

## Chapter IV

# The Marxist History of Historiography

Historians can show varying degrees of deference, honesty, and care toward national histories. Witold Kula accused Polish historiography of the 1950s of lacking respect toward national traditions: “The never-ending collections,” he wrote in the allusive *Gusta*, “comprised of Egyptian, Greek, Germanic, or Persian temples, weaponry of different nations, living quarters from all over the globe... That is their attitude toward history. A lumber room for minutiae acquired on the cheap, used for the most part only as ornaments. If plebeians or their chaplains dislike them – as the profane dislike the plebes – the minutiae can be replaced at all times. This lumber room is huge and wealthy.”<sup>700</sup>

For the excavation of exhibits from this treasure-trove (or lumber room) to make sense, it has to be subjected to a set of rules. It is these rules, Lucian Boia writes, “[that] bring into history a principle of order, attuned to the necessities and ideals of a particular society.”<sup>701</sup> The Czech and Slovak national revival was particularly marked by this sense of self-consciousness, by this need to provide assurance of the necessity of one’s existence. This sensation can also be traced in the idea of the reconstitution of an independent Poland or in the idea of German unification (as well as, for example, in pan-Slavist ideology). As Leszek Kołakowski observed, “factual history requires myth.”<sup>702</sup> To make sense of history, we need to go beyond it, into the realm of myth. This claim applies not only to national ideas of the 19th century or historiography of the Stalinist period, but also to the achievements of well-known and revered founders of scientific historiography. It also applies to the following introduction to the traditions of historiography – German, Polish, Slovak, and Czech –, as well as to any other attempt at cataloguing the various research approaches, methodological choices, writing styles and positions particular to historians. Sadly, by reducing the creative work of historians to a set of beliefs on subjects of particular interest to posterity, we often lose sight of the most arresting aspect

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700 Kula, *Wokół*, 386.

701 Lucian Boia, *History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness*, Budapest 2001, 29.

702 Leszek Kołakowski, *The Presence of Myth*, trans. Adam Czerniawski, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001, 32.

of history: the individual historian. In the introductory sub-chapters below, I will for the most part follow the most commonly accepted interpretations of national historiographies' output. I will also pay attention to those elements of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century historians' outlook which, in my opinion, were of particular significance to Marxist historiographies in East Central Europe.

## Historiography and the Concept of the State – German Historical Sciences

German historiography is typically represented in two mutually contradictory manners. The first tendency characterizes Marxist studies and, even more, works published in countries which went through a period of German occupation during the war. In this case, authors repeatedly raise accusations of nationalism, racism, or *Großdeutsch* arrogance, against German historians (going as far back as Thietmar of Merseburg, the Medieval chronicler of the Slavic-German borderlands), drawing abundantly from an arsenal of arguments and motives formed during the early postwar years. In the GDR, this manner of writing was tinged with a class critique of the bourgeois classics (discussed in more detail in a later section of this chapter). This brand of reflection on German culture persists even now, though nowadays one would be hard-pressed to find examples of it in scientific publications.<sup>703</sup> Representatives of the other approach to German historiography assume that they are dealing with a leading European historiography, a host of exceptional scholars, whose theoretical ruminations inspired the entire continent. In effect, this tendency shifts the burden of analysis from the content and ideas about history to the methodological reflections of German historians. Though the latter tendency seems to promote a far deeper and wiser examination of the conduct of historians, in some cases the division between politics and research is not only hard to achieve, but also pointless. The shape of the German national concept in the 19th century unquestionably affected historiography no less than it did in other countries that will be our focus later. Broadly conceived, politics also explain some of the differences between German historians and their colleagues from other countries in East Central Europe, quite often graduates of the same German universities.

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703 Among the exceptions are, for example, the activities of several employees of the Masaryk Institute (Masarykův ústav AV ČR), who condemned the supposed nationalism of contemporary German historians and the lack of patriotism in a section of the Czech intelligentsia. Cf. Miloslav Bednář, "Filosofie a historiografie – obtížné zvládnání česko-německých dějin," in: *Spory o dějiny I. Sborník kritických textů*, ed. Miloslav Bednář, Praha 1999, 70-80.

These differences were comparatively less pronounced during Enlightenment. At the same time, though, Germans were distinguished by the institutionalisation of historiography to an incomparable degree. While in Poland or Bohemia historical syntheses were produced within closed circles of enlightened favourites at royal and aristocratic courts, often in works resulting from a private or public commission, in Germany science had already become institutionalised in the 18th century. Enlightenment-era historians simply became university professors – they lectured and published course-books. They also enjoyed a numerical superiority over their Eastern counterparts – so much so, that the first commonly acclaimed works of the Enlightenment-era German historiography more often than not focused on countries other than Germany itself. Among other endeavours, August Ludwig Schlözer, a member of the Academy of Sciences and Arts founded by Peter the Great, and the author of *Geschichte von Russland* (History of Russia, 1769), conducted research into the controversial issue of the beginnings of the Kievan Rus', and succeeded in locating sources that supported the claim of the state's Norman origins. His contribution to the development of Russian historiography did not consist solely in setting the standards for the practice of history, but also in sparking the critical reaction of scholars such as Lomonosov, and opening the debate over the so-called Norman theory, a subject prevalent years after East Central Europe became dominated by Marxist methodology.<sup>704</sup> Of note is the fact that the critical edition of the chronicle of Nestor, prepared by Schlözer, preceded analogous editions of source materials on the history of Germany.<sup>705</sup> The first works on lands Germans had inhabited for centuries, such as Livonia, were also written in German.<sup>706</sup>

Another result of this institutionalisation was the preponderance of topics researched by professors from different German universities, spearheaded by the University of Göttingen. Historians such as Schlözer or Johann Christoph Gatterer made attempts at creating syntheses of general history. Other scholars focused on regional history, the history of law, of trade, of art, and so forth. Many of them shared Voltaire's disdain for the *Mordgeschichte*, believing instead that history deserved subjects other than kings and commanders, and objects other than wars.<sup>707</sup> Schlözer's subject of choice was society organised in a state, conceived – typically of historians of the 18th century – entirely in the

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704 Macůrek, *Dějepisectví*, 216-217.

705 Herbert Butterfield, *Man on his Past*, 56.

706 Hubertus Neuschäffer, "Deutsch-baltische Geschichtsschreibung im 18. Jahrhundert," *Journal of Baltic Studies* 1980/1, 71-77.

707 Grabski, *Dzieje*, 299-300.

abstract, as the perfect safeguard of freedoms of individuals and as the sum of all individuals – a peculiar machine in the service of the people.<sup>708</sup>

Historians of historiography typically associate this shift in perspective, and most of all, the completely new concept of the state, with the Napoleonic Wars. Prussia's humiliating defeat and the French occupation paved the way to ascribe a national character to the philosophy of Herder, to Wilhelm von Humboldt's ruminations on national grammar, or to the collections of songs and legends created by the brothers Grimm. With the *Befreiungskriege* demonstrating German military might, the national past was expected to become a force just as indomitable.<sup>709</sup> Critical editions of sources for the history of Germany began to emerge promptly (the first volume of the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* was published in 1826). Conceptions of national history of the time often reference the figure of the state as a goal all Germans should have been seeking to attain. The way to this ideal was blocked by the military and spiritual domination of foreigners, who – as Ernst Moritz Arndt noted – first usurped dominion over the country, and then, when finally expelled from it, they ascribed the main roles in European conflict to themselves, completely ignoring the achievements of the Germans.<sup>710</sup> Interestingly, Arndt, a poet and historical writer, believed Germans to be an exception on a European scale: a racially pure nation untainted by alien blood, simply deserving an eminent position in the world (his racial theory was also recalled in later times in the Third Reich).<sup>711</sup> The postulated united German state ceased to be a purely philosophical entity when inspired by the “spirit of the nation.”<sup>712</sup>

Ideas developed in Germany throughout the Napoleonic Wars did not immediately dominate local historiography. They were hindered not only by the restoration period's conservative political order, but also by the influence of one of the most distinguished historians, Leopold von Ranke. After the war, this theoretician of the methodology of German historicism was accused of being a “precursor” to Nazism. In a way, the denunciation was paradoxical: the stipulation was that his theological vision of the state, implying its impeccability, was used to justify the Nazi state. For Ranke, history is “God's playground,” presided over by Providence, and thus historians should abstain from passing judgment. Indeed, Pieter Geyl observed that Ranke's works are

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708 Heinrich Ritter von Srbik, *Geist und Geschichte vom deutschen Humanismus bis zur Gegenwart*, vol. 1, Salzburg 1964, 170.

709 G. P. Gooch, *History and Historians in the Nineteenth Century*, London 1952, 60.

710 Ernst Moritz Arndt, *Schriften für und an seine lieben Deutschen*, Leipzig 1845, 409.

711 Ernst Moritz Arndt, *Volk und Staat. Seine Schriften in Auswahl*, ed. Paul Requadt, Stuttgart 1940, passim.

712 von Srbik, *Geist*, 171.

full of understanding for even the most drastic of events.<sup>713</sup> Ranke did not perceive world history as a linear route of development; instead, he assumed that every epoch of humanity is characterised by its own spiritual tendency that it tries to fulfil.<sup>714</sup> As he wrote, “every epoch stands immediately before God, and its worth is measured not according to that which it has left behind, but rather the very fact of its existence.”<sup>715</sup>

With all its reverence toward the past, such an approach to history demanded the establishment of a periodisation. Ranke rejected Hegel’s philosophy as the epitome of determinism, leaving no room for man’s free will, but he did not propose an equally far-reaching conception to match Hegel’s theory of the successive stages of human development. He believed that each epoch had its own ideals which we may try to grasp, but without ever managing to organize them in an immutable sequence of successive stages. History is the realm of God: “From the perspective of God’s idea,” Ranke wrote, “I cannot imagine it in any other way than that humanity carries in itself an inexhaustible multiplicity of possibilities, which surface interchangeably according to a rule we cannot know, more mysterious and elevated than we are accustomed to think it is.”<sup>716</sup> The epochal divisions he employed were practically limited to the region of which he believed himself to possess sufficient knowledge to propose a periodisation. As boundary dates, he used events from the history of ancient Greece, Rome, the Holy Roman Empire and France (e.g., the Reformation). In his view, each epoch was marked by a conflict of opposing powers, for example, the German idea of secular rule and the Roman Catholic idea of spiritual rule. It was not the historian’s prerogative to side with any of the competing ideas, as their competition and mutual complement to each other provided a necessary stability. There was generally only one event in human history which did not fit into that system because Christianity emerged through God’s direct intervention.<sup>717</sup>

Ranke’s understanding of history was characterised by a partial return to the broad, general perspective typical of the Enlightenment. The historian would not place the history of his own people at the centre of general history. In accordance with the principle of stability, political events contemporary to the historian were also viewed as if from a distance. Ranke did not perceive the unification of Germany under the aegis of Prussians as the desired “end of

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713 Pieter Geyl, *From Ranke to Toynbee. Five Lectures on Historians and Historiographical Problems*, Northampton 1952, 9.

714 Leopold von Ranke, *Historische Meisterwerke*, ed. Horst Michael, Hamburg 1929, 133.

715 Ibidem, 133-134.

716 Ibidem, 135.

717 Ibidem, 142.

history.” For him, all of the numerous German states were useful institutions, and he perceived the dominant Austro-Prussian dualism as Germany’s strength, not weakness.<sup>718</sup> As a faithful servant of the Prussian king, Ranke was far removed from the idea of any particular European power’s continental domination. His moderate views were based on a certain assumption pertaining to foreign policy, a sphere of action which he held in particular esteem. He believed that equilibrium between European powers was historically the key element of stability.<sup>719</sup> In broad syntheses of the history of England and France, which he wrote on the basis of research conducted in foreign archives (he also visited archives in Belgium, Italy, Germany and Spain), he maintained an objective focus, writing – as G.P. Gooch observes – as a European more than a German.<sup>720</sup> Attempting to describe the role Ranke played in German and international historiography, Gooch calls him “the Goethe of history.”<sup>721</sup> I find the comparison to a later historian, Fernand Braudel, far more attractive, given that Braudel – in an even broader territorial focus than Ranke – was capable of writing impressive books of true general history, though using economy rather than politics as his frame of reference.

Ranke’s objectivity did not consist in withholding the expression of any aspect of the author’s convictions, nor in providing a dry list of established facts.<sup>722</sup> His objectivity resulted more probably from the ground rules he set for himself as a historian: the rejection of the idea of a linear narrative of progress and – consequently – a reluctance to express opinion on historical figures and events.

Ranke’s influence on German historiography stemmed not solely from his methodological innovations, but also his pedagogical successes. The historian developed new methods for the critical analysis of sources, and the seminar he conducted became a widely replicated model. The success of his students might

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718 Wilhelm Mommsen, *Stein, Ranke, Bismarck. Ein Beitrag zur politischen und sozialen Bewegung des 19. Jahrhunderts*, München 1954, 89-92.

719 Geyl, *From Ranke*, 8.

720 Gooch, *History*, 87.

721 *Ibidem*, 97.

722 The fact that this brand of objectivity is sometimes tied to Ranke’s name prompted Herbert Butterfield’s general observation: “Great historians, indeed, have to be rescued from the cages into which their immediate successors try to confine them; and this is another service that can be performed by the history of historiography. It may even happen that initial misunderstandings about an historian will be greatly magnified through insistent reiteration and careless transmission. A paradoxical example of this is the prolonged currency in this country of the view that Ranke was a historian who had no ideas – and even disapproved of them – desiring to reproduce only ‘facts,’ only events as they actually happened.” – Butterfield, *Man*, 100.

serve as a measure of his achievement: they dominated German historiography even before their teacher's demise.<sup>723</sup>

Nevertheless, Ranke and his pupils faced competition in the guise of liberal-minded historians with diametrically opposed views on objectivity. Karl von Rotteck and Friedrich Christoph Schlosser, as well as Georg Gottfried Gervinus, treated history primarily as a means of character formation. The task of the historian was to point the readers (as well as nations, that is, collective readers) to the proper manners of conduct. The assignment of grades, historical depictions as dictated by the concept of freedom, and a faith in progress found numerous analogies in Romantic historiography outside Germany (among others, in the works of Joachim Lelewel). In the preface to *Weltgeschichte für das deutsche Volk*, Schlosser wrote that "the main task of the author was to represent content, rather than expressing the tone of given period's literature; to excite every free soul through contact with the work, rather than encouraging literary criticism. The author assumed that the free spirit of an unconstrained man can understand this better than the captive mind of the scholar, desirous of glory, and entangled in low pursuits."<sup>724</sup> Gervinus believed that the historian should primarily judge his own times.<sup>725</sup> In history, on the other hand, he saw a combat between the democratic ideas inspired by the spirit of the Reformation and the aristocratic structures, rooted in the Middle Ages and monarchic absolutism.<sup>726</sup>

The youngest of the liberal historians, Georg Gottfried Gervinus, went so far as to define the rightful place of this school in the academic world of Germany in the later 1800s. In his view, Ranke was not political enough, which, in fact, meant that he was a conservative because a lack of bias in historiography inexorably led to the consolidation of the status quo. Another reference point for Gervinus was the so-called Prussian school. Its representatives in the period directly preceding the Springtime of the Peoples, the liberals Friedrich Christoph Dahlmann and Johann Gustav Droysen (who edited the liberal-patriotic *Deutsche Zeitung* together with Gervinus) were in his opinion too political, having been constrained by the Prussian-German authorities whom he himself deemed a military dictatorship.<sup>727</sup>

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723 Gooch, *History*, 117-120; see also Rudolf Vierhaus, "Ranke und die Anfänge der deutschen Geschichtswissenschaft", in: *Geschichtswissenschaft in Deutschland. Traditionelle Positionen und gegenwärtige Aufgaben*, ed. Bernd Faulenbach, München 1974, 20-25.

724 Friedrich Christoph Schlosser, *Weltgeschichte für das deutsche Volk*, vol. 1, Frankfurt am Main 1844, XXII.

725 Gondolf Hübinger, *Georg Gottfried Gervinus. Historisches Urteil und politische Kritik*, Göttingen 1984, 221.

726 Gooch, *History*, 104.

727 *Ibidem*, 9 & 220.

The development of the Prussian school, as well as the evolution of some of Ranke's pupils, were strictly related to the program for German unification. The liberals were hoping for a strong state that would safeguard individual freedoms. Many of them pinned their hopes for unification on a Prussia increasing in strength. However, these hopes were very far removed from a liberal program (a fact painfully experienced by delegates to the parliament of 1848). The dilemma faced by liberals pertained to the hierarchy of values – to simplify, one could say that despite persistent support, liberal positions were soundly defeated in 1848, when it transpired that there was no real force capable of enacting the national program. A repository of this necessary force, the conservative Prussia, on the other hand, was (according to numerous liberals) capable of unifying the country. A sizable group of the revolutionary period's nationalist activists decided in the latter 1800s to pin their hopes on the Prussian state, pushing the liberal program to the side. Chief among them were historians. Otto Hinze named this phenomenon “a spiritual process by which the nation of poets and philosophers created for itself a state.”<sup>728</sup>

Heinrich von Treitschke, Heinrich von Sybel, Hermann Baumgartner and Wilhelm Dilthey also espoused views different from those of Ranke. While he was more of a moderate conservative from the restoration period, who was attached to the idea of an efficient, enlightened absolutism and the concept of the European balance of power, they opted for national liberalism and criticised his objectivity. Historians of the Prussian school openly expressed a commitment to support the policies of their state. In their view, then, historical objectivity could only mean not falsifying facts. It was perhaps Ranke's successor both at the university and in the role of Prussian state historiographer, Heinrich von Treitschke, and also Sybel (one of Ranke's pupils), who most vehemently rejected Ranke's views in this regard.<sup>729</sup> The latter commented on his tutor: “A historian who endeavours to retreat into an elevated neutrality will irrevocably become soulless and pretentious, and even if he conducts his research in the most thorough manner and expresses his thoughts in the most apt and decorative way, he will never attain the heights of real nature, with its depth, warmth, freedom.”<sup>730</sup> The goal of the historian was not objectivity at all, but

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728 Otto Hintze, *Soziologie und Geschichte. Gesammelte Abhandlungen zur Soziologie, Politik und Theorie der Geschichte*, ed. Gerhard Oestreich, Göttingen 1964, 453.

729 Walter Bußmann, *Treitschke. Sein Welt – und Geschichtsbild*, Göttingen 1952, 201.

730 Heinrich von Sybel, “Über den Stand der neueren deutschen Geschichtsschreibung,” in: idem, *Kleine historische Schriften*, vol. 1, 349, quoted in: Jerzy Kałużny, *Opowiadanie historii w niemieckiej refleksji teoretycznohistorycznej i literaturoznawczej od późnego oświecenia do współczesności*, in: *Opowiadanie historii w niemieckiej refleksji*

rather the pursuit of truth. As Johann Gustav Droysen declared, “I do not seek to give more, or less, than a relative truth from *my own* point of view, the one I owe to my fatherland, my religious and political beliefs, and my times. A historian needs to possess the courage to admit his own limitations, as that which is limited is greater and richer than that which is limitless. An objective impartiality ... is inhuman. It is far more human to side with a party.”<sup>731</sup>

The difference of opinion between Ranke and the new school of history found perfect illustration in the dispute over German unity, which raged in the 1850s. In *Geschichte der deutschen Kaiserzeit* (1855), Wilhelm Giesebrecht depicted the empire as an oasis of culture in Medieval Europe. He identified the Hohenstaufens’ reign as the apogee of German history, stressing the universalist, “European” content of their politics. Giesebrecht was critical of the Saxon dynasty’s rule, just as he was of Northern and Eastern Germany’s impact on national culture and history. Responding to Giesebrecht’s book, Heinrich von Sybel stated that Germany’s progress was distorted by expansion into Italy, which wasted the country’s potential. The idea was far from new – similar statements were made, for instance, by Johann Gottfried Herder, who wrote that “the finest ... and least important of all jewels for the Germans was the Roman imperial crown; alone, it brought more misery upon the country than all the Tartar, Hungarian and Turkish invasions together. ... The German was cheated by the Italian; in Rome, German emperors and empresses were insulted, while German tyranny defiled Italy.”<sup>732</sup> According to Sybel, the only true and proper direction of expansion was the East. Soon, the Austrian professor Julius Ficker joined the dispute, criticising Sybel’s political engagement on the side of Prussia. Sybel responded in kind, pointing an accusatory finger at Ficker’s pro-Austrian sympathies.<sup>733</sup>

Indeed, the historical practice of representatives of the Prussian school depended on elements of liberal historiography, which were endowed with highly patriotic overtones. Droysen noted that the tendency toward the unification of the state had already existed among the early Hohenzollerns. Through the Reformation, they infused the German national idea with the spirit of Protestantism, which from then on became the determinant of true

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*teoretycznohistorycznej i literaturoznawczej od oświecenia do współczesności*, ed. Jerzy Kałużny, Poznań 2003, 24.

