

TOURISM AT THE STUDENT FRATERNAL BENEFIT SOCIETY OF JAGIELLONIAN UNIVERSITY IN THE PERIOD OF 1866-1939

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Abstract:

The article describes the activities of one of the oldest academic humanitarian organizations - the Student Fraternal Benefit Society of Jagiellonian University, with special regard to tourism activities in this organization in the period of 1866-1939. The aim of the article is to present the role of tourism for the members of the society and the development of such activities. It also shows the forms of tourism organized by the society, tourist destinations and why it was beneficial for the society members to take part in tourism activities.

Self-help organizations used to play a very important role in student life. They gathered a large group of students, often the entire student community of the university. Operation of self-help organizations concerned primarily: student loans, construction and maintenance of residence halls, organization of peer education, and provision of health care to students. Funds available to self-help organizations came from members' contributions, university grants and the organization of various events such as New Year's Eve parties, lotteries, etc. The activities of student self-help organizations at the Jagiellonian University were particularly marked during the interwar period. The largest and most resilient self-help organization at the Cracow University was the *Towarzystwo Wzajemnej Pomocy* [Mutual Aid Society], later renamed to *Towarzystwo Bratniej Pomocy* [Student Fraternal Benefit Society]. In addition, *Towarzystwo Bratnia Pomoc Medyków* [Medical Student Fraternal Help Society] and *Towarzystwo Bratnia Pomoc Teologów* [Theology Student Fraternal Benefit Society] were also active at the Jagiellonian University. There were also smaller-scale organizations operating in the university and they would reach out to specific communities by providing them with the help they needed¹.

While exploring the origins of tourism in Krakow, it is worth having a closer look at one of the oldest academic humanitarian institutions, *Towarzystwo Bratniej Pomocy Studentów Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego* [Student Fraternal Benefit Society of Jagiellonian University] The official existence of the Society dates back to the approval of the statute of the organization by the Austrian authorities, that is, to 24 January 1866. The history of the Society cannot, however, be considered to have begun on that day given that a secret organization driven by the same objectives was established in Krakow a few years before that. That institution could not have its official name at that time, but the academic youth called it among themselves *Bratnia Pomoc* [Fraternal Benefit]. The organization was to provide material assistance to poor peers, largely through the functioning of the loan system and scholarships, running affordable student restaurants, raising morality among young people, social refinement and mutual learning. Mieczysław Brzeski, student of Law, was the president of the secret *Komitet Bratniej Pomocy* [Fraternal Benefit Committee]. Organizations of this

¹ Dybiec J.: Uniwersytet Jagielloński 1818-1939, Kraków 2000, s. 323-327

kind were also established in the 19th century also at the Lviv University of Technology² and the University of Warsaw, and were commonly referred to as "Bratniaki".

At the same time, the students received help from another secret organization called the "Czytelnia Akademicka" [Academic Reading Room]. Despite many persecutions on the part of the Austrian police, members of both organizations sought to work out the statute and legalization of the Society. After a long and hard effort, the statute was approved which made it possible to merge *Bratnia Pomoc* [Fraternal Benefit] with the *Czytelnia Akademicka* [Academic Reading Room], thus founding *Towarzystwo Wzajemnej Pomocy Uczniów Wszechnicy Jagiellońskiej* [Fraternal Benefit Society of Jagiellonian University], under the patronage of St. John Cantius, patron of the Krakow Academy. The first unofficial president of the Society was Juliusz Walewski, whereas the formal legalization of the association took place in the academic year 1865/66, when the then rector of the university was Prof. Józef Majer³. The first president of the public and legalized Society was Leopold Świerż⁴.

In the first year of its existence, the Society gathered 330 members, which indicates a significant demand for such organizations since that was also the number of ordinary and extraordinary students enrolled in the Jagiellonian University that year. The main task of *Wzajemna Pomoc* [Fraternal Benefit] was to provide students with financial aid on cooperative and self-help basis. However, each year the scope of activity of the Society would expand and new needs for academic life were raised: creation of funds, construction of residence halls, organization of student kitchen, setting up student shops, medical activity, and last but not least tourism and leisure activities.

An important form of activity of *Towarzystwo Wzajemnej Pomocy* [Fraternal Benefit Society] was the construction and maintenance of student residence halls that provided young people not only with shelter, but also common integration. The Society could establish better relationships with students and found it easier to implement their statutory objectives, which were:

- provide material help to the members,
- promote and facilitate the education of members,
- encourage academic work,
- create a focal point of companion life
- establish permanent scientific and social circles within the Society.⁵

