

200 years of the University of Warsaw. Events, symbols and students

200 años de la Universidad de Varsovia Eventos, símbolos y estudiantes

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The Museum of the University of Warsaw

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.20318/cian.2016.3440>

Recibido: 25/05/2016
Aceptado: 17/11/2016

Abstract: The following article displays a brief history of the University of Warsaw. Its history commenced officially in 1816, when Tsar Alexander I stipulated the University foundation decree. Although initially the structure was rather minor and consisted of only five faculties, it performed a great role in development of Polish culture, art and science. Within its walls the virtuoso pianist, Frederic Chopin received an excellent education and many distinguished professors, including Ludwik Osinski and Fryderyk Skarbek delivered lectures. The University was located in one of the most beautiful parts of the city, in place of a former 17th century royal residence. Following examples of other European schools, the University of Warsaw has been very soon given an emblem, a banner, the insignia, and its authorities and professors were to wear academic robes. The University was closed down for the first time after the fall of the 1831 Uprising. It was

Resumen: El artículo expone una breve historia de la Universidad de Varsovia. La historia de la universidad comienza oficialmente en 1816, cuando su acta fundacional fue firmada por el zar Alejandro I en San Petersburgo. Aunque al principio la universidad era pequeña y sólo la constutúan cinco facultades, ha jugado un gran papel en el desarrollo de la cultura polaca, el arte y la ciencia. Muchos profesores distinguidos dieron conferencias dentro de sus paredes, entre otros Ludwik Osinski y Fryderyk Skarbek, y el graduado más famoso fue un virtuoso del piano Frederic Chopin. La escuela se situó en los edificios de una antigua residencia real del siglo XVII, en una de las zonas más bellas de la capital polaca. Al igual que en otras universidades europeas, recibió rápidamente un emblema, insignia y bandera, y para las autoridades y profesores se elaboró indumentaria. La universidad cerró por primera vez después de la

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later on, in 1862, reactivated for seven years under the name of the Main School. After just a short period of existence, the Polish institution was replaced by a Russian-language Imperial University and The University of Warsaw was not revived until 1915. As evidenced by the text, the subsequent years were a difficult period for the University, as it was dominated by conflicts between the Polish people and German invaders during the First World War and afterwards by the outbreak of the Polish-Bolshevik War in 1918, in which many students were involved. The institution started properly operating again in 1921. In the interwar period a number of distinguished scholars worked for the University, i.e. Kazimierz Michalowski, an archaeologist and Waclaw Sierpinski, a mathematician. The development of the University was impeded once again by the outbreak of the Second World War. Unfortunately, during that time many famous Polish professors were killed and some university buildings turned to rubble. Currently, the University of Warsaw is the largest academic institution in Poland with nearly 45 thousand students in the academic year of 2015/2016. This year, the institution celebrates its bicentenary under the slogan "Two centuries, a good beginning." This is also the idea the University of Warsaw intends to follow in the near future.

Keywords: University of Warsaw, Poland, Frederic Chopin, anniversary, insignia, professors, students

caída del levantamiento por la independencia en 1831. Sin embargo, volvió a abrir sus puertas en 1862 durante siete años, con el nombre de Escuela Central. El ruso se estableció como la lengua en la Universidad Imperial después de este corto período de tiempo. La Universidad polaca volvió a revivir como tal a partir de 1915. El autor del texto muestra que los años de sus operaciones no fueron los más fáciles, porque estaban sometidos por el conflicto entre los polacos y el invasor alemán durante la Primera Guerra Mundial, y más tarde por el estallido de la guerra polaco-bolchevique en 1918., en la que intervinieron muchos estudiantes. La escuela comenzó a funcionar correctamente de nuevo a partir de 1921. Evidencias de esto fueron los logros científicos del arqueólogo Kazimierz Michalowski y del matemático Waclaw Sierpinski. El desarrollo de la universidad fué interrumpido una vez más por el estallido de la Segunda Guerra Mundial en 1939, en la que muchos profesores polacos famosos murieron y edificios universitarios fueron destruidos. En la actualidad, la Universidad de Varsovia es la institución académica más grande de Polonia. Casi 45.000 estudiantes se matricularon en el año académico de 2015/2016. Este año también se celebra el aniversario de su bicentenario bajo el lema "Dos siglos, un buen comienzo." La universidad tiene la intención de seguir este lema en un futuro próximo.

