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Gumbel, Einstein and Russia

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Then published in English and Russian. Here, only English text, slightly changed.

1. Introduction

Emil Julius Gumbel (1891 – 1966) was an outstanding German, and later American statistician best known for his work on the extreme-value theory. I describe his political activities (not leaving aside its statistical element) and his unpublished correspondence with Einstein, and I attempt to show why he, and many more celebrated Western intellectuals had been supporting the Soviet Union in the 1920s – 1930s in spite of the horrors there perpetrated. I also dwell on Gumbel's unknown connections with other mathematicians and natural scientists including Mises and Bortkiewicz.

In the 1920s, Gumbel tirelessly battled against the rightist movement in his native Germany, and among his likeminded colleagues was Einstein with whom Gumbel became closely associated. This activity coupled with his Jewish origin made him a prominent target of various attacks, in particular by students infected with Nazism; his academic career had been blocked for many years and his very life was endangered¹.

In 1933 he emigrated to France, and in 1940 barely escaped to the United States where he lived and worked until his death. Gumbel never ceased his social and political activities. In France, he tried his best to help his fellow-refugees and denounced Nazism, and in the US he published several political papers and letters in newspapers² and became a member of two bodies for the liberation of Germany (Jansen 1991, p., 390).

In 1926, Gumbel worked for several months in Moscow and he visited the Soviet Union in 1932. Because of the situation in Germany, he wished for some time to remain there permanently, but happily failed (end of §4).

Johnson & Kotz (1997) briefly described Gumbel's life and work and cited previous pertinent writings³ whereas Jansen (1991) and Vogt (1991) examined his political activities. Both Jansen and Gumbel [28] include reprints of quite a few of his political contributions and the former, drawing on archival sources, also appended a valuable list of 583 Gumbel's writings and related materials⁴. However, it is composed pell-mell: scientific works, tiny reviews, popular pieces (about 30 in all), some independently entered translations of Gumbel's works, anniversary articles, abstracts, political writings, and literature about him, – all these items follow one after another chronologically. A few of Gumbel's papers in the Russian periodical *Matematicheskyy Sbornik* are recorded there twice, the second time as though having also appeared in *Recueil Math. Soc. Math. Moscou* which is the additional French title of the same journal.

Jansen's description of Gumbel's life and work is based on many archival and newspaper sources, but he had not provided a bibliography of the pertinent comments, nor did he furnish a list of his numerous abbreviations. Again, he had not offered a proper bibliographic description of Gumbel's contributions included in his book: in a few cases he mentioned the

appropriate English articles, – but who translated them, and/or changed their original titles?

I consider Gumbel's writings and statements on Russia (§2) and his unpublished correspondence with Einstein (§3)⁵. In §2 I also indicate some previously unknown points concerning Gumbel the statistician. In a special section (§4) I examine the implications of §2 and provide Gumbel's conclusions in a historical perspective by describing the relevant views of other intellectuals. I consider the Einstein – Gumbel correspondence in several subsections one of which is devoted to Einstein's political thinking. There, drawing on previous authors, I begin by sketching his attitude towards the Soviet Union.

Gumbel allegedly desired to describe Russia comprehensively and readers might have indeed expected that he, having been a statistician and an economist⁶, had painted a truthful picture, but he did not.

I draw on the *Bolshaia Sovetskaia Enziklopedia* [Great Soviet Encyclopedia], three editions: 66 vols, 1926 – 1947, 51 vol., 1950 – 1958, 30 vols, 1969 – 1978, respectively. The third edition is available in an English translation (separate translation of each volume). I abbreviate this source as BSE or GSE respectively and in the latter case I indicate the appropriate years of both versions.

I conclude here by a letter from Gustav Radbruch⁷ of 24 Nov. 1930 to Einstein (46519, see Note 5) and a description of the related developments. Here is the letter itself.

Gestatten Sie mir, streng vertraulich und ohne Wissen des Hauptbeteiligten mich mit einer Bitte an Sie zu wenden, die ich nur durch das Bewusstsein der Gesinnungsgemeinschaft zu rechtfertigen vermag. Sie haben früher bereits an der Angelegenheit des hiesigen Privatdozenten und jetzigen Professors⁸ Dr. Gumbel Anteil genommen.

Sie wissen auch, dass in den letzten Wochen von nationalsozialistischer Seite aus Anlass der Ernennung Gumbels zum Titularprofessor nicht nur unter Berufung auf die sechs Jahre alte unglückliche Äußerung Gumbels vom "Feld der Unehre"⁹, sondern auch auf seine gesamte Enthüllungspolitik gegen Geheimrüstungen, politische Morde und Fememorde der Kampf gegen Gumbel erneuert worden ist. Wie die Dinge auf deutschen Universitäten einmal liegen, fürchte ich, dass, – weniger infolge einer entschiedenen politischen Rechtseinstellung als, was schlimmer ist, infolge von Konfliktsangst, – kaum eine Fakultät mehr den Mut finden wird, Gumbel zu berufen.

Für Heidelberg aber ist der Fall Gumbel eine unerschöpfliche Quelle immer neuer Beunruhigungen, die gerade auch wegen der Angreifbarkeit des ursprünglichen Ausgangspunktes der ganzen Hetze die Stellung der links stehenden Heidelberger Professoren sehr erschweren. Ich glaube dass Gumbel trotz unleugbarer Taktfehler in seiner Vergangenheit durch seinen ebenso unleugbar großen politischen Mut es verdient, dass man sich seiner Zukunft annimmt. Über Gumbels mathematische und statistische Fähigkeiten und Leistungen steht mir zwar kein Urteil zu, aber sie werden, soweit mir bekannt ist, von Fachleuten hoch eingeschätzt.

Und so möchte ich die Frage und Bitte an Sie, hochverehrter Herr Professor richten, ob Sie nicht in der Lage sind, Ihren großen Einfluss für eine Berufung Gumbels in eine seinen Fähigkeiten und Leistungen

entsprechende andere Position, etwa bei der Kaiser Wilhelm Gesellschaft¹⁰, einzusetzen. Ich darf nochmals betonen, dass dieser Brief ohne Wissen Gumbels ergeht, er ergeht aber im Einverständnis meines nationalökonomischen Kollegen Lederer, der die akademischen Aussichten Gumbels unter den gegebenen Verhältnissen ebenso ungünstig beurteilt wie ich und auch seinerseits nur von Ihnen noch Hilfe erwartet.

On 29 Nov. 1930 Radbruch (46520) thanked Einstein for his answer, and on 27 Nov. Lederer (46522) wrote to Einstein as well. He largely repeated Radbruch's letter; described Gumbel's strained circumstances; and stated that the "nationalsozialistischen Studenten" will likely resort to ruthless attacks against Gumbel. And he also explained how Gumbel was invited to Heidelberg:

Er wurde uns seinerzeit, als wir einen Statistiker gewinnen mussten, von Prof. Von Bortkiewicz – Berlin aufswärmste empfohlen, und die Wertschätzung der Fachkreise geht ja auch aus der guten Resonanz seiner Publikationen in der Literatur hervor.

Bortkiewicz rarely recommended anyone (Woytinsky 1961, pp. 452 – 453)! Extracts from Einstein's answers to Radbruch (§3.1.1, No. 1, §3.3, NNo. 1 and 3) were published as a single whole in the Editorial (1931, p. 109). I partly reproduce Einstein's answer to Lederer in §3.3, No. 2.

Acknowledgement. The Albert Einstein Archives, The Jewish national and University Library, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, that keeps the Einstein correspondence, allowed me to quote/publish the relevant letters. I am also thankful to Dr. Barbara Wolff, Assistant Curator of the Archives, for copies of the relevant letters and to Dr. A.L. Dmitriev (Petersburg) for some Russian materials.

2. Russia

2.1. The Year 1922

For a leftist intellectual whom Gumbel became, it was natural to turn his attention to Russia; in 1922, he published his first pertinent publication [2]. There, he stated that Soviet Russia served as a catalyst of social struggle the world over (p. 194) and that communism was "our wish" (p. 195).

Gumbel added, however, that the Bolshevist way to it led "durch Blut und Hunger"¹¹. He thought that the transition to communism by parliamentary methods was impossible (p. 195)¹², that the Soviets failed to ensure the participation of masses in governing Russia (p. 199) with all power having gone to the Bolshevist party (p. 200). However, the downfall of the Soviets will not necessarily be repeated elsewhere (Ibidem)¹³. The proper way to communism, Gumbel also stated, lay through a "geistiger Wechsel" with which the Bolsheviks do not agree because of their materialistic philosophy (p. 198). Other necessary conditions for the transition of a country to communism are its healthy economy and a majority approval of the changes (p. 202). Gumbel (p. 199) recognized that Russia must have a "gebundenes Wirtschaftssystem" with yet unknown features but he did not elaborate¹⁴.

