

Chapter II

The Organisation of Historical Sciences and the Creation of Early Postwar Narrations

The impact of war and occupation between 1939 and 1945 on historical scholarship varied considerably from country to country. Polish historiography suffered heavy losses in academic personnel. Moreover, with the death of Marcei Handelsman in 1945, postwar historiography was deprived of its most innovative theoretician. However, the reorganisation of research and education progressed even in an almost totally devastated Warsaw. Influential figures in the field of history, such as Tadeusz Manteuffel, the first postwar director of the Historical Institute of Warsaw University and, in subsequent decades, the first director of the Institute of History within the Polish Academy of Sciences, were also in contact with the new political leaders from the Communist Party.

None of the other historiographies examined here had to deal with such a drastic collapse of infrastructure and such devastating human losses. Slovak historians actually profited from the violent dissolution of Czechoslovakia. The subsequent expulsion of Czech professors from the only Slovak university in Bratislava opened positions for their Slovak colleagues during wartime. After 1945 only a small group of nationalist historical propagandists fled the country to avoid the approaching Soviet army. The rest proved to be much more self-confident and sceptical towards the idea of Czechoslovak unity than had been the case during the interwar period.

Though the Czech universities were closed under German occupation, historians were allowed to perform research and publish their findings, and the Czech Academy for Sciences and Arts (Česká akademie věd a umění, ČAVU) operated unperturbed. Losses in scholarly personnel were limited to the few murdered and tormented at the concentration camps.⁶³ Paradoxically, the casualties sustained both before and just after the war proved much more significant. Josef Pekař, one of the most outstanding Czech historians, died in 1937. That same year saw the death of his rival in the dispute over the meaning of Czech history, the first president of Czechoslovakia, Tomáš Garrigue

63 Peter Heumos, "Geschichtswissenschaft und Politik in der Tschechoslowakei," *Jahrbücher für Gechische Osteuropas* 1978/4, 543.

Masaryk; while not a historian, he often took part in discussions on Czech history and formed the outlook of numerous Czech scholars. Kamil Krofta, a survivor of the Terezin camp, died in 1945, while Josef Šusta, accused by an overeager “patriot’s opinion” of being a collaborator with the Germans, committed suicide the same year. As a result, the historical community was robbed of a number of scholars distinguished not only by the extent of their output, but also by their potential for being leaders, capable, like Poland’s Tadeusz Manteuffel or Stanisław Lorenz, of acting as representatives of the scholarly world before the authorities.

In occupied Germany, the key task was to deal with scholars who collaborated with the National-Socialist regime. In the eyes of many students, especially those expelled from universities during Hitler’s reign, the steps that rectors took to denazify the schools were not radical enough. At any rate, administrators from the occupying states soon took control over personnel matters. They worked hard to perform a thorough denazification, leading to an actual break in continuity in personnel in the scholarly departments of the Soviet occupation zone: over 80% of professors active before 1945 could not continue to occupy their posts after the war.⁶⁴ In spite of denazification and the Soviet army administration’s strict supervision, new universities and scientific institutions began to form swiftly in the Eastern part of the country as well. All decisions concerning the scientific policy were made by the Soviet military administrators, with the aid of the Deutsche Zentralverwaltung für Volksbildung (German Central Administration for National Education), serving as a German “conveyor belt.”⁶⁵

Throughout the first postwar years, the work of the Polish, Czech, Slovak and German historians concentrated on reconstructing scientific institutions, replenishing archives and libraries, and reinstating regular study programs at universities. In Poland and Czechoslovakia, scholars clearly maintained ties to the prewar period, putting stress most of all on the independence of research. Though it seems that for Czech historians, as for most of their native society, the

64 Connelly, *Captive University*, 4.

65 Stefan Ebenfeld, *Geschichte nach Plan? Die Instrumentalisierung der Geschichtswissenschaft in der DDR am Beispiel des Museums für Deutsche Geschichte in Berlin (1950 bis 1955)*, Marburg 2001. 30. During the first post-war years, the conditions in which German universities operated were rather unusual, also because of the constant but unpredictable Soviet control. The university archives at Leipzig include a description of an unexpected visit at the university by a Soviet major. The author of the document responded with utter surprise to the major’s offer that he would decide which of the university employees dismissed for being members of the NSDAP should be allowed to get back to work. – Universitätsarchiv Leipzig, R. 219, Bd. 2 [Microfilm 1101].

Communist Party did not constitute a threat (in any case, Communists won over 43% of the popular vote in Bohemia during the free elections of 1946.). In this context, Alexej Kusák writes of the irrationality of the Czech intelligentsia, which traced “Fascism” in petit bourgeois behaviour, while at the same time, failing to see it at work in Communist-supported state control, collectivism, and anti-German nationalism.⁶⁶ In these circumstances, the Czech historians’ relations with their Slovak counterparts could indeed seem to be the biggest problem to tackle. Having suffered a far worse fate and – even more importantly – having had a chance to observe the Communist *Machtübernahme* at work, the Poles seem to have looked to the future of their profession with more caution. In the Soviet occupation zone in Germany, scholars were effectively barred from any attempt at self-government; all decisions concerning programs and personnel were issued by the Soviet occupational government in the form of military orders.

In the process of achieving power, various national Communist parties searched for legitimacy. The broad social support the Czech Communists enjoyed was an exception rather than the rule. Even in the Slovak part of the state the Communist Party lost sympathy during the early postwar years. In this situation, the Communists looked in the first instance to national culture and national history for support in the assumption of power. All attempts to reshape the preexisting Communist historical narratives were marked by this necessity. The interwar Communist movements were extremely critical of national traditions of any kind, offering an internationalist counter-narrative in opposition to dominant nationalist interpretations. This changed partly during the second half of the 1930s and certainly during the war, evolving along with the Soviet historical narrative. Thus the adoption of the Soviet paradigm in 1945 did not mean adopting the native Communist tradition of historical thought but rather searching for a new interpretation that would be “national in form and socialist in content.”

In their first attempts to attract the sympathy of the “common people” Polish, Czech, and Slovak Communists invoked recent history. A strong anti-German sentiment was common currency in postwar Europe, not restricted to its eastern parts. Poland and Czechoslovakia were among the countries that expelled German populations from their older or newly “reunited” western areas. Both states referred to a long history of conflicts with Germans, stressing

66 Alexej Kusák, *Kultura a politika v Československu 1945-1956*, Praha 1998, 208.

at the same time the importance of Slavic brotherhood in past and future battles.⁶⁷

The need for a widely accepted national Communist policy was responsible for the development of a network of Polish research institutes, the most prominent of which was the Western Institute (Instytut Zachodni) in Poznań. Under the directorship of Medievalist Zygmunt Wojciechowski, Instytut Zachodni was a significant landmark on the Polish historiographic landscape, publishing its own periodical *Przegląd Zachodni* (The Western Review) and opening branches in several Polish cities. Wojciechowski was not only a gifted historian, but also a nationalist politician. In the interwar period he had been a proponent of the concept of ‘Polish maternal lands,’ a national geography including more or less the lands that were transferred from the collapsed Third Reich to Poland after 1945. Wojciechowski’s book *Polska—Niemcy: Dziesięć wieków zmagania* (Poland and Germany: A Thousand Years of Struggle), first published in 1933, reappeared in 1945 in a new edition, considerably more critical of Germany than the first one. According to Wojciechowski, the whole western branch of the Slavic world had been shaped by constant military struggle against German aggression. The Germans, he contended, were unable to cohabit peacefully with Slavs, since they ‘biologically’ hated everything Slavic. Now, after 1945, “A new epoch of the Slavic march to the west has begun, replacing the German *Drang nach Osten*. Those who cannot comprehend that, will not understand the new era and will not recognize the true role of Poland in the new international reality.”

The *Przegląd Zachodni* vividly supported Wojciechowski’s view of Polish–German relations. At the same time, the editors of the journal expressed their loyalty to the Communist leadership and their gratitude to Stalin for the new and, in their view, legitimate western border of Poland. As a mixture of political and scholarly arguments, this so-called Polish western idea was a mirror image of the German *Ostforschung* with a pan-Slavic sentiment. As such, it had no Czechoslovak counterpart. Although the German problem was crucial for the Czech national movement from its beginnings (and perhaps because it was so important), there was no separate Czech or Slovak “western idea.” Consequently, no person could embody such a movement in the manner of Wojciechowski, who provided a face for this political tendency in Poland. The expulsion of Germans from Czech lands was accompanied by texts that questioned the moral and cultural values of the defeated enemy. Historical

67 See Edmund Dmitrów, *Niemcy i okupacja hitlerowska w oczach Polaków. Poglądy i opinie z lat 1945–1948*, Warszawa 1987 and *Obraz Němců, Rakouska a Německa v české společnosti 19. a 20. století*, eds. Jan Křen & Eva Broklová, Praha 1998.

writings described a thousand years of Czech-German struggles and an evil innate in the national character of Germans whose aggressive inclinations had led inexorably to the emergence of the Nazi dictatorship. However, in contrast to the Polish situation, postwar Czechoslovak historiography did not view Germans as a popular topic.⁶⁸ But there was another motif that attracted the attention of Czech and Slovak historians: the idea of Slavic brotherhood. An editorial in the first issue of the postwar *Český Časopis Historický* (Czech Historical Journal) claimed that “the Slavic idea in its new Russian understanding makes us sure that our motherland will never be a part of Greater Germania and, with all our frank sympathy for Europe, we will be allowed to develop as an independent nation.”⁶⁹ One of the most important animators of this Slavophile campaign was Zdeněk Nejedlý, musicologist, minister of education, first president of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, and the unquestioned leader of Czech Marxist historical sciences.

As in the Polish example, some Czech historians, who were rather far removed from the Communist camp, nonetheless supported the pan-Slavic and anti-German line. In 1947 a liberal Moravian historian, Ladislav Hosák, published his history of the Czech lands,⁷⁰ a rather typical example of interwar Czech historiography. Nevertheless, it introduced nationalist elements that argued against the more general liberal line. The Hussites were, according to Hosák, “cleansing our country of a religious and national enemy.” Lajos Kossuth was characterised as a “denationalised Slovak.”⁷¹ But the most critical remarks were reserved for Germans, who were characterised as having chosen since 1848 a path of hostility towards everything Czech, a path which led straight to Munich and the Second World War, and which culminated in the expulsion of the incurably traitorous Germans. The book ends with an affirmation of the belief in the “Slavic orientation” of Czechoslovak policy and with predictions of a glorious future for Czechoslovak-Russian brotherhood.

A largely similar picture was drawn by František Bokes, the Slovak author of a history of Slovakia and the Slovaks (published in 1946).⁷² Both Hosák and Bokes mixed the language of interwar geopolitics with radical new ideological

68 Ferdinand Seibt, “Die Deutschen in der tschechischen Historiographie 1945–1990“, in: *Im geteilten Europa: Tschechen, Slowaken und Deutsche und ihre Staaten 1948–1989*, eds. Hans Lemberg, Jan Křien & Dušan Kováč, München 1992, 43.

69 Václav Chaloupecký, “Pozdrav nové svobodě“, *Český Časopis Historický*, 47 (1946), 2.

70 Ladislav Hosák, *Nové československé dějiny*, Praha 1947.

71 Ibidem, 421.

72 František Bokes, *Dejiny Slovenska a Slovákov od najstarších čias po oslobodenie*, Bratislava 1946.

tendencies. Traditional references to Slavic mutuality gained new meanings when uttered in a new political context.

In the late 1940s when both Poland and Czechoslovakia entered a period of Stalinisation, the orthodox historical outlook underwent a rapid change. During a conference in Wrocław in 1950, Zygmunt Wojciechowski was condemned for his anti-German chauvinism. A local Marxist historian Ewa Maleczyńska commented: “I think that those who understand the postwar changes according to the dictum that once they beat us and now it’s their time to be beaten—those who want to replace the German *Drang nach Osten* with the Slavic ‘Drang nach Westen’—I think that those people don’t understand the meaning of recent developments.”⁷³ As a consequence, though Polish, Czech, or Slovak Marxist historical writings never lost their anti-German undertones, the candid blend of nationalist and Communist perspectives on the past was for a time marginalised.

In the postwar period, the “revolutionary” was sometimes combined with the “national” even at the cost of reproducing explicitly nationalistic interpretations. Though short, this period was then indicative of the Communist politics of history as well as of the reaction of historical communities in East Central Europe. The Communists learned how to approach a wider audience with a popular vision of the national past; the historians learned how to retain at least a part of their freedom in exchange for close cooperation with the new power.

In each of the aforementioned cases, the authorities introduced a number of solutions that stripped universities of their autonomous status and expanded the state’s importance to the fashioning of academic careers. The properties owned by academic institutions were nationalised. In Poland and Czechoslovakia, the Soviet system of collective institutional leadership and central planning in research was introduced; the former was implemented in the GDR in 1968. The plan was enforced by basic party cells at every university. New, Soviet-inspired academic titles were introduced.⁷⁴ The work conducted in historical

73 Ewa Maleczyńska, “Problem polsko-niemiecki w dotychczasowej historiografii polskiej,” in: *Historiografia polska wobec problemu polsko-niemieckiego. Referaty i dyskusja na konferencji międzysrodowiskowej we Wrocławiu 6 lipca 1950*, Wrocław 1951, 15.

74 See Connelly, *Captive University*, 58-69; Ralph Jessen, *Akademische Elite und kommunistische Diktatur. Die ostdeutsche Hochschullehrerschaft in der Ulbricht-Ära*, Göttingen 1999, 52-64; Teresa Suleja, *Uniwersytet Wrocławski w okresie centralizmu stalinowskiego 1950-1955*, Wrocław 1995, 19-24; Józef K. Szłapczyński, *Zarząd szkołą wyższą w Polsce Ludowej*, Warszawa 1968, Janusz Tymowski, *Organizacja szkolnictwa*

departments, both at the universities and at the academies of science (newly formed in the early 1950s), was expected to embrace the ruling ideology, not only through the choice of a uniform methodology, but also through “worldview-affecting” activities: academic gatherings and ideological instruction. The scientific candidate exam, introduced as a result of the implementation of new academic titles, focused on testing one’s basic knowledge of Marxism. To be able to tackle it, younger tenured scholars were expected to attend special preparatory lectures. Though the exam was mandatory only for the younger cadres, all scholars employed at scholarly institutions were expected to attend the exam preparations.

Yet, the changes involving structure, schedule, political education, academic titles and planning were not at all sufficient in transforming schools into institutions capable of propagating the achievements of Marxism-Leninism. While Polish, Czech and Slovak Communists gradually tightened the noose over their respective countries, borrowing heavily from reservoirs of nationalist interpretations of history along the way, they also made their first attempts at changing the social profile of students. The goal of the ruling caste in each of the countries under discussion was a “proletarianisation” of the universities, that is, effecting a situation in which card-carrying Communist professors of worker and peasant origins would teach the youth of worker and peasant classes to be good citizen and Party members.

The authorities ultimately failed to transform universities into a power base in Poland. John Connelly, who has studied this problem, stressed the importance of the strong relationship binding Polish professors and their students, which was a characteristic feature of scholarly life in Poland, and which made it impossible to drive a wedge between the two groups (a feat accomplished in the GDR). This failure was not only a result of the ineffectiveness of authorities, but also a consequence of differences among the scholarly traditions of Poland, Germany and Czechoslovakia. In the two latter countries, modern universities never became an autonomous community of scholars and students. On the contrary: they were deeply rooted in the structures of the state and therefore susceptible to its dealings. Polish universities were renowned for their curious, “lateral” structure of half-formal and informal relations which helped build a dense and broad network, observable even to this day. It played a seminal role in the struggle for control over the peoples’ minds. University employees were accountable most of all to their own community of intelligentsia; contrarily, in

wyższego w Polsce, Warszawa 1980; Bolesław Krasiewicz, *Odbudowa szkolnictwa wyższego w Polsce Ludowej w latach 1944-1948*, Wrocław 1976.

Germany and Czechoslovakia universities were not as distinguishable from the rest of society and much more dependent on the Party.