Palabras clave: Universidad de Varsovia, Polonia, Frederic Chopin, aniversario, insignia, profesores, estudiantes.

On the 19th of November the University of Warsaw will be celebrating its 200th birthday. This bicentenary gives us an opportunity to present a short history of this academic institution, which was founded almost at the same time as the University of Humboldt in Berlin (1810), University of Oslo (1811), University of Zürich (1833) and University of London (1836). However, unlike all these renowned universities, its past has been marked by numerous turbulent events associated with the complicated history of Poland in the 19th and 20th centuries.

The University of Warsaw was established on 19 November 1816 by Tsar of Russia Alexander I, who was also the King of Poland at that time. The initiative to set up a University in the capital of the Polish Kingdom came from

two outstanding rationalist thinkers of the Age of Enlightenment - Stanisław Kostka-Potocki (the Minister of Public Enlightenment) and Stanisław Staszic (President of the Society of Friends of Learning)¹. They have succeeded in creating an idea which had been very popular already in the second half of the 18th century, when Bishop Andrzej Stanisław Załuski and his brother Józef Andrzej Załuski had planned to found a University in the capital of Poland, which was to be called *Universitas Ponatoviana*². Unfortunately, the Partition of Poland in 1795 foiled all these intentions.

The Royal University of Warsaw, so called in the early time, was located in one of the most beautiful parts of the city, at Krakowskie Przedmieście Street, on the Vistula river escarpment, in a place, where in the seventeenth century kings from the Vasa Dynasty resided³ and later, in the second half of the 18th century, Polish monarch Stanisław August Poniatowski founded the School of Chivalry⁴. Initially, the University consisted of five faculties: Theology, Law and Administration, Medicine, Philosophy as well as Sciences and Fine Arts. From the beginning the University has been a driving force behind the development of the Polish science, art and literature. The first appointed rector was priest Wojciech Anselm Szweykowski, who served as the supervisor of the University up to 1831. This choice was successful since he proved to be able to alleviate disputes between the academic community and the Russian government.

¹ The Kingdom of Poland, commonly called the Congress Kingdom, was born out of the Duchy of Warsaw and proclaimed in Warsaw on the 20th July 1815. The Russian tsar became the Polish king and the highest office in the Kingdom belonged formally to viceroy general Józef Zającek. However, the most prominent figure on Polish soil was the Grand Duke Constantine, the tsar's brother, placed in command of the Polish army; Norman Davies, *God's playground: a history of Poland*, vol. 2, 1795 to the present (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 306-333.

² The idea to establish an institution of higher education in Warsaw evolved well before the Napoleonic era. This topic is discussed in an anonymous document kept now in the Stafanyk Library in Lviv *Projekt do ufundowania Universitatis Generalis, ułożony w 1772 roku* [Project for founding a University, conceived in 1772]. The University of Warsaw also had two very important antecedents in the times of the Duchy of Warsaw. The School of Law and the School of Medicine, both instituted during the Napoleonic era, were opened in 1808 and 1809 respectively; Jerzy Miziołek, *The University of Warsaw. History and traditions* (Warsaw: The Museum of the University of Warsaw, 2015), 32-34.

³ Jolanta Putkowska, *Pałac Kazimierzowski*, in *Art et Educatio. Kultura Artystyczna Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego*, ed. J. Miziołek (Warszawa: Uniwersytet Warszawski, 2003), 205-209.

⁴ The School of Chivalry (known also as the Nobles' Academy of the Corps of Cadets), founded by Stanisław August Poniatowski was the first educational institution of its kind in the history of Poland. Most famous graduates included: Tadeusz Kościuszko and Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz, Miziołek, *The University of Warsaw*, 34-43.

The Polish novelist and graduate of the University Aleksander Jełowicki described him in the following words:

The University's buffer against the cruelty and perverseness was its supervisor [of Grand Duke Constantine], the Reverend Szweykowski, who could never be praised enough, he stood guard against and forestalled every danger that threatened the students and the University itself⁵.

