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The Peasant Revolt of 1846 in Galicia: Recent Polish Historiography

In February 1846 Polish-speaking peasants in the western districts of Galicia, the Austrian part of partitioned Poland, struck down a national uprising composed largely of Polish nobles (*szlachta*) and joined Austrian troops marching on the tiny Republic of Cracow, where a Polish National Government had been established. Between four hundred and five hundred manors were sacked and over a thousand Poles killed. This peasant revolt is the point at which the national and social problems cross most strikingly in Polish historiography. Every historian of these events must explain how Polish peasants could rise against Polish patriots seeking to free Poland from the foreign yoke.

Controversy began immediately, but for almost a century, until World War II, debate was confined within fairly narrow interpretive limits. All the major treatments were based on one or another version of an "outside agitator" thesis.¹ Austrian historians such as Ludwig von Mises, who began his scholarly career with the Galician land-reform problem,² insisted that the peasant rising had been provoked by Polish revolutionaries who promised the peasants emancipation from feudal servitude. At their most defensive, Austrian historians held that no conceivable reform acceptable to the landowners would have satisfied the peasants and that no Austrian officials had taken part in preparing or spreading the peasant revolt.

There was solid evidence that some revolutionary emissaries had been at work among the peasants. However, there also was important, though not conclusive, evidence that some subordinate officials had encouraged the peasant rising. This evidence included the testimony of Austrian civil servants anxious to clear the imperial bureaucracy in Lwów and Vienna of complicity in social revolution. Polish historians for their part insisted that the nobility of Galicia could have solved the land question if it had not been for a conscious, planned policy of the Austrian government to use the peasantry against the patriotic nobility to divide the subject population and maintain Austrian rule. At their most aggressive, Polish historians held that Polish agitators had in no way

1. For a review of the historiography concentrating on the prewar years see Stefan Kieniewicz, *Ruch chłopski w Galicji w 1846 roku* (Wrocław, 1951), pp. v-xviii.

2. In his *Die Entwicklung des gutsherrlich-bäuerlichen Verhältnisses in Galizien (1772-1848)*, Wiener staatswissenschaftliche Studien, vol. 4, pt. 2 (Vienna and Leipzig, 1902).

contributed to peasant discontent and that cynical use of the peasants had been the policy of the Austrian government at all levels—Vienna, the governor general, the provincial Gubernium in Lwów, and the district chiefs. The most that Poles would admit was that subordinate officials might have encouraged the peasants without the knowledge and approval of their superiors and that Polish emissaries might have had a role in creating peasant unrest.

The departures from these themes are mainly interesting in retrospect. The progressive historian and politician Bolesław Limanowski believed that in order to be free Poland had to be democratic, and he condemned the social structure for contributing to national weakness as well as to injustice. He was the first to mention that the peasants continued to struggle against the re-imposed feudal obligations after the defeat of the uprising, and the first to emphasize that the peasants might have had aims of their own. Nonetheless, in Limanowski's view the revolt was basically the work of the bureaucracy, and its root cause was "the terrible ignorance of the peasants," who had let themselves be used to put down an insurrection that had a real chance of liberating the country (and thus the peasants as well).³ Similarly, Michał Janik's 1934–35 articles on the peasant leader Jakub Szela suggested a new interpretation without spelling it out. On the basis of new research Janik showed that Szela had indeed fought both lords and Austrians and had been exiled rather than rewarded for his services (as older presentations had held) when he was given a farm in an isolated mountain village in 1848. But since Janik mainly wanted to absolve Szela of personal participation in bloodshed, he concluded by suggesting that the outbreak of the revolt had been the work of Polish peasant-provocateurs, either homegrown or sent in from Russian Poland.⁴

The one inescapable conclusion for everyone was that the peasants who took part in the revolt did not consider themselves Poles. How the admission sounded depended on the point of view. To a conservative like Ostaszewski-Barański the peasants were beasts, "neither Polish nor Austrian," but "an ignorant, egotistical mass, which had no concept of any [ideal] and in whom savage instinct always found an echo. . . . If [the peasant] wanted anything, it was perhaps to work as little as possible and to have as much land as possible."⁵ (This sounded suspiciously like the nobility's ideal as well.) Others

3. Bolesław Limanowski, *Historja ruchu rewolucyjnego w Polsce w 1846 r.* (Cracow, 1913), pp. 160–72.

4. Michał Janik, "Zesłanie Jakuba Szeli na Bukowinę," *Przegląd Współczesny*, vol. 49 (April–June 1934); "Słowa pisane Jakuba Szeli," *Piast* (Cracow), no. 57 (Dec. 16, 1934), no. 58 (Dec. 23, 1934), no. 1 (Jan. 6, 1935), and no. 2 (Jan. 13, 1935). Reprinted in Czesław Wycech, ed., *Jakub Szela: Pięć prac o Jakubie Szeli* (Warsaw, 1956), pp. 82–119 and 66–79 respectively. On outside provocation see p. 67.

5. Kazimierz Ostaszewski-Barański, *Krwawy rok (1846): Opowiadanie historyczne* (n.p., 1913; 1st ed., 1896), p. 261.

did not find the peasants so reprehensible and drew different conclusions. A young radical, the late Jerzy Zawieyski, said that “national consciousness and feelings encompassing country, state, nation, fatherland, and finally humanity could not then take in the peasant masses . . . because whole centuries worked to ensure that these feelings did not exist. . . . The nobility represented the nation, Poland, and since for the peasantry the nobility signified oppression, then . . .”⁶

But before World War II no one completed such sentences or asked frankly why the interests of a peasantry that did not consider itself Polish were necessarily coterminous in the long run with Polish national liberation. To have done so would have required basic rethinking of the roles of both nobility and peasantry—not to speak of the character of Austrian dominion—in the history of these lands. It would have demanded, in other words, focusing on the social question. And this was too much to ask in a country whose literate classes were overwhelmingly preoccupied, for excellent historical reasons, with the national question. In such a situation the complicity of subordinate Austrian officials in the peasant revolt (for which there was, after all, documentary evidence) was heaven-sent. Even the problem of the democratic Polish agitators was not too difficult to deal with, since they could so easily be portrayed by conservatives as conscious or unconscious allies of the foreigner. The established interpretation absolved the Polish nobility of any responsibility, as social conservatives, for the absence of national consciousness among the peasants, and it placed the specific responsibility for the revolt squarely on the foreign oppressor and, to a lesser extent, on misguided Polish enemies of the contemporary social order. The peasantry itself was a blunt instrument. The logical conclusion, though seldom stated, was to equate social transformation with national treason.

It might have been supposed that the reconstruction of Polish history which was inevitable in People’s Poland would lead to a recasting of the basic questions. After all, the new leaders held no brief for the Polish nobility and made a thoroughgoing agrarian reform one of the keystones of their political program. The interpretive issues were imminent, and the peasant revolt in Galicia was the first major historical event to enjoy a centenary (in a country where historiography often seems to leap forward largely in connection with anniversaries). An examination of the structural factors underlying the revolt, firmly based in class analysis and at least sketching the historiographical implications, might have seemed a normal prospect. What occurred instead was a major debate with a surprising conclusion.

Three of the first new statements (published about the time of the

6. Jerzy Zawieyski, “Szela,” *Młoda Myśl Ludowa*, 1932, no. 12. Reprinted in Wycech, *Jakub Szela*, pp. 122–34 (quotation on p. 126).

