

# THE LIFE OF MARINE ENGINEER OFFICER EDGARS OTO PINKA (1895–1941)

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**Summary.** Based on the documents, the study provides a wide and comprehensive evaluation of the life of an engineer and citizen from *Vidzeme Edgars Otto Pinka* (1895–1941). His life was related to ships, military service in Latvia, Russia, and France, and the Latvian Society of Paris. Researching *E. O. Pinka's* studies and work, the author has studied the engineer's life from birth to the end of his life, reflecting on his progress as one of the best specialists in the Latvian Navy in his capacity of an engineer mechanic, shipping engineer, officer, and pedagogue. The contribution of *E. O. Pinka* to raising awareness about Latvia and Latvian music in France in the early 1930s is also significant. His daughter, a graduate (1964) of Riga Polytechnic Institute (RPI) *Māra Pinka*, inherited his interest in music. The article was developed by studying the collections of Latvian libraries, archives, and museums and communicating with the successors of *E. O. Pinka's* family.

**Keywords:** shipping engineer, officer, *Edgars Oto Pinka*.

## Childhood, Youth, and Education of *E. O. Pinka*

*Edgars Oto* (often called only by his first name – *Edgars*) *Pinka* was born on 17 April (according to the Julian Calendar – 5 April) 1895 in *Vecgulbene* Manor [1]. His father *Pēteris Pinka* (also *Pinke*; 1855–1928) came from the homestead «*Lejas Ganiņi*» of *Aizkuja* Village, near the present *Madona* Town, his house was located on the bank of the rapid *Rieba* River, there was also a mill. *P. Pinka* is said to have learned the trade of a miller and mill builder in *Pärnu* [2], Estonia, then worked in water mills in *Stāmariena*, *Gulbene*, *Kalnecmpji*. In the marriage with *Liena Pinka* (b. *Būda*; 1863–1940), daughter *Marta Eiženija Pinka* (m. *Šmite*; 1884–1944(?)), son *Edgars Oto* and two more children who

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died young were born. The manor miller's income was sufficient to educate his son not only in the parish school.



**Figure 1.** *E. O. Pinka* (first from the right) with his parents and sisters in *Vecgulbene* (July 1903).

From 1904 to 1907, *E. O. Pinka* attended *Gulbene* Lutheran Parish School, until 1914 he continued his education at Pskov Sergey Non-classical School (*Псковское Сергиевское реальное училище*) in Russia. The choice of an educational institution showed his interest in practical matters related to engineering, and graduates of non-classical schools had opportunities to study in this area. There were similar schools in *Vidzeme* and Riga, however, a neighbouring governorate was chosen for training. By road from the mill in *Ate*, where his father worked at the time, it was closer to Pskov if one took the narrow-gauge railway to *Valka* and then took the broad-gauge train to Pskov. It was about the same distance as in the opposite direction through *Stukmaņi* to Riga. There were other educational institutions in Pskov, which the people of the *Vidzeme*, including the boys from Vitebsk Governorate and *Kurzeme*, sometimes attended, e.g., a pedagogical seminary, a school of surveyors, an agricultural school, a cadet corps. Some pupils got involved in the social life of Latvians in Pskov. It was led by the later Professor of the University of Latvia (UL), *Jānis Kauliņš* (1863–1940), who taught *E. O. Pinka* the German language at the non-classical school [3]. Among the employees of the non-classical school was also singing teacher Josif Tulchiev (*Иосиф Тульчиев*; 1860–1938), a graduate of St. Petersburg Conservatory [4]. At that time, he was the one who to a large extent

organized music life in Pskov, he also introduced a young man from *Gulbene* region to this area, sparking his interest in music for the years to come.

