

WHAT HAPPENED IN STOCKHOLM?  
MOSES FINLEY, THE MAINZ AKADEMIE,  
AND EAST BLOC HISTORIANS\*

Excommunications et anathèmes ont trop longtemps été la regie,  
à laquelle tous n'ont pas encore renoncé. Le Congrès de Stockholm en  
fournit, une fois de plus, l'occasion indirecte....

“*Excommunications et anathèmes*”: Friedrich Vittinghoff may not, in his contribution to the Eleventh International Historical Congress in Stockholm in 1960, have sought to emulate medieval priests who “let the devil rage inside the excommunicants”, but Robert Mandrou’s reference to “anathemas” conveys the pervasive, nearly religious, hostility of those August days, at the height of a long Cold War that so often transformed the analytic into the agonistic.<sup>1</sup> Consider the *Historikerstreit* of the 1980s,<sup>2</sup> or the Frankfurt *Historikertag* in 1998.<sup>3</sup> Ancient history, often on the sidelines, twice took center stage in this period: at the reportedly tempestuous memorial conference for Elisabeth Welskopf in 2003,<sup>4</sup> and, earlier, at Stockholm. Tensions at Stockholm were heightened, we have now learned, by the unannounced or covert involvement of the West German *Auswärtiges Amt*, the Foreign Office.<sup>5</sup>

Stockholm yielded no Hegelian syntheses, but it marked the intersection of influential strains in the historiography of ancient Greece and

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\* I thank the editors for inviting this contribution in honor of Bernd Seidensticker, who as a person and scholar has contributed so much to our field, and whose work on East German writers provides a model for anyone exploring the period under consideration in this essay.

<sup>1</sup> Mandrou 1961, 518 is referring to Vittinghoff 1960, 89–131. CISH here = the International Committee of Historical Sciences, or Comité International des Sciences historiques. On anathemas: Vodola 1986, 46.

<sup>2</sup> Eley 1988, 171–208.

<sup>3</sup> Oxle, Schulze 1999.

<sup>4</sup> Stark 2005. I am grateful to Kurt Raaflaub and Christian Mileta for their accounts of this event.

<sup>5</sup> On the *Auswärtiges Amt*’s involvement in academic and civil affairs, though not Stockholm, see E. Conze et al. 2010.

Rome, a critical moment in the postwar evolution of individual historians and their institutions. Possibly “unproductive” in the short term, Stockholm has proved revealing and consequential.

The agents of discord at Stockholm included Eastern Bloc groups and the West German historical association, the *Verband Historiker Deutschlands* (VHD).<sup>6</sup> Hans Rothfels and Gerhard Ritter, conservative foes of Hitler, helped build the *Verband* after 1945. When East German established their *Deutsche Historiker-Gesellschaft*, in 1958, Ritter campaigned fiercely to maintain the VHD’s claim as *die einzige legitime Vertretung der deutschen Historikerschaft*.<sup>7</sup> In 1960, Rothfels journeyed to Stockholm to win the cooperation of Swedish hosts. German diplomats lined up international support. “Success” is evident in the conference program: of over 150 speakers from most European countries and many others, only one East German appears, H. O. Meisner, a distinguished septuagenarian bibliographer.

While the VHD was establishing itself in the west, the death of Stalin and re-publication of Marx’s *Grundrisse* (both in 1953) precipitated crisis and stuttering reform in the east. Tensions increased, culminating in Stockholm in the slavery session on August 25.

That this was an *international* conference providing new *interpersonal* contacts was not lost on Moses Finley, a born networker. Though disturbed by the West German attacks on Marxist historians, Finley initiated meaningful collaboration with eastern colleagues including Iza Biezuńska-Malowist (Warsaw) and D. M. Pippidi (Bucharest).

Finley had begun corresponding about the analysis of large data sets with the Russian historian Vladislav N. Andreyev in December 1959. His list of Eastern Bloc correspondents quickly grew to include, among others, the assyriologist I. M. Diakonoff, Jan Pecírka and Pavel Oliva in Prague, D. M. Pippidi in Rumania, Heinz Kreissig, Detlev Lotze and Elisabeth Welskopf in East Germany, Istvan Hahn in Budapest, and others. The correspondents can be viewed as a collaborative, constructing a powerful and useful social history of ancient society.<sup>8</sup> As Wolfgang Schuller remarked about one East German project influenced by Finley:

Die Konzeption dieser Wirtschaftsgeschichte ging von zahlreichen Bemerkungen in den *Grundrissen* von Karl Marx aus und deckte sich, soweit ich das richtig hatte beobachten können, auf weite Strecken mit

<sup>6</sup> Erdmann 2005, 247 and 300–302 comments usefully but very selectively.

<sup>7</sup> Cornelissen 2001, 452–453; Eckel 2005, 378–380; Pfeil 2008, 308–313.

