

THE WORK OF ASPAZIJA AND RAINIS IN THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY OF THE REPUBLIC OF LATVIA¹

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Abstract

The article looks at how Aspazija and Rainis reacted in the Constitutional Assembly on the political and cultural challenges of the time, and what is the importance of culture in their view. Aspazija and Rainis were members of the social democratic faction in the Constitutional Assembly. During the Constitutional Assembly, the adoption of the amnesty law and agrarian reform, as well as questions about the referendum and the place of the president in Latvia, were important. Rainis spoke in a debate here. Rainis' speeches always reflected his legal education. His example of democracy in politics was Switzerland, while in culture (and in politics) – Greece. As a member of the Latvian Social Democratic Party (LSDSP) Rainis defended the most radical agrarian reform proposal, which radically transformed Latvian agriculture. Rainis consistently defended the establishment of the Culture Fund and participated in various discussions on the financing of culture, emphasizing that culture is one of the foundations of the state. Aspazija spoke less at the Constituent Assembly, her focus was on the importance of women in the new Latvia, as well as reducing social inequality. Also, the poet strongly defended the cultural field.

Keywords: *Democracy, agrarian reform, Culture Fund, a poet and politics, a woman in politics.*

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Introduction

The Constituent Assembly was the first elected parliament of the Republic of Latvia, which met for its first ceremonial session on 1 May 1920, in Riga, in the former Vidzeme Armory House, where the Saeima (the Parliament of the Republic of Latvia) currently operates. The Constituent Assembly existed until 7 November 1922, when the first Saeima began to perform legislative functions [Ločmele 2022].

The involvement of representatives of the intelligentsia in nationally important processes is a common phenomenon that can also be observed in the two other newly formed Baltic states at the beginning of the 20th century. Thus, during the first period of the free state of Estonia, the writers Karl Ast, Alma Ostra-Oinas, and Axel Kallas were active in politics, while in Lithuania Gabrielė Petkevičaitė, Povilas Dogelis and Kazimir Ralys. The notable poets Aspazija (Elza Pliekšāne) and Rainis (Jānis Pliekšāns) have made their contribution to the development of the country of Latvia and have shown their position on socially important political issues, acting as members of the Constituent Assembly of the Republic of Latvia, representing the LSDSP. The Republic of Latvia proceeded in difficult conditions, with the state of war, the Spanish flu epidemic, unemployment, and the economic crisis, which had a significant impact on social issues and the positions of the cultural sector, where Rainis and Aspazija also had a word to say. The article examines how Latvian poets reflected on political and cultural sector challenges in the Constituent Assembly of the Republic of Latvia, also focusing on issues of equality and protection. Along with these aspects, their views on these issues are compared, looking for the common and differences. The article consists of two parts, where the first tells us about the historical background in which Rainis and Aspazija worked, while the second part focuses on their statements. The methodology of the article uses the historical point of view and discourse analysis, but the sources used are the collection of Rainis' speeches – *J. Rainis. Speeches and interviews* (Riga, 1993) collected articles by Rainis and Aspazija, as well as National Library of Latvia (NLL) web digital collection *RunA*.

Rainis and Aspazija had little political experience, and the poets were also not used to speaking at large political gatherings, therefore, the usual discourse constructions of political speech are not observable in their speeches either. The beginning of Aspazija's political activity can be considered the turn of the 19th century when the poetess joined the *Jaunā Strāva*¹ movement [Cimdiņa 2022]. The thematic discourse of the problem is often viewed in the spoken or written language; however, the social construct of the discourse and its contextual manifestations are also important. Therefore, the power of discourse lies in the composition of spoken or written language or expression [Iedema 2011: 1164–1166]. According to the

¹ The movement of the Latvian intelligentsia at the end of the 19th century.

opinion of linguist Teun van Dijk, in the speech of political content, it is necessary to update the information that should affect a specific audience. It is not possible to include all informative aspects in a speech, so it must be socio-psychologically effective and reach a specific audience [Dijk 1980: 258]. In the case of Rainis and Aspazija, this speech is aimed at a relatively narrow political audience, rather than a wider society. There is no concrete evidence of the political discourse methods consciously used by the poets, however, their language style and emotional means used in argumentation reveal a lot.

