

Chapter III

On the Lookout for Progressive Traditions

The Marxist vision of national history tended to focus attention on a specific category of historical events that were – or could be – understood as a nation’s “progressive traditions.” According to the ruling methodology, this category included all social and political upheavals as well as attempted coups. Upheavals were believed to mark a society’s advance to another, higher level of development, in accordance with Marxist theory of formations. Debates over that theory among Russian historians were cut short by Joseph Stalin, whose last word on the matter was that transitions from one formation to another occurred by way of revolutions.²⁴⁰ The task of Marxist historians was therefore to locate such revolutions in order to rewrite the national history according to the framework set by their Russian peers. All revolutionary movements – even those which, as so often was the case in East Central Europe had usually ended in failure – could count, provided one interpreted them the right way. Marxist historians worked diligently to properly emphasise their social importance. Sometimes a historical breakthrough could hardly be located at a distinct point in time (such was the case with early feudalism, whose origins were consigned to oblivion.). In these cases historians often entered disputes over chronology and nomenclature; hence, for instance, the Czechoslovak historians’ quarrels over the form of government in Greater Moravia. Elsewhere, the breakthrough points were more or less obvious, as in the case of the Hussite Wars in Bohemia, the Great Peasants’ Revolt in Germany, the Miners’ Revolt in Slovakia, the Central European upheavals inspired by the French Revolution, as well as national movements, uprisings, and revolutions of the 19th century, or finally the Great October Socialist Revolution (in this last case, the influence of the event was traced in countries neighbouring the Soviet Union, but also in countries further away).²⁴¹

240 Stobiecki, *Bolszewizm*, 100-101.

241 Marcin Kula shared some interesting thoughts on the role of the GOSR in the history of Latin America and the debates that took place between local historians and Soviet scholars. Fritz Klein, on the other hand, discussed his disputes with scholars of the Abteilung Wissenschaften ZK SED, who insisted on referencing 1917 (rather than 1918) as the turning point in the history of Germany. His inquiry whether the caesura of

These issues were often popular with historians before the 1950s as well; some contributors to earlier historiography believed revolutionary movements to have a national character. Such was the case with Hussites. Similarly, the onset of the feudal era was bound up with an emerging state structure that was also of interest to “bourgeois” historiography. Furthermore, 19th century nationalist movements played a significant role in shaping the cultures, national self-definitions, and interpretations of the past in each of the countries in question. In these circumstances, Marxist historiography entered into dialogue with existing, fixed historical traditions. As we shall learn further on, the results of this dialogue were extremely varied. The new, “Stalinist” interpretations of the national history were by no means bound to differ from past assessments. In the following analysis of key tropes, I pay special attention to yet another aspect of continuity: a reference to a historicist methodology particularly visible in the evaluation of state structures.

Finally, one should observe the similarities and differences between historical events that have become familiar to historians and were deemed common knowledge before 1945 or 1948, and those that entered the popular consciousness, in a way, when a nation’s “progressive traditions” were found lacking when compared to those of its neighbours. Few knew (or had heard) of the robust Polish Hussite movement until Ewa Maleczyńska made it a focus of her specialist works. In a similar vein, Peter Ratkoš played a seminal role in “discovering” the great miners’ revolt of 1525-1526 for Slovak historians. The interconnections between such freshly “invented” traditions and the established image of Hussites’ revolt in Bohemia or the Great Peasants’ War in Germany speak volumes about the Marxist historians’ way of thinking about history.

At the Dawn of Feudalism

According to basic Marxist methodological assumptions, the feudal state could only emerge from a sufficiently developed base. Jan Baszkiewicz elaborated on this idea by naming three elements facilitating the emergence of the early feudal state: “a swift rise of feudal relations of production and deepening forms of dependence, from which followed – deepening class antagonisms.”²⁴² At a slightly different angle, the Polish state could be seen to have been invented out

1917 should also apply to an analysis of the history of, say, the Eskimo people, was replied in the affirmative. Cf Fritz Klein, *Dringen und draussen. Ein Historiker in der DDR. Erinnerungen*, Frankfurt am Main 2000, 205.

242 Jan Baszkiewicz & Bogusław Leśnodorski, *Materiały do nauki historii Polski. Historia Polski od wspólnoty pierwotnej do drugiej połowy XVIII wieku*, Warszawa 1953, 20.

of necessity: “The rise of the Polish early feudal state played a crucial role in the progressive development of our country. It made it possible to effectively defend the Polish lands against foreign aggression, especially that of feudal Germany, and it secured the political independence of those lands.”²⁴³ Greater Moravia played the same role with regard to Frankish aggression.²⁴⁴ The circumstances leading to the rise of the German state, obviously free from the threat of German assaults, were explained in a slightly different fashion. What mattered here were the class conflicts between free peasantry on one side, and knighthood and aristocracy on the other. Hence, the early feudal state was seen to have emerged as a product of the possessor classes’ fear of the ever-threatening eruption of discontent among the oppressed strata.²⁴⁵

According to Stalin, when socio-economical development has reached a level sufficient for the creation of a political organisation, the requirements have been met for the emergence of a nation in its infant shape, that is, of a nationality.²⁴⁶ The rise of the state was seen both as a result of the processes responsible for the rise of nationality, and as its direct cause.²⁴⁷ Having recorded numerous manifestations of a national consciousness in the Gallus’ chronicle, Stanisław Piekarczyk asked: “How far back from Gallus’ times can the emergence of a Polish nationality be moved into the past?” The historian opined that the nationality must have been developing well before the turn of the 11th century.²⁴⁸ In this, Piekarczyk agreed with the Soviet authors of *Istoriya Polshi* (*История Польши*), who dated the emergence of the Polish nation to the turn of the 7th century.²⁴⁹ Meanwhile, Czech historians had no doubts that the Lands of the Crown of St. Wenceslas should simply be treated as a Czech state. On the other hand, they entirely rejected the claim that the Přemyslid state could simply be a successor to Greater Moravia.²⁵⁰

It’s interesting to set the claims of East German Medievalists against this backdrop. Throughout the period in question, they approached the issue of the

243 *Historia Polski. Makieta*, vol. 1, part 1, ed. Henryk Łowmiański, Warszawa 1955, 133.

244 *Přehled československých dějin*, vol. 1, 46-48.

245 Leo Stern & Hans-Joachim Bartmuß, *Deutschland in der Feudalepoche von der Wende des 5./6. Jh. bis zur Mitte des 11. Jh.*, Berlin 1963, 132.

246 See Józef Wissarionowicz Stalin, *Marksizm a kwestia narodowa. Kwestia narodowa a leninizm*, Warszawa 1949, 5-13.

247 *Historia Polski. Makieta*, vol. 1, part 1, 147.

248 See S. Piekarczyk, “Kilka uwag w sprawie kształtowania się i rozwoju narodowości polskiej,” *Kwartalnik Historyczny* 1955, 107-111.

249 В. Д. Королюк, И. С. Миллер, П. Н. Третьяков, *История Польши*, vol. 1, Москва 1954, p. 9.

250 *Přehled československých dějin*, vol. 1, 72.

development of German nationality with utmost caution, if only because accusations of nationalism carried more weight in post-war Germany than anywhere else. For this reason, they were more inclined to write on the history of the state, rather than the nation formation process; the emergence of a German nation was customarily associated with the rise of the Saxon dynasty.²⁵¹ However, the difference between Polish or Czech historians, embroiled in the task of detecting signs of the emergence of nations even before the rise of Medieval states, and their East German peers amounted to nothing more than a question of style. Although Leo Stern and Hans-Joachim Bartmuß wrote that the unification of different Germanic tribes under Frankish rule was a condition for the later emergence of the German state, they probably meant the rise of the German nation, despite never using the phrase.²⁵² In Volume One of their *Lehrbuch der deutschen Geschichte*, one can also find an interesting discussion of the nation-building potential of the Saxons, brutally subordinated by Charlemagne. Stern and Bartmuß claimed that Saxons were no strangers to the feudal system and were in fact in the process of forming their own feudal state before the Frankish conquest.²⁵³ Hence, the Saxons were already in the process of raising a German feudal state, when the Franks destroyed it. At that stage, the Saxon aristocracy betrayed their own people by pinning their hopes for expanding their control over the rest of society on the Franks. “Only the peasants of Saxony continued to defend their freedom against the yoke of oppression from the Frankish feudal state and its Saxon allies.”²⁵⁴ These peasants clearly represented German progressive traditions, and as victims of Western aggression they were, in effect, represented in a style characteristic of GDR propaganda two years after the rise of the Berlin Wall.

While Polish and Czech historians had no doubts over the national character of their Medieval states, similar claims would prove hard to defend for Slovak scholars. This was not a new state of affairs. Before 1918, Czech history was taught as the history of Austria, then as the history of Czechoslovakia, and nowadays, with few alterations in terms of factual data, it is taught simply as Czech history.²⁵⁵ At each of those stages, the past of the nation was imagined as a state-territorial continuum: Greater Moravia gave way to a Czech state which

251 Andreas Dorpalen, “Die Geschichtswissenschaft der DDR“, in: *Geschichtswissenschaft in Deutschland. Traditionelle Positionen und gegenwärtige Aufgaben*, ed. Bernd Faulenbach, München 1974, 125-126.

252 Stern & Bartmuß, *Deutschland*, 71.

253 Ibidem, 95.

254 Ibidem, 99.

255 Jan Rychlík, “České, slovenské a československé dějiny – problém vzájemného vztahu v různých historických dobách“, *Česko-slovenská historická ročenka* 2000, 21-22.

suffered from severe Habsburg oppression since 1620, but was reborn in 1918. It was much harder to review the history of Slovakia in a similar manner due to a lack of continuity. Hence, nationalist historiographers developed the idea (which in many respects continues to hold sway) that all early Medieval state formations emerging on Slovak lands were essentially Slovak.²⁵⁶ The staunchest defender of this claim – František Hrušovský – emigrated from Slovakia in 1945.²⁵⁷ Because of its tainted origin, Slovak Marxists could never simply embrace it; besides, their Czech peers also staked a claim to Greater Moravia.²⁵⁸ As a result, Czechoslovak publications customarily referred to it as “the first joint country of Czechs and Slovaks.”²⁵⁹ Claims of its unanimously or partially Slovak provenance reappeared in mid-1960s due in part to the political thaw and a new opening in the debates over Czech-Slovak relations.²⁶⁰ During the Stalinist era, the question of Medieval nation-building processes on Slovak territories was often raised in historical journals, leading to rather animated debates.²⁶¹ A draft of a university textbook on the history of Czechoslovakia

256 Dušan Kováč, “Slovensko-české vzťahy v historickom vedomí slovenskej spoločnosti“, *Česko-slovenská historická ročenka* 2000, 57-58.

257 Stefan Albrecht, *Geschichte der Großmährenforschung in den Tschechischen Ländern und in der Slowakei*, Praha 2003, 83 & 114.

258 See Maciej Górny, *Między Marksem a Palackým. Historiografia w komunistycznej Czechosłowacji*, Warszawa 2001, 67. Similar claims can be found in e.g.: *Dejiny Slovenska (tézy)*; Peter Ratkoš, “Počiatky feudalizmu na Slovensku (K problematike raného feudalizmu v našich krajinách),” *Historický Časopis SAV* 1954, 253.

259 *Dejiny Slovenska (tézy)*, 100.

260 See Peter Ratkoš, “Postavenie slovenskej národnosti v stredovekom Uhorsku,” in: *Slováci a ich národný vývin (Sborník materiálov z V. szjazdu slovenských historikov v Banskej Bystrici)*, ed. Július Mésároš, Bratislava 1966, 9.

261 In 1956, Jozef Kudláček put forward the possibility of a Greater-Moravian nationality (Jozef Kudláček, “K otázke o vznikaní národnosti na našom území,” *Historický Časopis SAV* 1956), a claim he developed a year later (Jozef Kudláček, “K novším názorom o vznikaní ranofeudálnych národností na našom území,” *Historický Časopis SAV* 1957). Cf. also other positions in the debate: Lubomír Havlík, “K otázke národnosti na území Velké Moravy,” *Historický Časopis SAV* 1957; Peter Ratkoš, “Velkomoravské obdobie v slovenských dejinách,” *Historický Časopis SAV* 1958; Jozef Kudláček, “K začiatkom slovanského osídlenia na území Československa,” *Historický Časopis SAV* 1958; Jan Dekan, “Skutočnosť a mýtus v bádani o vzniku ranofeudálnych národností (Odpoveď dr. J. Kudláčkovi),” *Historický Časopis SAV* 1958; Eugen Paulíny, “Poznámky k vzniku slovenskej národnosti zo stanoviska historickej jazykovedy,” *Historický Časopis SAV* 1959; Ján Tibenský, “Problémy výskumu vzniku a vývoja slovenskej feudálnej národnosti,” *Historický Časopis SAV* 1961; Branislav Varsík, “Vyznam výskumu osídlenia východného Slovenska pre otázku vzniku a rozvoja slovenskej národnosti,” *Historický Časopis SAV* 1961; O. R. Halaga, “K otázke vzniku slovenskej národnosti,”

professed that the Slovak nationality had formed already after the dissolution of Greater Moravia, under the rule of the Kingdom of Hungary.²⁶²

When Greater Moravia fell victim to a Hungarian invasion, the future of the Slovaks was bound with Hungary for the next thousand years. This posed numerous problems to historians who accorded extraordinary significance to the institutions of a national state since there were few sources that could serve as a basis for a singularly Slovak political history. They tried to bridge this gap by discussing the history of culture, especially folk culture. Still, this only allowed one to draw very general conclusions that “the Slovak people, separated from the ruling classes by an unbreakable divide of language, led its own cultural life. The wandering musicians, folk singers of the time and of later centuries, travelled from town to town, from village to village, and the people itself constantly enriched the cultural heritage, passing it on from one generation to another.”²⁶³ Within the Hungarian state, Slovaks were assumed to represent a folk element. At a Hungarian historians’ congress in 1953, Ľudovít Holotík simply stated that the “neighbouring nations” fought for true independence side by side with the Hungarian folk: “In the olden days in Hungary, the Slovaks were an oppressed nation, but the Hungarian working people faced conditions just as troubling. The Slovak and Hungarian people were naturally drawn together against common native and foreign exploiters.”²⁶⁴ Even if the relations between Slovak and Hungarian historians grew colder in later years, the image of Slovaks as allies and collaborators in most of the progressive undertakings in Hungarian history retained its vitality.

With Marxist historians putting so much stress on the problem of the emergence of the state and (their particular) nation, the question of identification of early state-like entities with particular formations gained in importance. Already when discussions over the history of Poland began, the Marxist scholars encountered an obstacle concerning nomenclature: did the newly-formed state truly amount to a feudal entity, and if so, was it fully developed or only in early stages of development? An initial suggestion for periodisation from Stanisław Arnold, who dubbed the state of the early Piasts pre-feudal, was criticised by

Historický Časopis SAV 1962; Peter Ratkoš, “K diskusii o vznikaní národností na našom území,” *Historický Časopis SAV* 1963.

262 *Přehled československých dějin*, vol. 1, 102.

263 *Ibidem*, 104-105.

264 Ľudovít Holotík, “Z výsledkov kongresu maďarských historikov,” *Historický Časopis SAV* 1953, 317.

Soviet scholars and consequently rebuked.²⁶⁵ Such was the general tendency at that time: a similar critique was levelled against Jürgen Kuczynski, who protested against what he saw as a premature staking out of new eras.²⁶⁶ The propositions of Polish scholars were not unaffected by the wording chosen by the Medievalists of neighbouring countries. At several points, including the Otwock conference, Karol Maleczyński pointed out that František Graus saw “in the 10th century a fully-formed feudal system in a not yet entirely organised Czech feudal state.” Meanwhile, Ibrahim Ibn Yaqub, in his reminiscences from travels through this part of Europe dating from the very period, claimed that Mieszko’s state was the most powerful in the region, which meant that it had to be more powerful than the Czech state of the same epoch. This comparative analysis proved that, already in the 10th century, there was a developed feudal state on Polish soil.²⁶⁷

Czech and Slovak historians were deeply concerned about the proper classification of the form of government predominant in Greater Moravia. František Graus and Václav Husa’s initial suggestions, deeming it a pre-feudal state, were rejected, as were analogous proposals put forward by Stanisław Arnold with regard to Poland.²⁶⁸ According to a contending interpretation, Greater Moravia was an early feudal state. In the case of Slovakia, Peter Ratkoš observed that the concepts of periodisation proposed by Ľudovít Holotík left no room for any questions regarding the Greater Moravian state formation. Holotík claimed that Slovakia became a feudal state in the 10th century, but did not comment on the form of government in the country prior to that historical stage.²⁶⁹ According to Ratkoš (as well as later theses on the history of Slovakia, edited by Holotík, and also the Czechoslovak university history textbook),

265 Stanisław Arnold, “Niektóre problemy periodyzacji dziejów Polski,” in: *Pierwsza Konferencja Metodologiczna Historyków Polskich. Przemowienia, referaty, dyskusja*, eds. Stanisław Herbst, Witold Kula & Tadeusz Manteuffel, vol. 1, 168-174.

266 Kuczynski claimed: “Weder eine einzelne Schwalbe noch ein ausgegangener Ofen sind Merkmale des Frühlings, was nicht ausschließt, daß sie ihn ankündigen können“ – Jürgen Kuczynski, „Zum Aufsatz von Johannes Hichtweiß über die zweite Leibeigenschaft“, *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1954, 471. The reply to the critique can be found in: Johannes Nichtweiß, „Antwort an Jürgen Kuczynski“, *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1954.

267 See Karol Maleczyński, “Zróżnicowanie społeczne i powstanie państwa polskiego w IX w.,” in: *Pierwsza Konferencja*, vol. 1, 259; idem, review of František Graus, *Dějiny venkovského lidu v Čechách*, vol. 1, *Kwartalnik Historyczny* 1953, 285.

268 František Graus, “Pokus o periodisaci českých dějin,” *Československý Časopis Historický* 1953.

269 Ľudovít Holotík, “K periodizácii slovenských dejín v období feudalizmu a kapitalizmu,” *Historický Časopis SAV* 1953.

Greater Moravia was the first instance of a feudal formation in the region.²⁷⁰ For the authors of *Dejiny Slovenska*, this suggested a kinship to the Kievan Rus, a native, Slavic early feudal formation.²⁷¹

The debates over periodisation of the feudal era among Polish, Soviet, Czech and Slovak historians appear to be marked by a particular ambitious streak. Karol Maleczyński precisely captured the essence of these discussions: it was simply unacceptable that Polish feudal relations should be less developed than those prevalent in Bohemia in the same historical period.²⁷² On the other hand, interpretations which suited the suppositions of Soviet historians with regard to the history of the Kievan Rus were promoted. These two features of the historical debate are vividly registered in the so-called Norman theory.

This theory, according to which the Kievan Rus was formed by Scandinavians, was criticised both in view of its scientific viability and the political role ascribed to it. According to Aleksander Gieysztor, Normans did traverse Ruthenia “as merchants or enlisted in mercenary troops formed by the Ruthenian princelings. Yet, they did not – and could not – play the role of an independent political agent.”²⁷³ At the Otwock conference, one of the members of the Soviet delegation, Yevgeni Kosminsky, proposed a less measured opinion: “Don’t the western historians stick to the rubbish they call the theory of Norman conquest, whose essence lies in denying Slavs the ability to form their own states?” – he asked rhetorically.²⁷⁴ In V. Mavrodin’s pamphlet, published in Poland as well, “Normanism” was characterised as a rhetorical weapon of western reactionaries in their struggle against the Soviet Union.²⁷⁵ Violent assaults on the theory abated only after 1956, and not in every country of the eastern bloc. In a book published in 1957, Henryk Łowmiański admitted that “The theory of the Norman origins of Rus and its statehood was, so to speak, a proper historiographic phenomenon only so far as the interest in political history prevailed and the historical process was viewed as an outcome of actions taken by individuals and dynasties, with mass processes

270 Peter Ratkoš, “Počiatky feudalizmu na Slovensku (K problematike raného feudalizmu v našich krajinách),” *Historický Časopis SAV* 1954, 253-276; *Přehled československých dějin*, vol. 1, 49; *Dejiny Slovenska (tézy)*, 31.

271 *Dejiny Slovenska (tézy)*, 31.

272 See Maleczyński, “Zróznicowanie,” 259.

273 Juliusz Bardach, Aleksander Gieysztor, Henryk Łowmiański & Ewa Maleczyńska, *Historia Polski do r. 1466*, Warszawa 1953, 27.

274 Eugeniusz Kosminski, “Aktualne zagadnienia mediewistyki marksistowsko-leninowskiej,” in: *Pierwsza Konferencja*, vol. 1, 352.

275 W. Mavrodin, *Walka z “teorią normańską” w rosyjskiej nauce historycznej*, Warszawa 1951.

thoroughly neglected.”²⁷⁶ Łowmiański’s book faced criticism in the GDR for an all-too-tame approach to the subject, while the debate over the beginnings of Ruthenia was assumed to have been finally and decisively resolved in accordance with the Party’s “anti-Normanist” views.²⁷⁷

Unquestionably, Poland (whether feudal or early feudal), like Bohemia, faced foreign aggression from its inception, especially from the Germans – so much so that Polish borders seemed to have been threatened from one side only. According to Marxist writers, Poland’s relations with Ruthenia were the opposite of Polish-German relations.²⁷⁸ Soviet authors promoted similar views.²⁷⁹ The belief in an essential and perennial Polish-German enmity, on the other hand, resembled quite closely the beliefs of Zygmunt Wojciechowski. The fact that Wojciechowski himself was castigated as a nationalist in no way affected West Germany’s bad press in Poland. For Poles, wars against the Germans were “just wars, conducted in defence of our own country and Western Slavs threatened with complete extermination at the hands of German feudal lords.”²⁸⁰ The point of the struggles against German aggression was maintenance of the country’s natural boundaries – boundaries which, from the very beginning, matched national divisions.²⁸¹

The concept of the Polish motherland was naturally supported by historians associated with the Western Institute. During the Otwock conference, Michał Szaniecki took part in a discussion on the issue, proposing a thorough focus in scientific texts on “borders whose existence we owe to the Soviet Union, and which so faithfully replicate the boundaries of the Polish motherland.”²⁸² At that point in time, East German historians also offered unqualified support for historically-grounded Polish borders in the West.²⁸³

276 Henryk Łowmiański, *Zagadnienie roli Normanów w genezie państw słowiańskich*, Warszawa 1957, 183.

277 Bruno Widera, “Zur Normanenfrage in Osteuropa. Überblick über 230 Jahre Forschung“, *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1959, 210-216.

278 See Bardach, Gieysztor, Łowmiański, Maleczyńska, *Historia*, 53; *Historia Polski. Makieta*, vol. 1, part 1, 141.

279 See W. Koroluk, “Przyczynek do zagadnienia stosunków polsko-ruskich w X w.,” in: *Historycy radzieccy o Polsce. Wybór prac*, ed. Stefan Gwich, Warszawa 1953, 16-17.

280 Bardach, Gieysztor, Łowmiański, Maleczyńska, *Historia*, 53.

281 See *Historia Polski. Makieta*, vol. 1, part 1, 98.

282 Michał Szaniecki, “Stosunek periodyzacji ogólnej do specyficznej periodyzacji historii poszczególnych dziedzin nadbudowy. Rejonizacja periodyzacji czyli uwzględnienie w periodyzacji specyficznego rozwoju w ramach terytorialnych,” in: *Pierwsza Konferencja*, vol. 1, 286.

283 See Felix Heinrich Gentzen, “Polskie Ziemie Zachodnie – historyczne ziemie polskie,” *Nowe Drogi* 1952/7, 71.

The German *Expansionspolitik* became a major issue for East German Medievalists. While they found little redeemable value to it, they stressed the connection between the brutal conquest of the Polabian Slavs and the criminality of the Prussian state,²⁸⁴ as well as chancellor Adenauer's equally repulsive foreign policy.²⁸⁵ At times, East German authors even accused their Polish counterparts of underappreciating the political effect of the phenomenon.²⁸⁶ The said conquest proceeded in a manner reminiscent of the way Charlemagne's Saxon Wars were described. Slavic possessor classes collaborated with German aggressors, gradually embracing a German identity. The broad, popular masses, however, responded to the foreign invasion with fierce resistance which was broken with an unprecedented brutality.²⁸⁷ While much Medieval German expansion was of a pacific nature, even German law settlements were deemed to have brought more harm than good.²⁸⁸ *Ostexpansion*, whether military or economic, caused "German-Slavic relations to become poisoned for centuries, until modern times, and the Revanchists of Bonn continue to stir anti-Polish, anti-Czech and anti-Russian resentments, whether openly or under the cover of anti-Communism; they hope to use them to win the masses over for their criminal purposes."²⁸⁹ Historians from the GDR posed the actions of their Western brethren in opposition to the tradition of German-Slavic cooperation, for instance the Polish-German brotherhood in arms during the fight against the Tartars at Legnica in 1241.²⁹⁰

Czech writers, whether Marxist or not, persistently referenced the Germans, beginning with the Franks, who had posed a constant threat to the Greater Moravia by military means as well as through propaganda, i.e. the Catholic Church. Hence Marxist historiography assigned a mostly defensive role to the

284 Leo Stern, "Disposition des Hochschullehrbuches der Geschichte des deutschen Volkes (1. Bd.)", *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1953, 643.

285 Ingrid Hagemann, "Die mittelalterliche deutsche Ostexpansion und die Adenauersche Außenpolitik", *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1958, 814-816.

286 Ingrid Hegemann made that accusation against Gerard Labuda – *ibidem*, 816.

287 Leo Stern & Horst Gericke, *Deutschland in der Feudalepoche von der Mitte des 11. Jh. bis zur Mitte des 13. Jh.*, Berlin 1964, 171-180; Stern & Bartmuß, *Deutschland*, 191.

288 Stern & Gericke, *Deutschland*, 205.

289 *Ibidem*, 206.

290 Leo Stern, "Disposition des Hochschullehrbuches der Geschichte des deutschen Volkes (1. Bd.)", *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1953, 641. The claim of a Polish-German brotherhood of arms at Legnica was criticised by Aleksander Gieysztor and Ewa Maleczyńska, who questioned East German estimates of the size of the troops in particular (according to historians from the GDR, Polish and German troops were of a more or less equivalent size); see Leo Stern, "Erste Zwischenbilanz einer wissenschaftlichen Kritik (III)", *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1955, 221.

Saints Cyril and Methodius, who sought to guard the state from the infiltration of German clergy.²⁹¹ Czech sovereigns were assessed according to their ability to maintain a political and spiritual independence from the Empire. Even the latest representatives of the Přemyslid dynasty, during whose reign Medieval Bohemia enjoyed its heyday, did not enjoy much appreciation on account of the fact that, along with their courts, they underwent cultural Germanisation.²⁹²

Slovak historians focused on German feudal aggression only insofar as it concerned Greater Moravia, for obvious reasons. The Hungarian invasion, however, received a different interpretation; unsurprisingly, given that one of the axioms of Slovak historical consciousness is the claim that Magyars were “civilised” by the Slavic inhabitants of Greater Moravia, who were also partially responsible for the formation of the Kingdom of Hungary.²⁹³

As already mentioned, East German scholars could not use the threat of feudal aggression to justify the formation of a state-like entity on their lands, since Germany posed precisely such a threat to other countries in East Central Europe. Still, even German history includes a period when the fragmented forces of the country joined to rebuke Western expansion, with much success. Nevertheless, this happened long before the formation of early feudal state-like entities. According to Karl-Heinz Otto, in the first years A.D., Romans crossed the Rhine, decisively changing the nature of their struggles with the Germans. From that point on, the latter were fighting a war of liberation.²⁹⁴ Meanwhile, the Roman slave system suffered a deep crisis, illustrated by increasingly frequent slave uprisings, including the War of Spartacus, the foremost rebellion (which, as Otto added, also involved slaves of German origin).²⁹⁵ In this light, neither side of the Roman-German conflict represented a higher stage of social development, but the Germans could claim the moral high ground. As Otto observed, “The great triumph over the superior forces of Rome was the fruit of a true struggle for freedom. The result of this struggle proves the historical fact that when an organised liberation struggle is elevated as the highest of values, the forces of the oppressed popular masses are released, making them stronger than the better equipped mercenaries serving the dominant power. ... German

291 *Přehled československých dějin*, vol. 1, 46-47.

292 *Ibidem*, 118.

293 See Daniel Rapant, “Słowacy w historii. Retrospektywa i perspektywy (Przyczynek do filozofii i sensu słowackiej historii),” in: *Kwestia słowacka w XX wieku*, ed. Rudolf Chmel, transl. Piotr Godlewski, Zofia Jurczak-Trojan, Maryla Papierz, Gliwice 2002, 408.

294 Karl-Heinz Otto, *Deutschland in der Epoche der Urgesellschaft (500000 v. u. Z. bis zum 5./6. Jh. u. Z.)*, Berlin 1961, 114.

295 *Ibidem*, 114.

warriors were morally superior to Roman mercenaries because they were struggling to free their homeland from Roman occupation.²⁹⁶

The triumph over Romans in the Teutoburg Forest also had a singular hero. Hermann, the chieftain of the Cherusci, whose memorial near Detmold became a symbol of German nationalism, was referred to in East German historical works exclusively by his Latin name, Arminius. The authors stressed that the historical image of the leader of German resistance was falsified to serve a chauvinist version of history. Meanwhile, all his qualities notwithstanding, one should not forget that the Romans were vanquished primarily by the German popular masses.²⁹⁷

This interpretation of Roman-German conflict met with critique from Polish scholars. Kazimierz Tymieniecki observed that, by exaggerating the importance of the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest, his colleagues from the GDR were closely following the traditional, popular, nationalist reading of national history. In his opinion, the battle, though bloody indeed, had very little political effect – it could hardly be credited, for example, with having brought about the withdrawal of Roman forces behind the Rhine. The response to this statement, given by Leo Stern, left no room for doubt as to the importance of this element of German progressive traditions: “the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest was, as Engels put it, one of the turning points in history, and we should not allow ourselves to be misled by the fact that this statement was echoed in popular literature. ... The German working class has to summon all of its traditions of liberation to reinforce the will to resist American imperialism with its ‘European idea,’ destructive of the national consciousness, as well as the West German bourgeoisie with its ‘European integration’. W. Ulbricht spoke in the same spirit at the 2nd Congress of the SED: ‘Our professors of history remain silent about the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest, where, as Engels writes in his *Der Ursprung der Familie, des Privateigentums und des Staats*, the Romans were beaten because Germans were free people whose personal courage and discipline far exceeded those of the Roman troops. They were fighting for the freedom of their country’.”²⁹⁸ Tymieniecki’s critique left no mark on the East German interpretation of the battle.

