

# I. 4. NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL INTERCONNECTIONS

## The “national honor” of German Academies

### The Vienna Academy caught between national and international academic cooperations

Academies of sciences tend to have a cosmopolitan understanding of science and are not bound by national borders. They cooperate in the widest variety of research projects based on an “international peaceful order.”<sup>1</sup> The Cartel of German Academies and Scholarly Societies founded in 1893, to which the Imperial Academy of Sciences in Vienna and the academies of the German Reich belonged, espoused this understanding of science.<sup>2</sup> In 1899, the Cartel participated in the founding of the International Association of Academies (IAA), in which 31 scientific institutions were connected on an interdisciplinary and international basis. The IAA, in which both natural sciences and humanities were represented, was active till the beginning of World War I and “never formally disbanded.”<sup>3</sup>

After 1918 an attempt was made to re-establish contact with the international network of academies that had been destroyed in the war. The International Research Council/Conseil International de Recherches (IRC/CIR) for natural sciences and the International Union of Academies/Union Académique Internationale (UAI) for humanities and social sciences were founded at a congress in Brussels on 18 to 28 July 1919 as successors to the IAA.<sup>4</sup> The UAI statutes, unlike those of the IRC, had no exclusion provisions for the former Central Powers, i.e. Germany and its allies during the war.<sup>5</sup> In 1922 and in 1923, the UAI, through the Dutch Academy, approached the Vienna Academy to join the Union and act as a link to the academies in the German Reich. The Vienna Academy did not want to take steps towards joining international organizations without the agreement of the German academies and declined the offer.<sup>6</sup> In a letter of refusal to the Dutch Academy of 23 October 1923, the Acad-

---

<sup>1</sup> Mommsen (2000), *Wissenschaft*, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Meister (1947), *Geschichte*, p. 127, and recently Wöckinger (2010), *Akademie*.

<sup>3</sup> Grau (1995), *Wissenschaftsakademien*, pp. 31–2.

<sup>4</sup> See Grau (2000), *Preussische Akademie*, p. 293.

<sup>5</sup> See Grau (2000), *Preussische Akademie*, p. 298.

<sup>6</sup> See Grau (1995), *Wissenschaftsakademien*, p. 35.

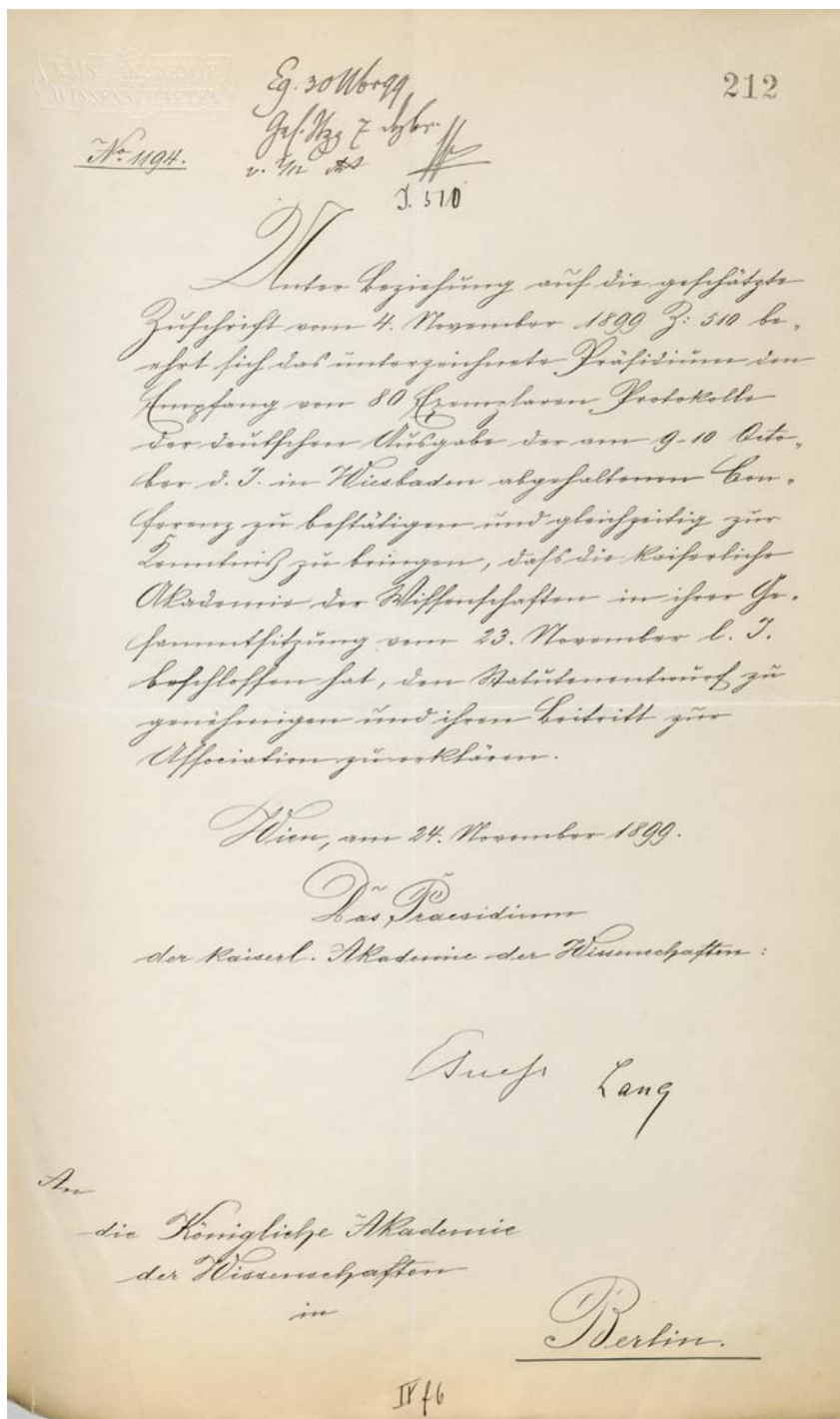


Fig. 67: Membership of the Association of 24 November 1899

emy in Vienna referred to the occupation of the Ruhr by France which made it *hardly possible at present that German and French scholars would sit together at the meeting table. Given this lack of prospects of being able to canvas successfully for the entry of our Reich German colleagues in the Union Académique Internationale, the main reason that the Vienna Academy might have considered for distancing itself temporarily from the German academies for tactical reasons also no longer exists.*<sup>7</sup>

