

Porges, Reingard: Theodor Wolff, the Writer in Exile 1933-1943,
Diss. University of Sydney 2006.

Abstract

This study examines the effect of exile on Theodor Wolff's writings from 1933 to 1943. Wolff, a highly assimilated German Jew and renowned journalist and editor-in-chief of the 'Berliner Tageblatt' from 1906-1933, was one of the most influential cultural and liberal political commentators during World War I and the Weimar Republic. His political life and influence has been extensively researched, whereas his life in exile has not been explored. Enforced sudden exile in 1933 represented a turning point in Wolff's life.

Following the temporal sequence of Wolff's ten years in exile, this study is divided into four chapters, starting with the early exile years from 1933 to 1936, followed by the immediate pre World War II period. The third chapter covers the German invasion and occupation of France in 1940. The last chapter sheds light on the two final years from 1942 to 1943. These four periods reflect his exile experience and gradual decline in living conditions, mood, and fundamental changes in his approach to writing. In exile Wolff devotes his time and effort to historical accounts and fiction – a difficult genre for a publicist and journalistic writer. He also embarks on autobiographical writings and during his final years in exile deals with the Jewish catastrophe unfolding in Nazi controlled Europe, raising issues concerning the so called 'Jewish Problem'.

This study draws attention to the effect exile had on an important German-Jewish writer, who in 1943 fell victim to the Holocaust. Wolff's works, especially his exile writings survived the war and remain relevant today.

The findings of this research provide some insight into a turbulent period in German and European history that drastically changed many lives. It also makes a significant contribution to the study of Theodor Wolff and to exile studies in general.