

# Silver Horizon: A Note on the Later Years of the Physicist-Diplomat Jakob Laub

*By Lewis Pyenson*

It is fitting that Jakob Laub (1882–1962) figure in the twenty-fifth anniversary volume of the journal founded by Richard Konetzke and Hermann Kellenbenz. Born in Austrian-controlled Galicia to the manager of an estate near the German border, Laub completed *Gymnasium* in Rzeszów. He studied briefly at the University of Cracow before travelling to Göttingen in 1902, where for three years he attended university as a student of mathematics and physics. In 1905 he moved to Würzburg, becoming an assistant of Wilhelm Wien's and then taking a doctorate under him. He passed to Heidelberg as an assistant of Nobel laureate Philipp Lenard's, and in 1911 he was called to the chair of geophysics at the National University of La Plata in Argentina. He taught at La Plata and at the Instituto Nacional del Profesorado Secundario in Buenos Aires until 1920, when he joined the Argentine diplomatic corps. He served in consular positions at Munich, Hamburg, Breslau, and Warsaw between 1920 and 1939, with time out from 1928 to 1930 as secretary to Argentine Minister of External Affairs Horacio Oyhanarte. While a diplomat he continued scientific research on radiotelephone transmission. In the 1940s, in Argentina, he turned to study the biological effects of radiation in the atmosphere. Beginning in 1948, he continued this research at the physics institute of the University of Fribourg, in Switzerland. He is best known to historians of science as Albert Einstein's first scientific coworker<sup>1</sup>. Laub's career encompassed a number of cultures and cultural currents; the silver horizon of the River Plate lies at its center.

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<sup>1</sup> "Laub, Jakob": *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, s. v.; Lewis Pyenson, *Cultural Imperialism and Exact Sciences: German Expansion Overseas, 1900–1930* (New York-Berne 1985), pp. 163–202, 227–228.

Laub's early interaction with Einstein has been limned in another place<sup>2</sup>. He was one of the very first physicists to realize the revolutionary implications of the special theory of relativity, and his research in the years before 1911 focused on the theoretical and especially experimental elaboration of Einstein's theory. Laub's was the first major evaluation, in 1910, of the experimental verifications of relativity. Nobel laureate Hendrik Antoon Lorentz made extensive use of it when lecturing. As late as 1912, with the addition to the literature of hundreds of titles relating to relativity, the *Etatsmäßige Extraordinarius* of mathematical physics at Freiburg, Johann Georg Königsberger, felt that Laub's was the best existing survey<sup>3</sup>. Laub's success was his undoing. In 1909 and 1910 he served as assistant to temperamental Philipp Lenard at Heidelberg. Lenard had never forgiven Einstein for providing a revolutionary, quantum interpretation of the photoelectric effect and thus overshadowing Lenard's own Nobel-prize-winning work on the same phenomenon. Lenard was sceptical of special relativity, and he expected Laub to measure the density of the electromagnetic ether – a hypothetical substance that Laub and Einstein had no use for. In academic circles, unlike as in electrostatics and love, opposites repel. Lenard came to feel that Laub's experimental skills were insufficient, and he blocked Laub's attempts at becoming a privatdozent. Late in 1910 Laub began casting around for greener pastures.

The course of Laub's academic career in Argentina set the tone for what happened later. His geophysical charge, while permitting him to lecture on pure physics, required that he investigate larger-than-laboratory-sized phenomena. The engagement at La Plata proved unhappy. Though titular of a chair, he was responsible to the director of the La Plata astronomical observatory. In 1911 this directorship passed to an astronomer from the University of Michigan, William Joseph Hussey. The American arranged to have Laub fired – an action that remained unopposed by the new German director of the La Plata physics institute, Richard Gans. In 1914 Laub transferred all his attentions to the duties of a chair at the elite, national

<sup>2</sup> Lewis Pyenson, *The Young Einstein: The Advent of Relativity* (Bristol-Boston 1985), pp. 215–246.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 215–246. Washington, DC, Smithsonian Institution Archives [henceforth WSI]. Paul Hertz to Jakob Laub, 8 August 1911: "Übrigens fand ich bei Lorentz auf dem Tische Ihren Relativitätsbericht. Er sagte, er leiste ihm sehr gute Dienste für seine Vorlesung". Hertz to Laub, 16 February 1912: "[Mathematician Leo] Königsberger sagte mir neulich, sein Sohn habe gesagt, daß ihr Referat über die Relativ. Theorie das Beste sei, was über den Gegenstand geschrieben ist".

normal school, the Instituto Nacional del Profesorado Secundario, located in Buenos Aires, where he had been teaching physics since 1912. There, among a staff of German nationals, he continued publishing on various aspects of experimental physics. Throughout the 1910s Laub vacationed in Europe and visited physicist colleagues, including Einstein in Zurich and Blas Cabrera in Madrid. His presence was remarked on – if not without qualification<sup>4</sup>.

