
On the threshold of the "new". The academic community in Poland in the face of the communist takeover (until early 1947). Several press voices

STRESZCZENIE

Nowa komunistyczna władza w Polsce po 1944/1945 r. zmierzała do całościowej przebudowy przejętego przez nią kraju. Świat akademicki nie mógł stanowić tutaj żadnego wyjątku, gdyż od tzw. "walki o dusze młodzieży", tj. od ideologicznego formowania młodego pokolenia, w dużym stopniu zależała przyszłość/pomyślność tamtejszego państwa. Rządzącym nigdy do końca nie udało się zniszczyć uniwersyteckiego etosu, chociaż próbowano intensywnie, zwłaszcza w pierwszych latach po zakończeniu II wojny światowej. Zmiany planowane w tytułowej przestrzeni propagowali różni działacze polityczni, przyznający sobie statut uczonych. Kilka uwag zgłaszanych przez nich na łamach prasy - stanowi treść niniejszego artykułu.

Słowa kluczowe: świat akademicki po 1944/1945 r., Polska Ludowa

ABSTRACT

The new communist authorities in Poland after 1944/1945 aimed to completely rebuild the country they had taken over. The academic world was no exception, as the future/prosperity of the country depended largely on the so-called 'struggle for the souls of young people', i.e. the ideological formation of the younger generation. The rulers never fully succeeded in destroying the university ethos, although they tried intensively, especially in the first years after the end of World War II. The changes planned in the titular space were promoted by various political activists who claimed the status of scholars. Several comments made by them in the press constitute the content of this article.

Keywords: the academic world after 1944/1945, People's Poland

INTRODUCTION

When Vladimir Lenin took power in Russia, he believed that it would take only a few months to move at least to the first phase of communism, i.e. socialism and social ownership of property. However, the reality turned out to be different. The need to introduce the New Economic Policy (NEP) showed that reversing the order of things does not happen overnight. Later, Joseph

Stalin announced the "end of history" every few years. However, unlike Francis Fukuyama, he did not mean the collapse of communism. On the contrary, the system was finally to be put into practice. This "custom" was discontinued after 1945, when the Soviet leader most likely realised that he was creating an illusion and predicting an illusion¹. Therefore, if even seemingly technical transformations in the economy (collectivisation, industrialisation) could not be achieved without sufficient time and preparation, these factors played an even more significant role in shaping the "new man"². After all, his formation (modelling) was a fundamental imperative of Marxism-Leninism³.

In Soviet society, the intelligentsia and their ethos were also supposed to become "new". The path led to a controllable, obedient expert/specialist "in something" who lacked a broad "worldview". Useful, but only in industry or agriculture and, importantly, in a "small section of work". The criterion **of usefulness** inevitably eliminated "unproductive" humanists, whose material in the form of words did not contribute to factory productivity or crop yields. The transformation of the academic world in the direction described began in the USSR as early as the beginning of the 1930s⁴. However, even in this case, it was necessary to adapt to reality. The structure of *academia*, with its fundamental core in the form of a master-apprentice system, did not allow these opposing forces to simply clash. The growth and maturation of the „student” required the presence of a „master”. Lenin and later Stalin did not originally have **their own** teachers. Therefore, until they managed to transform **their own** student into their **own** master, there was a need to tolerate the old professors, despite, as they used to say, "their capitalist baggage".

The term "own" more accurately than "new" (because "new" does not necessarily mean "own") conveys the meaning of the process to which the intellectual fabric was subjected, first in the USSR, then in other countries of the so-called Eastern Bloc, in an attempt to construct a people's intellectual

¹ M. Mazur, *Communism or socialism? Definitional and terminological controversies* [in:] PRL, or Poland in the second half of the 20th century. Studies, academic essays and source materials, J. Gryz, E. Kirwiel, E. Maj, M. Wichmanowski (eds.), UMCS Publishing House, Lublin 2013, p. 136.

² On these activities, using a strictly Polish example: *idem, On the biased man... The image of the new man in communist propaganda during the People's Republic of Poland and the Polish People's Republic 1944–1956*, UMCS Publishing House, Lublin 2009.

³ K. Marx, *Bourgeois and Proletarians* [in:] K. Marx, F. Engels, *Selected Works*, Książka i Wiedza, Warsaw 1949, pp. 33–37; V.I. Lenin, *A Brief Outline of His Life and Work*, Książka i Wiedza, Warsaw 1949, pp. 298–299.

