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Why did the Germans arrest and release Emile Borel in 1941?

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November 8, 2008

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1 Introduction

In late 1941, the German occupiers of Paris arrested and then released four members of the French Academy of Sciences, including the mathematician Emile Borel (1871-1956). Borel's wife recounted the events in her 1968 autobiography [11], but she was not able to provide insights into the Germans' thinking. In this paper, we provide some information about their thinking from German documents preserved in the AJ/40 series in the French national archives in Paris (CARAN). The files containing these documents were left behind by the Germans when they fled Paris in 1944. They have been used by a number of historians, especially Burrin [3], but they were thoroughly cataloged only in 2002, and historians have not yet explored them fully. We noticed that they contained information about Borel's detention while looking for information on another mathematician, Jean André Ville, in connection with a forthcoming issue on martingales of the *Electronic Journal for History of Probability and Statistics* (www.jehps.net). Ville was among the French officers taken prisoner in June 1940, and we hoped to learn about the reasons for his release in 1941. In general, there have been few historical studies on the situation of French mathematicians during the occupation; see however Audin's work on Jacques Feldbau [1].

We present, in English translation, documents from 3 boxes at CARAN: AJ/40/558, AJ/40/566 and AJ/40/567. There may be further documents relevant to Borel's arrest and release in other boxes in the vast AJ/40 series. We hope, in any case, to stimulate further archival research on how the Germans interacted with French scientists during the occupation. The paucity of published information about Borel's arrest and release is only one example of the inadequate attention paid to the details of this interaction by historians of science.

Pierre Laborie has written eloquently about how difficult it has been for the French to find the distance to write dispassionate history of their countrymen's interaction with the German occupiers (p. 182 of [9]):

The judgements passed on the collective attitudes and behaviors of the period between 1940 and 1944 are characteristic of this mixture of respectable intentions, fearfulness, and anxiety over all that is at stake in the realm of memory. The extraordinary variety of personal experiences passed on by friends and family, as well as the topic's sensitivity and its popularity—everyone has an opinion on the matter—limit the dispassionate perspective of historians and their efforts to explain what happened. When these perspectives stray too far from what is touchily guarded as 'memorially correct' to a particular group or community, they are poorly received, and sometimes even suspected of insidiously striving to justify the unjustifiable. The troubling question of behaviors during the Occupation is a recurring central theme in a debate that has been more about pronouncing judgment than about dealing with the issues and un-

derstanding their complexity. Such questions are deeply relevant to our times because of their moral dimension, and yet too often they are reduced to the level of excessive generalizations, simplistic alternatives, or even summary judgments of the ‘all guilty, all collaborationist’ variety.

In the case of science, this analysis often applies even to those who are not French, for the emotional ties between scientists and their historians easily cross temporal and geographic boundaries.

The documents we translate illustrate the moral dimension and the complexity of which Laborie writes. But they offer only a partial picture, leaving us with many questions. We try to present this partial picture with the dispassion that Laborie urges, refraining from premature efforts to pass judgment, in the hope of thereby obtaining some degree of access to the ambiguous context of everyday life in this troubling period, and of leaving space for others to complete the picture.

2 About Emile Borel

Emile Borel was born in a middle-class Protestant family in Saint-Affrique, in Aveyron in the center of southwest France. He kept close ties with Saint-Affrique throughout his life. After brilliant secondary studies, he went to Paris to prepare for the competitions leading to the *Grandes Ecoles*, the schools where the French scientific and administrative elites are trained. There he studied under the famous teacher Boleslas Niewenglowski along with the son of the mathematician Gaston Darboux, and he later recounted that it was at Darboux’s home that he discovered his passion for scientific and especially mathematical research. The *Ecole Normale Supérieure* was the place to pursue this passion.

Borel immediately specialized in mathematics at the *Ecole Normale*, beginning fundamental studies on divergent series, for which he introduced different modes of summability. This soon led him to fundamental work on the measure of sets, which cleared the way for Lebesgue to construct his integral and revolutionize analysis [7]. Measure theory also led Borel, starting in 1905, to focus on probability theory. He was the leading light in renewing mathematical probability at the beginning of 20th century, opening the way to the axiomatic formalization based on measure theory achieved by Kolmogorov in his *Grundbegriffe der Wahrscheinlichkeitsrechnung* [8, 17].

Borel saw the mathematician as a citizen, and he put this conception into practice with works of popularization and philosophy [2]. From early in his career, he engaged in an active social and public life, especially through circles connected to the family of his talented wife Marguerite and his father-in-law, the mathematician Paul Appell. Marguerite wrote fiction under the pen name Camille Marbo (for MARguerite BOrel). In 1913, she won the Femina prize for her novel *La statue voilée*. In 1905, Borel and Marbo founded a monthly journal, the *Revue du Mois*, which for 10 years was a leading general intellectual outlet for the moderate French left. During World War I, Borel was a leader in putting

the French technical and scientific elites at the service of the military. In 1915, at the age of 44, he volunteered for the army himself in order to test acoustical devices for locating guns on the battlefield. The same year, the mathematician Paul Painlevé, minister of public education, asked Borel to head a new office devoted to assessing and implementing inventions that could be used in the war. Two forthcoming books [6, 12] provide more information on his role at this time.

Having been close to centers of power during World War I, and having been personally devastated by the war's slaughter of young graduates of the Ecole Normale, where he had been deputy director, Borel turned increasingly to politics after the war. Determined to work for greater social justice and more understanding between nations, he became prominent in the radical-socialist party, a very moderately leftist party that attracted many scientists and other scholars, so much so that its role in the French governments between the wars led some to call France *the republic of professors*. In 1924, Borel was elected mayor of Saint-Affrique and member of parliament from Aveyron. When Painlevé became the new Prime Minister that year, he named Borel minister of the navy, a position he held only for a few months.

Having been elected to the French Academy of Sciences in 1921, Borel was also keen to use his political influence to help develop science and its applications. He played a fundamental role in the creation of several major institutes of higher education, most importantly the Institut Henri Poincaré (IHP), inaugurated in Paris in 1928, which became the principal research center in France for mathematical physics and probability. He saw to it that the IHP hosted the leading mathematicians and physicists of the 1930s, including Soviet scientists for whom travel was difficult, and German refugees fleeing the Nazis after 1933.