February 1946 centenary) were not very promising. Count Zygmunt Lasocki, a peasant party leader as well as a landowner before the war, wrote an article designed to show that the revolt had been initiated by the Austrians and led by Germans, Ruthenians, ex-soldiers, and criminal elements, admittedly sometimes supported by “real peasants.”⁷ Jerzy Eugeniusz Płomieński, who appears to have been connected with the non-Communist Polish Socialist Party (PPS), repeated in a book and an article that “the Austrians unleashed peasant pogroms,” and he polemicized with Janik over Szela. He found it “impermissible” to praise the massacre “either from a moral or from a national point of view” and to “rehabilitate and whitewash” Szela because of his “class-political program.”⁸ Tadeusz Hołuj, an Auschwitz veteran who still enjoys a modest prominence as a writer of fiction, was the most forward-looking of the three. His pamphlet contained several quotations from Marx, emphasized the rightness of those revolutionary democrats who had wanted to go to the people, and stated clearly that the peasant had been “imperial” because the partitioners rather than the Poles had brought him social freedom. But even Hołuj repeated that the massacres had been consciously provoked by Austrian officials, and his concluding note of optimism accorded poorly with the tone of his exposition: 1846 had strengthened the feeling of national community (because the national uprising had been planned to take place in all three parts of partitioned Poland), and had linked the struggles for social liberation and national independence for the first time.⁹ None of these accounts were based on new research, and all were based in various ways on prewar interpretations.

Two other statements, also by nonhistorians and also without new documentation, were more interesting. Roman Werfel was a Communist journalist with academic training. Though he had been a Trotskyite in prewar Poland, he spent the war in the Soviet Union. There, in February 1941, he published a major article on the 1846 events. It was republished in substantially the same

7. Zygmunt Lasocki, “Szela i Andrusikiewicz,” *Wiś i Państwo*, 3, no. 5 (1946): 447–58. The “real peasants” are discussed on p. 454.

8. Jerzy Eugeniusz Płomieński, “Przed wybuchem powstania krakowskiego w 1846 r.,” *Twórczość*, 2, no. 2 (1946): 62–69; *W kręgu polskiej irredenty (O Edwardzie Dembowskim, Jakubie Szeli i rzezi galicyjskiej)* (Warsaw, 1946). The book is a reconstruction of a work originally written in 1936–40 and lost in the Warsaw Uprising of 1944. I deduce Płomieński’s PPS connection from the fact that he published a response to reviews of his book in the party newspaper: “Retusze myślowe,” *Robotnik*, no. 45 (804) (Feb. 16, 1947). The peasant pogroms are discussed on p. 67 of the article and p. 9 of the book, and the impermissibilities on pp. 85 and 91 of the book.

9. Tadeusz Hołuj, *Rok 1846: Rewolucja i rabacja* (Cracow, 1946). The “imperial” peasants are discussed on pp. 14 and 56, Austrian provocation on pp. 37–38, and the conclusion on pp. 56–59. The book has no scholarly apparatus but appears to follow Limanowski—for example, the idea that incompetent leadership, rather than the peasant revolt, was the main cause of the uprising’s failure (p. 39).

form after Werfel's return to Poland with the liberating armies, on the occasion of the centenary. Werfel put forth what was to be the basic thesis of postwar historiography—the necessary long-term identity of social revolution and national liberation. In his view, the liquidation of feudalism and the development in Poland of a bourgeois-capitalist social structure were prerequisites to the re-establishment of a unified Polish national state. This was because mass support was required to eject the foreigner, because the largely peasant masses would not support a national liberation movement until they became conscious of their Polish nationality, and because national consciousness could not develop until feudalism was abolished and the peasants had some stake in the nation. Any movement that hastened the abolition of feudalism (which was abolished in Galicia by state decree in the revolutionary year 1848) also hastened national liberation. The real patriots of 1846 were therefore the peasants who fought their lords, or rather, in Werfel's view, the handful of revolutionary democrats like Edward Dembowski who recognized that Poland could not be freed until the peasants were emancipated, and who for that reason tried to link the social and national struggles. The real traitors of 1846, conversely, were the nobles—both the majority, those who cooperated with the government for fear of social revolution, and the minority, those leaders of the insurgent conspiracy who had prevented the democrats from agitating among the peasantry and thus deprived the uprising of its one chance of success. Werfel insisted that the democrats could have taken the peasant movement in hand, since the bureaucracy had succeeded in doing so, if they had been allowed to try.¹⁰

Though logical, Werfel's construction had several peculiarities. His colleague Roman Juryś pointed out one of them (in the same Moscow organ which had printed Werfel in 1941) when he stated that a "peasant-national" revolution was impossible in 1846 because "the social formations on which this revolution had to base itself in the city were not yet mature." Following Stalin, both Werfel and Juryś thus agreed that a peasant revolution could succeed only if led by the contemporary equivalent of the vanguard of the working class.¹¹ This had a certain plausibility at a time when a handful of

10. Roman Werfel, "Dembowski i Szela: Rok 1846," *Nowe Widnokreği*, 1941, no. 2, pp. 104–51; *Twórczość*, 2, no. 2 (1946): 70–109. The revisions are insignificant for the present purposes. The argument that the democrats could have taken the peasants in hand is on pp. 148–49 of the original and pp. 105–6 of the 1946 article.

11. Roman Juryś, "Henryk Michał Kamiński i Edward Dembowski," *Nowe Widnokreği*, 5, no. 23–24 (Dec. 30, 1945): 16–18. Stalin's statement, in an interview of Dec. 13, 1931, with Emil Ludwig, was, "Peasant uprisings can succeed only if they interweave with worker uprisings and if workers direct the peasant uprisings"; I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, 13 vols. (Moscow, 1947–53), 13: 112–13. It was printed in *Bolshevik*, Apr. 30, 1932. Neither the National Library in Warsaw, the Warsaw University Library, nor the Warsaw University Historical Institute library has a copy of the 1932 Polish edition

Communists of predominantly urban origin were struggling to complete their control of a largely agricultural country. But Juryś's point implied that Werfel—though he had ostensibly and even ostentatiously framed his analysis in terms of classes—had dealt in fact only with the political superstructure. And the corollary of this neglect of the socioeconomic substructure was the maintenance of the Austrian provocation thesis. Werfel wanted so badly to show that the peasantry must be led from outside that in his work the 1846 peasantry appeared as the same dark, undifferentiated mass exploited by the bureaucracy that the prewar historians had painted. This neglect was itself a function of Werfel's preoccupation with national liberation. For him, as for all the other early postwar commentators, it was the legitimacy of social revolution in terms of national liberation which was at stake.

The first reconstruction by a professional historian appeared two years later. In the last years before the war Dr. Barwiński, director of the Archives in Lwów, had been collecting materials, mainly Austrian, for a major reinterpretation of 1846. The holocaust had interrupted these plans, and Barwiński died in 1947. An established prewar historian, Stefan Kieniewicz, obtained Barwiński's notes and began in 1948 to use them, together with the results of his own further research, to reassess the 1846 events. His first tentative statement was presented in connection with the first major historical effort of People's Poland, the centenary collaborative work on 1848.¹² Kieniewicz wrote sections of the five-volume general work, but he also addressed himself specifically to the peasant question in Galicia in an article that appeared at about the same time.¹³ Concurrently he was writing a major book on the subject.

