INTRODUCTION: EVOLUTION OF THE ZIONIST IDEOLOGY

"The word 'Zionism' appeared at the end of the nineteenth century to designate a cluster of different movements, the common element of which was the project of giving world Jewry a spiritual, territorial or state centre, usually located in Palestine". Naturally the Zionist idea took many forms particularly in its formative period, and it is not surprising that sometimes its strands negated each other.

Zionism has manifested itself in multiplicity of concepts, values, emotions, ideological assumptions, political strategies and tactics, closely interlinked with powerful networks of organisation. Like all fully grown national or nationalist movements, it contains complexities, contradictions and ambiguities, often making the very definition of Zionism puzzling.

Anti-Zionist ideologists have themselves often used the term 'Zionism' in a loose way.


'Zionism' as a concept or ideology has been interpreted or understood from many angles. For some it is a 'permanent national calling of all Jewry'. Therefore it is justified and beneficial. For others it is subservient to universal values, and whether these values are taken from Judaism, liberal Humanism or from international proletarianism. For those who believe in universal human values and international proletarianism, Zionism is harmful and they consider it capitalism in its imperialist stage.⁴

The Western thinking and efforts lent a helping hand for the growth of Zionism. Two European developments in the second half of the nineteenth century created a congenial atmosphere for the imperialist-conceived Zionist idea'. The European Jewish mind was imbued with this Zionist idea and from a distance it seemed to be an 'inner motivated Jewish development'.⁵ The first was direct and indirect impact of the intellectual and political growth of European chauvinist nationalism. Nationalism had such an influence that even a socialist like Moses Hess titled his book 'Rome and Jerusalem' (1862). This book glorified Italian nationalist

4. Ibid.
movement and played upon the theme of 'pseudoscientific racist' theories of the nineteenth century. Hess had warned the Jews to avoid assimilation and reassert their exclusivity by 'reconstructing' their national centre in Palestine'. Rome and Jerusalem is an important book but what is more of historical importance is the political and intellectual climate of Europe that produced it. "The real politick of European statesmen exercised tremendous influence and Bismark was virtually an inspiration to the intellectual and political founders of Zionism".

The pogroms in Russia in 1881 were the second European development which provided impetus to the Zionist idea. On account of these pogroms there was a mass exodus of Jews to other countries of Eastern and Western Europe. This was a vital reason for the failure of Haskalah assimilationist movement. It was substituted by the movement of 'Lovers of Zion' which was inspired by Leo Pinsker's pamphlet, 'Auto Emancipation'. Societies were formed in Jewish centres to chalk out a programme for the settlement of Jews in Palestine and to revive the Hebrew language.

7. Ibid.
8. Ibid., pp.13-14.
9. Ibid., p.14
The Jewish communities of capitalist Western Europe had already absorbed and accommodated themselves on account of the wave of emancipation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Jews had been since then enjoying, equality as citizens of Judaic religion. but the new migrants from the East posed new problems. "Differing in culture, language and habits, and in general perceived as alien, the migrants posed a threat of social disruption and revival of anti-Semitism". The West European governments became apprehensive of the influences of the radical East European Jews. Similarly the assimilated Jews of Western Europe got threatened of the migrants who might jeopardize their comfortable positions. However, the arrival of Eastern Jews did revive anti-Semitism. A famous ultra-rich Jewish family of Rothschilds financed the Jewish settlements in Palestine to minimize Jewish immigration to Western Europe. Thus the feared rise of anti-Semitism was averted and the Jewry was aligned to the imperialist interests in the Middle East.

The Zionist effort in Palestine until now was the settlement of Jews for agricultural and religious purposes which was termed as 'Utopian Zionism'. It emphasized the need of agricultural settlements and at this stage its long term political aims were unclear.\textsuperscript{13} The Jewish Chronicle was established which later on became "an important vehicle for the popularization of Palestine colonization in Jewish circle".\textsuperscript{14}

The Zionist mechanization can be summed in the following words:

The Hebrew conquest of land, labour and means of production were the three pillars of the Zionist effort. On this premise, and under the leadership of Labour Zionism an exclusively Jewish economy and polity were established. Physical labour in the fields and factories was the bedrock of Labour Zionism. The native Palestinian Arabs, who would, otherwise have been the undisputed inheritors of the British as rulers of the country, were thus confronted with the increasing political challenge of the nascent Jewish Yishu in Palestine.\textsuperscript{15}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{13} Davis, n.10, p.7.
\item \textsuperscript{14} A. Taylor, \textit{The Zionist mind} (Beirut, 1974), p.32.
\item \textsuperscript{15} Davis, n.10, p.13.
\end{itemize}
Herzl

If it was in Eastern Europe that conditions were ripe for Zionist movement and it was the 'Pale of Settlement' that continuously provided the membership of the movement, it was only in the Western Europe that conditions were congenial for a strategic political concept of Jewish nationalism. The concept of political Zionism evolved in Vienna which was then considered to be the metropolis of the 19th century nationalist ferment. A young Jewish journalist from Vienna, Theodore Herzl, provided the political and organizational leadership of the new movement. "Into the frustrated and hopeless lives of the 'dreamers of the Ghetto' of Russia and Poland came the most fantastic of them all Dr. Theodor Herzl, who became the founder of all absorbing dynamic political Zionism as a result of his own experience with anti-Semitism".