The interwar period saw a particular boom of the Society. The number of members increased significantly, and the organization joined *Ogólnopolski Związek Bratnich Pomocy* [Polish National Association of Fraternal Benefit Societies] and then *Centrala Akademickich Stowarzyszeń Samopomocowych* [Main Office of Academic Self-Help Societies]. The change in operating conditions forced the Society to update their status several times in the post-war period. Since 1928, the Society went under the name of Brotherly Student Aid of the Jagiellonian University. Until 1938 a member of *Bratnia Pomoc Studentów Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego* [Student Fraternal Benefit Society of Jagiellonian University] and until ten years later the Society accepted all students, regardless of nationality, religion

² Księga pamiątkowa Towarzystwa „Bratniej Pomocy” Słuchaczy Politechniki we Lwowie (wydana z powodu Zjazdu z dnia 12. lipca 1894 byłych słuchaczy Akademii technicznej, następnie Szkoły politechnicznej we Lwowie), Lwów 1897, s. 3

³ Jubileusz 60-cio lecia Towarzystwa Wzajemnej Pomocy Uczniów Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego w Krakowie. Księga Pamiątkowa 1866-1926, pod redakcją Juliana Szweđa, Kraków 1926, s. 8-12, sygn. 1800. Biblioteka Seminarium Historii Kultury Polskiej Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego

⁴ Domazy M.: Z życia akademickiej młodzieży 1859-1890. Historia założenia i rozwoju Towarzystwa Wzajemnej Pomocy Uczniów Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego w 25 rocznicę jubileuszową, Kraków 1891, s. 107, sygn. 1324. Archiwum Biblioteki Jagiellońskiej

⁵ Statut Towarzystwa Wzajemnej Pomocy Uczniów Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego w Krakowie uchwalony na Walnym Zgromadzeniu dnia 2.12.1906, s. 1-2, sygn. S II 74. Archiwum Biblioteki Jagiellońskiej

and political views. After 1938, the members could only be Polish people who were Christians, thereby eliminating Jews from the organization⁶.

The Board of the Society, for better organization of work, went on to assign specific tasks to individual committees. In addition to such committees for Kitchen, Home, Information, Reading, Legal Affairs, Library, Shop, other committees were also set up to ensure the most important thing for every student, i.e. health. Responsibility in this area belonged to the Health Care Committee (formerly known as the Climate and Sports Committee) The group consisted of one president and 7 members⁷.

The health department encompassing all health-related matters of the entire student environment was divided into 4 divisions:

- *ad hoc* work
- care and climate
- hygiene

Alongside *Bratnia Pomoc Studentów Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego* [Student Fraternal Benefit Society of Jagiellonian] two other organizations, based on the same statute, were active at the Cracow University during the interwar period. The first was *Bratnia Pomoc Medyków Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego* [Medical Student Fraternal Help Society of Jagiellonian University], which continued the tradition of *Biblioteka Medyków* [Medical Students' Library] founded in 1862. The average number of students in the organization ranged between 350 and 600 people. The second organization gathering a large number of members was *Bratnia Pomoc Teologów Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego* [Theology Student Fraternal Benefit Society] whose origins date back to 1891⁸.

Among its members, *Towarzystwo Bratniej Pomocy Studentów Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego* [Student Fraternal Benefit Society of Jagiellonian University] would develop their passion for tourism and do anything not to neglect that activity. An important event was the participation in student camps organized by the Society during study periods. Most common trips were organized to Pławna and Szczawnica. In Szczawnica, a holiday home "*Pod Aniołem Stróżem*" (owned by the Jagiellonian University, renovated in cooperation with *Towarzystwo Wzajemnej Pomocy* [Fraternal Benefit Society]) and "*Dom Wypoczynkowy Matui*" [Guesthouse Matui] were used⁹. Participants were required to cover the costs of accommodation and travel, but the trips enjoyed great popularity regardless of that fact. During the trips, participants were able to spend their time actively taking part in excursions and various types of tourist and recreational activities.

The idea of the camps was most accurately reflected in the Report of the Board of 1936, which read: "Members of Fraternal Benefit took part in social campaigns held in Krakow. One should also mention the position of Fraternal Benefit on the action of physical culture among the academic youth, toward which they showed full understanding, making every effort to make their camps as quality-oriented as possible and at the same time make them fulfill the role of health centers. On the basis of the observation of the academic area, the complete lack of physical culture among the academic youth must be noted, which is bad for their health"¹⁰.

⁶ Dybiec J.: Uniwersytet Jagielloński 1818-1939, Kraków 2000, s. 323

⁷ Protokół z zebrania Konstytucyjnego Wydziału Bratniej Pomocy Studentów Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego z dnia 24.03.1937, sygn. S II 746. Archiwum Biblioteki Jagiellońskiej

⁸ Dybiec J.: Uniwersytet Jagielloński 1818-1939, Kraków 2000, s. 324-325

⁹ Protokół z Nadzwyczajnego Walnego Zebrania Członków Bratniej Pomocy Studentów Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego z dnia 24.04.1939, sygn. S II 746. Archiwum Biblioteki Jagiellońskiej

¹⁰ Sprawozdanie z działalności Bratniej Pomocy studentów Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego w Krakowie za rok 1935/36, Kraków 1936, sygn. S II 746

The camps were meant to restore physical, spiritual and mental strength of the students. Participants had the opportunity to acquire fresh stocks of energy and stamina for further work - young people were familiarized with the beauty of Polish countryside, paying attention to the natural peculiarities of the visited land, organizing trips (both scientific and leisure), as well as going on kayaking cycling tours¹¹.