2.2. The Year 1926

2.2.1. Marx's Mathematical Manuscripts. On 21 June 1925 Gumbel (43811) asked Einstein to recommend him, in particular, to the eminent biologist Julius Schaxel hoping that the latter will help him find a position in Moscow¹⁵. His plan proved only partly successful. Indeed, on 30 April 1926 Gumbel (43814) informed Einstein:

Ich war jetzt sechs Monate in Moskau und habe im Marx – Engels¹⁶ Institut die sogen. Mathematischen Manuskripte von Marx druckreif gemacht. Es handelt sich dabei um Notizen zur Differenzialrechnung, die ein gewisses philosophisches Interesse besitzen und zeigen, dass Marx die Anfangsgründe des Differenzierens wohl beherrscht hat. Meine Arbeitsbedingungen waren außerordentlich günstig. Allerdings lebt die Mehrzahl der dortigen Gelehrten in großer Notlage.

An article by Kolman (1968)¹⁷ preceded the publication of Marx's manuscripts (MSS) (1968). He (p. 104) ridiculously alleged that Marx's statements on mean values in economics were of exceptional methodological value for mathematical statistics. Then Kolman (p. 106) reported that the Marx – Engels Institute had entrusted Gumbel with "working on the manuscripts", but that he "was unable to appreciate in full measure either the importance of their publication or their philosophical and historical – mathematical significance"¹⁸.

This is doubtful (see Gumbel's letter above) and in any case Gumbel published a preliminary report [9] where he classified the MSS; then, his final report had never appeared (Vogt 1991, pp. 20 – 22) whereas Yanovskaia, the future eminent specialist in mathematical logic who eventually prepared the MSS for publication, had spent incomparably more time on this than Gumbel had¹⁹.

Quite a few mathematical articles were devoted to these MSS, e.g., Kennedy (1977), who referred to earlier commentators. A preliminary version of the MSS is Marx (1933). It was accompanied by Yanovskaia's commentary (1933) and preceded by an introductory note by the Marx – Engels – Lenin Institute (where Gumbel was not mentioned). It is also necessary to cite Glivenko (1934). To conclude, I note that Marx's contributions do not reflect his studies of mathematics²⁰ and that his MSS contain no items on statistics or probability²¹.

2.2.2. Statistics and Class Struggle. During his work in Moscow, Gumbel apparently met Schmidt who then held some position at the Communist Academy there²². Indeed, on 14 Dec. 1926 he wrote a letter to Schmidt [28, pp. 179 – 180] describing the contents of five of his prepared "works" on probability and asked whether they will interest the "verehrter Genosse Otto Julewitsch". At least three of these had really been put out in Russian periodicals. In all, Gumbel published five political writings (1923 – 1937) and ten scientific contributions in the Soviet Union²³, not all of them in Russian. Some of them appeared earlier, and some later in the West.

Soon after leaving Moscow, Gumbel published a paper on statistics and class struggle [6] and his observations on life in the Soviet union, see below and §2.2.3. Regarding the class nature of statistics in capitalist countries, Gumbel [6] stated that

1) Due to moral and economic reasons, statistics is unable to discover the causes of social phenomena (p. 132).

2) Statistical data (on harvests, p. 142; unemployment and industrial accidents, p. 147, etc), are distorted or hushed up (prostitution, abortions, p. 139) so that the ensuing calculations (e.g., of subsistence levels, p. 147) are wrong.

3) Although statisticians may well consider themselves objective, the application of statistics “belongs” to the ideological class struggle (p. 133).

4) Many statisticians attempt to prove Malthusianism (p. 134). However, taken by itself the notion of overpopulation is meaningless (p. 135). And the aging of the population is of no consequence as compared with the other evils of the society²⁴.

5) Criminal statistics shows the devastating nature of capitalism (p. 140). It reflects the intensity of class struggle; not by chance did Czarist Russia possess ideal pertinent data (pp. 141 – 142).

It is difficult to understand his last statement especially since elsewhere Gumbel [8, p. 106] maintained that statistics in pre-revolutionary Russia was “ganz unentwickelt”!²⁵

Gumbel tacitly assumed that capitalism was unable to change and naively thought that the socialist system was much superior. Thus, the shackles restricting statistics (his Item 1) will only disappear in a classless society²⁶. Two additional points. First, Gumbel noted that statistics was connected with national economy which was the reason for its low scientific level (p. 134); that an empirical check of the so-called laws of the latter was still impossible (p. 142); and that (p. 148) only mathematical statistics will be able to solve the problems of economics. These statements may be regarded as heuristic arguments in favor of creating the then not yet existing econometrics²⁷.

Second, I quote Gumbel’s extraordinary declaration (p. 141):

Bei politischen Morden selbst ist zu unterscheiden, ob sie revolutionär oder konterrevolutionär sind.

Only one step thus separated him from exonerating the death sentences meted out by phoney courts in Russia²⁸. To some extent, Gumbel repeated his deliberations elsewhere [11, Bd. 5] and the notorious statement just above is also there (p. 19).

2.2.3. Gumbel’s Travel Notes. Gumbel [8, p. 83] saw the overall social problem confronting the world as tracing the route to socialism; and the main question (p. 164) was, how long will capitalism still survive²⁹. The “usual formal democracy” of the Western type will not do, what is needed is dictatorship of the proletariat (p. 113)³⁰. Accordingly, the restoration of Russia’s economy achieved in the absence of private ownership is the Russian communists’ “immortal merit” (p. 112).

The terrorism, that the communists unleashed during the previous years against profiteers and even petty violators of the draconian commercial regulations, was economically justified (p. 99). Horrible political terrorism also took place (pp. 100 and 125) but it was only a side-effect of the civil war (p. 125) and partly occasioned by sabotage (p. 95). At present, capital punishment is “often” pronounced (p. 126), and the secret police, the GPU,

enjoys the right to exile citizens from the main cities; again, the GPU “often” imprisons people for months on end before even beginning the investigation³¹.

The New Economic Policy (NEP) which was introduced in 1921 brought about some economic freedom, and Gumbel noted the presence of street vendors (p. 120), privately working physicians (p. 125) and private publishers (p. 144). Overall, the existing economic system is state capitalism with a socio-political bias (“Einschlag”) (p. 110); or, state capitalism coupled with a detestable bureaucracy (p. 164)³², also see below.

In spite of the official materialistic philosophy (p. 132), practical idealism is widespread (p. 133) and this constitutes “perhaps” the greatest ethical merit of the Russian communists; top people remain poor (Ibidem; but see §2.3), and, more generally, party members are not allowed to earn more than an established amount of money (p. 114)³³.

“Usual” prisoners may leave jail once in a month (p. 126), soldiers are free to spend nights outside the barracks (p. 149) and foreign newspapers are sold in town (p. 135). Naïve comments on the relation between the state and the Russian Orthodox Church follow (p. 140)³⁴.

All power belongs to the party within which there exists democracy (p. 113) and quite exceptional opinions are tolerated (p. 136). The author apparently sees no contradiction between these statements and his other observations: “from time to time” purges are taking place in the party (p. 114) and deviationists are punished and even expelled from the party (p. 142). He (p. 159) also notes “political struggles” going on in the party and names Zinoviev and Trotsky³⁵ and correctly remarks that communism is a religion of sorts (pp. 140 – 141).

Civil rights do not exist (p. 116); even foxtrot is banned (p. 119). The complicated voting system ensures “necessary” results (pp. 103 and 115), the national republics cannot actually leave the Union (p. 116) and Zionism is forbidden (p. 139). Only 60% of the children attend school (p. 129), the professorial staff is underpaid (p. 130) but researchers fare good enough (p. 131). The evolution theory is the most important discipline of natural sciences whereas the theory of relativity was for a long time regarded as hostile (p. 133) and all scientific problems are considered together with their “final philosophical consequences” (p. 134)³⁶.

The housing conditions in Moscow are horrible which is a corollary of its having become the capital and of the influx of rural population rather than the communists’ fault (pp. 121 – 123)³⁷. Bureaucracy is omnipotent (pp. 116 – 117 and 155). So as to prevent the build-up of a new bourgeoisie, draconian measures are being taken since 1924 against successful NEP-men (p. 157). Gumbel lists these measures (both political and economic) and adds that economic steps should be applied instead; he apparently thought about subtle “European” methods. The black-market value of the ruble is lower than its official value and often experiences slumps (p. 109).