⁴ See K.E. Bailes, *Technology and Society under Lenin and Stalin. Origins of the Soviet Technical Intelligentsia, 1917–1941*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1978.

with a working-class and peasant background⁵. This model was then imitated in Poland, with an awareness of the necessary transitional periods until omnipotent influence over the independent "reproduction" of professionals/specialists was achieved⁶. This sketch analyses only selected issues from that period. It concerns the discussion on the future of the Polish academic world – or rather an attempt at discussion – in selected press publications, which claim the right to speak on behalf of the social group I am dealing with here. The time frame of the text covers the years 1944/1945–1947, i.e. from the establishment of communist rule in Poland to the rigged parliamentary elections of 1947, when those in power still tolerated relative pluralism of views.

In connection with the latter date, one more preliminary remark is necessary. The communists in Poland, as I said, tried to understand the necessity of a transitional period in production (I will deliberately use these technocratic terms, which originate more from industry than from higher education) of their own experts/specialists, in accordance with the Soviet model. However, their actions in the early post-war years (until 1947) were determined by their lack of absolute power. Not wanting to alienate the majority of society, activists of the Polish Workers' Party (PPR) camouflaged their future intentions, seeking optimal strategies for functioning at a given moment, in accordance with game theory as the key to understanding the events of the time. The best result was to be achieved by the appearance of a restoration of pre-war democracy, and indeed the pre-war world in general, but with social modifications in the form of guarantees of universal access to education, fair distribution of goods, equalisation of the countryside with the city, etc. However, no one proposed the abolition of private property, the elimination of inheritance or other controversial issues directly related to communist ideology. In fact, the very word "communism" was avoided, as it did not even appear in the name of the ruling party. The term was reserved, at most, for describing the eastern neighbour. One must be aware of the dichotomy of that reality (the nature of a totalitarian state) in order to see the

⁵ These processes were fundamentally similar in countries that were under the influence of the Soviet Union after the end of World War II. See J. Connelly, *Captive University. The Sovietisation of East German, Czech and Polish Higher Education, 1945–1956*, The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill 2000.

⁶ J. Wrona, *Jedni głosują a drudzy obliczają głosy (Wybory do Sejmu Ustawodawczego RP w 1947)* [Some vote and others count the votes (Elections to the Legislative Sejm of the Republic of Poland in 1947)], *Annales UMCS* 1997/1998, vol. LII/LIII, sec. F, pp. 433–482.

superficiality of propaganda press articles, which served only to create an impression and did not constitute the basis of real public debate. In practice, this could not happen, as the communists already had a prepared scenario, also with regard to universities and the intelligentsia, just waiting for the right moment to be implemented.

NEVERTHELESS, LET US CALL IT A DISCUSSION ABOUT THE POLISH ACADEMIC WORLD (1944/45–1947)

The communists who came to Poland with the Red Army quickly took action, including in the area that interests me here. As early as October 1944, the first "state" university was established in Lublin, heralding further decisive action in the *academic* sphere. Built from scratch, the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University (UMCS) encapsulated all the problems of such institutions at the time⁷. UMCS – without infrastructure, deprived of academic staff, destroyed during the war⁸, and with a large number of young people eager to learn, wanting to make up for lost time during the occupation – nevertheless argued that a debate (or rather propaganda) on the future of professors and students should be initiated **immediately**. The periodical *Odrodzenie* (Rebirth) was designated as an important forum for the Polish academic world and the world of culture in general. It was in its pages, in January 1945, that the editor-in-chief of the magazine, Jerzy Borejsza, published a programmatic article by the Polish Workers' Party (PPR) on the future of the intelligentsia *en bloc*. The title of the publication was significant: *A Gentle Revolution*⁹. This

⁷ On this university, see M. Kruszyński, *Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in 1944–1989. An outline of the history of the university under the Polish People's Republic*, IPN Publishing House, Lublin 2015.

⁸ On the losses suffered by the Polish intelligentsia during World War II, see, for example: M. Walczak, *Higher Education and Polish Science during the War and Occupation 1939–1945*, Ossolineum, Wrocław 1978, p. 31; S. Mauersberg, *Science and Higher Education in the Years 1939–1951* [in:] *History of Polish Science*, vol. 5: 1918–1951; Z. Skubała-Tokarska (ed.), Ossolineum, Polish Academy of Sciences, Wrocław–Warsaw–Kraków 1992, pp. 331–334; R. Herczyński, *Shackled Science. Intellectual Opposition in Poland 1945–1970*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Semper, Warsaw 2008, p. 41.