After graduating from the non-classical school, in the summer of 1914, *E. O. Pinka* applied for studies at RPI at the Department of Mechanics [5]. However, he did not start his studies and was dismissed in December, because at the end of August, the young man joined the Imperial Russian Navy as a volunteer. On 1 September 1914, he passed the entrance exam to the Imperial Nicholas I Naval Engineering School in Kronstadt (*Морское инженерное училище императора Николая I в Кронштадте*). It is comparable to a military school; the rules stipulate that the graduate must work at the designated place for five years. The tuition fees were lower as compared to RPI, but it was subject to strict regulations. The school mainly trained ship mechanics for the Russian Navy, as well as shipbuilders. The first year of study was shared by students in both majors – they learned physics, chemistry, analytical and visual geometry, differential calculus and integral calculus, applied mechanics and hydraulics, resistance of materials, maritime law, and foreign languages. Next, three years of specialization were planned. The special subjects for ship mechanics included the basics of shipbuilding, electrical engineering, the theory of thermomechanics, steam engines, machine assemblies drawing, and torpedo construction. Theoretical training from 15 September to 5 May also included lessons in mechanical workshops, chemistry, and electrical laboratories. Success was assessed on a twelve-grade scale. Practice on ships was planned from 15 May to 15 August. Presumably, during World War I, education was reduced from four years to three. The school graduation certificate stated that its recipient, *E. O. Pinka*, had the right of a person who obtained higher special education [6; p. 162].

## **The First Years of Work as an Engineer (1917–1924)**

In May 1917, midshipman *E. O. Pinka*, a graduate of the Naval Engineering School, was assigned to the service on the battleship (so-called dreadnought) «*Sevastopole*» built in 1911. Its base port was Helsingfors (now Helsinki, Finland), which until the declaration of independence of Finland in December 1917 was part of the Russian Empire. This ship did not participate in combat operations. Being involved in the Latvian Society of Helsingfors, a mechanic in the Russian Navy raised funds for the support of Latvian war refugees who arrived in the city [7]. In the spring of 1918, the dreadnought «*Sevastopole*» was moved to Kronstadt, in August, the head of the ship's boiler department,

*E. O. Pinka*, demobilized and returned to his family in *Gulbene*. On 5 December, he became the representative of the Ministry of Supply of the Provisional Government of Latvia in the area of *Valmiera* and *Smiltene*, from 3 January he continued his duties in *Liepāja*. In the middle of January, *E. O. Pinka* was briefly arrested by representatives of the German troops due to a misunderstanding.

On 28 January 1919, a native of *Gulbene* joined the Engineer Sapper Company of *Kalpaks* Battalion in *Liepāja*, and in February, First Lieutenant *E. O. Pinka* was appointed the Weapons Manager and Head of the Workshop. From 5 May, he was the commandant of *Vecauce* and its surroundings, in July, he was transferred to the Latvian Army Car Workshops as a Technical Manager. The Workshop, whose official name was «Car Garage and Workshop No. I», was admittedly managed by *Otto Hotte* (1892-?), a graduate (1916) of the Department of Mechanics of RPI. Thanks to the dedication and special knowledge of engineer *E. O. Pinka*, a strong and well-organized unit of automobile troops was established [8]. In August 1919, under the command of the Army Commander-in-Chief's Staff, the Naval Division started to be formed. From 16 September, *E. O. Pinka* was the engineer of this Division, in October he was approved as the Head of the Technical Department [9; p. 2]. During the Latvian War of Independence, the means of navigation played a special role in the battles against Bermontians, mostly in the transportation of soldiers. Although the army had few ships and boats, there was a sufficient number of maritime specialists. In the 1920s, in the process of officer attestation, *E. Pinka's* attitude towards the performance of his official duties was described as follows, «Energetic, insufficiently conscientious. There is a lack of practice in one's specialty, theoretical knowledge is sufficient» [9; p. 15]. A month after the conclusion of the Peace Treaty with Soviet Russia, First Lieutenant *E. O. Pinka* retired from service, as the army's personnel was downsized at that time.



Figure 2. *E. O. Pinka* (1920).