Rainis' activity in The Constituent Assembly has been studied in the article *Rainis Satversmes Sapulcē* by historian Jānis Šiliņš in the collection of articles *Rainim 150. Un rīts būs jāpieņem, lai kāds tas nāks*, where the political landscape in which Rainis worked is described. Šiliņš has also described three principles in the three speeches of Rainis' Constituent Assembly: observer position, absolute democracy, and justice [Šiliņš 2015: 182]. The important question of being a politician or a poet, as a poet and a politician being between truth and power, was studied by Vita Matīsa in the article *Truth and power* in the collection *Borders: Rainis and Aspazija between Latvia and Switzerland* (2006), and in the article *Ceļš uz savu valsti. Rainis un Aspazija starp Latviju un Šveici* in the collection *From Castagnola Towards Liberty* describes not only the activities of the two poets in Switzerland but also Rainis' repeatedly expressed the idea in the diaries (1919–1920) that he should become the president of Latvia.

Rainis' activity in the Latvian Constitution was also described by contemporaries, for example, in the memoirs of Fēliks Cielēns *Rainis un Aspazija. Atmiņas un pārdomas*, a collection of memories first published in 1955 in Stockholm, the second time in 2017 in Latvia. On the other hand, the work of the poetess Aspazija is more often seen in the context of the development of Latvian feminist thought, where her poetry is analyzed in this context and the essential role of the poetess herself in society is emphasized, for example, in the collection of articles *Aspazija un mūsdienas: dzimums, nācija, radošie izaicinājumi* and in the compiled collection *Kopotī raksti. 1. sējums / Aspazija* (2017) by literary scholar Ausma Cimdiņa. Aspazija's activity in the Constituent Assembly has been described by Dr. iur Sandra Osipova's collection of articles *Nācija, valoda, tiesiska valsts: Ceļā uz rītdienu* (2020).

The status of Aspazija and Rainis in the Constituent Assembly

At the beginning of 1920, Rainis and Aspazija were still in exile in Switzerland, in Castagnola, when the election law of the Latvian Constituent Assembly was drafted, nevertheless, the Central Election Commission of that time allowed Rainis and Aspazija to be included in the electoral list. This was opposed by the Provisional Government led by Kārlis Ulmanis and the State Chancellery, which insisted that

poets were considered foreigners and therefore could not be included in this list within the framework of the law. To change the situation in favor of Rainis and Aspazija, the LSDSP of Latvia proposed making corrections. The People's Council rejected the amendments to the Election Law but accepted the addition to the law. As a result of this addition, poets could participate in elections and function fully in the Constituent Assembly. Šiliņš described this situation:

“The way out was found by adopting no amendments to the law, but only an addition, which read as follows: “Passive electoral rights in the elections of Constituent Assembly of the Republic of Latvia” are enjoyed by Rainis and Aspazija”. Political party “Latvian Farmers’ Union”, which was the most opposed to allowing Rainis to participate in the elections, made the process a little more difficult by demanding to vote separately – first for Rainis and then for Aspazija. 36 politicians voted for Rainis, but the entire faction of the “Latvian Farmers’ Union” – 17 MPs – abstained. The admission of Aspazija was unanimously voted in the elections” [Šiliņš 2015: 180].