As far as the Polish history was concerned, the key event, not only from a Marxist standpoint, was the baptism of the state. Neither in Germany, nor in Czechoslovakia was so much weight attached to analogous events. Polish

296 Ibidem, 119.

297 Ibidem, 119-120.

298 Leo Stern, “Erste Zwischenbilanz einer wissenschaftlichen Kritik (II),” *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1955, 55 & 64.

historians underscored the ambiguous nature of the acceptance of Christianity: the baptism had positive as well as negative effects. Historians steadfastly opposed the traditionally accepted view of its anti-German meaning. Henryk Łowmiański agreed that “the baptism solidified Poland’s international position in the Christian world,” but at the same time stressed that “Bourgeois historians moved this less important moment to the foreground, claiming that Poland accepted the baptism to fend off the danger of German assaults, when, undoubtedly, the essential aim of assuming Christianity was strengthening the rule of the feudal lords.”²⁹⁹ For Czech historians, state baptism had more vices than virtues, while at the same time, it did play a progressive part insofar as it sped up the feudalisation of society.³⁰⁰ Nevertheless, it did not elude their attention that Christianity in general supported existing social relations – at one point even upholding the system of slavery.³⁰¹ Yet, even in Marxist works, one can find surprising deviations from the rule proclaiming that events hastening the onset of a subsequent social formation have at least a partly progressive character. According to Jan Baszkiewicz, “The acceptance of Christianity aided the further development of feudalism, strengthened and justified the class rule of the feudal lords over the feudally dependent peasantry. Christianity of the time was no longer the progressive Christianity known from the first centuries A.D.”³⁰²

This difference of opinion between Medievalists echoes the dispute over whether phenomena which accelerate the advance toward subsequent formations (feudal or capitalist) are by necessity objectively progressive, or, in the opposite case whether all popular, anti-feudal and anti-capitalist movements are always progressive, even when they objectively delay historical advance (according to the criteria of a given epoch). Henryk Łowmiański and Jan Baszkiewicz gave contradictory answers to this question: Christianity and the Church structure certainly hastened the development of feudalism, but while this was interpreted as a virtue by Łowmiański, Baszkiewicz saw it as a vice. In time, Baszkiewicz’s views prevailed and Henryk Łowmiański partially revised his view on the Baptism of Poland, while stressing its long-term negative effects.³⁰³

This difference of opinion should not be taken as proof of any essential rift among Marxist Medievalists as to the role of the Baptism. All authors were in perfect agreement as to the negative effects of the decision. First of all, the

299 Bardach, Gieysztor, Łowmiański, Maleczyńska, *Historia*, 40; see also, Maleczyńska, *Problem*, 20.

300 *Přehled československých dějin*, vol. 1, 49.

301 *Ibidem*.

302 Baszkiewicz & Leśnodorski, *Materiały*, 22.

303 *Historia Polski. Makieta*, vol. 1, part 1, 136-137.

acceptance of Western Christianity tied Poland to the Vatican. Another important drawback of the Baptism was that it arrested the development of national literature and the Polish language, which, in turn, impeded the formation of the Polish nation. The claim that the introduction of the Church accelerated the development of the country was refuted. At the same time, “the negative impact of Christianisation in the Latin creed was reflected in the erection of a cultural division between the Polish and the Southern and Eastern Slavs.”³⁰⁴

This last aspect drew Polish historians closer to positions taken by their Slovak and Czech colleagues. It is fairly obvious that Christianity was accorded two different readings, depending on the rite. The activities of Saints Cyril and Methodius usually received a far more favourable appraisal than those of the German clergy, or even the patron saint of Bohemia. Due to the fact that early modern reactionaries used him as a symbol of opposition to the progressive Hussite tradition, the cult of Saint Wenceslas received a critical evaluation from Czech Marxists.³⁰⁵ The development of the “national” cult of Saint Stanislaus in Poland received a similar treatment. The particularly negative attitude the Marxists had toward this specific figure naturally translated into a rather positive treatment of Bolesław the Bold, the bishop’s killer, who stood up against the Empire (though this also meant that he sided with the Papacy), allied himself with Yaroslav the Wise, and finally killed Saint Stanislaus – all of which received positive evaluations from the Marxists. Still, the authors of the “Draft” claimed that Bolesław erred in letting himself be coronated as a king “as this meant the submission of Poland to the Papacy which arrogated to itself superiority over all Christian states; the coronation thereby gave the Pope the right to interfere in Polish affairs.”³⁰⁶ Apparently, the selfsame antipathy toward the Vatican in particular and all ecclesiastical undertakings in general is responsible for the inconsistency inherent in evaluations of Christianity in the Middle Ages. As one of the areas where a Marxist evaluation could not rely solely on the authority of the classics, it was to a significant extent shaped by the Soviet Union’s current politics.

It is plain to see that Marxist Medieval studies attached particular attention to matters related to the creation and formation of states. Syntheses of national histories opened with ruminations on the origins of particular states, the reasons for their emergence, and the stage of development they reached, as well as the

304 Ibidem.

305 *Přehled československých dějin*, vol. 1, 73-74; see also, Václav Husa, *Historia Czechosłowacji*, Praga 1967, 42.

306 *Historia Polski. Makieta*, vol. 1, part 1, 184.

influence they had on the formation of national consciousness. Of vital importance was the ability to trace the political history of the states in question back to an appropriate development of the indigenous forces of production, rather than foreign invasions or personal achievements of individuals. It was the state that faced German aggression (in the case of Germany, the state-forming Saxons struggled against the invading Franks). Christianity, on the other hand, attracted the interest of historians only insofar as it facilitated the consolidation of feudal structures and/or limited the independence of the states by subordinating them, to an extent, to the Papacy. Marxist methodology was also open to other topics, as long as they worked to highlight the importance of the state as the most revered of all accepted values. Each of the historiographies under discussion introduces numerous examples corroborating this conviction. For example, historians of the GDR justified their critique of Germany's Eastward expansion by means of a moral argument as well as through analyses of internal politics: like Italian campaigns, Eastward expansion weakened central power while improving the position of the magnates, opening the way to a splintering of the state.³⁰⁷ This feudal breakup, in turn, had dire consequences for the people as well as the state – both of which sufficiently corroborate the predominant interest of the popular masses in the unification of Germany.³⁰⁸ Successive stages of decline and reinforcement of the *Zentralgewalt* form an axis for weaving the history of Medieval Germany in the *Lehrbuch der deutschen Geschichte*. Marxist works revived the theory of the German *Sonderweg*: the feudal victory over the centralised power prevented the Empire from becoming the crystallisation of the German nation, as it had been in France or England.³⁰⁹ This vision of German history also includes motifs present in works of authors belonging to the Prussian school: the elevation of the state to the rank of an absolute good because it was the entity designated to bring about the idea of national freedom for the Germans. Interestingly, German historians differed from their Soviet or Polish colleagues in their evaluation of the splintering of their respective states. Outside of Germany, historians agreed that it was a natural phenomenon, characteristic of a certain stage of historical development, and in this sense positive. “In the changed circumstances of a well-grounded feudal regime,” wrote Juliusz Bardach, “the power of the central prince was hardly of any use to the feudal lords.”³¹⁰ From Jan Baszkiewicz's

307 Stern & Bartmuß, *Deutschland*, 187 i 200; see also Erik Hühns, „Die politische Ohnmacht des Reiches (1250-1500),” *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1954, 71-73.

308 Erik Hühns, “Die politische Ohnmacht des Reiches 1250-1500 (II),” *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1954, 238.

309 Stern & Gericke, *Deutschland*, 119.

310 Bardach, Gieysztor, Lowmiański & Maleczyńska, *Historia*, 81.

perspective, the feudal breakup (a term commonly used in the 1950s) was not only progressive – it actually led to an even stronger unification of Polish territories.³¹¹

Though the feudal breakup was not by itself a regressive, or even a troubling phenomenon to Polish historians, Marxist Medievalists commended the princes of the Piast lineage for attempting to reunite the country. As a fragmented Poland progressed socio-economically, feudal fragmentation ceased to be considered opportune and turned into a regressive event, “a check on further economic development.”³¹² As in Germany, the peasantry was supposedly the group which held the most interest in reunification. Polish society also included groups which did not support reunification or tried to prevent it. Marxist analyses often remind the reader that “neither all the Polish clergy, nor all the Catholic hierarchy supported the unification of Poland.”³¹³ In these circumstances, Marxist Medievalists had also to reevaluate the cult of Saint Stanislaus. Jan Baszkiewicz characterised “the use of the cult of Stanislaus – regardless of the extremely harmful, negative role the figure played in Polish history in relation to the concepts of renewing the crown and unifying the country as well as popularising these ideas. It (using the cult of Stanislaus) played an *objectively* [Baszkiewicz’s italics] crucial and positive role for the unification of Polish lands. Objectively, that is, irrespective of the intentions of the creators of the cult of bishop Stanislaus (beginning with Wincenty Kadłubek) and the advocates of his canonisation; more than that – perhaps even in spite of their intentions.”³¹⁴ The author did not explain the subjective goals of the creators of the cult, but his explication found its way into the “Draft” of the university textbook on Polish history: “The positive attitude of the Papacy toward the canonisation of Saint Stanislaus is justified by its contemporaneous, intensive attempts – failed, as we know today – at subordinating the Orthodox Church in ... Red Ruthenia. The canonisation reinforced the position of the Church in Poland as Catholicism’s outpost closest to Ruthenia.”³¹⁵ Among the social groups that did not support the unification of the country, the clergy was joined by feudal magnates, primarily the district princelings with a personal interest in retaining an independent control over their respective principalities.³¹⁶

311 Jan Baszkiewicz, *Powstanie zjednoczonego państwa polskiego na przełomie XIII i XIV wieku*, Warszawa 1954, 39.

312 Ibidem, 147; Baszkiewicz & Leśnodorski, *Materiały*, 47.

313 Ibidem, 427.

314 Ibidem, 445.

315 *Historia Polski. Makieta*, vol. 1, part 1, 327-328.

316 Baszkiewicz, *Powstanie*, 283-284.

Marxist monographs, especially those about Polish or German history, can easily serve as a basis for an analysis of a phenomenon similar to that which occurred in the Soviet Union in the mid-1930s. There, after a period of domination by a rigorous Marxist vision of history framed by Mikhail Pokrovsky, the previous interpretation was reinstated. It diverged from Pokrovsky's views in ascribing instrumental value to the tsarist state, whose strength, external and internal development, and military victories were thenceforth to be celebrated with solemnity befitting the successes of the Bolshevik regime. Historians previously castigated for nationalism, idiographic tendencies, and other offences against Marxist methodology (like Evgeni Tarle), were allowed to return to work. Their scientific approach, in turn, was rooted in the tradition of German historiography. This vision of national history, which reconciled the claim to freedom with the concept of a strong state, going so far as to find its embodiment in the firmly centralised state of Prussia, was precisely a product of the Prussian school and its key contributors such as Heinrich von Sybel, Heinrich von Treitschke or Hermann Baumgartner. According to them, the state played the political, as well as ethical role assigned it by Hegel.³¹⁷ This particularly German variation of liberalism, mediated by the historians of the Russian Empire, proved equal to Marxism as an ideological tool for the interpretation of Medieval history, which did not prevent Marxist scholars from criticising historians of the Prussian school. Perhaps the two trends in methodology were joined by the idea of submitting the individual to a higher power – to the state in German historicism, and to historical processes in Marxism. Therefore, Marxist historians did not need to borrow directly from representatives of the Prussian school – they could refer to Karl Marx as a mediator, since his ideas were formed at the same time and place as those of Johann Gustav Droysen, an effervescent, talented national-liberal activist from the period preceding the Springtime of the Peoples. At the point when Marxist Medievalists transferred their interests from the popular masses to structures of the state, they moved closer to Sybel or Treitschke. Their description of Western feudal (or “slavish” in the case of ancient Romans) aggression, on the other hand, moved toward beliefs espoused by Joachim Lelewel, who perceived Slavic peoples as being marked by a drive to freedom of a more or less democratic nature, and as subjected to Germanic aggression. When referring to the same tropes of national historiographies, Marxist scholars stressed the state-building abilities of the Slavs (or the Saxons), abandoning the idea of their cultural superiority to the West. Instead, they focused on the equality of both worlds in terms of culture and civilisation, while maintaining the belief in the moral superiority of their own ancestors over the aggressors.

317 Iggers, *The German*, 91-93.

In this respect, Andrzej Feliks Grabski's claim of an antinomy between the dominant methodology in the Stalinist model of historiography and the political demands set before historians needs to be reevaluated.³¹⁸ The claim that the demands of current politics in the 1950s were more important than Marxist methodology is obviously true for the most part, but it does not significantly alter our knowledge of the historiography of that period, or of historiography in general. This lends a certain poignancy to the image of a historiography whose thin veneer of Marxism fails to preclude elements of an older methodological tradition, at times fairly distant from said Marxism. If Marxist historiography is, then, truly incoherent, it is not due to the collisions between Marx's "theory" and the contemporary political interests of the Soviet Union, but rather to the fact that changes in politics uncover and introduce other, competing interpretations of history, ruled by their own internal logic and therefore seldom in agreement with Marxist orthodoxy.

There is a minor, but interesting divergence between different Marxist interpretations of Medieval history – it pertains to the evaluation of feudal fragmentation. The fact that it received divergent appraisals from country to country can be explained in two different ways, both of which seem acceptable to me. On the one hand, in the case of the Holy Roman Empire, other than in Bohemia or Poland, the unification did not occur swiftly. An historical fact, which was of transitory interest to Czech and Polish scholars, was for the Germans an event of enormous significance that in time rose to the rank of a stumbling block on the way toward implementing the program of the national movement. On the other, one can see the divergence as a result of the employment of two different methods of Marxist interpretation. Polish and Czech historians treated feudal fragmentation as one of the laws of history, corroborated by other examples (e.g. from the history of Russia). This led them to assume the historical process as a certain continuous whole. One can also discern another source of inspiration at work in this decidedly Marxist view: it likewise agrees with Leopold Ranke's understanding of historical processes as the result of forces and phenomena which could have affected the balance of history if they were to achieve solitary dominance. According to this optic, it is illogical to reproach the Empire for having fallen apart, and its unity can no longer be seen as a dogma by which one can measure and evaluate historical events. East German historians, favouring a different approach, more often than not looked to the tradition of the German national movement for inspiration, interpreting this section of the Medieval period in a manner deeply akin to that of the historians of the Prussian school.

318 Grabski, *Dzieje historiografii*, 690-691.

The Anti-Feudal Social Revolution

At its inception in the Central and Eastern Europe, feudalism was a progressive phenomenon. However, as already shown, its vices were on display even prior to that – as seen, for instance, by the fact that it was introduced by force, or that the Church facilitated its introduction. Hence, one can hardly be surprised by the fact that Marxist historians searched for signs of this formation’s decline at very early periods. The so-called crisis of feudalism in Bohemia was dated to the 14th-15th century, that is, before the Hussite Wars. At the same time, analogous structures were uncovered by Polish, as well as, East German historians (in this case, the crisis predated the eruption of the Great Peasants’ Revolt.). According to Stalin’s thesis on the revolutionary character of inter-formational phases, every crisis paving the way to another capitalist formation should be followed promptly by a revolution. Such crises were treated as progressive events solely because they catalysed other formations. As a result, previous uprisings and revolts could not be deemed progressive, having occurred during feudalism’s heyday – i.e., while it was still responsible for the progress of history, rather than for pegging it back. This diagnosis caused much pain to historians who believed their main task to be describing the history of the struggle of the popular masses against the possessor classes – because Marxist historians typically sympathised with the weak and poor.

From the point of view of this new methodology, potentially the most arresting event of the early Piasts’ reign was the pagan revolt, which figured in works of the 1950s as a popular uprising. Still, even this case posed serious methodological questions. Just as with the Baptism of Poland, Henryk Łowmiański noted that “The popular uprising broke out at a time when feudalism was at a stage of ascension and corresponded to the existing state of creative forces.”³¹⁹ The popular uprising, conducted with the intent to bring the country back to the pagan tradition, could not relate to the contemporary socio-economic situation and therefore was not likely to be treated as a progressive movement. Again, as in the case of the Baptism of Poland, Jan Baszkiewicz presented an opinion radically different from that of Łowmiański: “The pagan slogans,” he wrote, “like the movement’s ideology, were an expression of a struggle against feudal oppression. ... Rejecting the openly brutal forms of feudal dependence, the popular uprising played an objectively progressive role, regardless of the intentions of the peasants who took part in the uprising and doubtless pushed for a return to the past community. ... [W]ith the popular uprising quashed, the reactionary elements of slavery, and the elements of a

319 Bardach, Gieysztor, Łowmiański & Maleczyńska, *Historia*, 60.

slave system in Poland, were put to serious question.”³²⁰ Łowmiański’s claim was criticised at the Otwock conference by Marian Serejski, who recounted the positive evaluation granted feudal-era popular uprisings in Soviet scholarly works. Though Łowmiański attended the venue, he did not venture to respond in his presentation. The version of national history presented in the “Draft” agreed with Baszkiewicz’s interpretative claims.³²¹

East German and Czechoslovak historians approached the early feudal peasants’ revolts with much more caution. In 1965, the *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* published a debate between Siegfried Hoyer and Hans Mottek, concerning the peasants’ uprising of 1336-1339. Mottek vehemently debunked Hoyer’s all-too-favourable view of the event and even went so far as to state that it was not a popular uprising at all, merely feudal-inspired anti-Jewish riots.³²² Czech historians, on the other hand, treated the early-feudal pagan reaction as a phenomenon characteristic of the previous formation, hence ill-suited to play a progressive part. This was reserved for phenomena like the more “mature” heresy, and, in particular, the revolutionary Hussite movement.³²³

As we will see presently, the Hussite movement played a very special role in Czechoslovak Marxist historiography (in part because of the fact that earlier historians also believed the period of the movement’s existence to have been the most important in the history of Bohemia).³²⁴ The fact that two leading young Czech Marxist historians of the 1950s – Josef Macek and František Graus – were interested in this movement also played a part. The new Marxist interpretation of the Hussite period was subjected to a tripartite division, suggested by Graus, into phases of the supremacy of the poor, the supremacy of the bourgeoisie, and the final phase which culminated in the Battle of Lipany and the victory of the nobility.³²⁵ Nevertheless, the numerous works of Josef Macek and other Marxist Medievalists often make the reader feel as if the transformation of religious movements into revolutionary ones did not constitute the axis of their narratives, and consequently, that the tracing of the progress of

320 Baszkiewicz & Leśnodorski, *Materiały*, 28-29.

321 *Historia Polski. Makieta*, vol. 1, part 1, 176.

322 Siegfried Hoyer, “Die Armliederbewegung – ein Bauernaufstand 1336/1339,” *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1965; Hans Mottek (letter to the editor, *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*), *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1965, 695-697.

323 *Přehled československých dějin*, vol. 1, 71.

324 Mor on the subject in: František Šmahel, *Idea národa v husitských Čechách*, Praha 2000; see also Čornej, *Lipanské*.

325 František Graus, “Pokus o periodisaci českých dějin,” *Československý Časopis Historický* 1953, 202-213.

revolution hardly constituted an enterprise worthy of the effort. Of far greater import seems the appraisal of individual and mass actors involved in the events described. This is primarily due to the fact that the Hussite movement is analysed not only as a historical event, but also as a myth. On the one hand, it is a national myth, for centuries a hallmark of Czech culture. On the other, due to its chronological precedence, the movement became a crucial link in the chain of so-called “progressive traditions” through a partially competitive re-reading of the myth by Marxist historiography.

In spite of Marxist demands for a “deheroisation” of historiography, the Czech interpretation of the Hussite revolution reserved the main roles in the event for two heroic figures of the period – Jan Hus and Jan Žižka. Hus was described as a dedicated internationalist, hostile to all nationalist obstinacy. This image was particularly affected by his attitude toward Germans. His internationalism did not go so far as cosmopolitanism. Quite the contrary: he was a staunch patriot, open to calls for Slavic cooperation.³²⁶ Hence “Our socialist patriotism and proletarian internationalism finds a living specimen and exemplar in Hus” even at so late a time.³²⁷ Hus’ social background was also found highly commendable – he was born to a poor family, and earned his post as a university teacher thanks to his hard work and ability.

However, Czechoslovak Marxist historians soon discovered that they faced a crucial problem of interpretation. Not only was Hus a preacher whose teachings translated into the language of programs for political and social revolution only with great difficulty. They also did not include any revolutionary elements, but only calls for a return to the real faith, chastity and an expiation of the sins of the Church. These problems were recognised.³²⁸ The solution implemented consisted of claims that Hus’ moderate ideology achieved revolutionary implications in the context of his fate.³²⁹ Hus’ death as a martyr, which transformed him into a national and religious symbol, was not the only reason for treating him as a revolutionary. He was said to have undergone an evolution well before his demise. According to Josef Macek, this evolution consisted of a “dialectical coupling” of the exceptional individual with the revolutionary people. Hus’ teachings, having become more and more “optimistic,” gained a progressive resonance.³³⁰

326 *Přehled československých dějin*, vol. 1, 176.

327 Josef Macek, *Jan Hus*, Praha 1963, 142.

328 See Josef Macek, *Ktož jsú boží bojovníci*, Praha 1951, 14; idem, *Husitské revoluční hnutí*, Praha 1952, 50.

329 Macek, *Ktož jsú*, 14.

330 Macek, *Husitské*, 49-50.

Hus was not the only one to undergo the translation of his reformatory religious postulates into the language of political programs – the same treatment was applied to preachers who spread his teachings. They were to play the role of his political tribunes: “The ideological struggle against the Church could only be conducted by those who were properly armed for it with sufficient education – and these were typically petty, impoverished priests, preachers. Yet their struggle could only be conceived in the same frame which the Church used to veil its class dogmas. ... Popular preachers could urge the people to war from the pulpit.”³³¹ According to Marxist scholars, the Hussites were not propelled by love of God or a desire for salvation, but by humanism, anti-clericalism, and a belief in the progress of humanity – features found in later progressive movements as well.³³² There were other common, timeless traits shared all across this broad spectrum, such as the desire to destroy the forces of reaction, as well as the exploiters and the entire feudal system.³³³

Jan Žižka was as troubling a figure for Marxist historiography as he was for historians of the 19th century. His noble birth and troubled past (he was said to have dabbled in banditry in his youth) were usually left unsaid or dismissed as fabrications of bourgeois historians.³³⁴ Josef Macek played down the problem of Žižka’s noble birth, claiming that “the Trocnov warlord did not differ that much from any of the richer peasants.” In Tábor, however, Žižka formed ties with the middle bourgeoisie instead of bonding with radical sectarians. However, given the economic situation of the time, he was forced to rely on towns to be able to operate effectively. Had he sided with the poor, he would have lacked sufficient resources to succeed militarily. In the end, Marxist scholars decided to take Žižka’s side. Like Hus, he was said to have won the support of the “progressive poor” with his uncompromising approach; like Hus, he was believed to have undergone an evolution through his experience with the simple folk-revolutionaries whom he commanded.

The positive appraisal of the Hussite leader seems to be primarily due to his extraordinary military talents. According to Marxist historians, Žižka was far more nationalist than Hus. Philosopher Milan Machovec named him “the inheritor of Hus’s torch.” In this role, he became “the favourite of the Czech nation.”³³⁵

For the Communists, Žižka’s image was tarnished by his ruthless dealings with the Hussite sectarians – the Adamites. As opposed to the earlier,

331 *Přehled československých dějin*, vol. 1, 171.

332 Timoteus Čestmír Zelinka, *Husitskou Prahou*, Praha 1955, 10.

333 See Macek, *Husitské*, 11 & 79.

334 Josef Macek, *Tábor v husitském revolučním hnutí*, Praha 1956, vol. 2, 34.

335 Milan Machovec, *Husovo učení a význam v tradici*, Praha 1953, 250.

historically “immature” heretics, the Adamites “were by no means religious fanatics, they struggled for the rights and victory of the poor. ... Their common sense and healthy reason and the conclusions drawn thereupon assailed Medieval obscurantism and fostered a primordial atheism.”³³⁶ Still, there was no chance for the realisation of such a radical program. Czech historians thus faced a problem analogous to the appraisal of the pagan revolt in the Piast state, and responded to it by showing less sympathy for the popular movement with no chance of hastening the arrival of another formation.³³⁷ The example of Žižka and the Adamites shows with striking clarity how the national-liberal patriotic tradition and the struggle for a Marxist historiography intermingled, even if they tended to accentuate different moments. Milan Machovec seemed to favour a more nationalist form of Marxism than Macek. His views on the Adamites were fairly straightforward: “If during the Hussite revolution the popular masses would have succumbed to similar errors and dependence on aid from above, it would have disarmed the people and made it believe in Jesus Christ more than in the flails.”³³⁸ Ewa Maleczyńska accused Macek of awarding the Adamites undue recognition. In her opinion, they were not as significant as Macek believed, but she showed understanding of the “Marxist historian’s emotional attachment to those most oppressed and persecuted.”³³⁹ Interestingly, the university textbook on the history of Poland, published in 1957 and co-authored by Maleczyńska, included a highly similar appraisal of a different radical religious group – the Polish Brethren of the 16th and 17th century. According to the textbook, their ideology, “though utopian at the time, was in social terms the most progressive program of the Polish Renaissance.” Like the Adamites, the Brethren were not “impoverished, disorganised and shapeless in class terms”: “The Arian left propagated a utopian Communism, endemic to plebeian political programs of the period, and far ahead of contemporary socio-economic relations.” The author of that portion of the textbook, Kazimierz Lepszy, actually identified only two serious weaknesses in the Arian ideology: that the Arian gentry oppressed the peasantry as much any other gentry did, and that the Brethren’s pacifism could prove to be pernicious. “The Polish Brethren’s position, denouncing all wars, whether aggressive or defensive, is understandable. However, this noble disposition against wars carried in itself a serious danger. On the one hand, it led to an abstention from conflicts as such, even if the independence of the fatherland was at stake. On the other, by throwing away their arms, the Brethren

336 Ibidem, 202.

337 Macek, *Husitské*, 98.

338 Machovec, *Husovo*, 250.

339 Ewa Maleczyńska, review of: Josef Macek, *Tábor v husitském revolučním hnutí, Praha 1955-1956, Kwartalnik Historyczny* 1958.

renounced all struggle for social justice if conducted by sword.”³⁴⁰ Apparently, then, the heretic movements could be interpreted in two divergent ways: one could either imbue their theology with a sense of progressive political ideology, and bring out the social content hiding behind religious phrases – as did Josef Macek; or, one could accept the religious character of the heretic movements, but only as an error, a deviation from proper revolutionary ideology. In both cases, Czech Marxists were particularly prone to tie themselves to a traditional interpretation of national history, for which the Hussite movement was much more than just a heresy, and the theological questions it posed were deemed irrelevant to its character.

As was the case with tracing the beginning of Medieval states, the history of the Hussite movement was subjected to a thorough “influence-ological” analysis: both external influences affecting the particular revolution and Hussite currents in other countries were taken into account (the latter with a far more considerable dose of enthusiasm). Within this frame, Josef Macek wove his ruminations, reminiscent of the debate over the “Norman theory”: “The revolutionary ideology of the popular heresy was therefore not condemned to transfer the ‘idea’ from one sect to another, from one country to another, but it could rise on its own in a local environment, from the depths of humiliation, oppression and exploitation experienced by our kinsfolk. If, then, the numerous heretic errors share so many similarities, this is due to a (qualitatively) identical level of exploitation of the peasant folk in our country, Southern France, Austria or England, and to the similar identity of the enemy, the exploiter-Church.”³⁴¹ Robert Kalivoda, whose work won recognition from Western Medievalists as well, offered another view. Having set out from the same Marxist basis, he traced the influence which European heresies had on the Hussite movement.³⁴² The contrast between these two perspectives serves as yet another illustration of the extent of changes that took place in Czechoslovak scholarly life between the mid-1950s, the time of Macek’s writing, and the early 1960s, when Kalivoda published his work.³⁴³

By far the most spectacular manifestation of the Hussite influence abroad was evident in the military expeditions called “*rejza*.” In historiography, these raids were represented primarily as propaganda efforts. For Marxist scholars, the reactions of the West, so fearful of the Hussites they resorted to slander, seemed akin to anti-Bolshevist propaganda of the interwar period.³⁴⁴ Czech and German

340 *Historia Polski*, vol. 1, part 2, 288-289.

341 Macek, *Tábor*, vol. 1, 153.

342 Robert Kalivoda, *Husitská ideologie*, Praha 1961.

343 See Ferdinand Seibt, *Husitica. Zur Struktur einer Revolution*, Köln 1965, 8-10.

344 Jan Durdík, *Husitské vojenství*, Praha 1954, 19.

“bourgeois” historiography treated the Hussite raids as typical wars of plunder. This view was summarily rejected by the Marxists, who endorsed an opposite view: “The Hussites subscribed to an age-old dream of stirring the peoples of neighbouring countries crushed by feudal oppression and binding them together in a struggle against a common enemy, the Church, which was the cornerstone of feudalism.”³⁴⁵ This new concept was bound up with widespread research into the resonance the movement enjoyed in East Central European countries, of which we will yet speak further.

From the perspective of Czech historians, the problem of the Hussite movement’s reception turned out to have been quite simple. As a rule, scholars assumed that the popular masses of neighbouring countries were friendly toward the Hussites, while the feudals responded with hatred. This comes as no surprise, given the oft-repeated claim that the Hussites solely pillaged feudal possessions.³⁴⁶ On the other hand, historians underlined the military efficacy of the Hussites and the fear they inculcated in the surrounding areas – even though the latter and former claims were completely at odds.³⁴⁷

Understandably, the foreign reception of the Hussite movement was of considerable interest to Marxist historiographies of Czechoslovakia’s neighbouring countries. The readership of East German historical literature were offered unlimited access to the interpretation of the Hussite movement provided by Czech Marxists through translations published both in the GDR and in Czechoslovakia.³⁴⁸ Scholars of the GDR often referenced the findings of their Czech colleagues, sometimes tempering their enthusiasm on the subject of Hus. On the other hand, though, they thoroughly agreed with claims about a vivid response to the Hussite movement in Germany, acting on the assumption that the Czech revolution was joined by numerous Germans, among them the “German Hussite” Friedrich Reiser.³⁴⁹ Nevertheless, German scholars attached primary importance to the effect the Hussite revolution had on the participants and leaders of the Great Peasants’ Revolt, Thomas Müntzer most of all. Asserting this influence was hardly a straightforward or uncontroversial matter. As late as 1955, in an unprecedentedly virulent review of Heinz Kamnitzer’s work on the beginnings of the Great Peasants’ Revolt, Rosemarie Müller put one of the axioms of Czech historiography

345 Ibidem, 15.

346 Choc, *Boje*, 341.

347 Josef Macek, *Husité na Baltu a ve Velkopolsku*, Praha 1952, 17.

348 See Alois Míka, “Die wirtschaftlichen und sozialen Folgen der revolutionären Hussitenbewegung in den ländlichen Gebieten Böhmens,” *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1959; Josef Macek, *Die Hussitenbewegung in Böhmen*, Praha 1958.

349 Horst Köpstein, “Über den deutschen Hussiten Friedrich Reiser,” *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1959, 1069-1070.

to question, writing that both the Hussite movement and the anti-feudal movements in Germany followed the example of peasants' uprisings in France and England. This amounted to a rejection of the thesis concerning the overwhelming influence the Hussite movement had on Germany. Furthermore, Müller disagreed with Kamnitzer's appraisal of Müntzer, whom she saw as hardly matching the brilliance of the figure described by Kamnitzer.³⁵⁰ In the early 1960s, Bernhard Töpfer debated Václav Husa in the pages of the *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, accusing the latter of overestimating the influence which a short stay in Bohemia had had on Müntzer's revolutionary beliefs.³⁵¹ Still, the prevailing claim dictated that just as the Hussite revolution had influenced the Great Peasants' Revolt, so Hus had influenced Müntzer.

The research into the reception of the Hussite movement abroad played a particularly important role in Slovak Marxist historiography. As in Bohemia, the Hussites counted among the most crucial local progressive traditions. Already in the first pages of the inaugural number of the *Historický Časopis SAV*, Ľudovít Holotík named as a significant task set before Slovak Marxist historical science the investigation of the influence of the Hussite movement, an issue to that point tendentiously avoided by bourgeois scholars.³⁵² A more detailed analysis of the attitudes toward the Hussite movement prevailing among Slovak historians was presented by Peter Ratkoš. In his view, while their stance was generally negative (e.g. in describing the Hussite raids as pillage expeditions), there was a vivid tradition of Hussite thought in Slovakia, which, in the 19th century, became a foundation for the Slovak national movement.³⁵³

According to Marxist scholars, Slovak Hussitism was both an imported ideology and an indigenous anti-feudal current. While the Czechs organised raids into Upper Hungary, the area eventually began to house permanent bases of the so-called *bratřici*, a group led by Jan Jiskra of Brandýs and Petr Aksamit. According to Ratkoš, the *bratřici* movement was already imbued with a national spirit.³⁵⁴ The outbreak of the Hussite revolution in neighbouring Bohemia significantly strengthened the Slovak bourgeoisie in its confrontation with the German patricians, and solidified its feelings of kinship with the Czechs, thereby

350 Rosemarie Müller, review of: Heinz Kamnitzer, *Zur Vorgeschichte des Deutschen Bauernkrieges*, Berlin 1953, *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1955, 133-135.

