

Hellmuth von Gerlach on Leading Antisemites and Their Agitation (1880s)

Abstract

Hellmuth von Gerlach (1866–1935) was a member of the Association of German Students [*Verein deutscher Studenten*] in the 1880s when he met Court Chaplain Adolf Stöcker (1835–1909) and became enamored of Christian Socialism. He was one of the most important newspaper editors and agitators in Stöcker's Christian Social Party. After the mid-1890s, he moved into the camp of the liberal nationalist Friedrich Naumann (1860–1919). His leftward drift continued before and during the First World War: he espoused pacifism and, shortly after the war, became a co-founder of the German Democratic Party. The following excerpt is from Gerlach's autobiography, *From Right to Left* [*Von rechts nach links*], published in 1937. Gerlach is able to see through the chicanery and corruption of the German antisemitic movement's self-seeking leaders (many of whom are represented elsewhere in the documents and images in this volume).

Source

Chapter 15

How I Became an Antisemite

In the winter of 1885, I attended the *Kommers*^[1] organized by the Leipzig chapter of the Association of German Students^[2] in honor of the founding of the Reich. Court Chaplain Adolf Stöcker was the official speaker. He commenced: "Dear young friends! As you can hear, I am terribly hoarse. I can only manage to croak. But I intend to croak like the ravens from the Kyffhäuser Mountains and extol the magnificence of the Reich!" These first words from Stöcker's mouth remained etched in my young mind. After all, for me, they were the first evidence of a kind of rhetorical talent that Germany had not experienced since Lassalle. What incredibly rich imagery did this man evoke with his words! When the priest of Saint Sophia's church in Berlin, Walter Burckhardt, died at the age of twenty-seven, Stöcker gave the funeral oration. Burckhardt, handsome like a young God and highly talented, was the favorite student of the master he had revered with such enthusiasm. Stöcker, the childless man, cast his eyes on the coffin: "He was like a son to me ☒ in my work, my right hand. Now it has been hacked off." At this moment, the hard man's voice cracked. The hearts of everyone present stood still, and eyes filled with tears. As is generally known, oratorical talent is rare in Germany. Stöcker possessed it in its most valuable manifestation: in the ability to always speak in a form appropriate to the milieu. In the pulpit or at a banquet, at the grave or the baptismal font, in the synod or the parliament, in a popular assembly filled with adversaries, or before the faithful flock of a missionary association—at all times, his speech was well-suited to the audience.

People often claimed that Stöcker had taken speech lessons from a great actor. For in his case, everything was indeed harmonious: the content of the speech, the pose, the gesture, the bearing, and the voice. This was no artificial product, however. This man did not need lessons in public speaking. It was his nature—and nature under control. That is why it seemed, overwhelmingly, that even in the skeptical atmosphere of Parliament everyone hung spellbound on his every word.

One could hate Stöcker, one could love him, but no one could remain indifferent toward him. For an entire decade, I loved him. Every time I began to waver, the bewitching nature of his speech cast another spell on me. No matter how much I may have objected to his political proclamations, when I ended up

sitting under his pulpit in the City Mission Church on Sunday, it was as though my senses became befuddled once again. Bewitched, I remained on the magic mountain.

On Sunday evenings, Stöcker knew how to dispel any last remaining doubts that had cropped up among his followers over the course of the week. He had become rich through marriage and kept an open house. On Sunday evenings, he used to gather twenty to thirty of his friends at a richly laden (though not sumptuous) table. Young people were particularly well represented; in addition, there were also like-minded persons from the Reich who happened to be in Berlin at the time. Then the questions of the day were thoroughly discussed.

Stöcker was not an entertaining conversationalist in the manner of Prince Bülow, but rather a storyteller of fascinating appeal, sometimes of drastic coarseness, always of seemingly boundless candor. We felt as though we were in on every conceivable secret behind the scenes. Nothing flatters a young person more than believing that he has been taken into the confidence of a great public figure. As the editor of his daily newspaper *Das Volk*, as chairman of the Christian Socialist Party in Berlin's sixth [electoral] district, as the architect of his election victories, I had dealings with him every couple of days. He regarded me as a useful instrument, as I often heard from friends throughout the country, who reported Stöcker's flattering remarks about me. My vanity was fuelled to an alarming extent when I learned about a conversation [between Stöcker] and my great uncle Philipp Kühne in Wanzleben. The latter had mocked me, saying "he is a moralizer who is trying to save the world, and cuckoo at that." Upon hearing that, Stöcker replied, "if he is any bird at all, then he must be an eagle."

