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A timely piece about an important forerunner of political Zionism, written by a member of our Editorial Board and frequent contributor to these pages.

Moses Hess, First of Modern Zionists

THIS year marks a great historical event in the history of Socialist Zionism. It is one hundred and fifty years since the birth of Moses Hess, generally recognized as the first to have formulated the modern Zionist concept.

If Ber Borochov, the great theoretician, is regarded as the father of the idea to create a synthesis between the struggle for a socialist society and the struggle to normalize Jewish life through territorial concentration in the historic homeland, Hess has to be regarded as the grandfather of this great vision. He visualized the survival of the Jewish nation as an inseparable part of the struggle for socialism. He was a revolutionary socialist before Marx, and a political Zionist long before Theodor Herzl.

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"Rome and Jerusalem"

This year also marks a century since Moses Hess published his great visionary and prophetic work *Rome and Jerusalem*. This work, like many other great visions, found no receptive minds for his challenging ideas in his time.

When Herzl read *Rome and Jerusalem*, four decades after it was published, he remarked in his diary, "Everything we have attempted can be found in his work, still insufficient attention has been paid to the fact that there is not a single Zionist principle which does not find expression in his famous work *Rome and Jerusalem*." Prof. Martin Ruber writes of this book, "It was a daring insight which at the first attempt penetrated to the very foundations of the Zionist idea."

The significance of *Rome and Jerusalem* for our times is not only that it satisfies our intellectual curiosity so that we may find out what the forerunner of great ideas had to say at a time when social tendencies and opinions ran contrary to his prophetic ideas. The importance lies in the fact that quite a number of ideas

expressed by Hess a century ago have become a reality, and some of them can still be used as guiding factors for present day Jewish life.

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The Early Days

Moses Hess was born in January, 1812, in Bonn, present capital of West Germany. He came from a middle class, strictly traditional Orthodox family. When he was still a child, his family moved to Cologne. Some of his early childhood was spent with his grandfather who taught him Bible, Rashi and Talmud. The piety and great Talmudic knowledge of his grandfather left an indelible impression on Hess' later life and contributed a great deal to the formation of his *weltanschauung*.

When Hess entered the University of Bonn, he was drawn in into the wrangle of revolutionary ideas with which the intellectual life was simmering.

Between 1795 and 1814, Bonn was under the Napoleonic rule. The gates of the Jewish ghetto were opened wide and its inmates were permitted to emerge into the light. This meant more personal freedom and more economic opportunities caused by the rise of capitalism. It also meant that secular knowledge was brought into the former ghetto. A wave of liberal ideas began to penetrate into the partly-emancipated Jewish communities of Western Germany.

In 1815, however, after the defeat of Napoleon, the Rhineland was annexed to Prussia, the most reactionary German state, and the old restrictive rule over the Jewish population was re-imposed. This created a spiritual crisis among some Jewish intellectuals and members of the Jewish upper economic crust. Unable to bear the return to their former status, they made all attempts to forge into German society, from which they were excluded, by deserting Jewish life. A whole generation of

intellectuals and professionals were converted to Christianity, among them Ludwig Berne, Heinrich Heine, Karl Marx's father, and many, many others.

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Clouds Over Ghetto

Germany at the time was not a homogeneous nation. Medievalism had not yet disappeared, and dark clouds hung over the ghettos. Some brighter rays penetrated from revolutionary France, giving heart to a number of German Jewish and non-Jewish intellectuals. The 1830 revolution in France had re-awakened hopes among the liberal and intellectual circles of Europe. Paris, the center of political revolution, fermented with all sorts of socialist ideas. All kinds of ideological groups and sects were organized. Socialist utopian ideas drew the attention of freedom-loving people throughout Europe. Babeuf preached that the possession of private property was the root of all evil, and that justice and liberty were not possible without complete social and economic equality. St. Dimonian and Fourierist doctrines were popular, not only in France, but elsewhere. Moses Hess was influenced strongly by all these contradictory isms. He was finally drawn into the stream of radicalism calling itself "True" or "Philosophical" Communism. Hess became the chief theoretician and recognized leader of this movement.

According to Theodor Zlocisti, Hess' biographer, Hess was the one to convert Friedrich Engels to communism, and was not without influence on young Karl Marx. Hess collaborated later with Marx in the radical *Rheinische Zeitung* which was the mouthpiece and the gathering place of the various revolutionary intellectual circles in the early 1840's. He also collaborated with Marx in writing *Die Deutsche Ideologie* (1845). According to Zlocisti, part of the manuscript is in Hess' handwriting.