When the Cartel joined the UAI in 1935, Redlich expected that all problems *irreconcilable with the national honor of the academies in the Cartel*, would now be solved and that *international cooperation would be possible [...] forever.*<sup>8</sup> The philologist Ludwig Radermacher and the historian Heinrich Srbik, who had been Secretary of the Section for Humanities and the Social Sciences since 1933, were elected as delegates to the UAI.<sup>9</sup> However, only Radermacher attended the UAI conferences in Brussels in 1936<sup>10</sup> and in London<sup>11</sup> in 1937.<sup>12</sup>

With the "Anschluss" of Austria to the German Reich in March 1938, the Vienna Academy received letters and telegrams of congratulation from the German academies. Paragraph 1 of the new Provisional Statutes set the task of promoting *science in the service of the German people.*<sup>13</sup> To demonstrate *to the world the absolute unity of German science*,<sup>14</sup> the Academy of Sciences in Vienna joined the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* [German Research Foundation] (DFG) in October 1938.<sup>15</sup>

*In view of Austria's entry into the Greater German Reich*, Srbik and Radermacher resigned their mandates with the UAI.<sup>16</sup> To ensure that the Cartel of German Academies was *duly represented* at the congress in London from 8 to 11 May 1939, Bernhard Rust, Reich Minister of Science, Education, and Culture, selected Johannes Stroux, Prussian Academy of Sciences, and Srbik, Academy of Sciences in Vienna, as representatives of the German Reich.<sup>17</sup> Both attended the UAI congress in London in 1939. Although the working language of the UAI was French, and the representatives of Great Britain and Italy also communicated in that language, Stroux and Srbik submitted a request that German be admitted as an official language in the conviction

<sup>7</sup> Quoted in Grau (1995), *Wissenschaftsakademien*, p. 35.

<sup>8</sup> AÖAW, UAI, 1/A, No. 312/1935, Redlich to the Federal Ministry of Education in Vienna of 1 June 1935.

<sup>9</sup> AÖAW, UAI, 1/A, No. 433/1935, Redlich to Pelseneer of 18 December 1935.

<sup>10</sup> AÖAW, UAI, 1/B, No. 209/1936, Srbik to the Federal Chancellery, Directorate General for Public Safety, of 12 May 1936.

<sup>11</sup> AÖAW, UAI, 1/B, No. 41/1937, Srbik to the UAI Secretary of 27 January 1937.

<sup>12</sup> AÖAW, UAI, 1/B, No. 8/1938, Srbik to the UAI Secretary of 3 March 1938.

<sup>13</sup> Provisional Statutes of the Academy of Sciences in Vienna, in: *Almanach* for 1938, 88 (1939), p. 9.

<sup>14</sup> AÖAW, Allgemeine Akten, No. 363/1938, President of the DFG to the President of the Vienna Academy of Sciences of 30 September 1938.

<sup>15</sup> AÖAW, Allgemeine Akten, No. 363/1938, Srbik to Mentzel of 13 October 1938.

<sup>16</sup> AÖAW, UAI, 1/B, No. 176/1938, Srbik to UAI of 7 May 1938.

<sup>17</sup> AÖAW, UAI, 1/B, No. 184/1939, Rust to Srbik of 3 April 1939.