I clung to Stöcker in boundless devotion. What tied me to him especially was the immoderateness of the attacks leveled against him precisely in those instances in which he was, according to my knowledge of the facts, entirely right.

For instance, there was the affair with the "funeral pyre letter" [*Scheiterhaufenbrief*], which the entire leftist press portrayed as the abyss of depravity. It was a letter in which Stöcker explained to his friend von Hammerstein^[3] that he was to edit the *Kreuzzeitung* in such a way as to alienate the young emperor [*Kaiser*] from Bismarck, turn him away from the policy of the Conservative-National Liberal *Kartell* inaugurated in 1887, and sell him on a purely rightist policy. Certainly, it was impossible to harmonize the letter with the biblical commandment, "But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil."^[4] After all, however, it was merely the recommendation of a particular tactic, and without tactics, politics is not possible at all. The letter was certainly not defamatory.

What incensed me above all, however, was that Stöcker was maligned as a "perjury pastor," because he had sworn in a lawsuit that he had never seen a man who, as it turned out, had once confronted Stöcker in a public meeting. Of course, the oath was objectively false. But to use that against Stöcker in such a subjective way seemed malicious to me. Anyone who has spoken at hundreds of meetings knows how easily secondary discussion topics can evade one's memory.

The things that gradually caused me to doubt Stöcker and that subsequently drove me into open opposition to him were altogether different matters. He was a demagogue, albeit a demagogue of great importance, but nevertheless prepared to put the rabble-rousing effect above the subject matter itself. He had founded his new party, the Christian Social Workers' Party, to snatch workers away from Social Democracy. His eloquence failed among the proletarian masses, but it kindled enthusiasm among the proletarianized middle classes. To be precise, it was his critical comments about the Jews, initially made in passing, that found particular resonance among these craftsmen and small shopkeepers, whereas his social remarks usually went over people's heads.

Realizing this, he tried a different tack. Antisemitism occupied an increasingly large part of his speeches,

without his ever being able to specify what he actually wished to see done to the Jews.

You see, as an orthodox Christian, he was a confessed opponent of the racial viewpoint. For years, I considered Stöcker an honest social politician. That was precisely what bound me to him emotionally. Gradually, however, I began to doubt his sincerity on this score. He could not be moved to take sides against the Anti-Socialist Law, even though it constituted the most glaring injustice against workers. He toyed with the idea of replacing universal suffrage with some kind of nebulous electoral law based on social estates. He refused to take up the fight against the abomination that was Prussia's three-class franchise. Above all, he strictly opposed taking even a single step on behalf of farm workers. For the coat seamstresses, he found the strongest words of support. After all, this also gave him the opportunity to whip up his listeners' instincts against the "Jewish manufacturers of ready-to-wear clothing" at the same time. Yet with respect to the farm workers, who had even fewer rights and were in an even more miserable position, the word was—oh, don't touch the issue, don't touch it! The Junkers would certainly not have been pleased to hear anything on that score!

He always had one eye cocked upwards. The great dream of his life was to "put conquered Berlin at the feet of the Hohenzollerns." He wished to win the masses but by no means lose the favor of the court and the nobility in the process. In order to keep his position as court chaplain, he made undignified concessions to the emperor and the church authorities. He needed the donations of the pious noblewomen for his City Mission. Therefore, he could not annoy their husbands by speaking up for farm workers and against the Anti-Socialist Law. —He attempted to carry on each shoulder a burden that might have been too heavy even for both together. This was a task that even this giant of a man, with his robust health and iron brow, failed to accomplish.

