

Trudy Gold | A Curious Triumvirate: Einstein, Rathenau and Haber and the Complexities of German Jewish Identity, Part 1

– Okay, well good evening, everyone. Well, it's certainly evening in England, and what I thought would be interesting because, as you all know, we've taken a completely different tack in August, and in fact, next week, I'm going to be lecturing on one of my favourite subjects, the image of the Jewish mother. And I think it's as important as Jewish fathers watch as well. So, but tonight, I thought I'd take a more serious tack, because one of the things that always fascinates me, and the more I study Jewish history and the more depth I go, what absolutely fascinates me is the complexity of Jewish identity. All identity is complicated, but I think when you get to Jewish identity, there does seem to be this different layer. It's not just how Jews identify themselves, it's how the outside world identifies them as well. And after all, they're such a tiny percentage of the population. And honestly, the group that always interested me most are German Jews. I was so privileged to be teaching in Hampstead in the early 80s, because so many refugees came to classes, they enriched the classes, they enriched my knowledge, and they were just an extraordinary group of people. And having been brought up and educated in England, I found that their approach to education and knowledge was far more rigid than that I'd been used to, rigorous, I should say, rigid and rigorous. And I'm brought to mind that great, great quote of Heine's when he said, "The two ethical nations, the Jews and the Germans, can create a new Jerusalem in Germany." Because the first point to make, I think, is that, okay, we know how terribly it ended. But what is fascinating is to look at 19th century German and Austrian Jewry or Jews working in the German language, and you have the most extraordinary array of talent and excellence. And for my presentation tonight, I have chosen three of the most talented, extraordinary men that walked the world at the end of the 19th, early 20th centuries. And don't forget that Einstein, he was Newsweek's man of the century. Einstein is considered, when anyone thinks of intelligence in silly adverts or whatever, it's Einstein. Now, the other point to make is Einstein, Rathenau, and Haber were all close. They were all very different in their attitudes to their Jewishness, none of them were religious. Because this is another issue, in a way, if you are a religious Jew, you don't have these conflicting areas of identity that wrack so many Jews who identify culturally, identify with the country in which they live, and yet what are they? And these three characters in their life, in their lives, they really bring out most of the complications of that identity. And I think it's important to talk about identity at the moment because in a world that is increasingly fractious and tribal, more and more people are considering what it means to be a member of a group, a member of a tribe. And what is most interesting about Einstein? In the end, he believed we should be human beings first.

So shall we, and have a look at the first slide, please, Judi, yeah. And all of them inhabited buzzing Berlin at the turn of the century. It was unified, remember, Germany was unified by Bismark in 1871. By 1900, Germany was one of the most industrialised, creative countries in the world. Having said that, there was also a kind of atavism, because Germany was created under the guise of German, of Prussian militarism, so it's an incredibly complicated city. And let's have a look at a couple more shots of it, please. Yeah, let's have a look at some more shots of Berlin. Of course, it was so badly destroyed, can we go to the next slide, if you don't mind, Judi, yeah. There's the Friedrichstrasse. There you see some wonderful old buildings. Those of you who haven't been to Berlin, it really is an interesting and exciting city again today. Now, what was the situation of German Jewry? They are fully emancipated in theory by Bismarck in 1871. However, they are emancipated just as the notion of race becomes important in Germany, in that fractious society that was also Germany, Germany was late in coming into the race for colonies, there was a sense of insecurity, and what you had was an astounding Jewish success story. We've said this before, in many ways, you can see the Jews as the arbiters of modernity. Whatever area of the world you wanted to look at, be it the arts, the sciences, literature, business practise, you see a disproportionate number of Jews, they were under 1% of the population of Germany, department stores, self-service restaurants, hotel chains, all the aspects of modernity that you could think about, you see a disproportionate number of Jews, and also the extraordinary love affair with German culture. This love affair that really had such a tragic end. I mean, I have German friends who will speak to me of Goethe and Schiller and quote it at me. They still remember, they still love the culture of Germany. And it's, in many ways, it was such a sad situation, beyond tragic, because by 1925, believe it or not, 45% of German Jews were intermarrying. And that meant there was also a liberal Germany that was prepared to take them in. So it's not, that's one of the problems with the hindsight of history, we know what happened. But if we were to go back to, say, the year 1900, you would've believed it was the best century you'd ever experienced. Your children can go to the schools and universities they want to go to. Maybe there are certain professions closed to them. It's very, you can't become an officer in the German army, it's very difficult to get into the civil service. But look at all the opportunities, look at the culture, and there's this absolute dazzling society that we can be part of. We can go to the opera, we can go to the art galleries, we can go to the great concerts, we can embrace it all. And as I said, there are some Zionist historians who go as far as to say that, if Germany hadn't ended so tragically, German Jewry would probably had disappeared of their own volition. Now, let's be careful, 10% of the population of German Jews were religious, I'm not referring to them. With religiosity, in a way, it is much more, it's much easier to contain and it's much easier to have your sense of identity.