⁹ J. Borejsza, *Rewolucja łagodna* [The Gentle Revolution], *Odrodzenie* 1945, no. 10–12, p. 1. Historians later borrowed this phrase to describe the years 1944/45–1947, i.e. the period of relative freedom and autonomy of the Polish academic world. See: P. Hübner, *Polityka naukowa w Polsce w latach 1944–1953. The origins of the system*, vol. 1, Ossolineum, Wrocław–Warsaw–Kraków 1992, p. 120; *idem*, *Stalinist "purges" in Polish science* [in:] *The hidden face of the communist system. At the roots of evil*, R. Bäcker, P. Hübner (eds.), Wydawnictwo DiG, Warsaw 1997, p. 213; J. Connelly, *Higher education in Central and Eastern Europe in the era of*

is how Borejsza described the transitional period between the continued presence of pre-war professors in academic life and the moment when this would finally cease to be necessary, from the point of view of the "installing" authorities. Except, of course, the author did not put it that way. This prominent party activist at the time argued that it was possible to harmoniously combine the old professorship with what was to be new. The new was to be a reservoir of intelligentsia – the children of workers and peasants who, as Borejsza explained, had not previously had universal access to higher education¹⁰. These people were said to possess a vital force that would allow them to efficiently rebuild the ranks of a class so severely affected by the occupier. However, he mentioned only the German occupiers, "forgetting" about Stalin's policy towards the Polish intelligentsia.

The leader of *Odrodzenie* probably tried, to some extent, to allay fears of change, but the title of the text I mentioned, which is probably an unintentional Freudian semantic error, is noteworthy. The term „revolution” *ex definitione* implies a massive and fundamental change in the existing state of affairs (political, social, cultural), resulting from a violent upheaval. Therefore, a „revolution” cannot be carried out „gently”. Meanwhile, this is what Borejsza theoretically demanded, trying to bring about what social psychology refers to as a decision-making model of crisis intervention¹¹. The aforementioned journalist diagnosed the problems and presented the conditions that needed to be met in order for *the academic community* to „make up” for the losses of the war, to actually bring about a decision-making crisis intervention to remedy the situation of the Polish intelligentsia. Firstly, the journalist noted – and urged others to note – the difficulties faced by universities. Secondly, he interpreted this situation as flawed and therefore in need

Stalinisation [in:] *The hidden face of the communist system...*, *op. cit.*, p. 227; R. Herczyński, *op. cit.*, p. 94; K. Kersten, *Polish Science 1939–1956 in the Face of Totalitarianism* [in:] K. Kersten, *Miscellaneous Writings*, T. Szarota, D. Libionka (eds.), Adam Marszałek Publishing House, Warsaw 2005, p. 74.

¹⁰ The PKWN Manifesto of July 1944 announced “free education at all levels”; see *Manifest PKWN*, W. Skrzydło (ed.), Wydawnictwo Lubelskie, Lublin 1979, p. 6. However, as far as the Second Republic is concerned, the Act on Academic Schools of 13 July 1920 did mention student fees, but shortly afterwards, *the March Constitution* (1921) included a provision on free education in public schools; D. Zamojska, *Akademicy i urzędnicy. Kształtowanie ustroju państwowych szkół wyższych w Polsce 1915–1920* [Academics and Officials. Shaping the System of State Higher Education Institutions in Poland 1915–1920], IHN PAN, Warsaw 2009, p. 183.

¹¹ F.J. Flynn, V.K.B. Lake, *If You Need Help, Just Ask: Underestimating Compliance With Direct Requests for Help*, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 2008, no. 95, pp. 128–143.

of modification. Thirdly, he warned against „indifferent acceptance” of the current reality, suggesting that otherwise Polish society would remain a „musty, provincial, egocentric backwater of snobs”¹².