731 Quoted in Eberhard Straub, “Vorwort zur Neuauflage“, in: Johann Gustav Droysen, *Friedrich I. König von Preußen*, Berlin 2001, V.

732 Johann Gottfried Herder, “Myśli o filozofii dziejów,” transl. Jerzy Gałęcki, in: *Państwo a społeczeństwo*, 291.

733 Grabski, *Dzieje*, 481-484.

Germaness. Austria, on the other hand, lost its German roots in Catholicism and cosmopolitanism.<sup>734</sup>

In the Prussian state and the German empire, Treitschke saw primarily beauty and might typical of every great country, and particularly of the talented German nation. “The unprejudiced beholder,” he wrote, “of the majesty of history will see in the growth of our nation an even progress, so systematic, so certain, that our hearts brim with pride and hope.”<sup>735</sup> In the history of Germany, Treitschke saw the transformation process of spiritual powers, which at first found expression in the realm of culture, but then morphed into political, national, Protestant unity under the aegis of the Prussians.<sup>736</sup>

However, the differences between Ranke and the Prussian school did not consist solely in the rejection of Ranke’s idea of objectivity. A lack of objectivity was more likely an expression of a far more deep-seated dissimilarity in the understanding of history. One of the major “neo-Rankeists,” Max Lenz (incidentally, Josef Pekař’s teacher), pointed to the idea of German unification as the perfect illustration of these differences. He observed that the national-liberals did not connect their hopes for unification with Prussia out of a desire for any personal gain, but with German interests in mind. After unification, Prussia was expected to melt into the newly-formed national state, losing its distinction. By offering the Hohenzollerns the German crown in 1848, the liberals were therefore seeking to deprive them of the Prussian crown. They operated according to a unanimously accepted national-liberal dogma. For Lenz, this was the understanding of history which Ranke abhorred. In the days when liberalism shaped historical thought, Ranke sided not with the Whigs, but with the Tories.<sup>737</sup>

The fundamental methodological difference between the two perspectives on history lay in an entirely different approach to the idea of historical progress. In his *Historik*, Droysen defined precisely these two mutually contradictory manners of describing the past. The first, where the scholar focuses on the ethical horizon of every epoch and culture, enables the ordering and translation of events and human actions in terms of a particular epoch and culture. The second, toward which Droysen himself was predisposed was based in a search for the moments in the past which anticipated the coming of a new, more

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734 Droysen, *Friedrich I.*, 169, see also Gooch, *History*, 129.

735 Heinrich Treitschke, *Briefe*, ed. Max Cornicelius 1913-1920, vol. 2, quoted in Bußmann, *Treitschke*, 99.

736 Ulrich Langer, *Heinrich von Treitschke. Politische Biographie eines deutschen Nationalisten*, Düsseldorf 1998, 358.

737 Max Lenz, *Kleine historische Schriften*, München, Berlin 1910, 394-395.

progressive order. Such a perspective allowed for the description of human struggles, victories and failures, on the road toward progress.<sup>738</sup>

Questioning Ranke's methodological assumptions had serious consequences for the historians of the Prussian school. A German-centric vision of history, culminating in the formation of the Reich, did not leave much room for further development toward progress. Generally speaking, the goal was already achieved. At the end of the road stood a German state that was neither the aggregation of individual citizens nor the realisation of their will. This state was the embodiment of freedom – the stronger it got, the more freedom it offered.<sup>739</sup> Hence, national-liberals leaned more and more toward conservatism. The youngest exponent of this approach, Heinrich von Treitschke, once an ardent proponent of English Whig historiography, soon ceased to perceive England as the realisation of his political ideals. "The old Treitschke condemned parliamentary reforms with the same vehemence he had applied in his youth to damning the Tories. Since the British had succumbed to the tyranny of 'public opinion,' the German state evidently offered much more freedom."<sup>740</sup> In a way, the fulfilment of the political objectives of the German national liberals deprived them of their rationale for existence. With the death of Treitschke in 1896, the Prussian school ceased to exist.<sup>741</sup>

From that point on, German historiography came to be dominated by historians who invoked Leopold von Ranke's works and accepted his principle of objectivity.<sup>742</sup> After the unification of Germany, however, his views came to be interpreted in a very peculiar manner. Lenz wrote of Ranke's "objective realism," analogising it to Bismarck's *Realpolitik*.<sup>743</sup> The concept of balanced European empires no longer attracted much interest as an interpretative tool, with Germany tightening its grip on the continent. "Neo-Rankists" apparently borrowed not only from Ranke, but also from the members of the Prussian school.<sup>744</sup> The most significant methodological battle of the late 19th century did

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738 Johann Gustav Droysen, *Historik. Vorlesungen über Enzyklopädie und Methodologie der Geschichte*, ed. Rudolf Hübner, München 1960, 343.

739 Ibidem, 353.

740 Charles E. McClelland, *The German Historians and England. A Study in Nineteenth-Century Views*, Cambridge 1971, 186.

741 Gooch, *History*, 145.

742 Fritz Hartung, "Otto Hintzes Lebenswerk," in: Otto Hintze, *Staat und Verfassung. Gesammelte Abhandlungen zur allgemeinen Verfassungsgeschichte*, ed. Gerhard Oestreich, Göttingen 1962, 9.

743 Elisabeth Fehrenbach, "Rankerenaissance und Imperialismus in der wilhelminischen Zeit", in: *Geschichtswissenschaft in Deutschland*, 55-56.

744 Ibidem, 65.

not focus on objectivity, however, but on the philosophical basis of historical research: the theory of cognition. Within German historiographic tradition, the commonly accepted view on cognition within the humanities, perhaps most fully expressed in the philosophy of Wilhelm Dilthey, was that it did not proceed in the same way as in the natural sciences. In the humanities, the hermeneut reconstructs the cultural context and interprets the object of his study anew each and every time, thereby approaching its truth. The search for a sense of history or faith in the progress of history belong to the metaphysical sphere, hence both are out of place in the work of the historian.<sup>745</sup> This approach to the humanities ran counter to the philosophical assumptions of positivism, whose impact on the work of German historians grew in significance toward the end of the 19th century.

The *Methodenstreit* between Karl Lamprecht and the “neo-Rankeists” to this day remains a sort of model, a reference point for participants in all later historical debates. Lamprecht criticised what he perceived as the basic guidelines of historicism, proposing in its stead a *Kulturgeschichte* – a historical endeavour spreading across all spheres of social and individual life, a total history.<sup>746</sup> In his opinion, the state was not the most fitting (nor actually, the only) object of interest for the historian. Neither did exceptional individuals captivate him: there was no room for the great national heroes in his works, as his exposition was all about materialism. Finally, Lamprecht questioned the possibility of hermeneutic cognition.<sup>747</sup>

Lamprecht aimed his critique straight at Ranke. He asserted that “The time of descriptive historiography is reaching its end, its dominion claimed by evolutionist historiography. Our work is no longer about describing, but about progress: we are facing the transformation of one fundamental rule of research into another.”<sup>748</sup> Though he renounced positivism, his theory and statements obviously displayed their positivist inspiration. Characteristic comparisons of historical and biological sciences led him to conclude that the ideal object of

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745 See Andrzej Miś, *Filozofia współczesna. Główne nurty*, Warszawa 1995, 135-150.

746 The question whether this particular principle of Lamprecht’s differed as significantly from Ranke’s thought remains unanswered. As Hans Cymorek notes, Ranke would likely offer his support to the concept of *Kulturgeschichte*, while at least a section of neo-Rankeists were hardly as methodologically conservative as Lamprecht believed. Hans Cymorek, *Georg von Below und die deutsche Geschichtswissenschaft um 1900*, Stuttgart 1998, 215-219.

747 Roger Chickering, “The Lamprecht Controversy,” in: *Historikerkontroversen*, ed. Hartmut Lehmann, Göttingen 2000, 18.

748 Karl Lamprecht, *Alternative zu Ranke. Schriften zur Geschichtstheorie*, ed. Hans Schleier, Leipzig 1988, 137.

study for both is an organism (human or state) in all its spheres of activity. In his view, economic and social history were indelibly tied to the history of art – his source of inspiration for the periodisation of general history. Lamprecht was convinced that all historical events belonged to a causal chain: any suggestion that history might be irrational was soundly rejected.<sup>749</sup>

As I already mentioned, Lamprecht's theses were opposed by the "neo-Rankists," primarily young historians who, in later years, played significant roles in German historiography (Felix Rachfahl, Hermann Oncken, Georg von Below, Friedrich Meinecke). They vehemently criticised both Lamprecht's claims concerning the philosophy of history (rejecting primarily his Western positivism), as well as examples of the unreliability and arbitrariness peppering his works. His divisions of history into eras raised significant doubts because they were unrelated either to the periodisation approved by legal or political historians, but rather rooted in analogies between the history of art and economic history. For instance, Lamprecht wrote of the "intensity" of particular styles of art, which he found comparable to the level of economic development in particular eras. At the same time, he acerbically criticised idealism, dubbing it an "easy" interpretative scheme susceptible to the omission of myriad details shaping the life of societies.<sup>750</sup>

On the face of it, the result of this dispute seemed unequivocal: German academic historiography disowned Lamprecht, proved his reliability lacking in terms of research, and did not exhibit significant interest in his methodological concepts. Still, the reception of Lamprecht's positions abroad was far more positive.<sup>751</sup> Even in Germany, Lamprecht enjoyed a significant impact on the development of regional historiography. His ideas, laying stress on the ethnic community rather than the state and its institutions, were widely referenced in the interwar period. He was cited by representatives of the *Ostforschung*, writing of the cultural achievements of Germans in the East, as well as proponents of the *Westforschung*, raising analogous issues in relation to German-French relations. His concepts were also referenced in the so-called *Volksgeschichte*.<sup>752</sup>

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749 Ibidem, passim.

750 Ibidem, 258 & 189.

751 Grabski, *Dzieje*, 584-591.

752 Chickering, "The Lamprecht," 26-28. The fact that Lamprecht's works were cited also during the Nazi period obviously cannot be held against him: a historian should not be held accountable for the way posterity makes use of his work. The connection to *Volksgeschichte* is of considerable interest, however, as Lamprecht himself approached pan-Germanic nationalism politically. In these terms, then, one could hardly speak of any "perversion" of the essence of his thought.

There are several issues within German historiographic traditions which could potentially play a significant part in Marxist studies, both in terms of methodology and politics. Marxists could relate to the liberal and patriotic historiography of the early 19th century, Though idealist, this brand of historiography was also dialectical and accepting of the laws of historical progress. The stumbling block in this regard was Leopold von Ranke. On the one hand, his political conservatism – the rejection of linear progress (outside of technical thought), or the assignment of a primary role to foreign policies – were unacceptable in Marxist historiography. On the other hand, the intellectual formation which followed Ranke in German historiography – the Prussian school – rejected Ranke not only in terms of methodological ideas, but also because of their German chauvinism, which Marxists would not assess in favourable terms. Finally, Lamprecht, whose positivist methodology approximated historical materialism to a certain degree, also held extremely right-wing political views. The wealth of German historiographic traditions thus proved to be a huge problem for Marxist-Leninists of the GDR.

## Dilemmas of Polish Historiography since the Late 18th Century

German historiography of the 19th and early 20th century was an obvious reference point and inspiration for historians in countries of East Central Europe. Other sources were also in use, of course, such as Romantic historiography – often of French origin – or positivism from France and England, but for the most part, Czech, Slovak and Polish historians (not to mention their numerous peers in the West) looked to Germany as a reference point. Of historiographies that are discussed in this text, only the German fails to conform to the formula devised by Josef Macůrek in relation to Central and Eastern European historical sciences, according to which the only feature distinguishing Eastern European historiographies from their Western counterparts was their backwardness.<sup>753</sup> German historiography was always among the finest of Europe. It was a source for guidelines concerning historical work and criticism, as well as the origin of the idea of the historical seminar. Part of the reason for its success lay with personal connections: many historians from East Central Europe studied in Germany.<sup>754</sup> For numerous writers, German historiography also became an

753 Josef Macůrek, *Úvahy o mé vědecké činnosti a vědeckých pracích*, Brno 1998, 91.

754 This subject demands separate treatment. Maciej Janowski writes of the impact Georg Waitz or Robert Mohl had on Michał Bobrzyński, and Waitz alone on Josef Pekař – see Maciej Janowski, “Three historians,” *CEU History Department Yearbook 2001-2002*,

adversary in journalistic and scientific debates. Tracing the methodological concepts inspired by German examples (or drawn from the same sources as their German counterparts), one has to keep in mind that the reception of historiography is neither straightforward nor unequivocal. Even if one ignores the obvious fact that every reading may be understood in a myriad of different ways, one cannot (and should not) construe straightforward connections between a Western methodological source and its East Central European counterpart. A difference in political, social and historical relations in each case colours common scientific concepts in a different way. Few historians look to a singular methodological influence – to call someone a “positivist” hardly makes for an exhaustive description. Typically, scholars summon a number of sources, borrowing from, for example, Ranke’s concept of progress (or rather, lack thereof), but also from some of the claims made by Lamprecht (this mixture seems prevalent in East Central Europe). Below, I will reflect on different visions of national history as well as detail the context of Polish, Czech and Slovak historiography to a larger extent than previously, while putting methodological concepts (that relate mainly to references from German historiography) in the background.

Polish historians of the Enlightenment era – particularly the most celebrated of them, Adam Naruszewicz – supported a powerful and enlightened centralised government, and wrote their works from the point of view of the state rather than the gentry. Consequently, Naruszewicz found the “absolutist” reign of the Piasts, who held the country in a tight grip, especially arresting and valuable, while the liberties of the gentry and the magnates appeared to him for the most part as a reason for the Commonwealth’s demise and as a serious threat to the state’s future. In Naruszewicz’s opus, the six volumes of the *Historia narodu polskiego* (History of the Polish Nation), published between 1780 and 1786, aside from a professional approach to the issue, rooted in a thorough familiarity with the sources, readers found a political, monarchic program designed as a contingency plan for saving the Commonwealth from total collapse. Naruszewicz, alongside a host of Enlightenment-era thinkers and politicians, abandoned the idea of the nation as limited to the gentry and considered the term

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222-224. Writing about Palacký, Pekař underlined that the high school in Bratislava Palacký attended was associated with a German Protestant university – cf. Richard Georg Plaschka, *Von Palacký bis Pekař. Geschichtswissenschaft und Nationalbewußtsein bei den Tschechen*, Graz 1955, 11. Czech and Slovak national revivalists (Ján Kollár, Pavol Jozef Šafárik) graduated from the University of Jena; there are numerous similar examples. Mapping of the scientific influence of various German schools of history on Central and Eastern Europe, beyond state borders and national boundaries, seems a fascinating task.

in its political sense, as the totality of landowners. This redefinition of the term “nation” could hardly be called daring; some 18th-century authors suggested far more modern applications. “Nation – is a conglomerate of people sharing a common language, customs and mores, ensconced in a single code of law for all citizens,”<sup>755</sup> wrote Franciszek Salezy Jezierski, who also believed that the Commonwealth would not prosper without returning the once revoked freedom to the people.<sup>756</sup> The remaining portion of the definition quoted above refers to another previously mentioned trait of Enlightenment consciousness: “Nation and the reign of the nation are two separate things, even though it would seem that a nation cannot exist without a country, that is, its habitat, and then, that a country cannot exist without a government.”<sup>757</sup> Though in a later section of his work Jezierski drew from the example of the Italians to eventually concede that a nation can persist without a singular state, state and nation remained the main subject of the historical imagination of the creators of the Polish Enlightenment.

Toward the end of the 18th century, historians raised calls for a break with a strictly political history limited to a catalogue of rulers and the wars they conducted. This pushed interest in the meaning of the “nation” and the redefinition of that term to the forefront of historical thought. Naruszewicz included lawmaking, economy, and the development of the sciences among his interests – elements which decisively broadened the field of historical reflection. This new perspective served to highlight Poland’s backwardness as well as the potential (including the dormant force of the “nation,” regardless of the definition applied) which its rusty state apparatus was unable to fulfil. Only reform, a return to the road of progress, already followed by countries across Europe, could have saved the Polish state. This claim stood in stark contrast with past popular perspectives on the history of the Commonwealth, which saw Poland’s exceptional position as a virtue, not a vice – as Stanisław Staszic or Naruszewicz described it.

The brash, Cassandra-like claims championed by Naruszewicz soon proved to have been timely. His prophecies of the Commonwealth’s demise under the weight of its own impotence were proven to be true with a painful precision. Even though after the Second Partition, a group of authors promptly produced *O ustanowieniu i upadku Konstytucji polskiej 3 maja 1791* (Of the establishment and collapse of the Polish Constitution of May 3rd 1791), opposing the theory of a self-inflicted fall from grace with unequivocal condemnations of the rapaciousness of the partitioning states (and also a scathing critique of king

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755 Franciszek Salezy Jezierski, *Wybór pism*, Warszawa 1952, 217.

756 Serejski, *Naród*, 54.

757 Jezierski, *Wybór*, 217.

Stanislaus August's conduct), Naruszewicz's clearly stated question of responsibility for Poland's failure remained for years the basic problem of Polish historiography.

This penchant for assigning responsibility for the demise of the Commonwealth suited the general character of Enlightenment-era works, which viewed history primarily as a material for character formation and education, for depicting the good and bad routes of historical development. The Royal Society of the Friends of Learning (Towarzystwo Królewskie Przyjaciół Nauk), formed in the Duchy of Warsaw (established in 1807), assumed the task of producing a forthcoming history of the Polish nation: "The book of history, whose publication is planned by the Society, will not only contain the most detailed collection of facts, but also a genuine picture of the national character, considered as a source of the nation's rise, consolidation, and decline. National character is understood as the virtues and vices, or rather the good and bad habits, which, like winds pushing a ship, thrust it upon the boundless canvas of the ages, and either raise it to the heights of supreme glory, or plunge it deep into the abyss."<sup>758</sup> Stanisław Staszic perceived the tasks of national history in a similar manner. He saw history as marked by "firm deeds" that had a bearing upon the prospects of a nation, and the task of identifying those deeds was assigned to historiography. Writing in the same year in which the Royal Society of the Friends of Learning published its address, the thinker attempted to trace the events that shaped Polish history. Characteristically, Staszic focused on the demise of Poland rather than the causes of its revival under Napoleonic patronage: "The enfeeblement and impending collapse of monarchic power (while the magnates gained in might), the extension of privileges for the gentry, the repulsion of the people's claims to citizenship and the land, were all an evil growing steadily since Louis of Hungary until the death of Sigismund Augustus. It will be made apparent that even the glory of the reign of the Sigismunds was merely a persisting surface glimmer, reflecting off of past fame and the greatness of the nation. Inside, the political body was ill to the bone."<sup>759</sup>

Of course, the search for the causes of the Commonwealth's demise was not Enlightenment-era historians' only activity. Whether Poland enjoyed limited independence, or even none at all, historians continued to couple their ruminations with efforts to collect national memorabilia, reinforcing the traditions of a country which would reemerge again sometime in the future. A

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758 "Odezwa Towarzystwa Królewskiego Przyjaciół Nauk w sprawie prospektu historii narodu polskiego" (1809), quoted in *Historycy o historii*, vol. 1, 62.

