

PHILOSOPHY AND  
ROMANTIC  
NATIONALISM:  
THE CASE OF POLAND

BY

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came to be associated not with brotherhood and freedom, as it had been before, but with discrimination against national minorities and with anti-semitism.

In view of such experiences—and, also, in view of the universal experience of our century—some of the old ideas of Polish Romanticism deserve, I think, to be treated as relevant to our contemporary problems. The idea of a nation as a spiritual community grounded in a common devotion to some higher, universal values should not be ignored by the world facing the processes of social atomization caused by a permanent crisis of values. The peculiar combination of ardent national feelings and a heroic defence of national identity with an equally ardent desire to submit nations to universally recognized ethical rules and to solve international conflicts peacefully, by means of supra-national institutions, is, obviously, not irrelevant to the world torn by dangerous, egoistic rivalries and, at the same time, having at its disposal most powerful means of destruction. The romantic idea that the national personality realized itself most fully in contributing to the universal regeneration of mankind was, perhaps, too idealistic as a political precept for a subjected and partitioned country but, perhaps, it also contained a great truth: after all, mere egoism leads only to a disintegration of personality, because true personality (both individual and collective) is impossible without a commitment to supra-individual, universal values. Even Polish romantic Messianism, seen from this perspective, represents above all a splendid example of the longing for a deeper meaning in history and of heroic 'hoping against hope'—qualities that seem to be much needed in the world suffering from 'de-utopianization', although by no means free from 'ideologies' (in Karl Mannheim's sense of these terms).

However, let us return to nineteenth-century viewpoints. It is evident, as I have tried to show throughout this book, that Polish romantic nationalism—its hopes and its disillusionments—was a function of the international status of the Polish question. One can say with a small degree of oversimplification, that the self-image of the Poles was dependent on the Western image of Poland, and that the latter was a more or less faithful reflection of the importance of the Polish question in European politics. Romantic nationalism flowered in Poland at the time

when European public opinion glorified the Poles as heroes of universal freedom. Its crisis began when events had shown that beautiful words were merely words, and that neither the governments nor the peoples of the West would organize a crusade for Poland's sake.

There are several reasons why I have decided to add to this book a separate study on Marx's and Engels's views on the Polish question. First, they are interesting in themselves, shedding much light on one of the least known aspects of Marx's and Engels's theories. Secondly, the works of Marx and Engels contain, I think, the best arguments defending the whole tradition of Polish 'political Romanticism' against its later critics. Finally, an analysis of their position on the Polish question and of their positive attitude towards Polish romantic nationalism is a good starting point for a short presentation of some Polish thinkers of the Left who were inspired by Marxism in their theorizing on the national question, and who came to conclusions completely different from the well-known standpoint of Rosa Luxemburg. It has a symbolic significance that one of them, Stanisław Brzozowski—a thinker undeservedly unknown in the West, but very widely read and influential in Poland—saw no contradiction in drawing inspiration at the same time from Marx and from the Polish romantic heritage.

## II. Marx, Engels, and the Polish Question

### 1. A Review of Some Essentials

'The working men have no country.' These famous words from the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* have often been quoted to support the view that the authors of the Manifesto, as ideologists of the 'country-less' proletariat, adopted a thoroughly cosmopolitan, supra-national standpoint—the standpoint of total indifference towards the national problem of having, allegedly, no relevance to the real situation and class interests of the industrial working class of Europe. In fact, however, this is a class misreading whose stubborn vitality and constant re-emergence in the vast literature on the subject are strange and regrettable indeed. It should not be so in light of S. F. Bloom's detailed study of the 'national implications in the work of Karl Marx' (B. 12).

According to Bloom, the *Manifesto* 'discussed the common taunt that the socialists proposed to abolish nationality as unworthy of serious consideration'. The usual misreading of the quoted statement from the *Manifesto* consists in taking it 'to affirm precisely what Marx and Engels were at pains to deny': that nationalities had no real existence, that they should not exist, that the emotion of patriotism was foreign to the proletariat. The point of the *Manifesto* was simply that the question of nationalism was bound up with the question of a stake in one's country (B. 12, pp. 22–4). The working class, according to Marx and Engels, was deprived of its fatherland but had to regain it by 'rising to be the national class', 'constituting itself the nation' (A. 58, VI, 501–3).<sup>7</sup>

Was it really so? It may seem doubtful to those students of Marxism who have become too much accustomed to thinking that historical materialism consists of reducing everything to class struggles and in seeing the class structure as the only true reality in social life. Such sceptics, however, should follow

Bloom's advice and carefully read Marx's letter to Engels of 20 June 1866—a letter in which French members of the First International, who considered all nations to be merely 'antiquated prejudices', were accused by Marx of 'Proudhonized Stirnerism; and of an unconscious French national egotism (see A. 25). The term 'Stirnerism', as applied to the national question, could refer only to Max Stirner's view that all allegedly supra-individual structures, like nation or class, humanity or state, are merely divinized 'phantoms'. Rejecting 'Stirnerism' amounted therefore to asserting that nations *did* have a real, tangible existence of their own. Moreover, if the negation of nations was no less than 'Stirnerism', this clearly implied that such a negation was bound up, logically at least, with a nihilist negation of social classes and generic humanity as well.

However, one can acknowledge the reality of nations while, at the same time, treating national patriotism as a rival and hostile ideology, and as an obstacle to raising one's class consciousness to the level of self-awareness. Indeed, this would be the most simple, but also the most simplistic, solution of the inevitable conflict between loyalty to the nation and loyalty to the class, or between any other forms of vertical and horizontal group consolidation. Such a simplicity, however, was alien to the authors of the *Manifesto*. Their own solution of this problem is to be found in their theory of 'national class'. The importance of this theory has recently been emphasized by George Lichtheim. According to him, the famous phrase: 'The working men have no country', was merely a splendid slogan, having 'absolutely no significance, save as a protest against the alienation of the industrial proletariat from society'. In contrast with this, he asserted, 'Marx's concept of the national class is altogether original and extremely relevant to the theory and practice of modern communism. Rather surprisingly, it has been ignored' (B. 100, p. 86).<sup>8</sup>

The theory of national class is a theory of a possible convergence between the interests of a class and the interests of a given nation as a whole. Britley defined the national class as that class in a nation whose interests at a given moment coincide with the interests of society as a whole and which, therefore, is best qualified to lead the nation along the line of progress, raising it to a higher economic and social level. It

follows therefrom that leadership by a national class is perfectly legitimate, and that patriotism—in so far as it expresses the standpoint of a truly national, i.e. truly progressive class—does not contradict the principle of the primacy of class interests over narrowly defined national loyalties. Moreover, it was envisaged that a situation might arise in which it would be necessary to subordinate narrowly conceived proletarian interests to broader national tasks. Such was in fact the case of Germany. As a backward country Germany was not yet ripe for a proletarian revolution; her proletariat, although more progressive than her bourgeoisie and becoming more and more independent of bourgeois ideological tutelage, was not yet strong and mature enough to become a 'national class'. It could and had to prepare itself to assume the role of national leader in the future, but for the time being it had to subordinate itself to the progressive bourgeoisie which was still Germany's 'national class'. This did not mean that the German proletarians should not have embarked on developing their own class-consciousness, awareness of the essential conflicts within bourgeois society, and ideas of a socialist future (in that case, it would have been an anachronism to write for them a *Communist Manifesto*). What it meant in practice was that the tasks needed for a bourgeois-democratic transformation of Germany had to be completed before the path of socialist transformations could be followed. One of the most important of these tasks was the unification of Germany—a task which was by definition patriotic *par excellence*. Without national unification—without 'one nation, with one government, one code of laws, one national class-interest, one frontier, and one customs-tariff' (A, 58, VI, 489)—the organizing of German workers on the national scale and their preparation for their future national leadership would have been impossible. Therefore there was no contradiction between the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, on the one hand, and editing a 'bourgeois-democratic' newspaper, *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, on the other. If, during the Springtime of Peoples, Marx and Engels were 'blowing the patriotic bugle as hard as possible' (B, 100, p. 74), it was by no means inconsistent, let alone a betrayal of the proletarian cause.

German workers were seen, thus, as vitally interested in the progressive solution of Germany's national problem. Hence

they had to have their own foreign policy. This policy was to be, of course, the policy of furthering Germany's alliance with the progressive, advanced European countries in order to oppose the Holy Alliance of the three absolute monarchs—the main bulwark of European reaction and the main obstacle to the progressive, democratic solution of the German national question.

It was quite natural that the Polish question, seen from this perspective, loomed large as a 'great European question', highly relevant to the cause of all-European progress and especially to the cause of democratic transformations in Germany. It would be no exaggeration to say that Marx and Engels saw it as the most important national question in Europe. It is really surprising that this important fact has been largely ignored or neglected in the vast literature on Marxism—even in publications specially focused on the national problem in Marxist thought.<sup>9</sup>

The reason behind the peculiar importance of the Polish question for the all-European, and particularly German, revolutionary strategy was seen by Marx and Engels in the obvious circumstance that Polish patriots had virtually no other choice than to struggle against the Holy Alliance, striving at the same time, in order to make this struggle successful, for a democratic transformation of their own country. They faced the alternative: 'Poland must either be revolutionary or perish' (A, 65, XVIII, 526), and proved able to make the right choice. Due to this Poland became a revolutionary nation, a counterpart of France in the East of Europe, 'a revolutionary part of Russia, Austria, and Prussia' (A, 58, VI, 373). In such a manner the Polish national-liberation movement became a natural ally of Western revolution, whether socialist (as in England or France) or bourgeois-democratic (as in Germany). Its peculiar significance for the German democrats stemmed from the fact that it was directed first of all against tsarist Russia—a state which actively supported feudal reaction in Germany and without which, it was believed, the absolute regimes in Austria and Prussia would not have been able to resist the pressure of democratic forces.

