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Herzl's original handwritten manuscript of Altneuland

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Herzl, Theodor, 1860-1904.

BOOK

THREE

[Altneuland. English]

The

Prosperous Land

Old new land = (Altneuland) /Theodor Herzl; translated from German by Lotta Levensohn: with a new introduction by Jacques Kornberg.

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PREFACE

A variety of motives pushed Herzl to write Old-New Land. Utopians novels were a popular genre in the late nineteenth century, and Herzl hoped to gain converts to Zionism. But in addition, pouring his thoughts and feelings into a novel was creative relief for Herzl the bailed playwright, convinced he had given up a prominent career in German letters by devoting himself to the Jewish cause. Finally, the novel was an affair between Herzl and his conscience, a refuge of utter honesty from the compromises of day-to-day Zionist politics.

In the nineteenth century, images of the ideal society conveyed through novels had spurred influential political movements. Etienne Caber's *Voyage en Jemie* (1840) had led to a

well-organized political movement among French artisans. As

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the century advanced, the appeal of the utopian novel only increased. Samuel Butler's *Erewhon* (1872) was followed by Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward, 2000-1887* (1888), the Austrian Theodor Hertzka's *Freiland: A Social Image of the Future* (*Freiland: Ein soziales Zukunftsbild*) (1890) and William

Morris' News from Nowhere (1890). Freeland went through ten editions in five years and gave rise to Freeland associations in Germany and Austria which sought to purchase land in Africa to realize the ideal society. Herzl wished for not equal but greater success.'

Still, Herzl's choice of the genre needs more explanation, for he had previously considered the utopian novel an inappropriate literary expression for a statesman and man of action. When

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VI PREFACE

PREFACE Vil

he first read Edward Bellamy's Looking Backward, Herzl had scoffed at it as an "ideal fancy" The Utopian genre functioned day-to-day Zionist coalition politics and recklessly set out on an best as a critique of society; the more it distanced itself from the intransigent assertion of his own vision of Zionism. If his real world, the "more amusing" it was. But for Herzl Zionism political hopes were in disarray, at least he would retain the integrity of his convictions. In the end Herzl payed a price for was not an "ingenious fantasy," that is to say "a novel." He conhis challenge, for the publication of Old-New Land unleashed a cluded in 1895 that a report on "The Condition of the Jews," bitter debate in the Zionist press. The debate was launched by would best evoke the immediacy and realism that suited his Ahad Ha-Am's critique of Old-New Land in Ha-Shilo'ah in political goals.' Later, when writing Old-New Land Herzl saw his December, 1902, and soon engaged prominent Zionists in novel no differently. In a draft of a letter to Lord Rothschild bitter controversy. The vehement tone of the debate threataccompanying a copy of the book, Herzl put his misgivings ened to rupture the alliance between East European and starkly: "I realize all the dangers it holds for me, namely that Western Jewry and destroy the universality of the Zionist they will once more revile me for being a 'dreamer of dreams.' movement. All sides retreated from the brink, but the publica- [in English in the original) But I had to chose this entertaining tion of Old-New Land ended up strengthening the hand of form because I want it to be read." 4

Herzl's Zionist opposition.<sup>6</sup>

However, his foray into ideal fantasy offered Herzl something more than a wide readership. Behind the protective shield

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of the fictional form, less binding than speeches and resolu- To understand why Herzl's novel provoked such opposition, tions, or at least easier to disclaim or qualify, Herzl expressed its ideological tendency must be understood. In composing a

his own vision of Zionism in its purest, most uncompromising utopian novel, Herzl was engaged in nationalist mobilization form. The novel was something removed from the sphere of through myth-making. Nineteenth century utopias were day-to-day political tactics, a creative personal catharsis amidst based on the premise that for the first time in human history his political difficulties. On June 3, 1900, Herzl wrote in his science, technology and industry would enable humanity to diary: "Shall we hear a categorical no from Yilduz [the Sultan's fully master its natural and social environment. These utopias palace)? If this came, I would resume work on my novel were powerful political instruments, promising to end once Altneuland. For then our plan will be only for the future and a and for all age-old oppression and injustice, and to gratify agenovel." On March 4, 1901 he linked Old-New land to his polit- old longings for satisfying labor and self-fulfillment. ical reversals and faltering time-table. "I am now industriously Old-New Land was not a blueprint for the settlement working on Altneuland. My hopes for practical success have of Palestine. With its free farmers and agricultural co-operanow disintegrated. My life in no novel now. So the novel is my tives, Old-New Land bears a superficial resemblance to the life." 5

schemes of Franz Oppenheimer, an influential German-Jew- Anticipated political failure was bitter, but also liberating. ish economist whom Herzl brought into the Zionist move- Reacting to the prospect, Herzl abandoned the constraints of ment in 1901. In his proposals for Jewish settlement, spelled OLD-NEW LAND HAIFA, 1923

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kind. We no longer have customers for it. No one comes captain laughed\_ heartily. "Where do you come from, sir? here who wants good cigars-there are only sailors who Have you never seen a newspaper or a time table?" "I shouldn't ask for chewing tobacco and cheap cigarettes." "I shouldn't say never, but several years have passed ... We know Palestine as "How is that possible?" asked Kingscourt. "Where are a forsaken country." "A forsaken all the tourists on their way to India and Australia and "A forsaken country ... good! If you choose to call it China?" that, I don't mind. Only I must say you're spoiled." "Oh, there have been none here for many years. They "Listen to me, captain," cried Kingscourt. "We'd like now travel by the other route." to offer you some good wine .... We're a pair of damned "Another route?" cried Friedrich. "What other route? ignorant wretches.