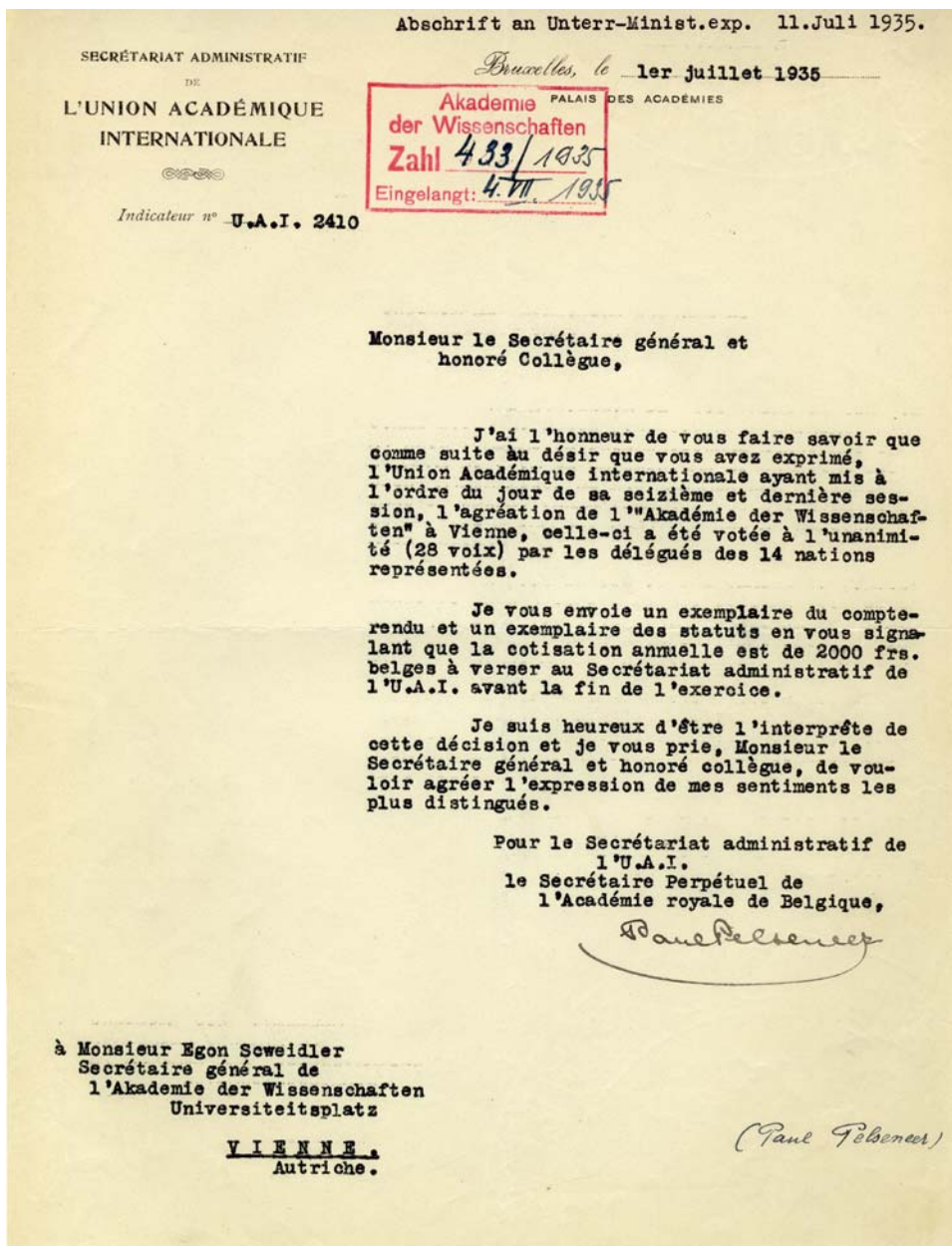


Fig. 68: Letter from the UAI of 1 July 1935

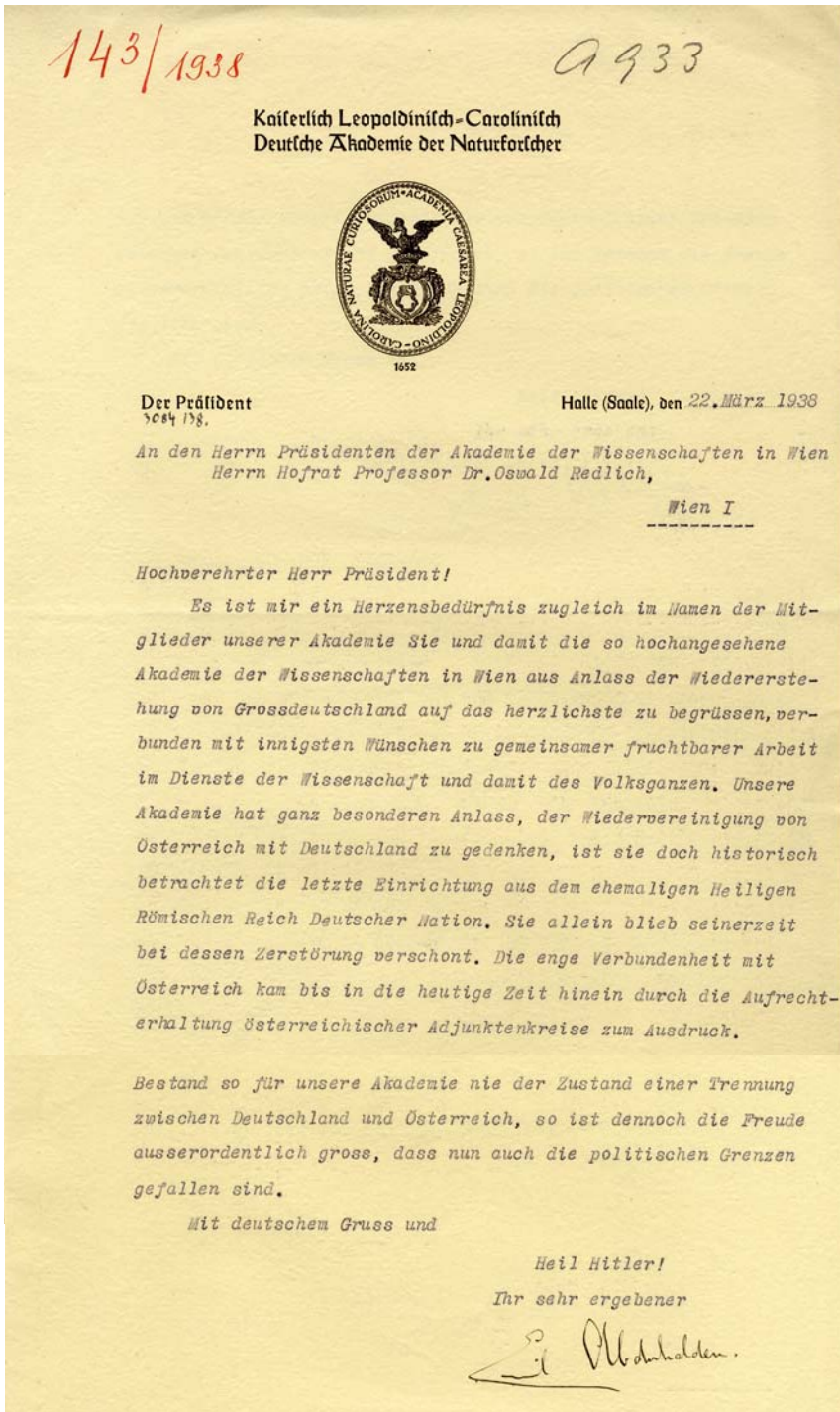


Fig. 69: Welcome letter from Halle of 22 March 1938



Fig. 70: Welcome telegram from Leipzig of 19 March 1938

that in doing so, they would be helping that language *gain basic recognition*.<sup>18</sup> Stroux and Srbik also reported that *during the entire congress there was no political dissonance among the delegates and that on the contrary, the wish for neutral and open collaboration was felt*.<sup>19</sup>

