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**ON THE PROCESS OF DE-STALINIZATION OF POLISH  
HISTORIOGRAPHY – STEFAN KIENIEWICZ (1907–92)  
AND THE INSURGENT TRADITION\***

**Abstract**

The article is a case study illustrating the process of Stalinization and de-Stalinization of Polish historiography. The issue in question is placed in the context of tradition understood in terms of one's relation towards historical heritage. An analysis of Stefan Kieniewicz's historical thought, one of the most distinguished experts on the history of the national uprisings of the post-partitioned era, is hoped to provide significant insights into the process of ideologization and de-ideologization of the Polish historiography of the communist era. While in the Stalinist account of Polish history national uprisings, having been included under the category of 'progressive traditions', tended to be equated with Lenin's idea of agrarian revolution, Kieniewicz's interpretation – the evolution of which marked the successive stages of the process of de-Stalinization – tended first to replace the Leninist concept with the nineteenth-century idea of social revolution and then to abandon the 'progressive traditions' in favour of the 'reactionary ones' (the role of Catholicism and the Polish presence in the East). Thus, the Stalinist account of the uprisings understood as the anti-feudal revolutions fostering the rise of 'capitalism' and 'bourgeois nation' was giving way to an interpretation in which the nineteenth-century armed movements were seen as a national struggle for freedom resulting in the development of Polish national consciousness in the ethnically Polish territories, and in the regression of this consciousness in the eastern lands of the old Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. When approached from the perspective of tradition, these interpretations appear to have aimed at inventing tradition (Stalinism) on one hand and at transforming heritage in a way which preserves its historical meaning on the other.

**Keywords:** Stalinism, De-Stalinisation, history of historiography, Polish historiography, Polish national uprisings, tradition, „inventing traditions”, Stefan Kieniewicz

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## I INTRODUCTION

No serious discussion of the post-war historiographies of Eastern and Central Europe can avoid addressing the issue of the process of their Stalinization and de-Stalinization. While the first (Stalinization) has already been widely discussed by scholars, the second (de-Stalinization) has received much less attention.<sup>1</sup> The scholarly picture of these historiographies will remain incomplete as long as our knowledge of the Stalinist model of historical studies is not complemented with an account of its further transformations – an account or accounts, for if it is justifiable to speak of one Stalinist model forced on the historiographies of all Eastern and Central European countries, then there was more than one path of de-Stalinization. Perhaps there were as many paths of de-Stalinization as there were the countries that underwent the process of Stalinization.<sup>2</sup>

However, this article is devoted to a discussion of the ‘Polish path’ only, or, to be more precise, to one of its sections. I am going to take a look at one historian’s interpretation of one problem, placing my analysis in the context of the ‘politics of history’ of the Polish People’s Republic (Pol.: *Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa*, PRL). The problem to be dealt with here wasn’t insignificant. As one of the most important issues of the post-partition era in Polish history, the national uprisings, because of their revolutionary and anti-Russian nature, were among the most difficult fragments of the national heritage the new authorities were prepared to accept. The choice of Stefan Kieniewicz as the subject of this article isn’t random either. Not only was he one of the most distinguished experts on the issue under discussion, but he was also one of the most prominent figures of historiography within the PRL: one of the contributors to the key publication providing a Stalinist account of Polish history, he served for many years as editor-in-chief of *Przegląd Historyczny* (1952–92). A deputy-director of the Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences (1957–68)

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<sup>1</sup> See John Connolly, *Captive University: The Sovietization of East German, Czech, and Polish Higher Education, 1945–1956* (Chapel Hill, 2000); Maciej Górny, *The Nation Should Come First: Marxism and Historiography in East Central Europe* (Frankfurt am Main *et al.*, 2013) (along with the literature referenced in the work).

<sup>2</sup> Rafał Stobiecki, ‘Destalinizacja czy destalinizacje?’, *Tygiel Kultury*, 4–6 (1999), 168–71.

and chairman of the Committee of Historical Sciences of the Polish Academy of Sciences (1969–84), he also represented Polish historians at the International Congresses of Historical Sciences (1955, 1965, 1970, and 1980).<sup>3</sup>

The analysis of the evolution of Kieniewicz's views of the national uprisings aims not only to deepen our understanding of the issue that lay at the heart of his scholarly endeavours, but it is also a case study illustrating the transitions of Polish historiography after 1945.

In the pages that follow I draw on the concepts of tradition and heritage. Following Jerzy Szacki in my understanding of both terms, I take heritage to refer to all the historically transmitted 'objects' (defined by Szacki as a social heritage), and tradition to the attitude which successive generations adopt with regard to these objects ("simply tradition per se").<sup>4</sup> In this sense national uprisings and the nineteenth-century reflection on the national struggle form part of heritage, while Kieniewicz's way of interpreting them comes into the category of tradition.<sup>5</sup> The adoption of such a perspective enables the examination of the extent to which Kieniewicz's interpretation of the struggle for freedom on one hand and the Stalinist account of it on the other fell within the range of the nineteenth-century heritage.<sup>6</sup> Regardless of the answer to this question, today both these traditions must be seen as forming part of the heritage.

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<sup>3</sup> Andrzej Szwarz (ed.), *Stefan Kieniewicz i jego dziedzictwo w polskiej historiografii* (Warszawa, 2010); Elżbieta Orman, 'O paradoksach historiografii w czasach PRL-u na przykładzie korespondencji Henryka Wereszyckiego i Stefana Kieniewicza', in Stefan Kieniewicz and Henryk Wereszycki, *Korespondencja z lat 1947–1990*, ed. by Elżbieta Orman (Kraków, 2013) [hereinafter: *Korespondencja*]; Tadeusz P. Rutkowski, *Nauki historyczne w Polsce 1944–1970. Zagadnienia polityczne i organizacyjne* (Warszawa, 2007), *passim*; see also Jerzy Skowronek, 'Profesora Stefana Kieniewicza metodologia praktyczna', *Historyka. Studia Metodologiczne*, xxiii (1993), 65–83; Andrzej Szwarz, *Stefan Kieniewicz (1907–1992)*, in *Słownik historyków polskich* (Warszawa, 1994), 224–5.

<sup>4</sup> Jerzy Szacki, *Tradycja* (Warszawa, 2011), 98–181.

<sup>5</sup> On the relations between tradition and historiography see, *ibidem*, 220–50.

<sup>6</sup> The problem of the invention of tradition in the context of the policy pursued by the communist authorities was addressed by Szacki, *ibidem*, 171; see also Dorota Malczewska-Pawelec and Tomasz Pawelec, *Rewolucja w pamięci historycznej. Porównawcze studia nad praktykami manipulacji zbiorową pamięcią Polaków w czasach stalinowskich* (Kraków, 2011).

## II

STALINISATION OF POLISH HISTORIOGRAPHY.  
UPRISINGS AS AN AGRARIAN REVOLUTION (1949–56)

Our knowledge of the process of the Stalinization of Polish historiography is quite thorough.<sup>7</sup> It was typical in the sense that it concerned a variety of disciplines which, according to the Bolshevik doctrine, were considered as belonging in the realm of class phenomena and, as such, were unable to describe reality in a way free of the interference of class interests. Marxism-Leninism was the only doctrine immune to such an interference and its proponents accorded it the status of both a hard science revealing the laws of naturalistically conceived society, as well as an ideology resorted to in the attempt to advance the revolutionary transformation of society. The doctrine justified the Party-State's attempts to seize full control of academia and to force it to accept the communist ideology as the theory on which all kinds of research were to be based. Such a view of the role of the doctrine wasn't of course regarded by its advocates as an ideologization of science and the abandonment of the very idea of truth-seeking. Quite the contrary, the very possibility of discovering the 'objective truth' depended on the adherence to the 'principle of the partisanship'.<sup>8</sup> According to the Leninist concept of the party as the vanguard of the most progressive social class, the party had access to reality undistorted by the pursuit of class interests – something

<sup>7</sup> See first of all Connelly, *Captive University*; Leonid Gorizontov, "‘Metodologičeskij perevorot’ v pol'skoj istoriografii rubeža 40–50 gg. i sovetskaja istoričeskaja nauka", in Alina Barszczewska-Krupa (ed.), *W kręgu historii historiografii i polityki* (Łódź, 1997), 103–26; Górný, *The Nation Should Come First, passim*; Andrzej Feliks Grabski, *Dzieje historiografii*, preface by Rafał Stobiecki (Poznań, 2011), 673–708; *idem*, *Zarys historii historiografii polskiej* (Poznań, 2000), 204–13; Piotr Hübner, *Polityka naukowa w Polsce w latach 1944–1953. Geneza systemu*, 2 vols. (Wrocław et al., 1992); Rutkowski, *Nauki historyczne*, 235–8; Rafał Stobiecki, *Historia pod nadzorem. Spory o nowy model historii w Polsce (II połowa lat czterdziestych – początek lat pięćdziesiątych)* (Łódź, 1993); *idem*, *Bolszewizm a historia. Próba rekonstrukcji bolszewickiej filozofii dziejów* (Łódź, 1998); *idem*, *Historiografia PRL: ani dobra, ani mądra, ani piękna ... ale skomplikowana. Studia i szkice* (Warszawa, 2007).