Despite the limitations which could not have been overcome through scientific policies introduced by the PPR and the PZPR, the struggle for “proletarianisation” of the universities could be said to have yielded one definite result. Though neither professors nor students joined the Party *en masse*—and those of them who did never severed ties with the community—the authorities managed to ensure that a significant number of the youth of authentic worker-peasant origin studied at universities. During the 1950s, these students amounted to about 50% of all admitted first year students.⁷⁵ However, youth with an “appropriate” background did not necessarily act as puppets of the authorities – having found themselves at the universities, they were influenced by a cadre that was indifferent, and at times even unsympathetic toward the government. According to Connelly, “With the doors to seminar rooms or lecture halls shut, the Party was left alone in the corridor.”⁷⁶ As a result, after 1956 the situation was returned to the state prior to the “Stalinisation of the universities.”⁷⁷ Besides, even the problematic success of “proletarianising” efforts is questionable; Connelly seems to give undue credit to admission politics. Looking at the social stratification of those admitted, as well as all candidates, it is apparent that already in 1949 workers-peasants made up a third of the Warsaw candidates, while “working intelligentsia” was responsible for half of all applications; moreover, this breakdown persisted throughout the Stalinist period. It would seem, then, that the long-term effects described by John Connelly were secured as much through the Stalinisation of the universities as through accelerated social advancement, the migration of numerous peasant families into towns and the pauperisation of society. One could therefore hazard the claim that, at least as far as the Stalinist period is concerned, the significant rise in the percentage of students of worker-peasant origins in Poland was not caused by Party policies

75 According to the data collected by Connelly for the academic year 1949-50, there were as many as 45.6% of first-year students of the kind in the entire country. However, already in the following year, as much as 62.2% were admitted. In subsequent years, the percentage steadily lowered, reaching in 1956-57 a value near to that of 1949-50 (48,5%). John Connelly, “Szkolnictwo wyższe w Europie Środkowej i Wschodniej w epoce stalinizacji,” in: *Skryte oblicze...*, 227-228.

76 *Ibidem*, 227.

77 Jan Uher, “Kampaň proti tzv. buržoáznemu nacionalizmu,” in: *Od diktatúry k diktatúre. Slovensko v rokoch 1945-1953 (Zborník materiálov z vedeckej konferencie v Smoleniciach 6. – 8. Decembra 1994)*, ed. Michal Barnovský, Bratislava 1995, 105-113; Grzegorz Gąsior, *Stalinowska Słowacja. Proces „burżuazyjnych nacionalistów” w 1954 roku*, Warszawa 2006.

toward universities; in fact, it was an effect of huge social changes brought about not by the authorities (though they played a part), but rather by the war. A far larger proportion of candidates of worker-peasant background became students after the war simply because so many more of them applied.

The efforts of Central European Communist Parties to transform universities politically and socially yielded divergent results. Authorities showed the greatest consistency in this regard in the Soviet occupation zone in Germany, and later in the GDR. Here, universities were turned into “proletarian” outposts controlled by the SED. The reaction of the majority of the East German intelligentsia to the worker’s uprising in Berlin in 1953 already proved the value of this policy. Neither in Czechoslovakia, nor in Poland did the governments succeed in winning the genuine support of the intelligentsia. In fact, the opposite was the case: it was the intelligentsia that served as the breeding ground for the leaders of social revolts up until and including 1989. The Polish Communists’ policy toward the universities did not yield the desired effects. Though the social base of the student community broadened, the authorities and government’s role in the achievement of this goal is debatable. The Polish universities avoided purges, and their staff did not join the Party *en masse* – which had occurred in Czechoslovakia, where the government managed to put the universities under Communist control, but failed to fill them with representatives of the urban and rural proletariat.

The defeats and victories of the academic politics of the Communist states and parties had crucial significance for the communities of historians in each of the countries under discussion. In the late 1940s in the GDR, after denazification and another purge, this community almost had to form anew. Communist historians enjoyed a numerical superiority over their “bourgeois” colleagues, growing with every new batch of graduates from “proletarianised” universities. In Czechoslovakia, where purges were not as thorough and occurred only after 1948, the community of historians was also shaped for the most part by Communists. Representatives of the “bourgeois” academy were pushed to the margins, relocated to universities outside Prague, and sometimes even barred from teaching altogether. In Poland, the community was led by “bourgeois” historians, forced to endlessly negotiate with the authorities. Over the long term, their position was reinforced by the fact that, at the expense of PZPR, they retained control over schooling of the younger generations of scholars.

Despite numerous differences among the communities of historians in 1950s’ Poland, Czechoslovakia and the GDR, the government of each of these countries set similar goals for the scholars to meet. They were supposed to create a new, Marxist historical science, and record it in magazines and in general works on national history. Deviations from the established norms were

unacceptable, and individualities were condemned. The historians worked in a fearful climate caused by the terror aimed against enemies of the new order, whether real or “objective” (who learned of their guilt only during interrogations). At times, it affected education and science in a highly direct manner. The so-called campaign against bourgeois nationalism, begun in Slovakia in 1950, started out as an effort to locate the Czechoslovak “supporters” of Tito, but, with the arrest of the commissioner of education (an equivalent of a minister in the Slovak government) Ladislav Novomeský, many teachers – historians as well – were removed from schools.⁷⁸

Despite obvious examples of Stalinist terror in each of the countries under discussion, we should also pose the question: is the monochromatic image of the 1950s really representative of what occurred outside prison walls and camp fences? Or, if we are talking about the intelligentsia – was the dictatorship of new governments and “faithful” artists and scientists an absolute rule? In each case, we are dealing with a process which took years to complete, a process of bringing together authorities’ demands and historians’ responsiveness.

Social scientists discuss and exchange opinions in scientific journals as well as at a variety of conventions, conferences and congresses. Obviously, quite a few of these occurred at locations and times which are the focus of this study. To describe the circumstances in which historians performed their work, however, it is advisable to distinguish those meetings that played a crucial role in shaping the views and actions of their community. Some of those “special” conferences are vividly remembered, almost as symbolic events, and memories of them are held to this day; in the case of Poland, one such event was definitely the First Methodological Conference of Polish Historians in Otwock, at the turn of 1952. A similar role can be ascribed to historical associations’ conventions and to international historians’ congresses (which were especially well-suited to perform the role). Each such event, to an extent, provides insight into dominant intellectual currents, the contemporaneous political situation, and the interpersonal relations within the organised historians’ guild. As far as my own interests are concerned, of highest importance will be the conferences, conventions, etc., during which the representatives of “bourgeois”

78 Josef Hanzal “Čeští historici před únorem 1948,” *Český Časopis Historický* 1993, 279-281. See Antonín Kostlán, “K vývoji českého dějepiscetví v letech 1945-1948,” *Český Časopis Historický* 1994; Jaroslav Čechura & Jana Šetřilová, “Josef Klik a II. sjezd československých historiků,” *Český Časopis Historický* 1994; Antonín Kostlán, *Druhý sjezd československých historiků (5.-11. října 1947) a jeho místo ve vývoji českého dějepiscetví v letech 1935-1948*, Praha 1993.

historiography clashed with Marxists in a struggle that serves as the focal point of the current study.

The intellectual and personal continuity between prewar and postwar Czech historiography was symbolically confirmed at the II Convention of Czechoslovak Historians in 1947. The convention was at the same time a portent of coming radical changes. Its organisers, the Czechoslovak Historical Society (Československá Historická Společnost), led by Karel Stloukal, invited some 800 guests (including a negligible Slovak contingent). Foremost among the topics were historical materialism and other methodological novelties, the German question, the question of Slavic cooperation, and the problem of Czech-Slovak relations.⁷⁹ Even before the proceedings began, a conflict arose between the organisers and a group of representatives of Marxism. The latter demanded that the paper on the October Revolution and the Slavic world be presented by Zdeněk Nejedlý rather than Jan Slavík, a well-known opponent of the Soviet Union. After a discussion with the leadership of the historians' union, Slavík agreed to give the topic away to Nejedlý, but one would be excused for doubting that this concession resolved tensions. As Josef Hanzal observed, the key problem was that most of the active proponents of Marxism in its Soviet incarnation were closely connected to Slavík before the war as collaborators on the *Dějiny a přítomnost* magazine. After the war, Václav Husa, Jaroslav Charvát, Václav Čejchan, Jan Pachta, Oldřich Říha and Jaroslav Vávra found themselves among the ranks of KSČ, while their "spiritual father" became an "inveterate enemy" of the first country ruled by workers and peasants.⁸⁰

The convention proceeded in due course until Zdeněk Nejedlý, then-current Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, took the stage to present his paper. His text sketched in a very raw outline the leading role of Soviet Union among the states and nations of the Slavs. The reaction of the public present to his talk was reserved to the utmost – some of the listeners already heard that Nejedlý's presence at the convention was practically forced upon the organisers. When Nejedlý finished his presentation, Jan Slavík took the floor with a critical response, exceeding the time allotted; among other things, he described to the congregated the methods of Stalin's dictatorial rule.⁸¹ Instead of countering, Nejedlý left the convention in a fury, stating that the old generation was evidently unable to comprehend him (in fact, Nejedlý was Slavík's senior by 7 years). The convention concluded with a double visitation at the graves of Josef Šusta and Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk. As Josef Hanzal rightly observed,

79 Josef Hanzal, *Cesty české historiografie 1945-1989*, Praha 1999, 58-61.

80 Ibidem, 69.

81 Hanzal, "Čeští historici," 281.

“Reading the proceedings of the convention today, we may be surprised at the fact that just before the February catastrophe historians could allow themselves to be so carefree, at ease, and fail to see the signs of an impending threat.”⁸² At the same time, the conflict between the Marxist group (self-proclaimed representatives of the Slovak historians) and Karel Stloukal presaged a coming storm.⁸³

As is well known, the danger materialised several months after the historians’ convention, in the shape of a political upheaval with utterly dramatic consequences for Czech historians. In the following years, the authorities stepped cautiously through the field of historical sciences, avoiding a direct confrontation between Marxist and non-Marxist historians; instead, administrative decisions were carried out, and debates were replaced by purges in historical departments. The gradual liberalisation of cultural life that began in the first half of the 1960s was also not the work of “bourgeois” academics, but of card-carrying Marxists, including personages so vital to the shape of the 1950s as František Graus or Josef Macek. This is the reason why, until the early 1960s, meetings in which Czech historians took part were for the most part manifestations of the community’s ideological unity. Executive decisions by the Party took a special importance for the period’s historians; for instance, in May, 1951, the Central Committee of the KSCĀ accepted the motion that works on Czech history should include a broader focus on the most recent events. As Nejedlý put it, scholars should become interested in Lenin’s Prague rather than the Baroque Prague.⁸⁴ Yet none of the other similar ideologically-charged conferences became such a visible focal point – their results were known well before they occurred, and they served more as conveyor belts for motions that had already been accepted behind closed doors. No “mass conversions” were expected, since they were proclaimed before the fact: people who did not appear likely to cooperate were robbed of the power to affect either the scholarly community or students.

The ground-breaking moment in Czechoslovak historiography, which also attained the rank of a symbolic event, was the involvement of 200 Czech and Slovak historians in the international congress of historical sciences in Vienna in 1965. At that point, the thaw had already arrived: cultural and artistic personalities had abandoned Socialist-Realist patterns, the Prague Spring had just begun, and heretofore “hardliner” Marxists like Graus or Macek were backing away from Party orthodoxy. Historians arrived at the congress on a

82 Ibidem, 282.

83 Heumos, “Geschichtswissenschaft“, 547-548.

84 Kostlan, “Druhy sjezd,” 276-278.

small, rented ship. Both in Vienna and during the following year's conference on the problem of nation in the Habsburg monarchy, scholars from the West were surprised to see that they were dealing with actual historians, and not Party functionaries.⁸⁵ The attitudes of Czechoslovak historians must have seemed surprising, since other participants were often quite aloof toward them. Henryk Wereszycki, barred from working with students during the Stalinist period, was also expected to attend the conference, but his passport application was rejected. In a letter to Piotr Wandycz, Wereszycki commented acerbically on the differences between himself and historians from other countries of the Soviet bloc, who were allowed to attend the venue: "they travel with ease," he wrote with irony – "their luggage is small."⁸⁶

In Slovakia, the situation developed largely along the same lines as it did in Bohemia. During the first plenary meeting of the community of Slovak historians (Slovenská Historická Spoločnosť, SHS) in April 1946 in Piešťany, participants focused primarily on the problem of normalising relations with their Czech colleagues. The newly-formed Slovak Historical Society, led by Daniel Rapant, enjoyed the support (including financial) of the Slovak government. The meeting featured speeches from then-commissioner for education, Ladislav Novomeský, as well as A.J.P. Taylor.⁸⁷ No Marxist minority appeared because none had existed at the time.⁸⁸ The second plenary meeting, scheduled for 1947, was cancelled. Several weeks after the scheduled meeting, one of the secretaries of the union of historians, Vendelin Jankovič, was arrested for allegedly taking part in an anti-government conspiracy.⁸⁹ Then, several months before a further meeting, scheduled for 1948, Czechoslovakia underwent a political coup.

The most important changes within the Slovak historical community took place during the process of "verifying" university personnel, just like in Bohemia.⁹⁰ Purges affected the historians' society as well. The discharge of Daniel Rapant as the president of SHS (and a professor at the University of

85 Jiří Kořalka, "Czechosłowacja," in: *Historiografia krajów Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej*, eds. Jerzy Kłoczowski & Paweł Kras, Lublin 1997, 51.

86 Piotr Wandycz, "Między starymi a nowymi laty," in: *Henryk Wereszycki (1898-1990). Historia w życiu historyka*, eds. Elżbieta Orman & Antoni Cetnarowicz, Kraków 2001, 265.

87 Lýdia Kamencová, "Vznik Slovenskej historickej spoločnosti a prvá etapa jej činnosti (1946-1950)," *Historický Časopis SAV* 1991, 183-188.

88 Marek Havrila, *Slovenská historiografia v rokoch 1945-1968*, Prešov 2004, in: www.pulib.sk/elpub/FF/Havrila1, chapter „Slovenská historická spoločnosť v rokoch 1946-1968.”

89 Ibidem.

90 Ján Mlynárik, *Diaspora historiografie. Štúdie, články a dokumenty k dejinám československej historiografie v rokoch 1969-1989*, Praha 1998, 15.

Bratislava), a man commonly named to this day as the greatest Slovak historian, became a symbolic event. Several other historians were ousted from their posts as well, and threateningly charged with anti-state activities.⁹¹ After the “victorious February,” SHS joined in with the official support of the Communist Party. The third plenary meeting of the organisation in October 1948 became one of the last occasions for expressions of protest against the changes taking place in the country as well as in the historians’ union. This occasion was used by an archivist, Maria Jeršová, who declined an invitation to take part in the meeting, since her husband, a hero of the uprising of 1944, was at that point locked up in jail.⁹² At any rate, this was the penultimate meeting of the SHS. Between 1950 and 1957, the organisation was practically inoperative.

The postwar historical consciousness of the Slovaks was significantly affected by the Slovak National Uprising (Slovenské Národné Povstanie, SNP), an assault on the German occupiers as well as on the pro-German Slovak government. Shifts in the official interpretation of that event render various symptoms of Stalinisation, and then of the thaw, eminently more visible. The Stalinist reinterpretation of the Uprising was related to the fact that contemporaneous Communist leaders, Gustáv Husák and Ladislav Novomeský, were accused of rightist-nationalist leanings and spent the whole Stalinist period in prison, awaiting, in all likelihood, death penalties. In this context, the yearly conferences devoted to the uprising achieved a symbolic status: in a way, they sketched out the current disposition of Slovak historiography. Jozef Jablonický compares two such conferences: The first, organised in 1953 by the Institute of History of the Slovak Academy of Science (Historický Ústav Slovenskej Akadémie Vied, HÚ SAV) shared the same outlook as Czech conferences on cosmopolitanism. There was no discussion involved other than the postulate, presented by the director of the Institute, that the presenters “unmask” the connections between the leaders of the Uprising and foreign intelligence—the Intelligence Service in particular—with more daring.⁹³ Another conference, in June 1964, occurred in the dramatically changed atmosphere of the “Slovak Spring.”⁹⁴ The Slovak National Uprising was returned to official memory, and

91 Referring to L. Čulen, J. V. Gajdoš und V. Jankovič. See Havrila, *Slovenská*, chapter „Slovenská historická spoločnosť v rokoch 1946-1968.”