So let's have a look at the men that I'm choosing, here, you see the

young Einstein. Now, Einstein was the youngest of the group. He, of course, the great genius of all time. What can I say about him? And one thing I do want to talk about is their upbringing. Because Einstein, in many ways, was by far, was the most wholesome of the group. Einstein came from an incredibly loving family. According to Fritz Stern, who wrote such wonderful book, Einstein's German World, it's by far, I think, the greatest book on this period. He said that basically, Einstein's father was an amiable father and an amiable failure who presided over a loving home. There was a son and a daughter, the mother absolutely adored him. And not only that, she was a very talented musician. And music played a very important part in his life. By the time he's 12, he became a violinist. He, and she was a pianist, they would perform concerts. So music was a big part of his life, there was a lot of love in his life, which was very different to the family relationships of the other two. And this is an area that really does interest me, and I know it interests many of you, because what creates the wholesome personality? Is it genetic or is it upbringing? And of the three, Einstein had by far the happiest home. None of them had religious homes, by the way, Einstein was never taught Hebrew. He didn't, he went through a religious phase when he was 12 and he refused to eat pork, but he was not bar mitzvah. But he's brought up in a very Jewish milieu. I've spoken to German Jews about this and many of them said, "Our circle was Jewish. They were Jews like us, but they were German." So let's have a look at the next, yeah, here you see Fritz Haber. Now, Fritz Haber was born in Breslau, Breslau, of course, was that border area between Germany and Poland, it often changed sides, it is now, of course, part of Germany. He came from a very wealthy Jewish family. They could trace themselves back to the great grandfather, who was a wool dealer in Poland. And, of course, the family were emancipated in Prussia in 1812. He was the son of first cousins. His father, by the time he was born, was a very important wealthy merchant. Dye pigments, paints, pharmaceuticals, this is the new world. But the mother died three weeks after he was born, so his early life was quite traumatic. He was looked after by aunts, and after six years, his father, Siegfried, think about it, Fritz, Siegfried, the heroes of German folklore, he remarried a woman called Hedwig Hamburger and had three daughters by her. Fritz had a very, very difficult relationship with his father. He does become close to his stepmother and half sisters. So, but again, he had a very fractured early life.

And can we turn to the next slide, please? Here, you see Walther Rathenau. Now, Walther Rathenau's dates, 1867 to 1922. Walther Rathenau was the son of one of the richest men in the world. His father, Emil, is a fascinating character, so I'm going to tell you a little bit about him, and then about the fractious young life of Rathenau. Of course, Rathenau becomes one of the most important industrialists in Germany and in the world, I should have stated, of course, that Fritz Haber is one of Germany's most important scientists, he was head of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute, he won the

Nobel Prize, and he was the most loyal German, and I'll talk more about that in a minute. But here, you see the young Walter Rathenau. Now, his father, Emil, was born to a wealthy family. In 1865, as a partner in a factory, he goes travelling and he realises the possibilities of the newly emerging electric technology. The world is beginning to explode with ideas. And it's no accident, I think, that the Jews are on the edge of modernity, because they're outside the tradition. If you think about it, if you are in a tradition, it's not so easy to see what's going on in the world. They're outside the tradition, they see the niche in the market. You can make the case that that's what Jewish history has always been about. We've been pushed into certain trades and professions. We've always had to live on our wits and on our feet. So now they're in the modern world, they can smell, as it were, what are the incredible benefits? Now, after the stock market collapse of 1873, which did so much to increase the rise of hostility to the outsider groups, including the Jews, he sold up. And when he was on a tour in France, he went to the Great Exhibition and he saw Thomas Edison's invention, and he actually acquired the rights to manufacture products based on the Edison company, he got a huge bank loan. And by 1907, his company AEG became the largest commercial company in the world. The bank asked him to partner with his competitor von Siemens. Siemens would produce and sell generators and Rathenau would build power stations and lay cables. And in 1894, Rathenau and the magistrate of Berlin signed an agreement for the electrification of Berlin, the city received 10%. This makes him one of the richest men in the empire. In 1866, he had married a woman called Mathilde Nachmann, who was the daughter of a Frankfurt banker. It was a very, very complicated family setup. The wealth already isolated them, there were two sons. It was the oldest son who was totally adored. Unfortunately, the adored elder brother is going to die young. And his mother totally doted on him. Like Haber, like Einstein, he was incredibly intellectually gifted. Now, he was very ambiguous about the wealth that he possessed and also about his Jewishness. They all had interesting educations.

What happened to Rathenau, should we see the next slide, please? Oh, we're back to Einstein, sorry, go back to Rathenau for just a minute. What happened to Rathenau, not only was he a very gifted scientist, he took his PhD in sciences, he went to Switzerland to study more. He was also, he also had degrees in literature and in philosophy. He was, the three of them were all ill. And he was an incredibly complicated, isolated person. He found his Jewishness a burden. He was homosexual, which may have led to many of his problems, why? Because, of course, at that time, it was illegal. Plus, of course, he had huge admiration for the Prussian officer class. And at the same time, he mocked them. When he was quite a young man, he wrote a rather painful article, which is called *Hear, O Israel*, and I'm just going to read a little bit of it to you. He says this. "Let me confess at the outset that I am a Jew. Need I any justification for not writing in defence of Jews? Many members of my tribe know themselves only as Germans, not Jews."

