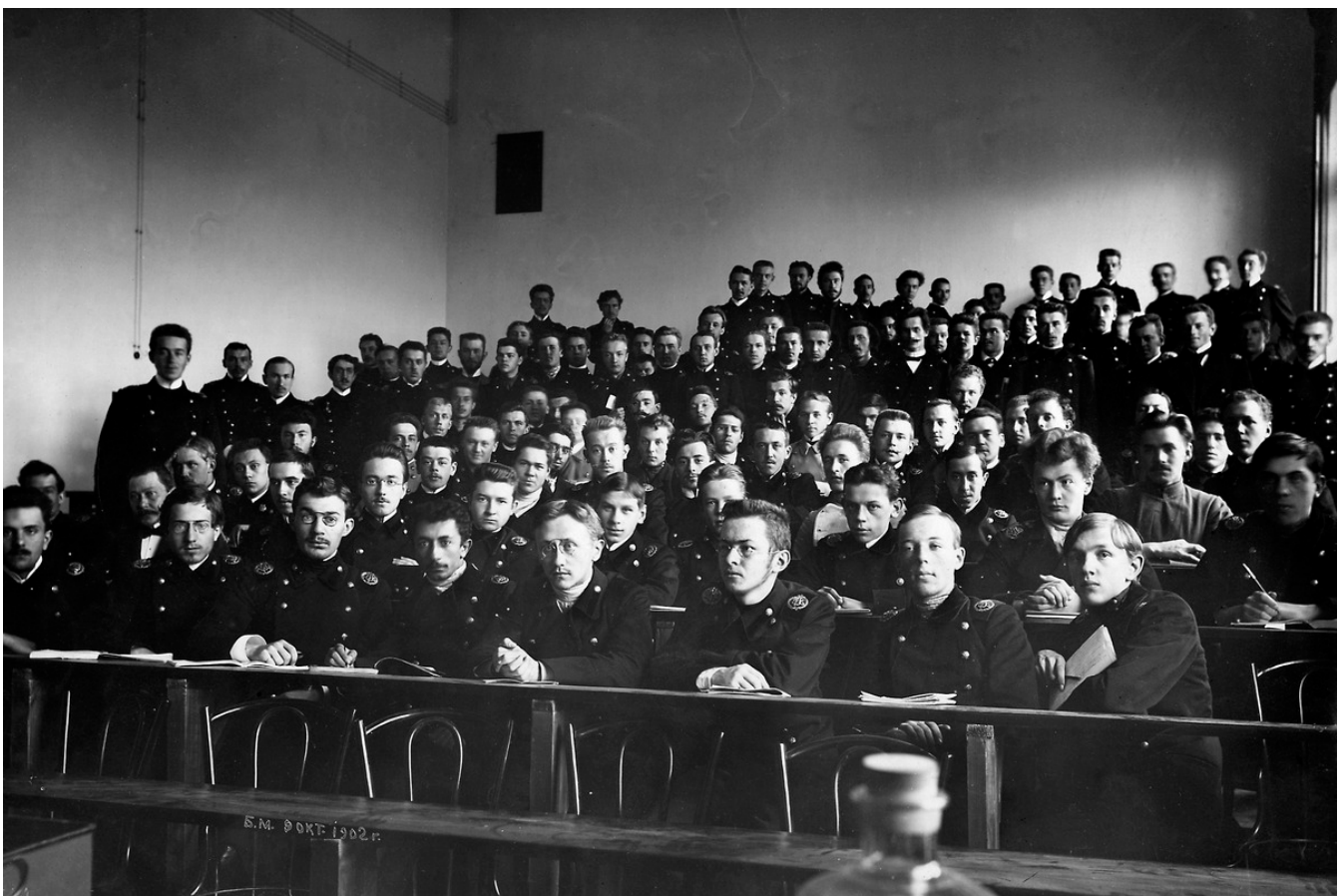


“You are the first”: 120 years ago the Polytechnic Institute opened

October 1 marked the 120th anniversary of the opening of the St. Petersburg Polytechnic Institute. Classes began on October 2.