Wherever there was only an "either-or," he strove for an "as well as." This is what made him fail. "This tribune of the people shattered on an unrequited love for the powerful at the top"—this is how Stöcker's biographer Walter Frank, who held him in great affection, summed up his life's destiny.

Perhaps it is precisely because he came from the lower social strata, grew up in barracks as the son of a constable, that he was unable to resist the peculiar appeal of the court. When countesses young and old flocked around him adoringly, when princes invited him to their castles for baptisms and weddings, when the Regent of Brunswick wrote him confidential letters, when even the Empress ordered him to give a private lecture, he was utterly pleased.

Of course, he was also happy when the applause of a people's gathering thundered around him. Yet when faced with a decision (Top or bottom? For the lords or the servants?), he evaded the issue.

He sought to reconcile the irreconcilable, until eventually almost no one trusted him anymore. His biographer comes to his defense against the reproach of two-facedness. What may have appeared as such, he argues, was only the result of his two souls. One thing led to another, however.

When I was dismissed by the publisher of *Das Volk* in the summer of 1896, I wrote a very distraught letter to Stöcker. He responded with his old warmth, explaining that although he had not agreed with some aspects of my editorial management, he was not to blame for my dismissal and regretted it profoundly.

A few months after my dismissal, one Mr. Ebert from the committee of the City Mission told me in all innocence that, as early as March, Stöcker had promised the committee that I would be removed from the editorial board and replaced by a conservative personality. When I followed up on the matter, various parties confirmed these facts. Stöcker had lied to me.

Had he written that he was compelled to part ways because of differences of opinion, I would have been saddened but would have resigned myself to the inevitable and warmly remembered countless hours of uplifting teamwork. This way, though, a shadow fell on his image. He had wanted to get rid of me as an

editor but keep me as a follower. For this reason, he used the owner of *Das Volk*, who was blindly devoted to him, as a pretense, blaming him for the rift and discrediting the owner, my friend the government clerk Bresges, in my eyes. He himself [i.e., Stöcker] did not have the courage to answer for something that was solely his responsibility.

In January 1896, under the influence of us young fellows, he had carried out the official separation from the Conservatives. In the summer of 1896, he instructed my successor [Dietrich von] Oertzen on the editorial policy of *Das Volk*: “Be more conservative than conservative and righter than right.”

Chapter 16

Beginning of the Transformation

In my mind’s eye, I have often compared Stöcker and [Friedrich] Naumann, both of whom had been equally close to me. Both were devout Christians. But Stöcker embodied all of the intolerance of the rigid Orthodox Christian, Naumann the all-embracing love of the Nazarene.

Both were driven by the strongest social impulses. For Stöcker, however, the masses were only the object; Naumann, on the other hand, wanted to make them the subject. Both were politicians through and through. But for Stöcker, politics was only the means to propel himself to power; for Naumann, it was the means to help democracy achieve power.

Both strove for lofty things. Yet while Naumann searched for truth his whole life, Stöcker believed he possessed it. Naumann continued to grow as a person until his death, whereas Stöcker felt himself to be fully complete even in his younger years.

Whereas Naumann struggled with doubts, Stöcker told a theologian tormented by a torn religious conscience: “Dear brother, doubt originates with the devil. One must be able to beat certain thoughts to death.”

Naumann spread a seed that will be capable of bearing fruit even in a hundred years’ time. Stöcker’s work had faded almost into nothingness even before his death.

Stöcker was the greater speaker, Naumann the greater human being.

Up to the thirtieth year of my life, I was an antisemite; at first instinctively, then by conviction, and finally, troubled by critical doubts.

To begin with, every human being is the product of his or her environment and education. A person who grew up in an archconservative castle in the most conservative constituency of Prussia can hardly be expected to share the mentality of the Association for the Defense against Antisemitism. As a child, I only got to see Jews in the form of the “fur and bag” Jews who came to our estate to buy and sell. These people were poor devils of embarrassing servility, the sort of people who, when thrown out the front door, come in again through the back. No one hated them, but people despised them. Inferior race!

