INTRODUCTION: FRIEDRICH MEINECKE AND HIS ÉMIGRÉ STUDENTS

Friedrich Meinecke’s life spans a full century. He was born in October 1862 in the town of Salzwedel, which was formerly a member of the Hanseatic League, in Prussian Altmark, now part of Saxony-Anhalt. He was the only son, alongside three daughters, of a Prussian postmaster. As yet without a railway station, the town depended on the stagecoach for its links to the outside world. Meinecke thus writes in his memoirs of hearing the post horn ringing out with a “cheerful blast” in front of his parents’ house during the first years of his life.\(^1\) As a result of his father’s disciplinary transfer, Meinecke arrived in 1871 in the

vibrant metropolis of Berlin, the economic and political centre of the newly founded German Empire. One of his most vivid early memories was watching the victorious regiments march into Unter den Linden in June 1871, along with a handful of older gentlemen wearing tall top hats—veterans of the war of 1813.\footnote{Meinecke Werke, vol. 8: Autobiographische Schriften, p. 23.}

Apart from a few interruptions during his studies and in 1943, 1944 and 1945/46, he lived in Berlin from 1871 to 1901, at the end of which period he worked as an archivist and lecturer (\textit{Privatdozent}), and then from 1914 until his death in 1954, as holder of a chair in history and finally professor emeritus. These two periods bracketed his years, so crucial to his scholarly endeavours and the development of his political views, as a professor at the Imperial University of Strasbourg (1901–1906) and the University of Freiburg (1906–1914), during which he experienced and learned to love the Upper Rhine cultural scene; the years from 1906 also brought him into contact with the relatively liberal climate that prevailed in the Grand Duchy of Baden. When Meinecke died on 6 February 1954, Adenauer had won the second Bundestag election of 1953, the economic upturn and the integration of Germany into the West had begun, and the course was set for the division of the country, overcome only in 1990.

I am unable to deal with Meinecke’s life here. I shall touch only in passing on his crucial importance to the discipline of history in Germany during the first half of the 20th century, as creator of the history of political ideas and editor of the \textit{Historische Zeitschrift} from 1893 until 1935. I shall restrict myself to some remarks on Meinecke as \textit{homo politicus}, a fascinating topic that has yet to be dealt with adequately. My main focus is on Meinecke as an academic teacher, particularly on his relationship with his students who were Jewish or had “Jewish family ties” and who fled Germany after 1933.

Meinecke’s wife, Antonie Meinecke, née Delhaes (31 January 1875–2 February 1971), who long outlived her husband, played a crucial role in his life’s work, especially in his relations with his students—a role so far virtually ignored in the academic literature on Meinecke. She was not only his partner after 1895, but also his most important interlocutor. His memoirs are dedicated to her. Above all, though, she made their home a place of intellectual exchange with his colleagues and students, as well as with politicians and leading officials of the time. It