

Forschungsprogramm „Geschichte der Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gesellschaft im Nationalsozialismus“
Research Program „History of the Kaiser Wilhelm Society in the National Socialist Era“

**“THE SWORD OF OUR SCIENCE” AS A
FOREIGN POLICY WEAPON**

**THE POLITICAL FUNCTION OF GERMAN GENETICISTS IN THE
INTERNATIONAL ARENA DURING THE THIRD REICH**

Sheila Faith Weiss

IMPRESSUM

Ergebnisse. Vorabdrucke aus dem Forschungsprogramm
„Geschichte der Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gesellschaft im Nationalsozialismus“

Herausgegeben von Susanne Heim im Auftrag der Präsidentenkommission
der Max-Planck-Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Wissenschaften e. V.

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Fremdsprachliches Lektorat: Birgit Kolboske

Bezugsadresse:

Forschungsprogramm „Geschichte der Kaiser-Wilhelm-
Gesellschaft im Nationalsozialismus“
Glinkastraße 5–7
D-10117 Berlin
Tel.: 0049–(0)30–2 26 67–154
Fax: 0049–(0)30–2 26 67–333
Email: kwg.ns@mpiwg-berlin.mpg.de

Umschlaggestaltung:
punkt 8, Berlin (mail@punkt8-berlin.de)

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ABSTRACT/KURZFASSUNG

German geneticists' most valuable service to the Third Reich was to confer legitimacy to the entirety of the Nazi racial project—to publicly bestow their professional blessing on the ideal of „the racial state.“ At home they lent an air of respectability to the regime's dystopian biomedical vision by delivering papers at normal scientific meetings, offering talks at overtly Nazi-organized conferences or holding official speeches at various German universities. But the most important battle for National Socialist racial policy credibility would be fought on the world stage.

This essay focuses on those professional activities of geneticists affiliated with the Kaiser Wilhelm Society (KWS) during the Third Reich. During the pre-war period, one of the most important ways in which renowned geneticists such as Eugen Fischer, Otmar von Verschuer, Fritz von Wettstein and Ernst Rüdin both legitimized Nazi racial policy abroad as well as underscored their own political usefulness at home was by hosting and participating in international conferences and scientific exchanges in their field. After the outbreak of the war, the venue for such a foreign policy predicated on the prestige of science changed. The National Socialist government and prominent KWS geneticists found it mutually advantageous for the latter to serve as scientific and cultural ambassadors in occupied and axis-satellite countries. The arrangement between the Nazi state and KWS scientists on the international stage is but one example of the ways in which genetics and politics served as mutually beneficial resources for each other during the Third Reich.

Der wertvollste Dienst, den die deutschen Genetiker dem Nationalsozialismus erweisen konnten, bestand in der wissenschaftlichen Legitimierung der Idee eines „Rassenstaates“. In der Heimat verliehen sie den düsteren biomedizinischen Visionen der Nationalsozialisten die Aura wissenschaftlicher Fundiertheit, indem sie eine rege Vortragstätigkeit auf verschiedenen, von NS-Organisationen veranstalteten Kongressen entfalteten. Der wichtigste Kampf um die Glaubwürdigkeit der NS-Rassenpolitik wurde jedoch in der internationalen Arena ausgetragen.

Der vorliegende Aufsatz beschäftigt sich mit diesem Tätigkeitsaspekt von Genetikern der Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gesellschaft während des „Dritten Reichs“. Vor Beginn des Krieges haben Forscher wie Eugen Fischer, Otmar von Verschuer, Fritz von Wettstein und Ernst Rüdin die NS-Rassenpolitik auf Fachtagungen im Ausland vertreten und damit ihre politische Nützlichkeit für das Reich erwiesen. Nach Kriegsbeginn änderten sich die Rahmenbedingungen auswärtiger Wissenschaftspolitik. Das NS-Regime und die prominenten Genetiker der Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gesellschaft verbündeten sich in einem für beide Seiten vorteilhaften Projekt der „Kulturmission“ in den besetzten und verbündeten Ländern. Auch im internationalen Zusammenhang dienten sich Wissenschaft und Politik während des „Dritten Reichs“ als wechselseitige Ressourcen.

“The Sword of Our Science” as a Foreign Policy Weapon
The Political Function of German Geneticists in the International
Arena During the Third Reich

Sheila Faith Weiss

INTRODUCTION

“Der zwischenvölkische Kampf der Meinungen ist in den Fragen der Erbbiologie und Rassenhygiene ein besonders heftiger,” noted the future director of the prestigious Berlin-based Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Anthropology, Human Heredity and Eugenics (*Kaiser-Wilhelm-Institut für Anthropologie, menschliche Erblehre und Eugenik*, KWIA), Otmar Freiherr von Verschuer, at a conference to celebrate the third anniversary of the “national awakening.”

“Es sind viele Bestrebungen im Gange, auf dem Wege über die Wissenschaft die Erb- und Rassenpflege im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland anzugreifen—das Schwert unserer Wissenschaft muß deshalb scharf geschliffen sein und gut geführt werden.“¹

The phrase “sword of our science”—coined by a devout Protestant, thoroughly familiar with the New Testament²—invokes a powerful image and points to the “Faustian bargain” made between most German scientists who remained at their posts during the Third Reich and the Nazi regime they served. In the well-known case of human geneticists, however, there were all too many ways in which these professionals used their science to support the National Socialist regime: 1) they offered their expertise both in writing the draconian sterilization

* Research for this article was made possible through a one-month guest fellowship in 2003 in Berlin at the Max Planck Society-funded Research Program, “The History of the Kaiser Wilhelm Society During the National Socialist Era.” I owe an intellectual debt to all the members of the research team for their collegiality; my special thanks goes to the program’s research director Susanne Heim, who read the earlier draft of this essay and offered helpful critique and comments. In addition, I am grateful to Thomas Berez, who read a later version of the paper, offered his comments, and helped with the proofreading. I am especially indebted to Helmut Freiherr von Verschuer for his support concerning the work of his father, Otmar Freiherr von Verschuer.

1 Otmar Freiherr von Verschuer, *Rassenhygiene als Wissenschaft und Staatsaufgabe*, in *Frankfurter Akademische Reden*, Nr. 7, Frankfurt/Main 1936, pp. 8-9.

2 According to Verschuer’s son, Helmut Freiherr von Verschuer, the notion of the “sword” as a symbolic weapon was taken from the New Testament. See, in particular, Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians, 6: 10-20.

law as well as serving on the Hereditary Health Courts designed to uphold them; 2) they wrote the racial testimonials that separated out “Aryan” from “non-Aryan” elements of German society; and 3) they schooled an army of medical experts in the science of “genetic and racial care”—many of whom would implement their newly gained knowledge at home and throughout occupied Europe.³ Yet there is one important service to the state that has been relatively underplayed in the burgeoning secondary literature on human as well as plant and animal geneticists during the Third Reich: the use of “the sword of [their] science” in the international arena as an effective foreign policy weapon.⁴

Interestingly, in doing what comes most naturally to all scientists, i.e. participating in international conferences in their field and delivering professional lectures to attentive audiences, German geneticists of all stripes served the foreign policy interests of the National Socialist regime in a myriad of subtle ways, in addition to the most obvious one revealed in Verschuer’s quote: professional legitimacy for Nazi racial policies abroad. The following examination of but a few of the numerous international meetings, conferences, and scientific exchanges in the field of genetics (including genetically-based anthropology, eugenics, and medical genetics as well as non-human genetics) will depict these less blatant forms of support as well. But lest we forget that these scientists were hardly passive pawns in this activity, but rather very conscious actors anxious to use the opportunity to attend such meetings for their own professional self-fashioning, we likewise need to address the question: how, specifically, did German geneticists profit from their international professional activities while simultaneously aiding the foreign policy goals of their government?

This paper will focus on several world-renowned geneticists affiliated with the Kaiser Wilhelm Society (KWS), in particular, on the international activities of the two directors of the KWIA, racial anthropologist Eugen Fischer (1874-1967) and medical geneticist Otmar von Verschuer⁵ (1896-1969) as well as the head of the Munich-based German Institute for Psychiatric Research/KWI (*Deutsche Forschungsanstalt für Psychiatrie/Kaiser-Wilhelm-Institut*), the psychiatric geneticist Ernst Rüdin (1874-1952). It will also deal with the role of renowned plant geneticist and director of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for

3 For a fuller discussion of these forms of “service to the state“ see my article „Humangenetik und Politik als wechselseitige Ressourcen: Das Kaiser-Wilhelm-Institut für Anthropologie, menschliche Erblehre und Eugenik, 1927-1945“(= Ergebnisse. Vorabdrucke aus dem Forschungsprogramm „Geschichte der Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gesellschaft im Nationalsozialismus“, 17), Berlin, 2004, pp. 32-38.

