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Alexander McKenna

*University at Albany, State University of New York*

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# **Liberalism and the Lessons of Weimar**

## **Arnold Brecht, Hans Speier, and Mid-Century America**

An honors thesis presented to the  
Department of History,  
University at Albany, State University of New York  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for graduation with Honors in History.

Alexander McKenna

Advisors: Dr. Carl Bon Tempo and Dr. Mitch Aso

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## Abstract

In 1933, the people of Germany elected Adolf Hitler and the Nazi party into power. This occurred under what had previously been a liberal democracy, the Weimar Republic. In the months following this event, the Nazis passed legislation that transformed what was once a bastion of free thinking, into the totalitarian empire. This event sparked an ideological crisis for the liberal intellectuals of Germany, and proposed an urgent question to the world: how can you, if at all, safeguard democracy without compromising its principles? This thesis follows Arnold Brecht and Hans Speier, two liberal intellectuals who came to the United States following the rise of the Third Reich. I examine how they adapt their beliefs in the wake of their traumatic experiences in Germany, how they apply those experiences to their work in America, and how they reach their conclusions on democracy. The chief influence of all the work Brecht and Speier did in America was their experiences in Weimar Germany. Despite many shared experiences, Brecht and Speier reach surprisingly different answers on how to protect democracy. Brecht maintains some liberal optimism, keeping a belief that democracy can function while embracing liberal principles, while Speier loses faith in his ideologies, deeming many liberal principles incompatible with a stable democracy. Brecht and Speier were never truly able to escape their memories of Weimar. Wielding their uniquely German experiences, these intellectuals helped shape American liberal thought and foreign policy in the Cold War period and beyond. As a result, a considerable portion of American thought and politics during this period came from German origins, a factor that counters the narrative of American exceptionalism. I examine a wide variety of sources in this thesis. However, the main focus is on primary sources. These chiefly consist of the published works of Brecht and Speier, along with other material found in the M.E. Grenander Archives' German and Jewish Intellectual Émigré Collection.

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## Section I

### Introduction

“Postwar Democracy is, above all, a challenge to thinking – a thinking that anticipates the future and heeds the lessons of the past, a thinking that ought to precede, rather than follow, practice.”<sup>1</sup> This sentiment comes from Arnold Brecht, one of the many German intellectuals who emigrated to America following the collapse of German democracy in 1933. Following this traumatic event, Arnold Brecht, and his fellow intellectual exile, Hans Speier, faced a crisis of belief, a crisis that changed both men’s views on democracy forever. This quote from Brecht demonstrated the way in which the two men confronted their crisis, and examined the challenges facing democracy. Through exhaustive analysis, Brecht and Speier found lessons in their experiences from Weimar, and applied these lessons to construct methods that they felt would protect democracy. This thesis will focus on Arnold Brecht, Hans Speier, their ideological journeys, and how their journeys led them to impact American liberalism throughout the Cold War. This project opens windows onto the history of liberalism in America, mid-century understandings of democracy, and the role of the intellectual in American society.

A liberal democratic society is dependent on its principles, principles that include cultural pluralism, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, free elections, and political representation. However, throughout the early 20th century, political figures and intellectuals became increasingly anxious regarding the stability of liberal democracies. Intellectuals such as Walter Lippmann questioned the practicality of these principles. Lippmann and other like-

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<sup>1</sup> Brecht, Arnold. "Democracy - Challenge to Theory" *Social Research* 13, no. 2 (1946): 195-224. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40982135>.

minded intellectuals presented a belief that, left unchecked, these freedoms could play a part in democracy's destruction.

In 1933, this fear that a liberal democracy could undermine itself became a reality. This democracy was the German Weimar Republic. The Weimar Republic, previously a bastion for the arts, political expression, and free thinking, elected Adolf Hitler as chancellor, securing the power of the Nazi party in Germany. Following this event, many intellectuals dedicated their work to uncovering what went wrong. However, the conclusions of these intellectuals varied widely. Some felt that liberal principles were to blame, some of which gave the Nazi party a platform to spread their ideology. Other intellectuals pointed their attention towards the citizens who elected Hitler to office. If the masses of a democracy can be manipulated into supporting an anti-democratic political entity, democracy faced an inherent existential threat.

The collapse of the democratic Weimar Republic turned the interwar skepticism of liberalism into a full-fledged crisis. The systems and principles that liberals held as gospel had suddenly facilitated the rise of Nazism, causing many liberal intellectuals to abandon or reconsider their old beliefs. Germany, while being the most common example of the rise of totalitarianism, was not the only nation in Europe to succumb to fascism.

The democratic nations of Europe, emerging victorious over numerous imperial regimes following World War I, witnessed the rise of totalitarian states across Europe during the interwar period. Despite the victory of democracy, the systems put in place to prevent further conflict, such as the League of Nations, were not prepared for the rise of these radical ideologies. The Weimar Republic, having been a democratic nation, was the most traumatic case of this phenomenon.

Intellectuals and politicians alike were forced to acknowledge and answer terrifying question; if it happened there, what would stop it from happening here? If liberal principles were the problem, should those be curtailed for the greater good? If the mass public was the problem, should they be barred from voting? Would instituting such policies destroy the very democracy they sought to protect? From these questions came another: How do we safeguard democracy without compromising its principles?

In the decades following 1933, the individuals who primarily answered these questions were intellectuals, and few were better positioned to do so than those Germans who fled the Nazis. In the face of fascism, many of these intellectuals found their way to the United States with the help of institutions, such as the New School for Social Research. At these institutions, many liberal German intellectuals took on a new kind of work, now driven by a goal to uncover what happened in Germany, and how to prevent it from happening again.

The collapse of the Weimar Republic was the most significant event in the lives of these intellectuals. They could not see the world in the same way they had in the past, embittered by the collapse of their homeland under the weight of the Nazis. The events of the twilight years of the Weimar Republic, 1931-1933 directed the political and ideological philosophies of these intellectuals for the rest of their lives. The work of Arnold Brecht and Hans Speier clearly demonstrated this impact.

Following the collapse of the Weimar Republic in 1933, Arnold Brecht and Hans Speier focused their work on trying to understand what caused the rise of the Nazis. From then on, their perspectives regarding subjects like the threats facing democracy, the role of the intellectual in society, and what makes a good system of government all flow from their experiences in the Weimar Republic.

In addition to showing the severe effect the rise of the Nazis had on Arnold Brecht and Hans Speier, this thesis highlights a tension between these individuals. How did these two individuals, who initially had so much in common, come to such radically different answers to the question of democracy?

Following their arrival in America, Brecht and Speier were in similar ideological positions. Both men were focused on uncovering the root causes behind the rise of fascism in Germany, and while the collapse of Weimar shook Brecht and Speier's faith in democracy, they initially held onto their core beliefs. Arnold Brecht, confronted with the failure of Weimar, felt it was necessary to compromise on liberal principle, adopting technocratic beliefs to create his answer to the question of how to protect democracy. Despite this compromise, Brecht maintained his core belief that the education of policy makers and the public resulted in a better democratic society. By contrast, Hans Speier underwent a shocking transformation in the fifteen years following 1933. Like Brecht, Speier initially adjusted his core beliefs to accommodate his new reality. However, as the years dragged on, and the forces threatening democracy grew more powerful, Speier abandoned his old ideals, fearing that the liberal principles of democracy made it more vulnerable. By 1948, Speier's fears led him to not just abandon his liberal beliefs, but to incorporate authoritarian methods into his answer of how to protect democracy.

Liberal ideas during the interwar period greatly influenced the perspectives of Brecht and Speier, therefore, to develop this dichotomy, I will first establish the background history for the topic. I will identify key themes and schools of thought present throughout this time, to include liberal optimism and liberal realism. To accomplish this task, I will be looking at a debate between John Dewey and Walter Lippmann, using each individual to represent a school of

liberalism. Additionally, I will talk about American and German liberalism individually to highlight some of their differences.

Second, with sufficient background established, I will go into depth on how the crisis of Weimar shaped the two German intellectuals. Using biographies, personal documents, correspondence letters, and a multitude of their published works, I will identify the beliefs of Brecht and Speier, and determine how their experiences in the Weimar Republic informed their conclusions decades later. To supplement this task, I will also utilize the work of Daniel Bessner, and his biography on Speier. I will lead in with a brief personal history for each of my intellectuals, how they fled totalitarianism, and how they found their places in America at the New School for Social Research. Next will be an examination on each intellectual's views regarding the role of an intellectual in society, the main threats they believed faced democracy into the Cold War period, and how those beliefs shaped their answer of how to protect democracy. Using the understanding gleaned from analysis of their conclusions and beliefs, I will establish what an "ideal society" would have looked like for these individuals. With these ideals I will identify each intellectual's core beliefs then contrast them with one another.

Arnold Brecht and Hans Speier reached their conclusions regarding liberalism and democracy using their experiences in both Germany and America. The beliefs that Brecht and Speier adopted throughout the careers marked a synthesis of American and European liberalism. Through the work of Brecht, Speier, and other German emigre intellectuals in American institutions, this Euro-American type of liberalism permeated American society throughout the Cold War era.

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## Section II

### Liberalism and Setting the Stage

The starting point for this conversation is liberalism. Since the Enlightenment period, liberalism has acted as the foundation for the ‘house’ that is modern democracy. The work of Enlightenment period thinkers, such as John Locke and Montesquieu, anchored liberal principles such as political pluralism and freedom of speech to the function of modern democracy. Therefore, when an individual or institution undermines the liberal traditions of a democratic nation, they are in turn undermining that nation’s democracy. Due to how interwoven the two concepts of democracy and liberalism are, the previous question of “how do we safeguard (modern) democracy without compromising it” inherently involves the principles of liberalism.

This thesis will explore liberalism in the United States and Weimar Republic Germany. Both were democratic nations, but the nature of their liberal traditions and political systems varied. For example, Weimar Germany had a strong tradition of political plurality. This tradition helped result in radical parties gaining a place in mainstream politics, whereas in the United States, because the political system was built around two parties, marginalized parties were effectively irrelevant as political actors.

The significance of Weimar’s liberal traditions cannot be overstated. The Republic’s notably liberal approach to democracy, coupled with its subsequent collapse at the hands of fascism caused realist liberals, and even more moderate liberal optimists to question the efficacy of such optimistic liberal tenets. The two schools of focus within this thesis are liberal optimism, and liberal realism. In order to better explain liberal optimism and liberal realism, two American

intellectuals will be ascribed to each belief as key representatives. Liberal optimism is represented by John Dewey, and liberal realism by Walter Lippmann.

The debates between John Dewey and Walter Lippmann demonstrate the friction between these two schools of liberal thought. Both men were firm with their beliefs, and despite subscribing to often conflicting schools of thought, both were also progressives. However, due to the differences in their beliefs, their views diverged on numerous points, particularly in the case of the mass public.

In 1922, Lippmann released a book titled "Public Opinion." In the book, he argued that the opinions of the general public should not influence political affairs. Lippmann believed that modern society had simply become too complex to believe that the mass public could have any valuable input regarding the direction that policy and society ought to take.<sup>2</sup> This demonstrated Lippman's stance as a liberal realist because he was willing to devalue the role of the public masses in democracy. While this perspective violated a liberal principle, Lippmann believed it was for the greater good. Liberal realists often postulated that a strict adherence to liberal principles was naïve, and that compromise was necessary to ensure the security of democracy.

Lippmann's stance on the role of the public was a reaction to the democratic theory of the time known as the "theory of public opinion." This theory suggested that, through the will, participation, and consideration of the people, the mass public, a more just and democratic society could be achieved.<sup>3</sup> Lippmann, who did not believe the mass public could navigate the political atmosphere of the future, placed their role of guiding democracy into the hands of intellectuals and experts. This alternative favored the views and perspectives of intellectuals and experts above the everyman, and is known as a 'technocratic' stance. To achieve an informed

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<sup>2</sup> Lippmann, Walter, "Public Opinion" (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & Company, 1922) page 273

<sup>3</sup> Speier, Hans. "Historical Development of Public Opinion," pages 10-12.

society Lippmann believed that the needs of modern society and politics called for the guidance of specialists. He believed it simply was not possible for the masses to possess the necessary knowledge, and as a result, a reliance on the public could compromise democracy. From Lippmann's perspective, strict adherence to liberal principles, which favored the mass public over any technocrat, would, ironically, compromise democracy. From this perspective, the question of "how do we safeguard democracy without compromising it" grows more complex.

John Dewey, on the other hand, came to the defense of the public. Dewey, our representative of liberal optimism, confronted Lippmann's claims from "Public Opinion."<sup>4</sup> As a liberal optimist, Dewey believed that an infringement of liberal principles was an infringement of democracy. From Dewey's perspective, compromising liberalism to achieve a perceived 'greater good' was simply anti-democratic, and was not sustainable.

In his 1922 criticism of Lippmann, Dewey postulated that for a democracy to function, the public should have a leading role. While he conceded that there are some problems regarding the mass public, Dewey stated that these problems can be solved through the education of the people.<sup>5</sup> In addition, Dewey argued that Lippmann's technocratic alternative was incompatible with democracy, turning policy into little more than an oligarchy, where the voice of the people is tossed aside for the dictations of the expert and intellectual.<sup>6</sup> Dewey acknowledged that democracy faced problems, but instead of compromising on democracy's principles and his own ideals to solve these problems, Dewey sought to improve and refine the systems and traditions already in place.

