

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN – EAU CLAIRE

“WHILE WE LIVE SHE IS EXISTING”: POLISH NATIONALISM AND THE
NOVEMBER UPRISING IN THE CONGRESS KINGDOM, 1814 – 1831

FOR PRESENTATION TO HISTORY 489

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Poland Is Not Yet Lost

While we live she is existing,
Poland is not fallen;
We'll win with swords resisting,
What the foe has stolen.

March, march Dombrowski,
From Italy's plain;
Our brethren shall meet us
In Poland again!

We'll cross where Warta's surging
Gloomily its waters,
With each blade from sheath emerging
Poland's foes to slaughter!

March, march Dombrowski,
From Italy's plain;
Our brethren shall meet us
In Poland again!

Hence unto the field of glory,
Where the life's blood's streaming;
Where with talons red and gory,
Poland's eagle's screaming!

March, march Dombrowski,
From Italy's plain;
Our brethren shall meet us
In Poland again!

Poland! Shall the foe enslave thee
Sadly and forever;
And we hesitate to save thee?
Never, Poland, never!¹

- Josef Wybicki

¹ Paul Soboleski, ed., *Poets and Poetry of Poland. A Collection of Verse, Including a Short Account of the History of Polish Poetry, With Sixty Biographical Sketches or Poland's Poets and Specimens of Their Composition, Translated into the English Language* (Chicago: Knight and Leonard, Printers, 1883), 201.

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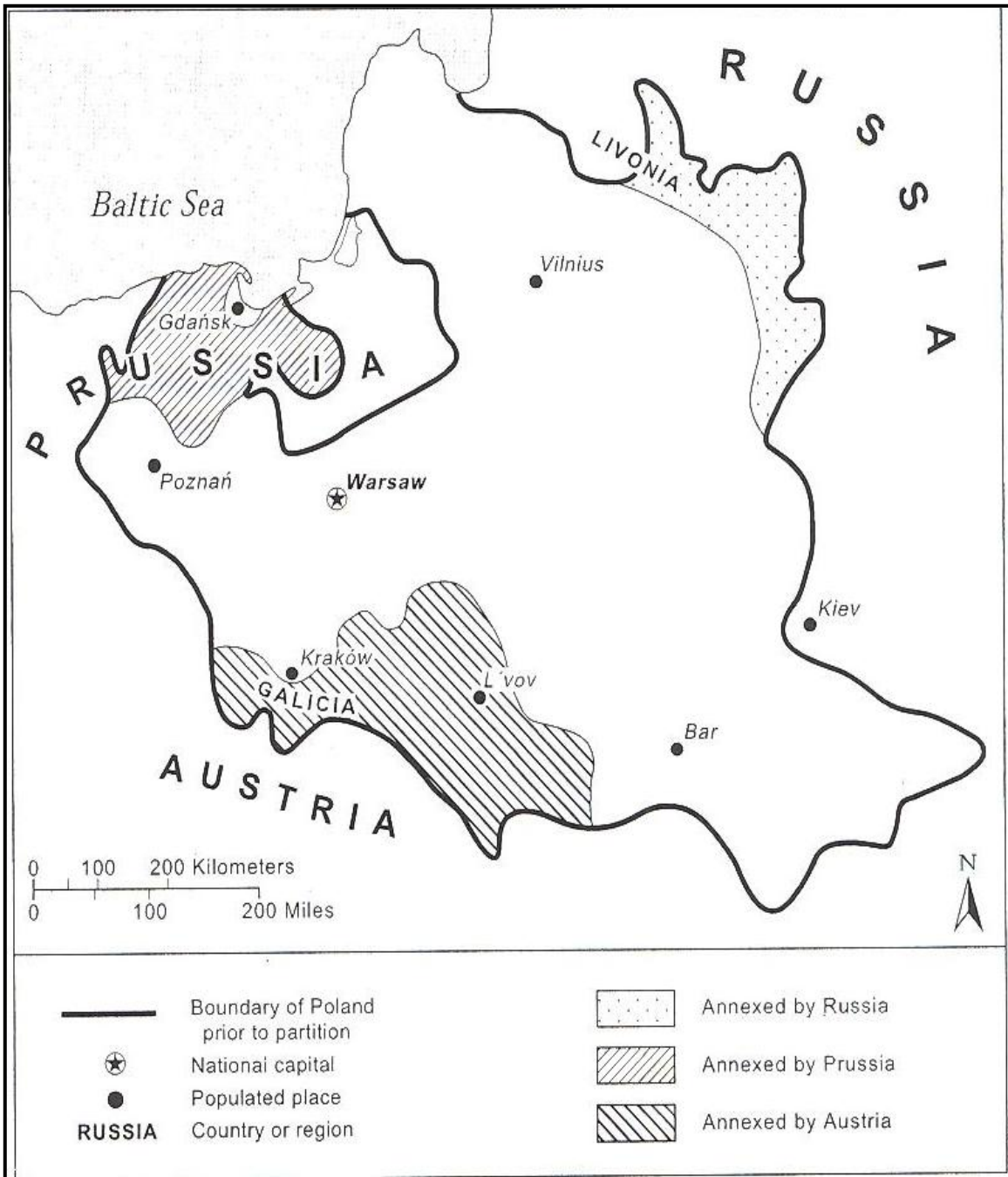


Figure 1: Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the First Partition, 1772.

Source: Library of Congress. Country Studies, "The First Partition of Poland, 1772," http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/poland/pl01_03a.pdf (accessed 2 May, 2008).

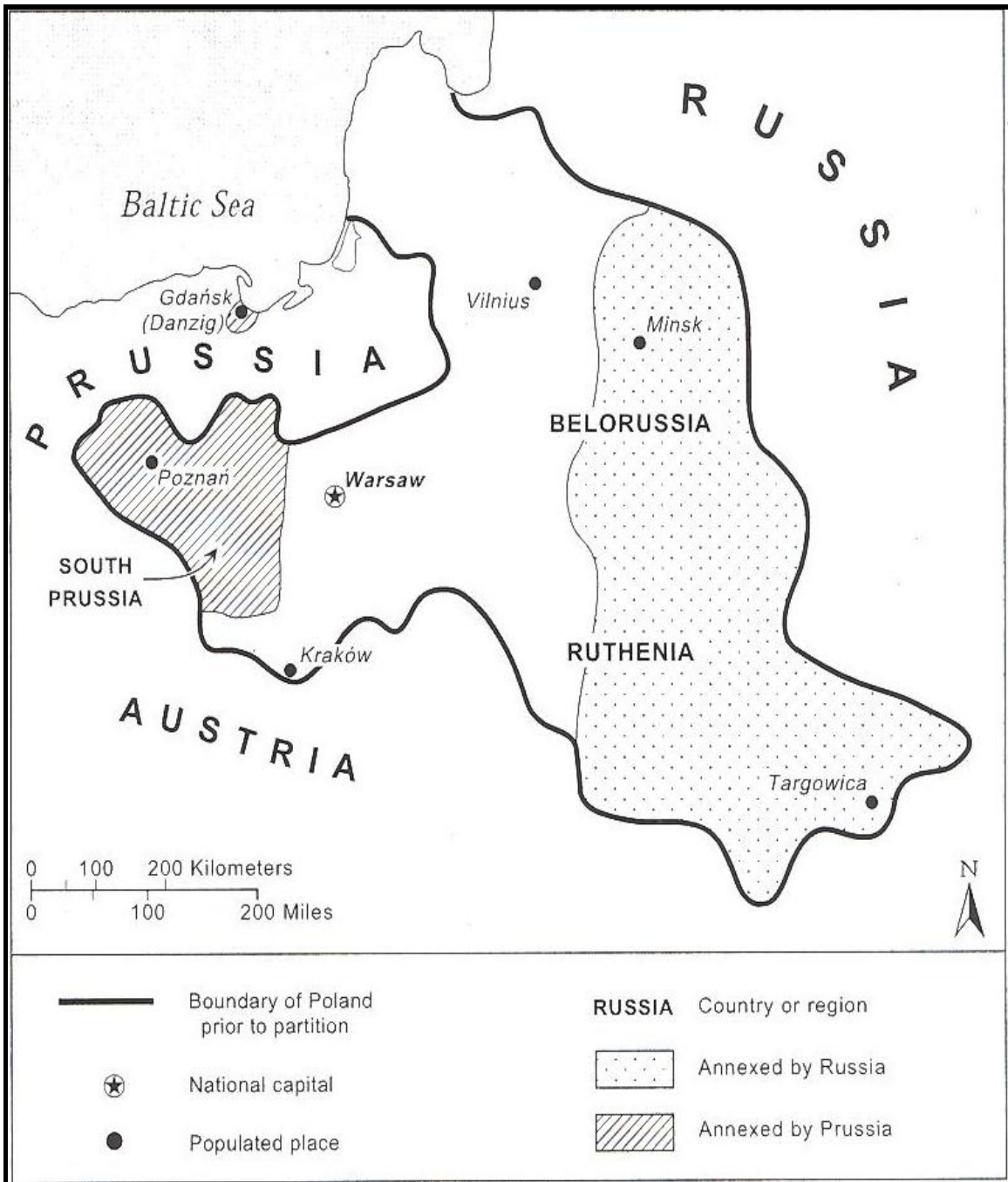


Figure 2: Second Partition of Poland, 1793

Source: Library of Congress. Country Studies, "The Second Partition of Poland, 1793," http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/poland/pl01_03b.pdf (accessed 2 May, 2008).

