

Zionism – Abstract

Zionism was founded by Theodor Herzl. In his treatise *The Jewish State* published in 1896, Herzl attempted to find a clear answer to the Jewish question, which was one of the many burning “questions” of the late 19th century. The Dreyfus affair as well as the unbearable situation of the Jews at the time, particularly in Russia, were the direct impetus for looking for a “modern solution”. He treats the Jews in the diaspora as one nation and sees the only solution in the establishment of a national, modern state of the future, whether in Palestine or in another state. His thoughts are imbued with an unshakeable belief in progress, as well as in man’s rationality, which in his words shall prevail over “all and outdated ideas” of the past. In the name of rationality he presents his austere vision of the establishment of the state along with the plan how to achieve this goal. His book *The Jewish State* is a fundamental document of the Zionist movement and Zionism as a whole and is applicable not only in the context of “national issues” prior to last century, but it has not lost its plasticity so far. He was the cornerstone who put the idea into operation and today we as the observers can see which paths the history of Jews followed in the time before the actual establishment of the State of Israel in 1948.

In 1897, the Zionist Organization was founded at the first Zionist Congress in Basel and Theodor Herzl became its president. Zionism soon spread particularly among Eastern European Jews, who were threatened by anti-Semitism and pogroms. Later, the emigration of Jews occurred as a result of Nazi persecution. This situation significantly helped to spread the idea of Zionism and the desire for their own homeland which would be a Jewish state. After the Balfour Declaration and the establishment of the British Mandate, the Zionist Organization acted in Palestine as a representative of the Jewish population in relation to the mandate government. Its task was to advise to and cooperate with the mandate administration in matters of the Jewish territory. The ZO operated and still operates mainly outside Palestine, from the very beginning of its foundation in Basel in 1897, when the ZO declared its goal, national revival and independence of the Jewish people in Eretz Yisrael. The term Zionism was coined by Nathan Birnbaum, a Jewish writer from Vienna, and was derived from the word Zion, which is one of the biblical names of Jerusalem. From the beginning, the ZO searched support from major powers, for which it pledged loyalty and cooperation.

The path of Zionism was not easy. Speculations over the territory for a Jewish state divided the Zionist Organization from inside. This issue was also joined by a different mindset of ideological groups within the Zionist Organization. World War I represented another threat to the Zionist Organization. After the rise of Nazism, a large immigration wave occurred, which headed to the already established settlements in Palestine. The Zionists were involved in this situation and led the preparation for the flow of refugees into

Palestine. Due to the large influx of money, which came along with refugees, Palestine witnessed a massive economic boom and not only the Jewish settlers benefited from it, but also 250,000 Arabs who emigrated from neighboring countries.

The main goal of the Zionist Organization was achieved after the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. Yet, its quest has not ended yet ...

Michal Müller