92 Kamencová, „Vznik,” 191.

93 Jozef Jablonický, *Glosy o historiografii SNP. Zneužívanie a falšovanie dejín SNP*, Bratislava 1994, 32.

94 Agneša Kalinová, “Z redakčného zákulisia Kultúrného života čiže príbeh o desiatich malých černoškoch,” in: *Kultúrny život a Slovenská jar 60. rokov*, Bratislava 1998, 94.

while its Communist leaders were rehabilitated, there was enough room for the non-Communist majority involved also to be recognised.⁹⁵

The cultural and political thaw in Slovakia began, like in Bohemia, around 1963. In June of that year, a plenary meeting of the Slovak Historical Society took place in Bratislava. The participants performed a special kind of self-criticism, seeking out traces of the “cult of personality” in their own works of the preceding years. They also criticised the influence of Party functionaries, show trials and falsifications of history. Participants also raised an issue of a more general nature: Whether historians guilty of all those shortcomings were still worthy of the name, or that they should be treated exclusively as propagandists.⁹⁶ The 6th convention of Slovak historians in Martin became a sort of a high-water mark for the “Slovak Spring.” The very choice of location for the convention was significant – during the 1950s, Martin, the birthplace of the Slovak national movement and the seat of Matica Slovenská, was closely symbolic of Slovak clerical-fascist nationalism.⁹⁷ Presentations devoted to the state of historiography of the previous 20 years bore special importance. Ľubomír Lipták observed a lack of foreign relationships along with efforts at breaking the generational continuity of Slovak historiography and its generally poor state.⁹⁸ Ján Mlynárik spoke with even greater vehemence: he underlined the decline in the quality of instruction of historians after 1948 and spoke up for Daniel Rapant (who had been previously ousted from all public positions).⁹⁹ However, Ľudovít Holotík, then-president of the historians’ association and director of the SAV’s Institute of History, distanced himself from papers presented at the convention, claiming that they criticised the “past period” too vehemently.¹⁰⁰

The self-definition of Marxist historiography of the GDR was significantly affected by the fact that it was in a constant dispute with other German historiography. Relations between neighbours and ideological opponents were dependent to a large extent on the political climate, which sometimes fostered

95 Jablonický, *Glosy*, 54. See Ľubomír Lipták, “Slovakia: History and Historiography,” in: *A Guide to Historiography in Slovakia*, eds. Elena Mannová & David Paul Daniel, Bratislava 1995, 13; Jozef Jablonický, “Slovenské národné povstanie v historiografii v rokoch totality,” in: *SNP v pamäti národa. Materiály z vedeckej konferencie k 50. výročiu SNP, Donovaly 26.-28. apríla 1994*, Bratislava 1994, 88-91.

96 Havrila, *Slovenská*, chapter: Slovenská historická spoločnosť v rokoch 1946-1968.

97 “VI. Zjazd slovenských historikov roku 1968,” *Historický Časopis SAV* 1990, 844.

98 Ľubomír Lipták, “Úloha a postavenie historiografie v našej spoločnosti,” *Historický Časopis SAV* 1969.

99 Ján Mlynárik, “Vzťah politiky a historiografie,” *Historický Časopis SAV* 1990, 864-865.

100 “VI. Zjazd slovenských historikov roku 1968,” 845.

limited cooperation, but at other times turned ice cold. Common, all-German historical conventions, involving scholars from the GDR up until 1958, gave the Marxists a special opportunity to meet representatives of “bourgeois” historiography. East-German conferences and scientific meetings did not offer this opportunity, since as a rule, they did not allow for an exchange of divergent opinions or the persuasion of the resistant, being more akin to the manifestations of an already-achieved Marxist unity as had been the case in Stalinist Czechoslovakia.

The first postwar conventions of the Verband der Historiker Deutschlands (VHD) involved very few Marxist scholars. The sole representative of the GDR was typically Walter Markov, a Marxist from Leipzig, who was valued in the West as well (he fell victim to hunts for Tito’s supporters in the GDR in 1951).¹⁰¹ East-German historians invited to the 1951 convention in Marburg did not receive passports and were unable to take part in the proceedings.¹⁰² A breakthrough occurred in 1953, in Bremen. The government decided to send a sizeable contingent, including non-Party specialists. GDR historians constituted about 10% of all participants (ca. 700), and took active part in the discussions and lobby conversations. In his report from the convention, published in *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, Fritz Klein joyfully observed that only a few West-German historians approached the Marxists with hostility (which they did in a highly unpleasant manner, denying them the right to call themselves historians).¹⁰³ The general, official response to the event was therefore mildly positive.¹⁰⁴ Still, the aggressive statements of Heinz Kamnitzer and Joachim Streisand, reproaching some of their Western colleagues for their national-socialist past, could suggest a different interpretation.¹⁰⁵

101 Matthias Middell, “Jenseits unserer Grenzen? Zur Trennung von deutscher und allgemeiner Geschichte in der Geschichtswissenschaft und Geschichtskultur der DDR,” in: *Nach dem Erdbeben*, 101.

102 Martin Sabrow, “Ökumene als Bedrohung. Die Haltung der DDR-Historiographie gegenüber den deutschen Historikertagen von 1949 bis 1962,” in: *Historikertage im Vergleich*, eds. Gerald Diesener & Mattias Middell, Leipzig 1996 178-179.

103 Fritz Klein, “Erinnerungen an die ersten Jahre der Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft 1953-1957,” in: *Historische Zeitschriften im internationalen Vergleich*, Leipzig 1999, 338.

104 Fritz Klein, “Der Bremer Historikertag 1953,” *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1953, 906.

105 Heinz Kamnitzer, “Zum Vortrag von Th. Schieder Das Verhältnis von politischer und gesellschaftlicher Verfassung und die Krise des bürgerlichen Liberalismus,” *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1953; Joachim Streisand, “Zum Vortrag von O. Brunner Das Problem einer europäischen Sozialgeschichte,” *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1953; Alfred Meusel, “Zum Vortrag von G. Ritter Das Problem

Another confrontation with non-Marxist German historiography took place three years later, during a VHD congress at Ulm. The young GDR historiography had already made its international début by that time at the congress of the Comité International des Sciences Historiques in Rome, though, on that occasion none of the contingents from people's democracies managed to overcome the image of a manipulated, centrally controlled and politicised academy.¹⁰⁶ At Ulm, the GDR was represented by a tight group of Party functionaries. The discussion spots were entirely orchestrated. A scant description of the proceedings in *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* lauded a sober German-German discussion and observed with satisfaction that historians from GDR were quite visible at Ulm.¹⁰⁷ The subsequent number of the magazine offered an even more optimistic representation of the event. The GDR historians wrote that Marxism was rejected by mostly the elder generation from the West, while the young doubted the cognitive capabilities of bourgeois historiography and were much more open to cooperation with the GDR.¹⁰⁸

The year 1956 was at the same time the final period of a more or less peaceable exchange of opinion between the two German historiographies. The 20th convention of the CPSU, the Hungarian Uprising and the Polish October, and then the anti-revisionist campaign in the GDR (including the persecution of Jürgen Kuczynski and the ousting of Fritz Klein and Joachim Streisand as editors of *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*) radically altered this picture. If Marxist historiography was to retain its dominant position in the country, it had to eschew direct confrontation with other methodological and political currents. The ideological organ of the SED, *Einheit*, published a fundamental critique of the politics of a direct exchange of opinions: "Scientific debate, a fruitful exchange of views, and a national meeting between German historians from the West and the East – all of these can work to the advantage of a progressive science, peace and international understanding, as long as they remain grounded in an inexorable struggle against imperialist historiography. On this ground, every contact with West German historians can prove fruitful and desirable."

des 'Militarismus' in Deutschland," *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1953; E. Werner, "Zum Vortrag von B. Spuler Hellenismus und Islam," *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1953.

106 Karl Dietrich Erdmann, *Die Ökumene der Historiker. Geschichte der Internationalen Historikerkongresse und des Comité International des Sciences Historiques*, Göttingen 1987, 316-319.

107 "23. Versammlung deutscher Historiker in Ulm," *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1957, 125-127.

108 Sabrow, "Ökumene," 189.

The final joint convention of German historians took place in September 1958 at Trier. The GDR delegation was on that occasion organised by the Deutsche Historiker-Gesellschaft (DHG), which formed several months before under the leadership of Ernst Engelberg, and was approved by the Department of Science of the Central Committee of the SED. This new association of East German historians vowed to struggle against militarism and neo-fascism for the victory of socialism in the whole of Germany.¹⁰⁹ Alfred Meusel's proposition that DHG members should also join VHD was rejected; more than that – members of the East German association were expressly forbidden to join VHD.¹¹⁰ Even before the convention began, *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* published an assault on some West German historians, branding them as imperialists.¹¹¹ In addition, the number of GDR historians escaping to the West rose rapidly in the months directly preceding the convention; VHD filed a protest against the GDR government's attempts to suppress this wave. The affair of Willy Flachs added insult to injury: Flachs, a scholar who could not endure the oppressive atmosphere of East Germany, fled to FRG and committed suicide.¹¹² The GDR side vehemently rejected the notion that his decision was in any way affected by a period of imprisonment or by being stripped of all his titles.¹¹³

An official severing of ties with West German historiography was for the most part a pure formality. At Trier, West German historians reacted to the pre-planned performances by their Eastern colleagues by taking away their right to speak.¹¹⁴ From that point on, the East German scholars treated their Western colleagues exclusively as ideological enemies, an attitude reflected in more and more denunciations in the *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*.¹¹⁵ The death of Alfred Meusel, a proponent of relative openness toward the Western scientific community, just before the 11th Congress of CISH in Stockholm, gained a symbolic meaning. Without him among the ranks, the GDR prepared an

109 E. Hoffmann, "Über Tendenzen, die den weiteren Fortschritt unserer Geschichtswissenschaft hemmen," *Einheit* 1957/12, 1151, quoted in: *ibidem*, 190.

110 "Aufruf zur Gründung der 'Deutschen Historiker-Gesellschaft' in der DDR," *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1958, 217.

111 Sabrow, "Ökumene," 191-192.

112 Heinz Heitzer, "Über unser Stellung zu den westdeutschen bürgerlichen Historikern," *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1958.

113 Sabrow, "Ökumene," 192-193.

114 "Zu den Zwecklügen des Herrn Thiedeck (Interview der Redaktion mit G. Schilfert und G. Pretsch)," *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1958, 1355.

115 "Zu den Vorfällen auf der 24. Versammlung des westdeutschen Historiker-Verbandes in Trier," *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1958, 1134.

independent contingent, focused around an “ideological struggle” against their peers from the U.S., the FRG, Yugoslavia as well as against Polish émigrés.¹¹⁶ East German historians no longer tried to win anyone over. Enclosed in their own milieu, they no longer needed to, or indeed could, confront their beliefs with adherents of other worldviews.

Poland differed from Czechoslovakia and the GDR in that the Stalinist “Sturm und Drang” lasted relatively shorter there. Before 1956, the Party failed to secure total control in terms of ideology or personnel, and criticism of the Stalinist schematism in historiography began to appear even before the Polish October. Hence, the Stalinisation of the Polish historiography proved to be an unfinished process, which makes it all the more interesting. In Poland, the confrontations between Marxists and “bourgeois” historians spread out over several years, with milestones occurring at conventions and conferences of great value and importance to the community. As a result, conferences were not pure formalities, as in the case of Czechoslovakia or the GDR, even though they did not foster a free and unrestrained exchange of opinions.

The first public appearance of an organised group of Polish Marxist historians occurred at the 7th General Convention of Polish Historians in Wrocław, which took place on September 19-22, 1948. Among the invited were a delegation of Soviet historians (Fyodor Tretyakov, Arkady Sidorov and Ivan Udaltsov, each delivering a paper). On the other hand, though, invitations were also extended to Charles Morazé, representing the CISH, and Josef Macúrek from Brno, a historian out of favour with Czechoslovak Communist authorities. One of the papers was presented by another historian who soon became *persona non grata*, Henryk Wereszycki (1898-1990).¹¹⁷ A motion by Wanda Moszczeńska “for the necessity of including an up-to-date course on the methodology of history, and specifically historical materialism, in the regular university curriculum in history,” won unreserved approval.¹¹⁸ The convention

116 See Felix-Heinrich Gentzen, J. Kalisch, G. Voigt & E. Wolfgramm, “Die ‘Ostforschung’ – ein Stoßtrupp des deutschen Imperialismus,” *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1958; Karl Obermann, “Bemerkungen über die bürgerliche Metternich-Forschung,” *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1958; Manfred Unger, “Bernhard von Clairvaux und der Slawenkreuzzug 1147. Bemerkungen zu einem Aufsatz von W. Schlesinger,” *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1959; Percy Stulz & Siegfried Thomas, “Zur Entstehung und Entwicklung der CDU in Westdeutschland 1945-1949,” *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1959.

117 Rolf Rudolph, “XI. Internationaler Historiker-Kongress in Stockholm,” *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1960, 1790-1794. See. Sabrow, *Das Diktat*, 305-312.

118 Elżbieta Orman, “Historyk i jego historia. Próba biografii Henryka Wereszyckiego,” in: *Henryk Wereszycki*, 56-57.

occasioned the official formation of a group of Marxist historians (under the name of the Marxist Association of Historians), which was supposed to coordinate the actions and enhance the skills of the very few proponents of the new methodology.

At the convention, the achievements of Marxists were judged to have been rather limited.¹¹⁹ Worse than that – talks given by Polish Marxists did not earn the approval of the Soviet guests.¹²⁰ Hopes for the future were mostly associated with the emergence of an organised group promoting the new methodology. The Marxist Association of Historians (Marksistowskie Zrzeszenie Historyków) was expected to perform this role, but it needed the government's trust and support to operate efficiently. At the same time, it became evident early on that this Marxist organisation had a rather negligible effect on the Polish historiography. The Marxists spent several months intensively preparing for the CISH Congress in Paris in 1950.¹²¹ It soon turned out that the profile of the Polish delegation for the Congress was dependent on the composition of the German contingent. The French organisers sent out a list of the German participants to all concerned, asking for any critical comments or reservations. In Poland, the reservations were quickly voiced by the Western Institute (Instytut Zachodni), which protested against the participation of several German scholars in the Congress.¹²² Soon enough, Party historians came up with their own list of objections to the arrangement of the German delegation. During a meeting at the Department of Science of the Central Committee of the Party in January, Żanna Kormanowa pointed out that “There are [in the German delegation] only three people from Berlin, and [Jürgen] Kuczynski isn't there. The organisers are apparently trying to smuggle in the imperialist historians.... They obviously want Poland to be their dummy. The Party authorities will have to decide this matter.”¹²³ Not long thereafter, Żanna Kormanowa handed to Manteuffel a list of representatives of “the German democratic historical science,” who should have been invited to the Parisian Congress. By April, Tadeusz Manteuffel prepared a list of Polish delegates to the Congress for the

119 *Kwartalnik Historyczny* 1948, 580. See Tadeusz Paweł Rutkowski, *Polskie Towarzystwo Historyczne w latach 1945-1958. Zarys dziejów*, Toruń 2009, 31-41.

120 Stobiecki, *Historia*, 97.

121 Quoted in Zbigniew Romek, “Historycy radzieccy o historykach polskich. Uwagi o zjeździe wrocławskim i konferencji otwockiej (1951/1952),” *Polska 1944/45-1989. Studia i materiały*, 4 (1999), 197.

122 Dział Rękopisów BUW, Spuścizna Niny Assorodobraj, VII/2, Protokół z posiedzenia partyjnej grupy historyków przy Wydziale Nauki KC PZPR, 7 I 1950.

123 Archiwum PAN, sygn. III 192 Materiały Tadeusza Manteuffla, j. 38 Akta Delegata PTH do stosunków międzynarodowych – List sekretarza Wydziału Naukowego Instytutu Zachodniego Zdzisława Kaczmarczyka do Tadeusza Manteuffla, 2 I 1950.

Ministry of Education, but “Party authorities” had already been forced to decide to boycott the event. Tadeusz Manteuffel was told to draft a letter to the organisers, rejecting the invitation in the kindest of terms.¹²⁴

The manner in which the authorities chose to settle the issue of the Polish involvement in the Congress of Historical Sciences exemplifies not only the attitude of the government toward historians as such, but also toward Marxist historians who, just like all the others, had already prepared their presentations, with some, like Żanna Kormanowa, putting quite an effort into organising the event and giving it an appropriate ideological resonance. The government’s decision, whether it was taken at Moscow’s behest, or in response to the composition of the German delegation, or even resulted from the increasingly strained post-1949 Polish-French relations, illustrates the disdain with which it treated historians, whether or not they were card-carrying Party members.

While the question of the Polish participation in the Parisian Congress of Historical Sciences was still up in the air, more and more Party-members began to voice their demands of serious changes in personnel and organisation of the field. According to the preliminaries of a Party group at the Department of Science of the Central Committee, the Congress was meant to serve as an opportunity to prove the qualifications of a group of leading Polish Marxists and to illustrate its cohesion. What’s more, the guidelines for the content of the presentations, delivered to the Polish Historical Association (Polskie Towarzystwo Historyczne), demanded that non-Party historians reference works of “progressive” science, at least in footnotes, just like Marxists. Had those plans succeeded, their creators’ works would have gained a fantastic opportunity to enhance their scientific standing. However, with the trip to Paris called off, administrative repressions and a “closing of the ranks” seemed to the Marxists a more viable method of exerting control over the community. In this climate, preparations for the 1st Congress of Polish Science, originally drafted by the late Jerzy Borejsza, took place.

