

Chapter I

Method

One of the most intriguing characteristics of the history of Marxist historiography in the last twenty years is its separation from the agenda of a “general” history of historiography. It is, on the one hand, a somewhat-“natural” side effect of the largely unchallenged position that the year 1945 is a turning point in recent history. But it is also, on the other hand, a reflex of post-1989 historical and political debates which spread their influence over historical science. Polish, Slovak, Czech, and German authors decisively distinguish between the historiography of the 19th century and that of the interwar period on the one side, and postwar Marxist-Leninist historical science on the other. Attempts at unifying both periods are rare and, even if they meet in the same book, the qualitative difference between them is emphatically marked. One of the most frequent oppositions discussed after 1989 was embodied in the contrast: “continuity or discontinuity.” Whereas the answer seems to be more than obvious: Marxism of the Soviet type has nothing to do with “normal” historiography. It was an attempt – to use the formulation of Polish historian of science Piotr Hübner – to decapitate the intellectual elite.⁶

This post-1989 narrative identifies Marxist methodology as a part of an external attempt to subordinate and control the historians’ milieu. As soon as the deepest incursions of Stalinism had abated, historians were able to go back to their previous ideals, running their business more or less as usual.⁷ Even when – as happened after 1968 in Czechoslovakia – there was a backlash of a strong dictatorship and a revitalisation of Stalinist narratives, the dichotomised picture remains dominant: a clear division between historians on one side and Communist party functionaries on the other.⁸

6 Piotr Hübner, “Stalinowskie ‘czystki’ w nauce polskiej,” in: *Skryte oblicze systemu komunistycznego. U źródeł zła*, ed. Roman Bäcker & Piotr Hübner, Warszawa 1997, 220.

7 See Maciej Górny, “‘Przełom metodologiczny’ na łamach ‘Przeglądu Historycznego’ na tle wybranych czasopism historycznych w Europie Środkowowschodniej,” *Przegląd Historyczny* 2006/1, 39-48.

8 See Michal Kopeček, “In search of ‘national memory.’ The politics of history, nostalgia and the historiography of communism in the Czech Republic and East Central Europe,”

The notion of discontinuity, as it is being used in the post-1989 history of historiography, refers not only to the scientific policy of Communist regimes, but also to dominant historical narratives. As Rafał Stobiecki puts it, Marxists – rather unwittingly – destroyed elemental social ties of historical continuity linking state and nation.⁹ The East Central European Marxism of the 1950s was thus clearly perceived as a gap in the development of historical science. In the historical debates that arose immediately after the collapse of Communism in East Central Europe, the notion of “white spots” (among others) was intended to represent the difference between ‘Communist’ historiography and the new, truly scientific, non-ideological historical science. The debates submitted to the logic of the totalitarian paradigm. Whereas Polish historians discussed the status of the People’s Republic of Poland (Polska, Rzeczpospolita Ludowa, PRL), describing it variously as a case of Soviet occupation or limited independence, of a totalitarian or authoritarian regime etc.;¹⁰ in Czechoslovakia the Communist regime was declared unlawful and criminal; the thematic rupture, coupled with an increased interest in the history of political resistance and dissent, automatically brought on criticism of pre-1989 historiography.¹¹ One of the interesting effects of this process was a sudden popularity of source literature, epitomising the “historical truth.”

To historians of historiography, the events of 1989 brought open access to archives, including the archives of the Communist party. It allowed them to study issues such as the balance of power in historical institutions, ways in which authorities influenced historians, personal connections, interdependences and conflicts, which were previously more or less known, but had no available evidentiary support in the documentary record. These new possibilities aroused an immense interest in the history of historiography in 1990s, especially in Germany. Dozens of historians (most prominently Konrad Jarausch, Matthias

in: *Past in the making. Historical revisionism in Central Europe after 1989*, ed. Michal Kopeček, Budapest 2008, 78-80.

- 9 Rafał Stobiecki, *Historia pod nadzorem. Spory o nowy model historii w Polsce (II połowa lat czterdziestych – początek lat pięćdziesiątych)*, Łódź 1993, 182. See also his article, “Between Continuity and Discontinuity: A Few Comments on the Post-War Development of Polish Historical Research,” *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung* 2001/2, 214-229.
- 10 The 1990s public debate over the nature of the Communist regime in Poland is analysed by Anna Magierska, *Dylematy historii PRL*, Warszawa 1995. For an international perspective, consult *Obrachunki z historią*, ed. Włodzimierz Borodziej, Warszawa 1997.
- 11 For the post-1989 East Central European debates on the legacy of Communism, consult the collective volume: *Narratives unbound. Historical studies in post-communist Eastern Europe*, eds. Sorin Antohi, Balázs Trencsényi, Péter Apor, Budapest 2007.

Middell and Martin Sabrow) agreed concerning the end of these political debates: “To escape from the vicious circle of mutual accusations and egoistic self-admiration, we need to critically historicise GDR historiography.”¹² From this perspective, new research should focus on a comparison between East German and other historiographies of the East Bloc as well as historical science in Nazi Germany.