Laub's travel was facilitated by his having become, in 1915, an Argentine citizen. It may be conjectured that this act did not require much deliberation. Laub would have seen the various national committees-in-exile planning for the aftermath of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, a political union to which he had no strong allegiance. Argentine citizenship insulated him, in the event, from anti-German feeling which culminated, in 1917, in the dismissal of German professors from the Instituto Nacional del Profesorado Secundario. Laub's perception of rising fortunes was as clear in national politics as in international and scientific affairs. As he pursued his scientific research during the middle 1910s Laub – the same as Einstein – became involved with alternative political currents. In Argentina he gravitated to Horacio Oyhanarte, a central figure in President Hipólito Yrigoyen's populist Radical Civic Union Party. At the end of the war Laub travelled to Germany, and through his political connections he arranged to enter the Foreign Service of the Argentine Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

For the next twenty-five years Laub remained on the rolls of the Foreign Service. He was first placed in charge of the Munich viceconsulate, in

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<sup>4</sup> Paris, École de chimie et de physique industrielles, Paul Langevin Papers, File "Solvay 1914". Pierre Weiss to Martin Knudsen, 2 July 1914: "Ich habe Prof. Laub in mein Laboratorium aufgenommen auf einen Wunsch hin von Prof. Einstein. Da Prof. Einstein zu dieser Zeit noch in Zürich war, ist er mit Herrn Laub in direkteren Beziehungen geblieben wie ich und hat, wie ich glaube, sich seine Versuche genauer angesehen. Ich habe nicht den Eindruck, daß Herr Laub außerordentlich kritisch verfährt. Er hat gewisse Versuche gemacht, die schwer mit den heutigen Kenntnissen zu erklären sind, und begründet darauf eine Anschauung, ohne eigentliche scharfe Kontrollversuche auszuführen. Wie Sie, habe ich den Eindruck, daß es nahe liegt an sekundäre Strahlen zu denken. Da ich aber die Sache nicht verfolgt habe, möchte ich durchaus nicht die Realität einer neuen Erscheinung leugnen. Es würde sich schon lohnen, daß die Sache mit Schärfe aufgenommen würde. Da Herr Laub gewissenhaft ist, ist es nicht unmöglich, daß er mit der Zeit Klarheit schafft. Vielleicht befragen Sie noch Einstein über diese Angelegenheit". In Buenos Aires, Laub had been conducting experiments on secondary cathode rays, the subject of his 1907 doctoral dissertation. I am grateful to Professor John Heilbron for calling this letter to my attention.

September 1920. In 1925 he became viceconsul in Breslau and worked his way up the diplomatic ladder to become *canciller de Ira. clase* in 1927. The following year he left Breslau for Buenos Aires, where he served as personal secretary to Oyhanarte, who had become minister of foreign affairs in the second Yrigoyen government. Laub survived the fall of Yrigoyen to a military coup in 1930. In December 1933, with the restoration of a nominal democracy in Argentina and the loss of one in Germany, he resumed duties at the Argentine consulate general in Hamburg. In 1937 he moved to the consulate general in Warsaw, where on two occasions he acted as the ranking officer. Poland fell to Germany, and on 4 September 1939 Laub was reassigned to the Argentine consulate general in Zürich. Two weeks later he was recalled to Buenos Aires. He officially retired as a diplomat in May 1945<sup>5</sup>.