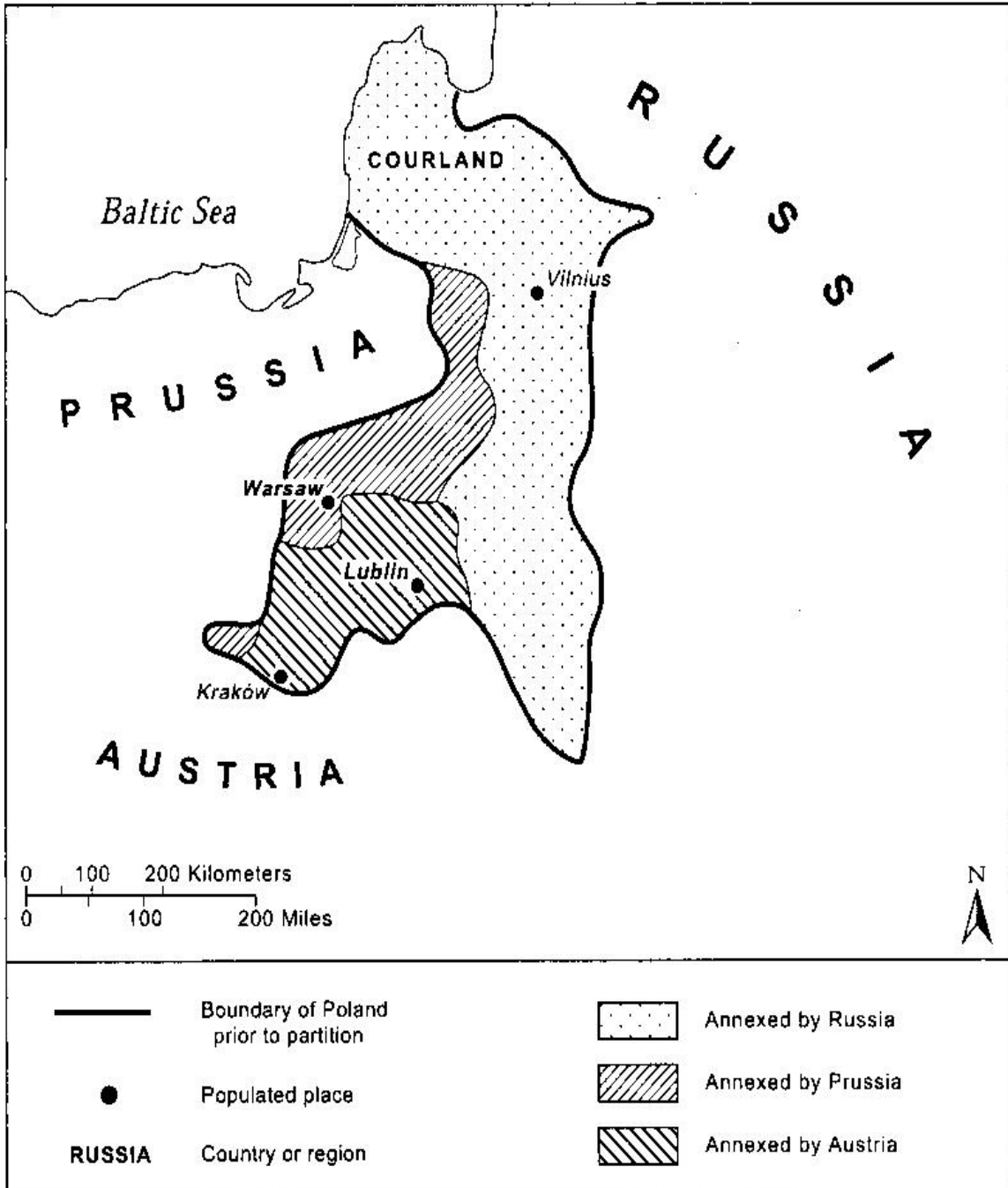


Figure 3: Third Partition of Poland, 1795

Source: Library of Congress. Country Studies, "The Third Partition of Poland, 1795," http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/poland/pl01_03c.pdf (accessed 2 May, 2008).



Figure 4: Duchy of Warsaw, 1807-13, and Congress Poland, 1815

Source: Library of Congress. Country Studies, “*Duchy of Warsaw, 1807-13, and Congress Poland, 1815,*” http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/poland/pl01_04a.pdf (accessed 2 May, 2008).

Glossary

- Kaliszanie.* A dissident group elected to the *Sejm* from the Kalisz district of the Congress Kingdom of Poland.
- Kongersówka.* “The poor little creation of the Congress.” A name given to the Congress Kingdom of Poland by its inhabitants.
- Namestnik.* Governor General of the Congress Kingdom of Poland, appointed by the Czar.
- Sjem.* Parliament of the Congress Kingdom of Poland that was composed of an upper Senate and a lower Chamber of Deputies.
- Szlachta.* Polish landed nobility.

Introduction

On a crisp autumn day in 1833, a committee of Russians and Poles met in Warsaw for the last time. Over the previous three years this small group of army officers had met at the behest of their sovereign, Nicholas I, to determine the guilt of the leaders of the late uprising. On November 29th, this tribunal sat down and pronounced that it was prepared to read out its verdict. Among the hundred or so accused was Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski, a man who had made his mark on Europe as one of the most brilliant political minds of his generation. He had served as a minister to the Russian Court during the reign of his close friend, Czar Alexander I and had been the most influential Pole at the Congress of Vienna in 1815, which had decided the fate of modern Europe. These facts did not sway the tribunal and he was found guilty *in absentia* and sentenced to be beheaded. However, Czartoryski had escaped from his homeland three years prior and had been living as an exile. When the news of his guilty verdict and the confiscation of his ancestral lands reached him, he was reputed to have calmly stated that, “I feel happy to be released from the bonds by which I had been fettered.”²

The history of Czartoryski’s Poland has always stood at a disadvantage. Situated in the center of a culturally divided continent, the Poles have been pulled in opposite directions for their entire existence as a nation. From the east, the Slavic tradition embodied in Russia pulled it in hopes of uniting all Slavs under one banner. It was also pulled by the Catholic west, which the Poles themselves have historically looked to for cultural inspiration and support. This cultural and historic limbo has greatly influenced

² Lubomir Gadon, “Emigracja polska”, vol. 1 (Cracow, 1901 - 1902), 208; quoted in M. Kukiel, *Czartoryski and European Unity, 1770-1861* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1955), 194.

the study of Polish history, especially in the western tradition, where it has been confined to either a footnote of a greater Russian chronicle or as merely the Slavic fringe of western civilization. The difficulties of determining Poland's place in modern European history are greatly enhanced by the fact that between 1795 and 1918, there was no Poland. In the eighteenth century, the lands of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth controlled vast tracts of eastern and central Europe. However, a series of partitions beginning in 1772 divided Poland between Russia, Prussia and Hapsburg Austria and by 1795, an independent Poland ceased to exist and a nation that had existed for centuries was wiped off the map by a simple stroke of the pen. During the nineteenth century, the majority of the former Commonwealth existed in the lands of the Russian Empire, which attempted to "russify" the population at all cost. By discriminating against every facet of Polish culture, language and religion, the Czars endeavored to create a servile population loyal to St. Petersburg. It was this undermining of national identity greatly hindered Polish studies in the west, where all that was seen was the overpowering and autocratic rule of imperial Russia.

The story of early nineteenth century Poland was of a nation desperately looking for an excuse to break its chains. Rebellions had sprung up in 1794 but had been crushed without mercy. New hopes rose with Napoleon Bonaparte, who after taking a Polish lover, granted a constitution to the Poles and created the Duchy of Warsaw. It lasted only from 1807 to 1813 and the Duchy's demise was solidified with that of Napoleon's at Vienna. During that Congress, which hoped to secure peace in Europe, a quasi-independent Congress Kingdom of Poland was created with the belief that it would placate the restless Poles. The Russian Czar, Alexander I, would serve as king with the

understanding that he respected certain conditions of the Polish *szlachta* (landed gentry), specifically a constitution and *Sjem* (parliament).³ These conditions were granted and Poland became one of the most politically liberal nations of Europe. However, Alexander I soon took measures to secure his power by placing his brother Grand Duke Constantine Pavlovitch as the Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Army in 1814.⁴ This action caused severe tension within the ranks of the *szlachta* and a newly found sense of nationalism began to ferment, which ultimately led to the armed revolt in the fall and winter of 1830 that many hoped would be a national resurrection.

In order to understand accurately the national history of any people, it is necessary to use as many primary sources in the native language as possible. Due to the lack of primary sources in Polish available, this paper relies heavily on secondary sources of Polish history written in English. Utilizing monographs of general history such as Norman Davies's, *God's Playground* and Piotr S. Wandycz's *The Lands of Partitioned Poland, 1795 – 1918*, one is able to look at the events of a small period of time while not losing focus of its greater context. The two decades that this paper concentrates on is only a tiny fraction of Polish history, therefore these general monographs make it possible to comprehend that small period more astutely. Apart from the generality garnered by these monographs, this paper has also employed works that give attention to more specific aspects of the subject, mainly the awakening of a Romantic national conscience within the Poles themselves and the zenith of that stirring in the November Uprising of 1830.

³ The Russian Czar occupied the office of King of Poland for the entire period that this paper covers. Therefore the term Czar will be used in the place of King for the use of clarity.

⁴ Konstantin Symmons – Symonolewicz, *National Consciousness in Poland: Origin and Evolution*. (Meadville, PA: Maplewood Press, 1983), 53.

These works have supplied an excellent collection of the events that the broader histories merely mention.

Though locating primary sources relevant to this research was difficult, several English translations proved to be vital. The personal memoir of Adam Czartoryski and Haring Harro's account of his experiences as a lancer in the Polish Army provide a window into Polish life during the period of the Congress Kingdom. One of the most important documents was the Constitution of 1815 found in the appendix of *The Imperfect Autocrat*. This document furnished a complete collection of Polish laws during the period. Among the political documents used, Romantic works such as the writings of Adam Mickiewicz and Maurycy Mochnacki depict the struggle within the souls of Poles who were forced to choose the erosion of their liberty or open war.

This research intends to explain that the creation of a semi-independent Polish state and the subsequent erosion of its liberty at the hands of the Russian Czars stirred an entire generation of Poles. By focusing on the years between the Congress of Vienna and the November Uprising of 1830, it will be possible to understand that even though Poland no longer existed as a political reality, the pride of nationalism felt by its people was still cherished.