And he goes on to talk about the problems of being a Jew. "Baptism," he says, "will certainly not bring an end to the Jewish question." In fact, Haber in 1914, because he, sorry, in 1909, because he wanted a professorship, he actually converted to Christianity, he became a Lutheran. But Haber converts. He so much wants to be part of Germany. And he believed that baptism, remember the quote of Heine, was the passport to German civilization. This is what Rathenau says. "Baptism will certainly not bring an end to the Jewish question. The individual, perhaps, could improve his conditions by disassociation, the Jewish entity could not. Were half of Israel converted, nothing would come of it but an impassioned antisemitism against the baptised." He goes on to really deprecate the Jews, he writes this. "Look at yourself in the mirror. This is the first step towards self-criticism. Nothing, unfortunately, can be done about the fact that all of you look frighteningly alike, and that your individual vices therefore are attributed to all of you. Neither will it console you that, in the first place, your East Mediterranean appearance is not very well appreciated by the northern prides. You should therefore be the more careful not to walk about in a loose and lethargic manner and thus become the laughing stock of a race brought up in strictly military fashion. As soon as you have recognised your unathletic build, your narrow shoulders, your clumsy feet, your shot, sloppy roundish shape, you will resolve to dedicate a few generations to the renewal of appearance. During that time, you will refrain from donning the costumes of the lean Anglo-Saxons in which you look as a dachshund dressed up like a greyhound. You will not offend nature by wearing a sailor's dress on the beach or half-stockings in the Alps. I do not know what the people of Israel look like in Palestine. Their contemporaries do not seem to share their beauty, but 2000 years of misery cannot but leave marks too deep to be washed away by Eau de Cologne. During all that time, your women have forgotten their smile, their laughter has become shrill and unhappy, and their beauty melancholy. If you understood their strange and exotic beauty, you would never choke it under bales of satin, clouds of lace, and nests of diamonds." He's obviously here referring to the nouveau riche of any society. So basically, he was very, very complicated about his Jewishness. So as I said, to learn better business techniques, he went to study in Switzerland. By 1903, after the death of his brother, his father relied more and more on him, they didn't have a good relationship, remember. So he joined the board of AEG. He was a brilliant entrepreneur. Within a decade, he'd established power stations in Buenos Aires, Manchester, and in Baku, huge diversification. In the end, he was president of 84 different companies. For example, this is all about modernity, think of it. He acquired a streetcar company in Madrid. He purchased British firms in East Africa. He was what we today, I think, would call a company doctor. He would restructure companies, turn them around, which vastly increased his wealth. And he produced huge inroads in chemical development, such as the development of acetone. And this is where he became associated with a man who is going to become an incredibly

close friend of Einstein and laterally of Haber, and that was Chaim Weizmann. Don't forget, Chaim Weizmann worked for the British on acetone in World War I. And as I said, in the end, he controlled over 84 different companies. He was also a very talented writer, he was a journalist. He would expose high-level scandals, he walked the world. He mixed, you see, interesting, he admires the Prussian officer class, but he mixes in a very cosmopolitan circle. He was close to socialist writers. He, this is what Fritz Stern said. "He realised that he had come into this world as a second-class citizen and no amount of ability could ever free him from it." He had his picture painted by Munch. He was a great supporter of the secessionist school, he was very close to Max Reinhardt, the brilliant Austrian Jew who controlled 31 theatres, again, modernity, in Berlin and Vienna, and of course, was one of the architects, with Hofmannsthal, of the Salzburg Festival. So this is his milieu. He was very troubled by the rise of racial antisemitism. Von Treitschke, who was the professor of history at the University of Berlin, he wrote a very important article, The Jews are Our Misfortune, later on, it became a quote of the Nazis, now, the point about von Treitschke is the whole of the general staff would go to his lectures. He was deeply affected by antisemitism, which he shared with many prominent Jews. And one of his problems was that he tried to overcompensate. And, but what is fascinating, for those of you who are interested in business, both father and son exemplified the network that existed between banking and industry because, of course, they had huge amounts of money to finance their empire. And one of the things in his article that Rathenau, Rathenau wrote an article that later was to prove very, very complicated. He once wrote, "There are 300 men, all known to each other, who control Europe's business." And he absolutely relished belonging to that world. He's very, he's a real paradoxical character, actually, because he's a captain of industry, he's a brilliant, brilliant businessman, he's a brilliant writer. He's an employer of thousands who called for the emancipation of the workers. He also very much worried about the mechanics of modernization, which he believed were destroying the soul of the country. And unfortunately, he identified that with the Jews. So with Rathenau, we have an incredibly complex, tortured man. He completely rejected conversion as a form of opportunism. He was not a religious Jew in any way, but he was a Jew and a Jew he would remain. He dreamt of a new world. He dreamt of an international world of total acceptance. This was also true of many of the alienated Jewish socialists, the international socialists, characters like Karl Marx. And yet paradoxically, he's also a very proud German. This is another comment he made about the Jews are people of fear who have only developed their intellectual faculties for their own protection. He also conducted an eight-year correspondence with a writer called Schwengler, who was a deep antisemite and a racist. He considered, he was a friend. Now, one of Germany's greatest writers, Robert Musil, used him as a model for Paul Arnheim, who's the noble industrialist in his wonderful book, Man Without Qualities. And please don't forget, he had the kind of wealth that gave him access to every circle, including

the court. So on one level, there's a lot of hostility towards Rathenau the Jew. He is very much admired in literary circles. He, and in the court, he would have conversations with the very antisemitic Kaiser Wilhelm II. There's a brilliant book on Kaiser Wilhelm written by John Rohl, and there's a very interesting chapter on the Kaiser's antisemitism. But for example, he accompanied the German colonial secretary, who also was a converted Jew, to southwest Africa, I beg your pardon, to advise him on industry. So he counted as friends other important industrialists, critics, artists, the avant-garde. Financially and intellectually, he supported the avant-garde secessionist art school in Germany. He did understand their spiritual fear of modernity. He wrote many philosophical articles. And prior to 1914, he was violently against an aggressive foreign policy.