The agrarian problem is the most acute issue (p. 105). A half of the peasants is poor (p. 107) and depends on the rich ones, the kulaks (p. 102). The situation is dangerous and agricultural cooperation is necessary (pp. 107 and 162)³⁸. Either the state, or the kulaks and the NEP-men will accumulate capital more rapidly and the stability will persist or not, respectively (p. 163). Gumbel is thus apparently prepared to abandon his advice regarding subtle economic measures (above).

Colonies are the soft spots of imperialism; Russia supports their nations (p. 152) and the Red Army might possibly help a revolution elsewhere (p. 148)³⁹. The independence of Finland, the Baltic states and Poland was recognized on the strength of the right of nations to self-determination (p. 147)⁴⁰.

2.3. The Year 1932

In 1932 Gumbel spent three weeks in Moscow and published his new travel notes [17]. As compared with 1926, Moscow became better-looking (not many beggars; no waifs or strays; less hawkers; more state-owned cars and trucks), but the housing situation worsened [still more] (p. 298). Inflation did exist and is dangerous because industrial plans, when formulated financially, become fictitious; however, without any capitalist class present, nobody benefits from its action (p. 302). He should have said: nobody benefits except for the state (for example, due to almost forced participation of the working people in yearly long-term state loans) whose interests did not at all coincide with the desires of the population, see Note 14. Food was rationed and its shortages led to hoarding (p. 300); the black-market cost of a Deutschmark was ten times higher than its official value (p. 301)⁴¹.

The top people were poor (“persönlich arm”)⁴² but frightfully powerful (p. 299) whereas scholars were compelled to toe the political line (p. 301). In principle, Russian problems are solved (p. 305); contrary to the situation in the West, people are living better than before; “from their sweat, blood and tears new factories belonging to them [?] are being built” (p. 306).

2.4. The Eye-Opening years

1) From 1934 onward, Gumbel began to express second thoughts (Jansen 1991, p. 67). In his letters of 1936 and 1938 he wrote about his deep disillusionment. “Insbesondere”, as Jansen claims, he was affected by the Moscow “Schauprozesse” of these years.

2) No less indicative was the decision of Heinrich Mann, Gumbel and “andere” who founded, in 1937, a *Bund freiheitlicher Sozialisten*, to separate themselves “programmatisch scharf gegen den Marxismus” (Jansen 1991, p. 42)⁴³. It seems nevertheless that (Ibidem, p. 67)

Bei aller Skepsis [much too weak] über den sowjetischen Weg zum Sozialismus hatte er [Gumbel, in 1934 – 1936] doch am historischmaterialistischen Fortschrittsdenken festgehalten.

Also in 1937, Gumbel undoubtedly had to note the absence of any Soviet mathematician (e.g., of Kolmogorov and Khinchin) at a conference on probability theory (Compliments 1937) attended by such figures as Cramér, de Finetti, Feller, Hostinský and Polya and by him himself.

3) In 1939 Gumbel signed a manifesto prepared by the German members of the *Union Franco-Allemande* which claimed that the Hitler – Stalin pact was a betrayal of peace by Russia (Jansen 1991, p. 44).

4) In 1954, Gumbel [23, p. 329] scornfully described the situation in East Berlin, and, on p. 330, he mockingly called the late Stalin the greatest philosopher “of our time”.

5) In 1957, reporting on his travel impressions, Gumbel (Jansen 1991, p. 70) said that

Die Stalinisten der Sowjetzone [of Germany] sind Papageien, die Worte eines Herrn nachplappern, der längst töt ist.

6) In 1960, Gumbel [25, p. 338] did not restrict his criticism of East Germany to food shortages (Note 14). His verdict was, that the emigration from there

Verdankt sich nicht nur materiellen Gründen. Grundlegend ist der intellektuelle Druck und der Mangel an Sicherheit.

7) In 1961, Gumbel [26, pp. 264 – 268] described Russia's participation in Germany's secret rearmament (1922 – 1933)⁴⁴ and remarked (pp. 265 – 266) that “All diese Tatsachen ... waren bereits in der Weimarer Republik bekannt” – and to him as well?

Then, he [26, pp. 268 – 269] denounced the “russischen Prozesse”:

Von 1937 an reinigte Stalin die Partei von den alten Bolschewiken. ... tausende wurden nach geheimen Verfahren hingerichtet ... [In 1956] hat Chruschtschow Stalin als großen wahnsinnigen Tyrannen angeprangert ...

8) Finally, in 1964 Gumbel reviewed an English translation of one of Solzhenitsin's officially published novels. He [27] remarked that the real situation in the Soviet Union became known even earlier⁴⁵ and that the author had properly chosen to show the fate of an ordinary man who was thrown into a labor camp just in case, and, practically speaking, for life. Although Gumbel believed that there were “perhaps” 10mln such victims [see §4], he did not say anything about his earlier illusions.

3. Einstein

3.1. He Tries To Help Gumbel

From 1923 to 1932 Einstein wrote at least six letters recommending Gumbel to five universities, all of them beyond Germany, and in a few other cases he expressed his willingness to help him secure an academic position and/or his high opinion of Gumbel.

3.1.1. Einstein's Opinion. 1) His letter of 28 Nov. 1930 (46526) to Radbruch.

Herr Gumbel ist zweifellos als Fachman[n] hinreichend tüchtig, um als Vertreter seines Faches an einer Hochschule zu wirken. Als Persönlichkeit schätze ich ihm noch viel höher. Sein politisches Wirken und seine Publikationen sind von einem hohen Ethos getragen ...

Das Richtigeste für Herrn Gumbel dürfte es wohl sein, an einer ausländischen Universität eine Stelle zu suchen. Ich habe mich in diesen Sinne schon öfter für ihn bemüht und bin gerne bereit, mich jederzeit für ihn einzusetzen ...

2) His letter of 25 July 1932 (50120) to Gumbel.

Es ist mir klar, dass Sie von hier fort sollen. ... Wenn Sie mir eine Stelle oder eine Persönlichkeit angeben, will ich gerne dorthin schreiben.

3) His letter of 2 Jan. 1932 (50110), probably to E. Montel⁴⁶.

Ich schätze ihn [Gumbel] sehr hoch ... unter den gegenwärtigen Verhältnissen nicht nur seine Position, sondern auch sein Leben bedroht ist.

4) His letter of 16 May 1933 (38615) to Gumbel.

Charakterleistungen sind ebenso viel Wert wie wissenschaftliche; deshalb brauchen Sie nicht in den Schatten zu stellen.

This was Einstein's partial response to Gumbel's letter of 10 May 1933 (38614). There, Gumbel described the difficult conditions of life for German academics who had fled to France, mentioned an appropriate "Vorschlag" made by Perrin and concluded by stating (more generally) that

Ein großer Teil der Abgesetzten, wie etwa Franck, Born etc [et al] steht so hoch, dass ein Vorschlag meinerseits gar nicht notwendig erscheint⁴⁷.

5) His letter of 12 Oct. 1943 (55236) to Gumbel. "... bin ich bereit Sie dort [wo Statistiker gebraucht werden] zu empfehlen".

3.1.2. He Recommends Gumbel. 1) His letter of 15 April 1923 (43810) to C.F. [?] Nicolai in Cordova [evidently, South America]⁴⁸.

Herr Dr. Gumbel ist mir seit einer Reihe von Jahren als ein scharfer wissenschaftlicher Geist und als vortrefflicher Mensch aufs beste bekannt. Von Studium Physiker hat er sich als Spezialgebiet die Statistik im weitesten Sinn gewählt, deren Berührungspunkte mit der Nationalökonomie ja zutage liegen. In seiner schriftstellerischen Tätigkeit hat er allgemein politische und nationalökonomische Fragen behandelt, soweit sie die Gegenwart betreffen. ... Ich bin überzeugt, dass er vermöge seiner großen Belesenheit und der Beweglichkeit seines Geistes sehr wohl geeignet wäre als Lehrer der Nationalökonomie zu wirken.

2) His letter of 25 Jan. 1928 (46508) to Karl Pearson.

Ich schätze Herrn Dr. Gumbel sowohl persönlich wie als außerordentlich intelligenten wissenschaftlichen Arbeiter sehr hoch, wenn ich auch in dem hauptsächlich von ihm bearbeiteten Spezialgebiet der Statistik mir kein Urteil erlauben darf.

Ich möchte erwähnen, dass Herr Gumbel durch zahlreiche mutige politische Schriften sich große Verdienste im öffentlichen Leben Deutschlands um die Gerechtigkeit erworben hat⁴⁹.

A few years before that Gumbel published two notes in *Biometrika*, and quite a few letters were exchanged in 1928 in connection with his attempts to secure a (provisional) position at the Galton Laboratory, University College. To achieve this goal, Gumbel applied for a fellowship to the European Office of the then existing International Educational Board⁵⁰.