351 Bernhard Töpfer, review of: Václav Husa, *Tomáš Müntzer a Čechy*, Praha 1959, *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1960, 1690.

352 Ľudovít Holotík, "K sedemdesiatym piatym narodeninám akademika Zdeňka Nejedlého," *Historický Časopis SAV* 1953, 23.

353 Peter Ratkoš, "Husitské revolučné hnutie a Slovensko," *Historický Časopis SAV* 1953, 28.

354 *Ibidem*, 39.

laying foundations for the modern Slovak nation.³⁵⁵ This did not mean, however, that Slovaks joined the Hussites in large numbers. On the contrary, the powerful gentry and patricians were fully capable of preventing a revolt among the poor townsfolk. In view of this fact, historians contented themselves with stating that news from the West generally aggravated class warfare in Slovak towns and villages. An unambiguously positive appraisal of a key portion of Czech progressive traditions often contrasted with the sources which the Slovak Medievalists were condemned to use. For example, a very soundly prepared 1965 re-edition of Branislav Varsik's interwar work, replete with citations from original sources, almost exclusively registered the devastation the Hussites caused during their raids (specifically, the estimated numbers of buildings burned). Although Varsik observed that "Today we can have no doubt that the Hussite period was the only moment since the collapse of the Greater Moravia when the clouded skies of Slovakia's past cleared somewhat," the reader of his work will likely miss this bright moment of improvement concealed as it is behind the smoke of Bratislava's burned outskirts.³⁵⁶ Varsik's book may have been based on a doctoral dissertation defended way back in 1928, yet the author had ample time and opportunity to "colour" somewhat the image of the Hussite influence in Slovakia. The progressive role of Czech cultural influence – linguistic, musical, etc. – was also described in fairly general terms.

The works of the Polish Medievalist Ewa Maleczyńska, the founder of the centre for Hussite study in Wrocław, Poland, constitutes a special case in the reception of the Marxist interpretation of the Hussite movement. As Wojciech Iwańczak observed, this particular topic has always suffered from a strong infusion of ideology, but Maleczyńska's writings surpassed even the notoriously one-sided analyses dating back to the 19th century in the ease with which she formed broad historical claims.³⁵⁷ The choice of Hussitism as one of the objects of particular interest to the Silesian Medievalists was also connected to the contemporaneous political situation. Ewa and Karol Maleczyński, as well as other scholars from Wrocław, realised that the history of that region, which merely moments ago had belonged to Germany, was rich with memories of Polish-German and Polish-Czech conflicts. As a common ground for Polish-

355 *Přehled československých dějin*, vol. 1, 223.

356 Branislav Varsik, *Husitské revolučné hnutie a Slovensko*, Bratislava 1965, 5 & passim.

357 Wojciech Iwańczak, "Polskie badania nad wpływami husyckimi w Polsce," in: *Polskie echa husytyzmu. Materiały z konferencji naukowej, Kłodzko, 27-28 września 1996*, eds. Stanisław Bylina & Ryszard Gładkiewicz, Warszawa 1999, 25-26 & 31. See also idem, "Rewolucja husycka w historiografii polskiej XIX w.," *Sobótka* 1996/4.

Czech cooperation, the Hussite movement represented a research opening into Medieval history that was devoid of dreadful spectres from the past.³⁵⁸

The Wrocław Medievalists attached the most importance to researching Polish involvement in the Hussite movement. Hussite ideology was said to have had a particular influence on Silesia. “In Silesia, the Hussite troops were joined by local peasants. Some castles ... were inhabited by Hussite leaders, mostly Poles.”³⁵⁹ The Hussite movement was particularly strong among Polish inhabitants of Wrocław.³⁶⁰ These, in turn, “dragged” the German city rabble and peasants into the movement.³⁶¹ Although less pronounced than in Silesia, the influence of the Czech Hussite revolution in other Polish regions still played a role of some significance. Historians recounted how, during the Constance council, the Polish delegation stood up for Jan Hus against accusations of heresy, and his demise caused all of Poland to “reverberate with powerful slogans of Slavic bonds.”³⁶² The calls elicited a particularly strong response in Ruthenia, where even “The inquisition began to track Hussite agitators.”³⁶³

The Hussite movement on Polish lands was as revolutionary as the one in Bohemia. However, there were no real grounds for the victory of a social revolution in the 15th century. This phenomenon was explained at the Otwock conference by Evgeni Kosminsky: “Why didn’t the peasant movement ... won’t win if it is not led by a hegemonic class. ... The bourgeoisie of the period could not exert this kind of influence. It only reached that stage during the era of bourgeois revolution, which is when it matured enough to claim that role.”³⁶⁴ Hence, it is hardly surprising that the Polish revolutionary Hussites often had to seek sanctuary beyond the borders of their country. For them, Bohemia

358 See Marek Cetwiński & Lech Tyszkiewicz, “Prawda historii i racja stanu (mediewiści wrocławscy o średniowiecznym Śląsku. Pół wieku badań),” *Sobótka* 1999.

359 Bardach, Gieysztor, Łowmiański & Maleczyńska, *Historia*, 236.

360 See *Teksty źródłowe do dziejów chłopstwa śląskiego*, part 1 up to 1945, eds. Zbigniew Kwaśny, Józef Leszczyński, Mieczysław Pater, Anna Skowrońska & Józef Gierowski, Wrocław 1956, XIII; *Teksty źródłowe do historii Wrocławia, 1. Do końca XVIII w.*, eds. Karol Maleczyński, Jan Reiter & Ewa Maleczyńska, Wrocław 1951, 45.

361 See Ewa Maleczyńska, “Ruch husycki na ziemiach polskich i jego znaczenie społeczne,” in: *Pierwsza Konferencja*, vol. 1, 448.

362 *Historia Polski. Makieta*, vol. 1, part 1, 528 and 533.

363 *Ibidem*, 539.

364 Eugeniusz Kosminski, “Postępowość i wsteczność folwarku pańszczyźnianego. O przewyciężeniu okcydentalizmu. Historyczne znaczenie Słowian,” in: *Pierwsza Konferencja*, vol. 1, 521.

embroiled in revolutionary flames, seemed like a natural destination. This movement developed until reaching its apogee in the 1430s.³⁶⁵

Due to these translocations, Poles became a significant force within the Czech Hussite movement, especially in its radical wing.³⁶⁶ The collapse of that wing of the Czech Hussite movement at the Battle of Lipany was said to have caused an increase in migration to Poland, and the subsequent rise of a radical ideology in the country. These phenomena brought about the confederacy of Spytko of Melsztyn, interpreted by Ewa Maleczyńska as “an openly Hussite revolt in Poland.”³⁶⁷ Her thesis was approved by Polish Marxist Medievalists.³⁶⁸ Spytko’s defeat – like the failure of the Czech movement – was caused by a “class” betrayal of a section of the gentry, which, “just when it faced ... the radical, plebeian current of Hussitism,” switched sides: “Just as the treason of the utraquists [led] to Lipany, so in Poland the majority of the participants in Spytko’s confederacy of noble birth [left] the camp in Grotniki on the eve of the battle.”³⁶⁹

Polish Medievalists engaged in cooperative work with their Czechoslovak counterparts, a partnership which helped produce, among other publications, another book by the leading Czech scholar of the epoch, Josef Macek (*Husyci na Pomorzu i w Wielkopolsce*, Warszawa 1955, orig. publ. 1952). The work in question was devoted to a description of the Czech mercenaries’ involvement in the service of the Polish king in his wars against the Teutonic Order, as well as to Polish-Czech exchanges in radical thought. In time, though—especially after the publication of Ewa Maleczyńska’s *Ruch husycki w Czechach i w Polsce*—scholarly cooperation faced substantial obstacles, and Czech Medievalists began to view their neighbour’s attempts to co-opt their native progressive traditions into the catalogues of the Polish national history with more scepticism. Maleczyńska’s claims were more and more vocally opposed. She was accused of an unwarranted overinflation of the role of Polish Hussitism and of attempting to paint it as even stronger and more radical than the Czech Hussite movement itself.³⁷⁰

Similar reservations toward revelations about the strength of the Polish Hussite movement were voiced by Polish Medievalists as well (though in this

365 Bardach, Gieysztor, Łowmiański & Maleczyńska, *Historia*, 242.

366 See Maleczyńska, “Ruch husycki,” 447.

367 Bardach, Gieysztor, Łowmiański & Maleczyńska, *Historia*, 243.

368 Baszkiewicz & Leśnodorski, *Materialy*, 74.

369 Maleczyńska, “Ruch husycki,” 450; *Historia Polski. Makieta*, vol. 1, part 1, 533.

370 See Ewa Maleczyńska, *Ruch husycki w Czechach i w Polsce*, Warszawa 1959. The Czechoslovak reactions to the theories of a robust Polish Hussite movement are discussed in my *Między Marksem a Palackým*, 90-95.

case, the motivation may well have been different than with the Czechoslovak Marxists). In a review of one of Maleczyńska's earlier works, Karol Górski stated, among other criticisms, that she "endeavours to prove that the Hussite movement enjoyed a broad reception in Poland, using as proof, among other things, accusations raised by foreign preachers, while failing to test their veracity."³⁷¹ For a historian, it was clear that Maleczyńska transposed phenomena described by Czech Medievalists onto a Polish environment without bothering to find sufficient support for her claims. As late as 1968, in *Kwartalnik historyczny*, she published an article in which she clearly and unambiguously defined her own understanding of historical truth. She found it essential "to ensure that the historian who engages in an analysis of particularly dense material is fully morally committed to building socialism; that, if the material leads him to critical conclusions, he will formulate them not to attack this reality, but to mend it, to point the way toward mending it."³⁷² The manner in which the author of these words approached her research problems might serve as ample proof of her genuine belief in the subservience of history to politics. According to this logic, the Polish Hussites had a double use for propaganda: as a native progressive tradition and an example of a Polish anti-feudal movement strictly bound to the "Recovered Territories," Silesia in particular. In this light, it comes as no surprise that the Party historian's status remained unshakeable well into the 1960s.³⁷³

Research into responses to the Hussite movement in Bohemia's neighbouring countries was grounded in a shared belief in the movement's progressive role. Furthermore, Czech historians were convinced of the movement's exceptional character. An astute reader of Slovak and East German scholarship would likely notice that their opinion was not a universally accepted truth. Both historians of the GDR and Slovak Marxists researched their native anti-feudal revolutions and created separate catalogues of progressive traditions.

Czech Marxists overlooked several competing traditions, first and foremost the Great Peasants' Revolt, whose importance for German history was described already by Engels. For historiography in the GDR, this tradition was of key importance. In Alexander Abusch's *Der Irrweg einer Nation*, the failure of the people's movement was already identified as an early origin for the *Deutsche Misere*. Abusch described the Peasants' Revolt through a conflict between two

371 Karol Górski, review of: Ewa Maleczyńska, *Spoleczeństwo polskie pierwszej połowy XV wieku wobec zagadnień zachodnich. Studia nad dynastyczną polityką Jagiellonów*, Wrocław 1947, *Przegląd Historyczny* 1948, 458.

372 Ewa Maleczyńska, "O społecznej użyteczności historii," *Kwartalnik Historyczny* 1968, 669-700, quoted in: Stanisław Bylina, "Dorobek czterdziestolecia," in: *Instytut*, 12.

373 See Jerzy Serczyk, "Kilka uwag w sprawie cenzury w PRL," in: *Cenzura w PRL*, 185.

exceptional personalities, representatives of mutually hostile socio-political camps: Thomas Müntzer and Martin Luther. In his view, Müntzer was “the greatest revolutionary figure of his day.”³⁷⁴ Still, his revolution failed; and, according to Abusch, Luther was at fault for this failure. He was the one who had prevented the formation of a durable alliance between the bourgeoisie and the peasantry, and his teachings essentially solidified the people’s belief in the righteousness of their subservience in the feudal system.³⁷⁵

The Great Peasants’ Revolt was “the first act of a European anti-bourgeois revolution.”³⁷⁶ To be more precise, it was a stage of an early-bourgeois revolution. Max Steinmetz, who attempted to redefine this historical event in 1960, established the boundary dates for this revolution as spanning 1476 to 1535. The movement drew its inspiration from the Hussites, from the ideology of György Dózsa’s Hungarian revolt, as well as from the beginnings of Reformation.³⁷⁷ The latter became a catalyst for the people’s rebellion, somewhat in spite of the will of its creators. As Leo Stern observed, “the great figures of the religious reformation: John Wycliff, Jan Hus and Martin Luther were drawn into political and social conflicts of their day against their will, caught in the revolutionary movements of the peasantry fighting the existing feudal order.”³⁷⁸ Yet, the Marxist appraisal of Hus differed significantly from that of Luther. While Czechoslovak scholars fully recognised the progressive character of their native reformer’s ideas, for decades Luther remained a symbol of the *Deutsche Misere*. Abusch stated that “The German reformation is to blame for the failure of the peasants and for the fact that urban and rural communities could not come together under a common program. ... Martin Luther became the key figure of the German counter-revolution, and went on to claim that status for centuries.”³⁷⁹ When, in the 1950s, the hyper-critical interpretation of national history fell out of favour, historians opted to change their views on the Reformation as an event, rather than on its instigator. Their

374 Abusch, *Der Irrweg*, 20.

375 Ibidem, 21.

376 Gerhard Schilfert, review of: Wilhelm Zimmermann, *Der Große deutsche Bauernkrieg, Berlin 1952*, *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1953, 152.

377 Max Steinmetz, “Die frühbürgerliche Revolution in Deutschland (1476-1535). Thesen zur Vorbereitung der wissenschaftlichen Konferenz in Wernigerode vom 20. bis 24. Januar 1960,” *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1960, 113-116.

378 Leo Stern, “Martin Luther und Philipp Melancthon – ihre ideologische Herkunft und geschichtliche Leistung. Eine Studie der materiellen und geistigen Triebkräfte und Auswirkungen der deutschen Reformation,” *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg*, 1952/53/6 *Gesellschafts- und sprachwissenschaftliche Reihe*, 32.

379 Abusch, *Der Irrweg*, 21.

only courtesy toward Luther being that they granted him that, until 1521, his ideas had a desirable (negative, in this instance) effect on his compatriots' attitude toward the Papacy.³⁸⁰ In Alfred Meusel's *Thomas Müntzer und seine Zeit*, published in 1952, the author recounted Friedrich Engels' opinion that the Reformation was a part of the early-bourgeois revolution. The Great Peasants' Revolt supposedly formed yet another part of the same historical event.³⁸¹ The Reformation, the oft-repeated claim went, should not be treated as a religious or cultural phenomenon, but primarily as a stage that resulted from class warfare.³⁸² Initially, the Swiss "progressive-bourgeois" Reformation received a positive appraisal in comparison with its German "feudal-absolutist" counterpart.³⁸³ Noteworthy changes in the evaluation of Luther's role began to take place in the 1960s, beginning with Max Steinmetz's presentation at a conference in Wernigerode which sparked a renewed interest in the Reformation among GDR historians.³⁸⁴ The increasingly positive image of the reformer was an outcome of political shifts – the resignation from calls to reunify Germany and the formation of a new concept of an East German nation. Eventually, it was agreed, as Josef Foschepoth wrote, that, "without the reformer of Wittenberg, Thomas Müntzer would not have been possible."³⁸⁵ By the early 1980s, Luther was already firmly ensconced in the catalogue of the GDR's progressive traditions, so much so that, in 1983 when West Germany celebrated his jubilee, East Germans hosted a competing celebration.³⁸⁶

Thomas Müntzer did not pose as many problems of interpretation as Luther, and, consequently, his image in the historiography of the GDR did not undergo as significant an evolution. The German historiographic tradition formed two opposing interpretations of the figure. For Georg Sartorius or Leopold Ranke, he was a bane to the social order, a dangerous individual threatening the state itself.

380 Thomas Vogtherr, "'Reformator' oder 'frühbürgerlicher Revolutionär'?" Martin Luther im Geschichtsbild der DDR," *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 1988/39, 596.

381 Por. Josef Foschepoth, *Reformation und Bauernkrieg im Geschichtsbild der DDR. Zur Methodologie eines gewandelten Geschichtsverständnisses*, Berlin 1976, 33.

382 Max Steinmetz, review of: Alfred Meusel, *Thomas Müntzer und seine Zeit. Berlin 1952*, *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1953, 971.

383 Hanna Köditz, "Die gesellschaftlichen Ursachen des Scheiterns des Marburger Religionsgesprächs vom 1. bis 4. Oktober 1529," *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1954, 70.

384 Thomas A. Brady Jr., *The Protestant Reformation in German History*, Washington 1998, 19-20.

385 Foschepoth, *Reformation*, 110.

386 Jan Herman Brinks, *Die DDR-Geschichtswissenschaft auf dem Weg zur deutschen Einheit. Luther, Friedrich II. und Bismarck als Paradigmen politischen Wandels*, Frankfurt am Main – New York 1992, 12.

For the same reasons, Müntzer was revered by scholars of a liberal-democratic persuasion, such as Karl Hammerdörfer or (before the revolution of 1848) Wilhelm Zimmerman.³⁸⁷ Until the mid-1960s, East German historiography saw in Müntzer essentially the progressive antithesis to Luther. While Czechoslovak authors discussed kinship between the enemies of the radical Hussites and the “reactionaries” of the 20th century, East German historians construed two historical lineages: “namely, the lineage which proceeds from Müntzer to the national politics of the working class (that is, a tradition of radical progress); and the other tradition, spanning from the anti-national alliance between Luther and the princelings up until the anti-national policies of the West German bourgeoisie, a tradition of reaction and betrayal.”³⁸⁸ Müntzer’s image was reminiscent in a myriad of ways to that of Hus, the difference being that East German scholars attached even less importance to the religious underpinnings of Müntzer’s beliefs. Although the German revolutionary was named as an heir to Hus,³⁸⁹ he was not treated merely as the executor of a program for social revolution developed in Bohemia. The German reviewer of Václav Husa’s book *Tomáš Müntzer a Čechy* stressed that, contrary to Husa’s claims, Müntzer’s stay in Prague did not bring about his detachment from Lutheranism, which was destined to happen anyway and in no way predicated on the influence of the Czechs.³⁹⁰ Like Hus, Müntzer was said to have undergone an evolution from a moderate reformer to a revolutionary.³⁹¹ But, most of all, Müntzer was said to have been a propagandist and campaigner for an early-bourgeois revolution. As a “conservative” revolutionary, he was, therefore, to some degree better than Hus. Ernst Werner consequently compared Müntzer to Želivský, the most radical of the Hussite preachers. “Müntzer’s teachings,” he wrote, “were a genial anticipation of a history that was already in the making, and of a budding class that did not originate in any of the existing social strata of the 16th century – neither the peasantry, nor the common folk. Still, this new class found its

387 Günther J. Trittel, “‘Thomas Müntzer mit dem schwerte Gedeonis’ – Metamorphosen einer ‘historischen Metapher,’” *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 1991, 551-559.

388 Foschepoth, *Reformation*, 109. See also: Manfred Bensing, “Thomas Müntzer und Nordhausen (Harz) 1522. Eine Studie über Müntzers Leben und Wirken zwischen Prag und Allstedt,” *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1962, 1105.

389 Horst Köpstein, “‘Die revolutionäre Hussitenbewegung’ – eine Ausstellung des tschechoslowakischen Nationalmuseums in Berlin,” *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1958, 1133.

390 Bernhard Töpfer, review of: Václav Husa, *Tomáš Müntzer a Čechy*, Praha 1957, *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1960, 1690. Husa emphasised ties between Müntzer’s beliefs and the radicalism of the Taborites. Cf. Václav Husa, *Tomáš Müntzer a Čechy*, Praha 1957, 2.

391 Foschepoth, *Reformation*, 90.

necessary support in the lowest strata of urban and rural people. It created and revolutionised the movement, forming an alliance between the poor of the city and the poor of the country, and establishing objectives for future general upheaval.”³⁹²

What made the appraisal of the revolutionary even more celebratory was the fact that he “could only summon a hazy precognition of what was already established knowledge to Marx and Engels – that the most oppressed class was precisely the one endowed with an historical mission.”³⁹³ One could hardly be surprised, then, that Müntzer became so hated and was slandered by reactionaries. The early 1950s image of Müntzer – as an incendiary revolutionary – retained validity outside of GDR historiography as well.³⁹⁴ In time, especially toward the early 1960s, East German historians began to think of Müntzer no longer in terms of Hus or Želivský, but in terms of Žižka, a doer, an experienced revolutionary politician far removed from all, even noble, utopias.³⁹⁵ “We fulfil the ideas of Thomas Müntzer” counted among the most common phrases summoned by East German propaganda, and the ideas in question had decidedly nothing to do with religion.³⁹⁶

Despite this high esteem for its leader, the early-bourgeois revolution in Germany (incidentally, just like everywhere else) failed. The reasons given for this defeat also shared a distinct similarity to the theses of Czechoslovak Marxists who analysed the defeat of the radical Hussites. Though the revolution worked in the interest of a still non-existent bourgeoisie, the class which resembled it the most, the Medieval townfolk, not only did not support the peasants’ movement, but actually rose against it. The “revolutionary alliance between the country and the city” proved to have been still lacking.³⁹⁷ Josef Foscepoth proposed two ways of interpreting this problem: one could either assume that the popular masses objectively acted in the interest of the townfolk, which at that point in time opted to join the counter-revolution (and hence acted against its own interest); or one could divide the townfolk into a progressive

392 Ernst Werner, “Messianische Bewegungen im Mittelalter, Teil 2,” *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1962, 605.

393 Ibidem, 616.

394 The same year (1952) which saw the publication of Albert Meusel’s *Thomas Münzer und seine Zeit* (including the selection of “previously unknown” sources edited by Heinz Kamnitzer), also saw publication, in Russian and German, of M. M. Smirin’s *Die Volksreformation des Thomas Münzer und der große Bauernkrieg* (Berlin 1952).

395 Foscepoth, *Reformation*, 110-111.

396 Ibidem, 151.

397 Helmut Hesselbarth, “Eine Flugschrift aus dem Großen Deutschen Bauernkrieg,” *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1953, 551.

(consciously or not) section that worked for the revolution and its reactionary counterpart.³⁹⁸ East German historiography used both explanations, either of which, like the evaluation of the Hussite radicals, amounted to a simple enough assertion: the revolution had broken out several hundred years too early.

The structural similarities between Marxist interpretations of the Great Peasants' Revolt and the Hussite movement are hardly accidental. Rather they are the result of both events having performed a similar function in the schematic interpretations of history. At stake in both were traditions that existed prior to 1945 or 1948-1949. While Marxist historiography's task was to reinterpret them, it was not forced to single-handedly "invent" them – the Peasants' Revolt was a topic broached by Engels, and the Hussites had been discussed already by Palacký. Liberal historians took note of the anti-feudal nature of the heretic movements even prior to the Springtime of the Peoples, as did the conservatives, who viewed the movements as cases of upheaval against social stability and attempts at rousing the dormant destructive powers of the common folk. In a way, Ukrainians and Poles could relate to one similar event from their national traditions, namely Khmelnytsky's Uprising (whose goal, according to Soviet historiography, was the incorporation of Ukraine into Russia).³⁹⁹ Attempts at a "takeover" of the progressive Hussite tradition and its adaptation to Polish history, made by Wrocław Medievalists, resulted from a belief (justified or not) that an analogous native tradition was not available. In the final analysis, Ewa Maleczyńska's works proved the "superiority" of the history of Bohemia over that of its neighbours. But adaptation was not the only means of picking out native anti-feudal revolutions. One could also attempt to fabricate them from raw elements, and this is precisely what Slovak historians did.

A significant portion of the Czechoslovak university history textbook is devoted to a description of the most powerful Slovak anti-feudal effort: the 1525-1526 revolt of the miners of Banská Bystrica against the owners of the mines, the Fugger and Thurz families. The uprising began with a strike instigated by the miners, dissatisfied with a diminished payment for their work. The upheaval was exacerbated by the formation of the religious "Brotherhood of the Body of Christ," founded by the miners, which sparked a new conflict. In time, however, "The miners' uprising transformed from a struggle for daily wages into a revolutionary combat under admittedly vague calls for a classless society."⁴⁰⁰ The progression from a religious conflict and a battle over wages to

398 Foschepoth, *Reformation*, 72.

399 Emilián Stavrovský, "Rešenie otázky vzťahu dejín Ukrajiny k dejinám SSSR v Istorii URSSR, zv. I.," *Historický Časopis SAV* 1955, 281-282.

400 *Přehled československých dějin (Maketa)*, vol. 1, 311.

a veritable revolution was explained in several ways. The Brotherhood was designated as an example of the reception of the radical reformation's slogans, like those of Thomas Müntzer, whose stay in neighbouring Bohemia attracted genuine interest from Czechoslovak historians. Historians interpreted it as an attempt to revive the program of the Tábor and bring about another revolution. The Brotherhood was also a vivid testament to the crisis of feudalism, which reached Slovak territories at the turn of the 16th century.⁴⁰¹ The miners' wage demands, which proved eventually to have been their only stated grievance, were not supposed to be treated literally. According to Peter Ratkoš, "it would be a mistake to treat the content of their proclamations as the final postulates of the revolutionary struggle. Written manifestos and demands are merely their tempered reflection. The real programs of anti-feudal struggles, such as the miners' uprising, ... have to be construed by the historian from the military clashes and court minutes; he must take note of wage issues as well as costs of living, ideological currents and political events, in order to be able to draw the right conclusions."⁴⁰² So, the revolutionary program of the insurgents was said to have been hiding behind economic and religious considerations, and found its most perfect expression in the general idea of "weeding out all the lords."⁴⁰³

The question of nationality was another interesting problem with regard to the uprising. In the early 1950s, when Slovak historians "discovered" this part of their native history, they often stressed the uprising's progressive, internationalist resonance. It is worth quoting at length from an article by Gustáv Hackenast, published in 1954, that went the furthest in stressing the internationalist agenda of the miners: "The heroic legacy of the Slovak and German miners' uprising in Banská Bystrica marks a fitting beginning to the centuries-long struggle of Hungarian miners for humane living conditions, for freedom. It fills us with pride, and it inspires even more dedication to work, and an ever more heroic attitude befitting the rightful heirs of this tradition: the Slovak and Hungarian miners in their successful endeavour to build socialism, the Hungarian and Slovak working class and Hungarian and Czechoslovak people, will forever be bound with the bonds of brotherhood."⁴⁰⁴ Within the next few years, Marxist authors abandoned the idea that the rebellious miners of the 16th century should be treated as an example for the strike workers of the 1950s,

401 Ľudovít Holotík, "K periodizácii slovenských dejín v období feudalizmu a kapitalizmu," *Historický Časopis SAV* 1953, 54.

402 Peter Ratkoš, *Povstanie baníkov na Slovensku roku 1525-1526*, Bratislava 1963, 11.

403 Peter Ratkoš, "Predohra baníckeho povstania v našich banských mestách v rokoch 1525/1526," *Historický Časopis SAV* 1953, 353.

404 Gustáv Hackenast, "Banskobystrické banícké povstanie (1525-1526)," *Historický Časopis SAV* 1954, 104.

but they also removed all mentions of Hungarians and verified the involvement of the Germans in the rebellion. In Ratkoš's essential monograph devoted to this subject, *Povstanie baníkov na Slovensku roku 1525-1526*, published in 1963, the national question took centre stage. The author claimed that the German miners were likely more ideologically enlightened, acting as a conduit for passing the slogans of the Great Peasants' Revolt on to the Slovaks.⁴⁰⁵ At the same time, though, he observed: "the fact that the manifestos of the rebellious miners' camp were written in German should not be taken as proof that the uprising was an action comprised solely of the German element."⁴⁰⁶ Ratkoš also stressed that the miners were opposed by German patricians and moderate German reformationists. The interpretation that remained largely unchallenged was the thesis that the political program of the miners' uprising was an extension of the aims of the Great Peasants' Revolt as well as Dózsa's uprising in Hungary.

The miners' uprising in Banská Bystrica has indeed been a recognised fact for years, but until the 1950s no one attached any importance to it. Its emergence as a topic for research is unequivocally tied to Peter Ratkoš, who played the same role in Slovak Medievalism which Josef Macek played in the Czech part of the country.⁴⁰⁷ At first, Ratkoš attempted to shed some positive light on the influence the Czech Hussites enjoyed in Slovakia – a daunting enough task given the conviction, commonly held in sources from the era and replicated by earlier Slovak and Hungarian historiography, that the *rejzas* were nothing more than brutal plundering expeditions. The miners' uprising was a less controversial, and more importantly, native Slovak source for progressive traditions, even if, as contemporary Slovak historians believe, Ratkoš not only decidedly overestimated its importance, but also romanticised the progression of the events he described.⁴⁰⁸

The ease with which Peter Ratkoš introduced the 16th century miners into Slovak history was quite uncommon among attempts at positioning newly uncovered progressive traditions as key links in the chain of historical progress and as sources of national pride. It is far easier to cite examples of anti-feudal movements which, despite the efforts of some Marxist scholars, retained a marginal status and failed to garner the kind of attention accorded the Hussite movement or the Great Peasants' Revolt. One such case was highlander banditry, linked in Slovak tradition primarily to Juraj Jánošík, a figure well-

405 Ratkoš, *Povstanie*, 271.

406 Ibidem, 10.

407 Anton Špiesz, "K problematike starších dejín Slovenska," *Historický Časopis SAV* 1990, 683.

408 Ibidem, 684.

known in Czechoslovakia and beyond who was sometimes called the Slovak Robin Hood.

Jánošík was exploited already by the ideology of interwar Czechoslovakia as a symbol of the struggle against the monarchy and the nobles. It was only after the war, however, that the bandits of the Carpathian Mountains became protagonists not only of children's schoolbooks and popularising efforts, but also Czechoslovak historiography. In several of his works devoted to Jánošík, Andrej Melicherčík provided a general characterisation of the phenomenon of highlander banditry, judging it to have been an effective form of fighting feudalism. Banditry was not an outgrowth of a highlander mentality nor of the folk's living circumstances, as previously believed, but was a reflection of class relations. Melicherčík listed numerous similarities between Polish, Ukrainian, Slovak and Hungarian highwaymen. In his opinion, the great peasant revolts of the 16th and 17th centuries, typically devoid of political programs and the support of townsfolk, were doomed to failure. Banditry, on the other hand, was considered to be an effective method of harassing class opponents.⁴⁰⁹ Jánošík also retained legendary status among the Slovak common folk as late as the 19th century when banditry had already faded away as a result of the rise of social consciousness among the working class.⁴¹⁰ According to Melicherčík, the memory of the highlander bandits became a sort of bandit messianism, deftly illustrated by the example of Oleksa Dovbush: "And yet the Ukrainians of yore believed more than anything in the coming of a new Dovbush. Their faith was confirmed by the legend that the gun which Oleksa Dovbush buried deep in the ground before his death draws closer to the surface every year, and that, when it emerges completely, the new Dovbush will arrive. That hope of the Ukrainian people, tied in literary practice to Oleksa Dovbush's name, has already materialised."⁴¹¹

The problem of banditry affected Poland to a rather large extent, which meant that Polish Marxist historiography, comparatively, devoted the most attention to it. The authors of the draft of the university textbook on the history of Poland wrote: "The finest bandit commanders ... became the stuff of legend for the people well before their death. Banditry served as fuel to the fire of class warfare, but at the same time was also a playground for developing the peasantry's military skills and partisan tactics."⁴¹² In a way, it made up for the

409 Andrej Melicherčík, *Juraj Jánošík. Hrdina protifeudálneho odboje slovenského ľudu*, Praha 1956, 78.

410 Jozef Butvin, *Slovenské národno-zjdenocovacie hnutie (1780-1848) (K otázke formovania novodobého slovenského buržoázneho národa)*, Bratislava 1965, 281.

