

The Stalinist Reception of Stanisław Brzozowski's Philosophy: The Case of Paweł Hoffman

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The Stalinization of Polish artistic, cultural, and academic life began around 1947, even though the breaking point for Polish literature was the Writers' Congress held in Szczecin in January 1949. As Zbigniew Jarosiński, the author of a book on Polish Socialist Realism notes, "at the very beginning, socialist realism was manifested in a few vague slogans based on the solid conviction that Polish art should be socialist, which meant both realist and faithful to the Party."¹ These initially vague visions grew into a firm doctrine that restricted all kinds of artists.² Polish cultural history ran its course, as did the cultural history of the Soviet Union, which moved towards socialist realism over a decade earlier by Maxim Gorky and his follower, Andrei Zhdanov.

The organized destruction of intellectual life in Poland³ was preceded by philosophical debates grounded in Lenin's thesis that "philosophical theories are not neutral in the class struggle but are instruments of it. Every philosophy is in

1 Zbigniew Jarosiński, *Nadwiślański socrealizm* [Socialist realism along the Vistula] (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IBL PAN, 1999), 15.

2 Ibid.

3 In this regard, as Michał Głowiński demonstrates, Stalinism was inconsistent: "On the one hand, it ruined Polish culture and tradition, but, on the other, it was in favor of ideas that lead to the growth of science and culture, especially those in which Communists could serve the function of patrons, protectors, or founders." Cf.: Michał Głowiński, "Pani Mayenowa – próba portretu" [Mrs. Mayenowa: a portrayal], in *Rozmaitości interpretacyjne. Trzydzieści szkiców* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IBL PAN, 2014), 229.

the service of some class-interest, and in a society torn by the class struggle this cannot be otherwise.”⁴ The proliferation of philosophical views on class struggle can be shown as the manifestation of a prior conflict at the level of production and ownership. However, it cannot be so in a classless society, which requires a unified philosophical approach that signifies working-class self-awareness. This approach came into being through the Soviet Union’s implementation of Marxist materialism as interpreted by Lenin and systemized by Stalin.

After the Bolshevik Revolution, social and political life in the Soviet Union was controlled by *Vserossiiskaia chrezvychainaia komissii* (The All-Russian Extraordinary Commission) who had the responsibility to suppress political opposition. In intellectual life, such roles were assigned to institutions such as the People’s Commissariat of Education, the Red Professors’ Institute, and the Communist Academy in Moscow,⁵ which were formed by Lenin to replace university philosophy departments. The latter two functioned under the patronage of Nikolai Bukharin who considered Marxism as a scientific approach to both social and natural phenomena of life.

How does the debate within such a defined Marxist framework of Lenin’s era differ from those of Stalin’s? In short, if it was at least somewhat possible under Lenin,⁶ the word “debate” practically disappeared from the register under Stalin. A late example of a debate would be between the “mechanists” and “dialecticians.” The mechanists perceived Marxism as a theory explaining the facts of social life but not as a philosophy, and hence, they disregarded the Marxist thinkers of their times as well as philosophers in general because they were products of bourgeois culture. The dialecticians, on the other hand, claimed that philosophy was necessary for the elaboration of exact science and its results in the spirit of dialectical materialism. In doing so, they wanted to explain the shift from quantitative to qualitative phenomena—the idea rejected by mechanists.⁷ Followers of dialectical materialism led by Abram Deborin were also interested

4 Leszek Kołakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism*, trans. Paul S. Falla (New York: Norton and Company, 2008), 717.

5 Ibid., 827.

6 “Until the mid-1920s philosophical debates went on rather undisturbed. Undisturbed in this sense that the opponents were at least allowed to respond to each other.” Leonid Stołowicz, *Historia filozofii rosyjskiej. Podręcznik* [The history of Russian philosophy: a textbook.], trans. and afterword by Bogusław Żyłko (Gdańsk: słowo/obraz terytoria, 2008), 589.

7 Further analysis of the dispute between the “dialecticians” and “mechanists,” and its philosophical ground can be found in Nikolay Lossky, *History of Russian Philosophy* (New York: International Universities Press, 1951), 347–356.

in the history of philosophy, however, they used it mostly to consolidate their stance. Owing to the influence of academic publishers and references to Engels and Lenin in their writings,⁸ dialecticians led the official criticism of ideological opposition in April 1929; it was not a long-lasting victory. At the beginning of 1931, an act condemning Deborin's followers was decreed which led to the editors of the journal *Pod znamenem marksizma* (Under the Banner of Marxism) to be forced to self-criticism. According to Leszek Kołakowski, since that moment in time, "the history of Soviet philosophy under Stalin [was] largely a history of Party ukases."⁹ This and the fourth chapter of Stalin's *History of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks): Short Course* significantly changed the way that students wrote philosophy because they were obliged to paraphrase the text with the proper application of the four elements of the Marxist dialectical method and three features of philosophical materialism in their research. No changes to the original were allowed until 1953.¹⁰