Pearson agreed to take Gumbel on; see the Board's letter of 18 Jan. 1928 to him (46504), and Gumbel's letter of 26 Jan. 1928 to Einstein (46509). Einstein (his letter to Gumbel of 25 Jan. 1928, 46506), however, mentioned "mehrfache schlechte Erfahrungen, die ich [er] mit dem Education Board schon gemacht habe ..." Gumbel, as he remarked there, had already overstepped "die obere Altergrenze" for a fellowship.

On 12 May 1928 Gumbel informed Pearson (Pearson Papers 709) that Mises as *proposer* and Bortkiewicz as *seconder* will formally apply for the fellowship, and he also adduced a letter of recommendation from Einstein (apparently lost).

Neither Mises nor Bortkiewicz is known to have been engaged in political life of Germany, and a few years later, in 1931, the latter died⁵¹ and the former fled Germany by the end of 1933 or very early in 1934. It is therefore all the more interesting to put on record their attempt to help Gumbel. Furthermore, on 22 April 1931 (46545) a *Geh. Regierungsrat*, Prof. Holde, in a letter to Einstein, listed quite a few intellectuals who were prepared to sign an "Erklärung" supporting Gumbel's efforts to hold his academic position against political attacks. Among these personalities were Radbruch, Rademacher and Mises. Einstein (his previous letter to Holde of 21 April 1931, 46544) was "selbstverständlich bereit Ihren Erklärung zu unterzeichnen".

3) His letter of 13 April 1931 (46538) to Prof. Berwald (Prague).

Ich habe gehört, dass an der deutschen Universität eine Lehrstelle für theoretische und praktische Wahrscheinlichkeitslehre⁵² zu besetzen ist. Ich empfehle Ihnen für diese Stelle den fähigen und fleißigen Herrn Dr. Gumbel, der an der Universität Heidelberg Privat-Dozent [see however Note 1] ist, und von dem ich überzeugt bin, dass er als Lehrer und Forscher die auf ihn gesetzten Erwartungen getreulich erfüllen wird. Er hat sich auch durch Publikationen rechtlich-politischen Charakters große Verdienste erworben, die ihm gegenwärtig gehässige Verfolgungen eintragen, die aber wohl später ihre gerechte Würdigung finden werden.

4) His letter of the same date (46540) to *Lieber Herr* Professor Philipp Franck at the same university.

Herr Gumbel ist ein klüger Kopf und hat sich durch seine mutigen Bücher über die Entgleisungen der Militärgewalt in Deutschland ein wirklich großes Verdienst erworben. Er wird deshalb von der reaktionären akademischen Kamarilla wütend verfolgt. Lassen Sie sich nichts weismachen, sondern stehen Sie bitte mannhaft für ihn ein, wie er es verdient.

5) His letter of 2 Jan. 1932 (50110) partly quoted in §3.1.1, likely to Montel.

Herr Gumbel ist zweifellos ein Mann, der mit einem seltenen Mute und seltener Hingabe für Gerechtigkeit und Verbesserung der zwischen-staatlichen Verhältnisse gekämpft hat⁵³. ... Gumbel ist auch als wissenschaftlicher Statistiker (angewandte Wahrscheinlichkeitstheorie) als tüchtiger Fachmann bekannt, wenn auch seine fachlichen Leistungen nicht

als außergewöhnlich bezeichnet werden können.

And so, Einstein understood statistics as applied probability; above (Item 3), when mentioning the “practical theory of probability”, he also apparently meant statistics. I (1998b; 1999) have discussed the relations between probability and statistics and (1998b, p. 104) noted that Mises, evidently in the 1940s or a bit later, and Neyman, in 1950, had thought that some classes of probability problems belonged to statistics. However, Kolmogorov, in 1938, had kept to the opposite opinion: statistics gradually ceases to be applied probability and probability ought to be considered as a “structural part” of statistics.

Montel answered Einstein on 4 Febr. 1932 (50111): Gumbel was luckily invited to deliver lectures at the *Institut Henri Poincaré*; and Langevin *lui-même* will certainly confirm this.

6) His letter of 3 Dec. 1932 (50124) to Prof. MacClelland at University of Pennsylvania.

Ich habe erfahren, dass an Ihrer Universität eventuell eine Lehrstelle für mathematische Statistik gegründet wird. Mit Rücksicht auf diese Eventualität erlaube ich mir hiermit, Sie auf Herrn Professor Dr. Gumbel aufmerksam zu machen ... Herr Gumbel ist bezüglich seiner Fähigkeiten und seiner menschlichen Qualitäten ein in hohem Masse würdiger Kandidat für eine derartige Lehrstelle. Er wäre wohl schon Inhaber einer ordentlichen Professur an einer deutschen Universität, wenn er nicht durch wertvolle Publikationen allgemeinen allgemein-politischen Inhalts den Zorn der gegenwärtig leider in so hohen Masse irreführten studentischen Jugend dieses Landes erweckt hatte.

3.2. His Participation Desired

1) Gumbel's letter to him of 26 Dec. 1934 (50133).

Das Institut de Science Financière et d'Assurances der Universität Lyon, an dem ich als Assistent tätig bin, beabsichtigt demnächst eine kleine Zeitschrift herauszugeben, welche sich mit Wahrscheinlichkeitstheorie und verwandten Gebieten beschäftigen soll. Bisher haben I. Hadamard, M. Fréchet, G. Darmon und Francis Perrin ihre Mitarbeit zugesagt. Ich gestatte mir die Anfrage, ob Sie prinzipiell bereit wären, ebenfalls als Mitarbeiter zu figurieren. Darüber hinaus wäre ich Ihnen sehr verbunden, falls Sie bereit wären, uns ein kurzes Leitwort zu senden das wir zu Beginn der ersten Nummer publizieren dürften.

Einstein's response is unknown, but the periodical hardly ever appeared.

2) Gumbel's letter to him of 18 Nov. 1935 (50135).

... ich erlaube mir, Ihnen in der Anlage [lost] den Plan zu einem Buch zu übersenden. Obwohl ich mit den Vorbereitungen erst heute anfangen möchte ich Sie bereits in diesem Stadium sei es um Ihre Mitarbeit, sei es um ein Vorwort bitten. Am liebsten wäre es mir, wenn Sie sich mit beidem, zunächst prinzipiell, einverstanden erklären würden. Jede Zeile von Ihnen wäre mir wertvoll.

3) Einstein answered on 3 Dec. 1935 (50137).

Ich kann mich mit Ihrer Idee nicht befreunden. Ein Buch mit kurzen Referaten über Facharbeiten aus allen Gebieten kulturellen Schaffens dürfte kaum Absatz finden. Der Umstand, dass die Arbeiten von Vertriebenen herkommen, dürfte kaum für die Käufer einen hinreichenden Anreiz bieten. Was mich betrifft, so wüsste ich überhaupt nicht, wie ich über meine Publikationen in einem solchen Rahmen referieren sollte. Ein Geleitwort könnte ich vielleicht geben, wenn die Sache wirklich gelingen sollte, der ich einstweilen skeptisch gegenüber stehe.

Apparently Einstein had not indeed published any popular account of his work.

4) Gumbel's letter to him of 1936 (50130).

Gumbel appends a list of participants in his project and the seven titles of their future contributions and again asks Einstein to submit a foreword. The titles include: Die Gleisschaltung der deutschen Wissenschaft; Finanzpolitik des Nationalsozialismus; Obituary of Emmy Nöther.

5) Gumbel's letter to him of 24 Jan. 1936 (50138).

Gumbel lists the seven authors adding that he hopes that about a dozen more will agree. All the authors are refugees from Germany, and among them is Schaxel (Moscow), see beginning of §2.2.1.

6) Einstein's letter of 9 July 1936 (50139) to Gumbel; apparently his answer to a missing letter.

Ich kann mich nicht dazu entschließen, das gewünschte Vorwort zu schreiben, zumal ich die geplante Publikation für verfehlt halte. Eine derartige Publikation, welche so bunt gemischte Beiträge enthält, kann weder wirksam, noch finanziell erfolgreich sein.

7) Gumbel's letter to him of 25 April 1938 (53267).

Einstein's negative answer led Gumbel to change the plan of the proposed book. It will be a collection of contributions written by authors

Die von den Nazionalsozialisten auf ihrem Wissensgebiet erhobenen Forderungen zurückweisen. Insofern ist das Buch gleichzeitig bunt gemischt und doch einheitlich.