This text was actually the beginning¹³. Later, we are dealing with a repetition *mutatis mutandis* of the same opinions, albeit expanded with new themes; still, however, within the same paradigm of thinking. For example, Włodzimierz Michajłow, director of the Department of Higher Education at the Ministry of Education (MOśw.), also writing in the pages of *Odrodzenie*, claimed he could not imagine Polish universities without freedom of research. This official wrote about university autonomy as one of the fundamental elements constituting a democratic state. He considered the entity created on Polish soil by the PPR [*sic!*] to be such a state. In the ongoing game of illusions and mirages, he stated bluntly:

A democratic state that guarantees maximum influence of the nation on political life will also implement maximum freedom of scientific research¹⁴.

In the above article, Mikhailov repeatedly used the terms „freedom” or „maximum freedom”. He rightly extended the meaning of these terms to include the issue of free and universal access to academic education¹⁵. In this context, the author treated the recruitment preferences for young people of working-class and peasant origin, adopted *a priori* by the People's Republic of Poland, as a real manifestation of this maximum freedom, now available. Moreover, he argued, the existing „class selection” as a tool of discrimination against disadvantaged groups in the Second Polish Republic, implicitly groups with greater potential than the representatives of the current intelligentsia, was finally abolished.

This was a manifestation of communist voluntarism. The hope that workers and peasants possessed immeasurable reserves of all kinds of skills

¹² J. Borejsza, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

¹³ I am omitting minor articles published in the daily press, aimed at the "average" reader rather than *strictly* at the intelligentsia. Here are some examples from the first months after the announcement of the PKWN Manifesto: *The organisation of higher education institutions*, *Gazeta Lubelska*, 21 September 1944, no. 44, p. 4; *Academic life in the liberated territories*, *Gazeta Lubelska*, 23 October 1944, no. 73, p. 1; *On socio-political studies*, *Robotnik*, 12 November 1944, no. 12, p. 4; *University lectures for officers*, *Robotnik*, 13 January 1945, no. 11, p. 3.

¹⁴ W. Michajłow, *On the freedom of science*, *Odrodzenie*, 1945, no. 28, p. 1.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

that could be used from one day to the next, without special preparation or additional measures¹⁶. At the same time, it was encrypted proof of the actual content of the planned internal transformation of the intelligentsia. A professional/specialist required only precise specialist knowledge and a certain political **awareness**.

So the same theses were endlessly mutated, convincing the former professorship that their status would not be affected. Stefan Żółkiewski, editor-in-chief of the socio-cultural weekly *Kuźnica* and member of the Polish Workers' Party, conjured reality in the same way as Borejsza and Michajłow. They probably started from a similar assumption as Joseph Goebbels, that a lie repeated many times becomes the truth. Hence, Żółkiewski insisted that universities would remain *sacrosanct*, with their rights and customs intact. Only an attentive reader, after reading Żółkiewski's inert „stream of consciousness”, could wonder how „post-war reconstruction in its former form” could be reconciled with „reasonable rationalisation of the university system”¹⁷. The last fragment, which does not say much, made it difficult to refer to the views presented by the publicist, *i.e.* the views of the party.

The editor-in-chief of *Kuźnica* condemned the „morbidity of the social composition of young students”¹⁸. Nothing new there. It was still about one thing: creating the appearance of security for academic staff, who were also involved, on their own initiative – as a result of their professed ethos – in rebuilding the academic world destroyed by the war. This fact had to be used as added value. On the other hand, the constantly repeated demand for the need to expand the social base of future students (implicitly future professionals/specialists) seemed harmless in essence. It is true that the government quickly began to look for alternative ways to accelerate the „migration” of workers' and peasants' children to the *academic* sphere (the so-called preliminary year of study, followed by preparatory studies¹⁹). However, pre-war

¹⁶ See on this subject: H. Palska, *Nowa inteligencja w Polsce Ludowej. Świat przedstawień i elementy rzeczywistości* [The New Intelligentsia in People's Poland. The World of Representations and Elements of Reality], Wydawnictwo IFiS PAN, Warsaw 1994, p. 58.

¹⁷ S. Żółkiewski, *Underestimated and Silenced*, *Kuźnica*, 1945, no. 7, p. 1.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ I am referring here to various “educational shortcuts”, *i.e.* courses lasting several months, after completing which young people who did not yet have a secondary education acquired the qualifications to apply for admission to higher education; D. Gałaszewska-Chilczuk, J.W. Wołoszyn, *From Preschooler to Student. Criteria for Social and Political Selection in Education in 1947–1956*, IPN Publishing House, Lublin 2012, p. 39, *passim*.

professors could still believe that such measures would not affect the structure and substance of the academic world. Moreover, the argument about the need to place greater emphasis on the education of representatives of groups that had been less present in universities until then did not seem entirely without merit. Even Professor Władysław Konopczyński, an eminent expert on the history of the 16th–18th centuries²⁰, acknowledged the validity of this postulate. He was one of the few who engaged in critical discussion with the all-powerful authorities (more on this in a moment).