Kieniewicz accepted Werfel's thesis of the long-term identity of social revolution and national liberation. As concerns the specific causes of the 1846 peasant revolt, however, he accepted and established the prewar thesis of Austrian responsibility. In other words, the contradictions of the social structure made the peasants discontented and assured that they would lack Polish national consciousness; but without Austrian provocation it was doubtful that they would have risen against their lords in 1846, or at least that the revolt would have been so extensive and so fraught with consequence. Kieniewicz concluded in his article that although the peasant disliked the feudal system, wanted to own his land, and dreamed of breaking up the estates, he was unable by himself to convert his dreams into political action. The landowners, despite

used by Werfel, although the National Library has two copies of a Yiddish edition published in Warsaw in 1935.

12. Natalia Gąsiorowska, ed., *W stulecie Wiosny Ludów, 1848–1948*, 5 vols. (Warsaw, 1948–53).

13. Stefan Kieniewicz, "Sprawa włościańska w Galicji w 1848 r.," *Przegląd Historyczny*, 38 (1948): 61–128.

the experiments of some individuals on their domains and despite the introduction of the land-reform question in the Provincial Estates in Lwów, were unwilling as a group to carry out any meaningful reform. Thus it was emissaries from the West who introduced agitation for reform in Galicia. Aimed at drawing the peasants to the national cause, this agitation forced the landowners to join the conspiracy, but the uprising broke out before the nobility could come forward with its program. The government gave the local officials a free hand and permitted them to lean upon (*oprzec się*) the peasantry for support against the insurgents. The eagerness of Breinl, chief of the Tarnów district where the worst excesses occurred, in using this permission "brought with it" the massacres. The Austrian bureaucracy was responsible for the massacre in the sense that the peasants had been given the (correct) impression that they would not be prevented from murdering their lords and burning the manors. The peasants themselves struck in defense of the "Good Emperor" in Vienna, but "basically [they] took advantage of the opportunity to free themselves from the feudal yoke and repay their persecutors." They supported Szela because he promised distribution of the lands of the murdered lords. The Austrians were unwilling to satisfy them, however, for fear that land reform would bring lords and peasants together against the government. Thus they reimposed feudal obligations, if only until the abolition of serfdom in 1848, also under peasant pressure.¹⁴

In considering the consequences of the revolt Kieniewicz emphasized the cost—to the peasant and to Poland—rather than the benefit. Although the revolt had brought emancipation sooner and under better conditions than might otherwise have been the case, he believed that the solidification of the alliance of peasantry and bureaucracy which resulted had, first, deprived progressive forces in Galicia of a mass base and, second, deprived the peasantry of any ally at all once the government made its peace with the conservative nobility in the 1860s. This in turn suggested that not every peasant revolt was in every circumstance a blow for social and national liberation.

Kieniewicz restated these theses in harsher form in a long introduction to a series of documents on 1846 which he published the next year. The piece emphasized Austrian provocation throughout, suggested that the Austrian government at all levels supported the outbreak, and called Breinl "the major creator of the situation from which the bloody Tarnów massacre was born."¹⁵

In the meantime the political and intellectual climates of post-1945 Poland were changing substantially. Political opposition had disappeared, the first major struggle of national and "international" Communists was decided in

14. *Ibid.*, pp. 68–69.

15. Stefan Kieniewicz, ed., *Rewolucja polska 1846 roku: Wybór źródeł* (Wrocław, 1949), pp. xxi–liv. On Breinl as the "creator" see pp. xxx–xxxii.

1948 in favor of the latter, and the collectivization campaign in the countryside had begun. The political role of the peasantry was more significant than ever.

It was at this point that the first real attempt was made to posit an autonomous peasant political program articulated in terms of the socioeconomic substructure rather than Polish national liberation. Written by Soviet historian Iliia Miller, this article appeared first in *Uchenye zapiski Instituta slavianovedeniia* of the Soviet Academy of Sciences in 1949 and was reprinted in Polish in 1951 under the sponsorship of *Nowe Drogi*, the theoretical journal of the ruling Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR).¹⁶ Miller's thesis was that a revolutionary situation existed in Galicia in 1845 and that the peasant revolt—the revolutionary movement of the peasantry—came from the peasants themselves, from below. Although both the democratic conspirators and the Austrian authorities attempted to use it for their conflicting ends, it was caused by neither.

This emphasis differed from Werfel's emphasis on democratic agitators, whose role Kieniewicz had admitted, and from Kieniewicz's emphasis on Austrian provocation, whose role Werfel had admitted. And their common interest in the harmony of social revolution and Polish national liberation was foreign to Miller. A certain confusion was the first result. Writing in *Nowe Drogi* the same year, Witold Konopka referred to Miller and attempted to substantiate his thesis on the basis of the documentation then available. He identified various forms of "spontaneous" peasant struggle—poor work, litigation against lords, arson—and wrote of "germs of organization" and "increasing oppression." But Konopka was also unwilling to give up the idea of political leadership from outside the peasantry (there were "many proofs" that revolutionary democratic propaganda reached the peasants, he wrote) or Austrian provocation (although it was a "lie" that Breinl had started the insurrection, it was true that "the Austrian authorities mobilized to deflect the blow of the insurgent peasantry from themselves").¹⁷

Kieniewicz's own fundamental work was published the same year.¹⁸ He had the latest and most complete documentation, and he maintained his theses of 1948, when the book was written, almost unchanged. Although he placed new emphasis on the continuing struggle of the peasants for emancipation after

16. I[liia] S[olomonovich] Miller, "Nakanune otmeny barshchiny v Galitsii," *Uchenye zapiski Instituta slavianovedeniia* (Moscow and Leningrad), 1949, no. 1, pp. 119–240; part 4, "Krest'ianskii vopros v revoliutsionnykh sobytiakh 1846 g." (pp. 183–240) is reprinted as "Sprawa chłopska w wydarzeniach rewolucyjnych roku 1846," *Zeszyty Historyczne "Nowych Dróg"* (Przekłady), 2, no. 3 (1951): 70–88; the whole work was reprinted as *W przededniu zniesienia pańszczyzny w Galicji* (Warsaw, 1953).

17. Witold Konopka, "O niektórych ruchach chłopskich w pierwszej połowie XIX w.," *Nowe Drogi*, 5, no. 4 (1951): 111–36.

18. Kieniewicz, *Ruch chłopski* (see note 1).

the defeat of the national uprising, he insisted that the revolt was provoked by the authorities and was not spontaneous. The peasant at that moment was incapable of planned struggle, either legal or revolutionary. Only an outside influence—an organized social-revolutionary movement conscious of its goals—could have successfully directed the peasant revolt. But no such movement existed, and in its absence the peasants simply took advantage of the national uprising to wreak vengeance on their oppressors “in the service of the Austrian government.” They paid heavily for it afterward, but the fact remained. In an article published at the same time, Kieniewicz carefully referred to “the peasant class struggle” as “the central issue of our history until the rise of the working class.” Although their theses were basically opposed, Kieniewicz gave pride of place to Miller, “who affirms the significance which the autonomous peasant movement had in the emancipation process.” But he also noted sadly that not much had been done in the preceding five years and regretted that Miller had not defined the autonomous movement more closely.¹⁹

Miller received support the following year from what must have seemed an unexpected source. Czesław Wycech was not a historian but a peasant politician. In these years he was vice-chairman of the Supreme Executive Committee of the United People’s Party (ZSL), the peasant party of People’s Poland. He had time enough to devote to serious research. His initial statement, in 1952, simply presented the thesis without new documentation: there had been increasing “misery” from the sixteenth century on, and the peasants had revolted spontaneously whenever they could. Wycech was willing to admit that the uprising of 1846 had been a “bloody settling of accounts with the nobility” and that “Metternich’s” policy had been “Machiavellian,” but he held that what had changed was not the peasantry but the “conditions of struggle,” the apparatus of oppression. The peasantry now had allies in the procapitalist bourgeoisie and in certain urban groups sympathetic to utopian socialism, and it was beginning to develop an intelligentsia of its own. But its aims and program were always the same—ownership of the land and freedom from any obligations to the lords, the “overthrow of the servile system through destruction of the Polish nobility.”²⁰

In 1953 two young historians, trained in People’s Poland, tried their hand at reviewing Kieniewicz’s book in the authoritative journals. Józef Buszko chided Kieniewicz for his relative neglect of the specific economic background and insisted that enough material existed to permit the conclusion that the economic lot of the peasant was “extraordinarily hard” and that pauperization

19. Stefan Kieniewicz, “Walka klasowa chłopów w XIX i XX wieku w oświetleniu historiografii polskiej,” *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, 58, no. 1 (1951): 39–57.

