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“The Nazi Period and its Consequences at the University of Hohenheim”

by Dr. Anja Waller

In April 1933, the first college president appointed by the National-Socialists took up his duties in Hohenheim. This marked the end of the college's institutional independence, which it had received only eleven years previously. The National-Socialists' enforced standardization (*Gleichschaltung*) had far-reaching consequences for students, lecturers, and employees at the college. It affected the teaching content, research, and social atmosphere on campus. The structural, personnel, and scientific consequences could be felt long into the post-war period.

While other key turning points in Hohenheim's history have been explored in detail, for example the Justus von Liebig debate in the mid-19th century or the transition from an agricultural college to a full university in 1968, the discussion of the National-Socialist history in Hohenheim has been surprisingly weak. This book aims to fill that gap.

At the initiative of the Hohenheim's University Council and based on a decision by the President's Office, the University of Hohenheim charged historian Dr. Anja Waller with the historical review of the National-Socialist period and its consequences at the University of Hohenheim. The renowned historian Professor Dr. Andreas Gestrich assisted Dr. Waller as an independent scientific advisor.

The project to review the National-Socialist period and its consequences at the University of Hohenheim first aimed to close the existing research gap and make it possible to place the National-Socialist era within Hohenheim's overall history. Second, memorial points are to be set up to raise more awareness for this part of history.

By carrying out this project, the University of Hohenheim also takes responsibility for what happened as well as actions that could have been taken but were not. After all, it is not only about the extraordinary National-Socialist careers and resistance that occurred only rarely in Hohenheim's history with National-Socialism. Perpetration or at least complicity can also arise from collaboration or non-intervention. That is why we must concern ourselves especially with the "completely normal" National-Socialist careers and repression processes that were revealed by this project.

With this publication, the University of Hohenheim aims to name and recognize the suffering and injustice that was committed under National-Socialist rule. The victims of National-Socialism in Hohenheim should not be forgotten, the injustice done to them is to be made visible, and those responsible are to be named. When confronting our history, it becomes clear what responsibilities arise from that for today.

A particular focus was therefore placed on the time before and after National-Socialist rule in Hohenheim. The foundations for National-Socialist *Gleichschaltung* in Hohenheim had already been set during the Weimar Republic, and National-Socialist influence did not abruptly end with the Allied victory in May 1945. Instead, an examination of Hohenheim's National-Socialist history reveals how quickly sci-

ence loses its freedom and how easily it can be made into a tool of horrific and inhuman policies. It shows that even scientists can become perpetrators or collaborators in a system that lacks freedom – whether because of blind ideology, falsely understood loyalty to principles, pure opportunism, or fear.

Today, the freedom of science is set down in Article 5 of the German Basic Law together with the freedom of opinion. After all, science can only act on its ability to contribute effectively to solving problems when it is also permitted to reach uncomfortable or inconvenient results. A strong democracy also needs to be able to choose from true alternatives for action based on a rational discourse culture. Science's contribution to this cannot be underestimated.

Hohenheim's history during National-Socialism therefore calls on us as scientists to protect the freedom of science. This includes transparently describing the methods used to reach findings, defending the freedom to choose topics, and ensuring the replicability of scientific results. Without a continual discourse within the scientific community and, at the same time, an open dialogue with society, this task cannot be fulfilled.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to Dr. Anja Waller and Professor Dr. Andreas Gestrich for their dedication and their intensive, sometimes painstaking work that gave rise to this volume with its extensive research findings. My thanks also go out to Professor Dr. Ulrich Fellmeth, the Director of the Hohenheim University Archives, for his competent assistance with the project. Numerous University members and citizens of the region also provided valuable information to support the project on a historical review of the National-Socialist period and its consequences at the University of Hohenheim. Archives and libraries made their resources available, and contemporary witnesses shared their memories. The publication of the research results was done with the friendly support of the Palm-Stiftung e.V. I would like to expressly thank all of them.

Reviewing the National-Socialist period and the consequences of this chapter of the University's history on the occasion of the University of Hohenheim's 200th anniversary was a long overdue step. I am glad we took it.