Vienna

In November of 1814, peace in Europe finally seemed to be at hand. The French Empire of Napoleon Bonaparte had been crushed by the great powers of Britain, Prussia and Russia and the peoples of the continent called upon for their leaders to establish a lasting peace. The governments of Europe responded to the public outcry and assembled in Vienna. Diplomats that gathered in the baroque halls of the Austrian capital were

determined to create a new continental order that would establish true European harmony and ensure a lasting reconciliation among all parties. Unbeknownst to most western envoys, a Polish prince named Adam Jerzy Czartoryski had quietly arrived in the retinue of Czar Alexander I of Russia with his own agenda. For the twenty years following the final partition in 1795, Czartoryski had spent his life at the Russian court and had come to hold a considerable sway over the Czar. Despite his personal affection towards his sovereign, the prince had aspirations of resurrecting his native homeland at the expense of Russian hegemony. The Polish state Czartoryski envisioned at Vienna had not existed for twenty years, but he was determined to push the subject to whatever end he felt necessary. When the focus of discussion finally turned to Poland it seemed as if that resurrection would occur. The Russian Czar seemed genuinely open to the notion of an independent Polish state and wrote Czartoryski with regards of his intentions in establishing that nation:

You have had an opportunity of knowing my intentions as to the institutions which it is my will to establish in Poland and the improvements I desire to introduce in that country [...] which has so long been tossed about by disturbances and revolutions. [...] This letter, which I allow you even to show, so as to add confirmation to what you will have to say in order to carry out my intentions.⁵

Alexander's enlightened tone did not seem universally acknowledged by all those assembled in Vienna. The Austrian minister, Prince Clemens Metternich, noted while writing his memoirs years afterwards, that the benevolence bestowed upon Poland by the Czar was a ruse used to entice that nation into a lull of subservience. "[The Czar] believes he will satisfy his admirers by offering them some phantom of the so-called nationality

⁵ Adam Czartoryski, *Memoirs of Prince Adam Czartoryski*. Vol. 1 and 2, ed. Adam Gielgud, The Eastern Europe Collection (New York: Arno Press and The New York Times, 1971), 302-303.

which will shut their mouth as to the new arrangements.”⁶ The outright denial of the Pole’s ‘so-called nationality’ described in Metternich’s presence stood in denial of two years of Czarist ‘flattering’ which did nothing but ignite hopes of Polish independence.⁷ Metternich was not the only dignitary in Vienna who had doubts about the Czar’s intentions with respect to Poland. Baron von Stein, a Prussian ambassador to the Congress wrote in his diary at the beginning of the assembly that, “Many believe that the Czar wishes only to give the impression of supporting the Poles.”⁸ It seems that all of Europe was aware of the shadowy nature of the Czar’s Polish ambitions except for the Poles themselves. To them, the possibility of their own state outshined any hint of political reality.

Whatever his intentions were, it is clear that Alexander wished to be seen by his fellow sovereigns as an enlightened and modern ruler. His plans to achieve this almost completely rested on the question of Poland. By utilizing his friend Czartoryski’s honest desire to see his homeland resurrected from the dead, the Czar was able to imagine a new Poland tied to Russia at the hip and with himself as king. Czartoryski had discussed with the Czar his vision for a sovereign Polish state in September, 1814. While en route to Vienna, the prince had convinced Alexander to stop at his ancestral estates in Puławy where he was able to create a vision of the Poland he had been imagining since childhood. The prince reminded the Czar that the most obvious condition for any

⁶ Clemens Metternich, *Memoirs of Prince Metternich: 1773-1815*. Vol. 2 ed. Prince Richard Metternich, trans. Mrs. Alexander Napier. (New York: Howard Fertig, 1970), 567.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Frederick Freksa, ed., *A Peace Congress of Intrigue (Vienna, 1815): A Vivid, Intimate Account of the Congress of Vienna Composed of the Personal Memoirs of Its Important Participants*. (New York: The Century Co., 1919), 362.

enlightened state had to be a solid foundation based on a written constitution. Though Poland had been non-existent for two decades, it had a long history of political writings with the most recent being the Constitution of 1791, which the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth had once hoped to be governed under.⁹

It seemed clear to Czartoryski that instead of creating an entirely new political system, it would be simpler to revitalize the former charter, but with minor ‘russifications.’ The constitution remembered by the prince had been a futile attempt during the tumultuous years after the first partition to reorganize the country under the politically liberal guidelines of revolutionary France’s Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen. It had never been implemented due to the Commonwealth’s invasion by Alexander’s grandmother, Catherine II in 1792, who consequently invalidated it. In Czartoryski’s mind, the rebuilding of the constitution’s promises was imperative so that, “the integrity of the country, civil liberties and the order of society may be forever equally maintained.”¹⁰ As news of the Czar’s personal pledge made to Czartoryski at Vienna began to filter down through the Polish *szlachta*, hope began to appear in the streets of Warsaw, Lublin and Łódź. To a downtrodden and war weary nation, it finally appeared as if providence had decided to alleviate their afflicted homeland with a national renaissance.

Unfortunately for Czartoryski, the political idealism that the Enlightenment had afforded him and his fellow *szlachta* did not resonate in the halls of St. Petersburg. In

⁹ W.H. Zawadzki, *A Man of Honour: Adam Czartoryski as a Statesman of Russian and Poland 1795 – 1831*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 256.

¹⁰ Constitution of May Third 1791; quoted in Krystyna M. Olszer. *For Your Freedom and Ours: Polish Progressive Spirit from the 14th Century to the Present*. 2d. ed. (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1981), 52 -53.

spite of their personal friendship, Alexander had been formatting arrangements that would ensure his complete dominance over any newly established state on the Vistula. All independent European states in the nineteenth century relied on their military prowess to preserve that independence. St. Petersburg recognized that if a free Poland was allowed to control its own army, it would eventually attempt to break loose from its Russian shackles. Wishing to prevent this break, the Czar became convinced that Russian control of the Polish military was essential for continental tranquility. The martial bonds that the Czar desired to craft between the two nations would be the most effective way to solidify their union under one sovereign. In the year prior to Vienna, the Czar had sent his younger brother, Grand Duke Constantine Pavlovitch to Warsaw in order to ensure St. Petersburg's interests were being met. Constantine had arrived in the capital and soon settled into his designated post as commander of the Polish Army. However, it soon became evident that since the Polish lands were still considered 'Russian Poland,' Constantine was not so much the Commander-in-Chief as he was the *de facto* ruler. At first, this was of little concern to the Polish military establishment, the majority of whom had fought against Alexander with Napoleon, but it soon became clear that Constantine's aspirations for Poland were much different than those of the Poles.

Constantine's intentions of protecting his brother's interests at the expense of Polish liberty became evident when he proposed a rapid reorganization of the army. This restructuring included two basic principles that Alexander had instructed Constantine to uphold: first, the Polish Army was to be weakened so that it would be forced to rely completely on the patronage of the Czar; secondly, the Army's size was to be limited in

order to prevent any form of independent action.¹¹ In addition to these demands, Constantine strove to acquire the total submission of the newly established War Committee to the Czar in case of any future conflict. The committee adamantly refused, citing that since Poland had yet to be officially re-established as a sovereign state, it did not have the authority to make such agreements. Constantine rejected this technicality in a letter sent to the committee on December 3rd, 1814. He informed the generals of the War Committee that their unwillingness to recognize the reforms was preventing the Czar from aiding their cause in Vienna.¹² When rumors began to spread throughout the Polish ranks that they would be incorporated into the Russian Army, soldiers sent a letter expressing their uniform opinion on what they saw as Czarist encroachment on the institutions of the Polish military:

Although we are in [Alexander's] power, only the fatherland has the right to our blood. If [Alexander] guarantees our fatherland we will die for it and our great protector...otherwise [we] rather remain prisoners.¹³

The following day, ignoring the sentiment of the common soldier, the War Committee succumbed to the demands of the Grand Duke and placed their nation's forces at the disposal of St. Petersburg. Whatever ill will felt by the Polish generals towards their new Commander-in-Chief, they were comforted by the hope that he would be recalled to St. Petersburg once the new constitution was ratified.

¹¹ Agneta T. Pienkos, *East European Monographs, No. CCXVII: The Imperfect Autocrat. Grand Duke Constantine Pavlovich and the Polish Congress Kingdom*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 40.

¹² *Ibid.*, 26.

¹³ Waclaw Tokarz, "Armja królestwa polskiego" (Piotrków: Nakładem departamenta Wojskowego Naczelnego Komitetu Narodowego, 1917); quoted in Pienkos, *The Imperfect Autocrat*, 26.

The Congress Kingdom

In June of 1815, Alexander journeyed to Warsaw for his coronation as king of an independent Congress Kingdom of Poland. The anointing of Alexander as God's chosen monarch created a sense of pride in the Polish people, not for their new king, but rather for their country which now joined the community of nations. Yet, this new Congress Kingdom was not an exact recreation of the former Commonwealth. It had a population of only 3.3 million and it was smaller than Napoleon's Duchy of Warsaw, at only 127,000 square kilometers. The Poles themselves took these reductions with a grain of salt and half jokingly referred to their new country as the *Kongresówka* or "the poor little creation of the Congress."¹⁴

The new Constitution of 1815 set out to govern the *Kongresówka* was seen as a milestone of personal liberty, not only for the Russian Empire but for all of Europe. Despite the autonomy that Czartoryski felt it guaranteed, St. Petersburg was able to assert their political dominance by forcing the first article of the new constitution to declare that the Kingdom of Poland would be 'forever united' to Russia. This unity was the one concept that Russian bureaucrats had insisted on and it was freely given by the *szlachta* to ensure independence.¹⁵ The other basic freedoms, most of which were unheard of in most of nineteenth century continental Europe were enshrined within the new constitution. Especially important to the increasingly literate urban masses was the guaranteed 'liberty of the press' which allowed for the newspapers and journals to openly

¹⁴ Norman Davies, *God's Playground: A History of Poland*, vol. 2, *1795 to the Present*. 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 226.

¹⁵ Constitution of 1815, art. 1; quoted in Pienkos, *The Imperfect Autocrat*, 157.

engage in public discourse.¹⁶ To add to the growing intellectualism that the press ensured, all public business was to be conducted in neither Latin nor Russian, but Polish. The most fundamental privilege, however, was the new nation's right to institute its own military coupled with its own Polish oath. Czartoryski understood that the naïveté of perpetual peace was improbable and that a standing and distinctive Polish Army would force the Russian autocrat to consider negotiations before violence.

A newly elected *Sejm* would consist of two houses, an upper Senate and a lower Chamber of Deputies that would debate bills and pass the laws. The Administrative Council of five members and a secretary of state had the responsibility of forming an executive branch that could serve as the Czar's political arm within Poland. The members of the Council were to be selected by the Czar's personally appointed representative, the *Namestnik* (Governor General).¹⁷ In fact, the majority of the Czar's power would be in the area of foreign policy, which had to remain in line with Russia's and would be monitored by the Ministry of the Interior in St. Petersburg. Also, the right to appoint all public officials would fall on the Czar.¹⁸

Following the proclamation of Alexander I as King of Poland in June of 1815 and the celebrations to commemorate a seemingly impossible resurrection, the political situation deteriorated rapidly. Suspicions began to mount that the Czar was using Poland as a tool for his 'larger scheme' of influencing elements throughout Europe in order to stop the spread of the Jacobinism that had been instilled in the people by Napoleon's

¹⁶ Ibid., 158.

