

# The Royaumont Seminar 1959 and Freudenthal's Involvement

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As it is already common lore in the history of mathematics education, Hans Freudenthal had been invited to participate at the Seminar on *New Thinking in School Mathematics*, held in Royaumont in 1959, organised by the OEEC (later renamed OECD), but had rejected the invitation – and that he regretted later on this refusal as a great error, assuming he might have impeded the worst of what he then thought to be a wrong way for modernisation (de Bock & Vanpaemel 2019, p. 75). La Bastide-van Gemert was already able to shade and differentiating this common lore, by researching in Freudenthal's *Nachlass* (La Bastide-van Gemert 2015). The focus of her analysis was to study Freudenthal's individual acting regarding the invitation.

As I had shown in my research upon this Seminar, which in fact launched the modern math movement internationally, the archive of the OECD had no longer documents of the preparatory stages of the Seminar; all that had been simply littered (Schubring 2014). Not only Freudenthal's correspondence with the OEEC staff, but also a number of documents he received during the preparatory stages of the Seminar enable, however, to reconstruct somewhat the preparations by the OEEC and by a "group of experts", which should assist them in elaborating the programme.

These documents allow not only to understand the concretisation of the conceptions for the Seminar, but also to remark that Freudenthal's participation in the preparatory changes had instigated effects upon the Seminar conceptions. My contribution will analyse these developments and elaborations. In a last section, I will report on my searches for information about the three West-German Seminar participants: Hermann Athen, Otto Botsch and Heinz Schöne.

De Bock, Dirk & G Vanpaemel (2019). *Rods, sets and arrows - The Rise and Fall of Modern Mathematics in Belgium*. New York: Springer.

La Bastide-van Gemert, Sacha (2015). *All Positive Action Starts with Criticism - Hans Freudenthal and the Didactics of Mathematics*. Dordrecht et al.: Springer.

Schubring, Gert (2014). The road not taken - The Failure of Experimental Pedagogy at the Royaumont Seminar 1959, *Journal für Mathematik-Didaktik*, 35: 1, 159-171.

The original conclusions of the Royaumont Seminar 1959, edited and commented by Gert Schubring, *International Journal for the History of Mathematics Education*, 2014, 9: 1, 89-101.