

**The Scholar Advocate:
Rudolf Schlesinger's Writings on
Marxism and Soviet
Historiography**

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Abstract

As a notable academic, Marxist writer and one-time political activist, an extensive critique of Rudolf Schlesinger's writings is long overdue. Raised in the revolutionary atmosphere of early twentieth century Austria, Schlesinger soon became embroiled in central European communism, taking on full-time work for the German Communist Party in Berlin, Prague and Moscow. He left the Soviet Union during the purges, having been described as 'alien to the party', and made his way to the UK where he fostered a reputation as an informed and prolific scholar.

This investigation is not intended to be a biography of Schlesinger, but rather an 'intellectual biography', an examination of his monographs, papers, drafts and memoir reflections. This allows for an appreciation of his academic contribution and an understanding of his unique personal motivation and perspective. Given his experiences, as well as the cultural, political and ideological paradigm from which he emerged, this analysis provides insights into Marxist theory, the labour movement, the Soviet Union and German communism. It also throws light upon the intellectual climate in the West during the cold war, providing a historiographical snapshot of academic Soviet studies, particularly in the UK.

The thesis is divided into two sections, with each exploring a different aspect of Schlesinger's writing. The first traces Schlesinger's theoretical development and education, detailing and analysing the impact of Luxemburg, Lenin, Marx and Engels on his thought and writing. Schlesinger emerges as a Leninist, whose understanding of the dialectical nature of Marxism leads him to seek the next stage in its development, since Lenin's revolutionary successes forever altered the socio-economic landscape and thus fated his theories to obsolescence. An examination of Schlesinger's attitude towards Stalin as a Marxist theorist illuminates his pragmatic stance regarding the Soviet leader. Whilst Stalin's rule had a considerable human cost and a deleterious impact upon Marxist theory, to Schlesinger, his leadership was necessary to further

the existence of the Soviet state, the sole manifestation of the great social democratic experiment.

The second section focuses on Schlesinger's writings concerning Soviet historiography. It is possible to discern changes in tone, emphasis and argument in his work on this subject. A dichotomy emerges between Schlesinger's positive portrayal of historiographical developments in the Soviet Union in papers written before Stalin's death and his retrospective condemnation of these events after 1953. This latter attitude chimes with his personal memoir reflections of life as an intellectual in Stalin's Russia, in which he described a highly controlled, academically stagnant society; yet it contrasts starkly with his earlier position. It is also possible to detect parallels between Schlesinger's changing emphasis and the dynamics of official Soviet attitudes. An explanation is required if Schlesinger is not to be dismissed as inconsistent or polemical.

It is argued that Schlesinger can be accurately described as a 'scholar advocate', both in terms of a defender of the Soviet experiment and a proponent of Marxism and social democracy. This characterisation allows for an understanding of Schlesinger's changing stance and motivations and explains his apparent inconsistency. Schlesinger was loyal to Marxism in general, but not to the fluctuating dictates of the Russian party. He was not a polemicist or propagandist but instead sought to stay loyal to wider Marxist ideals and methodology. For Schlesinger, his pragmatism ensured that he did not judge events in Russia from the rose-tinted spectacles of utopianism; his attitude was not swayed by single events, however tragic, and he was aware both of the utility and the transient nature of Stalin's rule. This helps to explain his positive attitude.

In addition, Schlesinger was keen to defend Marxism and the Soviet Union against what he perceived as unfair criticism; he sought to counter myths and misunderstandings propagated by disillusioned supporters and opponents. Schlesinger consciously attempted to combat what he saw, and many academics have recognised, as the cold war bias of a section of Western

comment and scholarship. This may, perhaps, have led Schlesinger to paint too optimistic a picture of the Soviet Union, but his work is a useful and necessary counterbalance to other literature. Schlesinger was no propagandist, and recognition of his unique and conscious motivation allows for a full appreciation of his rich and varied writings.

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Photograph of Rudolf Schlesinger provided by kind permission of B. McLernan

Chapter One: Introduction

Rudolf Schlesinger: Background

Rudolf Schlesinger was born on 4 February 1901 in Vienna. His father was from an old Viennese Jewish family. He had attended university and was baptised in order to marry Schlesinger's mother. His mother originated from a West German intellectual family, baptised two generations previously in order to gain, as Schlesinger expressed it, the 'entrance ticket to European civilisation'.¹ The family were relatively prosperous, intellectual and aspirational, hence the baptisms.

Schlesinger claimed that his ethnicity limited his social interaction in his childhood years. He found racial hatred to be endemic amongst intellectuals and the lower middle class within Austrian society and this naturally affected his choice of friends. He became aware of the anti-Semitism he saw as prevalent in Vienna at a very early age; one of his first nursemaids was dismissed from the household when his mother heard that she had narrated an anti-Semitic children's story to Schlesinger and his sister.² The young Schlesinger noticed that racial discrimination and hatred were commonplace at his school too; some of his teachers were markedly bigoted and fights over race issues were common amongst pupils. He soon learnt that nationalists of this type had to be treated with fists, feet or whatever else was available;³ "heaven, hell or Siberia are the most appropriate places for people who rouse racial hatred".⁴ Yet Schlesinger described soon learning at university to regard the Zionist organisations as political opponents too.⁵

Schlesinger depicted his schooling as supportive but not stimulating. He often encountered difficulties with discipline, his keenness to organise student

¹ Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: Whither Germany?* (Glasgow University Library, 1953-1961, Unpublished) Memoirs Volume I, p1.

² Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Bis zu Hitlers Machtübernahme*, (1944, Unpublished) Band I p. 6.

³ Ibid. p. 10.

⁴ Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: Whither Germany?*, p. 6.

⁵ Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Bis zu Hitlers Machtübernahme*, pp. 78-9.

representation would lead him into trouble with the school authorities. Even at university, Schlesinger remained unsatisfied by the level and tone of learning provided by its curriculum. However, walking and mountaineering quickly became a means of escape from adult control. It remained an important hobby throughout his life, offering peace, freedom and the possibility to overcome his physical shortcomings – he had suffered from TB early in life, leaving him with a shortened leg.⁶

According to his memoirs, certain events within Schlesinger's formative years appear to have had a dramatic effect upon his development. He wrote: 'Under the impact of World War One I became a socialist; under the impact of the revolution of 1918-1919 I decided to devote my life to service of the socialist cause. Without the war, I would have become a somewhat radical liberal intellectual'.⁷ This description of his path to socialism was mirrored and expanded upon in an article on Rosa Luxemburg published in 1966. He wrote of the influence that Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, as leaders of the Marxist Left and the anti-war movement in Germany, had had upon him: 'The present author is not the only one whom they, and the Russian October revolution, helped to find his way to revolutionary socialism. (The war, in isolation, would have produced an indignant pacifism.)'.⁸ After the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in March 1918, Schlesinger began to read Marx and became a defeatist, supporting the fall of his own country in the belief this would further the revolutionary cause. This development led to a near permanent rupture in his relationship with his father, an army officer. The brief existence of the Hungarian Soviet Republic also had a deep impact upon his personal development. The joint efforts of Social Democrats and Communists to solve the problems of political power were inspirational to the young student, although Schlesinger was still aware of the Republic's sins of omission: 'Surely they did not do what was necessary to root their power'.⁹

⁶ Ibid. p. 18.

⁷ Ibid. p. 23. Where the two versions of the memoirs are very similar, and unless otherwise stated, Schlesinger's translation from German to English has been used. It is assumed that he knew best how he wished to express himself.

⁸ Schlesinger, 'Marxism Without an Organizing Party', *Soviet Studies*, 18, 2, October 1966, pp225-251 at p. 225.

⁹ Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Bis zu Hitlers Machtübernahme*, p. 42.

The various tremors and aftershocks involved in the collapse of the Hapsburg Empire also affected Schlesinger.¹⁰ For example, a demonstration by the unemployed workers on 'bloody' Maundy Thursday 1919 gave Schlesinger a picture of the awful conditions in which the Viennese population were struggling. He witnessed starving women risking their lives by rushing into the streets, between shots, to take flesh from dead police horses.¹¹ Schlesinger described his first confrontation with political opponents as occurring at around the same time. In one incident at university, which contained an overwhelming fascist front of both students and staff, Schlesinger's Association (The Free Association of Socialist Students) invited Otto Bauer to speak.¹² Fascists stormed the meeting and, according to Schlesinger, he had to run to the nearby left-wing Rossauer barracks to get help. When leaving the university he was confronted by a fascist gang and was only able to escape by pretending his spectacle case was a revolver.¹³

Schlesinger was involved in a number of organisations of the labour movement during his youth in Austria. During the 'revolution' of November 1918, 'councils' were formed throughout Austria. The more advanced of the youth movement emulated the pattern in schools and Schlesinger described doing so at the *Schottengymnasium*, his own school. He was immediately elected to the Central Committee of the youth council and became responsible for its educational activities. He was re-elected by the council

¹⁰ For an academic treatment of this same period in Austrian history by the author see Schlesinger, *Central European Democracy and Its Background*, (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1953), pp. 132... For an alternative description, and one hotly disputed by Schlesinger, see R. Fischer, *Stalin and German Communism*, (Cambridge Mass., Harvard University Press, 1948) pp. 64..., footnote 14. Schlesinger wrote: 'Ruth Fischer gives her personal account of the incident, which seems inexact' (Schlesinger, *Central European Democracy*, p. 143, footnote 2). He disagreed with many elements of Fischer's book, criticising her claim to have written 'an objective history' (Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: Whither Germany?*, p. v.).

¹¹ Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: Whither Germany?*, p. 30-32.

¹² Otto Bauer (1881-1938) was one of the founders of the school of Austro-Marxism and wrote on matters of nationalism. Bauer joined the Social Democratic Party in 1907 and was a member of the government for a short period following World War One. He was critical of a Bolshevik-style revolution and advocated the 'slow revolution'. For more information see T. Bottomore and P Goode, *Austro-Marxism* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1978).

¹³ Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Bis zu Hitlers Machtübernahme*, p. 78.

even when his school failed to back him, after an anti-Semitic smear campaign by a teacher.¹⁴

The council soon brought him into contact with the Free German Youth Movement, which he enthusiastically joined. In his memoirs, Schlesinger explained that the Austrian version was much less romantic than the Reich one, involving a lot less dancing or national dress. For Schlesinger, its main activities were walking and political discussions and he noted the political evolution of diverse trends within the movement. For example, members of its right-wing were mainly gentile, lower-middle class males who formed Men's Associations excluding women and Jews. The left-wing of the movement was primarily concerned with educational reform. They hoped that the 'councils' would become a vehicle for student participation in curriculum setting etc. Unfortunately, little was actually accomplished in this direction because many students simply wanted to use the 'council' to ensure easier exam papers.¹⁵

After an abortive attempt by Schlesinger to unite the Students' Association (the 'council'), the Communist Young Workers' Association and the Socialist Young Workers' Association (SYWA) into a loose federation, he joined the SYWA as a member of the Education Committee. According to Schlesinger, this kind of work made him very aware of his 'emotional distance' from the average worker.¹⁶ This was a problem he believed was common to many of the best working-class activists and Schlesinger found himself unable to rationalise the dilemma until five years later when he read Lenin's 'What is to be Done?'.¹⁷

At university, Schlesinger joined the Free Association of Socialist Students. He described it as a predominantly communist, although non-sectarian, organisation. Schlesinger wrote that communist students did little actual party work, since the Austrian Communist Party left its students to study and

¹⁴ Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: Whither Germany?*, p. 23.

¹⁵ Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Bis zu Hitlers Machtübernahme*, p. 31.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* p. 38.

¹⁷ Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: Whither Germany?*, p. 37-38, Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, (Moscow, Gosudarstvennoe, Izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1958) 6, pp. 1-192.

prepare for their eventual role in the service of the labour movement. He contrasted this attitude with that of the KPD where: '... the young intellectual's usefulness for the Communist Youth Association was measured by the number of evenings devoted to organisational life and street propaganda'.¹⁸ Schlesinger felt that this was to the detriment of the young party members' studies.

Schlesinger joined the Austrian Communist Party in 1921 but was always relatively critical of its policies and leaders. He felt that communist propaganda during the revolutionary period contained more enthusiasm than actual understanding of political realities. He cited Elfriede Friedländer's (Ruth Fischer) speech in the Soviet Congress of June 1919 as an example of this. She closed her talk with a call to assume power saying: 'Follow the way on [in] which Rosa Luxemburg has preceded us, the way of triumph and of death'.¹⁹ Yet the Chairman of the Soldiers' Council then outlined the technical conditions necessary for a successful struggle and demonstrated that many were wholly lacking: over one hundred machine guns, for example.

Having gained his doctorate, Schlesinger moved to Berlin, in February 1923, to begin work for the Soviet economist Eugene Varga.²⁰ Now politically active, he joined the KPD immediately on arrival in Germany, eventually taking on full

¹⁸ Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Bis zu Hitlers Machtübernahme*, p. 69.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* p. 38. There is an error in the page number ordering within this edition. The numbers read 37, 38, 39, 37, 38, 39, 40... This quote is taken from the second p. 38. Ruth Fischer (1895-1961) was born Elfride Eisler. She helped to found the Austrian Communist Party in November 1918 but moved to Berlin in 1919 and became active in the KPD. In 1924 the left, including Fischer and her then partner Arkadi Maslow, took over leadership of the KPD and she also entered parliament as a communist deputy. In 1925 the Comintern sent an open letter to the KPD criticising their leadership. They were expelled from the party the next year. Fischer then traveled throughout Europe and Asia, briefly living in the US, and published books on the history of communism (B. Lazitch and M. M. Drachkovitch, *Biographical Dictionary of the Comintern* (Stanford, The Hoover Institute Press, 1986), p. 119). Schlesinger appears to have been mistaken about Fischer's original name.

²⁰ *Ibid.* p. 96-97. Jenö (Eugen) Varga (1879-1964) was born in Hungary. He was commissar for finance and chairman of the supreme economic council during the brief Hungarian Soviet Republic. After its collapse, Varga fled to Austria and then to Russia where he joined the party and was active in Comintern. As an economist, Varga wrote a great deal on planning and economic problems. In 1927 he became head of the Institute of World Economy and Politics and was elected to the Academy of Science in 1939. Despite occasionally falling foul of orthodoxy, Varga remained a key figure in the Soviet Union until his death (Lazitch and Drachkovitch, *Biographical Dictionary of the Comintern*, pp. 492-493). For more information on Varga, see, T. Remington, 'Varga and the Foundation of Soviet Planning', *Soviet Studies*, 34, 4, Oct. 1982, pp. 585-600.

time work for the party in spring 1925. On 22 May of the same year Schlesinger married Mila Sellvig, a communist party worker, in a secret ceremony at Werbellin Lake. They took part in an official, civil ceremony three years later at the insistence of a landlord.²¹ They remained together for the rest of his life.

Schlesinger remained a committed and active member of the KPD until his expulsion in 1937. He had many different roles and undertook various tasks for the party. He witnessed and participated in many of its key events: the aborted revolutionary attempts in 1923;²² the repercussions of Comintern's 'Open Letter' to the party; the development of the theory of 'social fascism' in 1928/9 and the failure of the May Day demonstrations and strikes in 1929 are just a few examples. The fluctuations of the KPD party majority involved an ever-changing body of leaders and theoreticians and Schlesinger sometimes found himself in agreement with the party majority. In his memoirs, he wrote, '... my support for Thälmann in 1928-30, and for Ulbricht in 1933-4 was free from any mental reservation'.²³ During such periods, Schlesinger was able to enjoy more responsible party positions and an increased influence. At other times, he found himself unable to agree with the tactical and theoretical assumptions made by the majority. This would inevitably impact upon his role within the party and he would often have to resort to freelance journalism or the role of an isolated theorist, until such time as the dominant faction

²¹ Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: Whither Germany?*, p. 188.

²² Again, a more scholarly treatment of these issues by Schlesinger can be found in Schlesinger, *Central European Democracy*, p. 212... and Fischer, *Stalin and German Communism*, p. 291...

²³ Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Illegalität und Emigration*, (1944, Unpublished) Band II, p. 232. Ernst Thälmann (1886-1944) was a member of the USPD when its left-wing merged with the KPD in 1920. He was on the left of the party and took part in the abortive Hamburg insurrection during the German October of 1923. He became chairman of the KPD in 1925 despite the expulsion of his left-wing peers. Thälmann survived the 'Wittorf affair', in which he attempted to cover up the appropriation of party funds by a member of the CC, and remained a member of the Presidium of Comintern and on the CC of the KPD for the remainder of his life. He was arrested by the Nazis in 1933 and was executed in Buchenwald concentration camp in August 1944. Walter Ulbricht (1893-1973) became a member of the KPD on its founding in 1918. He became a member of the CC in 1923 and remained so, except for the period of left-wing dominance in the mid-1920s. After a few months undertaking underground partywork, Ulbricht left Germany for Prague in October 1933. He took part in the Spanish Civil War before settling in Moscow in 1938, where he found work at Comintern. In 1945 Ulbricht returned to Berlin and became vice-chairman of the SED in April 1946 and eventually first Secretary and head of the East German State until his resignation in May 1971 (Lazitch and Drachkovitch, *Biographical Dictionary of the Comintern*, pp. 465-467 and pp. 486-487).

changed its opinions or was replaced. In fact, Schlesinger was so at odds with the party line in early 1926 that he was sent to Russia to work for the International Agrarian Institute; like many of his comrades Schlesinger spent time in Moscow in order to 'sit out his *uklon*'- deviation from the party line of the majority.²⁴ Deviationists were sent to be schooled by the Russian party and to correct their theoretical positions or await a time when their own attitude became that of the party majority. Schlesinger, having made the necessary adjustments to his party line, returned to Germany in April 1927 and resumed KPD work.

In his unpublished memoirs, Schlesinger described many of the key events in KPD history in the 1920s and early 1930s. His description of the development of the theory of 'social fascism' is perhaps one of the most interesting, as it puts Schlesinger at the epicentre of the theoretical evolution of the party. With the increasing success of fascism in the late 1920s, the KPD sought a new theoretical line on which to base its tactical decisions. The key theory to emerge from this debate was that of 'social fascism'; whereby the main enemy of communism and the labour movement was Social Democracy, rather than Nazism.²⁵ According to the theory, Social Democracy and its party had increasingly collaborated with the bourgeois government to create an authoritarian and fascistic state, all propaganda and tactical considerations should therefore be directed towards exposing its true nature.²⁶ This theory was of little use when encouraging resistance to fascism and led to a disastrous underestimation of Hitler's appeal and support.

As Schlesinger explained: 'I had been one of the first who had coined the term, and I immediately made my effort at elaborating the concept – not quite on those lines on which it soon became a popular slogan and greatly harmed

²⁴ Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Bis zu Hitlers Machtübernahme*, p. 202.

²⁵ Fischer, *Stalin and German Communism*, p. 655-656.

²⁶ The use of 'social fascist' as a derogatory label has been traced as far back as November 1922 in the Soviet newspaper *Izvestia*. In early 1924 Zinoviev and Stalin spoke of social democracy transforming into 'a wing of fascism'. However, the concept was not developed until the late 1920s (McDermott K, and Agnew J., *The Comintern A History of International Communism from Lenin to Stalin* (London, MacMillan Press Ltd.) p. 98). Schlesinger may have been unaware of its earlier origins and was referring to his part in the evolution of its later, more developed formulation.

our struggle against fascism'.²⁷ Schlesinger participated in the debates that led to the theory's elaboration but disagreed with its eventual development into a slogan that suggested all Social Democrats were, in fact, fascists. In early 1929, under his regular pseudonym of Rudolf Gerber, Schlesinger wrote an article upon the foundations of 'social fascism', published in *Communist International*.²⁸ According to his memoirs, he also wrote a report on the same subject to the Central Committee of the KPD in February 1929. He argued that the German state was becoming characteristic of a fascist state because of monopoly capitalism's tendency to directly control the state machine. There was also a tendency amongst trade unions and political parties to become direct supporters of the state instead of representatives of distinct sectional interests. These groups were then, '... collaborating with the employers on a corporative basis and handling the broad masses of the workers with a combination of terror and demagogic phraseology'.²⁹ There had also been a change in the character of the 'workers aristocracy'. It no longer consisted of skilled workers, since their position had been undermined by mechanisation and rationalisation. There was now a new privileged group consisting of foremen, supervisors and those employed in the state machine or in municipal or cooperative enterprises. This group, once bribed with the promise of job security, willingly collaborated with the state. It gained control of the trade unions and Social Democratic party organisations and proceeded to use them as instruments of repression against the revolutionary workers' movement. In light of these new developments, the KPD's struggle to gain the loyalty of the broad mass of Social Democratic workers should not aim at winning over parts of the reformist machine; this pursuit was hopeless since that machine was now part of the problem. The KPD should instead explain to the Social Democrat workers that, '... their party as such had become a tool of the fascisation of Germany and that, in the decisive hour, it would be found on the other side of the barricade'.³⁰ A struggle along these lines would be made easier by the fact that the new 'workers aristocracy' was much narrower and,

²⁷ Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: Whither Germany?*, p. 363.

²⁸ R. Gerber (Schlesinger), 'The Face of German Social-Fascism', *The Communist International*, 6, 21, 1929, pp. 800-808.

²⁹ Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: Whither Germany?*, p. 363.

³⁰ *Ibid.* p. 364.

in its fight against communism, was now opposing even the traditions of bourgeois democracy.

Schlesinger explained that he was less concerned about whether Social Democratic workers would be prepared to give up their party tickets than whether they would join the revolutionary struggle against the advice of their leaders. Schlesinger used the expression 'left-wing social fascists' in terms of insincere Social Democrat leaders but was very much against its generalisation. However, despite his protests, the term 'social fascism' quickly became a popular slogan within the KPD and came to mean that all non-communist parties were fascist. Later in his memoirs, he referred to the theory of 'social fascism' as 'my unwanted child'.³¹ Schlesinger offered a unique and insightful analysis of this important theoretical concept. His contemporary and retrospective descriptions provide useful information on what a middle-ranking party activist felt about party developments. It also helps to clarify the limits of Schlesinger's influence upon the party; he was respected enough to submit a report to the central committee and have a paper published in Comintern's central international organs, yet he had no real impact on the definition of 'social fascism' adopted by the KPD.

Schlesinger continued his varied KPD roles throughout the 1920s. He was to play a decisive part in the, ultimately unsuccessful, Mansfeld strike of June and July 1930, involving workers in the area's copper mines and foundries as well as the local unemployed populace.³² Schlesinger opted to stay in Germany after Hitler's rise to power, going underground on 30 June 1933 in order to continue illegal KPD work against the Nazis.³³ On 7 August 1933 he was arrested and taken to the notorious General Pape Street headquarters of the SA and then the equally infamous Columbia House.³⁴ After two weeks of torture and imprisonment, Schlesinger's wife, Mila, was able to secure his

³¹ Ibid. p. 417. In the German edition Schlesinger referred to it as his 'unfortunate' child. Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Bis zu Hitlers Machtübernahme*, p 318.

³² See Kapitel 14, 'Der Mansfeld Streik' in Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Bis zu Hitlers Machtübernahme*, pp. 301...

³³ Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Illegalität und Emigration*, p. 46.

³⁴ Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Illegalität und Emigration*, p. 55...

release and expulsion to Austria on account of his citizenship.³⁵

Schlesinger and Mila then moved to Prague and settled into émigré life. He organised educational activities for other German exiles and worked closely with Joseph Lenz, an old friend and German correspondent of the Communist Press Agency.³⁶ However, after becoming involved with internal KPD squabbles, Schlesinger was ordered to move to the Soviet Union by the KPD representatives in Russia. They wished to investigate him in person.³⁷ The investigation produced nothing against Schlesinger and in early 1935 he began work as the editor of the German edition of the *Communist International* in Moscow.³⁸

Schlesinger was in the Soviet Union at the time of the first 'purge' trial and was himself subject to the process of investigation and expulsion. Despite this he remained a strong supporter of both the party and the Soviet Union. In his memoirs, he stated: 'My expulsion from the party was the hardest experience of my life, incomparably harder than the two occasions where I had to face death in its least desirable forms, in General Pape street and later in England when I had to undergo a serious operation because of cancer'.³⁹ He explained that Mila was actually pleased he was in bed with flu when his party group suggested his expulsion, because she feared he might have had a breakdown if present. His whole life had been the party and to be without it had, until then, been inconceivable. Yet at the time, Schlesinger believed that there was indeed a general conspiracy against Stalin. There must, therefore, have been a wider belt of sympathisers. As Schlesinger later wrote in his memoirs, he, '... granted the party the right, if it suspected someone to belong to that belt even if being incapable of proving it, to expel him so as to avoid future mischief, the assumption being that, if the suspicion should prove unfounded, the party would make amends to those innocently expelled'.⁴⁰ In an

³⁵ Ibid. pp. 88-89.

³⁶ Ibid. p. 103.

³⁷ Ibid. p. 122.

³⁸ Ibid. p. 136.

³⁹ Ibid. p. 222.

⁴⁰ Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: The War Approaches* (Glasgow University Library, 1953-1961, Unpublished) Memoirs Volume II, p. 226.

anonymous paper to the journal *Pacific Affairs* written the year after he left the Soviet Union, Schlesinger insisted on the reality of an anti-Stalin conspiracy that justified the 'purges'. He wrote: 'That serious trouble existed is proven by the mere fact of the trials, whatever one may think of their details, for the holding of the trials was so detrimental to the repute abroad of the Soviet Union that it can hardly be assumed that they were 'trumped up''.⁴¹ According to Schlesinger, even when the full scale of the 'purges' emerged and it became clear, '... at least the majority of charges levelled against the victims of the 'great purge'' were trumped up', Schlesinger remained a Soviet sympathiser and a member of the communist party in the wider Marxist sense.⁴² He believed that subsequent information about the 'purges' had justified the behaviour of those, like Schlesinger, who would not let their attitude towards the Soviet Union be determined by a 'tragic episode'. On reflection, his opinion was that:

The 'purge' was a violent and to a large extent criminal way of carrying out the unavoidable change of generations, to replace those whose ways of thought had been nurtured by the need of overthrowing the old society by people grown up in the new one and knowing no other aims than its gradual strengthening and development.⁴³

The purges were violent and criminal but seemingly essential or unavoidable.

Schlesinger described the atmosphere within the party as becoming increasingly tense over the summer of 1936, with Schlesinger himself becoming concerned when learning of the arrest of people that he actually knew – mainly Russians working within the German party.⁴⁴ In July the

⁴¹ Schlesinger, 'The 'War Potential' of the Soviet Union', *Pacific Affairs*, 12, 1, March 1939, pp. 34-53 at p. 41. Schlesinger claimed authorship in Schlesinger, *Spirit of Post War Russia*, (London, Dennis Dobson Limited, 1947) p. 7 and in his memoirs, Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Illegalität und Emigration*, p. 273.

⁴² Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: Whither Germany?*, p. 282.

⁴³ Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: The War Approaches*, p. 231.

⁴⁴ The tense atmosphere felt by foreign communists in Russia up to 1938 is described by McDermott and Agnew, *The Comintern*, p. 148... E. Varga wrote to Stalin on 28 March 1938 to bemoan the intolerable tension under which foreign communists were living: 'One-sided,

German representative at Comintern informed Schlesinger of the arrest of Emel Lurye, a member of the KPD and a historian at Moscow University.⁴⁵ As party procedure dictated, he immediately told the representative frankly of his relationship to Emel. It was of a purely social nature having had factional disagreements in the past. However, Schlesinger was surprised at Emel's arrest. He assumed that historians at the University formed academic cliques – this would explain Emel's tendency to cut short phone conversations in Schlesinger's presence, but his having formed a clique did not seem a sufficient explanation for his arrest. He had been an oppositionist and, perhaps, had continued to be so after falsely submitting to the party majority. But no one in Schlesinger's circle could have regarded him as a potential terrorist.

On the day before Schlesinger went on holiday to the Caucasus he learnt of the arrest of Fritz David.⁴⁶ David had been editor of the German edition of *Communist International* and, on promotion to the chief Editorial Board, he had secured his old job for Schlesinger. He also worked for Wilhelm Pieck, the chairman of the German Politburo, as something amounting to personal secretary.⁴⁷ Since the information about his arrest was told to Schlesinger in confidence, he did not feel able to make any declaration regarding his relationship with David. He described being very shocked at the arrest: 'David had never belonged to any opposition within the party (in his confession he stated that Trotsky himself was surprised at him embracing Trotskyism – how could I have expected it!)'.⁴⁸ Schlesinger explained that if he had had to locate David politically, both in that year in Moscow and during their diverse contacts

narrow nationalism is increasingly gaining ground at the expense of the correct combination of Soviet patriotism and internationalism. Hatred for foreigners is rampant. Foreigners are indiscriminately considered spies; foreign children are called fascists at school' (McDermott and Agnew, *The Comintern*, p. 245).

⁴⁵ Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Illegalität und Emigration*, p. 202.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* p. 203.

⁴⁷ Wilhelm Pieck (1876-1960) joined the SPD in 1895 and was one of the chairmen at the founding meeting of the KPD. He was a leader of the party from 1918 to 1960, surviving the various purges and shifts in orientation. Beginning work with Comintern in 1921, Pieck advanced to higher and higher positions of authority, moving permanently to Moscow on Hitler's accession to power. He became the official head of the KPD on Thämann's arrest. In 1946 he became one of the two presidents of the SED and in October 1949 he was elected president of the German Democratic Republic. He held both positions until his death in 1960 ((Lazitch and Drachkovitch, *Biographical Dictionary of the Comintern*, pp. 364-365).

⁴⁸ Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: The War Approaches*, p. 209.

in Germany, he would have placed him slightly on the right of the broad range of political views which made up the German party majority; just as Schlesinger tended to be near its left fringe. In fact, such was his surprise at David's arrest that Schlesinger immediately feared he was an enemy agent. However, his frank ventilation of heterodox views within private discussions seemed to contradict this initial suspicion. His arrest was, therefore, a mystery.

Whilst on holiday, Schlesinger was able to get details of the first 'purge' trial from Moscow newspapers.⁴⁹ He described his amazement on reading that Kirov had not been killed by an individual on the fanatical fringe of the Zinoviev group, as he had previously assumed, but by a concerted group of Zinovievites, including Emel. Even stranger than the terrorism of the Zinoviev group was the revelation that David was an individual terrorist working for Trotsky and preparing an attempt upon Stalin's life. At this time, Schlesinger believed that the Soviet Government would not groundlessly arrest a well-connected person such as David and that there would not have been a trial if no actual conspiracy existed. Schlesinger asserted that he never discovered what it was that David actually did to cause his arrest but still believed that a person so closely associated with the chairman of the KPD would not have been randomly made an example of for political purposes.

Schlesinger noticed on his return from the Caucasus that the editorial office had developed a tense atmosphere. The former head of the department had been expelled from the party for his having advocated David's appointment. Other investigations were in the process of being prepared and amongst them was one on Schlesinger. The issue of *Communist International* he had edited before going on holiday was subject to a special review to determine whether, as well as demonstrating a lack of vigilance as regards David, he had been consciously distorting the party line.⁵⁰ The Commission reported a number of stylistic mistakes but no political tendency.

⁴⁹ Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Illegalität und Emigration*, p. 207.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* p. 213.

The real focus of the investigation was Schlesinger's relationship to David and several issues were central to the argument. The first was Schlesinger's political past. Everyone knew of his former connection to Ruth Fischer's group, yet the ten years since he had publicly broken with them had been those of his most responsible party positions. Besides, according to Schlesinger, there were few in the KPD who had not, at some time, been involved with a group that had since been condemned. The second issue was that David had proposed Schlesinger for his editorial job. Schlesinger wrote in his memoirs: 'David was a counterrevolutionary; hence David had proposed me for counterrevolutionary purposes, namely in order to have tolerable surroundings in which he would not be denounced'.⁵¹ Schlesinger responded that David had other obvious reasons for proposing Schlesinger, his editorial experience and knowledge of Russian, for example. He also argued that in ventilating his private views and tactical ideas, David had never exceeded acceptable deviations from the party line. Yet Schlesinger was deemed to have been insufficiently vigilant in his dealings with the 'traitor' David and was thus declared 'alien to the party' and encouraged to leave the country. It was agreed that he could not have known of David's terrorism but Schlesinger was guilty of 'liberalism', in the sense of a readiness to frankly air disagreements within the party, something no longer desirable or tolerated. Schlesinger was regarded as a helper of treason, however involuntarily. Thus, he wrote, '... an example had to be made with a person who certainly was not involved in the conspiracies (otherwise it would have been no example of the necessary suppression of 'liberalism' but another treason case)'.⁵²

Being 'alien to the party' rather than 'anti-party', official party bodies offered him advice and material help for the first few months after expulsion, something that he thought demonstrated a reasonable attitude within Russian party circles towards those expelled for lack of vigilance.⁵³ He determined to

⁵¹ Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: The War Approaches*, p. 221. In the German edition, Schlesinger wrote: 'David had suggested me for the editorial board, David was a counter-revolutionary, therefore, David, at least, must have been of the subjective opinion that my work for the editorial board would be useful for his counter-revolutionary purposes.' (Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Illegalität und Emigration*, p. 218).

⁵² Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: The War Approaches*, p. 222. Author's underlining.

⁵³ Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Illegalität und Emigration*, p. 233.

return to Prague, from where he could, in his own words, ‘... refute, not a certain sociological concept of the party, but the assertion that Rudolf Gerber was morally capable of lending any support to the enemies of the USSR or of his party’.⁵⁴ He would counter the label of ‘alien to the party’ by remaining faithful to the Soviet Union whilst in the West. Yet on his return to Europe, Schlesinger found it nearly impossible to publish, due to the stigma of expulsion. Mila also suffered from Schlesinger’s expulsion. According to Schlesinger, in Moscow no one had questioned her party membership, yet in Prague her repeated request for admission to normal party work was met with the response from the German party organisation that, ‘... you must understand, Rudolf’s case slightly stains you’.⁵⁵

With the Nazi invasion of Czechoslovakia in early 1939, Schlesinger and Mila were forced to flee to Poland. They escaped on foot over the Carpathian Mountains and, from Poland, were able to secure a place on a refugee ship from Gdynia to Britain on 21 April.⁵⁶ In England they were provided with some money by a fund for refugee scholars and lived in an abandoned cottage in the Fens near Cambridge.⁵⁷ Schlesinger was eventually to secure work at the University of Glasgow in 1948 and, as well as being a lecturer and researcher, he became co-editor of the journal *Soviet Studies* and founder of the journal *Co-existence*. He also spent time as a visiting professor at Sir George Williams University in Canada.⁵⁸ He retired in 1966 and died at his home in Argyllshire on 11 November 1969.

Why study Rudolf Schlesinger?

Rudolf Schlesinger remains a relatively unknown figure within the history of socialism, both as an active fighter within its ranks and as a theoretician and academic. Nevertheless, he is worthy of detailed study for a great many

⁵⁴ Ibid. p. 234.

⁵⁵ Ibid. p. 268.

⁵⁶ Ibid. p. 427.

⁵⁷ R. Beerman, ‘Rudolf Schlesinger – An Appreciation’, *Soviet Studies*, 21, 4, April 1970, pp. 409-410 p. 410.

⁵⁸ For more information on the founding of *Co-existence* see K. Levitt, ‘Karl Polanyi and Co-Existence’, *Co-existence*, 2, Nov. 1964, pp. 113-121.

reasons, not least because of the sheer number and scale of movements and events in which he was personally involved. Schlesinger lived, at various times, in Austria, Germany, the Soviet Union, the Czechoslovak Republic and Great Britain. He was deeply involved in political developments and participated in, or witnessed, significant events in many of these countries – the collapse of the Hapsburg Monarchy and Hitler’s invasion of Czechoslovakia are just two examples.

Schlesinger was well educated with a distinguished publishing career. He was a keen, intelligent observer who was able to successfully put his memories, thoughts and feelings to paper, inevitably enhancing his reputation as an academic, the locus of this investigation. Schlesinger was born into an intellectual family and attended the *Schottengymnasium*, Vienna’s most renowned secondary school.⁵⁹ He then attended the University of Vienna from autumn 1919, initially to read medicine but deciding upon social sciences after his first year.⁶⁰ On arrival in Berlin in February 1923 he began work as a professional economist in a research institute associated with Comintern (The Communist International).⁶¹ From February 1926 to April 1927 Schlesinger worked in Moscow as the German member of the International Agrarian Institute, researching agrarian problems in Central and Western Europe, especially Germany.⁶² From 1939 onwards Schlesinger continued his scholarly activities in Britain, eventually to work as a lecturer and researcher at the University of Glasgow. He published academic and theoretical work throughout his life on a vast number of differing topics including Soviet foreign policies, Marxist philosophy and Soviet legal theory.⁶³ Schlesinger became an expert in many academic disciplines. He trained as an economist but was also a proficient and well respected sociologist, historian and political theorist. As his obituary in the academic journal *Soviet Studies* noted: “His wide variety

⁵⁹ Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Bis zu Hitlers Machtübernahme*, p. 8.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* p. 65.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* p. 97.

⁶² *Ibid.* p. 192...

⁶³ See, for example, G Keeton and R. Schlesinger, *Russia and her Western Neighbours*, (London, Jonathan Cape, 1942); Schlesinger, *Marx: His Time and Ours*, (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1950); Schlesinger, *Soviet Legal Theory*, (London, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., Ltd., 1945).

of interests and encyclopaedic knowledge of the Soviet Union made him invaluable to the students of the Institute [Institute of Soviet and East European Studies] and of the University as a whole and especially to his colleagues".⁶⁴

Another pertinent factor making the study of Schlesinger in general, and his writings in particular, so valuable is the fact that he was a professional writer. Schlesinger not only wrote as part of his scholarly work but was also a prolific contributor to the communist press. In fact, many of his party posts within the KPD (German Communist Party) were as a freelance writer or editor of party organs. For example, in spring 1925 Schlesinger moved to Halle to work as an editor for *Klassenkampf*, a KPD provincial daily.⁶⁵ After a gap of a number of years Schlesinger became the organ's chief editor in autumn 1928.⁶⁶ In 1935-6 Schlesinger became editor of the German edition of *The Communist International* and worked within Comintern headquarters in Moscow.⁶⁷ This editorial and journalistic experience would have enabled Schlesinger to gain particularly good writing and observational skills. One can assume that these skills would be used to the full in his publications and thus suggests that a thorough critique of them is worthwhile.

Rudolf Schlesinger performed a vast number of roles within the labour movement. He was an eyewitness to many decisive occurrences and his perception of such matters would be of undoubted benefit to historians. He was also an organiser within the labour movement, a Marxist theoretician, an editor, an underground activist and, at times, an isolated intellectual. These different roles allowed Schlesinger to view the European labour movement from many perspectives. His varying functions also gave him the opportunity to associate with a great number of people from many different countries, backgrounds and political affiliations, something which would inevitably add to the depth of Schlesinger's experiences and thus promote him as an object of historical investigation. In fact, Schlesinger came to know many key figures

⁶⁴ R. Beerman, 'Rudolf Schlesinger – An Appreciation', p, 409.

⁶⁵ Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Bis zu Hitlers Machtübernahme*, p. 167.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* p. 287.

⁶⁷ Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Illegalität und Emigration*, p. 137.

within the labour movement and the history of the twentieth century. For example, at various times he enjoyed a close association with Ruth Fischer and Arkadi Maslow.⁶⁸ At university he became friends with the sons of the co-founder of the German Communist Party (KPD), Karl Liebknecht, and made the acquaintance of leading Austro-Marxist Otto Bauer. In Germany he worked under the reputable economist Eugen Varga and maintained working relationships with many key intellectuals within the socialist fold. During his first stay in Moscow, he came into contact with Stalin, since his wife, Allilueva, was Schlesinger's librarian and personal secretary.⁶⁹

Schlesinger was unique in several ways. This makes a study of his academic writings worthwhile and overdue. He was both a politically active and theoretical man, a combination Schlesinger no doubt adopted from Marx.⁷⁰ Schlesinger was unquestionably an active worker within the Communist party machine, both in Germany and the Soviet Union: he spent the two months of the Mansfeld strike of 1930 racing around the district on a motorbike with his colleague Willy Dolgner acting as party liaison for the strikers and making public speeches of encouragement.⁷¹ He also played an active role in the Berlin underground after the KPD was outlawed on Hitler's accession to power. For example, he produced information sheets for factory and district newspapers, from which local editors⁷² could pick out relevant material.⁷² Yet alongside this active party work, Schlesinger was also a theoretician and academic, researching and writing numerous publications, as mentioned

⁶⁸ Arkadi Maslow (1891-1941) was German born to Russian parents. He joined the KPD immediately after it was founded, and was always on its left-wing. After his expulsion he traveled with Ruth Fischer but was unable to obtain a visa for the US and died in Havana, awaiting her return (Lazitch and Drachkovitch, *Biographical Dictionary of the Comintern*, p. 307-8).

⁶⁹ Nadezhda Sergeevna Allilueva (1901-1932) was the daughter of a revolutionary and the goddaughter of prominent Bolshevik Abel Enukhidze. Stalin met her when she was sixteen years old and she became his personal assistant at the Commissariat of Nationalities. They were married in 1919 and she bore him two children. After a tempestuous marriage in which she became increasingly isolated, Nadezhda was found dead from a gunshot wound on 8 November 1932 and the circumstances remain unclear (Lazitch and Drachkovitch, *Biographical Dictionary of the Comintern*, pp. 3-4).

⁷⁰ As Marx pointed out in his eleventh 'Thesis on Feuerbach' of 1845: 'The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point, however is to *change* it' (Marx and Engels, *Werke*, 3, pp. 5 – 7 at p. 7, Author's italics).

⁷¹ Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Bis zu Hitlers Machtübernahme*, p. 310-11.

⁷² Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Illegalität und Emigration*, p. 16.

above. There are other examples of people within this category. Rosa Luxemburg and Lenin were a combination of the theoretical and the active. Yet both died at a relatively young age and thus did not have the opportunity to reflect upon events fully and write memoirs of their experiences. Perhaps Ruth Fischer and Trotsky are also examples, but their later writings and recollections seem coloured by overt political agendas to a far greater extent than Schlesinger's.

Schlesinger also occupied a relatively unique historiographical position. He was a participant and eyewitness to many important events in the labour movement and the history of socialism in the first half of the twentieth century, yet completed his analysis and recollection of these events in the West, much later. Living in the West, he was free from the ideological constraints placed upon Soviet scholars and memoirists. Yet he also appeared relatively free of the bitterness that often accompanied the writings of those who had emigrated or been expelled from communist parties and the Soviet Union.

A study of Schlesinger is of value to students of history and political thought because of his reputation as an academic within the UK. He co-founded and edited the multi-disciplinary journal *Soviet Studies*. This reputable publication helped to establish Soviet studies as an academic discipline in its own right. As the co-founder J. Miller pointed out, both editors wished for the publication to be accessible to all scholars, regardless of political complexion:

Schlesinger and I were both communists, in very different ways, but it never occurred to us that *Soviet Studies* could be anything other than a vehicle for the purpose of publishing any reasonably serious scholar, the more empirical the better, who cared to use it.... When the late Naum Jasny, who was at the opposite pole to Schlesinger amongst serious students of the

USSR, found publication difficult in the United States we both encouraged him to the utmost to use *Soviet Studies*.⁷³

Schlesinger's commitment to academic integrity, especially as regards his editorial role, is demonstrated in private correspondence between Miller and the then Principal of Glasgow University, Sir Hector Hetherington. In 1951 Miller wrote of a, '...tenet, which he [Schlesinger] holds in practice as well as in theory and as firmly as anybody ever will, namely that the editors, as trustees of their office, must maintain standards of scholarship'.⁷⁴ According to Miller, although often 'blinkered' by his 'own intellectual idiom', Schlesinger strove for 'objectivity'.⁷⁵ His administration of the periodical provides evidence of an academic endeavouring to create an objective forum for the discussion of all questions related to the study of the Soviet Union.

Whilst at Glasgow University Schlesinger contributed prolifically to the journal.⁷⁶ He also lectured on the subjects of Marxism, the Soviet Union, and its legal theory. One of his final acts within academia was to help establish and edit the journal *Co-existence* from 1963 until his death in 1969. As D. Nelson, the editor of its successor *International Politics* pointed out, this international journal,

...provided an insistent and innovative reminder that the problems of statecraft and governance were not merely explained by ideological distinctions or the differences between developed and underdeveloped world. In an era when little constructive dialogue existed across East-West ideological divides or North-South developmental chasms, *Co-existence*

⁷³ J. Miller, 'The Origins of Soviet Studies: A Personal Note', *Soviet Studies*, 25, 2, October 1973, pp. 167-169 at p. 168. For more information on Jasny see J. Wilhelm, 'The Failure of the American Sovietological Economics Profession', *Europe Asia Studies*, 55, 1, 2003, pp. 59-74.

⁷⁴ Miller, private correspondence to Sir Hector Hetherington (3 December 1951). The letter was given to me by a private collector.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ In the four issues of Volume 1 Schlesinger contributed six reports and eight review articles.

offered much of lasting significance while widening the audience of scholars from both sides of Cold War divides.⁷⁷

Once again, Schlesinger demonstrated his commitment to the provision of a multi-disciplinary academic forum. *Co-existence* was intended to facilitate the free discussion of issues across political, cultural and developmental divides. As Schlesinger wrote in the first issue of the journal, 'Marx, indeed foresaw that socialism will rescue mankind from barbarism in its struggle for survival. Yet this journal is not produced by socialists for socialists, but is intended to offer a broad forum for discussion'.⁷⁸ He made his political allegiance clear but sought to provide an open journal that conformed to the strictest scholarly integrity and countered prevailing cold war tendencies.

Schlesinger was viewed by some peers as one of a small circle of intellectuals and academics with expertise on what was still a new subject. For example, in 1947 Miller wrote in an initial proposal for *Soviet Studies*: 'The outstanding five or six authorities on the USSR in Britain (Dobb, Baykov, Sumner, Rothstein, Schlesinger and E. H. Carr) are all very interested in the proposal'.⁷⁹ It was clear to Miller that Schlesinger was an 'outstanding authority'. In 1951 he wrote, '... Schlesinger, in his books and articles, is doing a lot of spadework in helping to lay the foundations for work on Russia as a scholarly subject'.⁸⁰ At this time his academic pre-eminence, and notoriety within the cold war context, was thought to be as great as other notable scholars of his generation, such as I. Deutscher and E. H. Carr. In fact Zbigniew Brzezinski, the academic and one-time US national security advisor, was reported to have said that alongside Carr and Deutscher, Schlesinger was one of the most dangerous scholars in the UK.⁸¹ Schlesinger certainly contributed significantly to the establishment of Soviet studies as an academic discipline.

⁷⁷ D. N. Nelson, (1997), 'Introducing *International Politics*', *International Politics*, 34, 1, March 1997, pp. 1-5 at p. 1.

⁷⁸ Schlesinger, 'Co-existence as a Framework of Social Evolution', *Coexistence*, 1, May 1964, pp. 46 – 53 at p. 47.

⁷⁹ Miller, Proposal for a Journal of Soviet Studies (8 April 1947). Private papers.

⁸⁰ Miller, private correspondence to Sir Hector Hetherington (3 December 1951).

⁸¹ J. Haslam, *The Vices of Integrity: E. H. Carr, 1892-1982* (London, Verso, 1999), p. 223.

Methodological/Theoretical foundations of the thesis

The first thing to make clear is that this thesis is *not* a biography of Rudolf Schlesinger. The approach taken assumes an immutable separation between the object of study and the study itself. Whilst source material and publications exist which allow for a perception of Schlesinger the man, any representation of him could never be anything near to complete or accurate. The study is too far removed from the object. Therefore, one cannot hope to fully comprehend Schlesinger as a 'personality' or effectively communicate that to others.

As eminent historian A. J. P. Taylor has noted, psychologists and Freudians argue that the most important thing when studying an individual is the subject's unconscious mind:

This is all very well when the psychologist or perhaps even the historian has personal contacts with a living man. Even the most uninstructed of us can form some sort of impression, noting whether our subject is bad-tempered, vain or sympathetic.... But how do you interview a dead man? The answer is: you guess. The psychologist takes concepts that he has derived from living subjects and imposes them on dead ones. The results are far from satisfactory.⁸²

There will, thus, be no psychoanalytical investigation based on the self-conscious utterances of memoirs in an attempt to gauge Schlesinger's 'unconscious mind'.

According to Taylor, the task of a biographer and that of a historian are very different things. The biographer,

... claims to know what his subject was thinking as well as what his subject was doing. He writes confidently of his subject's

⁸² A.J.P. Taylor, 'The Historian as Biographer' in W. Buhl and G Heiss (ed.), *Biographie und Geschichtswissenschaft*, (Munich, R Oldbourg Verlag, 1979), pp. 254-261 at p. 256.

aims even when they were not revealed at that time. He often provides us with a vivid picture of the subject's thoughts. As a result each biographer presents an entirely different version, based more on conjecture than on evidence.⁸³

In contrast, the historian must be constantly aware of what he/she does not, and perhaps cannot, know about their subject. Conjecture must be kept to a minimum and clearly labelled as such, and there can be little reason to suggest what was in the subject's thoughts.

This investigation also makes no attempt to provide a detailed narrative or description of Schlesinger's life. This is, once again, due to scepticism regarding the scholarly efficacy of 'biography' and also because of a lack of source material to substantiate the information given in Schlesinger's memoirs. Details of his non-scholarly activities and home life have only been added to considerations of his academic writings in order to provide a context for them, when appropriate.

This is, instead, an 'intellectual biography', an investigation of Schlesinger's intellectual career and achievements. It consists of an examination of his scholarly writings, a critique of their contents and an enquiry into their academic value both for his peers and subsequent generations. This is done with particular reference to his writings on Marxism and the Soviet historical field, in order to determine his peculiar political, intellectual and theoretical paradigm.

However, this investigation is more than simply an 'intellectual biography'. It uses Schlesinger's work, and the investigation and critique of it, to refocus on the Soviet Union's history. The thesis should throw new light on aspects of Soviet history and society, as well as illuminating the value of Schlesinger as an academic to peers and modern students. It will also provide an insight into the work of a Western Marxist intellectual during the cold war. This is due to

⁸³ Ibid. p. 258.

the employment of an overtly anti-determinist, anti-essentialist and irreductionist approach. This investigation utilises an overdeterminist theory of Marxist derivation, developed by Resnich and Wolff, which states that every aspect of society is both cause and effect of all others.⁸⁴ According to the authors, 'Overdeterminism' is:

... the proposition that all aspects of society condition and shape one another. Hence it is not possible to reduce society or history to the determinant effect of some one or a subset of its constituent aspects. What theory or explanation does – all it can do or has ever done – is to select and draw attention to some aspects and some relationships of whatever object it scrutinizes. That object's overdetermined complexity and ceaseless change place a comprehensive grasp beyond any theory's reach. All theories and explanations remain partial, open to ceaseless addition, contestation, and change. This is because, to be intelligible, they can focus on only a few aspects. They necessarily leave out most of the other aspects.⁸⁵

This theory adds further ammunition to the assumption, asserted earlier, that it is impossible to fully comprehend Schlesinger as a 'personality', thus precluding any attempt at biography. Any understanding of him must necessarily 'remain partial' and so a definite aspect of the man is focused upon: his academic writings and those on Marxism and the Soviet historical field in particular. Whilst this 'overdeterminist' approach may appear negative and limiting, it does offer a more constructive element. No explanation or theory of events can be fully satisfactory, since they are not reducible to certain essential factors. Therefore, what is currently known about Marxist theory, Soviet society and the study and research of history in the Soviet Union is not finite or comprehensive. Anything an investigation and thorough reading of Schlesinger's input in this field can add to that bank of knowledge

⁸⁴ This approach can be found in S. Resnich and R. Wolff, *Class Theory and History*, (London, Routledge, 2002).

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* p. 9.

and theory, will, therefore, be illuminating. New aspects can be highlighted in this complex area, without questioning the validity or importance of what has been previously discovered.

The majority of sources utilised in this investigation are published works by Schlesinger. These are employed as primary sources, critically assessed to determine theories and analyses which Schlesinger wished to have attributed publicly to him. They are read in conjunction with one another to allow for broad perceptions of Schlesinger's theoretical and political assumptions, over time and across disciplines. They consist of monographs, journal articles, papers, commentaries and book reviews. The vast majority were published in the West, after Schlesinger's expulsion from the party, and most of these were written in the UK. Some unpublished sources have also been used. Private letters, early drafts of published works and copies of lectures have been used where appropriate. This is mainly when the subject matter contained in an unpublished work mirrors that of a published one or if it will help in the exposition and increased understanding of the nature of Schlesinger's published scholarly work. These private materials were obtained from the Rudolf Schlesinger Papers housed at Glasgow University Library or from private collectors.

Another major source is Schlesinger's unpublished memoirs. This form of self-representation is very much within the Western male tradition of autobiography. As the literary critic Leigh Gilmore has pointed out: 'Autobiography... has come to be identified... with master narratives of conflict resolution and development, whose hero – the overrepresented Western white male – identifies his perspective with a God's-eye view and, from that divine height, sums up his life'.⁸⁶ Schlesinger's memoirs fit this definition well. They are an attempt by Schlesinger to describe and explain his life and work. There are several copies of the memoirs. Early versions were written in German and the later drafts in English. An early, complete, German

⁸⁶ Cited in A. Woollacott, 'The Fragmentary Subject: Feminist History, Official Records, and Self-representation', *Women's Studies international Forum*, 21, 4, 1998, pp. 329-339 at p. 334.

version and the most up to date English one have been used in the present study, with reference given to the German edition where possible. Neither copy has been published. The English version was donated to Glasgow University Library on Rudolf Schlesinger's death and a private collector kindly gave one of the existing German editions to the author, others are retained in the Schlesinger Papers in Glasgow University Library.⁸⁷

It is unclear why the memoirs were not published in Britain but it is certain that they were written with the intention of publication. Throughout the text, Schlesinger referred to 'my readers', clearly suggesting that he was intending it to be read.⁸⁸ It is also apparent that he expected an international readership. In the preface to the English edition, Schlesinger stated that when writing the first draft in 1944, he had hoped that the memoirs would be published after his death for the benefit of a resurrected democratic and socialist Central Europe as much as the 'Anglo-Saxon world'.⁸⁹ In view of the period covered and the depth of analysis in the memoirs, it also appears that Schlesinger anticipated an audience with a reasonably wide knowledge of the European labour movement and twentieth century history. However, he did occasionally provide background information to the events he described, for those less familiar with the material covered.⁹⁰

Rudolf Schlesinger first began work on his memoirs whilst in England in spring 1944, the catalyst being a serious illness.⁹¹ In summer 1951 he managed to retrieve his personal archive from Germany and those of his papers he had been forced to leave in Prague. He was, thus, able to supplement his first draft and correct any erroneous details from 1953 to 1957.

⁸⁷ See, for example, the incomplete draft in Glasgow University Library, Schlesinger Papers, MS Gen 1660, 1 and 2, Unpublished.

⁸⁸ See, for example, Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: The War Approaches*, p. 70.

⁸⁹ Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: Whither Germany?*, p. iv.

⁹⁰ See, for example, Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Bis zu Hitlers Machtübernahme*, p. 105.

⁹¹ Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Bis zu Hitlers Machtübernahme*, p. 2 and Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: Whither Germany?*, p. iii.

The memoirs cover the period from Rudolf Schlesinger's birth on 4 February 1901 to his escape from Poland to Britain on 18 April 1939. Or, as Schlesinger explained in the preface to his second draft, the memoirs are a record of the failed efforts of the central European labour movement, concentrating on the 'interwar years', up to the point where armed conflict began between the fascists and the rest of the world, including the Soviet Union.⁹²

In the preface to the memoirs, Schlesinger insisted, as a historian, that he was well aware of the pitfalls and bias involved in memoirs. He, thus, saw his own as adding no more than interesting and colourful detail to his academic work. He also argued that he made no claim to be able to transcend the social conflicts of his time and so would clearly state his political standpoint from the very beginning:

For many years I have not only ceased to be a member of any particular party organisation, but even arrived at the conclusion that I, given my background and capacities, can serve the cause of socialism best without belonging to a definite party framework. But this does not prevent me from being partisan 'in the great historical sense', to speak with Marx.⁹³

He argued that a clear statement of the author's political standpoint would promote the memoirs' use by the historian and, thus, presented himself as a non-partisan socialist from the offset.

The memoirs are a useful source for a better understanding of Schlesinger and his background and they provide a wealth of material on many key events of the twentieth century. Whilst it is clear that Schlesinger consciously attempted to give as honest a portrayal of events as possible, admitting to errors and conceding mistakes, the memoirs are not without speculation and inevitable self-justification. They must be used with caution and an awareness

⁹² Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: Whither Germany?*, p. i.

⁹³ Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: Whither Germany?*, p. iii.

of all the caveats applicable to a source of this nature. In the words of A.J.P. Taylor: 'I have a word of counsel for any historian who is puzzled as to how to assess an autobiography: he should write one himself. He will find that however resolutely he tries to tell the truth the narrative gets out of control. Little successes are magnified and failures passed over unless of course they are blown up into monstrous grievances'.⁹⁴

Schlesinger's Marxism: His writing on theory as a key to understanding his wider work

Half of this thesis is devoted to an investigation of Schlesinger's writing on Marxism. As the theory that underpinned all of Schlesinger's scholarly work a thorough appreciation of his understanding of Marxism is essential. It is only by acknowledging Schlesinger's theoretical foundation that one can fully comprehend his other writing, something which Schlesinger would have fully admitted.

Marxism featured in all of Schlesinger's work, in method if not in subject matter. Consequently, there is a wealth of source material for this investigation. However, two works in particular are of relevance. Schlesinger's *Marx His Time and Ours* published in 1950 was his main philosophical work. It traced the history of Marxism, from its development in the nineteenth century through its reception in Russia and the success of the Russian revolution to its applicability in the world of the mid-twentieth century. The second important source is a series of nine lectures on Marxism-Leninism Schlesinger delivered at Glasgow University in 1964-1965 and 1965-1966, and at Sir George Williams University, Canada the following year.⁹⁵ The series was intended for postgraduate students of Soviet studies or advanced economics undergraduates. The lectures were written in full, with references and footnotes, and traced Marxism from its roots through to 1960s China.

⁹⁴ Taylor, 'The Historian as Biographer', p. 260.

⁹⁵ Schlesinger, *Marxism-Leninism. Nine Lectures on Fundamentals*, (Glasgow University Library, Rudolf Schlesinger Papers, MS Gen 1660, 18, Unpublished, 1964). Hereafter referred to as *Lectures*.

Schlesinger developed the lectures into a book entitled *Marxism-Leninism: An Outline*.⁹⁶ However, this does not appear to have been published, presumably due to Schlesinger's death. Alongside these main texts are a vast array of papers and reviews.

Schlesinger spent his entire adult life in the cause of Marxism, both as a political activist and academic theoretician. In his memoirs, he wrote that he had devoted most of his life to the critical development of Marxist theory.⁹⁷ To Schlesinger, Marxism was both a political ideology and a philosophical methodology. It was the movement that would, in his words, lead to, '...the emancipation of mankind from misery and de-humanisation'.⁹⁸ He argued:

The rule of man over man, and the fact that the means of production were controlled by a certain class different from the mass of society was nothing natural (and hence unchangeable) but an historical phenomenon which had a beginning and, hence, presumably, an end: this had to be brought about by the action of those who were not interested in its eternity.⁹⁹

Schlesinger believed that Marxism explained this situation and inspired and guided the movement that would remedy it. Marxism and its thinkers showed social-democracy how to organise to bring about revolution and how to construct a new state following that success. However, Marxism was also a philosophical methodology. Its historico-materialist outlook was a valid explanation of society and the way in which it operated. Marxism was a scientific method for scholarly pursuits, a way of understanding the world and investigating it. This method remained valid as circumstances changed and developed; Marxism was not a set of commandments or mere political

⁹⁶ Schlesinger, *Marxism-Leninism: An Outline* (Glasgow University Library, Rudolf Schlesinger Papers, MS Gen 1660, 49, Unpublished, 1968-1969). The preface detailed the origin of the book and the lectures (p. II).

⁹⁷ Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: Whither Germany?*, p.93.

⁹⁸ Schlesinger, *Marxism-Leninism. Nine Lectures on Fundamentals*, (Glasgow University Library, Rudolf Schlesinger Papers, MS Gen 1660, 18, Unpublished, 1964-1966) 2, p. 1. Hereafter referred to as *Lectures*.

⁹⁹ Schlesinger, *Lectures*, 2, p. 2.

instructions but a universal theory of permanent veracity. Schlesinger wrote that Marxism was, '...a theory of social development which, at the same time, claims to provide guidance for action transforming society'.¹⁰⁰ He argued that it was to be defined, '...not as a collection of dogmata but by its historically given origins and its continuing approach and method'.¹⁰¹

To Schlesinger, the essence of Marxism consisted of historical materialism and dialectics. Together, these concepts produced the Marxist method, a scientific, verifiable methodology. Marxism was not a set of instructions or a political creed, but was primarily this method. He outlined his basic understanding of Marxist theory in the second of his series of lectures, by quoting Marx's 'A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy':

The entity of production relations constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond the definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life processes in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness.¹⁰²

The materialistic conception of history explained the nature of society and how it developed from one form to another. The character of production determined the nature of society at any given stage; means of production and an individual's relationship to that means dictated man's relationship to nature and other people.

Marxism was a historical method as much as a philosophical or economic one.¹⁰³ Historical materialism was concerned with the succession of different

¹⁰⁰ Schlesinger, *Marxism-Leninism*, p. 1.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.* p. 3.

¹⁰² Marx and Engels, *Werke*, 13, pp. 6-160 at pp. 8-9. Schlesinger, *Lectures*, 2, p. 6.

¹⁰³ Schlesinger, *The Marxist Movement: Continuity and Diversity* (Glasgow University Library, Rudolf Schlesinger Papers, MS Gen 1660, 4, Unfinished, 1969), p. 5.

social formations, as determined by production. As Schlesinger expressed it in 1964:

Marxism is...a certain conception of the objective conditions of human action and, in particular, of such actions as lead to the replacement of one form of social organization by another one. In particular it asserts the basic importance of the industrial working class in the replacement of a capitalist by a socialist order of society.¹⁰⁴

In the lectures he made clear how this transformation from one social formation to another took place. Once more quoting Marx, Schlesinger argued:

At a certain stage of development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production, or – this merely expressed the same thing in legal terms – with the property relations within which they have operated hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an era of social revolution. The changes in the economic foundation lead sooner or later to the transformation of the whole immense superstructure.¹⁰⁵

According to Schlesinger, historical materialism demonstrated that revolution was not a utopian hope but a necessary link in the inexorable development of mankind. The realisation of socialist ideals, although impossible in earlier stages, was essential in later periods, when contradictions between productive forces and productive relations became apparent.¹⁰⁶

The key constituent alongside historical materialism was dialectics. This was

¹⁰⁴ Schlesinger, 'The Dispute and the Socialist Tradition', *Co-existence*, 2, Nov. 1964, pp. 177-184 at p. 178.

¹⁰⁵ Marx and Engels, *Werke*, 13, p. 9. Schlesinger, *Lectures*, 2, pp. 6-7.

¹⁰⁶ Schlesinger, *The Marxist Movement*, p. 14.

derived from Hegel's concept and Schlesinger described it in *Marx His Time and Ours*:

As against the current assertion that only one argument can be correct and that contradiction in itself is a proof of logical mistake, Hegel showed that the thesis as well as the anti-thesis contain elements of truth, in that they reflect different stages in the development of human society and human thought.¹⁰⁷

Contradiction was inherent in all things. This struggle between opposites led from a transformation of quantitative change to one of qualitative change. According to Schlesinger, this was a somewhat problematic concept when applied to Nature but it did explain the revolutionary progression of society.¹⁰⁸ Antagonistic forces grew within society, eventually expressing themselves through revolutionary change. The new formation developed within the old and change was an essential element of society.

Schlesinger made clear the importance of dialectics to Marxism. He argued that the Hegelian inheritance was essential because it allowed Marxism to develop beyond its origin. It allowed Marxism to reject the finality of human thought or achievement. It, thus, became a developing, transforming theory capable of evolving with a changing society.¹⁰⁹

This dynamic quality is what made Marxism as a method so important to Schlesinger. If Marxism was merely a set of instructions or a philosophical theory then it would inevitably have been time-bound, able to be disproved by new information or inaccurate predictions. Since it was a method this was not the case. In a 1962 paper on Marxist theory Schlesinger argued that Marxism could not become obsolete because of the method, which he described as, '...the analysis of economic process as the interaction of social aggregates, and the associated interpretation of history, down to the abolition of class

¹⁰⁷ Schlesinger, *Marx His Time and Ours*, p. 15.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. p. 16.

¹⁰⁹ Schlesinger, *The Marxist Movement*, p. 6.

divisions, as a history of class struggles'.¹¹⁰ He made clear the robust character of such an understanding of Marxism in his unpublished *The Marxist Movement*, writing: 'The strength of Historical Materialism rests precisely upon its being a method, i.e. that every mistake in the application can be corrected by improved application of the method upon new subject matters'.¹¹¹

There were a number of features of Schlesinger's Marxism, alongside its significance as a scientific method. Firstly, Schlesinger emphasised Marxism's transforming quality. This was, in part, because it was a method. It developed as science and society developed. Hence it was secure from obsolescence. In his unpublished book of lectures he argued:

But Marxism is not a specialist economic theory, as many people erroneously believe (hence they also believe that it can be refuted by the fact that the science of Economics, like any other, has made some progress during the century past since the publication of the first volume of 'Capital'); it is a definite way of understanding and synthesizing the achievements of individual social sciences: hence, it must develop with the latter.¹¹²

Critics pointed to elements in the Marxist classics that were no longer true or had proven unfounded as if this disputed the relevance of Marxism as a whole. Schlesinger argued that this was erroneous. Of course elements would become redundant, predictions would fail to materialise, but Marxist theory would move on as events did. The method would incorporate these developments. As Schlesinger argued in 1963: 'Communism regards itself as the expression of continuous contradictions of society which it should help to solve'.¹¹³ Marxism and communism understood the world dialectically: antagonism; contradictory forces and an ever-developing society. The theory to emerge from this

¹¹⁰ Schlesinger, 'Marxist Theory and the New Program of the Soviet Communist Party', *Science and Society*, 26, 2, Spring 1962, pp. 129-152 at p. 150.

¹¹¹ Schlesinger, *The Marxist Movement*, p. 16. Author's underlining.

¹¹² Schlesinger, *Marxism-Leninism*, pp. 2-3.

¹¹³ Schlesinger, 'The Preparatory Period in the Revolutionary Party' *Soviet Studies*, 14, 4, April 1963, pp. 447-460 at p. 458.

understanding would inevitably be dynamic.

A consequence of this aspect of Schlesinger's Marxism was that his main area of concern was the relevance of theory for the present day. He had little interest in classical Marxism beyond what was necessary to understand its most recent manifestation. The 'classics' were inherently ephemeral. Thus, Schlesinger focussed upon what was still applicable to modern developments and ways in which Marxism had adapted and developed.

A final characteristic of Schlesinger's Marxism was his desire to counter errors and myths in general understanding, a feature of all Schlesinger's scholarship. It can be discerned in his assertion of Marxism's continued relevance, his insistence that critics who pointed to instances of redundancy in the classic texts failed to comprehend the nature of Marxism. He argued that many opponents of Marxism wrote from a distorted cold war perspective and that many within the Marxist camp presented a vulgar or utopian version that was equally incorrect. For example, he consistently sought to expose vulgar theorists who reduced Marxism to the level of basic economic determinism. In 1964 he wrote:

Thus the twentieth century vulgarizers of Marxism, including the 'economists' not only misrepresented Marxist doctrine, but were indeed several decades behind the course of history. Their misrepresentation of Marx' early political writings as some kind of 'infantile disorder' of Young Hegelian origin, and their neglect of Engels' later writings stressing the non-economic factors on the shaping and interaction of history, belongs to the realm of political mythology.¹¹⁴

In his lecture series, Schlesinger insisted that Marxism was not a theory of simple 'economic breakdown' despite the efforts of Marx's pupils to turn it in to

¹¹⁴ Schlesinger, 'The Dispute and the Socialist Tradition', p. 178.

one.¹¹⁵

There are a number of reasons why a thorough investigation of Schlesinger's writings on Marxism is necessary. Firstly, it was the foundation of his scholarship. Marxism was the methodology underpinning his work; impacting upon everything: from the choice of subject, to method of investigation, to his paradigmatic assumptions. Without first exploring that theoretical foundation, it is not possible to fully appreciate his writings. The overdeterminist character of this thesis makes such an investigation imperative. Schlesinger's theoretical understanding was overdetermined by, and in its turn overdetermined, all other arenas of his life – his other scholarly work and political activities for example. In addition, an explicit recognition of Schlesinger's political standpoint, something he was keen to make as transparent as possible, provides a further layer of understanding. It provides context and background, as well as a deeper understanding of his motivations.

Secondly, Schlesinger was a respected, erudite and prolific scholar. His theoretical development and writings on the subject of Marxism are worthy of detailed examination for that reason alone. They represent a neglected resource, material that can provide information on one of the most significant political and philosophical doctrines of the last century. His work offers new perspectives and insights on Marxism and, in particular, the great Marxist theoreticians such as Rosa Luxemburg and Lenin. Schlesinger's interpretations were original and add to the existing body of literature but have not been investigated to any great extent.

Finally, a focussed study of Schlesinger's Marxism is valid because it provides an opportunity to understand and elucidate, as much as is possible, the work of a twentieth century thinker and political activist. Schlesinger was a representative of his generation – a Central European communist and scholar who devoted his entire life to his political cause. He was an active party

¹¹⁵ Schlesinger, *Lectures*, 3, p. 7.

member in Austria, Germany and Russia, but like many of his comrades, one who fell foul of the Soviet authorities and spent the latter part of his life in purely academic surroundings. In many ways, Schlesinger, as a Marxist, epitomised his time. An investigation of his writings on the subject can, thus, illuminate many aspects of that time and generation.

Schlesinger had remarkably similar experiences to many of his more well-known colleagues and contemporaries and they shared a common understanding of their ideology. For example, Schlesinger had much in common with fellow Austrian and party member Ruth Fischer. They emerged from similar backgrounds, politically and educationally. They maintained contact throughout their lives and worked within the same party milieu.¹¹⁶ However, Schlesinger established his post-Soviet life in the UK rather than the USA and retained his allegiance to the Marxist cause and, to him, its greatest hope and embodiment, the Soviet Union. In contrast, Fischer made her disillusionment and antipathy to Stalin's Russia and the leading Soviet Party clear in her work. Also, whilst she was a more senior figure in the communist movement, Schlesinger was her more well-known superior in their latter academic careers. An investigation of Schlesinger's Marxism and theoretical understanding can provide a background for the better appreciation of his contemporaries, such as Fischer, and the environment in which they developed and worked.

Schlesinger's writings on Marxism place him firmly within the European post-Leninist Marxist intellectual era. He shared many of the concepts of peers Georg Lukács and Karl Korsch and, again, emerged from the same party experiences. Schlesinger used the same vocabulary and wrote from within the Marxist intellectual paradigm of that time. However, he differed in his analysis from them and this is investigated in some detail within the thesis. Schlesinger provided original commentary, but an examination of his work also presents an opportunity to throw light on a man of his time, a

¹¹⁶ The author was kindly given copies of correspondence between Schlesinger and Fischer covering the period from 1951 to 1957 by a private collector. They wrote about current political events and their academic work. The correspondence was friendly and familiar.

representative of European radical activism and thought.

The writing of history in the Soviet Union as a window on Schlesinger's scholarly career

The second focus of this investigation concerns Schlesinger's work on the subject of historical writing and its theoretical framework in the USSR. The devotion of much of this thesis to the issue of Soviet historical output may seem unusual, since Schlesinger is not primarily known for his work in this field. However, it will be shown that such an approach is significant for a greater understanding of Schlesinger as an academic, commentator and memoirist, as well as furthering knowledge on the nature of the Soviet state, both under Stalin and following his death. In fact, it is by far the most fruitful method of investigation available to any student of Rudolf Schlesinger.

The production of historical writing had always been seen as a vital cog in the Communist party and state machinery in the Soviet Union. As J. Barber has argued,

...history as a branch of knowledge was basic to Marxism in a way that no other subject, with the exception of political economy, was... For Marx, the fundamental task of intellectual enquiry was understanding the process of social change, and to this the study of history held the key. Hence the central place occupied by historical analysis in his writings and in those of his most distinguished followers – and hence, conversely, given the political purpose of Marxist theory and practice, the intrinsic political importance of historical scholarship to Marxists.¹¹⁷

A state, which was purportedly Marxist in essence, would regard the researching, writing and teaching of history as a matter of great political

¹¹⁷ J. Barber, *Soviet Historians in Crisis, 1928-1932*, (London, Macmillan Press Ltd., 1981), p. vii.

significance. Such was the importance of historical analysis to the CPSU, it was deemed necessary to intervene directly in the historical sphere and to exert a degree of control over historical production.

G. M. Enteen has pointed out how important the work of historians was to Soviet life in general:

Party officials and historians themselves demanded that the past be made useful. Industrialization, heroic leadership in World War II, enhanced status in the community of nations, even the passage of time – none of these could provide the vital links of identification and loyalty between the regime and the populace. Nor was their universal acceptance of roles delegated by virtue of images of the future...Thus even though there was so little Soviet history, so little experience marking the new path to the future, the burden of justification fell to the Marxist historians.¹¹⁸

A great deal of the party and, thus, the state's legitimacy was based on its superior understanding of historical forces and relationships; this was the Marxist cornerstone which assured the confidence of the populace. As Enteen argued, '... party rule rested on promises about the future that claimed credibility by virtue of knowledge of the past'.¹¹⁹ This ensured that party and state machinery would take more than a passing interest in the historical field.

The very legitimacy and morality of the Communist regime rested upon the historical necessity, even inevitability, of the Revolution and the subsequent assumption of power by the Bolshevik party. It was, therefore, vital for that regime to insist that its people were educated in a manner which emphasised that legitimacy. This task lay with the historians, and as such, the state was bound to exert a great deal of influence, if not control, over them. The

¹¹⁸ G. M. Enteen, *The Soviet Scholar-Bureaucrat*, (University Park, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1978), p. 2.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.* p. 2.

significance of historical legitimacy increased with the continued survival of the Communist state. The absence of the anticipated European revolution required explanation, with reference to the past and the teachings of the founders of Marxism, as did the continued hardships of civil war followed by rapid industrialisation. The political ascendancy of Lenin and the subsequent crises in the search for a suitable heir, culminating in Stalin's supremacy, laid yet more importance on the concept of historical legitimacy. Individual authority could now be traced in a direct line from the founders of Marxism, through Lenin. One's actions during and immediately after the Revolutions of 1917 were the historical legacy on which one's authority came to be based. Control over the portrayal of that legacy became paramount.

The Bolsheviks demonstrated the significance they attached to historical writing almost immediately after the October Revolution. As historian J. D. White argued, '... from its very inception the Soviet regime established a firm control over how the history of the Russian revolution was written'.¹²⁰ In another work, he warned, '... the period [1917-1924] was not at all a relatively free one for historical scholarship. There was no time whatsoever in which important areas of history were not subject to political control'.¹²¹ As early as spring 1918, Trotsky was to write an authoritative historical account of the revolution, entitled *The Russian Revolution to Brest-Litovsk*.¹²² In this presentation of events Trotsky was keen to demonstrate that the Bolsheviks had not simply seized power. They had enjoyed popular support and would have achieved a democratic victory; but were, ultimately, forced to act, since their opponents were attempting to interfere with that democratic process. That the Bolsheviks saw an urgent need for a formal historical account of events is further evidenced in the fact that Trotsky wrote the short text whilst participating in the vital Brest-Litovsk peace negotiations.¹²³ As Trotsky wrote in *My Life*:

¹²⁰ J. D. White, *The Russian Revolution 1917-1921*, (London, Edward Arnold, 1994), p. 253.

¹²¹ White, 'Early Soviet Historical Interpretations of the Russian Revolution 1918-1924', *Soviet Studies*, 37, 3, July 1985, pp. 330-352 at p. 349.

¹²² L. Trotsky, 'The History of the Russian Revolution to Brest-Litovsk', *The Essential Trotsky*, (London, Unwin, 1963) pp. 21-111.

¹²³ *Ibid.* p. 25.

We had with us a good many stenographers who had once been on the staff of the State Duma, and so I began dictating to them, from memory, a historical sketch of the October revolution. From a few sessions there grew a book intended primarily for foreign workers. The necessity of explaining what had happened was imperative; Lenin and I had discussed this necessity more than once, but no one had any time to spare.¹²⁴

The Bolsheviks immediate concern with the portrayal of events of the Revolution could also be seen in the glowing forward Lenin gave to the American journalist, John Reed's *Ten Days That Shook the World*.¹²⁵ This text followed Trotsky's account; asserting that the Bolsheviks reluctantly took up the reins of power only after such a course was demanded by the masses.

By the time the Bolsheviks had begun to sense victory in the Civil War they were able to take a more positive historical approach to their part in the October Revolution. The new interpretation was initially represented by Lenin himself, in 'Left Wing Communism, An Infantile Disorder', a pamphlet distributed to delegates at the Second Congress of Comintern in July and August 1920.¹²⁶ Lenin argued that the Bolshevik party, with its methods of organisation, its Marxist principles and strict discipline, were uniquely responsible for the success of the Revolution and their assumption of power. He continued: 'Certainly, almost everyone now realises that the Bolsheviks could not have maintained themselves in power for two and a half months, let alone two and a half years, unless the strictest, truly iron discipline had prevailed in our Party'.¹²⁷ If others aspired to socialist revolutions in their own countries they would have to follow the model of Bolshevik experiences, as propounded by Lenin. He argued: 'Now we already have very considerable

¹²⁴ Trotsky, *My Life*, (London, Thornton Butterworth Ltd., 1930) p. 317.

¹²⁵ J. Reed, *Ten Days that Shook the World*, (New York, International Publishers, 1919). The introduction by Lenin began: 'With the greatest interest and with never slackening attention I read John Reed's book, *Ten Days that Shook the World*. Unreservedly do I recommend it to the workers of the world. Here is a book which I should like to see published in millions of copies and translated into all languages. It gives a truthful and most vivid exposition of the events' (p. v).

¹²⁶ Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 41, pp. 1-104.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.* p. 5

international experience which most definitely shows that certain fundamental features of our revolution have a significance which is not local, not peculiarly national, not Russian only, but international'.¹²⁸ Once again a leading member of the Bolshevik hierarchy took it upon themselves to expound an interpretation of historical events.

None of these works were undertaken by professional historians. Nor did the authors claim any accurate scholarly methodology. Yet, they were all intended as truthful accounts of a significant historical event. The speed at which they were produced suggests the importance that the Bolsheviks placed on the need for official interpretations. That these works had significant political and propagandist motivations enhances the thesis that the writing of history was of great importance to the Russian Communists. These examples only cover the period immediately concerning the Revolution and the Bolshevik party. They do not prove that the regime was concerned with the historical field in general. However, they do show an apparent fixation by the party and new Soviet power with historical writing and the presentation of history. In fact, J. D. White, referring to Lenin's 'Left-Wing Communism', argued that since there were no historical accounts published that supported Lenin's account: 'For Lenin the next logical step was to find a means by which historical works supporting his point of view could be published, or at least prevent the publication of works which contested it'.¹²⁹ This would certainly indicate how important a concern it was to the new regime.

This is further evidenced in the establishment of a 'Commission on the History of the Russian Communist party and the October Revolution' (Istpart) in August 1920, which was under the direct authority of the Central Committee. This institution was responsible for collecting, editing and publishing materials related to the party and the Revolution. It could demand the handing over of materials and had Soviet authority at its disposal to enforce this.¹³⁰ According to White: 'Istpart was able to establish within the country a virtual monopoly on

¹²⁸ Ibid. p. 3.

¹²⁹ White, 'Early Soviet Historical Interpretations', p. 340.

¹³⁰ See *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 5, 1930, p. 165. For more information on the establishment of Istpart see White, 'Early Soviet Historical Interpretations', pp. 340...

materials relating to the history of the Russian revolution... Istpart organizations were established throughout the country to ensure that local histories of the revolution accorded with the interpretation approved by the centre'.¹³¹ Istpart was merged with the Lenin Institute in 1928, by which time it had established a network of around 100 local branches. Although Barber has argued, 'In academic circles... Istpart's reputation was not very high',¹³² its success in publishing, by 1924, volumes of collected works by Lenin, Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev, attests to its influence and commitment to presenting a Bolshevik interpretation of history.

There is no evidence to suggest that Lenin intended to assert the kind of control over the historical field which was to become commonplace by the late 1920s under Stalin. However, whilst leader of the governing Bolshevik party, he certainly took an active interest in the production of historical writings and interpretations. He felt that some party control over historical output was desirable. Even Barber, who counterpoised Lenin's non-interference with Stalin's activism in this field, argued that the basis of early Bolshevik policy towards intellectuals displayed some elements of control. The two-pronged approach included the belief that old, 'bourgeois' intellectuals would be gradually won over to the socialist cause, as the successes of the new regime became increasingly apparent. Yet crucially, the second element was, according to Barber, '... the policy of educating the new generation of intellectuals in the spirit of Marxism, thus eventually creating a truly 'red' intelligentsia'.¹³³ Such a policy suggests the desire to gain considerable control over the actions and output of intellectuals, including historians.

The degeneration of historical scholarship under Stalin is well documented.¹³⁴ The state's interference in the historical field increased enormously on Stalin's assumption of power, proving once again the importance the Communists attached to the subject of history. As White pointed out:

¹³¹ White, *The Russian Revolution 1917-1921*, p. 256.

¹³² Barber, *Soviet Historians in Crisis, 1928-1932*, p16.

¹³³ Barber, *Soviet Historians in Crisis, 1928-1932*, p2.

¹³⁴ See Barber, *Soviet Historians in Crisis, 1928-1932*, R. D. Markwick, *Rewriting History in Soviet Russia* (Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2001), pp. 38-47, C. E. Black (ed.) 'History and Politics in the Soviet Union', *Rewriting Russian History* (Vintage Books, New York, 1962), pp. 3-33.