¹⁷ Ibid., 162-168.

¹⁸ Piotr S. Wandycz, *A History of East Central Europe*, vol. 7, *The Lands of Partitioned Poland, 1795 - 1918*. (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1974), 74-75.

Grande Armée. This desire to guarantee traditional conservatism is a probable reason that the Czar failed to recall his brother as Commander-in-Chief of Polish forces.¹⁹ Since the coronation, Constantine had become much more emboldened specifically due to the fact that besides the Polish Army, he had thirty thousand Russian infantrymen at his disposal.²⁰ The continual presence of the Grand Duke in Warsaw immediately produced wide ranging discontent not only in the military establishment but in the *szlachta* and common elements of society as well. The first significant struggle between Constantine and the new government occurred in the autumn of 1815. Citing the constitution, the Administrative Council announced plans to create a separate Ministry of War.²¹ Constantine fervently opposed what he saw as the council's unwarranted questioning of the military authority granted to him by his elder brother. This impasse took up a majority of the effort of the council during the first months of its existence. The major frustration among the Poles was that they lacked the legal authority to sidestep Constantine in military matters. With neither party willing to back down, a stalemate ensued, effectively preserving the *status quo*.

Meanwhile, Czartoryski spent his first months in the *Kongresówka* attempting to rekindle his friendship with Alexander in hopes of preventing any further disruptions caused by Constantine. Yet, Czartoryski had fallen out of favor at the Russian Court and his letters denouncing the Grand Duke as, “[nourishing] hatred for the country” fell on

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 77.

²⁰ Pienkos, *The Imperfect Autocrat*, 39.

²¹ Constitution of 1815, chap IV, art. 4; quoted in Pienkos, *The Imperfect Autocrat*, 163.

deaf ears.²² To add to the problems with Constantine and possibly to keep a closer eye on Czartoryski and the *szlachta*, St. Petersburg dispatched Nicolai Novosiltsov as the Czar's personal plenipotentiary to the Congress Kingdom. This post did not exist within the Polish constitution and Novosiltsov was subsequently seen by the government for what he was; an enforcer of Russian policy, free to operate outside the law.²³

By December 1815, Czartoryski's incessant complaining about Constantine had caused Alexander to harden towards him. Ignoring Czartoryski, the Czar appointed the one-legged Gen. Józef Zajączek as the *Namestnik*. The Polish prince had been thought by many observers as the logical choice for the *Kongresówka*'s highest position but his public disgrace was more than mere pettiness on the part of the Czar. Though Alexander publicly pronounced his love for Poland, he had no desire to have an 'independent-minded and experienced statesmen' garner any actual power. General Zajączek on the other hand was the epitome of the eighteenth century soldier. He possessed an unflinching sense of duty and honor which left him with little patience for civilian politics. St. Petersburg was confident that the new conservative *Namestnik* would resist any attempt to shift the situation.²⁴

Zajączek's first order of business as *Namestnik* was to settle the dispute between the Administrative Council and Constantine over the still non-existent Ministry of War. An agreement was reached and the council was allowed its ministry as long as they agreed to a minister chosen by Constantine. The man selected was Gen. Michał

²² Kazimierz Bartoszewicz, "Utworzenie Królestwa Kongresowego," (Krakow: Nakładem Centralnego Wydawnictwa, N.K.N., 1916), 171; quoted in Pienkos, *The Imperfect Autocrat*, 28.

²³ Zawadzki, *A Man of Honour*, 263.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

Wielhorski who was regarded by the Poles as a capable soldier and an ardent patriot. Yet, his position was primarily made ceremonial by Constantine who barred him from discussing military affairs with the Administrative Council. The Grand Duke had gone so far as notifying the council that he alone had the authority to speak to the Czar concerning military matters and that it was a branch outside the reach of the civil government.²⁵

It was becoming increasingly evident that in spite of everything the Poles had been given, Constantine was emerging as the only true power within the *Kongresówka*. The reality of the Grand Duke's presence left the Poles to ponder the reasons why he had been allowed to stay in the country. The clearest explanation to those well versed in Russian autocracy was that Constantine would interpret the Polish constitution how Alexander saw it, not as an emblem of liberty but as a treaty of unification.²⁶ In spite of Russia's intentions within the Congress Kingdom, the Poles still attempted to create a life for themselves that embodied the principles of their constitution.

The years before 1818 would become remembered by Poles as a pleasant calm before a storm of national suffering. During these short years, Polish national life began to awaken in a burst of profound energy that would influence budding revolutionaries and reformers alike. The most influential of these bursts was in the area of education which was intended to protect 'Polishness' from Russian influence. In 1815, the Commission for Religious Denominations and Public Enlightenment was established to achieve this. Stanisław Potocki, the commission's director, took his role as a secularized national

²⁵ Ibid., 264.

²⁶ Franklin A. Walker, "Constantine Pavlovitch: An Appraisal," *Slavic Review* vol. 26, no. 3 (September 1967): 447.

educator seriously and by 1816 had opened several universities including one in Warsaw. However, Potocki understood that higher education would not be enough to help the millions of illiterate peasants that created the majority of the kingdom's population. To combat the dilemma, Potocki had the commission set up over one thousand primary schools in every corner of the country. It was the hope of Potocki that these rural schools would extend the national pride felt by those in the capital.

Polish spirits rose even higher in 1818 when Alexander arrived in Warsaw for an official visit. His arrival bolstered a general feeling throughout the country that their Czar would protect the new nation from the despotic intentions of his younger brother and the bureaucrats in St. Petersburg. These hopes appeared to be justified when Alexander opened the first meeting of the *Sejm*. In these days of political euphoria, the Poles were simply happy to exist as a separate nation. It seemed inconceivable that their sovereign would attempt any onslaught on their liberty.²⁷ This belief in the just ruler and its equally just parliament was buttressed by the relative freedom of the *Kongresówka*'s press, something entirely new to Polish intellectual and political life. In the Prussian and Austrian partitions it was non-existent and even in Napoleon's Duchy of Warsaw, which prided itself on its liberalism, there existed only official newspapers and journals. As the *Sejm* met in those first few months, it seemed as if a truly free press would report its proceedings to an eager public.

This sense of intellectual liberty began with the publication of possibly the first uncensored newspaper in Poland's history, the *Gazeta Codzienna Narodowa i Obca* (Daily National and Foreign Gazette). The *Gazeta* was followed by dozens of minor

²⁷ Davies, *God's Playground*, 229.

periodicals that attempted to take advantage of the freedom allowed by the government. These smaller newspapers were definite products of their era and they encouraged nationwide pride by placing nationalistic titles across their headings. Titles such as *Orzeł Biały* (White Eagle) and *Polska Dekada* (Polish Decade) reflected the mood of the young writers who saw a new world guided by the principles of freedom instead of the absolutist regimes of the past. Young editors, byproducts of the new and growing intelligentsia created by the universities, wrote feverishly about the political hot topics of the day. It was their duty to report the proceedings of the *Sejm* as well as the actions of officials in order to preserve the integrity of their government. Yet, it was this desire to preserve Polish integrity that was soon to attract the attention of a regime unwilling to face the criticism of its subjects.²⁸

Within a few short months, however, the *Gazeta*, *Orzeł* and the others had been shut down on the orders of Zajączek and strict censorship of all periodicals ensued. The budget that the *Sejm* had debated since its inception had finally been sent to the Administrative Council for ratification. However, on the orders of Alexander, the budget's publication was delayed indefinitely in order to keep the Congress Kingdom from asserting too much independence. Lacking a budget left the *Kongresówka* from paying its debts, thus forcing it to continue to rely on loans from St. Petersburg.²⁹ The value of education had also been suffering due to the establishment's perception of Potocki. The national educator had been seen as too much of a liberal reformist for Warsaw. Potocki's position had been under threat from the Roman Catholic Church

²⁸ Wandycz, *Lands of Partitioned Poland*, 97.

²⁹ Norman Davies, *Heart of Europe: A Short History of Poland*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 165.

which saw his secular beliefs as heresy and his commission as an attack on the Church's traditional role as Poland's educator. The bishops soon allied themselves with Novosiltsov, who used Potocki's radical anti-clerical satire, *Podróż do Ciemogrodu* (A Journey to Ignoranceville), as an excuse to force him to resign. His replacement was the reactionary Stanisław Grabowski, who closed over a third of the primary schools and almost all separate Jewish schools in the country. One of the more subtle changes initiated by Grabowski was the replacement of Potocki's textbooks on ancient Athenian democracy with ones glorifying imperial Rome.³⁰

By 1819, political reality had set in and the people began to appreciate that they were seen not as an independent nation allied with Russia, but as a western province. When the *Sejm* met again in 1820, there was a small liberal opposition from the western city of Kalisz headed by two brothers, Wincenty and Bona-wentura Niemoyowski. This opposition, known as the *Kaliszanie*, was guided by the ideas of Wincenty whose main point was that the Czar was essentially 'a good father' whose pure intentions were corrupted by his underlings. In the Polish case, those corrupt officials were Constantine and Novosiltsov. During the *Sejm*'s second session, the two brothers rallied against the censorship imposed by the *Namestnik* and the inability of the people to propose amendments to the constitution. However, St. Petersburg did not see the Niemoyoskis as honest patriots loyal to their 'good father.' To Russian conservatives, Polish patriots were seen as revolutionaries determined to undermine all legitimate authority in the kingdom. Alexander wrote to Constantine giving him a free hand to ignore the constitution in order that the *Kaliszanie* dissidents be silenced. This free hand spelt the beginning of the end to

³⁰ Davies, *God's Playground*, 228.

all political opposition in Poland. Constantine used the *carte blanche* given to him by the Czar to permanently eliminate Kalisz as a provisional district and then ordered the *Sejm* to dissolve.³¹

The Underground

This ever-growing conservatism in the government, coupled with its complete disregard for constitutional law, forced many of the *szlachta* to create secret societies in which they could think freely without worrying about the censors. Out of all the societies, the National Freemasonry soon became the most influential. National Freemasonry was established in 1819 and governed by an iron-willed army major, Walerian Łukasiński. Like most members of the *szlachta*, Łukasiński and the Freemasons were led by a principle of reform not revolution. Polish secret societies of the early *Kongresówka* such as the National Freemasonry did not propose complete political independence. Instead they promoted the preservation of Polish national culture and history. They saw that culture being routinely rooted out of the public sphere by the ever more powerful Novosiltsov and felt that it was their duty to keep it alive. The threat posed by the Freemason's growing influence in the *szlachta* and the army led to its disbandment by Constantine and his subordinates via the Administrative Council. Instead of sinking into the background, Łukasiński simply dropped the Masonic tendencies of his organization and created a more conspiratorial Patriotic Society.