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<sup>4</sup> Kloppenberg, James. "Political Ideas". In: Stanley Kutler, ed., *Encyclopedia of the United States in the Twentieth Century*, volume 1, pages 280-281.

<sup>5</sup> Bessner, Daniel. "*The Night Watchman Hans Speier and the Making of the American National Security State*," pages 121-122.

<sup>6</sup> Kloppenberg, James. "Political Ideas". In: Stanley Kutler, ed., *Encyclopedia of the United States in the Twentieth Century*, volume 1, pages 280-281.

The debate between liberal realists and optimists lingered throughout twentieth century America. After their arrival in America at the New School for Social Research in 1933, both Hans Speier and Arnold Brecht had to find their stance on this issue. To assist them, the two intellectual exiles had new, American influences to guide them, such as the views and rhetoric of Dewey and Lippmann. These new, American ideas combined with their old beliefs and experiences from the fall of the Weimar Republic created a hybridized set of ideas. However, before we can discuss these two men and their beliefs in depth, we must first detail the nature of liberalism in the Weimar Republic.

The Weimar Republic was born during the closing months of World War 1. During peace talks, Woodrow Wilson presented the German Empire with demands to reform their authoritarian imperial government.<sup>7</sup> Initially, the imperial government was reluctant to accept and instate the demanded parliamentary reforms.<sup>8</sup> Instead, the Germans attempted to use the peace negotiations with Wilson as a stalling tactic.<sup>9</sup> Due to this reluctance, Kaiser Wilhelm and his cabinet soon lost their chance to control the circumstances of change.<sup>10</sup> Revolution erupted in Bavaria, and soon spread to the remainder of the German states. Political parties and worker's councils acted as platforms to organize the German people. These rebel groups made demands for things such as the end of the German monarchy and other governmental reforms.<sup>11</sup> However, amid these calls for reform, each of these political groups were vying for control of Germany.<sup>12</sup> At the end of the initial stages of revolution, the imperial aristocracy was thrown out of government, and one political party, the Majority Social Democratic Party (MSDP) took control

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<sup>7</sup> Mommsen, Hans, Elborg Forster, and Larry Eugene. Jones. *The Rise and Fall of Weimar Democracy*. Pages 12-14.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.,16.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 21-25

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

of Germany. Thus, the Majority Democrats established Weimar Republic on November 9, 1918, with Friedrich Ebert as the new president and chancellor.<sup>13</sup>

The authoritarian system of the German Empire was no more, marking the beginning of the interwar period, and now, Germany had its first real taste of democratic expression. Without any historical precedent to direct their future, the people of the Weimar Republic openly indulged in a wide variety of ideologies. As the Weimar Republic stabilized in the early 1920s, political expression and pluralism became a new cultural staple in German life, regardless of culture or creed. Mass political demonstrations were commonplace, women quickly gained the right to vote, and nearly every political party had enough support to gain representation within the German parliament, the Reichstag.<sup>14</sup>

The new Germany had risen from the destruction of World War 1, and embraced classic liberal beliefs, previously denied to them by the old Empire. The people of Germany saw believed that this new, liberal way forward was the cure for Germany's previous authoritarian sickness imposed upon them by the old Bismarckian state. As a result of this perspective, German liberals of the time were defensive of their newly embraced liberal principles. Many of these liberal Germans desired equality and freedom of expression "for all Germans, even those who opposed democracy."<sup>15</sup> With these new perspectives and government systems in place, in the early 1920s, Germany entered into a brief era characterized by free thinking and expression, both ideological and artistic. The possibilities stretching before the fledgling republic seemed endless.<sup>16</sup> However, Weimar's extensive degree of political plurality proved to be a double-

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<sup>13</sup> Mommsen et al. *The Rise and Fall of Weimar Democracy*. Pages 49-51.

<sup>14</sup> Weitz, Eric D. *Weimar Germany Promise and Tragedy*. Page 2, 82.

<sup>15</sup> Greenberg, Udi. "The Weimar Century: German Émigrés and the Ideological Foundations of the Cold War." Pages 169-170.

<sup>16</sup> Weitz. Page 2.

edged sword, eventually playing a part in the advancement of Democracy's enemies, and the country's eventual destruction.

In Weimar, the politics were "loud, contested, unruly," but perhaps even freer than those of the United States.<sup>17</sup> However, this freedom came at a cost. More extreme ideologies, such as communism and fascism, found considerable followings within the fertile political landscape of the Republic. Even in consideration of their open opposition to the democratic government, the Republic's adherence to political plurality allowed radical ideologies their rights of assembly. Despite the almost utopian optimism expressed by some individuals of the Republic, this new Germany had a long road ahead, and greater obstacles than the war reparations on its horizon. The Weimar Republic, despite its widely accepting liberal views, held deep divisions that could not be easily reconciled.<sup>18</sup>

Following 1918, the democratic system of the Weimar Republic gradually declined. First damaged in the opening months of 1919, there was conflict between the ruling democratic parties, the German communists, and opportunistic right-wing elements, such as the Freikorps. By the end of this brief conflict, Karl Liebknecht, and Rosa Luxemburg, two key leaders of the German communists were assassinated by the Freikorps-democrat alliance.<sup>19</sup> From this point on, the right wing elements of Germany were often overlooked as a potential threat.<sup>20</sup> Following the uprising of 1919, the small degree of political scrutiny present in the Republic was put on the communists.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Weitz. Page 82.

<sup>18</sup> Weitz. Page 83.

<sup>19</sup> Mommsen et al. Page 36.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

Over time, thanks to high degree of political toleration in Weimar, along with issues such as war reparations and economic depression, right wing parties gradually expanded their influence throughout the country. The events of 1933 punctuated the ascent of fascism, because on January 30<sup>th</sup>, the Nazi party gained enough popularity and political influence to have Adolf Hitler elected chancellor. In the following months, the Nazi party passed three key pieces of legislation that completed the transformation of the Weimar Republic into the Third Reich.

The first piece of legislation, passed on the 28th of February 1933, was known as the “Decree of the Reich President for the Protection of People and State”, or the Reichstag Fire Decree. The night before, on the 27th, a fire broke out within the Reichstag, setting the building ablaze.<sup>22</sup> Following an initial investigation of the fire, the German Communist Party was blamed for setting the blaze, and the arson denounced as a communist plot to overthrow the government.<sup>23</sup> Never to let a crisis go to waste, the Nazi politicians called for the arrest of their political enemies, and a drastic restriction of personal freedoms until the crisis was solved.<sup>24</sup> Article 1 of the Fire Decree stated the following: “Articles 114, 115, 117, 118, 123, 124 and 153 of the Constitution of the German Reich are suspended until further notice. It is therefore permissible to restrict the rights of personal freedom [habeas corpus], freedom of (opinion) expression, including the freedom of the press, the freedom to organize and assemble, the privacy of postal, telegraphic, and telephonic communications. The basic rights of all German citizens were annulled in one paragraph of legislation, all for the supposed greater good of the nation.

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<sup>22</sup> Gellately, Robert. “Backing Hitler: Consent and Coercion in Nazi Germany,” page 18.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Fest, Joachim. “Hitler,” page 397.

Immediately following the passage of the Reichstag Fire Decree, many leaders of the communist party were detained without need for trial, and communist media was banned, setting a precedent for what was to come under Nazi rule.<sup>25</sup> Taking advantage of the widespread fear, another piece of legislation was passed on the 28th of February, titled “Decree of the Reich resident against betrayal of the German people and treasonous machinations.” This law effectively replaced “a constitutional government with a permanent state of emergency”.<sup>26</sup> This act formed the foundations of Nazi legal justification, outlining the various criteria and punishments for charges of treason, espionage, and dissidence against the state.<sup>27</sup>

Finally, on March 23rd, the Reichstag voted to pass the Enabling Act. This act granted the chancellor emergency dictatorial powers which allowed Hitler to bypass parliament altogether. Using these key pieces of legislation, the Nazis had laid the groundwork for their regime, and shattered the constitution of the Weimar Republic with a democratic process by exploiting its shortcomings and loopholes.

From that point on, the collapse of Weimar, and the rise of the Nazis was complete. After achieving victory, further Nazi legislation was meant to cement their place as the masters of Germany, rooting out those who may oppose them. One such piece was the Civil Service Restoration Act, passed on April 7, 1933. This act called for “the immediate dismissal of university professors who failed to meet the ‘racial’ or political qualifications now required of those holding positions in state-run institutions.”<sup>28</sup> Despite being a very brief piece of legislation, this act is what forced the mass exodus of non-Nazi intellectuals and scientists from Germany.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Fest, Joachim. “Hitler,” page 397.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 398.

<sup>27</sup> Berlin, Germany “Verordnung des Reichspräsidenten gegen Verrat am Deutschen Volke und hochverräterische Umtriebe.” Reichstag, 1933.

<sup>28</sup> Friedlander Judith. “In the Eyes of Others: The Impact of the New School’s Refugee Intellectuals in the United States.” page 875.

<sup>29</sup> Berlin, Germany “Gesetz zur Wiederherstellung des Berufsbeamtentums.” Reichstag, April 7, 1933.

Jewish intellectuals and officials in particular were targeted by this act, as most of the law's text was dedicated to excluding them from the racial definition of "Aryan."<sup>30</sup> Despite the probability that the Civil Service Restoration Act only expedited an exodus that would have happened regardless, this event prompted dissident intellectuals and professional to seek out nations and communities that could use their talents and services. Many of these individuals, such as Arnold Brecht and Hans Speier, found their new homes in the United States. After settling into various American institutions, these German intellectuals dedicated their work to uncover the reasons behind Weimar's collapse to ensure that nothing like that could ever happen again.

While intellectuals were often interested in matters of politics and society, they were also very insular and specialized with their work during the interwar period. Intellectuals were more often involved in discussions with other intellectuals and those in their field than with advising the public or government.<sup>31</sup> Brecht and Speier arrived in the United States during a time where the role of the intellectual in society was expanding. The onset of World War II accelerated this expansion, resulting in both Brecht and Speier finding employment within the US government for several years. Prior to this cultural shift, during the interwar period, universities and other tight-knit communities were where intellectuals conducted most of their work, largely absent from the public eye. For example, a layman might have characterized entities such as *The New Republic* magazine as being "for intellectuals, by intellectuals." However, the demands that arose out of total war in World War II prompted a need for experts in a broad swathe of fields, notably on Germany.

The American government facilitated this shift in the role of the intellectual. First, the government hired these intellectuals directly into various government agencies such as the Office

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<sup>30</sup> Berlin, Germany "Gesetz zur Wiederherstellung des Berufsbeamtentums." Reichstag, April 7, 1933.

<sup>31</sup> Rutkoff, Scott. "New School: A History of the New School for Social Research", page 12.

of Strategic Services (OSS). As the role of the intellectual in society expanded from this model, more institutions dedicated to applying intellectual thought to society appeared, such as the RAND (Research and Development) Corporation. These institutions were a key platform for the work of intellectuals to have a direct impact in society. Unlike the past, where the work of intellectuals was sequestered off within solely intellectual communities, these institutions allowed Arnold Brecht and Hans Speier to directly inform and guide government policy. One major event that laid the foundation for this change was the collapse of the Weimar Republic. The exodus brought about by Hitler's Civil Service Restoration Act fueled the transition into America's age of intellectuals. The German exodus presented the United States with a wide variety of elite intellectuals, and an influx of new, uniquely German ideas and experiences. As a result, these German-European ideas came to influence the development of Cold War American liberalism and policy.

These Germans came from the Weimar culture of widespread political participation, many of them were either directly involved within a political organization, or at the very least, held strong convictions on what an intellectual's role in society ought to be.<sup>32</sup> The difference in culture between the Weimar Republic and the United States, coupled with the trauma these intellectuals developed following the rise of the Nazis, allowed for a hybridization of ideas through these German intellectuals. Their foundational ideals remained, but the crisis from the collapse of Weimar prompted the intellectuals to reconsider old beliefs, resulting in an incorporation of some American ideas. American intellectual institutions, such as the New School for Social Research and its University in Exile gave these foreign intellectuals a desperately needed destination to flee totalitarian oppression. They served as their homes and

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<sup>32</sup> Brecht, Arnold. "*Democracy - Challenge to Theory*," page 195.

communities in the United States where they could not only continue their work, but expand their own systems of beliefs.

Despite being a devastating event for both Germany and democracy, Alvin Johnson, an economist, and editor for *The New Republic* magazine, was able to use the collapse of the Weimar Republic to his advantage. The mass exodus of intellectuals from Germany following the rise of Hitler meant presented an opportunity for the United States, so long as these intellectuals could find a permanent home away from home in America. Alvin Johnson's opportunity was to make this home for exile intellectuals at The New School for Social Research. First conceived in 1917, The New School for Social Research formally opened in February 1919. A conglomeration of progressive thinkers and activists from places such as Columbia University, *The New Republic* magazine, and the women's suffrage movement were the minds behind its conception.<sup>33</sup> , New School Scholars believed they had the ability to usher in a new age of peace and democracy from the destruction of World War I.<sup>34</sup>

The School's founding principles centered on creating an institution divorced from mainstream higher learning, an institution where its researchers were separated from factors such as tradition, religion, and the special interests of superior organization, such as a sponsoring institution to which the New School would be beholdent.<sup>35</sup> In addition, the founders of the New School advocated for the use of methods found in the natural sciences to be applied to social sciences.<sup>36</sup> The goal of the New School was to apply scientific relativism and the scientific method to their social research, apply the belief that nothing was inherently good or evil, and to

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<sup>33</sup> Rutkoff, Scott. "*New School: A History of the New School for Social Research*," page 11.