E. O. Pinka was active in several trade organizations. From 1922 to 1923, he was involved in the company «Bura» co-owned by Sea Captain Archibald von Keyserling (1882–1951), then he was the manager of the warehouse of the company «Robežtirdzniecība» in Riga and in the village that now is *Indra, Krāslava District*. Later, the engineer supervised the shore construction works in the company of Hans Friedrich Schmidt (?-?). In 1921, *E. O. Pinka* was granted a new farm of 15.31 ha in *Vecgulbene Parish* from the land of *Gulbīši* semi-manor of *Gulbene Manor*, it was named «*Indrāni*» [10]. *E. O. Pinka's* father, later his sister, farmed there, the land was rented out. *E. O. Pinka* also visited it now and then [6; p. 148].

Indraņi, 28.12.37

Droši cien. Lagzdiņa kungs,

Notītu Jūs par manu par  
manas algas saņemšanu Tehnikuma  
par Decembra mēnesi un lūgšu to  
man ijsūtīt pēc sekošās adreses  
Martai Šmidt.  
Gulbene Indraņos  
Gulbene.  
Līdz ar to lūgšu arī saņemt no  
manis vissistmākos laimes novērtējuma  
uz Jānu 1938 gadu.

Ar treiciņu  
Jūs E. O. Pinka

Māsa aizvērt

**Figure 3.** *E. O. Pinka's* power of attorney to receive a salary from *Lagzdiņš* (28.12.1937).

## Work as a Mechanical Engineer, Marine Engineer, Teacher, and Conductor (1924–1941)

Although immediately after the Latvian War of Independence, the Latvian Army had practically no naval forces, it was necessary to think about the protection of the almost 500 km long sea border. At the beginning of the 1920s, Latvia inquired in various countries about the possibility to purchase ships or submarines from those used in World

War I, but without much success. The possibility of building coastal artillery was also discussed, but guarding the border from Estonia to Lithuania in this way would require relatively larger funds. In 1924, the *Saeima* discussed and on 10 April adopted a law on the purchase of coastal defence equipment, and the President of the State signed it on 19 April [11]. Not everyone in the *Saeima* and Latvian society supported this decision [12; pp. 152–154]. *E. O. Pinka* also got involved in the discussion and doubted whether the submarines would be able to live up to the expectations placed on them in the defence of Latvia's sea borders, as there was also a lack of a base for their deployment [13; pp. 11.–14]. Almost 10 million lats were allocated for the period of four years. Using these funds, Latvia was supposed to acquire two submarines and two minesweepers, including torpedoes. All floating vehicles were built in the cities of Nantes and Le Havre in France.

In connection with the expected development of the navy, on 1 November 1924, *E. O. Pinka* was included in the active war service at the headquarters of the Coastal Defence Squadron and three weeks later was assigned as a controller of the newly built warships in France [9; p. 12]. On 3 December, the naval officer left for Nantes, France. In November 1925, he was awarded the rank of Lieutenant Commander. In France, the engineer supervised the construction of the later submarine «*Ronis*», practiced in service on submarines, and also got acquainted with the manufacturing of torpedoes.

On 1 June 1926, the Underwater Boats Division was established as a separate unit. The first order issued on that day by Lieutenant Commander *Ādolfs Bergs* (from 1940 – *Kalns*; 1892–1957) begins as follows, «As of this day, I assume the duties of commander of the Underwater Boats Division. .. The Underwater Boats Division, as one of the strongest units of the Latvian Fleet, joins the other combat units today to protect the Latvian sea shores, stained with the tears of Latvian ancestors turned into amber» [14]. Engineer-mechanic Lieutenant Commander *E. O. Pinka* (grade 1 of IX salary category, effective from 20 September 1924) [14] was also enrolled in the division. A total of 90 men were initially included in the staff, *E. O. Pinka's* service was the longest among them. The first Commander of the division *Ā. Bergs* at the same time served as the Commander of the submarine «*Ronis*», the submarine «*Spīdola*» was commanded by the long-distance Captain *Oskars Rodiņš* (1892–1955). In August 1926, Latvians – the future crewmen – were sent to France to learn how to work on the ships built there.