This approach became a wholeheartedly embraced practice in Poland, in the Czech Republic, and in Slovakia. Polish works devoted to this aspect of history focus on such phenomena as the conference in Otwock (1951-52, planned as an official imposition of Marxism on Polish historiography), the Party-governed colleges, or the Institute of History at the Polish Academy of Sciences (founded in 1953 under Marxist auspices). Research on Czechoslovak historiography develops more or less along the same lines. The turning points in this case are: the last democratic congress of Czech historians in 1947, the purges accompanying the Communist takeover in 1948, and institutional changes concomitant with the persecution of professors and students. German and Polish historians were the first to analyse the impact of political censorship on historical writings.¹³ The main research question for all the scholars in this field is whether continuity was maintained in historical sciences, or if Stalinism did cause a personnel and institutional break.

The *Verwissenschaftlichung* (which in this context means “professionalisation”) of research on GDR historiography became the topic of a special issue of *Historische Zeitschrift* in 1998.¹⁴ Some of the texts it includes may be treated as research suggestions for the near future (and in fact Czech

12 Konrad Jarausch & Matthias Middell, “Einleitung. Die DDR als Geschichte: Verurteilung, Nostalgie oder Historisierung?,” in: *Nach dem Erdbeben. (Re-)Konstruktion ostdeutscher Geschichte und Geschichtswissenschaft*, eds. Konrad Jarausch & Matthias Middell, Leipzig 1994.

13 Zbigniew Romek, “Cenzura w PRL a historiografia – pytania i problemy badawcze,” in: *Metodologiczne problemy syntezy historii historiografii polskiej*, ed. Jerzy Maternicki, Rzeszów 1998; *Cenzura w PRL – relacje historyków*, ed. Zbigniew Romek, Warszawa 2000; idem, *Cenzura a nauka historyczna w Polsce 1944-1970*, Warszawa 2010; Siegfried Lokatis, “Die Zensur historischer Literatur in der DDR unter Ulbricht,” in: *Die DDR-Geschichtswissenschaft als Forschungsproblem*, eds. Georg Iggers, Konrad Jarausch, Matthias Middell & Martin Sabrow, München 1998; idem, “Die Zensur historischer Literatur in der DDR,” in: *Geschichte als Argument. 41. Deutscher Historikertag in München 17. bis 20. September 1996. Berichtband*, eds. Stefan Weinfurter & Frank Siefarth, München 1997.

14 *Die DDR-Geschichtswissenschaft als Forschungsproblem...*

scholar Martin Nodl adopted a majority of them to Czech historiography).¹⁵ These were, to name but a few: relations between East German historians and their ideological opponents from the Bundesrepublik,¹⁶ opposition to and collaboration with the authorities, and relations between power and historical science, or censorship. The same topics are discussed at least to an extent in Polish, Czech and Slovak historical works.

The same *Sonderheft* included a text by Frank Hadler and Georg Iggers, discussing the possibility of a comparative analysis of various Communist historiographies.¹⁷ John Connelly's analysis of Polish, Czechoslovak and East German universities under Stalinisation is without a doubt a prominent example of the advantages offered by such an approach.¹⁸

The first appeals for the use of postmodernism in research on Marxist historiography were made in Germany. In the aforementioned special issue of *Historische Zeitschrift* from 1998, Konrad Jarausch proposed postmodernism as a tool for interpreting East German historical science.¹⁹ In 2000, during a congress of German historians in Aachen, the issue was debated by Jarausch, Matthias Middell and Martin Sabrow, among others.²⁰ Their postulates were almost immediately – at least in a formal sense – put into practice, with contemporary German authors analysing the *Meistererzählung* (master

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- 15 Martin Nodl, "Možné přístupy ke studiu dějin české historické vědy v letech 1945-2000," *Soudobé Dějiny* 2001.
- 16 Martin Sabrow, "Die Geschichtswissenschaft der DDR und ihr 'objektiver Gegner'; Rainer Eckert, "Die Westbeziehungen der Historiker im Auge der Staatssicherheit"; Wolfgang Mommsen, "Die DDR-Geschichtsschreibung aus westdeutscher Perspektive," all in: *Die DDR-Geschichtswissenschaft als Forschungsproblem...*
- 17 Frank Hadler & Georg Iggers, "Überlegungen zum Vergleich der DDR-Geschichtswissenschaft mit den 'gespaltenen' Historiographien Ostmitteleuropas nach 1945," in: *Die DDR-Geschichtswissenschaft als Forschungsproblem...*
- 18 John Connelly, *Captive University. The Sovietisation of East German, Czech and Polish Higher Education 1945-1956*, Chapel Hill – London 2000.
- 19 Konrad Jarausch, "Historische Texte der DDR aus der Perspektive des linguistic turn," in: *Die DDR-Geschichtswissenschaft als Forschungsproblem...*
- 20 Konrad Jarausch & Martin Sabrow, "Das Konzept der 'historischen Meistererzählung' als Maßstab eines deutsch-deutsches Historiographievergleichs," in: *43. Deutscher Historikertag Aachen 2000. Skriptheft 2 Eine Welt – eine Geschichte?*, eds. Max Kerner, Peter Droste, Angelika Ivens & Cornelia Kompe, Aachen 2000; Matthias Middell, "Historische Meistererzählung und Institutionalisierung in der Geschichtswissenschaft," in: *ibidem*; Martin Sabrow, "Bauformen einer erneuerten nationalen Meistererzählung in der DDR: das Lehrbuch der deutschen Geschichte," in: *ibidem*.