4 This topic has not, of course, been left completely unnoticed. See, for example, Niels C. Lösch’s discussion of Eugen Fischer’s attendance at a few international conferences in his book, *Rasse als Konstrukt. Leben und Werk Eugen Fischers*, Frankfurt/Main, 1997; for a detailed discussion of the role of the German delegation at the International Federation of Eugenic Organizations, see Stefan Kühl, *Die Internationale der Rassisten: Aufstieg und Niedergang der internationalen Bewegung für Eugenik und Rassenhygiene im 20. Jahrhundert*, Frankfurt/Main 1997; Kristie Macrakis’ *Surviving the Swastika: Scientific Research in Nazi Germany*, New York 1993, mentions the topic of international conferences for the Kaiser Wilhelm Society in general. She does not go into detail, however, about the activities of the biomedical scientists or the non-human geneticists in the international arena in any great detail.

5 Henceforth simply referred to as Verschuer, as is customary in German.

Biology (*Kaiser-Wilhelm-Institut für Biologie*) in Dahlem, Fritz von Wettstein (1895-1945). The paper will cast a short glance at Wettstein's professional activities in the international arena, especially with regard to his visit to the United States in 1937 and his series of talks in Bulgaria in 1940. Hence we will see that not only experts in the field of human heredity, but non-human geneticists as well were able to make important contributions to legitimizing the Nazi regime through the network of relationships established with foreign researchers in their fields.

The essay is organized as follows: first, there will be a brief discussion of the various State and Party institutions concerned with international scientific conferences and the demands they placed on German delegations to these conferences, especially on the so-called delegation leader; second, a small sample of the international conferences and scientific exchanges attended by Fischer, Verschuer, Rüdin, and Wettstein in the pre-war period and a few lecture series in which the four geneticists took part in occupied, allied or "friendly" countries during the war will be analyzed; and finally, conclusions will be drawn regarding the symbiotic relationship between German geneticists' professional interests, international scientific conferences and exchanges, and the foreign policy goals of the National Socialist regime.

STATE AND PARTY ORGANS INVOLVED WITH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES:
GUIDELINES FOR DELEGATION LEADERS AND THOSE ATTENDING FOREIGN
PROFESSIONAL MEETINGS

During the pre-war years, there were initially three State organs that were involved in the politically and fiscally delicate operations of coordinating German scientists' attendance at professional conferences abroad: Konstantin von Neurath's *Auswärtiges Amt* (AA), Bernhard Rust's *Reichserziehungsministerium* (REM) and Josef Goebbels' *Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda*. Then there were secondary Party players such as the *NS-Dozentenbund* and the *Rassenpolitisches Amt der NSDAP*, but they served—at least in the pre-war years—primarily to exclude so-called politically unreliable scientists from representing Germany's interests abroad. There were, of course, conflicts of interest among the various State and Party organs that viewed international conferences as falling under their bailiwick⁶. Yet as Michael Burleigh warns us in his recent book "The Third Reich: A New History", we would be wrong to overemphasize these inter-party/inter-state struggles.⁷ In the area of concern here, there does not seem to have been any appreciable difference in the attitude of the major State organs toward international scientific conferences, although Goebbels' ministry seems to have been most vocal in its demands on the scientists.

6 The Reich and Prussian Minister of Science, Education and Public Instruction to the President of the Kaiser Wilhelm Society. 22.05.1935, Archive of the Max Planck Society (MPG-Archiv) Abt. I, Rep. 1A, 1052, n.d.; The Reich and Prussian Minister of the Interior to the Reich and Prussian Minister for Science, Education, and Public Instruction 30.4.1937, Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde (BAB) R 4901, 2760/46.

7 Michael Burleigh, *The Third Reich: A New History*, New York 2000, p. 156.

The German Congress Center (*Deutsche Kongress-Zentrale, or DKZ*) was established as a division of Goebbels' *Ministerium für Propaganda und Volksaufklärung* in 1934—possibly owing to Goebbels' feeling that his voice was not being sufficiently heard regarding the propaganda value of international conferences.⁸ Beginning in 1936, all those seeking to attend an international conference needed the approval of the *DKZ*. From that time on, it was responsible for questions of hard currency.⁹ Hence all applications made by individual scientists, or institutions in the name of their researchers, like the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gesellschaft, were dependent on this office to get the needed hard currency to attend an international conference. From the earliest days of the Third Reich, for Germans attending such meetings the following rules were obligatory: 1) they had to be organized as delegations with a “delegation leader” at the helm; 2) they were expected to meet with official German representatives in the foreign country where the conference was being held; and 3) they were required to submit a report on their return home. Yet, neither the *AA* nor *REM* appears to have made their views on the cultural-political importance of these conferences as specific as did the *DKZ*.

The *DKZ* made no secret about its view of such international conferences and its demands of delegation leaders at such meetings. As the *DKZ's* “Guidelines for Delegation Leaders” points out, a delegation leader must understand that his task is not merely a professional one relevant to his special area of concern. Rather, he has to be able to view it as “political or cultural-propagandistic pioneer work in the sense of German world prestige [...]” “Our present view of international congresses,” the “Guidelines” continued, “differs decidedly from earlier, more traditional views.”¹⁰ Moreover, as the *DKZ* emphasized “congresses are one of the most effective weapons in the struggle against poisoning the minds of people; in this manner we can, through efforts and personal impressions, eliminate prejudices and hateful lies without recourse to direct political propaganda.”¹¹ Complaining that about 75% of all international conferences were held in Paris or Brussels, the “Guidelines” argued that Germany should take its cue from France in recognizing the importance of such meetings as a conscious form of cultural propaganda that “in the hand of the statesman can be used as a unrivalled political weapon.”¹² Declaring as one of its goals that Germany play “a leading role, if not **the** leading role”¹³ at these international meetings, the delegation leader and the scientists under his leadership were urged to do all they could to bring this about. Among other things, this would include the delegation leader's skill to bring those under him “unified group with one will.”¹⁴ Moreover, the “Guidelines” stated, special attention must also be given to questions at conferences touching such politically sensitive issues as “Rassenhygiene, Sterilisation, [und das] Judenproblem [...]” Delegation leaders were instructed to answer these questions in an objective manner and directly rebuke any attempt at a critique of

8 Guidelines for the Head of the German Delegations to Foreign Congresses. Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes (PAAA), Budapest 178/2.

9 Annual report of the German Congress Center, 1938, PAAA, Budapest 178/1, p. 40.

10 Guidelines, PAAA, Budapest 178/1.

11 Ibid., p. 2.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid., p. 3. Emphasis in the original.

14 Ibid., p. 6.

National Socialist racial policies.¹⁵ And finally, the delegation leaders had to recognize that permission to speak at such a conference was an internal affair and that “we decide who may represent Germany internationally.”¹⁶

Under a section of the “Guidelines” entitled “It must not happen that ...” the *DKZ* clearly articulated several taboos for international conferences: 1) a German scientist should never contradict another in matters of Nazi ideology; 2) if a German speaker is attacked, some members of the delegation should not leave the room while others do not; 3) no German speaker should be made to look ridiculous by other members of the delegation; 4) no member of the delegation should feel insulted that he was not selected as delegation leader; the decision is not a professional value judgment but is based on several criteria, including his personal relationships to foreign scholars. Members of the German delegation, who are found to be a political liability at a conference, despite having passed the political litmus test for attending such conferences, will be sent home immediately.¹⁷ In addition, the *DKZ* stressed the need for the delegation leaders to international conferences to deposit invitations, memoranda, and anything distributed at such professional meetings in a *DKZ*-archive to be created specifically for this purpose.¹⁸

As was mentioned, although none of the other State offices involved with foreign scientific conferences were as explicit as the *DKZ*, the reports submitted by Fischer, Verschuer, Rüdin and Wettstein suggest that these and other guidelines were heeded—indeed, they were followed well before 1938, the year the *DKZ* wrote the above-quoted “Guidelines”. We know that the content of the reports must have been fairly accurate as important members of the Nazi Party, such as Walter Gross of the *Rassenpolitischen Amt*, frequently attended international genetics conferences to keep a watchful eye over the behavior of German biomedical scientists abroad.