Such considerations were accompanied by the presentation of a negative comparative perspective. Since judgements depend both on the state of knowledge and **the current context**, it was necessary to find some clear object that was „good”, a background for the current projection of the present that was favourable to the policy being introduced, because it was impossible to refer to actual data²¹. Unsurprisingly, pre-war Poland, in this case academic Poland, became the backdrop. It was argued that the Second Polish Republic had petrified an imperfect („reactionary”, „anti-popular”, „backward”) social group of students, favouring young people from intellectual and landowning families. The individualism of these people was portrayed in a negative light, identified with the selfish pursuit of the „propertied classes” to appropriate the sphere of education for themselves. The PPR, on the other hand, was presented as the only party in history striving for egalitarianism in education, finally calling for the creation of a working-class and peasant intelligentsia²². No one here concluded that the rulers were duplicating the mechanisms that had been condemned. If before World War II access to *academia* was monopolised by the chosen few, after 1944 the situation remained unchanged. Only the composition of the chosen few changed. However, from the perspective of those in power, this change was for the better.

The key phrase for analysing the pre-war condition of Polish universities was that education at that time was a kind **of privilege**. Before 1939, the state was to relinquish its own powers to search for talented students for

²⁰ At the same time, however, the professor feared that *the* mass *exodus* of such young people to higher education institutions, which he considered to be top-down and artificial, would contribute to a decline in the quality of teaching. W. Konopczyński, *The Tasks of Historical Science in Today's Poland*, "Polish Science. Its Needs, Organisation and Development" 1947, no. XXV, p. 159.

²¹ S.E. Taylor, S.T. Fiske, *Saliency, Attention and Attribution: Top of the Head Phenomena*, *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* 1978, vol. 11, pp. 249–288.

²² J. Kott, *On Social Advancement*, *Kuźnica* 1946, no. 17, p. 2.

the beneficiaries of this privilege, i.e. the classes I mentioned earlier (the landed gentry and the intelligentsia). This order was met with a resounding veto²³. In a simple, black-and-white scheme, the roles of individual social actors were defined precisely and without ambiguity. In the dramatic perspective used here, the „capitalist” rulers of former Poland, together with the fruit of their actions, i.e. the „bourgeois” professorship, imposed their own definition of the situation on peasants and workers. Only the social „losers” could study, unknowingly treating this **privilege** as a natural consequence of the prevailing order.

The essence of this understanding of the past became the debate on the „nobility” of the intelligentsia, initiated by the well-known sociologist Prof. Józef Chałasiński, which has already been described in the literature on the subject²⁴. The publication of a lecture given during the inauguration of the University of Łódź, printed in *Kuźnica*²⁵, gave rise to the professor's book *Społeczna genealogia inteligencji polskiej* (The Social Genealogy of the Polish Intelligentsia, 1946). The author subjected the existing ethos of the titular group as a whole, which he believed had been born in the 19th century out of civilisational necessity, to devastation. Fleeing the manors, the nobility, or gentry, took on the role of the intelligentsia, desperately trying to save their leadership role in society. As a result, this peculiar transfer allegedly disrupted the cultural genotype of the then-emerging intellectual milieu, which was imbued with an imperative conviction of superiority, a sense of managerial authority over others, class egoism, pride, contempt for work and its performers, cosmopolitanism, etc. It is therefore not surprising that at the same time work was being done on a „model” of the new scientist.

The philologist Stefan Oświecimski undertook an attempt to sketch a „social type of scholar”²⁶. The very term „social” removed the stigma from the future intellectual, indicating that he would not be connected in any way

²³ L. Sawicki, „Basic Postulates for the Organisation of Science,” *Życie Nauki* (March) 1946, no. 3, p. 157.

²⁴ See H. Palska, *Nowa inteligencja...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 35–39; *ibid.*, *Ideologia komunistyczna a problem inteligencji* [Communist ideology and the problem of the intelligentsia] in *Rzeczpospolita utraciona. Następstwa nazizmu i komunizmu na ziemiach polskich* [The Lost Republic: The Consequences of Nazism and Communism in Poland], J. Eisler, K. Rokicki (eds.), IPN Publishing House, Warsaw 2010, pp. 143–147.

