

I. 3. NEW PROGRAMMATIC AND STRUCTURAL ORIENTATION

Speeches by Academy President Heinrich (von) Srbik at the Ceremonial Sessions

The highpoint of the Ceremonial Session, which according to the By-Laws was to take place every year on or near the date of the foundation of the Academy on 30 May, was the speech by the Academy President, in which he went into the Academy's current problems or gave programmatic statements on its academic policy.

The official speech given by President Oswald Redlich in 1937 in celebration of the ninetieth anniversary of the Academy's founding was still in this tradition, as it pointed out the function of scholarship and research in society: "The urge for knowledge is a divine spark in the human breast. Science serves this urge, it investigates nature and all works of mankind. It is an achievement of the nineteenth century, which is now so often vilified for having devised and defined the demand for strict scientific research and method for this sacred urge, in other words the spirit of free but critically controlled, truthful, and impartial striving for knowledge. It is the exalted task and duty of science and thus of academies of science to consciously adhere to, uphold, and defend this achievement."¹

In the first Ceremonial Session after the "Anschluss", held exceptionally not in the spring but on 23 November 1938, the new President Heinrich Srbik gave an unusually long address on the theme: "German scholarship and the Vienna Academy in the Greater German Reich." Among other points, Srbik emphasized "the community of blood, soil, spirits, and hearts, and the epochal changes in the body of the people and the Reich." He did not fail to mention the "incomparable creativity and will of the Führer," which had brought about this "national drive of immense depth and potency in the people."² The prevailing zeitgeist – and probably a personal verbal gesture on the part of the speaker – was reflected in an overblown pathos that is alien to us today. The use at every possible opportunity in the speeches by Academy Presidents documented in the *Almanachs* for the years 1938 to 1943 of phrases such as "*deutsche Volksgemeinschaft*" ["German people's community"], "service to the German people," "decision-making power of the spiritual and moral element," "spiritual overarching of peoples," "spiritual homeland front," "fertility of the German spirit," or "idea of the eternal Reich" also have a disturbing effect.

¹ *Almanach* for 1937, 87 (1937), p. 183.

² *Almanach* for 1938, 88 (1939), pp. 163–4.

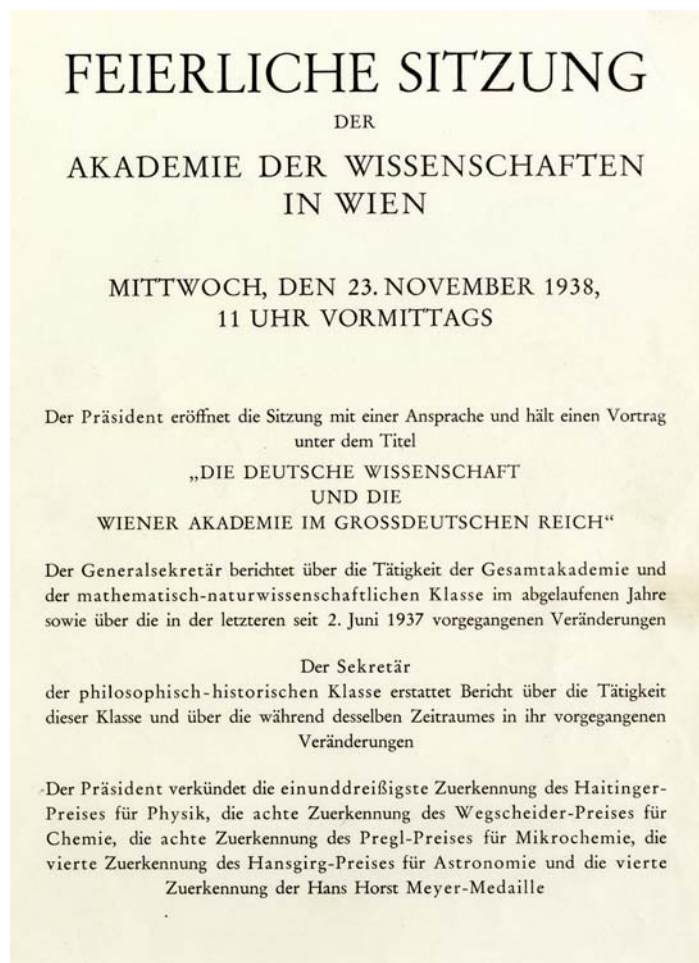


Fig. 48: Program of the Ceremonial Session 1938

“How could the Academy of Sciences in Vienna, now that Austria had entered the Greater German Reich and the age-old yearning for a greater German community of states has been fulfilled, how could the supreme academic community on the soil of the old Ostmark stand apart when Austria has again become the Ostmark of the united German People’s state and the Reich has been enlarged and enriched by millions of Germans?”³ [...] “Our Academy links up organically with its German past by placing itself with fervor and a sense of duty in the service of the greater German People’s state.”⁴

³ *Almanach* for 1938, 88 (1939), p. 164.

⁴ *Almanach* for 1938, 88 (1939), p. 169.



Fig. 49: Srbik bust with quotes from his speeches

Srbik then spoke of “the question of the entitlement to exist of the old major research communities, the German academies of sciences”⁵ and emphasized in this regard: “Scholarship of a creative nature is in its most profound sense not an end in itself, but in the service of something higher. It must experience the here and now of its own people and of peoples and influence its design. [...] If it does not want to waste its best energies, scholarship should not set itself apart from life and people or lose itself in impossible ideas of complete objectivity, which can never be attained.”⁶

Compared with Redlich’s speeches, Srbik⁷ makes disproportionate use of the words “German,” “Germany,” and “German-ness,” which occur in practically every second sentence. This is in keeping with the start of his speech in 1938, in which he confirms the “continuity of the national idea in the Vienna Academy.” Word frequency

⁵ *Almanach* for 1938, 88 (1939), p. 165.

⁶ *Almanach* for 1938, 88 (1939), pp. 165, 169–70.

⁷ The speeches by Redlich and Srbik lend themselves to comparison insofar as opening addresses by Presidents were given continuously after 1919. See *Festgabe* (1958). Redlich’s nineteen speeches between 1919 and 1937 consisted of around 13,000 words, while Srbik’s speeches between 1938 and 1943 amounted to just under 8,000; his 1944 speech was not published in 1945.

comparison also shows that apart from the inflationary use of “German,” the words “people,” “Reich,” and “spirit” also appear frequently. For Redlich, by contrast, who in general had a wider vocabulary, we find frequent use of the words “Austria,” “research,” and “activity.” A comparison on the basis of the keywords “national” and “international” also shows that Redlich repeatedly emphasized the international dimension of science and research, in particular the international association of academies in the world (1919, 1922, 1924, 1927, 1931), whereas Srbik mentions this dimension much less. He interprets the promotion of the international scientific collaboration of the Academy rather as a contribution to the “honor of the German name in the world” (1938).⁸ A comparison on the basis of the words “serve” and “scholarship” reveals the fundamental difference in the two speakers’ conception of scholarship. On several occasions, Redlich emphasizes on that scholarship primarily serves human knowledge, and (at the end of his 1937 speech) demands of it and of the Academy in particular that it should “uphold and defend the spirit of free but critically controlled, truthful, and impartial striving for knowledge.”⁹ In Srbik’s speeches, by contrast, scholarship is seen almost exclusively in the service of the German people, being placed “in the service of a new awareness of the truth and of the people’s honor, power, national unity, and freedom, and of the new idealism experienced by our people,”¹⁰ so that the work of the Academy – referred to on several occasion as “service to the people” – should prove itself, for example, “in works that serve the German race, the German language, and questions of German national character, German soil, German law, and German art, German family and genealogy.”¹¹ An analysis of the citations used also reveals a manifest break with tradition in 1938. Whereas Redlich is very keen to point to the Academy’s continuity through his recurrent (eight) references to the the start its history in the revolutionary year of 1848 on the one hand, and through numerous mentions of earlier Presidents and tributes to various members and their research on the other, only two quotations in Srbik’s 1938 speech (apart from the standard expression of thanks to Redlich) make reference to the Academy’s tradition, and the two names – Leibniz and Grillparzer – are instrumentalized to highlight the connection between Austrian and German history.

⁸ *Almanach* for 1938, 88 (1939), p. 167.

⁹ *Almanach* for 1937, 87 (1937), p. 183.

¹⁰ *Almanach* for 1938, 88 (1939), p. 176.

¹¹ *Almanach* for 1938, 88 (1939), p. 177.



Fig. 50: Auditorium at the Ceremonial Session 1939

The 1939 Ceremonial Session once again took place in spring, as was customary. The President's speech on this occasion was greatly affected by the incorporation of Sudetenland into the German Reich and the subsequent liquidation of Czechoslovakia, and the occupation of rump Czechoslovakia by the *Wehrmacht* [armed forces] and the creation of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. From Srbik's point of view, "the reorganization of the center of Europe through a grand idea has brought about great progress: [...] precious German ethnic soil has been returned to the Reich, and all the clouds that form, all the storms that could break out, will be unable to harm the solid structure of the German political body."¹²

The start of World War II, however, soon caused the initial euphoria about "the reorganization of the center of Europe" to fade away. In his relatively short speech of 1940, Srbik opined: "In the earth-shattering struggle of peoples and states that we are experiencing today, organizations for intellectual work such as our Academy of Sciences, do not, as a whole, have a widely audible voice." The commitment to the German people was, of course, present again, although on this occasion linked with the hope for peace in the near future: "The Academy as an intellectual community serves the German people and the Greater German Reich in immutable loyalty in time of war, as it will serve it when peace returns, and through the medium of its own people

¹² *Almanach* for 1939, 89 (1940), p. 166.

it also serves humanity. [...]. May a German peace illuminate our Ceremonial Session next year!"¹³

In his opening address in 1941, Srbik was forced to admit that an end to the war was not in sight: "The hope I spoke of a year ago has not yet been fulfilled: that a German peace would illuminate our Ceremonial Session. The immeasurable efforts in Germany's struggle for a new order in Europe and even in the world have not yet ended, the struggle on land and at sea continues to rage [...]. It is a millennial task with the most intense sense of responsibility that the German people has once again taken on today. German scholarship has no less duty in this people's task than the German sword and the German sense of beauty: German culture should radiate throughout the world, and the fertility of the German intellect should also fructify other peoples. Out of its loyalty to the people, the Reich, and the Führer, the Academy of Sciences in Vienna will also do its German duty. [...]. From such knowledge, strength and assurance of victory also flow to us, who can serve our people only with our intellect and not with weapons as well."¹⁴

On the day of the Ceremonial Session of the Academy in 1942, the President spoke of the need to take sides: "The side we take is that of the German people and Reich; the intellectual work must also incorporate and subordinate its own personality and creativity to it." Srbik also appealed for the "joyful fulfillment of duty to serve Germany" – which applied equally to the researcher in the hinterland as the "soldiers at the front."¹⁵ Following the reports by the two Secretaries, the newly elected honorary member of the Academy, Nazi writer Erwin Guido Kolbenheyer, gave a speech on "the ethnic biological function of spiritual life and spiritual education."¹⁶

In the 1943 Ceremonial Session the President again spoke of the "commitment of loyalty to the people and the Reich" in the "difficult years of Germany's world struggle, and the global task of our German cultural work," of the "purest and most intense pan-German sentiments." He also announced his "conviction that the idea of the Reich and a new world order demands the sacrifice of one's own life for the nation's mission and generates new life." He even went as far as to say that one must "burn pure life itself in order to brighten the world as a sacrificial flame." Regarding the war of the German Reich against the Soviet Union he stated: "The realm of Goethe and Beethoven, the German judicial and economic system, European order and civilization, will extend to wherever the marching boots of the German musketeer will stop."¹⁷

This was the last of Srbik's speeches to be printed in the Academy *Almanach*. In the *Almanach* for 1944, which was not published until 1946, it says merely: "The President of the Academy of Sciences, Prof. Dr. Heinrich R. v. Srbik, opened the

¹³ *Almanach* for 1940, 90 (1941), pp. 155–6.