After the outbreak of war, international correspondence with “enemy” states was greatly reduced. The Société Mathématique in Amsterdam<sup>20</sup> and University College in London<sup>21</sup> still corresponded with the Vienna Academy in 1939, but correspondence with the Agricultural Experiment Station in Rehovot, Palestine,<sup>22</sup> was discontinued. When the director of a Dutch laboratory of phytophysiology ceased correspond-

<sup>18</sup> AÖAW, UAI, 1/B, No. 184/1939, report by Srbik and Stroux on the 20th Congress of the UAI, 8–11 May 1939, of 22 April 1939, pp. 1–2.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>20</sup> See AÖAW, Protokollbuch 1939, No. 83, correspondence of the Société Mathématique in Amsterdam with the Academy of Sciences in Vienna of 8 February 1939.

<sup>21</sup> See AÖAW, Protokollbuch 1939, No. 85, correspondence of University College in London with the Academy of Sciences in Vienna of 8 February 1939.

<sup>22</sup> See AÖAW, Allgemeine Akten, No. 86/1939, correspondence of the Agricultural Experiment Station in Rehovot, Palestine, with the Academy of Sciences in Vienna of 10 February 1939.



Fig. 71: Invitation to UAI reception in London of 10 May 1939

ing in 1939 with German universities because of the exclusion of Jewish students,<sup>23</sup> Reich Minister Rust gave to understand that the German Reich attached *no value* [...] *to continuing relations with these anti-German circles.*<sup>24</sup> Rust forbade German anthropologists from taking part in the Congress for Anthropology and Prehistoric Archeology in Istanbul in 1939 because the organizer, the Paris Institute of Anthropology, had *a hostile attitude to the German Reich.*<sup>25</sup> By contrast, *cultural relations* were intensified with states like Finland. In January 1939, politically “unencumbered” Finnish scientists were invited by Reich Minister Rust to give lectures in the German Reich.<sup>26</sup> After 1940, visits abroad by German scientists were strictly controlled. The

<sup>23</sup> See AÖAW, Protokollbuch 1939, No. 159, Botanic Institute of the University of Technology, Vienna, to Blaauw, head of the Laboratorium voor Plantenphysiologisch Onderzoek Landbouwhoogeschool, Wageningen, forwarded to the Ministry of Interior and Cultural Affairs, and then to the Academy of Sciences in Vienna, of 6 March 1939.

<sup>24</sup> AÖAW, Protokollbuch 1939, No. 159, Rust to rectors and administrative offices of German universities and educational administrations including Austria of 14 February 1939.

<sup>25</sup> AÖAW, Allgemeine Akten, No. 116/1939, Rust to all academic institutions in the German Reich and administrative offices of 26 January 1939.

<sup>26</sup> See AÖAW, Allgemeine Akten, No. 104/1939, Rust to all academic institutions in the German Reich and all administrative offices of 18 January 1939.



Fig. 72: Reich Minister Bernhard Rust

heads of scientific institutions had to provide a detailed report on the *scientific and social suitability of the applicant*.<sup>27</sup>

For the Vienna Academy, as Herbert Matis has noted, the “coercive breaking of contacts with other countries” was probably the “most serious obstacle to the international exchange of knowledge.”<sup>28</sup> When the Academy was reorganized after the Nazi regime had come to an end, the revival of contacts with the international scientific community<sup>29</sup> was seen as one of the most important aims.

Felicitas Seebacher

<sup>27</sup> AÖAW, Allgemeine Akten, No. 276/1940, Rust to Srbik of 18 July 1940.

<sup>28</sup> Matis (1997), *Anpassung*, p. 50.

<sup>29</sup> See the essay in this volume by Heidemarie Uhl, “Centennial anniversary of the Academy of Sciences 1947,” pp. 191–9.

# **“Increase the achievements of German science by all available means”**

## **The National Socialist Project of the Reich Academy of German Sciences**

The National Socialist regime also tried to subjugate all Academies of Sciences to the “Führer principle.” An important step was the centralization of the Cartel of German Academies, to which the academies of Göttingen, Leipzig, Munich, Berlin, Heidelberg, and Vienna all belonged. Hitherto the seat of the leading academy, the “*Vorort*” [lead site], as it was called, had changed annually. In May 1939 the Prussian Academy of Sciences in Berlin was made the *permanent lead site and administrative headquarters of the Cartel of German Academies*.<sup>1</sup> At the last meeting of the Cartel on 7 to 8 July 1939 in Leipzig, the statutes of the Reich Association of German Academies were drafted. In August 1939 the minutes of the Academy of Sciences in Vienna already had *Reich Association* in parenthesis after *Cartel*.<sup>2</sup> On 21 August 1940 the new Statutes of the Reich Association were approved by Rust<sup>3</sup> and, in this way, the Cartel was officially replaced by the Reich Association of German Academies.

A further change in the relationship of the Vienna Academy to the Berlin headquarters occurred in the same year. Like the Austrian universities, the Academy was subordinated to the Reich Ministry of Science, Education, and Culture in Berlin on 1 February 1940.<sup>4</sup> Academy President Srbik wrote in a letter to Minister Rust of the *great satisfaction* at this step and gave an assurance that the Academy would *meet its commitments in the most conscientious manner*.<sup>5</sup> He wrote to Rudolf Mentzel, head of the Ministry’s Science Department, welcoming the *closer connection* henceforth.<sup>6</sup> The German Society of Sciences and Arts in Prague was incorporated into the Reich Association in the same year.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> See AÖAW, Protokollbuch 1939, No. 262, Rust to Srbik of 22 May 1939.