Rainis and Aspazija returned from Switzerland in April 1920, and they were welcomed in Riga at an officially organized event by a huge crowd of welcomers led by Mārgers Skujenieks. The welcoming event was organized by the People's Council, it was included in the protocol of a separate presidium meeting. The status of the poets in the society is also evidenced by the fact that in their honor two major Riga boulevards were renamed after Rainis and Aspazija, and on July 12 of the same year a solemn event was held at the Latvian National Opera. Matīsa writes about the arrival of the poets:

“In the spring of 1920, it seemed obvious to Rainis to be greeted on the day of his return as a part of eternal Latvia and exactly a week later to run in the first parliamentary elections. He did not fully appreciate how significantly the role of the writer and intellectual in public life has changed with the change of historical eras” [Matīsa 2006: 63].

After his return, Rainis was actively involved in the pre-election campaign, on 11 April he spoke at three meetings [Rainis 1993: 386]. In his speech, Rainis addressed the basic class of society, which should be the leading class in the nation: *“(..) the proletariat must win all rights, and the leadership of the nation must be taken into the hands of the basic class”* [Rainis 1993: 113]. Rainis identifies himself as a representative of LSDSP, as its member from the beginning of the party. The speech is made up of certain sentences that must elicit applause from the audience, at the end of the speech there are exclamation sentences with calls to vote for the party list. Rainis is therefore seriously thinking about motivating voters to vote.

Jānis Čakste was elected as chairman of the Constituent Assembly, and it was a disappointment for Rainis, because the poet was the most popular deputy of the largest party, so his ambitions were quite justified. He had a legal education and political experience, and he was known to many residents of Latvia. However, we must also consider the background against which the elections of the Constituent Assembly – the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic had been established in the country's neighborhood, The Spartacist uprising¹, and the November Revolution² had taken place in Germany. In 1919 Latvia experienced the terror of Pēteris Stučka's government, in such a situation, a representative of the LSDSP could not become president, so the other parties did not support the appointment of a social democrat to this position. It was also not beneficial for the social democrats themselves if Rainis had become the head of the Constituent Assembly or the president, because the president had to be politically neutral, so if Rainis was elected, they would lose an influential politician [Šiliņš 2015: 181].

Cielēns, being a member of the LSDP at the time, somewhat hypocritically emphasizes in his memories that Rainis encountered political reality for the first time in the Constituent Assembly elections: "*Rainis quickly left the meeting hall and went home disappointed, even though all the deputies gathered in the yellow representative hall to congratulate the newly elected president*" [Cielēns 2017: 78].

The directions of political interests of Aspazija and Rainis

Rainis' first speech took place on 8 August 1920, and it was dedicated to the Amnesty Law. The law was necessary because many people were awaiting trial in prisons or had already been convicted, whose guilt was a controversial issue – they were soldiers who had fought in various troops against the army of the Republic of Latvia, employees of the Soviet and German authorities. Rainis mentioned: "*There are already calls everywhere for this act: there are hundreds and thousands of so-called criminals waiting for amnesty*" [Rainis 1993: 8]. As a lawyer, Rainis also discussed the concept of amnesty in his speech, believing that more accurate concept is *non-mention* (amnesty) rather than *pardon*:

"The great wisdom of the ancient Greeks in politics – and I take politics in the cultural sense – was that they called such acts unmentions. They are now commonly referred to as pardons. This word is completely wrong, because often the pardoners have been more guilty than those who did the evil deeds, and it would be good if we called not to mention not only with the mouth but also with the heart so that we can create the new work in a certain community – Latvian new construction" [Rainis 1993: 7–8].

¹ *Spartakusaufstand*, 1919.

² *Die Novemberrevolution*, 1918–1919.

Rainis emphasized that if the country wants to call itself democratic, then the amnesty law should include as many different groups of people as possible so that not only the amnestied but also their relatives will be included in the creation of the country.

In the plenary session of 14 September 1920, the “Law on Pardons” was adopted, which determined that the President of the Constituent Assembly has the right to release from punishment and its consequences persons who have been convicted by a valid court verdict, so pardons will be granted by the President, and amnesty by the Constituent Assembly. The decision was taken unanimously, so it can be seen that the Constituent Assembly resolved the current issues, alleviated dissatisfaction in society, and created an inclusive society.