<sup>8</sup> The difficulties historians encountered in trying to understand the 'principle of partisanship' was discussed by Andrzej Wierzbicki, "Prawda jest i może być tylko w rękach klasy robotniczej". Z dziejów zasady partyjności nauki historycznej w Polsce', in *idem* (ed.), *Klio Polska. Studia i materiały z dziejów historiografii polskiej po II wojnie światowej*, iii (Warszawa, 2008), 143–62.

which, by definition, was out of reach of the 'bourgeois science'. The glorification of the objective truth (discovered by the party) was accompanied by the disparagement of 'bourgeois objectivism' (traditional science), to be regarded as one of the ways of protecting class interests. Such an approach made it difficult to distinguish between the exercise of Marxist science and the legitimization of the political system that brought it into being.

National uprisings were included in the field of progressive traditions – a step which was far from obvious. From a perspective of the theory of socio-economic formations, of crucial importance in the post-partitioned era was the process referred to as the anti-feudal transition. However, the way in which this transition was going to be interpreted wasn't clear. Apart from Polish Marxist historians, the problem was also dealt with by Soviet scholars who at the turn of 1940s and 1950s attempted to elaborate a universal interpretation of the national histories of the countries of the Soviet bloc in order to ease the nationalist tensions between them.<sup>9</sup> Unsurprisingly, scholars from the Institute of Slavonic Studies of the Soviet Academy of Sciences worked on the assumption that the new account of Polish history, which they were required to prepare, should be based on the interpretations to be found in works of the classic authors of Marxism-Leninism. However, as Andrzej Walicki showed as early as 1954 (although his remarks pertaining to this issue were published in 1968), Soviet scholars ignored Marx's comments on what was known as the Polish problem in the nineteenth century, giving priority to the views expressed in this regard by Lenin.<sup>10</sup> In this way Lenin's concept of agrarian revolution came to be associated with the ideal form of the anti-feudal transition, becoming the most important criterion by which to judge the progressive nature of the issues characteristic of the nineteenth-century reality. The problem was that Lenin presented his programme of agrarian revolution at the beginning of the twentieth century. It is hardly surprising that neither Polish uprisings nor Polish

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<sup>9</sup> Mihail Ū. Dostal', *Kak Feniks iz pepla. Otečestvennoe slavjanovedenie v period Vtoroj Mirovoj Vojny i v pervye poslevoennye gody* (Moskva, 2011), 232–75; Jan Szumski, *Polityka a historia. ZSRR wobec nauki historycznej w Polsce w latach 1945–1964* (Warszawa, 2016), 241–71.

<sup>10</sup> In the autumn of 1954 Walicki gave the memorial regarding this matter to Bronisław Baczko. At that time Baczko was an influential member of IKKN; see Andrzej Walicki, *Idee i ludzie. Próba autobiografii* (Warszawa, 2010), 41–4.

democrats of the post-partition era proved revolutionary enough to be designated as progressive. To make matters worse, Polish uprisings were the nobility's movements tainted with imperialism (the idea of the resurrection of an independent Poland encompassing all the lands it had possessed before 1772), and anti-Russian nationalism. Polish Marxist historians were invited to participate in some of the discussions devoted to the elaboration of this interpretation of Polish history. In time, they spoke in defence of the insurgent tradition, trying to prove its progressive character.<sup>11</sup> However, the result of this defence was sometimes controversial.

The institution which initially took upon itself the task of the elaboration of the Stalinist vision of Polish history was the Institute of Education of Academic Cadres (Pol.: Instytut Kształcenia Kadr Naukowych, IKKN).<sup>12</sup> Scholars from the Institute were quite consistent in their view of the formation transitions as the key issue of the post-partition era. From this it followed that the uprisings could be progressive only in so far as they were anti-feudal, and the only movements that met this condition, and thus deserved to be included under the category of 'progressive uprisings', were those organized by the peasants. This, in turn, meant that the only events that fulfilled the ideal of the struggle for independence were those known as the Galician slaughter in 1846.<sup>13</sup> However, this conclusion not only radically reversed the historical tradition but it also ran counter to a number of other elements of the orthodox interpretation of the

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<sup>11</sup> The issue was discussed by Zbigniew Romek, 'Polsko-radzieckie dyskusje o "Istorii Polski v trech tomach" w latach 1950–1959', in Andrzej Wierzbicki (ed.), *Klio Polska. Studia i materiały z dziejów historiografii polskiej po II wojnie światowej*, [I] (Warszawa, 2004), 169–91.

<sup>12</sup> I omit here earlier works by Żanna Kormanowa. See Stobiecki, *Historiografia PRL*, 258–9; Szumski, *Polityka a historia*, 242–4. On IKKN see Beata Bińko, 'Instytut Kształcenia Kadr Naukowych przy KC KPZR. Narzędzie ofensywy ideologicznej w nauce i szkolnictwie wyższym', *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*, xl, 2 (1996), 199–214; *eadem*, 'Skąd przychodzili, dokąd zmierzali ... Aspiranci pierwszego rocznika Instytut Kształcenia Kadr Naukowych przy KC KPZR', in Tomasz Szarota (ed.), *Komunizm. Ideologia, system, ludzie* (Warszawa, 2000), 192–204.

<sup>13</sup> Bronisław Baczek, *Poglądy społeczno-polityczne i filozoficzne Towarzystwa Demokratycznego Polskiego*, Warszawa 1955, 32–4, 99. On the evolution of Baczek's outlook see Stanisław Borzym, 'Baczek. Sublimacja historyzmu', in Stefan Amsterdamski et al. (eds.), *Historia i wyobrażenia. Studia ofiarowane Bronisławowi Baczce* (Warszawa, 1992), 11–20.

nineteenth-century uprisings. If, in accordance with its economist version, patriotism was considered to be a class phenomenon<sup>14</sup> and if this way of viewing patriotism was considered to be the grounds for drawing a distinction between a 'bourgeois nation' and a 'plebeian one',<sup>15</sup> then one was naturally led to raise doubts as to whether it was possible to speak about independence with regard to the nineteenth century. Regardless of the outcome of political and military efforts, the plebeian nation remained in the captivity of the bourgeois one throughout the nineteenth century. This seems to suggest that even the victorious uprising couldn't result in the regaining of independence. It is difficult to understand how even the peasants' anti-feudal movement could pursue the goal of regaining independence.

The statement becomes easier to understand in light of the utopian beliefs held by the communist elites in the Stalinist era. To interpret the advent of the PRL in terms of the 'New Beginning' and the rise of a 'socialist nation' was to foster a radically dichotomic view of the national past. Not only was 1944 seen to mark a transition between capitalism and socialism, but it was also considered to separate a 'real human history' from 'pre-history', the latter being one in which no realisation of real values was possible (such as freedom or independence). If socialism was the sole ground on which one could hope to see the growth of real values, then the elements of heritage, to be acceptable, couldn't be far removed from the socialist ideal.<sup>16</sup>

Recognizing the peasant movements as the ideal form of insurgent activity while at the same time denying that they could strive for a 'real independence', the orthodox Stalinist ideologists created a tradition that went beyond the insurgent heritage. Kieniewicz's interpretation aimed to preserve this heritage. However, the attempt he made was one for which he had to pay with a far-reaching compromise with the Stalinist vision of Polish history.

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<sup>14</sup> Natalia Gąsiorowska-Grabowska, 'Proces formowania się narodu burżuazyjnego w ramach kształtowania się stosunków kapitalistycznych w Polsce', in Stanisław Herbst, Witold Kula, and Tadeusz Manteuffel (eds.), *Pierwsza Konferencja Metodologiczna Historyków Polskich. Przemówienia, referaty, dyskusje* (Warszawa, 1953) [hereinafter: PKMHP], ii, 14–15; Baczek, *Poglądy*, 12.

<sup>15</sup> Roman Werfel, 'Stosunek pojęć: patriotyzm – nacjonalizm i kosmopolityzm – internacjonalizm. Zagadnienie jedności narodowej', in PKMHP, ii, 164.

<sup>16</sup> Józef Gutt, 'Niektóre zagadnienia poznania historycznego w świetle materializmu historycznego', in PKMHP, i, 43.

Kieniewicz entered the Stalinist era as a scholar with significant academic achievements to his credit. Generally in the tradition of individualistic historicism, his pre-war studies shared some characteristics with social history.<sup>17</sup> In line with Kieniewicz's approach was, promoted in the first years after the war, the idea of 'integral history',<sup>18</sup> as was the concept of social history, developed with the goal of explaining the social structure of contemporary Poland. The search for new ways of studying history was informed by the need to describe the experience of the generation who had lived through the collapse of the state in 1939, and its rebirth in 1918 and (as a satellite state of the Soviet Union) in 1945. This experience supported the conclusion that the "internal evolution of the Polish nation" was more important than "the current degree of political sovereignty". It also seemed to justify the elaboration of a new periodization of Polish history.<sup>19</sup> It wasn't of course expected of scholars to stop studying the history of the struggle for independence altogether. What they were expected to do was to place this issue in a broader social context. Taking the interconnection between the peasants' question and the struggle for freedom to be the most important issue in the post-partition era, Kieniewicz tried to show the negative effect which the social conflicts had upon the strength of the independence movement.<sup>20</sup> Soon the meaning these ideas were given obliterated itself in the clash with the 'methodological revolution' in which all scholars were forced to participate.

