

POLISH STUDENTS  
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF DORPAT



GRZEGORZ BŁASZCZYK

POLISH STUDENTS  
AT THE UNIVERSITY  
OF DORPAT (YURYEV)  
IN 1802–1918



Poznań 2022

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Wydział Historii UAM, Poznań 2022

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Cover  
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On the cover: main building of the University in Dorpat, lithography by  
Georg Friedrich Schlater, between 1832 and 1835 (Tartu Art Museum, Estonia)

Typeset  
Hanna Kossak-Nowocień

ISBN 978-83-67284-06-6

Published by  
Wydział Historii UAM  
ul. Uniwersytetu Poznańskiego 7  
61-614 Poznań  
tel. 61 829 14 64  
e-mail: [whwydawnictwo@amu.edu.pl](mailto:whwydawnictwo@amu.edu.pl)  
[www.historia.amu.edu.pl](http://www.historia.amu.edu.pl)

Printed and bound by  
PERFEKT – Gaul i wspólnicy sp.j.  
ul. Skórzewska 63  
60-185 Skórzewo

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# PREFACE



## 1. PRELIMINARY NOTES

This work revolves around Polish students of the University of Dorpat (the University of Yuryev since 1893) in 1802–1918 and their history after graduation. The chronological framework of this book is quite self-explanatory: the University was established in 1802 by tsar Alexander I. In 1918, the (German) university was closed down and replaced the following year by the University of Tartu with Estonian as the language of instruction (still in operation). 1918 marked the end of the school, established in 1802 as a university with German as the language of instruction (the so-called Dorpat period) which later, in 1893–1918, operated as a Russian establishment (the so-called Yuryev period; Yuryev is an old name for Dorpat). In 1918, when Yuryev was seized by German troops, the new authorities re-opened (albeit for a short time) a university with German as the language of instruction. Therefore, the time between 1802 and 1918 can be divided into 3 periods in the university's history: Dorpat (German), Yuryev (Russian) and again Dorpat (German). The latter was just an episode of barely several months. Interestingly, the city had previously hosted Academia Gustaviana, established in 1632 by Gustav II Adolf, king of Sweden, which operated until 1710. In summary, the history of the University of Dorpat dates back to the 1<sup>st</sup> half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

While the history of the University's students is easy to follow (at least generally) until their graduation, later on their fortunes are much more problematic to trace. The group of students in question is quite big, in total over 2,000 people who lived in a span of nearly 200 years since the early 19<sup>th</sup> c. (few since the late 18<sup>th</sup> c.) almost until the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. The last Dorpat students died in the 1970s and 1980s (so they must have been born in 1900 at the latest). A large majority of

them did not make headlines and were known to only their families and co-workers. Hence the problem with establishing the fortunes of many Dorpat students after their graduation. The identification of people bearing the same Christian and family name poses special problems because oftentimes, basic data like a person's date a place of birth, are missing. Some of the issues have been resolved but some remain puzzles. can only hope that this publication solves some of the problems and sheds more light on the past events.

As for the work's content, it focuses exclusively on the students of the University of Dorpat in the time in question. In order to enjoy the status of the University's student, several conditions had to be fulfilled: taking an entrance exam, visiting the University in person in a specified time (between 10 and 25 August for the autumn semester) to meet the rector, to pay the tuition fee (25 roubles) and for the student ID (6 roubles). Until 1861, the entrance exam was obligatory for the graduates of secondary schools from outside the three Baltic governorates (Courland, Livonia, Estonia) where the students were taught in German.

This work does not take into account other categories of Polish people related to the University but not enjoying the status of a student. First and foremost, they included pharmacists who, since the reform of 1893, were not officially recognised as students. Rather, they were registered separately as "pharmacy auditing students" and auditing students who could not be considered regular students for various reasons like age, failed secondary school exam or entrance exam. The auditing students typically became regular students of the University. The status of an auditing student was also granted to individuals willing to validate their diplomas: physicians or even doctors of medicine from a university outside Russia and enjoy the right of practicing in Russia.

On top of the above mentioned categories, the University hosted other groups of Poles, primarily people who studied at the University for a diploma of a pharmacist's assistance, a dentist, a midwife, a teacher and, by exception, a medical inspector. Another group of non-students were academics: a relatively small group of Poles with a

considerable intellectual potential and importance to the milieu. They represented “other employees” (barely a few of them) or, to be more precise, an orchardist plus admin employees and workers. A separate group consisted of Catholic chaplains in Dorpat, to some extent related to the University although formally not its employees. Special attention has been paid to Poles who earned academic master and doctor degrees at the University.

Another category of individuals was represented by people who verified their diplomas in Dorpat or sat the final exams. The former included often doctors of medicine educated abroad who wanted to practice in Russia and to this end, they had to obtain the right to practice their profession in the country. They had to follow a procedure of taking an exam in the Russian language, the history and geography of Russia, and various medical subjects. They often enjoyed the status of an auditing student (see above). The other group typically included graduates of medical schools as part of Private University Courses from 1908–1918 in Yuryev, who took the medical exam at the University.

Women (allowed at the University as late as in 1905) represented a separate group; initially they could only be auditing students. Women were recorded as students, auditing students, students of pharmacy, pharmacist’s assistants, pharmacists, dentists and midwives. With the exception of the latter category where men were not registered, in the remaining categories women represented a very small percentage of the total population. There were no females in three groups: academics, authors of academic dissertations and, for obvious reasons, Roman Catholic priests.

All these groups of Poles will be presented separately in this work by its author.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> G. Błaszczuk, *Dorpatczycy. Studia o Polakach i Polkach na Uniwersytecie Dorpackim w latach 1802–1918*; idem, *Polscy farmaceuci na Uniwersytecie Dorpackim do 1918 r. i ich dalsze losy. Słownik biograficzny*, Poznań 2021; idem, *Litwini na Uniwersytecie Dorpackim do 1918 r. i ich dalsze losy. Słownik biograficzny*, Poznań 2021; idem, *Dorpatczycy. Polscy studenci na Uniwersytecie Dorpackim w latach 1802–1918 i ich dalsze losy. Słownik biograficzny*, t. 1: A–Poznań 2021.