1995

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David Johnson
Portland State University

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David Johnson

I became interested in the Honors Program because I saw it as the best way to get the best possible education at PSU and prepare myself for graduate school. Little did I know that I would suffer a near overdose of Plato and that egotist Augustine. But I'm the better man for it all. Though I wonder what Freud would say about my development.

Because I have the desire to drown myself in books, I am heading off to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign to see what kind of trouble I can find in the third largest academic library in the United States. As a side pursuit, I will be undertaking graduate studies in modern German history with hopes of eventually earning my Ph. D. Along the way, I hope to get back to Germany a couple of times, disguising my quest of following the Fussball Bundesliga with research in Germany's big libraries and archives.

Kurt Tucholsky was born in Berlin in 1890. He served on the eastern front in the First World War, but was involved in supplies and did not see combat. Returning from the war, Tucholsky turned all his attention to writing. Working primarily for the weekly Weltbühne, he wrote under five names, including his own. In 1933, the Nazis burned his writings. In 1935, disillusioned with his native Germany and terribly depressed about the state of his own life, he committed suicide at his home in Sweden.
Kurt Tucholsky:
Left-Wing Intellectual and
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In the political culture of the Weimar Republic, there were few calm moments. Chaos, irony, and paradox moved through the currents of time without causing the least bit of surprise. Harold Poor has written: "Creativity and chaos, brilliance and stupidity, mania and calm, paradox and contrast—such was Weimar" (Poor, 66). There was an explosion of cultural activity, as Expressionism tested the limits, theater experimented with new forms, and the new media of film thrilled the masses. But there was also the rise of political violence; tolerated by many and even explicitly encouraged by others. The economy, ravaged by wartime policies, remained weak and vulnerable to the vicissitudes of the world markets. Above all, Germany was beset by a confrontation between the values of the old Reich and those now engendered by the new Republic. The times were far from stable.

In this environment of confrontation and chaos, Kurt Tucholsky operated in the intellectual sphere. He was a left-wing intellectual and journalist, writing against the authoritarian values of the Wilhelmine Reich and in support of republican ones. The words which came from his typewriter were in opposition to the intellectual traditions of the old Reich and the militaristic and authoritarian values professed by the old guard. Tucholsky saw the militaristic values of the old Reich re-emerging. It was these values which, Tucholsky believed, had to be overcome if the Republic was to have a long and fruitful future.
Critics of intellectuals have focused on the naive idealism of intellectuals and their tendency to withdraw from the political theater, instead concentrating on their respective specialties. Tucholsky did not fit into this group of intellectuals, as he was an active participant in the political debates of the day. He polemicized, satirized and criticized. He wrote poems and cabarets. When he saw a theme which needed to be addressed, he tackled it; often many times. He focused on real issues. His methods of satire and criticism were purposefully used to highlight the real problems faced by Germany. Tucholsky may have not been an active member of a political party, but he definitely was a politically-engaged journalist. He did have a voice worth hearing. Focusing his criticism on the government institutions of the Wilhelmine Reich, Tucholsky above all targeted the military as the major threat to the new Republic. The military's influence stretched throughout society, even to the traditionally pacifistic Social Democratic Party. It was this pervasive influence and the corresponding respect and adulation the military enjoyed from the German public that Tucholsky believed must be destroyed. Concentrating on the early years of the Weimar Republic, specifically 1919 to 1922, this paper will seek to prove the worth of Tucholsky's voice and the value of his efforts for the republicanization of Germany.

I

Prior to the First World War, there had been in Germany a strong distinction between the roles of the intellectual and the politician. The world of the intellectual was limited to the arena of ideas. He debated the trends within intellectual fields with colleagues, but left the political tasks to politicians. So long as one had personal and inner freedom, and this freedom was protected, there was no need for intellectuals to confront the
Imperial Chancellor Otto von Bismarck and other politicians over the control of the political realm. Most intellectuals were content with the stability provided by the Reich, especially when they compared their situation to the autocracy of Russia and the corrupted liberalism of France (Stern, 17).

Out of this contentment, Fritz Stern has argued a "Vulgar Idealism" developed in Germany after its 1871 unification (Stern, 17). In comparison to the idealism of the early nineteenth century, which had its roots in the Enlightenment and which had stressed equality of men, "Vulgar Idealism" instead stressed the superiority of German culture over foreign counterparts. Stern believed that this new idealism was passively consumed, elevated, and represented a claim to an exclusive proprietorship of Kultur (Stern, 17). With the rise of "Vulgar Idealism," there emerged en masse the unpolitical German, who denounced mass society, democracy, liberalism, modernity, and other "imports" from the west (Stern, 18). There was no concern for practical matters, as these so-called unpolitical Germans dogmatically opposed realism, pragmatism, and materialism. These Germans justified their anathema toward politics by stressing their cultivated minds, which would only be soiled by involvement in politics. However, their idealized Kultur did have political effects, as social divisions within Germany were widened and sanctified (Stern, 19). Through the forces of Kultur, these unpolitical Germans, sought to fight the growing threat to the status quo by the working class. Kultur was hence elevated to a level unapproachable by the uneducated. Stern has written that this concept of Kultur was "...invested with the

1. Not only the intellectuals were content with the political situation, but also was the vast majority of the bourgeoisie. I am focusing solely on intellectuals due to space and flow of argument.
2. The English word culture is not a suitable translation for Kultur. Kultur embodies much more: civilization, state of mind, etc.
awe and reverence that Germans felt, or thought they should feel, for the diverse creations of the spirit, for the mystery of the arts that to so many possessed a voice as tender and as powerful as religion itself” (Stern, 5). Accordingly, this development of meaning for *Kultur* could be nothing but unfavorable to the development of democracy or of a cohesive society within Germany (Stern, 6). Irresponsibility and iniquity were rationalized. With this rejection of participatory politics and idealization of *Kultur* by the majority of intellectuals, came a great productivity within the intellectual and scientific spheres. This productivity seemed to justify the split between politics and intellectual activity. As Stern argues, with the outbreak of war in 1914, many believed the coming struggle would demonstrate the superiority of German *Kultur* in comparison to the selfish ideals and institutions of the west (Stern, 20).³ These were the nationalistic feelings which overtook Germany as a whole in August of 1914. Along with this elevation of *Kultur* came a loyal adulation and respect for the military and its values of obedience, order, discipline, and strict control.

II

As the war dragged on and the assumed inevitable victory never came, there bred a disenchantment among German society in their once optimistic feelings towards the war. Among some intellectuals, the British blockade of Germany and the resulting privation for the German population produced a change in attitude. There was a growing social protest among intellectuals against the values of German bourgeois society.

³ Stern writes that there has been a misinterpretation of Germany being militaristic in 1914. He believed that the great enthusiasm of 1914 was not due to militarism or chauvinism, but rather due to the decades-long search for the moral equivalent of war. In the war they had found their equivalent of morality.
The historians Istvan Deak and Peter Gay have both seen this protest symbolically as a father-son conflict. The son, representing democracy, modernity, and progress, was poised against the father, who embodied the conventional order, philistinism, and capitalism. It was the Fatherland that was guilty of over-discipline and the betrayal and misleading of the younger generation. The father’s world had, therefore, to be repudiated so that Germany could join the community of nations in peace (Deak, 69-70). It was a struggle over the interpretation and control of Kultur and for the future of Germany. Instead of the ritualistic repeating of past German cultural accomplishments, there had to be a progressive, ever-creative, and modern Kultur developed.