In 1848 Engels summed up this argument in the following words:

A French historian has said: *Il y a des peuples nécessaires*—there are necessary nations. The Polish nation is undoubtedly one of the necessary nations of the nineteenth century.

But for no one is Poland's national existence more necessary than for us, Germans . . .

From the moment the first robbery of Polish territory was committed Germany became dependent on Russia. Russia ordered Prussia and Austria to remain absolute monarchies, and Prussia and Austria had to obey. . . .

So long, therefore, as we help to subjugate Poland, so long as we keep part of Poland fettered to Germany, we shall remain fettered to Russia and to the Russian policy, and shall be unable to eradicate patriarchal feudal absolutism in Germany. The creation of a democratic Poland is a primary condition for the creation of a democratic Germany. (A. 58, VI, 350-1.)

## 2. Marx, Engels, and the Historical Evolution of the Polish Question

Let us turn now to a brief chronological presentation of Marx's and Engels's views on the Polish question.<sup>10</sup>

The first period of Marx's and Engels's interest in Polish affairs was the years 1846-9. Like the whole European Left, from democratic nationalists like Mazzini or Michelet to English Chartists, they were deeply stirred up by the Manifesto of the Polish Revolutionary Government of 22 February 1846. They saw in it a programme for a revolutionary transformation of the whole of Eastern Europe—a programme for an agrarian revolution which would give land to the peasants and abolish all remnants of feudalism in the political and juridical spheres. There is no evidence which would allow us to conclude that 'agrarian revolution' meant for them a total expropriation of the gentry; manorial farms, transformed into the modern, bourgeois-type land property, were to be allowed to coexist with peasant farms, although the latter, of course, would predominate. It is interesting to note that this programme, supported in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, was in fact in tune with the demands of the moderate wing of the Polish democratic movement. Marx and Engels apparently did not know that it was severely criticized by more radical groups in the Polish revolutionary movement, primarily by the revolutionary socialists who demanded the nationalization of all land and the replacement of bourgeois property with socialist property. As we know, Edward Dembowski, the virtual leader of the Cracow uprising, was also a revolutionary socialist. In later years the two friends became aware of this: in 1880, they

called the Cracow events of 1846 'the first political revolution which had set forth socialist demands'.<sup>11</sup>

At the end of 1847 Marx and Engels took part in the international meeting organized by Fraternal Democrats to mark the anniversary of the Polish uprising of 1830. The speeches which they delivered there contained the first public announcement of the need to create an international organization of the workers. At this time they already had a considerable knowledge of Polish history derived from Joachim Lelewel's *Histoire de Pologne* and Ludwik Mieroslawski's *Débat entre la révolution et la contre-révolution en Pologne*. Lelewel had become their personal friend. He spent New Year's Eve 1847-8 with them and drank to the success of a 'united, powerful, democratic, and indivisible Germany'.

Even more important were the speeches made by Marx and Engels in Brussels, in February 1848, on the occasion of the second anniversary of the Cracow uprising. Engels, contrasting the Cracow revolution to the 'conservative revolution' of 1830, spoke of the former in the following words:

At Cracow, it was clearly seen that there were no longer men who had much to lose; there were no aristocrats; every step that was taken bore the stamp of that democratic, I might almost say proletarian boldness which has only its misery to lose and a whole country, a whole world, to gain. (A. 58, VI, 551.)

The same ideas were formulated by Marx, for whom the restoration of Poland 'has become the point of honour for all the democrats of Europe' (*ibid.*, p. 549).

This polonophile standpoint found full expression in *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*. Its most important contribution to the Polish cause was a series of Engels's articles entitled 'The Frankfurt Assembly Debates the Polish Question'. It was, perhaps, the most important *polonism* in Marx's and Engels's early writings. We find in it so many significant passages that it is impossible to quote all of them. Instead, let us make a brief enumeration: the words about Poles being a 'necessary nation', quoted above; a severe condemnation of the anti-Polish attitudes of the Germans and Jews from Poznan and Pomerania; an equally severe condemnation of the Frankfurt Assembly for its betrayal of the Poles; the theory of agrarian revolution as the only way of overthrowing 'patriarchal feudal barbarism' in Eastern Europe, and the acknowledgement that it was the Poles who

had been the first to embrace this idea: an assertion that 'the Poles have every prospect of finding themselves very soon in the van of all Slav nationalities' (*ibid.*, VII, p. 373); the demand for the restoration of the Polish state with special emphasis on the claim that the restored Poland 'must have at least the dimensions of 1772', that 'she must comprise not only the territories but also the estuaries of her big rivers and at least a large seaboard on the Baltic' (*ibid.*, p. 352); and, finally, the call for a German-Polish revolutionary alliance and for a revolutionary war against tsarist Russia.

Along with Engels's articles, in August 1848 *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* published the text of the 'Protest of the German Democratic Society in Cologne Against the Incorporation of Poznań in the German Confederation'. This protest, submitted to the National Assembly in Frankfurt, was made at a general meeting of the Cologne Democratic Society presided over by Marx.

No wonder that Polish politicians, both democrats and liberals, even liberal-conservatives, were very fond of Marx's and Engels's newspaper. In September 1848 a wealthy Polish landowner, Władysław Kościelski (in later years an outspoken conservative), gave Marx 2,000 thalers, as a Polish subsidy for *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*.<sup>12</sup> Very probably Kościelski was only an intermediary between Marx and a group of Polish politicians in Berlin who wanted to support the most polonophile German newspaper. If this hypothesis is true, the decisive voice in this delicate question belonged, undoubtedly, to August Cieszkowski.

In 1849 Marx and Engels pinned their hopes on the Hungarian insurrection—an insurrection in which thousands of Poles took part and whose commanders-in-chief were Polish *émigrés* (Generals Józef Bem and Henryk Dembiński). Later in this year a revolutionary insurrection broke out in Baden and the Palatinate; this time Engels himself took part in it, serving under the Polish commander-in-chief, Ludwik Mierosławski (Engels's direct superior was another Polish officer—F. Sznajde). Since there was at that time no revolutionary movement in Poland, all these events, naturally enough, overshadowed Polish affairs for a while. Nevertheless, Marx and Engels always remembered the services rendered to European revolutions by Polish patriots and often returned in their

articles to the Polish question. Engels often contrasted the Poles to the other Slavonic nations, claiming that the former, together with the Hungarians, Italians, and Germans, belonged to the great revolutionary nations of Europe, while the latter—the smaller Slavonic nations, infected by Russian Pan Slavism—were merely ethnic nationalities, 'relics' of history, having neither a historical past nor a future and doomed to be instruments of reaction. He included in the same category the Ruthenians of Galicia, accusing them of an 'obdurate narrow-mindedness' (A. 65, VI, 507–8). Poland will be restored because 'the words *Pole* and *revolutionary* have become identical' (A. 64, p. 81): Czechs, Croats, and other 'reactionary nations' will 'disappear from the earth' in the great revolutionary war of the future, so 'that nothing is left of them but their names' (*ibid.*, p. 67).

Everybody will agree today that this was a rather extreme position, and that Engels was simply wrong in his prophetic capacity. It is difficult also to deny that there were in his articles some overtones of a genuine and uninhibited German nationalism, bordering on apologia for force and 'iron ruthlessness' in history. We must remember, however, that Engels's lack of scruples in condemning whole nations for inevitable destruction was rooted not so much in his German patriotism but, rather, in his revolutionary zeal, ruthlessly subordinating everything to the cause of overwhelming the reactionary Holy Alliance, and, no less, in his Hegelian belief in historical necessity which had never had any scruples in paving the way of universal progress.

After the defeat of the Springtime of the Peoples, Engels cooled his zeal and started to make a critical reappraisal of past events. His attitude to the Poles underwent a sharp, although brief, volte-face. In his letter to Marx of 23 May 1851, the Poles were described as a 'nation foutue', brave but lazy, and unable to be a real civilizing force. The evidence of this was seen in the inability of the ancient Polish Commonwealth to polonize its national minorities, and the conclusion was that the Russians, who had shown an excellent russifying capacity, were more likely to spread civilization in the East. The Poles could be used as tools by the Western revolutionaries but only until Russia herself embarked on the path of agrarian revolution. Another conclusion was that the Germans should never abandon their



territories east of Memel (Klaipeda) and Gracow (including Poznamia)—surrendering even an inch of these territories to the Poles would amount to the betrayal of civilization.

It should also be added that similar thoughts were expressed by Engels in print, in a series of articles. 'Revolution and Counter-revolution in Germany'.<sup>13</sup> It is worth while also to note that in the first half of 1853 Engels became aware of the fact that the eastern lands of the former Polish state were inhabited predominantly by Ukrainian and White Russian peasants for whom the restoration of Poland would mean the restoration of the political power of the Polish gentry.<sup>14</sup> This newly acquired knowledge made him even more sceptical about the real effectiveness of Polish revolutionary activities.