The solemn inauguration of the University took place on 14 May 1818 in the heart of Warsaw, in the Church of the Holy Cross. The ceremony was undoubtedly spectacular, because for the first time in its history, the city's inhabitants had an occasion to admire the university procession, which went from the most important university building – the Kazimierzowski Palace to the church. After the mass celebrated by bishop Franciszek Malczewski, several prominent figures (Bishop Adam Prażmowski, rector Szweykowski and minister Potocki) gave solemn speeches. Especially, the words of the latter long remained in the memory of the audience:

The University towers over other school like the cedars of Lebanon over other trees, surpassing them in that there pupils are educated to become men, and here, men turn into citizens; there, young people learn and here they become learned [...]. In the past, Poland, to whom in her days of glory nothing could be foreign that was useful and excellent, used to have two such institutions. The ancient university of Kraków, a monument to the surpassing wisdom of King Kazimierz the Great and the University of Vilnius, a creation of the brave and learned Stefan, who, had he been granted more years of life, would surely have shown the world what Poland could have been under a monarch such as he. But, as these two colleges have been cut off from us, the One who re-creates everything for Poles, beginning with their lost name, the One who is no stranger to any kind of fame, following in the footsteps of those two great kings has established the University of Warsaw, so that Poland shall not lack any kind of benefit, ornament and glory⁶.

Ten years later, Antoni Brodowski, a talented Polish artist and professor of painting at the University, painted a canvas entitled *Tsar and King Alexander Conferring the Document Founding the University of Warsaw*. This painting was to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the inauguration of the University. Although the original piece of art has not survived, it is known from an oil sketch in the National Museum in Poznań and several 19th century prints. One of such graphics is kept in the Museum of the University of

⁵ Aleksander Jełowicki, *Moje wspomnienia* (Warszawa: Pax, 1970), 64.

⁶ *Obchod uroczystej inauguracji Uniwersytetu Królewsko-Warszawskiego*, (Warszawa: Drukarnia J.C.K. Mości Rządowèy, 1818), trans. in Miziołek, *The University of Warsaw*, 52-53.

Warsaw. Alexander I is seen handing in a rolled document to the first rector of the University – Wojciech Szweykowski. This event is witnessed by the “the founding fathers of the University” Potocki and Staszic (both on the right) and five deans depicted on the left. The painter presented here a symbolic but not realistic scene. There are a few reasons for such an interpretation. Firstly, the tsar signed the document of foundation of the *Alma Mater Varsoviensis* in 1816 in St. Petersburg. Secondly, that year Szweykowski was not rector of the University yet. Thirdly, the painted scene cannot be a “mirror reflection” from the inauguration either, because Alexander I had visited Warsaw a few weeks before it. And finally, rectors of the University started wearing gowns and chains only in 1821.

The issue of ceremonial dress and insignia was extensively debated at the meetings of the University Senate at the end of the second and third decades of the 19th century. It was decided that professorial gowns were to be worn within the University walls during the lectures and on solemn occasions. The rectorial gown was sapphire with white facing while that of the deans were black with sapphire facing. The uniforms –reminiscent of those worn by the military officers– were used by the academic representatives only outside the University. Such an attire was also provided to the students⁷. The first suit of chains was executed by the city’s jewellers. According to the historical sources, the rectorial chain was gold, triple, twisted, with elongated links, fastened with an eagle-shaped buckles⁸. The central element consisted of two golden palms and silver laurel surrounded by five stars. The chains worn by the deans were less decorative, also made of gold, double, without eagle-shaped buckles and with one star only on the main link. Most probably, in the times of the Royal University in Warsaw the rectorial scepters did not exist.

After the inauguration of the University, special medals were struck (in total 238 medals) to commemorate the establishment of the *Alma Mater*. After long disputes held at the Faculty of Sciences and Fine Arts it was decided that the medals were to be decorated with the busts of Tsar Alexander and Minerva, facing each other, and bear a short text CAESARE FELIX. The gold medals were conferred, for example, on the tsar, duke Constantine and minister Potocki, while the silver ones were delivered to many European universities⁹. The Museum of the University of Warsaw has recently tried to

⁷ Józef Bieliński, *Królewski Uniwersytet Warszawski (1816-1831)*, vol. 1, (Warszawa: Skład Główny w Księgarni E. Wende i Ska, 1907), 406-417.