When Germany had finally lost the war, and the Revolution came in November of 1918, there arose a great euphoria among left-wing intellectuals. These left-wing intellectuals believed that they were destined to play an important role in the reshaping of Germany after the war (Deak, 68). These intellectuals saw themselves as those justified to shape the new post-war Germany and viewed the future optimistically. In contrast to the ubiquity of the unpolitical attitude before the war, many intellectuals began outlining possible structures of government and plans for their future political involvement. There was widespread confidence in the coming birth of a new socialist state. “Forward” became the only direction for their thought. According to Peter Gay, the cultural task of these intellectuals was to restore the broken ties which the

4. Peter Gay, Outsider as Insider, and Deak, Weimar’s Left-Wing Intellectuals.
5. An example for such a change in attitude could be found in Thomas Mann. Mann had published Observations of an Unpolitical Man in 1918, espousing the virtues of the politically uninvolved intellectual. In the early years of the Republic, Mann’s attitude would change, eventually leading up to his novel The Magic Mountain (1924), which stressed the need for political involvement.
6. “Left-wing” intellectuals is a term used to describe intellectuals who were either Marxists and/or sympathetic to leftist ideas.
war had caused in German society (Gay, 8). An example for this new activism could be seen in Kurt Hiller. According to Hiller, the new German state would be run by intellectuals, echoing the platonic vision of rule by philosopher kings.7 Hiller went so far as to lay out the fundamental laws of the new state (Deak, 71).8 Even the famed architect Walter Gropius realized a social responsibility because of the lost war and the resulting exposure of the bankruptcy of German Kultur. He said: “This is more than just a lost war. A world has come to an end. We must seek a radical solution to our problems” (Gay, 8-9).

A belief in the inviolability of the intellect circulated among these intellectuals.9 The power of the intellect would enable condemnation of the father and fatherland and allow a spiritual regeneration and universal reconciliation (Deak, 70). With this increased sense of their worth, intellectuals approached the revolutionary days full of hope. For the journalists of the weekly Weltbühne, Istvan Deak writes, the future “...inspired optimism in the possibility of humanity’s ethical and social regeneration” (Deak, 68). Among the writers for the Weltbühne was Kurt Tucholsky.

The euphoria however did not last long. Many intellectuals quickly soured on the Republic. As government-sponsored Freikorps paramilitary groups restored order and suppressed revolutionary activity, a general aversion towards the government

7. Plato laid out this vision in the Republic. Those educated in the proper methods and in the proper material would be the rulers of society.
8. Among these laws: War was to be outlawed; there would be an equal distribution of all material goods as well as a minimum wage; and suppression of parliament if they opposed the will of the intellect. The last law reflected Hiller’s faith in the power of reason.
9. Such a concept reminds one of the ideas of the Enlightenment, with its emphasis on the power of reason, the inviolability of the intellect, and a belief in inevitable progress.
resurfaced among many intellectuals. With the passing of the Weimar constitution, many intellectuals objected to the remnants of the old imperial regime that remained in the Republic, namely the bureaucracy, the judicial system, and most importantly, the military.

Once optimistic over the promise of the Republic, many left-wing intellectuals now became disgusted with the system. The hopes for a state governed by intellectuals were quickly crushed by the political realities. These intellectuals had never had any recourse to power. They had no trade union, no paramilitary group backing their interests, and they had not been among those politically active in the old Wilhelmine Reich. The party that would have been the most logical fit for voicing their interests, the Social Democratic Party, these left-wing intellectuals found dull and its leadership intellectually weak and feebleminded (Laqueur, 47-48). The leaders of the SPD were, moreover, too conservative in their cultural views.

In the leaders of the SPD, many left-wing intellectuals saw petty-bourgeois aspirations. According to Walter Laqueur, left-wing intellectuals discovered that even among the workers there existed hopes for "bourgeois philistinism" (Laqueur, 48-49). The SPD leaders were mere functionaries whose only desire, next to entering the bourgeoisie, appeared to be among the workers, drinking beer and playing cards. A new Bebel, a Marx, a new Lassalle, or some other charismatic leader had not emerged. Instead, the

10. The Free Corps were paramilitary groups organized to maintain order in German cities and prevent an overthrow of the provisional republican Government by the Spartacists and other leftist groups. Unfortunately, these Free Corps went beyond their limits of power and murdered and beat suspected revolutionaries, often without retribution for these actions.

11. Kurt Hiller did try to organize intellectuals into the Rat der Geistiger Arbeiter. However, the interests and egos of the intellectuals that did join could not be combined into a workable council. The council passed away rather quickly. Kurt Tucholsky was never a member.
leaders of the SPD were weak, irresolute, and uninspiring (Laqueur, 50). Few intellectuals joined the party. Many intellectuals felt themselves alienated from such a party, and intellectually and culturally superior to the bourgeoisie and those workers striving to become members of it. Laqueur seems to be transposing a similar idea to Stern's concept of "Vulgar Idealism" onto left-wing intellectuals. Again an idealized, non-existent culture is used to define strata in society. Left-wing intellectuals, earlier enthusiastic over political involvement, again became unpolitical due to their belief in the superiority of their thought (Laqueur, 48-49).¹²

This avoidance of an alliance by left-wing intellectuals with the SPD has often been criticized by historians. Laqueur writes:

Whatever [the left-wing intellectuals] did or refrained from doing was of no public interest except to provide grist to the mills of Goebbels and Alfred Rosenberg. The struggle proceeded in the streets, the political assemblies, the beer-halls, the party headquarters, anywhere but the places frequented by the intellectuals. (Laqueur, 71).

According to Laqueur, the intellectuals were isolated from the real world. They were unaware of the real situations faced by Germans, and did nothing to seek these out. Nor did they fight for their ideals in parliament. The public took no interest in the intellectuals because they took no interest in the public.

¹² It is interesting that the SPD leaders viewed these intellectuals with the same degree of contempt. According to many in the SPD, the intellectuals had no interest in performing the necessary day to day tasks. Instead, they immersed themselves in utopian and futuristic visions, while neglecting pragmatic and real concerns. The intellectuals lacked political judgment and tactical ability. There was no place for them in a party specifically designed to work for the real interests of the working class.
Lack of public interest was certainly a dilemma for left-wing intellectuals and above all, for Kurt Tucholsky. Tucholsky has been called a foe of the Republic; a writer unable to recognize the extent of freedom the Republic offered in comparison to that before the war (Zwerenz, 57). Such criticism seems to be influenced by our knowledge of the end of the Weimar Republic. For example, Laqueur writes that Tucholsky and other intellectuals would be enlightened to the error of their ways by the brutality of the Nazi dictatorship (Laqueur, 45-47). Such a statement demonstrates the benefit of hindsight.

While a quick skimming of his works might lead one to believe Tucholsky was against the Republic, criticism of this kind is unwarranted when Tucholsky's writings are thoroughly studied. He was indeed a supporter of the Republic. Tucholsky was not fighting against the existence of the Republic, he was instead combating the weaknesses and hypocrisies of the democracy and the refusal of government representatives to overcome these shortcomings. Foremost among these shortcomings was the ongoing influence of the conservative-reactionary class, and the unfortunate adaptation of the SPD to this influence (Zwerenz, 57). Tucholsky was seeking to inform the public of its misplaced loyalty to such values. That he was not a loyal advocate and blind supporter of governmental policies should not be considered a weakness, rather a virtue. His calls for greater reform should not be seen as misguided, but as constructive attempts to ameliorate living conditions and Germany's standing in the world. Tucholsky wanted to improve the Republic, not destroy it.

Tucholsky was also not rejecting politics, only certain policies. He was not the against the SPD as a political party, only against its leaders who advocated and implemented poor policies (Heß, 92). The worst example of such a poor and short-sighted
policy was the SPD's agreement with the military on the 10th of November, 1918 (Kolb, 13). This agreement helped the military recover its strength and confidence after the lost war. It also reawakened the influence of the military in German society.

Despite Tucholsky's disappointment with the weak SPD leadership, he did not join the Communist Party. To him, the Communists were undemocratic and authoritarian. Tucholsky's heart lay with the workers, but he held no utopian visions of a coming worker's paradise. He believed it was his responsibility to remain on the outside, to point out errors and possible threats to the Republic. His job as critic, according to Gerhard Zwerenz, was to "...desanctify sacred cows; he did not have to become their herdsman in the process" (Zwerenz, 86). Tucholsky sought a society where everyone would have equal opportunities to increase their standard of living and well-being. That he felt more empathy for the historically-suppressed worker was based on the greater barriers to advancement which the worker faced.

