

## Charlotte Bertha Behrend

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A brilliant law student, she chose to start over in Italy when all life and work opportunities were closing up in Germany. With a second degree earned in Florence in November 1938, she managed to emigrate to the UK. During the war she adapted and held different jobs, and continued her training, specializing in adult education.

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### A cultured Berlin family facing Nazism

Charlotte Behrend was born in Berlin on 27 August 1913, to Felix Wilhelm (1880-1957), a Protestant, and Maria Zöllner (1890-1948), a Catholic<sup>1</sup>. Her father, who had graduated in Halle with Paul Natorp, was a lecturer in mathematics and physics and since 1930, the principal of the prestigious Kaiser-Wilhelm-Realgymnasium. A leader of the student movement in his youth, with the birth of the Republic he had joined the liberal Deutsche Demokratische Partei and had held several public offices, becoming an authoritative figure in the debate on education reform. In addition to textbooks, he published numerous contributions on pedagogy and on the issues facing schools<sup>2</sup>.

In February 1931, Charlotte graduated from the Oberlyzeum Berlin-Treptow with full marks;<sup>3</sup> she then enrolled at the School of Law of the Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität in Berlin. At this institution, she took, among others, the

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<sup>1</sup> ASUFI, AC, SS, f. «Behrend Charlotte», enrollment form at the University of Florence, 1 December 1937; *ibid.*, certified translation of Charlotte Behrend's birth certificate, 7 August 1937.

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. the biographical entries: Josef Spieler, *Behrend, Felix Wilhelm*, in Id. (ed.), *Lexikon der Pädagogik der Gegenwart*, Bd. 1, Freiburg im Breisgau, Herder, 1930, coll. 232-233 <<https://scripta.bbf.dipf.de>>; Klaus Bürger, *Behrend, Felix Wilhelm*, in Id. (ed.), *Altpreußische Biographie*, Bd. 5, Marburg, Elwert, 2000, pp. 1548-1549 (online version at <<https://kulturstiftung.org>>, accessed 29 December 2021).

<sup>3</sup> ASUFI, AC, SS, f. «Behrend Charlotte», certified translation of the high school diploma, 24 August 1937.

courses in Economics of Werner Sombart and Emil Lederer, who was expelled in 1933 because he was «non-Aryan» and a party member of the SPD; he then emigrated to New York, where he would eventually be co-founder of the University in Exile at the New School for Social Research<sup>4</sup>. Charlotte had as thesis adviser Martin Wolff, professor of civil and commercial law and private international law, and an important scholar who was expelled in 1935 for his Jewish origin and welcomed in 1938 at Oxford<sup>5</sup>. Nevertheless, Charlotte successfully graduated in Law on 16 November 1935; in her thesis, published the following year, she discussed the effects of the suspension of the gold clause, a form of insurance that had spread to private contracts in Germany following the high inflation of the postwar period<sup>6</sup>. Meanwhile, her father Felix Wilhelm had also been suspended, in 1933, and removed from service in 1935, on account of his Jewish origins and political orientation. And Charlotte's older brother, Felix Adalbert (1911-1962), a brilliant young mathematician, had migrated first to Cambridge, then to Zurich and Prague; he then returned to the UK in 1939; interned as an enemy alien, he was taken to Australia where he settled permanently<sup>7</sup>.

### **From Florence to the UK in search for security**

After graduating, Charlotte began to work in a Cook travel agency in Berlin,<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., certified translation of the university transcript, 20 November 1937. On Lederer and the University in Exile see Judith Friedlander, *A Light in Dark Times. The New School for Social Research and Its University in Exile*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2019.

<sup>5</sup> ASUFI, AC, SS, f. «Behrend Charlotte», curriculum vitae n.d., but 1937. On Wolff see Gerhard Dannemann, *Martin Wolff (1872-1953)*, in Jack Beatson, Reinhard Zimmermann (eds.), *Jurists Uprooted. German-Speaking Émigré Lawyers in Twentieth-Century Britain*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004, pp. 441-462.

<sup>6</sup> Charlotte Behrend, *Die Wirkung der Aufhebung der Goldklauseln*, Borna-Leipzig, Noske, 1936.

<sup>7</sup> Cfr. the obituary by Bernhard Hermann Neumann, *Felix Adalbert Behrend*, «Journal of the London Mathematical Society», 38, 1963, pp. 308-310, accessible online at *MacTutor History of Mathematics Archive* <<http://www-history.mcs.st-andrews.ac.uk>>; James Joseph Cross, *Behrend, Felix Adalbert (1911-1962)*, in National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 13, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1993 <<http://adb.anu.edu.au>> (accessed 29 December 2021).