⁸ Bieliński, *Królewski Uniwersytet Warszawski*, 404-405.

⁹ Bieliński, *Królewski Uniwersytet Warszawski*, 398-399.

find out where they could still be preserved. Positive answers came from the University of Humboldt in Berlin and University of Göttingen¹⁰.

The University was officially opened with a short delay because extra time was needed to gather the academic staff and adapt buildings for scientific purposes. Apart from the former royal residence – the Kazimierzowski Palace, two more buildings were erected in front of it in the years 1815-1816 (both designed by Jakub Kubicki). The first one was used by the Government Commission for Religious Denominations and Public Enlightenment, while the other housed the apartments of the Rector, professors and the Chopin family. To the north of the Palace there was the Chemistry Building and to the south – the Mineralogy Building. Both were occupied not only by auditoriums but also by the cabinets. In the following years, two more classical buildings were added to the campus: the Building of Fine Arts (now the Faculty of History) and the Auditorium Pavilion (currently remodelled, later the Faculty of Journalism and Political Sciences). The construction works finally finished at the University around the year 1822. In the heart of Warsaw a beautiful campus was created, designed in classical style, which –due to its location and function– could be called the Parnas Hill.

Before the inauguration, the university emblem had been designed, too. It presented the traditional Polish Eagle with a crown, with outspread wings, holding a palm branch in the talons of its left leg and a laurel branch in the talons of its right leg; they symbolized patience and reward respectively. Additionally, the eagle was surrounded by five stars, denoting the five academic faculties. The University also had a representative banner which was executed in 1826. It was blue with the image of Saint John Cantius (painted by Antoni Blank, a university professor)¹¹. This banner was used for the first time during the funeral procession in honor of Tsar Alexander I, while Saint John Cantius became also the university patron¹².

As it was mentioned before, the University consisted of five faculties. Apart from these, the University had over twenty scientific cabinets. The most spectacular and fascinating were the Mineralogical Cabinet with some stone exhibits gifted to the University by Alexander I, Zoological Cabinet with some examples of animals from around the world and some Egyptian

¹⁰ There has been preserved at the University of Freiburg document informing about delivery of the medal from Warsaw to Freiburg in 1820; Universitätsarchiv Freiburg A 75/50.

¹¹ The banner was destroyed during World War II, a photo of this flag can be found in: „Tygodnik Ilustrowany“, 23, June 2, 1916, 271.

¹² Miziołek, *The University of Warsaw*, 51-52.

mummies, and the Cabinet with a plaster cast collection. The last one was located in the Columned Hall in the Building of Fine Arts. On entering the collection, visitors found themselves among the most famous sculptural images of ancient art such as those of the Fighting Gladiator, the Belvedere Apollo, the Dying Gaul and the Medici Venus¹³. The Columned Hall still exists in its original form but at the moment it has only with just over ten statues. The Faculty of History regularly occasionally organizes scientific conferences and the Museum of the University of Warsaw holds some temporary exhibitions there. Apart from the cabinets, on the University grounds were opened also the Botanical Garden (1811) with an impressive collection of plants and the Astronomical Observatory (1825) with some astronomical instruments bought in Munich and Paris¹⁴.

All these collections could have been visited by the most famous student of the University – Fryderyk Chopin¹⁵. His family lived in one of the pavilions on the campus between the years 1817-1827, so the young composer spent his early years among the students. At the age of sixteen he became a student of the Main School of Music, which was an integral part of the University. Here, among the professors and artists, his musical talent rapidly developed. In the 1820s and 1830s he witnessed the creation of the University campus, construction of several buildings and could see some art exhibitions¹⁶. Chopin's letters give us today a clear picture of his early days at the University. In a letter addressed to his closest friend Jan Białobłocki, dated 2 November 1826, he wrote:

¹³ Hubert Kowalski, *The history of regal and university collection of plaster casts in Warsaw, Plaster Casts of the Works of Art. History of Collections. Conservation. Exhibition. Practice*, ed. Wojciech Marcinkowski and Tomasz Zaucha, (Kraków: Muzeum Narodowe, 2010), 37–51; Jerzy Miziołek and Hubert Kowalski, *Fidiasz, Michał Anioł i inni*, (Warszawa: Muzeum Łazienki Królewskie, 2012).

