

The impact of the Baltic Germans' emigration on the pharmaceutical sector in Latvia (1939-1940)

S. LAUZE*, B. MAURINA, V. SIDLOVSKA

*Received October 8, 2017, accepted November 17, 2017**Corresponding author: Sabine Lauze, Dzirciema iela 16, Rīga, LV-1007, Latvija
005383@rsu.edu.lv*Pharmazie 73: 182–184 (2018)**doi: 10.1691/ph.2018.7164*

For several hundred years, the Baltic German families of pharmacists have been the decisive creator of traditions in Latvian pharmacy. A large amount of the oldest pharmacies in Latvia, especially in Riga, were owned by pharmacists of Baltic German origin. Many of these ancient pharmacies ceased to exist in 1939, as a result of the emigration of the Baltic Germans. The agreement on the outward migration of German nationality citizens between Latvia and Germany was signed October 30, 1939. According to the information of the Pharmacy Board of Latvia, the number of employees in the pharmaceutical sector, registered in 1939, was 2068 persons. During the first wave of emigration, at the end of the year 1939, 306 persons, related to pharmacy, renounced the Latvian citizenship and emigrated. During the second wave of emigration, in spring of 1941, when Latvia had already lost its political independence, another 49 pharmaceutical employees left Latvia. In total 355 employees emigrated to Germany. As a result of the Baltic German emigration there was a decreased number of pharmacies in Latvia and the lack of pharmacists became a local issue. In rural areas quite often the only one pharmacy, which had been owned by a German origin pharmacist was liquidated or stayed closed for several months.

1. Introduction

The beginnings of the Baltic German culture in the territory of Latvia can be traced back to the 13th century, when the ancestors of this nation's group arrived from the current territory of Germany as knights, missionaries and traders (Feldmanis 2014). The first and oldest pharmacy in Latvia started to operate 1357 in Riga. The pharmacy was named as Rātsapitēka (City Council Pharmacy) or Lielā apteika (The Big Pharmacy) (*Die Rats-Apotheke oder Grosse Apotheke*), and continued to operate until 1758, having existed for 401 years (Šidlovska 2005). Most of the oldest pharmacies in Latvia, especially in Riga, were owned by pharmacists of Baltic German origin, who were the creators of the Latvian pharmacy tradition.

According to the population census of 1935, 56 411 Baltic Germans lived in Latvia, the statistical board of 1939 counts 54 567 Baltic Germans (Feldmanis 2014). Albeit being a minority, the Baltic Germans had the leading influence in the fields of trade, financing and industry in the territory of Latvia for a long period of time.

Before the Baltic Germans' emigration from Latvia in September 1939, 519 pharmacies existed in Latvia, 76 of them in Riga, but also in in other regions: Vidzeme (excluding Riga) 148, Kurzeme 92, Zemgale 94 and Latgale 109 (Dzirne 1940b). Most of them, numerically 219 pharmacies, were owned by Latvians. Approximately 105 were owned by Jewish pharmacists (Dzirne 1944). At this time by the Baltic Germans owned 99 pharmacies, 24 of which were located in Riga (Dzirne 1940a). These three ethnic groups were decisive for the management of pharmaceutical services during the first Latvian independency (1918-1940).

The agreement on repatriation of the citizens of Germany between Germany and Latvia, which was signed October 30, 1939, provided a final end date for emigration of December 15, 1939. The agreement consisted of 23 clauses (Valdības Vēstnesis 1939). Based on the agreement the emigration of Baltic Germans was planned as one-off event, as a result of which all the Baltic Germans would leave Latvia for non-returning. However, not all Baltic Germans emigrated before the end of 1939, a small part emigrated not before 1941, which is called an after-departure. During the first wave of emigration in 1939 in total 48 838 persons left Latvia (Feldmanis 2014).

In 1941, another 10 900 persons emigrated from Latvia, among them also Latvians (Feldmanis 2014).

2. Statistical information about the pharmacy professionals emigrated during 1939

On January 20, 1940, the Pharmacists' Society of Latvia requested from the Pharmacy Board information about the emigrated professionals (Bensons 1940). A seven pages document showed that before the end of 1939, 306 employees had left, among them 5 pharmacy masters, 83 pharmacists, 144 pharmacist assistants and 74 pharmacy trainees (Latvian State Archive 1941).