In January 1940, as Borel retired from teaching, the University of Paris celebrated his scientific jubilee, the fiftieth anniversary of his entrance to the Ecole Normale. All the great names of French mathematics and physics of the time were present, joined by foreign scientists who could come to Paris in spite of the war with Germany that had been declared in September 1939. The local newspaper of Aveyron, *Journal de l'Aveyron*, celebrated him on the front pages of its 21 and 28 January 1940 issues. In June 1940, when the French army collapsed and the Germans occupied Paris and northern France, Borel was in Paris. Borel and Marbo returned to Sainte-Affrique, in the non-occupied zone, that summer, but they were back in Paris in the autumn of 1940, after he was dismissed from the mayoralty of Sainte-Affrique by the new Vichy government. Falling in line with Vichy's national revolution, the *Journal de l'Aveyron* wrote at length in August 1940 about the educational reforms needed to undo the damage from the radical and anti-clerical conceptions that had prevailed during the previous regime and led to the disaster. Never mentioning the name of Emile Borel, they quoted at length Emile Picard, a Parisian mathematician who had no connection with Aveyron but was well known for his right-wing political views and social conservatism. The *Journal* made no mention of Borel's arrest in October 1941 or his release in November 1941.

After Borel was briefly detained for a second time early in 1942, he and Marbo again left Paris for Sainte-Affrique, where Borel was involved with the

resistance to the German occupation. After the war, Borel resumed his activities in Paris, while also serving again as mayor of Sainte-Affrique for two years, from 1945 to 1947. He died in Paris in 1956.

3 The complexity of the German presence in Paris

The documents we present reflect some of the complexity of the German presence in Paris, as they involve a number of different branches of the German military and government. To a large extent, the Germans reproduced in Paris the complexity of the Nazi regime in Berlin, where various bureaucracies and militarized agencies competed for power, without clear lines of authority among them. The overview given here draws on work by Burrin [3], Frank [5], and Nielen [15].

The most substantial German presence in Paris was that of the *Militärbefehlshaber in Frankreich* (Military Command in France), headquartered in the Hotel Majestic, north of the Seine near the Arc de Triomphe. The *Militärbefehlshaber* consisted of a security division, the *Kommandostab*, and an administrative division, the *Verwaltungstab*. The *Verwaltungstab*, consisting of 22,000 people in German military uniforms, was charged with overseeing the French governmental bureaucracy. The senior staff, numbering about 1500, were actually mostly civilian professionals detailed to Paris from various German government agencies, companies, and professional organizations. The *Verwaltungstab* was divided into three large sections, an immense section responsible for economic matters (*Wirtschaftsabteilung*), a section responsible for other administrative matters (*Verwaltungsabteilung*), and a section responsible for coordination and personnel (*Zentralabteilung*). The *Verwaltungsabteilung* was headed by Werner Best. The boxes from which we draw the German documents presented here were part of the archives of group 4 of the *Verwaltungsabteilung*, responsible for schools and culture (*Schule und Kultur*).

A second center of power, in the German embassy south of the Seine, was that of Otto Abetz, who held the rank of Ambassador and represented the German ministry of foreign affairs. In theory, Marshall Pétain's government, located in Vichy in the non-occupied zone, was still at war with Germany, and the two countries did not have diplomatic relations. But in practice Abetz was responsible for German relations with Vichy, overseeing Pétain's supposed authority to legislate for France and to appoint the ministers in charge of the bureaucracy. He also controlled the French press and radio in the occupied zone, and he organized and funded collaborationist groups. The section of Abetz's embassy responsible for purging French education, the cultural section, was involved in Borel's detention. It was headed by Karl Epting, whom Abetz had also put in charge of the German Institute at the Sagan Hotel.

The *Militärbefehlshaber* had German troops at its disposal for maintaining order, about 100,000 in late 1941, but it had no authority over operational

units of the German army in France. Both the Militärbefehlshaber and the operational army reported to the headquarters of the army in Berlin (Oberkommando des Heeres, OKH), which in turn reported to the supreme command of the armed forces (Oberkommando der Wehrmacht, OKW). The German air force and navy, which also reported directly to the OKW, organized their own collaboration with what remained of the French air and naval forces until these were entirely suppressed in November 1942.

Heinrich Himmler's SS (Schutzstaffel) and its intelligence service, the SD (Sicherdienst), were also active in Paris. The mission of the SS in Paris was to combat the Nazis' ideological enemies: Jews, Christians, communists, and Freemasons. According to Burrin ([3], pp. 96–97), the SS unit in Paris was still small in October 1941, but it was coming into conflict with the Militärbefehlshaber. In early October, a right-wing French group led by Eugène Deloncle used explosives supplied by the SS to blow up seven Paris synagogues, wounding two German soldiers in the process. This enraged Otto von Stülpnagel, then in charge of the Militärbefehlshaber, who was also concerned that the French population was being alienated by the increasing harshness of the occupation, especially the execution of large numbers of hostages in retaliation for attacks against the occupiers. The SS presence and role in Paris increased substantially after Stülpnagel's resignation at the beginning of 1942.

The Militärbefehlshaber's foremost goal was to put the French economy to work for the German war effort as effectively as possible, with a minimal expenditure of German manpower. They achieved this through their control of the French governmental bureaucracy, by directing the allocation of raw materials and requiring French companies to fill orders for the German military. The armistice Pétain had signed gave the Germans the right to require payment for the cost of the German occupation, and as they controlled the amount of this payment, they could pay the French companies with money from the French treasury.

Pétain wanted to replace the French republic with a conservative regime with traditional values, as Franco had done in Spain. The Germans approved of many aspects of Pétain's national revolution, including of course its anti-Semitism, but Abetz's strategy for keeping Pétain weak included supporting collaborationist groups with roots on the French left as well as ones with roots on the right. Abetz was close to Pierre Laval, who became the most detested figure in the Vichy government. Laval had limited interest in Pétain's national revolution but sought to convince the Germans that France had a future as a subservient junior partner to Germany. He made unilateral concessions to the Germans while serving as Pétain's minister of state during the first six months of the Vichy regime, and Pétain dismissed him in December 1940. During the period with which we are concerned, the final months of 1941, he was in Paris under Abetz's protection. After returning to Vichy as Pétain's Prime minister in April 1942, he further aligned France with Germany.