<sup>8</sup> Page dedicated to Charlotte Behrend at <<https://www.ancestry.com>> (accessed upon registration 29 December 2021).

but she too decided to try the path of emigration, the only opportunity available in the face of the progressive marginalization and preclusion from any kind of intellectual career in the Reich. While her sister Hildegard Martha (1917-2000) moved to London as early as 1936, she chose Florence: in 1937, she applied to the University of Florence for enrollment in the fourth year of the School of Law and on 7 November 1938, she earned her second degree with a thesis on «The application of copyright laws over time» and the grade 110/110<sup>9</sup>.

In all likelihood, Italy appeared to her to be a suitable environment to continue her legal education, or perhaps it was recommended by family friends or colleagues: Ernst Heinitz, assistant to her professors in Berlin, had moved to the Tuscan capital city in 1933<sup>10</sup>. The enactment of the racial laws together with the provisions concerning foreign Jews and the threat of an imminent war made it necessary to make new decisions: in 1939 Charlotte managed to emigrate to the UK where she would be reunited with her sister and parents, who had left Germany in the same year. After the outbreak of the conflict, her parents were both interned for a few weeks as enemy aliens, while Charlotte, who, upon arrival, had found accommodation in a center of the Young Women's Christian Association in London and attended the London School of Stenotyping, was declared exempt from internment as early as 23 October 1939<sup>11</sup>.

During the war years, she held several jobs, always looking for a permanent position. In 1941 she submitted an application to the British Federation of University Women, but it is not clear what kind of support she managed to

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<sup>9</sup> ASUFI, AC, SS, f. «Behrend Charlotte», letter of application to the Rector, 29 November 1937; *ibid.*, University of Florence, School of Law, report on the thesis defense and degree diploma, 7 November 1938.

<sup>10</sup> On Heinitz see Patrizia Guarnieri, *Ernst Georg Heinitz* (2019).

<sup>11</sup> Cfr. the pages dedicated to each member of the Behrend family at <<https://www.ancestry.com>> (accessed upon registration 29 December 2021). The files attesting to the exemption from internment of Charlotte, Felix and Maria/Marie Behrend on account of their refugee status are found in National Archives, Kew, UK, HO 396, *WW2 Internees (Aliens) Index Cards 1939-1947*, digitized in UK, *World War II Alien Internees, 1939-1945*, database accessible at <<https://www.ancestry.com>> upon registration.

obtain from the organization;<sup>12</sup> in the same year she moved briefly to Berkhamstead and to Welwyn Garden City in Hertfordshire; in 1943 she became secretary at the periodical «The Economist»; in 1944 she taught at Saint Lawrence College in Ramsgate. She enrolled at the University of London and in 1946 she graduated in Psychology, German and Italian as an «external graduate».

In 1945 she began teaching psychology for the Workers' Educational Association, first in Lancashire and from 1947, in Leicester, where she became lecturer in the University's Extra-mural Department, specializing in adult education. In 1945 she married Roy Millward (1917-2016). After her mother died in 1948, her father moved to Australia and lived with his son Felix, who had become an associate professor of mathematics at the University of Melbourne.

Charlotte died of an illness in Leicester on 17 January 1958, at only 44 years of age; Felix also passed away prematurely, in 1962<sup>13</sup>. Her sister Hildegard remained in the UK and became, after a rather difficult educational path, first lecturer, then professor of industrial relations at the University of Edinburgh<sup>14</sup>.

### Main publications

- *Die Wirkung der Aufhebung der GoldklauseIn*, Borna-Leipzig, Noske, 1936.

### Archival sources

- ASUFI, AC, SS, f. «Behrend Charlotte».

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<sup>12</sup> Cfr. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, RG-59.026M, *Minutes of the British Federation of University Women, Refugee Subcommittee*, database accessible at <<https://www.ushmm.org>> (accessed 29 December 2021).

<sup>13</sup> Page dedicated to Charlotte Behrend at <<https://www.ancestry.com>>, cit.

<sup>14</sup> Cfr. the obituary by Phil White, *Hilde Behrend. Economist Who Probed Our Motivation to Work*, «The Guardian», 16 February 2000 <<https://www.theguardian.com>> (accessed 29 December 2021).

- United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, RG-59.026M, *Minutes of the British Federation of University Women, Refugee Subcommittee, ad nomen* (database accessible at <<https://www.ushmm.org>>).
- National Archives, Kew, UK, HO 396, *WW2 Internees (Aliens) Index Cards 1939-1947, ad nomen* (database accessible at UK, *World War II Alien Internees, 1939-1945* <<https://www.ancestry.com>>).
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