In 1920, the main problem was the agrarian issue – in Latvia, more than 60% of the population lived in the countryside, and most of them were servants and landless. Their numbers were supplemented by soldiers returning home from the war and unemployed workers returning to their or their fathers’ native places in the countryside. The agrarian question in the country was political, historical, national, and even psychological. The number of landless people in the country was too large, which could cause social and political problems, but it was the *Bermontiāde*¹ that decided that the land of the manor would not only have to be given to the landless but should be given for free. The first of these ideas was already during the *Bermontiāde* and the slogan “Land for free!” was put forward by LSDSP, which therefore gained a huge following. The moderate position of the *Latvian Farmers’ Union* with Ulmanis, to acquire land for a fee, did not gain support [Bleiere 2005: 172].

Rainis, as a representative of social democracy, delivered a long, well-structured speech on 1 September 1920, where he tried to justify why the land should not be returned to the Baltic Germans for a fee and criticized the *Latvian Farmers’ Union* for neglecting the interests of the landless and serving the nobility. Rainis emphasizes that the situation is not simple from a cultural point of view either, because, for example, the representatives of the German community asked for the stage of the National Theater for five evenings a week, but the Latvians would then have one day left. Rainis emphasizes that the land issue is not only an economic issue but also a cultural and national policy issue. Rainis refers to his intention to write the play *Kajs Grakhs* (*Caius Gracchus*), thus introducing a broader cultural context into the speech [Rainis: 1981]. The play focuses on ancient Rome, two tribune brothers Tiberius (Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus: ca. 163 BC–133 BC) and Caius Gracchus

¹ A part of the Latvian freedom struggle and the Russian Civil War, in which the Armed Forces of Latvia, with the support of the Allies of the Entente, repelled the attack of the Volunteer Army of Western Russia from 8 October 1919 to 3 December 1919 and completely defeated their opponent.

(ca. 154 BC–121 BC). Caius Gracchus was a Roman politician, who tried to continue the agrarian reform initiated by his brother Tiberius and fought against the supremacy of the Senate, defending democracy. In addition to these issues, the draft of the play discusses in detail the need for land for different social classes. Rainis worked on the play in 1917 and 1918, as well as when returning to Latvia, but it remained unfinished. Constitutional issues have not been addressed in the other literary works of the time of the meeting of the Constitution – the collections of poems – *Addio bella!* (1920), *Čūsku vārds* (“Words of Snakes”, 1920), *Uz mājām* (“To the Home”, 1920), *Sudrabota gaišma* (“Silver Light”, 1921), as well as in the collection of children’s poetry *Zelta sietiņš* (“The Golden Sieve”, 1920).

In 1924, on April 14, the Saeima decided not to pay compensation to the nobles for the expropriated land (the owner was left with 50 ha) and to distribute it freely to the landless (there was not enough land for everyone, and there were rules about who could receive land). This was a deliberate political choice to turn the landless from communist ideas, but the majority of the people saw it as a victory for justice, and at the same time it was also a victory for the social democrats [Bleiere 2005: 173].

In the Saeima, when Rainis defended the agrarian reform, he was interrupted: *“Voices to the right: “The only nationalist in the Social Democrats!”*. And Rainis answered: *“I think that nationalism is also in social democrats”* [Rainis 1993: 17]. In his speeches, Rainis understands the meaning of culture more broadly than his party members, and he also connects culture with politics, economy, or welfare. Šiliņš emphasizes:

“Rainis was a convinced democrat, not a supporter of party power and party discipline. For Rainis, the party was a means, not an end in itself. Rainis was an idealist and nationalist, not a materialist and internationalist. Rainis was a people’s unifier and leveler of contradictions, not a propagandist of class struggle” [Šiliņš 2015: 181].

