

**Rebirth of the Maccabean:**

*The Early Zionist Movement and the Uganda Controversy, 1903-1907*

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## **Thesis**

The 1903 British proposal for a Jewish colony in its East African Protectorate permanently altered the direction of the early Zionist movement. While this offer gave the Zionists a unique opportunity to establish a practical and political Jewish homeland, it seems clear that the East African Proposal was doomed to failure from both the Zionist and British perspectives. Emerging conflicts within the Zionist movement, which were based on differences in ideology and pressured by rising anti-Semitism, led to divisions among the Jews that were too severe to allow for a unified consensus behind the Proposal. In addition, the initial reasons for the British offering of land in East Africa were altered by the changing political scene which made a Jewish settlement in the Protectorate less favorable to their interests. The replacement of personnel in British government as well as concerns over the continued availability of land in East Africa seems to suggest that full support for the Jewish African colony would not have existed had the project actually come underway.

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*By the rivers of Babylon we sat down and wept  
When we remembered Zion.  
There on the willows we hung our harps.  
Our captors asked us for songs,  
Our tormentors demanded songs of joy;  
They said "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!"  
But how can we sing the songs of the Lord  
While in a foreign land?  
If I forget you Jerusalem,  
May my right hand lose its cunning.  
May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth  
If I do not remember you,  
If I do not consider Jerusalem my highest joy.*

*Psalm 137 vv. 1-6*

## **Introduction**

While the Zionist movement is usually associated with the establishment of a homeland in Palestine, past Zionists have also considered a number of interesting land settlements in Australia, Argentina and even one in Grand Island, NY. While all of these considerations had their own importance for the Zionist movement, one of the most significant proposals is that of the 1903 offer of the East African Protectorate by British Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain. Known as the Uganda Controversy, this proposal of land, first vocalized by Zionist leader Theodor Herzl on August 23, 1903 at the 6<sup>th</sup> Zionist General Council in Basle, Switzerland, served as a major turning point in the early Zionist movement.

The late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century Zionist movement was strongly affected by significant changes in the political landscape of Western Europe as the rise of political liberalism helped spark new forms of Jewish emancipation. This Jewish emancipation, which was seen as the beginning of Jewish acceptance into modern society, allowed Jews to assimilate into society through educational and social opportunities that were originally denied them. The hope for Jewish peace which this assimilation fostered, however, turned sour with the rising anti-Semitism spreading throughout Europe. This involved both the age old religious and cultural hostility found in Eastern Europe as well as a new Western European anti-Semitism based on Social Darwinist racism and a reactionary backlash against Jewish emancipation.

For Western Jews, such as Zionist leader Theodor Herzl, anti-Semitic developments such as the 1894 Dreyfus Affair and the 1880s pogroms in Eastern Europe exposed the fact that Jews had never been accepted into the non-Jewish communities. The Zionist movement gained greater urgency as both Western and Eastern Jews began to express the desire of finding a homeland that would provide safety and respite from this anti-Semitism. To realize this

homeland, however, Zionists faced excessive challenges in uniting a people that had, for centuries, lived throughout the world and had developed a multitude of customs, beliefs, and languages that resisted simple unification.<sup>1</sup>

As leader of the Zionists, Herzl attempted to unify the Jews under the Western European ideals of secular political liberalism and nationalism, values which he had learned as a youth in Vienna, Austria. Herzl expressed these ideals, in his famous 1894 pamphlet, *The Jewish State*, in which he outlined his plans for a Jewish homeland that could claim political autonomy on equal footing with the Christian states of the world. The publication of *The Jewish State* helped Herzl gain important prominence which he used to found a Zionist Congress of which he became President. Pressuring Herzl to found a homeland in due time was what he termed the *Judennot* or *Jewish flight*, which referred to the mass migration of Eastern European Jews towards the West to escape to the violent pogroms. Herzl felt that the volume and poverty of these immigrants would further exacerbate the increasing anti-Semitic hostility in Western Europe and that these wandering Jews needed a homeland to call their own. Herzl was willing to consider any practical refuge rather than focus only on the traditional goal of Palestine.

While Herzl's practical plan for the Jewish state gathered many followers, Herzl still encountered a significant opposition group within the Zionist movement. The oppositionists, who were often led by traditional Zionists from Russia and Eastern Europe, rejected Herzl's political approach and theories about Jewish emancipation. As President of the Zionist Congress, Herzl had demanded that no Zionist settlements take place before the granting of political sovereignty. Many oppositionists, however, believed that the homeland could only be established gradually by sending out settlers to ready the land for the people. In addition, other

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<sup>1</sup> David Vital, "The Afflictions of the Jews and the Afflictions of Zionism: The Meaning and Consequences of the 'Uganda Controversy.'" *Essential Papers on Zionism*. Eds. Jehuda Reinharz and Anita Shapira. (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 128.

Zionists disagreed ideologically with Herzl's political emphasis and felt that the essence of the homeland should be grounded in the historical, cultural, and traditional ties to the past. It is for these reasons they felt that Palestine was the only possible option for a Jewish homeland.

Herzl's seeming neglect of these important connections angered the opposition.

The resentment caused by these internal conflicts was further aggravated by the fact that Herzl failed to establish several of his promised colonies including Palestine and El Arish (an Egyptian city along the coast of the Sinai Peninsula). The continued disappointments, along with Herzl's inflexibly stubborn leadership, wasted his followers' patience. His sudden announcement of the East African proposal at the 6<sup>th</sup> Zionist General Meeting on August 23, 1903 left the entire movement reeling. Russian Jews, in particular, who saw Palestine as their only option from government sponsored violence, felt betrayed. Critics in both Britain and East Africa raised concerns about Jewish settlement in the East African Protectorate. Adding to this dissent were the practical difficulties which arose as the Zionists tried to finalize details concerning this colonization with Britain. Following Herzl's untimely death a year later, the movement eventually split with the Russian Jews heading a movement for Palestine and Herzl's follower, Israel Zangwill, leading the Jewish Territorial Organization (ITO) for settlement in East Africa.

While the failure of the East Africa Proposal managed to expose many of the weaknesses of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Zionist movement, it also revealed much of the character of Great Britain. Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain's reputation as a liberal politician and his friendship with several powerful British Jews suggested his natural inclination to aiding the persecuted Jews of Eastern Europe. Yet Britain at this time was also suffering from economic and labor pressures caused by the flood of the Jewish immigrants fleeing the pogroms. In 1904,

Britain's Parliament began considering a harsh Alien Act, which some labeled as anti-Semitic, that was intended to limit the unfavorable developments caused by Jewish emigration from Eastern Europe. For Chamberlain, the East African Proposal became part of a more diplomatic approach to achieving the same goals as the Alien Act. By diverting the flow of Jewish immigrants to East Africa instead of Britain, he hoped to alleviate British worries over England's economic and social conditions.

Adding to the possible easing of England's immigration problems, Chamberlain's interest in the Zionist cause also stemmed from his concerns over the development of the East African Protectorate. As Colonial Secretary, Chamberlain had encouraged Britain to invest much time, energy and money in the colony. This included over £5 million for the Uganda Railroad, which Britain hoped would spread commerce in the Protectorate while also helping to end the slave trade in Africa. The only way to make these investments worthwhile, however, was through immigration and cultivation of the land. An offering of a homeland to the Jews, then, would help solve some of these development problems. All these motives suggest a complicated mixture of genuine concern and British political ambition as reasons for Chamberlain's advancement of the East African scheme.

Negotiations for the East African proposal continued for over two years before the Seventh Zionist Congress in 1905 officially rejected the offer based on the results of a 1904 investigatory expedition of the land. For these two years Britain held to its original promises to the Zionist movement, but its interest in helping establish a Jewish homeland in East Africa had significantly waned. In 1905, the government had successfully passed a second version of the Alien Act which helped address the issue of excessive immigration to England while avoiding much of the anti-Semitic claims related to the 1904 version. In addition, settlers from Britain

and South Africa were rapidly claiming land grants in the East Africa and developing the Protectorate into a profitable British colony. The fact that the British still felt obligated to reserve land for alien Jews led to rising tensions among white settlers in East Africa. The government was also second guessing the extent of the autonomy which had been originally promised to the Jewish settlers as well as the amount of expenditures necessary for supporting and founding such a settlement. News of the official rejection of the Seventh Zionist Congress came as a welcome relief. While members of the ITO continued to pursue the East African proposal, Britain never allowed itself to be cornered into making promises about East Africa that would create an obligation to the Zionist movement.

Historiography on the Uganda Controversy has been surprisingly scarce since in-depth analysis of the early Zionist movement is often passed in favor of the more relevant issues involving Arab-Israeli relations. The goal of this paper, however, is to remain focused on the why this particular offering of the East African Protectorate failed to succeed. As a result, this paper will concentrate on both the Zionist and British perspectives of the East African proposal. Research for this paper includes the minutes and communications of the Zionists before and during the Sixth Zionist General Meeting, British Parliamentary Debates, as well as writings of Theodor Herzl and Israel Zangwill. Along with these primary resources are a variety of secondary sources on the history of the East African proposal, British policy on the Jews, the biography of Joseph Chamberlain, and the life and intellectual thought of Herzl. In these ways, this paper will be primarily a traditional political narrative of the East African Proposal.

## **19<sup>th</sup> Century Western Europe**

The early political Zionist movement was significantly affected by the explosion of ideas in nineteenth century Western Europe. At this time, traditional political and social structures were being challenged by the emergence of new concepts such as political liberalism and nationalism. In the 1860s, this political experimentation was led by Prime Minister Otto von Bismarck of Prussia who used war and politics to unite the German states. Bismarck viewed the Catholic Church as a dangerous rival to this nationalist unification and, thus, adopted an anti-Catholic stance within the German states. In 1867, he defeated the Austrians in the Austro-Prussian War in order to keep the mostly Catholic state out of the Protestant dominated Germans.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, many religiously intolerant laws were repealed as civil marriages were legalized, schools were no longer run by churches, and religion classes were only made voluntary. The state gained authoritative control over placement of clergy. Much of the impetus for Germany's casting off of its religious laws came from its embrace of political liberalism, which emphasized civil liberties but remained exclusionary to certain groups.<sup>3</sup> Like the Germans, Austria also embraced this liberal spirit. Following the defeat of the Austro-Prussian War in 1867, the Conservatives were removed from office and their opposition, the National Liberal Party, gained control of the government. Under the new constitution which the Liberals created, Austria not only formed an alliance with Hungary, thus, creating the Austro-Hungary Empire, but it also instituted similar forms of German liberalism.

The emergence of political liberalism in Austria and Germany, and eventually throughout Western Europe, proved to be a significant event in Jewish consciousness. While political liberalism was elitist—the Austrians excluded women, common workers and Slavs—the liberals

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<sup>2</sup> R.R. Palmer and Joel Colton, *A History of the Modern World*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965), 522.

<sup>3</sup> Jacques Kornberg, *Theodor Herzl: From Assimilation to Zionism* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993), 13-14.

extended freedom to Jews by removing many of the religiously intolerant laws which had marginalized the Jews. There were no longer quotas on the number of Jews allowed in universities and Jews were also allowed to move into the cities as well as into more professions. Its effects offered a tantalizing opportunity of emancipation for the oppressed peoples of Europe, perhaps not more so than the Western Jews. With the dawn of a new form of western political freedom, hope abounded that this new attitude of religious toleration was a sign that Jews and other persecuted groups would be accepted into Western society. Jews eagerly sought assimilation within their communities.