According to Carlyle Herzl was the "ablest, truest-hearted, justest, noblest man". Herzl was most important and chief dispenser of the Jewish political and social ideas. It has been rightly said that Zionism as a true political movement and as an international force was to all intents and purposes his intention and his creation.

Herzl had decided upon the idea of high politics (Hochpolitik) as an instrument to get his people a homeland. During his days in French parliament as a reporter he had learned much of the unethical art of European diplomacy practiced by the so-called statesman of that time. "As a journalist of high stature, he had every opportunity to learn about the prevalent international banditry, the games of colonialism, and the sanctimoniousness of the white man's burden".

The Jews always had awaited the advent of Messiah. That Herzl tried to portray himself as a Messiah cannot be


21. Menuhin, n.18, p.36.
exactly proved. But there are numerous evidences that he was well-versed in messianic legend and conscious of the fact that among his followers there were a few who were simple and naive who saw in him an anointed deliverer. Herzl had become curious when he heard in 1895 about Shabbetai Zevi of the seventeenth century who is famous in Jewish history as the False Messiah. He never confirmed or rejected when people drew parallel with him and Shabbetai. He wrote in his diary. "The difference between myself and Shabbetai Zevi (The way I imagine him), apart from the difference in the technical means inherent in the times, is that I, however, find the great small, as small as myself". 22 A year before his death he visited Russia and there he said, "Our People believe that I am the Messiah, I myself do not know this, for I am no theologian". 23 Herzl set out to translate the Messianic yearning of the Jews into territorial political claims.

Doing something for the Jews and to rescue them from their pathetic condition had always obsessed Herzl and he

22. Vital, n.20, p.244.
was very much aware of this fact that he was obsessed. However he always recognized this obsession as a source of strength.  

This obsession limited Herzl's vision and he suffered from narrowness and egocentricity. Herzl was too close to Eastern Europe (Jews and Gentiles) to be able to take a universal, objective and historical approach to the Dreyfus Affair and to the progressive advancing forces that fought against the forces of darkness he saw everywhere. Dr. Herzl was totally blind to the comprehensive, broad issues involved in the Dreyfus case. 

France in 1894 was on its way towards the goal of democracy when the Dreyfus Affair occurred. Dreyfus was made

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24. Vital, n.20, p.244.

25. It came to the knowledge of French General Staff in 1894 that some highly secret documents had been stolen from their files and these documents have been sold to their potential enemy i.e. the Germans. Alfred Drefus who was a French Jewish Officer was arrested and charged of espionage without any proof except for some questionable papers later proved to be false. It was later proved that these papers were concocted and the mischief was done by the Anti Semites.

26. Menuhin, n.18, p.36.

27. Ibid.
an scapegoat when the reactionaries temporarily gained an upper hand but, at last, they failed, when the democratic and liberal values gained in strength and fought back to regain the lost ground. Emile Zola, who was a French intellectual vindicated the name of Dreyfus while Jean Jaures exposed the forgeries. Another French man Clemenceau in 1902 proved that Dreyfus was innocent and curtailed the right of the Catholic Congregations and the separation of the Church and the state was effected. The issue involved in France was of democracy and it survived the storm against it. Emancipation had not failed rather it had worked.

Menuhin wrote:

Herzl, the East European Jew, was unable to see that, any more than could the other 'dreamers of the ghetto' who were born and reared in the darkness of Russia and Poland and who could not divest themselves of their frustrations and unqualified prejudices against the Gentile world. And Hess, the German Jew (Germany of those days was hardly a democracy) after losing one battle quickly arrived at the conclusion that he had lost the war.

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28. Ibid., p.37.

