In 1927, the Berlin-based psychiatrist Paul Plaut wrote an article in which he claimed that the International Congress for Sexual Research, which had been held in Berlin in October 1926, had provided a forum for the first public discussion of the position of psychology within the legal process. Citing the papers given by the psychologist William Stern, the psychiatrist Albert Moll and the jurist Albert Hellwig, he pointed to a consensus among psychologists, psychiatrists and jurists about the importance of psychological knowledge in the courtroom, but noted their strong disagreement about which of these professions was best equipped to provide expert opinions in this context. Following up the tensions observed by Plaut at the International Congress for Sexual Research, this paper will highlight the contested nature of forensic psychology in early twentieth-century Germany. It will also demonstrate what was at stake professionally for psychologists, psychiatrists and jurists in debates over forensic psychological expertise.

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