411 *Ibidem*, 41.

412 *Historia Polski. Makieta*, vol. 1, part 2, 530.

absence of a native early-bourgeois revolution, since, as Bohdan Baranowski complained, “In Poland, there were no anti-feudal peasant revolts of proportions similar to those in some other European countries ... Struggles as vehement and dramatic as those which took place, for instance, in Germany, England or Russia, were unheard of in Poland.”⁴¹³ For most Marxist scholars, though, bandits were far less unambiguous than for Slovak historians. The authors of the “Draft” recognised that “while their activities to an extent assumed the shape of a class war against the oppressive feudals, they quite swiftly transformed into something completely different, being restricted to simple robbery of not only noblemen’s properties, but also peasants’ huts.”⁴¹⁴ In the early 1950s, bandits became the topic of several works (mostly collections of original sources).⁴¹⁵ Some of them reframed the highwaymen in the manner of folktales. As Baranowski observed, “The bandits of the time were characterised by a specific code of ethics. One could only assault and rob the manors of the gentry or corrals belonging to rich landowners who made their wealth from another’s misery. No self-respecting bandit would take anything from the poor – he would rather divide the riches stolen from the wealthy among the impoverished.”⁴¹⁶ Claims like these, though generally supportive of the “good cause,” met with critical responses from reviewers at specialist journals. Janina Bieniarzówna, writing in *Przegląd Historyczny*, criticised the “idealisation of bandit groups, whose unquestionable class disposition cannot erase evidence of the common robberies that took place.”⁴¹⁷ In an even sterner response to a work on highlander banditry, Juliusz Bardach pointed out “the class line distortion in banditry.”⁴¹⁸

A special type of banditry developed in the Ukrainian territories of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The area was located at the crossroads of class, religious and national conflicts. The resulting mixture was far more complex than was the case with Polish highlander bandits. The leadership of this collection of bandits was assumed by the Zaporizhian Cossacks, and it found its most significant manifestation in Khmelnytsky’s Uprising.

413 Bohdan Baranowski, *Powstanie Kostki Napierskiego w 1651 r.*, Warszawa 1951, 8.

414 *Historia Polski. Makietka*, vol. 1, part 2, 362.

415 See *Materiały do powstania Kostki Napierskiego*, ed. Adam Przyboś, Wrocław 1951; W. Ochmański, *Zbójnictwo góralskie. Z dziejów walki klasowej na wsi góralskiej*, Kraków 1950.

416 Baranowski, *Powstanie*, 56.

417 Janina Bieniarzówna, review of: *Materiały do powstania Kostki Napierskiego*, ed. Adam Przyboś, Wrocław 1951, *Przegląd Historyczny* 1953, 217.

418 Juliusz Bardach, review of: W. Ochmański, *Zbójnictwo góralskie. Z dziejów walki klasowej na wsi góralskiej*, Kraków 1950, *Przegląd Historyczny* 1952, 154-155.

The Cossack Uprisings formed the portion of Rzeczpospolita's history which was subjected to the most thorough reinterpretation after 1945. In works by members of the Kraków School, the analysis of Khmelnytsky's revolt already included more criticism of the Polish gentry than of the rebels.⁴¹⁹ Still, the popular understanding of the war, shaped by Henryk Sienkiewicz's novels, determined the society's way of thinking about the events. The problem decidedly warranted an explanation. This need was recorded by Jan Micigolski, a reader of the journal *Nowe Drogi* who posed the following question in a letter to the editor: "I was taught in middle school about the so-called rebellion of Bohdan Khmelnytsky in the Ukraine. In 1946, I read H. Sienkiewicz's *With Fire and Sword*. I feel that my previous knowledge of peasant rebellions in the Ukraine was insufficient. My stay at the Party-governed school in Kielce in 1949-1950 helped very little in this regard. I often travel around the Kielce voivodship and I can see that many people lack a clear vision of the problem, especially those who finished their schooling before the war. Therefore, I ask for a clarification of this problem in the pages of *Nowe Drogi*."⁴²⁰

The editors' explanation, like the new interpretation of Khmelnytsky's uprising included in Marxist works, painted a decidedly favourable image of both the Cossacks and Khmelnytsky himself. The rebellious leader "felt the misery of the Cossacks and the suffering of the Ukrainian nation, the more so since he too had fallen victim to the licentiousness of the Polish feudal lords and their retainers."⁴²¹ Because of the complex nature of the uprising, commingling social, national and religious issues, its social basis was very broad: "Khmelnytsky's standards were carried not only by the peasants, but also by Ukrainian townspeople, as well as by a section of the Ukrainian gentry and the Orthodox clergy; in other words, the rebel forces formed a united front of Ukrainian social and national forces against the rule of the Polish magnates."⁴²² At the 2nd Congress of the PZPR in March 1954, Nikita Khrushchev, speaking as a guest, advanced an audacious claim that the rebel army included a significant contingent of Polish peasants.⁴²³ The Ukrainian uprising received disinterested aid from Russia, but other neighbours of Ukraine were animated by completely different designs toward the rebels. In the "Draft" of the university

419 See Andrzej Stępnik, "Historia a literatura. Kontrowersje wokół powstania Chmielnickiego na przełomie XIX i XX w.," in: *Historia poznanie i przekaz*, ed. Barbara Jakubowska, Rzeszów 2000, 152-163.

420 "Listy do redakcji," *Nowe Drogi* 1952/7.

421 *Historia Polski. Makieta*, vol. 1, part 2, 557.

422 *Ibidem*.

423 "Przemówienie powitalne I Sekretarza KC KPZR towarzysza N. S. Chruszczowa," *Nowe Drogi* 1954/3, 85.

textbook on the history of Poland, Turkey was mentioned as Khmelnytsky's ally only in inverted commas. The Tartars received a similar appraisal.⁴²⁴ The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth represented the interests of the magnates who wanted to continue their oppression of the Ukrainian folk. For this reason, all later attempts at a compromise between the warring sides were doomed to fail. Consequently, the section of the Cossack elders who chose to support an agreement with Poland were seen as traitors to their own nation.⁴²⁵

The Treaty of Pereyaslav, binding Ukraine to Russia, received a dramatically different evaluation. In the Soviet Ukraine, its tricentennial was celebrated as a holiday honouring the "immovable" unity of two brotherly nations, with the ethnic and cultural proximity of Ukrainians and Russians emphasised heavily.⁴²⁶ In Polish Marxist historiography, the treaty's incorporation of a part of Ukrainian territory into the Russian state was praised as a step that fostered Ukrainian autonomy.⁴²⁷ The authors of the "Draft" phrased this claim in an even more radical manner, stating that "For a long time, the broad Ukrainian popular masses drifted toward Russia, to which they were bound by historical tradition." In their view, within the Polish Republic of feudal nobles, "the very existence of Ukrainian nationhood was threatened with extinction in such circumstances, and its only hope was to merge with Russia."⁴²⁸ The Treaty was said to have had a positive effect on the peasants' daily lives.⁴²⁹

No less progressive than the fortuitous development of Ukrainian nationality was the strengthening of the Russian state through territorial expansion.⁴³⁰ For obvious reasons, Poland, the Crimean Khanate, or Turkey viewed the "Pereyaslav deed" (in Zbigniew Wójcik's diction) unfavourably.⁴³¹ "The feudal Rzeczpospolita summoned all its powers to break the bond between Ukraine and Russia, which had put an end to the predatory policies of the Polish possessor classes."⁴³² The convergence of the interests of Moscow and Ukraine was quite

424 *Historia Polski. Makieta*, vol. 1, part 2, 561.

425 Baszkiewicz & Leśnodorski, *Materiały*, 113.

426 See Ivan L. Rudnytsky, "Pereiaslav: History and Myth," in: idem, *Essays in modern Ukrainian history*, Cambridge/Mass. 1987.

427 Baszkiewicz & Leśnodorski, *Materiały*, 112-113.

428 Ibidem, 567.

429 Zbigniew Wójcik, "Rywalizacja polsko-tatarska o Ukrainę na przełomie lat 1660-1661," *Przegląd Historyczny* 1954, 610.

430 *Historia Polski. Makieta*, vol. 1, part 2, 562.

431 See Wójcik, "Rywalizacja," 609.

432 Zbigniew Wójcik, "Feudalna Rzeczpospolita wobec umowy w Perejasławiu," *kwartalnik Historyczny* 1954, 109.

clearly depicted in a work approved by the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party, *The Theses for the Tricentennial of the Unification of Ukraine and Russia*: “Bohdan Khmelnytsky’s historical merit was that, by expressing the age-old longings and strivings of the Ukrainian nation for a close alliance with the Russian nation, and by guiding the formation process of Ukrainian statehood, he rightly perceived its tasks and perspectives, and he saw that the Ukrainian nation could not exist if not unified with the great Russian nation, which is why he relentlessly strove to unify Ukraine and Russia.”⁴³³

For Poland, Khmelnytsky’s uprising and Russia’s annexation of a portion of Ukrainian territory were said to have been a blessing. The very fact of this territorial loss weakened the magnates.⁴³⁴ Besides, the uprising in the Ukraine fostered anti-feudal movements in the Polish lands, sparking innumerable rebellions: “the metal-workers and miners’ joining forces with Kostka-Napierski’s revolt, the liberation of Warsaw in 1656, the anti-gentry townsfolk’s movement in Lublin in 1656 under Wojciech Reklowski, gathered under the slogan ‘Noblemen, your liberties are ceased,’ and finally the few preserved positive appraisals of the English Revolution and the mass involvement of the townspeople, especially the petit-bourgeois and the poor, in the struggle against the Swedes.”⁴³⁵

Although Khmelnytsky’s Uprising played an important part in the works of Polish Marxists, it did not belong to native history, but was rather a fragment of the progressive traditions of Soviet Ukraine. For obvious reasons, it could not have been “Polonised,” as had been the case with the Hussite movement in Ewa Maleczyńska’s writings. One could, however, attempt to associate other events in Poland with the Cossack uprising, casting about for Khmelnytsky’s Polish allies. In Marxist works, the little-known Kostka-Napierski’s rebellion was viewed both as analogous to the Ukrainian movement and as influenced by it. The fact that Kostka-Napierski operated in the Podhale region reflected the similarity of the local peasantry’s social situation to that of the Ukrainian peasantry.⁴³⁶ Furthermore, Kostka-Napierski maintained close relations with Khmelnytsky. As Józef Leszczyński learned, “Kostka-Napierski, whose collaboration with Khmelnytsky is ultimately beside the point, waited in Czorsztyn for the arrival of troops conscripted in Silesia. It seems that the rebellion in Greater Poland, organised most likely by Khmelnytsky’s agents,

433 Quoted in: Bohdan Baranowski, “Narodowo – wyzwolenicza walka ludu ukraińskiego w XVII wieku,” *Nowe Drogi* 1954, 37.

434 *Historia Polski. Makieta*, vol. 1, part 2, 113.

435 Zofia Libiszowska, “Ruchy plebejskie w Polsce w XVII w.,” in: *Pierwsza Konferencja*, vol. 2, 83.

436 See Baszkiewicz & Leśnodorski, *Materiały*, 103.

enjoyed a certain resonance in Silesia.”⁴³⁷ The authors of the “Draft,” on the other hand, wrote about the conspiracy of the Warsaw poor, “whose participants were expected to prepare an uprising which would explode when Khmelnytsky’s army drew closer.”⁴³⁸ Given the broad influence the uprising enjoyed in Polish territories, Czaplinski could hardly be said to have exaggerated when he stated that “in this period, the earth trembled under the feet of the gentry throughout Poland.”⁴³⁹

Polish Marxist historians exploited only a fraction of Kostka-Napierski’s “potential” in building up the history of their native progressive traditions. Among the obstacles they had to tackle was limited knowledge of the figure: “This peasant or bourgeois son was evidently filled with compassion for his injured and humiliated brethren, and must have viewed the brutal attempts at quelling the Ukrainian rebellion with undisguised aversion” – ventured Bohdan Baranowski, who admitted at the same time that he had no specific knowledge of Kostka-Napierski’s supposed plans for spreading the rebellion throughout the country, nor of the particular means for communicating with the Ukrainian rebels.⁴⁴⁰ The weak peasant movement, commanded by a man of unverified origin and unknown past, essentially could never compare with the anti-feudal revolts in neighbouring countries.

The tradition of the uprising of 1651 was nonetheless construed as the foundation for all later peasant political movements. According to Marxist historians, it was also one of Poland’s most decidedly progressive national traditions.⁴⁴¹ Juliusz Bardach claimed that “During the popular movement of 1651, there was a clear coming together between the Polish peasants and the Ukrainian folk, representing the progressive forces of social and national liberation, in a united front against the main force of reaction – the Polish feudal nobles. ... The Ukrainian peasants were the armed avant-garde of the rest of the Rzeczpospolita’s peasant masses, which, led by the Ukrainians’ example, and maybe even working in tandem with them, joined the struggle against feudal

437 Józef Leszczyński, “Agenci Bohdana Chmielnickiego i Jerzego II Rakoczego na Morawach i na Śląsku,” *Sobótka* 1955, 678.

438 *Historia Polski. Makieta*, vol. 1, part 2, 563.

439 Władysław Czaplinski, “Ruchy ludowe w roku 1651 (Wyniki badań, poprawki i uzupełnienia),” *Przegląd Historyczny* 1953, 70.

440 Bohdan Baranowski, *Powstanie chłopskie Kostki Napierskiego. Odczyt*, Warszawa 1950, 27-28.

441 See *Historia Polski. Makieta*, vol. 1, part 2, 565; Baszkiewicz & Leśnodorski, *Materiały*, 115.

oppression and exploitation.”⁴⁴² The most shocking part of the Marxist interpretation of Khmelnytsky’s Uprising is precisely this attempt to construe a movement aimed against the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth as beneficial for the state. To corroborate this view, historians needed to identify a sufficiently broad section of Polish society that possessed a suitable comprehension of Khmelnytsky’s progressiveness. Such a portion of society would then act as an ally of the Cossacks in their attempt to overthrow feudalism in Poland. Hence, the peasant anti-feudal movements, Kostka-Napierski’s rebellion, and the presence of Khmelnytsky’s and Rákóczi’s agents were all acting to counterbalance the fact that Khmelnytsky’s uprising was aimed against the Polish state.

Slovak historians writing on the anti-feudal movements of the 17th century could not name Khmelnytsky’s uprising as a direct source of inspiration for their native revolutionaries. In their case, far more compelling, but also more troubling, were the ties that existed between class warfare in Slovakia and the Hungarian anti-Habsburg rebellions of István Bocskay, Imre Thököly and Francis II Rákóczi, as well as the involvement of Transylvania against Austria in the Thirty Years’ War.

The attitude of Slovak historiography toward the Hungarian rebellions grew out of its appraisal of the Revolution of 1848 (which will be discussed in more detail later). Indeed, both in the popular understanding of Hungarian history and in the opinion of numerous Hungarian Marxists, the liberation movements formed a continuous lineage that culminated in the revolution of 1848-1849, both as the most glorious moment of national history and the deepest fall from grace which Hungary ever experienced. During the first years of the new methodology’s implementation, one would be excused for assuming that Slovak scholars would follow Marx in his appreciation of Bocskay, Thököly and Rákóczi. Indeed, in the first yearbook of the *Historický Časopis SAV*, Eudovít Holotík wrote of the alliance between Hungarian and Slovak common folk, who had joined in a struggle against foreign and local forces of reaction.⁴⁴³ The theses on the history of Slovakia, formulated some two years later, proposed that Rákóczi’s uprising began as a social struggle of Slovak and Ukrainian farmers. Only later was this vivid movement used to further the cause of an anti-Habsburg state revolt, losing its class character along the way.⁴⁴⁴ After the suppression of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, Czechoslovak

442 Juliusz Bardach, “W 300-ną rocznicę powstania chłopskiego pod wodzą Kostki-Napierskiego,” *Nowe Drogi* 1951/3, 109.

443 Eudovít Holotík, “Z výsledkov kongresu maďarských historikov,” *Historický Časopis SAV* 1953, 317.

444 *Dejiny Slovenska (tézy)*, 68.

historiography's tune turned sour. In the 1958 draft of the university history textbook, the authors pointed out that most of the victims of the feuds between the Hungarians and the Habsburgs were Slovak civilians, that the uprisings only served the gentry, and that "one could never treat them as national liberation struggles, as the Hungarian bourgeois historiography did. ... The state rebellions ... from the vantage point of the history of the Slovak people, should be judged as a struggle of two ruling classes over the right to exploit Slovaks."⁴⁴⁵ Furthermore, as Jozef Vlachovič observed, the rebellious Hungarians allied with the most reactionary power in Europe, the Ottoman Empire.⁴⁴⁶ The increasingly critical appraisal of the anti-Habsburg rebellions eventually affected the appraisal of the Habsburgs themselves. This observation seeped into Vlachovič's article from 1960, quoted above; as he wrote, "We cannot accept the high appraisal Bethlen's revolt received from Hungarian historians. A revision is also in order when it comes to their unanimous damnation of the Habsburg monarchy in the same period."⁴⁴⁷ A year later, the editors of *Historický Časopis SAV* criticised the participants in the congress of the CISH in Stockholm for idealising Transylvanian policies and demonising the Habsburgs.⁴⁴⁸

The events referred to above served more or less successfully as "early-bourgeois revolutions" in the histories of the countries discussed. At the same time, other revolutions affected national histories only partially – like Khmelnytsky's Uprising or the Hungarian struggles against the Habsburgs. Given that they were accorded comparable roles in compendia of national histories and in catalogues of progressive traditions, an analysis of the differences between them seems pertinent. We would be excused for supposing that the signifier "early-bourgeois revolution" finds its fullest representation in the German Reformation and the Great Peasants' Revolt (After all, this is how Friedrich Engels saw them).⁴⁴⁹ Still, a reading of Marxist analyses shows that it was not German history that served as the point of departure for progressive traditions of other countries in the area. The Reformation, and Luther in particular, received a great deal of criticism. All the admiration for Thomas Müntzer could not conceal the extremely unfavourable assessments of the

445 *Přehled československých dějin (maketa)*, vol. 1, 456-460.

446 Jozef Vlachovič, "Stredoslovenské banské mestá a protihabsburské povstania v prvej tretine 17. stor. (Príspevok k problematike dejín pätnásťročnej a tridsaťročnej vojny na Slovensku)," *Historický Časopis SAV* 1960, 526.

447 *Ibidem*, 556.

448 "XI. Medzinárodný Kongres Historikov v Štokholme," *Historický Časopis SAV* 1961, 528-534.

449 See Foschepoth, *Reformation*, 33.

peasant rebels' capabilities. The most praised, least controversial and "most modern" early-bourgeois revolution, as it turned out, was the revolutionary Hussite movement. Czech Marxists completed an arduous task: they managed to depict a thoroughly religious movement as a powerful social and anticlerical revolution. Their triumph was all the more significant because of the fact that this same evaluation of the Hussite movement was also accepted by foreign Marxists, who engaged in broad research on the resonances of the Hussite movement in their native countries, sometimes even attempting to stake a claim to the movement. Compared with the Hussite movement, the partly progressive movements discussed by Polish historiography, such as the pagan revolt, Kostka-Napierski's rebellion, or banditry in the Carpathian Mountains, lacked some of the same flair, either due to an absence of sufficient ideological foundations, or because they never reached the grand scale of the Hussite movement. In truth, only the revolt of the miners in Banská Bystrica (though probably in large part because of Peter Ratkoš's efforts as its chronicler) claimed a similar status as an uncontested, progressive, national and internationalist revolutionary movement – though it still failed to reach as great a scale.

This "success" of the Hussite movement resulted from a particular virtue of Czech Marxist historiography, which claimed, for the most part, the national-liberal image of history, and infused it both with Marxist terminology and analogies to modern history. The Hussites were accorded a special place already in Palacký's works, and the historians of the 1950s by necessity cited him more often than Marx and Engels in their own analyses.⁴⁵⁰ Neither Polish, nor German scholars could rely on such a self-explanatory, socially acceptable interpretation of national history.

The differences between particular early-bourgeois revolutions highlight the role which local historical traditions played in Marxist historiographies. In this respect (as in many others), the similarities deriving from a shared methodology and similar political commitments did not preclude the divergences that resulted from differences in the prior achievements in historiographies in East Central Europe. It was the relative weakness of the historiographic tradition in Slovakia that facilitated the formation of new interpretations, perfectly attuned to the current needs of the Marxist vision of history. In the case of Slovakia, the catalogue of "progressive traditions" was enriched not only with the miners' rebellion, but also with Jánošík who, according to Polish historians, did not merit serious scholarly study.

The interpretation of uprisings, rebellions and revolutions also provides particularly colourful examples of interactions between different Marxist

450 More on the subject in my *Między Marksem a Palackým*, passim.

historiographies. All popular movements were treated as one system infused with the “boiling” revolutionary *élan*. At times, an “enhancement” of a local “progressive tradition” resulted in the degradation of a tradition hailed by one’s neighbours. Hence Slovak history became for Slovak historians more progressive as Hungarian history became less progressive. The emphasis placed by Czech historians on connections between Müntzer and the Prague townsfolk was also meant to “diminish” somewhat the image of the greatest German revolutionary until Marx. A particularly spectacular example of this course of action are the works of Ewa Maleczyńska, whose high appraisal of the Polish Hussite movement forced her into a critical relativisation of Hussitism in Bohemia. The only peerless progressive traditions belonged to the nations of the Soviet Union, and neither Polish, Czechoslovak, nor East German Marxist works ever attempted to belittle their legacy.

The unquestionable interactions between particular Marxist historiographies also prove that, to properly analyse their achievements, one cannot limit oneself to a model comparing only Soviet historiography with any one of the historiographies belonging to the people’s democracies. This model works well so far as methodological considerations, general statements, or a few historical analogies are concerned. The history of East Central (and South Eastern) Europe, broadly understood, provides us with unlimited specific material for comparative analysis. As we have seen, the early-bourgeois revolution was made to conform with the model of the Czech Hussite movement, the ideas of interpretation provided by East German historians were critically evaluated by their Polish peers, and Slovak scholars constantly participated in an exchange of opinion with Hungarian historians. On the lookout for ways to describe events in local histories in a new, Marxist fashion, historians reached out for the experiences of their neighbours, read their analyses, assuming that many of the phenomena in question probably found proximate analogies in other countries of the region. Marxist historians seemed to have taken more note of those analogies than our contemporaries. Small wonder, given the schematic approach favoured by Marxism, which encouraged this search for analogies. If the laws of historical progress were replicated everywhere, regardless of the circumstances, the claims to national distinction, untranslatability, and exceptionality had to yield to a highly specific kind of comparative study.

Between the French Revolution and the Russian Tanks

Just like in numerous other versions of history, the French Revolution is also a unique event within the Marxist schema of history. It forms the frame of

reference for every other revolution in multiple aspects, ranging from its particular vocabulary (for instance, use of the term “Jacobins” for revolutionaries such as Ignác Martinovics or Hugo Kořataj, or the numerous Robespierres and Saint-Justs of the many failed Central European revolts), through the division into left and right sides of the political stage it introduced, up until the creation of such useful catchphrases as “revolutionary terror,” “counter-revolution,” and “reactionary intervention.” Within the “table of rank,” this revolution had at first claimed a precious spot, earning the moniker of “the mother of all bourgeois revolutions,” as well as being, in a way, the mother of the Great Socialist October Revolution. Lenin, for instance, compared Bolsheviks to Jacobins. In time, in the later 1930s, the French Revolution began to lose significance, particularly as it ceased to be mentioned as the forerunner to the October Revolution. However, despite yielding its status as the single proper context for the October Revolution in Russia, the French Revolution retained all its progressive glamour for East Central European states well into the 1950s.

It was said to have sparked unrest in rural areas of Bohemia and Slovakia; the peasants eagerly anticipated breaking of bonds of serfdom, erroneously perceiving Napoleon as their saviour.⁴⁵¹ For authors of the Marxist history textbook (particularly Josef Kočí), the pro-French tendencies among the Czech peasantry caused “an exacerbation of class warfare.”⁴⁵² As Zdeněk Nejedlý wrote, “The news that the French forces were approaching the borders of Bohemia were reason enough for unrest among our peasants ... willingly offering their services to the revolutionary French army as their liberator.”⁴⁵³ The revolution sparked similarly vivid reactions in Germany. In 1790, peasants in Saxony erupted in revolt. Though their movement was brought about by social oppression and a bad harvest, events in France added fuel to its fire.⁴⁵⁴ Still, the revolt was said to have been doomed to fail, with the peasants unable to enlist bourgeois support for their cause. The author of a dissertation describing the event mentioned only in passing that the rebel forces were limited to some 500 men, arguably an even more convincing cause of the movement’s failure.⁴⁵⁵

451 Jan Novotný, “Příspěvek k otázce úlohy některých lidových buditelů v počátcích českého národního obrození,” *Československý Časopis Historický* 1954, 627.

452 *Přehled československých dějin*, vol. 1, 639.

453 Zdeněk Nejedlý, *O smyslu českých dějin*, Praha 1953, 226.

454 Percy Stulz, “Der sächsische Bauernaufstand 1790“, *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1953, 20-38.

455 Percy Stulz, “Der sächsische Bauernaufstand 1790 (II),” *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1953, 404-405.

In the early 1950s, this pioneering research by Percy Stulz was complemented by further analyses of the early 1790s unrest in rural Germany.⁴⁵⁶

German historians also pointed to the positive response the revolution enjoyed in literary and scientific circles. Joachim Streisand, author of the relevant volume of the university textbook on German history, stressed that, just like the peasants, the German intelligentsia constituted an oppressed class. They had had to serve the Evangelical Church or “make the princes’ courts shine” just to make ends meet, but, in fact, the slogans of the French Revolution were very dear to their hearts. Furthermore, they also always affirmed that the very same slogans should serve as a call for the liberation and reunification of the German fatherland.⁴⁵⁷ The revolution won the admiration of the most formidable of Germans, Goethe, as well as of Hegel, Lessing, Kant, Schiller – German classicism in general.⁴⁵⁸ For the Romantics, on the other hand – the Schlegel brothers, Tieck, Novalis, Schelling and Schleiermacher – the initial awe was quickly replaced by a wariness of social progress and support for remnants of the feudal order.⁴⁵⁹

Though Marxist historians perceived the reaction to news from France as being similar across the entire East Central Europe, only Germany was blessed with a “sisterly” Republic of Mainz, formed on German territory and functioning under actual French occupation. This ephemeral state-like entity was described as “the first democratic republic on German lands” and consequently received positive evaluation. Its native character and relative independence from the French government or inspiration seemingly invited amicable treatment. Streisand wrote extensively on the various initiatives undertaken by the townsfolk of Mainz, who began spreading revolutionary [*sic* – M.G.] propaganda already in the 1750s.⁴⁶⁰ Figures such as Andreas Joseph Hofmann, a professor of philosophy and history, or the writer, librarian and naturalist Georg Forster, as well as other, unnamed German Jacobins were said to have been even

456 See Heinz Kamnitzer, “Disposition des Hochschullehrbuches der Geschichte des deutschen Volkes (1789-1815),” *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1954, 258-260, as well as: Joachim Streisand, “Aus dem Entwurf zum Lehrbuch der Geschichte Deutschlands (1789-1805),” *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1956, 66; Joachim Streisand claimed that numerous peasant revolts in Germany proved the existence of the same class divergences that had existed in France. – Joachim Streisand, *Deutschland von 1789 bis 1815 (Von der Französischen Revolution bis zu den Befreiungskriegen und dem Wiener Kongreß)*, Berlin 1959, 12-14.

457 Streisand, *Deutschland*, 12-14.

458 Ibidem, 100-108.

459 Ibidem, 109.

460 Ibidem, 36.

more radical than the French military-men occupying Mainz.⁴⁶¹ Scholars also emphasised that, though the peasantry of the Rhineland were grateful to the French for repealing feudalism, this should not have been taken to mean that they perceived themselves as French. “The love of the people for their fatherland,” wrote Streisand, “was so powerful that no political or military threats, nor material gains could obliterate the German character of the region.”⁴⁶² The peasants of the Rhineland were to prove their German patriotism several years later, when Germany engaged in a war against France.

Precisely, if France could turn from a progressive force into a reactionary enemy of the German peasantry in such a short time, it became essential to locate the specific moment this change occurred, the point when the country took on its negative role. This task, however, proved rather difficult to complete. German historians recognised two competing answers: the first, offered by Heinrich Scheel, ascribed a progressive nature to France up until the collapse of the internal counter-revolution and the beating back of foreign intervention forces, in other words, until sometime between 1794 and 1795. Most of the participants in the international discussion (attended by Polish and Czechoslovak scholars as well), organised by the Institute of History at DAW in November 1956, leaned toward the claim that France remained progressive until it beat reactionary Austria at Austerlitz, and Prussia at Jena and Auerstedt. The Polish historians (e.g. Stefan Kieniewicz), who played quite a significant role in the proceedings, argued that the formation of the Duchy of Warsaw should receive a positive appraisal.⁴⁶³ In accordance with this claim, the East German university history textbook established the date for the transformation of France into a reactionary power as 1807, when the French bourgeoisie achieved a dominant position in Europe and resistance began to germinate in Germany.⁴⁶⁴ Several years later, Heinrich Scheel radically altered his views and decided that the French accelerated the advent of capitalism, and their progressive role in that regard had not ended even as late as 1807, as Streisand believed.⁴⁶⁵ In the same way, Scheel also entered another dispute, initiated by Alfred Meusel and Ernst Engelberg, and conducted on the pages of *Sonntag*, a cultural weekly. Meusel fully agreed with Polish historians, while Engelberg asked, rhetorically, whether Napoleon should be named the benefactor of the German nation. As was the

461 Ibidem.

462 Ibidem, 72.

463 “Arbeitstagung des Instituts für Geschichte an der Deutschen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin,” *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1957, 364.

464 Streisand, *Deutschland*, 132.

465 Heinrich Scheel, “Zur Problematik des deutschen Befreiungskrieges 1813“, *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1963, 1281.

case with other debates between the two scholars, the disagreement culminated in a rather brutal mutual smearing by means of letters to the Central Committee of the SED.⁴⁶⁶

The appraisal of France's progressiveness was problematic to Polish historians as well. Just as in the GDR, the evaluation of the revolution was at odds with the appraisal of native progressive traditions, represented by the anti-Russian Kościuszko Uprising of 1794. The Uprising's greatest achievement was said to have been in aiding the first bourgeois revolution by engaging the forces of the states intervening in it. This is why, in spite of all the debates concerning the extent of the progressiveness of the entire movement as well as its particular participants, it was assumed that within Europe as a whole, it did play an eminently progressive role. The ties between the two movements in question were underscored already by the classics of Marxism.⁴⁶⁷

While Kościuszko aided France, there was hardly any reciprocity on the part of the Revolution's leaders because all Polish calls for help were patently ignored. The Polish Marxists were in disagreement as to the evaluation of this fact. Stanisław Herbst, author of the corresponding chapter in the Polish "Draft," stated that the Committee of Public Safety "proved to lack sufficient insight and failed to reckon with the fact that the fate of the revolution was, to an extent, decided over the banks of Vistula; and that, by aiding the rebels, it would not only weaken the feudal-absolutist states inimical to Poland, but also strengthen the Jacobin regime."⁴⁶⁸ Witold Łukaszewicz offered a much more severe appraisal of the French policies: according to his interpretation, Polish émigré activists succumbed to the deceitful propaganda spread by the "matadors of the Gironde." "The Poles did not realise that the whole Convention, clamouring with decrees and bursting with calls to the oppressed and slogans of brotherhood of the revolutionary arms, was in reality merely a cunning political tactic, designed to ward off the anti-French coalition; that the appeals to the peoples of the land to engage in a war against the tyrant-kings resonated quite differently on the parliamentary tribune than in the secluded cabinets of the ministers of the almighty Committee of Public Safety ... The Poles did not realise that just when Kościuszko appeared in Paris, the ministry of foreign affairs was busily preparing a recognition of the second partition of Poland, treating it as a part of the perfidious plan to pacify European relations."⁴⁶⁹ Łukaszewicz followed this dramatic account with an admission that, while he generally approved of the

466 Keßler, *Exilerfahrung*, 87-88.

467 *Historia Polski. Makieta*, vol. 2, 371.