29. Ibid.
Before the Dreyfus Affair Herzl had thought of some other solution to the Jewish problem which was different from "Jewish political nationalism". In 1695, he wrote in his diary in Paris, "Two years ago I wanted to solve the Jewish question, at least in Austria, with the help of Catholic Church. I wished to arrange for an audience with the Pope and say to him 'Help us against anti-Semitism and I will lead a great movement for the free and honourable conversion of the Jews to Christianity'. In broad daylight, at twelve o'Clock a Sunday, the exchange of faith would take place in St. Stephen's Cathedral, with solemn parade and the peal of bell.30

Socialism was another solution in Herzl's mind. When the Jews would become socialists there would emerge a movement which would fight the reactionary movements and anti-Semitism. Later in 1895 Herzl discarded those views. He wrote, "The thought grew stronger within me that I would have to do something for the Jews. Throughout the two thousand years of our dispersion, we have lacked unified political leadership I consider this our great misfortune. It has done us more harm than all the persecutions."31

31. Ibid., p.38.
Hersz's Political Personality: Hersz, as a matter of fact, was not familiar with the Jewish Question before he set out to find an answer to it. He had not heard of 'Lovers of Zion' until he had formulated his own ideas and chalked out a plan for its execution. He came into contact with those Jews who had first hand knowledge of "Jewish social scene' only when he had come out to gather followers for his own plans". Hersz did not regret, for not reading Pinsker's Auto Emancipation earlier. He wrote, that if he had read it perhaps he would have abandoned his own undertaking. He had not cared to go through Rome and Jerusalem until 1884. Only in May 1901 on a long train journey he finally read the book. He wrote, "Everything that we have tried is already in this book. The only bothersome thing is his Hegetian terminology. Wonderful the Spinozistic Jewish and national elements. Since Spinoza Jewry had brought forth no greater spirit than this forgotten, faded Moses Hess". Hersz, according to Clemenceau, was a man of action.

33. Ibid
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid.
distrusted subtlety, intricacy, verbal agility, compromise, demands for caution, concern for the views of others at the expense of one's own, and other such qualities that tend to obstruct rapid progress towards a stated goal." 37

He did not agree that antecedence in publication bestows any kind of privilege or authority. He noted in his diary, "This Birnbaum who had deserted Zionism for socialism three years before I appeared on the scene, poses obstrusively as my 'predecessor. In his brazen begging letters which he wrote me and others, he sets himself as the discoverer and founder of Zionism because he has written a pamphlet like many another since Pinsker (whom, after all, I had not read either)". 38

Herzl gave a definite shape to his plan during the spring of 1895 and the winter of that year, a span of nine months. This plan required a large amount of finance and that was the reason why he turned towards the "two pillars of Jewish enterprise and wealth". Baron de Hersch and the Rothschild family. 39

37. Ibid.
38. Ibid. p.248.
39. Ibid. p.248-49.
Herzl did meet Hersch. He tried to make him aware of the lack of Jewish political leadership and pointed out to him the problems of the Jewish people. The meeting with Hersch turned out to be a Fiasco. Herzl from now onwards did not consider him an ally.\textsuperscript{40} He also wrote a letter to the head of the Vienna branch of Rothschild family, Baron Albert, when he was still in Paris. He wrote, "I shall come to the point without preliminaries. I have composed a memorandum about the Jewish question for the German Kaiser. If you would like to know what is in the document, I shall read it to you. If not, it will be quite sufficient for you to return this letter to me".\textsuperscript{41} Herzl waited for an answer and counted on July 4, "Albert R's reply, which was due today, has not come. Fortunately I did not degrade myself by excessive courtesy in my letter"\textsuperscript{42}

Herzl left Paris at the end of July. He by now had started suffering from inner tensions. He noted, "I am shunning all my acquaintances. They tread on my toes, having no idea of the world I come form; this makes daily living

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., p.249.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., p.250.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.
The number of men with whom he found himself in tune even on the general issue of the condition of Jewry was tiny.

Herzl came across one notable person who somehow or the other shared Herzl's views. He was Max Nordau. Nordau was a physician and eleven years elder to Herzl. He had gained for himself immense literary reputation as an author of a number of volumes in which he had exposed the contemporary European society for its hypocrisies. When he read the address Nordan was enthralled. In a state of excitement he told Herzl, "If you are mad we are mad together: Count on me, I am with you!" Since then Nordan remained Herzl's most close associate. Herzl, while discussing the Jewish question with Nordan, wrote in his diary, "Each took the words right out of the other's mouth. I never had such a strong feeling that we belonged together." But Herzl kept his own counsel as far as the solution to the Jewish question was concerned. He even did not take Nordan into confidence.

43. Ibid., p.251.


Herzl, in November 1895 took a brief journey to Paris, to London and again to Paris. This was for him decisive and vital. He was exposed to intelligentsia of these advanced cities. In Paris he met Zodoc Kohen the chief Rabbi, three times. He read to him his 'address to the Rothschild where he had carefully eliminated all the references to the family. The chief Rabbi brought others to meet him. He was listened to attentively and impressed a number of important people. Zodoc Kohan suggested that Herzl should read his text to Edmond de Rothschild. Herzl remarked, "would n't dream of it".46

Herzl met an important person in London. He was Zangwill. The latter was a well known name among the English Jewish intelligentsia. His work Children of the Ghetto (182) had already made its literary reputation. He welcomed Herzl in England and arranged for him a series of meetings. Herzl met and discussed the Jewish question with important personalities like Asher Myers who was the editor, of Jewish Chronicle, Herman Alder, the Chief Rabbi Goldsmid and Sir Samuel Montague. The last was the banker and member of Parliament and was the most important contact of all. Herzl

