

Ernst Henrici Addresses Berlin Antisemites in the Reichshall Meeting: A Report in the *Tribune* (December 1880)

Abstract

The 1880s saw the rise of increasingly racist variants of antisemitism. This radicalization did not gain the favor of the Christian Social court chaplain Adolf Stoecker, who was closely involved in Conservative Party affairs, but Stoecker's competitors within the movement pushed for it. One such antisemite was Ernst Henrici (1854–1915), a grammar school teacher and the founder of the Social Imperial Party (*Soziale Reichspartei*), a splinter group. This rabble-rousing speech by Henrici to Berlin antisemites achieved immediate notoriety on account of its vicious language, its call for physical attacks on Jews attending the rally, and the tumults that broke out during the meeting. While most accounts of political assemblies in Bismarckian Germany suggest rather sedate (even sleepy) proceedings, this account stands apart: instead of providing a brief summary of predictable speeches, it vividly describes how a public rally was allowed to get out of hand—intentionally or not. The interventions hurled from the floor are as telling as the anti-Jewish pronouncements offered from the podium.

Source

A turbulent meeting, far eclipsing all Social Democratic and Christian Socialist ones, took place on Friday evening in the upper hall of the “Reichshallen” on Dönhofsplatz: “*Meeting of the Antisemitic Liberal Party*” was the description used in the editorial sections of some newspapers to draw attention to the event. “*A Meeting of All Truly Liberal Citizens of the Christian Religion*” was used as well. The following topic was specified: “Lecture on the Means for Maintaining Christian-German Interests.” On public advertising columns, however, large posters read “*People’s Assembly and Discussion of a Highly Important Matter!* — The Committee. On the authority of H. Weber.” It was probably on account of these various invitations that a great number of Israelites, Social Democrats, etc., were in attendance. Soon after 8 p.m., all parts of the great hall were completely overcrowded. Over 3,000 people may have gathered there. After a police officer and a constable had taken seats next to the committee table, the grammar school teacher *Dr. Henrici* stepped onto the platform and declared, on behalf of the committee, that the meeting was open. (There was shouting in the hall: Who is the committee? — Jews, shut your traps!) *Henrici*: I call on you to elect a chairman. (Shouting: First off, name the committee! — Racket in the hall.) *Henrici*: Is Herr Ruppel present? *Ruppel*: Yes, absolutely! [*Henrici*:] I ask Herr Ruppel whether he is possibly willing to chair the meeting? — *Ruppel*: I will chair the meeting, possibly. (Great hilarity.) — *Ruppel*: I am prepared to preside over the meeting if I am given the assurance that this assembly consists only of Christian men of German descent. [...] (Thunderous applause and prolonged drumming. Shouting: Jews out! Let’s get on with the rules of procedure!) — *Ruppel* (continuing): I am prepared to preside over the meeting if I am assured that only Christian men of German descent are present in this assembly. (Thunderous applause and racket. Shouting: We have Jews here, Yiddish wheelers and dealers; Jews out!) At the back of the hall, a number of Jews are thrown out by force, with knocks and blows. Finally, the print shop owner *Ruppel* was elected chairman. *Ruppel*: I want to thank you for my election and would like to mention that only Christian men of German descent were invited. (Thunderous applause and racket.) Anyone who does not meet these criteria is requested to leave the premises. (Thunderous applause and prolonged, really deafening tumult. Shouting: Jews out! On to the rules of procedure! This is a people’s assembly!) In various parts of the hall, brawls flare up. — At last, a Herr Schultz is called to speak on the rules of procedure. He states that he considers the conduct of the

