

Happy in BERLIN?

English Writers
in the City,
the 1920s and Beyond

Politics,
Psychoanalysis,
Pleasure

Introduction Einführung

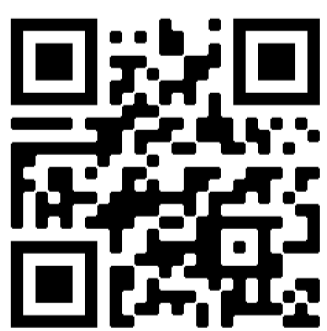


Fig. ↑ A summer evening on the new restaurant terrace of the Adlon Hotel, Berlin, coloured postcard after a watercolour by Karl Lindegreen, c. 1928

Politics, psychoanalysis, pleasure – the three focal points of this exhibition – were major draws for British writers to Berlin in the early 20th century.

Christopher Isherwood, W.H. Auden, and Stephen Spender are well known: they have created a myth about the city in their writings. But we invite you to follow in the footsteps of less famous authors such as Evelyn, Countess Blücher, Alix Strachey, Vita Sackville-West, Elizabeth Wiskemann, Diana Mosley, or William Robson-Scott, in order to immerse yourselves in 1920s and 1930s Berlin, and to discover some of the places where these authors spent their time. British writers travelled to Berlin for pleasure but they also came for more professional purposes, as political exiles during the First World War, as ambassador's wives, as journalists, or in order to train as psychoanalysts.

The exhibition is a joint project between The Centre for British Studies at Humboldt-Universität, Oxford University, and Literaturhaus Berlin and can be visited at all three locations.



More information can be found here:
Weitere Informationen finden Sie unter:
➤ www.happy-in-berlin.org



Fig. ↑ Jupp Wiertz, Germany Wants to See You, 1929

*Politik, Psychoanalyse, Vergnügen – diese drei Schwerpunkte der Ausstellung zählten zu den wichtigsten Pull-Faktoren für britische Autor*innen, Berlin im frühen 20. Jahrhundert einen Besuch abzustatten.*

*Die Autoren Christopher Isherwood, W.H. Auden und Stephen Spender sind sehr bekannt: Sie haben in ihren Werken aus Berlin einen Mythos gemacht. Wir laden unsere Besucher*innen dazu ein, auch den Spuren unbekannter Autor*innen wie Evelyn, Gräfin Blücher, Alix Strachey, Vita Sackville-West, Elizabeth Wiskemann, Diana Mosley oder William Robson-Scott nachzugehen, in das Berlin der 1920er und 30er Jahre einzutauchen und so einige der Orte näher kennenzulernen, die für diese Autor*innen von besonderer Bedeutung waren.*

*Britische Schriftsteller*innen reisten vergnügenshalber nach Berlin, aber auch aus beruflichen Gründen, als politische Exilant*innen während des Ersten Weltkrieges, als Botschafter-Gattin, als Journalist*innen, oder um als Psychoanalytiker*in ausgebildet zu werden.*

Die Ausstellung ist ein Kooperationsprojekt des Großbritannien-Zentrums der Humboldt-Universität, der University of Oxford, und des Literaturhauses Berlin. Sie kann an allen drei Standorten besucht werden.

Politics I

First World War and Revolution



Fig. ↑ Evelyn, Countess Blücher, photograph c. 1896, unknown photographer

Fig. ← Armed revolutionaries on Pariser Platz, 16 January 1919, unknown photographer



Fig. ↑ Palais Blücher, photograph by Georg Pahl, 1930

When the First World War broke out in 1914, the English Catholic Evelyn, Countess Blücher and her German husband were forced into exile, barely making it across the Channel without being torpedoed. They spent the first part of the war as privileged exiles at the royalist Esplanade Hotel, near the Tiergarten, in the company of other aristocrats stranded in Berlin.

'In the evening there is usually a large gathering of friends in the lounge of the Esplanade. We are an international collection of birds of passage, united by a common feeling of suspense and anxiety.' Evelyn Countess Blücher, 12 August 1914, *An English Wife in Berlin*

During the November Revolution of 1918 the Blüchers observed the masses of workers marching down Unter den Linden. The couple had moved to their sumptuous and enormous Palais, situated on Pariser Platz near the Brandenburg Gate. The social contrast could not have been greater.

'Early in the morning I had been already awakened by the sound of loud singing in the street, and on looking out of the window I saw hundreds of young sailor lads marching by, carrying parcels and looking very pleased with themselves.'

Evelyn Countess Blücher, 8 November 1918, *An English Wife in Berlin*

Politics I

The British Embassy Re-opened

Fig. → Helen Venetia (née Duncombe),
Viscountess D'Abernon, photograph
by Hayman Seleg Mendelssohn, 1890



Fig. ↑ The Tiergarten in winter,
photograph by Willy Römer, 1925

Fig. → Feeding impoverished
children after the First World War,
unknown photographer, 1920



The British embassy was re-opened in 1920 after standing empty during the war. It was situated in the Palais Strousberg on Wilhelmstraße, just off Unter den Linden. The ambassador's wife, the socialite Lady Helen D'Abernon, set it to rights, went on chaperoned walks in the Tiergarten and to soup kitchens, and arranged luxurious parties. For all this, her movements were almost as constrained as Evelyn, Countess Blücher's had been.

Nonetheless, her window provided a good observation point onto some of the city's secretive goings-on.

'I spend hours at the window, watching the lumbering conveyances and the unusual pedestrians that pass to and fro. [...] Last night a woman (as at first sight I took the figure to be) dressed in a light coat and skirt, a large hat and a floating veil, stood ever so long on the opposite side of the street in a dark doorway. At last she was joined by a man. After exchanging a few words they strolled away toward Unter den Linden. Then it was that the flat feet and heavy silhouette made me realize that this was a man dressed like a woman. When the figure advanced into the glare of the lamplight I saw that round the waist of the jacket was strapped a military belt from which hung a scabbard. It was not the first time that from my window I have seen men street-walkers dressed up as women, but never before one with a cavalry belt and sabre superadded.'

Helen D'Abernon, 4 August 1920, *Red Cross and Berlin Embassy*, 1946

Politics I

The British Embassy Re-opened



Fig. ↑ The British Embassy, Wilhelmstraße 70, unknown photographer, 1937

Lady D'Abernon's supervised walks and encounters with Weimar politicians led her to make quite scathing comments on class issues. She reported on her first meeting with the then German president, Friedrich Ebert, and his wife:

'The President is a rough diamond, coarse and heavy, but one feels at once that he has a strong personality and is no mere figurehead. Frau Ebert is a hefty upstanding lady from Danzig, said to be the daughter of a saddler. Both are unused to social amenities, but the lack of current conventional insincerities gives to the better sort of Socialists a certain simplicity and directness that is akin to natural dignity.'

Helen D'Abernon, 8 December 1920, *Red Cross and Berlin Embassy*

With her large-scale parties Lady Helen D'Abernon tried to impress on Berlin's society that the British had returned in full force. The Anglo-German diarist Harry Count Kessler, who was at home in international and diplomatic circles, thought her fancy-dress entertainments in rather poor taste:

'Lady D'Abernon [...] sah unglaublich jugendlich und hübsch aus als englisches Gainsborough-Bauernmädchen in hellem, geblütem Stoff und Mützchen. [...] Nur sieht man nicht recht ein, warum gerade Diplomaten in diesem Augenblick, wo die internationale Lage so gespannt und ernst ist, als Bauern und Bäuerinnen tanzen müssen.'

Harry Graf Kessler, 26 May 1925

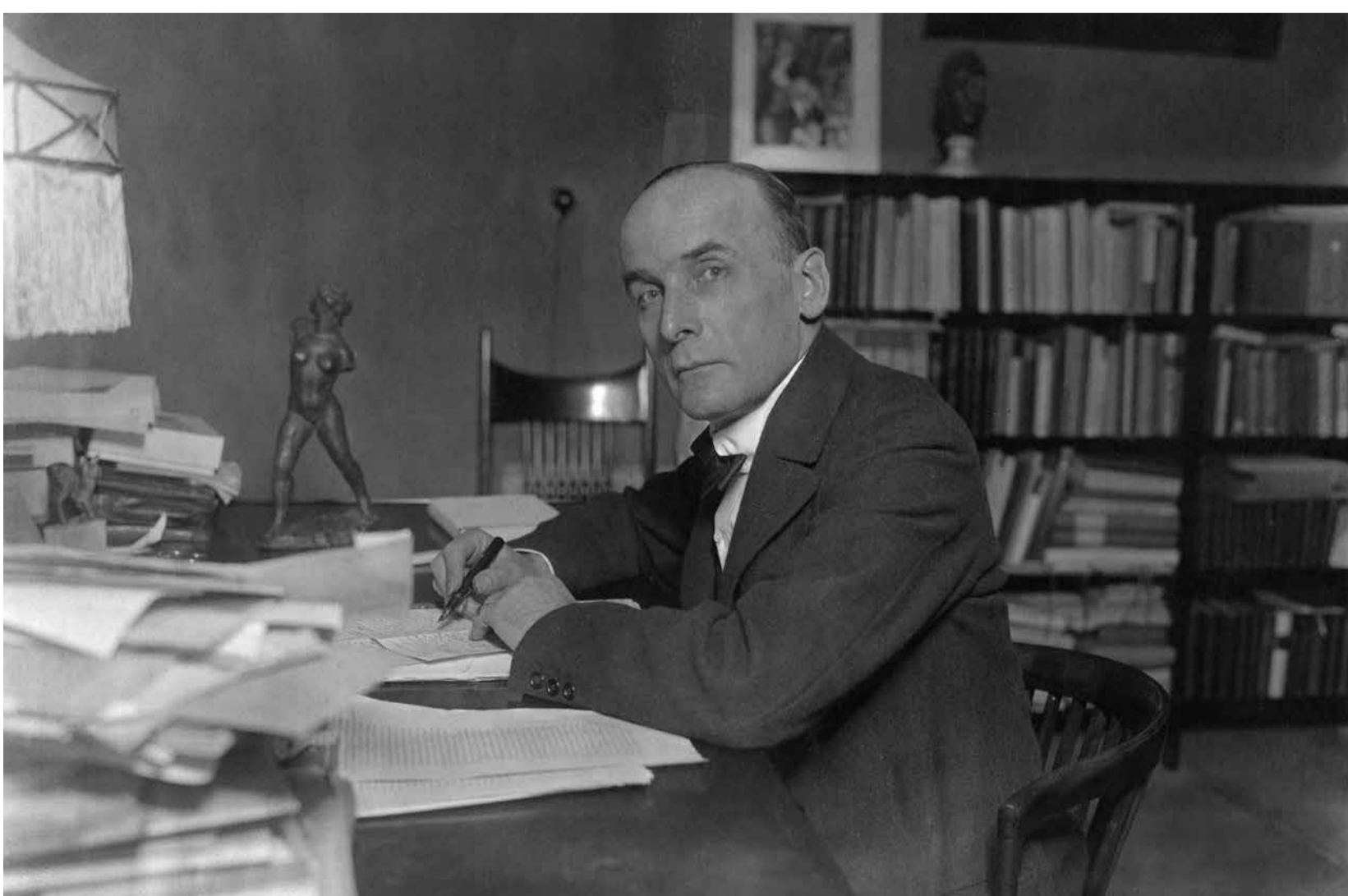


Fig. ↑ Harry Count Kessler at his desk, unknown photographer, 1919



Fig. ↑ The British Embassy (interior) and Ambassador Lord D'Abernon, photograph by Georg Pahl, 1922