46. Ibid., p.256.
was also introduced to the Maccabians by Zangwill. Maccabean
was a Jewish society whose members were authors, artists and
professional and those who did not indulge in commerce. 47

London proved to be very hospitable to Herzl. People
listened to him politely and with interest. Montague, though
did not commit himself to Herzl’s plan, was sympathetic and
friendly. Herzl won a friend in Goldsmid. The editor of the
Jewish Chronicle asked for prepublication a summary of his
pamphlet. Herzl had enough good reason to be pleased. 48

The Jewish Chronicle on January 17, 1896 published a
resume, which titled "A Solution to the Jewish Problem'.
This was followed by an editorial comment It wrote, "We
hardly anticipate a great future for a scheme which is the
outcome of despair ......

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Herzl found the only encouragement from some German
students who came to invite him to a meeting of this

47. Ibid., pp.256-57.
48. Ibid., p.257.
49. Ibid., p.258.
society. They fired him with many questions like, 'A regular state? A real state with its own laws, inhabited, governed, and administered by Jews? 50

Der Judenstaat

The fundamental concepts regarding Herzl's thought and Zionist outlook are in his Der Judenstaat. 51 Der Judenstaat consists of 30,000 words. Its language is simple and appealing and the author seems to be intent an getting it read. The very first sentence of Judenstaat reads, "The idea which I have developed in this pamphlet is a very old one: It is the restoration of the Jewish state. 52 Der Judenstaat does not appeal to pathos. He says, : I do not intend to arouse sympathetic emotions on our behalf. That would be foolish, futile and undignified proceeding". 53 He warned the Assimilationist Jews in these words, "Whoever would attempt to convert the Jew into a husband's man (i.e. Baron de Hersch) would be making an extra-ordinary mistake." 54

51. Kayyali, n.5, p.16.
53. 'The Jewish State' document, 3; as quoted in Vital, n.20, p.260.
54. Ibid., p.260.
Herzl has made every effort to drive home the point that his pamphlet was down to earth, sensible and feasible plan. It was not an utopia. The misery of the Jews was the propelling force. The problem was always to show how it could be set in motion.\textsuperscript{55}

He said:

The (organised and self initiated) departure of the Jews will involve no economic disturbance, no crisis, no persecutions; in fact, the countries they abandon will revive to a new period of prosperity. There will be an inner migration of Christian citizens into the portions evacuated by Jews ... The Jews will leave as honoured friends; and if some of them returned, they will receive hands of civilized nations as is accorded to all foreign visitors.\textsuperscript{56}

Herzl traces the source of Jewish question to the bitter subjection and suppression of Jews in all countries where they lived. According to him the pressure on the Jews varied from place to place and from time to time but the

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{56} Salvie d' Avigdor, \textit{The Jewish State} (trans), (1896), revised trans, Israel Cohen (1934) 'Introduction', as quoted by Vital n.20, p.261.
phenomenon was a general one. Among the Jews in economically upper classes it caused discomfort, in middle classes continual and grave anxieties, in our lower classes absolute despair. The nations in whose midst the Jews lived were all either covertly or openly optimistic Herzl was not interested in the causes of anti-Semitism. He dealt briefly with the rise of anti-Semitism and did not appear to sound very scientific. It's remote cause according to him was the loss of the power of assimilation of the Jews during the middle ages; it's immediate cause was excessive production of mediocre intellectuals who could not find a social and economic outlet downwards and upwards.\textsuperscript{57}

\textbf{PLAN}: Herzl says: "My plan is simple in design but complicated in execution". The plan consisted of two parts: Assumption of responsibility for Jewish national officers by a political body of to be called 'The Society of Jews'; and management of both the exodus of the Jews and their resettlement by a technical body to be called the Jewish Company.\textsuperscript{58}

\textsuperscript{57} \textit{The Jewish State}, Chapter 2 as cited by Vital, n.20, p.262.

\textsuperscript{58} Kayyali, n.5, p.15.
The first was to contact the relevant governments and seek to obtain their consent for the attainment of Jewish sovereignty 'over a neutral piece of land, and then administer the territory as a provisional government. The second was to take form of a chartered company, established in London under English Law. The company would have to be provided with handsome working capital and would take care of the liquidation of the migrants property in their countries of origin. In exchange it would provide land, housing, and employment in the new country. It was to promote industry and commerce. Herzl was to promote industry and commerce. Herzl has devoted longest chapter to this Jewish company in his Der Judenstaat.59

He describes the plan of the migration of Jews in details, the method through which they will be provided with a new home "not by dragging them ruthlessly out of their sustaining soil, but rather by transplanting them carefully to better ground. The bright young and ambitious professionals will be allocated by the opportunities provided by the society, and the company and they will draw the others after them.60

