

## Moses Hess

(On the 100th Anniversary of his Death)

BY SHALOM BEN CHORIN

April 6, 1975 will mark the hundredth anniversary of the death of Moses Hess in Paris at the age of 63. Interment took place in Cologne, but some ten years ago his remains were transferred to Israel whose revival by the restoration of Jewish statehood Moses Hess had envisioned.

Moses Hess was born in 1812, the son of a Jewish industrialist. His first major work "The Sacred History of Mankind," published in 1837, was permeated with a Utopian, messianic socialism in which no special role is as yet allotted to the Jewish people. From 1841 Hess came under the spell of Karl Marx. With some friends he founded the "Rheinische Zeitung" and became its editor, and later its Paris correspondent. It was in this paper that his long theoretical articles which were later to be collected and edited under the name "Socialist Essays," appeared. However, it did not take long before tension developed between Hess on the one hand and Marx and Engels on the other, since Hess who was a religious socialist could not subscribe to the purely materialistic concept of Communism and this attitude gained him the nickname of "Communist Rabbi."

In 1862 Hess brought out in Leipzig his book "Rome and Jerusalem," which established his eminent place in Zionist History. The book lacks systematic order and is somewhat confused, taking the form of a collection of letters and notes, but the lack of system is more than outweighed by his intensity of feeling and fervor of conviction.

In "Rome and Jerusalem" Hess develops the idea of a return of the Jewish people to its historic homeland. He does not see this return only from a religious, Socialist and Messianic angle, but also emphasizes the fact that Palestine forms a bridge between Asia and Europe being situated at the crossroads to India and therefore offering adequate political and economic opportunities to the Jewish people.

Simultaneously with the return of the first settlers, a spiritual regeneration will take place and in this connection Hess had in mind the establishment of a new Sanhedrin which would reform the ancient laws of Judaism in the spirit of modern times. The Jewish people has everything, said Hess, workers and intellectuals, capital and energy; it is lacking in but one thing, soil of its own, "La Terre," as he put it in his French writings.

On May 2, 1901, Herzl noted in his diary: Tuesday I went by train to Aussee, rented a flat for the summer and returned yesterday. I passed the 19 hours of the journey there and back in reading "Rome and Jerusalem" by Moses Hess. I had started it for the first time in Jerusalem in 1898, but in the stress and strain of these years I never managed to read it to the end. I am filled with enthusiasm and admiration. What a sublime, noble spirit! Everything that we are attempting can be found in this book.

Only his Hegelian terminology is awkward. The spirit of Spinoza, the Jewish and national component are magnificent. Since Spinoza the Jews have not produced a greater spirit than this faded and forgotten Moses Hess."

It was thanks to Max Bodenheimer, herald of Zionism and faithful collaborator of Herzl's, that "Rome and Jerusalem" was rescued from oblivion.

In 1950, 75 years after Moses Hess' death, Martin Buber wrote about him: "Hess was the first to explain comprehensively and in modern language the deep connection between the People and the Land of Israel and to convey the message and the challenge resulting from it for our times. He was a beginner rather than a precursor, but a beginner in thought and word who died before the beginning of the realization. Today, seventy-five years after his death, the Zionist Movement has not yet fully arrived at Moses Hess."

This is still true today, 25 years after his rehabilitation by Buber. We have grown accustomed to seeing Hess rather schematically as the precursor of Herzl or even as one of Herzl's forerunners. This view is tenable only if one looks at the history of concrete events but much less so if the figure and work of Hess are viewed from the angle of the history of ideas. He was indeed a deeper thinker than Herzl; he was more far-sighted, but he lacked in organizational ability.

His truly prophetic book "Rome and Jerusalem" was a voice calling in the wilderness without echo or response. However, there is something like the permanency of the spirit. Just as nothing gets lost in the world of matter, the spirit is indestructible and there is a renewal and revival of original and fertile ideas. Not only "Rome and Jerusalem" but also a selection from Hess' Zionist articles and essays on Socialism were published in Hebrew by the "Zionist Library" of the Zionist Executive's Organization Department in 1954 and 1956, and on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of his birth, an anthology of Hess' writings appeared in his "home town" of Cologne in 1962.

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## Isaiah Wall

By Rabbi Samuel Silver

Should the name of the UN be changed to United Nazis?

The warm reception given to that hater, Arafat, would indicate that is what the UN should be called.

Many are convinced that the representatives are really misrepresentatives, for it is hard to believe that the people of Europe and the people of Africa (which got so much help from Israel) are as hostile to Israel and as obsequious to the oily Arab leaders as the delegates of the UN seem to be.

Two ironies, among others, characterize the UN. One is that the organization itself is the fruition of the dream of the prophets of Israel. Here we have the beneficiaries of the vision of the seers of Israel turning against the modern descendants of those prophets.

The other irony is that the wall near the UN known as the Isaiah Wall doesn't even contain the name of Isaiah.

On the wall we read the statement which is the germ of the UN: the vision of a time when swords will be turned into plowshares and nations will no longer learn war.

But the UN people begrudged the Jews credit for the statement. It's anonymous!

For that reason we must jail a wonderful man named Sam Brown. Mr. Brown, once on the staff of the American Jewish Congress, raised a hue and a cry over the absence of the name Isaiah on the Isaiah Wall.

Like the man who inspired him, Stephen Wise, who founded the Congress, Mr. Brown mobilized others to protest the glaring omission.

Many people rallied to the Brown project. And now we learn that at long last the author's name will be affixed to the wall along with the noble utterance.

Now laboring in Miami, Florida, with one of the agencies seeking justice for the Jews of Russia, Mr. Brown has cause to rejoice. And we have cause to salute Mr. Brown who has struck a blow for honesty, where it is badly needed these days, in the UN.

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