¹⁴ Bieliński, *Królewski Uniwersytet Warszawski*, 492-493, 496-497.

¹⁵ More about Chopin at the University of Warsaw in: Jerzy Miziołek and Hubert Kowalski, *Chopin among artists and scholars*, (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2010); Another well-known student was Wiktor Szokalski – “the father” of the Polish ophthalmology. He studied at the University between the years 1828-1831 and left very interesting written memories from this period; Wiktor Feliks Szokalski, *Wspomnienia z przeszłości*, vol. 1, (Wilno: Księgarnia Stowarzyszenia Nauczycielstwa Polskiego, 1921).

¹⁶ At the University of Warsaw exhibitions of fine arts were organized regularly from 1819 on. The most talented artists received special medals struck for these occasions. In the National Museum of Warsaw there is a painting executed by Wincenty Kasprzycki, entitled *View of Fine Arts exhibition held in Warsaw in 1828*, which is a unique iconographic document of such an event. More on this topic in: Miziołek and Kowalski, *Chopin*, 187-194.

Know by this, my dear friend, that I no longer go to the Lycée, since it would be folly to be forced to sit six hours a day [...] when one can learn something quite different over this year. So finally, I am attending [Józef] Elsner's class on strict counterpoint six hours a week; I also attend lecture by [Kazimierz] Brodziński, [Feliks] Bentkowski and others where the topics are in any way connected with music¹⁷.

The professors mentioned above by Chopin belonged to the „stars“ of this institution and they were mainly Polish. Kazimierz Brodziński was a lecturer of literature whereas Feliks Bentkowski taught history. Furthermore, the lectures of professor of economics Fryderyk Skarbek and professor Ludwik Osiński both enjoyed great popularity among students. Osiński held public classes every week on Saturday afternoons. The nineteenth century researcher of Polish history and culture Kazimierz Wójcicki described him:

Ludwik Osiński used to lecture at the University for two hours, teaching the course of general literature. During those lectures, the courtyard of the University was often full of carriages and other conveyances. Osiński's excellent elocution attracted everyone so much that at the appointed hour even the most ardent Romantisc... came running to the University¹⁸.

However, there were also some foreign scholars such as Czech sculptor Paweł Maliński who made many reliefs not only at the University but also in Warsaw; Italian connoisseur of literature and Roman antiquities Sebastiano Ciampi and August Ernst Zinserling, a German professor who lectured on literature, and also on archeology.

Until 1830 year a total of 1113 Bachelor's or Master's diplomas were awarded to the students¹⁹. On the other hand, only 13 PhD diplomas were awarded to the young researchers. The main reason for such a small number of these qualifications was that there were no attractive career prospects for PhD holders. Also, the defence of the thesis in Latin proved to be a major obstacle for many students.

¹⁷ Fryderyk Chopin, *Korespondencja Fryderyka Chopina*, ed. Bronisław E. Sydow, vol. 1, (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1955), 73; trans. from Miziołek, *The University of Warsaw*, 96; Warsaw Lycée was the most prestigious secondary school in the city, operating between 1804-1831. After graduation many of its pupils became students of the University; Adam Tyszkiewicz, „Szkola Chopina i Kolberga, czyli Liceum Warszawskie”, *Stolica* 2269, (2014): 37-41.

¹⁸ Kazimierz W. Wójcicki, *Pamiętniki dziecka Warszawy i inne wspomnienia*, ed. Zofia Lewi-wówna, vol. 1, (Warszawa: Państwowy Insyytut Wydawniczy, 1974), 352.

¹⁹ *Przyjaciel Ludu*, 45, May 10, 1845, 364.

The Royal University of Warsaw existed only until 1831. Its fate was determined after the defeat of the November Uprising, in which many students and professors took part²⁰. By order of Tsar Nicholas I the University was eventually closed. Most of its collections were taken to Saint Petersburg and the academic insignia were recast in the Warsaw Mint²¹.