¹⁴ *Almanach* for 1941, 91 (1941), pp. 167–9.

¹⁵ *Almanach* for 1942, 92 (1942), pp. 169–70.

¹⁶ *Almanach* for 1942, 92 (1942), pp. 322–48.

¹⁷ *Almanach* for 1943, 93 (1943), pp. 171–3.

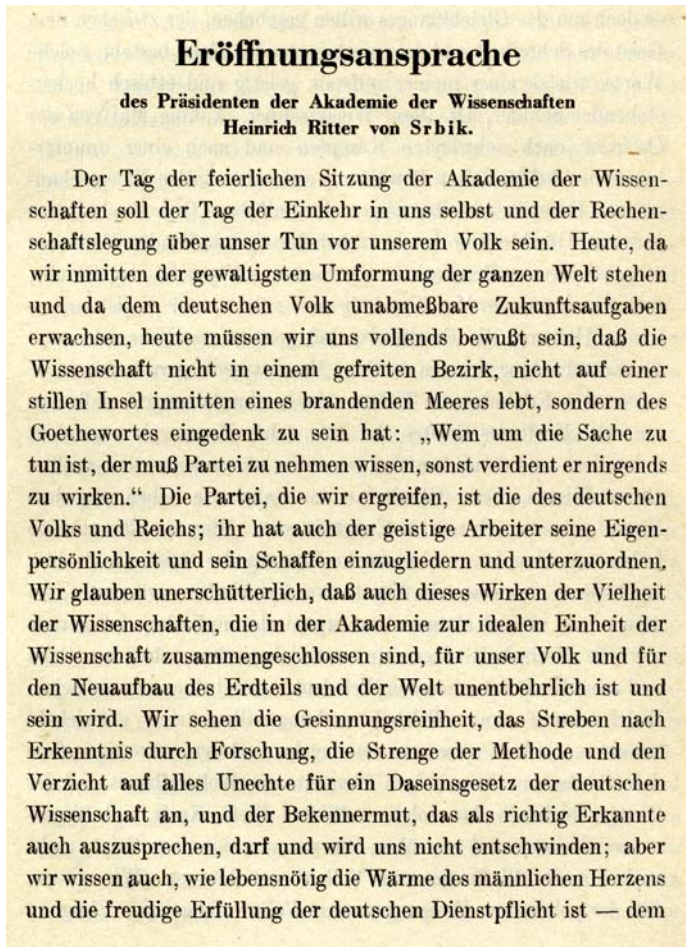


Fig. 51: Srbik's speech at the 1942 Ceremonial Session, beginning

Ceremonial Session by welcoming the guests in a speech and handed the floor to the Secretary General for his report on the Academy as a whole and the Section for Mathematics and the Natural Sciences, and then to the Secretary for his report on the Section for Humanities and the Social Sciences.”¹⁸

At the beginning of this *Almanach* it says: “Publication of the *Almanach* for 1944 is delayed on account of the destruction of the first composition by a bomb on the state printing works and the need to reconstruct the manuscript. The details regarding the Presiding Committee and members nevertheless reflect, in accordance with the purpose of the *Almanach* of gathering material for the history of the Academy, the situation in 1944 on the cutoff date of 31 December 1944, and the addresses of the members are also unchanged. By contrast, it appeared unnecessary to include the

¹⁸ *Almanach* for 1944, 94 (1946), p. 101.

Statutes of the Academy and the Reich Association of German Academies of Sciences, which the changed circumstances have invalidated, or provisions regarding foundations, legacies, and gifts, which are in need of revision and review, or the list of institutes receiving the publications of the Academy of Sciences.

Vienna, February 1946.

For the Presiding Committee
of the Academy of Sciences:

J. Keil,

Secretary General.”¹⁹

Herbert Matis

¹⁹ *Almanach* for 1944, 94 (1946), p. 1.

Expelled, burnt, sold, forgotten, and suppressed

The permanent destruction of the Institute for Experimental Biology and its academic staff

Today only a street name recalls the existence of a research facility that wrote biological and medical history in the first decades of the twentieth century. In February 1957, *Vivariumsstrasse* in the Prater was named after the magnificent building built at the start of the Prater's *Hauptallee* for the Vienna World's Fair in 1873, functioning initially as an aquarium and known after 1888 as the Vivarium. After this and many other exhibition projects had come to nothing, three young and wealthy biologists from the Jewish bourgeoisie purchased the building in 1902: the zoologist Hans Przibram, just 28 years old, and the botanists Wilhelm Figdor (36) and Leopold Portheim (33). This triumvirate transformed the building into a private research institute, to which they gave the programmatic name the Institute for Experimental Biology (Biologische Versuchsanstalt, BVA). In subsequent years it developed into one of the leading research centers for experimental biology in the world.¹

Equipped with what was, at that time, state-of-the-art laboratory infrastructure – including new types of temperature chambers – the researchers were attempting, as in chemistry and physics, to answer major biological questions by means of experiment. In so doing, they made the Institute for Experimental Biology into a sort of “breeding ground” of modern biology and a model for research institutes from New York to Moscow. Not only the infrastructure, but also the organization of the research was highly innovative: Scholars from different disciplines worked together, and laboratory facilities were made available to a constant stream of colleagues from Austria and other countries. Many doctoral theses by students at the University of Vienna – including that in 1910 of the later Nobel Prize winner Karl Frisch – were written at the Institute for Experimental Biology.

The research work most well known today to be conducted at the Institute for Experimental Biology were the spectacular breeding experiments by the eccentric zoologist Paul Kammerer, the first employee of the Institute for Experimental Biology who committed suicide following accusations of falsification that remain unresolved to this day. The researcher, who was very well reputed in his day, attempted to demonstrate the heritability of acquired characteristics in amphibians, but also carried out important work on the mutability of sex characteristics, and the significance of

¹ Some new articles have recently appeared about the Institute for Experimental Biology and its history; see Hofer (2001), *Goldscheid*, or Coen (2006), *Fin-de-Siècle Wien*. The best work remains Reiter (1999), *Zerstört*. The documentary novel by Lorenz (1952), *Sieg*, is still also worth reading, in particular pp. 127–234, 339–48.



Fig. 52: The Vivarium

cooperation in evolution.² The physiologist Eugen Steinach has also recently been rediscovered. From 1912 onwards he headed his own department in the Institute for Experimental Biology and was a pioneer in hormone research.³ Steinach, who was nominated for the Nobel Prize five times, became world-famous for his anti-aging operation, which Sigmund Freud, among others, underwent. “To be steinached” was a common expression in the 1920s, and became so well known even in English that newspapers used it without further explanation. But many other researchers also contributed to the high regard in which the Institute for Experimental Biology was held and hence to the reputation of the Academy of Sciences, which became the owner of the institute in 1914.

In order to safeguard the existence of their private institute in the medium term, the three founders donated their unique facility to the Academy on 1 January 1914 after long-drawn-out negotiations. Moreover, Przibram, Portheim, and Figdor, together with Przibram’s brother Karl, supplied 300,000 krone to establish a foundation, an sum equivalent to over 2 million Euros today. After 1918 the institute suffered not only from the difficult economic conditions but also from the growing anti-Semitism of professors at the University of Vienna. Paul Kammerer, for example, was refused the title of extraordinary professor in 1918/19 for political and “racial”

² It is hard to obtain an overview of the literature on Kammerer; even without more recent publications. The three best works remain Koestler (1971), *Case*; Hirschmüller (1991), *Kammerer*, and Gliboff (2006), *Kammerer*.

³ See, for example, Stoff (2004), *Jugend*, and Walch (2011), *Sexualhormone*.

reasons and thus abandoned his university career. Kammerer's main opponent was the paleontologist Othenio Abel who, in 1926, was motivated by anti-Semitism to prevent the habilitation of the zoologist Leonore Brecher and her colleague Paul Weiss, Hans Przibram's closest collaborators, who then left Austria for this reason.⁴ In turn, Przibram himself had no chance of obtaining one of the two vacant zoology professorships in 1925 despite his impressive scientific achievements. In spite of the adverse circumstances and the lack of support from the Academy – Przibram was in a weak position within the university and was not a member of the Academy – he managed to keep the research going. Between 1914 and 1939, 284 papers, some of them of book length, came out of the institute's laboratories and were published by the Academy. Since 1903 over 250 researchers (around a quarter of them women) had worked there, either unpaid or funded almost exclusively from external sources.⁵



Fig. 53: Work station in the Vivarium (1931)

⁴ See Taschwer (2013), *Geheimsache*, and Taschwer (2012), *Andenken*.

⁵ According to unpublished research by Sabine Brauckmann. Gerd Müller has calculated that 175 BVA papers totaling 5,056 pages appeared in the *Archiv für Entwicklungsmechanik der Organismen*, the leading international journal in this field at the time. Quoted in Markl (2002), *Keimzelle*.



Fig. 54: Vivarium staff (1936)
Seated center: Leopold Portheim; standing 3rd from l.: Franz Köck

With the “Anschluss” came the onset of tragedy for the 35-year-old Institute for Experimental Biology. While the Academy’s Presiding Committee carried out its exclusion of members for political and “racial” reasons after March 1938 in a bureaucratic and measured fashion, and in some cases *only on the explicit order of the Reichsstatthalterei* [office of the Reich Governor],⁶ its attitude toward the Institute for Experimental Biology was quite the opposite. The first act of destruction was executed with military precision. The main parties responsible were Fritz Knoll, who had already been elected on 20 January 1938 to the Academy curatorium of the Institute for Experimental Biology,⁷ and Franz Köck, who had succeeded Paul Weiss in 1927 as *Adjunkt* [administrative official] at the Institute for Experimental Biology, although he had been employed only as a specialist for the technical apparatus. Köck announced his National Socialist sympathies after 1938 and claimed a leading position for himself under the new political regime. On 17 March he ordered the *conditional closure* of the institute as well as preparations for its *reorganization*.⁸ It is likely that the locks

⁶ This was the text of the letter of 23 November 1942, in which the Nazi representative criticized Heinrich Srbik’s ‘wait and see’ attitude. ÖStA-AdR, Gauakt Heinrich Srbik, BMI/GA 49317.