4 German policy towards the French academy

In all the countries occupied by the Germans, intellectuals were among those arrested or assassinated. In Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Poland, these operations were carried out quickly and efficiently. In France, however, the Germans proceeded cautiously, weighing when repression might be helpful and when it might work against their strategy for controlling the country through the Vichy government and the bureaucracy.

A major turning point came at the beginning of November 1940, the usual starting date for the new academic year. The arrest of the famous physicist Paul Langevin on October 30 enflamed opinion, helping students mount an impressive anti-German demonstration on the Champs Elysées on the morning of 11 November, the anniversary of the armistice of 1918. The demonstration, often considered a turning point in French opinion, was violently repressed. Gustave Roussy, the rector of the Academy of Paris,³ was dismissed, and the University of Paris was closed.

The Germans were soon considering demanding that the French dismiss undesirable professors as a condition for the reopening of the Parisian institutions of higher education. Document A indicates that this was being discussed on 26 November by three offices: group 4 of the Verwaltungsabteilung of the Militärbefehlshaber, the cultural section of the German Embassy, and the SS. On the activity of these administrations, see in particular [14].

As reported in Document B, lists of professors to be considered for dismissal from the following institutions were drawn up:

- the University of Paris
- the College of France (Collège de France, a prestigious institution that does not enroll students but offers lectures to the public)
- Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes
- Ecole Normale Supérieure
- Ecole de Puériculture de la Faculté de Médecine
- Institut de Droit comparé
- Institut de Psychologie
- Institut d'Ethnologie
- Institut d'Etudes Germaniques,
- Institut d'Urbanisme de l'Université de Paris
- Institut National Agronomique

³The Academy of Paris included the university faculties (science, letters, law, etc.) and lycées in Paris; its rector was responsible for all faculty appointments in these institutions.

- Ecole Nationale Supérieure de l’Aéronautique
- Ecole Nationale de la France d’Outremer
- Ecole Polytechnique
- Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Postes, Télégraphes et Téléphones
- Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Mines
- Ecole d’Application du Génie Maritime
- Ecole Nationale des Ponts et Chaussées

This first list drawn up included all professors known or suspected to be Jews or Freemasons, and those known for anti-German, or more generally anti-fascist activity. Some individuals were also labelled *Kolonialaufwurf* (colonial call); perhaps this indicated that they supported de Gaulle’s call to continue the fight against Germany from the French colonies. There were many obvious errors, corrected in subsequent lists. In particular, we were surprised to see Maurice Fréchet labeled a Jew. Emile Borel was not on any of the lists; he was no longer employed at the University of Paris, and there was no list for the Academy of Sciences.

The persecution of the Jews was certainly the greatest shame of Vichy France. The legislation underpinning it began with the *Statut des Juifs*, excluding Jews from numerous professional careers, which was published on 3 October 1940. As many authors, including Paxton [13], have noted, this legislation was more severe than German legislation in some respects. On the other hand, it did permit exceptions. Many French politicians hoped that exceptions would minimize the law’s effects, or in any case permit the separation of *the wheat from the tares*, as Darquier de Pellepoix, Laval’s zealous *Commissaire aux Questions Juives* eloquently put it. Some others were outraged that any exceptions were possible. But the Germans immediately saw that the Vichy legislation could be used to eliminate Jews altogether, and the archives show that attempts by Vichy officials to make exceptions were often futile. Document B shows the Germans relying on France’s own legislation to weed out Jews.

Document B also shows that the Germans, especially Abetz, were reluctant to limit the purge of anti-German professors to those on the left. The traditional French right had some (limited) ideological proximity with the conservative theses of the Third Reich, and for many on the right Hitler was a lesser evil than the communists or even the Popular Front of the 1930s. But there was also a tradition of strong anti-German feeling on the right. Many on the right, such as de Gaulle, had considered the Versailles treaty too lenient. Emile Picard was an example of an anti-German right-wing intellectual; he was known for anti-German outbursts during World War I and for advocating ostracism of Germany afterwards [10, 12].

The Germans continued to watch for agitation after they allowed the university and other Paris institutions to reopen at the beginning of 1941. Document

C concerns the activity of the association *l'Université libre* (Free University), listing the names of those considered its main organizers. Among these we find two Academicians, Cotton and Mauguin, who were arrested with Borel at the end of 1941. Surprisingly, we also find Paul Lévy listed as a correspondent in the non-occupied zone. In contrast with Jean Perrin and Jacques Hadamard, who had fled Paris and were also on the list, Lévy had never been very involved in politics.

Among the French scientific institutions, the Germans paid special attention to the two most prestigious: the College of France and the Academy of Sciences. A document from the SD dated 13 May 1941, which we do not present here, shows that the Germans were watching when the College of France selected a new member from two candidates: “the former Dominican Father Dhorne, today married to a Jew”, and “Prof. Gabriel, Director of the French Institute in Stambul, an agent for a communist Franco-Russian organization”. From the SD’s perspective, the College of France had been infested by Jews and communists for years, and the traditional mode of election of new members by current members could not guarantee an evolution towards better attitudes towards Germany.

The Academy of Sciences had taken a very careful wait-and-see attitude from the beginning. Document D is a short note answering an inquiry about the political orientation of its members.

Some months before, the council of the French Academy, the most prestigious of the five academies composing the *Institut de France*, had held a secret meeting to discuss the attitude the Academy would take towards collaboration. The Germans had their informers, and Document E reports on the meeting. Emile Picard, it reports, voted with the opponents. Picard had been elected to the French Academy in 1924. He occupied Fauteuil (chair) 1, then traditionally held by scientists; he had succeeded the physicist Freycinet, and Louis de Broglie was elected to replace him after his death. The three supporting collaboration were André Bellessort (1866–1942), Cardinal Baudrillart (1859–1942) and Abel Bonnard (1883–1968). Bellessort and Baudrillart both died in 1942.⁴ Bonnard lived in exile in Spain after the war.