Yet while this political liberalism offered new hope for the Jews, it was based in elitist German Emancipationist thought. One important originator of the Emancipationist thought included the German, Christian Wilhelm Dohm, who wrote a 1781 book entitled *Concerning the Amelioration of the Civil Status of the Jews*. In his book, Dohm felt that common Jewish vices, often associated with money and usury, could only be solved through assimilation into modern culture. This was because these Jewish faults arose from centuries of Christian persecution and was a natural result of being pushed to the edges of society. Dohm felt that as a result of this marginalization, the Jews lost their identity with a particular state and all sense of their civic duties. Thus, for him, the solution to the Jewish problem involved the abandonment of Jewish identity for the purpose of assimilating into Western political society.<sup>4</sup>

Another important German writer to embrace German Emancipationist thought was Gustav Freytag, who wrote the 1855 novel *Debit and Credit*. In his novel, Freytag propounded that not only had Christianity forced Jews into disagreeable vices but that it also affected modern Judaism itself by turning it into a legalist, uninspired religion. For Freytag, these faults prevented not only Jews but even Judaism itself from integrating into modern society. In his

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 16-17.

novel, then, Freytag's main Jewish protagonist only achieves freedom by abandoning his stereotypical Jewish traits and taking up the German virtues of secular society. Both these German Emancipationist works—Dohm's *Concerning the Amelioration of the Civil Status of the Jews* and Freytag's *Debit and Credit*—suggested the important theme that Jews were not inherently evil, but rather were the victims of Christian persecution. However, they also suggested that the only way for Jews to change was by abandoning their “unacceptable” traits and assimilating into modern, secular society.<sup>5</sup>

### **Herzl's Pre-Zionist Years**

It was on this stage of intellectual exploration and experimentation that Theodor Herzl, the dynamic leader of the nineteenth century Zionist movement, developed his theories on Judaism and the Jewish state. Born in Budapest, Hungary on May 2, 1860, Theodor Herzl moved to Vienna, Austria with his parents at the age of seventeen after the death of his elder sister. Herzl was significantly affected by the developments in Western Europe, especially in Austria and Germany. For Herzl, these secular forms of thinking were particularly impressive since, by the age of eighteen, he no longer practiced Judaism. Although his family had followed all the prescribed Jewish rituals, they had never been particularly religious and Herzl founded his beliefs, instead, in the liberal political thinking of Western Europe.<sup>6</sup>

Adhering to German Emancipationist thought, Herzl agreed that the Jews had significant faults, which his follower, Israel Zangwill, would later term the “Marrano malady.”<sup>7</sup> As the

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 19-20.

<sup>6</sup> Amos Elon, *Herzl* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1975), 22.

<sup>7</sup> Israel Zangwill, *The East African Question: Zionism and England's Offer* (Broadway, NY: The Maccabean Publishing Company, 1904?), 33; Marrano was originally a Spanish term meaning “pig” given to Spanish Jews who converted to Christianity during the 15<sup>th</sup> century Inquisition in order to escape persecution. Some

Emancipationists had done before, Herzl traced these faults to Christian persecution: “We Jews have maintained ourselves, even if through no fault of our own, as a foreign body among the various nations. In the ghetto we have taken on a number of anti-social qualities. Our character has been corrupted by oppression.”<sup>8</sup> For Herzl, modern Jews were mere shadows in society who not only bowed to their situation but played along with their own demise. Most importantly, however, Jews remained absent from the political world. As Zangwill writes, “The Jew’s politics for many ages may be summed up as ‘Lie low and say nothing.’ But lying low, though it is a way of escaping hostile attention, is also a way of being walked over.”<sup>9</sup> Absence from the political world meant a continued corruption of Judaism and continued persecution. Rather, like the protagonist in Freytag’s novel, Herzl felt that the only way to overcome these Jewish vices was through assimilation into Western society and adherence to political philosophy.

Herzl put these beliefs in practice after entering the University of Vienna in 1880 when he joined a German nationalist, anti-Catholic student group known as *Albia*.<sup>10</sup> This membership allowed him to indulge in political, nationalistic rhetoric that he would later apply to his own understanding of the Zionist state. As part of the initiation into the group, Herzl had to fight a duel—an important test for himself since proving his honor also meant that he had overcome the

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Christians gave these Jews the nickname of “marrano” since they believed their conversions were insincere and done only to avoid punishment. Zangwill also uses this term derisively but in a broader sense of accusing Jews for their cowardly and weak development of character which, he feels, prevents them from expressing civic virtues.

<sup>8</sup> Theodor Herzl, *The Complete Diaries of Theodor Herzl*, vol. 1, ed. Raphael Patai and trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Herzl Press and Thomas Yoseloff, Ltd., 1960), 9.

<sup>9</sup> Zangwill, *The East African Question*, 7.

<sup>10</sup> *Albia*’s anti-Catholic slant was the result of its nationalist policy which desired the unification of the mostly Catholic Austria to the Protestant-based Germany. Herzl was not so much interested in *Albia* for its anti-Catholicism as much as with the possibility it offered Jews of achieving a more complete assimilation, which he believed would be better achieved under Protestant German rule than the more anti-Semitic Catholics of Austria. Later, when the annexation of Austria to Germany seemed less likely, Herzl was to advocate a mass baptism of Jews in Catholicism. This plan for baptism did not indicate changes in Herzl’s philosophy but rather highlights what he deemed most important—Jewish assimilation to society at any cost. The means did not matter as much as the end.

Jewish fault of cowardice. Even after Herzl left *Albia* in 1883 due to a conflict with its officers, it was evident that his time in *Albia* formed a lasting impression on his political thinking.<sup>11</sup>

Later, as a Zionist, when requesting funds for the Jewish state, Herzl would sign the requests with *Albia*'s old motto: "Honor, Freedom, Fatherland"—a sign of his continued adherence to German virtues as models for the new Jewish homeland.<sup>12</sup>

In 1884, Herzl graduated from the University of Vienna with a law degree and was an intern for a few years before turning towards work as a playwright. It seems clear that Herzl, whose father was involved in banking, was continuing his assimilationist plan by trying to achieve success in the upper, elitist classes of Austrian society and, by doing so, shedding the stereotype of Jews and money. Success as a playwright was one of the easiest ways to rise in the Austrian social structure. Some of his works, including the 1894 *The New Ghetto*, contained several important fictional, but semi-biographical, stories of Jews attempting to rise above Jewish vices through assimilation. Herzl also made attempts to rise above stereotypical Jewish vices by practicing, what he would later term, Jewish "self-contempt." In his young career, Herzl was known to differentiate his class of Jews, the Sephardic Jews from Spain, from the Ashkenazi, those mostly from Eastern Europe, whom Herzl considered caricatures of the worst Jewish vices. Arriving as new immigrants from Eastern Europe, they stood out as aliens unfamiliar with the languages and culture of the West—they were even more noticeable by, what

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<sup>11</sup> The origin and nature of this conflict are somewhat difficult to decipher. Some biographers of Herzl argue that the turning point occurred at a Richard Wagner memorial in March 1883 where German nationalism took center stage. At one point, a member of *Albia*, Hermann Bahr, spoke treasonously of Austro-Germany as awaiting deliverance from Germany. The day after Herzl read about the memorial in the newspapers, he wrote out his resignation. Most argue that this speech reflected a growing sense of anti-Semitism since Bahr adhered to pan-Germanism and some German anti-Semites in his speech. Herzl, then, felt he could no longer associate with the student fraternity because of this reality (Elon, 60).

<sup>12</sup> Kornberg, *Theodor Herzl*, 52.

Herzl termed, hateful, physical characteristics such as “shortness, ugliness, and slovenliness.”<sup>13</sup> Herzl would continue to exhibit signs of this elitism even as leader of the Zionist movement.

It is important to note, however, that while Herzl displayed this repulsion of Jewish characteristics, he seemed unwilling to part from his Jewish heritage. For instance, he never changed his Jewish last name although he had been solicited to do so several times. Herzl also seemed to relate to the suffering of Jewish history and, as he gloried in the German state, Herzl also gloried in the past successes of Jewish statehood. Herzl believed that in order to achieve this Jewish greatness again, Jews had to shed their contemporary Jewish traits (like the boy in Freytag’s novel) and claim German virtue, reflective of Jews old virtues, as their own. In this way, Jews would be accepted into political society and become respected as they were centuries before.<sup>14</sup> This dichotomy of pride and self-aversion was a problem which Herzl continued to struggle with in his attempts to find his identity as a Jew.

### **Rise of Anti-Semitism**

After Herzl’s moderate success as a playwright, he accepted a position in October 1891 as correspondent for the Jewish newspaper, *Neue Freie Presse*, in Paris, France. It was at this time that Herzl’s ideal beliefs in a Jewish individual’s ability to assimilate became slowly dismantled in the virulent anti-Semitism that rose in the 1880s and continued into the 1900s. Evidence of this anti-Semitism first rose in the East. In Russia, this violence, which was based on age old cultural and historical hatred of the Jews, began with the 1881 assassination of Czar Alexander II. The government blamed the Jews for the assassination and used it as a reason for sponsoring anti-Semitic policies including the 1881 attack on the Jews of Elisavetgrad (present-

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

day Kirovograd). Many more pogroms followed within the subsequent years in the Russian occupied regions of the Ukraine and Belarus, often against new Jewish immigrants who had come to settle in these economically viable regions. These victims took the brunt of the murder, raping, and destruction of property.

On May 3, 1882, the Russian government also began placing increased legal restrictions on the Jews by passing what became known as the “May Laws.” These laws forbade Jews to make new settlements, transact business on Christian holy days or receive government mortgages and other property deeds. In addition, a 10% quota was placed on the number of Jews allowed to apply to high schools and universities.<sup>15</sup> The combination of these physical and political attacks on the Jews led to a mass exodus of nearly two million Jews out of Russia between 1881 and 1914. Herzl referred to this problem as the *Judennot* or *Jewish flight*.

At first, Herzl had originally believed that this rise in expressed hatred of Jews was merely a remnant of medieval ignorance that would eventually disappear with the enlightenment of political liberalism. To his shock, however, the Western European countries that had initiated political liberalism were experiencing a new form of anti-Semitism. As Herzl noted in his 1896 pamphlet, *The Jewish State*, “Modern Anti-Semitism is not to be confounded with the religious persecution of the Jews of former times...[it is] a result of the emancipation of Jews.”<sup>16</sup> Many of these Western anti-Semitic theories became based in Social Darwinism and beliefs in racial inferiority. These forms of anti-Semitism even appeared within Herzl’s own beloved Austria. Austrian economic problems as well as social divisions with Slavic nationalists caused the

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<sup>15</sup> MyJewishLearning.com. The May Laws: Primary Historical Text, Russia 1881. 2002-2006. Accessed 17 October 2006. [http://www.myjewishlearning.com/history\_community/Modern/Overview\_The\_Story\_19141948/WWI\_and\_the\_Jews/Soviet\_Jewry\_Between\_the\_Wars/May\_Laws.htm].

<sup>16</sup> Theodor Herzl, “Chapter 1: The Jewish State.” *The Jewish State, MidEastWeb*. 2002. Accessed 24 October 2006. [http://www.mideastweb.org/Jewishstate.pdf], 2.

National Liberal Party, which had been the catalyst for political liberal reform, to lose power in the 1890s. The Christian Socials, led by Catholics, regained their position in government by running on a political base of anti-capitalism, which was associated with Jewish freedom and suppression of the Austrian middle class, and anti-Semitism that appealed to people's immediate reactions against political liberalism.<sup>17</sup> Some of their calls for change included a return to denominational schools and a banning of Jewish teachers in Christian schools. In 1895, the leader of the Christian Socialists, Karl Lueger, was voted as mayor of Vienna. Even political liberals, who Herzl had long considered friends, were now backing away from associations with the Jews in this politically charged environment.

Germany was experiencing a similar rise in anti-Semitism as a result of the shift in political dynamics. In the 1880s, in an effort to continue uniting the German states, Bismarck abandoned his liberal party and realigned with conservative factions in an effort to counter the rising socialist factors in Germany. This change of parties led to the decline of the liberals and created a tacitly anti-Semitic atmosphere. In 1881, Neustettin, Germany was the site of a pogrom while, just a year later, the city of Dresden held the first official anti-Jewish Congress aimed at discovering solutions to the Jewish problem.<sup>18</sup> At this time, several popular anti-Semitic books were published at this time including the 1881 *The Jewish Problem as a Problem of Race, Morals and Culture* by the renowned German scholar Eugen Dühring, which called for the elimination of Jewish civil and political rights that had just been gained through political liberalism.<sup>19</sup> In his diaries, Herzl attributes Dühring's eloquently blatant anti-Semitic book into

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<sup>17</sup> Kornberg, *Theodor Herzl*, 90.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 42-43.

