

PLAYGROUND OF THE INTELLECTUAL GREATS

In September 1924, Innsbruck was the hotspot for research in the German-speaking world. Around 6,000 scientists - including greats such as Albert Einstein, Erwin Schrödinger and Max Planck - discussed current issues in science and medicine. This was a unique opportunity for Innsbruck and Tyrol to be remembered as an attractive tourist destination.

It is a warm September day in 1924. Albert Einstein is standing on the platform in Innsbruck, with the mighty Nordkette in the background and the midday sun shining in his face. He is looking at the photographer, and Abraham Dubin is standing behind the camera. The two met just a few hours ago in the sleeping car from Vienna to Innsbruck. Dubin has a long journey behind him and an even longer one ahead of him. The 36-year-old comes from Călărași, where he was visiting his brother Leibe. Abraham Dubin was also born there, in what is now the Republic of Moldova, and emigrated to Argentina in 1905. For Dubin, Innsbruck on September 25, 1924 is a stopover on the way back to South America. Einstein, on the other hand, has reached the end of his journey. He is not the only scientist visiting Innsbruck these days; the 88th Meeting of German Natural Scientists and Doctors is taking place here from September 21 to 27. The city, which has a population of around 60,000, is bursting at the seams - around 6,000 participants are expected, including Nobel Prize winners, famous physicians, well-known scientific greats and future top researchers.

Dressed up for science. And tourism.

The Society of German Natural Scientists and Physicians, founded in 1822, is the oldest and largest scientific association in Germany. Every two years it holds its meeting, a high-caliber lecture and discussion forum for new research in the natural sciences and medicine. Innsbruck was the venue for such a meeting in 1869, and in 1922 the board of the society decided to hold the next meeting outside Germany for the first time since the First World War - and chose Innsbruck as the venue. The decision to choose "divided Tyrol" was a political one, just as the decision to choose Düsseldorf, which was still occupied by the French in 1924, as the next meeting venue, since the two cities are "forward posts of German watch," as Hans Haberer, the Rector of the University of Innsbruck, put it in a keynote speech on the evening of the 24th. The large scientific congress had already dominated the city for days, and local daily newspapers reported on the opening and the scientific lectures on several pages. The trains, coming from Germany, Switzerland and the east of Austria, were overcrowded; the state railways gave participants a discount. All hotels in the city and the surrounding communities are fully booked. In advance, the university, the Alpine Club and other organizations published appeals for the population to make private rooms available; Mayor Anton Eder promised that no taxes would be paid for this. In the city, guests travel on trams at the local rate, and there are even additional night trips on offer. In general, Innsbruck has spruced itself up for its guests, seeing this as an opportunity to remind people of itself as an attractive tourist destination. In front of the station building there is a triumphal arch decorated with fir branches, and numerous flagpoles with flags in the national colors have been erected on Südtirolerplatz and in the city center. The "housing allocation office" is also located at the station to provide congress participants with the addresses of their private quarters. Students will be responsible for guiding people there - there will be no classes at any of Innsbruck's secondary schools on the first few days of the congress. Federal President Michael Hainisch and Education Minister Emil Schneider will be attending the opening, and Governor Franz Stumpf will also be giving a speech. The supporting programme is extensive - including a reception in the Hofburg and a castle festival in Ambras - and well

organised, but improvisation is often necessary. On the welcoming evening, the town halls, where the Speckbach Town Band will be playing, prove to be too small for the planned "cozy get-together", and the large hall of the Hotel Maria Theresia and the station restaurant are spontaneously used. The same applies to the Tyrolean evening, which will take place on the 24th in the Alhambra, the large event hall on today's exhibition grounds. Brother Willram has put together a "local costume show in a historical setting" for this, with Andreas Hofer & Co. naturally taking centre stage, and the Wolkenstein and Wilten Town Bands will provide the musical accompaniment. The 2,000 tickets sold like hotcakes among the congress participants, so the event was repeated the next day – another repeat "for locals" was announced for October.

Meeting place for Nobel Prize winners.

whether Albert Einstein attended one of these events. The 1921 Nobel Prize winner in physics came to Innsbruck to meet with colleagues. The crème de la crème of physics is gathered here: Max von Laue (1914) and Max Planck (1918) have already received the Nobel Prize, while others - James Franck (1925), Erwin Schrödinger (1933), Victor Franz Hess (1936), Otto Stern (1943), Wolfgang Pauli (1945) and Max Born (1954) - are yet to receive this award.

In particular, the conversations that Einstein has with Pauli and Schrödinger have a significant influence on their future work on quantum mechanics.

