

Covenant

Walter Gottschalk: A Pioneer of Modern Library Science and His Interactions with Albert Einstein During the Nazi Era

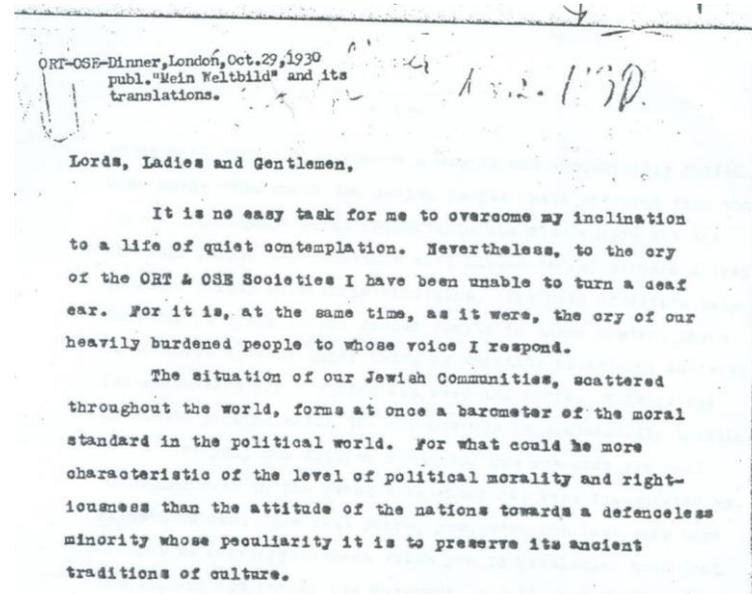
By Arnold Reisman*

Abstract: Walter Gottschalk, founder and director of the Oriental Department at the Prussian State Library in Berlin, was dismissed by the Nazis and forced into retirement in 1935 because of his Jewish heritage. Even with the help of Albert Einstein the only available safe haven to him and his family was Turkey. In 1932 the Turkish government made a command decision to modernize/westernize its higher education and library systems but did not possess the indigenous human resources to accomplish that goal. In 1933 Germany presented Turkey with a window of opportunity and Turkey began to invite intellectuals fleeing the Nazis to help in her social, scientific and cultural westernization process. Walter Gottschalk was one of the invitees. Within Turkey itself Gottschalk is widely acknowledged as having contributed greatly to the organization of her modern system of libraries, document archives, and cadres of librarians and library scientists.

Born in 1891 in Aachen, *Walter Gottschalk* studied orientalism, philosophy, history, and the history of art in both Wurzburg and Berlin, receiving a Ph.D. in 1914. Two years later, he was drafted to serve Germany in World War I and, whether by happenstance or plan, posted to Turkey, Syria, and Palestine. At the war's end, he joined the staff of the Prussian State Library in Berlin as senior librarian for language and history of the Middle East where he made significant contributions by establishing the library's Oriental Department, a fact that is well documented.¹ In addition to organizing the department's reference library and creating a precise catalogue, he was a member of the Ibn-Saad² Commission and co-editor of Ibn-Saad's complete works.³ Although his work was acknowledged with a substantial promotion in 1923, Gottschalk was dismissed from his job because of his Jewish origins and forced into retirement in 1935. For a while he managed to find somework in the field of science, and gave lectures on various topics, such as introduction to Arabic.

At that time, desperate for any help, many Jewish intellectuals in Germany turned to Albert Einstein for assistance in leaving their

hometown and securing positions elsewhere, for it was well known that Einstein was expending a great deal of his time and energy trying to help his brethren whose lives were at risk and who were trying to find a way to safety.⁴



From notes of a speech Einstein delivered on October 29, 1930⁵

In a letter to Albert Einstein⁶ postmarked 1938, Wanda (Mrs.) Gottschalk wrote:

Most esteemed Herr Professor:

The difficult times have given me the courage to approach you with a question.

In 1935 my husband, the archivist and librarian Dr. Walther Gottschalk, born January 29, 1891, in Aachen, had to relinquish his position at the State Library in Berlin, because we are Jews. As people who deeply experience their Judaism and affirm it, who are Jews not because they have to be but because they want to be, we have until now found the strength to bear our lot uprightly and with firm trust in God. But what makes my heart bleed and brings me to write to you today, is the thought that here such a capable Jew as my husband, like one paralyzed and forced into idleness, should let his young life pass by, whereas with a university or library appointment he could once again productively employ all his powers in the fields of science or librarianship.