By deciding to become part of the historical profession in the Stalinist era, Kieniewicz set out to recount Polish history in terms of the theory of socio-economic formations. This didn't mean the acceptance of a ready-made interpretation. The vision of national

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<sup>17</sup> Stefan Kieniewicz, *Ignacy Działyński (1754–1797)* (Kórnik, 1930); *idem*, *Spoleczeństwo polskie w powstaniu poznańskim 1848 roku* (Warszawa, 1935); *idem*, *Adam Sapieha 1828–1903* (Lwów, 1939). See Jerzy Zdrada, 'O Stefana Kieniewicza koncepcji dziejów porozbiorowych', in *Stefan Kieniewicz i jego dziedzictwo*, 29–36. This thought's affiliation with social history requires a separate study. See Andrzej Szwarz, 'Stefan Kieniewicz jako historyk społeczeństwa polskiego XIX wieku', in *Stefan Kieniewicz i jego dziedzictwo*, 121–30.

<sup>18</sup> Stefan Kieniewicz, 'O naszej historiografii w okresie międzywojennym', *Tygodnik Powszechny* [hereinafter: TP], iii, 24 (1947), 3.

<sup>19</sup> *Idem*, 'Historia narodu czy historia państwa?', *Dzieje Najnowsze*, 3–4 (1947), 374–5.

<sup>20</sup> *Idem*, 'Sprawa włościańska a sprawa niepodległości w dobie porozbiorowej', *Nauka i Sztuka*, ii, 9 (1946), 267–83.



past, which one was required to base on the theory in question, was still *in statu nascendi*. While accepting the general framework of the theory, Kieniewicz rejected its deterministic interpretation in which different elements of his 'integral history' were regarded as nothing but the epiphenomena of economic sphere. He refused to accept the view that the anti-feudal transition depended exclusively on the development of capitalism, and the shape of political movements was determined by their social base. In his account of the relationship between the peasants' class movements and the struggle for political freedom – and this was the key question to which he tried to find an answer – he didn't neglect to reveal their historical collision – a step by which he laid himself open to criticism for failing to discern the 'autonomy' of the peasants' movements and to understand their "objectively national liberation character".<sup>21</sup>

Differences between the two interpretations of the anti-feudal turn (the orthodox one and Kieniewicz's) became apparent in the paper which Kieniewicz delivered (written by Kieniewicz, the paper was a bit retouched by party mandarins) during the Mickiewicz Year celebrations.<sup>22</sup> The paper contained both the recognition of the agrarian revolution as the ideal of the anti-feudal transition and the consequent futility of the question of the role of the peasant revolution and the national uprisings in furtherance of the cause of independence as well as the thesis that "agrarian revolution gave the Polish nation the best chance to regain independence", for only the agrarian revolution could be expected to succeed in stirring up the masses (Polish, Lithuanian, Ukrainian, and Russian) against the reactionary partitioning powers.<sup>23</sup> It opened up the possibility of the outbreak of an uprising in Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine, which Kieniewicz – following the

<sup>21</sup> Stefan Kieniewicz, 'Walka klasowa chłopów polskich w XIX i XX wieku w oświetleniu historiografii polskiej', *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, lviii, 1 (1950/1951), 39–57; *idem*, 'Ruchy chłopskie a powstanie styczniowe', in PKMHP i, 150; *idem*, *Ruch chłopski w Galicji w 1846 r.* (Wrocław, 1951), [rev.:] M. Żychowski, 'Na marginesie antyfeudalnego powstania chłopskiego w Galicji w 1846 r.', *Przegląd Historyczny* [hereinafter: PH] xlv, 1 (1953), 230–43; J. Buszko, PH, xlv, 1/2 (1953), 244–52.

<sup>22</sup> Stefan Kieniewicz, *Problem rewolucji agrarnej w Polsce w okresie kształtowania się układu kapitalistycznego*, in *Z epoki Mickiewicza. Zeszyt specjalny „Przeglądu Historycznego” w rocznicę śmierci Adama Mickiewicza 1855–1955* (Wrocław, 1956), 3–39; See also *idem*, 'Z rozmyślań dziejopisa czasów porzobiorowych', *Kwartalnik Historii Nauki i Techniki*, xxv, 2 (1980), 254.

<sup>23</sup> Kieniewicz, 'Problem rewolucji agrarnej', 9–10.

tradition dating back to Mochnacki – considered to be a necessary condition for the staging of a successful uprising in Congress Kingdom. In this interpretation the agrarian revolution became part of the argument in favour of a very traditional vision of national uprisings, although Kieniewicz's view departed from the national heritage in its rejection of the idea of the restoration of an independent Poland to its pre-partitioned borders. His interpretation also provided an explanation of why the uprisings were unsuccessful – if they depended for their success on the ability to assume the form of an agrarian revolution, their failure to assume such a form explained why they ended in failure. And they failed to assume the desirable form because of the mistakes of the Reds who weren't able to overcome their class limitations and to push through a land reform radical enough to break up with the propertied classes and to stir the masses into action. As a result, the Reds were left with no other option but to ally themselves with the nobility who – in line with the policy pursued by the Whites – joined the uprisings in order to prevent them from assuming the form of the agrarian revolution, which, however, only obliterated the possibility of winning.<sup>24</sup>

The paper was written at the time when the Stalinist version of Polish history known as *Makieta Historii Polski* (mock-up synthesis of Polish history) was being worked on and, as a result, it contains *in nuce* some of the ideas, inconsistencies and contradictions to be found in this leading publication of the Stalinist historiography. One year after its appearance, it was subjected to strong criticism.

### III DE-STALINIZATION (1956–)

Both the nature and the extent of the changes that ensued in the course of what is known as the process of de-Stalinization of Polish historiography remain still in dispute. The very concept of de-Stalinization was elaborated with a view to describing the political disintegration of the totalitarian system. However, the concept of totalitarianism understood in terms of an ideological rule was also

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<sup>24</sup> The pattern characteristic of the policy pursued by the Whites had already been described by Kieniewicz before the war. He mentioned it again in his habilitation lecture; see *idem*, *Adam Sapieha*, 84; *idem*, 'Sprawa włościańska', 273.

used to describe some of the changes that occurred in the field of art and science.<sup>25</sup> It is easy to see that the question of whether 1956 marked the beginning, or the beginning of the end of the process of de-Stalinization is closely connected with the way the process was interpreted in historical literature. Rafał Stobiecki, for example, wrote not so much about the process of de-Stalinization as about the crisis of the Stalinist model of historiography, the peak of which came in 1956, during the Polish October.<sup>26</sup> According to Stobiecki, this model was to some extent reproduced by Gomułka's government. Stobiecki emphasised the extent to which until the end of the 1980s Polish historiography continued to be shaped by such relics of Stalinism as the state's control of historiography, the existence of the party's academic institutions, the continuity of scholarly cadres and, in so far as the content of historiography is concerned, the domination of the theory of socio-economic formations and the adherence to the interpretations formulated in class terms. Andrzej Feliks Grabski also didn't deny that the state's interference with historiography continued until 1989.<sup>27</sup> However, in his opinion the process of de-Stalinization should be understood in terms of the gradual liberation of Polish historiography from the ideological grip and the reestablishment of methodological pluralism. Stobiecki's account of the process seems to be of a piece with Kołakowski's idea of ailing Stalinism, while Grabski's interpretation can be linked with Walicki's view of a long and onerous retreat from totalitarian aspirations and the abandonment of the pursuit of the communist utopia.

Both interpretations seem complementary. The claim that the Stalinist structures of science survived until the end of the PRL is true (although it would be absurd to say that they survived intact),

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<sup>25</sup> The problem of the 'inconvenience' caused by the use of a heterogeneous concept of de-Stalinization in the historiographies of the countries of Eastern and Central Europe was discussed by Jan Foitzik, 'Entstalinisierungskrise in Ostmitteleuropa: Verlauf, Ursachen und Folgen', in Roger Engelmann, Thomas Grossböltling, and Hermann Wentker (eds.), *Kommunismus in der Krise. Die Entstalinisierung 1956 und die Folgen* (Göttingen, 2008), 35–9. In Eastern and Central Europe the use of the concept of de-Stalinization was banned until 1989. It appeared in Budapest in 1956 and was used in the discourse of the Marxist revisionists in the 1950s and the 1960s. As early as mid-1950s the concept of de-Stalinization began to be used in the Western scholarship.

<sup>26</sup> Stobiecki, *Historia pod nadzorem*, 129–38.