Hohenheim, October 2018



Prof. Dr. Stephan Dabbert
University of Hohenheim President

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Dr. Anja Waller

Summary

On the eve of National-Socialism, Hohenheim Agricultural College was a small, isolated college close to Stuttgart that was characterized by an extraordinarily homogenous staff, worldview, and subject focus. The teaching staff was male, “Aryan,” nationally conservative, and focused on agricultural sciences. Still, the College had an outstanding reputation both nationally and internationally.

Even during the time of the Weimar Republic, national or even nationalsocialist student groups dominated daily university life in Hohenheim. In contrast to other universities, however, in Hohenheim there were no republican, socialist, or communist student groups who could have balanced this out. Any dissenting opinions were harshly dealt with: If College members in this environment expressed political opinions that went against the general national-conservative, nationalist mindset, the student body responded with vicious insults. In this context, the professors, lecturers, assistants, and students went along with the National-Socialists’ enforced standardization policy (*Gleichschaltung*) not only without resistance but with enthusiasm and dedication. An above-average number of College members joined the *Sturmabteilung* (SA), the National Socialist German Workers’ Party (NSDAP), the *Schutzstaffel* (SS), and other party organizations. Those who expressed sentiments critical of National-Socialism or whose loyalty to the National-Socialists was in doubt were either driven from the College or were continually harassed.

With the start of National-Socialism, Hohenheim Agricultural College placed itself entirely in the service of an agricultural policy that brought death and destruction to large swaths of Europe, especially Eastern Europe. Hohenheim agricultural scientists participated in the National-Socialist regime’s crimes not only by offering theoretical support but also practical assistance in the occupied areas. To compensate for the loss of workers due to the war, more than 240 laborers were forcibly deported to Hohenheim.

After the collapse of the “Third Reich,” Hohenheim agricultural scientists were usually able to go into the post-war era with a clean reputation, sometimes after a brief interruption to go through denazification as a “collaborator,” and continue their careers without much of a fuss. There were no objections from the college either before or after the “Third Reich” about being subsumed by the National-Socialist goals. With the goal of a quick denazification, in retrospect the theoretical and practical contributions to National-Socialism were declared to be purely scientific work, and any political use by the National-Socialists was deliberately ignored. When expedient, however, career stations that were held under National-Socialist rule were emphasized even after the war and served to further assist the scientists’ careers. To fulfill the obligation for a political cleansing and close the “Third Reich” chapter as quickly as possible, an example was made of a few colleagues whose collaboration was particularly conspicuous, and they were removed from Hohenheim Agricultural College not only based on their tribunal decisions but also at the insistence of the President’s Office and the Senate.

In part due to the continuity of staff at Hohenheim Agricultural College in the transition from National-Socialism to the post-war era, there was no interest in questioning the impression of a successful denazification of the College, as that would have endangered the judgment that the College was not guilty of being tied too closely with National-Socialism. The Agricultural College and later University of Hohenheim was therefore able to maintain its image as an innocent university even through the time of the student movement and the following decades during which many other German universities had already questioned their National-Socialist past. The results of the project to review the National-Socialist period at the University of Hohenheim reveal that this perspective on the University of Hohenheim’s National-Socialist past misses its significant role in achieving the National-Socialists’ agricultural policy goals.

1. Hohenheim on the eve of National-Socialism

Hohenheim Agricultural College was founded after witnessing the famine of 1816, which can primarily be traced back to the cooling world climate after the eruption of Tambora, a volcano in Indonesia, in April of the previous year. In 1817, the Wuerttemberg King William I and his wife Catherine started a series of measures meant to reform agriculture in Wuerttemberg. This also included establishing a teaching, experimental, and model institution in the Hohenheim Palace in 1818 which gave rise to the Agricultural Academy in 1847 and Hohenheim Agricultural College in 1904. Besides offering a substantive education in agriculture, the College also aimed to establish agricultural research and to disseminate the results of this research. In 1922, Hohenheim Agricultural College gained its independence with a rectorate constitution. This meant that the university had only been an independent institution for eleven years when the National-Socialists seized power in 1933.

The lecturers at Hohenheim Agricultural College were made up of agricultural scientists, were all male with the exception of Professor Margarete von Wrangell, and for the most part had been in Hohenheim for a long period of time. Many of the lecturers had already been working in Hohenheim for many years, and some had studied or done their doctoral work in Hohenheim. The Hohenheim student body was also mostly homogenous during the Weimar Republic. The majority of students were male and Christian; there were only a few Jewish students. However, until the First World War there was a large number of international students. After the First World War, the number of international students decreased significantly, but with international students making up 10% of the student body, Hohenheim was still relatively international and thus also intercultural. Despite large variations at the start of the 1920s, the number of students was low in comparison with other German universities. Hohenheim was the smallest agricultural college in the German Reich.

