



Theodor Herzl's National Answer to the Misery of the Jewish People

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Abstract. Considering the complex web of cause-and-effect chains and motivating forces behind the creation of the State of Israel, the present study emphasises and analyses in detail the Zionist movement, with special regard to the work of Theodor Herzl (Herzl Tivadar).

Brought up according to the values and norms of European culture, Herzl, with his liberal worldview, was an advocate for assimilation and emancipation until his mid-thirties. Later, in the face of strengthening European antisemitism and especially the Dreyfus Affair, which exploded in 1894, with the antisemitic mass demonstrations in France, he would turn towards a radical solution for the Jewish question.

The study gives an in-depth analysis to the two Herzl-works which appeared in the intellectually fermenting period of the turn of the century: the booklet entitled *Der Judenstaat* (The Jewish State) appeared in 1896 and sketches the exodus process, and the *Altneuland* (Old New Land), a liberal utopia, was published in 1902 in German. The study also highlights the historical importance of Theodor Herzl.

Keywords: Zionism, Jewish national rebirth, Holy Land, Palestine, Theodor Herzl (Herzl Tivadar), responsibility

Scholarly works written on the catastrophes of 20th century Europe could easily fill a whole library. Historians have given thorough attention to the ways in which the horrible nightmares of collectivism became absorbed into the fabric of European societies. Historical scholarship has uncovered in detail the complex mechanisms behind the realisations of the grim National Socialist phantasm with its aim to suspend individual responsibility and annihilate personal integrity, as well as the workings of the Bolshevik obsession.

Among these large-scale catastrophes, it is perhaps the historical crime of the Holocaust¹ that has entered people's general awareness most within the Western world. The annihilation of European Jews is indeed a singular phenomenon in the history of mankind, as interpreted by French philosopher Paul Ricoeur: "The victims of Auschwitz are, par excellence, the delegates closest to our memory of all the victims of history". (Ricoeur 1985: 273)

It may not be stated that the birth of the Jewish state was the result of the Holocaust; in the background to its formation, however, we must be able to discern the most sophisticated and the roughest forms of *European* antisemitism as well as the Holocaust itself: the massive, systematic annihilation of Jews, which is one of the most terrible tragedies in history. At the beginning of World War II Jews in the Eastern part of Europe were exterminated on grounds of racism and family descent, but there were clearly apprehensible reasons, usually *economic* considerations behind their destruction. (Krausz 2004; 2006) In another approach, the Holocaust stands as a phenomenon of the past, incomparable to anything else. This extraordinary European experience, being one of the most gruesome chapters in world history, is not explicable in all its details. The advocates of this approach argue that it is futile to search for motivations, i.e. the whys in the background of the Holocaust, not because the past is so finite but because there are no rational reasons. The Holocaust is an *incomprehensible* historical phenomenon, and the processes behind the awful events are *impossible to unravel*: "The Holocaust may not be explained by historical conditions of any sort and no simultaneous summarising of its causes may determine any satiable final reason. The Holocaust was not only a great leap into Evil, but a totally irrational one, as well. This is why it stays outside of history." (Heller 1997: 86)

Nazis considered Jews harmful elements of society; their racial theory declared that Jews were the most corrupt race. The dramatic Nazi programme of ridding themselves of the Jews first focused on the concentration of Jews in ghettos and then, from 1941-42, on genocide – although three quarters of the Holocaust victims are known to have been alive in spring 1942. The Nazis and their supporters organised transports for millions of Jews, confining them to camps, humiliating, and killing them. Beside Germans, the nations of the Eastern European region also took action against their own Jewish populations, at times more aggressively than Nazis had planned and scheduled. Thus, responsibility for the unmatched crimes against the Jews must be assumed not

¹The Holocaust has been evaluated by Imre Kertész as the fragmentation of European culture. The National Socialist regime killed 4.5 to 6 million Jews according to the plans of "Endlösung" and "Umsiedlung".

only by Germans. (Krausz 2006: 46) The deportation and extermination of Jews across Europe is a shame pole of ethics. Western conscience wished to pay toward the immense debt to these victims with the creation of the Jewish state,² and Israel continued to be viewed as a victims' state.

