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Activities of the Teaching Staff Association of Stefan Batory University in Vilnius (1923–1939): An Outline

ABSTRACT

The author's basic intention is to sketch the short history of the Teaching Staff Association of Stefan Batory University in Vilnius, its reestablishment, structure, and the goals of its activities, as well as the ways they are performed by its members. Another important intention of the article is to show the sources for the history of this Association, which can be used for further research. The Association was active in the period 1923–1939; it gathered academic teachers from Vilnius University. Its main goal was to support the development of science in general, and above all to help in the preparation of new, well-educated staff members, not only for universities, but also for the other important institutions in the reborn Polish state. A no less important goal in the Association's activities was to integrate the university environment around important scientific issues, as well as to take care of the living conditions of the students and their families. The members of the Association were academic teachers of all faculties of Stefan Batory University. The information presented in this outline is the result of an analysis primarily of archival materials found in the papers and memoirs of one of the members of the Association, Tadeusz Czeżowski, who at the time of his arrival in Toruń from Vilnius was one of the founders of the University of Toruń. These materials are available in the Archives of Nicolaus Copernicus University.

KEYWORDS

USB Teaching Staff Association, Stefan Batory University in Vilnius, purpose and program of the Association, members of the Association

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Introduction

The year 2019 marked the 100th anniversary of the revival of the University of Vilnius, which was a continuation of the university that closed in 1832 (Gawrońska-Garstka, 2016; Piechnik & Puchowski, 1996; Opacki, 1998; Wrzosek, 1929). From the first years of the resurrected Stefan Batory University (USB), it was organized in departments. It is worth recalling that there were six departments within the university structure: the Departments of the Humanities, Theology, Law and Social Sciences, Mathematics and Natural Sciences, Medicine, and Fine Arts. On the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the re-establishment of this university, it is worth remembering some facts from its history which are so important for Polish science and culture. The rationale for this is not only the jubilee, but the fact that after World War II many academic teachers from USB created Polish universities or joined the research staff of existing universities.¹ One such university with “Vilnius roots” is Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń; therefore, I dedicate this essay to the memory of academic teachers who came from Vilnius to Toruń, and who contributed to the foundation of Toruń University. The article was written on the sidelines of the preparation for my book *Pedagogy at the Stefan Batory University* (Szulakiewicz, 2019). My main intention has been to present a general outline of the purpose and activity of one of the associations whose members were USB academics.² Allow me to mention that the beginnings of the Association fall in the first years of the resurrected USB (Opacki, 1998). A no less important goal of this text is to show the preserved sources on the activities of the Association, which may constitute material for further research. This article is based on the documentation legacy of Tadeusz Czeżowski, kept in the Archives of Nicolaus Copernicus University (“The legacy of Tadeusz Czeżowski”). The records of the Teachers’ Association (SGN) comprise 23 files containing materials from the period 1922–1939 on the history of this organization. To clarify, it should be said at the very beginning that Tadeusz Czeżowski was

¹ For the number of people who came from Vilnius to Toruń in general, not only academic teachers, see Krasnodębski (2019).

² There were many scientific associations at USB; see “Yearbook of Stefan Batory University in Vilnius 1938–1939” (n.d., p. 174).

the treasurer of the Association. The archives include the minutes of meetings and of congresses of Permanent Delegations, statutes from 1923 to 1936, membership declarations, lists of members, extremely meticulous books of accounts, and documents of legal regulations on associations. However, it is impossible to discuss the USB academics working in the SGN without referencing diaries, especially the ego-documents of those authors who were highly active members of the Association or observed their masters' participation in it as students. For example, among the authors documenting the life of the USB academic community, we should mention Tadeusz Czeżowski, Konrad Górski, Ludwik Kolankowski, Wincenty Lutosławski, Fr. Walerian Meysztowicz, Ferdynand Ruszczyc, Irena Sławińska, Stanisław Stomma, Władysław Tatarkiewicz, Czesław Zgorzelski, Fr. Bronisław Żongołłowicz,³ and others.