The participants of the meeting of the Subsection of History were presumably impressed the most by a paper which summarised their debates, presented by Żanna Kormanowa. Kormanowa began by stressing the role of history as one of the most Party-bound social sciences, heretofore exploited with relish by the possessor classes. A brief outline of the history of Polish historiography before 1918 was complemented by a broader section devoted to the interwar period. With all the positives (sometimes deemed questionable) of the period, Kormanowa found ample room for a scathing critique of some still

124 Dział Rękopisów BUW, Spuścizna Niny Assorodobraj, VII/2 – Protokół z posiedzenia partyjnej grupy historyków przy Wydziale Nauki KC PZPR, 7 I 1950.

active colleagues and several academic institutions.¹²⁵ Then, she stated that the Western Lands have officially been incorporated into the fatherland, which in her view meant that the Western Institute lost its *raison d'être*.¹²⁶ Among the postulates of the Subsection, the presenter named the formation of corporate departments in the manner characteristic of the Soviet Union, a deeper centralisation of academic publishing, and the formation of an Institute of History at the Polish Academy of Sciences.¹²⁷

Kormanowa's presentation made a lasting impression on her audience primarily because of her use of a rather primitive language when describing the achievements of widely known historians. This certainly did not bode well for the quality of the future Marxist scholarship in the history of historiography. One could hazard that the proceedings of the 1st Congress of the Polish Science were the final wake-up call for non-Party historians, alerting them to the dangers they faced, both personally and as a community. This was not because of a "totalitarian structuring" of the proceedings (according to Piotr Hübner), but rather thanks to fairly clear signals from card-carrying scientists, such as the philosopher Adam Schaff, or, in historiography, Żanna Kormanowa. The positions of non-Party professors who failed to submit to the new policies were now under threat. Partly independent scientific institutions, deemed obsolete already at that stage, were also in danger; according to Kormanowa, they included the Polish Academy of Learning (Polska Akademia Umiejętności) or the Western Institute. One could also expect the newly-formed, centralised scientific structures of the Polish Academy of Sciences to be handed over to historians who, like Kormanowa, acted for the government in regards to their colleagues. This was not a welcome development, especially in light of the fresh memory of a fragment of her presentation, in which she stated that, in the struggle for the completion of the 6-year plan, "we, historians, failed to keep the pace of the miner, the steelworker, the founder, the weaver."¹²⁸ It soon transpired that some historians were conscious of these developments and drew the right conclusions.

The next opportunity for a meeting of numerous Marxist and so-called "liberal-democratic" historians came with the First Methodological Conference of Polish Historians in Otwock between December 28th, 1951 and January 12th, 1952. The Otwock conference inarguably has an exceptionally bad reputation.

125 Archiwum PAN, sygn. III 192, Materiały Tadeusza Manteuffla, j. 38 Akta Delegata PTH do stosunków międzynarodowych – Projekt listu 7 VII 1950.

126 Żanna Kormanowa, "Referat podsekcji historii sekcji nauk społecznych i humanistycznych I KNP," *Kwartalnik Historyczny* 1951, 317.

127 Ibidem, 297.

128 Ibidem, 325.

Its main goal was to prove the superiority of card-carrying historians over their non-Party colleagues. The conference was rescheduled several times to give the young Marxists enough time to prepare for it.¹²⁹ The venue was visited by a huge number of historians from all the major research centres and many younger tenured scholars. No invitation was sent to, among others, Władysław Konopczyński or Zygmunt Wojciechowski, both of whom were criticised by Kormanowa at the 1st Congress of Polish Science.

The participants were to be evaluated not only by representatives of the Party and state authorities, but also by a delegation of Soviet historians: the director of the Institute of History of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, Boris Grykov, Yevgeni Kosminsky, Arkady Sidorov and Fyodor Tretyakov. The non-Party historians could derive comfort from the way the Soviet guests carried themselves. They did not offer support to the proponents of Stalinism, never allowed themselves to be isolated from their Polish colleagues, and spoke competently and courteously, emphasising the high qualifications of their hosts.¹³⁰ The leader of the delegation, Boris Grykov, won the Polish participants over when he asked the organisers to take him to one of the villages near Otwock, where he quartered during the First World War. This led to a meeting with an aged landowner, who supposedly kept fond memories of the erstwhile officer.¹³¹ When the conference ended, the Soviet guests were entertained by Bolesław Bierut, who expressed a great interest in the proceedings, and most of all, in the evaluation of the Polish academic cadres. The guests spoke highly of the non-Party historians, a fact which, as Leonid Gorizontov claimed, had very sad consequences for some of the Soviet delegates (back in their home country, Anna Mikhailovna Pankratova, a member of the Academy and an acquaintance of Żanna Kormanowa,¹³² accused them of yielding to the influence of the Polish bourgeois academy).¹³³

The evaluation presented by the Soviet guests was expected to frame the government's decision on the leadership of the future Institute of History at PAN.¹³⁴ Appeased by it, Tadeusz Manteuffel could safely pass on the resolution recommending the formation of the Institute to Prime Minister Cyrankiewicz.¹³⁵

129 Ibidem, 297.

130 Ibidem, 195-197.

131 Andrzej F. Grabski, *Zarys historii historiografii polskiej*, Poznań 2000, 205.

132 Based on the account by Prof. Janina Leskiewiczowa (in a conversation, February 2002).

133 Żanna Kormanowa, *Ludzie i życie*, Warszawa 1982, 199.

134 Juliusz Bardach, "Trudne początki," in: *Instytut Historii Polskiej Akademii Nauk 1953-1993*, ed. Stefan K. Kuczyński, Warszawa 1993, 69.

135 Stobiecki, *Historia*, 109; Romek, "Historycy radzieccy," 193.

The likelihood of the Institute's being handed over to someone like Żanna Kormanowa decreased. However, before the cadre of the future Institute of History at PAN took shape, the Otwock conference also brought about a number of events that inevitably worsened the non-Party historians' mood. These were the assaults of Roman Werfel, Tadeusz Daniszewski and Józef Kowalski on Henryk Wereszycki, the author of *Historia Polityczna Polski w dobie powstaniowej 1864-1918* (The Political History of Poland in the Post-Uprising era, 1864-1918, Warszawa 1948), a book they deemed pernicious, as a result of which it was withdrawn from bookshops. Asked to present a self-criticism, Wereszycki explained that he had not known nor applied the rules of Marxism-Leninism while working on the book. The assailants judged this self-criticism insufficient and renewed their assaults during subsequent sessions. The atmosphere became stressful not only for the victim of the assaults, but also for the other participants. Wereszycki himself thought that an arrest during the proceedings might be in the cards.¹³⁶

The Otwock conference is the last in a series of events that, in the eyes of both contemporaneous and current scholars, led to the Stalinisation of the Polish historiography. What did this Stalinisation consist of? A comparison of the proceedings of historical conventions and major conferences in each of the countries under discussion suggests that Stalinisation begins when the historical community is taken over by card-carrying Marxists, who then gradually force all members of the historical community to join the Party. This goal was fully achieved in the GDR, where authorities were greatly helped both by the denazification that decimated departments of the humanities at East German universities, and by the availability of an escape route to the West, chosen by many a dissident historian. In Czechoslovakia, the goal was actually achieved twice before 1989: first during the 1950s, and then after a period of "normalisation" that followed the Prague Spring. In Poland, neither of the stages crucial to its attainment were completed. Not only were the Marxists unable to achieve a numerical and qualitative advantage over the "bourgeois" historians; they even failed to come up with Marxist candidates for leadership of the community who would be capable of representing Polish historiography abroad. As a result, the Soviet guests at Otwock, for instance, expressed their esteem of Tadeusz Manteuffel or Aleksander Gieysztor (1916-1999), and not Żanna Kormanowa or Celina Bobińska. A comparison of the form, character and progress of the major conferences and conventions of historical societies shows that, in contrast to the other countries under discussion, in Poland the new

136 Tadeusz Manteuffel, *Historyk wobec historii. Rozprawy nieznanne. Pisma drobne. Wspomnienia*, Warszawa 1976, 358.

methodology had to be introduced repeatedly. It is not inconceivable that these attempts would eventually have yielded a definite result, and that both the Polish “liberal-bourgeois” historians and their students would have embraced a role similar to that of the university elites in the GDR. Still, the fact that the pressure to unify historiography lessened palpably already before 1956 undermined such an evolution of attitudes, and Polish historians were spared the fate shared for decades by their colleagues from the GDR or Czechoslovakia.

Every Central European Marxist historiography aimed to produce a comprehensive and useful synthesis of national history. A new textbook was meant to displace the old, “bourgeois” history books, entirely changing the perspective from which history was to be written; the popular masses were now supposed to become its subject. The production of this new “grand narrative” was also meant to exemplify a new approach toward historical work, treated as a collective endeavour. In most countries under discussion the task of the textbook’s creation was handed over to historical institutes formed at the newly-created academies of sciences. The structure of these institutes (broken down into chronologically ordered departments) roughly corresponded to the structure of the planned textbooks. Research queries as well as writing and editing duties for each of the volumes were delegated to numerous employees whose involvement in the work was not always marked by the inclusion of their names on the title pages of its final product. The work on the final versions of the textbooks took a long time – in the case of Poland, it was never completed – so the published books played their designated role only rarely and briefly. The effort put into their preparation turned out to be disproportionate to the effect.

Though the necessity of producing a Marxist textbook seemed obvious both in Poland, in the GDR, and in Czechoslovakia, the scheduling of the work and the hierarchy of goals to be achieved along the way to the final product were open to debate. Sometimes even card-carrying scientists were not entirely in agreement as to the type of textbook whose publication should be prioritised. In both Czechoslovakia and Poland, priority was eventually given to works of smaller volume, which could be of use for the final years of high school and at universities, and primarily the kind that would be easy to prepare and publish quickly.¹³⁷ The story of the publication process of a certain Polish university history textbook is most instructive in this regard. During a session of the scientific committee of the Institute of History at PAN in September 1953, a controversy arose between Leon Grosfeld and Žanna Kormanowa with respect to

137 See František Kavka, Josef Polišenský & František Kutnar, *Přehled dějin ČSR v epoše feudalismu (1526-1781)*, Praha 1956, František Kutnar, *Přehled dějin Československa v epoše kapitalismu*, Praha 1957.

the choice of the first book to be prepared for publication. Grosfeld believed that the academic textbook should receive an absolute priority; Kormanowa, on the other hand, supported the idea of focusing on a textbook for the later high school classes first.¹³⁸ In this dispute, Kormanowa had the upper hand at all times. Polish history schoolbooks were prioritised by the authorities even a few years before the formation of the Institute of History at PAN. In 1951, a textbook written by Gryzelda Missalowa and Janina Schoenbrenner, and edited by Kormanowa herself, arrived in print.¹³⁹ The work was a highly critical portrayal of national history, comparing the self-induced (by the gentry) collapse of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth to the defeat of September 1939. During debates over this textbook, which engaged prominent historians, Party members and non-members alike, the book was criticised for evident deficiencies, among them for its all-too-critical approach to the national traditions.¹⁴⁰

The authorities, as much as the leading Polish historians, wanted the new Polish history textbooks to represent an advance in quality both in terms of content and attitude toward national history. General history offered no such problem, since translated Soviet textbooks were in wide use.¹⁴¹ Before the publication of the especially important textbook intended for the final years of high school (classes 9 to 11), a range of consultations were organised – a practice observed after each re-edition of the work.¹⁴² The textbook for classes 9 to 11, eventually published in 1952, did not quite meet all the original guidelines.¹⁴³ Several weeks after the meeting of the Academic Council of the Institute of History at PAN that revealed the split between Kormanowa and Grosfeld, a session of the Department of Polish History at the Institute of the Education of Scientific Personnel (Instytut Kształcenia Kadr Naukowych, an institution devoted to teaching Party specialists), centered on the problem of the

138 Jerzy W. Borejsza, “Henryk Wereszycki czyli optymizm słusznych tez,” in: *Henryk Wereszycki*, 210.

139 Archiwum Instytutu Historii PAN, sygn. 5/27, Protokoły Rady Naukowej – Protokół nr 3 z posiedzenia Rady Naukowej IH PAN, 25 IX 1953.

140 Gryzelda Missalowa and Janina Schoenbrenner, *Historia Polski*, Warszawa 1951.

141 Dział Rękopisów BUW, Spuścizna Witolda Kuli, p. 27, t.: Podręcznik – programy nauczania, zwłaszcza historii gospodarczej - T. Manteuffel, Materiał do recenzji pierwszych 50 lekcji (str. 3-132) podręcznika “Historii Polski” G. Missalowej i J. Schoenbrenner; Ibidem: B. Leśnodorski, Marksistowski zarys dziejów Polski; Ibidem: W. Kula, Tezy do dyskusji nad podręcznikiem G. Missalowej i J. Schoenbrenner “Historia Polski,” 11 II 1952.

142 E. Kosmiński, *Historia wieków średnich*, Warszawa 1953.

143 Dział Rękopisów BUW, Spuścizna Witolda Kuli, p. 27, t.: Podręcznik – programy nauczania, zwłaszcza historii gospodarczej, Projekt tez dla autorów podręcznika historii Polski.

textbook, took place. During her presentation on that occasion, Żanna Kormanowa conducted a self-criticism for herself and her collaborators on the book, claiming that its deficiencies resulted from “our insufficient familiarity with theory.”¹⁴⁴ According to her, the errors were partially explained by – paradoxically – the absence of a university textbook which could serve as a basis for authors of textbooks designed for high-school students. The responses of other participants in the session were highly critical. In their view, the book was simply poorly prepared, “Particular authors wrote their pieces, others did not read what they wrote, and as a result the book includes a horrendous amount of repetitions, including repeated citations and dates, while numbers do not always add up,” observed Sylwester Zawadzki, a doctoral student at the Institute for the Education of Scientific Personnel, “the textbook should be appealing, it should foster a love for the workers’ movement.... But because it was written in such dry tones, one could even say: scribbled in a kind of – if you excuse the term – Marxist jargon, it does not appeal, it does not foster love.... Furthermore, I have to say,” Zawadzki continued, “that I don’t enjoy its criticism of the PPS.¹⁴⁵ The major error consists in the fact that the authors apparently criticise the PPS constantly for struggling for an independent Polish state. Instead of attacking their anti-national attitudes, the authors choose an entirely opposite route.”¹⁴⁶ According to this speaker, “the textbook at times resembles Party minutes,” particularly irritating by its sectarian view of Polish history, according to which “if there’s such a thing as an honest man, he must be a Communist.... There are no Poles if not Communist.... I’m not talking about the superstructure, ... but ... there’s no Żeromski, Prus, Konopnicka, Orzeszkowa, there’s no Matejko, none of our painters, there’s no room for those who protested.” Zawadzki’s arguments were accepted by Zygmunt Modzelewski, who identified the major flaw of the textbook as “its narrowing down of the object of analysis to the history of the workers’ movement.” “The textbook itself,” he concluded, “may finally prove the frailty of our historical front. At this point, our Polish Marxist historiography is still rather feeble, and this is obviously visible in the product of our writing, in what we now receive.... The main point of this textbook is to raise our youth in the spirit of love toward the Polish nation, the masses who created Polish history, and they need to be represented in this book.

144 *Historia Polski 1864-1945. Materiały do nauczania w klasie XI*, ed. Żanna Kormanowa, Warszawa 1952.

145 PPS – Polish Socialist Party – the biggest socialist organisation in Poland until 1948, when it forcibly joined the Communist PPR.

146 Dział Rękopisów BUW, Spuścizna Witolda Kuli, p. 27, t.: Dyskusja nad podręcznikiem szkolnym 1864-1945 – Stenogram posiedzenia Katedry Historii Polski IKKN odbytego w Warszawie, 3 XI 1953.

And they aren't. We heard it said here that the man has disappeared. Because of humanism and the Renaissance, we talk of the man, but I think we should rather be speaking of a nation as well – this is the background against which we will see the leaders. The nation should come first at all times.”¹⁴⁷

The experience of the debates on school textbooks had a definite influence on the organisation of work on the university textbook on Polish history. The work on Polish, Czechoslovak and Slovak textbooks progressed according to patterns so similar that one could use these examples to illustrate the specific rules of production for Marxist syntheses. It was assumed that the textbooks should result from a broad discussion, which was to take place before the publication of their final versions. After the publication, texts of a canonical or normative character were expected to attract controversy no longer. For this reason, the publication of the final versions of particular volumes was preceded by lengthy discussions over periodisation, the evaluation of specific events, and finally the printing of extracts from selected fragments of the textbook. Another important stage consisted in the publishing of “theses” and “drafts” meant to serve as a basis for discussion, both with national and international (primarily Soviet) historians.¹⁴⁸ Central historical magazines widely distributed news of the progress of successive stages of the work.