If we wish to examine the complex web of cause-and-effect chains and motivating forces behind the creation of the Jewish state, we must look back upon the good half century before the birth of Israel, and look into the list of historical precedents. Among the historical processes whose merger and unfolding resulted in the genesis of Israel, we must pay special attention to the Zionist movement.

In the last third of the 19th century and the first three decades of the 20th, nationalist ideologies heavily affected European peoples, and the idea of the creation of a national homeland started to occupy the minds of groups of European Jews. At the first Zionist Congress, convened in August 1897 in the stately City Casino of Basel, the proposal for Jewish settlement into Palestine was passed and the founding of an organisation to aid land acquisition in Palestine and promote settlement there was also initiated. A man named Chaim Weizmann, professor of chemistry from a settlement near Minsk and a liberal thinker, took the lion's share of the political preparation of the congress, while a journalist called Herzl hoisted the flag of a programme for a return to Palestine and a Jewish national rebirth. Theodor Herzl (Herzl Tivadar) and his dream of a Jewish state to be established in Palestine would stir up life in Europe and the Middle East within a few decades with a slogan that seemed romantic to many: "If you will, it is no fairytale."

Born in 1860 to an affluent merchant's family and a resident of Budapest until the age of 18, Herzl's guiding stars as Jewish theoretician and Zionist thinker were first and foremost his emotions and personal experiences. Brought up according to the values and norms of European culture, Herzl, with his liberal worldview, was an advocate for assimilation and emancipation until his mid-thirties. Later, in the face of strengthening European antisemitism and especially the Dreyfus Affair, which exploded in 1894, with the antisemitic

²1948, the year of the declaration of the State of Israel, brings a turning point in Eastern European attitudes to the Holocaust: until 1948, all over the Eastern regions of Europe (in the Soviet Union, as well) the Holocaust is still a matter of discussion; after 1948 there come long years and decades of silence based on the idea that there cannot be any distinction made between victims of the World War. This silence, however, was not complete in the Soviet block as memories of extermination based on racial grounds were expressed in the form of art works.

mass demonstrations in France, he would turn towards a radical solution for the Jewish question.

Herzl, a successful journalist of the liberal *Neue Freie Presse* in Vienna, came to spearhead a movement which envisaged Jews as the leading, chosen people of the new Middle East. As the Paris correspondent of the *Neue Freie Presse* at the beginning of the last decade of the 19th century he could personally experience that even assimilation fails to provide effective protection for Jews in Western Europe. Antisemitism in Europe and Russia flared up as early as the 1880s, but the veritable ‘road to Damascus’, the moment of enlightenment for Herzl came with the Dreyfus Affair, quoted by historians as the first modern spy story in European history. In 1894, in a closed trial and without evidence, the French authorities condemned Captain Alfred Dreyfus, a talented General Staff officer of Alsatian Jewish descent, to banishment on Devil’s Island in South America for spying – he spent five years there as a convict. Herzl was deeply appalled by the fact that in the capital of the great revolution, which declared human rights and heralded liberty, equality, and fraternity, in Republican France, a man may be convicted solely on the ground of being a Jew. He was filled with fear by the havoc wreaked by the mobs. “The charges against the Jewish officer provided an excuse for anti-Jewish circles to start antisemitic riots. The artificially induced crowd in Paris – in the city where, exactly a century before, equality for Jews before the law had been enacted as first in Europe – cried out for ‘Death to the Jews!’ in the open street. They demanded death to tens of thousands of Jewish citizens, only because one of them – although innocent – had been accused of treason.” (Hahn 1996: 165) These phenomena in France indicated that the attempts for a European Jewish emancipation and assimilation launched by the philosopher Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786) had failed. In the face of strengthening antisemitic disturbances attracting ever larger numbers of people in a Europe of antisemitic traditions, Herzl came to the conclusion that the struggle for equal rights for the Jewish people and their integration into secularised societies, which was started in the 18th century, had not reached its aim.

