



Max Nordau
Co-Founder of the World Zionist Organization with Theodor Herzl

From Degeneration to Regeneration

Max Nordau

By Jerry Klinger

Like Herzl, Nordau understood Zionism meant survival for the Jewish people.

Like Herzl, Nordau's private life was conflicted.

Like Herzl, his public life was straight, morally upright and focused.

Unlike Herzl, the Zionists never iconized Nordau.

Unlike Herzl, the Zionists never marketed Nordau.

Perhaps he was never marketed because the establishment Zionist leadership preferred he just fade away.

Nordau understood people and Zionism better than Herzl.

- Judith Rice

Max Nordau stood before the eager hopeful delegates at the First Zionist Congress. He presented a dramatic contrast to Theodor Herzl. Nordau, his hair and his beard prematurely white, was only

eleven years older than the much darker, commanding presence of Herzl who had just finished speaking.



Basel, Opera House

The First Congress was organized by Max Nordau. It assembled in a Concert Hall in Basel, Switzerland, August 29, 1897. Basel was not Nordau's first choice for a venue. He wanted the Congress to be held in Munich, Germany. The Orthodox religious community in Munich bitterly opposed it. Herzl, his pretentious assertion that he was the leader of World Jewry and the Restoration movement of the Jews to Palestine, a movement he called Zionism, was not wanted by the religious Jews in Munich. They viewed Zionism as heresy. Herzl was not the Messiah.

For different reasons, Munich's secular assimilated Jews did not want Herzl and Zionism there. Herzl and Zionism were direct threats to their very recently, hard won Emancipation. German Jews had finally achieved the same rights as all Germans. Why would they seemingly reject what they just achieved? They feared adding fuel to the rising fires of Racial Anti-Semites who questioned their loyalties.

Herzl and Zionism were more than just unwanted apostates to the Jewish religious and secular worlds. Herzl and Zionism were virtually unknown in 1897 to the vast majority of world Jewry, period.

The road to the Congress was not easy. Herzl believed that Zionism should best be spread by an elite "Society of Jews". Nordau argued strongly against Herzl's elitism. He convinced Herzl that Zionism needed to at least appear to be Democratic. Herzl and Nordau would be the leadership but they needed affirmation, legitimization of their actions and proposals by a vote of a Congress of Zionists. Otherwise, they only represented themselves. On August 29, 1897, Herzl and Nordau stood before the Congress as the proposed leadership and officially became the leadership of the newly minted Zionist movement.



First Zionist Congress

It was Nordau turn to stand at the podium. He wore a formal tuxedo. Herzl required all who were with him as leaders to wear formal attire to the proceedings. Herzl was very aware of staging and image projection. He was a playwright and a theatrical producer. He knew that they must do more than speak as leaders. They must look like dignified, established leaders.

Nordau's hazel eyes peered deeply into the assemblage before him. His was more than the simple confident stage presence of a seasoned famous European writer and speaker. If he was nervous it did not show. His speech would define the why of the Congress.

Nordau cleared his throat and began:

"The special reporters for individual countries will depict for you the condition of their brethren in the different states. Some of their reports have been submitted to me; others not. But even of the countries about which I learnt nothing from my collaborators, I have, partly from personal observation, partly from other sources, obtained some knowledge, so that I may, without presumption, undertake the task of reporting on the general situation of the Jews at the end of the 19th century.

This picture can, on the whole, be painted only in one colour. Everywhere, where the Jews have settled in comparatively large numbers among the nations, Jewish misery prevails. It is not the ordinary misery which is probably the unalterable fate of mankind. It is a peculiar misery, which the Jews do not suffer as human beings, but as Jews, and from which they would be free, were they not Jews.

Jewish misery has two forms, the material and the moral. In Eastern Europe, North Africa, and Western Asia -- those regions which shelter the vast majority, probably nine-tenths of our race -- the misery of the Jews is understood literally. It is the daily distress of the body, anxiety for every following day, the painful fight for the maintenance of a bare existence. In Western Europe, the struggle for existence has been made somewhat lighter for the Jews, although of late the tendency has become visible even there to render it difficult for them again. The question of food and shelter, the question of the security of life, tortures them less; there the misery is moral.

.That Jewish distress cries for help. To find that help will be the great work of this Congress."