The underside to Laub's diplomatic career is seen in a parallel trajectory followed by his wife, Ruth Wendt. The pair had met when Laub was Lenard's assistant at Heidelberg. They were married in February 1911 by Wendt's uncle shortly before they were to leave for La Plata. The marriage unwound during the next decade, and the birth of a daughter, Ruth Mercedes, in 1920, did little to effect a reconciliation. Wendt and her daughter moved to Hamburg in 1921. She left her daughter in foster care and, in 1925, returned to Argentina for a year and a half. In 1928 Wendt secured a position as a translator in an economics institute associated with the University of Hamburg. On 5 March 1933 she was dismissed for having married Laub, a converted Jew. Laub paid for her to live in Florence from 1933 to 1935, possibly with Ruth Mercedes. In 1935 Wendt placed her daughter with a Dutch family and travelled to New York; Laub obtained her visa in four days. She then decided to relocate in Hangchow, China, with an uncle who was a buyer for IG Farben. Ruth Mercedes joined her there in 1938. In June 1938, as the war with Japan began interrupting food shipments, Wendt moved to Canton and then to Hong Kong, where she worked with American medical missionaries. She returned to Hamburg in 1939, and travelled from there through Switzerland to France and on to New York. She found a place as a resident and language instructor in the University of Michigan dormitories. At Ann Arbor, she joined the

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<sup>5</sup> Laub's diplomatic trajectory was constructed by Ricardo R. Rodríguez (Subsecretario de Coordinación Universitaria, Ministerio de Cultura y Educación, Argentina), and relayed to me in a letter of 15 May 1973.

Religious Society of Friends. During the war she travelled around the United States as a nurse, maid, and laboratory assistant. She suffered a mental breakdown in 1941, and Ruth Mercedes was placed in a psychiatric institution in San Francisco. Wendt's final relocation to Pasadena, and her employment as an assistant in the Biology Department there, coincided with her becoming, in 1945, a US citizen. Labor historians know her as a pioneering organizer of migrant farm-workers<sup>6</sup>. Although the Laubs lived apart during the diplomatic years, between 1920 and 1940 Jakob was continually intervening on Wendt's behalf. He supported her financially, even after the marriage ended by divorce some time in the late 1930s<sup>7</sup>. His diplomatic connections obtained a US visa for her and Ruth Mercedes in 1939.

Among his consular tasks, Laub was responsible for organizing scientific exchanges between Argentina and Germany. While in Breslau, Laub acted to funnel engineers from the local institute of technology to Argentine universities<sup>8</sup>. He tried, as well, to have the procurement result in a symmetrical exchange, whereby an Argentine engineer would come to find a place in the Breslau institution<sup>9</sup>. After he moved to Hamburg, Laub corresponded with a former assistant of Danzig experimentalist Walther Kossel's over the possibility of an Argentine call<sup>10</sup>.

It is common for people to begin a new career in mid-life, leaving behind most traces of their former routine. This was far from the case with Jakob Laub. During the 1930s, he turned his experience as an experimental physicist to study the question of high-frequency, wireless, telephone transmission. Between 1931 and 1933 – in the aftermath of the coup by dictator José F. Uriburu and his corruptly elected successor, Agustín P. Justo – Laub tried to interest C. Lorenz AG and Siemens & Halske in his work, perhaps because he was at this time not drawing a salary from the

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<sup>6</sup> Interview with Ruth L. Wendt on 3 October 1980; Robert S. Vogel (American Friends Service Committee, Pacific Southwest Region) to the author, 4 April 1980 and 24 February 1982.

<sup>7</sup> Wendt recalled that she initiated the divorce proceedings in Buenos Aires in 1928. In 1979, Buenos Aires lawyer Hellmut Simons – the son of a former physicist colleague of Laub's at La Plata – told me that he handled the case.

<sup>8</sup> WSI. B. Dietrich to Laub, 21 November 1927, where the Breslau geographer Dietrich proposed Berthold Dziuba as a mechanical and agricultural engineer who would be suitable for such an exchange.

<sup>9</sup> WSI. Kornemann (?) to Laub, 18 February 1928, where the exchange proposal is spelled out.

<sup>10</sup> WSI. Viktor Loich to Laub, 3 May 1935.

