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**“Aggressive Anti-Semitism” in France and Germany – the Life of Theodor Wolff between Monarchy and Nazi-Terror<sup>1</sup>**

Anti-Semitism – it is a topic that has been discussed, analyzed and studied from every angle possible, especially in the aftermath of the National Socialist dictatorship in Germany of 1933-1945. However, for many people anti-Semitism seems to be a phenomenon limited to that period in history. They disregard the fact that it has been around for much longer than that, for more than a thousand years as a matter of fact, and continues to spread throughout the world today, even in a slightly more radical form.

Yet, people are correct in their thinking when they single out the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a particular aggressive era of anti-Semitism. There was a considerable change that took place at the turn of the century regarding the attitude towards the Jewish population in Europe. This is the point in time that I want to examine more closely in tonight’s lecture: the emergence of “aggressive anti-Semitism” in France and Germany that developed around 1900, as observed and analyzed from the perspective of Theodor Wolff.

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<sup>1</sup> Lecture given at Saint Leo University, Florida, USA on September 15, 2010; this version has been slightly modified.

Before I will introduce this remarkable man to you in more detail though, I would like to concentrate first on the term “aggressive anti-Semitism”.

As the word implies, there is a difference between what we would consider a so-called “traditional” anti-Semitism and its aggressive form, which began to appear at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Hostility toward the Jewish religion can be found frequently in different phases throughout history; however, up to 1900, it seemed to be fueled by religious motives rather than anything else. As the 19<sup>th</sup> century came to its close, the situation was ambivalent. Anti-Semitic groups in Germany lost a great deal of their political influence. During the 1890s, anti-Semitic minded parties had been defeated in the elections for the Reichstag.

Yet, upon entering the twentieth century, anti-Semitism became much more radical, and turned into a politically, socially and culturally motivated hatred against the Jewish people. It created an ideology with strong racist, nationalist and anti-socialist components, thus being able to increase its effectiveness in all areas of daily life. The anti-Semitic movement was further supported by a large immigration of Jews from the east. Yet, it was not so much the eastern, poorly assimilated, so-called “Ghetto-Jews” who stirred hostility among the German population. On the contrary, the vast amount of middle-class businessmen and landholders feared the well-assimilated, native Jewish

member of society who ran their companies successfully.<sup>2</sup> They seemed to be a good enough target to blame for all the misery, and the ongoing identity crisis in the face of modern capitalism that many Germans encountered. The dramatic pinnacle of this anti-Semitic development was reached with the National Socialist dictatorship. Hitler used the Jews as a scapegoat for all evil and fault in the world, and systematically terrorized this part of the population, based on a pseudo-scientific and racist justification.

This drastic development, however, was not obvious to everyone. There were only a limited number of people who recognized this radicalization early and tried to point it out to their fellow citizens. One of those people was Theodor Wolff.

Whereas in Germany, this name might be familiar with some people, I would not expect him to be known widely abroad, especially outside Europe. I would like to give you some background knowledge on this impressive man whose life and work I have been studying for decades, reaching back as far as 1969 when I was still a graduate student in college.

Theodor Wolff was born in 1868 and killed by the National Socialist Regime in 1943. Wolff was a German Jew, a correspondent and later editor-in-chief of the biggest Berlin newspaper, the "Berliner Tageblatt". He became famous through

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<sup>2</sup> Reinhard Rürup, Emanzipation und Antisemitismus. Studien zur „Judenfrage“ der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft (Kritische Studien zur Geschichtswissenschaft, vol. 15), Göttingen 1975.

his editorials in this well-known German daily. Today, one of the most prestigious prizes for journalists in Germany bears his name.<sup>3</sup>

At the age of 26, Wolff was posted to Paris, one of the most important cultural centers in Europe, by his publisher and cousin, Rudolf Mosse (1843-1920).<sup>4</sup> He reported so competently on French politics, economics and society that the circulation of the Berlin paper increased considerably. Wolff's liberal attitude and his profound articles on anti-Semitism in France impressed his readers.