<sup>34</sup> Katznelson, Ira. "Reflections on the New School's Founding Moments, page 402; Rutkoff, Scott, "*New School: A History of the New School for Social Research*," page 12.

<sup>35</sup> Rutkoff, Scott. "*New School: A History of the New School for Social Research*," page 12.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

dispassionately assess ideologies they may otherwise abhor. The founders of the New School believed that the social sciences had been sorely lacking in any degree of objectivity, and as such, desired to enshrine an innovative approach.<sup>37</sup>

Wielding their tools of scientific thought and reasoning, and free from the constraints of mainstream higher education, it was thought that the researchers of the New School could then view society “as an integrated whole,” to create and further a “more free, more egalitarian, more tolerant, more rational society.”<sup>38</sup> This all came during a period where the university model was likened to a business, with profits and conformity being prioritized over education and new ideas.<sup>39</sup> The founders of the New School also believed that, following the end of World War I, the conformist, suspicious atmosphere of World War I America be lifted, and that western society was to undergo radical change.<sup>40</sup> In this period of change, New School scholars believed their highly progressive, science focused model could reshape American education and social science.<sup>41</sup> In the early years of the New School, many of its members and associates believed that the School was going to attract scholars from around the world, and become “the center of the best thought in America.”<sup>42</sup> Early on, New School scholars wanted to change the world, and they believed they were going to. They possessed lofty, unrealistic goals for what the New School could accomplish, especially considering many of these goals hinged on social change beyond

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<sup>37</sup> Rutkoff, Scott. “*New School: A History of the New School for Social Research*,” page 12.

<sup>38</sup> Katznelson, Ira. “Reflections on the New School’s Founding Moments, 1919 and 1933,” page 398. Rutkoff, Scott. “*New School: A History of the New School for Social Research*,” page 12.

<sup>39</sup> Rutkoff, Scott. “*New School: A History of the New School for Social Research*,” page 12, 14.

<sup>40</sup> Katznelson, Ira. “Reflections on the New School’s Founding Moments, page 402; Rutkoff, Scott. “*New School: A History of the New School for Social Research*,” page 27.

<sup>41</sup> Rutkoff, Scott. “*New School: A History of the New School for Social Research*,” page 12, 27.

<sup>42</sup> Katznelson, Ira. “Reflections on the New School’s Founding Moments, page 402; Rutkoff, Scott, “*New School: A History of the New School for Social Research*,” page 12.

the control of the School. As a result, it did not take many years for their inevitable dissatisfaction to catch up to them.<sup>43</sup>

Alvin Johnson, previously a lead editor for *The New Republic* magazine alongside Walter Lippmann was one of the founding minds of the New School, and served as its director from 1922 to 1945. While Johnson wanted to have the School live up to the lofty expectations set before it, he had more immediate concerns. In 1922, the New School encountered a problem: Despite modestly successful early years, its members became demoralized, and the funding was unable to sustain many of the School's endeavors.<sup>44</sup> The speculated social revolution following World War I did not occur, and the New School's accomplishments became eclipsed by its overwhelming, and unrealized expectations.<sup>45</sup> In order to sustain the school going forward, the school faculty called for a restructuring, which demanded a choice; forgo the New School's profitable lecture program, or the expensive and less sustainable, yet rhetorically more valuable research program.<sup>46</sup> Alvin Johnson, brought in to be the new director in the same year of 1922, urged them to hang onto both, pushing for a short-term emphasis on the profitable lectures, and suspension of the research program.<sup>47</sup> This "short term" suspension lasted eleven years, meaning that the New School was "for Social Research" in only name. It was not until 1933, long after stabilizing the school's finances that Johnson got his chance to revive the research program, but under the new subdivision known as the University in Exile.<sup>48</sup>

The New School's University in Exile became one the most dedicated institutes in the United States to foreign intellectuals from the years of 1933 into the 1950s. This was a

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<sup>43</sup> Rutkoff, Scott. "*New School: A History of the New School for Social Research*," page 27.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 27-28.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 28-30.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 84.

considerable feat, considering the School's relative size to other institutions. In addition, the school's acquisition of intellectuals was also accomplished despite the trying circumstances of 1930s America, such as the Great Depression. These circumstances made the refuge offered by the University in Exile even more critical to the success and survival of these intellectuals, as the alternatives could have spelled disaster for their careers. On April 7th, 1933 the newly instituted Nazi regime passed the Civil Service Restoration Act in Germany, which dismissed any intellectuals or officials who opposed Nazi rhetoric.<sup>49</sup> This was the moment Johnson found opportunity.<sup>50</sup> Just a week later, on April 14th, 1933, Johnson proposed his idea to the New School, began raising funds, and working with the US government to acquire special visas.<sup>51</sup> The goal was to launch a sort of "rescue operation" to get many intellectuals out of Germany as possible, under the pretense of temporarily lecturing at the New School.<sup>52</sup> Due to Johnson's quick thinking and tenacity, the doors of the newly named "University in Exile" opened in the following October.<sup>53</sup> All of this occurred when America was not only in the depths of the Great Depression, but also when anti-Jewish and anti-immigrant sentiments ran rampant in the culture of the nation, the plight of some German or Jewish professors being laid off seemed like the least of their worries.<sup>54</sup> Despite these factors, Johnson was able to raise enough money and support to get these intellectuals to the United States. In addition, he did so less than six months after the Civil Service Restoration Act was passed, and in greater capacity than universities with far

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<sup>49</sup> Friedlander Judith. "In the Eyes of Others: The Impact of the New School's Refugee Intellectuals in the United States," page 875.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 873.

<sup>52</sup> Brecht to Johnson, October 13, 1933, Box 2, Folder 12, Appointment to the Faculty of the New School for Social Research & departure from Germany, Arnold Brecht Papers.

<sup>53</sup> Friedlander Judith. "In the Eyes of Others: The Impact of the New School's Refugee Intellectuals in the United States," page 875.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 873; Rutkoff, Scott. "*New School: A History of the New School for Social Research*," page 86.

greater resources than the comparatively modest New School.<sup>55</sup> Due to his fast and decisive action, Johnson was able to reestablish and revitalize the New School's research program with crucial new ideas and perspectives which, in some cases, even clashed with those of the established American liberal thinkers.<sup>56</sup>

At the opening of the University in Exile, Alvin Johnson stated the principles that he believed it, and the New School for Social Research were founded on:

“A faith and a judgement: the faith in liberal democracy as the only political system adequate to the needs of an advancing civilization [and] confident that in the end, reason, and its political expression, liberal democracy, will prevail.”<sup>57</sup>

This sentiment echoes the ideas of the New School founders, stating that democracy is the natural political manifestation of reason, once again suggesting that liberal democracy has a place as being absolutely good. However, the American members of the New School soon found that many of their German refugee counterparts did not see the world in the same way they did. When the European refugees arrived, they encountered a different flavor of liberalism, one they had no prior contact to at all. In the eyes of the Germans, fleeing encroaching totalitarianism, the American scholars were too idealistic, and even naive, with a dangerously untempered faith in liberalism for its own sake.<sup>58</sup> On the other side of things, to the Americans, these new and foreign Germans appeared cynical, and even motivated by fear and impulse as opposed to reason.<sup>59</sup> This moment represented the first direct hybridization of ideas between the German exile intellectuals and their American counterparts. These cynical, ideologically scarred

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<sup>55</sup> Rutkoff, Scott. “*New School: A History of the New School for Social Research*,” page 86.

<sup>56</sup> Katznelson, Ira. “Reflections on the New School's Founding Moments,” page 405.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 399.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 405.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

Germans, through their multi-national intellectual communities and their positions in places like the government expressed and spread their ideas until they became part of American liberalism in the Cold War.

Prior to the rise of the Nazis, the ideas of these German liberals were much more comparable to those of the American progressives found in communities like the New School. They held deep faith in both democracy and liberalism for their own sakes, with this faith supported by an absolutist belief that a progressive and educated would inevitably trend towards liberal democracy. In the last weeks of the Weimar Republic, Benno Reifenberg, an editor for the newspaper *Frankfurter Zeitung*, demonstrated this kind of sentiment. Speaking on Hitler's appointment as chancellor, Reifenberg stated this it was "a hopeless misjudgment of our nation, to believe that you can impose a dictatorial regime on it .... The diversity of the German people requires democracy!"<sup>60</sup> The earlier statement from the founders of the New School demonstrated a similar absolutist idea about democracy. It is likely that American liberal rhetoric reminded the German exile intellectuals of their own mistakes within, causing much of that friction.

The collapse of Weimar democracy differentiated the two camps of scholars. That event left scars on the ideologies of the German intellectuals, permanently altering their perceptions regarding the nature of democracy and liberalism. This difference between the German and American intellectuals in 1933 is what facilitated the combination of their ideas. Both dedicated themselves to bettering the world for the sake of democracy, and through their collaboration, they attempted to answer the question of how to safeguard democracy, forging a new American liberalism for the future.

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<sup>60</sup> Benno Reifenberg in Ullrich, Volker. "Adolf Hitler: "Ruhig Abwarten!"" Zeit Online (In German).

### Section III

#### Arnold Brecht

After the Nazi seizure of power entered its final stages in early 1933, Arnold Brecht, a liberal German democrat, stood in opposition to the Adolf Hitler and the Nazi party. In February of 1933, just days after Hitler's election as chancellor, Brecht confronted him in front of the assembly. He stated firmly that Hitler must "abide by the constitution and the law of the land," resulting in a premature, and awkward departure by the Chancellor. Mere days after this comment, Brecht was removed from his position as acting state secretary.<sup>61</sup> In April 1933, Brecht was even arrested by the Nazi party, but non-Nazi ministers quickly intervened, and Brecht was free once more.<sup>62</sup> The walls were closing in for people like Brecht, as on the fourteenth of July, 1933, "any organized opposition to the National Socialist Party was declared illegal."<sup>63</sup> As Brecht later wrote in 1944, "the curtain had fallen. The great silence reigned."<sup>64</sup>

In the following August, and another time in October, Brecht received letters from Alvin Johnson of the New School for Social Research. The letters offered Brecht a teaching position in political science at the New School. In response, Brecht laid out a set of conditions that Alvin Johnson must satisfy before he could accept. These conditions amounted to a desire to stay silent about the current political situation in Germany, a desire to not be considered an "exile," as he had heard of the School's reputation, and to have the freedom to return to Germany in May or

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<sup>61</sup> Treaster, Joseph B. "Arnold Brecht Dies; Long at New School. (Citation for all preceding material in paragraph) & Hula, Erich. "Arnold Brecht: 1884-1977." *Social Research* 44, no. 4 (1977), pages 601-602.

<sup>62</sup> The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Arnold Brecht." Encyclopædia Britannica.

<sup>63</sup> Brecht, Arnold. "Prelude to Silence: The End of the German republic." Page 120.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

June of the following year.<sup>65</sup> While it is unclear whether or not these concerns were genuine, it is likely that Brecht was trying to circumvent censors the letter had to pass through on its way to the United States. Regardless of this, Alvin Johnson reassured him, and accepted his conditions. Following their agreement, Johnson scheduled Brecht to start his position at the New School on November 9th, 1933.<sup>66</sup>

Arnold Brecht's traumatic experiences from the fall of Weimar forever changed his perspectives regarding democracy and the threats it faced. Particularly in the mid-1930s, in the United States, Brecht focused his work on finding the root causes for the collapse of the Weimar Republic. Following years of analysis, Brecht concluded that Weimar democracy, and democracy was most threatened by that's nation's own internal politics and structures. Brecht believed that in the case of Weimar specifically, the chief cause for its collapse was the Republic's weak constitution.

In his examination of the Weimar Republic, Brecht outlined several conditions that he believed contributed to its eventual destruction. First, Brecht stated that the liberal optimists who first controlled Weimar had little experience, resulting in a poorly thought-out, poorly written constitution. In addition, there was an overwhelming liberal majority within the government in 1919, and Brecht postulated that those liberals in power did not foresee the possibility of a non-liberal majority within the government. Second, Brecht had problems with the German system of proportional representation. Because Brecht was an advocate for political pluralism, he valued the liberal spirit of proportional representation. However, he felt that its practical implementation

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<sup>65</sup> Brecht to Johnson, October 13, 1933, Box 2, Folder 12, Appointment to the Faculty of the New School for Social Research & departure from Germany, Arnold Brecht Papers.

<sup>66</sup> Johnson to Brecht, October 13, 1933 & Johnson telegram, October 30, 1933, Box 2, Folder 12, Appointment to the Faculty of the New School for Social Research & departure from Germany, Arnold Brecht Papers.

left much to be desired, as it led to a more divided government due to increased inter-party conflict.<sup>67</sup>

Arnold Brecht's functional definition of democracy constituted three pillars, along with further clauses for qualification:

The protection of human or basic rights, the independence of the courts of law, and the maxim that all other matters are decided or controlled by the majority on the basis of general elections, in such a way that the people, by making free use of their right to vote can determine and change (either at any time or periodically within reasonable periods of time) both the members of the legislative assembly and (directly or indirectly) the holders of the highest executive offices.<sup>68</sup>

While Brecht did not publish this definition until 1970, its broad ideas are found throughout Brecht's writings from the 1930's and 1940's, and will serve as the basic foundation of understanding with how Brecht viewed democracy. This definition demonstrated Brecht's support for the liberal principles of individual rights, independent courts, and free elections. More importantly, however, this definition demonstrated Brecht's attention to detail. In addition to outlining the pillars that he felt defined a democracy, Brecht gave qualifiers to these pillars so that they could not be easily exploited through loopholes. While this was simply Brecht's own definition of democracy, this kind of critical thinking and foresight is crucial when formulating policy and legislation.

