

Book Reviews

Udi Greenberg, *The Weimar Century: German Émigrés and the Ideological Foundations of the Cold War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), ix + 276pp. (hbk). ISBN 978-0-691-15933-1. \$35.00.

There has been so much research and so many publications about German academic émigrés to the United States in the fields of law, politics, and the social sciences on both sides of the Atlantic over the last three decades that all relevant issues seem to have been covered already. So what should one expect from another book on this topic? Such initial skepticism is forgotten after just a few minutes of reading Udi Greenberg's remarkable book. Greenberg makes clear that he aims at more than just retelling the story of a few German émigrés who came to the United States after 1933. He wants to convince the reader that the influence of some of these German émigrés on American politics from the late 1940s until the early 1960s – the era in which the United States became the number one world superpower – had been underestimated for far too long.

The book breaks new ground in the research on the role of German émigrés in the United States. Much ink has been spilled about the tremendous influence of authors like Hannah Arendt, Leo Strauss, or Herbert Marcuse in American academia. Other historians have already written about the role that politicians with a German émigré background, such as Henry Kissinger, played in the U.S. administration. But Greenberg intends to do far more. He wants to give evidence to support two theses which obviously inspired the ambitious title of the book, *The Weimar Century*: first, that the ideas, policies, and institutional connections of German émigrés travelled basically unchanged with them from Weimar Germany to the other side of the Atlantic; and second, that the ideas and activities of these five German émigrés, in particular, became crucial for both democratization and anti-Communist mobilization in the United States after World War II.

The German émigrés whom Greenberg identifies as most influential, in this sense, were Karl Loewenstein (1891–1973), Ernst Fraenkel

(1898–1975), Carl Joachim Friedrich (1902–1984), Waldemar Gurian (1902–1954), and Hans Morgenthau (1904–1980), the youngest among them. All five made impressive careers in the United States, soon after escaping from Nazi Germany, as academics, writers, and – last but not least – consultants to various governmental administrations and philanthropic organizations. These five émigrés came from very different political, philosophical, religious, and intellectual backgrounds. Readers of *Max Weber Studies* may be interested to know that two of them – Loewenstein and Friedrich – were strongly influenced by Weber and his reception in Germany. Though some of the five émigrés loosely knew each other from their Weimar years, they never formed a group, even in exile. Each of them preferred to act on his own terrain. However, they did share one distinctive ideological mission: they wanted to save the United States from the disastrous fate of the short-lived Weimar Republic, as its collapse in 1933 had opened the path to the National Socialism and thus dictatorship, war, and the Holocaust.

The book is organized into five main chapters. Each chapter is devoted to one of the German émigrés. There have already been biographies, books, and articles about every one of them, but Greenberg has nonetheless been able to dig up a great deal of material that had so far remained unnoticed, distributed in more than fifteen archives in Germany, the U.S., and England. It is surprising how many new facets about the German émigrés in America Greenberg has been able to contribute to our knowledge. This is the case, in particular, for the archival material he has found about Karl Loewenstein's deep involvement in the United States' diplomatic and brutal military interventions in Latin America, already beginning in 1941 (187-98); about Ernst Fraenkel's role as a key player in the diplomatic campaign on the part of U.S. officials in South Korea between 1946 and 1951 (96-106); about Waldemar Gurian's crucial role as an advisor for the newly founded Rockefeller Foundation between 1948 and 1954 (150-66): and about Carl J. Friedrich's intellectual and organizational contributions to the Cold War university at Harvard (57-73).

