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The book that shaped a new era, 1946.

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THE BOOK THAT SHAPED A NEW ERA

WRHS ARCHIVES
The Jewish World Commemorates This Week, the Fiftieth
Anniversary of Dr. Theodore Herzl's Epoch-Making Book,
"The Jewish State."

By
Dr. Abba Hillel Silver

At
The Temple

On
Sunday morning, February 17, 1946

Fifty years, ago, dear friends, Dr. Theodore Herzl wrote a small volume called "Der Judenstadt". Seldom has such a small volume made such an impact on the life of our people. Around it raged a strong contest which has continued to this day. This volume created a storm of controversy. Around this volume was created a Jewish national movement. Within twenty years of its appearance, the central thesis of that little volume was accepted by the greatest empire on earth. And today a vast agitation is going on all over the world--on the one hand an effort to check, and on the other hand an effort to complete the progress of that idea to which that little book gave eloquent expression.

Who wrote it? What was the occasion for writing it? It was written by a Viennese Jew of that typically assimilationist environment, of that charming, pleasure-loving Viennese atmosphere of those days. He was a Viennese Jew, a writer of plays, a journalist of an important Viennese newspaper, a doctor of Laws, a member of the Vienna Bar, a man who was far removed from any vital concern of Jewish life, the Jewish life of his day, a man who was not at all at home in Jewish life, Jewish thought or Jewish history or Jewish literature, a man not at all acquainted with the life of world Jewry of his day, particularly in the great centers of Jewish life of his day -- in Eastern Europe.

But knowing all this about the man, you have described only part of the man. You have not indicated the source of the man's amazing, almost incomprehensible influence on other men. He was blessed with rare gifts. He possessed a fascinating personality. He possessed a genius of authentic leadership and rare powers of organization, planning. Many of the greatest among men fell under the spell of his personality, felt the enchantment of his dynamic vital being. One cannot dissociate Dr. Herzl's career and his achievements from the over-mastering fact of the man himself, the princely bearing, the majestic character, the inexhaustible wells of strength of the man. Here is how one writer describes the impact of the personality of Herzl upon himself when he first saw him at the first Zionist Congress in Basles in 1897 when Dr. Herzl arose to deliver the first

inaugural address, as it were, for this great assembly of world Jewry. This is the writer speaking. He was in the audience, watching Theodore Herzl:

"Before me rose a marvellous and exalted figure, kingly in bearing and stature, with deep eyes in which could be read quiet majesty and unuttered sorrow.. It is a royal scion of the House of David, risen from among the dead, clothed in legend and fantasy and beauty. Everyone sat breathless, as if in the presence of a miracle...And then wild applause broke out; for 15 minutes the delegates clapped, shouted and waved their handkerchiefs. The dream of 2000 years was on the point of realization; it was as if the Messiah, son of David, confronted us; and I was seized by an overpowering desire, in the midst of this storm of joy, to cry out, loudly, for all to hear - "Hail to the King!"

Israel Zangwill, who was certainly not aman easily swept off his feet, compared Herzl to some "King of ancient Assyria," -- the impressiveness of his countenance, the majesty of his bearing.

This extraordinary man, charming, passionate and of deep humanity came upon this tragic Jewish problem in the prime of his life and at the height of his career, and it shook him to the very depths of his soul.

He had known anti-Semitism before. What Jew in Vienna, or Austria or elsewhere had not? It had been spreading like a cancer through Western Europe, in Germany in the 17th and 18th centuries. In France Edouard Drummond published his infamous book "La France Juive" in 1885 which in a way could have become the text for later day Nazi propaganda. In a year over a hundred editions of this book were published. In 1892 he published his anti-Semitic newspaper, "La Libre Paris." He knew of anti-Semitism, like most of the Jews of his day. He didn't take it very seriously. He looked upon it as most men did -- as a sort of anachronism, a survival of olden times which was destined to pass away with continued growing enlightenment. It was only a question of time. The more advanced and civilized a country became, the less Jew hatred would persist in that country. There was really was no Jewish problem. That was the

the prevalent thought of himself and the enlightened Jews of his day. That was Herzl's thought. And then came a few shattering disillusionments and forced Herzl to abandon his rather comfortable wishful thinking.