In a surprising error, Document E lists Picard, a well known conservative, as a former member of the detested left-wing French Popular Front. Perhaps the Germans had confused him with another Emile, Emile Borel, whose party had joined the Popular Front in the election of 1936, even though he himself had not stood for election that year. The error was only about Picard’s past, not his identity. Picard was indeed a member of the Academy’s council, and Borel was not even a member of the Academy.

⁴The official website of the French Academy says of Bellessort that “He had been permanent secretary (*Secrétaire perpétuel*) of the Academy for a too short a time for his openly collaborationist views to damage the Academy.”

5 Borel's detention in 1941

From the beginning, the Vichy regime took measures against Freemasonry as well as against the Jews. A law of 13 August 1940 prescribed that Freemason lodges be closed, their properties impounded and sold. Civil servants and public officials were ordered to break any links with the dissolved lodges and not to affiliate anew if they were reconstituted. This repression increased dramatically in the summer of 1941. On 11 August 1941, a new law was promulgated stipulating the publication of lists of Freemasons in the *Journal Officiel* and directing that civil servants who had been Freemason dignitaries would automatically lose their jobs. Huge lists of names were published in the subsequent weeks. We have not been able to find Borel's name on any of these lists, and we do not have any information about whether he was a Freemason or not. The hypothesis would not be absurd. The radical-socialist movement shared many of Freemasonry's benevolent goals and its elitist vision of social progress through the progressive enlightenment of society. Cotton and Mauguin, two of the colleagues detained at the same time as Borel, were clearly classified as Freemasons by the Germans.

Four members of the Academy of Sciences, Aimé Cotton, Louis Lapicque, Charles Mauguin, and Borel, were arrested by the German police and sent to Fresnes prison around 10 October 1941 (we could not find a document with the exact date). Camille Marbo's detailed account of her husband's arrest is provided in Document F. Eugénie Cotton's account, in her biography of her husband, is provided in Document G.

We have found a few German documents concerning the arrest of the four academicians, but contrary to what Emilie Cotton writes, there is no reference to a concern about preventing a repetition of the Armistice Day demonstration of 1940. Instead, the aim seems to have been to dismantle supposed Freemason and Bolshevik circles in the Sorbonne and the Latin Quarter. Document H indicates that the four academicians (Borel is mentioned for the first time) had been denounced as a member of these circles by two collaborationists, Professor Peyron at the Institut Pasteur and a so-called teacher Voize at the Louis-le-Grand lycée.

The arrests may have been a by-product of the Roussy affair. The celebrated biologist Gustave Roussy was the object of a violent campaign by collaborationists, who accused him of being a communist and suspected that Jérôme Carcopino, minister of public education, wanted to return him to the post of rector of the Academy of Paris, from which he had been dismissed in the wake of the demonstration on 11 November 1940. The Germans seem to have followed the affair closely, and Roussy's dossier in the German archives contains both letters of accusation and letters defending him from "Peyron and Voize's calumnies". On 23 October 1941, the collaborationist newspaper *L'Appel* published a violent article opposing Roussy's return. How, the author asked, could Roussy still hold his position when "Professors Lapicque, Cotton, Mauguin, Borel, Villy, and Saintelagüe had have been locked up for Bolshevik Gaullism". There are hints that Roussy and Peyron were rivals at the Institut Pasteur.

Documents I and J show that the Germans were surprisingly concerned

about whether the accusations against the four scientists could be substantiated. Abetz's policies apparently required them to proceed carefully against individuals so well known. Document K indicates another element that may have played a role: support from French scientists working with the German navy. It seems very likely that Frédéric Joliot-Curie had a hand here; he famously managed to participate in resistance circles while also working with German scientists in his laboratory at the College of France, and his role in obtaining Paul Langevin's transfer from the Fresnes prison to house arrest in the Paris suburb of Troyes has been documented by Burrin ([3], pp. 315–322).

News of the arrests had also quickly spread abroad. On 18 October 1941, an article on occupied France in the London Times concluded with the comment, “No reason has so far been given for the arrest in Paris by the German authorities of the well-known mathematician Emile Borel, a former Minister of the Navy.” Two days later, on 20 October 1940, the Times devoted an entire article to the arrests, which we reproduce as Document L.

6 Conclusion

The documents we present in this paper give only a partial picture of what happened in Fall 1941 when German authorities decided to purge hostile scientists from the Paris Academy of Sciences. They do illustrate, however, the intricacy of the situation and the care the Germans tried to take, as they sought to avoid too hostile a reaction from French intellectual circles and from other German authorities in Paris interested in working with these scientists. The entanglement of the Vichy government, with its scheming and confused politics of collaboration with the Reich, only thickens the fog that enshrouds the troubling panorama of these difficult years.

Document A, by MBF V 4, 26 November 1940

*This is a translation from the German of the body of a document in Box AJ/40/567 at CARAN, dated 26 November 1940. Its heading indicates that it was prepared by group 4 (Schools and Culture) of the *Verwaltungsabteilung* of the *Militärbefehlshaber*.*

Re: Weeding out anti-German professors from French higher education

Expert: KVR. Dr. Dahnke

During a conversation about the arrest of the French professor Langevin, section director Dr. Best said that the Military Command did not intend to concern itself on a large scale with personnel matters in French higher education.⁵ Section director Dr. Best added that Ambassador Abetz had been given the task

⁵In general, we have translated the German word *Hochschulen* as “higher education” rather than “universities”, because many of the institutions involved, such as the College of France and the *grandes écoles*, are not usually called universities.

of managing the elimination of French professors known for anti-German activities from higher education in the occupied zone, possibly through diplomatic channels with the French Government. It is to be expected that the Embassy will come to agreement with group 4 of the Administration on measures to be taken.

In any case, we could consider making the reopening of Parisian higher education, which is now being considered, subject to conditions about personnel. To this end, investigations concerning the politics of professors in French higher education will be carried out in collaboration with the SS special command and Dr. Epting.

