

Economist's comments anger Jews

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By Bertrand Benoit in Berlin

Published: October 28 2008 02:00 | Last updated: October 28 2008 02:00

A top German economist was forced to apologise yesterday after comparing the wave of hostility against senior managers in the country to anti-Semitism in Nazi Germany, **writes Bertrand Benoit in Berlin.**

"I very much regret that the Jewish community feels hurt by my comments," Hans-Werner Sinn, chairman of the Ifo institute, told Charlotte Knobloch, president of Germany's Central Council of Jews.

Tagesspiegel newspaper yesterday quoted Mr Sinn as saying: "In every crisis, people look for culprits, scapegoats. During the 1929 crisis nobody wanted to believe in anonymous systemic flaws. People turned against the Jews at the time. Today they are turning against managers."

The comments triggered a barrage of condemnation, including rebuffs from the Central Council of Jews and representatives of Christian churches.

Mr Sinn replied: "It was not my intention to compare the fate of the Jews after 1933 with the situation of managers today. Such a comparison would be absurd. I wanted to make clear that the real causes of worldwide economic crises lie in systemic flaws . . . The hunt for scapegoats is always mistaken."

A spokesman for Angela Merkel, German chancellor, said the comparison was "wrong and unacceptable".

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