<sup>2</sup> AÖAW, Protokollbuch 1939, No. 373, report of the Cartel (Reich Association of German Academies) on the Cartel meeting in Leipzig on 7–8 July 1939 of 24 August 1939.

<sup>3</sup> Statute of the Reich Association of German Academies of Sciences, in *Almanach* for 1941, 91 (1941), p. 160.

<sup>4</sup> See 6th Regulation on the Transfer of Tasks and Authority of the *Reichsstatthalter* [Reich Governor] in Austria (Austrian regional government) of 11 January 1940 (= Reichsgesetzblatt, Part 1, No. 9), § 7. See Bergmann-Pfleger (2010), *Geschichte*, p. 27. The final liquidation of the Ministry of Education in Vienna took place with effect from 6 November 1940.

<sup>5</sup> AÖAW, Allgemeine Akten, No. 30/1940, Rust to Srbik of 2 February 1940.

<sup>6</sup> AÖAW, Allgemeine Akten, No. 30/1940, Srbik to Mentzel of 10 February 1940.

<sup>7</sup> See AÖAW, Protokollbuch 1940, No. 382, Rust to Srbik on 12 November 1940.



Fig. 73: Karl Theodor Vahlen

Behind this loss of autonomy for the German Academies was Karl Theodor Vahlen (1869–1945), a proponent of anti-Semitic “German” mathematics<sup>8</sup> and a fervent Nazi who had held various positions in the Nazi Party since the 1920s. In December 1938 Reich Minister Rust made Vahlen commissarial head of the Prussian Academy of Sciences, and although he was not confirmed in this position in the subsequent elections in June 1939, he was made President of the Berlin Academy “by decree.”

As President of the permanent lead site of the new Reich Association of German Academies, Theodor Vahlen could now officially carry forward his activities. His aim was the creation of a new institution, the Reich Academy of German Sciences. After just two days in office, Vahlen invited the Academy Presidents to a meeting to be held on 2 September 1940, but he only sent out a draft version of the statutes on 3 September.

Paragraph 1 formulated the central task of the Reich Academy as *increasing the achievements of German science by all available means, highlighting outstanding individual achievements, promoting the link between research and the people, and fostering the popular understanding of science*. For that purpose a *day of German science* was to be introduced.<sup>9</sup> This *dies academicus* was deliberately set for 18 January, the date of

<sup>8</sup> Nötzold (2000), *Strategien*, pp. 259–60.

<sup>9</sup> AÖAW, Reichsakademie, No. 296/1940, Vahlen to Srbik of 3 September 1940. Annex “Draft Statutes of the Reich Academy of German Sciences,” p. 1.