narrative) and the *Herrschaftsdiskurs* (discourse of power) within the GDR.²¹ The best practical example of the advantages and disadvantages of this method is Martin Sabrow's book *Das Diktat des Konsenses. Geschichtswissenschaft in der DDR 1949-1969*.²² It is based on broad archival research and describes not only various aspects of party dictate, but also the initiatives of historical circles. Sabrow analyses (in a very detailed, but somewhat tiring manner) mechanisms for the creation of rules in GDR historical discourse. The image he comes up with is much more complicated than a one-way model of the subordination of science to politics. Sabrow points to the moments when historians themselves disciplined their colleagues, creating an efficient system of self-control and thus reducing the need for direct political intervention. But, surprisingly, Sabrow devotes relatively little attention to a seemingly vital problem – the analysis of historical narratives, rhetoric, style or strategies of argumentation. Thus, his analysis is not a deconstruction of the content of GDR historiography but a description of historical sciences in the GDR. Because of this, one might wonder whether postmodernist notions are truly useful in this type of analysis. Nevertheless, Sabrow's influence on later international research cannot be denied. In some cases – as in the recent monograph of Slovak Marxist historiography by Adam Hudek – the outcome may be a well-balanced mix of institutional and textual analysis.²³

Sabrow's interesting attempt has one more feature that seems characteristic of the new type of German research into the history of science in the GDR. The question whether or not East Germany was a totalitarian state hinges upon the issue of research professionalisation. German authors generally relate to contemporary definitions of totalitarianism, concluding that none of them fully describes the GDR: the dictatorship of the Communist Party (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands, SED) was seriously limited, *ergo*, the GDR could not have been a totalitarian state. This explains why John Connelly's claims concerning the Sovietisation of Central European universities met with a rather cold response in Germany.²⁴ Instead of referring to abstract models, Connelly compared the reality of scholarly work in the GDR to the situation of

21 See *Die historische Meistererzählung. Deutungslinien der deutschen Nationalgeschichte nach 1945*, eds. Konrad Jarausch & Martin Sabrow, Göttingen 2002 (herein especially: Martin Sabrow, "Auf der Suche nach dem marxistischen Meisterton. Bauformen einer nationalen Gegenerzählung in der DDR").

22 Martin Sabrow, *Das Diktat des Konsenses. Geschichtswissenschaft in der DDR 1949-1969*, München 2001.

23 Adam Hudek, *Najpolitickéjšia veda. Slovenská historiografia v rokoch 1948-1968*, Bratislava 2010.

24 See Konrad Jarausch's review in *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung* 2002/2.

scholarship under Polish and Czechoslovak Stalinism. Such a comparison inevitably leads to the conclusion that, even if none of these countries was actually totalitarian, East Germany came surely the closest to clear-cut totalitarianism.

In the programmatic article cited above, Konrad Jarausch opposed deconstructivism in the history of historiography to a simplified formula, within which Marxist historiography is analysed exclusively in its legitimising function. Jarausch noted that “The common critique of the instrumentalisation of historiography in the GDR leads to the tricky question: what to do with all those libraries full of East German intellectual heritage.” Postmodern analyses are supposed to yield as broad an image of historiography as possible, and not be restricted only to one function of it (regardless of its importance). Nevertheless, despite all the conceptual differences, those two different approaches often lead to similar effects. Characteristically, a number of recent works on the historical legitimisation of political power in East Central Europe show a solid background in theories of sociology, visibly exceeding the typical level of engagement with sociological theory for each of the respective historiographies.²⁵ Although historiography is not always accorded a central position (for instance, by Marcin Zaremba), it is always referred to as an important legitimising tool. In most cases, however, historians dealing with the process of legitimisation through historiography look at the problem from the perspective of rulers and their need for history (or their fear of history) rather than considering historiography as a science or art with its own tradition. Furthermore, the period researched (whether it is a Communist or Nazi dictatorship) is often treated in isolation from the rest of national history, as an abnormality contrasting with the supposedly “normal” before and after.²⁶ All this leads back to the simplified ascriptions of totalitarianism. The paradox is even more striking if we consider that those works commonly conclude that Communists eagerly borrowed nationalist ideas – in other words, that they borrowed a lot from their predecessors.