Many left-wing intellectuals were indeed idealistic and ignorant of the real world, but a few did manage to create for themselves a voice that was heard; a voice that held true to ideals which corresponded to political realities. An example of such an intellectual was Maximillian Harden. Harden had been a vocal critic of governmental policies and social traditions in the Wilhelmine years and continued his criticism into the Republic. Harden had been very much involved in the happenings of his

13. The agreement was reached by the SPD leader and later Republic President Friedrich Ebert and the head of the General Staff, General Groener. In this agreement, the SPD and the military sought to maintain peace and order and to prevent the seizure of power by the radical left, represented foremost by the Spartacists. The military pledged its loyalty to the SPD led government and its support of the founding of a Republic. Unfortunately, this "maintenance" of order resulted in countless murders of leftists and republican sympathizers.

14. For the historiography of this agreement, see Kolb, Die Weimarer Republik, 157-82.
day and was a significant political figure, even if he never held an office. The ideas of a writer like Harden cannot simply be dismissed as naive and idealistic. These ideas represented a voice of opposition that reflected the period and its events. That Harden was active for many years suggests the relevance of his writings. Somebody had to be reading him in order to justify his continued employment.

Kurt Tucholsky was an intellectual in the spirit of Maximillian Harden. Like Harden, and in contrast to other left-wing intellectuals of the day, Tucholsky approached the future of Germany very cautiously and pragmatically. He refrained from idealistic visions of an intellectual-led Republic. Tucholsky was an engaged journalist, commenting often on the political happenings of the day. Further, Tucholsky was consistent in his message and his style. In his writings, Tucholsky’s subject matter and objects of criticism remained constant. He did not let up.

Such consistency was evident in Tucholsky at an early age. In a 1911 visit to Prague, he was able to meet Franz Kafka. This meeting made enough of an impression on Kafka that he noted it in his diary. He called Tucholsky an “entirely consistent person” (Poor, 12). Such an impression of the then law student Tucholsky by an astute observer like Kafka points to the intensity Tucholsky brought to his life even in his early days. Such intensity would never leave Tucholsky.

Tucholsky was not a passive observer but an involved and critical one. In comparison to other left-wing intellectuals who withdrew from the scene, Tucholsky remained: polemizing and propagandizing. He displayed the most energy, insight, and satiric brilliance of any left-wing intellectual active at this time (Poor, 5). He was a keen observer. In October of 1918, he wrote a letter to his fiancee Mary describing the importance of the coming weeks: “One is
allowed quite well to say that the fate of Germany for the next 200 years depends on the next few weeks” (Tucholsky, 412). He sensed the coming revolution and quite possibly the abdication of Wilhelm II and the establishment of a new political and social order. In the same letter he also addressed a theme he would stress often after the founding of the Republic; that of the ongoing adulation Germans professed for military and authoritarian values. He wrote: “The mistakes, which we have criticized and continue to criticize, have not been wiped from the Germans, instead only pushed just under the surface [heruntergesetzt]; these mistakes are not in the open—but are nevertheless still alive” (Tucholsky, 412). These mistakes were the adulation of the military and belief in the cultural superiority of Germany; the same values held by the “Vulgar Idealists” before the war. Tucholsky would fight against these traits diligently and prolifically. He was a key figure in the history of the Republic and also a symbol for it. He represented the freedoms gained: The freedom to write freely and without censorship; the freedom to criticize and to make suggestions.

Tucholsky wrote for many newspapers and journals, but he contributed most often to the *Weltbühne*, the weekly journal that served to comment on both the political and cultural scene in Germany from a leftist perspective. The *Weltbühne*

16. The Revolution he sensed broke out on November 9th, 1918 with the founding of the Republic. The Kaiser abdicated two days later.
17. “Vulgar Idealism” is of course a term coined by Fritz Stern. I use it here and later in the paper to describe the values of Tucholsky’s targets for criticism.
18. Tucholsky also wrote under four pseudonyms plus his own name. Yet, he never hid the true writer behind the name. He was not seeking to protect himself from what he wrote. See "Wir Alle Fünf" in Kurt Tucholsky, *Gesammelte Werke, Band I*, 1041-1043. Also Kurt Koszyk, *Die deutsche Presse*, 285.
had a small circulation, 16,000 at its peak (Koszyk, 285). This small circulation would seem to confirm Laqueur's view that indeed, these intellectuals were only writing for themselves. Others have argued, however, that the Weltbühne was in fact significant beyond the realm of unpolitical left-wing intellectuals (Mosse, 173). The Weltbühne was on newsstands throughout Europe and was read regularly by responsible members of the rightist intelligentsia as well as by the left (Poor, 66). Although the Weltbühne never enjoyed widespread popularity, it was significant, presenting weekly a consistent message representing the left intelligentsia in Germany. Kurt Koszyk has written that "...[the Weltbühne's] significance lay primarily in the fact that it brought the opinions of an important political group to weekly expression" (Koszyk, 285). That the Weltbühne was read by even those on the right—who used its content for their own dubious means—provides evidence of its significance.

This significance, however, does not clarify the effectiveness of Tucholsky as an individual writer. Laqueur singles out Tucholsky as providing an example for the ineffectiveness of left-wing intellectual activity. While he calls Tucholsky the "...most brilliant and most fertile German satirist since Heinrich Heine," these brilliant writings only served the interests of the far right (Laqueur, 45). Due to the anti-monarchical and anti-military content of such writings, the left-wing intellectuals were called traitors and named symbols of the decadent republic. Moreover, Laqueur states that writers such as Tucholsky were not thankful for the freedoms they pos-

19. Laqueur primarily bases his criticism of Tucholsky on his later writings, when Tucholsky was personally frustrated and distraught over the course of Weimar politics. It was in these days that Tucholsky wrote more often for Communist publications. He, however, did not join the party.
sessed. According to Laqueur, these writers argued that Germany was more reactionary than ever, including seemingly Republic-friendly politicians, from Gustav Stresemann to even the SPD.\textsuperscript{20} Laqueur states that even Tucholsky was not immune to falling into this helpless political isolation (Laqueur, 45-47).

Unfortunately, Tucholsky's writings would prove to be ineffective. They did not lead to a strong republic, filled with open-minded Germans. This failure, however, was not the result of self-imposed isolation and by political naivete on the part of Tucholsky. He knew exactly what was occurring in Germany and wrote incessantly about it.

It was not Tucholsky's job to save the Republic. He was a journalist reporting and commenting on what he observed. To hold the journalist responsible for supplying solutions is problematic. Tucholsky made suggestions, and he also pointed out the necessity of reform and the consequences if it were not carried out. He sought to enlighten and persuade his readers through his voluminous writings. That circulations were small should not be held against him. He did not rely solely on idealistic visions but also emphasized the need for real, and very possible reform. Anton Austermann has written, "That kind of Journalism was foreign to him which was distant from the public reality and existent only in private and exclusive conversation with the societal powers" (Poor, 9). Tucholsky was seeking to speak directly with the masses, calling on them to personally rid themselves of the burdens of servility to the Prussian \textit{Herrschaft} (King, 40). By doing so, the old system would collapse from its own weight. His readers were enlightened wittily, satirically, and with

\textsuperscript{20} Stresemann was Chancellor of the Republic for three months in 1923 and Foreign Minister from 1923 to 1929.
charm over the contemporary reality of communications (Austermann, 14).21

Because Tucholsky used satire and criticism as his methods of style, one could easily pass Tucholsky’s writings off as not appropriate for a mass audience, as they required a certain level of education for purposes of comprehension. His methods corresponded neither to the well-to-do nor to the existing political parties or institutions. They instead appealed to those disillusioned with politics and not to the fundamental values of regular German citizens, due to Tucholsky’s primary focus on the negative aspects of German society (Heß, 38).22 Tucholsky, however, during the first years of the Republic, did focus on topics important and relevant to all Germans. That he used satire and criticism to portray these topics should not take away from the seriousness and effort Tucholsky devoted to enlightening the German public to the real problems of the day. Harold Poor addresses this judgment as he observes Tucholsky’s methods. According to Poor, Tucholsky often did state idealistic, vague, and often hopeless goals, but he examined individual government policies and actions as well, on a practical level (Poor, 86-87). Tucholsky would point out errors and offer suggestions for their rectification. While it was true that Tucholsky held up the ideal of a more humane and democratic culture, he also knew this ideal could not be ingrained in the minds of the Germans

21. Anton Austermann sees Tucholsky as the great Historiograph of the Weimar Republic as his works serve as a chronological reflection and informal history of the Republic. The major events of the period are portrayed in his writings. He is more popular today than ever. Up to 1980, over 6 million copies of volumes of his work have been sold.

overnight. It could only be achieved in the classrooms and in reforms of government institutions. By this slow, gradual, and patient process, the inner spirit of society might be changed (Poor, 86-87). He used criticism and satire to enlighten his fellow Germans about the corruption and abuses committed by the old institutions in order to prevent these past sins from being repeated. While Tucholsky was rejecting the old institutions, he was simultaneously propagating democratic values which, he hoped, would lead Germany into a peaceful and productive future.