Most likely Engels's scepticism as to the Poles was shared at that time, partially at least, by Marx. Nevertheless, when the Crimean War turned their attention once more to the Russian menace to Europe, both friends quickly recovered their faith in Poland. Marx resumed his studies of Polish history and, as a result, became convinced that Poland had always been an 'outside thermometer' of Western revolutionary movements in the sense that every movement in the West had its counterpart in Poland and that the inner dynamism of Western revolutionary movements since 1789 could be measured quite correctly by their attitude to the Polish question.<sup>15</sup> In 1858 Marx and Engels published in the *American Encyclopaedia* an article on General Bem, stressing that he was unsurpassed in guerrilla warfare and deserved credit for his policy of reconciling the Magyars with the non-Magyar nations of Hungary. In a word, they became pro-Polish once again, ready to welcome a new revolutionary or insurgent movement among Poles.

They did not have to wait long. In January 1863 a new Polish uprising broke out. It was preceded by an agreement with the Russian revolutionaries; its outbreak was synchronized with the proclamation of a Manifesto in which the revolutionary Polish government declared that the peasants' land was their own property and that all feudal duties of peasants were abolished.

Was it not the expected agrarian revolution in the East—the revolution which Marx and Engels had predicted would come, seeing it as a prerequisite of a proletarian revolution in the

West? Apparently it was! No wonder that after a few weeks of hesitation they began to believe that an 'era of revolution' was again 'fairly opened' in Europe.<sup>16</sup>

Contemporary Polish historians are right in indicating that the radicalism of the Polish insurgents was restrained in practice by their desire not to alienate the patriotic gentry. In spite of this, however, there is no doubt that the January insurrection, although defeated, gained a victory as regards the agrarian question: tsarist government could not afford to alienate the Polish peasants by depriving them of the land they had been given, and, therefore, it had to enfranchise them on better terms than in Russia. There is no doubt also that the insurrection was permeated and accompanied by a truly internationalist spirit. Every nation in Europe gave it a smaller or greater number of volunteers, the greatest number being provided by the Russians. Francesco Nullo, the adjutant officer and closest friend of Garibaldi, and Andrej Poetbna, an eminent Russian revolutionary, friend of Alexander Herzen, suffered heroic deaths in it. Marx in his talk with Colonel Łapiński wholeheartedly approved the idea of organizing a German legion which would fight under its own flag on the Polish side (B. 14, pp. 371–88).<sup>17</sup> Despite Proudhon, who did everything to present the Polish insurrection as a reactionary, Catholic, and aristocratic movement, the working class and the socialists of Europe spontaneously supported the heroic Poles and energetically defended the Polish cause against the bourgeois press (which, incidentally, repeated the arguments of Proudhon and of the chauvinistic Russian press). English and French workers wanted their governments to declare war on Russia; a petition to Napoleon III, demanding of him an effective military succour for the Poles, was signed by 6,467 workers (see B. 75, p. 73). The German *Arbeiterbildungsverein* in London published a proclamation (written by Marx) which announced that the 'restoration of Poland'—an honourable slogan betrayed by bourgeois liberals—had become a blazing watchword of the German working class.<sup>18</sup> A meeting of French and English workers, organized in London in July 1863 to support the Polish struggle, was the place where the idea of organizing an international association of workers—the future International—was born. Marx and Engels remembered this fact and gave it symbolic significance.<sup>19</sup>

A touching testimony of Marx's emotional attitude to the Polish uprising is a photograph which shows him with his daughter Jenny who is wearing on her neck the Catholic cross of a Polish insurgent of 1863.<sup>20</sup> Documentation of his intellectual reactions to this event can be found in five manuscripts on Poland, Prussia, and Russia, written by him in the early spring of 1863, in connection with the anti-Polish Prussian-Russian convention of 8 February 1863. They were destined for a pamphlet entitled 'Germany and Poland—Military and Political Considerations', which Marx and Engels wanted to write together. The fate of Engels's part of his pamphlet (on military considerations) is unknown; Marx's manuscripts, curiously enough, remained unpublished for a hundred years. They were published only quite recently in Holland (by the Amsterdam Institute of Social History) and, later (in German and in Polish), in Poland (see A. 61 and A. 63).<sup>21</sup>

The main argument of the manuscript runs as follows: the restoration of Poland is the only way of annihilating Russia's domination over Eastern and Central Europe, and, by the same token, of destroying her ambitious plans to rule over the world. Therefore a restored Polish state is necessary for the Germans. On the other hand, the restoration of Poland would mean inevitable downfall for Prussia. Without Polish lands Prussia, a former lackey of Poland, would never have been able to achieve her present status in Europe and Germany. She had robbed Polish lands and established her position in Germany with the help of Russia, at the cost of permitting Russia to play a decisive role in German politics. 'The decline of Poland was the cradle of Prussia: the rise of Russia was the law of development of Prussian power. That is why Prussia was always a "jackal of Russia"'. At present the relationship between Russia and Prussia is a dialectical one: Russian support is necessary for upholding Prussian domination in Germany; Prussia, in her turn, is necessary for Russia as the only safeguard of Russian rule in Poland, and as the strongest outpost of Russian influence in Germany and in Europe. Prussian interests therefore are directly opposed to the interests of German democrats, representing the legitimate general interests of Germany. The restoration of Poland is an absolute necessity for Germany because there is no other way of liberating her from the reactionary tutelage of Russia. If the restoration of Poland is

incompatible with Prussian *raison d'état*, all the worse for Prussia: it means that Prussian interests are incompatible with the well-understood general interests of Germany, and, consequently, that the Prussian state should be destroyed.<sup>22</sup>

The general conclusion was simple and lucid: 'For Germany all questions of foreign policy can be reduced to one task: the restoration of Poland' (A. 63, p. 77).

In his presentation of Polish history Marx was guided by Polish authors—Lelewel, Mierostawski, Sawaszkiewicz, and others. He fully shared Lelewel's view that the decline and fall of the Polish state was preceded and accompanied by an inner process of national regeneration. Very often he literally repeated the opinions of Polish historians; he apparently felt that Polish views on Polish history were more reliable than Russian and Prussian ones. In his exposition of the making, defending, and overthrowing of the Constitution of 3 May 1791 he closely followed the historical account of the main architects of this Constitution (Hugo Koftaj and others), published in German under the title *Vom Entstehung und Untergang der polnischen Konstitution von 1791*. Unlike his practice in his other historical writings, he did not try to avoid moral judgements, sometimes very strong and emotional. Thus, for instance, the so-called 'guaranty' of the Polish political system, imposed upon Poland by her absolutist neighbours in order to prevent any attempts at modernizing and strengthening the Polish state, was in his eyes the most wicked treaty in the history of international relations.

Among the newly published manuscripts of Marx there is also a manuscript in English—first drafts of the polemic with Peter Fox, a member of the General Council of the International who had proposed a resolution concerning Poland. Marx could not agree with Fox's reasonings about the allegedly pro-Polish policy of France. French workers, he argued, are indeed pro-Polish, but none of the different French governments did anything for Poland. In fact, the recent history of France and Poland is a history of the Poles saving France many times and of France betraying them each time.

The defeat of the Polish uprising was, in Marx's estimation, one of the two most important events in European history since 1815.<sup>23</sup> The other was the Russian conquest of the Caucasus. Thus, the most important political process after the Napoleonic

wars and the Congress of Vienna was for Marx the growing strength of tsarist Russia. Such a diagnosis could only strengthen his commitment to the Polish cause, his desire to make it the most important point of the foreign policy of the international proletariat. Consistently, he drafted a resolution concerning Poland and submitted it to the General Council of the newly created International. The proposal consisted of two points: (1) a statement that the defeat of the Polish uprising was a serious blow to the cause of progress and civilization, (2) a declaration that Poland has an absolute right to fight for her independence and to demand from the advanced nations of Europe help in this fight (see A. 83, p. 286). On 25 November 1864, the resolution was passed.

In the next year the General Council started to prepare for the first Congress of the International. Marx and Engels were fully aware that the Polish cause would have many opponents: many proletarian organizations, especially in France, were deeply impressed by Proudhon, who, as we know, presented the Polish national-liberation movement as a reactionary movement of the nobility, completely alien to the Polish workers. The Polish question was to be the ninth point on the agenda of the Congress. Marx, who was not able to participate in the Congress, wrote special instructions for the delegates of the temporary General Council (see A. 25, pp. 93-4), explaining to them the importance of Poland for the all-European revolutionary strategy. Engels, for his part, engaged in polemics with the Proudhonists in an important theoretical article entitled, 'What Have the Working Classes to do with Poland?', published a few months before the convention of the Congress. In the opening phrases he reminded his readers that the restoration of Poland had always been the main aim of proletarian foreign policy:

Wherever the working classes have taken part of their own political movements, there, for the very beginning, their foreign policy was expressed in the few words—Restoration of Poland. This was the case with the Chartist movement so long as it existed; this was the case with the French working men long before 1848, as well as during this memorable year, when on the 15th of May, they marched on to the National Assembly to the cry of 'Vive la Pologne!—Poland forever!' This was the case of Germany, when, in 1848 and 1849, the organs of the working class demanded war with Russia for the restoration of Poland. It is the case even now; with one exception [Proudhon]—of which more anon—the working men of Europe unanimously

proclaim the restoration of Poland as a part and parcel of their political programme, as the most comprehensive expression of their foreign policy. (A. 64, p. 95.)