The pharmacy employees working in Latvia got their education in higher education institutions of the Russian Empire – most often at the University of Tartu, as well as at the University of Latvia, starting from 1918. Pharmacy masters obtained their master's degree in any other higher education institution of the Russian Empire or the University of Latvia. Persons qualified as pharmacists obtained their candidate's degree from the University of Latvia, which in 1940 was substituted by a master's degree. The pharmacist was also a person who had obtained a so called provisor degree from any of the universities of Russia. Pharmacist assistants had obtained an assistant's grade at any Russian university or in the University of Latvia (1918-1926) or at the University of Latvia (1926-1934). Pharmacy students or secondary school graduates were indicated as pharmacy trainees (Kazerovskis 1974).

Shortly after emigration the operation was temporary interrupted in 85 Baltic Germans' pharmacies, of which 23 were located in Riga, but remaining in the regions of Latvia: 20 in Vidzeme (excluding Riga), 21 in Kurzeme, 14 in Zemgale and 7 in Latgale (Dzirne 1940b).

In order to emigrate, each person had to have a special emigration certificate. Such a document was issued to persons, who were confirmed to belong to the German nation. For persons, who could not prove their belonging to the German nation, emigration was prohibited. According to clause I of the supplementary protocol of the agreement, a person was regarded to belong to the German nation if a confirmation to emigration, issued by the German embassy, could be presented (Valdības Vēstnesis 1939). However,

in the supplementary protocol of the agreement between Latvia and Germany exceptions were disclaimed, for example in the case of mixed marriages. In Latvia also lived a large amount of foreign stateless persons, the majority of which emigrated from Latvia together with Baltic Germans (Feldmanis 2014).

The exceptions mentioned in the supplementary protocol explain the fact, why the Pharmacy Board of Latvia had performed the listing of the emigrated pharmacy professionals also according to their ethnic origin. Most of those emigrated in 1939 were Baltic Germans, numerically - 273 pharmacy professionals (Dzirne 1940c). Among them were 5 pharmacy masters, 70 pharmacists, 124 pharmacist assistants and 74 pharmacy trainees. The pharmacy masters were Paul Bernhard (1869-?), Ernest Bushman (1867-?), Theodor Wasmus (1876-1960), Gustav Eduard Alexander Weiss (1874-1945), and Alfred Zimmel (1887-?) (Latvian State Archive 1941).

Besides the Baltic Germans, also 18 Latvians emigrated to Germany, 7 pharmacists and 11 pharmacist assistants. Additionally, 7 Polish, 4 Russian, 2 Estonian, 1 Swedish and 1 English professional emigrated (Dzirne 1940c).

However, according to an information of the Pharmacy Board from June 12, 1940, 15 pharmacies, mostly in rural regions, continued operation although being owned by Baltic Germans (Dzirne 1940e). In spring 1941, when Latvia lost its political independency, another 49 pharmacy workers left Latvia, again 5 masters, 14 pharmacists and 30 pharmacist assistants. Emigrated masters were Wilhelm Günther (1904-?), Eduard Hahn (1861-?), Woldemar Thomson (1883-?), and two Latvians - Vilma Liedeskrastiņš (1903-?) and Alise Kupcis (1906-1946) (Latvian State Archive 1941).

3. Sales of the pharmacies, owned by the Baltic Germans

The supplementary protocol of the Latvian and German agreement mentioned that emigrating Baltic Germans were not allowed to export pharmacy laboratories, equipment of the chemically pharmaceutical companies, items and devices, as well as medical treatments (Valdības Vēstnesis 1939). Baltic German pharmacists were allowed to sell their pharmacies to new owners, if it was possible to manage this in such a short time. The German pharmacists were, however, not permitted to sell the concession of the pharmacy to its new owner, he had to apply for a new one.