chairman absolutely unjustified, for according to the public advertising columns, this is a people's assembly and *anyone* is allowed to attend such a meeting. (Thunderous applause and intense racket.) — *Dr. Henrici*: According to the constitution, any Prussian has the right [...] (Shouting: To be thrown out! From the back of the hall, one could hear violent beating and terrible yelling.) *Henrici*: I ask you now to listen to me calmly. First of all, I just want to point out that the word "Christian" is no longer permitted on advertising columns. (Shouting: Outrageous! Everything is under Jewish influence already!) Otherwise the invitation on the columns would have read differently. *Dr. Henrici* then continues: The dominance of the Jews over the Christian people has become nothing short of unbearable. The Jews now pretend that they are more morally upright than we are and use that to gloss over their social predominance. So here I provide a statistical table. (Shouting: Where does the table come from? — From another corner: Lazy Jew boy, if you don't shut your big mouth, you will get a box on the ears! Terrible racket.) — Chairman *Ruppel*: Just let *Herr Henrici* finish; there will be discussion afterwards. (Shouting: Jews have nothing to discuss here! Racket.) *Dr. Henrici* reads aloud the well-known statistical table that has been discussed many times in the newspapers. According to this table, over the last eight years, Jews were sentenced by German courts considerably more often than Christians for currency offences, perjury, fraud, forgery, fraudulent bankruptcy, and sex crimes. They say that the Talmud—which is dismissed as a source of the Jewish religion, but still regarded by the Jews as something sacred—promotes these crimes. (Dreadful racket. Shouting: Outrageous! From somewhere else: "And we have to sit here among this Jewish riff-raff!" "Just kick the Jews out!" "Jews, hats off!" the hall resounded. Since several Jews were sitting at the back of the hall with their heads covered, their hats were knocked off, and by means of knocks and blows they were kicked out of the hall, their hats thrown after them.) Once order had been restored, *Dr. Henrici* read a few passages from the Talmud that said approximately the following: "Anyone cheating a goy, that is, a Christian, is doing a godly deed; anyone who finds something a Christian has lost and returns it to the Christian will not be forgiven by God." Perjury committed against a Christian during legal proceedings is described as a particularly godly act, *Dr. Henrici* continued. The Talmud even reports that the good Lord is in direct contact with the rabbis and confers with them frequently about perjuries committed or still to be committed by Jews against Christians in court actions. At this point, an absolutely indescribable tumult started so that the chairman, unable to restore order despite repeated ringing, was compelled to call for a five-minute recess. Brawls took place in various parts of the hall. "Lies! Slander! Impudent Jews!"—the muddled shouts resounded. Once again, a number of Jews were thrown out of the hall with knocks and blows.

Dr. Henrici continued: "A long time ago already, Professor Rohling offered a reward of 1,000 Thalers to anyone providing evidence that these sentences are not in the Talmud." (Thunderous applause and terrible racket. Shouting: "When it comes to Professor Rohling, any destraint is futile!" Repeated brawls in the back of the hall.) *Dr. Henrici*: "But no one has earned these 1,000 Thalers yet, no matter how greedy the Jews might otherwise be." (Thunderous applause and racket.) The speaker reported how "in many cases, Jews had cheated Christians out of their property in the most brazen way." Whenever Christians do anything similar, the speaker continued, the only thing to blame for it is the Jewish spirit that has been introduced into our Christian German people by Jews. (Thunderous applause and racket.) Our financial circumstances have undergone fundamental changes; wealth is increasingly concentrated in the hands of Jews. (Applause and racket.) Some time ago, the Jew Mendel Mannheimer donated 100,000 marks to the Jewish workers' pension institution on the occasion of his silver wedding anniversary. (Hear! Hear!) Just consider how incredibly rich this Jew must be. (Shouting: Damned Jew, Yiddish wheeler and dealer!) I ask you, is this a healthy state of affairs? (No, no, this is a Jewish state of affairs!) But I would like very much to tell you by which means the Jew Mendel Mannheimer has acquired such an incredible fortune. You see, the coat seamstresses he employs earn only four Thalers. (Racket.) It is a well-known fact that the Jews completely dominate the textile industry. A collar seamstress who really applies herself barely earns one mark a day. (Shouting: Outrageous!) If you oppress your workers so much, you can easily give away 100,000 marks all in one go. The Jew has no ideals: his ideal is earning money. (Shouting: Very true! Absolutely right!) For money, the Jew sacrifices his good reputation and his