Opposition towards the tendency to treat Marxist historiography, or, more generally, the culture of the Communist period, in isolation may have different reasons behind it. According to Jarausch and Sabrow, Marxist historical science should not be compared to “normal” historiographies of the democratic, liberal West. They believe that the research on historiography in the GDR should be conducted without reference to what was happening simultaneously in the

25 Marcin Zaremba, *Komunizm, legitymizacja, nacjonalizm. Nacjonalistyczna legitymizacja władzy komunistycznej w Polsce*, Warszawa 2001; Michal Kopeček, “Ve službách dějin, ve jménu národa. Historie jako součást legitimizace komunistických režimů ve střední Evropě v letech 1948-1950,” *Soudobé Dějiny* 2001/1.

26 See Marcin Zaremba, *Komunizm, legitymizacja, nacjonalizm...*, 398.

Federal Republic of Germany.²⁷ Within this scheme, historiography is perceived as a part of the *Herrschaftsdiskurs*, but it is also a science, so East German historians should not be judged in the same way as journalists of *Neues Deutschland*. GDR historiography is supposed to be analysed only as an aspect of the SED's dictatorial rule.

Another German-American historian Georg Iggers seems to be of a different opinion. He questions sharp distinctions between historiography under dictatorial and democratic rule. In both cases, history serves non-scientific purposes. From this point of view, Marxist historians of the Eastern Bloc may stand in line with Michelet, Droysen or Palacký.²⁸ Iggers obviously believes that "objective historiography" is a purely normative term, but as Karl Popper said, historians may try to show *wie es eigentlich nicht gewesen*.²⁹

The idea of supporting the treatment of the history of historiography as a continuous effort, without subjecting the 45 postwar years to exclusive treatment, seems very appealing. The works of John Connelly and others highlight the fascinating encounters between tradition and "Sovietisation," including the pressures applied and concessions made in view of creating a new compromise. To answer the question whether historical science maintained continuity during the era or not, we should refer not only to the dimension of personal or institutional politics; of equal importance are the questions whether Marxist historiographies follow in the footsteps of their bourgeois predecessors, and if so, how. The title of one of Sabrow's books, *Das Diktat des Konsenses*, could be used to describe relations not only between historians and authorities but also between Marxist historical narratives and the national traditions in Poland, the GDR and Czechoslovakia.

Assuming that a broader perspective on the analysis of Marxist historiographies is useful and needed, we should draw methodological inspiration from at least a small part of the history of "classic" historiography. In the process, we will probably notice that scholars researching 19th century historiography have already raised a number of questions that are still untouched

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- 27 Martin Sabrow, "Die DDR-Geschichtswissenschaft im Spiegel ihrer Gutachterpraxis," in: *Geschichte als Argument. 41. Deutscher Historikertag in München 17. bis 20. September 1996. Berichtband*, eds. Stefan Weinfurter & Frank Siefarth, München 1997, 198.
- 28 See *Proceedings Actes. 19th International Congress of Historical Sciences. University of Oslo 6-13 VIII 2000*, Oslo 2000, 87-88; *Die Mauern der Geschichte. Historiographie in Europa zwischen Diktatur und Demokratie*, eds. Gustavo Corni & Martin Sabrow, Leipzig 1996; idem, "Historiography in the 20th century," in: *The Misuse of History. Symposium on "Facing Misuses of History"*, Oslo 28-30 June 1999, Strasbourg 2000.
- 29 Idem, "Geschichtsschreibung und Politik im 20. Jahrhundert," in: *Die Mauern der Geschichte...*, 33.

or have only been addressed recently by historians of Marxist historiography. For instance, manipulations of historical memory were discussed in a well-known essay by Herbert Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History*, published in 1931.³⁰ Links between past heroes and current political trends were characteristic of Marxist historiographies as well.

In mid-1950s, Butterfield postulated that historians should raise the heretofore neglected question of the impact of historical science on European nations over the previous 150 years.³¹ This area was visited not only by Butterfield himself, but also by numerous other scholars. In East Central Europe, this question was researched as well, primarily by the most eminent representatives of the so-called Łódź school of the history of historiography: Marian Henryk Serejski and Andrzej Feliks Grabski. Both analysed various forms of historical thought, without restricting themselves to the so-called scientific discourse. Both also held historiography in high regard as a science concentrating on a broad complex of problems, including considerations of organisational structures, theoretical foundations and interpretations of the past.³² According to Serejski and Grabski, a historian of historiography should be interested in both historical institutions and the content of historical books – a far from obvious statement for many contemporary historians dealing with the Communist period. This perspective not only accepts but demands an interest in everything that shapes popular historical knowledge.

Both postulates were fulfilled in detailed works by the two historians of the Łódź school. Where Serejski wrote about references to “nation” and “state” in Polish historical thought,³³ Grabski described phenomena occurring on the margins of professional historiography, such as the works of Franciszek Duchiniński, the 19th century Polish-Ukrainian author of the theory of the Russians’ non-Slavic origin, or of the political aspects of 19th century historical

30 Herbert Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History*, London 1968 (reprint of the 1931 edition).

31 “An aspect of the history of historiography which has been somewhat neglected is the examination of the role which historical study and historical thinking played in the development of European nations during the last one hundred and fifty years” – Herbert Butterfield, *Man on His Past. The Study of the History of Historical Scholarship*, Cambridge 1955, 30.