There was a significant preponderance of men in the Constituent Assembly – out of 150 deputies, only six were women: Valērija Seile, Elza Pliekšāne (Aspazija), Berta Vesmane, Klāra Kalniņa, Zelma Cēsīniece-Freidenfelde, and Apolonija Laurinoviča. As an excellent poet and socially active personality, Aspazija was the most recognizable of the deputies, but her political experience was incomparably less than, for example, the former member of the People’s Council Kalniņa [Osipova 2020: 197].

This partially justifies Aspazija’s involvement in the Social Democratic Workers’ Party of Latvia, leading to the suspicion that the poetess added ideas of European equality during her time in Switzerland. However, the ideas of human rights were close to Aspazija even before the exile, for example, they are reflected in the play

Zaudētas tiesības (“The Lost Rights”, 1895).¹ During the time when Aspazija was active in the Constituent Assembly, the poetry collection *Izplesti spārni* (“The Wings Spread Wide”, 1920) written in Switzerland (1908–1918) was published. It can be considered one of her most important collections, in which the experiences of the lyrical hero and feelings of nature are intertwined. In the period from 1920–1924, a compilation of previous works in ten volumes *Kopoti raksti* (“Collected writings”) was also published. The mentioned literary works do not contain a clear political context; however, socially important ideas can be found in some examples.

Like Rainis, his spouse Aspazija became a member of the Constituent Assembly of the Republic of Latvia in 1920. In the notebooks of the transcripts of the constitutional meetings (1920–1922), we can read evidence of the poet’s participation in political debates, in which she, perhaps less often than Rainis, but no less energetically stood up for the important human rights issues and problems of a social nature, especially the reduction of social inequality and gender equality promotion.

Aspazija gave her first speech at the Constituent Assembly on 10 September 1920. In this speech, she focused on the poor condition of teachers, reminding politicians about the importance of learning and knowledge for the longevity of the Latvian state. The poet stated that the teacher’s task contrasts with the unfairly poor condition of teachers, which was rooted in bureaucratic uncertainty for several months, namely, whether the teacher’s position should be paid from state or local government funds. Aspazija had argued in favor of paying for the position of a teacher from state funds, justifying the role of the teacher as the basic bearer of national culture. She recognized culture as a part of the essence of the state – if the state is unable to ensure the preservation and development of culture, then the very foundations of culture are also threatened. In the poet’s view, cultural development is the basis for the existence of all large and influential countries:

“If we fail to do so, then the people’s culture is threatened at its very foundations. Do I really need to show how important the cultural task is? (..) Culture is the soul of the people, the real strength of the people, and the character of the people. If we don’t have this strength, we don’t have this character, then we can’t manage economic life either” [Aspazija 1920: 856].

Rainis also spoke at the same meeting because the question of who will finance teachers’ salaries was very important in the devastated country. The country lacked

¹ The play was created as a protest against the suppression of the rights of women in late 19th-century society. The central problem of the play is the woman’s struggle for her rights and the respect of society.

financial resources, and many municipalities were very poor, so it was clear that they would not be able to provide teachers' salaries. Rainis compares that when the territory of Latvia was part of the Russian Empire, 8% of the budget was allocated to education, but the new country allocated only 2% to it. Rainis started his speech with one of his constant topics – a reminder that culture is very important in the construction of the state. Rainis writes: “(..) *the fight against the teacher is the fight against culture, and the peasant has always been and always will be the one who hinders culture*” [Rainis 1993: 29]. He emphasizes that culture, to a certain extent, requires higher development from parliamentarism, and believes that if culture and education are not supported, the development of state finances will not be ensured either. Aspazija's and Rainis' views on these issues are the same they complement each other. In the Republic of Latvia, a law was passed that teachers are paid from the state budget, and they are equated to civil servants. This strengthened the prestige of the teacher's work, and a lot of young people actively studied to become teachers.