Foundation, Structure, and Members of the Association

In the university that was then organizing its structure, in addition to research and teaching bodies, many student research clubs, scientific, ideological, educational, regional, cultural, social, and sports societies were being established almost from the very first year.⁴ The "Yearbook of Stefan Batory University in Vilnius 1938–1939" mentions as many as 23 student clubs from among the scientific associations. These were included such research groups as the Polish Studies Club, the Historians' Club, the Philology Club, the Philosophy Club, the Theologians' Club, the Archeology Club, the Naturalists' Club, the Chemists' Club, the Medics' Club, and others ("Yearbook of Stefan Batory University in Vilnius 1938–1939", (n.d., p. 174). The curators of these student research groups were professors and representatives of the disciplines.

One of the more important societies that gathered employees of all departments, not students, was the USB Teachers' Association. Its activity dates back to the interwar period, more specifically, to

³ The list of works by these authors is provided in the References.

⁴ The history of student research clubs, whose members were representatives of scientific disciplines, was described by Stanisław Pigoń, see Pigoń (1929).

the period 1923–1939.⁵ We should add that there were such associations in other university cities, such as Warsaw, Krakow, and Lviv. The surviving documents show that the first efforts to establish the Teachers' Association in Vilnius began in 1922 ("The legacy of Tadeusz Czeżowski", item 23). From that year on, endeavors were made to establish such a society, as evidenced by the letters to the Polish authorities regarding the permit to establish the SGN and letters to the university authorities on its charter and mode of organization ("The legacy of Tadeusz Czeżowski", item 25). The office of the Association was located in the main building of the university. The founders were Fr. Bronisław Żongołłowicz, co-organizer of the revived USB, first dean of the USB Theological Faculty, deputy minister of the Ministry of Religious Denominations and Public Education (1930–1936), and co-founder and official responsible for implementing the Act on Academic Schools of March 15, 1933.⁶ Other founders included Dr. Kazimierz Sławiński, Professor at USB (chemist and dean of the Department of Mathematics and Natural Sciences of USB), Dr. Franciszek Bossowski, Professor at USB (lawyer, specialist in Roman and civil law, and dean of the Department of Law and Social Sciences), Prof. Teofil Gryglewicz (bacteriologist), and Władysław Dziewulski (director of the Astronomical Observatory in Vilnius and Professor at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń after the war).

The bodies of the SGN were the Management Board, the General Meeting of Members, and the Audit Committee ("The legacy of Tadeusz Czeżowski", item 23). The Management Board consisted of five members elected by the General Meeting from among ordinary members. A major role in the efficient functioning of the Association was played by the Audit Committee, consisting of three members, which perfectly supervised financial matters, gifts, donations, and subsidies and whose members were elected for only one year ("The legacy of Tadeusz Czeżowski", item 28). Sources demonstrate that the General Meeting ("The legacy of Tadeusz Czeżowski", item 27) was convened annually in March, but it was possible to call an

⁵ In some of the letters found in the documentation, we come across the name "Association of Professors and Doctors of the University of Vilnius."

⁶ As a reminder, it is worth mentioning that as a result of this act, the cathedral of Stanisław Kot and Ludwik Jaxa-Bykowski was liquidated.

extraordinary meeting at the request of 1/10 of the members—on the condition that such a request had to be justified—or it could be called at the request of the Audit Committee.

Special committees were appointed for ad hoc cases. For example, in 1935 a commission was established to draw up the regulations of the J. Piłsudski Scholarship. The commission consisted of Fr. Ignacy Świrski (theologian), Prof. Franciszek Boswowski (lawyer), Iwo Jaworski (lawyer), Kazimierz Sławiński (chemist), Bogumił Jasinowski (historian of philosophy), Stanisław Hiller (histologist and embryologist), Jan Prüfer (entomologist), and Ludomir Śledziński (painter and sculptor).

The representatives of the SGN were obliged to participate in the Delegates' Meetings ("The legacy of Tadeusz Czeżowski", item 42), this applied to the delegates of individual research groups whose meetings took place in various cities, including Krakow, Warsaw, Poznań, and Vilnius. These were—as the documents specified—meetings of the congresses of permanent delegations, wherein a key role was played by the Vilnius delegation, which submitted proposals and recommended actions which were important for the functioning of the organization. The significance of the participation of Vilnius representatives is not surprising, as Tadeusz Czeżowski and Bogumił Jasinowski were usually represented among the Vilnius delegation.

