

BARBARA JĘDRYCHOWSKA

University of Wrocław

ORCID: 0000-0001-6616-783X

## The University of Wrocław as the inheritor of the Lviv science and culture (1945–1952)

The beginnings of the university operations in Wrocław date back to year 1702 when Leopold I bestowed upon the Jesuit College the rank and status of a two-faculty catholic academy (*Akademia Leopoldyńska [Leopoldin Academy]*). Dissolution of the Jesuit order resulted in transferring the academy under custody of the state. In the wake of the merger between the College and the protestant university in Frankfurt (*Viadrina*) in 1811 the King's University of Wrocław (*Koenigliche Universität Breslau*), which held the right to maintain five faculties, was established on the grounds of the decision made by Prussian king Friedrich Wilhelm III. The university operated under its Latin name *Universitas Litterarum Vratislaviensis* and its goals consisted of bolstering standing of the Prussian state in the eastern frontier (a university "in the German east"). The University occupied a special position among the higher education institutions in the city even after the King's Higher School of Technology (*Koenigliche Technische Hochschule*) was opened in 1910. The following year the University received a new name referring to its founder: *Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität (the Friedrich Wilhelm University)*; the name remained until the conclusion of the Second World War. Officially the University also operated as *the University of Wrocław (Breslauer Universität)*. Following year 1933 the University was subordinated to the party agency (NSDAP) (Pater, 1986, pp. 9–14). The contemporary ministerial resolutions maintained the separate character of the authorities of the University and the Technical University but the institutions shared common budget, administration and educational officer.

In January 1945 the University and the Technical University were closed as a result of the Soviet army moving closer to *Festung Breslau* (Kulak, 1994, pp. 78–89). On the 9<sup>th</sup> of May, three days after the city surrendered, the first members of the Science-Culture Group (later transformed into the independent Delegation of the Ministry of Education for the Lower Silesia), the core of which consisted of the academic staff from Lviv, came to Wrocław. The group was led by the Representative of the Ministry of Education for Securing Post-German Universities' Property – prof. Stanisław Kulczyński, the former Rector of the John Casimir University of Lviv. His coworker and co-organizer of the developing University was a Lviv jurist, prof. Kamil Stefko, who in 1946 established in Wrocław the Higher School of Commerce in cooperation with the Higher School of International Commerce in Lviv; the Higher School of Commerce

was, later converted into the Higher School of Economy (M. Pater, 1986, pp. 58-59). There were also officers of the Home Army among the group coming from Lviv who were soon after joined by participants of the Warsaw Uprising, including Tadeusz Mikulski who in 1946 received the academic title of a professor and founded Polish language studies at the University.

The representatives of authorities who came to the city with the task of preparing the conditions for establishing a Polish university in this area were facing a difficult challenge. Firstly, the infrastructure of scientific institutions, which was damaged or destroyed over the course of military operations, had to be secured. During these military operations and shortly following their conclusion the University Library which possessed 780 thousand volumes lost nearly two thirds of its resources. Some of the books were destroyed during the bombardment of the city, e.g., in February 1945, but the majority of volumes burned during the fire which broke out three months later, on the night between the 10<sup>th</sup> and the 11<sup>th</sup> of May. Only the book collection which was moved out from Wroclaw was saved (Migoń, 1994, pp. 72–75). Attempts were made during the siege of the city at securing the documents located in the University Archive by moving these documents from the tower of the University building to the ground floor where “[documents] stayed piled up until the end of the war”; nevertheless, the documents were damaged during the bombing raids (Drozd, 1994, p. 93). Following the surrender of Germans numerous destroyed valuable old prints and manuscripts were discovered on the barricades erected during the siege of the city. Museums of Wroclaw were in ruins. Only 40% of the buildings of the Technical University and the University could be relatively rapidly adapted to the new tasks despite the fact that explosives and arms were frequently stored in the cellars of said buildings. In the majority of cases the scientific equipment could not be recovered: “Everything fragile was broken, everything made of metal was consumed by rust” (Pater, 1986, p. 58). However, the damage and the losses suffered by the archive and library collections were not always results of military operations. Such was the case of the secret Lviv newsletters from the German occupation period which were moved from Lviv to Wroclaw along with the archive of the Home Army and the collection of Ossolineum as a part of the first shipment in July 1946 (Matwijów, 1996, pp. 100–114). There was no time for cataloguing these newsletters because they were confiscated and ultimately lost (Klimowicz, 2005, p. 141).

