

TOWARDS THE STATE OF LATVIA

Nr. 8

Image 1

Management staff of the civil service of Northern Latvia at the Cēsis New Castle in July 1919 (sitting on the left: agronomist Vilis Gulbis, head of administration Markus Gailītis, agronomist Hugo Celmiņš; standing on the left: captain Kārlis Bankins, engineer Ādolfs Vickopfs, head of the Finance Division Aleksandrs Pētersons).

Collection of the Cēsis History and Art Museum



Latvia 100 

Cēsis – the provisional capital of Latvia

"In Cēsis – the provisional capital city" – this was the title of the article in the newspaper *Vidzemnieks* of 14 October 1919 that was published in Valmiera providing information on the work of the government, by noting that Cēsis – "a pearl in the wreath of Vidzeme" – has become the capital city of Latvia over the past few days.

Cēsis and the surroundings had become a prominent centre near the front-line already during World War I with both the headquarters for Russian XII army and the Latvian refugee care organisations. Many future Latvian state employees gained experience in political and economic work there, incl. the first Prime Minister of Latvia Kārlis Ulmanis and his associates from the Latvian Farmers' Union who worked in Priekuļi and Cēsis before the proclamation of the Republic of Latvia.

Image 2

The Cēsis New Castle where the civil administration of Northern Latvia was located after the battle of Cēsis in the summer of 1919. Publisher of the postcard Georgs Stilke in Berlin. Produced in 1918.

Collection of the Cēsis History and Art Museum

Image 3

Kristīne Apkalne's Former Women's Gymnasium (Raunas iela 7) where the meeting of the People's Council of Latvia was held on 11 October 1919. Publishers of the postcard K. Andersons and G. Matīss in Cēsis. Produced from around 1905-1912.

Collection of the Cēsis History and Art Museum

In the spring and summer of 1919, the civil administration of North Latvia under the leadership of engineer Markuss Gailītis was actually exercising powers of the Provisional Government of Latvia in Vidzeme that was freed from enemies.

Following the Battle of Cēsis, the civil administration was situated in the Cēsis New Castle. Thanks to the victory of the Estonian and Latvian troops in the Battle of Cēsis, this small city in Vidzeme gained a role in the consciousness of the Provisional Government of Latvia led by Kārlis Ulmanis that was similar to role of the Noah's Ark – a place where to find a shelter at a moment of danger. Such moment of danger came in October 1919, when the Bermondts' troops rapidly approached Rīga.

At the meeting of the People's Council of Latvia on 9 October, Kārlis Ulmanis, the Head of Government, had described the situation on the front near Rīga as 'relatively good'; however, in the evening – a few hours later, it began to deteriorate.

At about 7 p.m., the Germans exerted new pressure in the direction of Daugava at Rama Manor... An hour later, a message was received in Rīga saying that the Germans had broken the front and the state of Rīga was endangered." Although it later turned out that the news had been exaggerated, "in the light of immediate proximity of the enemy, the People's Council of Latvia and the government authorities left Rīga." This enemy attack was stopped at endangered sites, and the Prime Minister returned from Ropaži to Rīga at 5 a.m. Zigfrīds Anna Meierovics, Minister of Foreign Affairs also returned from Ropaži where the representatives of the government, who had left the capital city, where accommodated.