Stalinization in Poland was based on an already existing model that had been developed in the Soviet countries during the 1920s and 1930s; the process affected all spheres of life including politics, administration, culture, and the arts. Polish journals and magazines published after the war until 1948 show the changes in public debate especially on history, culture, and politics during which there was a more open discourse,¹¹ but after 1948 Stalinism became the domi-

8 Ibid.

9 Kołakowski, *Main Currents*, 847. Cf. Stołowicz, *Historia filozofii rosyjskiej*, 589–591.

10 *Historia Wszechzwiązkowej Komunistycznej Partii (bolszewików): krótki kurs, pod red. Komisji KC WKP(b) zaaprobowany przez KC WKP(b) 1938* (Warszawa: Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza "Książka," 1948), 120–134.

11 In March 1945 "Tygodnik Powszechny" (Universal Weekly), an independent (from both the state and the Church) Catholic newspaper was established. From May 20–25, 1945, a plenary session of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party took place, during which Władysław Gomułka criticized the fragmenting of the Party, excessive activity of security forces including the activity of the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKWD) on Polish territories. He also cautioned against identifying the Polish Workers' Party with the Soviet forces in Poland. In such journals as *Kuźnica* (The Forge), *Odrodzenie* (Revival), and in *Tygodnik Powszechny*, the debate over the shape of Polish culture after the war was still ongoing. Among the people involved in it were Zofia Nałkowska, Stefan Kisielewski, Jan Paradowski, and Juliusz Kleiner. In July 1945, the Polish People's Party was formed, with Stefan Mikołajczyk as its first head (the party kept its autonomy until 1947) and another journal, *Tygodnik Warszawski* (The Warsaw Weekly), was established. A managerial

nant approach in literature in both style and content marking the beginning of cultural dependence in Poland.

Stalinization affected philosophy even more than literature because of the fact that there were so many responses to Marxism in Poland before 1945 and they differed so significantly from Stalin's *Historia WKP(b)*. Such distinguished thinkers as Ludwik Krzywicki, Kazimierz Kelles-Krauz, or Edward Abramowski were controversial and could have led to revisionism. In order to hamper these free interpretations of the Marxist doctrine, it was necessary to combat the reactionaries on the Polish Left in order to control academic discussions on Marxism. This peculiar act of deciding what was true or not preoccupied the minds of philosophers affiliated with the Polish Worker's Party until the mid-1950s.

"Legenda Stanisława Brzozowskiego" (The Legend of Stanisław Brzozowski) by Paweł Hoffman and published in *Nowe Drogi* (New Ways) in 1947 was the first paradigmatic text for the philosophy of the era. Hoffman's life was no different from many other members of the Polish Worker's Party; he was born in Lviv in 1903 and began his activity in socialist movements when he was eighteen. He studied at the Department of Law and Philosophy at the University of Lviv and then moved to Krakow. In 1927 he became a member of the Communist Party of Poland and he started working for such socialist journals as *Czerwony Sztandar* (The Red Banner) and *Lewar* (Jack) before the war. In 1937

congress of the Union of Independent Socialist Youth took place in 1946 during which Jan Strzelecki's speech titled "Humanizm socjalistyczny" (Socialist Humanism) prompted a vivid discussion joined by Józef Chałasiński, Maria and Stanisław Ossowski, and Adam Schaff, among others; the first issue of a Catholic periodical *Znak* (Sign) was released in Krakow the same year. Based on Marta Fik, *Kultura polska po Jaltie. Kronika lat 1944–1989* [Polish culture after Yalta: the chronicle of the years 1944–1989] (London: Polonia, 1989). Here, I refer to the following issues: 1945 (36, 71, 94, 111, 170); 1946 (43, 61). These are only a few selected events that show the heterogeneity of the official discourse in Poland after the war. It seems important to mention that Stanisław Brzozowski's *Plomienie* (Flames) was also reissued in 1946. Joanna Kulczyk-Saloni ("O *Plomieniach* St. Brzozowskiego. Nowa recenzja bardzo starej powieści" [On *Flames* by Stanisław Brzozowski: a new review of a very old novel], *Kuźnica* 32 [1948]) and Kazimierz Koźniewski ("*Plomienie* Brzozowskiego" [Stanisław Brzozowski's *Flames*], *Twórczość* 4 [1948]) were skeptical in their reviews of the work. However, they acknowledged the value of the novel and Brzozowski's impact on the leftist intelligentsia before the war. Numerous references to Brzozowski can be found in other writers' texts. There were some positive references as well (e.g., Józef Chałasiński, "Inteligencja polska w świetle swojej genealogii społecznej" [The Polish intelligentsia and its social genealogy], *Kuźnica* 4 [1946]).