In two articles from 1919, “Was darf die Satire?” and “Wir Negativen,” Tucholsky defended his satirical and critical approach. Tucholsky saw satire as an “…absolutely positive method” (Tucholsky, 362). He added: “Nowhere else are those lacking character more quickly exposed” (Tucholsky, 362). Further, exaggeration was necessary at this time in order to “…blast open the truth, so that it becomes more clear” (Tucholsky, 363). No one should be kept safe from the satirist’s gaze. According to Tucholsky, there was “…no upstanding man or class that should not be able to take criticism” (Tucholsky, 364). Satire had to have no limits. Otherwise, the real truth could not be learned by the German public.

In “Wir Negativen,” Tucholsky fully addressed his critics. He could not affirm a society in which a sizable number of its citizens remained anti-republican and undemocratic. This was the “…central point of Germany’s current misery” (Tucholsky, 372). Germany was a land of soldiers, totally lacking in culture, and a land where the worst instincts of its citizens were constantly aroused and encouraged (Tucholsky, 373). In response to this

situation, Tucholsky laconically asked: “And to that we should say yes?” (Tucholsky, 373) Tucholsky, however, was not writing out of hatred for Germans. He wrote: “We want to fight with hate out of reasons of love. We are struggling out of love for the repressed, who must not necessarily always be proletarians. We love the thoughts of humanity which lie in the thoughts of humans” (Tucholsky, 377). In order for these humanitarian thoughts to spread and prosper, a change in the attitude and character of Germans had to transpire:

We should make positive suggestions. But all the positive suggestions benefit nothing, if the correct level of honesty and integrity to do not move through the land. The reforms, in which we believe, are not to be implemented with regulations, nor with imperial offices. We do not believe that it suffices to build up a filing cabinet and a large, multi-faceted personnel to settle this problem. What is needed is the proper character [anständige Gesinnung]. (Tucholsky, 375-76)

This proper character was to be obtained not only through reform of institutions but through emphasis on educational reform and promotion of positive German culture, which stressed freedom of ideas and freedom of the individual to make his or her own choices. What was collectively done to improve the situation should in no way interfere with individual freedom (Tucholsky, 375).

According to Tucholsky, there were two Germanys. One was free, the other servile (knechtisch) (Tucholsky, 993). In order for the free Germany, represented by the Republic, to win this struggle, there must be propaganda made for it. Unfortunately, Tucholsky saw few defenders of or advocates for the Republic because few republicans were in decisive positions within the Republic (Tucholsky, 993). There existed no widespread move-
ment in support of the Republic. According to Jörg Schönert, Tucholsky's use of satire and criticism, therefore, was part of his strategy for achieving positive results through negative means. Through unconditional attacks he sought to point out the negatives and remnants of the old system and to establish a common interest in the establishment of a thorough renewal of Germany (Schönert, 80). Further, Schönert believes Tucholsky's methods were an example of the bourgeois tradition of the Enlightenment which strove for a better morality and a free society and sought to preserve these values in the face of constant attacks (Schönert, 82). Criticism and satire were legitimate and traditional tools in this form of struggle (Schönert, 82).

Tucholsky was indeed not politically isolated, as Laqueur believes, but rather politically involved. In referring to left-wing intellectuals and with no doubt, Tucholsky as well in mind, Kurt Koszyk writes: "These so-called outsiders partly formed the image of the Republic. Therefore, the Republic was identified with their names" (Koszyk, 284). Through this identification came also, for Tucholsky, evidence of his involvement in the Republic.

Tucholsky recognized his own problematic and ambivalent relationship to the Republic (Heß, 108). He recognized he was an intellectual serving as a critic of a Republic he supported but in which he saw many dangerous flaws. Dieter Heß writes that Tucholsky's detachment from both the left and the right enabled and legitimized his criticism and warnings (Heß, 108). He was a journalist reporting and commenting on the shortsightedness and the shortcomings of governmental policies. Tucholsky himself saw his own role as follows:

The world must not be seen entirely from above; isolated, against and distant from everyone. Instead, one must be among the mass-
es—as leader, or adversary, or aristocrat, or monk, but among the masses. The journal, in which it can say that it belongs to one or to all is good; the deed that an individual can do with all or for all is even better. (Koszyk, 285). 24

With this statement, Tucholsky does not fit into the generalizations of Laqueur. 25 Tucholsky indeed recognized the need to understand the masses, but also to make the effort to be among them and to influence them. As will be shown below, Tucholsky was an active participant in the Weimar Republic, especially in its early years. He cannot be dismissed as a mere source for rightist propaganda. He actively wrote propaganda for his own cause. Although he was not a government official, he nevertheless used words as his deeds. He was writing the good fight.

Tucholsky did not fall back on utopian visions of society (Zimmerman, 109). He approached his work pragmatically. He did not join specific intellectual organizations, nor did he become a long-time member of a political party (Austermann, 20). 26 That he was not an active member of a political party can be a point for criticism. However, one need not be an active party member to be a political participant. Although Tucholsky was writing in an age without television or even widespread radio, the subject matter he addressed and criticized was politically-oriented and his criticism did not go unnoticed by politicians (Tucholsky, 3). 27 He possessed a voice which came often

24. Quote by Tucholsky, 1927.
25. See above.
26. Tucholsky did join the Independant Socialists (USPD) for a short time from March 1920 to 1922, when the Independents joined the Majority Social Democrats (SPD). As mentioned before, Tucholsky was never a member of the Rat der Geistiger Arbeiter.
27. Above all, politicians of the Right and the Nazis were very aware of his political writings. In 1933, Tucholsky was in the first group of authors to have their books burned by the Nazis. His writings were burned on May 10, 1933.
and consistently. Anton Austermann believes that Tucholsky had the confidence that he could play a positive role from the position of being a sharp critic of the existing political conditions. From this vantage point, he could excite self-action in those affected by these conditions. At least initially, Tucholsky believed, according to Austermann, that an oath of all contemporaries of good will could be taken to uphold honesty (Redlichkeit), humanity, functional work (sachliche Arbeit), and the preeminence of the individual before the corporation and collectives (Austermann, 20).28 Such hopes displayed a connection to Enlightenment thought which optimistically believed in the progressive betterment of man through education. Tucholsky indeed held such hopes.