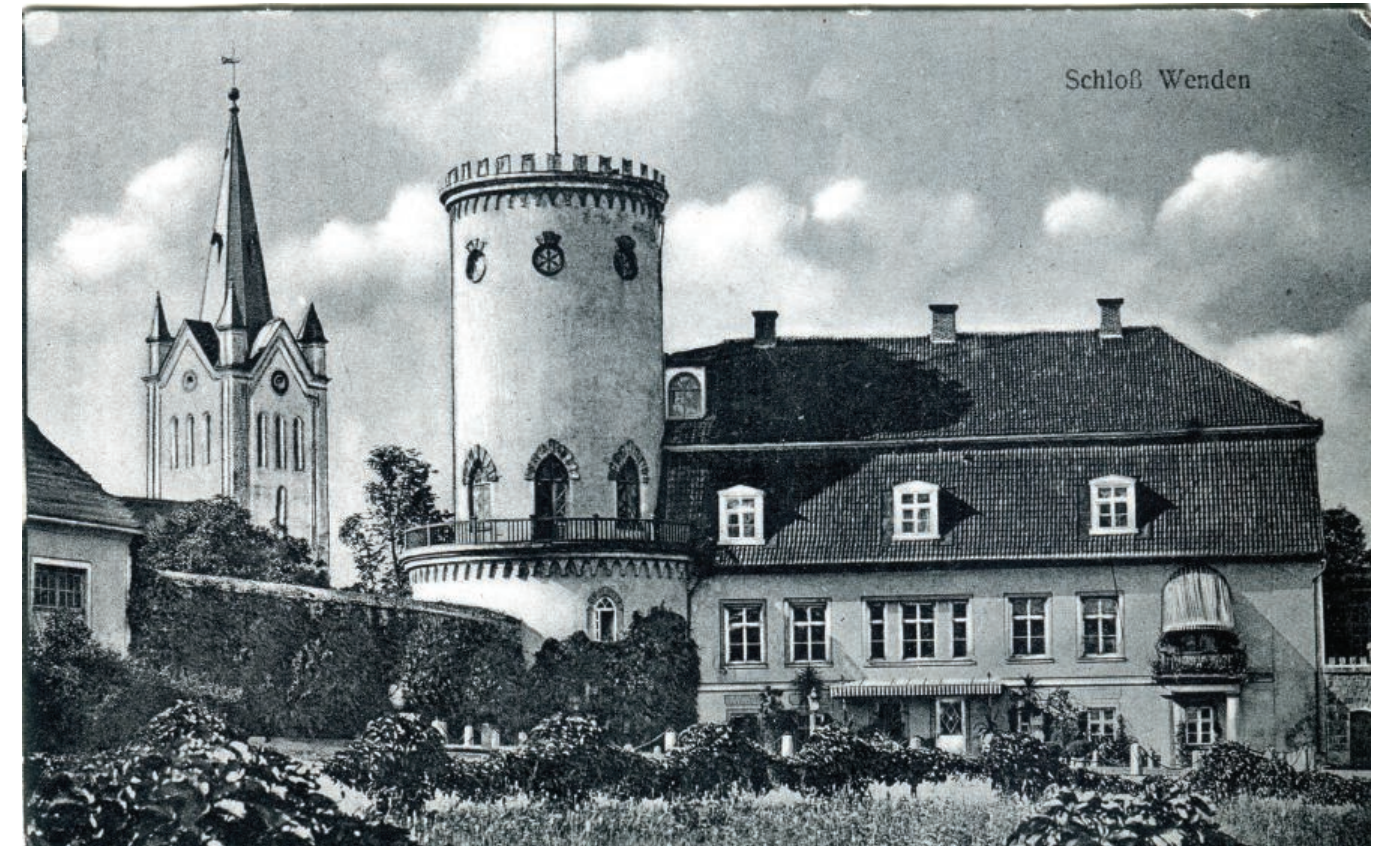


Image 2



Image 3

Image 4

Former office of the Justice's Court meetings (Raunas iela 14) where the Ministry of Trade and Industry was located. Publisher of the postcard K. Galviņš in Cēsis. Produced from around 1902 -1905.

Collection of the Cēsis History and Art Museum

At around 9 a.m., the enemy's projectiles began to fall in the city, and the ministers decided to leave Rīga. On 10 October, Prime Minister K.Ulmanis signed the following government statement:

"In the light of enemy's preponderance, it was impossible for our heroic army to hold its positions on the left bank of Daugava, through which Rīga found itself under direct enemy fire. Therefore, the government acknowledged that it was necessary to temporarily transfer the government authorities from Rīga to Cēsis."

The notice was published in the gazette *Valdības Vēstnesis* on 12 October. It was printed by the editorial office of Otto Nonācs in Cēsis (Palasta iela 15). The gazette also published the addresses of government authorities in Cēsis. The Prime Minister, the State Chancellery and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were located in the Longins Ausējs' Boys' Real School. The Ministry of Trade and Industry was situated in the former office of Justice's Court meetings (Raunas iela 14) while the Ministry of Transport and Labour – in the Cēsis railway station. The Ministry of Finance and the State Savings Bank were based in the premises of the former Tarbatu bank on the market square nearby St. John's Church. The Ministry of Agriculture was located in the so-called Vegesack's House (Palasta iela 11). The State Control found its temporary home in the nearby Pechonkin's house (former Reiera, now Bērzaines iela 6). The Ministry of Supplies was housed in the premises of the Bergmanis' pharmacy (Rīgas iela 32). The *Latopress* press agency had also moved to Cēsis. On 13 October, *Brīvā Zeme* published a supplemented order by the head of Cēsis garrison specifying addresses of other government offices registered in Cēsis. The Ministry of the Interior was at Pils iela 2 and the

