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**A CENTURY OF TRADITIONS:  
THE POLISH STUDENT MOVEMENT, 1815-1918**

by

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## **Abstract**

*This article focuses on the Polish student movement and its different manifestations in the former Polish lands in Prussia and the Russian and Habsburg empires between the Vienna Congress and the First World War. Its aim is to provide a generational narrative concerning the evolution of ideas and organisational activity that compelled Polish students to engage in political action. Moreover, it will show that the student movement in the 19<sup>th</sup> century served as a vehicle for the various political traditions that would play a dominant role in 20<sup>th</sup> century Polish politics. By particularly addressing the evolution of the student movement, it will shed light on how young members of the intelligentsia perceived the 'Polish cause' throughout the turbulent history between the end of the Napoleonic wars and the First World War. Above all, the chronicle of a continuous succession of conspiracies and uprisings in which students played a significant role left an imprint on Polish national consciousness that remains noticeable even until the present day.*

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**Introduction**

Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Polish students played an important role in historical events. However, student unrest in the 1930s, the protests of March 1968 or the student opposition during the 1980s were by no means arbitrary manifestations of student politicisation. Poland had witnessed student unrest and political activity in its ‘classical’ manifestation since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Such a student movement—besides being concerned with the interests of its own social group—often acted as a ‘spokesman for the nation’.<sup>1</sup> The importance of the Polish student movement is reflected in the fact that it emerged at universities in Prussia and in the Habsburg and Russian empires—states hostile to the affirmation of a distinct ‘Polishness’ at a time when no Polish state existed. Successive generations of students were inspired to engage in the struggle for an independent Poland. These students later joined the ranks of the intellectual élite whose ideals and activity constituted one of the key factors through which a Polish national identity was forged despite the unfavorable political context.

The self-proclaimed mission of the intelligentsia became a motive force in Polish patriotism and explains why in the 20<sup>th</sup> century both the Nazi and Soviet occupation regimes would strive to destroy this stratum of Polish society in order to consolidate their military victories.<sup>2</sup> Certain historical elements of the previous century’s student movement had by then already become part of the national heritage and sometime patriotic mythology. In fact, the history of the 19<sup>th</sup> century student movement constitutes no less than a ‘narrative of consciousness’ with its

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<sup>1</sup> L. Gevers and L. Vos, ‘Student Movements’ in W. Rügg (ed.) *A History of the University in Europe. 3: Universities in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries (1800-1945)* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. 269-71.

<sup>2</sup> A. Gella, ‘The Life and Death of the Old Polish Intelligentsia’ *Slavic Review* 1 (1971) p. 22.

account of consecutive conspiracies and uprisings that has significantly influenced Polish national consciousness in general.<sup>3</sup>

### **Patriotic awakening**

The origins of the Polish student movement can be situated in a European context influenced by the Enlightenment and later Romanticism.<sup>4</sup> The rise of the student movement in the post-Napoleonic era was precipitated by several factors with roots in the latter decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the early years of the 19<sup>th</sup>. The first partition of Poland, in 1772, triggered an intense national revival which, among other things, led to a major program of educational reform seeing the establishment of the *Komisja Edukacji Narodowej* (Commission of National Education)—the first ministry of education in Europe. The implementation of the KEN reform program in the respective academic centres did not leave the student milieu unchanged. In fact, it aspired to invigorate the students with new ideals of learning, critical thought, dignity, honour and service to the nation. Hitherto students had often shown adventurous, destructive behaviour fuelled by social frustration and a life of relative poverty. The reformers limited clerical influence by favouring state patronage of higher education, introduced new forms of recruitment and, most important of all, provided for financial aid.<sup>5</sup> The effort to forge a national consciousness would bear fruit when Poland was partitioned for a second and subsequently for a third and final time.

Students played a significant role in the final days of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Incited by Russian intervention in 1792, medical students responded to the military call-up for surgeons. Students also enthusiastically supported the Kościuszko insurrection, even forming distinct academic armed divisions.<sup>6</sup> Following the disappearance of the Polish state after the defeat of the insurrection, it was revolutionary France that inspired the next generation of

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<sup>3</sup> S. K. Morrissey, *Heralds of Revolution. Russian Students and the Mythologies of Radicalism* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998. pp. 7-8.

<sup>4</sup> Gevers, 'Student Movements' pp. 271-72.

<sup>5</sup> M. Frančić, 'Cztery Pokolenia Studentów Krakowskich (od Oświecenia do Powstania 1846)' in C. Babińska (ed.) *Studia z Dziejów Młodzieży Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego od Oświecenia do Połowy XX Wieku. Tom I* Kraków: Wydawnictwo Jubileuszowe UJ, 1964. pp. 24-28.

<sup>6</sup> Frančić, 'Cztery Pokolenia Studentów Krakowskich' pp. 29-30.

young Polish patriots. Many of them marched with the Polish Legions that pledged allegiance to Napoleon and later filled the ranks of the Polish army bound to the French client state, the Grand Duchy of Warsaw, in the process imbuing them with the liberal and democratic ideals of the revolutionary era.<sup>7</sup>

Simultaneously, students started to set up literary circles aimed at self-education where the works of enlightened authors were enthusiastically read and discussed. These circles increased an awareness of a separate youth culture and the underpinning romantic ideal of friendship.<sup>8</sup> It was thus with the onset of Romanticism and its ‘revolt’ against the rationalism of the Enlightened reformers—who had not been able to prevent the annihilation of the Polish state—that the road was paved for modern student movements to arise, for it invoked a missionary spirit among the students as they became convinced that Poland’s freedom could not be restored without their suffering and sacrifice.<sup>9</sup> Above all, it had a unifying generational effect and coincided with the values of the intelligentsia that would take the lead in revolutionary, military and conspiratorial activity in the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>10</sup>

### **Dawn of secrecy**

Following the 1815 restoration, European governments were unwilling to abandon the centralising state reforms of the previous decades. This was especially relevant for the universities as they constituted the training and recruitment centres for expanding state bureaucracies. Moreover, the increase in student enrolment as a result of ensuing demographic growth coincided with an urbanisation of the university system. This enabled a more efficient state control of the universities, but simultaneously allowed a concentration of the student population in urban areas and thus helped generate favourable circumstances for political action.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> M. Wawrykowa, *Für Eure und Unsere Freiheit. Studentenschaft und Junge Intelligenz in Ost- und Mitteleuropa in der Ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts* Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1985. pp. 58-59.

<sup>8</sup> Frančić, ‘Cztery Pokolenia Studentów Krakowskich’ pp. 31-33.

<sup>9</sup> Wawrykowa, *Für Eure und Unsere Freiheit* pp. 38-39.

<sup>10</sup> Gella, ‘The Life and Death of the Old Polish Intelligentsia’ pp. 8-12.

<sup>11</sup> R. D. Anderson, *European Universities from the Enlightenment to 1914* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. pp. 66-71.