honor. (Applause and racket.) Old Rothschild once said: “Anyone who takes away my money, takes away my honor, for my money is my honor.” (Terrible racket.) These days you see a lot of black-haired Christians in Germany. You see, because of their plentiful money the Jews are in a position to buy Christian girls to satisfy their desires, thus the black hair of many Christians. (Tumultuous hilarity and applause.) The speaker then told a story about a Jewish merchant who had a “pretty Christian-German clothing designer” he tried to seduce with great promises and presents. But when the Christian girl turned him down, he dismissed her. The founder of the “Alliance internationale israélite” [sic.], the now deceased Jew Cremieux in Paris, who, before he moved to France, may have been called “Krämer,”^[1] (laughter) once said: “Israel is advancing with giant strides.” Indeed, we can see every day how true this Jew’s statement really is. Almost all of Germany is already under Jewish influence. “Because of the important holidays, my shop will remain closed.” — Such notices can be seen hanging on most shops on a number of days, usually in September. I ask you: What kind of holidays are these? (Shouting: Of the Jewish wheelers and dealers!) The Jewish humor magazine, the *Kladderadatsch*, has the audacity to write: “This paper appears daily with the exception of weekdays.” And do you know when this paper appears? “On the Sabbath.” (Tumultuous hilarity and racket.) Yes, on the Sabbath, even though it is dated with Sunday. In the year 9 A.D., the Teutons said: We no longer let the foreign Romans sit in judgment of us; we can pass judgment on our people ourselves. Today, over 1,800 years later, we have to put up with Jews passing judgment on us. (Shouting: Boo! Racket.) I do not doubt the impartiality of our judges; but when I think of the passages quoted from the Talmud and have to tell myself that a large part of our judges were raised under such influence, [then] I am worried about our German people. (Thunderous applause and terrible racket. At the back of the hall and on the galleries severe brawls take place, in the course of which several Jews are thrown out by force once again.) The speaker reads several passages from the Talmud that advise Jewish judges to judge in favor of Jews at all times. (Cries of outrage.) I remind you, dear gentlemen, of the impudence with which Jewish humor magazines caricature our clergymen. If the *Wahrheit* took the liberty of launching anything similar against rabbis, it would certainly be confiscated immediately. (Lively approval.) The fact that the Jews would shrink from no measure to achieve their goals has provided them with social superiority. Thus we see Jews advancing everywhere, in all branches of administration and offices. We Germans, fleeced as we are, do not have the opportunity, for instance, to loll around as a private lecturer for several years, like the Jew, and wait for a professorship, and that explains the large number of Jewish professors. Three quarters of the poets and writers in Germany belong to the Jewish people. It is widely known that our daily press is completely dominated by the Jews. Even though Christian editors are employed by some liberal newspapers, they are nonetheless on the Jews’ payroll. The Jews claim that they are patriotic. (Loud laughter.) Well, of course, why shouldn’t they be patriotic? Could the Jews imagine a better country than Germany in which to realize their objectives? (Shouting: Jewish Eldorado!) Oh, yes, the Jews may well be patriotic, but they lack any German nationalist consciousness. (Thunderous applause and racket.) In the year 1870, it was almost exclusively Jews who tried to avoid participating in the open battle with the German archenemy by reporting to the military offices as scribblers. (Thunderous applause and racket.) “Fatherland” and “Jew” are simply two terms that don’t go together. In this country, forward steps—“progress”—means Jewish steps. (Thunderous applause.) The *Vossische Zeitung*, generally known as a progressive newspaper, adheres to the principle of printing anything that is favorable to the Jews and suppressing everything that attacks them. It proceeds in this way with foreign press assessments of the Jewish question, with the responses to Dr. Förster regarding the Jewish Petition, and with the well-known scandal involving District Governor Dollfuß. (Thunderous applause and racket.) This man, who has stolen eight tons of cement from the city, has been confirmed in office by the progressive Assembly of City Councilors, because they were afraid that without this confirmation the Jew Straßmann would not be re-elected City Councilor. (Shouting.) The Progressives simply do not know any German ideals any more; their ideal is a “progressive Judeal.” (Thunderous applause and racket.) Professor Mommsen, a very old gentleman (Shouting: Well, he is burned out!) argues in a brochure that the Jews belong to the German nation and that the original sin of their forefathers is to blame for their evil deeds. (Shouting: Boo!) Well, I repeat, Professor Mommsen is already very old. (Laughter.) So what can we do about the

Jews? (Shouting: Smoke them out!) Herr Virchow says we should mix with the Jews (Loud laughter) so that the differences will even out. (Shouting: Never!) In my opinion, a people that has now been completely emancipated for 32 years and has adapted so little to the German national spirit is not capable of emancipation. It's not just the Jews who are to blame for their vices and crimes, but also the ones who have granted them emancipation. In the interests of the Jews, who have no moral footing and must not be unleashed, lest they fall victim to vice and crime, it is necessary to abolish Jewish emancipation and pass strict laws against the Jews. (Thunderous applause.) This is essential not just in the interests of the Christians but also of the Jews themselves. (Applause.) Apart from that, it is necessary to isolate the Jews socially. So I call on you: Do away with the Jewish newspapers! (Thunderous applause.) Do not buy from any Jews and do not vote for any Jew or Jewish crony (thunderous applause), for the liberal parties are closely connected with the Jews. The Progressive and National Liberal Parties are under Jewish influence. It won't be long before the Progressive Party will be toppled in Berlin. (Thunderous applause and racket.) The Altenburg election only came about because of the well-known Jewish fund. In 1848, a Jew lad by the name of Straßmann stood on the barricades, but when the bullets started to fly, he crawled away to hide in a woman's bed. (Thunderous applause and racket.) Today this same Straßmann is head of the Berlin City Council. (Shouting: Sad enough!) Finally, the speaker called for the passing of the following resolution: "The assembly shares the conviction that if the liberal parties identify any further with the Jews, the majority of the population will inevitably draw closer to the Conservatives. We voice our protest against this shameless coquetry carried out by German men with the Jews; and we are convinced that the only way to prevent this lack of orientation among our citizenry is to found a liberal party independent of Judaism." (Thunderous, prolonged applause and repeated cheers for Henrici, who responds with a cheer to the Emperor.)

After some brief remarks by Commissioner Demmler, the resolution was passed with only seven votes in opposition.

Eventually, the crowd flocked out of the hall, singing, "Throw him out, the Jew Itzig, because he takes whatever he sees."

NOTES

[1] A play on the German word for "grocer" and "petty person"—trans.

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