In 1894, there is a radical change of outlook, an actual volte-face in Herzl’s life. An otherwise fervently liberal man, in 1893 Herzl would still dream of a specific way for the total assimilation of Central European Jews: the mass conversions to Catholicism of the Jews in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy on Sundays outside the Stephanskirche in Vienna, with himself at the head of this movement, which would not lack in elements of theatricality. (Herzl 1922: 8) A year later he was contemplating the fact that the true issue is not whether Jews wish to be assimilated but whether majority societies wish to

accept assimilating Jews. As the contemporary European press was flooded by articles and pamphlets that fired up antisemitic sentiments, and political forces which utilised antisemitism to reach political aims also emerged, proving very effective, Herzl gave up all hope for the Jewish people to achieve de facto legal and social equality in Europe in the foreseeable future. Fearing for the survival of Jews in Europe, Herzl became convinced that no other political ideology may provide a lifebelt for Jews than that of independent statehood, and the rebirth of the Jewish people must come to pass in the Holy Land. In the intellectually fermenting period at the turn of the century, the journalist, casting a dreamy glance into the future, laid out the sketches of a wonderfully promising plan, the exodus process, in a booklet entitled *Der Judenstaat* (*The Jewish State*) in 1896. His work of liberal utopia published in 1902 in German, bearing the title *Altneuland* (*Old New Land*) projected the social picture of a new Palestine to be established within a few decades. There is no universal system to be discerned in either treatise but both qualify as philosophy, a specific attitude towards the world.

Herzl documented his thoughts and ideas in a passionate way; his works “were written in a bombastic, theatrical and grandiloquent style – especially *The Jewish State* –, and his proposals for the solutions are presented not only as if he had discovered them, but as if he had been the first to raise the question itself. When he attempts to wring help from the Jewish tycoons Edmund de Rothschild and Maurice de Hirsch, he voices the prophetic *hycpe* of a beggar supplicating in the name of the Jewish people.” (Avineri 1994: 108-9) Expounding the problems of Jewish emancipation as a playwright, Herzl discusses in the pamphlet *The Jewish State* that the people of four-thousand-year-old Israel are not only determined to be scattered but also to be gathered, and the new golden age for the Jewish *nation* is at hand, when it may live in its own homeland. The central idea of political Zionism promoting the return of the Jewish people to Palestine, the ancient Promised Land, quotes rights of two thousand years in declaring that Jews are entitled to return to the land of their ancestors and create a Jewish state there. The most sacred location for the Jewish people is to be found in the Holy Land, in Jerusalem Old Town: the remains of the Temple destroyed in 70 AD, the fifty-seven-metre-high and thirty-two-metre-long Wailing Wall. This retaining wall, built in 19 BC, became a place for pilgrimage; in the subsequent centuries (as in Herzl's times) Jews came here to lament the destruction of the shrine and the loss of the independent state. Legitimacy for the Jews over Palestine (Canaan stretching from the Nile to the Euphrates) is asserted by Zionism on the basis of relations to the land of Biblical Israel and is built on the idea of historical

continuity. It is emphasised that it is not a state without precedents that is to be created there. This set of arguments nevertheless logically excludes the rights of Arabs to the same territory.

After completing law studies in Vienna commenced at the wish of his parents in 1878, the clever, sensitive journalist and writer continued to work mainly in the imperial city. He saw the antisemitic governments as the main allies of Zionism, purposely or unintentionally promoting the formation of the Jewish state. The foundation of the state in Palestine and the *recreation* of the Jewish state in Palestine for the Jewish *nation*, in effect, took place in Switzerland: “In Basel I founded the Jewish state”, wrote the leading figure of the self-asserting Jewish policy, Zionism, in his diary after the first Zionist congress of 1897, where almost all Zionist factions were represented. “If I said this aloud today, I would invariably be laughed at. Perhaps in five years, but surely in fifty years, it will be common knowledge.” (Schweitzer 2004) Fifty years is a fleeting moment on the historian’s time scale, thus he may not attempt to emotify the mathematical data of the number fifty, just as it is not his department to take a stance on issues of prophecy. The augury included in the diary entry, the message declared at the first conference of the Zionist movement in the Swiss city on the future New Jerusalem nevertheless came true in exactly half a century, with the declaration of Israel state in 1948.

