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# Science During Wartime: Richard Goldschmidt's Internment during the First World War

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## Abstract

At the outbreak of the First World War, the geneticist Richard Goldschmidt (1878-1958) found himself trapped in the United States, unable to return to Germany following a research trip to Japan. With the assistance of several prominent biologists, Goldschmidt was able to continue his study of sex determination in the gypsy moth, *Lymantria dispar*, working in the Osborne Zoological Laboratory as a guest of Ross G. Harrison, professor of zoology at Yale University. All semblance of a normal life in science came to an end, however, on 1 May 1918, when Goldschmidt was taken into custody by federal agents and charged with spying for the German government. Sent to an internment camp at Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia, he was released a month after the signing of the armistice with Germany and finally returned to Germany in June 1919. During his interview by an agent of the Bureau of Investigation, Goldschmidt looked toward the end of the war, "when it will be again recognized that science is international rather than national." It is clear, however, that not all scientists shared his view; indeed several were among those who testified against him. Drawing on Goldschmidt's FBI dossier, this paper examines the facts of the case and reflects on how during times of political crisis science can indeed be transformed from "international" to "national."

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