Once more, the extant correspondence is apparently incomplete; no answer from Einstein is available. Anyway, the book [28] appeared without Einstein's participation. Gumbel himself contributed an Introduction and wrote several pieces. There is also a section providing information about the authors, Gumbel included (his biography and bibliography, on pp. 231 – 233).

One of Gumbel's notes entitled "Arische Mathematik" [28, pp. 218 – 221] is a non-mathematical review of the first two issues of *Deutsche Mathematik*. Here is what he (p. 221) had to say about Einstein as pictured there:

Einstein spielt die Rolle des bösen Geistes. Sein Werk wird von einem Studenten (!) als "eine Kampfansage mit dem Ziel der Vernichtung der nordisch-germanischen Naturgefühl" bezeichnet.

At the same time, as Gumbel remarks, Jewish contributions are cited and generalized in the periodical and the original representation of the “Relativitätsprinzip” is [correctly] attributed to Einstein.

3.3. His Political Views

Over the years, Einstein made many attempts to help the victims of political oppression. In 1947 he (Sayen 1985, p. 207) wrote a letter to Stalin on behalf of Raoul Wallenberg and in 1950 he (Courtois et al 1997, p. 442) protested against the death sentence meted out to a Czech, Milada Horakova, on trumped-up political charges. For Einstein, his endeavors concerning Gumbel, although exceptionally numerous, were not therefore unusual.

During the 1920s – 1930s, Einstein (1960, pp. 194 – 199), together with likeminded intellectuals, had been striving to prevent war in Europe but he avoided anything that would support the Soviet regime; he apparently knew the real situation in the Soviet Union. Even in 1928 he (Courtois et al 1997, p. 819) protested against an earlier trial there of the so-called Industrial Party. Then, in 1932, he (1960, p. 196) remarked that his close friend, Henri Barbusse, had he been a Soviet citizen, would have likely found himself in prison or in exile if left alive at all⁵⁴.

Nevertheless, Einstein (Ibidem, p. 334) believed that the Soviet Union labored to promote international security; actually, did its damndest to stir up world revolution. And, back in 1926, he praised Gumbel’s essay [8], then not yet published, calling it objective (Jansen 1991, p. 84, without sufficient documentation).

Just the same, by the end of the 1940s he (letter of 1948, Sayen 1985, p. 112) explained away the Russian expansion into Eastern Europe and saw some “great merits” in the doings of the Soviet government, also see Item 8 below. In 1946, because of the threat of a new world war, Einstein (1960, p. 381) proposed to establish a single world government, but the Soviet authorities and obedient Soviet scholars rejected his (not really original) idea (Ibidem, pp. 444 – 450).

In a letter of 1953 Einstein (Sayen 1985, Chapter 17, Note 2) again condemned the Soviet and Czech political trials. Next year, however, in another letter, he (Ibidem, p. 210) stated that criticisms “cannot help” because “the Russians” will not hear them. He was patently wrong. In spite of permanent jamming, many Russians had by that time acquired the habit of listening to programs broadcast from abroad by several stations.

I continue with describing Einstein’s archival materials concerned with Gumbel.

1) His letter of 28 Nov. 1930 (46526) to Radbruch partly quoted in §3.1.1, No. 1.

Das Verhalten der akademischen Jugend gegen ihm [Gumbel] ist eines der traurigen Zeichen der Zeit, welche das Ideal der Gerechtigkeit, Toleranz und Wahrheit so wenig hochhält. Was soll aus einem Volke werden, dass solche Zeitgenossen brutal verfolgt und dessen Führer [Hindenburg] dem gemeinen Haufen keinen Widerstand entgegensetzen?

2) His letter of 3 Dec. 1930 (46524) to E. Lederer.

Es scheint, dass man in Deutschland dem Studententerror gegenübersteht

wie einem Naturereignis. Der Balkan hat seine Grenzen westwärts verschoben⁵⁵ ... Zum großen Teil beruht die Verblendung der Jugend auf einer in diesem Lande früher kultivierten, jetzt wenigstens geduldeten Glorifizierung des Militarismus und "Heldentums". Auch die Demokraten und Sozialisten machen in diesem gefährlichen Punkt Kompromisse und sehen nicht, dass sie an diesem Strick leicht aufgehängt werden können.

The last phrase was prophetic!

3) His letter of 25 March 1931 (46529) to Radbruch; see its beginning in Note 28 to §2.2.2.

Gumbel's Buch [13] habe ich neulich zum Teil gelesen und aufs Neue den Mann, seine Intelligenz, seine noble Gesinnung und seine Energie bewundert. Es ist furchtbar, wie man die unerfahrene Jugend hier aus eigennützigen Beweggründen irreführt. Wenn es so weitergeht, werden wir über ein fasc[h]istisches Gewaltregime zum roten Terror kommen.

Einstein had not explained his last statement, but at least he correctly noted the similarity between Nazism and practical communism, as I would say.

4) His letter of the same date (46527) to Gumbel.

Ich habe neulich in Ihrem Buche [13] mit voller Bewunderung gelesen. Wie schrecklich wird doch die Jugend in diesem Lande irreführt, aus wie niederen Motiven!

5) His letter of 9 July 1936 (50139) to Gumbel.

Ich finde, dass es sich in Amerika gut lebt und arbeitet. Ich habe seit Jahren nicht die Möglichkeit gehabt, so still und zurückgezogen zu leben. Frankreich ist einstweilen der einzige Lichtblick, aber wie Lange? Wird Blum⁵⁶ wirklich genug sein, um mit seinen mächtigen und raffinierten Gegnern fertig zu werden?

6) His letter of 28 June 1952 (59894) to Gumbel.

Der Gedanke, einen solchen korporativen Brief einzusenden, hat etwelche Berechtigung. Der Haken liegt aber in Folgendem. Wenn der Brief ausschließlich oder hauptsächlich von Refugees unterzeichnet wird, also von Juden, dann werden die Gegner sagen, er komme von nicht objektiven Leuten. Wenn aber koschere Gojim mitmachen sollen, kann man sich schwer auf einen Text einigen.

Der vorgeschlagene Text ist meiner Absicht nach nicht gut. Das Hauptargument ist doch, dass die Remilitarisierung fast zwangsläufig zum Weltkrieg führen muss. Aus diesem Grunde ist nach meiner Ansicht der Plan hier ursprünglich in Szene gesetzt worden. Heute aber, wo die Pleite in Korea etwas moderierend gewirkt haben dürfte, ist es schwer, einen honorigen Rückzug zu bewerkstelligen, nach der langen systematischen Hetze.

Wenn so ein Brief überhaupt inszeniert wird, muss James Warburg⁵⁷ genannt werden, der den Kampf sozusagen allein geführt und durch sehr gute Argumentation gestützt hat.

7) The response above was apparently occasioned by a draft (June 1952, 59895) of what likely became a letter co-authored by Gumbel, but not Einstein, and soon published in several American newspapers [22] which I have not seen. Here are a few extracts from the draft.

The rearming of Germany in any form will soon harm the interests of the United States. ... The German masses are against re-militarization. ... The militarists and the rightist elements would rather make an accord with the Soviets ... The treaty⁵⁸ will strengthen Russian domination of Eastern Europe and Russian influence in the West.

So much for Gumbel's toying with communism!

8) Einstein's letter of 25 Nov. 1948 to Solovine (also see Note 56) apparently throws light on this issue.

... There are attempts to uphold "our" policy of bringing the Nazism back to power in Germany in order to use them against the wicked Russians. It is hard to believe that men learn so little from their toughest experiences. Following his suggestion, I sent Hadamard a telegram to support opposition to the policy.

4. The Soviet Union: Facts and Impressions

During ca. 70 years, the Soviet regime either exterminated or indirectly brought to death 20mln of its citizens (Courtous et al 1997, p. 14)⁵⁹. No wonder that Upton Sinclair (1962, p. 305) in 1957 compared Stalin ("the Lenin of today", see Note 54) with "Tamerlane [Timur] or Genghis Khan, or any other of the wholesale slaughterers of history"⁶⁰. Just one illustration (Solzhenitsin 1974, vol. 1, pt. 1, Chapter 11, p. 424): In 1932, six kolkhozniks (collective farmers) were executed for mowing the grass left round the tussocks after the harvesting of their kolkhoz' meadow. For this crime alone, the author concluded, Stalin should have been quartered.

Here are devastating descriptions of another kind. In very general terms Russell (1920a) condemned the communist regime; on p.114 he remarked that the adoption of the Bolshevik methods by the "Western nations" would result in a "relapse into the barbarism of the Dark Ages". He (1958, p. 110) "hated" Russia and he (1920b, p. 180) stated that the "better" Bolsheviks were endeavouring to "create a Plato's Republic", – a slave-owning society ruled by an elite⁶¹!