<sup>8</sup> Finley to Andreyev, December 11, 1959. In Cambridge University Library.

der Konzeption von Moses Finley und seiner Schule – tant mieux pour Marx, ist man versucht zu sagen.<sup>9</sup>

*Wirtschaftsgeschichte!* We are reminded that some West German historians acknowledged an aversion to economic and social history that explains some of the tensions between Finley and the Mainz Akademie. Gerhard Ritter in 1949 told a public audience:

Aber mir will doch scheinen, als stecke in dem Vorwurf heutiger amerikaner (wie z.B. Felix Gilberts), wir wären mit unserer einseitigen Pflege politischer Historie im engeren Sinn und einer allzu sublimierten Geistesgeschichte nachgerade rückständig geworden, wir vernachlässigten die modernen Methoden der sog. social sciences in erstaunlichem Maß, immerhin ein berechtigter Kern.<sup>10</sup>

I shall take up these matters in the following sequence: 1) The contributions of Siegfried Lauffer and Friedrich Vittinghoff to the Stockholm slavery discussion. 2) Background on the Eastern Bloc scholarship criticized by Lauffer and Vittinghoff; 3) Finley's critique of Joseph Vogt and the Mainz Akademie project on slavery. I shall give away one conclusion in advance: historians in the east, working under governments that were often oppressive, subjected to doctrinal orthodoxy, and derided by western historians, nevertheless produced significant scholarship on important topics that often stood up well when compared with western scholarship.

This essay is a brief initial tour of complex terrain, sacrificing depth and detail in the interest of proving a larger picture.

## I. The Debate at Stockholm

The slavery session had a simple structure, well described by Iza Biezuńska-Malowist, who co-presided on August 25 with André Aymard:

The papers were divided into so-called *rapports*, which were published before the Congress, and communications, of which only summaries were published before the Congress, ... The published *rapports* were supposed to provide the main basis for the discussion, while the communications were delivered *in extenso* during sessions.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Schuller 2005, 89.

<sup>10</sup> Ritter 1950, 9.

<sup>11</sup> Biezuńska-Malowist 1961, 562–563. Erdmann 2005, 247 reports that the Soviets, too, approached the Congress aggressively.

The rapport for August 25 was Siegfried Lauffer's "Die Sklaverei in der griechisch-römischen Welt".<sup>12</sup> Two "Communications" followed: Dragomir Stolečić, "De l'enclave romain au colon" and Friedrich Vittinghoff, "Die Bedeutung der Sklaven für den Übergang von der Antike in das abendländische Mittelalter".

Although Matthias Willing portrays Lauffer as "throwing down the gauntlet" (*Fehdehandschuh*) in Stockholm, Lauffer's paper was temperate compared to his colleague's.<sup>13</sup> The "constant latent opposition" in antiquity between slave and free seldom broke out in open conflict, and the antithesis between slave labor and aristocratic leisure in Athenian texts was, he suggests, idealized (383). Roman slave revolts were not true "revolutions", and were sometimes motivated by religion. Asserting that the "spiritual lives", "mentality", and "ideology" of slaves require attention, Lauffer listed mentioned favored deities of slaves: "Christianity was to a great extent a slave religion".

Vittinghoff, discussing "Die Übergang von der Antike ins Abendlandische Mittelalter", insisted that Marx and Lenin treated historical change as a matter of *objektiver Gesetzmässigkeit* and "social revolutions".<sup>14</sup> Vittinghoff reviews the methodological debate conducted between 1953 and 1956 in the Soviet journal *Vestnik Drevnei Istorii* (*Вестник древней истории* or *VDI*, "Journal of Ancient History"), claiming that only after 1953 did Soviet scholars *sich erstmalig ernster mit den Quellen auseinandersetzen*. Unsurprisingly, he gives no sign of the "transition to feudalism" favored by orthodox Soviet historians. Slaves benefited from Christianity, were liberated in great numbers and did not struggle against the slave-system.

*This was not all.* Vittinghoff also presented a second, much longer and far more sweeping condemnation of Soviet scholarship, outside of the official program. Finley describes its genesis:

The session on ancient slavery, included in the programme at the suggestion of the German Historical Association [VHD], was one of the main combat-zones. The result of the confrontation was "catastrophic", Van Effenterre later reported. That the confrontation was not 'spontaneous' is demonstrable. The German periodical *Saeculum* devoted all the issues of 1960 to a critique of Marxism... The volume was described by the distinguished French historian Robert Mandrou as an 'indictment' ... for a trial in which the accused was to be denied the right of counsel.

<sup>12</sup> This article can be found in Lauffer 1960 and in Lauffer 1961.

<sup>13</sup> Willing 1991, 125–127.

<sup>14</sup> Published: Vittinghoff 1961, 265–272.

The first fascicule was prepared beforehand and distributed at the Congress. It included a lengthy piece by Vittinghoff entitled “The Theory of Historical Materialism about the Ancient ‘Slaveowners’ State” and subtitled “Problems of Ancient History in the ‘Classics’ of Marxism and in modern Soviet Research”. This essay fits Mandrou’s description exactly: Vittinghoff ignored publications that did not support his case and restricted himself to generalities and programmatic statements.