Politics I

Radicals in Berlin

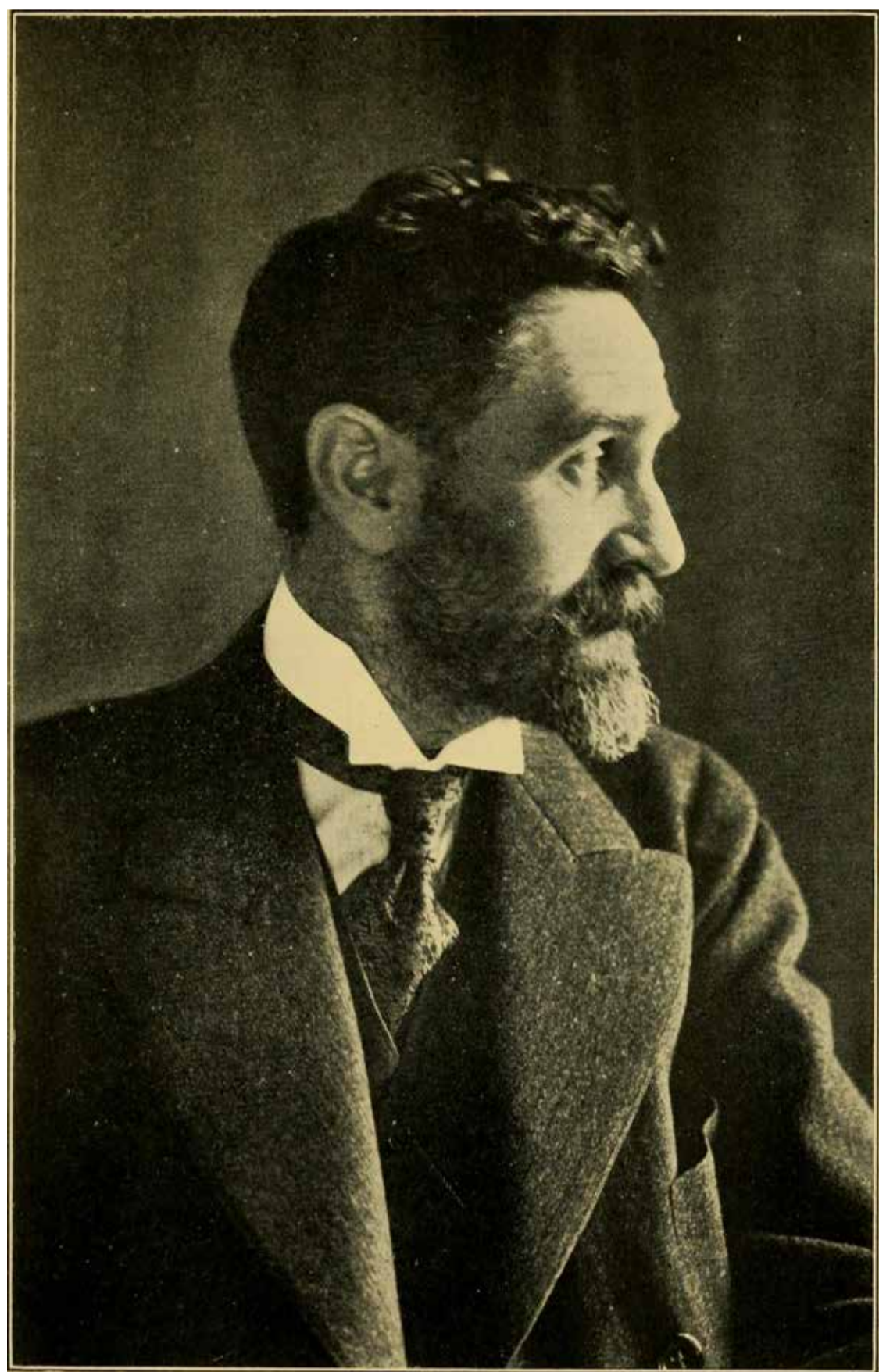


Fig. ↑ Sir Roger Casement, diplomat at the British Foreign Office till 1913, poet, and Irish nationalist executed for high treason after the Irish Easter Rising, unknown photographer, c. 1910

Fig. ↓ Willi Münzenberg, a communist collaborator of Chattopadhyaya, unknown photographer, 1930

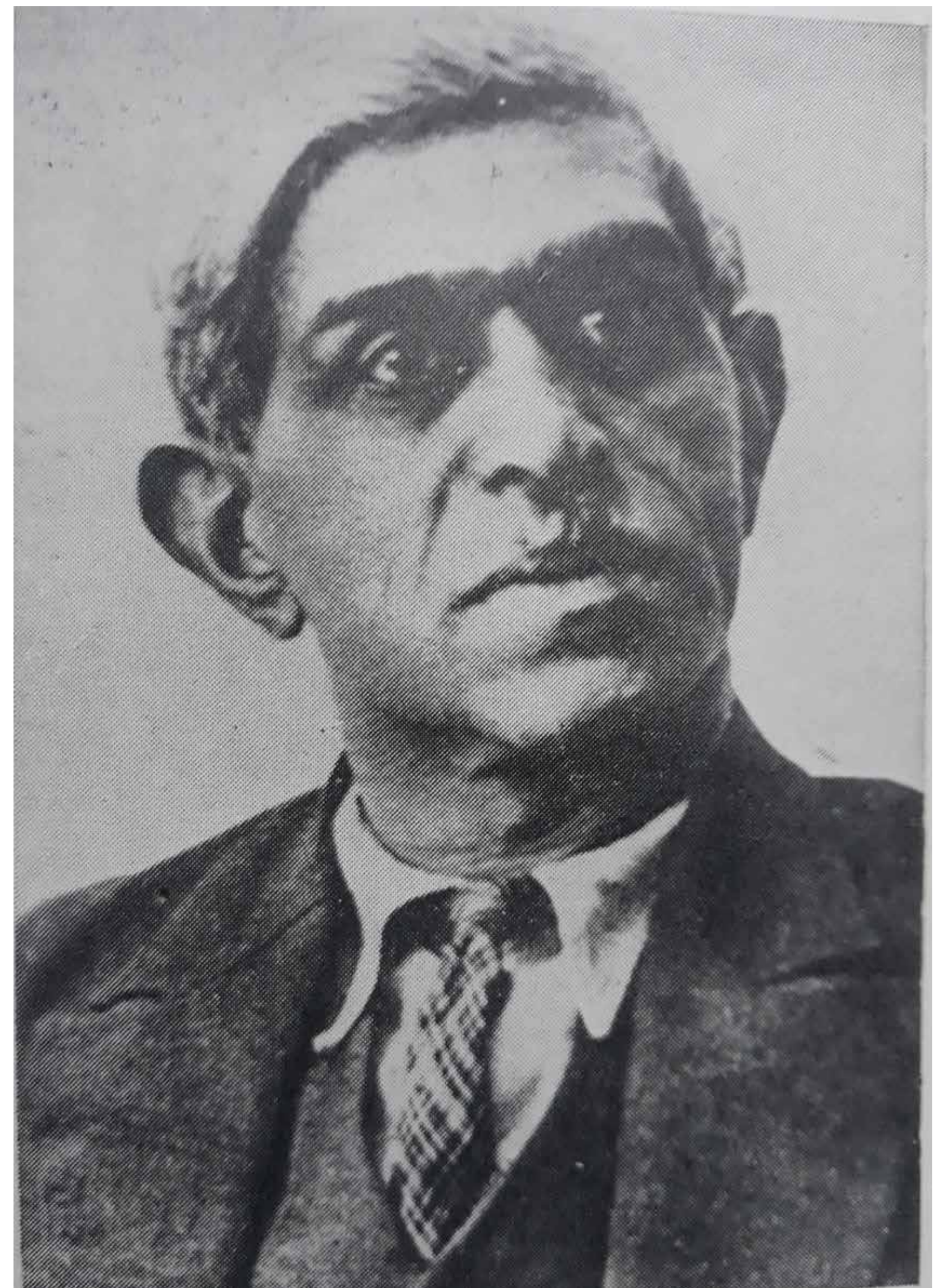


Fig. ↑ Virendranath Chattopadhyaya, unknown photographer and date

It was not only members of the establishment who visited Berlin. The city also attracted political radicals. Berlin as the capital of Britain's former enemy nation was an ideal ground for anti-British activities. The Irish nationalist Sir Roger Casement visited Evelyn Blücher during the First World War, and was later hanged for treason because of his support of the IRA. The Indian Virendranath Chattopadhyaya shared this anti-imperialist attitude. He worked in Europe towards overthrowing British rule in India.

Chattopadhyaya was well connected in literary circles: his sister was the poet Sarojini Naidu, his partner the American writer Agnes Smedley. At the outbreak of the First World War, Chattopadhyaya was studying at Halle University. The German ministry of the interior approached him to join the India Committee, to support anti-British activities in Europe. After the war, Chattopadhyaya joined forces with communists in Berlin. When Anglo-German relations improved and German political circles began to frown upon radical anti-Imperialism and Indian independence, he emigrated to the Soviet Union. Chattopadhyaya was killed by the Stalinist secret police in 1937.