Anyway, that was the conception with which I was raised: The Jews are different from us and are on a lower level. They do not want to work, just to haggle. They know no morality other than making money at any price. Therefore, one ought to beware of them. The best thing was to avoid them. For the saying went: *Qui mange du juif en meurt*. [Literally: Those who eat from the Jew perish from it].

This was the formula I followed at grammar school. We had half a dozen Jewish classmates at the most. We did not beat them up. The “rough fighters” were only produced by the Hitlerite mindset. But we snubbed them. We locked our few harmless Jewish classmates into an intellectual-social ghetto, as it were. I only became a rational antisemite, if one can use the expression at all, through the education I

received in the Association of German Students. I joined this association to find opportunities to be politically active as early as university. “Politics, I live for you, politics, I’ll die for you,” I wrote back then in a letter to my mother, which she has carefully preserved. The only student fraternities getting involved in politics in the 1880s were the Association of German Students on the Right and the Free Academic Association on the Left. Of course, for me as a Junker, the rightist organization was the only possibility.

What lured me to the “V. d. St.”^[5] in particular was the fact that members benefitted from lessons in public speaking. The “Cours d’Improvisation” in Geneva had aroused my passion for impromptu speaking. Now, as a member of the “V. d. St.,” I encountered the “Speaking Hall.” It organized an open-discussion evening every week. I participated in it with such enthusiasm that I was elected head of the Speaking Hall already in the second semester. Since most of us held virtually the same political convictions, the debates were destined to become monotonous rather soon. For this reason, I nominated a co-speaker for each debate, someone who had to act as the devil’s advocate, advancing our adversaries’ arguments and defending them. This enlivened our evenings in a remarkable fashion.

The “V. d. St.” was antisemitic because the Jews were considered un-German (based on racial theory), unpatriotic (since they occupied the opposition camp almost without exception), and unsocial (they were regarded as pillars of Manchester liberalism). Court Chaplain Stöcker and Professor [Heinrich] von Treitschke were the association’s two idols. Because of my oratorical activities in the V. d. St., I came into personal contact with leading antisemites even as a very young person. Among them was a man who is completely forgotten today, but who played an enormous role in the 1880s: Otto Glagau. He had been the business editor of liberal newspapers like the *Nationalzeitung*. He had saved a few thousand marks. In 1871, when the windfall from the French reparation payments unleashed the founding period [*Gründerzeit*], Glagau also got caught up in the frenzy. He bought shares in the extremely fishy Linden Construction Society and thus lost his entire savings. But if his gold had turned to water, he knew how to get gold from the dirty water again. He wrote *The Stock Market and Founding-Era Swindle in Berlin*, a book that caused an incredible sensation. He followed it up with a number of other books. The financial success allowed him to publish his own newspaper, which he called the *Kulturkämpfer*. It was written in a dazzling style and contained much interesting material, especially with respect to personages, as was also the case with [Maximilian] Harden’s later newspaper *Die Zukunft*.

Glagau had become an antisemite for purely personal reasons: Jews were prominently involved in the fishy enterprises that he had hoped would propel him to effortless riches. In other enterprises, ones that were no less fishy, high noblemen (such as Prince Putbus) and ultraconservative Teutons (such as Privy Counselor [Hermann] Wagener) had occupied leading positions. With enviable one-sidedness, however, Glagau saw the Jews behind everything. To him, Jews were the seducers, Aryans the seduced. Thus, he created the platform for a popular and financially profitable position. His motto was: “The social question is the Jewish question.”—The social question was the focus of my interest. Glagau had invented a patent remedy for its solution: Get the Jews away, and the social question is solved! Therefore, I went to him to imbibe social wisdom at the source.