Document B, by MBF V 4, 13 December 1940

This is a translation from the German of the body of a document in Box AJ/40/567 at CARAN, dated 13 December 1940. Its heading indicates that it was prepared by group 4 (Schools and Culture) of the Verwaltungsabteilung of the Militärbefehlshaber.

Re: Weeding out anti-German professors from French higher education in the occupied zone.

Expert: KVR Dr. Dahnke

Remarks: In a letter of 6 December 1940 to the military command, Ambassador Abetz proposed that the French government be required to dismiss Jewish and anti-German university professors on the occasion of the reopening of the Paris institutions of higher education on 1 January 1941. On Ambassador Abetz's instructions, the cultural politics expert of the German Embassy, Dr. Epting, has contacted the expert responsible at group 4 "Schools and Culture" and provided the list designated as attachment 1. On the basis an examination of this list, which also involved the special command of the SS (Dr. Biederbick; see attachment 2), it was decided to consider the dismissal of the French professors marked in blue in attachment 1.

The German Embassy, in an oral communication on 7 December 1940, has asked to withdraw its proposal with respect to the French professors whose dismissal was to be demanded because of anti-German activities. The reason given was that Ambassador Abetz was not satisfied with the selection, because it had not taken sufficient account of the anti-German forces that had formerly stood on the French right.

The Embassy continues, however, to support its proposal with respect to the Jewish university professors. After a conversation in the office of section director Dr. Best on 8 December, where the Embassy was represented by Dr. Epting, Staatsrat Turner⁶ informed the French Minister of Public Instruction and the rector of the Academy and University of Paris that the Military Command expects the strict application of the French laws on Jews in the French

⁶Apparently this refers to Harald Turner, an SS officer who had earned the title "Staatsrat" in his previous career as a jurist.

institutions of higher education, and also the exclusion of Jewish teachers from non-public schools.

The planned measures with respect to French university professors with definite past anti-German activity will be reconsidered at an appropriate time after further investigation, especially with respect the French political right.

Document C, from the SS, 24 May 1941

This is a translation from the German of the body of a document in Box AJ/40/567 at CARAN. The document is not dated, but it is stamped with the date 24 May 1941. The signature indicates that it was prepared by Dr. Biederbick of the SS.

Re: Agitation among Parisian students and the activity of a pro-British organization called "l'Université Libre" (Free University)

There are reports of activity in the occupied zone by a Gaullist and British propaganda organization called "l'Université Libre". A significant number of copies of a weekly mimeographed newsletter published by this organization are distributed in sealed envelopes, addressed to people who could be interested and ready to help. The most prominent university figures participating in this activity are all professors who adhered to Freemasonry and have not cut their links with it. They are eagerly supported by a number of Jewish professors who have not yet been dismissed from their positions. Among the most active leaders of the "Université Libre" are the following people:

- Cotton, professor at the Faculty of Sciences
- Tiffeneau, professor at the Faculty of Medicine, former dean. Living at: Paris, 85 Bd. St. Germain
- Mauguin, professor at the Faculty of Sciences
- Joliot, professor at the College of France
- Sainte Lague, professor at the Conservatoire des Arts et Métiers
- Daniel Auger, researcher
- Albert Bayet, recently recalled

All these professors currently occupy posts in Paris. A quick inquiry has shown that most of them are also in the leadership of groups supporting resistance against collaboration and the occupation, of which there are many in the Latin Quarter.

The "l'Université Libre" organization, as noted already, has numerous correspondents in the non-occupied zone, who try to stimulate the same kind of activity among university students in the free zone. It is said that the regions of Lyon, Grenoble, Marseilles, Montpellier, and Toulouse are the objects of the

greatest activity on the part of the organization's agents. The following individuals are mentioned in particular:

- Jean Perrin, in Lyon
- Paul Lévy, professor at the Ecole Polytechnique of Lyon
- Hadamard, in Toulouse
- Sampaix, Pierre, in Grenoble
- Masson, Bernard, in Marseille
- Luc, director of technical education in Vichy

We are assured that the recent distribution of anglophile pamphlets to university students, which has increased in both the occupied and free zones, is due to this organization. They are hardly content with this activity. They also organize meetings in the Latin Quarter and the previously mentioned cities, in which university students are especially encouraged to undertake and demonstrate resistance to any orientation by the government towards a policy of collaboration with the Reich.

Dr. Biederbick

SS-Sturmbannführer

Document D, from the SD, 13 May 1941

This is a translation from the German of a document in CARAN Box AJ/40/567, dated 13 May 1941. Its heading indicates that it was prepared by the SD.

In the composition of its membership, the Academy of Sciences has relatively little political orientation. Dr. Gosset, Dr. Roussy, and the Prince de Broglie are among its most famous and scientifically most prominent members. Some of the other members, such as the Jew Hadamard, a relative of Dreyfuss [sic], are to be counted among its anti-German elements.

Document E, from the SS, 15 April 1941

This is a translation from the German of the body of a document in Box AJ/40/566 at CARAN, dated 15 April 1941.

To the Military Command in France

Headquarters

Paris, Hotel Majestic

Re: Institut de France, Paris, and attached academies

In a secret vote on Marshall Pétain's policies and collaboration, which took place some time ago in the council of the French Academy, resulted in 3 of the council members present voting for and 4 voting against Pétain and against collaboration. Voting negatively were:

- Paul Valéry, writer
- G. Duhamel, writer
- Duke Maurice de Broglie, historian
- Emile Picard, adherent of the former French Popular Front

Voting in favor: André Bellessort, writer and permanent secretary of the French Academy, Cardinal Baudrillart, as well as the well known publicist Abel Bonnard.

Not only in the French Academy, but also in the Académie des Inscriptions et belles lettres, the Academy of Sciences, the Académie des beaux arts, and the Académie des sciences morales et politiques, there have been and still are Jews, pro-Bolshevists, Freemasons, but also adherents of the Action Française and members of allied groups. In a number of cases, these scientists were also members of the Union des Intellectuels Français pour la Justice, la Liberté et la Paix, which must be mentioned as the organization that united wide circles of French intellectuals uniquely on the basis of their absolute hostility to anything German. We have seen that Aimé Cotton and Charles Mauguin, members of the Academy of Sciences who both belong to the Union des Intellectuels Français, though officially it is no longer active, have incited people against the existing relationships in occupied France and against Germany with illegal pamphlets such as "l'Université libre". The matter is still under investigation.