Politics I

Cultural Exchange

at the

British Embassy

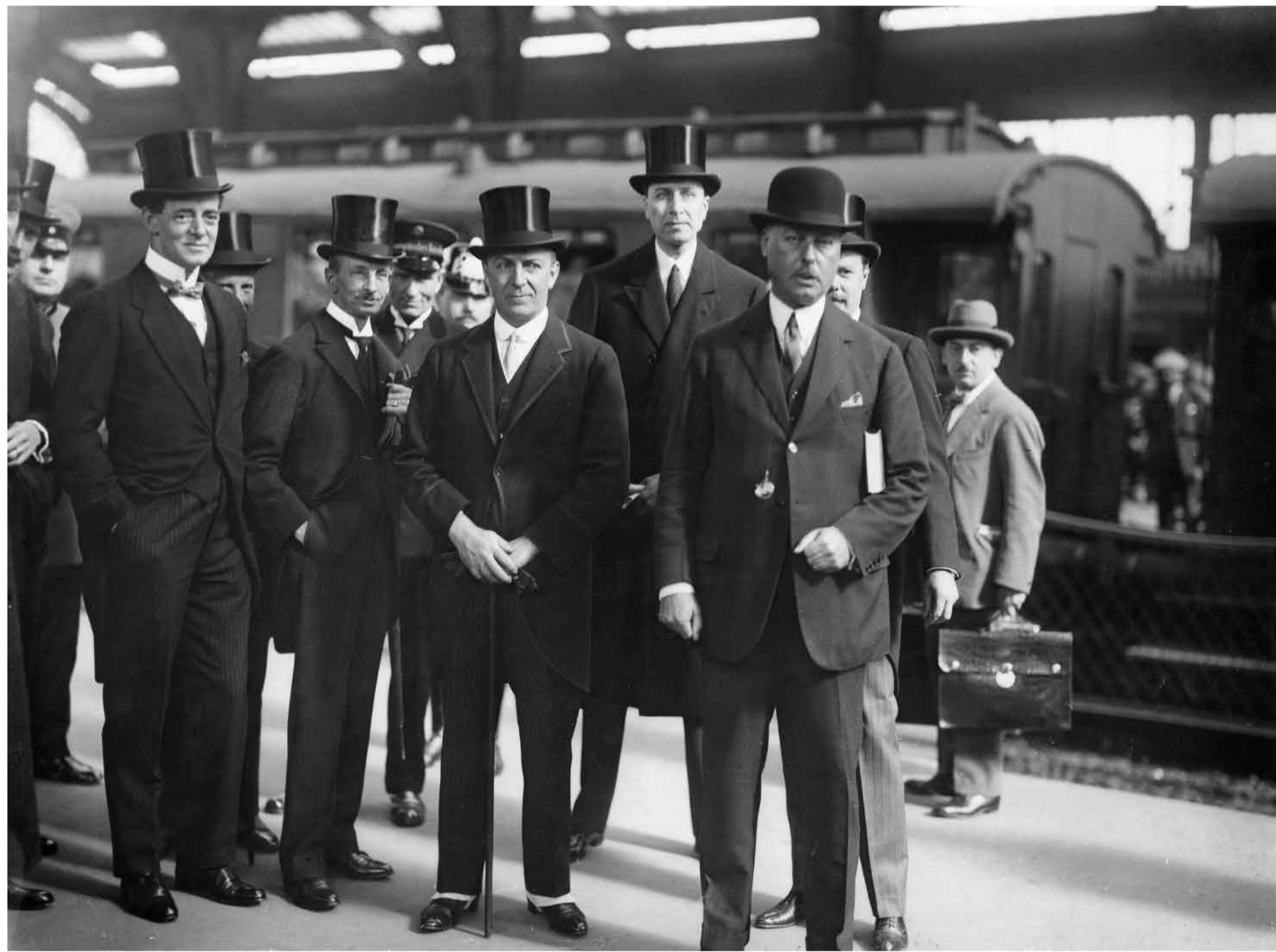


Fig. ↑ The photograph by John Graudenz, 1928, shows British Ambassador Sir Horace Rumbold, arriving in Berlin. Harold Nicolson is behind him on the right, sporting a moustache and a top hat

In the late 1920s, the British embassy became an important cultural hub when the writer Harold Nicolson was appointed first as counsellor, and then as *chargé d'affaires*. Nicolson was connected to the famous Bloomsbury group of writers and artists through his wife Vita Sackville-West. Both pursued attachments with members of their own sex.

'At seven I had to get up in order to meet old Rumbold. I put on my top hat and tails, and motored in on a lovely clear morning feeling rather cross and uncomfortable in my stiff clothes. There is no doubt moreover that I do not like Ambassadors arriving when I am in charge. They had opened the special waiting-rooms at the Friedrichstrasse — and there was the whole staff there looking very lovely, and two representatives of the German Government. The train came in and old Rumby bundled out rather embarrassed with an attaché case in one hand and in the other a novel by Mr Galsworthy. [...] Rumby was confused. 'Never', he said, 'have I felt so odd.' You see, the last time the poor man was in Berlin was exactly fourteen years ago to the day almost — on August 4 1914 — when he was Counsellor and crept out of Berlin under cavalry escort and amid the booings of a crowd. It is odd thus to return. [...]'

Harold Nicolson to Vita Sackville-West, 3 August 1928

Vita Sackville-West hated Berlin. In her letters, she spoke of the 'cage' of diplomacy and the 'coffin of Berlin'. She nevertheless immersed herself in the city's literary scene, translating Rilke, and starting an affair with the American-German writer Margaret Goldsmith. Vita's letters to another of her lovers, the modernist writer Virginia Woolf, are full of excursions, encounters, and reminiscences of the week she and Woolf spent together in Berlin in January 1929.

Politics I

Cultural Exchange at the British Embassy



Fig. 1 Vita Sackville-West,
photograph by Howard Coster, 1934

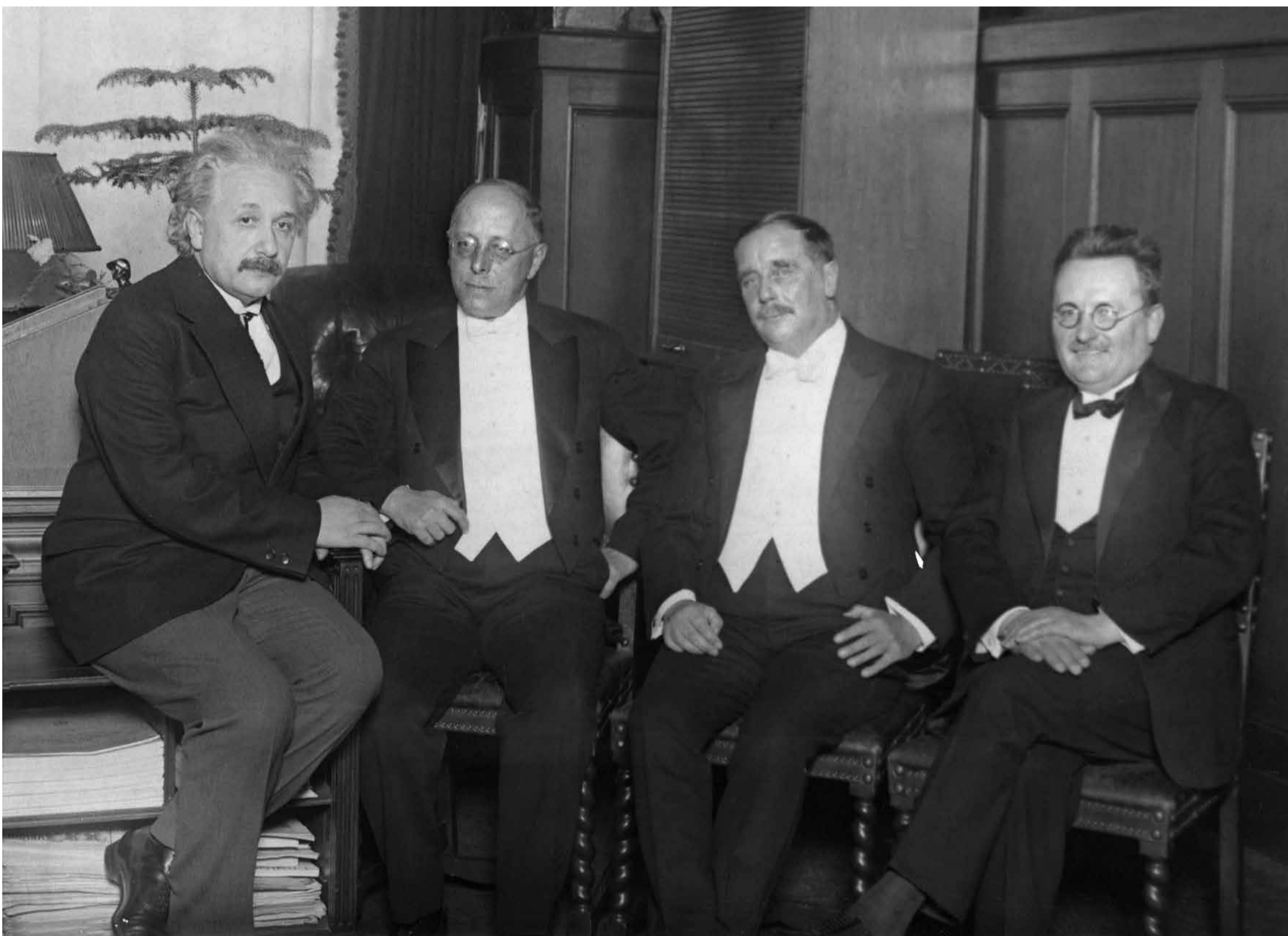


Fig. 1 From left: Albert Einstein, the
minister for cultural affairs Carl Heinrich
Becker, H.G. Wells, and the President
of the German Reichstag, Paul Loebe,
in Berlin, unknown photographer,
16 April 1929

Fig. 2 Margaret Goldsmith, German-
American writer who had a brief affair
with Vita Sackville-West,
photograph by Lucia Moholy, 1935



'My darling lovely Virginia, It is so empty here without you. [...] You won't get this, thanks to the English non-Sunday post, till after you have been to Long Barn, which I hope will have reminded you of me a little and perhaps revived in you something of those feelings to which you gave such startling and disturbing expression in the Funkturm. I say, you don't know what a difference your week here has made to me. It just shows how little the actual duration of time really counts. Formerly, the whole of Berlin was pure loathesomeness to me; now, there are just a few places which are invested with romance. Prinz Albrecht-strasse, Potsdam, the Funkturm; even Brücken-allee holds something of your flavour.'

Vita Sackville-West to Virginia Woolf, 25 January 1929

Virginia Woolf was not the only well-known writer to have visited Berlin during Nicolson's time at the embassy. On 16 April 1929, H.G. Wells gave a widely reported lecture at the German Reichstag. He spoke about the need to advance world peace by furthering world trade at the same time as overcoming militant nationalism.

Harold Nicolson's university friends visited, revelled in Berlins gay clubs and bars, and recreated the atmosphere of a student reading party in Berlin and Potsdam. The writer and editor Cyril Connolly was one of Nicolson's guests at the embassy:

'It is very pleasant here, only Bobbie, me, Harold and Raymond Mortimer living a luxurious reading party life at Potsdam, on a lake. We have a boat and bathe, when bored we go into Berlin to a cabaret crawl.' Cyril Connolly in a letter to Noel Blakiston, 3 June 1928

