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**POLISH SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL CENTRES ABROAD
IN THE YEARS 1831–1863**

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Abstract

In 1832, Europe witnessed a major movement of Poles in exile. Apart from military and political men, the émigrés counted substantial numbers of literary figures among their number. Their presence and activity ‘abroad’ gave rise to the unique phenomenon of a nation’s cultural focus existing beyond its historic homeland. This essay addresses the unusual story, in the process highlighting the extensive efforts made by the émigrés to research and construct Polish history.

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Emigration in France

‘The faith of every refugee should lie in the assurance and conviction that, like past emigrations, this one must return to its home country in victory and triumph.’¹

In spring 1832, almost 5,000 Polish political refugees arrived in France, settling in Paris especially. They included parliamentary representatives, civil servants, administrators, political activists, assorted young people and, more importantly, representatives of the literary world.²

A Polish emigration movement had already existed for some years and had a complicated political and organisational history. Many exiles, in fact, had given up hope of returning to their homeland and believed less and less in the support of foreign governments to help them achieve this. Likewise, a Polish literary movement already existed in France. Juliusz Słowacki had been one of the first Poles to arrive in London after the November Uprising. He had left his home country on 8 March 1831 and was in the English capital by 3 August, but he did not settle there. In a little over a month he moved to Paris.³ Joachim Lelewel made the journey to France as well, although in secret using the surname Neuman. And the list goes on: having experienced quarantine in Golub, and ‘impatiently sharpening his pen’, Maurycy Mochnacki along with his brother Kamil ‘hurried over the Sein’.⁴ They were joined in due course by, amongst others, Adam Mickiewicz, Stefan Witwicki and Antoni Gorecki.

Political figures making their way to Paris included Bonawentura Niemojowski, the last President of the National Government, who arrived there on 24 October 1831. He was accompanied by Teodor Morawski (the last Minister of Foreign Affairs), Andrzej Plichta (the secretary of the National Government) and Józef Kaszyc (a former member of parliament). In the

¹Projekty I. Domeyki względem założenia w Towarzystwie Litewskim i Ziemi Ruskich Wydziału Naukowego. Biblioteka Czartoryskich, rkps. 5356, pp. 171–77.

²Maria Straszewska, *Życie literackie Wielkiej Emigracji we Francji 1831–1840*. Warszawa 1971, pp.171–72.

³Jan Dąbrowski, *Polacy w Anglii i o Anglii*. Kraków 1962, p. 34.

⁴Kamil Kubicki, *W kręgu Karola Sienkiewicza (1793–1860)—przyjaciele i znajomi w kraju i na emigracji*. Tolkmicko 2010, pp. 121.

French capital they made contact with Karol Kniaziewicz and Ludwik Plater. With new people arriving every day, Leonard Chodźko, a member of French-Polish Committee, began organizing their accommodation and Hotel Rossignol—at the Croix des Petits Champs—became a particular centre for them.⁵ Exiled from Galicia, Karol Sienkiewicz arrived on 26 June 1834.

French authorities knew that contacts existed between the Polish émigrés and domestic left-wing political opposition circles, as well as freemasonry organizations, consequently the participation of Poles in the bloody riots of June 1832 was taken as a warning sign. These disturbances were fomented by Godfryd Cavaignac, a member of the *Société des Amis des Peuple* which aimed to unite the whole of France's political left-wing. The funeral of republican general Lamarque—an outspoken opponent of the Treaty of Vienna and member of the French-Polish Committee—served as a pretext for the disturbances.⁶ On 6 June, crowds gathered in different parts of the city to walk behind the coffin and demanded a place for him in the Pantheon. Lafayette, well-known for his pro-Polish views, took his place in the procession, as did Lelewel who represented the emigrants; Umiński and Sierawski were also present, marching in generals' uniforms. The riots that followed persuaded the French government that the Poles on their territory were dangerous elements and so they launched a series of repressive measures against them, the emigrants being made answerable to the French Minister of the Interior. They were dispersed around three departments and police surveillance of their activities was increased. Some particularly unwelcome individuals, such as Lelewel, were forced to leave France and Polish publications were subjected to heightened censorship.