So that's Rathenau, and I'm breaking off now to go to Einstein, because what I'm going to try and do is take them all up to World War I, which is a great break, and then continue with them afterwards. Here, you seek the young Einstein, the boy genius. You know, Einstein, those of you who are trying to rear a genius, it's fascinating, he didn't speak until he was three. He was very bad at foreign languages. He didn't do too well at school, he hated school, he hated the regimentation of school. But of course, in the sciences and mathematics, he was incredibly gifted. His father, who I've already mentioned, was a bit of an amiable failure. His father decided to leave Munich to settle in Italy. And because Einstein was at school, he left him behind with some friends and they went off to Italy, but unfortunately, the father was setting up an electric company, but he got the wrong current. Now, Einstein, when they left their family home, Einstein loved nature. There was a beautiful tree in the garden. And the developers immediately moved in and removed the tree, and that really up upset him. Einstein already as a youngster was mildly socialist. He of the three, I think, had the most wholesome personality. He finally finishes up in Switzerland at the technical university, it took him a couple of attempts to get in. I'm not going to go too deeply into his biography, there's some brilliant books on it. And his story is so well known. He married a Serbian mathematician who, older than him, not Jewish, his mother really, really objected. But he married her and they had two children, it was an absolute nightmare of a marriage. He spent a lot of time in Bern, he had, of course, working in the patent office, because in Switzerland, he created around him a group of young Jewish intellectuals. They called themselves the young Olympians, they studied Spinoza, they studied philosophy. And of course, it was in Bern in the patent office that he had what was called the annus mirabilis, where he produced these three papers that changed the course of world history and science. So he's then finally offered a post at university. And then, and there was terrible hostility, and I'm going to read you the professor, let me come to it, yeah. The eminent Professor Kleiner proposed a new associate professorship should be awarded to Einstein. And this is the letter who today ranks amongst the most important theoretical

physicists. He has an uncommonly sharpened... But Kleiner's colleagues asked for clarification, and this is what they wrote. "Here, Dr. Einstein is an Israelite. And since Israelites amongst scholars are ascribed, in numerous cases, not without cause, all kinds of unpleasant peculiarities of character, such as intrusiveness, impudence, or a shopkeeper's mentality in the perception of their academic position." Nevertheless, he was offered the post, and he goes off to Prague. And he, unfortunately, it was not a happy time. And he found, but luckily, he did find a group of young intellectuals, mainly, again, mainly Jews, who kept him sane. The marriage became more and more complicated. By this time, he had met Haber. They first met at a scientific conference in Karlsruhe, where Haber was giving the principal lecture, and a very, very close relationship developed. And in 1912, when Einstein was going through huge emotional turmoil, Haber was his most important confidant. And the Einsteins family actually lived with Haber's family whilst they were trying to work out a divorce. The divorce agreement was absolutely appalling. Einstein might have been a great individual, and in many ways, a huge humanitarian. But in his relationship with his wife and women, I think we might find him wanting. But then it's interesting, isn't it? You cannot look for perfection. But what he did to his wife was actually quite horrific, particularly as some commentators believe that she herself was a very, very talented mathematician and scientist and worked hard with him. And it was actually when Einstein said goodbye to them when they went off to Switzerland, he wrote, "Without him, without Haber, I wouldn't have been able to do it." And it was also to Haber that he confided his love for his cousin Elsa. And this is what Einstein wrote to a Swiss friend about Haber. "At times like this, one realises that the only thing in the world which is truly worth aspiring to is friendship." There was one great difference, though. Schiller was Haber's favourite author, whereas Heine was Einstein's.

Now, what happens to Einstein is that, by 1910, a wealthy philanthropist, Franz Oppenheimer gave him 5000 marks a year for three years to allow him to concentrate on serious work. And in 1911, he becomes a full professor at the Carl Ferdinand University in Prague, but he finally finishes up at the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute. He's lured there by Haber, it becomes the most important scientific institute in the world. And what is fascinating is how many Jews contributed financially. The Bleichroeder family gave 300,000 marks. The Mendelssohn Bank and the Rothschild Bank contributed, 35% of the funding came from Jews. They have received honorary doctorates and also great social recognition. And Einstein said, "The wildly anti-Semitic Kaiser has a weakness for rich Jews."

Now, I want to talk a little now about Fritz Haber, because in many ways, he is the one that I find most problematic because his career, he returns to his father's business in Breslau. But gradually, he emerges from it. He takes a, he acquires all sorts of qualifications. He takes a job at BASF, which was Germany's largest chemical and dye

firm. And from 1909 to 1913, he works with Robert Bosch, he'd made a fortune pioneering the development of the spark plug. And he funded the multinational company Bosch. And Haber, and together, they create the Haber-Bosch process to produce synthetic nitrate, which fed half the world, so extraordinary. He works and works, he, of course, heads up the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute. And when World War I erupts, the three men take very different paths, now, already, can we go on to the next picture, please? Already, Haber has converted to Christianity. He joins the War Department, remember, he's now one of the most important scientists in Germany. And he works for the German army in producing, actually producing poison gas. There were those, Weizmann, for a while, considered him a war criminal. And he and Einstein really fell out over this. And because Einstein was totally against the war, he thought it was an absolute madness. Now, there was a petition, the petition of 91, which was actually written by a Jew, saying that we are fighting the war, the 91 of the leading German intellectuals, that we are fighting the war for German culture, for German intellectualism, for the German spirit. Now, Einstein refused to sign. Haber, of course, did sign. Haber put his body and soul into the German war effort. His first wife committed suicide. Tragically, their 12-year-old son found her. And he still went off to the front to the army because he wanted to watch the experiments of poison gas against the Russian army. Now, he also was a huge patriot, I think it's very important, he totally bought into the dream of the German army, you know, the whole dream of Germany.