Pleasure The Most Exhilarating Climate

Fig. → Jeanne Mammen,
Sie repräsentiert!
Simplicissimus 32. Jg., 1928

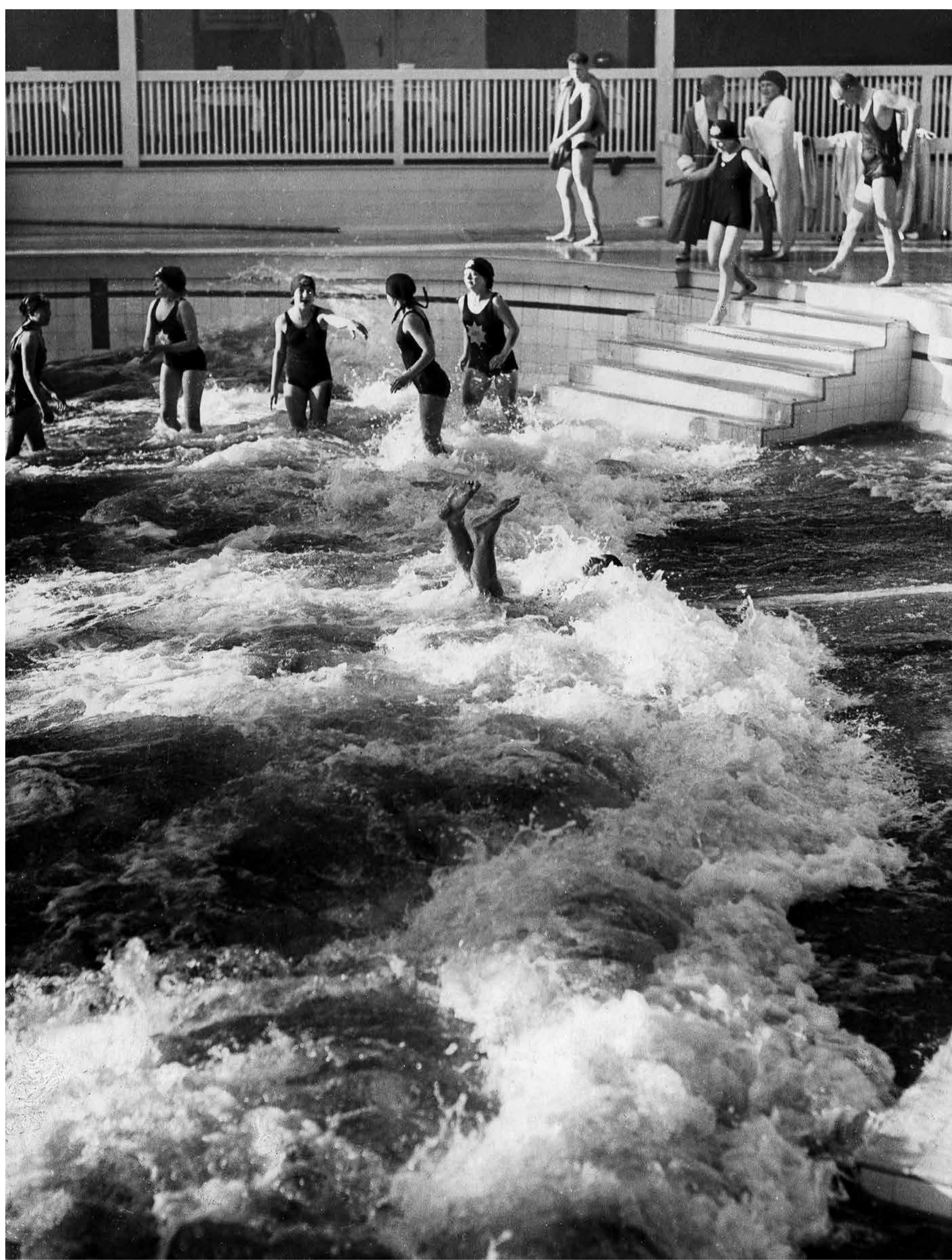


Fig. ↑ The wave pool at Lunapark,
Ullstein Bild, 1927

Fig. → The Radio Tower,
photograph by Martin Höhlig, 1928

Berlin was a city of stark contrasts in the 1920s and '30s. For those who could afford it, Berlin had become a sought-after tourist destination. British travellers enjoyed a favourable exchange rate which allowed them to make the most of iconic attractions such as the Radio Tower and the wave pool at the amusement park Lunapark, as well as the many cafés, bars, and gay and lesbian clubs. And all these places were now available to everyone: women were no longer constrained to the role of the *voyeuse* as Evelyn Blücher and Lady Helen D'Abernon had been during the First World War and the early 1920s. Now, they could enjoy being *flâneuses* just like their male counterparts.

'Even in bad times, however, Berlin had great attraction for the young. It had and has the most exhilarating physical climate I have ever know in Europe — one needed two hours' less sleep by comparison with London.' Elizabeth Wiskemann, *The Europe I Saw*, 1968

While Vita Sackville-West and Virginia Woolf enjoyed spending time at the Radio Tower and the wave pool, an earlier visitor to Berlin, the translator Alix Strachey, particularly revelled in balls, dances, and café culture.

'I have a terrible week before me, as I find I've let myself in for a Ball on Tuesday, tomorrow (Fast-Nacht) as well as Saturday. On Saturday I'm again in Cleopatra's tow [Melanie Klein], who's got a rage for 'em. It is a Kunst Akademie dance, very large & official. Tomorrow's affair is connected with the Romanisches Café & altogether cheap, Communistic & perhaps low. It is in the 'Schall u. Rauch' & preceded by a Cabaret Show.'

Alix to James Strachey, 23 February 1925



Pleasure Café Culture



Fig. ↗ Café des Westens, photograph by Martin Höhlig, c. 1928

Fig. → A Dancing couple, photograph by Martin Höhlig, c. 1928

Fig. ← Alix Strachey, photograph by Barbara Ker-Seymer, 1930s

Alix Strachey was especially fond of the Konditorei Schilling on Kurfürstendamm where she was able to listen to the ultra-modern radio concerts, a new form of entertainment just coming into fashion:

'Dearest James, [...] I am sitting in my favourite Rundfunk Konditorei (Schilling, Eke (sic) Kurfürstendamm and X strasse, gegenüber Gedächtniskirche) & listening to a succession of Johann (?) & Joseph (?) Strauss waltzes, shockingly distorted, & worsened by a 'Kontrolleur' who sits with his head in a cupboard (where valves glow mysteriously) & now & then causes the most alarming cracklings & sudden interruptions to issue forth. The whole is exactly like a Hirschmann diagram of the dream-mechanism, in which the loud-speaker = the gruesome, cavernous unc. & the Kontrolleur, the repressive Zensur. The result is a nightmare. I make a habit of coming here from 4'30 – 6, for a Nachmittags Konzert of light music, consuming 2 Coffee Parfaits & one cigarette, & reading & writing.'

Alix to James Strachey, 5 December 1924

Fig. → Café Schilling by night, exterior, postcard, unknown photographer, c. 1930s



Fig. → Café Schilling, interior, postcard, unknown photographer, 1941



Fig. → Potsdamer Platz and Haus Vaterland, a favourite amusement palace, photograph by Martin Höhlig, 1920–1930s



Psychoanalysis

The Berlin Psychoanalytical Institute



Fig. ← The Berlin Psychoanalytical Institute, on the left-hand side of Potsdamer Straße, photograph by Hans G. Casparius, 1930s

Fig. ✓ Sigmund Freud's 'secret committee'. Sigmund Freud, Sandor Ferenczi, Hanns Sachs (lower row from left); Otto Rank, Karl Abraham, Max Eitingon, Ernest Jones (upper row from left), unknown photographer, Berlin 1922

The Berlin Psychoanalytical Institute was an important international hub for the up-and-coming new movement. Its founders were some of Sigmund Freud's most trusted colleagues, Karl Abraham, Max Eitingon, and Ernst Simmel.



Freud's so-called 'secret committee' made not only Vienna and Budapest, but also Berlin an international centre of psychoanalysis. Founded as a training institution and as a *Poliklinik*, the Berlin Psychoanalytical Institute attracted many visitors from Britain who came to be analysed or to be trained as analysts themselves. Among them were not only Alix Strachey, who translated Freud's works with her husband James, but also Sylvia Payne and Ernest and James Glover, who would become leading figures in the London psychoanalytical scene.

Here, Alix Strachey first encountered the Austrian child psychoanalyst Melanie Klein. Apart from dancing at all-night balls together, Alix Strachey also assisted Melanie Klein by translating a series of lectures intended for a London tour which laid the foundation for Klein's later career. Klein moved to London with the help of the Stracheys in the mid-1920s and there became one of the world's leading psychoanalysts.

Psychoanalysis Beyond the Institute



Fig. ↑ The Austrian-born child psychoanalyst Melanie Klein, photograph by Elliott & Fry, c. 1927

Fig. ← The modernist writer, film pioneer, and advocate of psychoanalysis Bryher, photograph by the Franco-German photographer Gisèle Freund, 1930s

The Romanische Café, another haunt which Alix Strachey frequented, was an icon of Weimar Berlin: it was a meeting place for artists, writers, journalists, theatre and film directors, and psychoanalysts. In this cosmopolitan space, discussions of psychoanalytical issues mixed with political debates and dances.

'I meant to tell you how exciting last night's Sitzung had been. For Die Klein propounded her views & experiences on Kinderanalyse, & at last the opposition showed its hoary head — & it really was too hoary. The words used were, of course, psycho-analytical: danger of weakening the Ichideal, etc. But the sense was, I thought, purely anti-analysis [...] Well, it was most stimulating, & much more feeling was displayed than usual.'

Alix to James Strachey, 14 December 1924

The film pioneer and modernist writer Bryher describes the importance of psychoanalysis at the time:

'I spent several months a year in Berlin from 1928 to 1932. [...] I went to [Hanns Sachs] for an hour a day, during the rest of the time I saw films'. ... 'A classical, Freudian analysis in the right hands is perhaps the sternest discipline in the world, the hardest form of intellectual activity and a great spiritual experience. It offers, as a reward, liberty and understanding.'

Bryher, *The Heart to Artemis*, 1962

Not many years later, the key figures at the institute were forced into exile when the National Socialists integrated what remained of it into a state-run institution.



