

LIFE AND PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES OF A GRADUATE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGINEERING OF RIGA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE MIKHAIL KRIVOSHAPKIN (1888–1943)

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Summary. Rigan, a graduate of the Department of Engineering (1914) of Riga Polytechnic Institute (RPI) Mikhail Krivoshapkin, after studies worked as an engineer in Russia, where he built grain elevators. From 1920 until deportation to Siberia in 1941 he lived in Riga and was the author of several bridge projects in Latvia, worked as an engineer at Riga Construction Board and was a member of the Riga City Council (1925–1934). He worked in various public organizations. His descendants – grandchildren and great-grandchildren also pursue careers in engineering.

Keywords: Mikhail Krivoshapkin, graduates of Riga Polytechnic Institute, Latvian engineers.

Family, Childhood and Youth of M. Krivoshapkin

Mikhail Krivoshapkin (*Михаил Кривошапкин*; 1888–1943) was born in Riga on 19 October 1888¹. His father, Dmitry Krivoshapkin (*Димитрий Кривошапкин*; 1844–1906), was born in Russia, in the Vologda province (at present – Vologda region) in a family of Russian peasants. The father served in the army and advanced to the rank of

¹ The dates in publication are listed according to the Gregorian calendar or new style.

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sergeant major. D. Krivoschapkin was awarded the Cross of St. George IV class. In 1875, he married a peasant, an Orthodox Latvian born in *Puikule* parish, *Jevgeņija Zaķe* (also *Zakke*; 1855–1942). The wedding ceremony took place at the Orthodox Church of Transfiguration of Christ in *Jaunjelgava* city [1]. Soon the family moved to Riga city.

Jevgeņija's brother, *Andrejs Zaķis* (also *Zakke*; 1834–1899), was the first Latvian Orthodox Bishop known as Alexander. In 1883, he was appointed the Bishop of Ostrozhska and the Vicar of Diocese of Volhynia; from 1890 to 1893, he was the Bishop of Arkhangelsk and Kholmogory, Alexander's last position was of the Bishop of Polotsk-Vitebsk [2].



Figure 1. The family of M. Krivoschapkin (1898). 1st row from left: *Aleksandra* (1886–1955), parents *Jevgeņija* (1855–1942) and Dmitry (1844–1906) Krivoschapkins, between them – Mikhail (1888–1943), *Natālija* (1892–1946); 2nd row: *Lidija* (1878–1966), their relatives – two brothers Podprugins from Vologda and *Marija* (1880–1968) [3].

Jevgeņija and Dmitry had five children: four daughters and a son.

Aleksandra married architect Vladimir Shervinsky (*Владимир Шервинский*; 1894–1975), *Natālija's* surname after marriage was *Djakonov*, and *Lidija* married in 1898 to priest *Jānis Krampis* (1872–1945). Daughter of *Lidija* and *Jānis*, *Vera Krampe* (1907–1977) was an opera singer. The third daughter of M. Krivoschapkin, *Marija*, got married to Adrian Njikiforovsky (*Адриан Нукифоровский*; 1875–1914), the priest of the village of *Kurilovska* in the province of *Vitebsk* [4; 5].

In 1905, the family suffered a great misfortune – the head of the family, who worked as a casier at the time, was attacked; he was shot and died in 1906 at the hospital.

At that time, Mikhail Krivoschapkin was still studying at the Riga Alexander Gymnasium for Men from which he graduated in 1908. In the same year, M. Krivoschapkin enrolled in the Department of Engineering of RPI [6]. During his studies, on 9 February 1909, M. Krivoschapkin joined the Russian Student Corporation «*Fraternitas Arctica*» and received the «colours» on 2 September 1909; i. e., he became a full member of the corporation. At the beginning of the 1920s he was one of the founders of the aforementioned student corporation. It is known that in 1938 and 1939,

M. Krivoschapkin was the Chairman of the Association of Old Members of Student Corporation «*Fraternitas Arctica*» [7].

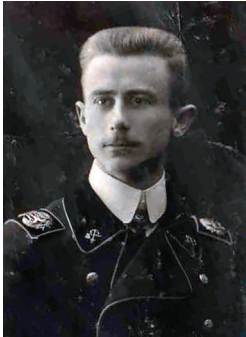


Figure 2.
M. Krivoschapkin
(1908) [8].