The University of Wroclaw was established on the debris and rubble of the city ruined in nearly 80% which served as a haven for resistance fighters, participants of the Warsaw Uprising, the soldiers from the area of Zamość, the displaced from the east and “other refugees searching for their place under the sun” (Klimowicz, 2005, p. 127). Despite the horrific scale of the post-war destruction the city was still exposed to instances of ransacking and looting: from bricks, furniture and radiators to works of art. Not only the so-called “rabblers”, people living among rubble and debris and devoid of

sustenance, participated in this practice, but also the looters from the central Poland and Soviet soldiers. In fear of looters the Rector founded the University Guard in June 1945 (in December this unit was renamed to the University Militia).

Despite the unbelievably difficult working conditions, utter chaos of the initial actions and the “forms of working towards stability and normalisation only materialising recently the University was already a certain constant, an already formed centre” (Kubikowski, 1962, p. 9). These circumstances were of major significance for the city – it was not the city which established the University but instead the University contributed to establishing and developing the new Wrocław and influenced its functioning by becoming a major “city-forming factor” (Wrzesiński, 2002, p. 24).

The foundation for the new city and the university community consisted of the arriving settlers, primarily coming from Lviv. In June 1946 Stanisław Kulczyński drew attention to this fact in his Rector Speech during the inauguration of the academic year at the University and the Technical University: “We are the substantive inheritors of the ruins of the German Wrocław and the spiritual inheritors of the frontier culture of Lviv” (Kulczyński, 1947, p. 58). The nature of the Polish Wrocław and its University was shaped by the customs and culture of Lviv. This cultural influence was also facilitated by the scientific staff members who were primarily influenced by the traditions of the John Casimir University in Lviv and the Lviv Polytechnic National University, the scholars who were referring to “understanding of the university work as a service in the social interest” (Wrzesiński, 1994, p. 101) – i.e. service performed not only for the benefit of the city but the entire community and the nation as well. The first group of the Lviv academicians was joined by the scientific staff from other academic centres; these newcomers adopted

the traditions and values which were transferred from the idealised Lviv [as their own]. Their dream was to establish and develop near the Odra River that which was related to the traditions of the lost heritage of their Lviv homeland and to the Polish mementos and relics among which the John Casimir University and the Ossolinski National Publishing House were of particular and special significance. It was at that time when the conviction regarding the particular and special character of the university work was consolidated – the work taken up not only in professional terms but also in the context of the mission which was to decide the persistence and survival of Lviv values under the new structures and within the old, post-German halls (Wrzesiński, 2002, pp. 24–25).

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of August 1945, the Government of National Unity issued the Decree on Transforming the German Higher Education Schools into “the Polish State Academic Schools”. On the grounds of this Decree the University merged with the Technical University and began to operate in Wrocław as a single institution sharing common Rector, Senate, budget and administration. Four faculties were established under the Technical University and six faculties were established under the University: the Faculty of

Humanities, the Faculty of Law and Administration, the Faculty of Natural Sciences, the Faculty of Agriculture (with the Department of Horticulture), the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, the Faculty of Medicine (with the Department of Pharmaceutics); the Faculties of Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry common for both institutions were also established. Opening these faculties was made possible owing to the teaching and scientific staff coming to Wrocław from the Lviv academic schools: the Agricultural College, the Veterinary Medicine Academy and the Higher School of International Commerce (Pater, 1986, p. 58).