20. Czesław Wycech, *Z przeszłości ruchów chłopskich (1768–1861)* (Warsaw, 1952), pp. 5–12.

was an immeasurably important “cofactor” in the genesis of the revolt, which Kieniewicz had not sufficiently stressed.²¹ Marian Żychowski was working at this time on the Cracow uprising, and he thought that Kieniewicz should have shown that agitators from outside the peasantry but inside the country had probably played a basic role. Unable to prove this with documents, he argued by extension from the support which peasants in the Cracow Republic had given the national uprising there and from the possibility that democratic agitators had continued to circulate among the Galician peasants after the fall of Cracow.²² But despite an avuncular tone for a man so young—he congratulated Kieniewicz for “drawing closer to the Marxist method of analysis” (p. 231)—Żychowski shared Kieniewicz’s interest in the identity of social revolt and national liberation. What he missed was a really adequate reaffirmation of this identity: “The peasants, aiming at breaking their feudal fetters, by that very fact struck not only at the lord as a landed proprietor but, as a result, at the feudal structure of the state, at the Austrian monarchy, and this aspect should have been extensively discussed by the author” (p. 237). What he disliked, in other words, was Kieniewicz’s exposition of the negative consequences of the revolt. In an article published a month later, Kieniewicz was willing to ascribe new importance to developing economic and social conditions in the countryside and to call the peasant movement “spontaneous,” but he concluded firmly that it “had become an instrument in the partitioner’s hand and prepared its own downfall.”²³

Meanwhile Wycech was at work in the archives, and in 1955 he produced a full-scale attempt to substantiate the spontaneity and authenticity of the peasant movement. He gave some pawns at the outset: he accepted the identification of the movement with the national liberation struggle in the long run, the “heavy national sin”²⁴ of the noble conspirators in refusing to bring the peasants into the conspiracy in time, and the perfidious policy of the Austrians, who attempted to use the peasants for their anti-Polish ends. This done, he gently but firmly rejected any suggestion that the peasant movement had begun outside the peasantry. Democratic propaganda in the countryside had merely “strengthened” the peasant front against the manors (p. 9). Peasant class struggles “in their majority were not organizationally connected with the democratic conspiratorial groups” (p. 11). As for the “Austrian provocation” thesis, Wycech made the best case that could be made

21. Józef Buszko in *Przegląd Historyczny*, 44, no. 1–2 (1953): 250.

22. Marian Żychowski, “Na marginesie antyfeudalnego powstania chłopskiego w Galicji w 1846 r.,” *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, 60, no. 1 (1953): 239–42.

23. Stefan Kieniewicz, “Z postępowych tradycji polskich ruchów narodowo-wyzwoleńczych,” *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, 60, no. 2 (1953): 183–206 (quotation on p. 198).

24. Czesław Wycech, *Powstanie chłopskie w roku 1846: Jakub Szela* (Warsaw, 1955), p. 201.

against it. He emphasized the limited character of Austrian encouragement in space and time and the absolute lack of solid proof that Breinl had organized the revolt. Kieniewicz had admitted that such proof was lacking and had based his case on strong indirect evidence. Wycech insisted that the peasants merely took advantage of government passivity to accomplish their own consciously held aims. These were always the same, and were of course unwritten, but in general they included an end to servile obligations, a division of the manor-farms, lower tobacco and salt prices, and in some cases local self-government. Arguing for the existence of peasant organization, he used the same kind of indirect evidence that Kieniewicz had adduced to prove Austrian provocation. Certain watchwords and demands were repeated in the course of the revolt in many areas, he wrote, and allowed the historian to speak "in general terms" of organization (p. 99). "Despite the ignorance prevailing in the countryside," he concluded, "the peasant had principles for his action which were thought through and, from his point of view and in the given situation, justified" (p. 199). The book was copiously documented, and the next year Wycech repeated these theses in the introduction to a useful book of prewar articles, including Janik's and Zawieyski's, and took Kieniewicz specifically to task for saying nothing about peasant struggles before the uprising.²⁵

In his full-length book on 1846 in Cracow and Galicia published at about the same time, Żychowski substantially accepted that half of Miller's thesis—concerning an autonomous peasant movement—which Wycech had documented, although he preferred to quote Miller and in some passages repeated Miller's individual points in order.²⁶ The revolutionary democrats' vision of a united struggle was still praised, but there was no longer any suggestion that they had actually reached the masses.

With the ghost of the democratic agitators thus apparently laid to rest and the reality of an autonomous peasant movement thus firmly grounded, there remained the need to document the changes in the socioeconomic structure which might explain Miller's revolutionary situation. This was sketched out in early 1956 in the Galician sections of a general survey of Polish peasant emancipation. Stanisław Śreniowski, the author, was a specialist in Russian Poland, and his account of 1846 was frankly derivative of Kieniewicz.²⁷ More interesting was the attempt, finally, to link the peasant struggle to developments in the economic situation of the peasantry. Śreniowski was obliged to

25. Wycech, *Jakub Szela* (see note 4). On Kieniewicz see p. 18.

26. Marian Żychowski, *Rok 1846 w Rzeczypospolitej Krakowskiej i w Galicji* (Warsaw, 1956). Compare p. 166 with Miller, *Zeszyty*, pp. 78–79, and p. 162 with Miller, p. 71.

27. Stanisław Śreniowski, *Uwłaszczenie chłopów w Polsce* (Warsaw, 1956), p. 278n.

admit that there was little evidence of marketization and of differentiation within the peasantry—the classic Marxist motors of rural development—in Galicia. But he made a virtue of this weakness by concluding that stagnation was precisely the Galician problem: the Austrian annexation had turned Galicia into a closed economy that was almost entirely occupied with turning grain and potatoes into vodka because it lacked outlets either for its products or for its surplus population. In this situation simple population increase, which meant less food per capita, could have produced increasing misery (and the revolutionary situation of 1845). Śreniowski admitted that his evidence—mainly figures on crop distribution, vodka consumption, and plot parcellation—was fragmentary. It remains the best we have.²⁸

Wycech, a peasant politician, had substantiated the existence of peasant politics in 1846; Śreniowski, a Marxist economic historian, had at least blocked out the economic basis on which peasant politics arose. Both had made essential contributions to the debate, but neither had spent much time affirming that peasant revolt must necessarily hasten national liberation. Śreniowski, it is true, assisted by a quotation from Marx which was a favorite among historians at the time, had used the “agrarian revolution” concept. Marx had written that without an agrarian revolution—a “revolutionary reconstruction of the whole agrarian system”—the national question was insoluble. Śreniowski’s general thesis was that the process of emancipation had been subject to the action of two political forces, the peasant struggle against feudal oppression and the attempts of Polish nobles and foreign governments to adapt agricultural conditions to the needs of a new era through reform.²⁹ This emancipation from above could not, however, solve the agrarian problem. It was clear from his exposition that his main focus was the agrarian system, not the national question.