Hoffman was arrested for his political activity and spent two months in prison, and then after the outbreak of the War, he worked as a teacher in Soviet-occupied territories until he joined the Red Army in 1941. In May 1943 he was assigned the position of Officer in Education and Welfare in the Polish First Tadeusz Kościuszko Infantry Division. In June 1944 Hoffman had become a member of the Polish Worker's Party and after 1945 he worked as an editor of numerous periodicals, such as *Rzeczpospolita* (The Republic), *Kuźnica*, and *Nowa Kultura* (The New Culture). For a short period Hoffman worked also as the head of the cultural department of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party. It also seems important to mention that Hoffman got Adam Ważyk's "Poemat dla dorosłych" (Poem for Adults), which symbolically marks the beginning of the Polish October in 1956, published in *Nowa Kultura*. After that, Hoffman worked as a translator, editor, and the deputy chief editor of *Polskie Wydawnictwo Naukowe* (Polish Scientific Publishers). In 1975 he decided to maintain his formal membership while keeping his distance from the party until he died in 1978.¹²

"Legenda Stanisława Brzozowskiego" is significant for a number of reasons; first and foremost because Hoffman chooses one of the most interesting yet most controversial philosophers of the twentieth century for the text's (anti-)hero. He subjects Stanisław Brzozowski to a critical analysis that was considered an act directed at the Polish non-Stalinist Left. Although initially considered a socialist authority, Brzozowski is depicted as a bourgeois reactionary in order to portray Marxism-Leninism as the only true way of thinking in accordance with Stalinism. Secondly, "Legenda Stanisława Brzozowskiego" also exemplifies the way in which Soviet philosophical discourse was transplanted onto Polish soil.

I will first provide a summary of Hoffman's three key arguments which are archetypal for a Stalin-era text that confronts bourgeois thought. The first part of the overview highlights the philosophical tradition that Hoffman uses, discusses the undertones implicated in his text, and analyzes the way in which empirical categories are used and transformed into shallow, vulgar, and ideologized concepts. Next, I will explore Brzozowski's life and work within the context of Polish history and more specifically in the political, artistic, and intellectual movements in Poland at the turn of the twentieth century. Finally, I will address the language and structure of the article because these two elements are inseparable.

12 *Słownik biograficzny działaczy polskiego ruchu robotniczego* [Biographical dictionary of the activists of the Polish Workers' Movement], vol. 2, ed. Feliks Tych (Warszawa: "Książka i Wiedza", 1987), 535f.

At this point, some additional information regarding methodology needs to be provided. Hoffman does not enter into a discussion of Brzozowski's thought, nor does he encourage anyone to do so, therefore, the following analysis does not intend to show which interpretations of Brzozowski's writings are inaccurate or simply false because all of the arguments presented by Hoffman are self-evident and questioning them seems pointless and irrational. The only way to pinpoint the ideological discourse of the text is to deconstruct and discuss the structure of its dogmas through an exploration of the text's foundation.

The most characteristic feature of texts like "Legenda Stanisława Brzozowskiego" is its schematic blueprint that functions as a template in which themes can be changed or added. However, this formula has a major flaw in that it prevents the author from writing more complicated narrative structures for ideas and rhetoric. In the case of "Legenda Stanisława Brzozowskiego" whose targeted readers were neither experts in philosophy, nor connoisseurs of Brzozowski's writings, this flaw appears to be the text's greatest advantage in that it provides arguments that are difficult to falsify but not difficult to believe.

In "Legenda Stanisława Brzozowskiego," an ideological opponent becomes a coherent and rational subject with a clear set of ideas while the reader is assigned the role of both the observer and witness who sees the judgment for the crimes of the accused. Hoffman uses virtual or reverse induction which consists of two major elements: an extra-narrative knowledge of the author and the reader's unawareness. Although the author's position is fixed from the very beginning, he does not reveal all of his knowledge at once; instead, he gradually reveals it through various literary techniques. As a result, the text is not only a discovery for the reader but it is also an account of the author's rising awareness. In this configuration the reader serves as a passive textual subject with limited knowledge, but he or she knows enough to follow the argumentation. This textual structure though can be easily unmasked because the reader must be completely under the control of the author, or otherwise he ruins the author's meaning. Therefore, the text does not allow room for argument because it is assumed that the targeted reader of an ideological text must not be distrustful. The reader is then forced into an arrangement with the author—either he or she will accept the text, or become the author's antagonist. What merely appears to be a rejection of an ideological position had significant intellectual, psychological, and physical consequences in reality.¹³

