
Zbl 0565.01014**Gericke, H.****Das Mathematische Forschungsinstitut Oberwolfach.** (German)
Perspectives in mathematics, Anniv. Oberwolfach 1984, 23-39 (1984).

[For the entire collection see Zbl 0548.00010.]

The article contains excerpts from a report written in 1953 by Wilhelm Süss, founder and leader of the Oberwolfach Institute until his death in 1958, selected by the author, who also wrote connecting commentaries and a brief survey of the development after 1953. Süss' report appears to be written for ministries and other possible sources for grants and support. The first excerpt describes the creation of the institute in 1944, its initial staff and a selection of investigations organized during the war, and is followed by a description of the difficult general situation of the institute after the end of the war, when the rich support granted by the Reich fell away. Next comes an exposition of the initial very ambitious goals of the institute, which would in fact make it central to all decisions and all formal and informal mediations of tasks and inspiration between the various institutions of German mathematics. Finally, the preparation of a survey of German mathematical research from 1939-1946 for the Allies, the other post-war publications of the institute (monographs and textbooks, a scientific and a didactical journal), and the growth of very informal discussion meetings into a structure of symposia is described (and, in more detail, the contents of the first symposia from 1949 to 1952). The purpose of the report (and the loyalty of the connecting commentary) has prevented the inclusion of genuine historical analysis. On various points, however, it contains important material calling for analysis and further research. So, the initial goals of the institute resemble the organization of the AMRC (nicknamed "Army Mathematics Research Center") of Wisconsin, suggesting that Süss' initiative might have resulted in effective mathematical support for the German war effort, had it not come too late. Furthermore, a striking contrast between even the "pure" research of the war period and the subjects of the post-war symposia suggests that the former should be seen as "oriented pure research", while the latter is parallel to the re-emergence of neohumanism in West German mathematics education after 1945. Alternatively, the contrast might indicate that Ludwig Bieberbach's crusade against the formalist (allegedly "Jewish") style of thought had influenced mathematics in the Third Reich more effectively than normally assumed.

*J. Høyrup**Keywords* : Wilhelm Süss; Ludwig Bieberbach*Classification* :

- *01A74 History of mathematics at institutions and academies (nonuniversity)
- 01A60 Mathematics in the 20th century