Not all Latvian pharmacists could buy a pharmacy directly from the owner due to a lack of purchasing power, although the Credit Bank of Latvia issued loans for the purchase of pharmacies already in the beginning of 1939 (Valdmanis 1939). A notification of the Pharmacy Board from June 12, 1940 mentioned that the former owners themselves could only sell 9 pharmacies directly. In seven cases the purchasers were private persons, but in two cases city governments. The pharmacies purchased directly were Buhards' pharmacy or the pharmacy of Kaļķu street (*Die Kalkstraßen-Apotheke*) in Riga (founded in 1655), Foks' Pharmacy in Riga or Priekšpilsētas Pharmacy (*Die Vorstadt-Apotheke*) (founded in 1725), Lāča Pharmacy in Riga, homeopathic pharmacy Skorpions in Riga (founded in 1912), the first homeopathic pharmacy A. Jungers in Riga (founded in 1833), Trapene Pharmacy in Valka county, Zvaigžņu Pharmacy in Valmiera, Ērgļa Pharmacy in Limbaži and Ērgļa Pharmacy in Gostiņi. The price of a pharmacy was within the limits from 6 000 lats until 75 000 lats. The most expensive one was Foks' Pharmacy in Riga, which was bought from Fridrich Treivert (*Friedrich Treuwerth*) (1874-1952) and Udo Valbe (*Udo Walbe*) (1903-?) by pharmacist Arnolds Krēsliņš (1892-1958). Comparatively the most cheapest one was Ērgļa Pharmacy in the province of Latvia, which was bought by the Gostiņi town municipality (Dzirne 1940g). Those owners of the pharmacies, which could not sell their pharmacies, had to pass them to the management of the special Fiduciary Exit Joint Stock Company UTAG (*Umsiedlungs-Treuhand Aktiengesellschaft*). UTAG sorted out the substantive legal issues of the residents of German nationality and one of the most important tasks was the evaluation and taking over of the Baltic German's real properties. During emigration the pharmacy owners left their pharmacies with all inventory and medicines, and they were gradually sold to new owners, using the mediation of UTAG.

Clause XVII of the emigration agreement stated that in the Bank of Latvia, a special UTAG account had to be opened for the taking over of the Baltic Germans properties. While clause XVIII provided that the settlement with Germany mostly had to take place with the additional export of the Latvian goods (Feldmanis 2014). Cash remunerations to the previous owners did not exist.

In total, 48 pharmacies in Riga were bought by the mediation of the joint stock company UTAG. In Riga 13 pharmacies were sold, the other ones in the following regions of Latvia: in Vidzeme 9, in Kurzeme 14, in Zemgale 8, but in Latgale only 4 pharmacies. The lowest price was 400 lats, which was paid for Nīkrāce Pharmacy in the countryside of Latvia. The highest price, 42 000 lats, was paid by the chief of the Pharmacy Board himself, Nikolajs Rūtenbergs (1902-1971), for Nikolajs Pharmacy in Riga. By the mediation of UTAG, pharmacies for the total amount of 399 750 lats were sold (Dzirne 1940f). The purchasers of pharmacies were Latvian pharmacists and city self-governments. In Riga Latvian pharmacists became owners of such recognized pharmacies as Gulbja Pharmacy or Garnizona Pharmacy (*Die Garnisonsapotheke*) (founded in 1674), Millers' Pharmacy or Klīversala Pharmacy (*Die Kliverholm-Apotheke*) (founded in 1809), Buhards' Pharmacy together with laboratory, Āgenskalns Pharmacy (founded in 1822) and others. The interest about the acquisition of Baltic Germans pharmacies from UTAG was great and most often, several pharmacists wanted to buy a pharmacy. Then, a decision was made by the Pharmacy Board with the consent of the Minister of the National Welfare.

For example, four pharmacist were willing to buy the traditional Gulbja Pharmacy. At the end, the permission to purchase was acquired by pharmacists Jūlijs Ruments (1900-1943) and Jānis Okše (1894-1961), who had also applied for other pharmacies (Rutenbergs 1939). It could not be determined so far, what motives prompted the Pharmacy Board of Latvia to offer a pharmacy to a particular person.