13 Andrzej Walicki discusses this problem when analyzing "Zniewolony umysł" (The Captive Mind) by Czesław Miłosz. Andrzej Walicki, "Zniewolony umysł" po latach ["The Captive Mind" revisited], in *Prace wybrane*, vol. 4: *Polska, Rosja, marksizm* (Kraków: Universitas, 2011).

Brzozowski and the Theory of Marxism

Marxism is a guideline to act. In a capitalist state, it is a guideline for the working class struggling for power. In a people's state, it is a guideline for the working class which leads to the creation of a new material and cultural reality. The Marxist philosophy of life—the recognition of reality in the process of transformation in order to transform it again—is a theoretical tool that any conscious creator of a new society—a socialist—cannot do without if he truly wants to become a conscious creator, i.e., one consciously and effectively using his sociological knowledge in social practice. Hence the demand to address issues transgressing the frames of strict practicality; hence, for instance, the necessity to analyze our cultural past; the necessity motivated by certain reactionary, radically anti-democratic, ideological attitudes seem to have a progressive form or even, as some may believe, a socialist one.¹⁴

This fragment from “Legenda Stanisława Brzozowskiego” conveys important lessons as a Communist primer, a credo of Marxist-Leninist belief. These lines present the author's, and the Party's position that became the foundation of the criticism of Polish leftist thought, and, most specifically the faction represented by Brzozowski.

The opening sentence had to set a basis that resonates throughout the text so that Hoffman's voice is infallible and draws a line in the sand for the reader. Although the Second World War had ended two years earlier, the war over the direction of humanity had just begun. The Stalinist text thus needed to evoke fear so that an individual would be willing to go into life-threatening situations and fight for Stalinism. In the case of “Legenda Stanisława Brzozowskiego,” Hoffman's short, succinct, and most of all, logical phrasing of communist arguments displays the values of the Polish People's Party¹⁵ to the reader in their conventional interpretation. Therefore, the text argues that Hoffman's standpoint is the only legitimate and possible one that can serve as a point of departure for future philosophical debate.

The first sentence of the article is a reference to a political message of communism. And for the readers of the time, it was clear that the main idea behind Marxism, as advocated by Lenin and Stalin, was to fight in order to give power

14 Paweł Hoffman, “Legenda Stanisława Brzozowskiego” [The legend of Stanisław Brzozowski], *Nowe Drogi* 2 (1947): 103. From this point on I will refer to the text using the abbreviated title “LSB” and the number of the page.

15 The “Polish United People's Party” after 1948.

to the parties representing the working class.¹⁶ Thus, to create a political agenda out of working-class struggle was not only an expression of Lenin's genius, but it was also the decisive factor behind the Russian Revolution. Owing to Lenin's constant efforts, Marxism developed from a philosophical and economic theory to a political doctrine with clearly defined and practical guidelines explaining how to create a communist state.¹⁷ Therefore, to use the formula of a classical definition (A means B) in the opening line is meant not only to legitimize his rationale but also to prove that Marxism-Leninism is superior to Brzozowski's Marxist philosophy whose line of reasoning is by far illogical and unclear.¹⁸

The following two lines add historical elements and constitute an elaboration on the initial definition of Marxism. Interpretations of the political message written into the original statement vary and depend on circumstances, as for example, in a capitalist state, the message becomes a fight for power given to the working class; while in a people's state, it is imperative to act for the creation of a new material and cultural reality. At this point, the reference to the history of the Soviet Union is quite clear. Marxism enables the working class to reclaim power from capitalists; however, that does not mean that the war was over, because the second sentence reveals Hoffman's doctrinal orthodoxy. Like Lenin, Hoffman claims that the state should not be understood as an autonomous entity but rather as a stage in the process of creating a model community, which then justified violence and brutal imposition of the new order. Even Marx wrote about the need to get past that stage¹⁹ because he viewed it as temporal and certainly

16 A similar argument is presented in *What Is to Be Done?* (1902) by Lenin, in which he criticizes the parties who opposed a Social-Democratic revolution. Hence, Hoffman had an excellent model to follow in confrontations with other ideologies.