Twelve years later, when Wolff became editor-in-chief in Berlin, he was already a well-known personality.<sup>5</sup> The political right labeled him a "Francophile" and a "Jew" in order to defame him. Wolff, however, regarded himself as a "German of Jewish religion". He rarely attended services in the Synagogue but on the other hand never denied his religious roots, and was determined to continue on the path to assimilation in a hostile environment. Considering this, it is not surprising that his wife was protestant, that his children were baptized in a Protestant church and that they were brought up by a Catholic nanny.

After World War I, Wolff established the "German Democratic Party", together with other left wing, liberal politicians.<sup>6</sup> During the last days of the Weimar

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<sup>3</sup> Bernd Söseman, Theodor Wolff. Ein Leben mit der Zeitung, München (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) 2001.

<sup>4</sup> Elisabeth Kraus, Die Familie Mosse. Deutsch-jüdisches Bürgertum im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert, München 1999.

<sup>5</sup> Wolfram Köhler, Der Chef-Redakteur. Theodor Wolff. Ein Leben in Europa, 1868-1943, Düsseldorf 1978; Jules Huret, Berlin um Neunzehnhundert, Berlin 1997.

<sup>6</sup> Kurt Wegner / Lothar Albertin (ed.), Linkliberalismus in der Weimarer Republik. Die Führungsgremien der Deutschen Demokratischen Partei und der Deutschen Staatspartei 1918-1933 (Quellen zur Geschichte des Parlamentarismus und der politischen Parteien III, vol. 5), Düsseldorf 1980; Bernd Söseman (ed.), Theodor Wolff: Tagebücher, 1914-1919. Der Erste Weltkrieg und die Entstehung der Weimarer Republik in Tagebüchern,

Republic, he found himself fighting both Nazi and Communist ideologies; he wanted neither a dictator of the right nor a tyrant of the left.<sup>7</sup> When Hitler gained power in 1933 and was appointed Chancellor, Wolff was forced to emigrate to France.<sup>8</sup> He found refuge there until he was exposed by the French police and handed over to the Gestapo.<sup>9</sup> He was brought to prison and died of the consequences shortly after in 1943.

I first encountered Wolff's work when I was writing my thesis as a graduate student. The subject was the end of World War I and the Treaty of Versailles in 1919, which gave rise to many heated debates in Germany. I found a well-written and thoughtful article that warned the allies of having the newly formed democratic government sign the treaty. Instead, the writer argued, the Kaiser and his generals, the people who were responsible for the war in the first place, should have signed it. The author of this article was, of course, Theodor Wolff, and this was the first time he had caught my interest. I learned that he was driven away from Germany and died after being imprisoned but

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Leitartikeln und Briefen des Chefredakteurs am "Berliner Tageblatt" und Mitbegründers der "Deutschen Demokratischen Partei" (Deutsche Geschichtsquellen des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts, vol. 54/I+II, ed. of the Historische Kommission, Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften). 2 parts, Boppard/Rh. 1984.

<sup>7</sup> Bernd Sösemann, Das Ende der Weimarer Republik in der Kritik demokratischer Publizisten. Theodor Wolff, Ernst Feder, Julius Elbau, Leopold Schwarzschild (Abhandlungen und Materialien zur Publizistik, vol. 9), Berlin 1976.

<sup>8</sup> Margrit Bröhan (ed.), Theodor Wolff. Erinnerungen, Gedanken im südfranzösischen Exil (Schriften des Bundesarchivs, vol. 41). Boppard / Rhein 1992.