This first period of the emigration lasted about two years. It laid the basis for the character and forms that literary life abroad would take as it supported Polish political rights and culture.

Paris through the eyes of Poles

'Paris never in its history had so many of our brilliant countrymen within its walls. All our best poets and writers, the most honoured citizens currently are in France, and the élite of these élites is in the capital.'⁷

⁵ Ludomir Gadon, *Wielka Emigracja w pierwszych latach po powstaniu listopadowym*. Paryż 1960, pp. 85–86. Ludomir Gadon, *Z życia Polaków we Francji: rzut oka na 50-letnie koleje Towarzystwa Historyczno-Literackiego w Paryżu 1832–1882*. Paryż 1883.

⁶ Maria Straszewska, *Życie literackie Wielkiej Emigracji we Francji 1831–1840*, Warszawa 1971, pp. 80.

⁷ *Ibidem*, pp.83. For Lelewel see: Bogusław Cygler, *Działalność polityczno-społeczna Joachima Lelewela w latach 1831-1861*. Gdańsk 1969. Stefan Kieniewicz, *Samotnik brukselski. Opowieść o Joachimie Lelewelu*. Warszawa

Paris itself did not make a favourable impression on many Polish writers. They felt lonely and alienated from the social mainstream. They watched without admiration as the *Arc de Triomphe* was built—the monument to thousands of Napoleon’s casualties, many of whom had Polish surnames, such as General Dąbrowski and Prince Józef Antoni Poniatowski, not to say ordinary men named after cities such as Gdańsk, Ostrołęka and Pułtusk.

Unaccustomed to living in big cities, the émigrés crowded into narrow streets. True, the Romanesque Abbey of Saint-Germain held the tomb of Ojkuish King Jan Kazimierz and served as a place of prayer and nationalist gathering, but more typically they were irritated by the noise of busy trading districts and market places, not to say shocked by the night-life evident on the grand boulevards. On many occasions Adam Mickiewicz expressed his antipathy not only to France, but to Paris in particular.⁸ To Juliusz Słowacki, Paris seemed hideous. Maurycy Mochacki could never get used to the city and the motley society of Louis Philip.⁹

Nevertheless this ‘boiling, noisy and crazy Babylon’, was a place of hope.¹⁰ In its alien surroundings the émigrés at least found the freedom of speech they so badly needed, even if their literary and scholarly circles only met in a relatively small number of houses.¹¹

The first scientific Polish institutions in Paris

The Lithuanian Society was the first scientific organization to be established. Created at the beginning of December 1831, after three months it changed its name to the Society for Lithuanian and Russian Territory.¹² Emigrants from these regions were important because they had decided to reject the Tsar’s amnesty. It was created by two young brothers, Cezary and Władysław Broel-Platerowie, who were descended from an aristocratic family which was well-known in Lithuania. Joachim Lelewel was another co-founder of the organization. The society looked to the creation of political unity between Lithuania and Russia. It aimed at convincing

1960. Kamil Kubicki, *W kręgu Karola Sienkiewicza (1796–1860)—przyjaciele w kraju i na emigracji*. Tolknicko 2010, pp. 179–84.

⁸ Maria Straszewska, *Życie literackie Wielkiej Emigracji we Francji 1831–1840*. Warszawa 1971, pp. 85. For Mickiewicz see: Zbigniew Sudolski Z, *Mickiewicz Opowieść biograficzna*. Warszawa 1997, *Panny Szymanowskie i ich losy*. Warszawa 1982.

⁹ *Korespondencja Juliusza Słowackiego*, opracowanie Eugeniusz Sawrynowicz, t.1 i 2, Wrocław 1962.

¹⁰ Maria Straszewska, *Życie literackie*. pp. 86.

¹¹ Kamil Kubicki, *W kręgu Karola Sienkiewicza*. pp. 121.

¹² B. Pawełko-Czajka, *Proces powstawania świadomości politycznej społeczności obywatelskiej dawnego Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego*. [w] *Wrocławskie Studia Erazmiańskie. Zeszyty Studenckie*. Wrocław 2009, p. 4.