Because of this situation, it is urgently necessary to search the offices of the Institut de France and its associated Academies for information on this anti-German activity, partly before the war, but partly ongoing.

A complementary search of the homes of those most incriminated is also necessary.

We plan to work on this issue in close concert with the appropriate cultural officials of the German Embassy in Paris.

We duly request any details that may be known or any particular leads that should be followed in carrying out these planned measures.

[signature]

SS- Obersturmbannführer

Document F, by Camille Marbo, 1968

This is a translation from the French of a passage on pp. 299-304 of the autobiography of Emile Borel's wife, Camille Marbo [11].

In October of that same year, 1941, my husband was arrested.

Around two o'clock, the housekeeper I had hired the day before announced, with a fright:

"There is a German in uniform in the living room."

It was a pretentious officer exchanging meaningless words with my husband. Then our door was shaken by knocking. Four soldiers and a sergeant appeared, and behind them my mother, disconcerted, who had come for her daily visit. The officer's tone changed:

"I must conduct a search. All of you please take a seat."

The four of us, my husband, my mother, the housekeeper brought back by a soldier, and myself, waited without budging for four hours, under the surveillance of the sergeant, who smoked constantly, sitting in a chair with his legs crossed, brutally ordering to shut up first the housekeeper, who timidly said, "The gas is on in the kitchen," and then my mother, who noted, at the end of her nerves, "It's raining like...".

We heard the noise of boots and of drawers being thrown on the floor. They put the apartment through a fine-toothed comb. Not only was the linen closet emptied, the sheets, covers, etc. unfolded and thrown in a mess on the floor, along with all the papers, files, and manuscripts from the desks and cabinets, but even the coal bucket was knocked over, its contents strewn across the kitchen.

The officer reappeared at seven o'clock:

"Mr. Professor, please follow me."

- Why? Where are you taking me?

- That is none of my business. Have your wife pack you a bag for the night.

- May I give him something to eat?

- No. That's our job."

Emile Borel hugged me and left. Followed by my distressed mother, whom I sent to Pierre's⁷ for dinner, and my housekeeper, whom I supposed I would never see again after this horrible beginning.

There was no news about my husband for more than two weeks, as Pierre accompanied me on several futile missions. His son Paul, who spoke German perfectly, went with me into the numerous offices of the German military administration, located in hotels, and into all the prisons, where we offered a package, always refused after consultation of a register of those being held:

"No Borel here."

Finally, thanks to Paul, who bicycled to Fresnes with a package they accepted, we learned the place of incarceration and were authorized to bring laundry once a week.

We added a chess set to the first package. At first the officer guarding the entry refused to take it. Paul explained that you can play chess by yourself.

"Nein."

A very young corporal, who was helping the officer, dared to say timidly that his father played chess by himself. The box was opened, the pieces examined one by one, the cardboard chess board examined closely. The chess set was accepted. Emile Borel would say how precious it was to him during his two

⁷Pierre Appell, Marguerite's brother.

months in a cell with no human contact except through the grill each morning, when he received his daily ration—a bowl of soup, a square of fat, a piece of bread, and a slice of lemon “for the statutory vitamins”—and the weekly visit where they silently threw in the contents of the bag I had brought the day before.

He had no right to a barber. He never took a walk in the courtyard. In complete darkness, from four or five o'clock in the evening until morning, he occupied himself with mathematical reflections and his memories, lying on his straw mat, having put on all the clothing I had sent him, one garment over the other, to avoid shivering. During the day, he walked back and forth, calculating how many kilometers he had gone and pausing for a game of chess. On the fir lid of the chess set, using a stub of a pencil that had been missed when the pocket of his jacket was searched, he made a little mark every morning, to count the days of his imprisonment. In fact, he had made one mark too few. I still have the chess set and its lid at Cornus.

Other scientists having been arrested the same day, we thought that the Academy of Sciences, where they were members, could intervene to ask that they be treated humanely, in consideration of their age, and quickly brought before a court.

We were told that this was impossible. It would be a political act, risking the abolition of the Academy. Duke Maurice de Broglie, Elie Cartan, Paul Montel, and Professor Jolibois supported taking action, without success. I went to see the minister, who expressed his profound sympathy but made his refusal very clear: “Alas, my hands are tied. . .”

These gentlemen declared that “our scientists” were well cared for at the Fresnes infirmary, with good bedding and proper food, and that the guards treated them with respect. In fact, the cells at Fresnes did have rudimentary sanitary facilities, which relieved the guards from taking out the sewage. But as for the rest, the rudeness with which they treated the mothers and wives who brought packages makes it difficult to imagine that they were even polite.

Aside from the affectionate and faithful conduct of our friends, two things especially touched me during this difficulty.

First, the immediate decision of the Swedish Royal Academy to name Emile Borel a corresponding member, while giving him the right to make nominations for the Nobel prize. Secondly, the conduct of my young housekeeper. Having earlier warned me that she could not work for me regularly for another week, she came to ring the bell at my door the very next morning, saying calmly, “I dropped the work for the other woman. There is work to do here.”

This attentive presence of an “employee” whom I had not known before was a great comfort to me. I will never forget that pretty young Spaniard, named Julienne.

Emile Borel was returned to me unannounced. Seven kilos thinner, haggard, his face obscured by his beard. He had suffered more from the cold than from hunger. And he had had to endure the wind, suitcase in hand, while waiting for the metro that brought him back home.

The next morning, he came down with double pneumonia, with a 40-degree

fever. He had a hard time recovering, not having been nourished as he should have been.

During his imprisonment, the wives of the other prisoners, including Madame de Pange and Eugénie Cotton, and I formed an island of anxiety in the midst of a resigned population. We experienced a moment of terror whenever they announced a transfer of prisoners to Germany or an execution at Vincennes. They would stop accepting our packages at the prison, leaving us to understand that our prisoners had been sent to some unknown destination. What relief, on the other hand, when they gave us back the bag we had brought the time before, with the laundry to wash. This happened twice. The first time, my husband had written “OK, everything is going well” on the waist of a pair of underpants, with the help of the miraculous piece of pencil overlooked when he was searched.

