

To:

C. Guillemin

The Committee to Investigate the Possibility of Establishing
an International Union of Mineralogy

8 Mar 1957

American members

M. J. Buerger, Chairman
J. D. H. Donnay
J. W. Gruner

A. Pabst
S. C. Robinson

Corresponding members

G. F. Claringbull
C. Guillemin

H. G. F. Winkler

Additional correspondent

N. F. M. Henry

Gentlemen:

Replies have been received from all the members of this committee except Robinson. Dr. N. F. M. Henry has also contributed some remarks on our business, and all these replies are being circulated herewith.

There is ample evidence in the correspondence to indicate that some kind of international organization is desired by all. Several members, however, feel that the international organization should not take the form of a Union. In order to take account of these objections, I suggest that we refer to the hoped-for international organization tentatively as The International Mineralogical Association (IMA), with the understanding that the name is tentative and is proposed chiefly to avoid any detailed suggestion of the form and connections of the organization.

I propose that a preliminary, informal, and unofficial meeting be held among mineralogists attending the Congress of the International Union of Crystallography at Montreal July 10. I suggest that at this meeting we discuss general matters concerned with the possible International Mineralogical Association, and attempt to get up a date and agenda for a subsequent, more formal meeting. I enclose a draft of an invitation to attend this informal meeting at Montreal and request that any corrections or suggestions respecting it be sent to me at the earliest possible time. I propose that the invitation be sent to the following organizations and individually:

Austrian Mineralogical Association (to be contacted by Pabst)

British Mineralogical Society (to be contacted by Claringbull)

French Mineralogical Society (to be contacted by Guillemin)

German Mineralogical Society (to be contacted by Winkler)

Italian Mineralogical Society (to be contacted by Buerger)

Mineralogical Society of America (to be contacted by American members of this Committee)

Mineralogical Society of Switzerland (to be contacted by Buerger)

A key Mineralogist in Belgium (to be contacted by Donnay)

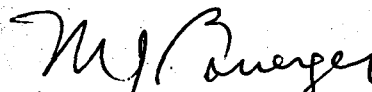
" " " " Finland (to be contacted by Buerger)

" " " " Sweden (to be contacted by Buerger)

" " " " Norway (to be contacted by Buerger)

I would be grateful if you would give the matters mentioned here your immediate attention.

Sincerely yours,


M. J. Buerger

8 Mars 1957

Claringbull

"I have now had an opportunity to discuss your memorandum to the Committee, appointed by the M.S.A., to Investigate the Possibility of Establishing an International Union of Mineralogy, dated December 18, 1956, with the Officers and Managing Trustees of the British Mineralogical Society. We are gratified to find that the M.S.A. is now interested in an international body for mineralogists.

"This Society since 1953 has been endeavouring to obtain support from the M.S.A. for the formation of an international organisation for mineralogists. Having waited for years for a reply from the M.S.A. - with whom we should have much preferred to have reached agreement before approaching other Societies - we decided last summer, in conjunction with a letter to European Societies about mineralogical abstracts, to raise also the question of international organisation.

"We have been careful not to propose, in the first place, an international Union for several reasons:

1. We do not wish to prejudice the issue in favour of a particular kind of organisation.
2. There were divergent opinions held about the form such an organisation should take.
3. There appeared to be similar divergent opinions in the U.S.A.
4. We were, and still are, given to understand that the formation of another International Scientific Union would be opposed by the existing scientific Unions if it made a direct approach to Unesco for support without first showing its calibre in practice.

We felt, therefore, that before proposing any specific type of organisation for discussion on an international basis, we should first propose an organisation and leave the decision on its particular form to international discussion.

"The result of our letters to the various European Mineralogical Societies and Institutes has been that all replies so far received - some of them at present only interim - are favourable. We decided not to circularise Iron Curtained countries until we had attempted to achieve agreement for the West.

"I think it would be safe to say, on the basis of discussions which have already taken place in our Council, and those I have recently held with the Officers and Trustees, that there is a reasonably unanimous desire among British mineralogists for some form of organisation, but that one could not be at all certain of obtaining even a majority vote for an International Union. I am therefore disappointed to find that the attempts of this Society, going back to 1953, for discussion on the subject of international organisation have apparently not been passed to the terms of reference of your committee.