⁷ From January 1938 the curatorium also included physicist and Academy Secretary Egon Schweidler, zoologist Karl Grobben, physiologist Arnold Durig, physical chemist Hermann Franz Mark, and geneticist and botanist Erich Tschermak-Seysenegg. Knoll was immediately appointed chairman.

⁸ AOAW, Papers of Fritz Knoll, Box 1, Folder 2.

AKADEMIE DER WISSENSCHAFTEN IN WIEN

WIEN I., UNIVERSITÄTSPLATZ 2.

A B S C H R I F T.

Wien, 4. April 1938.

Der Unterzeichnete, welcher im Kuratorium der Biologischen Versuchsanstalt mit der Wahrung der Interessen der Landesleitung der NSDAP in Österreich für den Bereich der Akademie der Wissenschaften betraut ist, beauftragt hiemit den Parteigenossen Universitätsprofessor Dr. Victor JUNK, Aktuar der Akademie der Wissenschaften gemeinsam mit Frau Marie REPOTOTSCHNIG, Buchhaltungsassistentin der Akademie der Wissenschaften die Zeichnung für den Widmungsfond der Biologischen Versuchsanstalt erliegend bei der Österr. Creditanstalt -Wiener Bankverein und für das Konto ordinario erliegend beim Postsparkassenamt in Wien zu übernehmen. Die bisherigen Zeichnungsberechtigten Univ. Prof. Dr. Hans PRZIBRAM und Leopold v. PORTHEIM werden hiemit von der Zeichnungsberechtigung enthoben.

Herr Ing. Franz KÖCK, Adjunkt der Biologischen Versuchsanstalt hat sich zur Fortführung der laufenden Agenden nunmehr mit beiden obgenannten neuen Zeichnungsberechtigten in Verbindung zu setzen.

f.d. Landesleitung der NSDAP:

gez. F. KNOLL

Fig. 55: Letter by Knoll of 4 April 1938

were changed already at this time and Jewish staff prevented from entering. On 4 April 1938 Fritz Knoll ordered *Party comrade University Professor Dr. Victor Junk, Actuary of the Academy of Sciences, together with Mrs. Marie Repototschnig, accounting assistant of the Academy of Sciences, to take over as signatories for the fund of the Institute for Experimental Biology [...] and the ordinary account [...]. The former signatories Univ.-Prof. Hans Przibram and Leopold von Portheim are hereby relieved of their signing authority.*⁹

The next day Köck was officially confirmed as sub-authorized agent for the Institute for Experimental Biology. And on 13 April 1938, a month and a day after the “Anschluss”, the Academy direction issued the following order, which could not have been more cynical: *The Institute for Experimental Biology is to be closed from 6 p.m. this day for cleaning work that cannot be delayed and will remain closed until 25 April. At 8 a.m. on 26 April the Institute will be reopened to those members of staff who have applied for and been issued passes. The work places are to be left in proper condition by 6 p.m. today. Temporary passes, which may be revoked at any time, will be issued for work that cannot be postponed (care of animals, final work, etc.).*¹⁰ The letter was signed by Knoll and the designated Academy President Heinrich Srbik.

From this time at the latest, Hans Przibram and Leopold Portheim, who had managed the institute for over 35 years and had donated it to the Academy, were no longer able to enter their institute. Przibram also had to abandon his private library. Eugen Steinach, physiology department head, was on a lecture tour abroad in March 1938 and never returned to Austria before his death in 1944. His villa at *Böcklinstrasse* 51 in the Pratercottage, a residential area between the Prater and the Danube Canal with large patrician houses, was “aryanized.”

Of the other twenty-two male and eight female employees in March 1938, fifteen were of Jewish descent. They were all required to leave the Institute for Experimental Biology immediately; one other female and four other male researchers left ‘voluntarily’ in March 1938. This meant that the institute lost all of its department heads and two-thirds of its staff within a very short space of time. Egon Schweidler, Secretary General of the Academy, described the situation in his report for 1938 in somewhat less dramatic terms: “The Institute for Experimental Biology in the Prater is in the process of reorganization in terms both of the design of the building and improvements to the interior fittings, and the organization of its scientific activities.”¹¹ Köck formulated it more explicitly on 4 May 1940 in a letter to the *Kurator der wissenschaftlichen Hochschulen* [Registrar of academic institutions of higher education]: *The Jews were removed after the changeover and where money from the Institute for Experimental Biology (private and state) was being used for the personal work of the Jews, Aryans*

⁹ AÖAW, Papers of Fritz Knoll, Box 1, Folder 2; see facsimile overleaf

¹⁰ AÖAW, Papers of Fritz Knoll, Box 1, Folder 2. See also AÖAW, Biologische Versuchsanstalt (Vivarium), Box 1, Folder 2.

¹¹ *Almanach* for 1938, 88 (1939), p. 188.

+ = Mfgt. - Berlin

**BIOLOGISCHE VERSUCHSANSTALT
DER
AKADEMIE DER WISSENSCHAFTEN
WIEN
II. PRATER, „VIVARIUM“**

WIEN, _____

Liste der Arbeitenden 1938.

+ Brecher Leonore, Dr.	Zoologische Abteilung	Freiplatz
Franko Ernst <i>einget. 15.10.38</i>	****	****
+ Geiringer Martha <i>einget. 15.10.38</i>	****	****
Glaser Josef, Dr. <i>einget. 12.11.38</i>	****	****
+ Grünberg Friedrich, Dr. <i>einget. 12.11.38</i>	****	****
+ Hueslmayer Walter	****	****
+ Hauser Heinz, Ing.	Botanische Abteilung	****
Blavac Franz	Zoologische Abteilung	****
Erabik Ottokar <i>einget.</i>	****	****
Jurisek Jovana	Pflanz. Physiol. Abteilung	****
Kisser Josef, Prof. Dr.	Botanische Abteilung	Lehrling
+ Kurz Onkar, Dr. <i>wartet</i>	Zoologische Abteilung	Freiplatz
+ Kun Heinrich, Dr.	Physiologische Abteilung	****
Lenkl Katharine <i>einget.</i>	Botanische Abteilung	Lehrling
+ Lindenberg Lise	****	Freiplatz
Lohweg Kurt, Dr.	****	****
Mausner Franz, Dr.	Zoologische Abteilung	****
+ Pecenik Onkar, Dr. <i>einget.</i>	Physiologische Abteilung	****
+ Prizbran Elisabeth	Zoologische Abteilung	****
+ Ried Onkar, Dr.	Botanische Abteilung	****
+ Rix Karl <i>einget.</i>	****	****
Rismann Gabriele, Dr.	****	****
Schnabl Josef	Zoologische Abteilung	****
+ Schmidt Gerda	****	****
Stift Alfred <i>einget.</i>	****	****
+ Stock Alexander	****	****

**BIOLOGISCHE VERSUCHSANSTALT
DER
AKADEMIE DER WISSENSCHAFTEN
WIEN
II. PRATER, „VIVARIUM“**

WIEN, _____

Fortsetzung Liste der Arbeitenden 1937.

+ Traub Lerle <i>einget.</i>	Botanische Abteilung	Freiplatz
Zeif Erhard	Zoologische Abteilung	****
Zicka Franz	Botanische Abteilung	****

Abteilungsvorstände

+ Botanische Abteilung	Leopold Portheim
<i>wartet</i> Pflanz. Physiol. Abteilung	Prof. Dr. Wilhelm Fiedor
+ Physiologische Abteilung	Prof. Dr. Eugen Steinach
+ Zoologische Abteilung	Prof. Dr. Hans Przibram
Adjunkt	Ing. Franz Köck

Fig. 56: List of employees (1937–8)

were paid with this money; Aryans being paid with this money remained in the Institute for Experimental Biology. This was done so that the experience gained through years of scientific work would not be lost.¹² While the "Aryanization" of the funds was successful, the continuation of research work was a disaster. The only serious researcher to continue to work for a short time at the *Institute for Experimental Biology* after the "Anschluss" was the botanist Josef Kisser. After 1945 he became a professor at what is now the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, where he was rector three times. Köck's own research, which consisted mainly of mixing sawdust with bran and testing this for use as livestock feed, proved to be nonsense. The only thing that continued to function in any way was the public aquarium.

Following numerous complaints and accusations against Köck, Knoll was appointed as "*Gefolgschaftsführer*" of the Institute for Experimental Biology on 8 November 1939 and thus became responsible for it. Köck's dismissal took effect on 1 October 1940,¹³ after he had brought about, amongst other things, *the destruction of ponds and terraria, the closure of parts of the scientific collection and several display cases, changes in the gardens, in short severe injury to the value of the institute*.¹⁴ The Vivarium continued to exist until 1943 as an aquarium, as it had started out 70 years earlier. In June 1943 the Academy concluded an agreement with the Kaiser Wilhelm Society that allowed the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Cultivated Plant Research to use the institute's facilities, greenhouses, and gardens for its experimental research.

But what happened to the former employees of the institute? In her book *Biologen unter Hitler* [Biologists under Hitler], Ute Deichmann also discusses the zoology and botany professors at German and Austrian universities who were expelled and murdered by the Nazis. She starts with Hans Przibram, the only biology professor to die in a concentration camp.¹⁵ The director of the Institute for Experimental Biology appears to have received an invitation from his former student Paul Weiss for the United States, but he underestimated the dangers posed by the Nazis. Before war broke out he was able to flee to the Netherlands, but they were occupied by German troops in the spring of 1940. On 3 March 1941, Przibram asked Fritz Knoll for a letter of support for his planned emigration to the United States. The letter was written by Knoll with the permission of the head of the Nazi Association for University Teachers Arthur Marchet, but the entire file was sent for a final decision to the Reich Ministry of Science, Education, and Culture in Berlin, effectively invalidating the letter from Vienna.¹⁶ In April 1943 the Nazis deported Hans Przibram and his wife to Theresienstadt concentration camp, where Przibram's suffering ended on 20 May 1944. He died of nutritional edema; his wife Elisabeth, who was also listed as an

¹² AÖAW, Papers of Fritz Knoll, Box 1, Folder 2.

¹³ See AÖAW, Papers of Fritz Knoll, Box 1, Folder 2, Knoll to Köck of 17 July 1940.

¹⁴ AÖAW, Papers of Fritz Knoll, Box 1, Folder 2, unsigned letter of 3 June 1940, probably written by Knoll, page 2.

¹⁵ See Deichmann (1995), *Biologen*, pp. 36–40.