17 Setting goals and pursuing them, but also the necessity to act on both political and theoretical grounds are emphasized by Lenin in his reference to Engels's *The Peasant War in Germany*. In this way, he opposes certain social-democratic ideas, seeking possibilities for a change in immediate action and the worker's union. Vladimir I. Lenin, *What Is to Be Done? Burning Questions of Our Movement* (New York: International Publishers, 1969), 27.

18 On the one hand, Marxists referred to commonsensical formal logic. However, in their references to dialectical materialism, they also made use of the dialectical logic of Hegel that was adopted by Marx and Engels, and in consequence, also by Lenin. To refer to the rules of formal logic and use them as an argument against ideological enemies could have been seen as a double-edged sword. Cf.: Lossky, *History of Russian Philosophy*, 345–347.

19 Cf. Kołakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism*, 296. This interpretation of Marx, especially in his early works, was criticized by Andrzej Walicki, who writes: "Marx was

less destructive. Followers of Soviet policy could have argued that the state, despite its oppressiveness, was indispensable in the fight against reactionaries because, owing to its structure, it was possible to eliminate a counter-revolutionary element. To make such a statement in Poland in 1947 equates the necessity to fight for the state against those who do not want to give power to the people. This struggle takes place not only in the realm of politics, but also—as Hoffman's text illustrates—in the realm of ideas, and the author explains which attitudes are acceptable and which are not.

The fourth sentence then sets a more philosophical and sociological context by clarifying Marxist philosophy. First of all, Hoffman argues that it should be treated as a philosophy of life that provides specific instructions regarding everyday life. Secondly, as a method of philosophical analysis whose nature is rather peculiar, it refers to reality in the process of transformation.²⁰ According to

well aware that the consequence of people's liberation from materialized objective relations must be a substantial increase of personal dependency; that elimination of the market's 'invisible hand' would lead to consolidation of the power of an organized collective over individuals. Contrary to liberal axiology, Marx viewed this as a positive change. As he claimed, 'true liberty relies on the degree of subordination to the authority'." (Andrzej Walicki. *Marksizm i nieudany „skok do królestwa wolności”* [Marxism and the unsuccessful "leap into the Kingdom of freedom"], in *Prace wybrane*, vol. 4: *Polska, Rosja, marksizm* [Kraków: Universitas, 2011], 407). According to Marx, the structure of a model community should resemble that of a factory. He also wrote about the ambiguous role of the state, which only proves Walicki's point. Karl Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right," in Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 3 (London: Lawrence & Wishart: 1975), 3–129.

- 20 This idea is derived from dialectical materialism. According to Lenin, it is "a development that repeats, as it were, stages that have already been passed, but repeats them in a different way, on a higher basis ('the negation of the negation'), a development, so to speak, that proceeds in spirals, not in a straight line; a development by leaps, catastrophes, and revolutions; 'breaks in continuity'; the transformation of quantity into quality; inner impulses towards development, imparted by the contradiction and conflict of the various forces and tendencies acting on a given body, or within a given phenomenon, or within a given society; the interdependence and the closest and indissoluble connection between all aspects of any phenomenon (history constantly revealing ever new aspects), a connection that provides a uniform, and universal process of motion, one that follows definite laws—these are some of the features of dialectics as a doctrine of development that is richer than the conventional one." Vladimir I. Lenin, *Lenin's Collected Works*, vol. 21 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1964), 454f.

Lenin, philosophy cannot exist by itself; it is a consequence of various productive forces, therefore, a philosophical method should not be treated as an academic tool but as social practice. The next line carries another dogma of Marxism-Leninism, viz., that the communist movement is a union of theory and practice separated from capitalism. Hence, the author argues that two academic disciplines—philosophy and sociology—merge in the working class movement, ultimately resulting in social engineering. This Marxist concept is important because it constitutes the foundation of Brzozowski's literary and philosophical work. In effect, Hoffman explains the dogma of communism and prepares the grounds for the criticism of Brzozowski.

According to Hoffman, the problem of reactionary tendencies is of high importance—to deal with it is not an act of escapism, but of utmost concern. Hoffman's article was crucial at the time because of the fight for political leadership in the newly-established Polish People's Republic, even though it was not intended to deal with the irrelevant texts produced by the working class's enemies. It was rather a defensive action to protect the proletariat from the anti-democratic slogans of the old capitalist era; slogans which also found followers in the new people's reality.

