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Since 1996, the NBP has also been issuing occasional 2 złoty coins, struck in Nordic Gold, for general circulation.

All coins and notes issued by the NBP are legal tender in Poland.

Information on the issue schedule can be found at the www.nbp.pl/monety website.

Collector coins issued by the National Bank of Poland are sold in the Kolekcjoner service (Internet auction/Online shop) at the following website: www.kolekcjoner.nbp.pl

and at the NBP regional branches.

The coins were struck at the Mint of Poland in Warsaw.

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The emergence of the Independent Students’ Association (NZS) in autumn 1980 was a reaction to the changes in the academic environment, particularly the establishment of Self-Governing Trade Unions (NSZZ ‘Solidarity’) and reflected their need to import to their universities the values as well as the hopes of the so-called “Polish August”. Prior to 1980, the Socialist Union of Polish Students (SZSP), which had been established in 1939, had an official status in Polish universities and joined the Polish People’s Workers Union (PVPR), the only legal political organisation in Poland.

The idea to start an independent students’ union was first raised in Gdańsk in August 1980 during the Solidarity strike. It was at the University of Gdańsk where the students formed the first Interim Founding Committee in August 1980. Similar committees mushroomed at other Polish universities and colleges in the weeks to follow. On 18 and 19 October 1980, a congress of representatives of 59 students’ committees held in Warsaw started the NZS, approved its statute and appointed the governing body – the National Founding Committee. The main tasks of the NZS were to independently create academic curricula, extension of university studies from four to five years, restoring jobs to university teachers fired on political grounds prior to 1980, allowing access to books prohibited for political reasons and kept in special library sections not accessible to students.

At the start of 1981 the University of Łódź emerged as an increasingly active centre of the NZS, where students of the Department of Law and Administration started to articulate the demands of the movement. Shortly afterwards other departments, including the University of Technology, the University of Gdańsk where the students formed the first Interim Founding Committee in August 1980, also joined the NZS, resulting in a nationwide movement. The NZS demanded the extension of the participation of students in universities’ regulatory bodies to one third of each regulatory body’s composition, the right to democratically elect the universities’ executive authorities, universities’ independence in matters of science and education, changing the rules for students’ military training, abolition of obligatory classes in political science and Russian language, as well as legalisation of the NZS.

Prior to the start of talks with the representatives of the communist government, the leaders of the student strike in Łódź and of the NZS National Founding Committee debated the extent to which the NZS activists should participate in the students’ strike organisation body. They also debated the extent to which striking students should stress the demands for changes related to the society as a whole, including the registration of the NZS. The organizers of the students’ protests in Łódź were moderate in this respect, whereas the national committee representatives were more radical and politicised. The demands as well as the sit-in strike by the students of Łódź universities made students of other academic centres to take part in the protests. As a result, over 30 thousand students were on strike or ready to strike in support of demands phrased by dissenting students.

The talks with minister Janusz Górski and the commission called by the communist government took place between 29 January and 18 February 1981, with short intervals. The registration of the NZS proved most challenging to the government, which finally gave in under the pressure of striking students. On 17 February, the NZS registration by the ‘Solidarity’ trade union. On 18 February, the ministry finally registered the NZS. The day after, in the city of Łódź representatives of the government and students’ delegates signed an agreement which deeply changed the academic institutions.

In the following months of 1981 the NZS was growing and it participated in the implementation of the principles of the Łódź agreement. NZS members published around 260 magazines free of political censorship and were active in defence of imprisoned dissident members of the Confederation for Independent Poland (KPN). In November 1981, the NZS instigated a pan-national solidarity strike with the Radom Higher School of Engineering, where ‘Solidarity’ and the NZS were unsuccessful in their demands for deposition of the repressive head of the school.

At the dawn of the martial law on 13 December 1981 and in the following days, over 400 NZS activists were arrested, including Jacek Czaputowicz, Janasław Guzy, Konstytant Radziwill, Jacek Rakowiak, Maciej Kuroń, Wojciech Walczak and Wiesław Urbatoń. Others, like Teodor Kłincewicz, went into hiding and organised underground ‘Solidarity’ movement. Underground activity undertaken reflected also the need to continue the NZS. Samizdat magazines were published and political graffiti appeared in the streets; many NZS members participated in street demonstrations called by underground ‘Solidarity’. Another segment of the NZS initiated the pacifist movement Peace and Freedom (Wolność i Pokój – WiP). On 5 January 1982, the government proclaimed the NZS illegal, which banned its overt activities at universities and colleges, but many of its members participated and even directed students’ self-government bodies. From 1986 onwards, a new generation of students made attempts to revitalise the NZS as an underground movement. In 1988, NZS students supported workers’ strikes and gradually returned to overtly public activity at universities and colleges, and participated in street demonstrations. In 1989, NZS representatives supported the opposition representatives in the Round Table talks that started the process of political power transfer from the communist party to the democratic opposition. A number of NZS members questioned the consent made with the communist party PzPR and took part in actions organised by radical political groupings. The registration of the NZS, promised during the Round Table negotiations, did not take place. The refusal to register NZS by the Regional Court in Warsaw on 23 May 1989 resulted in protests taking place at a number of universities. The NZS was finally registered on 22 September 1989 in the time of the cabinet of Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Poland’s first non-communist Prime Minister since 1945.

Professor Andrzej Friszke, doctorus habilitatus

On 16 March 2011, the National Bank of Poland is putting into circulation coins commemorating 30th anniversary of the establishment of the NZS, with the following face values: 10 zł – struck in proof finish, in silver, 2 zł – struck in standard finish, in Nordic Gold.