<sup>9</sup> Ruth Fabian / Corinna Coulmas, Die deutsche Emigration in Frankreich nach 1933, München 1978; Herbert E. Tutas, Nationalsozialismus und Exil. Die Politik des Deutschen Reiches gegenüber der deutschen politischen Emigration 1933-1939, München 1979; Varian Fry, Auslieferung auf Verlangen. Die Rettung deutscher Emigranten in Marseille 1940/41, Berlin 1989; Gerhard Hirschfeld / Patrick Marsh (ed.), Kollaboration in Frankreich. Politik, Wirtschaft und Kultur während der nationalsozialistischen Besatzung 1940-1944, Frankfurt / Main 1991.

also that his son Rudolf survived the persecution. I met with Rudolf, who lived in Paris, in 1970. He was very generous and let me work in his apartment for weeks where I was looking through everything his father had left behind. I stayed in Paris for three months but I was bound to return for the following three years to continue my work. With Rudolf, a special friendship formed that developed over the next twenty-two years and went from sharing a fridge, to him being a guest at my wedding. There he gave a speech which he closed by saying that his friendship with me had brought him closer to his homeland again and had restored at least some trust in the German population. Of course, these words were the best assurance to me, that all my work had been worthwhile. Rudolf was also so kind to pass on his entire father's estate to me which included an abundance of manuscripts, letters and diaries. Today, the majority of these historical documents are kept in the German Federal Archives. Theodor Wolff never ceased to impress me and apart from a biography that I have written based on the exclusive documents that were available to me, I have edited and published seven volumes containing his work. They show the determination to write and fight for a Germany that stood for democracy, tolerance, parliamentarianism and freedom.

As you can see from this short biographic overview, Wolff's experiences and observations can show us a great deal of how the "aggressive anti-Semitism" came about in Europe, and in France and Germany in particular.

As a young man of 26, Wolff began his job as a correspondent with great expectations. Paris fascinated him. He admired the cultural and parliamentary life and established close contacts with government officials and politicians. One incident that captured his attention the most was the Dreyfus-Affaire which appears to be one of the most prominent indicators of a rising aggressive anti-Semitism in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The French captain Alfred Dreyfus, who was Jewish, was arrested in mid-October 1894 on suspicion of espionage for the German government.<sup>10</sup> A piece of paper found in a trash can of the German ambassador was used as evidence against him.<sup>11</sup> Dreyfus appeared in front of a secret military court and was convicted. Opinions in France split into two camps: the followers of Dreyfus and the anti-Dreyfus groups which in turn caused considerable unrest, including street fights in Paris and a number of other places in France. After a long-lasting controversy, Dreyfus was pardoned by the French president in order to calm public opinion.

Wolff was one of the few foreign journalists who were admitted to all court proceedings and trials. His position was unique. Therefore, he and his newspaper were the main target for the growing anti-Semitic agitation, accusing him of being “typically Jewish”. This was not fair to Wolff who was not prejudiced towards the case due to his religious roots. He considered Dreyfus

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<sup>10</sup> Joseph Reinach, *Histoire de l’Affaire Dreyfus*, 7 vol., 1901-1911 ; Barbara Tuchman, *The Proud Tower*, New York 1966.

<sup>11</sup> Ernst-Otto Czempel, *Das deutsche Dreyfus-Geheimnis*, München 1966; Thomas Sparr, *Fremdbild und Selbstbild. Dreyfus in Deutschland*, in: *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* 289, December 10, 1994.

not only of importance as a member of the Jewish religion but also as a part of France's and Germany's privileged social class, the military elite. Consequently, Wolff never idealized the captain during the trial – he battled on behalf of the innocent victim rather than of the individual, whom he described as “a climber of the worst kind. He tries to please those above him, while treating his subordinates without respect”.<sup>12</sup> The trial demonstrated to Wolff that anti-Semitism in France was “more than elsewhere a slogan in which the dislike of a whole caste, of a whole society, beyond the boundaries of a religious community, finds its expression”.<sup>13</sup>

In Germany, France and Britain, leading newspapers did not share Wolff's insightful criticism of the French government's dealing with the affair. In his article “Anti-Semitism in France”<sup>14</sup> Wolff wrote: „It is clear that anti-Semitism in France attempts to exploit the Dreyfus-Affair for its own benefits with a certain amount of cunning. In order to be successful, the attitude was and always has been chauvinistic. The lowest instincts in the population were brought into play and, as if touched by a magic wand, the shouting arose in the slums of French towns and suburbs: “Long live the Army” coupled with the even louder cry “Death to the Jews, raid the Jews”. Hatred was also expressed quite frequently

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<sup>12</sup> Berliner Tageblatt, 3.6.1899 (Evening edition).