Despite many extremely difficult moments in its history, the *Alma Mater Varsoviensis* has always been reborn like a phoenix from the ashes. It was the case in 1862, when the Main School was established in Warsaw²². Approximately 3500 people studied there at four faculties (Law and Administration, Medicine, Philosophy and History, Mathematics and Natural Sciences). Many of them greatly influenced the face of the Polish science and culture, and prepared the ground for rebirth of an independent Poland. The University produced linguists, novelists and researchers recognized in the whole world today: Henryk Sienkiewicz, Nobel Prize winner in the category of literature for his book *Quo Vadis*, famous Polish positivist writer Boleslaw Prus and naturalist and traveller Benedykt Dybowski. Graduates of the Main School and its charismatic rector Józef Mianowski proclaimed the slogan 'Knowledge is power'. Thanks to their hard work, national consciousness was upheld in the most difficult period of the Russian occupation. The Main School was unfortunately closed seven years after its foundation²³. Over the next forty six years the Imperial University of Warsaw worked in the Mazovia region²⁴. Although this Russian institution was a tool to "russify" Polish society in all aspects (with the Russian language of instruction and the authorities coming from the East), it managed to educate many famous scholars like historian Władysław Konopczyński, mathematician Waław Sierpiński, and lawyer

²⁰ The November Uprising was an armed rebellion in the partitioned Poland against the Russian Empire. Poles unsuccessfully tried to overthrow Russian rule in the Congress Kingdom of Poland as well as in the Polish provinces of western Russia and parts of Lithuania, Belorussia and Ukraine; Davies, *God's playground*, 318-333.

²¹ Bieliński, *Królewski Uniwersytet Warszawski*, 405.

²² The Main School rose from the Warsaw Medical and Surgical Academy which was opened in Warsaw in 1857 due to liberalization in Russia after the Crimean War; More about this period at University; Stefan Kieniewicz, *Akademia Medyko-Chirurgiczna i Szkoła Główna (1857-1869)*, in: *Dzieje Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego*, ed. Stefan Kieniewicz, (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1981), 242-377.

²³ Again, the huge impact on such a decision of Russian authorities had an outbreak of another Polish patriotic rebellion - the January Uprising in 1863; Miziołek, *The University of Warsaw*, 183-184; Davies, *God's playground*, 352-363.

²⁴ Joanna Schiller-Walicka, "Imperial University of Warsaw-Russification or Rapprochement of the Two Slav Nations?", *Organon* 34, (2005): 181-193.

Karol Lutostański. In this period some interesting architectural elements were added to the campus: a monumental, neo-Renaissance building of the University Library and the Main Gate at Krakowskie Przedmieście Street (both Stefan Szyller's designs).

The Polish University was revived on 15 November 1915. During the First World War, the authorities of the German occupation forces granted their permission for the establishment of the University with the right to lecture in the Polish language again. They took such a step because they counted for the participation of the Poles in the continuing conflict on the East. At that time, for many inhabitants of the city, this long-awaited moment raised hopes that the national independence may be regained²⁵. During the reopening ceremony, which took place in the Kazimierzowski Palace, the newly elected rector Józef Brudziński said:

I welcome you all with words I hope will from now hold true forever: we finally have a University in Warsaw, in the halls of which the sound of our beloved and beautiful mother tongue shall be heard²⁶.

In the successive words he paid homage to his predecessors and rectors: Wojciech Szwejkowski and Józef Mianowski, he also recalled the history of higher education in Kraków and in Warsaw. Due to this significant event a bronze medal designed by the medallist Stefan Wiśniowski was struck. The obverse pictured the coat of arms of the University with an inscription in Polish: UNIWERSYTET WARSZAWSKI MCMXV [University of Warsaw]. The reverse showed an owl (the symbol of wisdom) with laurel and oak branches and an inscription: PRZEZ OŚWIATĘ DO WOLNOŚCI; WSKRZESZENIE WYŻSZ[YCH] POLSKICH UCZELNI W WARSZAWIE: 15 XI 1915 [Through education to liberty, the revival of the Polish Universities in Warsaw: 15 November 1915]²⁷. The year 1915 was significant for higher education in Warsaw for one more reason. For the first time women were allowed to enroll at the University.