²⁵ J. Chałasiński, *Inteligencja polska w świetle swej genealogii społecznej* [The Polish intelligentsia in the light of its social genealogy], „*Kuźnica*” 1946, no. 4, p. 1.

²⁶ S. Oświecimski, *O społeczny typ uczonego* [On the social type of scholar], *Życie Nauki* [Life of Science] (September) 1946, no. 9–10, pp. 172–176.

– neither genetically nor ideologically – with the much-criticised old professorship. The recipe turned out to be quite simple. First:

*The researcher should, at the expense of self-love, develop a sense of community in scientific pursuits, and must see the success of the common cause in all the results of the work of his fellow scholars*²⁷.

There was, therefore, a „common cause”, which, as one might assume, was the good of Poland, but the Poland of the people, an idea that did not occur to academics before 1939, who cared about the Poland of „landowners and capitalists”. It could not have been otherwise, since the main motive behind the activities of the former university staff was considered to be selfish, „narrow-minded” self-love.

But that is not all. Oświecimski also called for a restructuring of the foundations of universities, i.e. a modification of the hierarchical master-student system. The closer it got to 1947²⁸, the more boldly the protagonists of the system revealed the true nature of the proposed changes, hiding less behind verbal acrobatics, as Borejsza or Mikhailov had done not so long ago. „The current professor-student relationship discourages young people [...], intellectual qualifications are not enough for a scholar”²⁹ – wrote Oświecimski. How does an academic professor stand out in favour of a peasant-worker professional/specialist? – they asked. He was supposed to perform a service function in relation to the latter as a „knowledge provider” and nothing more. He no longer showed his protégé the way forward, did not shape his personality, did not inspire him to take the next steps. Such matters in the state were now exclusively „dealt with” by the ruling party. All the more so because, over time, the new professional/specialist was also to take the place of the current professor.

It was slowly revealed that socialist class equality (a classless social structure) would also reach the academic world, ultimately reversing the academic order of things. In this sense, students with the right background, thanks to their own ontologically assigned ability to transform reality, freed themselves from the „slavery” of the pre-war professorship, taking over the scientific „means of production”. If one believed, following Marx, that the history and development of humanity were governed by deterministic laws –

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 176.

²⁸ Let us recall that the PPR had already “won” the “3xYES” referendum.

²⁹ S. Oświecimski, *op. cit.*, p. 172.

although the classicist himself did not always remain faithful to this judgement – then the emancipation of the ‘student’ from the ‘master’ simply became a historical necessity.

As I mentioned, until the PPR took full power in Poland, the communists allowed a certain pluralism of views, and the „other side”, i.e. representatives of the pre-war professorship, behaved cautiously, not putting anything on the line. Formally, there was no need for this, because, let us remember, no one had officially announced a radical restructuring of the universities. So what was there to protest against? Moreover, any reaction other than a subdued one would only give arguments to the “Borejszom, Oświecimskim, Żółkiewskim” against the academics. The self-awareness of the former intelligentsia did not allow them to forget that this group was still a social „object”, seen and measured by other members of society (not only those in power), who, largely expected peace and stability after the war, rather than further arguments and disputes. After 1947, however, the democratic trappings of the totalitarian system of government disappeared, and the pages of magazines proved to be an unwelcoming place for those who thought differently from the representatives of the communist camp. The case thus lost its *raison d’être*, as it were, naturally.

However, it is difficult to believe that the professors did not expect what was to come³⁰. They did anticipate it, assuming – perhaps a little naively – that a compromise could be reached between the participants in the supposed sham dialogue. Hence, Prof. Konopczyński, whom I mentioned earlier, recognising the need for greater education of peasants and workers than had been the case until then, demanded, above all, an explanation and clarification of the PPR's intentions towards the academic world. He tried to inquire: „Today we hear the slogan: a new man in a new home – a **friendly** slogan [emphasis in the original – M.K.], but not entirely understandable”³¹. The professor, who had a wealth of research experience, reminded us that the

³⁰ This is confirmed by the diaries of some of them. Archives of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw (hereinafter cited as: APAN), Materials of Irena Turnau-Morawska (hereinafter cited as: Materials of I. Turnau-Morawska), ref. no. 80, I. Turnau-Morawska, My Diary, manuscript, n.p.; *ibidem*, Materials of Ludwik Hirszfeld (hereinafter cited as: Materials of L. Hirszfeld), ref. no. III-157/108, Note by L. Hirszfeld from 1946, n.p.; A. Słomkowski, *Memories from the time of serving as rector of the Catholic University of Lublin* [in:] *The Catholic University of Lublin in the years 1944–1952. Memories and accounts*, J. Ziótek (ed.), KUL Publishing House, Lublin 1999, p. 39.