My husband became well known as a scholar through his book, "The Older Arab Concept of the Vow," and demonstrated his capabilities as a librarian in his "Hand Catalog of the Oriental Department of the State Librarian in Berlin."

Because of my husband's almost unreal modesty, he would never on his own approach an academic institution with a request. Unbeknownst to him, therefore, I entreat you, esteemed Herr Professor, to be so kind as to bring it about that my husband might be invited by some university or library in Eretz [Palestine] or there [the U.S.], so that he might once again find a position suited to his immense knowledge.

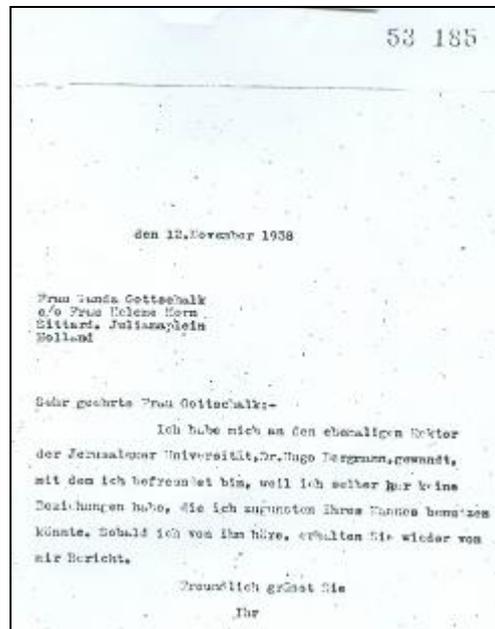
If this should not be at all be possible for you, most honored Professor, could you then advise me as to where I could turn with the same request?

With inexpressible thanks and the greeting of Zion,

Frau Wanda Gottschalk
P.S. Because of the circumstances in Germany I am requesting you to most kindly send your much appreciated response to: Frau Helene Horn, Sittard, Julianapleiu, Holland.

As a response to the above plea for help, Albert Einstein's letter of November 12, 1938, to Frau Wanda Gottschalk in Holland stated:

I have turned to the former President of the [Hebrew] University of Jerusalem, Dr. Hugo Bergmann, who is a friend of mine, as I myself have no connection to help your husband. As soon as I hear from him, you will hear from me.



Letter from Albert Einstein to Wanda Gottschalk, November 12, 1938.⁷

Raising another issue, Einstein continued: "I am committed to regularly supporting my sister-in-law and her husband (Mr. and Mrs. Ludwig Gumbertz in Berlin). I have been

supporting these people via a similar arrangement I have with you. This arrangement runs through June. Under present circumstances, I consider it too dangerous to hand over money to these people ahead of time. If you could hold your money back until then, I would like very much to make the payments the way you have suggested starting July 1. The payments will be \$20 monthly.”⁸ Gottschalk became a conduit for Einstein’s sending money to relatives in Nazi Germany.

Such arrangements were possible until Belgium surrendered to the Nazis on May 28, 1940. In the months leading up to the invasion, Belgium was considered a neutral country and money could flow through it to Germany.

In a letter dated January 18 1940, Einstein thanked Gottschalk for his December 27 letter acknowledging that \$20 was forwarded to his cousin, Frau Suzanne Koch. Einstein then requested that an equivalent amount be delivered to Miss Lina Einstein whose address is given only as “Ulm a Donau, Herbruckerstr.”

