The European Tradition in International Law: 
Alfred Verdross

Introductory Remarks

There was never doubt in our mind that Alfred Verdross should and would be one of 
the first scholars to feature in our series on the European Tradition in International 
law. This conviction, we believe, has been fully vindicated by the rich and 
illuminating contributions which appear in this issue. Those who have only heard of 
Verdross but are not familiar with his work will, we are convinced, be hugely 
enriched by this first encounter. Those who know Verdross and are familiar with his 
work will, we are equally convinced, see new facets to the man and his scholarly 
contribution.

It has been the custom in crafting these symposia to add a contribution with a 
personal note to the intellectual appraisal. Thus, for example, René-Jean Dupuy 
contributed a charming piece on Georges Scelle as did Roberto Ago on Anzilotti. 
We have followed the same format in relation to Verdross.

It is in this context that we decided to give some unflinching consideration to the 
position of Verdross the man and Verdross the scholar in relation to National 
Socialism and the Anschluss. It would have been easier to avoid the issue altogether. 
But the Journal decided that silence on this issue would speak louder than an honest 
appraisal. The thoughtful and measured piece by Anthony Carty is as illuminating 
as any other in the symposium.

Merely discussing these issues can be hard for those who were colleagues and 
students of Verdross and acutely painful to those to whom Verdross was mentor, 
even father figure. Of course some episodes we wish had never taken place; of 
course, especially with the wisdom of hindsight, some positions and expressions we 
wish had never been adopted. And of course, we wish, as we do in relation to so 
many of those who lived through those years, that more civic courage had been 
displayed more frequently. We wonder, as we should, if we would have behaved 
differently.

How to relate to that decisive and appalling chapter in the history of Europe and 
what to make of the vicissitudes of Verdross' personal and scholarly fate in that 
epoch is something on which we do not care to pontificate to our readers. Our 
conviction that Verdross deserves an honourable place in the European tradition of 
international law remains unshaken.

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of the Board of Editors

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