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An Investigation into Zionism's Inner Leadership

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Zionism
IB History HL II Internal Assessment

*An Investigation into Zionism's inner leadership:
To what extent was Theodor Herzl's Zionist movement successful?*

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Table of Contents

Plan of Investigation..... 3

Summary of Evidence.....4

Evaluation of Sources..... 6

Analysis..... 7

Conclusion..... 9

Bibliography..... 10

Plan of Investigation

This is a thorough investigation of Zionism's inner leadership and specifically Herzl's leadership and success or failure as a political leader. Zionism is a well known and widespread movement that speaks volumes to many people but the leadership during many time periods has been quite lacking. Thus the motivation to further delve into the historical problems with the Zionist movement but even more of a narrow spectrum in respects to Theodor Herzl himself. Through his whole political career, this investigation will inspect what went wrong.

To assess this character and his politics, this paper will go through the general and deeper information regarding other works about Herzl's movement and Herzl's own writings himself. This will hopefully shed some light on Herzl and his Zionism and evaluate to some extent the success of his movement.

Summary of Evidence

Gans

“The original Zionist ideologues, leaders, and activists all considered themselves members of an ethnocultural group that was stateless and therefore aspired to self-determination as a means of promoting members’ interests in adhering to their culture...for generations...” (Gans, 11)

“...those associated with civic nationalism. Theodor Herzl...was the most prominent Zionist leader to whom this could be said to apply...Another such leader was Leo Pinsker...the author of *Autoemancipation* (1882), in which he despaired of the prospects of Jewish emancipation in Europe and called for the establishment of a Jewish homeland” (Gans, 11).

“Herzl did not consider language to be a distinct component of cultural identity...” (Gans, 12).

“...Herzl’s Uganda Plan to realize Jewish self-determination in East Africa. He proposed this idea at the Sixth Zionist Congress in 1903...outright rejection” (Gans, 15).

“...Herzl dreamed of a Jewish state, but the Basel Program, which he presented at the First Zionist Congress in 1898, defined Zionism as aiming for the ‘establishment of a home for the Jewish people secured under public law in Palestine’” (Gans, 53).

Schoenman

“...Theodor Herzl set forth his plan for inducing the Ottoman Empire to grant Palestine to the Zionist movement...’We should there form an outpost of civilization as opposed to barbarism’ (Schoenman, 19).

Engel

“...Herzl claimed to have discovered the ‘motive force’ that, ‘if properly harnessed’ would make a sovereign Jewish national state a reality” (Engel, 46).

“Before writing *The Jewish State* he had only the vaguest notion of their activities. Nor did he regard the only possible territory for the state” (Engel, 49/50).

“...Herzl was certain that once the Jews of the world announced to the governments of Europe their readiness to cooperate in a scheme to relocate them to an extra-European territory of their own, the governments would make things happen in short order. He was to be disappointed” (Engel, 50).

“Herzl was convinced, the Sultan would negotiate with them seriously, for the Jewish people had

much to offer in return” (Engel, 54).

“...[Herzl’s] decision to convene the Basel Congress stemmed largely from his need for significant Jewish backing...the great Jewish bankers would not help him...” (Engel, 54).

“Herzl commanded neither Yiddish nor Hebrew, and he showed little regard for either. He assumed that Jews in the future Jewish homeland would speak the languages of the countries from which they came...” (Engel, 57).

“But Herzl’s approach held that what Jews needed most was international recognition of their right to settle and govern *some* corner of the world; *which* corner was secondary” (Engel, 61).

“Herzl’s death, the rejection of East Africa and the realization that diplomacy would not yield a charter for Palestine under present circumstances impelled the ZO to reconsider...”(Engel, 62).

Avishai

“...many mentors of political Zionism,...Herzl..., were themselves people who had tried to assimilate and, unexpectedly, failed” (Avishai, 25).

“Herzl’s name is so closely connected with the reputation of Zionism that it is astonishing to discover how far removed he was from the crucial Zionist debates...We shall see that, eventually, Herzl gave the stalwarts of Hibat Zion a desperately needed new structure, the ‘Zionist Congress’ and the means to raise funds from sources...”(Avishai, 33).

Evaluation of Sources

Engel, David. *Zionism*. Harlow, England: Pearson/Longman, 2009. Print.