759 Stanisław Staszic, "Jak powinna być pisana historia Polski" (1809), quoted in *Historycy o historii*, vol. 1, 75.

serious debate over Naruszewicz's claims began only when Joachim Lelewel presented his democratic, Romantic vision of Polish history. The notion of history as a means of character formation was retained, but the consensus of opinions on the causes of Poland's collapse and the prospects for its restitution had changed. One of the most striking differences between Lelewel's interpretation and the convictions of his predecessors was evident in the approach to the state: "At the root of Lelewel's concept of Polish history lay the belief that the republican form of government was the necessary, and also the 'natural' paradigm for unhindered progress."<sup>760</sup> Lelewel, politically a staunch republican, considered rule by the communes as the Slavs' primary and native form of rule (this belief was also shared by the exceptional Czech Romantic historian, František Palacký). Furthermore, according to the historian, not only did this form of government predominate in primordial Slavic communities, but it also served as a basis for the democracy of the gentry. Again, this contention highlights the disparity between Lelewel's and Naruszewicz's claims: instead of serving as proof of the region's backwardness with respect to other countries on the continent, the democracy native to Poland and other Slavic countries signified that "in terms of government, Poland was further ahead than the rest of Europe."<sup>761</sup> This politically backward Europe, however, affected the Commonwealth, causing deviations from the correct course of progress and imposing faulty, or even criminal, feudal rules upon the progressive state.

Lelewel's concept of national history often stood in stark contrast to the conceptions favoured by Enlightenment-era historians. For Lelewel, the reign of the despotic Piasts was a rejection of the ideals of rule by the communes – the Republic ought to have looked to its own past rather than apply experiences of the West. The collapse of the state was caused primarily by the countries that participated in the Partitions, with Poles cast in secondary roles. Lelewel's interpretation of national history had a fundamental political significance both for Polish internal disputes and in the European context. It collected arguments for the democratic outlook of Polish Romanticism, and it nurtured the patriotism of Poles who had been robbed of their own state. It was also a product of an unusual time, when Polish exiles tended to think of themselves as Europe's teachers and guides – whether because they belonged to a nation which experienced a suffering that made them more mature politically, or, as in Mickiewicz's works, because Poland constituted a mystical redeemer for the entirety of humanity, suffering for the sins of all. Lelewel's output also belongs to a period when Poles enjoyed a reputation for heroism in Europe's democratic

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760 Andrzej Wierzbicki, *Historiografia polska doby romantyzmu*, Wrocław 1999, 310.

761 Ibidem, 313.

circles, an opinion which, by and large, the historian shared, “All nations are bound in one indivisible family; in that family, no one is foreign, all are brothers.”<sup>762</sup>

The defeat of the anti-Russian uprising of 1863-1864 marked a breakthrough in Polish intellectual life, opening a new literary era (positivism), and inspiring new readings of national history. Furthermore, the uprising’s aftershock was soon compounded by the unparalleled collapse of France, the empire Poles had hoped would aid Poland’s political reconstitution as an independent state. Defeated France, forced to defer toward Russia as a necessary safeguard against a possible assault by Bismarck’s Germany, ceased to act as an attentive host to Polish political exiles. At the same time, the introduction of a constitutional monarchy in Austria, and especially the granting of autonomy to Galicia, with its two Polish universities, meant that, even before Sedan, moderate Polish émigrés in France were considering siding with the Habsburgs in hopes of attaining at least a partial independence. In Galicia itself, a new current of historical thought, known as the Kraków school, emerged, taking an oppositional stance toward Lelewel (though not unequivocally).

Rev. Walerian Kalinka and Józef Szujski, two historians most frequently named as the founders of the new school (next to Stanisław Smolka and Michał Bobrzyński), embraced the output of the Polish Enlightenment, stressing the firm ties between Polish and general history. Their attitude toward historians of the Romantic era, on the other hand, was far more critical. According to Szujski, the historiographic efforts of Lelewel and his followers were simultaneously unprofessional and overly tendentious: “Nothing is as common as the use of history, especially among us. ... It is used as a weapon – quotidian, commonplace, stitched through with oversize platitudes and supposedly faultless dogmas. According to a fairly widespread belief, national history is completely removed from the currents of general history, a tool that only serves our current aspirations, a humble servant to political views and a boundless source of bombastic dictums.”<sup>763</sup>

Historians associated with the Kraków school saw the causes of the demise of the Commonwealth in a similar light as did Naruszewicz or Staszic. In the preface to the book *Ostatnie lata panowania Stanisława Augusta. Dokumenta do historii drugiego i trzeciego podziału* (The final years of the reign of Stanisław August: Documents to the history of the Second and Third Partition, 1868)

762 Joachim Lelewel, *Polska; dzieje i rzeczy jej*, vol. 20, Poznań 1864, 421; quoted in Andrzej Wierzbicki, “Lelewel i Ojczyzna,” in: *W kręgu historii*, 48.

763 Józef Szujski, “Wstępna prelekcja otwierająca kurs historii polskiej” (1869), quoted in *Historycy o historii*, vol. 1, 143.

Walerian Kalinka wrote: “The source of our political impotence, and therefore, the main, if not the only cause of the collapse, were ... those countless deficiencies of the national character, displayed by and large by the entire ruling class of the time, which found their ultimate embodiment in notorious insolents, from Zborowski and Zebrzydowski down to the last hetmans of the Commonwealth.”<sup>764</sup>

The critique which Szujski or Kalinka levelled at Lelewel and his successors only marginally touched upon the problem of methodological principles – or at least, in a manner quite distant from our contemporary perception of it. Though they accused their predecessors of manipulations leading to the exploitation of history for political or philosophical arguments, the works of the earliest exponents of the Kraków school were not entirely devoid of personal opinion. In their critique, the members of the school did not construct a general opposition between an ideological history and an objective history, but rather they condemned a false ideology, demanding that a different philosophical construct take its place. For Szujski, to a far larger extent than for Leopold von Ranke, the emergence of Christianity shaped all other historical processes. It was Christianity that moulded the concept of humanity and the national idea (which is why, Szujski wrote, Greeks and Romans had not constituted distinct nationalities in their time). The rule of history stated that nations transform into states. Poland abandoned this natural route of progress: “In the West, nations die out, leaving states in their wake, but in Poland, the state organism dies in the face of a increasingly self-sufficient nation.”<sup>765</sup> Still, with the idea of history rooted in Christianity, one could share the Romantics’ hope for independence. Though Szujski thought of the state as a significant factor and desirable entity, he did not profess that its absence must necessarily precipitate the disappearance of a nation: “Only Christian nations share in unending progress and immortality,” he wrote, “only Christian nations possess the privilege of constant rebirth, as it is guaranteed to them through the idea, not contained in them, but standing beneath them, an idea that does not age, that always returns with renewed energy: the idea of the reunification of humanity.”<sup>766</sup>

Slavs, and Poles in particular, became active participants in world history only when converted to Christianity. Szujski named the Baptism of Poland a “Piast revolution,” meaning a reconfiguration of loosely tied lands of the

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764 Walerian Kalinka, “Ostatnie lata panowania Stanisława Augusta. Dokumenta do historii drugiego i trzeciego podziału [Przedmowa]” (1868), quoted in *Historycy o historii*, vol. 1, 339.

765 Józef Szujski, *O fałszywej historii jako mistrzyni fałszywej polityki. Rozprawy i artykuły*, Warszawa 1991, 43.

766 *Ibidem*, 25.

Norman Lechites into a Slavic state.<sup>767</sup> In European terms, the Piast state made the right choice in bonding with the Papacy against the barbaric German empire, as well as against the Byzantine civilisation (whose impact Szujski traced also in the Medieval history of Germany). Since the first elective kings, the history of Poland became “a veritable deluge, a muddle of forces and drives consuming one another, a storm of elements which never achieved harmony.”<sup>768</sup>

Poland, born with the assumption of Christianity and unhappily torn apart from the proper route of progress, instinctively grasped for some means of renewal. Szujski acknowledged the efforts of the reformers of the Great Diet, and even noted Polish involvement in the Napoleonic epic: “Napoleon seemed destined to replace all the Medieval rubble with the rule of the nation whose greatness elevated him and made him a potentate. Such was the root of inspiration that made Poles join the Legions and die in the ices of Berezina. But every great idea has to mature before it can turn into a reality. Napoleon fell and understood it only in seclusion, on a lonely isle in the Atlantic.”<sup>769</sup> According to Szujski, the situation changed only with the failed January Uprising: “Today, with enfranchisement complete, it transpires that conspirators are thoroughly in the wrong, while those who favour normal, organic work are absolutely right!”<sup>770</sup> Szujski stressed the historical analogy between the perversions of the democracy of the gentry and the unceasing irredentism of the post-January Uprising period, between *liberum veto* and *liberum conspiro*: “Just as *liberum veto* turned into Targowica after the Constitution of May 3rd, so *liberum conspiro* after the emancipation of the folk would bring about another [national calamity like Targowica - MG], only in a far scarier form. It is not freedom – it is socialism; it is not independence – it is being devoured by Moscow!”<sup>771</sup>

Neither political conservatism, nor methodological positivism are terms which could exhaustively describe the Kraków school in all of its guises. To a far larger extent, the positivist approach to writing history – whether in the sense of employing modern methods of historical research and an objective analysis of collected material, or in the sense of an acceptance of positivism’s philosophical dogmas – applies to the youngest exponent of the school, Michał Bobrzyński. In his interpretation of Polish history, Bobrzyński did not rely solely on a conservative, Catholic worldview, but also on sociological and political analogies between the West and Poland. He believed that “Historians who endeavour to reconstruct an image of the historical progress of humanity from

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767 Ibidem, 27.

768 Ibidem, 48.

769 Ibidem, 66.

770 Ibidem, 200.

771 Ibidem.

isolated facts, or manifestations of life, must assess and analyse these phenomena by depending on sound scientific bases (i.e., social and political sciences), analysing the social life of man and deciphering the conditions and laws on which it relies.”<sup>772</sup> Bobrzyński considered the adjustment of facts to suit worthless philosophical beliefs just as pernicious as the principled rejection of any philosophy of history in order to shape views of the past exclusively on the basis of established facts. In the spirit of his time, just like Karl Lamprecht, Bobrzyński explained his beliefs with resort to natural sciences: “Every historian can be compared to a paleontologist, who dug up some remnants of several prehistoric animals somewhere. He found bones – not a complete skeleton, of course – and also traces of skin and hair. From the remnants, the paleontologist should reconstruct the prehistoric animals and reproduce an image of each of them. If he applies to this work an arbitrary conviction, for example, that the animals of that period were half-fish and half-bird, he will use the excavated remnants of fish and birds to construct bird-fish creatures that never existed. If he should seek to prove that all animals walked in an upright position, he will place all leg pieces at the bottom, beneath the spinal column, like the historian, who claims that Slavic peoples were originally ruled by love and virtue alone with no need for law or punishment, and who reconstructs some contrived, incredible oddities out of the historical traces of those peoples of yore. However, if the learned naturalist endeavours to place those remnants in their original order solely on the basis of a detailed analysis, without any predetermining forethought, he will promptly give up his work. After all, no bone cleaves to another bone so strongly that it always remains stuck there. There were once sinews and flesh between them that have decomposed, and sometimes even bones dissolve. Hence, there is nothing left for him to do but clean every single bone, describe it, put in separate boxes, and fill a whole cabinet with them. What lesson does such science teach?”<sup>773</sup>

Bobrzyński favoured the use of the rules which social sciences had applied to the study of homogeneous entities, primarily nations and states. Analogies to Lamprecht’s methodological ideas lead us to believe that in his positive postulates, particularly with relation to the periodisation of history, Bobrzyński operated on a far more solid basis, dividing historical eras according to their forms of government.<sup>774</sup> It seems that the difference between Polish and German positivists (because, in the eyes of their contemporaries, and also later

772 Michał Bobrzyński, “W imię prawdy dziejowej” (1879), quoted in Michał Bobrzyński, *Dzieje Polski w zarysie*, ed. Marian Serejski & Andrzej Feliks Grabski, Warszawa 1977, 416.

773 *Ibidem*, 415.

774 See Janowski, “Three Historians,” 203-206.

commentators, both Lamprecht and Bobrzyński, and Josef Pekař also, belong in this group) stems in part from the different recipients of their critiques. Lamprecht tussled with Ranke; and, attempting to create a philosophy of history that could rival historicism, he emphasised the role of all-encompassing theories, enabling the placement of history in a framework of (progressively) successive epochs. Bobrzyński, fighting against the successors of Polish Romanticism, criticised their idealism, their detachment of Poland from historical processes taking place in the West, and their excessive reliance on creating philosophical frameworks for history. Some of his beliefs would perfectly suit Ranke and his followers, rather than Lamprecht. Hence, Bobrzyński belongs among the historians from East Central Europe who responded in a highly creative manner to the various methodological concepts coming from the West, transforming them and enriching them in new contexts.

The application of Bobrzyński's methodological concepts in his magnum opus, *Dzieje Polski w zarysie* (An Outline of the History of Poland), produced an interpretation of history that completely abandoned Romantic ideas, but also differed from the historical interpretations shaped by the Kraków school's elder exponents. Even Bobrzyński's chapter titles betrayed the historian's disposition toward the events described: "The weak and shortsighted policies of Sigismund I forfeit the historical mission of the nation and cause anarchy," "The Reformation: Gentry fails in its battle against anarchy and its pursuit of reform in the Commonwealth," "Return to Catholicism: Sigismund III wastes the fruits of Stephen Batory's hard labour." It was anarchy among the magnates, along with the weakness of the government, that led to the collapse of the Commonwealth. Bobrzyński rejected the idea of Slavic primacy in forming democracy, but lauded all phenomena which tied Poland to Western culture. Even when moralising, the historian did not adopt the overly religious tone typical of the elder representatives of the Kraków school.<sup>775</sup>

The theory of a self-inflicted collapse (authoritatively supported by a positivist science striving for critical objectivity), along with the conservatism and overt Catholicism of the Kraków school historians (with each of those traits present in varying degrees in the outlook of particular exponents) sparked a vehement reaction from those who were incapable of cherishing the liberties available in autonomous Galicia, as well as from those with a strong affinity for a different, less self-critical view of national history. The outrage at Kraków historians' critical analyses of the national past was distinctly palpable in the so-called Warsaw school, formed in the 1870s and 1880s. Its members – such as Tadeusz Korzon and Władysław Smoleński – shared Michał Bobrzyński's belief

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775 Ibidem, 206-207.

that history is governed by laws which can be unearthed with the use of social sciences, yet, at the same time, they negated Bobrzyński's objectivity in his pursuit of historical truth. Smoleński wrote: "Bobrzyński, like Szujski, is a doctrinaire, merely of a different kind. Szujski desires to bind Catholicism with Medieval scholastics and asceticism in the framework of an absolute monarchy. Bobrzyński, on the other hand, excludes moral and religious rules from politics, and approves of all methods, so long as they curb the people's self-sufficiency and enable a strong government fashioned after the Byzantine model."<sup>776</sup>

The Warsaw historians rejected claims of Poland's self-inflicted demise, proposing in its stead the thesis that Poland engaged in a modernising effort just before the final defeat, undergoing a period of revitalisation, which would have resulted in a new prosperity, were it not for the brutal violence of the states engaged in the Partitions: Russia, Austria, and Prussia. Still, since the Enlightenment, Poland was again on the right track of history and, sooner or later, it would have reclaimed its rightful place among the countries of Europe (this last claim was seldom expressed openly due to limitations instated by Russian censorship).<sup>777</sup> It seems that the conflict between the Warsaw school and the Kraków historians (Bobrzyński in particular) resulted from differences in worldview rather than in methodological approaches. Historians on both sides of the barricade used the same methods of analysis and offered similar critiques of their sources, and they shared similar philosophical beliefs. Criticising Bobrzyński, Smoleński seemed not to notice these similarities, or at least, he considered them less important than the fact that Bobrzyński was a conservative, a Catholic and a high-ranking Austrian official.

At the turn of the century, exchanges between the conservative historians from Kraków and the liberals from Warsaw were replaced by a far more volatile conflict of belief, and the ties between historiography and politics became even more pronounced than before, judging by the categories applied to these disputes. Historians of Polish historiography without hesitation referred to "national-democratic," "conservative," and "socialist" currents in the debate.<sup>778</sup> In more recent studies, divisions among Polish historians are often categorised according to three currents of thought: the traditional and conservative continuation of the Kraków school's historiography; the liberationist current, best represented by Szymon Askenazy; and the nationalist current, with representatives such as Waław Sobieski and Władysław Konopczyński, among

776 Władysław Smoleński, *Szkoły historyczne w Polsce (Główne kierunki poglądów na przeszłość)*, Wrocław 1952, 128.

777 See Grabski, *Zarys*, 139.

778 See Jerzy Maternicki, *Historiografia polska XX wieku, część I lata 1900-1918*, Wrocław 1982, 59.

others.<sup>779</sup> The fact that these divisions relate only marginally to the scientific outlook of the scholars involved highlights a certain deficit at the heart of the Polish history of historiography. It is useful to remember that, at least until the 1970s, Marxist scholars were also unable (or unwilling) to apply any viewpoint to their descriptions of “bourgeois” historiography other than the one rooted in a consideration of their particular worldview.

Wacław Sobieski, one of the outstanding representatives of the nationalist current, described two opposing tendencies in Polish historiography: the optimistic and the pessimistic. The latter was, in his view, represented by Kalinka, Szujski and Bobrzyński, though it found its perfect embodiment in the works of the youngest of the Kraków school historians. “Professor Bobrzyński’s stern judgment of our past,” wrote Sobieski, “though painful, would never have provoked such a spirited response if it was not for the Russian historians who borrowed from him eagerly and explained his claims in their own way.”<sup>780</sup> Władysław Konopczyński offered an even more brutal assessment of the attitudes of the young generation of historians toward Bobrzyński: “I recall how we pored over his audacious arguments on the beneficial role of the great despots – the Louises and Henrys, the Ferdinands and Ivans, on the wisdom of the aristocratic hierarchy which ruled Poland at the time of the Battle of Grunwald, on the ineptitude of the kindly kings and the do-nothing kings.... His schoolbook was a tad too big for us – and too foreign. Thanks to this, some of its lessons were missed. We did not grow to detest Polish history as much as we could have if we had soaked in all the bitterness and loathing toward traditional national sanctities expressed in *The History of Poland*, a text which we took as a confirmation of the poisonous teachings being served to us from the pulpit by the official educator.”<sup>781</sup>

Historians criticising Bobrzyński and other exponents of the Kraków school expressed the conviction that history should not only strive toward truth, but also provide the nation with documented reasons for taking pride in one’s own past. Critical works by Galician professors became unwitting instruments for the hated Russification, whereas, as Konopczyński asserted in the text cited above, “Nations must defend themselves from others’ loathing and self-inflicted dejection.”<sup>782</sup> Therefore, in 1890, at the 2nd Convention of Polish Historians, Tadeusz Korzon demanded that Polish historians condemn the Kraków school.

779 Grabski, *Zarys*, 147-150; Maternicki, *Historiografia*, 59-59.

780 Wacław Sobieski, “Optymizm i pesymizm w historiografii polskiej” (1908), quoted in *Historycy o historii*, vol. 1, 572.

781 Władysław Konopczyński, “O wartości naszej spuścizny dziejowej” (1918), quoted in: *ibidem*, 596-597.

782 *Ibidem*, 597.

