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Review of *Weimar Germany's Left-Wing Intellectuals*, by Istvan Deak

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of doctrinaire individuals used to feed slogans to a *Mittelstand* thirsting for a way out of its dilemmas. The Marxist revolutionary and sometime National Bolshevik Ernst Niekisch used his Resistance Press to advocate a reconciliation between socialism and nationalism in response to western domination and the Versailles treaty, while the extremely conservative Oswald Spengler sought to save Prussian values by postulating a Prussian socialism aimed at integrating the working class into the value system of the past. Finally, Ferdinand Fried and his colleagues on *Die Tat* played upon the misery which united all elements of the *Mittelstand* during the depression and upon the breakdown of the international economy to advocate a Third Front which would unify the disaffected *Mittelstand* in support of a new autarkic order in a German-dominated *Mitteleuropa*.

Lebovics is careful to point out that the relationship between social conservatism and nazism was a parallel rather than a direct one. Both movements appealed to the *Mittelstand*, and the Nazis were "vulgar" social conservatives. The author suggests that, "deviations notwithstanding," there was a correspondence between the theoretical tendencies in the two movements, the social conservative Center (Sombart and Spann), Left (Niekisch), and Right (Spengler) having counterparts, respectively, in Gottfried Feder, the Strasser brothers, and Fritz Thyssen. Ultimately, it was Hitler who determined Nazi economic policy by implementing the social conservative doctrine of the primacy of politics over economics and subordinating the fate of the nation to a racism alien to most social conservatives and to an imperialism beyond their wildest dreams. While Lebovics correctly emphasizes Hitler's opportunistic acceptance of private property in order to win over big business, he gives undue emphasis to Hitler's connection with Emil Kirdorf, whom the author erroneously identifies as the head of the defunct *Zentralverband deutscher Industrieller*. Such minor criticisms should not detract from the excellence of this book which should encourage further research into the *Mittelstand* and into the way in which social conservative ideas were "molded into the clichés at the beerhall *Stammtisch*, at the innumerable meetings of the societies and clubs to which so many members of the middle class belonged, at the political rallies, and in the pages of magazines of political commentary" (p. 179).

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Weimar Germany's Left-Wing Intellectuals. By *Istvan Deak*.
Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968. Pp. xii+346.

This book is not about Weimar Germany's left-wing intellectuals, except in a very narrow sense. Its subtitle describes it better: "A Political History of the *Weltbühne* and Its Circle." The *Weltbühne*, published in Berlin on a shoestring, and never achieving much of a circulation, was nevertheless one of Weimar Germany's most influential magazines. Its statements on any issue were reported throughout the press, not only in Berlin, but in all of Germany. Most of the best left-wing journalists wrote for it at one time or another, and its links with Germany's greatest literary figures added to

its prestige. The *Weltbühne* developed a distinctive style of political satire. It lampooned both the Right and the Left, traditional morality, patriotism, and popular culture. But its purposes were fundamentally serious; again and again it sought to reinvigorate the socialist republic. Under a series of brilliant editors (Siegfried Jacobsohn, Curt Tucholsky, Carl von Ossietzky), the *Weltbühne* came to be the most admired and most feared voice of left-wing political dissent during the Weimar Republic.

The *Weltbühne* and its writers have been almost completely neglected in this country, except for Harold L. Poor's very recent biography of Tucholsky (*Kurt Tucholsky and the Ordeal of Germany, 1914-1935* [New York, 1968]). Even in Germany, where there has been a good deal of study of Weimar's political journalism, attention has focused on Tucholsky because of the immense popularity of his work among the present generation. Istvan Deak makes an excellent case for the singular influence of the *Weltbühne* and argues convincingly that the men who wrote for it must be studied as a group. These Berlin newspapermen were "archetypes of a Central European phenomenon: the journalist who was also a literary figure, an intellectual, a social critic, a reformer, and a revolutionary" (p. 9). Deak also characterizes them as the "homeless left," that is, as intellectuals without any tie to established German institutions (except to Berlin journalism) and men who were unwilling to wholly support any political party. Their vigorous, uncompromising criticism, he suggests, was partly a result of this relative lack of responsibility; the fact that they failed to change the course of political history may be explained in the same way.