Brecht was careful when crafting his definition of democracy, applying decades of experience and a healthy degree of cynicism to account for potential loopholes. The care Brecht demonstrated in his definition speaks to his concerns with the deeply flawed constitution of the

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<sup>67</sup> Brecht, Arnold. "Prelude to Silence: The End of the German Republic." Page 47-49.

<sup>68</sup> Brecht, Arnold. "The Political Education of Arnold Brecht," page 153; Magoni, Doris J. *The Political Philosophy of Arnold Brecht*, page 72.

Weimar Republic. Brecht's main problems with the constitution was that it is was poorly thought-out, and therefore, poorly written. As a result, Brecht believed that the poor constitution of the Weimar Republic crippled its democracy from the very beginning.

In his 1944 book "Prelude to Silence: The End of the German republic," Brecht identified four circumstances that caused the Weimar constitution to be poorly planned.<sup>69</sup> First, he identified that the constitution was written in haste, having been written in the midst of the German revolution.<sup>70</sup> Second, Brecht noted that it was written by democrats that not only had little experience in governance, but also a "deep adherence" to liberal ideals, resulting in the implementation of some poorly planned, and fatal clauses.<sup>71</sup> Third, Brecht identified that in 1919, the time of writing this constitution, the world had not yet been confronted with the full extent of the danger that radical communism and fascism posed to democratic societies.<sup>72</sup> As a result, there was little precedent for protecting against those types of radical forces, and they went unaccounted for in Weimar's constitution. Fourth and finally, the constitution was written during a time when there was an overwhelming democratic majority in the Reichstag, and the German liberals did not consider the idea that parliament could at some point be controlled by an undemocratic majority.<sup>73</sup> With all of these factors identified, Brecht believed that the Weimar constitution was unprepared for the political battles that wreaked havoc in Germany, throughout the interwar period, and that the free reign of liberal optimistic idealism created easily exploited weaknesses in the document.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Brecht, Arnold. "Prelude to Silence: The End of the German republic." Page 47.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Brecht, Arnold. "The Political Education of Arnold Brecht," page 158; Magoni, Doris J. The Political Philosophy of Arnold Brecht, page 76.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

Regarding the actual content of the constitution, Brecht outlined three problematic principles the Weimar constitution adopts. These problems were, first, **proportional representation**, which encouraged the splitting of political parties, preventing more ideologically pluralistic, larger parties from forming. Second, **presidential election by popular vote**, which, in a divisive, proportional government, resulted in the election of “popular outsiders,” not strongly associated with any one party (such as Hindenburg). Third, Brecht argued that the constitution **did not properly limit the presidential powers**, which resulted in the president having the ability to circumvent the democratic process.<sup>75</sup>

Wielding these findings, Brecht concludes that the chief reason for the collapse of the Weimar Republic was its weak constitution.<sup>76</sup> By extension, Brecht demonstrated a belief that if Weimar instead had a strong constitution, it would never have collapsed. These beliefs colored Brecht’s perspectives towards democracy, leading him to adopt a belief that, with strong enough guidelines, i.e. a constitution, a democracy could withstand a wide variety of challenges.

Brecht compared his imagined solution to the variety of challenges that plagued Weimar. In some cases, Brecht’s vision of victory was not to eliminate all opposition to democracy, but to create a system that allowed that opposition to become part of the system. For example, Brecht believed that an indicator of a successful democracy, was the ability for even contradicting political ideas to coexist within a society in tolerance of one another.<sup>77</sup> The problem for Weimar was that while the nation possessed a considerable amount of political and ideological plurality, the contrasting ideologies present in the Republic were constantly at odds, all vying for the

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<sup>75</sup> Brecht, Arnold. “Prelude to Silence: The End of the German republic.” Pages 47-49.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 49, 59-60.

<sup>77</sup> Brecht, Arnold. “*Political Theory: The Foundations of Twentieth Century Political Thought*,” page 338.

triumph of their own system. This eventually played a large part in the weakening, and subsequent collapse of Weimar democracy leading up to 1933.

Despite Brecht's desire for an ideological plurality, he, as mentioned previously, saw problems with a system of proportional representation in government. Brecht made the distinction that this system could be beneficial in the initial drafting of a constitution (to avoid the problem of having an overwhelming majority only consider themselves and help fulfill Brecht's ideal of a pluralistic and mutually tolerant society).<sup>78</sup> However, in the case of an already established government Brecht believed that proportional representation is dangerous, preferring a model such as the two party system.<sup>79</sup> While it may appear strange that a man who desires a system where vastly different ideologies can coexist also prefers a two party system over a proportional system, Brecht believed that splitting the parties increased the rift between differing ideologies.<sup>80</sup>

In examining the Weimar Republic, Brecht determined that the presence of so many different political parties, alongside a system of election by popular vote, caused the appointment of "stalwart delegates," individuals uninterested in cooperation with other parties, as opposed to delegates who were able to find compromise between their political allies and enemies.<sup>81</sup> Worse still, his greatest concern with the proportional representation was that it could facilitate the rise of extremist parties, parties that, despite even being minorities, could hold "pivotal power between large parties," due to the already fractured parliament.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Brecht, Arnold. "*Political Theory: The Foundations of Twentieth Century Political Thought*," page 135; Magoni, Doris J. *The Political Philosophy of Arnold Brecht*, page 47.

<sup>79</sup> Brecht, Arnold. "Prelude to Silence: The End of the German republic." Page 47-49.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 47

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*; Brecht, Arnold. "The Political Education of Arnold Brecht," page 156.

By the time Brecht completed “Prelude to Silence” in 1944, he had cemented his belief that the factors that caused the collapse of Weimar democracy were a result of inexperienced individuals not being able to see the potential problems of their new political society. The threats to democracy, while in this case were of German making, could easily occur elsewhere. As such, Brecht made it his mission as an intellectual to prevent such analytical missteps from happening again. This perspective on the Weimar Republic, that its fall was determined by its shoddy foundations, acted as Brecht’s starting point in his mission to defend democracy.

Brecht’s solution to counter the naivety of policy makers was for intellectuals to take on an active role in society. In this new role, Brecht believed intellectuals could help devise strong constitutions for future democracies. Arnold Brecht believed that the role of the intellectual in a modern society was to inform the politician and policy maker of the threats facing their society. His beliefs suggested that policy makers required the support and guidance of a class of public intellectuals to craft policy robust enough to ensure democracy’s survival. As a result, Brecht postulated that, for a democracy to last, the intellectual must play a significant role in policy making.

In their new role, Brecht advocated for the intellectual to act as a scientist; to utilize scientific methods in their analysis, and maintain a degree of objectivity when analyzing concepts, problems, and solutions. Brecht believed that in analysis, a scientifically minded intellectual must temper their biases with relativism, to not immediately support or dismiss something just because it aligns or conflicts with their ideology. However, he also called for an intellectual to be cautious of their own relativistic techniques. Brecht believed that an over-reliance on relativism, where philosophers might view systems such as fascism as being merely alternatives to liberalism, led to a foolish, if not dangerous kind of analysis. Brecht

used scientific methods and relativism as tools to reach a more justifiable and logical conclusion, but never lost sight of his goal to support democracy.

Brecht outlined his intellectual mission, and what he believed should be the mission for all intellectuals, in his 1946 essay “Democracy - Challenge to Theory:”

To see, sooner than others, and to analyze, more profoundly than others, the immediate and the potential problems of the political life of society; to supply the practical politician, well in advance, with alternative courses of action the foreseeable consequences of which have been fully thought through; and to supply him not only with brilliant asides but with a solid block of knowledge on which to build.<sup>83</sup>

Brecht believed the intellectual’s duty was two-fold: First, the intellectual must have analytical and predictive skills to identify threats to democracy that a society has not yet faced. The execution of the intellectual duty relied on their skill and intelligence, which required very high-quality individuals, or a large intellectual community to exhaust possibilities. Second, the intellectual must “supply the practical politician,” requiring the intellectual to have a considerable role alongside the government. Brecht’s vision was that the politician was to determine policy based off the intellectual’s block of knowledge. Brecht’s conclusions here are notably technocratic in nature, requiring an intellectual elite to occupy what is at least a semi-permanent position in government. This conclusion is where Brecht most clearly compromises on liberal optimistic ideals to better protect democracy.

Throughout his writings, Brecht frequently identified himself as a political or social scientist. He often emphasized the latter half by utilizing a level of scientific relativism and objectivity to supplement his analysis. In his book, “Political Theory”, Brecht attempted to

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<sup>83</sup> Brecht, Arnold. “*Democracy - Challenge to Theory*,” page 195.

search for the value of various political beliefs and systems.<sup>84</sup> Brecht established various circumstances and criteria in examining what may make a type government successful.<sup>85</sup> He even conceded that something as abhorrent as Nazism has advantages over democracy in particular contexts. However, using his analytical criteria laid out at the start of the section, Brecht ultimately dismissed it as too unreliable or dangerous.<sup>86</sup> In addition, he broke away from his more scientific analysis, and stated that totalitarian systems are simply immoral.<sup>87</sup> While Brecht was undoubtedly biased against totalitarianism, acknowledging the fact himself, the criteria and conditions he laid out are logical, maintaining the a scientific integrity in his approach.

Brecht did not believe there are any absolutes in political theory. He established that many of the intellectuals who do believe in such absolutes often fell into the “is and ought” gap.<sup>88</sup> The “is-ought gap”, also known as “Hume’s law” is a logical fallacy where people use observations about the world to make judgements about the way things ought to be. An argument such as “America was founded on liberal democratic principles, therefore it ought to remain a liberal democratic nation” falls into this fallacy.<sup>89</sup>

Despite utilizing relativistic thinking and methods in analysis, Brecht avoided using them in his rhetoric. He engaged what he viewed as over-emphasis on relativism in his essay “Beyond Relativism in Political Theory.”<sup>90</sup> Brecht stated:

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<sup>84</sup> Brecht, Arnold. “*Political Theory: The Foundations of Twentieth Century Political Thought*,” page 302, 438.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 438.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Magoni, Doris J. *The Political Philosophy of Arnold Brecht*, page 3.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Brecht, Arnold. "Political Theory: Beyond Relativism in Political Theory." *The American Political Science Review* 41, no. 3 (1947), page 470.

Modern science and modern scientific methods, with all their splendor of achievement, have led to an ethical vacuum . . . For they have offered little or nothing to distinguish between good and evil, right, and wrong, justice and injustice.<sup>91</sup>

He followed this suggestion by stating that political science was at the forefront of this issue, as it is faced by forces such as Nazism and Communism.<sup>92</sup> He referred to relativists of the past (such as the sociologist Max Weber) as standing in the way of “further progress” in the realm of political theory. Despite aggressively “describing the consequences and implications of the various political creeds of their time”, they could not do enough to confront the enemies and problems facing democracy.<sup>93</sup>

Brecht’s personal political philosophy was something he called “partisan relativism”, which he outlined as a philosophy in which one values and utilizes the science and scientific methods, but did not let the nature of relativism prevent them from “orienting his own scientific research” toward some particular end.<sup>94</sup> He valued using relativistic techniques in his analysis (his means), but, to avoid the trap the he believed men such as Weber fell into, he made sure that his conclusions, (his ends) did not lose sight of his partisan goal; to support democracy, and combat the ideologies it is vulnerable to. For Brecht, there was little room for error when dealing with these forces, as framing an institution such as Nazism as if it were any other mundane political system was on par with ignoring it.<sup>95</sup>

Brecht was strict in his ideology, however. Despite his problems with relativism, he was careful to not let his partisanship (his bias), overshadow his relativistic methods. Brecht even

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<sup>91</sup> Brecht, Arnold. "*Political Theory: Beyond Relativism in Political Theory*," page 470.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Brecht, Arnold. "*Democracy - Challenge to Theory*," page 196.

<sup>94</sup> Brecht, Arnold. "*Political Theory: The Foundations of Twentieth Century Political Thought*," page 484.

<sup>95</sup> Brecht, Arnold. "*Democracy - Challenge to Theory*," pages 196-197.

criticized another intellectual who latches onto a similar philosophy to Brecht's partisan relativism, but allowed his desired ends to pollute his relativistic methods.