¹⁶ See UAW, Akademischer Senat, academic year 1939/40/41, ref. 1679.

employee of the Institute for Experimental Biology in March 1938, committed suicide the following day.¹⁷

These two were not the only Institute for Experimental Biology employees to meet their death through the Nazi terror. The zoologist Leonore Brecher was another victim.¹⁸ Shortly after the “Anschluss” she went on an unpaid research trip to Cardiff but had to return and was deported on 14 September 1942 from Vienna to the Maly Trostinec extermination camp near Minsk, Belarus, and killed on 18 September, the day of arrival.¹⁹ All that is known of her colleague Martha Geiringer, a doctoral student of Przibram, is that she was deported from Belgium to Auschwitz on 15 January 1943. The physiologist Heinrich Kun, Eugen Steinach’s closest colleague, died in an unknown camp in Yugoslavia. Henriette Burchardt, also employed for several years with Steinach, was deported on 24 September 1942 from Vienna to Theresienstadt and from there to Auschwitz-Birkenau on 23 October 1944. Her precise date of death is also unknown. The Institute for Experimental Biology was thus, relative to its size, the research institute in Austria and the German Reich with the most victims of National Socialism.

During the last days of the war in Vienna, the physical destruction of the building itself took place, long after the staff had been forced to leave and the research activities abandoned. According to the eye-witness account of long-standing institute employee Albert Weiser, German combat units (SS and *Wehrmacht*) were quartered in the Institute for Experimental Biology with heavy armored fighting vehicles from 6 to 9 April 1945 and were responsible for the initial destruction. *On 11 April 1945 a fire broke out in several places at the same time in the Institute itself, probably as the result of an incendiary shell, which raged for two days. It was impossible to fight the fire because of the water shortage and, since the Institute was right in the combat area, the heavy shelling.*²⁰ What happened afterwards was described in 1947 in Richard Meister’s *Geschichte der Akademie der Wissenschaften*: “The building of the Prater Institute for Experimental Biology, II., *Hauptallee* 1, was destroyed by fire in the last days of the war to such an extent that there was no possibility of restoring it with the Academy’s resources.”²¹ Elsewhere he writes: “The available cash funds and proceeds from the sale of the burnt-out building will be [...] used, as the founders would have wished, to build the Biological Station in Lunz am See.”²² There is also a paragraph about the work of the

¹⁷ On the fate of the Przibrans, see Przibram (1959), *Przibram*, p. 187; Koestler (1971), *Case*, pp. 121–2, and Reiter (1999), *Zerstört*, pp. 611–2.

¹⁸ See Taschwer (2012), *Andenken*.

¹⁹ This and the following data were researched at www.yadvashem.org.

²⁰ AÖAW, Biologische Versuchsanstalt (Vivarium), Box 4, Folder 2, commemorative record of events of April 1945.

²¹ Meister (1947), *Geschichte*, p. 190.

²² Meister (1947), *Geschichte*, p. 344. The question remains as to how those responsible in the Academy were able to fathom the wishes of the founders, all of whom, with the exception of Karl Przibram, were dead.



Fig. 57: The destroyed Vivarium

Institute for Experimental Biology – but not a word about the fact that no other Academy institute was harder hit by the events of 1938 to 1945. And, needless to say, nothing about the fate of Elisabeth and Hans Przibram, Wilhelm Figdor, Eugen Steinach, Leonore Brecher, Henriette Burchardt, Martha Geiringer, or Heinrich Kun. In the media, at least, there were protests at the abandonment of the burnt ruins. On 20 October 1948, *Neues Österreich* reported resignedly one last time about “the selling of biology” thus: “[...] at the heart of academia, in the traditional home of biology, material and even moral forces appear to have failed. Goodbye Vivarium! [...] The Academy of Sciences has sold the building it received as a gift.”

One person who cut out and kept this and other newspaper articles on the Institute for Experimental Biology, and who also collected further material on this research institute before 1938 and after 1945, was Fritz Knoll. It is possible that the botanist

had a guilty conscience about the complete destruction of the research institute that had been entrusted to him. When he published two volumes on great Austrian natural scientists, engineers, and physicians in 1950 and 1957 on behalf of the Academy, he had two opportunities to recall the great history of the research institute and to pay tribute to its most important researchers. But the principle of repression was stronger: Knoll did not write a single word about any of them. And in essence, the eradication of the Institute for Experimental Biology from the collective memory of the history of science continues to have an effect to this day; even now there is no comprehensive portrayal of and tribute to this once world-famous institute of the Academy.

Klaus Taschwer

Transformations in research policy

In the history of the Academy of Sciences published in May 1947 as part of the centenary celebrations, the author, Vice-President Richard Meister, did not entirely cover up the Academy's activities during the Nazi era. On the contrary, he considered it to provide convincing evidence that "the majority of the members [...] resisted the subjugation of research to the primacy of politics."¹ "The work of the Academy – in terms of its business and the content and spirit of the work – was not significantly influenced by the political transformation [...], and in the work carried out and published during this time, [it] did not deviate from its position of research based on strict scientific objectivity."² That Meister's description distorts and even completely deforms the historical facts can be seen just from the fact that his contemporary, the ancient historian and long-serving Secretary General of the Academy (1945–59) Josef Keil, described it in the same year as *one of the most effective pieces of propaganda for intellectual Austria*.³ Meister's claims are interesting for historians, however, because they indirectly point to the ambivalent relationship to politics that could be perceived among the Academy members after the "Anschluss" in 1938.

Scholarship and Politics – Alliances? Separate entities?

Within the Academy of Sciences some of the members adapted their research activities to National Socialist ideology; at the same time, others showed greater reserve in their reaction to the political demands of the new authorities. In spite of the "relatively small changes" in the Provisional Statutes (particularly regarding the admittance of new members),⁴ many full members, who thanks to the Academy Law and Statutes had enjoyed a high degree of scientific autonomy during the First Republic, saw the demands made by the Nazi authorities as a comparatively major transformation. In practice, the interference by the Nazi regime far exceeded the extent of political intervention negotiated between the National Socialist authorities and the Academy and set out in the Provisional Statutes. It is not, therefore, surprising that some Academy members also soon began to assert themselves.⁵ At the same time, many members sympathized with the Nazi Party and some were fervent National Socialists. The academic community reacted ambivalently to the new political situation: there was opportunistic adaptation by some members and individual attempts to resist demands by others. There are a number of examples to illustrate this ambivalence. Adaptation could be seen, for example, in the way in which, from 1938, the leading

¹ Meister (1947), *Geschichte*, pp. 181–2.

² Meister (1947), *Geschichte*, pp. 183, 186.

³ AÖAW, Minutes of the General Assembly of 10 October 1947 (A 1013).

⁴ Matis (1997), *Anpassung*, p. 25; see also the essay in this volume by Herbert Matis, "The revision of the Statutes," pp. 87–92.

⁵ See Matis (1997), *Anpassung*, pp. 54–61.

figures in the Academy's institutions were replaced, as well as in the submissiveness with which Academy members accepted the transfer of institutes to the Kaiser Wilhelm Society. In the minutes of the meeting of 16 December 1938, it thus states: *The Ministry requested the Academy's opinion on the proposal that Privatdozent [lecturer] Dr. Gustav Ortner be nominated head of the Institute for Radium Research and as full professor at the Department of Physics II of the University.* Although the Statutes did not permit interference of this type, the Academy decided *to agree to the application by the Vice-President [Egon Schweidler].*⁶ At the General Assembly of 27 October 1939, it was announced that Ortner had been appointed head of the Department by the Reich Minister of Science, Education, and Culture.⁷ The transfer of institutes was also – as mentioned above – *acknowledged* without further resistance: *The Ministry of Interior and Cultural Affairs, section IV, gives notice of the decree of the Reich Minister for Science, Education, and Culture, that the further support of the two Kaiser Wilhelm Institutes, the Biological Station in Lunz and the Sonnblick Observatory, is no longer necessary.*⁸

However, there were discernable signs of self-assertion among the academy members. To prevent the political misuse of funds, the General Assembly decided on 8 March 1940 to add an additional paragraph to the Statutes for the Institute for Radium Research relating to the Kupelwieser Fund dedicated to it, as follows: *This Fund shall be used by the Institute for Radium Research by agreement with the Curatorium for PURELY SCIENTIFIC non-profit tasks [author's emphasis] carried out by the Radium Institute in accordance with the Statutes.*⁹

Some members and staff of the Academy used the new regime as a springboard for their careers. They did not stop at opportunistic adaptation, but took the initiative and became actively involved in research activities aimed at substantiating political beliefs. Active self-mobilization in both action and rhetoric attested to this. In the 72nd *Mitteilungen* [Bulletin] of the Phonogram Archive Commission, the new head of the Archive, Walter Ruth, stated: "In keeping with the most recent demands, the Phonogram Archive has set itself the task of promoting speech and singing education, thereby putting itself at the service of Nazi education. [...] Its proud task of acting as an outpost and preserver of German culture in the south-east should be an incentive and commitment for us in the future."¹⁰ The contract concluded by ordinary member Viktor Christian between the in-house publishers of the Department of Oriental Studies of the University of Vienna and the "*Ahmenerbe*" [Ancestral Heritage] Foundation Publishing House gave control over the Academy's series the *Rudolf Pöchs Nachlass*

⁶ AÖAW, Minutes of the General Assembly of 16 December 1938 (A 941).

⁷ See AÖAW, Minutes of the General Assembly of 27 October 1939 (A 948).

⁸ AÖAW, Minutes of the General Assembly of 6 June 1939 (A 946).

⁹ AÖAW, Minutes of the General Assembly of 8 March 1940 (A 951). See also *Almanach* for 1940, 90 (1941), p. 138. The Assembly is erroneously dated 15 March 1940.

¹⁰ Ruth (1941), *Phonogramarchiv*, pp. 90–1.



Fig. 58: Institute for Radium Research

[Rudolf Pöch Papers] to the SS research institute.¹¹ Its aim was to provide scientific underpinning for the claim of supremacy of the Aryan race. The two volumes published by the Academy's Pöch Commission on the anthropology of Turkic peoples in Russia (1941) and the *Rassenkundliche Untersuchungen an Serben und Montenegrinern* (1943) were published by the "Ahnenerbe" [Ancestral Heritage] Foundation Publishing House in Berlin-Dahlem with, according to the title page "the support of the Academy of Sciences in Vienna."

This essay sheds some light on the self-assertion, opportunistic adaptation, self-mobilization and involvement of the Academy. On this central issue of research, first

¹¹ See BAB, NS 21/388 K., contract between the Department of Oriental Studies' in-house publishers and the "Ahnenerbe" Foundation Publishing House of 14 December 1938.

