

Title: The Tangled Web: The Personal and Public Lies of Albert Speer

Hist133B, Winter 2016, Source Exploration, By Samuel Fall:

Albert Speer, "On Joining the Nazi Movement in 1931, 1969,"

Document 8, from *The Nazi State and German Society* – Robert Moeller

The source selected was Albert Speer, "On Joining the Nazi Movement in 1931." Speer was born in Mannheim Germany, in 1905, to an upper middle class family (Forsgren, 2012, 8). He died on September 1, 1981 at St. Mary's Hospital in London. This source is an excerpt taken from Speer's memoir, *Inside the Third Reich*, which was published in 1969, after he was released from Spandau prison. The excerpt of Speer's memoir, included in Moeller's book, was intended to develop issues surrounding National Socialism such as citizenship, democracy, civil liberties, authoritarianism, and national security, which are all relevant in today's world. Moeller's book seeks to bring these issues to life by providing easily accessible primary sources that allow college-level students to do the work of real historians by analyzing the original documents. I was not able to determine directly where or if Speer's original memoir papers from Spandau were being kept. The following searches on Google failed to identify an organization holding his original Spandau papers: "where are albert speer's original papers," "albert speer spandau original papers." However, many of Speer's personal and Spandau papers are archived in the Bundesarchiv (Federal Archives) in Koblenz Germany. The memoir papers are likely among them. There was no full text copy of "*Inside the Third Reich*" by Albert Speer, available for download at Google Books, but I was able to check the book out of the UCSB's Davidson Library DD247.S63 A313 1970.

From 1949 to 1969, Speer served a 20 year sentence at Spandau prison for war crimes in connection with his role as armaments minister in the Nazi regime. Speer wrote this memoir on scraps of paper, which were smuggled out of the prison and kept by his closest friend Rudolf Wolters, until Speer's release in 1969 (R.J. Stillman 2000, 24), (Wikipedia 2016, 3.2.2). Originally intended as an explanation for his children, Speer's memoir became a best-selling book (Speer 1970, xiii). Speer's memoir covers his early life, joining the Nazi party, architectural work under Hitler, the start of WWII, Speer's appointment as armaments minister, and finally Germany losing the war. Of Speer's joining the National Socialist German Workers Party (NSDAP) or Nazi Party, Speer said he "took no notice" of Adolf Hitler when Speer was in college; instead he "was studying far into the night" (Forsgren 2012, 9). By the age of 23, Speer was teaching as an assistant professor at the Institute of Technology in Berlin-Charlottenburg (Forsgren 2012, 8). In December of 1930, his students persuaded him to attend a beer hall rally at Neue Welt, where Hitler was to speak (Schmidt 1984, 30). *Der Angriff*, a Nazi gazette published by Gauleiter Goebbels in Berlin, announced Hitler's speech in advance and resulted in thousands attending the rally (Schmidt 1984, 30). Speer was certainly dazzled by Hitler's oratory skills, but Speer also highlights a weakness in German education of the time, which left him, and many other young Germans, not conditioned to think critically on political matters (Speer 1970, 8). Hitler spoke that night about heroism and national unity (Schmidt 1984, 31). "[H]e presented the Volk, the Fatherland, and the

German victory as ideals to strive for, the audience burst into tempestuous applause” (Schmidt 1984, 31). After Hitler's speech that night, Speer went to be alone and order his thoughts. A few weeks later, Speer attended a speech by Goebbels at the Sportpalast, which Speer recounts actually repelled him (Speer 1970, 17). Nevertheless, in the end, Speer chose to follow Hitler over any other factor, and joined The Nazi Party in January of 1931 (Speer 1970, 18).