<sup>27</sup> Grabski, *Zarys*, 213–30.

and so is the statement that after 1956 Polish historiography entered the path of a gradual deideologization (the pace of the process and some of the problems related to it would be impossible to understand without taking into account the simultaneous existence of the Stalinist structures of science). In order to understand changes that took place after 1956, it is necessary to take into account both the factors of inertia and the attempts (sometimes hardly spectacular) to deideologize the profession. Such a research programme will cover both the ‘politics of history’ of the PRL and scholars’ attitude towards those elements of the Stalinist historiography that were responsible for its ideologization: Marxism-Leninism’s theoretical and ideological monopoly as the only doctrine providing true cognitions, the doctrine’s key elements such as ‘principle of partisanship’, ‘progressive traditions’, ‘the concept of objective truth’, and the interpretation of Polish history to which the doctrine gave rise. With regard to the subject of this article, of particular importance are: the ‘principle of partisanship’ and ‘progressive traditions’.

#### IV THE ‘PRINCIPLE OF PARTISANSHIP’ AND THE AUTONOMY OF SCHOLARSHIP

It is of course true that the Stalinist structures of the historical profession survived the criticism of the Stalinist interpretation of Polish history. The profession’s subjection to different forms of political control continued also after 1956. The view that science performed both cognitive and ideological functions was used to justify this control.<sup>28</sup> This “totalitarian virus” (Walicki) with which the historical

<sup>28</sup> See *III Zjazd Polskiej Zjednoczonej Partii Robotniczej, Warszawa 10–19 III 1959 r. Stenogram* (Warszawa, 1959), 135. The view of an unavoidably ideological character of social sciences survived Władysław Gomułka. It was taken as a point of departure for a discussion during the ‘Party Meeting on Social and Humanistic Sciences’ in 1973. See papers delivered by Jarema Maciszewski, Andrzej Werblan, and opinions expressed during the discussion by Tadeusz Jaroszewski and Andrzej Werblan, *Nasze Drogi* [hereinafter: ND], 5 (1973), 85–6, 108; 6 (1973), 9–11, 41, 66–7. The meeting preceded III Congress of Polish Science (23–29 June 1973) whose participants also drew on the view of the “dialectical unity of science’s cognitive, ideological, educational and advisory functions”, *II Kongres Nauki Polskiej. Materiały i Dokumenty*, I (Warszawa, 1974), 89 (the quotation from the paper delivered by Jan Kaczmarek, who served then as Minister of Science, Higher

profession was infected was to blame for the recurrences of 'ideological offensives', resorted to in the name of the restoration of the Marxist-Leninist integrity. The communist authorities still felt it their duty to remind scholars that the adherence to the 'principle of partisanship' was a necessary condition for discovering 'objective truth'. From this perspective, revisionism was attacked as a 'bourgeois ideology' which through its advocacy of the idea of the autonomy of scholarship stood in the way of pursuing objective truth.<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, however, it was increasingly accepted that the principle of partisanship applied only to the party historians – an approach which meant the abandonment of the idea of the methodological transformation of the whole academia. Historians who contested Marxism were tolerated, and so were non-Marxist methodologies.<sup>30</sup> In time, even the adherents of the idea of the ideological nature of scholarly activity questioned the absolute validity of this view, admitting that there are historical works "the only goal of which is to know the truth about the past".<sup>31</sup> These concessions can be taken as a sign that the revolutionary vigour, characteristic of the totalitarian period of the PRL, was on the wane.

It should be stressed that already in the first years after the Second World War Kieniewicz advocated some form of the scholar's social commitment.<sup>32</sup> However, he never supported the principle of partisanship (at least in the sense of making scholarly opinions congruent with the authority of the communist party). In this regard there was a continuity between the Otwock declaration which he was forced to make in support of those "who were on the right side of history" – an approach which in his opinion didn't rule out the possibility of

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Education and Technology). See also Piotr Hübner, 'Nauka w materiałach II Kongresu Nauki Polskiej', *Nauka Polska* (2004), 93.

<sup>29</sup> See XI Plenum KC PZPR. *Węzłowe zadania w dziedzinie szkolnictwa wyższego i badań naukowych (17–18 XII 1962)* (Warszawa, 1963), 124; Władysław Gomułka, *O aktualnych problemach ideologicznych pracy partii. (Referat wygłoszony na XIII Plenum KC PZPR w dniu 4 VII 1963 r.)* (Warszawa, 1963), 37–9.

<sup>30</sup> III Zjazd, 137–8.

<sup>31</sup> Jarema Maciszewski, 'Nie tylko o historii', ND, 5 (1972), 25; *idem*, 'Nauki społeczne i humanistyczne w ideologicznej i politycznej działalności partii, w realizacji programu przyspieszenia społeczno-ekonomicznego rozwoju Polski', ND, 5 (1973), 84–101 (here: 86).

<sup>32</sup> Kieniewicz, 'Historia narodu czy historia państwa?', 382–3; *idem*, 'O naszej historiografii', 3.

understanding the opposing party<sup>33</sup> – and the credo which he included in the preface to *Powstanie styczniowe* (the January Uprising):

As a student of the history of the period of captivity, living in Poland and working for Poland in the latter half of the twentieth century, I take a positive view of all the trends which in my opinion furthered the cause of national freedom, promoted the emancipation and prosperity of the masses and fostered the development of the friendship between Poland and other nations, especially neighbouring ones. In some measure such an approach affects the way in which I treat the partitioning powers, the Polish propertied classes and all the symptoms of Polish chauvinism. I do not think that by adopting such an attitude I am hampered in my efforts to reconstruct the past in a manner as consistent with the source material and the real course of events as possible.<sup>34</sup>

What links the Otwock declaration and the credo quoted above is not of course the spirit of Stalinism. Quite the contrary, the connection is to be found in what distinguishes these statements from this spirit. The idea of patriotic service that does not hinder the truth-seeking, clearly expressed in the credo, seems to draw on the pre-war motto “For Homeland and Science”. It was designed to stress that the autotelic character of both values was essential to the scholar’s ethos, from which it followed that patriotism could be reconciled with freedom of sciences, the latter being destroyed by institutional pressure and direct political commitment.<sup>35</sup> It is on this ideal of the relations between the state and academia that Kieniewicz based his defence of the historical profession against the communist leaders. In considering scholars to be under obligation to serve both their state and their nation, he argued that they would be most effective in discharging this duty as long as they were subjected to no interference by the state.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> *Idem*, ‘Zagadnienie prawdy obiektywnej w nauce historycznej’ in PKMHP, i, 107.

<sup>34</sup> *Idem*, *Powstanie styczniowe* (2nd edn., Warszawa, 1983), 6.

<sup>35</sup> Hübner, *Polityka naukowa*, 10–30.

<sup>36</sup> Stefan Kieniewicz, ‘Kilka uwag o dzisiejszym stanie historiografii polskiej’, ND, 1 (1969), 188–9.

V  
'PROGRESSIVE TRADITIONS'

'Progressive traditions', by definition, were subject to change because their progressiveness depended on what the party-state was just willing, under specific circumstances, to define as progressive.<sup>37</sup> In fact, the category of progressive traditions contained elements that were constant (for example, the history of the working class movement) and that were included in it only 'on a temporary basis' (for example, national uprisings). The determination to keep research practice within the confines of progressive traditions grew weaker and in time the communist authorities were increasingly willing to turn a blind eye to the study of topics that lay outside the field of the ruling party's ideological and political preferences. Of course, there were still issues that could be dealt with 'in the only right way' (Polish-Russian relations, Polish presence in the eastern territories of the old Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth and so on) or ought not be dealt with at all (as was most often the case). Except for such restraints, following the liberalization of the system after 1956, historians were given some freedom in the choice of topics to study.<sup>38</sup> Thus scholars' view of the idea of progressive traditions and the evolution of the way in which these traditions were regarded by the authorities overlapped.

Taking both factors into consideration, we may point out three variants of deviation from the Stalinist progressive traditions. The first would be tantamount to an attempt at transforming the said traditions and concepts associated therewith into a neutral object or a cognitive instrument. The second, in turn, would consist in a broadening of

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<sup>37</sup> The issue of 'progressive traditions' is necessarily dealt with in most works on the historiography of the PRL. However, the only work that is exclusively devoted to this issue is the article by Rafał Stobiecki, 'Stalinowska mitologizacja idei postępu' in Alina Barszczewska-Krupa (ed.), *Historia, mity, interpretacje* (Łódź, 1996), 139–47.

<sup>38</sup> See Andrzej Walicki, *Marxizm i skok do Królestwa Wolności. Dzieje komunistycznej utopii* (Warszawa, 1996), 491. I am omitting here such elements of the system as Security Services' blackmail which, as demonstrated by the case of the Cracow historian, Jan Wszolek, could deprive of the right to exercise their profession, see *Korespondencja*, 432, 434; on the control of academic circles by the Security Service see Piotr Franaszek (ed.), *Naukowcy władzy, władza naukowcom. Studia* (Warszawa, 2010).

the progressive traditions (which was the domain of authority) by greater (or simply different) areas of the national heritage. Finally, the third would mark a complete abandonment by the researcher of the 'progressive traditions' (irrespective of whether in the Stalinist or post-Stalinist form) and the independent selection of new research topics. In Kieniewicz's case, these variants at the same time specify the chronology of emancipation from the pressures of 'progressive traditions'. The Conference in Sulejówek (14–17 April, 1957) initiated attempts at 'neutralising' the concept of the agrarian revolution. The change in progressive traditions effected by the new Party grouping on the eve of the 1970s did not induce Kieniewicz to implement the new guidelines. Instead, in the second half of the decade there appear in his reflections issues pertaining to the Catholic religion and the Polish presence in the borderlands of the former Commonwealth – such motives were not only foreign to the 'progressive traditions', but also introduced significant corrections to the view of the Insurrections that had been created previously.