It is noteworthy that a large proportion of the German students in Hohenheim were already particularly racist and radical at the start of the Weimar Republic. There was no increasing tendency that reached its peak after the National-Socialists came to power and the universities were subjected to *Gleichschaltung*. On the contrary, various radical and in part militaristic groups existed from the very beginning.

Other political leanings had no place in Hohenheim. Republican, social-democratic, or communist groups did not exist for even a short period. Almost every student joined the SA, and a large percentage was also in the NS student association, facts that highlight this radical atmosphere.

In Hohenheim during the interwar period, research and teaching were characterized solely by agricultural science. Other independent agricultural universities in Germany were typically located in close proximity to universities and some closely cooperated with these institutions. In Hohenheim, students and professors attempted to counteract this limitation in the range of subjects by promoting general education lectures, as they also recognized that an academic education required more than studying just one subject. The general education lectures that were then started were slow to be accepted by the students even though the isolated location of the college offered students very little intellectual stimulation outside of courses. Instead, the student body concentrated on sports, which it believed to be extremely important.

2. Hohenheim during National-Socialism

On the eve of National-Socialism, Hohenheim was one of four agricultural universities in the German Reich. Because all other agricultural universities had been integrated into larger universities, two years after the National-Socialists came to power Hohenheim was the only remaining independent agricultural college. Only after the Anschluss of Austria and the annexation of Sudetenland did the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences in Vienna and the Agricultural College of Dëčín-Libverda fall under the direct influence of the National-Socialists.

These developments meant that Hohenheim had an exceptional position in the “Third Reich.” This position influenced the college’s further development and its history during National-Socialist rule.

2.1 National-Socialist Gleichschaltung

The National-Socialist Gleichschaltung started in Hohenheim at the latest on 2 May 1933 with the induction of Percy Brigl as the first President under National-Socialist rule. Alfred Beck was appointed as the special representative – and as the political-ideological monitoring authority. The Gleichschaltung policy’s enforced standardization stretched across all areas of college life, from the director – the President and now Führer – of the College to the lecturers and students and even to the content of teaching and research. It only took a few months for Hohenheim Agricultural College to lose its independence, which it had gained only eleven years earlier, and become a college under National-Socialist rule that was controlled and managed from above. In all structural areas, whether at the level of the lecturers, students, in teaching, or college management, everywhere the College had previously managed itself or where decisions had been made at the local level, the power was transferred to the Reich. Those loyal to the regime were placed in key positions to carry out National-Socialist policies. They were to plan and hold the course for the standardized universities. This resulted in new structures and power relationships with new, powerful partners. While the internal college cooperation among the three directors (college, lecturers, students) was smooth, functionary and scientific interests often clashed and power struggles resulted when Alfred Arnold, director of the state farmers, met with the College.

Hohenheim Agricultural College was selected to be the “National-Socialist Model Institute” – not only because Hohenheim was the only remaining agricultural university. Due to the high proportion of SA and NDSAP members among the Hohenheim students and lecturers who supported the National-Socialist plans, Hohenheim Agricultural College was an attractive choice to start work on exemplary National-Socialist agricultural science. The process of Gleichschaltung was not met with an equal amount of accord by all College members, but there was no resistance from among the lecturers or students to the National-Socialists’ plans.

2.2 The Hohenheim presidents and lecturers

When looking at the biographies and terms of offices for the six presidents (Percy Brigl 1933 to 1934, Alfred Beck 1934 to 1935, Peter Carstens 1935 to 1938, Erhard Jung 1938 to 1941, Walter Zimmermann 1941 to 1945, and Emil Lowig March until April 1945) who led Hohenheim Agricultural College during the National-Socialist era, a story of repression and generational shifting can be seen.