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‘foreigners’ of this centuries’ old union, and was directed against the Treaty of Vienna. Its slogan ‘Unity-Entirety-Independence’ also appeared on many of the pamphlets printed by emigrants, next to a coat of arms depicting the Polish eagle and Lithuanian chaser symbolizing unification. The society embraced a membership of Lithuanians, Russians, Volhynians and Podolians. Juliusz Słowacki and Adam Mickiewicz joined it too, often participating in its gatherings. Its honorary members included Lafayette, Jullien de Paris, Nepomucen Lemercier, and Ludwig Lamaitre.

Literary figures were active in almost in every newly-created society with a cultural and propaganda purpose. In Paris, on 24 December 1831, the Scientific Society of Polish Refugees was established by Joachim Lelewel.¹³ Lelewel himself was a mixture of romantic contrasts: in political affairs he exhibited a furious temper, but in scholarly and literary life he could display considerable patience. The Society in fact continued work which had been started in Paris before 1830. It sought to promote Polish culture in the West and to acquaint Europe with Polish history, politics and literature by translating key texts. Lelewel’s project included lists of possible pieces for translation, taking in literature, historical poetry, descriptive and comic poetry, romances, drama and theatrical works as well as fables and speeches. It followed that the society was divided into separate sections according to the language of the various translations to be produced. Its membership consisted of over thirty emigrants, including Chodźko, Podczaszyński and Czyński, not to say Mickiewicz, Malczewski, Goszczyński, plus Trembecki, Zabłocki, Krasicki, Bogusławski and Fredro. Although the society was considered most important at the time, unfortunately some of its most active members became dislocated from its activities. This reality, plus the lack of adequate funding, meant that eventually it failed.

The Friends of Progress Society was rather different. It was a left-wing organisation which had a lot in common with the Society of Polish Refugees. It had political-scientific and educational aims. Its president, Jan Czyński, was close to Lelewel and was well known for his journalism from the time of the Uprising. Although the society outlined an ambitious program for itself and published a manifesto, it never formed an effective management committee. The Slavic Society was formed in 1835 by Bogdan Zaleski, Adam Mickiewicz and Karol Wodziński but did not play a significant role in the émigré community.

¹³ Danuta Rederowa, *Polski emigracyjny ośrodek naukowy we Francji w latach 1831–1872*. Wrocław 1972, pp. 81–82.

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More effective at organization and collecting money were people from the circle around Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski. He was the last President of the National Government and supported the Polish Literary Society which was established on 29 April 1832.¹⁴ Its founders included a number of celebrities and were drawn from the right-wing of politics as well as the liberal centre. Members of this group were also found among the management of the Polish Emigration's Committee, led by General Józef Dwernicki.¹⁵ General Józef Bem also was involved here, as were Jan Umiński, Ludwik Plater and Teodor Morawski. The Literary Society acted as a forum for the political and cultural representation of the Polish emigration. Perhaps surprisingly in this light, during the first two years of its activity its proceedings were carried out in French. Under pressure from some members, however, a change was made and session subsequently used both French and Polish. The Society in fact undertook almost a diplomatic role, since it became more or less a propaganda office distributing, for the first time, documentation and information. It expanded its activities in 1838 when it established the Library which still exists in Paris today. Its first real manager was Karol Sienkiewicz.

The Society for the Support of Science was active in the provinces organizing various courses and military schools. The Society had a charter which defined its purpose as: 'collecting and publishing materials concerning to the history of the Polish Kingdom and its present situation'. Naturally it combined political aims with literary activity. The first session of the Society took place on 3 May 1832 and suggested that it would represent the nationwide aims expressed in the Act of the Constitution. 3 May was also recognized as a national holiday.

All of these projects collapsed, however, when their leaders finally were expelled from Paris. The only exception was the Literary Society which reorganized itself repeatedly and so 'outlived' all the other associations.

Emigration in England

Polish refugees encountered a similar atmosphere in England to the one they found in Paris. The first Poles who landed in Hull were two officers from General Antoni Giełgud's corps. They arrived at the end of September 1831 after initial internment in Prussia. The Poles who arrived from Kłajpeda received an hospitable welcome from the commanding officer of the local garrison

¹⁴ Sławomir Kalembka, *Towarzystwo Demokratyczne Polskie w latach 1832–1846*. Poznań 1866, p. 12.