Student political organisation first appeared in the German lands. Hitherto there had existed a corporate tradition of *Landsmannschaften* which, by promoting drinking and duelling, attracted the aristocratic student elements at German universities. Moreover, these conservative associations reflected the then plurality of petty German states and were therefore perceived as apolitical.<sup>12</sup> However, nascent industrialisation and subsequent social change aroused students to consider not only academic, but also political reform.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, during the Napoleonic era and the ensuing war of liberation students enthusiastically joined the army incited by a promise of constitutional reform. The violation of this promise after the war provoked the students into forming political organisations, the *Burschenschaften*, that propagated German national liberalism.<sup>14</sup>

However, a radical group within the *Burschenschaften* evolved to the point of embracing terrorism as a means of action.<sup>15</sup> Following the assassination of an alleged Tsarist agent, the infamous Karlsbad decrees in 1819 were issued in the German Confederation. Hence, all student organisations were forbidden by law and students as well as professors experienced the vigilant supervision of government plenipotentiaries. This repressive policy towards the academic milieu spread from the German lands and the Habsburg empire to the rest of Europe, reflecting both the respective governments' anxiety towards the development of revolutionary nationalism as well as the need to exercise control over the education and training of its officials.<sup>16</sup>

The prevailing reactionary climate consequently pushed activists underground thereby encouraging the proliferation of secret societies. For if academic authorities did grant permission for some legal forms of organisation, they were concerned with obtaining student loyalty and conformist behaviour in

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<sup>12</sup> C. E. McClelland, *State, Society, and University in Germany 1700-1914* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980. p. 191.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 217-18.

<sup>14</sup> Anderson, *European Universities* pp. 72-74; Gevers, 'Student Movements' pp. 272-74.

<sup>15</sup> L. S. Feuer, *The Conflict of Generations. The Character and Significance of Student Movements* New York: Basic Books Inc. 1969. pp. 59-63.

<sup>16</sup> Anderson, *European Universities* p. 74; McClelland, *State, Society, and University in Germany* pp. 218-19.

return for such privileges.<sup>17</sup> However, political intransigence was not the only cause of the emergence of secret societies. Other factors like the influence of Masonic ritual were also at work.<sup>18</sup> Above all, secrecy wielded some significant advantages for student organisations. It enabled the organisation's values to be preserved in the face of people who were not affiliated. Additionally, it facilitated its members' isolation in their milieu thereby enhancing feelings of group solidarity and comradeship, while simultaneously aiding the crystallisation of and identification with the organisation's aims and ideals. Furthermore, it improved and simplified the leadership's control over the organisation. Finally, it masked the organisation's visibility thereby hiding it from the students' elders—as well as from the authorities—and thus safeguarding its independence as a youth movement.<sup>19</sup> It is therefore not surprising that secret student associations proliferated in the former Polish lands in the wake of the Vienna Congress.

### **Revolutionary generations**

The opportunity for secret societies to emerge was often provided by legal forms of association such as the supposedly apolitical literary-scientific circles functioning under university patronage. Two such Warsaw student circles, the *Towarzystwo Literackie* (Literary Society) and the *Towarzystwo Czcieli Nauk* (Society of Devotees to Science), initiated an attempt to create an all-university student union. Although supported by the majority of the students, the union was disbanded by the rector only twelve days after its foundation in 1819. However, this did not stop the students forming their first student club, the *Gospoda Akademicka* (Academic Inn). By means of handwritten periodicals and demonstrations in honour of the 1791 May 3<sup>rd</sup> Constitution it engaged in patriotic actions. This alarmed the authorities which promptly banned the club and outlawed similar activity.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> A. Kamiński, *Analiza Teoretyczna Polskich Związków Młodzieży do Połowy XIX w.* Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1971. pp. 319-23.

<sup>18</sup> P. S. Wandycz, *The Lands of Partitioned Poland, 1795-1918* Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1996. pp. 85-86.

<sup>19</sup> Kamiński, *Analiza Teoretyczna Polskich Związków Młodzieży* pp. 324-25.

<sup>20</sup> J. Skowronek, *Młodzież Polska i jej Organizacje w Ruchu Narodowym 1795-1864* Warszawa: Neriton, 1994. pp. 46-47.

In the academic year 1817-1818, an organisation called the *Związek Przyjaciół* (Union of Friends) was created at the University of Warsaw. It was in fact a literary association for philosophical debate and not a political organisation. However, it had a conspiratorial structure in order to escape police surveillance and operated under the cryptonym *Panta Koina*.<sup>21</sup> In 1919 an affiliate was also set up in Berlin, but it was discovered by the authorities which led to the arrest of its members in 1822. After four months of investigation they were released as no conclusive evidence could be found that the organisation strived to destabilise the Kingdom of Poland. Nevertheless, it signified the end of *Panta Koina*.<sup>22</sup>

Around the same time another Polish secret student society, the *Związek Polski 'Polonia'* (Polish Union 'Polonia'), was active in the German university towns of Berlin and Breslau (Wrocław). The *Polonia* was officially an association of compatriots—resembling the *Landsmannschaften*—and initially did not propagate any political agenda. However, politicisation ensued as the majority of its members preferred the idea of an independent Polish state to constitutional reform in the Prussian-held Grand Duchy of Posen. Nonetheless, this nationalist tendency did not inhibit co-operation with German associations. On the contrary, it even resulted in the merger of the Breslau *Polonia* with the local *Burschenschaft*, the *Arminia*, as the German radicals were keen to accept the politically-minded Poles and the latter were convinced that the *Polonia* could only influence the student movement if they were to join forces. Suspected of adhering to an international conspiracy, the *Polonia* circles were disbanded by the police in 1822 and several of its members sentenced to prison.<sup>23</sup>

In 1819 an unnamed secret society was founded at Warsaw University that launched a call for the Polish nation to unite and regain independence. In that same year another organisation, the *Związek Wolnych Polaków* (Union of Free Poles), with a similar program was established. In early 1820 the two organisations merged, adopting the latter's name for the new structure which also drew on pseudo-Masonic practices of ritual, hierarchy and secrecy. This kind of

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<sup>21</sup> Derived from Greek, meaning 'all united' or 'everything common'.

<sup>22</sup> B. Hillebrandt, *Polskie Organizacje Młodzieżowe XIX i XX Wieku: Zarys Historii* Warszawa: Młodzieżowa Agencja Wydawnicza, 1986. pp. 10-11.