The first generation of presidents in National-Socialism were Percy Brigl and Alfred Beck. They were “conservative-nationalist” and, at the time of their appointment, they were in their mid to late forties. Brigl and Beck had taken part in the First World War as young men and had a national-conservative worldview. They hoped that National-Socialism would bring political stability and economic improvements for Germany and were not critical of National-Socialism. However, Brigl and Beck were not zealous followers of National-Socialism and did not join the NSDAP until the National-Socialists seized power. Brigl did not join until 1937. It is possible that they joined the party for opportunistic reasons in an attempt to accommodate the new rulers. This strategy was not successful in the long term, as both Brigl and Beck were forced to leave office. Apparently neither was able to convince the National-Socialist leaders that they were able and willing to reform the college to a National-Socialist training ground.

With the next president, Peter Carstens, the generation of “young National-Socialists” took over the presidency. Besides Carstens, this generation included all three presidents until the collapse of the “Third Reich”: Erhard Jung, Walter Zimmermann, and Emil Lowig. These presidents were young and staunch National-Socialists. They had

experienced the First World War as children and adolescents, but they had not actively participated in the war. Characteristic of the second generation of presidents is their early entry into the party even before the National-Socialists seized power: Carstens in 1930, Jung in 1932, Zimmermann in 1925, and Lowig in 1930. The four presidents in the second generation also have something else in common: they were appointed to their chairs and as presidents very early. All presidents in the second generation – with the exception of Lowig, whose term of office ended with Germany's capitulation – were in office much longer than the presidents of the first generation and chose to end their terms as opposed to being forced out of office.

The presidents of the first generation were not able to successfully convince the National-Socialist rulers of their dedication to the party and were quickly replaced by zealous National-Socialists and early party members, but this was not an obstacle to *Gleichstellung* at Hohenheim Agricultural College. It was implemented without incident or resistance.

Six Hohenheim professors were already members of the NSDAP before 1933; after the party seized power, the majority of the professors followed in their footsteps. Of the 29 professors who taught in Hohenheim between 1933 and 1945, there were only five for which proof could be found that they were not party members. This meant that Hohenheim had an above-average rate of professors who were National-Socialists. More than 60 percent of Hohenheim professors were members of the NSDAP during the "Third Reich" – and some of them well before that period. Compared to other universities, this is a remarkably high number. Almost no other university had a similarly high number of NSDAP members among the professors. In addition, during the National-Socialist era, eight Hohenheim professors were members of the SS, including the presidents Alfred Beck, Peter Carstens, and Erhard Jung. The Professor of Zoology, Gustav Rösch, was an SS member starting in 1933 and in 1940 became part of the Waffen-SS as an Obersturmführer. In 1933, almost the entire teaching staff became part of the SA. Only two older professors did not join, stating their physical frailty as the reason.

Not only the presidents, but also the entire Hohenheim teaching staff can be divided into the generation groups described above. While the teaching staff during the Weimar Republic was relatively homogenous, after the National-Socialists seized power, they were quickly divided into two groups characterized primarily by generation. Just as with the presidents, there was a generation of “conservativenationalist” professors who were born well before the turn of the century, took part in the First World War as young soldiers, and often viewed National-Socialism positively but were not enthusiastic National-Socialists. In contrast, there were the “young National-Socialists” who were mostly born at the start of the 20th century and had not experienced the First World War as soldiers but as children and adolescents. In the generation of the “young National-Socialists,” there were also the early party members who had joined before 1933 and were often zealous National-Socialists.

The two groups among the Hohenheim professors had a difficult time dealing with one another. A chairman in the *Reichsarbeitsgemeinschaft* for space research spoke of a strong division among the Hohenheim professors and referred to them as a “peaceless group.” Wuerttemberg’s Minister-President and Minister of Culture, Christian Mergenthaler, described the situation in Hohenheim as “a bleak picture of a divided university community.” Even during denazification, the division of Hohenheim’s professors was discussed several times. On the one hand, it was said that “several cliques had formed amongst the professors,” and that they had quarreled with each other between 1933 and 1945 while others vehemently denied this. They claimed that two groups had existed among the professors, but they had not fought with one another.

Starting in 1933, it was therefore not possible to speak of a homogenous teaching staff. The proportion of NSDAP members among the professors increased in comparison to non-members, as during appointment procedures, attention was often first paid to the duration of party membership and the subject aptitude was only of secondary importance. When the war started in 1939, of the 18 Hohenheim professors, 14 were NSDAP members and only 4 remained without a party. This meant that in 1939, almost 78 percent of Hohenheim’s professors were members of the NSDAP.