Brecht criticized Gustav Radbruch, a fellow German intellectual of the 1930s (Radbruch living under Nazi rule in Heidelberg at that time), and his "courageous paper," "Relativism in the Philosophy of Law," written in French, in 1934.<sup>96</sup> This paper, published as a defiant act against totalitarian rule, argued that "scientific relativism leads logically that values should not be forced upon any people against their will, and there-with, to postulates of liberty, separation of powers, majority rule, and sovereignty of the people."<sup>97</sup> This is an argument that, over time the practices of relativism and scientific objectivity will inevitably lead to the absolute truth that democracy is the only reasonable system of government..<sup>98</sup>

While Brecht appreciated Radbruch's effort to "come to the aid of Democracy in its darkest hour," Radbruch's conclusions troubled him for a few reasons.<sup>99</sup> Firstly, the sentiment that relativism leads to an absolute truth was not possible in Brecht's mind. He acknowledged that there are circumstances where non-democratic systems may work better than democracy.<sup>100</sup> In addition, the very idea of relativism resulting in an absolute is contradictory. Secondly, Brecht saw Radbruch's absolutist<sup>101</sup> view and the idea that democracy presupposes relativism as going against one of democracy's greatest merits: "that it [democracy] does *not* presuppose relativistic world views, or any other but offers a haven to adherents of the most divergent absolute or relativist creeds."<sup>102</sup> In a word, plurality is what Brecht saw as one of democracy's greatest

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<sup>96</sup> Brecht, Arnold. "Political Theory: The Foundations of Twentieth Century Political Thought," page 336.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 336-337.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 337.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 438.

<sup>101</sup> "Absolutist" here refers to the idea of democracy being an "absolute" truth when relativism is allowed to flourish.

<sup>102</sup> Brecht, Arnold. "Political Theory: The Foundations of Twentieth Century Political Thought," page 337- 338.

strengths, a presence and exchange of differing ideas under a system of “mutual political toleration.”<sup>103</sup> Radbruch’s piece was passionate, but reactionary, it was a logical plea in retaliation against the rise of German fascism. Even though Brecht acknowledged this and shares similar feelings about fascism, he dismissed Radbruch’s work, for it did not follow the methods Brecht felt an intellectual ought to engage in.

Brecht’s work suggested a belief that, if a democracy were built from the ground up, with sufficient foresight regarding what challenges it encountered, coupled with a robust, well thought out constitution, democracy could not be considerably threatened by anti-democratic forces. Given that scenario, Brecht advocated for the inclusion of these anti-democratic forces in both the government and policy, suggesting a desire for an unprecedented political plurality.<sup>104</sup> Brecht believed that, despite their inherent opposition to democracy, if a democratic system was secure enough to bear their weight, anti-democratic ideologies should participate in the democratic government.<sup>105</sup>

Brecht’s desire for this unprecedented yet functional plurality, demonstrated a strong, liberal optimist sentiment within his ideals. Despite his answer to the question of how to protect democracy being technocratic, this more liberal realist solution serves an optimist end. After a democracy is strengthened by its intellectual elite, that democracy could then embrace whatever other liberal optimist principles it desired. As a result, I conclude that Arnold Brecht maintained his liberal optimist core, and, despite some realist leanings, devised his solution with the intent that his optimist ideals could become reality.

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<sup>103</sup> Brecht, Arnold. “*Political Theory: The Foundations of Twentieth Century Political Thought*,” page 338.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 337-338.

Following World War II, the reconstruction of Imperial Japan and Nazi Germany began, and America saw them reconstructed using models reminiscent of its own liberal democracy. Brecht did not argue against the occupation and reconstruction of Germany and Japan, but against the America's choice to describe those governments as wholly democratic.<sup>106</sup> Brecht believed that these governments, having the will of America imposed upon them through military occupation, cannot rightly be called democratic. He states that such reckless labeling did "injustice to the name of democracy."<sup>107</sup> Arnold Brecht valued democracy and its associated beliefs. Even in the face of the loyalty he held to the United States, Brecht did not wish to see it misused to support political rhetoric or ideological dogma:

"Let us reserve the name of democracy for free people. If a wider use of the term cannot be checked, Americans should insist on defining both "exclusive" and "unfree" democracies as pseudo-democracies and distinguishing them from genuine democracy, which is "inclusive" and "free.""<sup>108</sup>

According to this statement, in order for Brecht to label something a true democracy, that democracy must transcend both race and creed. Liberal and democratic principles must apply to all of such a nation's inhabitants, lest that nation be condemned as hypocritical. It can be surmised that this belief extends to all of a nation's inhabitants, as this included (as mentioned earlier in this section) even anti-democratic groups such as fascists.

In his essay "Democracy: Challenge to Theory" (written in 1946), Brecht felt that the rhetorical usage of "democracy" was much too loose and in dire need of clarification.<sup>109</sup> He presented one commonly held idea of democracy in the west, simply being "a government *by* the

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<sup>106</sup> Brecht, Arnold. "Democracy - Challenge to Theory," page 202.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 203.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 201.

people - that is, by the *governed* people.”<sup>110</sup> Brecht urged that if this idea is going to be used, America should “stick to it,” instead of calling the practiced system a democracy when it did not functionally reflect that definition.<sup>111</sup> Under Brecht’s simple definition, white Americans could be said to live under that democratic system, however, Brecht argued that black Americans, could not.<sup>112</sup> In his view, black Americans lived under another system of government entirely, a government that was “controlled, not by him, but by the great masses of people and by public opinion . . . it is, for the Negro, no democracy. This fact should be readily admitted, and the treatment of the Negro should be discussed on the basis of this admission.”<sup>113</sup>

In the same sense, Brecht also argued that countries not governed by their own people cannot be called democracies. Things such as colonies, and mandated territories, even though the occupying nation may be democratic, if not governed “by the *governed* people,” are not democracies according to that sentiment, and should not be labeled as such in so casually.<sup>114</sup>

Brecht was generally unclear about his ideal democracy that expressed “mutual political toleration.”<sup>115</sup> Brecht desired a system of government where political parties were few, but heterogeneous, with a variety of ideologies present in each. Brecht believed that being within the same party structure would force otherwise divergent ideologies to compromise. It is likely that the model of the American two-party system influenced this, which, in 1940, possessed two very heterogeneous parties. With these changes, Brecht’s ideal system required enough checks and balances so that no single ideology could dominate and suppress the another to any meaningful extent, particularly within an individual party. While Brecht never explicitly stated the role of

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<sup>110</sup> Brecht, Arnold. “*Democracy - Challenge to Theory*,” page 202.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Brecht, Arnold. “*Political Theory: The Foundations of Twentieth Century Political Thought*,” page 338.

anti-democratic extremists within his system, it can be surmised that they would hold fringe or marginalized positions within a larger party, but still maintain a presence in policymaking.

In concluding on Brecht's intent, we should return to Brecht's view of his role as a political scientist: "To see, sooner than others . . . the immediate and the potential problems of the political life of society; to supply the practical politician, not only with brilliant asides but with a solid block of knowledge on which to build."<sup>116</sup> While he may have had an idea of what his ideal society was, Brecht presented his beliefs more as a theory as opposed to a concerted proposal. Brecht, despite the technocratic nature of his solutions, did not wish to take the reins of government, but instead wished to act as a pool of information for the politician, acting as an informant and counselor, but leaving the final society building up to the policy makers.

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<sup>116</sup> Brecht, Arnold. "*Democracy - Challenge to Theory*," page 195.

## Section IV

### Hans Speier

The triumph of Hitler and the Nazi party forever changed Hans Speier. His views on systems such as socialism and democracy were either greatly altered, or gradually abandoned from 1933 to 1948. Speier felt betrayed following Hitler's election, betrayed by the systems and people he placed his faith in. Like Brecht, the fall of the Weimar Republic presented a crisis for Speier's beliefs, transforming him from a passionate socialist liberal in the early 1930s, to a Machiavellian technocrat advocating for the manipulation of the public by 1948 and on.

Before the rise of the Nazis, Speier was passionate, politically active, and idealistic. In his school days of the mid-1920s, he studied economics and sociology under Emil Lederer and Karl Mannheim. Lederer imparted some of his socialist and Marxist beliefs onto the young Speier, while Mannheim shaped Speier's initial academic perspectives.<sup>117</sup> Hans Speier graduated with a PhD in sociology and national economics in 1928. Soon after, Speier joined the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD), where he sought to wield his education to assist the socialist cause.<sup>118</sup> Speier and his colleagues believed that it was their duty as socialists to use their knowledge and help educate the working class "masses" of Germany.<sup>119</sup> Through public education of this proletariat body, the social democrats believed they could trigger a Marxist revolution led by a passionate working class.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Speier, Hans, 1984, Box 3, Folder 5, Autobiographical Notes, page 9, Hans Speier Papers.

<sup>118</sup> Bessner, Daniel. "*Democracy in Exile: Hans Speier and the Rise of the Defense Intellectual*," page 16.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

In 1931, Speier accepted a teaching position at the *Hochschule für Politik* (College for Politics), a school dedicated to teaching Germans about liberal democratic principles.<sup>121</sup> The Hochschule acted as an institute and community for left-wing, often liberal, German intellectuals of the time, to include individuals such as Arnold Brecht.<sup>122</sup> Until 1931, Speier's career in academia had only exposed him to other intellectuals, be they writers, academics, or philosophers.<sup>123</sup> It was not until his involvement in the SPD and the *Hochschule* that he came into contact with the working classes.<sup>124</sup> This new experience gave Speier perspective regarding sociology and the perceptions of academics on the masses, causing him to criticize the work of his old mentor, Karl Mannheim. Speier accused Mannheim of simply writing about the academia on sociology, as opposed to studying the people in society themselves.<sup>125</sup> Using his position at the Hochschule, Speier was able to educate the people of Germany as he and the SPD desired, however, his ideals of a working class yearning for a Marxist revolution were soon to be strained by the shifting German political climate.

In late 1931, Speier began to fear the Nazi threat against Germany.<sup>126</sup> Hitler had just made a momentary political alliance with Alfred Hugenberg, a right-wing German nationalist who controlled a substantial portion of the Weimar media. Using Hugenberg's influence, Adolf Hitler was able to push Nazi rhetoric and ideals into a mainstream audience, to include some of the people that Speier taught. The situation in Germany degraded further until the people of Weimar elected Adolf Hitler as chancellor in January of 1933. Speier's reaction was disbelief, disbelief that such a violent, hateful man could have been elected by so many of the people he

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<sup>121</sup> Bessner, Daniel. "*The Night Watchman Hans Speier and the Making of the American National Security State*," Page 4.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Speier, Hans, 1984, Box 3, Folder 5, Autobiographical Notes, page 12, Hans Speier Papers.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 12-13.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 14.

had put his faith in.<sup>127</sup> Soon after, the *Hochschule fur politik* was taken over by the Nazi Ministry of Propaganda and Speier, with his left-wing beliefs, was removed from his position.<sup>128</sup>

Seeing the Weimar Republic crumble before his eyes, Speier made plans to leave Germany. He was torn between staying in Germany for the sake of his sickly parents, and leaving so that he may secure the future of his Jewish wife and newborn child. By the summer of 1933 Speier said goodbye to his sickly parents, and fled to London. Here, in August of 1933, Speier met Alvin Johnson, who was a friend of one of Speier's mentors, Emil Lederer.<sup>129</sup> Johnson and Lederer proposed their idea to Speier; form a university in exile as a haven for the German intellectuals fleeing the grasp of totalitarianism. In addition to extending the offer for Speier to teach at the New School, Johnson and Lederer asked Speier for a favor: Noting that Speier was not Jewish and could return to Germany, the two men asked Speier to act as a recruiter for the University in Exile.<sup>130</sup> Speier was to seek out intellectuals of interest, present them Johnson's offer of employment in America, and help them flee Germany, where they might have been unable to without Speier's assistance.<sup>131</sup> Speier returned to Germany, for the last time before 1945, now referring to it as his "morally sullied homeland."<sup>132</sup> He said his final goodbye to his parents, and helped shepherd intellectuals out of Germany as requested of him. Speier then accepted a position at the New School for Social Research in 1933, and, alongside Emil Lederer, became one of the founding members of the University in Exile.<sup>133</sup>

After his arrival to America, Speier reflected deeply on his beliefs. The destruction of Weimar at the hands of the Nazis was made even worse for Speier by the fact that the public

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<sup>127</sup> Speier, Hans, 1984, Box 3, Folder 5, Autobiographical Notes, page 15, Hans Speier Papers.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid. 16-17.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 17-18.

masses Speier once taught and put his trust in had shifted their support to the Nazis. This deeply embittered Speier, eventually replacing his old ideals with an often cynical, cold, and even fearful outlook on the world around him. The fearful response is demonstrated in how he came to view democracy: following the rise of the Nazis in 1933, to his time at the RAND Corporation in 1948, Speier increasingly viewed democracy as fragile, in constant danger from even the most minor radical elements, radical elements that democracy itself allowed to exist.<sup>134</sup> At best, these elements were allowed to exist because of democracy's liberal principles of political pluralism and freedom of expression, and at worst, they were directly supported by that society's own population.

After he began his work at RAND in 1948, Hans Speier shifted the focus of his fears. By that time, he had entirely written the public off as a lost cause, no longer believing it worthwhile or possible to educate them to better democratic society. Speier adopted the belief that the government and intellectuals must manipulate the public using propaganda, manufacturing their consent, and shepherding them away from any corrupting, anti-American influences. This perspective came as a response to the rise of the Soviet Union as America's greatest enemy. Speier's fears of the authoritarian giant from the east became urgent after the formation of the eastern bloc out of the Warsaw Pact, and the Soviet acquisition of the atomic bomb in 1949. In addition, Speier saw no room for diplomacy with the Soviet Union, suggesting that any diplomatic action from the USSR towards the United States, no matter how mundane, had the end goal of undermining American interests.<sup>135</sup> In order for a liberal democracy to combat what Speier viewed as an ethically bankrupt regime, drastic, and even equal measures were necessary to preserve the democratic way of life. From this, Speier supported NATO as a match to the

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<sup>134</sup> Bessner, Daniel. "*Democracy in Exile: Hans Speier and the Rise of the Defense Intellectual*," page 17.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, V; Bell, Duncan. "Realism." Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.

eastern bloc, and the manipulation of America's population to limit ideological deviance away from the American cause.