In Poland 1955 was a tentative year in many fields—history among them. It was the centenary of the death of the national poet, Mickiewicz. Witold Kula, one of the deans of Polish historiography then and now, used the occasion to strike a fine balance among contending factions in nineteenth-century historiography. According to Kula the national and social struggles were interdependent and equally important factors in the formation of the “bourgeois nation,” and the question which one of them came first was falsely put: “If rightist historians put national slogans first, it was a disguise

28. *Ibid.*, pp. 153–68. There is a more recent basic study of vodka production and drunkenness in Russian Poland: Halina Rożenowa, *Produkcja wódki i sprawa pijaństwa w Królestwie Polskim, 1815–1863* (Warsaw, 1961). To my knowledge nothing comparable has been done on Galicia.

29. Śreniowski, *Uwolnienie chłopów w Polsce*, pp. 7–8, 293–95, 310. See also Kieniewicz’s review in *Acta Poloniae Historica*, 1 (1958): 146–53.

for counterrevolutionary tendencies and a factual resignation from national postulates; if on the other hand leftist researchers have happened to put national issues second, this can only have resulted from ideological immaturity.”³⁰

The formulation made it clear that ideological immaturity was the clear and present danger. In two papers—read in Poland and at the International Congress of Historical Sciences in Rome in 1955³¹—Kieniewicz used the agrarian-revolution concept both to give full credit to the spontaneity and authenticity of the antifeudal peasant struggle and to reaffirm the basic thesis of the new historiography that in the long run the peasant struggle served the cause of national liberation. At the same time, by focusing on why there had been no agrarian revolution, he was able to maintain all his previous theses and to conclude again that whatever the long-term or short-term benefits of the 1846 revolt may have been, its consequences in the crucial middle term were unfortunate. Kieniewicz later claimed that these articles were intended merely to summarize the results of postwar research to that point.³² They did so in a manner which embraced all the other contributions in an expanded version of his own and shifted the focus of argument back to the national question. And he proceeded to imbed his version in lapidary form in a text intended for students rather than for other historians. This was a draft (*makieta*) of what was to be the standard university textbook on the 1764–1864 period. Sent to the printers in January 1956, it appeared in June.³³ Kieniewicz wrote the 1846 sections.

His first sentence on the national insurrection stated that it was the work neither of emigrants nor of foreign provocation but of revolutionary ferment in the countryside. The exposition was especially hard on the nobility and the leaders of the conspiracy, who were pictured as reluctant dragons spurred on mostly by fear of a serf revolt and largely responsible for their own demise. One whole subsection was entitled “The Treason of the Large-Landholding

30. Witold Kula, “Rok Mickiewiczowski,” *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, 62, no. 2 (1955): 3–12 (quotation on p. 7).

31. Stefan Kieniewicz, “Problem rewolucji agrarnej w Polsce w okresie kształtowania się układu kapitalistycznego,” *Z epoki Mickiewicza* (Wrocław, 1956), pp. 3–39 (the author notes on p. 4 that the article is the revision of a speech given on June 29, 1955): “La question agraire et la lutte pour la libération nationale en Pologne et en Italie à l’époque du Printemps des Peuples,” Académie polonaise des sciences, Institut d’histoire, *La Pologne au X^e Congrès international des sciences historiques à Rome* (Warsaw, 1955), pp. 235–52.

32. Stefan Kieniewicz, “Historiografia lat 1795–1914 w dorobku dwudziestolecia,” *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, 72, no. 1 (1965): 13.

33. The date of “release for assembly” is given with the printing information in all Polish books. That the draft was sent to the printer in January is attested in *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, 64, no. 3–4 (1957): 185.

Nobility,” and both “treason” and the loaded word “bourgeoisie” appeared frequently.³⁴

The subsections on the peasant revolt included all the interpretive contributions of recent years except Śreniowski’s economic approach, which had not yet appeared. The revolt was a “spontaneous response to the increasingly severe exploitation of the peasants by the manors.” From the beginning “we observe certain elements of organization” (pp. 438–39). A large place was given to peasant resistance to reimposition of feudal obligations by the Austrians after the uprising, and a somewhat smaller place to signs of preparations beforehand.

Kieniewicz concluded with his clearest affirmation yet of the necessary national-liberation character of the 1846 revolt: “The antifeudal movement of the peasant masses, despite the mistakes committed, was in its essence a national liberation movement, and although it did not achieve victory, it struck the feudal order to the quick. The next revolutionary blow in 1848 swept that order from the face of the earth. The peasant uprising which preceded it by two years was thus not without fruit.” The Marxian classics show us, he wrote, that the peasant revolt in Galicia was a step toward agrarian revolution—for them the indispensable condition of Poland’s liberation (pp. 447–48).

Along the path to this conclusion, however, Kieniewicz reiterated and even embellished the evidence for Austrian provocation and dwelt again on the revolt’s unhappy consequences. He stated that one rumor (that the lords were arming to prevent emancipation) came from Breinl, and another (that the lords had sworn to kill the peasants) “may have” come “in planned fashion” from the district office. Neither statement has ever been proved conclusively. Further, although he admitted there was no evidence that Breinl paid bounties per head, Kieniewicz held that Breinl’s munificence in rewarding peasants “for lost labor-time” had been the spark which “emboldened the generality of peasants to a massive blow at the manors.” In this way the movement of the unenlightened and badly organized peasantry took the form of a spontaneous sowing of death and destruction and allowed itself to be used as a “tool” by the Austrian bureaucracy. As a result it contributed to the fall of Cracow and isolated itself from the urban progressive movement in the future, assuring that it would never achieve its own goals (pp. 439–40, 447).

Thus the historiography of the first decade of People’s Poland ended as it had begun: with the identity of social and national struggle, with Austrian provocation, and with a curse on both manor and village for inadequacy in the national-liberation struggle. The nobility was unwilling to emancipate the

34. Tadeusz Manteuffel, ed., *Historia Polski*, Stefan Kieniewicz and Witold Kula, ed., vol. 2: 1764–1864, pt. 2: 1814–1864 (Warsaw, 1956), pp. 419–23.

peasantry, even to gain them to the national cause; and the peasantry, because it was blind, struck the nation down. In this specific context the conclusion that the peasant movement was “in essence a national-liberation movement” was an implausible benediction.

Curiously, the Polish October of 1956 had the same result as the introduction of Stalinism after 1948: it produced attempts to shake the historiography of 1846 out of this conceptual framework. And the process was just as peculiar. The convention of historians called to discuss the textbook draft met in April 1957. The debate was bitter, more bitter evidently even than the written record shows, and it centered on Kieniewicz’s contribution.³⁵

Criticism came from several directions. Juliusz Bardach branded the “agrarian revolution” concept for the red herring it was, a “muddy” idea originating with the Russian populists. Whereas Engels had understood agrarian revolution as an integral part of the bourgeois revolution, “with us . . . [it] was understood until not long ago as something completely automatic, even at times as something simply opposed to the bourgeois revolution. The agrarian revolution is represented as being peasant *par excellence*. But there never was such a revolution!” And the Nestor of Polish Marxist historians, Natalia Gąsiorowska, dryly criticized the handbook’s periodization, based not on economic and social changes but on political events.³⁶ All this was pertinent enough. But the sharpest attack came from the most improbable source. The devil’s advocate was Henryk Wereszycki, a political historian of the nineteenth century, of moderate socialist persuasion, who like Kieniewicz (an old friend of his) had published his first work in 1930, and who was just as devoted to national liberation.

