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The revival of the Vilnius University in 1919: Historical conditions and importance for Polish science

STEFAN BATORY UNIVERSITY existed in Vilnius in the inter-war Poland (1919–1939) and it stood out in Poles memory as an extra ordinary scientific centre. It was regarded as a bridge between the past and the present. The university was destined to such a unique role thanks to the rich traditions and a legend which were connected with that educational institution. It was the smallest Polish university — somewhat provincial although its influence swept the whole north-eastern borderland. Its revival and further development turned out very important for Polish science and culture in the inter-war period. More than that, Vilnius university could be proud of a tradition reached as far back as the 16th century and a rich scholarly production. Thanks to Jesuits endeavours and the king Stefan Batory support a foundation diploma of Vilnius Academy was promulgated in 1578. The king perceived the institution as

the Far North forum which will create an emporium of noble science and will be a source of Catholic faith for foreign young men.¹

In 1781 the Academy gained a position of The Principal School of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which had under control all the school system at the eastern territories of Polish Commonwealth. Next epoch in the university life began in the 19th century, after an incorporation of the Lithuanian-Russian territories into Russian Empire. Then prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski had made a bid for Emperors favours and thanks to his efforts the school was given a title of the Imperial University (1803). The fate of Vilnius university was finally sealed in 1832 when the November Rising broke up, it was good excuse for the government to repress the Polish inhabitants.²

A defeat of the insurgents was a beginning of succession of disasters, the tsar set up a new and strict policy towards Polish people. The university didn't exist anymore, the government only allowed to work two schools, which were the remains of a sometime magnificent institution. First of them was Theological Academy — former theological faculty — which was responsible for the clergy higher education. Russian administration wasn't satisfied with the effects — the seminarists didn't show enough subordination — and the Theological Academy was transferred to St. Petersburg in 1842.³ The second remained school — Academy of Medicine and Surgery — was closed at the same year. Most of its laboratories, library etc. were conveyed at Kijów university. Initially, there was a chance to save the Academy, because it had splendid reputation among medical circles in Empire. Unfortunately the political reasons prevailed over the common sense and the best medical faculty in Russian Empire was destroyed.⁴ Although it must be taken into account, that even a few years of Medical Academy activity was uncommonly important for a history of Polish science in Vilnius. It made a substitute of the university and it was raising a reputation of local medical circles. Thanks to the last circumstance the functioning of Imperial Medical Society in Vilnius was possible. The Society was the eldest such institution in Russia, moreover the members played a great role in a process of the university revival after the Great War.

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¹ Ludwik Piechnik, *Dzieje Akademii Wileńskiej*, Rzym 1984–1990, vol. 1, p. 185.

² Janina Kamińska, *Universitas Vlnensis. Akademia Wileńska i Szkoła Główna Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego 1773–1792*, Pułtusk–Warszawa 2004, p. 31.

³ Leszek Zasztowt, *Kresy 1832–1864. Szkolnictwo na ziemiach litewskich i ruskich dawnej Rzeczypospolitej*, Warszawa 1997, p. 122.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

The next time of repressions, even stronger than previous, came after the January Rising in 1863. The tsar decided to take an action against Polish people on the large scale. All the Polish school system was cancelled, both on the secondary and elementary level. Also a teaching of maternal language (Polish and Lithuanian) was strictly forbidden — speaking in Polish in public places as well. Polish cultural and scientific life was officially suppressed but it flourished secretly. The development in such conditions was extremely difficult — Vilnius intellectuals were deprived of the libraries, laboratories and a possibility of free discussion (social meetings in the private houses required a police permission). Only the members of Imperial Medical Society were quite privileged because the association was tolerated by the government. They were able to complete a fine library and an archive. Vilnius doctors conducted the medical observations during their private practice or in town's hospitals (where they could use the labs) and what was the most important advantage — they could meet together and discuss, of course in Russian. They could also publish in the medical journals in the Empire.