The first inaugural lecture of the 1945/46 academic year was delivered under the combined structure of the University and the Technical University on the 15<sup>th</sup> of November 1945 at the Faculty of Mechanical and Electrical Engineering of the Technical University by prof. Kazimierz Idaszewski – the professor of the Lviv Polytechnic National University and an electrical engineering specialist. The first Rector of the combined Universities was a botanist and the Rector of the Lviv University – prof. Stanisław Kulczyński. Also the subsequent Rectors originated from the academic community of Lviv: a mathematician, prof. Edward Marczewski, and a zoologist, prof. Kazimierz W. Szarski. The main organiser and director of the Institute of History was a professor of the Lviv University and a member of the Scientific Association of Lviv and the Science and Culture Group – Karol Maleczyński. A physicist from Lviv who was later appointed to the position of the Deputy Minister of Education in the Lower Silesia, prof. Stanisław Loria, came to Wrocław with the same group. In 1946, the first Director of the Dermatological Clinic, prof. Jan Lenartowicz, was previously the Director of the University Dermatological Clinic in Lviv. Professor Antoni Knot, a graduate of the Lviv Faculties of History and Polish Language Studies, was appointed to the office of the director of the University Library in September 1945. In 1946 Professor Antoni Knot also took over the care over the Ossolineum collection transferred from Lviv to Wrocław – initially as the General Secretary of the Ossolineum Friends Society and in the 1947–1949 period as the Managing Director of the Ossolinski National Publishing House in Wrocław. The Library was a scientific and research institution and its collection constituted a major and valuable scientific foundation for students and employees of the University. It was also a place of significance for the Lviv repatriates (Głos Ludu, 1946, no. 202)

During the first stage of the post-war operations of the University the scholars from Lviv constituted a decisive majority therein and owing to their rich experience they established conditions conducive not only to cross-disciplinary team research but also to founding scientific associations. They were responsible for opening the Wrocław division of the Mathematics Association in the autumn of 1945 with the goal of continuing Association's pre-war Lviv operations. In 1946 they also moved the "Pamiętnik Literacki [Literary Memoir]", a unit of the Adam Mickiewicz Literary Association operating in Lviv, to Wrocław where it began its operations (Fita, Świerczyńska, 1990,

p. 166). In the same year the Science Association consisting of six departments was established in Wrocław upon the initiative of prof. Stanisław Kulczyński and continued traditions of the Lviv Association for Supporting Polish Science operating in years 1901–1919 as well as the traditions of the subsequent Science Association operating until 1939. Tasks of the Association consisted of initiating and coordinating scientific research (the forms of research impossible to conduct at the University), promoting science and publishing activity (Wrzesiński, 1994, p. 102). The Lviv traditions of maintaining the relationship between the University and literature were represented by the “Zeszyty Wrocławskie [Wrocław Notebooks]” academic quarterly launched in 1947. The quarterly publication was co-edited (with prof. Mikulski) by Anna Kowalska, a writer born in Lviv and a student of Classical Philology and a graduate of Romance Language Philology. University’s publishing house also cooperated with the exceptional and distinguished creators connected to the pre-war Lviv, among them: Julian Przyboś, a poet, prof. Juliusz Kleiner, a literature historian affiliated with the Lviv University, and Stanisław Rospond, the associate professor of the local university and a linguistics specialist who in 1945 presided over the Silesian Commission for Determining Names of Towns and Villages. “The journal was one of the most ambitious literary and scientific journals among the resurgent post-war Polish humanities community” (Biernacki, 1985, p. 681). For a brief period (1947–1948) the journal was published by the Community of Polish Language and Literature Enthusiasts’ established in Wrocław in January 1946 by Anna Kowalska who was its first leader.

Despite the very difficult living conditions Wrocław did not want for candidates for studies. In the 1945/46 academic year 1271 students were admitted to the University, in the 1948/49 academic year this number tripled and continued to grow in the subsequent years (Pater, 1986, p. 59). However, for a long time some of University’s students could not find accommodation, experienced shortages of sustenance and thus were forced to seek employment and take up a job. Simultaneously the students and the scientific staff of the University were involved in clearing the city of rubble and debris and in restoration of not only the University but also the city. Under such circumstances differences in origin, religious creed or political beliefs were meaningless.

Professors and students of Wrocław experienced the commonality of fate resulting from the war-time experiences and new threats. A certain peculiar biological survival force resulted in people behaving rationally in this surreal environment and even displaying a certain optimism regarding their future despite the surrounding atmosphere akin to awaiting a cataclysm (Klimowicz, 2005, p. 139).