Claringbull

"We hope that, in view of the present state of our enquiries with European countries, the M.S.A. committee will not complicate the issue on this side of the Atlantic by sending out an additional circular proposing an International Union of Mineralogy, without prior agreement of the Council of the British Society."

Gruner

"Historically, mineralogists were at one time very important and they preceded, naturally, the modern type of crystallographer. They also were very much involved in the development of analytical chemistry, modern geology, and geochemistry. Looking into the future I am very much afraid that in another generation or two the mineralogist will have lost most of his ground to the crystallographer and the rest of it probably to the geochemist. This is taking a very black and discouraging view.

"I feel that in training mineralogists, we have reached the point where students should get more physics and chemistry than anything else. I have found that if you give them such necessary training that it will not be very long before they will have decided to become crystallographers in preference to mineralogists. I do not know whether you will agree with me.

"If the remaining mineralogists now band together and have an international union of mineralogy, would that stem the tide and help us to retain the semblance to mineralogy as a distinct branch of natural science? If you think that it would, I am certainly in favor of forming such a union. I suppose in that case we should heavily draw on crystallographers, as well as economic geologists, and perhaps to a certain extent on geochemists as members. If we can persuade the European and other countries to join such an organization, we probably should not hesitate.

"I suppose you visualize sort of an international union meeting of mineralogists perhaps every three or four years. In that case it might be a good idea to have it at the same place and perhaps overlapping in time with one of the other unions so that travel time and expenses could be somewhat reduced. I will be very much interested in the opinions of the other members of our committee, and in the attitude other countries may take to an invitation from us."

Donnay

"I have read the correspondence sent by Dr. Claringbull on behalf of the Mineralogical Society (of London). It seems to me that our own committee could, at an early date, reach an appreciable measure of agreement as to what could be done now. I would venture to say that all of us would agree to the following points:

1. We want an international association of some kind or other, devoted to Mineralogy.
2. We want this body to be an independent one, that is to say, not tied to any existing organization as a mere sub-section or commission. (This refers to International Geological Congress, International Union of Crystallography, and other existing unions.)

3. Some of us might prefer an International Union of Mineralogy, but even these would not prefer having nothing than not having an International Union of Mineralogy. All of us, I would think, want to avoid stagnation while necessary negotiations are going on.

4. We should therefore go ahead with plans to form a temporary organization, independent, not an International Union at birth, but which may become one in due course.

If you too feel that we could agree on such terms, please circulate the enclosed carbon copies to members of the committee, with your proposal for action. We could then embody our recommendations in a report to the Council of M.S.A., and request that Council act on it by mail, that is, without waiting for the November meeting.

The reason for all the hurry is that the organisational meeting of the proposed association could well be called in Montreal next July, before or after the Congress of Crystallography."

Henry

"Having recently had the opportunity of talks with colleagues in different countries, I offer the following suggestions for the consideration of members of the committee which has just been set up by the Mineralogical Society in America.

1. There is general satisfaction that our American colleagues have decided to join in the work which has been going on in Europe with a view to achieving some such organization. The British Society sent out a preliminary letter to various countries in the summer of 1956 and a number of replies to this were received.

2. It does appear, however, that there may be a more suitable form of organization than a Union. The reasons for this are that we do not wish to separate ourselves too sharply from the Geological Congress on the one hand nor from the Union of Crystallography on the other. Also there would be strong opposition from existing Unions to the formation of a new one for financial reasons, as its share of Unesco subsidies would be subtracted from their own shares. Again, the holding of separate Congresses, if a new Union were formed, would require a large amount of time and energy, probably from the same kind of people who at present gave so much work to the two other Organizations just mentioned.

3. There are undoubtedly activities which would benefit from some kind of international organization in the field of Mineralogy, but we suggest that this should be something less formal than a Union, at least to begin with. One suggestion is that it maybe possible to enlarge somewhat the scope of the recently-formed International Society for Geochemistry to include mineralogists. Such a step would give us the opportunity of seeing how this International Organization worked out in practice before taking the much larger step towards the formal foundation of a new Union."