To begin the examination of Speier's descent into his illiberal mindset, we will look at his work from the mid-1930s, the early years of his exile in America, Speier's work focused obsessively on the collapse of democracy in the Weimar Republic. In his autobiographical notes, Speier stated; "my recent experiences deeply influenced my scientific interests, the most important of those was not my own emigration, but by Hitler's triumph."<sup>136</sup> Like Arnold Brecht, Speier sought to find the root cause of Weimar's collapse. Unlike Brecht, however, Speier did not focus his analysis on Weimar's structures or systems, but squarely on the mass public, and the naivety of the intellectuals and politicians that placed their trust in them.

Speier drafted a book even before his move to America, writing it in the final few years of the Weimar Republic. This book, titled "German White-Collar Workers and the Rise of Hitler," attempted an analysis of white-collar workers in Weimar Germany, and what might have explained their support for Nazism. In his analysis, Speier broke down various kinds of political rhetoric circulating at the time, along with a deep dive on the various worker's organizations present throughout the Republic. Despite the considerable work put into the book, Speier was self-admittedly unable to point out any broadly applicable and conclusive factors which explain the support for Hitler.<sup>137</sup> Speier acknowledged that white collar and middle class workers came from a wide variety of political backgrounds, stating it to be "impossible to offer easy generalizations" about them.<sup>138</sup> He concluded his chapter titled "Nationalism" with a conclusion that nationalist sentiments translated to social prestige amongst middle-class Germans of the

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<sup>136</sup> Speier, Hans, 1984, Box 3, Folder 5, Autobiographical Notes, page 17, Hans Speier Papers.

<sup>137</sup> Speier, Hans, "German White-Collar Workers and the Rise of Hitler," pages 103-117.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid. 103.

period, but nearly refuted that very claim in the same breath. He stated that this “was not a coherent ideology nor was it evenly embraced by members of this social stratum.”<sup>139</sup>

Speier’s inability to point out specific causes of the support for Nazism occurs again in his autobiographical notes. In these notes, written as late as the 1980s, Speier stated that he felt the German middle class had a “special predisposition for Nazism,” referring to it as “aggressive stupidity.”<sup>140</sup> He attributed this to the middle class having cultural tendencies which aligned with Nazi rhetoric (such as anti-Semitism), combined with being what Speier called “half educated.”<sup>141</sup> His perceptions of the German youth were even more nebulous. The explanations he presented to make sense of the youthful support of radicalism are condescending and reductive; Speier essentially called them bored, “in the darkness of their tedious lives, punctuated only by imposed risks.”<sup>142</sup> He suggested that the youth of Germany turned to supporting radicalism simply to alleviate boredom, referring to these actions as “self-chosen dangers.”<sup>143</sup> There lies a problem in Speier’s inability to point out a particular explanation for this. As it is his most prevalent concern regarding the sanctity of democracy, being unable to link the support for Nazism or radicalism to any specifically German cause means that the shadow of Weimar never leaves him. If nothing particularly German was behind the masses supporting Nazism, then Speier had to answer a question; what was there to stop it from happening again?

This question facing Speier and democracy asked what the role of the public or “masses” is within a democracy. Speier engaged this directly in his 1950 essay “Historical Development of Public Opinion.” This essay discussed the idea of public opinion, being defined as “a

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<sup>139</sup> Speier, Hans, “*German White-Collar Workers and the Rise of Hitler*,” page 117.

<sup>140</sup> Speier, Hans, 1984, Box 3, Folder 5, Autobiographical Notes, page 17, Hans Speier Papers.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

communication of citizens to their government.”<sup>144</sup> Moving through the history of the concept through the Enlightenment to 1950, Speier talked about how public opinion became seen as a tool to “purify” politics, quoting Woodrow Wilson: “Statesmen must follow the clarified common thought or be broken.”<sup>145</sup> According to Wilson, and most American sentiments throughout the early 20th century, public opinion, that is, the views and will of the masses influencing government policy, was not only a benefit to democracy, but necessary for its success. Speier then described this perception being shaken by the events following World War I, with the failure of the League of Nations, and then the rise of fascism leading into World War II.<sup>146</sup> He stated that world politics have simply become much more complex than in past years, too much so for the everyman, being “beyond his understanding.”<sup>147</sup> Speier also demonstrated a belief that the overall morality of society has degraded in the years prior to 1950, causing the public to be untrustworthy from both an intellectual and moral standpoint.<sup>148</sup> Thinking back to Speier’s comment referring to Germany as his “morally sullied homeland,” it is clear that his sentiments from 1933 still remained, being projected onto not just the people of Germany, but the civilian masses overall.<sup>149</sup>

Speier’s time at the RAND corporation starting in 1948 saw his work shift to foreign policy and national security, inevitably involving the USSR. In his work, Speier never once considered the Soviet Union to be anything but an enemy of the United States and democracy as a whole. While Speier did not directly compare the Soviet Union to Nazi Germany, they occupied that same role in his perceptions; an unjust, unrepentant enemy of the United States,

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<sup>144</sup> Speier, Hans. "Historical Development of Public Opinion." *American Journal of Sociology* 55, no. 4 (1950): page 376.

<sup>145</sup> Speier, Hans. "Historical Development of Public Opinion," page 387.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Speier, Hans, 1984, Box 3, Folder 5, Autobiographical Notes, page 19, Hans Speier Papers.

and the democratic way of life. The United States, on the other hand, was his savior nation, and Speier developed a profound loyalty towards the country.<sup>150</sup> He was unable to defend Germany from its own breed of totalitarianism, but perhaps now, with his new perspectives and position, he could safeguard the United States from the Soviet Union, and the influences it could have on the American population. The next few paragraphs will outline Speier's perspectives towards the Soviet Union, and in-turn, what eventually drove him towards his illiberal conclusions.

Even before the end of World War II, Hans Speier believed that the Soviet Union would prove to be an enemy of the United States. Speier admonished Franklin Delano Roosevelt and his administration, prior to the president's death in April of 1945, for believing for even a moment that the USA-USSR alliance could last, suggesting that they were too preoccupied with the all but defeated Germans.<sup>151</sup> Speier went so far as to claim that such perceptions helped result in a "silencing of political reason" within America.<sup>152</sup> "Political reason," in this case meant taking the proper precautions against the Soviet Union, preparing for what Speier believed to be a clearly inevitable conflict.<sup>153</sup> Speier, however, was writing this in 1981, long after that conflict began.

Speier's fears regarding the Soviet Union intensified following their acquisition of nuclear weapons. Instead of the USSR being a threat to just NATO and democracy, they had become a threat to civilization itself.<sup>154</sup> Speier's fear stems from not just the possibility of nuclear warfare, but also from rhetoric espoused by Nikita Khrushchev and other Soviet leaders throughout the 1950s. Soviet leaders did not immediately embrace the idea that nuclear war

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<sup>150</sup> Bessner, Daniel. "Democracy in Exile: Hans Speier and the Rise of the Defense Intellectual," page 46.

<sup>151</sup> Speier, Hans. *From the Ashes of Disgrace Journal from Germany 1945-1955*, page 5.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 4-5.

<sup>154</sup> Speier, Hans. *Force and Folly: Essays on Foreign Affairs and the History of Ideas*, pages 45-46.

spelled doom for civilization, as was believed among many western nations.<sup>155</sup> Instead, the Soviets spoke in-line with their “doctrine of the inevitability of war,” stating that “communism would emerge victorious from nuclear war.”<sup>156</sup> Despite the Soviets revising their doctrine in 1956, and later abandoning it in 1959, Speier took their rhetorical grandstanding and aggression to heart, and never considered them to be anything other than an adversary.<sup>157</sup>

To Speier, the Soviet Union represented a tireless enemy, its regime unbound by the ethical restrictions that can cause liberal democracies to be so fragile. Due to its authoritarian structure the beliefs of the USSR’s population, and therefore, American propaganda (targeted at the masses), could do little to threaten it. By contrast, being a liberal democracy, America’s general population, and therefore, Soviet propaganda, could influence its political activity. In this titanic struggle between two world powers, Speier felt America was at a disadvantage. Our earlier question again confronted Speier; how do we safeguard democracy without compromising it?

Throughout his work, whenever he was discussing things such as sociological issues or public opinion, Speier separated authoritarian nations from the rest of the world. One phrase he often used as an antithesis to authoritarian nations is “in countries in which opinions can be freely expressed,” making a point to separate any considerations of the communist bloc from the rest of the world.<sup>158</sup> It is unclear whether Speier did this consciously or unconsciously, but one thing is certain; in Speier’s mind, the world was divided in two.

The idea of a world with two sides was further reinforced in Speier’s essay “Soviet Atomic Blackmail.” To answer the highly centralized, totalitarian eastern bloc, Speier believed

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<sup>155</sup> Speier, Hans. *Force and Folly: Essays on Foreign Affairs and the History of Ideas*, pages 45-46.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 45.

there must be a strong western bloc, and as such, Speier was an advocate for a strong NATO.<sup>159</sup> Speier advocated for this alliance for the sakes of both the United States and Europe as a whole. While Speier did not fear any immediate use of nuclear weapons, he acknowledged that the power disparity between the “haves” and “have-nots” was an area in which the Soviets could gain power.<sup>160</sup> The “have nots” of concern was all of Europe under NATO, as they did not have nuclear weapons of their own. With this essay, Speier identified the main difficulty presented by a bloc of democratic nations versus a bloc of totalitarian nations: The strength of NATO relied on not just the strength of the United States, but also on good diplomatic relations between the United States and all of its member nations. By contrast, the Warsaw Pact was highly centralized, with all of its member nations being satellites or puppets of the Soviet Union. As a result, the eastern bloc’s only major concern was the strength of the Soviet Union. NATO was only strong if the Soviets believed that the United States was going to intervene on behalf of their ally, otherwise, the vulnerable “have not” nations were going to fall prey to Soviet influence.<sup>161</sup> Speier believed that so long as European nations were unable to defend themselves and their neighbors from the Soviet Union via deterrence, Europe was going to remain the focal point for American national security. As a result, any erosion of NATO, be it by Soviet actors, or NATO’s own doing, would be detrimental to the interests and security of the western world.<sup>162</sup>

Speier’s fears of the unruly public and the looming Soviet threat reinforced his old notions of intellectuals leading the way for society. However, instead of educating the masses, Speier believed the way forward was to educate policy makers. Speier believed that the intellectual ought to serve an integral role in society, directly informing government legislation

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<sup>159</sup> Speier, Hans. *Force and Folly: Essays on Foreign Affairs and the History of Ideas*, pages 84-86.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 85-86.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

and policy. In order to accomplish this, Speier advocated for, as Daniel Bessner stated in his dissertation on Speier; “knowledge in power’s service”<sup>163</sup> This meant that the intellectual’s place was within government, be it within institutions which supported the state, or through more freelance correspondence with policy makers.

Speier feared for democracy after his experiences in Weimar. From his perspective, democracy's own principles facilitated its destruction, he did not trust public opinion to inform policy, as the beliefs of the individual were vulnerable to the corrupting influence of propaganda and radicalism. Speier believed that the crisis democracy was facing called for potentially extreme actions that superseded democratic tradition. In short, it was the intellectual’s role to know what was best for society, and to direct their findings toward those with the power to make the necessary changes. The average citizen was either too ill-informed, or too dangerous to play a significant, if any role in policy.

Speier’s education surrounded him with intellectuals from the very beginning. With the influence from his famous and successful mentors, Karl Mannheim, and Emil Lederer, along with his fellow students and colleagues, he developed a view on an intellectual’s role in society early on. Prior to 1933, Speier believed that his role as socialist intellectual was to educate the mass public, and that through that education, the public would inevitably help to forge a socialist society.<sup>164</sup> While Speier’s beliefs in socialism and Marxism were dashed by the rise of Nazism, he maintained his belief that an intellectual should have an active role in society. Throughout his career, Speier remained unwavering on this point, the only aspect that changed was who the intellectual was meant to advise.

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<sup>163</sup> Bessner, Daniel. “*The Night Watchman Hans Speier and the Making of the American National Security State,*” Page 10.

<sup>164</sup> Speier, Hans, 1984, Box 3, Folder 5, Autobiographical Notes, pages 12-13, Hans Speier Papers; Bessner, Daniel. “*Democracy in Exile: Hans Speier and the Rise of the Defense Intellectual,*” pages 15-16

From 1933 to 1938 Speier met Alvin Johnson, shepherded German intellectuals safely from the Third Reich to America, settled himself in his new home in New York City at the New School, and established a name for himself as a public intellectual in America. During this period, Speier analyzed the circumstances behind Weimar's collapse. This analysis, in addition to the ongoing success of Hitler's Germany embittered Speier, causing him to abandon his belief in the mass public. To him, the theory of the mass public, the belief that a government investment into "public opinion safeguards morality and promotes reasonableness in foreign affairs," was archaic and naive.<sup>165</sup> The events of the twentieth century, such as the carnage of total war and the rise of fascism, had instead shown that public opinion held no inherent goodness, and was dangerously vulnerable to manipulation.<sup>166</sup> Additionally, Speier acknowledged that some information, such as state secrets simply cannot be disclosed to the public, in that case, the public could not participate, and the policy-maker needed to look elsewhere for counsel.<sup>167</sup> As a result, Speier concluded that a government must instead employ the guidance of a trustworthy, highly educated elite in their determination of policy, intellectuals.