Hoffman's demonization of opponents was not only based on revealing Brzozowski's "deceitful" modes of thought; Brzozowski was also accused of trying to destroy the commonsensical laws governing history. Reactionaries contradicted rational cognition of reality and nullified its objective nature by claiming that the world depends on individuals. This ideal vision highlights fideism and the belief in an intuitive power of cognition while disregarding the legacy of empirio-criticism and the philosophy of Henri Bergson, which are the themes that Hoffman focuses on the most in his criticism of Brzozowski. Revealing inaccuracies within Machism was equivalent to questioning the work of the Polish philosopher in general, the philosopher who openly displayed his fascination with both of these tendencies in modern philosophy. When analyzed from a Marxist-Leninist perspective, both make the same mistake—they describe themselves as anti-metaphysical but, on the other hand, resort to anti-materialist argumentation. Anti-metaphysical currents are materialist and anti-materialists are idealists. Therefore, Brzozowski's choice was unacceptable for Hoffman because of its attempt to join together mutually exclusive currents.

Hoffman is well aware that entering into an argument with an ideological opponent may easily go off on the wrong track, hence, he constructs a conceptual pattern of interpretation in his article. First of all, he picks out concepts from the Marxist-Leninist register that are already legitimized in communist discourse. Next, he shows how these concepts function as reactionary weapons

against the proletariat, and then he “uncovers” the presence of these concepts in Brzozowski’s writings, to arrive finally at the conclusion that Brzozowski was an advocate for bourgeois philosophy and had to be removed from the collective memory of the leftist movement. This argument is slightly invalid, though. Brzozowski indeed refers to the same legacy as the Communist movement and his interpretation of this legacy differs from that of Lenin and Stalin; but it would still have to be shown that he was an ally of imperialism. In this sense, Hoffman’s polemics are only quasi-argumentative and intended to depreciate his opponent’s standing. In this way, the author only proves that his perspective is relative.

One of Brzozowski’s crimes was, as Hoffman writes, “a shift from empirio-criticism (which he initially believed in) and pragmatism to Bergsonism. It is an evolution from an already reactionary philosophy to an even more reactionary one.”²¹ Hoffman also notes, “Bergson says nothing about reality or about cognition in general. Epistemological matters essential for empirio-criticism were solved in an overly simplified way—ontological and epistemological matters do not exist; everything is metaphysical and the only concreteness lies inside of us.”²² The most fundamental theoretical abuse is to assume that intuitionism is an anti-epistemological current if interpreted as “a stance exposing the role of intuition (moral, intellectual, metaphysical) within cognition.”²³ In that case, why does Hoffman contradict the most fundamental Bergsonian thesis? There are two possible answers, one being that Hoffman refers to Lenin’s *Materialism and Empirio-criticism: Critical Comments on a Reactionary Philosophy* in which the latter introduces the theory of reflection, as summed up by Leszek Kołakowski: “Sensations, abstract ideas, and all other aspects of human cognition are the reflection in our minds of actual qualities of the material world, which exists whether or not it is perceived by anyone.”²⁴

The way that Hoffman presents his opponent’s philosophy is not meant to prove Brzozowski wrong but rather to ridicule his work as reactionary philosophy. Bearing in mind the premises of Marxism-Leninism, any worker or member of the intelligentsia with no education (there were such in the Polish United Workers’ Party) would find Hoffman’s choice of Brzozowski’s arguments ridiculous, which was precisely the result that Hoffman wanted. The devaluation of Brzozowski’s work is achieved through textual manipulation, terminological

21 Hoffman, “LSB,” 106

22 Ibid., 105

23 Jan Hartmann, “Intuicjonizm” [Intuitionism], in *Słownik filozofii* (Kraków: Krakowskie Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 2009), 108.

24 Kołakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism*, 719.

ambiguity and finally, through ridicule and the devaluation of the philosopher's work. As Hoffman claims, "there are no original thoughts" in Brzozowski's writings; "everything is borrowed from the most reactionary Western-European thinkers."²⁵ Hence, Brzozowski not only follows the most outrageous epistemological theories, he also does not build upon them with any original thought of his own.

Brzozowski and Polish History from a Marxist Point of View

In the section "Klasowość jako podstawa antydemokratycznego solidaryzmu" (Social Class as the Foundation of Anti-Democratic Solidarity), the focus changes from philosophical matters to more social and political issues, which, according to Hoffman, are inseparable from Brzozowski's writings and the author himself. The tone changes as Brzozowski is presented not only as an authoritative Polish intellectual at the turn of the twentieth century but also as a political proponent. This way of writing about him diverges from the initial style, although this shift is unclear and can easily be challenged. If Hoffman considered Brzozowski as an advocate of a certain philosophical theory, then, in the context of social and political analysis, he becomes a conscious and active subject who affects the flow of events through his publications instead of direct action. This hypothesis is justified in the philosopher's attempt to reconcile two of the most important political currents that shaped prewar Poland society as emblemized by Roman Dmowski and Józef Piłsudski.