Although writing in 1930, Tucholsky described his long-held goal of creating a new Germany:

From Deutschland must Deutschland be made, and it must also be shown that besides Hitler, Hugenberg und those fischkalten University types of the year 1930, there are still other kinds of Germans. Every reader can participate in this effort. If he does that in his own district through the deed, that will be our highest achievement. (Austermann, 53)29

Tucholsky sought the active participation of his readers to help in changing the system. He hoped that Germany would begin with a tabula rasa, ensuring a building up of new values and the complete destruction of the experiences and behavior evident in the Wilhelmine period. In so doing, Tucholsky wrote,

28. Later, Tucholsky experienced great discouragement due to realization that majority of Germans were unwilling to commit to new values.
29. Deutschland refers to a Germany led by teutonic warriors whose present embodiment was the Prussian military. Deutschland referred to what Germany should be. Fischkalten refers to people who are resistant to new ideas.
"The claim of authority held by such institutions as the military, church, bureaucracy, and justice system would be effectively shaken to their foundations" (Schönert, 81). Tucholsky believed it was his job to influence, as best he could, public support for the Republic. If that meant using satire and emphasizing democratic and humane ideals, he would utilize those means. Austermann confirms this approach:

In face of the power of latent and open anti-republican propaganda in the Weimar Republic, Tucholsky believed that the survival of the Republic was far more dependent upon more than just an education campaign that merely rested on the better argument. The majority of the German population was only to be won to the side of the Republic through sharp, immediate altercations with the anti-republican forces. Propaganda was necessary in order to establish the Weimar Republic in the consciousness of the masses as their state. (Austermann, 164-65)

Constant confrontations were necessary. Tucholsky not only demonstrated constancy and consistency with his arguments and tactics but also displayed an unmatched productivity. From November 1918 to December 1919 alone, Tucholsky wrote more than 150 essays and poems, in which he sought to expose the horrors of war, discredit Prussian authoritarianism and militarism, and in the end, to make a true revolution in German life (Poor, 49). In the weekly Weltbühne he had a reliable means for conveying his voice. He mastered the short article, conveying his message through poems, criticisms, satires, commentaries, polemics, reviews, and even through simple reports.

Tucholsky wrote pieces which directly attacked the threats he saw to the fledgling Republic. Moreover, Tucholsky clearly

stated his vision of democracy, a vision which was very much aware of the realities of German society, and not based on idealistic pipe dreams. He sought:

A democracy, where one is free and conscious of his responsibility. A democracy, where people are not equal like the lined up numbers of a Prussian army company—that incarnation of a penitentiary state [Zuchthausstaat]—instead a democracy, where between a bank president and his porter, there exists no separation due to caste, only due to one’s economic well-being and type of occupation. If they drink tea with each other is another matter. That they are both human is a for us certain. (Tucholsky, 1042)

Such a quote demonstrates no connection whatsoever to the goals of the Communist Party. What it does display is a clear recognition of the class realities that existed in Germany. Tucholsky was not advocating any nationalization of industries or redistribution of incomes. Rather, he sought a society in which everyone was equal before the law and in which everyone had equal opportunity. Tucholsky saw the values of Germany’s “Vulgar Idealism” of the pre-war period as very much alive and gaining renewed strength and influence. Tucholsky was seeking, through his writings, like-minded Germans to aid in his struggle for new values of equality and freedom.

In 1920, Tucholsky listed the demands which he felt had to be fulfilled in order for the Republic to last. They were as follows:

1. Transformation of the Reichswehr into a People’s Militia. Removal of all unnecessary and counter-revolutionary generals and officers.
2. Demilitarization of the police. Forced retirement of all unreliable officers, especially those active in the Provinces.
3. Reform of the Justice System—especially at the prosecutorial levels. Removal of all those loyal to the monarchy.
4. Democratization of the bureaucracy. Thorough pursuit and prosecution of all republican complaints. Firing of all bureaucrats, along with removal of pensions, whose anti-republican politics have been proven.
5. Strengthening of the national government vis-a-vis the states.
6. Complete restructuring of educational methods and subjects in the schools and universities.
7. Immediate amnesty for all political prisoners who have been imprisoned for their republican actions.
8. Above all, enlightenment and propaganda of the new republican ideas. Destruction of Prussian legends. Subjects become citizens. (Tucholsky, 997)

These demands were unspecific in how they should be implemented, but they did provide a framework for Tucholsky's subject matter in his articles. Above all, Tucholsky sought the elimination of all anti-republican elements remaining in governmental positions. The militarization of German society had invaded all government institutions. This invasion had to be countered with a republican one through ridding institutions of military values and replacing them with republican values.

Tucholsky attacked all remnants of the Wilhelmine Reich, but his main target was the pervasive militarism in German society. In a poem titled The Prussian Press, he pointed out the main enemy:

Nur einen Feind hast du deines Geschlechts!
Der Feind steht rechts! (Tucholsky, 429)

31. A poor translation of this runs:
Only one enemy do you and your generation have!
The enemy stands on the right!
For the whole poem, see Tucholsky, "Preussische Presse," Gesammelte Werke, Band I, 429.
The ultimate representative of the right for Tucholsky was the military. While the German bureaucracy, with its undying loyalties to the Wilhelmine Reich, and the judicial system, with its own favoritism towards the old order, were often the focus of his attacks, it was the military whose values pervaded and influenced all levels of German society. The greatest threat to the new Republic's existence and successful life was militarism. Consequently, Tucholsky focused more on militarism in his writings than on any other subject in the first years of the Republic. The violent crushing of the Spartacist Revolt and the ensuing murders of the Spartacist leaders Rosa Luxemberg and Karl Liebknecht by the rightist paramilitary groups called the Free Corps (Freikorps) served as the spark for Tucholsky's prolific writings in this period.\(^\text{32}\)

Harold Poor writes that it was at this time that Tucholsky "...decisively entered his career as a writer and journalist" (Poor, 49).

Tucholsky could not understand why many Germans wished for a return to the times of the Wilhelmine Reich in which militaristic values dominated and which placed so many undue restrictions upon German citizens. He could not understand why Germans desired a return to an order in which they had been treated like and seen as dogs by their Prussian rulers (Tucholsky, 1042). It was the values of these Prussian rulers, values such as rigid strictness (catonische Strenge) and puritanical simplicity, which had led Germany to a disastrous war and humiliating defeat (Tucholsky, 1042). He believed these values had to be destroyed.

\(^{32}\)Rosa Luxemberg and Karl Liebknecht were the leaders of the Spartacists, later the Communist Party of Germany (KPD). In January of 1919, they were among the leaders of the spontaneous Spartacist Uprising. Ill-planned and lacking in mass support, the uprising was easily crushed by government-sponsored forces called the Free Corps.
Tucholsky believed that Germans had a barracks mentality, and this mentality enabled militarism to remain the supreme value of German society (Poor, 78). According to Tucholsky, the destruction of these values, however, was almost impossible because they had been ingrained in the minds and beliefs of Germans from birth (Tucholsky, 590). Further, the development of this militarism had not been stopped in any way. In sporting and outdoor clubs, youths had been taught to organize themselves in units and undertake activities that emphasized maintaining order and undivided respect for leaders. In schools, youths were taught to emulate and honor military officers, for it had been the military and the statesmanship of Bismarck that had unified Germany in 1871. As a result, Tucholsky believed Germans had acquired a need for a superior figure. He wrote, "The reasons for the cultural struggles are deep. The German, beaten up by tradition, needs something which he can place over himself in authority" (Tucholsky, 590). Through culture and education, the life of a German had been molded to resemble life in the military. The German became subservient to and needful of an authority figure. According to Tucholsky, the need for authority and the resulting adulation of the military made Germans blind to misuses of power. Germans refused to see wrong-doings because they wished to remain in their comfortable world, free of responsibility and full of monetary profits (Tucholsky, 590). The lost war was consequently regretted by many Germans because it had destroyed the old order of things (Tucholsky, 590).