Foreign Service<sup>11</sup>. He collaborated on the question with Yurii Aleksandrovich Krutkov, and he undertook discussions with AEG and the Reichspost about marketing his ideas<sup>12</sup>. Laub and Friedrich Kirschstein carried out experimental tests of radiotelephone transmission around 1936<sup>13</sup>. At the very end of his life, Laub tried to settle out of court with AEG over his priority on this question<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> On Uriburu and Justo, for example: Carlos Alberto Floria and César A. García Belsunce, *Historia de los Argentinos*, vol. 2 (1971; Buenos Aires 1975), pp. 327–340. Laub's overtures to the industrialists are indicated in his commentaries in a catalogue of the Galerie Gerd Rosen (Kunst- & Buch-Antiquariat Auktionen) for *Auktion 36* (Berlin April 1961), lot 3968; in an accompanying text, "Die Herkunft des hochfrequenten Drahtfunks" (Fribourg 1961), (New York, Leo Baeck Institute, AR-A 438 1282) Laub asserted that his experiments carried out in Breslau in 1931–1933 lie at the beginning of the high-frequency radio technology subsequently used by the Reichspostministerium. Laub wrote to Kurt Wegscheider on 15 December 1960: "Der hochfrequente Drahtfunk (Radio am Telephon) ist auf meine Versuche in Deutschland zurückzuführen. Das ist auch veröffentlicht, besonders nach dem Krieg von einem hohen Beamten des Postministeriums. Aber auch schon im Jahre 1936 in den Loren(t)z Berichten (die bekannte Firma Lorentz Berlin)". The Wegscheider letter in the author's possession [henceforth LP]. See F. Budischin, "Entwicklung und Ausbau des hochfrequenten Drahtfunks in Deutschland" *Fernmeldetechnische Zeitschrift* 1 (1948), pp. 201–202, for Laub's pioneering research which, however, is incorrectly attributed to "Prof. W. Laub".

<sup>12</sup> LP. Kurt Wegscheider to the author, 21 July 1980, where Wegscheider recalled meeting Laub around 1934–1935 and discussing the overtures to AEG and the postal service. Laub recalled his work with Krutkov in Gerd Rosen, *Auktion 36*, item 3968. There Laub referred to him as C. A. Kruckow. The identification of Kruckow as Krutkov is circumstantial but persuasive. Krutkov, one of the most talented early-twentieth-century Russian physicists, was completely at home in the German language. He signed his numerous German papers as "G. Krutkow". Before 1933 he spent long periods of time studying and working in the Netherlands and Germany. V. Ya. Frenkel, "Yurii Aleksandrovich Krutkov": *Soviet Physics Uspekhi* 13 (1971), pp. 816–825.

<sup>13</sup> WSI. Leo Pungs to Laub, 3 August 1936, where Pungs, an *Ordinarius* at the Braunschweig Institute of Technology, wrote: "Ihre gemeinsam mit Herrn Kirschstein durchgeführten Arbeiten waren mir alle bekannt, da ich selbst eine Reihe von Messungen auf dem gleichen Gebiet angestellt habe". Pungs explained that he did not feel the need to cite the work (appearing in *Lorenz Berichte: Technische Hausmitteilungen der Aktiengesellschaft*) in a recent and related publication of his. Kirschstein, *Über ein Verfahren zur graphischen Behandlung elektrischer Schwingungsvorgänge* (diss., Berlin Inst. of Tech. 1930).

<sup>14</sup> LP. Laub to Wegscheider, 28 June 1960, 16 July 1960, and 15 December 1960. From the last: "Dr. Werner, Berlin, ausgezeichnet, eine Persönlichkeit. Doziert an der technischen Universität. Er war diese Woche in Zürich, woher er mich anrufen hat. Im Januar wird er mich besuchen, denn ich kann nicht nach Zürich reisen. – Er hat Querverbindungen zur AEG. Er muss noch mündlich mit mir etwas besprechen. Es wird wohl mit Gottes Hilfe eine Einigung kommen, ohne Schiedsgericht. – Das alles vertraulich. – In USA rechne ich mit der Hilfe der Weltfirma Brown Boveri".

Radiotelephone extended promises of financial reward. It was otherwise with research into atmospheric electricity, which absorbed Laub's interests at both the beginning and the end of his career. Atmospheric electricity constituted part of Laub's intellectual mandate during his brief tenure in geophysics at the National University of La Plata. Together with the German director of the Central Meteorological Institute of Santiago de Chile, Walter Knoche, Laub took extensive measurements of atmospheric electricity during the Brazilian total eclipse of 1912<sup>15</sup>. He carried out related observations in southern Argentina during his time at the Instituto Nacional del Profesorado Secundario, although these appeared in print in Argentina only in 1926. In 1944–1945, furloughed from European service, Laub turned to study the therapeutic effects of electrical conductivity in the air of the Rawson Hospital in Buenos Aires. Laub arrived at Fribourg in April 1948 and promptly continued his research into atmospheric ionization – including that produced by radioactive fallout from nuclear tests – and public health<sup>16</sup>. In 1955/56, when Laub was well over seventy years old, a paper appeared on the subject coauthored with Friedrich Dessauer and the late Walter Graffunder; it presented and analyzed measurements taken in the late 1940s<sup>17</sup>. At the age of 77 he sparred with Hans Israël, a meteorologist with the German Weather Service at Aachen, over atmospheric electricity during solar eclipses: Laub and Israël argued the merits of Laub's observations from 1912<sup>18</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> Walter Knoche, Jakob Laub, "Meteorologische und luftelektrische Messungen während der totalen Sonnenfinsternis am 10. Oktober 1912 auf der Fazenda Bõa Vista bei Christina, Brasilien": *Terrestrial Magnetism and Atmospheric Electricity* 21 (1916), pp. 117–204. On Knoche: Lewis Pyenson, "Ciencia pura y hegemonía política: Investigadores franceses y alemanes en Latinoamérica": *Historia de las ciencias*, ed. Antonio Lafuente and Juan José Saldaña (Madrid 1987), pp. 195–215, on p. 210.