The conference is not just a meeting of high-ranking physicists. More than 20 Nobel Prize winners of the time and later took part, including Julius Wagner-Jauregg. In Innsbruck, doctors discussed his proposed therapy for treating progressive paralysis, a neurological sequela of syphilis: malaria pathogens were used to induce an artificial fever in patients, thereby treating the disease. Numerous doctors, including Karl Mayer from the Innsbruck Psychiatric Clinic, reported successful treatments and explained that this "vaccination malaria" was not contagious. Wagner-Jauregg from Vienna was awarded the Nobel Prize for Medicine in 1927 for his discovery. Karl Frisch, Professor of Zoology at the University of Breslau, also caused a stir. The Viennese-born man gave a public lecture on the language of bees. As visual support, he had "a skilled cinema operator" produce a film of dancing bees. According to Frisch, he was probably one of the first scientists to use this new medium to present his research. Karl Frisch will receive the Nobel Prize for Medicine in 1972 - together with Konrad Lorenz and Nikolaas Tinbergen. Alfred Wegener is also in Innsbruck. The polar explorer and father of the continental drift theory is presenting his new book "The Climates of Geological Prehistory", which will become a fundamental work in the still young scientific branch of paleoclimatology.

Advertising for the whole country.

The prominent – and probably also wealthy – audience is not only welcome in Innsbruck. Numerous Tyrolean communities and regions draw attention to themselves and advertise day trips; the German Society for Forensic Medicine, which holds its annual meeting during the Natural Scientists' Day, organizes one such trip to Lake Achensee. South Tyrol also presents itself at its best with the Etschländer Kurorte issue, a 100-page illustrated brochure – in fact, numerous groups visit Brixen, Bozen and Merano after the conference. Other congress participants venture into the mountains, such as Ernst Brüche, German physicist and pioneer of electron optics. In 1974, on the occasion of the 80th birthday of Ernst Zachmann, with whom he conducted research in Danzig in the 1920s, he remembers "our ill -

advised descent to Eibsee from the Zugspitze in low shoes over snow and scree, which almost cost the Physical Society two promising young physicists."

But not everywhere is able to cope with the rush of guests. On 23 September, a reader of the Innsbrucker Nachrichten complained about "inconveniences on the Stubai Valley Railway" two days earlier. Numerous day-trippers, including many naturalists from Germany, had taken advantage of the beautiful Sunday weather to travel to Fulpmes. Several hundred passengers were then waiting for the evening return journey. "When the life-threatening crush finally came to an end, in which women and children in particular were put under pressure by the recklessness of some mountaineers, by breaking through with their pickaxes, it became apparent that there was not enough room in the three carriages for all the passengers," reports the reader. Around 50 excursionists had to stay behind, and at the following stops the "passengers hanging on the running boards and fighting for entry were in direct danger of their lives" - if the train even stopped. A special train would have helped, the reader concludes: "It would also have prevented the guests from the Reich from worrying about the traffic situation in Tyrol."

In any case, Albert Einstein left Innsbruck on September 27th and took the train to Zurich to meet his sons. Abraham Dubin probably already arrived in Paris on that day. There he had the photo of Einstein developed as a postcard at the Innsbruck train station. On the back of a print he noted his meeting with Einstein on October 3rd, and sent a second print to the physicist in Berlin on October 31st. It was the day he left for Buenos Aires. He died there in 1930.