Work on Marxist textbooks proceeded at a slow pace. The draft of the first volume of *Přehled československých dějin* was published in 1958.¹⁴⁹ The first volume of the Polish “Draft” saw print in 1955 (in two parts), while *Dejiny Slovenska* (the idea of having a “draft” printed first was in that case dropped) went to press in the early 1960s.¹⁵⁰ The whole endeavour may have been ambitious, but there were also other, more mundane reasons for the slow progress of the work. It quickly transpired that despite sincere dedication of all involved in the work, a quality synthesis was hard to come by in the absence of

147 Ibidem.

148 “Rozmowa z Czesławem Madajczykiem (not. Zbigniew Romek),” in: *Cenzura w PRL*, 134; Havrila, *Slovenská*, chapter: „Historický ústav SAV v rokoch 1953-1968”; Roman Ferstl, “František Graus v počátcích Historického ústavu ČSAV” in: *František Graus – člověk a historik. Sborník z pracovního semináře Výzkumného centra pro dějiny vědy konaného 10. prosince 2002*, eds. Zdeněk Beneš, Bohumil Jiroušek & Antonín Kostlán, Praha 2004, 52-53; Jiří Jílek, “František Graus a „Maketa,”” *ibidem*, 57-68.

149 *Přehled československých dějin*, vol. 1, eds. Josef Macek, František Graus & Ján Tibenský, Praha 1958.

150 *Historia Polski*, vol. 1, part 1, ed. Henryk Łowmiański (project editors Tadeusz Manteuffel, Leon Grosfeld & Bogusław Leśnodorski), Warszawa 1955; *Historia Polski*, vol. 1, part 2, ed. Henryk Łowmiański, Warszawa 1955; *Dejiny Slovenska* (tézy), ed. Ludovít Holotík, Bratislava 1955; *Dejiny Slovenska*, vol. 1, eds. Ludovít Holotík & Ján Tibenský, Bratislava 1961.

monographic works. The first “draft” saw print in Poland, and yet its editor, Tadeusz Manteuffel, was rumoured to have purposefully slowed the progress of the work, especially the part devoted to the latest period, which was by nature given to the most severe political deformations. I was unable to verify this claim, but as far as the earlier volumes were concerned, Manteuffel hardly needed to apply any pressures of the kind. Quite the contrary: he expended a lot of energy trying to put authors who were running late with commissioned texts back on track. The Archives of the Institute of History at PAN have collected a number of more or less coarse admonitions, including dispatches categorically demanding the submission of delayed works.¹⁵¹ The entire endeavour was to an extent unfortunate; some of the delays were caused by the theft of collected materiel.¹⁵² The progress of the work was also greatly slowed by debates concerning matters of key importance from the perspective of Marxist historiography. In the case of Poland, the most important problem was the characterisation of the achievements of national and foreign historiographies. Josef Macek and František Graus, who chaired sessions devoted to the first volume of the Czechoslovak “draft” in February 1959, faced mostly hundreds of small remarks and claims about particular historical facts, to which they repeatedly responded that the textbook was not meant to replace the nonexistent monographs on particular subjects.¹⁵³

The lack of clarity over criteria for evaluation of “bourgeois” historiography is reflected in the debate on the historiographical chapters of the following volume of the Polish textbook, which took place in April 1955. Marian Serejski criticised the views maintained by Celina Bobińska, who claimed that conservative historians of the Kraków school, and especially Michał Bobrzyński, stood out from the other “imperialist” historians because they “saw through the patterns of history.” Since the conservative Bobrzyński was supposedly a comparatively progressive moderate – responded Serejski – how should we evaluate the progressive liberals, Waław Tokarz, Bolesław Limanowski or even Marcei Handelsman?¹⁵⁴

Slovak Marxists also faced numerous obstacles in interpretation, sometimes of an entirely essential nature. A traditional problem, encountered already in the works of Július Botto and František Sasínek, was the determination of the object of history (beside the obvious, though hardly specific assumption that history should always speak primarily of the popular masses). Should the Marxist

151 Archiwum Instytutu Historii PAN, sygn. 12/60, Podręcznik Historii Polski. Protokół z dyskusji, preliminarz, korespondencja.

152 Ibidem – Pismo Waław Urbana, Kraków, 24 I 1954.

153 Jílek, “František Graus,” 67.

154 Ibidem.

synthesis be a history of the Slovak ethnic grouping, or of the territories it inhabited? How should one approach the problem of Slovak-Hungarian and Slovak-Czech relations? The authorial collective attempted to merge national and territorial perspectives, making itself susceptible to criticism. Commenting upon the “Theses,” František Bokes pointed precisely to the fact that they were concerned more with “Slovak history” than with “history of Slovakia,” which stood in contradiction to the title of the work.¹⁵⁵ Still, *Dejiny Slovenska* was in later years valued more than any of the other Marxist syntheses. The most basic reason for this was the fact that this unprecedented and daring attempt could not rely on any pre-existing sources, which meant that its authors had to conduct a series of pioneering inquiries. It was impossible for them to rely extensively on analyses and sources published by native historians of the 19th century, as the Czech Marxists among others did.¹⁵⁶

The work on the university textbook on the history of Poland and the reception of the first published volumes of the “Draft” both perfectly illustrate the political transformations of Stalinist Poland. The first critical reactions to contemporaneous policies toward historians were heard at the General Assembly of the Polish Historical Society in 1956. The final meetings prior to the publication of the “Draft” did not lead to any significant debate over the form of Marxist interpretation of national history. The coming political thaw is perfectly visible in comments on the debate over the first volume of the “Draft,” published in the mid-year *Kwartalnik Historyczny*.¹⁵⁷ The authors of the report optimistically concluded that “the synthesis marked an attempt ... – mostly successful – to avoid committing the errors of the previous epoch when being schematic equalled being in the right, and when some historians, entangled in dogmas and their own opportunism, were given to describing events according to an ideal pattern – ‘the way they should appear,’ not taking into account the abundant original sources.”¹⁵⁸ The same yearbook of *Kwartalnik Historyczny* included an assessment written by Witold Kula, entitled *W sprawie naszej polityki naukowej* (“On our scientific policy”). The piece was a printed version of a presentation given at a session of the Academic Council of the Institute of History at PAN in June 1956, in which the author evaluated the achievements of Polish historiography after 1945. Describing the initial postwar period, he noted “a flood of rubbish, often imbued with undisguised nationalism” rising against the gradually strengthening influence of the *Annales* school. For Kula, the

155 Havrila, *Slovenská*, chapter: Historický ústav SAV v rokoch 1953-1968.

156 Helena Třísková, “Synthesis,” in: *A Guide*, 40.

157 Ryszard Kiersnowski, Tadeusz Lalik, Janusz Tazbir & Andrzej Wyczański, “Dyskusja nad makietą I tomu Historii Polski,” *Kwartalnik Historyczny* 1956.

158 *Ibidem*, 4.

Wrocław convention was a failure, not so much for card-carrying historians, as for their “progressive” non-Party colleagues denounced both by “traditional” historiography and by the decision-makers. The period from 1949 to 1952 was marked by the rule of the iron fist, which resulted in a total stagnation as well as a flight from history into related disciplines: archaeology, history of art or economics. At Otwock, “Representatives of the Party and state authorities saw that, in spite of what their informers had said, most of the Polish historians were in fact people, living, thinking and feeling, respondent to the enormous scientific perspectives opened up by Marxism, wanting to be and capable of being of use to the country.”¹⁵⁹ Further on, Kula claimed that the first postwar decade brought a multitude of disappointments. Marxism was at times applied in a primitive manner: “It sufficed to prove the ‘constantly worsening’ lot of the peasant, it sufficed to say anything bad about the relations between Poland and any western country in any century – and one was already deemed a Marxist. It sufficed to juggle the term ‘objective progressiveness’ to be thought of as a dialectician.”¹⁶⁰ Kula criticised the sorry state of research into recent history, stemming from the self-delusion of Party representatives: “It is time to end with making a secret (strictly guarded, but remembered by elder people and known to younger historians through documents) of the Party position, which was either faulty for its time, or, if right, no longer remains valid.”¹⁶¹ The article also included mentions of falsifications of historical sources, “a censor’s attitude toward the past,” and also of a certain “pessimism” of the history of Poland as viewed in this Marxist light (a motif of high importance to later “thaw” debates). The same problem was discussed in the final volume of *Kwartalnik Historyczny* published in 1956, in the report *Z prac organizacji partyjnej w Instytucie Historii PAN*, compiled by Krystyna Zienkowska and Jerzy Jedlicki.¹⁶²

Paradoxically, Witold Kula combined these exceptionally critical remarks with a generally positive evaluation of the achievements of the first decade under Communism: “We can claim with full responsibility that there does not seem to have been, in the history of Polish science, another decade as progressive.”¹⁶³ Nevertheless, some changes in academic policy seemed

159 Witold Kula, “W sprawie naszej polityki naukowej,” *Kwartalnik Historyczny* 1956, 154.

160 Ibidem, 156.

161 Ibidem, 158.

162 Krystyna Zienkowska & Jerzy Jedlicki, “Z prac organizacji partyjnej w Instytucie Historii PAN,” *Kwartalnik Historyczny* 1956, 530.

163 Kula, „W sprawie,” 155.

necessary even to Kula who gave a lot of weight to the freedom of scientific debate and highlighted the importance of research trips abroad.¹⁶⁴

Even before Kula's article appeared in print in *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, it sparked a heated debate during a session of the Academic Council of the Institute of History at PAN. Its primary participants, Marian Małowist (1909-1988) and Leon Grosfeld opted to cushion the blow Kula delivered, pointing to the "problem of a dangerous tendency toward reverse dogmatism" and the undesirability of a complete rejection of Marxist methodology.¹⁶⁵ Aleksander Gieysztor made a much harsher statement; he spoke for the hasty organisation of a general convention of historians. "It should have a impetuous character to it – he added – as a kind of vote of no confidence."¹⁶⁶ "We should also," he continued, "demand to be told about employed scholars who were dragged into the archives." When Małowist commented that, compared to other fields of study, historiography did not plummet so low under Stalinism, Gieysztor replied that "while it didn't suffer the worst, it doesn't mean it's doing well." Gieysztor's statement unleashed a flood of criticism toward the scientific policies of the Communists. Stefan Kieniewicz raised the issue of censorial interferences and obligations to tamper with historical truth.¹⁶⁷ Marian Henryk Serejski made a statement that could have informed Witold Kula's later claim that Polish Marxist historiography was stretched between Communism and nationalism. Serejski reminded the congregation that during the "past period," questions of a national nature were treated in a highly unusual manner: "for instance, it was said that Suvorov was a Russian patriot, while Batory was nothing but a reactionary Pole." Years later, Kula concluded that "Traditional historians accuse Polish historiography of the years 1948-1955 of excessive revisionism and deprecating national traditions. For proof, elements such as a critical evaluation of Batory, depictions of the armies of the old *Rzeczpospolita* as an instrument of class repression, or putting stress on the reactionary character of Czartoryski's milieu, and so on, suffice. Historians who have been tied to the progressive movement for years were surprised by the exact opposite of that: pressures toward apologetics, the untouchability of 'national sanctities,' a hagiographic streak."¹⁶⁸ This difference of opinion remains valid in today's evaluations of Polish historiography under Stalinism.

164 Stefan Żółkiewski, "Uwagi o postępie metodologicznym nauki polskiej w minionym dziesięcioleciu," *Studia z dziejów nauki polskiej* 3/1955, 13.

165 Archiwum Instytutu Historii PAN, sygn. 5/26, Protokoły Rady Naukowej 1956-1959 – Protokół z posiedzenia Rady Naukowej IH PAN, 25 VI 1956.

166 Ibidem.

167 Ibidem.

168 Witold Kula, *Wokół historii*, Warszawa 1998, 101.

The wave of “reverse dogmatism,” which Leon Grosfeld feared, was not a purely imagined danger. Some of the reactions to ever more visible signs of the coming thaw could make card-carrying historians quite apprehensive, and in time, they were also found to be distasteful even to some of their non-Party colleagues. The Marxist textbook on the history of Poland, both in its “Draft” edition and in its final incarnation, was one publication which, due to its importance, met with very stern appraisal from the reviewers. In 1957, Henryk Wereszycki delivered a crushing, though tactful, analysis of its second volume for *Kwartalnik Historyczny*.¹⁶⁹ Early in his review, he lauded the authors of the “Draft” for clearly striving to avoid a vulgarisation of history. Later on, though, he criticised the crucial, most important aspect of the book: the vision of national history that it represented. “After reading some thousand and more pages of post-Partitions history,” he asserted, “I was overcome by an irresistible feeling that we were presented with a clearly pessimist image of our nation’s past.”¹⁷⁰ Wereszycki did not agree with this pessimist outlook. He pointed to several sources for the authors’ pessimism. First, he named the “pessimism of the historian’s workshop”: “The authors of the draft seem to have somehow lost faith in their own vocation. Skimming through chapters of the first part of the second volume, I noted that, some fairly important issues related to the period of the Partitions are quite often resolved with recourse to the authorities of Marx and Engels – scholars whose views on matters of Polish history took shape a hundred years ago. Throughout these hundred years, Polish historiography worked diligently, particularly with regard to the period of the Partitions. But for the authors of this textbook, scholars of a hundred years ago remain the highest authority on the matter. Therefore, the whole scholarly effort of those hundred years of work by Polish historians has come, to an extent, to waste. For a Polish historian writing in our times, whose teachers belong precisely to the lineage of that century, teachers who schooled him in that century’s context, whom he valued in his youth, and sometimes even revered – it must fill him with pessimism and lack of faith.”¹⁷¹ There was also another kind of pessimism, which depressed Wereszycki even more. Since the synthesis which he reviewed was apparently supposed to serve as a kind of “justification” of the People’s Republic of Poland, it inevitably became an apotheosis of the people and a condemnation of the possessing classes. According to Wereszycki, these basic assumptions were justified in the textbook by recourse to two claims: “The first claim, that all anti-feudal movements were *eo ipso* movements for the freedom

169 Henryk Wereszycki, *Niewygasała przeszłość*, Kraków 1987.

170 Ibidem, 250.

171 Ibidem, 251.

of the nation. And the second claim, that every counter-revolutionary idea, every idea defending feudalism was also anti-national. These claims draw us to the very depths of pessimism. The peasant who struggles against the feudal oppression is the driving force of the liberation movement: that is an oft-repeated phrase. Yet, the textbook is scientifically sound, and hence, specific facts stand in constant contradiction to this main claim. As a result, the peasants' movement in Galicia in 1846 [aimed against Polish insurrectionists – MG] becomes the greatest Polish anti-feudal movement of the era. If that is a liberation movement, and particularly the greatest of the era, then the main claim is surely awash in pessimism."¹⁷² Wereszycki argued that in the 19th century, the achievements of the higher classes were necessarily of a much higher importance for Polish culture and the national cause; yet these classes were deplored by the authors of the textbook. It was an obvious mistake to evaluate the past anachronistically, through the lens of contemporary politics. The authors should have reminded themselves that their work was addressed primarily to the young reader. "Therefore, if the authors want to make the minds of the youth more susceptible to the ideas they propagate, they need to take their feelings into account as well. If the feelings of the youth are offended, the youth will be inclined to reject all that the textbook offers."¹⁷³

Wereszycki's statement was only one among many critical evaluations of the "Draft." In April 1957, during a debate over its second volume, the number of critical comments rose so high that a resigned Witold Kula scribbled in his notebook: "What I'm not going to talk about: 1) How the same people judged the same things in January 1956; 2) How those responsible avoided criticism in January 1956."¹⁷⁴ When he finally got to speak, he conceded that though the Marxist historians set numerous historical falsities straight, they created a spate of new ones themselves, thereby risking losing the confidence of their readers. According to Kula, the thaw was sometimes understood in historiography in an unwise manner, veering dangerously close to nationalism. This was not the result he had envisioned from the work of correcting the Stalinist period's errors. And yet, after 1956, it was becoming customary to shrug off the entire output of the previous decade, without making any efforts at distinguishing between its virtues and its vices.¹⁷⁵

The authors of the textbook tried to apply all the necessary (and possible) corrections to their work before its final version saw print. The brunt of those

172 Ibidem, 252.

173 Ibidem, 276.

174 Dział Rękopisów BUW, Spuścizna Witolda Kuli, p. 9, t.: Udział w konferencjach – Dyskusja nad makietą II tomu UPHP, Sulejówek, 14-17 IV 1957.

