Abstract

The aim of presented work is to analyze the impact of the November Uprising (powstanie listopadowe) had on the change of a conception of the Polish nation. The November Uprising which broke out in the Kingdom of Poland and western Russian territories in 1830-1831 is considered in this work to be a key event that stands as a climax of a broad opposition movement that was active throughout the 1820s. Defeat of the insurrection resulted in a massive exodus of the Poles and launched a new era marked by two distinctive features: foreign environment within which the emigrants had to live and changed conditions within the Kingdom of Poland itself.

Presented analysis traces the evolution of conception of nation solely within the political realm, because it is the only one – compared to philosophical or religious realms – that enables creation of precise political programs regarding crucial aspects of life of the Polish emigrants and answers the main following questions: how should the Poles proceed in order to restore an independent Poland, how should they define the social base of the Polish nation and finally who should be their partner in the arena of international relations. In this study specific attention is given to the position of social group of peasants-serfs within the Polish nation, because this was the vastest of all the social groups. The need to improve position of serfs became a frequently discussed question already during the Uprising and was continued in the exile. A vast number of political groups that the Polish emigrants created forces us to narrow our analysis down to three main ideological currents: modest democratic current represented by Joachim Lelewel, radical democratic current by Tadeusz Krępiecki and liberal-conservative current by Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski. The reason that allows us to undergo this reduction rests on the fact that these three currents were most popular among Polish emigrants and presented distinct conceptions of nation forming thus a competitive environment with each current struggling for obtaining a leading role in the exile. At the same time the scope of this work is confined to the environment of the Polish exile which leaves the analysis of the concept of nation as presented by the ideological groups in the Kingdom for future studies.

Finally, in order to record the changes in the concept of nation that were the results of the November Uprising our attention must also be drawn to notions regarding nation in the era preceding this historical event.