Six years later, Nordau was at the center of heated internal political fury in the Sixth Zionist Congress. He was the point man for Herzl's pivot to seek a possible *Nachtsl*, a *Night Asylum* - a temporary Zionist home in upper Kenya (Uganda), instead of Palestine. The air between Zionist factions became poisonous. Chaim Selig Luban, a young Russian anti-Uganda Zionist, attempted to assassinate Nordau at an evening reception. The assassination attempt failed. Later, the story was released that Luban was insane.

Nordau fought hard for Herzl's Uganda plan out of loyalty to Herzl. Personally, he did not believe in it. He thought Herzl was wrong.

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Max Nordau was born Simcha Maximilian Sudfeld, July 29, 1849, in Pest, Hungary. His father, Gabriel Sudfeld, was an itinerant orthodox Rabbi, sympathetic to the Haskala. Though a hopeful Hebrew poet, he made his living as a private Hebrew teacher to the children of wealthy Jewish families.

Simcha grew up in a kosher home. He attended Cheder and learned at his father's knee. His parents, confident of his Jewish identity, wanted him to have the emerging educational benefits that Jewish emancipation in the Austro-Hungarian Empire afforded. For higher education, they sent him, as did many hopeful liberal leaning Jewish families, to schools run by Jesuits.

Graduating with high marks, Simcha was admitted to the University of Budapest's Medical School. Medicine was one of the very few avenues of professional education open to Jews. He graduated in 1872.

His religious values began changing once away from the confines of the Jewish world. *"When I reached the age of fifteen, I left the Jewish way of life and the study of Torah. Judaism remained a mere memory and since then I have always felt as a German and a German only."*

He no longer saw himself as Jewish. He was at best an agnostic. He did not want to identify with his Jewish roots. They were too restricting. A year later after graduating as a physician, he changed his name. Simcha Sudfeld was too Jewish. He left for Berlin with a new name, Max Nordau.

For the next six years he traveled through Europe, expanding his horizons and experiencing European life. When it came time to settle down, he chose Paris. Paris was to be his home, except for the years of World War I, until his death.

Nordau's family was very poor. Nordau was so poor his clothes did not fit, his shoes were unmatched hand me downs from other children.

School and later University cost money. Yet Nordau was able to support himself. His father was an unrecognized Hebrew poet of some skill. Nordau must have inherited the gift of the Muse. At 14 he submitted his first article to a major Buda-Pest paper. It was accepted and published. He began writing regularly for *Der Zwischenact* as a theatre and literary critic. Though still a youngster, he was recognized as a literary genius. Eventually Nordau became an editorial writer and correspondent for several newspapers. The public responded to the brilliant analysis of the young man. His writings paid his way through medical school.

Nordau meteorically moved up in the literary world becoming a giant in European literary circles. He continued to keep his Jewish background private for philosophic and professional reasons. He was not a Jew. He was a European. Nordau even kept his Jewish background private to maintain an affair with a notorious anti-Semitic writer and Parlor literati of high Russian royal lineage, Olga Alexeevna Novikova. He denied to himself her obvious anti-Semitic writings, her public declarations of Jewish hate, all the while she defended the Russian State and the pogroms.

His growth as a Zionist led to the final breach with his former lover. They wrote their last cold letters to each other and separated. Novikova died in Paris in 1925. She died alone, impoverished, an obscure relic of a vanished age. She was gone. Anti-Semitism endured.

The direction of Nordau's life was changing.

In 1894, Nordau married Anna Lowenthal, a Protestant, the widow of his best friend, Dr. G. Lowenthal. Dr Lowenthal had been the Jewish Director of Baron de Hirsch's effort to solve the terrible suffering of Russian Jews fleeing the State encouraged pogroms against them during the 1880's. Lowenthal was in charge of Jewish refugee resettlement in Central and South America. Nordau adopted the three children Anna brought into the marriage. Together they had a child of their own, a little girl named Maxa. Nordau acquiesced to Anna's entreaties. Maxa was baptized. Nordau refused to be. He staunchly remained an agnostic finding all organized religion repugnant, including Judaism.

Nordau's life and his career were successfully running along two parallel lines. He was a physician with a particular interest in the emerging new science of psychiatry. Medicine drew him into the world of science; its causative explanations engaged his mind and framed his understandings of human behavior.