<sup>23</sup> Wawrykowa, *Für Eure und Unsere Freiheit* pp. 81-83.

organisation enabled the ZWP to unfold its political activism on a broad scale and even gain control of other organisations in the Polish lands. It also engaged in conspiratorial dealings with secret societies in other nations, as in the German lands through the *Polonia* circles, of which the Breslau group's entry into the *Burschenschaften* was encouraged by the ZWP.<sup>24</sup>

The ZWP also strived to penetrate the academic milieu in Kraków. That city's students had been rather absent in setting up societies after 1815. In 1820, however, in the wake of a protest movement against local police action, a number of students founded a literary-scientific society, the *Towarzystwo Orła Białego* (Fellowship of the White Eagle). The organisation was disbanded by the university authorities which mistakenly believed it to be a conspiracy. In 1821, conflict erupted anew and enabled Warsaw ZWP activists to set up the *Bractwo Burszów Polskich* (Brotherhood of Polish *Burschen*) in Kraków. The explicit reference to the *Burschenschaften* was supposed to facilitate affiliation with the latter in Breslau. However, student associations were outlawed in Kraków in 1821 following an investigation into *Burschenschaften* activity in the city which put an end to the BBP's activity.<sup>25</sup>

The ZWP also established a periodical in 1821, the *Dekada Polska* (Polish Decade), in which articles were published with declarations of solidarity to freedom movements elsewhere in Europe as well as demands for an amelioration of the Polish peasants' fate. The periodical barely appeared for a couple of months until it was closed down by the Congress Kingdom authorities. This was provoked by the publication of the May 3<sup>rd</sup> Constitution on the occasion of its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Its editors were exiled to Austrian Poland or drafted into the Russian army. Further arrests in 1823 led to the final break-up of the ZWP, thus ending the activity of one of the most wide-ranging student societies of its time.<sup>26</sup>

Still, it was in the Russian partition that the most comprehensive Polish student movement came into being. In 1817, a secret society, the *Towarzystwo*

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<sup>24</sup> Hillebrandt, *Polskie Organizacje Młodzieżowe* pp. 11-12; Skowronek, *Młodzież Polska i jej Organizacje* pp. 48-49.

<sup>25</sup> Frančić, 'Cztery Pokolenia Studentów Krakowskich' pp. 40-53; Wawrykowa, *Für Eure und Unsere Freiheit* pp. 80-81.

<sup>26</sup> Hillebrandt, *Polskie Organizacje Młodzieżowe* pp. 12-13; Skowronek, *Młodzież Polska i jej Organizacje* pp. 50-51.

*Filomatów*<sup>27</sup> (Fellowship of Philomaths), was set up by students at the University of Wilno. It soon evolved into a circle for political discussion proclaiming a patriotic mission for the young intelligentsia. Its members were active in affiliated organisations enabling them to exert considerable influence among the student population, becoming the most widely branched out of the Polish secret societies at the time. The society retained its secrecy for five years until discovered by the Russian authorities who linked it with the *Burschenschaften* in Germany.<sup>28</sup> The *Filomaty*, however, were not a revolutionary group, but due to their ensuing patriotic activities the authorities finally cracked down on the student community in 1923 in what amounted to one of the harshest repressions of a student movement in contemporary Europe. Students were sentenced to prison or exile in Russia and the university was submitted to severe restrictions and increased government surveillance.<sup>29</sup>

The disbandment of the *Filomaty* and the break-up of the ZWP marked the end of an era of extensive student political activity. The effects of the Karlsbad decrees in the German lands were matched in the 1820s by the reactionary policy of the Russian emissary towards the academic milieu in the Congress Kingdom, Kraków and Wilno.<sup>30</sup> This situation was exacerbated in 1825 after the ill-fated uprising of the *Dekabristy* (Decembrists) in Russia revealed contacts between Polish and Russian activists and led to a general crack-down.<sup>31</sup> Nonetheless, some Polish student organisational activity persisted in peripheral academic milieus. From 1825 to 1828 a literary circle, the *Towarzystwo Zwolenników Słowiańszczyzny* (Society of Advocates of Slav Language), was active in Lemberg (Lviv) aiming to counter the policy of Germanisation. In Dorpat (Tartu) some four German *Landsmannschaften* were complemented by a Polish association of compatriots, the *Polonia*, that functioned publicly from 1828 to 1832, after which it was forced underground.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Derived from Greek, meaning 'friends of science'.

<sup>28</sup> Wawrykowa, *Für Eure und Unsere Freiheit* p. 84.

<sup>29</sup> Hillebrandt, *Polskie Organizacje Młodzieżowe* pp. 8-10; Skowronek, *Młodzież Polska i jej Organizacje* pp. 51-55.

<sup>30</sup> Wandycz, *The Lands of Partitioned Poland* p. 86.

<sup>31</sup> Wawrykowa, *Für Eure und Unsere Freiheit* p. 97.

<sup>32</sup> Skowronek, *Młodzież Polska i jej Organizacje* pp. 56-58.

Towards the end of the 1820s, opposition to the repressive atmosphere revived conspiratorial activity in the Congress Kingdom. Students played an active part in a conspiracy that emanated from the Warsaw cadet-officers' school in 1828 and gradually developed to a national level. In addition, an alleged 'coronation plot' by radical students to assassinate the Russian Tsar, Nicolas I, during a visit to Warsaw was supposedly prevented a year later.<sup>33</sup> This activity coincided with a general European trend where the post-1815 restoration bred ever more resentment. Secret societies like the *Carbonari* attracted radical students and spread a general conspiracy around the continent.<sup>34</sup> Its culmination would take place in the revolutionary year of 1830.

### **Insurrectionary spirit**

The outbreak of the November insurrection of 1830 was a generational event. It came at a time when the above cited cadet-officers' conspiracy had been betrayed and risked total uncovering.<sup>35</sup> The outbreak of revolt in other parts of Europe, notably in France and in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, forced a Russian reaction. Opposition against the mobilisation of Polish troops to crush the Belgian revolution, as well as possible *Carbonari* influence, precipitated the Polish uprising that was initiated by members of the cadet-officers' conspiracy in Warsaw.<sup>36</sup> Apart from their pivotal role in the first hours of the insurrection, student contingents contributed to the general military effort. The ensuing collapse of the insurrection led to severe repression and many a student chose a life in exile.<sup>37</sup>

After 1830, prospects for Polish higher education drastically worsened. The only Polish university left was in Kraków since those of Warsaw and Wilno had been shut down and their collections and libraries shipped to St Petersburg.<sup>38</sup> Polish education was severely restricted and students from the Congress Kingdom

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid. p. 58; Wawrykowa, *Fur Eure und Unsere Freiheit* pp. 98-99.

<sup>34</sup> Gevers, 'Student Movements' p.278.

<sup>35</sup> Wawrykowa, *Fur Eure und Unsere Freiheit* pp. 100-02.

<sup>36</sup> Wandycz, *The Lands of Partitioned Poland* pp. 105-06.

<sup>37</sup> Frančić, 'Cztery Pokolenia Studentów Krakowskich' pp. 59-65; Skowronek, *Młodzież Polska i jej Organizacje* pp. 61-62.

<sup>38</sup> Anderson, *European Universities* p. 78

were forced to study at Russian universities, so increasing their exposure to Russification.<sup>39</sup> The climate in the other former Polish lands changed as well in the aftermath of the November insurrection. Germanisation in Prussian Poland was stepped up as the liberal example of the Congress Kingdom had ceased to exist. Kraków was submitted to increasing Austrian pressure following the active participation of its student population in the insurgency. Galicia on the other hand emerged from political apathy and Polish émigrés were able to set up patriotic networks there. *Carbonari* influenced the rise of such groups as *Młoda Polska* (Young Poland) and the *Stowarzyszenie Ludu Polskiego* (Society of the Polish People).<sup>40</sup> A new episode of conspiracy had begun.