The second section of the text seems to be of more importance for Hoffman. He devotes more space to socio-political discussion and there is also a difference in his reasoning. As in the first section, Hoffman resorts to terminological density, numerous shortcuts, and arguments based on association; but then the second section is also characterized by a slower pace in order to analyze Brzozowski's philosophy more closely and systematically. These different sections are connected by one central thesis which claims that Brzozowski was not actually a socialist, but rather a proto-fascist. In doing so, Hoffman argues from what he conceives as a set of governing laws that make of communism the pinnacle of human development.

In the chapter on syndicalism, which is devoted to its advocate, Georges Sorel, Hoffman states that "[Sorel] proclaimed the Bergsonian mystique the successor to dialectical materialism [and] the most adequate philosophy for the working-class movement. He contested the value and aim of political struggle, and

25 Hoffman, "LSB," 108.

the idea of the proletariat coming to power.”²⁶ Hoffman argues that the relation between Bergson and Sorel was based on mutual inspiration, and thus, the former as an intuitionist was considered a syndicalist while the latter was influenced by Bergsonian intuitionism as an advocate of syndicalism. There is one more reason why Sorel can be qualified as an enemy of communism: He challenged the idea of a workers’ utopia with the “myth” of workers’ syndicates. In his letter to Daniel Halévy, Sorel wrote:

The revolutionary myths that exist at the present time are almost free from any such mixture; by means of them it is possible to understand the activity, the feelings and the ideas of the masses preparing themselves to enter on a decisive struggle; the myths are not descriptions of things, but expressions of a determination to act. A utopia is, on the contrary, an intellectual product; it is the work of theorists who, after observing and discussing the known facts, seek to establish a model to which they can compare existing society in order to estimate the amount of good and evil it contains. [...] Whilst contemporary myths lead men to prepare themselves for combat which will destroy the existing state of things, the effect of utopia has always been to direct men’s minds towards reforms which can be brought about by patching up the existing system.²⁷

Associating Brzozowski’s ideas with Sorel’s critique of the workers’ movement and replacing utopia with myth allows Hoffman to deny his opponent’s individuality and originality. For him Brzozowski is just another reactionary since he does not offer anything new. Using Sorel’s myth in a simplified way, Hoffman demonstrates how familiar slogans work as a cover for dangerous ideologies as he disqualifies what most people would consider the greatest intellectual achievement of Brzozowski—his philosophy of work—and presents it as an attempt to hide the truth about capitalist exploitation. Furthermore, it is presented as highly mystical and thus inaccessible to analysis with materialist or Marxist categories. What Hoffman wants to prove is that Brzozowski’s language is only superficially socialist, because his use of Marxist vocabulary only refers to reactionary concepts. By supporting the bourgeoisie, the greatest Polish author and philosopher becomes the ‘greatest fraud’.

The major goal of the article was to prove Brzozowski’s connection to Polish nationalism, although this could not be done directly. In his own writings,

26 Ibid., 115

27 Georges Sorel, “Introduction: Letter to Daniel Halevy,” in *Reflections on Violence*, (New York: Dover Publications, 2004), 28f. The quote shows the exactly opposite understanding of utopia and the role of the workers’ movement than presented by Lenin in *What Is To Be Done?*.

Brzozowski openly criticized the nationalist tendencies of the National-Democratic Party, and it is possible that many readers of *Nowe Drogi* were still familiar with these texts.²⁸ Hoffman argues that although there was no apparent connection to nationalism on the surface, a closer analysis would reveal Brzozowski's kinship with Dmowski's movement. At this point, his adaption of content to form is obvious, and he emphasizes Brzozowski's anti-revolutionary and anti-romantic attitudes. Hoffman presents himself as a defender of the national tradition, as a rightful heir of revolt, and most of all, as the only heir of romantic moral values,²⁹ while Brzozowski as well as the National-Democratic Party are portrayed as the nation's true enemies. He then argues that the only rightful heirs of Polish imponderabilia were the Polish United Workers' Party, and that "Brzozowski warns against any grassroots revolutionary action, against the people's mass movement, against any attempt of going to war with the invaders' governance."³⁰ He describes both the November Uprising and the January Uprising as anti-capitalist and connects them to the Bolshevik Revolution by presenting them as a fight for people's rights and the end to oppression. With these rhetorical tricks Hoffman deems Brzozowski as anti-Polish.

