

# Reichstag Speech by Dr. Ludwik von Jazdzewski (January 15, 1886)

## Abstract

Ludwik von Jazdzewski (1838–1911) was a priest and doctor of theology. He was also a member of the Polish contingent of the Landtag (Prussian state parliament) and the Reichstag. He invoked the language of morality and international law to defend Polish nationals who resided in Prussia without German citizenship.

## Source

Dr. von Jazdzewski

[...]

Gentlemen, this “Polish national fanaticism,” “the unjustified Polish velleities and ambitions” as the minister calls them, “the fanaticism of the Polish race,” supposedly forms the substrate of the endangerment of the political security of the Prussian state. The alleged fanaticism of the Polish population is expressed in the defense and the preservation of rights that are based on divine and natural law and that have been granted through state treaties and through the assurances of the monarchs of these states. The extent to which these rights have been violated is evident in the *Kulturkampf*, whose insidious poison continues to spread rampantly through the populace; is evident in the pedagogically ruinous and reprehensible educational policy since 1872; is evident in the language law of 1876, which demonstrates the whole attitude of the Prussian bureaucracy toward the Polish population. If blood and money are demanded of us, and if we are obliged to give this blood and money for the preservation of the Prussian state, then, I believe, we are well within our right to insist that whatever can make a person’s life worthwhile in some way should also be granted to us; and that we be protected by the Prussian government in the preservation of our inalienable rights and in our efforts to retain our nationality and to practice our religion freely. And if we are reproached for our perfectly correct attitude and are insulted with the word “fanaticism,” our hallowed right is thereby in a certain manner restricted, repressed, and reduced to nothing, so that it is no surprise that a reaction and an outrage is expressed in the population, and that people defend themselves against the government with all permissible means.

Gentlemen, if concerted efforts to retain one’s national language and to practice one’s religion freely are a crime, and if the suspicion of being able to commit such a crime is employed to expel many thousands of people from the country, even those who were born in the Prussian territory, so as to make them beggars, then I believe it would have been more consistent, if also much crueler—if one cannot accept such a nationality—to attempt to introduce through governmental channels a law “against the dangerous efforts of Poles to retain their nationality and religion,” to propose an exceptional law modeled on the laws of July 4, 1872, and May 4, 1874, and to thereby enrich Germany’s and Prussia’s code of emergency laws with a new gem. We would then see what the world would say to this. As long as this has not happened, however, we must deign to grant the Polish people that they alone may choose the nationality and religion which satisfy them; that we acknowledge these rights in our fashion, that we go as far in the preservation of our nationality and our religious faith as the laws of this nation permit; and that we will not allow anyone to violate what we hold sacred at the danger of perishing in the defense of these highest properties of humankind.

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According to official information from the Prussian government, on October 1, 1884, there were 9,749 immigrants in the provinces of East and West Prussia. Including family members, the total number equals 30,165 heads. Of these, 4,119 in the region of Strasburg; 3,251 in the region of Thorn, with a population of 33,000 souls, hence around 10 percent. But these are also the two regions in which immigration has assumed the greatest dimensions. In other regions this immigration accounts for no more than 1 percent of the total population. But, gentlemen, as long as the migration of the German population to the Kingdom of Poland does not stop, the influx of the Polish population into the Prussian provinces will not be stopped without a special measure on the part of the Prussian government. If one can speak at all of the displacement of a population according to its nationality, then these figures will prove to you that, if so and so many thousands of Germans have migrated to the Kingdom of Poland in the past decades, then it is the Germans who are displacing the Poles, rather than the Poles who are displacing the Germans—in this case, the Prussians.

Hence, Minister von Puttkamer has by no means justified the measures through the national viewpoints that he emphasized. On the contrary, the numbers that I quoted—and which, as I said, are official numbers—sufficiently prove that a shift in conditions in those eastern provinces with respect to religion and with respect to nationality has by no means taken place. There must, therefore, be other motivations; and a key to these motivations is provided by Lord Taaffe's answer, which he gave on October 17, 1885, in the Austrian imperial council [*Reichsrath*], and by a related answer from Lord Kalnoky of November 17, 1885, in the Austrian delegation. There, it was stated that linguistic and confessional shifts provided the motivation for this measure—hence, the motivation related not just to language, but also to confession. This official excuse from the Prussian government shows that in the case of the expulsions, no investigation was made into personal wrongdoing—hence, that the precondition for expulsion recognized under international law was entirely absent. The people were expelled because they are Poles and because they are Catholics. In Prussia it is unconstitutional for a Catholic to be treated differently under the law from a Protestant. It is all the worse that this treatment has been made into a basic principle. Officially, this is interpreted in such a way that it is not a matter of confessional considerations, but of confessional relations that are connected with national ones; the measure is directed not at religious confession itself, but rather at confession as a mainspring of national tendencies. This sophistic interpretation of the *Berlin Political News* [*Berliner politischen Nachrichten*] does not blunt the measure's religious edge; the measure remains the newest innovation in the *Kulturkampf*, a new way of persecuting Catholics.

[...]

Gentlemen, the law of the Prussian state and the law of any regulated state must be constructed on the basis of Christianity. Where this basis is missing, true civilization is also missing. Here, this basis is missing, and I ask you gentlemen to make sense of it.

[...]

Source: *Stenographische Berichte über die Verhandlungen des Reichstags*. Berlin: Norddeutsche Buchdruckerei, November 1885–January 1886, pp. 530–35. Available online at: [http://www.reichstagsprotokolle.de/Blatt3\\_k6\\_bsbo0018456\\_00569.html](http://www.reichstagsprotokolle.de/Blatt3_k6_bsbo0018456_00569.html)

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