And besides—and I only became aware of this later—I remained under the spell of antisemitism for nearly thirty years only because all the eminent antisemites honored me with their trust and friendship. “Our crown prince,” were the words I often heard. [Max] Liebermann von Sonnenberg, then the undisputed leader of the antisemites, dedicated a volume of his poems to me and offered me (just as I had turned twenty-six) a newly vacant antisemitic seat in the Reichstag. Liebermann von Sonnenberg, a cavalry captain dismissed because of debts, knew nothing, but was capable of a lot. He was one of the most effective public speakers I have ever met in my life. He combined dazzling wit with a lofty drama whose hollowness was not always easy for a young person to grasp. In addition, he was an organizer and conversationalist of high caliber. Any constituency to which he applied his “special treatment” could be regarded as carried from the very start. And any debriefing he called was a source of amusement beyond

compare. He could write poetry, sing, and drink equally well. People melted with delight when he launched into his own original antisemitic *Schnaderhüpfel*^[6] “Sleep, Little Jew, Sleep” or “In Parliament Sits Eugen Ri-Ra-Richter.”^[7] For years, I, too, could not resist the spell of this earthy personality.

The first appreciable blow to my antisemitism came from none other than Liebermann von Sonnenberg himself. We were sitting together after some election victory. At one previous meeting, a discussant had inquired about the actual nature of the antisemites’ scientific program, and I was embarrassed that I could only talk my way around the question by evoking some empty phrases about the lack of just such a program. I shared my pangs of conscience with Liebermann.

In his carefree manner, however, Liebermann laughed and said: “My dear friend, do not go gray with worry about it. First we shall become a political power. Then we shall find the scientific basis of antisemitism.”

I was utterly shaken. Science had always appeared the absolute pinnacle to me. With fervent effort, I had studied Karl Marx and [Karl] Rodbertus, Adam Smith and Schopenhauer, Darwin and [Eugen] Dühring; I was plagued with pangs of doubt. But now our leader told me: first power, then science! Gradually this opened my eyes. Soon I saw the horrible scientific wasteland that surrounded the antisemitic camp. We were capturing one constituency after another without really knowing the purpose. In the Reichstag elections in 1893, the antisemites had won sixteen seats. But when they sat in the Reichstag in numbers large enough to be recognized as a parliamentary caucus, and when I expected deeds, I experienced nothing but personal squabbling and petty jealousies. Every last one of them, Liebermann von Sonnenberg, [Oswald] Zimmermann, Dr. [Otto] Böckel, Paul Förster, [Hermann] Ahlwardt, Köhler, and so forth, was practically a party on his own. One of them was in favor of medium-sized business, the other a friend of workers, one a nobleman, the other a democrat. One would call for a struggle against Jews and Junkers, the other stayed with the big landowners through thick and thin. In every single vote, the parliamentary caucus fell apart. Not a single substantial bill was introduced, especially not in the area that had formed the basis of the agitation: the Jewish question. In fact, as it became evident in the parliamentary caucus, no one was able to propose an anti-Jewish law because it was impossible to agree on a definition of the term “Jew.” Everyone concurred on one thing:

“What he believes is all the same,
It’s race that constitutes the shame.”

So what mattered was not religious creed but only race. But how should the term “race” be conceived in law? This pentagram has caused mental anguish even to the greatest minds. And in the antisemitic parliamentary caucus one could only find people of very limited intellect. Since it proved impossible to agree on what a Jew was, the members continued to curse the Jews but failed to pass a bill against them.

My ethical frustration with the antisemites was just as great as my intellectual disappointment. In the people’s assemblies, these fine chaps lashed out at “Jewish immorality.” The seducers of Germanic virgins, the destroyers of the German family, and the carriers of Oriental lustfulness were pilloried to the cheering of the gathered crowd. Once the meeting was over, the participants went to Mr. Rieprich’s antisemitic bar of ill repute for a drink among German men. Soon each of the German moral watchdogs had one or, better yet, two barmaids around or all over him, whereupon the gathering would launch, in slight variation, into the Westphalian state song.

“Happy is he whose arm is curled
Around two Westphalian girls.”

Once I had started becoming critical of antisemitism, I discovered rotten spots in its flesh at every turn.

One of its loudest speechifiers was Dr. Paul Liman, first an editorial writer for the *Dresdner Nachrichten*, then for the *Leipziger Nachrichten*. My friend at the time, Wolf von Dallwitz, ascertained from the parish registers that it was only Liman's father who had converted from Judaism to Christianity. When Liman was subsequently reproached for not being particularly well-qualified to champion racial antisemitism, he tried to lie his way out of it: "His father had supposedly told him he was of Italian extraction, and this was why he was so dark and hairy."