The itinerary varied from day to day. Among the numerous excursions organized during the camps were: hiking in the Pieniny National Park and the Dunajec River, mountaineering trips to Czorsztyn and back, boat trips through the Dunajec River Gorge, trips to *Trzy Korony* [a summit of the Three Crowns Massif], to *Groty Aksamitki*, to the Little Pieniny, to *Morskie Oko* through Zakopane, to the Szczyrb Lake, to Stary Smokowiec and Nowy Smokowiec, and finally to *Tatrzańská Lomnica*¹².

During the winter, students took part in mountain tours, both on foot and on skis. Each year there was a preparation course for ski instructors, supervised by Antoni Konopko, Commander of the Highland Kompaniya and a distinguished pioneer of skiing in the Polish Army¹³. The course included morning gymnastics (also known as "*sucha zaprawa*", or "dry stamina training"), field exercises, further trips to the area, and interesting lectures on skiing theory on topics such as ski equipment maintenance and high mountain skiing¹⁴.

Participants were also visited by friends and groups that led them to other interesting sites. For example, in 1931, students were visited by Senate Mayor, Raczkiewicz, accompanied by the Rector of the Academy of Fine Arts, Gałęzowski, the Presidency Board of *Fraternal Benefit*, the Border Circle Tour, the Academic Camp Tour in Pławna, the Physical Education Tour, as well as individual and group student tours of the Jagiellonian University¹⁵.

Undoubtedly, the camps did their job, giving young people the opportunity not only to relax in good health, but also to devote attention to tourism, leisure and sport, and to shape positive habits in that respect¹⁶.

Another form of tourist activity was the common tourist trips, by means of which the youth of the Jagiellonian University learned about interesting historical sites and took in the Polish nature. Students would explore *Klimkówka* (near Zakopane), *Mszana Dolna*, Kownieca, Poronin, Krynica and many other places¹⁷. The Society also organized tours to get to know the city of Krakow and the surrounding towns, as well as to the nearby forests in connection with the need for the youth to remain in touch with nature.

To conclude, it is important to emphasize the significant role of *Towarzystwo Bratnia Pomoc Studentów Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego* [Student Fraternal Benefit Society of Jagiellonian University] in the development of tourism among students. Despite the many forms of activities needed for students - such as financial loans, health care, construction of

¹¹ Sprawozdanie Zarządu Towarzystwa Wzajemnej Pomocy Studentów Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego za rok 1920/21, Kraków 1921, sygn. S II 745

¹² Towarzystwo Bratniej Pomocy Uczniów Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego. Pismo do Świątecznego Senatu Akademickiego Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego w Krakowie z dnia 17.08.1935 r.), sygn. S II 746. Archiwum Biblioteki Jagiellońskiej

¹³ Protokół z posiedzenia Wydziału Bratniej Pomocy Studentów Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego w Krakowie z dnia 10.12.1936, sygn. S II 746

¹⁴ Sprawozdanie Wydziału Bratniej Pomocy Studentów Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego za rok 1930/31, Kraków 1931, s. 43, sygn. 537 Biblioteka Seminarium Historii Kultury Polskiej Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego

¹⁵ Sprawozdanie Wydziału Bratniej Pomocy Studentów Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego za rok 1930/31, Kraków 1931, s. 1-2, sygn. 537 Biblioteka Seminarium Historii Kultury Polskiej Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego

¹⁶ Towarzystwo Bratniej Pomocy Uczniów Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego. Pismo do Świątecznego Senatu Akademickiego Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego w Krakowie, (415/35 Kraków 3.04.1935 r.), s. 3, sygn. S II 746. Archiwum Biblioteki Jagiellońskiej

¹⁷ Sprawozdanie z działalności Bratniej Pomocy studentów Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego w Krakowie za rok 1935/36, Kraków 1936, s. 2, sygn. S II 746. Archiwum Biblioteki Jagiellońskiej

residence halls - physical culture was not neglected. The Board of the Society on the one hand carried out the statutory goal of creating the *foci* of fellow life and, on the other hand, offered students the opportunity to spend their spare time on various forms of physical activity. Provided with the opportunity to travel together, students could get to know both the cultural heritage as well as the nature of their home country. Additionally, another very significant aspect of tourism in *Towarzystwo Bratniej Pomocy* [Fraternal Benefit Society] was physical health. In the difficult times of state development, these organizations promoted physical culture as an important interest area for young people.