Dr. George Miller Beard was an American neurologist. In 1869 he described a degenerative condition of modern society he called Neurasthenia. Neurasthenia exhibited with patient symptoms of fatigue, anxiety, headache, impotence, neuralgia and depression. It was a direct result of the central nervous system's exhaustion. He linked Neurasthenia to modern civilization, urbanization and dehumanization in the industrializing world. Entire communities and even racial groupings displayed the symptoms to varying degrees.

Dr. Nordau, the physician, was well aware of psychiatric literature that described the disproportional incidence of Neurasthenia and Jews. As late as 1906, even the Jewish Encyclopedia authoritatively stated, "*In general it may be summarized that the Jews suffer chiefly from the functional nervous diseases, particularly from hysteria and neurasthenia, and that the organic nervous degenerations, such as locomotor ataxia, progressive paralysis of the insane etc., are uncommon, commensurate with the infrequency of alcoholism and syphilis among them.*"

More than fifty years passed before Neurasthenia was refuted as bad science.

The Jewish Telegraphic July 12, 1927 reported from Berlin:

"No Physical Degeneration of Jews, says Jacob Lestschinsky.

There is no physical degeneration of the Jews, Jacob Lestschinsky, Jewish statistician, declares in a volume on "Problems of Population Among the Jews," to be published shortly by the International Statistical Publishing House "Metron" in Padua.

"We can assert," Mr. Lestschinsky writes, "that all the allegations of a degeneration of the Jews in the Diaspora, which have disturbed Jewish public opinion for half a century, are biologically unfounded. It is true that there are withered branches on the Jewish national tree of life and other branches which are withering. But they are branches far removed from the roots of national life, and have ceased to take fresh sap. The trunk of the tree, however, the Jewries in the East, are still sound and fertile."

The damage was done. It could not be undone.



Protocols of the Elders of Zion

The same year as the First Zionist Congress met in Basel, Pyotr Ivanovich Rachkovsky, head of the Paris office of the Russian Secret Police, created a vicious anti-Semitic book, about Jewish malevolent world control conspiracy, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. *Protocols* was wildly successful, translated into many languages and even republished as true by the American auto magnate Henry Ford in the 1920's.

No matter how many times or how many reputable sources prove that *The Protocols* is an absolute fabrication of hate, it survives in popular literature in the 21st century.

Easily purchased throughout the Arab world and anywhere that the belief of Jewish world control is accepted truth, *The Protocols* continue to sell well. Egyptian Television, 2002, ran a 41 part made for T.V. series during the holy month of Ramadan, based upon *The Protocols*. The series "*Horse Without a Horseman*," interpolates *The Protocols*. The series is a purported history of Egyptian struggle against the world domineering control of the British and the Zionists. The lie of *The Protocols*, told and retold to those who wish to believe it, becomes their truth.



H.S. Chamberlain

Two years after the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* began its enduring release a massively influential pseudo-scientific work appeared. An Englishman and Germanophile, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, published *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*. Chamberlain's work, focused on scientific legitimization of the inferiority of degenerate racial groups such as the Jews. Mixing of inferior races with superior Teutonic peoples degenerated humanity.

"All historically great races and nations have been produced by mixing; but wherever the differences of type is too great to be bridged over, then we have mongrels", he wrote in his book.

Chamberlain's work was extraordinarily success. Literary intellectuals of his day, such as George Bernard Shaw, called *Foundations*, *"a historical masterpiece. Those who failed to read it would be unable to talk intelligently about contemporary sociological and political problems."*

Hitler and Chamberlain were mutual admirers of each other and personal friends.

Chamberlain joined the young Nazi Party in the 1920's. His writings influenced Alfred Rosenberg 's Nazi world view. Rosenberg, Nazism's ideologist, worked closely with Hitler to shape the intellectual justifications for Nazi actions. Rosenberg was hung as a war criminal October 16, 1946.

For Dr. Nordau, the physician, Neurasthenia was a real medical problem for Jews. He was deeply perplexed how to treat the disease, how to stop it, how to reverse it, if it were not too late.