...Not once did Vittinghoff discuss a question of substance with regard to ancient slavery, contenting himself in a footnote (in the wrong context) with the inevitable, “Everything essential was already said by Eduard Meyer in his fundamental lecture of 1898”.<sup>15</sup>

Ernst Badian – no radical – said this second Vittinghoff submission “was distributed ..., in a deliberate act of confrontation. Its manner now appears deplorably provocative”.<sup>16</sup>

Vittinghoff, in *Saeculum*, reviewed several dozen articles from *VDI*, concluding that they follow Stalin’s exclusion of the Asiatic mode of production from the “five stages”.<sup>17</sup>

The “Asiatic mode of production” is a composite, its elements scattered across various publications and letters of Marx. Ernest Mandel’s statement, summarized by Stephen P. Dunn, serves as an adequate starting point:

A system in which communal groups remain but chieftains ... remain, who perform trading or military or irrigation-directing functions for the whole, and who obtain the material means of life through taxes exacted ... voluntarily from the communes... The communes no longer share equally in [their] products, but hold the land more or less jointly, so that the individual ... has the protection of the communal entity and ... nothing to gain by seriously improving the parcel he happens to be working...<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Finley 1998; Mandrou 1961, 518: “Sous la direction d’Oskar Köhler, de Fribourg (en Brisgau), quelques collègues allemands se sont chargés de l’opération dans une livraison speciale, destinée au Congrès, et ont ainsi, à nouveau, ouvert la polémique. Avouons-le : choisir le materialisme historique comme sujet de discussion, c’est intenter un procès, se saisir d’un accusé (auquel un avocat est d’ailleurs refusé)...”.

<sup>16</sup> Badian 1981.

<sup>17</sup> See I. Stalin 1938 [И. В. Сталин, “О диалектическом и историческом материализме”, in: *Краткий курс истории ВКП(б)*].

<sup>18</sup> Dunn 1986, 6.

Vittinghoff mentions the publication of the second German edition of Marx's *Grundrisse* in Berlin in 1953, but ignores the substantial impact of that text. He condemns the overall *pseudomarxistisches Geschichtsprozess-schema* of scholarship in *VDI* (110–112), asserting that Stalin's death in 1953 *keinerlei spürbar Auswirkung für die althistorische Generallinie gehabt hat*, only to add, in the same sentence, that *ein langsamer Wandel* nevertheless occurred in *VDI* – but that the *Generallinie* trumped this *Wandel*:

Gegen Prof. Irmschers Behauptung, es gebe überhaupt kein “sowjetamtliches Bild”, erinnerte Vittinghoff daran, dass im Jahre 1956 von der Redaktion des *Vestnik* die Hauptergebnisse der sowjetischen Diskussion über unsere Frage offiziell und verbindlich zusammengefasst worden seien, so dass es bisher unvorstellbar sei, dass ein Sowjethistoriker den Übergang von der Antike ins Mittelalter nicht als eine jahrhundertelange *soziale Revolution*, geschweige denn überhaupt nicht als eine Revolution darstellen konnte. Die Leitartikel des *Vestnik* legten immer wieder die jeweilige Generallinie in aller Offenheit fest.<sup>19</sup>

Vittinghoff summarizes official Leninist-Stalinist theory, mentioning Stalin's insistence that slave society was universal in antiquity, with no place for the “Asiatic mode”.<sup>20</sup> Finley, in the late 1930s a graduate student active in left-wing politics, likely came in contact with the Asiatic mode at that point: in 1938, he and other Columbia students briefly befriended Karl-August Wittfogel, later a major advocate of the “Asiatic mode”, after Wittfogel's return from China. The Wittfogels and Finleys even, improbably, shared an apartment for a month on Cape Cod that August, and Finley likely heard the case for the Asiatic mode in detail from Wittfogel.<sup>21</sup> Soon afterward Wittfogel divorced his wife, became an arch-conservative, and ultimately testified against his friends, ruining their American careers. As Finley told his dean at Rutgers, the vacation “did not turn out to be a very happy arrangement”.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> *XI<sup>e</sup> Congrès International des Sciences Historiques* 1962, 95.

<sup>20</sup> See Fogel 1988, 56–79.

<sup>21</sup> See Wittfogel 1957. Wittfogel also testified against the Indian historian Daniel Thorner, who was released by the University of Pennsylvania and spent nearly a decade in India before Fernand Braudel invited him to work in Paris, and E. Herbert Norman, a noted Japan scholar, who committed suicide in 1956. A careful correlation of dates in 1939 reveals that Wittfogel's charge against Norman was untrue: Tompkins 2006, 121 and 199.

<sup>22</sup> Tompkins 2006, 110–113 and 203 n. 68. “Not a very happy arrangement”: from Finley's statement to Dean Herbert P. Woodward, Newark College of Arts and Sciences, Rutgers University, September 5, 1951. In Lewis Webster Jones Papers, Rutgers University.