This new society was now fully fed up with the despotic tendencies of the authorities and began to take a more radical approach to their country's ills. The national suffering led the Patriotic Society to hatch a plan to create 'local cells' across Poland.

³¹ Wadycz, *Lands of Partitioned Poland*, 84.

These cells were intended to propagate the fight for full and immediate independence. Even after Constantine ordered Łukasiński's arrest in 1822 and the elimination of the Patriotic Society as a political force, its views continued to influence other secret societies such as the League of Free Poles and Society of United Slavs.³² However, these societies were not nearly as organized or political as Łukasiński's and they remained social gatherings for *szlachta*. The vacuum created by the dissolution of the Patriotic Society led to the creation of new underground movements freed of the old, liberal aristocracy and filled with younger and more radical elements.

These underground movements were mainly populated by university students and a growing number of young officers who were determined to experience the same liberty enjoyed by other nations. Polish youth assembled throughout the countryside and as far away as Wilno (modern day Vilnius, Lithuania) and Berlin, to discuss politics, philosophy and a future society.³³ Maturing revolutionaries promoted ideas of social change for the citizen and "an uncompromising promotion of liberty which rejected all forms of tyranny" even going so far to rally against the Polish *szlachta*. These ideas inspired a new generation of Romantic thinkers who saw the plights of their countrymen and responded with new forms of nationalism.

The robust underground of Wilno was seen as the greatest threat to Russian control in Poland, even though it was situated outside *Kongresówka*'s borders. As the second great city of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Wilno was a relative second center of Polish culture and was seen by all Poles as a portion of their ancestral

³² Davies, *God's Playground*, 229.

³³ J.K.Fedorowicz, ed., *A Republic of Nobles: Studies in Polish History to 1864*.(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 270-271.

homeland. After he fell out of favor, Czartoryski had managed to attain the position of curator of the University of Wilno and had been using his office to influence new generations of Polish patriots. However, by the time that the young poet Adam Mickiewicz arrived at the university, Czartoryski had been replaced and his pro-Polish policies had been reversed. The university community celebrated Czartoryski's memory and patriotism by hosting a collection of secret organizations dedicated to the Polish cause.

One of the most prominent student organizations was the *Towarzystwo Filomatów* (Philomatic Society and known as the Philomats) founded by Mickiewicz shortly after his arrival. Initially, the Philomats were like any other university society in that their preaching for ennobling of the Polish soul was seen as benign byproducts of university life.³⁴ Yet, following the appearance of Novosiltsov at the university in the middle of 1823, thoughts of outright independence began to be quietly discussed. Novosiltsov had arrived with the intentions of smoking out all secret societies and his presence infuriated the Philomats who saw him as another cog in the machine of brutal anti-Polish campaigns on the part of St. Petersburg. Denouncing their silence as a lack of nerves, the Philomats now publicly declared that their goal was to see the complete recreation of the old Commonwealth.³⁵

Novosiltsov acted quickly and banished several students to Russia in hopes of crushing the Philomats. The fear that the students had for Novosiltsov was well founded. Harro Harring, a former cadet in a Polish Lancer Regiment, remembered that in 1823,

³⁴ Monica M. Gardner, *The Eastern Europe Collection: Adam Mickiewicz. The National Poet of Poland*. (New York: Arno Press and The New York Times, 1971), 18.

³⁵ Davies, *God's Playground*, 230.

One half of the University of Wilno, besides numerous youths and young men from distant governments of the Empire were, by Novosiltsov's decision, condemned, some to be sent to Siberia, some to serve as common soldiers, some to suffer the punishment of the knout (whip), and some to imprisonment; all this because a boy had chalked on a wall the words 'Live the constitution of 1791.'³⁶

Having staved off the worst of Novosiltsov's punishment, Mickiewicz left for St. Petersburg in 1824 after determining that Russia was the last place that the censors would look for him. Shortly after his entry into the imperial capital, he made connections with various members of a Russian dissident group known as the Decembrists. Within weeks, Mickiewicz was serving as a messenger between various Russian and Polish secret societies, much to the chagrin of the authorities who had dispatched one of their agents to spy on him. Surprisingly, all these conspiracies associated with the young Polish poet coincided with his meteoric rise to literary fame as a literary genius in Russia.³⁷

When the *Sejm* met in 1825 for the first time in four years, it was a starkly different atmosphere from the one the Niemoyoski brothers had known. Debates were no longer public and any opposition within the chamber had been weeded out. It appeared as if all power of that body and indeed the Polish government had been collected and forged into a bulwark for the conservatism of Constantine. All chances for the *Sejm* to have better relationship with its Czar also disappeared in December 1825 when Alexander died leaving Russia in the midst of a succession crisis.

Constantine, as the younger brother of the childless Alexander, was next in line for the throne. He admitted however, that he was neither capable of ruling nor was

³⁶ Harring Harro, *Poland Under the Dominion of Russia*. (Boston: Printed for I.S. Syzanski, 1834), 46.

³⁷ Konstancy Zantuan, "Mickiewicz In Russia," *Russian Review* vol. 23, No. 3 (July, 1964): 238-246.

wanted as Czar by the powerful movers in St. Petersburg. The reasons for the latter snubbing could be several. It is probable that his growing affection for Poland had irked the most powerful slavophiles in Russia. The Grand Duke had arrived in Warsaw in 1814 despising all things Polish but by 1825 had become an avowed patron of his adopted homeland even to the point of marrying a Pole beneath his rank, Joanna Grudzinska. After Constantine, the next in line was his younger brother by seventeen years, Nicholas. However, Nicolas wanted the crown even less than Constantine and a series of letters were hurriedly sent between the brothers pleading with the other to take the throne. Eventually, Nicholas agreed to take the crown as long as Constantine was allowed to remain in Warsaw.

Nicholas's ascension in 1825 as Czar of Russia and King of Poland brought about a wave of protests in Russia led by the Decembrist group that had been associating with Mickiewicz. Shouting "Constantine and Constitution," the Decembrists were not against the Empire itself, but Nicholas, and advocated that Constantine assert his birth right. Whatever its intentions were, it was quickly crushed and the new Czar began to deal out heavy handed reactions to all his political enemies.³⁸

In the *Kongresówka*, this meant that the underground movements and secret societies were under an increased threat. Nicholas attempted to persuade Constantine to hold a court of inquiry in Poland to bring suspected revolutionaries to the surface. His elder brother refused, citing that since Łukasiński had been imprisoned, the Patriotic Society had all but disappeared. Without its leadership, Constantine argued, the other societies posed little danger. Constantine went even as far as defending the actions of

³⁸ Pienkos, *The Imperfect Autocrat*, 87.

Polish dissidents, writing to a friend, “In good faith could you reproach them? Put yourself in their place and suppose that Russia had been partitioned as was Poland, what would you have done?”³⁹

This feeling of affection for Poland was something that most Poles found hard to believe but it speaks volumes of Constantine’s personal dilemma. The Grand Duke was a man who had genuinely come to love Poland and felt that Alexander had not fulfilled the promises he had made with Czartoryski. Despite his sympathies for the Poles, he still felt his duty lay with his Czar. The conflicted feelings within Constantine initially caused him to deny Nicholas’s request to send Russian agents into Poland. However, after further prodding, Constantine’s resolve collapsed and the agents were allowed into the country. Nicholas was never as conflicted as his older brother and his distaste for the *Kongresówka* was ever apparent. To Nicholas there was no Poland, only a western province riddled with dissent.⁴⁰

The agents ordered by Nichols into Poland in early 1826 were commanded to completely disregard civil liberties and the constitution in their investigation. What was most disturbing to the Poles was that the commission set up by the agents was not solely a Russian affair but one shared with Polish conservatives. Out of the ten committee members, five were Poles and the chairman was the President of the Senate. Its main focus was to find the Patriotic Society and its new leader, Lieutenant-Colonel Krzyżanowski guilty of high treason and to sentence them to whatever fate the Czar determined. The remaining remnants of the society waited calmly believing that since

³⁹ Constantine to Opochnin, February 17, 1826, Schilder, *Nicholas I*, 531; quoted in Pienkos, *The Imperfect Autocrat*, 90.

⁴⁰ Davies, *Heart of Europe*, 165.

only one or two of their members had participated in the Decembrist revolt, the rest would be spared. Unfortunately, the society was betrayed by one of its brothers who divulged to the police conversations he had heard between his fellow members. This disclosure coupled with the fruits of a year long investigation resulted in the arrest of nine members of the Patriotic Society including Krzyżanowski.⁴¹ After much haggling between the Czar and his brother of where the trial should be held, in the *Kongresówka* or St. Petersburg and before a Polish or Russian judge, it was agreed that the *Sejm* would convene specially to hear the case. Finally on May 22, 1828 sentence was passed much to the displeasure of Constantine and the rage of Nicholas. All seven of the accused were found innocent of treason.⁴² The justification of the *Sejm* tribunal was that it could not be considered high treason for a Pole to advocate the rebuilding of a Polish state.⁴³

While the *Sejm* was holding its deliberations from 1826 to 1828, stress cracks appeared between the cosmopolitan elite that had created the Congress Kingdom and Romantic nationalists who felt stifled by it. The new tidal wave of Romanticism was being felt in every corner of Europe but it had particular resonance in the stateless nations. Young patriots had discovered that literature could be used to communicate with the larger masses of the public and this realization caused a plethora of Polish works to spring from the pens of writers in every corner of the country, though many remained ineffective and unread.⁴⁴

⁴¹ R. F. Leslie, *Polish Politics and the Revolution of November 1830*. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1969), 113-114.