During National-Socialism, scientists were expelled from Hohenheim Agricultural College. This occurred in different ways. Not every scientist was fired, but especially for assistants, not extending their contracts was a tried and true method of removing them from the college. However, some scientists also “voluntarily” resigned when faced with massive pressure and continual harassment. Evicting college members as a result of the “Act on Restoring the Professional Civil Service” was done less frequently in Hohenheim than at other universities. In part this was due to the teaching staff, which was national-conservative to national-socialist without exception and did not include any “non-Aryans.” No lecturers were fired. Two professors were expelled from the College: Max Rüdiger and Ernst Jenny. Besides this, the civil servant Director of Horticulture, Rudolf Wehrhahn, the research associates Karl Pfeilsticker, Marianne Meisenheimer, Georg Baur, Josef Krauss, Hans Stahl, and Huberta Bronsart von Schellendorf were expelled from the College. It could not be definitively determined whether Adolf Richard Walther, Hohenheim president from 1932 to 1933, was also part of the group of professors who were driven away from the College or whether he left for personal reasons in the spring of 1933.

2.3 Students

In contrast to the national trend, the number of students at Hohenheim Agricultural College increased at the start of National-Socialism. It was not until the introduction of the Reich Labor Service (*Reichsarbeitsdienst*, RAD), which was required for all young men before starting their military service, and which many students completed in the summer semester, that the number of students first decreased in the summer semester 1935. The decreasing trend continued until the start of the war.

Among Hohenheim’s students there was no resistance to *Gleichschaltung* during National-Socialism. On the contrary, they enthusiastically supported the plans. There are no records of student expulsions in Hohenheim. The reason for this, however, was that there simply were no left-wing or Jewish students. Religious groups also had very little influence on Hohenheim’s student body. The introduction of the two National-Socialist fraternities “Florian Geyer” and “Tannenberg” was welcomed by the students, with the only resistance coming due to the confiscation of the fraternity houses. Within only a few years, the once international college had become a National-Socialist, conformist location with the students’ assistance and approval.

During the war years, Hohenheim Agricultural College benefited once again from the growing importance of agricultural science in the National-Socialist state. In contrast to many other universities in the Reich, which had to be temporarily or permanently closed because of war damage, students in Hohenheim were able to continue and complete their studies without interruption. The College and politicians assumed that at the latest at the end of the war, a large number of agronomists would be needed. However, university operations in Hohenheim were also carried out under more restrictive conditions, as a military hospital was placed in the Hohenheim Palace and there was only a poor supply of food and fuel for heat. The few students who remained at the College followed the course of the war in Hohenheim and stayed in contact with their friends on the front. They assured them that they were using their time at the university to “do their part in achieving victory, in as much as that is possible at home.” Because of the decreasing number of students and the fact that many of them only came to Hohenheim for a short time to take exams, toward the end there was almost no student life at Hohenheim Agricultural College.

2.4 Hohenheim Scientists in Service to National-Socialist Agricultural Policies

To avoid suffering from a collapse of food production and dependency on foreign imports like in the First World War, the National-Socialists planned to convert German agriculture to a war-ready nutritional science. Farming and agronomy therefore became very important in Germany. In the National-Socialists' war preparations, the key task of agricultural science was to contribute to an increase in production, enabling the National-Socialist goal of an independent food supply. This meant that agricultural scientists in Hohenheim had more possibilities for both theoretical research and practical applications, in which they also included the students and for which they were able to procure large amounts of resources and funding.

Several Hohenheim scientists were enthusiastic supporters of the National-Socialist agricultural policies from the very start of National-Socialism and in part even before they seized power. These scientists had not just focused on National-Socialist topics for opportunistic reasons. Even during the war, research continued despite