Figure 3. Russian Student Corporation «*Fraternitas Arctica*» in study year 1908/1909. From left: Stepan Sawernjajew (*Степан Заверняев*), Piotr Winogradow (*Петр Виноградов*), Mikhail Krivoschapkin, Nikolai von Essen (*Николай фон Эссен*), Iwan Lassmann (*Иван Лассман*), Friedrich Leesmann (*Фридрих Леесман*) [9].

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Already during his studies Mikhail Krivoschapkin began practicing as an engineer. He describes the beginning of his career: «In summer of 1911 I worked in Joint Stock Company of *Valmiera* Narrow-Gauge Railway as a trainee for researching the *Inčukalns–Jaunpiebalga–Vecpiebalga–Smiltene* line and in the development of the project, later also in the installation of the railway line. In the summer of 1912, I worked as a trainee in Saratov and later I held the position as the job manager for the sewerage building of this city. In the summer of 1913, I worked in Riga city with «*Karl Kalt*» as a work manager in the establishment of Riga City sewerage and took part in reconstruction of the brick arch of bridge across the city canal in *Kr. Barona iela*» [10].

In 1914, M. Krivoschapkin graduated from the Department of Engineering of RPI with an excellent civil engineer degree. The subject of the diploma project was «*Двухшарнирная арка с затяжкой через реку Оку*»



Figure 4. M. Krivoschapkin works with a leveler in *Jaunpiebalga* city (1911) [11].

в Нижнем Новгороде» («Dvuhsharnaja arka s zatjazhkoj cherez reku Oku v Njizhnjem Novgorodje»/«Two-hinge arch with lace over the River in Nizhny Novgorod»).

Work of M. Krivoshapkin in Russia (1914–1920)

In a copy of the diploma issued on 5 June 1914, it is written that «Mikhail Krivoshapkin has been granted the right to carry out all types of construction work and to design all types of buildings and structures; entering full-time post in the relevant public service» [12].

In 1914, there was another significant event in the life of M. Krivoshapkin – on May 22 he married the daughter of the State Councillor Nina Scherwinsky (*Нина Шервинская*; 1892–1942). Father of Nina – Max Scherwinsky (*Максим Шервинский*; 1859–1909) – was an architect, one of the art nouveau pioneers in Riga. He was also a teacher and Director of the Riga German Craft School.



Figure 5. *Nina* and Mikhail Krivoshapkins (1914) [13].

Mikhail and *Nina* was known eight years before the wedding. Gymnast Mikhail met *Nina* thanks to his sister *Aleksandra*, who studied with *Nina* at the Lomonosov Gymnasium. *Nina* and Mikhail Krivoshapkins lived happily in their marriage for 27 years.

In his biography, M. Krivoshapkin wrote: «After graduating from Riga Polytechnic Institute, I was invited to stay in the Department of Bridges to prepare for scientific work; the offer was made by the Head of the Department of Bridges and Dean Professor Vodzinskis. World War I, which occurred at the time of the institute's closure, deprived the opportunity to accept this professor's call» [14].

To find a job, M. Krivoshapkin and his new wife went to the capital of the Russian Empire St. Petersburg.

According to the recommendations of Director of RPI Woldemar von Knieriem, M. Krivoshapkin entered the German company «*Philip Holtzman & Co*» dealing with underground and surface engineering. But when the World War I began, the company was wound up and the engineer was forced to look for a new job.

In his autobiography, M. Krivoshapkin wrote that on 5 August 1914 he entered the service at the Department of Grain Elevator Buildings of the Russian State Bank as engineer for projecting high-rise concrete structures and iron bridges. In 1915 he led the construction of grain elevator in Borisoglebsk, the province of Tambov. There was built a 32-meter high-reinforced concrete and silo-building with a 12-meter high wooden extension; brick building for machines with a 45 meters high brick chimney; two-storey and one-storey stone buildings; railroad and cobblestone. The cost of the buildings was approximately one million gold rubles.