Dr. Nordau observed that something in Jewish life had changed for the worse. He had grown up learning the biblical stories of strong, healthy Jews, the Samsons, the Gideons, the Davids. He

knew 2,000 years earlier when the Jews lived in ancient Israel on their own land controlling their own lives; they were not even remotely like the Neurasthenia victims of his time. What had happened? Nordau was not sure. He did not know how to help them.

Dr. Nordau was highly respected. Max Nordau the literary critic, the writer, was internationally famous. He had an enormous, influential following. Nordau's books were translated into ten languages and some ran to 59 sold out editions. Combining his two talents, medicine and writer/analytical critic into one, Nordau took up the challenge to understand what was happening to Europe and European culture. He wrote his most famous and controversial book, *Entartung..Degeneration*.



End of the Century

Degeneration was published in 1892, the same year he first met a comparatively minor writer for the German press, Theodor Herzl.

Degeneration was a moral social analysis of what has and is going wrong with European life. Nordau examined the decaying of European art, literature, culture and society as gripped in a deathly disease. Nordau saw European intellectualism turned inward, focusing on self centered egos and the newly coined psychiatric term, the ID. The resurgence of anti-Semitism, especially the rise of racial anti-Semitism, was a visible manifestation of European degeneration.

Emancipation of the Jews was supposed to have been a shining culmination of European liberty and human evolution. Jewish emancipation grew from the logical ideals of the French Revolution. It was not an evolved right or a natural human right to give Jews equality with Christians but a right that was reluctantly granted. Not granting Jews emancipation meant denying full rights to Christians. Jews are the canaries in the coal mine.

What did Nordau want?

"I am concerned with moral philosophy, and from that point of view I show that all Morality is rooted in the desire of men to live together peaceably in a society, to have greater security of life

and property, greater possibilities of happiness, and that the same needs must impose the rules of Morality upon states in their relations to one another", he wrote.

Nordau's solution for Europe:

"It is the sacred duty of all healthy and moral men to take part in the work of protecting and saving those who are not already too deeply diseased. Only by each individual doing his duty will it be possible to dam up the invading mental malady. It is not seemly simply to shrug the shoulders and smile contemptuously. While the easy-going console themselves by saying, "No rational being takes this idiocy seriously, "madness and crime are doing their work and poisoning a whole generation..

We in particular, who have made it our life's task to combat antiquated superstition, to spray enlightenment, to demolish historical ruins and remove their rubbish. To defend the freedom of the individual against State oppression and the mechanical routine of the Philistine; The 'freedom' and 'modernity,' the 'progresses' and 'truth,' of these fellows are not ours. We have nothing in common with them. They wish for self-indulgence; we wish for work. They wish to drown consciousness in the unconscious; we wish to strengthen and enrich consciousness. They wish for evasive ideation and babble; we wish for attention, observation, and knowledge. The criterion by which true moderns may be recognized and distinguished from impostors calling themselves moderns may be this: Whoever preaches absence of discipline is an enemy of progress; and whoever worships his 'I; is an enemy to society. Society has for its first premise, neighbourly love and capacity for self-sacrifice; and progress is the effect of an even more rigorous subjugation of the beast in man, of an ever tenser self-restraint, an ever keener sense of duty and responsibility. The emancipation for which we are striving is of the judgment, not of the appetites."

Nordau was cynical that individuals, society, and nations, would stop thinking of themselves jingoistically. He knew it would not be good for the Jews in the coming turmoil of probable war.

The book was a huge success in the 1890's. *Degeneration* is mostly forgotten today. The liberal intellectual elites that Nordau criticized as leading Europe to degeneration are lionized instead.

Theodor Herzl was introduced to Max Nordau in 1892. Nordau was famous. His name was on the lips of thousands of European intellectuals. Herzl was unknown, a minor society column writer and a very modestly successful playwright. It was a step up in the world for Herzl to know Max Nordau.

The two men shared similarities. They were both writers. They both came from the same Austro-Hungarian roots. They were highly assimilated, anti-religious Jews. They were Jews only because they could not shake their branding as Jews. Both struggled with the Jewish question and how to solve it. Herzl toyed with a mass conversion of the Jews at St. Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna. Nordau sought universalism.

Nordau had many affairs including, incredibly one with the notorious anti-Semitic Russian apologist and writer, Novikova. Herzl's marriage degenerated to bitter mutual distain and hatred.