<sup>16</sup> LP. Laub to Kurt Wegscheider, 13 May 1948, where Laub reports his arrival in Fribourg and his affiliation with the physics institute there.

<sup>17</sup> Jakob Laub, "Über Schwankungen atmosphärischer Ionen und ihre biologische Wirkung": *Bulletin der Schweizerischen Akademie der medizinischen Wissenschaften* 16 (1960), pp. 292–304, where Laub refers to his Argentine and Swiss publications and to the question of radioactive fallout. On fallout: WSI. A. Sittkus (Freiburg i.Br.) to Laub, 18 July 1953. On his collaborator: J. A. del Regato, "Friedrich Dessauer": *International Journal of Radiation Oncology and Biological Physics* 4 (1974), pp. 125–7. Dessauer was a pioneer of medical radiology in the early decades of the twentieth century. From 1937 to 1953 he directed the physics institute of the University of Fribourg.

<sup>18</sup> WSI. Israël to Laub, 15 April 1959.

Just as atmospheric electricity touched Laub in his early and later years, so Albert Einstein crossed the compass of his life. In 1937, upon his transfer from Hamburg to Warsaw, Laub left a number of papers in the keeping of his sister-in-law, Emma Ahlmann Wendt. The papers survived the war and Laub retrieved them in the 1950s. They included a collection of letters from Einstein, beginning in 1908, extracts from which appeared in Carl Seelig's documentary biography of Einstein<sup>19</sup>. The letters have come to provide us with a unique picture of Einstein as he labored on the road to general relativity. In Laub's dying days, they were his principal comfort.

Laub lived in Fribourg on his Argentine pension. Under Juan Domingo Perón's reign, it took a bit of paperwork to have a pension forwarded overseas<sup>20</sup>. As the Argentine peso began its downward slide, the pension ceased to provide for Laub's expenses. Soon after arriving in Fribourg, Laub wrote to his nephew Kurt Wegscheider that the peso had declined by more than 25% and that he was worried about his living arrangements<sup>21</sup>. In 1954 he asked Dessauer for 400 Fr. to cover him for the month of February<sup>22</sup>. Through the 1950s, Laub's health declined along with the peso. In 1960 his arm underwent an operation for an old X-ray burn<sup>23</sup>. By this time the Argentine pension covered virtually none of his needs, the peso having sunk to the value of five Swiss centimes<sup>24</sup>. Laub raised funds by sending 73 items from his *Nachlaß* to a Berlin auction house, Galerie Gerd Rosen, through the intermediary of his nephew Kurt Wegscheider<sup>25</sup>. Eleven letters from Einstein, written between 1908 and 1913, went for DM 11.000; other items netted much less. As a measure of

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<sup>19</sup> Carl Seelig, *Albert Einstein: Eine dokumentarische Biographie* (Zürich 1954), constituting a revision of Seelig's, *Albert Einstein und die Schweiz* (Zürich 1952). LP. Kurt Wegscheider to the author, 21 July 1980, for the circumstances of Laub's *Nachlaß*.

<sup>20</sup> WSI. Phyllis Hementl (?) to Laub, 8 October 1949.

<sup>21</sup> LP. Laub to Wegscheider, 26 September 1948: "Leider ist der argentinische Peso um mehr als 25% abgewertet, ich weiß noch nicht, wie es weiter gehen wird, ferner, wie lang ich hier unter diesen Umständen bleiben werde".

<sup>22</sup> WSI. Laub to Dessauer, [1954]: "Für den Monat Februar muß ich noch leider 400 Fr. haben, um die ich Sie bitte, denn ich bin ganz ohne Geldmittel".

<sup>23</sup> LP. Laub to Galerie Rosen, 30 May 1960 (copy).