The views of 19th century Zionist thinkers, especially the German Moses Hess and the Russian Leon Pinsker have contributed greatly to the foundation of the Jewish state in Palestine in the middle of the 20th century, but among them there emerges the paramount figure of the ‘fanciful’ forerunner to the new Jewish diplomacy: Theodor Herzl. Although familiar with his definition of Zionism (“Zionism is not a party; Zionism is the Jewish nation on the road”)³, (Blumenthal 1977: 195) we may not regard his theoretical activity a novelty as not even the basic notions of the ideology derive from him: the phrasing ‘Zionism’ and ‘Zionist’ were coined in 1890 (according to other sources, in 1885)⁴ by Nathan Birnbaum, born of a Viennese Jewish family, who conducted

³Ernst P. Blumenthal: “Der Zionismus ist keine Partei – der Zionismus ist das jüdische Volk unterwegs.”

⁴Source: <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/biography/Birnbaum.html> (accessed October 20, 2009). Avi Shlaim designates 1885 as the birthdate of the phrase ‘Zionism’ in his 2001 volume entitled *The Iron Wall*. Of the rich literature on Zionism, I only refer to the most significant works: Shlomo Avineri, *A modern cionizmus kialakulása*. Budapest: Századvég, 1994; André Chouraqui, *Un visionnaire nommé Herzl: la résurrection d’Israël*. Paris: Laffont, 1991; Amos Elon, Herzl. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1975; Klaus Dethloff (ed.), *Theodor Herzl oder Der Moses des Fin de Siecle*. Wien / Köln / Graz: Hermann Böhlau Nachf., 1986; Halász, Zoltán, Herzl. Budapest: Magyar Világ, 1995; Ha-

law studies and then chose to become a writer and journalist. The historical role of the initiator of the 1897 Basel Zionist congress constitutes in the fact that it was him who brought about a breakthrough for Zionism in Jewish and international public opinion. He put the phenomena of a marginalised Jewish life onto the palette of world politics for all future times. (Avineri 1994: 107-8) The Jewish journalist living in abysmal poverty, driven by a spirit of adventure, publishing light glosses and superficial quick written pieces (Avineri 1994: 108) not only gave new impetus to the Zionist movement but took practical steps toward the creation of the old new land, the Jewish state in Palestine. He sought the favours of diplomats, presidents, and crowned heads for his programme of action; he attempted to gain the support of influential, wealthy Jews, who were in a position to intervene in the highest political circles of the great powers. Although Herzl, always filled with a desire for success, (Bein 1934: 70) travelled round the capitals of Europe with daring plans in his luggage, his efforts proved to be futile (in his lifetime): Zionist aspirations were not embraced by any contemporary great power. We might add that the leaders of the Ottoman Empire, then holding the Holy Land, were also less than enthusiastic about the programme of the formation of the Jewish national homeland in the territory of Palestine.

The first decades after Herzl's death were characterised by a strong sense of division among Jews on the issue of the Jewish national rebirth. Sephardic Jews reacted neutrally to the ideas of Zionism; they had no pioneers either in the theoretical or practical political foundation of the movement. The decisive majority of Ashkenazi Jews living in Central Europe and mostly sympathetic to the ideas of liberalism also rejected the realisation of Jewish national integration in Palestine. In Budapest, Herzl's city of birth, the local Jewish community suspected his person as a British colonisation agent. Many accused him with the very notion that by propagating his Zionist views he inadvertently created grounds for a new wave of antisemitism, and worked to strengthen discrimination against Jews. Although antisemitic sentiments gained force in the years following World War I in the defeated European states, as mostly Jews came to be blamed for the catastrophe, the ideas of Zionism were not popular for a great part of the European Jewish population in the first third of