Among them, there was also the radio-telegrapher Corporal *Hugo Legzdīņš* (1903–2004), known as the last Commander of Latvia's first submarine «*Ronis*» (1940–1941). He wrote, «Captain *Pinka*, an engineer,



also served on «*Ronis*». In Nantes, our entire team had to go to classes in the shipyard itself, where *Pinka* was assigned a spacious office. Here he laid out submarine drawings on a large table, drew on a blackboard to introduce us to the premises, devices, and apparatuses of the «*Ronis*». Two weeks prior to the arrival of the team in Nantes, the submarine had already been launched, so we could see it in reality immediately after studying the drawings. This type of training seemed very adequate. In general, our engineer and captain acted very energetically. He was fluent in French and very musical. At *Pinka's* passionate suggestion, a brass band was even created from the members of «*Ronis*» team. We solved the issue with the instrument supply quite simply. Considering our large travel allowance, we decided to buy the instruments ourselves. No special motivation was necessary here – everyone contributed the necessary few hundred francs. Then came the training. Captain *Pinka* himself worked both as a bandmaster and as a teacher. We were not really musicians, and we had to learn the matter from the very basics. Every day after work, *Pinka* came to «Saint Anna» (hotel) and played with the orchestra for hours. Horns were making such noise in the hotel that nearby residents complained about troublemakers. We agreed that we would blow more quietly, which we did» [15].

*E. O. Pinka* participated in the ceremonial launch of both submarines. He left Nantes for Latvia with the submarine «*Ronis*» in May 1927 and arrived in the Latvian territorial waters on 20 May. From then on, he performed the duties of a submarine engineer-mechanic, was the second person behind the commander. The submarine designed by French engineer Jean Ernest Simonet (1866–1958) was 55 meters long and 4.6 meters wide, above water it was powered by a diesel engine, underwater – by an electric motor powered by batteries, submerged to a depth of 50 meters. Above water speed amounted to 14 knots (25.93 km/h), underwater – 10 knots. The submarine was armed with six torpedo tubes, an anti-aircraft gun, and two machine guns [16]. The planned crew was 32 people; usually, 26–28 men were mentioned in the division orders. In a sense, it was the mechanic who was responsible for making the complicated technical complex work safely and well.

At the same time, *E. O. Pinka* was also a mechanical engineer of the Underwater Boats Division (from May 1928 – Submarine Division), who was promoted to the rank of Captain (1927) in the Latvian Army. In the fall of 1930, he was sent to study at the Technical Maritime Academy in France. In the Submarine Division, he was on vacation at that time. The service note said that the officer was on a business trip for scientific purposes. In October 1932, Latvian *E. O. Pinka* was awarded a diploma of civil engineer of marine structures in Paris [17]. He took 16 different courses, six of them lasted for two years. On a 20-grade scale, the

average rating was 16.01. The officer continued his service in the previous place and «On 6 October, 1932, Captain *Pinka Edgars* returned from the regular vacation assigned to him; the engineer-mechanic of the submarine «*Ronis*» also returned after graduating from the technical marine academy in France with a 1st class marine construction engineer's diploma and joined the division, in his capacity of the engineer-mechanic of the submarine «*Ronis*» he resumed performing his official duties on 17 October of this year» [18].

The Latvian Society of Paris operated in the capital of France. The community of compatriots was made up of those working and studying there, the Society used the premises of the Embassy of Latvia. When a men's double quartet was organized in the Society in 1931, Captain *E. O. Pinka* became its leader. In the spring of 1932, the city of Nice proposed to hold a folklore festival along with the traditional flower festival, inviting representatives of different nations to interest vacationers. In January, the Embassy of Latvia in France also received an invitation. It was decided to organize a mixed choir conducted by *E. O. Pinka*, based on a male double quartet. It would then participate in an event on the French Riviera. The number of singers exceeded 30, among them there were several professional musicians, some of them associated with the Russian Opera in Paris. For example, the most famous was the Riga-born singer, mezzo-soprano *Elza Žebranska* (1903–1996), who studied in Paris. She also performed as a soloist at the concerts. The costumes for the choristers were mainly sent from Latvia, *Liepāja* Museum (director *Jānis Sudmalis*; 1887–1984) was especially responsive with the collection collected by the former *Kurzeme* Provincial Museum. *E. O. Pinka's* contacts with the previous place of service may have helped. Men's suits were mostly made locally. On the last day of February, Latvians took part in a joint concert in Paris, after which the participants of the folklore festival left for Nice by train. Representatives of 19 different nations participated in the event, the audience enjoyed the singing of the Latvian choir and its magnificent costumes, the conductor was also appreciated. Captain *E. O. Pinka* also sent correspondence about the holiday to his homeland [19–21]. On 17 April, he was elected an Honorary Member of the Latvian Society of Paris [22].