The contemporary Poland, deprived of independence in the international arena and completely subordinate to Soviet influence, was forced to import Soviet models into the majority of aspects of social and political life. These models also concerned the higher education and thus the submissive administration attempted to adapt the goals

and tasks of the higher education to the new ideological and political demands and needs. The University was presented with the primary task of educating “a new man” for the socialist Poland and this educational task was defined as “the education in the spirit of involvement in establishing the new system” (Wrzesiński, 2002, pp. 25–26). Initially the traditional principle of the independence of higher education institutions presented itself as an obstacle in implementation of this plan. This principle took deep roots in the post-war Wrocław and the political attitude of the scientific personnel, particularly the staff originating from Lviv, was far from supportive of communism. Similar attitudes were demonstrated by residents of the city among whom the political slogans displayed on posters and placards (e.g. “We were. We are. We will be” or “Wrocław – your city; Odra – your river”) frequently evoked resistance and reluctance materialising in the form of vulgar footnotes and annotations scribbled on the propaganda posters (Klimowicz, 2005, pp. 133–134). All these factors were reflected in the reluctance of the central authorities in Warsaw to establish and develop a strong academic community in the capital of the Lower Silesia. This reluctance was strengthened by the circumstances related to the conviction regarding the uncertainty of the borders – in case of changes in the borders investing significant sums in a university would be pointless and without merit.

Although the scientific communities in Poland perceived the University of Wrocław as a servile institution subservient to the communist influence the local authorities were primarily occupied with seeking out the influence of the opponents of the communist ideology within the structures of the University. Initially the hostility of the Lviv university community towards the Polish political authorities was visible and numerous students and professors elected to remain non-partisan. However, when the university demonstrated a more decisive subservience towards the ideological pressure past year 1947, the Lviv community started to be referred to as “the enemy of the people”. In the 1947/1948 academic year, the requirement was introduced forcing all students to pass an initial preliminary test on the subject of Marxism. At that time:

the militant Marxists who assaulted conservative (according to them) professors with the zeal of neophytes, who wore red ties during the official celebrations and rose clenched fists as a sign of victory came forward with increased frequency; however there were also [those] detached and reluctant towards the new authorities or even the recently discovered enemy of the people (Klimowicz, 2005, pp. 128–129, 142–143).

Following rejection of the Lviv traditions attempts were made at perceiving the mission of the University in the context of the imposed process of education within the framework of which the permanence of the former university ideals constituted a threat to the new regime. In 1948 the character of the University was distinctly altered; the University transformed from a research institution into an advocate of the ideology of the authorities. These changes were primarily effected through restricting freedom

of expression, introduction of police supervision and prohibitions (Wrzesiński, 2002, pp. 25–26). At that time the attitude of Rector prof. Stanisław Kulczyński also changed unexpectedly as he turned from:

the advocate of the far reaching autonomy of universities into a zealous supporter of the centralisation of scientific policy, extensive powers of the ministerial authorities and restricting powers of the elective university bodies (Wrzesiński, 1994, p. 105).

In 1949 prof. Stanisław Kulczyński was honoured with the membership in the Polish Nation-wide Committee for Celebration of the 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday of Stalin and in the Fifties he was appointed to the office of the Chairman of the State Council. Professor Ewa Maleczyńska, a Lviv historian, became involved in operations of the Marxist Association of Historians established in 1948 and became an active member of the Voivodeship Committee of the PUWP and the Central Committee of the PUWP. Such cases were plentiful among the Lviv scholars and there were just as many confirmed enemies of the new ideology as there were conformists. Numerous professors knew how to “save face and the compromises to which they agreed did not exceed the usual boundaries of relations with any other type of authority within the framework of this type of activity” (Klimowicz, 2005, p. 143)

The care for the “appropriate” political face of the research works was demonstrated primarily by representatives of the humanities and the social sciences who were subjected to the rigours of ideological and police supervision. The exact sciences enjoyed slightly more leeway. However, because the University was becoming increasingly inconvenient for the authorities who were not content with the model of a creative student and graduate, the authorities began at the turning point between the forties and the fifties of the XX century to slowly single out and isolate privileged vocational schools from within University’s structures. At the same time further faculties began to split off from the University and establish independent higher education institutions (1949 – the Academy of Medicine Practitioners, 1950 – the Higher Agricultural School, 1951 – the Technical University of Wrocław). Simultaneously the ministerial authorities were making the attempts at limiting the scientific research to the regional reach and scope (Wrzesiński, 2002, p. 26).