In his five intellectual portraits, Greenberg sheds light on the crucial importance of the Weimar experience, *der lange Schatten Weimars* ('Weimar's long shadow'), not only for the intellectual and political development of these German émigrés, but also – to a surprising degree – for American political developments. In their view, the United States was the ideal vehicle for preserving, defending, and spreading a political project that they themselves had begun in the

Weimar years. Greenberg presents this part of his thesis convincingly. Loewenstein, who had been one of Weber's young protégés in Heidelberg, fervently argued in the early 1920s that the liberal tolerance of the Weimar Republic was misguided; democracy did not rely on relativism, he claimed, but on a firm belief in the importance of democratic institutions. In the early 1940s, he condensed these reflections into his well-known theory of 'militant democracy'. Ernst Fraenkel, one of the rising stars in the intellectual circles of the Social Democratic Party, interpreted the Weimar Republic as a constitutional order of compromises—not confrontation—between collective political actors such as labor unions and interest groups for big business. In the 1950s, this view evolved into his neo-pluralist theory of democracy. According to the young Friedrich, who had academically matured in a small circle of Protestant Weber admirers, democracy did not emerge from the Enlightenment but from seventeenth-century political ideas in the Protestant parts of Germany and then migrated with the Puritans to North America. Thus Americans and Germans shared quasi-natural religious and political foundations. This idiosyncratic historical interpretation laid the groundwork for Friedrich's post-1945 eschatological vision of the Cold War as a religious struggle and for his theory of totalitarianism. As a journalist in the second half of the 1920s, Waldemar Gurian, who had been influenced as a young student by Carl Schmitt, became one of the most outspoken Catholic voices defending the democratic republic in the name of Christian personalism. The Catholic doctrine of personalism—a doctrine that advocates a spiritual entity called the 'person', embedded in a web of communities such as family, profession, and nation—later became the intellectual basis for Gurian's public campaigns against Soviet totalitarianism. As a doctoral student in the 1920s in Munich and Frankfurt, Morgenthau was already writing about topics in international relations. He was regarded as a rising star of international thought in Germany. Greenberg rightly emphasizes the continuity between Morgenthau's political thinking about dynamic world orders in his Weimar years and his later realist theory of international relations. During the 1950s, Morgenthau's realist theory—based on the concept of national interest and the struggle for power—made him into the intellectual mastermind for curricula in departments of international politics in universities and military academies all over the United States.

Greenberg's close hermeneutic analyses also teach a more general lesson. His interpretations contradict the dominant view among

scholars of German émigrés, who have turned their exile in the United States into something like a second socialization, and who primarily emphasize processes of intellectual assimilation and acculturation rather than intellectual continuities. Instead, Greenberg insists on the deep rootedness of the Weimar experience for the émigrés' political thought.

Since Greenberg wants to show that the five chapters on the émigrés are far more than a study of five biographical curiosities, he closely follows the 'unlikely paths' that led the five 'from Weimar to the center of American power' (3), where they participated in shaping world politics after World War II. He identifies two main fields in which the German émigrés were active in various official positions: as crucial players in West Germany's postwar reconstruction under the banner of 'Western integration', and as inspirers of—and advisors to—the makers of U.S. foreign policy towards the Soviet Union, Europe, Asia, and Latin America. According to Greenberg, the theories and writings of the German émigrés provided the intellectual frameworks that mobilized American democracy for its crusade against communism. The lesson they took from the collapse of the Weimar Republic was that it was necessary to bring the fight against the enemies of democracy, whether Nazism or Communism, early enough and firmly enough. In countless articles, lectures, and memoranda, these five German émigrés identified Communism as the new evil and violently aggressive tyranny, and made suggestions as to how liberal democracies should fight it successfully.

Greenberg writes that this crusade for democracy often led to 'ironic, tragic, and brutal consequences' (5), which stood in stark contrast to the normative principles of their democratic theories. Loewenstein's entanglement with U.S. counterinsurgency policies in Paraguay, Brazil, Chile, and Cuba, where thousands of suspicious persons were detained and deported (191), is the most striking example of a policy which destroyed the very values which it claimed to defend. Greenberg diagnoses a certain irrational 'paranoia' (172), an 'anti-Communist phobia' (17), a 'militant inflexibility' (110), and 'dichotomous worldviews' (258), which were deeply rooted in the personal experiences of the German émigrés. According to Greenberg, the 'democratic revolution the émigrés helped unleash was a bittersweet one, simultaneously heroic and tragic' (17) because it constrained the political imagination and ruled out political alternatives which did not fit into the Cold War dichotomy of good and evil.