²⁵ Aleksander Stempin, *Die Wiedererrichtung einer polnischen Universität: Warschau unter deutscher Besatzung*, in: *Kollegen – Kommilitoten – Kämpfer. Europäische Uniwesitäten im Ersten Weltkrieg*, ed. Trude Maurer, (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2006), 127-147.

²⁶ The inauguration ceremony began on 15 November with the Mass in the Cathedral performed by Aleksander Kakowski, Metropolitan Archbishop of Warsaw. Afterwards, all the guests went to the University campus, Stempin, *Die Wiedererrichtung einer polnischen Universität*, 140-143.

²⁷ In 2015 an exhibition dedicated to 100th anniversary of the university reopening took place within its walls; Jerzy Miziołek, Hubert Kowalski, Adam Tyszkiewicz, *Warszawa i Uniwersytet*, (Warszawa: Muzeum Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2015).

The first years of activity were not easy for the reactivated University. Conflicts between the academic community and the German authorities erupted frequently; the Polish students were very often arrested for patriotic activities, the University was also temporarily closed from time to time. Rector Józef Brudziński, who tried to alleviate many of these conflicts, can be regarded as a worthy successor to Szweykowski and Mianowski. Many times count Bogdan Hutten-Czapski came to the assistance of Brudziński. Hutten-Czapski, who at the time was appointed the curator of the University, is by many historians of high education of Poland regarded as a “good spirit” of the University²⁸. Stabilization of the situation at the University came only after a victorious war against the Bolshevik Russia. Head of State, Marshall Józef Piłsudski, on 2 May 1921 granted a new set of insignia to the University, returning with this gesture to the best European academic traditions²⁹. In return he was awarded an honorary doctorate, the first one in the history of the University of Warsaw³⁰.

In the interwar period a lot of distinguished scholars worked at the University of Warsaw. An outstanding historian of antiquity, Tadeusz Zieliński studied the history of ancient Greece and Rome, the father of Polish archeology Kazimierz Michałowski was preparing the first excavations in Egypt and renowned mathematician Waclaw Sierpiński laid the foundations of Polish mathematics. The University also became increasingly recognized internationally. Many Polish researchers were invited to deliver lectures at international conferences and congresses. Moreover, representatives of the University of Warsaw took part in many jubilees of academies, schools and scientific institutions. Regularly, the authorities of the University sent congratulation letters to other European Universities. Some of them have recently been found in the archives of Amsterdam, Budapest, London and Zürich. The proof of the growing popularity of the *Alma Mater Varsoviensis* is the usage of the university emblem (eagle with five stars) in many academic campuses around the world. One of them is located in the Cité Internationa-

²⁸ The curator left significant memoirs concerning above all the period of the First World War and German occupation of the Polish territories; Bogdan Hutten-Czapski, *Sześćdziesiąt lat życia politycznego i towarzyskiego*, vol. 1-2, (Warszawa: Księgarnia F. Hoesicka, 1936).

²⁹ New chains and scepters of the University of Warsaw were designed by Józef Smoliński and Mieczysław Kotarbiński. It is significant that these new symbols of power and dignity were made 100 years after the insignia from the time of the Royal University of Warsaw. The correspondence preserved in the Archive of Jagiellonian University (AUJ) shows that the Warsaw scepters from the year 1921 were modelled on those used in Cracow; AUJ, S II 534.

³⁰ The honorary PhD diploma of Marschall Piłsudski is kept in the collection of the Polish Army Museum in Warsaw (MWP): 8449c MWP.

le Universitaire de Paris, another one in the Polish Nationality Room at the University of Pittsburgh and the third one at the University of Queensland in Brisbane. In 1930s the University of Warsaw gradually developed. Many modern buildings with auditoriums were built throughout the city. Before the outbreak of the Second World War more than 9000 people studied at eight faculties. In 1935, the University received a new name – the University of Józef Piłsudski in Warsaw, which was used over the next four years³¹.

The events of September 1939 interrupted the work of the University. At the beginning of the war many university buildings in the heart of Warsaw were bombed and the University was immediately closed by the Nazis.