Gide (1936 – 1937) formulated many negative conclusions about what he saw in Russia; and in particular about the lack of political freedom (pp. 69 and 132 – 133). He (pp. 116 – 117) referred to Soviet newspapers listing astonishing setbacks in industry, mentioned the "new law" prohibiting abortions, terrible housing conditions and (pp. 194 – 195) scarcity and low quality of condoms and cited a local physician to the effect that "masturbation is practiced most generally"...

So why did many foreigners paint rosy pictures of the Soviet Union?

1) The difficult economic situation in the 1930s the world over; the dangers posed by Nazi Germany and its allies; and, later, Russia's part in winning World War II against them; and (§3.3) the threat of World War III, – all this contributed to distort the harsh reality.

2) Political blindness and/or premeditated deceit. In 1937, a French newspaper (Courtois et al 1997, p. 324) mentioned Stalin's "monstrous deeds" and accused several men including Romain Rolland⁶² and Paul Langevin (a friend of Einstein, cf. §3.1.2, No. 5) of being "delighted" by the Soviet regime. In 1930 – 1951 Theodore Dreiser published about 35 papers and short notes in the Soviet Union (some of them translated from Western leftist periodicals) and constituting a volume of his works (1955). And Louis Aragon (1972), who was Stalin's henchman, pure and simple, contrived to omit any mention of communist atrocities.

Among those politically blind I cite Feuchtwanger (Note 54)⁶³ and Bernard Shaw. In 1921, the latter sent Lenin a complimentary copy of his book *Back to Methuselah* (published in 1921) with an inscription (translated back from the BSE, 2nd ed., vol. 48, 1957, p. 159):

To Lenin, who, alone from among the statesmen of Europe, possesses the talent, the character, and the knowledge required of a man holding such a responsible position.

3) Superficiality. It was incumbent of any author to analyse beforehand the inferences formulated by his predecessors, the more so since some visitors to Russia doctored their accounts (Russell 1920a, p. 20), and, in addition, since they disagreed one with another (Zweig 1945, p. 308). Nevertheless, each author apparently only relied on his own impressions⁶⁴.

Then, visitors hardly realized that a positive conclusion should have been thoroughly checked rather than taken at face value. A similar statement was (and is) well known to statisticians, and I note that Einstein (1979, p. 19) made an analogous utterance with respect to experiments, but Gumbel obviously forgot this requirement. A special point here is that many Soviet citizens, especially before 1928, felt themselves like participants of a great mission (Zweig 1945, p. 305). Earlier Russell (1920a, p. 60) had denied this, but I myself heard similar statements from older men.

4) Propaganda. Year in and year out, the poverty-ridden and hungry nation spent a lot of money to keep communist parties abroad. At home, two events marked the beginning of the Great Terror: the appearance of a patriotic song that swept the country⁶⁵ and the adoption of a sham constitution.

The life of Maxim Gorky is highly relevant. From 1917 onward he managed to save the lives of many intellectuals, and he tried to defend national science and culture against the Bolsheviks (Vaksberg 1999). He also began to adapt himself to the Establishment but continued to be a meddler and in 1921 he was forced to emigrate (Ibidem, p. 48).

In 1928 Gorky visited the Soviet Union and next year he returned for good; in Europe, he only was a one-time writer whereas in Russia he remained a classic. During his last years, Gorky became the most authoritative propagandist of the Stalinist regime (below), but he was unable (to bring himself?) to write Stalin's biography (Ibidem, p. 263). Furthermore, *The Great Leader and Teacher* felt himself crowded by Gorky (Ibidem, p. 360) and in 1936 he was poisoned (Ibidem, p. 374)⁶⁶. I would add that with the Great Terror already under way, Gorky remained potentially dangerous.

In 1929 Gorky visited a labor camp and approved of the methods of *re-educating* the inmates, and a youngster, who dared tell him the truth, was immediately executed (Solzhenitsin 1974, vol. 2, pt. 3, Chapter 2). Then,

without waiting for the (stipulated beforehand) verdict, Gorky (1930a, p. 3ff) condemned the defendants at a phoney trial in Moscow as guilty of high treason. He (Ibidem, p. 15) also blamed the kulaks for “organizing famine”, cf. Note 38. On the same page he maintained that, “With the blessing of the head of the Christian Church”[?], European politicians “are preparing a marauding attack on the Union of Soviets”.

Soon Gorky (1932, p. 23) declared that the dictatorship of the proletariat [?] was temporary, necessary for “re-educating” tens of millions of people⁶⁷. Actually, Gorky for a long time was experiencing hostile feelings with respect to his own people. Russians are “apathetic” (1922, p. 9) and “very fond of beating, no matter whom” (p. 20); “special cruelty” is in their nature (p. 17)⁶⁸. And, just as the Jews who fled Egypt did not live to see the Promised Land, Gorky (p. 43) finally declared, so also the

Semi-barbarian, stupid, difficult people in the Russian villages will die out ... and a new generation will replace them.

Was not this idea formulated during his talks with leading Party figures?

I return now to Gumbel (§2). Recall that his last travel notes described the year 1932 so that he should have known enough. Nevertheless, he had not noticed the brutish nature of the Stalinist system; he either had not realized the essence, or had believed in the fairness of the trial, in 1928, of the Industrial Party, cf. Einstein’s proper attitude (§3.3). Earlier he [2, p. 202] mentioned the “wilful sabotage” allegedly committed by intellectuals. But still, Gumbel surely heard truthful stories from his friends in Moscow. Even Zweig (1945), who only spent a fortnight in the Soviet Union (p. 302), discovered an anonymous note in his pocket explaining that Soviet citizens did not dare tell him their real opinions (p. 308).

Concerning his professional level, I do not believe that Gumbel managed, in 1932, to miss Kolman’s notorious paper (1931), “Sabotage in science”, appropriately published in the Party’s leading organ, or that he knew nothing about the decimation of Soviet statisticians⁶⁹. Again, did not he feel that a rigidly planned economy (§2.1) coupled with dictatorial rule had imposed great difficulties on the population (and led to falsification of statistical returns)?

Although he had made many interesting observations, Gumbel compiled a false account of the Soviet Union. As a finale, consider two of his statements taken together [19, p. 94; 8, p. 159], both of them describing the year 1926:

Ich fand Moskau zwar sehr interessant, aber ich wollte dort nicht mein Leben verbringen. Ich wusste nicht, was aus Russland unter Stalin werden würde ...

A hundred million peasants are freed from the knout and millions of workers may look with proud hope on the first attempt at realizing socialism [with a brutish face].

Serfdom was abolished in Russia in 1861!

Gumbel was lucky in that his later (in 1932) attempt to find a position in Moscow failed (Vogt 1991, p. 29), otherwise he would have likely perished, cf. Note 15, or at least been *re-educated* in the Gulag.

Notes

1. Gumbel began his academic career in Heidelberg in 1924 and only became *außerordentlicher Professor* in 1930 (Jansen 1991, pp. 385 and 387). Here is a newspaper account (Anonymous 1931) of one of the pertinent episodes:

... Prof. Gumbel sei von jungen Studenten in der übelsten unakademischen Weise in seiner Lehrtätigkeit behindert worden ... Prof. Albert Einstein mahnte, die inkriminierten [political] Bücher Gumbel zu lesen, er habe aus ihnen gelernt. Prof. Gumbel nannte den Kampf gegen ihn eines Kampfs des Faschismus gegen die Republik.

A long Editorial (1931) which I also mention below was mostly devoted to defending Gumbel from the rightists. This proves that he was indeed one of their main opponents.

2. See §3.3, No. 7 but especially [26].

3. The appearance of Gumbel's biography in their book certainly honored his memory.

4. Pinl (1972) listed several of Gumbel's writings lacking in Jansen's bibliography.

5. I cite the letters by date and the provided five-digit numbers. In two cases, I mention the Pearson Papers kept at University College London.

6. Gumbel studied economics (Jansen 1991, p. 10). In 1923, Einstein (§3.1.2, No. 1) recommended him as an economist to a foreign university and in 1926 Gumbel read *Gastvorlesungen über Mathematik für Nationalökonomien* in Hamburg (Pinl 1972, p. 158).

7. A Professor *der Rechts*, and, at the time, the *Reichsjustizminister*. In Note 43 to §2.4.2 I refer to one of his letters published in Bd. 18 (!) of his *Gesamtausgabe*. Below, I also mention Emil Lederer, a prominent economist (Jansen 1991, p. 18) and several mathematicians and physicists who are certainly remembered at least by the appropriate specialists.