Now, Rathenau was much, much more complicated. Rathenau was violently against war. He thought it was madness, he understood what the weapons of modernity could do, and he really, really was so against the war. But when war breaks out, remember, he is two things. He is the great internationalist, but he's also a very proud German. He warned, remember, he's warned against an aggressive foreign policy back in 1913. He was the first man to propose a common economic market for the whole of Europe, and in part to stave off the threat of America as the great emerging giant. He was worried by the mediocrity of the German political leadership. He also, he had a great sense of his own worth intellectually. And he believed that he was passed over for high office because he was a Jew.

And Fritz Stern went as far as saying that he really believed that, can we go on and have a look at Rathenau next, please? Yes, Fritz Stern went on to say that he really believed that what Rathenau wanted to do was actually to be the German Israeli. This is a quote of Einstein's because, as I said, they were all in Berlin and Rathenau and Einstein became very close. This is what Einstein said, "If one had offered Rathenau the post of Pope, he would've accepted. Technically, he probably would've done it quite well." But, so he's in a terrible situation because he's against the war, but he's a patriot. And he warned the German army, they said, "Oh, it's going to be a lightning strike, it's going to be over." Just as the British General

said, "It will be over by tea time." You know, when you think of that appalling war, which we are still living with, you know, we're still living with the carnage of the First World War. If you want me to bring it up to date, the collapse of the empires at the end of the First World War and the creation of the new regimes in the Middle East, the new states in the Middle East, the new states out of the Habsburg Empire, the new states in the Balkans, the new states out of the old Turkish Empire, just think of the chaos that we're still, the ramifications of this excessive nationalism that we're living today, and you have a man like Rathenau who could foresee, you know, he can stand back and see the dangers, however, he was a German patriot. So he warns the generals that, if there's a long war, there will be an economic blockade on Germany. And he said it would be a total catastrophe. And as a result, he said, "Remember," it's Napoleon's quote, "an army marches," I think it, no, it isn't, it's, somebody online will have to help me. Who said, "An army marches on its belly?" It was an English general, wasn't it? Anyway, he, eventually, his warnings were heeded and he was asked to set up a raw materials division within the Ministry of War, so he goes to work for the German government. He created wartime enterprises, turned private companies over to the war effort. Later on, the Americans were going to emulate that in the Second World War. And so he switched German industries to producing specific goods for the war. Many, many people totally opposed his appointment, the Jew. And he resigned. And this is what he wrote in a very sad letter, "A private citizen and a Jew volunteered to help the state, and that would always be held against him." In 1915 though, his father died and he becomes the president of AEG, which ironically made huge profits from the German military. He was terrified, as the war went on, as was Einstein, what on Earth would happen. He said this, "A mechanical world will rule like a, and who will rule the world? A flock of sheep understanding nothing, we are driven into the unknown." He began to write again. He wrote something in a very important book in 1917 called Days to Come. It sold 65,000 copies. He, a virulent attack on the Prussian nobility and on their vulgar opulence. Although he was a monarchist, he advocated total political reform. He railed against the childlike, what he called the childlike subservience and obedience of the herd. He advocated a parliamentary democracy, a vital parliamentary democracy. He wanted to change the tax structure to rectify the huge gulf between the rich and the poor. Remember, this is one of the richest men in the world, but he saw what needed to happen. He said, "Class egoism and class power prevents most people from gaining bildung," you know, that incredible German word which means education, culture. He dreamt of a world of greater political maturity, and in 1918, he wrote a very important pamphlet, the plea to Germany's youth. Realise the task that awaits you.

Now, after the war, he's going to become one of the great targets for the defeated right. After Versailles, he founded the League of Industry as an offshoot of internationalism. He was one of the