Tucholsky's writings were designed to enlighten the Germans to this reality. Unfortunately, he saw little change. The

33. Prior to 1871, Germany had not been unified. Through three wars in the 1860's and early 1870's, Prussia succeeded in unifying Germany under their control. For a summary of these events, see Gordon Craig, *Germany 1866-1945.*
Army General Staff remained, only under a different name to hide its existence from the Allies. Free Corps roamed throughout Germany, committing acts of violence against those suspected of disloyalty and republicanism. Referring to murders committed by Free Corps, Tucholsky wrote, “This world (that of the Free Corps) is without scruples, deeply untrustworthy, and honored and treasured by a great part of the population” (Tucholsky, 543). The ongoing belief in militaristic values contributed to the concealment of crimes committed by the Free Corps and the lenient treatment those convicted received. Tucholsky wrote: “The disgrace of our military and our justice system are supported by a beaten up and proud bourgeoisie” (Tucholsky, 824). Tucholsky found this support likewise a disgrace for Germany. Through his writing, he hoped to show the military and the Free Corps for what they really were: exploitative murderers and destroyers of humanity. In a satirical piece obviously designed to demonstrate the true attitude of military men, Tucholsky depicted a discussion among officers who had just killed citizens deemed disloyal: “Look how respectable the dogs are dressed. We should take their boots” (Tucholsky, 544). Such a piece displays Tucholsky’s purpose of portraying the officers as inhumane thieves and destroyers of civilization. Tucholsky was directly targeting a real danger to German society. He was reporting on the violent realities taking place on the streets of German cities. He was an engaged participant in the struggle to establish a real republic, with new values and new

34. The General Staff, headed by Ludendorff and Hindenburg from 1915 to the end of the war, had almost dictatorial power during the war through the development of an almost worshipping of their power and presumed infallibility by the German public. This staff was abolished after the war, as ordered by the victorious Allies. However, the military was able to maintain the functions of the Staff through reorganization and trickery. See Gordon Craig, Politics of the Prussian Army.
methods of action, emphasizing peace, equal opportunities, and democracy.

Harold Poor has written that Tucholsky held the military responsible for the poverty in German civilization (Poor, 95). Instead of German civilization progressing from the roots laid by Goethe, Kant, Schiller, Beethoven, and others, the “Vulgar Idealism” of the past had re-emerged and negated the possibility of “good” Germans gaining prominence and creating for Germany a favorable reputation in the world. With the pervasive influence of the military and its authoritarian values, Germany had become a land of aggression and destruction. This struggle between the two Germanys, according to Tucholsky, was a clash between two worlds which did not speak the same language (Tucholsky, 357). Consequently, Tucholsky believed no revolution had taken place in 1918, rather a counter-revolution (Tucholsky, 407). The militaristic values had been resuscitated through the inability of the German people and their politicians to overcome their desire to be ruled authoritatively. Military generals had successfully maintained their basis of power. Tucholsky compared the situation in the early Republic to that of the 1848 failed revolution. He wrote: “We have lost the ideals of 1848 but kept the reaction. Politics have become nothing but constant squabbling. Please, God give us a couple of decent fellows so that we can overcome these terrible times and enter into a splendid spring” (Tucholsky, 170).

The continued power and influence of the military brought fear to Tucholsky, for he believed there existed a strong likelihood that the generals would destroy the Republic and unleash a new war of revenge against the Allied Powers (Poor, 95). The awe of the military which the public possessed would have to be replaced with a respect for and willingness to serve the
Republic. Otherwise the Republic was doomed as were the hopes for a new humane German society.

The German generals were the worst danger to the new Republic. They had no knowledge of humanity or of the real German spirit (Geist). They were unfamiliar with the creators of the true German spirit, represented by the writers Goethe, Friedrich Schiller, and others. Tucholsky wrote that these generals instead “…thought with the biceps and wrote with the fists” (Tucholsky, 529). Further, they had no love whatsoever for the Republic. This lack of love inspired the military-adoring bureaucrats also to despise the Republic. One was therefore severely limited in his career, if he was a republican (Tucholsky, 994). This was the situation Tucholsky sought to change and felt had to be changed. He himself recognized the difficulty in this task: “How the journalists can correctly come to grips with this situation and finally close this chapter in world history—it must be a difficult job” (Tucholsky, 530). Indeed, Tucholsky saw it as the responsibility of journalists to tackle the problem of militarism in German society. He was attacking failed institutions that continued to persist without significant reform. Tucholsky was no dreamy-eyed idealist conceiving new logocratic visions of a world ruled by the intellectuals. He was directly fighting the greatest problem he saw in Germany; that of a military instilling in the German people its values of dominance and subservience.

An example of the military’s dominance in the life of Germans was illustrated in the phenomenon of the Generals Paul von Hindenburg and Erich Ludendorff.35 Their continued

35. Hindenburg and Ludendorff were the leaders of the Army General Staff from 1915 to the end of the war. As the public only received censored accounts of the war, both Hindenburg and Ludendorff became through extensive government and military propaganda idols of the German populace. They were seen as infallible and omniscient. As a result of this power, they eventually became the unofficial rulers of Germany, even superseding the authority of Kaiser Wilhelm II.
popularity, despite the lost war, was indicative of the pervasive nature of the military values in German society. After the war, the German public was told of the “Stab in the Back Legend” (Dolchstößlegende) which was propagated foremost by the two generals. The Army had not lost the war, rather it had been the politicians of the left and other republicans that had undermined the inevitable victory. The military had successfully transferred its responsibility for Germany’s defeat from itself to the new republican politicians who had had no say at any time in military policies. Tucholsky documented this incredible occurrence as he attended a hearing in which both Hindenburg and Ludendorff participated (Tucholsky, 532).

Tucholsky did not believe all Germans held Hindenburg and Ludendorff in high esteem, but that a significant majority certainly did (Tucholsky, 532). Both Hindenburg and Ludendorff were symbols of the military and its values. As a result, many Germans reserved a place of honor in their hearts for both men. The emotions and pride of the Germans had overcome their reason. In reality, both Hindenburg and Ludendorff had been failures. They had not won the war. They were in fact murderers. In a satirical tone, Tucholsky wrote:

Heroes? Heroes? What have these two to do with the hero concept? [They were merely] Administrative bureaucrats, well-nourished, constantly out of danger, and like Ludendorff, on the Eighteenth of November, leaving the country. (Tucholsky, 531)36

That this reality was overlooked by many Germans did not surprise Tucholsky, for he believed these Germans secretly longed to have the opportunity to kick others around, and to be ruled

36. Ludendorff initially fled Germany after the cease-fire was signed because he feared arrest. He, of course, really had nothing to fear due to the high respect he enjoyed in Germany.
by a dictator. Only in these situations would such a German
give his best. Germans desired order and to be subservient to
this order, which only the military could provide (Tucholsky,
530, 532). Sarcastically, Tucholsky wrote, “One must have lost
a war to be so celebrated” (Tucholsky, 532).

The German military stood in opposition to Tucholsky’s goal
of a new and vitalized German Republic. He wrote: “The entire
German military, as it stands today, has nothing at all to do with
the Republic. Its only worry is to create for itself a special flag,
which reminds itself not of the hated black-red-gold, rather of
the old monarchical towel” (Tucholsky, 994).37 The military
remained forever loyal to its old benefactor, the monarchy. It
could not be relied upon to support the Republic in times of
need. Tucholsky believed the military and its companion, the
Free Corps, had established the Republic as their new enemy
after the armistice had taken away the Allied Powers as enemies
because the fundamental need for soldiers was to create for
themselves an enemy (Tucholsky, 820). He wrote that the Free
Corps would have been formed “…even in the deepest desert.
The military had to create them. It was a question of blood. The
Free Corps stand like empty taxis on the street or like ladies of
the night at the corner, waiting for their buyer” (Tucholsky,
821). Tucholsky added that the buyer did come, representing
industrial interests and the philistine middle class (Tucholsky,
820-21). These groups allowed militaristic values to enter the
political world of the German Republic (Tucholsky, 820-21).