<sup>19</sup> Elon, *Herzl*, 57.

forcing him to seriously consider the Jewish question and eventually leading him away from a belief in assimilation.<sup>20</sup>

While still serving as a correspondent for *Neue Freie Presse*, Herzl was also witnessing this anti-Semitism first hand in France. French anti-Semitism became epitomized in the infamous scandal of the 1884 Dreyfus affair in which a young Jewish officer of France, Captain Alfred Dreyfus, was wrongfully accused of passing military secrets to Germany. The perfect example of an assimilated Jew, Dreyfus was court-martialed in suspect proceedings which were clearly biased against the Jew. This, too, was said to have seriously influenced Herzl's conception of a Jew's ability to integrate into Western European society.

The rise of anti-Semitism in Western Europe deeply disturbed Herzl since it originated in a place he believed had overcome medieval Jewish hatred and where assimilation was most likely to be achieved. Herzl's original reaction to this evidence of the failure of assimilation was confused and unfocused. He started fishing for more drastic ways to counter this anti-Semitism. It was in 1893, for instance, that Herzl proposed having the Austrian Jews convert to Catholicism in a mass baptism. While this may seem as characteristic of the "Marrano malady," Herzl saw it as an opportunity to celebrate Jewish acceptance in public instead of secretly converting. He idealized, then, that the Catholics would be impressed by displays of Jewish civic virtue.<sup>21</sup> In another proposition, Herzl suggested Jews adhere to socialism (an ideology he disliked) since he felt the Jew would disappear from the fringes of society and meld into a political party.<sup>22</sup> But Herzl soon conceded in his diaries of "the emptiness and futility of efforts to combat anti-

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<sup>20</sup> Herzl, 1895, *The Complete Diaries*, vol. 1, 4.

<sup>21</sup> Kornberg, *Theodor Herzl*, 115.

<sup>22</sup> Herzl, 10 March 1897, *The Complete Diaries*, vol. 2, 521.

Semitism”<sup>23</sup> in Western Europe. But what new plan would enable him to avoid this anti-Semitism while still fitting with his beliefs of political liberalism and emancipation?

### ***The Jewish State***

Herzl’s search for a solution to anti-Semitism led him to the idea that perhaps Jews could not assimilate *individually* into society but they could assimilate into the political world as a Jewish state.<sup>24</sup> Herzl believed that by establishing a separate Jewish political state in which Jews could participate, Jews would be able to prove their equality and worth to the world. Thus, the Jews would gain the respect and esteem of those who would not allow them to participate within the Christian states. Based on this idea, Herzl published the 1896 *Der Judenstaat* or *The Jewish State*, which described his basic plan for establishing a Jewish homeland. In this pamphlet, Herzl demonstrated the influence of Germany’s nationalist and liberalist thought on his own Zionist theories. In his first chapter, Herzl stated his opinion that anti-Semitism was not caused so much by social or religious differences but that “[i]t is a national question, which can only be solved by making it a political world-question to be discussed and settled by the civilized nations of the world in council.”<sup>25</sup> For Herzl, this national question would be solved by the establishment of a Jewish state.

Herzl defended his belief that the Jewish state was the solution to Jewish problems by recognizing the unique identity of the Jewish people which made it difficult to assimilate into

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<sup>23</sup> Herzl, 1895, *The Complete Diaries*, vol. 1, 6.

<sup>24</sup> Vital, “The Afflictions,” 120.

<sup>25</sup> Herzl, “Chapter 1: The Jewish State,” *The Jewish State*, 2.

modern society: “whether we like it or not, we are now, and shall henceforth remain, a historic group with unmistakable characteristics common to us all.”<sup>26</sup> According to Herzl, this unique nature naturally bred anti-Semitism and the only way to bring peace for the Jews would be to establish a nation-state under Jewish political autonomy. It was this basic theory which drove Herzl to work almost exclusively in the political sphere throughout the rest of his Zionist efforts.

In *The Jewish State*, Herzl outlined three different committees that he envisioned would guide the Zionists towards their goal: the Society of Jews, the Jewish Company and local groups. The three layers were modeled after the modern socialist ideals as emphasized by Western Europe at the time. The purpose of the Society of Jews was to prepare the political and social way for a Jewish colony by acting as the entity with which governments would negotiate. This was extremely important to Herzl since the Society of Jews would represent the international political recognition necessary to the establishment of an actual Jewish state. Then, the Jewish Company, which was the financial backbone of the Zionist movement, would order and arrange the economic and business ends of the Jewish colony.<sup>27</sup> Finally, the local groups were to be present in the new land and help with its governance. Thus, according to Herzl’s vision, the Jewish homeland would have the social, political and economical strength to exist on par with the nations of the world.

After describing some of the challenges related to the political and economic strength of a Jewish colony, Herzl also dealt with how the colony should be settled. In his second chapter, Herzl made it clear that gradual settlement in the Jewish homeland must not take place before obtaining political sovereignty over the land. This contradicted traditional Zionist theory that Jewish settlers must cultivate the land for decades before others can follow. Herzl feared that

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<sup>26</sup> Herzl, “Chapter 2: The Jewish Question,” *The Jewish State*, 3.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

gradual settlement without political basis would create increasing problems with the natives of any country. By establishing political and social rights, and then sending settlers to fill the land immediately, Herzl felt that the worst of the tensions with existing populations would be reduced to a minimum.<sup>28</sup> The first settlers to inhabit the new land would be the poorest and would perform the hard, necessary labor to establish a working state. Following the completion of agriculture and the construction of infrastructure, those of higher financial status would follow behind. Herzl suggested that this process, which had to follow the Zionists' obtainment of political sovereignty, would take place over many years.

In *The Jewish State*, Herzl also tackled the question of the appropriate land to be used for the Jewish homeland. He focused on the possibility of two different colonies in Argentina and in Palestine. Herzl outlined the benefits of Argentina's land and the large number of Jewish residents already present there, but ultimately leaned towards Palestine since it is "our ever-memorable historic home. The very name of Palestine would attract our people with a force of marvelous potency."<sup>29</sup> Yet while Herzl recognized the importance of Jewish historical attachment to Palestine, he made comparisons between the two nations based on their practical and potential appeal. This fact suggested that Herzl was willing to look outside the sacred lands of Palestine for a homeland that would, at least temporarily, offer the Jews political autonomy.

To unite the Jews behind his cause, Herzl attempted to create a sense of national culture to which he could draw the scattered peoples of Judaism.<sup>30</sup> In *The Jewish State*, Herzl made it clear that he intended his Jewish state to be aligned with no particular nationality, but that it

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>30</sup> Michael Berkowitz, *Zionist Culture and Western European Jewry Before the First World War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 1.

would become a multi-national federation of Jewish people who would hold onto their own cultures and languages. German would be the main language but the Jewish state was to be reflection of all of Europe.<sup>31</sup> As a symbol for this new movement of Zionism, Herzl and his followers called themselves the Maccabeans—a reference to the old Jewish heroes of the Maccabean family who revolted against the oppressive Hellenistic rulers. The Maccabean victory over their Greek rulers led to the establishment of a Jewish state in the land of Israel for over one hundred years. Herzl and followers such as Israel Zangwill would take up the banner of the old Jewish state in order to resurrect its glories and create a new hope for the people of Judaism. As a symbol of this statehood, Herzl created a new flag with a simple white background and seven gold stars—six in the center formed in the shape of the Star of David and one rising just above it.<sup>32</sup> These seven stars were to represent the seven-hour work day, a reference to socialist ideals that Herzl hoped would draw Western European Jews. Eventually, however, this flag would change to carry the symbol of the Star of David with the *talit* stripes.<sup>33</sup> These cultural symbols were a significant change in the Jewish consciousness. In his pamphlet *The East African Question*, Zangwill wrote of its effect on the Zionist cause which now came “with a trumpet-cry of ‘Fly high and say everything.’ Zionism means the end of the Marrano period and the revival of the Maccabean. Zionism is a political movement to obtain for the Jewish people a publicly, legally assured home in Palestine.”<sup>34</sup> Herzl hoped that his book, *The Jewish State*, would become the blueprint that would lead this new and exciting Maccabean revolution.

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<sup>31</sup> Kornberg, *Theodor Herzl*, 177.

<sup>32</sup> Elon, *Herzl*, 213.

<sup>33</sup> Berkowitz, *Zionist Culture*, 25.

<sup>34</sup> Zangwill, *The East African Question*, 8.

Herzl intended *The Jewish State* for the world audience, but he had difficulty in having it published after it was rejected by both his regular and even some Jewish publishers. Eventually, a non-Jewish Viennese company agreed to take publish it in 1896. Finally, Herzl's Zionist message—his solution for the great Jewish question—was now available for the world to embrace or reject.

### **Beginnings of Political Zionism**

The publication of *The Jewish State* in 1896 created a great stir in Western European communities and drew attacks from angry politicians, prominent Jews, and even some old friends. Herzl, however, also began to win himself a following of dedicated Jews. While some followers came from England, Austria, and Germany, Herzl drew most of his movement from Eastern Europe and Russia. Stinging from the recent pogroms, these Eastern European Jews turned to Herzl as the leader who would finally pull them from their hell of persecution. Here was a man, full of dynamic and vibrant energy, who had a practical plan to create their long awaited Jewish state.<sup>35</sup> With followers such as these, Herzl attempted to enforce a structure to organize them according to his European political heritage. One of Herzl's most important developments was to call for the convening of a Jewish Congress. In March 1897, over one year after the publication of *The Jewish State*, Herzl organized a preliminary meeting of eleven prominent activists from both Western and Eastern Europe to plan for the first Zionist Congress in August 1897. Once again, Jews reacted with excitement to the news of such a Congress since it suggested that they were a government-in-exile, a political entity that had the power to make changes.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Elon, *Herzl*, 180.

On August 23, 1897, the First Zionist Congress was held in Basle, Switzerland with approximately 200 delegates from seventeen different countries. In order to instill a sense of professionalism and distinction, Herzl required everyone to wear suits. In the course of the meeting, the organization of the Zionist government body was established. The *Aktions-Comité* (A.C.) was elected by the Congress to serve as its governing body. Five A.C. members who lived in Vienna were chosen to help direct the daily affairs of the Zionist movement and became known as the *Engeres Aktions-Comité* (E.A.C.). The rest of the delegates of the Congress were known as the *Grosses Aktions-Comité* (G.A.C.).<sup>37</sup> The constitution also established that every group of 100 *Shekel*-payers was to elect one delegate (increased to 200 *Shekel*-payers/delegate by 1903).<sup>38</sup> In addition, the Congress set the foundations for the Jewish Colonial Trust, modeled after Herzl's vision of the Jewish Company in *The Jewish State*, which was eventually established in London in 1899 and began its operations in 1901. Most importantly, however, the constitution of the First Zionist Congress agreed on the aim and central purpose of the organization, known as the Basle Programme: "The aim of Zionism is to create for the Jewish people a *homestead* in Palestine according to *public law*."<sup>39</sup> The Congress agreed to continue meeting annually to further this Zionist goal.<sup>40</sup>

Although, Herzl seemed somewhat disappointed by the delegates arriving for the Congress (As he stated in his diary: "I am in command only of boys, beggars, and prigs"),<sup>41</sup> he

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<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 225.

<sup>37</sup> Michael Heymann, introduction to *The Minutes of the Zionist General Council: The Uganda Controversy*, vol. 1 (Jerusalem: Israel University Press, 1970), 10.

<sup>38</sup> Footnote in Heymann, intro. to *The Minutes*, 10.

<sup>39</sup> The Basle Programme, 30 Aug. 1897 quoted in Elon, *Herzl*, 242.

<sup>40</sup> In 1901, the Zionist Congress began meeting biannually due to the burdens of monetary costs as well as travel.

<sup>41</sup> Herzl, 23 Aug. 1897, *The Complete Diaries*, vol. 2, 577.

understood the great achievement that had been made in the founding of the First Zionist General Council. Not only had the Zionists formed an international body with financial power and political persuasion, they had also agreed on their organization's main aim. In addition, Herzl had achieved a change in traditional Judaic perspective by modeling the Congress after the nationalist structure of Western Europe. This structure elicited emotional and popular responses that attracted many middle-class Jews to respond.<sup>42</sup> International Jewish reaction to this success was tremendous as more and more followers began to believe in the words of this magical man. Zionist societies multiplied by eightfold in 1898.<sup>43</sup> Herzl and his movement were riding high on optimism and faith.