By February 1939, remaining in Germany was no longer a viable option for the Gottschalks, so they first went to Holland, then to Belgium to stay with relatives. While in Belgium he found himself in the situation where he had received a job offer but could not get a visa. For Jewish academics in his situation, even these great minds, America was out of reach because of restrictive immigration laws, State Department practices, and widespread antisemitic hiring bias at its universities. Writing on December 17, 1939 from his refuge in Belgium, Gottschalk thanked Einstein for all that he had done and stated: “From the certain sanctuary that my Belgian relations have provided me with such indescribable hospitality, I have been able on my own to pursue my [professional] advancement to the point that I have been offered a professorship in Arabic language and culture at the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati and a librarian's post at the

University of Istanbul. Since the American Consul in Antwerp has, for reasons of formalities, made difficulties with our visas, I'll probably have to decide on Turkey.”⁹

Germany received strategic materials, such as chromium, from Turkey, a neutral country, and was intent upon keeping that relationship. According to Horst Muller, Gottschalk “was sent through the occupied zones [of Europe] to Turkey in a closed train car on the express orders of Joachim [Joseph] Goebbels, Hitler’s Minister of Propaganda,”¹⁰ in 1941. At Istanbul University he worked on library matters and was considered to be an “expert.” This vague title made it possible for him to work on many projects, including the supervision of all the libraries of the various university institutes as well as the development of the Turkish library system.

During the post World War II years, Turkey was experiencing a very problematic economy and a rampant nationalism. In an August 28, 1948 note to biochemist and former Istanbul University colleague Felix Haurowitz, recently resettled at the University of Indiana in Bloomington, Walter Gottschalk discussed the trials and tribulations of budgetary cuts and layoffs in Istanbul.¹¹

*fürchte mir, es wird ihnen nicht
 Dank vom Hause Hitler. Auch
 vom Di. 2 die freundliche
 Dank.
 Sie sind nicht schon längst
 fleißigen Bemühen eines pompösen
 Bibliothek. Wir hingegen haben
 eines grossen Personalabbaus
 Leute erblinden müssen.
 Mit den besten Empfehlungen
 verbleibe ich...*

bookbinding and restoration departments at the various institutes and at universities. Their efforts helped to conserve many of the cultural riches that had accumulated throughout the Ottoman period and preceding it,¹⁶ making such documents and artifacts accessible for future generations¹⁷ and it is to their credit that many Turkish scholars and pupils were trained in their fields of expertise.

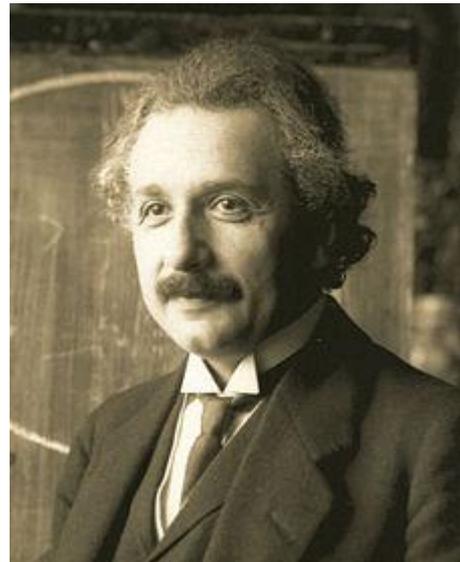
As founder and head of the first Library Science program in Turkey and as a consultant to the Turkish Ministry of Education for over a decade, Gottschalk can rightfully be credited with playing a significant part in the development of Turkey's modern network of libraries and archival systems. From personal experience at several universities in Turkey, this author can attest to the fact that the librarians and information specialists are as well trained and dedicated to duty as any of their counterparts in the USA.

A note of August 28, 1948 from Walter Gottschalk in Istanbul to Felix Haurowitz in Bloomington, Indiana

From 1949 until his retirement in 1954, Gottschalk held the chair of Library Science at Istanbul University. Like some of the other émigrés, he returned to Germany, settling in Frankfurt where he edited the reference book, *Jewry, Fate, Nature and Presence*,¹² for which he was honored with the Federal Service Cross. In 1966, on his seventy-fifth birthday, Gottschalk was designated an honorary member of Frankfurt University, in recognition of his "contributions to scientific books."¹³ Gottschalk's life-time contributions can be found in a "Retrospective" provided by S. Elverfeldt.¹⁴

After Gottschalk's departure from Turkey, the chair in Library Science at Istanbul University was awarded to his assistant, Dr. Rudolf Juchhoff,¹⁵ who held it until 1968, and was then succeeded by Meral Alpay, a Turkish national who had been Dr. Juchhoff's assistant.