Since the end of WWII, Albert Speer has been a highly controversial figure. Many Germans, including his associate and close friend Rudolf Wolters, blame Speer for apologizing too much: “[Y]our accusations against your former colleagues (Göring, Goebbels, Bormann, etc.) who, being dead, cannot defend themselves are agony to me ... I hope and think that the day will come when you will no longer find it necessary to confess your guilt to all and sundry in order to persuade yourself of your virtue,” (Wikipedia 2016, 3.2.2). Yet, while Speer accepted collective responsibility for his part in the Nazi regime, and for specific immoral acts he committed, such as using slave labor, he claims that he did not directly know of the mass murder of the Jews (Niewyk 1996, 121). Many historians such as biographers Gitta Sereny and Joachim Fest, author Simon Wiesenthal, and social psychologist Erich Fromm have accepted that Speer was sincere in his contrition (Van der Vat 1997, 2). On the other hand, historians such as Matthias Schmidt who wrote the book *Albert Speer: The End of a Myth*, have found evidence in a diary called the *Chronik*, kept by Speer’s close friend Rudolf Wolters, which shows that Speer ordered the clearing of thousands of Jewish owned flats in Berlin (Schmidt 1984, 184). Another unofficial Speer biographer was Dan van der Vat, who wrote *The Good Nazi: The Life And Lies Of Albert Speer*. Van der Vat believes that Speer was fully aware of the Holocaust, and that his claims of ignorance were merely self-serving lies (Van der Vat 1997, 2). Lastly, historian and Harvard Professor Erich Goldhagen found evidence that Speer probably knew directly after all. In October of 1943, Speer attended a conference in Posen Poland where Heinrich Himmler gave a speech stating that Jews were being exterminated and appears to address Speer directly in the audio recording of the speech (Youtube: Albert Speer 2014, 32:51). Speer himself claims that he left the conference before Himmler’s speech (Youtube: Albert Speer 2014, 33:00). Gitta Sereny believes, based on research in psychology, that Speer blocked what he could not bear to acknowledge (Youtube: Albert Speer 2014, 35:49). While the Posen evidence is not absolute, since there is no positive proof that places him in the audience (such as his voice on the recording), Sereny and most others believed, from that day on, Speer must have known (Youtube: Albert Speer 2014, 33:00).

In today’s high-tech world, Speer is one of the most relevant and cautionary lessons of Nazi Germany. He was a well educated, intelligent, talented, and industrious technical professional who claims to have persuaded himself that his professional work was apolitical and non moral, since he was just a technician (Forsgren 2012, 12). This idea has become known as the fallacy of technical neutrality. Whether or not Speer knew of the Holocaust at the time, his memoirs, writings, and interviews have helped frame the debate on the ethics of technical professionals (Forsgren 2012, 12). As a result, Albert Speer has become a touchstone for the topic of modern engineering ethics.

Annotated Bibliography Entries:

Speer, Albert, and Richard Winston trans., and Clara Winston trans. *Inside the Third Reich*. New York: Macmillan Company, 1970

This book is Albert Speer's memoir, written while he was in Spandau prison. Intended as an explanation for his children, it was published in 1969 and became a bestseller. According to Melvyl/worldcat there was 267 editions of Speer's memoirs published between 1969 and 2013. The memoir has been published in 20 languages including German, English, Dutch, French, Czech, Russian, Spanish, Danish, Estonian, Norwegian, Japanese, Romanian, Italian, Hungarian, Polish, Slovenian, Chinese, Croatian, Serbian, and Galician. Also, Melvyl states that 1,690 libraries worldwide hold a copy of the book. I was able to check it out at UCSB's Davidson Library call number DD247. S63 A313 1970.

Hughes, Thomas Parke. 1971. Review of *Inside the Third Reich: Memoirs*. *The Business History Review* 45 (3): 415–18. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3113694>.

Professor Hughes, of Southern Methodist University wrote this book review of *Inside the Third Reich* in Autumn of 1971. Hughes says the following about Speer's character: "[n]eedless to say, the charm and instincts were fired by inexhaustible ambition." Hughes also points out that Speer's claim of being apolitical is false since in his memoirs Speer talks of thwarting many power grabs by Bormann, Goering, Himmler, Goebbels, and other party bosses. I interpret Hughes' comments to mean he is skeptical of Speer's contrition. Hughes focuses on the historical aspects of the memoir. Hughes appears to be willing to accept at face value Speer's analysis of war production and Reich policy. In these areas, Hughes believes that Speer's memoir has clarified a few things, such as the way Speer functioned as an intermediary between the industrialists and Hitler. Hitler had been under pressure from old line National Socialists since 1933, who demanded an economic revolution to match the political one. Speer was able to use his relationship with Hitler to maintain these industrialists' independence and loyalty, which enabled higher war production.

John H. E. Fried. 1971. Review of *Inside the Third Reich*. *The American Political Science Review* 65 (2). [American Political Science Association, Cambridge University Press]: 568–70. doi:10.2307/1954513.

From JSTOR, I found John Fried's book review of *Inside the Third Reich*, he categorically states that he does not believe Speer's claim of contrition. Rather, Fried says Speer attempts to "seduce the reader by presenting himself simultaneously as a repentant sinner and, despite all, lovable rascal." Fried wrote this review in June of 1971.

Burdick, Charles. 1971. Review of *Inside the Third Reich Memoirs*. *Military Affairs* 35(1): 38–38. doi:10.2307/1984175.

From JSTOR, I found the following book review for Albert Speer's *Inside the Third Reich* memoirs. Professor Burdick, of San Jose State College wrote this book review of *Inside the Third Reich* in February of 1971. Burdick's opinion of Albert Speer is very positive; who he says "seeks no justification, no excuses, no scapegoat."