¹⁵ *Zakłady polskie na wychodźstwie*. Rocznik Towarzystwa Historyczno-Literackiego w Paryżu. 1866, pp. 44.

who honored them with a show of his troop's drill.¹⁶ A small group of Poles was already living by the Thames, among them Julian U. Niemcewicz and Walerian Krasiński who were acting as a diplomatic mission. In October 1831 Aleksander Waleski, and Ludwik Jelski (the former president of the Polish Bank) joined them. Just before Christmas Eve, the former President of the National Government, Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski, together with his secretary Karol Sienkiewicz, arrived in London. In January 1832, lieutenant Józef Napoleon Czapski also arrived from Gdańsk.

Great Britain was, however, much less attractive than France for the Polish emigration. This was partly for reasons of language, but also culture and historical traditions. Many emigrants felt more at home in Switzerland and Belgium than England. Despite England's more liberal treatment of refugees, they only ventured across the English Channel if they missed opportunities to stay in other countries.

Dislocation of the emigrants in England

London and Portsmouth were the two largest urban centres where Poles could be found. London was attractive because of its proximity to the continent and the lack of administrative limits on refugees' stay—something which was obligatory in Paris and which caused many to leave France for England eventually.¹⁷ At the end of 1832, the Polish community in London numbered at least fourteen people. Two years later, over thirty Poles attended the anniversary celebration of the November Uprising. By the summer of 1834 there were over 200 Polish exiles in the English capital.

After the Springtime of Nations, substantial numbers of new emigrants arrived on the banks of the Thames. In 1849, the main concentrations of Poles could be found in east London, for example Whitechapel, Bethnal Green and Spitalfields. These poor working-class corners of London attracted exiles not only thanks to their cheap lodgings, but also with the promise of work in local factories. The areas appealed particularly to economic migrants from Polish territories—Poles and Jews alike. The group, now some two and a half thousand strong, was the second largest community of Polish exiles in Europe. At the time, its exodus was regarded as something unexpected and even novel—although in fact there had been earlier historical examples of

¹⁶ Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz, *Pamiętniki z roku 1830–1831*. Warszawa 1924, t.1, pp. 77–78

¹⁷ Krzysztof Marchlewicz, *Wielka Emigracja na Wyspach Brytyjskich (1831–1863)*. Poznań 2008, pp. 17–19.

refugees fleeing to the British Isles to escape persecution in mainland Europe (for example the Huguenots).¹⁸

The first Polish scientific centres in England

The majority of achievements associated with Polish cultural and scientific organizations arose from the émigré community based in France. Nevertheless, the Poles living in Britain also created a full and interesting scientific and artistic life. As a measure of its possibilities, it had a lot in common with the activities found in France. In spring 1834, Poles in London formed The Society of Enlightenment.¹⁹ Its manifesto declared a desire to work and learn in order not to be a burden on the host population, adding that in the future it hoped to ‘bring to our countrymen ways of increasing their fortune’. Stanisław Worcell was its first president. In summer 1834, following a dispute in the Society, Worcell and Pułaski left, but the organization itself endured. It was divided into three sections (industrial, military and literary) with the leadership of each sharing its knowledge with the wider membership. The Society also offered free foreign language lessons to children of impoverished British families, an initiative undertaken in recognition of England’s welcome.²⁰ Unfortunately the Society always had problems getting teachers and paying for accommodation; eventually its activity ended in January 1838.

The Society of Polish Brothers was set up in London in the 1850s, as was the Society for the Scientific Support of Polish Emigrants’ Children (April 1852). The leadership of the latter included people involved in the Hôtel Lambert salon based in Paris, most notably Piotr Falkenhagen-Zaleski, along with his wife, Maria, Karol Szulczewski, Giełgud and Terlecki. The Society hoped to support children going to school in London’s West End and the City, but had only limited success on account of limited resources. It only managed to assist the very poorest emigrants’ children. Its financial difficulties meant that the organisation only lasted a few years.