More and more areas of historical study acquired a political significance as they were used as ideological ammunition by the Soviet leadership or by one or other of the political groupings. This situation provided the opportunity for Stalin to exert his influence over all historical writing between 1930 and 1934. The old division between subjects falling into the province of Istpart and the rest of historical study disappeared. From then on all areas of history became subject to Stalin's control.¹³⁵

One of the most significant events in this process was Stalin's 1931 letter to the editors of the journal *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, 'Some Questions Concerning the History of Bolshevism'.¹³⁶ In it, he insisted that certain historical matters were not open to debate or discussion since they were 'axioms of Bolshevism'; thus greatly curbing historians' freedom of action. The culmination of an all-powerful Stalinist monopoly of historical interpretation was embodied in the orthodox historical textbook *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks): Short Course*, published in 1938.¹³⁷

The study and research of history had always been of great significance to the Soviet state. However, alongside his own brand of Marxism, the controlled historical interpretations expounded by Stalin's historians constituted the twin pillars of the Soviet Union's theoretical base. Historical and Marxist theory formed the essence of Stalinist legitimacy. Any close investigation of Schlesinger's analysis of these subjects, a previously undervalued and even ignored analysis, will inevitably shed new light on this vital aspect of the changing Soviet regime.

As well as providing a new insight into these cornerstones of the CPSU and the Soviet Union, a close examination of Schlesinger's writings on the study of history in the USSR is vital for a better understanding of Schlesinger as an

¹³⁵ White, *The Russian Revolution 1917-1921*, p.259.

¹³⁶ Stalin, *Sochineniia*, 13, pp. 84-102.

¹³⁷ *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks): Short Course*, (Moscow, Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1945).

academic and writer. This is, not least, because the issue of historical study in the Soviet Union was obviously of such great interest to him. The importance he attached to it can be seen in the sheer volume of work he produced on the subject. Over the course of his academic career in the West, Schlesinger wrote 17 articles and papers dealing specifically with the writing of history in the USSR. He made reference to it in many of his other papers and books. Schlesinger did not publish a book on the subject. However, the series of four articles he published in his own journal *Soviet Studies*, so quickly after its inception, amount to a major monograph.¹³⁸ The importance he attributed to developments in the Soviet historical field was also discernable in the fact that Schlesinger's first publication on his return to the West in 1938 concerned that very topic.¹³⁹

It seems clear that from the mid 1930s onwards Schlesinger wished to be, amongst other things, a professional historian. Writing in his unpublished memoirs in 1944 Schlesinger argued that, with hindsight, he should have taken the job offered to him at the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute in 1935. He could then have prepared several serious historical works in order to gain a chair of modern German history at a Soviet university. Instead, he accepted a post at Comintern Headquarters.¹⁴⁰ His interest in the subject of history and his desire to become a published historian are also evidenced in the number of historical texts he produced during his time in the UK. These included *Russia and her Western Neighbours* published jointly in 1942 with George W. Keeton, Professor of Law and Dean of the Faculty of Law of University College, London. The work concerned, in the authors' words, an attempt, '... to interpret the policy of the Soviet Union in relation to her Western neighbours from the time of the Revolution in 1917 down to the Nazi attack on

¹³⁸ Schlesinger, 'Recent Soviet Historiography, As Illustrated by the Journal *Voprosy istorii* (Questions of History), Vols. 1948-9 – I', *Soviet Studies*, 1, 4, April 1950, pp. 293-312; Schlesinger, 'Recent Soviet Historiography, As Illustrated by the Journal *Voprosy istorii* (Questions of History), Vols. 1948-9 – II', *Soviet Studies*, 2, 1, July 1950, pp. 3-21; Schlesinger, 'Recent Soviet Historiography, As Illustrated by the Journal *Voprosy istorii* (Questions of History), Vols. 1948-9 – III', *Soviet Studies*, 2, 2, October 1950, pp. 138-162; Schlesinger, 'Recent Soviet Historiography, As Illustrated by the Journal *Voprosy istorii* (Questions of History), Vols. 1948-9 – IV', *Soviet Studies*, 2, 3, January 1951, pp. 265-288.

¹³⁹ Schlesinger, 'Neue sowjetrussische Literatur zur Sozialforschung', *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, VII, 1938, pp.166-199.

¹⁴⁰ Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Illegalität und Emigration*, p. 136.

Russia in June 1941'.¹⁴¹ Another early historical publication of Schlesinger's concerned the evolution of federalism, in theory and practice. Entitled, *Federalism in Central and East Europe*, the monograph was published in 1945 and took a historical approach to the subject, tracing the changing forces of centralisation and federalism both chronologically and geographically.¹⁴² The work included large sections on federalist theory, including Austro-Marxist conceptions and the emergence of a specifically Soviet federalism. However, it concentrated on the changing nature and success of federalism in Germany, from Nineteenth Century concepts of democracy, through Bismarck's empire and into the Nazi era; in the former Austrian territories, from the seismic upheavals of 1848 through to the collapse of the Hapsburg monarchy; and in the USSR, from Tsarist to modern times. In 1950 Schlesinger again engaged with the historical world of Central Europe, publishing a book on *Central European Democracy and its Background*.¹⁴³ In it, he concentrated upon the history of the trade union movement and the development of Social Democracy and working-class representation.

Schlesinger produced two documentary readers that can be regarded as historical in intent and character. Both were published by the International Library of Sociology and Social Reconstruction founded by the sociologist Karl Mannheim.¹⁴⁴ The first, *The Family in the USSR*, was published in 1949.¹⁴⁵ Although predominantly a sociological work, the book was chronological and source-based. Its introduction traced the changing debates and legal frameworks from pre-Soviet times to post-war USSR policies and experiences. Documents were fully annotated by Schlesinger and concerned Soviet attitudes towards the family, on such topics as marriage, divorce, co-education and abortion.¹⁴⁶ The second work, *The Nationalities Problem and*

¹⁴¹ G. W. Keeton and Schlesinger, *Russia and her Western Neighbours*, p 5.

¹⁴² Schlesinger, *Federalism in Central and East Europe*, (London, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., Ltd., 1945).

¹⁴³ Schlesinger, *Central European Democracy*.

¹⁴⁴ Schlesinger was to publish five books for the Library, the two discussed above as well as *Central European Democracy*; *Soviet Legal Theory*, and *Marx His Time and Ours*.

¹⁴⁵ Schlesinger, (ed.) *Changing Attitudes in Soviet Russia: The Family in the USSR*, (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1949).

¹⁴⁶ It seems that Schlesinger intended to publish another work on the same topic, this time a monograph on social institutions within the USSR. See Schlesinger, *Social Institutions*,

Soviet Administration, followed a similar pattern.¹⁴⁷ It seems clear, from this brief sample of Schlesinger's historical writings, that he did consider himself to be a historian. This explains the interest Soviet historical output held for him and validates the detailed examination this thesis devotes to the subject of Schlesinger's writing on Soviet historians and their work.

Another reason for the concentration of this thesis upon Soviet historiography is because it is one of the only topics on which he wrote over time. His first paper on the topic was published in 1938, immediately after he left the Soviet Union.¹⁴⁸ One of Schlesinger's last publications was also on the topic of developments in Soviet historical sciences and appeared in 1967 in the *Annuaire de L'U.R.S.S.*¹⁴⁹ Thus, an investigation of his writings on this particular topic allows for an appreciation of his work over a long time period, nearly thirty years, from 1938 to 1967. Whilst Schlesinger may have written on a huge variety of subjects during this same time frame, he did not do so with the same degree of regularity. The theme of Soviet historians and Soviet history was one to which he continually returned. The use of these papers, therefore, provides the degree of consistency necessary in any examination of one person's writings.

The fact that Schlesinger wrote about the topic of Soviet historical studies over a long time period allows the reader to take a comparative approach. It becomes possible to monitor Schlesinger's analyses and comments over time. This is one of the most academically rewarding aspects of this particular investigation, because one is able to perceive the modifications and modulations of Schlesinger's approach to, and assumptions about, the subject. One of the chief assertions of this thesis is that Schlesinger's opinions and emphases regarding Soviet historical output did change over time. This

(Glasgow University Library, Rudolf Schlesinger Papers, MS Gen 1660, 40, Unpublished, 1955)

¹⁴⁷ Schlesinger, (ed.) *Changing Attitudes in Soviet Russia: The Nationalities Problem and Soviet Administration* (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1956).

¹⁴⁸ Schlesinger, 'Neue sowjetrussische Literatur zur Sozialforschung'.

¹⁴⁹ Schlesinger, 'Some Recent Developments in the Social Sciences in the USSR', *Annuaire de L'U.R.S.S.*, 1967, pp. 19-34. Both his earliest and last piece on the theme are remarkably similar in intention, approach and tone. This can be seen in the similarity of titles.

has enormous repercussions for any consideration of Schlesinger as an academic, commentator and memoirist and inevitably affects any examination of his other writings. This decisive determination would have remained undiscovered if not for the close examination of his historiographical writings over time. In short, no other study would have highlighted this extremely significant factor for any appreciation of Schlesinger.

Schlesinger did write on one other subject regularly over the course of his academic career in the West, the theme of Soviet legal theory and Soviet law in general. However, these publications often took the form of book reviews, which contained little, if any, analysis or discussion of the issues of Soviet law. Schlesinger reviewed books containing interpretations of Soviet law by Western scholars,¹⁵⁰ as well as translations of works on legal theory by Russian and Soviet theoreticians¹⁵¹ and reviews of Soviet books on the subject.¹⁵² He also frequently published commentaries, small articles reporting on contemporary events and discussions in the field of law in the Soviet Union. One example of this is an article entitled 'Soviet Theories of International Law' published in *Soviet Studies* in 1953.¹⁵³ It reported on debates, organised by the Chair of International Law of the Academy of Sciences, on the character of a recently published and sharply criticised book on international law. Although this provided Western readers with new information on contemporary discussions of legal matters in the Soviet Union, it offered little in the way of insightful analysis. Schlesinger did not particularly engage with the subject, instead merely reporting the result of others' engagement.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁰ See, for example, Schlesinger, "'Justice in Russia": A Dissent', *The Yale Law Journal*, 60, 6, June 1951, pp. 976-985.

¹⁵¹ See, for example, Schlesinger, 'Philosophy vs. Soviet Law', *American Journal of Comparative Law*, 1, 1952, pp.155-161.

¹⁵² See, for example, Schlesinger, 'Yuridichesky Slovar (Legal Dictionary)', *Soviet Studies*, 6, 2, October 1954, pp. 157-161.

¹⁵³ Schlesinger, 'Soviet Theories of International Law', *Soviet Studies*, 4, 3, January 1953, pp.334-338.

¹⁵⁴ For another example of a brief report on contemporary discussions in the Soviet Union, see Schlesinger, 'Proposed Changes in Family Law', *Soviet Studies*, 8, 4, April 1957, pp. 453-457. The short article concerned debates amongst legal theoreticians on the need to amend the Family Law of July 8, 1944, especially in regard to divorce and paternity. Interestingly, the article implicitly highlights the thawing of intellectual debate in Soviet Russia, commensurate with official renunciation of aspects of Stalinism at the Twentieth Congress.

Schlesinger wrote several papers and one monograph on the theme of the Soviet legal system and these do represent analytical scholarship. For example, in 1951 he published an article on 'Court Cases as a Source of Information on Soviet Society'.¹⁵⁵ The stated purpose of the paper was, '... to illustrate the way in which such materials [Supreme Court publication of cases and reports in legal periodicals] may be used and to indicate some specific problems arising in the interpretation of this type of evidence'.¹⁵⁶ Schlesinger drew readers' attention to the many problems involved with the use of court cases as source material on the Soviet Union, such as censorship and propaganda issues as well as the inevitably unrepresentative, even controversial, circumstances of those caught up in legal disputes. However, he was also keen to highlight what it was possible to learn from this material once all of the caveats had been considered. He argued that it was possible to discern what the highest courts wished to distinguish as important cases and decisions, as well as the ways in which lower ones were obviously failing to carry out their functions in a manner satisfactory to their superiors. An examination could, thus, help to determine judicial priorities, especially following a change in the law. Other examples of his scholarship on matters of Soviet law include two papers Schlesinger published in 1960 which documented the recent changes and debates surrounding social aspects of law.¹⁵⁷ The first dealt specifically with the incipient 'transfer of ordinary judicial functions to social organizations'.¹⁵⁸ The second concerned issues of social regulation brought about by the re-codification of the labour law.

It is clear that Schlesinger did not write as much about legal theory as he did on the subject of history in the Soviet Union. The subject of legal theory could not form the basis of this investigation because there is not the same wealth of material. Also, much of it requires a specialist understanding and vocabulary in order to properly engage with the material. This investigation is not, nor ever intended to be, a specialist legal work and so would be

¹⁵⁵ Schlesinger, 'Court Cases as a Source of Information on Soviet Society', *American Slavic and East European Review*, 10, 3, October 1951, pp. 163-176.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.* p. 164.

¹⁵⁷ Schlesinger, 'Social Law I', *Soviet Studies*, 12, 1, July 1960, pp. 56-82; Schlesinger, 'Social Law II', *Soviet Studies*, 12, 2, October 1960, pp. 145-167.

¹⁵⁸ Schlesinger, 'Social Law I', p. 57.

insufficiently equipped to fully critique Schlesinger's writings on the subject. The Soviet legal system was constantly evolving and often reflected the abnormal aspects of society rather than its norms.¹⁵⁹ This also makes it unsuitable as the focus of a study since it cannot translate so easily to other areas on which Schlesinger wrote. In contrast, an investigation of his work on historical writing in the Soviet Union enhances understanding of his output on other topics such as Marxist theory and society.

No source can be understood as a whole, isolated in time and space. This is especially true when a consciously over-determinist approach is taken, such as in this investigation. The detailed reading of Schlesinger's work on history, therefore, provides the context in which to understand his writings as a whole. A thorough examination of his works on the historical sphere in the Soviet Union allows for a conception of Schlesinger's understandings, motivations and assumptions, both implicit and explicit; it reveals the political and intellectual paradigm within which he operated. The motives, values and assumptions it is possible to perceive in his work on historiography would have been an inherent aspect of his other writings. However, they would have remained indiscernible without this investigation. Having revealed these, his other writings can be better understood and appreciated. It is only through a detailed, thorough examination of Schlesinger's writing on the study and researching of history in the Soviet Union that one is able to gain insight into his work as an academic. This method opens a window on to his scholarly career by revealing the peculiarities of his political and intellectual paradigm.

The borders of the investigation: what the thesis is *not*

As well as carefully outlining the remit of this investigation, it is also essential to clarify its boundaries; it is vital to identify what the thesis is not in order to fully comprehend what it is. As outlined in the methodology section, this thesis is not a biography of Schlesinger in the traditional sense, concentrating instead on his role as an academic and writer. It can be viewed as an

¹⁵⁹ Schlesinger, 'Court Cases as a Source of Information on Soviet Society', p. 163.

'intellectual biography', one based predominantly on his writings. In fact, the bulk of the investigation focuses on two particular sets of writing for the reasons outlined above.

Nor is this a bibliography, elucidation or narration of Schlesinger's collected works. He had a phenomenally wide variety of interests and wrote on a great many of them. He was also an expert in many academic disciplines: having trained as a social scientist; found employment as a professional economist and published as a sociologist, political theorist and historian. It would, therefore, be impractical to cover all of these writings and topics in the depth necessary for any meaningful understanding of Schlesinger's work to emerge. Often his published writings appear as a running commentary on events he perceived as significant in the development of the Soviet Union, interspersed with monographs on a particular topic.

He is, perhaps, best known for his two documentary readers published by the International Library of Sociology and Social Reconstruction.¹⁶⁰ However, it is important to note that these were only written because of an invitation to do so. In the introduction to one, Schlesinger wrote: 'In the spring of 1944 the late Professor Karl Mannheim suggested to me that I publish in this Library a number of volumes dealing with the changing attitudes prevailing in Soviet Russia towards specific aspects of social and political life'.¹⁶¹ This suggests that the subject and nature of the works were not Schlesinger's free choice. The two volumes do contain some analysis but mainly consist of translations of documents and so are somewhat unusual within Schlesinger's publication portfolio.

On the whole, his selection of subjects for examination or publication appears arbitrary and even chaotic, something which is best demonstrated with reference to a brief sample of his published writings. In October 1949, for example, Schlesinger published a 'commentary' on the Biology discussion

¹⁶⁰ Schlesinger, (ed.) *The Family in the USSR*. Schlesinger, (ed.) *The Nationalities Problem and Soviet Administration*.

¹⁶¹ Schlesinger, *The Family in the USSR*, p. vii.

that had been taking place in the Soviet Union.¹⁶² He had never previously written about biological research, but now commented on, in his words, ‘... the first occasion of Party intervention in the direction of scientific research and teaching outside the social sciences proper’; an event that represented a, ‘...fundamental change even in comparison with the philosophical discussions’.¹⁶³ The report concerned the dispute between so-called orthodox or academic geneticists and the school of T. D. Lysenko.¹⁶⁴ The official ascendancy of this latter school was confirmed by Lysenko on 7 August 1948 in a speech in which he claimed that his opening statement for the Lenin Academy of Agricultural Sciences of the USSR, a week before, had been approved by the Central Committee.¹⁶⁵ It was further evidenced with the publication of Yuri Zhdanov’s letter to Stalin, published in *Pravda* on the same day, in which he apologised for earlier criticism of Lysenko.¹⁶⁶

The interpretation discernible in this paper on scientific research coalesced with that present in his writings on historical research in the Soviet Union published at the same time. Despite the obvious problems concerning state interference in academic study, Schlesinger appeared to provide a positive portrayal of events. For example, when discussing the disagreement between the followers of Lysenko and the ‘academic geneticists’ he wrote that there were frequent, ‘... complaints from both sides about alleged victimization’. He argued: ‘None of the facts mentioned seem to indicate anything worse than an atmosphere of embittered struggle between academic schools, each trying to use its position in order to give appointments and promotion to its supporters’.¹⁶⁷ Schlesinger insisted that Soviet science was seen as an agency of Soviet society and, thus, party principles of discipline and submission to the majority line had been introduced to the field. However, he

¹⁶² Schlesinger, ‘The Biology Discussion: A Commentary’, *Soviet Studies*, 1, 2, October 1949, pp. 106-118.

¹⁶³ Schlesinger, ‘The Biology Discussion’, p. 106.

¹⁶⁴ Lysenko and his school were proponents of the ideas of I. Michurin and they developed a ‘science of agriculture’ which was anti-genetic. The proactive appeal to the Soviet Union of a theory emphasising the possibilities man would have to alter nature and his environment are obvious.

¹⁶⁵ Schlesinger, ‘The Biology Discussion’, p. 110.

¹⁶⁶ Y. Zhdanov, ‘Yuri Zhdanov’s Letter to Stalin’, *Soviet Studies*, 1, 2, October 1949, pp. 175-177.

¹⁶⁷ Schlesinger, ‘The Biology Discussion’, p. 107.

continued, whilst this may have appeared strange to western scientists, ‘... the point in dispute between academic geneticists and Michurinists was not the legitimacy of applying Party philosophy to Science, but in the way it should be applied’.¹⁶⁸ Schlesinger portrayed the discussions as lacking any overt hostility or of having any extreme repercussions for the losers. In other positive statements, Schlesinger appeared very optimistic about the likelihood of progress in biological and agricultural research and argued that official support of the Lysenko school was not unconditional.¹⁶⁹ Whilst generally conforming in interpretation to Schlesinger’s other writings of the time, this paper on the biology discussion had little else in common with them. The subject matter was an atypical choice, which helps to expose the occasionally random character of Schlesinger’s work.

Another example of Schlesinger’s eclectic publication record is shown in his 1954 paper on developments in Soviet agriculture.¹⁷⁰ Earlier in his research career Schlesinger had concentrated on the subject of agriculture and its development in a Marxist state.¹⁷¹ He had touched upon it in earlier writings when in the UK, especially when discussing general Soviet developments.¹⁷² However, the attention he paid to the topic was intermittent, to say the least, in the latter stages of his scholarly career. This particular paper concentrated upon recent changes in Soviet policies regarding kolkhoz farms and the attempts made, since August 1953, to increase the production levels of livestock and vegetables, which still languished at pre-World War One levels despite recent improvements in grain output.¹⁷³ The paper contained a detailed commentary and analysis of recent changes, using a combination of western and Soviet sources. The tone was factual in the main, although Schlesinger did offer some opinion. He argued that, although he had

¹⁶⁸ Schlesinger, ‘The Biology Discussion’, p. 117.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid. p. 113 and p. 114.

¹⁷⁰ Schlesinger, ‘The Decisions on Agriculture’, *Soviet Studies*, 5, 3, January 1954, pp. 234-245.

¹⁷¹ For example, Schlesinger spent from February 1923 until spring 1925 working in a research institute in Berlin. He specialised in agrarian problems. Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Bis zu Hitlers Machtübernahme*, p. 97.

¹⁷² See for example Schlesinger, ‘Some Problems of Current Kolkhoz Organization’ *Soviet Studies*, 2, 4, April 1951, pp. 325-355.

¹⁷³ Schlesinger, ‘The Decisions on Agriculture’, p. 235.

previously anticipated, ‘... the transformation of kolkhoznik into a state employee’, he now felt that, ‘... with the private plot re-asserted as an important element in the kolkhoznik’s economy, the state’s control of the skilled labour force may become a main means of keeping the activities of the majority of the agricultural population within the framework of the plan’.¹⁷⁴ He now felt that, instead of creeping nationalisation of kolkhoz farms, more and more of the specialists and managers involved in agricultural production would become employees of the state and thus control would be exercised in this manner.

Once again, this publication conformed to the broader interpretations discerned in Schlesinger’s writings on the historical sphere in the Soviet Union. Consistent with his other publications after Stalin’s death, Schlesinger made an overt criticism of the deceased party leader, referring to ‘... the stubbornness with which policies, once adopted, were pursued before Stalin’s death’.¹⁷⁵ He also wrote of Khrushchev’s depiction of the previous neglect in creating incentives for agricultural output as an ‘error’; illuminating the incipient de-Stalinisation process.

A paper published in *Economics of Planning* in 1965 again illustrates the diverse nature of Schlesinger’s publication record, this time its subject being Soviet planning.¹⁷⁶ Schlesinger had written on planning several times and in a paper published the year before, he spoke of ‘... a major study on the Soviet decision to industrialize the country and to collectivize agriculture which I hope to publish in the near future’.¹⁷⁷ However, this monograph was never to materialise and so his articles on the subject of planning remained relatively isolated.

The 1965 article began by asserting the importance of planning as a universal legacy of the October revolution: ‘As an historical phenomenon, though not in

¹⁷⁴ Schlesinger, ‘The Decisions on Agriculture’, pp. 244-245.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid. p. 237.

¹⁷⁶ Schlesinger, ‘Some Observations on the Historical and Social Conditions of Planning’, *Economics of Planning*, 5, 1-2, 1965, pp. 53-73.

¹⁷⁷ Schlesinger, ‘A Note on the Context of Early Soviet Planning’, *Soviet Studies*, 16, 1, July 1964, pp. 22-44 at p. 22.

all its theoretical concepts, planning represents part of the impact of the Russian revolution on twentieth-century history'.¹⁷⁸ He then expounded a brief history of Soviet planning, arguing that first efforts originated from technological, as well as political, considerations. As the regime stabilised, Lenin focused on electrification as a symbol of the power of planning before concentrating the efforts of *Gosplan* on the solution of practical problems. There then developed, in the mid twenties, a battle for the planning concept between 'the "teleologists", who conceived it as a conscious transformation of reality, against the "geneticists", the mere forecasters of envisaged market developments', before collectivisation proved to be the decisive factor influencing planning.¹⁷⁹

Again, the tone and emphasis of this paper was consistent with his other publications. For example, Schlesinger displayed the pragmatic attitude towards collectivisation prevalent in all of his work. There were veiled references to the apparent necessity of collectivisation, despite the costs, and seeming praise for Stalin's technical abilities.¹⁸⁰ However, consistent with another common interpretation present in his writings of this time, especially those concerning the historical sphere, Schlesinger also condemned aspects of 'Stalinism'. In this case the 'anti-cosmopolitan' rejection of anything perceived as western or bourgeois. He argued that developments in planning were possible, '... as soon as "de-Stalinisation" had marked the removal of ideological obstacles to the application of modern western methods'.¹⁸¹

The paper then sympathetically described the different, and evolving, species of planning present in Eastern Europe, in Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, and the USSR. Schlesinger argued that since 1961 the Soviet Union operated a tentative combination of planning and elements of market economics. He argued that two types of economies existed in the developed world at this time. One in which there existed '... occasional interference, for socially

¹⁷⁸ Schlesinger, 'Some Observations on the Historical and Social Conditions of Planning', p. 53.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.* p. 57.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.* p. 58.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.* p. 59.

approved purposes, with a market substantially conceived as self-regulating', and another defined by '... the use of market institutions by a state-controlled economy applying "teleological" planning and using the public ownership of the "commanding heights" as a means to enforce the planners' decisions'.¹⁸² Whilst there may well have been aspects of 'convergence' visible between these two systems, different types of planning would continue to characterise different social formations.

This very brief description of a few of Schlesinger's publications demonstrates the breadth of subjects on which he wrote throughout the course of his academic career. His choice seems haphazard, perhaps even arbitrary, and his publications were often a running commentary on contemporary events rather than researched and analytical scholarship. It is, therefore, clear why an in-depth investigation necessarily had to focus on one or two particular topics. Schlesinger's writings on Marxism and the subject of historical work in the Soviet Union were chosen for the many reasons outlined above.

Rudolf Schlesinger: The Scholar Advocate

This thesis describes Schlesinger as a 'scholar advocate' for a number of reasons. The 'scholar' label requires little explanation – Schlesinger worked as an academic, theorist and writer for most of his life. He was an intellectual of some standing and would have described himself as a scholar. However, Schlesinger also used his scholarship for a distinct, Marxist purpose: to promote and clarify understanding of, and sympathy for, the Soviet Union and Marxism in general. He was, thus, an 'advocate' in both senses of the word. He supported and wrote in favour of Marxism, communism and its embodiment, however imperfect, in the shape of the Soviet Union. He was also an advocate in the sense of pleading for or defending another. He defended the Soviet Union against its detractors, its cold war critics and disillusioned ex-supporters. He attempted to redress the balance against what

¹⁸² Ibid. p. 68.

he viewed as the 'cold war' or reactionary character of Western scholarship. He also tried to correct the myths and misconceptions surrounding the subject. That is not to say that Schlesinger blindly or unthinkingly defended all actions of the state, all Marxist writers and variations. He was not a propagandist or even a member of the Communist party in the second half of his life. However, this thesis argues that he acted as a 'scholar advocate', in both the content and interpretation of his writings.

Schlesinger's pragmatism or utilitarianism enabled him to remain loyal to the idea of the Soviet experiment and Marxist methodology despite setbacks or the unsavoury actions of its leaders, notably Stalin. Schlesinger took a long-term perspective. He believed that his attitude should not be swayed by unfortunate episodes, such as the purges, or the hard but necessary decisions of a party attempting to retain power in the face of hostile encirclement. He was, thus, a scholar advocate when many had turned their back on the Soviet Union. To Schlesinger, these critics were utopian and he derided them for their naivety and wishful thinking. He gave a description of utopianism in *Marx His Time and Ours*, writing: 'the utopian represents an intrusion of the element of will into the realm of knowledge. Thus it exceeds the limits of a rational explanation of the work which the observer can give within the conditions of his social surroundings'.¹⁸³ Utopians had unrealistic expectations and judged the Soviet Union from an unfair ideal. The scholar advocate, in contrast, was a realist.

It is argued here that a noticeable difference exists within Schlesinger's writings over time. Those written before Stalin's death, in the period from Schlesinger's return to the West until 1953, were markedly distinct from those written after 1953. It is possible to determine in which period a work was written by noting the interpretation within it. In his earlier papers, Schlesinger was generally very positive about the Soviet Union. He defended Soviet developments, events and interpretations and, whilst never ignoring the more negative aspects, he tended to provide an optimistic conclusion or impression.

¹⁸³ Schlesinger, *Marx His Time and Ours*, p. 89.

This attitude was in contrast to his personal memoir reflections on life in the Soviet Union. In these, Schlesinger bemoaned the lack of intellectual opportunity and stifling academic climate and presented a negative picture of Soviet life under Stalin. Schlesinger's later writings, those produced after 1953, and especially those after 1956 were characterised by his retrospective condemnation of events under Stalin, particularly in Soviet historiography.

There are a number of possible explanations for this apparent dichotomy. But it is argued the most fruitful answer is that Schlesinger was acting as 'scholar advocate'. He was reacting against perceived cold-war hostility within Western scholarship and was defending the Soviet Union against utopian criticism. Thus, in the early years, Schlesinger attempted to provide a more positive interpretation of events in Soviet Russia to counterbalance the profusion of overly negative appraisals. His pragmatism allowed him to find achievements and cause for optimism in the dark years of Stalin's leadership. The deleterious consequences of Stalin's rule did not blind Schlesinger to the successes of industrialisation for example. Later, after Stalin's death, when the Soviet Union itself acknowledged the excesses and extra-legal methods of the preceding years, Schlesinger was able to provide a more distanced perspective and saw much cause for optimism for the future. He felt justified in not letting his attitude be dictated by the short-term distortions of one man's rule. He now attempted to counter what he saw as the unfair concentration of Western scholarship and opinion on what was, in overall terms, a few short years in the history of Marxism and communism.

The thesis begins with an investigation of Schlesinger's Marxism. Following the chronology of his own theoretical education and development, it traces Schlesinger's writings on Luxemburg, Lenin, Marx and Engels and, finally, Stalin. Schlesinger appears an ardent Leninist but, according to his understanding of Marxism, recognises that Lenin's contribution and its very success, now makes it obsolete. A new stage, encompassing new socio-economic conditions is now necessary. In accordance with the timeline posited, in the years before 1953/6, Schlesinger appears to suggest that Stalin's contribution to Marxist theory may hold the key to this next dialectical

stage. However, Stalin's theoretical impact is dismissed after his death. Schlesinger argues that it is necessary to remove the Stalinist distortions from Leninism before progressing to the next stage. The examination of Schlesinger's writings on Stalin provides insights into his pragmatism and allows for a greater understanding of his general attitude. Schlesinger's writings on Marxism appear of their time: post-Leninist, post-war, European and have much in common with Lukács. However, they display a great deal of originality and provide the context for all his other scholarship.

The thesis then turns to an examination of Schlesinger's writings on Soviet historiography. A detailed investigation of his own experiences as an academic in the Soviet Union are undertaken, based on his memoir reflections. These provide a context for his academic work and highlight the discrepancies between his personal opinion of the Soviet intellectual environment and the seemingly positive description of it he provided in published work. There then follows a detailed critique of his writings on the subject up to 1953 and from the death of Stalin onwards. The difference in nuance and interpretation between these two periods is highlighted and possible explanations for the distinction are discussed.

Part One: Schlesinger and Marxism

The assumption that a person's writings and activities cannot be viewed in isolation, but instead, are inherently interconnected with, and overdetermined by many aspects of the social, political and economic setting from which they emerge is a view that Schlesinger would no doubt concur with. It is also one that this enquiry supposes as self-evident. It is thus vital to investigate, as far as possible, the political, theoretical or philosophical foundations which comprise the basis of Schlesinger's scholarly work; remembering that with Schlesinger's overtly Marxist understanding, the philosophical is the political. These elements form the layers of overdeterminancy that comprise the background, influence and constituent components of his writings. A correct understanding of the theoretical underpinning of Schlesinger's work, as well as a determination of its consistency or otherwise, over time, allows for a thorough critique of his work on the writing of history in the Soviet Union in the second half of the thesis.

Part One of the thesis, therefore, attempts to discern and explain the particular Marxist foundation of Schlesinger's scholarship. It will examine his political and philosophical education and influences, as elucidated in his unpublished memoirs, before engaging with his more mature theoretical evolution as certain concepts of his early years were rejected. Schlesinger began his active political life as a strong supporter of Rosa Luxemburg, so some time is spent examining his writings on this topic. However, with the embracing of Leninist principles of organisation, Schlesinger became an ardent and lifelong adherent of Lenin's writings and theories. A thorough investigation of his writings on Lenin will, thus, be undertaken. Schlesinger believed that his appreciation of Lenin finally allowed him to fully understand the work of the Marxist founders, Marx and Engels. Thus, his writings on this topic are explored and discussed. A comparison of Schlesinger's attitude with those of his contemporary Georg Lukács will also be attempted; before,

finally, turning to an examination of Schlesinger's attitude towards Stalin as a political and philosophical theorist. Is this attitude consistent over time or does it change depending on the orthodoxy of the CPSU, mirroring his interpretation of the historical field and Soviet events in general? Does his analysis alter before and after Stalin's death?

Chapter Two: Rosa Luxemburg

In his memoirs, Schlesinger described his early philosophical influences as being of an academic nature. After an early affection for 'mised patriotism', demonstrated by his reading of Tolstoy, the works of Zola led him to a gradual non-Marxist type of socialism.¹ However, under the influence of the anti-war atmosphere, Schlesinger was soon to take a stronger approach to politics. He wrote, '... if the recognition of the principle of revolution (as opposed to my initial absolute pacifism) can be seen as fundamental, I can date the essential turning point from Autumn 1917 and I have my late teacher, Karl Gruenberg, to thank for the decisive impression of my life'.² Schlesinger attended a series of his lectures on the ancestors of modern socialism whilst still at school and was greatly inspired.³ Later in his memoirs, Schlesinger wrote that Karl Grünberg provided him with excellent training in historical methods and the history of the labour movement at university. So much so that when, years later, Schlesinger was researching *Central European Democracy* he was still

¹ Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Bis zu Hitlers Machtübernahme*, p. 24. For more information on Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910) the Russian literary giant, pacifist and critic of state and church see W. Rowe, *Leo Tolstoy*, (Boston, Twayne Publishers, 1986). Emile Zola (1840-1902) was a French novelist and journalist who wrote about working class subjects in a similar manner to Charles Dickens in England a generation before. Apart from his literary legacy, not least the series of twenty interlinked novels entitled *Les Rougon-Macquart*, Zola was most famous internationally for his role in the 'Dreyfus Affair' of the 1890s. Zola wrote a press article headlined 'J'Accuse' to provoke French authorities to try him for libel in order to highlight the wrongful imprisonment of the Jewish military officer Dreyfus and its surrounding anti-Semitism (F. Hemmings, *The Life and Times of Emile Zola*, (London, Paul Elek, 1977).

² Ibid. p. 24. In the English edition, Schlesinger wrote, 'So far as the war was concerned, an intelligent person might get inspiration from Tolstoy but, in the prevailing conditions, one could not be a Tolstoyan as regards the appropriate methods of bringing it to an end. War and economics, however, were not separated by a Chinese wall: if the replacement of my original Tolstoyanism by the acceptance of revolution is regarded as the essential turning point, I owe my later [late] teacher, Karl Gruenberg, the decisive impression of my life' (Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: Whither Germany?*, p. 20-21).

³ Karl Grünberg (1861-1940) was born in to an Austrian Jewish family in Romania. He moved to Vienna aged twenty to study law and converted to Roman Catholicism in 1892 to take up a university career. By the end of 1899 he was appointed a temporary Professor of Political Economy at the University of Vienna; a position that was not made permanent until 1912. In 1910 he founded the journal *Archiv für die Geschichte des Sozialismus und der Arbeiterbewegung* and moved to Frankfurt in 1924 to become the first director of the Frankfurt Institute (see chapter 6, p. 210). He played a huge role in making the study of Marxism and the history of the labour movement possible within official institutions. This was demonstrated at an academic ceremony to open the institute; in his speech, Grünberg openly expressed his commitment to Marxism. Grünberg stoped work in January 1928 following a stroke but survived for a further twelve years (R. Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School*, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1994) trans. M. Robertson, pp. 21 – 34).

able to use his doctoral thesis on Central European socialism and the trade union movement as source material.⁴ The admiration and respect that Schlesinger felt for Grünberg continued throughout his life. In one of Schlesinger's last writings, in 1969, he spoke of Grünberg as one of the founders of the study of socialism and described him as 'my revered teacher'.⁵

Schlesinger argued that his theoretical training at university was not all that it could have been. This was especially true of his appreciation of Marxist theory.⁶ The atmosphere of his student days was entirely dominated by western Marxist traditions, despite the presence of Russian Mensheviks, and communist Yugoslavs and Bulgarians in his Students' Association. This was partly explained by the fact that, in those days, according to Schlesinger, '... the majority of the early writings of Marx and Engels, and practically all of the writings of Lenin's, were inaccessible: [Franz] Mehring's writings were regarded as the last word in the philosophical interpretation of Marxism'.⁷ Schlesinger was not to fully engage with the works of Marx and Leninism proper until later.

Next to Marx, his other early philosophical influence was Rosa Luxemburg.⁸ Schlesinger had a personal connection to his mentor, since he was close to

⁴ Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: Whither Germany?*, p.92. In the preface to the book, Schlesinger referred to Prof. Grünberg as the person to suggest this doctoral theme (Schlesinger, *Central European Democracy*, p. x).

⁵ Schlesinger, *The Marxist Movement*, p. 11.

⁶ Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: Whither Germany?*, p.93.

⁷ Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Bis zu Hitlers Machtübernahme*, p. 85. In the English edition, Schlesinger included the writings of Georgi Plekhanov alongside Mehring's (Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: Whither Germany?*, p.93). Franz Mehring (1846-1919) was born to a middle class family in Pomerania. As a journalist and writer, Mehring opposed Bismark and became a Lassallean socialist in the late 1870s but soon converted to Marxism and joined the Social Democratic Party. Mainly writing in *Neue Zeit*, Mehring attacked revisionists and remained a staunch internationalist throughout the war, alongside Luxemburg and Liebknecht, becoming a founder of the Spartacus League shortly before his death (F. Mehring, *Karl Marx, The Story of his Life*, (London, John Lane, 1936) especially translator's preface by E. Fitzgerald, pp. vii - x).

⁸ Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Bis zu Hitlers Machtübernahme*, p. 89. In his memoirs, Schlesinger noted that he moved to Germany in February 1923 to work at a research institute under Eugene Varga as a sociologist specialising on agrarian problems (See above chapter 1, p. 5). Although Schlesinger had enormous respect for Varga he did not seem to have any great theoretical influence upon him (Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: Whither Germany?*, pp. 102...).

Karl Liebknecht's sons whilst at university. In 1920 they had fled Weimar Germany and continued their studies in Austria. They soon joined Schlesinger's circle of friends and he occasionally holidayed with them and their stepmother, Sonya. She received many letters from Luxemburg and would read them aloud to the group. Schlesinger wrote in his memoirs:

It is quite possible that the diverse right-wing factions in the German C.P [Communist Party]... appreciated more of Luxemburgism proper, i.e. of Rosa's limitations. But when I moved amongst the people to whom a person who had been as good and devoted a Marxist as I ever hoped to be, had written such letters, who knew such aspects of her life as a model revolutionary would hardly remember, I became conscious of the whole broadness of her personality.⁹

This, and endless discussions with the younger Liebknecht boy, gave Schlesinger a huge admiration for Luxemburg, something which is quite clear from his memoirs.

Schlesinger asserted that, at this time, he was unaware Luxemburg had formulated many of her theories on spontaneity in polemic against Lenin; or that these theories were incompatible with the ideas of Leninism.¹⁰ He thus, in his own words, '... did not even become conscious of the need to make some choice' between Luxemburg and Lenin.¹¹ Schlesinger wrote in his memoirs that he knew the two theorists disagreed on certain matters, but '... everyone, in those days, disagreed with everyone on some issues'.¹² Instead, Schlesinger argued, his study of German Social Democracy filled him with respect for this great leader who, without resorting to theories of anarchism, opposed the narrow bureaucratism of the established labour movement and recognised the revolutionary initiative of the uneducated and unorganised

⁹ Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: Whither Germany?*, p. 98. Schlesinger did not say so, but it is assumed that Liebknecht's wife would reread old letters from Luxemburg, since the author was already dead at this point.

¹⁰ Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Bis zu Hitlers Machtübernahme*, p. 95.

¹¹ Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: Whither Germany?*, p. 98.

¹² *Ibid.* p. 99.

masses.¹³ He also appreciated the attention she paid to the problems of the colonies, writing: 'Her *Accumulation of Capital* was important mainly in that it broadened that concept of the oppressed masses to include all the colonial peoples'.¹⁴ Luxemburg's economic treatise, first published in 1912, postulated that only economic imperialism could account for continuous capitalist accumulation, but the opportunities for this were finite as more and more of the globe was used up in this manner. Marxism asserted the collapse of capitalism due to the weight of its economic contradictions. Luxemburg sought the cause of this collapse from outside the individual capitalist economy, arguing that capitalism could continue to grow so long as there were primitive economies to be drawn into spheres of influence. Eventually the entire surface of the earth would become part of this process of capitalist accumulation. Capitalism could no longer grow and would, therefore, collapse.¹⁵ However, in these early days, Schlesinger was able to ignore the differences Luxemburg's approach to the colonial question had to that of Lenin's, which he also admired.

Even after the KPD's aborted revolutionary attempts of 1923, Schlesinger still adhered to Luxemburgist principles.¹⁶ He reiterated his commitment to the Luxemburg tradition as late as 1924. In his memoirs he spoke of writing a pamphlet in February of that year, which used Luxemburg's theory of capitalist accumulation as its foundation.¹⁷ However, the KPD was now moving away from Luxemburg's theories. As Schlesinger expressed it: 'In the theoretical field, 'Bolshevization of the party' was now proclaimed as the

¹³ Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Bis zu Hitlers Machtübernahme*, p. 89.

¹⁴ Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: Whither Germany?*, p. 99. R. Luxemburg, *Gesammelte Werke*, (Berlin, Dietz Verlag, 1972), 5, pp. 5 – 411 and pp. 413-523.

¹⁵ J. P. Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg*, (London, Oxford University Press, 1966), Volume I and II, p. 530... As J. Robinson, in the introduction to the English translation of Luxemburg's work, wrote, 'Cloth from Lancashire pays for labour in America, which is used to produce wheat and cotton. These provide wages and raw materials to the Lancashire mills, while the profits acquired both on the plantations and in the mills are invested in steel rails and rolling stock, which open up fresh territories, so that the whole process is continually expanding'. This could not continue indefinitely, hence capitalist collapse (Luxemburg, *The Accumulation of Capital*, (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1951), pp. 26-27).

¹⁶ For a description of these events by Schlesinger see *Central European Democracy*, p. 212....

¹⁷ Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Bis zu Hitlers Machtübernahme*, p. 147. He also made reference to a 1924 article based on these same principals in Schlesinger, 'Marxism Without An Organizing Party', p. 250, footnote 34.

overcoming of the Luxemburgist tradition, which had proved bankrupt in the German events of 1923'.¹⁸ According to Schlesinger's memoirs, the slogan 'bolshevisation' was useful to the KPD because it exposed the difference between Lenin's Bolshevik theory and the left-wing Menshevism of Trotsky and Rosa Luxemburg, something which, up to that point, few outside Russia fully appreciated.¹⁹ Schlesinger did point out, however, that the term was later misused. It came to imply the mechanical transfer of a central leadership, as developed over years of revolutionary struggle in a giant empire with a backward past, to parties in entirely different circumstances, such as those engaged in the fight against fascism.²⁰

Schlesinger wrote of the horror he felt when the party first began attacking Luxemburg and her theories in 1924.²¹ He wrote a long article in her defence, but it remained unpublished on the insistence of Karl Korsch, the then editor of *Die Internationale* and a fanatical anti-Luxemburgist according to Schlesinger.²² The new Central Committee of the KPD set about publishing translations of Lenin's works, including *What is to be Done?* and on reading these, Schlesinger's support of Luxemburg waned considerably.²³ According to his memoirs, Schlesinger was now able to appreciate the irreconcilable antagonism between Lenin's and Luxemburg's approaches.²⁴ It was, perhaps, possible to integrate some elements of Luxemburg's theory of capitalist accumulation into a theory of imperialism based upon Leninist principles. However, for Schlesinger, '... after the experiences of 1923 one could not remain a Communist while siding with her against Lenin on organisational problems'.²⁵ When it became clear to Schlesinger that he needed to make a choice between Luxemburg and Lenin he chose the latter with little hesitation. According to Schlesinger this alteration in his theoretical approach was to

¹⁸ Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: Whither Germany?*, p. 175. The term 'Bolshevisation' was first officially proclaimed at the Fifth Comintern Congress in June-July 1924 and later modified in the Fifth Enlarged Plenum of the ECCI in March-April 1925 (McDermott K, and Agnew J., *The Comintern* p. 45).

¹⁹ Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Bis zu Hitlers Machtübernahme*, p. 149.

²⁰ Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: Whither Germany?*, p. 177.

²¹ Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Bis zu Hitlers Machtübernahme*, p. 151.

²² Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: Whither Germany?*, p. 180.

²³ Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 6, pp. 1-192.

²⁴ Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Bis zu Hitlers Machtübernahme*, p. 152.

²⁵ Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: Whither Germany?*, p. 180. Schlesinger's underlining.

dictate his attitude to internal problems in the KPD and also to decide '... upon the further course of my life'.²⁶ Such a theoretical transition cannot have been taken lightly.

Schlesinger argued that once he fully understood Luxemburg's complete system he had to oppose it; however, he believed it was still years before he had comprehended Marx's scheme in full and came to the conclusion that Luxemburg's economics were untenable.²⁷ For some time he attempted to interpret the differing theories of Lenin and Luxemburg as reflections of the needs of different stages of development in the western socialist movement. He wrote:

The first of these stages involved the breaking of the sectional machinery built for the achievements of improvements within the given state, the second the construction of a new, socialist state and society: the first required maximum democracy (...), the second discipline especially on the part of the masses whose upheaval created the new order. Rosa Luxemburg regarded that discipline as too high a price for the formation of the new order.²⁸

In his later version of the memoirs, Schlesinger wrote that, in British exile, he had come to think along remotely similar lines; '... in some places and in some stages of the historical transition process a synthesis between liberalism and socialism will be found'.²⁹ However, he quickly clarified this uncharacteristic statement by adding the caveat that such a possibility could only exist under the impact of a revolutionary transition, '... in certain decisive countries, in crucial moments'.³⁰ Schlesinger ended this particular discussion of his conversion from 'Luxemburgism' by once again reasserting his 'Leninist' credentials. Referring to the possibility of a more Luxemburgist

²⁶ Ibid. p. 182. This sentence has been scored out on the copy of the memoirs used here, but remains perfectly legible nevertheless.

²⁷ Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Bis zu Hitlers Machtübernahme*, p. 152.

²⁸ Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: Whither Germany?*, p. 181.

²⁹ Ibid. p. 181.

³⁰ Ibid. p. 182.

transition or revolution he concluded, 'No intellectual equipment superior to Leninism had been found for such points and moments of crisis'.³¹

Although Rosa Luxemburg was a great influence upon him, Schlesinger argued that, as a member of the KPD, he had attempted to help free the German labour movement from the limitations of her theories. With hindsight, he argued that if the generation preceding his had been capable of successfully 'bolshevizing' the labour party, the German revolution could have conquered power on some occasion between 1918 and 1923. Rosa Luxemburg could then have become Germany's greatest leader, having under these circumstances been better protected. Her theories of 1905-1913 would thus have been remembered only because their defeat allowed for revolutionary victory as well as the correction of many limitations of the Russian movement.³²

Schlesinger's attitude towards Luxemburg altered significantly over time. It was clearly something over which he had thought, and suffered, a great deal. There appeared to be a certain amount of self-justification involved in his memoir writings on the subject. He felt it necessary to explain his earlier admiration, even devotion, to her person and theories, as well as his subsequent rejection of them in favour of more Leninist conceptions. However, it is clear that he consciously and publicly retained a great deal of respect for her as a Marxist and revolutionary.

All of Schlesinger's exile writings on Luxemburg are consistent and support the views expressed in his memoirs. They show an admiration for her theories and activities but a fundamental dispute with her conclusions and methods. For example, in *Central European Democracy* Schlesinger referred to Luxemburg several times. When discussing her attitude towards the party and its role, he wrote: 'She rejected the Bolshevik idea of a party which would support the sectional interests of labour while continuously representing

³¹ Ibid. p. 182.

³² Ibid. p. 99.

before it the tasks implied in a future revolutionary situation'.³³ According to Schlesinger, the Luxemburgist party could only assume a leading role on the assumption of an imminent socialist revolutionary situation. The party presumably stayed in the background when revolutionary circumstances were not present and could do little to attempt to instigate such a climate. Schlesinger argued that Rosa Luxemburg's theoretical approach, '... was governed by the combination of a Menshevist attitude towards Russian organizational problems with a strictly anti-bureaucratic attitude to those of Germany'.³⁴ Such descriptions remain consistent with the post-1924 attitudes he wrote about in his memoirs.

Schlesinger once again emphasised Luxemburg's devotion to 'spontaneity' and spontaneous mass action. However, he now criticised this commitment, arguing, '... she failed to see that even 'spontaneity' is not pure democracy, but is only action under *ad hoc* leadership'.³⁵ For Luxemburg, the direction of the political mass strike, a synonym of the revolutionary process, should be left to the 'revolutionary period', to spontaneous mass action. But Schlesinger questioned whether it was correct to expect the proper decisions to be taken by '... an *ad hoc* meeting of workers in a factory'.³⁶ This orthodox Leninist position differed markedly from the earlier unflinching admiration for her faith in the uneducated and unorganised masses he described in his memoirs.

Yet Schlesinger did show some sympathy for Luxemburg's 'error'. He argued that, perhaps, she had not been aware of the gulf between the mythology of peoples' 'spontaneous' actions in past revolutions and their actual behaviour in these situations. He also suggested, '... she was horrified by the prospect that a group of people who regarded themselves as competent to 'organize a revolution' on a national scale might also look upon themselves as competent to establish a revolutionary dictatorship'.³⁷ Her views on, and criticisms of, the Bolshevik Party and its behaviour after the revolution would perhaps have

³³ Schlesinger, *Central European Democracy*, p. 105.

³⁴ *Ibid.* p. 105.

³⁵ *Ibid.* p. 105-6.

³⁶ *Ibid.* p. 106.

³⁷ *Ibid.* p. 106.

encouraged her belief in mass action over that of an organised party.³⁸ In fact, it seems that Schlesinger retained some sympathy for this position, perhaps implying that it was not unreasonable for the time. He wrote that she had reason to doubt that any organisation was preferable to the initiative of some ad hoc body; 'In contrast, any centralized body shouldering national responsibilities might be handicapped either by the shortcomings of information available when the movement was an underground one, as in Russia, or by its own bureaucratic conceptions of proper financial provisions, legal safeguards, etc., as in Germany'.³⁹

Schlesinger published a long paper dedicated to discussions of Luxemburg and her political and theoretical legacy in *Soviet Studies* in 1966.⁴⁰ Ostensibly, the article formed a review of J. P. Nettl's recently published biography of Rosa Luxemburg.⁴¹ However, Schlesinger conceded: 'The following lines are intended as a treatment of a great figure in a specific stage in the development of the Marxist movement, reference to Mr. Nettl's book being made where this may help to make my argument clearer'.⁴² In the paper Schlesinger clearly reiterated his profound respect for Luxemburg the 'great figure', as well as reinforcing the tremendous influence she had played in the development of his Marxist outlook and politics. He stated once again that it was through Luxemburg that he found '... his way to revolutionary socialism'.⁴³

Schlesinger's paper coincided with and expounded upon the views expressed in his memoirs and previous writings. He began by declaring that, in his

³⁸ See, for example, 'The Russian Revolution' written in 1918 (Luxemburg, *Gesammelte Werke*, 4, pp. 332-365) and 'The Russian Tragedy' published in *Spartacus* in 1918, which criticised the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk as a capitulation to German militarism (Luxemburg, *Gesammelte Werke*, 4, pp. 385-392).

³⁹ Schlesinger, *Central European Democracy*, p. 107.

⁴⁰ Schlesinger, 'Marxism Without an Organizing Party'

⁴¹ Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg*. Schlesinger wrote positively about the publication, asserting that it was well rounded, due to the focus on Polish aspects of her life, her personal life, as well as her German and Russian activities and experiences. However, he also argued that Nettl was far removed from the intellectual world of his subject, seeming to suggest that he could not fully understand it. He also argued that some of Nettl's factual errors were of a nature that suggested the author had not sufficiently familiarised himself with the material (Schlesinger, 'Marxism Without an Organizing Party', p. 225).

⁴² Schlesinger, 'Marx Without an Organizing Party', p. 225.

⁴³ *Ibid.* p. 225.

younger days, during the post-Great War revolutionary upheavals, he and his colleagues had been convinced of the orthodoxy of Luxemburg's Marxism: 'Rosa Luxemburg had explained Marxism in a way which she regarded, and we accepted, as the orthodox one'.⁴⁴ Schlesinger argued that most other Marxists' rejection of her theory of accumulation had seemed irrelevant, as it explained to his generation the inevitability of war if the capitalist mode of production remained. It was only when the revolutionary defeat in Germany was compared with success in Russia that he felt the need to critically reassess 'Luxemburgism'. He wrote: 'It was known that Rosa had had disagreements with Lenin on many issues, in particular the organization problem, a wrong solution of which appeared to be the main cause of our defeats'.⁴⁵ His description of the timing and motive behind his disillusionment also conformed to that expressed in his memoirs.

He went on to discuss whether Rosa Luxemburg's theories and influence had played a part in the defeat of the revolution in Germany: 'Had the theoretical foundations, so far as they were specifically 'Luxemburgist', been mistaken?'.⁴⁶ He answered this question in the positive, making reference to his 1953 *Central European Democracy*, in which he had argued that, had a Bolshevik-type party existed in Germany between January 1918 and October 1923, there would have been many opportunities to seize power.⁴⁷ Schlesinger stated that thirteen years later he still believed the statement to be true. However, he added that now he felt the decisive question was whether the absence of such a party in the West was due to tactical errors or was simply an expression of the immaturity of the time for certain kinds of revolution.⁴⁸ He did not offer an answer. In general, he wrote, '... the need for communism to overcome Rosa Luxemburg's limitations was obvious, and remains obvious, if only because she failed to notice the fact, emphasised by

⁴⁴ Ibid. p. 226.

⁴⁵ Ibid. p. 227.

⁴⁶ Ibid. p. 227.

⁴⁷ Schlesinger, *Central European Democracy*, p. 372.

⁴⁸ Schlesinger, 'Marx Without an Organizing Party', p. 227, footnote 3.

Lenin and even Hilferding, that capitalism had entered a new stage, economically as well as politically'.⁴⁹

Rudolf Hilferding's study, first published in 1910, concerned the increasing concentration of capital in large corporations. This produced a growing number of cartels and trusts, and thus enhanced the role of banks and, ultimately, finance capital. His study of the economic and political consequences of these developments led to his theory of economic crises and of imperialism, the economic policy of finance capital. Monopoly prices inevitably stifled domestic demand and created the need for state intervention to ensure protectionism at home. At the same time, aid increased export demand for the cartels. Nationalist expansionist policies ensued, leading to an intensification of conflict between developed nations. Nationalism became not a question of national independence or cultural autonomy but the ideology of imperialism. Crucially, the socialisation of the economy reinforced by the greater role of the state, meant that the socialist movement should not aim to smash the bourgeois state but should instead take it over and expand its role.⁵⁰ According to Schlesinger, Luxemburg's failure to accommodate the new stage of capitalist imperialism and monopoly rendered 'Luxemburgism' obsolete, even before it was able to enter the decisive stage of revolutionary upheavals in the first half of the twentieth century. This was in stark contrast to Lenin's correct recognition and interpretation of developments.⁵¹

In terms of her long-term theoretical influence upon Germany, and the KPD in particular, Schlesinger believed it to be a negative one. He wrote: 'She would always have been ready to fertilize with her blood the soil for a truly revolutionary party of the German proletariat. In the moral sense she has done so. But she was a theoretician, and her theoretical legacy proved to be a handicap for the development of the party'.⁵² For him, the worst aspect of her legacy was that she left the party unable to correct its own mistakes, without

⁴⁹ Ibid. p. 228.

⁵⁰ R. Hilferding, *Finance Capital* (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981).

⁵¹ See for example, Lenin's 'Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism' written in 1916. Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 27, pp. 299 – 426.

⁵² Schlesinger, 'Marx Without an Organizing Party', p. 245.

moving towards the opposite extreme. The KPD thus proved incapable of capitalising on 'Germany's Kornilov', the Kapp Putsch of March 1920. Schlesinger insisted

The thesis that shortcomings of Rosa Luxemburg's concepts formed the root, not of any particular one of the 'deviations' within our party, but of its incapacity to keep a balance and its ensuing propensity to fall from 'rightist' mistakes into 'leftist' ones, and *vice versa*, has been maintained by me repeatedly.⁵³

Schlesinger gave no explanation as to how Luxemburg had been responsible for this flaw. Perhaps her lack of organisation, her non-Leninist approach to party, was to blame. In any case, it was clear that Schlesinger now felt that his one time idol's influence had hindered revolution in Germany. This was in marked contrast to the enormous admiration he had previously described and, according to Schlesinger, was evidence of his increasing recognition of the correctness of Leninist principles.

Once again echoing his earlier writings on the subject, Schlesinger noted that these failures of 'Luxemburgism' had necessitated, and indeed brought about, the 'Bolshevisation' of the KPD. He noted that this term, and the policies surrounding it, came to be misused by some. In particular, Schlesinger mentioned the KPD leadership of Ruth Fischer and Maslow, who had, '... played a temporary and provocative yet completely unprincipled part' in the 'Bolshevisation' process.⁵⁴

Schlesinger insisted that a great deal of the anti-Luxemburgism that found expression in the early and mid twenties in Germany, were merely attempts by party members to demonstrate their loyal pro-Stalinist position. It was often, as Schlesinger expressed it, '... a mere hook on which to hang extreme caricatures of Stalinism, which would not have been defended by the

⁵³ Ibid. p. 246, footnote 28.

⁵⁴ Ibid. p. 227.

authentic Stalin'.⁵⁵ However, the 'authentic Stalin', was not to be spared criticism either:

Stalin himself is co-responsible because of his extreme simplifications of the struggle against a conglomerate described as 'Trotskyism' and, what is more substantial, because of his silent, and nationalist, assumption that the development of Russian Bolshevism was *the* development of revolutionary Marxism in the twentieth century.⁵⁶

Such criticism of Stalin, and his nationalism in particular, came to characterise Schlesinger's later writings on Soviet Russia. He pointed out that the 'de-Stalinisation' process offered a unique opportunity to reconsider the non-Russian tradition of Marxist thought. As he put it, '... destalinization encourages looking back to those forms of Marxism which *preceded* the system described by Stalin as 'Leninism''.⁵⁷ Rosa Luxemburg's legacy could now be put into perspective, away from the vagaries of Stalinist polemics and factional disputes. Significantly, Schlesinger inherently criticised Stalin and his influence on Marxist theory; a system 'described' as 'Leninism' suggests that this was not, in fact, the case. Stalin must, therefore, have corrupted it.

In this 1966 paper, Schlesinger provided a description of the chronological evolution of 'Luxemburgism'. He examined what was unique to her philosophy and hypothesised as to why she seemed unable to come to terms with Engels' later writing and Lenin's in general. He compared 'Luxemburgism' to what he saw as the three basic implications of Engels' approach in the period following Marx's death, and, in particular, in his 1892 article, *Socialism in Germany*.⁵⁸ He concluded that Luxemburg was only fully aware of the first two. Engels' article was originally written for a French audience, to inform them of the history of German Social Democracy. Engels argued that, given the developing social and economic situation in Germany, the Socialist Party

⁵⁵ Ibid. p. 227, footnote 5.

⁵⁶ Ibid. p. 227, footnote 5. Author's italics.

⁵⁷ Ibid. p. 228. Author's italics.

⁵⁸ Marx and Engels, *Werke*, 22, pp. 245-260.

would continue to garner electoral support, to such an extent that eventually the bourgeoisie would react, provoking a revolutionary situation. However, Engels argued that if war were to break out, most likely provoked by a belligerent Russia, then the triumph of socialism would either be immediate or pushed back tens of years. The German socialists would be forced to fight in order to defend the position they had managed to achieve.

To Schlesinger, the first implication of Engels' approach was the need to develop class consciousness amongst the proletariat, '... the social class called to form the basis of the new social cohesion has to be organized and made conscious of its task'.⁵⁹ Secondly there followed the understanding that, in Schlesinger's words, '... all partial reforms must be seen as links in a prolonged revolutionary process'.⁶⁰ It was only through these successful attempts at gaining reforms, as well as temporary setbacks, that the new class would mature in experience and organisation, thus preparing it for the demands of its ultimate task. The third implication was the need to recognise and formulate plans for long periods without wars or depression. There could be no reliance on continual immiseration or cyclical economic disasters to increase consciousness and prepare the class for its upcoming role. As Schlesinger put it: 'By now we have had two decades without major depressions, with an evident raising of the productive resources in both parts of the world, and the hope that the threat of world war may recede. What then?'.⁶¹

As regards the first of Schlesinger's implications, he argued that Rosa Luxemburg was well aware of the need to develop class consciousness amongst the revolutionary class. He wrote that this required the, '... development of a proletarian 'sub culture' within West European civilisation'.⁶² Referring to Luxemburg's *Mass Strikes, the Party and Trade Unions*, Schlesinger insisted that she understood the pivotal role of class consciousness as much more than an element of the 'cultural

⁵⁹ Schlesinger, 'Marx Without an Organizing Party', p. 230.

⁶⁰ Ibid. p. 232.

⁶¹ Ibid. p. 248.

⁶² Ibid. p. 230.

superstructure'.⁶³ He wrote: 'As distinct from the young Marx, yet in complete agreement with the mature Marx, who had appreciated trade union struggles as instrumental in the growing consciousness and demands of the masses, Rosa did not believe that mere misery creates class consciousness'.⁶⁴ In fact, '... in her concept (and, *a fortiori*, in that of Engels) there was *no* contradiction between improvement in the condition of the working class and the preparation of that class for the eventual fulfilment of its historical task'.⁶⁵ This gave Luxemburg's argument a degree of dynamism, especially when confronted with periods of relative stability and even prosperity. Improved conditions, and such reforms as the working class was able to extract from capital, nonetheless prepared them for the coming revolutionary struggle; reform was a stepping stone towards revolution, not its alternative.

The second problem for 'classical' or pre-revolutionary Social Democracy was that, if the socialist movement was to avoid a splitting of the working class into any number of potentially opposed interest groups, these reforms had to be understood as linking elements within a longer revolutionary process. According to Schlesinger, it was this concept that the Revisionists such as Eduard Bernstein attacked at the turn of the century.⁶⁶ Bernstein questioned the continual worsening of conditions for the working class and the need for a united movement transcending sectional aspirations. Luxemburg rose to the fore as a Marxist authority in German circles in defence of this second implication of Engels' in her 'Reform and Revolution' first published in 1899.⁶⁷ She eloquently defended Marx's labour theory of value and theory of economic cycles, but did so with no particular originality. She also argued that

⁶³ Luxemburg, *Gesammelte Werke*, 2, pp. 93-170 esp. pp. 126-127.

⁶⁴ Schlesinger, 'Marx Without an Organizing Party', p. 231. See, for example, Luxemburg, *Gesammelte Werke*, 2, p. 114 in which she writes of a, '... *general raising of the standard of life of the proletariat*, economic, social and intellectual', whilst discussing the history of industrial unrest surrounding the 1905 revolution. Author's italics.

⁶⁵ Schlesinger, 'Marx Without an Organizing Party', p. 232. Author's italics.

⁶⁶ In 1899 Bernstein wrote that Marx's prediction that the seeds of destruction of the capitalist system lay within that system was erroneous, since the economic tendencies upon which it was based had not been fulfilled. He also argued that Socialist parties should aim, not for a proletarian society, but for one of universal citizenship; they should represent all groups in society. Bernstein insisted that it was the socialist movement, and its gaining of a succession of small reforms, that was important, not the 'final goal' of some future society. E Bernstein, *Evolutionary Socialism A Criticism and Affirmation* (New York, Schocken Books, 1967).

⁶⁷ Luxemburg, *Gesammelte Werke*, 1/1, pp. 367-465.

democracy could only emerge from the triumph of the working class and not from the Liberals. However, Schlesinger insisted that Luxemburg did display originality in her fight against Revisionism. He wrote: 'The strength of Rosa's reply lies in the demonstration that militarism, war and domestic reaction, far from being distortions of the normal course of capitalist development, are inherent in modern capitalism'.⁶⁸ Although there was no guarantee of a continual decline in working class conditions as a catalyst to revolutionary consciousness, capitalist crises, wars and eventual breakdown were inevitable.

In fact, Schlesinger argued that it was during this struggle that Luxemburg left '... the well traced path' of Engels and began to develop 'the specific 'Luxemburgist' attitude'. According to Schlesinger, by:

... arguing against all the current statements about the dangers of assuming power before the objective conditions have matured, Rosa argues that, since the organization of the socialist society presupposes the assumption of power by a class hitherto removed from current political education and experience, where all the objective conditions for socialist reconstruction are available, the assumption of power *cannot* come too early.⁶⁹

The working class would mature to their task *through* the assumption of power. It was the process of revolution and power that was important, not the determination and observation of necessary prerequisites to that seizure. There would be inevitable setbacks and failures, but the experience of these led to the maturation of the class.⁷⁰ According to Schlesinger, Luxemburg's

⁶⁸ Schlesinger, 'Marx Without an Organizing Party', p. 233.

⁶⁹ Ibid. p. 236. Author's italics.

⁷⁰ In 'Reform and Revolution' Luxemburg wrote: '... it will be impossible to avoid the "premature" conquest of State power by the proletariat precisely because these "premature" attacks of the proletariat constitute a factor and indeed a very important factor, creating the political conditions of the final victory. In the course of the political crisis accompanying its seizure of power, in the course of the long and stubborn struggles, the proletariat will acquire the degree of political maturity permitting it to obtain in time a definitive victory of the revolution. Considered from this viewpoint, the idea of a "premature" conquest of political

attack on Revisionism made her unpopular with the party machine. Her emphasis on the mass strike as a revolutionary tool from 1905 onwards separated her from the majority of the SPD. He wrote: 'At first hidden, from 1910 explicit, this differentiation turns, with the outbreak of war, into open and ruthless struggle, to be concluded with the foundation of the German Communist Party and the murder of Rosa'.⁷¹

Schlesinger outlined another 'unique' aspect of 'Luxemburgism', this time concerning the role of the party in Social Democracy. Revolutionary parties were to provide guidance to the masses but could not determine the revolution. They were instead to provide slogans to allow the working classes to maximise their potential:

The socialist party of each country was the element of guidance, not more, since Rosa did not believe that revolutions could be organized in the sense of determining their start and practical course, which had to be left to the dynamics of the revolutionary period. Guidance in the revolutionary period meant giving the struggle such slogans and direction that at every moment the maximum of the potential as well as the actual power of the working class is realized, that the decisiveness and sharpness of the tactics of Social Democracy never lag behind the actual forces but move ahead of them.⁷²

power by the labouring class appears to be a polemic absurdity derived from a mechanical conception of the development of society, and positing for the victory of the class struggle a point fixed *outside and independent of* the class struggle.' (Luxemburg, *Gesammelte Werke*, 1/1, p. 435. Author's italics).

⁷¹ Schlesinger, 'Marx Without an Organizing Party', p. 236.

⁷² Ibid. p. 237-8. Luxemburg made clear that she did not believe that revolutionary periods could be organised. In 'The Mass Strike' she wrote: If, therefore, the Russian Revolution teaches us anything, it teaches above all that the mass strike is not artificially "made," not "decided" at random, not "propagated," but that it is a historical phenomenon which, at a given moment, results from social conditions with historical inevitability. It is not, therefore, by abstract speculations on the possibility or impossibility, the utility or the injuriousness of the mass strike, but only by an examination of those factors and social conditions out of which the mass strike grows in the present phase of the class struggle – in other words, it is not by *subjective criticism* of the mass strike from the standpoint of what is desirable, but only by *objective investigation* of the sources of the mass strike from the standpoint of what is historically inevitable, that the problem can be grasped or even discussed.' (Luxemburg, *Gesammelte Werke*, 2, p. 100). Years later, in December 1918, Luxemburg again spoke of her understanding of a party. She wrote in 'What Does the Spartacus League Want?': 'The

Luxemburg's conception of a party differed markedly to Lenin's. Schlesinger argued that her theory of organisation was, in fact, a '... rejection of organization', and he strongly disagreed with this.⁷³ However, he insisted that Luxemburg recognised there were two different aspects to a party, having learned this from Lenin. The party had to fight for social reform whilst remaining the bearer of the long-term interest of the working class in its pursuit of a socialist society.⁷⁴ It was this second aim of the party which Bernstein had questioned.

However much Luxemburg had learned from him, she was, according to Schlesinger, never able, '... fully to come to terms with Lenin at any stage of her development'.⁷⁵ It was this belief that led Schlesinger to reject the theories of Luxemburg in favour of Lenin's. Her main failure in this respect was that she lacked a conception of the party based upon the experiences of all classes; unlike Lenin she did not take the peasantry into account. Schlesinger wrote,

Rosa lacks one basic element of the Leninist analysis of party, namely his statement in *What is to be Done?* that the insufficiency of the 'trade unionist class-consciousness' (both trade unionist and reformist parliamentary) derives not only from its short view but also from its failure to be based upon the experiences and relationships of *all* classes in society'.⁷⁶

Schlesinger was, however, adamant that this difference in attitude to Lenin had nothing to do with any struggle of Luxemburg's for 'abstract democracy', a cause retrospectively bestowed upon her by opponents of the Bolsheviks.

Spartacus League is not a party that wants to rise to power over the mass of workers or through them. The Spartacus League is only the most conscious, purposeful part of the proletariat, which points the entire broad mass of the working toward its historical tasks at every step, which represents in each particular stage of the revolution the ultimate socialist goal, and in all national questions the interests of the proletarian world revolution.' (Luxemburg, *Gesammelte Werke*, 4, pp. 442-451 at p. 450).

⁷³ Ibid. p. 249.

⁷⁴ Ibid. p. 238.

⁷⁵ Ibid. p. 238.

⁷⁶ Ibid. p. 238. Author's italics.

Ultimately, Luxemburg was inferior to Lenin because the latter based his policies on an analysis of 'actual' conditions as opposed to prosaic theory. Luxemburg proved incapable of evolving from the 'classical' model. In Schlesinger's words:

Lenin's specific attitude in the organization issue derived from his concrete analysis of the national and agrarian problems, which forms his world historical merit but which Rosa, enamoured as she was with the classical 'model' of 'pure' capitalism..., simply refused to appreciate.⁷⁷

He went so far as to ponder whether Luxemburg had chosen to devote most of her energies to Germany because its socio-economic, political and cultural environment was closer to the 'model' than other countries.

Schlesinger now returned to the third implication he discerned in Engels' approach of 1892: what should a Social Democratic party do in a period without wars or depression? Luxemburg had made two contributions towards tackling this problem. She made use of the term 'imperialism' in the widest sense of the word. This was, according to Schlesinger, '... certainly better than over-specialization, or emphasis on the mere fact of monopoly; both approaches would logically lead to a struggle against purely individual aspects of existing society'.⁷⁸ This would deprive socialism of its function as an alternative to capitalist society.

Luxemburg's second contribution was her 'theory of accumulation'. As Schlesinger put it, this was the idea that the part of the surplus value which was to be used as investment could not be realised by sales to either of the main capitalist classes. It had to come, instead, from those pre-capitalist classes still remaining within capitalist centres and, more importantly, from colonial countries. This process would lead to the colonies becoming

⁷⁷ Ibid. p. 239.

⁷⁸ Ibid. p. 248.

capitalist in character. Then, he wrote: 'With the approaching conclusion of the process, and even earlier with a serious reduction of scope for expansion, the viability of capitalism, comes to an end and it will fall, presumably in a chain of major depressions with revolutionary consequences'.⁷⁹ Few Marxists agreed with Luxemburg's analysis and her approach was in clear contrast to that of Hilferding and Lenin, based as they were upon monopoly capitalism.

However, Schlesinger pointed out that it did have two positive aspects. Firstly, she questioned the stability of the value of money, a basic assumption of all Marxist models. Secondly, she at least approached the question of underdeveloped countries. Although, according to Schlesinger, '... she did so with an erroneous concept and from the wrong end, so to speak, as potential yet insufficient markets for the industrialized countries rather than in relation to economic and political processes in the colonial countries themselves'.⁸⁰ To conclude his thoughts on Luxemburg's theory, Schlesinger argued that its impact upon the KPD could only ever have been transitory. This was not because of demands by the Russians for Leninist orthodoxy but because it was of no value in helping to understand the problems of real underdeveloped countries such as China. He once again criticised Rosa Luxemburg for the disparity between her theories and developing reality.

That Schlesinger admired Luxemburg nonetheless was clear from his praise of her stance during the war: 'She has proved herself not only a brave... but also a careful, ... intelligent and consistent leader of the anti-war group'.⁸¹ Whether Luxemburg, who attacked those who had betrayed German socialism, or Lenin, who urged defeat of one's own bourgeoisie, was the more correct was irrelevant, a matter of nuance. Schlesinger insisted: 'I am not willing to argue with my two great teachers on such points, after half a century has passed'.⁸²

Schlesinger appeared to provide a balanced portrayal of Luxemburg's

⁷⁹ Ibid. p. 249-50.

⁸⁰ Ibid. p. 250.

⁸¹ Ibid. p. 241-2.

⁸² Ibid. p. 242.

attitudes and influences. He argued against the use of her writings by various parties and individuals who attempted to expose her supposedly inherent opposition to Bolshevik policies. In substance, four issues impacted upon her analysis of the Russian revolution. Firstly, Luxemburg's main concern was Germany and she was bound to view Soviet Russia concluding a separate peace with that country differently to the Bolsheviks. Secondly, he wrote, '... she had in general, as we have seen, a tendency to be pessimistic on the prospects of first revolutionary triumphs to be consolidated, and hence to put greater demands on the orthodoxy of the practical policies which, in her opinion, would produce lessons for the future rather than consolidated states.'⁸³ The example a Russian revolution could provide was more important than its securing any long term power. She also expected more 'proletarian democracy' than the Bolsheviks could satisfy. Although, according to Schlesinger, she was to eventually pursue the same policies as the Bolsheviks in Germany but without the backing of the vast majority of the industrial workers and soldiers which the Bolsheviks enjoyed. Finally, Luxemburg disapproved of the use of terror in the Russian revolution. Once again, Schlesinger felt that her opposition on this point was not intractable: 'This is the crux of the matter: the Russian revolution has ceased to be a dream, it has become hard reality. If Rosa had survived and become responsible for a real revolution building a new order she, too, would have learned to do hard things'.⁸⁴ According to Schlesinger, although Luxemburg had her reservations about the Russian revolution, some of her reasons for this concerned her background and others were ones she simply would not have held if she were in the same position. Schlesinger's paraphrasing of Leo Jogiches advice to Luxemburg was arguably a justification for Bolshevik terror practices immediately following the revolution.⁸⁵ It was also based on a negative assumption: Rosa Luxemburg was not in a situation where such a moral conundrum was placed in front of her, so there is nothing to suggest that she would not have done as the Bolsheviks had. However, there is no

⁸³ Ibid. p. 244.

⁸⁴ Ibid. p. 244.

⁸⁵ According to Nettl, Rosa Luxemburg had been distressed that her old colleague Josef Dzierzynski had accepted the post of head of Cheka (Russian security police) asking how he could be so cruel. Her longtime partner Jogiches had replied, 'If the need arises, you can do it too' (Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg*, Volume II, p. 731).

evidence to suggest that she would have either. Perhaps, Schlesinger was allowing his sympathies for the Bolsheviks and his oft-mentioned desire to counteract reactionary Western views colour his judgement in this respect. The 'scholar-advocate's' pragmatic or utilitarian attitude was certainly apparent in his own attitude towards terror.

In conclusion, Schlesinger argued that Lenin was by far the superior theorist and political figure; Rosa Luxemburg's failure was obvious because it contrasted so strongly with Lenin's success.⁸⁶ For Schlesinger, Luxemburg's main error was shared with most Marxism of the time: 'Her weakness may be explained in terms of failure of Marxism, as developed in her days, to satisfy the needs of a fully developed Western industrial country'.⁸⁷ Luxemburg proved incapable of adapting theory to the developing needs of the modern proletariat. Whilst Lenin did not operate in conditions of a Western industrial country, he was able to promote a dynamic evolution of Marxism to suit the needs of Russia at that time. Schlesinger was obviously a great admirer of such dynamism, pragmatism and, perhaps even, iconoclasm. Ultimately, it appears that Lenin was the greater materialist. However, Schlesinger was anxious to put Luxemburg's legacy in to context, arguing that she remained superior to both Trotsky and Bukharin. In fact, he argued, outside Italy, she was the greatest Western Marxist theoretician since Engels' death.

Schlesinger provided a reasonably balanced analysis of Rosa Luxemburg's theories and political legacy. His interpretation also fitted in with his earlier writings outlining his own theoretical evolution. It appears his onetime infatuation coupled with a subsequent, but not wholesale, rejection of her ideas led him to a realistic appraisal. Schlesinger dismissed common myths about 'Luxemburgism' as developed by her opponents and those who sought her authority and orthodoxy for their own cause. For example, he criticised suggestions that Luxemburg had represented notions of 'abstract democracy' in opposition to the undemocratic methods of the Bolsheviks.⁸⁸ He also

⁸⁶ Schlesinger, 'Marx Without an Organizing Party', p. 247-8.

⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 248.

⁸⁸ Ibid. p. 238.

insisted that it was a myth that Luxemburg glorified mass strikes at the expense of armed insurrection.⁸⁹ Finally, Schlesinger wrote that Luxemburg's 'Accumulation of Capital' could not be used to validate a theory of the automatic breakdown of capitalism. In fact, Schlesinger wrote, Luxemburg rejected such notions, '... in favour of a conception of a series of conflicts and catastrophes, the solution of which by working-class action would demand a maximum of consciousness'.⁹⁰ Her theories were based on mass and direct action by the proletariat. This 'myth breaking' was not a new element to Schlesinger's writings. He had argued in 1950 that it was unjust to reproach Luxemburg with a desire to delay revolution due to her advocacy of automatic elements; '... long before capitalism should come to its 'natural' end, the horrors and destitution involved in imperialist wars and colonial conquest would force revolution as the only alternative on peoples'.⁹¹ This role was a familiar one to Schlesinger and many of his writings were concerned with unmasking both Western and Marxist distortions of theory and history.

Arguably, Schlesinger blurred Luxemburg's differences with and criticisms of the Bolsheviks and the October Revolution; an understandable sentiment for a man attempting to evaluate his two great sources of inspiration, Lenin and Luxemburg. However, he consistently argued that his preference was for Lenin's theories and he admitted that Luxemburg's approach was inimical to them. For example, Schlesinger admitted Luxemburg could only envisage the breakdown of capitalism as a worldwide process. He wrote that she rejected the notion of a series of national revolutions, '... the essence of the modern Leninist concept'.⁹² Leninism would always be the superior theory, not least because it was formulated in regard to the development of society since Marx's time. It had a genuinely materialist base and its pragmatism had ensured its success.

Like most of Schlesinger's writings, the paper 'Marx Without an Organizing Party' can be dated by the attitudes towards Soviet Russia contained within it.

⁸⁹ Ibid. p. 239.

⁹⁰ Ibid. p. 250.

⁹¹ Schlesinger, *Marx His Time and Ours*, p. 188.

⁹² Schlesinger, 'Marx Without an Organizing Party', p. 251, footnote 35.

It was written after Stalin's death and the subsequent 'de-Stalinisation' process in the Soviet Union, and contained overt criticisms of Stalin and the vulgarisation and authoritarianism of his rule. This was combined with an optimistic outlook for the post-Stalin future in the USSR. Schlesinger argued that now there were opportunities to explore the non-Russian aspects to the Marxist tradition.

J. P. Nettl's description of Soviet and KPD treatment of Rosa Luxemburg after her death appears to broadly correspond to Schlesinger's. For example, he clearly accepted the notion that Rosa Luxemburg's body of writing constituted a system of ideas. According to Nettl, the notion of Luxemburg's theories as, '... a coherent whole with universal application' was first propounded by Georg Lukács in 1920-1921.⁹³ From then on 'Luxemburgism' existed as an 'ism', a system to be conflated with other deviant systems, such as Trotskyism, and contrasted unfavourably with the orthodox system of Leninism. Schlesinger undoubtedly viewed these theories in terms of differing systems, although he would never have reduced them to labels of abuse to be hung on whichever enemy was then current. He also clearly accepted the need for a choice between Lenin and Luxemburg, suggesting that the latter represented a lower stage of development and was surpassed, theoretically and politically, by Lenin. On the whole Schlesinger tended to agree with the post-World War Two official Soviet interpretation, which was now freed from the excesses of Stalinist control. Luxemburgism remained a system ridden with errors, partly due to historical circumstances but mainly because of the author's intellectual failure. However, as Nettl wrote, there was a clear distinction between Luxemburg and Luxemburgism, '... the one as a shining example, the other as a false doctrine related to but not justified by a particular period of the past; in any case worthy of critical study'.⁹⁴ Schlesinger was consistent in his admiration of Luxemburg but rejected what he regarded as her system.

⁹³ Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg*, Volume II, p. 795.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* Volume II, p. 821.

Chapter Three: Lenin

This chapter examines Schlesinger's attitude towards Lenin as a Marxist theoretician. Such an investigation provides an insight into Schlesinger both as a scholar of Marxism and as an adherent of that ideology. What did he understand by 'Leninism'? What did he consider Lenin's contribution to Marxism to be? Did he admire his work? The investigation also provides information on Lenin, his writings and theories. Schlesinger offers a little-read perspective, one which inevitably adds to the sum of work completed on the subject. It begins with an exploration of Schlesinger's memoir reflections; an examination of how Schlesinger became acquainted with Leninism, as well as his initial impressions of its validity. The chapter then turns to an examination of Schlesinger's published work on the topic.