If we can accept the identity as a group of the Berlin journalists who were the most frequent contributors to the journal, Deak's argument is nevertheless plagued by a problem of definition. In his analysis of the *Weltbühne*, he also includes what he calls the *Weltbühne* "circle." This group is made up of intermittent contributors, of whom a great many were not primarily journalists but well-known novelists, poets, essayists, or dramatists—Heinrich Mann, Alfred Döblin, Ernst Toller, René Schickele, to name a few. These men were national figures rather than just Berliners, as the author often implies, and they were by no means as "homeless" as the journalists. Further confusion arises from Deak's occasional willingness to include among the *Weltbühne* "circle," not only contributors, but also those leaders of Weimar culture whom the magazine most admired. The *Weltbühne*, he says, "stood very close" to Bertolt Brecht, Ludwig Renn, Erwin Piscator (p. 1). Sometimes such artists as Ernst Barlach, Käthe Kollwitz, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, and Walter (not "Hugo") Gropius are lumped together with Tucholsky, Toller, Kurt Hiller, and Ossietzky, all under the rubric "left-wing intellectuals" (pp. 161-62). On the whole, then, Deak's view of his subject is very narrow, comprising only the *Weltbühne* staff and some Berlin journalists; but at some points it expands, without explanation, to include nearly all the makers of avant-garde culture.

Yet despite this problem of definition, the main argument is clear. It centers on the Berlin journalists, their commentary on political issues, and the political causes which they championed. The *Weltbühne* writers

emerge as remarkably hardheaded and prescient. They sought unilateral disarmament, reform of the judiciary, and freedom of the press; they constantly prodded the republican government to carry forward the social revolution. As the weaknesses of the Republic became more evident, their disappointment grew, and with it the viciousness of their polemics. Gradually the journal gravitated toward the Communist party, though it never wholeheartedly supported it. Because of these attitudes, Weimar liberals accused the *Weltbühne* of "fouling its own nest," and some historians (Kurt Sontheimer, Golo Mann, Gordon Craig) have argued that its writers helped to undermine the republic.

Deak shows that, on the contrary, the political judgment of the *Weltbühne* circle was very good and their political views usually the only sensible ones for intelligent republicans to take. For example, they welcomed the Versailles treaty with its disarmament clauses, and argued for a policy of fulfillment from the first. They opposed all alliances outside the League of Nations, and were particularly suspicious of Rapallo, which they saw as a convenience for the General Staff. When Stresemann did initiate a policy of fulfillment, the *Weltbühne* rightly perceived that it was a sham. Tucholsky went so far as to denounce the Locarno Pact as the prelude to an invasion of Czechoslovakia and Austria and to a new partition of Poland.

By 1925, as the chapters on the progressive radicalization of the *Weltbühne* demonstrate, the magazine had already moved away from support of the majority socialists, though it did not yet support the Communists. But this position was not perverse antirepublicanism; it was the result of despair at the compromises of the *Bonzen*, the Social Democratic party (SPD) "bosses," and of utter disbelief in their ability to strengthen the republic themselves. Had the SPD listened to the *Weltbühne* writers at any point, argues Deak, had it sought socialized industry, reform of the judiciary, disestablishment of the army, or had it severed its connections with "the bourgeois political parties, the Center, the People's Party, and the Nationalists who, after 1929, consistently favored an authoritarian solution" (p. 226), then it would have had a better chance of preserving the republic, even as late as 1933. This, after all, is what historians have been saying about the fall of the Weimar Republic right along; it is absurd to criticize the *Weltbühne* circle for anticipating it.

Deak's discussion of this political journalism makes fascinating reading, not least because it revives many long-forgotten incidents over which journalists exercised themselves, perhaps unduly, in the twenties. Few historians of modern Germany mention the Jakobowski affair (Germany's Sacco and Vanzetti Case), the campaign for the expropriation of the princes, the *Schund- und Schmutzgesetz* (Law against Trash and Smut), or the trial of George Grosz for "blasphemy." Yet these were major radical issues, and the stance of the *Weltbühne*, in each case, had wide repercussions throughout the press from Left to Right. If intellectual history is to take note of what the general public thought was important, then this is the way it should be written.

Interwoven in this analysis of the magazine's political views is a vivid picture of the world of Berlin journalism. Tucholsky, Ossietzky, Bruno Frei, Manfred George, Kurt Hiller, and many others are sharply character-

ized. We learn something about the pace of their lives and a good deal about their personal conflicts. Most of them came from middle-class Jewish families; like other German Jews, hatred of their origins led them to place their faith in the revolutionary masses. But as very self-conscious intellectuals, they were also contemptuous of the masses. This led them often into a kind of technocratic elitism, which made their every socialist proposal either suspect or naïve. Perhaps it was these conflicts, and the very equivocal status of these writers, which made satire their forte; the satirist does not have to state a program of his own. They were, in any case, clever satirists, in a style virtually untranslatable because of its play on dialect and status-conscious usages. Deak has an extraordinarily sensitive ear for their writing, and does a splendid job of translating it.