175 Ibidem.

corrections was in fact borne by several people, primarily Witold Kula, Tadeusz Manteuffel, elected as the solitary editor of the entire work in 1956 (up until that point, in accordance with the rules promoting at least formally collective work, the book was edited by a team of several people), and finally Stefan Kieniewicz, who had, for instance, made corrections to chapters on the 19th century, which were prepared by Celina Bobińska.¹⁷⁶ Despite their efforts, the reaction to early volumes of the final version of the textbook was hardly positive. In June 1958, *Twórczość* magazine published an article by Paweł Jasienica, an author one would hardly associate with the Marxist methodology.¹⁷⁷ Of course, Jasienica had a number of reservations with regard to the university textbook on the history of Poland as well (mostly related to the selection of boundary dates for the particular volumes), yet it was the way other critics had lambasted the book's authors that elicited his firm protest. "The work on *The History of Poland* began in Autumn 1952," Jasienica wrote, "In subsequent years, many things changed for the better, and it made the work of this team of scholars decidedly more complex. The outposts of 'schematism, dogmatism and one-sided distortions,' at first dismantled piece by piece with great effort, started falling one by one in 1956. Life took on an insane pace, and the heavy machine working on the *History* at full-steam had to adjust to rapidly changing conditions."¹⁷⁸ The team working on the textbook did all they could – Jasienica continued. After the thaw, the only way to make everybody happy was to call a halt to all work on the project and "linger, keeping one's ears to the ground." However, in his eyes, such behaviour would be simply foolish.

Jasienica also believed some of the reactions to the work betrayed ill will: "The printing process for the *History* ended in November 1957, and the book reached the readers only in January. Yet already on December 17th, *Polityka* carried an extensive piece entitled 'Adult prose.' Its author scoffs loftily: 'A serious work, an effect of a collective effort, perhaps a bit untimely, but fairly ambitious, a synthesis of a representative character, claims that Władysław II Wygnaniec "became an agent of foreign intervention." We are talking about a prince from the second quarter of the 12th century, a son to Bolesław Krzywousty.' The statement could likely be found in the 'draft' of the work, but sounds much different in the final version of *History*: 'Władysław II, later called Wygnaniec, quickly followed the route chosen by numerous disinherited rulers, bringing foreign intervention into his homeland.' It's beyond my

176 Dział Rękopisów BUW, Spuścizna Witolda Kuli, p. 13, t.: Bieżące funkcjonowanie zawodowe – Stefan Kieniewicz to Kula on February 26 1956: "I'm returning the final 3 chapters by Bobińska ... The historiography now looks decidedly better."

177 Paweł Jasienica, *Tylko o historii*, Warszawa 1992.

178 Ibidem, 73.

comprehension, this tendency to put spokes in others' wheels, to a public condemnation of faults in the project that were actually *mended!* I wouldn't tussle over any given piece if it wasn't for the fact that one can hear sometimes caustic remarks about *History* from people who have not seen or read it. This bad credit of faith – inevitably inflated by some personal scuffles – hurts people who performed a hard, necessary and useful work. It isn't free of errors and faults, but I doubt that anyone could have done it better in the complicated conditions of the past few years. It's very likely that the final fruit of the work of the authors of *History* is in reality fairly close to a best possible performance in these circumstances."¹⁷⁹

The authors of the textbook took the critical comments of the readers of the "Draft" very seriously. This is well illustrated by an analysis of the introduction to the first part of the second volume of the book, published in 1958 (edited by Stefan Kieniewicz and Witold Kula).¹⁸⁰ The editors started the book off by informing the readers that, as a result of the debate over the "Draft," the meeting in Sulejówek, and the article by Henryk Wereszycki, "It can be said that some chapters were written anew."¹⁸¹ The highly controversial issue of the boundary dates chosen for the volume – 1764 and 1864 instead of the traditional choices of the Third Partition (1795) and – e.g. – the insurrection of 1863 – was treated in detail (these were the boundary dates both Wereszycki and Jasienica questioned). The authors of the preface underlined with force that "The rules of periodisation ... were approved ... in the years 1953-54, and have been maintained in the same general shape without changes. These rules are entirely debatable by definition."¹⁸² The period discussed in the volume was characterised by the authors as the crisis of feudalism, yet it is hard not to think that by 1958 such "Marxist" periodisations, based on the theory of formations, were typically cast aside, to make room for reinstated traditional caesuras. This is where the following hint, included in the preface, comes from: "The first part of the second volume, together with the two parts of the first volume, forms a three-volume history of independent Poland, while the second and third parts of the second volume are a beginning of a four-volume history of post-Partition Poland."¹⁸³

Compared to the Marxist syntheses of national histories published in Poland and Czechoslovakia, the GDR's *Lehrbuch der deutschen Geschichte* stands out

179 Ibidem, 74.

180 *Historia Polski*, vol. 2, 1764-1864, part 1, 1764-1795, eds. Stefan Kieniewicz & Witold Kula Warszawa 1958.

181 Ibidem, 4.

182 Ibidem, 1.

183 Ibidem, 3.

already by its appearance. Both the “Drafts” and the final versions of the other textbooks are typically bulky volumes marked by the names of several editors and even more collaborators, co-authors of specific fragments and authors of studies used to create the textbooks. In the case of the textbook written in the GDR, we are dealing with a series of slim books of a smaller size, distinctly marked with the name of a single author (or sometimes two). The collective that was involved in the preparatory work remained in the shadow of the seminal figures of East German historiography, a practice which marked something akin to a revision of the otherwise commonly embraced egalitarian methodological and organisational guidelines.

The decision to publish the Marxist synthesis of the history of Germany at a faster pace, until 1953, was taken by the Central Committee of the SED in October 1951. Alfred Meusel, the only card-carrying historian in the GDR who could boast a pre-World War II professorship, was named chief editor of the project. Having returned from exile in Great Britain in 1946, Meusel taught at Humboldt University in Berlin, where he was also appointed Dean of the Department of Philosophy. In 1947, he became the first Marxist full professor, and then was appointed director of the Museum für Deutsche Geschichte. The authors of the particular volumes of the Marxist textbook benefited from rich aid provided by the employees of the Museum für Deutsche Geschichte and the Institut für die Geschichte des deutschen Volkes of the Humboldt University in Berlin. Among the authors, one could also find formidable figures of East German historiography, such as Ernst Engelberg, Gerhard Schilfert, Heinz Kamnitzer, Karl Obermann or Albert Schreiner. Outlines of particular chapters were discussed at the publishing committee meetings and published in *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*.¹⁸⁴

The ambitious undertaking faced numerous obstacles, some of the kind reminiscent of the work on the Polish “Draft” and some entirely singular. The composition of the team of authors changed constantly – suffice it to say that seven names “fell out” of the initial list. Despite pressure from Walter Ulbricht, the work on the textbook became a protracted effort, and the deadline for its completion was inevitably pushed back. After 1956, the publishing committee was torn by an open conflict. First, Alfred Meusel’s position was weakened when his close friend Jürgen Kuczynski fell out of favour with the authorities. Then, as a result of a discussion on the character of *Novemberrevolution*, Albert Schreiner was deposed from the committee. The personal and aspirational conflict between Meusel and Ernst Engelberg, however, proved the most fateful.

184 Mario Kessler, *Exilerfahrung in Wissenschaft und Politik. Remigrierte Historiker in der frühen DDR*, Köln-Weimar-Wien 2001, 85-86.

It was, to an extent, a struggle over the interpretation of national history. Alfred Meusel, an ardent supporter of German unity, believed that the forcible unification of the country and the formation of an empire in 1871 was a progressive event, despite its limitations. Engelberg, who was to become Bismarck's biographer and the co-author of the "Prussian renaissance" in the GDR, was at that time far more critical toward this part of the national tradition, and considered Meusel's interpretation unacceptable. The conflict between the two historians played itself out through internal reviews, memoranda to the authorities and conversations with employees of the Abteilung Wissenschaften of the Central Committee of the SED rather than in professional magazines or even the popular press, but Meusel, who at first had enjoyed a higher standing as an editor reviewing Engelberg's text, made some exceptionally vicious comments, also with regard to the writing style of his competitor – he stated that professors should not demand of their pupils that they write in good German as long as they cannot do it themselves.¹⁸⁵

At the point when the work on the textbook (and the attendant conflict between Engelberg and Meusel) were progressing at an ever-increasing pace, Alfred Meusel was one of the leaders of the community of historians of the GDR. This was also how he was seen within the Party: the very fact that he was given the task of overseeing the publication of a key work proved it beyond doubt. Engelberg, on the other hand, was a "greenhorn" Marxist, struggling both to gain acceptance for his interpretations and to achieve a position that would match his personal ambitions. Tried and imprisoned in the Third Reich, he had later emigrated to Switzerland. After the war broke out, when the Swiss authorities began to persecute antifascists, he had agreed to take up a job as a German teacher at the Istanbul University. After his return to Leipzig in 1948, Engelberg gave lectures on German history at the local university and was appointed director of the Institut für Deutsche Geschichte. Despite alleged connections with Rudolf Slánský, Engelberg's career proceeded apace. Luck was apparently on his side, as Meusel's position began to wane in the later 1950s. The dissolution of remnants of unity between German historians on both sides of the border, as well as the anti-revisionist campaign, both worked to Engelberg's benefit.

Meusel's position became precarious as a result of an affair that gave East German historiography a bad name abroad. Meusel had high hopes for a younger colleague he ardently promoted – the émigré Heinz Kamnitzer (1917-2001). Having returned from England, Kamnitzer joined the SED and, since 1947, lectured at Humboldt University. Between 1952 and 1954, he headed the

185 Ibidem, 242.

university's Institute of History (Institut für Geschichte des Deutschen Volkes) and was the Dean of the University, and between 1953 and 1955, he co-edited the *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*. In 1952, Meusel's monograph, *Thomas Müntzer und seine Zeit*, appeared in print; Kamnitzer selected source materials for the publication. In his introduction, he professed that the texts he chose were completely new to historians. In reality, however, the selection consisted of texts that had already come out in print and were familiar to historians. The damage to his reputation was all the more significant for the fact that, as a Communist and Jew, he eagerly castigated West German historians with a national-socialist past. Now, it was their time to exact their revenge on the moralist. In later years, Kamnitzer left history behind and devoted himself to literature.

Meusel and Engelberg's struggle consisted of sending letters to Party authorities. Ignoring the rules of collective work (as well as many other rules), Engelberg contacted the Department of Science of the Central Committee of the SED in February 1958 with a proposal for the publication of a volume under his editorship, *Deutschland von 1849 bis 1871*.¹⁸⁶ He complained that because of Meusel he fell victim to indiscriminate attacks from the publishing committee and hence suggested that the committee be bypassed in this case. The authorities accepted his suggestion, and the volume, devoted to the years 1849 to 1871, saw print as the first of the series, despite being scheduled to appear as only the seventh of the sequence. What is more, because of his steadfast rejection of any kind of cooperation with West German historiographers, Engelberg earned himself the position as head of the newly-formed association of GDR historians, the DHG.

This was not the end of Engelberg's assaults on his elder colleague though. In subsequent letters to the Central Committee of the SED, Engelberg demanded that Meusel be removed from his position as chief editor in the author's collective. He accused Meusel of espousing liberal views, criticised his interpretation of history, and finally charged him with a deviation from the ruling methodology. He concluded that their conflict was a "clash between a warring Marxism on the one side, and a just as combative and conscious non-Marxism on the other."¹⁸⁷ More importantly from the perspective of the work on Marxist synthesis, Engelberg expressed the belief that Meusel's activities robbed the author's collective of any ability to act further. Therefore, he advocated that the collective be disbanded and individual agreements signed with particular authors.¹⁸⁸

186 Ernst Engelberg, *Deutschland von 1849 bis 1871*, Berlin 1959.

187 Quoted in: Kessler, *Exilerfahrung*, 243.

188 Ibidem, 244.

The ruthless struggle over the main historical undertaking of the East German academy ended only with Alfred Meusel's death in September 1960. Eventually, as Martin Sabrow remarked with irony, this erstwhile seminal figure of East German historiography did not get his name on any of the textbook's volumes.¹⁸⁹ His idea that "Drafts" of the subsequent volumes of the textbook be printed first, like in other people's democracies, to spark a broader, national debate, was also dropped. Though the textbook did eventually appear in print, it hardly qualifies as a monument to a collective effort. It was found wanting in terms of its professional status, reliability, and level of detail. The final shape of this East German historical synthesis largely bears out the character of the community of local card-carrying historians, whose main and most representative example was the efficient tactician, experienced political player, and also historian, Ernst Engelberg.

In each of the countries that interest us here, scientific associations of historians, academies of learning and professional societies boasted an old and rich tradition. However, the decision of Communist authorities to introduce deep organisational changes, leaving behind old scientific traditions, should not be thought of as an act of reckless vandalism; in fact, it was an outcome of reasoned calculation (as far as the authorities were concerned). Of course, historical institutes of the Party, focused on the history of local organised workers' movements and filled with deserving Party activists, had already been in place at that time. The goal was not to counterbalance the existing structures, but rather to form and control an institution that would oversee the entire historiographical effort of each nation and would command the respect of society as well as the esteem of the historical community. The formation of Academies, tasked solely with research activities and a representative role, facilitated control over the historians and made it possible to create elevated offices for leading card-carrying scholars, who could then devote their time to writing, at a remove from teaching obligations. Additionally, a structure created from the ground up could be easily shaped and politically controlled.

The centralisation of scientific societies was universally opposed – the opposition, however, did not utterly and fundamentally reject the policy of centralisation, but rather resisted the shape of reforms that were expected to occur sooner or later in any case. The members of several Czech scientific societies conducted extended negotiations with authorities, hoping that the

189 Martin Sabrow, "Auf der Suche nach dem materialistischen Meisterton. Bauformen einer nationalen Gegenerzählung in der DDR," in: *Die historische Meistererzählung. Deutungslinien der deutschen Nationalgeschichte nach 1945*, eds. Konrad H. Jarausch & Martin Sabrow Göttingen 2002, 55.

projected Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences (Československá Akademie Věd, ČSAV) would turn out to be merely a “cap” over the other organisations, a formalised centre for a federation of independent entities. Their hopes turned out to have been futile.

From the very beginning, both Polish and other academies of science were all expected to attain two seemingly contradictory goals. On the one hand, they were supposed to introduce the new methodology, setting an example for scientists all over their respective countries. On the other hand, though, as the authors of the Polish Party’s internal document wrote, “For political reasons, it [wa]s necessary that PAN t[ook] over from the Polish Academy of Learning and other general associations the serious and recognised scholars not currently engaged in academic work; though they may often be ideologically foreign to us, [because] they [we]re well known to have been of great service to the Polish academy.”¹⁹⁰ PAN was therefore conceived as a Marxist institution as well as a refuge for scientists who exerted a pernicious influence on the youth. This characteristic befitted the Institute of History at PAN as well.¹⁹¹

Consequently, traditional scientific associations and the newly-founded academies of science based on the Soviet model recruited their personnel in highly similar ways. Even members of old associations, who – as in Czechoslovakia – questioned the sensibility of the government’s centralisation policy, were typically inducted into the academies of science.¹⁹² The new academies were even open to those scientists whose credentials were in doubt due to the Party cells at their home departments.¹⁹³ To an extent, then, academies acted as a preserve for those who were refused the right to teach. In the case of Poland, the two spheres in fact never separated entirely, as scholars of the Institute of History at PAN could often enjoy double employment: both at the academy and at a university. As a rule, academic institutions benefited from

190 Archiwum Akt Nowych, sygn. 237/XVI – 27, KC PZPR Wydział Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego – Uchwała BP KC PZPR w sprawie PAN. Tajne. Projekt, 1951.

191 Stefan Kieniewicz, “Kilka słów o Instytucie Historycznym,” in: *Instytut Historii*, 74; Frank Hadler, „Geschichtsinstitute an ostmitteleuropäischen Wissenschaftsakademien. Budapest, Prag und Warschau im Vergleich,” in: *Historische Institute im internationalen Vergleich*, eds. Matthias Middell, Gabriele Lingelbach & Frank Hadler, Leipzig 2001, 302-303.

192 Magdalena Pokorná, “Sjednocením proti jednotě. Spor o budoucí podobu akademie věd,” in: *Věda v Československu v letech 1945-1953. Sborník z konference*, eds. Blanka Zilyská, Petr Svobodný & Blanka Šachová, Praha 1999, 120.