In the early 90's he found himself in Paris as the correspondent of the Viennese Paper, the "Neue Freie Presse," In '92 there broke upon France, the first of two great scandals which came to involve the Jews. The first one had to do with the collapse of the Panama Society. A company had been formed in France, founded by Ferdinand de Lesseps, the engineer of the Suez Canal. Millions of francs were invested in that project by many of the small people of France, the small people of France invested their savings in that project. That project, through mismanagement and corruption, collapsed. A great cry went up in France. In this project, the reactionary element, the clerical element had been very much interested. They were coming under very severe criticism and attack. Whereupon they did what anti-Semites do at all times. They sought to turn away the animus of the population from themselves to a minority which could be easily held responsible, which could be the scapegoat of that misfortune. The Jewish group offers itself readily because it is a minority, and so while no Jews were involved and had nothing to do with it, the Jews of France came to be blamed for this economic disaster just as anti-Semites later in Germany and in this country came to blame the Jews for economic depression and economic misfortune.

Herzl as a key newspaper observer, saw this developing anti-Semitism in France and how the Jews were being victimized. Then it began to dawn on him that there is a Jewish question. There is no doubt about it. Those who deny it are wrong. But he, as yet, had no solution. In fact the first solution which occurred to him was (a) that the Jews in Germany should ally themselves with the espousal of Socialism, and as far as the Austrian Jews were concerned, to convert to Catholicism thereby in one stroke dissolving the Jewish question. There was ferment going on in the mind of Herzl. He was wrestling with the problem.

The first positive wrestling with the problem is manifested in his play which he wrote at that time called "The New Ghetto" in which he dramatically analyzes the problem of Jewish -non-Jewish relationships - all its entanglements, and while he does not arrive at the conclusion at which he later arrives, he is true to himself and he fights for his dignity and his freedom. He asserts himself. He is no longer the escapist, running away from the problem. He now speaks of the mandate of the Jews to fight for their dignity.

Then, in December, 1894, there broke the Dreyfus Affair of which you are all familiar -- the trial, the condemnation, the degradation of this innocent man, this French patriot. He heard the cries around the courtroom and on the day of Dreyfus' degradation: "Death to the Jews, Death to Dreyfus!"

Thus Herzl began to think. "In Republican, modern, civilized France, a hundred years after the Declaration of the Rights of Man, the French people, or at any rate, the greater part of the French people, does not want to extend the rights of man to Jews. The edict of the great Revolution has been revoked."

He further writes: "Until that time, most of us believed (1899) that the solution of the Jewish question was to be patiently waited for as part of the general development of mankind. But when a people which in every other respect is so progressive and so highly civilized can take such a turn, what are we to expect from other peoples, which have not even attained the level which France attained a hundred years ago?"

"And Herzl, the honest thinker, the searcher after truth, moves forward to the inevitable conclusions which he incorporates a year and a half later in that little book, "Judenstadt." - an attempt at a modern solution to the Jewish question.

He said that when he wrote it -- it is really not a book, it is a -- and he wrote it under terrific emotional stress -- "he felt the flutter of eagle's wings over his head."

What is the thesis of this book, "The Jewish State?" It is a very simple one. The Jews are a people -- not a religious sect whose problem can be solved by

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The scope, the international political vision wasn't there. Nor was the driving power of dynamic leadership. Herzl did not know about Zionism. He had not read Pinsker's volume, nor Hess' volume. He arrived at his ~~ex~~ conclusions through his own spiritual honest, through his own wrestling with the thought.

In this book, Dr. Herzl suggests ways of carrying out his plan. He suggests first of all the creation of a "Society of Jews," which would become the legal spokesman and legal representative of the Jews to negotiate for them. There did not exist an organized body to represent them. He wished to create it. It was originally named "Pioneer Jews. It was to speak for it, make approaches to governments for. It was to obtain a territory with Sovereign title to it, not a place to which Jews could immigrate -- in his day there were immigration opportunities everywhere in the world, in America, in South America. He was thinking in terms of a land over which the Jewish people would have sovereignty, because he said -- and here again he shows a prophetic grasp of the problem - "otherwise, the government under pressure of the local population, which would feel itself threatened by the immigration, would the farther influx of Jews. Emigration can therefore have sense only when it has as its foundation our assured sovereignty of the Territory."

religious emancipation or by apostasy. The Jews are a people. They cannot assimilate because the world will not permit it to assimilate. Here and there a Jew can escape -- but ^{not} a people. It cannot escape. That people creates because of its position as a minority an unfavorable reaction which expresses itself in what we call anti-Semitism. Anti-Semitism will not be liquidated by enlightened social progress. The Jewish question will have to be a national question and can only be solved nationally and politically -- that is through the establishment of the Jewish state. Let me read you his own words. The little introduction certainly requires no improvement. In the introduction to his book he writes:

"The Jewish question still exists. It would be foolish to deny it. It is a remnant of the Middle Ages, which civilized nations do not even yet seem able to shake off, try as they will. They certainly showed a generous desire to do so when they emancipated us. The Jewish question exists wherever Jews live in perceptible numbers. Where it does not exist, it is carried by Jews in the course of their migrations. We naturally move to those places where we are not persecuted, and there our presence produces persecution. This is the case in every country, and will remain so, even in those highly civilized -- for instance France -- till the Jewish question finds a solution on a political basis. The unfortunate Jews are now carrying anti-Semitism into England; they have already introduced it into America.