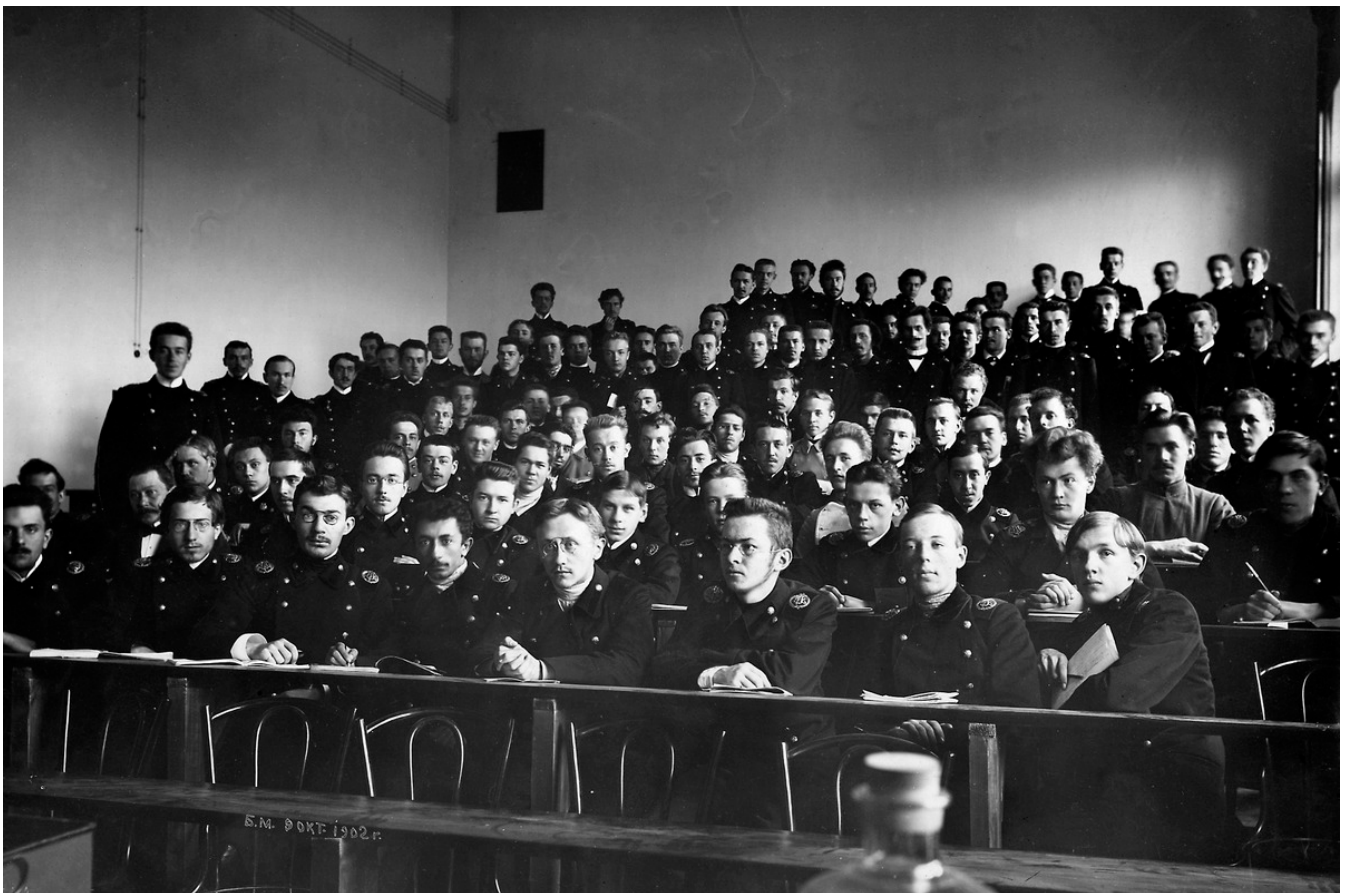
Three years have passed since that historic moment when Minister of Finance of Russia Sergey Witte received the highest permission from Emperor Nicholas II «to establish the Polytechnic Institute in St. Petersburg». The construction is almost completed. On May 2, 1902, on the Statute of the St. Petersburg Polytechnic Institute and its staff, Nicholas II wrote: «So be it». Four departments were created in the new institute: metallurgical, electro-mechanical, economic and shipbuilding.



On October 1, 1902, on the day of the Intercession of the Holy Virgin, the consecration of the Institute took place. Clergy of the Novosiltsev Church served a prayer service in the assembly hall and the premises were sprinkled with holy water. Unfortunately, Sergey Witte was not able to attend the opening ceremony (he was in Vladivostok that day). The government was represented by the manager of the Ministry of Finance, Privy Councilor Peter M. Romanov, who declared the St. Petersburg Polytechnic Institute open. On the same day, on behalf

of all those who were present at the prayer service — and there were the first students in uniform, contractors, workers, architects, the director of the Institute, Prince Andrei Gagarin, four deans, professors, associate professors, and distinguished guests (including the manager of the Main Chamber of Weights and Measures, Dmitry Mendeleev) — Peter Mikhailovich sent a telegram to the Emperor Nicholas II, who was at that moment in Livadia: Today the St. Petersburg Polytechnic Institute erected by Your Imperial Majesty's will has been consecrated and tomorrow classes will begin in it. The director, professors, and students of the Institute ask me to express to Your Imperial Majesty their feelings of boundless devotion and gratitude for the institution of higher learning so generously furnished by Your Most Gracious Grace, and to report to Your Majesty that they will make every effort to fulfill their duty to devote themselves to the cause of good education. I accept to submit this information to Your Imperial Majesty.

On October, 2, before the beginning of classes, a prayer service was offered in the auditorium by Grigory S. Petrov, the artillery school's preacher, who was very popular in the capital at that time. Then the director of the institute, Andrei G. Gagarin, spoke to the students. Here is a short extract from his speech: You are the first, with your participation will be established traditions of our institute. Do your best so that it worthily and steadily entered in family of the big brothers. For its life to flow properly, you must be consciously disciplined by internal discipline. Follow the rules of the institute and the instructions of mine and the professors. Do not hesitate to come to us when you have any difficulty. In us you will always find a stronghold and help.



On that day the first lecture in theoretical mechanics for the students of the Technical Department was given by professor Ivan V. Meshchersky, and in one of the large auditoriums professor Alexander S. Posnikov gave a lecture on political economy for the students of the Economic Department.

And on the night of October 2 to 3, Peter M. Romanov received an answer to his telegram from Livadia: I wish sincerely the success of the St. Petersburg Polytechnic Institute, which opened today, and thank the director, professors, teachers, and students for the sentiments expressed by all. NIKOLAI.

In order that the students and teachers of the Polytechnic Institute also learn the response of the Emperor, the Comrade Minister came again to the Polytechnic Institute on October 3, invited everyone to the assembly hall and read out the telegram. In response he heard a threefold «Hurrah!»

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