In spite of Marx's and Engels's efforts, the ninth point of the proposed resolution was rejected by the Congress. It should be added, however, that it was strongly supported by a considerable minority, especially by English and German workers, and that the Congress was nearly dissolved because of disagreements about the Polish question.

Soon afterwards, in January 1867, a great international meeting was held in the Cambridge Hall in London to celebrate the fourth anniversary of the last Polish uprising. It was organized by the International, with Marx delivering the key address. He called Poland 'the immortal knight of Europe', warning at the same time that, worn out by the accumulated betrayals of Europe, she might become 'a whip in the hand of the Muscovite' (A. 64, pp. 105-6). It is very naïve to believe, he claimed, that times have changed and 'Poland has ceased to be a necessary nation'. In fact, 'there is but one alternative for Europe. Either Asiatic despotism under Muscovite direction, will burst around its head like an avalanche, or else it must re-establish Poland, thus putting twenty million heroes between itself and Asia and gaining a breathing spell for the accomplishment of its social regeneration' (*ibid.*, p. 108).

The impression made by this speech was immense. The meeting passed four resolutions in favour of Poland, one of them making it clear that Poland should be restored within the boundaries of 1772. It seemed that Proudhonism had been finally defeated.

After 1864, proletarian meetings organized by the International were almost the only place where words such as those quoted above could be heard. This explains the curious fact that the International had its sympathizers not only among the Polish radical Left but also among the Polish liberals, many of them being quite conservative otherwise (see B. 13, p. 73). To the latter group belonged, among others, the historian F. Duchński who, in contrast to Lelewel, flatly denied that the Russians had any right to the common Slavonic heritage: in fact, he maintained, they were the descendants of an Asiatic race of Turanians, having nothing in common with the Slavs.

On the other hand it should be stressed that some of the

leaders of the Polish insurrectionary. Left began to pin their hopes on the European proletariat quite independently from Marx's and Engels's pro-Polish stand. One of them, General Józef Hauke-Bosak, the commander of the insurrectionary forces in the Sandomierz and Cracow voivodships, became active on the left wing of the international League of Peace and Freedom. He demanded the socialization of land and of the means of production (by giving the latter to workers' associations); in his brochure *La Grève* (1869) he set forth the idea of a general strike for the introduction of an eight hours' working day. In the Franco-Prussian War he fought under Garibaldi and gave his life in defence of the French Republic.

Another figure of importance, General Jarosław Dąbrowski, a member of a revolutionary circle of Polish officers in St. Petersburg, was the initiator and co-organizer of the revolutionary movement within the Russian army in the Congress Kingdom. Arrested before the insurrection, he succeeded, nevertheless, in steering the movement from prison. He has the credit of being one of the first Polish politicians to recognize the Ukrainians as a separate nation and acknowledge their right to self-determination. In 1871, like hundreds of his compatriots, he decided to fight as a simple soldier of the Paris Commune; soon he was made commander-in-chief of one of three armies of the Commune and, later, the commander-in-chief of all the military forces of the revolutionary city. He was killed on a barricade. The motives of his actions were explained later by his brother Teofil in the following words: 'We joined the Paris revolution because we saw in it a social revolution which, if successful, could overthrow the existing order in Europe. Could Poland lose anything in it? Nothing. Could she win something? Yes, everything' (A. 12, p. 163).

The third important representative of the 1863 generation was General Walerj Wróblewski, one of the leaders of the Polish insurrectionary forces in Belorussia. He fought in the Paris commune as the commander-in-chief of the army defending the whole left bank of the Seine. He organized the last point of resistance against the troops of Versailles and defended it to the end. After the defeat he became a member of the General Council of the International and a close friend of Marx and Engels whose houses were for him (in his own words) 'les seules et véritables maisons fraternelles' (B. 14, p. 47). He never

became a Marxist, but was sometimes very useful for Marx and Engels in their fight against Bakuninists and Proudhonists. The two founders of 'scientific communism' did everything they could to help him in poverty and illness; they seemed to like his cavalier spirit, his constant readiness 'to mount on a horse', and his jovial sense of humour. His presence in the General Council supported the pro-Polish tendencies within the International. He was active also among the Polish socialists in exile, siding with Bolesław Limanowski who strove for a synthesis of socialism with democratic, humanitarian nationalism.

The prominent part played by the Poles in the Paris Commune brought discredit to their cause in bourgeois public opinion. We can clearly see in retrospect that the Franco-Prussian War, the Paris Commune, and the unification of Germany which followed, were a real turning point after which, from the point of view of European governments, the Polish question ceased to be an international question.

It was not so, however, in the International. Marx and Engels never forgot that, as they put it, the Polish exiles gave the commune her 'best generals and most heroic soldiers',<sup>24</sup> that for the Courts-Martial in Versailles 'it was sufficient to be a Pole in order to be shot'.<sup>25</sup> At the same time Engels repeated once more his classical diagnosis of 1848, and went even further, saying: 'Even more than France, Poland, due to its historical development, is faced with the choice either of becoming revolutionary or of perishing.' This point, he added, with French Proudhonists in mind, 'invalidates all the silly talk of the essentially aristocratic character of the Polish movement' (A. 64, p. 114). Supporting his view with a list of historical examples of the Polish irrevocable commitment to democracy he concluded: 'In 1870 the great mass of the Polish émigrés in France enlisted in the service of the Commune. Was that a deed of aristocrats? Does that not prove that these Poles stand fully in the forefront of the modern movement?' (*ibid.*)

Very significantly, the question of Polish national independence became the platform on which Marx's and Engels's views sharply clashed with the views of the first Polish Marxists who at the end of the 1870s started to publish in Geneva their own journal named *Równość* (*Equality*). The editors of *Equality* understood proletarian internationalism as the opposite of patriotism. Moreover: they were convinced that

Polish patriotism had become the instrument of reactionaries trying to prevent the emergence of class-consciousness among the Polish workers. In 1880 they organized an international meeting in Geneva, to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Polish uprising of 1830, and proclaimed on this occasion that the old slogan 'Long live Poland!' had lost its revolutionary content. The new slogans for Polish revolutionaries were to be: 'Away with patriotism and reaction! Long live the International and Social Revolution!' In contrast to this, Marx and Engels greeted the meeting with a long letter attesting the revolutionary content of the cry 'Long live Poland!' and proclaiming the Polish cause to be still worthy of wholehearted support by European revolutionaries, including the Russians.<sup>26</sup>

In his letter to Kautsky of 7 February 1882, Engels made the following comment on the Geneva meeting: 'It appears that the *Różniak* has been impressed by the radically sounding phrases of the Geneva Russians' (i.e. by the Russian anarchists and populists, dismissing *political* questions as allegedly irrelevant to social revolution (cf. B. 176, pp. 80–106). In the same letter he presented a deep theoretical explanation of his and Marx's position. It runs as follows:

Every Polish peasant or worker who wakes up from the general gloom and participates in the common interest, encounters first the fact of national subjugation. This fact is in his way everywhere as the first barrier. To remove it is the basic condition of every healthy and free development. Polish socialists who do not place the liberation of their country at the head of their programme, appear to me as would German socialists who do not demand first and foremost repeal of the anti-socialist law; freedom of the press, association, and assembly. In order to be able to fight one needs first a soil to stand on, air, light and space. Otherwise all is idle chatter. (A. 64, p. 117.)<sup>27</sup>

The same line on the Polish question was pursued by Engels after Marx's death. In 1890, in a long article entitled the 'Foreign Policy of Russian Tsarism', he repeated all the arguments for his and Marx's conception of the peculiar importance of Poland for the revolutionary transformation of Russia, adding to it an interesting parallel between Russian policy in eighteenth-century Germany and Russian policy in eighteenth-century Poland.<sup>28</sup> In 1882, in the preface to the Polish edition of the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, he pointed out that in Germany, Italy, and Hungary the national problem had

already been solved while the Polish question remained unsolved—despite the fact that the Poles had contributed more to the cause of revolution than Germany, Italy, and Hungary together. The rapid development of Polish industry, much quicker than in Russia, was in his view a new proof of the vitality of the Polish nation and a new guarantee of the imminent restoration of the Polish state. From the point of view of the International the restoration of Poland was desirable and necessary, because without the national independence of each country an honest, sincere collaboration between the nations of Europe was simply inconceivable.

Thus, it was quite natural that the old Engels had friendly relations with the leaders of the Polish Socialist Party (PPS), although the latter were accused of nationalism. Not only Plekhanov but he too could not agree with 'la belle m-elle Luxemburg' who defended the view that at the international congress in Zurich the Poles should be represented according to their formal citizenship, i.e. as parts of the Russian, Prussian, and Austrian delegations. Engels must have shared Plekhanov's opinion that the adoption of such a principle would amount to a new partition of Poland. If there are any doubts about it, let us recall his view on the relations between the Irish sections and the British Federal Council:

What would be said if this Council called upon Polish sections to acknowledge the supremacy of a Russian Federal Council in Petersburg, or upon Prussian, Polish, North Schleswig, and Alsatian sections to submit to a Federal Council in Berlin? Yet what was asked to do with regard to Irish sections was substantially the same thing. If members of a conquering nation called upon the nation they had conquered and continued to hold down to forget their specific nationality and position, to 'sink national differences' and so forth, that was not Internationalism, it was nothing else but preaching to them submission to the yoke, and attempting to justify and to perpetuate the domination of the conqueror under the cloak of Internationalism. (A. 60, p. 303.)