32 Rafał Stobiecki, “Wprowadzenie,” in: Andrzej F. Grabski, *Dzieje historiografii*, Poznań 2003, XIII.

33 Marian H. Serejski, *Naród a państwo w polskiej myśli historycznej*, Warszawa 1973; *Historycy o historii. Od Adama Naruszewicza do Stanisława Kętrzyńskiego 1775-1918*, ed. Marian H. Serejski, vol. I, Warszawa 1963, *Historycy o historii 1918-1939*, vol. II, Warszawa 1966.

competitions.³⁴ A similar approach can be found in the writings of other Polish authors, such as Andrzej Zahorski's or Andrzej Wierzbicki's works on 19th century historical culture.³⁵ The latter wrote a short book *Konstytucja 3 Maja w historiografii polskiej*, which is of particular interest for the present study.³⁶ Wierzbicki describes the 19th century debates on the 1791 Polish Constitution, but then moves on to a discussion of Marxist authors. Zahorski follows a similar pattern in his writings. Neither of the two authors introduces any division between the "normal" pre-1945 historiography and its "Stalinist" incarnation; by doing so, they achieve a clear and coherent narrative of specific intellectual debates.

The idea of a history of historiography as a broad panorama of concepts and events shaping an image of the past is surely not new. This kind of approach is familiar to the history of ideas and collective memory. With respect not only to the history of historical science, but also to the culture of Bohemia (including German Bohemian historiography) and Slovakia, it can be found in the brilliant work of synthesis by František Kutnar and Jaroslav Marek.³⁷ *The German conception of history*, one of the early books by Georg Iggers, offers a similar perspective.³⁸ Iggers applies ideas of German historicism to the German national awakening, especially the *Befreiungskriege*, which – according to him – played for Germany a role equivalent to that of the French revolution.³⁹ Josef Macůrek's book on East European historiographies since 1946, although devoted for the most part to professional science, deals with politics and culture, and may be perceived as a powerful and continuously appealing manifesto of

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- 34 Andrzej F. Grabski, "Na manowcach myśli historycznej. Historiozofia Franciszka H. Duchyńskiego," in: idem, *Perspektywy przeszłości. Studia i szkice historiograficzne*, Lublin 1983; idem, *Historiografia i polityka. Dzieje konkursu historycznego im. Juliana Ursyna Niemcewicza 1867-1922*, Warszawa 1979; idem *Kształty historii*, Łódź 1985; idem *W kręgu kultu Naczelnika. Rapperswilskie inicjatywy kościuszkowskie (1894-1897)*, Warszawa 1981.
- 35 See Andrzej Zahorski, *Spór o Stanisława Augusta*, Warszawa 1990 (2nd edition); Andrzej Wierzbicki, *Naród-państwo w polskiej myśli historycznej dwudziestolecia międzywojennego*, Wrocław 1978; idem, *Wschód-Zachód w koncepcjach dziejów Polski*, Warszawa 1984; idem, *Historiografia polska doby romantyzmu*, Wrocław 1999.
- 36 Andrzej Wierzbicki, *Konstytucja 3 Maja w historiografii polskiej*, Warszawa 1993.
- 37 František Kutnar & Jaroslav Marek, *Přehledné dějiny českého a slovenského dějepiscetví. Od počátků národní kultury až do sklonku třicátých let 20. století*, Praha 1997 (2nd ed.).
- 38 Georg G. Iggers, *The German Conception of History. The National Tradition of Historical Thought from Herder to the Present*, Middletown 1968.
- 39 Ibidem, 7.

European cultural unity.⁴⁰ Macůrek strongly opposed submitting European historiography to geopolitical divisions: it is singular and should be treated as such. In addition, such a division would be very problematic for Macůrek himself, as his book on Eastern European historiography does not discuss either Czech or Slovak historiographies. Should they be placed in the West, or did Macůrek perceive them as being somewhere in-between the two poles?

There seems to be enough evidence not to doubt the usefulness of the research frames of older historiography for the analysis of East Central European Marxist historiographies. On the contrary: they may help to develop a complex picture including not only institutions and the scientific policy of party and state, but also all the interconnections between historiography and historical tradition, the imaginings of the national past, the history of ideas and collective memory, and, finally, historical myths.