There were another intellectual groups in the 19th century Vilnius which were fought for a survival of Polish culture and science. They were the people who also fought for the revival of Vilnius university in oncoming years. These activities were conducted with varying success — depending on how the tsar's court was benignant and what was the current policy. Polish intellectuals developed mainly the arts subjects, both because of the financial problems (there were no money for expensive investments) and of the requirements of the secrecy. Mentioned studies were prosecuted by the members of Vilnius Agricultural Society (have existed since 1881, introduced modern agricultural methods and made a physiographical map of Vilnius district); Archaeological Committee and Antiquity Museum (they were cancelled after the January Rising); secret Archaeological Circle (established in 1899, specialized in collecting the relics of the past, prepared ethnological description of Vilnius district).⁵ These works intensified in 1905, when a favourable political atmosphere prevailed along the whole Russian Empire. Then the activists from the gentry and the indefatigable Vilnius doctors became to try for the university revival. The attempt was unsuccessful but it was a rehearsal before the oncoming events.

The outbreak of war didn't change the situation in an essential way — Vilnius was under German occupation and new authority wasn't favourably inclined toward the idea of Polish university. All the petitions signed by Vilnius intellectuals remained without a response. The withdrawal of German army in 1918 brought a change which was longed for — although this process began in distant Warsaw. There was a group of people connected with Vilnius and Polish science: Alfons Parczewski, an archivist Waław Gizbert Studnicki, Marian Morelowski, Stanisław Władyczko. They established the Lithuanian Commission, and during an informal meeting in a private house voted the several resolutions. These provisions for the future university were followed in Vilnius by the decrees of Polish Committee which exhorted to rebuild the institution.⁶ The Committee organized the Commission for Organization and Vindication under a leadership of Józef Ziemacki, whereas in Warsaw — in cooperation with Vilnius organization — was created the Committee of the Revival of Vilnius University governed by Alfons Parczewski. The civic leaders didn't relax in their efforts to gain the designed aim. Vilnius citizens established in January 1919 another organization — Educational Committee. This Committee took the next step and developed a Temporary Academic Senate. Józef Ziemacki was designated as the university president, the heads of the faculties were also chosen. The Commission for Organization and Vindication worked intensely to provide the proper material conditions.⁷

The Soviet invasion stopped the efforts of the Vilnius society, but at the same time the Department of Science and Academic Schools in the Ministry of Education and Religion paid attention to the needs of the north-eastern territories. The officials perceived that for this district an academic school was necessary — there was a great demand for high skilled cadre. Polish army recaptured Vilnius in spring 1919 and the activity of the civic leaders and the government were synchronized. The Commander-in-Chief Józef Piłsudski entrusted the task of coordination these efforts to Ludwik Kolankowski. Such decision wasn't easily accepted both by the local establishment and the Ministry although after some time they reached a consensus. An appointment of the professors to the academic posts was in the

⁵ Andrzej Romanowski, *Pozytywizm na Litwie*, Kraków 2003, p. 274.

⁶ *Księga Pamiątkowa ku uczczeniu CCCL rocznicy założenia i X wskrzeszenia Uniwersytetu Wileńskiego*, Wilno 1929, vol. 2, p. 4.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 6–7.

Ministry management whereas dr. Ludwik Kolankowski was responsible for an administration.⁸ Various conflicts had accompanied the university revival since the very first moment. Vilnius society endeavoured to gain its aim very energetically and often the leaders didn't trouble to get an official permission from the authority — although it must be borne in mind that the century of tsar authoritarian dominion didn't prepare people to a cooperation with Polish administration. Moreover mentioned administration also had troubles and eventually it came about that the Ministry of Education was trying to force its own policy despite the decisions of the Chief-of-State. To sum up, the reconstruction of Vilnius university was conducted by three semi-independent centres: the circle of civic leaders, the Ministry officials and Józef Piłsudski with his collaborators.⁹ The influences of the Ministry slightly prevailed over the Vilnius citizens endeavours in this controversy, but at the same time Marshal Piłsudski consequently forced his project of the future university. He was determined to secure as many privileges as possible for the establishment so he promulgated the necessary decrees as the Commander-in-Chief. As the Chief of State he was obliged by law to consult all the decisions with the parliament, but as the Commander-in-Chief he could operate independently in Vilnius district. Therefore the local initiative lost importance but Vilnius inhabitants had an advantage of Marshal Piłsudski favours. He was showing his support constantly, for example he remitted his official salary for the benefit of the university.

