



Dr. Bernhard Dombek Präsident der Bundesrechtsanwaltskammer, Berlin

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It all started very late. As late as 1995. The Council of the **Tel Aviv Bar** visited the Berlin Bar, of which I was President at the time. A colleague gave a talk about the fate of several very well-known Jewish lawyers after 1933. After this talk, my Israeli colleague **Joel Levi** stood up and asked if we could put together a list, if only a list, of those Jewish lawyers which were excluded from the profession. A list that should at least contain their names and maybe their last known addresses,

as well as – if available – some details about their individual fate. This list would be a sign that these Jewish lawyers were not forgotten. The reply he got was that it was impossible to establish such a list. The files of the Berlin Bar had gone up in flames. He was told that there were only a couple of individual stories that could be traced, and that had already been done.

To me, this was no satisfactory answer and I did not want to leave it at that. Luckily, I found someone who was willing to put together this list:

Simone Ladwig Winters, who also helped set up the exhibition here today, and who I would like to give a very warm welcome. She managed to put together an almost complete list of Jewish lawyers that were persecuted in Berlin after 1933.

The list, however, was only the starting point. It was accompanied by **comprehensive documentation** about how expulsion came about. The Berlin Bar – and I would also like to welcome its Vice-President, Mr. Fiedler – published the list and documentation in a book, entitled “**Anwalt ohne Recht**” (**Lawyers without Rights**). The book led to an **exhibition** which was opened by the Berlin Bar at the Centrum Judaicum in Berlin on 30th November 1998.

When I became **President of The German Federal Bar**, I wanted not only the lawyers in Berlin to remember their Jewish colleagues who had been expelled and killed after 1933. I wanted lawyers **all over Germany** to remember these lawyers without rights.

Many German Regional Bars followed this idea gladly. The exhibition was also on display at the **63rd German Jurists Forum** in Leipzig in 2000 and travelled through many German cities before it reached the Bundestag in 2003. Finally, It was even shown in Israel. I had the great honour to open the exhibition in Jerusalem together with the German Federal Minister of Justice. After Jerusalem, the exhibition travelled also to Tel Aviv and Haifa.

What is **so special** about this exhibition?

It is the **fate of individuals** that makes it so impressive. The respective fate of each individual lawyer is at the centre of this exhibition. When we learn, for example, that about a quarter of all Berlin lawyers of Jewish descent were murdered, we simply acknowledge an abstract figure. It does not cause a moral shock. What causes the shock is the confrontation with someone's personal story.

One particular person's death, one particular fate moves us and therefore it is important that we learn about many people's individual stories, not only about famous lawyers, whose names are well-known to every member of the profession even today. Here we also learn something about the fate of the average lawyer who was not famous at all. Because he should not be forgotten either.

However, this exhibition does **not answer all the questions**:

What was the reaction of non-Jewish lawyers when part of their colleagues were randomly excluded from the profession? We don't know anything about joint action in solidarity against the ban to exercise the profession of lawyer. In 2001 the **Berlin Bar Association** published a comprehensive study about Berlin lawyers between 1933 and 1945, a study which demonstrates the failure of all lawyers' organisations and recalls statements of several non-Jewish lawyers that are so brutal and inhuman that they make our hearts stand still. Apparently, the great majority remained silent. It seems that it at least approved of the extermination of the Jewish colleagues.

And there is another open question:

How is it possible that this exhibition is organised only **60 years** after what has happened, at a time, when there are basically no more witnesses? It is a shame that this question has to **remain unanswered**. There may be attempts to explain and to justify. But I believe it would be embarrassing to quote them here.

However, we are very happy and **content** that The German Federal Bar is able to present this exhibition in New York today.

I am very moved by the fact that I can welcome you here in New York today, because no-one among those who were present when Joel Levi spoke about the list he wished for, would have been able to imagine what this wish turned into.

Not only a list, but a book

And not just one single book. Apart from the Berlin Bar, many other Bars and Associations have remembered their Jewish colleagues and published books.

And the list did not only become books, but also this exhibition.

Finally, let me express my gratitude:

Thank you, **Joel Levi**, for having made this request for a list in 1995. I believe you too can be satisfied with what became of your request. But first of all, this request had to be made, and I thank you for making it.

I would also like to thank **Simone Ladwig-Winters**. She has accompanied The German Federal Bar and the German Jurists Association, starting with the list, then with the book and through to the first exhibitions, up until today. Without her, the non-lawyer, we would not have been able to achieve all this. And with her assistance we want to continue. We have many plans. We are planning another, extended edition of the book. The result of your work which is represented in the book and in the exhibition will surely be also at the heart of the “Museum of the German Legal Profession”, a museum which we have just started to develop.

Let me also thank the Leo Baeck Institute and the Walter Foundation and all those who have helped prepare the exhibition. I thank **all of you** who have come here today not only to show your interest in this exhibition, but also your solidarity - should this be possible after all this time. Your presence proves that you, too, consider what is on display at this exhibition, to be a warning to all lawyers of future generations in Germany.