Wereszycki concentrated his fire on the implausibility of Kieniewicz’s conclusion. He believed that the handbook had made People’s Poland the measure of Polish history, whereas “every historian understands that People’s Poland is not the end of national history, according to which historical phenomena will be assessed or explained in dogmatic fashion.” And he found this distortion most striking in the treatment of 1846.

Wereszycki’s first interest was to clear the nobility of the charge of treason. He could not see how each and every counterrevolutionary position betrayed the nation. No other nation in nineteenth-century Europe, including many that had achieved independence, had less-treasonable “possessing classes” or more-consistent revolutionaries. Nor was there treason in the long run. No doubt Polish nobles defended their class interests, he said. They even thought of their peasants only as peasants and worried little over which language they spoke. But though they had defended their social privileges and

35. Record in *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, 64, no. 3–4 (1957): 13–200.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 46 (Bardach), p. 60 (Gąsiorowska).

the contemporary social order, Polish nobles had also fought for national liberation and worked for the extension of national consciousness among the masses.

Wereszycki's defense of the nobility led him to ask for justice for the peasants too—to ask why peasants should necessarily struggle toward national liberation. When lords were of different nationality, as in Ireland, then peasant revolts could be national. Conversely, peasants could also rise against a foreign invader in defense of feudalism, as in Spain in 1808 or Russia in 1812. But in Poland “the nobility was Polish, and the nobility also wanted its own state, or in other words independence. No dialectic can help here.” The fact of peasant enmity to national liberators was too palpable to allow Kieniewicz's conclusion to appear plausible.

As a way out of the blind alley into which he felt postwar historiography had led, Wereszycki demanded a complex approach to complex problems and suggested the hypothesis that the Polish masses had become conscious of their Polish nationality only after emancipation, in the bourgeois period, under the influence of the bourgeois school.³⁷

Most historians present at the meeting took Wereszycki's remarks for an attack on Marxist principles rather than on the uses to which these principles had been put in the previous decade. Wereszycki, who was at the least “tremendously noncontemporary,” had negated the achievements of postwar historiography and had echoed “interwar historians” by his “curious” thesis on “ignorant Polish peasants.” The fact that the new historiography was based on Marx, an acute nineteenth-century observer, disproved Wereszycki's charge that People's Poland, a twentieth-century phenomenon, had been made the measure of the nineteenth century. On the other hand, no history is objective, and “the Marxist school” also has the right to speak its mind.³⁸ Żychowski in particular rallied to a total defense of Kieniewicz. The revolutionary movement of 1846 was presented truly and correctly, he declared, and was revealed in all its complexity and variety in the projected handbook. He was unable to share Wereszycki's view (his own view in 1953) that “the peasant movement

37. *Ibid.*, pp. 13–30. Two years later Wereszycki suggested that the history of Galicia needed to be seen not just as part of the history of Poland but also as part of the history of Austria. Austria, alone among the three partitioning powers, had no ruling nation, despite desultory attempts by its German urban elements to become one. As a result, only in Galicia did the possibility of compromise between Poles and occupants exist, and Galicia was the only part of partitioned Poland where for a time there was no strong national liberation movement. See Henryk Wereszycki, “Dzieje Galicji jako problem historyczny,” *Sprawozdania Wrocławskiego Towarzystwa Naukowego*, 1961, pp. 77–78, summarizing an article in *Małopolskie Studia Historyczne*, 1958, no. 1, pp. 4–16. Galicia was also the cradle of the peasant political movement which celebrated its seventy-fifth anniversary in 1970.

38. *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, 64, no. 3–4 (1957): 70, 171, 175, 177.

was dependent on a movement coming from the cities. . . . It must be affirmed with total emphasis that in the specific Polish conditions the peasant could and did become the basic social force in the struggle for independence, as indicated in the handbook." Why? Because "our scientific duty is to evoke from the pages of our history the presence of the peasantry in the national liberation movement and to cherish this beautiful tradition" (pp. 165–66).

Kieniewicz used against Wereszycki the methods that had been successful in the past: he admitted minor errors, shifted the focus of discussion, and preserved his central theses intact. With regard to noble treason, he was willing to admit that not every socially conservative force should be called "treasonable." With regard to the peasantry, he was willing to admit that it had sometimes constituted merely a "potential" rather than an actual motive force for national liberation movements. But the issue, he declared, was pure scientific accomplishment. By this he appears to have meant the acceptance and application of Marxist principles, as he understood them, in historical research, for he went on to say that he had made many mistakes before and after the war but had always tried to correct them in the light of scientific scholarship. The nineteenth-century thesis of noble treachery had been proven by postwar research. He would not apply a reduced rate to the actions of "these people" nor refrain from condemning their policies, injurious to the nation, for the sake of "holy agreement." And "in the long run" the peasant antifeudal movement served the Polish national liberation cause, "because whatever hastened the overthrow of feudalism in Poland favored the national interest, and whatever conserved feudalism and wished to preserve its relics was against the national interest" (pp. 195–200). And there the debate rested.

When the book was finished eighteen months later and published in 1959, it contained interesting minor revisions. Some (though not all) quotations from Marx and Engels were dropped; "bourgeoisie" became "possessing classes"; both "agrarian revolution" and "treason" disappeared almost entirely. The national insurrection, which had broken out "in connection with the revolutionary ferment encompassing the Polish countryside," now broke out "by the will of a domestic conspiracy," in "tight" connection with that ferment. "The Treason of the Large-Landholding Nobility" now became its "Desertion." Metternich's unleashing of the serfs—a quotation from Marx—was replaced by a "perfidious agitation" which "created the appearance that the Austrians [would] permit the peasants to settle accounts with the lords."

But all the main themes came through whole. Marx's statement that 1846 was a step on the road to agrarian revolution, indispensable to Polish national liberation, was rephrased without reference to Marx, but it was not withdrawn. And the "essential" national-liberation character of the peasant movement was restated in general terms: "The liquidation of feudalism and the peasantry's

achievement of autonomy [*usamodzielnienie*] were the indispensable conditions for the formation of national consciousness in the masses. Thus every blow aimed at servitude and servile labor—even though it caused the defeat of the uprising in the first instance—in the long run served the cause of the nation's liberation."³⁹

And this has remained the textbook view of 1846 ever since. Nor has the debate been renewed among specialists. In 1958 Wycech published a collection of documents and introduced it with a restatement of his peasantist thesis. Reviewing the book, Kieniewicz promised a polemic on principles, but it seems never to have appeared.⁴⁰ Six years later he was content to list the differences of outlook on specific issues—the prospects for the peasant movement, Szela's role, and so forth—subsisting among Polish historians of these events, but without elaboration. While he perceived a certain "obsolescence" in the work of the first half of the 1950s, the struggles of principle, ideology, and method had "echoed away, as it were" (*jak gdyby przycichły*) and had been replaced by more "businesslike discussion."⁴¹

This has been almost, but not quite, true. The rare new articles⁴²—documenting the judicial struggle of peasants in two Galician villages (including Szela's) against their lords before 1846, showing that Metternich was upset by Prussian claims that the Austrians had paid bounties per head, following Szela's image in Polish literature, both written and oral—have been businesslike indeed, but have not departed from Kieniewicz's framework. The one related book published recently did, but without result.⁴³ The author of the book, the late Roman Rozdolski, also wrote the article on peasant litigation mentioned above and had lived abroad since it was written shortly after the war. Like Werfel, Rozdolski had been a Trotskyite before 1939. He was

39. Tadeusz Manteuffel, ed., *Historia Polski*, Stefan Kieniewicz and Witold Kula, ed., vol. 2: 1764–1864, pt. 3: 1831–1864 (Warsaw, 1958), pp. 188–218. This is marked "Second Edition"; the draft (*makieta*) noted in note 34 above was marked "First Edition." Comparative pagination between first and second editions on themes: "domestic conspiracy" (pp. 419 and 188), "treason to desertion" (pp. 422 and 192), "unleashing to agitation" (pp. 439 and 208), paraphrase of Marx and restatement on national liberation (pp. 447 and 217).

