

The Fateful Moment

The Birth of Herzl's Zionism

By HERMANN BAHR

The question of what particular incident or circumstance effected in Theodor Herzl's life the revolution which changed the man of letters into the national leader has frequently been debated, and never answered decisively. It is the subject of this brief sketch by Hermann Bahr, one of the finest dramatists and men of letters produced by Austria in the last forty years. Among the best-known works of Hermann Bahr are: "The Russian Journey," "Anti-Semitism," "Expressionism." In Volume One of the "Diaries" is the following entry: "Hermann Bahr said he would write an attack on me because one could not get along without the Jews. 'Pas mal.'"

really find itself. He turned to the feuilleton—he became a *causeur*, or whatever other name you might choose to give to this slightly despised guild. From the staff of the *Neue Freie Presse* Herzl's prestige spread far beyond the confines of Austria; and when he was chosen its Paris correspondent, Herzl had achieved one of the most sought-after and envied positions in the European journalistic world. No; that dark incident of his university days, which had affected him so directly, did not change the current of his life. It was in Paris, in an incident in which he was not involved personally, that he met his fate.

He was an eye-witness of the cruel and historic ceremony when Captain Dreyfus was stripped of his insignia, and degraded from his rank, prior to his department to Devil's Island. The majority of the public was convinced that Dreyfus was guilty; and Herzl was convinced among others. And yet the brutality of the ceremony made a strange impression on him. Born actors, the French lose no opportunity to dramatize a public incident: and here was material for a brilliant effort. It was a magnificently impressive spectacle. An officer breaks the traitor's sword; one by one a sergeant, a corporal and a private strip his insignia from him, and cast them at his feet. Herzl, believing Dreyfus to be guilty, saw the man treated according to his deserts. What he

could not understand was the overt delight which showed upon the faces of the spectators. It seemed like a national holiday. "Why are these people so delighted?" This was the question which he repeated over and over again. When the performance was over, when the traitor had been led away, and while the faces of the dispersing throng still glowed with happy excitement, Herzl turned with that question to one of his colleagues of the press. "Why are they so delighted? The traitor deserved his fate, and he received no more punishment than he merited. But how can they find such intense joy in the suffering of a human being. Granted he is a traitor—but a traitor is still a man."

His colleague replied: "No,

IN those far-off days when I entered the University of Vienna to take up the study of the classics, Theodor Herzl was already the pride and glory of the *Burschenschaft* or fraternity of which I became an impertinent *Fuchs* (junior member). Even in those early days the charm and magic which in his maturity were to conquer thousands were already manifest; it was not only by his appearance that he dominated his fellow students—his gallant nature, his ironic, superior spirit, his easy masterfulness were irresistible. I can hardly describe the astonishment that seized us when we learned that the *Burschenschaft* had decided in full convention to strike Herzl's name off its roster. It was decided at the same time to admit no more Jews, for the *Burschenschaft* had determined not to lag behind the spirit of the times. Strangely enough (or is it so strange?) the suggestion came originally from a Jewish member of the fraternity. There was no danger of his being expelled, for with the same unanimity with which it expelled Herzl, the fraternity decided that this particular Jew was so eminently Aryan in spirit—he was a very courageous dueller—that he could remain. It appears that the distinction thus conferred upon the Aryan Jew did not contribute much to his peace of mind. At any rate, he solved the problem by shooting himself.

But it was not this incident which was destined to give the fateful turn to Herzl's life. It seems to have made no profound impression on him, for he certainly did not permit it to overshadow his enjoyment of life. The field which he ultimately chose for himself was one in which an overshadowed and haunted spirit could not



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the French do not feel that he is a man. They see him not as a human being but as a Jew. Christian compassion ends before it reaches the Jew. It is unjust—but we cannot change it. It has always been so, and it will be so for ever."

It was at this moment that Herzl's Zionism was born.

Such was the account that Herzl gave me frequently—though of course in later years. There was a time when our work threw us into intimate contact; on fine summer evenings he would stop at my office on his way out and ask me whether I cared to walk a little of the way with him. But our walks sometimes lasted for hours; we kept on circling the *Votivkirche* until the sun had set and the twilight was dying. And perpetually he returned to the theme that had made him its prisoner. Again and again he repeated: "There is no nation without a country! What is more, there is no man without a country;

he may not know it, he may not feel the slight desire to know it, he may feel perfectly at home in this strange land—but he must know that somewhere in the world there is a country predestined to be his own and that of his family, a country which will permit him to enter, which cannot refuse him. If he does not dream of going to his country, he has no desire to do so; but he knows that there is a country that is waiting for him, that belongs to him, and to which he belongs. No man can live without this!

It was only at Herzl's funeral that I began to understand fully just what he meant. The procession lasted for hours; I went with it. And I realize that I was in an alien world. This dark mass, murmuring words incomprehensible to my ear, moving through Vienna toward the Promised Land. And Herzl's achievement is this: He restored to his people the knowledge of their home.

Herzl and France

By PAUL PAINLEVÉ

The author of this appreciation of Theodor Herzl is at present Minister of War in the cabinet of Poincaré. One of France's outstanding liberals, M. Painlevé has been Prime Minister on several occasions and President of the League of the Rights of Man.

THEODOR HERZL, a man who had probed and felt in himself the unsounded depth of the Jewish soul and the indestructible idealism of his people, by faith alone set into motion a process of action and preparation that finally proved stronger than all obstacles. The whole of Palestine with its magnificent achievements is a monument to his genius. The further the moment of Herzl's death sinks back into the past, the more majestic appears the stature of the man. It will go on increasing in grandeur until the day when all the earth will recognize him as one of the élite of mankind, one of the fashioners of history. That process is in evolution now.

It would seem that there is an impression abroad that French public opinion is hostile to the Zionists and their work. This is a serious misunderstanding. The Government of France has followed with deep sympathy everything that has been done since 1916, when that sympathy was first expressed. I belonged to the Government at that time. But this must not be forgotten: France has an interest dating from centuries back in the Holy Land.



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Fear is entertained in France that the rapid growth of Hebrew and its intensive development, in conjunction with a larger diffusion of English in the Near East, will push French culture even further into the background.

I hope the Zionists understand our anxiety. They should not like to be forgotten in the New Jerusalem in which French genius has so long radiated its brilliance. Let the Zionists develop their fatherland, strengthen their culture and perfect their language.

Let them pay tribute to the generous treatment that England has always accorded them—but let them also remember another nation which was also generous and hospitable to Israel, and which through the Declaration of the Rights of Man made citizens of the Jews of Europe.

Herzl, the great friend of France, the man steeped in our culture and civilization as well as in those of other peoples, would have wished it so. That is my certainty and my hope.

Whom shall we believe, the prophets who predict a marvelous Renaissance or the pessimists who foresee a lamentable debacle? After ten years of activity an affirmative answer can be given: Palestine will become the hearth of Judaism. Her soil will become the home of numerous people.