Though the Convention ultimately fell short of a complete excommunication of conservative historiography, the first decades of the 20th century brought about an emphatic return to an “optimistic” vision of history. This wave of “conversions” culminated during World War I, when studies of the Polish past were often geared toward justifying the country’s existence. As Andrzej F. Grabski asserts, though, nearly all European historiographies of the period exhibit similar tendencies.<sup>783</sup>

Works produced by historians who, unlike Sobieski, were unrelated to the nationalist camp, were also often politically charged. New ideological boundaries between Polish historians replicated the general, national conflict between the biggest political camps – the Piłsudski camp and the National Democrats. Each camp was, in itself, quite heterogeneous, not only in scientific terms, but also in terms of ideology (a proponent of Piłsudski could have had any political background, as the Marshal was the decisive connector). The level of engagement in public service, understood in a highly particular way, also tended to vary: Marcei Handelsman, linked to the Piłsudski camp, accused Szymon Askenazy of fabricating national hagiography.<sup>784</sup> It is a crucial task for the history of Polish historiography to emphasize perspectives other than those of this dichotomous political division. Works of Polish historians of the 20th century also reflect the methodological dilemmas raised by German historians. Early into the century, Stanisław Zakrzewski transferred the Prussian school’s concept of the historical significance of “great men” into Polish history, criticising “Lamprechtian” novelties in economic history and associated historical sciences.<sup>785</sup> Polish historians often mentioned cultural history as the most likely future focus of historiography. Marcei Handelsman wrote of the problem of possibility and inescapability in history, which had come to the attention of German historians as well.<sup>786</sup> Stefan Czarnowski, on the other hand, expressed the belief that “to satisfy the task of the historian, it is essential for him to become a sociologist.”<sup>787</sup> Conflicts of belief and a given scholar’s political orientations were overlaid with various methodological inspirations whose diversity equalled the variety found in other 20<sup>th</sup> century European countries.

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783 Grabski, *Zarys*, 153.

784 Józef Dutkiewicz & Krystyna Śreniowska, *Zarys historii historiografii polskiej*, vol. 3., Łódź 1959, 134.

785 Stanisław Zakrzewski, “Kultura historyczna” (1906), quoted in *Historycy o historii*, vol. 1, 526-531.

786 See Marcei Handelsman, “Możliwości i konieczności w procesie historycznym” (1931), quoted in *Historycy o historii*, vol. 2.

787 Stefan Czarnowski, “Metoda socjologiczna a historyczna” (1939), quoted in *ibidem*, 193.

In other words, the traditional conflict of belief among Polish historians gained a new meaning in the 20th century. The subject of the debate changed as well: scholars no longer focused solely on the causes of the Commonwealth's demise. Andrzej F. Grabski singled out two competing historical orientations in the interwar Polish state: Western and Eastern, or the Piast and Jagiellon camps. The former Western-Piast orientation was dominated by proponents of a nationalist ideology. Aside from elder scholars, whose careers began in the previous century, this camp was represented by younger historians such as Zygmunt Wojciechowski (incidentally an outstanding expert in the history of Medieval law). Proponents of this orientation eagerly addressed subjects such as the beginnings of the Polish state or struggles against the Germans, and were particularly opposed to specific beliefs shared by their German counterparts (e.g. beliefs concerning the German cultural mission in the East). Zygmunt Wojciechowski formulated the concept of "indigenously Polish territories," which were said to match the territories of Poland during the early Piasts. Ideas shared by historians adhering to this camp, in particular the principle of a return to the "natural" borders in the West, dominated the political imagination of Polish politicians during the Nazi occupation.<sup>788</sup> They also played a significant part in the historiography and political propaganda of prewar Poland.

In the interwar period, the "Piastist" doctrine faced opposition in the guise of a strong "Jagiellonian" current represented by historians such as Oskar Halecki or Ludwik Kolankowski. These historians developed different strands within the same historical school. While Halecki's concepts were rooted in the idea of voluntary cooperation between Poland and Lithuania in a federated state, Kolankowski sided with historians who emphasised the Polish role as "Kulturträgers" in relation to Lithuanians, Ukrainians and Belorussians. Hence, the conflict boiling at the heart of this current of Polish historiography was rooted in a discord between scholars who interpreted the Commonwealth as a manifestation of cooperation between independent nations, and those who believed it to have been the product of the political expansion of the Polish state and nation. This was a discord between the historical programs of federation and incorporation.<sup>789</sup>

The interwar period not only shifted the focus of Polish historical debates, but it also sparked a thorough reconstruction of the conditions of scholarly work in history. No longer did historians need to tackle restrictions imposed by occupying governments or evade the grasp of Russian censorship. However, one

788 Włodzimierz Borodziej, "Wstęp" in: *Niemcy w Polsce 1945-1950. Wybór dokumentów*, eds. Włodzimierz Borodziej & Hans Lemberg, vol. 1, Warszawa 2000, 46-49.

789 Grabski, *Zarys*, 177-179.

could still be fired for espousing beliefs contradictory to the ideology of the ruling party (which is what happened to Waław Sobieski, among others). Working conditions undoubtedly improved, primarily in the territories of the Russian partition. Autonomous universities were crowded with students drawn not to corresponding worldviews so much as to historical methodology. These schools were able to offer steady work to exceptional scholars. New schools were formed by Marceli Handelsman, Waław Tokarz, and Franciszek Bujak; Władysław Konopczyński and Waław Sobieski were likewise surrounded by pupils. The two former scholars educated a whole string of historians who shaped the image of Polish historiography in the postwar era, for example, such historians as Tadeusz Manteuffel, Marian Henryk Serejski, Stanisław Arnold, Marian Małowist, Wanda Moszczeńska, Aleksander Gieysztor, or Henryk Jabłoński. The interwar decades also witnessed developments in the research of economic history (conducted by Bujak, Jan Rutkowski, Arnold, and Natalia Gąsiorowska-Grabowska). Polish historians could finally enjoy working conditions similar to those which had been available in other more fortunate countries for over a century before, and they promptly began narrowing the methodological distance that had developed under foreign rule. In this respect, the congress of the Comité International des Sciences Historiques which took place in Warsaw in 1933, achieved a symbolic status.

## Czech Historiography in the Shadow of the National Revival

The historiography of the Enlightenment period played no less a significant part in meditations on the status of state and nation in Bohemia than the works of Naruszewicz, Kołłątaj, or Staszic did in Poland. Nevertheless, conditions faced by Czech scholars affected the political resonance of their works in a manner different than that traced in the works of Polish historians. During the reform efforts under the reign of Joseph II, historians sided with the gentry of Bohemia in a defence of its class privileges, implicitly opposing a strong, centralised government. The centralisation of power in Vienna would have inevitably led to a restriction of the historical rights of the Kingdom of Bohemia. At the same time, as evident in Mikuláš Adaukt Voigt's *Über den Geist der böhmischen Gesetze* (1788), a defence of these rights paved the way for the formation of a history of the Czech nation as an entity distinct from the other constituent nations of the Habsburg monarchy.<sup>790</sup> In describing any of the currents of the

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790 Kutnar & Marek, *Přehledné*, 152-155.

19<sup>th</sup> century's national revivalism, one should remember that the scholar's gaze is inevitably ahistorical. Indeed, it was never a certain or established fact that books devoted to the history of the lands of Bohemia would affect the formation of the nation in the shape it took during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The alliance between the aristocrats indifferent to the Czech national idea almost by default and the scientists engaged in furthering the revival lasted almost until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>791</sup> Yet, Czech historians had addressed the issue of the Hussite movement already during the Enlightenment, at first depicting it mainly as a protest against the corruption of the Church. František Kutnar and Jaroslav Marek pointed out that Enlightenment thinkers, such as Josef Dobrovský, had not yet embraced the political role that was ascribed to historians during the Romantic period. Dobrovský himself, for instance, did not hesitate before publicising a "patriot's opinion," judging in 1825 that the Manuscript of Zelená Hora was a forgery intended to further the political goals of Czech national movement activists. His personal (highly pessimistic) beliefs on the future of Czech nationality and the Czech language were also unsuited to the program of the burgeoning national movement. The new generation of historians, spearheaded by František Palacký, treated history as a science tied fairly closely to the national cause, and often even subservient to it.<sup>792</sup>

The significance of František Palacký extends well beyond his work as a historian. The "father of the nation" was also a political – at first a moderately liberal, then conservative – leader of the Czech national movement. At the dawn of his political and scientific career, in the 1820s, the movement had barely developed; at his deathbed in 1876, the Czech nation was universally admired (at least in East Central Europe) for achieving a position equal to that of other respected European nations. His funeral established the pattern for Czech national ceremonies of mourning, even though no Czech state yet existed.<sup>793</sup> As a scholar, he shaped a coherent concept of Czech history, which in many aspects retains validity to this day. For later historians, Palacký became a reference point.

The creator of modern Czech historiography did not avoid critically evaluating the Czech national character and consistently strove to identify the

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791 Jiří Štaif, "Czech Historiography in the 30s to 60s of the 19th Century," in: *Jan Evangelista Purkyně in Science and Culture. Scientific Conference, Prague, August 26, - 30, 1987*, ed. Jaroslav Purš, Praha 1988, 123-126; Miroslav Hroch, *Na prahu národní existence. Touha a skutečnost*, Praha 1999, 75-78.

792 Kutnar & Marek, *Přehledné*, 165.

793 Vladimír Macura, "Poslední slova Františka Palackého," in: *František Palacký 1798/1998. Dějiny a dnešek. Sborník z jubilejní konference*, eds. František Šmahel & Eva Doležalová Praha 1999, 529-530.

deeper significance of Czech history, the historical destiny of Czechs and the human virtues peculiar to the nation. Much like Lelewel's work, his research produced a thesis on the possibilities and necessities of nationhood. In accordance with contemporaneous Romantic historiography, Palacký searched national history for traces of the spirit of freedom. It manifested itself with particular poignancy in two historical moments: the primary Slavic democracy (in this case, Palacký referred to works by Polish historians, Lelewel and Maciejowski),<sup>794</sup> and the Hussite revolution. Palacký devoted far more attention to the Hussite period than to any other period in the history of Bohemia, editing an enormous collection of sources for the history of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. For him, the Hussite period constituted the only moment in history when Bohemia outpaced Europe in terms of ideological development – when its name came to represent historical progress. Still, Palacký staunchly opposed all religious fanaticism and viewed the cruelties of the Hussite wars as an abomination. In time, his views on the period altered somewhat (in the 1860s, he stressed the Slavic tropes of the Hussite ideology much more emphatically), but his fundamental premises remained basically unchanged.<sup>795</sup>

Palacký was the first Czech historian to attempt to answer the question of the meaning of the history of Bohemia. From his perspective, it lay with Bohemia's confrontation with Germany, a view reflecting his general outlook on history, perceived dialectically as a conflict between opposing terms (body and spirit, democracy and feudalism, etc.).<sup>796</sup> This confrontation developed into an open struggle only very rarely, typically remaining confined to the spiritual sphere, with the peaceful coexistence of both nations unhindered; yet, for Palacký, it remained permanent and indelible.<sup>797</sup> In politics, Palacký, the author of a famous letter to the Frankfurt parliament, established the fundamental distinction between Czechs and Germans with uncommon clarity. The Czech historian was also set apart from numerous idealist and liberal German authors by his interpretation of the German idealists' philosophy of history. While he agreed that the logic of history was defined by the pursuit of freedom, he did not

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794 Josef Pekař, "Ke sporu o zádrhu staroslovanskou," *Český Časopis Historický* 1900, 243-265.

795 See Petr Čornej, "Ke genezi Palackého pojetí husitství," in: *František Palacký*, 123-135.

796 Karel Štefek stresses that the dialectic put forward by Palacký was not a restatement of the Hegelian concept, and the historian himself was by no means a Hegelian. Characteristically, the disparities between the two thinkers centred on the concept of free will and the capability for action among individuals who, in Palacký's opinion, were not subject to the universal laws of history. In this, Palacký accepted the perspective of Ranke. Karel Štefek, "Palacký a Hegel," in: *František Palacký*, 43-52.

797 Plaschka, *Von Palacký*, 17.

believe this pursuit to have reached its apex in the history of Prussia, nor did he accept that it should end with the realisation of the objectives of the German national movement. Since Germans continued to observe the feudal idea, true freedom should rather be sought in the history and destiny of the Czech Slavs.<sup>798</sup> In the key moment of the history of Bohemia, the Hussite period, Palacký discerned a struggle for freedom of conscience, as well as an iteration of the everlasting Czech-German (and democratic-feudal) conflict.

Palacký's role in shaping Czech national culture is even more impressive for the fact that at the time when he set out to write his works, the existence of a Czech nation was less easily accepted than was the case with the Polish nation. His most significant work appeared first in German (entitled *Geschichte von Böhmen, grösstentheils nach Urkunden und Handschriften*). He only got around to publishing a Czech edition some 12 years later. As a result, the binding of the "Czech cause" to universal values seemed natural and necessary not only to Palacký, but also to many subsequent Czech thinkers.<sup>799</sup>

Palacký's domination of Czech historiography and the popular imagination of the past had already faced challenges in the 19<sup>th</sup> century – from both political and methodological perspectives. The year 1854 saw the publication of *O synchronické metodě při dějepise rakouském*, written by Václav Vladivoj Tomek. Tomek (incidentally a student of Johann Gustav Droysen) proposed the creation of a history of the Austrian monarchy that would incorporate the national histories of its constituent parts. He defined the task of Austrian (and, by extension, also Czech) historians to be a research project that sought to understand the means by which the state they lived in was formed. Such a supranational perspective allowed Tomek to, for example, consider Ottokar II as the first ruler to ever attempt the unification of the lands of the later monarchy, and, by that same token, he could even include elements unrelated to the traditions of the ruling dynasty among the historical traditions of the state.<sup>800</sup> With regard to the role of the Catholic Church, an issue of particular significance to the Czech national consciousness, Tomek expressed quite a different opinion from that of the national-liberal majority, because he appreciated the role the Church played in integrating Czech society. Furthermore, he saw the Hussite movement as an historical anomaly of fatal

798 Štefek, "Palacký," 49.

799 See Piotr Wandycz, "Odrodzenie narodowe i nacjonalizm (XIX-XX wiek)," in: *Historia Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej*, ed. Jerzy Kłoczowski, vol. 2, Lublin 2000, 158.

800 Plaschka, *Von Palacký*, 30-31.

implications, claiming that “Hus ... had abandoned the path of progress which we had followed before his time.”<sup>801</sup> Tomek believed that the Hussite movement had caused the decline of the king’s power, which had been increasing in the period before the Hussites. Antonín Rezek also favoured strong, centralised governments, while criticising the oligarchic rule of the gentry.<sup>802</sup> Palacký’s views were placed under scrutiny from another angle as well, by Josef Kalousek, a devout Catholic of national-liberal persuasion, who defended claims concerning the authenticity of the manuscripts of *Zelená Hora* and *Dvůr Králové*. Kalousek considered Hus a Catholic and vehemently opposed all claims that he played a primary role in the Reformation (including those put forward by Palacký).<sup>803</sup>

Czech historiography of the Romantic period faced a different challenge from Jaroslav Goll (who earned his habilitation from the University of Prague in 1875, a year before Palacký’s demise). Goll did not seek to frame the entirety of national history with a particular philosophy of history. Neither did he share the conviction that a historian’s main task was to shape the tone of public debate. Goll unambiguously supported the legal government, siding with Austro-Hungarian authorities during the First World War (a fact which, after 1918, became a reason for the boycott of Goll by his fellow scientists). He introduced new, German rules for the analysis of sources, laying stress on the precision of their work, which prevented him also from forming his own synthesis of national history. This task was assumed by his students, of which Goll had scores, many of whom dominated Czech historiography up until 1945.<sup>804</sup>

Goll is usually typecast as a positivist, as is his school. In this context, however, “positivism” does not connote a philosophical perspective, but rather the so-called positivist, critical research attitude, with which Goll familiarised himself as a student in Göttingen. As far as his research perspective is concerned, he relied on German historicism, and particularly on Ranke, whose views on the task of the historian he shared.<sup>805</sup> The Czech historian rejected the idea of linear progress (incidentally a crucial aspect of positivist philosophy), opting against the inclusion of elements of sociology into history and

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801 Wáclav Wladivoj Tomek, “O stavovských nepokojích v zemích mocnářství rakouského za panování Rudolfa II. a Matyáše (mezi léta 1594 až 1614),” *Časopis Českého Musea* 1854, 240, quoted in Zdeněk Kalista, Josef Pekař, Praha 1994, 174.

802 Plaschka, *Von Palacký*, 51-55.

803 *Ibidem*, 46-50.

804 Kutnar & Marek, *Přehledné*, 384-399. Among Goll’s students were Josef Pekař, Wáclav Novotný, Josef Šusta, Jaroslav Bidlo, Gustav Friedrich, Kamil Krofta, Julius Glücklich, Rudolf Urbánek and also Zdeněk Nejedlý.

805 Kalista, *Josef Pekař*, 139.

approaching with utmost scepticism the idea of subjecting history to any kind of an overarching philosophy.<sup>806</sup> Like Michał Bobrzyński, among others, he believed that “Ethical values and historical events often go separate ways. Those who find this appalling should not seek solace in history. It teaches us that oftentimes the best plan is the one which is not chosen, that virtue is seldom rewarded. We find the idea of a world that does not improve unedifying, and this is what makes history worthless *ad usum delphini*. By itself, history does not promote optimism, though neither is it pessimistic. Nonetheless, ethics, as far as it is binding to everyone, apply likewise to historians and their work.”<sup>807</sup>

Goll’s belief in the ethical responsibilities of the historian compelled him to partake in the debate over the authenticity of the falsified manuscripts of Zelená Hora and Dvůr Králové, supposedly discovered in 1816-1818 by Josef Linda and Václav Hanka. In reality, the works were fabricated, most likely by Hanka (in fact, their authenticity had been placed in doubt already by Josef Dobrovský).<sup>808</sup> The contribution of Goll and several other Czech humanists lent the debate a certain gravity, as both manuscripts had already become fundamental readings for the history of literature in Bohemia, and proof of the early existence of a highly developed Czech poetry, as well as of its precedence over German poetry in the use of numerous literary motifs. In his articles on the state of Czech historiography, published in the *Revue Historique*, Goll himself described the situation of those criticising the manuscripts in these words: “Public opinion treats them as heathens. ... Political journals cast them out of the country and call upon the nation to rise in numbers to bear witness to an *auto da fě*.”<sup>809</sup> In the end, though, the critics of the manuscripts emerged victorious from this debate.

Jaroslav Goll’s favourite student, Josef Pekař, was a historian of very firm views, eager to reinterpret Palacký’s canonical theses. Pekař also excelled in economic history, proving his skills by capturing in a single panorama the political events, changes in laws, and accounts of peasant life in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, combined in a “Lamprechtian” comprehensive picture of the history of the Czech estate of Kost.<sup>810</sup> Finally, he was the staunchest defender of the “purity”

806 Ibidem, 140.

807 Jaroslav Goll, “Historický rozbor básní rukopisu Královedvorského” (1886), quoted in Plaschka, *Von Palacký*, 61.

808 Macura, *Znamení*, 151-160.

809 Jaroslav Goll, *Posledních padesát let české práce dějepisné*, Praha 1926, 50.

810 Jaroslav Čechura, “Josef Pekař a Karl Lamprecht,” in: *K počtě Jaroslava Marka. Sborník prací k 70. narozeninám prof. dr. Jaroslava Marka*, eds. Lubomír Slezák & Radomír Vlček, Praha 1996, 82.

of Goll's teachings from the concepts propagated by Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk in his new philosophy of history.