60. The Jewish State, Chapter 3, as quoted by Vital, p.264.
Herzl in his Der Judenstaat, elaborated the functions of the 'Society of Jews' which happened to be the organ of the national movement. He emphasized the importance of the society that had to be created before all. The society would consist of active Jews who would be no secret members of it and would be endowed with the power of negotiation with other governments to foster its aim and objective. He wrote, "The Jewish people are at present prevented ... from conducting their political affairs themselves. Besides, they are in a condition of more or less severe distress in many parts of the world. They need, above all a gestor. This gestor cannot of course be a single individual. Such a one would either make himself ridiculous or seeing that he would appear to be working for his own interests contemptible. The gestor for the Jews must therefore be a corporate body, And that is the society of Jews".62

It would not be sufficient for the Society to enter into negotiations with other governments but it would also work for the promotion of the study of the demography, economic resources, and public opinion of the Jews. The

62. The Jewish State, Chapter 3, as quoted by Vital, p.265.
Society would form a nucleus around which the public institution of the Jewish state would later develop. Finally the Society would take up the issue where the Jews were to migrate. He discussed the question where the Jews were to migrate to "Shall we choose Palestine or Argentina? We shall take what is given us, and what is selected by Jewish public opinion. The Society will determine both these points." 63

Herzl had the clear cut idea what the Jews would have to give in return. He believed the Society of Jews, with the Jewish 'power of the purse' at its command would be able to grant financial advantages to the receiving - not in the form of a regular tribute but in the form of loans. He speculated, "Supposing his Majesty the Sultan were to give us Palestine we could in return undertake to regulate the whole finance of Turkey." 64 He was of the opinion that the entry of the Jews into their new country would 'divert streams of wealth' to the entire region, and precipitate 'an unprecedented commercial prosperity al around ..... It was


his belief that all states would benefit, both those which the Jews would leave and those into whose neighborhood they would arrive. 65

Herzl had indeed pondered over Erez Israel as a most adequate land for Jews to settle. He mentioned, "It would have in its favour the facts that it is the unforgotten ancestral seat of our people, that its name would constitute a programme, and that it would powerfully attract the lower masses". 66 However, on the practical level Herzl never had a special choice though he had the realization that in Palestine modern Jews would find it difficult to settle as it was a country where modern economic technique could not be easily applied and that it was too close to Europe for his taste. 67

The subject of Erez Israel was delicate and he reconsidered his views. Putting aside his earlier reservations he wrote, "It is more and more to the interest of the civilized nations and of civilization in general that

66. Kayyali, n.5, p.16.
67. Vital, n.20, p.266.
a cultural station be established on the shortest road to Asia. Palestine is this station and we Jews are the bearers of culture who are ready to give our property and our lives to bring about this creation."  

It is not strange for the Zionists to call themselves the most cultured people. They were through their scheme arrogating to themselves the task of civilizing the world a further stage in the 'White mans burden'. It is surprising that Zionists were destroying Palestine and its people by establishing a Jewish state there, and yet they called it a civilizing mission. They stood the human values on their head and they showed the least sensitivity to the Palestinians. Herzl justified the choice of Palestine on the vague and spurious historical claim. He wrote, "Palestine is our over - memorable historic home. The very name of Palestine would attract our people with a force of marvelous potency."  


The primary purpose of 'Der Judenstaat' was tactical to make the issue public and to draw new allies. After the publication of the pamphlet he wrote to colonel Goldsmid:

The essay I have published has gained me the greatest of hatreds and the warmest of friendships. The Zionists of Vienna and Berlin have proclaimed their enthusiasm for my plan. The money men praise and denounce me in the sharpest possible may. The anti-Semites treat me fairly. At all events, the discussion is now open and, it seems, will soon reach the parliaments.

The response of the important personalities and general non-Jewish public was cool towards Der Judenstaat. The subject received a very moderate response in the press. Herzl's own and most prominent newspaper in Vienna did not mention his pamphlet and his activities. The German and Austrian newspapers came out with unfriendly comments. The Jewish Chronicle ignored Herzl and supported Hersch, for Hersch confined his activities among Russian Jewry. It also felt that the absence of religious element in the scheme


71. 27 February 1896, Igrot, II, n.44, p.66; as quoted by Vital, n.20, p.267.
"rendered it cold and uninviting". The chronicle rejected Herzl's theory that wherever Jews lived there was anti-Semitism. Baron de Hirsch did not react nor did the Rothschilds.72

All in all, *Des Judenstaat* made few converts to his cause. Max Nordan on 26 February wrote to Herzl, "I have read your *Judenstaat* twice. This is only my impression very briefly: From an objective point of view the pamphlet can be discussed from several aspects. From a subjective point of view it is, simply great . . . . It was particular courage to have admitted to feelings that other Jews had pushed back into the depths of their unconscious. What will come of the pamphlet I do not know; but that you have revealed yourself in it, that I do know."73