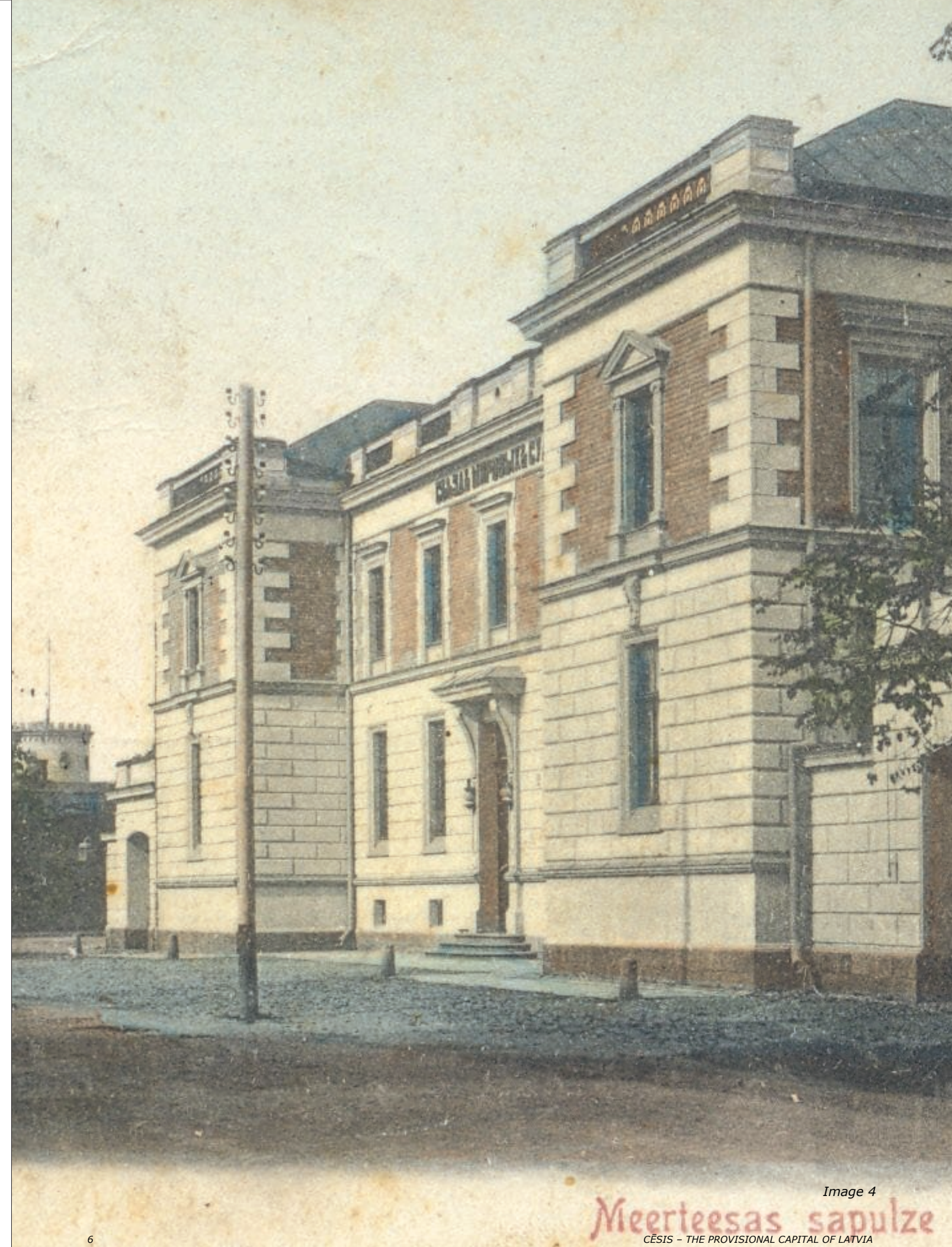


Image 4

Meerteesas sapulze
CĒSIS – THE PROVISIONAL CAPITAL OF LATVIA

Image 5

Longins Ausejs' Boys' Real School called "Stone Nest" (Raunas iela 2) where the offices of the Prime Minister, the State Chancellery and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were located. The postcard was published in 1918.

Collection of the Cēsis History and Art Museum

Ministry of Education was at Hermeistara (present Gaujas) iela 16. The order also states that the radiotelegraphy is located in the railway station. According to later publications, it appears that the office rooms of the institution subordinate to the Ministry of the Interior were also at the District Board House (Pils iela 7). Already on 11 October – the day before the publication in the gazette *Valdības Vēstnesis*, the newspaper *Sociāldemokrāts*, which was printed in Cēsis, informed its readers about the relocation of the government authorities and the People's Council of Latvia from Rīga.