On the 1st of September 1951 two higher education institutions, the Technical University and the classical University, were ultimately separated and in the following year the University received the name of Bolesław Bierut on the grounds of the Resolution of the Council of Ministers. The subsequent political and social transformations in Poland in years 1956, 1970, 1980 and 1989 (when name of Bierut was stricken down from the name of the University) opened new perspectives and prospects before the University and its scientific community.

## Works Cited

- Biernacki, B. (1985). *Zeszyty Wrocławskie. Kwartalnik krytyczno-literacki* [hasło]. In: *Literatura polska. Przewodnik encyklopedyczny*, Vol. II (p. 681). Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe.
- Drozd, J. (1994). 60 lat Archiwum Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego. In: T. Kulak, W. Wrześniński (eds.), *Studia i materiały z dziejów Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego*, vol. III (pp. 91–97). Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego.
- Fita, S., Świerczyńska, D. (1990). *Towarzystwo Literackie im. Adama Mickiewicza 1886–2006*. Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich.
- Klimowicz, M. (2005). *Wspomnienia z czasów zamętu*. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego.
- Kulczyński, S. (1955). *Udział Wrocławia w odbudowie nauki polskiej*. Wrocław: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe.
- Kulczyński, S. (1947). Mowa J.M. Rektora Uniwersytetu i Politechniki we Wrocławiu prof. dra. Stanisława Kulczyńskiego, wygłoszona na uroczystym otwarciu Uniwersytetu i Politechniki w dniu 9.06.1946 r. In: *Wrocławski kalendarz akademicki na rok 1947* (pp. 57–64). Wrocław: Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza Drukarnia Uniwersytetu i Politechniki we Wrocławiu.
- Kubikowski, Z. (1962). *Wrocław literacki*. Wrocław: Ossolineum.
- Kulak, T. (1994). Uniwersytet Wrocławski i Wyższa Szkoła Techniczna w latach 1910–1945. In: T. Kulak, W. Wrześniński (eds.), *Studia i materiały z dziejów Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego*, vol. II (pp. 77–89). Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego.
- Matwijów, M. (1996). *Walka o lwowskie dobra kultury w latach 1945–1948*. Wrocław: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Ossolineum.
- Migoń, K. (1994). O początkach wrocławskiej Biblioteki Uniwersyteckiej. In: T. Kulak, W. Wrześniński (eds.), *Studia i materiały z dziejów Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego*, vol. III (pp. 69–76). Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego.
- Pater, M. (1986). *Uniwersytet Wrocławski i jego polska przeszłość*. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego.
- Wrześniński, W. (2002). Trzysta lat Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego. Tradycje a współczesność. *Odra*, 10, 24–29.
- Wrześniński, W. (1994). Rola Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego w kształtowaniu śląskiego środowiska naukowego po II wojnie światowej. In: T. Kulak, W. Wrześniński (eds.), *Studia i materiały z dziejów Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego*, vol. III (pp. 99–116). Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego.
- Skarby Ossolineum przybyły do Wrocławia (26.07.1946). *Głos Ludu. Pismo codzienne Polskiej Partii Robotniczej*, 202.



## Abstract

The presented text discusses the history of the University of Wrocław, one of the first higher education institutions established in the western frontier of Poland following conclusion of the Second World War. The paper focuses on the 1945–1952 period, although it also invokes certain pieces of information referring to the previous Prussian and German influence and background. The goal of the undertaken task is to present the University of Wrocław in the context of the organisational, scientific and social contributions of the academic staff coming from the John Cassimir University and the Lviv Polytechnic National University to the Wrocław institution in the initial years of University's operations. The academic traditions of Lviv influenced not only the post-war development of the University of Wrocław but also the post-German Wrocław itself. The subject literature concerning the researched issues is extensive. The qualitative analysis of texts was utilised in order to compile these materials in the context of the subject of this paper. Primarily the publications of the distinguished professors from Wrocław who have bound their organisational and scientific activity to the University of Wrocław were utilised; these distinguished professors include: Stanisław Kulczyński, Mieczysław Klimowicz, Mieczysław Pater, Wojciech Wrzesiński.

**Keywords:** the University of Wrocław, the John Casimir University in Lviv, the Lviv Polytechnic National University, traditions of Lviv