468 *Ibidem*, 347.

469 Witold Łukaszewicz, *Targowica i powstanie kościuszkowskie. Ze studiów nad historią Polski XVIII wieku*, Warszawa 1952, 174.

French Revolution, “one has to admit that the uprising received no aid, not only because it was led by the gentry, but also, to a rather large extent, because ties to the uprising would have been unwelcome for the French who, by rejecting calls for help, furthered their peace talks with Prussia and consequently facilitated the dismantling of the coalition besieging France.”⁴⁷⁰

An opposite argument, patently rejected by Łukaszewicz, was made in Celina Bobińska’s work published two years later. Bobińska believed that the highly positive appraisal of the Uprising and the Constitution of May 3rd by the classics was greatly exaggerated. As far as non-existent French aid was concerned, Bobińska claimed that the Jacobins displayed “an unbending class line and revolutionary vigilance with respect to the uprising – a movement of the gentry, in class terms, politically tending toward a compromise with feudalism.”⁴⁷¹ Furthermore, she believed that the “slandering of the Jacobins,” accused of cold-hearted calculation, was characteristic of Polish bourgeois historiography of a nationalist bent.

Though Marxist historians treated the first bourgeois revolution as a generally positive phenomenon, their sympathy for the movement was evidently limited in a myriad of ways. In the case of both Poland and East Germany, the French Revolution collided more or less emphatically with national history, and, as a result, was often accorded a mixed evaluation, if only for that reason. Further on, we will learn that a similar judgement was meted out to the Hungarian revolution of 1848-1849. Still, the revolution’s positive influence was placed in doubt not only because of the praise heaped on Kościuszko or the *Befreiungskriege*, but also as a result of the fact that one of the powers seeking to quash revolutionary, and later Napoleonic, France was Russia.

Zdeněk Nejedlý, whom we have quoted above, named in one breath two incidentally if not entirely mutually contradictory progressive events, of which the Czech folk both delightedly approved. The peasants did not only await impatiently for the eruption of the French Revolution in their own country – they also “understood” the Slavic idea at precisely the same time and welcomed with open arms the Suvorov-commanded Russian army, advancing to do battle with the French. “And with his fervent friendship for the newly-found Slavic brethren, [Suvorov – MG] infused our people with a new, Slavic consciousness, which later played such an important role in our renaissance.”⁴⁷²

Nejedlý’s idea of connecting the Russian presence in Moravia in 1799 to the national revival received a mixed response from Marxist historians. Josef Kočí

470 Ibidem, 195.

471 Celina Bobińska, *Marks i Engels a sprawy polskie do osiemdziesiątych lat XIX wieku*, Warszawa 1954, 41.

472 Ibidem.

assumed that the Russians were responsible for a significant strengthening of Slavic ideology, which played a seminal role at an early stage of the revival, thereby aiding Czechs in an indirect manner. Besides, “the Czech people saw in their own eyes the beautiful traits typical of the Russian soldiers, their humility ... self-assurance, cordiality, generosity and devotion. They were pleased by the hearty treatment their children received from the Russians, and admired the travelling soldiers’ courage and strength. They enjoyed the songs of the Russians.”⁴⁷³ Čestmír Amort claimed that the passage of the Russian troops proved indispensable for the national revival, since they virtually raised the nation from the dead. The same author also discussed the passage of the Russians through Slovakia, which occurred during the retreat from Austerlitz. He stressed not only the moral virtues of the simple soldier folk, but also the genius and paternalistic care of Mikhail Kutuzov, their commander: “Contemporary accounts – those already known and those we have just recently discovered – pay due homage to Kutuzov, an exceptional commander, who was not only a brilliant strategist and a strict superior, but also a caring father to all of his soldiers. He was just; when one of his subordinates was at fault, the culprit received due punishment whether or not he was a ‘blue blood.’ Not only did he care for his soldiers, their provisions, quarters, clothes, etc., but also for the civilians whom they met on their routes. Many orders, directives and letters reveal these traits of his character.”⁴⁷⁴

The works of Amort were vehemently criticised in the *Československý Časopis Historický*, first by Milan Švankmajer, then by Jan Novotný, as well as in the *Historický Časopis SAV* by Zdeňek Konečný. Švankmajer accused Amort primarily of grave exaggeration. It was not the passage of the Russian forces, but the development of capitalism that propelled the Slavic revival. This analysis led to Švankmajer’s severest accusation: Amort’s theories were not only non-Marxist, but actually anti-Marxist.⁴⁷⁵ Novotný, on the other hand, charged Amort with an uncritical treatment of his sources. He singled out Amort’s use of documents which originated in an urban environment as illustrative of the situation in the rural Moravia. At the same time, he agreed with Amort in his assessment of national activists who were critical of the Russians as instruments in the hands of the global forces of reaction. These activists were mistaken in undervaluing the influence which the Russians had on the development of the

473 Josef Kočí, *Naše národní obrození*, Praha 1960, 125.

474 Čestmír Amort, “Michail Kutuzov na Slovensku v rokoch 1805-1806,” in: *Z dejín československo-slovanských vzťahov*, ed. Jozef Hrozičnik, Bratislava 1959, 437.

475 Milan Švankmajer, review of: Čestmír Amort, *Ruská vojska u nás v letech 1798-1800*, Praha 1954, *Československý Časopis Historický* 1953.

national life of the Czechs.⁴⁷⁶ Konečný limited his input to a recognition of Amort's book's striking unreliability, listing the places where its author was at odds with the facts.⁴⁷⁷

The debate over Amort's dubious claims continued during a conference devoted to the role of the Soviet Union in Czech and Slovak history since the end of the 18th century. Jaroslav Vávra attempted to reconcile the French Revolution and Suvorov's influence through a precise distinction: while Russia and Austria were reactionary so long as they wanted to destroy revolutionary France and attacked Napoleon, they became progressive once forced to defend themselves against the French. Later, when Napoleon began to lose ground, both his opponents turned reactionary yet again.⁴⁷⁸ For Vávra, the Russia of the late 18th century embraced the role of Europe's policeman, keeping all progressive currents in check. At the same time, he did not follow Amort's lead in claiming that the Czechs were happy about the situation when forced to provide for the Russian army wintering on their lands. Furthermore, Vávra believed that Russia's reactionary position did not antagonise Czech national revivalists – in truth, they were anxious that the ideas of the French Revolution might take root in their fatherland. There were no documents that could prove the thesis that Austrian authorities engaged in any sort of combat against Russophilia during the period.⁴⁷⁹

Švankmajer took a similar stance at the aforementioned conference. He faulted Amort for being mistaken in claiming that popular Russophilia dating from 1798-1799 formed a particularly important element of contemporaneous relations between Czechs, Slovaks and the Soviet Union. That feeling, he reasoned, had far more reasonable grounds in then present-day Czechoslovakia. Amort responded that, while the goals of the Russian soldiers might have been extremely reactionary, objectively they played a positive role, exerting a "progressive" influence on the Czech people. In response, Švankmajer accused Amort of idealisation and oversimplification. There was to be no compromise position on the matter.⁴⁸⁰

476 Jan Novotný, "Nová práce o bratrských stycích československého a ruského lidu v našem národním obrození," *Československý Časopis Historický* 1954.

477 Zdeněk Konečný, review of: Čestmír Amort, *Ruská vojska u nás 1798-1800*, Praha 1954, *Historický Časopis SAV* 1955, 245.

478 Jaroslav Vávra, "Česko-ruské vztahy v první etapě národního obrození (1775-1830)," in: *Z bojů za svobodu a socialismus. Úloha SSSR v osvobozeneckých bojích a budovatelském úsilí českého a slovenského lidu*, ed. Jaroslav Vávra, Praha 1961, 42.

479 *Ibidem*, 43-45.

480 „Z diskuse,” in: *Z bojů za svobodu*, 128-131.

It seems that Amort's claims on the essential role the Russians played in the national revival were far more welcome in Slovak historiography. Karol Golán's 1964 volume of studies, published posthumously, stated that the sense of belonging to the Slavic community, which proved crucial for the revival of the Slovak nation, was born in 1805, when Kutuzov crossed Slovakia with his army, the greatest force in Europe.⁴⁸¹

While even Čestmír Amort agreed that the time spent by the Russians in Moravia and Slovakia affected the Czech and Slovak national revival only indirectly, Russian involvement in the war against Napoleon undoubtedly mattered for Germany. The Russians took part in the campaign of 1806-1807, culminating in the crushing defeat of Prussia, as well as, the campaign of 1813, during which the French were cleared entirely from all German territories. Russia also offered solace to Prussian patriots who were developing plans for liberating their fatherland from French domination.

The defeat of Prussia sparked political and military reforms, bound up with the names of Baron Heinrich Friedrich Karl vom und zum Stein, General August Neithardt Gneisenau, Gerhard Johann von Scharnhorst, Karl von Grolman and Hermann von Boyen. The reforms, though enforced from the top down, received positive appraisal as a catalyst for the new capitalist formation. With the gentry compromised by the defeat to France, the key role in reforms was played by the bourgeoisie.⁴⁸² Although Stein himself hailed from the wealthy nobility, he adhered to an ideology so progressive that in the early 1950s he rose to rank as one of the seminal figures in the Marxist retelling of German history. It was not insignificant that, having been deposed as the King's minister, he travelled to Russia, where, as an advisor to tsar Alexander, he acted as an ambassador for Germany. Alexander Abusch compared Stein's activities to the role played by the Communist Nationalkomitee Freies Deutschland in Moscow.⁴⁸³ Heinz Kamnitzer wrote emphatically of the achievements of Stein and other like-minded patriots: "How hard was it for these people! How different was their situation from the one we live in! The German patriots of 1812-1813 were forced to rely on a spontaneous popular movement. Their official ally, tsarist Russia, had just at that point become the rallying point for the forces of resistance against the French occupation, and yet, at the same time, it was bent on achieving its own dynastic goals. Today, every German patriot knows that the German people living in a section of our fatherland can depend on its parties, organisations and the government, which inscribed on the land's banners the slogan of freedom for our

481 Karol Golán, *Štúrovské pokolenie (Výber z diela)*, Bratislava 1964, 370.

482 Streisand, *Deutschland*, 143.

483 Abusch, *Der Irrweg*, 67.

entire country. Their powerful, infallible bedrock is Socialist Russia, which shields us from American aggression and aspires to ensure the unity and independence of every nation."⁴⁸⁴ In the popular East German interpretation of the *Befreiungskriege*, every participant in the contemporary struggle had an historical counterpart: the United States were the France of the Napoleonic era; the countries of Western Europe, and West Germany in particular, were the Confederation of the Rhine; the *Freikorps* were described as "partisan troops," and the role of tsarist Russia, the liberator, was handed to the Soviet Union.⁴⁸⁵

The people inhabiting German territories were painfully tested by the French occupation while absorbing ever more patriotic propaganda. The first anti-French popular revolt broke out in Tyrol, but the townsfolk were isolated from the peasant movement, and the ruling classes of Austria betrayed the Tyroleans by striking a deal with Napoleon. These events created a rift between Austria and Germany.⁴⁸⁶ Another wave of popular revolts swept through Germany in 1813, with German patriots returning to the fatherland along with Russian troops. The Russians were offered a welcome befitting liberators, the more so because of the presence of a German legion among their ranks. The way in which the Russian folk defeated Napoleon was to serve as an example for the Germans.⁴⁸⁷ The heroism of the Russian soldiers and officers (and also the German patriots), however, contrasted with the cautious, greatly reserved conduct of the Prussian court, which was consumed by fears of a real popular uprising. After the Battle of Leipzig, when Russian and German officers of the "folk's kin" argued for a continued offensive to the West of the Elbe, "reactionary circles" in Prussia halted the coalition's victorious march.⁴⁸⁸ In general, East German Marxists believed that the tsar's troops implemented German policies far more successfully than Prussian ruling circles.

Just as had been the case during their earlier passage through Moravia and Slovakia, Russians proved their exceptional goodwill, internationalism and

484 Heinz Kamnitzer, "Stein und das "Deutsche Comité" in Rußland 1812/13", *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1953, 92.

485 Georg von Rauch, "Das Geschichtsbild der Sowjetzone," in: *Gibt es ein deutsches Geschichtsbild? Konferenz der Ranke-Gesellschaft Vereinigung für Geschichte im öffentlichen Leben*, Frankfurt/Main-Berlin-Bonn 1955, 112.

486 Streisand, *Deutschland*, 170-173.

487 Heinz Kamnitzer, "Disposition des Hochschullehrbuches der Geschichte des deutschen Volkes (1789-1815)", *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1954, 279. See also A. L. Naročnickij, "Völker und Regierungen zu Beginn des Befreiungskrieges 1813," *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1964, 60.

488 Heinrich Gemkow & Gerhard Thiele, "Die Völkerschlacht bei Leipzig", *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1953, 867.

discipline to the Germans as well: “They were infused with the spirit of popular war, driving them to defeat Napoleon’s armies. The entire nation offered generous support to their cause. And even though the Russian armies of 1812-1813, as earlier, were of a feudal nature in class terms, one could never perceive them as a blind tool of the tsar.”⁴⁸⁹ They were marked by a very high morale and even the unfavourable, pedantic Prussian authorities had nothing to complain about in relation to the passage of the allied troops.⁴⁹⁰

The role Marxist historians of the GDR and Czechoslovakia assigned to the Russian soldiers remained perennially obvious up until 1989. The highly positive appraisal of German reformers in works produced before and during the jubilee of 1953, on the other hand, proved far less durable. Already in 1950, Soviet scholars attacked the exceedingly positive depiction of Baron vom Stein in Heinz Kamnitzer’s *Stein und das Deutsche Komitee in Rußland 1812/1813*. In the pages of *Voprosy Istorii*, they pointed out that the German baron was not only an aristocrat, but also an English sympathiser.⁴⁹¹ The Party’s guidelines for historians, published in 1955 as *Die Verbesserung der Forschung und Lehre in der Geschichtswissenschaft der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik*, stressed, among other things, the necessity of providing appropriate definition to the role played by the masses in the *Befreiungskriege*.⁴⁹² The university textbook on German history emphasised the national-liberal movement’s leaders’ persistence in pursuing a liberal-bourgeois political program for fear of an anti-French revolt turning into a social revolution. Joachim Streisand even recalled that Gneisenau’s plan for the rebellion put in place specific measures meant to hold back the “hotheads” who wanted to bring about a war against the gentry.⁴⁹³ During the next jubilee in 1963, criticism was heaped on the publications of 10 years before, with claims that those publications had often overstated the role of the reformers at the expense of the aspirations and achievements of the German folk.⁴⁹⁴

489 Fritz Staube, “Russische Armee und deutsches Volk im Frühjahr 1813,” *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1962, 1139.

490 Ibidem, 1129.

491 See von Rauch, *Das Geschichtsbild*, 112.

492 “Die Verbesserung der Forschung und Lehre in der Geschichtswissenschaft der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik“, *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1955, 511.

493 Streisand, *Deutschland*, 194-195.

494 Heinrich Scheel, “Zur Problematik des deutschen Befreiungskrieges 1813“, *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1963, 1287. A similar statement can be found already in the volume prepared in view of the CISH conference in Stockholm: Ernst Engelberg & Rolf Rudolph, “Zur Geschichtswissenschaft der DDR“, in: *Historische Forschungen in der DDR. Analysen und Berichte. Zum XI. Internationalen Historikerkongreß in Stockholm, August 1960*, Berlin 1960, 8.

Heinrich Scheel even voted for the inclusion of popular movements that did not challenge the French at all in the national liberation struggle's narrative. For him, the unrest in rural Saxony or Silesia, where news of the Prussian defeat caused the local peasants to breach their duties, was a progressive and patriotic event. He was, at the same time, fully conscious of the paradox inherent in his argument, as the very same peasants were quite welcoming toward the French.⁴⁹⁵

The role Napoleonic France, or indeed the Russian troops, played in Polish history simply could not be viewed in a manner analogous to the prevailing interpretations in historiographies of the GDR or Czechoslovakia. Even in the early 1950s, it was unthinkable to write of Suvorov's humaneness when his army was culpable for the slaughter of the populace on the eastern outskirts of Warsaw. One could never hope to prove the existence of a Polish-Russian brotherhood of arms, nor of any positive influence the Russians could have exerted on the development of Polish national culture; neither did Russians exert any recognizable influence on local radical social movements, which typically harboured an anti-Russian attitude. Works of the kind Čestmír Amort produced in Czechoslovakia never emerged in Poland. Still, the role played in Polish history by Napoleon, the Legions, or the Duchy of Warsaw, were re-evaluated.

Bonaparte ranked as one of the historical figures who grew steadily less and less progressive in the eyes of Marxist scholars with the passage of time. The young general of revolutionary France, successfully commanding the Army of Italy against one of the culprits of the partitions of Poland, was a pristine figure. The same could not be said of Napoleon the First Consul, and even less of Emperor Napoleon I, a reactionary ruler if there ever was one. The Napoleonic legend was just as reactionary, especially in the part involving Poland, "the legend of Napoleon as 'the father of all Poles' or 'the reviver of the Fatherland.'"⁴⁹⁶ Adam Korta observed that "The Napoleonic legend ... was exploited by the Polish bourgeoisie ... as a means of spreading and deepening anti-Soviet sentiments within our society."⁴⁹⁷ The lion's share of responsibility for popularising this legend went to Józef Piłsudski, who did all he could to transfer "onto the Soviet Union all the hatred the Poles harboured for the tsars."⁴⁹⁸

Just as Napoleon could represent the forces of progress as well as reaction, his subordinates served divergent causes, especially the Polish troops in the

495 Scheel, "Zur Problematik," 1284. The interpretation of the Galician slaughter of 1846 as a Polish national-liberation movement, described in the next subsection of this chapter, seems to be an obvious analogy to Heinrich Scheel's claim.

496 See Adam Korta, *O postępowych tradycjach i antynarodowych mitach*, Warszawa 1955, 140.

497 Ibidem, 141.

498 Ibidem, 132-133.

service of France, and the army of the Duchy of Warsaw. Some of these bore a certain resemblance to just wars, others were unquestionably unjust. The very fact that the dedication and courage of Polish soldiers remained the same regardless of the nature of the wars they were engaged in, inclined some scholars toward vehement criticism of their attitudes. For Adam Korta, it was precisely during the Napoleonic period that “the romance arises of glorious cavalry assaults or courageous bayonet charges, with standards aflutter to the sound of the drum, drowning out, in seeming willfulness, any consideration of the goals and meaning of the struggle at hand, any question regarding the actual value of the struggle for Poland.”⁴⁹⁹ However, Marxists did recognize some positive values in the democratic nature of the Polish Legions. Radical émigré leftists “were struck” by the contrast between the often reactionary role the legionnaires were largely made to play and the popular character of the formation in which they served. With the latter trait enjoying an undeniable supremacy, “many ... Polish radicals joined the Legions to fight for Poland hand in hand with the Polish soldier-peasant.”⁵⁰⁰ Cooperation between radicals and the peasant soldiers of the Legions spawned numerous plots against Bonaparte’s dictatorial rule.⁵⁰¹ The fact that the Polish forces were formed for the most part from the peasantry had far-reaching consequences, as they were later transformed into “rural ‘troublemakers’ and peasant leaders in the class struggle.”⁵⁰²

At the same time, as already mentioned, the Legions were sometimes tasked with fairly inglorious duties. They occupied an ambiguous position at the very beginning of their service, acting as gendarmerie, or perhaps the overseers of Napoleon’s less reliable Italian allies.⁵⁰³ The involvement of Polish soldiers in quelling the rebellion in San Domingo proved particularly vile and damaging. According to the authors of the “Draft,” the Poles were sent into the Caribbean primarily because of the spread of anti-Napoleon plots among the soldiers. The fact that “people who fought for Polish freedom were ordered to subdue the Negroes fighting for their own freedom” was deemed the most disagreeable of

499 Ibidem, 133.

500 *Historia Polski. Makieta*, vol. 2, 457-458; Stefan Kieniewicz offered similar views on the matter, ascribing a progressive character to Legionnaire republicanism, while observing at the same time, “We evidently honour the fact that in Italy, the Legions served the French drive for acquisitions, that they were riddled with a Napoleonic legend inimical to Poland” – Stefan Kieniewicz, “Z postępowych tradycji polskich ruchów narodowo-wyzwoleńczych,” *Kwartalnik Historyczny* 1953, 187.

501 *Historia Polski. Makieta*, vol. 2, 462.

502 Ibidem, 513.

503 Ibidem, 457.

all. The soldiers did not want to be involved in the expedition: “Polish soldiers, being of peasant stock, did not enjoy this combat, in their hearts siding with the Negro peasant.”⁵⁰⁴

Yet, the involvement of Polish forces in the Napoleonic wars sometimes proved beneficial. In 1806, hearing news of the impending arrival of French forces into the lands Prussia claimed during the Partitions of Poland, “The richer section of landowners remained inactive, but the peasants, especially the farm retinue, gladly joined ranks with the enemies of the Prussians. ... In the Łęczyca voivodship, a peasant mob wilfully arrested a German squire as an enemy of the French.”⁵⁰⁵ The Poles played a particularly important role in the siege of Gdańsk.⁵⁰⁶ Even later, in another “ever Polish” territory – Silesia – the local folk welcomed the soldiers of the Duchy with arms wide open.⁵⁰⁷ The defensive war of 1809 also had a positive impact as a national liberation struggle. Of particular interest is the manner in which the tactical moves of the Polish commander-in-chief, prince Józef Poniatowski, were interpreted. His decision to distribute arms to the people of Warsaw right after the battle of Raszyn was read as a timid attempt at sparking resistance among the popular strata. The fact that the withdrawal of Polish forces from Warsaw and their relocation to Galicia, behind Austrian lines, prompted the archduke Ferdinand to engage in talks with Poniatowski was understood to have been occasioned by the fear of “a possible resistance in a town renowned for its traditions of revolt.” At the same time, the move was also deemed to have been caused by Poniatowski’s anxiety with regard to a vivid popular movement. By giving the town away to the Austrians, Poniatowski “from a political standpoint, freed himself from pressures exerted by the revolutionary capital and robbed the Jacobins of all power to mobilize the people of Warsaw. The people itself was outraged at the news of capitulation, and Warsaw’s saleswomen slung mud at the withdrawing commander-in-chief.”⁵⁰⁸ In other words, Poniatowski handed Warsaw to the Austrians for fear of the revolutionary stirrings of the popular masses, and the Austrians engaged in negotiations with the Poles because of this very same revolutionary fervour.

Comparing the treatment accorded the French Revolution, Napoleon and his Russian adversaries in the historiographies in question, we witness another interesting methodological problem: how should one relate commonly approved progressive traditions to local national histories? In Stalinist incarnations of Marxist historiography both the French Revolution and, to an even greater

504 Ibidem, 464.

505 Ibidem, 473.

506 Ibidem, 477.

507 Ibidem, 527.

508 Ibidem, 519-520.

extent, the Russian army, were the bearers of historical progress. Evidently, scholars of Central and Eastern Europe tried to prove (if possible) that their nations, or at least the popular strata, viewed both the French Revolution and the courageous tsarist soldiers favourably. This was more easily said than done, when the two progressive phenomena in question stood on opposite sides of the barricade. The clash of these positive ideas was typically won by the eventually victorious Suvorov, while the French Revolution, having proven itself defective in ever-new ways, ultimately transformed into a reactionary Napoleonic regime. It is hard not to notice that East German works painted Napoleon in a much darker hue than Polish studies. Both Polish and German authors retained essential sections of their national traditions which maintained their positive resonance despite changes in the frame of reference. Thus, the Baron vom Stein, a Prussian reformer, was associated with the liberation struggles of the German folk rather than the reactionary monarchy (or monarchies) he served. The Legions, on the other hand, remained a progressive, popular force even while serving such unjust causes as the oppression of other nations. It seems that scholars of the GDR went farther than their Polish counterparts in this drive toward incorporating particular figures and events of the Napoleonic era into their “progressive traditions.” The reactionary “Napoleonic legend” made its way into numerous Polish Marxist studies, while the analogous problem posed by the interpretation of the *Befreiungskriege* in 19th and 20th century Germany did not attract as much attention, despite the Prussian reformers’ persistent presence as the most favoured historical protagonists of the “Prussian school,” and despite Johann Gustav Droysen’s belief that the Prussian reforms ranked among the most important revolutions in human history (on par with the American and French Revolutions).⁵⁰⁹ Marxist scholars were also silent on the role the *Befreiungskriege* played in the Third Reich’s propaganda around the end of the Second World War.

Of note is also another virtue of the historical plots discussed above. As Karl Heinz Schäfer noted, the Marxist interpretation of the *Befreiungskriege* elevated the people while pushing the ruling classes deep into obscurity.⁵¹⁰ This somewhat self-explanatory observation sidesteps a rather arresting aspect of the phenomenon in question. The fact that the popular masses are cast almost exclusively in progressive roles was used not only to further the critique of the ruling classes; at times, phenomena of note for national history were “redeemed”

509 Otto Hintze, *Soziologie und Geschichte. Gesammelte Abhandlungen zur Soziologie, Politik und Theorie der Geschichte*, ed. Gerhard Oestreich, Göttingen 1964, 466-467.

510 Karl Hainz Schäfer, “1813 – Die Freiheitskriege in der Sicht der marxistischen Geschichtsschreibung der DDR“, *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 1971/21, 19.

in the face of Marxist critique precisely because they engaged the popular masses. The *Befreiungskriege*, the Polish Legions in Italy, and even the positive views of the Russian army held by Czech and Slovak peoples serve as perfect examples of this phenomenon. Their popular nature sufficed as evidence of their progressiveness, in a way, even though the reins of power continued to be held by the privileged classes, and political programs often proved to be far from revolutionary.

The National Movements of the 19th Century

Czech and Slovak Marxist historians repeatedly stressed the unchallenged status of national revival movements as supreme achievements in the histories of their respective nations. The revival was said to have been designed and executed by the Czech and Slovak people. The author of the preface to the Polish edition of Arnošt Klíma's book on the events of 1848 commends Klíma precisely for debunking "the traditional belief that the revival was the fruit of the work of exceptional individuals of noble or bourgeois origin."⁵¹¹ At the same time, Marxist historians never failed to reckon with the impact of particular national revivalists, quite a few of whom were born and raised among the people. Lenin's dictum to the effect that the intelligentsia does not constitute a social class, but merely a stratum, and thus can be of service to different classes, was invoked repeatedly. During the revival, the intelligentsia served the Czech and Slovak people.⁵¹² Yet, the main protagonists of the revival, the priest-revivalists, would never attain the status of social reformers, being heavily implicated in the feudal system.⁵¹³

Nevertheless, the assessment of the national revivalists was unquestionably positive. In Marxist studies, Josef Dobrovský became a tireless pioneer and champion of human progress; Jan Kollár, the creator of the theory of Slavic reciprocity, was imbued with progressive humanism and a democratic spirit. Their errors stemmed solely from a self-explanatory ignorance of Marxist thought. Dobrovský, for instance, a representative of the Enlightenment, "could not have fully understood the revolutionary underpinnings of the Hussite

511 B. O., "Przedmowa," in: Arnošt Klíma, *Rok 1848 w Czechach. Początki ruchu robotniczego w Czechach*, Warszawa 1951, 5.

512 Kočí, *Naše*, 201.

513 *Ibidem*.

movement,”⁵¹⁴ while the arrival of Ľudovít Štúr’s national activists rendered Kollár and his pan-Slavism objectively reactionary.⁵¹⁵

The national revival also played a seminal role in shaping the common future of Czechs and Slovaks in a single state.⁵¹⁶ Ideas of Slavic cooperation were rooted in the period of national revival.⁵¹⁷ According to Kočí “Hence it is not by chance that our socialist society, imbued with a vivid, loving interest, evaluates and appreciates the significance of our national revivalists. At the same time, it steers clear of an uncritical cult of these great people, accepting the historical conditions of their efforts and struggle.”⁵¹⁸

Independent Slovak research on the national revival was in many ways reminiscent of the work conducted by Czech Marxists. Slovak scholars also relied on a fixed set of assumptions about the significance for the national revival of the masses’ involvement, the decomposition of feudal relations, and the emergence of a new, capitalist order.⁵¹⁹ Likewise, they appreciated the role played by exceptional individuals, the national revivalists. Historiography of the 1950s made great strides in this respect, recognising the achievements of Ľudovít Štúr as well as his predecessors, especially Anton Bernolák. This area was also the scene of several battles between Czech and Slovak scholars. The Czech Slavist, Frank Wollman, in his *Slovantství v jazykově literárním obrození u Slovanů* (Praha 1958), offered a critique of Bernolák’s 1787 proposal for the codification of a Slovak literary language that was accepted by Catholic circles of the Slovak intelligentsia. Wollman, like other Czech scholars of the era, tended to promote an alternative current of late 18th century Slovak culture that advocated the assumption of Czech as the literary language for Slovaks. Slovak Marxists were far more supportive of Bernolák and his followers, recognising their involvement in the shaping of the national language, as well as their progressive political program.⁵²⁰ This positive appraisal of Bernolák made its way into the university textbook on the history of Czechoslovakia.⁵²¹

514 Ibidem, 86-87.

515 Ibidem, 169.

516 Jan Novotný, *O bratrské družbě Čechů a Slováků za národního obrození. Kapitoly z dějin vzájemných vztahů Čechů a Slováků v národním hnutí do roku 1848*, Praha 1959, 6.

517 Klíma, *Rok 1848*, 91.

518 Kočí, *Naše*, 15.

519 Ján Tibenský, “Počiatky slovenského národného obrodzenia,” *Historický Časopis SAV* 1954, 526.

520 Ján Tibenský, “K problému hodnotenia bernoláčtiny a bernolákovského hnutia,” *Historický Časopis SAV* 1959, 557-576.

521 *Přehled československých dějin (maketa)*, vol. 1, 634.