Andreas Hauser

Tirol Magazin

Winter 2024 Edition

<https://www.dastirolmagazin.at/>

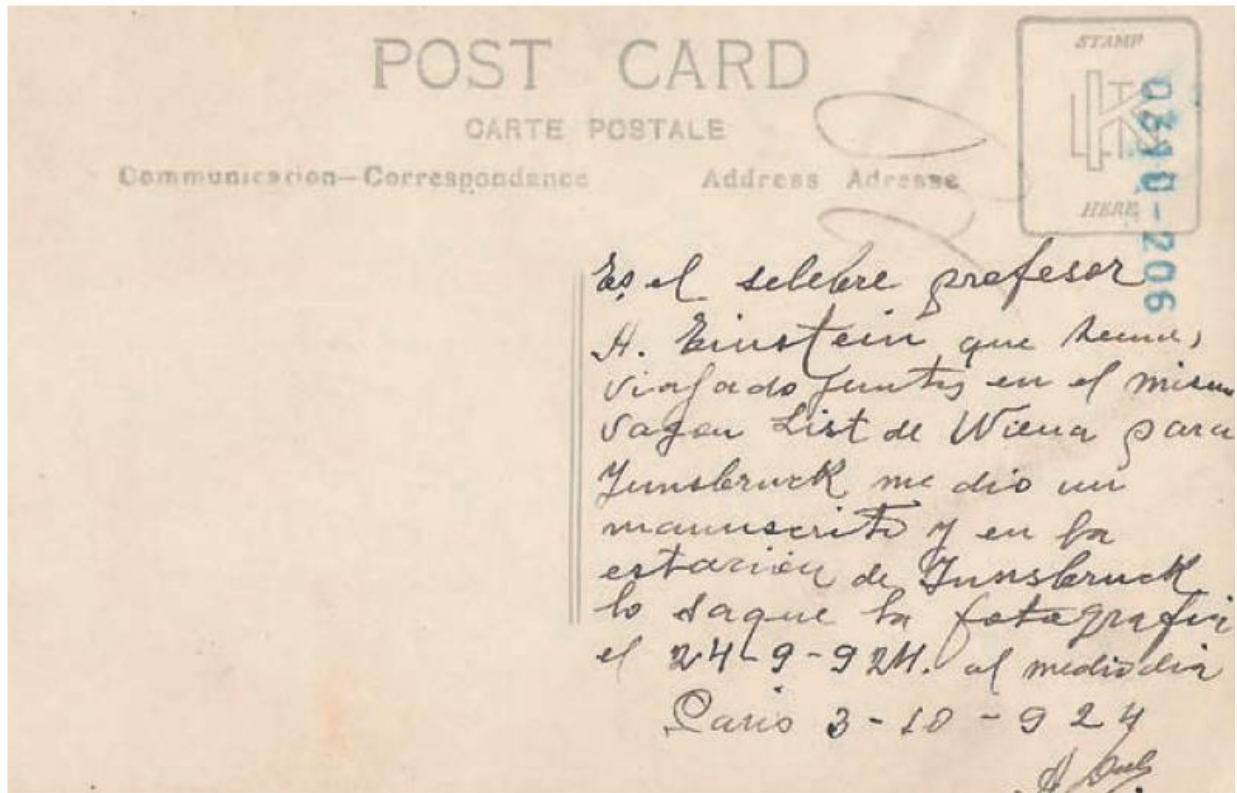
Society of German natural scientists and physicians

The German Society of Natural researchers and doctors e. V. (GDNÄ) is one of the oldest German scientific associations. It was founded in 1822 by the Natural philosopher and physician Lorenz Oken founded in Leipzig and after World War II in February 1950 in Göttingen as a club again founded. Your office is located in the rooms of the Physics Center Bad Honnef at Bonn. It currently has about 4,000 members. The name of the GDNÄ has developed from this time The unusual term “naturalist” was coined by the term “natural sciences scientists”. The GDNÄ sees their goals and tasks in the Creating understanding and Trust for scientific Research through dialogue between scientists and the public and in promoting interdisciplinary universal information and exchange of views between Scientists from various specialist areas. The most important event The event is held every two years changing locations meeting of the company, the each under a certain The main topic is the researcher of different disciplines current research present results and discuss with the audience.



Albert Einstein at Innsbruck train station, photographed by Abraham Dubin, who subsequently published the photo in Paris developed as a postcard.

© ARIEL PARKANSKY/WWW.THEFAMILYTREE.INFO



On the back of the postcard, Dubin wrote: "It is the famous Professor A. Einstein, whom I remember traveling together in the same sleeping car from Vienna to Innsbruck.

He gave me an autograph and I took the photo at Innsbruck train station on September 24, 1924 at noon."



Numerous delegations and professional societies used the congress for day trips. For example, the Achensee was the destination of the German Society for Forensic Medicine, expertly led by the Innsbruck forensic doctor Carl Ipsen.



The supporting program included a Tyrolean evening in the Alhambra, the large event hall at today's exhibition center. Brother Willram put on a "local costume show in a historical setting" for this, with the Wilten town band and the Wolkensteiner singing group providing the musical accompaniment (pictured at an evening of entertainment in the Grauer Bär on March 15, 1924).



Meetings of the specialist departments took place in the city halls and in the theater, the major lectures were held in the Alhambra on what is now the exhibition grounds. There were also exhibitions in the university buildings, in the country house and in the riding school on what is now Kaiserjägerstrasse.



© UNIVERSITÄT INNSBRUCK

The experimental physicist Egon Schweidler (right) was responsible for the on-site organization as managing director of the 88th Assembly of German Natural Scientists and Physicians. Pictured with the Rector and Deans of the University of Innsbruck in the academic year 1923/24.



Federal President Michael Hainisch was in Innsbruck on the occasion of the 88th Assembly of German Natural Scientists and Physicians and received representatives of the German chemical industry.