Members of the Association

According to the charter of the SGN, the members were divided into the following categories:

- ordinary (these were professors, deputy professors, and USB docents),
- extraordinary (people who performed didactic and professional functions, for example), and
- honorary (those appointed by the General Meeting).

The Charter detailed the rules for admitting members into the Association ("The legacy of Tadeusz Czeżowski", item 23). The Management Board could refuse to admit a person as a member without giving a reason. In such a case, the candidate could appeal to the General Meeting, in which case a secret ballot was held on whether or not to admit the candidate, which usually ended with them being

accepted. A candidate was admitted to the group when at least 2/3 of the participants were in favor. Members were obliged to pay annual contributions in the following amounts: a one-time entry fee of 10 PLN and 5 PLN monthly dues. These fees fueled the assets of the Association, apart from which consisted of state subsidies, gifts, and bequests from private individuals.

Voting at the General Meeting was confidential, if such a demand was submitted by 10 members. Elections, on the other hand, were always secret. In the event of an equal number of votes, the matter was resolved by the chairman, which shows that the chairman had extensive powers in this regard.

When analyzing the lists of members of the SGN in individual years, it can be seen that it numbered around 100 people (“The legacy of Tadeusz Czeżowski”, item 24). For example, according to the lists, the number of members from 1933 to 1938 ranged from 87 to 104 in 1935, which was the twelfth year of its operation. In 1936, 94 contributors were registered, while in 1937 there were slightly fewer, i.e., 87 people. As for the number of members of the Association, it may be interesting to learn about their affiliation with particular university departments:

- Department of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, 26 members
- Medical department, 22 members
- Department of Humanities, 21 members⁷
- Department of Fine Arts, 5 members
- Department of Theology, 6 members⁸
- Department of Law and Social Sciences, 11 members⁹

However, it is not possible to explain in a simple fashion based on these data the proportions of personnel or to paint a full picture of the SGN, because the number of members representing each de-

⁷ The list representing the Department of Humanities included Ludwik Chmaj, Tadeusz Czeżowski (treasurer), Bogumił Jasinowski (secretary), and Jan Oko.

⁸ The Faculty of Theology was represented by Fr. Czesław Falkowski and Fr. Walerian Meysztowicz, among others.

⁹ The membership of the Teachers’ Association in Vilnius was relatively high, compared to the number of members from other universities, as, for example, in Poznań there were only 70 members of such an organization.

partment depended on the number of academic teachers employed in it. Indisputably, we should be glad that a large number of teachers from three faculties—Mathematics and Natural Sciences, Humanities, and Medicine—were involved in the SGN. Professors from the Faculty of Humanities were predominant on its board.

The Goals of the Association and their Implementation

According to the charter, the purpose of the SGN was

- to support the interests of science, i.e., support initiatives serving the development of science, such as publishing research initiatives and those targeted at the institutionalization and popularization of science,
- to look after candidates for employees of university departments,
- to care for professors, associate professors, and others who performed research or teaching jobs with the prestige appropriate for their profession in society and to protect their financial interests and friendly relationships,
- to provide mutual material help and moral support, and
- to care for widows and orphans of deceased professors and associate professors, as well as clerks with higher education.

Based on an analysis of the sources, the way the objectives of the Association as outlined above were realized and through what forms of organization this was achieved can be described as follows:

- promoting the association's goals in the press,
- participating in the meetings of the delegates of all associations in Poland,
- presenting the needs of the association and its members,
- carrying out fundraising for purposes consistent with the charter,
- issuing the Association's authority,
- organizing food cooperatives¹⁰ and mutual aid funds, and
- organizing publishing cooperatives ("The legacy of Tadeusz Czeżowski", item 23).

¹⁰ A cooperative is an organization or association.

The implementation of the Association's goals on a national scale can be reconstructed on the basis of reports of permanent delegations represented by the SGN, which operated in different university cities. On the other hand, according to the reports, goals that could be defined as regional tasks were mainly pursued in Vilnius. However, SGN members also took up national matters. For example, the Vilnius Association held about seven "discussion meetings."¹¹ It is worth enumerating the issues raised at the Vilnius discussion meetings. The discussions were held on the following topics:

- movements and currents among the radical academic youth,
- the attitude of the Polish intelligentsia towards Bolshevism,
- employment of academic youth after graduation,
- cultural life, and
- reports on trips abroad.