Following from Luxemburg, the next stage in Schlesinger's theoretical development came about through his increased knowledge of Lenin and his writings. This led to a thorough transition in his political and theoretical thinking, from his acceptance of 'Luxemburgism' to that of the tenets of 'Leninism'. This evolution is clearly described in Schlesinger's memoirs and has been outlined in the previous chapter. In 1919 Schlesinger read Lenin's 'State and Revolution' but felt that it was little more than a systematic presentation of Marxist views.¹ Then, presumably around the time of its publication in 1920, Schlesinger read "Left-wing' Communism: an Infantile Disorder'.² This was a tremendously significant event for Schlesinger; he wrote, '... to me, like many other western Socialists, this was the first introduction to Bolshevik theory proper'.³ However, his understanding of Marxism, and Bolshevism in particular, was still far from comprehensive. He insisted: 'I doubt whether we grasped even all of the essentials of its

¹ Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 33, pp. 1-120. Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Bis zu Hitlers Machtübernahme*, p. 63.

² Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 41, pp. 1-104.

³ Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Bis zu Hitlers Machtübernahme*, p. 63.

contents...'.⁴ Finally, from 1923 onwards, as he became more aware of Lenin's work and the failure of a Luxemburg-inspired KPD became increasingly apparent, Schlesinger came to recognise the superiority of Lenin's position over that of his previous mentor, Rosa Luxemburg. He wrote of the importance of reading Lenin's *What is to be Done?*. The book was a catalyst to his dropping of Luxemburg's economic and organisational theories and siding with Lenin.⁵

The only other notable mention of Lenin in the memoirs, separate from his realisation of Luxemburg's errors, concerned his demand that parties affiliating to the Third Communist International, Comintern, should adhere to the 'Twenty One Conditions' it developed at its Second Congress in 1920.⁶ Whilst primarily a question of politics rather than Marxist theory, the issues of organisation, agitation and attitudes towards other groupings are matters necessarily connected to political theory. According to Schlesinger, the conditions of entry were formulated in response to centrist parties' offers to negotiate the formation of a new International. Strict revolutionary criteria of entry would, therefore, prevent their involvement. To Schlesinger, the intention behind the conditions was to establish, '... some standard of sincerity in support of the Russian revolution'.⁷ Presumably, this would be in opposition to the mere rhetoric of support offered by certain sections of European Social Democracy.

A majority of Social Democratic party leaders had argued against participating in the Comintern and, according to Schlesinger, their subsequent arguments showed that their differences with ordinary 'social patriotic' reformists had disappeared with the end of the war.⁸ Men such as the influential German theoretician Karl Kautsky had already moved to the foreground of anti-

⁴ Ibid. p. 63.

⁵ See above chapter 2, p. 65.

⁶ The full text of the conditions can be found in *Second Congress of the Communist International- Minutes of Proceedings*, Volume 1 (New Park Publications, 1977) pp. 303-309. For more information on the Congress and the 'Twenty One Conditions' see McDermott K, and Agnew J., *The Comintern* pp. 17...

⁷ Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Bis zu Hitlers Machtübernahme*, p. 52.

⁸ Ibid. p. 52.

Bolshevik propaganda.⁹ It was, therefore, natural that the Bolsheviks would wish to remove opponents such as these from their International. Lenin was correct to insist upon some declaration of solidarity by participants as well as a commitment to fight any war of intervention.

Unfortunately, the Bolsheviks demanded more than this. According to the early version of Schlesinger's memoirs, their insistence that the parties who sought to join the new organisation must absorb the experiences and policies of the successful Russian party was regrettable but understandable.¹⁰ In his later draft Schlesinger was less conciliatory about what he regarded as the error of Lenin's 'Twenty One Conditions'. The conditions represented more than simply the acceptance of the value of Russian experiences and methods, something of undoubted use to parties such as those of Germany and Hungary, whose failure to apply these methods had greatly contributed to their recent revolutionary 'tragedies'. Instead, according to Schlesinger, '... the Bolshevik principles of organisational centralisation and of complete ideological homogeneity were proclaimed as standard, the acceptance of which formed the preliminary condition of admission to Comintern'.¹¹ To Schlesinger this appeared unnecessary and needlessly alienating. The conditions were 'a very clumsy formulation', especially when one remembered that European radical workers held such deep sympathies for Russia that the Soviet experiences would have been assimilated anyway.¹² Schlesinger doubted that many non-Russians had read Lenin's *What is to be Done?* and hence did not understand the organisational principles for which

⁹ Karl Kautsky (1854-1938) propagated and popularized ideas of Marxism in Germany, initially under Engels' direction. He launched the prestigious international Marxist journal, *Neue Zeit*, and wrote the Hanfield Programme of Austrian Social Democracy in 1888 and the German SPD's Erfurt Programme of 1891, in which Marxism was adopted as the official party ideology. He became the SPD's 'party professor', leading theoretician of the Second International and led orthodox attacks against revisionism. However, his reputation amongst socialists had fallen dramatically by the outbreak of war. He advocated SPD abstention from the vote on war credits, his 'centrist' theory of 'ultra-imperialism' was at odds with Luxemburg and Lenin, and finally in 1917-1918 he wrote against the Russian revolution and the Bolsheviks and accused Lenin of betraying socialism. Reviled by communists, he moved to Vienna in 1924, fleeing from the Nazis to Amsterdam where he was to die (D Geary, *Karl Kautsky*, (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1987)).

¹⁰ Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Bis zu Hitlers Machtübernahme*, p. 53.

¹¹ Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: Whither Germany?*, p. 57.

¹² *Ibid.* p. 60.

they were voting anyway.¹³

When considering Lenin's reasoning, Schlesinger argued: 'It is just possible that Lenin, when formulating the Twenty-One Conditions, envisaged the possibility of a prolonged delay of socialist revolutions outside Russia'. However, Schlesinger wrote that even if this were true, '... the Conditions did little good yet a lot of harm.'¹⁴ In Austria, whilst the average worker's sympathy for the Bolsheviks did not decrease, his/her willingness to learn from Russian experience did. In Germany, the conditions did not affect the strength of the revolutionary movement but neither did they succeed as the cleansing operation they were intended to be. Even in countries such as China or the Balkans, where successful parties seized power, they did so because of the application of Bolshevik principles in countries with similar conditions to revolutionary Russia, not because of any 'purges' based on the conditions.¹⁵

If Lenin had expected prolonged isolation, he would have been better accepting the 'centrists' into the Comintern as they were, with only an insistence on their splitting from their right wings. According to Schlesinger, Lenin's real opponents, those such as Kautsky and Hilferding, would have left the International anyway. Without the authoritarian tenets of the Twenty One Conditions, Russian efforts towards the reception of the Bolshevik experience internationally would have assumed the character of an honest factional struggle. Instead it took on the '... ridiculous shape of Bolshevisation', as Schlesinger expressed it.¹⁶ This was to the detriment of all involved. When the split within the International did come, the word of the Comintern representative increasingly became final in internal disputes.¹⁷

¹³ Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Bis zu Hitlers Machtübernahme*, p. 55. Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 6, pp. 1-192.

¹⁴ Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: Whither Germany?*, p. 63.

¹⁵ Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Bis zu Hitlers Machtübernahme*, p. 57.

¹⁶ Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: Whither Germany?*, p. 64.

¹⁷ However, Schlesinger argued that failures by national parties could not be blamed on Comintern, either because it prevented potentially successful actions within countries or arranged insurrections according to Soviet needs and against the will of the people (Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: Whither Germany?*, p. 64). For example, when discussing the case of the KPD he argued, 'the statement that Comintern – in Germany in 1923 or at any

Although Schlesinger conceded that his understanding of the complexity of these issues was limited at the time, he felt that solidarity with the great Soviet experiment was paramount. He wrote, '... when the [Austrian] social democratic party congress declared the 21 Conditions as incompatible with party membership, I joined the Communist Party as an individual'.¹⁸ And so Schlesinger pledged his allegiance to Lenin and the Bolsheviks, a commitment which remained for the rest of his life.

There is little else concerning Lenin, as a politician or theoretician, in the memoirs. Schlesinger clearly admired Lenin, enough to abandon his youthful idol, and remained a supporter of his writings and ideas. However, since they were not contemporaries and as Lenin died soon after Schlesinger began active party work, there was little else he could say on the topic in an autobiographical work. It is necessary to turn to his academic writings to discover further insights into Schlesinger's thoughts on Lenin and Leninism.

Schlesinger wrote a number of articles and sections in books about Lenin. His admiration and praise of the theoretician is one of the major elements of consistency throughout his writings. According to Schlesinger's memoirs it was only through a correct appreciation of Leninism that he came to properly understand Marxism as a system. To Schlesinger, Marxism and Leninism were inseparable; the latter was a constituent part of, and developing stage in the former. Most of his writings about party, theory or Russia engaged with Leninism in some way, so there is an abundance of source material for an investigation of his attitude towards Lenin.

Four themes emerge from an investigation of Schlesinger's work on Lenin. Firstly, his undoubted admiration of the subject matter. That Schlesinger believed Lenin to be an outstanding scholar, theoretician, organiser and

other occasion – destroyed hopeful revolutionary movements is nonsense, borne from the self-assertion of leaders who complain of miracles they would have wrought had [it] not been [for] that Moscow devil' (Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: Whither Germany?*, p. 134). Schlesinger's attitude was in stark contrast to that of Ruth Fischer, his peer and former colleague. She asserted that the machinations of Comintern, particularly at Stalin's behest, doomed the KPD to failure. See Fischer, *Stalin and German Communism*.

¹⁸ Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Bis zu Hitlers Machtübernahme*, p. 64.

politician is clear from the most cursory glance at any of his writings dealing with Marxism and philosophy. It could be argued that this admiration went so far as to become a justification for all of Lenin's writings, theories and actions. Perhaps he became blinded to any faults or errors; he certainly appeared willing to agree with Stalin's lavish praise. Schlesinger seemed prepared to discuss ways in which Marx and Engels' arguments and judgements had been flawed or were no longer relevant, yet he appeared more reluctant when it came to Lenin.

The second theme is Schlesinger's understanding of Leninism as an evolution of original Marxism. Marxism, as a system of ideas, a scientific methodology and a revolutionary ideology has an unchanging philosophical materialist core. However, beyond this base, it creatively evolves as circumstances develop – thus maintaining its materialist and dialectic essence. As a body of theory it is dynamic, capable of, and in fact requiring, change by successive generations. Leninism thus cannot be a 'distortion' of the original, true Marxism of the founders, a criticism often levelled at Lenin by opponents. It instead becomes its heir, the next essential evolutionary step; one that will ultimately be superseded by the next phase in the dialectical development of society.

This belief of Schlesinger's could be clearly seen with his transition from 'Luxemburgism' to 'Leninism' in the early to mid-1920s, and represents the crux of any of Schlesinger's writings concerning Lenin. Lenin was able to adapt his thinking and theories as socio-economic and political circumstances changed. He recognised the development of new class structures and possible alliances between these classes and adapted Marxist ideas and tactics accordingly. This, ultimately, allowed the Bolsheviks to affect a revolutionary change. In contrast, Luxemburg did not perceive any changes, her Marxism remained static and her party proved incapable of leading a revolution.

Another feature of Schlesinger's attitude was his belief that Lenin's main contribution had been his theory of the party. Lenin had melded a synthesis of

the traditions of the Russian revolutionary movement with a dynamic approach to Marxist theory. His application of these principles to Russian conditions allowed him to organise a party capable of leading a revolution. Marxism would always require modifications as circumstances developed. Lenin undertook the necessary modifications to ensure Marxism's suitability for less well developed countries and its transformation in Russia allowed for its utility in China and elsewhere. Lenin's success in this respect was proven by the existence of the Soviet state.

The fourth notable element of Schlesinger's writings on Lenin was a discernable feature of all of his work and was most clearly evidenced in that on Soviet historiography. Schlesinger's interpretation or emphasis in writing about Lenin was noticeably similar to the official Soviet line at any particular time. In earlier writings, for example, Schlesinger seemed to concur with Stalinist orthodoxy in asserting the greatness of Leninism and seeing developments under Stalin as a natural progression from it. After the denunciations of 1956, however, he appeared to believe that certain of Stalin's 'excesses' had to be purged from theory; something which would bring about a return to pure Leninism. After this return to a more sound theoretical base, further modifications could be made by later authorities such as Khrushchev.

The key to Schlesinger's understanding of Lenin was *What is to be Done?*, first published in 1902. The work was both a polemic against Economism and a call for a tightly knit, cohesive and disciplined party. Lenin argued that social democrats should not simply concern themselves with trade union struggles and the wider workers' movement but should have a more clandestine and professional organisation. To Lenin, what was required was, '... an All-Russian organisation of revolutionaries that stands undeviatingly on the basis of Marxism, that leads the entire political struggle and possesses a staff of professional agitators'.¹⁹ Whilst spontaneity and a loose democratic organisation would condemn workers to the limited aims of trade unionism,

¹⁹ Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 6, pp. 153-154.

the role of social democracy was to raise their consciousness. Lenin described the type of party necessary to fulfil this role, and Schlesinger believed this to be one of his main contributions to Marxist theory and the history of the Russian revolution. He seems to have believed that Lenin prescribed a party formula, which was followed by the Bolsheviks, successfully given the existence of the Soviet state. Schlesinger's analysis is demonstrated by his attitude towards the 'Twenty One Conditions' of entry to Comintern. He argued that the conditions were erroneous and did little good, but that the assimilation of Bolshevik principles of organisation was essential for future revolutionary success.

The other key text to Schlesinger's analysis of Lenin was 'Left-wing Communism: an Infantile Disorder' written after the Russian revolution and first published in 1920. In it Lenin attempted to demonstrate that he and the Bolsheviks had created a party capable of seizing and maintaining power. Many elements of their experience were of international validity, thus foreign parties should centralise and assimilate that experience. They should follow the Bolsheviks since they had been the only party to succeed. Lenin argued, '... certain fundamental features of our revolution have a significance that is not local, not peculiarly national, or Russian alone, but international'.²⁰

In *What is to be Done?* Lenin set out how a party should organise, in 'Left-wing Communism' he argued that the Bolsheviks had achieved power because of the nature of their organisation and urged foreign parties to follow this lead. However, many argue that the revolution in Russia did not simply occur because the party was organised in the way in which Lenin had originally proposed or retrospectively described. In fact, even Schlesinger admitted that Lenin's initial plans for the state did not come to fruition and that Lenin was not responsible for the timing of revolutionary events.²¹ As J.D. White has argued, Lenin insisted foreign parties adopt the principles which had apparently made them victorious. He continued:

²⁰ Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 41, p. 3.

²¹ See below p. 120.

Lenin maintained that some features at least of the Russia revolution were applicable internationally. He was not inclined to consider that what had brought the Bolsheviks to power in Russia was their promise of peace, bread and land to a people exhausted by war and hunger. Lenin was in effect imposing on foreign parties not the pattern of the Russian revolution, but of a mythical revolution that had not occurred anywhere.²²

However, instead of this more distanced analysis, Schlesinger appears to have concurred with Lenin's evaluations, accepting his interpretation almost in its entirety.

Marx His Time and Ours, published in 1950, was the first of Schlesinger's works after his return to the West to engage in any great detail with Lenin. This was Schlesinger's seminal philosophical work. It primarily concerned the development of Marxist theory up to the time of publication, in particular in the Soviet Union – in essence, Marxism's applicability to the world of the 1950s. Schlesinger wrote in the preface: 'I am dealing far less with the internal coherence of Marx's argument in the conditions of its origin than with the issue of how far questions and answers conditioned by that setting are relevant for our, very different, days'.²³ Schlesinger attempted to trace changes and developments in Marxist theory from its roots in Marx and Engels to its realisation, imperfect or otherwise, as embodied in the Soviet state. As Schlesinger put it:

An investigation may concentrate upon the modifications of the Marxist system made by the further evolution of the social formation investigated by Marx, including attempts at realisation of his system. Such an approach involves inherent criticism of Marx's original system but it takes the continuing relevance of the system for granted.²⁴

²² White, *Lenin, The Practice and Theory of Revolution*, (London, Palgrave, 2001) p. 161.

²³ Schlesinger, *Marx His Time and Ours*, p. x.

²⁴ *Ibid.* p. 1.

It was this investigation he was proposing.

Three key concepts emerged from his work. Firstly, a major aim seemed to be the clarification of what Marxism was, an attempt to demystify and dispel common misconceptions; although given the dry, lengthy and obtuse writing style employed this was unlikely to be too successful. Throughout the text, Schlesinger made clear what Marxism was *not*; what were in fact the propositions of 'vulgar' variations. For example, Schlesinger went into some detail to explain that Marxism was not utopianism: 'To the founders of Marxism, Communism was not a condition to be established nor an ideal to which reality must adjust itself... This seems the strongest possible rejection of utopianism and wishful thinking'.²⁵ He was also at pains to separate Marxism from any kind of pragmatic philosophical base.²⁶ Sometimes this demystifying appeared to be an attempt to 'rescue' Marxism from the Western world's erroneous understanding.²⁷ This is a somewhat negative motive, one that perhaps left the work open to criticism that it justified or apologised for more dubious aspects of Marxist theorising and characteristics of the Soviet state.

Secondly, a major feature of the work was the emphasis on Marxism as science. It was a scientific theory that was verifiable, not as accurately as other sciences where experiments could be constructed artificially in controlled environments, but where results could be used to prove veracity nonetheless. To Schlesinger, Marxism's materialist base implied the demand for objective truth, the very essence of 'science'.²⁸ Schlesinger felt the scientific nature of Marxism to be self-evident. For example, when discussing pragmatism he wrote: 'Pragmatism is thus opposed to the basic tenet of Marxism and of Science in general that the World is an objective reality

²⁵ Ibid. p. 56.

²⁶ Ibid. pp. 58... and pp. 61...

²⁷ See for example Schlesinger, *Marx His Time and Ours*, p. 92 in which he points out that 'economic determinism' was a characteristic of vulgar Marxism as opposed to Marxism proper.

²⁸ Ibid. p. 61.

independently of human ideas'.²⁹ It is clear from this statement that Schlesinger regarded Marxism as existing *within* Science, obeying the same rules and reasoning.

The third important proposition of *Marx His Time and Ours* followed directly on from the second. Science required proof. Marxist theory had been proven to be fundamentally correct in its approach; the proof lay in the 'objective reality' of the October Revolution and the resulting Soviet state. Schlesinger was at pains not to overstate his case; the state was not some idealised version of a Marxist model, it had problems. But for it to be otherwise would be utopian. The dialectical nature of social development was expressed through the evolution of society, parts clashed, experiments failed, but progress was achieved as a result. Schlesinger wrote: 'That the system has a large degree of inherent truth is proved by the success of its application in Russia'.³⁰ Continuing: 'The behaviour of those Socialists who are inclined 'to write off' the Russian revolution because it fails to comply with their pet Utopia, which some of them prefer to describe as 'Marxism', is truly contrary to the Marxist point of view'.³¹ This theme, of the Soviet state as proof of the correctness of Marxism, is one familiar in much of Schlesinger's writing on the subject.³²

Marx His Time and Ours adhered to the timeline proposed in this thesis. It was published in 1950 and can, therefore, be categorised into Schlesinger's pre-1956 body of work. The unifying characteristic of all of Schlesinger's writings in this period is their broad conformity with orthodox Soviet interpretations. So, the book praised Stalin and his contribution to Marxist theory, presenting him as the natural successor to Lenin – theory was evolving from Marxism to Marxism-Leninism to Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism. This perhaps explains why, when turning to Schlesinger's engagement with Leninism in the work, there is not as much as one might expect. The book

²⁹ Ibid. p. 58.

³⁰ Ibid. p. 4.

³¹ Ibid. p. 4.

³² See, for example, Schlesinger, 'More Observations on Ideology', *Soviet Studies*, 19, 1, July 1967, pp. 89-99 at p. 89.

dealt with Marxist theory's roots in the writing of Marx and Engels, but then concentrated more on developments during the Stalin era. The importance of Lenin's contribution was clear but there was little written specifically about it. Was this, perhaps, because Schlesinger was keen to demonstrate Stalin's impact on theory? Alternatively, it could be because Schlesinger was attempting to write about Marxism's contemporary significance. According to his dialectical understanding of theory, as material circumstances developed, Leninism would lose its relevance. Further theoretical evolution was required in order for Marxist theory to remain dynamic and applicable. Lenin's contribution had been enormous but this success brought about changed conditions, and theory had to adapt to them.

When Schlesinger did write about Lenin, there were, in general, two features to his comments. Firstly, Schlesinger appeared, almost unquestioningly, to adopt Lenin's tenets. For example, he accepted Lenin's criticisms of the philosophers Richard Avenarius and Ernst Mach in his polemic 'Materialism and Empirio-Criticism' seemingly at face value.³³ This was in spite of the fact that the work, published in 1909, was a violent and sarcastic attack on a great number of philosophers of whom Lenin knew relatively little. As the one-time Bolshevik N. Valentinov wrote: 'It is the rage that makes Lenin's book so unique: it would be difficult to find another Russian work which contains so much crude abuse of foreign philosophers... He wanted to spit on his opponents'.³⁴ Lenin argued that empirio-critics, as positivists, did not believe that an object could exist independently of human consciousness. If a human mind could not relate to an object empirically, experience it as sensations, then it did not exist. Lenin countered this position by stating that

³³ Lenin, Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 18, pp. 7-384. Ernst Mach (1838-1916) was an Austrian physicist and philosopher who believed that science should confine itself to descriptions of phenomena which could be perceived by the senses and was one of the founders of modern positivism. Richard Avenarius (1843-1916) was a professor of philosophy at Leipzig and then Zurich. He attempted to discern a scientific philosophy based upon a critique of experience. The two scholars, more or less simultaneously, but independently, formulated the school of empirio-criticism. For more information see F Carstanjen, 'Richard Avenarius and his General Theory of Knowledge, Empiriocriticism', *Mind*, New Series, 6, 24, Oct. 1897, pp. 449-475 and L. Kolakowski, *Positivist Philosophy*, (Harmondsworth, Penguin Books Ltd., 1972), trans. N. Guterman, especially chapter 5.

³⁴ N. Valentinov (N. V. Volsky), *Encounters with Lenin* (London, Oxford University Press, 1968), trans. P. Rosta and B. Pearce, p. 245.

the earth existed before man did, before any human mind was present to experience it. This fact was irrefutable. The only way the empiricists could resolve this problem was to 'mentally project' themselves in to the prehistoric past. However, he continued:

If we 'mentally project' ourselves our existence will be *imaginary* – but the existence of the earth prior to man is *real*. Man *could not* in practice be an observer, for instance, of the earth in an incandescent state, and to 'imagine' his being present at the time is *obscurantism*, exactly as though I were to endeavour to prove the existence of hell by the argument that if I 'mentally projected' myself thither as an observer I could observe hell.³⁵

However, this analysis was a crude portrayal of Machist thought. The Empirio-Criticists were concerned with epistemological questions: how could one *know* that the earth existed prior to man. It was a matter of cognition not of the dismissal of objective reality or otherwise.³⁶ Whereas Lenin claimed positivism is the belief that if a human mind cannot engage empirically with an object then it does not exist, it is more accurately construed as the belief that if a human mind cannot relate to an object empirically, experience it sensationally, then it does not exist for that observer. In other words, what is defined by what is observable or may be deduced from the observable. Scientists were able to build a picture of prehistoric earth by way of fossils and other evidence, allowing for empirical cognition and logical deduction. However, Schlesinger simply wrote of, '...the pertinent question in Lenin's *Empirio-criticism*, whether and how the World existed when Dinosaurian minds were

³⁵ Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 18, p. 74.

³⁶ As Valentinov argued with Lenin: 'Actually, how do you know that our planet was once incandescent, and that there was no life, human or otherwise, upon it? Was your knowledge of this provided by a mystical communication from some disembodied spirit, or is it the result of cognition, research on the part of a human subject, and derived from it? You are interested only in the fact that the earth was once incandescent: but the theory of cognition is concerned with the way in which such knowledge has been received, through what contact between object and subject it was reached, how much of it is certain, and what in it must and can be considered truth from the epistemological point of view' (Valentinov, *Encounters with Lenin*, pp. 212-213).

the only ones available to create it'.³⁷ As knowledgeable and experienced a student of philosophy as Schlesinger would surely know that this was a facile misrepresentation of the empiricists and positivism. Yet Schlesinger unquestioningly applied Lenin's vulgar argument when describing these philosophical developments.

The second feature of *Marx His Time and Ours* is the praise Schlesinger bestowed on Lenin and his theoretical work. He did offer some negative comments and pointed out where he believed Lenin to have been mistaken. But on the whole, Schlesinger offered a very positive portrayal. It was clear from Schlesinger's memoir writings that he believed Lenin's great impact had been his correct assessment of material conditions and the resultant application of tactics to those conditions, but he reinforced this point in *Marx His Time and Ours*. He wrote:

In some instances a correct statement of facts, made possible by Marxist theory and inconceivable from any other standpoint, has been the cause of the political success of the Marxist party. Lenin's correct assessment of Russia, in contradiction to the Narodniki, that she was undergoing transformation to capitalism, and of the political consequences to be drawn from that fact, is a foremost example.³⁸

This statement provides evidence of the kind of the esteem in which Schlesinger held Lenin, but it also demonstrates the orthodoxy of his interpretations and uncritical acceptance of Lenin's version of events.

Schlesinger did not spend a great deal of the book focussed on aspects of Leninism, but a brief investigation of his attitude towards Lenin's work on imperialism provides a general insight. Schlesinger offered a brief but orthodox exposition of the topic, concentrating in particular on Lenin's main writing on the subject, 'Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism', first

³⁷ Schlesinger, *Marx His Time and Ours*, p. 25.

³⁸ *Ibid.* p. 66.

published in mid-1917.³⁹ He revealed nothing new but displayed a characteristically deep knowledge of the source material. Interestingly, although both Lenin and Luxemburg engaged with theories of imperialism, Schlesinger presented no comparative analysis of the work of his two great teachers. He made clear in his memoirs that on realising the difference in their approaches he initially attempted to accommodate elements from both – Luxemburg’s theory had value but was applicable to an earlier stage of capitalist development, but he soon realised the superiority of Lenin’s understanding. However, here there was to be no scholarly critique of both theories beyond the statement that Luxemburg had not recognised the new stage of capitalist development identified by Lenin’s work.⁴⁰

Schlesinger described the influence on Lenin of J. Hobson’s explanation of imperialism as the export of capitals, and R. Hilferding’s analysis of monopoly capitalism.⁴¹ Lenin explicitly pointed to the two texts in his introduction to ‘Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism’, arguing that no work had advanced beyond these comprehensive descriptions of imperialism, until now of course.⁴² Lenin adopted Hilferding’s idea of capitalism’s transition from competition to monopoly capitalism and the socialisation of production. This new stage of capitalism was finance capital and industry was now dominated by banks and financial oligarchies. However, these developments had not brought an end to conflict. As the export of capital for increased profitability became paramount, nations and international cartels now fought over the division and re-division of global spheres of influence, thus creating

³⁹ Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 27, pp. 299-426.

⁴⁰ Schlesinger, ‘Marx Without an Organizing Party’, p. 228.

⁴¹ Schlesinger, *Marx His Time and Ours*, p. 316. The English economist A.J. Hobson was best known for his work *Imperialism* first published in 1902. According to A Brewer: ‘Hobson held an underconsumptionist theory, arguing that the low level of wages and the high proportion of profits saved led to a chronic shortage of demand. He was aware that investment demand could fill the gap between production capacity, on the one hand, and consumption spending on the other, but he argued that there would not be sufficient investment opportunities at home to sustain demand’. The search for investment outlets to absorb these surplus savings was thus the economic driving force behind colonial expansion. Capitalism could be preserved, however, by raising wages, thus increasing consumer demand and lowering the volume of savings and the pressure to find new investment outlets (A. Brewer, *Marxist Theories of Imperialism*, (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980) p. 112).

⁴² Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 27, p. 309.

international power struggles.⁴³ However, finance capital was a moribund capitalism.⁴⁴ It had at its head a parasitic class which would impede technical innovation if necessary in order to preserve its own position.

An important feature of Lenin's imperialism was its uneven advance; capitalism did not develop at a uniform pace.⁴⁵ Finance capital would invest wherever it found it profitable to do so, be this in a developed or undeveloped country. An implicit corollary was, therefore, that the spread of revolution would be uneven too. Revolution may begin in hitherto unexpected places rather than amongst the most advanced states. The huge profits enjoyed by finance capital allowed them to bribe the upper strata of the proletariat with high pay.⁴⁶ This produced opportunism and, presumably, explained the behaviour of the majority of Social Democrats on the outbreak of war.

In 'Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism', Lenin was replying to Kautsky's concept of 'Ultra-imperialism', whereby capitalist monopolies would agree worldwide organisation of production and thus bring an end to international conflict. According to Schlesinger, Lenin answered that since capitalism developed in an uneven manner, any agreement would be ephemeral.⁴⁷ Kautsky was also mistaken in believing that imperialism was driven by industrial capital rather than finance capital, hence his emphasis on the acquisition of agrarian territories.⁴⁸

Lenin's theory of imperialism, according to Schlesinger, provided a, '...comprehensive picture of international relations differing from, but no less impressive than, the original Marxist – or pre-Marxist – scheme'.⁴⁹ It was of continuing relevance and offered an understanding of the world which was now also shared by Lenin's opponents. This attitude amply demonstrates

⁴³ Ibid. pp. 420....

⁴⁴ Ibid. p. 424.

⁴⁵ Ibid. pp. 422 – 423.

⁴⁶ Ibid. p. 402.

⁴⁷ Schlesinger, *Marx His Time and Ours*, p. 316.

⁴⁸ For information on Kautsky's views on imperialism see Geary, *Karl Kautsky*, chapter 4, especially pp. 52...

⁴⁹ Schlesinger, *Marx His Time and Ours*, p. 318.

Schlesinger's appreciation of Lenin and 'Leninism'. However, his wholehearted endorsement of Lenin's imperialism does not hold up to scrutiny. Whilst Lenin may well have been prescient in his recognition of the uneven development of capital, as well as finance capital's ability to impede technological progress where it found it advantageous to do so, his ideas concerning the importance of banks in a socialist assumption of power were proven ill founded by events in Russia. Following on from Hilferding and Bukharin, Lenin believed that the concentration of power and capital in a few hands, those of the banks, was laying the foundations of a socialist system. As J. D. White has pointed out, Lenin had originally thought, '... the big banks were the state institutions which were needed to bring about socialism, and which would be taken over as they stood from capitalism'.⁵⁰ An important element of Lenin's theory of imperialism was that this latest and final evolution of capitalism facilitated a relatively smooth transition to socialism. In fact, in 'Can the Bolsheviks Retain State Power?' written in October 1917, Lenin wrote: '*Without big banks socialism would be impossible*'.⁵¹ However, on the assumption of power, Lenin was soon to realise that he could not simply take over the reins of the financial institutions; the banking system was completely destroyed during the revolution.⁵² Schlesinger was undoubtedly aware of this but concentrated instead on other elements of Lenin's imperialism, such as international relations.

Schlesinger further praised the theory of imperialism, writing, 'Lenin's concept of international relations is impressive as a general abstraction which serves to establish general trends'.⁵³ Lenin was not able to describe all of the details of international relations as they emerged after the revolution, but he did provide a methodology by which to assess them. This, once again, demonstrated Schlesinger's appreciation of Lenin as a thinker who recognised the need to evolve theory as conditions altered. Instead of a rigid definition of international relations, which would inevitably become obsolete as circumstances developed, he created 'a general abstraction' in order to

⁵⁰ J. D. White, *Lenin, The Practice and Theory of Revolution*, p. 151.

⁵¹ Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 34, pp. 287-339 at p. 307. Author's italics.

⁵² White, *Lenin, The Practice and Theory of Revolution*, p. 151.

⁵³ Schlesinger, *Marx His Time and Ours*, p. 319.

perceive 'general trends'.

That Lenin was able to create a theoretical model or methodology that Marxists could use to analyse dynamic material conditions and then plan their actions accordingly, was a familiar theme in Schlesinger's admiration. His iconoclastic adaptation of the Marxist model in opposition to a rigorous and dogmatic preservation of the founders' pronouncements was what set him apart. For example, one of the basic principles of early Marxism regarding war was no longer applicable during Lenin's time. The use of war by revolutionaries as an opportunity to appear as the most consistent defenders of the national interest and thus take power, was inappropriate when both warring parties were viewed as equally reactionary.⁵⁴ This concept was, therefore, of little relevance to the twentieth century. Thus Lenin introduced the notion of defeatism – changing theories and tactics as material conditions altered over time. Schlesinger pointed out that defeatism did not mean collaboration with a foreign government. He wrote, '... [this] would contradict the Leninist conception of internationalism because it would counteract the attempt of the Socialists on the other side to defeat *their* imperialist government and would give an efficient propaganda tool to the latter.'⁵⁵ Defeatism implied the defeat of one's own leaders and bourgeoisie irrespective of its effect on others.⁵⁶

However, Lenin's conception was now obsolete due to its successful application in one country – Russia. The correct Leninist line would now advise support of the enemy by domestic revolutionaries if that foe was from the Socialist camp. However, not all communists had realised that theory and policies had to be altered. As Schlesinger pointed out, '... the tactics applied by most of the Western Communist parties during the first stage of World War II resulted in that failure which is bound to crown the application of sacred formulas to a situation which no longer fits the basic assumptions to which

⁵⁴ Ibid. p. 320.

⁵⁵ Ibid. p. 322.

⁵⁶ See, for example, Lenin's pamphlet 'Socialism and War' published in 1915. In it Lenin wrote: 'A revolutionary class cannot but wish for the defeat of its own government in a reactionary war, and cannot fail to see that the latter's military reverses must facilitate its overthrow.' (Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 26, 307-350 at p. 327).

they owe their origins'.⁵⁷ The ability to adapt theory to changed circumstances was one of the essences of Marxism-Leninism to Schlesinger.

The second theme to demonstrate Schlesinger's attitude towards Lenin in this work concerned revolution. To Schlesinger, Lenin's theories on revolution and organisation of the revolutionary party confirmed his pre-eminence as a Marxist thinker. According to Schlesinger, there were three basic socialist attitudes towards revolution and transformation of the state. These were revisionism, centrism and that of Lenin. The latter involved the replacement of existing machinery by a new one originating from within the revolutionary dynamic. This third conception implied a difference between the revolutionary mass movement and the organised sectional movements usually operating within a capitalist framework. According to Schlesinger, '... this consequence, though not alien to the minds of the founders, was not clearly drawn before the Russian revolution of 1905 when the specific character of the revolutionary mass-movements was emphasized by Lenin as well as by Rosa Luxemburg'.⁵⁸ Lenin recognised the need for a new type of revolutionary movement or party, one which was differentiated from the sectional workers organisations accommodated within the capitalist state.

In the Leninist conception of revolution, 'revolutionary situations' occurred. However, unlike other theorists, Lenin provided a much more concrete definition of what they were and how to determine them. As Schlesinger wrote, these crises had not only 'objective' conditions but there also had to be 'subjective' changes; namely, '... that the revolutionary class should be capable of revolutionary actions sufficient to overthrow the existing regime which, even in a period of crisis, would not automatically collapse'.⁵⁹ Unless the working class was suitably organised and motivated, any revolutionary attempt would fail. There followed from this the need to organise the revolution. There had to be a party capable of leading the revolutionary class to action at the appropriate time. Lenin's understanding of these factors, as

⁵⁷ Schlesinger, *Marx His Time and Ours*, p. 323.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* p. 255.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* p. 257.

well as his realisation of the function of the party, made him unique and confirmed his superiority over Luxemburg.

Lenin diverged from the centrists in recognising that when a 'revolutionary situation' transformed into an 'acute revolutionary situation', it was necessary for the working class to take offensive action and create a new state-machinery.⁶⁰ The bourgeoisie would be unable to accept peaceful transition to socialism and so civil war was inevitable. Leninism insisted that this anticipated conflict should be solved by offensive action. Such a position obviously had a decisive influence on the kind of working class organisation necessary to accomplish that action; a tightly knit, disciplined body would be vital in such circumstances. According to Schlesinger, Engels would have understood this but few of Lenin's contemporaries did.

Accurate appreciation of the characteristics of 'revolutionary situations' as well as the subjective factors, such as party organisation necessary to transform the crisis into an actual revolution, allowed Lenin to discern tactical laws of general validity. Thus, wrote Schlesinger, '... a social phenomenon is no longer analysed as an objectively given fact, but the rules governing the behaviour of those who intend to bring that phenomenon to the culmination point are being established as laws [,] neglect of which is bound to result in defeat'.⁶¹ Lenin was able to analyse correctly potential revolutionary situations. He also provided laws for the organisation of the party and the transformation of the state. It was, in fact, 'Leninism' which brought about the success of the Marxist schema. As Schlesinger expressed it: 'The realisation of the Leninist scheme in a fourth of the world had made clear that socialism is a practical proposition'.⁶²

The essence of Schlesinger's Leninism was its adaptation of Marxism to the circumstances of the time. That Lenin was able to do this successfully was proven by the emergence of the Soviet state. However, this very success led

⁶⁰ Ibid. p. 262.

⁶¹ Ibid. p. 262.

⁶² Ibid. p. 264.

to the obsolescence of many of his theories and tactics. It was necessary to develop new ones once the new material circumstances had been evaluated. Presumably Stalin had undertaken this. However, Western Communist parties had proven unable to adapt dialectically; hence their failure.

Similar themes emerged from Schlesinger's next work on Lenin, an encyclopaedia article written for *Handwörterbuch der Sozialwissenschaften* and published in West Germany in 1959.⁶³ Once again, Schlesinger emphasised the transitional and progressive nature of Leninism – it was an evolution of original Marxist theory, adapted to changed circumstances, but one that itself required development as conditions continued to alter dialectically. For an encyclopaedia piece the article was considerably detailed and represented a broad and systematic presentation of Leninism with a considerable and varied bibliography. It was also a very orthodox exposition, one generally in line with Soviet interpretations.

This orthodoxy was demonstrated in Schlesinger's emphasis of 1912 as a key date in Bolshevik and Russian history. Schlesinger wrote that at the Prague Conference of January of that year, Lenin formally constituted the Bolshevik faction as the central organisation of Russian Social Democracy.⁶⁴ Thus, 1912 was the year the party which went on to lead the October Revolution and ultimately transform Russia into a modern socialist nation was truly separated from those who were incapable of this task. It was traditional in Soviet literature to point to 1912 as one of the significant periods in party history.⁶⁵ This is easily understood when it is remembered that 1912 is the year in which Stalin first joined the Central Committee and became a key figure within the party. Soviet authorities would obviously be keen to demonstrate how important this time was for the development of the revolution. It seems that Schlesinger's presentation corresponded to this timeline, for whatever reason; although, he made no reference to Stalin at this

⁶³ Schlesinger, 'Lenin, W.J.', *Handwörterbuch der Sozialwissenschaften*, 23, 1959, pp. 582-587.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* p. 583.

⁶⁵ See, for example, part five of chapter four of the *Short Course* entitled 'Prague Party Conference, 1912. Bolsheviks Constitute Themselves an Independent Marxist Party' (*Short Course*, pp. 138-143).

time.

The article's interpretations also coalesced with official Soviet orthodoxy in its emphasis on the reasons for the split between the Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks at the London congress of 1903. Schlesinger wrote of the split in terms of organisation; was the party to be the vanguard of the revolutionary movement or a gathering point for all with socialist sympathies.⁶⁶ The Bolsheviks were portrayed as the only truly revolutionary party capable of leading the masses, through their organisational discipline, whilst the Mensheviks, including G. Plekhanov, were not.⁶⁷ This interpretation is commonplace and the description of the split as emanating from a dispute about the famous 'Article One of the Rules' of party membership was prevalent both in Soviet orthodoxy and in the West.⁶⁸ This disagreement betrayed much deeper divisions regarding organisation, centralisation and discipline and made the continuation of a unified body untenable and undesirable from the ever prescient Lenin's point of view.

There is certainly a great deal of truth in this presentation but it is a somewhat distorted and simplified version of events; something Schlesinger was likely to be aware of. The decisive issue of the congress concerned a more short-term question: how many members each group would have on the editorial board of *Iskra*, the party's paper, and the Central Committee.⁶⁹ Although divergent opinions did exist within the Social Democratic party about who should be able to call themselves a member and the level of organisational unity required, there was broad agreement on the need for such unity in order to bring about a transformation of society. As Schlesinger himself later wrote:

⁶⁶ Schlesinger, 'Lenin, W.J.', p. 583.

⁶⁷ Georgii Plekhanov (1856-1918) is seen by many as the father of Russian Marxism. Initially an underground revolutionary in the Emancipation of Labour group, Plekhanov spent thirty seven years in exile studying philosophical questions of Marxism and how best to adapt it to Russian conditions. Eventually arguing with Lenin and criticising 'What is to be Done?', Plekhanov rejected Bolshevism. He died the upholder of, in his view, orthodox Marxism against the anarchism and irresponsibility of Lenin's push for a second, proletarian revolution. See, S. Baron, *Plekhanov*, (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1963).

⁶⁸ See, for example *Short Course*, pp. 39-44 and J. Reshetar, *A Concise History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (New York, Frederick A. Praeger, 1964).

⁶⁹ White, *Lenin, The Practice and Theory of Revolution*, p. 64.

.... we should remember that in those issues which split the Social Democrats and Communists, Mensheviks as well as Bolsheviks supported the position now associated with communism (precisely for this reason the Bolsheviks eventually carried the large majority of the Russian labour movement). At the Second Party Congress Lenin argued that a proletarian dictatorship was necessary because the Russian working-class might have to establish a minority government.... Plekhanov followed up implications of Lenin's approach when he stated that every democratic principle, including universal suffrage, should be subordinated to the needs of the revolution.⁷⁰

Although the 'trivial' issue of composition of party bodies did bring to the fore disputes about what constituted a party member and what a supporter, interpretations of these matters are often made to appear as a contest between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, now unmasked as 'Economists' or Revisionists. This was not the case. Schlesinger was fully aware of this and yet gave this simplified version in the encyclopaedia article.

Schlesinger was also orthodox in his presentation by stressing the ripeness of Russia for a revolution; one of a different type to that envisaged by the founders perhaps, but Lenin's development of Marxist theory illuminated the way in which revolution could be carried out in Russia nevertheless. This analysis legitimised the Soviet state and the Bolshevik assumption of power. Were it to be otherwise, the Bolsheviks would have been usurpers who used an inappropriate ideology developed for industrial countries in order to achieve power for their own ends.

His description of events in the article was often similar to Soviet sources. For example, Schlesinger wrote that during Lenin's first exile in East Siberia, from 1897 onwards, 'Economism' gained the upper hand amongst Social Democrats in St Petersburg and other cities. He described 'Economism' as a:

⁷⁰ Schlesinger, *History of the Communist Party of the USSR*, (Calcutta, Orient Longman Ltd., 1977) p. 43.

'Russian variant of west European revisionism'.⁷¹ The presentation of a coherent, powerful and totally erroneous theory of 'Economism' was common to all Soviet outlines of events, and was initially developed by Lenin, amongst others.⁷² However, as J. D. White has pointed out, 'Economism' was not an actual doctrine or movement – no one would admit to being an 'Economist' and no one advocated the ideas attributed to them.⁷³ It was a label that Lenin would pin onto opponents, thus equating them with revisionism, 'Bernsteinism', 'Kautskyism' and so on, in an attempt to discredit them.⁷⁴

The encyclopaedia article began with a brief description of Lenin's life and the leading role he played in Russian and Social Democratic events; 'From the creation of 'Iskra' until his death he was the leader of the Russian left socialists'.⁷⁵ Schlesinger explained that Lenin's theoretical work gave the party its orientation and formulated its 'Weltanschauung'. He then outlined the three major problems confronted by Lenin, describing his novel and revolutionary solutions to them. These were the nature of Russian capitalist development, the necessary character of a socialist party and the question of socialist reconstruction in Russia.

Schlesinger argued that Lenin identified capitalism in Russia with large-scale capitalist industry.⁷⁶ Already in 'The Development of Capitalism', written between 1896 and 1899, Lenin recognised that the rural community was splitting into socially differentiated categories – broadly characterised as the proletariat and capitalists.⁷⁷ As Schlesinger put it, in Russia, in contrast to many European countries; '... the urban bourgeoisie were only the tip of a kulak dominated pyramid', 'the proletariat were only the most proletarianised and conscious part of a much wider peasant or landless mass'.⁷⁸ Under these

⁷¹ Schlesinger, 'Lenin, W.J.', p. 583.

⁷² See for example, Lenin, 'A Protest by Russian Social Democrats', *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 4, pp. 163-176 and Lenin, 'A Talk with Defenders of Economism', *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 5, pp. 360-367.

⁷³ White, *Lenin, The Practice and Theory of Revolution*, p. 48.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* p. 58.

⁷⁵ Schlesinger, 'Lenin, W.J.', p. 583.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* p. 583.

⁷⁷ Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 3, pp. 1-778.

⁷⁸ Schlesinger, 'Lenin, W.J.', p. 583.

circumstances there existed the possibility that revolution could come about not simply from the industrial proletariat but from the development of the 'proletarianising' process on the whole of society, including in the villages. This recognition, this development of the original Marxist suppositions was one of Lenin's greatest achievements.

Given the situation in Russia, a relatively backward country with developing revolutionary potential, Lenin went on to develop his conception of the tasks of the party, most notably in 'Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution' written in 1905.⁷⁹ From the classical Marxist position that a socialist revolution would occur in an industrially developed country, the majority of Mensheviks thought that the liberal bourgeoisie would have a leading role in the revolution. The Social Democrats would then become the opposition party within a bourgeois democratic political system. Trotsky and the left-wing Mensheviks thought that the proletariat should take the leading role in the forthcoming revolution in order to ruthlessly pursue their own class goals. However, in the absence of a socialist revolution in an industrially developed country, they believed the Russian revolution to be destined for defeat due to the inevitable conflict between the victorious proletariat and the peasantry. In contrast, Lenin argued that a socialist party should not wait for the bourgeoisie to achieve democratic freedoms. It should instead try to seize power for itself in alliance with sections of the peasantry; thus establishing the 'democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry'.⁸⁰

According to Schlesinger, Lenin's ideas were further developed through the experience of the Great War and the quarrels regarding the correct socialist position to it. In contrast to socialist pacifists, Lenin's analysis of monopoly capitalism led him to believe that war was inevitable due to the periodic re-division of the world amongst the leading capitalist powers.⁸¹ Peace was unachievable whilst capitalism prevailed, thus revolutionary socialists should answer the world war with systematic preparation for the seizure of power. To

⁷⁹ Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, pp. 1-131.

⁸⁰ Schlesinger, 'Lenin, W.J.', p. 584.

⁸¹ *Ibid.* p. 585.

Schlesinger, this analysis implied Lenin's recognition that Marxism had originated in different economic circumstances. Up to then, the only alteration to the teachings of the founders had been late Engels' revision of his position on the war question. Now, however, Lenin changed the traditional formulations so that they were appropriate to the changed economic conditions.

Schlesinger touched upon the philosophical foundations of Leninism when discussing the party as a revolutionary vanguard. According to Schlesinger, Lenin's 'Materialism and Empirio-criticism' disagreed with any notion that matter was not a physical concept. In fact, matter was, as Schlesinger expressed it, '...a philosophical category to describe objective reality'.⁸² According to Lenin, philosophical materialism was the recognition that an objective reality existed outside consciousness.⁸³ This objective reality could not be refuted by changes to any person's physical conception of the world since it existed outside their subjective cognition. However, Lenin seemed to back away from such an ultra-materialist position later in his career, with the resurgence of the revolutionary tide during the war. He began to make observations on the subjective element in dialectic interactions. According to Schlesinger, Lenin's 1915 'Questions of Dialectics' had the most far-reaching recognition of subjective factors.⁸⁴ He went further, arguing that Lenin had even partly acknowledged the legitimacy of philosophical idealism. This attitude does seem to contradict Schlesinger's earlier brief engagement with Lenin's materialism and his attack on empirio-criticism.⁸⁵ Then he had aped Lenin's inaccurate criticism of positivism: how could a world before humans have existed if there was no one there to experience it. However, he recognised the changing nature of Lenin's stance over time.

As regards the necessary character of a socialist party, Schlesinger felt that most Russian socialists recognised the concept of a central organisation as

⁸² Ibid. p. 584.

⁸³ As Lenin expressed it: '... historical materialism and Marx's entire economic doctrine are permeated through and through by a recognition of objective truth' (Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 18, p. 338).

⁸⁴ Schlesinger, 'Lenin, W.J.', p. 585. Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 29, pp. 316-322,

⁸⁵ See above, p. 96...

the 'vanguard' of the revolutionary movement. For Lenin this had developed through a combination of the Narodnik or Populist tradition and the practical necessity of the underground movement. However, Lenin's peculiar contribution was in his distinguishing between the movements concerned with the daily interests of the workers; the trade union or parliamentary sections of social democracy, and the revolutionary-socialist one. This latter movement required non-proletarian intellectuals to initially organise and produce the ideas. However, the spontaneity of the masses remained the determining purpose of the organisational socialist vanguard. It was these organisational elements which, firstly in 'The Urgent Tasks of Our Movement' and then fully in *What is to be Done?*, created the foundations of the break between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks.⁸⁶ These ideological divisions soon intensified. According to Schlesinger, Lenin insisted upon the idea of, '... not just an organisationally but also an ideologically united organisation as a precondition for the victory of the proletariat over their much stronger enemies'.⁸⁷

In the encyclopaedia article Schlesinger described Lenin as correct and insightful in all respects, even where this appeared contradictory. He mentioned that one of Lenin's contributions to Marxist political theory was his recognition of the role of intellectuals as the initial source of ideas within the party: the proletariat could not become conscious of its tasks alone. However, immediately afterwards he emphasised the significance of the masses to Lenin's theory, in particular their spontaneity. This was as if to compensate for any dilution of the workers' role. He was defending Lenin from criticism that he undermined the role of the proletariat in the proletarian revolution just as he pointed towards the hugely important role the non-proletarian element were to play within the revolutionary organisation.

In much the same way, Schlesinger appeared to be fearful that he had presented Lenin as too enamoured with 'spontaneity', a Luxemburgist deviation. He went on to argue that, in the struggle with the widespread

⁸⁶ Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 4, pp. 371-377.

⁸⁷ Schlesinger, 'Lenin, W.J.', p. 584.

'theory of spontaneity', Lenin answered the question 'should we organise the revolution' with an emphatic 'yes'.⁸⁸ Schlesinger went further insisting that, during the course of the revolution, Lenin underlined the decisive role of armed revolt, an organised aspect of the movement which 'spontaneity' could surely not be relied upon to produce. This was in opposition to the left-socialists' emphasis on the importance of 'mass strikes'.

The alteration in Lenin's position only appears inconsistent when 'Leninism' is viewed as a monolithic coherent theory in which all works contributed to that body in a uniform manner. Yet Lenin developed his ideas throughout his career; he altered his viewpoint and changed his emphases, even if he did not explicitly acknowledge this himself. In *What is to be Done?* Lenin did argue that consciousness needed to be brought to the proletariat from the outside.⁸⁹ However, just two years later in 'One Step Forward, Two Steps Back', he stressed the potentially parasitic influence of intellectuals upon the working class and emphasised that they had a great deal to learn from the workers.⁹⁰ J. D. White noted the difference in emphasis: 'In the earlier work Lenin had extolled the part played by the intelligentsia in bringing a socialist consciousness to the proletariat; in the later one he maintained that the intelligentsia had lessons in organisation and discipline to learn from the workers.'⁹¹ This may have been because he changed his mind or, perhaps, because of more short-term practical necessities. Equally, early in his career Lenin reacted with great ferocity at any attempt to explore idealism or question the dialectic materialism he employed. Later, as Schlesinger noted above, he accepted that idealism did have some merit. The older Lenin thus seemingly mellowed in his attitude towards idealism. Schlesinger's analysis of Leninism only appeared contradictory in places because of his attempt to present a systematic and entirely coherent account, one that glossed over changes in that system over time.

Having discussed Lenin's attitude towards the character of Russian

⁸⁸ Ibid. p. 584.

⁸⁹ Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 6, p. 30.

⁹⁰ Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 9, pp. 38-65.

⁹¹ White, *Lenin, The Practice and Theory of Revolution*, p. 65.

development and the tasks and composition of a revolutionary party, Schlesinger described Lenin's views regarding socialist construction in Russia. However, he did not go in to any great detail; arguing that the big questions concerning socialist construction only truly ripened after Lenin's death.⁹² He first approached the subject within the context of Lenin's 'State and Revolution', written in August and September 1917. He wrote: 'In a systematic exposition of classical Marxist 'theory of the state', the necessity of destroying the existing state apparatus and replacing it with organs of working class power, emerging from mass initiative, is emphasised'.⁹³ Again, with an apparent desire to quash any potential criticism of Lenin, Schlesinger pointed out that despite any seeming concessions to anarchism this smashing might entail, there was a great emphasis on the role of the party as organisers of both the revolution and the new state.

What was written thereafter on the topic can be seen as a robust defence of Lenin's plans and policies. His initial ideas, developed in 1917 in his 'April Theses' or 'The Tasks of the Proletariat in the Present Revolution' and 'Can the Bolsheviks Retain State Power?', concerned nationalisation of land and control of production.⁹⁴ Control of the banks and other 'commanding heights' would be sufficient for the immediate transformation of Russia into a planned economy.⁹⁵ Schlesinger conceded that this was not what occurred in practice. However, he insisted that the much more far-reaching nationalisation measures that were introduced in the first revolutionary period were not due to any theoretical considerations but, '...in part because of the flight of capitalists and in part because of the workers' refusal to cooperate with them'.⁹⁶ According to Schlesinger, it was not a miscalculation on Lenin's part

⁹² Schlesinger, 'Lenin, W.J.', p. 586.

⁹³ Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 33, pp. 1-120. Schlesinger, 'Lenin, W.J.', p. 585.

⁹⁴ Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 31, pp. 149-186, Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 34, pp. 287-339.

⁹⁵ Lenin wrote: 'The big banks are the "state apparatus" which we need to bring about socialism, and which we *take ready-made* from capitalism; our task here is merely to lop off what *capitalistically mutilates* this excellent apparatus, to make it *even bigger*, even more democratic, even more comprehensive. Quantity will be transformed into quality. A single State Bank, the biggest of the big, with branches in every rural district, in every factory, will constitute as much as nine-tenths of the *socialist* apparatus.' (Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 34, p. 307. Author's italics).

⁹⁶ Schlesinger, 'Lenin, W.J.', p. 586.

but the circumstances of later events that meant that his earlier predictions did not come to fruition. That this remained a major flaw in Lenin's plan was not discussed.

Schlesinger briefly described Lenin's writing concerning construction after the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk before turning to the New Economic Policy (NEP) instituted in 1921. According to Schlesinger, the temporary revival of free trade at this time was necessary due to the backwardness of lower middle-class Russia.⁹⁷ This justification was swiftly followed by an assertion that Lenin continued to strive towards, and write about, the transition to socialism up until the end of his life. Schlesinger noted that in some of his last works, such as 'On Cooperation' written in January 1923, Lenin asserted the importance of developing peasant cooperatives for the transition to socialism.⁹⁸ His point was that Lenin still believed Russia had begun the journey towards socialism.

Finally Schlesinger turned to an appreciation of Lenin: what recognition of his legacy existed in the modern world? He argued that in the atmosphere of the cold war, 'stupid libel' had been written about Lenin, presumably by commentators from the West and political opponents.⁹⁹ The notion that the cold war blinkered many Western writers and created a hostile environment, which was anathema to a proper discussion of Soviet matters, was familiar to all of Schlesinger's writing. The proposition that he spent much of his career consciously attempting to counteract this prevailing hostility and prejudice is a central tenet of this thesis. In contrast to those hostile to the Soviet Union, Lenin's supporters had developed the cult of Leninism following his death. According to Schlesinger, Lenin was placed on a 'pedestal of infallibility'.¹⁰⁰ His theories and writings were applied to very different situations leading to unhistorical expositions of his works.

To Schlesinger, this myth creation developed in two distinct directions, with

⁹⁷ Ibid. p. 586.

⁹⁸ Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 45, pp. 369-377. Schlesinger, 'Lenin, W.J.', p. 586.

⁹⁹ Schlesinger, 'Lenin, W.J.', p. 586.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. p. 586.

each trying to claim Leninist heritage in their own arguments. Firstly there were those who disagreed with the direction of Soviet policy since Lenin's death. The left opposition, for example, constructed an image of Lenin as the 'pioneer of workers' democracy' in contrast to the current suppression of that democracy.¹⁰¹ Oppositionists attempted to bolster their position by reference to Lenin. His successors had subverted Lenin's intentions.

The other myth construction was undertaken by Soviet authorities, an orthodox position was created in official books, articles and speeches. Lenin's approval and authority for current actions was sought and found in his body of work. This was particularly true during the Stalinist period, in which, as Schlesinger wrote, Stalin '... used every opportunity to find his own ideas within those of the 'Master''.¹⁰² In the Stalinist presentation Leninism was a new phase of Marxism. Lenin's name was added to that of Marx and Engels, as one of the founders of the movement. Whilst Schlesinger agreed that Leninism was a new phase, he clearly disapproved of the use of Lenin as a litmus test of orthodoxy and Marxist correctness. Instead he appeared to be in agreement with the post-Stalin position of Soviet authorities. Stalinism had distorted Leninism, and it was necessary to remove these distortions so that further progress could be made. This analysis corresponds to the time-line the present thesis has posited. The encyclopaedia article was written after Stalin's death and in contrast to his earlier work, in which Schlesinger appeared to acquiesce with the Stalinist interpretation of Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism, he was now more critical of the Stalinist influence upon theory.¹⁰³ It appears that it was necessary to remove Stalinist distortions, to return to original Leninism, before further dialectical progress could be undertaken.

In Schlesinger's opinion, Lenin had melded a higher phase of Marxism: 'Like all great thinkers, who helped form the history of their time, Lenin tied a series of threads together to create a new unity'.¹⁰⁴ In his case, those threads were Marxist theory and the traditions of the Russian revolutionary movement.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. p. 586.

¹⁰² Ibid. p. 586.

¹⁰³ See above p. 95.

¹⁰⁴ Schlesinger, 'Lenin, W.J.', p. 587.

From an analysis of monopoly capitalism, which others shared, he drew far-reaching consequences for the reorientation of the socialist movement. Lenin washed away the difficulties of a socialist revolution in Russia and created a Marxist theory capable of seizing power. The realisation of Lenin's new unity proved to be a model for many. It provided the basic principles of the revolutions in China and in other backward countries.¹⁰⁵ Schlesinger recognised that Lenin had altered Marxism beyond the founders' initial assessment, but this was one of his strengths. According to Schlesinger, Lenin had positively admitted the possibility that Russia had developed a different revolutionary type to that of the classical Marxist schema; one '... devoted to improving the state apparatus and systematically overcoming cultural backwardness'.¹⁰⁶ He referred to Lenin's statement in 'Better Fewer, But Better', written in March 1923, in which he stated that socialist victory was assured:

In the last analysis, the outcome of the struggle will be determined by the fact that Russia, India, China etc., account for the overwhelming majority of the population of the globe. And during the last few years it is this majority that has been drawn into the struggle for emancipation with extraordinary rapidity, so that in this respect there cannot be the slightest doubt what the final outcome of the world struggle will be. In this sense, the complete victory of socialism is fully and absolutely assured.¹⁰⁷

Whilst some would consider Lenin's development of the original Marxist scheme as heretical, unprincipled or simply wrong, the application of revolutionary principles to an unsuitable, non-industrial climate, Schlesinger clearly applauded it. He maintained faith in what he saw as Lenin's coherent and holistic theory of revolution and socialist construction and believed its victory was inevitable.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. p. 584.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. p. 586.

¹⁰⁷ Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 45, pp. 389-406 at p. 404.

Schlesinger's analysis was clear. He praised Lenin's contribution in the strongest terms and defended him against criticism he seems to have anticipated in readers. He also defended the Soviet Union, arguing that it was still incomplete but progressing towards the eventual higher form of communist society.¹⁰⁸ He saw the Russian revolution and the Soviet state as a victory for Leninism in particular, a new and higher stage in Marxist theory. However, writing in 1958, '... a lifetime after his [Lenin's] death, as his party emphasises his works in reaction to the extremes of his successor, there may be a need for some of the main elements, although not the philosophical foundations, to make space for a new analysis'.¹⁰⁹ A further theoretical advance, a new phase, was necessary in Marxism, one taking into account the changing circumstances and one in which the Stalinist 'extremes' were first removed.

Schlesinger once again touched upon his own views of Lenin when writing a book review for *Soviet Studies* in April 1959.¹¹⁰ In it he praised Lenin and argued that it was his development of the theory of a revolutionary party which was of most importance: 'A good case can be made for regarding Lenin's political theory, and in particular his concept of the party, as his main contribution to Marxist theory'.¹¹¹ An understanding of the historical context of this development was crucial to any appreciation: Lenin combined the Russian tradition of professional revolutionaries with Marxist theory. Similar to previous work, Schlesinger emphasised Lenin's recognition of the need to separate the workers' economic struggles from political ones. The party should aim to raise these economic wants to the higher level of a political struggle against Tsarism. However, as Schlesinger wrote, it was also necessary for the party to adapt to issues arising from: '(1) the predominance of the peasants in pre-revolutionary Russia, (2) the struggle against the War, (3) the transition from bourgeois-democratic to a socialist revolution and, finally, (4) the transition from the conquest of power to economic

¹⁰⁸ Schlesinger, 'Lenin, W.J.', p. 585.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. p. 587.

¹¹⁰ Schlesinger, 'Leninism; Soviet Marxism', *Soviet Studies*, 10, 4, April 1959, pp. 409-416. The article reviewed A. G. Meyer, *Leninism*, (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1957) and H. Marcuse, *Soviet Marxism* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1958).

¹¹¹ Schlesinger, 'Leninism; Soviet Marxism', p. 413.

reconstruction'.¹¹² That Lenin was able to prepare and lead a party capable of these myriad tasks was taken for granted. Schlesinger again pointed out that Lenin played little part in the last task, that of socialist construction, due to his death.

Key themes of Schlesinger's writings on Lenin emerged from another review four years later.¹¹³ Once again, as in the encyclopaedia article in particular, Schlesinger emphasised the tribute Lenin paid to, '... the Narodnik share in the ancestry of Bolshevism'.¹¹⁴ It was Lenin's amalgamation of the Russian revolutionary tradition with Marxist theory that paved the way for revolutionary success. Schlesinger also emphasised the significance of *What is to be Done?* as a defining text. As Schlesinger wrote, it was 'the fundamental work of Bolshevism'.¹¹⁵ Another crucial feature that Schlesinger consistently pointed to was the necessarily dialectical nature of Marxist theory. It developed and remained an active and relevant methodology because it changed over time, often as a result of internal struggles. Its historical materialist base also ensured theory remained interwoven with the ephemeral economic, and wider socio-political, circumstances. Original Marxism was developed with West European countries in mind; modifications and developments were essential for it to be of any use to an underdeveloped state such as Russia. Schlesinger took this argument one step further. The dialectical alterations which took place, primarily at Lenin's instigation, were now of relevance to other countries: '... Marxist theory, in that form in which it had developed in Western industrialised countries, could hardly have served as a pattern for countries such as China and Cuba unless it had undergone modifications implied in its application in a major underdeveloped country'.¹¹⁶ Presumably, further modifications would be necessary to make the theory relevant to differing material conditions. However, Lenin's input had ensured the continuing relevance of Marxist theory.

¹¹² Ibid. p. 413-4.

¹¹³ Schlesinger, 'The Preparatory Period in the Revolutionary Party'.

¹¹⁴ Schlesinger, 'The Preparatory Period in the Revolutionary Party', p. 455.

¹¹⁵ Ibid. p. 456.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. p. 453.

The value of Lenin's fusion of the traditions of the Russian revolutionary movement to Marxist theory were again underlined in a paper published in 1965 entitled 'Lenin as a Member of the International Socialist Bureau'.¹¹⁷ Schlesinger wrote, '... he [Lenin] turned the rather negative attitude of the early Russian Marxists towards the Populist inheritance into a demand for a synthesis of their organizational experience with the Marxist interpretation of the historical process'.¹¹⁸ Schlesinger was careful to point out that this did not imply an uncritical acceptance of the Populist tradition; only that which was useful and applicable should be restored.¹¹⁹ He also referred to the 'decisive step' Lenin took with his adaptation of Marxism to Russian conditions; Marxist theory thus became applicable to current material conditions. Demonstrating his commitment to the dialectical process, Schlesinger argued: 'Still, he would not have claimed the outcome of the adaptations was the last word of the international socialist movement'.¹²⁰ Marxism-Leninism was not the final, absolute authority. Further changes would become necessary, not least as a result of the correctness and success of that theory. The call for further changes and a rejection of any exegesis of Lenin's texts was a consistent theme of Schlesinger's writings.

The final substantial piece of work Schlesinger produced on the subject of Leninism is the series of nine lectures, entitled Marxism-Leninism. The lectures were given just before Schlesinger's retirement and constitute his final assessment of the political theory or ideology he dedicated his adult life to. They can be seen as a final analysis; the culmination of a developing body of work on the subject of Marxism.

The lectures were typical of Schlesinger's style of expression. They clearly and unflinchingly displayed his commitment and belief in the subject matter –

¹¹⁷ Schlesinger, 'Lenin as a Member of the International Socialist Bureau', *Soviet Studies*, 16, 4, April 1965, pp. 448-458.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.* p. 457.

¹¹⁹ That Lenin was indebted to Populism, but that this did not equate to his acceptance of the Populist platform was also posited by Schlesinger in an article of the previous year. Schlesinger, 'The Dispute and the Socialist Tradition', *Co-existence*, 2, November 1964, pp. 177-184 at pp. 179-180.

¹²⁰ Schlesinger, 'Lenin as a Member of the International Socialist Bureau', p. 458.

the veracity of Marxism as an ideology, intellectual methodology and political movement. The content was thorough, with many details and examples. However, the writing style and language was complicated and obtuse in places, with a structure that made comprehension problematic. Schlesinger would often change from one subject of discussion to another with no obvious break, introduction or conclusion. He also employed a great number of parentheses within sentences, often clouding his point in the process.

Schlesinger displayed his usual utilitarian attitude towards events covered in the lectures. He combined condemnation of the excesses and terroristic means utilised by Stalin's regime with a pragmatic acceptance of the necessity of some methods, at the expense of more humanistic concerns. Schlesinger expressed a clear admiration of Lenin's achievements but insisted that the changes to Marxist theory which he effected were of ephemeral validity. He also asserted Lenin's fallibility, a reasonably rare admission for Schlesinger. He twice pointed out that it was Stalin and Trotsky rather than Lenin who correctly timed the October insurrection to fit with Soviet legality. In the seventh lecture he wrote: '...this was one of the occasions when the two worked together, and showed more practical insight than the master'.¹²¹ And in the next he conceded: 'Lenin admittedly proved occasionally wrong in tactical issues, the most important of which concerned the decisions, taken by the CC [Central Committee] against his volition, not to expel but simply to reprimand the opponents of the October insurrection [and], to carry out that insurrection according to a time-table preserving Soviet legality'.¹²² Schlesinger still believed that Lenin was the 'master' and only 'occasionally wrong' but these minor admissions were greater than usual.

There was a familiarity to the orthodoxy of Schlesinger's analysis in the lectures. His position was similar to that of official Soviet sources on several issues, including the immediate pre-history of Bolshevism. He asserted: 'From the struggle against Economism Russian Social Democracy in general, and

¹²¹ Schlesinger, *Lectures*, 7, pp. 9-10.

¹²² *Ibid.* 8, p. 13, footnote 1.

Leninism in particular were born'.¹²³ This overestimation of the coherence of 'Economism' as a movement has already been discussed. However, Schlesinger went further in the lectures, once again unquestioningly reiterating Lenin's version of events. He referred to the *Credo* as a manifesto of 'Economism' and argued that the group wished the Russian labour movement to be restricted to the defence of workers' immediate economic interests and compared themselves to Western Revisionists.¹²⁴ Lenin had referred to the *Credo* in such a way in 1899. He wrote:

A tendency has been observed among Russian Social-Democrats recently to depart from the fundamental principles of Russian Social-Democracy that were proclaimed by its founders and foremost fighters... The *Credo*... which is presumed to express the fundamental views of certain ('young') Russian Social-Democrats, represents an attempt at a systematic and definite exposition of the 'new views'.¹²⁵

Schlesinger also portrayed the *Credo* as a 'systematic and definite exposition'. His agreement with orthodox Soviet and Leninist descriptions was also apparent in the lectures when he described the 'Empirio-criticists' as 'supporters of semi-idealist re-interpretations of Marxist philosophy' and 'God constructors'.¹²⁶

The majority of the lectures concerned aspects of Leninism and Lenin's role in the development of the Bolshevik party and the Soviet Union. They contained much that was familiar to earlier work. One of the main features of Schlesinger's writings on the subject was that Lenin had uniquely synthesised the traditions of the Russian revolutionary movement with classical Marxist

¹²³ Ibid. 5, p. 5.

¹²⁴ Ibid. 5, p. 4. J. D. White insists that the *Credo* was no such thing. Lenin's sister Anna sent a short manuscript about the role of the Social Democrats and the workers' movement written by S. N. Prokopovich and E. D. Kuskova to Lenin, describing it as some 'Credo' of the 'youngsters'. However, Lenin took this description literally and believed the manuscript to be a 'programmatic statement'. It was described as such in all subsequent Bolshevik sources (White, *Lenin, The Practice and Theory of Revolution*, p. 53).

¹²⁵ Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 4, pp. 163-176 at p. 165.

¹²⁶ Schlesinger, *Lectures*, 8, p. 15, footnote 2.

theory; this blend had brought about the successful Bolshevik revolution and ensured Marxism's continued relevance in changing socio-economic circumstances. This important theme was evident in the lectures. As Schlesinger put it:

Leninism represented the absorption of Marxism by the Russian revolutionary movement as well as the partial absorption of the organisational traditions and moral impetus of the Russian revolutionaries movement: in the outside world without the first absorption the Russian revolutionary movement would not have resulted in the raising of a backward country to the position of one of the leading, and in some aspects the most advanced power of today; without the second one Marxism would have remained a Utopian dream, incapable of influencing the course of history when those who had been backward during the European-dominated period of modern development entered the great transformation process.¹²⁷

Without Marxism, the Russian revolutionaries could not have brought about the revolution and transformation of society and industry. Without the revolutionaries' organisational heritage, Marxism would not have had the tools and structures to have any decisive impact on that society.

In the lectures, Schlesinger conceded that Lenin's organisational concepts may have altered Marxism, something more dogmatic Marxists would consider heresy. However, these alterations were a necessary and inherent part of Marxist theory and were what made it applicable to changing conditions. Lenin's organisational concepts may have led Russia further towards a socialist revolution than accepted Marxist ideology of the time allowed for an isolated Russia. However, according to Schlesinger, this was because Lenin, '... fully grasped the needs of his own country – and of other

¹²⁷ Ibid. 9, p. 1.

underdeveloped countries to follow'.¹²⁸ Lenin recognised that conditions had altered from Marx's day and developed his organisational theories to take account of them. He perceived the rise of monopoly capitalism and imperialism and sought to change revolutionary theory to fit, something he did with great success.

Familiar interpretations could also be seen in Schlesinger's description of the birth of Comintern and Lenin's Twenty One Conditions. In a similar vein to his memoirs, the lectures pointed out that few would argue with the Bolsheviks desire to purge any new International of those who had displayed their consistent opposition to the agreed standards of social democracy. However, as Schlesinger wrote: 'The really controversial problem concerned the definition of opportunism, separation from which as well as from the overt traitors was required'.¹²⁹ Lenin's definition of opportunism was too broad and Comintern was saddled with unhelpful and unwieldy conditions of membership as a result.¹³⁰ He described the conditions as one of Lenin's major errors throughout his publishing career. Again, echoing his memoirs, Schlesinger went on to justify or explain the actions of those, such as himself, who agreed to accept the Conditions in order to join Comintern. He asserted, '... already in the autumn of 1920 a consciousness of the central importance of the Russian revolution caused many left-wing socialists who had their objection against the extreme centralisation of the Twenty One Conditions for Admission to Comintern to vote for their acceptance'.¹³¹ Solidarity with Soviet Russia took precedence over concerns about centralisation.

Finally, the last key theme to also be present in Schlesinger's lectures was the importance of *What is to be Done?* for an understanding of Leninism. Schlesinger regarded it as one of the key texts of Marxism and wrote that there was not, '... the slightest reason to assume that at any time of his life he

¹²⁸ Ibid. 5, p. 10.

¹²⁹ Schlesinger, *Lectures*, 8, p. 1.

¹³⁰ In fact, Schlesinger appears to have displayed a consistency of opinion on this matter throughout the period of investigation. In one of his first works on returning to the West, *Spirit of Post-war Russia*, Schlesinger wrote, '... it is extremely difficult even in retrospect to defend Lenin's twenty-one conditions of 1920' (Schlesinger, *Spirit of Post-war Russia*, p. 110.).

¹³¹ Schlesinger, *Lectures*, 8, p. 4. Author's underlining.

[Lenin] departed from the concepts of the functions of the revolutionary elite as elaborated in What is to be Done and on the applicability of these principles to international socialism all over the world'.¹³² This work was fundamental to the development of Lenin's theory of the party, although Schlesinger went on to point out that this theory was of only limited validity since conditions were dynamic.

There were elements which were new in the lectures. For example, Schlesinger provided further analysis of Lenin's attitude towards the state. He wrote that Lenin's aims regarding Russia were initially limited, continuing: 'Lenin did not believe that the realisation of his suggestions would turn Russia socialist'.¹³³ However, Russia could begin the socialist revolution and improve conditions to facilitate the entrance of socialist allies in Europe and the US. The immediate aims on realisation of power were also limited: nationalisation of the banks; worker representatives' control of production and distribution; nationalisation of land alongside the preservation of large farms. Schlesinger argued: 'It was on this platform that the Bolshevik party ... assumed power'.¹³⁴ In keeping with Schlesinger's admiration of the Bolsheviks and Lenin's version of events, this statement implicitly assumed that the Bolshevik seizure of power was consensual and that it was their organisational tactics and correct application of policies which brought about this success. This suggestion is one that was made in many of Schlesinger's writings on the history of the Russian revolution.

Schlesinger went on to assert that Lenin envisaged the new state in a very fluid manner: 'In general, Lenin had no particular respect for institutions, including new ones created by the revolutionary movement itself'.¹³⁵ Institutions would rise and fall as they were needed. According to Schlesinger, Lenin was a 'hard realist' when it came to measures necessary to preserve the new state. Schlesinger pointed to Lenin's report of 1918 in which he defended the need for unequal salaries and the use of bourgeois

¹³² Ibid. 8, p. 6. Author's underlining.

¹³³ Ibid. 7, p. 6. Author's underlining.

¹³⁴ Ibid. 7, p. 7.

¹³⁵ Ibid. 7, p. 10.

specialists by arguing that state capitalism was essential for the salvation of the Russian revolution.¹³⁶ There would be setbacks upon the road to socialism and unpopular measures may be needed, seemingly in contrast to long-held principles, but these would be worthwhile if the young revolutionary state was preserved and allowed to develop. This 'hard realism' or pragmatism is a characteristic which Schlesinger shared. He continually defended the fledgling Soviet state against criticism that socialist principles were being betrayed. He took a pragmatic stance on issues such as NEP or party discipline, arguing that however unsavoury, such measures were often necessary for survival. He would, therefore, have approved of Lenin's attitude and may even have been influenced by it.

Schlesinger spoke of a systematisation of Lenin's theories in the lectures. This was also a new element to his analysis. He wrote that Lenin's 'Left-wing Communism' and the Theses of the Second Congress of Comintern were: '... the nearest approach to a systematisation of Lenin's political theories we have'.¹³⁷ Schlesinger had explained previously that the key to understanding Leninism was *What is to be Done?*. In it Lenin had explained the need for a professional party of disciplined and centralised revolutionaries who could raise the consciousness of the proletariat above mere economic or trade union struggles, to their historical role as a revolutionary class. Schlesinger had also made clear that these developments of Marxist theory had directly led to the success of the Bolsheviks in Russia and had transformed that Marxism into something applicable to later times and non-advanced states. However, Schlesinger now went further. He stated that Lenin's later writings, namely 'Left-wing Communism' and his speeches at the Second Congress, were a continuation of that system.

In these works Lenin was passing on his successful theory to other parties. He was outlining how the Bolsheviks achieved their revolution and urging other parties to take advantage of this experience. In 'Left-wing Communism'

¹³⁶ Ibid. 7, p. 11. Lenin, 'The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government', *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 36 pp. 165-208.

¹³⁷ Schlesinger, *Lectures*, 8, p. 7.

Lenin wrote:

But at the present moment of history the situation is precisely such that the Russian model reveals to *all* countries something, and something very essential, of their near and inevitable future. Advanced workers in every land have long understood this... Herein lies the international 'significance' (in the narrow sense of the term) of Soviet power, and of the fundamentals of Bolshevik theory and tactics.¹³⁸

Many features of the Russian revolution, and Bolshevik theory in particular, were of international validity and should thus be assimilated. Schlesinger obviously agreed wholeheartedly with this interpretation. He had said as much from a personal perspective in his memoirs. Schlesinger accepted Lenin's interpretation as expressed in 'Left-wing Communism', as a true description of the way in which the Bolshevik party had operated during the revolution and on gaining power. However it has already been noted that Lenin's description did not directly correspond to the true nature of that party.

Schlesinger argued that alongside Lenin's treatment of immediate political issues in these works, he also tackled agrarian questions and problems of colonial emancipation. He wrote: 'Most important, however, for the further development of Marxism is his systematic treatment of the agrarian and colonial problems, i.e. those where Lenin had made his maximum contribution to the further development of the classical Marxist inheritance'.¹³⁹ Schlesinger had not previously written much about Lenin's attitude towards these problems and did not go into any great detail now, yet he clearly thought them significant.

Schlesinger argued that Lenin's theses on the agrarian problem submitted to the Congress were based upon the revolutionary experience of Russia. Once again he asserted the primacy of Lenin's position due to successful Bolshevik

¹³⁸ Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 41, p. 4.

¹³⁹ Schlesinger, *Lectures*, 8, p. 7.

experiences in Russia. In backward countries it was necessary to divide up large estates in order to win the sympathies of the peasantry. In more advanced countries it would still be vital to provide land for peasants but some large estates could be preserved as state farms.¹⁴⁰

Lenin also demanded a more modern approach to colonialism. According to Schlesinger this manifested itself in calls to pursue close alliance with all emancipation movements so long as this association, '... does not prevent the struggle of the communist for independent organisation of the proletariat and semi-proletariat'.¹⁴¹ Communists were to take a more popular front attitude to colonial emancipation where appropriate. Lenin insisted that the description of colonial movements should change from 'bourgeois democratic' to 'national revolutionary', because, often, colonial bourgeoisie now colluded with the bourgeoisie of the oppressing nation.¹⁴² Schlesinger noted the change of emphasis and felt it concerned the possibility of avoiding the capitalist stage of development.¹⁴³ This was something he believed was, '... alien as we know not to Marx but to the bulk of West European socialists who joined with what they supposed to be an orthodox-Marxist development'.¹⁴⁴ Lenin and Marx both believed it was possible to avoid the capitalist stage; less developed countries could now learn from Russia and move directly towards socialism. This both legitimised the Bolshevik's seizure of power, Marx would have agreed with their actions, and emphasised Lenin's role in adapting Marxist theory to modern conditions.

Schlesinger concluded his discussion of Lenin's political system by emphasising its open-ended character: 'At the end of his life Lenin thus has

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. 8, pp. 7-8. Lenin wrote: 'Sections of large estates can and must always be found, part of which can be turned over to the small peasants, perhaps not as their property, but on lease, so that even the smallest peasant may get some part of the confiscated estates. Otherwise, the smallest peasant will see no difference between the old order and the dictatorship of the Soviets. If the proletarian state authority does not act in this way, it will be unable to retain power' (Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 41, p. 252).

¹⁴¹ Schlesinger, *Lectures*, 8, p. 8.

¹⁴² Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 41, pp. 241...

¹⁴³ As Lenin put it, '... are we to consider as correct the assertion that the capitalist stage of economic development is inevitable for backward nations now on the road to emancipation and among whom a certain advance towards progress is to be seen since the war? We replied in the negative' (Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 41, pp. 245-246).

¹⁴⁴ Schlesinger, *Lectures*, 8, p. 9.

left the ends of his system open'.¹⁴⁵ He argued that NEP was the last contribution Lenin was able to make to Russian development. This was a stage in which many decisive issues were yet to be settled, not least the enormous task of industrialisation.

The final section of Schlesinger's lectures to concentrate on Lenin concerned reflections on Leninism immediately after his death. They were similar to observations he had previously made about Soviet and cold war characterisations of Lenin's legacy and they demonstrate the historiographical and dialectical nature of Schlesinger's interest. He was concerned with Lenin's significance during his lifetime and later, as his theories and policies bore fruit and shaped further developments. He was also concerned with the way in which leaders and groups manipulated Lenin's legacy for their own interests. He singled out two strands within Soviet Russia immediately after Lenin's death to demonstrate the different ways in which his impact could be understood. During the struggle for Lenin's succession, and on Stalin's initiative, the party encouraged recruitment from the working bench. As Schlesinger noted: '...for their indoctrination systematic textbooks of 'Leninism' were elaborated.'¹⁴⁶ Two of these textbooks in particular exposed the differing attitudes. According to Schlesinger:

That written by Zinoviev was dominated by emphasis on the peasant and colonial problems, the implication being that Leninism was an adaptation of classical Marxism (which thus was to be retained substantially unaltered for the leading industrial countries) for the particular problems of backward countries.¹⁴⁷

By concentrating on what Lenin had had to change in order to remain relevant to traditionally inappropriate states, industrially backward, non-capitalist ones, Zinoviev was arguing that any adaptations Lenin had made were temporary

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. 8, p. 11.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. 8, p. 11.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. 8, p. 11. G. Zinoviev, *V. I. Lenin*, (Kharkov, Put prosveshcheniia, 1924).

and of limited relevance. Marxism, in its traditional form, was still appropriate for the majority of industrial countries.