### 3. Peculiar Features of Marx's and Engels's Theory of the Nation

Let us now turn to theoretical problems. Is it justified to say that Marx and Engels created a theory of the nation and of national independence, a theory of their own, stemming from, or at least meaningfully related to, their historical materialism?

I think that we can give a positive answer to this question. If

Marx and Engels supported the Polish struggle for independence, but, at the same time, refused to acknowledge the right to self-determination of the Habsburg Slavs, it was *not only* because of their understanding of the practical interests of the German workers, or Germany as a whole, but *also* as a logical consequence of their theoretical understanding of some general laws governing the historical process.

One of the basic premises of Marx's and Engels's view of the nation is the theory of 'national class' to which I have referred at the beginning of this chapter. This premiss, however, does not explain why the two authors of the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* divided nations into two groups, the 'historical nations', having the right to self-determination, and the 'history-less peoples', devoid of this right (cf. B. 49, p. 22). Nevertheless this very fact, curious as it may seem today, is of crucial significance for the proper understanding of Marx's and Engels's theory of nations.

Let us begin with a few quotations, shedding light on some other premises of this theory. All of them are from Engels's article 'Democratic Pan-Slavism' (1849). The first of them deals with the growth of civilizations:

... will Bakunin reproach the American people for waging a war, which to be sure deals a severe blow to his theories based on 'Justice and Humanity', but which none the less was waged solely in the interests of civilization? Or is it perhaps a misfortune that the splendid land of California has been wrested from the lazy Mexicans who did not know what to do with it?

Is it a misfortune that through rapid exploitation of the gold mines there the energetic Yankees have increased the medium of circulation, have concentrated in a few years a heavy population and an extensive trade on the most suitable part of the Pacific coast, have built great cities, have opened up steamship lines, are laying railroads from New York to San Francisco, which will actually open the Pacific Ocean to civilization for the first time, and for the third time in history will give a new orientation to world trade? Because of this the 'independence' of a few Spanish Californians and Texans may be injured, but what do they count compared to such world historical events?

Now on the issue of 'history-less' peoples:

Peoples which have never had a history of their own, which from the moment they reached the first, crudest stages of civilization already came under foreign domination or which were only forced into the first stages of civilization through a foreign yoke, have no vitality, they will never be able to attain any sort of independence.

On historical necessity:

... at a time when everywhere in Europe great monarchies were an 'historical necessity', what a 'crime', what an 'accursed policy', that the Germans and Magyars bound these tiny, crippled, powerless little nations together in a great Empire, and thereby enabled them to take part in an historical development which, if left to themselves, would have remained entirely foreign to them! To be sure such a thing is not carried through without forcibly crushing many a delicate little national flower. But without force and without an iron ruthlessness nothing is accomplished in history.

Finally, on centralization:

Now, however, as a result of the formidable advances in industry, trade and communications, political centralization has become an even greater need than it was then in the 15th and 16th centuries. What still has to be centralized is becoming centralized. (A. 64, pp. 71-2, 76.)

What is implicit—or even explicit—in the above quotations can be called, I think 'the historic right of superior civilization'. In a conflict between superior and inferior civilization, superior and inferior culture, the superior one is bound to win and rule, and nobody should have any moral scruples about it; it must win at all costs because its victory is in the interest of historical progress, in the interest of universal human Civilization. In history, being 'right' means only 'being on the side of progress', 'being a vehicle of civilization'. Referring to allegedly 'absolute' moral standards is nothing more than sheer sentimentalism and unhistoricism.

Was it historical materialism and not yet another variant of vulgar Hegelianism? Certainly: the terminology had sometimes a Hegelian tinge ('historical necessity', 'historical nations', and so forth), yet it was Hegelianism thoroughly reinterpreted in accordance with the distinctively Marxist view of history. It was distinctively Marxist to claim that the main criterion of progress is the development of productive forces and that everything else should be subordinated to it. Seeing historical progress, including the future transition from capitalism to socialism, as an objective process, not to be measured by abstract, moral criteria, was a distinctive feature of Marxist 'scientific' socialism, as opposed to 'Utopian' socialism. Finally, it was very Marxist to conceive of progress as an incessant increase of centralization; it was not *distinctively* Marxist,

because there were many other thinkers (to mention only Saint-Simon) who fully shared this view but, nevertheless, it was a characteristic feature of Marxism.

All of these ideas were very relevant to the national problem. It followed therefrom that in order to make a sound judgement concerning national conflicts one must refer not to moral absolutes but to historical laws and, first of all, must answer the question: whose victory is in the interest of general human progress? The same question should be asked in a case of direct conquest, because an absolute moral condemnation of any conquest is a sentimental stupidity (see B. 12, p. 49). Pre-socialist progress has always been cruel, it has always been achieved at somebody's cost. 'History', wrote Engels in a letter to a Russian populist, 'is about the most cruel of all goddesses, and she leads her triumphal car over heaps of corpses not only in war, but also in "peaceful" economic development' (A. 59, p. 510). The same view was developed by Marx in his famous article on English rule in India. Progress, he wrote, would 'cease to resemble that hideous pagan idol, who would not drink the nectar but from the skulls of the slain', only 'when a great social revolution shall have mastered the results of the bourgeois epoch, the market of the world, and the modern powers of production, and subjected them to the common control of the most advanced peoples' (quoted from B. 12, p. 54).

How can those nations which are advanced, 'progressive', representing the interests of Civilization, be distinguished from the others? The simplest answer to this question is purely economic: an advanced nation represents a higher stage or, at least, a higher level of economic development; in any conflict between an advanced and a backward nation, historical right—the 'right of a superior civilization'—is as a rule (i.e. when no additional circumstances are involved) on the side of the former.

For Marx and Engels this was true, but not enough to make a final judgement. They knew that Czech lands were economically quite well developed, and yet they were strongly opposed to the national aspirations of the Czechs. They supported the Polish national movement, although they were aware of the economic backwardness of Poland. They sympathized with the Irish struggle against English rule in

spite of the obvious fact that Ireland was economically much less developed than England. It was so, because they were thinking not only in purely economic terms, but in politico-economic, political and cultural terms as well. The mechanistic 'economic determinism', represented by some of their disciples, was deeply alien to their thought.

In politico-economic terms the chief tendency of progressive capitalist development was conceived of by Marx and Engels as the abolition of 'independent, or but loosely connected provinces' and the establishment of large, highly centralized nation-states (see A. 58, VI, 489). It was consistent with their view of the increasing importance of centralization in economic life: large-scale politics create better conditions for large-scale economies and, therefore, the assimilation of smaller nationalities is a progressive process (see B. 12, p. 36). It was never assumed, of course, that a forcible assimilation was desirable, but it was assumed that sometimes it could be necessary. A gradual process of assimilation to a superior civilization as was the case with the polonization of the Ruthenian and Lithuanian nobility,<sup>29</sup> or with the germanization of the upper layers of the Czechs, was considered to be quite natural and progressive. Moreover: it was strongly emphasized that such an assimilation was irreversible, because the results of the historical civilizing process could not and should not be reversed. From this point of view the Pan Slavism of the Habsburg Slavs, i.e. the movement for the national 'awakening' of the small Slavonic nations, was considered to be 'reactionary', running foul of the chief tendency of progress. Another obvious consequence was the support of the idea for the restoration of Poland within the historical boundaries of 1772, in spite of the fact that the eastern territories of ancient Poland were not ethnically Polish—if Poland was to be restored, it had to be restored as a big state, because only big states are in accordance with the progressive development of history.

An extremely interesting comment to those views is Engels's article 'What have the working classes to do with Poland?' It was written after the Polish uprising of 1863-4, in order to refute the standard argument of the Proudhonists who argued that the 'principle of nationalities' is a 'Bonapartist invention', used and abused for reactionary aims and having nothing in common

with the class interests of the workers. In answering this argument Engels made an important distinction between 'nationality' and 'nation'. A 'nationality' is an ethnic group whose natural boundaries are those of language; a 'nation' is a product of history, a politically organized territorial subdivision of mankind;<sup>30</sup> its boundaries depend on its inner vitality and its ability to be a vehicle of civilization. Every European nation has been composed of many ethnic nationalities, and a great majority of nations are still inhabited by people of different nationalities. To support separatist movements of the ethnic nationalities means to contribute to the disintegration of the multiethnic political nations; hence, the 'principle of nationalities' has nothing in common with 'the old democratic and working-class tenet as to the right of the great European nations to separate and independent existence'. 'The "principle of nationalities"', wrote Engels,

... raises two sorts of questions; first of all, questions of boundary between great historic peoples; and secondly, questions as to the right to independent national existence of those numerous small relics of peoples which, after having figured for a longer or shorter period on the stage of history, were finally absorbed as integral portions into one or the other of those more powerful nations whose greater vitality enabled them to overcome greater obstacles. The European importance, the vitality of people is as nothing in the eyes of the principle of nationalities, before it, the Roumans of Wallachia, who never had a history, nor the energy required to have one, are of equal importance to the Italians who have a history of 2000 years, and an unimpaired national vitality; the Welsh and Manxmen, if they desired it, would have an equal right to independent political existence, absurd though it would be, with the English. The whole thing is an absurdity, got up in a popular dress in order to be used as a convenient phrase, or to be laid aside if the occasion requires it (A. 64, pp. 99-100).