PRE-WAR INTERNATIONAL GENETICS CONFERENCES

One of the first international meetings relevant specifically to German human geneticists—as well as Nazi racial policy—was the “Anthropological and Ethnological Conference” held in London between July 20 and August 4, 1934.¹⁹ Pointing to the serious financial situation and stressing that only those conferences “national or cultural political interest should be funded,” the Reich Ministry of Economics did not lodge a complaint when the AA appointed Eugen

15 Ibid., pp. 12-13.

16 Ibid., p. 6. Emphasis in the original.

17 Ibid., pp. 26-28.

18 Ibid., p. 29.

19 Eugen Fischer to The Reich Minister for Education, Science, and Public Instruction., 13.05.1934, BAB, R 4910 12384/2.

Fischer as delegation leader and travel for German scientists was granted.²⁰ Karl Saller, an anthropologist whose views on the race question were at odds with the Nazi regime, was denied permission to attend this conference by the *Rassenpolitisches Amt der NSDAP*.²¹ Fischer did nothing to try to come to his colleague's aid. What is particularly interesting about this meeting is that it was held in the middle of a large inter-party and state denunciation campaign against Fischer.²² There were both jealous colleagues and important Nazi Party officials who felt that this "non-Nazi" racial scientist wielded far too much power. As it might have caused international repercussions to remove him as delegation leader, Walter Gross, one of the major Party players from the *Rassenpolitischen Amt* involved in this denunciation campaign, did not insist on his dismissal. He did, however, accompany the delegation leader.²³

In his obligatory report Fischer stressed that there were over a thousand scientists from forty-nine countries who attended the Congress; he also dutifully reported that there was a small number of Jewish immigrants at the meeting, but that "they did not make a display." According to Fischer, somebody did make a „tactless" remark. Although Nazi racial policy had not been attacked in specific, Fischer went to the General Secretary of the Congress and complained about this allegedly impertinent comment. Fischer stated in his report that he would see to it that this "tactless" colleague's speech would be shortened in the meeting's official report.²⁴ Most interesting, however, was Fischer's emphasis on the honors bestowed upon him at this prestigious international meeting. As Fischer stated in his official report to Bernhard Rust "...ich erhielt den Auftrag, im Namen aller Vertretungen der Regierungen aller Länder, der Universitäten und der Gesellschaften [at the Congress] zu begrüßen, dem Prinzen Georg und dem Präsidenten zu danken und dem Kongress guten Verlauf zu wünschen. Andere Redner traten nicht auf. Weiter wurde [...] ich zum Abendessen vom Earl of Onslow in das Haus of Lords eingeladen," with only twenty important individuals invited to attend the dinner. Fischer could also be proud that "several Germans took turns chairing sessions with [delegates from other countries]." ²⁵

It is clear that Fischer served his own interests as well as those of the state by attending this conference. He demonstrated his loyalty to the regime during his denunciation campaign and pointed to his value as scientific capital for the regime. The *KWIA* director clearly proved that it was advantageous for the National Socialist state to retain him as delegation leader. Moreover, it was

20 Memorandum from the Reich Minister for Economics to the KWS, 01.06.1934, MPG-Archiv, Abt. I, Rep 1A 1051, p. 142; Walter Gross to the Reich Ministry of Interior, 13.6.1934, BAB, R 1501 126245/244. Memorandum from the Reich Minister of Economics to the KWS, 1.6.1934, MPG-Archiv, Abt. I, Rep. 1A, 1051, p. 142; Walter Gross to the Reich Ministry of the Interior, 13.6.1934, BAB, R 1501 126245/244.

21 Dr. Böhme to the Foreign Office, 31.5.1935, BAB, R 4901 1238/9.

22 For details of the denunciation campaign against Fischer, see Lösch, *Rasse als Konstrukt*, pp. 230-253.

23 *Ibid.*, p. 266.

24 Report on the International Meeting of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, 05.08.1934, MPG-Archiv, Abt. I, Rep. 1A, 1051, Bl. 184-185; see: Kühl, *Die Internationale der Rassisten*, p. 21.

25 Report on the International Meeting of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, 05.08.1934, MPG-Archiv, Abt. I, Rep. 1A, 1051, Bl. 184-185.

probably not accidental that the denunciation campaign against Fischer stopped soon after the conference. As Fischer later stated in his unpublished autobiography with regard to his need to “walk on eggshells” at this particular conference: “Nun, ich blieb wissenschaftlich objektiv, und es ging vorzüglich, jede Störung blieb aus, ich erntete Beifall.”²⁶

In 1935 the *International Union for the Scientific Investigation of Population Problems* (IUSIPP) hosted its World Population Conference in the capital of the “new Germany.” Fischer was appointed acting scientific President of the Conference by the government. Although some members of the IUSSP had reservations about holding the conference in Berlin after the “Nazi seizure of power” (but before the passing of the Nuremberg Laws), individuals of the stature of American geneticist Raymond Pearl believed that “proven and broadminded scientist like Eugen Fischer could guarantee the scientific neutrality of the conference.”²⁷ Suffice it to say that the Conference was truly a “an achievement and propaganda showplace”²⁸ for Nazi racial policy in every sense of the word. The achievements of the new National Socialist state was made clear in virtually every German scientific paper, as well as in Fischer’s opening remarks. Fischer spared no words in slavishly praising the achievements of Hitler for all his great work in the field of racial hygiene:

...wir sind voll stolzer Freude, daß wir das erhebende Bewußtsein haben dürfen,[...], daß unsere Reichsregierung, vor allem aber unser Führer und Reichskanzler Adolf Hitler diesen tiefsten und folgenschwersten Sinn der Bevölkerungswissenschaft klar erkannt und den Willen hat, die Folgerungen zu ziehen. So dürfen wir heute bei Beginn unserer Arbeit mit dankbarem Herzen des Mannes gedenken, dessen starke Hand den Willen und, so Gott will, die Kraft hat, vom deutschen Volk das Bevölkerungsschicksal abzuwenden, das vergangene Kulturen und Völker in den Tod geführt hat. Und dasselbe hoffe und wünsche ich für die Staatslenker und Regierungen aller anderen Nationen und Völker. In diesem Wunsch für alle gedenken wir ehrerbietig grüßend, wenn wir hier auf deutschem Boden und in des Reiches Hauptstadt zur Arbeit uns versammeln, des deutschen Volkes Führers und Reichskanzlers, und ich bitte Sie mit mir ihn zu begrüßen: Der Führer und Reichskanzler Adolf Hitler! Sieg Heil!²⁹

Verschuer, Fischer’s protégé, also reiterated the importance of human heredity for National Socialist racial policy in his own conference talk, “Erbbiologie als Unterlage der Bevölkerungspolitik”—a point earlier stressed by Fischer in a July 1933 report to the Reich Ministry of Interior in which he specifically sold

26 Quote taken from Lösch, *Rasse als Konstrukt*, p. 267.

27 Quoted from Kühl, *Die Internationale der Rassisten*, p. 131.

28 This phrase is quoted from Lösch, *Rasse als Konstrukt*, p. 268.

29 Hans Harmsen and Franz Lohse (ed.), *Bevölkerungsfragen. Bericht des Internationalen Kongresses für Bevölkerungswissenschaft*, Berlin, 26.08. - 01.09.1935, München, 1936, p. 43. Emphasis in the original.

his institute to the regime.³⁰ Verschuer also emphasized the importance of the KWS as the institutional site for some of the most important work in the field.³¹

Perhaps less obvious is the way in which important state officials like Reich Minister of Interior and Honorary Congress President Frick used the conference for Nazi foreign policy ends. To be sure, Frick, like most of the German researchers attending the meeting, laid bare the ubiquitous biological vision of Nazi politics. “Man wollte, weil man international in dieser oder jener Richtung dachte, nicht verstehen,” Frick reminded his audience, “daß Fleiß und Arbeit nutzlos sein müssen, wenn man sich nicht auf einer großen Linie rassischer Bevölkerungspolitik zusammenfand. Welchen Sinn konnte eine Außenpolitik, eine Finanz- oder Wirtschaftspolitik haben, wenn das Volk rassistisch darüber zerbrach?”³² But then he went further. Frick not only tried to deflect from the negative image of Germany’s sterilization policy abroad, insisting that it was merely “an emergency measure...to banish the acute danger for the time being” He also argued that following the logic of race hygiene and population policy, National Socialists must be enemies of war. “Das deutsche Volk,” the Reichsinnenminister contended, “will nichts anderes, als seinen Bestand im Rahmen der anderen Völker behaupten und seinen Teil zur Weiterentwicklung menschlicher Kultur und Gesittung leisten.”³³ When one considers that Germany was already in the throes of its illegal rearmament program and that it was one of Hitler’s conscious foreign policy strategies to present himself as a man of peace, one realizes how such a conference could, and did, serve Nazi goals in the international arena. And, as indicated earlier in the case of Verschuer’s paper at the Berlin-based conference, the conference also shed a positive light on the Kaiser Wilhelm Society as so much important international research in the field of racial hygiene and genetics was undertaken at the institutes of Fischer, Rüdin and Wettstein.