193 Alena Míšková, “ČAVU a ČSAV: Otázky kontinuity a diskontinuity II. (Vytvoření sboru členů ČSAV a jeho vztah k členské základně ČAVU a KČSN),” in: *Česká akademie věd a umění 1891-1991. Sborník příspěvků k 100. výročí zahájení činnosti*, eds. Jiří Pokorný & Jan Novotný, Praha 1993, 107.

a decidedly more friendly atmosphere than the universities, and were much more welcoming to “bourgeois” scholars.¹⁹⁴

At the same time, in both the Czech and Slovak scholarly communities a far greater role was played by a sizeable group of younger scholars, steadfastly supportive of government policies and in most cases belonging to the Party. Lýdia Kamencová writes of sections of SAV in which the “young,” ardent supporters of the Communist ideology, were paired with the “old,” typically opportunist scholars, seeking only to adapt to the new situation.¹⁹⁵ At times, conflicts erupted between these two groups.

Polish, Czech and Slovak institutes of history at the national academies of science, established between 1952 and 1953, shared a similar structure and an identical set of goals. The research units which comprised them were divided according to chronology – in Czechoslovakia, they owed their names to the theory of formations, while in Poland, the boundary dates between the great epochs served as official titles. In the early 1960s, when its personnel was already fully established, the Institute of History at PAN employed over 180 people; toward the end of the 1950s, its Czech counterpart employed just over 70 people.¹⁹⁶ At the time of its formation, the Institute of History at SAV employed 16 people, but that number grew steadily.¹⁹⁷ The Institute of History at PAN stood out among other equivalent institutions because of its decentralised structure: nearly half of its personnel worked in affiliate institutes (the Prague Institute had only two branches; the idea of creating branches was only considered at the SAV in the 1960s).

Aside from the production of monographs, the institutes were tasked with popularising Marxist methodology through the publication of central historical magazines, the creation of Marxist syntheses of national history, documentary and bibliographic work, as well as the schooling of younger cadres. In terms of work organisation, they were expected to introduce collective methods (exemplified by university textbooks on the histories of Poland, Czechoslovakia and Slovakia). The employees, task groups and entire institutes were supposed

194 Jindřich Schwippel, “ČAVU a ČSAV: otázky kontinuity a diskontinuity I.,” in: *Česká akademie*, 95.

195 Lýdia Kamencová, “Rozvoj spoločenských vied na Slovensku v rokoch 1953-1963 v materiáloch Ústredného archívu SAV,” in: *Věda v Československu v letech 1953-1963. Sborník z konference (Praha 23.-24. listopadu 1999)*, eds. Hana Barvíková, Marek Ťurčanský & Pavel Kodera, Praha 2000, 325.

196 Frank Hadler, “Geschichtsinstitute an ostmitteleuropäischen Wissenschaftsakademien. Budapest, Prag und Warschau im Vergleich,” in: *Historische Institute*, 307.

197 *Slovenská akadémia vied 1953-1973*, eds. Milan Repaš, Vojtech Filkorn, Ján Gouda, Vojtech Kellö, Miroslav Murín & Alexander Ujváry, Bratislava 1974, 73.

to draft yearly plans, and then report on their completion.¹⁹⁸ In practice, planning was a real nuisance, especially in the early years of the new academies. The new model of work organisation raised issues which are well illustrated in the debate over a project of a general plan for the entire Institute of History at PAN, presented by Witold Kula at the third meeting of the Academic Council, in November 1953. The project was criticised by the auditorium for having missed questions that particular members of the Academic Council deemed vital, or for devoting insufficient space to the work of regional branches that these members oversaw. Celina Bobińska protested against the exclusion from the project of the Kraków unit she directed which was devoted to researching class conflict in Lesser Poland. She underlined the political weight of the plan, which in its current shape had “st[olen] all support from the only combative Marxist department, already working in adverse circumstances.”¹⁹⁹ Nearly all participants in the meeting agreed that the plan was chaotic and overlooked too many issues of prime importance. The director of the Institute was forced to explain to his audience the meaning of planning in science: “Planning isn’t easy,” he said, “we’re still learning from those more experienced than us. Actually, though planning in science has been introduced in the Soviet Union over 20 years ago, no one dares to suggest a general, national plan for science. Each institute has its own plan, but there’s no national plan. We need to draw conclusions from this fact. We shouldn’t forget that both PAN and the Institute of History are productive establishments that plan their output and claim responsibility for it. Planning means committing oneself. A failure to complete a plan leads to very serious consequences. We can’t plan to meet all guidelines for essential research tasks. These guidelines are meant to act as indicators whether financial aid should be offered for a given research proposal or not. This current debate, despite its advantages, leads us down a very dangerous alley. We can’t and would invite ridicule for having the whole plan disqualified.”²⁰⁰

Marxist research centres were expected to address new questions and come up with interpretations that would contest the products of “bourgeois” historiography. During a session of the Academic Council of the Institute in January 1954, Stanisław Arnold proposed that young academic employees focused solely on the most recent history. His proposal was supported by Stanisław Okęcki, who named several key topics of concern: “the necessity of shaping a ‘historical’ answer to Adenauer’s revisionist propaganda. ... There’s a

198 Hadler, “Geschichtsinstitute,” 295-296.

199 Archiwum Instytutu Historii PAN, sygn. 5/27 Protokoły Rady Naukowej – Protokół nr 3 z posiedzenia Rady Naukowej IH PAN, 25 IX 1953.

200 Ibidem.

campaign going on to vindicate AK, NSZ²⁰¹,” Okęcki complained, “During the past two months, [Radio] ‘Free Europe’ broadcast 85 programs devoted to topics from Polish history. We have nothing with which to oppose this. This problem should be addressed in our press, in our historical publications. We need to lend more focus to counteracting enemy ideology.”²⁰²

Until the early 1950s, decisions concerning the scholarly life in the Soviet occupation zone of Germany were taken exclusively by the military administration of the Red Army and its German auxiliary, the Deutsche Zentralverwaltung für Volksbildung. A drastic shortage of scholarly employees, dismissed as a result of denazification, forced the authorities to allow numerous “bourgeois” scholars to maintain their posts to keep universities running. By the end of the 1940s, the government policies in science were becoming more stringent. As a part of the *Sturm auf die Festung Wissenschaft* (Assault on Fortress Science), announced in 1951, historical institutes in half of East German universities were liquidated. Until a sufficient number of Marxist cadres was schooled, only institutes of the history of the German people (Institute für Geschichte des deutschen Volkes) in Berlin, Leipzig and Halle, were maintained.²⁰³ In October 1951, the Central Committee of the SED proclaimed the formation of a museum of German history, and then also of an institute of history at the academy of sciences.²⁰⁴

At first, the museum was to be devoted to the history of the German workers’ movement, but eventually, it assumed the decidedly more neutral name of the Museum für Deutsche Geschichte (Museum of German History). It began operating in 1950. Describing its goals, Wilhelm Pieck said that until that point, museums “still devote[d] too much space and attention to some mediocre princelings. I believe that we should put an end to that and give that space to the real German people, the workers and the peasants, thinkers and poets fighting for freedom, to all who are entitled to this space on merit.”²⁰⁵ The museum was supposed to discover and commemorate the progressive traditions of the German nation from the German Peasants’ Revolt until Ernst Thälmann.²⁰⁶ Among the museum’s employees one could find “bourgeois” historians (“big names”) as well as Party members; gifted graduates of historical departments

201 AK – Armia Krajowa, NSZ – Narodowe Siły Zbrojne – organisations of non-Communist resistance during the Second World War.

202 Archiwum Instytutu Historii PAN, sygn. 5/27 Protokoły Rady Naukowej – Posiedzenie Rady Naukowej 26 I 1954 r.

203 Sabrow, *Das Diktat*, 40-41.

204 Ebenfeld, *Geschichte*, 41-42.

205 Quoted in: Kessler, *Exilerfahrung*, 79.

206 Ebenfeld, *Geschichte*, 63.

were also sought after with intent, since the museum was supposed to become a central research institute for East Germany as well, an equivalent of an academic institute of history.

The enlistment of employees for the new institution turned out to be a problematic task. Historians working at universities, or even the Party's Marx-Engels-Lenin-Stalin Institute (M-E-L-S-Institut) at the Central Committee of the SED, were loath to leave their jobs. Alfred Meusel also failed to show any enthusiasm upon receiving his nomination for the post of museum director (throughout an almost two-year initial phase, the organisation was temporarily directed by an associate of the Marx-Engels-Lenin-Institut, Eduard Ullmann).²⁰⁷ This choice exemplified a tendency toward shaping the museum as a separate institution not associated with the Party, but rather with the unitary German nation, in accordance with the views espoused by Meusel, a tireless militant for a united, socialist Germany. The museum was also supposed to train young Marxist cadres. To ensure the proper quality of the training, however, it had to employ a tremendous percentage of "bourgeois" scholars. Their employment at an institution that was also responsible for visual and printed propaganda led to conflicts and violent divisions. Incidentally, these conflicts did not arise solely between the Party-members and non-Party employees.²⁰⁸

Keeping the museum working day in, day out gave its directors quite a headache. Personnel shortages translated into a dearth of middle-aged scholars, while young graduates and students closer to graduation were represented in throngs. Almost no one (including the director himself) had any experience in museum work; most employees were only learning the basics of scholarly work. The first exhibitions were scheduled to open on May 1st, 1952, but were running late by over two months. The museum operated under continuous and very strict control from the Central Committee, which sanctioned exhibition plans and evaluated their completion. Stefan Ebenfeld quotes an exemplary intervention of the Central Committee of the SED, concerned with the period from 1918 to 1945: "While exhibiting the fascist terror, the use of the poem *Kinderschule* by J.R. Becher is advised" (Johannes R. Becher was an officially approved prominent poet of the GDR),²⁰⁹ and Fritz Haecker's painting was to be remade because the members of the Political Office "look[ed] too thin."²¹⁰

207 Ibidem, 91-96.

208 Karen Pfundt, "Die Gründung des Museums für Deutsche Geschichte", in: *Historische Forschung und sozialistische Diktatur. Beiträge zur Geschichtswissenschaft der DDR*, eds. Martin Sabrow & Peter Th. Walther, Leipzig 1995, 101-102.

209 Manfred Jäger, *Kultur und Politik in der DDR. Ein historischer Abriß*, Köln 1982, 1-9.

210 Ebenfeld, *Geschichte*, 120-121.

The work of the museum was also troubled by internal conflicts between its director and Albert Schreiner. The latter, a veteran of the *Novemberrevolution* and a Party apparatchik, became the chief of the museum's department concerned with the 1918-1945 period and pushed it to approach that era from a strictly Party perspective, with special attention to the November Revolution, which in his eyes was a proletarian affair. Meusel did not accept that vision. "This script," he wrote, "represents a story of a German failure, illustrated – or even better – identified with the history of the KPD. It's a story about the good who are always right, but unfortunately always lose, while the bad, who are always wrong, unfortunately always win. Had the script not ended with the victory of the Socialist Soviet Union during the Second World War and the Potsdam Treaty, I'd be forced to call it one of the saddest stories I've ever read."²¹¹ With regard to the general character of the exhibition, the Party authorities lent Schreiner their support; however, the *Novemberrevolution* was re-evaluated in accordance with the guidelines of the *Short course*...²¹²

The ambiguity of the position of the museum was also exposed in the fact that, beside the didactic and museum work, its employees were also expected to prepare a Marxist textbook on German history. The fact that Alfred Meusel became the chief editor of the entire work was in no way a coincidence: the production of the textbook was expected to engage the "human resources" found at the museum, and the directors of particular departments were to act as (and, to an extent, became) authors of particular volumes of the projected work. More than that: despite there being no formal connection between the *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* and the museum, the central historical magazine of East Germany was commonly assumed to have been yet another outlet of the Museum für Deutsche Geschichte.²¹³

With both the museum and the historical departments at several East German universities in place, the formation of a central academic historical institute turned out to be a rather daunting challenge. Each of the existing institutions came with its own set of card-carrying, well-connected directors. This system did not favour centralisation, as it would have been concomitant with renouncing personal privileges, submitting to another leading historian, or losing part of one's independence. The choice of the first director of the Institut für Geschichte at the DAW was a question of compromise: though Karl Obermann was a Communist returnee, he was not as significant as Leo Stern, Alfred Meusel or Jürgen Kuczynski (nor as competitive as Ernst Engelberg). He

211 Quoted in: *ibidem*, 142. See. Pfundt, "Die Gründung," 109.

212 Kessler, *Exilerfahrung*, 81.

213 Ebenfeld, *Geschichte*, 144-148.

was, however, one of the first scholars researching the workers' movement and 19th century workers' history. As we shall see, this curious compromise with regard to personnel did not hold too long.

The newly-established (in March 1956) Institute took over the main task of the Museum für Deutsche Geschichte: the creation of a Marxist textbook on German history. Among the ranks of the academic institute of history were numerous employees of the museum, with prominent historians of the museum's Academic Council topping the list. During its first year, the Institute recruited over sixty people for its five chronologically divided departments.²¹⁴ Though the Institute was located in Berlin, the directors of its particular departments transferred their work to cities in which they held professorial or administrative positions. Because of that, the Institute of History of the DAW became as decentralised as its equivalent at PAN, the main difference being that its decentralisation was a result of a power play between prominent Marxists of the GDR, rather than an attempt at empowering provincial research centres. Compared to academy institutes in other people's democracies, the East German incarnation of the institution was also distinguished – as Martin Sabrow points out – by a very strict, quite organic politicisation.²¹⁵

The Institute of History at DAW was imagined as the ground-breaking institution for the new science. A year after it officially opened, both the Institute and the Museum für Deutsche Geschichte publicly condemned Jürgen Kuczynski, who was suspected of harbouring revisionist sympathies. This moment marked a distinct caesura in the history of the Institute: the authorities and some card-carrying historians used this opportunity to vehemently criticize what they perceived as the excessively high standing of their “bourgeois” colleagues. Heinrich Scheel called for a reorganisation of the Institute into a strictly Party-bound research centre.²¹⁶ In September 1958, director Obermann was assaulted by Rolf Dlubek, who discerned remnants of positivism and “factology,” an “archival fetishism” and objectivism in the part of the *Lehrbuch* Obermann was tasked with preparing.²¹⁷ Prominent directors of several departments of the Institute of History at DAW – Ernst Engelberg, Albert Schreiner, Leo Stern and Jürgen Kuczynski – also spoke out against Obermann. Though engaged in mutual argument, they were all in perfect agreement in their critical evaluation of the director. Party leadership took up an interest in

214 Sabrow, *Das Diktat*, 55-71.

215 Martin Sabrow, “Parteiliches Wissenschaftsideal und historische Forschungspraxis. Überlegungen zum Akademie – Institut für Geschichte (1956-1989),” in: *Historische Forschung*, 202.

216 Ibidem, 81-82.

217 Kessler, *Exilerfahrung*, 215.

Obermann, assuming that his political qualifications were not sufficient for performing such a prominent function.²¹⁸

However, Obermann's critics were unable to reach a compromise as to his prospective replacement. The basic Party organisation at the Institute reserved the seat for Leo Stern, who directed the department of the museum tasked with researching the Second World War. However, while Obermann was characterised by an insufficient political commitment in the eyes of the Party activists, Stern was charged with even heavier crimes. The erstwhile would-be director of the Institute of History at DAW, Leo Stern (born Jonas Leib), hailed from Austria. He was the only East German émigré historian to have taken part in the Second World War on the side of the Soviets (he fought in the Battle of Stalingrad). In 1945, he lectured at the University of Vienna, but his Austrian career was soon broken by a fatal coincidence. As a delegate of the Austrian Communist Party to the celebrations of May 1st at the provincial town of Kleinpöchlarn, he was assaulted and wounded by unrecognised drunks. The Soviet soldiers, who were summoned to the location, shot several random participants in the celebrations, incidentally Communists. From that event on, Stern was labelled a NKVD spy. Because of this, he joyfully accepted an invitation to take over the department of modern history at the University of Halle. As a professor since 1950, and three years later as a rector of that university, he presided over the task group *Dokumente und Materialien zur Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung*. The group was composed mostly of "bourgeois" historians, some of them even burdened with a national-socialist past. This made Stern susceptible to political assaults. The first of these took place in 1954, when one of Stern's collaborators, Werner Frauendienst was accused of glorifying Prussia. Corrections sent to the editors of *Neues Deutschland* did not improve his situation, and Frauendienst opted not to wait for the story to unwind and fled to West Germany.²¹⁹ Four years later, the University of Halle was afflicted by a series of escapes to the West; among the escapees was yet another assistant professor, Ernst Klein, and Stern was summoned by the Rütten&Loening publishing house to provide an explanation for the fact that a collection of documents concerning the Great Socialist October Revolution would not appear as scheduled after several of his collaborators on the project permanently left the country.²²⁰

Stern's rival to the seat of director of DAW's Institute of History, Ernst Engelberg, was fully capable of ruthlessly exploiting all of Stern's mishaps. As a

218 Ibidem, 215.

219 Ibidem, 271-273.

220 Sabrow, *Das Diktat*, 101.

member of the younger generation of historians of the GDR, he steadfastly opposed all kinds of collaboration with “bourgeois” scholars. At the point when he took over the leadership of the East German historical association, having pushed Alfred Meusel from his position as the chief editor of the Marxist synthesis of German history, and took up the position the director of the Institute of History at DAW, East German historiography entered a new phase of development.²²¹ Ernst Engelberg was at the same time the last “great” among GDR historiographers. After him, no one ever played as seminal a role: the new education system, shaped in part by Engelberg himself (as well as his rivals), did not foster such exceptional individuality.