raszti, György, *Két világ határán*. Budapest: Múlt és Jövő, 1999; Novák, Attila, *Theodor Herzl*. Budapest: Vince, 2002; Patai, József, *Herzl*. Budapest: 1932; Alex Bein, *Theodor Herzl: Biographie*. Wien: Fiba, 1934; Julius H. Schoeps, *Theodor Herzl and the Zionist Dream*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1997; Carl E. Schorske, *Bécsi századvég: Politika és kultúra*. Budapest: Helikon, 1998, 136-163; Gideon Shimoni, *The Zionist Ideology*. Hanover, N.H. / London: Brandeis University Press, 1995.

the 20th century: they continued to disfavour the programme of the creation of an independent Jewish state. As late as the mid-1920s, support for Zionism among Jews in Germany was rather low, amounting to a mere 4 to 5 per cent. This attitude of rejection was foreshadowed by the fact that the first Zionist congress, planned to convene in Munich, had to be transferred to the Swiss city of Basel because of indignation and protest from the German rabbis.

Significant changes were only brought about by the leaden times, when old-fashioned pogroms were replaced by death works organised on a national level. The cruellest racial hatred of all times burst to the surface in the Germany of the 1930s; racist atrocities became an everyday phenomenon and in the years preceding the outbreak of World War II 12 per cent of Germany's Jewish population emigrated to Palestine. Antisemitism, governed from the highest level of the state, also strengthened in the Soviet Union from the mid-1930s. As a reaction to acts of antisemitic discrimination, European Jews continued to migrate in ever higher numbers to Palestine (then under British authority), to the land that in their belief was assigned to them by the Almighty.

Pioneering personalities in the Zionist movement agreed that the basis of Jewish national existence is territorial concentration. At the same time, emotions clashed when it came to the marking out of the geographical area of the prospective Jewish state. Solutions in North and South America also emerged. The American Mordecai Manuel Noah (1785-1851), a journalist and author like Herzl, envisaged the formation of Jewish colonies in the Eastern regions of the United States in the first half of the 19th century.⁵ A few decades later, the Russian Leon Pinsker (1821-1891) would toy with the idea of the foundation of a Jewish national home in North America. In the final decade of the century, the ideas of Baron Maurice de Hirsch (1831-1896) sparked hot debates: in 1891 he proposed that Argentina should provide a place for Jewish colonies. The influential banker founded the Jewish Colonization Association and generously supported the transfer of poor Eastern European Jews to the new Jewish settlements in Argentina.⁶ On behalf of the British government, Colonial Secretary Lord Joseph Chamberlain put forward the proposal to create Jewish colonies in Eastern Africa in 1903 but Zionists firmly rejected the

⁵Seymour "Sy" Brody, *Mordecai Manuel Noah: An Ardent Patriot and Zionist*. Source: Florida Atlantic University Libraries, Jewish Heroes and Heroines in America from Colonial Times to 1900, <http://www.fau.edu/library/brody12.htm> (accessed October 12, 2009). See further: Selig Adler - Thomas E. Connolly, *From Ararat to Suburbia: The History of the Jewish Community of Buffalo*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1960.

⁶For a detailed overview of the topic see: Theodore Norman, *An Outstretched Arm: A History of the Jewish Colonization Association*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985.

idea of the Uganda settlement. Emerging on the death of Baron Hirsch, Herzl and many of his followers professed that the Jewish national rebirth may not come to pass in a foreign land. "It is my sacred conviction that a wonderful New Jerusalem will be built beyond the walls of the Old Town", Theodor Herzl jotted down with enthusiasm an experience of Jerusalem on one of his trips to the Holy Land in autumn 1898. Herzl also calculated with transitory preparations, the creation of preliminary concentration areas in the region of el-Aris in the Sinai or in Uganda. It is nevertheless clear that he could imagine the birth of the Jewish national homeland exclusively in the territory of Palestine, then part of the Ottoman Empire, in the land of the forefathers, where once the state of Solomon and David lay. The conviction of the leading character of Zionism was further corroborated by his quotation of the text of the Psalm at the Uganda congress: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning".