Walter Gottschalk and the other senior librarians who immigrated to Turkey were joined by junior colleagues, bookbinders, and restorers who created corresponding



A. Einstein
 Albert Einstein, 1921



Walter Gottschalk, 1921

(Foto: Staatsbibliothek Preußischer
Kulturbesitz Berlin,

Sign.: Portr. Slg./Bibl. Kl./Walter Gottschalk)

About the Author

*Arnold Reisman received his PhD in engineering from UCLA and is a retired professor of operations research from Case Western Reserve University. As an independent scholar he authored Turkey's Modernization: Refugees from Nazism and Atatürk's Vision (Washington, DC: New Academia Publishers, 2006). Two companion books by Reisman, Classical European Music and Opera: The Case of Post-Ottoman Turkey, and Rejection and Acceptance: The Impact of European Culture on Turkey: 1933-1950, are both due out in 2009 (Charleston, SC: BookSurge Publishing, 2009).

NOTES

¹ Walter Gottschalk, *Preussische Staatsbibliothek. Katalog der Handbibliothek der orientalischen Abteilung*. Preussische Staatsbibliothek. (Leipzig: Harassowitz, 1929).

² A Sunni Muslim (born in 168AH/784CE and died in 230AH/845CE), scholar of Islam and an Arabian biographer.

³H. Müller, "German Librarians in Exile in Turkey, 1933-1945," *Libraries & Culture*, Vol. 33, No. 3 (1998), pp. 294-305.

⁴ See Arnold Reisman, "Jewish Refugees from Nazism, Albert Einstein, and the Modernization of Higher Education in Turkey (1933-1945)," *Aleph: Historical Studies in Science & Judaism*, No. 7 (Jerusalem and Bloomington, IN: The Hebrew University of Jerusalem and University of Indiana Press, 2007), pp. 253-81 and Arnold Reisman, "On Albert Einstein's Non-Participation in Harvard University's Tercentenary 1936 Celebrations," forthcoming in *Education History Researcher*.

⁵ Courtesy of Albert Einstein Archives, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Document No. 29 034 -1.

⁶ Albert Einstein Archives, Princeton University, Document No. 53-184. 1 and 2.

⁷ Albert Einstein Archives, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Document 53 185.

⁸ Albert Einstein Archives, Princeton University, Document 55 205.

⁹ Albert Einstein Archives, Princeton University, Document 55 204-1.

¹⁰ S. Elverfeldt, *Zusammenstellung der Lebensdaten und Werke von Walter Gottschalk* (Aachen 1979). Reference to this information was given by the Archiv. *Bibliographia Judaica* in Frankfurt. There are other documented instances of the Nazis obliging the Turkish government's request for individuals whose skills were desperately needed for its modernization effort. One of these was Alfred Kantorowicz, a pioneer in public health and pediatric dentistry who had been incarcerated in Nazi concentration camps for nine months prior to release and a Turkish safe haven. See Arnold Reisman, "Public Health Dentistry Pioneer: Alfred Kantorowicz in Exile from Nazi Rule," *Journal of the*

History of Dentistry, Vol. 55, No. 1 (Spring 2007), pp. 6-16.

¹¹ Felix Haurowitz Archives, Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN.

¹² Franz Bohn, Walter Dirks & Walter Gottschalk, *Judentum, Schicksal, Wesen und Gegenwart*, (Wiesbaden: F. Steiner, 1965).

¹³ As can be seen from Worldcat, several of them went through multiple editions.

¹⁴ See Elverfeldt. This is based on handwritten notes, never previously published, from the Staatsbibliothek Preubischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin.

¹⁵ Dr. Rudolf Juchhoff started work at Bonn University's library after receiving his PhD in 1921. He held many management positions and became a faculty member in Germany in 1949. He joined the Department of Library Science at Istanbul University in 1964. In addition to teaching courses, he also took part in the opening of Istanbul University Faculty of Letters' general library. He died in 1968. He appears to have been in Berlin during the both World Wars; thus he was not one of the exiled professors.

¹⁶ See Arnold Reisman, *Classical European Music and Opera: The Case of Post-Ottoman Turkey* (Charleston, SC: BookSurge Publishing, 2009) and Arnold Reisman, *Rejection and Acceptance: The Impact of European Culture on Turkey: 1933-1950* (Charleston, SC: BookSurge Publishing, 2009).

¹⁷ Müller, "German Librarians in Exile in Turkey."