A similar event was held again in France the following spring. In a special letter to the leadership of the Navy, the Embassy of Latvia asked to allow engineer *Pinka* to come to Paris from *Liepāja* for the training of the choir, the permission of the command was received. On 6 February, the naval officer was granted a leave [23] to proceed to Paris. Also this time the performance could be considered as introducing Western Europe to Latvia, its culture, and traditions [24–25].





Figure 4. Latvian Choir of Paris in Nice (3 March 1932).

The place of service for the engineer was mainly in *Liepāja*, various training trips were made from there, also going to joint manoeuvres with the fleets of other countries, individual visits to the ports of other countries. He was responsible for collecting the historical materials of the submarine «*Ronis*», organized courses for the seafarers of the Submarine Division, and worked in the Officers' Court of Honour.

Starting from the school year 1928/1929, the engineer worked as a teacher at the courses for ship mechanics in *Liepāja* State Technical School, then also in *Liepāja* Maritime School. In 1931, the brochure «*Kuģu tvaika katli*» (Ship Steam Boilers), compiled by *E. O. Pinka*, was published using the rotaprint technique. In February 1936, considering his education and practical work experience, he was certified as a full-fledged secondary school teacher with the right to teach subjects in marine engineering. Starting from the school year 1935/1936, *E. O. Pinka* taught an airplane course at *Liepāja* State Technical School [26]. Later, he was replaced by *Georgs Novickis* (1908–1985), a graduate (1933) of the Faculty of Mechanics of the University of Latvia, the Head of the Aviation Department of *Liepāja* War Port Workshops, who, having won a Humboldt scholarship, in the study year 1934/1935, had supplemented his knowledge in the Aircraft Construction Department of the Technical University of Berlin [27]. The senior commander followed world events in the field of maritime affairs, especially in the area of the military fleet, informing the citizens of Latvia about it as well [28–34].



Figure 5. *E. O. Pinka* (c. 1935).

In the annual attestations of *E. O. Pinka* in the mid-1930s, he received positive and relatively similar reviews. The last was written in the fall of 1937, «He was treated in the *Ķemeri* Sanatorium during the year of attestation, but in terms of his health, he was also able to endure the hardships of wartime. Mental abilities are good. Morally and ethically blameless. Moderately energetic, polite, and sociable. Alcohol is used, but it does not affect the service. Outside duty, he teaches classes at the state technical school in *Liepāja*. He knows and performs his duties very well. Fair and apolitical towards subordinates. Behaves within the limits of norms and regulations. Disciplined enough. Capable of organizing and conducting military education courses. Independent within the scope of his rights. Normal self-motivation and courage to take appropriate steps when necessary. Interested in technical innovations. Able to take higher technical positions. Conclusion: Good. Shall be promoted to the position of the head of the divisional maintenance unit» [9; p. 28].

The attestation of the previous three years recommended that the officer be promoted to the position of engineer mechanic of the squadron headquarters. Both positions were mentioned as possible promotions on 5 December 1937 by Squadron Commander, RPI graduate (1914) *Teodors Spāde* (1891–1970) and on 9 December – by Army Commander *Krišjānis Berķis* (1884–1942).