In the context of issues of social injustice, Aspazija does not forget about social inequality in the field of gender. At the meeting on 2 December 1920, the poet emphasized her mother's socially vulnerable position, sharply reprimanding the non-serious attitude of the politicians of the Constituent Assembly:

“(..) this question is a sacred question, is a serious question because he is the very root of life. And here I found the case that it was precisely about this question, then such fun arose, especially here in the center, that it offended my woman's feelings” [Aspazija 1920: 1480].

The speech of the poetess was powerful at the meeting on 10 December 1920, where it was decided to strengthen the marriage laws and make a transition from church marriage to civil marriage, Aspazija calls this a progress and renouncing of the remnants of feudalism, which limited the freedom of the individual because the process of church divorce was extremely complex and usually unfair to the woman. The poetess considers the acquisition of human freedom, previously suppressed by feudalism, not only as the classic deprivation of feudalism but also as the fall of the patriarchal model. In addition to praising the progressive policy, Aspazija emphasized: the adoption of this law is a day of celebration for women because the third pillar of the old model – the supremacy of men – is also falling:

“Until now, marriages have been based on the domination of men, although in the most natural first state all marriage was where the mother was with her child, the mother belonged to the child and was only respected as such” [Aspazija 1920: 1560–1561].

On 28 September 1921, Rainis got involved in the discussion about the Constitution, specifically the referendum and the presidential elections. At the beginning of his speech, Rainis also addressed the current issue of citizenship:

“There is almost a view of citizenship that the state is just an extended private farm, some kind of general store, some kind of consumerism. We do live in small conditions, in a small area, but this view is also harmful, more harmful than all ruling views combined because this is a delusion at the very core: public life is as different from private life as an individual person is from a nation” [Rainis 1993: 25].

Rainis has called for the introduction of a referendum as one of the basic rights of the people, as he observed in Switzerland. According to him, the referendum is an expression of democracy, and the political development of the people increases through referendums: *“I say, the introduction of the referendum is not a revolutionary step either, it is a step towards the education of the people in a political sense”* [Rainis 1993: 27].

Although Rainis was opposed to the introduction of the institution of the president, he probably hoped to occupy such a position himself. Rainis' attitude towards the institution of the presidency is twofold: in his diaries and reality, he wants to become the president of Latvia, but he has lived for many years in Switzerland, where there is no such institution of the president of the country, and the forms of government closest to him from history are democracy (Greece at the time of Pericles) and republic (Roman Republic). Rainis believes that the president is a legacy of the time of the monarchy, and the country can be politically strong even without such a ruler, in a speech dedicated to the referendum and the establishment of the institution of the country's president (1 September 1920), Rainis cannot really justify why Latvia would need a president because, in the case of Switzerland, democratic governance was implemented without such a head of the state. He was also skeptical of the idea of a president elected by the people because in that case populists who mislead the public could win. However, the poet emphasized the representative function of the president, which requires a creative spirit: *“He should be the head that can give cultural goods”* [Rainis 1993: 31]. According to him, only a democratic country can be a cultural country and only a cultural country can exist (such as Greece in the time of Pericles), so the president must represent and understand this interaction of culture and national welfare.

Rainis' position on culture as one of the cornerstones of the country is consistent with Aspazija's opinion on the importance of the cultural issue, which the poet expressed at the meeting on 7 October 1921. On this date, the issue of funding distribution came to the agenda, leaving the cultural sector represented by

poets in the role of a stepchild. Aspazija expressed her indignation at the phrases heard at the meeting, for example, that there is no economic basis for creating the Culture Fund, culture does not need any organization, etc. Aspazija has defended the cultural sector, stating that its representatives were among the initiators of the idea of a Latvian state:

“Even when Latvia was not yet established, our cultural workers were the ones who saw this ideal in the spirit and created it. You only come after them as their practical fulfillers. But now you wonder, you can still say it is a bad thing!”
[Aspazija 1921: 1553]

In 1921 and 1922, Rainis also talks about the financing of the Culture Fund, which is constantly threatened, because economic activity is important for the country. Rainis emphasized that spiritual culture is as important as material culture and that countries with developed cultures also have a high level of material well-being.