Vittinghoff acknowledges that “modern Soviet research” after 1953 disavows the most unsustainable notions of Stalinist stage theory. He rightly exempts the Soviet historian A. I. Tjumenev and a few others from the most extreme Stalinist positions, though he fails to trace Tjumenev’s consistent record of independence back to the mid-thirties (122–124; for more on Tjumenev, see below). Vittinghoff praises (124–127) Staerman’s important and nuanced 1953 *VDI* contribution, which opposed “Soviet constructions”.<sup>23</sup>

Lauffer and Vittinghoff overlook much interesting work done in the Eastern Bloc after 1953. Vittinghoff in particular caricatures Marx and Engels as the authors of “lawlike regularities”, while disregarding works like the *Grundrisse* that do not fit this narrow picture.

## II. Other Perspectives on Soviet and Eastern European Scholarship

### *E. M. Staerman*

Vittinghoff’s remark to Irmscher, that the editors of *VDI* imposed a “general line”, was true up to a point. The *editors* may have done that, but not the *historians*. According to Mattis List’s short but useful paper on this debate, not only did Staerman, three years *before* Khrushchev’s speech on the “Cult of Personality”, omit any mention of Stalinist stage theory, her colleagues took similar (not identical) positions:

Die Forscher (besonders Shtajerman) verwarfen zwar nicht offen die Thesen der Klassiker, doch gingen sie sehr viel freier mit ihnen um, sie opferten fortan nicht die Fakten der Theorie... Die Präsenz des Systems war jedoch nicht gebrochen... doch zumindest Stalin, der versucht hatte, eine grundlegende Richtung der Marxinterpretation vorzugeben, war zum Zeitpunkt der Diskussion schon bedeutungslos für die Alte Geschichte geworden.<sup>24</sup>

List pointed out that free expression had its limits, of course, and state authority did continue to intrude on historians’ lives, though less brutally than under Stalin.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Staerman 1953 [E. M. Штаерман, “Проблема падения рабовладельческого строя”], 51–79.

<sup>24</sup> List 2013, 9.

<sup>25</sup> Yavetz 1988, 136.

W. Z. Rubinsohn, who emigrated from the Soviet Union to Israel in 1950, notes that in 1956 Staerman would write:

The uprising of Spartacus showed that the slaves had not yet become a class which could have brought about a change in the mode of production. They only wanted to free themselves, not to do away with slavery and found a new society. For this reason they were unable to formulate any ideology which would have united all the oppressed.<sup>26</sup>

“At this time”, Rubinsohn reports:

All Soviet text-books were still speaking of Spartacus’ uprising as “a terrible blow, from which the slave-owner society never recovered”, or of “a tactical failure, but a great moral victory”, formulations which are entirely suited to Stalinist thinking.

Zvi Yavetz credits Staerman with a “breakthrough ... in the study of ancient history”, for her findings on the social position of slaves.<sup>27</sup> “Her contribution to the reorientation in Soviet research is manifold”.

Moreover, in Yavetz’ eyes though not Vittinghoff’s, “Soviet research” contributed significantly when the western discussion was deadlocked:

In the West the debate did not die out ...

The shift came from an unexpected quarter – the USSR. After the XXth Congress and Khrushchev’s vituperative denouncement of personality cult (i. e., Stalin), the Soviet and East European scholars were relieved of their affliction. Of the important studies which now attempted to discard the jetsam of Stalinistic phraseology while endeavoring to remain within the confines of a more liberal Marxist framework, Staerman’s two books are particularly noteworthy...<sup>28</sup>

She serves as an introduction to a discussion of positive forces in Soviet scholarship. Was the rest of the field really as locked in by Stalinist law-like regularity, as Vittinghoff suggests (“Ja im voraus bestimmt war, wie es gewesen sein musste, und Geschichte sich nur nach dem marxistisch-leninistischen Entwicklungsgesetz ereignet haben konnte”)?<sup>29</sup> What might he have overlooked?

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<sup>26</sup> Rubinsohn 1987, 14. Rubinsohn seems not to mention Staerman’s 1953 article.

<sup>27</sup> Yavetz 1988, 138.

<sup>28</sup> Yavetz 1988, 135–136. See List 2013, 3 and Vittinghoff 1960, 127 on her early dating of the shift to feudalism.

<sup>29</sup> Vittinghoff 1960, 125.



*Jan Pecírka: Complicating Vittinghoff's Picture*

When he addressed the XXth Party Congress in 1956, on Stalin's "Cult of Personality and Its Consequences", Nikita Khrushchev tacitly invited historians to roll up their sleeves. Jan Pecírka, an ancient historian in Prague, responded by visiting Moscow and joining the renewed, intense, discussions of ancient slavery and historical transitions. In 1964 and 1967, he published two remarkable and influential studies of Soviet economic history, in the Czech journal *Eirene*.<sup>30</sup>