However, in 1937, a Senior Commander supposedly had some disagreement with the leadership. He was charged under Article 52, Part 2 of the War Punishment Law (violation of military honour and subordination), which was discontinued in July 1938 due to lack of evidence [9; p. 33]. However, on 22 December 1937, the Senior Commander resigned from active service «at his own request», and was excluded from the division's officer lists on 11 February 1938, the transfer of the affairs and duties of the submarine and divisional

engineer mechanic to the new executor was completed on 10 March. During the interrogation on 7 February 1941 about the reason for leaving, *E. O. Pinka* said, «I wrongly insulted my superior» [35; p. 179].

**Figure 6.** *E. O. Pinka*  
(first from the right) –  
guest of honour at the  
graduation of *Gulbene*  
Elementary School  
(May 1937).



Captain *E. O. Pinka* was one of the best specialists in his field [7], the only marine engineer who was a specialist in internal combustion engines, specializing in submarine diesel engines, boat engines, and the automotive industry [8]. His work was highly appreciated – he was awarded V (1928) [36] and IV Class (1936) Order of the Three Stars [37]. Among the officers of the Latvian Army, there were not many who received two high state awards of this degree [38].

## End of Life (1938–1941)

After retiring from the army, the engineer from *Liepāja* went to Riga, where he established a construction company. He had the construction rights of an engineer and an architect registered in the Construction Department of the Ministry of the Interior [39]. *E. O. Pinka's* office organized electrical installation works, then took over the company «*A. C. Fitzner*», whose owner repatriated to Germany. The company also installed central heating, hot water, and gas mains [40]. From March 1938 to August 1939, the engineer lived in Riga at 67–7 *Valdemāra* Street [41], then shortly after – at 4–24 *Ausekļa* Street (this place is also mentioned as the company's address), in December he moved to 3–3 *Laipu* Street. Nearby, at 39 *Valņu* Street, was the former firm of *A. C. Fitzner*, where the office of *E. O. Pinka* was situated.

In the fall of 1940, he was hired as an engineer at the People's Commissariat of Labour, from the beginning of the following year, *E. O. Pinka* was the Head of the Technical Department at the Riga Shipbuilding and Repair Factory of the People's Commissariat of the River Fleet of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) [35; p. 166]. It was established in the fall of 1940 by two nationalized companies – the Baltic Machine Factory «*Ed. Cepps*» and shipyard «*Lange*», whose office was situated at 38 *Valguma* Street [42]. This position corresponded to his education as an engineer and also his previous work experience. However, on 24 January 1941, *E. O. Pinka* was arrested, being accused for cooperation with the foreign secret service [35; p. 160]. A total of four people were accused and then tried in one case: *E. O. Pinka*, Riga City Council employee (formerly a railway worker) *Nikolajs Petrovičs* (1906–1941), Headmaster of *Daugavpils* Polish School (formerly also a railway worker) *Pēteris Daugste* (1896–1941) and car mechanic in Riga *Jānis Krollis* (1892–1941). They were not arrested at the same time. The first of the four to be detained was *N. Petrovičs*, who was mentioned by *Arvīds Sprinģis* (1904–?), the attendant of the *Jelgava* railway station, during the interrogation on 7 January. In the spring of 1940, *N. Petrovičs* asked *A. Sprinģis* to note how many and what kind of cargoes were sent to Germany through *Jelgava* with the goods produced in the USSR. This interested the employees of the Embassy of France, and he promised to pay for the news. It started even before the German attack on France in May 1940, when France, apparently, allowed the possibility of such an attack, news about the preparation of the opponent was important. At that time, the cooperation between the USSR and Germany was determined by mutual agreements. *N. Petrovičs* was arrested on 9 January 1941. During the interrogation, he admitted that *J. Krollis*, who had acquaintances at the Embassy of France, had previously approached him asking to collect the news. In addition to *A. Sprinģis*, *N. Petrovičs* also asked *P. Daugste* for similar information about *Daugavpils* railway junction. These men were also arrested. Over time, *J. Krollis* did not deny providing news to the employees of the embassies of France and England. On 18 January 1941, *J. Krollis* mentioned that in April 1940, an employee of the Embassy of France also stayed at the home of his friend engineer *E. O. Pinka* and was interested in military affairs. It should be mentioned here that *J. Krollis* and *E. O. Pinka* met at the end of 1930 in Paris, where the former had been working as a driver for seven years, while the latter had been sent to study. Both were interested in music, both attended small Latvian society events. The driver was the treasurer of the Latvian Society of Paris, he also sang in the choir led by *E. O. Pinka*. From time to time, they also met after 1933, when *J. Krollis* returned to Riga. *J. Krollis* was also connected with the Embassy of France