Eugénie Cotton, whose husband shared Emile Borel’s fate, and I buzzed around like two crazy bumblebees. We were sent to see an ineffective lawyer. I went to find the Lhomond Street chaplain, Father Stock, who was not able to keep his promise to visit my husband and take him a bible, because he had not acquired a driver’s license.

During a period when Fresnes refused packages and they told me that our prisoners had been transferred somewhere else, following up on a name given me by Madame de Pange, I dared to go to Foch Avenue, to a stylish hotel where, unbeknownst to me, the Gestapo had just moved in, replacing some other German offices. There, having asked for a certain *Fräulein*, who had been able to tell Madame de Pange right away where her husband was, I was sent from one room to another, locked in for an hour, then seized by two soldiers, who set me in a corridor and talked with an officer through an open door. I opened another door, hoping to find the open air, and I found myself in a narrow room, where soldiers behind trestles with candles on them were sealing yellow envelopes with black wax. It was a frightening spectacle. A sergeant grabbed me, drug me away, and threw me onto the sidewalk of Foch Avenue. I never quite understood what it was all about.

Once I got word, by a mysterious route, that if I went to a place near the Sorbonne and signed a guarantee that neither he nor I would oppose the occupier, Emile Borel would be released in twenty-four hours. I did not go to the appointment. I explained to Paul Montel, who came to see me just as the unofficial intermediary left, that in the first place my husband would never forgive me for signing such a renunciation, and then that I saw no point in it, as I did not trust the Nazis’ word.

“In short,” Montel said, “you do not want to play Tosca.”

Document G, by Eugénie Cotton, 1967

This is a translation from the French of a passage from Eugénie Cotton’s biography of her husband, Aimé Cotton [4].

I have always thought that the arrest of the four progressive academicians

was related to the student demonstrations that took place at the Arc de Triomphe in 1940 on the occasion of the anniversary of the 1918 Armistice. Paul Langevin had been held responsible for these demonstrations, and he had been arrested and put under house arrest. To prevent the recurrence of such demonstrations, the Germans made the first move and arrested the scientists they thought might encourage the students to demonstrate on 11 November 1941. Arrested on 10 and 11 October, when preparation for the demonstration might have begun, Borel, Cotton, Lapicque and Mauguin were freed on 13 November, soon after the anniversary of the Armistice.

In a letter written to me after my husband's death, Charles Mauguin recalled his opinion about the cause of their common arrest: "You have to believe that we had some things in common in our temperaments and our philosophy, because there was a lot of agreement in our way of seeing things. Naturally kind, he (Aimé Cotton) dedicated himself without hesitation, enduring every ordeal, to the cause he believed to be just. On the other side, he declared himself against what he reproved with courage and clearness. This is probably why he was detained by the Germans in 1941 at Fresnes, where the two of us were together without knowing it. I will never forget our trip back together after leaving the prison, looking like highwaymen with our shaggy heads in the metro."

Document H, by MBF V 4, 1 November 1941

This is a translation from the German of a document in CARAN Box AJ/40/-567, dated 1 November 1941. It was prepared by group 4 (Schools and Culture) of the Verwaltungsabteilung of the Militärbefehlshaber.

Re: Freemason and Bolshevist circles in the Sorbonne and the Paris academic district

Expert: OKVR⁸ Dr. Dahnke

Remarks: Professor Peyron, of the Institut Pasteur, and Professor Voize, who was removed from his position at the Louis-le-Grand lycée by Minister Carcopino, have named the following persons as representatives of the Freemason and Bolshevist view in higher education and the administration of public education:

- 1). G. Roussy, who was named rector of the Sorbonne by Minister Jean Zay and removed from the position at the end of 1940 by Minister Ripert or Minister Chevalier. Professor Peyron said the removal was on his initiative. Married to a half-Jew. Still today director of the cancer institute in Paris. At the end of 1940, Roussy, was stripped of his French citizenship, as he is originally from Switzerland. Minister Carcopino has arranged for him to regain his citizenship and wants to make him rector of the Sorbonne again. Proof: According to Peyron, Carcopino himself told him this.

⁸Oberkriegsverwaltungsrat (Superior War Administration Advisor)

According to Peyron and Voize's accusation, Roussy is exceptionally influential in Freemason and Bolshevik circles (see the attached newspaper clipping).

- 2). C. Luc, director of technical education in the French Ministry of Public Instruction (file in V kult 402), though not himself a Freemason, is a decided supporter of Freemasonry and Bolshevik tendencies in French education.
- 3). Guyot, for 20 years general secretary of Paris University, removed from this position along with Roussy at the end of 1940 and named head of the office of higher education by Carcopino. Freemason.
- 4). Mme. Hattinghais, named by Carcopino director of the Ecole normale for young women in Sèvres. Known as supporter of Jews and Freemasons.
- 5). Professor Soretti, removed by Minister Chevalier from his position as professor at the University of Caen because of his Bolshevik opinions; Carcopino has changed his dismissal to retirement.
- 6). Masbou, named director of primary education in the Seine by education director Rosset. Not himself a Freemason but a supporter of Freemason and Bolshevik tendencies in education; removed from his functions by Chevalier, named by Carcopino as director of the Ecole Normale supérieure for technical education.
- 7). Santelli, inspector of the Academy of the Seine and Marne, removed by Chevalier because of his communist opinions, named general inspector of technical schools by Carcopino.
- 8). Chatelun, former director of the Louis-le-Grand lycée, named by Carcopino director of primary education of the Seine, replacing Masbou. Not himself a Freemason but sympathizes with them and has permitted anti-German speeches at the Louis-le-Grand lycée.
- 9). Prof. Frédéric Joliot, professor of chemistry at the College of France. Works with German scientists in Paris by arrangement with the military command and is therefore under German protection. Measures against him are now possible after a contact with the military command in France, group V culture. His wife:
- 10). Mme. Irène Joliot-Curie, professor of chemistry at the Sorbonne. Both are radical leftists and are engaged against collaboration with Germany.
- 11). Professor D. H. Maguin [sic], professor of mineralogy at the Sorbonne and at the Ecole pratique des hautes études.
- 12). Professor Emil [sic] Cotton, professor of physics at the Sorbonne and at the Ecole pratique des hautes études.