Pecírka does not mention Vittinghoff, but his findings are an implicit rebuke. Against Vittinghoff's grim Stalinist lockstep, Pecírka portrays an intellectually rich community of scholars, impatient with Eduard Meyer's hoary *zyklischen Theorie* and vague notions about "ancient capitalism" and busily comparing Marx's scattered allusions to antiquity with the data. (Note that Vittinghoff himself, as late as 1960, proclaimed his satisfaction with Meyer's formulation seven decades earlier, in 1898.<sup>31</sup>) A. I. Tjumenev appears to have tested the limits of expression more than others.<sup>32</sup>

The Chinese revolution and the publication of Lenin's *On the State* in 1929 had led scholars to ask about the Asiatic mode of production. Pecírka's first essay recounts the grueling discussions in Leningrad in 1931, which concluded that ancient China was not "Asiatic" but "feudal" and thus in harmony with the five universal stages finally formalized in Stalin's *Dialectical and Historical Materialism* (primitive communism, slavery, feudalism, capitalism, socialism).<sup>33</sup> This was an important moment, not because it yielded a "correct" interpretation – it did not – but because it pushed forward topics that would not go away: the labor structure in ancient Greece, Egypt and Mesopotamia, private vs. state slavery, the size of slave populations, the similarities or dissimilarities between Greek and Near Eastern societies, the nature of the "transition to feudalism", and the "social position of direct producers".

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<sup>30</sup> Pecírka 1964, 147–169.

<sup>31</sup> Vittinghoff 1960, 94 n. 36: "Alles essentielle hat dazu schon Ed. Meyer in seinem grundlegenden Vortrag von 1898 ... gesagt".

<sup>32</sup> For further comment on the persistence of disagreement during the Stalin years, see Dunn 1986, 36 and 137 n. 15. Even though expression was not at all free, some scholars spoke fairly freely. On the danger they faced, see Heinen 2010, 109–111. Stasi report in Florath 2005, 191–192. Finley letter to Jean Andreau, August 7, 1977: "Pecírka (in so far as his difficult situation permits him to speak openly)". Finley Papers, Cambridge.

<sup>33</sup> Stalin 1938, 42.

Pecírka seems to be nearly alone in discussing the response to the very first publication of Marx's *Grundrisse (Formen)* in 1939: he says that it spurred further inquiry, with an emphasis on forms of property, irrigation systems, gradual development, connection of individuals with the collective, agrarian farm-economy and urban trade with agriculture, and debt servitude.<sup>34</sup> Pecírka concludes that the rejection of the Asiatic mode in 1931 did not end discussion.

Pierre Vidal-Naquet immediately praised Pecírka's report in *Annales*, emphasizing the gap between Tjumenev and Struve: was the Near East like, or unlike, ancient Greece, and how?

Le marxisme, notamment dans sa forme soviétique, est une langue commune qui peut masquer les divergences les plus considérables. J. Pecírka le montre fort bien, et c'est peut-être le principal intérêt de son article. Un historien comme A. I. Tjumenev emploiera exactement le même langage "esclavagiste" que Struve, mais là où l'un tente une réduction à l'unité, l'autre creusera le fossé entre le monde "classique" et le monde oriental.<sup>35</sup>

The "Asiatic mode" settled nothing. But it spurred scholars to careful consideration of labor structures in Egypt and Mesopotamia.

Pecírka's second essay, in 1967, treated more recent scholarship, emphasizing complexity and concreteness and acknowledging that Stalin's 1938 scheme contained factual errors. The central question was, whether the Orient fit into a broad theory of stage development. Alert to tendencies that Vittinghoff neglects, Pecírka again mentions Tjumenev, who challenged both Struve's claim that slavery was ubiquitous in the Near East and the sanctification of the Marxist classics ("a single quote from Lenin doesn't suffice to construct the theory of slaveowner-formation"). Vittinghoff cited Tjumenev several times but missed these moments.

Marxist "dogmatists", Pecírka says, believed that "each of the Marxist classics carried in his head a prepared and thorough theory". Lenin's "scattered utterances in various contexts, never used as technical terms, reveal the same inconsistencies as in Marx and Engels". (We are nearing Prague Spring at this moment.) Pecírka applauds Kovalev's finding that many of Lenin's remarks on antiquity in *On the State*, far from being original, were borrowed from Engels' *Origin of the Family* (157–158). He adds that the terminology of Marx and Engels "constantly reminds us that they presented no complete theory of ancient oriental society". Efforts to

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<sup>34</sup> Pecírka 1964, 159–160.

<sup>35</sup> Vidal-Naquet 1966, 381.

present the Asiatic mode as a “fully worked out concept” (160–162) without precise inquiry are, he says, a *Rückkehr zu einem überwunden Stadium von Marxens Denken und zu einem überwundenen Stand der historischen Kenntnisse*. And suddenly, we are confronted with Moses Finley.

