

Jews in Western Europe

While such views were being expressed in the east, Jews in Western Europe developed quite an opposite philosophy. Consider Adolf Jellinek, who was called to Vienna as rabbi of the Leopoldstadt Temple in 1856 and became known as the greatest Jewish preacher of his age and a standard-bearer for Jewish liberalism. He said that the plan for an independent territorial home for the Jews was absurd and impossible. "He deplored the creation of what he called with prescient acuity 'a small state like Serbia or Romania outside Europe, which would most likely become the plaything of one Great Power against another, and whose future would be uncertain,'" writes Wheatcroft. "But this was not the nub of his opposition. The real objection to a Jewish territorial home would be that it threatens the position of western Jews, and should be rejected by Jews."

Jellinek argued that "almost all Jews in Europe" would vote against the scheme if they were given the opportunity. This was because they are not, as both Pinsker and the anti-Semites seemed to think, transient vagrants in the country where they lived. "We are at home in Europe," stated Jellinek, "and feel ourselves to be children of the lands in which we were born, raised and educated, whose languages we speak and whose cultures constitute our intellectual substance. We are Germans, Frenchmen, Englishmen, Hungarians, Italians, etc. with every fibre of our being. We long ago ceased to be genuine full-blooded Semites in the sense of a Hebrew nationality that has long since been lost."

As the 19th century came to an end, the figure of Theodore Herzl emerged as the founder of the modern Zionist movement. His worldview, Wheatcroft shows, was shaped by the anti-Semitism he observed around him and, in many ways, he accepted the anti-Semites' view of Jews.

By the time he had entered his Gymnasium or high school in 1875, a branch of the new anti-Semitism, one based on nationalism more than on traditional religious questions, had emerged in Budapest, Herzl's boyhood home. Cyozo von Istóczy made a violent speech in the Hungarian Parliament denouncing the Jews in terms which combined the old and the new: the Jews were an exclusive tribe who had defied absorption into the outside world for thousands of years, and who aimed at economic conquest of their gentile neighbors under cover of "liberalism." Three years

later, in 1878, the year of the Congress of Berlin, Istóczy made a still more remarkable speech. He supposed that "in no other land in Europe does the Jewish Question necessitate a more urgently radical solution than in our monarchy and especially in Hungary," and went on to propose such a radical solution: the restoration of a state for the Jews in the Holy Land. Thus, the man who organized the first self-styled anti-Semitic movement in modern Europe urged Jewish emigration to Palestine. This, Wheatcroft declares, "was the first time that a connection appeared between anti-Semitism and Zionism."

Shaken by Dreyfus Case

Herzl, who once called for the mass baptism of Western Jews into Christianity as a way to ease assimilation and end anti-Semitism, was shaken by the Dreyfus case in France and other manifestations of hostility to Jews which he observed. He came to believe that anti-Semitism was now an insoluble problem and he wrote in his diary that, "I have the solution to the Jewish Question. I know it sounds mad; and at the beginning I shall be called mad more than once — until the truth of what I am saying is recognized in all its shattering force." The solution was presented to the public in February 1896 as *Der Judenstaat* (The Jewish State). He urged the creation of a state for the Jews.

A man without any religious belief in God or Judaism, Herzl was not concerned with the location of such a state. It might be Palestine or it might be Argentina or Uganda. Once established in a land of their own, he wrote, "a wondrous breed of Jews will spring up from the earth. The Maccabees will rise again."

Herzl recognized that most Jews, particularly those in free Western countries, would not uproot themselves to live in this Jewish state. He denied, as well, that Zionism was an admission of defeat and was simply the other side of the coin of anti-Semitism. Yet, Wheatcroft believes that, "Herzl came close to admitting this himself. Why else did he say that anti-Semites 'will be our most reliable friends, the anti-Semitic countries our allies?'"

Zionism, Wheatcroft shows, was not an outgrowth of ancient Jewish tradition but was an imitation of emerging 19th century European nationalism, particularly that of Germany. Sixty years after *The Jewish State* appeared, historian Hans Kohn observed that the book and the philoso-

phy it contained was an outgrowth of the very European nationalism which had brought such sorrow to the Jews, and that the whole tenor of this nationalism not only "had nothing to do with Jewish traditions; it was in many ways opposed to them."

Not merely nationalism in general, but one nationalism in particular inspired Herzl. As Hannah Arendt put it, Herzl's thought in terms of nationalism was inspired by German sources. In the German theory, people of a common descent or speaking a common language formed a nation and ought to form a state. As Kohn said, this was an idea which ran counter to the Western political ideal that a country should consist of peoples of various and even unknown ethnic origin who owed a common allegiance, an ideal exemplified, Kohn pointed out, by the United States above all.

Break With Jewish Tradition

In Wheatcroft's view, Zionism "was an almost conscious mirror-image of European nationalism based on a belief in the failure of assimilation and liberalism. At the same time, it was a radical break with Jewish tradition. It was from the beginning consciously secular — and was to become steadily more so, until the day would come when Zionist zealots picnicked off ham sandwiches on Yom Kippur. Herzl . . . dreamed of a Jewish state which was both secular and unmilitaristic: 'We shall know how to keep the rabbis in their synagogues and the generals in their barracks,' not as it turned out part of his prophesy which would come true. Nor did he see how Zionism . . . like so many doctrines might develop."

Jewish opposition to the Zionist idea in the West was overwhelming. "On the one hand," Wheatcroft notes, "were the devoutly religious. Reform as well as Orthodox Jews thought that Zionists attacked and degraded Judaism and the Jews as a religious community, quite apart from impiously anticipating Messianic Redemption and the restoration of God's People by the Messiah, in God's time. Orthodox and Reform Judaism had been strongly hostile to one another, and the precise flavor of their anti-Zionism differed. For the Orthodox, Zionism blasphemed Torah Judaism; for the Reform synagogue it represented, as Robert Wistrich puts it, 'a parochial retreat from the universalist Jewish mission of

(Continued on page 8)