8. See Note 1.

9. In 1924 Gumbel presided at a meeting commemorating the beginning of the world war and "in einem improvisierten Schlusswort" recalled those perished: "Ich will nicht sagen – auf dem Felde der Unehre gefallen aber doch auf grässliche Weise ums Leben kamen" (Jansen 1991, p. 19). He used "diese Formel" once more in 1924 (Ibidem, p. 364; Note 107). In 1932, in another public speech, Gumbel (Ibidem, p. 35) proposed "als Denkmal des Krieges ... eine große Kohlrübe" because in 1917/1918 swede had become the staple food for the Germans.

I also note that in 1927 Gumbel [8, p. 117) suggested that the "wahre Symbol" of Soviet Russia was not the Hammer and Sickle, but the bureaucrat's abacus. A bit later a Soviet citizen found guilty of suchlike blasphemy, even if whispered privately, would have landed in a labor camp.

10. The predecessor of the present *Max-Planck-Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Wissenschaften*.

11. He continued: "und er [der Weg] muss, wenn integral angewandt, dazu führen"!

12. Gumbel listed three reasons: the dissociation of those elected from the working population; the ideological influence of the capitalists; and the

resistance of other institutions to the parliament. He failed to notice that under socialism the top people might be no less separated from the man in the street (Note 42) whose interests were hardly taken into account (Note 14).

In 1918, Gumbel [11, p. 194] thought that the transition to socialism should be achieved peacefully: “Schritt um Schritt baue man den Kapitalismus ab”.

13. Suchlike declarations are heard even now. The do-gooders still preach communism just like the believers in perpetual motion persisted in dreaming about the paradise they will be offering to mankind. Cf. Gorky’s warning (1930b, p. 3) addressed abroad: “You will also have to deal with traitors of the same brand”.

14. Anyway, the Soviet Union moved towards a planned economy suppressing its own New Economic Policy (§2.2.3). And experience showed that, apart from the impossibility of predicting the requirements for each commodity (including, for example, nails of every type and size) and the respective capacities, the plans were always geared to the needs of the state (as understood by the Party) rather than to the vital requirements of the population.

Horrible housing conditions in Moscow (Note 37) is an appropriate example. Late in life Gumbel [25, pp. 337 – 338] described the situation in the German Democratic Republic:

An einem Tag gibt es kaum Kartoffeln, aber Milch im Überfluss. An anderem Tag gibt es genug Kartoffeln, aber keine Milch.

15. Schaxel himself was invited by the Soviet Academy of Sciences and moved to Moscow. There, he came out against the notorious high-ranking humbug Lysenko, was imprisoned and then died, in 1943, “under obscure circumstances” (Dictionary 1983, p. 1026).

16. Later this institution was called the Marx – Engels – Lenin Institute, then Stalin’s name was added to it, – a fact shyly passed over in silence in the GSE (vol. 10, 1972/1976, pp. 301 – 302).

17. A petty mathematician and a diehard top communist (1892 – 1979) who eventually lost faith in the Soviet system and fled the country. Demidov & Tokareva (1995) published a letter of an eminent historian of mathematics, G.F. Rybkin, who edited Kolman’s manuscript of a booklet on Lobachevsky. He listed many glaring mistakes contained there and added that Kolman never blushed.

18. He repeated this statement twice: in the published text of the MSS (Marx 1983, p. 226) and in his last contribution (Kolman 1982, p. 172). In the later instance he, as noticed by Vogt (1991, p. 22), had shamelessly called Gumbel a “mediocre mathematician”. Vogt put on record some more information about Kolman; also see Vogt (1983). Thus, in 1931, at the International Congress of Mathematicians in Zurich, he reported on the preparation of the Marx MSS for publication without mentioning Gumbel.

19. The BSE (1st ed., vol. 19, 1930, p. 799) carried Gumbel’s biography. It described his scientific work and political activities in Germany and stated that “for some time” he had lived in Moscow “preparing Marx’ mathematical heritage for publication”. At the time, the Chief Editor of the BSE was Schmidt which likely explains why Gumbel was entered there, cf. beginning of §2.2.2 and Note 22.

20. In a letter of 1901 to his father, an eminent statistician of the old, non-mathematical school, Chuprov (Sheynin 1990, p. 23) expressed his dissatisfaction with the “arithmetical manner of exposition” of vol. 2 of *Das Kapital*.

21. In 1881, Pearson thought about translating *Das Kapital* but it seems that Marx rejected his trial attempt (Porter 2004, p. 69ff). Pearson was critical of Bolshevism. He (1978, p. 243) remarked that [in 1924] Petersburg [actually, Petrograd] “has now for some inscrutable reason been given the name of the man who has practically ruined it”.

22. From 1927 (until?) he was member of the Presidium, and (from?) to 1930, head of its section on natural sciences; during 1939 – 1942, Vice-President of the Soviet Academy of Sciences.

23. His book [24] was translated into Russian in 1965. In the Foreword, B.V. Gnedenko properly stated that Gumbel had written the only monograph on its subject, which, moreover, will be easily understood by a broader circle of specialists, but that he had restricted his attention to studying independent trials. One of Gumbel’s scientific papers [7] was translated in 1928 by Youshkevich who later became the most eminent Soviet historian of mathematics.

24. The present situation proves that Gumbel was wrong.

25. In a letter of 1915 to Markov, Chuprov (Sheynin 1996, p. 104) remarked that “the figures now published by the Central Statistical Committee exaggerate the population [of Russia] by five if not ten million”.

26. See p. 10 of the original Russian edition to which I refer when the pertinent statement is missing, or omitted in the German version (abridged by Jansen). The page numbers of the two versions greatly differ and it is not difficult to distinguish between them. Even when Gumbel foresaw that sex criminality will persist under socialism (p. 19), the Editor(s) of the Russian edition disagreed!

27. Gumbel [10] said a few words about the study of conjuncture made at Harvard University. Then, he published a short review [14] on *Konjunkturforschung* without however mentioning Kondratiev, see Note 29. Elsewhere, he [15, p. 110] stated that *Konjunkturkunde* was a new statistical discipline.

28. On 25 March 1931 Einstein wrote two letters, one to Gumbel (46527), the other one, which I also quote in §3.3, No. 1, to Radbruch (46529). In each of them, he stated that he was glad to have read the latter’s article and in the second one he added:

Ich freue mich, dass in diesem Lande noch aufrechte und rechtliche Männer gibt, wie Sie einer sind. Ihr Artikel war mir eine wirkliche Freude.

The paper in question was likely Radbruch (1929 – 1930) where the author condemned political murders substantiated by *la raison d’Etat*. Einstein hardly knew about Gumbel’s pertinent pronouncement to the contrary.

29. In 1922 Chuprov (Sheynin 1990, p. 22) stated that

The intrinsic contradictions of capitalism are great and deep, but at present the ability to manage them is still greater.

In 1923, Kondratiev predicted the crisis of the capitalist system (although not its starting point). His fate was tragic (Ibidem, pp. 29 – 30). In 1952 Gumbel [20, p. 161] formulated another “fundamentale Frage”:

Ob die neue Gesellschaft einen humanitären Sozialismus oder eine totalitäre und vielleicht sogar theokratische Struktur bringen wird. Die russische Regierung ähnelt heute der Ecclesia [general assembly] Militans ... (Das älteste Beispiel für die Übereinstimmung beider Ziele war die kommunistische Regierung der Jesuiten in Paraguay.)

This passage is extremely interesting. First, it anticipated the idealistic phrase *Socialism with a humane face*. Second, in the 1980s, the eminent Soviet mathematician (and notorious anti-Semite) Shafarevich declared that socialism was defined by an appropriate ideology rather than by social ownership of the means of production. Accordingly, he argued that the Inca state (a slave-holding despotic state) was a socialist country.

30. Which does not really exist, as he himself stated on the same page! And how about the necessary conditions for the transition to socialism (§2.1) which were never fulfilled in Russia?

31. But was the civil war necessary? Also see §2.3. In 1927 the GPU (more correctly, the OGPU) acquired the right to arrest and even to execute citizens without trial (Stetsovsky 1997, vol. 1, p. 244).

32. On p. 91 Gumbel mentioned the “present communist government” and added a curious remark: “so far as [it] ... really has communist tendencies”. After Khrushchev, Soviet leaders hardly believed in a communist future. They kept pretending to their faith so as to continue in absolute power and instantly abandoned this attitude after the downfall of the Soviet Union.

33. This restriction was later abandoned.

34. Gumbel hardly realized that in 1921 – 1922 several thousand clergymen, monks and nuns of the Orthodox Church were executed on false charges, – alleged refusal to give up the Church valuables necessary for saving the starving population (Courtois et al 1997, p. 140ff), cf. Note 59. The BSE (1st ed., vol. 46, 1940, p. 665) even accused the Church of “espionage, treason and betrayal”, although its later editions dropped this charge. The second antireligious wave occurred in 1929 – 1930; Flügge (1930) made public additional horrible facts concerning Mennonites and Baptists.