Apart from the economic and cultural issues, the poets also came to the attention of the aspects of civil rights in the Constitutional Assembly. Since the activity of both poets in Latvian politics was threatened due to their status as foreigners, the discussion of the asylum seeker's rights at the meeting on 18 January 1922, provoked a sharp reaction from Aspazija. When deciding on ensuring the rights of Latvian citizens on the territory of the country and the defense of the country outside the borders of Latvia, the right not to extradite citizens for political crimes was also discussed, which raised concerns in the mind of Arveds Bergs, a member of the non-partisan group, raising thoughts about the havoc that would be caused by the uncontrolled reception and defense of political criminals, so that the provision of asylum to such persons would not be necessary or desirable. Aspazija reacted strongly to these statements, as she herself was a political emigrant. As an argument, the poet reminded of the political vulnerability of emigrants in 1905, when the supporters of the idea of the Latvian state were declared separatists and, only thanks to the asylum rights established by other countries, could they continue to build their dream of the free Latvian state. In this regard, Aspazija almost prophetically indicated the possibility of new political clashes and the importance of the role of the political diaspora in the restoration of the country:

“(..) Political clashes may arise again because we did not expect and did not foresee the outbreak of the great war, which came like a terrible storm over us. If such cases were to arise in the future, where would we have to look for these blue rights again in other countries, or should we now deny these rights to foreign emigrants?”
[Aspazija: 1922: 1580]

Rainis emphasizes the need to build Latvia as a country inclusive of various peoples, and Belarusians became the center of his attention. On 27 June 1922, Rainis speaks in defense of Belarusians, because Latgale deputies, especially Francis Kemps, recommend removing the funding allocated to Belarusian schools and cultural needs because there really are no such Belarusians. Rainis refers to the statistics that Belarusians are still in Latvia, about 60,000. Rainis outlines the history, refers to Belarusian literature, and notes that there are 52 schools in Latvia where the language of instruction is Belarusian, they make up four percent of the population of Latvia, and they have the right to learn in their schools, and also have the opportunity to develop culture.

Aspazija and Rainis focused on strengthening the rights of various social groups, which was not important for many politicians of that time. Both poets saw Latvia as a democratic and cultural country but described a democratic society as an inclusive society.

Acting in the Constitutional Assemblies was a short period in the lives of both poets, but they were both among the drafters of the new country's Constitution and the first adopters of laws.

Conclusions

Rainis and Aspazija were members of the *Latvian Social Democratic Workers' Party*. In their speeches, they defended social interests, and vulnerable and underprivileged groups of society – workers, and soldiers. Rainis' speeches often mentioned such terms as *working people, landless people, basic class, the proletariat*, etc.

Rainis was a lawyer by education and graduated from the most prestigious educational institution of his time – the Faculty of Law of the University of St. Petersburg (1884–1888). The skills acquired in the studies allowed Rainis to understand legal texts and improve the nuances of laws.

For Rainis Greece was an example not only in drama and culture but also in politics because Greece is the birthplace of democracy. Rainis believed that Latvia also had to become a country of culture. Switzerland, on the other hand, is another example of democracy for Rainis. Aspazija has also been influenced by the current human rights ideas in Switzerland.

Aspazijas' phenomenon in politics cannot be separated from her literary activity, as political views are revealed, for example, in the play *Zaudētas tiesības* ("The Lost Rights", 1895). Her personality and social status as a representative of the cultural field and defender of women's rights had a significant impact on controversial issues discussed in the Constituent Assembly.

As the members of the Constituent Assembly represented different sectors and were at different levels of education, it was important to address them comprehensively

and at the same time does not lose the rational argumentation which Rainis is perfectly used to, but in the case of Aspazija, a stylistically elevated way of speaking, warmth and confident characteristic of her expression can be observed. At the same time, Aspazija's emotional speeches show the personal values of the poetess.

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