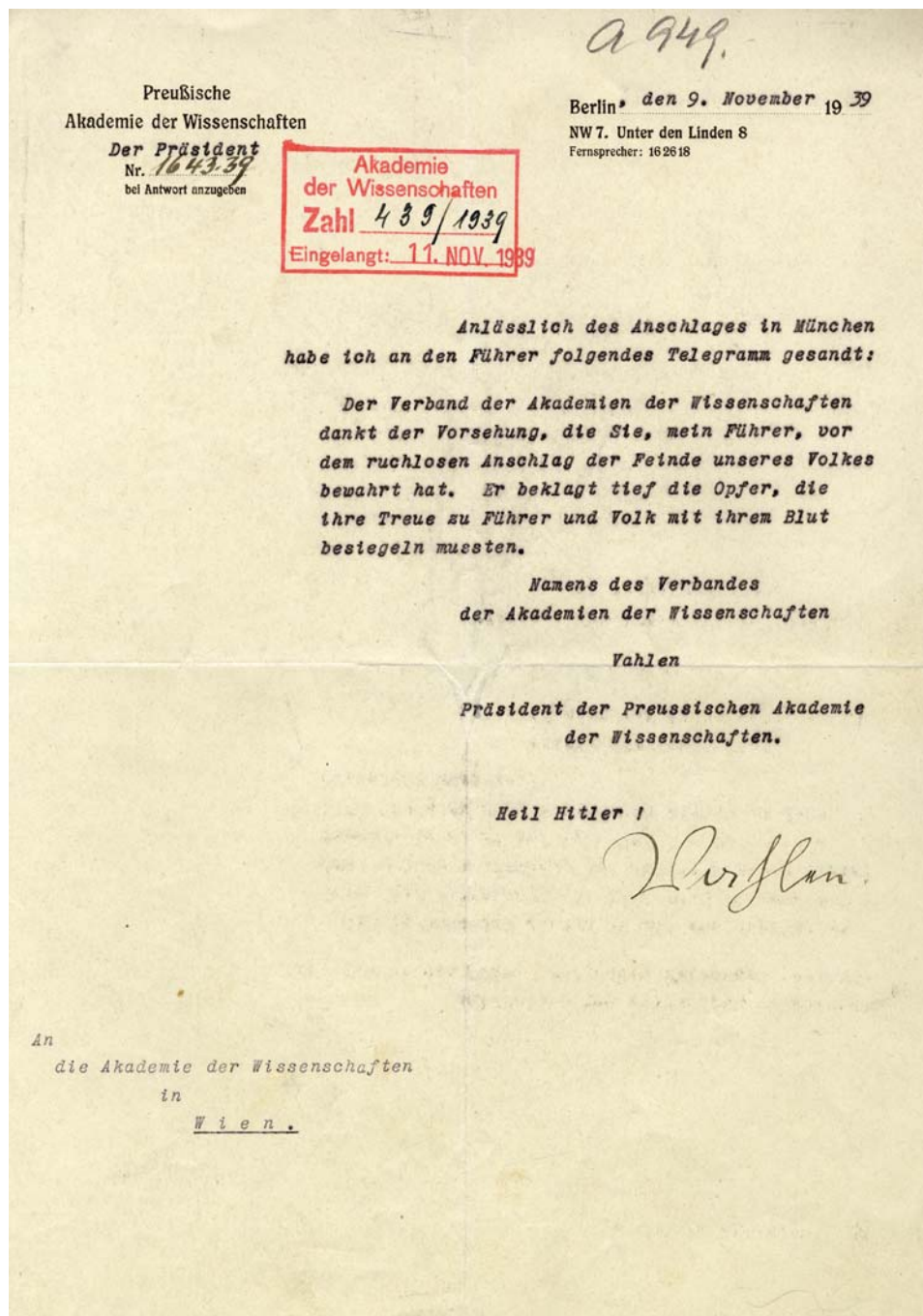


Fig. 74: Letter of the Prussian Academy of 9 November 1939

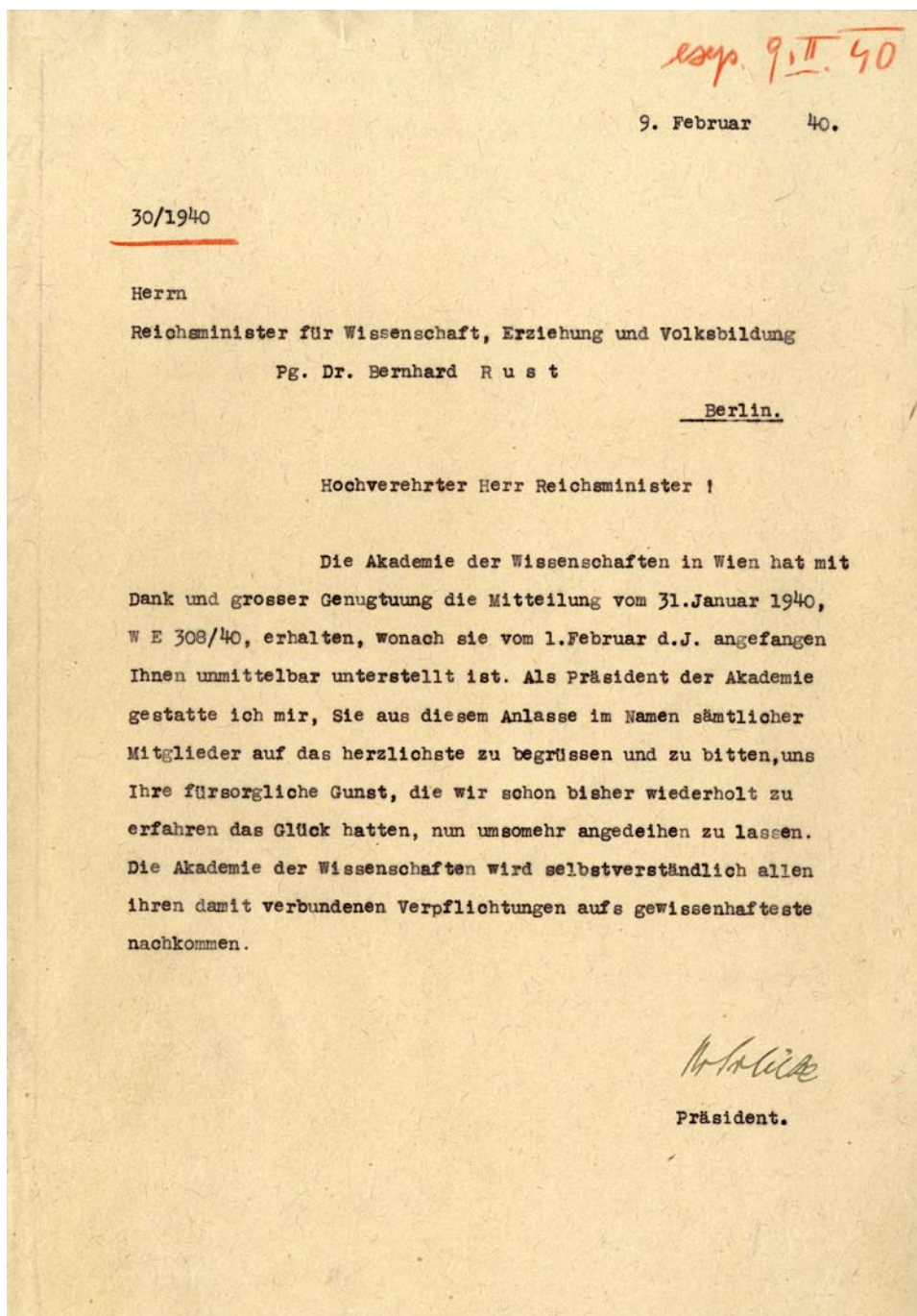


Fig. 75: Letter from the Academy to Reich Minister Rust of 9 February 1940

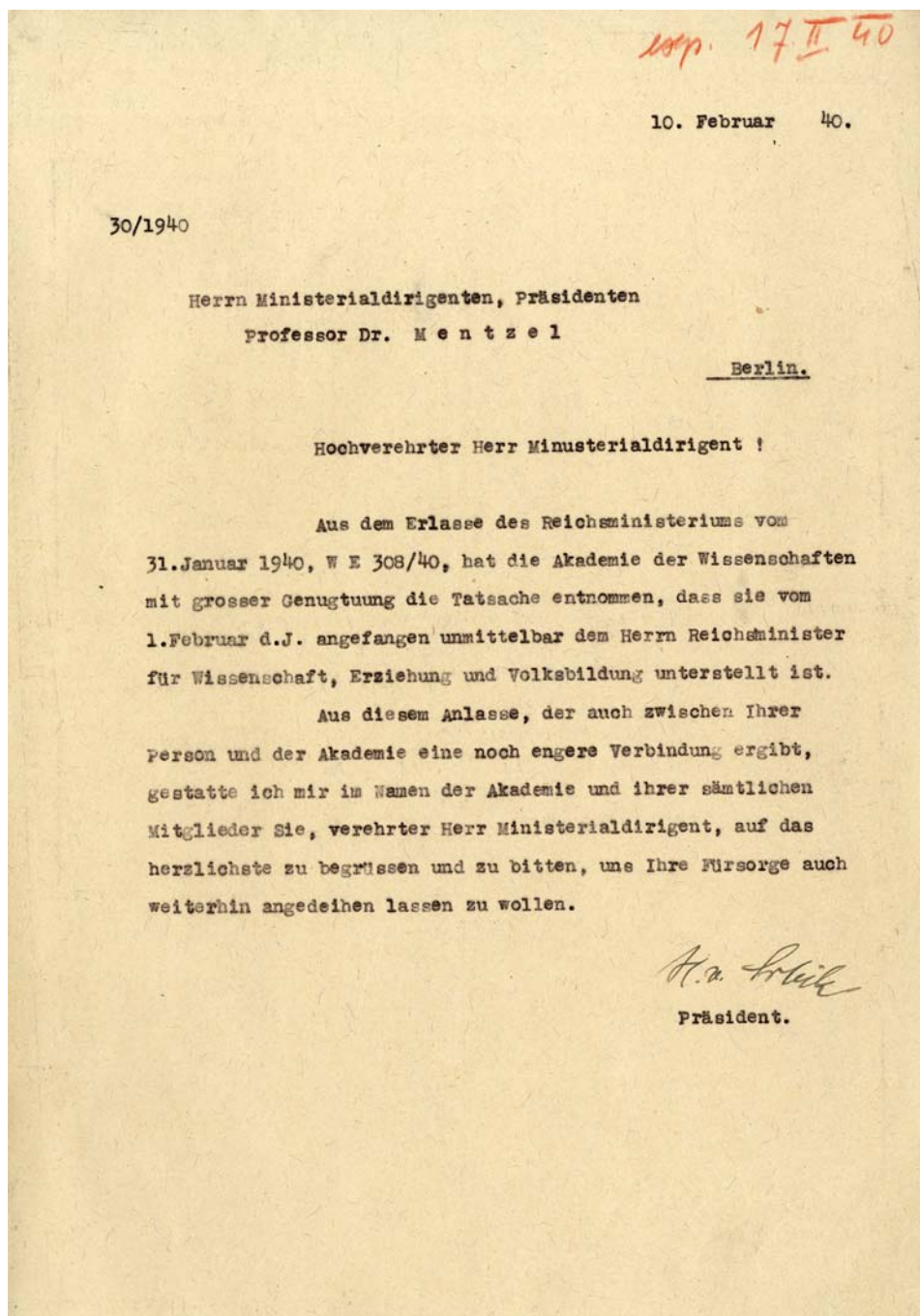


Fig. 76: Letter from the Academy to Rudolf Mentzel of 10 February 1940

the founding of the German Reich in 1871.<sup>10</sup> Above all, the Reich Academy was to carry out *joint work* in those disciplines to which the *National Socialist state* attached *particular importance*.<sup>11</sup> The ordinary members of the Reich Academy were to be Reich German men *of the best age* [and] *and at the height of their powers*. According to paragraph 15, honorary members could also be Reich German women who promoted German scientific research or had put it into practice. Membership could be withdrawn in the event of *unworthiness*.<sup>12</sup> To symbolize the unity of the Reich Academy, the German Academies were to add the designation *Sozietät der Deutschen Reichsakademie* [Society of the German Reich Academies] to their name. They were to consist of three sections, *Mathematics and Physics, Biology, and Humanities*.<sup>13</sup>

