HERZL, Theodor (May 2, 1860, Pest – July 3, 1904, Edlach)

Theodor Herzl was a Jewish Austro-Hungarian journalist, playwright, statesman, and founder of the political Zionist movement. Herzl studied law in Vienna, where he first confronted the problem of anti-Semitism in European society. His preoccupation with the issue intensified during the Dreyfus Affair, on which he reported as the Paris correspondent for the Viennese newspaper *Neue Freie Presse*. Herzl rejected the idea that complete assimilation could solve the “Jewish Problem.” Modern anti-Semitism, he argued, is so deeply rooted in European society that it could be overcome only by means of a political solution that would guarantee Jews sovereignty or autonomy in their own land, preferably the historic territory of Israel. Herzl sketched out his program in a book entitled *Der Judenstaat* (1896). He promoted the idea through direct contact with world leaders and high-ranking political and economic figures, as well as by disseminating the Zionist agenda among wider masses in public meetings and newspaper articles. In 1897 he convened at Basel the Zionist Congress, which was to serve as the main platform for debating Zionist ideas and policies. In his utopian novel *Altneuland* (1902), Herzl envisioned the land of the Jews as a modern, secular, pluralistic state with socialist traits.

Bibliography: Steven Beller, *Herzl,* London: Peter Halban, 2004.

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