The intensive works were conducted both in Warsaw and in Vilnius by Commission for Organization and Vindication. The organizers ambition was to begin new academic year in autumn 1919. More cautious civic leaders advised against opening the whole university — they believed that organizing the faculties in this situation was reckless. There were no appointed professors and the lecture rooms were unfurnished. They considered whether it wouldn't be wiser to rebuild the university by stages: initially the theological and law faculties because these departments didn't required expensive laboratories etc. The lectures were planned in the evenings in empty secondary school rooms. At the end this plan was given up and the rebuilding was conducted with typical after-war enthusiasm. The local leaders want to establish ten faculties: pharmaceutical, law, philosophical, philological, fine arts, theological, physics and mathematics, agronomical, veterinary, medical. The members of the Commissions postulated the old buildings should be given back to the Vilnius university and the adjoining houses as well.¹⁰

Presented plans were ambitious but the enthusiasm of the Vilnius society favoured the daring purposes — Mrs Wojnicz offered a bacteriological lab, Agricultural Society was ready to transmit a right of property to the land in Antokol suburb without charges. They started to actualise their plans, thanks to the reasonable advises of the Ministry they decided to reduce the number of the faculties and appoint not many but the best professors. The organizers had great problems to ensure for the university proper place because the public buildings were scarce in Vilnius. The authority was forced to solve the feuds between Temporary Academic Senate, the army, the secondary schools and another establishments. After a vindication the Committee took care about the buildings renovation, organised the university library, a printing house and the offices. The activists had amount of work ahead — the lecture rooms weren't electrified, the furnishings and a lab equipment still didn't purchased.¹¹

At the same time in Warsaw the supporters of the Vilnius university rebuilding were fighting another battle — when the foundation act was published and the university got a Temporary Statute, they were anxious for a budget. The sums which were provided for the Vilnius establishments designated the future of the university. The arts subjects were very clearly favoured because this department got as many as thirty five paid professors post, the government invested mainly in history and literature. This faculty was planned as a core of the university, from its centre the Polish culture should radiate and influence all the students. The legislators were convinced that an intimate knowledge should be synonymous with a profound national identity.¹² Such state of mind was possible to achieve by careful studies of the maternal language and Polish literature. The organizers also assumed that the arts studies will be a common ground for Poles, Lithuanians, Belorussians and Ukrainians on behalf former

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 19.

cultural connections. The aim of these contacts was to work up a new model of international co-operation in modern times — the government recommended to establish the professorship of Lithuanian and Belarussian languages. Vilnius university was expected to open the way for Poland to the East. Józef Piłsudski during the official inauguration of the academic year (on the twelfth of October 1919) said to the convened students:

You should behave in a such way, that the word “Poland” will sound attractive to all the nations who inhabit our state.¹³

A practical thinking of the government representatives toward the university was proved by the circumstances connected with the fine arts department. The administration considered the financial problems typical in the post-war period and was unwilling to establish this faculty — they thought that another branches of knowledge were more important than painting, sculpture etc. Vilnius citizens were forced to try for the fine arts very long. The foundation act — so looking forward — was published on the twentieth of August 1919, the university was named after the founder of the old Academy — the king Stefan Batory.¹⁴