by the fact that the car workshop sometimes repaired embassy cars. The interrogators also paid attention to the fact that in 1933 *E. O. Pinka* introduced *J. Krollis* to *Pēteris Melbārdis* (1892–1941), whom he had known since the beginning of the 1920s, when they worked together in border trade. *J. Krollis* and *P. Melbārdis* started a joint business in the delivery of illegal goods from Germany, but unsuccessfully. *P. Melbārdis* was arrested already on 30 June 1940 and was prosecuted as an agent of American, English, French, and German secret services, he was executed on 25 March 1941 [43].

During the interrogation on 7 February 1941, engineer *E. O. Pinka* said that in the spring of the previous year, a person visited their apartment and delivered a letter from a Frenchman named Blanchard. *E. O. Pinka* got acquainted with him during joint studies in Paris, after the Latvian returned to his homeland, they exchanged letters. Blanchard was interested in the events in Latvia, also in what had changed recently in the senior commander's former place of service in *Liepāja* (there was a military base of the USSR at that time). The person who came promised to come after some time for an answer, but had not returned. *E. O. Pinka* told *J. Krollis* about the visit, who, based on the visual description of the visitor, assumed that the meeting was really with a person from the embassy. However, *E. O. Pinka* repeatedly emphasized to the interrogator that no information was transferred. After the start of the German-Soviet war on 22 June 1941, the detainees were taken to Astrakhan, Russia, where interrogations took place as late as in September. A court hearing was held on 5 November. In his final statement, *E. O. Pinka* said, «I did not intend to do anything bad and I did not do it. If I also had any connections with the intelligence service, I was not aware of it. Please excuse me» [35; p. 237]. The verdict reads «The defendant *E. Pinka*, recruited by a foreign secret service agent, collected espionage information about the defence». On 5 November 1941, all four were sentenced to death. The life of a naval engineer ended in Russia, near the Caspian Sea.



Figure 7. *E. O. Pinka*  
in custody (1941).



## The Family and its Successors

On 7 April 1929, *E. O. Pinka* married *Marija Monika Tizengolda* (b. *Rusecka*; 1894–?) in the Riga Garrison Congregation in the Riga Cathedral, whom he supposedly met while working at «*Robežtirdzniecība*» company in the vicinity of *Krāslava*. Their marriage was dissolved on 5 November 1935. A sentence in *E. O. Pinka's* 1936 officer attestation is related to this, «He is morally and ethically not to blame, although he wanted to connect his life with a woman, for whom the officers' court of honour expressed their disapproval» [9; p. 26]. He married for the second time doctor *Lidija Ošeniece* (1906–1991) on 8 August 1940.