⁴² Pienkos, *The Imperfect Autocrat*, 90-91.

⁴³ Wandycz, *Lands of Partitioned Poland*, 88.

⁴⁴ Fedorowicz, *Republic*, 270-271.

For the most part these writers took the same view as the secret societies and had little desire to see the people rise up only to be cut down. Their aim was to awaken and nourish the national soul and to instill it in every citizen regardless of class.⁴⁵ Mickiewicz used for inspiration the desire of his countrymen to remember their own traditions and culture when writing his greatest early work, *Konrad Wallenrod*. This bitter tale of hiding one's nationalism brought to light the hidden truth of many Polish families. In the words of Ladislav Mickiewicz, the poem depicted the reality of growing up Polish in the Congress Kingdom, where,

It [was] compulsory for [the Pole's] parents, who must feign joy as they hang out banners and illuminate their windows while they carry mourning in their souls... So long as throughout the breadth and length of ancient Poland unending humiliation from the enemy is the Poles' daily bread, so long as the curses of *Konrad Wallenrod* will find an echo in Polish souls.⁴⁶

The Romantic nationalists did not simply create their own works to inspire the nation. They borrowed from their past so that they could remind themselves that they had not always been the property of foreign powers. The rediscovery of Józef Wybicki's words to Jan Dabrowski's "Polish Legion" led them to start reevaluating the possibility of reform.

While we live she is existing,
Poland is not fallen;
We'll win with swords resisting,
What the foe has stolen.⁴⁷

Wybicki's forceful words had not argued for reform and the Romantics wondered why they had. Living during the oppressive late 1820s, they understood that despite their

⁴⁵ Peter Brock, ed., *Nationalism and Populism in Partitioned Poland: Selected Essays*. (London: Orbis Books, 1973), 13.

⁴⁶ Gardner, *Adam Mickiewicz*, 62.

⁴⁷ Soboleski, *Poets*, 201.

country's lack of formal existence, as long as Poles still lived its essence would survive. Many young patriots were coming to believe that the only way they could save their country was through force.⁴⁸

The rise of the Romantic nationalists was coupled with a growing 'religio-nationalistic' trend. People began to equate the faith of their souls with the patriotism of their hearts. The piety that these Poles identified with found a leader in Kazimierz Brodziński. Brodziński was a member of the Warsaw Society of Friends of Learning and urged them to add religious flavor to their philosophy. For him, Poland had not simply been destroyed and oppressed by the partitioning powers, it had been sacrificed so that the other nations of Europe could enjoy their freedom. He labeled his martyred country the 'Christ of Nations' which had special meaning to the religious Poles.⁴⁹

The ideas of the Romantic intelligentsia and 'religio-nationalists' soon found a special group of admirers in the Polish Army officer corps. The older officers had been taught in the tradition of the eighteenth century and the French Revolution but the junior officers and cadets were quickly becoming connected with the modern, Romantic philosophies of Mickiewicz and Brodziński. Despite the infiltration of these new ideas into the lower ranks, the army was widely considered by both Russians and Poles as the buttress for the czarist regime in the *Kongresówka*. Constantine himself held complete faith in the army and believed in its loyalty above all else. This belief seemed justified in 1829, during the high water mark of the *Sejm* commission to uproot the secret societies,

⁴⁸ Brian Porter, *When Nationalism Began to Hate: Imagining Modern Politics in Nineteenth – Century Poland*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 18.

⁴⁹ Symmons -Symonolewicz, *National Consciousness*, 55.

the entire retinue of Polish officers reaffirmed their own oath of loyalty to Constantine's and the Czar's rule.

In spite of this outward show of support and allegiance of the army, trouble was brewing within the lower ranks. Life in the Polish Army for junior officers was becoming stale as young men were left to perform endless parades and drills for Constantine. What had once been seen as a necessary part of a young man's education had slowly been corroded away by the Grand Duke's iron rule. All advancement through the ranks had virtually stopped which bubbled into a sense of hopelessness for young cadets. One instance that would come to haunt the army was the suicide of a young officer on Warsaw's parade ground after being humiliated by the Grand Duke.⁵⁰ An even more disturbing account was given by Harring Harro who remembered a lancer unable to control his horse. Enraged, Constantine ordered that the man jump with his horse over a pyramid of twelve bayonets. After performing the task four times, the horse's legs broke. A general attempted to intervene on the animal's behalf, but was arrested as a rebel.⁵¹

As the older generation stood silently at the sight of Constantine's erratic behavior, the young began to act. In 1830, Second-Lieutenant Piotr Wysocki, an instructor at the infantry academy in the Łazienki Gardens near Warsaw and Col. Józef Zaliwski began to consider ideas about an armed rebellion. Soon after their meeting they began to associate with civilian conspirators who were developing a plan to assassinate the Grand Duke himself.⁵² These intellectuals and soldiers soon found common ground.

⁵⁰ Leslie, *Polish Politics*, 115-116.

⁵¹ Harro, *Poland Under*, 72-73.

⁵² Davies, *God's Playground*, 231.

Both groups wanted to have a chance to succeed in their fields; for the junior officers it was advancement, while for the students it was unsupervised and uncensored thought.

Their frustration reached a boiling point in the summer of 1830 when the world that the Congress of Vienna had created unraveled. Greece had recently won its independence from the Ottoman Empire and Belgium officially separated from the United Netherlands. In Paris, long considered the hotbed of European revolution, citizens rose up and overturned the monarchy of Charles X. The reaction politics that had characterized Europe for the past fifteen years eroded in the face of liberal nationalism.⁵³

Like the great cities of the West, Warsaw was abuzz with dread. Rumors were beginning to spread that Nicholas had ordered the mobilization of Polish troops to quell France's July Revolution and Belgium's secession from Holland. On October 18th, Constantine received a message from Nicholas commanding that the Polish Army be assembled in Warsaw in order to assist the Dutch. However, this order was quickly rescinded and the Polish army was left disorganized and confused while Russian forces mounted in the east with expectations of being deployed to either Brussels or Paris. After Constantine rescinded the mobilization orders, strikes broke out in several factories across Warsaw causing mass arrests by the police. Making matters worse was Novosiltsov's discovery of a rumor that cadets were conspiring against Constantine.⁵⁴

Sensing trouble, Constantine wrote to Nicholas who in turn gave the Grand Duke another *carte blanche* to handle any possible disturbance. He immediately called together the top echelons of the Polish aristocracy and begged them to urge peace. In his

⁵³ Ibid., 232.

⁵⁴ Leslie, *Polish Politics*, 120-121.

desperation to avoid an all out revolution he publicly admitted his past errors, promised to forgive the *Kaliszanie* and reduce police presence in Warsaw.⁵⁵ Unfortunately for the Grand Duke, the mob was beginning to swell and it seemed that any attempts at negotiations would be futile.

The November Uprising

On the night of November 29th, 1830, the powder keg erupted. Swelled with the Romantic notions of Mickiewicz and the ‘religio – nationalism’ of Brodziński, young radicals rose up in a fury of violence. These revolutionaries agreed that the signal to initiate their revolt would be the burning of a brewery near Constantine’s Warsaw residence, the Belweder Palace. Quickly after the fire was ignited, it was discovered by a fire brigade who put it out before it could be seen by the majority of Warsaw’s residents. Meanwhile, Lt. Wysocki organized a small group of cadets to incite the Warsaw garrison to rise up and aid their cause. The cadets pleaded with every senior officer they found in the barracks for help but none were willing to betray the oath they had declared to the Czar.⁵⁶

The most ambitious portion of their plan was led by Ludwik Nabelak who had been sent to the Belweder Palace to seek out Constantine. Nabelak and his rabble stormed the gates killing the guards and managed to force their way into the main hall of the palace. With emotions raging, the mob stabbed the first uniformed man they found, believing him to be Constantine. After the murder they shouted, ‘The Grand Duke is dead’ and left to join the masses outside. Nabelak had left so hastily that he had failed to

⁵⁵ Pienkos, *The Imperfect Autocrat*, 106.

⁵⁶ Leslie, *Polish Politics*, 121.

determine if the man was Constantine. The dead man was in fact an army officer in charge of protecting Constantine who had been hiding in his wife's bedroom.⁵⁷ Shortly after the storming of the Belweder, people began to gather in the streets roaring with approval for the conspirators. Attempting to reassemble order in the streets, several Polish generals stood up to calm the crowds, only to be shot down by their own countrymen.

Constantine was finally able to grasp the situation and ordered his Light Horse brigade to dispel the mob. At dawn, the lines were drawn with most of the experienced Polish troops backing Constantine while the civilian population supported the revolt. Most importantly for the Grand Duke was the Russian garrison of thirty thousand men situated just outside the capital which had remained intact. Refusing to use his Russian forces, Constantine charged the Administrative Council to quell the riots stating that since Poles had started it, it was the "Poles that must stop it."⁵⁸

The ideals of the original conspirators were well placed but their ineptitude was too great to help their cause. The night of the 29th had been bungled from the brewery fire to the murder at the Belweder. Wysocki and his cohorts had started a revolution but without a clear and unified manifesto, they were unable to take advantage of the disorganization left in its wake. Seeing that the radicals were not capable of leading the mob effectively, the reformed minded *szlachta* took control over the revolt. Francizek Drucki-Lubecki, a Polish prince and close advisor to Constantine immediately understood that this armed revolt could be used to force concessions from Nicholas before full out war erupted. In order to preserve the peace, Drucki-Lubecki proposed that

⁵⁷ Davies, *God's Playground*, 234.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

the Administrative Council be replaced with a provisional government.⁵⁹ This new government was not in line with the radical youth movements that had attacked the Belweder Palace. It was instead a small oligarchic group consisting of aristocrats determined to preserve the privileges granted to Poland at Vienna. Czartoryski was brought in for his experience and credibility despite his personal feelings towards the ‘idiot’ enterprise the revolutionaries had concocted. The prince’s view was that any revolt against the Czar would only prove to be an exercise in futility and destroy all hopes of Polish liberty.⁶⁰ The other major voice in the provisional government was Gen. Jósef Chłopicki who was widely lauded for his military authority in the event of war with St. Petersburg.