Temporary Academic Senate immediately start to work on a permanent statute. There were three projects which were based on the traditions of Imperial Vilnius University and the achievements of the contemporary Polish and foreign educational institutions. There were also considered the provisions which were made on a congress of Polish academic schools on the fourth of July 1919. These decrees became a base for a regulations which were obligatory for all Polish universities — the parliament voted these solutions in 1920. The structure of Vilnius university also referred to the 19th century model. The planned before ten departments were reasonably limited to seven: arts studies, theological, law and social studies, science subjects, agricultural, medical, fine arts. All the university composed of one hundred thirteen professorships, mainly with only one researcher — the assistants were very few. At the beginning the most difficult task was to organize medical department and the necessary clinics. It was the purpose why Stefan Batory University cooperated with the army — vast hospital premises in Antokol were the common estate of them. Thanks to mentioned joint venture the medical services in Vilnius were of high quality. Especially the ophthalmology clinic rendered the services to the whole community — a trachoma was a plague of the north-eastern borderland. Described privileges toward the arts studies caused that the best scientific cadre was wanted. These professors appointed by the Ministry, whose decided to come to Vilnius, were very often governed by a sense of duty. The work of Stefan Batory University was undertaken by such great scientists as: Józef Kallenbach, Marian Zdziechowski, Wincenty Lutosławski. It was some kind of sacrifice — to resign from a safe atmosphere in Kraków or to refuse to take a post in more promising Poznań. The political fate of Vilnius was still unknown, the very first academic year was interrupted in summer 1920 — the Polish-Bolshevik war broke out. The most important offices and the most precious property were evacuated, whereas many students and professors joined to the army. The next year didn't bring so coveted stabilization — a treaty conceded Vilnius district to Republic of Lithuania. This decision wasn't accepted by Polish society, both in Vilnius and in central Poland. General Lucjan Żeligowski responded to a secret order of Józef Piłsudski and organized a false revolt. He marched up with faithful regiments to Vilnius and conquered the town. The result of this action was formation of a specific political being called “Middle Lithuania”. It was very small country — created only from Vilnius district — and it have existed until 1922 when Vilnius Parliament voted an incorporation and Middle Lithuania was affiliated to Polish Republic. From this point two countries were constantly in the formal state of war.¹⁵ These circumstances didn't baffle the efforts of Vilnius leaders, they resumed the work just after the Bolshevik attack was repelled.

The cooperation with older and more affluent academic schools made possible for Vilnius university to return to a former glory. The most noticeable help was offered by Jagiellonian University — many of Kraków researchers came to the borderland to renew the Polish science. They took with them the

¹³ *Z dziejów Alma Mater Vilnensis. Księga Pamiątkowa ku czci 400-lecia założenia i 75-lecia wskrzeszenia Uniwersytetu Wileńskiego*, Kraków 1996, p. 54.

¹⁴ Marcei Kosman, *Uniwersytet Wileński 1579–1979*, Wrocław 1981, p. 57.

¹⁵ Józef Buszko, *Historia Polski 1864–1948*, Warszawa 1987, p. 233.

Galician universities tradition, specific methods of work and academic way of thinking. The second most important group of professors was made by the newcomers from Russia. The scientists of Polish origins, who survived from Revolution, flocked to Vilnius and took an influential position in the establishment. They found in the town a field of activity and a friendly atmosphere of a borderland city. They were considered as people formed by eastern culture and therefore they felt more comfortable and were more accepted by locals than the newcomers from Galicia and central Poland. Temporary Academic Senate not only negotiated with the candidates for the posts but also its representatives travelled to the USSR to enlist the Polish scientists. Professor Stanisław Władyczko was delegated to the Russian scientific centres to offer the professorships in Vilnius for Poles. His proposition was accepted by Kazimierz Karaffa-Korbut (hygiene), engineer Władysław Karaffa-Korbut (inorganic chemistry), dr. Kazimierz Noiszewski (ophthalmology) and many others. The alumnus of Livonian universities were also enthusiastically greeted, especially from Dorpat (Tartu) where existed very strong circle of Polish intellectuals. Besides, Polish researches came to Vilnius from Western Europe and the USA.