Both men were present in Paris and witnessed the infamous Dreyfus trial and his sentencing to hard labor on Devil's Island for treason against France. Both men were shocked at French reaction to the trial. Nordau knew from the beginning that Dreyfus was being sacrificed as a scape-goat. Herzl at first believed Dreyfus was guilty. Quickly both men were horrified, that in France, the birthplace of European Jewish emancipation, when the intellectual foundation for a better future for European Jewry could collapse so suddenly.

The Dreyfus trial, for both men, was not the often mythologized sudden epiphany that anti-Semitism would never fade away with enlightenment. Herzl's and Nordau's understandings were evolutionary. The Dreyfus trial was the last vicious ripping of the blinders from their eyes. A new path for Jewish life was needed. Two thousand years of Jewish suffering and waiting for the Messiah was more than enough. Human effort was needed.

Herzl had been thinking, working and struggling with what can be done for the Jewish people for many years. His solutions were not new, unique or special.

An American Christian minister, Reverend William Blackstone had proposed the basic principles of political Zionism five years before Herzl. He presented his solution for the Jewish problem, ending Jewish oppression and torment - Jewish political restoration to Palestine with major world governments backing. President Harrison received the famous, internationally publicized Blackstone Memorial. President Harrison's State Department promptly *lost it*. Years later, Justice Louis Brandeis, the leader of the American Zionist Movement, said he believed that Blackstone was the father of Zionism and not Herzl.

Moses Mendelsohn, Leon Pinsker and other Jewish 19th century thinkers inched toward Jewish national return. Religious Jews sought a Messiah to return them to Israel. Some Jews believed Herzl was the Messiah. He was not.

Herzl and Zionist historians said that Herzl had no idea or knowledge that others had advanced his solution to the Jewish problem before him. In Herzl's diary, he confessed that if he had known of the others he might not have done what he was doing. Perhaps that is true, or it could be self-serving. It does not matter.

What was unique about Herzl were not his ideas but that he acted upon them with religious zealotry and incredible success. He put into motion and did what no Jew had ever done before.

Herzl struggled for weeks after the Dreyfus trial, writing non-stop in his small Paris flat. He was isolated, intense, feverish, collating his thoughts and ideas. Three weeks of hard work and the outline of his solution to the Jewish problem was born, his booklet, *Der Judenstadt*, The State of the Jews.

Herzl had put his ideas to paper. Herzl still did not have an audience. Herzl still did not have much legitimacy as a relatively minor columnist for a major Viennese newspaper. Herzl needed legitimization. He needed big, influential people, writers, political and religious leaders to agree with him, to endorse him and his ideas. Herzl turned to Nordau.

Actually, a friend of Herzl was deeply concerned about Herzl's mental stability. Herzl, tragically, was subject to genetically transmitted depressive illness. It was a genetic disease he transmitted to his children and to his last descendent Stephen Norman. Norman committed suicide in Washington, D.C., November, 1946.

Herzl suffered from the same mental instability as did Abraham Lincoln. Herzl's friends were afraid for him. They encouraged him to get counseling, to get mental health aid. They encouraged him to go to a doctor, to go to a psychiatrist for an evaluation. His obsessive behavior was so extreme.

Herzl went to see his friend, Dr. Max Nordau, the famous psychiatrist for an evaluation. Dr. Nordau met with Herzl for three days. Herzl presented his views to Dr. Nordau. He shared his dreams. He shared his solution to the Jewish problem. He shared *Der Judenstadt*.

After three days of intense discussions, first as a patient to doctor, the sessions changed to writer to writer and finally to visionary to writer understandings. After three days Nordau said to Herzl, "*If you are insane, we are insane together. Count on me!*" Nordau became Herzl's first convert, his first apostle of Zionism to assist him as a missionary and as a lieutenant.

Herzl desperately needed Nordau. He needed legitimization. Herzl needed Nordau's name. He needed Nordau's endorsement, influence and reputation for Zionism. Herzl and Zionism's need for legitimization did not end with Nordau. It was only the beginning, the first vital victory.

Nordau saw in Herzl and through Zionism how to save the Jews. Nordau saw that the Jewish twin diseases, Neurasthenia and anti-Semitism, sinking Jews into degeneration and destruction, could be averted. They could be reversed, even cured through Zionism.