Bereft of any perspective for a better future thanks to the restrictive political atmosphere of the 1830s and 1840s, Polish students were inclined to draw on the preceding generations' experience. Several organisational initiatives were undertaken throughout the academic centres of the partitioning powers at the universities of Vienna, Lemberg, Breslau, Königsberg, Kiev and Dorpat.<sup>41</sup> In 1832—inspired by the *Filomaty*—the *Klub Tajemnych Filaretów* (Club of Secret Philareths) was founded in Kraków. Initially contemplated as a self-study circle to prepare future cadres for the national movement, its members gradually underwent a radical-democratic politicisation. By the middle of the decade they were united with other students from similar groups in the ranks of the SLP and, subsequently, in the more radical *Konfederacja Powszechna Narodu Polskiego* (General Confederation of the Polish People). This conspiratorial movement survived until the outbreak of revolt in Kraków in 1846 when radical students joined in a mass movement against Austrian incursion.<sup>42</sup> However, the rebellion, which preceded the general European revolutionary wave of 1848, failed and provoked the Austrian annexation of the Kraków republic, and thus to the

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<sup>39</sup> J. Remy, *Higher Education and National Identity: Polish Student Activism in Russia 1832-1863* Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2000. pp. 65-75.

<sup>40</sup> Wandycz, *The Lands of Partitioned Poland* pp. 126-31; Wawrykowa, *Für Eure und Unsere Freiheit* pp. 140-41.

<sup>41</sup> Skowronek, *Młodzież Polska i jej Organizacje* pp. 66-71.

<sup>42</sup> Frančić, 'Cztery Pokolenia Studentów Krakowskich' pp. 101-05; Skowronek, *Młodzież Polska i jej Organizacje* pp. 64-66.

Germanisation of the university. This eliminated the last haven of Polish higher education.<sup>43</sup>

In 1848 students played an active role during the ‘Spring of Nations’ as it engulfed the German lands and the Habsburg empire.<sup>44</sup> Polish academic youth greeted the outbreak of revolutionary fervour in Austria and Italy with enthusiasm. They formed their own contingent of the *Gwardia Narodowa* (People’s Guard) and set up a *Stowarzyszenie Wzajemnej Nauki* (Society for Mutual Study) in Kraków. When the Hungarian revolution erupted, Polish students actively worked in support committees or even volunteered for the Hungarian army. After the defeat of the revolution many students were arrested and expelled, while some of the Hungarian volunteers emigrated.<sup>45</sup>

In Prussia the pro-Polish sympathies that were manifested in the early phase of the revolution evaporated once the threat of war with Russia disappeared. The initial democratic-liberalism of the *Vormärz* made way for a nascent German nationalism.<sup>46</sup> The Congress Kingdom and the Russian partition appeared on the other hand relatively immune to the events in the rest of Europe. That is until a Polish-Lithuanian youth conspiracy, the *Związek Bratni* (Brotherly Union), that had been preparing an armed uprising for 1849 was discovered by the police. Its participants were arrested and subsequently imprisoned or executed. For the following years—until the outbreak of the January uprising of 1863—student conspiratorial activity would primarily be fixed on ‘consciousness raising’.<sup>47</sup>

Russia’s defeat in the Crimean war sparked off a new wave of student activity. In Kiev, some Polish students opposed their peers’ passivity and created self-study and mutual aid groups. Although they professed a patriotic nature, the traditionalism of the local gentry was criticised in their periodicals. In 1857 these groups were integrated in the *Związek Trojnicki* (Trojnicki Union), that

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<sup>43</sup> Anderson, *European Universities* p. 78.

<sup>44</sup> Gevers, ‘Student Movements’ pp. 292-95.

<sup>45</sup> M. Zgórnjak, ‘Młodzież Akademicka Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego Wobec Wydarzeń Politycznych Lat 1846-1866,’ in C. Bobińska (ed.) *Studia z Dziejów Młodzieży Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego od Oświecenia do Połowy XX Wieku. Tom I* Kraków: Wydawnictwo Jubileuszowe UJ, 1964. pp. 110-29.

<sup>46</sup> Wandycz, *The Lands of Partitioned Poland* p. 139.

<sup>47</sup> Skowronek, *Młodzież Polska i jej Organizacje* pp. 72-74; Wandycz, *The Lands of Partitioned Poland* pp. 147-48.

disseminated democratic propaganda, founded secret schools and an underground university in Kiev, while also making preparations for an uprising. Through the *Polskie Towarzystwo Pomocy Naukowej* (Polish Society for Scientific Aid) its members worked to educate the peasantry and gradually extended their influence throughout the Russian and Austrian partitions. In Austria, students had protested against the Germanisation of the university of Kraków throughout the 1850s. A mutual aid organisation was created and at the end of the decade a secret organisation, the *Czytelnia Akademicka* (Academic Reading-room), was founded which was in contact with the *Związek Trojnicki*.<sup>48</sup>

Towards the end of the 1850s high school students in Prussia—where no Polish higher education had existed since the partitions—set up illegal study circles dedicated to achieving a moral elevation in working towards the liberation of the oppressed fatherland. Their activity—the publication of periodicals and the study of Polish literature and history—was limited to ‘organic work’. Their existence was discovered by the police, who disbanded the last of the organisations by 1863. Nevertheless, a general conspiratorial trend was taking shape throughout the former Polish lands that would culminate in the outbreak of the January insurrection in 1863.<sup>49</sup>

This was accompanied by the emergence of mass organisations in academic milieus of Moscow, St Petersburg, Kiev and Kraków that organised mutual aid, libraries, patriotic self-study and from which secret revolutionary groups sprouted. Through these groups the student milieus integrated themselves in the national conspiratorial movement. When the insurrection broke out in 1863, many students again participated passionately in the military struggle in line with their romantic ideals. Its failure would have a significant impact on the political consciousness of the next generations of Polish students.<sup>50</sup> First and foremost, it marked the end of an age of revolutionary liberalism.

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<sup>48</sup> Skowronek, *Młodzież Polska i jej Organizacje* pp. 74-75; Zgórniak, ‘Młodzież Akademicka Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego’ pp. 129-36.

<sup>49</sup> M. J. Olszewska, *Studenci z Królestwa Polskiego przed Powstaniem Styczniowym* Warszawa: Wydział Polonistyki Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2004. pp. 63-87.

<sup>50</sup> Skowronek, *Młodzież Polska i jej Organizacje* pp. 75-78.

### **Perspectives of modernisation**

The end of the January insurrection—the generational catastrophe of its time—marked a new phase in the history of the student movement in the former Polish lands. It was situated against the backdrop of social, economic and political change in the different partitions as they were further integrated in the state structures of the partitioning powers. The emancipation of the peasantry, the modernisation of agriculture, the onset of industrialisation and demographic growth ensured that the Polish lands gradually underwent the transformation to modernity. Slowly, but surely a bourgeois culture began to take form thereby replacing the aristocratic gentry society inherited from the Commonwealth. The most important element herein was the rise of positivism in the aftermath of the January insurrection that put an end to revolutionary sentiment. The Polish élite adopted a policy of ‘Triple Loyalism’, thereby concentrating on ‘organic work’ in the cultural, social and economic sphere.<sup>51</sup> Despite the demoralisation caused by the defeat of the insurrection and the following repression, a new generation of Polish youth and students strived to assert themselves.

