolic values attributed to architectural monuments when these are treated as sources for the history of a particular nation; on the other hand he clearly marked out the

supranational significance of the local architectural heritage, which (he said) should be described as "Baltic" in view of its international substance and origins (Pirang 1926, 1, 7-9). However, the approach advocated by Pirang found little response among his German and Latvian colleagues in Latvia.

In contrast to the declining success of Baltic German efforts to maintain pre-war standards of protection for their cultural heritage, a certain increase was evident in the activities of the Russian community. This resulted in a historical survey devoted to the monuments of sacred architecture of the Russian Orthodox Church in Latgale. The survey, published in 1939, included accounts of sixty-five objects located in five districts and the two biggest cities (Jēkabpils and Daugavpils) in the south-eastern part of Latvia (Caxapov 1939). At the same time the reconstruction of murals exposed in the Orthodox cathedral in Riga began in 1938, a project planned to last three or four years (*Latvijas Arhitektūra* 1938, 239-245).

These measures for preserving a building often associated with Russian dominance in Latvia were initiated at the peak of the dictatorship of Kārlis Ulmanis (1877-1942), a fact which seems significant in the light of the tensions which arose between the state and the Baltic German community, and which also affected the protection of the Latvian architectural heritage. In accordance with the new principles governing domestic policy under Ulmanis, limitations were placed on the cultural autonomy of minorities, and the concept of a "Latvian Latvia" was enunciated and declared to be the main objective of policy, to be attained as soon as possible (Stradiņš 1998, 31).

The two clearest expressions of this approach in the field of heritage protection should be mentioned. The first was a demand to "dismantle the remnants of the castles once built by German oppressors from the hills of the Latvian fatherland," put forward in several articles in 1938 by the journalist Arturs Kroders (1892-1973); this, however, was attacked in counter publications (Šilde 1976, 641) and also rejected in the opinion given by the Monument Board (*Latvijas Arhitektūra* 1939, 130).

Yet the Riga reconstruction project, established in 1936 to advance "the national spirit of architecture," developed in a rather different way. This project was proposed by state officials -- *de facto* by President K. Ulmanis himself -- and gained almost unanimous support from leading Latvian architects, including Professor Pauls Kundziņš (1888-1983), who was the main expert in architectural heritage protection at the Monument Board. During the most active phase of this project, from 1936 to 1938, approximately seventy buildings of varied historical value were torn down in Old Riga (Valdessa 1939, 72). The question is, however, did the

arguments used in dailies to support this project only follow the political conjuncture of the age, and was there also some other kind of motivation for the far-reaching reconstructions planned in the very heart of Riga? It goes without saying that this project had a distinctly political and ideological background based in the anti-German trends of policy that were characteristic for the authoritarian regime in Latvia. In this regard, a whole host of seemingly irrefutable evidence has been given recently by Andreas Fülberth in his monograph on the capitals of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania from 1920 to 1940 (Fülberth 2005, 183-226, 316-361).

On the other hand, one could say that the Riga reconstruction project had some relation to the common *Zeitgeist* of urbanism that could be discerned in other contemporary proposals such as the *Plan Voisin de Paris* developed by Le Corbusier (1887-1965) in 1925 (Will 2000, 118-126). The proposals made by Latvian architect Arnolds Lamze (1889-1945) at the early stage of development of the Old Riga reconstruction project were based on both political and aesthetic grounds. Although he left the final decision to the government, Lamze argued for the need to take into account the different points of view expressed about the project. His own favored approach was to divide Old Riga into two parts according to the historical value of the buildings located there. The northwestern part (between the Dome Cathedral and the castle) seemed to Lamze to comprise the kind of satisfactory architectural and artistic unity that could hardly be found in the second part of Old Riga -- the territory from the Dome to the city canal in the north and to the railway in the southeast. He considered this latter area to be more eligible for large-scale reconstruction (Lamze 1936). As Fülberth (2005, picture 51) demonstrates, this was indeed the part of the city where the greatest degree of demolition and reconstruction of historical structures either occurred or was planned to occur.

The typical viewpoint of the representatives of the Monument Board regarding the historical and cultural value of the architecture of Old Riga can be found in the booklet *Some Monuments of Mediaeval Architecture in Riga* (Riekstiņš 1939) published in 1939 by Hugo Riekstiņš, the organization's supervisor of monument protection. With the exception of churches and five or six public buildings, Riekstiņš argued that Old Riga was nothing more than a collection of hovels; if, in the natural course of events, some of those "rat-shacks" disappeared to make way for monumental buildings "suited for the spirit of our time, the only people to shed a tear would be the Baltic Germans" (Riekstiņš 1939, 28-29).

At the same time, however, the frequently encountered ideological rhetoric about "creating the new Latvian Riga" could also serve to favor opposite conceptions. This possibility becomes apparent in the case of the former Church of St George. In 1937, the architect Jānis Jaunzems, who

was actually responsible for the protection of ethnographic buildings [sic -- *M.M*] at the Monument Board, called publicly for the Riga administration to stop using the former church as a warehouse, in order to protect the oldest structure in "the awakened Latvian Capital" from utilization which he considered to be improper for a significant monument of architecture (Jaunzems 1937, 119). Furthermore, during World War II efforts were made by the Monument Board to arrange the restoration of this church in order to establish a depository for details of ruined architectural monuments there.³⁷

The extensive reconstruction of Old Riga during the last few years of independence attracted well-founded criticism not just from the Baltic German community, but also from some Latvian architects -- the first group being worried about the deformation of Riga's historic landscape, the second about the enormous expense of this enterprise (*Krastiņš* 1995, 271). Articles on the subject in the *Rigasche Rundschau* offered many contradictory views, but the leading Russian newspaper in Latvia, *Segodnia* (*Сегодня, Today*) came out unequivocally in support of the project, speaking of the need to clear the capital of waste and outdated buildings (Абызов 1999, 309-313, 391-394, 394-398). The common argument advanced in both Latvian and Russian publications was that there was no necessity to preserve the whole historic structure of Old Riga: rather, individual objects of outstanding significance should be protected, like the principal medieval churches and public buildings such as the House of Blackheads. With the outbreak of World War II, however, the project had to stop due to the cessation of funding hitherto allocated by the state and the municipality of Riga. Furthermore, hints dropped by German diplomats linking this issue with the attitude of the Latvian government towards the German minority as discerned in Berlin (Dunsdorfs 1992, 316) could not be set aside in the atmosphere of international relations in the late 1930s.

The general trend in protection of the national architectural heritage in Latvia during the interwar period turned into an affirmation of the state-approved interpretation of history. The Monument Board was therefore mostly concerned about archeological sites and ethnographic objects, that is, about peasant buildings, opposing them to architecture connected with the cultural heritage of the Baltic Germans. Seen from this angle, the foundation of an ethnographic open-air museum on the outskirts of Riga in 1932 (*Kundziņš* 1932) served both as a statement and demonstration of the singularity of Latvian cultural identity, and as an argument for the political and cultural dominance of Latvians in the Republic of Latvia.

Notes

1. For information on von Hollander, see Lenz (1970, 333).
2. Latvijas Valsts Vēstures Arhīvs [The National History Archive of Latvia, LVVA], 1630.f., 1.apr., 176.l., pp.30-35.
3. *Ibid*, 108.l., p.153.
4. LVVA, 4038.f., 1.apr., 4.l., pp.129-132.

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