The writing of this sort of history poses special problems. Deak moves back and forth between discussion of political theory and of popular literature, weaves together biography, vignette, quotation, literary criticism, and political analysis, dealing throughout with people and issues unfamiliar to his audience. He achieves a fine balance between analysis and digression; it is the best written work of this type I have seen. But if the text is elegantly written, its apparatus—two sets of footnotes and two biographical appendixes—will discourage even the specialist. An already complex argument should not have to support so much distracting explanatory material.

This is a superb study of the *Weltbühne's* political views. Among intellectual histories, it has rare virtues. But I find it hard to understand why Deak limited himself so rigidly to a discussion of political thought. The *Weltbühne* was more than a political journal; it commented on all aspects of Weimar culture. (It was subtitled "a weekly for politics, art and economics.") Deak's discussions of the nature of the *Weltbühne* circle suggest that among the "left-wing intellectuals" he would really like to number all the progressive creative figures of Weimar Germany. Even though the main preoccupations of the artists, film makers, composers, and so on, were not primarily political, they held a more political view of art than artists usually do. It might have been possible to demonstrate that they shared the political ideas of the *Weltbühne* writers, just as it should have been possible to show that the *Weltbühne* held an avant-garde view of the arts. The character of the *Weltbühne's* subject matter, its wide influence, and the expansive nature of its "circle," could then have served as a bridge to study Weimar culture as a whole.

Yet even as it stands, Deak's book says a good deal by implication about the broader pattern of Weimar culture. In fact, to those who have read Peter Gay's *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider* (New York, 1968), Deak's argument will sound like a calculated refutation of Gay. (It is strange that Deak does not mention Gay's book. They came out at the same time, but even if Deak did not see Gay's book in manuscript, he must be familiar with the series of lectures given at Columbia on which it was based.) Gay's brilliant and superficial argument, which spans all intellectual life (including, very briefly, the *Weltbühne*), is that Weimar intellectuals had been the "have nots" of the empire, its bitterest and most censored critics. Under the Weimar Republic, they were transformed so

rapidly to "insiders"—heaped with praise and status as its intellectual leaders—that they could not adjust and remained somewhat utopian and irresponsible. Deak's ever-recurring theme, on the contrary, is that Weimar Germany's left-wing intellectuals were "not at home in Germany."

Gay certainly overstates his case: As one reviewer has remarked, his book should have been titled "the outsider as not-quite-so-outsider" (Arthur Mitzman, "Modernism and Weimar," *Dissent* [May–June 1969], pp. 282–86). If it is true that expressionists dominated the German film for a while, that the Bauhaus got state support, that the Horkheimer and the Warburg Institutes were successful in finding financial support and status at least partly outside the traditional academic institutions, that modern architects received fat commissions from municipal governments, that all this was applauded in the Berlin press, where radical democrats were able to speak their minds with complete freedom, it is also true that none of these intellectuals had access to the true centers of power. In stressing this, Deak is perfectly right. Yet he understates their apparent influence. It was surely the combination of apparent, outrageous success and ultimate insecurity which gave Weimar intellectuals their strident brilliance and which made Weimar culture what it was, a hectic carnival of genius. Deak, with his profound understanding of what it meant to be a journalist-intellectual in Berlin, is better equipped to confront this central paradox than is the paradoxical Gay. But he has not done it, either out of modesty or out of deference. I think he should come clean.

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Weimar Germany and Soviet Russia, 1926–1933: A Study in Diplomatic Instability. By *Harvey L. Dyck*. Studies of the Russian Institute, Columbia University.

New York: Columbia University Press; London: Chatto & Windus, 1966. Pp. 280. \$6.75.

The preface of the book bears the date "August 1965." It is based on a thorough examination of German Foreign Office files (filmed as well as nonmicrofilmed). In some respects Dyck's point of view and approach seem too narrowly German as he concentrates on the files of the Politisches Archiv kept at Bonn (permission to use pertinent documentation in DDR archives had been refused; see p. 59). Here, however, no effort seems to have been made to locate archives of the *Russlandausschuss der deutschen Industrie*, though this organization, founded in 1928 (which Dyck mentions on pp. 147–48 and 195), exerted a strong influence in the ministry.

Dyck makes use of a fair amount of the innumerable printed materials relevant to the topic in German, English, and Russian. Strangely enough, no secondary Russian literature published later than 1961 has been used, and a knowledgeable, but unfriendly reviewer in the East German *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* has already called attention to the puzzling fact that one of the most important primary Russian sources, the *Dokumenty vneshnei politiki*, is conspicuously absent in Dyck's list of printed documentary sources. As volume 9 for 1926 of the *Dokumenty* had been