For years, Ahlwardt was the antisemites' most celebrated speaker. In Neustettin, in the remotest corner of Eastern Pomerania, he had been elected [in 1892] to the Reichstag, beating out a Conservative. Along with his secretary, he had systematically called on farms, asking each farmer how many acres of land and how much livestock he owned. Then he turned to the secretary, who pulled out a gigantic notebook, and dictated to him: "Take this down! Gussow owns thirty acres, five cows, and four pigs; he ought to own sixty acres, twelve cows, and ten pigs." He had become famous for his books, which were entitled *Judenflinten* [Jewish guns] and *Eid eines Juden* [Oath of a Jew]. The foundation of these books seemed a bit shaky to me and my friend Dallwitz. So Dallwitz, himself a zealous antisemite, went to him to look at the evidence. Ahlwardt came up with a stack of files but could make neither head nor tail of it. When Dallwitz pressed him more, Ahlwardt broke off the conversation with the words, "if I cannot prove something, I simply claim it."

Among the antisemitic leaders, I got to know only a few really decent people, and those of flawless character were so uneducated in formal terms that outrage gripped me, young person that I was, when I had a chance to observe them up close. All of them were demagogues, some of them against their better judgment, others due to lack of judgment.

It was not so much the Jews but the antisemites who turned me away from antisemitism.

In 1903, when I encountered Liebermann von Sonnenberg again in the Reichstag, he used a speech to clobber me, his lost "crown prince." I limited myself to a brief personal remark, quoting the lines:

"Those traveling to truth through error
Are the sages.
Those persisting in error
Are the fools."

Since I gestured toward Liebermann while saying these last words, the speaker grabbed his bell to call me to order. But he sat down again, as he had second thoughts about whether he might actually call old Rückert^[8] to order.

Because of my practical experience, I have thoroughly renounced antisemitism. Perhaps only those who have experienced this childhood disease themselves are wholly immune to it! The antisemitism of my first thirty years was largely based on the following: I hardly knew a single Jew. Why should I associate with the representatives of an inferior race? Especially given that these people were below par morally, though (unfortunately) above par intellectually, as a result of which one could be trampled quite easily when dealing with them. Did not the entire power of this alien nation, one so insignificant in quantitative terms, rest on this combination of cunning and moral unscrupulousness?

This is what I heard every day in the Association of German Students and from my peers and in the antisemitic meetings. Thus, I read chiefly right-wing newspapers—of course, I did not touch any "Jewish rags." Added to this was the type of literature widespread in our circles.

To me—who knew no Jew, so to speak—the image of Jewry was all the firmer: they were a people marked by blatant materialism, only out to make money; they shrank from hard work, were unproductive on account of a devotion to trading, indiscriminate in their means, and therefore well-

represented in criminal statistics; they had a destructive (rather than constructive) bent, and were cynical and lascivious—overall, Mephisto as an entire people.

Certainly, I began to have doubts soon enough. Though in my youth, I had the blinkered perspective of my milieu; still, I grew out of these blinkers.

I went into raptures about Heinrich Heine, bathed in the delight of his irony, whereas the poets extolled by my fellow [antisemitic] travelers struck me as incredibly dull. I was astonished by Karl Marx's life's work, which appeared extremely constructive to me. [Ferdinand] Lassalle's speeches fired my enthusiasm, and I felt they represented the pinnacle of the German language. I admired the idealism of Eduard Bernstein, who preferred eating the hard bread of exile to tasting the sweet cake of subjugation. I saw how people who never had enough expletives for the Jews unfailingly sought out Jewish expertise when it was a matter of life and death.

And then I was fortunate enough to come into close personal contact with intelligent conservative men who were not antisemitic. Adolph Wagner and Court Chaplain Frommel as well as Provost Baron von Liliencron told me of their experiences with great Jews, whom they had known as great human beings and great Germans.

I began dealing with the history of Jewry beyond the catechism of the antisemites.

Why did the lawyers only become lawyers and almost never judges? It could only be because the few Jews who had a chance of becoming judges always got stuck at the earliest stages.