40. Józef Sieradzki and Czesław Wycech, eds., *Rok 1846 w Galicji: Materiały źródłowe* (Warsaw, 1958), pp. 13–31. Kieniewicz's review in *Przegląd Historyczny*, 49, no. 4 (1958): 802.

41. Stefan Kieniewicz, "Les récentes études historiques sur la Pologne au temps des partages," *Acta Poloniae Historica*, 1 (1958): 59–73.

42. Roman Rozdolski, "Do historii 'krwawego roku' 1846," *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, 65, no. 2 (1958): 403–22; Mieczysław Żywczyński, "Metternich i 'krwawe premie' w 1846 r. w świetle dziennika jego żony," *Przegląd Historyczny*, 56, no. 3 (1965): 464–67; Franciszek Ziejka, "Dwie legendy o Jakubie Szeli," *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, 76, no. 4 (1969): 831–52.

43. Roman Rozdolski, *Stosunki poddańcze w dawnej Galicji*, 2 vols. (Warsaw, 1962).

passionately sympathetic to peasant betterment, vehemently unsympathetic to the nobility, and indifferent to Polish national liberation. Unlike Werfel, he remained angry in his old age in exactly the same way. In 1962 his two-volume work on the social structure of old Galicia, of which the second volume was composed of Austrian documents, was published in Warsaw. It was in the main a careful reconstruction of the eighteenth-century land reforms, forced upon a recalcitrant but resilient nobility by the Austrian government, which had inaugurated the peasant-bureaucrat alliance of 1846. It was clear to Rozdolski that the Austrians had introduced these reforms for a variety of state-political reasons rather than for any love of peasants. Nonetheless, from an opposite ideological starting point he reached conclusions strikingly similar to those of von Mises: Polish society, free or unfree, would never have liberated the peasantry, and the Austrian state had done all that had been done.

The book was like a stone thrown down a well. (By mid-1970 it was prominent on Warsaw overstock shelves.) Kieniewicz has returned to 1846 in three recent works—his section (just preceding Wereszycki's) of the 1968 English-language general history of Poland, his 1968 history of Poland between 1795 and 1918, and his recent English-language survey of Polish peasant emancipation.⁴⁴ Though the tone varies slightly from previous works, the familiar emphases appear in all three publications: the nobles forced into the conspiracy by peasant unrest; the spontaneity, based on increasing oppression, and at the same time the poor organization of the peasant movement; Breinl's emissaries stirring the peasants and Breinl's money encouraging them to massacre; the failure of both national liberators and peasants to link the national and social struggles; the disastrous short-term and fruitful long-term consequences in relation to national liberation.

In a recent article on the development of national consciousness in nineteenth-century Poland, Kieniewicz has gone on to explain the relation between economic substructure and ideological superstructure, really for the first time. As concerns the peasantry, he suggests three chronological stages. The first is the relative stabilization of the feudal system in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, with a weak class struggle and low class consciousness among the peasants. In this stage the peasant might well follow the lord into the national struggle, as in 1806, 1809, and even 1830. In the second stage, land hunger dominates in a worsening economic situation: the lord is the enemy, the official the ally, and the peasant is impervious to national slogans. Emancipation ushers in the third stage. It defuses rural class tension,

44. Stefan Kieniewicz, "On the Eve of an Agrarian Revolution (1832-1848)," in Stefan Kieniewicz, ed., *History of Poland* (Warsaw, 1968), pp. 463-507; *Historia Polski, 1795-1918*, 2nd ed. (Warsaw, 1969), pp. 161-73; *The Emancipation of the Polish Peasantry* (Chicago and London, 1969), pp. 113-24.

but at the same time it puts relations with foreign officials on a new plane, and with a modicum of well-being and expanding education the road is open "to more complete understanding not only of the peasantry's class interests but of its national and civic tasks."⁴⁵ Thus in conclusion the "national task" is given its proper weight once more, even in the most suggestive of Kieniewicz's renderings.

Since 1956, therefore, Polish historians as a group have been willing to accept, and uninterested in rebutting, the picture developed by Kieniewicz of the peasant revolt in Galicia. This treats the greatest peasant revolt in the history of the Polish lands almost exclusively in terms of how it affected the prospects for Polish national liberation.⁴⁶ Although the answer is now somewhat different from what it was before the war, the question has remained the same: What (or, really, who) contributed to, and who hampered, the recovery of independent Polish statehood? That this version, which assumes that social liberation was possible only in an independent Poland, should have won practically unquestioned acceptance in People's Poland is a commentary on People's Poland itself. And this also requires explanation.

There are of course perfectly natural reasons why debate should have been largely replaced by repetition of a canon. One is that the major protagonists have gone on to other things. Roman Werfel, after editing *Nowe Drogi* during the thaw, lives in semiretirement; Czesław Wycech is chairman of the United People's Party and marshal of the Polish Sejm; Marian Żychowski teaches at the central (Communist) party school and directs the national university "political science" program, a curriculum of Marxist-Leninist political education which was much expanded after the student demonstrations of 1968;⁴⁷ Stanisław Śreniowski and Roman Rozdolski are dead. Stefan Kieniewicz has devoted his enormous energies first to the history of the 1863–64 uprising (and thus of Russian Poland), often in collaboration with Ilia Miller, then to studies of the nineteenth-century progressive historian Joachim Lelewel and of the Warsaw positivists, and most recently to the major syntheses noted above.

One result of this turning to other pursuits is that the field has been left to the historians. It will have been noticed that except for Kieniewicz the

45. Stefan Kieniewicz, "Rozwój polskiej świadomości narodowej w IX [sic] w.," *Współczesność* (Warsaw), 14, no. 22 (299) (Sept. 24–Oct. 7, 1969):1, 11.

46. That this need not be so is demonstrated by the latest treatment of the nearest competitor to the 1846 revolt—the 1651 peasant revolt in the Carpathian foothills. See Adam Kersten, *Na tropach Napierskiego* (Warsaw, 1970). In reviewing the historiography (pp. 9–17) Kersten shows (besides the fact that Ilia Miller has had a creative role here too) that 1651 has witnessed the same tension between social and national liberators as 1846. But no one has won.

47. Wycech gave up both posts in early 1971 to resume scholarly pursuits, and Żychowski was rumored to be seriously ill.

original contributions to the debate came from men who if they were Polish, were not historians, or who if they were historians, were not Polish. Other contributions have been either tangential, like Śreniowski's or Rozdolski's, or essentially provocative, like Wereszycki's. The withdrawal of non-Poles and nonhistorians leaves Kieniewicz without a peer. He wrote and continues to write the best history of 1846 available: he has the best grasp of available documentation, the subtlest argumentation, the most polished presentation.