founders of the German Democratic Party. And the chaos, the terrible chaos at the end of the First World War that I've lectured on in the past, and I know many of you understand what happened, the horror of Germany. He rejected state ownership of industry, because what happened, the Germans went to the polls in 1919, they elected a broad left government, all the revolutions were put down. He thought, saw globalisation as a response to the technological revolution. He was a real prophet. Now, by 1920, Joseph Wirth was, who was to the, he was a chancellor to the left of centre. He relied more and more on Rathenau and insisted that he came to the, was part of the German delegation at the Spa Conference where German reparations were discussed. His aim was to persuade the Allies that Germany would comply to prevent the invasion of the, he was a pragmatist. He was against what the Allies were trying to do, he said it's vengeance. And it was in Spa that another gentile industrialist called Hugo Stinnes, he said, he was a rejectionist, he said, "Rathenau has the soul of an alien race," that was to stick, only a Jew would give into the Allies, what an earth could they have done? Because the Allies made it quite clear, if their terms were not accepted, they would invade. It was not a negotiated treaty. When Wirth became chancellor, and despite huge opposition, he appointed Rathenau head of the Ministry of Reconstruction. And in January 1922, he persuaded Rathenau to become German foreign minister. Both his mother, remember, she's lost one son, she's lost her husband. They tried to persuade Rathenau not to take the post. The ultra right absolutely hated him. This was in the, in 1922, he signed the Treaty of Rapallo to normalise relations with the Soviets, so you can imagine, to the ultra right, Russia's Jewish, Rathenau's Jewish, and one of the common ditties in Berlin, kill off Walther Rathenau, the goddamn Jewish sow. Rathenau, they said, is a representative of a satanic people. And this was an article in Theodor Fritsch's magazine, "How long before we have Walther the First of the dynasty of Abraham? The day is coming when the wheel of world history will be put in reverse to roll over the corpse of the great financier and his accompanied." The attacks become more and more extreme. And on January the 24th, 1922, he lived in a beautiful house in Wannsee. Can we jump on to the last three slides, Judi, and then go back? If you don't mind. Yes, that's the one, that is Wannsee. Wannsee is, you know, the name, the Wannsee house. The ultimate in horror, but Wannsee is a lake, it's about 20 Ks outside of Berlin. It's a great holiday spot for Germans. And in the 20s, the wealthiest had their summer houses, he had a beautiful villa in Wannsee.

Can we see some more pictures, please? Yeah, that is, that's, by the way, is the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute, can we go on? Yeah. Actually, I think we need to go back a couple, Judi, I want to show them, yeah, that's the Wannsee District, could you hold it there for a minute? Because what happens is, he's driven on the 24th of June in an open top car from his villa, and five young right-wing fanatics, part of the Thule Society and Consul, these murky right-wing groups that were already swallowing The Protocols of the Elders of Zion whole,

remember, it's been published in Berlin and in Munich, it's been brought into Germany mainly by Russian aristocrats who believe the Revolution is a Jewish affair. And the five young murderers, they shoot and they throw a grenade into the car, and of course, he is murdered. Can we see the scenes of his funeral, please, because, yeah. There is Walther Rathenau's funeral, now, the left mourned him, they mourned him terribly. This is what Robert Boothby, the British politician, wrote of him. "He was something only a German Jew could be: simultaneously a prophet, a philosopher, a mystic, a writer, a statesman, an industrial magnet of the highest and greatest order, and the pioneer of what has become known as industrial rationalisation." This is Stefan Zweig, he was on vacation, he was also part of Rathenau's circle. By the way, his assassination caused the mark to plunge dramatically. Now, and this is what Stefan Zweig wrote. "Now the real witches' sabbath of inflation has started. To repair a broken window now costs more than a whole house would've cost before the inflation. A single book now costs more than a printing company with 100 presses. Unemployment grows worse. People shake their fists at the profiteers and foreigners in their luxurious cars who bought whole rows of streets like a box of matches. Men align themselves with any slogan that promised order."

Now, this is what Einstein wrote in a letter about his close friend. "His allegiances were contradictory. He felt himself to be a Jew, was internationally minded, and was at the same time as incidentally or quite a few Jewish intellectuals of that generation, in love with Prussianism, its Jewish, its Junkers, and its military forms. He was far removed from the narrow-minded, militaristic attitude of almost all German intellectuals. Still, he was, strangely enough, dependent on the recognition of men inwardly much inferior to him in all human qualities. Despite this curious kind of dependency, he took pleasure in poking fun at events and persons, a man of wit and subtle malice."

You know, you're going to have to bear with me because I have totally mistimed this talk. There's so much more information that I want to share with you that, Judi, I think I better do this part two next Monday, which means I will delay the image of the Jewish mother in film to the following Monday. I'm sorry about that, but I really think it's such an important subject, and I'm sure there's going to be a lot of questions. Is that okay, Judi?

- [Judi] Yes, Trudy, that's fine.

- So because there's a lot more to say about Fritz Haber and Einstein and his Jewishness because, of course, don't forget that Einstein became a very close friend of Weizmann's. And although they quarrelled later on, there's a lot to say about that.

So shall we have a look at questions?

Q & A and Comments

This is Dr. Colin Leci telling us, "Sitting in Jerusalem, I'd like to remind you that the current ceasefire was not as usual announced by Israel, but through the media of Al Jazeera."

"Can we have the link to the Pelosi article," asks Gene.

Thank you, Tim. And people are saying, Rose Rahimi, just as a response to your introductory statement about freedom of action, autocracy is too close for comfort. Orban just got a standing ovation at the APAC, what a disgrace.

This is from Josie Adler. "The Kaiser wanted to extend Unter den Linden so he could show London and Paris. He wrote to Max Lieberman telling him to move out of his house next to the Brandenburg Gate. Lieberman replied, "The Kaiser wants to move me out of his house, Max Liebermann doesn't." Max Liebermann, of course, had a villa in Wannsee.

Yes, this is from Saul. "The first Volkswagen was designed by a Jew working for Porsche AG and was owned by Jews and taken away by Hitler," yeah. You know, it is, Saul, it's one of the most terrible, terrible stories. You've got to remember though, we are looking with historic hindsight. What I find fascinating by pinpointing these characters, and of course, you could look at others, don't forget the great Paul Ehrlich who created the cure for, Salvarsan, which became a cure for syphilis. He was completely vilified by the right-wing and Catholic press in particular for interfering with nature.