### **Failure of Palestine and El Arish**

As the President of the Zionist Council, Herzl now had the authority to approach dignitaries for the purpose of obtaining Palestine, which was under the control of the Ottoman Empire, as the new Jewish homeland. True to his impatient character, however, Herzl had not waited for this official endorsement and had already attempted to make contacts with the German government in 1896 through the help of a British Christian Zionist, Reverend William Hechler, who knew Kaiser Wilhelm II personally. Eventually, in 1898, Herzl was able to meet with Kaiser Wilhelm II in Constantinople where he solicited Germany's help in funding a political charter for Palestine from Turkey. At the time, the Kaiser was intrigued by the political advantages of owning Palestine and agreed to consider the possibility of pressuring Turkey into granting this charter which would be under German control. Later that year, however, Herzl met

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<sup>42</sup> Berkowitz, *Zionist Culture*, 38.

<sup>43</sup> Weisbord. *African Zion*, 50.

once again with the Kaiser in Palestine. By this time, the Kaiser had made a clear retreat from his earlier position and noted to Herzl the great need for irrigation before the land was made viable for settlement.<sup>44</sup> In May 1901, then, Herzl turned directly to the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire to have him concede to the Zionists a Charter for the land of Palestine. The Ottoman Empire, known as the “Sick Man of Europe,” was in a state of severe decline and for a high price, the Sultan was willing to offer the lands of Mesopotamia, Syria, Anatolia, and Cyprus for Jewish settlement. However, he was still unwilling to part with Palestine. Eager to follow the directive of the Basle Programme and still optimistic about the possibility of obtaining Palestine, Herzl refused to consider these lands, although he maintained open communications with the Turks.<sup>45</sup>

With each passing year, however, Herzl became more impatient as news of Eastern European pogroms continued to haunt the Zionist movement. Despite the Basle Programme’s insistence on the Zionist duty to obtain Palestine, Herzl felt that the practical road must be taken first. What good were his negotiations in saving the *Judennot* whose lives and livelihoods were in daily danger? In a letter to Lord Rothschild, the British millionaire, Herzl stated that “I must not be a stickler for principles and reject any immediate help for the poorest of our poor, no matter what form it may take.”<sup>46</sup> If he could not obtain Palestine, then the next best option must be found. This help soon came in an offer from Great Britain.

On October 22, 1902, Herzl was able to obtain an interview with Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain<sup>47</sup> and Foreign Secretary Lord Henry Charles Lansdowne through his

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<sup>44</sup> Elon, *Herzl*, 297.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 345.

<sup>46</sup> Herzl to Rothschild, 12 July 1902, *The Complete Diaries*, vol. 4, 1302.

connections with Leopold Greenberg, who was an advertising agent and co-founder of the British Zionist Federation. With his usual bluntness, Herzl told Chamberlain that he wanted El Arish, a coastal city in Egypt, the Sinai Peninsula and Cyprus as a Jewish homeland.<sup>48</sup> Herzl was interested in these lands since, as he told Lord Rothschild, “A great Jewish settlement east of the Mediterranean will strengthen our prospects for Palestine.”<sup>49</sup> In addition, by obtaining non-Palestinian land first, Herzl felt it would raise the Jewish state to political equality with other nations and allow it greater status in its future negotiations for Palestine.<sup>50</sup> Although Chamberlain was interested in helping the Zionists, he felt that further discussion of a Jewish settlement in El Arish required the aid of Lord Evelyn Baring Cromer, the British minister plenipotentiary and consul-general of Egypt. Herzl convinced Chamberlain to set up a meeting the following day with Lord Cromer and even persuaded Chamberlain to support the endeavor if Lord Cromer agreed to it.<sup>51</sup>

After considering Herzl’s ambitious plan, Lord Cromer decided to allow a small commission to be sent into the Sinai Peninsula to scope out the land and determine the feasibility of a Jewish colony. If the commission approved of the plan, Lord Cromer stated that the Egyptian government, which remained under British supervision, would only require Ottoman citizenship and a yearly contribution from the Jewish settlement.<sup>52</sup> The commission spent three months in the Sinai Peninsula from January through March 1903. Based on their report, the

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<sup>47</sup> Joseph Chamberlain was the father of Neville Chamberlain, the Prime Minister of Great Britain known for his appeasement efforts with Nazi Germany prior to World War II.

<sup>48</sup> Interest in the Suez Canal had led Britain to take control of Egypt and the Sinai Peninsula in 1882. Turkey had given Cyprus to Britain in 1878 with the guarantee that Britain would use it to protect the Ottoman Empire from Russian aggression.

<sup>49</sup> Herzl to Rothschild, 12 July 1902, *The Complete Diaries*, vol. 4, 1302.

<sup>50</sup> Weisbord, *African Zion*, 52.

<sup>51</sup> Herzl, 23 Oct. 1902, *The Complete Diaries*, vol. 4, 1360-1363.

<sup>52</sup> Herzl to Baron Eckardstein, 10 Dec. 1902, *The Complete Diaries*, vol. 4, 1381.

Egyptian government sent word back to Britain that it was not capable of sustaining a Jewish colony in the Sinai Peninsula. The biggest obstacle was the lack of irrigation since the Egyptian government felt it could not supply the full amount of water necessary to allow for cultivation and agriculture of a colony. Although the British government hesitated to completely reject the Sinai plan, further progress was halted by the report of this commission.<sup>53</sup> Herzl was devastated by the negative results of the report. He had stated in his diary that “I thought the Sinai plan was such a sure thing that I no longer wanted to buy a family vault in the Döbling cemetery [in Vienna].”<sup>54</sup> His determination to make the plan work, however, led him to continue to seek Britain’s help for El Arish.

### **East African Offer**

On April 23, 1903, Herzl met with Chamberlain to discuss further plans to solve the problem of irrigation in El Arish. Chamberlain felt that prospects for El Arish were unfavorable and mentioned another option, which Herzl recorded in his diaries:

“I have seen a land for you in my travels,” said the great Chamberlain, “and that’s Uganda. It’s hot on the coast, but farther inland the climate becomes excellent, even for Europeans. You can raise sugar and cotton there. And I thought to myself, that would be a land for Dr. Herzl.”<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Circular Letter from E.A.C. to Members of G.A.C., June 12, 1903 in *The Minutes of the Zionist General Council: The Uganda Controversy*, vol. 1, ed. and intro. Michael Heymann (Jerusalem: Israel University Press, 1970), 64-65.

<sup>54</sup> Herzl, 16 May 1903, *The Complete Diaries*, vol. 4, 1491.

<sup>55</sup> Herzl, 24 April 1903, *The Complete Diaries*, vol. 4, 1473; Here it seems that Joseph Chamberlain is using Uganda to refer to the East African Protectorate. The Uganda Protectorate was directly to the west of the East African Protectorate, and, although its southern border lined Lake Victoria, lay well inland and had no coastal regions along the Indian Ocean.

Herzl remained focused on El Arish, but mentioned that Jews could possibly settle in Uganda at a later time.<sup>56</sup> At this time, however, Herzl was feeling pressure to find any land to present to the Sixth Zionist Congress set for August 1903. He began searching for any way to regain the Sinai Peninsula himself. He considered asking for Mozambique from Portugal to use as a bartering tool to trade for the Sinai Peninsula and Cyprus. He proposed asking the King of Belgium for the Congo Free State as a Jewish colony. Perhaps he could return to the Sultan and ask for Mesopotamia again.<sup>57</sup> All of these ideas, however, were more fantastical than realistic.

Herzl's disinclination to the East Africa project drastically changed, however, after receiving the news of one of the most violent Russian pogroms in Kishinev. This pogrom, which took place on Easter weekend from April 6-7, 1903, broke out through the instigation and organization of local government officials. It was estimated that 49 Jews were killed, hundreds of homes and businesses looted and burned, and that thousands of families were left homeless. As reports of the pogrom filtered into Western Europe, Herzl's distress at the news led him to visit Russia for the purpose of alleviating the rising tensions between the persecuted Jews and the Russian government. It was here, in August 1903, that Herzl was able to meet with Vyacheslav Plehve, Russia's Minister of the Interior, and received Plehve's pledge of support for the Zionist movement. Herzl hoped to use Russia to pressure Turkey into handing Palestine to the Jews, but

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<sup>56</sup> The East African Project was inappropriately termed the Uganda Project after a misunderstanding of where the settlement would be as well as the fact that Britain never an official announcement of what land it was offering to the Zionists. The East African Protectorate only included a portion of the land in its western section that would become Uganda. The majority of the East African Protectorate would eventually form the country of Kenya in 1920. Part of the confusion arose from the fact that no formal offer of a particular section of land was ever made. At one point, Joseph Chamberlain mentioned a territory between Nairobi and the Mau Escarpment which lay in the center of the East African Protectorate. Later, Sir Charles Eliot, the East African Commissioner, suggested that a good settlement would be at the Uasin Gishu Plateau, which lay in that would become part of present-day Uganda. Even later, Sir Clement Hill of the Foreign Office suggested that the Jews should settle in the coastal Tanaland Province which lay in the southeast section of the East African Protectorate; See appendix A.

<sup>57</sup> Herzl, 13 May 1903, *The Complete Diaries*, vol. 4, 1487.

he also realized that this Russian support only came because of its desire to rid itself of Jews.<sup>58</sup> With the prospect of El Arish and Palestine moving slowly and the Sixth Zionist Congress fast approaching, Herzl began to reconsider the East African suggestion in the hopes that he could present another option for political respite to the Zionists.

On May 20, 1903, Leopold Greenberg, who had helped Herzl meet with British officials over El Arish, met again with Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain on behalf of Herzl and the Zionist movement. In this meeting, Chamberlain noted that he too felt that Palestine was the most preferred option for the Jewish state but that control over this land remained with Turkey. And while El Arish seemed most appealing because of its proximity to Palestine, the British recognized that its stalling progress meant that another solution had to be found. Chamberlain again brought up the option of the East African Protectorate and suggested that a good place for a settlement would be an estimated size of 200 square miles between Nairobi and the Mau Escarpment since it offered a good climate and the possibility of settling at least one million people within its boundaries.<sup>59</sup> He warned Greenberg that the Zionist movement should take advantage of the offer in case other prospects claimed the land. He also suggested that the Zionists send a commission out to investigate the land as they had done earlier for the Sinai Peninsula.<sup>60</sup>

Receiving the report from Greenberg on this development, Herzl was thrilled with the prospect of Jewish autonomy in the land which he codenamed “Samson.” This was the first time that a nation had actually initiated an offer without a proposal from the Zionist movement itself. Although East Africa would not have the religious, historical or cultural links that would attract

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<sup>58</sup> Herzl, 4 June 1903, *The Complete Diaries*, vol. 4, 1503.

<sup>59</sup> See appendix A for a map of the East African Protectorate.

<sup>60</sup> Weisbord, *African Zion*, 65-67.

the Jews, it was an immense political victory that would allow the Jewish people to be officially recognized as a nation by another government. By July 4, 1903, Greenberg and David Lloyd George, a member of Parliament, drew up a draft of a charter for the Jewish East African colony. The charter called for a constitution that would be approved by the British government. This constitution would create a popular form of government that would be “Jewish in character and with a Jewish Governor to be appointed by His Majesty in Council.”<sup>61</sup> The constitution was to also grant the settlement complete domestic control of the colony including the power of granting taxes for administrative matters as well as the power to acquire other lands in the East African Protectorate as it saw fit. In addition, the persons living in the settlement would automatically become British subjects—a provision Greenberg wanted to include in order to counter any claims that the Jews would not be loyal to the British government. The settlement would be named “New Palestine” and be allowed to create its own flag. Exercise of all these powers in the constitution, however, was to be subject to the approval of the respective British officials. After completing this draft, Greenberg and George submitted it to Joseph Chamberlain, Cecil Hurst, assistant to the legal advisor of the Foreign Office, and Lord Lansdowne.<sup>62</sup>

These British officials returned the draft with several suggestions for revisions. They objected, for instance, to the determination of Jewish colonists as immediate and permanent British citizens. Rather, as with all British colonies, residence in a Protectorate was not the equivalent of British citizenship. In addition, while they agreed to a Jewish government that controlled the normal domestic considerations of the colony, the officials hesitated to grant the power of governorship to the colonists since they feared they would be fostering an *imperium in*

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<sup>61</sup> Terms and conditions of the concessions to be granted by His Majesty’s Government to the *Jewish Colonial Trust* (Juedisches Colonialbank) *Limited* for the establishment of a Jewish settlement in British East Africa, H VI D3: Clause 5(a), 4 July 1903 quoted in Weisbord, *African Zion*, 73.