The sequence is fascinating. First, Pecírka detects a contradiction within Marxian periodization terminology: “‘Ein Übergangsstadium kann nicht als Formation angesehen werden’, sagt Krapivinskij” (165). Pecírka insists that terms like “Asiatic” require further empirical work. Instead of three categories he calls for a “typology of forms of dependency”, presenting Finley’s call for a morphology of ancient exploitation:

We are in thrall to a very primitive sociology which assumes that there are only three kinds of labour status: the free, contractual wage earner, the serf, and the slave. Everyone must somehow be sorted into one of these categories... In the Far East... missionaries, colonial administrators, and scholars alike pinned the slave label on a fantastic variety of statuses in China, Burma and Indonesia, with unfortunate consequences both to learning and to administration. Modern anthropology has successfully reexamined that field and demonstrated that human status possibilities are far from exhausted by the triple classification which we have inherited from Rome and medieval Europe.<sup>36</sup>

“Thralldom”, for Finley, lay in the scholar’s bondage to “the simple slave–free antinomy”, which, because it violated the real nature of relationships, has been “harmful ... when applied to some of the most interesting and seminal periods of our history. ‘Freedom’ is no less complex a concept than ‘servitude’ or ‘bondage’; it is a concept which had no meaning and no existence for most of human history; it had to be invented finally, and that invention was possible only under very special conditions”.

What is needed, “Der Ausweg aus dieser schwierigen Lage”, Pecírka says, is the sort of “rainbow” or “typology of rights and duties” that Finley develops.<sup>37</sup> This appeals to Pecírka because the “spectrum” is based not on abstractions but on concrete analysis that studies societies as complex structures. It may seem surprising that, still at the height of the Cold War, a scholar from Prague was not only challenging some versions of Marx, but using Finley. Surprising but not unusual, for reasons that would require another essay.

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<sup>36</sup> The reference is to three articles: “The Servile Statutes of Ancient Greece”, “Between Slavery and Freedom”, and “La servitude pour dettes”, all of which are now most easily located in Finley 1982, 116–167.

<sup>37</sup> Finley 1982, 131; Pecírka 1964, 171–172.

In 1966, Finley's friend Emily Grace Kazakevich reported that the Soviet scholar "Gluskina from Leningrad" had asked to borrow offprints of his work: "The irony is, your works circulate like Agatha Christie's. Do you find that flattering?"<sup>38</sup> This was Lija Gluskina, a professor of Ancient history, whose father, Mendl Gluskin was like Finley's grandfather David Tevel Katzenellenbogen, a rabbi in Leningrad. Their graves in St Petersburg are not far apart.<sup>39</sup>

Pecírka reminds us of one source of Finley's popularity with Eastern Bloc historians: in the USSR: the "spectrum of status", though held in contempt by many western Marxists because it relies not on Marx, but on Max Weber, impressed some Soviet scholars. Significantly, Dandamaev in 1974 opened an important attack on binary "slave" – "free" oppositions in Babylonia by citing Finley's "Between Freedom and Slavery".<sup>40</sup> Heinz Kreissig in East Berlin, a friend of Finley, relied on the spectrum in sorting out the Greek *Sklavenhalterklasse*, commenting that *Der Klassenbegriff wird hier offensichtlich ad absurdum geführt*.<sup>41</sup> Detlev Lotze, who also worked on the "between slave and free" category, had a long and respectful correspondence with Finley, discussing both Marx and Weber on labor issues, and cited Finley regularly.

The cross-border respect went both ways. Finley had substantial respect for Istvan Hahn of Budapest. Not only did he and Lotze both attend Hahn's lecture, "Die Anfänge der antiken Gesellschaftsformation in Griechenland und das Problem der sogenannten Asiatischen Produktionsweise", but he used it in *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology*:

In an effort to make more concrete the emergence of a slave society, I took a lead from Istvan Hahn and suggested three necessary conditions: private ownership of land, a sufficient level of commodity production, and the absence of a sufficient internal labor supply.<sup>42</sup>

This is just one of several tributes to Hahn in Finley. What is striking is that it's a case of a western scholar stating openly that his East Bloc counterpart had something to teach him. Vittinghoff does not talk like that.

These are serious scholars who dealt with serious topics. Readers may ask themselves whether Vittinghoff's grasp of social history was close to theirs. To judge from the two essays studied here, the answer is no: the

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<sup>38</sup> July 5, 1966. Finley Papers.

<sup>39</sup> I am grateful to Svetlana Chervonnaya for this information.

<sup>40</sup> Dandamaev 1984, 69–73.

<sup>41</sup> Kreissig 1974, 526.

<sup>42</sup> Finley 1998, 272; 154.

closest Vittinghoff comes to social history is his claim that Christianity eased the plight of slaves, a position that is, today, not well regarded at all. When Matthias Willing summed up the results of the Stockholm *Congrès* by saying that the East Germans “could not cover the research deficit”, he makes a point: that is the impression that emerges from the printed question and answer sessions. But when one thinks seriously about what Lauffer and Vittinghoff actually said, it is hard to say they revealed a superior understanding of ancient society. The further irony is that since the East Germans presented no papers, the deficit was not in *research* but in *access to the podium*. There was no opportunity to test the “research deficit”.