As we can see from this quotation, Marx's and Engels's approach to national conflicts could not be reduced to the simple question of 'levels of economic development'. It involved also other criteria, such as political and cultural development, 'the European importance', or, even, a somewhat vague notion of the 'vitality of people'. The emphasis on 'having a history' may seem surprising, since we are inclined to think of every ethnic group as having a history of its own. And we are right, of course, especially from the point of view of economic and social history. Nevertheless, Engels's intention is quite clear. He wanted to stress that a nation should have a *political* history,

showing proofs of its capacity to shape its own historical fate. We may conclude, therefore, that a nation (in contrast to a mere 'nationality') should be an active agent of historical development, a conscious 'subject' (in the philosophical sense), and not merely a 'raw material' of history. It is understandable that a nation conceived in such a manner should display 'vitality' and 'energy', an acute feeling of dignity, a capacity for civilizational and cultural expansion, and even warlike qualities (cf. B. 120, p. 254).

The application of this argument to the Polish question was rather obvious. Poland was not a 'nationality' but one of the *political* nations of Europe. Like many other nations in the present and the past she was a multiethnic nation; the 'principle of nationalities', supporting the claims of non-historic, ethnic nationalities, was very dangerous from the point of view of Polish interests. Engels did not hesitate to assert that this principle was in fact 'a Russian invention concocted to destroy Poland': it was more than one hundred years old, because the Russians had used it as a pretext for the partitions of Poland.<sup>31</sup> 'Therefore, if people say that to demand the restoration of Poland is to appeal to the principle of nationalities, they merely prove that they do not know what they are talking about, for the restoration of Poland means the re-establishment of a state composed of at least four different nationalities' (A. 64, pp. 100-1).

The theoretical source of this view was an absolutization of the 'French model' of nation-forming processes: Engels thought that in the restored Polish state the Ukrainians, Belorussians and Lithuanians would become parts of the Polish nation in the same way as the Alsatians, Bretons, Basques and Provençals had become parts of the one and indivisible nation of France. History has shown, however, that the 'French model' could not be successfully followed in East-Central Europe: neither in the case of the former Polish Commonwealth, nor in the case of the lands of St. Stephen's Crown (cf. B. 24).

#### 4. Marx, Engels, and Romantic Polish Nationalism

It is evident that Marx's and Engels's theory of the nation, presented above, was incompatible with modern nationalism, defining nations by linguistic and ethnic criteria. It was no less incompatible with the democratic viewpoint that the right of



self-determination should be extended to every nation. On the other hand, interestingly enough, it was in harmony with some characteristic tendencies of the romantic Polish nationalism of the time of the great national uprisings. It was not accidental that Joachim Lelewel, the first Polish friend of Marx, was a typical romantic nationalist and a democratic internationalist at the same time. The same is true about Wróblewski, the best Polish friend of Marx and Engels and, perhaps, the greatest epigone of romantic nationalism, wholeheartedly believing in the brotherhood of nations and in the natural alliance between Polish patriotism and European revolutionism.

True, there were many differences, very often, from a theoretical point of view, most important ones. Polish romantic thinkers were as a rule, as far as possible from programmatic scientism and economic determinism; Marx and Engels, in their turn, were as far as possible from the ethicism (sometimes religiously tinged) of Polish romantic thought. Yet, in spite of this, let us try to point out some points of convergence between Marx's and Engels's approach to national problems and the views of their Polish contemporaries.

First, the historical, political, and territorial concept of the nation, as opposed to the ethnic, linguistic concept. For Lelewel the Polish nation consisted of the Poles of Great Poland, the Poles of Little Poland, Mazovians, Lithuanians, Ruthenians, and so forth (cf. B. 17, p. 13). Himself of Polish-German background, he considered even Polish Germans to be simply German-speaking Poles. This view was fully shared by Engels, in whose eyes the German Burghers living for centuries in Poland 'became Poles, German-speaking Poles' and 'never regarded themselves as politically belonging to Germany any more than did the Germans in North America' (A 58, VI, 339). For Lelewel the ancient Polish Commonwealth was one great multiethnic nation. He wanted to preserve the ancient Polish notion of being 'gente Ruthenus (vel Lithuanus), natione Polonus'. It is easy to notice that what he meant by 'gens' corresponded to Engels's 'nationality', and what he meant by 'natio' was equivalent to Engels's 'nation'.

The ideologists of the Polish Democratic Society, following the example of the French Jacobin nationalists, emphasized that the restored Poland should be a centralized state, with no room for regional autonomy. In this respect they disagreed with Lelewel, who highly appreciated the federal structure, regional

self-government, and inner diversity of the ancient Polish Commonwealth. The main reason for this was the apprehension of anarchy and counter-revolution. Unlike the French Jacobins, who wanted the French language to be obligatory for all citizens of the republic (cf. B. 51, pp. 64-5 and B. 79, p. 91), they did not demand a forcible linguistic polonization of Lithuanians or Ruthenians; nevertheless, they strongly felt that separatist tendencies based upon linguistic or religious grounds had to be reactionary and could not be tolerated in an 'orderly republic'. We may add that this position was in fact very similar to that of Marx and Engels. Another important similarity was the fact that they conceived of 'nation' in the same way as Marx and Engels, i.e. as a historical, political, and territorial concept, and disregarded the significance of linguistic and ethnic differences.

Very close to the hearts of the Polish patriots of the Romantic Epoch was Marx's and Engels's view that not all nations were equally important for Europe, that the importance of a given nation depended on its services to the universal cause of progress. This was precisely the intellectual and moral ground of the Poles' ardent belief in revolutionary internationalism, of their conviction to the cause of an all-European revolution, of their firm conviction that the restoration of Poland would be a necessary outcome of the imminent overthrow of the reactionary 'Old World'. I have tried to show that Marx and Engels fully shared this view.

The similarity of views on the Polish question was even deeper. For Marx and Engels Poland was an Eastern-European counterpart to France. They thought that Poland had to perform the same revolutionary task for the East as France had performed for the West and, therefore, that the revolutionary movements in the West had their natural ally in the Polish national movement. They saw Poland as the main bulwark of civilization among the Slavs and the main carrier of revolutionary ideas east of the Elbe; very often they spoke of Polish 'sacrifices' to the cause of revolution in the West, especially of the services rendered by the Poles to different revolutions in France, and, as a rule, they were inclined to exaggerate their importance. Such an attitude to Poland not only pleased the Polish patriots but confirmed their cherished belief in the peculiar 'mission' of their nation.

### 5. A Few Remarks on Post-Marxian Marxism

As I have already noted, after the defeat of the Polish uprising of 1863-4 and, finally, after the Franco-Prussian War, the Paris Commune, and the unification of Germany, the Polish question ceased to be an important European question. In contrast to this, the political liberalization of the Habsburg Empire, bound up with the social advance and growing political importance of the masses, made the national movements among the Austro-Hungarian Slavs stronger, more mature, and more important. The Ukrainian national movement in Galicia also grew up; its energetic fight against Polish rule in the province made it evident that the old formula 'gente Ruthenus, natione Polonus' had become an anachronism. In these changed circumstances Marx's and Engels's views on the national problem in Eastern Europe became anachronistic as well. The Austrian Marxists were the first to realize this and to draw the necessary conclusions. Their leading theorist, Karl Kautsky, made the following statement in his letter to Victor Adler of 12 November 1896:

I think that the old standpoint of Marx concerning the Eastern question and the Polish question, as well as his attitude towards the Czechs, have become unsupportable. To close one's eyes to the facts and to cling stubbornly to the antiquated standpoint of Marx would be utterly un-Marxist. (A. 1, p. 221.)

Another factor which served as a catalyst in the process of reevaluation of the Marxian viewpoint on the Polish question and on the national question in general was the challenging theory and practice of Rosa Luxemburg. She applied to Poland Marx's theory of the necessary process of economic integration in such a way as to enable her to argue that the Polish economy had become so much integrated with the Russian that the idea of Polish national independence was merely a petty-bourgeois nationalist illusion, used by reactionaries in order to hinder the development of class consciousness among the Polish workers. The restoration of Poland, she thought, was not only impossible but also undesirable; she reluctantly agreed to embrace the cause of limited autonomy for the former Congress Kingdom, but even this was a forced concession on her part (cf. B. 124, II, 847). She willingly supported the liberation of Balkan Slavs from the Turkish yoke because she saw Turkey as a stagnant, reactionary state; in contrast to this, she believed so strongly in

the socialist future of Russia that even to hint at the idea of an independent Poland was for her a vicious ideological diversion. Thus, her position regarding Poland versus Russia was diametrically opposite to that of Marx, although justified, as in Marx's case, by referring to an all-European revolutionary strategy. She could never agree with Lenin who insisted that all the nations of the tsarist Empire should have, formally, the right of self-determination. Her extremism and quite unreasonable lack of flexibility on this point cannot be explained by theoretical or tactical reasons; as her recent biographer has correctly noted, emotional motives were, possibly, the most important. Her hatred of the 'social-patriots' from the Polish Socialist Party was so strong because she herself 'transferred all the energy and satisfaction of patriotic consciousness to the working class' (B. 124, II, 861-2). Her peculiar greatness and tragedy stemmed from a strenuous effort to conceive of internationalism not as collaboration between nations but as a complete liberation from national loyalties.

