

## In Commemoration of the Tenth Anniversary of Baltic University

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In 1945, when Nazi Germany capitulated, the lives of the homeless found new outlets, and there appeared new possibilities for their cultural activities. Immediately Lithuanian schools, which were so much needed for the growing generation, were successfully organized. There arose the problem of university studies also, especially since quite a number of Lithuanian professors and students found themselves outside their homeland, with the war having interrupted the students' studies which had been started in Lithuania and with only a portion of these students being able to hope for admittance to German universities which, at that time, had been only partly reestablished. Finally, there were also certain stimuli of national self-respect, because the ability to organize a university had to testify vividly to the world the high cultural level of our exiles. Other Baits made efforts similar to those of the Lithuanians. Approval for organizing a university was obtained from the British occupational government. According to its direction, the steps of the Lithuanians, Latvians, and Estonians were synchronized in the creation of one Baltic University, common to all three nations, in Hamburg. The British Foreign Ministry, after the inquiries by the offices of the local governments, also looked favorably on the matter and answered that it did not see any reason why Baltic University should not be formed. A special conference of government officials and teaching staff was called, in which the university statute was discussed and enacted, according to which a need for three rectors was foreseen, to represent in the university administration the affairs of these three nationalities; also, there had to be three administrative persons in each college, one being the dean and the other two the assistant deans. The statute made provision for the university president, who was to be entrusted with the representation of the university. Eight colleges were foreseen, namely: philosophy, economics and law, mathematics and natural sciences, land industry, medicine, architecture and engineering, chemistry, mechanics. And thus, on March 14, 1946, Baltic University began its first semester of serious work. This was a cultural victory for the exiles and worthy of pride, the fruit of great creative potency and energy.

Academic life started on an industrious, but also enthusiastic, note. In the historical museum of Hamburg, which had been somewhat repaired and the main hall decorated by the emblems of the three nations and the plaques of the eight colleges, for the first and, perhaps, the only time sounded out lectures by Lithuanian, Latvian, and Estonian professors, presented to students not only in German, at that time practically the most convenient language for communication among the Baits, but also in their native languages; in them certain parallel subjects were taught to the students of any one nationality, as well as the subjects of native language and literature. There was also much vitality in the university camp, which was established in the so-called Zoocamp, where in the lot, once a graveyard, primitive barracks had been erected during wartime for workers. And thus it happened that the Baits had to continue the university traditions by transferring, as picturesquely expressed by Professor Mykolas BiriiSka, from the baroque of Vilnius to the barracks of Hamburg. At the camp gate by the British flag there streamed in the wind the flag of Baltic University, whose three parallel gold lines against a white background symbolized the close cooperation of three nations, forced here by destiny from the native shores of the rippling Baltic Sea. Baltic University announced its establishment to other universities in the world. The scientific proceedings series published by Baltic University and called Contributions of the Baltic University were sent to at least two hundred universities and scientific institutions;. In a short time greetings and good wishes began to be received from universities throughout the whole world. They have been received not only from Europe, but also from the United States, Canada, Mexico, South Africa, India, and even from faraway Australia. For example, here is an excerpt from a letter from Harvard University: "I am writing to extend the felicitations of Harvard University to the newly opened Baltic University in Hamburg. The young people of three Baltic States are fortunate in being able to continue their studies under its aegis." The University of Nebraska: "We extend to you our congratulations and most sincere good wishes on the opening of Baltic

University. It is to be hoped that many difficulties which you have encountered will be finally overcome, and that your institution may have a brilliant and successful future. We thank you for sending us the first issues of your Contributions... For our part, the University of Nebraska can offer in exchange our new series of University Studies..." The University of London, England, wrote: "It is indeed encouraging to hear of the work being done by your University, and I should like on behalf of the Principal and my colleagues to send you our greetings and good wishes for your further work." The University of Quebec, Canada, congratulated with acknowledgement of the magnificent work (magnifique travail) which was accomplished in spite of all difficulties. The University of Goteborg, Sweden, wished success to the new "sister institution." The University of Heidelberg, the oldest one in Germany, greeted "the youngest university on German soil." Duesseldorf's Academy of Medicine wished properly that in the established Baltic University the youth torn off from their countries would find at least a spiritual homeland. All these beautiful greetings raised spirits and strengthened determination. Consequently, Baltic University felt as though it had been accepted into the world family of universities.

In January, 1947, Baltic University was transferred from Hamburg to the neighboring Pinneberg (one half hour by suburban train), where the whole modern military quarters were given over to the university. The location was well chosen. Communication with Hamburg was convenient, and the quarters themselves were large, with their own sports stadium, squares, auditorium, offices, kitchen, assembly hall, and wide paved roads. Having passed the organizational period, the curricula became stabilized and lectures proceeded in an orderly fashion. According to the means at hand, the necessary laboratories and consulting rooms were organized. A library equipped with a reading room was arranged. Also an agreement was reached with the German University of Hamburg, which kindly allowed BU students to use its equipment, which, of course, was more convenient and more abundantly installed. However, even in Pinneberg the Department of Dentistry organized its own polyclinic and dental laboratory. The College of Mathematics and Natural Sciences established its own, although small, zoology, geology, and physics laboratories. Botanists could avail themselves of a 15,000 specimen herbarium. The chemistry laboratory was excellent. Geodesic instruments were also owned, with which technology students performed experiments on the wide quarters of the university grounds. In order to acquaint students with the newest scientific advances, study trips were organized. The College of Land Industry arranged such trips to the Institute of Applied Botany in Arensburg, to the peat — bog research station in Bremen, etc. Forestry students could get practical training in one of the largest forest raising firms in the neighborhood of Pinneberg.

The abundant overseas immigration which had begun quickly diminished the number of students and professors. Hence, the work of the university was officially closed on September, 1949. However, it must be noted that measures were taken to transfer BU to the United States or Canada. For example, in 1947, the project of transferring the university to Quoddy village, Maine, was written up in the American press. Of course, the university having no funds, the project was soon dropped. Later the subject was taken up by a proclamation in the name of the Committee for Baltic University in Exile, signed by many U.S. and Canadian university presidents, deans, professors, and other important American civic leaders. In the proclamation the following was expressed: "It would be a terrible tragedy if this unique institution were to go out of existence... It is imperative that the cultures of Baltic people, which are today being destroyed by a genocidal foreign regime, should be kept alive, and that there should be at least a small body of Baltic intellectuals prepared and able to assist in their countries' recovery." This proclamation was mentioned by "The New York Times" (June 20, 1948) and other widely known newspapers. However, the lack of funds defeated this project, too. For the same reason the projects to transfer the university to Canada were also dropped, although high Canadian officials were interested in these projects. For instance, on April 22, 1948, H. L. Keenleyside, Deputy Minister of Mines and Resources, wrote to the president of Baltic University: "...The proposal to reestablish Baltic University in Canada is being examined here... your views will be given both serious and sympathetic consideration." Later Canada's universities gave their favorable opinions, too. Nevertheless, nothing could be accomplished, and Baltic University concluded its fine and meaningful action.

In commemorating the tenth anniversary of the birth of Baltic University, the ones who had the opportunity to work and learn in it, remember the happy and creative atmosphere in Hamburg and Pinneberg, which resembled so much the old academic spirit and traditions created in the Vilnius, Kaunas, Riga, and Tallinn Universities of the Baltic nations.