"I believe that I understand anti-Semitism, which is really a highly complex movement. I consider it from a Jewish standpoint, yet without fear or hatred. I believe that I can see what elements there are in it of vulgar sport, of common trade jealousy, of inherited prejudice, of religious intolerance, and also of pretended self-defence. I think the Jewish question is no more a social than a religious one, notwithstanding that it sometimes takes these and other forms. It is a national question, which can only be solved by making it a political world-question to be discussed and settled by the civilized nations of the world in council."

Please note how prophetic these words are spoken fifty years ago.

"We are a people -- one people.

"We have honestly endeavored everywhere to merge ourselves in the social life of surrounding communities and to preserve only the faith of our fathers. We are not permitted to do so. In vain are we loyal patriots, our loyalty in some places running to extremes; in vain do we make the same sacrifices of life and property as our fellow-citizens; in vain do we strive to increase the fame of our native land in science and art, or her wealth by trade and native land in science and art, or her wealth by trade and commerce. In countries where we have lived for centuries we are still cried down as strangers, and often by those whose ancestors were not yet domiciled in the land where Jews had already had experience of suffering. The majority may decide which are the strangers; for this, as indeed every point which arises in the relations between nations, is a question of might. I do not here surrender any portion of our prescriptive right, when I make this statement merely in my own name as an individual. In the world as it now is and for an indefinite period will probably remain, might precedes right. It is useless, therefore, for us to be loyal patriots, as were the Huguenots who were forced to emigrate. If we could only be left in peace...."

"But I think we shall not be left in peace."

Now, of course, Dr. Herzl was not the first to have arrived at these conclusions. There was really nothing novel about it. The Jewish people on the very day that they were exiled from Palestine entertained these convictions and these hopes. That is the meaning of the Jewish Messianic hope, the rebuilding of the Jewish nation in its historic land.

In 1862, Moses Hess, also of Western Europe, wrote a book which made a great impression in Jewish life, "Rome and Jerusalem" in which he eloquently postulates for Western Jews in thesis - a Jewish nation through re-establishing as a nation among nations of the world and in Palestine - otherwise our problem will never be solved.

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And that conviction of Herzl is as valid today as it was then.

Then, along with the Society of Jews, he suggested the establishment of the Jewish Company which would be the economic instrument for migration and settlement after a territory with sovereign rights had been acquired by Jews.

I will not go into the details. Many of the ideas are no longer relevant, but these are the broad outlines, and these broad outlines have persisted to this day.

You can readily understand the reception of this book. He was jeered at. It was called madness, a chime a. Herzl was referred to as "King of the Jews." In Munich, Munich, mind you, Herzl's book was referred to as a "fantastic dream of a whose mind had been unhinged by Jewish enthusiasm." He was attacked by orthodox Rabbis, Reform Rabbis, by individuals -- all the arguments that persist today. Many refused to listen. However, the masses listened to him. The students listened. Also some very important Jewish personalities of that day. Max Nordau listened and was impressed, Nordau who was an international figure far greater than Herzl in his day. Herzl, with this group of followers, in the face of this vast opposition began to work, began to challenge, began to rally the Jewish world. For eight years this rare being worked day and night. He called upon Sultans, ministers, statesmen, sultans, whenever the opportunity arose. He was driven by this urgency which he felt, to save the Jews from a tragedy which might be awaiting them.

In 1897 he succeeded in doing what no one up to that time succeeded in doing -- calling together and convoking a congress of world Jewry to discuss this project which we find in this book. That was in 1897. Twenty years passed and this chimera, this political madness was written into a diplomatic document and signed in the name of the greatest government in the world. In 1918 Great Britain accepted the thesis of this little book. Great Britain looked with favor on the establishing of a Jewish home in Palestine and pledged itself to facilitate

it.