The Austrian Marxists were much more moderate. They still believed that large states were necessary for economic progress but, on the other hand, they realized that a denial of national self-determination—i.e. a rejection of 'the principle of nationalities' so much ridiculed by Engels—would contradict the principles of political democracy to which they were more and more committed. Thus, they acknowledged the right of self-determination trying, at the same time, to interpret it in such a way as to avoid the fragmentation of the existing states. A sophisticated solution to this problem (acceptable even to Rosa Luxemburg) was provided by a learned jurist, Karl Renner, who interpreted national self-determination not as a right of territorial self-determination but as an extra-territorial personal right to preserve and develop one's cultural identity. This solution was adopted by Otto Bauer who sincerely, even ardently, supported cultural nationalism, but, at the same time, tried to de-politicize national movements by limiting their aims to strictly cultural issues (such as national schools, newspapers, literature, and so on).

The new dominant attitude towards the Polish question found expression in the resolution passed by the London Congress of the International in 1896. It rejected both the proposal of the Polish Socialist Party and the counter-proposal

set forth by the Polish Social Democrats headed by Rosa Luxemburg. The first proposal proclaimed that the restoration of Poland should be treated as a matter of peculiar importance for the working class in Europe; the other proposal declared such a goal to be reactionary and utopian. Having rejected both of them, the Congress proclaimed instead that, in principle, each nationality has a right of self-determination and that the working class should fight against all forms of oppression, including national oppression. Thus Marx's and Engels's distinction between 'nations' and 'nationalities', as well as their emphasis on the *peculiar* importance of the Polish question, found no endorsement in the Second International.

An interesting Marxist contribution to the theoretical explanation and practical solution of national problems was made by a Polish sociologist, a member of the Polish Socialist Party, Kazimierz Kelles-Krauz (1872-1905). His works on the national question, written in Polish in the years 1900-4 (see A. 34, II) are ignored by Western specialists who, as a rule, concentrate on Rosa Luxemburg and do not try to become acquainted with the arguments of her socialist opponents in Poland. Such an attitude finds support in the widespread belief that the PPS was not a Marxist party and had no interesting theoreticians in its ranks. This is, however, only partially true: Kelles-Krauz, an influential figure in the PPS, was undoubtedly a gifted thinker and an ardent Marxist.

Polemizing with Rosa Luxemburg, Kelles-Krauz concentrated, of course, on the Polish question. He dismissed her argument that Russian markets were necessary for the development of Polish industry and that for that reason Poland should remain united with Russia. Incorporation, he argued, is not necessary for economic co-operation and trade; it cannot even guarantee that the tsarist government will not reintroduce a tariff-wall between the Congress Kingdom and Russia, if it happens to serve the interests of Russian industrialists. In general, reducing important political questions to economic considerations is a kind of 'economism', characteristic of the 'apolicism' of the anarchists and populists, but deeply alien to Marxism. The most important Marxist argument for the independence of Poland is the fact (pointed out by Engels) that the Polish working class is more developed, more mature, and, proportionately, much more numerous than the working class

in Russia. Russian rule over Poland hinders the democratic transformation not only in Poland but also in Russia because, as Marx and Engels repeatedly stressed, 'a people which oppresses another cannot emancipate itself'.

Kelles-Krauz was fully aware that some aspects of Marx's and Engels's views had become unsupportable. He welcomed the national awakening of 'non-historical' peoples and did not deny them the right of political self-determination. Like Kautsky (and unlike Marx and Engels) he emphasized the growing nation-creating role of native languages and explained this by referring to the processes of vertical and horizontal social mobility, characteristic of capitalist development and greatly increasing the role of all means of communication. He agreed, therefore, to define nationalities by linguistic criteria and to abandon Marx's and Engels's distinction between 'nationalities' and 'nations'. He agreed even (which was something rare at that time) to treat the Jews as a separate, although non-territorial, nationality. The most difficult for him was the problem of the Lithuanian, Latvian, Belorussian, and Ukrainian populations of the ancient Polish Commonwealth. In accordance with the old standpoint of Marx and Engels, Kelles-Krauz treated these nations as not mature enough for independent statehood and, taking into account the visible growth of their national consciousness, proposed that they enter into a federation with a restored, socialist Poland. Such a federation, he argued, would be much better for their further national development than remaining within the boundaries of the autocratic and essentially 'Asiatic' Russian state. It seemed to him that Latvia (where he was born), Lithuania, and Belorussia would become autonomous parts of the restored Poland, while the Ukraine would choose a more loose form of federation. The final solution of these problems, as well as the solution to the Polish question, was made dependent on the organizational and educating activity of the Polish socialists: the future boundaries of Poland, he thought, would be delimited by the territorial range of activities of the Polish Socialist Party.<sup>32</sup>

Kelles-Krauz's contribution to the general theory of nationalism consisted in an interesting analysis of the dialectical relations between the nation-building processes and political democratization. Political democracy, he argued, is a

necessary condition for the normal, civilized forms of class struggle; on the other hand, genuine political democracy, i.e. a political system in which different minorities are ready to accept the decisions of the majority, is possible only in a society whose members consider themselves as belonging to the same nation. Therefore, an independent national state is necessary both for the bourgeoisie and for the working class. The latter needs it even more because the proletarian class interest demands *full* political democratization, and cannot be satisfied with half-measures. The Polish bourgeoisie would gladly accept a limited national autonomy, but the Polish workers, being a 'national class', would never cease to struggle for full national independence.

Another interesting Polish thinker whose name should be mentioned in this context was Stanisław Brzozowski (1878-1911). He underwent a fascinating intellectual evolution in which Marxism was only a phase, although a very important one. He was most close to Marxism in the years 1906-8, but even then interpreted it in a spirit very different from the naturalistic determinism of the intellectual leaders of the Second International, such as Plekhanov or Kautsky. It is justified to say that, like György Lukács, he had discovered some of the basic philosophical intuitions of young Marx before the main works of the young Marx, such as his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, were published. He saw Marxism as a philosophy of action; in order to avoid connotations of idealistic activism he preferred to call it a 'philosophy of work'. In his Marxist phase he thought that purposeful work in order to survive and develop, above all physical productive work, was the most important form of human activity, the ultimate source of our knowledge of the external world and the basis of human domination over the elemental forces of nature. He endowed work with a creative capacity and thought of it in sociological and historical terms. Philosophically, this meant that the so-called 'classical definition of truth' is a nonsense because the external world, as we know it, is not something 'given'; it is something *created* by ourselves in the historical and social process of collective work. It followed from this that the working people have always been the vanguard of mankind in its eternal struggle with resistant 'nature', and that the notion of the so-called 'objective laws of nature' (or 'laws of history')

represented a false, reified image of the world, resulting from the alienation of intellectuals, which, in turn, was the result of the divorce between the non-working producers of ideas, for whom the world, such as they knew it, was something 'given', and the working people, who, in fact, had created this world. If the workers themselves had an illusion of the 'objectivity' of natural and social processes, it was only because of their social enslavement which for a long time had been necessary for the development of productive forces. The modern industrial proletariat was seen in this perspective as an oppressed class which, for the first time in history, had a chance to liberate itself without causing thereby a regression in human mastery over nature.

Brzozowski's importance for the Marxist theory of nationalism and for the Marxist approach to the Polish question lies in the fact that, like Kelles-Krauz, he saw the Polish proletariat as the most developed, most mature, most modern class of Polish society, i.e. as the 'national class' in the Marxian sense of this term. In opposition both to Rosa Luxemburg and to traditional patriotism he considered the class consciousness of the Polish workers not as something alien, irrelevant, or hostile to Polish patriotism but as the highest, most modern form of Polish national consciousness. The events of the revolution in 1905-7, he thought, proved that the Polish working class was the only force fighting national independence and, at the same time, making the most important contributions to the economic and spiritual modernization of Poland. At the beginning of the twentieth century, when the Marxian idea of 'national class' was almost entirely forgotten, this was an original standpoint, worthy of mention as an attempt at combining Marxism with a progressive, proletarian nationalism.

From the point of view of this book it is relevant to point out that Brzozowski's nationalism was strongly influenced by the Polish romantic heritage, and that his philosophical activism drew inspiration not only from Marx's 'Theses on Feuerbach' but also from Mickiewicz's cult of heroism, Cieszkowski's 'philosophy of action', and from many other Polish thinkers of the Romantic Epoch.<sup>33</sup>

To sum up, Marx and Engels put forward four conceptions concerning nationalism. First, the conception of the 'law of

superior civilization', leading to the conclusion that the more advanced nations—more advanced not only in the economic sense, but also from the point of view of cultural development or revolutionary activity—are the legitimate leaders of humanity, representing the interests of an all-human civilization; this conception, as we know, was defended by Engels in his articles on the Habsburg Slavs. Secondly, the conception of the 'national class' and of the national tasks of the workers. Thirdly, the distinction between historical 'nations' and linguistic/ethnic 'nationalities'. Finally, the viewpoint that national interests should be subordinated to the universal cause of revolution. This viewpoint might be interpreted in two different ways, having in common only the denial of the universal applicability of the right of national self-determination. Marx and Engels themselves combined this viewpoint with their theory of the 'national class', and inferred from it that the working class should actively support those national movements whose victory would bring about a desirable change in international relations. On the other hand, their theory implied that if the proletariat is not ripe enough to become a 'national class', its class interests should be subordinated to national interests. Rosa Luxemburg (the other interpretation) also thought that some national movements might serve the cause of progress, but she insisted (in glaring contrast to Marx's and Engels's standpoint) that the proletariat as such could not have separate national tasks, and that true internationalism consisted in the total eradication of patriotism. Other conceptions, such as those developed by the Austrian Marxists, could be, perhaps, more or less compatible with Marxism, but there was nothing *distinctively* Marxist in them. (I deliberately refrain from analysis of Lenin's conception because that is a topic for another, separate work.)