The beginnings of the university were very humble — there were only four hundreds fifty nine students in academic year 1919/1920. On the other hand it must be remembered that the Stefan Batory University was the smallest scientific establishment in inter-war Poland, the students population consisted of not more than three thousand and one hundred persons in its full bloom years. To sum up, the number of Vilnius students increased seven times from 1919/1920 to 1938/1939. Poles dominated in this group — made up about seventy % of population, the second position was held by Jews and after them placed the rest of the group: Belarussians, Lithuanians, Ukrainians.¹⁶ The most populated faculty was law and medical department — which situation wasn't exactly in line of the Ministry policy, but was thoroughly compatible with the pragmatic plans of youths. Cherished by the government the arts subjects faculty was only on the third place in the rank, the science subjects were next and theology and fine arts departments completed the list. On the other hand the gradation looks different when another criterion is taken under the consideration — a percentage of female students. There was only one hundred seventy six women among one thousand one hundred and fifty one law students in academic year 1929/30, the same situation was on medical faculty: two hundred and sixty six girls on eight hundred and nineteen persons. It was caused by a fact that such careers were hardly available for the women at these years. Decidedly more girls studied the sciences — two hundred and seven of them among five hundred and thirty nine persons, but the most popular were the arts subjects: women made up seventy four % of students.¹⁷ The reason was that a diploma of arts allowed to entry the teaching career in the secondary schools. So this department, against the Marshal Piłsudski plans, became not a part of Polish eastern policy but a mint of teaching cadre for north-eastern borderlands. The organisers were also defeated in another purpose — they failed to establish the professorship of eastern languages. It was partially due to the financial problems and partially to a reluctance of nationalists circles. The role of a centre of a public and political life was taken over by law department. Besides, the federative ideas of Józef Piłsudski — which were fund on a having equal rights and a union of Poles, Lithuanians and Ukrainians — were defeated by the growing nationalist trends, among all the nations.

To sum up, the pragmatic demands of everyday life caused the changes in organisers plans about the education and ideological formation of youths. More impressive success the authority gained with the process of creating the scientific environment in Vilnius. This society was rather small but the Vilnius university was also small institution. In its last year of activity the establishment employed eighty four professors, thirty nine lecturers and two hundred and forty five aides (language teachers, lab assistants).¹⁸ Such limited staff won a worldwide fame for the Stefan Batory University: very renowned was professor Marian Zdziechowski, whose presidential speeches were published in French newspapers e.g. *“La Revue des Deux Monde”*. Well-known to many people was Wincenty Lutosławski, for many years the visiting professor in Great Britain and Switzerland — his greatest books were published in English first. Also Michał Reicher, Kazimierz Pelczar, Ferdynand Ruszczyk, Ludomir Sleńdziński and Maksymilian Rose (Max Rose, neurologist) enjoyed an exceptional fame. The arts

¹⁶ Marcelli Kosman, *Uniwersytet Wileński 1579–1979*, Wrocław 1981, p. 62.

¹⁷ *Szkoły wyższe w Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*, Warszawa 1930, p. 346–375.

¹⁸ Marcelli Kosman, *Uniwersytet Wileński 1579–1979*, Wrocław 1981, p. 60.

subjects have been actively developed due to the designated tasks which were set and the technical possibilities — but the sciences weren't neglected. In the first place the historians proceeded with work, they went in for the exploring the past of the Polish-Lithuanian union and the history of Lithuanian-Russian territories. They created several fundamental source materials as *Akta unii Polski z Litwą*, *Kodeks dyplomatyczny katedry i diecezji wileńskiej*, *Akta cechów wileńskich*. These Lithuanian studies were of a large scale which was typical for a inter-war period. Taking up such great and demanding tasks wasn't possible without a historic seminar in the old capital city of Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

Thanks to mentioned seminar the historians created the works which were irreplaceable to this day e.g. *Studia nad początkami społeczeństwa i państwa litewskiego* by Henryk Łowmiański. His publications showed an unusual precision of a scientific method and raised vast range of problems. There were conducted intensive researches on the medieval history at this territory, the history of conflicts between Lithuanians and Teutonic Order and as well on a social and political structure of Lithuania. These problems engaging a great deal of attention during the Sixth General Congress of Polish Historians, which was in session in Vilnius 1935.¹⁹