In 1916, M. Krivoshapkin led the construction of grain elevator at the Altata station in province of Samara (at present – Saratov region). The following works were carried out there: a 24-meter high-reinforced concrete and silo-building with a 12-meter high wooden silo-extension were built; one-storey stone building, farm buildings, railroad, reinforced concrete bridge were built. The total cost of the buildings was around 500 000 gold rubles.



Figure 6. Construction of grain elevator in Altata (1916) [15].

In 1918, M. Krivoshapkin led the grain elevator building at the Atkarsk, the province of Saratov and at the same time assembled the elevators' machines at the Petrovsk. From 1919 to 1920, he headed the Technical Department of the Elevators Building of Saratov Province and was in charge of the new construction and repairs at the Department of Food of Saratov Province.

In September 1920, M. Krivoshapkin and his family left Soviet Russia and returned to their home country, Latvia. In Russia, two children were born in the family: *Boriss* (1916–1990) and *Ksenija* (1917–1918). The youngest children were born in Latvia: *Vladimirs* (1923–1942) and *Natālija* (1931).

Activities of Engineer in Latvia

On 1 October 1920, M. Krivoshapkin started working at the Department of Bridges of the Board of Roads and Construction at the Latvian Ministry of Transport as Senior Engineer. In his autobiography, M. Krivoshapkin described the situation as follows: «With the abolition of the Board of Road and Construction on 1 April 1921 I remained at the reorganized Board of Highway and Land Road as a Bridge Engineer» [16].

In January 1922, M. Krivoshapkin oversaw the inspection and improvement of the Old Iron (Railway) Bridge in Riga.

Together with the graduate of RPI (1911), lecturer of the University of Latvia, engineer *Pāvils Pāvilāns* (1883–1956), was developed several project versions of the bridge across the *Lielupe* river.

In 1923, a Pontoon Bridge across the *Venta* river was built in *Ventspils* city after the project of M. Krivoshapkin. It was opened on 21 October 1923 [17]. The Pontoon Bridge was built by contractor *E. Bauls*. The Wooden Bridge was 174.6 meters long and 8.5 meters wide and served until 1964 when the new reinforced concrete bridge was built. The bridge was rotatable in order not to interfere with marine traffic. The construction of the bridge cost the government about 50 000 lats.

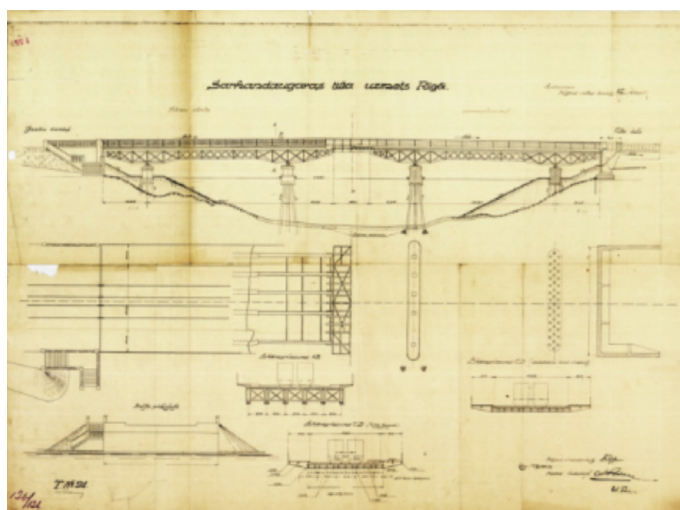


Figure 7. Project of reinforced concrete bridge across the *Sarkandaugava* armlet (in the 1920s) [19].

In 1929, after the project of M. Krivoshpkin in Riga, a reinforced concrete bridge over *Sarkandaugava* armlet was built. In total, the engineer participated in designing more than 100 different sizes of bridges [18].

In 1923, M. Krivoshapkin, together with his wife's brother architect Vladimir Shervinsky, established a private project company, where many projects were developed under their leadership, such as: project of the Riga Russian Theatre Reconstruction, project of *Ainaži* Four-Class Primary School building, reconstruction projects of many private buildings, research for constructions of St. John the Forerunner Church in Riga and many other objects [20]. Company was successful until 1940 [21].