This power of the military and its values made Tucholsky
see the future of the Republic in black and white. According to
Tucholsky, two worlds were colliding, and absolutely no bridge

37. The “hated black-red-gold” refers to the new flag of the Republic which replaced
the black-red-white flag of Prussia and the Reich. This “monarchical towel”
remained as the flag of the military.
existed that might reconcile the old and new values. Reflecting on the murders of Rosa Luxemberg and Karl Liebknecht, he wrote:

Militarism is not dead, only temporarily put down. The miserable rest of it hides itself in Noske’s gardens, which are so damaging because there, under the new flag, the old ideals are held high. There is again this false collective spirit of the “division,” this fabulous notion, placed higher than everything human. There is corruption, but always under the guise of correctness. There is the old, terrible outlook which we no longer want. (Tucholsky, 418)38

Tucholsky sought to fight this pervasiveness of the military until “...no trace of it existed” (Tucholsky, 418). Germans had to rid themselves of the barracks mentality, and instead view it as the greatest hindrance to their progress as a nation (Tucholsky, 824). Tucholsky, however, did not see the Germans taking the necessary action to overcome the burdens of the past. He wrote:

Action and spirit are two factors that are more distant from each other than ever. We have hundreds of dogmas of reflection, but hardly any of action. We resemble the centipede, who, despite considerable thought, still does not know which leg should be first raised and as a result, remains still. (Tucholsky, 169)

According to Tucholsky, Germany was at a crossroads. It faced a choice. Germany might return to a past filled with corruption and destruction or enter a future, full of greater freedoms and membership in a community of nations. But in order to enter this future, Germany had to undergo a spiritual revolution, one without violence and political murders (Tucholsky, 824).

38. Gustav Noske was Defense Minister from 1919 to 1920. See below.
169). Without such a revolution, Germany was doomed to fall back into its dark and burdensome past.

In the political parties of the Weimar Republic, Tucholsky saw agents working against the Republic. In the politicians of the German People’s Party (DVP) and the German Nationalist People’s Party (DNVP), Tucholsky saw activists working for a return to the monarchy. Some of these politicians tolerated the Republic, but they yearned secretly for a return of the Hohenzollerns. These politicians had no convictions and were merely opportunists using their cleverness and devious tricks to become important men in the new Republic (Tucholsky, 425). Because of the prominence and activity of such politicians in the workings of government, Tucholsky called the Weimar Republic a “negative monarchy” and not truly a republic. The Republic was unable to protect itself because its enemies were active within the Republic itself (Tucholsky, 993). Tucholsky saw the precarious position in which the Republic found itself due to the continuing strength of the old institutions and above all the military. In a graphic illustration of the lingering old values and their force of attraction, Tucholsky described shop owners who “...were flattered when they were allowed to have the Royal Supplier emblem on their shop window” and were consequent-

39. DVP stands for Deutsche Volkspartei while DNVP stands for Deutsche Nationale Volkspartei. The former was a remnant of the old National Liberal Party while the latter had its roots in the old Conservative Party and the right wing of the National Liberals.

40. Hohenzollern was the name of the dynastic family that first served as Kings of Prussia and later as Emperors of Germany.

41. To Tucholsky, there was no better example of such an opportunist than Walther Rathenau, foreign minister of the Weimar Republic and killed by right-wing radicals in 1922. Rathenau had been head of Germany’s General Electric (AEG) before the war. During the war he was responsible for armaments and supplies for the military. Tucholsky saw him as a monarchist in republican’s clothing. The later Chancellor and foreign minister Gustav Stresemann provides another example of such an “opportunist.”
ly so happy that “...they respectfully observed the droppings of the imperial horses” (Tucholsky, 1042). Despite the new Republic, many Germans still longed for recognition as loyal monarchists. In order to change such attitudes, Tucholsky believed that new ideas had to be presented by new men (Tucholsky, 425).

Logically, these new men should have been the leaders of the Social Democratic Party (SPD). Traditionally pacifist and anti-monarchist, the SPD was seen by many as the one party able to establish a strong Republic in Germany. However, in Tucholsky's eyes, militaristic values had successfully infiltrated even the SPD (Tucholsky, 169).42 The policies of the SPD were a bitter disappointment to Tucholsky, for it should have been the party, with its pacifist heritage, to rid Germany of militarism. Instead, the leaders of the SPD sided with the military, in order to crush the January uprisings and maintain order. Tucholsky never forgave the SPD for its deeds during this time, especially Defense Minister Gustav Noske, whom Tucholsky considered the worst offender (Tucholsky, 104). The SPD had betrayed not only its own constituency, but the entire German population, who had grown tired of war and its glorifications. The masses had wanted a new order, and Tucholsky crafted the sketches of this new order. As days and months passed, the masses forgot this new order. But Tucholsky did not. He refused to forget. His writings never strayed from his advocacy of a Germany absent of the authoritarian military. One cannot consider him merely as an idealist. There had been an opportunity to shift Germany away from its glorification of military values. The pervasiveness of

42. Tucholsky was already critical of the SPD in 1914, after its vote to support to join the coalition in the Reichstag supporting the war effort. He said, “The political opposition, the Progressives, and above all the SPD have totally discredited themselves. We can no longer support our radicals, because they aren’t radicals.”
these values had unfortunately been manifested in the leadership of the SPD.

Tucholsky did not view the majority of SPD members responsible for this alliance with militaristic values. Tucholsky was even in agreement with many of the traditional maxims and goals of the SPD, but conflict came with the actual governmental policies of SPD leaders; foremost their pro-military policies. Tucholsky judged these policies against the original principles of the SPD that had developed during its long existence. Tucholsky pointed out the deficits from these principles and the consequences thereof (Heß, 89).

Tucholsky's attacks on the SPD and its policies were highly personalized as they primarily focused on the Defense Minister Gustav Noske and the President of the Republic, Friedrich Ebert. Tucholsky's criticism of Noske was far more pointed than his accusations of Ebert. Tucholsky did regard Ebert as a man of integrity, even if he believed Ebert displayed too much flexibility in his workings with the old order (Heß, 103). Noske, on the other hand, received no sign of respect from Tucholsky. Dieter Heß has written that Tucholsky viewed Noske as "...politically incapable, morally unqualified, an anti-democratic, and anti-republican character, and responsible for the misdevelopment of the Republic" (Heß, 101). Tucholsky sought the resignation of Noske as the first step in letting the Republic strengthen itself against the attacks of anti-republican elements and destroy the old military values which were work-

43. Tucholsky was a member of USPD from March 1920 to 1922. He saw them as the true representative of traditional principles of SPD, i.e. dissolution of Reichswehr. Tucholsky never voiced support however for the council movement, a dictatorship of proletariat, or the nationalization of industry. He left the party when the USPD rejoined the Majority SPD. See also Austermann, Tucholsky, 26.

44. Friedrich Ebert was President from January 1919 to his death in 1925.
ing with state support to destroy the Republic (Tucholsky, 591). The question can be raised whether such a personalized strategy was effective in any way. Tucholsky was criticizing Noske without himself becoming actively involved in politics through a political party. Tucholsky, as a journalist, was not simply reporting events as he saw them but adding sometimes acerbic commentary to his observations. This of course did not change governmental policies, but Tucholsky was utilizing his right to criticize, which was one of the new rights gained in the Republic. It must be stated again that Tucholsky was very much involved in the events of the day even if he did not influence the actions of politicians.

One can see Gustav Noske as a justifiable target for Tucholsky’s pen. In a book written by Noske describing his time as Defense Minister, Noske referred to himself as the “bloodhound” who did not shun the responsibility of using violent methods to crush rebellious activities (Noske, 68). Further, Noske considered Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemberg as those most responsible for the uprising in January of 1919. Their deaths, although tragic, were a result of their own exhortations to murder and violence (Noske, 75-6). Such a view, coming from a representative of the working class and the Republic, sickened Tucholsky. A recent study of Gustav Noske's life by the

45. This was written two months before the Kapp Putsch.
46. Noske held Luxemberg and Liebknecht responsible for the peaceful revolution turning into a bloody civil war. In his memoirs, Noske stated that the SPD wanted no revolution and that it was its taking control of the government in 1918 that prevented a full-out and chaotic civil war and a communist Germany.
47. In Noske’s defense, he overestimated the strength of the Spartacists and their threat to the overall stability of the new Republic as did many others. There were also many supply problems in regards to food and other necessities of life throughout Germany which required the maintenance of order. This is a complicated manner and deserving of a paper all its own. For purposes of space, it will not be discussed further here. See Korb, Die Weimarer Republik, for a good historiographical discussion.
historian Wolfram Wette confirms Tucholsky's view of Noske as one overcome by militaristic values. Wette writes:

Noske had in fact no scruples when it came to using force. Indeed, he preferred using overwhelming force to achieve a "total" solution instead of seeking a political compromise. His behavior during the January uprising makes clear, that he only thought in terms of victory or defeat; values which came from the military environment. It is probable that the war experience positively influenced Noske's attitude towards the military-organized cult of force. As a result, instead of using police forces to maintain order, Noske used the military. (Wette, 315)

According to Wette, Noske was indeed heavily influenced by the militaristic values which permeated German society.