Fischer’s success at hosting the World Population Conference at home virtually ensured that he would be appointed delegation leader when it was held in Paris two years later. Recognizing his scientific value to the regime, he requested a large sum of money, 10,500 *Reichsmark* for forty scientists, including junior colleagues and spouses of some of the researchers. Fischer stressed the cultural-political importance of a large German delegation to attend a conference in Paris—where the political situation would be far more delicate than the Conference he hosted at home.³⁴ Indeed, according to the delegation leader, “even women could be used to promote the German cause at such occasions”—a suggestion that was positively endorsed by the *DKZ* when it wrote its “Guidelines” a year later.³⁵ In a letter to his trusted friend Verschuer,

30 Research Institutes for the Scientific Underpinning of German-Völkisch Racial Hygienic Population Policy, n.d., MPG-Archiv Abt. 1, Rep. 1A, 2404, Bl. 18-26.

31 Otmar von Verschuer, *Erbbiologie als Unterlage der Bevölkerungspolitik*, in: *Bevölkerungsfragen*, pp. 612-614, here p. 612.

32 Opening Address of the Honorary President of the Congress, Reich Minister Dr. Frick, in: *Bevölkerungsfragen*, pp. 6-12, here p. 7.

33 Opening Address of the Honorary President of the Congress, Reich Minister Dr. Frick, in: *Bevölkerungsfragen*, pp. 6-12, here p. 12.

34 Eugen Fischer to the Reich Minister of Education Rust, *Internationaler Bevölkerungskongress in Paris, 13.2.1937*, BAB, R 4901 2760/5.

35 *Ibid.*; *Guidelines*, PAAA, 178/1 Budapest, p. 10.

who by this time headed his own institute for Hereditary Biology and Racial Hygiene in Frankfurt, Fischer strongly encouraged him to make the journey to Paris, as it was all well and good that Nazi officials appear, but besides the politicians it was necessary that “prestigious representatives of science attend.”³⁶ A conflict with those foreign human geneticists who did not see eye to eye with the German delegation was expected in Paris.

Owing to illness, Fischer was unable to attend, although he had made all the necessary preparations for this important meeting. In his place, Rüdin was appointed substitute German delegation leader—perhaps the only other world renowned German human geneticist more eager to do the Nazi state’s bidding than Fischer.³⁷ The expected ideological conflict in Paris—where the Germans were unable to control events as they did in Berlin—was not slow in coming, despite the attempt by French president of the Conference, Adolphe Landry, to prevent it. Although the details cannot concern us here, suffice it to say that three Jewish scientists, including the famous German-Jewish anthropologist Franz Boas, questioned the importance of genetics as the determining factor in such traits as intelligence and denied that a country’s intellectual development was dependent upon the race of its inhabitants. Moreover, Boas and his like-minded colleagues argued that the individual or group’s environment largely shapes so-called racial traits.³⁸

In their reports of this conference, both Verschuer and Rüdin emphasized how “the sword of [their] science” was put to good use in refuting the claims of the Jewish participants. Verschuer accomplished this by stressing that these speakers were not in step with the newest hereditary research.³⁹ Ernst Rodenwaldt, another member of the German delegation, labelled the criticism of these Jewish scientists “rabbinical.” They had nothing to do with customary scientific discussions found in European science, he added.⁴⁰ Moreover, Verschuer pointed out that German racial legislation did not aim at assigning a “value” to individual races. Allegedly, Germany was only interested in protecting “its own people from an infusion of completely alien racial elements.”⁴¹ Verschuer and Fischer appeared to agree among themselves on this and other rhetorically slippery means of negotiating the politically sensitive “Jewish question” in order to protect their own scientific reputations abroad

36 Fischer to Verschuer, 6.2.1937, Verschuer Papers (UMNV) Nr. 9.

37 Eugen Fischer to the Reich Minister for Education Rust, Bevölkerungskongress in Paris, 15.06.1937, BAB, R 4901 2750/99. Handwritten note regarding Rüdin’s nomination as substitute delegation leader was probably written by Rust.

38 Kühl, *Die Internationale der Rassisten*, pp. 145-152. For a discussion of Boas’ position, see Doris Kaufmann, ‘Rasse und Kultur’: Die amerikanische Kulturanthropologie um Franz Boas (1858-1942) in der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts—ein Gegenentwurf zur Rassenforschung in Deutschland, in: Hans-Walter Schmuhl (ed.) *Rassenforschung an Kaiser-Wilhelm-Instituten vor und nach 1933*, Göttingen, 2003, pp. 309-327.

39 Report on the trip to Paris for the Purpose of Participating in the International Congress for Population Policy, Universitätsarchiv Frankfurt, Akten des Rektors (UFAR) Abt. 1, Nr. 47 (Verschuer), Bl. 20.

40 Kühl, *Die Internationale der Rassisten*, p. 150.

41 Report on the trip to Paris for the Purpose of Participating in the International Congress for Population Policy. UFAR, Abt. 1, Nr. 47 (Verschuer), Bl. 20.

while simultaneously trying not to anger the Nazi government.⁴² Verschuer concluded this portion of his report by stating that all attempts on the part of the Jewish participants faltered on “German scientific thoroughness...”⁴³ Delegation leader Rüdin stressed the scientific contributions of his own Institute members in combating the Jewish point of view. He echoed Verschuer’s observations by stating that at the Conference “the German position was defended in a worthy manner and undoubtedly won an intellectual and moral victory.”⁴⁴ He went further, however, in arguing that it was necessary to go to such international meetings, even when such unpleasant instances occur, in order to know what the other side was thinking about Germany’s science and politics and to immediately report any incidents that occur. Almost two years later, only months before the outbreak of war, Rüdin showed his willingness to do the regime’s bidding in a report that was sent to the General Director of the KWS in response to Minister Bernhard Rust’s query regarding international conferences. Asked if he thought new international scientific congresses were necessary, Rüdin replied that what was important was not to create new conferences, but to ensure that “Germany’s interests are secured at the ones already in existence.” Most significant, however, is “to bring the existing ones to Germany. I have worked towards this end...”⁴⁵

In September 1937, the renowned *KWS* plant geneticist Fritz von Wettstein received an invitation from the Genetics Department of the Carnegie Institution of Washington at Cold Spring Harbor, New York to spend two to three months at the research center and hold a series of lectures there. He was also requested to give a talk at the prestigious American Genetics Society Meetings in Indianapolis in December of that year.⁴⁶ Apparently, Wettstein had received an invitation to Cold Spring Harbor, also site of the American Eugenics Record Office, two years earlier. Unfortunately, however, he was unable to accept the earlier offer “for official reasons” and hoped that the Reich Minister of Education, Bernhard Rust, would approve the trip this time. The departure date was planned for sometime between the 15 and 25 of December 1937.⁴⁷

It was unlikely that Wettstein, one of the most generously funded plant geneticists⁴⁸ during the Third Reich with extensive international connections, would be prevented from taking part in a professional activity that stood to aid his country as much as it enhanced his own reputation. As the report of his trip

42 For example, Fischer and von Verschuer often use the term „andersartig“ rather than „minderwertig“ to describe Jews, as the latter would not be considered „scientific.“ See, for example, Fischer’s use of the term “andersartig” in his talk given in the Harnack House on February, 1, 1933, where he describes the Jews in this manner. Press memo, n.d., MPG-Archiv, Abt. I, Rep. 1A, Nr. 808, pp. 93-96.

43 Ibid.

44 Report on the 1937 Paris Congress from Professor Rüdin, 01.11.1937, BAB, R 4901 2750/198-199.

45 Rüdin to the General Director of the Kaiser Wilhelm Society, 02.02.1939, MPG-Archiv, Abt. I, Rep. 1A, 1062, Bl. 77a.

46 To the Minister for Science, Education and Public Instruction through the President of the Kaiser Wilhelm Society, 08.09.1937, MPG-Archiv, Abt. I, Rep. 1A, 1057, p. 953.