Already in 1925, M. Krivoshapkin was offered to construct a hanging bridge across the *Daugava* river, forcing it to be 610 meters long with two 43 meter high iron towers. Engineer predicted it between *Kr. Valdemāra iela* and *Āgenskalns* Steamboat Pier. The proposal was apparently premature and was not accepted by the Construction Board [22].

From 1924 to 1941, M. Krivoshapkin worked at the Construction Board of Riga City Council. He was a civil engineer and a member of the Audit Committee. The engineer was responsible for monitoring the progress of the construction works and the condition of the existing bridges.

One of the most pressing problems of the city's economy was the lack of connection between the two banks of the *Daugava* river. A Pontoon Bridge was built at the end of the 19th century and a horse railway was built on it at the beginning of the 20th century. During World War I an attempt to evacuate the bridge failed because the storm thrown it off the shore. Instead, the Luebeck Bridge was built from wooden trusses, but in 1924 it was destroyed by spring floods [23], so the main task of Riga City Council was to build a new pontoon bridge across the *Daugava* river.

Supervision of the construction of bridge was entrusted to the city engineer M. Krivoshapkin. The bridge was opened in 1931 and was located around the current *Akmens* (Stone) Bridge. On the suggestion of

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Figure 8. Construction of a Pontoon Bridge in Riga city (1931) [24].



Figure 9. The Pontoon Bridge in Riga (in the 1930s) [25].

M. Krivoshapkin, tram lines were placed on the bridge in two directions. Pavement pedestrians were laid, electric lighting was installed. During World War II the bridge was destroyed.

From 1924 to 1940 M. Krivoshapkin joined the duties of an engineer with the teacher's work (in the evenings) at Riga City Craftsman School and Technical School at 4 *Gaiziņa iela*, where he read lectures on bridge construction, ground and road works [26].

The fact that he has been published in the biographical guide «*Es viņu pazīstu*» («I know him») is a testimony to M. Krivoshapkins' merits and engineer's work. It is noted that M. Krivoshapkins was the manager of the Department of Bridges of the Department of Construction at the Riga Construction Board, designed a bridge over the *Venta* river in *Ventspils* city, a Pontoon Bridge in Riga city, a bridge over *Sarkandaugava* armlet and others [27].

Social and Political Activities of M. Krivoshapkin in Latvia

M. Krivoshapkin was known in Latvia not only as a talented engineer but also a tireless participant of several Russian public organizations.

Already in the early 1920s, M. Krivoshapkin joined the most influential Russian organizations at the time: the Russian National Union in Latvia and the Russian National Association in Latvia and these organizations also nominated him to the Riga City Council and the Saeima. He was entrusted with the duties of Chairman of the Election Committee of the Russian National Association in Latvia.

Engineer M. Krivoshapkin took part in the elections in the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Saeima. In 1925, he was nominated from a list of «Candidates of Orthodox Voters and Russian Unified Organizations Block», led by Archbishop *Jānis Pommers* (1876–1934) of the Latvian Orthodox Church. It was the first political experience of M. Krivoshapkin. He was not elected to the Saeima [28]. In the 3rd and 4th Saeima elections in 1928 and 1931, M. Krivoshapkin remained faithful to the political course he had chosen [29; 30]. True, the title of the list changed a little over time, and M. Krivoshapkin was nominated for a list of «Candidates of Orthodox and Old Believers Voters and United Russian Organizations». In 1928, M. Krivoshapkin was already an experienced councillor of Riga City Council and had no particular desire to become a Deputy of the Saeima.

M. Krivoshapkin was closely associated with the Riga City Council. He was an engineer, so economic and urban improvements were closer to him than politics.

