

The Career of Franz Oppenheimer

DR. FRANZ OPPENHEIMER was one of the first half-dozen sociologists of pre-Hitler Germany and one of the leading German economists during the first two decades of this century.

His pupils came to occupy many important chairs of economics or sociology in various parts of the world, many of them in this country. Among those now in the United States are Dr. Gottfried Salomon, lecturer of the Institut Germanique of the Sorbonne; Dr. Oscar Jászi, professor of political sociology at Oberlin College; Dr. Constantine Panunzio of the University of California, and Drs. Eduard Heimann, Adolph Lowe and Frieda Wunderlich, professors of economics and sociology at the New School for Social Research, New York.

Professor Oppenheimer was born in Berlin and was graduated as a doctor of medicine from the University of Freiburg. Early in his career as a medical practitioner he became aware of the influence of social and economic conditions on the health and well-being of his working-class patients. So he quit medicine and took his doctorate in philosophy at the University of Berlin, specializing in economics and sociology.

He became a prolific writer and theoretician, turning out a whole library of books and articles. The most famous of his publications were "The State," first published in 1908, which has appeared in many editions in translation in all the important languages of the world, the oriental included, and his "System of Sociology," a work of many thousands of pages in four volumes, published from 1922 to 1929.

Known as a critic of Karl Marx, he engaged in many controversies and his chief followers were among the radical peasant groups of Germany. He remained an instructor at the University of Berlin from 1908 until 1917, when he became a titular professor. After the revolution a chair was established for him at Frankfort.

He was one of the leaders of the German Bodenreform movement, and personally carried on an agitation for the breaking up of the great estates of the Junkers in Prussia. He also established several co-operative colonies. Opposed to large landed property, he advocated internal colonization by establishing co-operative agricultural communities as a remedy for the poverty of the working classes and their mass unemployment.

Since his return from Japan, where he went to lecture at the University of Kobe after his expulsion from Germany by the Nazis, he was an editor of THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF ECONOMICS AND SOCIOLOGY and wrote for American periodicals.*

* From the obituary by Will Lissner in *The New York Times*, New York, Oct. 1, 1943.