Why did Jews avoid fighting? Because in Prussia, not only were they barred from the career of officer; they could not even become reserve officers.

Why were there so few Jewish craftsmen? Because they had been excluded from guilds up to the time of Jewish emancipation.

Why were they not farmers? Because until 1812, they were not allowed to acquire any landed property.

Why did so many deal in financial transactions? Because under canon law, only Jews are allowed to carry out financial business.

Of course, I could have—and should have—known all this before taking a position on the Jewish question. But does Adolf Hitler actually know this today?

Naturally, studying the Jewish question finally made me want to get to know some Jews myself. My acquaintance with Charles L. Hallgarten in Frankfurt am Main was of great importance to me. Hallgarten had made a great fortune as a banker in New York and had become an American citizen. Still in the prime of his life, he returned to his hometown of Frankfurt, because for him earning money was not an end in itself but only a means to an end. He intended to dedicate the second half of his life solely to making his wealth available for humanitarian purposes.

After Hallgarten's death, an acquaintance told me that the tax authorities in Frankfurt had been very surprised to find an estate of only eight million instead of the expected eighty million. I would not have been surprised by this at all, considering that Hallgarten had once told me: "Every father should take care of his children to the extent that he can. If he is rich, he should leave them enough so that they can lead a carefree life. He does them an injustice, however, if he secures for them an abundance that seduces them into living like drones. Our social order permits the unlimited accumulation of millions. Our ethics ought to command us to channel the surplus money, which derives from the community after all, back into the community. Therefore, I have resolved to leave one million to each of my children.

Whatever I own beyond that, I intend to spend during my lifetime on causes that strike me as the most humane.”

Thus he spoke. Thus he acted. He opened his palm wide for all philanthropic objectives of an interdenominational nature. He even donated large sums to strikes if he felt the workers were right.

I was present myself at some of his negotiations. He was immensely generous; but he never gave any money before having informed himself thoroughly about the basis of the business. If someone came to solicit money, even for the best causes, but had nothing more than general plans and phrases, he turned him away. If another person showed up with an accurate profitability evaluation and estimate, he examined it in detail; if the matter seemed to make sense to him, he pulled out his checkbook and said: “Your calculation appears to be correct. According to this, you are 30,000 marks short. Here you go.”

Of course, numerous associations and institutions would have loved to have such a man as their chairman. In order to meet such requests with a justified “no,” he deliberately did not re-acquire citizenship in the German Reich. I had always heard that the Jews pushed themselves to the fore. Hallgarten pushed himself into the background.

At the same time as Hallgarten, another Frankfurt Jew, Mr. Merton, appeared on the scene with gigantic foundations for charitable purposes. Had any of our heavy industrialists with their dozens of millions, had any of our magnates with their tens of thousands of hectares of land ever turned any portion of their abundance into any substantial foundation for the benefit of the general public? My delusions about idealism as an Aryan monopoly and materialism as a Semitic stigma melted away like snow in the sun. As late as 1892, at the Tivoli Party Congress of the Conservatives, I had cheered the speaker who had shouted into the hall, “better ten Ahlwardts than one Liberal!” A few years later, I was certain of one thing: better ten Jews than one antisemite!

NOTES

[1] Evening drinking session of a student fraternity—trans.

[2] *Verein deutscher Studenten*, or V. d. St.—trans.

[3] Baron Wilhelm von Hammerstein-Schwartow, chief editor of the *Neue Preußische (Kreuz-) Zeitung* after 1881 and a fellow antisemite—ed.

[4] Matthew 5:37, quoted from the King James version of the Bible—trans.

[5] Abbreviation for the *Verein deutscher Studenten* or Association of German Students—trans.

[6] South German: a four-line song that is humorous and often smutty—trans.

[7] Both are corrupted nursery rhymes—trans.

[8] The poet and professor Friedrich Rückert (1788–1866)—trans.

Source: Hellmuth von Gerlach, *Von rechts nach links*, edited by Emil Ludwig. Zurich: Europa-Verlag, 1937, Chapters 15 and 16, pp. 102–18.

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