Zionists claiming rights for all sacred locations for the Jews, for the whole territory of Biblical and historical Israel did not pay proper attention to the fact that Palestine, belonging to the territorial unit known as historical Syria, is a sacred place for Jews and Muslims alike. On the Temple Mount in Eastern Jerusalem there stand not only the ruins of the twice-destroyed Temple of the Jews of Antiquity: the Wailing Wall, but the Prophet Muhammad also ascended to Heaven from this place. They did not take into consideration the fact that Western ideas of national consciousness and sovereignty are no longer unknown in the Eastern basin of the Mediterranean. Although in the course of his journeys across the Holy Land Herzl could gain the personal experience that Palestine is populated by Muslim Arabs, the leader of the political movement which unfolded around the idea of a "return" to Palestine for Jews scattered over the world still enthusiastically heralded the slogan "a land without a people for a people without a land" ("Ein Land ohne Volk für ein Volk ohne Land") of early Zionism.

The distinguished thinker simply did not calculate with the sharpening of the oppositions between the Arab and Jewish ethnic groups. He never conceived the demand for settling to what extent the Jewish state should be Jewish; instead, he emphasised the liberal quality of the state. He envisaged a cosmopolitan world in Palestine, one tolerant to languages and religions, where his prognosis showed the *disappearance of antisemitism* as opposed to its new wave. On transporting his reader into the foreseeable future, Herzl acts as a guide to a world of peace and harmonious coexistence, promising a cozy, nice and habitable, and altogether alluring land of happiness: "The Jewish question may be resolved in the framework of great and general peacemaking. We will

part as friends with our former enemies.” Although the leading figure of Zionism did not discuss in detail the issue of the type of state system possible to introduce into a multinational structure in the Holy Land, he considered the Republic of Venice, (Herzl 1896: 92) and Western liberal states as models for a secularised Jewish state. In the approach of the Zionist thinker, the creation of a state in Palestine by Jews does not mean oppression or forcing another nation into dependency. In the Promised Land, Arabs may live in more freedom than ever.

Herzl, advocating pragmatic solutions, offered a European perspective to Arabs: the Ottoman Middle Ages of Palestine may in a few decades be replaced by Western modernity; the Holy Land may catch up with the more developed contemporary continent in both economic and political respects. In the *Old New Land*, (Herzl 1902) describing a possible life of Palestine in 1923, he envisaged a historic transformation for the whole region. He thought that the Jewish national home to be born in the not-too-far future would not only prove to be viable but could be accepted as an integral part of the region. Herzl firmly believed that the achievement of an independent Jewish national existence in Palestine would positively affect the whole Middle East, and placed an emphasis on economic development and regional collaboration. At the same time it must be pointed out that the thinker writing on the mass homecoming of the Jews appropriated the self-soothing basic idea and mission-mindedness of 19th century colonialists. He prolonged the life of a major tenet of 19th century colonisation policies: the idea that the process of civilising ‘the backwards and undeveloped nations’ had to be undertaken by cultivated and broad-minded Jewish immigrants. It is in fact this well-intentioned civilisation mission by enlightened, charitable and considerate Jews what Arabs need. Jewish settlers bring with themselves a new world, well-being and prosperity, so the Jewish state offers an opportunity for resident Arabs to work off their significant civilisational deficit. “This immigration proved to be nothing but useful to all of us,” explains Beshid bey, the Arab character of the utopia novel *Old New Land* to the surprised strangers.⁷

Earthly happiness-seeking and everyday life differ greatly from ideal principles and utopistic pictures of society. The first wave of Jewish immigration to Palestine started before Herzl’s emergence, in 1881. From the beginning,

⁷Schweitzer, András, Álomállam. In: *Heti Világgazdaság* July 3, 2004, 71. András Schweitzer quotes the opinion of Yael Dayan, daughter of the late Israeli Defence Minister Moshe Dayan: “The fantasy train of thoughts that Jewish immigration ushers in the age of rise for the Arab population is of such effect in the history of Zionism that to date many feel that the occupation of the Gaza and Cisjordan territories is a blessing to Palestinians.”

