



## **“LEADER”**

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Is it a law, that the more we ponder over any particular occurrence, the more mysterious and less understandable does it appear to us? The more I think about Hertzl , the harder it becomes for me to comprehend the following fact : why had a Jew- a Hungarian Jew, brought up in Vienna, of all others , - become a Zionist in Paris, of all cities. In Hungary all he could see was how Jews were assimilating themselves with a romantic enthusiasm. Vienna, at the time of Herzl’s youth, was the scene of internal division in the Jewry- a division not touched with tragedy one without grief; but a happy one accompanied with dancing. And the life that Paris of the nineties presented to a young and handsome newspaper correspondent like Theodor Herzl, was certainly an ideal medium in which to forget all earthly worries, let alone that one is a Jew. It is true, that in all these countries he could encounter anti-Semitism in a variety of form; especially in Vienna under Luigar’s mayoralty, and in the Paris of the Dreyfus affair. But, as we all are perfectly aware, stripes alone - “mackses” by themselves are insufficient to make a man a Zionist. Over and above that, it is essential that he shall have within him a spark of Jewish feeling.

Where, then, did such a man find in himself that spark? Here a second, and greater mystery makes its appearance: Whence comes that magical force which, within only seven years, transforms the body and soul of a nation like ours. All the leading personalities we now possess had to labour twice and three times that long



before they could direct us: and here a strange man appears, writes a book, and at once becomes a leader.

It will be argued that this was the outcome of the pleasant surprise in that Herzl was a “stranger”; or that Jews were flattered by the fame he had acquired as an outstanding European writer. I doubt that this can in any way account for the mystery. This explanation may satisfy in the beginning, as a sensation: congresses and world-wide organizations however, are neither built upon pleasant surprises nor the flattering positions of any individuals. After the convening of congress, or the formation of a world-wide organization a far longer period than seven years must pass before such a body can have become something substantial; something to be felt; before it can be recognized as an opposing force, let alone a guiding and directing force-and here comes a stranger utters a word, and dies after seven years, leaving a nation where there was but a herd.

Obviously, this mystery is cleared up by the fact that Herzl possessed “the nature of a leader”. But what, after all, is the essence of a “leader”. I do not remember having heard the word in daily use among us, Jews, in Herzl’s time. Nay, it seems to me not even among “any” European people. Only in England was the word “leader” in use; and then it had rather the meaning of “manager”; a man who is elected today, and told, “Go away, and God be with you” tomorrow; but that is not a superman, to be followed with closed eyes. In the Russia of that time, any talk of “leaders” was certainly destined to draw ridicule, on its authors. Every movement used to be directed by a committee, sometimes with and sometimes without a chairman. In the



Latin countries especially, no talk of political leaders was to be heard. In the French language the word conveying this meaning simply did not exist. Even the Italian “Duce” really is not an Italian word; it was unknown in every-day speech prior to the year 1922. It was simply borrowed from the Latin word “ducis”, and had been invented especially for Mussolini.

Now it is different. Now it has become a fashion. In every country a dictator is yearned for, and if a suitable man cannot be found, they take unsuitable one, decorate him with a title, and even attempt to treat him as a real leader. We, Jews, who even in the moment of Zionist ecstasy remain true to the Galuth decrees, likewise imitate that trend ; and the search for “the nature of a leader” surges through our ranks in the same way, and with the same consequences, as among our neighbours. As, unfortunately, there is no super-man, an ordinary mortal is "discovered" and adorned with a title. If he be foolish, he accepts the role, puffs himself up, and tires to play it; - and fools among us – God be praised – are no rarity. I am acquainted with the heads of nearly every party in Zionism, and I am sure that not one of them has the nature of a real leader: but despite that. Many of them have been accorded the title, and, to our misfortune, some are seriously inclined to accept it. At least I know of a dozen who whether surreptitiously or openly, have “put forward their candidature” for this title.

The true meaning of the word leader is far from the meaning generally attached to the English word of that name. An English “leader” is, virtually, the slave of his party; a real “leader” in the true sense of the word, is something quite different.



He must be a man who instead of the whole party doing the thinking, has been given official authority to be the only “thinker”.

The programme ratified by the Congress does not represent anything in reality, the programme is only what the “leader” considers necessary and useful. It is useless for an outsider to try and prove by facts and logic that a certain step is not good or not expedient, as the answer to this always will be “he does so”. One really must be a superhuman to righteously carry this crown. However, in reality official leaders always act under the influence of somebody, but instead of this being the influence of votes or nomination of candidates here there is always the influence of accidental surroundings.

Our children will be astonished, when they will read the actual biography of those leading personages, who can now be found in all countries; they will be surprised when they will discover that many of them were merely toys in the hands of a certain party.

It is especially difficult to comprehend those who dream about “leaders”. When I was young it was absolutely different. We believed that every movement consisted of people of the same worth and standing; each one of them a duke, each one of them a king. When the time of election came, a programme and not people were chosen; the elected persons merely had to carry out the said programme. We, the mass, would follow them not because they were our “leaders”, but because they were our “slaves”. If you, voluntarily, elect a group of people and order them to work for



you, then you are obliged to either aid them or to cast them off, as in this way you are not being subjected to their will, but merely following your own inclinations, expressed in the elections. Much contradiction was contained in the theory of my youth, sometimes it was only fictitious, but I like it best, it has more pride, more majesty. "Hadar", even though it bears a name detracting from its literal meaning "democracy".

Quite a different leader was Herzl. Here there was no title, no previously prepared role, people obeyed him and therefore he is a "leader". In the Russian language there is a phrase more suitable than the word "leader". In Russia during the last epoch a beloved and respected writer or thinker was called a masterful mind. For instance, Mihailovsky a Russian writer of the 1880's, who did not belong to any political party, was called by that name. Such man was Herzl, he conquered our thoughts, and this was a fact and not a duty.

In other words, this was truth. Real leaders are seldom born and their distinction is that they do not aspire to this vocation. To obey them is not a question of discipline, they are obeyed in the same way, as a talented singer inspires the audience with his song and draws them into it, for his singing expresses our own hopes and sorrows.

There is one more symptom, such a person as Herzl, dies, and after thirty years he still remains our leader.