Stalin, on the other hand, as early as 1921 and later in his work 'Foundations of Leninism' argued that Leninism was Marxism adapted to the later stages of capitalism, that of imperialism and proletarian revolution. Leninism was the latest version of Marxism.¹⁴⁸ As Schlesinger explained, '... the specific conditions of Russia, plus some more 'underdeveloped' countries – the accession of which, as we have seen Lenin envisaged at the end of his life – far from being atypical represented the problems of actual, as distinct from dreamed of, socialist revolutions'.¹⁴⁹ Leninism was Marxism for present conditions. Schlesinger clearly agreed with this Stalinist interpretation. He did not say so in the lectures but he had stated many times that he believed Leninism to be the next evolutionary step in the dialectical and fluid political theory of Marxism. He also frequently emphasised the fact that Lenin had altered previous theory to take account of changed circumstances and had thus made it relevant to less advanced countries.

The lectures provided a further insight into Schlesinger's Leninism. They substantiated the themes of his earlier writings as well as offering some new analysis. They are particularly important since they were written near the end of Schlesinger's life, after his retirement from academia. They thus represent the culmination of his work.

Schlesinger's attitude to Lenin was largely consistent over time. There was a difference in emphasis between his writing whilst Stalin held power and that published after Stalin's death. However, this timeline is more difficult to discern with works on Lenin than on other topics, noticeably Soviet historiography. This is because Schlesinger only published one work of note

¹⁴⁸ In 'Foundations of Leninism' Stalin wrote: 'Leninism is Marxism of the era of imperialism and of the proletarian revolution' (Stalin, *Sochineniia*, 6, pp. 69-188 at p. 71).

¹⁴⁹ Schlesinger, *Lectures*, 8, p. 12. The same argument about the differing systematisation of 'Leninism' by Zinoviev and Stalin is given by Schlesinger in Schlesinger, *History of the Communist Party of USSR*, pp. 224-225 and in Schlesinger, 'Stalin, J. W.', *Handwörterbuch der Sozialwissenschaften*, 15, 1957, pp. 11-15 at pp. 12-13. In both cases Schlesinger clearly portrays Stalin's analysis as the correct one.

in the West before 1956. Nevertheless, one distinct difference is apparent. In Schlesinger's early work he appeared to concur with Stalin that theoretical developments since Lenin's death, and undertaken by Stalin or with his approval, represented the natural progression of that theory. Whereas in later works, notably his encyclopaedia article, Schlesinger suggested a need to purge theory of erroneous Stalinist distortions; a return to Leninist purity was required before further advances could be undertaken. Once again, coalescence with Stalinist interpretations was apparent whilst he lived. Yet condemnation of many developments effected by Stalin was characteristic in writings after his death.

Schlesinger greatly admired Lenin's theoretical work, the advances he made to Marxism, and his political activities. Schlesinger committed himself to Lenin's path in the early 1920s and remained on it for the rest of his life. He believed that Lenin's theory of the party, his organisation of the Bolsheviks, led directly to the success of the Russian revolution and was a blueprint for parties in other countries. His amalgamation of the traditions of Russian revolutionaries with Marxism advanced that theory so that it was applicable to the changed conditions of the twentieth century. These alterations created a Marxism which differed from that envisaged by the founders, but these changes were natural; Marxism was supposed to remain bedded to dynamic material conditions. However, Lenin's success had made his contribution obsolete. Further alterations were required as a result of changes to material conditions. The fact of the Russian revolution had irreversibly altered the socio-economic and political landscape.

Chapter Four: Schlesinger's Later Theoretical Development – Marx and Engels, Lukács, and Stalin

This chapter will focus upon Schlesinger's later theoretical development. As Schlesinger became familiar with Leninism it led him towards a greater understanding of the founders of Marxism: Marx and Engels. An investigation of his attitude towards them is vital for an overall perspective of his Marxism. A brief examination of the similarities between Schlesinger's approach and that of the outstanding Hungarian Marxist, Georg Lukács will then be undertaken. Finally, the chapter will examine Schlesinger's attitude towards Stalin as a theoretician; the correct appreciation of this aspect of Schlesinger's thought is vital for the second part of the thesis.

The contents of this chapter, and indeed the order of the entire Marxism section of the thesis may appear odd at first sight. It does not conform to the traditional or chronological development of Marxist thought and, perhaps, appears to treat Marx and Engels as an afterthought, combined as they are with later personalities. However, there is a valid reason for the presentation. It instead follows Schlesinger's personal theoretical development, his own chronology: from Luxemburg to Lenin, through Marx and Engels and finally to Stalin.

Schlesinger was not particularly interested in philosophy until later in his career, when a full-time academic. Although he stated that he devoted the substantial majority of his life to the critical development of Marxist theory, it seems clear that, for the most part, Schlesinger meant the active aspects of theory – characteristics of party, tactical strategies – Marxism in the widest sense of the word, the world-wide movement for social justice and freedom.¹

¹ Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: Whither Germany?*, p.93.

To Schlesinger, Marxism was a living, breathing methodology and source of inspiration rather than a dry, intellectual object of study. Hence his early focus on contemporary debates between Leninism and Luxemburgism. Even later in his career, historical debates were worthy of critical investigation only if they were of relevance to present concerns. This attitude was demonstrated in an article Schlesinger published in 1964/5 concerning Marx's *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*.² Schlesinger made clear that he had no interest in, for example, '.... an academic dispute amongst a few German intellectuals, 120 years ago, unless the outcome is relevant in its intellectual content'.³ Schlesinger would only be concerned with those aspects of Marx and Engels' work that were of continued importance in present times. There were, thus, few writings devoted to Marx and Engels alone.

Equally, Schlesinger expressed no interest in what he saw as purely philosophical debates, such as those involving Lukács, beyond their influence on contemporary understanding of Marxism and the movement. He had little time for those who concerned themselves with philosophical, metaphysical enquiries at the expense of actual historical circumstances. In 1947 Schlesinger referred to the eternal debates on the precise functioning of dialectics. He wrote:

I think that the victories of the Red Army, although, in my opinion, undoubtedly due to essential forces of Marxism, are in no way due to some mystic force of the negation, the negation of the negation, and so on. Therefore, the time spent by many people in Cambridge and Oxford on the commendable study of the 'mystery' of the successes of the Red Army should have

² Schlesinger, 'Les 'Manuscripts économique-philosophiques' de Marx replacés dans leur perspective historique', *Annali dell'Istituto Giangiacomo Feltrinelli*, 1964/65, pp. 51-72. The article was published in French but an earlier, English draft is available in the Schlesinger Papers at Glasgow University Library (Schlesinger, *Marx's Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts in the Historical Perspective* (Glasgow University Library, Rudolf Schlesinger Papers, MS Gen 1660, 39, Unpublished, 1962)). The year the English paper is written is recorded on p. 32. Where references to both versions are given, translations have been taken directly from the English one as it is assumed that this was Schlesinger's original meaning.

³ Ibid. p. 51. Schlesinger, *Marx's Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts in the Historical Perspective*, p. 1.

been devoted to the study of the driving forces and the historical development of the Russian Revolution rather than to the study of some mystical formulas understood by very few of those who use them.⁴

This 'practical', pragmatic attitude was a common theme in Schlesinger's writings.

Schlesinger made clear his dislike of purely scholastic tasks in his actions as well as his writings. On arrival in Moscow in 1935 Schlesinger was offered a post at the Marx-Engels Institute. He declined the opportunity on learning that foreign staff members were predominantly given roles involving the critical revision of Marx's manuscripts.⁵ Such work was of no interest to him. Schlesinger wished to be involved in more practical tasks, involving his own party if possible. This disdain for concentration on Marx's writings remained with Schlesinger. The treatment of texts as received truths was anathema to Schlesinger's dialectical and historico-materialist understanding. Such texts were inherently time bound and thus of limited value. There is not, therefore, many of Schlesinger's writings which undertake textual analysis or real engagement with Marx's work.

Schlesinger made clear that he had taken no special interest in the publication of Marx's *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* until they became the focal point of criticism of Marxism. He wrote:

The Manuscripts were first published in full in 1932, on the very eve of Hitler's access to power. At that time, we had other things to bother about. I think I represent no particular case when I honestly confess that, notwithstanding the part which I had played in the preceding years in the organisation of communist party education in Germany, I took notice of the very existence

⁴ Schlesinger, *The Spirit of Post-War Russia*, p. 172.

⁵ Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Illegalität und Emigration*, pp. 135-6.

of the Manuscripts only when, in the post-war period, they were broadly used by all kinds of critics of Marxism.⁶

This quote makes clear how late Schlesinger became aware of some of Marx's writings. He was conscious of Lenin and Luxemburg's writings as part of his revolutionary work and life; they were read and debated within his party activities. However, the same was not true of the classics of Marx and Engels. Although he was certainly aware of the basic foundational texts, they did not hold the same immediate interest for him.

Given the nature of Schlesinger's theoretical education, development and scholarly work, one gains a greater understanding of his attitude by concentrating upon his writings on Leninism and Luxemburgism. There are more of them, and the subject matter was of greater importance to Schlesinger, as the issues they dealt with were of contemporary significance to his generation. Leninism was still exerting a profound influence on a large part of the world. Although Lenin's theories should now have been superseded, this had been far from satisfactorily resolved by the time Schlesinger was writing in the 1950s and 1960s.

Schlesinger understood Marxism as evolving dialectically and Leninism was the natural progression from the theories of Marx and Engels. This evolution had resulted in much of Marx and Engels' work becoming obsolete. There was, thus, little to be gained from in-depth investigations of that work. Schlesinger became fully conversant with the works of Marx and Engels, an investigation of his attitude towards them is vital to fully comprehend his 'Marxism', but the main emphasis has inevitably to be on his other mentors.

⁶ Schlesinger, 'Les 'Manuscripts économique-philosophiques' de Marx replacés dans leur perspective historique', p. 66. Schlesinger, *Marx's Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts in the Historical Perspective*, p. 21-22. Marx and Engels, *Werke, Ergänzungsband Schriften bis 1844, Erster Teil*, pp. 465-567. For more information on *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* see T. Bottomore, *Karl Marx, Early Writings*, (London, C.A. Watts and Co. Ltd., 1963).

Marx and Engels

As noted above, the works of Marx and Engels are not of primary importance in an investigation of Schlesinger's Marxism. Although most of Schlesinger's writings which engage with theoretical concerns or the Soviet Union refer to Marx and Engels, he did not devote many papers or books to that subject alone. So, whilst the sections on Luxemburg and Lenin went in to a detailed analysis of Schlesinger's developing works upon the subject, this section will provide an overview of the key themes and characteristics of his attitude towards the founders of Marxism.

Such an approach by no means attempts to diminish the influence Marx and Engels had upon Schlesinger. It merely suggests that he did not devote a great deal of scholarly attention to their individual writings. Schlesinger felt that Marx and Engels were men of towering intellect and genius. He dedicated his entire life to furthering their cause and his appreciation of their greatness ran throughout his work. In his memoir reflections he referred to Marx as, '.... the greatest thinker whom I knew (and know to the present day)'.⁷ He continually referred to Marx and Engels as the 'masters' and 'founders'.⁸ So it is clear that Schlesinger was filled with admiration and respect for their contribution to social democracy. It is also clear that Schlesinger developed an enormous knowledge of their work and theories. His writings demonstrate a deep and detailed understanding of all aspects of Marx's and Engels' writings. He was able to point out errors in quotation and emphasis in others' analysis, even in official publications of their texts by the Marx-Engels Institute in Moscow.⁹

Whilst it is clear that Schlesinger held Marx to be 'the greatest thinker', it is necessary to define his attitude towards Engels. Did he believe Engels to be Marx's equal? Were they joint partners, joint 'founders' of Marxism or did

⁷ Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: Whither Germany?*, p.95.

⁸ For example, in his memoirs he wrote of Marx as 'the master' (Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: Whither Germany?*, p.96).

⁹ Schlesinger, *Marx's Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts in the Historical Perspective*, p. 23. See also Schlesinger, *Marx His Time and Ours*, p. 34 in which he refers to the frequent misquotation and misunderstanding of Marx's comments about religion as the 'opium of the people'.

Engels have a more junior role? Schlesinger did not give a precise answer in any of his writings. At no point did he set out the differing roles they played or write anything substantial about their relationship. His views on this subject must, therefore, be sought in general impressions. Schlesinger regularly spoke of the 'founders' and, more often than not, referred to both Marx and Engels when writing about Marxism. In an encyclopaedia article defining 'communism' he wrote: '*Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels* differentiated between the different 'socialists' currents'.¹⁰ He went on to refer to Marx and Engels together five more times and Marx alone four times. From a very brief overview of this article – a broad, general description of communism, it is clear that Schlesinger routinely referred to both theoreticians. Both were obviously of importance in founding communist theory.

Schlesinger assigned Engels three different roles: he assisted Marx in developing initial Marxist assumptions; he was responsible for the propagation of those theories after Marx' death and, to some extent, he continued to advance elements of that theory in the post-Marx era. Schlesinger referred to the first role in his unpublished draft on the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*. He argued that the bridge between a philosophical and economic Marxist analysis was first developed in 1844. The new economic outlook emerged on Engels' instigation, as Marx himself would admit.¹¹ That Engels initially introduced Marx to the relevance of economics for his study of society and alienation is widely recognised.¹² Schlesinger did not spend much time discussing the issue, but acknowledged it nonetheless.

Schlesinger dealt with Engels' second role in one of his last works: an unfinished and unpublished manuscript entitled *The Marxist Movement: Continuity and Diversity*. It was written in 1969 and presumably remained incomplete due to Schlesinger's death. In the preface, Schlesinger wrote: 'This attempt to record the foundations of that struggle [Social Democracy]

¹⁰ Schlesinger, 'Kommunismus', *Handwörterbuch der Sozial-Wissenschaften*, 54, 1965, pp. 610-625 at p. 610. My italics.

¹¹ Schlesinger, *Marx's Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts in the Historical Perspective*, p. 12.

¹² See, for example, J. D. White, *Karl Marx and the Intellectual Origins of Dialectical Materialism*, (London, MacMillan Press Ltd., 1996) pp. 139...

has been written by a man who joined it slightly more than half a century after its inception and who, as human fates go, has to lay down his pen about half a century later', suggesting that he was aware his death was imminent.¹³ Schlesinger intended the manuscript to become a published book and the idea for it emerged from discussions he had whilst visiting Montreal in 1968.¹⁴ Several colleagues insisted his generation's knowledge and experience of the world wide Marxist movement should not be allowed to die with it. Thus, Schlesinger set out to write a general explanation of how and why Marxism continued to be, '.... one of the great intellectual and social movements of World History', whilst remaining relevant to increasingly diverse groups of people.¹⁵ There were four sections to the manuscript and three were complete. More were probably planned if the intention was to describe the movement up to the time of writing. The four chapters were entitled: Introduction: the origins; The period of reception, 1864 – 1898; The period of crisis, 1898 – 1914, and The period of crisis II, 1914 – 1928. The manuscript represents a particularly useful insight into Schlesinger's thought. It was written near the end of his life and was intended as a broad, scholarly examination of the Marxist movement. It can be seen as Schlesinger's final analysis, one he spent a lifetime studying and developing.

In the manuscript Schlesinger argued that Engels furthered both the understanding and popularity of Marxist theory. According to Schlesinger, Engels' *Anti-Dühring*, first published in 1877 and 1878, definitively converted continental Social Democracy to Marxism.¹⁶ Later, he described Engels as a, '.... generaliser of genius'.¹⁷ Engels' ability to generalise and explain the concepts of Marxism were not the only, or most important, reason behind the conversion of thousands of activists to the Marxist cause, but it certainly played its part.

¹³ Schlesinger, *The Marxist Movement*, p. 1.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 1.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* p. II.

¹⁶ Marx and Engels, *Werke*, 20, pp. 1-303. Schlesinger, *The Marxist Movement*, p. 42.

¹⁷ Schlesinger, *The Marxist Movement*, p. 42.

Finally, Schlesinger suggested in various writings that Engels advanced Marxist theory after Marx's death. In his encyclopaedia article on Lenin, he argued that until Lenin's work, the only alteration to classical Marxism came about as a result of Engels' change in attitude to the war question late in life.¹⁸ That Schlesinger believed Engels to have continued developing Marxism is also clear from his treatment of Luxemburgism. Schlesinger believed that Rosa Luxemburg's theoretical deficiencies emerged from her failure to deal with developments in theory made in Engels' later writings and in most of Lenin's. He pointed to Engels' *Socialism in Germany* in particular as an example of work she did not adequately digest within her own.¹⁹ So, Engels was clearly a vital theorist in the initial development of Marxism, in its dissemination and in its further evolution. Schlesinger seems to have viewed Marx and Engels as partners. He would often refer to the both, rather than simply write of Marx. If there had to be a senior partner in this relationship, however, to Schlesinger, this was clearly Marx. He alone was the 'greatest' thinker, the 'master'.

Turning to Schlesinger's attitude to Marx, six major themes emerge. Firstly, Schlesinger's understanding of Marx and Marxism derives from Lenin's interpretation. Secondly, for Schlesinger, the main purpose of any investigation of Marx is to determine the relevance of his writings and theories for modern circumstances. Following from this, Schlesinger believed that, whilst Marx would always be pre-eminent as the founder of the Marxist movement, the nature of that movement meant that the significance of the original leader was temporal. Marx was less important than the 'ism'. Fourthly, the key to Schlesinger's Marxism was dialectics and historical materialism; classical German philosophy was a vital ingredient. The fifth characteristic is Schlesinger's emphasis on the active versus contemplative nature of Marx's work. The final element to run through Schlesinger's writings on the subject was his attempt to dispel myths about Marx and the theory he developed. This section will deal with each theme in turn.

¹⁸ Schlesinger, *Lenin, W. J.*, p. 585.

¹⁹ See chapter 2, p. 73.

That Schlesinger's understanding of Marx was Leninist in nature should be of no surprise. It has already been shown that he became fully conscious of Marxist theory only as a result of his recognition and adoption of Leninism. He viewed Leninism as the necessary development of Marxism in changed conditions and so would naturally be more concerned with it, over its now partially obsolete ancestor. However, he clearly judged the movement's earlier manifestation from the perspective of this later vantage point. He seemed to view Marxism through the prism of Leninism. For example, in *The Marxist Movement*, Schlesinger asserted the three ingredients of Marxism: German classical philosophy, English political economy and the traditions of the French revolution, especially utopian socialism. Whilst this interpretation is commonplace, what demonstrates Schlesinger's acceptance of Lenin's version of Marxism is that he referred to him in order to validate the proposition.²⁰ He pointed to Lenin's 1914 article 'Karl Marx' in the *Granat* encyclopaedia as an authoritative voice on the sources of Marxism.²¹ This interpretation of Marx's heritage was clearly visible throughout Schlesinger's work, in *Marx His Time and Ours*, for example.²²

Lenin's influence was also obvious in Schlesinger's attitude towards materialism in Marxism. As noted earlier, Schlesinger emphasised different aspects of Lenin's materialism in different writings, although he gave the impression that he was in agreement with whatever attitude he described. Sometimes, Schlesinger wrote of Lenin's unstinting materialism in the face of idealistic challenges to the basis of Marxism, at others he referred to Lenin's appreciation of aspects of the idealist approach. He noted the difference explicitly in one of his lectures on Marxism-Leninism:

²⁰ Schlesinger, *The Marxist Movement*, p. 6. Modern texts continue to emphasise these three key constituents of Marxism. See, for example, P. Worsley, *Marx and Marxism*, (London, Routledge, 2002) whose first two chapters concentrate upon German philosophy, the French revolution and socialism, and British political economy.

²¹ Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 26, pp. 43-93.

²² See, for example, Schlesinger, *Marx His Time and Ours*, pp. 38... in which reference is made to 'German philosophic sources' (p. 39), 'Utopian critics of the [French] Revolution, St. Simon and Fourier' (p. 40) and 'Ricardian economists' (p. 41).

It is not surprising that Lenin devoted particular attention to emphasis on the materialist, anti-idealistic aspects of Marxist philosophy in times when the voluntarist threat was particularly great, i.e. after the defeat of the first Russian revolution (the implications of which the party's left-wing was not prepared to recognize and found consolation for in Mach's 'empiriocriticism'), and after the introduction of the New Economic Policy, when Lenin emphasized the need for a society of materialist friends of Hegelian dialectics. In between, ... Lenin put much emphasis on the positive aspects of Hegelian dialectics and even of philosophical idealism.²³

Schlesinger was aware of Lenin's changing emphasis and the reasons for it. However, the important point is that Schlesinger coalesced completely with Lenin's interpretation of Marxism and Marx's philosophy.

The second key theme in Schlesinger's writings was his insistence that Marx was only to be investigated in order to determine issues of contemporary validity. Schlesinger had no real interest in locating Marx' or Engels' work within their historical context. Thus, the study of classic texts, beyond the need for general education in Marxist method, was of use mainly to understand and explain why conditions had changed since the time of writing and hence to recognise what aspects of their theory now required alteration. Examination was only useful if it had a practical application. This was demonstrated in Schlesinger's attitude to the publication of the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*. Although they were published in Germany as early as 1932, Schlesinger did not bother to become familiar with them until they were cited by critics of Marxism, after 1945. Now there was a practical, present day need to examine them and so he did. Even then, his concern was how this work could be understood in relation to modern events. He wrote:

²³ Schlesinger, *Lectures*, 1, p. 5.

For those who accept at least the fundamental principles of Marxism, and even an objective approach to the history of social thought, it is obvious that one must place the studies of the young Marx in a perspective which would be that of the middle of the twentieth century, and not that of the 1840s; there is everything to be gained by situating the object of interest in its true perspective.²⁴

Schlesinger explicitly stated his concern with Marx's contemporary validity and application in his major work on the subject, *Marx His Time and Ours*. In the preface he made clear that Marx's work was not to be studied in regard to the conditions of its origin but only in terms of its continuing significance.²⁵ This preoccupation with the application of Marxist theory to present concerns was demonstrated in his choice of subject matter in articles. He published two separate papers in 1962 dealing with Marxist theory, both of which did so in relation to the new programme of the CPSU, drawing historical theory and present events together.²⁶ He frequently perceived Marx's work with a view to its future impact, drawing a connection between his statements and later events in Russia. In *The Marxist Movement*, for example, Schlesinger connected statements by Marx to those of Russian Social Democracy fifty years later.²⁷

Following directly from this last theme, Schlesinger's next concept was that, as important as Marx and Engels were as the founders of Marxism, the dynamic nature of their theory meant that the significance of the original leaders was inherently temporal. The theory bestowed by the masters required continual modification, it was time constrained. This meant Marx and Engels could be, and in fact were, wrong on certain issues without that affecting their influence or any judgement of them. Schlesinger often noted

²⁴ Schlesinger, 'Les 'Manuscripts économique-philosophiques' de Marx replacés dans leur perspective historique', p. 51.

²⁵ Schlesinger, *Marx His Time and Ours*, p. x. See chapter 3, p. 93.

²⁶ Schlesinger, 'Marxist Theory and the New Program of the Soviet Communist Party', Schlesinger, 'The CPSU Programme: The Conception of Communism', *Soviet Studies*, 13, 4, April 1962, pp. 383-406.

²⁷ Schlesinger, *The Marxist Movement*, p. 13.

that Marx's nationalities policies were incorrect and unhelpful. In *The Marxist Movement*, he wrote,

... the erroneous assumption that a West European socialist revolution was near and that the forces of counterrevolution would combine against it on the lines of the late Holy Alliance, lead to undue emphasis on the national movements of countries such as Poland and Hungary which, in 1848 and later, opposed the traditional leading powers of the Holy Alliance yet, and Marx and Engels knew very well – were gentry lead [led].²⁸

In *Marx His Time and Ours*, Schlesinger again referred to Marx and Engels' failure to appreciate the national question.²⁹

To Schlesinger, another common error in Marx's reasoning was his overly optimistic attitude towards the potential for bourgeois-democratic revolutions in his lifetime. In his lecture series Schlesinger frequently referred to Marx's 'wishful thinking' in this respect.³⁰ However, as he wrote elsewhere: 'The fact that even great men make logical mistakes is not important for us'.³¹ That Marx and Engels were wrong about certain issues, that their assumptions and predictions were proven fallible, did not take away from 'Marxism' at all. Since *Marxism*, rather than Marx, was the key, the latter's failures were irrelevant. Marx and Engels may have been mistaken on certain matters but they elaborated a framework in which to treat concrete political situations. They provided the Marxist methodology, and this, rather than the exegesis of some or other text, was the defining characteristic of Marxism. This method was the essence of Marxism.

To Schlesinger, Marxist methodology comprised of dialectics and historical materialism. Schlesinger asserted the primacy of historical materialism as method in *Spirit of Post-War Russia*. He wrote:

²⁸ Ibid. p. 21.

²⁹ Schlesinger, *Marx His Time and Ours*, p. 302.

³⁰ Schlesinger, *Lectures*, 4, p. 2 and p. 3, for example.

³¹ Schlesinger, *Marx His Time and Ours*, p. 97.

But although method is not knowledge, good methods of approach are an essential condition for scientific success. The facts, including especially the development of the Russian Revolution, have proved dialectical materialism to be a most fruitful approach to social science as well as to its practical application, politics.³²

He also frequently referred to Marxism's debt to dialectics and its Hegelian heritage. According to Schlesinger:

Marxism is, in substance, a synthetic approach to the diverse aspects of society. But there can be no doubt that of the three mentioned source elements the first, namely Hegelian dialectics, was essential, not only because it enabled the synthesis but also because it allowed the old Marxists to go beyond their sources and, after a century, still allows Marxism to proceed beyond its original tenets.³³

The creation of this method was Marx's true legacy. The dialectical approach facilitated, and in fact demanded, a continually critical perspective. It allowed Marxism to move beyond the sometimes erroneous and inevitably ephemeral nature of the original conceptions as elucidated by Marx and Engels.

Although Schlesinger was somewhat inconsistent on this point, he did, in general, emphasise the importance of the Hegelian tradition to Marx and Marxism, particularly in regard to dialectics. In *Marx His Time and Ours* he argued that it was possible to derive Marxism, as it was to develop in Russia in the twentieth century, from indigenous sources and, thus, diminish the role of Hegel. However, he continued:

³² Schlesinger, *Spirit of Post-War Russia*, p. 173.

³³ Schlesinger, *The Marxist Movement*, p. 6. The three sources Schlesinger referred to were German classical philosophy, English political economy and French socialist thought.

All this being duly recognised, we cannot get rid of the fact that Byelinsky and Herzen would have been impossible without the Hegelian background, and that Marx got from Hegel just what enabled him to facilitate the progress from Chernishevsky to Plekhanov and Lenin. Marx minus Hegel, or, to put it differently, Ricardo plus Robert Owen and Bakunin, could never have done the job.³⁴

Marx's debt to Hegel was unmistakable.

Another key to Schlesinger's writings on Marx and Engels was his insistence that the active character of their work was crucial to their success. Marx was significant because he chose an active approach to his materialist outlook. Schlesinger wrote:

In the development process conceived as human practice, Marx already in his abstract-philosophical stage of his development sees the key to the solution of the ancient dilemma of the relationships between the objective-contemplative and the subjective-active approach; at this point his ways finally part from Feuerbach and from those of his contemplative, descriptive materialism.³⁵

Marx chose the active path; mere contemplation, without a search for practical applications and solutions, was redundant.³⁶ The importance of this element of Marxist theory ran through Schlesinger's work. He often made reference to Marx's assertion that, 'The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in

³⁴ Schlesinger, *Marx His Time and Ours*, p. 44.

³⁵ Schlesinger, *The Marxist Movement*, p. 12.

³⁶ Marx made this point explicitly in his 'Theses on Feuerbach' of 1845 when stating: 'The question whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory but is a practical question. Man must prove the truth, *i.e.*, the reality and power, the this-worldliness of his thinking, in practice. The dispute over the reality or non-reality of thinking which isolates itself from practice is a purely scholastic question' (Marx and Engels, *Werke*, 3, p. 5).

various ways; the point is to *change* it'.³⁷ He believed that this made Marx's work significant and he attempted such a practical approach in his own life.

The final theme evident in Schlesinger's writings on Marx and Engels is his apparent desire to dispel myths and misconceptions surrounding the theoreticians. Such a motive is also evident in his work on Lenin and Stalin and appears as a major characteristic of all of Schlesinger's writings. He believed that many critics of Marxist theory and the Soviet Union based their opinions on misconceptions and misunderstanding. He wished to correct these errors and distortions. The 'myth' of most significance to this thesis concerned Marx's attitude to Russia. Schlesinger argued, throughout his writings, that Marx had not conceived of a historical system valid for all countries and times. He did not set out just one path along which all nations must proceed. Thus, Marx made clear that Russia could, potentially, take her own route to socialism, avoiding the pitfalls and horrors of the capitalist stage of development. In his paper 'Marxist Theory and the New Program of the Soviet Communist Party', published in 1962, Schlesinger wrote that many people, particularly in the West, erroneously believed that Marx had envisaged only one way to socialism, that following the Western pattern. He continued:

On the contrary, Marx rejected any 'general historico-philosophical theory the supreme virtue of which consists in its being supra-historical,' and discussed the possibility of Russia's avoiding the capitalist stage of development, with the village community possibly providing a bridge for passing directly to socialism if industrial support for such a transition was available.³⁸

Schlesinger made similar arguments in many other papers on the subject.

³⁷ See, for example, Schlesinger, *Marx His Time and Ours*, p. 61. The quotation is from Marx's 'Theses on Feuerbach' (Marx and Engels, *Werke*, 3, p. 7). Author's italics.

³⁸ Schlesinger, 'Marxist Theory and the New Program of the Soviet Communist Party', p. 132, footnote 3. Schlesinger was referring to Marx's letter of 1877 to the editors of *Otechestvennye Zapiski* (K. Marx and E. Engels, *Selected Correspondence*, (Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1965) trans. I. Lasker, pp. 311-313).

The motive of myth-dispelling was particularly clear in Schlesinger's engagement with Marx's *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*.³⁹ He felt they were seized upon by critics of Marxism in order to pitch the young Marx against his mature work and, thus, discredit him. In 1965 he wrote, 'During the last eight years or so Marx's early writings have become fashionable. Part of the reason is that the 'eggshells' of their Hegelian origins and their differences in approach from classical Marxism lend themselves readily to manifold abuses'.⁴⁰ As shown earlier, Schlesinger became preoccupied with this particular work in order to counter these abuses. He published papers specifically dealing with it, and made reference to the distortions in many of his later writings.⁴¹ Whilst many authors pointed to the *Manuscripts* to show a more idealist, non-economic perspective to some of Marx's work, Schlesinger believed such an analysis to be entirely erroneous. The manuscripts were not published before 1932 and, according to Schlesinger, were never intended for publication, '.... since Marx regarded them as a provisional and transitory effort in the elaboration of his theory'.⁴² They certainly did not represent, as Schlesinger thought some suggested, '.... some kind of 'infantile disorder' of Young Hegelian origin'.⁴³ Marx's early study of the concept of alienation was only of significance in that it developed an approach which was to become the materialist conception of history.⁴⁴ In fact, according to Schlesinger:

To anyone who is in the sense of conceiving the historical process as a sequence of social formations the growth and potentialities of which depend on the economic conditions of the time, the Manuscripts as such can be no more relevant than they eventually became to their author, who appears to have

³⁹ The manuscripts were an incomplete attempt to synthesise Marx's new philosophical, historical and economic outlook. They remained unfinished and represent Marxism in an early stage of development. However, they do contain components of Marx's critique of political economy (White, *Marx and the Origins of Dialectical Materialism*, pp. 145...).

⁴⁰ Schlesinger, 'The Continuity of Marx's Thought', *Science and Society*, 29, 2, Spring 1965, pp. 217-224 at p. 217.

⁴¹ Schlesinger, 'The Continuity of Marx's Thought', Schlesinger, 'Les 'Manuscripts économique-philosophiques' de Marx replacés dans leur perspective historique'. For examples of references within other works see, Schlesinger, *The Marxist Movement*, p. 9-10 or Schlesinger, 'The CPSU Programme: The Conception of Communism', p. 384.

⁴² Schlesinger, *The Marxist Movement*, p. 9.

⁴³ Schlesinger, 'The Dispute and the Socialist Tradition', p. 178.

⁴⁴ Schlesinger, 'The Continuity of Marx's Thought', p. 220.

regarded them just as a link in his transition from idealistic to materialist dialectics, and from young Hegelian philosophy to an understanding of the basic importance of economic issues.⁴⁵

The *Manuscripts* did not constitute a new insight into Marx's thinking, they merely helped to elucidate his theoretical development from youth to intellectual maturity.

Two interlinked misconceptions Schlesinger spent some time attempting to dismiss concerned the very essence of Marxism. According to Schlesinger, critics argued that Marxism had been proven false because so many of its original tenets had been dropped or proven incorrect. A viable ideology would surely have remained stable and correct over time. To this, Schlesinger countered, '.... the Marxist concept of historical development, its Dialectics, serves as the intellectual tool by the application of which it is possible to eliminate and to replace obsolescent elements of the original ideology'.⁴⁶ Marxism, by its very nature, was supposed to evolve and critically reject elements that had become obsolete, more often than not, as a direct result of the theory's impact. He argued that the movement would surely have become bankrupt if, over the course of one hundred years, no tangible results had been achieved. Some elements of the original theory would inevitably have been achieved whilst others were no longer appropriate.

A further misconception followed from this: critics insisted that Marxism was no longer relevant since so many of its original aims had now become reality. However, Schlesinger argued: 'Marxism was intended as a system of concepts subject to continuous [continuous] change – and, hence, not obsoleting as a system when individual elements of that system have to change; it also answers against the wide-spread misconception that with the realisation of a fair proportion of its original demands the Marxist movement

⁴⁵ Les 'Manuscripts économique-philosophiques' de Marx replacés dans leur perspective historique', p. 66, Schlesinger, *Marx's Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts in the Historical Perspective*, p. 23.

⁴⁶ Schlesinger, *The Marxist Movement*, p. 3.

finds its natural end'.⁴⁷ Again, the error emerged because of a fundamental misunderstanding of the dialectical nature of Marxism; its aims and objectives would evolve as circumstances did.

Another myth Schlesinger was eager to counter was the reproach that Marxism was fatalistic and deterministic, denying the role of human ideas in history. Schlesinger countered this argument throughout his writings. In *The Marxist Movement* he argued that, early in his career, Marx moved away from a contemplative, descriptive materialism. Schlesinger referred to Marx's third *Theses on Feuerbach* in which he asserted, just as men are products of circumstance and education, circumstances are changed by men, and the educators have to be educated.⁴⁸ According to Schlesinger: 'This is an advanced yet valid formulation of the argument against the reproach of fatalism frequently levelled against determinist philosophies'.⁴⁹ Marx explicitly acknowledged the human factor in social development. Schlesinger drew this same conclusion in *Spirit of Post-War Russia*, insisting:

Marx and Engels, unlike some of their popularizers particularly in Germany, never thought of denying the fact that 'men make their history themselves'. Nor did they disregard the importance of historical personalities and of the ideas that move them. They considered it the task of sociology to explain how these ideas and these personalities could arise in a certain period.⁵⁰

Again in *Marx His Time and Ours*, he wrote, 'Marx's 'historicism' is intended to mean that human actions are conditioned by the historical circumstances under which men have to make decisions and does not deny the importance of those decisions as the factor immediately shaping human history'.⁵¹ Later in

⁴⁷ Ibid. p. 2.

⁴⁸ Ibid. p. 12. The full thesis is as follows: 'The materialist doctrine that men are products of circumstances and upbringing, and that, therefore, changed men are products of changed circumstances and changed upbringing, forgets that it is men who change circumstances and that the educator must himself be educated. Hence this doctrine is bound to divide society into two parts, one of which is superior to society' (Marx and Engels, *Werke*, 3, pp. 5-6).

⁴⁹ Schlesinger, *The Marxist Movement*, p. 12.

⁵⁰ Schlesinger, *Spirit of Post-War Russia*, p. 137.

⁵¹ Schlesinger, *Marx His Time and Ours*, p. 2.

the same work, he argued: 'The most common misapprehension about Marxism is the assumption that it denies the power of ideas, as distinct from material forces, to influence the course of history'.⁵² It is clear that Schlesinger was eager to defend Marx and Marxism against misconceptions and myths. It is a theme discernible in a great many of his writings concerning Marx.

Lukács

In order to fully engage with Schlesinger's understanding of Marx and Marxism it is necessary to turn to another Marxist theoretician and contemporary of Schlesinger's, Georg Lukács; a man described by his biographers, A. Arato and P. Breines as, '...the greatest philosopher of Marxism since the death of Karl Marx and the most controversial communist intellectual in this century'.⁵³ A number of Schlesinger's attitudes and interpretations appear reminiscent of those of the Hungarian scholar and a brief investigation of what influence, if any, he had on Schlesinger should prove fruitful in furthering an understanding of his attitude towards Marxism.

Georg Lukács was born in 1885 to a wealthy Hungarian family. He converted to communism in 1918 and served as Commissar for Culture and Education in the brief-lived Hungarian Soviet government of 1919. Fleeing the ensuing White Terror, Lukács lived first in Vienna, then Moscow, before returning to Hungary in 1945, where he became a member of parliament and Professor of Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Culture at the University of Budapest. He was an active figure in the uprising of 1956, action which led to his deportation to Romania for a year. On his return, Lukács devoted himself to scholarly activities. He died in 1971.

As well as developing a Marxist theory of aesthetics, Lukács is best known for his work *History and Class Consciousness*, first published in 1923.⁵⁴ His critique of Marxist theory attempted to demonstrate the necessity of dialectical

⁵² Ibid. p. 45.

⁵³ A. Arato and P. Breines, *The Young Lukács*, (Pluto Press, London, 1979), p. 3.

⁵⁴ G. Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, (Cambridge, The MIT Press, 1971) trans. R. Livingstone.

historicism and argued that proletarian revolution was a question of proletarian class consciousness. The work met with immediate and sharp criticism from Comintern and Lukács soon recanted his theses, although its influence on later Marxist thinking, especially Western Marxism, remained significant. The German communist Karl Korsch had reached similar conclusions to Lukács in 1923.⁵⁵ Their thinking is eloquently summarised by Arato and Breins:

Chief among them was the conviction that, in the final analysis, proletarian revolution hinged upon the subjective factor, proletarian class consciousness, and that understanding this factor required recognition of the Hegelian components of Marx's thought.... [They] further agreed that the outlook of the Second International and Marxist thought virtually as a whole during the latter part of the nineteenth century had been dominated by what Korsch called 'Hegel amnesia' and what Lukács called a 'vulgar Marxism'. By these terms they meant to characterize a standpoint in which dialectical and revolutionary understanding was displaced by a narrowly materialist and positivist approach that had reduced consciousness to an epiphenomenal reflection of economic structures and laws.⁵⁶

This vulgar materialism could never be revolutionary as it would not recognise and thus take part in the revolutionary process by which the proletariat became the conscious and active 'maker of history'.⁵⁷ Immediately, parallels with Schlesinger's attitudes are apparent. Schlesinger was continually defending Marxism against 'vulgar Marxism' and 'vulgar materialism'; it was

⁵⁵ Karl Korsch (1886-1961) was a member of the KPD from 1920. He adopted a position of opposition and then ultra-leftism from the mid-1920s, which was to result in his expulsion from the party in April 1926. Korsch continued as a Reichstag deputy for a further two years, but, as his political group dissolved, his active political life ceased. Fleeing Germany after 1933, Korsch lived the rest of his life in the US as an academic, at turns both optimistic and despairing of the progress and opportunities for Marxism. In Korsch's main theoretical work, *Marxism and Philosophy*, published in 1923, he emphasised the debt Marxism owed to the Hegelian tradition and explored the relationship between Marxism and philosophy (K. Korsch, *Marxism and Philosophy*, (London, NLB, 1970)).

⁵⁶ Arato and Breines, *The Young Lukács*, p. 172.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* p. 173.

more than simply the sum of economic factors or a lifeless, crudely deterministic model devoid of human personality or will. He strongly believed in the importance of the subjective factor and revolutionary consciousness; for Schlesinger, it was Lenin's recognition of subjective elements, as well as objective conditions, which had led to his success. Schlesinger had also emphasised the importance of the Hegelian tradition to Marx and Marxism.

The general thrust of Lukács' approach concerned the active quality of Marxism. This was also a key theme of Schlesinger's writings on Marx. Both authors emphasised 'praxis': what Arato and Breines have defined as a '.... philosophy of history with practical intent'.⁵⁸ Marx had revealed the necessity of action through a revolutionary materialist approach. Lukács began one of the major sections of *History and Class Consciousness*, 'What is Orthodox Marxism?', with a quote from Marx's *Theses on Feuerbach*: 'The philosophers have only *interpreted the world* in various ways; the point, however, is to *change it*'.⁵⁹ He made clear from the outset that his understanding of Marxism was of a transformational character, a philosophy of action. Schlesinger would readily agree with this theme and often quoted from the same source in his own writing.⁶⁰ Although Schlesinger did not use the term 'praxis' he did make clear that Marx's importance was in his recognition of the human influence on historical development.

Both Lukács and Schlesinger focussed upon the primacy of method in Marx's work. Lukács wrote:

Let us assume for the sake of argument that recent research had disproved once and for all every one of Marx's individual theses. Even if this were to be proved, every serious 'orthodox' Marxist would still be able to accept all such modern findings without reservation and hence dismiss all of Marx's theses *in*

⁵⁸ Ibid. p. 112.

⁵⁹ Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, p. 1. Marx and Engels, *Werke*, 3, p. 7. Author's italics.

⁶⁰ For example in *Marx His Time and Ours*, Schlesinger argued: 'Marx regarded an active approach to changing the world as a moral duty of progressive people in our time', pointing to the *Theses on Feuerbach* as proof of this (Schlesinger, *Marx His Time and Ours*, p. 61).

toto – without having to renounce his orthodoxy for a single moment. Orthodox Marxism, therefore, does not imply the uncritical acceptance of the results of Marx's investigations. It is not the 'belief' in this or that thesis, nor the exegesis of a 'sacred' book. On the contrary, orthodoxy refers exclusively to the *method*. It is the scientific conviction that dialectical materialism is the road to truth...⁶¹

He stated elsewhere, '... our underlying premise here is the belief that in Marx's theory and method the *true method* by which to understand society and history has *finally* been discovered'.⁶² Schlesinger agreed wholeheartedly with these sentiments. He continually emphasised the importance of the Marxist method; dialectical materialism was the key to appreciating Marx's contribution. Conditions would alter, the statements and writings of theoreticians would become obsolete as a result, but the method would remain valid. Once again, both authors seemed to regard the spirit of Marxism along similar lines.

Whilst they agreed that the dialectical method was the key to Marxism's vitality, they had a different understanding of what that meant. Schlesinger argued: 'It is clearly established that the Marxist outlook is objectivistic and deterministic. It acknowledges the existence of a world independent of the human mind'.⁶³ He continued, '.... the other essential element in Marxist philosophy is the conception that the laws governing it are dialectical, i.e. non static, but dynamic'.⁶⁴ The dialectical method explained the laws of society, and the world in general. To Schlesinger, it was an objective theory independent of man. However, Lukács argued that the dialectic was contingent upon human consciousness and intention; it was not objective.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness*, p.1, Author's italics.

⁶² Ibid. p. xliii. Author's italics.

⁶³ Schlesinger, *Spirit of Post-War Russia*, p. 169.

⁶⁴ Ibid. p. 169-170.

⁶⁵ Arato and Breines, *The Young Lukács*, p. 177.

R. Hudelson has noted the similarities between Lukács' and Lenin's approach to Marxism as well as their major difference and this is along the same lines as Schlesinger's attitude; with Schlesinger mirroring Lenin. Hudelson wrote, '... both Lenin and Lukács criticized the Marxism of the Second International for its mechanistic and undialectical misconception of Marx's theory of history'. Schlesinger also criticised such overly mechanistic misconceptions. Hudelson continued,

However, in their understanding of dialectics and the proper method for social theory, Lenin and Lukács were in fundamental disagreement. Where Lenin accepted the dialectics of nature, Lukács restricted dialectics to processes involving conscious subjects. Where Lenin held a unity of science position with respect to the natural and social sciences, Lukács held that social theory required a method distinct from the method of natural sciences⁶⁶

Schlesinger felt that dialectics of nature were somewhat problematic. In *Marx His Time and Ours* he wrote that '... problems arise once the Dialectical approach is applied outside the sphere from whose conditions it was derived, especially in the analysis of Nature'.⁶⁷ However, he did believe that Marxist dialectics involved the search for a 'world-outlook' of scientific validity, so, unsurprisingly, he would certainly have sided with Lenin and against Lukács in the demarcation outlined by Hudelson.⁶⁸

Yet there were more instances where the spirit of Lukács' and Schlesinger's analysis of Marx and Marxism coalesced. Both stressed the importance of Marxism for the present: Marx's writings may have been time bound, but they remained significant for contemporary understanding and action because of the method he had developed. This chapter has already addressed

⁶⁶ R. Hudelson, 'Marxist Science as Ordinary Science' *Noûs*, 20, 1, March 1986, pp. 53-63 at p. 53.

⁶⁷ Schlesinger, *Marx His Time and Ours*, pp. 13-14. Later in the same work he wrote of the '... the limitations of the 'dialectical' approach to Nature' (Schlesinger, *Marx His Time and Ours*, p. 27).

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* p. 14.

Schlesinger's preoccupation with current applications of Marxist theory. He was far more concerned with present conditions than past debates, not least because of his belief in the active, transformational obligation of Marxism. Lukács expressed a similar desire, writing of the need to adopt, '.... a substantive position with regard to the urgent problems of the present; for according to this view of Marxist method its pre-eminent aim is *knowledge of the present*'.⁶⁹ Both adamantly urged the continual reinvigoration of Marxist theory and hotly denied that mistakes in past Marxist texts were indications of overall errors, since they were of necessarily ephemeral validity. Similarly, Lukács argued that the Russian revolution was evidence of Marxism's veracity, a frequent theme in Schlesinger's writings. Lukács insisted, '.... the experiences of the years of revolution have provided a magnificent confirmation of all the essential aspects of orthodox (i.e. Communist) Marxism'.⁷⁰

A strong feature of Lukács' work was his emphasis on the Hegelian aspects of Marxism; in fact, Schlesinger actually referred to him as a 'neo-Hegelian'.⁷¹ Lukács insisted that Marx was indebted to Hegel, an attitude perhaps natural for a theoretician who stressed the importance of the dialectical method. He wrote: 'We cannot do justice to the concrete, historical dialectic without considering in some detail the founder of this method, Hegel, and his relation to Marx'.⁷²

As noted above, Schlesinger's attitude to Marx's Hegelian legacy differed substantially over time. His shifting stance reflected the general chronological divide in Schlesinger's work. In one of his earliest works on returning to Europe, *Spirit of Post-War Russia*, Schlesinger downplayed the significance of Hegel, and classical German philosophy in general. He wrote: 'Marx and Engels as pupils of Hegel took over his own specially developed terminology which he called dialectics.... Marx and Engels, to use their own expression,

⁶⁹ Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, p. xliii. Author's italics.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* xliii.

⁷¹ Schlesinger, *Spirit of Post-War Russia*, p. 170, footnote 167.

⁷² Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, p. xliii. Lukács insisted that Marx had taken the 'progressive part of Hegelian method', but had then advanced it, eliminating its 'mythologising remnants' and thus revealing true method (Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, p. 17).

turned the teacher's theory upside down. But they retained his terminology.⁷³ However, he continued, '.... I should, further, like to assure my readers that, in many years of thorough study, I have found nothing interesting in Marxist theories that could not be explained without the use of Hegelian terminology'.⁷⁴ Thus, Hegelian terminology was unnecessary for an understanding of Marxism.

Elsewhere in the work, Schlesinger argued that the need to analyse the background to Nazism had led to a critical re-examination of the 'Prussian State philosopher' Hegel. This had coincided with Russia's increasing recognition of the superiority of nineteenth century Russian progressives over their German counterparts. He continued:

Consequently, these trends are bound to reduce the importance of Hegelian philosophies as a source of Marxism. It will become one of the many *bourgeois* attempts of the early nineteenth century to establish laws of historical development and to understand the class structure of modern society. It may be thought as no more important than the works of the French historians of the restoration or the Ricardian school of radical British economists.⁷⁵

Schlesinger supposed that if Hegel could be placed on the same level as other pre-Marxist theoreticians, the fact that Marx employed his terminology, '...could be reduced to historical chance'.⁷⁶ Henceforth, the terminology could be dropped, especially since it impeded the dissemination of Marxism.

However, in later or more scholarly works Schlesinger gave a quite different interpretation, asserting the importance of Marx's Hegelian tradition. In one of his last manuscripts Schlesinger wrote that of the three major sources of

⁷³ Schlesinger, *Spirit of Post-War Russia*, p. 171.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* p. 172.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* p. 147.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* p. 147.

Marxism, '.... the first, namely Hegelian dialectics, was essential'.⁷⁷ As Schlesinger pointed out: 'Marxism found its merits precisely in the overcoming of the limitations of its source-material by recognising their historical conditioning'.⁷⁸ Yet both Marx and Engels understood the importance of Hegelian philosophy. This emphasis on the significance of Hegel seems in stark contrast to his earlier dismissal of it. Again, in *Marx His Time and Ours*, Schlesinger insisted Marx had received, '.... his basic methodological armour from Hegel'.⁷⁹

Schlesinger consistently viewed the use of classical German terminology as an impediment to popular understanding; he referred to it as, '.... both recondite and mystical to the non-adept' in *Marx His Time and Ours*.⁸⁰ He also spoke of the 'burden' of 'Hegelian terminology' in later works.⁸¹ However, he went on to make clear that Hegel's importance could not be underestimated. In all later works he distinguished between the inaccessibility of the language and the essential nature of the Hegelian contribution to Marxism. This, again, differed from his earlier work, in which he did not appear to differentiate between Hegelian terminology and Hegelian concepts. He appeared to argue both were obsolete.

In Schlesinger's earliest work his attitude was in contrast to that of Lukács, whereas he appeared in agreement with the significance of Marx's Hegelian legacy in later writings. This alteration in emphasis is partly explained by the different nature of the publications. Schlesinger's *Spirit of Post-War Russia* was intended for a popular readership, one who would find the Hegelian discourse extremely challenging. In his efforts to demonstrate the viability and contemporary significance of Marx's work, he may have deliberately under-represented Marx's debt to classical German philosophy. However, in his more scholarly works, such as *Marx His Time and Ours*, Schlesinger was outlining Marx's development in a serious work intended for students of the

⁷⁷ Schlesinger, *The Marxist Movement*, p. 6.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* p. 6.

⁷⁹ Schlesinger, *Marx His Time and Ours*, p. 5.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* p. 27.

⁸¹ Schlesinger, *History of the Communist Party of the USSR*, p. 308.

movement. He would inevitably include details of the Hegelian influence upon Marxism's founders in such a monograph. Another reason for Schlesinger's initial attitude forms the basis of the second part of the thesis. In earlier works Schlesinger often actively demonstrated, and indeed defended, the official attitudes of Stalin's Soviet Union. This was particularly noticeable in *The Spirit of Post-War Russia*.⁸² Later, after Stalin's death, Schlesinger was more critical and condemnatory of developments that occurred under Stalin. From then on, he would often be in agreement with post-Stalin Soviet orthodoxy.

L. Goldmann traced the changing attitudes towards the Hegelian tradition in Marxist theory. He wrote: '... between 1890 and 1923, with the exception of Rosa Luxemburg and to a large extent Trotsky, nearly all the important theorists of Marxism took up a positivist position parallel to that of academic science'. This was shown in the dearth of attention paid to Hegelianism, and, '... even Lenin, in his *Materialism and Empirio-criticism*, wrote one of the most mechanistic and anti-dialectical works there is'.⁸³ According to Goldmann, Lenin discovered Hegelian philosophy in 1914-1915 and subsequently moved to a more dialectical position. However: 'The return to mechanism and Stalinist positivism was to begin round about 1922, but it gathered force principally after Lenin's death'.⁸⁴ Schlesinger appeared to be reflecting this Stalinist position regarding the Hegelian tradition in his early work. He also reflected and flattered Soviet patriotism in downplaying the German origins of Marxism. Later, however, he maintained a position closer to Lukács' and this can be taken to be his final analysis, as it was represented consistently in his final works on the subject.

Schlesinger shared much of the spirit of Lukács' concerns. He may well have been influenced by Lukács' work. But there was also a great deal of divergence between the two writers. This was especially true of their differing attitude to dialectics and the nature of historical materialism. Both argued that

⁸² See chapter 6 p. 235.

⁸³ L. Goldmann, 'Reflections on History and Class Consciousness' in I. Mészáros (ed.), *Aspects of History and Class Consciousness*, (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), pp. 65-84 at p. 66.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* p. 68,

they were fundamental to Marxism, but disagreed about their exact character. They also demonstrated different perspectives on the Marxist tradition after Marx and Engels. Lukács wrote: 'Rosa Luxemburg, alone among Marx's disciples, has made a real advance on his life's work in both the content and method of his economic doctrines. She alone has found a way to apply them concretely to the present state of social development'.⁸⁵ Luxemburg was to be admired presumably, in part, because she had not fallen into the error of anti-dialectical thinking common amongst her contemporaries. Whilst Schlesinger admired Luxemburg's work and believed that she had advanced Marxist thought, to consider the plight of colonies for example, he would not have offered such wholehearted praise. He argued that she had encountered limited success since she had failed to properly use the historico-materialist method in evaluating new and changing conditions. She proved incapable of recognising dialectical developments. Schlesinger also disagreed with Lukács' approach wherever it came into conflict with Leninism.

Despite appearances suggesting Schlesinger was influenced by the work of Lukács, there is little in his writings that specifically touch upon the subject to suggest that this is the case. Schlesinger rarely mentioned Lukács in his work but what does exist is reasonably dismissive. Apart from one piece of writing, Lukács was only referred to in a few footnotes. In *Marx His Time and Ours*, Schlesinger wrote of Lukács' work as anathema to, '... the objectivist foundations of Marxism'.⁸⁶ He went into slightly more detail in his paper on Marx's *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* but, again, did not appear to agree with Lukács. He described *History and Class Consciousness* as a collection of essays written in the aftermath of the defeated Hungarian revolution and the Comintern disputes of the early 1920s. According to Schlesinger, it concerned the question of whether communist parties should undertake offensive action because of the long term effect it had on workers' class consciousness: Lukács, 'in a highly refined philosophical form', suggested that the revolutionary vanguard could make the leap towards

⁸⁵ Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, p. xli.

⁸⁶ Schlesinger, *Marx His Time and Ours*, p. 64, footnote 33.

freedom by the act of rallying and taking revolutionary action.⁸⁷ However, Schlesinger was deeply sceptical of this notion. He wrote, '... even supposed for a moment that it could have lead to consciousness of the need to establish a socialist society, [it] would not necessarily have abolished the phenomenon of Alienation from the operation of such a society, which cannot live on mere enthusiasm'.⁸⁸ Schlesinger did not believe that action intended to produce proletarian consciousness was, alone, enough to produce the revolutionary transformation of society.

The only piece of work focussing on Lukács remained unfinished. A collection of essays concerning Lukács' major work entitled *Aspects of History and Class Consciousness* was published in 1971 and contained an appendix by Schlesinger.⁸⁹ The papers were based on a series of open lectures held at Sussex University in 1969-70. However, as a footnote to Schlesinger's contribution noted, he died a few days before he was to deliver his lecture and, 'Thus, his contribution remained somewhat fragmentary', hence its inclusion as an appendix rather than a full chapter.⁹⁰ It remains, nonetheless, his only substantial work available on the subject.

Schlesinger's paper was intended to investigate the historical context in which Lukács' *History and Class Consciousness* was written, in particular, the debates concerning the correctness or otherwise of 'offensive action'. Schlesinger referred to the 'Bettelheim affair' in the Austrian party in 1919 and the German 'March action' of 1921 as concrete examples of the events and ensuing debates that contributed to that context.⁹¹ According to Schlesinger, Lukács was concerned with the problem of how to define the party's function in the acute stage of revolution. He agreed with Rosa Luxemburg's organisational principles and belief in spontaneity in the earlier period. As

⁸⁷ Schlesinger, *Marx's Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts in Historical Perspective*, pp. 25-26, footnote 29.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* pp. 25-26, footnote 29. Author's underlining.

⁸⁹ Schlesinger, 'Historical Setting of Lukács's *History and Class Consciousness*' in I. Mészáros (ed.), *Aspects of History and Class Consciousness*, (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), pp. 192-198.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* p. 192, asterisked footnote.

⁹¹ For a historical account of these events by Schlesinger, see *Central European Democracy*, pp. 182... especially p, 183, footnote 2 and pp. 214...

Schlesinger explained, Lukács thought, ‘... party activity, by *inherent necessity*, would lead the masses to a higher level of activity, well beyond the immediate aims’.⁹² However, Lukács argued that Lenin’s organisational concepts were correct in revolutionary situations, those described by Schlesinger as, ‘.... characterized by the actuality of a proletarian revolution’.⁹³

Apart from a few short pages of outline, there was little actual analysis within the appendix. Schlesinger did not express opinions or provide any in-depth critique of Lukács’ work, perhaps because he did not fully complete the paper. However, there were a few insights into Schlesinger’s thinking on the subject, and what there is, fits with his other references. He emphasised the idealistic and subjective character of Lukács’ analysis, accusing him of ‘philosophical Leftism’. He argued: ‘As in many analogous cases, only one side of the complicated dialectical relationship between the subjective and objective factors – that of action – is emphasized, while the other is neglected’.⁹⁴ He reiterated the point: ‘The idealistic character of the ‘theories of offensive’ and, even more, of Lukács’ generalizations related to them, rested in the very conception that it was possible – to speak with Thalheimer – ‘to force the Revolution’s destiny’.⁹⁵ Once again, Schlesinger seemed sceptical of this prospect. However, he did make clear that Lukács’ views could not be equated with Blanquism since such action was not intended to achieve state power but was to be part of the maturation process of the working class so that, ultimately, they could gain power.

The comments about Lukács discernible in Schlesinger’s writings were of a similar nature to the orthodox criticism levelled at Lukács by Comintern and official Soviet Marxism-Leninism. Accusations of overemphasis on the subjective elements and the conflation of political ultra-leftism with theoretical subjective idealism were common amongst critics and were developed from

⁹² Ibid. p. 195.

⁹³ Ibid. p. 195.

⁹⁴ Ibid. p. 196.

⁹⁵ Ibid. p. 197.

themes Lenin and Trotsky had presented in 1920-1921.⁹⁶ They were also a noticeable element of Schlesinger's analysis. However, Schlesinger did clarify his criticisms; Lukács was not purely concerned with action and he did not believe that the development of proletarian class-consciousness would bring about revolution in and of itself, but he did place too much emphasis on this element.

It is, perhaps, unusual that Schlesinger did not engage more with the work of Lukács' or his contemporaries such as Karl Korsch. They were members of the communist movement of which he was an active participant. Schlesinger was in the Austrian Communist Party when Lukács was involved in the Hungarian revolution and short-lived Soviet government. He was an intellectual worker in Moscow when Lukács was employed at the Marx-Engels Institute. He was a member of the KPD at the same time as Korsch and he participated in the discussions about Rosa Luxemburg's legacy and the 'March action' to which he referred in his Lukács paper. However, his lack of interest is more explicable when it is remembered that, at this time, Schlesinger was not particularly interested in philosophical or scholarly pursuits. Later, when he began to write about philosophical and theoretical matters he would be fully aware, not only of the unorthodoxy of their approach, this was immediately apparent to anyone with a degree of theoretical knowledge, but the further development and legacy of Lukács' line of thought. Schlesinger would be aware that the intellectual heir of Lukács' work was 'Western Marxism', a current in conscious opposition to Soviet orthodoxy. Schlesinger would inevitably disagree with this school and he may have retrospectively criticised the source of its inspiration as a result.

Schlesinger did emphasise many of the elements of Lukács' work in his own understanding of Marx and Marxism. He wished to reassert the philosophical base of historical materialism and dialectics. There was also a similar spirit to his Marxism, one concerned with action, or praxis, the primacy of method and Marx's continued importance in the present day. So, perhaps Lukács did

⁹⁶ Arato and Breines, *The Young Lukács*, p. 178.

have an impact upon Schlesinger's understanding. Schlesinger did not make this claim himself, and he appeared to dismiss Lukács' contribution when he did refer to him. Nevertheless, Lukács was of undeniable influence upon Marxist thinking. He affected the intellectual environment in which Schlesinger developed and worked and some of the similarities in attitude between the two are stark.

Stalin

The final section of this chapter examines Schlesinger's attitude towards Stalinism and Stalin as a Marxist theoretician. As well as reviewing his writing on the subject, it attempts to determine whether Schlesinger's views changed over time. This thesis argues that Schlesinger's attitude corresponded to Soviet orthodoxy and that he was reasonably positive about events in the Soviet Union before Stalin's death but retrospectively condemned them. Did his writings on this subject conform to the argument and timeline? An investigation of Schlesinger's attitude towards Stalin also helps illuminate vital aspects of Schlesinger's work and beliefs. Recognition of his pragmatism, in terms of his attitude towards Stalin's 'socialism in one country', the purges and Stalin's legacy, provides a wider insight into Schlesinger's work. It may help explain the apparent inconsistency in his attitude.

Whilst all scholars agree that Stalin was not a Marxist innovator or theoretical genius in the mould of Marx, Engels or Lenin, there is some debate regarding his reputation as an intellectual. According to the historian R. Conquest, Bukharin remarked to Kamenev in 1928 that Stalin was, '... eaten up with the vain desire to become a well-known theoretician. He feels that it is the only thing he lacks'.⁹⁷ It seems it mattered to Stalin that he was viewed as a noteworthy theoretician. However, many believed that he continued to lack this quality throughout his career. For Conquest:

Stalin had a good average grasp of Marxism, and though his adaptations of that flexible doctrine to suit his purposes were not

⁹⁷ R. Conquest, *The Great Terror: A Reassessment*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1990) p. 61.

so elaborate or so elastic as the similar interpretations of his rivals and predecessors, they were adequate to his career. His lack of the true theoretician's mind was noted by many, and he seems to have resented it.⁹⁸

Although, Conquest also pointed out that Stalin's theoretical clumsiness was often exaggerated by commentators.

More recently, E. Van Ree has investigated Stalin's contribution to Marxist philosophy. He argued, '...the writings of Stalin that can count as philosophical at all are few', continuing, 'Most importantly, the dictator's arguments were ramshackle and schematic'.⁹⁹ However, Van Ree did assert that Stalin had provided some original contributions to Marxist theory. Whilst Stalin's 'Anarchism or Socialism?', had been criticised by many for its lack of originality as a mere summation of Marxism, Van Ree pointed out, at the time of its publication in 1906 and 1907, there was no standard Marxism. Therefore, any summarising of the theory had to display originality.¹⁰⁰ To Van Ree: 'Stalin's philosophy was a compound of Plekhanovist historical materialism and Bukharinist quasi-dialectics, but, the simplistic and schematic formulations notwithstanding, with some original admixtures of his own'.¹⁰¹ He argued that Stalin had contributed distinctive formulations to historical materialism, with his emphasis on the significance of ideas, and the existence of social phenomena, e.g. language, derived from the needs of the society rather than from the class structure of that society.¹⁰² However, he insisted that both of these contributions were taken from Plekhanov.¹⁰³ Stalin's concept of dialectics also contributed to theory, but once again Stalin occupied a position very close to another theoretician, this time Bukharin.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁸ Ibid. p. 61.

⁹⁹ E. Van Ree, 'Stalin as a Marxist Philosopher', *Studies in East European Thought*, 52, 4, Dec. 2000, pp. 259-308 at p. 259.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. p. 267. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, 1, pp. 294-372.

¹⁰¹ E. Van Ree, 'Stalin as a Marxist Philosopher', p. 297.

¹⁰² See chapter 6, p. 266...

¹⁰³ E. Van Ree, 'Stalin as a Marxist Philosopher', p. 296.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. p. 297. Nikolay Bukharin (1888-1938) joined the Bolsheviks in 1906 and worked closely with Lenin up to the latter's death. He held the editorship of *Pravda* from 1918 to 1929 and emerged as a major party theoretician. After Lenin's death, Bukharin initially aligned

Typically, Schlesinger's writings on the topic were mixed. Sometimes he seemed to assert Stalin's theoretical and academic credentials, at others he dismissed them. This was, perhaps, all a matter of emphasis. Schlesinger may have wished to counter any hostile myth that Stalin was merely a bureaucratic brute, but still believed his intellectual capacities to have been limited. In a footnote to one of his lectures on Marxism-Leninism, Schlesinger referred to, '.... the flourishing of the myth of his [Stalin's] alleged failure to develop original theoretical work'.¹⁰⁵ So the familiar theme of myth dispelling was clearly important to Schlesinger in respect to this topic. He certainly did not admire his theoretical work as he did the other Marxist writers. Stalin was no 'master'; Schlesinger did not consider Stalin one of his 'teachers'. However, according to Schlesinger, Stalin did develop original theoretical work.

In one of Schlesinger's first Western writings to engage with Stalin as a theoretician he made clear that he believed this aspect of the Soviet leader's personality was all too often overlooked. In a review of I. Deutscher's biography of Stalin, which was published in *Soviet Studies* in 1950, Schlesinger was critical of the author for underestimating Stalin's intellectual work.¹⁰⁶ He noted that the biography was superior to many sources in that it did not understand Stalin from within, '... the current alternatives of Superman, Devil or average shrewd bureaucrat driven into the foreground by forces he failed to master'.¹⁰⁷ However, according to Schlesinger, Deutscher failed to fully appreciate Lenin's concept of the Bolshevik party. He was, thus,

himself to the right, with Stalin against Trotsky. However, by 1928 Bukharin began to oppose the rapid industrial and collectivising development Stalin sought. Increasingly marginalised and forced from all positions of influence Bukharin recanted his 'deviations' in 1934. In March 1938 Bukharin was a defendant at the trial of the Right opposition, he was found guilty and his death sentence was carried out on 15 March (H. Rappaport, *Joseph Stalin, A Biographical Companion*, pp. 27-32). For information on Bukharin's theoretical contribution to Marxism see D. Gluckstein, *The Tragedy of Bukharin*, (London, Pluto Press, 1994).

¹⁰⁵ Schlesinger, *Lectures*, 8, p. 16, footnote 11.

¹⁰⁶ Schlesinger, 'Stalinism' *Soviet Studies*, 1, 3, January 1950, pp. 240-258. The review was, in general, very favourable towards Deutscher's publication (I. Deutscher, *Stalin: A Political Biography*, (London, Oxford University Press, 1949)). It also dealt with the latest publication of Stalin's works. Whilst noting the negative political impact current concerns had on the works, resulting in omissions and inadequacies, Schlesinger offered much praise. He argued: 'On the whole, Stalin takes an astonishingly frank view about the publication of documents written in personal circumstances that it might be impolitic to recall' (p. 254).

¹⁰⁷ Schlesinger, 'Stalinism', p. 244.

unable to understand that Stalin was selected by his party, rather than simply the master of it.¹⁰⁸

In the review, Schlesinger emphasised Stalin's significant and original contribution to Marxist theory:

Stalin has brought important elements into Marxist theory which were not there before (indeed, while the present tendency is to ascribe to him basic Marxist statements which he has, at the best, popularized, in earlier days the requirements of factional struggle resulted in ascribing quite a lot of his original statements to Lenin). Stalin's exposition of Leninism to the undergraduates of Sverdlov University was the first Bolshevik statement in which Leninism was assessed as a definite stage in the development of Marxist theory clearly distinguished from original Marxism, and was discussed in relation to the specific Russian background.¹⁰⁹

Schlesinger also insisted Stalin's 'Dialectical and Historical Materialism' was, '... the continuation of a long line in its author's thought as well as the first presentation of Marxist philosophy without Hegelian terminology and with full emphasis on the parts played by individuals and ideas in the historical process'.¹¹⁰ Stalin developed a new Marxist interpretation with his emphasis on the role of force in the transformation of society and on the continuity of national life. He was also original in dropping utopian elements in the concept of world revolution.¹¹¹ Schlesinger made clear that he believed Stalin to be an original Marxist scholar and theoretician. He also clearly agreed with some aspects of Stalin's theory. Schlesinger consistently reproached those within

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. p. 245.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. p. 246. Stalin's 'Foundations of Leninism' lectures were delivered to Sverdlov University and published in *Pravda* in April and May 1924 (Stalin, *Sochineniia*, 6, pp. 69-188).

¹¹⁰ Schlesinger, 'Stalinism', p. 246. Stalin's 'Dialectical and Historical Materialism' was written in September 1938 and included as part of the *Short Course* (pp. 105-131) without explicit acknowledgement of Stalin's authorship. It was republished in J. Stalin, *Problems of Leninism*, (Moscow, Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1947) pp. 569-595.

¹¹¹ Schlesinger, 'Stalinism', pp. 246-7.

the party, as well as its critics, who judged Soviet Russia from a utopian perspective. He would, therefore, have approved of Stalin's practical approach to world revolution.

In his next work to broach the subject of Stalin as intellectual, *Marx His Time and Ours*, Schlesinger was more circumspect but still suggested that Stalin had merit in this role. Again he pointed to 'Dialectical and Historical Marxism' as evidence of Stalin's authority. He wrote: 'Recently, Stalin gave a summary of the essential characteristics of Dialectics that has the great advantage of avoiding the pitfalls connected with specific Hegelian language'.¹¹² Later, he continued on the theme, arguing:

Stalin's description of the struggle between the past and the future, that which is dying away and that which is developing, makes impressive reading because it smacks of the struggle carried on in the most varied fields of the social world of today, with religious, philosophical, aesthetic and even mathematical disputes hanging upon cleavages caused by the great social and political issues.¹¹³

Schlesinger referred to the work as 'impressive' but did point out that it was impossible to apply dialectics to all spheres of nature. Thus, Soviet ideology's recent attempt to portray dialectics as the 'new world outlook' together with its emphasis on the supposed partisan nature of philosophy was, according to Schlesinger, to be, '... interpreted as elements of social mythology rather than as contributions to Science'.¹¹⁴ Yet, he again wrote positively about Stalin's work when discussing ideology. He argued that Stalin was one of the first theoreticians to explicitly derive the correctness of historical materialism from methodological advantage rather than the primacy of economics over

¹¹² Schlesinger, *Marx His Time and Ours*, p. 15. He referred to 'Dialectical and Historical Materialism' in a footnote.

¹¹³ Ibid. pp. 18-19. Stalin wrote: 'Contrary to metaphysics, dialectics holds that internal contradictions are inherent in all things and phenomena of nature, for they all have their negative and positive sides, a past and a future, something dying away and something developing' (Stalin, *Problems of Leninism*, p. 572).

¹¹⁴ Ibid. p. 19.

ideas.¹¹⁵ Schlesinger continually emphasised the importance of ideas in Marxism so would inevitably approve of this development.

In 1957 Schlesinger published an encyclopaedia article on Stalin in *Handwörterbuch der Sozialwissenschaften* in which he offered his views on the leader as a theoretician.¹¹⁶ Schlesinger emphasised the practical, pragmatic nature of Stalin's theoretical work. He argued, approvingly, that it could not be separated from his political activities, referring to Marx's *Theses on Feuerbach* and its assertion that thinking isolated from practice was purely scholastic; or as Schlesinger expressed it, '.... when the immediate tasks of praxis are removed, study is rejected as fruitless and scholastic'.¹¹⁷ According to Schlesinger, like Lenin's work, every one of Stalin's articles could easily be proven to have a direct connection to actual discussions within the party and, in his later writings, with the actual problems of the Soviet state.

Schlesinger described Stalin's theoretical work in a reasonably positive manner. He argued that Stalin's 'Anarchism or Socialism?' was an attempt to explain the fundamentals of dialectic materialism by relinquishing Hegelian terminology and emphasising the importance of personality and human ideas. According to Schlesinger, this point of view had been neglected in the usual mechanistic exposition of Marxist philosophy.¹¹⁸ In other writings, Schlesinger made clear that he agreed with such an approach and here too Schlesinger's tone seemed to be one of approval.

Later in the article, Schlesinger described the difference between Zinoviev and Stalin's view of Leninism. He argued that whilst Zinoviev interpreted Leninism as an adaptation of Marxism for the particular problems of backward countries, Stalin depicted it as, not only a presentation of revolutionary Marxism, but as a further development of it, as socialism in the epoch of

¹¹⁵ Ibid. p. 46, footnote 4.

¹¹⁶ Schlesinger, 'Stalin, J.W.', *Handwörterbuch der Sozialwissenschaften*, 15, 1957, pp. 11-15.

¹¹⁷ Ibid. p. 12.

¹¹⁸ Ibid. p.12.

imperialism and proletarian revolution.¹¹⁹ Schlesinger had made similar observations in other work and his writings on Lenin make clear that he sided with Stalin in this debate.¹²⁰ Schlesinger made other positive comments about Stalin, the theoretician, in the encyclopaedia article, describing Stalin's work on nationalities as 'original', for example.¹²¹ However, he was not uncritical. Schlesinger pointed out that the concepts developed in many of Stalin's later works were subsequently criticised.¹²² He also made reference to Stalin's negative influence on intellectual freedom. Schlesinger argued that in the 1930s Stalin devoted himself to the achievement of a definite conception of party history. He aimed to create a standard of political reliability for party members and, thus, provided an ideological motive for the removal of all dissenters.¹²³

Schlesinger argued that any assessment of Stalin's significance in the development of science and knowledge was muddied by his position in party struggles.¹²⁴ The partisanship of commentators polarised opinion. On the one hand there was the legacy propounded by his party machine; they claimed him as one of the most significant Russian statesman, a scientific genius equal to, and perhaps surpassing, Marx and Lenin, whose reach extended to all spheres of knowledge in which the party was interested. On the other hand, the opposition described Stalin as a mere bureaucrat and questioned the authorship of his public works. According to Schlesinger, under Stalin, his theoretical abilities were widely lauded and, indeed, exaggerated. However, after his death, the reaction against his dictatorial methods and the overestimation of his theoretical achievements led to the opposite, an underestimation of his theoretical significance. Neither gave an accurate picture. Schlesinger argued that Stalin was not a creative thinker in the ranks of Lenin or Marx. However, he did free Lenin's theory of some internal

¹¹⁹ Ibid. pp. 12-13.

¹²⁰ See chapter 3, p. 129.

¹²¹ Schlesinger, 'Stalin, J.W.', p. 13. Stalin's 'Marxism and the National Question' was first published in 1913 and it was to this work that Schlesinger referred (Stalin, *Sochineniia*, 2, pp. 290-367).

¹²² For example, Schlesinger pointed out that Stalin's definition of the superstructure was criticised in the Soviet Union after his death (Schlesinger, 'Stalin, J.W.', p. 14).

¹²³ Schlesinger, 'Stalin, J.W.', p.14.

¹²⁴ Ibid. p.14.

contradictions and his simplification process made Marxism suitable as a basis for the schooling of a third of humanity.¹²⁵ The article was, thus, reasonably positive in respect to Stalin's reputation as a theoretician.

In Schlesinger's later writings he tended to be more critical of Stalin's intellectual achievements and legacy. For example, in *History of the Communist Party of the USSR* Schlesinger referred to 'intellectual Stalinism' as a 'deadweight'.¹²⁶ Elsewhere in the monograph he wrote of the 'unified indoctrination' aimed at by Stalin's later theoretical work, such as his presentation of dialectics in the *Short Course*.¹²⁷ Earlier he had described this exposition as impressive. Schlesinger still acknowledged that Stalin was an important populariser of Marxism. He wrote:

The presentation of Marxist dialectics ... was the first *popular* treatment of the subject which gave the essentials without unnecessarily burdening it with Hegelian terminology.... But whatever the historian may think about the correctness of the record, and the theoretician about the fullness with which some aspects of the Marxist theory have survived this *popularization*, it provided the sort of Marxism which finally reached the political cadres with the responsibility of leading one-third of mankind.¹²⁸

Marxist theory under Stalin did not emerge entirely unscathed, but its popularisation was immensely significant to the future course of the movement.

¹²⁵ Ibid. p.14.

¹²⁶ Schlesinger, *History of the Communist Party of the USSR*, p. 438. Schlesinger's major publication on the CPSU was originally written in the years 1959 to 1961 and was published in an Italian translation. Schlesinger revised and updated it to include events up to 1966 for the English edition. However, it seems to have remained unpublished until 1977. The English edition was published by an Indian company and contained numerous spelling and grammar errors. See, for example, the misspelling of 'desperate' (Schlesinger, *History of the Communist Party of the USSR*, p. 289). The book charted the Russian communist party from its roots in nineteenth century radicalism up to Khrushchev's fall from power. Schlesinger made use of his own experiences within the labour movement where he thought it appropriate but primarily relied on original source material. The monograph is detailed but seems to have anticipated a great deal of prior knowledge from readers.

¹²⁷ Ibid. p. 308.

¹²⁸ Ibid. p. 308. My italics.

Schlesinger believed that Stalin deserved a reputation as a scholar. He felt the undermining of his intellectual achievements constituted an element of the partisan struggle in which Stalin was involved and also represented myth making on the part of his opponents. Whilst certainly not uncritical, and recognising the negative impact Stalin had upon theory and intellectual life, he nevertheless believed that he contributed to theory. Schlesinger suggested throughout his works that Stalin was significant as a populariser of Marxism at the very least. This important function allowed one third of the globe to finally comprehend the theoretical foundation of the system under which they lived.

In early works such as the popular *Spirit of Post-war Russia*, or the more scholarly *Marx His Time and Ours*, Schlesinger emphasised the importance of Stalin as a great populariser of Marxism. Stalin may have simplified, but only to increase general comprehension and not in a way that took away from theory. As was shown in the discussions on Lukács, Schlesinger almost entirely dismissed the importance of the Hegelian tradition to Marxism in *Spirit of Post-war Russia*.¹²⁹ According to Schlesinger, the decrease in Hegelian influence under Stalin helped otherwise 'perplexed people' understand the fundamentals of Marxism.¹³⁰ In his review of I. Deutscher's work, published in 1950, he referred to Stalin's significance in developing a, 'Marxist philosophy without Hegelian terminology'.¹³¹ He criticised Deutscher for labelling this a 'crude digest', arguing: 'But this is no reason to deny the importance of the theoretical work by which the refined product of the liberal Utopia was transformed into practical guidance for action, even if that transformation was accompanied by popularization'.¹³² Marxist theory was supposed to inspire and transform the masses; Schlesinger would not have viewed popularisation in a necessarily negative way.

¹²⁹ Van Ree has made clear that this was an action Stalin would certainly have approved of. He wrote: 'Stalin's concept of dialectics was part of the non-Hegelian tendency in Marxism. He never believed in 'interpenetrating opposites' and the 'negation of negation' ('Stalin as a Marxist Philosopher', pp. 296-7).

¹³⁰ Schlesinger, *Spirit of Post-war Russia*, p. 172.

¹³¹ Schlesinger, 'Stalinism', p. 246.

¹³² *Ibid.* p. 247.

In comparison, his later writings and personal reflections concerning Stalin are more critical. For example, in his memoirs, when discussing Stalin's impact upon theoretical research within the party, Schlesinger spoke of his having sterilised Marxism.¹³³ This deleterious effect was still being felt many years later. However, this was perhaps more to do with Stalin's attitude towards theoretical and academic freedom than his personal theoretical contribution. Schlesinger also suggested in later writings that Stalin's popularisation of Marxism could be more correctly described as 'vulgarisation'. Stalin's Marxist literature simplified theory to an extent that took away its essential elements. In his memoirs, Schlesinger spoke of the simplifications and vulgarisations inherent in the *Short Course*.¹³⁴ Whilst these simplifications may have been necessary given the situation in backward Russia, it undoubtedly had a negative impact upon Marxist theory. In *History of the Communist Party of the USSR* Schlesinger again referred to Stalin's simplifications and argued that it was self-evident that they would have been, '.... subject to criticism after the end of his 'cult''.¹³⁵

As can be seen from this brief survey of Schlesinger's views on Stalin's reputation, there was a discernable change in emphasis in his writings over time. Schlesinger's earlier works were more positive about Stalin, whilst his later ones were more condemnatory. However, this was more a matter of tone than any real change in attitude. In this respect, his writings on Stalin differ to those on Soviet historiography or on Lenin. In the latter two the change in interpretation between his early work and that completed after Stalin's death is marked and undeniable, whereas his writings on Stalin display more consistency. Whilst his later works may have stressed the vulgarising quality of Stalin's theoretical output this was described alongside, and even as part of, the popularisation process that he referred to, and admired, in all writings. He also consistently concurred with Stalin's analysis of Leninism compared with others propagated at the same.

¹³³ See chapter 5, p. 204.

¹³⁴ Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: Whither Germany*, p. 266.

¹³⁵ Schlesinger, *History of the Communist Party of the USSR*, p. 308.

One theme to become evident when examining Schlesinger's attitude towards Stalin is the pragmatism that pervades his approach. Recognition of this pragmatism is necessary for a proper understanding of Schlesinger's attitude to all aspects of Marxism and the Soviet Union but it is particularly apparent in his work on Stalinism and Stalin's theoretical and political impact. For Schlesinger, Stalin was a terror who had a detrimental impact on much of the Soviet Union. However, at the same time, he was able to bring about the essential transfer of generations to continue the revolutionary tasks. As well as overcoming the problems of erroneous schools of thought of the previous Soviet period, Stalin's leadership, in thrusting a backward country through industrialisation and collectivisation in a few short years, was of paramount importance in guaranteeing the survival of the great experiment. Whatever Stalin's negative aspects and whatever the negative consequences of his leadership, factors which Schlesinger never denied, he took the pragmatic stance that they were an unfortunate consequence of necessary processes. This pragmatism is best illustrated with reference to Schlesinger's attitude towards 'socialism in one country' and the purges.

In the absence of the anticipated European revolutions, discussion in Russia inevitably turned to the fate of an isolated Soviet state. The topic became increasingly important after the failure of the revolutionary movement in Germany after 1923. The years from 1924 onwards saw much debate within the Soviet government on whether socialism in one country, and a backward one in particular, was possible. Could Soviet Russia survive in isolation and, even if it could, was it possible to build or complete socialism in a single country?¹³⁶ Some, such as Trotsky, argued that capitalist restoration was almost inevitable without other socialist revolutions. It was necessarily impossible to attempt socialist reconstruction within a single country.¹³⁷ In contrast, Stalin and Bukharin argued that a complete socialist society in an isolated nation was indeed viable. The discussion ended when Stalin's theory

¹³⁶ For more information on the theory of 'socialism in one country' and the debates surrounding it see E. Van Ree, 'Socialism in One Country: A Reassessment', *Studies in East European Thought*, 50, 2, June 1998, pp. 77-117.