For the first time, M. Krivoshapkin was elected as a Deputy of the Riga City Council in February 1925 together with an architect, a graduate of the Department of Architecture (1904) of RPI Pjotr Ladigin (*Петр Ладыгин*; 1879–?). In 1928, M. Krivoshapkin repeated his success in elections. The third candidate, Boris Shalfejev (*Борис Шалфеев*; 1891–1935), was also elected from the list of «Russian Organizations». In 1931 M. Krivoshapkin was once again elected to the Riga City Council. But his colleague by P. Ladigin, was replaced by Kirill Jankovich (*Кирил Янкович*; 1858–1939) [31].

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Figure 10. M. Krivoshapkin (in the 1930s) [32].

From 1924 to 1940, M. Krivoshapkin was a member of the Russian National Union in Latvia (since 1939 – Riga Russian Society) and was re-elected as a Member of the Board [33].

According to the data of 1938, M. Krivoshapkin was a Member of the Board of the Russian National Union, the Chairman of the Student Corporation «*Fraternitas Arctica*», the Vice-Chairman of the Russian Society of Engineers, the Member of the Board of «Riga Charity Society for Poor Russians», Secretary of the Board of «Friendly Society of Russian Theatre», Senior Member of the Russian Gymnastics Society «*Сокол*» («Sokol») [34], as well as took part in several other public organizations, including the Association for the Promotion of Academic Education. As a Member of the Riga City Council, he financially supported the Institute of Sciences of Russian University, promoting the granting of subsidies [35].

Since 1930, M. Krivoshapkin has been Member of the Russian Gymnastics Society «*Сокол*» («Sokol») [36], which is known for his right, monarchic beliefs. In 1933, the organization split into the creation of «*Русский сокол*» («Russkij sokol») and «*Русская сокольня*» («Russkaya Sokolnja»). In 1936, as a result of pressure from state structures, these two organizations were merged. The manager's duties were entrusted to M. Krivoshapkin, who, working in the city administration and in the work of other societies, was only fulfilling this duty formally. In 1939, the engineer left the society.



Figure 11.
Fyodor Shalapin with
the Rigans at the
Friendly Society of
Russian Theatre.
1st row from left:
1st M. Krivoshapkin,
4th – F. Shalapin
(1934) [37].

M. Krivoshapkin also visited the concerts, including at the end of 1934 was listening to the well-known Russian opera singer Fyodor Shalapin (Фёдор Шаляпин; 1873–1938) in Riga city and met with him in the Friendly Society of Russian Theatre.

From January to May 1941, M. Krivoshapkin worked as a Senior Engineer in the Planning Committee of the Executive Committee of Riga City. From May until his arrest on 14 June 1941, he was Chief Engineer and Head of Capital Construction of the Brick Trust [38].

Holidays and summers family (spouses and three children) spent in *Jaunogre*, where they built a wooden two-storey summer cottage by the project of Vladimir Shervinsky project.

According to the memories of M. Krivoshapkin's daughter *Natālija*, her father paid great attention to his children. M. Krivoshapkin was not indifferent to drawing and painting, which he taught his children, he taught them to be honest and hardworking people.

End on Life of M. Krivoshapkin and His Descendants

14 June 1941 was a fateful day for M. Krivoshapkin and his family. On this day in Krivoshapkins' apartment, like in many other Latvian apartments and homes, uninvited guests came into the form НКВД (NKVD)². Vladimir Shervinsky is became an inadvertent witness to this event and his memories describe the situation well: «in the evening of 13 June everyone noticed that there were many large trucks at the crossroads of the city. .. And only on 14 June everything in the morning was explained, there were no more rumours. It was clear that lot of people are being arrested. Riga was silent, everyone was gloomy like shadows and in the evening a telephone call was made in our apartment. Misha (Mikhail Krivoshapkin) urged to immediately bring his suitcase, which for some reason was with us, as well as ropes to tie the belongings. It was clear

² НКВД – Народный комиссариат внутренних дел; People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs, Security Service of the Soviet Union

that they broke in their apartment too. We took the suitcase, put some ropes in it and we went up to *Šķūņu iela* in a hurry.