Although political organisation was at a low, mutual aid structures were created by students in the academic milieus of the former Polish lands. A first, the *Towarzystwo Bratniej Pomocy* (Society of Brotherly Aid), had been set up in Kraków in 1859 and formally legalised by the university authorities in 1866.<sup>52</sup> Its example was emulated later in other academic centres.<sup>53</sup> The *Bratnie Pomoce* aimed to provide financial support for students in need. This ranged from loans and stipends to medical care and affordable student canteens. Furthermore, they were also responsible for the construction of the first student dormitories. Above all, despite their public nature they managed to retain a degree of autonomy as their activity was furnished by proceeds generated by membership fees and fundraising events.<sup>54</sup> However, the ability of student organisations to function in the former Polish lands varied as a result of the different policies of the respective partitioning powers.

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<sup>51</sup> Wandycz, *The Lands of Partitioned Poland* pp. 260-63.

<sup>52</sup> Zgórniak, ‘Młodzież Akademicka Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego’ p. 135.

<sup>53</sup> Skowronek, *Młodzież Polska i jej Organizacje* pp. 76-77.

<sup>54</sup> C. Kozłowski (ed.) *Słownik Organizacji Młodzieżowych w Polsce 1918-1970* Warszawa: Iskry, 1971. p. 14.

The best circumstances for the Polish student movement to develop were to be found in the Austrian partition. Although the liberal concessions of the *Ausgleich* in 1867 only acknowledged the rights of the Hungarians, the achievement of Galician autonomy led to a substantial amelioration in Polish higher education.<sup>55</sup> Following the recognition of linguistic rights Polish was decreed as the language of education in Galicia in 1869. This led to the Polonisation of the Universities of Kraków in 1870 and Lemberg in 1871 which then became a refuge for Polish students suffering under the respective Germanisation and Russification policies.<sup>56</sup> On the one hand this led to loyalist inclinations among the local Polish élite who perceived the Catholic Habsburgs as the lesser evil amid the partitioning powers. On the other hand the revival of Polish higher education allowed for the education and training of a future Polish intellectual élite.<sup>57</sup> However, this ‘academic freedom’ resulted in a conservative stance on the part of the academic authorities. Organisations such as the *Czytelnia Akademicka* were tolerated, but kept under strict supervision by the university authorities.<sup>58</sup>

The latter organisation had been founded as a discussion club in 1859 and endorsed by the students in the Kraków *Bratnia Pomoc*, who appealed to the authorities for its legalisation. Although police repression hindered public meetings, students persisted in their activity by taking refuge in private homes and, in time, boasted a significantly increased membership. The *Bratnia Pomoc* successfully renewed the bid for the *Czytelnia*’s legalisation 1867. It was to have an elected leadership, manage a library and was to function as a study-aid organisation for the university’s students. Nevertheless, attempts during the

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<sup>55</sup> Wandycz, *The Lands of Partitioned Poland* pp. 218-20.

<sup>56</sup> Anderson, *European Universities* 235; Gevers, ‘Student Movements’ pp. 314-15.

<sup>57</sup> J. Havránek, ‘The Czech, Polish and Slovak Intellectuals in the Habsburg Monarchy between the State and the Nation,’ in M. Norrback and K. Ranki (ed.) *University and Nation: The University and the Making of the Nation in Northern Europe in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, Helsinki: SHS.#, 1996 p. 135.

<sup>58</sup> S. Konarski, ‘Początki Ruchu Postępowo-Radykalnego w Uniwersytecie Jagiellońskim (1880-1896)’ in H. Dobrowolski, M. Frančić and S. Konarski (ed.) *Postępowe Tradycje Młodzieży Akademickiej w Krakowie* Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1962. pp. 14-18.

following years to broaden its activity and reach out to the general public were curbed by police invigilation.<sup>59</sup>

In Prussian Poland, the general situation for the development of the Polish student movement was far from favourable. German unification and the ensuing *Kulturkampf* were set on curbing Catholicism and Polish nationalism. State policy was to achieve further Germanisation of the region.<sup>60</sup> Resistance such as school strikes against religious education in German or the setting up of self-study groups was met with harsh repression.<sup>61</sup> Disciplinary laws were issued to keep the student community under control. Furthermore, the proclamation of the anti-socialist law ensured that students who were suspected of being socialist activists were subjected to disciplinary action by the university authorities or possible criminal conviction. Facing social and ethnic tensions in the East, the state did not refrain from dissolving Polish associations and proscribing socialist or Polish nationalist views among the student community. Political education and militarism in the German empire were bent on imbuing the students with an ardent nationalism which required a certain apathy towards political activism.<sup>62</sup>

In Tsarist Russia Polish students had been forced to study at Russian universities since the aftermath of the November uprising. Following the defeat in the Crimean war a more liberal wind had swept over the Congress Kingdom as the new Tsar wished to accommodate some Polish demands. This resulted in the creation of an *Akademia Medyko-Chirurgiczna* (Medical-Surgical Academy) in 1857 followed five years later by the foundation of a de facto Polish university in Warsaw, the *Szkoła Główna* (Main School).<sup>63</sup> However, the January uprising put an end to Russian leniency towards the Poles. The Congress Kingdom was annexed to the empire as 'Vistula Land' and a general policy of Russification strictly enforced. Hence, in 1869 the *Szkoła Główna* was replaced by a Russian

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<sup>59</sup> J. Myśliński, 'Czytelnia Akademicka i Ognisko' in C. Bobińska (ed.) *Studia z Dziejów Młodzieży Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego od Oświecenia do Połowy XX Wieku. Tom I* Kraków: Wydawnictwo Jubileuszowe UJ, 1964. pp. 165-67.

<sup>60</sup> Wandycz, *The Lands of Partitioned Poland* pp. 233-36.

<sup>61</sup> J. Kulczycki, *School Strikes in Prussian Poland, 1901-1907* New York: Columbia University Press, 1981. pp. 62-64.

<sup>62</sup> K. H. Jarausch, *Students, Society and Politics in Imperial Germany* Princeton: Princeton University Press., 982. pp. 336-45.

<sup>63</sup> Wandycz, *The Lands of Partitioned Poland* pp. 155-165.

university.<sup>64</sup> Nevertheless, the student generation that had attended the *Szkoła Główna* provided the impetus for the intellectual, scientific and cultural movement that became Warsaw positivism. It bridged the gap between the pre- and post-insurrection generation of students.<sup>65</sup>

In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century a gradual modernisation process had commenced in the Tsarist empire as well. This resulted not only in a general increase in student numbers, but also in the social diversification of the student body as students from non-aristocratic backgrounds, the so-called *raznochintsy*, entered the academic milieu. This significant group's material and financial deprivation systematically bred a climate of unrest.<sup>66</sup> In general, students in Russia were especially susceptible to become politicised as their 'modern' disposition flowing from their education clashed with the oppressive nature of the autocratic Tsarist regime.<sup>67</sup> Hence, the student milieu was prone to be influenced by revolutionary movements. Recurring repression generated waves of protest throughout the 1860s and 1870s culminating in the Tsar's assassination in 1881. As a result, in 1884, a severely repressive statute was decreed which enforced a near dictatorial governmental control of the universities. But this only served to foster further politicisation with radicalisation and repression logically following one another.<sup>68</sup>

Despite the general restrictive conditions, Polish students turned once again to political activity towards the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Until the beginning of the 1880s the student milieu in Kraków had been prone to submit to the conservative climate that had endured since the re-polonisation of the university. A high degree of passivity and indifference was prevalent during the trial of a radical political activist in 1880.<sup>69</sup> In its wake student political activity, however, revived. Radical attitudes in the *Czytelnia Akademicka* became visible and students became involved in the nascent socialist movement. This provoked a

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid. p. 196.