¹³⁷ Schlesinger wrote briefly about Trotsky's attitude to an isolated Russia in his memoirs. See Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Bis zu Hitlers Machtübernahme*, pp. 217... and Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: Whither Germany?*, pp. 283...

of 'socialism in one country' became the official party doctrine at the 14th Party Congress in April 1925. The classic exposition of the theory was presented a year later in Stalin's 'Concerning the Questions of Leninism'. Stalin argued that 'socialism in one country' was,

... the possibility of solving the contradictions between the proletariat and the peasantry by means of the internal forces of our country, the possibility of the proletariat seizing power and using that power to build a complete socialist society in our country, with the sympathy and the support of the proletarians of other countries, but without preliminary victory of the proletarian revolution in other countries.¹³⁸

Henceforth, the Communist party argued that the building of socialism was possible in Russia, whether she remained isolated or not. According to E. Van Ree: 'From then on the future of an isolated bolshevik Russia was summarised in two possibilities: either complete socialism or collapse under military intervention, and the first alternative was deemed highly probable'.¹³⁹

Whether it was possible to achieve socialism in an isolated country or not, Schlesinger was certain that this had not taken place under Stalin. He wrote in the lectures, '.... when Stalin died the construction of socialism – in any sense acceptable to normal socialists as distinct, of course, from state ideology – was not yet completed [,] while Soviet Russia's isolation had already ended eight years before'.¹⁴⁰ However, he agreed that this was what a Soviet country should aim for. Schlesinger felt 'socialism in one country' had been socially useful and politically expedient, displaying a pragmatic appraisal of developing Bolshevik theory.

Schlesinger's pragmatism was in contrast to, and perhaps in reaction against, the utopianism he saw in many communists and commentators. He believed

¹³⁸ Stalin, *Sochineniia*, 8, pp. 13-90 at p. 65. See also Stalin, 'The Results of the Work of the Fourteenth Conference of the R.C.P.(B.)', *Sochineniia*, 7, pp. 90-132 esp. pp. 109-121.

¹³⁹ Van Ree, 'Socialism in One Country: A Reassessment', p. 105.

¹⁴⁰ Schlesinger, *Lectures*, 9, p. 4.

that 'socialism in one country' was the correct theory for that time, in opposition to utopians who argued that it deviated from the classical Marxist perspective and insisted it was better that a capitalist restoration occurred until such time as the subjective conditions ripened for the final revolutionary wave. Schlesinger did not believe that the great socialist success should be abandoned simply because it deviated from the Marxist classics. More importantly, he believed that his great mentor, Lenin, would not have abandoned Russia. Schlesinger made this clear in a paper published in 1965. He argued that it was unlikely Lenin had thought seriously about the possibility of socialism in an isolated country. However, he continued, '.... surely he would not have left, as Trotsky later suggested, the Russian revolution in the lurch when the west European part of the revolutionary perspective failed to realize'.¹⁴¹ If Lenin could become convinced of the possibility of an isolated Soviet Russia's survival, Schlesinger was likely to follow suit.

Schlesinger frequently emphasised Lenin's writings from immediately before his death. These works appeared to indicate Lenin's recognition of Russia's opportunity to build socialism. According to Van Ree: 'In the last years of his life Lenin became even more optimistic on the perspectives of socialism in Russia'.¹⁴² He pointed to Lenin's article 'On Cooperation' as significant in this respect, writing:

In his 1923 article Lenin accomplished a shift in definition. He defined co-operative property on land owned by a proletarian state as socialist, and as 'completely socialist' for that matter.... Now, once this system was defined as a fully socialist one, the creation of a 'complete socialist society' in backward Russia was at one stroke deemed possible.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ Schlesinger, 'Lenin as a Member of the International Socialist Bureau', p. 458.

¹⁴² Van Ree, 'Socialism in One Country: A Reassessment', p. 95.

¹⁴³ Ibid. p. 96.

Lenin would, thus, appear to have come close to the conclusion Stalin was to advocate.¹⁴⁴ In fact, Stalin frequently cited this article in order to confer Leninist legitimacy upon his theory.¹⁴⁵

Schlesinger stated in one of his encyclopaedia articles that Lenin's conceptions of the party and the development of capital in Russia had created the prerequisites for the development of the theory of 'socialism in one country'.¹⁴⁶ He also described 'On Cooperation' as significant and pointed out that Lenin was concerned with the development of peasant cooperatives in order to build towards socialism.¹⁴⁷

He made the same point in *History of the Communist Party of the USSR*, once again asserting Lenin's later faith in the prospects for Soviet Russia. He argued:

Lenin believed that the State industry could not only be restored after the devastations of the war and hold its own in competition with private enterprise, but also eventually move the peasant economy forward on socialist lines if proper relationships (*smychka*) with the peasants were established. In his last articles, written during his illness, Lenin elaborated on the theme: with political power in the hands of the Soviets, agricultural co-operation might provide a transition to socialist forms of production accessible to the peasants' understanding.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁴ Lenin had argued that an alliance between the proletariat and the peasantry, combined with state ownership of the means of production made possible the construction of socialism out of cooperatives: 'Is this not all that is necessary to build a complete socialist society?' (Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 45, p. 370).

¹⁴⁵ For example, Stalin in his 1926 defence of 'socialism in one country' argued, '... we can and must build a complete socialist society, for we have at our disposal all that is necessary and sufficient for this building', with reference to Lenin's article (Stalin, *Sochineniia*, 8, p. 70).

¹⁴⁶ Schlesinger, 'Lenin, W.J.', p. 584.

¹⁴⁷ See chapter 3, p. 114.

¹⁴⁸ Schlesinger, *History of the Communist Party of the USSR*, pp 209-10.

Schlesinger also argued in his lecture series that Lenin, by the end of his life, had envisaged the need for the Russian revolution to survive in isolation.¹⁴⁹ This focus on Lenin's later writings and the assertion of an optimistic approach to Russia's fate and the prospects for socialist development suggests that Schlesinger saw continuity between Lenin and Stalin. It appeared to validate the theory of 'socialism in one country' for Schlesinger and he seems to have been keen to demonstrate this.

Schlesinger had sympathy with the theory and seems to have believed that it was correct for the time, but he disagreed with Stalin's apparent confidence in the near certain victory of full socialist construction. Yet Schlesinger believed in the efficacy of 'socialism in one country'. He understood its usefulness and purpose, not necessarily as a theory of intellectual and philosophical validity but as a motivating, positive message to a tired society facing an enormous task and potentially disillusioned by the absence of international support. It harnessed energy and focused workers on the tasks of industrialisation and construction that lay before them.

This aspect of Schlesinger's thought was clearly expressed in *History of the Communist Party of the USSR*. Schlesinger wrote: 'Whatever its shortcomings (Stalin died before socialism was completed in his country and a second world power establishing socialism was in existence), it was useful in rejecting pessimism or adventurism caused by the temporary isolation of the Russian revolution'.¹⁵⁰ 'Socialism in one country' inspired party members and gave them a purpose, one of great historical and revolutionary significance. According to Schlesinger, '... Stalin inspired the new cadres by showing them that the worker's everyday job was part of a great historical process'.¹⁵¹ He went further, arguing that the theory facilitated the great leaps Soviet society was to make in the coming years. He insisted that Stalin's concept, '... served as the intellectual skeleton for the earlier stages of the industrialisation

¹⁴⁹ Schlesinger, *Lectures*, 9, p. 1.

¹⁵⁰ Schlesinger, *History of the Communist Party of the USSR*, p. 225.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.* p. 228.

process'.¹⁵² Similarly, in the lectures, Schlesinger emphasised the motivating intention behind the concept, and did so with approval. He wrote, '... it served the purpose of maintaining confidence and encouraging maximum efforts during the period of the temporary isolation of the Russian revolution'.¹⁵³ Schlesinger's main concern when assessing the theory was its efficacy, its utility. If 'socialism in one country' served to encourage and motivate the Soviet people then it did not particularly matter if the theory was correct or not. Such a pragmatic stance was natural for a Marxist of Schlesinger's type. Marxist theory was supposed to promote action and Schlesinger judged theories and policies in this respect.

This same pragmatism is visible in Schlesinger's attitude towards the purges and Stalin's leadership in general. Throughout his writings, Schlesinger pointed to the barbarism and extra-judicial nature of the purges.¹⁵⁴ But, in general, he seems to have viewed them as a necessary evil. Schlesinger certainly did not deny the nature or scale of the purges and his distaste was made clear in all of his works. He wrote of 'Lenin's genial idea' becoming, '.... tainted with horror' under Stalin.¹⁵⁵ In the lectures, he described the purges thus;

When, collectivisation being in essentials secured, the XVII party Congress tried to call a halt, to open the way to reconciliation with the opposition, which now recognised that Stalin had been in essentials right, and to replace his individual by collective leadership, Stalin proceeded to terror of the most brutal kind and destroyed the majority of the Congress delegates, of the Central Committee elected by them, of the old party and of the army cadres by the infamous procedure known as the 'great purge'.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵² Ibid. p. 440.

¹⁵³ Schlesinger, *Lectures*, 8, p. 12.

¹⁵⁴ See, for example, chapter 1, p. 11.

¹⁵⁵ Schlesinger, *History of the Communist Party of the USSR*, p. 437.

¹⁵⁶ Schlesinger, *Lectures*, 9, p. 5.

Schlesinger frequently spoke of the horror and brutality of the purges. In *The History of the Communist Party* he referred to, '.... the horrible things that had happened under Stalin' and later to, '.... the horrible things done by the highest authority in the country.'¹⁵⁷ He also spent some time discussing the background to the purge, its procedures, results and what Stalin's motives might have been.¹⁵⁸

Yet, Schlesinger emphasised in all of his writings that no matter how terrible the purges were, Stalin and his brutal methods were, in some ways, necessary. As noted in the introductory chapter, Schlesinger gave some indication of this attitude in his memoirs. He wrote:

The 'purge' was a violent and to a large extent criminal way of carrying out the unavoidable change of generations, to replace those whose ways of thought had been nurtured by the need of overthrowing the old society by people grown up in the new one and knowing no other aims than its gradual strengthening and development.¹⁵⁹

He indicated that the purges had a purpose; one necessary and unavoidable if the Soviet state was to survive. He made further reference to the necessity of Stalin and his methods in the lectures. Schlesinger argued that through 'blood, horror and triumphs', Stalin '... fulfilled his historical function'.¹⁶⁰ This was a deeply pragmatic viewpoint.

According to Schlesinger, the purges had two main consequences, both necessary for the survival of the Soviet Union. Firstly, they brought about the essential transfer of generations; new, younger workers and party members came to the fore in Soviet life in place of Old Bolsheviks who had been schooled in revolution but not in state preservation. Secondly, the purges also helped prepare the Soviet Union for the upcoming war. In 1950 Schlesinger

¹⁵⁷ Schlesinger, *History of the Communist Party of the USSR*, p. 396 and p. 403.

¹⁵⁸ See, in particular, Schlesinger, *History of the Communist Party of the USSR*, pp. 288....

¹⁵⁹ Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: The War Approaches*, p. 231

¹⁶⁰ Schlesinger, *Lectures*, 8, p. 12.

wrote: 'The purges completed Stalin's triumph over the oppositional factions and at the same time created the conditions for preserving national unity even in the most difficult moments of the coming crisis'.¹⁶¹ Whilst it could be argued the purges decimated the experienced army command and left the nation weakened, Schlesinger felt that its unity was strengthened; the purges left it better able to survive the difficulties of war.¹⁶² In fact, Schlesinger believed that the threat of war allowed for the purges to take place. He argued that there was no vocal opposition to events because everyone wished to remain loyal to a state under threat from foreign countries. Schlesinger wrote, '... the victims could not even attempt to resist since it was carried out (and, perhaps, in Stalin's subjective mind justified) in the atmosphere of an approaching war against a foe still superior in material strength'.¹⁶³

Although Schlesinger's pragmatic attitude towards the purges ran through all of his writings, a close reading does indicate that Schlesinger believed different things at different times. In his earlier works, Schlesinger indicated that since it would not have been in the state's interest to show the hostile world its problems through a series of show trials if the accusations were exaggerated or fictitious, they must have been, to a large extent, true.¹⁶⁴ In his review article of 1950 Schlesinger also referred to the existence of at least, '... *some* conspiracy', although he did add that not all of the facts were yet known.¹⁶⁵ This is in stark contrast to his later works, written once the true nature of the purges was established. In his memoirs, Schlesinger made clear that his former beliefs were erroneous; the majority of the charges were, in fact, 'trumped up'.¹⁶⁶ He also stated in *The History of the Communist Party* that the Soviet Union and the party suffered as a result of the purges, not simply in terms of human suffering, which could be taken for granted, but in terms of prestige, confidence and the quality of party membership.

¹⁶¹ Schlesinger, 'Stalinism', p. 247.

¹⁶² See, for example, R. Medvedev who stated: 'It is generally acknowledged that the Soviet Union entered the worst war in history with its best military leaders destroyed by Stalin' (R. Medvedev, *Let History Judge*, (New York, Columbia University Press, 1989), trans. and ed. G. Shriver, p. 747).

¹⁶³ Schlesinger, *Lectures*, 9, p. 5.

¹⁶⁴ See chapter 1, p. 11.

¹⁶⁵ Schlesinger, 'Stalinism', p. 249.

¹⁶⁶ Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: Whither Germany?*, p. 282.

Schlesinger wrote: 'The result was the party's loss, not just of the hidden oppositionist or at least of the Belorussian Old Bolshevik...but also of the average worker'.¹⁶⁷ Further in the same chapter he made a similar point: 'Even the supervisory – not to speak of the democratic – functions of the party machine, were undermined by the 'purge''.¹⁶⁸ However, his final judgement on the purges remained pragmatic. They were a 'tragic episode' and 'unavoidable'. Schlesinger felt he was correct not to let his attitude towards the Soviet Union be altered or determined by such an unfortunate event.¹⁶⁹

Schlesinger displayed a pragmatic attitude towards Stalin and his rule in general. No matter what his negative characteristics and the detrimental impact he had upon the Soviet Union, his policies and leadership were essential for its survival and further development. Stalin's methods may have been brutal but he solved problems.¹⁷⁰ In his encyclopaedia article, Schlesinger insisted that Stalin enabled Russia to overcome fifty to a hundred years of backwardness in just ten short years. This achievement was the main reason for his enormous authority and made his brutal crushing of resistance acceptable to the party and Soviet public.¹⁷¹ Schlesinger repeatedly referred to Stalin's achievements and the fact that he was able to do more than even he had set out to do. Writing about Stalin's formulation of 'socialism in one country' in the early 1920s in *The History of the Communist Party*, Schlesinger argued:

The conditions for Soviet Russia's security against external threats and fulfilling her functions as a centre of socialist reconstruction were formulated in very ambitious terms, which however are low compared with what has been achieved since: fifteen to twenty million industrial workers (in comparison with the four million available in those days), electrification of the main industrial regions, cooperative organisation (without further

¹⁶⁷ Schlesinger, *History of the Communist Party of the USSR*, p. 297.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. p. 304.

¹⁶⁹ Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: The War Approaches*, p230.

¹⁷⁰ Schlesinger, *History of the Communist Party of the USSR*, p. 399.

¹⁷¹ Schlesinger, 'Stalin, J.W.', p. 13.

specification) of agriculture, and a well-developed metal industry.¹⁷²

He repeated the sentiment in the lectures, arguing that Stalin's plans had been ambitious but were far below what was actually attained before his death.¹⁷³

Schlesinger's pragmatism allowed him to take a long-term perspective when judging Stalin and his legacy. Although there was suffering and brutality, Stalin's successes were vital to the continued development and survival of the Soviet Union; in this respect he was as significant as Lenin. He summarised their achievements in respect of the Soviet Union thus:

... Lenin by tremendous will-power, had introduced the NEP, and thereby saved the Russian revolution from breaking at the point where the Jacobin dictatorship had fallen in 1795...Stalin, by a combination of soberness and brutality, had given that decision a content which has turned the isolated Soviet Union into one of the 'big two', and what otherwise would have been a gigantic Paris Commune in to the start of a new phase of human political and social organisation.¹⁷⁴

The two leaders may have taken decisions and developed policies that veered away from accepted theory and ideology but this was due to the exigencies of circumstance. To Schlesinger, Marxism was an active theory intended to transform society, its dialectical quality insisted that it change as circumstances did. Compromises and unpleasant but necessary decisions were simply part of that developing theory and methodology. Lenin and Stalin were doing what was necessary to maintain Marxism's relevance and viability. To balk at the more brutal consequences of Stalin's rule or to turn away from the Soviet Union, as the embodiment of socialist hope, was utopian and

¹⁷² Schlesinger, *History of the Communist Party of the USSR*, p. 228.

¹⁷³ Schlesinger, *Lectures*, 9, p. 3.

¹⁷⁴ Schlesinger, *History of the Communist Party of the USSR*, p. 437.

therefore erroneous. In one of his final writings, Schlesinger confirmed his opinion of Stalin, arguing that he was, '...a man whose whole political life can be brought under the heading that he tried to bring Utopia into the realm of what he deemed realistic policies'.¹⁷⁵

This apparent pragmatism of Schlesinger's helps to explain the inconsistencies in his attitudes and writings over time. The preservation of the Soviet Union was more important than any short-term humanitarian concerns and Stalin was essential for that preservation. Schlesinger would inevitably defend him against critics if he believed in the necessity of his rule. Unpleasant decisions had to be made if the Soviet Union was to continue to develop and Schlesinger, ever practical, understood and even praised those decisions. Perhaps his earlier writings were positive about the Soviet Union for this reason.

In addition, it is clear from Schlesinger's work on Stalin that he was not fully aware of events during Stalin's rule until after the leader's death. This helps to explain the change in attitude noticeable in his later works. Schlesinger may have been shocked to hear of the scale of Stalin's crimes and this would affect his judgement. Stalin was now condemned and Schlesinger was more negative about his leadership. However, Schlesinger may also have simply altered his attitude pragmatically as circumstances developed. What was now necessary for the Soviet Union was a 'de-Stalinisation', the recognition of the excesses and brutality of the Stalin period and the ability to learn from them and continue forwards. Schlesinger now supported such action.

Finally, before concluding this part of the thesis, it is necessary to turn briefly to Schlesinger's attitude towards that other notable personality and Marxist theoretician in early Soviet rule, Trotsky. Schlesinger wrote a great deal on Lenin and Stalin but rarely mentioned Trotsky, although it is possible to discern his attitude from his occasional references. For the most part, whenever Schlesinger did write about Trotsky it was in a negative light. This

¹⁷⁵ Schlesinger, *The Marxist Movement*, p. 2.

was especially true when Schlesinger compared Trotsky's actions and thoughts to Lenin's. For example, when discussing the German and Russian peace negotiations of 1918 in *The History of the Communist Party*, Schlesinger argued that Lenin made full use of all propaganda opportunities available at Brest-Litovsk. He continued; 'However, he never went as far as letting the Germans have an excuse for breaking the armistice, which is what actually happened as a result of Trotsky's proclamation of 'neither war nor peace''.¹⁷⁶ Later in the same work he again criticised Trotsky, this time in regard to international developments of Autumn 1927: 'When the Chinese events were followed by the Arcos raid, the British Government's breaking off of diplomatic relations and the assassination of the Soviet ambassador in Warsaw, a demonstration of national and communist unity was clearly required. But Trotsky drew the opposite conclusion'.¹⁷⁷ Trotsky's judgement was frequently flawed and Schlesinger clearly disapproved of his actions.

Ultimately, Schlesinger would always disagree with Trotsky and side with Lenin and later Stalin. The advocate and pragmatist would concur with those who strove for the continued survival of the Soviet Union, even if this was at the expense of lofty, classical principles. Trotsky, in his dogged commitment to internationalism and his willingness to sacrifice all of the gains of the Russian revolution proved himself to be a utopian. Schlesinger would inevitably compare Trotsky's attitude towards an isolated Soviet Russia unfavourably with Stalin's 'socialism in one country'.¹⁷⁸ In fact, in *Marx His Time and Ours*, Schlesinger went so far as to argue: 'Trotskyism is the natural punishment for the utopian elements in Marxism', making his views on the subject quite clear.¹⁷⁹ Schlesinger argued that utopianism was necessary in the initial stages of a revolution; however,

... this holds true only during the preparatory stage and up to the culmination of a revolutionary wave; from that moment onwards the utopia, because it transcends not only actual but

¹⁷⁶ Schlesinger, *History of the Communist Party of the USSR*, p. 128.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid. p. 244.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid. pp. 222...

¹⁷⁹ Schlesinger, *Marx His Time and Ours*, p. 69.

also possible reality, is bound to serve as a mere pious hope, as an ideological explanation of the existing society, if not as a weapon of counter-revolutionary attack upon the actual results of the social transformation because they have failed to come up to the utopian standard. *It is this mechanism that stood behind all the disputes between Stalinists and Trotskyists.*¹⁸⁰

Trotsky was utopian and judged Soviet society from this perspective. In this respect he was counter-revolutionary.

Schlesinger also criticised Trotsky for his part in the development of a particular brand of history, a Western, 'Trotskyist' version of events that distorted and even falsified. In this respect, he was similar to Stalin and the conscious development of his own version of events. Schlesinger argued that when investigating Stalin's actions,

... the historian is virtually restricted to two primary sources, the works of Stalin himself and his closest circle of friends, and those of his main antagonist, Trotsky ... Both sources are partisan, and there is no *a priori* reason to ascribe to either an interest in establishing a historical truth above and independent of political implications.¹⁸¹

Both were concerned with ensuring their historical legacy. In another work, Schlesinger again compared the attempts of both Stalin and Trotsky to monopolise history's judgement. He argued, '...much of Stalin's and Trotsky's assertions about the horrible crimes committed by the other in the years 1917-1919 belong to the realm of factional mythology'.¹⁸² Schlesinger held Trotsky responsible for a number of misconceptions of Soviet history prevalent in the West. He wrote; 'Like everything connected with Stalin's career, Lenin's article 'Better Fewer but Better' has been interpreted, particularly in publications

¹⁸⁰ Ibid. p. 90. My emphasis.

¹⁸¹ Schlesinger, 'Stalinism', p. 241.

¹⁸² Schlesinger, *History of the Communist Party of the USSR*, p. 146.

influenced by Trotsky's writings, as part of a struggle allegedly waged by Lenin against Stalin's ascendancy'.¹⁸³ However, he was equally critical of official Soviet attempts to expunge Trotsky from the historical record.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸³ Ibid. p. 256, footnote 12.

¹⁸⁴ See chapter 6, p. 258.

Part Two: Schlesinger and Soviet Historiography

It seems quite clear from the volume of work produced by Schlesinger that the subject of Soviet historiography held an intense interest for him. Part two of the thesis concentrates upon his writings on this topic. Due to the overdeterminist assumptions of the investigation, such an approach throws light not just upon on Schlesinger's attitude towards the subject in question but also his thoughts on fundamental aspects of the Soviet Union as well as that society itself.

Schlesinger's analyses closely corresponded to official Soviet interpretations. He provided a reasonably positive portrayal of Soviet historiography during Stalin's time; a portrayal that was deeply at odds with his personal experience of intellectual life in Stalin's Russia. However, he retrospectively condemned the academic atmosphere following Stalin's death. He appeared to wholly endorse, and in fact performed his own, de-Stalinisation.

The first chapter of the section appraises Schlesinger's own experience of life as an intellectual in the Soviet Union. An examination of his unpublished memoirs provides a detailed insight into his activities as well as his opinions, both at the time and later when writing about them. The next chapter provides an outline of Schlesinger's writing on Soviet historiography up to Stalin's death in 1953. Finally, the attitudes and interpretations discerned in his earlier works are compared to those in his later papers concerning Soviet historiography, those written and published after Stalin's death.

Chapter Five: Schlesinger's personal experiences as an academic in Stalin's Soviet Union

Schlesinger visited the Soviet Union on three occasions, from 1926 to 1927, in the summer of 1931 and finally from early 1935 to the winter of 1936/7. His first and last stays in Russia were for extended periods during which Schlesinger was employed in an academic or intellectual capacity. In 1926 Schlesinger moved to Moscow in order to work as the German representative for the newly established International Agrarian Institute on the recommendation of Eugene Varga. Like many of his comrades Schlesinger was induced to move to Russia by the KPD in order to 'sit out his *uklon*', deviation from the part line of the majority.¹ Deviationists were sent to Russia to be schooled by the Bolsheviks and to correct their theoretical positions or await a time when their own position became that of the party majority. He returned to Germany in April 1927 having made the necessary adjustments to his theoretical line on agrarian matters. In 1935 Schlesinger again returned to the Soviet Union and found work as the editor of the German edition of the official Comintern publication *Communist International*. He remained employed by Comintern headquarters until his investigation and subsequent branding as 'alien to the party' in summer 1936.

Schlesinger wrote extensively of his experience of working in Russia in his unfinished memoirs. He described in detail the nature of his work, the kind of atmosphere in which it was undertaken and his own feelings about the events that he witnessed or participated in. His memoirs, therefore, comprise a new and insightful source for the better understanding of the intellectual climate in Russia at those times. They also provide a much more personal context from which Schlesinger's academic writings on Soviet historiography can be understood. As well as contextualising his work, they offer an opportunity to

¹ Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Bis zu Hitlers Machtübernahme*, p. 202.

compare his personal reflections and experiences as an intellectual in the Soviet Union with his later academic works on Soviet intellectual life and progress. One can contrast the 'objective' approach of his later writings on Soviet historiography with the inherently 'subjective' nature of his personal autobiographical reflections; something which will allow for a deeper understanding and critique of both.

Schlesinger was not involved in historical research in any capacity whilst in the Soviet Union. His memoir reflections do not, therefore, involve the same intellectual climate of which he was to write when describing Soviet historiography. However, Schlesinger was involved in academic or intellectual work in both of his extended visits to the Soviet Union and can, thus, offer broad insights into the general intellectual atmosphere of the time. His memoirs offer the opportunity to compare the constraints placed upon intellectuals working for the Party and those nominally outside its sphere. In addition, Schlesinger provided information in his unfinished memoirs on the influence of the Soviet Union, and its attitude towards research and intellectual activities, upon communist parties in the West, the KPD in particular.

Schlesinger could have been a historian in Stalin's Russia. He was offered a post at the Marx-Engels Institute on arrival in Moscow in 1935 on the recommendation of the KPD Central Committee. Schlesinger declined the offer in favour of work at Comintern headquarters after being informed by the Institute that his work there would have predominantly involved critical revisions of Marx's manuscripts, something Schlesinger was most unenthusiastic about. However, he later argued,

... if gifted with the art of prophecy (as regards the 'great purge' as well as regards the future position of research workers)... I would have accepted the job, would have somehow fulfilled my obligations to Marx's manuscript, and divided my spare time between some literary work for the German C.P and the writing of some serious historical book in Russian, to prepare for my

desertion from the Marx-Engels Institute to a chair for modern German history at some Soviet university.²

This statement suggests that Schlesinger believed, with hindsight, that the historian's life was not quite so controlled as that of the party academic's. He believed he could have maintained his KPD role and a research post if the Institute, as opposed to Comintern, had initially employed him. His disillusionment with the limited intellectual work granted to him as a Comintern editor and his subsequent investigation and dismissal would not, in these circumstances, have occurred. In fact, later in his memoirs Schlesinger wrote that the historical field was 'remote from the field of actual political struggle'.³

This attitude perhaps helps to decipher the apparent inconsistency between Schlesinger's personal memoir reflections upon the stifling intellectual environment existing within Stalin's Soviet Union during his visits, and the arguably positive perception of research within the historical field that he wrote about immediately after his expulsion. If Schlesinger regarded the two working environments as very different he would not view his personal experience of one as providing a great deal of information about the other. Condemnation of one would not necessarily involve the censure of all work completed in the other. Yet one is able to perceive broad trends within the intellectual world of the Soviet Union in Schlesinger's personal writings. If nothing else, his reflections help to create an understanding of the nature of the society in which the Soviet historians' research was undertaken.⁴ It is argued here that Schlesinger's memoir observations do throw significant light on the intellectual and cultural environment in which the historians whom he later wrote about undertook their research. This creates a problematic contradiction between his positive comments on the kind of work these historians were able to successfully complete and the not too severe restraints on freedom placed upon them by the state and the party, and his own personal experience of curtailment of academic freedom and a speedy

² Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Illegalität und Emigration*, p. 136.

³ Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: The War Approaches*, p. 188.

⁴ For more information on politics and culture in the 1920s and 1930s see S. Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front* (Cornell University Press, London, 1992).

realisation of the very limited opportunity for real intellectual activities.

Whilst working for the International Agrarian Institute (IAI) Schlesinger gained his first experiences of Soviet life as an intellectual. The Institute was founded in 1926 in Moscow and was envisaged as the research centre for the Peasant International. According to the historian of Soviet agricultural research, S. Gross Solomon: 'The new Institute had a broad mandate: the study of social relations in agriculture throughout the world. In keeping with that mandate, the membership of the Institute included many specialists of foreign agriculture'.⁵ Although the IAI was officially attached to the Peasants' International, Schlesinger described this institution as being more a fiction than a reality and his only relationship to it was restricted to participation in the meetings of its party nucleus.⁶ Yet, Schlesinger insisted that the IAI was a 'proper' scientific institution that conducted research it found necessary and useful. Its work often overlapped with that of the Communist Academy whose superiority was evident in '...purely theoretical issues and, also later in the practical problems of Russian collectivisation'.⁷ Despite this theoretical superiority and the very different conditions within Russian and German agriculture, Schlesinger found discussions between the two institutions to be convivial and academically fruitful.

His memoirs praised the openness and comradeship pervading many of the scholarly discussions he was involved in, including those organised by Comintern. Schlesinger was able to attend the talks of the Commission of Agrarian Policies in the VIII Enlarged Plenary Meeting of the ECCI in December 1927. These talks centred on whether to support the establishment of peasant parties in capitalist countries.⁸ Yet despite the open nature of these

⁵ S. Gross Solomon, *The Soviet Agrarian Debate* (Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado, 1977), p. 26.

⁶ Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Bis zu Hitlers Machtübernahme*, p. 195.

⁷ *Ibid.* p. 195.

⁸ Schlesinger believed that an organised communist party would need suitable 'front' organisations in order to organise their natural allies, the smallholders. He suggested the formation of broad peasants' unions, without political affiliation. However, no special 'peasants' party' was required and any party that did arise would inevitably fall under the leadership of the kulaks, could, therefore, never be an ally of the proletariat and would hence be counterproductive.

talks, Schlesinger made clear that he, and many others, preferred to debate agrarian problems in private talks connected to their work rather than in official party meetings, since most of their opinions differed somewhat from the party line. Whilst suggesting that differences of opinion were tolerated within the party and discussions of these differences did take place, Schlesinger's assertion also seems to indicate a reluctance to air openly many of these debates and perhaps suggests a fear of reprisals. In fact, Schlesinger explained that shortly after these discussions, party orthodoxy was transformed into a, '...catechism published as a pamphlet'.⁹ Everyone learned the appropriate answers in order to recite them if their party nucleus was ever investigated for unorthodoxy. This was done to facilitate the smooth playing of everyone's parts in the 'required comedy' since hardly anyone would have met the catechism's demands if they were to answer sincerely.¹⁰ This episode suggests a requirement, by the party, of uniformity of opinion and severe limitation of genuine discussion. Schlesinger did point out that even those people who were in general agreement with the party majority, as regards the agrarian question, strongly disagreed with this kind of discipline, yet he gave no evidence of the numbers that felt this or how their disapproval was expressed.

Schlesinger's own work at this time focused on the agrarian problems of Central and Western Europe, and in particular the agrarian problems within the German labour movement. He had his own sub-department within the IAI and his own librarian, Stalin's wife Allilueva. Schlesinger noted positively in his memoirs, '... not withstanding all political differences, the impression was in favour not only of her but also of her husband and of the Russian party's general setting'.¹¹ The main body of the work Schlesinger produced in Moscow became a book entitled *The Agrarian Problem in German Social Democracy*. It was published in Russia two years after Schlesinger's return to Germany. Schlesinger described the difficulties he faced in securing the royalties owed to him from the IAI after his book's publication. He had to

Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: Whither Germany*, p. 262b.

⁹ Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Bis zu Hitlers Machtübernahme*, p. 197.

¹⁰ Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: Whither Germany*, p. 263.

¹¹ *Ibid.* p. 257-8.

involve his former Soviet trade union and allow them to sue the Institute on his behalf. This in no way altered his relationship to the IAI. As Schlesinger wrote, '... lawsuits were regarded as a means of pressure necessary to get from the State Bank the foreign currency necessary to pay royalties to Germany'.¹²

There was, however, a more serious political dispute which arose during the process of publication. The IAI, whom Schlesinger described as being near to the Russian right wing, chose the KPD member August Thalheimer as one of the book's critics.¹³ According to Schlesinger, Thalheimer was '... the main theorist of Brandler's group and hence one of my most outspoken factional opponent[s]'.¹⁴ The other reviewer was Fritz Platten, Lenin's friend from the Zimmerwald days, who wrote a favourable critique of the book.¹⁵ When the Institute published the book they did so together with a preface repeating many of Thalheimer's general criticisms. Schlesinger understood these criticisms to be that he had failed to side unreservedly with 'orthodox Marxism'. He felt that the IAI were being overly cautious in their treatment of his publication since Thalheimer had already been expelled from the KPD at this point, but unfortunately '... such incidents were unavoidable by-products of the prevailing confusion between scholarly and factional activities'.¹⁶ This incident can serve as an example of the kind of difficulty that scholars and intellectuals could encounter in the publication of their research; orthodoxy was of paramount importance. Schlesinger admitted that factionalism increasingly played a part in academic activities. However, whatever criticism, fair or unfair, Schlesinger's book was subjected to, it was eventually published, suggesting that any atmosphere of intellectual repression was not at this point all pervasive.

¹² Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Bis zu Hitlers Machtübernahme*, p. 196.

¹³ Ibid. p. 197. Thalheimer (1884-1948) was the ideological leader of the KPD, along with Heinrich Brandler, from 1921 until the failed October offensive of 1923. He was expelled from the party in December 1928 after Comintern sent an open letter criticising the right-wing of the KPD (Lazitch and Drachkovitch, *Biographical Dictionary of the Comintern*, pp. 464-5).

¹⁴ Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: Whither Germany*, p. 261.

¹⁵ Friedrich (Fritz) Platten (1883-1942) was an active member of the Swiss Social Democratic Party and then the Swiss Communist Party. He moved to Moscow in 1931 where he worked in the International Agrarian Institute, like Schlesinger. In 1933 he was sent to prison by the Soviet authorities, where he died. Platten was rehabilitated posthumously in 1963 (Lazitch and Drachkovitch, *Biographical Dictionary of the Comintern*, pp. 365-6).

¹⁶ Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: Whither Germany*, p. 262.

The drafts of Schlesinger's memoirs contain many general observations on the nature of Soviet society during his first visit to the region. As a keen sociologist Schlesinger consciously endeavoured to establish a picture of society, including the attitudes and educational levels of average workers. His party links with the German Club provided him access to the KPD group involved in studying factory relations. This 'circle' was attached to a Moscow textile factory and allowed for his participation in regular 'triangle meetings' in the factory between the manager, the party organiser and the trade union organiser.¹⁷ Schlesinger believed that these experiences, amongst others, enabled him to create a relatively sound understanding of Soviet society. He wrote: 'I would definitely say that, in those days, party members, even foreigners, of a certain experience and standing got an honest and fairly complete picture of the problems and difficulties arising in Soviet life'.¹⁸ It is clear that Schlesinger was assured of his reasonably accurate portrayal of the Soviet Union. However, this strong assertion should perhaps be questioned, especially since Schlesinger admitted that he could not say whether his experience within the textile factory had been typical, or particularly representative of Soviet industrial life.¹⁹

Schlesinger claimed that the average Russian industrial worker was overwhelmingly superior to the average Western working class activist in terms of intellectual development. Yet many in the Soviet Union remained at a very poor educational level. This fact determined some of the developments in the tone of Soviet literature in the previous years. As Schlesinger argued:

It is ridiculous to put Stalin's *Short Course on the History of the CPSU* (quite apart from its factual errors and distortions), and a whole lot of other publications which preceded and followed it, on a level with the classics of Marxist literature – but if one has seen Russia before and during the collectivisation, one

¹⁷ Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Bis zu Hitlers Machtübernahme*, p. 199.

¹⁸ Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: Whither Germany*, p. 265.

¹⁹ Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Bis zu Hitlers Machtübernahme*, p. 199.

understands how and why Marxism was simplified – and, of course, vulgarised – to such an extent as was done.²⁰

An atmosphere in which it was necessary, and perhaps a state priority, to ‘vulgarise’ literature could indeed appear to be stifling for an intellectual. Certain constraints were placed on publications and these would inevitably limit vocabulary and the sophistication of argument. However, whilst admitting the ‘distortions’ in much of the literature, Schlesinger’s pragmatic justification of the need to simplify helps to explain his initially more positive assessment of Soviet historiography once exiled from the Soviet Union.

Schlesinger’s memoir observations provide evidence of the influence the intellectual environment in the Soviet Union had on western communist parties. In late 1931 Schlesinger and Mila became very active within an educational circle they had helped to establish in Berlin. The circle was composed of teachers from the higher party schools: members of the KPD’s Education Department; people such as Schlesinger and Fritz David, whose party work was mainly editorial, and educationalists such as Johannes Schmidt, head of the Berlin ‘Marxist Workers’ High School’.²¹ The circle spent its time formulating party school programmes, airing theoretical debates within a relatively free environment and planning for the publication of annotated Marxist classics. However, Schlesinger admitted in his memoirs: ‘An institution such as our circle was bound to become a victim of the authoritarian trends within the party’.²² The Party Secretariat closed down the circle immediately after the publication of Stalin’s famous letter to *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia* in 1931.²³ It was in this letter that Stalin insisted

²⁰ Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: Whither Germany*, p. 266.

²¹ According to the published court proceedings of the 1936 Moscow Trial, in which he was one of the accused, Fritz David was also known as Ilya-David Israilevich Kruglyansky and was born in 1897. He was a member of the KPD and the CPSU. At the 1936 trial he pleaded guilty to being a member of a united Trotskyite-Zinovievite terrorist centre that killed Sergei Kirov and had planned to assassinate Stalin. He was sentenced to death by shooting (Peoples Commissariat of Justice of the USSR, *The Case of the Trotskyite-Zinovievite Terrorist Centre, Marxists Internet Archive* <http://www.marxists.org/history/ussr/government/law/1936/moscow-trials/24/verdict.htm> as at 12/11/05).

²² Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: Whither Germany*, p. 439.

²³ Stalin, *Sochineniia*, 13, pp. 84-102.

certain matters were not open to historical debate but were, in fact, axiomatic. Schlesinger pointed out that the circle was not involved in the immediate subject of the letter. Yet, Schlesinger observed, ‘... beyond its immediate subject Stalin’s letter was intended to prevent theoretical research from being carried out otherwise than under the immediate control of the political leadership – and from this standpoint our circle surely left much to be desired’.²⁴ Schlesinger recognised the great impact Stalin’s letter and attitude had had upon his own opportunity to create theoretical work and debate contentious issues. It placed limitations upon the kind of work that could henceforth be undertaken and upon the appropriate channels through which research could be conducted. Schlesinger argued that Stalin’s influence was felt strongly and immediately within the KPD. He noted: ‘Stalin...by his letter to the Editor of *Proletkaya Revolutsia* had opened his ‘offensive on the theoretical front’ against hidden Trotskyites. The party’s internal life was already Russified to such an extent that no one was astonished about the example being followed by the leader of the German party’.²⁵ Thälmann instantly launched his own ‘theoretical offensive’ within the party, curbing debate and closing discussion groups such as Schlesinger’s educational circle.

Schlesinger’s portrayal of the ‘russification’ of the German party at this time as well as the subservience of Thälmann to his Soviet masters is substantiated by many other sources. As the wife of Eugene Leviné and later Ernst Meyer, two key figures within the party, Rosa Leviné-Meyer was in a good position from which to report on German affairs. Concerning his assumption of the KPD leadership in 1926 she wrote: ‘Thaelmann was much better suited to the role of puppet. In a private talk with Ernst, he said he would surround himself with a set of secretaries, including Ernst, to work for him. ‘The policy will come from Moscow anyhow’, he concluded wisely’.²⁶ Later in her memoirs, referring

²⁴ Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: Whither Germany*, p. 440.

²⁵ *Ibid.* p. 454. Author’s transliteration.

²⁶ R. Leviné-Meyer, *Inside German Communism*, (Pluto Press, London, 1977) p. 93. Leviné-Meyer’s second husband Ernst Meyer (1887-1930) was a member of the KPD politburo from 1920 until January 1923. He was re-elected in 1927 but due to his anti-Thälmann position he was removed from all party functions in June 1929, shortly before his death from tuberculosis (Lazitch and Drachkovitch, *Biographical Dictionary of the Comintern*, pp. 312-3). She was

to the KPD leaders of 1928, including Thälmann, she observed: 'They soon learned to repeat Stalin's orders with automatic precision'.²⁷ What the CPSU, Comintern and Stalin, in particular, declared, became the final word.

Such statements confirm what Schlesinger had reported of the increasingly Soviet controlled and intellectually stifled environment within the party. If Stalin's initiative had had such an impact within the KPD, Schlesinger must have been well aware that its repercussions would have been felt even more fundamentally within the Soviet Union, thus having a dramatic influence upon Soviet historians and their freedom to research and publish.

In 1935 Schlesinger became the editor of the German edition of Comintern's official publication *Communist International*.²⁸ Fritz David had been the German editor but on his promotion to the General Editorial Board he had secured his old position for Schlesinger. Although David's motives for offering Schlesinger the job were later questioned on his arrest and trial for terrorism, it came as no surprise to Schlesinger that he should be offered the role. There were very few Germans in Moscow with both Russian language and editing skills. In fact, when political opponents tried to block Schlesinger's appointment, they could find no suitable replacement to suggest.²⁹

According to Schlesinger, the importance of precise formulations within *Communist International* was so great that the Russians were bound to see themselves as superior in such matters. The General Editorial Board, therefore, comprised of an all-Russian membership, with the exception of David who was granted his privileged position due to his great experience in Russian matters. This editorial board directly edited the Russian version of

also married to Eugen Leviné (1883-1919) a founding member of the KPD and participant in the short lived Bavarian Soviet Republic in 1919, for which part he was tried and condemned to death by the Weimar authorities (Lazitch and Drachkovitch, *Biographical Dictionary of the Comintern*, p. 260).

²⁷ Leviné-Meyer, *Inside German Communism*, p. 145. Another KPD memoirist, Oskar Hippe, wrote of the Stalinisation of the party, viewing the 10th Party Congress of 1925 as the decisive turning point away from Leninism and towards Stalinism (O. Hippe, *...And Red is the Colour of Our Flag* (Index Books, London, 1991) trans. A Drummond, p. 92).

²⁸ Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Illegalität und Emigration*, p. 137.

²⁹ *Ibid.* p. 138.

Communist International and also undertook all of the political editing. The foreign edition editors would then select appropriate material for inclusion in their country's version. Their choice, however, was subject to the General Editorial Board's approval.³⁰

Under these circumstances, Schlesinger very quickly became disillusioned with his work at Comintern. As he conceded in his memoirs, there was little room for initiative or indeed much real thought on his part at all. He found that for weeks on end he might, '... have little more to do in my job than to read the German newspapers, to check the correctness of the translations from Russian',³¹ or to give the Board information on some factual German questions.³² Schlesinger had taken the post on the assumption that it would offer him the opportunity to learn about communist parties in other countries and, most importantly, to write articles for the German underground and thereby aid clarification of party disputes. On first taking the post at Comintern it was still theoretically possible for him to contribute an article to the Russian edition, yet as the publication increasingly became seen as the organ for the unequivocal exposition of Comintern and the Soviet Union's official views this possibility was gradually reduced to nil.

In the 1920s Schlesinger had written many articles for publication in Comintern periodicals. In his memoirs, he argued that he had frequently contributed, '... on most important questions, without holding any party office more senior than that of the chief editor of a Provincial daily and of a member of the Provincial Party Secretariat'.³³ For example, in early 1929, Schlesinger wrote an article on the theoretical foundations of 'social fascism', published in *Communist International*.³⁴ In late 1930, Schlesinger was able to offer another

³⁰ Ibid. p. 152.

³¹ Ibid. p. 153.

³² Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: The War Approaches*, p. 153.

³³ Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Illegalität und Emigration*, p. 154 and Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: The War Approaches*, p. 152, footnote.

³⁴ Schlesinger, 'The Face of German Social Fascism'. In the article Schlesinger argued that Germany was becoming characteristic of a fascist state because of monopoly capitalism's tendency to control the state machine directly. The SPD had become a tool of this 'fascisation' and the SPD workers needed to be persuaded that their leaders would turn against them in the decisive hour. He argued that the phrase 'left-wing social fascist' should

contribution to *Communist International* on the conditions of political mass strikes.³⁵ Yet he discovered that, by 1935, there were to be no more opportunities for him to publish any named articles, despite having a more responsible party post at Comintern headquarters. National party leaders were now regarded as the main contributors. However, even the articles of major leaders of foreign parties were subject to a great deal of editing. According to Schlesinger, there was a tendency, '... to regard original work of authors – in particular prominent ones – as hooks on which statements, regarded as necessary from Comintern's standpoint, had to be hanged'.³⁶ This would inevitably create a somewhat stifled intellectual atmosphere and would certainly curb inter-party debate.

One feature of Schlesinger's work as editor was the attention required when checking the translation of Russian articles into German. Overlooking a mistake that had potential political implications could cost one's party ticket. No mistake was regarded as accidental; an inattentive editor might aid an intentionally anti-party translator in distorting the party line.³⁷

A lack of fulfilment in his Comintern work led Schlesinger to seek intellectual satisfaction in part-time activities for the German party and in other publications. Shortly after his arrival in Moscow, Schlesinger was asked by the party publishers to write a book on Nazism, '... a systematic critique of the social demagogy of the Nazis, for the benefit of the workers who had to fight it within the diverse organisations of the 'Third Empire''.³⁸ Schlesinger made clear in his memoirs that he was not suggesting that his effort was a, '...work of genius'.³⁹ However, it was the first systematic analysis of Nazi demagogy,

be used in terms of insincere Social Democratic leaders but was very much against the generalisation of the term. See also Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Bis zu Hitlers Machtübernahme*, p. 271.

³⁵ 'Putting all my emphasis on the distinction between the present economic strikes and the political strikes to come I found the former's main importance in their preparing the way for the latter and in the shaping of those mass organs which would be needed in the following and more decisive, stages of the German revolution'. Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Bis zu Hitlers Machtübernahme*, p 318.

³⁶ Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: The War Approaches*, p. 153.

³⁷ Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Illegalität und Emigration*, p. 153.

³⁸ Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: The War Approaches*, p. 156.

³⁹ *Ibid.* p. 156.

and remained the only one to emerge from within the Marxist camp as far as he was aware. According to Schlesinger, had this treatment of the subject been published it would have been read four years in advance of the critiques of the non-Marxist opponents of Nazism, who inevitably failed to analyse the class character of Nazi ideology; such as the fact that Nazi racial theories were expressions of class subordination within Germany. Schlesinger continued: 'Yet while our theoretical standpoint allowed us to come out with an earlier and more thorough critique of Nazi theories than available to the *bourgeois* anti-Nazis, the publicist setting which was available for the defence of this standpoint defeated that theoretical advantage'.⁴⁰ The intellectual and publishing atmosphere was such that a work of tremendous value to the German workers and the Marxist camp as a whole remained unpublished.

Schlesinger had finished the manuscript by 1 May 1936 and received a report from the party publishers in mid-July. They were not wholly against publishing the work but did raise several issues. In October 1936 the manuscript was returned, with the comment, '... you will understand that its publication is impossible in your present circumstances'.⁴¹ The publishers were referring to the fact that, by now, Schlesinger was under investigation by the party because of his connections with David. Schlesinger had already received the majority of his payment for the work and he willingly recognised that the party publishers had settled the matter on fair terms whilst they could still deal with him as a comrade. However, he had not yet been expelled from the party and the proceedings against him may have only resulted in a reprimand, yet the publishers already felt it necessary to sever their ties with him. Schlesinger argued, even if he had been subject to a mere reprimand, the prevailing atmosphere would have made it very difficult for the publishers to issue a book of his. Schlesinger criticised the environment, '... in which the literary treatment of a most important issue depended on quite extraneous circumstances'.⁴² This series of events and Schlesinger's reactions to them

⁴⁰ Ibid. p. 156.

⁴¹ Ibid. p. 157.

⁴² Ibid. p. 157 In the first edition of his memoirs Schlesinger did not recount this particular incident but did mention that a number of *Unter dem Banner des Maxismus* was withdrawn after just a few copies were distributed in the summer of 1935. It contained an article he had

certainly suggest a stifled and intrusive intellectual environment; one that would inevitably have impacted upon the quality and academic integrity of Soviet historiography. Schlesinger witnessed and was himself subject to the state's increasing control over intellectual life within the Soviet Union. The mere instigation of an investigation by the party precluded Schlesinger from publishing again.

Schlesinger did, in fact, write a great deal in his memoirs about the negative atmosphere that existed for intellectuals and academics in the Soviet Union during the times in which he lived there. From a wider perspective, Schlesinger understood his private discomfort as the by-product of a certain development within the party. This manifested itself in the disappearance of a particular kind of intellectual from the political stage:

Since Rosa Luxemburg's, and earlier, days a certain type of party intellectual, to which I counted myself with pride, had written on the assumption that they were responsible for the scholarly qualities of their contributions and for their usefulness as incentives to fruitful argument: the party as a whole, in which the author played his part as one comrade amongst many, had to organise these discussions and then to draw the lessons from the exchange of opinions; there was nothing inherently wrong in remaining in a minority⁴³

The increasing demand for ideological homogeneity and the limitations imposed upon criticism differed starkly with Schlesinger's conceptions of how a Marxist party should operate. In his view, if an author took responsibility for the academic integrity of his/her work as well as its efficacy in engendering discussion, isolation upon a particular theoretical issue was not a matter for investigation or even of much party concern. In a similar way Schlesinger had argued, in another section of his unfinished memoirs, that it was the duty of

written and Schlesinger wondered if the withdrawal had anything to do with him (Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Illegalität und Emigration*, p. 156).

⁴³ Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: The War Approaches*, p. 154. In the first edition of the memoirs, Schlesinger makes a similar statement but does not mention Luxemburg (Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Illegalität und Emigration*, p. 154).

every Communist to follow unhesitatingly the orders of the Communist world party. However, it was also, '... every Communist's obligation to make his maximal contribution towards those decisions', that is: 'It is the obligation of ruthless expression of one's own opinion and ruthless criticism of one's own as well as of other comrades' mistakes'.⁴⁴

If one compares Schlesinger's own descriptions of what he expected from a Marxist party and its state, with his observations on what actually occurred in the Soviet Union one can easily understand Schlesinger's disillusionment with the kind of intellectual opportunities available to him. As mentioned earlier, Schlesinger may have separated his own experiences from those of people working within the historical field but he can hardly have denied that the party, and in particular Stalin's, increasingly total opposition to dissent of any kind was inevitably to have huge repercussions on all sections of Soviet society. The party and state exercised significant control over all academic subjects and the study of history, necessarily of great importance to a state with Marxist-Leninist aspirations, would, therefore, be particularly heavily regulated. This was increasingly so after Stalin's personal intervention in the historical debate in 1931.⁴⁵ It is difficult to accept that someone with the insight and intelligence of Schlesinger could fail to comprehend that his own experiences and difficulties regarding his intellectual and academic integrity whilst in the Soviet Union may well have been mirrored in some way within the historical field.

Schlesinger was actually acquainted with a Russian KPD member, Emel Lurye, who worked in the University of Moscow History Faculty during his final visit to the Soviet Union.⁴⁶ Schlesinger had first known Emel through their

⁴⁴ Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: Whither Germany*, p. 229.

⁴⁵ See, Barber, *Soviet Historians in Crisis, 1928-1932*, especially Chapter 10.

⁴⁶ There does appear to be some inconsistency regarding his name. Earlier in the memoirs when referring to Emel, Schlesinger wrote Alexander Lurie in brackets beside the name (Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: Whither Germany*, p. 290) In other sources he is known as Moses Lurye or Moishe Lurie and appears to have also worked under the name of Alexander Emel (L. Sedov, *The Red Book on the Moscow Trials*, Marxists Internet Archive, <http://www.marxists.org/history/etol/writers/sedov/works/red/ch05.htm> as at 03/10/05).

In the reported court proceedings of the 1936 Moscow Trial, Emel was listed as 'Lurye, Moissei Ilyich (alias Alexander *Emel*), born in 1897'. Peoples Commissariat of Justice of the

KPD work and they became friendly during Schlesinger's 1926 visit to Moscow, since they shared a mutual friendship with Ruth Fischer. Emel had sometimes taken Schlesinger along to Russian oppositionist meetings at this time.⁴⁷ In early July 1936 the German party representative in Comintern informed Schlesinger of Emel's arrest. Schlesinger immediately spoke frankly with the representative about his and Mila's relationship to the arrested man. This had been purely social since they disagreed over internal KPD matters.⁴⁸ However, he had later appeared sincere in his submission to the majority and, according to Schlesinger, '... had given us good reasons to regard himself as convinced of the basic correctness (though not, of course, of the details) of Stalin's line'.⁴⁹ Schlesinger was, therefore, astonished at his arrest, admission to charges of terrorism and conspiracy to murder Stalin and eventual execution in the first 'purge' trial of 1936.⁵⁰

This surprise at Emel's arrest and trial may have led Schlesinger to doubt the charges made against him. If this were the case, he could well have developed a negative attitude towards the study of history in the Soviet Union. There would appear to be little freedom for intellectual expression if one could be 'purged' at any time. However, Schlesinger explained that when first writing his memoirs in 1944 and *The Spirit of Post-war Russia* soon after, he was fully convinced of the existence of an actual conspiracy against Stalin.⁵¹ An anonymous paper to the journal *Pacific Affairs* written by Schlesinger the year after he left the Soviet Union substantiates this attitude.⁵² Under these circumstances Schlesinger may well have believed that Emel was guilty of conspiracy and terrorism and would, therefore, regard the intellectual environment as being hazardous only if one were involved in anti-state activities.

USSR, *The Case of the Trotskyite-Zinovievite Terrorist Centre*, Marxists Internet Archive <http://www.marxists.org/history/ussr/government/law/1936/moscow-trials/24/verdict.htm> as at 12/11/05.

⁴⁷ Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: Whither Germany*, p. 290.

⁴⁸ Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Illegalität und Emigration*, p. 202.

⁴⁹ Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: The War Approaches*, p. 214.

⁵⁰ For more information about the trial and the purges in general see R Conquest, *The Great Terror: A Reassessment* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1990) especially chapter 4.

⁵¹ Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: The War Approaches*, p. 190.

⁵² Schlesinger, 'The 'War Potential' of the Soviet Union', p. 41.

However, this explanation loses a little of its credibility when other observations Schlesinger made about Emel's fate elsewhere in his unfinished memoirs are taken into consideration. Schlesinger wrote that, after Emel's trial, the party authorities claimed that a whole group of terrorists existed within the history faculty of Moscow University; it was, in fact, '...a seat of conspiracy'.⁵³ Historian R. Conquest confirmed this, writing: 'Historians were particularly vulnerable. The whole school of Party historians which had followed Pokrovsky were arrested. They were often labelled terrorists. In fact, it is quite extraordinary how many of the leading terrorist bands were headed by historians'.⁵⁴ Yet Schlesinger also wrote in his memoirs: 'I must assume that nothing worse than an organised discussion group to oppose the party line in the historical field was in existence'.⁵⁵ He assumed that the history faculty had done nothing more than form an academic clique, an act which had resulted in their arrest and execution. If Schlesinger did believe that the historians at Moscow University were executed by the Soviet Union for establishing a group to oppose a certain historical interpretation, an understanding of his attitude towards Soviet historiography immediately after his return to the West becomes problematic.

After describing his expulsion, Schlesinger reflected upon authoritarianism within a Marxist party, how a party should operate and how its relationship to theory should best be developed. In the second draft of his memoirs Schlesinger explained that the argument was, '... in substance developed already in the first version of these memoirs; I cannot however assert that in 1944 I was as detached from my personal experiences as I am now'.⁵⁶ This statement suggests that in the earlier version of the memoirs and around the time that Schlesinger was writing many of his articles on Soviet historiography, he was still very personally affected by his expulsion from the party. One would imagine this would engender feelings of anger and frustration and yet these emotions do not correspond with the clinical, perhaps

⁵³ Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: The War Approaches*, p. 187.

⁵⁴ Conquest, *The Great Terror*, p. 291.

⁵⁵ Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: The War Approaches*, p. 188, footnote xx.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* p. 231, footnote x. For the less well-formed argument in the German edition see Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Illegalität und Emigration*, p. 225...

even apologetic, tone in which he was to write about the Soviet Union in the 1940s. Instead, it is likely Schlesinger was attempting to prove his continued loyalty to the Soviet regime after his expulsion. Again there would appear to be a paradox between how Schlesinger expressed his feelings about events, both at the time and with hindsight, and the way in which he was to write about them in his academic works.

Schlesinger argued that a certain degree of intellectual freedom was vital for the healthy growth of theory. However, this still did not exist in the Soviet Union in any satisfactory way at the time of his memoir writing:

Long after Stalin, his 'purges' and the assertion that any lack of uniformity in the communist camp presented a weapon for the bourgeoisie has gone, his concept of theory as an outlook authoritatively fixed and developed by the party leadership (and necessarily by the party leadership, for otherwise it could not claim authority) continues to sterilise Marxism.⁵⁷

He went on to question the efficacy of one of the main 'achievements' of the Stalin period, namely the concept of Marxism as a necessarily authoritarian symbol of party unity. Schlesinger argued that Marxism had been at its most effective when it was promoted not simply as a systematic presentation and propaganda of accepted tenets, but rather as a system or method of thought applied to discover 'gaps' in theory and elaborate ways in which to fill them, thereby moving that theory forward. Such action would continually alter theory in a dialectical progression. Theory would be advanced '... not necessarily by the correctness of the suggested solutions but by the result of the argument induced by them'.⁵⁸ The very act of debate and the freedom to make theoretical errors gave Schlesinger's Marxism its vitality. His approach was based on the assumption that Marxist principles would be the foundation of party activities and that majority decisions on practical issues would be obeyed but that, '...no statement on matters of theory, by whomever it was

⁵⁷ Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: The War Approaches*, p. 237.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* p. 237.

issued, could claim authoritarian validity'.⁵⁹ Schlesinger admitted that this assumption was rejected in the course of the purges. Stalin did indeed claim total 'authoritarian validity' for his theoretical statements, including those he made on the historical front. How was it possible for Schlesinger not to condemn the atmosphere in which historians were working in the 1930s and 1940s when the conditions in which they had to research were those very ones he claimed were most dangerous and stifling for theoretical progress?

Schlesinger's unpublished memoir writings do contain several positive comments about the intellectual environment of Stalin's Soviet Union. Schlesinger insisted theoretical advancements were made under, and perhaps because of, Stalin. He wrote: 'I find it difficult for anyone except very narrow-minded dogmatics to deny that the overcoming of the schematic economist interpretation of the Marxist theory of history implied a major progress in sociological analysis'.⁶⁰ Schlesinger argued that the repudiation of what he regarded as Pokrovskii's historical theories represented a great advance in the study of history in the Soviet Union, a thesis he had elaborated consistently in his academic writings upon the subject. However, there were negative aspects in the progress of historical writing. He did concede, '...there is room for argument about the correctness of some of the statements made since 1935 by Soviet historians in order to emphasise the importance of national struggles for independence in 1612 and 1812'.⁶¹ There were no grounds for Marxist historians to combine an appreciation of the national struggle with any positive assessment of the Russian regime of those times. Schlesinger recognised the increased politicisation of the historical arena and yet emphasised the few positive benefits of research under Stalin.

Schlesinger compared advances in historiography with those he regarded as having occurred in the arts. He wrote of Sholokhov's *And Quiet Flows the Don*.⁶²

⁵⁹ Ibid. p. 239.

⁶⁰ Ibid. pp. 185-186.

⁶¹ Ibid. p. 186.

⁶² M. Sholokov, *Quiet Flows the Done*, Volumes 1 and 2 (Raduga, USSR, 1984) trans. R. Daghish.

I always regarded Sholokhov's achievement, and his final success when the leftist trends in art were overcome and his was praised as one of the masterpieces of 'socialist realism'... as a warning against the tendency to regard the rise of 'Stalinism' in the intellectual fields as an unmitigated evil: it was, indeed, the agency through which much of the narrow-mindedness grown during the first revolutionary period was overcome.⁶³

For Schlesinger, the Stalinist period of Soviet history overcame earlier, erroneous movements and trends. He argued that to regard the Stalinist period as devoid of any intellectual achievement was naïve and short-sighted. Many problems and setbacks may have occurred within the academic fields but progress was made nonetheless. In the overcoming of certain intellectual and theoretical trends, the party and the intellectuals may have 'swung' too far in the other direction but it was this debate and continuous dynamic that constituted progress. It was clear to Schlesinger that, '...the Russian revolutionaries had never proved able to correct an error without falling into the opposite one', but theoretical advancement was still achieved.⁶⁴ Whilst other commentators, such as the sociologist Nicholas Timasheff, viewed the Stalinist 1930s as a time of 'great retreat' from the revolutionary values in cultural and social policy developed after the revolution, Schlesinger saw the changes in a positive light.⁶⁵ S. Fitzpatrick described the 'retreat' as,

⁶³ Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: The War Approaches*, p. 180-181 The book was later made into an opera, but Schlesinger felt that this was far more populist than the original work. Schlesinger did describe the book and opera in the first version of his memoirs, but concentrated more on its contemporary impact than this historical perspective (*Erinnerungen: Illegalität und Emigration*, p. 181-182).

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* p. 185.

⁶⁵ N. S. Timasheff, *The Great Retreat The Growth and Decline of Communism in Russia*, (New York, Arno Press, 1972). The first edition of the work was published in the US in 1946. Timasheff argued that, contrary to popular opinion, pre-revolutionary Russia was not stagnant, but showed signs of overcoming her backwardness and developing towards an industrialised democracy. The Bolshevik revolution was thus, '... a shock inflicted on a rapidly advancing society compelling it to depart from its historical ways'. The revolution was, '... a violent disruption of continuity, a conflict between a Utopian idea and historical tradition', continued by way of an organised dictatorship, (p. 71). The 'Great Retreat' from the 'Communist Experiment' from 1934 onwards involved the restoration of certain national traditions and some adjustment of society towards its original line of development; although

'...exemplified by the return to the classics in literature, the reevaluation of the Russian national heritage and history, and the repudiation of progressive methods in education'.⁶⁶ Whilst Schlesinger conceded that many of these new emphases went too far, he did believe they were a necessary step in overcoming past mistakes made in the heady atmosphere of the 1920s.

When discussing disillusionment with his Comintern work, something that Schlesinger regarded as symptomatic of the party's more authoritarian stance on intellectual activities, he wrote that his feelings on this matter had altered over time. He explained that immediately after leaving the Soviet Union he had felt quite negative about the climate there. However, now, in the mid-1950s, he felt much more optimistic about intellectual freedom:

.... in the USSR there is now a fair freedom of argument even on major issues, if conducted in scholarly journals in the economic, legal and even philosophical field; a person's being 'wrong' at some occasion does not preclude him from uttering his opinion at some following one. It may be hoped that this habit will eventually expand to the CPSU's clearly political publications.⁶⁷

If Schlesinger was becoming optimistic about the freedom of debate in the second half of the 1950s he could not have been so before then. One can logically deduce that Schlesinger believed the opportunity for debate, even within a scholarly context, to be minimal in the 1930s and 1940s. As he had pointed out earlier, the party was increasingly claiming a monopoly over theoretical validity at this time. There is, therefore, a great deal of inconsistency in Schlesinger's memoir writing about the intellectual environment existing within the Soviet Union during his visits to the region. At

this by no means implied a break with political dictatorship or the rejection of the materialist philosophy of Marxism. Instead an amalgamation of traditional and communist values had taken place. So: 'The Russian Orthodox Church is once more a recognized, even partly privileged body; this is in accordance with historical tradition. But the State teaches antireligion in schools; this is in accordance with Communist principles', (p. 355).

⁶⁶ Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front*, p. 197.

⁶⁷ Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: The War Approaches*, p. 154.

some points he seemed to suggest that the atmosphere was stifling, especially as regards his own experiences, and at others he would claim that certain freedoms did exist and that numerous intellectual advances were achieved during the period.

Taking the memoirs as a whole, the impression that Schlesinger gives of the intellectual environment in which he found himself working when in the Soviet Union was a stifled, harsh and dissatisfying one. Schlesinger clearly described this as regards his own personal circumstances. The opportunities for initiative and creativity were massively curbed whilst he worked for Comintern and there was a tremendous emphasis on precision and accuracy, producing a somewhat paranoid and creatively infertile atmosphere. As early as 1926 Schlesinger encountered the difficulties of publishing in the Soviet Union and the problems of factionalism taking precedence over intellectual integrity. In 1936 he again faced the now insurmountable political obstacles to publication. He was eventually expelled from the party and forced to leave the USSR because of his willingness to debate theoretical concerns openly and because of his lack of vigilance. In his memoirs Schlesinger wrote that he was chosen as a suitable candidate for expulsion because of his 'liberalism', '...not in the ordinary sense, of course, but in that of a readiness frankly to air disagreements within the communist party'.⁶⁸ It is, therefore, plausible to assume that he would regard an intellectual environment that could not tolerate his methodological beliefs as one that was itself intolerable for the undertaking of Marxist theoretical work.

⁶⁸ Ibid. p. 222.

Chapter Six: Schlesinger's writings on history in Stalin's Soviet Union

Writings from 1938-1947

This chapter describes and appraises those writings produced before Stalin's death in 1953. The first part deals with his writings immediately after leaving the Soviet Union, and the second those articles he produced when settled as an academic in Glasgow. Taken together they represent a coherent, if developing, expression of Schlesinger's views on historiography in Stalin's Soviet Union.

It is argued here that throughout his writings of the period, Schlesinger attempted to portray the research of history in the Soviet Union in a positive light. Whilst never ignoring the more difficult and impeding aspects of the intellectual environment in which historians worked, Schlesinger's overall analysis was almost predominantly one of praise, at least for progress made under difficult circumstances. He often defended historians' work against what he seems to have perceived as unfair Western criticism, taking on the role of advocate for Soviet scholarship. Another distinctive feature of these writings was his reiteration of many of the arguments used in ongoing campaigns in the Soviet Union. For example, in many of the papers of this period he reproduced various elements of the anti-Pokrovskii campaign; his criticisms of Bolshevik historian M. N. Pokrovskii and his so-called 'school' mirrored those made by representatives of the state. Schlesinger's interpretations often coalesced with official Soviet orthodoxy. This may have been because he was in agreement with the emphases current at that time, but Schlesinger could also have been consciously interpreting Soviet events in a positive light. This contrasts sharply with his personal experiences of life as a scholar in the Soviet Union and with his later writing on the subject, in which he was far more condemnatory of the atmosphere and ensuing scholarly production under Stalin.

The first of Schlesinger's articles to deal specifically with the subject of Soviet historiography was entitled 'Neue sowjetrussische Literatur zur Sozialforschung' ('New Soviet Russian Literature on Social Research') and was published in 1938. Schlesinger had been invited to submit this report by the Institut für Sozialforschung based in Frankfurt, and the article was printed in their publication.¹ The work represented the main focus of Schlesinger's research and income whilst in Prague in 1938. It concerned general ideological developments in the Soviet Union and contained a section on 'The provisional results of the historical discussion'.² In his unpublished memoir reflections, Schlesinger explained that the article concerned recent historiographical discussions, which he believed had led to the overcoming of the Pokrovskiiian approach, that of the historian M. N. Pokrovskii, an achievement of some note in Schlesinger's eyes.

Schlesinger wrote:

My general intention in writing these reports was the demonstration of the actual progress made in the development of Marxist theory during the overcoming of the diverse schools which had held a monopoly position during the twenties and early thirties, quite independently from the paraphernalia with which this progress was surrounded in the atmosphere of the 'great purge' and its immediate antecedents. Without knowing anything definitive about the amount of truth or otherwise which stood behind those paraphernalia I believed that it was possible to define the social and intellectual developments the road for which was opened by the Stalinist methods.³

This statement seems to entirely substantiate the thesis that Schlesinger intentionally and consciously conveyed a positive description of Soviet

¹ Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Illegalität und Emigration*, p. 273. The Institut was later to be known as the 'Frankfurt School' and was instrumental in the development of critical theory. For more information on the school see M. Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination* (London, Heinemann Educational Books, 1973), esp. pp. 3-40.

² Schlesinger, 'Neue sowjetrussische Literatur zur Sozialforschung', p. 186.

³ Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: The War Approaches*, p. 249.

historiographical developments in his writings. His aim was to demonstrate the achievements made in intellectual fields, something perhaps denied by other commentators. This progress had come about because Stalinist Russia was able to overcome the erroneous theories and interpretations that had enjoyed monopoly status in the earlier period of Soviet rule. Schlesinger argued that, not knowing anything substantial about the 'paraphernalia' of the 'great purge', he had believed it possible to observe ideological progress as a result of it. Ignorance of the scale, brutality and extra-judicial nature of much of the 'purges' had apparently allowed Schlesinger to view developments purely in terms of intellectual progress. His use of the past tense in this sentence may well have been significant. Writing after Stalin's death, and now knowing more about that 'paraphernalia' he perhaps no longer agreed with his earlier, deeply pragmatic, approach. However, he did not say so.

The historiographical section of the article began with a short explanation of the background to the recent historical discussions. On 16 May 1934 a Government decree on the defects of historical teaching in primary and middle schools was published.⁴ This attack on the inadequacies and errors of current school textbooks was the starting point of the ensuing debate. The decree argued that historical teaching had simply provided abstract definitions of socio-economic formations, as opposed to a living description of the course of history. The Soviet authorities called for a new set of textbooks to facilitate the teaching of history. Unfortunately, the drafts of the new books still appeared to suffer from errors of, what Schlesinger described as, the 'Pokrovskii school'. The Party leadership thus made clear in pronouncements of 8 and 9 August 1934 that the main task in the historical field was the overcoming of this school.⁵ Schlesinger explained that this was originally to be

⁴ For the text of the decree see M. Pundeff, *History in the USSR, Selected Readings* (San Francisco, Chandler Publishing Company, 1967), pp. 98-99. For more information on Soviet textbooks see D. L. Brandenberger and A. M. Dubrovsky, 'The People Need a Tsar: The Emergence of National Bolshevism as Stalinist Ideology, 1931-1941', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 50, 5, July 1998, pp. 873-892. For another Western account contemporaneous to Schlesinger, see A. Mazour, *Modern Russian Historiography*, (Princeton, D. Van Nostrand Co., Inc., 1958), pp. 196...

⁵ For the text of the decree see Pundeff, *History in the USSR*, pp. 100-105. The original statements were only known to a small group of historians. They became known to Soviet society at large after their publication in *Pravda* on January 27, 1936. The *Pravda* article

achieved by way of self-criticism and open discussion. However, new drafts reproduced many of the same errors and it became clear the 'school' was not prepared to undertake a revision voluntarily. According to Schlesinger, it thus became necessary to publicly bring the authority of the State and Party leadership into the matter, and this was done on 26 January 1936 with the publication of the comments of Stalin, Kirov and Zhdanov.⁶ A committee was to be established, chaired by Zhdanov and consisting of historians and politicians, which would publish a report on the drafting of new textbooks.

In September 1937 The Soviet of Peoples' Deputies, on the advice of a published report by this committee, authorised the publication of a history textbook by A. V. Shestakov.⁷ Schlesinger argued that this marked the end of the three-year debate on conceptions of history and its proper presentation. According to Schlesinger, this debate had arisen out of the practical need for recognised and authoritative guidelines, '.... on the question of history teaching and its methods in general'.⁸ Such definitive guidelines were necessary because of recent political developments. Many new social strata had entered political life and there was a need for clarification of their relationship to the historical tradition. It was essential that the 'vulgar Marxism' of these groups be overcome if they were to fulfil their roles within Soviet intellectual life. In other words, rising social mobility and the influx of peasants into industrial areas required an increase in educational standards. Schlesinger made no attempt to suggest other, perhaps more disingenuous, reasons for the change in historical emphasis and teaching now deemed

began with an explanatory introduction which included a denunciation of the works of Pokrovskii; 'the first public repudiation'. (Enteen, *The Soviet Scholar-Bureaucrat*, p. 190.)

⁶ Schlesinger was presumably referring to the *Pravda* article mentioned above.

⁷ A. V. Shestakov, (ed.) *Istoriia SSSR: kratkii kurs* (Moscow, Uchebno-Pedagogicheskoe Uzdatel'stvo, 1938). According to Pundeff, in 1937 Professor A. V. Shestakov's manuscript was awarded second prize in the competition and was issued as a textbook for USSR history in the third and fourth grades. The committee argued that it was unable to award a first prize. (Pundeff, *History in the USSR*, pp. 105-6.) Enteen wrote: 'Only in 1937 did the party judge one of the new textbooks prepared in the competition reasonably acceptable for its purposes'. (Enteen, *The Soviet Scholar-Bureaucrat*, p. 190.) Schlesinger was either unaware or omitted to mention that the Party only deemed the Shestakov textbook 'acceptable'. The full text of the judging committee's report can be found in *K izucheniiu istorii*, (Moscow, Partizdat, 1937), pp. 32-38.

⁸ Schlesinger, 'Neue sowjetrussische Literatur zur Sozialforschung', p. 187.

necessary. He appeared to be in complete accord with the state on the reasons for, and the necessity of, this change.

Schlesinger argued that Stalin, Kirov and Zhdanovs' theses had criticised the draft textbooks because they reflected the abstract nature and incorrectness of the Pokrovskii 'school'.⁹ He went on to detail exactly what the objections to Pokrovskii were. It seems clear from his narrative style that Schlesinger was again in complete agreement with the Party as to both the existence and the erroneous nature of the Pokrovskii 'school'. For example, Schlesinger wrote that it was necessary for the party to publicly assert its authority in the matter of new textbooks since the 'school' had proven itself unwilling to 'undertake a revision of its views'.¹⁰ That the 'school' existed, a revision of its views was required and that this would not be accomplished voluntarily was stated as fact.

At this point it is worth examining Schlesinger's attitude towards Pokrovskii in more detail as it illuminates how closely his own writings mirrored Soviet orthodoxy in the Stalin period. M. N. Pokrovskii (1868 – 1932) was the first Bolshevik historian of note and has been described as 'the founder of Soviet historiography' by the Western commentator A. Mazour.¹¹ He rose to pre-eminence in the 1920s and trained a new generation of scholars to develop a specifically Marxist approach to history.¹² Pokrovskii attempted to explain historical developments with reference to what he saw as their underlying economic causes and introduced the concept of 'merchant capitalism' to explain Russia's development from feudalism to capitalism proper.¹³ He held

⁹ Ibid. p. 188.

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 187.

¹¹ A. Mazour, *The Writing of History in the Soviet Union*, (Stanford, Hoover Institution Press, 1975) p. 14.

¹² For further information on Pokrovskii's life, career and reputation see, Enteen, *The Soviet Scholar-Bureaucrat*, Mazour, *Modern Russian Historiography*, pp. 186-202, Mazour, *The Writing of History in the Soviet Union*, pp. 7-23, J. D. White, 'The Origins, Development and Demise of M. N. Pokrovskii's Interpretation of Russian History' in I. D. Thatcher (ed.) *Late Imperial Russia*, (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2005) pp. 167-188, H. Asher, 'The Rise, Fall, and Resurrection of M. N. Pokrovsky', *Russian Review*, 31, 1, Jan. 1972, pp. 49-63.

¹³ See, for example, M. N. Pokrovskii, *Brief History of Russia*, Volume 1, (London, Martin Lawrence Limited, 1933), trans. D. S. Mirsky, pp. 103-117.

numerous party positions and was elected to the All-Russian and then All-Union Congress of Soviets. He was also immensely active academically, at various times he edited journals, headed Istpart and chaired the State Council of Scholars as well as continually publishing his own work. However, Pokrovskii fell out of favour with the Soviet authorities from the mid-1930s. The Party and the historical profession in general, including many of his former pupils and supporters, criticised the scholar and heaped condemnation on his work. As K. Mehnert wrote, 'Pokrovsky died twice'; once in 1932 when he was given a State funeral with full military honours and once in 1934 when the official anti-Pokrovskii campaign began.¹⁴ This continued until his slow rehabilitation from 1956 onwards. During this time, Pokrovskii was accused of anti-Leninism, schematic bourgeois methodology, vulgar economic materialism and historical falsifications.

Schlesinger referred to Pokrovskii and the 'overcoming' of his work in most of his writings concerned with Soviet historiography. He appeared to be producing independent examinations of Pokrovskii's approach to history but was, in fact, aping the Soviet line as decreed by Stalin. In many ways Schlesinger was simply retreading ground thoroughly covered by Soviet historians and party orthodoxy. This may well have been because his opinion coalesced with that of the Soviet authorities; he consistently argued that the Stalin era advanced the study of history because it overcame Pokrovskii's erroneous theories; and he was not alone in the West in thinking this.¹⁵ However, it also strengthens the thesis that Schlesinger consciously painted a positive picture of developments in the Soviet Union and confirms that he frequently followed the orthodox line in matters of interpretation.

The official anti-Pokrovskii campaign began with the publication in 1936 of the directive establishing a committee to organise the production of new history textbooks announced in 1934. Pokrovskii was an obstacle in Stalin's path to

¹⁴ K. Mehnert, *Stalin Versus Marx* (George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1952), pp. 11-12.

¹⁵ For example D. F. White pointed out the negative effect Pokrovskii's theories had on Soviet historical scholarship and argued that the fall of his school had a positive impact on the profession (D. F. White, 'Protiv Istoriceskoi Konceptcii M. N. Pokrovskogo (Against M. N. Pokrovskii's Concept of History)' Review, *Slavonic and East European Review*, 2, 1, March 1943, pp 257-263 at pp. 262-263).

the role of historical arbiter. Stalin may well have seen his chance to discredit his rival when the issue of new textbooks arose.¹⁶ As J. D. White has argued, the campaign was launched in a subtle way; it involved the juxtaposing of a number of items under the general heading of 'On the Historical Front'. *Pravda* and *Izvestiia* published the directive in full as well as details of the subject groups tasked with the provision of the new texts, 'None of this had anything to do with Pokrovskii. However, this was not the impression the newspapers conveyed'.¹⁷ Alongside the details concerning the schematic nature of school history texts were articles condemning Pokrovskii and his errors.¹⁸ These articles accused Pokrovskii of being schematic and ignoring true facts and events. According to J. D. White, the newspapers consciously created the impression that the directive on school textbooks had condemned Pokrovskii, this was how historians referred to it at the time.¹⁹ The myth conflating the textbook criticisms with Pokrovskii's supposed schematic errors continued thereafter, including in Schlesinger's analysis. Henceforth Pokrovskii and his 'school' were routinely criticised by the authorities, his former pupils and all other historians. This culminated in a two-volume collection of essays, published in 1939-40, on the subject of Pokrovskii.²⁰ As G. M. Enteen, a biographer of Pokrovskii, has asserted, these volumes were, '.... great monuments of Stalinist culture, two works of monumental distemper'.²¹

Schlesinger's criticisms of Pokrovskii were remarkably similar to the official Soviet version, even using the same language. He referred to schematicism,

¹⁶ White, 'M. N. Pokrovskii's interpretation of Russian history', p. 183. D. Brandenberger has argued that the impetus for the anti-Pokrovskii campaign involved a number of parties including Zhdanov and Bukharin. However, he does not dispute Stalin's role in this, merely the notion of a monolithic totalitarian structure with Stalin at its centre making every decision. (D. Brandenberger, 'Who Killed Pokrovskii? (the second time): The Prelude to the Denunciation of the Father of Soviet Marxist Historiography, January 1936', *Revolutionary Russia*, 11, 1, June 1998, pp. 67-73).

¹⁷ White, 'M. N. Pokrovskii's interpretation of Russian history', p. 184.

¹⁸ N. Bukharin, 'Nuzhna li nam marksistskaia istoricheskaia nauka? (O nekotorykh sushchestvenno vazhnykh, no nesostoiatel'nykh vzgliadakh M. N. Pokrovskogo)', *Izvestiia*, 27 January 1936 and K. Radek, 'Znachenie istorii dlia revoliutsionnogo proletariata', *Pravda*, 27 January 1936.

¹⁹ White, 'M. N. Pokrovskii's interpretation of Russian history', p. 184.

²⁰ *Protiv istoricheskoi kontseptsii M. N. Pokrovskogo; Protiv antimarksistskikh kontseptsii M. N. Pokrovskogo* (Moscow-Leningrad, Izatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1939-40).

²¹ Enteen, *The Soviet Scholar-Bureaucrat*, p. 190.

vulgarity, projection of modern concepts into the past. A. Mazour outlined the Soviet perspective and the similarities between this and Schlesinger's accusations are stark:

Pokrovskii was now charged with advocating a too subjective conception of Marxism and held responsible for its infiltration into the writings of others; he was blamed for the arbitrary attributions of modern social and economic ideas to bygone generations utterly ignorant of them; ululations were raised against his doctrine that Communism needed no objective science; he was ridiculed for forcing the course of history into a Procrustean bed of materialism; and finally, he was charged with the advocacy of a rigid conception of Imperial Russia now regarded as the worst historical blunder of them all.²²

Schlesinger apparently agreed with the vast majority of official criticisms. However, he was certainly not alone in this. Much of Soviet and Western writing of the time took a similar approach to Pokrovskii. Mazour himself argued: 'The entire architectonic system of Pokrovsky is somewhat flimsily mechanistic'.²³ He went on to accuse Pokrovskii of writing history as a record of one inevitable continuum, 'a lifeless mechanistic process', 'a purposeless play of economic factors'. This appeared to coincide with the orthodox Soviet interpretation as espoused in the criticism of school textbooks.