Alvin Johnson and the New School for Social Research shared this belief that an intellectual class should inform policy makers. In a letter regarding one of Hans Speier's leaves of absence from the New School when working for the US government during World War II, Johnson wrote to a Doctor Ferdinand Khun.<sup>168</sup> Johnson defended Speier in the letter, seeking to extend Speier's leave of absence from the School while still retaining him administratively.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Speier, Hans. "Historical Development of Public Opinion," pages 386-388.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid., 387-388.

<sup>168</sup> Johnson, Alvin, 1944, Box 3, Folder 15, Alvin Johnson to Dr. Ferdinand Kuhn, on Speier, Hans Speier Papers.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

Johnson stated; “The First duty of the New School, and particularly of the graduate faculty, is to serve to the limits of our abilities, the government of the United States.”<sup>170</sup>

Speier, and many other German intellectuals that came to the New School, integrated themselves into the American intellectual community, electing to use their new experience of exile as an opportunity.<sup>171</sup> The community of the New School is undoubtedly what Speier was referring to in his essay “The Social Conditions of the Intellectual Exile.” In this essay, Speier postulated that an intellectual, like everyone else, exists and functions within “a system of economic demands and social recognitions”, engaging in the own culture and traditions, which dictate the nature and demands of their work.<sup>172</sup> To follow this, Speier stated that if an exile or immigrant intellectual found themselves in a system too dissimilar to their own, their work was going to decline, or that intellectual may cease to function in their role altogether.<sup>173</sup> This problem was said to stem from a lack of support structure, a decline in individual motivation, and an absence of demand for the intellectual’s work due to misaligned goals or ideals.<sup>174</sup> However, even under such circumstances, there have been cases where intellectuals are able to continue on with their work. Speier highlighted two such circumstances; “Either the social structure in which his status and usefulness are defined migrates with him, or he moves as a member of and within a stratum that is not localized.”<sup>175</sup> The category of German intellectual exiles, to include Hans Speier and Arnold Brecht, falls under the first, where they found a community of like-minded individuals at the New School for Social Research.

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<sup>170</sup> Johnson, Alvin, 1944, Box 3, Folder 15, Alvin Johnson to Dr. Ferdinand Kuhn, on Speier, Hans Speier Papers.

<sup>171</sup> Bessner, Daniel. “*The Night Watchman Hans Speier and the Making of the American National Security State*,” Page 8.

<sup>172</sup> Speier, Hans. "The Social Conditions of the Intellectual Exile." *Social Research* 4, no. 3 (1937): 316-318

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, 318.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 318-319.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, 319.

Speier's decision to integrate into American intellectual life at the New School was crucial, as it laid the foundation for his eventual move to government work following the outbreak of World War II. The decision to integrate into American society contrasted with other German exiles who were resistant to their new circumstances. One such intellectual was Max Horkheimer. Horkheimer preferred to write in German, and felt out of place in American society, deeming his exile to be unpleasant.<sup>176</sup> Due to his resistance, Horkheimer never had much of a career in America, sticking to the academic scholarship he was accustomed to before returning to Germany in 1949.<sup>177</sup> This contrasted with Speier, who settled in with the New School, then went on to have an incredibly impactful career working for the US government, and as a division leader at the RAND Corporation. It is possible, however, that without the positive and welcoming community of the New School that Speier might have stagnated like Horkheimer.

Despite his positive relationship with the New School, Speier left the Graduate Faculty (AKA the University in Exile) twice. Once in 1940, where he left to work under the US government directly (though still technically listed as a member of the Graduate Faculty), as the government became interested in Speier's work and research regarding psychological warfare and propaganda.<sup>178</sup> He once again left in 1948, choosing instead to work at the RAND Corporation to establish their social science division.<sup>179</sup> This second instance came after Speier's disillusionment from working under the government, and subsequent (albeit brief) return to the New School.<sup>180</sup> Speier came to view the New School as "provincial," too detached from the problems he sought to confront for him to be satisfied with his work there.<sup>181</sup> As a result, Speier

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<sup>176</sup> Bessner, Daniel. "*The Night Watchman Hans Speier and the Making of the American National Security State*," Page 9.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid., 117.

<sup>179</sup> Speier, Hans, 1984, Box 3, Folder 5, Autobiographical Notes, page 32, Hans Speier Papers

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

accepted a job offer at the RAND corporation to lead their social science division. Once there, he established a program to research and study threats to US and NATO security, namely, Soviet military doctrine and foreign policy.<sup>182</sup> From his positions assisting the government, Speier was able to help direct policy. He was acting out what he believed to be the ideal role of the intellectual; directly informing policy makers using his knowledge and research.

The fall of the Weimar Republic in 1933 damaged Speier's outlook on the mass public, the cracks of the blow eroding his ideals until they eventually flipped by 1938. The rise of the Nazis assaulted the notion that a free public opinion inevitably trended towards democracy and individual freedoms. Instead, Nazi propaganda influenced the masses of Weimar until the eventually elected to abandon their democratic government in favor of an authoritarian one. This presented a crisis for both Speier and liberal, democratic thinkers. If the government of the United States was supposed to be "by the people, for the people," but those very people could now threaten the democracy of the United States, the role of the mass public had to be addressed.<sup>183</sup> While Speier believed that his intentions were always in support of democracy, his methods to safeguard democracy gradually moved towards undemocratic means.

As mentioned previously in this thesis, Speier developed a mistrust for the everyman and the mass public, causing him to adopt the belief that the theory of public opinion was naive and unrealistic for modern society. In Speier's mind, the workings of a modern government and foreign policy were simply too complex to consult the average citizen for approval, as they were not educated enough to provide valuable feedback. In addition, Speier believed that the anti-democratic ideologies and total war of the twentieth century had created a public that was

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<sup>182</sup> Speier, Hans, 1984, Box 3, Folder 5, Autobiographical Notes, page 32, Hans Speier Papers

<sup>183</sup> Lincoln, Abraham, "The Gettysburg Address."

[http://rmc.library.cornell.edu/gettysburg/good\\_cause/transcript.htm](http://rmc.library.cornell.edu/gettysburg/good_cause/transcript.htm).

“lacking in moral energy.”<sup>184</sup> From Speier’s perspective the temptations and rhetoric presented by radicalism, along with years of war resulted in an erosion of public morality, weakening their moral compasses. This drain in morality allowed for the masses to further sympathize with radical thought, and to cause a shift in their motivations, a shift that Speier felt made the masses even less trustworthy.<sup>185</sup> Speier believed that because of their lack of education, gullibility, and even a degree of maliciousness, the mass public, at best, had no place informing government policy, and at worse, needed to be circumvented entirely for democracy to survive.

Speier’s answer was to abandon the notion of public participation in policy in favor for that of the intellectual. While it took until 1948 for Speier’s views to develop to such a point, Speier ended up devaluing the rights of the everyman and liberal principles. He came to believe that the public did not have the need or the right to know the inner workings of government policy, or even for the government to necessarily tell them the truth.<sup>186</sup> This deeply illiberal vision for government policy, and his transformation to this from his social democrat origins, are demonstrated in the progression of his work on propaganda.

Following 1933, Speier became interested in Nazi propaganda. His original intention in studying propaganda was to better understand why the German public succumbed to Nazi ideology, but as the 1930s went on, he developed his own professional interest in the field.<sup>187</sup> Speier’s early views on propaganda are discussed in Speier’s appropriately titled essay “On Propaganda,” written in 1934. Speier identified that propaganda is found both in totalitarian and democratic societies.<sup>188</sup> In totalitarian societies, Speier stated that propaganda serves to “silence

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<sup>184</sup> Speier, Hans. "Historical Development of Public Opinion," pages 387-388.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> Speier, Hans. *Force and Folly: Essays on Foreign Affairs and the History of Ideas*, pages 18-19.

<sup>188</sup> Speier, Hans. "On Propaganda." *Social Research* 1, no. 3 (1934), page 377.

reason,” turn public opinion into private opinion, and engender an environment where a totalitarian dictatorship can continue existing.<sup>189</sup> In contrast, Speier argued that propaganda conflicted with liberal principles, and as such, was not welcome in a democratic society.<sup>190</sup> Due to the propagandist’s counter-liberal practices, he was forced to “run his business in secret” or face public, and likely political opposition.<sup>191</sup> At this point in his career, with Nazi rhetoric and propaganda still fresh in his mind, Speier believed that propaganda was undemocratic and unjustifiable, calling it an “infringement of the basic intellectual rights of man.”<sup>192</sup> In 1934, even after being betrayed by the everyman, Speier still held a belief that the intellectual rights of the mass public were important to safeguard for the sake of democracy. However, this sentiment did not survive for long.

Speier’s sentiment regarding propaganda in 1934 showed the cracks forming in his ideology, but also that he was holding on to his old beliefs. In 1934, he still maintained his old belief that the intellectuals could educate the public, just that democracy required a better method of implementing such education.<sup>193</sup> However, by 1938, Speier’s last vestiges of faith in the public collapsed. In 1938, Speier came to believe that no amount of enlightenment or education could make the public immune to propaganda, stating “the belief that the unfortunate inclination to fall for [the work of charlatans, i.e., propaganda] can be destroyed by means of enlightened reason” was empirically false.<sup>194</sup> In his dissertation on Speier, Daniel Bessner attributes this flip to Speier holding out hope that Hitler’s regime was going to collapse, and that the public

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<sup>189</sup> Speier, Hans. "On Propaganda," pages 377-379.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid., 377.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid., 376.

<sup>194</sup> Speier, Hans, “Book Review: de Francesco, Grete,” page 12; Bessner, Daniel. “*The Night Watchman Hans Speier and the Making of the American National Security State*,” page 124.

couldn't succumb so wholly to Nazi rule. However, in the following years, as Hitler's grip on the country strengthened, Speier's hopes were once again dashed.<sup>195</sup>

This bitter shift in Speier's ideals formed the foundation of his final transformation into an ideological Garrison State propagandist, he abandoned his faith in the public, and by 1948, was ready to abandon the remainder of his ideals if it meant democracy's survival.<sup>196</sup> The catalyst of his fear was the Soviet Union, and the power they held to both corrupt and destroy the United States, be it through propaganda or nuclear arms.<sup>197</sup> The Soviet Union, being a totalitarian state, was able to use propaganda and freely manipulate its people.<sup>198</sup> As a result, Speier felt the United States, a nation that could not directly control public opinion by virtue of its principles, was fighting at a disadvantage<sup>199</sup> This threat changed Speier's perspective on propaganda, viewing it as an abhorrent, totalitarian tool of manipulation in 1934, and a necessary evil that democracies needed to utilize to survive in 1948.

Speier went so far as to call for propaganda campaigns to be launched against the Soviet Union, stating in 1948; "the United States, too, can wage sincere political subversion propaganda against the dictatorial Soviet regime."<sup>200</sup> In the case of internal usage, Speier sought to use propaganda to manufacture consent amongst the public. In the case of manipulating the public to support a war, he stated in 1939; "the enemy has to be wholly identified - if need be at the cost of all intellectual sincerity - with the principle of evil."<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> Bessner, Daniel. "*The Night Watchman Hans Speier and the Making of the American National Security State*," pages 124-125.

<sup>196</sup> Speier, Hans, "Morale and Propaganda," in *War in Our Time*, page 13.

<sup>197</sup> Speier, Hans. *Force and Folly: Essays on Foreign Affairs and the History of Ideas*, pages 45-46.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> Speier, Hans, "Morale and Propaganda," in *War in Our Time*, page 13.

<sup>200</sup> Speier, Hans. "The Future of Psychological Warfare." *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 12, no. 1 (1948), page 18. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2745583>.

<sup>201</sup> Speier, Hans, "Morale and Propaganda," in *War in Our Time*, page 13.

The Hans Speier that existed prior to the collapse of Weimar was far from the Hans Speier that existed in the 1950s. The trauma Speier experienced from the fall of Weimar turned his views regarding democracy on their head, giving him a vastly different perspective on what an “ideal society” looked like. After his experiences in the Weimar Republic, Speier abandoned many of his old beliefs. While he did not necessarily hate the everyman, Speier lost his faith in them. The education of the mass public ceased to be worthwhile or possible in Speier’s mind, and liberal principles limited the ways in which America could combat the Soviet Union. These perspectives, coupled with the existential threat to American democracy posed by the Soviet Union, radicalized Speier’s ideals. His solution to protect democracy was to take drastic, counter-liberal measures, justifying his methods by believing them necessary to ensure democracy’s existence in the face of the USSR. Despite Speier’s overall cynicism and Machiavellian “for the greater good” mentality, some of his ideals can still be uncovered, lingering in the depths of his conviction. By examining his concerns about democracy, and identifying the circumstances in which his cynicism falters, it is possible to piece together a vision of Speier’s “ideal society,” in contrast to his fear motivated idea of a functional society.