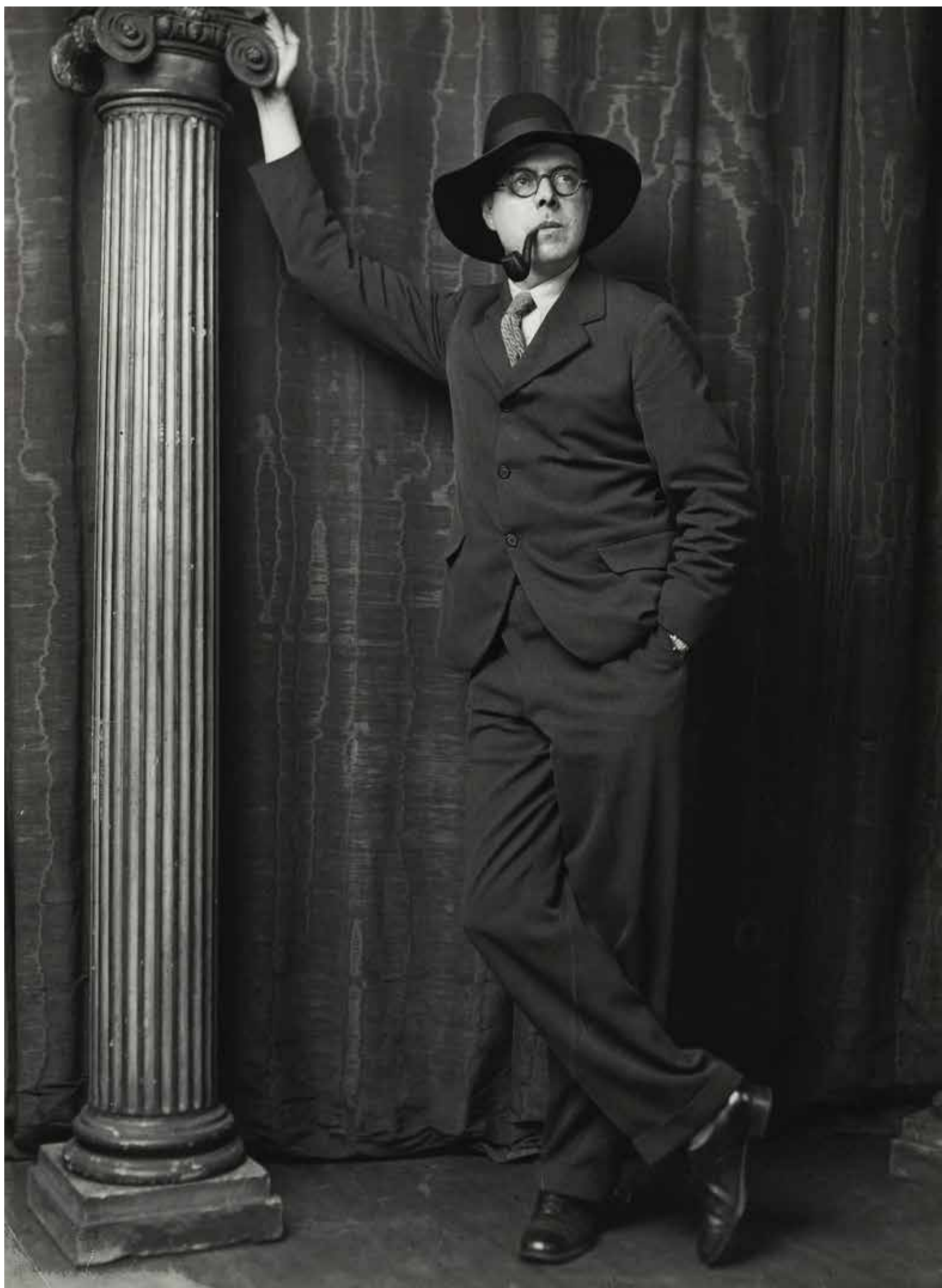
Fig. ↑ The Romanische Café where writers, psychoanalysts, and artists met, unknown photographer, 1930

Politics II

Flirting with Fascism

Fig. → Berlin im Licht, a festival of lights which is mentioned by Lewis in his book *Hitler*, photograph by Martin Höhlig, 1930s

Fig. ↓ Wyndham Lewis, photograph by George Charles Beresford, 1929



As well as left-wing British writers and critics of National Socialism, Berlin also attracted supporters of fascism.

The avantgarde artist and writer Wyndham Lewis travelled to Berlin in 1930 and what he saw inspired him to write his infamous book *Hitler*, published with the prestigious publishing house Chatto and Windus in London in 1931. In it, Lewis fulminates against Berlin's tolerant attitude towards homosexuality.

'Berlin — it's Western Babylon — is as everybody knows the quartier-général of dogmatic Perversity, the Pervert's Paradise, the Mecca of both Lesb and So.' Wyndham Lewis, *Hitler*, 1931

The main aim of Wyndham Lewis's tract was to create support for National Socialism in general, and for Hitler in particular. The anti-communist direction of his argument is clear from the beginning. Lewis suggests that the Berlin police condoned communist violence and that National Socialists were at a disadvantage, being armed only 'with [their] fists or sticks'. Lewis styles Hitler as a necessary bulwark to help quash the threat of a Bolshevik revolution outside the Soviet Union:

'So in Adolf Hitler, the German Man, we have, I assert, a "'Man of Peace".' Wyndham Lewis, *Hitler*, 1931

Wyndham Lewis was later to change his mind and retract his support of fascism but the nature of his political trajectory remains a matter of scholarly debate to this day.

Politics II

Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität



Fig. ↑ Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität, photograph by Karl Hagemann, 1938

Fig. ↗ Inaugural address by the new rector, Professor Wilhelm Krüger, photograph by Willy Römer, 1 April 1935

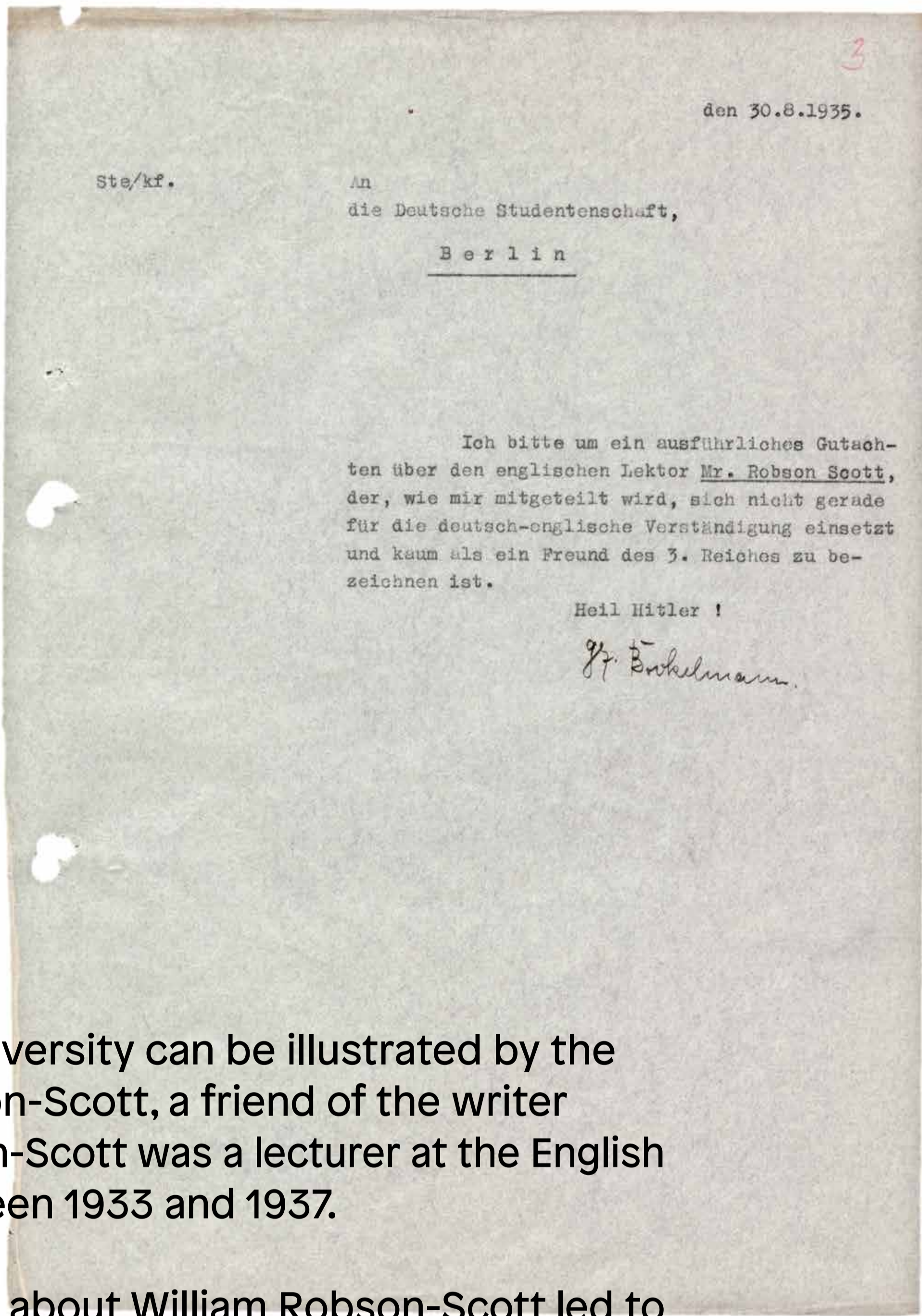
Many members of Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität, which was renamed Humboldt-Universität in 1949, adopted National Socialism wholeheartedly, with staff and students participating in the burning of books by Jewish, gay, and left-wing writers, or by authors who were otherwise deemed 'unsuitable'.

'This spring the University of Berlin was compelled to accept as its Rector a vet of about thirty-five, because none of the ordinary professors were sufficiently tough to please the régime. This man ordered the students to a pseudo-military parade. He gave them a Nazi harangue, at the end of which he said they could now go back to their intellectual studies since he had no objection! Those who failed to parade were, I am told, sent down.'

Elizabeth Wiskemann, *A Land fit for Heroes*, 1935

Politics II

Under Surveillance: William Robson-Scott



What happened within the university can be illustrated by the case of William Douglas Robson-Scott, a friend of the writer Christopher Isherwood. Robson-Scott was a lecturer at the English Faculty of the university between 1933 and 1937.

Among the professors, doubts about William Robson-Scott led to him being spied on, and reports were requested from faculty and students. In his autobiographical work *Christopher and His Kind* (1976), Christopher Isherwood describes Robson-Scott's position: **'When the Nazis came into power, William was teaching at the University of Berlin. The daily confrontation between him and his students must have been ironically comic. Here was a roomful of young Germans being lectured to by a seemingly typical representative of the ruling class of England — Germany's natural ally, according to Mein Kampf. It was to be presumed that he regarded himself as belonging to a master race born to rule the 'lesser breeds without the Law.' Hitler admired this attitude and taught his followers to imitate it. However, William's students soon became aware that their professor, far from being an ally, regarded Nazi Germans as the very lowest of the lesser breeds. William made this clear to them, in his nonchalant style, over and over again. Some of the students were outraged and walked out of the classroom. Complaints were made to the university authorities.'** Christopher Isherwood, *Christopher and His Kind*, 1976

Die Dozentenschaft / Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität / Berlin

fragebogen

nach dem Stande vom:

Name (deutsch): ROBSON-SCOTT

Vorname: WILLIAM DOUGLAS

Deutsche Dozentenschaft:

Institut: Universität Berlin

Wohnung: Admiral v. Schroederstr. 37

Sprechstunde: Barbarossa Str. 8841

Schulart: Phil.

Dienstverhältnis: Lektor

Wissenschaftliches Fachgebiet: Englische Literatur

Geburtsort: Edinburgh, Schottland

Staatsangehörigkeit: Englisch

Religionsbekenntnis: Anglikanisch

Verheiratet: nein

Änder: Zahl: 1

Alter: 37

Relig. Abstammung: ja — nein

Relig. Abstammung der Ehefrau: ja — nein

Bisherige wissenschaftliche Laufbahn:

Studium: wann? wo? Oxford 1919-1924

Staatprüfungen:

Promotion: wann? wo?

Berufsjahr:

Wenden!