The campaign against Pokrovskii was launched for a number of reasons and resulted in a one-sided and unfair portrayal of his writing. The biggest reason for the removal of his influence was because Pokrovskii's theories were in contradiction to the ideology underpinning Stalin's rule; they threatened his authority. For example, Pokrovskii's analysis countered the supraclass theory of the state, the idea that state transcended class rather than developing out of the interests of the leading class. Enteen has suggested that this betrayed an underlining hostility towards the state, something that would inevitably

²² Mazour, *Modern Russian Historiography*, pp. 200-201.

²³ *Ibid.* p. 192.

conflict with a government advocating a policy of 'socialism in one country'.²⁴ Pokrovskii was also anti-individualist, refusing to celebrate or revere the acts of key individuals. This would contradict Stalin's cult of personality and emphasis on the power of transforming personalities.²⁵ He was also an internationalist whose 'cosmopolitanism' was unacceptable to the Soviet Union's new emphasis on patriotism.²⁶

Many of the errors the anti-Pokrovskii campaign imputed to the historian were distortions of his writing or complete falsifications. Schlesinger followed many of these myths seemingly to the letter. For example, as Enteen has pointed out:

The extreme formulation of his [Pokrovskii's] view – 'history is politics retrojected into the past' – is a statement attributed to Pokrovskii by virtually all his Soviet critics before the 1960s, and by some Western critics. They suggest that it imparts the essence of his views on historical scholarship.²⁷

Schlesinger frequently referred to the erroneous nature of this concept.²⁸ Yet the statement did not occur in any of Pokrovskii's writings. In fact, according to Enteen, it is something of which he accused non-Marxist historians. Pokrovskii's followers did use the phrase, but to seek to vulgarise his work with such an accusation is somewhat distorting. J. D. White has also argued that to accuse Pokrovskii of being schematic and dismissing concrete facts is totally unjust.²⁹ It is clear that the labelling of Pokrovskii as a vulgar or extreme economic determinist was a distortion, and again was something that Schlesinger frequently did. As Enteen has explained:

With regard to the relative significance of substructural and superstructural elements in the historical process, Pokrovskii

²⁴ Enteen, *The Soviet Scholar-Bureaucrat*, p. 48.

²⁵ Asher, 'The Rise, Fall, and Resurrection of M. N. Pokrovsky', pp. 52-53.

²⁶ Mazour, *The Writing of History in the Soviet Union*, p. 18.

²⁷ Enteen, *The Soviet Scholar-Bureaucrat*, p. 33.

²⁸ For example, see below p. 228 and p. 233.

²⁹ White, 'M. N. Pokrovskii's interpretation of Russian history', p. 184.

was clearly an economic determinist, but he eschewed and actually polemicized against the most extreme formulations of that position and sought to give some weight to superstructural elements.³⁰

In fact, Enteen argued that Pokrovskii often sought to combat what he regarded as the vulgarisation of economic determinism.³¹

Pokrovskii's Soviet critics castigated him for crimes he did not commit and developed and propagated a myth of his errors that continued for several decades. Schlesinger seems to have been party to this misrepresentation despite his knowledge of the original Pokrovskiiian sources. He followed the Soviet interpretation throughout his writings of this time, arguing that the overcoming of his school was one of the main achievements of Stalinist historiography and giving limited credence to the positive effect Pokrovskii had on the development of a Marxist study of history.

In Schlesinger's report the positive role Pokrovskii had played in the evolution of historiography was partially recognised. Schlesinger quoted a *Pravda* article of 21 January 1936 which stated that Pokrovskii had developed in the struggle with the subjectivism of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois historians, who saw in the Tsars and their actions the most important motive forces of history.³² In opposition, Pokrovskii had postulated the theory that the development of economic relations was a fundamental factor in history. Whilst this represented an advance in the study of history, Pokrovskii's work also had the negative effect of transforming dialectic materialism into 'economic automatism'. His formulations were schematic and overly abstract, replacing the living history of the class struggle with dry social formations. The same *Pravda* article compared Pokrovskii's treatment of Tsardom, merely a weapon of merchant capital, to Lenin's, which supposedly stressed the extremely elastic, dialectic character of Tsardom and its slow transformation from a

³⁰ Enteen, *The Soviet Scholar-Bureaucrat*, p. 35.

³¹ *Ibid.* pp. 33-34.

³² Schlesinger, 'Neue sowjetrussische Literatur zur Sozialforschung', p. 189. It seems likely that Schlesinger was, in fact, referring to the article of 27 January 1936 mentioned above.

monarchy of the nobility to one of capitalism; in order to expose the weakness and oversimplification of Pokrovskii's analysis.

Another 'flawed' characteristic of Pokrovskii's work was that of his 'anti-historicism'.³³ Schlesinger argued that Pokrovskii had forced complicated and contradictory historical processes into his pre-prepared sociological scheme, or Procrustean bed, and replaced living classes with abstract sociological categories. His 'anti-historicism' also manifested itself in his indifference to concrete events and their chronological presentation; actual events were only referred to in order to illustrate his schema, to further elaborate his views on feudalism, religion, etc. These errors had been reproduced in the works of those from his 'school' and were visible in the draft textbooks.

By far the most important element in the thought of the Pokrovskii 'school' was the concept of 'merchant capital'; Schlesinger wrote that Pokrovskii had felt it to be the most significant component to any understanding of Russian history.³⁴ This too was criticised by the Soviet authorities. Schlesinger did not go into any great detail as to what this most important concept consisted of: Pokrovskii had asserted that capital had ruled Russia autocratically from Ivan the Terrible until the last Nicholas, 'merchant capital' had, in fact, created the Russian Empire and serfdom. Schlesinger believed that its genesis lay in response to the nineteenth century Slavophil presentation of history which attempted to dispute the existence of capitalism in Russia. In Pokrovskii's attempt to prove this wrong he reflected the existence of capitalist features into the past. The theory had also originated from Pokrovskii's polemic against the cult of personality inherent in bourgeois historiography. However, with his conception, the concrete questions central to historical scholarship disappeared since all causes were presupposed. Schlesinger argued: 'The acting people were reduced to mere puppets of economic driving forces'; this would once again create a schematic, abstract presentation of history.³⁵

³³ Ibid. p. 190.

³⁴ Ibid. p. 190-191.

³⁵ Ibid. p. 191.

Schlesinger argued that Pokrovskii's theory of 'merchant capitalism' represented the projection of the modern day class struggle into the past, '... the present-day class struggle appears as the single reality and this leads to any past repression being conceived of as 'capitalist''.³⁶ Schlesinger insisted that the use of the concept of 'merchant capitalism' involved the application of modern political concepts, such as Bolshevism or 'democratic peoples' revolution', to unsuitable periods of the past. The projection of modern political concerns backwards also led Pokrovskii to conclude that historians who were active in the class struggle should concentrate entirely on specific themes connected to matters of modern proletarian praxis.

In his report Schlesinger also took issue with what he regarded as Pokrovskii's incorrect philosophical viewpoint, accusing him of 'idealistic relativism'.³⁷ He argued that Pokrovskii's pragmatic epistemological approach led him to believe that every ideology, including Marxism, had the effect of a 'distorting mirror' through which reality could never be entirely accurately reflected. Such an interpretation perhaps inevitably concluded that the goal of an 'objective description of history' was a bourgeois illusion. Pokrovskii had argued against the theory that laws of nature are objective and hence exist independently from consciousness. This justified the overtly political role that Pokrovskii granted the field of historical study. Whilst the Soviet authorities of the 1930s accepted the connection between historical knowledge and politics, and the principle that history represented a weapon of the class struggle in a class society, it was argued that Pokrovskii was labelling Leninism as a form of 'class based subjectivism' and hence placing it on the same level as reactionary bourgeois ideologies such as positivism or subjective idealism. This could not be tolerated and was also at odds with Schlesinger's own belief in Marxism's objective quality.³⁸

Schlesinger's report next attempted an appreciation of the Shestakov textbook approved for publication by the judging committee. Schlesinger

³⁶ Ibid. p. 191.

³⁷ Ibid. p. 192.

³⁸ See chapter 4, p. 152.

argued that whilst it would be ludicrous to expect any methodological definitions in a schoolbook, '... it is worthy of note what a popular book, worked out by the Party leadership, has to say on the significance of history'.³⁹ He provided a description of its contents as well as a positive impression of the book's interpretation on various matters. Schlesinger emphasised the fact that the book began with a brief section on the emergence of the classes and states that comprised the history of the USSR. The textbook's exposition was opened by a presentation of the oldest states in the Transcaucasus and Central Asia, with small sections on the Scythians and Black Sea Greeks.⁴⁰ Schlesinger's point was that from the outset it was not merely the Slavs who were represented as the central bearers of history. He conceded that, after this initial section, the Shestakov text was concerned almost exclusively with the Slavs, especially the Great Russians. However, Schlesinger pointed out that this ethnic chauvinism had, in fact, been a criticism of the judging committee.⁴¹

Schlesinger provided an enthusiastic description of Shestakov's textbook. He included many expressions of praise and noted the depth and detail to which it often went. Schlesinger wrote: 'The emergence of the class divisions and of the Slav states was well presented';⁴² 'The activities of the 'Tsar-reformer' were fully described'⁴³ and 'The struggle for freedom of the oppressed peoples' was appreciated in a purely positive and detailed manner'.⁴⁴ He also argued that the textbook presented a balanced approach, especially in regard to its treatment of Peter I; both the negative and positive aspects of Peter's reign were described. The book dealt fully with the oppression of the peasantry, the ensuing uprisings and the terror with which these revolts were subdued. Schlesinger quoted from the book in order to substantiate his argument:

³⁹ Schlesinger, 'Neue sowjetrussische Literatur zur Sozialforschung', p. 194.

⁴⁰ Shestakov, *Istoriia SSSR*, p. 8.

⁴¹ Brandenberger and Dubrovsky have pointed out the extent to which Shestakov's textbook was redrafted to the detriment of non-Russian minorities so it seems that this 'ethnic chauvinism' was actually officially approved of (Brandenberger and Dubrovsky, 'The People Need a Tsar', p. 879).

⁴² Schlesinger, 'Neue sowjetrussische Literatur zur Sozialforschung', p. 194.

⁴³ *Ibid.* p. 195.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* p. 196.

Under Peter I Russia made considerable progress, but remained a land in which everyone lived under the yoke of serfdom and Tsarist arbitrary use of power. The strength of the Russian Empire under Peter I was achieved at the cost of 100,000 workers, and the cost of the plundering of the people. Peter I did a great deal for the creation and consolidation of the state of nobility and merchants.⁴⁵

It seems that Schlesinger agreed with this analysis of the reign and legacy of Peter I.

One criticism of Shestakov's text was broached in the report. Schlesinger felt that it adequately described the harsh yoke of the Mongol conquerors and the eventual divorce of the Moscow Princes from them. However, he added, this was not achieved without a certain 'prettification', resulting in the past being described in purely heroic terms.⁴⁶ Yet, in general, Schlesinger provided a positive description of the textbook and offered praise for many of its sections. He did not present any overall conclusions on its content or efficacy as an educational tool, but the lack of any real criticism did suggest that the book was suitable for its task.

Schlesinger utilised a variety of contemporary Soviet sources for the report, such as official party statements, articles from newspapers such as *Pravda* and academic journals like *Istoriia Marksist*, to illustrate current debates within the historical field, centring upon the issue of education and school textbooks. What comment he did make, besides his general narrative, seemed to correspond to the stance of the Soviet Union at the time. This can be seen in his support of the anti-Pokrovskii campaign and his praising of the Shestakov textbook. His analysis of the faults of the Pokrovskii 'school' represented his

⁴⁵ Ibid. p. 195. Shestakov, *Istoriia SSSR*, p.66. For a modern work on Peter and his legacy see E. V. Anisimov, *The Reforms of Peter the Great*, (London, M. E. Sharpe, 1993) trans. J. T. Alexander.

⁴⁶ Schlesinger, 'Neue sowjetrussische Literatur zur Sozialforschung', p. 195.

general thinking on this matter and various elements of his interpretation were expanded on in his later writings on the subject. Schlesinger offered no overall conclusions or analysis, even though the paper was to provide a summary of recent developments. Without this final summation it is difficult to perceive Schlesinger's opinion, yet what little he did offer in the way of analysis was predominantly positive. It therefore seems reasonable to conclude that Schlesinger intended to convey these latest developments in Soviet historical teaching as progressive.

Schlesinger again addressed the topic of Russian historiography in an unpublished discussion entitled *The Problems of Commercial Capitalism in 17th and 18th Century Russia*.⁴⁷ The draft was not a final version and contained many hand-written corrections. Perhaps it cannot truly represent Schlesinger's thinking on the subject since his ideas required a certain clarification. In fact, another, probably later draft of the article was turned down for publication in *The Economic History Review*.⁴⁸ However, it does contain a great deal of relevant material and allows for an understanding of the development of Schlesinger's opinion of historiography under Stalin. The article provides a bridge between his first work on leaving the Soviet Union and his later writing. Many of the themes touched upon in *The Problems of Commercial Capitalism in 17th and 18th Century Russia* were further elaborated in *The Spirit of Post-war Russia* published in 1947. In the manuscript, Schlesinger traced the historical debate in Russia concerning the causes, character and success of the Petrine reforms, as well as discussing the concept of 'commercial capitalism' or 'merchant capitalism'.⁴⁹ He

⁴⁷ Schlesinger, *The Problems of Commercial Capitalism in 17th and 18th Century Russia* (Glasgow University Library, Rudolf Schlesinger Papers, MS Gen 1660 41 8, Unpublished, 1941-1943). The manuscript can be roughly dated to between 1941 and 1943 when it is known that Schlesinger was living in Cambridge, the place of writing noted on the manuscript, but before the later draft was posted to journals (see footnote below).

⁴⁸ See letter to Schlesinger from the editor of the journal, M. M. Postan, (Schlesinger, *The Problems of Commercial Capitalism*, (Glasgow University Library, Rudolf Schlesinger Papers, MS Gen 1660 48 2, Unpublished, 1943). The date is taken from that attached letter from the editor of *The Economic History Review* dated 27 June 1943.) The editor wrote that it would require 'drastic revision of both substance and form' and criticised the paper for its lack of material. The earlier draft of the manuscript is used here because it is complete, in comparison to the copy of the draft sent to the journal which finishes mid sentence and appears to have pages missing.

⁴⁹ Although in this manuscript Schlesinger used the phrase 'commercial capitalism', it is clear

introduced the general background to these problems and evaluated what 'capitalist' elements, if any, existed in seventeenth and eighteenth century society.

This work is somewhat unique because it offered Schlesinger's own opinions upon historiographical problems. Schlesinger did not simply follow the debate but actually participated in it as a historian. Having no opportunity to engage with any of the primary material, he relied upon the secondary literature to examine the questions and formulate his own conclusions. This had several disadvantages, not least that Schlesinger was forced to rely upon those very sources, such as Pokrovskii, which he was casting doubt upon.⁵⁰ Since he had no new information and did not have access to the materials that other historians had based their judgements on, one could argue that he would inevitably have very little that was new to offer. Yet the manuscript provides an insight into Schlesinger's thoughts on the subject, even if no new historical ground is broken.

Schlesinger argued that a capitalist interpretation of Russian history had long been predominant, if erroneous: 'On the first glance it seems somewhat astonishing that in Russia the capitalist interpretation of early history has so much influenced historiography, already since the 18th Century. For Russian history seems, *prima facie*, to suggest everything but a capitalist interpretation of feudalism'.⁵¹ Russian development, at least in its successful forms, had not known municipal autonomy and had also never witnessed the breaking up of the manor, two classic characteristics of the evolution of feudal into capitalist society in Schlesinger's view. Schlesinger argued that it would make more sense to describe Russia as the classic country of feudalism, one that had passed through four periods of crisis, developing new forms of feudalism in response to each until finally it was forced to make some compromise with capitalism in the 1860s.⁵²

that the two terms were synonymous in his thinking.

⁵⁰ For example, Schlesinger cited Pokrovskii as a source of information but subsequently criticised him, Schlesinger, *The Problems of Commercial Capitalism*, p2.

⁵¹ Schlesinger, *The Problems of Commercial Capitalism*, p. 3.

⁵² The four periods were: 'The introduction of Christianity and the so-called Olga reforms (in

To Schlesinger, there were two reasons why students of history had tried to interpret Russia's past from a capitalist perspective, despite the overwhelming evidence against it. The first was that, from the formation of the Kiev state until the 1917 revolution, the Russian aristocracy had been involved in commercial discourse with economically more developed countries. This was necessary to protect themselves from becoming instruments of 'indirect' colonial rule and it explained the strong impression that Westerners visiting Moscow in the 16th and 17th Century had of the commercial interests prevailing there. He wrote: 'Once one is ready to suppose that a man mainly interested in money profits is, therefore, a capitalist, it is not difficult to support a 'commercial capitalist' interpretation of Russian history with plenty of documentary proof'.⁵³ However, Russia's communication with capitalists was not proof of their own capitalism and could be explained by needs of self-preservation. This need to prevent colonisation from nearby centralised Western states, such as the Polish-Lithuanian state in the middle of the fifteenth century, resulted in a strong centralisation of government. Such a necessity saved the country from feudal dispersal and did lead to a strong development of the money economy. However, according to Schlesinger, if capitalism was understood as a system of production,

.... it is problematic whether the hastened strengthening of money economics did accelerate at all the growth of capitalism. Just the other way round it even might be concluded that the huge costs of centralisation and of the attempts, during the 16th, 17th and 18th Centuries to open for Russia an independent outlet to the West, retarded the evolution of the conditions for a truly capitalist development.⁵⁴

the second half of the 10th Century), the rise of the Northern princedoms (12th/13th century), the 'Oprichina' under Ivan IV and the following 'Time of Troubles', and the Petrine reforms with the following reactions up to 1762'. (Schlesinger, *The Problems of Commercial Capitalism*, p. 4.)

⁵³ Schlesinger, *The Problems of Commercial Capitalism*, p. 6.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 6-7.

Again, what at first might appear to be a capitalist advancement, strong centralisation and active intervention in the economy, could be explained by other needs and developments within the state.

Schlesinger went on to outline the broad historiographical trends in pre-modern Russian history. Liberal historians of the nineteenth and twentieth century sought the thread of Russian development in the increased binding of individuals and groups to the state.⁵⁵ They wrote reasonably favourably of the westernisation of Russia, but criticised the fact that, after the reign of Peter I, the state only loosened the obligations of the nobility. In contrast, wrote Schlesinger, Pokrovskii's main achievement had been his ability to criticise the Petrine reforms, '... not from the point of view of an idealisation of the 'autocht[h]one' feudal Russia, as the Slavophiles had done... but under the point of view whether Peter's way was really the best and most effective way to realise capitalist progress and to render Russia a country up to contemporary standards'.⁵⁶ He recognised the correctness of Peter's aims but questioned his methods. Modern Soviet historiography, written in the 1930s and 1940s, returned to the rather positive attitude of the Liberals, whilst criticising the general feudal framework of Petrine and post-Petrine Russia. Schlesinger argued that Russian attitudes to the country's past and future were determined by interpretations of the turning point in Russian history, '... the period when the great decision for the Western way of development had definitely been made'.⁵⁷ It was understandable that the Bolsheviks, having gained political power under the aegis of a Western theory, should claim Peter's inheritance. Schlesinger argued that there was a certain pragmatism to the Bolsheviks' historical interpretation, one that he understood and perhaps even approved of.

⁵⁵ Schlesinger was presumably referring to historians such as V. O. Kliuchevskii (1841-1911). For more information on the great master of nineteenth century historiography see, Mazour, *Modern Russian Historiography*, pp. 112-121. He also referred to M. I. Tugan-Baronovsky and his major work *The Russian Factory in the Nineteenth Century* (Homewood, Illinois, Richard D. Irwin, Inc, 1970) trans. A Levin and C. S. Levin. Tugan-Baranovskii (1865-1919) was one of a group of Russian 'Legal' Marxists (Mazour, *Modern Russian Historiography*, pp. 182-183).

⁵⁶ Schlesinger, *The Problems of Commercial Capitalism*, p. 8.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* p. 8.

Schlesinger next tried to discern if any 'capitalist' elements could be discovered in seventeenth and eighteenth century Russian society: 'It is the question whether the dynamic tendency of such 'capitals' as existed during the 16th and 17th Centuries was to create a capitalist society'.⁵⁸ Did these earlier elements of 'capital' lead society towards capitalism? Schlesinger argued that within a Marxist system of sociology one could not say 'capital' when referring to money accumulations that did not provide employment for industrial workers and showed no tendency towards such an employment as the normal method of yielding profits. Examples of money accumulation alone did not provide evidence of a transition away from feudalism. Instead, Schlesinger introduced his own criterion for assessing the nature of the Russian state at this time. One had to prove a causal chain between the instances of 'commercial capitalism' and a capitalist tendency of development.

According to Schlesinger the theory of 'commercial capitalism' did not stand up to serious academic scrutiny and seventeenth and eighteenth century Russian society could not be characterised as developing towards capitalism. This was because only two of Schlesinger's six criteria were present. There were numerous and sizeable 'commercial capitals' and the ideologies and foreign policies of the time did have a capitalist element.⁵⁹ However, the social and economic mechanisms to further develop these did not exist and what 'commercial capitalisms' were present were not gaining control over the manufacture of small handicrafts.⁶⁰ Also, 'commercial capitalism' played no role in shaping large-scale industry and its representatives, the merchants, had very little, if any, political power.⁶¹

According to Schlesinger, Pokrovskii had insisted that all the pre-requisites for capitalism had existed at the end of the seventeenth century and would have come fully to fruition had it not been for the political framework of a state that

⁵⁸ Ibid. p. 10.

⁵⁹ Ibid. p. 11 and p. 13.

⁶⁰ Ibid. p. 18 and p. 20.

⁶¹ Ibid. p. 30.

was controlled by the nobles.⁶² However, Schlesinger disputed this claim arguing that at least two, if not more, of Pokrovskii's preconditions were absent. Schlesinger argued:

There were no sufficient working-hands apart from the serfs, whose inclusion into industrial production was just to result in the 'feudalisation' of Russian industry. And, in consequence of the rule of serfdom, there was not a sufficient domestic market – apart from the enormous military needs of the state, and some luxury consumption of the rich, certainly not just the most suitable field for developing a young industry⁶³

Schlesinger argued that a capitalist interpretation of Russian history and the success of the 'fallacious' theory of 'commercial capitalism' had come about because the past had been judged by the needs and possibilities of another generation instead of its own. Present beliefs and social systems had been reflected backwards into the past creating a seriously mistaken impression of seventeenth and eighteenth century society.

The Problems of Commercial Capitalism in 17th and 18th Century Russia is an interesting manuscript which provides some information on Soviet historiography but perhaps, more importantly, elaborates Schlesinger's personal thinking on the nature of pre-1917 Russian society. He analysed various Russian schools of thought such as Pokrovskii's and then offered a lucid explanation as to why he disagreed with these theories. His criticisms of Pokrovskii were of an academic character, perhaps lending them more legitimacy than his more polemical attacks. Schlesinger questioned his concept of 'commercial capital' and found it wanting. It seems clear that Schlesinger was in agreement with and, in some ways, was reproducing the arguments of the Soviet anti-Pokrovskii campaign. He provided little evidence

⁶² Ibid. p. 35. See Pokrovskii, *Brief History of Russia*, Volume 1, p. 100.

⁶³ Schlesinger, *The Problems of Commercial Capitalism*, p. 36.

to substantiate his claims regarding Russian development. He also failed to provide explanations of his terms. Schlesinger referred to concepts such as 'commercial capitalism', 'merchants' and 'ideologies', terms with various and often value-laden meanings, but did not provide an exposition of the precise way in which he was using them. It is important to remember, however, that the manuscript was not a final draft.

Schlesinger's next writing on Soviet historiography was as part of a book, *The Spirit of Post-war Russia*. Whilst in exile in Prague in 1938 Schlesinger had written a large manuscript on recent developments in the Soviet Union. It was lost for some time between his London and New York publishers and, when Schlesinger did have it returned, he found it to be too outdated for publication. Most of the research he had undertaken was put to use in *The Spirit of Post-war Russia* and so the main body of work for the book was produced immediately after Schlesinger's expulsion from the USSR.⁶⁴ The book was based on observations that Schlesinger had made in the USSR before the Second World War. He argued, however, that he was, '.... quite justified in altering the detail and calling it a book on the spirit of post-war Russia, because I believe that the trends observable in pre-war Russia have continued, and are continuing to dominate Soviet life'.⁶⁵ The correctness of this statement is open to debate. Certainly, in the historical sphere, post-war social and political conditions were dramatically different to earlier ones; leading inevitably to different historical interpretations. Perhaps the most significant feature of post-war historiography was the 'anti-cosmopolitanism' campaign; a movement introduced purportedly to purge Soviet society of the accommodation of the bourgeois world that had occurred during wartime.⁶⁶ This obviously would have led to the manifestation of different trends before and after the war.

Schlesinger asserted that his intention in writing the book was to study the Soviet social system: the internal development of a revolutionary state, from

⁶⁴ Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: The War Approaches* p. 250.

⁶⁵ Schlesinger, *Spirit of Post-war Russia*, pp. 7-8.

⁶⁶ See below pp. 246...

the point of view of the needs and standards of the state under consideration.⁶⁷ He believed that this made his study unique, since many other discussions simply applied the standards of one state in order to criticise another. This unique, academic and impartial strategy was, presumably, in contrast to many Western works, which merely criticised the Soviet system through the prism of inappropriate Western standards. Schlesinger observed various aspects of Soviet social life and attempted to discern general Soviet attitudes. He explored the Marxist 'ideological superstructures' constructed by the Soviet state, such as legislation and culture.

The book had an entire chapter dealing with the historical field in the Soviet Union, 'The Conception of History'.⁶⁸ In it, Schlesinger attempted to deduce the impact that recent developments in Soviet thought, namely the evolution of Soviet patriotism, had had upon approaches to the fundamental problems of history. He began by explaining that Soviet historical studies were necessarily undertaken within a Marxist framework. Marxism stressed the importance of the objective structure of society, the material conditions from which men produced their livelihoods. This Marxist conception was, according to Schlesinger, '.... in opposition to the traditional 'explanation' of historical development by the enumeration of the feats of 'great men' and by the description of the ideas influencing their actions'.⁶⁹ Marxism emphasised objective social constructions, the causal factors influencing man's ideas and setting limits to the realisation of these ideas. As in his Marxist writings, Schlesinger insisted that Marx and Engels had never denied that men produce their own history or tried to reduce the significance of personalities and ideas. However, the task of Marxist sociology and historical research was to explain how these particular personalities and ideas had arisen at that particular time. Any historical study undertaken in the Soviet Union would inevitably begin from these assumptions; Marxism was the theoretical paradigm from which all research was born. Schlesinger believed this to be

⁶⁷ Schlesinger, *Spirit of Post-war Russia*, p. 8.

⁶⁸ Schlesinger, *Spirit of Post-war Russia*, Chapter 6, pp. 137-148.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* p. 137.

one of the most positive aspects of Soviet historiography, since he considered the use of Marxist methodology to be the basis of sound scholarship.

It would, perhaps, be natural to expect great advances in sociological and historical research given that any work was produced from theoretically sound roots. However, according to Schlesinger, a distortion of Marxism had been introduced to Russia prior to the revolution and this had had a profound impact upon subsequent work. Schlesinger wrote:

.... a vulgar travesty of Marxism was propagated in Russia before and during the first years after 1917 under the title of 'economic materialism'. Marxist theory was misused to imply the existence of some automatism by which economic conditions produce 'history' of their own accord, with the men and their ideas acting as mere marionettes.⁷⁰

This theory of 'economic materialism' had various undesirable ramifications for the Bolsheviks. Schlesinger identified two major disadvantages to the theory. Firstly it had a tendency to produce amongst revolutionaries a fatalistic attitude and willingness to seek out inevitable causes of defeat rather than solutions to avert it: 'objective conditions' were the determining factor in society and if the ones necessary for revolution were not present there was nothing one could do. It could thus be a pretext for avoiding revolutionary action. Schlesinger believed that the theory had fulfilled such a function both in German and Russian right-wing Socialism, singling out Kautsky as someone who strove to find pretexts for avoiding decisive revolutionary action. He argued that 'economic materialism' could well serve as the theoretical basis for 'right-wing deviations' on the eve of a revolution. However, it could also become a pretext for 'left-wing deviations' after the event; the society that had emerged from the revolution had done so in contradiction to Marxist precepts and could not, therefore, be socialism. Further radical and revolutionary action would in this case be necessary.

⁷⁰ Ibid. p. 137.

According to Schlesinger: 'The fact that economic materialism lent itself to these heterodox interpretations, most of them in the Trotskyist sense, was a sufficient reason for the Stalinists to wage an energetic war 'on the historical front''.⁷¹ Schlesinger rejected the 'economic automatism' and 'vulgar Marxism' he attributed to Pokrovskii and his school. He also appeared to advocate Stalin's actions.

The second major problem the theory held for the Bolsheviks was that if one accepted that men and ideas were simply figureheads, what was the point in studying them? Schlesinger argued that for fifteen years after the revolution Soviet youth were only taught of 'empty sociological boxes'. This allowed children to gain a vivid impression of the general conditions of life in a certain period without having to worry about examinations based on 'dry facts'. Yet the major disadvantage of this form of historical education was that it would very often result in total ignorance of the basic events of history. In provincial schools, even the positive aspect was likely to be distorted into caricatures, and so the children would learn nothing except meaningless phrases. This major criticism of 'economic materialism' was familiar throughout Schlesinger's writings of this time. He accused Soviet education, based on what he perceived to be 'Pokrovskiiian' concepts, of teaching only a vulgar and overly schematic version of history. This judgement appeared to correspond directly to that of the Soviet authorities and their anti-Pokrovskii campaign.

According to Schlesinger, the most popular 'sociological box' used immediately after the revolution, under the auspices of 'economic materialism', was the theory of Russian 'merchant capitalism'. This had been developed forty years previously and had proven to be especially dangerous to an understanding of Russian history. Schlesinger argued that the theory was, '.... as old as the Marxist fashion among Russian intellectuals' and pointed to Kautsky as the originator of this "economic' vulgarisation'.⁷² Building upon his previous work, Schlesinger argued that if, at around 1900,

⁷¹ Ibid. p. 138.

⁷² Ibid. p. 139, footnote 134.

any states in Europe were feudal or semi-feudal it was surely Russia that best fitted the description. However, he continued:

.... for good reasons...., the struggle against Tsarist Russia had to be fought under the leadership of a party, working class at least according to its own theory, and under the banner of the Marxist ideology which had been originally developed to satisfy the needs of the class struggle between industrial workers and capitalists.⁷³

There was, therefore, a tendency amongst progressive historians to interpret the feudal past in light of present circumstances, and to seek economic explanations for all phenomena. Added to these errors was an inability amongst most historians to fully comprehend the Marxist conception of productive relations. This produced a great number of very 'primitive travesties of history' in the years immediately before and after the October revolution.⁷⁴

In Schlesinger's earlier and later writings he accused Pokrovskii of utilising the false theory of 'merchant capitalism', but he made little reference to him in this work. Schlesinger did write, '.... the tendency arose among Russian progressive historians to interpret the purely feudal past in the light of the present, 'to reflect the proletarian class struggle into the past', as one extremist representative of this tendency declared'.⁷⁵ It seems clear that Schlesinger believed Pokrovskii to be the 'extreme representative'; he had previously argued that Pokrovskii reflected modern circumstances backwards.⁷⁶ It is unclear why Schlesinger would choose not to name him directly at this point. Yet it seems certain that Schlesinger was once again

⁷³ Ibid. p. 139.

⁷⁴ Ibid. p. 139.

⁷⁵ Ibid. p. 139.

⁷⁶ See, for example, Schlesinger, 'Neue sowjetrussische Literatur zur Sozialforschung', p192.....

criticising Pokrovskii and his followers, in agreement with official Soviet attitudes of the time.

In order to substantiate the fallacious theory of 'merchant capitalism' it was necessary to find some characteristics of capitalism in ancient feudal Russia. As elsewhere, Russian landlords had allied with merchants since the sixteenth century in order to facilitate development from feudal anarchy to an absolutist state. Schlesinger proposed that it was a relatively simple matter to overemphasise this point in order to assert that commercial capital had shaped the laws of serfdom and that the crown was merely an ornament covering the merchants' rule. However, this interpretation of Russian history led to numerous logical difficulties. If Russia had already become capitalist, what had progressives been fighting for in the two hundred years preceding the 1917 revolution? Was it worthwhile to fight against overwhelming odds merely to change the existing type of capitalism into its more modern form of industrial capitalism? Schlesinger also emphasised the politically expedient need for the Soviet state to reject such an interpretation. As soon as the Bolsheviks wished to stress their historical links to all Russian progressive thought, with the rise of Soviet patriotism under Stalin, the description of the former ruling pattern as 'merchant capitalism' had to be removed, along with other simplifications, since they described various aspects of Russian history as non-progressive. Such vulgar manifestations of capital were no longer appropriate for a state wishing to shine a light on the historically progressive character of the Russian people. Schlesinger suggested that the state had its own reasons for progressing beyond the theory of 'merchant capitalism'; however, he agreed with the outcome.

The other major weakness of the theory of 'merchant capitalism' was that, according to Schlesinger, aside from political motives, '.... what remained of Marxism as a sociological theory of history, if the standard of the present were simply to be applied to the past'?⁷⁷ It distorted Marxism to the point of

⁷⁷ Schlesinger, *Spirit of Post-war Russia*, p. 140.

absurdity, and so the concept of 'merchant capitalism' was dropped in the late 1920s. Schlesinger wrote that it had, '.... contradicted the fundamental Marxist thesis that various stages of social development are characterized by the various forms in which men *produce* their livelihood'.⁷⁸ According to Schlesinger, in 1930-1 even Pokrovskii had to concede that the concept of 'merchant capitalism' was meaningless since capitalism was a system of production and yet 'merchant capitalism' did not produce anything.

As the distortions of this vulgar Marxism became ever more visible, Soviet historians made a concerted move away from those theories emanating from 'economic materialism'. Thus, according to Schlesinger, '.... the past was reinstated – in so far as this past had been progressive by the standards of its own times and had contributed to forming the present outlook of the Soviet fatherland'.⁷⁹ Historical interpretations were now freed from the constraints of an erroneous methodology. There was to be no more reflecting the present backwards and a correction of previous mechanistic statements ensued, although emphases were often determined by propagandistic requirements and some Soviet historians went too far in 'correcting' past mistakes. As well as perceiving these changes in a progressive manner, Schlesinger argued that some of the necessary changes in historical research and teaching were instigated by Stalin personally. He cited the drive against perceived 'economic materialism' in school textbooks, begun by the Party authorities in 1934, as an example.

Schlesinger described the changes in Soviet historiography in a very positive light. He used the differing interpretations of Peter I over time as an example of how the changes made in historical theory under Stalin had led to improvements in its study and teaching. His analysis was very similar to *The Problems of Commercial Capitalism in 17th and 18th Century Russia*. In pre-revolutionary Russia, historians had tended to treat Peter I in one of two ways. Either, as Westernisers, they celebrated him as a kind of liberal reformer or,

⁷⁸ Ibid. pp. 143-4. Author's italics.

⁷⁹ Ibid. p. 140.

as Slavophiles, they criticised him for the destruction of old-Russian mysticism and for killing many thousands for the sake of introducing modern technique and economics. The first generation of Soviet historians, i.e. Pokrovskii's school, attempted to criticise him from a more progressive perspective. They pointed to Peter's failure to achieve his own aim of capitalist industrialisation and blamed him for the suffering of the masses, the fruit of which only the exploiters would be in a position to enjoy. However, Schlesinger continued, '... the Pokrovskiiian historians themselves, in their polemics against the former official cult of Peter, relapsed into the Slavophil tendency of defending all his antagonists, including such obvious reactionaries as his son and grandson'.⁸⁰ Although the first Soviet historians had made progress in historical interpretation, more was clearly required.

Schlesinger believed that the official Soviet textbook edited by Shestakov best illustrated the Soviet attitude at the time of his writing.⁸¹ It acknowledged that Peter had done much to shape and strengthen the state. Now Soviet historians expressed sympathy with him in his struggle against ecclesiastical and other reactionaries and against the peasant uprisings directed at the Petrine state. They acknowledged his achievements in introducing reform within the existing system and his recognition of the need to eventually overthrow that system. Schlesinger concluded that, '... this result seems to be reasonable from the historical as well as from the methodological point of view, it may be regarded as characteristic of the attitude of Stalinist Russia towards the Russian past'.⁸² Schlesinger also praised Stalinist Soviet historiography for returning to sound Marxist principles: 'As to the theoretical interpretation of facts, I do not think that recent developments of Soviet historiography are exposed to serious criticism from the Marxist point of view: at least in essentials it seems that the claims of the Soviet writers to have restored original Marxian concepts is justified'.⁸³

⁸⁰ Ibid. p. 142.

⁸¹ It is the same textbook to which Schlesinger referred in his report for *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*.

⁸² Schlesinger, *Spirit of Post-war Russia*, p. 142

⁸³ Ibid. p. 143.

When writing about Soviet attitudes to Peter I, Schlesinger pointed out that any discussion inevitably had to confront questions of the price paid, in human costs, for speedy reconstruction, and the moral implications of a 'revolution from above' which would necessarily have little regard for freedom of criticism. There are obvious parallels between issues surrounding the rule of Peter and those of the Bolshevik state. Schlesinger wrote: 'So when reading historical writings 'on Peter', one must sometimes ask whether it is really about Peter that post-1917 Soviet historians were writing'.⁸⁴ Schlesinger believed that personal ethics decided the stance individuals would take on these issues. It was unsurprising that both Lenin and Stalin had expressed the opinion that, without the work of Peter, they could not have undertaken theirs. However, he strongly rejected the notion that this had led modern Soviet historians to uncritically lavish praise upon the Petrine reforms.

This section of the chapter is particularly interesting because it displays Schlesinger's keen awareness of the political nature of the historical and sociological work he was exploring. He believed this political dimension was characteristic not only of work undertaken within the Soviet Union but of academic work in general. As a Marxist, attempting not simply to interpret the world but to change it, Schlesinger would not have condemned Soviet historiography for its political character; it was an inherent part of the research process, and one he explicitly recognised. All academic work had its political implications and assumptions and that which was produced in the Soviet Union was simply more self-conscious.

Countering any potential assertion that Soviet historiography was overtly politicised by the state, or simply followed the needs of short-term propaganda, Schlesinger argued that there was little doubt that at certain times certain aspects of Russian history were emphasised. However, he countered:

⁸⁴ Ibid. p. 141.

To emphasise, for needs of popular propaganda, certain topical aspects of national history is one thing, to 'correct' history for propagandist aims is another. I do not think that present Soviet writing of history deserves the latter reproach, at least in so far as it deals with issues outside the field of factional struggles within the Bolshevik party.⁸⁵

Soviet historiography did no more than any other state would find necessary in order to mobilise its society against perceived dangers. Schlesinger argued that Marxism, the very cornerstone of Soviet historical and sociological theory, rejected any adaptation of historical teaching for propagandist aims as belonging to a pragmatic philosophy. Soviet philosophy had strictly adhered to this policy; any manipulation of historical facts would be inadequate according to those standards. Schlesinger admitted that there still existed certain inconsistencies between historical teaching and its 'selection' of facts, and the standards established by Soviet philosophy. Further advances towards the complete rejection of pragmatism were thus necessary; he wrote, '.... the future of Marxism, as a scientific theory, in the USSR as well as in any country where it might conquer political power, implies the rejection of pragmatism.... and the exclusion of political expediency from arguments used in scientific discussion'.⁸⁶ However, Soviet historiography could not be condemned because it was not yet theoretically or methodologically perfect.

In order to counter the frequent reproach that Marxist and subsequently Soviet theory neglected the historical importance of human thought, Schlesinger used quotations from a state textbook: 'New social ideas and theories arise only after the development of the material life of society has set new tasks before society.' But they arise, '...precisely because they are necessary to society, because it is *impossible* to carry out the urgent tasks of development of the material life of society without their organising, mobilising,

⁸⁵ Ibid. p. 142.

⁸⁶ Ibid. p. 143.

and transforming action'.⁸⁷ He was attempting to demonstrate the state's endorsement of the view that social ideas and theories were vital to the evolution of society. Schlesinger argued that it was unjust of detractors to forget that the Soviet Union was fully occupied in changing the world. Any people or group that were bound to action could hardly deny the significance of the spiritual source of this action. Schlesinger may also have believed the overcoming of the theory of 'economic materialism' was proof that the Soviet Union respected the historical role of men and ideas; it replaced a mechanistic world view with a much more vibrant, organic Marxist analysis.

Schlesinger's *Spirit of Post-war Russia* clearly and eloquently described much of what Schlesinger appeared to believe about the position of Soviet historiography at that time. He expressed a deep approval for its theoretical source of Marxism, before asserting that significant problems had developed within historical research and teaching immediately before and after the 1917 revolution. Schlesinger's understanding of the distorted theory of 'economic materialism' and its concept of 'merchant capitalism' were elucidated. Their eventual overcoming under Stalin was briefly described and it was clear that Schlesinger believed this to be a major achievement in the Soviet intellectual field. He also attacked several common reproaches against Soviet historiography arguing that they were exaggerated or simply untrue; once more taking on the role of 'scholar advocate'. On the whole, Schlesinger gave a very positive, one-dimensional, description of recent developments within the study of history in the Soviet Union. He approved of these developments arguing that state textbooks were good examples of the quality of scholarship and teaching available in the Soviet Union. It seems clear that the book was intended to be of a popular character; in his preface, Schlesinger argued that he wished to describe Soviet ideology in 'plain language' without 'special jargon'.⁸⁸ This may explain the rather one-sided, appreciative tone Schlesinger gave to his analysis of Soviet historiography. However, it is also

⁸⁷ Ibid. p. 144. The quotation is taken from the notorious *Short Course* edited by the Central Committee, and Stalin in particular. The text can be viewed as the main repository of party historical orthodoxy from its publication in 1938 until after Stalin's death (*Short Course* pp. 116-117).

⁸⁸ Schlesinger, *Spirit of Post-war Russia*, p. 8.

good evidence to suggest the emphasis Schlesinger wished to convey to his readers. Without the caveats necessary in strictly academic writing, Schlesinger was able to wholeheartedly praise the historical field.

Writings from 1950-1952

The most significant work Schlesinger completed on the subject of Soviet historiography was a set of four articles published in 1950 and 1951 in the periodical *Soviet Studies*, the scholarly journal that he had co-founded and co-edited. The fact that Schlesinger wrote these major articles and published them in his own journal so quickly after its inception proves the deep interest that historiography held for him.⁸⁹ Taking the four articles together, the general impression Schlesinger gave of the Soviet historiography he outlined is positive. He described a great deal of active and critical debate amongst Soviet historians and charted many theoretical advances. However, at the same time, he was often deeply critical of individual works of scholarship and certain trends within historiography. Quite how these two polar attitudes are somehow to be married together is indicative of the general paradox Schlesinger displayed in his attitude to the subject. He gave a very favourable overall analysis of the study of history in the Soviet Union under Stalin and, whilst not ignoring the flaws apparent in its study, never seemed to incorporate them into his general analysis.

The articles used contemporary Russian historical publications to decipher currents and trends in Soviet historiography. There were obviously some limitations to this approach, since Schlesinger's analysis depended on the material that he was able to procure as an academic living in Britain. This would necessarily leave some gaps in his knowledge of the literature but this was a problem for all students of the Soviet Union in the West and Schlesinger could at least add his own personal experiences to any investigation. He acknowledged these limitations, proving that he was certainly conscious of them. For example, he was not able to follow the

⁸⁹ The first article was printed in the fourth publication of the journal.

debate on Russian historiography, occurring in Soviet academic publications of the late 1940s, to its conclusion. Schlesinger admitted: 'Unfortunately, we have no detailed knowledge of the persons and events; therefore the conditions of the next move are matters of speculation'.⁹⁰

Schlesinger was very clear about the aims of the *Soviet Studies* articles. He wrote: 'We are not here discussing Soviet history as specialists in that field; our interest is a sociological one, and we are dealing with the subject in so far as it reflects the life of Soviet society'.⁹¹ Being a student of many academic disciplines, history and sociology included, Schlesinger perhaps inevitably took a multi-disciplinary approach to the subject. This would allow for a Marxist perspective, studying one aspect of society in recognition of the determinist relationship it had to other elements. Such an approach may also have recognised the peculiarly political and social influence the study of history often had, and nowhere more so than in an overtly Marxist state.

He conducted his analysis of Soviet historiography by tracing the debates and changes in emphasis, as well as possible social, political or cultural reasons for these, in the academic journal *Voprosy Istorii*. Schlesinger justified his use of this particular journal by explaining that it predominantly concerned itself with questions of Marxist fundamentals; he wrote: 'Although this journal is not the principle vehicle for original research, it is the central organ of the Soviet historical profession and the main vehicle for generalizing the application of Marxist ideology to Soviet historiography'.⁹² A. L. Litvin has described the periodical as being 'the principle historical journal' at that time.⁹³ It does, therefore, appear to have been a good source for information on historical developments. The new journal, which had supplanted *Istorik Marksist* by special order of the Party's Central Committee, was to be serious, scholarly

⁹⁰ Schlesinger, 'Recent Soviet Historiography', 1, p. 306.

⁹¹ *Ibid.* p. 297.

⁹² *Ibid.* p. 293.

⁹³ A. Litvin, *Writing History in Twentieth-Century Russia* (London, Palgrave, 2001), trans Keep, J. L. p. 21. C. E. Black also described *Voprosy Istorii* as 'the principal historical journal since 1945' in 'History and Politics in the Soviet Union', p. 18.

and non-populist. According to Schlesinger, the editorial of the first issue of Volume 1945 promised to describe and influence the direction of historical research. It also announced the intention to offer a channel of communication with non-Soviet historians and to invite collaborative work with those foreign academics who shared the basic approach of Soviet historiography.⁹⁴ This never materialised. However, Schlesinger insisted its reviews of foreign publications were, '.... fair and in many cases not unfriendly'.⁹⁵

Despite the journal's professed aspirations, just four years later the second issue of 1949 announced a change in the editorial board and policy of *Voprosy Istorii*.⁹⁶ This was as a result of criticism of the historical profession by the Central Committee. Schlesinger argued that the journal had recognised,

.... it has for some time past ceased to be a fighting organ of Marxist-Leninist historiography, that it has not confronted Soviet historians with their topical tasks, that it refrained from creative discussion of the most important problems of historiography and did not conduct a consistent and decisive struggle against expressions of bourgeois ideology in Soviet historiography.⁹⁷

Schlesinger explained that the journal also admitted to having expressed a liberal attitude to distortions of ideology instead of unmasking falsifiers of history. Each issue had been a casual collection of articles that had failed to pose theoretical problems or elaborate questions of social thought or the history of Soviet society and the state. However, the new editorial board was committed to correcting these errors. Schlesinger used issues from the few

⁹⁴ Schlesinger, 'Recent Soviet Historiography', 1, p. 302. 'Zadachi zhurnal 'voprosy istorii'', *Voprosy Istorii*, 1, 1949, pp. 3-5.

⁹⁵ Schlesinger, 'Recent Soviet Historiography', 1, p. 303.

⁹⁶ 'O zadachakh' sovetskikh istorikov v bor'be s proiavleniiami burzhuaznoi ideologii', *Voprosy Istorii*, 2, 1949, pp. 3-13. The new editorial board was listed on the final page of the edition.

⁹⁷ Schlesinger, 'Recent Soviet Historiography', 1, p. 294.

years before and after this self-criticism in his examination of Soviet historiography. He made no comment on it or the change in editorial personnel and so one is unable to ascertain Schlesinger's opinion on the matter. This does appear to be a rather strange omission in his articles. He was basing his entire analysis on the contents of a periodical in the midst of major editorial changes as well as enduring harsh and public denigration. This would inevitably have affected the contents of the journal. Schlesinger could, perhaps, have made some distinction between articles and interpretations popular before and after this shift or described any alteration in tone as a result, but he did not.

The series of articles began with an insistence that debate existed within the historical field in the Soviet Union. Marxism-Leninism was the basis of all historical research but this in no way impeded debate or discussion. Schlesinger argued, '.... the general framework of interpretation is given to Soviet historians, but the Marxist-Leninist theory is open to diverse interpretations. Controversy about these interpretations is one aspect of historiographical activities'.⁹⁸ Contrary to what many Western commentators thought, a strict Marxist methodology did not limit intellectual freedom or debate.

Schlesinger gave a brief outline of the background to recent historiographical discussions, giving a short summary of pre-1917 liberal historians and outlining the work of Pokrovskii; '.... the most prominent figure in Soviet historiography during the first fifteen years after the October Revolution'.⁹⁹ He insisted Pokrovskii's theory of 'economic materialism' was inherently anti-Marxist since an attempt to interpret history in solely economic terms contradicted the Marxist conception of history as a succession of different forms of social life, determined by the nature of production in each. Schlesinger had written previously on what he perceived to be the problematic

⁹⁸ Ibid. p. 293.

⁹⁹ Ibid. p. 298.

nature of Pokrovskii's theory but he now added another criticism of it. Namely that:

Pokrovsky's concept of Merchant Capitalism had very definite implications for the interpretation of Russian history. This concept confirmed the tendency of pre-Marxist Russian historiographers, such as Klyuchevsky, to emphasize basic differences, distinguishing early Russian history, with its alleged absence of Feudalism, from the West.¹⁰⁰

Such a theory denied the importance of the Slav peasants and the existence of autonomous development in mediaeval society parallel to the West. Such an interpretation was now at odds with the state priority of emphasising independent, yet typical, Slavic development. Schlesinger argued that Soviet historians were conscious of the fact that their brand of Marxism demanded a certain universality of historical experience. The acceptance of separate yet analogous development to the West would, therefore, be necessary. Although Schlesinger did not say so, there was also perhaps an intentional appeal to national pride within the campaign against so-called Pokrovskiiian concepts. Schlesinger's assertion that Pokrovskii's theory denied the parallel nature of Russia's development was disingenuous since Pokrovskii consistently denied the particularity of the Russian experience. Schlesinger actually stated this in a later unpublished paper.¹⁰¹

Schlesinger described the overcoming of Pokrovskii's school within Soviet historiography. His historical concepts were attacked in the early 1930s mainly due to the immediate needs of education. As Schlesinger had argued in *The Spirit of Post-War Russia* and *Zeitschrift fur Sozialforschung*, Pokrovskii's scheme had reduced the facts of national history to illustrations of

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. p. 299

¹⁰¹ Schlesinger wrote that Pokrovskii had improved upon Kliuchevsky's work by stating that, '... after all, Russia's development was not so particular' (Schlesinger, *Social Institutions*, p. 169).

general trends and had created a tendency to merge the teaching of history with that of sociology.¹⁰² The party thus sought to replace his analysis and theory of history. According to Schlesinger: 'Pokrovsky's theories were emphatically rejected as 'empty sociological boxes''.¹⁰³ Pokrovskii continued to be the subject of criticism as late as 1942 for his, '...anti-histori[c]ism'; applying structures derived from present conditions to entirely different systems of the past and offering a negative perspective on national history.¹⁰⁴

There were various consequences to the overcoming of 'economic materialism', not least that those historians, such as E. V. Tarle, who had been eclipsed by Pokrovskii, could now come to the fore.¹⁰⁵ A younger generation of historians emerged and began to work on definite and distinct time periods. However, Schlesinger argued, '.... the defeat of Pokrovsky's school caused also a lot of loose, unsystematic and propagandist talk of a traditional, nationalist character'.¹⁰⁶ Soviet historians reacted against Pokrovskii's erroneously negative approach to the nation by describing it in too positive a manner. This chauvinist tendency increased during World War Two and was, perhaps, inevitable as the Soviet Union tried to unite and motivate its people against a foreign foe. Yet Schlesinger made no direct reference to possible reasons for this nationalist, blinkered approach to history.

According to Schlesinger, the 1948 volume of *Voprosy Istorii* contained reactions to A. Zhdanov's famous speech to a conference of philosophers on 24 June 1947. The speech formed part of a general restatement by the party

¹⁰² Schlesinger, *Spirit of Post-war Russia*, pp. 138-9 and Schlesinger, 'Neue sowjetrussische Literatur zur Sozialforschung', pp. 187...

¹⁰³ Schlesinger, 'Recent Soviet Historiography', 1, p. 300.

¹⁰⁴ For example in a report by E.V. Tarle at the Jubilee Session of the Academy of Sciences on the 25th Anniversary of the October Revolution published by the Academy in 1943. (Schlesinger, 'Recent Soviet Historiography', 1, p. 300.)

¹⁰⁵ Tarle's rehabilitation as a respected historian after the defeat of Pokrovskii's school is described in A.E. Erickson, 'E. V. Tarle: The Career of a Historian under the Soviet Regime', *American Slavic and East European Review*, 19, 2, April 1960, pp. 202-216. However, he was once again criticised for errors of interpretation during the 'anti-cosmopolitanism' campaign.

¹⁰⁶ Schlesinger, 'Recent Soviet Historiography', 1, p. 301.

of the functions of intellectual specialists in the Soviet Union.¹⁰⁷ The conference had been organised to lead criticism of G. G. Aleksandrov's book on the history of philosophy. Stalin argued that the book overestimated the importance of Western, in particular German, philosophy and failed to note the decisive break Marx's work had created in the evolution of philosophy. Criticism was thus essential.¹⁰⁸ Zhdanov took the lead in this second conference, the first having been deemed too cautious in its condemnation. He insisted on the need for greater appreciation of Russian achievements and the rejection of ideological ties to the West.¹⁰⁹ According to Schlesinger, the speech implied a shift in ideological interpretations, fitting theory to the changed circumstances of post-war Soviet life.¹¹⁰ However, he argued that Zhdanov's speech did not have the enormous impact upon history that was noticeable in other academic subjects, '.... there was no special break in the historical field because, as we have just seen, the basic concepts of post-war ideology were elaborated in the historical field rather earlier than elsewhere'.¹¹¹

Schlesinger went on to describe the ensuing ideological campaign commonly referred to as 'anti-cosmopolitanism'. In a paper in 1949 he had made clear the significance of this new focus in intellectual life. He referred to, '.... the general importance of the attacks on 'cosmopolitanism' as the general heading under which all the ideological discussions in the USSR have now been brought'.¹¹² In the *Soviet Studies* article, Schlesinger claimed that from

¹⁰⁷ Andrei Aleksandrovich Zhdanov (1896-1948) was seen in the West as Stalin's heir apparent. According to his biographer K. Boterbloem, 'Although more contractor than architect, Zhdanov was one of the great builders of the Soviet edifice' (K. Boterbloem, *The Life and Times of Andrei Zhdanov, 1896-1948* (McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal, 2004), p. 3). Zhdanov had many party roles including Soviet spokesman on the arts and in the years 1946-1948 his influence on Stalin was unsurpassed. The period was known as *Zhdanovshchina* as the party sought to consolidate its authority on every arena of Soviet intellectual life. See H. Rappaport, *Joseph Stalin, A Biographical Companion*, (ABC-CLIO, Santa Barbara, 1999), pp. 322.

¹⁰⁸ Boterbloem, *The Life and Times of Andrei Zhdanov*, pp. 291...

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. pp. 306...; Shtepa, *Russian Historians and Soviet State*, pp. 220...

¹¹⁰ For a contemporary British report on Zhdanov's speech see J. Miller; M. Miller 'Andrei Zhdanov's Speech to the Philosophers: An Essay in Interpretation', *Soviet Studies*, 1, 1, June 1949, pp. 40-51.

¹¹¹ Schlesinger, 'Recent Soviet Historiography', 1, p. 303.

¹¹² Schlesinger, 'Some Materials on the Recent Attacks against Cosmopolitanism', *Soviet Studies*, 1, 2, October 1949, pp.178-188 at p.178.

April onwards the 1949 volume of *Voprosy Istorii* had been dominated by the movement.¹¹³ The 'anti-cosmopolitanism' drive was concerned with many arenas of Soviet culture and had several themes. It seems generally to have been aimed at purging any perceived bourgeois or western elements from Soviet intellectual achievement or from historical interpretations. The supposed past accommodation of the bourgeois world had developed during the war, due to an inevitable reduction in antagonism towards the U.S and other Western states, whilst fighting as allies. Yet now, cosmopolitanism was synonymous with American imperialism and was the antithesis of Soviet patriotism. There, thus, began a relentless campaign, directed at all strata of society and every sphere of Soviet intellectual life, aimed at the removal of any vestiges of tolerance towards western scientific or philosophical values.¹¹⁴

As K Shtepa wrote:

Defined in the painful course of many 'discussions' and 'criticisms' in 1948 and 1949, cosmopolitanism came to mean the extolling or even the use of Western authorities – 'fawning' before the West and, conversely, the belittling of Russian historians and traditions. In accord with the dictates of foreign policy, the use of Western sources came to mean reliance on the tools of American imperialism.¹¹⁵

The distinctly anti-Semitic character of the campaign has been widely recognised. K Tomoff, for example, has written: 'Anticosmopolitanism has long been seen as thinly veiled anti-Semitism'.¹¹⁶ There was more to the crusade than simple anti-Semitism but few denied the undertones and

¹¹³ Schlesinger, 'Recent Soviet Historiography', 1, p. 303. For some examples of perceived 'cosmopolitanism' in various academic fields as well as introductory notes by Schlesinger see Schlesinger, 'Some Materials on the Recent Attacks Against Cosmopolitanism'.

¹¹⁴ Erickson, 'E. V. Tarle: The Career of a Historian under the Soviet Regime', pp. 209-210.

¹¹⁵ K. Shtepa, *Russian Historians and the Soviet State*, (New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 1962) p. 209.

¹¹⁶ K. Tomoff, 'Uzbek Music's Separate Path: Interpreting 'Anticosmopolitanism' in Stalinist Central Asia, 1949 – 52', *The Russian Review*, 63, April 2004, pp. 212 – 240 at p. 212.

implications.¹¹⁷ However, Schlesinger made no reference to this in his articles. This does seem a strange omission, particularly from someone of Jewish descent who had experienced anti-Semitism in his childhood. Schlesinger may have deliberately avoided mention of this sinister aspect of the campaign in his effort to emphasise the positive aspects of Soviet historiography. However, this is merely speculation. Schlesinger may also have been unaware of these implications; although, given his background, this is doubtful.¹¹⁸

Schlesinger felt the campaign was a reaction to the rapprochement of Marxism to its bourgeois-democratic ancestors, and in particular of Soviet Marxism to all broadly progressive tendencies in the national past; both trends had flourished in the war years. The campaign also reacted against attempts to diminish the differences between Soviet Marxism and the social forces in the West to which the wartime alliance had appealed. According to Schlesinger, in the historical field, the 'anti-cosmopolitanism' drive manifested itself in, '.... a polemic against the minimizing of differences with the West'.¹¹⁹ Another element to the campaign involved a critique of pre-Revolutionary historians. They were criticised in terms of their supposed embellishment of the Russian past. In order to enhance national prestige, Russian development had to be seen as independent of the West; although this did not go so far as to suggest that Russia evolved upon entirely separate lines. In addition, considerations of the specific achievements of the Soviet state and party made it necessary to rid previous times of embellishments; making developments since all the greater.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ See, for example, Shtepa, *Russian Historians and the Soviet State*, p. 209 and p. 229.

¹¹⁸ Schlesinger did refer to the anti-Semitic character of anti-cosmopolitanism in a post-1956 work. He wrote of the '... anti-Semitic overtones in the more popular aspects of the campaign against the 'cosmopolitans'' (Schlesinger, *History of the Communist Party of the USSR*, p. 349).

¹¹⁹ Schlesinger, 'Recent Soviet Historiography', Part 1, pp. 303-4.

¹²⁰ As an example of the 'anti-cosmopolitan' campaign, Schlesinger referred to the criticism of N. L. Rubinstein's work *Russian Historiography*, published in 1941. According to Schlesinger, the author was criticised for his Pokrovskii national nihilism and for a greater error - his not regarding the Bolshevik revolution, and more specifically the breaking of the Pokrovskii school's dominance in the study of history in 1934-1936, as decisive in the field of historiography (Schlesinger, 'Recent Soviet Historiography', 1, p. 306).

Schlesinger argued that 'anti-cosmopolitanism' was of a more severe character than previous ideological campaigns.¹²¹ For example, it resulted in the change in *Voprosy Istorii's* Editorial Board.¹²² However, it is arguable whether the loss of position or reputation of several scholars on the Editorial Board was a 'more severe' punishment than that which had occurred in previous ideological campaigns. The campaign against bourgeois historians at the beginning of the first five year plan resulted in elderly academics such as M. K. Lyubavsky and N. P. Likhachev being imprisoned and exiled. According J. Barber: 'On one calculation, 130 historians were arrested during 1930 and 1931'.¹²³

The 'anti-cosmopolitanism' campaign had a major impact upon Soviet historiography, affecting the selection, tone and content of articles in *Voprosy Istorii*. The drive resurrected theories of Russia's unique, independent development whilst insisting that the Bolshevik takeover of power represented a decisive break with the past. There was to be no accommodation of the western world into analyses of Russian development. This new emphasis was to be followed in all spheres of academic research, including the study of Russian history. This party-instituted drive had enormous repercussions for Soviet historians and yet Schlesinger only described it in brief terms and failed to note the intentionally anti-Semitic implications of the new approach.

In the paper, Schlesinger offered very little of his own opinion on the post-war historiographical developments he described. This appears to be a strange exclusion since in other writings on the subject Schlesinger was rarely reticent in offering his own judgements. There were implicit criticisms of the Soviet regime's historiographical formulae within the introductory article; several

¹²¹ Schlesinger, 'Recent Soviet Historiography', 1, p. 303.

¹²² Ibid. p. 308. The severity of the campaign was also evidenced in the necessity for Professor Kedrov, editor of the philosophical journal *Voprosi Filosofi*, to publicly recant his work for its alleged belittling of Soviet science and servility to international science (Schlesinger, 'Prof. Kedrov on Philosophy and National Self-Assertion' in *Soviet Studies*, 1, 1, June 1949, pp. 84-91).

¹²³ Barber, *Soviet Historians in Crisis*, p. 41.

footnotes seem to covertly disparage new trends or semi-official criticisms.¹²⁴ However, the positioning of this criticism was bound to reduce its impact and, in general, the paper was very positive about developments.

The second article began with a discussion of Soviet interpretations of ancient history, as reflected in the journal *Voprosy Istorii*. Non-Russian or Slav history appeared to have been primarily focused upon the Roman Empire. The decay of the ancient world had always been a major area of research in the West but now, Schlesinger asserted, '... the topicality of the issue is felt equally strongly by Soviet historians and publicists who are rejecting the theories of their Western colleagues and beginning to formulate their own'.¹²⁵ He argued that Engels, in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, written in 1884, produced the classic Marxist perspective on the subject.¹²⁶ Engels' aim was to explain why the modern proletariat could overthrow capitalist society and replace it with a non-exploitative one, whilst oppressed classes of the past only succeeded in replacing decaying societies with other exploitative forms. Schlesinger then referred to Stalin's speech to a meeting of *kolkhoz*-activists in February 1933, at the First All-Union Congress of Collective-Farm Shock Brigaders. According to Schlesinger, Stalin illustrated,

.... the superiority of the modern working class over all the earlier revolutionary classes by saying that the former could end exploitation for good, while the revolutions of the slaves which had overthrown slave-holding, and those of the serfs which had overthrown feudal society, had only been able to substitute one form of exploitation for another.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ For example, in one footnote, Schlesinger wrote that since current Soviet historiography insisted that serious work could only have emerged from a Marxist standpoint, '...every Soviet historian who describes the work of non-Marxists contemporary with Leninism as serious, thereby invites the reproach of having erroneously described them as at least very near to Marxism'. This would inevitably impede research and discussion. (Schlesinger, 'Recent Soviet Historiography', 1, p. 309, footnote 26).

¹²⁵ Schlesinger, 'Recent Soviet Historiography', 2, p. 3.

¹²⁶ Marx and Engels, *Werke*, 21, pp. 25-173.

¹²⁷ Schlesinger, 'Recent Soviet Historiography', 2, p. 4. Stalin insisted: 'The history of nations knows not a few revolutions. But those revolutions differ from the October Revolution in that

This appears to have been very near to the tone of Engels' statements, suggesting a continuation of Marxist interpretation into the Soviet era. However, Schlesinger argued that more recently there had been a renewed tendency to reflect backwards, if not the modern class struggle, at least contemporary Bolshevik concepts about the social dynamics of change. Whereas Engels was satisfied to show the necessity of a socio-economic interpretation of the fall of Rome, modern Soviet historians wished to stress the decisive role of popular movements in the transformation of social formations. In this new interpretation, external conquest became only a secondary phenomenon. Schlesinger asserted: 'It is obvious that this represents a methodological attempt to apply the Marxist theory concerning the mechanisms of social transformations to the national sections of the international process'.¹²⁸ He cited an article by M. Alpatov on the transition from the ancient to the mediaeval world as an example of it.¹²⁹

Soviet interpretations of Roman history increasingly differed from those in the West at this time. Schlesinger cited A. Dopsch as an example of Western historiography.¹³⁰ He argued that Dopsch's theory of the 'barbarians' merely 'taking over' the Roman estate, assumed that the estate must have already contained manifestations of semi-feudal forms. Early mediaeval society must, therefore, have featured a well-developed money economy in which prosperous farmers were producing for the market alongside the slave-holding manors. Such an interpretation differed substantially to Soviet historiography. As Schlesinger explained: 'This concept is sharply rejected by Soviet historians because it does not regard feudalism as a natural and self-holding economy and because it does not recognise the changes which took

all of them were one-sided revolutions. One form of exploitation of the working people was replaced by another form of exploitation, but exploitation itself remained' (Stalin, *Sochinennia*, 13, pp. 236-256 at. p. 239).

¹²⁸ Schlesinger, 'Recent Soviet Historiography', 2, p. 5, footnote 8

¹²⁹ See M. Alpatov, 'Novyi etap b razrobotke problemy perekhoda ot dvernego mira k srednim vekam', *Voprosy Istorii*, 7, 1949, pp. 28-39 (Schlesinger, 'Recent Soviet Historiography', 2, p. 4, footnote 3 and p. 5).

¹³⁰ Schlesinger was referring to Alfons Dopsch (1866-1937) the Austrian scholar and historian of the origins of medieval civilisation. A. Dopsch, *The Economic and Social Foundations of European Civilization* (New York, Howard Fertig, 1969).

place in the ancient world as revolutionary'.¹³¹ Dopsch's scheme ran counter to the classic Marxist explanation of Western history and periodisation.

Schlesinger argued that the articles in *Voprosy Istorii* concerned with ancient history represented a new, independent, stage in Soviet historiography. Soviet historians were developing their own theories on the Roman Empire and its fall and these theories diverged greatly from those in the West. Soviet theories evolved from the classic Marxist interpretation and enjoyed the full support of Stalin. He pointed that Alpatov's article contained statements to the effect that the slaves were incapable of defeating the Empire alone and thus required class allies.¹³² Schlesinger wrote: 'Such statements are clearly ideological; whether they can be helpful to Science, as earlier ideological constructions have occasionally been, depends upon their suitability as incentives to specialist research'.¹³³ The fact that allies were required to destroy the decaying empire may have been a reflection of the experiences of the Russian Revolution and the decisive role given to the peasantry, rather than the thoughtful analysis of evidence. It was to be seen whether this interpretation would prove fruitful for scholars. Schlesinger also pointed out that Alpatov was keen to prove the continuity of Marxist thought on the subject, traceable to Marx himself; this again would be for ideological purposes.¹³⁴ However, new advances in the historiography of this period had been made and Schlesinger described them in a positive light.

Schlesinger wrote briefly about the debates on the nature of the Petrine period to be found in *Voprosy Istorii*. The discussion was, in the main, on whether Petrine Russia had a generally feudal character, or if capitalist formations had already begun to take shape. According to Schlesinger, N. L. Rubinstein held the leadership of the dominant interpretation. He argued that

¹³¹ Schlesinger, 'Recent Soviet Historiography', 2, p. 6.

¹³² Alpatov, 'Novyi etap v razrabotke problemy perekhoda ot dvernego mira k srednim vekam', pp. 33-34.

¹³³ Schlesinger, 'Recent Soviet Historiography', 2, pp. 5-6.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.* p. 5, footnote 10.

the Petrine period was of a primarily feudal character.¹³⁵ Schlesinger wrote that he assumed, '.... a transformation from a predominantly feudal to a predominantly capitalist pattern during the 1740s and 1750s'.¹³⁶ This matter seems to have been one of quite open debate. In fact, Schlesinger referred to one article which contributed to the discussion despite its apparently obvious unorthodoxy.¹³⁷ Schlesinger argued that P. Lyashchenko enjoyed official recognition for his interpretation of the nature of Petrine Russia in his book *History of the National Economy of the Russia*; 'The Stalin prize awarded to Lyashchenko may be regarded as an approval at least of the principles of his approach'.¹³⁸ His interpretation was of a Petrine Russia featuring both feudal and capitalist characteristics. Yet a year later *Voprosy Istorii* contained a critical review of Lyashchenko's book written by I. Bak. It argued that the era had remained predominantly feudal.¹³⁹ Again, the publication of this review would seem to suggest that a certain freedom of debate existed within the historical field, in spite of the heated climate of the prevailing 'anti-cosmopolitanism' campaign. This open historiographical discussion appears to strengthen the case for some of Schlesinger's most positive comments about the historical field in the Soviet Union, such as those made in *The Spirit of Post-war Russia*, for example.¹⁴⁰ Yet one year later the contents and editing of *Voprosy Istorii* were heavily criticised and the majority of the editorial board were replaced. This may well have been due to the publishing of debates and heterodox articles such as those described above.

Lyashchenko had described the Petrine regime as representing both feudal nobility and the evolving bourgeoisie. According to the historian, the era witnessed a strengthening of serfdom at the same time as an increase in

¹³⁵ N. Rubinshtein, 'O manufakturnom periode russkoi promyshlennosti i skladyvanii kapitalisticheskogo uklada v Rossii XVIII veka', *Voprosy Istorii*, 12, 1947, pp. 74-79.

¹³⁶ 'Recent Soviet Historiography', 2, p. 18.

¹³⁷ Ibid. p. 19. The article in question was S. Strumilin, 'Ekonomicheskaiia priroda pervykh russkikh manufaktur', *Voprosy Istorii*, 6, 1948, pp. 60-70, and concerned the economic conditions of the first Russian manufactures.

¹³⁸ Schlesinger, 'Recent Soviet Historiography', 2, p. 19. P. I. Lyashchenko, *History of the National Economy of Russia*, (New York, The MacMillan Company, 1949) trans. L. M. Herman.

¹³⁹ I. Bak, 'Istoriia narodnogo khoziaistva SSSR', *Voprosy Istorii*, 6, 1948, pp. 82-89.

¹⁴⁰ Schlesinger, *Spirit of Post-war Russia*.

investment from large merchant capitalists and a great deal of development of the internal market. As Schlesinger wrote: 'Thus the elements of capitalism grew within a still predominantly feudal society'.¹⁴¹ Lyashchenko's interpretation of the Petrine era differs markedly from writings of Schlesinger's on the same subject. In the unpublished *The Problems of Commercial Capitalism in 17th and 18th Century Russia*, Schlesinger argued that there were no particularly significant developed capitalist features in seventeenth or eighteenth century Russia.¹⁴² Again, in *The Spirit of Post-war Russia*, he insisted: 'If, about 1900, there were any feudal or semi-feudal states in Europe, it was certainly Tsarist Russia'.¹⁴³ Despite having written upon the subject, Schlesinger failed to offer his own opinion on the debate. He did not comment on the fact that this 'semi-official interpretation' was at odds with one he had himself written, or that Lyashchenko's theory was very similar to that which Schlesinger had previously attributed to Pokrovskii in his repudiation of him.¹⁴⁴

Schlesinger did write: 'There can be little dispute amongst Marxist historians about the appearance of at least *some* elements of capitalism from the sixteenth century onward'.¹⁴⁵ Whilst it is true that in his earlier writings he had not argued that there were no capitalist elements in the Petrine era, this statement does appear to change the tone of Schlesinger's analysis regarding the extent of capitalist development from that in *The Problems of Commercial Capitalism in 17th and 18th Century Russia*. Perhaps Schlesinger had over-emphasised the feudal nature of Petrine Russia in earlier work in order to discredit Pokrovskii and the theory of merchant or commercial capitalism attributed to him. However, this would make those writings of Schlesinger's somewhat polemical. His interpretation would also coincide with state

¹⁴¹ Schlesinger, 'Recent Soviet Historiography', 2, p. 19. For example, Lyashchenko wrote: 'On the whole, then, serf labor played a prominent role in the industry of the eighteenth century. In contrast with western Europe, therefore, the first growth of Russian manufacturing industry came within the milieu of serfdom' (Lyashchenko, *History of the National Economy of Russia*, p. 287).

¹⁴² See above, pp. 227...

¹⁴³ Schlesinger, *Spirit of Post-war Russia*, p. 139

¹⁴⁴ Schlesinger, *The Problems of Commercial Capitalism*, p. 35...

¹⁴⁵ Schlesinger, 'Recent Soviet Historiography', 2, p. 21. Author's italics

endorsed historiographical objectives of the time, as well as now endorsing changed contemporary ones.

Schlesinger conjectured that the change in Soviet historiography on this issue had taken place because,

.... with the increasing 'anti-cosmopolitan' tendency to emphasize the autochthonous development of their own country, Soviet historians may be expected to devote more attention to Russia's share in the development of early capitalism than they did during the anti-Pokrovsky drive, when they were merely interested in demonstrating the still largely feudal character of the regime overthrown by the twentieth century revolutions.¹⁴⁶

This certainly appears to be a convincing explanation for the alteration of official historiography. However, it could be argued that Schlesinger's own interpretations followed the same pattern. Concurrent with the anti-Pokrovskii campaign in the USSR he was arguing for the, 'largely feudal character' of pre-revolutionary Russia. Yet now, contemporaneously with the 'anti-cosmopolitan' drive, he appeared to be, at least implicitly, accepting 'Russia's share in the development of early capitalism'.

The third of Schlesinger's series of articles on Soviet historiography concentrated upon the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and began with a discussion of the revolutions of 1848 and their connection to the nationalities problem. 1948 represented the centenary of the Communist Manifesto and the European revolutions and was, therefore, a great catalyst for the publication of research on these subjects. The article went in to some detail regarding Soviet historical work on Marx and Engels' attitude towards

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. p. 21.

nationalities. However, it is perhaps most interesting because it led Schlesinger to comment upon the controversy surrounding the publication, by the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute in 1948, of correspondence between Marx and certain Russian political figures.¹⁴⁷ His comments shed light not only on Soviet attitudes to the topic, but also on Schlesinger's.

In his famous letters to Vera Zasulich and the editor of *Otechestvennye Zapiski*, Marx appeared to question having created a theory that was 'both universal and supra-historical'.¹⁴⁸ He also implied that *Capital* might have been written from a Western perspective only. The editors responsible for the printing of these letters were heavily criticised for not having emphasised the fact that, within this particular context, the classics had deviated from Marxist orthodoxy as established by Lenin. Schlesinger cited a review by A. Khan'kovsky in *Voprosy Istorii* as an example of this criticism.¹⁴⁹ Khan'kovsky had censured the editors for failing to include the appropriate references to writings of Lenin and Stalin alongside Marx's letters.

This seems to be proof of a trend within the historical field at this time towards a lessening of reliance on the Marxist classics. It would certainly be necessary if Soviet historians were to prove the typical character of Russian development, something they were at pains to do in all fields of historical research, but which was severely contradicted by the latest revelations about Marx's Russian thinking. Schlesinger appeared sceptical of the approach Soviet historians had taken to the publication of Marx's letters, writing: 'In view of the great care taken by Marx in drafting the theoretical formulations in the letter to Vera Zasulich, the current method of explaining 'unorthodox' statements made by Marx by his practical interest in encouraging the most active group amongst the Russian revolutionaries can hardly be defended'.¹⁵⁰ Schlesinger also wrote that it was obvious, '... nobody has faced the

¹⁴⁷ Schlesinger, 'Recent Soviet Historiography', 3, p. 144.

¹⁴⁸ See above, pp. 145...

¹⁴⁹ A. Khan'kovskii, 'Perepiska K. Marksa I F. Engel'sa s russkimi politicheskimi deiateliami', *Voprosy Istorii*, 8, 1948, pp. 105-120.

¹⁵⁰ Schlesinger, 'Recent Soviet Historiography', 3, p. 144, footnote 15.

possibility that Marx's temporary doubts about the succession of definite stages of social development typical for all civilisations may have been something more than an expression of opportunism in his dealings with the Russian factions'.¹⁵¹ Schlesinger's approach was consistent with the attitude he took in all other writings on this subject. Although he did not devote a great deal of attention to the subject of Marx's attitude towards Russia he consistently mentioned it when dealing with other work. Schlesinger always insisted that Marx had not posited the Western framework as the only path to socialism. Russia could potentially avoid the capitalist stage of development and transfer directly to socialism if there was sufficient industrial support externally.¹⁵²

It seems clear Schlesinger disapproved of ignoring, or undermining, Marx's later writings about Russia simply because they did not easily fit into the orthodox successive stages theory of historical development.¹⁵³ He, therefore, made a significant criticism of Soviet historiography as reflected in the journal *Voprosy Istorii*. However, he did not devote a great deal of attention to the subject and much of his analysis was contained within a footnote, away from the main body of the text. This would inevitably reduce its impact upon readers. It is important to note that a party institute published Marx's correspondence despite the fact that their contents clearly differed from the orthodoxy of the time. This would seem to indicate that at least a certain openness of discussion was tolerated, even encouraged, on such a fundamental matter of Marxist principles.

Schlesinger expressed concern about the lack of publications on the immediate pre-history and history of the October revolution. There was more

¹⁵¹ Ibid. p. 144.

¹⁵² See, for example, Schlesinger, 'Marxist Theory and the New Programme of the Soviet Communist Party', p. 132; Schlesinger, 'The Preparatory Period of the Revolutionary Party', p. 451; Schlesinger, 'The Dispute and the Socialist Tradition', p. 177; Schlesinger, *Lectures*, 2, p. 9.

¹⁵³ For a very similar but more recent approach to the subject see T. Shanin, 'Late Marx: gods and craftsmen' in T. Shanin (ed.), *Late Marx and the Russian Road* (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1984), pp3-39.

work completed upon the first period of Soviet power. However, Schlesinger implied that much of it had an overtly political role to play in reflecting contemporary attitudes backwards or proving the orthodox heritage of certain policies; 'All these contributions emphasize those trends of the very earliest days of the Soviet republic which are predominant at the moment'.¹⁵⁴ What research was published in *Voprosy Istorii* at this time only illuminated small details of more complex questions or served to legitimise current policies and denigrate those people and ideas that were now out of favour. He argued that one paper, '.... describes the resistance against centralisation almost only in terms of the treachery of the factions which were later defeated'.¹⁵⁵ He suggested that the article was a polemical work with little intrinsically new to offer on the subject.

Political exigencies impacted upon the efficacy and quality of scholarship concerned with the Civil War period too. Historians were forced to explain the establishment of the Red Army without reference to Trotsky's decisive role.¹⁵⁶ Schlesinger argued that the requirements of state enforced historical axioms were, in these cases, anathema to the rigours of sound scholarship and coherent presentation.

The last section of Schlesinger's third article detailed historical work undertaken on the themes of imperialism and the German revolution. Schlesinger provided a condemnatory evaluation of new trends, interpretations and individual works by Soviet scholars in these fields. He reviewed most of the articles within the context of the ongoing campaign against 'objectivism'; 'The struggle against 'objectivism' forms the main theme

¹⁵⁴ Schlesinger, 'Recent Soviet Historiography', 3, p. 149.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid. p. 149. The paper in question was B. Morozov, 'Bor'ba partii bol'shevikov za ukreplenie sovetskogo gosudarstvennogo aparata', *Voprosy Istorii*, 11, 1949, pp. 13-36.

¹⁵⁶ For example, Schlesinger described an article by D. Osnobishin thus, '.... the factional interpretation of all operational problems of the civil war according to which all army leaders who disagreed with Stalin and Budenny are regarded as traitors, is driven to such lengths that the bewildered reader is left wondering how, if this were true, the triumph of the Red Army in the Civil War could be explained' (Schlesinger, 'Recent Soviet Historiography', 3, p. 149. D. Osnobishin, 'K istorii pervoi konnoi armii', *Voprosy Istorii*, 12, 1949, pp. 109-126).

of all the present Soviet historiographical discussions'.¹⁵⁷ This latest ideological crusade on the historical front can best be understood alongside or as part of the 'anti-cosmopolitanism' campaign. It was directed against those historians who were regarded as uncritically accepting bourgeois sources, both foreign and pre-Revolutionary Russian.¹⁵⁸ According to Schlesinger, the party felt that, '.... under the influence of the rapprochement to *bourgeois* liberal and progressive thought during the second world war', certain historians had blindly followed non-Communist sources and thus produced a liberal-western interpretation of events as opposed to the correct Communist critique.¹⁵⁹ This criticism assumed that utilising bourgeois sources would necessarily entail the assimilation of any interpretation or emphasis the foreign source may have had. However, Schlesinger argued that it was the task of historians to discuss facts rather than sociological attitudes to the subject; sources could, therefore, be used as a means to gather facts only. He was deeply critical of the campaign against perceived 'objectivism' and insisted that any omission in research caused by a one-dimensional theoretical approach would lead to a decline in scholarship. Schlesinger also suggested that the campaign would have a negative impact upon the perception of Soviet historical research abroad: 'To the Western historian, the Soviet drive against 'objectivism'... is bound to appear as a revival of Pokrovsky's demand for the reflection of topical politics into the past, if not as a demand for subjectivism in the worst sense of the word'.¹⁶⁰ This represented a damning indictment of current trends.

The fact that all discussions, conclusions and interpretations of the German revolution had to be adjusted to match those of state orthodoxy as enshrined within the *History of the CPSU(b)* or *Short Course*, was another feature of

¹⁵⁷ Schlesinger, 'Recent Soviet Historiography', 3, p. 157.