Herzl's first convert would be more vital to Zionism than Herzl ever dreamed. He was the critical voice, the fire eater for Zionism that Herzl could never present himself publically to be. It was Nordau's political connections that were vital to the success of Zionism. After World War I, when the treaty of Versailles was being negotiated and the later San Remo treaty was accepted by the League of Nations, it was Nordau's influence that showed. Prime Minister Clemenceau and others had become strong proponents of the Zionist cause because they had known and were converted by Nordau, not Herzl.

Nordau wrote and spoke of Zionism actively. Nordau wrote explaining Zionism in later years.

"He who is convinced that the Jews are a people must necessarily become Zionist, as only the return to their own country can save the everywhere hated, persecuted, and oppressed Jewish nation from physical and intellectual destruction.."

The Zionists know that they had undertaken a work of unexampled difficulty. Never before has the effort been made to transplant, peacefully, in a short space of time, to another soil, several million people from various countries; never has it been attempted to transform millions of physically degenerate proletarians, without trade or profession, into agriculturists.

What gives the Zionists the courage to begin this labor of Hercules is the conviction that they are doing a necessary and useful work, a work of love and civilization, a work of justice and wisdom. They desire to save eight to ten millions of their kindred from intolerable suffering. They desire to free the nations among whom they now vegetate from a presence which is considered disagreeable. They wish to deprive Anti-Semitism - which everywhere lowers public morals and develops the very worst instincts - of its victim. They wish to make unquestionable producers out of Jews at present reproached with being parasites. They desire to fertilize with their sweat and till with their own hands a country that is today a desert, until it is again the flowering garden it has once been. Thus will Zionism in an equal degree serve the unhappy Jew and the Christian peoples, civilization and the economy of the world; and the services which it can render, and wishes to render, are great enough to justify its hope and that Christian world, too, will appreciate them, and support the movement with its active sympathy."

At the first Zionist Congress Nordau described the condition of the Jews and the need for Zionism. At the second Zionist Congress he was credited with coining a concept, two words that would be the medicine for Jewish evolutionary degeneracy. Nordau called for a Muscular Judaism, a Muscular Jewish culture and identity, (Muskeljudentum) to be reborn.

Many sources refer to Nordau's Muscular Judaism as a unique concept, independently born. It was not. Muscular Judaism was a repetition and adoption by Dr. Nordau of the much earlier movement that came from the Christian world, Muscular Christianity.

The term Muscular Christianity first became well known through an article, February 21, 1857 by T.C. Sandars that appeared in the Saturday Review. Thomas Hughes, a popular English novelist, expressed the values and purpose of Muscular Christianity in his widely read novel, Tom Brown at Oxford, 1861.

"The least of the muscular Christians has hold of the old chivalrous and Christian belief, that a man's body is given to him to be trained and brought into subjection, and then used for the protection of the weak, the advancement of all righteous causes, and the subduing of the earth which God has given to the children of men."

Nordau picked up on the concept. He adapted it to Jewish needs and changed the name to Muscular Judaism.

Nordau's speech to the Second Zionist Congress (1898) was a combination of Max Nordau the Zionist and Dr. Nordau the physician. Dr. Nordau prescribed a cure, a regeneration of the Jewish people.

"We Jews possess an exceptional gift for physical activity. It may be that this will appear paradoxical since we have been accustomed for generations to view ourselves in the mirror which our enemies have held p to so, and to discover any number of physical blemishes. It is true that our muscles have been weakened and that our attitudes and postures are not always satisfactory. but when Jews do engage in sport their defects vanish, their postures improve, their muscles become strong and their general health gets better.."

The history of our people relates to the fact that we were once strong physically. but today that is not the case. Others succeeded in degenerating us physically. They had the ghetto Jews of the Middle Ages into sorrowful weaklings, haggard and unable to defend ourselves in the narrow alleyways of the ghetto. Nobody can deny us the necessary physical activity needed to make our bodies healthy again. We will renew our youth in our aging years. We will develop wide chests, strong arms and legs, a brave look. We will be warriors. What is lacking physically, we will develop through exercise. But our recovery to health is not only through the body, but also in the spirit, for as Hebrews attain more achievements in sport, so will our self-confidence improve. Long lives Sport! Hebrew sports clubs go forward and bloom."