The movement which had sparked the uprising was sidelined by the *szlachta* and forced to set up a new Patriotic Society, headed by the literary critic, Maurycy Mochnacki.⁶¹ Mochnacki had been one of the revolution’s most ardent supporters and was considered by all but the most radical as a true source of danger for the provisional government. In 1829, he had made friends with extremists demanding the dethronement of Nicholas and proposed that any revolution should be a social one.⁶² Despite his idealism, Mochnacki seemed too politically naïve to grasp that political alliances were more important than ideology in revolutions. The day that the provisional government

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Zawadzki, *A Man of Honour*, 303.

⁶¹ Fedorowicz, *Republic*, 272.

⁶² Andrzej Walicki, “Adam Gurowski: Polish Nationalism, Russian Pan Slavism and American Manifest Destiny,” *Russian Review* vol. 38, No. 1 (January 1979): 2.

was proclaimed, he rallied against Chłopicki, proposed killing Drucki-Lubecki and was finally chased by a mob into Warsaw's Bank of Poland.⁶³

The task of the new government was to steer Warsaw through the fury of patriotic unrest sparked by Mochnacki and his supporters. In order to appease St. Petersburg, the provisional government allowed Constantine to leave Warsaw unharmed along with his troops, which included several Polish regiments. In exchange for his personal safety back to Russia, the Grand Duke had promised not to call up the Lithuanian Army. He also confirmed his determination to uphold the constitution and release the Polish regiments in his control from their oath of allegiance.⁶⁴ After fleeing Warsaw, the Grand Duke stopped with his entire retinue near Grodno to write his sister and explain that though he was in flight from the Polish capital, he had, "not fired a single shot, and [...] all the aggression and hostility began on the Polish side."⁶⁵

By December 8th, General Chłopicki had been declared virtual dictator of the provisional government. Surprising all his colleagues, Chłopicki began clamoring for an immediate surrender to the Czar. This decision was not made out of love for Russia but because he saw that the Polish situation was hopeless in the face of Russia's vast martial superiority. Instead of contemplating defeat, Czartoryski sent envoys to the capitals of Europe in hopes of garnering their support. Due to the plight of the Poles described by these messengers, the Polish cause became championed in London, Paris and as far away as America.

⁶³ Leslie, *Polish Politics*, 131-132.

⁶⁴ Wandycz, *Lands of Partitioned Poland*, 107-108.

⁶⁵ S.W. Jackman, ed., *Romanov Relations: Private Correspondence of Tsars Alexander I, Nicholas I and the Grand Dukes Constantine and Michael with Their Sister Queen Anna Pavlovna, 1817 – 1855*. (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1969), 227.

Czartoryski fervently believed foreign support from the rest of Europe was necessary if any chance of success was expected. To placate the fears of Europe's conservative governments, he assured them that the November Uprising was not a Jacobin war determined to overthrow the established system but a fight for survival:

It is for us to convince [Europe] that our revolution is truly Polish, that is, has as its aim the existence and independence of our Fatherland, and not the overthrow of all social principals and the propagation of the hideous seeds of anarchy.⁶⁶

The prince felt that the greatest source of sincere sympathy would come from France. The French viewed the Poles as proud allies of Napoleon that had been similarly humiliated by the victorious powers at the Congress of Vienna. Using this history as a backdrop, various committees sprang up throughout France so that funds could be gathered to finance Warsaw.⁶⁷ In spite of the zeal of private French citizens to aid the Polish revolt, the French government became increasingly suspicious. Paris refused to send any military and economic aid and snubbed Czartoryski by failing to officially recognize the provisional government. The reason for this lack of compassion had more to do with French dissidents than Polish radicals. Since November, Polish exiles had been streaming into the French salons and were beginning to mingle with the more extreme facets of the French intelligentsia. Wishing not to see a repeat of the July Revolution or the 'overthrow of all social principles,' French authorities decided not to risk open war for their former allies and remained wary of anyone who empathized with them.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Leslie, *Polish Politics*, 162.

⁶⁷ Max Brown, "The Comite Franco – Polonais and the French Reaction to the Polish Uprising of November 1830," *The English Historical Review*, vol. 93, No. 369 (October 1978): 783 – 784.

⁶⁸ Lloyd S. Kramer, "The Rights of Man: Lafayette and the Polish National Revolution, 1830 – 1834," *French Historical Studies* vol. 14, No. 4 (1986): 528.

As Czartoryski's French plans soured, the Poles began to face the problem of what to do next. Some argued for the continuation of the *Kongresówka* while others stood against any compromise with Nicholas. Chłopicki, ever a pragmatist, declared that all officers immediately return to their garrisons and appealed for volunteers. Urgent letters were sent to St. Petersburg assuring the Czar that the calling up of troops and the creation of a provisional government was to ensure public order. The letters received no answer and in fact there had been little reaction from the Russians, who appeared to be doing nothing.⁶⁹

On December 18th, Chłopicki's control over the provisional government came to an end as the *Sejm* assembled. The moment that Chłopicki gave up his power, the pressure he had placed on the Patriotic Society disappeared. The radicals, led by the historian Joachim Lelewel and Mochnacki, pushed through a revolutionary agenda that culminated on January 25th, 1830. On that day, Czar Nicholas I was formally dethroned as King of Poland. Now the Polish cause ceased to be an internal Russian affair and was elevated into a 'struggle for independence.'⁷⁰ Five days after Nicholas was dethroned, a new National Government was established with Czartoryski as president. Czartoryski was a man not suited to his new role as the head of a revolutionary government demanding action. He had never felt that revolution was an appropriate response to Nicholas's systematic disregard of the constitution but he believed he was honor bound to lead his countrymen through the wake of the recent violence. The first act of the National Government was to reword the oath of allegiance freeing the officers of their duty to the

⁶⁹ Leslie, *Polish Politics*, 136-137.

⁷⁰ Wandycz, *Lands of Partitioned Poland*, 109.

Czar. This new oath bound up all of the political aspirations of the Romantic revolutionaries:

I swear allegiance to the Fatherland and the Polish Nation [...] I swear to support with all my power the cause of the national insurrection, for the purpose of achieving the existence, liberty and independence of the Polish Nation.⁷¹

With the dethronement of Nicholas, international attention became transfixed on Warsaw. French sympathizers were joined by British editors who proclaimed a wish to see the poor benefit from the November Uprising while at the same time advocating the power of moral coercion over physical power.⁷² On the other side of the Atlantic, American newspapers were filled with cries for liberty and hoped that Poland would, “throw off the fetters of her conquerors and assume the condition she once held among nations.”⁷³ Even though most of the democratic world hoped that Poland would soon be returned to her former position, their support was mainly in principle. The actual fighting would be left to the Poles, who in January 1831 faced a Czar now resolved to crush their new nation. On February 5th, 120,000 Russian soldiers crossed over from Bialostock into Poland and began the march towards Warsaw. The internal struggle that had transformed into a revolution had now become a full scale war.

At the beginning of the Russo-Polish War in February 1831, it appeared as if the National Government had an actual chance of prolonging the conflict to the point that the Czar would be forced to consider their demands. This belief in an eventual Polish

⁷¹ Leslie, *Polish Politics*, 160.

⁷² Peter Brock, “Polish Democrats and English Radicals 1832 – 1862: A Chapter in the History of Anglo – Polish Relations,” *The Journal of Modern History* vol. 25, No.2 (June 1953): 139.

⁷³ Arthur Prudden Coleman, *A New England City and the November Uprising: A Study of Editorial Opinion in New Haven, Conn., Concerning the Polish Insurrection of 1830 – 1831*, (Chicago: Polish R.C. Union of North America, 1939), 34.

triumph led groups such as the Patriotic Society to spread leaflets throughout Warsaw demanding that war be declared on Russia.⁷⁴ Young Romantics eagerly joined up in order to fight as they envisioned their countrymen routing the Russian juggernaut. These naïve young men had been blinded by the images of heroism created by the Patriotic Society and willingly left their private lives to give up everything for the Polish fatherland. The new recruits that streamed into Polish garrisons at the beginning of the uprising gave a sense of confidence to the Polish Army.⁷⁵ Polish forces were emboldened further when they became convinced that they held several advantages over their adversary. First, the war would be fought on Polish soil and among Polish citizens who would be willing to help their countrymen. Also, unlike the Russians, the Polish Army possessed better-quality equipment and a central capital close to the front. The greatest advantage for the Poles was the cause itself. For the first time since Thaddeus Kosciuszko's 1794 rebellion against the partitioning powers, the Poles had independently raised arms against their oppressors. Yet, despite the benefits of a better equipment, locality and cause, the Poles still had to face one of the largest armies in Europe.

By March, Lelewel was attempting to spread the promises of the uprising throughout every village in the *Kongresówka*. His slogan, “for our freedom and yours” swelled the Polish ranks to 85,000 men who demanded to engage the Russians. In spite of the growth of the Polish military and the outburst of patriotic nerve, the Russian's under Gen. Ivan Diebitsch continued to descend on Warsaw. Their advance continued almost completely unopposed until it reached a small wood near the village of Grochów on

⁷⁴ Leslie, *Polish Politics*, 164.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

February 25th, 1831. It was here that the Poles were given their first opportunity to test their mettle against Russian conscripts.

Commanding the Polish troops was General Chłopicki who pressed his forces forward with hopes of allowing Warsaw enough time to fortify itself. After the smoke had cleared from the battlefield, ten thousand Russian soldiers had either been killed or wounded but Diebitsch remained in command of the field.⁷⁶ Regardless of Diebtisch's Pyrrhic victory at Grochów and General Chłopicki's untimely death shortly after the battle, the Poles still managed to halt the Russian advance. For two months after Grochów, the Russians attempted to outflank the Polish forces, but to no avail. The new commander of the Polish Army, Gen. Ignacy Prądzyński took ten thousand Russian prisoners near Dębe Wielkie in late March and by April had destroyed a Russian corps at Iganie which sent Russian morale plummeting.⁷⁷ These early victories gave the Congress Kingdom reason to believe that their freedom was attainable. Yet, that belief was shaken to its core on May 26th, when the Polish infantry was annihilated at the Battle of Ostrołęka. With the destruction of Gen. Prądzyński's army came the complete disintegration of the government, which was already fragile due to the political infighting between the radicals and Czartoryski's government.

For the first months after the dethronement of Nicholas, Czartoryski's government had been able to keep Mochnacki, Lelewel and the other radicals in check. That changed after Ostrołęka when the authority in the *Sejm* shifted to members of a new version of the *Kaliszanie*. Feeling that major social change was needed to bring all Poles

⁷⁶ Davies, *God's Playground*, 236.