<sup>65</sup> S. Kieniewicz, 'Akademia Medyko-Chirurgiczna i Szkoła Główna (1857-1869)' in S. Kieniewicz (ed.) *Dzieje Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 1807-1915* Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1981. pp. 326-67.

<sup>66</sup> Morrissey, *Heralds of Revolution* p. 23.

<sup>67</sup> G. I. Shchetinina, *Universitety v Rossii i Ustav 1884 Goda* Moskva: Nauka, 1976. pp. 69-80.

<sup>68</sup> Feuer, *The Conflict of Generations* pp. 127-35; Shchetinina, *Universitety v Rossii* pp. 209-22.

<sup>69</sup> Wandycz, *The Lands of Partitioned Poland* pp. 211-13.

crackdown on the *Czytelnia* in 1884. Although some years of acquiescence followed, a particularly active group of radicals known by the name of their publication, *Ognisko* (Hearth) emerged in 1889.<sup>70</sup> As this coincided with unrest in Lemberg, the authorities applied repressive administrative measures in a bid to curb the revived radical tendencies. The *Ognisko*-group was brought to trial in 1891, but subsequently acquitted. Nonetheless, student activity was impeded until 1895 when the radicals regained the initiative in the *Czytelnia*, in turn prompting a more far-reaching reaction of the Kraków authorities. While only a few radical activists were expelled from the university, student contacts with the working class were prohibited and, finally, when this did not appear to produce satisfactory results, the *Czytelnia* was disbanded altogether.<sup>71</sup>

Students at the University of Warsaw became politically active anew from the mid-1870s. In 1875 a *Towarzystwo Oświaty Narodowej* (Society for National Education) was founded aiming to counteract the ignorance of the popular masses. It adhered to the principles of conspiratorial secrecy, tried to elevate the popular level of literacy and provide patriotic education.<sup>72</sup> Despite the ascendancy of Warsaw positivism, there thus emerged a certain ‘back-to-the-people spirit’.<sup>73</sup> However, the TON encountered competition from Russian socialist agitators whose message of revolutionary liberation gradually decreased its influence. In 1877, following numerous arrests, the organisation ceased to exist. Nonetheless, this period marked a definite renewal of political activity as socialist and radical circles—among them sympathisers of the Russian *Narodnaya Volya* that applied terrorism for revolutionary purposes—sprang up amidst the student body. It was the era of the ascendancy of socialism and many a Polish student became active in the socialist movement. Polish students appealed to liberal Russian professors against the stark Russification policies. In 1883 a Russian radical humiliated the

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<sup>70</sup> Myśliński, ‘Czytelnia Akademicka i Ognisko’ p. 175.

<sup>71</sup> J. Buszko, ‘Studenci Krakowscy Wobec Ruchu Socjalistycznego i Ludowego (1880-1904)’ in C. Bobińska (ed.) *Studia z Dziejów Młodzieży Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego od Oświecenia do Połowy XX Wieku. Tom I* Kraków: Wydawnictwo Jubileuszowe UJ, 1964. pp. 193-98; Konarski, ‘Początki Ruchu Postępowo-Radykalnego’ pp. 14-23.

<sup>72</sup> Z. Kmiecik, ‘Początki Ruchu Młodzieżowego w Warszawie (1864-1904)’ in B. Hillebrandt (ed.) *Postępowe Organizacje Młodzieżowe w Warszawie 1864-1976* Warszawa: PWN, 1988. pp. 10-12.

<sup>73</sup> Feuer, *The Conflict of Generations* pp. 19-22.

despotic curator of the Warsaw Educational District by slapping him in the face. Polish students rallied in support at the university. Their demonstration evolved into protest against Russification and the authorities sent mounted police and regular infantry against the students. In the wave of repression that followed about a tenth of the Polish students were barred from entering the university. But this did little to curb the students' activity.<sup>74</sup>

### **The rise of nationalism and socialism**

By the 1880s the new spirit of protest had given birth to a generation of *niepokorni* (defiant ones). They believed that through an act of will the emancipation of the people could be achieved and that this entailed both national liberation as well as social revolution. Towards the end of the century, divisions would gradually arise and the adherents of nationalism and socialism drifted apart.<sup>75</sup> However, despite the growing differences in ideological outlook the common realisation gained ground that the positivist approach of co-operation and 'organic work' would not suffice due to the repressive policies of the partitioning powers. If Poland were to regain its independence some form of political action was necessary.<sup>76</sup>

Thus to this end the secret *Związek Młodzieży Polskiej "Zet"* (Union of Polish Youth "Zet") was founded in 1887 as an umbrella youth organisation aimed at transcending the geographical and political boundaries of the partitioned lands.<sup>77</sup> Inspired by freemasonry, the ZMP "Zet" was organised along conspiratorial lines with a hierarchical structure directed from above. Its members demonstrated a high level of activity in which both advocates of nationalism and radicals with socialist inclinations co-operated to bring practically every mutual aid and self-education student organisation under its authority.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Kmieciak, 'Początki Ruchu Młodzieżowego' pp. 12-16.

<sup>75</sup> B. A. Porter, 'Democracy and Discipline in Late Nineteenth-Century Poland' *The Journal of Modern History* 2 (1999) pp. 350-51.

<sup>76</sup> Kmieciak, 'Początki Ruchu Młodzieżowego' 16.

<sup>77</sup> T. W. Nowacki (ed.) *ZET w Walce o Niepodległość i Budowę Państwa: Szkice i Wspomnienia* Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1996. p. 22.

<sup>78</sup> Hillebrandt, *Polskie Organizacje Młodzieżowe* pp. 16-17; Nowacki (ed.) *ZET* pp. 40-43.