After the *Rheinische Zeitung* was closed, Hess participated in a periodical published in Switzerland under the odd name of *Twenty-one Sheets of Switzerland*. The name came about from the fact that any publication of over twenty sheets did not come under the restrictive rule of the censor. Hess also was an ally of Marx in his ideological struggle against Bruno Bauer, Stirner and Feuerbach.

Hess' essay *Die Folgen der Revolution des Proletariat* (1847) was published before the Communist Manifesto. In his analysis of the

development of capitalism, he was very close to the Marxian view. But this did not prevent Karl Marx from concentrating his fire on Hess in the Manifesto. This was the beginning of a fierce polemic against the "True" Communists.

Georg Lukacs*, a significant Marxian thinker, describes Hess as "an absolute predecessor of Marx, whose fate was all the more tragic because he was not only personally an absolutely honest revolutionary, but also, of all the idealist dialecticians, approximated most closely to Marxian dialectics."

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Basis of Ideology

Hess deviated from Marx on the principle that socialism has to be based *not only* on relations of production and technical development, but also on moral values. He also deviated from Marx on the role of the national problem in the utilization of a socialist society.

Martin Buber says about Moses Hess, "He saw the source of social movement of his day not in the needs of the belly but in those of the heart and thought." Hess regarded social ethics closely connected to the social problem, and never actually deviated from the importance of material conditions for the development of social ends, but went ahead from that point. He viewed socialism not from an "idealistic" base, since he was completely disconnected from the German idealistic school, but rather along the lines of Spinoza, whom he had admired since early youth.

Hess' ideology was born of a desire to find fundamental principles of social organization which would make possible the elimination of all social conflicts. He believed that valid principles of social order could be derived only from the knowledge of the metaphysical structure of existence. Virtue arises from the knowledge of our status and function in the all-embracing totality called by both Spinoza and Hegel, God. Although Hess regarded the class struggle, caused by the relationship of production, as a vital factor of social progress, his philosophy gives the widest autonomy to moral activity. He was far from Marx's rigid fundamentally disciplined succession of ideas, from his precise logical consistency, which disregarded the human soul.

*Georg Lukacs: *Moses Hess Und Das Problem Der Idealistische Dialectic*.

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Two Sources of Socialism

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According to all his biographers, Hess was a man of singular purity of character, sensitive to every form of injustice. He had a great devotion to principles and was unable to hate even those who harmed him.

Hess never wavered in his allegiance to his socialist creed. He was active in the First International, where he joined forces with Marx in his ideological strife against Bakunin. He was the recognized leader of the early socialist movement in Germany, and was rightfully called the father of German communism. In the later years Hess actively collaborated with Ferdinand La Salle in organizing the new General Federation of German Workers.

Hess was not a Utopian Socialist, as were many of the forerunners of Marxism who believed that a socialist society could be accomplished through isolation from the sinful word of exploitation, and by building socialist islands in the midst of a capitalist society. The new society could only be gotten through fierce struggle. Hess remained steeped in the ethics of Jewish religion and nationality.

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Two Sources of Socialism

The modern socialist and revolutionary labor movement in Europe had its roots in two separate bases. On the one side, it was an outgrowth of the class struggle between the economically exploited and their exploiters. On the other hand, the revolutionary movement was nourished more and more by the struggles for national liberation. More than half of the European people in the past century were not sovereign. Russia, Austria and Turkey, among others, ruled over scores of nations and national minority groups. Fifty-five per cent of the population of the Russian Empire, constituting dozens of large and small nationalities, were dominated by the ruling circles of Russia which was called the Prison of Nations. The little country Austria ruled over scores of nations and ethnic minorities. Turkey had hegemony over the countries of the Near East and the Balkan Peninsula. England dominated and made all-out attempts to assimilate into its folds Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Germany and Italy were still fragmented and on the verge of becoming unified states. Europe was stirring with national revolts. National minorities within the dominated states, as well as in the independent states, were completely disregarded. They were

expected by all liberals, even by the socialists of those days, to assimilate and fuse with the majority.

What had taken place in the middle of the last century in Europe to a certain degree could be compared with the present awakening of the Asian-African continents. All this was an outgrowth of the development of modern capitalism. The struggle against exploitation and for socialism, and the fight for national liberation and independence were intertwined, and to a certain degree both made attempts to dominate one another. Marx himself supported the Polish revolt against Germany, saying that the working class has no fatherland.

Some socialist leaders foresaw the future socialist society as a fusion of nationalities. To some, a homogeneous mankind was the ideal, and the existence of national units a barrier in the struggle for socialism.