<sup>24</sup> LP. Laub to Wegscheider, 31 May 1960: "Mir wü[r]de es viel besser gehen, wenn ich nicht so viele Schwierigkeiten mit meiner Pension hätte". Laub to Wegscheider, 28 June 1960, for the exchange rate.

<sup>25</sup> LP. Laub to Wegscheider, 28 June 1960.

comparison, a letter of Friedrich Wilhelm von Schelling's, auctioned at the same time, knocked down only DM 225<sup>26</sup>.

Laub's reaction to it all: "Please telephone me right away that the money has been sent, for I *really* need it"<sup>27</sup>. Without the money, Laub wrote to his nephew, he would have been sent to the poorhouse. His Argentine pension brought in around DM 170 per month. His savings in Buenos Aires, apparently some 60.000 pesos, were finally released by the government; because of devaluation, they were worth only 5500 Fr. Much or most of this sum seems to have gone to cover the cost of three operations. Laub reported that his sister-in-law, Emma Ahlmann Wendt, had found still more letters and printed material. He asked his nephew to bring the new material to Gerd Rosen for auction<sup>28</sup>. The documents – including a large number of Einstein's reprints from the early years and a few more of Einstein's letters – went on the block in April 1961<sup>29</sup>. Laub then sent additional items to Gerd Rosen for the autumn auction<sup>30</sup>. His position at this time was "not especially rosy". He complained to his nephew that Emma Ahlmann had lost a great deal of his material, including reprints of his articles with Einstein<sup>31</sup>. The autumn auction at Gerd Rosen brought lively bidding. It was featured on television and in the newspapers<sup>32</sup>. Laub added DM 643 to his coffers as a result<sup>33</sup>.

Money weighed on Laub's mind as he approached his eightieth birthday and saw two articles to press<sup>34</sup>. His small pension had stopped coming

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<sup>26</sup> LP. Wegscheider to Laub, 14 November 1960 (copy): "Als die Nummer 4529 aufgerufen wurde, betonte der Versteigerer, daß es sich hier um das Glanzstück der Auktion handele. Drei Kommissionäre haben mit bestimmten Aufträgen geboten. Zunächst wird üblicherweise mit der Hälfte der Taxwerte angefangen. Hier hat jedoch der Auktionator gleich mit DM 10.000,— begonnen, bei DM 11.000,— den Zuschlag erteilt". Wegscheider gives the price of the Schelling letter. Excerpts from the Einstein letters, including two photographed pages, appear in Galerie Gerd Rosen, *Auktion 35*, III. Teil, Bücher und Autographen (Berlin 1960), pp. 342–344.

<sup>27</sup> LP. Laub to Wegscheider, 26 November 1960: "Telephoniere bitte sehr gleich, daß das Geld überwiesen wird, denn ich brauche es notwendig".

<sup>28</sup> LP. Laub to Wegscheider, 15 December 1960.

<sup>29</sup> Galerie Gerd Rosen, 37. *Auktion*, Teil II, Bücher und Autographen (Berlin 1961).

<sup>30</sup> LP. Laub to Wegscheider, 28 July 1961.

<sup>31</sup> LP. Laub to Wegscheider, 7 September 1961.

<sup>32</sup> LP. Wegscheider to Laub, 27 November 1961 (copy).

<sup>33</sup> LP. Laub to Wegscheider, 3 December 1961.

<sup>34</sup> Laub, *Über Schwankungen*; Jakob Laub, "Albert Einstein und Albert Gockel": *Academia Friburgensis* 20 (1962), pp. 29–33.

from Buenos Aires. He tried to obtain a settlement from AEG regarding his old research on radiotelephones from the 1930s. This had become for him a *Lebensfrage*<sup>35</sup>. As he lay dying, Laub wrote a final letter to Kurt Wegscheider, imploring him to find a certain patent lawyer in Berlin<sup>36</sup>. He expired within the month, the silver horizon still dangling a promise of prosperity and honor<sup>37</sup>. It was Einstein, bracketing Laub's life, who provided a measure of both.

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<sup>35</sup> LP. Laub to Wegscheider, 8 February 1962.

<sup>36</sup> LP. Laub to Wegscheider, 29 March 1962.

<sup>37</sup> Fribourg, Registre des décès de l'arrondissement de l'état civil, 37, 235 no. 193: "Acte de décès, Jacobo-Juan Laub". Laub died on 22 April 1962, at 10:43 a.m.