The ZMP “Zet” promulgated a political programme stressing a mission of ‘consciousness raising’ as paramount in the struggle for an independent Poland. It essentially constituted a compromise between nationalist and radical tendencies in the organisation as the envisioned future state would be socialist in nature. However, the nationalists gradually gained the upper hand which later caused the radicals to break away. Nonetheless, the ZMP “Zet” went public from 1891 onwards with patriotic agitation and organised manifestations. Despite mounting repression it grew ever more successful. However, in 1894 the Tsarist police managed to deliver the organisation a serious blow that effectively ended its existence.<sup>79</sup>

Four years later, in 1898, the ZMP “Zet” was revived in the Russian partition under increased nationalist influence. However, its programme was buttered down to aim for autonomy instead of independence thereby suiting the Polish élite’s positivist stance. The ZMP “Zet” continued the Polish tradition of ‘organic work’ by setting up youth organisations in rural and working class milieus. A conspiratorial network of student self-education circles was set up to counter the policies of Germanisation and Russification. In addition, in 1899, the *Teka* (Portfolio), a periodical dealing with the problems of Polish youth in all three partitions was set up in Lemberg to popularise nationalist ideology among students. The importance of the ZMP “Zet” for the nationalist movement in general should not be underestimated. It made the dissemination of nationalist ideology possible through its student networks in places—as in Prussian Poland—where the local élite’s loyalty to the respective power was paramount. Above all, it provided the ideological and political training ground for future nationalist activists.<sup>80</sup>

It is against the backdrop of the increasing nationalist course adopted by the revived ZMP “Zet” that the foundation of the first student socialist organisations should be situated. In 1899 following incidents of police brutality at St Petersburg University, a wave of student solidarity strikes engulfed the Russian

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<sup>79</sup> Hillebrandt, *Polskie Organizacje Młodzieżowe* pp. 18-20; Nowacki (ed.) *ZET* pp. 51-53.

<sup>80</sup> Hillebrandt, *Polskie Organizacje Młodzieżowe* pp. 20-22; Kulczycki, *School Strikes in Prussian Poland* p. 42; Nowacki (ed.) *ZET* pp. 63-68; Porter, ‘Democracy and Discipline’ p. 380.

empire. The nationalists appealed in vain to Polish students at Russian universities not to join their Russian peers in the strike.<sup>81</sup> Responding instead to the call of student solidarity, Polish students at Warsaw University put forward demands for academic autonomy and Polish tuition. Although crushed by the authorities the strike's impact was nonetheless significant as it managed to politicise the student community on a massive scale.<sup>82</sup>

Subsequently, the socialist-minded students left the Warsaw *Bratnia Pomoc* that was de facto controlled by the ZMP "Zet" and established a mutual aid organisation of their own, the *Spójnia* (Union), in 1899. The *Spójnia* was active among youth in academic and secondary school milieus where it competed with the nationalist organisations. Its membership consisted both of radicals as well as students of a more moderate socialist orientation. The organisation's activity did not limit itself to economic aid, but developed self-education circles and disseminated anti-Prussian and anti-Russian propaganda. Above all, the *Spójnia* emphasised the need for the unity of Polish and Russian students in the struggle against the Tsarist regime as in the 1899 strike movement.<sup>83</sup>

In 1901 student unrest once again engulfed the Russian empire caused by the proclamation of oppressive measures enabling the arbitrary enlisting of radical students into the army.<sup>84</sup> The *Spójnia*, however, hesitated to join a solidarity strike fearing possible repression. Nevertheless, the resentment of Russian domination continued to generate ill-feelings. When the hated curator of the Warsaw Educational District died in 1903 Russian professors laid down wreaths on the university's behalf at his funeral. This was enough to cause disturbances in Warsaw. The students proclaimed a strike and demanded the resignation of the university's rector. The broad support for the strike prompted the authorities to close down the university until early 1904. Although some students were expelled, the authorities were eventually forced to appoint another rector. The events were but a taste of what was to come a year later.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> S. D. Kassow, *Students, Professors, and the State in Tsarist Russia* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989. pp. 112-13.

<sup>82</sup> Kmieciak, 'Początki Ruchu Młodzieżowego' p. 24; Morrissey, *Heralds of Revolution* pp. 45-58.

<sup>83</sup> Hillebrandt, *Polskie Organizacje Młodzieżowe* pp. 26-27.

<sup>84</sup> Kassow, *Students, Professors, and the State in Tsarist Russia* pp. 123-24.

<sup>85</sup> Kmieciak, 'Początki Ruchu Młodzieżowego' pp. 25-27.

In the Austrian partition both the *Czytelnia Akademicka* radicals as well as student activist who had fled the Russian partition influenced the establishment of socialist organisations. After the disbandment of the *Czytelnia* the Kraków radicals had tried in vain to regain control of the *Bratnia Pomoc*. But following the initiative of Lemberg students a separate organisation, the '*Zjednoczenie*' *Stowarzyszenie Kształcącej się Młodzieży Postępowej* ('Union' Fellowship of Progressive Studying Youth), was set up in 1895. The activity of the *Zjednoczenie* signified a further politicisation of the Kraków student milieu. Apart from self-study groups the organisation called meetings to discuss broad student related issues. In 1898 a state of emergency was declared which severely hampered the further activity of the *Zjednoczenie*. However, the organisation was subsequently revived and continued its activity albeit on a lower level until 1900, while professing a more explicit socialist political view. The organisation published a periodical, *Młodość* (Youth), and was affiliated with the Lemberg published *Promień* (Ray). However, both police surveillance as well as its members' retirement from student life precipitated its demise. It was succeeded for the next five years by the *Ruch* (Movement), which had hitherto existed as a non-active shadow organisation of the *Zjednoczenie*. Its membership and activity until 1904, however, were less significant. Nevertheless, these organisations prepared the ground for the further development of a socialist student movement in the Austrian partition after 1905.<sup>86</sup>

Although no significant Catholic student organisation appeared in the academic milieu until after the First World War, the emergence of socialist and radical tendencies among the student community in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century prompted a clerical reaction. This was strengthened in the wake of the encyclical letter 'Rerum Novarum' in 1891. Reflecting inspiration among the Catholic youth organisations which were supervised by the clergy and which had been revived during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the *sodalicje mariańskie*, a first 'academic' sodality was set up in Lemberg in 1899. A similar sodality was founded in Kraków in 1891 to

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<sup>86</sup> Buszko, 'Studenci Krakowscy' pp. 199-217; M. Frančić, 'Postępowe Organizacje Studenckie w Krakowie (1895-1914)' in H. Dobrowolski, M. Frančić and S. Konarski (ed.) *Postępowe Tradycje Młodzieży Akademickiej w Krakowie* Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1962. pp. 59-89.

oppose the radicals who controlled the *Czytelnia Akademicka* during the latter half of the 1880s. Initially, the sodalities' membership scarcely numbered a handful of students, but it gradually increased over the years. The improved social-political climate after the 1905 revolution aided the further growth and development of these organisations despite internal ideological friction regarding national and social issues.<sup>87</sup>

### **Revolution and war**

In 1905, following her defeat in the war with Japan, revolution swept the realm of the Russian empire. Russian students shed their initial patriotic considerations and turned against the Tsarist government. They played a prominent role in the revolutionary action, proclaiming a strike that transcended the university's sphere aimed at achieving more fundamental political reforms.<sup>88</sup> The revolution did not leave the Polish student movement unscathed either. On hearing of the events of 'Bloody Sunday' Polish students in Warsaw went on strike. Depictions of the Tsar were torn to pieces at mass rallies with demands for the legalisation of student associations, more autonomy and language rights were formulated. However the Tsarist regime did not concede, and this led to a boycott of the Russian school and university system. The school boycott was widely upheld and lasted for 10 years, but caused many Polish students to seek their education elsewhere. This resulted anew in an influx of students from the Russian partition to the universities of Lemberg and Kraków.<sup>89</sup>

After the 1905 revolution, conflict arose in the nationalist movement as the ZMP "Zet" could not console itself with the formal pro-Russian appeasement policy. Withdrawal of support for the Russian school boycott, led the ZMP "Zet" to sever its ties with the *Liga Narodowa* (National League) in 1909.<sup>90</sup> A year

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<sup>87</sup> S. Gajewski, *Chrześcijańskie Organizacje Akademickie w Polsce (1889-1939)* Rzeszów: Wydawnictwo WSP, 1993. pp. 18-20; Hillebrandt, *Polskie Organizacje Młodzieżowe* pp. 45-46.

