

Statistics in Berlin between Ladislaus von Bortkiewicz (1868-1931) and Richard von Mises (1883-1953)

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In January 1901 the Russian citizen Vladislav Josephovich Bortkiewicz - known in Germany as Dr. habil. Ladislaus von Bortkiewicz - and official staff member of the Imperial Russian Ministry for Transport (Russian Railways) was appointed as „ausserordentlicher“ professor by the Prussian Ministry for Education and Cultural Affairs at the Berlin University (Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität). From this time statistics became a major topic in the curriculum for undergraduates in economy at the Berlin University as well as at the Berlin School of Economics (Handels-Hochschule) from 1906 onwards.

When Ladislaus von Bortkiewicz (1868-1931) became full professor for statistics (professor ad personam) in 1920, in the same year Richard von Mises (1883-1953) became full professor for applied mathematics (the first in Berlin) and director of the Institute for Applied Mathematics and Mechanics. Both professors were teaching at the Philosophical Faculty of the Berlin University. For a very short time two of the most influential scientists of the early 20th century were working on the same place - in statistics and economy as well as in applied mathematics and statistics.

In the talk, first, it will be given an overview on the field statistics between economy and mathematics from about 1900 to 1933. Second, it will be analysed the teaching activities of L. von Bortkiewicz and R. von Mises at the Berlin University with special attention on statistics. Finally, it will be discussed their relations from 1920 to 1931/33.