Allemin (translation)

"I am entirely in agreement with ^{many} numerous French mineralogists in thinking that it is necessary to create an International Union of Mineralogy soon. In the symposia held by geologists or crystallographers, we play the part of poor relatives if, in the sessions, we could engage in personal relations, it is hardly easy to bring about communication, and a good number of symposia are forbidden to us because we have no way of choosing the subjects. Also, the excursions connected with the meetings have only remote connections with mineralogy.

"In creating an International Union for a science as vast as mineralogy, the science from which geology as well as crystallography grew and which plays a greater role every day in numerous scientific activities, we will prevent its being considered only as an accessory science and we will be able to make the studies which actually try to get away from it return (petrography, geochemistry, clay study, etc.).

"Having specialized in descriptive mineralogy, I think such a Union could create commissions useful in clarifying this subject; particularly, I want an International Committee for New Species, a committee growing out of the Union, which could supervise publications concerning new minerals in order to avoid an excess of improper names as well as setting up nomenclature rules for the mineral world.

"It would also be useful in making a census in the countries belonging to the Union of the original mineral classes to place them eventually at the disposal of those doing research on them.

"These are two ideas which come to my mind, but we will find many others which will prove that the establishment of this Union is a real necessity.

"I think that the French Society of Mineralogy and Crystallography, once advised, will be very happy to help as best it can in the project which you propose."

Pabst

"At this moment I have only the following suggestions to make:

A. That we follow your plan of bringing this matter up with our sister societies as soon as possible. The British Society has meetings in January, March and June and the French Society also has meetings at frequent intervals so that it ought to be easy for these groups to take some preliminary action before next summer. The DMG, like the MSA, meets only once a year, usually in late summer. There are also rather active mineralogical societies in Italy and in Switzerland. They should also be brought into these preliminary discussions. There is an Oesterreichische Mineralogische Gesellschaft but it functions largely as a local Viennese society. Even so, it might also be included as well as any other well-established scientific mineralogical organization.

B. We should definitely plan to have a Montreal meeting to discuss plans with an international group, preferably of authorized representatives, and possibly to take action towards establishment of a Union if that is the general wish. It seems probable to me that one or more active mineralogists from each of the more important countries will be present.

C. Some way should be found to reach mineralogists in those countries where no separate mineralogical societies exist but where there is a good deal of mineralogical activity, for instance, Sweden, Finland and Belgium.

D. I have long felt that better international cooperation in mineralogy would not only be desirable but could be most effective if only a good beginning were made and general agreement reached on a few fundamental matters. Possibly an International Union could handle some of these matters. This, it seems to me, would be a much more useful service than the holding of meetings. Among the matters that might be the concern of the Union may be mentioned:-

1. An international commission to exercise continuing surveillance over the establishment of new mineral names. If such a commission had functioned in the past systematic mineralogy might be in a much better state and the great amount of good scientific effort that must now be spent on clearing up old muddles might be applied towards enlarging our understanding in other ways. One of the first tasks of such a commission would be to set up minimum standards for descriptions of new minerals. Fleischer and others have done much excellent critical work along these lines but an international effort is clearly needed.

2. Mineral nomenclature was a subject for an attempt at British-American agreement a little over twenty years ago. This had some good results but much more should have been done and more effective steps should have been taken to implement the agreement. This matter has gained greatly in importance in recent years because of the entry of scientific workers from other disciplines into the fringes of mineralogy. An example is the great upsurge of activity in clay mineral studies by ceramists, soil scientists, engineers and others. There have been some unwise proposals for revision of nomenclature or classification proposed in these quarters where clearly the voice of responsible modern mineralogists should be heard.

3. Related to the matters just mentioned is that of preservation and accessibility of type specimens. Many questions of mineral nomenclature cannot be properly resolved because of lack of type material. An international organization might establish a system for depositories of type material for all new species and possibly for certain other significant mineralogical reference materials. This might be done through the cooperation of the national museums of each of the countries adhering to an international body with, possibly, in addition some one or more museums, such as the British Museum, acting as depositories for the entire world.

4. Some notice should be taken of the rise of new sciences that largely overlap mineralogy and in which some measure of independent organization has begun. The most conspicuous examples are geochemistry and the field of clay studies. There exists a more or less international periodical in the field of geochemistry and the recently organized Geochemical Society in this country has a somewhat international tinge. Possibly there could be overorganization and this may have some undesirable effects such as the provision of too many outlets for publication in some of which material remains effectively hidden. This may apply to the reports of the annual clay conferences that have been held in this country since 1952.