In 1986, Jerzy Jedlicki formulated the idea that “Nations which in their history experienced (and still experience) mostly failures and humiliation and which still share the same feeling of unfulfilled individual and group aspirations, those nations search in their history not so much for learning, but for compensation.”⁴¹ It is worth mentioning that in other conditions the same “creative” attitude towards history may be found also among those who win, as was the case with the aforementioned Whigs. Already in the Middle Ages, the imagined ethnogenesis of European nations was based on myths that proved surprisingly durable. The 19th and 20th century debate between the “Latin school,” which claimed that Romanians were descendants of the Romans, and historians who stressed their Dacian and Daco-Roman heritage should suffice as an example. Both intellectual strains shared the conviction that Romanians, whether they derived from Romans or Dacians, were the first inhabitants of Moldavia, Wallachia and Transylvania, a contention by which they demonstrate their difference from Hungarians or Slavs. Such “political” myths belong in the broad “margins” of historiography researched by Grabski and other aforementioned Polish, Czech, and German historians (I put “margins” into quotation marks because, in fact, the myth is often more important – and no less true – than the fact on which it is built).⁴²

The 19th century is a particularly rich research field in this respect as the period saw the birth of many “historical traditions,” not only in the nations

40 Josef Macůrek, *Dějepisectví evropského východu*, Praha 1946.

41 Jerzy Jedlicki, *Żle urodzeni czyli o doświadczeniu historycznym. Scripta i postscripta*, Londyn-Warszawa 1993, 166.

42 See Petr Čornej, *Lipanské ozvěny*, Praha 1995 a reception history of the Medieval battle of Lipany and a companion to the book *Lipanská křižovatka, Příčiny, průběh a historický význam jedné bitvy*, Praha 1992.

discussed in this study. The problem was illustrated by Lucian Boia in the example of Mihail Viteazul, who is said to have united Romanian lands and who in fact ruled over Moldavia, Wallachia and Transylvania, albeit for one year only (1599-1600). This fact did not prevent him from playing the role of a national hero in the works of Mihail Kogălniceanu and Nicolae Bălcescu in mid-19th century.⁴³ Other “national rebirths,” “awakenings,” and “renaissances” could yield many analogous examples. The Czech “national awakening” is the best known and, to some extent, universal example because – due to the path-breaking research by Miroslav Hroch – it is used as a referential frame for other equivalent phenomena.⁴⁴

Vladimír Macura authored a very concise analysis of the Czech “national awakening.” He believed that the very idea of comparing the efforts of a national movement to an awakening is connected with a mythical, non-linear understanding of time.⁴⁵ Macura’s works offer a catalogue of various strategies used by Czech patriots to “discover” (or construct) a national past, sometimes resulting in brand new national traditions.⁴⁶ He also raised the question of the imagined traditions originating in the 19th century, claiming that “we were made of illusions, myths and mystifications.”⁴⁷ The task of the scholar is not to demystify ideas of the past, even in a just cause, but rather to discover the origins of the social or national imagined past and the mechanisms governing it.⁴⁸

As already mentioned, the “Czech” perspective is also applied by non-Czech authors, sometimes even in a much sterner manner, as in the case of Maria Bobrownicka, who stressed the cultural infertility of the Slavic myth in Central and South-eastern Europe, especially in Bohemia and Slovakia.⁴⁹ Boia’s book showed that attempts to describe national myths using historical categories can meet with a violent reaction.⁵⁰ Maria Janion and Maria Żmigrodzka analyse the

43 Lucian Boia, *History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness*, Budapest 2001, 39.

44 Miroslav Hroch, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe*, Cambridge 1985.

45 Vladimír Macura, *Znamení zrodu. České národní obrození jako kulturní typ*, Praha 1995, 79-80.

46 See Vladimír Macura *Český sen*, Praha 1998 as well as Robert Burton Pynsent, *Questions of Identity (Czech and Slovak Ideas of Nationality and Personality)*, Budapest 1994.

47 Vladimír Macura, *Masarykovy boty a jiné sem(o)fejetony*, Praha 1993, 16.

48 See Jiří Rak, *Bývalí Čechové... České historické mýty a stereotypy*, Praha 1994, 7.

49 Maria Bobrownicka, *Narkotyk mitu. Szkice o świadomości narodowej i kulturowej Słowian zachodnich i południowych*, Kraków 1995, 39.

50 Lucian Boia describes the violent critiques of his approach which followed the publication of his *Istorie și mit în conștiința românească*, București 1997 – see. Boia, *History and Myth*, 1-2.

myths of Polish Romanticism in an only slightly different manner, with relation to literature.⁵¹

The formation of nations in the 19th century has become one of the most popular topics of comparative research over the past few decades. Christoph Conrad and Sebastian Conrad stress that this approach is useful also for work in fields that are traditionally considered “untranslatable,” i.e. national in a very strict sense. In other words, the belief in the uniqueness of nations is one of the most common forms of faith.⁵²

Vladimír Macura analysed 19th century patriotic culture, as well as Czech myths of the Communist period.⁵³ There are undoubtedly serious differences between Communist ideology and the “national awakening,” starting with a completely different definition of time. While the reborn Czech nation saw itself in an eternal cycle, socialist culture was based on the notion of a new beginning and perceived time as running toward a strictly defined goal along the lines of progress.⁵⁴ This might raise some doubts as to the concept of a continuity of ideas between the 19th century and the Communist period. To eliminate those doubts, I propose to forego theoretical considerations for a moment and to concentrate on the phase of development of Soviet historiography which was supposed to set the tone for East Central European historical sciences after 1945.