Nordau wrote in an article in a Jewish gymnastics magazine, 1900:

"Let's go! Pull your courage together. Do Something! Work for yourself and make a place for your people under the sun! Don't rest until you have convinced the indifferent and downright hostile world that your people have a right to live and enjoy life just like other peoples."

Muscular Christianity spurred the development and transformation of YMCA's and Churches into centers of Christian athleticism and culture. Jews too imitated and learned from the positive effects of the Christian experience. Jewish Community Centers developed complete with gymnasiums and swimming pools. Jewish sport clubs grew and flourished. Jewish sport organizations adapted to the Zionist message. Names such as the Bar Kochba football club and the famous Maccabee Games brought much Jewish pride and resurgence in Jewish physicality. Muscular Judaism and Zionism were natural bonds in forging the new Jew.

Theodor Herzl died suddenly in 1904. He was only 44 years old. His dream of Zionism, his hope for a powerful world power sponsor of Zionism, had failed. He had bankrupted his family, ruined his health, and had little to show for it. One of his last wishes was for Max Nordau to assume the leadership of the Zionist Movement and to head the World Zionist Organization. Nordau declined.

Nordau remained affiliated with the Zionist movement until he became painfully aware that Zionism moved away from Herzl's vision of Political Zionism. Practical Zionists, men and women who purchased, settled and developed Palestine one dunam at a time, instead of the sweeping mass movement Herzl envisioned, had taken control of the future. Herzl did not want a mass resettlement of Palestine until Zionism had the international, unbreakable guarantees of the world powers. He did not want a piece meal approach to Zionism. He believed it would fail.

Conditions on the ground changed. Herzl, just before his death, must have sensed he was losing control of the movement he started. After his death, Herzl was lauded, lionized, iconized and mythologized by even his Zionist enemies. After his death, Herzl's life and message was molded to the needs of the new Zionist leadership. Nordau remained behind continuing to fight for Herzl's old vision of Zionism.

Nordau was becoming an anachronism. He was out of step with the events taking place in Palestine that Herzl had unleashed. The reality of Zionism was evolving. He dropped out of leadership of the Zionist movement not too many years after Herzl's death. Nordau was disgusted

and resentful. He toyed with the idea of creating a new movement based upon Herzlian Zionism but abandoned the idea. He was getting too old. His health was deteriorating.

World War I, Nordau left France to live in Spain. It was not safe for an Austrian to be living in France, no matter how loyal he was to the French situation. After the War, Chaim Weizmann attempted to bring Nordau back into the Zionist fold. He was the grand old Statesman of Zionism. Nordau declined.

Nordau did make one last effort for the Jews after the war. Prescient as ever, almost prophetic in his world view and understanding of European life and culture, Nordau sensed imminent danger for the Jewish people. He called for, he demanded, he cajoled, he wrote, he begged that at a minimum 600,000 Jews must be transferred to Palestine immediately. Their lives were in danger. Nordau was ignored by the Zionist movement.

Nordau had returned to Paris, his health not particularly good. He died in 1923 and was buried in Paris. Three years later his remains were exhumed. His body was reburied in a mausoleum in the back of Tel Aviv's Trumpeldor Cemetery. Few people know it is there or visit his resting place.

Herzl wrote in his diary that Nordau did not fully understand the Zionist message until after his speech at the Second Zionist Congress. Herzl was very wrong. Nordau understood the meaning, the importance of Zionism better than Herzl. Dr. Nordau saw the degenerative effects of anti-Semitism on Jewish life. He did not know what to do. Dr. Nordau diagnosed the disease but did not have the tools to fix the problem.

Herzl described his grand scheme to solve the Jewish Problem. Nordau accepted the goals of Political Zionism. But, it was Dr. Nordau who understood the disease on an individual, on a human and not just a societal basis. It was Dr. Nordau who put the Jewish Problem in past, present and future context. It was Nordau the Zionist and Nordau the physician who knew that Zionism was the answer to save countless Jewish lives and souls. He knew it was the path from Jewish degeneration to Jewish regeneration.

Nordau never knew how right he was. The Holocaust began sixteen short years after his death.

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