The London Historical Society was another initiative. Its educational and academic aims were regarded as essential by its élitist members, and the organisation became active popularizing Polish history. It was founded on 27 August 1839, its first president being Krystyn Lach Szyrma,

¹⁸ Krzysztof Marchlewicz, *wielka Emigrac.* pp.25. Table 1. Number and migration movements of Polish political exiles to and from United Kingdom 1831–1861.

¹⁹ M. Tyrowicz, *Towarzystwo Demokratyczne Polskie 1832–1863: przywódcy i kadry członkowskie: przewodnik bibliograficzny.* Warszawa 1964, pp. 607

²⁰ Ustawa TWO, Londyn 29 VI 1834, Biblioteka Polska w Paryżu, rkps 603, ss.8; *Rules of the Polish Association of Mutual Instructin for the Regulation of Pupils attending their gratuitous Lectures.* Londyn 1835, pp. 1–2.

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and stated that it was a branch of the Paris Historical Department. Leonard Niedźwiecki was its secretary, and additional founding members included Stanisław Poncjaj Brzeziński, Ignacy Szczepanowski and Władysław Zamoyski²¹—all of whom made significant financial contributions to its work. Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski was an honorary patron, as was Lord Dudley Stuart. The literary society Friends of Poland gave the organisation access to its accommodation and supported its work with subsidies.²² As of 1843, the organisation's president, who chaired meetings and developed external contacts, received extensive rights, including the capacity to invite new members to join. In practice, Krystyn Lach Szyrma became president for life. The London Historical Society had a clear political overtone and its terms of reference were the same as those evident in Hôtel Lambert. It busied itself with a massive effort to collect and publish material about Polish history. Danuta Rederowa has estimated that in the period 1839–59 its members handed over to the Historical Department and to the Historical and Literary Society over five thousand extracts from British Archives.²³ Materials kept until now in the Polish Library in Paris were gathered from private and public sources, including Polish maps found in the British Museum and sundry pieces connected with the Polish causes from Bute House Library, Petersham. A large number of documents were also located in the national archives, including the correspondence of British diplomats based in Warsaw, Berlin, St. Petersburg, Vienna and Drezno. Additional materials were found in libraries in Lambeth, Manchester, Ipswich and Jersey.

This highlights the considerable popularity of historical research for those in exile from their homeland. Very many emigrants indeed looked to fulfil their academic aspirations in specifically this scholarly area; and even if the Polish emigration in England was not, in the final analysis, as productive as its counter-part in Paris, this was simply because more refugees found shelter on the banks of the Seine than on the banks of the Thames. Nonetheless, it is quite clear that following the failure of the November Uprising, many Polish refugees decided to serve their homeland by building scientific institutions on foreign soil. Responding to the complete annihilation of scholarly life in Poland, they were hoping to promote their national spirit which,

²¹ Władysław Zamoyski, *Jeneral Zamoyski 1803–1863*. t.1, Poznań 1910. Jadwiga Zamoyska, *Wspomnienia*, wstęp i opracowanie M. Czapska. Londyn 1961.

²² Krzysztof Marchlewicz, *Wielka Emigracja na Wyspach Brytyjskich (1831–1863)*. Poznań 2008, pp.142–43.

²³ Danuta Rederowa, *Polski emigracyjny ośrodek naukowy we Francji w latach 1831–1872*. Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków 1972, p.131.

by this point, they regarded as in danger. Faithful to their aims, they wanted to keep the idea of Poland and the Polish nation alive until better conditions returned to their homeland. The Historical and Literary Society and the Polish Library—both based in Paris—still exist today.²⁴

About the author

In 2009, Kamil Kubicki graduated from his doctoral studies at the University of Maria Curie-Skłodowska, Lublin. His research interests concern the history of great emigration of the 19th 20th centuries, including the fates of Poles in exile. His e-mail address is kamilkubicki@interia.pl.

²⁴ Kamil Kubicki, *W kręgu Karola Sienkiewicz*. pp.149–150. The Literary Society transformed itself into the Historical and Literary Society in 1852.