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**ARNOLD BRECHT (1884–1977):  
DEMOCRATIC CIVIL SERVANT AND POLITICAL SCHOLAR  
IN BERLIN AND NEW YORK**

Book presentation, Berlin, February 21, 2007. Co-sponsored by the GHI and the Herbert and Elsbeth Weichmann Foundation (Hamburg). Conveners: Claus-Dieter Krohn (Hamburg) and Corinna Unger (GHI). Participants: Egon Bahr (Bundesminister a.D.) and Brigitte Zypries (Bundesministerin der Justiz).

The GHI presented one of its most recent publications, a collection of articles on Arnold Brecht edited by Claus-Dieter Krohn and Corinna Unger, at the *Landesvertretung* Hamburg in Berlin this February. More than 120 guests attended the event, and the Franz Steiner Verlag displayed copies of the *Transatlantische Historische Studien* it publishes in cooperation with the GHI.

Brecht, a high-ranking civil servant in Weimar's federal and Prussian administrations, had to leave Germany in 1933 for his defense of democracy against the Nazis. He became a highly acclaimed professor of political science at the New School for Social Research in New York, wrote a prize-winning book on political theory, and advised the U.S. administration on questions concerning Germany during World War II. After the end of the war, he traveled regularly to Germany to participate in its rebuilding and democratization. Having acquired American citizenship, he did not re-migrate to Germany, but he engaged intellectually in the "German cause" by offering advice to West German politicians on both German and European unification.

For a long time after his death, Brecht's name as well as his intellectual and administrative achievements had been forgotten. Thirty years later, Brecht's legacy is being revived, thanks, among others, to Federal Minister of Justice Brigitte Zypries. At the Berlin book presentation, Zypries recognized the importance of Brecht's far-reaching reform projects during the Weimar Republic and honored his intellectual and personal integrity as one of the few democratic civil servants of the Weimar era. Egon Bahr, a central protagonist of the SPD's *Ostpolitik*, appreciated Brecht's engagement to help solve the "German question" by initiating talks with the GDR and embracing détente. He argued that Chancellor Adenauer had missed the opportunity to recruit Brecht as head of the chancellery, a position he would have filled perfectly.

*Corinna R. Unger*

Democracy requires a universalistic political belief system in the sense that it legitimates different ideologies. And it might be assumed that religious value systems which are more universalistic in the sense of placing less stress on being the only true church will be more compatible with democracy than those which assume that they have the only truth. To underscore this notion, Lipset concludes that "Catholics may accept the assumptions of political democracy, but never those of religious tolerance," adding that "where the conflict between religion and irreligion is viewed as salient by Catholics or other believers in a one true church, then a real dilemma exists for the democratic process" (1959: 95).