Konrad Górski and Kazimierz Sławiński were two of the speakers during such meetings.¹²

An important task carried out by the SGN was to prepare official projects and teaching curricula, which were then presented at the meetings ("The legacy of Tadeusz Czeżowski", item 43). One of the important documents that the SGN prepared was an official letter regarding a scholarship in the name of Józef Piłsudski.¹³ A letter to the Permanent Delegation of Associations and Unions of Academic Schools in Poland stated that the Association of Teachers in Vilnius decided to establish the J. Piłsudski Scholarship. Another official letter concerned improving the living conditions of assistant professors and lecturers and the reform of the salary of professors at higher research institutions and auxiliary scientific forces, as associates, junior assistant professors, and assistant professors were then called. The program did not neglect to mention the situation of younger

¹¹ The Teachers' Association in Vilnius did not have good housing conditions. According to the documents, the meetings were held in a building that had shortcomings—for example, it was not properly furnished.

¹² Kazimierz Sławiński (1870–1941) was a chemist, USB professor, and dean of the Department of Mathematics and Natural Sciences. He came to Vilnius in 1919; earlier in the Warsaw period, he taught in high schools in Warsaw, including at Leontyna Rudzka's school.

¹³ Tadeusz Czeżowski was in charge of the applications submitted by the Teachers' Association of USB to establish a scholarship for people working in science.

academics, so the ministerial authorities were presented with proposals to amend the provisions of the Charter regarding these auxiliary scientific forces. Among the matters concerning this group of teachers was, for example, the question of assistants' working time.¹⁴ Likewise, in the area of science-related affairs, the problem of the so-called extraordinary and parallel departments was brought up. One of the key goals of the Association was to participate in the creation of teaching curricula ("The legacy of Tadeusz Czeżowski", item 43). The documentation includes "A Proposal for the Curriculum of Philosophy for the Second Year of General Secondary School." This project was developed by Kazimierz Twardowski and Kazimierz Ajdukiewicz.¹⁵ This example shows the collaboration between professors from Vilnius and Lviv. The project contains a description of teaching materials, school readings, activities of the philosophy club, textbooks, students' homework, and correlating philosophy with other subjects.

As is commonly known, the 1930s were marked by legal changes concerning universities. The program of the SGN also includes these issues, i.e. job-related matters of USB teachers, resulting from legal acts and affecting their social status ("The legacy of Tadeusz Czeżowski", item 42). The SGN members also prepared an official letter to amend the provisions of a parliamentary act (Act of March 15, 1933 on Academic Schools, 1933)¹⁶ in which unfavorable provisions relating to university employees were noticed. These unfavorable regulations included:

- depriving lecturers over the age of 55 of the right to teach at universities,
- depriving honorary professors of the right to sit on department councils,
- depriving retired professors of the right to teach at universities, and
- dissolving faculties during their reorganization.

¹⁴ Also, draft amendments to the ordinance of the President of the Republic of Poland of February 24, 1928 on the working relationship of professors of State Academic Schools and auxiliary scientific forces.

¹⁵ This cooperation was natural, as Tadeusz Czeżowski had been one of Kazimierz Twardowski's students.

¹⁶ See "Act of March 15, 1933 on Academic Schools".

The “Codification Commission,” consisting mainly of representatives from the legal sciences, was responsible for legal concerns.

Another important position agreed on by the Vilnius members of the Teachers’ Association was the “Official Letter on the Reinstatement of the Research Allowance in the Salary of Professors,” because their salaries, according to the members of the SGN, differed from those of civil servants of the same category (i.e., 4th and 5th grade). Salaries in other professions were quoted as examples: department clerk (600 PLN per month), department head (500 PLN per month), and head of the prison (200 PLN) (“The legacy of Tadeusz Czeżowski”, item 42).

