

65 Years Old—Travels and Friends in 1981 (II) Title 305

In June 1981 I visited Hanover to see Carsten Salander, an old friend whom I first met when he was accredited after World War II. as the Science Counsellor at the new German Embassy in London. We liked each other and later met from time to time, either on his visits to London or in Hanover where he occupied a seat on the Board of PreussenElektra, one of Germany's largest Electricity producing concerns. He introduced me to Professor Eduard Pestle, then the President of the Leibniz Society in Hanover, who in turn supported my international endeavours. [See Title 355]

This meeting could have had, in 1987, great importance for the Advancement of Science Associations. Through a tactical fault on my part, however, it led to very little and neither Pestel, nor the Volkswagen Foundation, which generously financed our international meeting in Hanover, are to blame.[See ISR 12/1 and 12/2] I made my first contacts with the Volkswagen Foundation during this visit to Hanover, meeting Dr Borst and Dr Luise Zarnitz who so greatly helped me in 1987. A few days later, I was in Paris to attend the annual meeting of the International Astrolabe Society of which I was President. It took place at the Paris Observatory. [See Title 71]

In July I had organised a Seminar on 'Interdisciplinarity' at the famous Herzog August Library in Wolfenbüttel. It was again Carsten Salander who had introduced me to the director Professor Paul Raabe, who considered such a seminar of value. [See Title 269A] This Library, considered one of the finest in Europe, was founded by August, Duke of Brunswick, in 1604. G.W. Leibniz, himself a prominent librarian of his age, in theory and in practice, was in charge of the Library from 1690 to 1716.

As one enters the great hall housing the original library, one is surrounded by four white walls, made up from the numerous vellum bindings which fill the hall from the floor to the top of the very high vaulted ceiling. The books are arranged in over 20 well-lit rows according to their size.

One thought struck me when contemplating this treasure of scholarship with its notable collection of medieval manuscripts. The small town of Wolfenbüttel, just south of Brunswick, lies in the very centre of Europe, and many victorious armies must have passed through it during the centuries. Yet it was never plundered of its priceless possession. I could only conclude that the captains and commanders of these passing armies were such illiterate soldiers, that they never understood the value of the booty lying at their feet. Or perhaps the great number of books made removal impossible? Not so for the *Palatina* Library of Heidelberg which was packed in 184 wooden crates and on mule-back removed to Rome in 1623 where it is still part of the Vatican Library today. Cardinals were greater bibliophiles than generals!