

Veluti academiae Livonicae principium futurum:
The Plans to Establish an Academy in Livonia
Before Swedish Rule

Summary

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This paper examines the late-sixteenth-century plans to establish what was intended to be the first university in Livonia: the Academia Livonica, initiated by David Hilchen (1561–1610), secretary of the city of Riga, syndic, and secretary of the king of Poland. This started out as a joint project by the city of Riga and the Livonian knighthood. In accordance with Hilchen's plans, this university was supposed to evolve out of the Riga Cathedral School, which had transitioned in 1594 to a humanist curriculum as a safeguard against the increasingly entrenched Jesuit educational system in Livonia, which at the time was under Polish-Lithuanian rule. Until around 1596, Hilchen also planned to teach Lutheran theology under the aegis of the new academy. However, the failed attempts in 1597–1598 to find a superintendent for the Evangelical Church in Livonia who would also serve as a professor of theology at the academy, as well as the understanding that neither the secular nor the clerical authorities of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth would have granted privileges to such an institution, forced Hilchen to content himself with an institute of higher education akin to the Academy at Zamość, where philosophy in the broad sense, the arts, and political science were taught. Hilchen managed to complete the first step of the plan to establish the Livonian Academy: to invite a professor at the University of Helmstedt, Salomon Frenzel von Friedenthal (1561–1600), to oversee the reorganisation of the Cathedral School. Frenzel arrived in Riga in the late summer of 1599. Hilchen's speech in Latin, delivered upon Frenzel's arrival, is one of the most significant sources of this plan; because it has never before been used by Latvian, Estonian, German, or Polish scholars, an Estonian translation of it has been included with the present paper.

The second half of the article analyses the models for education reform in Riga based on Hilchen's extensive correspondence. Firstly, we have determined that the Academy of Strasbourg's role as a model for the planned Academy in Riga was not indirect. In fact, it was directly based on Hilchen's visit to Strasbourg during his *peregrinatio academica* in May 1581 as part of the cohort of Alexander Olelkowicz Słucki, the prince of Ruthenia. Secondly, Hilchen's reforms cannot be simply reduced to his short sojourn in Strasbourg; at least as important was his later correspondence with others who had studied in Strasbourg,

especially with those who had already implemented Sturm's ideas in their own cities' schools. Given the confessional conflicts in Riga, it was no surprise that Hilchen focused on the schools that were based on the Strasbourg model, that were located in what was then Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth territory, and that, like Riga, were located in the zones of conflict between different confessions. These were the *gymnasium* founded in Thorn and the Academy of Pomerania that was modeled after it under the supervision of influential lawyer and mayor Heinrich Stroband in the early 1590s; the *gymnasium* of Lewartów, founded by Hilchen's fellow student Albert Calissius for unitarians and antitrinitarians (active in 1588–1598); and the Academy of Zamość, founded by Hilchen's patron, Polish grand chancellor of the Crown and grand hetman Jan Zamoyski (1594).

All these educational institutions had been created and acted in opposition to either the Jesuit educational establishments or, in the case of Academy of Zamość, to the Catholic University at Krakow.

Several factors prevented the establishment of the grandiose academy in Riga. These included Hilchen's arrest on 14 January 1600 and his escape from Riga and subsequent exile for the rest of his life in Poland; Frenzel's death on 23 April in the same year; and the Polish-Swedish War that began in the late summer. Although Riga's planned Academia Livonica did not come to pass due to Poland and Sweden, the military and religious great powers of the age, it can be seen as Hilchen's attempt (as a Livonian patriot) to preserve an ancient, unitary, and independent Old Livonia, by the means of a native educational institution that would not have been subverted by any foreign power. By omitting theology, Hilchen intended to make sure that Livonia's academic institution would survive under a conquering foreign power of any confession. The revision of Livonia in 1598–1599 revealed that replacing the high authorities of Polish-Lithuanian origin with educated native officials would have been much easier if there had been a rhetorically talented intellectual cohort that met contemporary political, diplomatic, and juridical demands.