Fig. ↑ Passport photograph and first page of Robson-Scott's personnel file at the university, unknown photographer, c. 1933

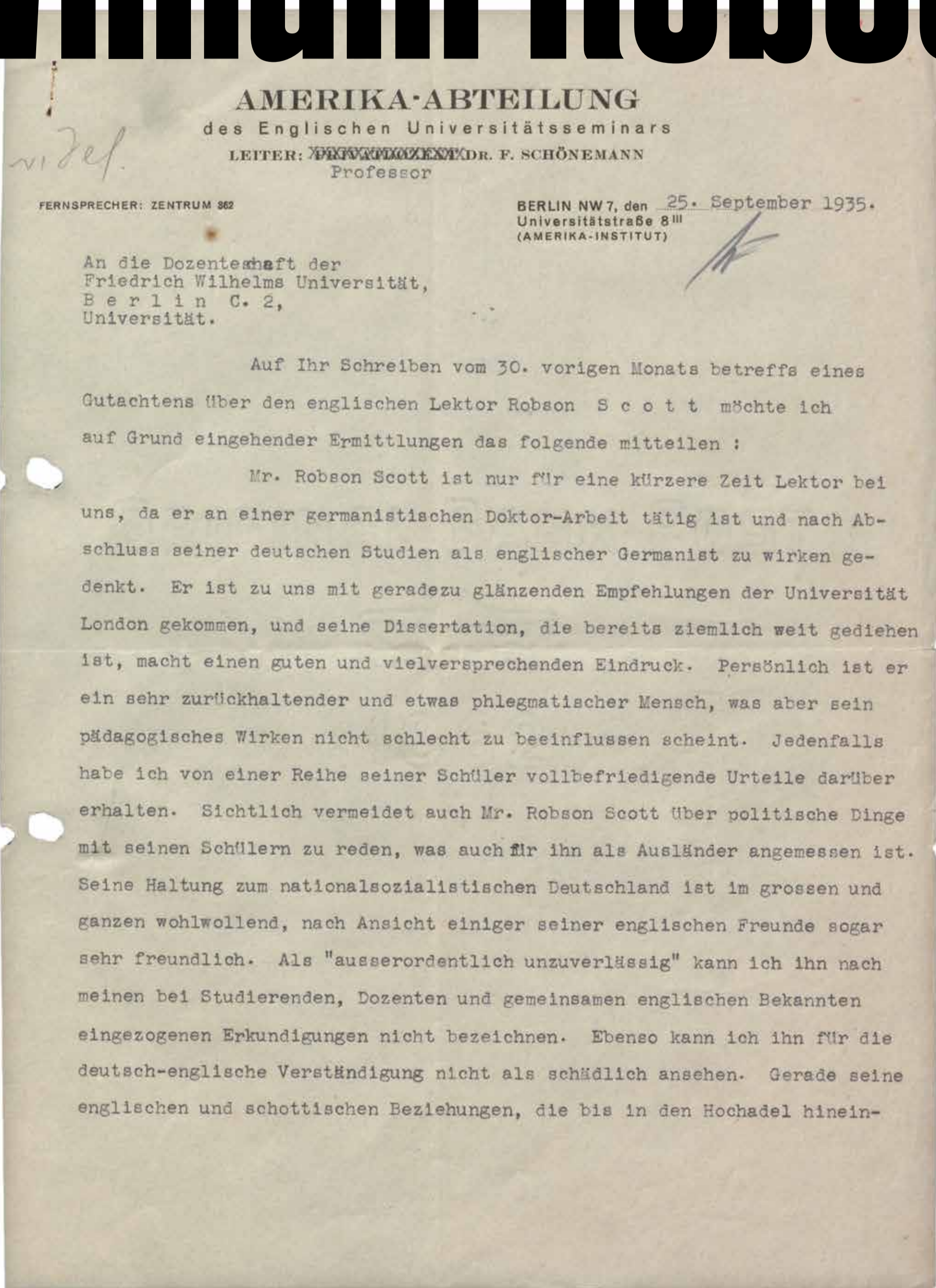
Fig. × Request for written reports on the political attitude of Robson-Scott, by an unidentified university member named Brökelmann, 30 August 1935

Politics II

Under Surveillance: William Robson-Scott



Fig. ↑ William Robson-Scott, unknown photographer, published with a special issue of German Life & Letters on the occasion of his retirement, January 1969



During the Second World War William Robson-Scott worked as a secret agent observing communist German and Austrian refugees in London. Afterwards, he continued his career as a distinguished professor of German, first at Birkbeck College, and later at the University of London. Among other varied academic works, he translated Freud's correspondence with another Berlin psychoanalyst, Lou Andreas Salomé, together with his wife Elaine. The University of London awards an annual travelling scholarship in memory of his scholarly achievements.

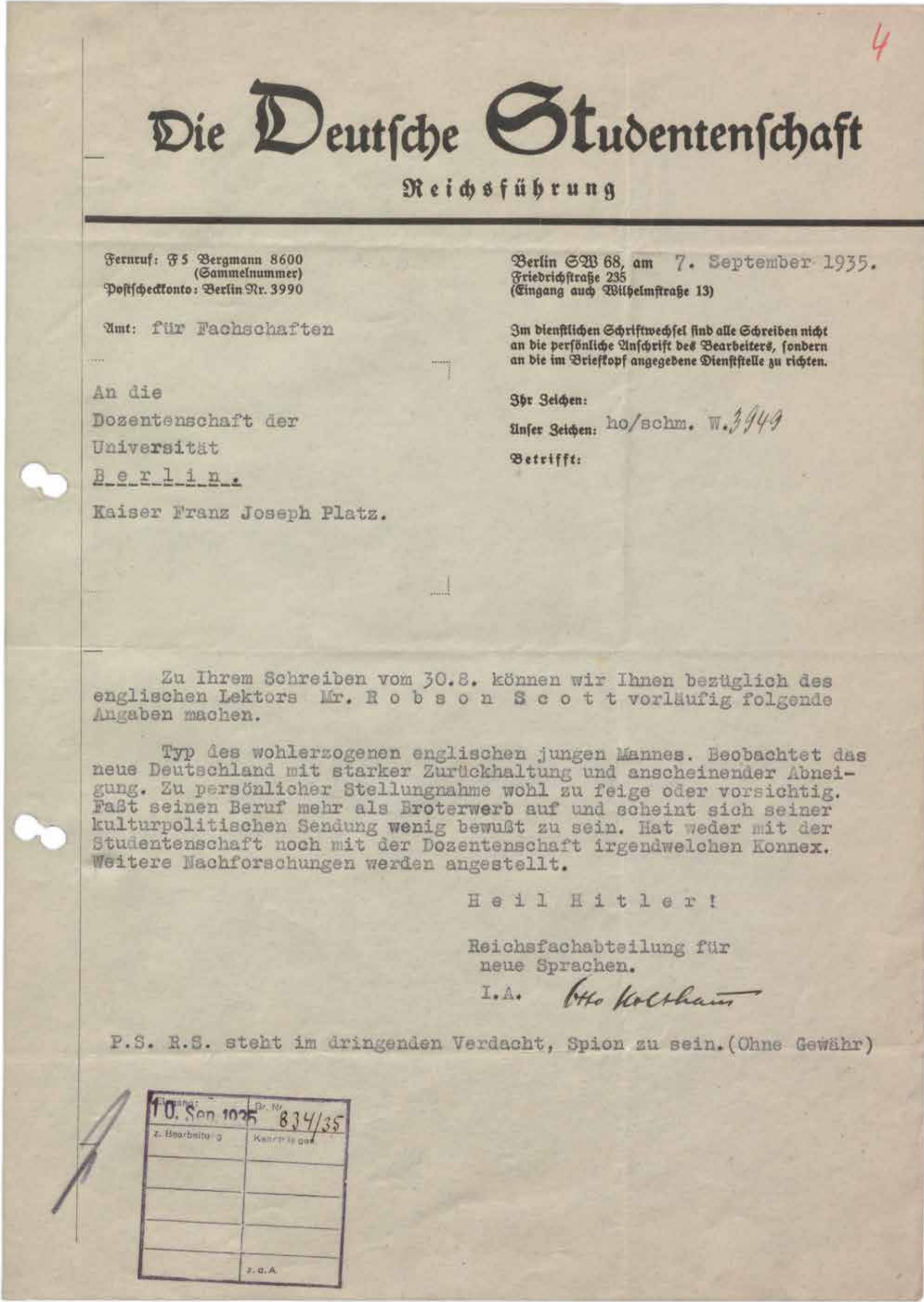
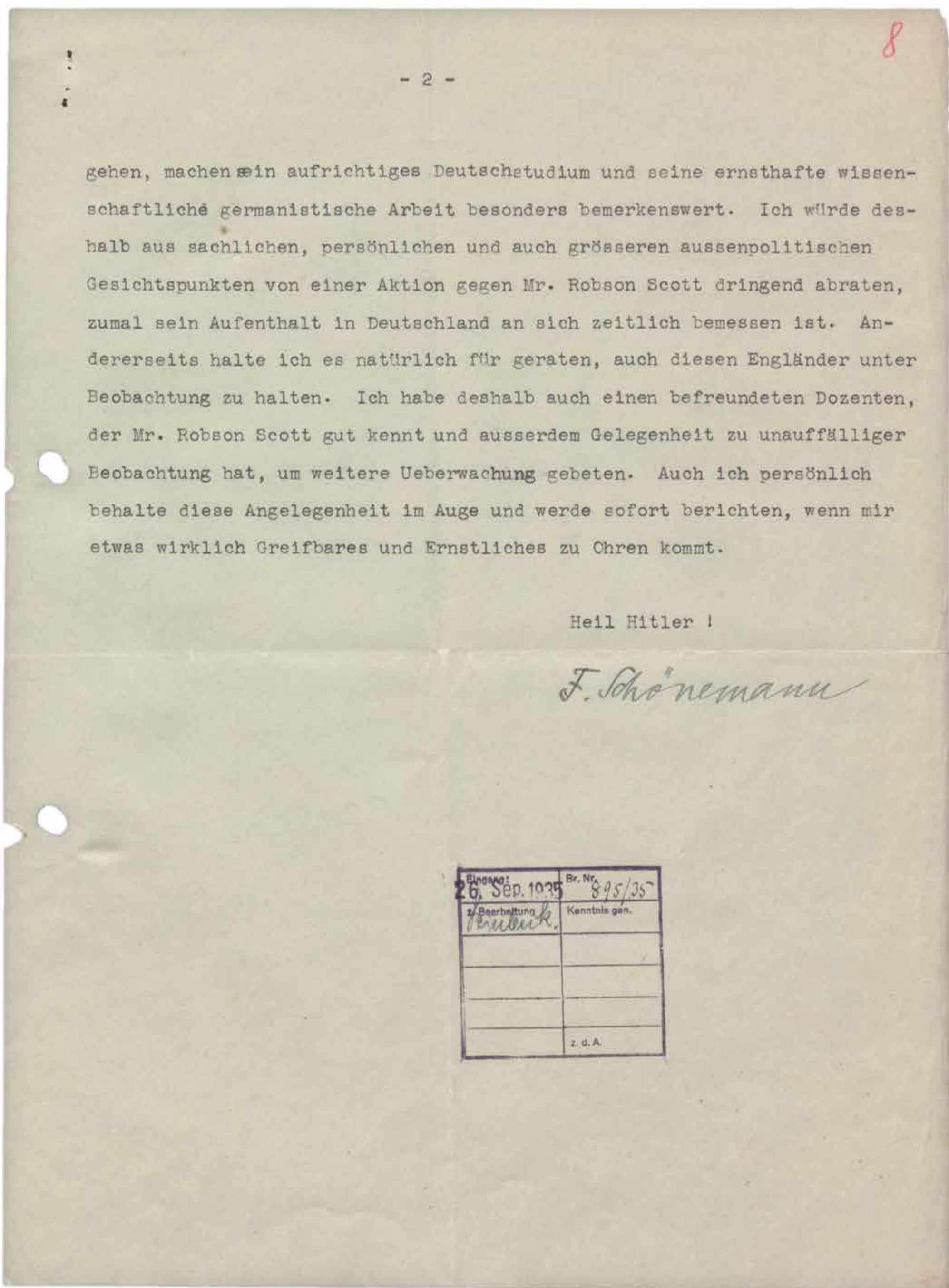
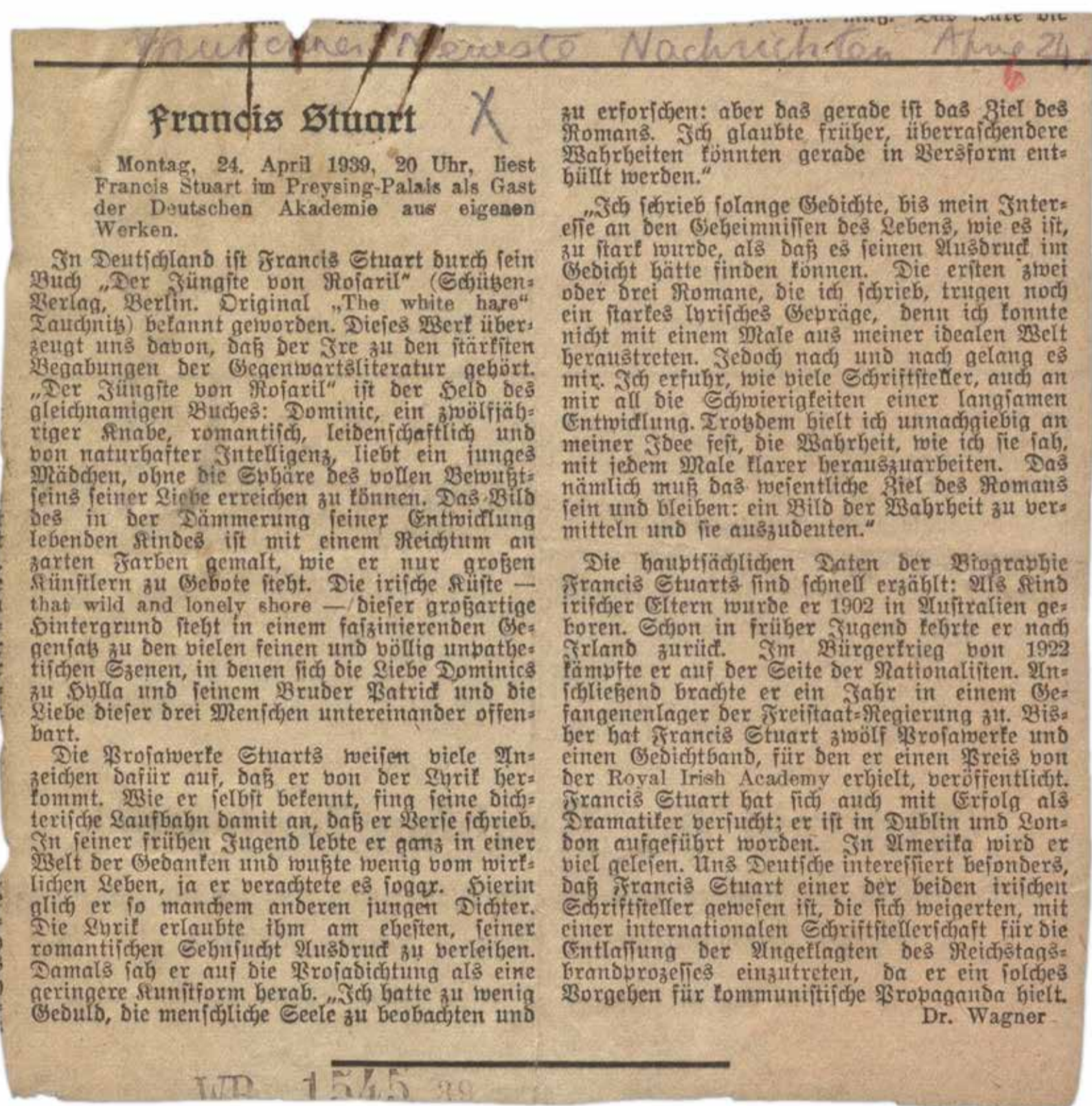