<sup>62</sup> Weisbord, *African Zion*, 73-74.

*imperio*—an empire within an empire.<sup>63</sup> As Hurst extrapolated in a memo of July 23, 1903, the Jews would be allowed to exercise control over their local, domestic matters, but “If the promoters are looking for more than this and want a petty state of their own, something more than townships or municipalities, the scheme would, I think, be open to great objection.”<sup>64</sup> Thus, the Colonial and Foreign Offices wished to maintain ultimate control over the external running of the colony.

On August 6, 1903, the British presented Greenberg with the changes required by the government. Greenberg immediately agreed and the British Protectorates Department set about writing a letter, dated August 14, 1903, to be read aloud at the Sixth Zionist Congress. The letter signed by Sir Clement Hill, a clerk in the Foreign Office, stated the British government’s consideration of an agreement between Great Britain and Herzl and the Jewish Colonial Trust over the establishment of a Jewish colony in the East African Protectorate. In the letter, Hill explains Britain’s motive for offering East Africa as a sincere concern for the sufferings of the Jewish race and a willingness to investigate “any well considered scheme for the amelioration of the position of the Jewish Race.”<sup>65</sup> The letter then offered the Zionist Congress help in funding the commission to investigate East Africa. If this commission was to meet the approval of the Zionist movement and the British government, Foreign Secretary Lord Landsowne would be prepared to continue negotiations for the offer with the main considerations to include:

the grant of a considerable area of land, the appointment of a Jewish Official as chief of the local administration, and permission to the Colony to have a free hand in regard to municipal legislation and as to the management of religious and purely domestic matters,

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<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>64</sup> Public Records Office. Foreign Office. 2/785: Hurst, Memorandum, 23 July 1903 quoted in Weisbord, *African Zion*, 75.

<sup>65</sup> Public Records Office. Foreign Office. 2/785: Hill to Greenberg, 14 Aug. 1903 quoted in Weisbord, *African Zion*, 79.

such local autonomy being conditional upon the right of His Majesty's Government to exercise a general control.<sup>66</sup>

These last two points concerning the limits of Jewish power in the new colony reflect some of the concerns of Jewish autonomy originally raised by Hurst, Lansdowne, and Chamberlain when examining the Greenberg-Lloyd George draft. The letter ended with the statement that the administrative expenses of the colony would not be covered by the British government and that, in case of its failure, the land could always be reclaimed by the British.<sup>67</sup>

Still missing from the letter was any definitive area or size of land to be offered to the Zionists. While Chamberlain had mentioned an area between Nairobi and Mau, Sir Charles Eliot, Commissioner of the East African Protectorate, suggested in November 1903 that the Uasin Gishu Plateau would be best for the Zionist settlement since it was grassy, well-watered, temperate, and virtually uninhabited because of tribal conflicts.<sup>68</sup> The final details, however, were to be determined after the Zionists had agreed to and completed their own investigatory commission of the East African Protectorate.

### **British Domestic Concerns**

While this letter painted the British government as a benevolent entity whose sole concern was for the protection of the Jewish people, it seems clear that Joseph Chamberlain would not have made an offer of land to the Zionists without also considering British interests as well. To be sure, Chamberlain's reputation as a radical politician and a leader of the Liberal Party made his offer of East Africa seem natural. It was also well-known that Chamberlain had

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<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 79-80.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>68</sup> Weisbord, *African Zion*, 102; See appendix A for a map of the East African Protectorate.

several powerful Jewish friends such as Lord Alfred Rothschild, whom Herzl was soliciting for funds, as well as Jews who ran the British financial house, the Rand. Many of these Jewish friends had helped Chamberlain finance the Boer War in South Africa. Chamberlain, then, already had an interest in serving the needs of the Jewish community.<sup>69</sup>

The social and economic situation of England, however, offers a different context for the unsolicited generosity for the offering of East Africa. The same pogroms that had affected Herzl were also leading to a flood of poverty-stricken East European Jews into England. Some statistics estimate, for instance, that there was about 35,000 Jews living in England in 1850, but that from 1850-1939 this figure jumped to nearly ten times to 350,000 Jews.<sup>70</sup> While many native Jews were from the middle class or even prominent banking families, such as the Rothschilds, a majority of these immigrants began settling in overcrowded ghettos including the East End of London. The social and economic stresses of such a situation were predictable.

The increase in Jewish immigrants, whose desperate poverty often led to job exploitation, weakened British unions' ability to bargain for better pay and rights. These developments led to increasing hostility and veiled anti-Semitism. Some Britons began labeling the South African Boer War as a war fought for and funded by prominent English Jews.<sup>71</sup> Anti-alien groups, such as the "British Brothers' League," were formed and began soliciting the government to put an end to the immigration of these "criminals" who were ruining the labor movement.<sup>72</sup> These pressures led the government to seriously consider how to respond to the negative effects of the immigration.

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<sup>69</sup> Julian Amery, *The Life of Joseph Chamberlain*, vol. 4 (1901-1903) (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd, 1951), 256-257.

<sup>70</sup> Michael J. Cohen, *Churchill and the Jews* (Totawa, NJ: Frank Cass and Co., 1985), 15.

<sup>71</sup> Cohen, *Churchill and the Jews*, 16.

<sup>72</sup> Oskar K. Rabinowicz, *Winston Churchill on Jewish Problems* (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, Ltd., 1956), 46.

On March 21, 1902, seven men, including Lord Rothschild, were appointed to the Royal Commission on Alien Immigration for the purpose of discovering the extent of the negative effects caused by immigration as well as provide any suggested measures to controlling immigration. While they examined data and evidence over the period of a year and a half, the Royal Commission examined 175 witnesses to gather their impression of the effect of Jewish immigration. Among these included members of the British Brothers' League who proclaimed their belief that Jews could not be loyal to the British government and that they were the main source of problems for the British people.<sup>73</sup> This sentiment was repeated by a number of witnesses.

The Royal Commission also called Theodor Herzl to the witness stand because of his reputation as leader of the Zionist movement. Herzl traveled from Vienna and arrived in London on July 7, 1902, shortly after the death of his father and in the middle of continuing negotiations with Turkey over Palestine. Although Herzl himself felt that he had “an off day” since he “spoke and understood English badly, and made a number of mistakes due to caution,”<sup>74</sup> he was the only one to offer a practical solution to the Commission—support a Jewish homeland and the Eastern European immigrants would be diverted from England. Herzl was not unfamiliar with this argument which he used on several occasions to encourage countries to support the Zionist cause.<sup>75</sup> It was also during this trip that Herzl was first introduced to Lord Rothschild, who was a member of the Royal Commission, and was able to solicit his financial help for the Zionist movement.

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<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>74</sup> Herzl, 9 July 1902, *The Complete Diaries*, vol. 4, 1295.

<sup>75</sup> Herzl, 5 Feb. 1900, *The Complete Diaries*, vol. 3, 904.

After considering this witness testimony as well as examining the statistical data it had gathered, the Royal Commission published its final report on August 14, 1903.<sup>76</sup> Along with suggesting the establishment of a Department of Immigration, the Commission also recommended that aliens with criminal charges may be deported from England and that laws on overcrowding and unsanitary conditions may be greater enforced in the ghettos. In response to this report, Arthur Balfour, Prime Minister and head of the Conservative Party, sponsored the first Alien Bill of 1904 in the House of Commons. The provisions of the Alien Bill stated that certain classes of aliens would be subject to state control and those who could not support themselves after their second year as well as those with misdemeanors would be deported. It also stated that immigration officers would be able to enforce deportation of certain immigrants without appeal. These ranged from those who had committed felonies to those who were deemed “undesirables” to those whom they felt could not support themselves. The burden of proof was to lie fully upon the alien.<sup>77</sup> Such a Bill erupted in controversy as British Jews reacted to these restrictions.

Opponents of the Act, many from the Liberal Party who often had large numbers of Jewish constituents, found this Bill unworthy of Britain. In the Parliamentary Debates held on the Alien Act on April 25, 1904, some pointed out that the policy advocated in the Bill suggested that Britain was surrendering its long-claimed title as asylum for the persecuted peoples of Europe.<sup>78</sup> In addition, other opponents vocalized the opinion that this Bill was a veiled form of anti-Semitism. Mr. Trevelyan of Yorkshire stated: “I believe that a great part of this agitation is

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<sup>76</sup> This was the same day as the official letter of Britain’s East African Offer to Herzl and the Jewish Colonial Trust.

<sup>77</sup> Cohen, *Churchill and the Jews*, 17.

<sup>78</sup> Sir Charles Dike, Speech to the House of Commons, 25 April 1904, *Hansard Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 4<sup>th</sup> ser., vol. CXXXIII (April 12-April 28, 1904) (London: Wyman and Sons, Ltd., 1904), col. 1068.

directed against one particular set of aliens, namely, the Jews, and I believe this agitation is directed by those who are really forcing public opinion against those who cannot be called destitute as well as against those who are mean and poverty-stricken.”<sup>79</sup> These accusations, which reflected many of the complaints raised by the British Jews, pointed out the problems of granting immigration officials the power to determine who was “undesirable” for the British country.

Proponents of the Bill argued, however, that the provisions on immigration were not intended to change Britain’s role as refuge for the persecuted but as a necessary measure to ease the economic difficulties of their own people. Major Evans Gordon spoke that “I desire as ardently as anyone in this House to see an amelioration in the condition of the Jews of Eastern Europe, but I cannot countenance the transfer of their burdens to the shoulders of the poorest and most helpless of our own population.”<sup>80</sup> He continued to argue that although Britain prided itself as an asylum for the persecuted, it was impossible for the island nation to save every wronged citizen of the world. In addition, many supporters felt that the Alien Bill was restrictive enough so as not to allow, as its opponents suggested, a targeting of Jews. In June 1904, the Alien Bill was removed to a Grand Committee where the opposition continued proposing amendments to the Bill until the Home Secretary decided to withdraw the Bill after seven days of debate. It seemed that the Liberals achieved victory. A year later, however, a modified version of the Alien Act was introduced again by Balfour with a tightened definition of the “undesirability” of aliens as well as the removal of several disputed provisions.<sup>81</sup> Although the Act still raised

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<sup>79</sup> Mr. Trevelyan, Speech to the House of Commons, 25 April 1904, *Hansard Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 4<sup>th</sup> ser., vol. CXXXIII (April 12-April 28, 1904) (London: Wyman and Sons, Ltd., 1904), col. 1080.

<sup>80</sup> Major Evans Gordon, Speech to the House of Commons, 25 April 1904, *Hansard Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 4<sup>th</sup> ser., vol. CXXXIII (April 12-April 28, 1904) (London: Wyman and Sons, Ltd., 1904), col. 1083.

heated debate and enraged the Jewish community, it succeeded in passing the House of Commons on July 20, 1905 with a majority of ninety members.<sup>82</sup>

Joseph Chamberlain's initial offer of East Africa in 1903 had come at the start of this controversy. Consideration of these Alien Acts led to accusations of anti-Semitism and significantly tainted Britain's reputation as a land of refuge as it had so often claimed. Although Chamberlain was not averse to the Alien Acts, he recognized their danger to Britain's character and saw British aid in helping establish a Jewish homeland as the perfect diplomatic solution that would please both Jewish constituents as well as those in Britain who wanted to stop the flow of immigrants. In addition, it would also bolster British reputation as a protector and defender of the persecuted. These realities offer some context for Britain's interest in Zionism, but why would Britain choose East Africa as an appropriate place for a Jewish homeland? What made it preferable to any of their colonies and Protectorates across the globe?