difficult conditions and scientists being drafted for military service. This also included confidential research contracts that were important for the war, although the contents were for the most part not recorded. Only research into the production of a natural vitamin C supplement at the Institute of Agricultural Technology is known. Even before the war, Hohenheim scientists looked at the theoretical aspects of resettlement. As supposed “people without space” (*Volk ohne Raum*), the National-Socialists laid claim to areas beyond the German borders. In Hohenheim, Adolf Münzinger is an example of someone who focused on the topic of resettlement. He contributed to the restructuring plans for the “Westmark,” an area that was to be created by joining Lorraine, the Palatinate region, and Saarland. Although this restructuring plan was not realized in the end, even at the start of the campaign for France, 80,000 French were evicted from Lorraine and so-called “Reich Germans” who were to be settled in Lorraine were evacuated from the border regions. Even in the 1960s Münzinger continued to report on the “ideal conditions” that existed for this resettlement project. At the start of the war, other Hohenheim scientists participated actively in the resettlements, displacements, and deportations in the Reich territory and conquered eastern territories. This also included students who travelled to Poznan with Hohenheim Professor Peter Carstens in the context of their studies. Carstens led and coordinated the SS settlement staff Poznan and was thus responsible for displacing the residents on-site and resettling German population groups coming from abroad. Several Hohenheim scientists were also part of the economic and scientific raids in the context of Operation Barbarossa. One of these was Professor Otto Sommer, who was appointed as the Senior War Administrative Officer in the Reichskommissariat for the Ukraine, and as his final position was the Director of the Research Center for Agriculture and Forestry, which was in charge of all agricultural-biological institutes and all experimental stations in western Ukraine.

Hohenheim's role in the National-Socialist agricultural policies can be seen in the relatively high number of Hohenheim scientists who were actively in the service of National-Socialist agricultural policies: as SS training directors, theoretical planners for resettlements, participants in displacement and settlement of German troops in occupied territories, and participants in the systematic theft of scientific material from Ukrainian institutes. As they liked to emphasize after the war ended, they were

usually working as scientists and in part had management positions. Almost none of these Hohenheim scientists were held accountable after the war. Some of them were even able to benefit from their experience “in the East,” climbed the career ladder, and received honors and awards from the University of Hohenheim and the Federal Republic of Germany.

The growing importance of agriculture and the start of the Second World War also meant that a large number of forced laborers came to Hohenheim. The number of forced laborers in Hohenheim can no longer be precisely determined even after viewing the relevant source material. Evaluating various databases and archival holdings led to a number of 242 forced laborers who were used in Hohenheim and its experimental fields during the Second World War. Among the forced laborers, there was a disproportionate number of women – around 60 percent. The forced laborers came from at least twelve different countries, but their origin or nationality could not be determined in every case. Most of them came from Russia, Poland, and Ukraine, others from France, Czechia, Yugoslavia, and Armenia. A large group of stateless people could also be found among the Hohenheim forced laborers, especially those who came from Ukraine and Armenia. Almost one-eighth of the Hohenheim forced laborers were children and adolescents. Among the 20 children, there were also 5 babies and toddlers between 0 and 3 years of age. They were children of the female forced laborers and were deported to Hohenheim with their mothers or were born during their stay in Germany. The largest portion of the forced laborers were young adults born after 1920, however.

The forced laborers were used for varying amounts of time in Hohenheim. Some only stayed for a short while – a few months or even days – and were then transferred to other stations, for example after the end of a harvest season. Others stayed for years and some could only leave Hohenheim after the end of the war. The forced laborers were used especially as agricultural workers, but some also worked in the Palace, at the institutes, or as housekeepers in College members' households. The forced laborers did not live in a large mass housing area but were distributed among several rooms and locations on the College property and more distant experimental fields. Little is known about the everyday life of the forced laborers in Hohenheim. However, it is certain that this varied among the different groups

of forced laborers depending on the rules and prohibitions that applied to them. There was hardly any family life, as families were separated even after the forced laborers were deported to Germany. The only records of resistance to this repressive situation in which their entire lives were determined by others refer only to male forced laborers, who resisted by refusing to work or even trying to flee. There was also little recorded about the medical care for forced laborers. However, the deaths of two forced laborers were documented: the Polish woman Isabella Sikorska, who died only a few days after her arrival from the concentration camp Ravensbrück on 18 March 1945 due to “cardiac insufficiency, pneumonia,” and the Russian Peter Ralintschenko, who had a fatal accident in the animal breeding institute on 22 February 1945.