The final section of the text, entitled "Longing for Imperialism," is a major accusation against Brzozowski. Hoffman's aim was to discredit indisputably Brzozowski's tradition, especially since imperialism was a substantial topic for Marxism-Leninism. Supposedly, Brzozowski's most important project was to combine two conflicting ideological currents which apparently had a common feature in that they were both epiphenomena of a Polish capitalism rife with deeply rooted tensions and inconsistent ambitions. On the one hand, there was a desire for independence from foreign powers, while on the other, a need for a pragmatic agreement. Trying to solve this problem, Hoffman claims that Brzozowski had to act on behalf of the invaders, which is proven by his friendly

28 Cf.: S. Brzozowski, "Trąd wszechpolski" [The all-Polish leprosy]; "Oto wszechpolskie są junaki!" [Here are the all-Polish braves!]; "W przededniu [o taktyce narodowej demokracji]" [The day before: on the tactics of National Democratic Party] in *Pisma polityczne. Wybór*, ed. Michał Sutowski (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2011).

29 "Shortly after the war, the authorities were mostly preoccupied with the rising social awareness of the romantic tradition to prove that it is not in contradiction with the new state." Wojciech Tomasiak, *Inżynieria dusz. Literatura realizmu socjalistycznego w planie „propagandy monumentalnej"* [The engineering of souls: the literature of socialist realism in "monumental propaganda"] (Wrocław: Monografie Fundacji na Rzecz Nauki Polskiej, 1999), 74.

30 Hoffman, "LSB," 124

sentiments to both the Soviet Union and Western powers. What is crucial and unusual in this way of argumentation? First of all, Brzozowski was manipulated into a purely political game, which was close to the heart of the Polish people at the time. The problem was not only related to the near future, but also to matters of liberty and independence, because collaboration with invaders, even to be suspected of such activity, was met with condemnation. Although not mentioned in the text, the reference to the so-called “Brzozowski affair” and his apparent collaboration with the tsarist Okhrana is apparent. Secondly, the process of re-writing history relied on prevailing post-war sentiments in Poland. Hence, Piłsudski and Dmowski were drawn together, called traitors,³¹ and described as politicians not able to predict the Russian Revolution of 1917.³² To put them in the same category ended many perilous discussions and was suitable for Hoffman’s dichotomous vision of the world as presented in “Legenda Stanisława Brzozowskiego.” Finally, according to Hoffman’s argument, the close relations between the philosopher and National Democracy as well as his actions against Poland could be proven.

In his conclusion, Hoffman states that “his ideology, the political ideas that Brzozowski was the father of in *Legenda Młodej Polski*, were put into practice only after May 1926, when the Polish bourgeoisie was ready—under favorable circumstances—to follow the imperialist bourgeoisie of other nations, as suggested, among others, by Brzozowski.”³³ This quote makes Brzozowski responsible not only for future events that he could not have predicted, but also presents him as a major ideological thinker of *Sanacja*. Pretending to be a socialist, he made statements to which Piłsudski and his followers referred during the coup of May 1926. According to Hoffman, this approach not only solves the problem of Brzozowski’s philosophy and its pseudo-socialist and proto-fascist origins, it is also a warning for those who would think of departing from the Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy. In this way Hoffman creates a link between history and the ongoing political, social, and cultural events.

31 Piłsudski’s rejection of Socialism was frequently reported on in newspapers long before the beginning of the First World War. Their aim was to deconstruct the myth regarding the history of Piłsudski’s leftist military activities. Cf. Władysław Bieńkowski, “Nad grobem legendy” [Above the grave of the legend], *Odrodzenie* 25 (1947); Henryk Jabłoński, “Raz jeszcze o legendzie piłsudczyzny” [A few more notes on Piłsudski’s legend], *Odrodzenie* 29 (1947).

32 “Neither Dmowski nor Piłsudski expected this happening: that Russian Revolution will end with victory, that tsardom will be overthrown, and that Russian imperialism will collapse” (“LSB,” 128).

33 Ibid., 131f.

This analysis of Hoffman's "Legenda Stanisława Brzozowskiego" is supposed to establish the structure and the purpose of the Stalinist text of reconciliation and demonstrate how important it was to eliminate any discourses that opposed Marxism. The case of Brzozowski and Hoffman is a perfect example of this since the text has been frequently referred to in, for instance, Adam Schaff's *Narodziny i rozwój filozofii marksistowskiej* (The Birth and Development of Marxist Philosophy)³⁴ in which are present the same figures and ideological calques. The same method was applied to other controversial Polish thinkers of the turn of the twentieth century, including Edward Abramowski and Kazimierz Kelles-Krauz. However, after 1956, the foundations of philosophical criticism in the spirit of Marxism-Leninism would be destabilized.

Translated by Karolina Mistrzak

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34 Warszawa: „Książka i Wiedza”, 1950.

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