There was a chaos in the apartment, filled bags, various things were strewn around, three men were in the dining room, sitting at the table, writing something and a militiaman was standing by the door. It turned out that «guests» had arrived at his apartment at night, but in Riga there was only Borja (the eldest son of M. Krivoshapkin) and «guests» went in all of the rooms and said they were looking for someones and then went away. Seeing that there is no uncle Misha, they left to Ogre city, but when they arrived there uncle Misha had already gone to Riga. «It is nothing,» they said, «let's take the family and he will get to know and come» and when uncle Misha arrived in the apartment in city, they were waiting there. *Nina* (spouse of Mikhail Krivoshapkin) fired from room to room, from the closet to the closet, not knowing what to take, what to do and occasionally caught up with unnecessary items because they only had two hours and the baggage was very limited. I ran after the ropes at Pankratov family, who lived in *Mazā Kalēju iela*. By the set time everything was ready. We were tightly embraced, but we didn't know we were seeing Misha, *Nina* and Volodechka for the last time» [39].

M. Krivoshapkin was deported to Ussolag in the Molotov region (at present – Perm region), but the family was sent to the Tomsk region. The main reason for his arrest and deportation was his participation in the Russian Gymnastics Society «Сокол» («Sokol»), especially the managerial position in it from 1934 to 1939. The prosecution of 23 March 1942 suggested that the case be referred to the Special Meeting of the USSR³ *НКВД* (NKVD) and sentenced to the highest penalty – «execution by shooting» [40].

M. Krivoshapkin' dealt with the case was overviewed at special meeting only on 4 November 1942. The verdict was as follows: «For taking part in the counter-revolutionary fascist organization Mikhail Krivoshapkin is imprisoned for 10 years from the 14 June 1941» [41].

The health of engineer and public worker, M. Krivoshapkina, was already irreversibly damaged. On 6 April 1943 he went to eternity [42].

Remained in Siberia, *Boris* and *Natālija* continued the work of their fathers engineer after returning to Latvia. M. Krivoshapkins' grandchildren are graduates of RPI: *Liena Ivonna Šervinska* (daughter of *Boriss*) is a certified architect, while *Vita Gudkova* (daughter of *Natālija*) has finished RPI a civil engineer. The great-grandchildren of engineer M. Krivoshapkin study at Riga Building College – *Dāvis Sprīzītis* as the civil engineer and *Dita Sprīzīte* as the architect.

³ USSR – Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

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Life and
Professional
Activities of a
Graduate of a
Department of
Engineering of
Riga Polytechnic
Institute Mikhail
Krivoshapkin
(1888–1943)



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Rīgas Politehniskā institūta Inženieru nodaļas absolventa Mihaila Krivošapkina (1888–1943) dzīves gājums un profesionālā darbība

Rīdzinieks, Rīgas Politehniskā institūta (RPI) Inženieru nodaļas absolvents (1914) Mihails Krivošapkins pēc studijām strādāja par inženieri Krievijā, kur būvēja elevatorus. No 1920. gada līdz izsūtīšanai uz Sibīriju 1941. gadā dzīvoja Rīgā un bija vairāku Latvijas tiltu projektu autors, strādāja par inženieri Rīgas būvvaldē, bija Rīgas domes deputāts (1925–1934). Darbojās dažādās sabiedriskās organizācijās. Inženiera darbu turpina viņa pēcnācēji – mazbērni un mazmazbērni.

Atslēgas vārdi: Mihails Krivošapkins, Rīgas Politehniskā institūta absolventi, Latvijas inženieri.

Татьяна Фейгмане, Лиена Ивонна Шервинска

Жизненный путь и профессиональная деятельность Михаила Кривошапкина (1888–1943), выпускника Инженерного отделения Рижского политехнического института

Рижанин, выпускник (1914) Инженерного отделения Рижского политехнического института (РПИ) Михаил Кривошапкин после учебы работал инженером в России, где строил элеваторы. С 1920 года до депортации в Сибирь в 1941 году он жил в Риге и был автором нескольких проектов мостов в Латвии, работал инженером в Рижской Стройуправе, был депутатом Рижской думы (1925–1934). Работал в различных общественных организациях. Деятельность инженера продолжают его потомки – внуки и правнуки.

Ключевые слова: Михаил Кривошапкин, выпускники Рижского политехнического института, инженеры Латвии.