Another important achievement of the Association was the “Official Letter on the J. Piłsudski Scholarship” and the Regulations on the Marshal J. Piłsudski Fund.”¹⁷ The main thrust of this initiative was to honor the memory of Józef Piłsudski, who used to allocate his salary to awards granted to assistant professors for their research. In addition, he supported many research projects at USB, initiated by both professors and students, e.g., the journal *Alma Mater Vilnensis*, in print from 1922 to 1935, just to mention one (Szulakiewicz, 2017). It is no wonder, then, that the excellent USB rector Marian Zdziechowski dedicated one of his lectures (on the Marshal’s name day) in a series addressed to young people to Piłsudski (“In the Fight for the Soul of Academic Youth”; Zdziechowski, 1927). Shortly after Piłsudski’s death, some members of the SGN began drawing up the rules of the scholarship, and on December 14, 1935, an extraordinary meeting of the Association was convened to ratify them. This required an amendment to the SGN charter, which was done in 1936. The regulations were approved unanimously. The objective of this initiative was to create opportunities for researchers to go on trips abroad. It was done in accordance with the principle that the goal of every country which values culture is to have as many of the best educated scientists as possible; therefore, the purpose of the scholarship was to make it possible to apply for trips to other countries. The goal was also to promote an exchange of personnel with foreign universities (“The legacy of Tadeusz Czeżowski”, items 26 and 33). The scholarships were mainly awarded to people with MAs and PhDs.

¹⁷ For text of the Regulations, see Szulakiewicz (2019, pp. 155–157).

The main intention of these actions was to prepare candidates to fill university chairs in the future, and the financial support that they received was to facilitate their preparation for scientific work and to assist them in going on study trips abroad. The Vilnius members of the Teachers' Association encouraged other departments to join this scholarship campaign, justifying it as follows:

At the same time, it should be remembered that people with higher academic qualifications in Poland are needed not only to fill chairs in universities and other academic schools, but also to fill positions in the judiciary, in departments of ministries to oversee the reform of administration and taxation, in state banks, etc. ("The legacy of Tadeusz Czeżowski", item 43, p. 2)

Thus, the idea of organizing the scholarship fund was intended to better Poland with more educated people.

Conclusion

Summing up the comments about one of the associations created by USB academic teachers for teachers, it should be stated that it worked primarily towards the development of science. The significance of the activity of the Teachers' Association operating at Vilnius University can be assessed by perusing the biographies of the eminent scientists who were members and associates of the SGN: Tadeusz Czeżowski (philosopher), Waclaw Dziewulski (physicist), Władysław Dziewulski (astronomer), Stanisław Kościakowski (historian), Manfred Kridel (literary historian), Jan Oko (classical philologist), Fr. Leon Puciata (professor of dogmatics), Bl. Michał Sopoćka, confessor of St. Faustyna Kowalska, the previously mentioned Fr. Prof. Bronisław Żongołłowicz, Konrad Górski (historian of literature and culture), and Bogumił Jasinowski (historian of philosophy).¹⁸ The philosopher and teacher Ludwik Chmaj, who chaired a university department at USB, joined the group of members of the SGN in the last years of its operation (just before World War II) (Szulakiewicz, 2003, 2019). We must state that the SGN members

¹⁸ For more on the activities of some of the above-mentioned members of the Association, see Czeżowski (1973), Gołubiew (1974), Jadacki (1994), Dalecka (2003), Szulakiewicz (2010, 2017), and Tomaszewski (2018).

mainly focused on achieving the primary goal set out in the charter, i.e., supporting the development of science, preparing young academic staff, and helping candidates for university chairs in advancing their research. However, assistance for the professors' families, which sometimes found themselves in difficult living conditions, was no less important. Numerous organizational forms of cooperation between the members of the SGN also helped achieve the goal defined in the founding document as "friendly collaboration," i.e., the integration of the scientific community.

After a careful analysis of the sources, one more general observation emerges that characterizes the work of academic teachers at Stefan Batory University in Vilnius: It is necessary to emphasize the incredibly versatile activity of the then university professors in the fields of research, didactics, organization, and science. This remarkably active attitude of the professors may have been motivated by the unique atmosphere of Vilnius. Characteristics of this atmosphere can also be found in scientific literature and fiction. Czesław Miłosz, an alumnus of Vilnius University, aptly wrote that "Vilnius cannot be eliminated from the history of Polish culture because of Mickiewicz, Słowacki, and Piłsudski" (Miłosz, 1990). I would like to add to these words that it is impossible to eliminate from the history of Polish science the outstanding scholars from Vilnius University and their merits for Polish science.

As I mentioned in the introduction, this article does not constitute an exhaustive study of the issue; it is only an outline, and the issue requires further research, including the use of archival materials indicated in the article, which were found in Tadeusz Czeżowski's documents and in the memoirs from that period.

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