When public opinion in the U.S. began to change in the 1960s, the anti-Communist German émigrés faced opposition from political activists and students. In those days other German émigrés like Herbert Marcuse or John H. Herz were far more popular than Loewenstein, Friedrich, and Fraenkel, who even became targets of the activists. In Fraenkel's understanding, these confrontations were 'Weimar-crisis-revisited' phenomena. Fraenkel was not willing to communicate with the spokesmen of the protest movement against the Vietnam War in Berlin. Instead, he labeled them the 'new SA' (the paramilitary brigade of the Nazi Party) and called for police action on the campus.

Hans Morgenthau acted differently. He was a rare link between the old generation of Cold War German émigrés and the young generation of the protest movement. Greenberg describes in detail how the State Department tried to get his public support for the Vietnam War. However, he returned from a government-sponsored trip to Saigon as a fierce and vocal opponent of any American commitment in Southeast Asia. In the following years he often spoke out against the Vietnam War in newspaper articles, round tables on television, and demonstrations on the streets. Among the best sections in the book is Greenberg's analysis of Morgenthau's arguments against this bloody war. Morgenthau had not given up any basic element of his realist theory of international relations; instead, his critique of the war in Vietnam must be understood as a logical extension of his reflections about the dynamics of the international order from the 1920s (222–33). In Morgenthau's case, the long intellectual shadow of Weimar did not lead to a military escalation of the Cold War, but rather to a policy of wise retreat and *détente* in the name of national interest.

Greenberg's book is well written and tells a coherent story. While he convincingly makes the case for the continuities in their intellectual development, his argument in favor of their political significance probably requires a much broader analysis within the context of the development of American anti-Communism and American foreign policy. One should not underestimate the importance of purely homegrown fruits like McCarthyism and the interests of the military-industrial complex. Perhaps the German émigrés were less successful at bringing about a new policy orientation in the post-war United States than they were at providing intellectual camouflage for it. In any case, Udi Greenberg has written a highly original book that reshapes scholarship on the role of German émigrés in the

United States, and opens a broader agenda for historical research about continuities and discontinuities in political thought and the traffic of political ideas across long distances in the twentieth century.

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Michael Symonds, *Max Weber's Theory of Modernity: The Endless Pursuit of Meaning* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2015), x + 193pp. (hbk). ISBN 978-1-4724-6286-2. £60.00.

If the meaning of meaning can only be deciphered within particular contexts of meaning, then all interpretation seems to be caught in an aporia, a web, or a paradox. Interpretation (in the sense of either *Deutung* or *Verstehen* in German) encounters the problem of how and within which contexts literal meaning can be distinguished from figurative connotation, and how each is different from meaning in the sense of significance or importance. Max Weber grappled with this hermeneutic problem throughout his career, but nowhere more directly and explicitly than in the opening pages of the book he was working on in his final days, *Economy and Society*. There he defines the focus of sociology as 'subjectively intended meaning which is either...actually existing... [or] conceived as a pure conceptual type'.¹ Where ideal typical meaning is the specialist domain of the sociologist, actually existing meaning encompasses the larger world of experience and common sense, the world that is the object of sociological interpretation and explanation.

Michael Symonds's book does not directly address the methodological premises of Weber's version of interpretive sociology (*verstehende Soziologie*), but rather makes a broader and bolder claim that Weber's theory of modernity hinges on ultimate questions of the meaning of life, death, and suffering. Despite the secular and rationalistic character of modern life, these are also the questions that motivate religious belief systems and underlie traditional worldviews. Taking Weber's *Economic Ethics of the World Religions* as his primary frame and focus, in particular the 'Intermediate Reflection' (a title Gerth and Mills misleadingly translated as 'The Social

1. Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), p. 4; translation modified.