Q: "Aristotle defined human beings as rational animals. Were Hitler and Stalin rational?"

A: I don't think, you know, honestly, Aristotle might have been a wonderful philosopher and certainly a tutor to Alexander, was he, are we rational? You know, I'm hoping that, and Wendy has been discussing this, we will have more talks on the nature of people. You know, we can't give any definite articles.

Yes, of course, Breslau is now in Poland and called Wroclaw, yes, of course. Breslau must have been an extraordinary place. I have, my friend Anita Lasker-Wallfisch talks quite a lot about Breslau and the world that was there. Remember, it was a border town, it was an extraordinary, an extraordinary Jewish community. Most of them were not religious, but they mixed with each other, it's so fascinating. Breslau, yes, I know, Nora, it is in, yes, of course, it's now in Poland, but at that time, it was in Germany. Sheila says the same.

Q: Has anyone read the novel The Other Einstein that describes the

relationship and marriage to his first wife, a very gifted scientist and collaborator?

A: Yeah. She was kind of written out of history. I'll talk about that more next week because, of course, one of his children was mentally ill, his other son became a professor in America. Look, it's something else that's fascinating. Greatness in the world quite often means very unhappy private lives, private family lives. Having looked at the three characters, the reason I chose them, to start with, they were huge figures, they walked the world. You know that quote of, the quote in Julius Caesar, Marc Antony on Caesar, Shakespeare, of course, "He doth bestride the narrow world like a colossus." Well, they were all colossus. Haber, very complex, very, very problematic. Einstein, I think, in the way, the most wholesome of them, but with real problems as far as women, his relationship with women. And also, why didn't his wife get, his first wife get any credit for the work? So it's complex.

Alan Palmer, the Kaiser attended a lecture by Rathenau, the K denounced petrol as an expensive import much inferior to electricity to propelling vehicles, oh, that's interesting, Nicholas.

Q: Do you think that the traditions of the time required to be religious and pay its vulnerability to see the opportunities of the early 20th century?

A: That is a fascinating question. I don't know, I honestly, honestly don't know, I know that there are many successful wealthy religious business people, and I, that's a huge question, I think I'd like other people's comments on that. Maybe that's even a challenging conversation.

"Rathenau was writing his comments about the destiny of the baptised German Jew," so says Shelly, but on the other hand, who could predict it?

It depends what, you see, we have the history of, I keep on saying this, we know what happened next.

This is from Rose, "That writing is disgrace, for the self-hating Jew is worse than an anti-Semite. At the end, the irony is that Hitler didn't care, you went to the gas chamber, so sad to deny your heritage."

Yeah, I mean, this phenomenon of self-hating Jews, it was actually coined by a German Jewish philosopher called Lessing who was murdered by the Nazis, of course, in 1933. Yeah, I mean, I would suggest to you that Karl Marx suffered from it. It's, I think it appears in people who don't have any of the beauty of the Jewish experience. Now, what Rathenau wrote when he was a young man, I wanted to share it with you, but I do find it incredibly problematic, as I'm sure most of you do.

Heine's remark, "Conversion is the passport to European civilization," John, not German, European civilization, yes. Yes, interesting that Jews who converted generally did so to Lutheranism and not Catholicism. Except to say, Shelly, that Lutheranism was the prominent religion in the north of Germany. Luther, remember, was a German historian and very problematic anyway as far as antisemitism is concerned. You know, I find it a complicated story, Lutheranism and the Jews.

This is from Jonathan, "Albert Ballin, the largest shipping company in the world, and his ships carried most of the immigrants to do war. He died by suicide in the last weeks of the Great War."

Yes, it destroyed so many people's dreams. I mean, all that belief in progress. Turn of the century, Karl Kraus, you know, the brilliant Viennese satirist, also had a touch of Jewish self-hatred, I think. He said that turn of the century was like an experimental station on the way to the edge of the world. Look, I look at, personally, I look at the technological revolutions around us all. It's too bewildering, it's too depersonalising. Watch the film Metropolis.

Q: "How does identity relate to freedom, determinism, and responsibility? Determinist traits like race, where you were born, and ancestry, involve no choice or effort, should not be considered accomplishments or crimes, and therefore not be a worthy basis for identity."

A: Peter, you are saying something very, very sensible, but you are therefore presupposing that people are rational. Racism is irrational, is it not? To dislike somebody because they come from a different faith, a different colour, a different class, or whether they have a disability, it is irrational. I have no problem with anyone disliking me because they don't like something about me. I have the problem if they dislike me from, because I'm a Jewish woman.

So the problem, I think, then Peter goes on to say, "People like Freud, Ernestine Rose, and Einstein felt this paradox and chose to base their identity on chosen traits, how much effort and integrity you live your life with, how much progress you have achieved intellectually, philosophically, socially." Yes, of course, it takes those huge kind of individuals, Freud and Einstein, for all their flaws that people accuse them of today, they did walk, they really walked the world, and yes, they did have a very rational side, but I unfortunately believe that many people don't. Peter goes on to state, "They realised and felt the paradox of being free to have your identity determined by determined traits. Is it not preferable to be proud on and base your identity on chosen traits?" Of course it is, but unfortunately, your identity is not just self-identity.