¹⁵⁸ In fact, K. Shtepa pointed out the difficulty historians faced in complying with the demands of both 'anti-cosmopolitanism' and the campaign against 'bourgeois objectivism'. He wrote: 'On the one hand, it was necessary for patriots to avoid being rebuked for fawning before Western scholarship and to take care of the merits of the old national scholars, their originality and uniqueness. On the other hand, there remained the danger of exposing themselves to accusations of bourgeois objectivism in the case of an insufficiently critical attitude toward these same scholars' (Shtepa, *Russian Historians and the Soviet State*, p. 225).

¹⁵⁹ Schlesinger, 'Recent Soviet Historiography', 3, p. 155.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.* p. 156-157.

Soviet scholarship which Schlesinger criticised. The orthodox interpretation of events in Germany in 1918/1919 found the revolution to have been a 'bourgeois' one and it seems that no other analysis could be tolerated.¹⁶¹ Schlesinger argued that this particular criticism was of 'a dogmatic character'.¹⁶² Once again dogmatism in matters of interpretation was hindering scholarly progress, although it is important to note that Schlesinger did not make this conclusion himself.

In general, Schlesinger provided a negative appraisal of Soviet historical research concerning the period from 1848 up to the Second World War. He objected to the vehement campaign against 'objectivism', a current which appeared to distort Soviet historical research. The campaign limited the use of sources and assumed that a historian always accepted the interpretation of that source, something Schlesinger felt to be methodologically erroneous. Progress had been achieved in the study of Marx and Engels' attitudes towards the nationalities question. However, he castigated Soviet analysis of Marx's writings upon the revolutionary potential of Russia in the nineteenth century. He argued that Marx's contribution to the debate about Russia could not be ignored simply because it did not concur with official interpretations. Schlesinger bemoaned the lack of research produced on the history of the October revolution in Russia and argued that the majority of publications concerning the first Soviet period were of a tangibly propagandist or polemical character, focusing on issues relevant to the current needs of the state. He also criticised the scarcity and quality of work produced on the rise of imperialism and fascism in Europe.

Schlesinger began his final article of the Soviet historiography series with a discussion of recent Soviet interpretations of post-1918 diplomatic history. He argued that the majority of work on the topic consisted of reviews of foreign documentary publications, many of which were viewed with hostility by the

¹⁶¹ '.... the revolution in Germany was not a Socialist but a bourgeois revolution'. *Short Course*, p. 231.

¹⁶² Schlesinger, 'Recent Soviet Historiography', 3, p. 159.

Soviet writers. These reviews formed part of the 'anti-cosmopolitanism' and 'objectivism' campaigns. They involved a somewhat polemical rejection of all perceived bourgeois sources and interpretations and also attempted to infer, if not simply state, that an anti-Soviet bias was common to all Western powers.¹⁶³ Reviewers were also keen to expose the 'objectivist' idealisation of bourgeois foreign policies, believed to be held by some erring Soviet historians. Schlesinger seemed to regard many of the reviews and articles unfavourably; reviews of documentary collections published about British and German inter-war foreign policies were evaluated with unnecessary hostility in the Soviet Union. He argued that they were attacked for supposed omissions in the collections rather than from the point of view of questioning authenticity. Often the documentary collections were also criticised for the inclusion of certain documents that the reviewers perceived to be in the interests of the publishing country. Schlesinger wrote: 'The Soviet reviewers seem to take it for granted that the editors of British publications look only for political effects in Germany'.¹⁶⁴

Only very recently had articles concerning US foreign policy in the pre-war and Second World War years began to emerge. Schlesinger argued that they involved a major re-assessment of the Roosevelt period and represented a serious shift in Soviet ideology. Once again this alteration of interpretation can be understood from the wider context of other post-1945 ideological developments, most importantly the 'anti-cosmopolitanism' campaign. There was now a tendency amongst Soviet historians to extend their very negative analysis of post-war USA back into the interwar period. According to Schlesinger, this new orthodox analysis was very significant since, '... many of the recent Soviet attempts to avoid encirclement were based upon appeals to the Roosevelt tradition against that now predominating in American

¹⁶³ For example, Schlesinger described an article by V. M. Turok on the Anglo-French negotiations for a western bloc in February-June 1925 thus; 'This latter article emphasizes the anti-Soviet trend in French no less than in British policies'. This paper was apparently of a typical character. (Schlesinger, 'Recent Soviet Historiography', 4, p. 267, footnote 8.) V. Turok, 'Ot plana Dauesa k garantiinomu paktu', *Voprosy Istorii*, 6, 1948, pp. 22-41.

¹⁶⁴ Schlesinger, 'Recent Soviet Historiography', 4, p. 267, footnote 8.

politics'.¹⁶⁵ Such an appeal would no longer be possible. This perhaps heralded a more militant stance in international affairs; instead of appealing to the US's more moderate past Soviet historians projected their current notion of its aggression backwards.¹⁶⁶ Schlesinger argued that a simple projection of current notions into the past was potentially erroneous; it was in fact a vulgarity of which he had accused Pokrovski.

Schlesinger's fourth article, completing his summary of Soviet historiography up to the post-war period, was in general very critical of the kind of research and reviews published in *Voprosy Istorii*. He argued that many of the reviews of foreign documentary publications were overtly polemical and often deeply unfair in their criticisms. He also pointed out that the exposition of events in China was occurring in the Soviet Union around a decade after the fact. He argued that, perhaps, this would persuade Soviet historians to view the state's dominant position, as regards the publication of research work, as having certain negative consequences.¹⁶⁷ He drew attention to the propagandist value of much of the work completed on the inter-war years and Allied policies before and during the Second World War. He did not, however, conclude that this was a major motivational factor in the evolution of interpretations.

Schlesinger's major articles on Soviet historiography offer a great deal of information on the subject. It seems clear that he was particularly knowledgeable and interested in this field and, therefore, had much of value to write. With limited access to information on the historical profession in the Soviet Union, a critical analysis of the contents of an important scholarly journal allowed Schlesinger to gain an impression of the kind of work being

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. p. 277.

¹⁶⁶ See for example, I. Kadomskii, 'Formirovanie anglo-amerikanskogo bloka posle kapituliatsii Frantsii (mai-dekabr' 1940 goda)', *Voprosy Istorii*, 2, 1950, pp. 40-65. Schlesinger argued that it represented 'an intelligent compilation of the sources' as well as an 'interpretation which goes beyond what we have already read in official Soviet publications'. However, he also argued that whilst the Soviet government may have viewed the Roosevelt period through the perspective of their own era, the government of the 1930s was unlikely to have judged events on what US policy might be by the 1950s (.Schlesinger, 'Recent Soviet Historiography', 4, p. 274-5).

¹⁶⁷ Schlesinger, 'Recent Soviet Historiography', 4, p. 272.

published there. He summarised historiographical trends of the recent Soviet past, elaborated the broad shifts in interpretation and analysis that had occurred since the Second World War and described the ideological campaigns which formed the wider context for these changes. However, the information that he provided on this latter theme was limited. He wrote comparatively little on the course and impact of the major post-war ideological campaign of 'anti-cosmopolitanism', despite asserting its significance and intensity. It was left to the reader to link his analysis and description of individual works of scholarship to the broader ideological environment of the Soviet Union. Schlesinger rarely explained any relationship between the articles he described and the general historical front.

In general, it seems that Schlesinger wished to convey a positive analysis of Soviet historiography in the articles. He began by insisting on the freedom of debate which existed in the historical field, within the consensual Marxist-Leninist framework. He demonstrated the evolution of Soviet historiography, often asserting the progress achieved by successive interpretations in overcoming the limitations of their predecessors. Schlesinger also praised works of individual scholarship. It seems clear that he regarded work carried out on earlier historical periods as of a generally higher quality than Soviet research on more modern issues. He did draw attention to the political efficacy and even necessity of certain historical interpretations but did not write any conclusions on how this may have affected freedom of discussion or scholarly credibility. He even pointed to individual cases of what appeared to be total censorship, wholly polemical purges and huge state interference in the practice of history in the Soviet Union; all without comment. At times the articles seemed entirely narrative, offering no real analysis or judgement upon the matters described.

Schlesinger was condemnatory of individual works of scholarship, reviews and interpretations. Parts three and four contained almost entirely critical observations of Soviet work. However, he did not seem to incorporate these

critiques into what little overall, and almost entirely positive, summation he had. For example, in the first of the series of articles, Schlesinger argued that reviews of foreign publications were conducted with fairness and often friendliness in *Voprosy Istorii*.¹⁶⁸ However, when describing actual reviews, Schlesinger clearly gave the impression that foreign works were, on the whole, viewed with much hostility. Schlesinger had not incorporated his descriptions of the actual character of the reviews into his general analysis. In fact, in this instance, his general and specific comments were in direct contradiction to each other. Schlesinger's criticisms of Soviet historiography were often introduced only in the footnotes of his articles; this would necessarily lessen their impact on a reader.¹⁶⁹

There was no general conclusion to the series of articles and there appears to have been a reluctance on Schlesinger's part to make one. His stated aim was sociological, to observe how the study of history reflected the life of Soviet society. Yet Schlesinger did not fulfil this aim. His articles lacked any real analysis linking historiographical developments to events in other sections of society. To have ended the series of articles with an overall assessment or conclusion is the usual method of bringing a discussion to a close and Schlesinger did so in the vast majority of his other writings. There could have been various reasons for this omission. One possibility is that Schlesinger did not wish to make the necessarily more pessimistic characterisation of the study of history in the Soviet Union that followed from his many criticisms. Such a motive would support the thesis that Schlesinger wished to convey a good impression of Soviet historical work.

Schlesinger's study of historiography was continued in a publication appearing just a few years after his major series of articles.¹⁷⁰ 'Recent

¹⁶⁸ Schlesinger, 'Recent Soviet Historiography', 1, p. 303.

¹⁶⁹ See, for example, Schlesinger, 'Recent Soviet Historiography', 1, p. 309, footnote 26.

¹⁷⁰ One other article touching upon Soviet history was published before this. However, it was merely a small introduction followed by a translation of reports by a Soviet school inspector. Schlesinger, 'On the Results of School Examinations in Modern History', *Soviet Studies*, 2, 4, April 1951, pp. 422-432.

Discussions on the Periodization of History' was published in the journal *Soviet Studies* in 1952.¹⁷¹ It was entirely concerned with developments within Soviet historiography and, as the title suggests, focused on the continuing debate surrounding the correct periodisation of history.¹⁷² It can be considered a continuation of the previous set of articles Schlesinger produced on the topic. It had the same tone and general analysis and utilised the same sources: Soviet scholarly journals such as *Voprosy Istorii* and *Bolshevik*. Similarly, this article appeared to defend the study and research of history within the Soviet Union from arguments that nothing of worth was produced.

The article was one of Schlesinger's most optimistic writings on the subject, alongside *The Spirit of Post-War Russia*, written five years earlier. Schlesinger insisted that scholarly work of meritorious value was undertaken within the Soviet Union and also argued that major controversies on issues of Marxist fundamentals were frequent at the time of his writing. However, it is important to note that he did not deny there were problematic and harmful aspects to historical research, factors that inevitably impacted on the quality of scholarly output and teaching.

Schlesinger began the article by admitting the 'politico-propagandist' character of much of Soviet historiographical literature'.¹⁷³ Sometimes re-evaluations of historical events occurred according to the political needs of the state. Schlesinger wrote: 'In such instances Soviet academic institutions work as political agency pure and simple: on the basis only of some inspired articles in *Pravda* they reject theories hitherto accepted, annul academic degrees awarded years before, and so forth'. However, Schlesinger argued

¹⁷¹ Schlesinger, 'Recent Discussions on the Periodization of History', *Soviet Studies*, 4, 2, October 1952, pp. 152-169.

¹⁷² For more information on the periodisation debates see Shtepa, *Russian Historians and the Soviet State*, chapter 10 and L. Yaresh, 'The Problem of Periodization' in C. Black (ed.) *Rewriting Russian History* (Vintage Books, New York, 1962), pp. 34-77. The latter paper, although much more critical of the atmosphere in which Soviet historians worked than Schlesinger, did agree that good quality work was produced during the periodisation discussions. Yaresh wrote: 'On the whole the discussion of 1946-1954 was extremely interesting, and was conducted on a considerably higher plan than the discussion of 1929-34' (p. 76).

¹⁷³ Schlesinger, 'Recent Discussions on the Periodization of History', p. 152.

that, in such cases, ‘.... the victims themselves are not the more scholarly writers (as Western critics of the USSR tend, after their fall, to depict them), but are themselves political propagandists who quite enjoyed the game as long as they were on the winning side.’¹⁷⁴ Schlesinger suggested there were two sides to the historical field in the Soviet Union, with only one of these, the less ‘scholarly’, being involved in the propagandist type of research and publication. The suggestion that some historians were playing a game and were actively involved in the developing state control of academia has been substantiated by modern scholars. A. Litvin has argued that some historians were active in their support of Stalin’s 1931 letter to *Proletarskaia Revoliutsiia*. He wrote: ‘The archives show that Stalin’s letter was discussed by historians before it appeared, and that members of the profession actually backed the new line; they were more than just its victims’.¹⁷⁵ S. Fitzpatrick has referred to the advantages the cultural intelligentsia could gain from their position in Stalin’s Russia, so there were certainly prizes for those who were successful in the game.¹⁷⁶

Despite these overtly political activities, Schlesinger insisted real arguments took place within Soviet historiography. Some of these debates involved matters of general principle, hugely significant to the ideology of a state with a Marxist framework. Schlesinger went further, ‘.... there are plenty of theoretical discussions amongst Soviet historians and there are very few theoretical tenets which – in fact, though not in form – are uncontested’.¹⁷⁷ He used as an example Stalin’s statement during the linguistics discussion of May to July 1950 in which he asserted that there were spheres of mental activity, in this case language, which did not belong to the superstructure.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁴ Ibid. p. 152.

¹⁷⁵ Litvin, *Writing History in Twentieth-Century Russia*, p. 13.

¹⁷⁶ S. Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front*, p. 246.

¹⁷⁷ Schlesinger, ‘Recent Discussions on the Periodization of History’, p. 153.

¹⁷⁸ In reply to a group of Soviet students, in July 1950 Stalin wrote in *Pravda*: ‘In this respect language radically differs from the superstructure. Language is not a product of one or another base, old or new, within the given society, but of the whole course of the history of the society and of the history of the bases for many centuries. It was created not by some one class, but by the entire society, by all the classes of the society, by the efforts of hundreds of generations. It was created for the satisfaction of the needs not of one particular class, but of the entire society, of all the classes of the society. Precisely for this reason it was created as a

These spheres were products of the whole of society not the rule of one class.¹⁷⁹ This statement was readily taken up by academics in a number of fields and provoked widespread debate and discussion on what other elements of life might be products of the whole of society.

Schlesinger argued that discussion and disagreement were necessary in a Marxist state in order to further science; it was only through debate that Soviet state tenets were elaborated. He wrote:

In a society which has an organizational repository of orthodoxy, any individual dispute may come to an end by formal decision but, as intellectual life in a period of social change will never come to a standstill, no conclusion of any individual dispute can prevent, or is even intended to prevent, the re-opening of the basic argument in new forms. In fact, such arguments provide the actual source from which 'authoritative' statements are fed, to provide a fertile soil for new argument about their interpretation.¹⁸⁰

single language for the society, common to all members of that society, as the common language of the whole people. Hence the functional role of language, as a means of intercourse between people, consists not in serving one class to the detriment of other classes, but in equally serving the entire society, all the classes of society. This in fact explains why a language may equally serve both the old, moribund system and the new, rising system; both the old base and the new base; both the exploiters and the exploited.' (Stalin, *Marxism and Problems of Linguistics*, (Hawaii, University Press of the Pacific Honolulu, 2003) pp. 5-6). For a contemporary account of the linguistics debate and Stalin's statements upon it see J. Ellis and R.W. Davies, 'The Crisis in Soviet Linguistics', especially p241.... Schlesinger actually cited this article so it would seem to be a source of information he used. See also, K. Mehnert, *Stalin Versus Marx*, pp. 51... Mehnert saw this change in attitude towards language as part of the wider assertion of Russian nationalism and celebration of Russian tradition.

¹⁷⁹ In a later unpublished work Schlesinger outlined exactly what he understood by Stalin's speech, '...he defined superstructures as institutions created by ruling classes for the purpose of the preservation of the existing social order: it followed that language, being created by the whole of society and serving all classes of society, can be no superstructure. Nor is it a means of production, as it serves purposes more broader than the production process. It follows that at least this social institution falls outside the traditional Marxist framework: it is created not by the peculiar classes of society, but by society as a whole' (Schlesinger, *Social Institutions*, p. 212).

¹⁸⁰ Schlesinger, 'Recent Discussions on the Periodization of History', p. 154.

Disputes were the framework from which progressive theoretical consensuses were reached; in an ever-changing society, dialectical development of ideas and theories were inevitable and necessary. Schlesinger seemed to suggest that although the Party was the medium through which theoretical authority was bestowed it was, perhaps, merely a channel rather than the absolute judge of that authority. The state could act as arbiter precisely because critical debate raged in the Soviet Union. He cited a statement of Stalin's in order to substantiate his claim of the necessity of debate, '.... no science can develop and succeed without struggle of opinions and freedom of criticism'.¹⁸¹ That Stalin would argue freedom of debate was essential to intellectual and theoretical progress perhaps suggests that it existed. However, it does not necessarily prove that it was something he believed or that it was a state of affairs in existence. There is a great deal of evidence to suggest that Stalin wished to stifle debate. His proclamation that certain interpretations of Bolshevik theory were 'axiomatic' is, perhaps, only the most infamous example.¹⁸² Yet Schlesinger wished to prove that intellectual disputes provided the ingredients for state orthodoxy. This was the purpose of the entire article. He explicitly stated that his analysis of the periodisation debate was useful in order to illustrate that point.¹⁸³ Schlesinger's desire to portray the study of history in the Soviet Union as one involving freedom of debate over fundamental principles seems clear.

According to Schlesinger the discussion on periodisation began with two articles in the journal *Voprosy Istorii* in 1949 and proceeded for more than a year without reaching any definite conclusions.¹⁸⁴ Over 30 discussion articles were received by the publication in response to the initial papers, with 21 being published. Debates on the subject also took place at various academic institutions.

¹⁸¹ Ibid. p. 155. Stalin wrote, in his 1950 article in *Pravda*, '...no science can develop and flourish without a battle of opinions, without freedom of criticism.' (Stalin, *Marxism and Problems of Linguistics*, p. 29).

¹⁸² See chapter 1, p. 43.

¹⁸³ Schlesinger, 'Recent Discussions on the Periodization of History', p. 154.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid. p. 154. The two articles were K. Bazilevich, 'Opyt periodizatsii SSSR feodal'nogo nerioda', *Voprosy Istorii*, 11, 1949, pp. 65-90 and N. Druzhinin, 'O periodizatsii istorii kapitalisticheskikh otnoshenii v Rossii', *Voproy Istorii*, 11, 1949, pp. 90-106.

Schlesinger began his discussion of the debate by, once again, suggesting reasons for Pokrovskii's fall from pre-eminence within Soviet historiography. He argued that there were three main points that contributed to the overthrow of the 'school'. Firstly,

.... it interpreted both Russian and Western mediaeval history in terms of 'merchant capitalism', i.e. a social formation which does not differ fundamentally from the formation against which modern socialist revolutions are directed; this precluded an interpretation of earlier Russian history as a succession of non-capitalist periods.¹⁸⁵

Schlesinger argued that such an analysis had now been definitely rejected in favour of an interpretation of the Russian past in terms of feudalism. Secondly, Pokrovskii had demanded partisanship in historiography. Schlesinger did not object to this in principle. He wrote: 'Interpretation of the past in terms of modern political issues is not alien even to contemporary Soviet historiography'.¹⁸⁶ His problem with Pokrovskii's particular partisanship was that an interpretation of the Russian past in terms of 'merchant capitalism' led to attempts to find manifestations of the proletarian class struggle throughout Russia's history. He disputed the basis for Pokrovskii's partisanship rather than the phenomenon itself. Finally, Schlesinger rejected Pokrovskii's so-called 'a-historicism', the utilising of a general description of socio-economic systems, as opposed to the evaluation of individual historical events, personalities and ideas. This last point remained unresolved and was, in essence, the basis of the periodisation debate; how were historians to relate individual events to more general systems? As Schlesinger wrote, it was '.... the problem of defining, in the specific Marxist terms, the relationships which exist between the individual events described by the historiography and the general laws which are said to dominate them'.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵ Schlesinger, 'Recent Discussions on the Periodization of History', p. 156.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid. p. 156.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid. p. 156.

Pokrovskii was incorrect to focus exclusively on general laws, but there had, as yet, been no solution of how to fit the individual events and the general laws together.

Three interpretations or resolutions to this methodological problem had emerged from the ensuing periodisation discussion. The first Schlesinger described as the economic interpretation; 'According to the traditional concepts of nineteenth-century Marxism ... the socio-economic formations provide the framework in which the individual events proceed according to the specific laws governing each formation'.¹⁸⁸ The fall of the Pokrovskii 'school' meant that the framework used to explain Russia's past was now to be a feudal one. Schlesinger was critical of this economic interpretation. However, despite his criticism, he pointed out that Soviet historians could not be found guilty of the vulgar economic materialism of the past: 'No modern Soviet author.... would attempt a periodization based upon economic events only'.¹⁸⁹ Soviet historians now attempted to include all political events in their analysis. One is left to draw the conclusion that this surely represented an advance on Pokrovskii's days.

The second approach Schlesinger labelled the 'political interpretation', and involved the assertion of the primacy of politics over economics. He described some instances of individual political approaches but argued that only I. Smirnov elaborated this viewpoint with any consistency.¹⁹⁰ Smirnov suggested that a sound scheme of periodisation already existed in the basic documents of the anti-Pokrovskii struggle, such as Shestakov's textbook and the *Short Course*. According to Smirnov, the development of productive relations was the cornerstone of Marxist analysis, but this evolution proceeded only very gradually and so it was necessary to base periodisation, the division of history into specific and successive stages, on definite events within this development. These important events were produced by political

¹⁸⁸ Ibid. p. 156.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid. pp. 157-8.

¹⁹⁰ I. Smirnov, 'Obshchie voprosy periodizatsii istorii SSSR', *Voprosy Istorii*, 12, 1950, pp. 77-99.

history and, thus, historical stages could best be divined with reference to politics. Schlesinger pointed out that Smirnov had a marked bias towards those political groupings that proved successful within each historical stage: 'He recognizes as 'real, and all-national' class struggles only those which lead to a struggle of political power'.¹⁹¹ Schlesinger made no comment as to the efficacy of this approach or to the patriotic, overly positive and fatalistic interpretation such a method may provoke.

When writing about Smirnov, Schlesinger described the nature of Shestakov's state-approved school textbook. This exposed his attitude towards official Soviet historiography, something the book certainly represented for a period. He wrote: 'It is patriotic, without being nationalist, and it is in sympathy with oppressed classes and peoples throughout the course of Russian history. It also supplies full and sympathetic information according to the standards of an elementary school textbook on the general conditions of life and of cultural developments'.¹⁹² This could certainly be regarded as praise for the book and corresponds to his earlier judgement in *Zeitschrift fur Sozialforschung*.¹⁹³ In a footnote to the discussion, Schlesinger drew his readers' attention to certain constraints of Soviet scholarship. He argued that the textbook was much more sympathetic towards the victims of Tsarist expansion or those who suffered during the realisation of Peter I's achievements than was possible in a modern Soviet publication.¹⁹⁴ This could again be regarded as praise for Shestakov's book, as well as criticism for more modern works. Yet Schlesinger provided no unequivocal comment on the subject and, as noted, this information was only given within a footnote.

According to Schlesinger's paper the first two methods of periodisation only ever enjoyed limited success: 'From the very start, the bulk of opinion rallied round the principle of periodization according to the development of class

¹⁹¹ Schlesinger, 'Recent Discussions on the Periodization of History', p. 160.

¹⁹² Ibid. p. 159.

¹⁹³ Schlesinger, 'Neue sowjetrussische Literatur zur Sozialforschung', pp. 194-198.

¹⁹⁴ Schlesinger, 'Recent Discussions on the Periodization of History', p. 159, footnote 14.

struggles'.¹⁹⁵ N. Druzhinin had originally espoused this third interpretation, arguing that class struggles were the key to understanding economic developments, as well as changes to the political or ideological superstructures. Periodisation according to class struggle did not necessarily follow a pattern of successful class actions or social movements, since this would differ little from a scheme based on significant political events. As most class struggles were defeated it would make little sense to align periodisation to the practical outcomes of these movements. Druzhinin argued that the class struggle always had historical significance and placed the beginnings of capitalism at the emerging social movements of the 1760s.

Following the publication of the discussion articles, the editors of *Voprosy Istorii* noted their own conclusions. Schlesinger described their stance as 'eclectic'. It could also be seen as a compromise or synthesis of the three main interpretations.¹⁹⁶ Schlesinger argued that, even though the editors fully rejected Smirnov's 'political' interpretation, this meant little more than their refusal to accept any one general or universal standard of periodisation. There was no real conclusion to the debate, but equally, no definitive orthodoxy had henceforth to be adhered to. Discussions on the matter could and should continue. Schlesinger wrote: 'The results achieved by the discussion in *Voprosy Istorii* were recommended as a starting point for further argument, on the basis of further research, within the individual institutions'.¹⁹⁷ Such a proposition was presumably intended to promote debate and discussion.

Schlesinger seemed keen to show the fruitfulness of the debate as well as the open manner in which new a consensus was to be achieved. He described the evolution of consensual historical interpretations. The *Voprosy Istorii* editors argued that, whilst the line taken during the anti-Pokrovskii struggle represented a major advancement within Soviet historiographical scholarship,

¹⁹⁵ Ibid. p. 160.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid. p. 162. 'Ob itogakh o periodizatsii istorii SSSR', *Voprosy Istorii*, 2, 1951, pp. 53-60 esp. pp. 55-56.

¹⁹⁷ Schlesinger, 'Recent Discussions on the Periodization of History', p. 155.

this consensus had now also been superseded. Schlesinger wrote, '.... not a single supporter of the periodization still accepted in Soviet textbooks was found in the course of this last discussion'.¹⁹⁸ Later in the paper, Schlesinger declared, '.... the editors noted that the only point on which all the participants in the discussion were agreed was the rejection of 1800 (footnote 25: Which, until now, was the accepted dividing point in textbooks) as the year which marked an important change in Russian life'.¹⁹⁹ Whilst there was no real agreement on what the new interpretation should be, there was a general accord that previously accepted notions were no longer of scholarly or pedagogical value. Schlesinger gave the impression that there was friendly and open agreement that more research and discussion was necessary before the subject of periodisation could be satisfactorily resolved. This discussion would, therefore, serve as an example of critical debate on a matter of fundamentals; an impression Schlesinger almost certainly intended to convey.

Schlesinger concluded his paper in a somewhat restrained manner, insisting: 'No premature conclusions should be drawn from the comparative freedom, in which a discussion about rather fundamental issues of the Marxist interpretation of history was carried on'.²⁰⁰ The insinuation that the freedom enjoyed by historians during this particular discussion may only have been temporary seemed to contradict his earlier more positive statements. Use of the phrase 'comparative freedom' also indicated that the prevailing intellectual atmosphere was not one that non-Soviet historians would describe as free. Again, such a statement would appear to oppose earlier ones in which Schlesinger stated that there were very few matters of principle which were not open to dispute.²⁰¹ He did draw attention to what he described as the 'achievements' of the anti-Pokrovskiiian and anti-'cosmopolitanism' campaigns, and reiterated the point that the orthodoxy to which all historians were obliged to comply was established through the process of debate.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid. p. 155.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid. p. 168.

²⁰⁰ Ibid. p. 168.

²⁰¹ Ibid. p. 153.

However, in general, there did appear to be a significant anomaly between the apparent praise which Schlesinger expressed in the introduction to his paper and the somewhat muted, even pessimistic, conclusions he offered. This could be seen as further proof that Schlesinger consciously wished to convey a more positive portrayal of Soviet historiography than his own empirical study of it warranted. One vital caveat to that thesis is the fact that, at no point, did Schlesinger ever deny the political exigencies and orthodox historical interpretations it was necessary for all scholars to conform to.

There are several themes that run throughout Schlesinger's writings on historiography up to Stalin's death. Firstly, he gave a positive portrayal of events in the historical sphere. He insisted on the freedom of debate that existed, the quality of scholarship produced and the integrity of the historical profession in general. He also consistently argued that the defeat of the Pokrovskii school in this era was an enormously progressive step. Schlesinger was an advocate of Soviet historiography in this period – he defended it against what he believed was unfair and excessive criticism and he seemed to want to inform the West of the valuable work that was being produced. Schlesinger's views seemed to coalesce with the Soviet textbooks of the era, something that was especially apparent in relation to attitudes towards Pokrovskii. However, another major theme was Schlesinger's negative appraisal of individual works of scholarship. He recognised the censorship apparent in many, the erroneous impact of political expediency in others and pointed towards the political effects of party campaigns such as anti-objectivism or anti-cosmopolitanism. This created a tension between his individual critiques and his overall conclusions.

Finally, it is necessary to note how at odds with other writers Schlesinger was in his praise of Soviet historiography at this time, both in terms of his contemporaries and later scholars. A. Mazour wrote of:

The stifling intellectual climate of this period, in which revising history to suit political needs became standard practice... Everyone had to be a propagandist first and a historian second. A travesty of truth came to pass for history. To many historians research lost validity or importance, the main purpose being to prove a chosen conclusion even in the face of incontrovertible evidence.²⁰²

Writing much later, in 1989, R. Medvedev drew similar conclusions about the character of Soviet scholarship under Stalin. He wrote:

There was no room for free discussion and the contest of various opinions. Instead, dogmatism, rote learning (*nachetnichestvo*), stagnation, and inertia prevailed. The truth was not what corresponded to facts, to empirical research, but what Comrade Stalin had declared to be true.... Inconvenient facts were juggled, distorted, or simply ignored.²⁰³

Schlesinger's views and his insistence on positive aspects of Soviet historiography may be a welcome counterbalance to such total condemnation of a whole profession over a reasonably lengthy time period. Yet the contrast in emphasis remains stark and requires explanation.

²⁰² Mazour, *The Writing of History in the Soviet Union*, p. 21.

²⁰³ Medvedev, *Let History Judge*, p. 809.

Chapter Seven: Schlesinger's Writings on History after Stalin's Death

Stalin's death on 5 March 1953 brought about seismic changes in Soviet government and society. Nikita Khrushchev was eventually to seize the reins of power after several years of collective leadership by Stalin's lieutenants, and a gradual transformation of Soviet life ensued, with denunciations of the 'cult of personality' Stalin had propagated.¹ The impact of these changes was felt in the historical field as keenly as elsewhere, especially after the Twentieth Party Congress of 1956. As historian J. Keep wrote:

In Soviet historiography, as in other fields of Soviet intellectual life, the year 1956 was something of a turning-point. The twentieth congress of the CPSU called upon Soviet historians, and particularly upon those concerned with the history of the party itself, to bring their studies 'closer to life', and to intensify their efforts to promote 'the building of communism'. The campaign was intimately linked with what was euphemistically called 'overcoming the consequences of the cult of the individual'.²

There followed a period of examination and critical self-reflection by Soviet historians as they slowly moved away from Stalinist dogma. Stalin's reputation was dealt one final blow in October 1961, at the Twenty-Second Congress, when his remains were moved from Lenin's tomb to the Kremlin wall. His control over Soviet intellectual life was firmly ended and there followed

¹ For Schlesinger's description of the events following Stalin's death see *History of the Communist Party of the USSR*, chapter VIII.

² J. Keep, 'Introduction' in J. Keep (ed.) *Contemporary History in the Soviet Mirror* (George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1964) pp. 9-18 at p. 10.

another party appeal for historians to remove erroneous Stalinist distortions from their work.³

Alongside the dramatic changes to the official historical orthodoxy, there was a significant alteration in the tone of Schlesinger's writing on the subject. After 1953, and in particular after the congress in 1956, Schlesinger became far more condemnatory and critical of Soviet historiography under Stalin. He expressed optimism for the future of the historical sciences but argued that much of the previous work was poor. He also condemned the previous orthodoxy as distorting and politically motivated. Clearly this was a dramatic change from his early writing in which he emphasised the positive aspects of Soviet historiography. His attitude was now more in keeping with his personal memoir reflections of life as an intellectual in Stalin's Russia.

This chapter will examine Schlesinger's post-1953 writing in detail, to determine in what ways and to what extent Schlesinger's attitude changed. It will then turn to a discussion of possible reasons for this transformation: were the events of 1956 revelatory to Schlesinger, leading to a reassessment of his earlier opinion; was he now switching to the new party orthodoxy; had he been defending the Soviet Union against the perceived 'cold war' bias of Western commentators but now felt able to express his discomfort with Stalin's leadership? Whatever his motives, recognition of this change in attitude must inevitably impact upon any judgement or critical assessment of Schlesinger as a scholar. It is argued that an assessment of Schlesinger as the 'scholar advocate' represents the most fruitful appreciation of his life and work in regard to Soviet historiography.

Writings from 1953

Schlesinger's attitude to Soviet historiography changed following Stalin's death and the ensuing 'de-Stalinisation'. However, there is one piece of writing that can be seen to span the two stages of his work. His unpublished

³ J. Keep, 'Introduction'. For further information on post-Stalin Soviet historiography see N. Heer, *Politics and History in the Soviet Union*, (The MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1971).

Social Institutions seems to bridge the gap between the praise and defence of Soviet historical studies apparent in his early work and his later attitude of retrospective condemnation. The incomplete manuscript was a corrected draft that seems to have been intended for eventual publication. It was divided into two parts: the first entitled 'The Family and Education' contained chapters on the development of Soviet family policies, education and organised religion; the second, 'The Arts and Science', had chapters on the social sciences, the natural sciences and the artist and the party. The chapter on social sciences contained information on Soviet historiography.⁴

The manuscript appears to have been written between Stalin's death in 1953 and the beginning of official 'de-Stalinisation' in the Soviet Union as signalled by the Twentieth Party Congress. The latest reference in *Social Institutions* is to an article published on January 24, 1955.⁵ However, it makes no mention of the Congress or its extensive preparations. These events were of critical importance to the further development of Soviet social sciences and it seems unlikely that Schlesinger would have omitted mention had he known of them at the time of writing. Therefore, it seems reasonable to date the manuscript sometime between January 1955 and early 1956.

The transitional period between Stalin's death and the Twentieth Congress is reflected in Schlesinger's manuscript. He was presumably unable to determine the direction of future events in the Soviet Union and his analysis of the historical field is mixed and somewhat contradictory. On the one hand, he continued to be as positive about the value of historical work completed under Stalin and the freedom of debate available to scholars. Yet, at the same time, he was now undoubtedly more condemning of Soviet scholarship.

When discussing Soviet historiography, Schlesinger seemed to emphasise continuity between the Stalinist and post-Stalinist landscape. He argued that Stalin was consciously loosening his grip on academic freedom towards the

⁴ Schlesinger, *Social Institutions*, pp. 165-240.

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 240d.

end of his life.⁶ Schlesinger insisted there was a transition, ‘... from the dogmatic generalisations of The Short History of the CPSU and of the struggle against Pokrovsky’s school to more emphasis on the particularities of historical processes’.⁷ This liberation continued after Stalin’s death, when historians were invited to concentrate on the part played by the masses as the creators of cultural and revolutionary transformation.⁸ That such developments were necessary does indicate an implicit acknowledgement by Schlesinger of the existence of a hostile and ‘dogmatic’ environment beforehand. This was something he never denied, despite his positive portrayal of Soviet historiography.

Schlesinger argued that in the previous decades historians enjoyed reasonable access to archives and produced positive work on subjects such as periodisation and economic relations in early Russia.⁹ He also pointed to the degree of intellectual freedom that existed. Discussions of periodisation engaged differing definitions of the motive forces of history and questions of Russia’s distinctiveness. As Schlesinger noted:

In view of the whole of Russia’s intellectual development it is difficult to imagine academic issues of greater weight in the Communist Party’s outlook: the fact that they could frankly be discussed without consequences worse than a very mild criticism of the editor’s failure to take sides shows the extent to which freedom to discuss theoretical issues (as distinct from political issues circumscribed in historical terms) existed during the last years of Stalin’s life.¹⁰

This approach is consistent with Schlesinger’s attitude in his earlier writings.

⁶ Ibid. p. 235.

⁷ Ibid. p. 238.

⁸ Ibid. p. 239.

⁹ Ibid. p. 183.

¹⁰ Ibid. pp. 228-229.

Equally familiar is Schlesinger's attack on Pokrovskii and his school. He pointed to Pokrovskii's positivist errors: his confusing of dialectic materialism with 'class subjectivism'; his erroneous conception of Marxism as an ideology like any other and thus, '... incapable of properly reflecting reality'.¹¹ He also argued that Pokrovskii's theories hindered state education and suggested that the defeat of his school was a major achievement of the Stalin era.¹² However, Schlesinger went further in his criticism than in his previous work. He now suggested that Pokrovskii was more of a propagandist than an historian. He wrote,

... to the propagandist who search[e]s the past for quotations useful in commemoration speeches, the task of the present is the point of reference for the past. To him, history is 'politics applied to the past', and historiography aims at 'reflecting the proletarian class-struggle into the past'. Pokrovskii applied this principle.¹³

As an example, Schlesinger argued that Pokrovskii adopted Lenin's appeal for the defeat of one's own bourgeoisie during World War One and applied it to inappropriate periods of the past, thus expressing sympathy with the Napoleonic invasion of 1812.

However, there was a noticeable shift in Schlesinger's attitude in *Social Institutions*. Despite all of the positive features he emphasised, Schlesinger was more condemning of the quality of work and highlighted many of the problems encountered in its production. Schlesinger argued:

There is an enormous amount of publications on the revolutionary democrats of the mid-nineteenth century, but already in the study of this period the party's demands for confirmation of given political formulae is strongly felt: the

¹¹ Ibid. p. 178 and p. 172.

¹² Ibid. p. 172 and p. 183.

¹³ Ibid. pp. 171-172.

discussions as well as the events of the actual Congress, its debates and decisions and their likely implications. Schlesinger's article did not exclusively deal with the issue of historiography, a major aspect of the Congress, but it did provide a great deal of information and opinion on the matter.

Schlesinger was certainly aware of the 'secret speech'. He cited an article in *The Times* in March 1956 that seems likely to have been the source of his information.²⁰ The newspaper article concerned Walter Ulbricht's report to East Berlin party officials on his return from the Congress.²¹ According to the newspaper, the First Secretary of the Socialist Unity Party, described Stalin as 'a despot' who had turned the State security services loose on his own party comrades and had made a, '...mockery of Soviet democracy'.²² It went on to describe the content of Ulbricht's speech in some detail. He had argued that East German Communists, like their Soviet counterparts, had to realise that Stalin's personality cult had led to erroneous foreign policy decisions. His personal despotism had damaged Soviet justice and produced mistaken decisions on agricultural and economic matters. Whilst praising Stalin's work concerning the construction of socialism and the fight against Trotskyism, Ulbricht argued that in later life he had, '.... shown a growing tendency towards personal tyranny'.²³ This had resulted in fewer and fewer meetings of the Central Committee and even the Politburo; inevitably leading to wrong decisions being taken.

The report continued:

As a direct result of Stalin's false premise that the class struggle was bound to grow more in intensity as Socialism was built up had been the persecution of leading Communists between 1936 and 1938 (the great purges). Since the hostile classes had by

²⁰ Schlesinger, 'From the XIX to the XX Party Congress', p. 8, footnote 18a. The footnote number is recorded as 18a within the text but as 19 in the footnote section.

²¹ 'Herr Ulbricht Swells the Anti-Stalin Chorus' in *The Times*, 19 March, 1956, p. 10.

²² *The Times*, 19 March, 1956, p. 10.

²³ *Ibid.* p. 10.

then been all but eliminated, where else could Stalin's security police have turned?²⁴

Stalin had given orders which infringed Soviet laws and had led to the arrest of innocent people. As regards the 'myth' of Stalin's military genius, Ulbricht was reported as insisting its genesis was the work of Stalin himself, through passages in his biography and the *Short Course*. Contrary to the claim in his biography that the history book was written by Stalin and then revised by the Central Committee, it had in fact been the product of collective work on the part of the Committee. Stalin had then revised it to suit his personal taste.

According to the report, Ulbricht argued, '... it has become known that Stalin did not prepare the country for war in an adequate manner, although the impending aggression by Hitler's Germany was plain to see'.²⁵ Three separate sources warning of the attack were ignored, as was a German deserter who crossed the Soviet line on the eve of the invasion. Finally it was reported that Ulbricht had informed the East Berlin party that Stalin had repeatedly refused the 'correct advice' of military advisors. The *Times* article corresponded closely with the available reports on the contents of Khrushchev's speech at the Twentieth Party Congress. Reference was made to the errors and terrible conclusions inevitably resulting from Stalin's 'cult of personality', his reputation as a military expert was repudiated and his part in violating Soviet justice and arresting many innocent party members was exposed.

According to Schlesinger:

Such reports about Khrushchev's speech at the private session as are available indicate that under this heading were included problems such as Stalin's thesis that the class struggle would be intensified after the expropriation of hostile classes, in reflection of the capitalist encirclement. This thesis was the

²⁴ Ibid. p. 10.

²⁵ Ibid. p. 10.

basis on which he let loose the political police against oppositionists within the party.²⁶

It seems clear that this information was taken directly from the article in the *Times*, as it mirrors so consistently information contained therein. However, Schlesinger made no reference to criticisms of Stalin's leadership style and military capabilities. The validity of Khrushchev's, and subsequently Ulbricht's, speeches seems to have been taken for granted by Schlesinger in his July 1956 article. At no point did he declare any doubts as to their authenticity or the correctness of their portrayal of Stalin's rule. This seems to contradict his earlier stance on events within the Soviet Union, when he made very little comment on negative aspects of the Soviet regime.

Schlesinger argued that the significance of the 'secret speech' and of the entire Congress was in its denouncing Stalinism as a method of leadership and its attempt to establish a new orthodoxy. He wrote: 'Stalinism was rejected not as a set of theoretical views, but as an authoritarian method of leading the party and the nation, opposed to the development of the work and responsibility of all the participants in socialist construction'.²⁷ The repudiation of the 'cult of the individual' was a necessary complement to the now sought after ideal of collectivity in leadership, the new method of rule which the Party authorities were attempting to found.

There were three main reasons why the Party leaders had decided the denunciation was necessary. The first and, according to Schlesinger, '.... possibly the most powerful reason for making a clear break with the Stalinist framework was the realization that party theory must be adapted to the changed international conditions'.²⁸ Such a statement suggests Schlesinger believed Stalinism was necessary under previous international conditions. If so, this would be one more instance of Schlesinger's pragmatism: Stalin was

²⁶ Schlesinger, 'From the XIX to the XX Party Congress', p. 8.

²⁷ Ibid. p. 8.

²⁸ Ibid. p. 16.

a necessary evil for the Soviet Union at a time of hostile encirclement when rapid social and industrial transformation was necessary.

The second reason Schlesinger cited was the, '.... widespread demand for the settlement of accounts with the whole method which made use of the nation's need for protection against external enemies and their agents in order to suppress internal dissent, and even to get rid of anyone who happened to attract the displeasure of the political police'.²⁹ Simply put, this second reason for the change in attitudes heralded by the Twentieth Party Congress was due to the perceived need for security of law or primacy of Soviet justice. It was necessary to prevent a return to the extra-judicial terror of the Stalin period.

The third motive force, and the one of most relevance to this study, was, as Schlesinger expressed it, the, '.... fight for a critical and realistic approach to the past and the present'.³⁰ A new attitude towards Russia and the Soviet state's history was required. The main points of criticism of historical work mentioned at the Congress were given in a speech by A. I. Mikoyan.³¹ According to Schlesinger, these points had already been elaborated at the readers' conference of the journal *Voprosy Istorii* earlier that same year.³² He pointed out that A. Pankratova, the editor of *Voprosy Istorii* and Central Committee member, in her summation at the conference on 28 January 1956, was eager to explain that no 'revolution in historiography' was intended; instead merely an improvement in existing scholarly work. In fact, according to Schlesinger: 'The rejection of the embellishments and nationalist distortions of the history of the Russian Revolution which had developed during the Stalin

²⁹ Ibid. p. 13.

³⁰ Ibid. p. 15.

³¹ The text of Mikoyan's speech can be found in Gruliyaw, *Current Soviet Policies II*, pp. 80-89. Anastas Ivanovich Mikoyan (1895-1978) joined the party in 1915 and enjoyed positions of responsibility under Stalin, Krushchev and Brezhnev. At various times Mikoyan had responsibility for internal and external trade, the party purges in Armenia and the rehabilitation commissions. He became President of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet in 1964-1965 (H. Rappaport, *Joseph Stalin, A Biographical Companion*, pp. 183-185).

³² A report on the conference proceedings can be found at 'Konferentsiia chitatelei zhurnal "Voprosy Istorii"', *Voprosy Istorii*, 2, 1956, pp. 199-213. The main reports and 26 of the main contributions to the discussion were reported. The readers' conference is also described in Heer, *Politics and History in the Soviet Union*, pp. 69-73 and M. Fainsod, 'Historiography and Change', in J. Keep (ed.) *Contemporary History in the Soviet Mirror* (George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1964), pp. 19-42 at p. 20.

period had been treated as an achievement of the new course as early as January 1955'.³³ This would seem to suggest that whilst the Congress and its 'de-Stalinising' policy certainly impacted upon Soviet historiography, its effects were not leviathan; there was no 'revolution', as Schlesinger put it. Was this perhaps an attempt by Schlesinger to present a degree of continuity between the study of history before and after Stalin's death? He may simply have been stating that the de-Stalinisation process in the historical sphere was begun before the Congress but few would deny that the Congress had an enormous impact upon the study of history.

During the Twentieth Party Congress, Pankratova declared the Party's opposition to attempts at embellishing contemporary events, arguing that many historians had proven themselves unable to deal with the shortcomings in their earlier work.³⁴ Mikoyan, in turn, demanded the writing of a history of the October Revolution and of the Soviet state, which would, as Schlesinger recorded it, '.... show without embellishment not only the surface but all of the manifold aspects of the life of our Soviet land'.³⁵ Schlesinger argued that Mikoyan had, '.... hit at the political root of the evil' when he attacked the *Short Course*, a book which Stalin had taken responsibility for.³⁶ Mikoyan argued:

.... if our historians were to make a genuine and profound study of the facts and events in the history of our party in the Soviet period.....if they were to delve properly into the archives and historical documents, and not only into the back issues of newspapers, they would be able to give a better explanation, from the position of Leninism, of many of the facts and events dealt with in the 'Short Course'.³⁷

³³ Schlesinger, 'From the XIX to the XX Party Congress', p. 9.

³⁴ The text of Pankratova's speech is translated in Gruliyaw, *Current Soviet Policies II*, pp. 146-149.

³⁵ Schlesinger, 'From the XIX to the XX Party Congress', p. 15. In Gruliyaw, *Current Soviet Policies II*, the statement is translated as follows 'one that presents without embellishment not only the facade but the whole many-sided life of the Soviet fatherland' (p. 88.).

³⁶ Schlesinger, 'From the XIX to the XX Party Congress', p. 15.

³⁷ Gruliyaw, *Current Soviet Policies II*, p. 88.

This statement appeared to be in direct contradiction to views which Schlesinger had expressed in the period of Stalin's rule. Although never having written about the Short Course specifically, Schlesinger had praised officially endorsed state textbooks in the Stalin era.³⁸ He had quoted from the *Short Course* in his *Spirit of Post-war Russia*. However, he did not name the text, referring to it instead as an 'official document'. The quotation was used as proof against reproaches that Marxism neglected the importance of human thought.³⁹ So it was certainly meant to demonstrate an authoritative and, presumably, correct text.

As well as providing a coherent and reasonably detailed description of the events of the Twentieth Party Congress, Schlesinger seemed to argue in his article that the changes in party policy, and their subsequent impact on historiography, were both justified and necessary. He also criticised works of historical scholarship produced in the period before Stalin's death and supported the Party's denunciation of the intellectual atmosphere which he had created. There does, therefore, seem to be a degree of inconsistency between Schlesinger's contemporary and retrospective evaluation of historical works.

Schlesinger published an article in *Soviet Studies* in October 1956 which dealt specifically with post-Stalinist Soviet historiography.⁴⁰ His earlier writings had broached the subject but now Schlesinger investigated, in some detail, the changes which took place in the sphere of historical scholarship as a result of the alteration of official party policies since Stalin's death, in particular as a result of the Twentieth Party Congress. The publication of the paper once again demonstrated the interest Soviet historiography held for Schlesinger.

³⁸ See, for example, Schlesinger's praise of the Shestakov textbook in Schlesinger, 'Neue sowjetrussische Literatur zur Sozialforschung', pp. 194-195.

³⁹ Schlesinger, *Spirit of Post-war Russia*, p. 144.

⁴⁰ Schlesinger, 'Soviet Historians Before and After the XX Congress', *Soviet Studies*, 8, 2, October. 1956, pp.157-172.

The Congress proceedings were heavily utilised as source material. In a footnote, Schlesinger indicated that he had used the U.S. State Department's translation of the proceedings, including Khrushchev's 'secret speech', for the purposes of the article.⁴¹ He also used a great deal of material, including reports from the readers' conference, editorials and individual articles, from the theoretical journal *Voprosy Istorii*. Schlesinger had made much use of the journal in his previous writings about Soviet historiography and had already convincingly argued that the publication was an effective window on to the activities of historians in the Soviet Union. This latest paper was, thus, methodologically very similar to his earlier work on the subject, and allows for a great degree of comparison between them.

In general, Schlesinger expressed an optimistic attitude towards the future of historical scholarship in the Soviet Union. He argued that historical output was already improving as a result of recent events. He described E. Burdzhhalov's article on Bolshevik tactics before Lenin's return in 1917.⁴² Schlesinger wrote, with praise:

This article seems to be a serious effort to present the facts, based on well-known contemporary documents printed in the 'twenties which have been widely used by Western scholars. Burdzhhalov criticizes himself and others because recent publications on the period misrepresented events in Stalin's favour – even to the extent of omitting Stalin's own admission of error in 1924.⁴³

Burdzhhalov argued that, prior to Lenin's April theses in 1917, Stalin and Kamenev advocated a policy of conditional support for the provisional government in opposition to Lenin's stance. Stalin decided to support Lenin after the April conference but Kamenev continued his opposition. This portrayal differed substantially from the previous depiction of a universally

⁴¹ Ibid. p. 170, footnote 14.

⁴² E. Burdzhhalov, 'O taktike bol'shevikov v marte-aprele 1917 goda', *Voprosy Istorii*, 4, 1956, pp. 38-56.

⁴³ Schlesinger, 'Soviet Historians Before and After the XX Congress', p. 164.

consensual party under Lenin in the lead up to the Bolshevik revolution. It also suggested fallibility on Stalin's part. Schlesinger argued that although Burdzhhalov was admitting to distortions in previous presentations of events and was now in the process of correcting them, he did not attempt to analyse or explain why the truth had been distorted in the past. Thus, Schlesinger conceded that problems and errors would continue for a time in Soviet historical work.

Schlesinger was not alone in expressing optimism about the future of the historical profession after the Twentieth Congress. There were plenty of reasons to think this. N. Heer wrote:

The Twentieth Party Congress was a landmark for both the CPSU and its chroniclers. Many hopeful signals pointed to the invigoration, reorganization, and rededication of the party and its historians toward a more effective and rational fulfilment of their tasks in the Soviet system. Not only was the party to be revitalized and the substance of its history to be reworked at Khrushchev's direction, but at the behest of two authoritative party figures there would be a drastic improvement in historians' methodology and scholarship.⁴⁴

Burdzhhalov, in his articles and editorials in *Voprosy Istorii*, was one of a number of revisionists who began to explore the opportunities they thought were now open to the historical profession. They demanded the critical examination of sources and the publication of memoirs and other materials.⁴⁵ They were sufficiently emboldened to continue their demand for new standards of scholarship in the face of authoritative criticism of this revisionism in July 1956.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Heer, *Politics and History in the Soviet Union*, p. 75. Heer was referring to the speeches by Pankratova and Mikoyan.

⁴⁵ See, for example, I. Smirnov, 'Ob istochnikovedenii istorii KPSS', *Voprosy Istorii*, 4, 1956, pp. 194-201.

⁴⁶ Heer, *Politics and History in the Soviet Union*, p. 87.

However, by June 1957, Burdzhhalov had been removed from the editorial board of *Voprosy Istorii*, a thorough shake up of the remaining personnel and organisation had taken place, and a hostile attack upon the 'revisionists', and Burdzhhalov's contribution in particular, formed the basis of the journal's editorial.⁴⁷ These measures were accompanied by official decrees from the Central Committee defining the boundaries of acceptable discussion and criticising the recent actions of the journal.⁴⁸ Those historians who had attempted to open debate were officially silenced and the incipient broadening of scholarship was quashed as the state took a more conservative stance, perhaps as a result of events in Poland and Hungary.

Schlesinger was obviously unaware of these later developments when writing his article. His optimism may well have been premature. However, most commentators agree that the post-1956 period represented a more open, free atmosphere for the historical profession. Whilst the first tentative steps of the revisionists may have strayed beyond the party's tolerance, a new era was beginning. Schlesinger was not isolated in his positive attitude regarding the future of Soviet scholarship. H. Rogger, writing in 1965, argued:

Historians are no longer compelled (they are told) to write the history of the thirties as an unbroken parade of victories and triumphs; they can write about the non-Bolshevik opponents of Tsarism with greater fairness... The hero-worship of Stalin, Ivan IV and Peter I as nearly coequal gods of the national Pantheon, has ended. In short, there has been a refinement of method, a greater subtlety of language and approach, a resumption of contacts with foreign scholarship. Historians have been allowed, and even urged, to look differently at the past.⁴⁹

Rogger conceded that historians still faced many impediments to free

⁴⁷ 'Za leniniskuiu partiinost v istoricheskoi nauke', *Voprosy Istorii*, 3, 1957, pp. 3-19. See Heer, *Politics and History in the Soviet Union*, pp. 91...

⁴⁸ Heer, *Politics and History in the Soviet Union*, p. 90.

⁴⁹ H. Rogger, 'Politics, Ideology and History in the USSR: The Search for Coexistence', *Soviet Studies*, 16, 3, January 1965, pp. 253-275 at pp 272-273.

scholarship and pointed out that the sphere of their activities remained determined by the party. However, there had clearly been progress.

An important feature of Schlesinger's article is the criticism which he directed at earlier Soviet historiography, in particular that of the late Stalin period. When referring to work published up to 1956 he pointed out, '... the extent to which the selective approach to history had been entrenched, and to which its advocates took it for granted that its objective basis in the semi-literacy of a large part of the reading public still remained'.⁵⁰ His negative attitude towards earlier scholarship was also discernible in his evaluation of the changes which had occurred in this field. Schlesinger insisted:

The main facts of party history are available once the taboos are lifted. Historians can now begin to rearrange them in the light of the experience acquired since NEP – the last period in which free argument about these things was possible among the rank and file of the party. This work has indeed presumably begun, at least in the minds of those who all this time were confident that the authoritarian degeneration of Soviet intellectual life would come to an end owing to the laws of motion of the socialist revolution.⁵¹

Schlesinger was arguing that since the NEP period an 'authoritarian degeneration' had occurred in the intellectual sphere; 'free argument' had been impossible until the recent reorganisation of academic work. He may have been suggesting that only work concerning party history was conducted in such a stifling, intellectually impotent atmosphere. In his writings before Stalin's death, Schlesinger had implied that work on later periods and on party history was generally of a lesser quality to other spheres of research. Yet he did not explicitly indicate this caveat. It is, therefore, not unreasonable to assume this was how he evaluated the academic atmosphere for all historians in the recent Soviet past. This would correspond with the way he described

⁵⁰ Schlesinger, 'Soviet Historians Before and After the XX Congress', p. 159.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* p. 167.

the environment under which he worked whilst in Soviet Russia. Perhaps this was a recent conclusion, based on the potentially revelatory information provided at the Congress, especially in Khrushchev's 'secret speech'. However, it represents a dramatic shift in emphasis from Schlesinger's earlier writings on Soviet historiography. In them Schlesinger conceded the hostile and problematic elements to the study of history in the Soviet Union, yet he offered a generally positive evaluation of the quality of work undertaken.

According to Schlesinger, the revision of conventional attitudes was made clear in the first edition of *Voprosy Istorii* of 1956, which appealed for a re-examination of Pokrovskii.⁵² Historians were asked to appreciate Pokrovskii's merits in relation to the general level of historical science at that time, as well as to consider the shortcomings of his work. To Schlesinger:

Compared with the intellectual climate prevailing quite recently, and manifested in contributions to the same issue, this indicated a basic change: the editors took up an attitude which was not entirely negative to the historian in opposition to whom Soviet historical studies of the 'thirties and 'forties had developed, and they found merits in a person denounced as an enemy after the 1937-8 purges.⁵³

Schlesinger argued such a turn of events could signify the first public rehabilitation of a falsely accused old Bolshevik or the refutation of the convention that any early virtues or successes of those who went on to become 'enemies' should be ignored. Either way, Schlesinger was convinced that this, 'explicit recognition' of Pokrovskii's achievements as a historian was a significant and new development.⁵⁴ Expressing his personal opinion, Schlesinger argued,

⁵² Schlesinger, 'Soviet Historians Before and After the XX Congress', p. 157. 'Ob izuchenii istorii istoricheskoi nauki', *Voprosy Istorii*, 1, 1956, pp. 3-12. See also, Heer, *Politics and History in the Soviet Union*, p. 73.

⁵³ Schlesinger, 'Soviet Historians Before and After the XX Congress', p. 157.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* p. 157.

.... there can be no Soviet historian who wishes to return to Pokrovsky's 'economic materialism' and to the concept of 'merchant capitalism', but ever since 1950 there has been some recognition of Russia's especial backwardness and, on the other hand, of the part played by the urban guilds and by wealthy peasants in the formation of capitalism.⁵⁵

It appears Schlesinger was once again mirroring the official views of the Soviet Union. He too now reluctantly accepted that Pokrovskii had merits as an historian. However, Schlesinger remained consistent with his earlier views about the weakness of what he perceived Pokrovskii's system to be. He still criticised the models of 'economic materialism' and 'merchant capitalism' he attributed to Pokrovskii. In a footnote later in the article, Schlesinger was again critical: 'Every Soviet historian knows that one of the main, and most justified, criticisms levelled against Pokrovskii was based upon his demand that Marxist historiography should 'reflect the proletarian class-struggle into the past'.⁵⁶

The revision of the orthodox historical paradigm and the problems associated with it were also evidenced by Schlesinger in Soviet historians' treatment of Stalin. Schlesinger felt that when dealing with recent history there arose a contradiction between what he described as 'historical truth' and the way in which the Central Committee was administering 're-education': 'For a long time Stalin had been held up as an ideal model; he is now treated as a 'negative hero' whose negative features, however, can be disclosed only by stages, as the policies associated with his name are dispensed with'.⁵⁷ In a footnote, Schlesinger pointed out the inconsistencies between what the Soviet public were told about the recent past and the objective 'historical truth'. He argued, '.... readers [of *Voprosy Istorii*] may be expected to be aware that what they are now being told is still not the whole truth but a transitional stage between the former embellishment and a future stage when the nation will be

⁵⁵ Ibid. pp. 157-8.

⁵⁶ Ibid p. 169, footnote 12.

⁵⁷ Ibid. p. 164.

regarded as ripe to face all the facts'.⁵⁸ Such a statement constituted an explicit recognition of the falsity of past historical work as well as the merely partial truth of what was now being published.

According to Schlesinger, the current official treatment of the question argued that Stalin's historical function had been mixed. Stalin had initially promoted the progress of Soviet society; however, with the evolution of his personality and working methods, he became divorced from the mass of the people. This created a division between his correctly formulated theory and his erroneous practice. In Schlesinger's opinion,

.... the Stalin thus depicted by his closest collaborators is not necessarily identical with the Stalin of the objective historian: this is rather a picture of the provincial or Central Committee secretary as he should *not* be at a time when Stalinist methods of leadership have become obsolete. Stalin is distorted, in his favour when criminal violations of accepted party standards are omitted, but greatly to his detriment when the negative side of characteristics which carried the USSR through grave crises are treated on the level of Ovechkin's Borzov.⁵⁹

The correct historical interpretation of Stalin had still to be reached in the Soviet Union. An application of Marxist principles would facilitate this. According to Schlesinger, '.... the contradictions in Stalin's work must be explained by the contradictions inherent in the historical setting which shaped him'.⁶⁰ It seems clear that, whilst Schlesinger was optimistic about the future of historical scholarship in the Soviet Union, he nevertheless felt that, at this

⁵⁸ Ibid. p. 170, footnote 16.

⁵⁹ Ibid. p. 165, Author's italics. Borzov is a literary character taken from a short story by Valentin Ovechkin, which was published in the monthly magazine *Novy Mir* in September 1952. It was entitled *Rayonniye Budny* or 'District Routine'. It portrayed the senior party secretary, Borzov, as a jealous, bullying character who thoughtlessly fulfilled quotas and party instructions without real initiative or understanding of the needs of his district. This was in contrast to the more democratic, constructive approach of his deputy, Martynov. The sketch is available in translation in Miller, 'A Contrast in Types of Party Leadership', *Soviet Studies*, 4, 4, April 1953, pp. 447-468.

⁶⁰ Schlesinger, 'Soviet Historians Before and After the XX Congress', p. 165.

stage, historians were impeded in their work by the prerequisites of political expediency, as judged by the Party. He argued that, although still imperfect, Soviet historiography was making great progress. Whereas in the historiography of the 1930s and 1940s Stalin had been portrayed as the great leader, he was now considered to have had a mixed legacy. There is obviously a contradiction between this evaluation of Soviet historical work and Schlesinger's previous analysis.

In this paper Schlesinger went into greater detail concerning the proceedings of the *Voprosy Istorii* readers' conference, held in late January 1956.⁶¹ The conference lasted for three days and was attended by 600 teachers and research workers from Moscow. The main reports, given by Pankratova and the journal's deputy editor Burdzhhalov, fully anticipated the official objections to current historical scholarship proclaimed by Mikoyan at the Twentieth Party Congress. Schlesinger listed a number of criticisms made by Burdzhhalov. Party history had been falsified to better display the merits of a few leaders at the expense of other individuals and the rank and file as a whole. The inner party struggles of the 1920s had been presented as an unmasking of spies and wreckers, rather than as a political and ideological battle against anti-Leninist elements. According to Schlesinger, Burdzhhalov also argued that the *Short Course* was obsolete as a version of party history.⁶² Some dissent towards the editors' criticism was to be heard at the conference, but Schlesinger was critical of these oppositionists and insisted that any opposition was weak and came almost exclusively from the institutional strongholds of the established tradition. He thus indicated his approval of the changes being sought in Soviet historiography.

The paper described the contents of the edition of *Voprosy Istorii* which went to press a month after the Twentieth Party Congress. The editorial concerned

⁶¹ Schlesinger noted that his information had come from the report of the readers' conference given in *Voprosy Istorii*. See above p. 292.

⁶² Schlesinger wrote that he directed criticism towards: '... The embellishment of the foreign and colonial policies of tsarism, and the denunciation of the liberation struggles of the Caucasian and other peoples against tsarist Russia as allegedly reactionary and inspired from abroad'. Such excesses of patriotism were now unacceptable (Schlesinger, 'Soviet Historians Before and After the XX Congress', p. 158).

the lessons of the Congress for the historical profession and party history.⁶³ Stalin appeared to be principally blamed for the misrepresentation of party history and the *Short Course* was heavily criticised. The text's pre-eminence as the touchstone of historical truth had prevented the undertaking of any critical studies of party historiography, since any work written earlier had been seen as valueless. Yet now, Schlesinger wrote:

The *Short Course* is recognized as having some merits in systematizing and popularizing party history, and in 'explaining some important issues of the history and theory of Bolshevism'. But the treatment of the post-1917 period in particular is denounced as being permeated by the 'idealist standpoint of the cult of the individual'.⁶⁴

According to Schlesinger, the *Short Course* was criticised for neglecting the role played by Lenin and the masses, to the benefit of Stalin. It also underestimated, or even ignored, the difficulties the party had faced. The book was dogmatic and ahistorical, reflecting political attitudes of Stalin's days to the past. Its presentation of the party's position on the eve of Lenin's return to Russia was incorrect and Stalin's role in the October revolution had been overemphasized in party history. This was in direct comparison to treatment of the Petrograd military revolutionary committee and its role in organizing the insurrection, which was hardly mentioned. Schlesinger made no comment above a simple description of these criticisms. This can, perhaps, be taken to indicate his agreement with them. He did write of the 'current falsification of history' as a statement of fact and criticised those who opposed the new editorial line so this would seem to be the case.⁶⁵

According to Schlesinger the editorial also criticised the state of the material with which historians had to work.⁶⁶ Verbatim reports of conferences and congresses were now a bibliographical rarity and important documents were

⁶³ 'XX S"ezd KPSS I zadachi issledovaniia istorii partii', *Voprosy Istorii*, 3, 1956, pp. 3-12.

⁶⁴ Schlesinger, 'Soviet Historians Before and After the XX Congress', p. 160.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* p. 161.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* p. 162.

still withheld from research workers. The issue also appealed for a critical re-examination of all books on party history, so that the kind of mistakes and falsifications being discussed could be eliminated. The study of Soviet history and the revolutionary movement could then be placed on to a truly Marxist-Leninist foundation. Schlesinger speculated as to whether this appeal could be successful, arguing: 'There is an obvious political interest in establishing the truth, for if all the assertions about the party's past successes were true, it would be impossible to discuss present difficulties frankly without encouraging unfavourable comparisons with the past'.⁶⁷ He argued that a great deal of material was now being republished and this would aid historians in their analysis, but felt that historiography remained in a transitional stage. Whilst undoubtedly progressing away from the falsification of history which categorised the period of Stalin's rule, historians were nevertheless constricted by political orthodoxy and expediency, especially in regard to whom they could and could not name. Schlesinger felt that Burdzhakov's already mentioned article on Bolshevik party organisations after the February revolution, which named everyone involved in party activities, including those who were later to become 'enemies of the people', was a significant and positive step.

Schlesinger argued, although progress was being made in the fields of modern and party history, the situation was much more complicated when it came to the study of earlier periods of Russian history. He wrote that it was necessary to correct the, '.... misinterpretation of past stages of Russian history which followed from the far-going identification, in the historical writing of the late Stalin period, of the present Russian national self-assertion with the past'.⁶⁸ Present concerns and priorities had once again been reflected into older, inappropriate periods. Disputes in this sphere centred upon the method of historical interpretation and research required to bridge gaps in knowledge, since omission of well-known facts did not generally occur.

Schlesinger described the changing investigations concerning Shamil and the

⁶⁷ Ibid. p. 163.

⁶⁸ Schlesinger, 'Soviet Historians Before and After the XX Congress', p. 167.

Caucasian uprising of the mid nineteenth century to illustrate the dynamics of pre-modern historiography.⁶⁹ He felt that the defeat of the Pokrovskii school still represented an achievement in this arena, thus retaining a degree of consistency with his earlier writings, but felt that the post-war period had led to, '... harmful excrescences on that approach'.⁷⁰ Shestakov's 1937 textbook was the first to systematise the post-Pokrovskiiian interpretation that Schlesinger admired.⁷¹ The textbook assumed that Shamil's movement was progressive in character, as with all earlier Russian revolutionary traditions. Schlesinger argued that it was only in the late Stalin period that this interpretation was superseded by the official characterisation of the movement as a comparatively narrow group of local feudal lords and 'bandits'. He felt Soviet historians should have known that this was merely a repetition of Pokrovskii's mistaken reflection of the present struggle into the past; the need for a strengthened Russian state was being reflected backwards. Thus, wrote Schlesinger:

Without the assumption, at least tacitly, that tsarist Russia was the nucleus of the USSR, this new interpretation was senseless. In any case, it involved a series of falsifications. The supporters of the new interpretation falsified the statements of Marx and the Russian progressives (who critically welcomed Shamil's struggle against tsarism) and they distorted the reports of tsarist officials and generals.⁷²

In the late Stalin period, a commonplace historical truth was repressed

⁶⁹ Shamil was the leader of Muridism, an extreme Muslim sect in the Caucasus. From 1834 to 1859 he led the resistance movement against Russian annexation. As L. Tillett wrote: 'Up to 1950 most Soviet historians considered him to be the greatest of several leaders of 'national-liberation' movements against Tsarist colonialism... After World War II this concept of Shamil came into conflict with party-inspired doctrines of Soviet patriotism and Great Russian leadership. As a result an opposing version of the 'national liberation' movements and their leaders was introduced into Soviet historiography, Shamil, who had been the most lionized of these leaders, was now the most condemned' (L. Tillett, 'Shamil and Muridism in Recent Soviet Historiography', *American Slavic and East European Review*, 20, 2, April 1961, pp. 253-269 at p. 253).

⁷⁰ Schlesinger, 'Soviet Historians Before and After the XX Congress', p. 168. Soviet orthodoxy of the Stalin era also held Pokrovskii responsible for the former positive portrayal of Shamil (L. Tillett, 'Shamil and Muridism in Recent Soviet Historiography', p. 258).

⁷¹ Shestakov, *Istoriia SSSR*, p. 90.

⁷² Schlesinger, 'Soviet Historians Before and After the XX Congress', p. 168.

because it was politically harmful and Schlesinger argued that historians were willing to provide the necessary interpretations. This is a hugely damning evaluation of the state's control of the historical sphere. Schlesinger, however, added the caveat that there were only a 'few' historians willing to write such falsifications and 'none of the outstanding ones'.⁷³ He asserted that, since Stalin's death, debate on this issue was now moving in a progressive direction and some historians were beginning to argue against the previous nationalist interpretation. Whilst the post-Stalin era did witness a more open attitude towards research on Shamil, there was a party reaction against the more forceful revisionists.⁷⁴ Once again, Schlesinger may have been overly optimistic about the prospects for free academic publication and debate. He ended the article on an entirely positive note: 'This removal of taboos and standing judgments from the past is clearing the way for historians who are seeking new lines of approach'.⁷⁵ This included an implicit criticism of the norms of historical method in Stalin's times.

Schlesinger provided a great deal of information upon the effects of the Twentieth Party Congress on the historical profession. He offered a review of likely shifts in the historiographical paradigm, as well as reporting what was written in the Soviet historical press immediately after. However, the paper does not correspond to the general interpretation of events Schlesinger had constructed in his earlier writings. The inconsistency between his positive evaluation of historiographical work in the USSR under Stalin and his retrospective condemnation of it following his death are clear. When not explicitly criticising historical work of the Stalin period, Schlesinger was writing so enthusiastically and with such obvious agreement with the official changes heralded by the Congress that a negative appraisal of the previous orthodoxy can be assumed. It is important to note that Schlesinger's writings of the Stalin period were not without negative remarks and criticisms of Soviet historical work; the contrast between them and his post-Stalin writings should not, therefore, be exaggerated. This paper also makes clear that there were

⁷³ *Ibid.* p. 168.

⁷⁴ L. Tillet, 'Shamil and Muridism in Recent Soviet Historiography', p. 266.

⁷⁵ Schlesinger, 'Soviet Historians Before and After the XX Congress', p. 169.

elements of continuity in Schlesinger's writings. He continued to denigrate what he perceived as Pokrovskii's historiographical 'school'; however, akin to the official Soviet interpretation, he now offered a much more conciliatory appraisal of his individual achievements. In general, Schlesinger's attitude towards Soviet historiography did appear to change at around the time of the Twentieth Congress. It could, perhaps, be argued that he was once again mirroring the official views of Soviet orthodoxy, adapting his interpretation just as it changed within the Soviet Union.

Soviet historiography was again the subject of Schlesinger's published writings in April 1958 with a short report on a conference in the USSR dealing with the methodology of source critiquing.⁷⁶ A conference for research workers had been held by the Moscow State Institute for Historical Archive Work (MGIAI) in 1957 and Schlesinger reported on as much of the proceedings as he was able to glean from Soviet journals. According to Schlesinger, many Soviet historians felt that discussions on critical source evaluation had been totally neglected in the Soviet Union and, thus, pre-revolutionary concepts were often simply reproduced. In recent years, however, there had been a revival of interest in the subject, involving a search for a Marxist perspective. The *partiinost* attitude towards sources was still correct, so there was to be no return to 'objectivism', but all methods of textual criticism developed by traditional historiography were to be utilised.⁷⁷

According to Schlesinger, editors had displayed an uncritical approach to documents and in some cases the selection of documents for inclusion in published collections had been carried out in an obviously arbitrary fashion. It was felt by many that even Lenin's works required investigation into the circumstances of their provenance and any emphasis the author may have had, due to time-conditioned necessity. Offering his own opinion, Schlesinger argued: 'It is obvious that the very assumption of this function by the historian implies a rejection of the propagandist's claim to use the 'quotations bag' in

⁷⁶ Schlesinger, 'Textual Criticism of Soviet Historical Documents', *Soviet Studies*, 9, 4, April 1958, pp. 449-451.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 449-450.

order to back by Lenin's authority every statement regarded as correct in present circumstances'.⁷⁸ Schlesinger indicated that the majority of historians approved of the changes introduced into historiography since the Twentieth Congress. He pointed out that there was no reference in the conference report to Stalin, '.... whose letter to the Editor of *Proletarskaya Revolutsia* in 1931 signified the triumph of those applications of the concept of *partiinost* to the study of the past, the overcoming of which – though not, of course, of the concept as a definition of their general approach – at present occupies the minds of Soviet historians'.⁷⁹ Schlesinger made very little reference to Stalin's letter in his earlier writings, in spite of his acknowledgement of its decisive impact on Stalinist historiography. Yet he was now clearly emphasising its influence on the researching and writing of history. He argued that the main concern of Soviet historians was how to overcome its insidious influence.

The paper was little more than a report upon a conference report. It did, however, show that Schlesinger remained concerned with the topic of Soviet historiography, as well as giving some indication as to the concerns and priorities of Soviet historians. Schlesinger used Soviet terms such as '*partiinost*' without offering a definition of them. One cannot, therefore, know what exactly Schlesinger understood by it, and little of his own opinion was provided. However, the paper is written with a tone of approval and the fact that he chose to write about the conference, perhaps suggests he regarded it as a significant event. The paper also provides additional evidence to support the thesis that Schlesinger's writings on historiography underwent a dramatic shift in emphasis, coinciding with 'de-Stalinisation' in the USSR.

In January 1960 Schlesinger published a brief report in *Soviet Studies* on the debates concerning a new history curriculum in the Soviet Union.⁸⁰ The reorganisation of Soviet primary and secondary education, which occurred after discussions of autumn 1958, had resulted in the need for a new history

⁷⁸ Ibid. p. 450.

⁷⁹ Ibid. p. 451.

⁸⁰ Schlesinger, 'The New Secondary School History Curriculum', *Soviet Studies*, 11, 3, January 1960, pp. 341-348.

syllabus.⁸¹ Before the proposed reform, history courses were administered on a 'linear' basis. Lower grades were taught the earliest stages of history, gradually moving to the modern era as they progressed through the years. As Schlesinger pointed out, however, those who did not intend to complete the full term of secondary education left school with no knowledge, except for selected episodes, of their own country's history. It was felt that it was necessary to give those with an eight-year education a more rounded and complete historical knowledge; the ensuing debate centred upon how best to do this.

According to Schlesinger's report, one of the main themes to emerge from the discussion, and one of relevance to Soviet historiography in general, was the extreme unease felt by many historians towards changes to the curriculum. It was feared that they could inadvertently revert to the 'sociological schemas' taught in the past. This was a reference to the party's criticism of history education in 1934, directed primarily against Pokrovskii and his school for their alleged schematic approach to the past. Schlesinger wrote: 'Not for nothing did M. V. Nechkina reproach the majority of her colleagues with unwillingly gliding into the treatment of history in terms of abstract sociological schemes, condemned a quarter of a century ago, since with the condensed course of modern general history no time would be left for anything else'.⁸² Similarly Schlesinger argued that, at a conference convened by the History faculty of Moscow University: 'It was left to [E. M.] Chermenski...to bring home the obvious truth that the danger of a return to abstract sociological schemes was implied in the very burdening of the curriculum with enormous amounts of materials which simply could not be dealt with in other than schematic ways'.⁸³ Schlesinger clearly shared this unease, since it was both an 'obvious truth' and a 'danger', in his opinion.

⁸¹ For more information on developments in post-Stalinist history education, see N. H. Garowek, 'Education, Ideology, and Politics: History in Soviet Primary and Secondary Schools', *The History Teacher*, 11, 1, Nov. 1977, pp. 55-74.

⁸² Schlesinger – 'The New Secondary History Curriculum', p. 344. The reproach was recorded in A. M. Sinitsin 'O structure i sodержanii istoricheskogo obrazovaniia I srednii shkole', *Voprosy Istorii*, 8, 1959, pp. 193-200 at p. 199.

⁸³ Schlesinger – 'The New Secondary History Curriculum', p. 345. The conference was reported in N. A. Nikolaev, 'O postanovke istoricheskogo obrazovaniia v srednoi shkole', *Voprosy Istorii*, 5, 1959, pp. 207-221. Chermenski's contribution was noted on pp. 219-220.

Another feature of the debate was the apparent alarm of some historians at what they perceived as a tendency to fully rehabilitate the Pokrovskii 'school' of historiography. Schlesinger offered his own opinion in a footnote to the text. Schlesinger argued that, as a defamed old Bolshevik, Pokrovskii had been rehabilitated by the Twentieth Party Congress. As a philosopher of history, he could be no more rehabilitated than any sociologist whose theory was now proven obsolete. As an organiser of an education system, it was impossible to rehabilitate him. Schlesinger continued:

The basic confusion had been produced by Stalin, who combined the criticism of Pokrovski's 'economic materialism' and of his concept of history as 'political struggle looking backward' (a criticism in which Stalin was certainly right, though he shared in fact at least the second of Pokrovski's concepts) with an, equally necessary, request for a return to a systemic teaching of history based upon the facts, and with a barbaric calumny of Pokrovski and his pupils as alleged counter-revolutionary conspirators.⁸⁴

Schlesinger was once again condemning Stalin, both in terms of his behaviour towards Pokrovskii as a person and in his guilt for reflecting present day politics into the past. He also remained a staunch critic of Pokrovskii's historical work and theory. Schlesinger, alongside many Soviet historians, still regarded 'overcoming' Pokrovskii's 'school' as a major intellectual achievement of the Stalin era. He offered a consistent view over time, on this issue at least.

In April 1965 Schlesinger published what was ostensibly a review of the publication of pre-1914 correspondence between Lenin and Camille Huysmans, the then Secretary of the Second International.⁸⁵ As well as

⁸⁴ Schlesinger, 'The New Secondary History Curriculum', p. 348, footnote 16.

⁸⁵ Schlesinger, 'Lenin as a Member of the International Socialist Bureau', *Soviet Studies*, 16, 4, April 1965, pp. 448-458. Camille Huysmans (1871-1968) was the Secretary of the

providing an insight into Lenin's attitude towards international Social Democracy in the pre-war years, Schlesinger's review also concerned the incipient debate upon this issue, a debate which Stalin had so firmly crushed in his letter to the editors of *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia* in 1931. The article, therefore, deals with one of the most crucial incidents in the development of Soviet historiography.

It was in this article that Schlesinger was the most critical of Soviet historiography and Stalin's impact upon it in particular. He described how, in the summer of 1930, the leading Soviet historical journal *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia* published an article by the historian A. Slutskii in which he argued that before 1914 Lenin may well have underestimated the danger of 'Centrism' amongst international Social Democratic groups.⁸⁶ Slutskii felt that Lenin's behaviour was explicable since he required international sympathy for the reconstruction of the Russian Social Democratic Party under Bolshevik leadership. However, he criticised Lenin for not having encouraged a breakaway of the left-wings of European parties. Under the influence of what Schlesinger described as 'apparently internal' criticism by the Central Committee Secretariat, the journal's editors admitted on 20 October to having committed an error in publishing Slutskii's article.⁸⁷ However, they also added that it would be expedient of historians to concentrate upon the relationship of the Bolsheviks to the Second International. According to Schlesinger:

This provoked Stalin's rage: in an article....he attacked the editors - which meant primarily Pokrovsky - for permitting discussions on issues affecting the very essence of Bolshevism; Slutsky's ideas were denounced as hidden Trotskyism; a lot of not immediately connected observations were added about Trotskyism allegedly hidden in other publications on party history; 'rotten liberalism', which had

International Socialist Bureau, the permanent executive committee of the Second International, from 1904 until its dissolution. See J. Joll, *The Second International 1889-1914* (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1955).

⁸⁶ A. Slutskii, 'Bol'sheviki o Germanskoi S.-D. v period ee predvoennogo krizisa', *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia* 6, 1930, pp. 38-72.

⁸⁷ Schlesinger, 'Lenin as a Member of the International Socialist Bureau', p. 448.

caused the editors to enter into discussion even with enemies of the party, and basic weaknesses contained in the work even of historians as close to Stalin's political standpoint as E. Yaroslavsky, were condemned.⁸⁸

In damning terms, Schlesinger described the impact of Stalin's letter on subsequent historical work: '.... by his solemn proclamation the task of party history as searching not for the truth but for constructs fitting the needs of the party leadership was firmly established, and has left its traces up to the present day'.⁸⁹ Schlesinger may have believed that the letter only impacted upon party historiography, as opposed to the study of more general historical problems. In his earlier writings Schlesinger had frequently conceded that it was party history that was the most influenced by the vagaries of party policy. Whilst this may be true, it seems unlikely that he would believe all other spheres of historical work remained unaffected. Later in the article, Schlesinger actually wrote in terms of general historiography and the changes which resulted from Stalin's letter.