Schmidt, Matthias. *Albert Speer: The End of a Myth*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984

Schmidt confirms that Speer did attend the beer hall rally in Berlin, as related in the excerpt published by Moeller, although it was in December, not November as Speer claimed. The announcement of the speech was published before hand in *Der Angriff* on December 2, 3; which was a Berlin gazette controlled by Goebbels. I could not find the full text on Google Books or eBook Collection (EBSCOhost), but I was able to check the book out from UCSB's Davidson Library call number DD247.S63 S3513 1984.

Sereny, Gitta. *Albert Speer: His Battle with Truth*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1995

In her book, Sereny confirms Speer's account of attending the Berlin rally to hear Hitler, in 1930. In an interview, Speer's wife Margret Speer recounts that she was worried about Speer, when he didn't come home until late that night, because there had been two SA men killed in a demonstration the previous day (pp82). This supports part of Speer's story about going to think after the meeting, as well as his account that the meeting opened with the report of two SA men being killed. Speer states that it was due to this speech that he became convinced, at the time, that Hitler was "a human being; I mean with that, I felt he cared."

Niewyk, Donald L.. 1996. *German Politics & Society* 14 (3 (40)). Berghahn Books: 121–23. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23736375>. . accessed January/24/2016.

This is a book review of Gitta Sereny's book *Albert Speer: His Battle With Truth*. Niewyk states that Sereny confirmed many of the suspicions of Schmidt, Goldhagen, Barraclough, and other that Speer must have known about the Holocaust at the time. "And yet, she came away liking the man, convinced that he suffered deeply from his distortions of the truth."

Van Der Vat, Dan. *The Good Nazi: The Life and Lies of Albert Speer*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1997

An unofficial biographer of Speer, Dan van der Vat wrote *The Good Nazi: The Life And Lies Of Albert Speer*. Van der Vat, confirms Moeller's account that Speer attended Hitler's speech at the Neue Welt beer hall at Hasenheide. Hitler made the audience wait before entering, which was a common strategy to increase their tension. During this wait, a student leader warmed the crowd up with a report of the alleged killing of two SA men by Communists. Finally, Hitler came in and spoke to the crowd of mostly students "calmly and reasonably." He played on their idealism and traditional national values. He blamed corrupt politicians and ended to a standing ovation (pp 38). Van der Vat believes that Speer was fully aware of the Holocaust and that his claims of ignorance are merely self-serving lies. His book is one of the only biographies of Speer that had no editorial influence from Speer himself.

Stillman II, Richard J., and Larry Luton. "Distant Mirrors: Eight Recent Exemplary Models." *Public Administration Review* 61, no. 2 (March 2001): 247-253. *Business Source Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed February 15, 2016).

This article deals with examples of public administration. Stillman tries to use historical exemplary models to argue for normative values in public administrative decision making. Albert Speer is used as a cautionary tale of how complex and self-deceived decision making can get.

"Writer revealed inner workings of the Nazis." *Courier Mail, The (Brisbane)* (October 2006): Newspaper Source, EBSCOhost (accessed February 14, 2016).

I was not able to find Newspaper Sources at EBSCOhost for the key words "Inside the Third Reich." However, I found 136 results for "Albert Speer" that had full text. I further refined this search by adding the term "memoir," which gave 5 results. The EBSCOhost results did not include any book review. This article was an obituary for Journalist and historian Joachim Fest. Fest was Albert Speer's editor for both his memoirs *Inside the Third Reich* and his later book *Spandau: The Secret Diaries*. The obituary appeared in The Courier-Mail in Brisbane Australia.

Moeller, Robert G. *The Nazi State and German Society*. Bedford/St. Martin's, 2010 Moorhouse, Roger. "Germania." *History Today* 62, no. 3 (March 2012): 20-25. Historical Abstracts, EBSCOhost (accessed January 24, 2016).

This book is a collection of short primary sources on National Socialism, and is popular with college history professors for writing assignments.

Forsgren, Roger. "The Architecture Of Evil." *Current* no. 547 (November 2012): 7-13. Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost (accessed January 24, 2016).

According to Forsgren, Speer's memoirs, writings, and interviews have helped frame the debate on the ethics of technical professionals, and has become a touchstone for the topic of modern engineering ethics.

***Albert Speer: The Nazi who said Sorry*. Youtube; From BBC Arts and Entertainment Network Co-Production, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AtHEuU50S8M> (accessed February 13, 2016).**

This was a 2014 BBC documentary I found on YouTube by searching for "Albert Speer." It presented a basically positive image of Speer as wrong, deluded, but contrite.

***Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Rudolf Wolters," (accessed February 13, 2016), <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RudolfWolters>**

Rudolf Wolters was a longtime associate of Albert Speer. The two knew each other in college and later Wolters worked under Speer in the Nazi regime. Wolters became Speer's link with the outside world during his sentence in Spandau, but the two had a falling out after Speer was released.