5. Mineralogical abstracting is certainly a field for international cooperation and this seems to me just the time for an effort in this matter which has long been handled on a strictly national basis and with some rather unhappy results. This is, of course, connected with other scientific abstracting, especially geological abstracting.

If there seems any prospect that a new Union could function effectively in connection with such matters as these, I would be highly in favor of getting it going as quickly as possible."

Winkler

"I have considered the matter of an international organization of mineralogists and come after discussions with some of my colleagues to the following conclusions:

"An international organization of mineralogists might be useful, provided, of course, that our burden will not be increased and that the existence of other international societies in our field will be taken into account.

"I feel that an affiliation with the recently formed Geochemical Society would be advisable because (a) that society covers a very wide field of mineralogy already and (b) it is, concerning membership quite international. It would be a great pity, if we had an International Mineralogical Society and separately the Geochemical Society; an affiliation of the two seems to be very desirable. This would form a really strong society which could establish very close contacts to the Union of Crystallography and the International Geological Congress. Primary task of an International Society of Mineralogy or Union of Mineralogy should be the organization of Symposia in our field which seems to be more fruitful than a congress; next, the matter of Mineralogical Abstracts on an international basis, as will be initiated by N. F. Henry, seems to deserve full support of a Union of Mineralogy.

"A further point for consideration seems to be the problem: 'Union of Mineralogy' o r 'International Society of Mineralogy.' I am not sure, but I believe that a Union has a different status which might be difficult to attain; but I am not certain on this.

"The next step to be taken by the committee is, as you wrote, to communicate with the several societies of the world. This, has

already been done by G. F. Claringbull about six months ago and I know that the German Mineralogical Society has answered his circular. Other Societies will also have answered; therefore the above mentioned step seems to be unnecessary. It would be valuable to know of the result of Claringbull's activities in this matter."

8 Mars 1957

Invitation to Send National Delegates to Montreal to
Consider the Formation of an International Mineralogical
Association.

The Mineralogical Society of America appointed a committee to investigate the possibility of establishing an International Union of Mineralogy. The committee consists of five American members and one corresponding member from England, one from France and one from Germany. After an exchange of correspondence it became evident that the Committee is unanimous in desiring to go ahead with the formation of an international mineralogical organization, although several have suggested that perhaps the organization should not have the form of a Union. To avoid such a connotation, the committee proposes that an International Mineralogical Association be formed. Our corresponding member from England, Dr. G. F. Claringbull, informs us that the British Mineralogical Society is also in favor of such an organization, and that a canvass by them indicates that the idea is well received by other European mineralogical groups.

To establish an International Mineralogical Association as soon as possible, our Committee suggests the following plan:

(1) The International Union of Crystallography meets July 10 - July 20, 1957, in Montreal, Canada. Since many mineralogists will attend this International meeting, it is suggested that each national Mineralogical Society delegate one of its members, who plans to go to Montreal, to represent that country in a preliminary informal meeting to be arranged by this Committee at the I.U.C. The function of this informal

meeting will be

- (a) to discuss the proposed I.M.A., its form and scope;
- (b) to select an appropriate location for a later, more formal session of delegates to establish such an I.M.A. (It is tentatively suggested that the meeting be held during the April holidays in Southern Europe);
- (c) To suggest an agenda for such a subsequent formal meeting; and
- (d) to consider a provisional constitution under which the later formal meeting could be conducted.

Your Mineralogical Society is accordingly invited to appoint as its delegate some member who plans to attend the I.U.C. at Montreal. (This invitation is also addressed to prominent mineralogists in countries not having Mineralogical Societies, requesting them to find a mineralogist of their country who can represent the country at the informal meeting).

It is suggested that the meeting be convened by M. J. Buerger, but that the delegates be prepared to nominate and elect a chairman.

M. J. Buerger, Chairman

G. F. Claringbull

J. D. H. Donnay

J. W. Gruner

C. Guillemin

A. Pabst

S. C. Robinson

H. G. F. Winkler

Committee of the Mineralogical
Society of America

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