### **British Colonial Concerns and the East African Protectorate**

Britain's history with East Africa extended back to the 1840s when British missionaries first landed at Mombasa. Britain had never taken serious consideration of its development and protection, however, until pressured by German settlement in their own East African Protectorate, which was southwest of the British zone.<sup>83</sup> As this settlement increased in the 1880s, Britain began to take steps to secure its control over its Protectorate, which remained important to Britain for several reasons: East Africa provided another route to India while Britain

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<sup>81</sup> Rabinowicz, *Winston Churchill*, 69-70.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>83</sup> To see the advancement of Germany and Britain into East Africa, see appendix B.

could also continue colonial competition with Germany and France.<sup>84</sup> To secure their interest, then, on November 1, 1886, Britain made an agreement with Germany which defined their spheres of influence. Another agreement with Germany in July 1890 eventually extended Britain's sphere of influence over the country of Uganda. By September 3, 1888, Britain granted a charter for the Imperial British East African Company (IBEAC) for the purpose of buying land from respective chiefs and tribes in East Africa as well as to begin development of infrastructure in order to enable further settlement of the land.<sup>85</sup> Although the IBEAC's charter was eventually rescinded in 1895 due to some authority conflicts with the British government, it effectively carried out its job of securing British authority over its East African zone in face of German pressures from the southwest.<sup>86</sup>

Further motivation for British development of the East African Protectorate came under pressure to end the African slave trade. In November 1889, King Leopold of Belgium held an international meeting to discuss means for securing this end. The General Act of July 1890 which came from this meeting suggested that some of the most effective means for controlling slavery involved developing infrastructure and, most importantly, railroads since they provide "cheap and safe transport."<sup>87</sup> The British began to consider building a railroad in the East African Protectorate as they expressed their belief that "Civilization alone will have an enormous

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<sup>84</sup> Weisbord, *African Zion*, 14.

<sup>85</sup> Charter granted to the Imperial British East Africa Company, 3 Sept. 1888 in Irish University Press, *British Parliamentary Papers: The Uganda Papers: 1892-99*, vol. 70 (Shannon, Ireland: Irish University Press, 1971), 6-11.

<sup>86</sup> Throughout the 1890s, the British government was experiencing authoritative problems with the IBEAC which sometimes demanded more money and support from the motherland. In June 1894, the lines of the East African Protectorate were reexamined and the government realized that the IBEAC's influence extended far beyond its appropriate powers. The government used this as the main reason for rescinding the IBEAC charter (Weisbord, 18).

<sup>87</sup> Foreign Office to Treasury, 20 Dec. 1890, Irish University Press, *British Parliamentary Papers: Reports and Other Papers on the Partition of Africa and the Construction of the Uganda Railway*, vol. 67 (Shannon, Ireland: Irish University Press, 1971), 2.

detering effect on slavery, and civilization can only reach such a distance in the wake of the railway.”<sup>88</sup> In 1896, with the support of the newly elected Conservative government and a strong push from Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain, Parliament approved of the government’s plans for a Uganda Railroad and pledged £5,244,000 to its completion. Further funds would also be supplied from the government in the Uganda Railroad Acts of 1900 and 1902.<sup>89</sup>

The Railroad, completed in 1901, actually lay completely within the East African Protectorate and ran from the city of Mombasa in southeast East Africa to Lake Victoria.<sup>90</sup> The importance of this railroad, which helped in the development of the capital city of Nairobi, was immeasurable. Sir Charles Eliot, Commissioner of the East African Protectorate, described its impact on East Africa in his 1905 book *The East Africa Protectorate*:

It is not an uncommon thing for a line to open up a country, but this line has literally created a country...East Africa may be said to have come gradually into existence at exactly the same rate as the rails advanced, and at the present the most important question that can be asked about any locality is, How far is it from the line?<sup>91</sup>

In order to make this railroad worthwhile, however, the land also had to be peopled. While immigrants from India had flooded the region to aid in the construction of the Uganda Railroad, many left following its completion. Those familiar with the East African territory felt that the coastal lands were best suited to Asian settlement while others continued to encourage Indian settlement.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> The Slave Trade in Connection with the Projected Railway, Irish University Press, *British Parliamentary Papers: Reports and Other Papers on the Partition of Africa and the Construction of the Uganda Railway*, vol. 67 (Shannon, Ireland: Irish University Press, 1971), 100.

<sup>89</sup> Weisbord, *African Zion*, 18.

<sup>90</sup> See appendix A.

<sup>91</sup> Sir Charles Eliot, *The East Africa Protectorate* (New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1966), 208.

Britain, however, also wanted to encourage white European settlement whenever possible. The number of white settlers already in East Africa, who were primarily engaged on the railroad as merchants, contractors, and shipping agents, was relatively small. Some white settlers were also the remnants of attempted settlements. In 1894, a group of German and Austrian settlers known as the Freelanders attempted to establish a utopian society in East Africa under the leadership of Viennese writer Theodor Hertzka.<sup>93</sup> Britain allowed Hertzka to head an expedition into East Africa for the purpose of settlement, but due to a lack of purpose and discipline, the Freelanders ran into significant problems with the native population and their group later dissolved that year. In 1902 another settlement group, led by Lord Delamare of England, established some communities in East Africa.<sup>94</sup> These attempts at settlement, however, were not sufficient and the British government recognized the great need to further developments in the East African Protectorate.<sup>95</sup> Britain considered reserving the temperate highlands of East Africa only for whites and even before the completion of the railroad, Eliot, the East African Commissioner, began discouraging Indian settlement in the highlands in the fear of potential conflicts between whites and Indians.<sup>96</sup>

As Colonial Secretary, Chamberlain led the efforts to encourage settlement efforts and make these financial investments in East Africa. After taking a personal tour of the land, Chamberlain once expressed to Parliament his optimism in East Africa's potential: "Uganda is one of the most promising, in regard to capacity of production, of any of the countries which

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<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 20-21.

<sup>93</sup> The coincidence of the similarity of the names of Herzl and Hertzka as well as the fact that they were both Viennese writers led to a number of unfavorable comparisons when the offer of East Africa for the Zionists was first made public. Hertzka's absolute failure did not help Herzl's cause with white settlers in East Africa.

<sup>94</sup> Elon, *Herzl*, 174.

<sup>95</sup> See appendix C for a map of general areas of white settlement in East Africa.

<sup>96</sup> See appendix C for the extent of white settlement in East Africa.

have recently been surveyed...it is possible to grow wheat, cotton, tea, tobacco, coffee and fiber.”<sup>97</sup> Chamberlain’s belief in the potential of the land as well as his influence in Britain’s East African investments suggests his possible desire to salvage East African productivity by offering it to the Jews. Once again, this proposal would serve British interests since it would help secure the British land from German pressure as well as developing it in order to pay back British patience and investment in the land.

### **The Sixth Zionist Congress**

On August 23, 1903, Herzl first unveiled Britain’s proposal for the East African proposal. After addressing the Sixth Zionist Congress about the failure of El Arish, Herzl mentioned his experiences in a recent trip to Russia where he noted the great need for the Zionist movement to succeed for the sake of the Russian persecuted. Herzl, then, proceeded to read the letter written by Sir Clement Hill concerning Britain’s official offer of land. After reiterating the Zionists’ commitment to Palestine, Herzl suggested that East Africa was only a step towards achieving this goal. It would not only provide a temporary refuge but also secure political power in the international world. The floor was then opened to discussion with Vice President Max Nordau answering questions.<sup>98</sup>

The Zionists’ reaction was explosive and the Congress fell into a heated debate. After years of hope and expectation about the El Arish project, Herzl’s seeming flippant announcement of its failure and its replacement with East Africa—a land historically, culturally, and religiously

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<sup>97</sup> Great Britain. *Hansards Parliamentary Debates* XXV (1894) col. 264-65 quoted in Weisbord, *African Zion*, 123.

<sup>98</sup> Minutes of the Zionist General Council, 23 Aug. 1903 in *The Minutes of the Zionist General Council: The Uganda Controversy*, vol. 1, ed. and intro. Michael Heymann (Jerusalem: Israel University Press, 1970), 101-102.

foreign to the Jews—was devastating. Herzl’s consideration of East Africa, which seemed to ignore the Basle Programme of the First Congress, would mean diversion of precious energy, money and people into East Africa and would weaken potential efforts to eventually establish Jews in Palestine. An irate Russian woman tore down an East African map, which had been raised in place of the map of Zion that usually hung during Congressional meetings. Herzl related in his diary that “at a private caucus of the Russian Zionists they even started accusing me of treason!”<sup>99</sup> For those, who had placed their hope in Herzl and in the Zionist movement in establishing the final homeland in Palestine for their millions of refugees, the proposal of East Africa was almost sacrilegious.

Although the reaction of the Russian delegates may have seemed extreme, their response was merely the boiling point of a number of clashes between the members of the Russian G.A.C. members and Herzl. Russian delegates had long complained about the lack of communication between the Russian G.A.C. members and the executive committee of the Congress, the E.A.C. They had, for instance, been left completely in the dark about the El Arish scheme and only received information concerning it from the newspapers and other sources of public media.<sup>100</sup> The Russians felt this was unfair since a majority of Russian delegates formed membership in the Congress as well as holding most of the shares to the Jewish Colonial Trust.<sup>101</sup> In addition, some Russians were never convinced that Herzl’s system of searching for a homeland was the best method. Many believed that a Jewish homeland should begin with gradual settlement that preceded even political sovereignty and recognition—qualities which Herzl insisted, as he had stated in *The Jewish State*, were an absolute must before any such settlements could begin.

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<sup>99</sup> Herzl to Plehwe, 5 Sept. 1903, *The Complete Diaries*, vol. 4, 1551.

<sup>100</sup> Russian members of G.A.C. to “Fünferausschuss,” April 24, 1903 in ed. Heymann, *The Minutes*, 59-60.

<sup>101</sup> Heymann, intro. to *The Minutes*, 18-19.

Other Russians also feared that Herzl was not as interested in the cultural, historical, and religious significance of Palestine as they were. For many Russians who believed in the traditional Zionist principles of historical rights to Palestine, Herzl's new political emphasis was unnecessary and dangerous to the unity of the movement.<sup>102</sup>

While the Russians expressed their anxieties over the direction of Herzl's leadership and the power of the E.A.C., there were no congressional provisions for supervision that would allow the Russians to maintain a watchful eye over Zionist activities. As early as 1898, Russian delegates tried to curb Herzl and the E.A.C.'s powers by submitting resolutions to the E.A.C. delineating the E.A.C.'s role and the extent of its powers as well as asking for detailed semi-annual reports.<sup>103</sup> These demands, although recognized, were never taken seriously and Russian Zionists were forced to put up with continued lack of information and limited involvement.

With continued isolation from the rest of the Zionist movement, many Russians were concerned about the Zionists' non-traditional political attempts to alleviate the sufferings of the Jews in the East. Many did not understand Herzl's demand that no purchase of Palestinian land could be made without a political charter. News of Herzl's failure to obtain political rights for Palestine from the Turks led them to become impatient over the lack of progress. In September 1902, the Czarist government gave Zionists official approval to hold a Russian Zionist Congress in Minsk. One of their resolutions called for an immediate purchase of land by the Jewish National Fund in Palestine.<sup>104</sup> In November 1902, several Russian members of the Zionist Congress, headed by the engineer, Menahem Ussishkin, set up their own company called

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<sup>102</sup> Shmuel Almog, "People and Land in Modern Jewish Nationalism," in *The Essential Papers on Zionism*, eds. Jehuda Reinharz and Anita Shapira (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 55.

<sup>103</sup> Max Mandelstamm to [E.]A.C., 18 Oct. 1898 in ed. Heymann, *The Minutes*, 51-53.

<sup>104</sup> Heymann, intro. to *The Minutes*, 21.