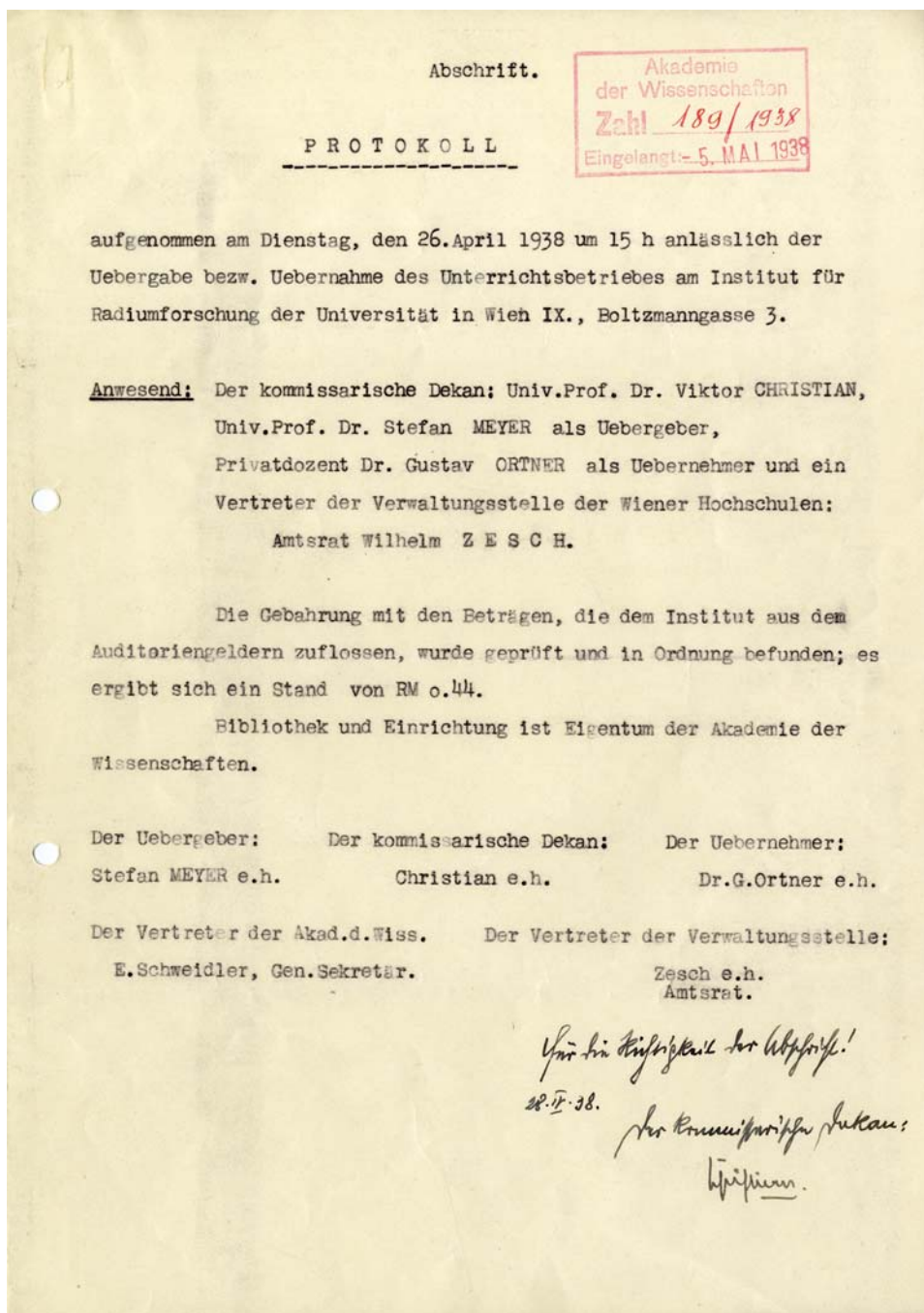


Fig. 59: Transfer of the Institute for Radium Research of 26 April 1938

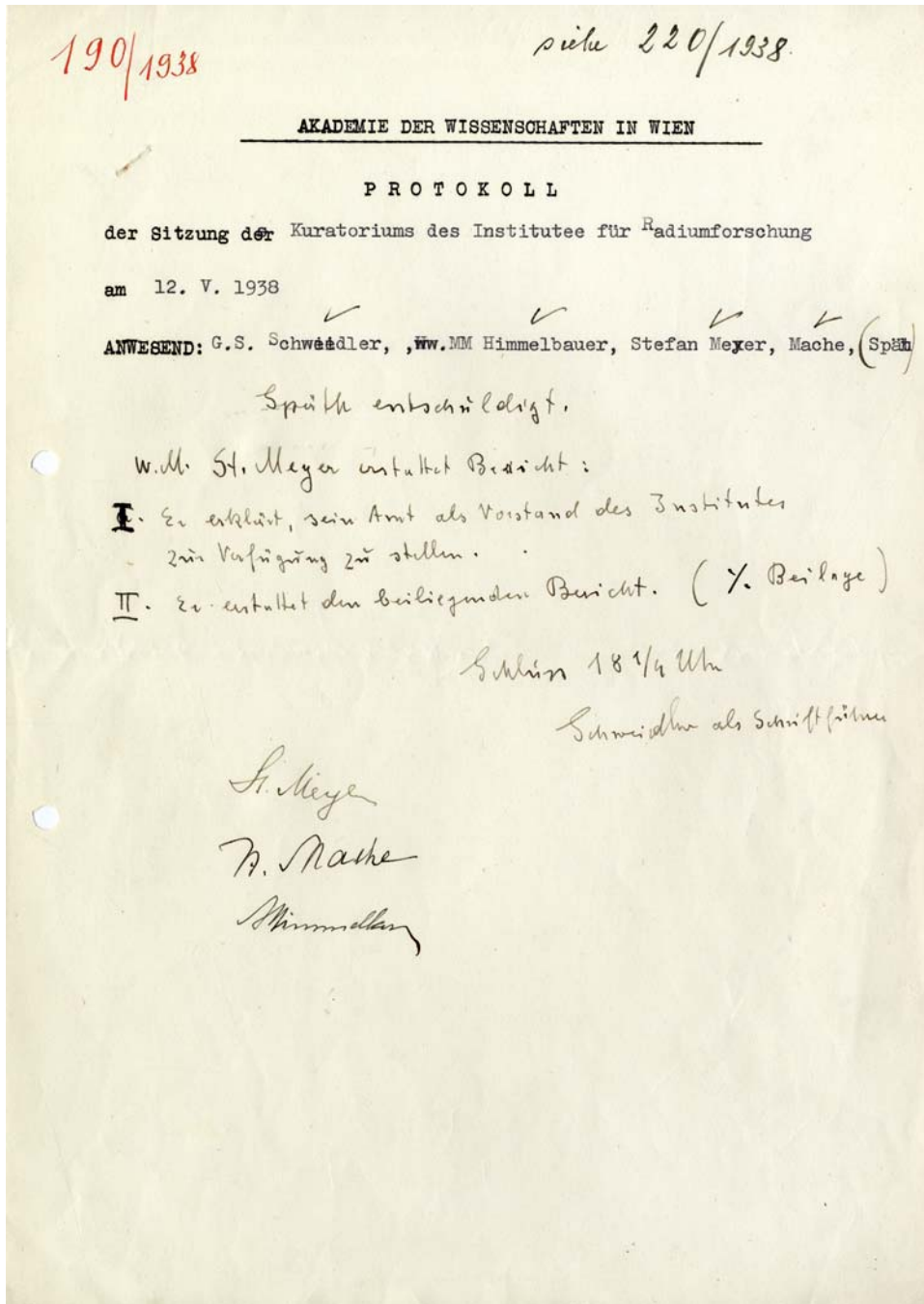


Fig. 60: Curatorium meeting of 12 May 1938

pioneering studies have been published by Mitchell G. Ash and Albert Müller who focus specifically on the German Reich and on the University of Vienna.¹² Regarding the Vienna Academy of Sciences and a comparative approach between research institutions, there is still a large gap that can be closed only by way of a major research project.

1938, or the so-called “new era”

In 1938, members of the Nazi Party were installed in leading positions in the scientific institutions that had employees, if these institutions were not already headed by illegal Nazis. The nomination processes revealed the opportunism of the Academy, which abandoned some of the relative autonomy it still had in doing so. The following tendency can be observed: In general, “racially” persecuted heads of the Academy’s institutions were dismissed, as were some supporters of the authoritarian *Ständestaat* [Corporate State]; they were replaced by illegal Nazis. With this “upheaval” in personnel, internationally acclaimed scientific practices built up over years among the Academy institutions, as well as research programs and pioneering international research institutes were extinguished at a blow.¹³ The following institutions were affected in this way.

At the Institute for Radium Research, the illegal Nazi Gustav Ortner replaced the full member Stefan Meyer, a pioneer of radium research who, together with his colleague Karl Przibram, had made the Institute world-famous. A quarter of the staff members, including Marietta Blau, Elisabeth Rona, Anni and Franz Urbach, Eduard Jahoda, Gustav Kürti, and Stefan Pelz, were also dismissed on “racial” grounds.¹⁴ The institute continued to produce publications, but many fewer than before.

At the Institute for Experimental Biology (BVA) in the Prater, the board members and department heads Leopold Portheim, Eugen Steinach, and Hans Przibram were removed. The internationally renowned scientists working there and around two-thirds of the staff were dismissed after April 1938 on “racial” grounds.¹⁵ The illegal Nazi Franz Köck became head of the Institute for Experimental Biology. On the basis of an “official party measure,” he was appointed by the “trustee head of cultural associations and organizations” as the “authorized representative of the Academy’s Institute for Experimental Biology” on 5 April 1938. This appropriation of the commissarial leadership was even questioned by the chairman of the Institute for Experimental Biology’s Curatorium, rector of the University and ordinary member of the Academy of Sciences Fritz Knoll, in a letter to the *Kurator der wissenschaftlichen Hochschulen*

¹² See Ash (2010), *Wissenschaft*; Ash (2006), *Wissenschaftswandlungen*; Ash (2004), *Wissenschaftswandlungen*; Ash (2002), *Wissenschaft*, and Müller (1997), *Adaptierung*.

¹³ See Reiter (1999), *Naturwissenschaften*, p. 184.

¹⁴ See Reiter (2000), *Meyer*, p. 122; also Reiter (1988), *Wissenschaftsemigration*, pp. 709–29; Reiter (2006), *Naturwissenschaften*, p. 185, and Rosner/Strohmaier (2003), *Blau*, pp. 49–51.

¹⁵ See the essay in this volume by Klaus Taschwer, “Expelled, burnt, sold, forgotten, and suppressed,” p. 106.

[Registrar of academic institutions of higher education] in Vienna of 8 October 1940.¹⁶ Research was discontinued in 1941 following the provisional closure of the institute.¹⁷

At the Phonogram Archive, the meritorious director Leo Hajek, for whose 25th anniversary celebrations plans were already being made before the “Anschluss”, was replaced by his assistant Walter Ruth, who had already rendered services to the Nazi Party during its illegal period and who was made provisional director by a decision of the Phonogram Archive Commission of 4 May 1938.¹⁸ Hajek was dismissed from the civil service on 30 June 1939 and had to emigrate the same year on account of “racial” persecution.¹⁹ Thereafter the Phonogram Archive carried out research projects aimed at substantiating political beliefs.