The next domain of arts subjects in which the university triumphed, was a jurisprudence — Jerzy Lande got all the credit for that success. He was a continuator of the Leon Petrażycki philosophical ideas and he regarded the law as a psychical phenomenon — an effect of the adaptability processes which had taken place when the societies had been formed. Vilnius became then an example of the team work — very uncharacteristic event for a Polish school of law philosophy — the young and unknown lawyers prepared a handbook — *Ogólna nauka o prawie*. This publication considered in all aspects the psychology of a lawmaker and the connections between a sociology and a penal law. The scientists showed the law as a result of social conditioning against the background of a specific reality.²⁰ The lawyers of Vilnius university must be also equal to a task of creating a new law for a new state: Franciszek Bossowski, Eugeniusz Waśkowski prepared the civil law for Eastern Territories and Waclaw Komarnicki was a member of a staff which worked on Polish constitution in 1921.²¹ Equally intensive were the studies of a linguistic in Vilnius — especially in German, this branch of knowledge was in a high esteem for its research on the German dialects. Jan Otrębski was very renown for his achievements in a comparative Indo-European linguistic, he published the reflections of the lingual relations between Lithuanian and Slavonic. The conclusions of Kazimierz Chodyncki and Olgierd Chomiński had a decisive meaning for a developing of Polish Slavic studies.²² The university gained its fame also thanks to a daring methodological innovations — the researchers from all the country were attracted by Manfred Kridl method of a structural analysis in literature. Another methodological sensation were the lectures of Stefan Srebrny about the scenic conceptions of Aeschylus. Stefan Srebrny deducted his opinion from the Aeschylus tragedies — the new theatrical idea was born in Vilnius.²³

Vilnius school of maintenance of ancient monuments is worth of several mentions — it was a unique phenomenon in inter-war Poland. The head of Vilnius Office of Works and the specialists of a fine arts history — Jerzy Remer, Stanisław Lorentz, Juliusz Kłos, Jan Borowski — had a great task to perform: they were obliged to restore a splendour of the capital city of Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The greatest Vilnius wealth was lovely baroque architecture which was extremely neglected during the time of Russian partition and the occupations following once after another. Some buildings e.g. the Vilnius Castle were destroyed beyond retrieve but many of them still could be saved (the fragments of a medieval barbican). Another problem represented the cause of Catholic churches which had been transformed into the Orthodox temples during the partition. These churches had been nearly always empty — it wasn't just enough believers to fill them up and after the Russians withdrawal the situation

¹⁹ Marcei Kosman, *Uniwersytet Wileński 1579–1979*, Wrocław 1981, p. 61.

²⁰ Kazimierz Opalek, Władysław Wolter, *Nauka filozofii prawa i prawa karnego w Polsce*, Kraków 1948, p. 16.

²¹ Adam Szponar, Kazimierz Przybyłowski, Władysław Siedlecki, *Nauka prawa prywatnego i procesowego w Polsce*, Kraków 1948, p. 16.

²² Tadeusz Lehr-Spławiński, *Zarys dziejów słowianoznawstwa polskiego*, Kraków 1948, p. 28.

²³ *Z dziejów Alma Mater Vilnensis. Księga Pamiątkowa ku czci 400-lecia założenia i 75-lecia wskrzeszenia Uniwersytetu Wileńskiego*, Kraków 1996, p. 251.

intensified. Therefore Vilnius artists started the difficult work of renovation of the churches and the medieval castle in Troki. They also were responsible for a world-famous event — the discover of royal graves in cathedral undergrounds. This story was thoroughly reported in the all Polish press.²⁴

The development of science subjects was on a second place under mentioned circumstances but it wasn't completely neglected. First of all there were conducted the researches focused on an intimate knowledge of natural resources of Vilnius districts. The representatives of mineralogy got all the credit for performing the nation-wide projects: Stanisław Małkowski for the map of surrounding region and Paweł Radziszewski who was interested in more distant territories — he analyzed a petrography of Wołyń and Góry Świętokrzyskie.²⁵ The most important scientific problems for the local economy were realized in agricultural department. Vilnius commercial activities and industry made up for lost time (toward more developed regions) rather slowly, moreover inhabitants of north-eastern borderland were almost totally dependent on farming, for the local industry was mainly restricted to food manufacturing. Because of that the university raising centre prosecuted the intensive works on an improvement on the regional breeds of cattle, sheep and poultry. The researches analysed the organization of Vilnius market and the local small-farming economy. The traditional occupation of women in the region and a source of additional income were a flax cultivation and herbs gathering. Vilnius home-spun was woven into very refined patterns and they enjoyed the appreciation of Polish customers. The scientists became to promote the local weaving and herbs gathering in a very intensive way in order to help the poor farmers and save the regional customs. Flax Centre was established as a branch of the agricultural faculty and it conduct the researches on developing the better plant variety. The success of Vilnius professors was impressive, the local seed and medicinal seedlings centre run a dispatch sale all over the country. The samples were even sent to Poznań district which was hundred kilometres away and represented the region of the most developed farming technique. Also Flax Society full-grown very lively activity.²⁶