Speier’s fears for democracy, and his subsequent counter-liberal solutions, were necessary evils in Speier’s functional society. They were necessary because he believed that democracy as a system was too fragile to combat the forces of totalitarianism and anti-democratic radicalism on its own. To Speier, so long as the ends meant the safety of democratic society, and the decline of totalitarianism the ends justified his radical means. Because fear drove Speier’s views on what made a good functional society, his ideal society would need to be free of the elements that fueled his fear. The world would be free from totalitarian forces of any kind, where a liberal democracy could exist under its own power, backed by an educated, informed,

moral public. In Speier's ideal, justice and democracy would prevail over, and eliminate totalitarianism. He would live in a society where he did not have to fear for democracy.

Speier's primary concerns, resulting in his functional society were, two-fold: The internal, being the public masses, and external, being anti-democratic regimes; namely, Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. Both concerns came from Speier's trauma at the hands of the Nazis from the collapse of the Weimar Republic. The internal threat, the public, drove Speier's anxiety and loss of faith in democracy with the election of Hitler in 1933. The external threat, the regimes, are what manipulated the public into supporting anti-democratic ideologies, with propaganda campaigns from Joseph Goebbels being Speier's original trauma. Similarly to Brecht, Speier believed that certain totalitarian forces, especially Nazi Germany, could and should be considered "evil." America, by contrast, represented a righteous force that swept Nazi evils and injustice aside.<sup>202</sup> This belief was so strong that it resulted in Speier disassociating himself from even the German people, becoming apathetic to the carnage they endured at the hands of the allies.<sup>203</sup> It was not until October of 1945, on his first return trip to Germany, in association with the Nuremberg Trials, that Speier was made aware of just how jaded he had become.<sup>204</sup>

First, in a London airport, Speier was confronted by an American bomber pilot, raging at Speier regarding the injustice of the Nuremberg trials.<sup>205</sup> The American pilot believed that if he had been on the losing side of the war he would have been the war criminal, as he had killed hundreds or even thousands as a bomber pilot.<sup>206</sup> From the pilot's perspective, in war, no sides

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<sup>202</sup> Speier, Hans. *From the Ashes of Disgrace Journal from Germany 1945-1955*, pages 1-2.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-3.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-2.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*

were free of blame. While the pilot was unaware of the exact nature of who was being judged at the Nuremberg trials, the guilt he felt caused him to see himself as being one in the same as these German war criminals. This notion of guilt struck Speier, interfering with his “sheltered” vision of America.<sup>207</sup> Previously, Speier had not begun to question American actions during the war, seeing it all as means to the just end of eliminating the evil of Hitler’s Germany.<sup>208</sup> Suddenly, an American pilot was not only acknowledging a crushing guilt for what he did during the war, but comparing the deeds of Americans to the deeds of Germans on trial at Nuremberg.

Second, when visiting his old home in Berlin with colleagues, they come upon its ruins. Speier makes two remarks here; “Right here, at the corner, it used to stand. I can now claim that I was born in mid-air,” and, in reference to the destruction more broadly “I felt sorry only for the children.”<sup>209</sup> While the first comment could be passed off as a sort of morbid humor to make light of the situation, Speier himself later remarks on his second comment: “I still regret this accommodatingly heartless answer. Death of civilians of whatever age or nationality in war is nothing to feel indifferent about.”<sup>210</sup>

We can draw conclusions regarding Speier’s sentiments from these passages. Speier believed America to be righteous, and Nazi Germany evil. His stated reaction to the pilot’s challenge was described as “a desperately intense desire to prove to him that he was wrong. . . that in this war, with all its carnage and destruction, the forces of evil had been beaten down by the forces of righteousness.”<sup>211</sup> American democracy, despite its flaws, was still the righteous entity in Speier’s eyes, and any nation that sought to dismantle it was invariably unjust. In

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<sup>207</sup> Speier, Hans. *From the Ashes of Disgrace Journal from Germany 1945-1955*, pages 1-2.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid., 2.

addition, Speier's jaded behavior towards the death of the hundreds of thousands of German civilians who died during World War II echoed his bitterness and fears regarding what a mass public is capable of. However, his later reflection and regret offers a glimpse into his deeper, less functional ideals.

Speier, even with all his skepticism towards the mass public and elitist, technocratic solutions regarding government policy, did not hate the mass public. He simply believed that they were too ill-educated or too vulnerable to manipulation to be entrusted to protect democracy without supervision or manipulation. To achieve the closest thing to his ideal society, Speier believed the role of the intellectual and official needed to supersede the public. However, this was simply a means to an end. Without the forces of totalitarianism threatening to corrupt the public, the "theory of public opinion that Speier dismisses (due to the vulnerability of the public to caustic ideologies) would be placed back into consideration: "according to the theory of public opinion, it is the function of government in foreign affairs to make the world safe for the rule of public opinion."<sup>212</sup>

In the vein of international relations, an ideal becomes more difficult to envision. Speier's views regarding NATO and nuclear weapons existed in the context of a looming threat, in the form of totalitarianism and the Soviet Union. In Speier's ideal world, that threat would not exist in such a form. Therefore, NATO would not be necessary and nuclear arms would have a much less immediate role in international relations. While Speier did value the deterrence provided by nuclear weapons, he held a deep anxiety regarding their capacity of annihilation.<sup>213</sup> If war was to occur, Speier believed that it must be limited in its scope, or "civilized," as opposed to the

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<sup>212</sup> Speier, Hans. "Historical Development of Public Opinion," page 11.

<sup>213</sup> Speier, Hans. *Force and Folly: Essays on Foreign Affairs and the History of Ideas*, pages 13-15.

“uncivilized” type of warfare known as total war.<sup>214</sup> For Speier, a characterizing feature of uncivilized warfare was motivation by ideology, a war that sought the total destruction, subjugation, and otherwise undoing of the opposition.<sup>215</sup> So long as nuclear arms, the threat of complete annihilation, existed in a world where total war was possible, Speier’s ideal could not be reached. Therefore, his ideal would do away with both. A world without the technology to destroy its own population en masse, and without any desire to do so, a noble desire that Speier himself would have dismissed as staggeringly unrealistic.<sup>216</sup>

Speier’s work and ideals were rooted in the reality of his subject matter. Any ideal world beneath his deep-seated beliefs is bound to be unrealistic. However, if Speier were to have his way, the world would be democratic, completely free of any dangerous totalitarian or otherwise radical ideals, as any presence of them could threaten Speier’s fragile perspective of democracy. Without the presence of these ideological dangers, intellectuals would not need to manipulate or circumvent the mass public, and could instead focus their efforts on educating them as Speier first intended in 1928. In addition, weapons of mass destruction would cease to exist, and an international community, reminiscent of liberal internationalism would regulate war to not allow for another total war in any capacity. Ironically, liberal international and the League of Nations was one of the very systems Speier dismissed as naive following 1933.

When broken down to the raw motivations, Speier’s vision for an ideal society is reminiscent of what it must have been when he was a passionate young socialist at the *Hochschule fur Politik* in 1928. Despite the unshakable similarities in his ideals, his methods were forever complicated by the harsh realities of World War II and the Cold War, and, he felt,

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<sup>214</sup> Speier, Hans. *Force and Folly: Essays on Foreign Affairs and the History of Ideas*, pages 13-15.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, 11-15.

demanded his drastic, anti-democratic methods. As a result, Speier's true ideal society was nothing more than a fantasy. As for a functional ideal society, the closest model may be today's day and age: There is currently no immediate threat of total war or nuclear posturing (for the most part). There is a liberal internationalist system to regulate warfare, in the form of the UN and other such institutions. However, Speier's ideal would not appreciate policy makers and politicians actively ignore the input of the intellectual.

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## Section V

### Conclusion

Despite their similar backgrounds, Brecht and Speier ended up constructing contrasting belief systems. In a sense, the two men represented the two schools of liberalism outlined at the beginning of this thesis, as John Dewey and Walter Lippmann did in interwar America. However, Brecht and Speier do not fit perfectly with the beliefs of Dewey and Lippmann. Their experiences were unique to them, and, importantly, uniquely German. The collapse of the Weimar Republic was undoubtedly a wake-up call for both men. Both began as liberal optimists, but even Brecht, who maintained a strong faith in democracy and liberal principles, had to adjust many of his old views in consideration of the problems facing democracy.

Brecht's problem of focus from the Weimar Republic was its weak constitutional backbone. The incompetent liberal optimists who first controlled the Weimar Republic built it upon a shoddy constitutional foundation, making it far more vulnerable to radicalism than other, more established democracies. While this problem could potentially face many democracies, Brecht did not believe it was not endemic to democracy as a whole. Brecht believed that building a strong constitution for future democracies, one that provided strict enough guidance to prevent its principles from being undermined in as comprehensive a way as possible, would help other democracies avoid many of the problems that the Weimar Republic encountered.

Even into the end of his career, Brecht stuck to his core optimist ideals. His change from Weimar was chiefly his attempt to find a world where those ideals could function. Aside from his solution to protect democracy emphasizing the role of the intellectual over the everyman, Brecht's beliefs and methods were ever in support of liberalism and democracy. Brecht's

message implored the intellectual and policy-maker to thoroughly analyze the political world. He believed that through such analysis, the intellectual could achieve the foresight necessary to anticipate future threats against democracy. Brecht felt that, given extensive precautions, and a diligent intellectual class supporting the government, a society based on liberal optimistic principles was possible without an inevitable collapse.

Speier's problems of focus were much different from Brecht's. From the start of his career to the Cold War, Speier focused his work on the mass public. He believed that the allure of radical ideals, and the susceptibility of the mass public was the chief cause of Weimar's collapse. Speier's analysis of the mass public in the Weimar Republic exacerbated this problem, he could not link it to anything uniquely German. Unlike Brecht's problem of focus, Speier believed his problem *was* endemic to democracy as a whole. This endemic, ever-present threat was a source of anxiety for Speier, and this anxiety is what drove his transformation.

The case of Hans Speier was more tragic than the one of Brecht. Speier began as an optimist. He believed firmly in the mass public, that with proper education, the same perspective taken by John Dewey in the 1920s. Speier still held onto some hope following the events of 1933, believing, at least to some extent, that the public would overcome, and the Nazi regime might soon collapse. It was not until some point between 1935 and 1938 that Speier gave up on the public. During that period, Speier was forced to acknowledge that the public was not going to overthrow the Nazi regime, and that they were there to stay. At this point, the wound left on Speier by the German public festered, and he abandoned his hopes. Speier's beliefs shifted to those reminiscent of Walter Lippmann and his technocratic perspective. By 1948, Speier began to utilize the tools of his enemies, propaganda, the very thing that the Nazis used to manipulate the German people. Something he had previously condemned as infringing upon the basic rights

of man was now seen as unavoidable by Speier, all as a desperate, anxiety-induced attempt to defend the ever-fragile democracy. Fear became Speier's driving motivation by the Cold War period. Speier's fear buried his core ideals and motivations. As a result, he compromised on his core liberal beliefs. He did not foresee a world where liberal optimism could work, so he sought to defend democracy by any means necessary.

With all the differences between the views of not just Brecht and Speier, but American intellectuals such as Dewey and Lippmann, our central question of "how do you protect democracy without compromising it" remains contentious. There cannot be any one answer for this question, as, in line with Arnold Brecht's teachings regarding relativism, circumstances dictate what the situation calls for, there is no universal solution. This thesis looked through the perspectives of specific individuals from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century into the 1950s, and how their circumstances shaped their views of democracy. They existed in a unique time and reacting to world changing events, the likes of which we may never see again. These views ranged from a zealous adherence to liberal ideals, to a deep suspicion of their efficacy, believing the existence of such ideals to be detrimental to the function of democracy, even if it had characterized democracy in the past.

In paving the way for democracy in the future, it is crucial to understand the lessons of the past. American liberalism following 1933 was more than American. Through their long academic and professional careers, foreign intellectuals like Arnold Brecht and Hans Speier had lasting influence in shaping liberal thought. When these two men arrived in America, they brought their raw, uniquely German experiences from Weimar with them, and used those experiences as the foundation for their new belief systems. In the following decades, these men developed a hybridized system of beliefs, both American and German. This hybrid belief set is

what came to permeate Cold War liberal thought. Speier's legacy in defense correspondence and propaganda initiatives against the Soviet Union is evidence of this. As a result, to fully understand Cold War American liberalism, one should also understand the European interwar period, particularly with the fall of the Weimar Republic.

This notion of a hybridized belief set acting as a pillar of Cold War liberalism pushes against the idea of American Exceptionalism. It suggests that American intellectuals were not alone in forging American liberalism during the Cold War, but that immigrants (from what was later considered an enemy nation, no less) played a crucial role in guiding the future of the United States. America could not have learned from the lessons of Weimar to the extent it needed to without the experiences of German intellectuals. American Exceptionalist theory denies the contemporary contributions of those who are not American, and in doing so, disregards the lessons that can be taught by people and nations across the world.

In our attempts to find our own answer to the question of democracy, we would do well to remember Brecht's teachings; we must engage in "a thinking that anticipates the future and heeds the lessons of the past, a thinking that ought to precede, rather than follow, practice."<sup>217</sup> While the lessons of Weimar were and are very real, they also act as a metaphor, a metaphor for lessons that can be learned across the world and across peoples. If democratically minded individuals do not examine the past and its lessons, regardless of who or where those lessons come from, we cannot use that knowledge to inform the future. If we do not use the past to forge a better future, we put democracy at risk in the same way that short-sighted German liberals did at the birth of Weimar.

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<sup>217</sup> Brecht, Arnold. "Democracy - Challenge to Theory" *Social Research* 13, no. 2 (1946): 195-224. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40982135>.

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