³¹ W. Konopczyński, *Tasks and needs of the humanities in Poland*, *Życie Nauki* (February) 1946, no. 2, p. 84.

prerequisite for the proper development of science is continuity and consistency. Nothing in this field was born *ad hoc* or as a result of a sudden flash of inspiration. In this context, this eminent historian warned against methodological philosophical stumbling blocks, which were supposed to solve all previous interpretative difficulties as if by magic. He was thinking about the hegemony of the Marxist paradigm of „ „ hanging in the air: „Nothing is so simple that, at the push of a button called the dialectical method, what is dark and complicated becomes clear and simple”³².

Psychologist Mieczysław Choynowski emphasised obvious truths (did he think there was a need for this?). No political system or party had a monopoly on truth. He noted that science was guided by its own eternal rules, free from mechanical pressures and current interests. Unlike Oświecimski later on, he saw the position of a scholar traditionally, as a guide for young people and as an active participant, but not only in the process of education. He was concerned with the active participation of such people in public life, treated as a basic ethical norm, the violation of which meant a departure from the ethos³³.

Konopczyński and Choynowski's words were spoken at a time when the Soviet Union, and soon afterwards Poland, was firmly under the sway of Lysenkoism³⁴ and the mutating Michurinism that had sprung from it – a theory pulled out of a hat, *ad hoc* and the result of a sudden flash of inspiration. What is more, the Polish scientists mentioned above wrote about their doubts at a time when, in the East, there was heated debate about the „greater validity” of Vasily Shulgin's theory of „the death of the school” by Vasily Shulgin („The school is a tool in the hands of the ruling social class, and with the death of this class, it dies”) over the theory of the „school of productive labour” by Paweł Błoński (education is best achieved in practice or with significant participation in productive labour). It is possible that, fearing precisely this type of „novelty”, the theses formulated by Prof. Chałasiński were addressed more emphatically. This discourse was also considered *strictly* academic, rather than political, on the assumption that the same *academic* rules still applied.

³² *Ibidem*, p. 87.

³³ M. Choynowski, *Nauka wobec społeczeństwa* [Science and Society], *Życie Nauki* (January) 1946, no. 1, pp. 9, 14.

³⁴ On this subject, see P. Köhler, *Lysenkoism in Poland against the backdrop of the political situation at the time* [in:] *Studies on Lysenkoism in Polish biology*, ed. P. Köhler, IPN, Krakow Branch, Dante Publishing House, Krakow 2013.

It is interesting that even Aleksander Litwin, a former activist of the Communist Party of Poland (KPP), then a journalist for *Trybuna Wolności*, who was not yet thinking about any „methodological dissent”³⁵, dared to question the thesis concerning the exclusively noble origins of the Polish intelligentsia in Kuźnica, and nowhere else. He accused Chałasiński of excessive and unacceptable simplifications, pointing to the strong bourgeois roots of the group in question³⁶. He was echoed by specialists, including literary historian Karol Wiktor Zawodziński³⁷. However, the strongest voice in this regard was that of Stefan Kieniewicz in *Tygodnik Powszechny*, a place where false notes and self-censorship did not apply. This 19th-century researcher conclusively demonstrated, referring to specific historical periods (most notably, of course, the period of the partitions), the richness of the tradition from which the intelligentsia and, above all, scholars had drawn until then. He also encouraged restraint before expressing hasty judgements, postulating concern for the research workshop with its universal rules, not subject to fashions or trends³⁸.