Vilnius professors took care about the practical questions but they didn't forget about the theoretical problems — however the financial resources were limited. A pride of university were the works of Jan Weysenhoff — the only Polish specialist in Einstein theory. The team of physics fulfilled a very important role in a nation-wide scale — Waław Staszewski and Aleksander Dmochowski edited a journal *Fizyka i Chemia w Szkole* which was an educational equipment at all secondary schools in Poland at this time. The publications of Józef Patkowski (an absorbent spectrum of bromine) and Waław Dziewulski (the metallic deposits) were also of great importance.²⁷ The university could also be proud of the achievements in the way of chemistry — Kazimierz Sławiński was a founder of Polish Chemistry Society, in Vilnius worked Marian Hłasko, Edward Bekier, Witold Kraszewski.²⁸ The sciences of economy and mathematics had their honourable representatives, the most significant was Władysław Zawadzki — Polish minister of finances in 1932–35 and an author of modern economics (a theory of money).²⁹

But the most spectacular triumphs the university had in a field of astronomy, Vilnius observatory had the newest equipment in the country and its level of researches was comparable to Oxford scientific centre. Władysław Dziewulski and Wilhelmina Iwanowska were specialized in astrophysics, their student twenty eight years old Józef Marcinkowski was appointed to a professorship in the USA — unfortunately he was executed in Katyń. He also studied under guiding of Antoni Zygmund, which monograph *Trigonometrical Series* was discussed broadly in the scientific centres all over the world.³⁰ Stefan Batory university received numerous demonstrations of appreciation: it were the invitations for the conferences and lectures abroad, the contracts for the publications and translations. As an example of world recognition could be presented a Joseph Girard brochure form 1934: *Le destin tragique at*

²⁴ Juliusz Kłos, *Wilno. Przewodnik krajoznawczy*, Wilno 1937, p. 110–129.

²⁵ Julian Tokarski, *Nauki mineralogiczne w Polsce*, Kraków 1948, p. 34.

²⁶ Stefan Ingot, *Zarys dziejów nauk rolniczych i leśnych w Polsce*, Kraków 1948, p. 40.

²⁷ Tadeusz Piech, *Zarys historii fizyki w Polsce*, Kraków 1948, p. 27.

²⁸ Wiktor Lampe, *Zarys historii chemii w Polsce*, Kraków 1948, p. 26.

²⁹ Jan Czarnkowski, *Zarys dziejów myśli ekonomicznej w Polsce*, Kraków 1948, p.26.

³⁰ Jan Gadomski, *Zarys historii astronomii polskiej*, Kraków 1948, p. 30.

glorieux de l'antique Universite de Wilna. The renown of the university caused that all Vilnius professors, which were exiled during the Second World War and afterwards, found the new positions in foreign institutions. Manfred Kridl, Waclaw Lednicki, Bohdan Zawadzki, Antoni Zygmund, Witold Sukiennicki were in the USA; the largest group of scientists remained in Great Britain so they could establish among others: Polish Department of Law in Oxford, Department of Medicine in Edinburgh and the most specific kind of institution — a continuation of Stefan Batory University, Polish University in Exile in London.³¹

