

DRAFT

MEMORANDUM from MATHEMATICA

To:

Date: September 13, 1971

From: O. Morgenstern

Subject: History of the Naturalization of Kurt Gödel

The following is dictated on the basis of memory only without consultation of my notes and diaries. The concrete dates and other details will be filled in at another opportunity.

It was in 1946 that Gödel was to become an American citizen. He asked me to be his witness and as the other witness, he proposed Albert Einstein who also gladly consented. Einstein and I occasionally met and were full of anticipation^{to} what would happen during this time prior to the naturalization proceedings themselves and even during those.

Gödel whom I have seen of course time and again in the months before this event began to go in a thorough manner to prepare himself properly. Since he is a very thorough man, he started informing himself about the history of the settlement of North America by human beings. That led gradually to the study of the History of American Indians, their various tribes, etc. He called me many times on the phone to get literature which he diligently perused. There were many questions raised gradually and of course many doubts brought forth as to whether these histories really were correct and what peculiar circumstances were revealed in them. From that, Gödel gradually over the next weeks proceeded to study American history, concentrating in particular on matters of constitutional law. That also led him into the study of Princeton, and he wanted to know from me in particular where the borderline was between the borough and the township. I *tried* to explain that all this was totally unnecessary, of course, but with no avail. He persisted in finding out all the facts he wanted to know about and so I provided him with the proper information, also about Princeton. Then he wanted to know how the Borough Council was elected, the Township Council, and who the Mayor was, and how the Township Council

functioned. He thought he might be asked about such matters. If he were to show that he did not know the town in which he lived, it would make a bad impression.

I tried to convince him that such questions never were asked, that most questions were truly formal and that he would easily answer them; that at most they might ask what sort of government we have in this country or what the highest court is called, and questions of this kind. At any rate, he continued with the study of the Constitution.

Now came an interesting development. He rather excitedly told me that in looking at the Constitution, he had found some inner contradictions to his distress, and that he could show ^{how} in a perfectly legal manner it would be possible for somebody to become a dictator and set up a Fascist regime, never intended by those who drew up the Constitution. I told him that it was most unlikely that such events would ever occur, even assuming that he was right, which of course I doubted. But he was persistent and so we had many talks about this particular point. I tried to persuade him that he should avoid bringing up such matters at the examination before the court in Trenton, and I also told Einstein about it: he was horrified that such an idea had occurred to Gödel, and he also told him he should not worry about these things nor discuss that matter.

Many months went by and finally the date for the examination in Trenton came. On that particular day, I picked up Gödel in my car. He sat in the back and then we went to pick up Einstein at his house on Mercer Street, and from there we drove to Trenton. While we were driving, Einstein turned around a little and said, "Now, Gödel, are you really well prepared for this examination?" Of course, this remark upset Gödel tremendously, which was exactly what Einstein intended and he was greatly amused when he saw the worry on Gödel's face. When we came to Trenton, we were ushered into a big room, and while normally the witnesses are questioned separately from the candidate, because of Einstein's appearance, an exception was made and all three of us were invited to sit down together, Gödel, in the center. The examiner first asked Einstein and then me whether we thought Gödel would make a good citizen. We assured him that this would certainly be the case, that he was a distinguished man, etc. And then he turned to Gödel and said, "Now, Mr. Godel, where do you come from?" Gödel: "Where I come from? Austria."

The Examiner: "What kind of government did you have in Austria?"

*E's discussion
of Holy Russia
adopted Greek
Orthodox relig,
not Rom. Cath.*

Gödel: "It was a republic, but the constitution was such that it finally was changed into a dictatorship."

The Examiner: "Oh! This is very bad. This could not happen in this country."

Gödel: "Oh, yes, I can prove it."

So of all the possible questions, just that critical one was asked by the Examiner. Einstein and I were horrified during this exchange; the Examiner was intelligent enough to quickly quieten Gödel and say "Oh God, let's not go into this" and broke off the examination at this point, greatly to our relief. We finally left, and as we were walking out towards the elevators, a man came running after us with a piece of paper and a pen and approached Einstein and asked him for his autograph. Einstein obliged. When we went down in the elevator, I turned to Einstein and said, "It must be dreadful to be persecuted in this fashion by so many people." Einstein said to me, "You know, this is just the last remnant of cannibalism." I was puzzled and said, "How is that?" He said: "Yes, formerly they wanted your blood, now they want your ink."

Then we left, drove back to Princeton, and as ^{we} ~~to~~ came to the corner of Mercer Street, I asked Einstein whether he wanted to go to the Institute or home. He said, "Take me home, my work is not worth anything anyway anymore." Then he quoted from an American political song (I unfortunately do not recall the words, I may have it in my notes and I would certainly recognize it if somebody would suggest the particular phrase. Then off to Einstein's home again, and then he turned back once more toward Gödel, and said, "Now, Gödel, this was your one but last examination;" Gödel: "Goodness, is there still another one to come?" and he was already worried. And then Einstein said, "Gödel, the next examination is when you step into your grave." Gödel: "But Einstein, I don't step into my grave." and then Einstein said, "Gödel, that's just the joke of it!" and with that he departed. I drove Gödel home. Everybody was relieved that this formidable affair was over; Gödel had his head free again to go about problems of philosophy and logic.