Fig. ↑ Report from the official student body on Robson-Scott, implying he might be a spy and questioning his support of National Socialism, Otto Kalthaus, 17 September 1935

Fig. ↖ Report by Professor Friedrich Schönemann, a trusted source of the Ministry for Propaganda and NSDAP member, on Robson-Scott. It contains a more differentiated characterisation of Robson-Scott's political attitude. The report warns of international complications if action should be taken against the lecturer but promises further investigations into the matter, 25 September 1935

Politics II

Accommodating a Propagandist: Francis Stuart



While Robson-Scott resigned from his post as lecturer in Berlin and finished his doctorate at the university of Vienna, the writer Francis Stuart did the opposite. Born in Australia, Stuart was Irish, and was educated at Rugby school in England. He went on a German reading tour in 1939, and subsequently applied for the position of lecturer in English at Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität. He also worked, rather unsuccessfully, as an IRA gunrunner and agent.

Francis Stuart taught English at Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität until 1944. According to his personnel register which he signed himself, he was a member of the 'Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt' (National Socialist People's Welfare) and 'other NS organisations'. The university did its utmost to accommodate his financial and other wishes, as his extensive files show. Stuart supported the English Nazi propagandist William Joyce, known as Lord Haw Haw for his high voice, by writing broadcasts for him, and by broadcasting his own talks. Joyce was hanged for treason in Britain after the war, although he had become naturalised as a German in the 1940s.

Die Dozentenchaft / Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität / Berlin

Fragebogen 001

nach dem Stunde vom: 30. Mai 1941

Name (deutsch): Stuart
Vorname: Francis
Österreichische Dozentenchaft: Englische Seminar (Phil. Fakultät)
Institut:

Wohnung: Raubestr 13 II
Fernsprecher: 96 05 16

Geburtsort: Townsville Australien
Geburtsdatum: 29-4-02
Staatsangehörigkeit: Irland
Religionsbekenntnis: Kath.
Deutsche Staatsangehörigkeit: ja
Kinder: 2
Alter: 14 und 10
Religionsbekenntnis der Ehefrau: ja
Religionsbekenntnis der Ehefrau: ja

Bisherige wissenschaftliche Laufbahn:
Studium: wann? wo? Ireland
Dissertation: wann? wo?

Berufszweig: Schriftsteller

Staatssprüfungen:
Dissertation: wann? wo?

Wenden!

Fig. 1 Newspaper report on Stuart's reading tour in Germany in 1939, attached to his application letter, Münchener Neueste Nachrichten, 24 April 1939

Fig. 2 Photograph of Francis Stuart from his personnel file at the university, unknown photographer, c. 1941

Politics II

Accommodating a Propagandist: Francis Stuart

Hotel Nürnberger Hof
FRIEDRICH-WILHELMS-UNIVERSITÄT
Eigendimer Fritz Otto

BERLIN SW11
ADAMSTEDTER PLATZ 1
ALBANUSSTRASSE 100
TELEFON 18 52 01

April 29th 1939

Dear Professor Schirmer

I wish to make application for the position of lecturer at the English Seminar of the Berlin University.

I am Irish, born 1902, educated at Rugby. I have always since then lived in Ireland. I have written and published in England and America about twelve books, one is a book of poems, the others mostly novels. I enclose some cuttings in relation to these. One of my books has been translated into German and published here by Schutten-Verlag under the title of 'Der Jungst'

on Rosalie' and two of my books have appeared in Tauchnitz and Albatross editions.

I am a member of the Irish Academy of Letters founded by the poet W.B. Yeats. I have had two plays produced, one in Dublin and one at the Arts Theatre, London. I enclose also a cutting from a Munich paper with some details.

For references I can give Herr Helmut Clissmann of the Deutsche Akademie, 18 Upper Mount St., Dublin, and also Herr Eduard Hempel, the German minister to Ireland.

My address from Thursday next (May 4th), until when I shall be moving about, will be:

Hotel Bergischer Hof
Bonn

I am married and have two children. I am sorry to say I do not speak German.

Yours sincerely
Francis Stuart

Stuart left Berlin for Munich with his German girlfriend in 1944. After being interned for a short while in Germany and living in France and England, they settled in Ireland in 1958. In 1996, four years before his death, Stuart was made a 'Saoi of Aosdána' by the Irish Arts Council, the highest accolade which Ireland awards to its artists. This led to an ongoing public controversy.

Stuart's post-war novel *Blacklist Section H* gives an account of his time at the university and of Germany during the war. In it, he repeatedly asserts his position as an artist and writer beyond all social norms.

'What was he to say in these talks? And who would listen? Iseult and his mother-in-law? Molly's uncles? The Deasey brothers? Some of his former jailmates? He could condemn such Allied atrocities as he'd heard of — the indiscriminate bombing was only just beginning — but that would involve him in the same deception as the propagandists who presented the war as a moral conflict.