Yet Pekař himself proved a none-too-faithful apprentice to his master. As the Czech commentator on the conflict between the neo-Rankeists and Lamprecht, while far from repudiating the latter's concepts, he did not recognize historical laws or necessities. Both in his stated views and in his works, however, he included elements of economic history and sociology.<sup>811</sup> Zdeněk Kalista, who compared Lamprecht's views to those of Pekař, concluded that the latter did not treat the "laws of history" as determinative, but explicatory. Things did not have to proceed the way they did, and yet, the aggregation of cultural and developmental phenomena characteristic of a given epoch eventually prevailed and gave a new shape to the world. One could say that in his periodisation, rooted in the distinctions between the periods of the history of art, Pekař borrowed as much from Lamprecht and the positivists, as from Ranke. The latter's role was underlined by the Czech historian's claim that particular epochs should be approached as distinct cultures that were governed by different (or rather, differently apprehended) values and that breathed a different air. These epochs align, as in Lamprecht's works, as links in a chain of stages following one after another in a strictly defined order.<sup>812</sup> In Pekař's dispute with Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, this distinction between each successive epoch became the bone of contention between the philosopher and the historian.

Masaryk's *Česká otázka*, published in 1895, initiated a debate that lasted many decades, commonly referred to as the dispute over the meaning of Czech history.<sup>813</sup> Thanks to his involvement in the debate over the authenticity of the Zelená Hora and Dvůr Králové manuscripts (on Goll's side – the young Pekař also published a critical analysis of the manuscripts, pointing out anachronistic details concerning his native North Bohemia), Masaryk opened the dispute as a well-known person. He believed that "the history of nations is not the work of coincidence, but the manifestation of a certain plan of Providence, and hence the task of historians and philosophers, the task of every nation, is to fulfil that plan, recognize their place in it and act accordingly ... in every line of work, including politics."<sup>814</sup> Masaryk's vision of the history of Bohemia was rooted in Palacký's claims. He contended that, while the Hussite period constituted the seminal moment in the history of Bohemia, the failure of the uprising of the Bohemian estates in 1620 was the result of the decline of Hussite ideals. During

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811 Kalista, *Josef Pekař*, 151.

812 Ibidem, 150-153.

813 See *Spor o smysl českých dějin 1895-1938*, ed. Miloš Havelka, Praha 1995.

814 Foreword to the first edition in Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, *Česká otázka*, Praha 1990.

the dispute, Masaryk pointed to religion as the defining factor in Czech history. The great universal human values once upheld by the Hussites returned to Czech history with the national revivalists of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>815</sup>

In his argument, Masaryk committed factual errors, which, together with logical inconsistencies, became the main object of criticism for Jaroslav Goll's followers, and Pekař most of all. The latter pointed out the lack of a direct connection between the Hussite movement of the 15<sup>th</sup> century and the national revival of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, indicating that the Czech national revivalists were influenced by German philosophy rather than by the thought of the Bohemian Brethren. In Pekař's eyes, Masaryk's theories were rich in such contentious claims, where facts were subjected to an overarching philosophical concept.<sup>816</sup>

Pekař himself saw nationality as a "leitmotif" of Czech history. As he himself stressed, it was an idea picked up from the thought of Palacký, who perceived the history of Bohemia as the field of struggle between Slavic and German principles. Pekař believed in the continuity of national consciousness in the lands of Bohemia. His nationalism, however, of which he spoke openly, was peculiar in nature. The historian based his political ideas on the concept of historical rights granted to the crown of Bohemia, not on any particular ethnic basis. Hence, he showed no interest whatsoever with respect to Slovakia, and sought to improve relations between the Germans and the Czechs.<sup>817</sup> Up until 1918, he advanced a program for the transformation of the Habsburg monarchy into a federation of states. He hoped that the First World War would bring about the fulfilment of the Czechs' political objectives in the same way that the Austro-Prussian War had resulted in the acceptance of the demands of the Hungarians.<sup>818</sup> Masaryk, on the other hand, derived Bohemia's right to independence from the innate rights of all nations. Kalista writes of Pekař's "creative conservatism"<sup>819</sup> – "creative" because, in political beliefs as much as in historical works, Pekař sought to join rather than divide, to do justice to every component of the national tradition rather than eliminate any of them in the name of "true patriotism." In fact, Pekař defended himself against accusations of nationalism by drawing attention to the way in which Masaryk's concept, supposedly developing national elements from religious ones, lay the foundations for nationalism in the interwar Bohemia.<sup>820</sup> Pekař's adversaries, on

815 See Jarosław Kiliński, *Naród a idea narodowa. Nacjonalizm T. G. Masaryka*, Warszawa 1998, chapter "Filozofia dziejów."

816 Miloš Havelka: "Spor o smysl českých dějin 1895–1938," in: *Spor o smysl*, 25-26.

817 Kalista, *Josef Pekař*, 71.

818 Josef Pekař, *Na cestě k samostatnosti*, Praha 1993.

819 Ibidem, 74.

820 Havelka, "Spor o smysl," 57.

the other hand, resented not so much his supposed nationalism, as the work he conducted to rehabilitate the period which followed from the Battle of White Mountain, the Baroque period. While Masaryk and his proponents saw that period as an intermission in national history, Pekař recognised the value not only of Baroque art, but also of Czech folk culture of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Furthermore, he identified the latter as a source for the 19<sup>th</sup> century's national revival.

Czech historiography provides us with a particularly striking illustration of a phenomenon most likely relevant, to a greater or smaller extent, to every other country. While, in Bohemia of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, history was almost totally dominated by the pupils of Jaroslav Goll and Josef Pekař, the popular imagination of history was shaped more profoundly by the inheritors of the Romantic vision of national history, whether in its original shape defined by Palacký, or in an “ahistorical” version produced by Masaryk. Because of this divergence between academic and popular audiences, the Marxist redefinition of historiographic traditions could take place, so to speak, on two levels. The new historiography could challenge Romantic clichés, thereby siding with critiques from Goll's school (or from the Polish Kraków School). Or, it could approve the vision of history promoted by the Romantics, who, after all, shared many similarities with Marx and Engels in generational and philosophical terms (for example, with respect to the idea of historical progress). Finally, it could also strive to create a new entity, opposed to the entire historiographic edifice inherited from the past.

## **A History Struggling for the Right to Exist – Slovak Historiography**

In the comments on Czech historiography above, a certain crucial aspect of its development, as well as of the development of all Czech culture, was omitted. That aspect is the Slavic idea, defined in the works of two Slovaks who bound their lives and careers to Bohemia: Pavol Jozef Šafarík (or, Pavel Josef Šafařík, in Czech) and Ján Kollár (Jan Kollár). At the same time, both belong to Slovak culture, espousing beliefs which warrant their inclusion in the lineage of Slavophile and pan-Slavic thinkers. At the root of their historiosophical ideas lay the conviction that Slavs were a single nation speaking a single tongue (merely divided into local variants, according to Šafarík). Within the confines of the great Slavic family (both the Czecho-Slovak authors and a plethora of later proponents of the “Slavic idea” repeatedly stressed the numerical strength of this family, totalling about 80 million members in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century), Czechs and

Slovaks formed a common branch. As Robert Pynsent observed, both the aforementioned graduates of the University of Jena not only developed marginal concepts from Herder's *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, but also applied the principles of the German national movement, formulated in the wake of the wars of liberation from Napoleonic oppression, to Slavic realities.<sup>821</sup> The characteristic equation of culturally and linguistically singular Germany with "artificially" divided Slavic peoples counted among the most common observations in the works of the Slavic national revivalists.<sup>822</sup>

In their historiosophy, Šafárik and Kollár attributed the greatest achievements in furthering the progress of humanity to the Slavs. The Slavs' exceptional virtues – their gentleness, as well as the ability to create cultural artefacts – set them apart from violent, primitive German tribes. Kollár went so far as to find Slavs among the inhabitants of ancient Rome, surmising that Latin was merely an ancient Slavic dialect.<sup>823</sup> Meanwhile, Slovaks became something akin to "Slavs in miniature," Upper Hungary being a territory endowed with an immeasurable wealth of Slavic dialects. Just as Slavs in general always fell victim to assaults from their aggressive neighbours, so did the Slovaks suffer from Hungarian oppression. The sense of belonging to a caste of people numbering in the millions fed hopes for retaining one's own nationality, and for figures as poetic as Kollár, it also bred confidence. Besides, Slovak prophets of the Slavic idea kept their spirits high also by remembering Herder's famous sentence on the dearth of opportunities for the Hungarian nation's progress.<sup>824</sup>

Pavol Jozef Šafárik and Ján Kollár occupy a very special place in the history of the Slovak historiography. Their predecessors, a few trained amateurs, typically engaged in disputes over regional issues, writing local histories in Latin, defences of the Slavic language spoken by the inhabitants of Upper Hungary, or tales of the past glory of Great Moravia. The creators of the idea of Slavic reciprocity placed Slovaks in the very broad context of an idealised Slavic land, at the same time picking them out from a specific, real local context. History, however, was not central to Slovak culture because the key problem was language. Historiographic theses became, in a way, subjected to linguistic considerations, while the latter turned into political programs in the context of the Slovak national revival. Kollár and Šafárik were Slovak Protestants, members of a group which treated Czech as a literary language appropriate for liturgical use among Slovaks. There was also a separate cultural

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821 Robert B. Pynsent, *Pátrání po identitě*, Praha 1996, 76-80.

822 See Josef Jungmann, *Zápisky*, Praha 1998, 78-79.

823 Kutnar & Marek, *Přehledné*, 251-252.

824 Pynsent, *Pátrání*, 85-90.

movement of Slovak Catholics who usually referred to the Slovak language codified by Anton Bernolák. This division was only overcome with the arrival of the Protestant Ľudovít Štúr in the early 1840s.

Though Štúr was not a historian (incidentally, neither were Kollár and Šafárik), his impact on Slovak historiography cannot be exaggerated. On the one hand, he rejected the claim framed by his predecessors who endorsed Slovak-Czech unity, invoking in its stead the idea of Slovak national independence on the basis of a separate language. In time, the success of his attempt at nation-formation transformed him into a “father of the nation,” not only in the sense applied to the figure of Palacký, but also as someone who actually “invented” Slovaks (further on, we will discuss numerous examples of this aspect of Štúr’s historical significance).

Štúr outlined his beliefs on Slovak history in his book *Starý a nový vek Slovákov* (The Old and New Era of the Slovaks) (manuscript dated 1841), which was written in a conversational tone. He wholeheartedly agreed with his predecessors, who wrote of the might and cultural power of Great Moravia. Nevertheless, it was constantly menaced by the invasive Franks, who insidiously murdered successive Moravian rulers. Štúr even attributed the arrival of the Hungarians to a Frankish plot. The Magyars initially exploited the peace-loving Slovaks, who tried to share some of the spirit of their Christian civilisation with their untamed neighbours. Finally, with the help of Saint Adalbert and missionaries from Bohemia, they succeeded in convincing the Magyars to accept Christianity. According to Štúr, “From that point on, Magyars and Slovaks lived side by side in peace, faithful to a common fatherland. They elected separate kings to administer their lands, treated them with deference and showed unbreakable faith. They led joyous lives, for their country gained in power through the harmony among its citizens.”<sup>825</sup> Slovaks continued to excel in their abilities, lawfulness and intelligence; and Štúr devoted a portion of his work to the argument that nearly all Hungarian subjects who had achieved anything of note up until the 19<sup>th</sup> century had actually been Slovaks. This primacy of Slovaks in all walks of life inevitably incited envy: “The supremacy of Slovaks over the Magyars and the wealth they acquired through diligence sowed envy among the Magyars, who were enraged by their inability to match the Slovaks either in mind, or in riches.”<sup>826</sup> This anger – wrote Štúr – lay at the foundation of the plan to rob Slovaks of their former laws and refuse them the right to their own language: to oppress them.

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825 Ľudovít Štúr, *Wybór pism*, Wrocław 1983, 34.

826 *Ibidem*, 35.

*Starý a nový vek Slovákov*, however, was not merely the historiosophic statement of a Slovak revivalist. Štúr's magnum opus, *Das Slawentum und die Welt der Zukunft* (written after the failure of the Springtime of the Peoples and published posthumously in Russian in 1867) pushed to the extreme ideas which Štúr appropriated from Kollár. Maria Bobrownicka, who analysed Štúr's claims very meticulously (and with a healthy dose of criticism) pointed out that his pan-Slavic ideas were bound up with the rejection of culture outside of folklore: "Folklore is ahistorical," writes Bobrownicka, "... [H]ence, the promotion and entrenchment of Štúr's cultural model in Slovakia resulted in the elimination from native cultural traditions of the ancient literature of the Renaissance, the Baroque and Classical Periods, which had been shaped – due to envelopment in the Latin Kingdom of Hungary – by the philosophy and aesthetics of the European *universum*. Even if the erasure was not definitive, these literary traditions were underappreciated and decidedly impoverished, as if the culture's only role was the conservation of age-old forms of local folklore and the imitation of its elements."<sup>827</sup> This work of the national revivalist was also a manifesto of pan-Slavism. Perhaps dismayed by the defeat of the Slovak political movement of 1848-1849, he transferred his hopes onto Russia, in the expectation of peasant enfranchisement and the extension of the *mir* into aspects of economic life other than agriculture. The Russia he longed for was a state desired by every Slav; hence, he should promptly abandon his independence, embrace Russian as his native tongue and convert to the Orthodox faith.<sup>828</sup> Štúr struck a prophetic note, proclaiming: "One revolution will follow another, and each shall wreak more and more misery upon the Western nations. Successive generations seemingly plunge ever deeper into madness and feebleness."<sup>829</sup> This rather typical pan-Slavic manifest, written from a conservative Russian standpoint rather than from a Slovak perspective, also included a critique of the Poles who "through their light-minded and ineffectual uprisings, through their incessant ties to maleficent foreigners, betrayed the trust of their own native folk. All their history clearly proves that they are unfit for the leadership of all Slavic nations."<sup>830</sup> This leadership was reserved for the noble and modest Russian tsars.<sup>831</sup>

Though Štúr's "final word" was far more pan-Slavic than the ideas of Šafarík or Kollár, he remained a patron for Slovak national and cultural independence. As a historiographer, he enjoyed undisputed primacy for many

827 Bobrownicka, *Narkotyk*, 79.

828 Ibidem, 40.

829 Štúr, *Wybór*, 110.

830 Ibidem, 107.

831 Ibidem, 113.

years, the more so since, faced with oppression from the ruling Hungarian nation, the Slovak national revival continued to focus on the struggle for the preservation of language and culture. The development of historiography was also hindered by the absence of native universities and academic associations (the scientific-cultural *Matica slovenská* was dissolved in 1875 by Kálmán Tisza's government). Administrative decisions were reinforced by Hungarian "scientific imperialism," manifested in historical publications that wholeheartedly denied Slovaks the status of a nation.<sup>832</sup> They were merely an ethnic conglomerate, primarily formed from the offspring of Czech colonists, Hussite *bratřici* and other minor Slavic groupings. The problem of identifying the primary inhabitants of Slovakia became a fundamental issue for Slovak historiography of the day. Hungarian theories were vehemently opposed by the most accomplished historian of the "maticny period," Franko Vít'azoslav Sasinek, who instead offered his own theory claiming that Slovaks inhabited Slovakia since time immemorial, and the seizure of their country by Hungarians was not a conquest, but a voluntary acceptance of the newcomers by the civilised Slovaks: "Since ancient times, Slovaks inhabited the territory they live in now. They lived here as Sarmatians or Quadi, before and after the Vandals, before and after the Goths. They were here before the Huns came, and stayed on after Attila's death. The orphaned Slavic cohorts of the Rugians dominated, but could not eliminate, the Slovak population. After their departure, the Langobards, so to speak, passed the night in Slovakia, but after they were gone, the Slovaks were no longer troubled by anyone else in the shade of the Carpathian Mountains, up until the 9<sup>th</sup> century."<sup>833</sup>

Scholars who shaped modern Slovak historiography (and decisively affected the social imagination of the past) increased their activities only in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The same period saw the development of dominant trends in Slovak politics and national life. An inquisitive analyst of Slovak relations during the interwar period, Henryk Batowski, distinguished four factions (one of them consisting of one person only) in Slovak politics on the eve of the assassination in Sarajevo. Milan Hodža, up until 1914 a close associate of Archduke Franz Ferdinand and a proponent of the transformation of the Habsburg monarchy into a federation of states, after the war joined ranks with the "Hlasist" camp (consisting of activists tied to *Hlas* magazine). They supported the notion of a Czechoslovak state. In 1920, Hodža published *Československý rozkol*, a

832 Ján Hučko, "Problematika národnoobraného boja v dielach významných slovenských historikov v rokoch 1895-1918," in: *Slovensko na zčiatku 20. storočia (Spoločnosť, štát a národ v súradnicach doby)*, eds. Milan Podrimavský & Dušan Kováč, Bratislava 1999, 233.

833 Franko Vít'azoslav Sasinek, "Slovensko v pradobe," *Slovenský letopis* 1882, 129, quoted in Hučko, „Problematika,” 236.

reinterpretation of the Slovak national revival. In his view, the success of Štúr's linguistic endeavour was not the culmination of an organic process that roused a slumbering consciousness, but, rather, it was a political act. He saw it as an attempt at protecting the nation from Magyarisation at the cost of relinquishing Czechoslovak unity and creating a separate nation loyal to the Hungarian state.<sup>834</sup> The "Hlasist" ideology was opposed by the pan-Slavists, such as Svetozár Hurban Vajanský, who, perhaps unwittingly invoking the jargon of Ukrainian nationalist activists, claimed that he would rather see Slovaks "drown in the Russian sea than in the Czech swamp."<sup>835</sup> Finally, Batowski identified a national camp, which in Czechoslovakia was dominated by the clergy of both denominations. Among the antecedents of this particular movement, one could name the prodigious historians, Július Botto and Josef Škultétý, authors of all-encompassing interpretations of Slovak national development.<sup>836</sup> Debates among historians tied to particular political camps inevitably took place in newspaper articles rather than in mass-produced books.

The year 1918 was a turning point for Slovak culture. As Ľubomír Lipták observes, at the moment of Czechoslovakia's formation, the last Slovaks who may have had the opportunity of attending a Slovak high school would have been around 60 years old. Common ignorance concerning the rules of orthography became a serious challenge.<sup>837</sup> "Slovakness" experienced a painful birth. Hungarian monuments were torn down more often at the behest of visitors from Prague than of the locals; the newly-established state holiday commemorating Jan Hus was not appreciated by the Catholic section of the Slovak folk, who saw him merely as a heretic.<sup>838</sup> Paradoxically, this tremendous political upheaval yielded only a minor shift in the views of the most revered elderly Slovak historians.

In his works (primarily *Slováci, vývin ich národného povedomia* from 1906-1910), Botto (1848-1926) depicted the struggle of the national movement against a setting of Magyarisation and the oppression of a people devoid of all support from the intelligentsia. The vision of history he promoted was anti-Hungarian, but also anti-German and anti-Jewish, since Botto accused all those nations of exploiting the Slovak peasant. It was the peasant that bore the brunt of

834 Kutnar & Marek, *Přehledné*, 936-937.

835 Rudolf Chmel, "Kwestia słowacka w XX wieku," in: *Kwestia słowacka*, 12.

836 Henryk Batowski, "Zarys dziejów Słowacji w ostatnim dwudziestoleciu (1918-1937)," in: *Słowacja i Słowacy. Praca zbiorowa*, ed. Władysław Semkowicz, Kraków 1938, 122-124.

837 Ľubomír Lipták, *Changes of Changes. Society and Politics in Slovakia in the 20th Century*, Bratislava 2002, 35.