"On Thursday 9 October, the government authorities were evacuated from Rīga to Cēsis. On Friday 10 October, the Prime Minister was still in Rīga. The war authorities were still operating in Rīga."

It was also noted that due to the fact that the German troops were approaching Rīga, the People's Council of Latvia moved to Cēsis on Thursday night.

On Friday, the first meeting of the factions took place in the premises of the City Board of Governors in Cēsis (Rīgas iela 7).

In the evening of the same day, the second discussion took place in the Women's Gymnasium, where Prime Minister K. Ulmanis and Minister of Foreign Affairs Z. A. Meierovis provided some information on the situation. On 11 October, the fourth meeting of the fifth session of the People's Council of Latvia was held in the Hall of the Women's Gymnasium (formerly Kristīne Apkalne's Women's Gymnasium at Raunas iela 7). At 9.45 p.m., the meeting was opened by Jānis Čakste, President of the People's Council.

Although it was not possible to notify all the parliamentarians about the move of the People's Council of Latvia to Cēsis, it was well-attended

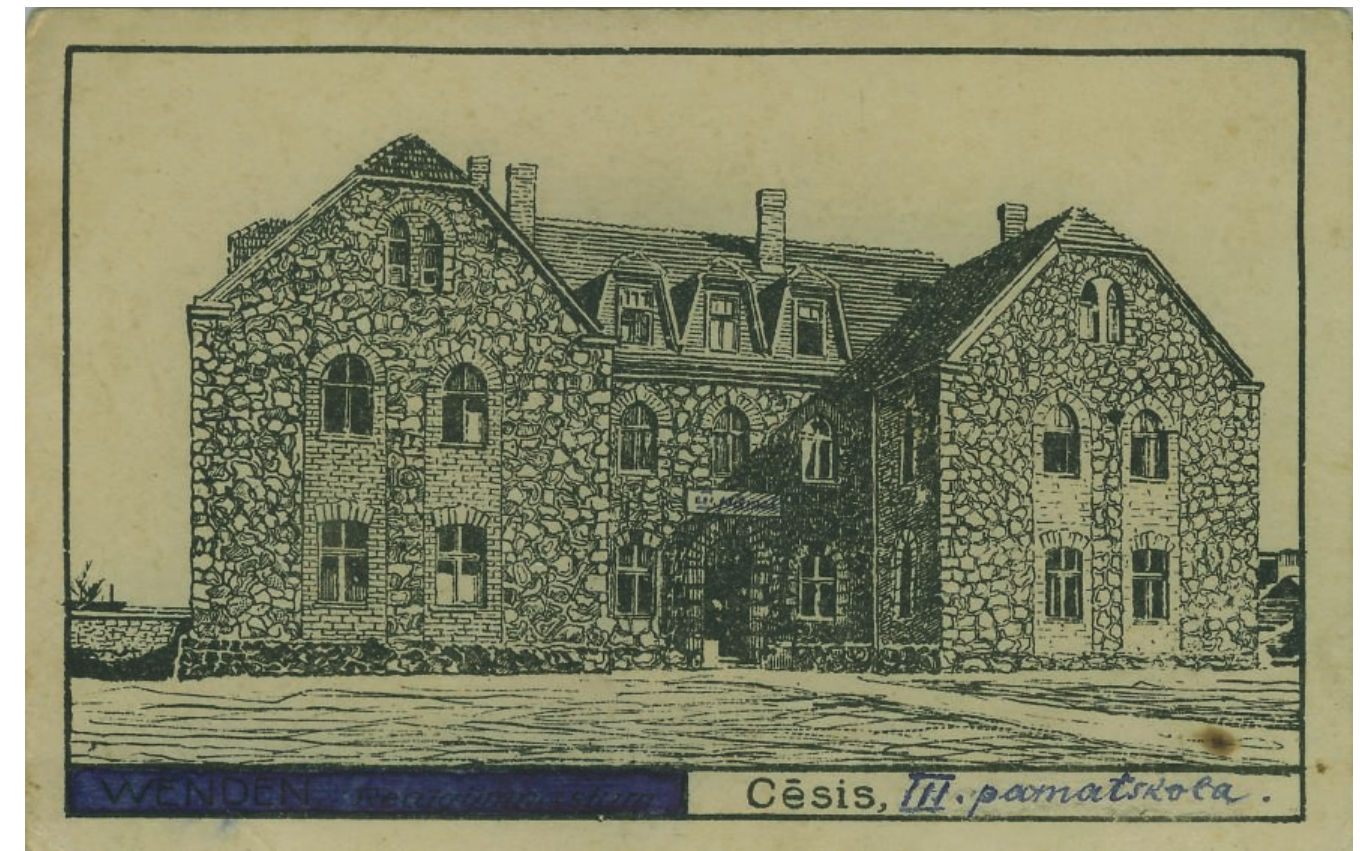


Image 5

to have a decision-making power.