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Hess' Viewpoint

In these early days of the socialist labor movement, Hess viewed the historical development entirely differently. He saw even in the smallest national entity the frame for a socialist society. Only the complete independence and freedom of all entities could eventually lead towards socialism.

These contradictory tendencies in the socialist movement—stemming from national and class sources—were more acute in the later radical movements, especially in Jewish life. They took the form of sharp ideological disputes between Zionism, the Jewish liberation movement, and socialist anti-Zionist groups. The latter believed that socialism would automatically solve all social woes, including the Jewish problems.

A continuation of Hess' ideas came to expression in a more deeply theoretical synthesis between socialism and Zionism formulated over four decades later by Borochof. Out of this formulation rose a modern Socialist Zionist movement whose pioneering element created the base for present-day Israel.

The main desire of the Jewish people in Germany, in Hess' time, was to dig themselves out of ghetto life, to be emancipated within the countries where they resided. The ideal was to get the same legal rights as the non-Jewish population.

Hess felt that emancipation was a great ac-

complishment in the fight for freedom and democracy and that it might solve some of the problems of the Jew as an individual, but surely not the Jewish problem. Emancipation of the individual might destroy the inner Jewish national fortification, which was strengthened in the course of Jewish history and expressed in a Jewish way of life, and weaken its national consciousness.

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Cost of Emancipation

The modern emancipators of Western Europe demanded a high price from the Jews for the same legal rights as the non-Jews. It was to be the end of all Jewish national consciousness. Jews could hold on to their own religion, if they desired, but the religion must be de-nationalized, removed from its national content. The French Jews could be regarded as Frenchmen and the German Jews as Germans, providing they disconnected themselves from all Jewish aspirations with which the Jewish religion was filled. The only ones who remained at that time entrenched in their national consciousness were the Orthodox.

In those days, there was no visible social secular Jewishness. Those who became secularized through the influence of nationalism drifted away from Jewish life altogether. Hess argued with these elements that the real Jewish religion does not consist of pure theological dogma; it is a religion living within the borders of a Jewish nation.

The Jewish intelligentsia and some of the richer Jews who secularized themselves began to desert Jewish life en masse. They started with assimilation and ended with baptism. They departed the Jewish religion as secularists, but this did not prevent them from adopting Christianity. Their actions were mainly motivated by egoistic interests; they tried to save their souls by buying exit tickets from the ghetto to German society. A wave of conversion embraced Germany.

Hess despised the deserters. In his *Rome and Jerusalem* he writes, "If it is true that the Jewish emancipation is not compatible with adherence to the Jewish nation, a Jew ought to give up the former for the latter." And further, "Jews are not a religious group but a separate nation. It is a nation which should seek its normalcy by resettling in the historic

homeland." Also, "The modern Jew (the assimilated Jew) who denies this is not only an apostate, a religious renegade, but a traitor to his people."

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True Internationalist

Hess, the Socialist Zionist who was so deeply anchored in Jewish life and in its national needs, was a true internationalist. Racial chauvinism, false reactionary nationalism in any form were condemned by him. To deny one's own nationality was to him as repulsive as to proclaim its superior rights or power by those who are bigger and stronger. National desertion is as ugly as national chauvinism; it is a social disease which seeks either to be dominated or to dominate others.

While other oppressed nations live on their own soil, Jews must first resettle in their homeland, he said. Therefore, the national independence of Jews is more of a requisite for any form of social and political progress than of any other oppressed nation.

For the realization of his vision, which seemed in his day a remote fantasy, Hess proposed practical steps. He suggested a Jewish World Congress which would demand from the world powers the return to the Jewish people of their historic homeland. He saw Jewish colonization in Palestine as the first step for his later gigantic plan to resettle the Jewish people. He was enthused over the first attempt of colonization by Rabbi Kalischer.

When *Rome and Jerusalem* appeared, it was received with derision and anger. The thoughts and ideas of the first Socialist Zionist were ridiculed. The assimilated Jews argued that even if Palestine should be given to the Jews, no civilized Jews would ever leave their beloved homeland, (in which they were nationally oppressed) and settle in the wilderness between ancient graves. Jews, they said, were not capable of creating their own modern national culture.

These and similar arguments were echoed in later years among Jewish anti-Zionist Socialists who produced similar arguments. This mockery of the Socialist Zionist idea was kept up until the Nazi holocaust when some who survived saved themselves in the land which the first Socialist Zionist pioneers had prepared the ground work for a Jewish homeland.