35. Zinoviev was expelled from the Party in 1927, 1932 and 1934 (he was twice re-admitted) and executed in 1936. Trotsky was exiled from the country in 1929 and assassinated by a Stalinist agent in Mexico in 1940. About 1934, Gumbel (Jansen 1991, p. 67) denounced Trotsky’s exile.

36. Read: All issues are subordinated to Marxist philosophy. The attitude towards relativity theory was not at all established. For example, Kolman (1939) believed that velocities can exceed 300,000km/sec. The contrary statement, he declared, went against dialectical materialism. Then, a certain Vislobokov (1952), writing in a leading ideological journal, denied the theory. Even in the 1970s a (state) publishing house in Moscow rejected a manuscript describing Einstein’s life and work, because, as the reviewer claimed, he was a Zionist. I heard about this from the author herself.

37. Was it so difficult to foresee the impending breakdown of the housing? The powers that were had hardly done anything at all not to mention that, in 1933 – 1934, because of their possible anti-Soviet inclinations, *undesirable*

elements were forced to leave Moscow (60 thousand during two months of 1934) as well as several other cities (Courtois et al 1997, Chapter 9 of pt 1). Gumbel published photographs depicting the ugly conditions of housing in Moscow but did not dare disclose his authorship or even to let them appear in Germany (Jansen 1991, p. 16).

38. Gumbel believed, naively or otherwise, that young workers were being sent to rural areas “to examine the feelings” of the peasants rather than to organize a ruthless struggle against the kulaks. A few years later two million of these poor wretches were exiled and six million of peasants died of starvation (Courtois et al 1997, p. 164).

39. This would have been tantamount to intervention. Again, Gumbel’s text hardly tallies with his belief [12, p. 174] in the sincerity of contemporary Russian proposals for disarmament.

40. Actually, the Soviet military force was not sufficient for preventing these nations from securing independence.

41. When comparing this statement with Gumbel’s own previous report (§2.2.3) on the value of the ruble, it occurs that the Russian currency experienced a downfall which apparently meant that a large portion of the population was impoverished.

42. Their salaries were low as compared with their Western counterparts. However, fringe benefits had been (and still are) so diverse and considerable that the “poor top people” constitute an altogether separate population. Some time ago it became generally known that for several decades they had been buying foodstuffs (and other goods?) at prices existing in 1926. And some of them were even being serviced by clandestine state-maintained brothels.

43. Radbruch provided a related testimony. In a letter of 1949 to a certain Hugo Marx he (1995, p. 316) wrote:

Schrieb mir Gumbel über seine jetzige Ansicht vom Marxismus, sehr abgewogen Zustimmung und Kritik und ganz in dem mir richtig erscheinenden Sinne. Sogar er scheint weiser geworden zu sein.

44. He [21, p. 284] mentioned this fact already in 1952, although in passing. In 1925 he [5] did not say anything about it.

45. Gumbel mentioned Leonhard (1956). On p. 723 she cited Einstein’s statement “kein Ziel ist so hoch dass es unwürdige Methoden rechtfertigen könnte” choosing it as an epigraph to one of her chapters. Following a nasty tradition, she had not indicated the exact source. Bearing in mind Russian communists, she could have well written “... unwürdige [much less cannibalistic] Methoden ...”

46. The handwritten draft of this letter has No. 46547 and Einstein wrote it beneath Montel’s letter to him dated 5 Dec. 1931 (46546). Montel mentioned Gumbel and stated that “ce [?] serait pour lui naturellement la meilleure de recommandation”. Montel’s answer to letter 50110 (see §3.1.2, No. 5) had the letterhead *Ecole Municipale de Physique et de Chimie Industrielles* whose director was then Langevin, and Montel indeed mentioned him. He apparently substituted for Langevin.

47. Gumbel again informed Einstein about the German refugees in France on 10 Jan. and 18 Nov. 1935 (50134 and 50135).

48. Jansen (1991, p. 12) reported that in 1915/1916

Neben mathematischen und naturwissenschaftlichen Vorlesungen und

Übungen, darunter auch die Einsteins [cf. the text of this letter 43810], hörte er [Gumbel] den bekannten und angefeindeten Pazifisten Georg Friedrich Nicolai.

Jansen added that Nicolai had written a foreword to one of Gumbel's political notes.

49. A copy of this letter is also kept among the Pearson Papers (709), but the words "um die Gerechtigkeit" inserted by hand are absent there.

50. *The National Union Catalog, Pre-1956 Imprints*, vols 1 – 754, 1968 – 1981 (vol. 269, pp. 595 – 596) lists *Annual Reports* of this American-based Board for 1924/25 and 1925/26.

51. Gumbel [20] published an obituary notice of Bortkiewicz. I can now add that Mises left a manuscript on mathematics in Nazi Germany (Sheynin 2003).

52. See below.

53. In 1924 Gumbel addressed a French – German peace meeting (Note 9) and published an appropriate paper [3]. Also see [4].

54. Einstein kept Barbusse's portrait in his study "next to the portrait of my [of his] late mother" (Einstein 1922). Later Barbusse (1935, p. 312) stated that Stalin was "the Lenin of today". Yes, of course; and the next ones in line were Mao Zedong and Pol Pot!

After Barbusse's death Stalin sent his condolences to *L'Humanité* (BSE, 2nd ed., vol. 4, 1950, p. 235). Feuchtwanger (1937, p. 109) echoed Barbusse's maxim: If Lenin had been the Caesar of the Soviet Union, then Stalin is their Augustus. Cf. Gide (1936 – 1937, p. 69): Stalin is the *raison* of everything.

55. In 1929, after a coup d'état, a militaristic-monarchic dictatorship was established in Yugoslavia.

56. Léon Blum, the then Prime Minister of France. And here is Einstein's later statement (letter to Maurice Solovine, the translator of some of his contributions into French, of 23 Dec. 1938; Einstein 1993, p. 93):

France's betrayal of Spain and Czechoslovakia is frightful. The worst part is that the consequences will be deplorable.

57. During the 1930s – 1940s, James Paul Warburg published quite a few books on foreign relations.

58. Which one? NATO was established in 1949; the Bundesrepublik joined it in 1955.

59. Thus, in 1921 – 1922 more than five million died of starvation whereas grain had been sold abroad (Stetsovsky 1997, vol. 1, p. 28), – apparently, in part, to finance revolutionary movements worldwide.

60. Russell (1920a, p. 119) reasonably feared the "revival of Jenghis Khan and Timur".

61. Russell (1920a, p. 7) also believed that "Socialism is necessary for the world" and Gumbel (Russell 1917, p. 102n) thought that he might be called an "antibolshevistic communist".

62. The main text of Rolland (1935 – 1938) could have been meant.

63. Feuchtwanger essentially drew on his talks with Soviet leaders, Stalin included! He possibly felt an instinctive thirst for replacing reality by desire. On the other hand, I ought to add that his collected works were published soon afterwards. Feuchtwanger's book (1937) on Russia also appeared in a Russian

translation although it contained some criticism of the Soviet regime. Strange as it may seem, I have it on good authority that those who discussed it in public were being imprisoned and the translated book withdrawn from libraries.

64. I have not seen a single reference to Dostoevsky's *Besy* (1873; several English translations from 1931 onward entitled either *The Devils* or *The Possessed*; French and German translations made at the end of the 19th century). This is a prophetic and destructive criticism of revolutionists. Neither did I see any mention of Russell (beginning of §4).

65. I quote its two lines: *There is no other nation Where a man is breathing as freely as here.*

66. Vaksberg has only partly documented his account. In this case hard evidence is lacking. On p. 376 the author maintained in passing that Wallenberg was poisoned as well.

67. On p. 11 he called Charles Chaplin "sentimental and dismal"! Chaplin's films with a happy end for the man in the street in a capitalist society, – this was, as I suspect, the real cause of Gorky's remark.

68. How can a cruel people *re-educate* tens of millions of their compatriots? Another statement seems, however, partly true: Not the "atrocities" of the leaders of the revolution, but the cruelty of the people was solely responsible for the post-revolutionary events (p. 41; Gorky's own inverted commas).

69. Here is a literal translation of a troglodyte's contented statement (Smit 1931, p. 4): "The crowds of arrested saboteurs are full of statisticians". In a few years she became Corresponding Member of the Soviet Academy of Sciences ...

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Abbreviation: Jansen = Jansen (1991); PZM = *Pod Znamenem Marksizma*;
R = in Russian

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