<sup>13</sup> Berliner Tageblatt, 15.1.1898 (Evening edition).

<sup>14</sup> Berliner Tageblatt, 21. 2.1898.

in the German press – even the Catholic daily, “Germania”, intensified its anti-Semitic statements.

Wolff’s critical attitude was shared by the popular author, Emile Zola (1840-1902), who published the case in an open letter to the president of the country, entitled “J’accuse”.<sup>15</sup> He accused the general staff and the court of distortion of the law. “I know of no greater offence against society [...]. My action is a revolutionary step to facilitate a faster recognition of truth and justice. I passionately desire to enlighten and speak in the name of all humans who have suffered much and have a right to the pursuit of happiness.” Zola’s text appeared very quickly in more than 300,000 editions all over France and there were additional posters and further publicity in other countries. The nationalist French press was furious. Postcards and caricatures were made to ridicule the Jews. Publicists and polemic speakers encouraged violence.

In order to oppose the increasingly aggressive attitude toward the Jewish connotation around him, Wolff wished to promote the acceptance of middle-class-liberal values such as rationality and a heightened sense of responsibility. Despite his sharp criticism in his commentaries, he expressed his concern in an appealing tone. “On one hand, anti-Semitism is rejected, [by our politicians], and on the other hand, there is only praise for it. We have taken little notice of this trick, (saying one thing and meaning another), since we are used to it. We

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<sup>15</sup> „J’accuse...! Lettre au président de la republique“ (Felix Faure), in : L’Aurore 87, 13. Jan. 1898, p. 1.

observe similar things on a daily basis because every minister is forced to hide behind such two-faced, untrue statements".<sup>16</sup> It was around the turn of the century that these devious political methods promised success.

Wolff's experiences in France had a profound influence on his professional and political life. They sharpened his judgment concerning political parties as well as society in general. Eventually, the fierce racism he was observing in France created in him a new self-recognition for his Jewish origins. Even meeting Theodor Herzl<sup>17</sup> (1860-1904) in Paris, the father of political Zionism, did not cause Wolff to concern himself with topics such as "Jewry", "anti-Semitism" or "Zionism" in public. Personal threats did not change his mind. Campaigning by the nationalists against Jewish newspapers and their prominent editors started long before 1914.<sup>18</sup> The protests reached their peak during the First World War. The Weimar Republic was unable to stop the anti-Semitic advancement.<sup>19</sup> A "black list" circulated in December 1919, containing Wolff's name as well. He

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<sup>16</sup> Berliner Tageblatt, 4.5.1914.

<sup>17</sup> Herzl lived in Paris during the Dreyfus-affaire; in 1895 he finished his book "Der Judenstaat"; Gustav Gabriel Cohen, Die Judenfrage und die Zukunft, Hamburg 1896.

<sup>18</sup> Anonymous, Neu-Palästina oder Das verjudete Deutschland. Ein milder Beitrag zur Kenntnis der Judenherrschaft im sog. „Deutschen“ Reiche. Von einem Konservativen, Berlin (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) Berlin 1879; Anonymous (i.e.: Hermann Nordmann), Die Juden und der deutsche Staat (10<sup>th</sup> edition), Berlin 1879; K. J. Rohan, Eine Ansicht über die Ursachen der Judenfrage und über die Mittel zur Lösung derselben, Leipzig 1882; H.V. Welcker, Die nationalen und sozialen Aufgaben des Antisemitismus, Ulm 1882; Carl Paasch, Eine jüdisch-deutsche Gesandtschaft und ihre Helfer. Geheimes Judenthum, Nebenregierungen und jüdische Weltherrschaft, 2 parts in 1 vol., Leipzig 1891; A. Fern, Die jüdische Moral und das Blut-Mysterium, Berlin 1893; Georg Stille, Der Kampf gegen das Judenthum (7<sup>th</sup> edition; popular version), Leipzig 1898.