Tucholsky considered Noske a fool and completely unaware of his being merely a tool of military interests. Tucholsky wrote:

The reason why the completely incapable Noske must be constantly reproached is that this former Social Democrat did not use the good opportunity to put out on the streets all the profiteers of the old system. He does not see that they consider him a fool. (Tucholsky, 590)⁴⁸

Despite believing Noske to be a fool, Tucholsky realized he was nevertheless loved by the German population.⁴⁹ To Tucholsky, this popularity was completely unjustified. Tucholsky wrote:

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⁴⁸ It is interesting to note that Tucholsky called Noske a former Social Democrat, which he obviously was not. Tucholsky is referring to Noske's and other SPD leaders' disloyalty to the real maxims of the party.
⁴⁹ Tucholsky was not the only writer to view Noske as a fool and a tool of officers. In April 1929, a writer from the liberal Berliner Zeitung called Noske a prisoner of the military officers. This writer further called Noske's policy of cooperation with the military an egregious error and responsible for the deaths of many innocent Germans. See Wolfram Wette, *Gustav Noske, Eine politische Biographie*, 315.
Noske, the man of the street, the revolutionary minister, is by large segments of the population almost beloved. He is really a man lacking in intelligence (ein kopfloser Mann). I have actually never seen in German politics—outside of the Kaiser—such a frightening measure of injudiciousness (Einsichtlosigkeit) in all matters. He has no idea what is going on. He does not know that there are forces at work which seek to conserve the terrible and old ways and help a completely barbarian class stand up again. He is clueless and as a result, helps these forces in this process. (Tucholsky, 546)

According to Tucholsky, Noske was responsible for the lack of reform in the military leadership and in military structure, despite the proven ineptitude of military leaders and the resulting obvious need for reform (470). Observing the manner in which Noske operated among military leaders, Tucholsky satirically remarked that they all must be related in some way and that Noske was the successor (Fortsetzer) to Ludendorff’s tradition of ineptitude and shame (Tucholsky, 470).50

The danger of this intimate cooperation between Noske, the SPD, and the military was the continued suppression of republican ideas and anti-military and anti-monarchical elements. This suppression was manifested in the lack of sufficient punishment of rightist agitators who beat and killed leftists and republicans and the corresponding heavy punishment for convicted leftist agitators.51 Tucholsky held Noske and others in the

50. Noske was indeed respected by some in military circles. According to the military historian Harold Gordon, Noske received a "grudging respect" from the military for his methodical and practical approach to military matters. See Harold Gordon, The Reichswehr and the German Republic 1919-1926, 331.

51. For a contemporary study of violence in the early years of the Weimar Republic, see Emil Gumbel, Vier Jahre politischer Mord, specifically page 81. Gumbel, a mathematician by trade, lists the number of murders committed by the left at twenty-two. The average sentence was fifteen years. The number of murders committed by those on the right was 354. The average sentence was four months. Four of the twenty-two leftists went unpunished. 326 of the rightists. Ten leftists were executed. No rightists were.
SPD leadership responsible for this lack of equal justice (Tucholsky, 546). He complained that there were always promises made by the SPD and other so-called republicans to change the situation, but that every day it continued to persist and worsen. Trials were forgotten and the virtuous spirit of the German Officer Corps was always trumpeted instead as its representatives were acquitted or sentenced to probation or to serving a suspended sentence. It was “the divine Noske” who allowed this justice system to continue its operations in such a manner (Tucholsky, 546). Noske and other SPD leaders were responsible for letting an atmosphere of violence and suppression of republican ideas linger and thrive. He wrote, “The cause of weakness is that no one dares make themselves available to take on the crowd. No one dares to kick out of the way the established right, the right that has acquired its rights and privileges dubiously and without work” (Tucholsky, 994). Those with courage, such as Mathias Erzberger, wound up dead or beaten (Tucholsky, 994). Tucholsky believed Noske to be the worst of cowards. He wrote:

It is completely unimportant to know whether Noske is acting with a good or bad conscience. He is a parasite, far worse than the exploitive rich and their agents, worse than the farmer is to his dog.

(419)

It was Noske who had been responsible for the forty-nine deaths in Berlin during the January 1919 Uprising and for the reawakening of the “German pest”: militarism (Tucholsky, 821). To

52. Mathias Erzberger was a leader of the Catholic Center Party, a German representative at the Versailles Peace Conference, and later Finance Minister. His involvement at Versailles and in the Republic made him a target of rightist violence. He was murdered in 1922. Maximilian Harden, the journalist and critic, was also severely beaten in 1922.

53. Tucholsky’s estimate of 49 deaths is low. Other sources list as many as 156 dead. Perhaps Tucholsky was limiting his totals to Berlin. See also Wette, Noske, 308.
Tucholsky, Noske was worse than the old militarists because Noske had betrayed his original cause and the Germans who had believed in this cause.

The harsh criticism of a specific person which Tucholsky directed towards Noske is significant because of its constant and barrage-like nature. Tucholsky attacked Noske often during Noske’s tenure as Defense Minister. In Noske, he saw the governmental representative of militaristic values. That these values had influenced a Social Democratic minister was for Tucholsky a sign of their pervasiveness and power. The problem of the role of the military was very real. Tucholsky was not making it up to sell copies of the Weltbühne. The violence in the streets, the free roaming of the Free Corps, the creation of the Stab-in-the-Back Legend, and the ongoing worship of the Generals Ludendorff and Hindenburg were for Tucholsky demonstrations of the power and influence of militaristic values. These values threatened Germany’s future and world peace. Due to this threat, Tucholsky engaged in his criticism and satire, in the hope of showing his fellow Germans the real danger posed to them because of their adulation of militaristic values.

Kurt Tucholsky was far from an objective observer. He clearly desired an authentic Republic and free society, with a new people’s militia and new educational forms to instruct the new generations of Germans in the superiority of republican values. Tucholsky targeted individuals for criticism to effectively highlight the real problems Germany was facing. Tucholsky did not have all the answers, and he knew it. He stayed away from specific solutions, perhaps because he believed the establishment of a real republic would itself determine solutions through debate and dialogue. He instead strove to focus on the factors inhibiting the implementation of a true republic and influence those with the capability to create changes in the system to step for-
ward and do it. He sought through satire and criticism to point out the absurdities of the old system and its restrictions on individual freedoms and Germany's development.

That Tucholsky wrote so much in the first years of the Republic can be seen as a commitment by him to inspire those capable to undertake the necessary actions to change the system. Unfortunately, few were willing to listen to his voice of inspiration. Further, Tucholsky did not have a large readership. Leading Social Democrats, certainly aware of his writings, could have been repulsed by Tucholsky's intellectual status. Other politicians and Social Democrats as well were simply interested in acquiring and maintaining political power. That meant maintaining order and reviving a ravaged economy. They believed they did not have the option of experimenting with new ideas beyond those implemented in the creation of the Republic. These beliefs can neither be confirmed nor rejected in this paper. What can be discerned is the fact that Tucholsky did not stray far off the practical line and never out of the political sphere. He was not of the earlier intellectual tradition of focusing on a special field and ignoring the political realm. The demands he expressed in his writings were pragmatic and viable. They required, however, courage and political will. Unfortunately, this will was lacking among the responsible leaders of the Republic, foremost among those of the SPD. Tucholsky's criticism was valid and cannot be dismissed as hopeless idealism. He had a voice which was heard, but unfortunately not heeded.
Bibliography