47 Ibid.

48 Ute Deichmann, *Biologen unter Hitler. Portrait einer Wissenschaft im NS-Staat*, 2nd ed., Frankfurt/ Main, 1995, p. 79. Here Deichmann provides a table listing money received by various plant geneticists by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft.

makes clear, Wettstein was indeed given the permission to go, and his extensive report—which, in terms of detail, goes far beyond the usual reports given upon a German researcher’s return from a foreign professional conference⁴⁹— sheds much interesting light on the degree to which he was willing to use his time at Cold Spring Harbor to gather information on the institutional structure of scientific, especially genetics, research in the United States. It also reveals that he was eager to inform his German patrons about what needed to be done to ensure that German science, and genetics in particular, remain competitive on the world stage. Wettstein certainly felt that the international standing of Germany in the field of genetics was threatened by the work made possible by conditions in the United States.⁵⁰

In a section of his report entitled “Wissenschaftsleben” Wettstein outlined what he believed helped account for the strength of American science.

Das Imponierende und die Stärke des amerikanischen Wissenschaftsleben im Konkurrenzkampf mit anderen Nationen ist die große Zahl der arbeitenden Wissenschaftler und der vorhandenen Institute. Schon in Indianapolis war dies der erste große Eindruck, der später dauernd bestätigt wurde. Nicht nur die Anzahl der Universitäten und Hochschulen ist sehr groß, in jedem Institut finden sich auch noch eine große Zahl verschiedener Forscher für die einzelnen Arbeitsgebiete. Die Qualität der amerikanischen Wissenschaftler ist sicher nicht besser als bei uns, in vielen Fällen sicher schlechter. Aber wenn ein führender Kopf irgendwo ein neues Problem aufdeckt, dann ist immer gleich eine ganze Schar von älteren und vor allem jüngeren Wissenschaftlern da, die alle möglichen Konsequenzen zieht, gedanklich und noch mehr experimentell.⁵¹

Wettstein remarked that every American institute had numerous researchers for each sub-discipline—a situation that simultaneously strongly encouraged new work but also led to “deep divisions and **one-sidedness**.”⁵² Although Wettstein did not hold back his criticism of individual aspects of American research life, he stressed the importance of the newly-founded Rockefeller institutes. He felt that whereas at the time he wrote his report, Germany did not yet lag behind the United States in science, the trend in North America was such “that we must make every effort to hold the current position of equality.”⁵³ In particular, Wettstein praised the “general education” among American institutions of higher learning. “Das Gemeinschaftsleben in den *dormitories* führt zu gutem Geiste”, the director of the KWI für Biologie continued. He recommended “a tougher education“ in his own homeland, something that would not only improve the state of German science but result in “avoidance of the [moral] decline of [our] youth[.]”⁵⁴ Wettstein closed this portion of his report with what he felt Germany should strive for in its academic life: “Das richtige ist die

49 Almost all of the reports I have seen are about 2-3 pages long. Wettstein’s was 6 pages in length.

50 Wettstein to the Reich Ministry for Science, Education and Public Instruction, 27.7.1938, MPG-Archiv, Abt. I, Rep. 1A, 1059, Bl. 9-12.

51 Ibid., Bl. 9-10. Emphasis in the original.

52 Ibid. Emphasis in the original.

53 Ibid., Bl. 10-11. Emphasis in the original.

54 Ibid., Bl. 11.

Summierung von speziellen Kräften in grösserer Zahl unter der Leitung eines hervorragenden Kopfes. Ich glaube, man sollte bei uns wieder zu dem Typus des guten Extraordinarius zurückkehren und solche in grösserer Anzahl um einen wirklich führenden Kopf herumgliedern.“⁵⁵

It is clear that Wettstein's professional visit to the United States served the National Socialist regime well, insofar as the KWI Director went out of his way to describe the advantages and disadvantages of the structure of American scientific research and offered a concrete suggestion for how Germany could remain competitive in light of the great strides being made in the United States. We know from earlier research on Wettstein that he was particularly interested in doing all he could to modernize his field and give German genetics a competitive edge in the international arena. This was not just a matter of insuring that his Institute remained in the vanguard of plant and agricultural genetics; for Wettstein, it was also “a matter of patriotic pride.”⁵⁶ But Wettstein did not limit himself to a discussion of the pros and cons of American research structures. He spent an exceptionally large amount of time discussing Germany's image in the United States and what could be done to improve the less-than-positive view of the Third Reich there. In a special section of his report entitled “Unsere Propaganda”, Wettstein discussed what he believed was Nazi Germany's most serious problem in the United States: “Einen der schlimmsten Eindrücke, die jeder gewinnt, der einige Zeit drüben lebt, ist die antideutsche Propaganda, vor allem geleitet durch die Hetzpresse. Es ist dies so arg, daß eine Abhilfe dringend notwendig ist.”⁵⁷ The plant geneticist suggested that “even if it requires considerable financial resources“ an “independent“ newspaper should be established, “die ohne aufdringliche Propaganda einfach klare, wahre Nachrichten bringt. Denn die meisten Leute sind eben der Hetzpresse ausgeliefert, weil es gar nichts anderes gibt.“⁵⁸ It is fairly clear from the rest of his report that “Hetzpresse” is synonymous with the so-called “Jewish press.” Wettstein appears to have accepted the National Socialist view that Jews were in control of the media, especially in the United States, and that Germany would have to actively combat this if anything like an “objective” view of the Third Reich could reach non-Jewish Americans. Wettstein reported, that “[der] Antisemitismus ist in vielen Gegenden stark im

55 Ibid., Bl. 11-12. Emphasis in the original.

56 For a discussion of Fritz von Wettstein's interest in keeping German non-human genetics on a competitive level, see Deichmann, *Biologen unter Hitler*, pp. 172-173, Bernd Gausemeier, “Mit Netzwerk und doppeltem Boden. Die Botanische Forschung am Kaiser-Wilhelm-Institut für Biologie und die Nationalsozialistische Wissenschaftspolitik,” in: Susanne Heim (ed.), *Autarkie und Ostexpansion. Pflanzenzucht und Agrarforschung im Nationalsozialismus*, Göttingen 2002, pp. 180-205. According to Gausemeier, Wettstein was in awe of American technology in the field of plant genetics as well as the structure of American research institutes (p. 186). Gausemeier states that, for Wettstein, „[v]on den USA lernen hieß für ihn in dieser Frage siegen lernen.“ p. 186. As I have tried to demonstrate, von Wettstein's report of his American trip suggests that he could be critical of some aspects of American research practice, although, by and large, as Gausemeier aptly points out, the plant geneticist was impressed with the way research was undertaken in the United States. I have translated Gausemeier's “patriotische Angelegenheit” as “a matter of patriotic pride.” Here p. 183.

57 To the Ministry for Science, Education and Public Instruction, 27.7.1938, MPG-Archiv, Abt. I, Rep. 1A, Nr. 1059, Bl. 12.

58 Ibid., p. 13

Ansteigen gefunden [sic]” Considering this trend, he suggested that „eine kluge unauffällige Propaganda unter Aufzeigung unserer wirklichen Entwicklung gerade jetzt auf guten Boden fallen [würde]. Diese Zeitungspropaganda sollte durch kluge Filme ergänzt werden, die Hetzfilmen entgegensteuern könnten.“⁵⁹ Like many national-conservative German mandarins,⁶⁰ he might have become more open to anti-Semitic propaganda, as his report certainly leaves open the possibility that he believed the Jews were responsible for America’s negative view of the “new Germany.”

In addition to combating the “Hetzpresse,” von Wettstein suggested that Germany ought to consider an exchange program with young American academics. These people would study in German institutions of higher learning and experience first hand the truth about the Third Reich. “Ein längerer Aufenthalt in unserem Lande ist die beste Propaganda. Ich habe das an den englischen und amerikanischen Studenten in meinem Institut immer gesehen,” Wettstein assured Minister Rust.⁶¹ And finally, Wettstein even considered the implementation of „increased cultural propaganda by sending artists, scientists, and poets to conferences.” This cultural propaganda could even begin on ships carrying young American academics to Germany.⁶² Wettstein concluded his six-page report to Rust by once again reiterating the danger of not taking the anti-German propaganda seriously. “Ich glaube, man kann von unserer Seite nicht genug Augenmerk dieser Antipropaganda widmen. Selbst wenn wir einen gewissen Aufwand an Devisen dazu benötigen, muss dieser Hetze begegnet werden, im Allgemeinen und auf dem Boden der Hochschulen im Besonderen.“⁶³ As will become even clearer in Wettstein’s wartime series of talks held in Bulgaria, the plant geneticist’s interest in combating anti-German propaganda in the United States was part of a much larger project to establish Germany’s world hegemony in his field, control eastern Europe’s stock of agricultural resources, and secure his country’s dominant position in the future “new order” in Europe.