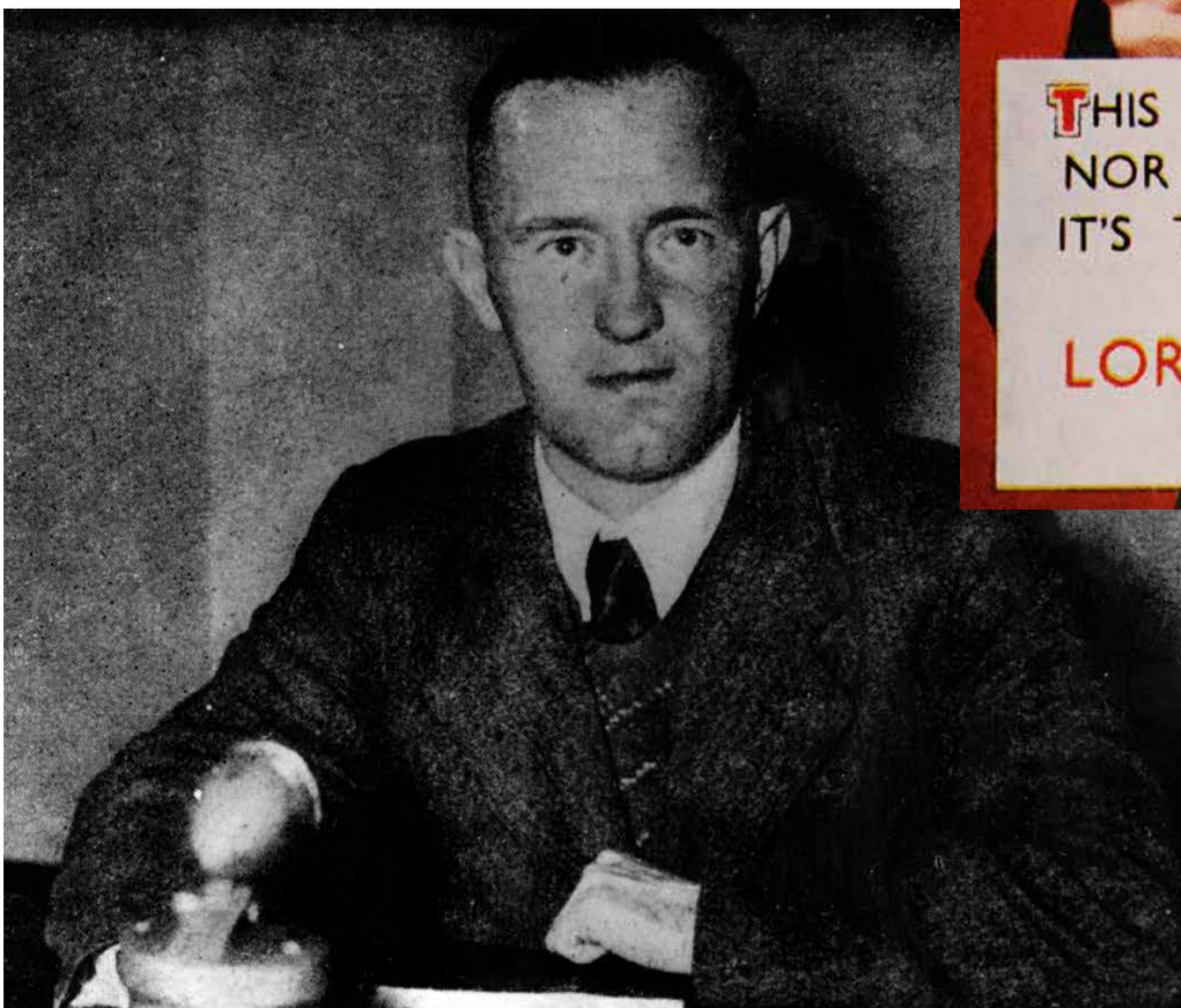
The harshest judgement passed on him would not be entirely undeserved even though he didn't accept the jurisdiction of the court. Could he express his belief that the only possible good that could now arise out of it was if it ended by bringing the whole structure, ideological, cultural, moral, crashing down about the heads of whoever was left with whole ones? Hardly.'

Francis Stuart, *Blacklist Section H*, 1971

Fig. ↗ Francis Stuart's application letter for the post of lecturer, addressed to Professor Walter F. Schirmer of the English Department at Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität, 29 April 1939

Fig. → A vintage postcard featuring 'Lord Haw Haw', c. 1943

Fig. ↓ William Joyce, known as Nazi radio propagandist 'Lord Haw Haw', unknown photographer, c. 1942



Politics II

Fascism and Anti-Fascism



Fig. ↑ Diana Mosley (right) with her sister Unity Mitford and Nazi officer friends, unknown photographer and date, 1930s

Fig. → Berlin during the Olympic Games, photograph by Herbert Hoffmann, 1936



Fig. ↑ Diana Mosley, photograph by Heinrich Hoffmann, c. mid-1930s

Fig. ↓ Hotel Kaiserhof on Wilhelmplatz, photograph by Ernst Schwahn, 1937



The most glaring case of an outspoken supporter of fascism is Diana Mosley, one of the six famous Mitford sisters, three of whom became writers.

Diana Mosley began an affair with the leader of the English fascists, Oswald Mosley, and frequently travelled to Berlin by air to meet Hitler and to observe the Olympic Games. She stayed at the Hotel Kaiserhof just opposite the Reichskanzlei, where Hitler resided when in Berlin. She also regularly met the family of the German propaganda minister, Josef Goebbels, and was married in Berlin in Hitler's presence.

In her autobiography *A Life of Contrasts*, published in 1977, which was serialised on the BBC and won wide critical acclaim, Mosley describes her intimate encounters with Hitler:

'When from time to time I happened to be in Berlin I would telephone the Reichskanzlei to say I was at the Kaiserhof hotel. Occasionally, in the evening, Brückner would ring up. 'Gnädige Frau, wollen Sie zu uns hierüber kommen?' I crossed the Wilhelmsplatz and was shown in. Hitler was generally sitting by an open fire; quite a rarity in centrally heated Berlin. Sometimes we saw a film, sometimes we just talked.'

Diana Mosley, *A Life of Contrasts*, 1977

Politics II

Fascism and Anti-Fascism

Fig. → Reichskanzlei
on Wilhelmstraße,
photograph by Otto Hagemann, 1937

The last word shall be given to quite a different writer: Elizabeth Wiskemann, a reporter for the British left-wing weekly *The New Statesman & Nation*, who took a decidedly antifascist stance.

Wiskemann spent regular periods of time in Berlin in the 1930s. In her outspoken articles and attempts to change the course of the British policy of appeasement she warned of the dangers of anti-Semitism and understood very early that National Socialists such as Richard Heydrich meant what they said. She was in considerable political danger but only left Germany for good after having been imprisoned by the German Secret Police.

'At last the man who had arrested me sent for me and, showing me a German translation of the article called 'A Land fit for Heroes,' asked me whether I had written it. I said that I could not tell unless he showed me the English original since I wrote a great deal. At this he went away quite meekly to look for the English. That gave me time to breathe and to think again. [...] His chief, in full SS uniform, was precisely the blond beast type and looked a good deal younger. [...] He [then] explained to me that in view of imminent events — he meant the Olympic Games in Berlin — he was prepared to let me off lightly. If I would sign a statement that I could have written that article he would let me go — the German was "hätte es schreiben können". I was no lawyer, but it seemed to me that to say you could have done something was far from saying that you had. So I signed. [...] Then they gave me back my suitcase [...].'

Elizabeth Wiskemann, *The Europe I Saw*, 1968

Wiskemann spent the war years in Switzerland, working as an undercover agent for different British institutions. She wrote several acclaimed books on international politics and became the first female professor at Edinburgh University, where a plaque commemorates this achievement. Peter Kamber's novel *Geheime Agentin* (2010) has rescued her from obscurity by celebrating her political insight and bravery.



WOMAN GRILLED BY NAZIS IS GOING BACK

"I AM not cowed . . . I shall go to Germany again." Miss Elizabeth Wiskemann, detained by Hitler's Secret Police on Saturday and grilled for an hour and a half, spoke these words when she arrived back in London yesterday.

History supervisor at Cambridge and writer on foreign affairs, Miss Wiskemann visited the Foreign Office as soon as she reached London. Her story shows the network of Nazi "supervision." For a week she was in Dursfig. Then, as soon as she reached Berlin, the secret police were on her trail.

MAP OF RUSSIA

"I was just finishing lunch," she said, "when the maid announced two visitors. They were both in plain clothes and showed the badge of the Secret Police. They ordered me to accompany them to headquarters."

"I was shown into a room with a large map of Russia on the wall."

"I was asked where I was born and all the things which could be ascertained from my passport. I was then questioned about a German translation of an article (Continued on Page 5, Column 4)

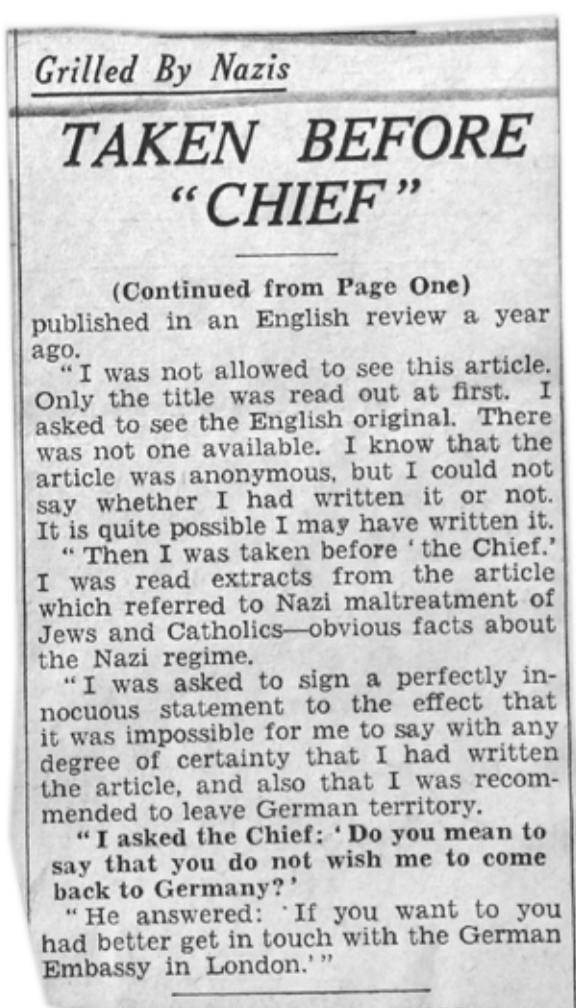


Fig. ← Article reporting on Elizabeth Wiskemann's imprisonment in Berlin, *The Daily Mail*, 14 July 1936

Fig. → Elizabeth Wiskemann, photographer and date unknown



Fig. ↑ The Gestapo headquarters, 'Geheimes Polizeihauptamt' on Prinz-Albrecht-Straße, unknown photographer, 1933

Fig. ↓ Portrait of Elizabeth Wiskemann by Swiss artist Martin Fivian, 2009

Fig. × Passport photograph of Elizabeth Wiskemann from the Swiss Archives, unknown photographer, c. 1940



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Konditorei Schilling, exterior, postcard. Unknown photographer, c.1930s, private collection.

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Request for written reports on the political attitude of Robson-Scott, by an unidentified university member named Brökelmann, 30 August 1935. HU Archives, HU UA NS Doz. Nr. ZBI 7305 A. 14 (1), Blatt 3.

Passport photograph and first page of Robson-Scott's personnel file at the university. Unknown photographer, c.1933. HU Archives, HU UA NS Doz. Nr. ZBI 7305 A. 14 (1), Blatt 1.

A photograph of William Robson-Scott on the occasion of his retirement, 1969. Unknown photographer.

Report by Professor Friedrich Schöнемann on Robson-Scott. 25 September 1935. HU Archives, HU UA NS Doz. Nr. ZBI 7305 A. 14 (1), Blätter 7 und 8.

Report from the official student body on Robson-Scott, 17 September 1935. HU Archives, HU UA NS Doz. Nr. ZBI 7305 A. 14 (1), Blatt 4.

Newspaper report on Stuart's reading tour in Germany in 1939, *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten*, 24 April 1939. HU Archives, HU UA UK Personalia Nr. Str. 120 Bd. 1, Blatt 6.

A passport photograph of Francis Stuart and first page of his personnel file. Unknown photographer, c.1941. HU Archives, HU UA NS-Doz. 2 Nr. ZD I 1143 (1), Blatt 001.

Francis Stuart's application letter for the position as lecturer, 29 April 1939. HU Archives, HU UA UK Personalia Nr. Str. 120 Bd. 1, Blätter 9 und 10.

Lord Haw Haw, vintage postcard, c.1943. 173715291 © Getty Images.



Fig. ↑ Tram stop Potsdamer Straße, photograph by Martin Höhlig, 1920–1930s