The Bolshevik takeover was not directly followed by any general change in Russian historiography. It was only in 1926 that a Marxist Historical Society was created, and a new methodological orientation was officially approved at an historical congress in 1928-1929. The new interpretation of Russian history was inspired mainly by Mikhail N. Pokrovsky. He attacked Russian historiography, criticising particularly all attempts at portraying Russia as a unique and special case of a country following its own *Sonderweg*. According to Pokrovsky, Russia had developed just as any other country, it was simply backward. Traditionally crucial elements of Russian history, such as the country’s territorial expansion, were seen not as any particular tsar’s success, but as a result of the development of trade (by this token even Alexander Nevsky was a servant to capital). The christianisation of Russia was deemed “an incident” and wars against the Tatars were viewed as a struggle between two cultures at the same stage of development. Pokrovsky accused tsardom of imperialism, and interpreted the

51 Maria Janion & Maria Żmigrodzka, *Romantyzm i historia* (2nd edition), Gdańsk 2001.

52 Christoph Conrad & Sebastian Conrad, “Wie vergleicht man Historiographien?,” in: *Die Nation schreiben. Geschichtswissenschaft im internationalen Vergleich*, eds. Christoph Conrad & Sebastian Conrad, Göttingen 2002, 19-20.

53 Vladimír Macura, *Šťastný věk – Symboly, emblémy a mýty 1948-89*, Praha 1992.

54 See Rafał Stobiecki, *Bolszewizm a historia. Próba rekonstrukcji bolszewickiej filozofii dziejów*, Łódź 1998, 65.

Polish-Russian wars of the early 17th century not as Polish aggression but as a social struggle against the tsar. Even more strikingly, Pokrovsky claimed that Russians were most likely of Finnish origin, which likened his approach to Franciszek Duchiniński's fantastic theories formed in the mid-19th century.⁵⁵

The domination of Pokrovsky's interpretation of history did not last long. He died in 1932, and his theories were rebuked only two years later. They were characterised as abstract, unusable in school education, and indebted to inappropriate sociological frameworks. But in fact – as foreign commentators noted – it was Pokrovsky's hostility towards Russian national traditions that invited the most disapproval.⁵⁶ His sociological leanings were soon displaced by a Stalinist model of historiography, referring in many respects to earlier interpretations of Russian history.⁵⁷ The new narrative of national history was to be filled with a Russian-Soviet patriotic spirit, and was indebted to the Russian heirs of German historicism in its method. Like Ranke, Karamzin and others, Soviet historians referred to the state as a focal point of history. The importance of each state was estimated according to its military power. Even the term "historicism" was adapted in the USSR as "Marxist-Leninist historicism," letting it survive the next crisis of historiography in 1945 when "western" notions fell out of fashion.⁵⁸ Russian nationalism achieved its peak in Soviet historiography during World War II. Josef Macůrek noted almost immediately after its end that "You could see everywhere that the Russian past was viewed not in Marxist, but in patriotic terms, as a fight for independence and freedom against numerous aggressors and plunderers, above all 'against the German element'; it was described as the Russian people's eventual rise to power, the development of outstanding military skills, but was simultaneously also a struggle for freedom only, which hugely affected the universal culture. Russian science elevated the moral and spiritual forces in Russians, and we may say that it contributed to this historical victory in the defence of Russia, civilisation, and the national existence of many nations conquered by the Germans."⁵⁹

The victory of "national values" over Pokrovsky's interpretation was not easy, with some Russian Marxist historians seriously fearful of a relapse of nationalism. During the Russian offensive of May 1944, Anna Pankratova

55 See Macůrek, *Dějepisectví*, 259-264.

56 Ibidem, 260.

57 Н. В. Иллерицкая, "Становление советской историографической традиции: наука, не обретшая лица," in: *Советская историография*, ed. Ю. Н. Афанасьев, Москва 1996, 165-170.

58 Por. Eduard Thaden, "Marxist Historicism and the Crises of Soviet Historiography," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 2003/1, 17-20.

59 Macůrek, *Dějepisectví*, 264.

issued a letter to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, criticising the re-evaluations of historical figures such as Ivan the Terrible, Peter the Great or Alexander I. She observed that Soviet historians (and Soviet propaganda) had lost sight of the fact that the masses were the subject of history, not the leaders. In late May and early June 1944, a meeting took place in Moscow between representatives of the two tendencies of interpretation of national history, all aspiring to be Marxist. While they came to no final solution, Pankratova was later punished for distributing material pertaining to the meeting.⁶⁰

