



Study traces the life of Porsche co-founder Adolf Rosenberg

19/03/2026 For the first time, a new study is devoted to the biography of Porsche co-founder Adolf Rosenberg. The historian Prof. Joachim Scholtyseck, from Bonn, recounts the life of the Jewish racing driver and entrepreneur, and his contribution to Porsche history. The project, which was jointly initiated by Rosenberg’s descendants and Porsche, complements research into the company’s beginnings by adding important findings.

Thanks to the study on the life of Adolf Rosenberg (1900 – 1967), a comprehensive academic review that includes all the available archives is now available for the first time ever. In October 2022, Adolf Rosenberg gGmbH (Munich), Sandra Esslinger (USA) from the Rosenberg family, and Porsche AG jointly commissioned the renowned historian Professor Joachim Scholtyseck from the University of Bonn.

On April 25, 1931, Rosenberg joined Ferdinand Porsche and Anton Piëch to officially found Dr. Ing. h.c.F. Porsche GmbH. He played a major role in shaping the design office in the early stages and, as a shareholder and managing director, contributed to its establishment. His name almost fell into

obscurity after fleeing the Nazis. "The research project, on the joint initiative of Adolf Rosenberger gGmbH and Porsche AG, closes a significant gap in the beginnings of the company's history," according to Achim Stejskal, Head of Porsche Heritage and Porsche Museum.

Success and persecution

In the 1920s, Rosenberger had celebrated numerous successes as a racing driver. In the design office, as commercial lead, he was responsible for finance and customer contacts and, with his initial capital and network, contributed significantly to the development of the company.

In 1933, he left the management board for economic reasons. When the Nazis took power, the Jewish entrepreneur was increasingly targeted by the regime. In 1935, he had to hand over his company shares to Porsche at a nominal value and was temporarily imprisoned in the Kislau concentration camp. From Paris, he managed the patents and licenses business for Porsche abroad until the end of 1937, when Porsche finally ended the collaboration. In 1938, Rosenberger was forced to emigrate to the US, where he tried to establish a business presence under the name of Alan A. Robert, with sporadic success. A restitution procedure that ended in 1950 in a settlement with meager financial results and the unsuccessful attempt to do business with Porsche also shaped Rosenberger's time in the USA. Further redress procedures with the state of Baden-Württemberg and his hometown of Pforzheim did not always end satisfactorily. He died in Los Angeles in 1967.

The independent academic study now tells Rosenberger's entire life story for the first time, marked by short-term successes and long-term disappointment, and raises awareness of a differentiated culture of remembrance. A total of 19 key questions, previously agreed upon, were examined: from growing up in Pforzheim and getting to know Ferdinand Porsche right through to the founding of the design office. Central to this was the question of why he left the commercial management in 1933 and the circumstances under which he stepped down as a partner at Porsche in 1935. In addition, there-established connections with Porsche and its employees in the period after 1945 were analyzed. "I wanted to give a face to the man that was Adolf Rosenberger by comprehensively reconstructing his life – and at the same time analyze the reasons why he was successful as a racing driver, but was pushed out of the corporate world as a Jewish entrepreneur during the Nazi period," said Professor Joachim Scholtyssek.

Independent research and constructive cooperation

Professor Wolfram Pyta previously examined the beginnings of Porsche up to the immediate post-war period in a separate chapter in his work *Porsche – Vom Konstruktionsbüro zur Weltmarke* (Porsche – From Engineering Office to Global Brand), published in 2017. However, essential sources including the Rosenberger family archive were not taken into account at the time. In 2019, Rosenberger's descendants founded Adolf Rosenberger gGmbH with the aim of completely reappraising his legacy. This gave rise to the idea that an independent study of Adolf Rosenberger and Porsche would fill in the

gaps in his life history.

Remembrance as a task for the present

The research project was funded by Porsche, but was conducted in an open-ended manner and according to the highest academic standards. Porsche AG and Adolf Rosenberger gGmbH agreed in advance in 2022 to recognize the results of the independent study, and publish them in German and in English.