**Basle Congress**

"The idea of calling a general assembly of Zionists crops up in Herzl's correspondence and his diary almost

72. Jewish Chronicle, 24 April, 1896; as quoted by Vital n.20, p.269.

immediately after his return to Vienna from his journey to the (event and to London and Paris". However he had no idea as to how he would translate this plan into action, nor had he the organisational detail. He was inclined to Zodoc Kahn's idea of a secret conference of eminent leaders. By the time the conference could be convened Herzl wanted to gain some diplomatic success to attract attention towards this meeting. He wanted to involve masses and arouse public opinion and wanted to keep a public congress a weapon in reserve. This idea had taken a firm root in his mind and he started pondering over it concretely. However, Herzl moved patiently.

With the dashing of virtually all other expectations, and in a state of utter depression, the idea of a Congress set upon his mind in January 1897. He had started referring to the Congress in his correspondence and in his diary in a definite way at the same time. He wrote to De Hass his chief contact in England, "I intended to call a

75. Diaries 11, p.447; as quoted by Vital, n.20, p.328.
general assembly of Zionists in Switzerland this summer and started giving the matter a moderate preliminary publicity". 77

On March 7, 1897, a decision to convene a Zionist Congress was taken during a two-day conference of a group of Lovers of Zion from Berlin. Herzl was there with his associates from Austria to chalk out a plan for a cooperative working relationship with the Berlin circle. Willy Bambus was the leader of this Berlin circle. he was a leading personality of 'Esra' a society founded to facilitate and encourage the settlement of the Russian Jews in Erez-Israel. 78

The decision to call the Congress was a historic decision. It was not a difficult task set by Herzl to his friends which could not be attained. It was a task for which Herzl himself was best suited. He was gifted by the art of persuasiveness, sense of theatre and experience of the workings of the French parliament. He was from the very

78. Ibid., n.20, p.329.
beginning quite clear about his aims. The Congress had to "be a glorious demonstration to the world of what Zionism is and of what it wants". Apart from that, its immediate business was to make a unified Zionist movement possible. 79

Herzl never again looked upon those like Edmond de Rothschild who earlier had paid no heed to his ideas. The Congress had to be a manifestation of public rebellion against the well-established secular leadership of Jewry. Herzl did try to win over those like Goldsmid who were on the margin of opposition to him. The western Jews in majority responded to the proposal of the Congress outrageously though the Austro-Hungarian Zionists convention endorsed the proposal for convening an international congress. 80

There followed a mixed reaction. German newspapers came out with editorials condemning the proposed Zionist Congress as antinational and against the basic tenets of Judaism. 81 The B'nai Brith Lodge of Munich called upon the Jews not to extend any cooperation to Herzl. A letter issued


80. Sacher, n.44, p.44.

81. Ibid.
by the executive committee of the association of German Rabbis expressed its sentiment against Zionism as follows:

The Association of Rabbis in Germany regards it as proper to make the following explanations:

1. The efforts of so-called Zionists to found a Jewish national state in Palestine contradict the messianic promises of Judaism as contained in the Holy Writ and in later religious sources.

2. Judaism obligates its adherents to serve with all devotion the fatherland to which they belong, and to further its national interests with all their strength. Religion and patriotism both lay upon us the duty of asking all who are concerned with the welfare of Judaism to stay away from the above mentioned Zionists endeavors and most particularly from the Congress which is still being planned, despite all the warning against it. 82

But the correspondent of Ha-Magid wrote, "If the assembly were to bring some unity to the movement then surely it was to be welcomed". 83 The newspaper Ha-Zefira wrote, Nothing comparable had been attempted since the

82. Ibid.
83. Ha-Magid, 21 April 1897; as quoted by Vital, n.20, p.341.
movement had begun and we were entitled to see it as a good augury, the beginning of redemption for at last the many needs of our people have assumed a concrete form.... and the Jewish question on which all had trodden .... will now be discussed in public by the wise and the eminent".  

There were also private reactions which were mixed in nature. A few of the veterans became quick convert to the idea. Lillienblum felt about-Herzl to be a man who wanted to involve Western Jewry in the re-establishment of Yishuv in Erez Israel. He wondered, "could such a one be turned down" Ahad-Ha'am did not oppose the Congress but was not optimistic about it and could see little coming out of it.  

But nothing deterred Herzl to forge ahead. Herzl refused to compromise over the nature of the Congress. The site of the Congress was fixed at Basle in Switzerland. It was the only compromise Herzl was ready to make. The Jewish Chronicle had called the whole affair Dr. Herzl's Congress.