Finally, most of the work may now have been done. In this as in other areas a considerable amount of genuinely new evidence has been made available in People's Poland. It is possible and even likely that additional material could be uncovered in Lwów (Lvov) and in Vienna, though these cities are not readily accessible to Polish historians. In terms of the actual events of 1846, however, it may well be that such evidence would be marginal. As long as Kieniewicz's conceptual framework is satisfactory to Polish historians, there will be no real incentive either for new research or for reinterpretation.

And it is clear that the framework satisfies. The point is that it has satisfied Polish historians since it was announced in 1946 by Roman Werfel. Werfel brought the new wine of social revolution, but he delivered it in the old bottle of national liberation. Nobles and revolutionaries switched roles, but the personae remained the same in what was still essentially a national drama.

This overview, established immediately after the war by a Communist Party spokesman coming from Moscow, was elaborated by a distinguished prewar historian in 1948 and embodied by him in a major work which appeared in 1951. By the quality of his work, Kieniewicz transformed the written history of 1846 from melodrama to tragedy. This was done in the midst of intense debate. Paradoxically, it was only during the terrible years between 1948 and 1956 that there was serious discussion on what the real questions in nineteenth-century Polish history were. In the upshot, it was demonstrated (by Kieniewicz) that Austrian officialdom had a complex role, with differentiated goals, and (by Wycech) that the peasant was more than a stock figure with a club and a torch. But all attempts to recast 1846 in fundamentally different conceptual terms were unsuccessful. And since 1956 the debate has, as Kieniewicz put it, "echoed away." The need was, and still is, to establish the legitimacy of social revolution in terms of national liberation, because it cannot be doubted that the real question is why statehood was lost in the eighteenth century and not regained in the nineteenth century.

In People's Poland this view is identified with scientific Marxism. It will be recalled that the 1957 correspondents almost without exception chose to view Wereszycki's remarks as an attack on Marxism, and that Kieniewicz defended himself on the basis of "pure scientific accomplishment." A year later he confirmed that "it does not seem that [the protesting voices of the 1957 convention] can lead to abandonment of the materialist methodology and the

newly adopted viewpoints.”⁴⁸ To outsiders this may seem a hasty identification, but it was established at the very birth of the new order.

There is also an ideological reason. Since the conquest of Luxemburgism, the tenet that Polish national liberation was a natural and inevitable result of the historical process has been practically unchallengeable among Polish Marxists. But as an explanation for our phenomenon, this was in my view quite secondary to the peculiarities of the early postwar situation. All the first Polish participants in the debate were prewar intellectuals, and the war experience magnified what had existed previously. People’s Poland needed almost any intellectual who had escaped the attempts to destroy Poland’s educated classes. Most surviving historians were not Marxists, since few had been Marxist before the war, and the training of a new generation was just getting under way. In the meantime “the materialist methodology” was allowed to impose itself through a combination of conviction and well-understood self-interest. But this was a two-way street, and the new methodology set to work to answer the old questions. The new historians were as faithful as their teachers.

Roman Werfel launched the new interpretation in 1946 as follows:

In 1944 and 1945 the development of circumstances in Poland for the first time did not take place according to the well-worn schema of capitulation to reaction. For the first time on the scale of the whole nation, of all Poland, another concept came into effect, the concept of Dembowski, when in one indissoluble whole were linked the struggle for national liberation and the struggle for the liberty of the Polish people, when with arms in hand it broke the reactionary *coup d’état*.⁴⁹

And Marian Żychowski, Kieniewicz’s erstwhile student-critic and most fervent defender in 1957, answers back with the most recent reaffirmation of this “small stabilization,” where national goals lie down with social ones and many basic questions go unasked:

Linking up with the loftiest traditions of the Polish Workers’ Party, accepting its whole creative achievement, the Polish United Workers’ Party makes its own creative contribution to the treasury of Marxism-Leninism, to the theory and practice of socialism in the questions of nation and state. Our party, correctly interpreting the ideas of V. I. Lenin, linked social-revolutionary and national goals, tying patriotism with internationalism. Like the PWP, the PUWP appreciates and strengthens the role of the independent people’s state, emphasizing its connection with the class constitutional dynamic and with national consciousness, which permitted the association of fatherland with socialism.⁵⁰

48. Kieniewicz, “Les récentes études,” p. 61.

49. Werfel, *Twórczość*, p. 108.

50. Marian Żychowski, “Uniwersalność treści a specyfika narodowa,” *Trybuna Ludu*, June 4, 1970, p. 3.

Galician peasants have a different tradition. Until this century the peasant's struggle on his own behalf went on without much reference to the national context which so absorbed his social betters. The alliance of peasant and Austrian official was natural (it was not the monster that Polish nobles and intellectuals thought it to be) and dissolved only slowly, in some cases late in this century. A wartime anecdote may serve to illustrate. It is drawn from the experience of the Górale, the highland peasants of the Tatras. Though the social structure and historical traditions of this group set them apart in many ways from the peasants of the Galician plains, they are typical in that for them, as for the "ordinary" inhabitants of the lowlands, the development of Polish national consciousness has been very much a function of perceived peasant interests.⁵¹ During the war the Germans attempted to organize them into a "mountain nation" (*Goralenvolk*) distinct from the Poles. Those who were willing to sign on were ruthlessly executed by the partisans and by post-war tribunals; they were in any case few, and ostracized by their neighbors, who by this time felt themselves to be Poles. But even at this late date, the story goes, the following dialogue could take place between a Góral and an official at the German district office:

"I come for one of them *kynkarte* [*Kennkarte*—ID cards]."

"You'll get one, and it'll be mountaineer, because you're a mountaineer and not a Pole."

"Well, you know, when it was Austria, I guess I was an Austrian; then came Poland and I turned Pole; now that it's the General Government I should be Governor General!"⁵²

This was a century after 1846. Galician peasants might conceivably have stayed Austrian. History has recorded stranger things. But how they happened to become Poles would be another history.

51. As I hope to show in another article, this was especially (rather than even) true in the case of the one peasant community in Galicia which supported the Polish national uprising in 1846, the highland village of Chochołów. The most recent works on this subject are Władysław Łyś, *Powstanie chochołowskie: W 110 rocznicę 1846–1956* (Warsaw, 1956) and especially Rafał Gerber, ed., *Powstanie chochołowskie 1846 roku: Dokumenty i materiały* (Wrocław, 1960). For a description of the development of national consciousness in a non-Górale village in Galicia, see Zbigniew Tadeusz Wierzbicki, *Żmiąca w pół wieku później* (Wrocław, Warsaw, and Cracow, 1963), pp. 185–210. Wierzbicki writes, "The years 1939–1945 definitively concluded . . . the process of coming to national consciousness [*proces uświadamiania narodowego*] of Żmiąca's population which had begun sometime at the beginning of the twentieth century" (p. 207).

52. Andrzej Błachowski, "Wątek jak rzeka," review of Stanisław Piotrowski, *Skalne Podhale w literaturze i kulturze polskiej* (Warsaw, 1970), *Walka Młodych*, June 14, 1970, p. 14; Wawrzyniec Busza, "Konfederacja tatrzańska," review of Sylwester Leczykiewicz, *Konfederacja tatrzańska* (Warsaw, 1969), *Dziennik Ludowy*, June 5, 1970, p. 4. Błachowski claims to print the anecdote for the first time. See also Włodzimierz Wnuk, *Walka podziemna na szczytach* (Warsaw, 1965).