American historian, David Engel, concentrates the majority of his book Zionism to the general education and knowledge of the Jewish society and establishment as a 'state' as of 2009. Engel uses primary sources to clearly show the reader how the Jewish movement was created and how it's changed under the influence of Jewish writers during the nineteenth and twentieth century. Not only does Zionism explore the media's impact but as well the various leaders and foreign policies that thoroughly contributed. The deep investigation of the Jewish 'state' is illustrated by Engel's unique ability to relay the information and concrete evidence without confusing the reader. Engel's intended audience is a new reader approaching Zionism without any prior knowledge of the topic. Though it provides much to general readers, his work lacks deep insight into Jewish culture and mindset, which leads to his inability to emotionally understand the very complex situation of Zionism. Still the amount of factual knowledge and textual comparison makes Zionism a great book for general research purposes.

Herzl, Theodor. *The Jewish State*. New York: Dover Publications, 1988. Print.

Although Theodor Herzl, a Jewish scholar, was considered one of the founding fathers of 'Zionism', he lacked much perspective which was needed in the Jewish community. This insufficiency can be seen through his own work, The Jewish State. Since Herzl had a privileged lifestyle and no understanding between the majority of the Jewish people and himself, there was not the extreme pull for Jewish nationalism which was expected under Herzl's leadership. The Jewish State reiterates Herzl's own opinions and despite his lack of true connection with the audience, this pamphlet was one of the most widespread Jewish literature and inspired many to take action against their oppressors. Herzl had many radical and deep social goals for the Zionism movement and this is where all of such theories stemmed off of. Between the Jewish disconnect between Herzl, The Jewish State perfectly captures the truth of the Jewish situation and, at that point recent, social and economic oppression.

Word Count: 325

Analysis

An Investigation into Zionism's inner leadership: To what extent was Theodor Herzl's Zionist movement successful?

Zionism is one of the most widespread and well known Jewish social movements, but it has always been somewhat lacking in leadership. Herzl is considered a founding father of the Zionist movement and is known for his success. Evaluating Herzl's success is important to the Zionist movement, as to understand whether his contributions are contrary to popular belief or not, as well as to gain some depth into this chapter of the Zionist movement. Despite Herzl's deeply rooted reputation for being a successful Zionist, his various attempts at a movement failed miserably. His failures were due to three misunderstandings: his disconnect from the Jews, ignorance of historical context and unrealistic political expectations.

Originally, Herzl was interested in neither the Jewish people nor their social movements until later in his life as a journalist. Later in his career, Herzl then began writing The Jewish State, in which he proclaimed that all Jews must consolidate under their own legislature and territory. Herzl was highly criticized for his lack of knowledge of the Jewish language and his belief that language is not a "distinct"¹ aspect of culture. Another cause of tension between Herzl and the public was his political and social decisions. One such example is the East Africa Plan; although it was an offer for land, the plan lacked support due to the funding and adaptation of lifestyle that would be necessary. Herzl also lacked the necessary vigor and compassion that later Zionism leaders provided. He cared not about the location of their movement but about the acceptance of their movement, by Engel's standards. The Jewish population identified with Herzl's messages but never with Herzl himself, this eventually led to a toll on Herzl's work and a lack of following and support for his propositions.

Theodor Herzl did not have an understanding of the history or previous mass movements of the Jewish people. As Engel puts it, Herzl did not have the "vaguest notion"², nor did he understand the historic struggle the Jews have experienced. Herzl demanded that Jews cease attempting to assimilate with other nations and consolidate into a Jewish 'state', but he did not understand that the Jews had looked for a homeland for years and many just wished to settle down in existing countries, yet another term of disagreement and frustration. Herzl was not keen to understand the history of the Jewish people either, the years of persecution and rejection had wearied out the people, whom at this point had little to no motivation for a mass movement.

Lastly Herzl's political expectations were completely askew. Herzl believed that the Sultan of Palestine would be open for communication and compromise, that the other European countries would assist the Zionist movement, and that the Jewish people would follow his political bills as much as he did, but Herzl was greeted with disappointment. The Sultan was not

¹(Gans, 12)

²(Engel, 49/50)

open for communication and did not see the Jews as having “too much to offer”³, the other European countries shoved the Zionist movement aside or to East Africa, and the Jewish people refused many of his propositions. Another thing to consider was the fact that there was no unified Zionist organization, but rather a multitude of decided groups and the leader of these, the Zionist Organization, was highly against all of Herzl’s propositions.

Word Count: 547

³(Engel, 54)

Conclusion

Herzl was a highly acclaimed leader of the Zionist movement and although his pamphlet, The Jewish State was very popular with the Jewish population and brought the Jewish community together, his political Zionist movement was unsuccessful. His Zionism propositions were both socially and politically rejected. Herzl was a key leader in this movement, in spite of his failures politically, he moved the Zionist movement and began advocating for the people. Thus, although he failed to create the Jewish 'state', Herzl still brought attention and new ideas to the lacking Zionist community and other nation's leaders.

Word Count: 95

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