The College members found it normal to “order” laborers who had been abducted from their homes and robbed of their rights to replace the German laborers who had been drafted into the military. After all, the field work could not be postponed because of the rainy period, and the animals needed to be regularly cared for to survive. As long as the laborers could work, those responsible did not care how they were doing, that they had been sent involuntarily, that they were separated from their families, or that some of them had been deported to Germany under catastrophic circumstances. Their state of health and caring for them were only a concern if the laborers’ productivity and the College’s interests were in danger. Anything that went beyond the purpose of forced labor was mostly ignored. None of the sources give indications that there was any sympathy with the plight of these people.

When it came to the injustice of forced labor, even after Germany’s capitulation in May 1945 there was no change in the views of those who had been responsible. That is revealed by letters that the College sent to the American military administration. In these letters, the request was continually made to please remove the former forced laborers from the College and take them to a camp, as they were no longer available to be used as laborers. Tellingly, the College felt that the forced laborers staying in Hohenheim until their future could be determined was harmful to the College’s reputation. It did not see this situation as an opportunity to recognize the injustice that had been done to the forced workers and to make reparations.

3. Hohenheim after 1945

On the evening of 20 April 1945, Hohenheim was taken by French troops. The soldiers plundered and raped. During the following days, French troops took up residence in various private homes in Hohenheim. The College was closed. In September 1945, the military hospital in the Hohenheim Palace was shut down, and American occupying forces moved into the Palace. When teaching resumed at Hohenheim Agricultural College in December 1945, the College was able to use its rooms - which were almost completely intact. Only the State Plant Breeding Institute had been destroyed. The Institute of Plant Production, the Dairy for Research and Training, and the large barn had been damaged by bombs. However, the state of the buildings' interiors made it difficult to resume normal university operations, as these had suffered damage from the occupation of French and American troops. Due to confiscations, a large portion of the inventory was missing, for example a significant amount of the scientific equipment from the Institute of Botany. However, the American military government emphasized the importance of resuming teaching at Hohenheim Agricultural College. In particular the Ministry of Agriculture believed this to be very important, and felt that the immediate opening of the College would be a decisive factor in the development of agricultural work and education. When the College was reopened in December 1945, there was a rush of applicants. Entry restrictions for new admissions limited the number of students to 150, and especially the female students fell victim to this, as they were rejected in favor of male applicants. Still, in part due to the increase of female students in the final years of the National-Socialist regime, the portion of female students in the first three semesters after the war was almost 25 percent. International students were also relatively common in the first post-war semesters. These were usually not young people who came from abroad to study in Hohenheim but displaced persons who had come to Germany due to war circumstances and either could no longer return to their home countries or no longer wanted to.

Just after the end of the war, a list of professors and lecturers was made who were not permitted to be hired at that time. Many Hohenheim professors had to interrupt their careers at least for a brief period due to their NSDAP membership or the fact that they had held National-Socialist positions. After their denazification as

“collaborators,” however, they were usually permitted to return to their previous stations. The careers of some also ended. An example is the former president and carrier of the golden party badge, Walter Zimmermann. He was placed in political imprisonment in May 1946, and his denazification lasted until September 1950. Finally, Zimmermann was categorized as a “minor offender” and lost his right to teach, among other things. He was therefore not able to return to Hohenheim.

The thinned-out Hohenheim teaching staff created difficulties, but applications from the Soviet zone and the formerly occupied territories in the east were available to fill the open professorships. When the College reopened in December 1945, twelve of the 19 Hohenheim professors were new to the College. During the course of denazification, eight chairs at the twelve institutes, most of which only had one professorship, had to be filled again. The College members and the College did not always feel they were treated justly during denazification and often viewed themselves as the victims. Adolf Münzinger, who had been appointed by the American military government as the interim president of the university, was convinced that his intercession led to denazified “collaborators” being able to be re-hired by the College sooner or later.

When reviewing the completed denazification process at Hohenheim Agricultural College at the start of the 1950s, it becomes clear that the strict standard that the Americans set at the start of the College's denazification was weakened throughout the years and, in the end, even enabled the re-hiring of formerly active NSDAP members and even SS members. In the group of new professors, who often came from universities in the formerly occupied eastern territories or the Soviet zone, there were some who had been denazified as “collaborators” but still had a deeply national-socialist past. However, none of the presidents who held office in Hohenheim between 1933 and 1945 came back to the College. The former College directors for students and lecturers were also prevented from returning to conduct scientific work at Hohenheim Agricultural College.

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