⁷⁷ Wandycz, *Lands of Partitioned Poland*, 112-115.

into the ranks, the radicals proposed to build the very social structure that Czartoryski had promised the other European powers never to implement. Tensions were strained further when the *Kaliszanie's* journal, *Nowa Polska* (New Poland) began to endorse the emancipation of all serfs and Jews.⁷⁸ This proposition horrified the conservative *szlachta* in the *Sejm*, whose wealth was often tied with large country estates farmed by the peasants. Even Czartoryski abhorred the bills, especially the ones concerning Jewish emancipation which he considered not only unjust but insulting to the Polish people.⁷⁹

As the arguments over the reforms proposed in *Nowa Polska* began to tear the government apart, the Russians continued their advance on the capital. The new Commander-in-Chief of Polish forces, Gen. Henryk Dembiński fell back to Warsaw but had no opportunity to reinforce the city in preparation for a Russian siege. The day after his arrival, mob violence broke out from frustration over Ostrołęka and resulted in the murder of four generals and thirty-four prisoners before the governor of the city was able to quell the rioters. By that time however, all expectations of victory had vanished. The Russians had encircled the city and were preparing to attack and on September 6th, the Russians opened fire on Warsaw. After two days of heavy bombardment and countless civilian deaths, the people of Warsaw agreed to surrender. On September 8th, 1831, 325 days after the storming of the Belweder Palace, the government that had hoped to govern a sovereign nation capitulated.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Davies, *God's Playground*, 237.

⁷⁹ Artur Eisenbach, "Attempts to Settle the Legal Status of Jews During The Constitutional Period of the Congress Kingdom," *Jewish Social Studies* 50 (1988-1992): 12.

⁸⁰ Davies, *God's Playground*, 237.

A thousand miles away in Stuttgart, Germany a young Polish pianist, Frederick Chopin, who had escaped Warsaw shortly before the outbreak of hostilities, wrote in his journal after he heard the news of his country's fall:

Oh God, doest Thou exist? Thou Art, but revengest not. Hast Thou not seen enough of these Muscovite crimes, or art Thou Thyself a Muscovite? [...] Perhaps my sisters have fallen victim to the fury of the Muscovite scum... The Muscovite is lord of the world... Oh, why could I not slay a single Muscovite?⁸¹

Aftermath

After the surrender of Warsaw, many of those who had shared Chopin's hope for a free Poland may have had similar feelings of despair. The revolution that they had begun with such pristine hopes had been dashed not only by their enemy, but by their own naïveté. The 325 days of the revolt were a haphazard and complex web of councils, national and provisional governments, and an ever changing catalog of generals. The one constant seemed to be the lack of true unity between those who had started the uprising and those forced to lead it to its conclusion. The greatest source of contention between the two parties was Czartoryski's failure to incite the mass majority of Polish peasants to rise up against the Russians. When the emancipation of the peasants failed to occur, vast numbers of Poles began to question whether a Russian landlord was any worse than a Polish one. Mochnacki believed that it was this failure to spread the revolutionary spirit to the bottom rungs of society that had spelt disaster:

Here in the center of Europe is a great nation that crumbles because of the weakness of its constitutions, crumbles because of numerous defects of its social system. It was not because of traitors that we crumbled, not because we disagreed among ourselves, not because of the insidious schemes that Moscow paid to have woven around us, not at all; these were but the

⁸¹ Ibid., 241.

consequences of an evil that lay much deeper. We crumbled because with us not the majority but the minority has always been the nation.⁸²

When the Russian commander, Gen. Ivan F. Paskievitch, entered Warsaw he discovered a city empty of revolutionaries. Czartoryski had fled to Paris with hopes of escaping the revenge of Nicholas. Lelewel, Mickiewicz, Mochnacki and the young pianist Chopin joined him to create a new cultural bloc for exiled Poles centered at the Hotel Lambert. The most poignant ode to the Polish cause written by any of those banished was the saga, *Pan Tadeusz*, published by Mickiewicz while in Paris. Within the poem's prologue the author weeps for his fallen 'Mother Poland,'

But of the wounds that have so lately bled,
The tears from Poland's eyes in torrents shed,
The glory that has not yet ceased resounding –
To think of these had been our hearts' confounding!
For now our nation in such anguish lies
That even Valour, when he turns his eyes
Upon the torture in those well lov'd lands,
Has nothing he can do but wring his hands.⁸³

The presence of these exiles in Western Europe was able to incite some sympathy in their new countries from like minded individuals. Their power and ability to express in words and music the plights of a Poland re-crucified had a rippling effect on their host country's populations. In France, where 4,500 Poles settled, the government still refused to intervene, despite Czartoryski's hopes.⁸⁴ Yet, their conservatism was derided by young

⁸² Mochnacki, 79.

⁸³ Adam Mickiewicz, *Pan Tadeusz or The Last Foray in Lithuania*, trans. Watson Kirkconnell. (New York: The Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences In America, 1962), 2.

⁸⁴ Leslie, *Polish Politics*, 259.

republicans who took to the streets in support of the vanquished Poles.⁸⁵ After beginning a correspondence with the British group, the Literary Association of the Friends of Poland, Czartoryski hoped that he would be able to garner some additional support from London. Peace was too highly prized by the English who, as Czartoryski noted in his memoirs were, “interested in Poland; but it is more interested in internal questions and in maintaining peace.”⁸⁶

The most outrageous reaction came from the Vatican, where Pope Gregory XVI wrote to the Poles in his encyclical letter, *Cum primum*, that it was the duty of the Polish clergy to not only obey all ‘legitimate authority’ but to urge the congregations to do the same.⁸⁷ The foreign powers all seemed to feel the plight of the Poles in their hearts but in political reality, they were unwilling to do anything that would cross the ever growing power of Russia. A New England newspaper, safe from the reach of St. Petersburg, accurately summed up the amount of foreign outcry: “Thus has perished as brave a nation as ever bled for freedom. Enlightened Europe looked on and coolly saw a nation butchered”⁸⁸

All those who remained in the *Kongresówka* were forced to face the harsh punishment of the Czar. On October 18th, 1831, Nicholas proclaimed that all hostilities had officially ended and that the Congress Kingdom of Poland was now, once more,

⁸⁵ Jolanta T. Pekacz, “Deconstructing a ‘National Composer’: Chopin and Polish Exiles in Paris, 1831 – 1849,” *19th Century Music* (2000): 165.

⁸⁶ Czartoryski, *Memoirs*, 330.

⁸⁷ Alan Reinerman, “Metternich, Pope Gregory XVI, and Revolutionary Poland, 1831 –1842,” *The Catholic Historical Review* vol. 86, issue 4 (October 2000): 603.

⁸⁸ Coleman, *A New England City*, 44.

firmly under Russian hegemony.⁸⁹ Officers who had participated in the uprising were sent to Russia along with 80,000 other Poles. The majority of private soldiers were allowed back into the army but were forced to serve in the Caucasus so as not to stir up trouble in their homeland. All military banners, revolutionary objects were to be removed from the country. Essentially, anything that had a national or historic value for the Polish people was uprooted and transported east.⁹⁰

On Valentine's Day, 1832, the Constitution of 1815 was officially transformed into the "The Organic Statute of the Kingdom of Poland." This new set of laws, which essentially voided the constitution, was meant to quash any independence that the Poles may have hoped to preserve after the revolt. The new statute would, in short, consolidate Poland into the Russian Empire, not as a separate kingdom, but simply a western province so that the Poles may "establish their tranquility and well-being by closer and unwavering union with the Russian State."⁹¹ The Congress Kingdom of Poland, which had stood for only sixteen years, had, like its Commonwealth predecessor, vanished from the map of Europe.

Conclusion

When Czartoryski heard reports of his conviction in 1833 he had been an exile for nearly two years. While at the Hotel Lambert in Paris, he and his fellow outcasts had attempted to preserve some resemblance of Polish intellectual life. It was their shared experience during the *Kongresówka* that shaped the history of Poland during the chaotic years of the nineteenth century. Despite the passions of patriots, Poland remained non-

⁸⁹ Leslie, *Polish Politics*, 256.

⁹⁰ Davies, *God's Playground*, 244.

⁹¹ Pienkos, *The Imperfect Autocrat*, 173.

existent for nearly a century after the defeat of the revolt. The loss of nationhood in 1831 spelt the end of the liberal idealism that the Enlightenment had implanted in the minds of *szlachta* like Czartoryski. Liberty would no longer be fought for by old men in marbled halls, but at barricades in the streets. Though Romantic nationalists remained just as naïve after 1831 as they had before, they continued to struggle against the tightening grip of Russia. The short renaissance of Poland as a political entity foreshadowed the nationalist politics of the mid-nineteenth century. In 1848, the spirit of the November Uprising was felt in the Spring of Nations that spread across the continent as the subjugated peoples of Europe rose up against the tide of autocracy and conservatism.

During the years of the *Kongresówka*, the Polish *szlachta* fought tirelessly for the resurrection of their country. Statesmen such as Czartoryski struggled to do this through peaceful means. Politics and diplomacy, however, were not enough for the reality imposed by the Russian Czars. The task of imagining a Poland that was more than a vassal state of St. Petersburg was taken up by young Romantics who were convinced that only through agitation could Poland be returned to its rightful place. These nationalists believed that by utilizing the national culture and history of Poland, it would be possible to instill in the hearts of their countrymen a sense of pride that would lead them to recreating their fallen state. As the possibility of liberty began to pale in the face of Russian autocracy, the notion of a dramatic national revolt became ever more attractive. The November Uprising held a promise for thousands of disaffected Poles who willingly joined the army and manned the barricades. Yet, the passion of the young was not enough to curb the Russian's desire to preserve their empire and the 'Christ of Nations' was once again crucified as the world coolly watched on.

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Abstract

This paper details the formation of Polish nationalism in the Congress Kingdom of Poland from the Congress of Vienna in 1815 until the November Uprising of 1830. The period is highlighted by the reformation of Poland into an independent nation under and its subsequent struggles under Russian hegemony. This paper discusses the birth of Polish nationalism as a result of Russian dominance. It also explains how Romanticism and the intellectual experience of the *szlachta* (Polish gentry) influenced the November Uprising of 1830 that ended the Congress Kingdom.