The draft statutes were to be discussed within twelve days in *extraordinary general assemblies* and then submitted for adoption at a meeting of the Academy Presidents on 19 September 1940. At the same time, Vahlen started a press campaign and at least 37 newspapers reported, mostly on 4 and 5 September, on the founding of the Reich Academy.<sup>14</sup> Minister Rust acted precisely as Vahlen wished: on 13 September, before the deadline for completion of the consultations by the Academies, he elevated the Reich Association to a Reich Academy and put it under the commissarial leadership of the President of the Prussian Academy.

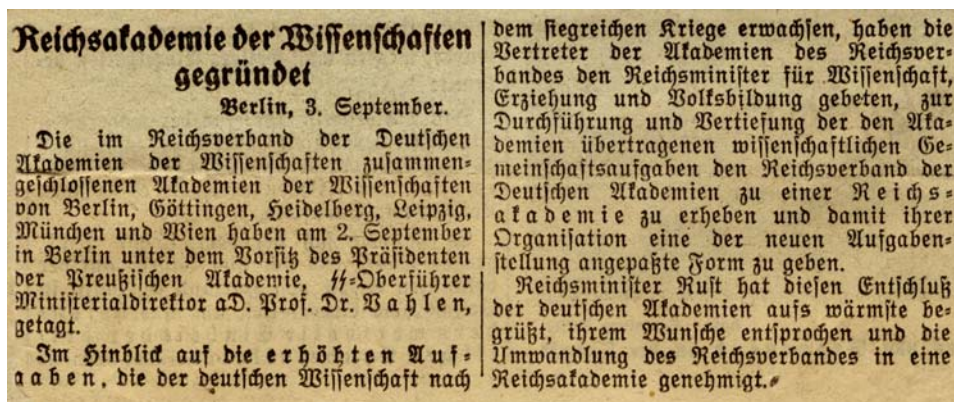


Fig. 77: *Völkischer Beobachter*: founding of the Reich Academy of 8 September 1940

<sup>10</sup> Seidler (1995), *Elite*, p. 19.

<sup>11</sup> AÖAW, Reichsakademie, No. 296/1940, Vahlen to Srbik of 3 September 1940. "Draft Statutes of the Reich Academy of German Sciences," p. 1.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., pp. 8–9.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>14</sup> AÖAW, Reichsakademie, No. 296/1940, Vahlen to Srbik of 20 November 1940. Annex, newspaper cuttings of reports about the Reich Academy of German Sciences.