<sup>19</sup> Kurt Sontheimer, Antidemokratisches Denken in der Weimarer Republik. Die politischen Ideen des deutschen Nationalismus zwischen 1918 und 1933, München (3<sup>rd</sup> edition) 1992; Werner Bergmann / Juliane Wetzel (ed.), „Der Miterlebende weiß nichts“. Alltagsantisemitismus als zeitgenössische Erfahrung und spätere Erinnerung (1919-1933), in: Wolfgang Benz, Jüdisches Leben in der Weimarer Republik, Tübingen 1998, p. 173-198; Dirk Walter, Antisemitische Kriminalität und Gewalt. Judenfeindschaft in der Weimarer Republik, Bonn 1999.

also belonged to those potential victims of the Hitler-Putsch in 1923. A National Socialist poster read: “The leading scoundrels of the betrayal of the 9th of November 1918 are, as of today, outlaws. Every German who can locate Ebert, Scheidemann, Oskar Cohn, Paul Levy, Theodor Wolff, [and] Georg Bernhard, their helpers and accomplices, has the duty to deliver them, dead or alive, to the authorities.”<sup>20</sup>

A hotly debated topic during the Weimar Republic was also the immigration of the “Eastern Jews”.<sup>21</sup> Wolff and many others were afraid that the carefully achieved assimilation of the Jewish population in Germany was not yet stable enough and therefore might be threatened by these new immigrants. In 1925, approximately 80% of recent Jewish immigrants were from the East and in 1933, their numbers had risen to nearly 90% - about half of them were from Poland. They settled mostly in the Ruhrgebiet, in central Germany and in Berlin. The “Eastern Jew” was considered the exact opposite of the other stereotyped assimilated “Jew”. He was supposed to be lazy, dirty, sickly, inclined to criminality and fraud. Around 1920, proposals circulated which suggested concentrating them in camps. During this time, Bavaria deported a number of “Eastern Jews”. There was no public protest from any Jewish community. The

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<sup>20</sup> Vossische Zeitung, 16. November 1923, Evening edition.

<sup>21</sup> Trude Maurer, *Ostjuden in Deutschland 1918-1933* (Hamburger Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Juden, vol. 12), Hamburg 1986.

assimilated Jewish citizens wished to distance themselves from their eastern companions.<sup>22</sup>

In 1933, the assimilated German Jewry was convinced that it had to oppose the “Eastern Jews” and their influence. They believed that they were running a risk of returning to the Middle Ages, in which a traditional anti-Jewish attitude was dominant. It was not a sign of resignation but realism when Wolff concludes: “It does not matter how or whether the world might change, the Jewish problem will always remain. After the war there will, however, appear a problem that will prove much more difficult to solve – it is the German problem [...]. The German problem, the one I am referring to, is an unavoidable moral problem.”<sup>23</sup>

During his exile in France in 1942/43, Wolff wrote a paper called “The Jews”. It was never published but was among the documents that were given to me by his son Rudolf. In his writings, Wolff recalls reading the Bible and being reminded of the warmth of his Jewish family life. “I can still perceive its closeness [...] and its meals, whether orthodox or not. I have not found in many