### III. Finley and the Mainz Akademie

Joseph Vogt’s career remains under consideration, thanks in part to Diemuth Königs’ dissertation and Karl Christ’s stunning reconsideration of his mentor’s career, as well as to new revelations about the institutional history of the VDH (seemingly ignored by ancient historians). There is a good deal more to say about Vogt, Vittinghoff and other individuals.

First, I have tried in this essay to show that Eastern Bloc historical activity was, at least at times and in places, lively and intelligent, with some very positive results, even during the “dogmatic period”. Writing this essay has strengthened my sense that the historians of the Eastern Bloc merit closer attention than they have received.

Second, the Cold War context requires attention. Clearly, both the East and the West Blocs took the *Congrès* quite seriously. The Cold War was no laughing matter for Germans: *Geteilte Himmel* serves as the title of a novel (by Christa Wolf), a stage play, and an important art exhibit in Berlin: division was serious. West Germany insisted that Germany was a single country, only temporarily split in two, and brought massive influence to bear in support of that position. But West German actions, at least as directed by Ritter and Rothfels, had a grim firmness that offended others, especially because the *Verband Historiker Deutschland* worked hand in glove with the federal government, and these institutions need to be included in new studies.

Exactly what role did the Mainz Akademie play in all this? Finley, in *Ancient History and Modern Ideology*, portrays the Akademie as a major force in the confrontation. Johannes Deissler, in response, noted that “Vittinghoff war nie Projectmitglied”.<sup>43</sup> The precise contours of Mainz

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<sup>43</sup> Deissler 2010, 86. Under the circumstances, “Aus deutscher Sicht” is charming.

association perhaps mattered less than the concerted effort of which Mainz may have been a small part.<sup>44</sup>

That said, the Mainz Akademie was explicitly founded to compete with Bolshevism, as Elisabeth Hermann-Otto openly states: “von Anfang an mit den marxistischen Studien zu konkurrieren hatte. Das wurde von den Förderern und Geldgebern erwartet und lag im Geist der damaligen Zeit des Kalten Krieges”.<sup>45</sup> This was presumably known to the audience at Stockholm, and surely had an effect.

Finley had praised the Mainz project to Emily Grace Kazakevich in Moscow in 1957 and at an international Congress in 1962 (overlooked by Deissler).<sup>46</sup> But the 1960 Stockholm conference put him on guard. His remark that one had to be in the room to understand the event merits attention, especially because the published summaries are scanty. Finley had spoken well of Vogt in reviews. Clearly, he liked the *idea* of a focused team of scholars taking on a complex research topic, and had hopes for it. He knew that Vogt was a competent historian (and praised Vogt’s work on slave revolts). He had a far lower opinion of the other Mainz scholars. His decision to act came slowly, and can be traced in his letters to his German translator, Andreas Wittenberg.<sup>47</sup>

But in the end, Finley’s critique was overdetermined, since the Mainz project ran afoul of positions he held throughout his life, unrelated to the war or to Stockholm.

Consider “humanism”. For Finley and his friend Arnaldo Momigliano, the humanism of Werner Jaeger’s *Paideia* certainly merited criticism, in part because it cut theory off from its material base. It is hard to think of a time when Finley used “humanism” in a positive sense.

Second, methodology. One scholar calls Finley “rude” for saying Vogt’s scholarship was “antiquarian”.<sup>48</sup> In truth, Finley had been assailing “antiquarian”, or “Baconist” scholarship for forty years. “The still prevalent antiquarian procedure of listing all known discrete ‘facts’”, Finley

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<sup>44</sup> Mandrou 1961, 518.

<sup>45</sup> Hermann-Otto 2010, 63–64.

<sup>46</sup> See Finley 1965, 33.

<sup>47</sup> In one of his letters about this topic, Finley told Wittenberg: “I met Vogt for the first time at the appalling Stockholm Congress, saw him twice subsequently, I believe, and for a long period we maintained a formally friendly contact. I ... was treading on eggshells ...: I never had any illusions about his sincerity but some hope about his future behavior. That hope was gradually dissipated and in the end I decided to throw the eggshells away. (I may add that I had no hesitation in refusing to write for *Aufstieg und Niedergang* even in the earlier phase.)” (November 23, 1980).

<sup>48</sup> Wiedemann 2000, 156.

said, “is no method at all”.<sup>49</sup> Finley emphasized that *the very nature of the evidence from antiquity* is sparse and misleading, so full of gaps in understanding that getting a “control” from comparative evidence become treacherous.

Finley’s third, equally justifiable, reason was the Mainz School’s opportunistic assault on Marxist historiography, which was always an influence on Finley. With colleagues like Istvan Hahn, he continued to find ways to use it.

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<sup>49</sup> Finley 1985, 194.



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The 1960 International Congress of Historical Science at Stockholm was marked by presentations that reflected the tensions of the Cold War. For ancient historians, the critical event was the sessions on slavery, when S. Lauffer and F. Vittinghoff delivered fierce attacks on Marxist historiography as they understood it. The structure of the conference precluded responses in kind, so this essay quickly reviews Eastern Bloc historiography from 1930 up to 1960, with particular attention to E. M. Staerman, J. Pecírka, and I. Hahn, concluding that Marxist social and economic history had positive features. In conclusion, the essay takes up the response of M. I. Finley, who was present at the event and developed his own critique of the Mainz Akademie and its leader, Joseph Vogt.