*Ge'ulah* for the purchase of land in Palestine. For Herzl, these actions were a clear challenge to his political and diplomatic efforts in Palestine. Herzl, however, did not want to create more conflict and offered limited support for the group with the understanding that Ussishkin was merely building up the financial credit for the Jews within Palestine. The group eventually won commitments from other Jewish banks as well as the Jewish Colonial Trust and the Anglo-Palestine Company of England.<sup>105</sup>

This division between the Russian and Western Jews was further fueled by a scandal over Herzl's 1902 book *Altneuland* (*The Old New Land*), in which Herzl imagined the Jewish state as a utopian program based on a mixture of collective ownership as well as private enterprise. The Ukrainian born author, Ahad ha-Am harshly criticized the book as a literary and stylistic failure. Herzl took Ahad ha-Am's words as a personal attack against himself and the Zionist movement and asked his Vice President, Max Nordau, to respond to Ahad ha-Am. Nordau's inflammatory response in the March 13, 1903 issue of the paper *Die Welt* gave the unintended impression that Herzl was representing the glorious culture of the West whereas Ahad ha-Am represented the uncultured Jews from the East.<sup>106</sup> The fight then degenerated into hostility between Western and Eastern Jews, between the politically liberated Westerners and the "backward" Easterners.

All these issues between Russian delegates and the political Zionist movement boiled over in Herzl's announcement of East Africa at the Sixth Zionist Congress. Disappointment in the failure of El Arish, the increasing violence at home, the growing tensions between Eastern and Western Jews, and the belief that action in gradual settlement of Palestine must be taken immediately led many Russians to harshly criticize this project.

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<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 20-25.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

Supporters of Herzl, however, who mostly consisted of Western Jews, saw the East African Proposal as a practical opportunity for political recognition of a Jewish state that should not be rejected out of hand. A minority of Russians also expressed support for the plan stating that Russian Jews were “going to hell itself” with the increasing violence in Russia and that even East Africa was preferable to this torture. They suggested then that the Basle Programme be amended so that it included not only Palestine but other lands that could be considered for a Jewish homeland.<sup>107</sup> This amendment was not seriously considered but the supporters did call for a vote, as the letter from Sir Clement Hill had suggested, on the formation of a commission to at least investigate the land of East Africa. The final tally was 295 votes in favor and 177 votes against. In protest, Russian members walked out and only returned after Herzl himself followed them and pleaded for their forbearance, reassuring them of his commitment to Palestine by declaring in Hebrew the words of the Psalm 137, “If I ever forget thee, O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget its cunning.”<sup>108</sup> Thus, despite strong Russian protests, majority rule had determined that the Zionist movement would send a commission to further investigate settlement in East Africa.

Herzl was exhausted by his efforts and noted after the end of the Sixth Zionist Congress that if the East African commission succeeded but Palestinian efforts failed, he would offer East Africa to the Seventh Zionist Congress and resign. He even formulated his resignation speech:

I recognize that this [the East African proposal] had produced a decisive split in our movement, and this rift is centered about my own person. Although I was originally only a Jewish State man—*n’importe où* [no matter where]—, later I did lift up the flag of Zion and became myself a *Lover of Zion*. Palestine is the only land where our people can come to rest. But hundreds of thousands need immediate help.

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<sup>107</sup> Minutes of the Zionist General Council, 23 Aug. 1903 in ed. Heymann, *The Minutes*, 101-102.

<sup>108</sup> Weisbord, *African Zion*, 148.

There is only one way to solve this conflict: I must resign my leadership.<sup>109</sup>

Here it seems that Herzl's original excitement over the East African offer had been sapped. The debate surrounding the British offer forced him to realize that the ideal he had envisioned for the East African homeland was an unrealistic position considering the bitter divides among the Zionists. His resignation speech also suggests the recognition that his political and secular emphasis for the Jewish state was aiding to this division since his political vision was not the consensus of all Zionist delegates. He realized that in order to maintain unity in the Zionist movement, the direction of the Zionist movement must be only aimed for Palestine or he must resign.

### **Continued Reaction to the East African Offer**

Russian reaction to the East African offer did not end with the closing of the Sixth Zionist Congress. Ussishkin of the *Ge'ulah*, who was in Palestine at the time of the Congress but who was still voted in as a delegate, responded by declaring that he was not bound to support the Congress's resolution for a commission to Africa. He and eight other Russian members of the Congress secretly met at Kharkov, Russia where they contended that the East African project must not be allowed. They issued an ultimatum to Herzl that he promise to never consider territory outside of Palestine or Syria and that, if he refused, an independent body of Zionists would be formed in opposition. Herzl received wind of their revolt and wrote of his disgust at this division of Zionism: "They have first acquired all the bad characteristics of professional politicians. I shall first of all mobilize the lower masses against these inciters to rebellion...In

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<sup>109</sup> Herzl, 31 Aug. 1903, *The Complete Diaries*, vol. 4, 1547-1548.

addition, I shall cut off their supply of money, etc.”<sup>110</sup> At the time, Herzl defused the situation by publishing the demands of the Kharkov Conference in the newspaper, *Die Welt*. He received an outpouring of support against these Russian rebels, which eventually led to the removal of the nine Russians as delegates in the Seventh Zionist Congress, but the emotional reaction did not save his East African project from further criticism.<sup>111</sup>

The notion of a Jewish homeland in East Africa was sparking a debate all across the globe—perhaps none more intense in England. Dr. Moses Gaster, Chief Rabbi of the Sephardic community in England, held the view that the East Africa proposal was a contradiction of everything that Zionism stood for since it ignored the entire purpose of the movement in founding a homeland in Palestine. He believed that while Herzl may have the noble purpose of establishing a temporary refuge for the persecuted Jews, such a project should be reserved for special organizations apart from the official Zionism movement. By adhering to East Africa, the Zionists were stretching precious human and financial resources that should be focused solely on acquiring Palestine. He also feared that a settlement in East Africa would result in Zionism losing the respect of countries as well as Christian supporters who based their support in Zionism on the Jews’ religious and historical heritage to Palestine.<sup>112</sup>

Another English Zionist, Lucien Wolf, also strongly disapproved of the East African scheme. Unlike Gaster, who had been shocked by the choice of land, however, Wolf was more concerned by Herzl’s plan to encourage the citizens to maintain their European identity. Like Herzl, Wolf believed that the stereotypical vices of Jewish character were caused by marginalization and Christian persecution. Yet, while Herzl believed this would end with Jewish

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<sup>110</sup> Herzl, 4 Dec. 1903, *The Complete Diaries*, vol. 4, 1572.

<sup>111</sup> Weisbord, *African Zion*, 150.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 151; 153.

entrance into politics even in a separate state, Wolf believed that the isolation of Jews in a single state would continue to encourage the development of these unsavory Jewish vices. He also felt that this retreat into a purely Jewish community would grant victory to the anti-Semitists since it would seem to prove the Jews' inability to assimilate into modern society. If the movement ultimately failed it would also support the notion of Jewish incapacity to run civil states.<sup>113</sup>

Proving a worthy British adversary to these opponents of East Africa was Israel Zangwill, one of Herzl's most dedicated followers and a later leader of the East African cause. Unlike Gaster, Zangwill believed that East Africa was not drawing the Zionist movement away from Palestine, but rather offering a significant political and cultural step towards its realization. Zangwill, who believed in Herzl's demands for political sovereignty, compared the East African project to the creation of a Jewish empire backwards by first founding its colony and then establishing the motherland in Palestine. Unlike Wolf, Zangwill believed that East Africa, or any land, offered the Jews a chance to prove to the world that they were no longer infected with the Marrano malady, but with the new Maccabean spirit. Zangwill stated his vision for the Jewish state as one surpassing even Christian states in his 1904 pamphlet *The East African Question: Zionism and England's Offer*:

Let the Jews, with their genius for righteousness, establish a Jewish State in which justice shall be better done than in any existing State, in which morality stands higher and crime lower, in which social problems are better solved, in which woman's rights are equal to man's, in which poverty and wealth are not so terribly divided, in which the simple life is the universal ideal; let them light this beacon fire of theirs upon Zion's hill, or East Africa's plateau, and they will do more for the Jewish mission than in twenty centuries of pulpit talking.<sup>114</sup>

Zangwill also argued that by first establishing a homeland in East Africa, the Jews would have a greater chance at initial success than in Palestine where they would have to face significant

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<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

<sup>114</sup> Zangwill, *East African Question*, 18.

cultural and historical problems. This one success in East Africa would raise the political stock of the Jews as well as the possibility of the world's acceptance of Jewish ownership of Palestine. Then, once again, Jews could prove their worth by overcoming the irrigation and deforestation problems in Palestine to achieve a thriving community. Carrying this flag for East Africa, Zangwill managed to drum up significant English support under the title of Territorialists.

While debates such as these raged within the Zionist communities, Britain was also facing protests from other sectors of society. Many white settlers in East Africa were enraged by the prospect of a Jewish settlement in what they considered the best lands of East Africa. In the August 27, 1903 issue of the *East African Standard*, a paper sympathetic with the whites, stated its opinion that the best sort of settler for East Africa was the practical farmer who would bring capital and immediate assistance to the growth of the colony. The paper, which termed the project "Jewganda,"<sup>115</sup> noted that since the Jewish settlement was to act as a sort of refuge for the Jews, the expected type of settler would be poor and unable to contribute to the investments in the land. They suggested that the British government's encouragement of poor settlers seemed to contradict the Government Emigration Office's recommendation that settlers not come with less than £300.<sup>116</sup> *The East African Standard* also suggested that Jews coming from Russia and Western Europe would not remain loyal to the British or East African cause—a claim similar to that of witness testimony given to the British Royal Commission of Alien Immigration. They believed that the Jews were naturally an inassimilable race and could not be trusted to produce for the good of the settlement.

These opinions of the *East African Standard* reflected many of the sentiments of white settlers in East Africa. The white settlers formed a committee, headed by Lord Delamare, to

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<sup>115</sup> Elon, *Herzl*, 390.

<sup>116</sup> Weisbord, *African Zion*, 33; 87.

pressure the British government and the East African commissioner, Sir Charles Eliot, against such a Jewish settlement. They accused the Jews of lacking the knowledge, morals, and wherewithal to be able to survive on the land—characterizations not much different than Herzl's own description of his people. They also felt that the Jew was incapable of performing the agricultural work necessary for sustenance since they came from a culture of trade and commerce. Why, then, was Britain reserving this land for an alien population when it could be given to some of their own trusted, loyal race from England? Even giving it to British poor would be better than reserving it for aliens.<sup>117</sup>

Not all white settlers held this opinion of the East African proposal. A minority paper, *The East Africa & Uganda Mail*, noted that the Uganda Railroad had yet to bring forth the desired profits due to lack of settlement, that there was plenty of land available, and that what they believed was the proposed area of land was not really the best land anyways. *The East Africa & Uganda Mail* also compared Russia to the Egyptian pharaoh who had kept the Jews in exile until the God's deliverance through Moses. Christian missionaries in East Africa agreed with this characterization and viewed the Jewish arrival as a spiritual and material blessing.<sup>118</sup>

While white settlers in East Africa were reacting in these ways, Sir Charles Eliot, the East African Commissioner, was having his own reservations about the proposed Jewish settlement. Although he saw benefits to any sort of settlement, Eliot's experience with the Jews of Morocco and Turkey left him with the impression that Jews were insufficient farmers—a trait he thought indispensable to survival in the untilled lands of East Africa. Eliot also feared that Eastern European Jews would bring the baggage of racism and persecution, and stir up religious conflict

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<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 95-96.

among the Christians settlers.<sup>119</sup> More importantly, however, as time since the original offer continued to pass, Eliot felt that the chances of reserving the right land for the Zionists were dwindling. In November 1903, Eliot had sent the Foreign Office his suggestion that the Uasin Gishu Plateau would be a good spot for the Jewish settlement since it had highlands and was not far from the Uganda Railroad.<sup>120</sup> The publicity brought by the announcement of the Zionist settlement in the East Africa, however, brought the prospect of land to the attention of both British and South Africans. In addition, in February 1904, the British government also asked him to grant a large piece of land to the *East Africa Syndicate*. As the white settlers had hoped, more of their own loyal brethren were showing interest in land grants and taking up the remaining land of the Protectorate. Eliot later expressed some of his increasing concerns in his 1905 book, *The East Africa Protectorate*:

It is practically certain that in the near future all this surrounding area [of the Uasin Gishu Plateau] will be occupied by people of British race, and, that being so, though I am no anti-Semite, I greatly doubt the expediency of putting in the midst of them a body of alien Israelites.<sup>121</sup>

Eliot feared, then, that forcing a Jewish homeland into close proximity with settlers still competing for land in East Africa would inevitably led to conflicts and tension.