Extensive archive material was made available to the research team led by Professor Scholtyseck. This included all relevant documents from the Porsche company archive. In addition, previously unexplored documents from Adolf Rosenberger's family archive have been evaluated for the first time. Dr. Sandra Esslinger, Rosenberger's second cousin, provided documents stored in the USA. "This study bridges the gap between the bitter family memory and the company's history. We are grateful for how respectfully our family legacy has been handled. The results give Adolf Rosenberger his place in history back," summarized Professor Sandra Esslinger. Other external national and international sources were included in the research. Two workshops were held to provide professional support. These facilitated discussions with other high-ranking academics, all of whom are respected professors: Werner Plumpe, Frank Bajohr and Andreas Wirsching from Germany, with Peter Hayes from the US.

"The independent study is an integral contribution to the culture of remembrance. Porsche addresses its own past extensively and in depth, and faces up to its responsibility," says Achim Stejskal. "The collaboration with Professor Scholtyseck and Adolf Rosenberger gGmbH has been characterized from the very beginning by openness, trust and constructive dialog." For Porsche, the responsibility that arises from the past shapes how it acts in the present. "We are strongly opposed to exclusion, discrimination and antisemitism," says Stejskal.

Symposium in Munich and book publication

The results of the Rosenberger study were presented on March 19, 2026 at an academic symposium at the Emory University in Atlanta. At the event, Professor Scholtyseck presented the key research findings to the public.

The biography Adolf Rosenberger. Driven Out – Adolf Rosenberger – Race Car Driver and Porsche Co-founder from Siedler Verlag is now available.

The notable figures

Professor Joachim Scholtyseck is a renowned contemporary historian at the University of Bonn. He has conducted a great deal of research into the history of companies. Among his most well-known works

are the comprehensive studies on the entrepreneurs Günther Quandt (2011), Otto Beisheim (2020) and Reinhard Mohn (2020) as well as the companies National-Bank (2011), Freudenberg (2015) and Merck (2018). A study on Henkel will be published shortly.

Adolf Rosenberger gGmbH represents the interests of the representatives of the descendants of Adolf Rosenberger. The aim of the Rosenberger society and its founder, Professor Sandra Esslinger is to fully depict the historical events around why the Jewish A. Rosenberger lost his position as managing director and shareholder between 1933 and 1935. In addition, there is a public interest in countering the realities of antisemitism, discrimination and exclusion in society, together with Porsche.

The **Dr. Ing. h.c. F. Porsche AG** of today acknowledges the past of its predecessor companies and sees confronting its history as an ongoing task. Its history is part of Porsche – including the Nazi period. The Porsche AG of today is openly committed to tolerance and open-mindedness. The promotion of academic research into the company's history is intended to help understand the past and to shape the future.

MEDIA ENQUIRIES

Brendan Mok

Head of PR & Communications – Porsche Asia Pacific
brendan.mok@porsche-ap.com

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Title: Adolf Rosenberger, co-founder of the Dr. Ing. h.c. F. Porsche GmbH, ca. 1931, Porsche AG
Subline: Adolf Rosenberger

Path: Study traces the life of Porsche co-founder Adolf Rosenberger/Images/img_2.jpg
Title: Prof. Dr. Joachim Scholtyseck, Historiker und Autor, Porsche Museum, 2025, Porsche AG
Subline: Prof. Dr. Joachim Scholtyseck

Path: Study traces the life of Porsche co-founder Adolf Rosenberger/Images/img_4.jpg
Title: Prof. Dr. Joachim Scholtyseck, Historian, Dr. Sandra Esslinger, Adolf Rosenberger gGmbH, Achim Stejskal, Head of Porsche Heritage and Museum (fltr), 2025, Porsche AG
Subline: Prof. Dr. Joachim Scholtyseck, Dr. Sandra Esslinger and Achim Stejskal

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