stones have proved to be inferior. There is no doubt that these must be removed. However, my friends fear that the stones are not tested for their real properties, but all the stones are rejected only on the basis of origin; they are hastily torn out, and in so doing, parts of the whole construction could inadvertently be threatened. For, a mind blinded by rage never grasps its object clearly. My friends think that there are indispensible pillars in the edifice of German culture which originate from Jews. Each blow now shaking the building makes them tremble for the building and for its future.

I would like to add a word that helps to explain the depressed spirits of these Germans. Hardly any of them wanted me to make their worries known publically. I would only hurt myself by doing so; one should not say these sorts of things right now. I am of another opinion in this, and not least because I have read the Reich Chancellor’s book, with all its contempt for pussyfooters and with his constant call for straightforward people. The Germans of whom I speak can be helped immediately at least in this point: by seeing that no one is even thinking of holding our misgivings against us, which arise from a genuine concern for the nation, and that no one will persecute us because of them.

Right after this was written, the broad outlines of the law which deals with the foreign infiltration [Überfremdung] of schools and universities was made known. My friends also do not deny that this law was shaped by resolute but at the same time careful hands. Their greatest wish now is probably that only these authorized hands decide upon such things and that all unauthorized reformers defer to the authority of the State.

14 The Spirit at Universities [April 28, 1933]


Hardly a day goes by in which a new list of university lecturer suspensions is not issued. Hardly a university remains whose teaching staff has not yet been interfered with. These actions have been taken based on the Civil Service Law, which sets descent and political activity as criteria. Thus in a number of cases the cause of the suspensions is clear. But there are at least as many university
lecturers whose removal from office has no discernible connection to the legal provisions.

Let us set aside the individual’s academic standing and personal merit. Controversial men like Dehn had to reckon with disciplinary punishment, along with a few others who had exposed themselves politically. But why did men who taught politically neutral subjects have to resign even though they only represented their specialty and had no visible ties to any party activity or political movement? We call to mind the prominent names on the mathematics and science faculty at Göttingen; we recall Germanists, medical doctors, and chemists, who have never been seen in any political connection whatsoever. These professors had at one time been appointed by their departments on the strength of their academic achievements, not in accordance with the wishes of previous governments. Now their work as researchers and teachers is being declared superfluous, alien or even a resistant element in the fabric of the nation. On what basis was this decision made? Is it perhaps that indiscernible something, that confidence between university lecturer and the student body on which the yes or no verdict rests?

The student league, at any rate, has understood the campaign as such and has set to work on its own initiative. A few days ago in Kiel it demanded the compulsory suspension of a great many professors. The same method is supposed to now be applied at all German universities. The leader of the ‘German Student League’ [Deutsche Studentenschaft] has made an appeal to all the individual student leagues, giving the following directions.

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3Giinther Karl Dehn (1882-1970) was a Protestant theologian with Socialist leanings who was forced to take a one-year leave of absence from the University of Halle due to pressure by the right-wing Student League in October 1932. In November of 1933 he was dismissed completely from public service as ‘politically unreliable’ as a direct result of the change in government, on the basis of Article 4 of the law referred to above. See Heiber [1991/92], Vol. 1, pp. 82-108.

4The ‘Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service’ had devastating consequences for the Göttingen mathematics and science departments, which lost approximately 30% of their faculties, including among others the internationally renowned professors Max Born, Richard Courant, James Franck, Edmund Landau (1877-1938), Emmy Noether (1882-1935), and Hermann Weyl (1885-1955). See Schappacher & Kneser [1990], pp. 26ff.; Becker, Dahms & Wegeler (Eds.) [1987]; Göttinger Zeitung 71, Wednesday, April 26, 1933, no. 23381, p. 1: ‘Beurlaubte Hochschulprofessoren. Neue Maßnahmen. Rusts-Sächsischer Giöttinger Professoren betroffen’ and ibid., 1st supplement, p. 1. On Franck’s case, see also docs. 9f., on Courant see doc. 22, ft. 4 and Reid [1976].

5See, e.g., the declarations “Wider den undeutschen Geist” issued by National Socialist student organizations in German newspapers in April 1933; cf., for example, Göttinger Tageblatt, Vol. 45, No. 88, April 13/14, 1933, p. 4. In May 1933 the German Student Leagues (NSDStB) organized the building of bonfires of ‘abominable literature’ (Scheiterhaufen der Schandliteratur) at all university towns; cf. Göttinger Tageblatt, Vol. 45, No. 105, May 5, 1933, p. 3: ‘Die Göttinger Studentenschaft im Kampf wider den undeutschen Geist’ and No. 110, May 11, 1933, p. 3; also Bleuel & Klinnert [1967] and Götz von Olenhusen [1966] on the activities of right-wing student organizations which supported Nazi ideology at universities most enthusiastically. On this student action in the spring of 1933, see Strätz [1968]. Cf. also, the Introduction, p. xlvi.

6In an attempt to woo the majority of students, a law was quickly passed regarding student