838 Ibidem, 32.

anti-Habsburg Hungarian uprisings; it was the Slovaks who paid the price for the aggressive politics of Matthias Corvinus. Finally, Botto reinterpreted the Hungarian revolution of 1848 as just another assault on the Slovak people.<sup>839</sup> This history of their nation seen through the lens of its torments left a lasting mark on Slovak historiography, evident even after 1989.<sup>840</sup> Botto authored the popular thesis of a several centuries long interruption in Slovak history. He believed that the “true” history of the Slovaks took place in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, and then was cut off until reemerging at the dawn of the national revival. The intervening period did not yield anything befitting the name of Slovak history. Paradoxically, this thesis did not suggest a pessimistic interpretation of national history – Botto identified similar discontinuities in the histories of Hungarians and other European nations: “Hungarians have no history between the year 1000 and 1848, just like Slovaks. Ever since the formation of the feudal state, the political nation of Hungary became limited to the landowners.”<sup>841</sup>

Škultétý (1853-1948) shared most of Botto’s beliefs. Before 1918, he engaged in disputes with his Hungarian peers, invoking the philosophy of Herder as well as the theses and achievements of Štúr.<sup>842</sup> After the formation of Czechoslovakia, he debated the Czechoslovakists, such as Hodža, and a group of Czech professors at the newly-formed University of Jan Ámos Komenský in Bratislava. He pointed out to his rival colleagues that the claim that Slovaks and Czechs were bound by common ethnic origins was a simple restatement of ideas spread by Hungarian propaganda. Before 1918, the claim was used in support of statements denying Slovaks any secession rights in Upper Hungary; after the formation of Czechoslovakia, it was reinstated in support of the fiction of a “Czechoslovak nation.”<sup>843</sup> Škultétý also sought to prove the ethnically Slovak character of Great Moravia. In his opinion, Slovaks and Czechs were divided by too many differences for the nations to be capable of merging. Contrary to Václav Chaloupecký, the Czech lecturer at the university in Bratislava, he believed that the Slovak revival was in no way tied to the Protestant tradition that had cultivated a cultural bond with Bohemia, stating rather that it had arisen due to the personal efforts of the first generations of revivalists, such as Anton Bernolák.<sup>844</sup>

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839 Hučko, “Problematika,” 237-239.

840 Kutnar & Marek, *Přehledné*, 647-648.

841 Július Botto, *Slováci. Vývin ich národného povedomia*, Bratislava 1971, 26.

842 Hučko, “Problematika,” 240. See Jozef Škultétý, *Slovanská vzájomnosť v publicistike Jozefa Škultétého (výber)*, Martin 1998, 22-23.

843 Jozef Škultétý, *Za slovenský život*, Martin 1998, 22.

844 Hučko, „Problematika,” 652-654.

Chaloupecký represented official state ideology, providing it with arguments drawn from history and linguistics. In *Staré Slovensko* (published in Bratislava in Czech), he wrote that ancient Slovakia was inhabited by Czechs. In later periods, the language spoken by the locals was influenced by other languages and cultures, without substantially changing the Czech character of Slovakia: “In those olden times, Slovakia belonged geographically to the Czech people and formed a political entity in tandem with Moravia, while also maintaining unity with Western Czech territories in national and linguistic terms. This should not be taken to mean that the language used in the Western parts of Slovakia was devoid of its own unique colouring, yet throughout the Medieval period, as well as later on, for all its nuance, it was still considered a form of Czech, and the people who spoke it were thought of as Czech folk.”<sup>845</sup>

In his typology of the political attitudes in Slovakia, Henryk Batowski failed to mention any intellectual current that supported the idea of tying Slovakia’s national future to the Hungarian state. In fact, after 1918, such attitudes virtually disappeared from the national discourse. Activists pursuing an autonomous status for Slovakia within a reestablished Hungary simply moved to Hungary and became engaged in revisionist propaganda efforts there.<sup>846</sup> Foremost among the supporters of this current before 1914 was Samuel Czambel. He called upon Hungarian authorities to undermine Czech influence in Slovakia by supporting the development of Slovak nationhood. According to his philological theory, Slovaks belonged to the ranks of the Southern Slavs, having emerged from the South to claim territories heretofore inhabited by Polish tribes. While there was no room for any talk of a Czecho-Slovak kinship within this concept, the national policy of pre-Trianon Hungary rendered the formation of any Slovak sense of authentic belonging to the Crown of St. Stephen virtually impossible.<sup>847</sup>

The troubling conditions of Slovak historiography’s development played a crucial role in delaying the impact of modern methodology (which was observable in Bohemia since the beginnings of Jaroslav Goll’s activity) until after 1918. It was precisely the interwar period that saw the beginning of the scholarly work of Daniel Rapant, a figure whose prominence in Slovak historical sciences did not diminish even during the 1950s, when, after having declined subjection to Marxist methodology and Communist politics, the historian was pushed to the margins. Rapant rejected the idea of a Czechoslovak nation, claiming that Czechs and Slovaks had formed separate nationalities “since always.” The historian’s magnum opus was the monumental *Slovenské*

845 Václav Chaloupecký, *Staré Slovensko*, Bratislava 1923, 273.

846 Batowski, „Zarys,” 162.

847 Kutnar & Marek, *Přehledné*, 650-651.

*povstanie roku 1848-1849. Dejiny a dokumenty* (1935-1972), supplemented by numerous shorter monographs and academic and popular articles. Relying on a rich and well-developed collection of sources (a starkly distinguishing feature vis-à-vis most of his predecessors), Rapant painted the Slovak uprising of 1848 as an eminently just struggle for liberty, even though it had been conducted hand in hand with the Habsburg army. This high esteem regarding the uprising resulted, in part, from his interpretation of the Hungarian revolution as a movement geared toward the maintenance of feudal relations and nationalist oppression rather than an upheaval meant to bring democracy to the Slovaks.<sup>848</sup> At the same time, the scholar rejected the tearful vision of national history put forward by Botto. He believed that Slovaks had been proven to be capable of forming their own state not only through the part they played in shaping Great Moravia, but also through their contribution to the formation of the Medieval Kingdom of Hungary.<sup>849</sup> One should add that Rapant's scholarly qualifications were also evident in his 1952 book on the peasant uprising of 1831.<sup>850</sup> Though the author found himself under fire from Marxists because he did not discuss the social significance of the uprising sufficiently, he did not come close to claiming that the peasant revolts had national significance for the Slovaks, despite the fact that such an argument would have supported his own argument about the strength of the national spirit in Slovakia.<sup>851</sup> Rapant sought above all to conduct himself in a professional manner, which was not a characteristic which his predecessors would have pursued as essential for themselves.

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One of the most urgent problems for Polish, Czech, Slovak, and East German historiographies of the 1950s was the critical evaluation of modern national historical science from its beginnings in the Enlightenment to the final years of the interwar period. Researchers were supposed to find their way between two extremes: a total rejection of the older historiography and a 'positive' search for a progressive historiographical tradition. One of the few Polish interwar Marxists, Wanda Moszczeńska (1896–1974), called it a "dialectical negation" of

848 See Daniel Rapant, "Madziaryzacja, Trianon, rewizja i demokracja" (1930), in: *Kwestia słowacka*, 98-103.

849 Daniel Rapant, "Słowacy w historii. Retrospektywa i perspektywy (Przyczynek do filozofii i sensu słowackiej historii)" (1967), *ibidem*, 407-408.

850 Daniel Rapant, *Sedliacke povstanie na východnom Slovensku r. 1831*, 2 vols., Bratislava 1952.

851 Ladislav Tajták, "Prínos D. Rapanta vo výskume východoslovenského sedliackeho povstania v roku 1831," in: *Historik Daniel Rapant – život a dielo (1897-1988-1997)*, eds. Richard Marsina et al., Martin 1998, 171.

the pre-Communist heritage.<sup>852</sup> As a matter of fact, what Marxists were expected to do was simply to build up a new school in national history through suitably selected predecessors. The following remarks refer to the Marxist-Leninist history of historiography in the so-called Stalinist period.

While describing the various attitudes towards pre-Marxist historiographical traditions, one should not overlook some differences between the respective national and political contexts. First of all, the frequency and sharpness of historical debates were more pronounced in the Polish and East German cases than in the Czech or Slovak Marxist-Leninist historical sciences (although the period under scrutiny was much shorter in Poland than in other countries). Czech and Slovak Marxist interpretations of the national past, in contrast, borrowed a great deal from the traditional stock of liberal-nationalist ideas; this influence was present in Czech culture since the first edition of František Palacký's magisterial historical work, while the origins of the Slovak heritage had been linked to Ľudovít Štúr's national movement program. One should not assume, however, that Czech and Slovak attitudes towards the history of historiography were 'national' in the same way.<sup>853</sup> Meanwhile, neither the German, nor the Polish Marxists, followed their own liberal-nationalist tradition so explicitly. In these two cases one can observe a hesitation over recognition of various historical traditions, which led to more frequent and sharper ideological confrontations among Marxist historians. It should also be mentioned that interest in the history of historiography in the 1950s seems to have been more evident in the Polish case than in any other of the four previously mentioned historiographies. The number of Polish Marxist publications devoted to this issue was substantially higher than in the GDR or in Czechoslovakia.

Marxists dealing with the history of historiography faced several important problems of a methodological, cultural, and political nature. The first set of problems related to the translation of historiographical traditions into the language of Marxism-Leninism. In this regard, 19<sup>th</sup> century historians were transferred from their original cultural and scientific context and transposed onto a different theoretical frame. They were interrogated with ahistorical questions from the point of view of Soviet Marxism, not from the point of view of their own times or the history of historiography.

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852 Wanda Moszczeńska, "Stosunek do dorobku dawnej historiografii polskiej," in: *Pierwsza Konferencja*, vol. 1, 91.

853 I analysed similarities between Czech liberal-nationalist traditions and the Marxist interpretation of national history in the article: "Past in the Future. National Tradition and Czechoslovak Marxist Historiography," *European Review of History-Revue européenne d'Histoire* no. 1 (2003).

The second group of problems may be described as geopolitical, as has been illustrated in the previous chapter. This is probably the easiest to understand and, in many cases, clearly leads to an obvious conclusion: Marxist historiographies in East Central Europe often praised those historical phenomena that were pro-Russian without paying much attention to their social or political context. Thus the conservative pan-Slavists were less problematic than the anti-tsarist democrats. Even Marx and Engels could be wrong in those moments when they criticised or neglected the historical role of Russia.

Finally, the third set of problems refers to the role of 19<sup>th</sup> century nationalism. Since Marxist-Leninist historiographies in East Central Europe never adopted a radical Pokrovski-type ‘Bolshevik’ historiography with all its anational and anti-national features, they remained deeply indebted to the national traditions shaped by such personalities as Palacký, Lelewel, Štúr, the Prussian school, or the Warsaw and Kraków positivists. In fact, it would have been drastic to sever the ties that had bound Marxist historians with the tradition of national movements, and none of the examined historiographies seriously dared to undertake such extreme measures. Gradually they became more and more ‘nationalist,’ but even in their beginnings, in the 1950s, one could find many traces of continuity between the older historiographical tradition and the new methodological trend.

In the following considerations, I will present some sample problems illustrating the interferences of different methodological traditions, political affiliations, and interpersonal relations in the Polish, East German, Czech, and Slovak history of historiography. I concentrate on two main problems: different attitudes towards each nation’s tradition of national historiography, as well as the main methodological problems of Marxism in the debates on East Central European historiographies. Finally, I will try to select and describe several elements that were present in every Marxist history of historiography and that shaped the academic landscape of the 1950s and early 1960s.

## **Poland: Criteria of Progressiveness and Pan-Slavism**

Assessing historiographical traditions was not only a difficult task, but proved to be a very complex topic and thus probably the only one that would occasion a broader discussion in Polish historiography of the 1950s. Marxists were supposed to look upon 19<sup>th</sup> century historians from at least three different angles. The first issue was the evaluation of the political sympathies of the historians, and their attitudes towards progressive ideologies of their time. Second came the evaluation of their work in both methodological and factual

contexts. Finally, it was deemed necessary to characterize not only particular individuals, but also the ideologies they had subscribed to, and to locate them in the established theoretical framework of socio-economic formations. This attitude towards history seemed quite natural for the representatives of Marxist ideology. As the Soviet Medievalist Evgenii A. Kosminskii put it, “from the Marxist point of view, historiography is just one of the disciplines of the history of social thought, and it is therefore always clearly and closely connected with politics. By various alternating visible and invisible means, bourgeois ideology is able to infiltrate historiography together with those achievements of bourgeois historiography which we both appreciate and make use of.”<sup>854</sup>

To characterize the effects of new interpretative efforts, we shall focus upon a few crucial questions. Starting from the Polish example, we will see the way Marxist historians characterised one of the most important Polish scholars of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Joachim Lelewel, and another Romantic historian, the far less known Polish Slavist and pan-Slavist, Zorian Dołęga Chodakowski. Later we will focus on Marxist interpretations of the forerunner of positivist historiography, Karol Boromeusz Hoffman, and of the two historical ‘liberal’ schools of the second half of 19<sup>th</sup> century: the so called Kraków and Warsaw schools. What is important to note is that all the scholars under discussion belonged to a small group of Marxist historians from the 1950s who did not belong with the majority of Polish scholars. Thus, the controversies surrounding their work reflect—so to speak—the internal debates of certain scientific collectives and not a hegemonic act of dominance over the non-Marxist milieu.<sup>855</sup>

Joachim Lelewel, perceived as the first Polish professional historian and author of the Romantic interpretation of Polish history, was also a democratic politician. The first postwar Marxist opinions on this friend of Marx and Engels were positive. A leading Stalinist historian and author of the first Communist guidelines for schools, Żanna Kormanowa, characterised him in 1946 as an exemplary progressive democrat.<sup>856</sup> The same opinion was officially accepted by representatives of Polish scholars in the humanities gathered at the First Congress of Polish Science (I Kongres Nauki Polskiej) in Warsaw in 1949. The

854 Evgenii A. Kosminskii, *Istoriografiia srednykh vekov (V v. – seredina XIX v.)*, Moscow 1963, 7; quoted after: Rafał Stobiecki, “Between Continuity and Discontinuity: A Few Comments on the Post-war Development of Polish Historical Research,” *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung* 2 (2001), 128.

855 I refer to the phenomenon of “Denkkollektiv” as described by Ludwik Fleck in his *Entstehung und Entwicklung einer wissenschaftlichen Tatsache. Einführung in die Lehre vom Denkstil*, Basel 1935.

856 Kormanowa, *Joachim Lelewel*, 6.

1950s brought several editions of Lelewel's writings, which constantly manipulated his texts to achieve the picture of a relentless fighter for social progress. His theory of ancient Slavic democracy as well as his internationalism and sympathy for the peasantry were highly appreciated.

However, as Marxist researchers analysed Lelewel's opinions more deeply, they identified more limitations to his 'progressivism'. For example, praising the democratic heritage of the Slavic past, Lelewel came to the conclusion that the democracy of the Polish gentry was a progressive phenomenon. Thus Marxist historians could rightly accuse him of ignoring the exploitation of the peasants that characterised the period. Even more important, Lelewel was not ready to recognize the rights of Ukrainians and Belorussians to foster national development (we should also mention that Polish democrats shared this erroneous position also with Marx and Engels). But the most problematic aspects of his biography were his critical attitudes towards Russia and his supposedly insufficient political radicalism. The most ill-fitting criticism of Lelewel can be found in a book by Celina Bobińska, *Marks i Engels a sprawy polskie do osiemdziesiątych lat XIX wieku* (Marx, Engels, and the Polish question until the 1880s), published in 1954. The historian, closely linked to the Party leadership, described Lelewel as a man "unable to decide," a "liberal-opportunist" if not clearly a reactionary politician. Disregarding the Polish national tradition and even Marx and Engels, she had attempted to prove that the Romantic historian's "two great friends" had made a mistake in their appreciation of him, and did not realize that he was not "worthy of their friendship." Only Marxist historiography was able to judge historians properly.<sup>857</sup> Other critical remarks of Polish Marxist historians targeted the fact that Lelewel was not a Marxist.

Relatively little attention was paid to other historians of the Polish Romantic tradition, more or less influenced by Lelewel. Perhaps the only exception is the particularly interesting case of Zorian Dołęga Chodakowski, who became the object of an article published in 1955 in *Kwartalnik Historyczny* by Andrzej Poppe.<sup>858</sup> The author stressed Chodakowski's democratic and pro-Russian opinions, incorporated him into the group of progressive heirs to the Polish Enlightenment and described him as a forerunner of revolutionary democratic historiography. Poppe pointed to Lelewel's unparalleled influence on Chodakowski, which seems unlikely, especially if we take into consideration the fact that Chodakowski was older than Lelewel and died before the publication of

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857 Bobińska, *Marks*, 32.

858 Andrzej Poppe, "U źródeł postępowej historiografii szlacheckiego rewolucjonizmu: Zorian Dołęga Chodakowski (1784-1825)," *Kwartalnik Historyczny* 1955, 27-40.

the most important and popular works of the Romantic historian. Nonetheless, Poppe claimed that almost every progressive feature of Chodakowski's ideology was borrowed from Lelewel. Furthermore, all limitations in the works of the Polish Slavist were also attributed to Lelewel's influence. An attentive reader of the article might have had the impression that Poppe was trying to prove that while Chodakowski's virtues were his own achievement, it was Lelewel who was responsible for all his ideological shortcomings.

A comparison of the official attitude towards these two historians allows one to conclude that, in the case of the almost forgotten Chodakowski, it was easier to include him in the category of "progressive traditions" than had been the case with the popular writer and influential politician Joachim Lelewel. The fact that Lelewel was a democrat, and Chodakowski a conservative Slavophile, was no obstacle. On the contrary, sometimes it was possible to be a reactionary thinker who in some aspects "objectively" represented progress; in fact, it could be preferable to being a "progressive" ideologist who made inexcusable mistakes. At the same time, this comparison shows how one's attitude towards Russia became the basic criterion of Marxist evaluation. Both of these observations on Marxist research in the field of historiography will prove useful in further discussion.

In 1953, the leader of a group of Marxist historians from Łódź, Marian Serejski, published a study on the liberal historian Karol Boromeusz Hoffman, who had been a representative of the 19<sup>th</sup> century liberal-conservative wing of the Polish Great Emigration and a forerunner of positivist historical research.<sup>859</sup> According to Serejski, Hoffman was not only a better, more professional historian than Lelewel, but also a representative of another stage of social progress (from the period of late feudalism to early capitalism). At the same time Serejski openly admitted Hoffman's political liberalism and social conservatism and acknowledged that his ideology became reactionary in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Nevertheless, at this particular stage Hoffman played a progressive role as a follower, and also as a critic, of Lelewel's philosophy of history.

Serejski's book was strongly criticised by the Warsaw sociologist Nina Assorodobraj for having judged Lelewel unfairly. She accused Serejski of 'sociologism'—a serious methodological error. According to Assorodobraj, Hoffman could not be progressive and reactionary at the same time. He was actually always hostile towards the idea of agrarian revolution, the only progressive Polish ideology of his times. These conclusions led Assorodobraj to raise the theoretical problem of 'objective' and 'subjective' criteria of progress. In short, Assorodobraj stated that not every change brings progress. If a liberal

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859 Marian H. Serejski, *Studia nad historiografią Polski, Cz. I, K. B. Hoffman*, Łódź 1953.

thinker lays foundations for the development of capitalism, he remains a liberal and capitalist despite the fact that what follows capitalism in its late phase is socialist revolution. In fact, his activity may be interpreted as an attempt to repair and preserve an existing social order; thus his activities might have been more dangerous than open feudal reaction. Finally Assorodobraj compared Serejski's picture of Hoffman to a hypothetical monument to a landowner who had introduced new capitalist methods, improving the productivity of his estate. Her article ends with the following statement: "People's Poland draws from the progressive traditions of the Polish nation. It will not draw from Hoffman."<sup>860</sup>

The methodological discussion begun by Nina Assorodobraj soon continued far beyond the biography of Karol Boromeusz Hoffman. The next point of contention was the Marxist-Leninist reassessment of the so-called Warsaw school of history: liberal historians from the Russian part of Poland who opposed the conservative Kraków school which had become influential after the fall of the January Uprising (1863–1864). Serejski described the leading Warsaw positivist scholar Władysław Smoleński as an anti-clerical and highly 'progressive' follower of Lelewel. According to Serejski, both Smoleński and the entire Warsaw school should have been incorporated into progressive national traditions, despite various limitations.<sup>861</sup> Rather than Nina Assorodobraj, it was Celina Bobińska who criticised Serejski's "attempts to fabricate a progressive political biography of Smoleński."<sup>862</sup> In her view, positivism belonged to the ideologies of reaction, along with positivist historiography and the positivist Smoleński.