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<sup>22</sup> See the new studies in Hans Otto Horch (ed.), *Positionierung und Selbstbehauptung. Debatten über den ersten Zionistenkongreß, die „Ostjudenfrage“ und den Ersten Weltkrieg in der deutsch-jüdischen Presse (Conditio Judaica, vol. 45)*, Tübingen 2003: These articles derive from a German project devoted to the study of discourses in German Jewish journals and the tensions they reflect between acculturation, Antisemitism, and the quest for Jewish identity. The undertaking was initially inspired by the conviction that an analysis of Jewish periodicals is an especially promising way of reconstructing essential and existential issues concerning Jewish minorities in German-speaking countries on all important political and cultural fronts, without ignoring the immediacy of the debates in favour of abstract theories. Central are the debates on the First Zionists’ Conference in Basel and the issue of the „Eastern Jews“ in WW I.“

<sup>23</sup> Wolff, Theodor: *Die Juden*, p. 264.

other houses of Worship a similar atmosphere as I remember from my young years, when the Torah was tenderly carried, like a sweetheart, decorated and crowned with silver bells; and the cantor, with his deep voice sang the festive melodies [...]. When a religious couple behind the windows of a nearby apartment lights the Sabbath candles, even though they are not my candles, their light is warm.”<sup>24</sup> This manuscript was the first part of a planned trilogy. The two unwritten volumes were supposed to be entitled “The French” and “The Germans”. Wolff was searching for a new beginning in the ruins of the “symbiosis of the Jews and the Germans”.<sup>25</sup> At this point, he considered the road via Zionism as a dead end and did not support the variants of Herzl’s proposals of a self-governed Jewish homeland.<sup>26</sup>

On the contrary, assimilation for him was a “conditio sine qua non”. Western European Zionists were not less assimilated than Wolff himself. He did not accept Zionism as the perfect solution since it involved a separation from Germany. Wolff wrote: “Zionism invites with open arms to Palestine. Its idealistic goal is uncontested and what it has already achieved will outlive the simplistic, negative and critical carping [...]. None of these Jews had any notion that they would be expelled from their homeland or that they would be

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<sup>24</sup> First published by Bernd Söseman in a documentation under the title „Theodor Wolff, Die ‘Juden’. Ein Dokument aus dem Exil 1942/43”, Königstein / Taunus 1984 , p. 37.

<sup>25</sup> Wolff studied the Opus magnum of Heinrich Graetz, Geschichte der Juden von den ältesten Zeiten bis auf die Gegenwart, 11 vol., Leipzig 1861-1876.

<sup>26</sup> Walter Laqueur, A History of Zionism, London 1972.

banned to the darkness of the Ghetto or that they would be handed over to the executioner and be forced to sew the yellow star onto their clothes". The liberal Jew was German, Austrian, Czech, French; he neither wanted to know or to hear anything about a Jewish nation or a Jewish state. Zionism intended to separate the Jew from Western culture and to return him to Jerusalem.

Wolff hoped that with his paper "The Jews" he might be able to open up the path to emancipation and assimilation again after it had been blocked by Anti-Semitic National Socialists. He thought that the surviving Jews would be able to return and work in a free Germany. His vision was, at that point, reflected by the Weimar democracy.<sup>27</sup> The Weimar Constitution of 1919 secured for the first time freedom and equal rights for all citizens.

Towards the end of 1929, Wolff stated that "despite the hopeless political prospects of Zionism, one had to appreciate the importance of the development of a colonial attitude and of the idealism for the cause".<sup>28</sup> But he remained a skeptic. A Zionist state in any form could be at best only a partial solution.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Hendryk K. Broder, *Die Opfer der Opfer. Wider die tragische Leidenschaft vieler Juden der "zweiten Generation" – in Israel und anderenorts – die Leiden ihrer Eltern und Großeltern nachzuleben*, in: *Die Zeit* 29, July 14, 1989. Salomon Korn, member of the „Zentralrat“, remarked critically recently: „How German is it supposed to be?“ in: *Die Zeit* 24, May 7, 2003: "The demonstrative gesture [...] as Jew [...] to wish not to be excluded from the community of the Germans seems rather obtrusive, yes, embarrassing". And now in a global perspective after the American war against the Iraq: Henning Ritter, *Freundfeinde. Kritik der zionistischen Vernunft: Israel und der Antisemitismus*, in: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* 200, August 29, 2003, p. 33.