There was also room enough for a positive assessment of the Slovaks who had laid the groundwork for the Czech national revival. Pavol Jozef Šafárik, the author of a fantastical theory of the European indigenes of the Slavs, “proved beyond all doubt that Slavs participated actively in the history of Europe from time immemorial, and besides, demonstrated that Slavs also took an active part in the shaping of European culture.... [T]he goal of his work was to abolish the superstitious belief in Slavic retardation, to illustrate the influence the Slavs exerted on ancient culture, and further, to prove that they played a major role in the formation of European culture in the first millennium A.D.”⁵²² Jan Kollár, who “sympathised with the Russians since his childhood,”⁵²³ was also named as a source of Slovak progressive traditions.⁵²⁴

Slovak publications often addressed the problem of Czech-Slovak relations during the period of national revival. The tone employed, however, differed from that found in the works of Czech scholars. Scholars researching the 19th century from a Slovak perspective often compared the two national movements, finding the Slovak one to be more progressive. This was supposedly most visible during the Springtime of the Peoples. Jarmila Tkadlečková pointed out that the Czech bourgeoisie attempted to dominate the young Slovak national movement in order to eventually lead it into reactionary positions.⁵²⁵ Although in the end both Czech and Slovak national activists failed to join in with the Revolutions of 1848, Slovaks continued to embrace a progressive standing for a longer time, mostly because they initially considered resolving the Slovak national issue through becoming a part of a multi-national, democratic Hungary.⁵²⁶

The national revivalists were typically bound to the Slavic idea. In her comparative studies of the cultural consciousness of Western and Southern Slavs, Maria Bobrownicka counts Czechs and Slovaks among the nationalities particularly badly infested with the “Slavic myth.” Embraced by national

522 Jozef Kudláček, “P. J. Šafárik a jeho koncepcia pôvodu Slovanov,” *Historický Časopis SAV* 1957, 78; See also: N. A. Kondrašov, “Význam diela P. J. Šafárika pre ruský vedu,” in: *Z dejín*.

523 *Přehled československých dějin (maketa)*, vol. 1, 749.

524 Ľudovít Bakoš, “Úvod,” in: Ján Kollár, *Pamäti z mladších rokov života*, Bratislava 1950, 7.

525 Jarmila Tkadlečková, “Názory a činnosť Karla Havlíčka Borovského z hľadiska vývoja česko-slovenských vzťahov,” *Historický Časopis SAV* 1958, 38-47. See also article of the Czech historian: Jan Novotný, “Otázky obrozenských vzťahů Čechů a Slováků v dosavadní historiografii,” *Historický Časopis SAV* 1958, 269.

526 Jan Novotný, “Příspěvek k vzájemným vztahům Čechů a Slováků v první etapě revoluce roku 1848,” *Historický Časopis SAV* 1963, 366-387.

cultures, this myth inadvertently translated into a willing rejection of an original, existing tradition that bound the respective nations to the European West. Instead of pursuing a more comprehensive realisation of a culture of the West (which, for Bobrownicka, would be the “natural” course of development), the Slavic revivalists turned away from it.⁵²⁷ It is debatable whether the Czech and Slovak national revivals did indeed represent as singularly an anti-European drive as Maria Bobrownicka claims, but one can hardly overlook the fact that her interpretation bears a number of similarities to the popular reading of the “Slavic myth” disseminated across Bohemia and Slovakia in the latter half of the 19th century – the difference being that the pan-Slavist nationalist activists tended to ascribe a diametrically opposite value to the phenomenon than did Bobrownicka.

The “anti-Occidentalism” of the national revival was also a crucial subplot of Marxist analysis of the phenomenon, and was typically approved of by Marxist historians. Given that the revival was bound up with the emergence of the idea of cooperation between Slavic states and nations under the aegis of the Russians, the political implications of the Slavic myth seem to have played a crucial role in this respect. It was clear for Marxist historians that true Slavic reciprocity could only take place in collaboration with the Soviet Union.⁵²⁸ In January 1948, Zdeněk Nejedlý offered a telling parallel with 19th century pan-Slavism: “We are fighting in the name of a Slavic orientation represented by Stalin. This is how we understand Slavic politics today. But we can see that the bourgeoisie fully comprehends the implications of this. And it looks to history, too, hoping to prove that we have always been a Western nation and never had anything to do with the East.”⁵²⁹

The Slavic idea underpinned the drive toward independence for Slavic nations. Polish scholars who did not accept this view found themselves under fire from Czechoslovak Marxists.⁵³⁰ For the Czechs, the idea was undoubtedly progressive, although not without important reservations. While Russophiles of the early 19th century were seldom criticised, their later counterparts received less favorable assessments. Capitalist society produced two forms of Russophilia: the first, a regressive, bourgeois attachment to the tsarist order; the second, a progressive and revolutionary workers’ movement.⁵³¹ Nonetheless,

527 Bobrownicka, *Narkoty*, 39.

528 Kočí, *Naše*, 252.

529 Nejedlý, *O smyslu*, 207.

530 Milan Kudělka, “Význam slovanské myšlenky pro národní obrození ve Slezsku,” *Slezský Sborník* 1960.

531 See Zdeněk Konečný, *Revoluční hnutí v Československu a jeho vztahy k SSSR. Morava a Slezsko-dokumenty 1879-1938*, Praha 1960, 11.

any variant of pan-Slavism ranked higher than Austro-Slavism. The Slavic idea diminished in time, as a result of tsarist policies: the quelling of both Polish uprisings, in 1830 and 1863, seriously affected the image of Russia in Czechoslovak Marxist historiography. In both cases, the most progressive currents within Czech and Slovak societies sided with the revolutions and against the tsar.⁵³² At the same time, scholars repeatedly stressed that “the Russian folk had nothing to do with this eruption of tsarist despotism.”⁵³³ After the collapse of the January Uprising of 1863 in Poland, Czech Russophilia became an unequivocally progressive cultural movement, devised to salvage progressive and lasting values from the wealth of Russian culture.⁵³⁴

Similarities between the Marxist interpretation of Slovak and Czech national revivals go far beyond the parallels we have drawn here. In truth, the only significant difference was the fact that Czech historians looked to the German revolution of 1848 as a point of departure for their national movement, while their evaluation of the Hungarian revolution of the same year played an important, but hardly crucial role.

The events of 1848 were often joyfully recounted in Marxist historiography, with the radical wing of the revolution and the aborted Prague uprising receiving the highest accolades. Marx and Engels’ praise of the uprising was eagerly recollected. Marxist scholars also directed attention to the fact that different groups involved in the uprising took divergent stances toward it, resulting in clear-cut divisions between the reactionaries (opposing the movement) and progressives (taking part in it).⁵³⁵ In scholarship devoted to the events of 1848, the leading role was invariably ascribed to Josef Václav Frič, an insurgent leader. Espousing a supposedly correct view of the situation, Frič advocated a revolutionary outbreak; the moderate Palacký, on the other hand, was invariably cast as his misguided counterpart.⁵³⁶ At the same time, Czech scholars did not fail to add that Czech liberals were hardly isolated in their embrace of a reactionary position in 1848 – Hungarian and German liberals did likewise. The Germans of Prague were even said to have sabotaged the initiatives of Czech democrats from the outset.⁵³⁷ Even the German democrats failed to comprehend the nature of events and did not support “the Czech national interest in a

532 Ibidem, 14-15.

533 *Přehled československých dějin*, vol. 2, part. 1, 89.

534 Oldřich Říha, “Úloha SSSR v osvobozených bojích českého a slovenského lidu,” in: *Z bojů*, 15.

535 *Přehled československých dějin*, vol. 2, part 1, 62.

536 Klíma, *Rok 1848*, 131.

537 *Přehled československých dějin*, vol. 2, part 1, 37.

common, revolutionary struggle against the feudal, imperial Vienna.”⁵³⁸ This misjudgment allowed the Czech bourgeoisie to introduce appeals for a fight for national equality, a position which swayed the popular vote. The proletariat was alone in rejecting the nationalists’ propaganda.⁵³⁹ Czech Marxist historians also often stressed that the uprising was quelled by units formed from Germans and Hungarians.⁵⁴⁰

The Slavic Congress was another historical event which received divergent appraisals from Czech historians and their Soviet colleagues. For Ivan Udaltsov, the sole progressive aspect of the Congress stemmed from the involvement of Polish delegates,⁵⁴¹ but the authors of the university textbook on the history of Czechoslovakia had a much more positive opinion of the event.⁵⁴² According to Czech historians, the year 1848 also reinforced a rising sense of community between Czechs and Slovaks, with both nations forced into strict cooperation because of German and Hungarian nationalisms.⁵⁴³

The attitudes Marx and Engels espoused toward the Czech national movement became a stinging matter for Czech historians – so much so that the subject was rarely even broached. Typically, historians limited their input to passing remarks about the positive response of the classics to the eruption of the Prague uprising.⁵⁴⁴ Engels’ view of the Czechs as a people with no history, condemned to dissolution in the German sea, was never quoted in any Czechoslovak publication. Udaltsov favored a different approach, arguing in the preface to his book that, “[i]n a number of works, Marx and Engels vehemently condemned the Czech nationalist movement of the year 1848-1849 for its counterrevolutionary stance toward the European revolution.”⁵⁴⁵ In conclusion, he concurred with the opinion of the classics: “In this light, it becomes apparent that the role played in 1848-1849 by the Czech national movement should be deemed counterrevolutionary, and the positions taken by the Czech nation in the second stage of the movement—in the decisive period for the revolution raging throughout Austria—cannot be taken as anything other than reactionary.”⁵⁴⁶

538 Ibidem, 42.

539 Ibidem, 44.

540 See Klíma, *Rok 1848*, 112 & 129-130.

541 Iwan I. Udalcow, *Studia z dziejów walk narodowych w Czechach w r. 1848*, transl. A. Szklarska, Warszawa 1953, 54-60.

542 *Přehled československých dějin*, vol. 2, part 1, 54-55.

543 Novotný, *O bratrské*, 247.

544 See *Přehled československých dějin*, vol. 2, part 1, 59 and Klíma, *Rok 1848*, 129.

545 Udalcow, *Studia*, 3.

546 Ibidem, 155. Józef Chlebowczyk called Udaltsov’s work a glorious example of a “superficial, uncritical exegesis” of the classics. Udaltsov did not attempt to account for

The Hungarian revolution of 1848-1849 was a crucial component of Udaltsov's "European revolution." According to Udaltsov, in this European conflict, the Czech national movement opted to side with the monarchs, proving itself "reactionary." As already evident, Czech Marxist historians attempted to defend their national tradition from such a slanderous opinion. However, they never went as far as their Slovak colleagues, who denied the progressive nature of the revolution, because that would have set them in conflict not only with the opinions of Marx and Engels, but also (and more importantly) with those of Soviet historiography, represented by Udaltsov. They preferred laying stress on the notion that the Czech bourgeoisie was isolated in its aversion to the Hungarian revolution, which meant that Udaltsov was right in deeming its position reactionary. The lower classes, however, took a different course of action, often exhibiting sympathy with the Hungarians.⁵⁴⁷

This was not the only means employed by Czech historians to rehabilitate the Czech national movement. They also tried to indirectly defend the position of the national leadership, so vehemently criticised by Udaltsov. The strategy they used was borrowed from their Slovak colleagues. As Arnošt Klíma noted, "Undoubtedly, the Hungarians, much like the Germans, were themselves partially responsible for the Slavs' rejection of their revolutionary cause in 1848."⁵⁴⁸ In the university textbook on the history of Czechoslovakia, one can also find a passage comparing the two Hungarian revolutions – of 1848 and 1956 – and highlighting the reactionary aspects of both.⁵⁴⁹

The task set before Polish and German Marxists was never as demanding as the aforementioned reinterpretation of the classics. Marx and Engels viewed the Polish national movement in a decidedly more positive light than they did its Czech or Slovak counterparts; they supported the Polish uprisings, and were themselves actors in the events of the Springtime of the Peoples in Germany. I already discussed the problem the Kościuszko Uprising posed for Polish Marxist historiography. The same doubts – whether the limitations of the Polish liberation movements outweighed their progressiveness – were raised with respect to each of the later revolts. Only the folk was deemed to have played an indisputably positive role throughout – it was solely due to its support and inspiration that the November Uprising ever broke out. In studies from the 1950s, Marxist historians highlighted the role of the Warsaw townsfolk in keeping the movement

Engels' dramatically harsh review of the Czech national movement. – Józef Chlebowski, *O prawie do bytu małych i młodych narodów*, Warszawa – Kraków 1973 (2nd ed.), 170.

547 Ibidem, 76.

548 Klíma, *Rok 1848*, 142.

549 *Přehled československých dějin*, vol. 2, part 1, 127.

(established by young members of the intelligentsia) alive. Participants in the original plot – “adolescent members of the gentry and intelligentsia, a potential reservoir for the left, were easily manipulated by aristocratic circles that sought to employ them as an advance guard for the counterrevolution.” This may have been inevitable had it not been for the commotion among the Warsaw folk, and particularly the seizure of the Warsaw Arsenal. It was “[t]he peasants and the plebeians [who] single-handedly transformed a minor military disorder into a major movement, an almost year-long battle against the might of the tsarist regime,” and, since the outbreak of the uprising on that November Night, “the victory of the uprising lay in the hands ... of the people of Warsaw.”⁵⁵⁰

With the urban popular masses claiming initiative, “cautious milieus” grew uneasy. They (successfully) attempted to gain control over the uprising in order to strip it of its revolutionary aspect. It may seem a paradox, but Marxist studies of the uprising tended to depict members of extremely reactionary circles as having been supportive of the idea of incorporating Ukrainian and Belorussian territories into the Kingdom of Poland – which indirectly meant they were supportive of an energetic spread of the uprising to the East. Obviously, they were guided by the desire to reconstitute their rule over the Belorussian and Ukrainian peasantry.⁵⁵¹

Of the political currents represented in the uprising, only the far left consistently, though clumsily, opposed the counterrevolution. The left was isolated in its struggles to improve the peasants’ lot, but “it failed to formulate a revolutionary call for peasant enfranchisement, this being the foremost reason why it could not attain victory.”⁵⁵² The fact that the left wing of the uprising was specifically involved in seeking a total break with Russia was largely omitted in studies published in the 1950s.

The Marxist assessment of Joachim Lelewel, one of the leaders of the insurgents’ left wing, was very typical of his political camp. This exceptional historian proved a wobbly politician, seeking “to use his political club as a sort of conduit between the people and the parliament, a conduit which would neutralize and blunt the vehemence of the plebeians’ assaults on the government.”⁵⁵³ Żanna Kormanowa stressed the difficulties faced by the leader of the only revolutionary club and a member of a procrastinating insurgent government, as well as the irreconcilable paradox of his position: “He should have preferred leaving the compromise-seeking government,” she reasoned, “to

550 *Historia Polski. Makieta*, vol 2, part 2, 170 & 177. See also Tadeusz Łepkowski, *Początki klasy robotniczej Warszawy*, Warszawa 1956, 341.

551 *Historia Polski. Makieta*, vol. 2, part 2, 203.

552 *Ibidem*, 230.

553 *Ibidem*, 58.

contend for power in the name of the left wing of the movement under the banner of agrarian reform. It would have been wiser to prepare the grounds for a resolution by force, or for a coup d'état." But – as the historian duly noted – "[Lelewel] was not a man of action – he was a scholar."⁵⁵⁴

The erroneous, wobbly, undecided, and sometimes even reactionary politics of the insurgent leadership were poignantly illustrated in its diplomacy. Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski, tasked with maintaining foreign relations, persistently failed to reckon both with the enmity of Western European elites toward the Poles, and with the sympathy of their countries' popular strata. Even in Bohemia, despite the dominance of pan-Slavic ideology, "The popular masses ... and a significant proportion of the townsfolk supported the Polish cause against the tsar." In addition, Russian soldiers sometimes switched sides to join the Poles.⁵⁵⁵

Given the impotence (or treason) of the upper classes, the better part of responsibility for conducting military operations rested with the people. A sense of "treason by the elites" spread wildly, finding expression, e.g., in popular songs and a growing "revolutionary turmoil" in rural areas.⁵⁵⁶ Successive counterrevolutionary measures by the government finally led to an eruption of the disaffected people of Warsaw. On August 15th, 1831, a mob lynched prisoners and demanded a more energetic prosecution of the military campaign. Though these events were brought about by the leftist Patriotic Society, none of its leaders commanded the mob. While the events of August 15th did not result in a leftist coup, the fact that they presented the possibility of this kind of a development had a bearing on the period after the demise of the uprising: "It is extremely telling," Tadeusz Łepkowski stated, "that the tsarist regime ruthlessly pursued and punished the 'perpetrators' of the events of the night of August 15th, while showing so much compassion to several members of the uprising's 'top.'⁵⁵⁷

Taking into account the various factors affecting the critique of particular political groupings and politicians of the November Uprising, one would be excused for assuming that the assessment of the event by Marxist historiographers could not be positive. However, the fact that the uprising sparked some radical activism swayed historians to accept the notion that the uprising was – at least to an extent – a bourgeois-democratic revolution. Though Engels saw it for a "conservative revolution," Józef Dutkiewicz observed that

554 Żanna Kormanowa, *Joachim Lelewel*, Warszawa 1946, 42-43.

555 *Historia Polski. Makieta*, vol. 2, part 2, 207-208.

556 See *Ibidem*, 201 & 211.

557 Łepkowski, *Początki*, 361.

“In the term ‘conservative revolution,’ one should not put too much stress on the adjective ‘conservative,’ but conversely, underline clearly and firmly that the uprising was, in the particular conditions of the era and contemporary understanding of its significance, a revolution.”⁵⁵⁸ From a broader perspective, the collapse of the uprising compromised the aristocracy and, hence, hastened the advance of a future revolution.⁵⁵⁹ For Marxists, the movement’s primary gain was the crystallisation of the Polish political scene: a clear-cut division into the popular progressive camp and the noble-aristocratic reactionary camp. In studies I gained access to, the necessity of an all-national movement and a bloody Polish-Russian war for the representation of the progressive and regressive camps in Polish society was never presented as a possible question for scholarly examination. Though an inquiry into the merits of the uprising would seem pertinent in the wake of the war, it did not occur to historians to pursue this problem until later on.

With the collapse of the uprising, its active participants sought refuge abroad. The émigré political factions that emerged from these events served as a subject of particular interest to Marxist scholars, if only for the rich ties binding the refugees to the creators of Marxist philosophy. However, this interest did not translate into an unequivocally positive representation of the Great Emigration in studies from the 1950s. The characteristic critical edge of the Marxist interpretation of Polish history manifested itself in the description of the nature and achievements of the Hotel Lambert’s conservative-liberal camp. In works published toward the end of 1940s, Stefan Kieniewicz characterised the politics of Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski as approximating other, more radical émigré societies. Each of those “were staked nearly single-mindedly on the revolutionary card,” always in pursuit of the goal of peasant enfranchisement.⁵⁶⁰ On the other hand, Żanna Kormanowa’s booklet on Lelewel, published in 1946, identified Czartoryski as a member of the aristocratic reactionary camp.⁵⁶¹ The “methodological breakthrough” in Polish historiography pushed Polish historians into embracing Kormanowa’s views in this regard. In studies published during the next few years, one could find passages on the so-called “Czartorism” (*czartoryszczyzna*), a reactionary political program of rightist

558 Józef Dutkiewicz, “Ewolucja lewicy w powstaniu listopadowym,” in: *Z epoki Mickiewicza. Zeszyt specjalny „Przeglądu Historycznego” w rocznicę śmierci Adama Mickiewicza 1855-1955*, eds. Stefan Kieniewicz, Izabela Biezuńska-Małowist & Antoni Mączak, Wrocław 1956, 89.

559 *Historia Polski. Makieta*, vol 2, part 2, 385.

560 See Stefan Kieniewicz, *Oblicze ideowe Wiosny Ludów*, Warszawa 1948, 55; idem, *Czyn polski w dobie Wiosny Ludów*, Warszawa 1948, 7-9 & 149.

561 See Kormanowa, *Joachim Lelewel*, 92-93.

circles of the Great Emigration. The programmatic goals of Czartorism affected the camp's politics: "Czartoryski's aristocratic camp sought to resolve the Polish question via a reactionary, 'top-down' approach – desiring an adjustment to necessary capitalist shifts, it also wanted to smuggle them through in a similar manner. The goal was to betray the revolutionary, patriotic strivings of the masses: to subordinate the future of Poland exclusively to international haggles and intrigues conducted in the anterooms of distinguished diplomats, avoiding the engagement of revolutionary classes at home and the forces of European revolution. This faction wanted most of all to avoid binding the cause of liberation to dangerous social aspirations."⁵⁶²

This final aspect of the internal politics of the Hotel Lambert faction drew particular focus in studies published in the 1950s. "Czartorism perpetually talks about independence," wrote Bronisław Baczeko, "but the cause of national liberation is always treated as separate from the struggles of the popular masses for anti-feudal transformation." The reactionary camp was consumed with a fear of the masses. For this reason, liberal émigré circles proved even more hostile to the cause of liberating the oppressed classes than openly reactionary politicians. Baczeko compared Hotel Lambert to national renegades like Henryk Rzewuski (who declared that the demise of the Polish state led first to a degeneration, and then to an obliteration of the Polish nation).⁵⁶³ The "aristocratic-feudal camp" of the Emigration propagated an Occidentalism that was pernicious to the Polish cause.⁵⁶⁴ It also circulated anti-Russian propaganda, seeking to prevent all cooperation between Polish and Russian revolutionaries.⁵⁶⁵

Czartoryski's reactionary camp was contrasted with the leftist émigré societies – the Polish Democratic Society (*Towarzystwo Demokratyczne Polskie*, TDP) and the Communes of the Polish People (*Gromady Ludu Polskiego*, GLP). Potentially, these organisations constituted highly "efficient" elements of a progressive heritage for the Polish nation. The stated goal of both was a reconstruction of social relations, but each bound the transformations to a nationalist agenda. Foremost among the Polish Democratic Society's virtues was a widely shared distaste of Czartoryski's camp. The Polish Democratic Society

562 Bobińska, *Marks*, 49.

563 Bronisław Baczeko, "Wstęp," in: *Towarzystwo Demokratyczne Polskie. Dokumenty i pisma*, ed. Bronisław Baczeko, Warszawa 1954, IX-XI.

564 Gryzelda Missalowa, "Francuski socjalizm utopijny i jego wpływ na polską myśl ewolucyjną w latach 1830-1848," in: *W stulecie Wiosny Ludów 1848-1949*, ed. Natalia Gąsiorowska-Grabowska, part 2: *Wiosna Ludów w Europie. Zagadnienia ideologiczne*, Warszawa 1951, 173.

565 Irena Koberdowa, "Walka czartoryszczyzny przeciwko sojuszowi polskich i rosyjskich rewolucjonistów w czasie powstania styczniowego," in: *Z epoki*, 222.

contradicted the clerical bent of Hotel Lambert by embracing a decidedly more advanced position: “The left of the Society railed against mysticism and messianism, vindicating the tradition of the Polish Enlightenment, with its materialist and rationalist achievements. The Society was particularly vehement in its assaults on *towiańszczyzna*⁵⁶⁶, which spread like a fungus in the 1840s, feasting on the dearth of ideological development and the collapse of numerous progressive thinkers and activists of that period.”⁵⁶⁷ Still, neither anti-clericalism nor rationalism were enough to treat this element of the Polish Democratic Society’s ideology as undeniably progressive. Bronisław Baczko observed that “The Enlightened taunts of TDP’s publications sometimes overshadowed its limited outlook – a lack of a decidedly materialist position.”⁵⁶⁸ The Society’s insufficiently radical social program resulted from the organisation’s class composition – most of its members hailed from the gentry.⁵⁶⁹

A number of members of the Polish Democratic Society were clearly conscious of the class limitations of its political program. These members promptly left the Society, dominated by “compromisers” and “liberals,” to fight for a revolutionary transformation of their fatherland. According to Baczko, it fell to the founders of the Communes of the Polish People to finally overcome the barrier created by the revolution’s identification with the gentry, in order to become true revolutionaries.⁵⁷⁰ Witold Łukaszewicz wrote biographies of the two leaders of this political group, a fact which in itself illustrates Marxist historiography’s esteem for their achievements. Łukaszewicz – a scholar noted for his criticism of the country’s history – even found himself capable of awe at Tadeusz Krępowiecki’s ideological maturity. He contended that Krępowiecki’s writings were “strikingly rich in the ability to apply dialectical thinking to problems as complex as the genesis and role of absolutism, feudal exploitation, nationalist and religious oppression; [his work] reveals a baffling array of beliefs with respect to peasant revolts in the Ukraine, the role of masses in the formation of nation-states, the popular dictatorship, property and work.”⁵⁷¹

The contributions of the other leader of the Communes centred around a problem of key importance to Marxist scholars. “As we all know,” wrote Celina Bobińska, “the main contribution of [Stanisław Gabriel] Worcell was a glorious rapprochement and engagement in cooperative work with Herzen ..., a policy of

566 *Towiańszczyzna* – a section of Polish émigrés in France grouped around the charismatic Andrzej Towiański (1799-1878).

567 Baczko, “Wstęp,” XXXVII.

568 Ibidem, XXXVIII.

569 Witold Łukaszewicz, *Stanisław Gabriel Worcell*, Warszawa 1951, 29.

570 Baczko, “Wstęp,” XV; see also: Missalowa, “Francuski socjalizm,” 279.

571 Łukaszewicz, *Tadeusz Krępowiecki*, 92.

alliance with the Russian revolution, the emergence and development of which were registered and acknowledged by Worcell, albeit in a thoroughly naïve, Utopian Slavic phraseology.⁵⁷² Władysław Bortnowski stressed that Stanisław Worcell overcame nationalist prejudice and fully comprehended the fundamental discord between the reactionary tsarist regime and the progressive Russian folk.⁵⁷³ That an alliance with Russia was an element of the Humań (Uman, today's Ukraine) Commune's program was a fact noted even by Bolesław Bierut.⁵⁷⁴ The fact that this cooperation was initiated by the left spread terror among reactionary circles, particularly the Czartorist camp.⁵⁷⁵

The Polish-Russian alliance, however, was not an alliance of equal partners. In terms of ideology, Russian émigré circles far outpaced even the most radical Poles. Alexander Herzen was unrivalled in the extreme as a model of a true revolutionary: his revolutionary democratic political program was decidedly more radical than anything the Polish revolutionaries would concoct, whether abroad or at home.⁵⁷⁶ Already before 1863, he unconsciously shared Marx's line of thinking, despite not having contacted him yet by that point. "We should be impressed even more," stressed Bobińska, "by the proximity of their ideas ... on the uprising [of 1863] – Marx and Engels on one side, and the Herzen-Ogarev camp on the other."⁵⁷⁷ Comparisons between members of the Communes of the Polish People and the Russian revolutionaries stripped the former of some of their virtues, which were conversely highlighted when related to the outlook of Polish Democratic Society representatives. While the Communes were comprised of revolutionary democrats, the Society was supposedly a gathering of revolutionary nobles. However, when compared to Herzen, members of the GLP seemed more akin to revolutionary nobles, with the Russian meriting the title of a "revolutionary democrat."⁵⁷⁸

In spite of their unquestionable – in the Polish context – progressiveness, the Communes of the Polish People and specific political leaders were criticised in Marxist studies, not only for not holding their own with regard to the Russian

572 Bobińska, *Marks*, 129.

573 See Władysław Bortnowski, "Przedmowa," in: Łukaszewicz, *Stanisław Gabriel Worcell*, 5; see also: *Historia Polski. Makieta*, vol 2, part 2, 339.

574 Bolesław Bierut, *O Konstytucji Polskiej Rzeczypospolitej Ludowej. Konstytucja Polskiej Rzeczypospolitej Ludowej*, Warszawa 1954, 41.

575 See Irena Koberdowa, "Walka czartoryszczyzny przeciwko sojuszowi polskich i rosyjskich rewolucjonistów w czasie powstania styczniowego," in: *Z epoki*, 215 & 225.

576 See Łukaszewicz, *Stanisław Gabriel Worcell*, 47.

577 Bobińska, *Marks*, 157.

578 See *Historia Polski. Makieta*, vol 2, part 2, 551.

revolutionaries, but also for their so-called objective faults. For instance, according to Łukaszewicz, Stanisław Worcell failed to surmount the burdening relics of feudalism in his thinking, which inevitably limited the revolutionary impact of his ideology.⁵⁷⁹ An even more significant error of the Polish radicals was that, while they undoubtedly espoused socialism, they tended toward its Utopian incarnation rather than its scientific one represented by Marxism. As Władysław Bortnowski lamented, “Until the very end of his active life, Worcell proved incapable of choosing the right field of combat – he could not turn away from utopianism, and draw closer to the scientific socialism of Marx and Engels.”⁵⁸⁰ To make matters even worse, the ideological evolution of the Communes tended toward socialist messianism.

The “methodological breakthrough” in Polish historiography coincided with the centennial anniversary of the revolution of 1848. Just as during the preparations to the Year of Renaissance or Year of Enlightenment in later years, historians were expected to play a very significant role in the celebrations. The year 1948 saw the publication of a whole series of historical works devoted to questions related to the anniversary, spearheaded by a volume edited by Natalia Gąsiorowska-Grabowska, *W stulecie Wiosny Ludów 1848-1849* (The 100th Anniversary of the Springtime of the Peoples 1848-1849). In the first volume of the publication, its editor declared that “The People’s Republic of Poland looks for its roots in a period removed from our times by a hundred years, dating its emergence to the period of the Springtime of the Peoples as a source for its current constitution.”⁵⁸¹ Given such an outlook, the evaluation of the revolution could not have been other than positive; hence the tone of the majority of publications from 1948. In the edited volume mentioned above, Stefan Kieniewicz wrote about the heroism of the scytheman from Miłosław who washed the Polish people clean of the disgrace of the Galician Slaughter. He stressed the unity of the nation in the struggle for independence.⁵⁸² The image of a national, class-indifferent solidarity was drawn even more compellingly in *Oblicze*

579 See Łukaszewicz, *Stanisław Gabriel Worcell*, 30.

580 Bortnowski, “Przedmowa,” 6.

581 Natalia Gąsiorowska-Grabowska, “Sytuacja gospodarczo-społeczna na zachodzie i wschodzie Europy w połowie XIX stulecia,” in: *W stulecie Wiosny Ludów 1848-1848*, ed. Natalia Gąsiorowska-Grabowska, vol. 1: *Wiosna Ludów na ziemiach polskich*, eds. Natalia Gąsiorowska-Grabowska, Stefan Kieniewicz, Anna Minkowska, Irena Pietrzak-Pawłowska, Leon Przemyski & Mieczysław Tobiasz, Warszawa 1948, 42; other publications of the anniversary year were listed in articles by Stefan Kieniewicz, “Polski dorobek naukowy stulecia Wiosny Ludów,” Marian Tyrowicz, “Tematyka dziejów 1848/9 r. w jubileuszowej historiografii obcej” and Henryk Batowski, “Z pokłosia Wiosny Ludów w dziejopisarstwie słowiańskim” (all included in *Kwartalnik Historyczny* 1949).

582 Stefan Kieniewicz, *Czyn polski w dobie Wiosny Ludów*, Warszawa 1948, 149.

ideowe Wiosny Ludów (The Ideological Countenance of the Springtime of the Peoples). There, Kieniewicz wrote that “the programs and social slogans promulgated at home and abroad – enfranchisement, government of the people by the people – for most patriots are means toward a national end.... In the upper strata of the nation, one would be hard-pressed to name more than a few individuals willing to renounce statehood, even if its price was cultural dependence.”⁵⁸³ It seemed only right, then, that “for later generations, 1848 became the year of the last armed effort in the [Prussian] partition, a memory of a reconciliation of all social strata in the struggle for a sacred cause, yet another proof of the vitality of the Polish nation.”⁵⁸⁴

Another characteristic feature of the images of the events of 1848 drawn by Polish scholars in anniversary publications was criticism of all symptoms of pan-Slavism, particularly visible in depictions of the Slavic Congress in Prague. Henryk Batowski viewed the organisers of the Congress in a highly critical manner, though conceding that their pan-Slavism had not yet become as degenerate as it would be in the 1860s and 1870s. Still, even in this relatively benign shape, the ideology was inadmissible, primarily because of “operating solely according to nationalist criteria ... in total disregard of universal human values.” As Batowski added “Revolution, the rights of the working masses, the class movement of the proletariat – all of this was foreign, perhaps even hostile, to pan-Slavists and Austro-Slavists.”⁵⁸⁵ A detailed description of the Congress, presented by Kieniewicz, criticised Czechs who “were game to remove Poles from the proceedings for fear of having a revolution on their hands in their native Prague. Powerless to avoid inviting them, they demanded that active participation in the Congress be restricted solely to Austrian subjects. Nevertheless, the Polish name commanded so much respect that no one cared much for the rule.”⁵⁸⁶

The claims presented by Stefan Kieniewicz were an extension of his beliefs dating from before the war. Kieniewicz saw the Polish cause of the 1848 period as equivalent to the cause of revolution, a belief disseminated by Marxist classics as well. Nonetheless, the “methodological breakthrough” deeply transformed the manner in which the events of the period were assessed. Looking through Kieniewicz’s texts from 1948, one could, for instance, find the

583 Stefan Kieniewicz, *Oblicze ideowe Wiosny Ludów*, Warszawa 1948, 17.

584 Stefan Kieniewicz, “Wielkopolska i Prusy Zachodnie w latach 1846-1848,” in: *W stulecie*, vol. 1, 164.

585 Henryk Batowski, “Zagadnienia roku 1848 w Słowiańszczyźnie (Fakty, literatura, uwagi metodyczne, materiał dyskusyjny),” *Przegląd Historyczny* 1948, 50-51.