84. Ha-Zefira, 5 May 1897, as quoted by Vital n.20, p.341.  
86. Ibid., p.347.  
87. Sacher, n.44, p.44.  
88. Vital, n.20, p.344.
The first Zionist Congress held at Basle was an unprecedented event. An air of uncertainty was lurking among the delegates. The arrangement was perfect and well thought out and Herzl was determined to leave a strong and lasting impression. The agenda was provided beforehand and the participants were provided with a badge bearing the inscription. 'The establishment of a Jewish state is the only possible solution to the Jewish Question.'

The Congress opened on Sunday morning, 29 August 1897, in the Concert Hall of the Basle Cassino. Herzl had insisted on the delegates attending the opening session to wear formal dress, tails and white ties. A modern Zionist flag was hanging at the building entrance.

The Congress at Basle was attended by 200 to 250 people representing twenty-four states and territories. The participants were an assembly of educated, middle class Jews: businessmen, industrialists, financiers, men of letters, members of professions and students. There were also eleven Rabbis. Overwhelmingly they were liberal and modernist in their social and religious tendencies. Very few

89. Ibid., p.354.
90. Ibid., p.354.
of the participants were men of repute outside the Jewry. Only Nordan had an international reputation. The veterans from Russia and Poland—Mandelstamm, Ahad Ha'am, Sokolov, Ussekhin—were decidedly among the most powerful and interesting personalities present.91

It was Herzl and Nordan who delivered the two key speeches: the one made a brief restatement of the rationale, purposes and method of political Zionism, and the other gave an analysis of its sources in the contemporary social conditions of the Jews.92

When Herzl rose to speak he was greeted by a thunderous ovation. Ben Ami, one of the Russian delegates remarked: 'Hail to the king.' It was an appellation Herzl would not have disdained.93

Herzl said, "We are here to lay the foundation stone of the house which is to shelter the Jewish nation". He added, "Anti-Semitism has given us our strength again. We have returned home .... Zionism is the return of the Jews to Judaism even before their return to the Jewish land."

91. Ibid., p.358-59.
92. Ibid., p.360.
93. Sacher, n.44, p.45.
explained that the Congress would take up the task and take recourse to "the spiritual means of revising and nursing the Jewish national consciousness". He pointed out the inadequacy of the piecemeal colonization in Palestine which did not have the international legal sanction Herzl's address was impressive, temperate and restrained. Nordan spoke about the sad conditions of East European Jewry. He also analysed the failure of emancipation and the dilemma of Western European Jewry in social and political affairs. He described the West European Jews as the race of new Marranos. Nordau declared, "It is a great sin to let a race whose abilities even its worst enemies do not deny, degenerate in intellectual and physical misery .... The misery of the Jews cries out for help. The finding of that help will be the great task of this Congress." The Congress continued for three days and after that it constituted for itself a number of organisations to promote its aims and objectives. A permanent Zionist organisation of the Jewish Society on the lines of Herzl's essay was constituted. There had to be a General Council which would

94. Ibid.
95. Ibid.
perform the function of the Executive of the Zionist organisation and would be known as 'Greater Action Committee'. It would comprise of representatives of the numerous national Zionists' federations; and a Central Executive (a "Smaller Actions Committee") whose members all lived in Vienna. Those who agreed with the Basle programme could become members by paying the annual fee of a 'Sheket', an ancient Hebrew coin which was equivalent to a single Austrian Schilling. Herzl was the unanimous for the President of the Zionist Organisation. The discussion finally ended with the singing of a Hebrew anthem "Ha Tikvah" (The Hope), written by Nephtali Imber, and a vote of thanks to Herzl. Herzl wrote afterwards, 'If I were to sum up the Basle Congress in a single phrase which I would not dare to make public, I would say in Basle 'I created the Jewish state'". 96

The key provision of the Congress stated, "The aim of Zionism is to create for the Jewish people a home in Palestine secured by public law". 97 A reading of Herzl's

96. Ibid.

Diaries as well as an examination of subsequent Zionists' action would reveal that the term "public law" refers nothing but to the patronage of the imperialist powers. He envisaged that the European powers would back Zionism for one of the three main motives:

1. Imperialist self interest;
2. Ridding themselves of Jews and antisemitism (in west European case avoiding the influx of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe) and
3. Using organised Jewish influence to combat revolutionary movements and other internal factors.  

Four means were adopted to obtain this objective:

(i) The programmatic encouragement of the settlement of Palestine with Jewish agricultural workers, laborers and artisans.

(ii) The unification and organisation of all Jewry into local and general groups in accordance with the laws of respective country.

(iii) The strengthening of Jewish self awareness and national consciousness.

98. Kayyali, n.5, p.17.
(iv) The preparation of activity for obtaining the consent of the various governments, necessary for the fulfillment of the aims of Zionism.