The struggle for the position of director of the Institute of History at the East German Academy of Sciences was unprecedented in either of the other countries under our consideration. In the case of Czechoslovakia, the competition ended with the equivalent position at the Czech Academy handed to Josef Macek (1922-91), a young historian of the Mediaeval era. According to Bohumil Jiroušek, this was a surprising decision, since the design of the structure of the Institute of History at ČSAV was the brainchild not of Macek, but of Václav Husa. Going forward, Macek’s eventual victory proved to have affected the frigid relations between the academy of sciences and the philosophical department of Charles University in Prague, where Husa led the Czechoslovak history section.²²² At the same time, it was just another stage in a career that led the former student of Zdeňek Kalista to considerable heights. Macek became not only the director of the Institute of History at ČSAV, but also a representative in the National Assembly, and even a member of the Central Committee of the KSČ.²²³ Right after his nomination as director of the Institute, he was also appointed a regular member of the ČSAV – and all at the age of only 31!²²⁴ At the dawn of this stunning career stood a national award the young historian received in 1952 for his work entitled *Husitské revoluční hnutí*.

What could have prompted such swift promotion? Petr Čornej, who questioned Macek about the circumstances of the award’s presentation, recounts the following story: “Right after 1948 [when Macek passed his M.A. exam – MG], he devoted himself to researching the beginnings of Tábor in a broad work entitled *Tábor v husitském revolučním hnutí*. Sadly, no one was interested in publishing the book; every publishing house pointed to the specialist nature of the work and suggested that the author submit a piece that could explain to ‘the

221 Ibidem, 112.

222 Bohumil Jiroušek, *Josef Macek. Mezi historií a politikou*, Praha 2004, 38-40.

223 Ibidem; See also Hanzal, Cesty, 104-105; *In memoriam Josefa Macka (1922-1991)*, eds. Miloslav Polívka & František Šmahel, Praha 1996.

224 Hadler, “Geschichtsinstitute,” 293-294.

working people' the Marxist views on the role of the Hussite movement in Czech and European history. This is supposedly how *Husitské revoluční hnutí*, the work that paved the way to the highest positions and a strong political standing for the thirty-year-old Macek, came into being. It hardly needs to be added that it took personal ambition and good connections in the Communist leadership to make such a brilliant career possible. By a twist of fate, Macek's history of the Hussite movement was published while a prominent Communist functionary overseeing the formation of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, Ladislav Štoll (1902-81), was recovering in a hospital. He killed time reading the latest books – that is how he happened upon Macek's *Husitské revoluční hnutí*, a book he found enchanting. It was Štoll who put the young historian on the road to success, bringing him his national prize."²²⁵

Ambitious, intelligent, and enjoying the support of Party leadership, Josef Macek cut a figure reminiscent of his senior of 13 years, Ernst Engelberg. Yet, his later career followed a much different route. Macek took an active part in the liquidation of the remnants of Czechoslovak Stalinism. Following his involvement in documenting the 1968 intervention of Warsaw Pact forces in Czechoslovakia, he was ousted from his position and rejected the right to publish his works in the country by the Husák regime. This did not prevent him from enjoying worldwide renown as a specialist on the Renaissance, or from publishing in foreign languages.

There was no ruthless struggle for the position of director in the new institute in Slovakia either. In this particular case, the Communist authorities simply had no candidates on hand that could offer a proper scientific quality as well as guarantee faithfulness and loyalty to the cause. While the German occupation was still in place, Alexander Markuš seemed an option, but he died prematurely while being transported to a concentration camp.²²⁶ At the turn of the 1940s, the position of director of the Institute of History at SAVU was held by, among others, Jaroslav Dubnický (1916-79, born Jaroslav Honza), a Marxist historian of art and an official of the Plenipotentiary for Education and Culture ("plenipotentiary" was an equivalent of the 'ministry in Prague, tasked with representing the central government of Slovakia). Dubnický was briefly preceded in his directorial position by three "bourgeois" historians: František Bokes, Alexander Húščava (1906-69) and Branislav Varsik (1904-94). Dubnický also took over lectures in the history of Slovakia for students at Komenský University in Bratislava from the expelled Daniel Rapant (in 1950-

225 Čornej, *Lipanské*, 168.

226 Anton Špiesz, "K problematike starších dejín Slovenska," *Historický Časopis SAV* 1990, 683; Hudek, *Najpolitickejšia*, 50.

51, Dubnický was the Dean of the Philological Department at the university). He was one of the few Slovak scholars in the humanities who had any knowledge of Marxist methodology, which is why he was tasked with the heavy burden of teaching it to other Slovak historians.²²⁷ His ties to the KSČ dated back to before the war; he formally joined the Party in 1945, and three years later, he oversaw purges in the Slovak historical association.²²⁸

With an excess of responsibilities on his hands, Dubnický was replaced as director of the newly-formed Institute of History at SAV by Ľudovít Holotík (1923-85; he was already the director of the Institute of History at SAVU since 1951). Holotík was an alumnus of the Prague School of Politics and Society (*Vysoká škola politická a sociálná*, which preceded VŠPHV). After graduation, he worked at the School as an assistant and conducted classes in Marxism-Leninism at the Medical Department of Charles University. Following his return to Slovakia, he also became the chief editor for *Historický Časopis SAV* and edited the Marxist synthesis of national history. Despite his apparent prominence, Ján Mlynárik describes Holotík as a tragic figure in his role as one of the leading representatives of Slovak historiography. Too intelligent to gain the trust of Slovak Party apparatchiks, Holotík became a “buffer”: for the historical community (as well as the reading public), he became the face of the Stalinisation of historical sciences, slandering the heroes of the Slovak National Uprising and condemning the sins of interwar Czechoslovakia, both real and imagined. He was evidently unable to stay in tune with the times: his book “unmasking” the real face of Milan Rastislav Štefánik appeared only in 1958, well after the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, at a time when such publications were already dated. In 1968, this work stood as a symbol of the Stalinisation of Slovak science and was publicly burned in effigy by students protesting against this repressive policy. A year later, Holotík published a text in which he claimed the ephemeral Slovak Soviet Republic, far from being an example of proletarian internationalism, was actually a Hungarian attempt at violating the territorial integrity of Czechoslovakia. Meanwhile, card-carrying scholars were mostly of the persuasion that the Slovak Soviet Republic represented a “progressive tradition of the Slovak nation.” As a result of these interpretative mistakes, a lack of both a political sense and the support of sufficiently powerful friends, Holotík, the director of the Institute of History at SAV and the editor of the central historical magazine as well as the synthesis, never became a full-time member of either the SAV or the ČSAV. On the

227 Havrila, *Slovenská*, chapter: “Hlavné pracoviská slovenskej historickej vedy.”

228 See *Slovenský historický slovník (od roku 833 do roku 1990)*, eds. Vladimír Mináč et al., vol. 1, Martin 1986.

contrary: 1968 de-Stalinisation deposed him from all posts (he ceded his position as director terminally, and resigned from his editorship duties temporarily). A suicide committed in 1985, at the height of Husák's normalisation, provided a tragic ending to his story.²²⁹

The Institute of History at PAN differed significantly from other equivalent institutes of the newly-formed academies; some scholars see this difference as an aftermath of the Otwock conference.²³⁰ However, the final decision to offer the seat of director of the Institute to a non-Communist widely recognised both at home and abroad, Tadeusz Manteuffel, actually occurred only after the Otwock conference. The Central Archives of Modern Records in Warsaw store several variants of the directing cast of the Institute, all framed by the Department of Science of the Central Committee of the PZPR between 1951 and 1952. Neither proposed Tadeusz Manteuffel as the director. Initially, the cast was supposed to be formed entirely of "Party elements." Henryk Jabłoński was the first prospective director, while Żanna Kormanowa, Nina Assorodobraj, Stanisław Arnold and Roman Heck were to act as his deputies. Positions within the Institute's sections were also supposed to be filled with Party members. The project left the issue of the post of director of the section of Polish history between 1795 and 1917 unresolved (the rivalling options were Celina Bobińska and Stefan Kieniewicz, but Kieniewicz's name came with an annotation stating that he was a Catholic).²³¹ Another plan of the personal cast for the Institute of History at PAN, appended to the previously mentioned projected resolution about the tasks of the Institute, suggested that Henryk Jabłoński become the Institute's director, while Stanisław Arnold and perhaps Natalia Gąsiorowska-Grabowska would act as his deputies, and Żanna Kormanowa would become an assistant on scientific matters. Manteuffel was included in the cast as one of the director's deputies.²³² This shows that the first corrections had already been applied, raising the number of non-Party historians involved in governing the Institute.

The findings of the Otwock conference were assessed by a special commission formed by the Office of the Political Bureau. Its work bore fruit in the shape of a resolution which, beside calls for improved efforts in the swift formation of the Institute of History and for the promotion of Marxist methodology, also included a motion to "promote to directorial positions non-

229 Mlynárik, *Diaspora*, 18-28.

230 Dział Rękopisów BUW, Spuścizna Niny Assorodobraj, VII/2 – Protokół konferencji organizacyjnej MZH...; Rafał Stobiecki, „Pierwsza Konferencja Metodologiczna,” 208.

231 Archiwum Akt Nowych, sygn 237/XVI – 43 Wydział Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego – Projekt obsady personalnej.

232 Archiwum Akt Nowych, sygn 237/XVI – 43 Wydział Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego – Projekt obsady personalnej IH.

Party historians who showed a sufficient command of the Marxist-Leninist method and whose faithfulness to the People's Republic of Poland is beyond doubt."²³³ The resolution also included another projected cast for the Institute of History at PAN, this time suggesting Natalia Gąsiorowska-Grabowska as the prospective director. Manteuffel was presented as her projected deputy, as were two further historians, Henryk Łowmiański and Bogusław Leśnodorski (1914–85); the position of the scientific assistant was reserved for Witold Kula or Juliusz Bardach.²³⁴ This particular project was sent to Tadeusz Manteuffel for evaluation: he criticised it from top to bottom. He pointed out the overgrown directorial cadre, explaining the inevitable fragmentation of responsibilities that would result from it. It is hard to assess the extent to which his evaluation affected the academic policies of the authorities; it seems more instructive to read between the lines of his opinion. Manteuffel wrote: "Fully accepting the necessity of handing the position of the director to a Party member, we see two possible ways to make this course acceptable – a) to offer the position to a candidate of a younger age and essentially active, b) to offer it to an older candidate with a high political standing, who would only outline the general direction of the work of the Institute, while relying on a deputy to substitute for him on a regular basis."²³⁵

Obviously, the decision-makers eventually ceased to consult on the proposed cast for the Institute of History at PAN with Tadeusz Manteuffel and simply nominated him for the post of director of the Institute. Manteuffel differed in every possible way from the typical official leaders of Marxist historiography chosen in other countries discussed in the present study. He was not a member of the Party; he had studied in the West. He gained recognition already before the war, particularly as the organiser of the 1933 congress of Comité International des Sciences Historiques in Warsaw. During the occupation, he helped organize underground education, and right after the war, as we already know, he was involved in recreating the Historical Institute at the University of Warsaw. Consequently, as director of the Institute, he depended on his academic standing and organisational abilities. In 1950, he became elected president of the Polish Historical Society (PTH), his victory serving as proof of having gained the trust of the community. The fact that he was able to successfully negotiate the tendencies of the authorities to intrude into the lives of historians resulted also from a peculiar personal trait, unequivocally asserted by

233 Archiwum Akt Nowych, sygn 237/XVI – 43 Wydział Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego – Uchwała Sekretariatu BP KC PZPR w sprawie nauk historycznych.

234 Archiwum Akt Nowych, sygn 237/XVI – 43 Wydział Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego – projekt obsady IH PAN, no date.

235 Ibidem.

numerous witnesses who had the chance to make his acquaintance. He was endowed with a veritable charisma – he exuded trustworthiness while being quite fearsome.²³⁶ In Party circles his comportsment won him the nickname of the “wooden prince.”²³⁷ His authoritative standing is well illustrated by an anecdote recounted by Henryk Samsonowicz. During the 1956 elections for the new government of the historical society, the only candidate proposed and approved by the authorities, Natalia Gąsiorowska-Grabowska, lost out. Having long been connected with the Left (she belonged to the Parisian section of the PPS in 1904, sided with the party’s left wing after it split, and during the interwar period, until 1922, was a member of the group that later reformed into the Polish Communist Party), she moved away from it after 1922, and did not join the KPP or the PPR. She did join PZPR in 1949, however. The authorities saw her for a while as a candidate for the editorship of *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, as well as a prospective director of the Institute of History at PAN; later, she presided over the Academic Council of the Institute, was a member of the Board of the PAN, and the president of the Polish Historical Society.²³⁸ Gąsiorowska-Grabowska’s defeat in the elections perplexed and scared the General Board of the Society, which then decided to call on Manteuffel, who was absent from the convention due to an illness. Manteuffel listened to a report by telephone, and then calmly asked: So what? His reaction prompted the Board to call for another election, this time with no candidates set for an instant victory.²³⁹

An in-depth analysis of the Communist scientific policies and their effect on historians would necessarily take much more room than we can afford to give it. The overview of the most important problems presented above is supposed to act as an introduction to the main part of this book – an analysis of the relationship between Marxist historiographies and national traditions, including the traditions of national historiographies. It delineates circumstances in which works quoted later on were written, and specifies the names of the historians engaged in the aforementioned scientific and political struggles. As we shall see,

236 Robert Jarocki, *Opowieść o Aleksandrze Gieyztorze*, Warszawa 2001, 233; also in verbal communication with Marcin Kula.

237 Reminiscences of Stanisław Trawkowski at the celebration of the 100th anniversary of Tadeusz Manteuffel’s birthday at the Institute of History at PAN, March 5th 2002.

238 See Ireneusz Ichnatowicz, “Natalia Gąsiorowska (1881-1964),” in: *Historycy warszawscy ostatnich dwóch stuleci*, eds. Aleksander Gieyztor, Jerzy Maternicki & Henryk Samsonowicz, Warszawa 1986, 252-256.

239 Reminiscences of Henryk Samsonowicz at the celebration of the 100th anniversary of Tadeusz Manteuffel’s birthday at the Institute of History at PAN, March 5th 2002.

some of the traits of particular historical sciences discussed in this chapter are reflected in the shape and character of historical publications. Simplifying the astonishingly complex situation as much as humanly possible, one might say that Czech and Slovak Marxist historiographies were centralised and unified to a far larger extent than Polish and East German historiographies. Hence the question: can a unification (or lack thereof) be observed in publications emerging in the 1950s, affecting, for example, the variety of the Marxist opinions being formulated? On the other hand, taking into account the origins of the most politically, intellectually and socially important Marxists, we would be excused for assuming that the superiority of the historiography of the GDR in that regard should result in the greater methodological maturity of its output – or, in other words, that Marxism should have had a greater role to play in its historiography than in all the other historiographies discussed.

There are also similarities that should be accepted before we attempt to comprehend the mechanics of the process for creating Marxist interpretations of history. Obviously, the manner in which scientific debates were conducted in each of the countries under discussion differed from country to country (suffice it to remind one of the differences between Poland and the GDR in that regard). Still, some traits were shared. In each of the countries of interest to us, Marxist historians aimed not so much to convince their opponents and readers, or even to present their views in a compelling way, but rather to dominate and monopolize a fragment of the commonly accepted interpretation of history. There could be only one interpretation – only one reading of the classics was right. A multiplicity would suggest a weakness and a lack of discipline among Marxists, which was downright unacceptable. The subsequent chapters will show, among other things, how historians more or less successfully performing their work attempted to break out of those narrow boundaries.