One of the most important elements of the de-Stalinisation of Polish historical studies was the discussion on *Makieta* at the Conference in Sulejówek in April 1957.<sup>39</sup> As a result of the discussion the editors of the work equated the agrarian revolution with the social revolution of the nineteenth century, removing from the Stalinist concept the most ideological assertion of the identicalness of anti-feudal and national independence movements. This was a view that Kieniewicz defended in the beginning of the 1950s against the 'orthodoxes' from the IKKN, and it is therefore nothing surprising that in later years he considered the course of the discussion in Sulejówek as "I think, the greatest success of my life".<sup>40</sup> The second volume of *Historia Polski*, published in 1958, to a considerable extent took the results of this discussion into consideration.<sup>41</sup>

Further corrections of this view were introduced by the textbook on the history of post-partition Poland, written by Kieniewicz a decade

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<sup>39</sup> Andrzej Czyżewski, *Proces destalinizacji polskiej nauki historycznej w drugiej połowie lat 50. XX wieku* (Warszawa, 2007), 57–74; Górny, *The Nation Should Come First*, 123–31; Rutkowski, *Nauki historyczne*, 306–9. Opinions in the discussion were published by *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, lxiv, 4/5 (1957).

<sup>40</sup> Kieniewicz, 'Z rozmyślań dziejopisa', 256.

<sup>41</sup> *Idem* and Witold Kula (eds.), *Historia Polski*, ii: (1764–1864), 3 pts. (Warszawa, 1958–9).



later.<sup>42</sup> We should at this point keep in mind that the *Historia Polski* elaborated by the Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences was intended to function not only as a canonical version of national history, but also an academic textbook. As regards the latter objective, however, it was unsuccessful, if only due to its enormous size. And although Kieniewicz's textbook, which coped with this task considerably better, was based on the PAN synthesis, in comparison to this work it constituted a further step in the direction of historiographical tradition and social history. Kieniewicz did adopt elements of the theory of historical materialism (the base-superstructure, the class struggle) and the issues (the growth of capitalism, social change, the struggle for national independence) from the 'original', he no longer considered the transition of socio-economic formation as the "essence of the nation's history in bondage", but rather the "process of transformation and modernisation of society".<sup>43</sup> This formulation bore testimony to the further weakening of the formation-based axis of the Marxist synthesis, which correlated with the reinstatement of the traditional periodisation of post-partition history (delimited by two dividing lines: the loss and the regaining of independence), and also the presentation of the insurrections. The agrarian revolution (understood as a social revolution) remained as their ideal, but Kieniewicz refrained from terming them as a lost 'bourgeois revolution'.<sup>44</sup>

In PRL, historical syntheses were subjected to particular rigour, and therefore it should be stressed that Kieniewicz repeated the interpretation of the insurrections contained therein in his monographs. It is of the utmost significance that when resuming his pre-war work on the Poznań insurrection of 1848, Kieniewicz considered it necessary to supplement the book with the findings of "Polish historical studies utilising the tenets of historical materialism", which allowed him to solve "a great many riddles that I did not know how to clarify or, indeed, was unable to elucidate 25 years ago".<sup>45</sup> This interpretation appears frequently in his post-war studies, among others in the impressively documented, erudite monographs devoted to gentry's

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<sup>42</sup> Stefan Kieniewicz, *Historia Polski 1795–1918* (Warszawa, 1968) (11 editions until 2002); cf. Zdrada, 'O Stefana Kieniewicza koncepcji', 80–2, 94.

<sup>43</sup> Kieniewicz, *Historia Polski*, 9.

<sup>44</sup> The very concept of agrarian revolution disappeared from the 1980s editions.

<sup>45</sup> Stefan Kieniewicz, *Spółczesność polskie w powstaniu poznańskim 1848 r.* (Warszawa, 1960), 5, 7.

policy in the period before the January insurrection, and the January insurrection itself.<sup>46</sup> In these works, he combined the revolutionary social history of the insurrections with the ideal of the insurrections as an agrarian revolution.

From the perspective of time we can see that this element became the most controversial part of Kieniewicz's interpretation. We have already mentioned the critique to which it was subjected by A. Walicki from the perspective of the history of ideas.<sup>47</sup> But the thesis whereby an insurrection could have succeeded as a revolutionary peasants' movement, brought about *ad hoc* by the parcelling out of the estates of the nobility, appeared equally improbable from the point of view of political history. Already in 1958 it was being reversed by Wereszycki, who expressed the opinion that an agrarian revolution would only have quickened the fall of the November Insurrection, encouraging Prussia and Austria to hasten their intervention.<sup>48</sup> However, while Wereszycki considered that these views reflected the illusions of nineteenth century democrats, Stanisław Bóbr-Tylingo – an émigré historian – was of the opinion that the concept of the agrarian revolution was not completely ahistorical only because in 1864 it was propagated by ... the Russian generals!<sup>49</sup> Thus, Bóbr-Tylingo also emphasised the anti-effectiveness of the agrarian revolution: in his opinion, it would have culminated in the “massacre of Polish settlements, manor-houses and palaces”. Kieniewicz's view to the contrary appears so far detached from his otherwise common-sense line of thinking that we are forced to search for explanations outside the logic of his historiographical arguments. One of the most obvious motives would be the issue of the nobility's ‘guilt complex’ for the fate of Polish peasants and the fall of the Polish Commonwealth. This ‘complex of guilt for the adversities of the people’, continuously present in the Polish intellectual tradition,

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<sup>46</sup> *Idem*, *Między ugodą a rewolucją. Andrzej Zamoyski w latach 1861–1862* (Warszawa, 1962); *idem*, *Powstanie styczniowe* (1st edn., Warszawa, 1972).

<sup>47</sup> See n. 10.

<sup>48</sup> Henryk Wereszycki, ‘Powstania na tle sytuacji międzynarodowej’, in *idem*, *Niewygasta przeszłość. Refleksje i polemiki* (Kraków, 1987), 39–41 (the text dates from 1958).

<sup>49</sup> Stanisław Bóbr-Tylingo, [rev.:] S. Kieniewicz, *Powstanie styczniowe* (Warszawa, 1972), *Teki Historyczne*, xvii (1978/1980), 247–63. More on the issue see Artur Mękariski, *Między historiozofią a polityką. Historiografia Polski Ludowej w opinii i komentarzach historyków i publicystów emigracyjnych 1945–1989* (Warszawa, 2011), 43, 132–3.

was noted by Jerzy Stempowski, who considered that on the one hand it referred to symbolic actions aimed at achieving the “internal resolution by the intelligentsia of the issue of its guilt complex”, and on the other to “an attempt at an honest familiarisation with the people”.<sup>50</sup> If we apply these to Kieniewicz’s intellectual biography, we could say that during the Stalinist period the ‘honest attempts’ which he had made immediately after the war at researching the issue of the peasants were ‘led astray’ by his faith in the ‘agrarian revolution’. A certain advantage of this explanation seems to lie in its cohesiveness: an irrational motive for action (the ‘guilt complex’) in this instance clarifies the appearance of a non-rational element of the theory (the agrarian revolution as a means of ‘resolving the complex’). However, the fundamental problem of this line of thought consists in the fact that it assumes what it intends to explain, that is the ‘gentry’s sense of guilt’ itself. It is difficult to present any statement by Kieniewicz which would indicate that he had such a sense of guilt. There do, however, exist professions that allow us to guess at an altogether different attitude:

I was raised by my parents in the mindset that whatever we may think about the here and now, you should not look back, but rather, if you want to retain your internal equilibrium and live a useful life, adapt to what is.<sup>51</sup>

Obviously, we cannot exclude that a missing piece of evidence supporting the existence of a ‘guilt complex’ will someday be found. Suspending this hypothesis until such later time, however, we are left with the ‘stoic adaptation’ mentioned above in the letter to Wereszycki. This suggests that we should look for ‘banal’ solutions that is ones which attempt to explain non-rational developments (the agrarian revolution) as being the result of a rational process. Such a process could be the assimilation (consideration as one’s own) of the concept of the agrarian revolution as a result of the gradual ‘osmosis’ of Marxist-Leninist schema during the lengthy period of time devoted to work on the *Makieta*.<sup>52</sup> Its subsequent defence would

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<sup>50</sup> Jerzy Stempowski, *Notatnik niespiesznego przechodnia*, i, compil. and introductory note by Jerzy Timoszewicz, ed. by Dorota Szczerba (Warszawa, 2012), 45.

<sup>51</sup> *Korespondencja*, 368.