Four months after the engineer's arrest, in May 1941, a daughter of *Lidija* and *Edgars Pinka – Māra* – was born, and she never met her father. In 1959, she entered the Faculty of Electroenergetics of RPI. In 1961, the faculty was reorganized – the Chair of Electrical Communications and Automation was divided into two departments – Electrical Communications and Radio Engineering, and they were included in the newly established Faculty of Automation and Computer Technology, where *M. Pinka* continued her studies. 50 years after her father joined RPI, in 1964, *M. Pinka* graduated from the institute, obtaining a diploma in radio engineering. The young engineer started working at the Chair of Radio Engineering of RPI as a laboratory assistant, from 1965 – as an assistant. Since 1966, the chair was included in the newly established Faculty of Radio Engineering and Communications. The names of the chairs also changed – in 1968 she worked as a senior lecturer at the Chair of Radio Receivers, from 1972 – at the Chair of Radio Equipment [44; p. 513]. *M. Pinka* was associated with her *Alma mater* for 30 years. Not only the chairs', but also the name of the university changed – in 1990 RPI was renamed Riga Technical University (RTU). *M. Pinka* also worked at the Chair of Latvian Language and Culture of RTU (1990–1991) as the students of the Russian flow had to be taught the Latvian language. There were short training courses, which *M. Pinka* also completed. In parallel with her work at the chair, *M. Pinka* started working in Riga Secondary School No. 6 from 1993 as a mathematics teacher, later also a physics teacher. There was a shortage of teachers of the mentioned subjects, and the pedagogical work of an engineer was very necessary. Moreover, *M. Pinka* liked it and was good at it, so in 1995 the engineer decided not to run for the next term at the chair and switched to full-time work at school. In order to continue working at school, according to the new regulations, higher pedagogical education was required, therefore, from September 2004 to June 2005, *M. Pinka* obtained the qualification of a secondary school physics teacher in



part-time studies at the Faculty of Physics and Mathematics of the University of Latvia [45].

Engineer *M. Pinka*, like her father, liked music. She had learned to play the violin and sang in the RPI / RTU women's choir «*Delta*», she was also its president [44; p. 197]. *Vadims Ņikitins* (1939–2021), husband of *M. Pinka* and son-in-law of *E. O. Pinka*, also worked at RPI / RTU. Two granddaughters continue the family.

In Latvia, the Latvian Maritime Academy was established in 1989, which became a structural unit of RTU in the faculty status in 1990 [46]. From 1993 to 2022, it operated as an independent higher education institution, and since 1 November 2022, it has been part of RTU again as an independent structural unit. Here, maritime specialists of the highest level are now being trained, and young people have the opportunity to get an education in Latvia. In the first half of the 20th century, *E. O. Pinka* did not have such an opportunity. That is why young people from Latvia went abroad to study maritime sciences.

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## SOURCES OF ILLUSTRATIONS

**Figure 1.** O. Priediša foto. Viktora Ķirpa Ates muzejs, KPNM 2141.

**Figure 2.** LNA LVVA 5601. f., 1. apr., 4920. l., 2. lpp.

**Figure 3.** LNA LVVA 2227. f., 2. apr., 706. l., 148. lp.

**Figure 4.** Ulda Ozoliņa krājums.

**Figure 5.** LNA LVVA 5601. f., 1. apr., 4920. l., 37. lpp.

**Figure 6.** Gulbenes novada vēstures un mākslas muzejs, GVMM 4422.

**Figure 7.** LNA LVA 1986. f., 1. apr., 5354. l.



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## **Kuģniecības inženiera, virsnieka Edgara Oto Pinkas (1895–1941) dzīves likloči**

Pētījumā rodams plašs un vispusīgs dokumentos balstīts vidzemnieka inženiera Edgara Oto Pinkas (1895–1941) mūža izvērtējums. Tas saistīts ar kuģiem, dienestu Latvijā, Krievijā un Francijā, Parīzes Latviešu biedrību. Veicot pētījumu par E. O. Pinkas mācību un darba gaitām, autors inženiera dzīvi apzinājis no dzimšanas līdz mūža beigām, atspoguļojot viņa kā viena no labākajiem speciālistiem Latvijas jūras spēkos inženiera mehāniķa, kuģniecības inženiera, virsnieka un pedagoga gaitas. Nozīmīgs ir arī E. O. Pinkas ieguldījums Latvijas un latviešu mūzikas popularizēšanā Francijā 20. gadsimta 30. gadu sākumā. Interesi par mūziku mantojusi viņa meita, Rīgas Politehniskā institūta (RPI) absolvente (1964) Māra Pinka. Raksts tapis, izpētot Latvijas bibliotēku, arhīvu, muzeju krājumus un sazinoties ar E. O. Pinkas dzimtas turpinātājiem.

**Atslēgvārdi:** kuģniecības inženieris, virsnieks, Edgars Oto Pinka.