These means were the same as Herzl had formulated in his pamphlet Der Judenstaat. The only change occurred when the word "Home" was substituted for the word "state". The change in terminology was a conscious attempt to appeal to those Jews who had a sentimental cultural or religious attachment to Palestine. These were the Jews who had been opposing the concept of Jewish nationality or Jewish state.99 Herzl was convinced that his supporters will not find it difficult in meaning it "Jewish State" in any case.100

"This calculated ambivalence concerning a central element of the Zionist political programme aided Herzl in obtaining support for Zionism. Succeeding Zionist leaders have consistently used this technique of calculated ambiguity in terminology in order to enhance Zionist appeal among those opposed to Zionist nationality concept".101


100. Ibid., p.6.

The first president of the Zionist Congress, Theodor Herzl, started translating the programmes of the Basle Congress into action. First of all, he met with Kaiser Wilhelm II, who was on a tour of the Ottoman Empire. Herzl discussed with him the opening of a land development company under the protection of Germany operated by Zionists in Palestine. At first, the Kaiser showed some inclination in favour of the proposal but rejected it in the second meeting.\textsuperscript{102}

Herzl managed to approach directly to the Sultan of Turkey. He put forward in May 1901 his proposal of Zionist immigration to Palestine and in return he promised that the Zionists would take care of the financial problems of Turkey.\textsuperscript{103} The Sultan, however, did not agree to this idea of mass immigration to Palestine.\textsuperscript{104}

The Zionist executive body then turned towards Great Britain in October 1902 to seek from them a chunk of Sinai Peninsula for immigration and settlement.\textsuperscript{105} During the interview with Chamberlain in October 1902, Herzl's voice

\textsuperscript{102} Tayler, n.99, p.7.
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{104} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{105} Ibid., pp.7-8.
trembled as he explained his proposal for an Anglo-Zionist partnership which involved colonial concessions for the Jews in Cyprus, el-Arish and the Sinai Peninsula to serve as a "rallying point for the Jewish people in the vicinity of Palestine."\textsuperscript{106} Herzl tried to convince Chamberlain and Lord Lansdowne, the Foreign Secretary, that by supporting the Zionist attempts the British Empire would gain not only a rich colony but also ten million Jews.\textsuperscript{107} He wrote:

Will all wear England in their hearts if through such a deed it becomes the protective power of the Jewish people. At one stroke England will get ten million secret but loyal subjects active in all walks of life all over the world. At a signal, all of them will place themselves at the service of the magnanimous nation that brings long desired help .... England will get ten million agents for her greatness and her influence. And effect of this sort of thing usually spreads from the political to the economic.\textsuperscript{108}

\textsuperscript{106} Patai (ed.), \textit{Diaries}, p.1362; as quoted by Kayyali, n.5, p.18.

\textsuperscript{107} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{108} Ibid.
The above collusion between Zionism and imperialism was too clear to be commented on. An Arab writer said, "Herein lies the Zionist quid pro quo: for the power that undertakes to be universal protector they offer the Jews as universal agents and the Jewish settler state as a client".\textsuperscript{109}

Negotiations broke down, but in 1903 the British government offered the Zionist organisation the opportunity to colonize a portion of Uganda.

Herzl somehow reconciled to Uganda offer but no concrete action was taken upon it. The plan was abandoned after Herzl's death in 1904.\textsuperscript{110}

In view of the subsequent Zionist emphasis upon Palestine the Uganda proposal may appear to be surprising. It is significant as an indication of the secular and political character of the Zionist movement. The search for the territory elsewhere when the Palestine objective was frustrated reveals the lack of strong cultural and religious ties to Palestine. Only at a later stage, did the emotional

\textsuperscript{109}. Ibid.
\textsuperscript{110}. Taylor, n.99, p.8.
attachment of the Zionist movement to Palestine became so great that no other territory would be considered. 111

As far as public international law was concerned Zionism did not gain any recognition at the beginning of the world War I. The Zionist Organisation was working and had entered into negotiations with many governments. However, the mere conduct of such negotiations gave some recognition to the Zionist Organisation as an international public body. "Nevertheless, the negotiations brought no practical political results for either the Organisation or its claimed national entity, "The Jewish people". 112

The great conception of Herzl, the gigantic enthusiasm of the Basle Congress and the untiring efforts of the founder of political Zionism appeared to have fizzled out by the beginning of the World War I. It appears that if the War had not taken place with all its schemes on the part of the Allied Powers, and the situations created during and after the War, political Zionism would have died. The War, the intensified imperialist drive in West Asia and the winning

111. Ibid., n.97, p.103.
112. Ibid.
over of the West European Jews and many others, who were reluctant at the beginning, brought a new batch of East European Jewish leaders, less imaginative but more pragmatist than Herzl, to the forefront. They furthered the idea of Herzl and through a long, concerted and internationally orchestrated propaganda and effort, ultimately got Israel, which appeared to be an impossible and fantastic proposition at the beginning.