<sup>52</sup> Stefan Kieniewicz, ‘Rachunek sumienia’, *TP*, xliii, 52/53 (1989), 5. Regarding Kieniewicz’s approach to Marxism, cf. also Zdrada, ‘O Stefana Kieniewicza

be nothing more than the consequence of this identification. By the mid-1980s, however, it had already been consigned to the past.<sup>53</sup>

From the point of view of the transformations of the insurrectionary tradition, of key importance were the events of December 1970 and the attempts made by the new power elite to stabilise the state on the basis of a new justification of communist authority.<sup>54</sup> During Gomułka's period of government the 'anti-feudal and national independence movement' retained its place, unquestioned, amongst the 'progressive traditions', even though the hundredth anniversary of the January Uprising made the political inconvenience of the heritage of combating Russian domination abundantly clear (not for the first time).<sup>55</sup> Gierek's grouping, however, with its catchword of building a 'second Poland', felt the need to adapt tradition to the current tasks of the Party. From the perspective of the set aim, this time round "values created thanks to the exertions of the hands and minds of numerous generations of Poles" and the "state traditions" – serving to stabilise the system – appeared to have greater relevance than the revolutionary traditions (of course with the exception of the workers' movement).<sup>56</sup> The Party's expectations with regard to historians were defined during the Party Meeting on the Social Sciences and Humanities (26–27 April, 1973) by the then Secretary of the Central Committee for Science, Franciszek Szlachcic. He called for the "traditions of the liberation struggle" to be supplemented with research into the hitherto neglected "traditions of state building, economic work, traditions of the input of culture and civilisation, which obviously our nation also possesses". In this way, organic work – traditionally contrasted with the insurrections – took over the role that had hitherto been assigned to

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koncepcji', 65; Jerzy W. Borejsza, 'Stefan Kieniewicz. Historyk i jego epoka', in *Stefan Kieniewicz i jego dziedzictwo*, 20–1. I have borrowed the term 'osmosis' from Rafał Stobiecki.

<sup>53</sup> See Zdrada, 'O Stefana Kieniewicza koncepcji', 91.

<sup>54</sup> See Marcin Zaremba, *Komunizm, legitymizacja, nacjonalizm. Nacjonalistyczna legitymizacja władzy komunistycznej w Polsce* (Warszawa, 2005), 353–83.

<sup>55</sup> Tadeusz P. Rutkowski, 'Obchody setnej rocznicy powstania styczniowego. Między historią a polityką', in Alicja Kulecka (ed.), *Dziedzictwo powstania styczniowego. Pamięć, historiografia, myśl polityczna. Zbiór studiów* (Warszawa, 2013), 124–45.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. the papers presented by Jarema Maciszewski and Władysław Markiewicz at the Party Meeting on the Social and Humanistic Sciences: Maciszewski, 'Nauki społeczne i humanistyczne'; Władysław Markiewicz, 'Stan i perspektywy rozwoju nauk społeczno-humanistycznych', ND, 5 (1973), 102–17.

them in the historiography of PRL, becoming a 'progressive tradition' of the period of 'Construction of Socialism'.<sup>57</sup>

This also marked a turning point in Kieniewicz's approach to 'progressive traditions'. In one of his autobiographical articles he presented the course of his discussion (held in 1973) with Franciszek Szlachcic, who, while congratulating the historian on the publication of *Powstanie styczniowe*, urged him to emphasise "the positive tradition of peaceful work for state and society" instead of "imprudent impulses". "I should have been aware – Kieniewicz observed – that this book would not be to the liking of the authorities ... . Another thing is that had I known the opinion of the authorities, this would not – without a doubt – have found reflection (already then [emphasis MW]) in my choice of wording".<sup>58</sup> However, this evidence seems to be contradicted by the fact that it was then that Kieniewicz embarked on a rehabilitation of organic work and the policy of conciliation,<sup>59</sup> while somewhat later – during the period of euphoria brought about by the August Agreements of 1980 – commenced an unequivocal critique of the thesis that the Polish insurrections were necessary.<sup>60</sup> What we do, however, know about Kieniewicz's attitude at the time allows us to assume that these were not the pronouncements of an enthusiast of the new 'progressive traditions', but rather the voice of a sceptic concerned with the development of the domestic political situation which in his opinion gravitated towards the revolution.<sup>61</sup> Thus, when

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<sup>57</sup> Franciszek Szlachcic, 'O dominację marksizmu-leninizmu', ND, 6 (1973), 9.

<sup>58</sup> Stefan Kieniewicz, 'Sens czy też bezsens walk o niepodległość?', *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*, 2 (1991), 28.

<sup>59</sup> For example, *idem*, 'Utrata państwowości i drogi jej odzyskania' in *idem*, *Historyk a świadomość narodowa*, (Warszawa, 1982), 272–84.

<sup>60</sup> Kieniewicz dedicated these reflections to the 'White' politicians of every period, stressing that 'anno 1980 these are not strictly academic deliberations', *idem*, 'Problem konieczności powstania listopadowego', *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, lxxxvii, 3/4 (1980), 607–20.

<sup>61</sup> *Korespondencja*, 61–70; Zdrada, 'O Stefana Kieniewicza koncepcji', 100–1. From November 1980, Kieniewicz's critical statements regarding the situation in the country were also recorded by the Security Service, which in April 1983 classified him amongst the „group of persons in the Praesidium of the Polish Academy of Sciences supportive of opposition activities”, Patryk Pleskot and Tadeusz P. Rutkowski (eds.) *Spętana Akademia. Polska Akademia Nauk w dokumentach władz PRL. Materiały Służby Bezpieczeństwa (1967–1987)*, i (Warszawa, 2009), 277, 333, 338, 340, 358, 399, 413, 418, 513; Tadeusz P. Rutkowski, 'Władze PRL wobec Polskiej

the strikes erupted in the Gdańsk Shipyards, he decided to sign the *Appeal of the 64*, which contained words of support for the striking workers, but also called upon them to act ‘in moderation’.<sup>62</sup> In a letter dated 24 August 1980 – written barely four days after the signing of the Appeal – he numbered himself among “some new version of the millenarians [reference to the moderates of the pre-1863 period]”.<sup>63</sup> We may therefore say that Kieniewicz engaged in a rehabilitation of organic work, for he found himself – just as the heroes of his book – ‘between conciliation and revolution’.

A broader look at Kieniewicz’s later writings makes it clear that behind these statements there was a revision of the insurrectionary tradition, which went completely beyond the ‘progressive traditions’ in any meaning of the term.

## VI ‘REACTIONARY TRADITIONS’

As Jerzy Zdrada aptly observed, beginning from the second half of the 1970s Kieniewicz used smaller forms of historical expression (articles, essays, reviews) to touch upon issues which in his opinion required a new interpretation, and in more than one instance did so in a manner fundamentally different from previous ‘official’ presentations. Among others, this concerned problems such as Polish political thought and culture, the role of the intelligentsia, the Jewish issue, and also – which at this point appears particularly important – the role of religion and the Catholic Church, and also the issue of the Polish presence in the eastern borderlands of the former Commonwealth.<sup>64</sup> Not only did positive opinions on this topic not fit into the ‘progressive traditions’, but they were considered as ‘reactionary’

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Akademii Nauk w latach 1982–1984’, in Franaszek (ed.), *Naukowcy władzy*, 275, 280.

<sup>62</sup> Orman, ‘O paradoksach historiografii’, 68.

<sup>63</sup> *Korespondencja*, 523. At that time he wrote about the millenarians: „They try to prevent the youth from becoming involved in the clandestine activity and wish to postpone the confrontation with more numerous enemy until later date ... they reject both the uprising and a compromise. They are in favour of organic work and the improvement of social relations”, Stefan Kieniewicz, ‘Między postawą romantyczną a pozytywizmem’, *Twórczość*, xl, 11 (1984), 96.

<sup>64</sup> Zdrada, ‘O Stefana Kieniewicza koncepcji’, 94–6.

throughout the entire period of existence of PRL. And it was precisely a reflection on these issues that gave rise to an impulse to reassess the view of the insurrections.

There was nothing opportunistic in his turn towards the history of religion. Throughout his life, Kieniewicz was a religious person, and after his retirement (1977) he even started “going to church more or less each morning”.<sup>65</sup> Popular religiousness and the sudden cult of John Paul II were on the whole foreign to him,<sup>66</sup> however more or less from 1980 he involved himself in the cultural activities of Catholic Intelligentsia Clubs, and also held ‘historical talks’ for the novitiate of the Carmelite nuns (his daughter, Teresa, had joined this order).<sup>67</sup> Furthermore, in the autumn of 1981 he took part in an academic conference concerning Polish-French religious contacts in Lille, and in a colloquium on the Christian roots of European nations in Rome during which he talked about the connections between Catholicism and Polish patriotism.<sup>68</sup> It cannot therefore come as a surprise that over time the governing Party circles came to view him as a “clericalist”.<sup>69</sup>

Kieniewicz’s interest in the link between Polish Catholic Church and the national struggle in the nineteenth century had become apparent as early as 1976. At the Polish-Italian conference held that year in Lecco he offered a review of the issue.<sup>70</sup> In his paper he discussed both the factors that favoured the consolidation of the relationship

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<sup>65</sup> Wiesław Niewęglowski (ed.), *Czym jest dla mnie Msza Święta? Ankieta Duszpasterstwa Środowisk Twórczych* (Warszawa, 1997?), 48–9.