J. Čakste noted that "today's meeting is attended by 19 members of the People's Council of Latvia from the Farmers' Union, 15 members representing the Social Democrats, 12 – the Democrats, 5 – the Latgalians, 3 – the Labour Union and 1 representing the German Progressive Party. There were no representatives from the Republicans, Russians, Jews, German Democrats and German national liberals."

The main and the only issue on the agenda was the military convention with Estonia. Minister of Foreign Affairs, Z. A. Meierovics discussed the need to ratify and conclude it.

Following the interdepartmental agreement, a delegation of five people was approved, which would travel to Estonia to draw up the terms of the treaty together with the members of the government. The meeting was closed at 10.15 p.m.

It should be noted that, on 11 October, Prime Minister and Minister for Defence K. Ulmanis signed an appeal: "Dear citizens! The fatherland – our Latvia – is in danger! The destiny of our homeland is at stake on the banks of mother Daugava. Our hour has come! Please help with your lives and property. Our heroic army requires additional forces, food, clothes, caring hands to the injured. Join forces, found aid groups, ensure that all soldiers can be on the front, collect clothes, send food to the Latvian fighters. A citizen of Latvia - the diligent Latvian woman – give a hand in order to jointly defeat the deadly enemy of Latvia who is standing again on the banks of Daugava."

Image 6

Building of the railway station (Stacijas laukums 5) where the Ministry of Transport and Labour was located. Publisher of the postcard Georgs Stilke in Berlin. Produced in 1918.

Collection of the Cēsis History and Art Museum

The next day (12.10) *Valdības Vēstnesis* wrote: "The government has actually moved to Cēsis; however, in the context of current events, many ministers are faced with work outside the present place of residence of the government. The presence of the Minister of Supplies is urgently required by the front and, therefore, Prime Minister Ulmanis, who serves in both posts is going to the front. As the result of development of war activities, the Minister of Foreign Affairs is also faced with a trip to Revala or Vilnius. In the light of the fact that all judicial authorities remain in Rīga, it is expected that the Minister of Justice will be seconded there. Minister of Foreign Affairs Z. A. Meierovis already left for Warsaw on 12 October.

On 14 October, Prime Minister and Minister of Defence K. Ulmanis was injured in the right knee from an exploding projectile on the corner of Peldu street as he was visiting the "front positions along the banks of Daugava. On 15 October, the newspaper *Latvijas Sargs* wrote: "Although the injury has caused inflammation, it is not dangerous. The Prime Minister keeps working." The representatives of the government and political associates from the Farmers' Union who were worried about Ulmanis' health sent him the telegrams of sympathy. Two editions (13th and 15th October) of newspaper *Brīvā Zeme* of the Latvian Farmers' Union, under the leadership of Jānis Vārsbergs, agronomist and member of the People's Council of Latvia, addressed in more detail the work of individual ministries.

It was noted that the employees of the Ministry of Agriculture continue to collect materials to be submitted to the Constitutional Meeting for drafting of the agrarian reform bill, as well as work on the forest export law and the project for use of peat next summer.



Image 6

Image 7

Welcoming Prime Minister Kārlis Ulmanis in Cēsis on 25 August 1919. Photographer Pēteris Paukšēns.

Collection of the Cēsis History and Art Museum

*We express
gratitude
to Dr. hist. Tālis
Pumpuriņš for his
contribution to the
preparation of
the fact sheet
"Cēsis –
the provisional
capital
of Latvia".*

The representatives of the Ministry of Education continued their usual work as far as possible.

"The Director of School Department and heads of school units take note of the progress of local schools, hold discussions with teachers and provide the necessary critical remarks and explanations," noted Brīvā Zeme.

The employees of the ministry "negotiated with teachers many issues, including programs, teaching methods, terms, etc."

The Ministry of Supplies in Cēsis, which was under direct responsibility of the Prime Minister, had a 24-hour official for telephone communications with Rīga.

The Ministry had "specifically commanded officials to the dependency regions with instructions to local ministry staff to speed up the collection of fees for army needs."

The ministers of the government were forced to return to Rīga soon, while many employees of ministries continued their work in Cēsis, and could return to the capital city on the banks of Daugava only after the defeat of the Bermonians. At this critical moment, both the Provisional Government of Latvia and the People's Council of Latvia, as well as many refugees from the territory that was invaded and threatened by the enemy found their home in Cēsis.



Image 7