THE WAR YEARS AND GENETICS-RELATED TALKS

The war, at least the British involvement in it, did hamper some German geneticists’ professional hopes. Verschuer, for example, gave a high profile, high prestige talk at the Royal Society in London on twin studies just months before the war.⁶⁴ He had hoped to secure an exchange of junior researchers between his Frankfurt Institute and the Francis Galton Lab. Allegedly he viewed it as a way to quiet things down in the internationally politically contested field

59 Ibid.

60 One can deduce Wettstein’s national-conservative outlook from some of his speeches. See, for example, the speech he held at his colleague Carl Correns’ death in Gausemeier, *Mit Netzwerk und doppeltem Boden*, p. 183.

61 To the Ministry for Science, Education and Public Education, 27.7.1938, MPG-Archiv, Abt. I, Rep. 1A, Nr. 1059, Bl. 13.

62 Ibid.

63 Ibid., p. 14.

64 The lecture was published in: *Proceedings of the Royal Society of London*, 1939, p. 62-81.

of human genetics.⁶⁵ In a private letter, Fischer congratulated his good friend and colleague on his achievements and mentioned that he spoke to the General Secretary of the KWS, Ernst Telchow, about his accomplishments. It was clear to both, Fischer added, that Verschuer would be his successor at the KWIA. Verschuer's scientific and foreign policy successes could thus be used to promote him to the position of director of one of the most prestigious KWIs for human genetics—a plan long since forged by both men.⁶⁶

Turning to the State and Party organs involved in these matters, one finds that even before the war, important changes in the AA left their mark, as Ribbentrop replaced the conservative Konstantin von Neurath and the SS presence there became increasingly obvious.⁶⁷ By this time, the AA had also acquired its own “cultural-political department,” the department responsible for overseeing international scientific conferences. The *Auslandsorganisation der NSDAP* took on a new importance during the war years, and the *REM*, Rust's ministry, showed itself more aggressive as well. Indeed, in 1939, shortly after the outbreak of hostilities, a memo was sent to the KWS entitled “Deutsche Kulturpropaganda im Ausland” categorizing its members into those useful for “purely professional talk” and those with the ability to speak on more general scientific topics. Although Fischer, Verschuer, Wettstein and Rüdin fell into the latter category, the subject matter of their science was so abjectly political in the context of the Third Reich, that any meaningful distinction between scientific lectures and political ones (allegedly the task of Nazi bigwigs when they spoke abroad) fell by the wayside. The memo also stressed that the KWS, owing to the “completely apolitical manner in which it was viewed abroad” would be perfect for the kind of cultural political work the regime now had in mind. It requested the KWS to encourage its members to invite scientists to hold talks at the *Harnack-Haus*. It also desired KWS scientists to hold talks in appropriate foreign countries. To facilitate matters, Fischer, Verschuer, and other important KWS scientists were required to fill out a form asking them about their foreign scientific contacts in neutral countries and requesting information on their ability to hold talks in foreign languages.⁶⁸

With the beginning of war, other high level changes were made in the way the state dealt with international scientific conferences. On November 12, 1940, a meeting was organized to discuss all existing international scientific organizations and how they could be used or discarded to advance German interests. Fischer was part of the commission legislated to make this important decision.⁶⁹ In 1941, the *REM* circulated a secret memo stating that German scientists were to have as little to do with their Polish counterparts as possible.⁷⁰

65 Report from 7.-14.6.1939 on the Completed trip to London, UFAR, Abt. 1, Nr. 47 (Verschuer), Bl. 37.

66 Fischer to Verschuer, 9.3.1939, (UMNV) Nr. 9.

67 For a discussion of these changes, see Hans-Jürgen Döscher, “SS und Auswärtiges Amt im Dritten Reich. Diplomatie im Schatten der „Endlösung,“ Berlin 1991.

68 German Cultural Propaganda Abroad, September, 1939, MPG-Archiv Abt., I, Rep. 1A, 1065, n.d.

69 International Scientific Organizations, Institutes, Associations, etc., 12.11.1940, BAB, R 4901 3190/131-134. (It is not clear who authored this document).

70 Initial Contact Between German Scientists and Professors with Political Academic Scientists, 02.07.1941, MPG-Archiv Abt. I, Rep. 1A, 1067/Mappe 4, n.d.

And when, in 1942, Verschuer was invited to give a talk at the new *Reichsuniversität* Posen on “Die Zwillingsforschung als Grundlage der heutigen Rassenhygiene,” the poster announcing the talk specifically stated “die **deutsche**⁷¹ Bevölkerung” is welcome to attend.⁷²

We will now examine four sets of conferences where Fischer, Verschuer, Rüdin and Wettstein held talks during the war. As international scientific conferences, in any meaningful sense of the phrase, ended with the outbreak of hostilities, German human geneticists were reduced to holding talks in friendly or occupied countries, frequently part of a lecture series sponsored by the German embassy (through the German Institute). These talks, however, were perhaps more important to the regime from a cultural-political point of view than those held at respected international meetings prior to the War.

In 1940, von Verschuer and Rüdin were scheduled to give talks related to their field of human genetics at the *KWI für Kunst und Kulturwissenschaft*—until 1934 known simply as the *Bibliotheca Hertziana* (BH)—in Rome. That a series of talks on such a subject would be held in the first humanistic institute opened by the KWG, largely dedicated to Italian art⁷³, requires a bit of an explanation. In 1934, the new Nazi Party director of the BH, Werner Hoppenstedt, wrote a memorandum in which he argued—with the good wishes of the *Führer*—that a new cultural institute should be established in the Eternal City. The KWG agreed to have it appended to the BH and extend its area of competence to a study of the symbiosis between Italian and German culture. As Hoppenstedt explained, “[es] wäre zu hoffen, daß damit eine Stelle in Rom geschaffen wäre, die ohne das Wort ‘Propaganda’ über die Pforten geschrieben zu haben, doch für die deutsche Sache und auch die deutsche Politik in bedeutsamer und entscheidender Weise werben könnte.”⁷⁴ To accomplish this, scientists from both inside and outside the Institute would come for seminars and colloquia that would attract the Italian public, especially the youth.

According to Verschuer’s report, he did indeed journey to Rome for a lecture series in which not only he and Rüdin were scheduled to hold a lecture on human genetics, but Nazi Party and State officials in the field of racial policy, Walter Gross and Leonardo Conti, were also slated to present talks. Although Gross and Conti definitely did not attend, Verschuer could be pleased that his paper, held in German, went over well with a large audience of Italian scientists and physicians. He intimated that the Italians had a lot of catching up to do in

71 Emphasis mine

72 Archiv der Stiftung für Sozialgeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts (SfS), Bremen, Bestand Verschuer, Nr. 1 Correspondence on Lectures, 1939-1942, photocopy of the poster announcing von Verschuer’s talk, n.d. I am grateful to Karl-Heinz Roth for making this material available to me. This exclusion of the non-German population in Posen paralleled the events surrounding the lecture of the director of the *KWI für Physik* and Nobel Prize winner, Werner Heisenberg, when he held a talk at the *Institut für Deutsche Ostarbeit* in Krakow in December 1943. I would also like to thank Mark Walker for pointing out the comparison to Werner Heisenberg.

73 UFAR, Abt. 1, Nr. 47 (Verschuer), Bl. 41. On the origins of the *Bibliotheca Hertziana*, see Bernhard vom Brocke and Hubert Laitko (ed.), *Die Kaiser-Wilhelm-/Max-Planck-Gesellschaft und ihre Institute*, Berlin, 1996), p. 633.

74 Memorandum: The Founding of the Cultural Science Department of the *Bibliotheca Hertziana* in Rom, PAAA, Rome 1322b; here p. 4.

the area of medical genetics and racial hygiene, but fortunately, they were eager to learn. An Italian journal entitled *La Difesa della Rassa* (with a circulation of 150,000) agreed to carry a special issue dedicated to the subject.⁷⁵

In November 1940, von Wettstein held two professional lectures in a “friendly” country: Bulgaria. His talks were approved by the *Auswärtigen Amt* and were delivered at the Agricultural Ministry in Sofia during the German plant geneticist’s eight-day stay. Although he claimed to have observed the “intellectual trends and political relations” in his host country, in contrast to his earlier report on the United States, Wettstein declined to comment on these matters. He would restrict himself to reporting on the “scientific conditions” in the country.⁷⁶ That Wettstein had a difficult time separating science and politics, however, will quickly become apparent.