<sup>66</sup> In a letter to Wereszycki dated 8 June 1980 he remarked with irony that “in the contemporary apartments of the middle generation, in the place where Van Gogh’s *Sunflowers* used to hang, it is now obligatory to keep a colour photograph of the master of the house shaking hands with John Paul II”, *Korespondencja*, 509, see also *ibidem*, 429, 442, 673.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibidem*, 649, 680, 687, 735.

<sup>68</sup> Stefan Kieniewicz, ‘Catholicisme et patriotisme en Pologne 1864–1914’, in *Les contacts religieux franco-polonais du Moyen Âge à nos jours: relations, influences, images d’un pays vu par l’autre. Colloque international, Lille, 5–7 octobre 1981* (Paris, 1985), 368–91; *idem*, ‘Eglise et nationalités en Europe centrale-orientale au XIXe siècle’, in *The common roots of the European nations. An international colloquium in the Vatican, I* (Florence, 1982), 127–36.

<sup>69</sup> Orman, ‘O paradoksach historiografii’, 70.

<sup>70</sup> Stefan Kieniewicz, ‘Kościół polski i sprawa narodowa’, in *idem, Historyk a świadomość narodowa*, 207 (trans. of the text: ‘L’Eglise polonaise et la cause nationale au XIX-e siècle’, in *Istituzioni, cultura e società in Italia e in Polonia (sec. XIII–XIX)* [Galetina, 1979]).

between Catholicism and Polish national consciousness (post-uprising repression, Russification, *Kulturkampf*), and those that hindered this process. The latter included the policy pursued by the official church (that is, episcopate) that “resigned itself to the collapse of Poland and sought to establish good relations with the partitioning powers” – not always to good purpose. “Thus, more out of necessity than of will – stated Kieniewicz – the problem of Catholicism (persecuted by the partitioning powers) became entwined with that of the persecuted nation”.<sup>71</sup> The historian also pointed out that the “Church is not just the episcopate” but the ordinary clergy and “truly devoted believers, who, acting as Catholics for the good of their fellow creatures, rendered good services to the national struggle”.<sup>72</sup> This opinion led him to conclude that the legend – invented by the Catholic clergy after 1918 and placed today in question – of the persecuted Church serving as the mainstay of the survival of Polish nation was not entirely without foundation. Catholicism did become a significant element of the Polish national consciousness. “In view of the masses having little or no sense of national identity, their attachment to Catholicism, endangered by heresy or schism, objectively worked in favour of the national cause”.<sup>73</sup>

Religion was also a factor in shaping collective mentality and, by extension, in affecting social attitudes. If the study of the religious factor stood in marked contrast with the idea of tracing ‘progressive traditions’, it could be reconciled with Kieniewicz’s social history of the uprisings.

Until 1989, the issue of the history of the eastern lands of the former Commonwealth was also a taboo subject. The presentism of Marxist Polish and Soviet historiography, which projected the borders of the PRL and the USSR into the past, made the very existence in Polish history textbooks of questions concerning the Polish presence in the eastern borderlands of the former Commonwealth problematic. Information on this topic, limited to a bare minimum, was provided in accordance with the obligatory interpretation (which, *nota bene*, was itself a ‘progressive’ reinterpretation of the historical thought of the Cracow school). According to this interpretation, the Polish presence in the eastern borderlands was to be the result of the expansion of

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<sup>71</sup> *Ibidem*, 205–6.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibidem*, 206.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibidem*.



Polish feudal lords – contrary to the Polish national interest – that led to the oppression of Byelorussian, Lithuanian and Ukrainian peasant masses, and finally to the fall of Poland and defeats in successive insurrections, launched under the rallying cry of a return to pre-partition borders.<sup>74</sup> We saw that in *Makieta* Kieniewicz considered a resignation from this rallying cry as a precondition for an insurrection to break out in Lithuania and Ruthenia and to succeed in the Kingdom of Poland.<sup>75</sup> Kieniewicz continued to repeat this view also after 1956, among others when describing Andrzej Zamoyski's policies before the January Insurrection.<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, he explained away the fact that the watchword of '1772 (i.e. pre-partition) borders' was also cited by the 'Reds' as political tactics, which – however – contradicted their democratic principles.<sup>77</sup> While maintaining his negative opinion on the impact of Polish territorial ambitions on the course of the insurrections, over time Kieniewicz moderated his position, noting that these aspirations followed from contemporary national identity, and "an abandonment of the borders of 1772 would have been a mental impossibility for Traugutt's generation".<sup>78</sup>

These expressions were the symptom of a return to a historical interpretation of the issue of the eastern borderlands, which – however – could not constitute the subject of academic research in PRL. Allusions to the negative effects of this situation had been made by Kieniewicz as early as 1979,<sup>79</sup> while in 1986, when reviewing Daniel Beauvois' work on the Ukrainian borderlands, he stressed that the French researcher had 'helped out' Polish historians, who had no possibility of taking up this subject.<sup>80</sup> This remark, however, concerned

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<sup>74</sup> An émigré critique of this interpretation has been presented by Mękariski, *Między historiozofią a polityką*, 87–134.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. also Zdrada, 'O Stefana Kieniewicza koncepcji', 95–6.

<sup>76</sup> Zamoyski was said to be interested in the Ukraine as an 'area for a new type of expansion', i.e. expansion of the Warsaw bourgeois on the basis of the landed gentry from the eastern borderlands, Kieniewicz, *Między ugodą a rewolucją*, 42–3.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibidem*, 188, 259–60.

<sup>78</sup> *Idem*, *Powstanie styczniowe* (1983), 703.

<sup>79</sup> *Idem*, 'Przedmowa wydawcy' in Tadeusz Bobrowski, *Pamiętnik mojego życia*, ed. by Stefan Kieniewicz (Warszawa, 1979), i, 18.

<sup>80</sup> Daniel Beauvois, *Le noble, le serf et le revisor. La noblesse polonaise entre le tsarisme et les masses ukrainiennes (1831–1863)* (Paris, 1985), [rev.:] Stefan Kieniewicz, 'Daniel Beauvois o kresach południowych', PH, lxxvii, 4 (1986), 767, 775.

only scholarly works. For already in 1984, having discovered family correspondence from the years 1857–69, he had written a history of the Kieniewicz manor in Dereszewicze (present-day Belarus), in which he confronted family legends with documents and historical knowledge.<sup>81</sup> This “minor romance à la Walter-Scott” was in actual fact a suggestion that “family history may throw new light on more general issues”, first and foremost – obviously – on that of the Polish presence in the eastern lands of the former Commonwealth.<sup>82</sup> The book was published “amidst a growing wave of ... people modelling themselves on ancestors and the sentimental tinge surrounding the eastern borderlands”,<sup>83</sup> however this topic remained taboo until the very end of PRL. The situation changed only in 1989,<sup>84</sup> and it was then that Kieniewicz, with the General Convention of Polish Historians in Łódź on his mind, wrote a paper in which he presented a brief outline of issues pertaining to the eastern borderlands and proposed future directions of its research.<sup>85</sup> The paper’s theses appeared to generalise the reflections presented *in nuce* in *Dereszewicze* and minor works from the 1980s concerned with the topic of the eastern borderlands, but as a whole they differed significantly from earlier approaches.

In his paper, Kieniewicz pointed out three directions of research into the issues at hand: “the history of the eastern borderlands as a region in which Poles had lived, the history of the inhabitants of the borderlands and of their input ... into the history of our nation”, as well as the political issue of the eastern borderlands and the impact thereof on the development of Polish political thought and Poland’s

<sup>81</sup> Stefan Kieniewicz, *Dereszewicze 1863* (Wrocław, 1986).

<sup>82</sup> *Ibidem*, 5.

<sup>83</sup> And it was for this reason that the publisher of *Dereszewicze 1863* became interested in the recollections of Antoni Kieniewicz (the historian’s father) cited in the manuscript, which were soon also published, Antoni Kieniewicz, *Nad Prypecią, dawno temu ... Wspomnienia zamierzchłej przeszłości* (Wrocław *et al.*, 1989), 6–7.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. Stefan Kieniewicz, ‘Quo vadis, Clío?’, TP, xlv, 42 (1990), 8.