4. Pharmacy in Latvia after the emigration of Baltic Germans

According to the information of the Pharmacy Board of Latvia, in 1939 the pharmaceutical personnel in Latvia comprised 2068 employees, of which 649 were of Jewish origin. Among the 470 pharmacists, 136 were Jewish (Dzirne 1944). After the Baltic German's emigration, the lack of pharmaceutical staff in the country had become a serious issue. The Pharmacists' Society of Latvia had warned about severity of the situation already November 14, 1939. In a letter to the Pharmacy Board the society advised to admit more pharmacy students to the Pharmacy Department of the University of Latvia and to amend the clause 121 of the Pharmacy Law issued in 1939. This stated that pharmacist assistants were only permitted to take exams after 1.5 years of pharmacy practice. The Pharmacists' Society insisted that instead of the pharmacy students the exams of the pharmacist assistants should be allowed to take the pharmacy trainees, and students should be allowed to study undisturbedly (Bensons 1939). While in 1940, as a result of amendments of several normative acts, the exams of the pharmacist assistants were allowed to take both pharmacy students with the practice in pharmacy of 1.5 years and pharmacy trainees with the practice in pharmacies of at least 3 years (Planders and Dzirne 1940). By organization of the courses and examination of the pharmacist assistants, it was tried to compensate the lack of employees in the field also in further years of the World War II.

As a result of the emigration of Baltic Germans in Latvia, the number of pharmacies decreased. In the notification of the Pharmacy Board from June 12, 1940, 23 liquidated Baltic Germans pharmacies were listed, of which 6 were located in Riga. Among them was one of the oldest pharmacies of Riga called Herbert Bush (1886-?) Pharmacy, also known as Mazā or Ziloņa Pharmacy (*Die Kleine Apotheke oder Elefant-Apotheke*) (founded in 1570), which during the period from 1814 until 1836 was owned by the famous Latvian scientist pharmacist Dāvids Hieroniņš Grindelis (*David Hieronymus Grindel*) (1776-1836). Other historical pharmacies of Riga were also closed, for example, Lauvas Pharmacy or Ķēniņa Pharmacy (*Die Königliche Apotheke*)

(founded in 1691, officially closed in 1941), Zaļā Pharmacy (*Die Grüne Apotheke*) (founded in 1710), as well as one homeopathic pharmacy, Zvaigznes Pharmacy (1923) (Dzirne 1940d).

By the end of emigration period, the Pharmacy Board, in the publication "Valdības Vēstnesis" (Government Gazette) from December 7, 1939, published a list of pharmacies, whose concessions were cancelled for 52 persons, based on clause 83 of the Latvian Pharmacy Law. This clause said that a pharmacy could be closed if a disorder or negligence was detected for several times or if such circumstances arise when a pharmacy owner become a person, who was insolvent or had a damnable lifestyle, as well as person, who was not able to manage a pharmacy due to his or her mental state. These reasons, however, were not the real ones; the pharmacies, mentioned in this list, had all been owned by Baltic Germans and concessions were cancelled because of the emigration. Most of these pharmacies were purchased by Latvian pharmacists and then continued operation (Rutenbergs and Dzirne 1939).

In rural regions, economic interest in pharmacies offered for purchase was not so great. There were cases that the only pharmacy, which had been owned by a pharmacist of German origin, stayed closed for several months, until it was overtaken by a new owner. For example, on January 16, 1940 the Pharmacy Board received the information that in the Spāre province, parish residents were complaining as the local pharmacy was closed due to emigration of its owner (Ausmanis 1940). To get their medicines, residents had to go to Talsi, which, forth and back, were 42 km, or to Ventspils – forth and back more than 90 km.

During the emigration of Baltic Germans 2 drug wholesalers, 6 foreign chemical and pharmaceutical companies and 3 chemically-pharmaceutical laboratories ceased to exist (Dzirne 1944).

5. Summary

As a result of the Baltic Germans emigration the amount of the pharmacies and their employees decreased. In 1939 the Latvian pharmacy field was left by a very significant part of professionals, which had maintained pharmacy services at a high level for many years. However, for many of Latvian pharmacists the emigration of Baltic Germans gave an opportunity to become pharmacy owners, but this did not last for longer than a year. The Baltic German emigration was a prelude for World War II in Latvia. June 17, 1940, the territory of Latvia was occupied by the Red Army. The shortly following nationalization of pharmacies and other pharmaceutical enterprises was the next shock, which awaited the Latvian pharmaceutical sector and its employees.

Conflicts of interest: None declared.

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