Described renown of the university was created by the years of intensive work. Every year the professors appeared at various congress in all European countries. For example Julian Szymański was in 1927 in Louvain on the occasion of five hundredth anniversary of the local university and in London (hundredth anniversary of London university). He also attended the scientific meetings in Paris, Oxford, the Hague — during the last mentioned he was a member of Organizing Committee. Waclaw Komarnicki presented his achievements on congress in Romania. In oncoming years the scholars travelled more often: in 1928 nine of them had speeches on sessions in Bologna, Rome, Amsterdam and many other places. It is fair to assume that the works of Vilnius professors was known at the all European universities. Stefan Glaser made a journey with the lectures through the continent, Kornel Michejda visited Swiss clinics. As well many scholars took part in native conferences, besides Vilnius was a host of many similar events e.g. in June 1927 were held the following meetings: Polish dermatologists, paediatricians, Slavic ethnologists and ethnographers.³² This year was rich in public and social occasions: the session of academic presidents conferred in December 1927 on the subjects of an educational structure and the conditions of a scientific work.³³ Nearly every year the various congresses were sitting in Vilnius, the participants from all Europe were attracted by beautiful architecture and splendid scientific team. Exceptionally strong bonds were contracted between Vilnius and Hungarian scholar circles, it was surely due to the founder's name but also to traditional cooperation from Galicia, these traditions came to Vilnius with the professors from Lwów and Kraków. The visits of foreign guests became so frequent that the permanent welcoming staff and tour guides were designed — professors Ferdynand Ruszczyc and Juliusz Kłos were chosen as the magnificent experts at Vilnius art and architecture.³⁴

Other evidences of scientific possibilities of Vilnius scholars were mentioned before momentous publications and specialist journals which still shows their present interest. *Ateneum Wileńskie* was ranged among them — this magazine was meant to be for the researches of the past of Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Fourteen volumes were edited from 1923 to 1939, the publishers intended to integrate Polish historians who were interested in such topics and worked not only in Vilnius, but also in Kraków, Poznań, Lwów, Warszawa. Besides Polish astronomers followed with attention the articles in *Biuletyn Obserwatorium Astronomicznego w Wilnie*, as the Vilnius astronomical centre had very special position. Remaining four scientific journals from Stefan Batory University were also highly estimated.³⁵ To sum up, the Stefan Batory University enacted the important role lending an aid to the other Vilnius scientific institutions. Without scholars many local societies — Medical, Hygienic, Otolaryngology — couldn't exist. Most of the town's museums functioned due to the academic collections and in the university rooms. Usually they were students educational equipment and the public could visit the expositions from time to time. The university library was also used as a public facility. But the most important academic share in city educational life was an assistance for Vilnius School of Political Studies and Scientific Institute of Western Europe — sovietology centre, unique for a world scale. The Institute seminars were conducted by university professors, the students were chosen from the promising graduates. However formally the institutions were two separate establishments, though their integration was very deep.

³¹ *Z dziejów Alma Mater Vilnensis. Księga Pamiątkowa ku czci 400-lecia założenia i 75-lecia wskrzeszenia Uniwersytetu Wileńskiego*, Kraków 1996, p. 252.

³² *Lietuvos Centrinis Valstybnis Archyvas*, F. 175, Ap. 1 I A 174.

³³ *Lietuvos Centrinis Valstybnis Archyvas*, F. 175, Ap. 1 I A 182.

³⁴ *Lietuvos Centrinis Valstybnis Archyvas*, F. 175, Ap. 1 I A 152.

³⁵ *Szkoły wyższe w Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*, Warszawa 1930, p. 346.

It couldn't be missed that the smallest university in inter-war Poland, founded on the borderland, enjoyed the great respect — greater than it was possible to expect. Paradoxical a claustrophobic closure of Vilnius district between tight borders (with the USSR and Lithuanian Republic) didn't lessen the importance of Stefan Batory University. This academic centre was established on the borderland especially for seeking a contact and exploring the East, so the natural conditions of Vilnius district were turned to account of the university. The neighbourhood of the USSR was a marvellous challenge for the representatives of political science and the sovietologists. The past of Polish-Lithuanian union, rich in events, supplied the materials for years of studying. Even the underdeveloped farming of the north-eastern territories became a starting point for the numerous publications and an intimate research work. The results achieved than in Stefan Batory university are still of service to Polish science.