<sup>85</sup> *Idem*, ‘Kresy. Problem Litwy i Rusi w dobie porozbiorowej’, TP, xliii, 46 (1989), 1, 3; a slightly amended version was published as ‘Kresy. Przemiany terminologiczne w perspektywie dziejowej’, *Przegląd Wschodni*, i, 1 (1991), 1–13. However, this paper was not printed in the post-Convention *Pamiętnik*, nor is it present in the Convention’s programme, included therein, cf. Stefan Meller (ed.), *Pamiętnik XIV Zjazdu Historyków Polskich, Łódź 7–10 września 1989 roku*, i: *Referaty, komunikaty – sekcje* (Łódź, 1989); Danuta Bednarska-Pituła (ed.), *Pamiętnik XIV Zjazdu Historyków Polskich, Łódź, wrzesień 1989*, ii (Toruń, 1994).

relations with its eastern neighbours.<sup>86</sup> This research programme was based on the conviction that transformations of Polish national identity constitute the fundamental element of post-partition history. “The history of the eastern borderlands as a region in which Poles had lived” (to which the history of Dereszewicze contributed) painted a picture of the decline of Polishness that supplemented the vision of its development in the Kingdom of Poland (and also in the Prussian and Austrian partition zones).<sup>87</sup> Kieniewicz observed that due to the cultural domination of the Polish landed gentry at the beginning of the nineteenth century on both banks of the Bug and Niemen, there existed “two regions that were equally Polish in nature”, which subsequently – due to the post-insurrectionary repressions (1831, 1864), the development of the Ukrainian, Lithuanian and Byelorussian nations, and finally the Revolution of 1917 and the Second World War – underwent gradual depolonisation.<sup>88</sup> It is exactly through the perspective of this long-term process that Kieniewicz considered the history of his ancestral manor in the mid-nineteenth century as a “prefiguration of the catastrophe that enveloped Dereszewicze (and all the manors in the eastern borderlands) in the next century”.<sup>89</sup>

Kieniewicz only mentioned the issue of the contribution of the landed gentry from the eastern borderlands to Polish history,<sup>90</sup> giving greater attention to the region as a political problem.<sup>91</sup> He argued that, from the Polish viewpoint, in the nineteenth century it constituted a national territory of strategic importance, for according to contemporary strategists Poland would be able to conduct war with Russia either at the so-called Smoleńsk Gate, or on the outskirts of Warsaw. For Russia, in turn, possession of these lands was of importance for its superpower status. Obviously, the politicians in Sankt Petersburg were well aware of Polish aspirations, and this practically ruled out any possibility of agreement in the nineteenth century: in order to

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<sup>86</sup> Kieniewicz, ‘Kresy. Problem Litwy i Rusi’, 3.

<sup>87</sup> Kieniewicz had, however, noticed this process even previously, cf. for example *idem*, ‘Rozwój polskiej świadomości narodowej w XIX w.’, in *idem*, *Historyk a świadomość narodowa*, 68 (the text dates from 1969).

<sup>88</sup> *Idem*, ‘Kresy. Problem Litwy i Rusi’, 1; cf. *idem*, ‘Przedmowa wydawcy’, 17; Beauvois, *Le noble*, [rev.:] Kieniewicz, 772.

<sup>89</sup> Kieniewicz, *Dereszewicze*, 9.

<sup>90</sup> Beauvois, *Le noble*, [rev.:] Kieniewicz, 773.

<sup>91</sup> Kieniewicz, ‘Kresy. Problem Litwy i Rusi’, 1, 3.

rule in Lithuania and Ruthenia, Russia simply had to rule in Warsaw. This situation explains the course of the January Uprising, the policy of Russification that followed in the second half of the nineteenth century, and also the history of the twentieth century, i.e. the wars of 1920 and 1939. It is exceedingly typical of Kieniewicz's line of thought that this sequence of events led up to the current moment, when – as was his hope – since no one in present-day Poland (in 1989) aspires after the borders of 1772, then the reasons of state that once made it imperative for the Tsars to rule on the Vistula have also lost their foundation.<sup>92</sup> Obviously, however, the political problem of the eastern borderlands did not come down to Russo-Polish relations alone. Kieniewicz touched upon this issue, too, assessing it from the point of view of good-neighbourly relations, which implied the right of the Lithuanians, Byelorussians and Ukrainians to self-determination.

As we may readily observe, the perspective for research into the history of the eastern borderlands introduced by Kieniewicz considers national history as the sole plane of post-partition history. The issue of the transition of socio-economic formations disappears altogether. It is particularly characteristic that when presenting the religious, national and social antagonisms existing between peasants and the manor in *Dereszewicze*, Kieniewicz does not use evidence of anti-Tsarist and anti-gentry feelings in order to present the chances of the agrarian revolution as the optimal path to independence. For there is no doubt that this would have resulted in a massacre of the manors and put an end to the Polishness of these lands. In *Dereszewicze*, the January Uprising is just a fragment of a larger whole, which – as we know – does not concern capitalist transformations, nor even first and foremost the struggle for independence, but rather the endurance (and decline) of Polishness. Thus, the failure of the insurrection did not result from the lack of an agrarian revolution, held back by 'White' politicians, but rather from the fact that the peasant issue had remained unresolved for decades. It is for this very reason that national and religious antagonisms in Polesia deepened, and following enfranchisement this led to the alienation and stagnation of the manors, which contrasted sharply with the situation of the Byelorussian peasants, who gained affluence and a sense of dignity – “which we forgot to give them at the opportune moment, considering solely our personal

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<sup>92</sup> *Ibidem*, 3.

profits".<sup>93</sup> However, while on the one side Kieniewicz accused the landed gentry of the eastern borderlands of social short-sightedness, on the other he considerably moderated his assessment of political attitudes – from the perspective of the endurance of Polishness, consideration is given even to the arguments of loyalists, viewed as defenders of Polishness, albeit this was limited to the manors of the eastern borderlands.<sup>94</sup>

The 'story of family and the eastern borderlands' also fits in with the social history of the insurrections, since social, religious and ethnic antagonisms, as well as the dynamics of social change, help explain the changes occurring to Polishness in the eastern borderlands. This story also discloses its educational value, for an understanding of these processes leaves no room for destructive resentments.

## VII CONCLUSION

The Stalinist paradigm, whose advocates put all the other paradigms in quotation marks, itself seems to deserve such a treatment. It identified 'bourgeois science' with ideology, while at the same time regarding the ideology of the communist party as the 'objective scientific theory'. Such an approach didn't prevent its advocates from claiming that it was just the historic mission of the working class that made the paradigm the only right one to follow. From this it follows that the erosion of this revolutionary faith after 1956 was of crucial importance for the changes that took place in Polish historiography after the Second World War. It paved the way for the gradual deideologization of historiography and for the establishment of methodological pluralism. The transformations of the ways of the legitimizing of the communist rule which came later and which changed, in the 1970s, the official status of the 'insurgent tradition' were less significant in view of the legitimacy crisis of the communist rule.<sup>95</sup> The evolution of Kieniewicz's views, and in the latter half of the 1970s he dropped

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<sup>93</sup> *Idem, Dereszewicze*, 179–80.

<sup>94</sup> The change that took place in the 1980s in Kieniewicz's attitude towards 'agrarian revolution' and the issue of compromise was paid attention to by Zdrada, 'O Stefana Kieniewicza koncepcji', 91

<sup>95</sup> This is attested to by the materials from the Party Conference of Social Sciences (7–8 Dec. 1985), see ND (1985), Suppl. 3/7/1985, 15–93.

the idea of extracing 'progressive traditions' altogether, can be seen as one of the symptoms of the crisis.

How did these changes affect the transformations of the picture of the insurgent tradition? The Stalinist vision of Polish history constituted the obvious point of reference for all the changes that took place in the historiography of the PRL. This vision involved the use of the extremely narrow criteria of progressiveness, as a result of which the ideal uprising was one assuming the form of agrarian revolution, and this ideal was best fulfilled by the anti-feudal peasant movements. In the wake of the process of de-Stalinization, Kieniewicz's point of view gained acceptance and from then on the Leninist concept of the agrarian revolution was identified with the 'social revolution', which was part of the nineteenth-century democratic outlook. In Kieniewicz's greatest works, which were published after 1956, the concept served as a scholarly hypothesis – a realistic alternative enabling the understanding of specific historical events,<sup>96</sup> but at the same time limiting scholarly perspective and distorting the shape of historical dilemma.<sup>97</sup> This is demonstrated by the further evolution of Kieniewicz's thought which revealed a tendency to 'recover the memory' of the hitherto omitted elements of the nineteenth-century heritage such as the Polish presence in the eastern lands of the old Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the role of the Catholic Church and the religious factor in collective mentality. Distancing himself from the only right view of history (this time a 'confessional view'), Kieniewicz subjected these elements of heritage to the rigours of scholarly analysis. It was enough to undermine the view of the uprisings of which the social revolution was an ideal.

One can only guess what would have been the vision of the uprisings taking into account the last elements. This situation highlights the ambiguity connected with the appraisal of the Polish Marxist historiography. One can hardly deny that it deserves credit for raising significant social issues and, thanks to the commitment of scholars of

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<sup>96</sup> Alexander Demandt, *Ungesehene Geschichte. Ein Traktat über die Frage: Was wäre geschehen, wenn ...?* (Göttingen, 2011).

<sup>97</sup> I mean the policy pursued by the Whites during the January Uprising which, according to Kieniewicz, was informed by a fear of social revolution (which he considered to have been a realistic alternative way of struggling for independence), disregarding the motive of a fear of the confrontation with a more powerful opponent, see Kieniewicz, *Powstanie styczniowe* (1983), 224.

great stature such as the protagonist of this article that it sometimes managed to achieve high scholarly level. The evolution of Kieniewicz's thought indicates that these problems made their presence felt early on and that the ideological and administrative pressure from the first half of the 1950s cast a shadow over their further development.

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