It was all in vain. Given the political circumstances, paradoxically, the implementation of Soviet models was in fact a Marxist necessity. In mid-1947, prominent journalist and PPR activist Stefan Jędrychowski called for gratitude for the „gentle revolution” which, he claimed, had become the only chance for ideological recovery for those who did not want a new intelligentsia in the Leninist-Stalinist formula and did not understand the point of creating one. Those who decided to stick to their (old) ways were now losing their right to continue to exist³⁹. The journalist was delighted that the

³⁵ Aleksander Litwin (1909–1984), later deputy head (1949–1951) of the Party School at the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party (KC PZPR); in 1951–1954, lecturer at the University of Warsaw; employee of the Department (later Department) of Party History at the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party (1954–1959), at the end of the 1950s he began to clearly deviate from the official "line" of interpretation of Polish history, arguing about the position of workers in the Second Polish Republic. It was probably for this reason that he was removed from the circle of "official" historiographers of the labour movement; T. Rutkowski, *Historical Sciences in Poland 1944–1970. Political and Organisational Issues*, University of Warsaw Press, Warsaw 2007, p. 396.

³⁶ A. Litwin, *Dyskusja o inteligencji. O społecznej genealogii polskiej inteligencji* [Discussion on the intelligentsia. On the social genealogy of the Polish intelligentsia], *Kuźnica* 1946, no. 14, pp. 2–3.

³⁷ K.W. Zawodziński, *On the Genealogy of the Polish Intelligentsia*, *Kuźnica* 1946, no. 12, p. 11.

³⁸ S. Kieniewicz, *The Ancestry of the Polish Intelligentsia*, *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 1946, no. 15, p. 3.

³⁹ Soon, many well-known pre-war Polish professors (Władysław Tatarkiewicz, Janina Kotarbińska, Jan Bystron) lost their academic chairs and were forced into retirement. This fate did

moment was finally coming when „the masses, wanting to adopt the achievements of the past and knowledge, would be able to develop by changing universities”⁴⁰. The following words could be interpreted not as a prophecy, but as a prediction:

Humanity can only achieve true freedom of science in a classless society, when the class interests of reactionary classes no longer distort the formation of scientific views. [...] The autonomy of science will grow with the development of socialism⁴¹.

This was the beginning of a style characteristic of the next stage in the history of the intelligentsia and higher education in Poland – the so-called ideological offensive on the scientific front. At that time, there would be one canon, one thought, one line and one course of action.

CONCLUSION

These preliminary considerations can be summarised in a few points:

- after the end of World War II, communists in Poland, as in other countries of the so-called Eastern Bloc, implemented the models imposed on them by Moscow, including those concerning the restructuring of the academic world and the composition of the future intelligentsia;
- in the Leninist-Stalinist understanding, the existing intelligentsia was reformatted into professionals/specialists, losing its former ethos and social status, and instead becoming a purely utilitarian tool for industrialisation and collectivisation;
- this intellectual “rebuilding” took time, which is why, in the initial phase of the process, it was necessary to retain some representatives of the former academic professorship;
- in magazines aimed at intellectual circles, the new authorities in Poland attempted to persuade the pre-war academic staff to cooperate

not spare Prof. Konopczyński, of course. Unlike the much younger Kieniewicz, who remained professionally active for many years, albeit with some turbulence, and "survived" the Stalinist era; P. Hübner, *Stalinowskie "czystki" [Stalinist "purges"]...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 218–219.

⁴⁰ S. Jędrychowski, *Walka o wolność nauki czy o utrzymanie starego porządku?* [The struggle for academic freedom or for maintaining the old order?], *Kuźnica* 1947, no. 22, p. 2.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

with the Polish Workers' Party (PPR), promising to maintain *the* organisational *status quo* in universities, only expanding the student recruitment base to include young people of working-class and peasant origin („gentle revolution”);

- the aim was to create a false sense of security among professors who, in accordance with the intellectual ethos, were involved in the reconstruction of higher education;
- the Second Polish Republic, with its biased presentation of the education system at the time, became a counterpoint to the demands put forward by people associated with the ruling camp;
- educational mechanisms in the Second Polish Republic were described as a “privilege”, using the full meaning of the term;
- the criticism of pre-war universities was accompanied by a frontal attack (Prof. Józef Chałasiński) on the allegedly exclusively noble origins of the intelligentsia, which inherited the worst traits of their ancestors in their cultural DNA;
- the new authorities promoted a specific understanding of the “social type of scholar”;
- until the end of 1946, selected representatives of the former professorship, taking advantage of the pluralism and freedom of opinion that was still permitted, attempted to participate in a restrained and matter-of-fact manner in the semblance of discussions with representatives of the ruling authorities.

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