The draft statutes met with "heavy criticism" in the discussions at the Academies.<sup>15</sup> In the Vienna Academy on 13 September 1940 there was a *lively discussion* on the classification into three sections.<sup>16</sup> The other Academies also had reservations about the planned Reich Academy and proposed several amendments to the statutes.<sup>17</sup> In spite of these reservations the Academy Presidents agreed at a meeting on 19 September 1940 in Berlin on a joint draft version of the statutes of the Reich Academy that differed only in one aspect, albeit an important one, from the original draft: the Reich Association should not be subsumed within the Reich Academy, and the special status of the "old" Academies should be retained.<sup>18</sup>

The Reich Academy now appeared to be taking concrete shape: financial resources amounting to RM 60,000 were earmarked in the 1941 Reich budget, and conversion plans for the rooms in the Royal Palace of Berlin were drawn up. The draft statutes were not dealt with by the Ministry, however, and instead it presented a new version of the statutes for the Reich Academy on 15 April 1941. The commissarial President was requested to "obtain the agreement of the Academies concerned."<sup>19</sup> The changes compared with the draft of October 1940 were so fundamental, however, that the Academies refused to agree to them, and Vahlen was *inundated with massive requests for change*. After discussion of the ministerial draft in a General Assembly of the Prussian Academy, Vahlen took up the requested changes and distributed a revised proposal, which was accepted by the General Assembly of the Berlin Academy. Two days later, on 31 May 1941, he sent this draft to the Academy Presidents for approval.

The other Academies remained *firm in their rejection*, however. It is significant to note that they maintained close contact so as to coordinate their actions. For example, the Viennese President Heinrich Srbik wrote on 6 June 1941 to the Academies in Göttingen, Heidelberg, Leipzig, Munich, and Prague pointing out that Vahlen had *stated clearly for the first time that the Reich Association had ceased to exist*.<sup>20</sup> All of the comments on the draft statutes were also circulated among the Academies. When Srbik informed Vahlen of the results of the sectional meetings of 11 and 19 June, his letter included the requested changes that he had received from the other Academies.<sup>21</sup>

On 9 July 1941 Vahlen was obliged to inform the Ministry that he had been unable to achieve approval of the Reich Academy statutes and that the Academy Presidents wanted a further oral consultation in the presence of a representative of the

<sup>15</sup> Nötzold (2000), *Strategien*, p. 265.

<sup>16</sup> AÖAW, Minutes of the extraordinary General Assembly of 13 September 1940 (A 956), p. 2.

<sup>17</sup> See AÖAW, Reichsakademie, No. 296/1940, Saxon Academy of Sciences to Vahlen of 16 September 1940.

<sup>18</sup> See Nötzold (2000), *Strategien*, p. 266.

<sup>19</sup> Quoted in Nötzold (2000), *Strategien*, p. 268.

<sup>20</sup> AÖAW, Reichsakademie, No. 110/1941. Quoted in Nötzold (2000), *Strategien*, p. 269, who in n. 151 refers to the archive signature valid at the time.

<sup>21</sup> See AÖAW, Reichsakademie, No. 110/1941, Srbik to Vahlen of 20 June 1941, p. 1.

Reich Ministry. The Ministry refused this request. The plan for a Reich Academy was shelved for the time being on 5 March 1942, when the Reich Ministry informed the Academies that *no Reich funds will be made available again for the fiscal year 1942 for the Reich Academy of German Sciences*. The reason given for the decision was a decree by Hitler saying that *such measures are not vital to the war effort and are to be suspended until further notice*.<sup>22</sup>

In April 1943 Vahlen resigned as President of the Prussian Academy of Sciences; he was replaced by Vice-President Hermann Grapow.<sup>23</sup> Grapow invited the *Presidents of the Reich Academy* to a meeting in Weimar on 22 May 1944.<sup>24</sup> Because of the impending Academy elections and the Ceremonial Session,<sup>25</sup> Srbik only sent the Actuary Wilfried Oberhummer to represent him.<sup>26</sup> Oberhummer reported to the Vienna Academy only that there was no funding for a Reich Academy.<sup>27</sup> A last appeal by Grapow to Reich Minister Rust, the *patron of German science*, was unsuccessful.<sup>28</sup>

Although the designation *Sozietät der Reichsakademie* was still given under the names of the individual Academies in letterheads,<sup>29</sup> Berlin's centralization plan had failed. Evidently the "self-interest of the Academies and their defensive attitude when faced with remote governance from Berlin and an uncontrollable 'Führer President'" had mobilized "considerable resistance."<sup>30</sup> Herbert Matis suggests, however, that this policy succeeded "ultimately, perhaps, thanks to the evident paralysis of state activities from 1941 on account of the war."<sup>31</sup>

Felicitas Seebacher

<sup>22</sup> Nötzold (2000), *Strategien*, p. 268.

<sup>23</sup> See Mommsen (2000), *Wissenschaft*, p. 20.

<sup>24</sup> AÖAW, Allgemeine Akten, No. 84/1944, Grapow to Srbik of 4 April 1944.

<sup>25</sup> See AÖAW, Allgemeine Akten, No. 84/1944, Oberhummer to Srbik of 8 April 1944.

<sup>26</sup> See AÖAW, Allgemeine Akten, No. 84/1944, Srbik to Grapow of 27 April 1944.

<sup>27</sup> See AÖAW, Allgemeine Akten, No. 84/1944, report by Oberhummer of the meeting of Academy Presidents in Weimar of 22 May 1944, p. 1.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>29</sup> AÖAW, Allgemeine Akten, No. 145/1944, Srbik to Knoll of 4 September 1944.

<sup>30</sup> Wennemuth (1995), *Heidelberger Akademie*, p. 123.

<sup>31</sup> Matis (1997), *Anpassung*, p. 60.