<sup>28</sup> Ernst Feder, „Heute sprach ich mit...“. *Tagebücher eines Berliner Publizisten, 1926-1932*, ed. by Cécile Lowenthal-Hensel and Arnold Paucker, Stuttgart 1971, p. 229.

<sup>29</sup> Theodor Wolff: *Die Juden*, p. 206.

The manuscript “The Jews” became Wolff’s final work – a farewell. He wrote: “I began these observations in 1942 and finished in spring of 1943. There is, perhaps, little meaning and purpose in occupying oneself with the Jewish problem, or all problems of today or tomorrow. But the brightness on the horizon has increased – it is no more as dark as it has been in the darkest days, only a mystical wish that the ideas of justice, freedom and humanity could not be oppressed.”<sup>30</sup>

In conclusion, I want to summarize my thesis with the following points, and also give an outlook where anti-Semitism is headed today.

Firstly, Wolff compared the situation in France with that in Germany. He recognized that anti-Semitic agitation and also Jewish self-criticism were not unique to Germany but also prevalent during the Third Republic in France. The French as well as the Germans regarded themselves in their attitude towards the Jews as representatives of a collective and most of them did not recognize Jews as citizens.

Secondly, Wolff experienced in France, as well as in Germany, that Anti-Semitism could be mobilized for social and political purposes. Not only nationalists and conservatives took advantage of that fact but also groups on the political left as well as communists and socialists. Anti-Semitism became an

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<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*, p. 19.

integral part of various movements. Marxists put the “Jewish spirit” on the same level as Manchester capitalism. Ideas of anti-capitalist Anti-Semitism could even be found among German Social Democrats.<sup>31</sup>

Lastly, Wolff had not one, but rather two bitter experiences – not only did he lose his German citizenship but he also failed to receive complete protection in France. Even in exile, Wolff was convinced that in the end, anti-Semitism would be crushed. As far as he was concerned, this development was neither natural nor ought to be part of the constitution and structure of the world.

If we reflect on the 20<sup>th</sup> century today, it is difficult to share Wolff’s optimism. Systematic murders driven by anti-Semitic hatred in a number of great wars, and in dictatorial countries such as Germany, the Soviet Union, and nations in Asia and Africa, do not permit us to be very hopeful. We have to be realists and skeptics.

Even after Auschwitz, barbarism still exists as well as a new, somewhat different anti-Semitism that has developed since the founding of Israel. It bears the following characteristics:

This new anti-Semitism is no longer only occupied by right-wing extremists and Neo Nazis but also by radical left-wing anti-Zionists. It applies the Jewish stereotype prematurely to Israel’s politics towards Palestine and labels it

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<sup>31</sup> Rosemarie Leuschen-Seppel, Sozialdemokratie und Antisemitismus im Kaiserreich. Die Auseinandersetzungen der Partei mit den konservativen und völkischen Strömungen des Antisemitismus 1871-1914, Bonn 1978.

“Jewish Politics”. Furthermore, it takes another radical turn by creating new, absurd allegations: it proposes the idea that the Jews were solemnly responsible for their fate and even benefited morally and financially from the Holocaust. Those who support this thesis knowingly reverse the roles of victim and perpetrator.

Sadly, there are also a growing number of anti-Semitic teenagers in Germany, despite an early and informative education at school and frequent visits to the vast amount of memorial sites throughout the country. Judaism is often reduced to the time of the Holocaust, instead of presenting the Jews as bearers of their own culture. A preventive education, however, is hard to establish in a society that consists of many immigrants, since it is difficult to agree on a common recollection of events in history. The United States, for instance, has a long history of multicultural society, longer than that of any European states. I believe we should seize this opportunity and learn from those experiences so that we can apply them to our situation in Germany.