Schlesinger insisted that he, and other communists, well understood the implications of the letter: 'In the German communist movement, in which I worked at the time, we could have no doubt whatever that such a reinterpretation of the tasks of historiography rather than the struggle against certain incorrect statements had been Stalin's major motive in writing this article and in drawing the appropriate 'organizational consequences' from it'.⁹⁰ Stalin meant to delineate the boundaries of acceptable historiographical debate; as Schlesinger understood it this was a drive for the establishment of theoretical homogeneity. If anyone had been in doubt, the ensuing 'theoretical offensive' conducted by the leaders of the Comintern national sections would

⁸⁸ Ibid. p. 448. Schlesinger was referring to Stalin's infamous letter to the editors of *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia* published on 28 October 1931. See J. Barber, 'Stalin's Letter to the Editors of *Proletarskaya Revoliutsiya*', *Soviet Studies*, 28, 1, January 1976, pp. 21-41.

⁸⁹ Schlesinger, 'Lenin as a Member of the International Socialist Bureau', p. 449.

⁹⁰ Ibid. p. 449. Schlesinger also referred to the letter in *History of the Communist Party of USSR*. Once again making clear that it was intended to assert orthodoxy and Stalin's supremacy. He wrote: 'Moreover, Stalin's intervention marked a further step in the development of party historiography as an institutional device to strengthen the position of the leading group' (p. 285).

soon have clarified matters. Such an account of Schlesinger's thinking on the issue at the time coincides with his description of events in his unpublished memoirs.⁹¹ Both items were written retrospectively and at around the same time. The fact that they support each other displays a consistency which helps to validate Schlesinger's statements on his contemporary understanding.

A certain amount of justification appears to have been written by Schlesinger concerning his, and others, reaction, or lack of it, to this 'theoretical offensive'. He was keen to point out that not all official statements, or all aspects of problematic ones, were incorrect; he argued, '... the occurrence of quite sensible and necessary statements in such documents prevented anyone except those directly harmed from criticizing them'.⁹² Somewhat unconvincingly, Schlesinger argued that these drives could well be used to mobilize party workers against theoretical errors advocated by certain factions within the leadership of the parties, so there may have been a positive element to them. Ultimately however, he wrote: 'Faced with an extremely critical situation in Germany as well as in the USSR, none of us was eager to raise controversial issues'.⁹³ External factors demanded that party loyalty took precedence.

One could argue that these justifications help to explain Schlesinger's attitudes and written emphases up to the 1950s: he did not wish to damage the unity of the party in the face of external danger; there were elements of truth in the new orthodoxy and mobilisation against theoretical errors could be a positive force. Was this why Schlesinger did not publicly denounce what he retrospectively denigrated? Schlesinger's attitude once again evidenced his pragmatism and desire to play the role of advocate for the Soviet system.

One interesting feature of Schlesinger's attitude towards Stalin's letter to the editor's of *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia* is that he appears to have seen the attack as directed principally towards Pokrovskii. He stated this explicitly in the

⁹¹ See chapter 5, p. 194.

⁹² Schlesinger, 'Lenin as a Member of the International Socialist Bureau', p. 449.

⁹³ *Ibid.* p. 449.

introduction to his review, '... he [Stalin] attacked the editors – which meant primarily Pokrovsky'.⁹⁴ Later, when discussing the impact the availability of the Lenin and Huysmans correspondence would have on research, he wrote: 'The publication of this volume may offer an opportunity to resume the discussion which Pokrovsky was prevented from opening in 1930 by Stalin's intervention'.⁹⁵ Schlesinger believed Stalin and Pokrovskii to be the main protagonists in the affair. Perhaps this helps to explain Schlesinger's relatively passive reaction to Stalin's interference in the historical sphere, both at the time and later in the 1930s and 1940s when engaged in writing about Soviet historiography. It may have been another justification for his inactivity, despite his full awareness of the wider implications for theoretical and academic work. Schlesinger consistently made his evaluation of Pokrovskii's contribution to the historical sciences known. He felt Pokrovskii's theoretical constructs and methodology to be fatally flawed and seriously detrimental to both the development of historiography and the teaching of history in the Soviet Union. Throughout his writings he argued that the overcoming of the Pokrovskii 'school' was a major intellectual achievement of the Stalin era. If Schlesinger believed Stalin's attack to be fundamentally directed against Pokrovskii's theories, teachings and students, then he might have taken a pragmatic approach to events; believing the outcome of the attack worthwhile despite the high costs. Of course, in order to substantiate this argument one would have to prove that Schlesinger held this negative interpretation of Pokrovskii already in 1931. There are no articles or papers from this time dealing with Soviet historiography. Yet it is certain that Schlesinger heavily criticised what he perceived as 'Pokrovskiiism' in his first known writing to cover the subject in 1938.⁹⁶

Schlesinger was somewhat isolated on this issue. Many academics have argued that, rather than the letter being an attack directed specifically at Pokrovskii, no historians emerged from the affair unscathed. Barber, for example, argued that very few escaped criticism, dismissal from post or

⁹⁴ Ibid p. 448.

⁹⁵ Ibid. p. 450.

⁹⁶ Schlesinger, 'Neue sowjetrussische Literatur zur Sozialforschung'.

expulsion from the party. He insisted: 'M. N. Pokrovsky, was spared, but he in any case was a dying man. His closest followers ... were all attacked and forced to acknowledge mistakes'.⁹⁷ It seems that Stalin intended to signal a warning to the historical profession in general, rather than to attack one particular leading school at this time.

Schlesinger's review contained an interesting and relatively unique evaluation of Lenin's role in international Social Democracy in the years before the First World War and immediately after the Revolution. He argued that, were it not for Allied intervention leading to civil war on a massive scale, the Bolsheviks may well have dealt with the split from the Menshevik-Internationalists in an analogous way to the conflict with the right-wing communists. Moreover: 'Lenin, if not involved in a desperate war, might indeed, instead of organizing the centralized Comintern, have found some means broader and more propagandist in character to advocate his views within the international labour movement'.⁹⁸ Schlesinger argued that Lenin was pushed, unwillingly, towards an authoritarian, centralized leadership style. Speculating on what Lenin's attitude to events, occurring after his death, might have been. Schlesinger wrote:

I very much doubt whether he even thought, as Stalin later asserted, of the possibility of socialism in one country, but surely he would not have left, as Trotsky later suggested, the Russian revolution in the lurch when the west European part of the revolutionary perspective failed to realize. Still, he would not have claimed that the outcome of the adaptations was the last word of the international socialist movement⁹⁹

He argued that both Trotsky and Stalin were wrong in claiming Lenin's authority for their actions after his death. Lenin would not have envisaged the isolated position of the Soviet Union as desirable and would not have altered

⁹⁷ Barber, 'Stalin's Letter to the Editors of Proletarskaya Revolutsiya', p. 22. This view is mirrored in Enteen, *The Soviet Scholar-Bureaucrat*, p. 153.

⁹⁸ Schlesinger, 'Lenin as a Member of the International Socialist Bureau', p. 452.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.* p. 457-458.

theoretical doctrine to match such a state of affairs. However, equally, he would not have abandoned the Soviet experiment when the west European revolution did not immediately come to fruition. Schlesinger once again advocated the actions taken by the Soviet Union, insisting that its detractors were simply utopian.

This review appears to have been an honest, frank and relatively independent analysis of events in the historical sphere in the Soviet Union in the early 1930s, as well as a brief analysis of Lenin's international role immediately before and after the Revolution. One of the most striking aspects of the paper is how sympathetic Schlesinger was to Lenin. He praised his abilities and the role he played in international communism, as well as staunchly defending his actions against critics such as Slutskii, and what he clearly perceived as slurs upon his reputation by Trotsky and others. Schlesinger had made clear his admiration in writings concerning Lenin and Maxism and this was continued in his historical works and papers on historiography.

In contrast, another striking feature of this review is Schlesinger's near total condemnation of Stalin. The only non-critical statement Schlesinger made about Stalin was that he had been correct to disagree with Slutskii; however his reasons for this were erroneous.¹⁰⁰ Stalin's attack on the editors of *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, which aimed at achieving theoretical homogeneity as he dictated, led to the search not for truth but for convenient constructs to suit the needs of the party. The effects of this offensive were still discernible in academic work on party history as late as 1965 when Schlesinger published his review.

The review conforms to the general problem of Schlesinger's writings on Soviet historiography. How is one to marry his apparently differing attitudes to the same issues? In this paper Schlesinger is at his most vociferously critical

¹⁰⁰ Schlesinger wrote: 'In his attack on Slutsky, Stalin was right in so far as it was indeed impossible for the Bolsheviks to combine, in 1913-1914, with Rosa Luxemburg. He was, however, completely mistaken in describing Lenin's attitude to his duties as a member of the International Socialist Bureau as one of basic opposition' (Schlesinger, 'Lenin as a Member of the International Socialist Bureau', p. 454).

of Stalin and his impact upon the study of history in the Soviet Union. This increases the contrast between the negative evaluation of Stalin discernible in all of his writings in the post-1953 period and his much more positive portrayal of events published before. In this paper, just as in his report on Soviet attitudes towards the treatment of historical sources, Schlesinger insisted upon the enormous significance of Stalin's letter for Soviet historiography and communist intellectual life in general.¹⁰¹ Yet he had made no real reference to it in his writings before 1953, despite writing a series of articles and a chapter in a book specifically on developments within the area. Although his earlier work concentrated upon the later evolution of historical research, in the late 1930s and 1940s, the omission of details on state interference of such seismic proportions seems incredible. The 1931 letter created the intellectual terrain from which any later developments would have emerged and Schlesinger's later writings and personal reflections prove he was only too aware of this.

Schlesinger published a report on recent developments in Soviet social sciences in 1967 in the French periodical *Annuaire de L'U.R.S.S.*¹⁰² Its scope, intention and methodology were very similar to his earlier report for *Zeitschrift fur Sozialforschung* published in 1938; both used contemporary Soviet journal publications to attempt a general analysis of developments within the sphere of social science. In general, Schlesinger felt that after the necessarily negative process of 'de-Stalinisation' the social sciences were now moving in a more positive and progressive direction. He wrote, '.... explicit 'de-Stalinization', i.e. a condemnation of dogma and attitudes established during the two tragical decades, has fairly submerged: in the space thereby opened the search for new, scientifically based approaches not only to practical but also to basic theoretical problems is in full swing'.¹⁰³ In a style typical of his post-1953 writings, Schlesinger displayed an intensely critical attitude towards the Stalin era; he wrote as if this interpretation was to be taken for granted. His treatment of contemporary developments and research was, however,

¹⁰¹ Schlesinger, 'Textual Criticism of Soviet Historical Documents', p. 451.

¹⁰² Schlesinger, 'Some Recent Developments in the Social Sciences in the USSR'.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.* p. 19.

undertaken in a much more optimistic and appreciative manner.

The discussion consisted of three separate topics. Schlesinger described the progress made within Marxist theory, especially in what he labelled 'Marxist historical sociology'.¹⁰⁴ He also described theoretical work on the problems of 'nation' as a concept. Both matters were widely debated in 1966. The remaining section of the article concerned developments within the field of Soviet historiography.

Schlesinger began by pointing out the new positive approach to history which he was able to discern:

I may, at first, denote the truly ingenious way in which, without sacrificing anything of the necessary clarity, they have achieved a 'de-dramatization' of de-Stalinization so as to get their hands free for more urgent tasks. The *Voenna-Istoricheskii Zhurnal* – in my opinion, the best of the group – got the issue settled by publishing now, from issue to issue, not just necrologues for the victims of the army purge which would be bound to make a sombre impression.... but by reprinting the citations from their earlier, and happier years, of the heroic deeds for which they got their medals.¹⁰⁵

Evidently Schlesinger felt Soviet historiography could now move on from the 'sombre' task of 'de-Stalinisation'. He approved of the more optimistic and celebratory approach of the military history journal he cited. The generally positive tone of Schlesinger's report was also visible in his appraisal of works on the origin of the Soviet state.¹⁰⁶

The main issue of 'de-Stalinisation' for Soviet historians, according to Schlesinger, had been the need to discover the correct attitude towards the

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. p. 27.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. p. 21.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. p. 24...

Pokrovskii 'school'. This was necessary because of the 'legend' established since 1934 of the, '...anti-historical, if not counterrevolutionary' character of Pokrovskii and his students.¹⁰⁷ Schlesinger gave no details as to the origin of this 'legend' but the use of such a term implied his antipathy towards it. This was disingenuous since in his earlier writings, at the time in which the 'legend' was still the orthodox Soviet interpretation, he appeared to concur with this very negative evaluation.

In order to demonstrate the kind of work published on the issue, Schlesinger described and analysed an article by O.L. Vainshtein entitled 'The Formation of Soviet Historical Sciences in the 1920s' and published in 1966.¹⁰⁸ He argued that, whilst Vainshtein did not deny Pokrovskii's deviation from the correct path of historical materialism, he also showed his relationship to earlier historians. He compared the Pokrovskii 'school' to the liberal historiography from whence it had emerged. Historians such as Kliuchevsky had placed more importance upon social formations and class interests than individuals and ideas. However, they were still far from developing a proper Marxist perspective. As Schlesinger pointed out, '.... against this state of historical science before, and immediately after, the October revolution the approach of Pokrovsky, and of the school of Soviet historians trained by it, appear in a more proper perspective'.¹⁰⁹ Throughout the 1920s, Pokrovskii and his students developed by fighting those bourgeois trends inevitably still present in Soviet historiography. They also played a vital role in the construction of Soviet historical institutions such as the Institute of Red Professors and RANION (the Russian Association of Research Institutions in the Social Sciences).¹¹⁰ This was another achievement for which Pokrovskii was now to be recognized by both Vainshtein and Schlesinger.

This positive appreciation of Pokrovskii's legacy was not accompanied by any

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. p. 22.

¹⁰⁸ O. L. Vainshtein, 'Stanovlenie sovetskoi istoricheskoi nauki (20-e gody), *Voprosy Istorii*, 7, 1966, pp. 32-47. Schlesinger stated in error that the paper was published in number 9 of 1966.

¹⁰⁹ Schlesinger, 'Some Recent Developments in the Social Sciences in the USSR', p. 22.

¹¹⁰ For more information on the establishment of these academic institutions see Barber, *Soviet Historians in Crisis*, chapter 3.

minimising of the errors committed by his 'school'. Schlesinger pointed out that the article criticised Pokrovskii's misuse of sociological schemata, his continued acceptance of certain concepts of bourgeois science and his tendency to 'modernise' the class struggles of the past, amongst other errors. In fact, Schlesinger continued: 'All the essential elements of Stalin's criticism of Pokrovsky are thus upheld'.¹¹¹ Yet, it was also accepted that these errors were indicative of the general level of historical studies in the late 1920s and early 1930s. As Schlesinger argued, '.... the Pokrovskeans, in this respect, hardly committed mistakes much surpassing Stalin's elaboration of a 'slaves revolution' which allegedly overcame ancient society'.¹¹²

Schlesinger argued that Vainshtein did not deal with the overtly nationalist elements to Stalin's anti-Pokrovskii campaign. Apart from this, however, Schlesinger appeared to be in agreement with his interpretation. This approach contrasts remarkably with the continuing attacks on Pokrovskii that Schlesinger reported immediately before the Twentieth Congress. However, it is typical of the change in historians' attitudes heralded by the Congress; they now proclaimed Pokrovskii's merits as an historian as well as writing of his theoretical and practical errors. Schlesinger appeared to concur with such an interpretation. He was keen to point out that Pokrovskii had advanced historiography well beyond the legacy left by his predecessors and insisted that his errors were no greater than those of his contemporaries. However, Schlesinger did retain some consistency with his earlier writings. He maintained that Pokrovskii's system was deeply flawed or at best obsolete.

It seems clear that there was a change in the tone of Schlesinger's writings before and after Stalin's death. Up to 1953 Schlesinger wrote a great deal on

¹¹¹ Schlesinger, 'Some Recent Developments in the Social Sciences in the USSR', p. 23.

¹¹² Ibid. p. 23. Schlesinger had written about the 'slaves revolution' in his publications of the early 1950s. In ambivalent, if not approving, language, Schlesinger argued that Stalin illustrated the superiority of the working class with reference to their ability to end exploitation; the slaves' revolution had merely substituted one form of exploitation for another. Schlesinger added that Stalin's observations, '.... Made without any claim to specialist knowledge, served their purpose as historical parallels drawn by an intelligent politician, and they were received as illustrations to statements about the interpretation of contemporary history' (Schlesinger, 'Recent Soviet Historiography', 2, pp. 4-5). This can be seen as yet another example of the difference in emphasis discernible in Schlesinger's earlier writings when compared with his later ones.

the subject and some elements of continuity were visible. He always generalised the study of history in the Soviet Union in a positive manner. Whilst never denying the political and censorial impediments necessarily constituting a significant part of a historian's work, Schlesinger praised the kind of publications appearing. He argued that enough intellectual freedom and historiographical debate existed to ensure vigorous scholarship. At this time, Schlesinger also frequently criticised what he perceived as the Pokrovskii 'school' of history; he argued that its defeat was a major achievement of the historical field. After 1953 Schlesinger's general attitude, as expressed in his publications, altered radically. He now denigrated Soviet historical scholarship of the Stalin era for its poor quality and condemned the intellectual atmosphere from whence it originated. He argued that significant improvements could now be expected as a result of 'de-Stalinisation'. This later attitude is mirrored in his unpublished memoirs.

Schlesinger's Change in Emphasis and Potential Explanations

There can be little doubt that a distinct difference in the tone of Schlesinger's emphases and arguments are visible in his writings on historiography before and after Stalin's death. As the previous chapters have elucidated, Schlesinger demonstrated a generally positive attitude towards the quality of historical scholarship in the period before 1953. However, in his later writings, he criticised that very same output. His analysis had altered from one of conditional praise to almost wholesale condemnation. The paradox between these two positions is increased further on consideration of Schlesinger's memoir reflections. Schlesinger wrote a great deal on his perception of intellectual work in pre-war Soviet Russia. He argued that his freedom to produce academic or intellectual work was severely impeded by the state, to the point where his own commitment to that freedom was in such contrast to the official position, that his expulsion from the party became inevitable. This interpretation would substantiate Schlesinger's later writings, in which he

referred to the intellectually impotent atmosphere created by Stalin, yet contradicts his earlier work and its more positive tone.

These alterations in interpretation may well affect judgements of Schlesinger as a historian and writer on Soviet historiography. They perhaps inevitably impact upon the value of his publications to students of the Soviet Union. It is, therefore, vital to fully comprehend and attempt to explain this dichotomy. The remainder of this chapter will explore the changing nature of Schlesinger's interpretations and their relationship to the dynamics of official Soviet orthodoxy; seeking to determine to what extent, if any, Schlesinger's views on historiography mirrored the party line. Could Schlesinger be correctly identified as a Stalinist during his early academic career on leaving the USSR? Did the apparent vacillations and contradictions in his analysis coincide with similar changes in the Soviet Union and, if so, what effect does this have on the value of Schlesinger's writings and reputation as an academic? Schlesinger's attitude towards three things in particular will be highlighted: the *Short Course* and its interpretation of Russian history; Shestakov's textbook, and Pokrovskii's legacy and 'school'. The chapter will then examine possible motives or explanations for the evident inconsistencies in Schlesinger's work; before, once again, considering how this influences any critique of that work. It will be possible to discern in what way his understanding of Marxist thought, his study of Soviet historiography, and the inherent contradiction in his analyses over time, impacted upon his writing.

It seems beyond doubt that Schlesinger advanced a comparatively positive portrayal of historical scholarship in the Soviet Union in his papers, articles, etc written from the late 1930s up to the death of Stalin in 1953. It is also possible to recognise parallels in Schlesinger's analysis with those of orthodox Soviet interpretations. These were elaborated in officially endorsed state textbooks which were, according to Markwick, granted 'biblical status'; they, '.... established *the* paradigm within which all other historical writing was confined'.¹¹³ The most notorious of these texts was the *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks): Short Course*, which

¹¹³ R. D. Markwick, *Rewriting History in Soviet Russia*, p. 42.

established the axioms of party history from its publication in 1938 until its denunciation at the Twentieth Congress. It is, therefore, essential to determine Schlesinger's attitude towards it. The textbook was edited by a commission of the CPSU Central Committee and was granted official CC endorsement. However, Stalin was popularly regarded as its principal author. As Markwick pointed out: 'Hailed as 'the encyclopaedia of Marxism-Leninism' by Kaganovich, the *Short Course* was the codified culmination of the merciless 'auto-da-fé' against the historians set in train in 1931 by Stalin's letter to the editors of *Proletarskaya revolyutsiya*'.¹¹⁴ On 14 November 1938 the CC passed a resolution declaring the *Short Course* the only 'official' guide to Marxism-Leninism and party history, thus ending any opportunity for speculation or debate on matters contained therein.¹¹⁵

Schlesinger did not write a great deal about the *Short Course* or the period of history it covered in his pre-1953 papers. It is, therefore, a little difficult to ascertain his opinion of it. However, Schlesinger did quote from the text, referring to it as an 'official source', in *Spirit of Post-war Russia*.¹¹⁶ The citation was to prove that Marxist and Soviet theory did not neglect the historical importance of human thought. Schlesinger felt, at this point, that he could use the *Short Course* as a legitimate and respectable source for the presentation of Soviet interpretations. He utilised it as a source to substantiate his own argument, an argument that advocated a positive portrayal of Soviet historical writing.

There are two elements of Schlesinger's analysis of Russian history and historiography, which coalesce with the official Soviet interpretation as represented by the *Short Course*. Firstly, Schlesinger was in agreement with

¹¹⁴ Ibid. p. 42. Lazar Kaganovich (1893-1991) was a staunch ally of Stalin and Politburo member from 1930 until his expulsion from the party under Krushchev. He remained a loyal supporter and accomplice of Stalin through the excesses of the Great Terror and by the late 1930s was a member of his select inner circle (H. Rappaport, *Joseph Stalin, A Biographical Companion*, pp. 139-140).

¹¹⁵ Markwick, *Rewriting History in Soviet Russia*, p. 42. Medvedev has also pointed to the significance of the *Short Course* in the development of an orthodox historiography (Medvedev, *Let History Judge*, p. 809).

¹¹⁶ Schlesinger, *Spirit of Post-war Russia*, p. 144.

the text about the nature of pre-twentieth century Russian society. The *Short Course* argued, 'Tsarist Russia entered the path of capitalist development later than other countries. Prior to the sixties of the past century there were very few mills and factories in Russia. Manorial estates based on serfdom constituted the prevailing form of economy. There could be no real development of industry under serfdom'.¹¹⁷ It seems that the 1860s were regarded as the key decade in Russia's emergence from its feudal economy. In Schlesinger's *The Problems of Commercial Capital*, he wholeheartedly agreed with this analysis. Insisting that anything but a capitalist interpretation of Russia's feudal past could be considered, Schlesinger argued: 'Russian history knows no breaking up of the manor'.¹¹⁸ This was in direct accord with the *Short Course's* statement on the ubiquity and significance of manorial estates. Schlesinger continued: 'It would seem much more promising to describe Russia as the classical country of feudalism which, through at least four big crises... developed new and again new forms of society until the fifth (that during the sixties of the 19th Century) forced upon it at least some compromise with capitalism'.¹¹⁹ Here again, Schlesinger was in agreement with the official Soviet depiction of the 1860s as the significant decade for transition from feudalism to capitalism, although both texts were at pains to point out that this transition was not an abrupt change from one type of economy to another, but was a much more prolonged process.

The second issue on which Schlesinger seemed to be in complete accord with the *Short Course* was on the theoretical base from which historical study was undertaken in the Soviet Union. In 1947, Schlesinger wrote, with approval:

.... the Marxist conception of history was formulated, and achieved its main triumphs, in opposition to the traditional 'explanation' of historical development by the enumeration of

¹¹⁷ *Short Course*, p.3.

¹¹⁸ Schlesinger, *The Problems of Commercial Capitalism*, p. 4.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 4-5.

the feats of 'great men' and by the description of the ideas influencing their actions. In opposition to such an 'idealistic' conception, Marxism stresses the importance of the objective structure of society, based on the material conditions under which men produced their means of livelihood. The objective structure of society influences the action of men both by influencing their ideas and by setting limits to the realization of their ideas.¹²⁰

Similarly the *Short Course* argued that, in contrast to the 'idealism' of the Narodniks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries: 'The strength and vitality of Marxism-Leninism lies in the fact that it does base its practical activity on the needs of the development of the material life of society and never divorces itself from the real of society'.¹²¹ The text continued:

It does not follow from Marx's words, however, that social ideas, theories, political views and political institutions are of no significance in the life of society... We have been speaking so far of the *origin* of social ideas, theories, views and political institutions, of *the way they arise*, of the fact that the spiritual life of society is a reflection of the conditions of its material life. As regards the *significance* of social ideas, theories, views and political institutions, as regards their *role* in history, historical materialism, far from denying them, stresses the role and importance of these factors in the life of society, in its history.¹²²

Both texts emphasised the materialist element to the Marxist conception of history, the primacy of the conditions of material life in any causal

¹²⁰ Schlesinger, *Spirit of Post-war Russia*, p. 137.

¹²¹ *Short Course*, p.116.

¹²² *Ibid.* p.116. Author's italics.

relationship. However, both also wished to demonstrate that this did not lead to the complete exclusion of social ideas as important factors in history.

Yet, in the third part of Schlesinger's series of articles on Soviet historiography he made an implicit criticism of the *Short Course*. Schlesinger pointed out the difficulties historians of the German revolution of 1918 faced, since their analysis was only free from criticism if it conformed to the official interpretation as elucidated in the *Short Course*. This led to criticisms of 'a dogmatic character'.¹²³ Schlesinger was arguing that the necessity of complying to the dictates of the *Short Course* impacted negatively on the research and writing of history. In the same paper he explicitly disagreed with the official Soviet interpretation of the German revolution. The *Short Course* insisted, '... the revolution in Germany was not a Socialist but a bourgeois revolution'.¹²⁴ However, Schlesinger argued:

.... if a revolution is defined as a certain form of mass-movement which may be abortive, then it is true to say that a working class revolution with socialist aims occurred in Germany in 1918 and was defeated. In Germany of 1918, bourgeois society was a firmly established reality although there was still room for bourgeois-democratic reforms, and any thorough change would have been socialist.¹²⁵

This obviously represented a major distinction between Schlesinger's writings and the interpretation in the *Short Course*. However, Schlesinger did not state this explicitly and elsewhere had suggested that the text was a reasonable presentation of official theory.

¹²³ Schlesinger, 'Recent Soviet Historiography', Part 3, p. 159.

¹²⁴ *Short Course*, p. 231.

¹²⁵ Schlesinger, 'Recent Soviet Historiography', Part 3, p. 159.

It seems clear that Schlesinger did disagree with some aspects of the *Short Course*. He certainly did not echo any of its most vulgar descriptions or interpretations. In fact, he wrote little on any of the subject matter covered by the textbook, thus there is little that is directly comparable. There are, however, similarities in interpretation, and even in description, with some of Schlesinger's earliest writings. So perhaps Schlesinger was following the party line, on some matters at least. However, this benevolence or lack of criticism is in contrast to the attitude Schlesinger presented after Stalin's death. In the post-1956 era, Schlesinger wrote with praise of Mikoyan's attack on the *Short Course* arguing that it was the 'root of the evil'.¹²⁶ Schlesinger now conformed to the new orthodoxy as represented by the speeches of the Twentieth Congress.

Another textbook representing official Soviet interpretations was *Istoriia SSSR: kratkii kurs*, published in 1938 under the editorship of A. V. Shestakov.¹²⁷ It was issued as a textbook after receiving second prize in a competition for school textbooks, announced by Sovnarkom and the Central Committee in 1936, and was intended for use amongst third and fourth grade students.¹²⁸ K. Shteppa has argued that this text, '... was named the standard textbook obligatory for all elementary and middle schools in the Soviet Union and until the late 1930s and early 1940s was the only material on Russian history for courses in these and even the higher schools'.¹²⁹ Its pre-eminent position within the school curriculum demonstrates its importance and testifies to the orthodoxy of the interpretations it expounded. Schlesinger wrote about it specifically on a number of occasions in the years between his leaving the USSR and Stalin's death.

In Schlesinger's 1938 report for *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* he offered much praise for the newly published textbook.¹³⁰ He pointed to its inclusion of

¹²⁶ See above, p. 286.

¹²⁷ Shestakov, *Istoriia SSSR*.

¹²⁸ Pundeff, *History in the USSR*, pp. 105-6.

¹²⁹ K. F. Shteppa, *Russian Historians and the Soviet State*, p. 128-129.

¹³⁰ Schlesinger, 'Neue sowjetrussische Literatur zur Sozialforschung', pp. 194-198. See

sections on the Scythians and Black Sea Greeks as evidence that the text was not entirely based on the history of the Slav peoples. He argued that, despite certain 'prettifications', Shestakov's book provided a balanced and detailed presentation of historical events. This would certainly suggest general agreement with the interpretations it contained. Again in 1947, Schlesinger made positive comments upon the textbook. He argued that, in comparison to earlier interpretations of Peter:

Present Soviet historians, for example in the official textbook, by Shestjakov, acknowledge that Peter *the Great*, as he is again called, 'did a good deal to shape and strengthen the state ruled by the big landlords and merchants'.... The achievement of reform within the existing system is recognized as well as the necessity of eventually overthrowing this system. This result seems to be reasonable from the historical as well as from the methodological point of view.¹³¹

This, again, would suggest agreement with the interpretation of Peter I contained in Shestakov's book.

As late as October 1952, Schlesinger was praising the book.¹³² Whilst admitting the politically expedient, patriotic nature of the text, Schlesinger gave the impression that this did not necessarily detract from its balanced approach. In fact, in a footnote in the same paper, Schlesinger wrote:

The treatment of the conquest of the Tartars in the 10th Century is, indeed, much more sympathetic to the victims of Tsarist expansion than would be conceivable in a Soviet publication today. This also applies to the treatment of the achievements of

chapter, 6, pp. 221...

¹³¹ Schlesinger, *Spirit of Post-war Russia*, p. 142. Author's italics.

¹³² See chapter 6, p. 271.

Peter I; here the sufferings of the masses during the realization of these achievements are emphasized.¹³³

Although criticising more modern textbooks, Schlesinger, once again, offered praise of the interpretative line taken in the Shestakov work. This suggests that Schlesinger approved of the official Soviet line as represented by the textbook.

When Schlesinger referred to the text in his writings after 1956 he revealed a similar attitude, showing consistency of interpretation in this matter at least. He continued to express admiration for the Shestakov work, particularly in relation to Shamil. He argued that the late Stalin period distorted the reasonable interpretations expounded in the text. Schlesinger followed the orthodoxy of the early Stalin period but explicitly rejected that of later. Whilst this condemnation was far more forthright in his later writings than in his earlier ones, Schlesinger's opinion did not change over time. His consistency was in contrast to the general tone of his work, which displayed a marked alteration in the period after Stalin's death.

It could be argued that Schlesinger so closely mirrored official Soviet interpretations over time that this was, in fact, his intended aim. This feature of his writing is particularly striking as regards his attitude to Pokrovskii. In earlier publications Schlesinger wrote in almost entirely critical terms, denigrating Pokrovskii for his schematic, abstract and a-historical approach to Russian history. He accused Pokrovskii of transforming dialectic materialism into 'economic automatism'.¹³⁴ The content of his criticism and even the vocabulary utilised were remarkably similar to official decrees concerning the teaching of history, such as those of May 16, 1934.¹³⁵ His interpretation corresponded closely to the official Soviet one as expressed in the two-

¹³³ Schlesinger, 'Recent Discussions on the Periodization of History', p.159, footnote 14.

¹³⁴ Schlesinger, 'Neue sowjetrussische Literatur zur Sozialforschung', p. 189.

¹³⁵ Pundeff, *History in the USSR*, p. 100-103.

volume collection of essays, published in 1939-40.¹³⁶ Schlesinger's writings shared none of their polemical invective but the actual content of their scholarly criticism was similar in character. In contrast, after the Twentieth Party Congress the official Soviet stance toward Pokrovskii and his 'school' mellowed significantly. Enteen wrote: 'Praise of his energy, his devotion and his practical leadership, coupled with warnings against a revival of his ideas long ago transcended might be considered the essence of the official interpretation'.¹³⁷ This again is remarkably similar to Schlesinger's attitude in his post-Stalin writings. Was Schlesinger being influenced by official Soviet interpretations when forming his own? Did Soviet policies affect the tone of his academic writing? Whilst this may be the case, it is vital to note that throughout both periods, and even in his memoirs, Schlesinger argued that the defeat of the Pokrovskii school was a progressive development. The Stalinist period of historiography had a positive impact on historical science if only because of this step. Schlesinger was consistent in this regard in both his writings before Stalin's death and those after.

Nonetheless, there remains a clear distinction between Schlesinger's writing in the two periods investigated. The tone and content of his work suggests an attempt to provide a distinctly positive, optimistic portrayal of Soviet historiography, and Soviet life in general, in the years under Stalin. In contrast, after 1953, and particularly after 1956, Schlesinger retrospectively condemned events under Stalin and now expressed great optimism for developments in the post-Stalin era. Throughout both periods Schlesinger's interpretation often appeared remarkably similar to Soviet orthodoxy as expressed through decrees, official textbooks and the Twentieth Congress.

It is necessary to posit reasons for this change. Why did Schlesinger's interpretations and attitudes alter so starkly? Why did his later work correspond to his own experiences and memoir reflections when his earlier

¹³⁶ See chapter 6, p. 215.

¹³⁷ Enteen, 'Soviet Historians Review Their Own Past: The Rehabilitation of M. N. Pokrovsky', *Soviet Studies*, 20, 3, January 1969, pp. 306-320 at p. 306.

work did not? Why were his earlier interpretations so different to those of his peers and modern commentators?

One possibility is that Schlesinger was deliberately and slavishly following the changing Soviet line – acting as Stalin’s man in Glasgow. Whilst there are similarities between certain party orthodoxies and Schlesinger’s interpretations, this argument does not hold up to scrutiny. Schlesinger was certainly never uncritical of the Soviet Union and its policies. He regularly disagreed with Soviet orthodoxy and explicitly said so, although this was often in footnotes in the pre-1953 period. He had also demonstrated his belief in the necessity of academic independence and integrity in his activities as a scholar in the UK.¹³⁸ One example of this integrity is demonstrated in Schlesinger’s attitude towards the publication of views at odds with his own. When the economist N. Jasny found that he was unable to publish in the US due to his unorthodox views on Soviet statistics, he discovered a forum in Schlesinger’s *Soviet Studies*. J. Wilhelm has noted that this was on Schlesinger’s instigation: ‘When one of the editors, Rudolf Schlesinger, published an article favourable to Soviet agriculture, he sent a copy to Jasny with the offer to publish an unedited reply from him because he knew Jasny disagreed with his assessments’.¹³⁹ This presents a very different picture of Schlesinger than one of a loyal adherent to Soviet orthodoxy. It must also be remembered that it was his ‘liberal’ attitude towards freedom of debate that led to his expulsion from the KPD.

Also, there were elements of consistency in Schlesinger’s writings. This often put him at odds with orthodoxy and provides evidence of his academic integrity. As much as the emphasis in Schlesinger’s writings on Pokrovskii may have altered, he consistently denounced Pokrovskii’s concepts and methods and argued that their defeat was a major achievement in the maturation of Soviet historiography. Schlesinger also always maintained the difference between actual, professional historical work within the Soviet Union

¹³⁸ See chapter 1, pp. 19.

¹³⁹ Wilhelm, ‘The Failure of the American Sovietological Economics Profession’, p. 62.

and those historians who were merely propagandists playing a game.¹⁴⁰ In fact, Schlesinger seems to have believed in his own consistency. He made no reference to the shift in his interpretation following Stalin's death. In *History of the Communist Party of the USSR* he cited early work to provide further information and verify his proposition. He referred readers to his *Zeitschrift* article of 1938 and his first paper on Soviet historiography, published in July 1950, when discussing the positive impact the defeat of the 'Pokrovskiiian' approach had on the historical sphere.¹⁴¹ This suggests that Schlesinger still believed in the legitimacy of these works. The fact that his writings can be seen to somehow mirror those of official Soviet orthodoxy on Pokrovskii should not necessarily be seen as an indication of his complicity with, or of the undue influence of, that state.

Another explanation for the change in Schlesinger's interpretation could be that the process of 'de-Stalinisation' in the Soviet Union threw new light on historical scholarship and thus altered his opinion. In this case, information offered to the CPSU at the Twentieth Party Congress would have been revelatory to Schlesinger. It seems clear that before 1956 he did believe in the existence of a conspiracy against Stalin, something he felt at the time justified the 'purges'. In his memoirs, he explained that he had no doubts about the anti-Stalin conspiracy when writing *Spirit of Post-war Russia*.¹⁴² Schlesinger wrote that this belief changed as a result of the Congress; he now accepted that charges had been 'trumped up', but he continued to accept the functionality of this violent generational shift.¹⁴³ It seems clear that the Congress did alter Schlesinger's opinion of the USSR and this could explain his condemnatory attitude towards previous Soviet scholarship. However, it does not particularly elucidate his positive tone in pre-1956 writings since his memoirs show that he felt the intellectual environment in Stalin's Russia to be incompatible with scholarly integrity. It also fails to explain why his earlier attitude was in contrast to the majority of international opinion, which argued

¹⁴⁰ See, for example, chapter 6, p. 266.

¹⁴¹ Schlesinger, *History of the Communist Party of the USSR*, p. 290, footnote 69.

¹⁴² Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Illegalität und Emigration*, p. 273.

¹⁴³ Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: Whither Germany?*, p. 282.

that Soviet historiography was controlled by the party to the detriment of scholarship.

A more convincing explanation is that Schlesinger was reacting to what he perceived as the 'cold war' mentality of some Western and émigré authors. In 1961 he had written that British research on the Soviet Union conformed, on the whole, to correct academic scrutiny. Yet much that was published on the subject in the U.S. was of a wholly reactionary character. Schlesinger referred to, '...the American method of promoting the study of the 'potential enemy'' and argued that:

Scholarly insight cannot be achieved when it is based on the assumption that Soviet developments are due to some devilish disruption of the supposedly 'natural' state of society (tantamount to the official mythology about American society itself) or that they are due to the inherent dynamics of that abstraction called 'power' (the product of American disillusionment with the democratic ideology) and that consequently every action is permissible if it will weaken a supposedly hostile 'power complex'.¹⁴⁴

In his unpublished book based on the Marxism-Leninism lectures, Schlesinger referred disparagingly to 'cold warriors', those writers and commentators who acted from the perspectives and motivations of their particular cold-war hemisphere rather than from academic principles.¹⁴⁵ This attitude was also evidenced in *History of the Communist Party of the USSR* when he wrote of 'Western Sovietology' in the pejorative.¹⁴⁶ He argued that scholars of this type began their studies from 'absurd expectations', basing their criticism of communist states on capitalist criteria.

Schlesinger often displayed an immensely sceptical view of observational

¹⁴⁴ Schlesinger, 'British Studies of the History of the Soviet Union', *Science and Society*, XXV, Winter, 1961, pp. 1-19 at p. 2.

¹⁴⁵ Schlesinger, *Marxism-Leninism*, p. 10.

¹⁴⁶ Schlesinger, *History of the Communist Party of the USSR*, p. 406.

material published by émigrés, placing much of it firmly within the cold war camp. Again, Schlesinger felt that this type of publication was more common in the U.S., 'We [in the UK] are also spared the emphasis that has become conventional in the United States on the 'revelations' of displaced persons, and the diversion of scholarly energies into 'field studies' and interviews with that particularly unrepresentative sector of the Soviet population'.¹⁴⁷ His negative opinion of the value of émigrés work was also displayed in two papers on Soviet law, both published in 1951. In a book review, Schlesinger wrote:

The problem of how to use the evidence available in the experiences of Displaced Persons constitutes one of the most urgent issues in the methodology of the analysis of any problem in Soviet society. The tendency of some Displaced Persons to become producers or inspirers of best-sellers, and the hopeless entanglement of experiences undergone in the U.S.S.R. with Western ideology and politics in which the analyst of such works finds himself caught do not encourage the use of that type of material.¹⁴⁸

Similarly, in a paper on the value of court cases as sources of information on Soviet society, he argued that, '... the refugees' experiences are subject to a process of selection and editing, which are to a greater or lesser extent conditioned by the state of international relations and of public opinion in the country of publication'.¹⁴⁹ If Schlesinger had always believed this to be the context from which a large amount of Western work emerged, it may well have encouraged him to provide an overly optimistic or positive interpretation of Soviet developments in reaction.

That some of the academic output of the West in the 1950s and early 1960s

¹⁴⁷ Schlesinger, 'British Studies of the History of the Soviet Union', p. 2; See also his attitude towards émigré authors in Schlesinger, 'Litvinov's Ghost', *Soviet Studies*, 7, 4, April 1956, pp. 373-383 and Schlesinger, 'Emigre Specialists in Soviet Institutions', *Soviet Studies*, 4, 1, July 1952, pp. 63-70.

¹⁴⁸ Schlesinger, "'Justice in Russia": A Dissent', p. 976.

¹⁴⁹ Schlesinger, 'Court Cases As A Source of Information on Soviet Society', p163.

was heavily influenced by its 'cold war' context is now increasingly recognised. R. Markwick has written: 'Sovietology, lavishly financed especially in the United States and Germany, emerged as an essential part of the West's cold-war armoury in which the totalitarian paradigm, at least until the mid-1960s, was a vital weapon. Nowhere has this been more evident than in Western scholarship on Soviet historical writing'.¹⁵⁰ Scholars depicted Soviet historians as the handmaidens of political authority, producing nothing of academic merit. As Markwick pointed out, whilst there was certainly some truth to these accusations, '... unsubstantiated assertions about the myths allegedly woven by Soviet historians in their psychological prison were a major impediment to non-Soviet scholars taking the work of their Soviet counterparts seriously'.¹⁵¹ Adherents of this totalitarian model were often entirely unconscious of the fact that they too may have been involved in their own myth making. They tended to hold firm to the conviction that 'our' research is 'objective' whilst 'theirs' is 'ideological'. McDermott and Agnew have commented on the almost total consensus surrounding the 'totalitarian paradigm' of the Soviet system that was dominant in Western academic circles from the 1950s onwards.¹⁵² They pointed out, however, that E.H. Carr and others 'declined to pay homage' to this ubiquitous theory.¹⁵³ Schlesinger could admirably be placed in this lofty company, being unwilling to bow to the dominant historical and interpretative trend.

S. Fitzpatrick, the renowned historian of culture in the Soviet Union, has also commented on the 'moral protest' and 'totalitarian' nature of much memoir and academic work about Stalin and the academic world. She argued that a great deal of memoir literature on cultural life under Stalin, '... expresses the viewpoint of the old Russian intelligentsia and tends to be a literature of moral protest, either against the Soviet regime as such or against the abuses of the Stalinist period'. Equally, she noted a body of Western work that analysed the

¹⁵⁰ Markwick, *Rewriting History in Soviet Russia*, p. 5.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.* p. 6.

¹⁵² McDermott and Agnew, *The Comintern*, p. xxiii.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.* p. 212. L. Viola pointed to the 'Cold War binary thinking' that simplified the study of the Soviet Union in the US. This was in contrast to UK work which often positioned itself outside the Cold War paradigm (L. Viola, 'The Cold War in American Soviet Historiography and the End of the Soviet Union', *Russian Review*, 61, January 2002, pp. 25-35 at p. 25).

syndrome of 'totalitarian control' of culture:

The element of moral condemnation in the concept of totalitarianism – developed in the postwar years, which were also the formative years of American Soviet studies – makes the scholarly literature strikingly similar in tone to the memoir literature of the intelligentsia.¹⁵⁴

Whilst most of this literature did provide a great deal of information upon the subject and was not incorrect in many of its theories and assumptions, the relationship between party and culture was often far more complex than was acknowledged.

The paper by B. Wolfe in the edited conference proceedings, *Totalitarianism*, provides a good example of this kind of literature.¹⁵⁵ Published in 1954 it discussed 'totalitarianism' and intellectual life, with a particular focus on history in the Soviet Union. Using the model of totalitarianism, Wolfe argued that there was nothing of value in Soviet historical output, it was merely myth-making and there were no scholars or academics, just propagandists. He wrote:

But to say that history has become a weapon and the historian a warrior is scarcely to touch upon what is essentially new in the new history. Historiography has been absorbed into ideology and must support and accord with and be pervaded by the ideology that justifies and takes its character from the regime. History is part of a myth or mystique, so that its actors, its forces and trends, its trajectories from past through present to the future, must be in keeping with the style that characterizes the whole system. Just as painting and poetry and music must conform to that 'style' so history, which is once more a form of

¹⁵⁴ Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front*, p. 238.

¹⁵⁵ B. Wolfe, 'Totalitarianism and History' in C. Friedrich (ed.), *Totalitarianism*, (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1954) pp. 262-277.

poetry in its primary sense of myth-making.¹⁵⁶

Explaining the totality of state control over history, Wolfe continued:

In the new historiography there is a startling reversal in the roles of history-maker and historian. In the pre-totalitarian epoch or in the free world, men make their history as best they can, and the historians try to determine the relations between what they thought they were doing, what they said they were doing, and what they have really done. But the new rulers know what they are doing. They possess in their ideology and in their charismatic attributes a prophetic insight and an absolute key to the future. They are history-makers in a new sense, having banished all uncertainty and contingency from human affairs. They no longer need critical interpreters and assayers of their intentions, their words, their deeds, and the consequences of their deeds.¹⁵⁷

Schlesinger may have reacted against this dualist view - of the 'free world' pitted against the intellectually stagnant Soviet system. The impact of Schlesinger's overtly political bias on the value of his writings lessens when his work is compared to undoubtedly polemical peers such as these. Within this context, it could well be argued that Schlesinger was being sympathetic to Soviet historians in reaction; he was perhaps attempting to redress the balance.

Other scholars took a far more neutral position than Wolfe when investigating Soviet historiography. However, many still occasionally betrayed what Schlesinger may have understood as their 'cold war bias' and wrote from within the 'totalitarian' model. K Shtepa often referred to the monolithic party machine that dictated historical interpretation from on high.¹⁵⁸ He also

¹⁵⁶ Ibid. p. 264.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. pp. 266-267.

¹⁵⁸ Shtepa, *Russian Historians and the Soviet State*, p. 212.

occasionally adopted a sarcastic tone when discussing Soviet historiography.¹⁵⁹ C. Black wrote from a 'totalitarian' perspective and made clear his total rejection of the theory and methodology employed by Soviet historians.¹⁶⁰ Schlesinger consistently argued that the West's insistence on evaluation from their, necessarily one-sided, criteria did not allow for a full appreciation of events or developments.¹⁶¹ To entirely reject, from the outset, the methodology used by the historians being examined may have blinded the author to their achievements. Such a perspective was also clearly at odds with Schlesinger, who embraced that methodology. His early positive attitude may well have been to counter these very different approaches.

In fact, as noted throughout the chapters, much of Schlesinger's work seems to have been concerned with defending Marxism and the Soviet Union against unfair Western criticism. In his unpublished memoirs, Schlesinger explicitly noted his intention, on leaving Soviet Russia, to counter the prevailing anti-Soviet campaign in the West by way of his writings.¹⁶² In a paper from 1967 Schlesinger noted the West's preoccupation with Stalin and his rule when discussing the Soviet Union. He wrote of the broadness of Marxist teaching, encompassing as it did the fields of art and even the natural sciences and argued: 'But most Western argument on Soviet ideology rests precisely upon the record of the twenty-two years – out of a total Marxist record of 123 years'.¹⁶³ He also spoke of the, '...short-term distortion of the picture by the Stalin episode', continuing, '...on which, and on the inflation of which to a counter-utopia the advocates of the not-so-open Western society rely to the

¹⁵⁹ 'Beyond any doubt, history is the most political of all sciences!' (Shteppa, *Russian Historians and the Soviet State*, p. 277). Shteppa was, perhaps, an example of the 'displaced persons' Schlesinger was sceptical of. He was originally a historian under Stalin but was arrested briefly in 1938. He remained in Kiev when the Germans took over the area and fled to Germany on the return of the Red Army in 1943. Steppa emigrated to the US in 1952 (Shteppa, *Russian Historians and the Soviet State*, Forward by A. Dallin).

¹⁶⁰ He wrote, 'As a matter of fact, it may well be questioned whether Marx's historical materialism, taken literally, contributes anything substantial to the understanding of history...Non-Marxist thinkers who have devoted serious study to historical materialism, tend to agree that it is speculative and utopian rather than scientific' (Black, 'History and Politics in the Soviet Union', p. 10).

¹⁶¹ See, for example, chapter 6, p. 230.

¹⁶² Schlesinger, *Erinnerungen: Illegalität und Emigration*, p. 268.

¹⁶³ Schlesinger, 'More Observations on Ideology', p. 96.

present day'.¹⁶⁴ The concentration upon the Stalin era and its negative aspects was made clear and Schlesinger attempted to portray a more accurate or positive picture in reaction. Such an attitude would have become less tenable, or necessary, after the Twentieth Congress, perhaps explaining the alteration in his writings at this time. Now, it was possible for Schlesinger to denounce Stalin without appearing to validate all cold war criticism of the Soviet regime.

In his unpublished book on Marxism-Leninism, Schlesinger again highlighted the defensive aspect of his writing. He argued that he wished to treat Marxism from a more correct perspective. Previous courses on Marxism had been delivered by opponents who denounced it as a threat to civilisation.¹⁶⁵ The Western intellectual scene was dominated by a number of erroneous interpretations and Schlesinger wished to take a stand against them.¹⁶⁶ For example, Schlesinger wrote that after the Twentieth Congress and the Hungarian insurrection of 1956, '...there has been a tendency to react to the obvious short-comings of Soviet-type 'realistic socialism'' by a revival of Marx's pre-Marxist writings and an emphasis on the humanist elements therein.¹⁶⁷ He disagreed with such a revival and felt that it was a distortion of Marxism.

Other historians and scholars have described Schlesinger as 'anti-cold war' in his attitude and professional behaviour. This substantiates the view that Schlesinger's changing perspectives can be partly explained by his desire to counter prevailing cold war tendencies in the West. Notable academic R. W. Davies referred to Schlesinger, Jack Miller, Deutscher and others as belonging to the 'anti-Cold War' camp. Describing this group, Davies wrote:

If the primary characteristic of the members of this camp was their belief in the legitimacy and progressiveness of the Bolshevik revolution, one of their secondary characteristics

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. p. 89.

¹⁶⁵ Schlesinger, *Marxism-Leninism*, p. II.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid. p. 12...

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. 13.

(curious though this may seem today) was that they all regarded the Soviet industrialization drive and the forced collectivization of agriculture as in broad outline inevitable, and in some ultimate sense progressive.¹⁶⁸

Davies counterpoised this group to those who viewed the Bolshevik revolution as illegitimate and wrote from that perspective. He referred to the shared outlook of the anti-cold war group again in a review published in 2000 which spoke of the 'eccentric and flamboyant' Schlesinger.¹⁶⁹

This explanation of Schlesinger's changing interpretation as a reaction to cold war scholarship can be understood as part of his role as 'scholar advocate'. Schlesinger was an advocate, a defender, of the Soviet Union and Marxism in general in the face of hostile Western reaction. His loyalty and pragmatism allowed Schlesinger to retain a reasonable attitude towards developments whilst opponents could only view events from a negative, polemical, perspective. Equally, disillusioned ex-supporters were blinded by their utopianism. They failed to recognise the necessary, if unfortunate, decisions that had to be taken if the Soviet Union was to survive and turned, instead, to opposition.

There is considerable evidence of Schlesinger's loyalty. His Marxist perspective shone consciously from all his work and his sympathy with the Soviet Union was always transparent. In his memoirs Schlesinger wrote of his awareness that KPD members expected him to attack his former party immediately on arrival in the West.¹⁷⁰ He, thus, determined to prove his loyalty to Marxism. This desire to demonstrate his loyalty may have found expression in his publications; his favourable attitude to Soviet historiography in the Stalin era, his initial recognition of Stalinism as the successor to Leninism, and his subsequent agreement with the denunciations of the Twentieth Congress. Yet such a description of events could well be unfair. As Schlesinger wrote: 'I

¹⁶⁸ R. W. Davies, 'Drop the Glass Industry: Collaborating with E. H. Carr', *New Left Review*, I/145, May-June 1984, pp. 56-70 at p. 59.

¹⁶⁹ R. W. Davies, 'E. H. Carr' *The Russian Review*, 59, 3, July 2000, pp. 442-445 at p. 445.

¹⁷⁰ Schlesinger, *In a Time of Struggle: The War Approaches*, p. 227.

think that my further activities have sufficiently elucidated what I understand by the obligation of Marxists to contribute, inside or outside the established organisational framework, to the development of Marxist thought'.¹⁷¹ Schlesinger was loyal to a particular ideology and methodology, not a state or party. He conformed to what he understood as the tenets of Marxist scholarship rather than the dictates of the Soviet Union. This does, perhaps, explain Schlesinger's initial willingness to portray historical research conducted within a supposedly Marxist framework in a positive light. However, his writings were coloured by his sympathies to Marxism and the Soviet experiment in its entirety, not by vulgar party adherence.

Schlesinger's pragmatism or utilitarianism in respect to the Soviet Union has also been widely demonstrated, most notably in his attitude towards the purges and Stalin's legacy. This perspective allowed Schlesinger to retain his sympathy when others rejected the Soviet Union, after the purges, the Hungarian events of 1956 or the revelations of the 'secret speech', for example. Schlesinger believed that hard decisions and actions were sometimes necessary for the greater good. To imagine otherwise was utopian. He argued that Rosa Luxemburg's revulsion at the use of terror would not have lasted since it was necessary in some situations: 'This is the crux of the matter: the Russian revolution has ceased to be a dream, it has become hard reality. If Rosa had survived and become responsible for a real revolution building a new order she, too, would have learned to do hard things'.¹⁷² This attitude helps explain why Schlesinger was able to discern positive outcomes from the Stalin era where others could only express distaste for the atmosphere and methods used. Schlesinger pointed to the advantages of the defeat of the Pokrovskii school and the reasonable interpretations within certain textbooks whilst recognising, although perhaps diminishing, the general character of a manipulated and cowed historical profession. After 1956, events had moved on and the Soviet Union was now discussing its errors. Schlesinger no longer needed to redress the balance of Western interpretation and could concentrate on the optimistic indications

¹⁷¹ Ibid. p. 222.

¹⁷² Schlesinger, 'Marx Without an Organizing Party', p. 244.

emerging from Moscow.

Detailed analysis and recognition of the outlined changes in Schlesinger's writings on historiography inevitably affect their value to students of the subject. Yet a consideration of his possible motives has shown that they were unlikely to have been sinister in intent. It is doubtful that Schlesinger had deliberately followed the dynamics of official Soviet orthodoxy as anything more than a distant sympathiser. His desire to demonstrate his loyalty was more about proving that he was not an 'enemy' of the Soviet Union and his positive interpretation of facts and events may well have been heavily influenced by what he perceived as the reactionary character of some Western scholarship. Schlesinger's real loyalty was to Marxism, as a theory and methodology in its widest sense. As an editor, Schlesinger demanded the very highest standards of academic integrity. His seeming pursuit of objectivity in practice surely lessens the criticism that the conspicuously political character of his early writings must inevitably attract.

It is important to remember that the apparent inconsistency in Schlesinger's description of Soviet historiography is fundamentally a matter of emphasis. The difference between his analyses before and after Stalin's death was in their general impressions, the nuances of interpretation. Schlesinger never denied those elements which contradicted his overall analysis. His conclusions were never so strong that they denied the possibility of alternatives. His writing on Soviet historiography and Marxism can, therefore, provide a wealth of insightful information.

Compared to other authors of his generation Schlesinger appears uniquely self-aware. He often began his books and papers with a statement of his political convictions and intellectual assumptions.¹⁷³ Other writers were less forthcoming and yet their assumptions would nevertheless influence the

¹⁷³ For example, in the preface to *Marx His Time and Ours*, Schlesinger described his personal background and asserted his adherence to Marxism (Schlesinger, *Marx His Time and Ours*, p. x).

contents of their work.¹⁷⁴ Whilst caution must clearly be exercised as regards Schlesinger's work, it still remains a valuable resource for a better understanding of Marxist theory in the twentieth century, Soviet historiography, the Stalinist state and life as a scholar in the cold war West. Schlesinger's political and ideological outlook coloured his scholarly output. However, an inclusion of the usual caveats necessary for any source evaluation allows for a proper appreciation of his work in terms of its contribution to the development of Soviet studies.

¹⁷⁴ In *Russian Historians and the Soviet State*, Shteppa argued that it was his aim to be, '...completely objective in his representation and impartial in his interpretation of the facts'. Yet, one paragraph later, admitted that, 'a certain degree of subjectivism was perhaps impossible to avoid', since the author was a witness and participant in events he described.

Chapter Eight: Conclusions

Rudolf Schlesinger was an important political activist, theorist and journalist. Involved in many of the key events of the first half of the twentieth century, he recorded his experiences in his unpublished memoirs and wrote academic works on the same subjects. On his departure from the Soviet Union in the late 1930s, Schlesinger established a career as a renowned and respected scholar in the UK. However, his activities and publications have remained relatively ignored since his death. This may be because his writing style and subject matters do not lend themselves to a broad or popular readership or, perhaps, the area of study has fallen out of favour with the end of the cold war and the collapse of the Soviet Union. Nevertheless his academic writings remain a rich vein of scholarship and are worthy of detailed investigation.

Two aspects of Schlesinger's work have been examined in detail: his writings on Marxism and those on Soviet historiography. Marxism was both the political motivation and intellectual foundation of all of Schlesinger's activities and publications. It was chosen as an area of study because it allows for an appreciation of all of Schlesinger's other work; Marxism provided the methodology, theoretical paradigm and often the subject matter of his papers. Schlesinger was a reputable and prolific scholar of Marxism, displaying an encyclopaedic knowledge of the classics and Marxist developments in Russia. He was also a representative of his generation of left-wing, radical intellectuals.

The second focus was Schlesinger's writings on Soviet historiography. Although this was not an obvious selection since Schlesinger is not primarily known for his work in this field, the study was undertaken for a number of reasons. Not least because Schlesinger wrote specifically about Soviet historical output on a great many occasions, and consistently over time, and he referred to the topic frequently when addressing other matters. Developments within Soviet historiography were of great interest to him

throughout his publishing career. Also, an in depth critique of Schlesinger's work on this subject demonstrated the change in emphasis discernable in his publications, depending upon the date written. In his early works on all topics, Schlesinger provided a positive, optimistic, even defensive, interpretation of events within the Soviet Union. In the period after Stalin's death, and particularly from 1956 onwards, he condemned those same developments but expressed an optimistic attitude for the post-Stalin future of the Soviet Union. This change is most clearly highlighted in his writings on the subject of Soviet history.

A critique of Schlesinger's writing on Marxism and Soviet historiography is illuminating because it allows for a better appreciation of his value as a scholar to students of the Soviet Union. The overdeterminist foundation of the thesis suggests that it also throws new light on those very topics, the Soviet Union in general and the cold war nature of Western scholarship. Historical science and Marxist theory were two of the bases of Stalin's rule. Thus, any illumination of them should, in addition, provide an insight into Stalinist Russia.

Schlesinger's intellectual development began with a devotion to the writings and theories of Rosa Luxemburg. She had a decisive influence on the young liberal, converting him to communism for the rest of his life. Schlesinger initially admired Luxemburg's commitment to spontaneity, her attack on the bureaucratism of the trade union movement and her concern with the peoples of undeveloped nations. He remained an admirer of her political convictions but began to question her theories and methods when the disparities between the successful experiences of the Russian party were compared to those of the Luxemburgist KPD in Germany. On realising that Luxemburg and Lenin's attitudes towards party organisation were incompatible, and fully understanding the difference in their conflicting economic theories, Schlesinger decided Lenin was correct. From the mid-1920s onwards Schlesinger became a Leninist.

According to Schlesinger, Luxemburg remained a powerful icon but her theories were erroneous and contributed to the failure of the KPD in Germany. He supported Luxemburg but rejected the doctrine of 'Luxemburgism'. He felt that she left the party unable to correct its mistakes without wildly veering towards deviations of the opposite extreme. He believed that, had the German party been successfully bolshevised, they would have been able to achieve power through revolutionary action sometime between 1918 and 1923. For Schlesinger, Luxemburg's errors occurred because she did not recognise the new stage of capitalism, monopoly capitalism, unlike Lenin or Hilferding. Society had developed from the time of Marx and Engels but Luxemburg was unable to evolve from the classical model. Her understanding of Marxism and capitalism became obsolete.

Schlesinger criticised those who tried to use Luxemburg in support of their own partisan political agenda. He argued that she was no arch-democrat and could not be used as a theoretical stick with which to beat the Bolsheviks. In his later writings on the subject, written after Stalin's death, Schlesinger also derided Stalin's distorting influence on Luxemburg's legacy. He argued that the virulent anti-Luxemburg campaign in the KPD in the mid-1920s was merely an attempt by party members to visibly express their pro-Stalin loyalty. Schlesinger believed that de-Stalinisation offered an opportunity for Marxists to develop a correct perspective towards Luxemburg.

Despite his early adherence to Luxemburg, by his mid-twenties Schlesinger transferred his allegiance to Lenin and Leninism. His admiration of Lenin, his political activities and Marxist theories, were a key feature of all of Schlesinger's writing. This respect shone through his work consistently over time. It is also clear that Schlesinger believed Leninism to be the next stage of Marxism. It was not a distortion, as some critics argued, but the next dialectical development in a dynamic model. In fact, Schlesinger went further, arguing that Leninism led to the success of Marxism, created a higher phase. It was Lenin's ability to develop theory, to change it to fit new material circumstances, that directly led to the success of the Russian revolution. Lenin recognised the nature of capitalist development in Russia and the

significance of the proletarianising process on the peasantry, for example. In contrast, Luxemburg's failure to develop theory directly led to revolutionary defeat in Germany.

Schlesinger argued that Lenin's main contribution to Marxism was his theory of the party. Lenin's methods of party organisation were outlined in his writings and were strictly adhered to as the Bolsheviks took power. Other parties wishing to emulate their success should, therefore, follow Lenin's instructions. According to Schlesinger, Lenin was able to blend a synthesis of the Russian revolutionary tradition with Marxist theory to create a new type of party, one capable of leading a revolution. However, material conditions had now changed, in part owing to Lenin and his party's success. The world was very different and Lenin's Marxism now required development to take this into account.

Schlesinger seemed to unquestioningly accept Lenin's tenets and propositions. That Lenin carefully prescribed the necessary actions to bring about revolution in Russia appeared obvious, although this version of events can be easily disputed. Schlesinger also aped Lenin's facile philosophical depictions and argued that his plans for the post-revolutionary state were correct, even if they were unable to come to fruition due to external circumstances. His writings on Leninism broadly corresponded to the Soviet line of interpretation. His early works implied Stalinism was the natural progression from Leninism, they also stressed 1912 as a key date in the history of Marxism – the year Stalin joined the central committee. However, his later works emphasised the distorting effect Stalin had introduced to theory. It was necessary to return to Leninism before the next dialectical stage could be embarked upon. Despite this nuanced change in analysis Schlesinger's writings on Lenin are insightful and scholarly. They also provide a wealth of information on Schlesinger's personal Marxist development.

Although Schlesinger wrote little about Marx and Engels, he held them in great esteem and was very knowledgeable on the subject of the classics. Schlesinger's interest lay in the contemporary significance of Marxism – its

relevance for the present day. His emphasis was, thus, inevitably on later developments, on Leninism, Luxemburg etc. However, it is still possible to detect general themes in Schlesinger's understanding of Marx and Engels.

This understanding emerged from his relationship to Leninism. He used Leninist sources to explain Marxism and followed Lenin's interpretations. In addition, Schlesinger made clear that Marxism was more important than Marx. Marx and Engels founded a theory and method that developed beyond their initial input. The founders were wrong on some issues, and others were solved over time, but this had no effect on the veracity of Marxism. Schlesinger insisted the two key elements of Marxism were dialectics and historical materialism. Although he varied his view on the importance of Hegelian dialectics to Marxism, he consistently argued that these two ideas formed the basis of the theory. He also stressed the active nature of Marxism, in contrast to contemplative philosophy. Marxism was intended to understand and then to change, not merely to observe.

Schlesinger's motive of myth dispelling was particularly clear in respect to his views on Marxism and Marx. Many of his writings on the subject seemed geared towards the clarification of misunderstandings and misconceptions in the West. For example, Schlesinger frequently emphasised Marx's attitude towards Russia, arguing that Marx did not develop a universal model of development; there was more than one path to socialism. Schlesinger also hotly disputed the notion that Marxism denied the power of ideas and the human element or that it was overly deterministic.

An examination of Schlesinger's Marxism suggested similarities between his conceptions and those of contemporaries, particularly Georg Lukács. The two theoreticians did have much in common; such as their insistence on Marx's debt to Hegel, their concentration on the active nature of Marxism and its importance as a method. They also both strongly rejected vulgar materialism and economic determinism. However, Schlesinger sided with Lenin wherever his views differed to Lukács'. Schlesinger argued that Marxism was a scientific method of universal validity and that dialectics were objective and

independent of man. This was in obvious contrast to Lukács. They also disagreed as to Luxemburg's legacy since Lukács insisted she alone had advanced Marxist theory after Marx and Engels' death. Schlesinger would necessarily have been influenced by Lukács' concentration upon philosophy and his vocabulary since they emerged from the same intellectual and political milieu. However, their similarities are not as great as one might expect. Schlesinger's own references to Lukács, though few, are consistently dismissive.

Once more in the role of myth breaker, or 'scholar advocate', Schlesinger argued that Stalin was a Marxist theoretician. Although no genius, those who denied Stalin's role in the development of Marxist theory did so for partisan or political reasons. Schlesinger felt Stalin was the first to recognise that Leninism was a new, more advanced, stage in Marxism. He was also instrumental in dropping utopian elements in world revolution. When discussing Stalin's theoretical input, Schlesinger was, in general, more positive in his earlier works. He argued throughout his publishing career that Stalin had been significant as a 'populariser' of Marxism – he made the theory accessible to the average worker. However, in his later works, Schlesinger consistently pointed to the negative impact Stalin wrought, both in terms of the intellectual atmosphere he created and his own contribution. He argued that Stalin's popularising involved vulgarisation.

The investigation into his writings on Stalin revealed Schlesinger's pragmatic attitude and this helps to explain the apparent inconsistency in his views over time. Schlesinger argued that Stalin was a brutal leader who carried out tasks in an illegal and inhumane manner. However, Stalin took decisions necessary for the survival of the Soviet Union, the embodiment of socialist hope. Schlesinger believed Stalin's 'socialism in one country' was not intellectually valid but was necessary to motivate the Soviet people at a time of isolation and doubt; the theory's utility was the most important thing. He reacted against the horrors of the purges but pointed to their efficacy and insisted that Stalin's leadership fulfilled a historical function, however distasteful that was to utopians.

Turning to Soviet historiography, Schlesinger's memoir reflections on his time as a scholar and intellectual in the Soviet Union were examined. This was to provide a personal context to his academic publications. Schlesinger worked in the Soviet Union as an academic researcher and editor in the 1920s and 1930s and wrote extensively of the experiences in his unpublished memoirs. He seemed to believe the historical field was very separate from his own intellectual circle and this may diminish any comparisons drawn between the two. This division may help to explain why his personal reflections differed so sharply to his attitude towards Soviet intellectual freedom expressed in his early writings in the West. However, his knowledge of the scholarly climate must surely have given him a general insight into the world of the historian. There is, thus, a contradiction between his negative personal evaluation of the intellectual atmosphere of Stalin's Russia and his positive interpretation immediately after his expulsion.

In general, Schlesinger's memoirs detailed a hostile intellectual environment, one without academic freedom and in which party dictates were the final word in all discussions, if a discussion was allowed at all. Schlesinger encountered often insurmountable difficulties to publication and was soon reluctant to air disagreements in party meetings. He described the effect of Stalin's 1931 letter to *Proletarskaia revolutsiia* on the KPD and the ensuing clampdown on intellectual freedom; surely realising that its impact on Soviet historians must have been even greater. Schlesinger also argued that he rejected the concept of Marxism developed under Stalin, Marxism as an authoritarian symbol of party unity. Instead, Schlesinger believed that Marxism was a method developed by dialectical progression; it emerged through argument and discussion. To limit freedom of debate, thus, stifled Marxism.

However, Schlesinger did point to one positive element of Stalin's rule on intellectual life. He insisted the repudiation of Pokrovskii's schematic, economist interpretation of history represented a clear advance in Soviet historiography. Schlesinger consistently argued this was the case in all his academic writings. He detailed other advances he felt had taken place in the

arts under Stalin, arguing that Stalin overcame the narrow mindedness of the earlier period.

Schlesinger's works on Soviet historiography written and published during Stalin's lifetime were, generally, very positive in character. He praised recent interpretations of Peter I and current textbooks and argued that they represented progress from previous analyses and were historically reasonable. He insisted the Marxist methodology employed by Soviet historians did not stifle debate but, instead, provided it with a sound theoretical foundation. There was, in fact, a great deal of critical debate; discussions and disagreements were how orthodoxy was established. Whilst Schlesinger never denied the difficult aspects of scholarship in the Soviet Union, in some of his writing, particularly *Spirit of Post War Russia*, he provided an entirely glowing characterisation of developments in the historical field under Stalin.

Schlesinger's interpretations and emphases often aligned with official Soviet campaigns. His depiction of Pokrovskii as a schematic, vulgar economic determinist was simplistic and distorting. Yet, it mirrored the official anti-Pokrovskii campaign of the 1930s; often utilising the same vocabulary. Similarly, Schlesinger's description of the nature of pre-revolutionary Russia altered subtly as official Soviet characterisations did. In his first works, Schlesinger insisted the pre-revolutionary state was substantially feudal, agreeing with the ensuing anti-Pokrovskii movement. Yet later, he conceded that there were notable elements of capitalist development; appearing to agree with the official post-war anti-cosmopolitanism campaign.

The pre-1953 publications certainly admitted the negative aspects of Soviet scholarship. Schlesinger denounced Soviet campaigns, such as those against 'bourgeois objectivism', and argued that they were having a detrimental effect on the historical sphere, the quality of scholarship and its international reputation. However, critical comments were often consigned to footnotes, inevitably lessening their impact. Individual reviews and papers were heavily censored, especially those concerning later periods. Yet, Schlesinger did not

appear to draw these negative impressions into his overall conclusions. He argued there was a difference between genuine historians, who produced scholarship of merit and substance, and mere propagandists. It was this latter group who tended to fall foul of authorities and participate in the dubious purges and denunciations of academics and interpretations. Schlesinger may have been keen to separate the work of the two groups. He would not wish to have Soviet historiography judged on the output of party propagandists.

Initially after Stalin's death, the change in Schlesinger's attitude towards Soviet historiography was small. He continued to argue that work of value had been completed and that freedom of debate had existed. Although, he was now more condemnatory of the general academic environment and strongly criticised individual works. His analyses in works written after the Twentieth Party Congress, however, represent a sea change. Schlesinger outlined the events of the congress and the de-Stalinisation process and appeared in complete accord with developments. He approved of the condemnation of Stalin's excesses and cult of personality, and wrote enthusiastically of the call for historians to take a more measured approach to their work.

Schlesinger appeared optimistic about the future of historical science in the Soviet Union. However, he also portrayed a deeply hostile attitude towards earlier work, Soviet historiography completed under Stalin. He pointed to historians' selective approach to facts and sources, taboos on certain themes and a general authoritarian degeneration in the intellectual environment. This was in stark contrast to his early positive appraisals. Schlesinger noted the deleterious impact of Stalin's exhortations to Soviet patriotism, particularly on the study of early periods of Russian history. He also emphasised the terrible effect of Stalin's 1931 letter. His early work barely referred to the event, yet was now described in damning terms.

Schlesinger's change in tone often corresponded to official Soviet orthodoxy. In the pre-1953 era, he agreed with interpretations in textbooks and the anti-Pokrovskii campaign. After 1956 he supported the pronouncements of the

Twentieth Congress and appeared in complete agreement with the more conciliatory stance towards Pokrovskii. This, alongside the change in emphasis, required explanation if Schlesinger's writings were to retain any value as academic work.

Schlesinger could have been slavishly following the Soviet party line. However, there is plenty of evidence of his academic integrity. Schlesinger was never uncritical of developments within the Soviet Union and his analysis often contradicted official orthodoxy. Also, there were many elements of consistency in Schlesinger's analysis. So this explanation seems unlikely. Perhaps the speeches at the Twentieth Congress were revelatory to Schlesinger, fundamentally altering his attitude towards earlier events. Whilst this is plausible, and explains Schlesinger's retrospective condemnation it does not account for his earlier praise, in opposition, as it was, to the majority of international opinion.

The most reasonable explanation for Schlesinger's early positive perspective was that he was reacting against perceived cold war bias of the West. He expressly pointed to the cold war hostility of many writers and émigrés. Modern scholars have substantiated the assertion and have criticised the blinkered approach to Soviet historiography and the totalitarian paradigm of much Western work of the time. In addition, peers of Schlesinger argued that he was an 'anti cold-war' scholar.

Alongside this motive, was Schlesinger's desire to remain loyal to the Soviet regime, and, more importantly, to Marxism and communism in general. In his role as scholar advocate, Schlesinger defended and promoted the Soviet Union. That is not to say that Schlesinger was a propagandist or that he justified all actions of the state. However, his pragmatism and utilitarianism allowed him to eschew utopian disillusionment and instead accept the harsh realities of revolutionary governance and state building. Knowledge of this aspect of Schlesinger's scholarship affords a proper perspective on the value of his writings.

Whilst the notion of the 'scholar advocate' is helpful in understanding Schlesinger, it is not an absolute explanation of his motivations and writings. The concept is used to show the conflicting nature of Schlesinger's work, his dual role as both a scholar and an advocate of Marxism and the Soviet Union. However, there were times when the advocate appeared to dominate the scholar and Schlesinger's intellectual honesty must be called into question. His near total acceptance of Lenin's writing on philosophy, and empirio-criticism in particular, is a good example of this aspect of Schlesinger's work. For the most part, Schlesinger simply aped the simplistic and distorting criticisms of his mentor despite his undoubted awareness of the crass nature of this abuse. The advocate was stronger than the scholar.

Schlesinger's attitude towards the 'Twenty One Conditions' of entry to Comintern are also illuminating in this respect. Schlesinger wrote frequently that he believed the conditions were mistaken; they created an overly centralised organisation aimed at little more than wholesale 'Bolshevisation' of the communist movement. The conditions failed to cleanse the parties as they were intended to and the principles they were supposed to convey were rarely understood by signatories. In fact, according to Schlesinger, the conditions made workers less willing to learn from Russian experiences. They needlessly alienated the very people they were to inspire. As a scholar, Schlesinger understood and commented on this. However, in spite of his misgivings, he left the Austrian Socialist Party when it refused to meet the conditions. He joined the Austrian Communist Party in order to remain loyal to the Soviet experiment. The need to remain alongside the victorious Russian communists was paramount even if they were mistaken or their actions harmful. In Schlesinger's actions the advocate, once again, proved more powerful than the scholar.

Schlesinger argued that many people in his generation silenced their personal misgivings in order to stay faithful to Soviet Russia. They felt this sacrifice was necessary for the greater good of the socialist cause. Like others, his motives were clear and he did not deny them. This provides an insight into Schlesinger's work and helps explain the conflict within them. Yet his devotion

to Lenin, his naive belief that were it not for Soviet Russia's desperate war for survival Lenin would have constructed an International along more open lines, run counter to his academic analysis of the situation and to many of Lenin's own writings. In this, and on other occasions, Schlesinger appeared so, 'blinkered by his own intellectual idiom', to use Jack Miller's phrase, that it can be difficult to afford some of his work much credibility.¹

There were other sections of Schlesinger's writings that can be placed in this category; times when advocacy seemed a stronger motive force than scholarship. His early failure to condemn the *Short Course* and Stalin's letter to *Proletarskaia revolutsiia* or to acknowledge the hugely detrimental effect they had had upon the Soviet historical field are particularly striking examples. These works deliberately sought to stifle debate and dictate, quite explicitly, the boundaries of historical truth. Their facts and interpretations were the only ones that historians were permitted to use. Again, when writing about the 'anti-cosmopolitanism' campaign, Schlesinger failed to highlight its anti-Semitic character. This omission is remarkable. It would seem that Schlesinger's desire to illuminate or advocate the positive aspects of Soviet historiography outweighed the need to paint a completely accurate picture in his scholarly work. Schlesinger hinted at his reasons for accepting Stalin's letter in his memoirs. He argued that most understood the purpose of his intervention but were concerned about external threats to the Soviet Union and felt their solidarity with it was more important than expressing opposition and promoting disunity. However, whilst there was clearly a conflict between Schlesinger as an advocate and as a scholar, it was only on certain occasions that the advocate entirely dominated. This should not affect an overall appreciation of his writings.

Besides the body of work on Marxism and historiography discussed in this thesis, Schlesinger contributed to scholarship in many other ways. The 'scholar' description can, thus, be further defended. These other aspects of Schlesinger's career deserve further, more detailed study but can be briefly

¹ See above, p. 20.

summarised. Working at the Glasgow Institute of Soviet and East European Studies, Schlesinger became a leading light within a generation of scholars who founded the academic field of soviet studies in the UK. Alongside others, such as Maurice Dobb and E. H. Carr, Schlesinger helped to create an open British discipline in opposition to the more cold-war minded hostility of much US work on the same subject. His personal experiences of the Soviet Union and continental social democracy, coupled with his academic background and language skills were ideal preparation for this career. It is clear that Schlesinger's colleagues and contemporaries found his contribution invaluable and he was described as an authoritative figure on Russian matters.

One of Schlesinger's most significant contributions to the new field was in his co-founding and co-editing the journal *Soviet Studies*, one of the world's leading academic journals devoted to the Soviet Union. Based in Glasgow, the journal has remained an important periodical, changing its title to *Europe-Asia Studies* in 1993 following the collapse of the Soviet Union. The journal provided a forum for scholars with an interest in the field to publish and interact and bestowed academic credibility on a still new discipline. Schlesinger contributed prolifically to the journal throughout his career and was noted as an editor of integrity who strove for academic objectivity whatever his personal political convictions. In 1964 Schlesinger also founded and edited the journal *Co-existence*. Testament to Schlesinger's scholarly integrity, this was a modern attempt to promote friendly academic dialogue between ideological and developmental divides.

Schlesinger was also well-known for his two documentary readers produced for the International Library of Sociology and Social Reconstruction.² The works, on the family and the nationalities problems in the USSR are significant for providing translated and annotated materials and documents unavailable in the west up to then. Schlesinger also spent much of his time at

² Schlesinger, (ed.) *Changing Attitudes in Soviet Russia: The Family in the USSR*; Schlesinger, (ed.) *Changing Attitudes in Soviet Russia: The Nationalities Problem and Soviet Administration*.

Glasgow publishing translations and annotations of Soviet texts in *Soviet Studies*. These, again, provided a wealth of information and source material for students and helped to lay the foundations of the discipline.

Schlesinger, the scholar advocate, had several key attributes. Despite his occasional scholarly failures, when the role of advocate seemed to take precedence in his desire to remain loyal to the Soviet experiment, Schlesinger appears intellectually honest. Consistency in approach and motivation can be seen in his work on Marxism and Soviet historiography. In both, he fought against what he saw as vulgar Marxism, vulgar economic determinism; a misunderstanding of the ideology and method that distorted and blunted it as an instrument of social change and intellectual advancement. In historiography, Schlesinger believed Pokrovskii's influence to have been hugely detrimental because it could be seen as simple economic determinism. This vulgarisation was increased yet further in the hands of his followers and popularisers. Schlesinger was supportive of developments under Stalin because historians finally overcame this error. Pokrovskii's school became obsolete, an improvement upon pre-Marxist historical analysis but dated and vulgar nonetheless. In Marxism, Schlesinger combated attempts to pit the young Marx against his more mature works and argued against vulgarisation and overly deterministic interpretations.

Another key feature is Schlesinger's lifelong desire to counteract the myths and distortions that he saw surrounding perceptions of Marxism and the Soviet Union. Whether caused by ignorant misunderstanding, utopian disillusionment or cold-war hostility, Schlesinger attempted to rescue Marxism from misinterpretation. He wished to show the West, in particular, the essence of true Marxism, the reality of the Soviet Union, rather than the jaundiced, one-dimensional version commonly propounded. His defence of both may have swung too far in opposition, but was done from an honest and stated standpoint.

Schlesinger understood Marxism as a transforming ideology and method. It was supposed to change the world, for the better. This was also the essence

of his scholarship. Schlesinger, as a Marxist and scholar, was actively engaged in that transformation. His writings must be assessed from this perspective; his intention was to change things: to explain, inspire and lead. This would necessarily give his work a political colour but does not make them any less honest or credible.

Schlesinger's Marxism, his understanding of history, his personal motivation were all profoundly influenced by the success of the Bolsheviks and the rise of the Soviet experiment. Schlesinger viewed everything through the prism of the Soviet Union. Originally raised within the German communist movement and Marxism of Luxemburg, Schlesinger shifted allegiance to Lenin when the success of the Russian revolution became clear. To Schlesinger, this triumph, compared to the abject failure of German communism, was proof of Lenin's superiority over Luxemburg. Schlesinger turned his attention east, and there it stayed. He was able to forgive almost anything the Soviet Union did, even when he was personally injured by those actions, because it was the current best hope for humanity. To Schlesinger, the Soviet Union was the pinnacle of communist achievement thus far. It was not perfect, it made mistakes, required development, but this was the nature of Marxist dialectical progress. To believe otherwise, was naïve utopianism.

Schlesinger was loyal to the Soviet experiment and the Marxist method. This fact influenced all of his writings. Yet this loyalty was not to a specific party, to the machinations of political orthodoxy and the dictates of changing party personnel. It was to Soviet and Marxist ideals. In fact, Schlesinger's commitment to these ideals – investigation, criticism, freedom of debate – led to his expulsion from the party he had devoted his life to. Schlesinger was a consciously transparent adherent of Marxism, his writings were politically coloured. With this in mind, one can appreciate the wealth of information and analysis he provided in the course of his academic career. His work is a rich, and largely untapped, source for the better appreciation of many aspects of the twentieth century.

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