586 Kieniewicz, *Czyn*, 107.

claim that the tsarist regime served the cause of Russian national expansion.⁵⁸⁷ Later publications typically included a disclaimer stating that the tsar and the nation – the Russian folk – had no common agenda (and would never have one). However, for Kieniewicz, even the most reactionary policies of tsarist Russia did not affect the assessment of “national expansion.” Furthermore, after 1948, a vehement critique of Czech pan-Slavism, and particularly the Slavic Congress, would contradict the accepted interpretation of history and stand in conflict with Czechoslovak historiographic foundations.

Publications dating from after 1949, outlining the progress of the Springtime of the Peoples in Polish territories as well as its international ramifications, passed an entirely different judgment. Just as in 1794 and 1830, the people were said to have joined the national liberation struggle en masse. Attitudes toward the uprising in Greater Poland, however, were dependent on social status: “In the early days, the rural poor showed more initiative than the landowners.”⁵⁸⁸ Members of privileged classes and even democratic conspirators faced much sterner judgment. In chapters of the “Draft” authored by Stefan Kieniewicz, the idea of a national solidarity of all Poles was patently rejected.⁵⁸⁹

Polish Marxist historians stressed the ambiguous role Russia and the Russians had played in the Springtime of the Peoples. “News of the revolution in the West coincided with a rising tide of peasant unrest throughout Russia,” Kieniewicz observed. Furthermore, “Among the volunteers from the Kingdom joining ranks with Poles, there were also some Russians – soldiers of the tsar’s army.”⁵⁹⁰ Celina Bobińska, on the other hand, underlined the commonality of interests between Polish and German democrats, claiming that “in the Poznań area, Prussian reactionaries trumped not only the local folk, but also the German revolution.”⁵⁹¹ Publications dating from before 1948 maintained that “the radicalism of the Polish social agenda in the Greater Poland revolution stands in glaring opposition to the social program of the province’s German population, overwhelmed by a love of the old order, adhering to a bureaucratic and military despotism, enamored of tyranny and slavish subjection.”⁵⁹² Especially in the

587 See Kieniewicz, *Oblicze*, 18.

588 *Historia Polski. Makieta*, vol. 2, 469.

589 Ibidem, 470–471, 475 & 478 as well as Natalia Gąsiorowska-Grabowska, “Proces formowania się narodu burżuazyjnego w ramach kształtowania się stosunków kapitalistycznych w Polsce,” in: *Pierwsza Konferencja*, vol 2, 38.

590 *Historia Polski. Makieta*, vol. 2, 473.

591 Bobińska, *Marks*, 81.

592 Tadeusz Cieślak, “Program społeczny wielkopolskiego ruchu rewolucyjnego 1848 r.,” *Przegląd Zachodni* 1948, 270.

pages of the *Western Review*, events in Greater Poland were treated as yet another chapter in the perennial struggle between Poles and Germans.⁵⁹³

According to Marxist authors, the progress of the Springtime of the Peoples in Polish lands proved that “Polish revolutionaries had not yet forged strong enough ties with the people.” A section of the Polish possessor classes was scared by the realistic prospect of an agrarian reform, leading them to consider cooperation with occupying governments. The revolutionaries were expected to know that the future of Poland depended solely on the people, who – though unenlightened – remained the only class to have passed the exam of 1848.⁵⁹⁴

The last of the great national uprisings, in 1863, was framed in a similar interpretive scheme. Beginning with the top rungs of the social ladder, “major landowners and the grand bourgeoisie, consumed with a fear of an agrarian revolution, were both opposed to the idea of an armed struggle for independence insofar as its success hinged solely upon the involvement of broad national masses, primarily peasants.”⁵⁹⁵ The middle gentry and bourgeoisie were not as openly hostile to an armed struggle for independence, but erroneously bound their hopes to the involvement of Western powers. Besides, “landowners and bourgeois wanted to create a Poland that would include the lands of the Kingdom as well as the Stolen Lands, i.e., territories of Lithuania, Belarus and right-bank Ukraine within 1772 boundaries. The native Polish lands of the Prussian and Austrian partition, however, were not considered.”⁵⁹⁶

Marxists placed the rightist socio-political camps in opposition to the “plebeian-popular” radicals, among them students, a section of the intelligentsia, artisans and plebeian masses, especially in Warsaw.⁵⁹⁷ Members of this group were positively affected by contacts with Russian revolutionaries. Ties with Russians, on the other hand, also forced Poles to accept radical solutions to the peasant question.⁵⁹⁸ They could rely on ranks of Russian regulars for performing the complex task of reaching distrustful social strata. Consequently, the left attempted to claim and radicalize the patriotic movement. To limit the possibility of a settlement with the tsar, they imposed upon the demonstrators slogans that positioned them in support of the restoration of the Stolen Lands. In studies from the 1950s, this was treated as a hindrance: “Unitary manifestations were a

593 See Bożena Osmólska-Piskorska, “‘Wiosna Ludów’ na Pomorzu,” *Przegląd Zachodni* 1948; Tadeusz Grygier, “Powstanie wielkopolskie a plany wyzwolenia reszty ziem zachodniej Polski,” *Przegląd Zachodni* 1948.

594 *Historia Polski. Makieta*, vol. 2, 540-541.

595 *Ibidem*, 159.

596 *Ibidem*, 160-161.

597 See Korta, *O postępowych*, 158.

598 *Historia Polski. Makieta*, vol. 2, 635-636.

political error of the reds. Instead of acknowledging the national struggles for liberation of the Lithuanian, Belorussian, and Ukrainian peasants, they evoked the meanest tradition of the Polish nobility, claiming Polish dominion of these countries.”⁵⁹⁹ The fact that the problem of the Stolen Lands was addressed by some of the reds automatically threw them into the movement’s right wing, in accordance with the rule set out by Andrzej Ślisz, who stated that “All those who demanded the inclusion of the Eastern territories of the ancient, feudal Commonwealth were concurrently engaged in upholding a superior role for the nobility in the country.”⁶⁰⁰ An important judgment with bearing for the whites as well as the reds stipulated that the uprising was brought about not by manifestations of patriotism, but by peasant resistance to serfdom.⁶⁰¹

The outbreak of the uprising, like the months of national agitation that preceded it, moved different groups within Polish society to take divergent positions with respect to it. Having assessed the insurgents’ military efficacy, Adam Korta claimed that “parties” consisting of peasants or poor artisans and proletarians enjoyed the most success. The very fact that the uprising lasted so long was a result of the popular masses’ active support.⁶⁰² Emanuel Halicz wrote that the increased revolutionary commotion in rural areas of Poland even suggested a kinship with a bourgeois-democratic revolution.⁶⁰³ The peasants involved in the insurrection “sought to mold it into a mass, truly popular movement.”⁶⁰⁴ Sadly, in the end, the inclusion of the popular masses in the uprising failed to spark a revolution, the reason being the lack of a working class – a hegemon capable of rousing the whole nation. Still, the uprising played a crucial role in accelerating the formation process of the Polish nation.⁶⁰⁵

The people greeted the National Government’s 1863 program of enfranchisement with mild approbation. During the Otwock conference, Emanuel Halicz assigned the program the key role in forcing the tsar to approve peasant enfranchisement, in 1864, on terms beneficial to the peasants. (Halicz’s opinion did not affect the generally approved Marxist timeline, in which 1864

599 Ibidem, 657.

600 Andrzej Ślisz, “Współpraca polskich i rosyjskich sił postępowych w polskiej prasie emigracyjnej i konspiracyjnej lat 1859-1864,” in: *Z dziejów współpracy rewolucyjnej Polaków i Rosjan w drugiej połowie XIX wieku*, eds. Ludwik Bazyłow, Helena Brodowska & Krzysztof Dunin-Łasowicz, Wrocław 1956, 10.

601 See *Historia Polski. Makieta*, vol. 2, 692.

602 Ibidem, 177-178.

603 Emanuel Halicz, “Ruchy chłopskie a powstanie styczniowe,” in: *Pierwsza Konferencja*, vol. 2, 155.

604 *Historia Polski. Makieta*, vol. 2, 705.

605 Ibidem, 736.

continued to carry greater significance than 1863.) The involvement of the peasantry in the uprising amounted to not only a direct engagement in combat against the tsar's army, but also – perhaps even, most importantly – it represented “the involvement in an anti-feudal struggle against the manors.”⁶⁰⁶ The fact that the peasants generally did not support the insurgents resulted primarily from the actions of the possessor classes who attempted to isolate the radical agitators from the peasantry.⁶⁰⁷ Representatives of a reactionary direction in the insurgent government, the whites, strove to gain control over the entire movement. With respect to the Russian people, they introduced a “decidedly nationalist line.”⁶⁰⁸ Marxists interpreted the gentry's casting about for international support as the recruitment of allies for combat against the indigenous progressive camp. Even the members of the lower sections of the clergy were seen to have played an ambiguous part in the uprising, joining the ranks of the insurgency not for reasons of patriotism, but to prevent an excessive radicalisation of the movement.⁶⁰⁹ A major error of the red left was the pursuit of a compromise with the right-wing members of the movement because “the concept of a national front, of unity and cooperation with the landowners” would have never appealed to the peasant masses.⁶¹⁰

In addition to covert internal enemies, the uprising had powerful external foes (as well as equally deadly false friends) more perfidious than the tsar himself. “Pius IX offered his blessings to the ruling powers in the pursuit of a conservative, Catholic Poland. But ... he refused Poles the right to liberate themselves, by means of a revolution.”⁶¹¹ In the “camp of enemies of the uprising,” Adam Korta counted Pius IX, Napoleon III and Władysław Czartoryski, next to Alexander III, Bismarck and Aleksander Wielopolski. Policies of countries such as England or France, though seemingly sympathetic, “hid a decidedly anti-Polish position behind platitudes about friendship with the Polish nation.”⁶¹² Indeed, Poles could only depend on the support of the popular masses and the revolutionary milieu of Western Europe.⁶¹³ Finally, the uprising was also sabotaged by the tsar's propaganda, which played up “a perfidious argument that its aristocratic, regressive nature was supportive of the privileges of the nobility and the Church.”⁶¹⁴

606 See Halicz, “Ruchy,” 157.

607 Korta, *O postępowych*, 155.

608 *Ibidem*, 176.

609 *Historia Polski. Makieta*, vol 2, 674.

610 Gąsiorowska-Grabowska, “Proces,” 42.

611 *Historia Polski. Makieta*, vol. 2, 717.

612 Korta, *O postępowych*, 181. *Historia Polski. Makieta*, vol. 2, 718.

613 *Ibidem*, 721.

614 *Ibidem*, 735.

Still, the uprising could depend on the most reliable of allies: the Russian folk and Marx and Engels, “two people who, with their genius minds, mapped out new pathways for all humanity to follow.”⁶¹⁵ In studies on the January Uprising, it was customary to refer to both as “the tested friends of the Polish people.” In numerous works, one could find reproductions of the same photograph, depicting Karl Marx with his daughter who wore a stylised cross from the uprising on her neck. Celina Bobińska, who devoted a separate book to the attitudes of the classics toward Poland, stressed that both Marx and Engels assessed the situation of the Polish with uncommon sobriety: “Both friends felt particular unease concerning the Bonapartist influences and dealings in the camp of the reds,” while “the whites for them were already branded direct agents for Palmerston and Bonaparte.”⁶¹⁶ After the fall of the uprising, Engels made a comment which was commonly reproduced in Polish Marxist studies (with or without a citation): “Polish independence and Russian revolution are mutually dependent.” “This ingenious guideline,” wrote Andrzej Ślisz, “for the Polish liberation movement signified another, far more fundamental realisation of a shift of the center of the revolution’s international forces from the West toward the East.”⁶¹⁷

For Marxist historians, it was abundantly clear that Russian revolutionaries deeply sympathised with the Poles, a view at times confirmed by the Russians’ personal involvement in the uprising. The Russians saw a connection between the Russian revolution they craved and the Polish national liberation movement. They also tried to educate Poles concerning the true nature of the liberation struggle: “Only an agrarian revolution could ensure the masses’ broad involvement in the Polish independence movement. The red left, commanded for the most part by men raised under the influence of the great Russian revolutionary democrats, understood this, and, thus, formed the closest of ties with the anti-tsarist movement in Russia, with its program of peasant revolution. The Polish landowning reaction, on the other hand, constantly pestered by peasant revolts, was scared of the Russian revolutionary spirit due to its radicalising influence on Poland... The threat of an alliance with Russian revolutionaries also bode ill for the reds’ liberal-bourgeois right who willingly compromised with the feudal squire, the forerunner of the capitalist landlord.”⁶¹⁸ As already mentioned, Russian soldiers were deeply concerned with the fate of the Polish peasantry. Furthermore, “Even among officers who did not switch

615 Korta, *O postępowych*, 156; see also Celina Bobińska, “Marks i Engels wobec powstania styczniowego,” *Kwartalnik Historyczny* 1953.

616 Bobińska, *Marks*, 169-170.

617 Ślisz, “Współpraca,” 19.

618 Ibidem, 10.

sides for the insurgents, the uprising found some sympathisers, who covertly worked to its advantage. Among others, this group included the father of Nadezhda Krupskaya.”⁶¹⁹

Despite numerous reservations, Polish Marxist historiography assessed the uprising positively. In fact, one should perhaps rephrase this last sentence because the typically positive evaluation of the uprising in general was usually qualified by a series of reservations as to particular dictators, the leaders of specific units, politicians (whether whites, reds, or émigrés), and entire sections of Polish society. The January Uprising received a more positive reading than the November Uprising, primarily due to its National Government’s decision to enfranchise the peasants. Another reason for the positive response was the involvement of Russians on the Polish side, a precious ornament in the annals of Polish-Russian friendship. The November Uprising did not provide as many opportunities for celebration. Studies from the 1950s added a corollary of sorts to descriptions of the progressiveness of the January Uprising – a reminder that several decades after the executions of captured insurgents in Warsaw, in the very same locations, on the banks of the Warsaw citadel, activists of the first Polish socialist party were also hung.⁶²⁰

The January Uprising concluded the period of national liberation struggles begun with the Kościuszko revolt. It seems instructive to consider attempts to develop a Marxist interpretation of the history of Polish struggles for independence, as well as an interpretation of the Polish national movement’s program. All revolts were summarily subjected to a unitary criterion of progressiveness and, at the same time, effectiveness: to win independence, the movements had to treat social issues as a part of the national liberation struggle and instigate the agrarian revolution. Some declared that these conditions were in fact met; Such was the case, for example, with Józef Cyrankiewicz, in his address at the Unification Congress of PPS and PPR, or with Witold Kula during the Otwock conference.⁶²¹ Typically, though, authors pointed to the fact that the

619 *Historia Polski. Makieta*, vol. 2, 719.

620 *Ibidem*, 183; An almost identical statement can be found in Żanna Kormanowa, “Gospodarczo – społeczne przesłanki ukształtowania się pierwszej polskiej klasy robotniczej (w 70-lecie powstania partii “Proletariat”),” *Przegląd Historyczny* 1952, 417.

621 See *Podstawy ideologiczne PZPR. Referat tow. Bolesława Bieruta wygłoszony w dniu 15 XII 1948 r. Koreferat tow. Józefa Cyrankiewicza wygłoszony w dn. 16 XII 1948 r. na Kongresie Polskiej Zjednoczonej Partii Robotniczej. Deklaracja ideowa PZPR*, Warszawa 1952, 84; Witold Kula, “Narastanie elementów kapitalizmu w Polsce XVIII w. Splatanie się walki klasowej z narodowo-wyzwoleńczą. Stosunek historiografii polskiej do procesu tworzenia się narodu burżuazyjnego,” in: *Pierwsza Konferencja*, vol. 2, 126-127.

class aspect of the Polish struggles for independence was far more visible from a general European perspective than from within Poland. While Celina Bobińska admitted that in the West, “Suspicious and distrustful of silver-tongued liberal-bourgeois politicians, the masses tested their faithfulness to revolutionary principles by looking at their attitude toward the Polish question,” she nevertheless repeatedly stated that, beyond just the Kościuszko Uprising, all other Polish revolts played a far more progressive role outside rather than within Polish lands. For this reason, it was easy to effect a kind of “closing” of history. Just as the stated point of the constitution of 1952 was to correct the shortcomings of the Constitution of May 3rd, so “The agrarian revolution was completed only under the government of the People’s Republic of Poland, in 1944 and 1945, when the working peasant gained a hegemonic ally in the industrial proletariat.”⁶²²

Marxist scholars rued the Polish uprising’s missed opportunity – for engaging in cooperation with Russians. This notion infiltrated the analyses of nearly all patriotic outbursts, and was applied to all uprisings as parts of a single process. Generally, though, Polish national insurrections had a moderately progressive character. Pavel Tretiakov, the Russian historian, persuaded the participants at the Otwock conference to accept this belief on the very first day of the event, stating that “No one can question the progressive nature of the Polish national liberation movement of the 19th and early 20th century.... The movements directed against the Russian tsardom in the 19th century, though, such as the one in Kazakhstan, led by local feudal lords, should be treated in a completely different manner.”⁶²³

Still, none of the Polish uprisings met each of the conditions of progressive national traditions. None enjoyed the kind of praise heaped on the national awakenings in Czechoslovakia by local historians. The success of these national movements – whose aim was to form cultures, literatures and political representations for the oppressed Slavs – was evident enough in the fact that, a hundred years later, people discussed them in Czech and Slovak. Meanwhile, the Polish uprisings failed. But even if they had succeeded, it is doubtful whether the Marxist assessment of their achievement would improve. How can one praise a successful war against Russia, even if it was ruled by a tsar? A conservative pan-Slavist, such as Palacký, Kollár or Štúr, seemed less controversial in that regard than an anti-Russian democrat like Kościuszko or Lelewel.

622 Korta, *O postępowych*, 95-96.

623 Pavel Tretiakov, “Znaczenie prac Józefa Stalina o zagadnieniach językoznawstwa dla nauki historii,” in: *Pierwsza Konferencja*, vol. 1, 75-76.

The problematic nature of assessments of the Polish uprisings according to their progressiveness becomes even more evident when compared with Marxist interpretations of a phenomenon which one would appropriately call a national counterrevolution. There were few events in Polish history which garnered as many unequivocally negative responses from later generations as the Galician Slaughter – an armed movement of Galician peasants in “good emperor’s” defense who had murdered insurgent noblemen or handed them over to the Austrian authorities. Karl Marx offered a different interpretation of the events of 1846, claiming that the Kraków uprising constituted a revolution, an ultimately failed, but commendable attempt at combining a struggle for national independence with the fight for social liberation: “The Kraków revolution,” he wrote, “was neither reactionary nor conservative. On the contrary, it was more inimical to Poland than to its foreign oppressors, because it undermined the old, barbarian, feudal, aristocratic Poland that had been based on the bondage of the majority of the nation. Far from attempting to revive the old Poland, the Kraków revolution sought its complete devastation, so that, working hand in hand with a completely different class, it could raise from the old order’s ruins a new, modern, civilised, democratic Poland.”⁶²⁴ The revolutionary classic’s assessment served as a point of departure for the Marxist reinterpretation of the Kraków uprising and the Galician Slaughter.

In the 1950s, scholars stressed that the Kraków revolution began a period of revolutionary commotion across Europe. In a way, events in Galicia heralded the Springtime of the Peoples.⁶²⁵ Though the efforts of Polish revolutionaries eventually proved futile, this fact did nothing to change their interpretation. As Celina Bobińska asked rhetorically, “So what if the uprising was a local affair, if ... the broad peasant masses failed to comprehend it? ... what mattered was that the peasant was counted upon, that he was promised agrarian revolution, while the landlords were threatened with it.”⁶²⁶ Despite historians’ high esteem for it, nothing could alter the fact that the Kraków uprising failed. This failure must have had causes; some of them, in a way, had to have displayed an objective character. Marxists stressed that, in economic terms, Galicia was particularly backward, while the local “landowning gentry” did everything in their power to prevent radical propaganda from seeping through to the country. A part of the responsibility for the failure of the revolution has been laid at the door of the

624 Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels, *Dzieła wybrane*, Warszawa 1949, vol. 1, 61, quoted in: Henryk Jabłoński, *Międzynarodowe znaczenie polskich walk narodowo-wyzwoleńczych XVIII i XIX w.*, Warszawa 1955, 43.

625 See Bobińska, *Marks*, 72; Stefan Kieniewicz, *Legion Mickiewicza 1848-1849*, Warszawa 1955, 31.

626 Bobińska, *Marks*, 67.

revolutionaries themselves. Roman Werfel accused them of an excess of moderation and inability to grasp the moment's consequence.⁶²⁷ According to the authors of the "Draft," the right wing of the revolutionary party bore the brunt of responsibility for the failure, since it "engaged in compromises with the possessor classes."⁶²⁸

Yet, the assessment of the Galician Slaughter proved a far greater challenge for Polish Marxist historiography. The anniversary publications, which also addressed the Springtime of the Peoples, typically offered criticisms of the peasant movement. In 1948, Stefan Kieniewicz wrote of an uprising "drowned in the blood shed by the hands of Polish peasants," while claiming that the uprising in Greater Poland, two years later, cleansed the people of the taint of the Slaughter.⁶²⁹ His description of the course of events of February 1846, for the most part, followed the traditional narrative: "The peasants read the propaganda of the emissaries mistakenly: called upon to fight for liberty, they turned upon their lords and the insurgents. Ever perfidious, and at that point shaken with fear, the Austrian bureaucracy asked the peasants to quell the rebellion by themselves, leading to a catastrophe. A 'popular leader' emerged in the guise of Jakub Szela, who led the peasants on the manors, blindly avenging old wrongs committed against the people."⁶³⁰

The at times dramatic efforts to reinterpret national history are illustrated in the sections of the "Draft" authored by Stefan Kieniewicz. The attitudes of this particular historian to his subject of inquiry changed radically over a short span of time. The shifts introduced in his *Ruch chłopski w Galicji w 1846 roku* (The peasant movement in Galicia in 1846), a work honored with a national prize in 1952, were still deemed insufficient by Natalia Gąsiorowska-Grabowska. As she observed, "One still finds the main chapter bearing the title 'Slaughter,' the case of Jakub Szela is not explained in view of historical truth, there is insufficient connection between social and national struggles and between the Kraków revolution and the peasant uprising, the subversive role of the Austrian authorities is assessed wrongly."⁶³¹ In the volume of the "Draft" published in 1956, Kieniewicz already argued that neither the ignorance of the peasants, nor the machinations of the Austrian bureaucracy were responsible for the Slaughter. In

627 Stefan Kieniewicz, "Walka klasowa chłopów polskich w XIX i XX wieku w oświetleniu historiografii polskiej," *Kwartalnik Historyczny* 1951, 53.

628 *Historia Polski. Makieta*, vol. 2, part 2, 438.

629 See Kieniewicz, *Oblicze*, 56; idem, "Wielkopolska i Prusy Zachodnie w latach 1846-1848," in: *W stulecie*, vol. 1, 164.

630 Kieniewicz, *Czyn*, 22-23.

631 Archiwum PAN, sygn. III – 152, Materiały Natalii Gąsiorowskiej-Grabowskiej, j. 68 Opinie o dorobku naukowym pracowników nauki.

fact, “opinion-makers of noble stock sought to denigrate this movement and distort its character,” and then “The enemies of the Polish people for decades pointed the finger at the peasant, blaming him for the sin of ‘fratricide’ in 1846.”⁶³²

In the new, Marxist-Leninist interpretation, the Slaughter became a progressive peasant movement. “The peasant uprising of the time,” wrote Kieniewicz, “struck a severe blow against the feudal social order, ... it sought to reverse the Prussian direction of capitalist development and reinstate the revolutionary way, and ... it opened a road to liberation for the country through an agrarian revolution. The anti-feudal movement of the peasant masses was in essence, despite the errors it committed, a national liberation movement, which, though failed, deeply shook the system of bondage.”⁶³³ The peasants were not governed by a desire for financial gain, though the Austrian bureaucracy paid for every Polish noble’s head. The interpretation of the role played by Jakub Szela was also subjected to revision: the ironic designation “popular leader” was no longer printed in quotation marks. The “Draft” included the claim that “In his struggle with the nobility, Szela did not assume the mask of a servant to the emperor, but rather openly voiced peasant demands,” though sadly, “He did not control the peasant element to the extent that he could effectively command the resistance movement.”⁶³⁴

Marxist scholars went even further in underlining the similarities between the political role of the Kraków Uprising and the Slaughter. Not only did both movements supposedly threaten Austrian rule in Galicia to a similar extent. Studies from the 1950s basically equated the insurgents to the peasants.⁶³⁵ The two liberation movements did not join forces, but, in a way, they did engage in cooperative action: “As we all know, the coming eruption of peasant fury became for the plotters of Tarnów an incentive to hasten the uprising. The insurgents’ assault on Tarnów, on the other hand, gave the peasant masses a chance to engage in combat.”⁶³⁶ During the Otwock conference, Natalia Gąsiorowska-Grabowska spoke of the commonality of goals between the insurgents and the peasants, stressing the progressive nature of the Slaughter.⁶³⁷

The Galician Slaughter’s inclusion among the progressive traditions of the Polish nation stands in stark contrast with the approach of Czechoslovak historians to their native history. Polish scholars did not care to prove, as did

632 *Historia Polski. Makieta*, vol. 2, part 2, 438 i 447.

633 *Ibidem*, 447.

634 *Historia Polski. Makieta*, vol. 2, part 2, 444-445.

635 *Ibidem*, 428; see also Stefan Kieniewicz, “Problem rewolucji agrarnej w Polsce w okresie kształtowania się układu kapitalistycznego,” in: *Z epoki*, 11.

636 *Ibidem*, 439.

637 See Gąsiorowska-Grabowska, “Proces,” 37.

Slovaks or Czechs, that the national movement was a popular movement as such, even if peasants were not involved. Perhaps it was indicative of the belief that the history of Poland was in itself reactionary, anti-Russian, and focused on the nobles and not the masses. The same belief could lead to a search for connections between the revolutionary Hussite movement and the uprising of Spytko of Melsztyn, or between the Khmelnytsky Uprising and Kostka-Napierski. Hence the uprisings were not picked up for their immanent progressiveness, but rather for their examples of cooperation with Russian revolutionaries, and the assessment of the insurgents proved far less compelling than that of the Polish peasants, who murdered Polish nobles at the behest of the Austrian administration.

The search for an event in German history that would play a role similar to that of the Czech and Slovak national awakenings or the Polish uprisings should probably begin with a description of the *Befreiungskriege*. However, this topic was already sufficiently addressed in the previous subsection. Here, I will only discuss events which, for Marxist-Leninist historiography of the GDR, seemed a continuation of the progressive struggles for the unification of Germany. Marxist interpretations of *Vormärz* and the events of Springtime of the Peoples in Germany included elements bearing an uncanny similarity to the descriptions of the Polish uprisings. The 100th anniversary of the revolution became an opportunity for state-sponsored celebrations throughout the Soviet German occupation zone.⁶³⁸ At least until the 1960s, in the period when German history focussed on unification efforts, historical studies concentrated on workers and peasants who fought for a single Germany. (The absolute dominance of the working class among the actors of the Springtime of the Peoples did not necessarily mean that it received much attention from the writers.) Karl Obermann wrote that “the search for a solution to this question of national importance uncovered differences of approach among particular classes and strata with regard to common national interests. From the very beginning, the bourgeoisie’s treatment of the nation was burdened by its interests as an oppressing class.... It preferred for changes to occur not via a revolution, but through reforms, compromises with the feudal and militarist reaction. Already at that point, the bourgeoisie opposed the forces of democracy and prevented the unification of the country on a democratic platform. It raised its class interest above the interest of the German folk, thereby objectively taking the path of

638 Günther Heydemann, “Die deutsche Revolution von 1848/49 als Forschungsgegenstand der Geschichtswissenschaft in der SBZ/DDR“, in: *Krise – Umbruch – Neubeginn. Eine kritische und selbstkritische Dokumentation der DDR-Geschichtswissenschaft 1989/90*, eds. Rainer Eckert, Wolfgang Küttler & Gustav Seeber, Stuttgart 1992, 310.

treason.”⁶³⁹ This assessment of the bourgeoisie failed to account for the divergences within the unitary bourgeois camp, but Marxist historians cared little whether they were writing about liberals or conservatives (just as their Polish colleagues found it pointless to recognize the camp of Prince Adam Czartoryski for being more progressive than the conservative “national turncoats” like Henryk Rzewuski).⁶⁴⁰ The petite bourgeoisie occupied a more privileged position. Its actions, however, were marked by an inability to grasp the moment’s consequence and a fear of decisive action.⁶⁴¹

Though the bourgeoisie in its entirety was not determined to pursue unification, particular representatives of the social group sometimes received positive evaluations from Marxist scholars. The choice of figures for elevation could often be quite puzzling. While discussing “the struggle of the industrial bourgeoisie for German unity,” Obermann lauded Friedrich List’s attempts at eliminating tolls and creating a common German market. The fact that the very same List fathered the idea of a German *Mitteleuropa* did not deserve Obermann’s mention.⁶⁴² Another protagonist in the struggles for unification was the liberal politician and physician, Rudolf Virchow, whom “bourgeois studies sought to depict as a Prussian patriot and nationalist.”⁶⁴³ Among the positive figures one often also found Hegel, whose idealism did not preclude or diminish the progressive nature of his philosophy – after all, he did introduce the dialectical method. At this stage of development, Hegel’s philosophy suited the needs of the liberal bourgeoisie who were striving to form an all-German constitutional monarchy.⁶⁴⁴

The drive toward the unification of Germany was, then, progressive in itself (up to a point) and merited plaudits even when it did not come with a democratic ideology.⁶⁴⁵ The scholars’ attitude toward the movement began to change as soon as an organised working class entered the stage. From that point on, the

639 Karl Obermann, *Deutschland von 1815 bis 1849 (Von der Gründung des Deutschen Bundes bis zur bürgerlich-demokratischen Revolution)*, Berlin 1963, XIII.

640 See Heydemann, “Die deutsche Revolution,” 315.

641 Ibidem. See also Walter Ulbricht, Horst Bartel, Lothar Berthold, Ernst Diehl, Friedrich Ebert, Ernst Engelberg, Dieter Fricke, Fritz Globig, Kurt Hager, Werner Horn, Bernard Koenen, Wilhelm Koenen, Albert Schreiner & Hanna Wolf, *Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung, vol. 1: Von den Anfängen der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung bis zum Ausgang des 19. Jahrhundert*, Berlin 1966, 91.

642 Karl Obermann, “Disposition des Hochschullehrbuches der Geschichte des deutschen Volkes (1815-1849),” *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1954, 114.