Marian Henryk Serejski decided to express his disagreement with Bobińska's critical remarks openly and published a polemical article in *Kwartalnik Historyczny*.<sup>863</sup> He questioned the very idea whether there was, after the fall of the January Uprising, any possibility of an agrarian revolution in Polish lands. This fact—Serejski claimed—placed limitations on the possible progressiveness of the liberal bourgeoisie. To reinforce his arguments, the historian built an analogy between the Warsaw school and a group of liberal Russian historians from the same period. According to Serejski, the Poles were

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860 Nina Assorodobraj, "W sprawie kryterium postępowości w historii historiografii (z powodu książki M. Serejskiego o K. Hoffmannie)," *Kwartalnik Historyczny* 1953, 186.

861 Marian H. Serejski, in Władysław Smoleński, *Szkoły historyczne w Polsce (Główne kierunki poglądów na przeszłość)*, Wrocław 1952.

862 Celina Bobińska, "Spór o ujęcie pozytywizmu i historyków pozytywistów. W związku ze wstępem do reedycji W. Smoleńskiego *Szkół historycznych*," *Kwartalnik Historyczny* 1954, 187.

863 Marian H. Serejski, "Miejsce pozytywistycznej szkoły warszawskiej w historiografii polskiej XIX stulecia," *Kwartalnik Historyczny* 1955.

as progressive as their Russian contemporaries. In turn, Serejski criticised Bobińska's attitude towards the youngest representative of the conservative Kraków school, Michał Bobrzyński. Bobińska praised the former governor of Galicia for his methodological achievements, especially his usage of sociological research in an attempt to establish universal principles of social development, which—according to her—was very close to Marxist methodology. During the First Congress of Polish Science, Bobińska even went so far as to assert that openly conservative historiography—above all the Kraków school—was in a way much less problematic for Marxist researchers since they did not need to unmask it, whereas liberal historiography required a new critical Marxist examination.<sup>864</sup>

The debate possessed an interpersonal dimension as well. In 1956, several days before the massacre of the Poznań workers, a meeting of the scientific board of Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences took place. Marian Henryk Serejski claimed that Nina Assorodobraj and Celina Bobińska had conducted a political campaign against him.<sup>865</sup> Bobińska answered that her polemic with Serejski was a “normal” scientific discussion (a rarity under Stalinism), and had nothing to do with politics.<sup>866</sup> The continuation of the personal conflict between Serejski and Assorodobraj was even more embarrassing. In 1958, Serejski published a book on Joachim Lelewel for which he was accused of plagiarism by Assorodobraj. This personal conflict did not reach any final conclusion. The deterioration of the quality of scientific debate to this level of personal animus did not stimulate the growth of a new, homogenous interpretation of Polish 19<sup>th</sup> century historiography.

Describing these controversies helps us to draw a schema of Marxist attitudes towards Polish historiographical traditions. Despite the scarcity of historical debates in the Stalinist period, in general, historiography inspired broad controversies. None of the Polish Marxists managed to create a general vision of the shortcomings and achievements of past historians. Different, often contradictory, interpretations divided the already numerically small group of Polish Marxists. Serejski, Bobińska, Assorodobraj, and Żanna Kormanowa were all representatives of largely the same methodological tendency among leftist scholars, but the conflicts and controversies between them made it impossible to create a ‘common front’ against non-Marxist historians. The effect was discouraging from the point of view of Communist authorities. Neither Lelewel,

864 See: Celina Bobińska on the 1st Congress of Polish Science, *Kwartalnik Historyczny* 1951, 404.

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

866 Ibidem, Protokół nr 15 z posiedzenia Rady Naukowej IH PAN, 15 XII 1956.

Hoffman, Smoleński, nor Bobrzyński could be seen as a part of a Polish progressive tradition. Instead of a clear vision of the Polish history of historiography, Marxist historians contributed another chapter to the traditional debates shaped by their ‘bourgeois’ colleagues.

## **Czechoslovakia: Defence of the Founding Fathers**

In many respects the founding father of Czech historiography, František Palacký, can be seen as a Czech counterpart to Lelewel. Like the Pole, he was a national political leader. His vision of national history is generally perceived as Romantic. They both shared the belief in an ancient Slavic democracy, the “German” character of feudalism, and the bright future of their nations. The most striking differences between Palacký and Lelewel were of a political nature and reflect the differences between Polish and Czech nationalism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Lelewel belonged with democratic radicals, whereas Palacký shifted from liberalism to a social conservatism with pan-Slavic undertones. His reception among Marxists was, interestingly enough, quite positive. Josef Macek deemed Palacký’s interpretation of Czech history progressive since Palacký had appreciated the importance of the Hussite movement. Palacký did not distinguish between the more progressive radical Hussite movement of Tábor and the moderate Hussites, but this detail did not change the positive reception of his work. According to Macek, Palacký as a historian and politician allegedly represented the most progressive part of the bourgeoisie in its glory days, especially before the revolution of 1848. As a liberal, and later a conservative politician, Palacký however could not always count on appreciation. The Soviet scholar Ivan I. Udaltsov accused Palacký of being not only conservative but also nationalist (chauvinist), and found Palacký’s idea of Austro-Slavism reactionary. Udaltsov also called the Czech national movement as a whole reactionary, as it had supported the Habsburg monarchy in its struggle against the 1848 revolution in Vienna and Hungary. This opinion presented by not only a Soviet historian but also a prominent Soviet diplomat in Prague could not be rejected openly by Czech historians. It was furthermore historically ‘justified’ by Friedrich Engels’ severe judgment of the Czech national movement. As far as research shows, only two Czech historians dared challenge Udaltsov in order to defend Palacký from Marxist criticism. In 1948, when the nascent Marxist-Leninist “methodological revolution” was not yet fully defined, Josef Macůrek, the brilliant “bourgeois” historian from Brno, confronted Soviet researchers during his stay at the congress of Polish historians in Wrocław. Macůrek debated Udaltsov, pointing to the international context of the Czech national

movement.<sup>867</sup> Several years later the first president of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences and the main codifier of the Czech Marxist vision of history, Zdeněk Nejedlý, firmly (and successfully) rejected Udaltsov's attempt to erase Palacký from the Museum of National Literature (Památník národního písemnictví) in Prague.<sup>868</sup> Nevertheless, the only promising way to defend national values permanently was to try to "reconcile" Udaltsov with Palacký. In the university handbook on Czech history, Udaltsov was referred to as "the best expert on the revolution of 1848."<sup>869</sup> Josef Kočí, the reviewer of Udaltsov's book in *Československý Časopis Historický*, shared this laudatory evaluation but added that Udaltsov did not pay attention to some positive aspects of the Czech national movement, especially to the role of Palacký as a historian.<sup>870</sup> Bedřich Šindelář formulated the same idea in a different way when he wrote, "We must distinguish between Palacký the historian, and Palacký the politician."<sup>871</sup>

The Marxist assessment of František Palacký was more positive than the Polish Marxist assessment of Lelewel, despite Palacký's political beliefs and the harsh criticism which Marx and Engels leveled against the Czech national movement as a whole. The Czech émigré Joseph F. Žáček wrote in the late 1960s that Palacký's work was "still regarded as classic, valuable not only for much of its factual content but especially for the philosophy of history which permeates it (It is, of course, the only comprehensive philosophy of Czech history besides the Marxist one)."<sup>872</sup>

The Slovak Marxist interpretation of Ľudovít Štúr, the leader of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Slovak national movement, demonstrates striking analogies to the picture of Palacký. The Communist literary theoretician Vladimír Mináč described him as a creator of the Slovak nation: "In the beginning was the Word. And the Word was with Štúr. ... So, Štúr was the beginning."<sup>873</sup> Historian Karol Goláň described Štúr as a combatant for social and political progress, for Slovak national identity and Slovak culture, as well as for universal values.<sup>874</sup> Although

867 Macůrek, *Úvahy*, 79.

868 Hanzal, "Čeští historici," 283.

869 See *Přehled československých dějin*, vol. 2, part 1, 10–11.

870 Josef Kočí, "Revoluce v Čechách roku 1848," *Československý Časopis Historický* 1954, 511.

871 Bedřich Šindelář, "František Palacký a dělnická třída," *Časopis Matice Moravské* 1952, 35.

872 Joseph F. Žáček, "Palacký: A Marxist Portrait," in *Czechoslovakia Past and Present*, vol. 1, *Political, International, Social and Economic Aspects*, ed. Miloslav Rechcigl, The Hague–Paris 1968, 603.

873 Vladimír Mináč, "Tu žyje naród," in: *Kwestia słowska*, 376.

874 Karol Goláň, *Štúrovské pokolenie (Výber z diela)*, ed. František Bokes, Bratislava 1964, 367.

critical of the idea of Czecho-Slovak national unity, Štúr always expressed sympathy towards Czechs.<sup>875</sup> Július Mésároš called him an internationalist and political moralist on the way to becoming a revolutionary.<sup>876</sup> He was said to have been the best student, economist, linguist, educator, publicist, poet, politician, and—last but not least—the best Slovak historian of his times.<sup>877</sup> Karol Goláň stated that he possessed some prophetic abilities, for he was supposed to have foreseen the decline of capitalism in Slovakia.<sup>878</sup> In his later years Štúr became a pan-Slavist, dreaming of the assimilation of all Slavic nations into Russian language and culture, but this conservative turn did not fundamentally alter the positive assessments which Marxists made of Štúr.<sup>879</sup>

In fact, if anything could tarnish this image of a national hero, it was his attitude towards the Hungarian revolution of 1848–1849. Not only did the Revolution belong to the ‘progressive traditions’ of socialist Hungary, it was also one of the democratic movements passionately supported by Marx and Engels. At the same time, their opinion of the Slovak national movement was as critical as it had been in the case of Czech liberals. In 1954, the young Slovak historian and ethnographer Vladimír Matula highlighted this conflict. According to Matula, the commonly used interpretation of the Slovak national movement was highly subjective and idealising. The truth was that Štúr and other Slovak politicians had supported the reactionary Austrian state against the spirit of European revolution, embodied in Lajos Kossuth. Only a few marginal radical democratic Slovak groups that supported Hungarians were truly progressive. The mainstream of the Slovak national movement had not come close to embracing any kind of democratic ideology. From 1848 on, Matula found no traces of social progressiveness in the Slovak national camp.<sup>880</sup>

This reevaluation of Štúr radiated out like a local earthquake, eliciting an almost immediate response to some of Matula’s theses. Karol Goláň admitted that the Slovak national movement cooperated with Vienna, but it simply had no other choice: “The national chauvinism of the Hungarian movement ... had

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875 Goláň, *Štúrovske*, 371.

876 Július Mésároš, “Štúrov boj za oslobodenie slovenského roľníctva spod jarma feudalizmu,” in *Ludovít Štúr – život a dielo 1815-1856. Sborník materiálov z konferencie Historického ústavu Slovenskej akadémie vied*, ed. Vladimír Matula, Bratislava 1956, 152–153.

877 Almost every aspect of his rich personality was analysed by the authors of the volume: *Ludovít Štúr – život a dielo*.

878 Goláň, *Štúrovske*, 376.

879 “Veľke jubileum,” *Historický Časopis SAV* 1956, 4.

880 Vladimír Matula, “K niektorým otázkam slovenského národného hnutia štyridsiatych rokov XIX stor.,” *Historický Časopis SAV* 1954, 375–405.

excluded any other option.”<sup>881</sup> In January 1955, Matula faced his opponents during a conference at the Historical Institute of SAV. This time Karol Goláň was supported by a curious coalition, composed of the Stalinist literary historian Andrej Mráz and the young, bright and ‘apolitical’ sociologist and historian, Július Mésároš.<sup>882</sup> The first phase of the debate was closed in 1955, when the Slovak Academy of Sciences published the so-called “theses” for the Marxist university handbook for history students. According to the collective authors, Štúr was partly wrong because the agenda of the Hungarian revolution could have had a clearly progressive impact on all nationalities. On the other hand, they stated that he was correct in noting that the Hungarian liberal opposition had decided to accept historical-feudal rights and ignore national rights (and accordingly, they disregarded the objectives of the Slovak national movement).<sup>883</sup>

In 1956, the Slovak scientific community celebrated the centennial of Štúr’s death. His portrait graced the cover of the central historical journal, *Historický časopis SAV*, and the foreword to the volume described the latest debates over the Slovak national movement of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Its author criticised equally two extreme options: bourgeois nationalism and national nihilism.<sup>884</sup> One of the studies by Július Mésároš was entitled “Boj Ľudovíta Štúra proti feudalizmu” (Ľudovít Štúr’s struggle against feudalism). Mésároš highlighted important social differences between Hungarian revolutionaries and members of the Slovak national movement. In his view, Slovaks were common people, whereas Hungarian liberals were of noble origin. Thus their social radicalism was seriously limited. For Štúr and his fellow fighters—as Mésároš claimed—the Hungarian revolution was simply not progressive enough: “Bourgeois reform, as shaped by the liberal gentry in March 1848, was only a shadow of the ideas for which Štúr had fought. The abolition of serfdom, and the radical transformation of the feudal means of production and of the gentry’s privileges were accomplished only in part. It was not enough.”<sup>885</sup> These opinions were supported by Soviet researchers during the Štúr conference in Moscow in 1956.<sup>886</sup> Several

881 Karol Goláň, “Ľudovít Štúr a slovenské národné hnutie v štyridsiatych rokoch XIX. Storočia,” *Historický Časopis SAV* 1955, 91.

882 (JT) [Ján Tibenský] “Konferencia slovenských historikov o tézach slovenských dejín,” *Historický Časopis SAV* 1955, 300–301.

883 *Dejiny Slovenska (tézy)*, 115.

884 “Veľké jubileum,” 4.

885 Július Mésároš, “Boj Ľudovíta Štúra proti feudalizmu,” *Historický Časopis SAV* 1956, 6–19.

886 “Vedecké zasadnutie v Moskve venované stému výročiu smrti Ľudovíta Štúra,” *Historický Časopis SAV* 1956, 43.

weeks before, a conference in Bratislava had taken place. Its participants simply ignored any critical remarks concerning the national hero. Vladimír Matula himself gave a speech on Štúr's Slavic idea, stressing its "healthy features" and by no means recapitulating his previous critical remarks.<sup>887</sup>

In the meantime, Matula's critical positions were completely abandoned. One should point to the Hungarian revolution in 1956 as one of the reasons for the posthumous victory of Štúr over Kossuth. In 1959, the Czechoslovak university handbook described Štúr as an unquestionable source of progressive traditions and national values. The Hungarian revolution was then compared to the contemporaneous Hungarian "counterrevolution" and thus excluded from progressive traditions.<sup>888</sup> The rhetorical perfection of this construction warrants an extensive quote: "The aversion toward the Hungarian revolution ... coupled with an apologetic attitude toward the Slovak interventions of 1848-1849 became an ideologically important source for Slovak bourgeois nationalism. On the other hand, as the grievous events of 1956 in Hungary prove, they still exert a detrimental influence and lead to nationalist exaggerations and the blind cult of the Hungarian revolution. In truth, the Hungarian revolution of 1848-1849 was marked by even more pronounced limitations and indecisiveness than other 'true' bourgeois revolutions. The particular merit of the Hungarian nation in 1848-1849 was that it acted not only in its own name, but also in the name of international progress. Within the counterrevolutionary putsch of 1956, the wilful replication and manipulation of the revolutionary-democratic traditions of 1848-1849 was a weapon used by reactionary instigators and false petit-bourgeois democrats for the purpose of effecting the restoration of former exploitative classes, and by international imperialists, the greatest enemies of popular and national freedom."<sup>889</sup> Finally, Matula tried to defend the remnants of his theory by claiming that the old Štúr, while politically conservative and pan-Slavist, bore striking similarities to 1848's radical democrats, "'Kral' and Francisci, of course without their revolutionary strategy."<sup>890</sup> Matula's attempt to connect the "conservative revolution" with the democratic one did not open any wider debate.

The more progressive Štúr and the Slovak national movement looked, the more reactionary the Hungarian revolution became. In the mid-1960s, Vladimír Mináč wrote: "This revolution we fought against was odd from its very

887 Vladimír Matula, "Štúr a slovanstvo," in *Ludovít Štúr-život a dielo*, 386–387.

888 *Přehled československých dějin (Maketa)*, vol. 1, 769.

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

890 Vladimír Matula, "Vyvrcholenie štúrovskej koncepcie myšlienky slovenskej vzájomnosti v štúrovom diele *Slovanstvo a svet budúcnosti*," *Historický časopis SAV* 1960, 376.

beginnings: *drôle de revolution*. The figures were changing: the casino in Pest instead of the Viennese court; five Hungarian aristocratic families instead of the emperor. It was characteristic of this strange revolution, that no other reaction, restoration, or counterrevolution was needed to stop it. This revolution had an inborn protest, reaction, and restoration—revolution bearing a victorious reactionary seed.”<sup>891</sup>

In turn, Matula’s article had been extensively quoted after 1954 as a negative example, especially during the political liberalism of the so-called Slovak Spring period in the 1960s. His attempt to reinterpret Štúr and the Slovak national movement was labelled as the “Stalinisation of historiography.” Moreover, it became the main example for all the anti-national and ungainly ugly features of the Stalinist period. Ludovít Holotík, director of the Institute of History at the Academy, wrote in 1963 that “the ideological campaign against nationalism was one-sided; it was restricted to Slovakia and accompanied by a system of distrust and terror. In those conditions the necessity of searching for Slovak progressive traditions was wrongly understood, it was labelled as nationalism (for example when it came to the characteristics of Ludovít Štúr, etc.).”<sup>892</sup> The allusion to Matula was quite clear, but it was still not the last assault on his claims. The idea of an anti-national Stalinist historiography that attempted to “destroy” Štúr is still present in Slovak public and scientific life. In 1991, during the congress of the Slovak Historical Society, Richard Marsina claimed that in the Communist period only the small nations were accused of nationalism, whereas it should be clear, that whatever they do, they do it to defend their existence from suppression by the large nations.<sup>893</sup> Interestingly, a similar position is defended by Adam Hudek in a book which, by all accounts, is a work of undeniable quality. Accepting without reservation all manifestations of sympathy among Slovak Marxists for Štúr and national traditions, Hudek argues that up until the 1960s, historical discourse was in that regard dominated by the self-critical position of Ladislav Novomeský, who harked back to the 1930s.<sup>894</sup>

Neither the Štúr controversy, nor any other element of the Slovak Marxist interpretation of history justifies such theses. It appears rather that the ‘purges’ at Slovak universities and historical societies did not produce a rapid reinterpretation of the national narrative. Daniel Rapant, probably the most outstanding Slovak historian of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and a symbolical figure, was

891 Mináč, “Kwestia slowacka,” 383.

892 Ludovít Holotík, “Desať rokov Historického ústavu Slovenskej akadémie vied,” *Historický Časopis SAV* 1963, 601.

893 Richard Marsina, “Slovenská historiografia 1945-1990,” *Historický Časopis SAV* 1991, 372.

894 Hudek, *Najpolitickéjšia*, 50.

relieved from his duties as a historian, but his interpretation of the Slovak national movement remained widely accepted.<sup>895</sup> In 1966, this traditional interpretation was challenged again by a Hungarian Marxist, Erzsébet Andics. The Slovak responses demonstrated already a good deal of distance from the national ‘nihilism’ of Matula. Július Mésároš quoted both Vladimír Mináč and Daniel Rapant to prove that—whatever Marx and Engels might have said about the Hungarian revolution—Kossuth was simply fighting for power. His victory would not have positively advanced the prospects of the Slovaks.<sup>896</sup>

## GDR: Rather Treitschke than Ranke

Czech and Slovak Marxist historiographies do not offer many examples of bitter clashes between adherents of various “bourgeois” methodological directions. To find an equivalent to the vivid Polish debates on Hoffman, Lelewel, or the Kraków and Warsaw historical schools, one should search in the historiography that inherited the most sophisticated (but also the most problematic) tradition: East German Marxist historiography. I will focus on two problems of crucial importance: the reevaluation of Leopold von Ranke, and the so-called Prussian historical school consisting of Johann Gustav Droysen, Heinrich von Sybel, Heinrich von Treitschke, and Theodor Mommsen (considered as a member of this group by the East Germans). As in the Polish case, all the historians taking part in the East German debates were Marxists, though some of them did not necessarily belong to the mainstream.