With regards to the Biological Station in Lunz and the Gastein Research Institute, following the Nazi seizure of power in Austria, the association agreements with the Academy of Sciences in Vienna were dissolved. The original agency responsible for running the Biological Station in Lunz was an association founded in 1923 by the Kupelwieser Foundation, in which the Academy and the Kaiser Wilhelm Society were represented. In 1939 the association’s assets were confiscated and it was dissolved by the “*Stillhaltekommissär*” [“Commissioner for Suspensions”] responsible for the “*Gleichschaltung*” [“alignment”] of associations, societies, and organizations. The Biological Station continued to operate under the Kaiser Wilhelm Society and the leadership of the illegal Nazi Party member Franz Ruttner with the same staff as before. The Academy continued to be represented at the Biological Station by the Vice-President of the Curatorium, the botanist Fritz Knoll. At the Gastein Research Institute, the supervisory function of the Academy Curatorium, whose members came from the Section for Mathematics and the Natural Sciences, was suspended in 1938. This institute was handed over to the municipalities of Badgastein and Bad Hofgastein. Ferdinand Scheminzky, a student of the Catholic conservative physiologist and ordinary member Arnold Durig, was replaced as head of the Institute by the illegal Nazi Party member Gerhard Kirsch.²⁰ After 1945, the Academy took over both institutes: Lunz in 1947 and Gastein in 1952.²¹

¹⁶ See Reiter (1999), *Zerstört*, pp. 609–14.

¹⁷ Meister (1947), *Geschichte*, p. 186. For details of the Institute for Experimental Biology, see also the essay in this volume by Klaus Taschwer, “Expelled, burnt, sold, forgotten, and suppressed,” pp. 101–11.

¹⁸ AÖAW, Phonogram Archive, Box 1, Folder 4, minutes of the meeting of the Phonogram Archive Commission of May 4, 1938.

¹⁹ For details of Hajek see the essay in this volume by Marlene Wahlmüller, “Consequences for the academic staff. The case of Leo Hajek,” pp. 69–76.

²⁰ Knierzinger (2012), *Forschungsinstitut*, pp. 121–2.

²¹ A commission for the administration of the Biological Station in Lunz was set up in 1947 and a commission for the scientific management of the Gastein Research Institute in Bad Gastein in 1952. See *Almanach* for 1947, 97 (1948), p. 56, and *Almanach* for 1952, 102 (1953), p. 148.



Fig. 61: Sonnblick Observatory

The administration of the Sonnblick Observatory remained in the hands of the Sonnblick Association, with funding being provided by the Kaiser Wilhelm Society.²² Ordinary member Heinrich Ficker was made chairman of the Sonnblick Association by order of the Reich Minister for Science, Education, and Culture on 23 January 1941.²³

Of the dismissed institute directors, Stefan Meyer managed to survive the Nazi era in Bad Ischl. Ferdinand Scheminzky, a physiologist who had been highly appreciated in the authoritarian *Ständestaat*, was appointed extraordinary professor at the University of Innsbruck in 1942. Karl Przibram, Leopold von Portheim, Eugen Steinach, and Leo Hajek were persecuted and expelled on “racial” grounds. Hans Przibram died in the Nazi Theresienstadt concentration camp in 1944 after having initially escaped to the Netherlands.

The Academy, which was divided into commissions, saw the creation of a new *Kommission zur Herausgabe von Schriften zur Rassenkunde und menschlichen Erblehre* [Commission for the Publication of Documents on the Study of Race and Human Genetics] in 1942. It was hoped that this commission would produce findings that could be used politically. Other commissions were renamed. Fervent National Socialists were elected to some. Chairmen were sometimes replaced by other commission

²² See *Almanach* for 1939, 89 (1940), p. 177.

²³ After 1939 the observatory on Hoher Sonnblick was of “increased military value” for the *Luftwaffe* [air force] and, as a result, the Association was able to continue to run it. See *Almanach* for 1941, 91 (1941), p. 190, and *Almanach* for 1942, 92 (1942), pp. 188–9.

members who belonged to the Nazi Party. The following examples bear witness to this development. In 1939 the Commission for the Promotion of Prehistoric Research and Excavations in Austria was renamed the Prehistoric Commission, and was run henceforth as an intersectional commission (made up of members of both the Section for Mathematics and the Natural Sciences, and the Section for Humanities and the Social Sciences), by the chairman Oswald Menghin, ordinary member of the Academy.²⁴ In 1940 the dean of the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Vienna, *SS-Obersturmführer* and ordinary member Viktor Christian, was co-opted into this commission. In the intersectional Phonogram Archive Commission, ordinary member Arnold Durig was replaced the following year as chairman by another ordinary member, the Anglicist and Nazi Party member Friedrich Wild. In the intersectional Commission for the Pöch Estate, Viktor Christian replaced the ordinary member Ferdinand Hochstetter as chairman. Hochstetter remained in the Pöch Commission, and Durig in the Phonogram Archive Commission. In the Commission for the Publication of German Medieval Inscriptions, the Germanist Dietrich Kralik-Meyerswalden, an ordinary member of the Academy and a member of the Nazi Party, replaced the former director and long-standing President of the Academy, Oswald Redlich. In 1942, most Nazi Party members were active in the following commissions: Phonogram Archive Commission (eight Nazi Party members out of fourteen commission members), Commission for Public Lectures (eight out of thirteen), Commission for the Publication of German Medieval Inscriptions (seven out of ten), Balkan Commission (six out of seventeen), Commission for the Matthäus and Rudolf Much Foundation (six out of nine), Asia Minor Commission (five out of ten), Prehistoric Commission (five out of eight), Commission for the Publication of Writings on the Study of Race and Human Genetics (five out of eight), Egyptian Commission (four out of seven), Medieval Sources of Law (*Weistümer*) and Rent-roll Commission (three out of six), and the Historical Commission (three out of seven). Significantly, these commissions received the most state funding between 1938 and 1945.²⁵

It should be pointed out that, in 1942, commission work was carried out predominantly by Academy members who did not belong to the Nazi Party, with the exception of Heinrich Srbik and Arnold Durig, who sat on nineteen and fourteen commissions, respectively. The most active Academy members were the physicist Egon Schweidler (member of 29 commissions and two delegations), the chemist Ernst Späth (member of 23 commissions), the classical philologist Ludwig Radermacher (18), the historian Oswald Redlich (17), the philologist Paul Kretschmer (13), and the historian Alfons Dopsch (12). It is notable and yet hardly surprising,

²⁴ For details on Menghin see Urban (2010), *Urgeschichte*.

²⁵ See the unpublished evaluation of the annual accounts of the Academy of Sciences for the period 1938–45 by the economist Johanna Aigner, MS., in the framework of the research project “Continuity and Transformation. The Austrian Academy of Sciences in the 20th Century,” run by the Institute of Culture Studies and Theatre History and funded by the city of Vienna (MA 7).

therefore, that in many of the Academy's commissions there was "an extensive continuity in the research work."²⁶ The strikingly active collaboration of older ordinary members who were likely as not critical of the interventions by the new authorities would appear to indicate that many of those who were familiar with the Academy's high-level of autonomy before 1938 were, through their research, investing in the interests of the Academy's self-assertion. By contrast, other Academy members who had already belonged to the Nazi Party when it was still illegal, sympathized with National Socialism, and/or as members of the Nazi Party had been elected as members of the Academy after the "Anschluss", were key figures in the opportunistic adaptation, self-mobilization and self-motivated involvement of the Academy through projects that suited Nazi interests.

Summary

The transformation of research policy under National Socialism was the result of two developments: the abandonment of the extensive autonomy enjoyed by the Academy since 1921/22 and, in conjunction with this, the passive acceptance of extensive interference by the new authorities that had not been allowed for in the Statutes. It is to be assumed that some of the older Academy members spoke up for keeping research and politics separate. Nevertheless, at the same time most of them opportunistically accepted considerable non-statutory political interference. By order of the new state authorities, "racially" or politically unacceptable institute directors were replaced by relatively young illegal Nazi Party members. On its own initiative, the Academy reorientated commissions along National Socialist lines and also entered into political alliances. As the following essay shows, under the "special protection of the Reich" and in accordance with the Provisional Statutes, between 1938 and 1945 the Academy carried out "science in the service of the German people."²⁷

Johannes Feichtinger

²⁶ Matis (1997), *Anpassung*, p. 42.

²⁷ *Almanach* for 1938, 88 (1939), p. 9.

Science “in the service of the German people”

According to the Provisional Statutes approved by the decree of the Reich Minister for Science, Education, and Culture of 22 July 1938, the task of the Academy of Sciences in Vienna was “to promote science in the service of the German people through independent research by its members and through stimulating and supporting external achievements.”¹ The Academy dedicated itself to this task by carrying out research projects with civilian or military relevance and through approving grants for research whose role it was to substantiate political beliefs. The self-mobilization and self-motivated involvement of parts of the Academy was illustrated in the initiative of carrying out research projects within the core area of the Nazi ideology (racial and ethnicity research) and the Nazi state (nuclear research). This went hand in hand with a focus on research relevant to the state instead of on the basic scientific research that had prevailed hitherto. Self-mobilization was frequently linked with the aim of earning new financial and symbolic resources. The examples cited here bear witness to this trend.

Nuclear research

At the Institute for Radium Research, the new director Gustav Ortner attempted “to adapt the Institute, which had originally been devoted solely to radium research, as quickly as possible to the larger range of tasks of a modern nuclear physics institute.”² Because of the secret work, vital to the war effort, on energy generation from nuclear processes, the Institute, which was merged with parts of the Department of Physics II of the University of Vienna in 1943 to become the Four-Year Plan Institute for Neutron Research headed by Nazi Party members Georg Stetter and Gustav Ortner, was granted generous special funding. As early as 1940 the Academy had supported the Institute with a subsidy of RM 12,000 from the remaining Reich grants from the years 1939 and 1940 for the *design of a high-voltage discharge tube (generation of high-speed canal rays)*.³ New findings, however, were published “from 1939 in a much reduced quantity,” as Meister commented critically in 1947.⁴

¹ *Almanach* for 1938, 88 (1939), p. 9.

² ÖStA-AdR, K 19/6147A, Georg Stetter, application for transformation of the extraordinary professorship for physics (radium research) into a full professorship, undated [January 1943], quoted in Fengler (2012), *Wüstentrockenheit*, p. 101.

³ AÖAW, Minutes of the General Assembly of 25 October 1940 (A 957), Annex.

⁴ Meister (1947), *Geschichte*, p. 186.

