

European experience and foreign professorship at the stage of establishing Moscow University

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Abstract. The article reviews the history of establishing Moscow University and the first decade of its performance in the context of considering the European experience and the role of visiting foreign professors. Attention is drawn to the use of the experience of European universities in the projected management system of Moscow University and ensuring its autonomy by M.V. Lomonosov. The authors show the role of the I.I. Shuvalov, the favorite of Empress Elizabeth Petrovna, in implementation of the project of Moscow University, and analyze the developed hierarchy of the university's governing bodies, the structure of administrative positions, and the system of privileges granted by the government. The dominant role of visiting professors in establishing and functioning of the university's faculties is revealed in detail, as well as the conditions created for their work in Moscow, and the personal role of each of the invited professors in the educational process during the first years of Moscow University. The authors reveal the conflicts between Russian and foreign professors and show their inevitability at the stage of establishing Moscow University, drawing attention to the transition of the educational process to the Russian language as the teaching language during the first years of the reign of Catherine the Great, Empress of Russia.

Keywords: teaching, autonomy, privileges, faculty.

The socio-economic development of Russia in the post-Petrine period increasingly demanded educated officials, engineers, scientists, and specialists in various economic sectors. The Academic University in St. Petersburg and military educational institutions obviously did not cover this need on the required scale. A need appeared to establish such a secular educational institution, in which, together with the nobles, the commoners could also study. In the reign of Elizabeth Petrovna, Lomonosov came up with the idea of establishing such an institution in Moscow, referring, among other things, to the fact that many nobles and commoners lived in the oldest capital. Lomonosov's idea was supported by I.I. Shuvalov, an influential statesman and a favorite of the Empress. In July of 1754, he presented in the Senate a project

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for establishing Moscow University. At that, Shuvalov has stressed that “enlightened peoples were obliged to the sciences by the fact that they were exalted and glorified over people who lived in the darkness of ignorance”, and that “through science, Peter the Great performed those feats that again exalted our fatherland, namely: building cities and fortresses, establishing the army, creating the navy, carrying out reclamation of uninhabited lands, establishing waterways, and other benefits of our being” [1: 10]. The reference to enlightened peoples was indicative since without reference to the experience of European universities and the invitation of foreign professors the matter could not have moved forward.

During the development of the draft charter of the university, Lomonosov advocated freedom of teaching, armed himself against police burdens that prevented the dissemination of knowledge, against the clergy, who did not allow reasonable teaching and scientific education in the name of religion, and even scolded science in sermons [2: 1]. He advocated establishing a university corporation, taking as a model the University in Leiden (Holland). An advisory body, namely, a Conference of the most authoritative scientists, was supposed to be at the head of the corporation. It was supposed that the Conference sessions would be held “to advise and discuss all kinds of regulations and initiatives concerning the sciences and the best scientific works, and then to provide each professor with everything that he sees in his profession as necessary and requiring improvement; the same general session will solve all matters concerning the students’...” [1: 12]. However, the Conference was presided over not by the rector, chosen from among the professors, but by an authorized official – the director, who had authority in all matters of the university’s life. The last word in all important decisions was given to the curator, who represented the interests of the university before the government, rather than to the director.

According to the model of the oldest European universities, Moscow University was given certain autonomy or “liberties”, whose basis was the privileges granted by the government. The main privileges included the following: 1) the university was not subject to any state institution other than the Senate; 2) professors, teachers, and students could litigate at the university court, and could be directed to another court only with the knowledge of the curator and director; 3) the homes of all university corporation members could not be used for cantonment and were not subjected to police cumbrances.

Of great importance was the privilege that protected the university from “excessive attention” from the Moscow authorities, which allowed applying to various state instances and judicial bodies. This made Moscow University such an unusual phenomenon in an autocratic country with its bureaucratic apparatus that two additional decrees were published later, dated March 5, 1756, and December 22, 1757, which confirmed the university’s autonomy and its subordination directly to the Senate.

The university project was approved by the Empress on January 12, 1755 (according to the Julian Calendar) on Tatiana’s Day by a personal decree “On the establishment of Moscow University and two gymnasiums”. According to the charter, which was in force until 1804, the university consisted of three faculties: law, medicine, and philosophy, where ten professors taught.

The Faculty of Law employed three professors. A professor of general jurisprudence was to teach general and Roman law, a professor of Russian jurisprudence – internal state law, a professor of politics – interstate relations. There were also three professors at the Medical Faculty. A professor of chemistry taught physical and apothecary chemistry, a professor of natural history demonstrated a variety of minerals, herbs, and animals in the classroom, the professor of anatomy gave lectures on medical practice, as well as conducted practical classes in the anatomical theater. Four professors taught at the Faculty of Philosophy: a professor of philosophy taught logic, metaphysics, and moral teaching; a professor of physics taught experimental and theoretical physics; a professor of eloquence taught oratory and versification (writing of poetry), and a professor of history taught general (universal) and

Russian history, as well as heraldry [3: 41]. Thus, the Faculty of Philosophy was more extensive in terms of teaching staff, because, following the example of German universities, it formed the basis of university education. The students were required first to complete the course of verbal sciences, where they studied Latin and Greek, and then continue their studies at the faculty of choice. “The philosophical class or faculty is the most extensive, intended to prepare students for the higher faculties and train them in many things. The faculty teaches philosophical and verbal sciences, mathematics and other subjects, which not only purify and enlighten the human mind but also meet our daily needs, and can produce a lot of good for the state” [4: 191].