East German historians only started to elaborate on their pre-Marxist scientific traditions rather late. In the 1950s, one of the leading Marxist scholars, a professor at the university in Halle (and veteran of the Soviet Army), Leo Stern, addressed the issue in his work *Gegenwartsaufgaben der deutschen Geschichtsforschung* (published separately, as well as in the newly created *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*). The chapter devoted to Ranke was entitled simply “Ranke and the fall of German historiography.” Stern criticised Ranke’s notion of objectivity, which led to social and political conservatism,

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895 On the ‘purges’ in Slovakia see: Vladimír Michalička and Daniela Vaněková, “Die Entwicklung des Hochschulwesens in den Jahren 1945-1989,” in *Die Bildungs-, Wissenschafts- und Kulturpolitik in der Slowakei 1945-2004*, eds. Beata Blehova & Peter Bachmaier, Frankfurt am Main 2004, 81–90.

896 Július Mésároš, “Treba revidovať názory Marxa a Engelsa o revolúcii rokov 1848-1849?,” *Predvoj*, 1966, 10–11; I use the new edition in: idem, *Zložitě hľadanie pravdy o slovenských dejinách. Výber štúdií, odborných polemik a článkov z polstoročnej výskumnej a publikačnej činnosti*, Bratislava 2004, 259–267.

and moreover, paved the way to German nationalism.<sup>897</sup> He faulted the “moral indifferentism” of this form of objectivity, which could make every past crime justifiable. Surprisingly, Stern did not accuse Ranke of being a reactionary political thinker – he considered his striving for an objective picture of the past as serious and sincere. Still, he noted that, by resort to objectivity, Ranke weakened the moral strength of German historiography, leaving it unprepared to face the historical outcomes of 1918 and 1945.<sup>898</sup>

In 1956, the prominent economic historian Jürgen Kuczynski (1904–1997) presented a completely different evaluation of Ranke’s impact on German historiography. Kuczynski wrote that Ranke was a brilliant historian who raised the professional level of historiography: “As a matter of fact Ranke used those new scientific tools to strengthen the ruling classes .... But how much closer we are to the uncovering of the real past thanks to his efforts! ... All means that help us better describe reality are important for social progress and therefore objectively help the new win its battle against the old in society.”<sup>899</sup> Jürgen Kuczynski’s assessment of Ranke was one of the main arguments in an official campaign against “revisionism” that, thanks to his good political relations with the German and foreign Communist elite, did not have any serious personal effects.<sup>900</sup>

The official GDR narrative of German historicism was created throughout the 1960s. It was much more simplified than any passage from Stern or Kuczynski. The young German sociologist, historian, and director of the Historical Institute at Humboldt University in Berlin, Joachim Streisand (1920–1980), simply described Ranke as a part of the feudal reaction against the progressive intellectual current(s) of Enlightenment.<sup>901</sup> Gerhard Schilfert noticed that Ranke’s reactionary character was evident even in his youth, when he remained unmoved by the flourishing radical movement of the *Burschenschaften* and thus supported European reaction during every single 19<sup>th</sup> century revolutionary attempt.<sup>902</sup> He was set against such progressive Romantic

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897 Stern, *Gegenwartsaufgaben*, 20.

898 Stern, *Gegenwartsaufgaben*, 24–25.

899 Jürgen Kuczynski, “Parteilichkeit und Objektivität in Geschichte und Geschichtsschreibung,” *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1956, 887.

900 Kuczynski described these events in his book *Frost nach dem Tauwetter. Mein Historikerstreit*, Berlin 1993.

901 Joachim Streisand, “Progressive Traditionen und reaktionäre Anachronismen in der deutschen Geschichtswissenschaft,” *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1961, 1783.

902 Gerhard Schilfert, “Leopold von Ranke,” in *Die deutsche Geschichtswissenschaft vom Beginn des 19. Jahrhunderts bis zur Reichseinigung von oben*, ed. Joachim Streisand, Berlin, 1963, 242–243.

historians as Schlosser, Gervinus, Rotteck, and Zimmermann.<sup>903</sup> When in the early 1960s the Marxist evaluation of Hegel began to change rapidly,<sup>904</sup> and the philosopher was at least partly adapted to the progressive heritage, Ranke lost another point, for he had criticised Hegel's philosophy of history.<sup>905</sup> Ranke was unfairly accused of "worshiping the Prussian regime," and, on the other hand, quite "fairly" faulted for negating historical progress and stressing the role of foreign policy and social conservatism. Ernst Engelberg, the leader of the GDR historical association, wrote, "shortly, Ranke was useful to justify imperialist aggression abroad as well as for fighting against the German workers' movement."<sup>906</sup>

The Marxist appreciation of Ranke had gradually deteriorated, becoming more and more one-sided. The Prussian historical school had a similar trajectory, albeit in the opposite direction. In the late 1940s, when the Marxist vision of the German past was still under the influence of postwar criticism (with Alexander Abusch as the most prominent representative of the new historical direction), the role of Sybel, Treitschke, and Droysen seemed to be quite clear: through their works they had prepared the way for Hitler.<sup>907</sup> As Gottfried Koch stated, "their works reflected a compromise between the great bourgeoisie and the Prussian feudal-absolutist reaction."<sup>908</sup> The young Marxist historian of historiography, Hans Schleier (born in 1931), characterised the Prussian school as antidemocratic and counterrevolutionary. Its members were Prussian chauvinists and militarists. They were afraid of social democracy and did their best to destroy its influence on German society. They supported Bismarck's aggressive policies, and some of them (namely Treitschke) were also anti-Semitic.<sup>909</sup> In methodological matters Droysen, Treitschke, and Sybel were said to combine the old liberal agenda with all the reactionary features of

903 Schilfert, "Leopold von Ranke," 253.

904 For the turn of the former interpretation of Hegel see: *Skizze zur Geschichte der Hegel-Literatur in der SBZ und der DDR* ([www.hegel-institut.de/Diskussion/DDR](http://www.hegel-institut.de/Diskussion/DDR)).

905 Schilfert, "Leopold von Ranke," 256.

906 Ernst Engelberg, "Politik und Geschichtsschreibung. Die historische Stellung und Aufgabe der Geschichtswissenschaft in der DDR," *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1958, 482.

907 Stern, *Gegenwartsaufgaben*, 29; Hans Schleier, *Sybel und Treitschke. Antidemokratismus und Militarismus im historisch-politischen Denken großbourgeoischer Geschichtsideologen* Berlin 1965, 161.

908 Gottfried Koch, "Die mittelalterliche Kaiserpolitik im Spiegel der bürgerlichen deutschen Historiographie des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts," *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 1962, 1842.

909 Hans Schleier, "Die kleindeutsche Schule (Droysen, Sybel, Treitschke)," *Die deutsche Geschichtswissenschaft*, 271–301.

German Romanticism (first of all its fondness for feudalism).<sup>910</sup> They were hostile towards the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, and—despite formal declarations—towards the progressive heritage of German Classicism.<sup>911</sup>

Despite all this, East German Marxists saw some of the positive aspects of the Prussian school, and—interestingly enough—observed them mostly in those aspects where it differed from Ranke and his followers. Gottfried Koch stated that the conflict between Sybel and Giesebrecht had a clear political meaning: Prussian historians were correct in stating that the Medieval German empire spent its vital power in Italy instead of strengthening its internal coherence and expanding to the Slavic East. Figures such as Sybel or Treitschke wanted a united Germany, and thus they were more progressive than conservatives who supported existing political relations.<sup>912</sup> Had they not supported the *Ostexpansion* as well, their assessment by Marxists could have been even more positive.<sup>913</sup>

It is thus very interesting to compare the Marxist attitude towards Ranke and his younger colleagues. Interestingly enough, the Prussian school came to be perceived more favourably than the most influential German historian. Hans Schleier explained this problem in a similar way to what Marian Henryk Serejski had done with the historians Karol Boromeusz Hoffman and Joachim Lelewel: “Political historians, representatives of an alliance between the great bourgeoisie and the Junkers, adherents of the national and political unification of Germany, represented a new school of historiography, more progressive than the conservative, Romantic Ranke.”<sup>914</sup> Surprisingly, even such features of the Prussian school as its German nationalism were interpreted as having been inherited from Ranke, and thus were not seen as a difference between Ranke and national-liberals. Schleier noted that “there were many more methodological and political similarities between Ranke and the Prussian-German historians than they, or the later bourgeois history of historiography, were willing to admit.”<sup>915</sup>

Of course, it was Sybel’s, Treitschke’s, and Droysen’s attitude towards the unification of Germany that played the main role in this Marxist interpretation. In the mid-1950s, the conflict between two leading personalities in German Marxist historiography, Alfred Meusel and Ernst Engelberg, also concerned this phenomenon. Meusel supported a more “national” interpretation and described 1871 as a victorious moment for the German national movement and the

910 Koch, “Die mittelalterliche Kaiserpolitik,” 1841.

911 Schleier, “Die kleindeutsche Schule (Droysen, Sybel, Treitschke),” 304.

912 Koch, “Die mittelalterliche Kaiserpolitik,” 1842.

913 Streisand, “Progressive Traditionen,” 1785.

914 Schleier, *Sybel und Treitschke*, 228.

915 Ibidem, 230.

German working class. Engelberg (later known as the GDR biographer of Bismarck)<sup>916</sup> claimed more ‘Bolshevik’ positions, declaring his hostility towards Bismarck and the idea of unification “from above.” Nevertheless in the 1960s, when Meusel died, and Engelberg was at the peak of his political and scientific career, he adopted the ideas of his former enemy. Odd as it may seem, this was bound to happen. Since the Marxist interpretation of German history in the 1950s saw national unity as the main objective of all progressive movements, starting with Thomas Müntzer, the fulfilment of this task had to be finally interpreted as a progressive phenomenon. And thus, the Prussian school that avidly supported unification was finally labelled as more progressive than Ranke, who was rather sceptical towards every attempt to change the political map of Europe.

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We can now draw some conclusions from samples of Marxist historiographies in East Central Europe. We started with the Polish problem: how to define the criteria of progressiveness in the history of historiography. Then we examined the successful Czech attempt to ‘defend’ František Palacký from Marxist critiques, and the Slovak analogy—an unsuccessful ‘attack’ on Ľudovít Štúr. Finally, we demonstrated that the comparison of East German representations of Ranke and the Prussian school illustrate the same problem as Polish debates, namely the problem of recognising the criteria of progressiveness. At the same time, East German debates touched upon the question of the ‘defence’ of national tradition (in this particular example of the *Reichsgründung* in 1871) from a supposedly ‘Bolshevik’, ‘anti-national’ reinterpretation, addressed also in the Czechoslovak context. Now finally, we can summarize and re-consider the methodological parallels in this broad comparison.

For Marxist historians, the crucial problem of the criteria of progressiveness remained unsolved. On the one hand, it was quite natural to search for progressive values in Romantic historiography. Lelewel and Palacký, as well as Štúr (the latter two in their early works), described the Slavs’ pre-historic freedom and equality, condemned German feudalism, and looked to the future with the optimism of liberal *Vormärz* democrats. They stressed the ‘democratic’ phenomena of national history: the Hussite revolution, previous Slavic freedom, and even the progressive elements of the democracy of the gentry. In many ways Marxists simply shared their conclusions. Still, on the other hand, it was clear to them that Romantic historiography was idealist, and methodologically less developed than later positivist or historicist schools. Thus some Marxists

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916 Ernst Engelberg, *Bismarck* Berlin 1985.

identified with the latter, describing Karol Boromeusz Hoffman and Michał Bobrzyński as more progressive than Lelewel. Both options—‘Romantic’ and ‘Historicist-Positivist’—were equally likely to be represented in any given Marxist historian’s position, both could be described as truly Marxist, and in fact both were introduced as the Marxist response to previous ‘misinterpretations.’ A highly interesting appendix to the Polish, Czech, and Slovak cases was provided by the East German interpretations of the Prussian school, which was treated as more ‘national’ and less conservative than Ranke, but it was, as had been the case with Lelewel, Palacký, and Štúr, neither an ‘objective,’ apolitical, nor a strictly ‘scientific’ group. Droysen, Sybel, and Treitschke were at the centre of the German national movement in their times and thus, functionally could play a role similar to that of the Romantic historians in Poland, the Czech lands, or Slovakia. Even if their political stance had been officially labelled as reactionary, their nationalism proved to be closer to the Marxist interpretation of history than any disinterested art of ‘objectivity.’

The debate over the criteria of progressiveness saw the formation of a separate intellectual milieu, namely, that of socially and politically conservative scholars with strong pan-Slavic sympathies. In contrast to other Polish Marxist researchers, so reserved in their attitudes towards historiographical traditions, Andrzej Poppe tried to include Zorian Dołęga Chodakowski in the ‘progressive’ catalogue, and by so doing, he neglected the evident ideological shortcomings of pan-Slavism, not only in comparison to Marxism, but also in comparison to the democratic ideology of the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. His attempt illustrates that in the eyes of the Marxist canonisers, a historian’s attitude towards Russia was a crucial feature, offering redemption for ideological or methodological ‘backwardness.’ Unfortunately, neither the history of Poland in general, nor the history of historiography could supply many examples of pro-Russian sympathies. This was much easier to come by in the case of Czech or Slovak historiography, and in fact, according to Marxist researchers, a progressive pan-Slavism characterised both Štúr and the late Palacký, as well as the Czech and Slovak national movements in general.

Another aspect of the progressiveness debate was the adoption of the idea of historical progress. Marxist reassessments of different historical groupings rarely avoided this pitfall. Romantic historians, although idealist (and in fact simply because they were idealists), believed in historical progress, which to some degree made them similar to Marx and Engels. Adherents to a positivist philosophy, although in many ways different, also shared a belief in a linear and constant progressive evolution. This made them at least partly relevant to the Marxist vision of history. On the other hand, Ranke, with his critique of the Hegelian philosophy of history and with his division of history into separate

epochs meant to be judged according to their own rules, was unacceptable. In comparison to Ranke's historicism, the nationalist tendency of the Prussian school was much easier to justify as a predecessor to German Marxist historiography.

The differences between Polish criticism of Lelewel, on the one hand, and Czech and Slovak admiration for Palacký and Štúr, on the other, is not at all a unique phenomenon. Many historians of historiography see the immanent difference between more or less 'nationalist' Marxist historiographies, with more or less national groupings contained within each of them. The division between more and less 'national' models of Marxist historiography can be subsumed in the conflict of 'right' and 'left' interpretations described by Lutz Raphael. Those on the 'left' always focus on the class struggle and ascribe progressiveness only to the lower classes. The more moderate 'right' interpretation sees a continuity of progressive development culminating in the climax of national history: an independent, "people's democratic" state. In this latter model, particular knights, kings and burghers are also included in progressive traditions.<sup>917</sup> The Czech and Slovak cases are an example of the more 'national' model, the Polish case seems to represent a different pattern altogether, and the East German case is the most dependent on political conjunctions and also the most dynamic, shifting from radical postwar 'pessimism' to the nationalist and Prussian 'renaissance' just before the collapse of the state.

On the whole, of the cases analysed here, one can consider the 'Czechoslovak model' as the most centralised. It is difficult to find any important historical controversies in the Czechoslovak context of the 1950s. If such a controversy emerged, it was almost immediately silenced (as happened to Vladimír Matula's theses). The interpretation of national history was dependent on the liberal-nationalist historiographical tradition inasmuch as it did not confront Marxist dogmas too openly. Critical comments concerning the Czech and Slovak national movements by the founding fathers of Communism were simply ignored. The Marxist vision of the past drew on the liberal-nationalist conviction in general (it described the history of the nation, not of the class struggle or economic development), as well as on some of its specific details (such as interpretations of the Hussite movement, 'national revival,' and František Palacký or Ludovít Štúr). Paradoxically, such a development meant that any other Marxist (but non-orthodox) interpretation was barely possible.

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917 Lutz Raphael, *Geschichtswissenschaft im Zeitalter der Extreme. Theorien, Methoden, Tendenzen von 1900 bis zur Gegenwart*, München 2003, 58-9.

The dominant collective of Marxist scholars was reproducing a pre-Marxist, eclectic vision of the national past.

The less 'national' models of Polish and East German historiography of the Stalinist period were much more open to certain types of historical discussion – which was quite different from the model of debates in 'normal sciences' because it stressed the need for achieving a single true interpretation for every single topic. The debates between Polish or German historians on the progressiveness of Lelewel, Hoffman, Ranke, or the Prussian school were supposed to lead (and in some cases really led) to the canonisation of one chosen solution. Once the canonisation was achieved, no other interpretation would be accepted, as there could not be two parallel Marxist interpretations of the same phenomenon. In practice, traces of 'pessimism' appeared mostly in places where Polish or German history interfered with the privileged Soviet vision of the national past. Polish democrats of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (such as Lelewel) unfortunately had been doing their best to fight Russian autocracy. Similarly, the anti-Slavic features of German history were summarily condemned (at least until the late 1960s) by GDR historiography.

In addition, one should also highlight the relatively broad German and Polish non-Marxist historiographical traditions as a catalyst for the multiplicity of opinions within the Marxist historical community. The decisions concerning which part of the ideological domain to draw from, and which traditions to condemn to oblivion, often proved to be too difficult. Whether one should praise the democrat Lelewel, or point to positivist historians as representatives of a new social-economic formation, remained an open question. Paradoxically, it could be said that German and Polish Marxists of the Stalinist period prolonged and revived the main historiographical debates of 19<sup>th</sup> century scholars. In the 1950s, though in a rather simplified way, the classic controversies between Romanticism and Positivism or Conservatism and Liberalism found their equivalent in the polemics of Bobińska, Serejski or Assorodobraj; Kuczynski, Engelberg or Stern. In contrast, in the Czech, and most clearly in the Slovak case, the exclusion of such an important figure as Ľudovít Štúr from the historical tradition was rightly perceived as a threat to the national identity; his role in his national culture cannot be compared to any Polish or German national hero.

However, it should be stated very clearly that neither a 'right' nor 'left' Marxist interpretation of national history can be perceived as better than the other in any sense. Both were only variations within the frame of Soviet-type Marxism. Both 'right' and 'left' could be equally destructive to the quality of scientific discourse, excluding the possible multiplicity of interpretations. Interpretations of both types aspired to a monopoly in nearly every topic (as in

those described in this text). This monopolistic nature of historiography led to the application of a mythic structure of Stalinist science. If the interpretation of history (philosophy, biology, linguistics, or any other science) is understood as something similar to religious belief, and not as an *ipso facto* problematic and multi-faceted phenomenon, it transcends reality and begins to belong to the sphere of myth.<sup>918</sup> Within this mythic structure, interpretations, whether more or less national, played the same destructive role.

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918 I refer to the broad understanding of “myth” as described by Leszek Kołakowski, *The Presence of Myth*, transl. Adam Czerniawski, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001, *passim*.