Racial research

From the early 1940s the Academy also supported projects associated with the study of race, partly through grant-funded research and partly on its own initiative. At the request of director Hans Kummerlölwe, who was commissioned to direct the so called *Wissenschaftliche Staatsmuseen* [state research museums] in Vienna, Academy President Srbik arranged grants for an extensive series of studies by the Anthropology Department of the Museum of Natural History in the Kaisersteinbruch prisoner of war camp (Stalag XVII A) in northern Burgenland, the first prisoner of war camp in Austria.⁵ The examinations carried out by the department head and illegal Nazi Party member Josef Wastl were financed by the Academy committee for the administration of the Treitl legacy. Srbik drafted the approval of Kummerlölwe's application on 18 July 1940, even before the letters from the committee members had been received by the Academy Chancellery. The letter was sent after receipt of the expert opinions of 22 July 1940: The ordinary members Oswald Redlich, Egon Schweidler, Paul Kretschmer, Josef Maria Eder, and Ferdinand Hochstetter had more or less willingly but unanimously agreed to pay for ten assistants and a large amount of material (including 100 dozen photographic plates, 120 rolls of film, 60 rolls of Agfa Color film), together with a *subsidy* for the staff of the Museum of Natural History.⁶ Srbik, who was also a member of the Treitl committee, had informed the other members that Ferdinand Hochstetter, who was responsible for anthropological work, and Viktor Christian were in accord on this matter.⁷ Financing was also provided for the ethnologist Martin Gusinde as an additional researcher. Before approval, Srbik pointed out to Kummerlölwe that it would be *of unique value* if the *bodies of Africans who had died in Kaisersteinbruch* could be transferred to the *Anatomical Institute of the University of Vienna for scientific study*, because there were *only very few studies of the differences between races regarding the internal organs*.⁸ The provisional results of the "studies of Belgian and French prisoners of war" carried out from 7 July to 7 November 1940 "by order of the Academy"⁹ with a view to obtaining "insights into the racial composition of the peoples of western Europe"¹⁰ were published in 1941 in the *Anzeiger der Akademie*: "3,517 individuals" were measured (including "north Africans," "negroes," and "Jews") and 20,000 photographs were taken. The main finding

⁵ See AÖAW, Subventionen, Box 11, No. 264/1940, Kummerlölwe to Srbik of 5 July 1940.

⁶ AÖAW, Subventionen, Box 11, No. 264/1940, members of the Treitl committee to Srbik (and Academy Chancellery) of 17 July 1940 (Redlich, Schweidler), 20 July 1940 (Kretschmer), 18 July 1940 (Eder), and 19 July 1940 (Hochstetter).

⁷ AÖAW, Papers of Egon Schweidler, Box 1, Srbik to members of the Treitl committee of 16 July 1940.

⁸ AÖAW, Subventionen, Box 11, No. 264/1940, Srbik to Kummerlölwe of 9 July 1940.

⁹ This terminology was chosen in later publications on the activities of the Anthropology Department, see Teschler-Nikola/Berner (1998), *Abteilung*, p. 335.

¹⁰ Another series of measurements in the Wolfsberg prisoner of war camp (Stalag XVIII) of members of the British Army was prevented by captured officers of the Royal Army with reference to the Hague Convention. See Berner (2011), *Gegenstände*, pp. 161–2.

was "that both Nordic and Mediterranean migrants had exerted a strong racial influence on the original Gallo-Celtic population in historical times."¹¹ On behalf of the Academy, Srbik also supported Kummerlöwe's application to the *Oberkommando* [Supreme Command] *der Wehrmacht* (OKW) for an "official military commission for anthropological and racial studies of prisoners of war." The application was rejected by the *Oberkommando* in spite of the *unusually favorable opportunity* and the *plethora of material* bearing witness to the *Soviet ethnological and racial mix*.¹²

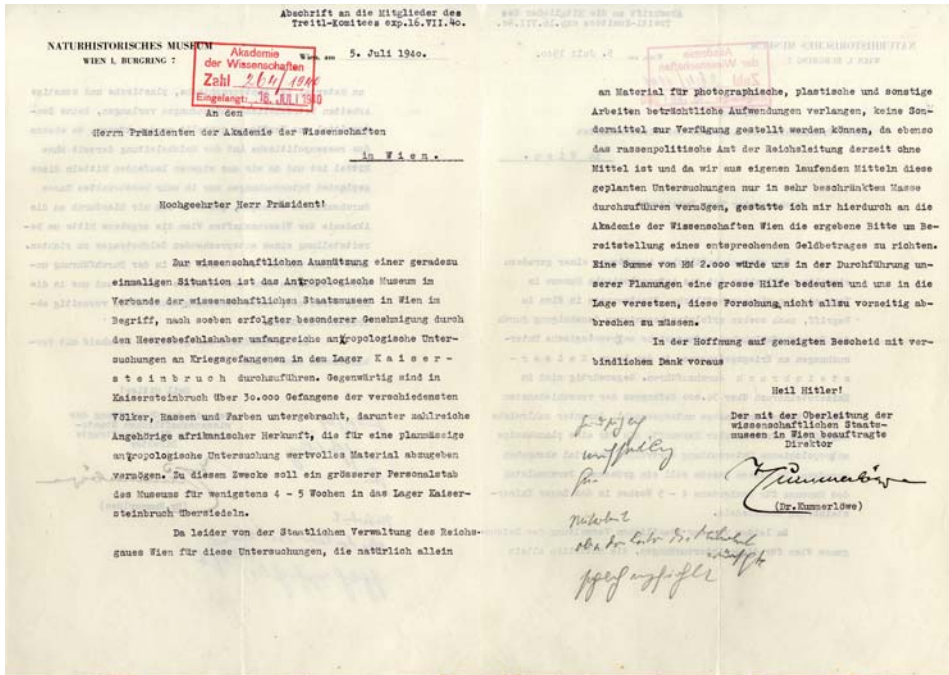


Fig. 62: Application for subsidy by Hans Kummerlöwe of 5 July 1940

In 1942 the Academy started a special anthropological series on its own initiative at the *suggestion* of ordinary member Christian (now *SS-Hauptsturmführer*). For this purpose, a new Commission for the Publication of Writings on the Study of Race and Human Genetics was established consisting of ordinary members from both Sections, that is the Section for Mathematics and the Natural Sciences, and the Section for

¹¹ Wastl (1941), *Untersuchungen*. For the series of measurements, see Pawlowsky (2005), *Erweiterung*; Teschler-Nicola/Berner (1998), *Abteilung*, and Berner (2011), *Gegenstände*.

¹² AÖAW, Subventionen, Box 11, No. 264/1940, Kummerlöwe to Supreme Command of the *Wehrmacht* of 16 April 1941; *ibid.*, Kummerlöwe to Srbik of 11 August 1941; Srbik to Supreme Command of the *Wehrmacht* of 21 August 1941, and Supreme Command of the *Wehrmacht* to Srbik of 10 September 1941.

Humanities and the Social Sciences: physician Ferdinand Hochstetter, botanist Erich Tschermak-Seysenegg, biologist Fritz Knoll, physician Eduard Pernkopf, geographer Eugen Oberhummer, prehistorian Oswald Menghin, geographer Hugo Hassinger, and Viktor Christian. Christian and Hochstetter were made *responsible for publication*.¹³ The commission worked "very scientifically," as Meister emphasized in 1947,¹⁴ but not very productively, despite being well funded. In October 1940 the Section for Mathematics and the Natural Sciences had already approved a generous subsidy of RM 5,000 for the *publication of a special series on of studies on race from the German south-east*.¹⁵ The only volume of the series *Untersuchungen zur Rassenkunde und menschlichen Erblehre* to be published was entitled *Familienanthropologische Untersuchungen in dem ostschwäbischen Dorfe Marienfeld im Rumänischen Banat* (1942). It was written by Robert Routil, a member of the Anthropology Department of the Museum of Natural History, who had previously taken part in the measurement of detained Jewish men in the Vienna stadium in the Prater, most of whom were subsequently transported to Buchenwald. Routil had also been involved in the measurements at the Kaisersteinbruch and Wolfsberg prisoner of war camps.¹⁶ Family anthropology studies were seen as useful for determining the extent to which the character of an ethnic minority, the "characteristics of a guest nation," was determined biologically, i.e. "through a racial composition differing from the host nation."¹⁷ The Commission for the Publication of Writings on the Study of Race and Human Genetics was dissolved at the first ordinary General Assembly on 22 June 1945. A work by the physiologist of race and fervent Nazi Robert Stigler, originally intended for the series, was published in 1952 in collaboration with full member Eduard Pernkopf under the title *Rassenphysiologische Ergebnisse meiner Forschungsreise in Uganda 1911/12* [Physiological Findings concerning Race from my Uganda Expedition 1911/12] in the series of *Denkschriften* [Proceedings] of the Section for Mathematics and the Natural Sciences (vol. 109,3).¹⁸

Ethnicity research

The self-mobilization of the Academy could also be observed with regard to the Phonogram Archive, not only in terms of rhetoric – as discussed above – but also of action. An initiative concerning studies in prisoner of war camps makes this

¹³ AÖAW, Minutes of the General Assembly of 6 February 1942 (A 968). On the activities of this Committee, see Matis (1997), *Anpassung*, pp. 44–5.

¹⁴ Meister (1947), *Geschichte*, p. 182.

¹⁵ AÖAW, Minutes of the General Assembly of 25 October 1940 (A 957), Annex.

¹⁶ See Pawlowsky (2005), *Erweiterung*, pp. 74–9.

¹⁷ Geyer (1934), *Anthropologie*, pp. 325–6. Because of the "family structure of such minorities," biometric family anthropology studies promised to provide new findings in connection with this politically relevant objective.

¹⁸ AÖAW, Minutes of the meeting of the Section for Mathematics and the Natural Sciences of 11 January 1951 (B 2761).

self-mobilization manifest. The first such initiative was undertaken by the designated archive director Walter Ruth in 1939, the second by the designated deputy chairman of the Phonogram Archive Commission, ordinary member Friedrich Wild, in July 1940, albeit in vain, as was to transpire following protracted negotiations. In the same year, three ordinary members who were or were to become members of the Nazi Party were co-opted into the Phonogram Archive Commission, namely physicist Heinrich Mache, Germanist Dietrich Kralik-Meyerswalden, and Anglicist Friedrich Wild. In 1940 further Nazis, engineer Franz Aigner and Germanist Anton Pfalz, were elected. The long-standing commission chairman Arnold Durig, a “Catholic conservative” considered to be sympathetic to the authoritarian *Ständesstaat* [Corporate State],¹⁹ had offered to resign in April 1938. On 26 April 1940 he applied on the grounds of permanent absence for ordinary member Friedrich Wild to be designated as deputy chairman. Wild was appointed chairman on 7 March 1941,²⁰ and Ruth was given Leo Hajek’s former title “head of the Phonogram Archive” on 25 October 1940. He was definitively appointed head of the archive on 28 November 1941, directly after he had completed his habilitation.