We've thought of nothing but our own  
 Not the Cape of Good Hope?" pleasure for  
 twenty years. Now, then, what's happened to  
 The dealer was annoyed. "You choose to laugh at me, that old Palestine?"  
 sir. Every child knows that people no longer travel to Asia "You could get  
 to Palestine in less time than it would  
 via the Suez Canal!" take to tell you  
 about it. Why not make a slight detour if  
 Kingscourt and Friedrich looked at each other in amaze- you've a couple of  
 days to spare? If you wish to leave your  
 ment. "Of course, every child knows it," shouted Kings- yacht, you'll  
 find fast boats to all the European and Americourt, "but you must not think us  
 ignorant if we've not can ports at Haifa and Jaffa."  
 heard of this damned new canal!" "No, we don't  
 leave our yacht. But we could make the  
 "Just get out, will you!" The Greek pounded furiously detour, Fritze.  
 What do you say? Do you want to take anon his counter. "First you tease me  
 about expensive cigars, other look at the land of your blessed ancestors?"  
 and then you make these stupid jokes. Get out!" "Palestine  
 attracts me as little as Europe. It's all one to  
 Kingscourt wanted to reach across the counter to whack me."  
 They headed for Haifa. The coast of Palestine rose on  
 the Greek over the head. But Friedrich drew the old hotthe horizon on a spring  
 morning following one of the mild,  
 spur away. "Kingscourt, big things that we don't know  
 soft nights common in the eastern MPciiterranean . They  
 about have happenc.i wliiic -we've been away."  
 stood together on the bridge of the yacht, and stared ste:::d  
 á~1 bdicVt SU myself, Devil take me! Well, 'we must find  
 ily through their telescopes for ten whole minutes, looking  
 out about it at once!"  
 always in the same direction.  
 Returning to the harbor, they learned from the captain  
 "I could swear that that was the Bay of Acco over there,"  
 of a German trading vessel that traffic between Europe and remarked  
 Friedrich.  
 Asia had taken a new route-via Palestine. "I could also  
 swear to the contrary," asserted Kingscourt.  
 "What?" asked Friedrich. "Are there harbors and rail- "I still have a  
 picture of that Bay in my mind's eye. It was  
 ways in Palestine?"  
 empty and deserted twenty years ago. Still, that's the  
 "Are there harbors and railways in Palestine?" The Carmd on our  
 right, and to our left is the town of Acco."

"How changed it all is!" cried Friedrich. "There's been Kingscourt and Friedrich were spellbound. Their a miracle here." á

twenty-year-old map showed no such port, and here it was

As they approached the harbor they made out the details as if conjured up by magic. Evidently the world had not with the help of their excellent lenses. stood

still in their absence.

Great ships, such as were already known at the end of They

left the yacht and entered a landing boat, in which the nineteenth century, lay anchored in the roadstead between Acco and the foot of the Carmel. Behind this fleet they were rowed through the swarming ships to the quay. they

tween Acco and the foot of the Carmel. Behind this fleet exchanged impressions in abrupt, broken phrases. They

they discerned the noble curve of the Bay. At its northern

The boat drew in at the stone steps of the dam. As they end, the gray fortress walls, heavy cupolas and slender up the steps, they noticed a young man who was came

minarets of Acco were outlined in their beautiful ancient to go down to an electric launch that waited for him. about

Oriental architecture against the morning skies. Nothing He,

in turn, catching sight of them, stopped short and

had changed much in that skyline. To the south, however, stared at Friedrich with wide-open eyes. He seemed thunbelow the ancient, much-ried city of Haifa on the curve derstruck.

of the shore, splendid things had grown up. Thousands of

The old man noticed his behavior and growled, "What white villas gleamed out of luxuriant green gardens. All does

this fellow want? Hasn't he ever seen two civilized the way from Acco to Mount Carmel stretched what people before?"

seemed to be one great park. 1 The mountain itself, also,

"That can hardly be the case," smiled Friedrich. "The was crowned with beautiful structures. Since they were ap- people on this quay seem more civilized than we do. It's

proaching from the south, the promontory at first obscured likely that we look old-fashioned to him. Just look more

their full view of the city and the harbor. When, at last, up at

that cosmopolitan traffic in the streets. And all the

the landscape was revealed to them in its entirety, Kings- well-dressed people! Seems to me our clothes are a bit out court's "Devils!" became legion. of

date."

A magnificent city had been built beside the sapphire- They

instructed their boatman to wait for them at the

-á blue Mediterra.m~an.. \_The rna.e-nificent stone dams showed landing pl:>re, .aPd ascended "":'"'.' st0!!.' steps leading up

the harbor 2 for what it was; it is the 5th largest and most important  
to the high-lying street where they had seen the traffic:  
port in the eastern Mediterranean. Craft of every shape and size  
the water's edge. They thought no more of the and size, flying the  
flags of all the nations, lay sheltered stranger who had stared at  
them so fixedly. However, he there.

followed them and tried to overhear what language they  
1 Beautiful residential suburbs on the summit and slopes of Mount Carmel were  
speaking. Soon he had caught up with them; and the Carmel verify  
Herzl's forecast of "one great park." The lower town has next  
instant he strode a step in front of them and faced been developed  
as an important commercial center.

2 Built by the British Mandatory Administration in 1934 and enlarged  
about.

by the State of Israel, Haifa is the country's main port and also one of  
"Sir!" stormed Kingscourt. "What is it you want with the great  
ports of the Eastern Mediterranean. us?"

— Old New Land (Used by permission of the curator)