Don't forget that Einstein, they destroyed his library, they burnt his books, they even burnt his boats, they put a price on his head. Einstein, and don't forget, Einstein, the great liberal who was so involved in fighting for human rights, and I'm going to talk about that next Monday, he also wrote that letter for Szilard to Roosevelt saying, "You've got to get the bomb before Germany does." Was that a rational or an irrational decision? I don't want to go there, it's one of those terrible problems.

Anna Smirovnus, yes, it was Napoleon. Was it? Okay. Yes.

This is from Dr. Colin Leci, "Haber is known in scientific and technical for the Haber process, that was the production of synthetic ammonia from nitrogen and hydrogen."

Thank you, thank you very much, Colin. Yes, it seems to be Napoleon. It was either Napoleon or Frederick the Great. Or more people are coming up with Napoleon. Monique says it's both Napoleon and Frederick the Great. Yes, Sheila's agreeing. Yes, Bobby's agreeing.

Tim, yes, Wannsee is where the Wannsee Conference happened, in one of those beautiful villas that had become a home, rest home for the SS. I think, synthetic acetone, I think it was Rathenau's company that was involved in it, in Manchester, we'd have to take that further. Because, of course, it's Weizmann. Weizmann, remember, was an assistant lecturer of chemistry at Manchester University, the two, they're all associated, with each other.

Q: "To what degree," Elliot asks, "to what degree does anti-Jewish and anti-Israel attitudes exist today in Germany?"

A: Oh, that is a complication. I am not going to answer that for you, Elliot. I think we will be, Wendy is determined, and I think rightly so, that we should do a lot of up to the minute presentations on what's going on in the world today, and that certainly will be one of them.

Thank you, Barbara, thank you, Jennifer. Yes, Monique, the Russian secret police worked on what have become the protocols.

Monique, that's not, it was actually Rachkovsky in Paris. There's a lot of work done on the protocols now. And I lectured on the protocols a few weeks ago. Where did Zweig say that? In one of his letters.

Yes, Robert says, "The closest Einstein came to Talmud was when a young medical student in the Einstein family invited to Shabbat dinner by the with Max Talmey."

Yeah, I'm going to talk about on Monday, because one of the things about Einstein, he had some amazing mentors on the way to greatness.

Oh, this is Josie, oh, I love lockdown. "Our grandfather, Dr. Adolf Orgler, was patent director of AEG until 1939, when he exiled to Joburg, then after the war at age 75, he was called back by the Brits and the Americans to reopen AEG in Frankfurt. He retired from there aged 80 to family in Joburg."

Oh, that is amazing. Thank you so much for that, Josie.

Q: "Why do you think that Einstein is more remembered, whilst Haber and Rathenau are largely forgotten, apart from his greatest longevity? Don't you think that Einstein's sense of humour made him stand out?"

A: Neville, what I thought I'd finish next week with, next Monday, I was going to finish today, but obviously, I'd mistimed. With some of Einstein's quotes, the wit and the wisdom of the man. Or also, look, Rathenau, Haber had a very, very complicated life. I mean, there were some who thought he was a war criminal. He created poison gas for the German army. Tragically, in the end, it was only, he tried, he was on his way to Rehovot, he died in Switzerland in 1934. Einstein wrote to him, "You held the blonde beast much too close." So we take that point of yours, Neville, next week, it's an important one.

Mike says, "If you are brainwashed so you're not rational," that's part of it, of course.

Yes, Barry, I think we're going to have to say that it was Napoleon and Frederick the Great, an army marches on its stomach.

People are asking, would we consider leading a trip to one of the areas? We used to do it a long time ago, and I really, Wendy and I have discussed it, it would just be, I don't know. Look, let's see how the world pans out. There's a lovely South African friend who used to organise trips of Jewish interest all over Europe, I don't know if he's listening. But I think it's more a question for him.

Thank you, Barbara. Monique, "Those who understood the Spanish Inquisition could predict that baptism would not suffice for former Jews," yeah. Yes, yes.

Q: "Based on the number of Jewish Nobel laureates at the time, such as Ehrlich and Landsteiner, did Jews, in fact, flourish in science and other humanistic professions at least as much as any other period? Can you comment on why this was?"

A: I think it's got a lot to do with new science, new chemistry, new physics, I am not a scientist, I am a historian who can tell life stories and talk about the period. What I have gathered from all my reading, it's because of this outsidersness. They're outside the rigidity. They're flexible. Look, 25% of all Nobel Prize winners have

been Jews. That's another issue for another time, maybe. Karl Marx's daughter Eleanor went to Jewish political meeting. Eleanor Marx was very interested in women's rights, she was very involved in all sorts of meetings in the east end of London. Yes, she, but her father had real problems with his Jewish origins and wrote some terrible things about the Jews.

Thank you, Susan. Barry's saying, "If Hitler had been rational and embraced the Jews, Germany would have become number one country in the," well, what is certainly a problem is that so many of the scientists who worked on Los Alamos were born Jewish. They worked on the bomb under Oppenheimer. So it's a very complicated area. I think that's it.

Thank you to some lovely, some people who said they found this interesting. I find this presentation interesting. I will continue next week. So Judi, thank you very much, and if you could change the syllabus yet again.

- [Judi] I will make this, Trudy, we'll give you a call tomorrow, Trudy.

- Sorry and thank you all and good night, everyone.

- [Judi] Thank you, Wendy, bye bye.

- [Wendy] Bye, bye.