I would like to say much more, but I haven't the time. Two things were true. His vision was correct in two ways. First, the destruction of Western Europe. Nobody wished for it. It came about as he foresaw it. What is left of Western European Jewry is in the concentration camps. His vision came true in a more hopeful way too. That little country of Palestine, in his day desert, sparsely settled, barren, fifty years later is a vigorous, creative Jewish community with close on to seven hundred thousand souls, hundreds of colonies, settlements, schools, hospitals, orphanages, social agencies, universities. Seven hundred thousand Jews -- no one could stop them. There was an irresistible historic force back of them. That is what the vision of a man can do to friends when there is truth in them. Within eight years he spent himself. His great heart broke.

Herzl was not a narrow political nationalist. He was not a chauvenist. To him, as to all Zionists, nationalism is not the end to itself. The Jewish people has always known of other frontiers, beyond that.....

I conclude with these words of Dr. Herzl ~~which~~ to indicate the quality of this vision, which he called for in Zionism. "As I understand it there is a striving for moral and spiritual perfection. "For in Zionism, as I understand it," he wrote three months before his death, "there is not only the striving for a legally secured soil for our poor people; there is the striving for moral and spiritual perfection."

Again he wrote: "Let the word be repeated here which was given at the beginning: the Jews who will it shall have their state. We shall at last live as free men on our own soil and die peacefully in our own homeland. The world will be liberated by our liberation, enriched with our wealth, made greater by our greatness. And that which we seek there for our own use will stream out mightily

and beneficently upon all mankind."

That is the vision of that day. That is the vision of Theodore Herzl.



1) 50 yrs. ago - "Der Judenrat" - short - Selbster - Storm of controversy - Created a great but. movement - In 20 yrs. - thesis accepted - To-day - a vast agitation. to check or correct papers of that idea ^{to} which that little book - gave eloquent expression.

2) Who wrote it? What was the occasion for the writing of it?
- A Viennese Jew, product of ^{of chemistry, engineering &...} env. environment a writer of plays & feuilletons, a journalist & an important. V. newspaper. & a Doctor of Laws, a promoter of the V. bar -
- A man far removed from ^{of} concern with problems of life -
- but at all at home in ^{of} history, or ^{of} that - was familiar with the life of world Jewry - East & West -

3) But there was much more to the man -
- He had blessed gifts ^{a fascination} of personality & the genius of author's leadership - and ^{and} power of organization and planning -
- None of the greatest among them ^{felt} under his spell, felt the enchantment of his dynamic vibrant personality -
- One cannot dissociate Heyl's career & achievements from the over-marking fact, the man H. Heuser - his will of strength - his power, heavy - his majestic bearing -
- How is how one, who was present at first 2. types - describes him - ^{for 2 types} (LWB)
- Zangwill - compared him with "some King, ancient Roman"

4) This extraordinary man - gifted, charming, passionate, and of deep humanity came upon this topic of problem in the prime of his life - and it struck him to the very depths of his soul -
He had known Antis. before. What J. in Vienna ^{a Austria a creature} did not

I had been spreading like a cancer thru W. Europe, Germany 70 - France - Edward
knows the ex. Steve - that it was taken ~~rather lightly~~ ^{Drumont} ^{La France} ^{JULY 11} ¹⁸⁸⁸
very seriously.
an anachronism! a revival of older times! It will pass
away with the growth of enlightenment, only a question of
time! The more advanced civilized - the less Jew hatred
There really is no Jewish question!

57. And then came the shocking disillusions -
H. was in Paris reporting for "Le Libre Presse"
1892, Financial Scandal Ferdinand de Lesseps - Engineer
Famous Panama Canal - collapse of Panama Soc.
Hundreds, millions, francs - savings of small people - lost
mismanagement & corruption
Jewish question - Clericals ^{always} had been behind Pana. Soc.
No Jew in it. - Jews blamed for it. - Nazis -

"There is a Jewish question, there is no doubt about it,
Those who deny it are wrong!" - W. W. no solution
Germany = Jew. espousal; Localism =
Austria - Jew. conversion to Catholics - thinks!

Nov. 1894 - "The New Shelta" - dramatically analyzes the
problem - no ~~fixed~~ solutions - Time to hurry
fight for his dignity & his freedom! - out, the
New Shelta! Never Shelta.

Dec. 1894 - Dreyfus Trial - + condemnation - degradation
"I am innocent" - "A Mort!" "A mort les Juifs"
"Death to all the Jews - here, me, I then was a traitor"

There in France! "In republican, modern, civilized France, a 100 yrs. after the Declaration, the Rights of Man: The French people, or at any rate the greater part, the French people, do not want to extend the rights of man to Jews. The edict, the great Revolution has been reverted."