Многие выступления на Международном Историческом конгрессе 1960 г. в Стокгольме отражали настроения эпохи холодной войны. Особенно разгорелись страсти на заседании секции античной истории, посвященном рабству, где З. Лауфер и Ф. Фиттингхоф подвергли резкой критике марксистскую историографию в своем понимании. Регламент конференции не допускал возможности ответить таким же образом, поэтому в статье дается краткий обзор историографии Восточного блока с 1930 по 1960 г. и уделяется особое внимание позиции Е. М. Штаерман, Я. Печирки и Й. Хана, которые находили в марксистской социальной и экономической истории положительные черты. В заключение рассматривается ответ М. Финли, который присутствовал на заседании и выступил с независимой критикой Майнцской академии и ее главы Й. Фогта.

## CONSPECTUS

Carmen natalicium .....	5
Vorwort .....	7
WOLFGANG RÖSLER	
Die Hikesie des Phemios und die Bedeutung von αὐτοδίδακτος in der <i>Odyssee</i> (22, 344–353) .....	11
THERESE FUHRER	
Teichoskopie: Der (weibliche) Blick auf den Krieg .....	23
GERSON SCHADE	
Archilochus, 196a <i>IEG</i> <sup>2</sup> .....	42
NINA ALMAZOVA	
When Was the Pythian Nome Performed? .....	56
MICHAEL GAGARIN	
Aeschylus' Prometheus: Regress, Progress, and the Nature of Woman ...	92
OLIVER TAPLIN	
A Couple of Conjectures that Point to Hands in Sophocles .....	101
VICTOR BERS	
"Dame Disease?": A Note on the Gender of Philoctetes' Wound .....	105
JENS HOLZHAUSEN	
"Fürchten oder Lieben?" Zu Sophokles, <i>Oidipus Tyrannos</i> , Vers 11 ....	109
PATRICIA E. EASTERLING	
Σεμνός and its Cognates in the Sophoclean Scholia .....	120
ISTVÁN BODNÁR	
A Testimony of Oenopides in Pliny .....	126
KLAUS HALLOF	
De epigrammate Coo aetatis classicae .....	137
RALF KRUMEICH	
Silen und Theater. Zu Ikonographie und Funktion des betagten Halbtieres in der attischen Vasenmalerei des 5. Jhs. v. Chr. ....	139
ALEXANDER VERLINSKY	
Lysias' Chronology and the Dramatic Date of Plato's <i>Republic</i> .....	158
NORBERT BLÖSSNER	
Platons Demokratiekapitel (Pl. <i>Rep.</i> 555 b 4 – 562 a 3) und das sokratische Argument .....	199

---

Статьи сопровождаются резюме на русском и английском языке  
Summary in Russian and English

BERND MANUWALD	
Bürger als politische Akteure. Überlegungen zur allgemeinen Politikkompetenz bei Platon und Aristoteles .....	225
ECKART E. SCHÜTRUMPF	
Aristotle on the Philosophical Nature of Poetry. The Object of <i>Mimesis</i> According to <i>Poet.</i> 9 .....	244
WIDU-WOLFGANG EHLERS	
<i>Libertino patre nati</i> .....	274
DENIS KEYER	
<i>Venimus ad summum Fortunae</i> : Prosperity and Flourishing of Arts in Horace ( <i>Epist.</i> 2. 1. 32–33) .....	279
ALEXANDER GAVRILOV	
Who Wrote the <i>Encheiridion</i> of Epictetus? .....	295
FRITZ FELGENTREU	
Κτήμα ἐξ αἰ. Überlegungen zu Eigentum und Historiographie in den Plinius-Briefen .....	317
CARLO M. LUCARINI	
Emendamenti a Svetonio .....	331
PETER HABERMEHL	
Origenes' Welten Frühchristliche Kosmologie im Spannungsfeld zwischen Platonismus und Heilsgeschichte .....	350
ELENA ERMOLAEVA	
A School Ancient Greek Epic Parody from Kellis .....	370
REINHART MEYER-KALKUS	
Deklamation im antiken Theater und im 18. Jahrhundert. Die Re-Interpretation von Melopoie und Rhythmopoie durch Abbé Dubos und Gotthold Ephraim Lessing .....	383
STEFAN REBENICH	
Eduard Schwartz und die Altertumswissenschaften seiner Zeit .....	406
DANIEL P. TOMPKINS	
What Happened in Stockholm? Moses Finley, the Mainz Akademie, and East Bloc Historians .....	436
Bernd Seidensticker Schriftenverzeichnis .....	453
Hyperborei vol. XI–XX conspectus .....	462
Hyperborei vol. XI–XX auctores alphabetico ordine dispositi .....	472
Key Words .....	481
Правила для авторов .....	484
Guidelines for contributors .....	486