
the Dutch housewife (who, unlike her counterparts elsewhere in Europe, had few if any servants). Leisure and ease were the signal contributions of the 18th century, as ottomans and stuffed chairs encouraged relaxation, and improved fireplaces (and stoves) produced what historian Fernand Braudel called a "revolution in heating."

With scores of telling examples, the author follows the growing influence of technology, noting that "the great American innovation was to demand comfort not only in domestic leisure but also in domestic work." But the steady drift during the 20th century toward "conspicuous austerity," efficiency, and functionalism (despite nostalgic "period" revivals) has produced sterile domestic environments. "We must rediscover for ourselves the mystery of comfort," Rybczynski insists, "for without it, our dwellings will indeed be machines instead of homes."

**THE CYCLES OF
AMERICAN HISTORY**

by Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.
Houghton, 1986
498 pp. \$22.95

The 14 essays collected here, most of which are reprinted, add up to an extended philosophical meditation on recent American politics, informed by the author's long and fundamentally liberal view of American history.

The pattern of our past, argues Schlesinger, an adviser to John F. Kennedy as well as a noted historian, is cyclical. Acknowledging theoretical debts to Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry Adams, economist Albert O. Hirschman, and even his own father, he rejects the image of a pendulum swinging between opposing fixed points—between, say, private and public interests, or conservatism and liberalism. Instead, Schlesinger envisions a spiraling cycle, with each new phase "flow[ing] out of the conditions—and contradictions—of the phase before and then itself prepar[ing] the way for the next recurrence." Schlesinger's cyclical scheme diminishes the role of labels (Reagan is too much of a reformer to be thought of simply as a conservative) and even of external events. Two severe depressions between 1869 and 1901 failed to spur liberal reforms or to stem the conservative tide; the Progressive Era (1901–19) got under way during a time of prosperity. Ultimately, Schlesinger argues, the "two jostling strains in American thought agree more than disagree" on such

fundamental matters as individual liberty and the rule of law.

Schlesinger muses on the Cold War ("The real surprise would have been if there had been [none]"); the conflict between those who consider America an experiment—subject at any time to failure—and those who see it as the divinely ordained "City on the Hill"; the reputations of presidents; and the future of the vice presidency. While the essays are devoted mostly to historical patterns, Schlesinger concludes with the argument that leaders alone "affirm free choice against the supposed inevitabilities of history."

**THE HARVEST
OF SORROW:
Soviet Collectivization
and the Terror-Famine**
by Robert Conquest
Oxford, 1986
412 pp. \$19.95

In the summer of 1932, Josef Stalin demanded that 6.6 million tons of Ukrainian grain be handed over to the Soviet government for export abroad. By November, village granaries were empty, peasants were beginning to starve, and police "brigades" swarmed the countryside looking for offenders who withheld any of their crop. As the death toll mounted, Western relief was repeatedly turned back at the border. By the end of the next year, over seven million Ukrainians lay dead.

Horrible as these events were, Conquest, a noted Soviet historian, reminds us that they were only the culmination of a deliberate Bolshevik strategy, begun by Lenin and carried out by Stalin, to "collectivize" Soviet agriculture and to crush any nationalist resistance within the Soviet empire. Lenin had managed to wipe out only the wealthiest independent peasants (or kulaks) in 1920. But nine years later, Stalin sent some 13 million peasants to Arctic work camps, where roughly a third died. The peasants who remained at home were forced into collectives. Many resisted, of course, but none so firmly as the Ukrainians—a people long known for their opposition to Bolshevik policies. So Stalin gave his orders.

And Western observers, by and large, averted their gaze. Conquest lauds the few exceptions. The Manchester *Guardian's* Gareth Jones, traveling by foot through the Ukraine, reported the peasants' common lament: "There is no bread. We are dying." His dispatches were attacked not only by the Soviet press but also by many Western journalists, including the cynical careerist Walter