Following his intention to report on scientific issues, Wettstein informed the *Auswärtige Amt* that “ agricultural breeding and breeding research is on a rather high level in Bulgaria.”⁷⁷ He remarked that the several breeding institutes in Bulgaria were grouped around a central agricultural institute in Sofia headed by leading geneticists and breeding researchers who spent time in Germany, Sweden and the United States as well as in the Soviet Union under the renowned plant geneticist, Nikolai I. Vavilov (1887-1943). With regard to the scientific direction of Bulgarian breeding research, Wettstein commented that it was oriented both towards Germany and the Soviet Union—the latter owing to Vavilov’s tremendous influence in the field as well as the long-standing *Russenfreundschaft* that exists in the country.⁷⁸ It was also easier to obtain and read Russian than German literature in the field. Unfortunately, Wettstein continued, Lysenkoism has begun to triumph in the Soviet Union. This was opposed to the internationally recognized Darwinian-Mendelian direction in genetics. In its Larmarckism, Wettstein added, Lysenkoism “rejects the basis of race.”⁷⁹ According to the German plant geneticist, the head of the Bulgarian agricultural institute recognized the danger of these developments for his own country, and “he made a strong plea for its dependence on Germany [...]”⁸⁰

The impossibility of separating science and politics in Wettstein’s report becomes clear when one examines his suggestion on how to counter this neo-Larmarckian threat to the Bulgarian genetics community to the Foreign Office:

Ich glaube daher, daß der Zeitpunkt günstig ist, um diesen Bestrebungen von uns aus entgegen zu kommen und damit von uns aus kulturpolitisch den Einfluß Rußlands auf diesem Gebiet zurückzudrängen. Es kann dies fachlich auch wärmstens befürwortet werden, da unter den Züchtungsforschern

75 Report on the Lecture Trip to Rome from 10. – 21. 2.1940, UFAR, Abt. 1, Nr. 47 (Verschuer), p. 43.

76 Report on the Lecture Trip to Bulgaria Initiated by the Bulgarian Agricultural Ministry, 12.01.1941, MPG-Archiv Abt, 1, Rep. 1A, 1067/1, Bl. 1-5. Quotes on p. 1.

77 Ibid., Bl. 1.

78 Ibid., Bl. 3.

79 Ibid., Bl. 4.

80 Ibid.

Bulgariens Leute von gutem Rang sind und der Austausch auch für uns daher fruchtbar werden kann.⁸¹

Although Germany and the Soviet Union were not yet at war, it is clear that Wettstein felt that a continued “Russian” scientific presence in Bulgaria would detract from Germany’s political and cultural influence in the country. Wettstein ended his five-page report with a list of suggestions to cement the relationship between Bulgaria and Germany in the field of agricultural research.⁸²

It is important to remember that Wettstein’s lecture series at the agricultural ministry in Bulgaria’s capital city did not take place in a scientific and political vacuum. Bulgaria was the site of tug of war between the allies, especially Britain and the Soviet Union, and Germany for cultural hegemony in the region. Science and scientific institutes would play a large role as a form of cultural politics in the “new order” in Europe.⁸³ For example, after Germany’s attack on the Soviet Union and only a year after Wettstein held his series of talks in Sofia, the KWI director lent his support to the construction of a joint German-Bulgarian KWI dedicated to agricultural research. Indeed, he had a hand in selecting the German director.⁸⁴ It was to be established by the KWS with the explicit support of the *Auswärtigen Amts*, the *Reichsernährungsministeriums* and the *Oberkommandos der Wehrmacht*.⁸⁵ One of the Bulgarian geneticists “of high standing” mentioned by Wettstein in his report was none other than Donscho Kostoff, state secretary to the Bulgarian agricultural minister Ivan Bagrianoff. Kostoff was the Bulgarian geneticist, who later signed the written agreement with agricultural expert Konrad Meyer, one of the leading figures in Heinrich Himmler’s notorious *Generalplan Ost* to crystallize the “German-Bulgarian cooperation in the field of agriculture” through the above-mentioned creation of a joint German-Bulgarian *KWI/Forschungsstelle*.⁸⁶ Wettstein’s concern to eliminate Russian influence from Bulgaria can be placed in the larger context of his plan—a vision he had in mind even prior to the German invasion of the Soviet Union—to appropriate valuable Russian plant and agricultural institutes and have a hand in controlling agricultural production in the Soviet Union and the Balkans. He was also instrumental in the creation of the KWI for Cultivated Plants (*Kaiser-Wilhelm-Institut für Kulturpflanzen*) near Vienna in 1943—an institute that would serve as the center of a network of plant collecting stations “from the polar sea to the Mediterranean area, from the

81 Ibid.

82 Ibid. Bl. 4-5.

83 For a discussion of Bulgaria as a site of cultural politics between Britain and Germany, see Susanne Heim, *Kalorien, Kautschuk, Karrieren. Pflanzenzüchtung und landwirtschaftliche Forschung in Kaiser-Wilhelm-Instituten 1933-1945*, Göttingen 2003 pp. 72-84.

84 Ibid., pp. 78-79.

85 Ibid., p. 76.

86 Ibid. For a discussion of Donscho Kostoff, see pp. 76-83. Quote on p. 76. Kostoff is mentioned in Wettstein’s report, Report on the Lecture Trip to Bulgaria Initiated by the Bulgarian Agricultural Ministry, 12.1.1941, MPG-Archiv Abt. 1, Rep. 1A, 1067/1, Bl. 1-5. Regarding the biography of Konrad Meyer and his role in Himmler’s *Generalplan Ost*, see Irene Stoher, „Von Max Sering zu Konrad Meyer—ein ‚machtergreifender‘ Generationenwechsel in der Agrar- und Siedlungswissenschaft“ in: Heim, *Autarkie und Ostexpansion*, pp. 57-90.

Atlantic to the extreme continental region, from the seacoast to the Alps.”⁸⁷ As we have seen, Wettstein, though never a Party member, certainly legitimized and supported the agricultural and East European cultural politics of the National Socialist regime through “the sword of [his] science” in the international arena.

The years 1941 and 1942 witnessed numerous talks by Fischer and Verschuer throughout Europe. From October 23 through November 8, 1941 Fischer delivered a series of lectures throughout Romania. He also gave one talk in Hungary. What is particularly revealing about his travel report is the amount of political information it contained, especially on the tensions between Romanians and Hungarians, as well as between Romanians and the *Volksdeutschen* living among them. Fischer stressed the positive role played by the German Institute in Bucharest as a mediator between the academic and political circles in Romania, as well as between the latter and the Germans. Interestingly, he warned about having scientists lecture to Romanians and the *Volksdeutschen* at the same time; separate events would strengthen the ties between *Reichsdeutschen* and Romanian academics. Fischer also viewed it as a mistake to combine a trip to Klausenburg/Cluj, Hungary (present-day Romania) with Romania, as the Romanians still viewed the University of Klausenburg/Cluj as Romanian. Nonetheless, declared Fischer, “the present foreign policy situation has never been as favorable as it is now” for Germany. We would do well, he added, to invite Romanian academics to Germany not because of any scientific talent, “as, in general, they cannot bring us too much” but for cultural-political reasons. Fischer closed his report with a positive assessment of his effectiveness in handling the delicate question of “race” owing to his status and age. After all, the Romanians knew his scientific position on race even before 1933.⁸⁸ In this and other lecture trips Fischer assumed a position of cultural ambassador, not unlike the one physicist Werner Heisenberg played in occupied Europe. The important difference, of course, is that Fischer’s statements on science were intrinsically political in the context of the racial policies of the National Socialist state in a way that Werner Heisenberg’s were not.⁸⁹

In late 1941/early 1942, the German Institute⁹⁰ in occupied Paris initiated a series of lectures dealing with issues of health and racial hygiene, presumably at the Sorbonne. Verschuer held a talk entitled “Das Erbbild vom Menschen.”⁹¹ Fischer, by now a Party member, decided to speak on “Rasse und Deutsche

87 Susanne Heim, „Research for Autarky. The Contribution of Scientist to Nazi Rule in Germany,“ (= Ergebnisse. Vorabdrucke aus dem Forschungsprogramm “Geschichte der Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gesellschaft im Nationalsozialismus”; 4), Berlin 2001; here p. 17. Heim takes this quote from Deichmann, *Biologen*, p. 431.

88 Travel report by Eugen Fischer, n.d., MPG-Archiv Abt. I, Rep. 1A, 1067/8.

89 For a discussion of Heisenberg as “goodwill ambassador,” see Mark Walker, *Nazi Science: Myth, Truth and the German Atomic Bomb*, New York, 1995, chapter 7.

90 For a discussion of the importance of the Deutsche Institut in Paris, see Frank-Rutger Hausmann, (ed.) “Auch im Krieg schweigen die Musen nicht” *Die Deutschen Wissenschaftlichen Institute im Zweiten Weltkrieg*, 2nd ed., Göttingen 2002, pp. 100-130.

