could be summarized in the statement: “Of all the candidates for this post Stark is the least well-suited both scientifically and personally.” Obviously, all this correspondence went to the Secretary. He then promptly nominated Johannes Stark, without consulting the board of trustees of the [Reich] P[hysical and] T[echnical Institute].

Now, did Stark oust his predecessor Paschen or did he not?

20 Hans Kopfermann: Letter to Niels Bohr [May 23, 1933]


Dear Professor Bohr,

I have been back from my trip to Germany for 14 days now. If my impressions from 10 days in Berlin, Göttingen and Rostock are not to become outdated and obsolete, I must now finally report them to you.

It is not quite so easy to form an opinion about what is going on in Germany; and it is even more difficult to make any predictions about how things will develop. This is partly because freedom of speech is restricted; but it is mainly because it is hard to judge what the German government itself wants, or how far her supporters will push her. On one point all sensible people agree: The masses are very much more radical than the leaders; and especially students (i.e., the radicals among them, who unfortunately have all the say against a diligent, moderate majority of perhaps 70%) go much further, or at least want to go much further, than the Ministry of Culture. The Berlin student organization’s appeal

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6 The original typescript reads ‘PTB’, but should be ‘PTR’, since it was only renamed a federal institute (Physikalisch-Technische Bundesanstalt) after World War II.

1 The atomic and nuclear physicist Hans → Kopfermann visited Niels Bohr several times at Copenhagen after obtaining his doctorate at the University of Göttingen in 1925. The Danish atomic and nuclear physicist Niels Hendrik David Bohr (1885–1962) took his degree in 1911, then traveled to England to work together with Joseph John Thomson and soon afterwards in 1912 with Ernest Rutherford on atomic structure. Later that year he became teaching assistant at the University of Copenhagen and was promoted to lecturer in 1913. 1914–16 he was invited again to Manchester to work with Rutherford and returned to Copenhagen as professor of theoretical physics, where an institute had been established for him in 1920. He made major contributions to nuclear physics and quantum theory and was awarded the Nobel Prize for 1922. In 1943 Bohr fled his occupied native country to Sweden, from where the British secret service brought him to England. He later participated in the American atomic bomb project, and returned to Copenhagen after the war in 1945. See also footnote 4 of doc. 31.

2 On the support by radical student organizations for the Nazi movement see in particular, Bleuel & Klinnert [1967]. At some universities, such as at the Berlin Polytechnic in Charlottenburg, the → NSDStB already had more than 60% of the votes in the student council in 1931/32. On Apr. 12, 1933, the Prussian Minister of Education Bernhard → Rust issued a new law concerning the student leagues, which introduced racist principles and the Führerprinzip into all student organizations. On Apr. 22, 1933, a Reich law concerning the ‘formation of student unions’ specified that only matriculated students of German origin and language could

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illustrates this, for example, which was an attempt to quietly boycott also those Jewish professors permitted by the civil service law to stay in office. All students are supposed to be compelled not to attend the courses held by such lecturers. It has actually not been successful up to now; with one exception, the courses have run smoothly. The notorious placard by the students at Berlin University, which states, among other things, that everything that the Jew says in German is a lie, also shows this radical tendency clearly. Neither the Berlin rector nor the Minister of Culture have succeeded in having the placard removed; it is still posted on the bulletin board today. The Culture Ministry’s attempt to persuade Haber to stay also seems to indicate that it is trying to attenuate.

At the moment a power struggle is apparently taking place in Germany behind an astonishingly calm façade between the relatively moderate leaders and the radical masses; and the whole problem seems to be whether it is possible to appease the masses, who have been driven so far through privation, the Versailles Treaty and systematic incitement. In order to gain the goodwill of the govern-

be members of the Deutsche Studentenschaft; their declaration of ‘Aryan’ descent had to be certified on oath. On the ‘non-Aryan’ students at German universities after 1933, see Götz von Oellenhusen [1966].

3 On the student appeal in Berlin see doc. 14, especially footnote 8. The student boycott of Jewish and leftist lecturers was called in Berlin on April 1, 1933.

4 The exception Kopfermann may have been thinking of is the Institute of Sexology (Sexualwissenschaft) directed by Magnus Hirschfeld (1869–1935) in Berlin, which the students had rampaged on May 6, 1933.

5 A facsimile of a published version of this manifesto can be found, for example, on p. 316 of Eduard Seidler’s Die medizinische Fakultät der Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg im Breisgau. Grundlagen und Entwicklungen, Berlin: Springer, 1991. The German Student League posted these ‘12 theses against Un-German spirit’ (12 Thesen wider den undeutschen Geist) at Berlin University on Apr. 13, 1933. Thesis 5, for example, stated: “The Jew can only think like a Jew. If he writes in German, he is lying” (“der Jude kann nur jüdisch denken. Schreibt er deutsch, dann lügt er”); thesis 6: “We will root out lies, we will stigmatize treachery”; thesis 7: “We demand of the censors that Jewish works appear in Hebrew. If they appear in German they must be labeled translations”. See also Stritz [1968], p. 354, for earlier formulations of this and other theses. On this student action see also doc. 14.

6 When the rector of Berlin University, the professor of law Eduard Kohlrausch ordered the ‘12 theses’ removed from university bulletin-boards, he was replaced by the Nazi anthropologist and eugenicist Eugen Fischer (1874–1946), who was then instrumental in filling further key positions at the university with Nazi activists. Cf., e.g., Laitko et al. [1987], pp. 507, 513 as well as doc. 14, footnote 9.

7 On Fritz → Haber’s resignation from his position as director of the → KWIPC, see doc. 15, footnote 3. Bernhard Rust’s and Max → Planck’s efforts to convince Haber to withdraw his resignation on the grounds of the war service exemption of the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service were futile.

8 Kopfermann was not alone in underestimating the radicalism of the National Socialist movement and the fanaticism of its anti-Semitic and anti-Communistic elements. What they perceived as signs of moderation on the part of the Nazis were only acts of compromise to appease national conservative circles including General Ludendorff and for foreign relations reasons.