The problem concerning the “lack of national worthy people in the sciences” and the staffing of the university with teachers was solved in the same way as in the time of Peter the Great, by means of inviting foreign professors. Shuvalov and G.F. Muller, Academician of the St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences, played a major role in providing the new educational institution with foreign academic staff.

It was Muller, who invited seven professors from Germany to Moscow, using his connections in the scientific circles of Europe, and laid the scientific foundation of the new university. Ph.H. Dilthey from Mainz, J.M. Schaden and J. H. Frommann from Tübingen arrived to Moscow in the 1756. Ch.G. Köllner, and I.A. Rost from Göttingen, and J.Ch. Kerstens and J.G. Reichel from Leipzig came a little later. Only two Russian professors were among the first university lecturers [3: 44–45]. What were the German scientists, who breathed life into a new educational institution that would later become the leader of Russian science and education?

The first place among the professors was occupied by Schaden, a Master of the University of Tübingen, a follower of the Wolf School of philosophy, who taught philosophy. The next was Dilthey, a graduate from the Universities of Innsbruck, Strasbourg, and Vienna; he arrived to teach history but on arrival was sent to the Department of Natural Law. The entire Faculty of Law was focused on him for over ten years. Logic, metaphysics, and morality were taught by Professor Frommann, who arrived at the same time as Professor Schaden. Delivering the general history was entrusted to Köllner. Being ill-prepared for this subject, he confined his reading to Rollin and consulted Muller on Russian history. German literature was taught by Reichel, following Gottsched’s guidance. After the death of Köllner, he moved to the Department of General History. Reichel was one of the most gifted and useful lecturers in Moscow University. Professor Rost of Göttingen laid the foundation for the Mathematical Department of the Faculty of Philosophy. The Medical Faculty was supervised by Professor Kerstens [5: 495].

When foreign scientists were invited, a contract was signed with them, usually for five years, where the disciplines that this specialist was required to teach were prescribed. According to the Table of Ranks, which ranked the system of ranks in the military and civilian service at 14 levels, the position of professor corresponded to the 8th class, which, in turn, was equivalent to the army rank of major or the civilian rank of the collegiate assessor.

Professors were entitled to a salary of 500 rubles a year. To live in Moscow, this amount was considered insignificant. The professors were forced to look for additional sources of income, resorting to part-time work and seeking payments of various allowances from Shuvalov. When in 1766 the time came to renew the contracts with foreign scientists, they demanded a significant increase in salary, which could be seen as a manifestation of dissatisfaction with their allowance.

Most of the German professors had a poor command of the Russian language, which was an obstacle to their communication with students. Lomonosov’s followers, professors Popovsky and Barsov advocated teaching philosophy and verbal sciences in Russian rather than in Latin, “since there is no such thought that could not be expressed in Russian”. However, their appeals were not supported.

Conflicts often broke out between Russian and foreign professors, which also harmed the activities of the educational institution. The University Conference, which started performing in October 1756, initially consisted of three professors, namely, Popovsky, Frommann, and Dilthey. Thus, the majority was made up of foreign scientists, and this situation remained until 1768. Popovsky sought seniority in the Conference, but Dilthey and Frommann were opposed, claiming that they had received positions at the university earlier than Popovsky, as well as tried to establish a hierarchical system similar to universities in the West, i.e. by faculties, where the first place (in the absence of theology) was given to professors of the Faculty of Law (Dilthey), the second place – to medical professors, while the third place – to philosophical professors [6: 126]. As a result of the confrontations, it was this system that was approved that allowed Dilthey to take the lead in the Conference. The contradictions were transformed into personal hostility. Thus, Popovsky was refusing to issue a certificate of service to Dilthey, who, in turn, used to send slanders to St. Petersburg against Popovsky [1: 79]. As a result, many of Popovsky's proposals that contributed to the development of Russian science were rejected by the Conference.

Since 1767, all the faculties of Moscow University were allowed to give lectures in Russian instead of Latin. This was preceded by a persistent struggle in the professorial environment between German and Russian academic staff. The endpoint in this opposition was put by Catherine the Great, who arrived in Moscow to open the Established Commission, and spoke in favor of “teaching lectures at the university in the language of Russia” [7: 426]. So, Russian scientists were given the right to teach in Russian.

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