643 Kurt Winter, “Rudolf Virchow und die Revolution von 1848“, *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1954, 844.

644 Obermann, *Deutschland*, 128.

645 Ibidem, 189.

bourgeoisie's struggles with the remnants of feudalism paled in comparison to the struggles of the proletariat with capitalism.⁶⁴⁶ This interpretation of the events of 1848 appeared already in *Der Irrweg einer Nation...* and continued unchanged from that point on.⁶⁴⁷ The first workers' unions, such as Bund der Gerechten, and the first appearances of an organised working class, such as the Silesian weavers' revolt, opened a new chapter in the history of progressive traditions. No longer were they national traditions, but the traditions of the German Communist party.⁶⁴⁸

During the Springtime of the Peoples, the working class was not yet sufficiently organised to stand at the helm of the revolution. The petit bourgeois intelligentsia, on the other hand, was perfectly capable of taking up the task. According to Karl Obermann, two antagonistic classes – the workers and the bourgeoisie – vied for the attention of the petite bourgeoisie. The fact that the intelligentsia assumed the leadership of the revolution resulted in a dearth of resolve among German activists, who were multiplying “handsome resolutions” rather than actions.⁶⁴⁹ The Frankfurt Parliament's demand that worker meetings taking place across the city be forcibly dispersed came to have a symbolic significance.⁶⁵⁰

Evidently, this characteristic of 1848 revolutionary participants did not yield much optimism. The bourgeoisie betrayed the national movement by openly assuming reactionary positions. The petite bourgeoisie and the intelligentsia lingered awhile before taking the same step. Therefore, the only group remaining on the battlefield was the working class, which was, nevertheless, robbed of its “hegemony,” that is, its own political party. It was impossible to decide whether this hegemony was indispensable to the success of a revolution. East German historians tended to offer conflicting views on the matter, as the masses were often credited with a consciousness sufficient for independent revolutionary action even without an organised leadership.⁶⁵¹ Still, the Marxists managed to note a number of shortcomings in the conduct of the German working class – primarily, the absence of a worker-peasant alliance: “The German proletariat stood at the forefront of all battles of 1848-1849 and

646 Ibidem, 145.

647 See Abusch, *Der Irrweg*, 96.

648 Ulbricht, Bartel, Berthold, Diehl, Ebert, Engelberg, Fricke, Globig, Hager, Horn, Koenen, Koenen, Schreiner & Wolf, *Geschichte*, 36.

649 Karl Obermann, *Die deutschen Arbeiter in der Revolution von 1848*, Berlin 1953, 121 & 134.

650 Ibidem, 260-262.

651 Helmut Rumppler, “Revolutionsgeschichtsforschung in der DDR,” *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 1980/31, 183.

consistently fought for democracy. Yet, it was not strong enough to lead the peasants and the petite bourgeoisie, and, hence, the German bourgeoisie was allowed to sell the revolution off to reaction.”⁶⁵²

As with Luther and the Reformation, the image of the German bourgeoisie during the Springtime of the Peoples grew more and more positive with time. In 1962, in Jena, a research group devoted to the history of the bourgeois parties was formed under the leadership of Dieter Fricke. Its goal was to scientifically verify theories of “two lines” of historical development in Germany. At the same time, the group was also expected to specifically describe the “class enemy” responsible for the failure of a progressive unification of Germany in 1848, as well as, to locate those among the bourgeois politicians who could merit inclusion in the catalog of East German progressive traditions.⁶⁵³ In this last case, any spectacular success was unlikely to occur. No one could rival Marx and Engels, who were not only commentators upon, but actors in the events of 1848. The treatment of the actors of the Springtime of the Peoples in Germany was determined by the fact that the failed revolution, to an extent, led to the top-down imposed unification of the country. This phenomenon was approached with much criticism until the turn of the 1980s, when a new, positive assessment of Bismarck and of Prussian heritage changed the way German bourgeois politicians of 1848 were looked at, as well.

There are many analogies between the attitudes of East German and Polish Marxist historiographies toward 19th century national movements. Both the Polish uprisings and the German grassroots movements for unification were interpreted as narrowly progressive phenomena. They lacked an understanding of social questions and the support of the peasant masses and the working class. As Andrzej Walicki points out, the postulate of agrarian revolution, which for Polish Marxists constituted the sole condition of success for the Polish national liberation movement, was picked up and adopted from Lenin’s writings, where it was treated as a political postulate for his own party. The application of such a measure to the analysis of the Polish political movements of the 19th century can hardly be justified in Marxist terms and inevitably led to profound criticism. The Polish Marxists expected the national movement to espouse far more radicalism than the classics of Marxism themselves (and the classics of

652 Obermann, *Die deutschen*, 332.

653 Johannes Schradi, *Die DDR-Geschichtswissenschaft und das bürgerliche Erbe. Das deutsche Bürgertum und die Revolution von 1848 im sozialistischen Geschichtsverständnis*, Frankfurt am Main 1997, 130-154.

Marxism-Leninism as well).⁶⁵⁴ From a Marxist standpoint, Walicki continued, the accusations leveled against the democrats, charging them with a lack of understanding for the national aspirations of Lithuanians, Ukrainians and Belorussians, were just as unfounded. By refusing these nations a right for self-determination, activists of the Polish national movement were closely approximating the position supported by Marx and Engels at that time.⁶⁵⁵ Analogous practices of Marxist scholars can be observed in the GDR. It remained forever unclear how and for what reason representatives of the German working class of yore should have become conscious of the necessity of establishing a peasant-worker alliance as a condition for the revolution's success (rendering them more advanced than Marx and Engels). Even if it was possible, could this alliance (or, in the Polish context, the agrarian revolution) really have led to the victory of the revolution?

This warrants the question: were Czech and Slovak national movements not riddled with the same faults, being additionally accused by Marxism's classics of collaboration with the European forces of reaction? It seems they were. Yet still, the image of the national awakening painted by Czechoslovak historiography was far more positive than the interpretation of Polish and German national movements' struggles with European reaction. It is hard to tell which of the potential reasons for this state of affairs played the key role. Was it because 19th century movements of "historical" nations were aimed against the bedrock of the Holy Alliance: Russia, while the Slavic national awakenings typically relied on a Slavophile, and sometimes even a pan-Slavic backdrop? Did it matter that there was a powerful defender of the national-liberal interpretation of history in Czechoslovakia, in the guise of Zdeňek Nejedlý, since neither Poland, nor the GDR produced a like-minded individual who could draw binding rules for the interpretation of the national past? Or was it because the compensatory role which history plays in the life of a nation was more relevant to Czechs and Slovaks than to Poles or Germans? Doubtless, it mattered that Polish or German Marxists who invoked national traditions were dealing with a much richer collection of political movements and a wealth of historical interpretations concerning them. A wealth of national historiographical traditions and a far richer tradition of national and radical movements in the 19th century was, in the case of Poland, but especially East Germany, more of a hindrance than a facilitator to interpretation. As a whole, the Czech or Slovak

654 Andrzej Walicki, "Marks i Engels o sprawie polskiej. Uwagi metodologiczne," in: *Powstanie listopadowe 1830-1831. Geneza – uwarunkowania – bilans – porównania*, eds. Jerzy Skowronek & Maria Żmigrodzka, Wrocław 1983, 314.

655 Ibidem, 310.

national movement, which served as a basis for national cultures, proved resistant to a critique from the standpoint of historical materialism – the more so since, in its Stalinist guise, historical materialism no longer adhered to Marx’s belief in the existence of “historical” and “non-historical” nations. Since it was impossible to simply deem the Czech or Slovak nation reactionary, one had to include their respective national movements among the “progressive traditions.”

Comparing the attitude of Marxist historiographies to the national movements of the 19th century, one should also take into account the fact that a commonality of critique of the indigenous traditions in the Polish and German context on the one hand, and the Czech and Slovak on the other, would yield divergent results with respect to the Marxist vision of history. Questioning the role of the Polish uprisings or the skeptical attitude of East German Marxists toward the achievements of the liberal bourgeoisie and the workers’ movements during the Springtime of the Peoples did nothing to challenge the fundamentals of national consciousness. Had the same brand of criticism been employed toward figures of importance to Slovak national culture, such as Ľudovít Štúr, it would have forced Slovak historians to reinterpret their national history anew, as the operation would result in casting away a man who framed the modern Slovak nation’s course of development – a man who, in a way, shaped the nation itself. In the final analysis, the role played by individuals such as Štúr or Palacký is incomparable to that of any insurgent commander or leader of the Great Emigration. In the Czech and Slovak case, a harsh, Marxist criticism of the national revivalists could have produced the effects which Rafał Stobiecki (in my view, erroneously) ascribed to Polish Stalinist historiography – a “rupture in the elementary rules of social life, expressed in the demand for a historical continuity of state and nation.”⁶⁵⁶

The Impact of the Great Socialist October Revolution on the History of East Central Europe

The Great Socialist October Revolution served as the key event for Marxist interpretations of the history of popular democracies. In every case, the claim that the revolution decisively affected the most significant socio-political processes became axiomatic. In Poland, the Great Socialist October Revolution was named as (to quote the title of a chapter from a schoolbook for 11th graders) “the decisive precondition in the reconstitution of the Polish state.” This relationship was explained by a Soviet historian: “The victory of the socialist

656 Stobiecki, *Historia*, 182.

revolution and the constitution of the dictatorship of the proletariat in Russia enabled the rebirth of the Polish state and the unification of all Polish lands, including the Western territories. However, the ruling classes of bourgeois-aristocratic Poland betrayed the interests of the Polish people. The majority of Polish lands in the West – a significant portion of Silesia, Pomerania, Warmia and Mazurias [*sic*], the delta of the Vistula including Gdańsk – remained in German hands. With the support of English, French and American imperialists, the Piłsudski faction and the National Democrats instigated a criminal war against the Soviet Union, seeking to claim the territories of Ukraine and Belarus.”⁶⁵⁷

Marxist scholars paid particular attention to the activities of Józef Piłsudski, the leading Polish enemy of the revolution. “Piłsudski and his followers,” asserted Tadeusz Daniszewski, “were always characterised by extreme chauvinism and a deeply nationalist hatred of the Russian revolutionaries.”⁶⁵⁸ The Polish-Bolshevik war was the crowning achievement of his anti-Soviet activities. Adam Korta devoted a sizable article to the subject, giving it the telling title “The Brawl that Became a Legend.” In the article, he recounted the already cited findings of Soviet scholars, who claimed that the war in the East shattered all Polish hopes of claiming the territories in the West. The Soviet state conducted a policy of peace, and “The working class of capitalist countries gazed at the first state of free workers and peasants in the world with a growing affection,” but the “bourgeoisie and landlords, dreaming of long-lost manors in the Ukraine and the factories of the Donbas, ... were pushing for an aggressive war from the very beginning.”⁶⁵⁹ Semen Petlura, Piłsudski’s ally in Ukraine, was, in Korta’s words, “a half-criminal figure, a black reactionary, a Ukrainian chauvinist, a die-hard Polish-hater.”⁶⁶⁰

Marxist scholars went out of their way to stress the superficial character of political differences between Piłsudski’s federal camp and Dmowski’s nationalists because of their common enmity to Soviet Russia.⁶⁶¹ This

657 J. Rubinsztein, “Polityka kolonizacyjna wilhelmowskich Niemiec na zachodnich ziemiach polskich (1900-1914),” in: *Historycy radzieccy*, 218-219; see also Walentyna Najdus, “Lenin o prawie narodu polskiego do niepodległości,” *Kwartalnik Historyczny* 1953; M. Wągrowski, “Rewolucja Październikowa a Polska,” *Nowe Drogi* 1952/11; M. Wągrowski, “Rewolucja Październikowa a Polska (cz. II),” *Nowe Drogi* 1953/1.

658 *Historia Polski 1864-1945. Materiały do nauczania w klasie XI*, ed. Żanna Kormanowa, Warszawa 1952, 175.

659 Korta, *O postępowych*, 187-189.

660 *Ibidem*, 195.

661 “Thus, neither of these orientations embraced national guidelines or demands. Both were an expression of the interests, needs and aspirations of the Polish bourgeoisie ...

partnership was considered a continuation of a factual alliance between the PPS and National Democracy, dating back as far as the revolution of 1905.

Adam Korta also engaged in an attempt at the “demythologisation” of the course of the Polish-Soviet war. He claimed that the debates over actual authorship of the Polish victory at Warsaw were of secondary importance, and the ascription of this “achievement” to Piłsudski was meant to “exemplify the supposed ‘genius’ of a Führer, a crucial aspect of every fascist ideology.”⁶⁶² The significance of the debate was, in itself, quite questionable – elsewhere, Korta observed that the “Miracle at the Vistula” was only an “alleged” Polish victory. In fact, the whole image of the war was turned upside down: Poland was represented as the dominant, aggressive side, pursuing total obliteration of the enemy while Russia merely conducted defensive actions. The key role was no longer assigned to the Battle of Warsaw, instead having been ascribed to the Soviet counter-offensive “which became a great national war against the Polish landlords and ended in the banishment of the Polish armies from the Ukraine.”⁶⁶³ Meanwhile, behind the Polish lines, a fervent class war was brewing, with the people realising that – as Korta put it – “The Soviet army set out toward Poland as a liberator, an ally to the Polish working masses.”⁶⁶⁴

Not all Poles, however, displayed as negative an attitude toward the Russian revolution as Dmowski or Piłsudski. Marxist scholars often stressed that members of the Social Democrats in the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania wholly supported the October Revolution.⁶⁶⁵ Feliks Dzierżyński, who performed enormous services to the security apparatus of the revolution, took center stage: “The amount of hatred that the bourgeois of the world exhibited – and continue to exhibit – toward him is a just measure of this man’s dedication to the cause Dzierżyński was always typified by an affectionate care for the people, a revolutionary blaze, limitless dedication to the party, a deep patriotism and proletarian internationalism that always goes hand in hand with it.”⁶⁶⁶ Side by side with Dzierżyński stood other

and hoped to ensure the best possible conditions for the development and expansion of the Polish imperialism, even at the cost of true independence.” – Leon Grosfeld, „Prawidłowość i specyfika polskiego imperializmu,” in: *Pierwsza Konferencja*, vol. 2, 282.

662 Korta, *O postępowych*, 186.

663 Ibidem, 196-197.

664 Ibidem, 197; see also Franciszek Ryszka, “Radykalizm społeczny ludności Górnego Śląska na przełomie lat 1918/19,” *Przegląd Zachodni* 1950.

665 Walentyna Najdus, “Polacy w Rewolucji Październikowej (w XXXV rocznicę Rewolucji Październikowej),” *Przegląd Historyczny* 1952, 437.

666 Bronisław Baczko, “Wstęp,” in: Korta, *O postępowych*, 21-22; see also: Edward Ochab, “Największy polski rewolucjonista,” *Nowe Drogi* 1951/3; J. Kole, “Feliks Dzierżyński Budowniczy Gospodarki Socjalistycznej,” *Nowe Drogi* 1951/3.

supporters of the revolution – Julian Marchlewski, Bronisław Wesołowski, as well as numerous nameless heroes, because “Nearly all fronts of the civil war saw Polish revolutionary units engaged in heroic combat.”⁶⁶⁷

Czechoslovak Marxist historiography similarly ascribed the collapse of the Habsburg monarchy to the October Revolution. This claim was staked out primarily in Jurij Křížek and Oldřich Říha’s work bearing the candid title *Bez Velké říjnové socialistické revoluce by nebylo Československa* (Without the Great October Revolution there would be no Czechoslovakia) (Praha 1951). The Czech and Slovak peoples’ struggle for independence and socialism had already begun with the arrival of news about the February Revolution. The later revolution only fueled that fire: “Though the working class, as we shall see further, tried to imitate the victorious progress of the Russian workers, it did not yet possess a complete understanding of all the fundamental conditions for their victory – first of all, it was unfamiliar with Leninism.”⁶⁶⁸ For this reason the working class would only enjoy limited success – it managed to break the monarchy apart, but it failed to erect a socialist Bohemia.⁶⁶⁹ Like Polish Marxists, their Czech counterparts did not pay heed to the essential divergences between different bourgeois organisations – in this case between the proponents and opponents of the monarchy. Furthermore, the bourgeoisie, in the guise of Masaryk, worked objectively against Czechoslovak independence. Since independence was gained through the Great Socialist October Revolution, and the Czechoslovak Legions, of which Masaryk was the political commander, were opposed to the revolution, Masaryk inadvertently acted as a stumbling block in the struggle for independence.⁶⁷⁰ The formation of Czechoslovakia was said to have incited “nationalist illusions” among the workers, leading them to abandon the struggle for social liberation.⁶⁷¹

In Czechoslovak historiography, the role played in Polish studies by Piłsudski’s Legions and the “brawl become legend” was ascribed to the Czechoslovak Legions in Russia, formed of prisoners of war and deserters from the Austro-Hungarian army. These units fought against Germans; similar units were also formed in Italy, France, and Serbia. Later on, the Legions in Russia fought against the Bolsheviks, and even managed to claim control of the Trans-Siberian Railroad and significant portions of Siberia. During the interwar period,

667 *Historia Polski 1864-1945*, 299; see also: Zygmunt Modzelewski, “Julian Marchlewski (1866-1925),” *Nowe Drogi* 1950/1.

668 *Přehled československých dějin*, vol. 2, part 2, 1222.

669 See Oldřich Říha, “O národním hnutí a národnostní otázce 1848-1918,” *Československý Časopis Historický* 1954, 68.

670 Karel Herman, “Hlavní rysy česko-ruských vztahů v letech 1870-1917,” in: *Z bojů*, 95.

671 *Ibidem*.

the Czechoslovak legionnaires became a privileged group, like their Polish counterparts. This situation was completely upturned in the 1950s. The Legions' Eastern escapade was recounted in a manner reminiscent of the treatment of the Polish-Bolshevik war: "The anti-Soviet intervention of the Czechoslovak Legions in 1918-1920 is a painful memory for every honorable member of our nations, a stain on the Czechoslovak-Soviet friendship, which nevertheless is today firm as rock and immutable."⁶⁷² The soldiers were not responsible for the conflict, instigated by the international forces of reaction, who craved the destruction of the Soviet Union. The Slovak author, Ján Kvasnička, added that within particular military units, subjectively progressive Czech and Slovak privates were influenced by tsarist and Czech officers "who, significantly aided by rightist social-democratic leaders, isolated the soldiers from the Russian revolutionary milieu."⁶⁷³ Masaryk was said to have relished the international reaction, becoming a toady for his "superiors" by sacrificing the lives of Czechs and Slovaks.⁶⁷⁴ Despite accounts of personal bravery, the legionnaires were merely a tool. As Vlastimil Vávra put it, "Logic suggests that those who died sacrificed their lives for an alien cause."⁶⁷⁵

Czech and Slovak prisoners of war were easy to recruit because they lacked political experience. The social-democratic leadership was to blame for that, having fed them "toothless revisionist theories." Because of this influence, only a few, "led primarily by a class instinct," joined the Red Army.⁶⁷⁶ Numbering around 10,000, according to Vlastimil Vávra, Czech soldiers of the Red Army "salvaged the honor of the Czech and Slovak proletariat."⁶⁷⁷ They were particularly exposed to the brutality of their countrymen.⁶⁷⁸ The Soviet government, on the other hand, as Marxist historians stressed, treated the legionnaires in a friendly manner.⁶⁷⁹

Slovak historians copied in many points the historical framework elaborated by their Czech colleagues. They wrote of the people's vivid reaction to news of the October Revolution, of a wave of strikes and calls for an immediate ceasefire. Much attention was devoted to the Russian revolutionaries' slogan of

672 Vlastimil Vávra, *Klamná cesta. Příprava a vznik protisovětského vystoupení československých legií*, Praha 1958, 5.

673 Ján Kvasnička, *Československé légie v Rusku 1917-1920*, Bratislava 1963, 323.

674 Vávra, *Klamná*, 5 & 23. See also Václav Král, *O Masarykově a Benešově kontrarevoluci proti sovětské politice*, Praha 1953.

675 Vávra, *Klamná*, 28.

676 *Ibidem*, 50.

677 *Ibidem*, 130.

678 *Přehled československých dějin*, vol. 2, part 2, 1265.

679 *Ibidem*, 1265.

self-determination for all nations.⁶⁸⁰ The Slovak (and Hungarian) bourgeoisie, on the other hand, were unwelcoming toward the Russian proletariat.⁶⁸¹ The emergence of a Czechoslovak state was an (unintended) effect of the people's liberation struggle, inspired by the Great Socialist October Revolution.⁶⁸² This lack of intention was apparent in the fact that the key participant in the events, the working class, had not actively sought to form a state. Sadly, in a decisive moment, national liberation efforts were taken over by the bourgeoisie, which led to the creation of an independent Czechoslovakia. The bourgeois-democratic revolution thereby failed to transform into a proletarian revolution.⁶⁸³

This should not be taken to mean that there was no attempt in Slovakia to introduce a government of the Soviets. The invasion of Hungarian Bolshevik forces received a surprisingly positive assessment. As a rule, the progressive potential of the resulting Slovak Soviet Republic was never belittled – so much so that Ľudovít Holotík's 1959 article, despite his accusation that the Czechoslovak bourgeoisie acted as agents for the French government during the suppression of the Hungarian revolution, was received as an assault on tradition. Holotík offered a very positive assessment of the revolution itself, lauding Slovak participants for their noble internationalism.⁶⁸⁴ Though highly positive, this assessment proved insufficient and became a hindrance to Holotík's career.⁶⁸⁵ Readers of Slovak historical publications and later yearbooks of the *Historický Časopis SAV* will note, however, that the Slovak Soviet Republic was rarely mentioned, typically only during major anniversaries.

680 Ľudovít Holotík, *Októbrová revolúcia a národnooslobodzovacie hnutie na Slovensku v rokoch 1917-1918*, Bratislava 1958, 121.

681 *Dejiny Slovenska (tézy)*, 187-189.

682 See *Slovenská republika rád. Výsledky bádania a spomienky súčasníkov prednesené na vedeckej konferencii v Prešove 8. a 9. júna 1959*, ed. Michal Dzvoník, Žilina 1959; Michal Dzvoník, *Ohlas Veľkej októbrovej socialistickej revolúcie na Slovensku (1918-1919)*, Bratislava 1957, passim. Ján Mlynárik holds this last work, and Dzvoník's publications in general, in high esteem, deeming them exceptionally pointed and free of falsifications – Mlynárik, *Diaspora*, 90.

683 Ľudovít Holotík, "Ohlas Veľkej Otóbrovej Socialistickej Revolúcie na Slovensku od konca roku 1917 do vzniku ČSR," *Historický Časopis SAV* 1957, 448. See also: Ľudovít Holotík, *Októbrová revolúcia a národnooslobodzovacie hnutie na Slovensku v rokoch 1917-1918*, Bratislava 1958; Ľudovít Holotík, "Vznik Československa a jeho význam pre slovenský národ," *Historický Časopis SAV* 1958, 495.

684 Ľudovít Holotík, "O Slovenskej republike rád roku 1919," *Historický Časopis SAV* 1959, 174. See also Martin Vietor, "K tridsiatemu piatemu výročiu Slovenskej Republiky Rád," *Historický Časopis SAV* 1954.

685 Mlynárik, *Diaspora*, 20.

In Slovakia, the reactionary legend of Piłsudski and the Czech Legions had a counterpart in the legend of one of the founding fathers of the country, Milan Rostislav Štefánik. This tragically departed plane pilot became an iconic figure for Czechoslovakia, serving as proof of the state's rootedness in the actions of the Czech and Slovak bourgeoisie. By referencing Štefánik, the ruling circles of Czechoslovakia attempted to disavow the impact which the Great Socialist October Revolution had on the emergence of the state. The right-wing "Ludacy," on the other hand, sought to prove that Štefánik pursued independence for Slovakia.⁶⁸⁶ Holotík intervened in this debate, contending that Štefánik played an anti-national role, like Masaryk and Beneš. This time, the focus of the debate was not on the person's so-called objective role, but simply on an uncompromising recognition that Czechoslovakia's founding fathers were in fact agents of France.⁶⁸⁷

German historians found that the October Revolution's impact on Germany was far harder to trace. Any attempt to describe the Weimar Republic as a product of the events of 1917 in Petrograd would have been ridiculed. Besides, the German state enjoyed a sizable presence even before that time. There was another problem, too: the Russian revolution had a direct counterpart in German history, the November Revolution of 1918, an unsuccessful, but nonetheless ideologically related event. Alexander Abusch named the *Novemberrevolution* the first stage in a process that culminated in April 1946, when the Communist Party and the social-democratic left joined ranks as the SED. Had such a united party of the working class existed in 1918, the revolution would have succeeded – he asserted.⁶⁸⁸

In spite of several differences with other states within the Communist bloc, the historiography of the GDR also stressed the decisive influence of the Great Socialist October Revolution on the German working class. As Albert Schreiner noted in his anniversary speech, "The impact the Great Socialist October Revolution had on Germany before and after the November Revolution cannot be exhaustively described in a two-hour presentation."⁶⁸⁹ In the first issue of the *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, Heinz Kamnitzer mentioned the October Revolution's influence as one of two discoveries made on the basis of documents studied by Marxists (the other being the contention that, during the

686 Ludovít Holotík, *Štefánikovská legenda a vznik ČSR*, Bratislava 1958, 6, 9 & 326-327.

687 The Marxist assessment of Štefánik was subjected to a scrupulous analysis by Mlynárik, *Diaspora*, 220-243.

688 Abusch, *Der Irrweg*, 282.

689 Albert Schreiner, "Auswirkungen der Großen Sozialistischen Oktoberrevolution auf Deutschland vor und während der Novemberrevolution," *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1958, 7.

war, the German ruling classes had no fear but for the German workers.).⁶⁹⁰ News from Russia had sparked a movement that ultimately established the Bavarian Soviet Republic. Officers on the Eastern Front were powerless to prevent simple soldiers from fraternising with Russians.⁶⁹¹ Though bourgeois historiography fabricated a different explanation, it was, in fact, the Russian revolution that made the workers abandon stations and organize mass strikes.⁶⁹² The involvement of German prisoners of war in the revolution, on the Bolshevik side, was also of considerable importance.⁶⁹³

The November Revolution, however, drew much more focus. Though Marxist scholars unanimously praised figures such as Karl Liebknecht or Rosa Luxemburg, the very task of defining the revolution proved highly problematic. In the first postwar publications, it was considered a proletarian revolution.⁶⁹⁴ Albert Schreiner told the audience of his aforementioned speech that he was himself led astray as to the nature of the revolution. It was only after he read the *History of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks): Short Course* that he developed the conviction that the revolution was indeed of bourgeois making.⁶⁹⁵ Yet, when Schreiner shared this personal story with his audience in 1958, the *Short Course* was no longer the single, undisputed source of knowledge about the world. So, already in 1957, right after the thaw, the *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* initiated a debate on the November Revolution, focusing on two problems: the class character of the revolution and the assessment of the

690 Heinz Kamnitzer & Klaus Mammach, "Aus Dokumenten zur Vorgeschichte der deutschen Novemberrevolution," *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1953, 810. See also: Karl Obermann, "Bemerkungen über die Entwicklung der Arbeiterbewegung in Berlin 1916/1917 und ihr Verhältnis zur russischen Februarrevolution und zur Großen Sozialistischen Oktoberrevolution," *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1957; Wolfgang Ruge, "Zur Taktik der deutschen Monopolbourgeoisie im Frühjahr und Sommer 1919," *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1963, 1088.

691 Walter Bartel, "Die Wirkungen der russischen Revolution," *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1957, 923.

692 Klaus Mammach, "Das erste Echo der Großen Sozialistischen Oktoberrevolution in der deutschen Arbeiterklasse im November 1917," *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1957, 1033.

693 See Sonja Striegnitz, "Die aktive Teilnahme ehemaliger deutscher Kriegsgefangener an der Oktoberrevolution 1917 und an den Kämpfen des Bürgerkrieges 1918-1922," *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1960.

694 See Lutz Winckler, "Die Novemberrevolution in der Geschichtsschreibung der DDR," *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 1970/21, 218.

695 Albert Schreiner, "Auswirkungen der Großen Sozialistischen Oktoberrevolution auf Deutschland vor und während der Novemberrevolution," *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1958, 29.

workers' and peasants' councils' progressive impact (the circumstances of that debate was described in some detail in chapter two). Historians gradually abandoned a radically positive assessment of the revolution, finding it more and more deficient. Peter Hintze stated that the councils had already lost their revolutionary character in December 1918.⁶⁹⁶ Roland Bauer claimed that the revolution, though proletarian in its beginnings, was not properly concluded and hence swiftly transformed into a bourgeois movement.⁶⁹⁷ Walter Mimitz offered a slightly altered interpretation, acknowledging that a proletarian revolution could not arrive in Germany until the bourgeois revolution was concluded (as we already know, this deficiency was an effect of the events of 1848). The November Revolution was therefore, in a way, doomed to certain limitations, though, of course, the fact that neither the Spartacus League nor the budding Communist Party of Germany was capable of leading working classes to victory was noted as well.⁶⁹⁸ Walter Ulbricht closed the debate by condensing the ruminations of the historians into a compromise formula: "In conclusion, we are forced to concede that the November Revolution had a bourgeois-democratic character, yet in some cases it was conducted by proletarian ways and means."⁶⁹⁹

A comparison of Marxist studies on the events of 1917-1920 in Poland, Germany, Bohemia and Slovakia, illustrates the ways in which bits of local history were placed in the context of the superior, revolutionary tradition of the Great Socialist October Revolution. Historians writing in the 1950s had no doubt that the Russian revolution was a special event, progressive in the utmost. Not only was its "superiority" over the founding fathers of the postwar states obvious – its impact on all events, not only in their region of the world, became indisputable. The scheme recurring in the outlines of the history of Poland, Bohemia, and Slovakia (the impact of the Great Socialist October Revolution on the struggle for independence, the reactionary intervention in Russia, the dominance of regressive possessor classes, the glorious engagement of Poles, Czechs and Slovaks on the side of the Red Army) becomes disputed however, if

696 Peter Hintze, "Zur Frage des Charakters der Arbeiter und Soldatenräte in der Novemberrevolution 1918, dargestellt am Beispiel der Räte in Mecklenburg," *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1957, 264.

697 Roland Bauer, "Zur Einschätzung des Charakters der deutschen Novemberrevolution 1918-1919," *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1958, 162-163.

698 Walter Mimitz, "Über den Charakter der Novemberrevolution von 1918/1919 in Deutschland," *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1958, 706 i 712.

699 Walter Ulbricht, "Über den Charakter der Novemberrevolution. Rede in der Kommission zur Vorbereitung der Thesen über die Novemberrevolution," *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1958, 729.

we consider some of the problems presented by recent German history. The German November Revolution could well be an indigenous reference point and a standard of progressiveness. It had its own mythos, its own martyrs, and its own heirs – this final heritage claimed, as was often repeated, by the GDR.

It seems that it was precisely this potential competition between the November Revolution and the October Revolution that convinced East German historiography to accept, in agreement with the *Short Course*, that the former was not of proletarian, but of bourgeois-democratic character. Interestingly, this amounted to equating it with events such as the formation of the Czechoslovak Republic in 1918, or the revolution of 1848 in Germany and Hungary. Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht's revolution was thereby resignified as a link between the early bourgeois revolution (the Hussite movement, the Great Peasants' Revolt, the uprising of the Slovak miners, Khmelnytsky's Uprising) and the "real" October Revolution. It is unlikely that the members of the Spartacus League saw themselves in these terms. That they were thrust into it perfectly illustrates the fact that Marxist-Leninist interpretations of the histories of Germany, Poland, Bohemia, and Slovakia were not a simple continuation of some new current of Marxism, but rather an attempt to read the traditions of national historiographies anew.