Zionist colonisation regarded Palestine as a territory which “could and should be transformed into an ethnically homogeneous ‘national homeland’”⁸. Arabs felt threatened by increasing Zionist immigration, thus the Arab population did not show hospitality towards the ethnically horized Jews arriving in Palestine. While in Herzl’s vision resident Arabs declare that it was the Jews who had made them rich, flesh-and-blood Arabs living in the area thought the exact opposite: Jewish colonies representing secularised and nationalistic ideologies and settling in Arab territory appeared as foreign particles in their eyes. The immigration of Zionists to the Holy Land led to the strengthening of the anti-Jewish mood among the Arabs of the Middle East; their arrival into Palestine further enhanced the feeling of humiliation and subordination to the West in the inhabitants of the area. In contrast to the Old Testament story of David and Goliath, in the Zionist-Arab conflicts sparked by the Zionist colonisation of the Holy Land it is no longer absolutely clear who is David, and who Goliath. The leading figure of Zionists and their theoretician of greatest effect could not play a role in the creation and defence of Israel as he died in 1904, at the age of forty-four. As opposed to the hopeful ideas of the founding fathers of Zionism, the formation of Israel state in 1948 did in no respect have a healing power for the fundamental problems of the Jewish people. The thinker who made secular Zionism flourish wanted to organise Israel on secular grounds, and did not calculate with hostile sentiments from the large camp of religious Zionism, who give precedence to divine laws. He likewise did not take into consideration the so-called ultra-orthodox Jews, who reacted against the Zionism of a secular nature, and who accused Zionism of having capitalised on the Holocaust to give life to Israel. The ultra-orthodox religious leaders, along their principles based on Judaism, represent anti-Zionist views: the new Israel may only come to life by the actions of the Messiah, thus the Jewish state created by the Zionist movement must be destroyed.

The later masters of the Holy Land, the Zionists introduced new forms of violence in the Middle East in the years preceding the declaration of the state: the employment of explosive devices placed in cars, bombs in packages, letter bombs or time bombs against the civil population was previously unknown in the region. (Khalidi 1998) The followers of Herzl, who dreamt of the ideal picture of a multi-faceted and harmonious world, caused the most painful event in the history of Arabs living in the Holy Land in 1948: more than half a million Zionist settlers arriving in Palestine violently forced three quarters of a million

⁸Lugosi, Győző, Izrael mítoszai. In: *Öt Kontinens. Az Új- és Jelenkori Egyetemes Történelmi Tanszék tudományos közleményei*, Budapest: ELTE, 2003, 59-77.

of the Palestine Arabs to abandon their birthland and their homes. As a result of mass expulsion, Palestine Arabs lost their most important towns, all of their sea ports and railway lines as well as a great part of their water and agricultural land resources. In the middle of the 20th century there appears in the Eastern basin of the Mediterranean a Palestinian people driven by the idea of return and emphasising Palestinian priority of presence,⁹ the actual non-existence of which the leading politicians of the Jewish state will assert for decades.

History, if not repeating itself, seems to be composing variations on the same theme. After 1948, Palestine Arabs awaiting the opportunity to return, settled in camps and as a result losing the normality of everyday life, could not even guess that in two decades a new descent to hell would await them, when fresh refugee camps would collect Palestinians forced to flee their birthplaces. The political movement for the return to Palestine would also gain muscle, this time from Palestinians themselves. The avalanche of history at times proves unstoppable.

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⁹For a detailed exposition of the issue see Elias Sanbar, *Les Palestiniens dans le siècle*. Paris: Gallimard, 1994; Elias Sanbar, *Figures du Palestinien: identité des origines, identité de devenir*. Paris: Gallimard, 2004.

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