<sup>88</sup> Feuer, *The Conflict of Generations* pp. 122-26; Kassow, *Students, Professors, and the State in Tsarist Russia* pp. 182-83.

<sup>89</sup> Hillebrandt, *Polskie Organizacje Młodzieżowe* 28-33; Z. Kmieć, 'Młodzież Warszawska w Rewolucji 1905-1907,' in B. Hillebrandt (ed.) *Postępowe Organizacje Młodzieżowe w Warszawie 1864-1976* Warszawa: PWN, 1988. pp. 31-34.

<sup>90</sup> Porter, 'Democracy and Discipline' pp. 384-92.

later another break-away occurred following differences in tactical assessments regarding the struggle for independence. This led a group of activists to set up a new independent organisation which took on the name of its periodical, *Zarzewie* (Hotbed). Although at first mirroring the organisational activity of the ZMP “Zet”, the *Zarzewie* group and other dissenters subsequently formed paramilitary organisations. In 1912 they were placed under the general command of Józef Piłsudski and constituted part of the Polish Legions that fought against Russia in the First World War. When independence was restored after the war the organisation disbanded itself perceiving its goals to have been achieved.<sup>91</sup>

In the Russian partition activism suffered because of the school boycott and the mass emigration of Polish students. The Warsaw *Spójnia* in effect ceased to exist, but some of its members at the University of Kraków set up a similar organisational structure and filled the void left by the demise of the *Ruch*.<sup>92</sup> It was an organisation harbouring adherents of different strands of socialism from revolutionary to reformist and internationalist to independence-oriented activists. The friction caused by these ideological divergences resulted in the organisation’s break-up around 1910. Those favouring a combination of nationalism with reformist socialism set up a new organisation, the *Promień*, named after the Lemberg published periodical and became affiliated with Piłsudski’s movement. The Kraków *Spójnia* henceforth took on a revolutionary internationalist position. Despite their reciprocal differences and antagonisms they were still at times able to co-operate as during the so-called *Zimmermanniada* in 1911, which was a protest campaign against the encroaching clerical influence at the University of Kraków. The *Spójnia* finally ceased to exist when war broke out in 1914.<sup>93</sup>

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century a movement for moral renaissance stimulated the foundation of several Catholic student organisations. To this purpose a *Katolickie Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Kształcącej się Młodzieży* (Catholic Society of Friends of Studying Youth), had been set up in secrecy in Warsaw in 1903. The relative liberalisation following the 1905 revolution permitted the

<sup>91</sup> Hillebrandt, *Polskie Organizacje Młodzieżowe* pp. 22-26; Nowacki (ed.) *ZET* pp. 99-108.

<sup>92</sup> M. Frančić, ‘Między Rewolucją a Wojną (1905-1914)’ in C. Bobińska (ed.) *Studia z Dziejów Młodzieży Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego od Oświecenia do Połowy XX Wieku. Tom I* Kraków: Wydawnictwo Jubileuszowe UJ, 1964. pp. 242.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.* pp.245-53; Hillebrandt, *Polskie Organizacje Młodzieżowe* pp. 33-39.

creation of an affiliate in Wilno. The organisation's main activity consisted of weekly 'ethical discussion circles', where religious views were applied to social issues, the philosophy being that to achieve the rebirth of the nation one had to start with one's own moral rebirth. Apart from its religious commitment, the programme did not differ much from that of the nationalists. In 1908 similar initiatives were undertaken in St Petersburg, Lemberg and Kraków. That same year activists from different circles met in Warsaw to discuss publishing a journal, but the authorities arrested the participants who were subsequently incarcerated. Finally, in 1909, the renaissance movement managed to publish a periodical, *Prąd* (Current), that appeared regularly until 1915 when the circumstances of the First World War inhibited further activity.<sup>94</sup>

The outbreak of the First World War in 1914 caused the student movement to decline rapidly as universities were closed and students were drafted into the respective armies of the partitioning powers. However, when German and Austrian forces advanced to occupy the former territory of the Congress Kingdom in 1915, the University and Polytechnic of Warsaw were reopened as Polish institutions. Although the war had decimated the ranks of the pre-war student organisations, this renewal of Polish higher education—which saw a threefold increase in student numbers—was accompanied by a revival of nationalist and socialist student political activity. In 1917 the events in Russia led to a rise of revolutionary sentiment among the student community. After police brutally dispersed a demonstration commemorating the May 3<sup>rd</sup> Constitution in 1917, a student strike broke out in Warsaw. The strikers called for the complete liberation of Polish higher education from foreign occupation. The authorities banned all organised student activity and answered the students' boycott of the university with the suspension of classes. By 1918 the student movement gained fresh momentum due on the one hand to the influx of youth returning from Russia and on the other hand to developments in the final stages of the war which raised the prospects of regaining independence.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Gajewski, *Chrześcijańskie Organizacje Akademickie* pp. 27-33.

<sup>95</sup> Hillebrandt, *Polskie Organizacje Młodzieżowe* pp. 54-57; Z. Kmieciak, 'Młodzież Warszawska i jej Organizacje w Latach 1908-1918,' in B. Hillebrandt (ed.) *Postępowe Organizacje Młodzieżowe w Warszawie 1864-1976* Warszawa: PWN, 1988. pp. 52-53.

## **Conclusion**

From its earliest appearance at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century until the end of the First World War the Polish student movement possessed some typical characteristics that persisted throughout the whole period. Since the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century students organised themselves, among other things, in mutual aid organisations thereby developing a far-reaching commitment towards their own milieu. However, practically every student generation since 1815 had seen some kind of organisational activity that could be interpreted as political in nature. This type of activity ranged from discussion clubs to political action groups, from secret societies to transnational organisations often showing strong democratic tendencies. What these activities had in common was that their protagonists—as young members of the intelligentsia—looked beyond their own milieu. During every uprising or war they contributed their energy to the general patriotic effort.

As the 20<sup>th</sup> century drew closer, a pluralism of political views emerged that coincided with social and political change in the former Polish lands. In general, students tended to be more radical than their elder contemporaries. Their views were more pure to principle and thus they were less inclined to settle for appeasement vis-à-vis the partitioning powers. This made them prone to undertake revolutionary action, but it also facilitated generational conflicts fuelled by political opposition to their elders. Moreover, the traditions of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Polish student movement would reverberate among the generations of students after 1918 in the newly independent Polish state as well as in the Polish People's Republic after the Second World War. As students went on to join the ranks of the intellectual élite they further enhanced the views and ideals that had once held sway in the student movement. Thus, the history of the Polish student movement in the 19<sup>th</sup> century constitutes a fundamental element in the formation of a Polish national identity.