91 UFAR, Abt. 1 Nr. 47 (Verschuer), p. 46.

Gesetzgebung.”⁹² The lectures were delivered to a group of elite French scientists in French. As should be obvious, here the goal was no longer to legitimize Nazi racial policy in the abstract; it was to win approval for its implementation in occupied France. Indeed, in Fischer’s discussion of the “Jewish problem”—only weeks before the infamous *Wannsee* Conference would slate 165,000 Jews in occupied France for extermination⁹³—the KWIA director not only served Nazi foreign policy objectives but its genocide goals as well. He implemented a well-thought-out rhetorical strategy in addition to bestowing his scientific expertise and professional status as “resources”⁹⁴ during this sensitive lecture in Paris. There can be no doubt that Fischer realized something terribly bad was happening to the Jews, at least those in Eastern Europe. After all, in 1940 he sent one of his assistants and three students to the Lodz ghetto to find pictures of “typical Jews” that would be used for his blatantly anti-Semitic book published with the German theologian, Gerhard Kittel, entitled “World Jewry in Antiquity”.⁹⁵

Although the original papers no longer appear to exist, we know exactly what Fischer and von Verschuer said at the meeting as the talks at this lecture series were later published as a booklet entitled *Etat et Santé*.⁹⁶ After offering his definition of “race” Fischer used studies from American “mainline eugenicists” such as Charles Davenport to support the idea that there were important intellectual differences among the various races. Not surprisingly, he played down differences among the so-called European races, not merely in order to avoid offending his audience, but because he genuinely believed that some racial mixture among allegedly closely related races was not harmful. Matters were entirely different with regard to Jews, however. Although Fischer noted that there were isolated Jews who made remarkable achievements, they nonetheless had a very marked racial mentality and character that separated them from Europeans. “The moral tendency and all of the actions of the Bolshevik Jews lay bare such a monstrous mentality that we can only speak of inferiority and [the Jews representing] a species different from our own.” If a people wish to preserve the culture of their ancestors, it is imperative that they

92 Concerning the Lecture Trip to Paris, 10.12.1941, MPG-Archiv Abt. I, Rep. 1A, 1067/Mappe 8, n.d.

93 This is the figure for the number of Jews in occupied France slated for extermination at the Wannsee Conference as given by Martin Gilbert, in: *The Routledge Atlas of the Holocaust*, 3rd ed., London 2002, p. 85.

94 I am employing the term „resources“ in the same manner as historian of science Mitchell Ash does in his article, „Wissenschaft und Politik als Ressourcen für einander,“ in: Rüdiger vom Bruch/Brigitte Kaderas (ed.), *Wissenschaften und Wissenschaftspolitik. Bestandsaufnahmen zu Formationen, Brüchen und Kontinuitäten im Deutschland des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Stuttgart 2002, pp. 32-49.

95 Eugen Fischer and Gerhard Kittel, *Das antike Weltjudentum, Tatsachen, Texte, Bilder. Schriften des Reichsinstituts für Geschichte des neuen Deutschland, Forschungen zur Judenfrage*, Bd. 7, Hamburg 1943.

96 Eugen Fischer, *Le problème de la race et la législation raciale allemande*; Otmar von Verschuer, *L’Image héréditaire de l’homme*, in *Etat et Santé* (= *Cahiers de L’Institut Allemand*; 4), Paris n.d., pp. 83-110 (Fischer); pp. 61-79 (Verschuer).

exclude those races whose character traits are so alien from their own, Fischer concluded.⁹⁷

Perhaps even more disconcerting than Fischer's talk was his appraisal of it in his official report. After praising the German Institute for the psychological wisdom of holding the talk at a French university, he mentioned that it was both well attended and well reported in the local newspapers. He explained that his "extremely open, but purely scientific manner" discussion of the "Negro problem" and "Jewish problem" in France was accepted without rebuttal. Indeed, individual French scientists, Fischer claimed, "acknowledged that I discussed the topic honestly and courageously."⁹⁸ Unfortunately, one could not trust collaborating with most of these people. Most of the anthropological institutes in Paris were anti-German, at least regarding our concept of race, Fischer reported: "Das ist aber für die gesamte Politik nicht ohne Bedeutung." According to Fischer, only "scientifically-modern and German-friendly" researchers should be allowed continued influence in the field.⁹⁹

CONCLUSION

As we have seen, German geneticists did indeed use "the sword of [their] science" as a foreign policy weapon to support the racial policy goals of the Nazi state by attending professional international conferences. But this was only the tip of the iceberg. We can summarize some of the less obvious ways in which these meetings and National Socialist foreign policy intersected in the pre-war period as follows: first, international professional conferences, especially when held in Germany, bolstered the prestige of German science, especially in light of the pariah status it endured during the early Weimar years when its scientists were excluded from foreign conferences. They hence advanced the cultural policy goals of Germany; second, insofar as these international conferences were moved to Germany or to "countries well-disposed toward Germany" they furthered Nazi aims as they were controlled by geneticists sympathetic to the Nazi cause. Moreover, we can look at the role of renowned German geneticists like Fischer, Verschuer, Wettstein and Rüdin and view how they directly used their influence to advance Nazi foreign policy interests prior to 1939. Among the ways they accomplished this task include: 1) their attempts to change the shape of international conferences to reflect German interests; 2) their efforts, through indirect channels and personal relations with foreign scientists, to influence these researchers in a pro-German direction; and finally, 3) through the reports these German scientists were forced to write, they gave the regime valuable insights into the political and scientific state of the host country in which they held their talks.

97 The original reads as follows: "S'il faut reconnaître que beaucoup de Juifs isolés ont fait oeuvre remarquable, voire même oeuvre de premier plan, dans des domaines très variés de l'esprit, les tendances morales et toute l'activité des Juifs bolchéviques décèlent une mentalité si monstrueuse que l'on ne peut plus parler que d'infériorité et d'être d'une autre espèce que la nôtre." Ibid., pp. 85-110; here p. 106.

98 Concerning the Lecture Trip to Paris, 10.12.1941, MPG-Archiv, Abt. I, Rep. 1A, 1067/8, n.d. It is not clear who Fischer originally addressed this report to, although it was probably Rust.

99 Ibid.

During the war, these men continued to support Nazi foreign policy goals by legitimating the execution of Nazi racial policy— including, indirectly, genocide—in occupied and “friendly” countries. Moreover, through their support of Nazi cultural policy, they helped win the hearts and minds of professionals in neutral countries. And finally, owing to their efforts, these scientists helped prepare the way for the “new order” in Europe by showing the virtues of German science, in general, and genetics in particular.

How, we might ask, did German geneticists themselves profit from these international conferences and lecture series? And what can we say about the relationship between genetics researchers and the National Socialist state if we examine their activities in the international arena? Two conclusions can be drawn here: first, attending international conferences gave German non-human geneticists and biomedical scientists a chance to meet with their peers and exchange ideas that could be used by them to enhance their own research—something that given the parameters of the Nazi state and its racial policy also served the interest of the regime. Second, such conferences conferred influence at home; the KWS geneticists’ international reputations were scientific capital for the Nazi regime and they knew it. They could exploit it for their own ends, for example to end denunciation campaigns (as in the case of Fischer), to secure a directorship of the KWIA (in the case of Verschuer) as well as in more mundane ways such as securing more money for their institutes—an activity which, again, would ultimately benefit the regime, as their research directly served the racial policy needs of the Nazi state.

Hence German geneticists’ use of “the sword of [their] science” in the international arena lays bare the radical symbiotic relationship between the junior and senior partners to the “Faustian bargain” made at the outset of the Third Reich between geneticists and the Nazi state. Each served as intellectual and political resources for the other. The results, as we know, were tragic.

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AUTHOR

Prof. Dr. Sheila Weiss

Die Historikerin Sheila Faith Weiss lehrt Geschichte an der Clarkson University in Potsdam, New York. In den Jahren 2002 bis 2004 war sie für einen Gesamtzeitraum von 5 Monaten Gastwissenschaftlerin im Forschungsprogramm „Geschichte der Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gesellschaft im Nationalsozialismus“, wo sie sich mit verschiedenen Themen im Zusammenhang mit dem Kaiser Wilhelm Institute für Anthropologie, menschliche Erblehre und Eugenik befaßte und dabei diesem Institut von unterschiedlichen historiographischen Ausgangspunkten genähert hat. Weitere Arbeitsschwerpunkte der Autorin sind: Geschichte der modernen Wissenschaften und die Geschichte des Holocaust.

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