- 13). Professor Louis Lapicque, professor of physiology at the Academy of Sciences. The same.
- 14). Professor Emil [sic] Borel, professor of mathematics at the Sorbonne. Member of the Academy of Sciences. The same.
- 15). Professor Gustav [sic] Monod, professor of philosophy at Versailles. Cabinet director for the Jewish minister Jean Zay. The same.

Document I, by MBF V 4, 10 November 1941

This is a translation from the German of a document in CARAN Box AJ/40/-567, dated 10 November 1941. It was prepared by group 4 (Schools and Culture) of the Verwaltungsabteilung of the Militärbefehlshaber.

Re: Freemason and Bolshevist circles in the Sorbonne and the Paris academic district

Expert: OKVR Dr. Dahnke

1- Note: The Alst⁹ arrested professors Mauguin, Cotton, Lapicque and Borel (see the attached note of 1 November 41), and assistants Aubert and Cazalas (see the attached memorandum). I have gotten in contact with the Alst (Major Dr. Reille), spoken with the expert in charge of the file, Captain Krülle, and transmitted to him the note of 1 November 41 in order to bring connections of which he had been unaware to his attention. He intends to extend his investigations to this circle.

[added later] 2- Once again, on 24 November 41 (new contact with Captain Krülle, informing me about the results of his investigations)

I. A.

Document J, by MBF V 4, . . . November 1941

This is a translation from the German of a document in CARAN Box AJ/40/-567, dated November 1941. It was prepared by group 4 (Schools and Culture) of the Verwaltungsabteilung of the Militärbefehlshaber.

Re: Freemason and Bolshevist circles in the Sorbonne and the Paris academic district

Expert: OKVR Dr. Dahnke

1- Note: Consultation with Captain Krülle on 25 November 41. He released Professors Mauguin, Cotton, Lapicque and Borel. Their interrogation showed that all of them, especially Cotton, still candidly stand by the political ideas they advocated before and during the war. The openly declared that they expect

⁹Probably an abbreviation for Allgemeine-SS.

England and America's political system to rescue France. But they emphatically denied that they had in any way acted on their views, especially with students. The intelligence service is not in position to prove such activity, though our informers claim it has taken place. In particular, it is impossible to arrange a confrontation with students from the circles these professors were supposed to have influenced, because the informers did not identify any such students by name.

During a consultation between this expert, Dr. Epting, and Dr. Biederbick, we considered putting the four professors under house arrest outside Paris, as was done with Langevin in Troyes. In view of such a political attitude on the part of the four professors, who are described by rightist circles as the center of extreme leftist and anti-German tendencies in the Sorbonne — see the references in the newspapers — it cannot be expected that they will refrain from expressing their opinions in French scientific circles. This would justify a measure of this kind, even if it is impossible to produce witnesses to prove their political activity. No active participation by Langevin was proven either. But we must deliberate carefully before implementing such a measure; I have therefore asked Dr. Epting to personally discuss the matter at the Embassy as soon as possible.

2- (Wieder vor zum) Back on 8 December 41 (conversation with Dr. Epting and Dr. Biederbick on 9 December 41 at 12 o'clock).

I. A.

Document K, from the German Navy, 25 October 1941

This is a translation from the German of the body of a document in CARAN Box AJ/40/558. The document is a copy of a letter, marked secret, from the office of the Commanding Admiral of the German Navy in France, dated 25 October 1941.

Paris, 25 October 1941

To the military command in France group Ic

Re: Arrest of French scientists

No reference

The research section of the naval weapons office at the Headquarters of the War Navy is currently working in Paris on important problems of nuclear physics together with the Parisian "Curie" Institute. The German scientists depend on the French scientists in this work. To be named, among others, are the mathematician Prof. Borell [sic], the physicists Prof. Langevin and Cotton, the crystallographer Prof. Mauguin and the mineralogist Prof. La Picque [sic], the last two of the Sorbonne.

According to information from the representative of OKM to the Commanding Admiral in France, the forenamed French scientists have been under arrest

for some time. Because the collaboration between the German and French scientists will be very difficult under these circumstances, and the continuation of the military scientific research may become impossible, we would like to be advised about whether the misdeeds committed by the arrested French scientists are so serious that their arrests must be upheld.

Document L, from the Times of London, 19 October 1941

Paris Savants Arrested

Pro-British views

Laval on Germany as 'Queen of Europe'

From Our Special Correspondent, French frontier,¹⁰ Oct. 19

The Vichy Government to-day confirmed the arrest in Paris by the German authorities of five prominent professors of the University - namely, MM. Borel, Langevin, Lapique, Mauguin and Cotton.

According to some sources they are charged with spreading de Gaullist propaganda, according to others with pro-British sentiments, while some newspapers lay emphasis on the fact that the political activity of MM. Langevin and Borel has been well known since the time of the Front Populaire. The brother of the former Prefect of the Seine Department, M. Villey, has also been arrested, together with his son and daughter, on a charge of alleged de Gaullist activity.

Judging by opinion in Haute Savoie, these arrests are causing bewilderment, as even the former political opponents of these scientists cannot believe that they have been arrested on account of their personal views. Some light may be thrown on the affair by a recent article published by Laval in his newspaper the *Moniteur du Puy-de-Dôme*. In this he says that now that Germany has conquered her enemies, who are those of France, the latter must conquer her disorder and errors and hold out her hand to Germany - the Queen of Europe. Laval then declares that all French persons who are still imbued with anti-German prejudice should be at once dismissed from public offices. He adds that this prejudice now exists mainly among the intellectuals, where it may be regarded as a remnant of anti-Fascism.

In Haute Savoie the view is expressed that the above 'ultimatum' by Laval inspired the Vichy Government to act accordingly, as the French authorities certainly lent a hand in the arrest of the Paris professors.

¹⁰The references to the Haute Savoie suggest that the correspondent may have been stationed in Switzerland.

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