Historian of the University Tadeusz Manteuffel described the situation on the campus in September 1939:

Then the University grounds became one burning inferno. The Kazimierzowski Palace on the escarpment and the neighbouring Chemistry and Pharmacy building were on flames; also burnt the Ex-Superintendent's Building, parallel to the library, which housed the Archive of Public Enlightenment and where several seminars in the humanities and law were held. Aerial bombing partly demolished the former museum and the Theoretical Medicine Building. All the other buildings lost their window panes; there were holes in the roofs and the walls were largely damaged³².

Despite the official ban on teaching imposed by the Nazi authorities, the University did not stop its work. It continued its activity organizing underground lectures and seminars. Thanks to the courage and dedication of many professors during the Second World War, the institution was able to reopen its doors immediately in 1945.

Nowadays, the University of Warsaw is the largest academic institution in Poland. It consists of 21 faculties and educates nearly forty five thousand students. The current rector, prof. Marcin Pałys is the 44th superior of the University. The prestige of this institution has been proved not only by its academic success but also its reputation abroad. The University of Warsaw has educated five Nobel Prize winners: Henryk Sienkiewicz (1905), Menachem Begin (1978), Czesław Miłosz (1980), Joseph Rotblat (1995) and Leonid Hurwicz (2007). Every year many famous Polish researchers receive honorary doctorates from the most famous foreign Universities. The

³¹ More about Józef Piłsudski's relationship with the University in: Adam Tyszkiewicz, "Józef Piłsudski w murach warszawskiej Alma Mater", *Rozprawy z Dziejów Oświaty*, 52 (2015): 81-107.

³² Tadeusz Manteuffel, *Uniwersytet Warszawski w latach wojny i okupacji, Kronika 1939/40-1944-45*, (Warszawa: Uniwersytet Warszawski, 1948), 8.

Alma Mater Varsoviensis is also the “mother” of several other well-known, Polish universities like the Medical University of Warsaw, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw, Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw and the University of Białystok.

Time at the University of Warsaw has not stood still. During the last few years three new faculties have been opened: Oriental Studies, “*Artes Liberales*”, and Faculty of Journalism, Information and Book Studies. Systematically, more and more new University buildings have been erected not only in Warsaw but also in other parts of Poland. The most beautiful architectural designs are those of the new Main University Library on the left bank of the Vistula River and the European Centre for Geological Education located in a small town of Chęciny in the Holy Cross Mountains. *Two centuries, good beginning* is the motto of the 200th anniversary of the University of Warsaw – our University intends to follow this path in the future³³.



1. Medal minted to commemorate the founding of the University of Warsaw, 1818, The Museum of Warsaw.



2. The coat of arms of the University from the University Gate, Krakowskie Przedmieście Street 26/28, Warsaw.

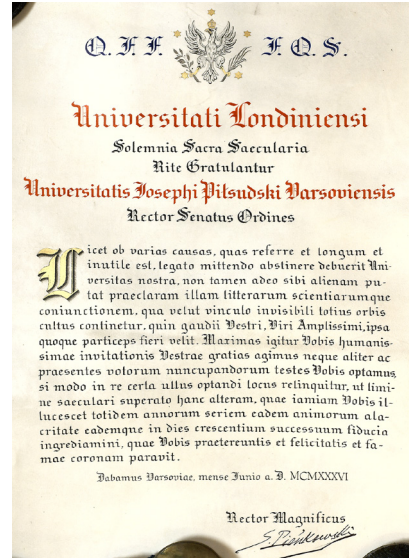
³³ During the preparation of this text a series of books (in Polish language) *Monumenta Universitatis Varsoviensis*, (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2016) was published. It includes a dozen volumes summing up the University’s history and biographies of University’s most outstanding researchers.



3. Jan Piwarski, View of the Kazimierzowski Palace, lithography, 1824, The National Museum in Warsaw.



4. The congratulation letter sent from University of Warsaw (University of Józef Piłsudski in Warsaw) to the University of London; Senate House Library, University of London.



↑ 5. The room of plaster casts, engraved by Kazimierz Krzyżanowski after a drawing by Franciszek Tegazzo, 1866, 'Tygodnik Ilustrowany', 338, 17 III 1866, p. 124.

→ 6. The ceremony of granting the University insignia, 2 May 1921. Next to the Marshall Piłsudski is Rector, Prof. Jan Karol Kochanowski, The Museum of Warsaw University.



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