An interesting variant of the same evolution occurred in Ukraine. The situation of historians there was even more uncertain than in Russia. Not only did they not know whether they should interpret the history of Ukraine from a “class” or “national” perspective, but they also had to determine the role played in it by Russia. Soviet Ukraine had its own Pokrovsky in a young historian, Matvyi Yavorsky. His theses on national history competed with the dominant “national” interpretation of Mikhaïlo Hrushevsky. Javorsky rejected the idea of the nation as the driving force of history; at the same time, he was not at all pro-Russian. In his interpretation of the Bolshevik revolution in Ukraine, he underlined its peculiar characteristics which were dissimilar to those of the Russian Revolution. Javorsky’s success – the official condemnation of Hrushevsky’s interpretation – was almost immediately followed by his own fall. Javorsky was arrested in 1933; Hrushevsky, who had been recognised as ‘fascist’, died a year later. During the war, the historical policy in Ukraine bowed to the necessity of boosting confidence in national values, but still without any clear guidelines. *Zhdanovshchyna*, which for Russians meant the campaign against “Occidentalism” and liberalism, for Ukrainians was also a fight against nationalism. This increased the chaos in the Marxist interpretation of Ukraine’s history. Finally, as in Russia, Ukrainian Marxist historiography similarly adopted the Hrushevskyan “national” paradigm, combining it with elements of historical materialism.

By the second half of the 1940s, other, newly conquered nations were expected to adjust multiple professions, including those related to the historical sciences, to the Soviet model. However, Marxism, soon to become the only acceptable methodology, was no longer understood in the same way in Bolshevik Russia. Its Soviet variation borrowed heavily from the tradition of Russian historiography and the Russian national tradition. The variations formulated in the satellite countries were also less likely to break away from

60 Maureen Perrie, *The Cult of Ivan the Terrible in Stalin’s Russia*, Houndmills 2001, 99-102.

existing traditions than to revise and re-evaluate them, along with the perspectives on Russia's role in the history of Central and Eastern Europe.

This current work attempts for the most part to find an answer to one question: how did the Marxist historians of Poland, Czechoslovakia and the GDR employ national historical and historiographical traditions? The reader will likely spot the differences between the mode of analysis of Marxist-Leninist historiographies proposed herein and their previous evaluations. Outlining the relationships between different Marxist-Leninist historiographies, I usually (though not without exceptions) put stress on "lateral" relations (between Polish, Czech, Slovak and East German historians) more than on "vertical" relations (between each satellite historiography and Soviet historiography). Analysing the content of Marxist works, I rarely depend on Party publications (though statements on historical matters from relevant directorships will be frequently referenced). I strive to maintain a focus on historical publications without tampering with the facts, if possible, even if the works in question fail to retain a proper scientific profile. Finally, in my analysis of the views of Marxists, I put greater stress on elements of continuity and on references to non-Marxist historiographical traditions – that is, while conscious of a lack of continuity in numerous aspects of scholarly life, I focus on the signals of a continuity of historical thought. All these factors of my analysis constitute a deliberate attempt at presenting a different, and, in my opinion, more complete, perspective on Marxist historical sciences in Central and Eastern Europe. It is more of an invitation to debate than a closing remark on a past discussion.

The extent and propriety of using the terms "Marxist" and "Stalinist" with reference to the intellectual or cultural phenomena of the Stalinist period remains questionable. Georg G. Iggers points to differences between "Western Marxism" and the official Marxist philosophy of international Communist parties. Leszek Kołakowski, on the other hand, claims that Stalinism was in a certain sense a form of Marxism: Marxism-Leninism of the Soviet type was deeply dependent on "classic" Marxist thought. This view naturally does not indicate that Stalinism as such was the only possible and logically necessary extension of Marx's thought.⁶¹

There is, on another note, no specifically original concept behind the time frame which I have chosen for this study. The dates differ between the countries under discussion – I accept the boundary dates specified by Polish, Czech, Slovak and German scholars. In the case of Poland, these are 1948 or 1949 and

61 See Georg G. Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century. From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge*, Middletown, Conn. 1997, 78-79; Leszek Kołakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism: The Founders, The Golden Age, The Breakdown*, New York 2000, 1110-1118.

1956; with respect to Czechoslovakia, the years 1948 and 1963 are assumed to mark the beginning and end of the Stalinist period. Allowing for lengthy publication processes, I used 1965 as a final boundary date for my research, and in some cases went as far as 1968. In the history of the GDR, the starting date of the Stalinist period is widely assumed to be 1949 (which is, by the way, also the date of the country's formation itself), and the closing date is put at the end of the 1960s, a period which saw an ongoing centralisation of schooling, an introduction of another school reform, as well as generational changes in scholarly circles.⁶²

62 These dates refer to the generally applied chronology of cultural history and, as such, are not always accepted by historians of historiography. Nevertheless, they represent not only the main turning points in the scientific policy in the Soviet bloc but also prove to be flexible enough to reflect specific features of historiography (i.e., the time needed for the publication and reception of a given publication). For the criticism of my approach, see Martin Nodl, *Dějepisectví mezi vědou a politikou. Úvahy o historiografii 19. a 20. století*, Brno 2007, 106.