(a) Until that time most, as believed (1899) that the solution, the J. question was to be patiently waited for as part of the general development of mankind. But when a people which in every other respect is so progressive and so highly civilized can take such a turn, what do we to expect from other peoples, which have not even attained the level which France attained a 100th yrs. ago?..

6/. And Herzl, the honest thinker, the searcher after truth, moves forward to the inevitable conclusions which he incorporates a year and a half later in his "An Attempt at a Modern Solution of the Jewish Question".

He felt - the further his people's ways along his road, will not be successful.

- His thesis: ① Jews are a people. ② They cannot assimilate. ③ ~~They should not assimilate~~ ④ Antisemitism will not be liquidated by enlightenment & social progress. ⑤ The Jewish question is a national question ⑥ It can be solved only politically ⑦ a Jewish State. (Judeo Nat. Body)

7/ He was not the first - ① Mess. Rep. ② Mess. Reps 1862.

"Rome & Jerusalem" - 9 January - a nation among nations - Palatium.

③ 1882 - Dr. Leo Pinsker - Odessa doctor - Auto Swave/Pol following ~~papers~~ ^{tray papers} of 1881 - J. People must solve their problem their self-emancipation - an indep. nation on its own land.

④ 18 columns - 112 122/11 -

8/ Heyl. did not know it - Movement small-scale - little papers - small achievements lacked sweep - large, audacious vision - Inter. approach

9/ H. suggests - to carry out his plans -

① The Society of Jews - legal rep. of J. people - to represent and act for it - and speak for it - make approaches to governments -

To obtain a territory with sovereign title to it - has a place for immigration - into which Jews could immigrate But a State - sovereign rights

For to insure: the genit, under pressure of the local population, which would feel itself threatened by the immigration would forbid the further influx of Jews. Emigration can. ∴ have sense only when it has as its foundation an assured sovereignty of the territory.

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David, confronted us; and I was seized by an overpowering
desire, in the midst of this storm of joy, to cry out,
loudly, for all to hear - "Hail to the King!"....

(2) The Jewish Company. - The Economic instrument of migration and settlement - after ser. ten. has been obtained. -

10/ Reception. Attacked - Jeered - Chimera! Madness.
"King of the Jews!" - "the fantastic dream of a faislisme
whose mind had been unburied by J. enthusiasm"
J. writes in Minuten (minutes) - Nazis!
Orthodox & Russian Rabbi -

(1) But others looked! the masses - Youth - Students -
David Wolffsohn & H. Max Nordau - "a revelation"

(2) How Herzl worked! 8 yrs - Kaiser - Prussian - Pope - Minister
Statsumen -

11/ Zionist Congress. Req. World Jewry - Aug. 1897

✓ Nov. 2, 1917 - Balfour Declaration.

His vision came true!

(1) Tragically - destruction of W. Europ. Jewry

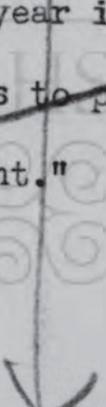
(2) Hypocritically - 700,000 Jews - a nation!

12/ W. a narrow nationalism: Other Frontiers! (Jews)

~~At the same time, Zionism was for him something more; he gave to it the name~~
~~of "The Eternal Ideal;".~~ ~~Even after the acquisition of Palestine it would not cease~~
~~to be an ideal.~~ "For in Zionism, as I understand it," he wrote three months before
his death, in his introduction to a youth publication, "there is not only the striving
for a legally secured soil for our poor people; there is the striving for moral
and spiritual perfection." ~~In this striving for moral and spiritual perfection~~
~~he himself led the way.~~

"In the economically upper classes it produces discomfort. In the middle classes it produces a dull unhappiness. In the lower classes it produces naked desperation. The simple fact is that everywhere the pressure issues to the same effect, and it is summed up in the classic Berlin cry: Juden raus! I shall therefore compress the Jewish problem into its capsule form: Must the Jews 'get out'? If so, whither? Or can we remain? And if so, for how long?"

"No individual is strong enough or rich enough to transfer a people from one place of residence to another. Only an idea can do it. The state idea does possess that power. In the long night of their history the Jews have never ceased to dream that kingly dream: 'Next year in Jerusalem.' It is an ancient saying among us. The task before us now is to prove that this dream can be transformed into a thought of the bright daylight."



"Let the word be repeated here which was given at the beginning: the Jews who will it shall have their state. We shall at last live as free men on our own soil and die peacefully in our own homeland. The world will be liberated by our liberation, enriched with our wealth, made greater by our greatness. And that which we seek there for our own use will stream out mightily and beneficently upon all mankind."