A few words should be added concerning Marx's and Engels's attitude towards the Polish question. It is evident that they were wrong when they insisted that Poland and Hungary were the only nations east of the Elbe which deserved independence and had a chance to win it. Quite often they somewhat exaggerated the European importance of Poland. Nevertheless, it seems useful to recall their views. A majority of Western historians, referring to the socio-economic theory of modernization, conceive of nineteenth-century Poland as a

backward East-European country, i.e. a country of essentially the same type as Russia; it is therefore appropriate to recall that Marx and Engels—the two thinkers who had discovered the importance of the economic factor in history—were very far from such a one-sided view, that they took into account historical heritage, political culture, and always treated Poland as part and parcel of Europe, and as an eastern outpost of the West. Some specialists know that the Polish question was an important European problem, but the average educated man (sometimes even in Poland!) is ignorant of this. Eulogies in honour of heroic Poles by such writers as Lamennais, Michelet, Mazzini, or Victor Hugo can be dismissed as shallow romantic rhetoric; the opinions and analyses of Marx and Engels—the most influential nineteenth-century thinkers—have to be taken more seriously. It is not necessary to agree with them, but it is useful to know them, if only as an antidote to the prevalent indifference towards the history of those European nations which, as a result of political divisions, do not belong to the contemporary 'West' and, because of this, are treated by many people, often unconsciously, as not belonging to Europe as well.

The word "old" or "greater"  
 half of Europe to Asia is 1945  
 and perhaps it is many an  
 occurs

Lessing's and Cieszkowski's views have been discussed in an interesting article by B. Heper (B. 55).

<sup>18</sup> To enumerate some of them: the programme of the sanctification of work and earthly life; the conception of the calling of man consisting in constant self-creating and in transforming the world into a 'New Jerusalem'; the idea of the immanent presence of God in the world and of the gradual disappearing of the difference between the 'secular' and the 'sacred'; the peculiar combination of religiosity with the cult of science and progress; the vision of the future 'planetary' mankind united by a common synthetic (or syncretic) culture and living in eternal peace; the idea of universal evolution leading to the emergence of a supra-human being; and so forth.

<sup>19</sup> Reprinted in A. 109 (pp. 361-5) and (in Polish) in A. 106.

<sup>20</sup> For a more comprehensive analysis see B. 177.

<sup>21</sup> In Norwid's eyes Cieszkowski was the greatest philosopher in the contemporary world.

<sup>22</sup> It is worth while to mention that the Russian Slavophile K. Aksakov used the same words ('the inner truth') in his description of the basic principle of the Russian commune.

<sup>23</sup> In his poem 'Fulminant', written during the Polish uprising of 1863, Norwid set against military heroism the heroism of Archimedes, Socrates, and Plato. See A. 79, III.

<sup>24</sup> One of the best studies on Norwid is entitled 'Norwid's Romanticism' (B. 153). In spite of this title, however, the author shows Norwid as a writer consciously overcoming Romanticism, both artistically and intellectually.

<sup>25</sup> It seems proper to note in this connection that Norwid himself emphasized that Christianity is older than the catechism, and that one should be obedient not only to the Church, whom we called 'our Mother', but also to our Father in Heaven (A. 79, IX, 196).

#### PART FOUR

<sup>1</sup> For a detailed analysis of this brochure see W. Karpinski, in B. 42.

<sup>2</sup> Orzeszkowa, like other Positivists, was a staunch opponent of all forms of anti-semitism. She wrote a series of novels on Jewish themes in which she treated the Polish and Lithuanian Jews with great understanding and sympathy.

<sup>3</sup> For a detailed analysis see J. Kurczewska's article in B. 42.

<sup>4</sup> The word 'Hakaitis' was coined after the initials of the founders of the *Deutscher Osmerk Verein*: Hansemann, Kennemann, and Tiedeman. The chief aim of this organization was colonization and thorough germanization of the 'eastern marches'. In Polish political vocabulary the word 'Hakaitism' became synonymous with militant chauvinism.

<sup>5</sup> Poplawski expressed the same thought in the following words: 'We want to live and to develop our national individuality, this conscious will is for us the highest law, the foundation of our patriotism. To justify this patriotism, to legitimize it by referring to "universal" ideas, would amount to degrading its dignity' (A. 85, I, 68).

<sup>6</sup> For a detailed analysis of the 'neo-romantic' trends in Polish nationalism see H. Floryńska, in B. 42.

<sup>7</sup> The same point has recently been made by a Polish philosopher, J. Kuczyński (B. 89).

<sup>8</sup> It should be noted that Lichtheim has ignored Bloom, in whose book the problem of the national class is discussed in a separate chapter.

<sup>9</sup> S. F. Bloom has devoted a separate chapter of his book to the national problems of England, France, Germany, Russia, and the U.S.A.; strangely enough, he has not paid much attention to the problems of Italy and Ireland; even more surprising is the fact that he did not devote a special chapter to the Polish question in Marx's and Engels's thought.

<sup>10</sup> For a more detailed presentation see the books by J. W. Borejsza (B. 14) and C. Bobińska (B. 13). Cf. also the recently published book by I. Cummings (B. 31). It appeared when this study had already been written and prepared for printing.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. the letter to the Geneva meeting in honour of the 50th anniversary of the Polish uprising of 1830, signed on 27 November 1880 by K. Marx, F. Engels, P. Lafargue, and F. Lessner (A. 57).

<sup>12</sup> See Koscielski's letter to Marx of 18 September 1848, in B. 13 (pp. 70-1) and B. 14 (p. 209).

<sup>13</sup> Published in the *New York Daily Tribune*, 1851-2.

<sup>14</sup> See Engels's letter to Weydemeyer of 12 April 1853.

<sup>15</sup> See Marx's letter to Engels of 2 December 1856.

<sup>16</sup> See Marx's letter to Engels of 13 February 1863. The quoted words were written by Marx in English.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Marx's letter to Engels of 12 September 1863.

<sup>18</sup> The text of this proclamation is available (in Russian) in the 13th volume of the Russian edition of Marx's and Engels's works, and in A. 57, I, 390-2.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. their letter to the Geneva meeting, 1880 (see above, note 11).

<sup>20</sup> Reproduced in A. 57, II.

<sup>21</sup> The Polish edition, prepared by a group of Soviet, Polish, and East German historians, is better, but, unfortunately, much less available in the West.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Marx's letter to Engels of 24 March 1863.

<sup>23</sup> See Marx's letter to Engels of 7 June 1864.

<sup>24</sup> K. Marx, 'On the Polish Question', speech delivered in honour of the Polish uprising in 1863, London 1875. Quoted from A. 57, II, 105. The original of this speech (in German) was destroyed in the last war in Warsaw together with other documents from Polish *émigré* archives in Rapperswil Castle.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. the letter to Geneva meeting, 1880 (see above, note 11).

<sup>26</sup> See above, note 11.

<sup>27</sup> It is noteworthy that Engels was concerned with the national feelings of the Polish *workers*, refusing thereby the widespread misinterpretation of the famous slogan: 'The working men have no country.'

<sup>28</sup> Tzarism wanted to profit from the anarchic state of affairs in both countries and, therefore, in both cases imposed on them a 'guarantee' of the existing political order in which every German prince and every member of the Polish Parliament could exercise the right of veto; in such a manner, Germany was to become, after Poland, 'the next object to be partitioned' (A. 64, p. 35).

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Engels's words: '... due to the higher civilization of the Poles the White Russian and Ukrainian nobility has become strongly polonized' (A. 64, p. 30).

<sup>30</sup> Engels wrote only about European nations, and it seems that he saw modern nations as products of the historical development of Europe. In any case, such a view would harmonize with the characteristically 'Eurocentric' facet of Marxism (cf. B. 120, p. 238).

<sup>31</sup> It should be added that this was only an argument 'from hindsight', used by nineteenth-century Russia. Catherine II in her justification of the partitions of Poland never used arguments which could undermine the principle of dynastic legitimacy. The fact that eighteenth-century Russians made use of the anti-Polish rebellions of Ukrainian peasants (which they themselves, later, cruelly suppressed) is another issue.

<sup>32</sup> In the first years of the Polish People's Republic Kellies-Krausz was condemned as a Polish nationalist, or even 'imperialist', disguised as a socialist, and, as such, providing quasi-Marxist arguments for the future Kiev expedition of Pilsudski (cf. B. 139). Today he is treated as an outstanding Marxist thinker; his articles on the national problems are, usually, highly esteemed, with the exception of his view on the desirable Eastern boundaries of Poland (see M. Waldenberg, in B. 42).

<sup>33</sup> For a detailed analysis of Brzozowski's intellectual development see B. 181.