Fig. 65: Walter Ruth

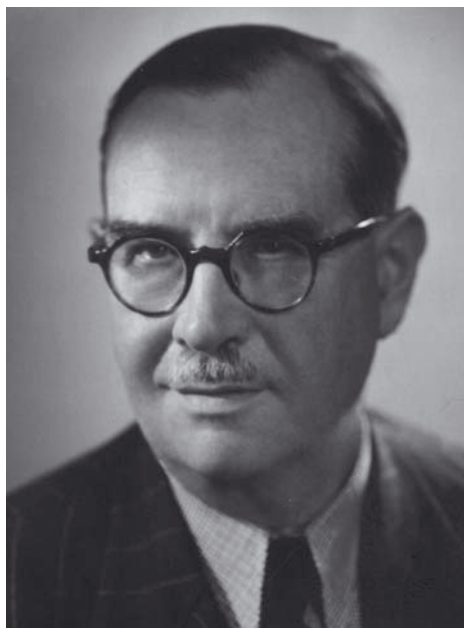


Fig. 66: Friedrich Wild

¹⁹ Soukup (2004), *Durig*, p. 130.

²⁰ For details of Friedrich Wild, see Pils (2010), *Gelehrter*, pp. 471–85.

Wild and Ruth had urged Academy President Srbik on several occasions since 1939 to apply to the Berlin Supreme Command of the *Wehrmacht* regarding *recordings of speech and singing of different peoples and tribes of the French and British empires, including natives and of speech and singing of Polish prisoners of war in the camps of the "Ostmark"*.²¹ Srbik's applications were rejected²² because the *Institut für Lautforschung* [Institute of Sound Research] in Berlin had already been authorized to make recordings in prisoner of war camps and *double visits* were to be avoided.²³ The argument that the Archive, on account of the *extensive recordings taken in the [First] World War in prisoner of war camps had a good deal of experience in this area*²⁴ and that *only in wartime did the rare opportunity present itself again of making modern electrical recordings of folksongs and dialects of Polish, Ukrainian, and Belarusian prisoners in the prisoner of war camps* was not accepted.²⁵

The scientific work initiated and carried out by the Phonogram Archive between 1938 and 1945 included recordings of the most valuable church bells in Austria (1941/42), which were to be melted down to help the wartime economy, speech recordings of South Tyroleans who had resettled in the Reich (1940), and recordings of dialects of Bessarabian and Dobruja Germans resettling in various *Gaue* [highest regional and organizational units of the Nazi Party] of the "Ostmark" (1941).²⁶ The latter enterprise was awarded a subsidy on Srbik's request from the *Vereinigte Grenzlandämter der Gaue Wien und Nieder-Donau* [Unified Offices of the *Gaue* Vienna and Lower Danube].²⁷ The Phonogram Archive had the latest technology and in, 1940, the Section for Humanities and the Social Sciences approved RM 4,300 for the purchase of a cathode-ray oscillograph.²⁸ The Phonogram Archive also supported "research [...] in the service of Nazi education into pathological speech and its therapy through recordings and examinations."²⁹ The increase in *tasks resulting from*

²¹ AÖAW, Phonogrammarchiv, Box 1, Folder 4, Srbik to Supreme Command of the *Wehrmacht* of 18 July 1940, and *ibid.*, Srbik to Supreme Command of the *Wehrmacht* of 19 December 1940.

²² See AÖAW, Phonogrammarchiv, Box 1, Folder 4, Supreme Command of the *Wehrmacht* to Academy of Sciences in Vienna of 8 August 1940.

²³ See AÖAW, Phonogrammarchiv, Box 1, Folder 4, Institute for Sound Research of the University of Berlin to Academy of Sciences in Vienna of 7 February 1941.

²⁴ AÖAW, Phonogrammarchiv, Box 1, Folder 4, Srbik to Supreme Command of the *Wehrmacht* of 19 December 1940; see Lange (2010), *Forschungen*.

²⁵ See AÖAW, Phonogrammarchiv, Box 1, Folder 4, Ruth to the Ministry of Interior and Cultural Affairs of 3 October 1939.

²⁶ AÖAW, Phonogrammarchiv, Box 1, Folder 4, activity report of the Phonogram Archive for 1941 of 25 March 1942.

²⁷ AÖAW, Phonogrammarchiv, Box 1, Folder 4, Minutes of the meeting of the Phonogram Archive Commission of 25 October 1940.

²⁸ AÖAW, Minutes of the General Assembly of 25 October 1940 (A 957), Annex.

²⁹ Ruth (1941), *Phonogrammarchiv*, pp. 90–1.

*the war*³⁰ and several interventions by members of the Academy's Presiding Committee in the *Wehrmeldeamt* [Military Recruiting Office] did not protect Walter Ruth from being drafted in 1942. After captivity, denazification, and pardon by the Federal President, Ruth resumed his leading position in the Phonogram Archive on 1 October 1948 as an employee of the federal government. Wild was officially listed in the *Almanach* for 1949 as chairman of the Phonogram Archive Commission again following the application approved by the Federal President for exemption from atonement.³¹ In 1954 Wild provided a detailed report of the *current activity* of the Phonogram Archive. The research program had barely changed and the continuity in terms of personnel and content were evident. The dialect recordings, which *on account of the content and technical quality* were to provide the basis for further activities of this nature, were the recordings of the South Tyrolean dialects by Josef Schatz, the German dialects of Bessarabia by Anton Pfalz, the dialects of Carinthia, East Tyrol, Upper Austria, and Burgenland by Eberhard Kranzmayer, and those of Styria by Leo Jutz. Schatz, Pfalz, and Kranzmayer had contributed *to the systematic definition of all Austrian dialects* during the Nazi era.³²

South-eastern research

The Academy profited from the boom in south-eastern research and, during the Nazi era, Vienna increasingly established itself as its center. It focused on applied research so that, as the Viennese cultural geographer Hugo Hassinger wrote in 1942, *science will never again be too late when it comes to political actions*.³³ Vienna was the location of various institutes devoted to south-eastern research. At the Academy, it was carried out by the Balkan Commission, renamed in 1940, divided after 1942 into three departments (linguistic, antiquarian, and scientific) and after 1943 into two departments (humanities and science) under the new name the South-Eastern Commission.³⁴ The Balkan Commission replaced the Commission for Historical, Archeological, and Philological Ethnographic Research into the Balkan Peninsula established in 1897. The suggestion of establishing a south-eastern institute in the Academy, which, according to the minutes of the Academy meeting, had come from the Office of the *Reichsstatthalter* [Reich Governor], was not taken up by the Section for Humanities and the Social Sciences, but instead the Balkan Commission was upgraded in 1940

³⁰ AÖAW, Phonogrammarchiv, Box 1, Folder 4, activity report of the Phonogram Archive for 1941 of 25 March 1942.

³¹ See AÖAW, PA Walter Ruth, and PA Friedrich Wild; *Almanach* for 1949, 99 (1950), p. 121.

³² AÖAW, Phonogrammarchiv, Box 1, Folder 5, Wild to Presiding Committee of the Academy of Sciences of 16 March 1954. For the activities of Anton Pfalz and Eberhard Kranzmayer during the Nazi era, see Wahlmüller (2010), *Akademie*, pp. 94–9, and Ranzmaier (2010), *Germanistik*.

³³ UAW, Papers of Hugo Hassinger, 131.01, Hassinger to Triska of 7 May 1942.

³⁴ Stadtmüller (1942), *Balkankommission*.

to become an intersectional institution.³⁵ Six of its seventeen members were also members of the Nazi Party. For one of the most highly funded commissions, the scientific output was minimal and at first glance politically harmless. It is to be assumed that the preparations for the Nazi "*Umvolkung*" ["ethnic cleansing"] policy in south-eastern Europe were not carried out at the Academy. The Balkan and South-Eastern Commission were merely part of the south-eastern research complex in Vienna, in which ordinary members Heinrich Srbik, Hugo Hassinger, and Viktor Christian pulled the strings. In 1942 Christian was appointed delegate of the Academy of Sciences in the *Südostgemeinschaft der Wiener Hochschulen* (*Südosteuropagesellschaft*) [South-Eastern Society of the Vienna Universities (South-Eastern Europe Society)].³⁶ According to a memorandum by Christian, Srbik was to chair a committee in the *Südosteuropäisches Forschungsinstitut* [South-Eastern Europe Research Institute] planned by Rosenberg's office, whose task it would be *to provide expert opinions on scientific undertakings in south-eastern Europe and to present them to the Reich ministries concerned*.³⁷ This plan was canceled along with the South-Eastern Europe Research Institute; in Vienna the *Südosteuropagesellschaft*, a *Südostgemeinschaft Wiener Hochschulen* [South-Eastern Community of Vienna Universities], the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Raumforschung* [Working Group for Spatial Research], and the *Südost-deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* [South-East German Research Council] (SODFG) were active in this area. The main aim of these organizations was the scientific preparation for "*Umvolkung*."³⁸ The SODFG in particular was involved in Nazi "ethnicity and extermination policy."³⁹ Ordinary members of the Academy, including historians Hans Hirsch and Otto Brunner, geographer Fritz Machatschek, and the above-mentioned Hugo Hassinger, had leading positions in it.⁴⁰ In 1945 all of these organizations were disbanded. The South-East Commission at the Academy was incorporated into the Section for Humanities and the Social Sciences (1948) and renamed the Balkan Commission in 1950. Hugo Hassinger, who had never been a member of the Nazi Party but had carried out ethnicity research in its interests and saw "Vienna's German mission" in the "gradual" shifting of "the cultural divide between West and East" further eastwards⁴¹ was able to continue his research activities without interruption. In 1946 he founded the Commission for Spatial Research and Reconstruction. The following year, on the application of full member Richard Meister, an Austrian Research Community for the South-East and the Orient was established at the

³⁵ See AÖAW, Minutes of the meeting of the Section for Humanities and the Social Sciences of 27 April 1938 (C 2579).

³⁶ *Almanach* for 1942, 92 (1942), p. 97.

³⁷ BAB, BDC, PA Viktor Christian, sheets 137–8, 141–2.

³⁸ See Beer/Seewann (2004), *Südostforschung*.

³⁹ Fahlbusch (2000), *Forschungsgemeinschaft*, p. 260.

⁴⁰ See Svatek (2010), *Hassinger*, and Svatek (2010), *Wien*.

⁴¹ Hassinger (1942), *Sendung*, and Hassinger (1941), *Lebensraumfragen*.

Austrian Academy of Sciences under Hassinger's chairmanship, which was disbanded in 1950 by order of the occupying powers.⁴²

Summary

Various attitudes and actions can be discerned at the Academy of Sciences in Vienna between 1938 and 1945. Most of the research activities were oriented towards opportunistic adaptation, self-mobilization, and self-motivated involvement, as has been examined in this essay. Examples included nuclear research, race research, ethnicity research, and south-eastern research, with a shift from basic to applied research. The self-mobilizing and often young researchers at the Academy thus made use of opportunities to obtain additional financial and symbolic resources through research activities aimed at substantiating political beliefs, no doubt in the hope of climbing the career ladder this way.

Johannes Feichtinger

⁴² *Die Furche*, 2 July 1950, p. 4.