### **Developments of the East African Proposal**

With criticism from both Jews and white settlers swirling around the East African plan, the Foreign Office and the Zionists were placed in a difficult position of continued negotiations. Compounding these problems, for the Zionist movement was the resignation of Chamberlain

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<sup>119</sup> Eliot, *The East Africa*, 177-178.

<sup>120</sup> See appendix A for a map of the East African Protectorate.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 177.

from position of Colonial Secretary at the end of September 1903. Chamberlain intended to focus the rest of his political career on tariff reformation, but his exit from a powerful governmental position meant the loss of an important advocate for the Zionist cause. His replacement, Alfred Lyttelton, was less interested in pursuing the establishment of a Jewish settlement. Greenberg, however, continued to meet with Foreign Office officials who asked that the Zionists contact the East African Commissioner, Charles Eliot, in order to determine the lands open to investigation. Progress was slow and further confusion was created in September 1903 by a Russian delegate from the Zionist Congress who set about unilaterally negotiating with Britain over a Cyprus project for a Jewish homeland. More time was lost as the Foreign Office confusedly thought, for a time, that the two projects were part of the same effort.<sup>122</sup>

In late November and December, Greenberg met in a series of conferences with Sir Clement Hill, who had signed the letter read at the Sixth Zionist Congress, to further discuss developments in the East African project. Throughout these meetings, Hill made it clear that since the start of negotiations in April 1903, changes had been made concerning the land to be reserved for the Jews. Hill explained that this was due to the limited nature of land available and fear that the size of the land grant originally offered, the 200 square miles between Nairobi and Mau Escarpment suggested by Chamberlain, would create opposition from both East African settlers and the English themselves. Hill suggested instead that the actual area to be offered would be more along the lines of 500,000 to 600,000 acres probably in the province of Tanaland, which lay on the southeastern portion of the East African Protectorate. Hill stated that even this size would cost about £15,000 per year to guard the settlement from raiders.<sup>123</sup> Hill also made it

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<sup>122</sup> Weisbord, *African Zion*, 162.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.

clear that the Foreign Office was well aware of the criticisms being leveled at it and that Britain was becoming more uncomfortable with its commitment to the East Africa project.<sup>124</sup>

These meetings were a significant setback for the Zionists. Such a small offering of land, which Greenberg compared to the size of Derbyshire, was incapable of supporting the Zionists' plan for both family settlements and cattle farming. Herzl agreed that this was too small and also rejected the idea of a settlement in the coastal Tanaland Province since he felt the land was too low and not suitable for Europeans. To compound these practical complications, it was also at this time that a mentally disturbed Russian, who declared his opposition to the East African project, attempted to assassinate Max Nordau, Herzl's Vice President. Secretly, and in a memo to the delegates of the G.A.C., Herzl expressed his belief that the Zionists would have to abandon the East African plan.

Herzl, however, was not willing to allow the British to pull out without offering some compensation to the Zionists. It was the British who had stated their purpose of helping the Jews and it was their recent limitations on East African land that was causing the Zionists to pull back.<sup>125</sup> On December 13, 1903, Herzl published a letter addressed to the leader of the English Zionist Federation, Sir Francis Montefiore, in which he explained the Zionists' position on the East Africa project. He never stated outright that the plan would be abandoned but intimated the hope that the British would replace the failure in East Africa with yet another attempt at Jewish settlement in El Arish. In this way, Herzl was diplomatically holding Britain to the pledge of East Africa until it found another viable homeland for the Jews, preferably in El Arish. Herzl

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<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 164.

<sup>125</sup> Herzl to Joe, 31 Dec. 1903, *The Complete Diaries*, vol. 4, 1586.

succeeded in keeping communications with England open while playing on England's sense of honor and obligation to the Zionists.<sup>126</sup>

In line with this plan of diplomatic pressure, Greenberg continued to meet with members of the Foreign Office throughout January of 1904 and even received the support of Joseph Chamberlain who, although out of office, still took great interest in the Zionist position. Greenberg's excitement with the plan was renewed when the Foreign Office offered 4950 square miles on the Uasin Gishu Plateau, which Sir Charles Eliot, Commissioner of the East Africa Protectorate, had first suggested to the Foreign Office at the end of 1903. The land had great potential since it was not far from the Uganda Railroad, on high land, and near Lake Victoria. Greenberg immediately wired Herzl about this new development and urged him to accept the offer.<sup>127</sup> Herzl, who still intended to use East Africa merely as a diplomatic pawn, wanted Britain to write out a charter for the colony. The Foreign Office refused, however, until the Zionists had sent out an expedition to investigate the land set aside by Eliot.

In an effort to reunite the Zionist movement and broach the topic of the East Africa Commission, Herzl held an emergency G.A.C. meeting in April 1904 in Vienna. At this meeting, where he also addressed the rebellion of the Russian delegates of Kharkov, Herzl asked the delegates to be reasonable and at least consider the East African offer while continuing to look forward to Palestine. Ussishkin, the leader of the Kharkov rebellion, headed two days of debate against the East African cause. A resolution was then put forth calling for an expedition to East Africa but that "the question of the colonisation [sic] of East Africa will not be decided till the Seventh Congress"<sup>128</sup> to be held in Basle Switzerland in 1905. The resolution was passed

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<sup>126</sup> Weisbord, 168.

<sup>127</sup> Herzl, 9 Feb. 1904, *The Complete Diaries*, vol. 4, 1611.

almost unanimously and Herzl could claim an important victory in temporarily pulling together the splitting factions of the Zionist movement. Nothing further could be done, however, until a Zionist expedition was sent to East Africa.

### **Signs of British Reservation**

While Britain's offer of land seemed to show an interest in renewing relations with the Zionists, the Foreign Office's memos at this time show increasing uneasiness over the wisdom of such a plan with the Zionists. They began to see that Herzl's settlement plan, although one that was to take place "immediately" after political rights had been acquired, was to be characterized by gradual settlement of individual settlers before the rest of the Jews would settle. This slow influx of settlers would not benefit Britain's plan for the development of the land. Colonial Secretary Alfred Lyttelton feared that the Jews were incapable as agriculturalists and would soon give up when encountering difficulties.<sup>129</sup> He was also concerned that these individual settlers would not be responsible to the British government. In addition, as noted before, Charles Eliot was having his own concerns about the availability of land for the Zionists. Eliot had offered the Uasin Gishu Plateau as an option for the Jewish settlement in November 1903, but since that time, British and South African settlers had been pouring into East Africa and he feared that the Uasin Gishu Plateau would be claimed within a year.<sup>130</sup>

In addition to these concerns from inside the Foreign Office and East Africa, Britain was also being pressured by the House of Commons for information on the East African proposal. In the period of questioning before the House of Commons, Colonial Secretary Albert Lyttelton

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<sup>128</sup> Resolution of G.A.C. in Vienna on April 1904 quoted in Weisbord, *African Zion*, 178.

<sup>129</sup> Weisbord, *African Zion*, 172.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 174.

consistently refused to provide more information of the details of the offer and, in doing so, thoroughly frustrating House representative Cathcart Wason. Wason questioned Foreign Office officials: “Why should this alienation of territory be shrouded in mystery, and why should the House of Commons be absolutely refused information on the subject?”<sup>131</sup> In an effort to obtain these answers, Wason called a special meeting of the House of Commons on June 20, 1904.

In this meeting, Wason stated his strongly held belief that the East African proposal was an ill conceived plan that did not take into account the inevitable clashes of white settlers with the natives. Wason contended that the main purpose of the Uganda Railroad had been to protect the dignity of the natives by ending the slave trade. Encouraging white settlement in East Africa would negate this purpose: “To establish a colony of aliens whose thoughts and whose language was not ours, was a cruel wrong to inflict”<sup>132</sup> on East Africa. Several other members agreed with Wason that the settlement of Jews in East Africa would lead to troubles because of their inassimilable nature.<sup>133</sup>

But while some members argued that East Africa was as an opportunity of protecting the Jews as well as the cultivation of the land, further concerns were voiced over the resignation of Sir Charles Eliot as Commissioner of the East African Protectorate in 1904. Eliot had resigned because the Foreign Office would not allow him to reserve land grants for sheep herders because of fears that this land reservation would interfere with native rights. Eliot was furious that the Foreign Office was interfering when they had previously demanded he reserve 400 square miles of land for the *East African Syndicate* in the middle of native grazing lands. Many in Britain,

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<sup>131</sup> Cathcart Wason, Speech to the House of Commons, 9 June 1904, *Hansard Parliamentary Debates*, 4<sup>th</sup> ser., vol. CXXXV (May 17-June 13, 1904) (London: Wyman and Sons, Ltd., 1904), col. 1295.

<sup>132</sup> Cathcart Wason, Speech to the House of Commons, 20 June 1904, *Hansard Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 4<sup>th</sup> ser., vol. CXXXVI (June 14-June 28, 1904), (London: Wyman and Sons, Ltd., 1904), col. 563.

<sup>133</sup> Haviland Burke, Speech to the House of Commons, 20 June 1904, *Hansard Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 4<sup>th</sup> ser., vol. CXXXVI (June 14-June 28, 1904) (London: Wyman and Sons, Ltd., 1904), col. 568.

however, were unaware of this reason and thought Eliot's discontent was connected, as Wason had intimated, with the possibility of a Jewish settlement and the resulting conflicts with the natives. David Lloyd George, the member responsible for helping Greenberg draft the original charter for the East African homeland, stated that "As he understood it, Sir Charles Eliot had raised objections to this settlement, and that was one of the reasons why he resigned" and that because of this "the matter assumed much more serious proportions."<sup>134</sup> Earl Henry Percy, answering for the Foreign Office, would not clarify Eliot's objections. This only increased the House of Commons' suspicions to the ill-advised nature of the Jewish settlement in East Africa.

### **East African Expedition**

While Britain was struggling with critics within the government, the Zionists were enduring their own crisis in the death of their beloved leader, Theodor Herzl. Suffering from heart problems and illness brought on by his tireless efforts, Herzl passed away at the early age of 44 on July 3, 1904. Shortly before his death, Herzl had reunified the Zionist movement again at the G.A.C. conference in Vienna, but the movement now lacked the charismatic leader who had the both the vision and practical resolve to take action. The man who had founded the political movement and guided it by pure force of will was gone and the recently patched factions were set to collapse. David Wolffsohn, one of Herzl's faithful followers, took his position as the new President of the movement, but the vacuum of leadership was noticeable. A division was being formed between the East African supporters led by Israel Zangwill and Palestinian supporters led by the Russian, Chaim Weizmann.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> David Lloyd George, Speech to the House of Commons, 20 June 1904, *Hansard Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 4<sup>th</sup> ser., vol. CXXXVI (June 14-June 28, 1904) (London: Wyman and Sons, Ltd., 1904), col. 578.

<sup>135</sup> Chaim Weizmann would later become the first President of Israel from 1949-1952.

Despite its loss, the Zionist movement was determined to follow through with resolution of the G.A.C. conference to send a commission to East Africa. Limited by the fact that they could not fund the expedition with the Jewish Colonial Fund or any organizations connected with the Zionists movement, progress on the expedition was delayed nearly three months until they were able to find an anonymous private financier in late July 1904. The British, already pushed by Parliament to hand over a report on the issue of the East Africa proposal, were becoming impatient with delays. In November 11, 1904, the Foreign Office notified Greenberg that because of the increasing number of British settlers in East Africa, they no longer felt obligated to reserve the proposed area for the Jewish settlement from land applications.<sup>136</sup>

In late November 1904, Greenberg finally managed to organize a three man team to set out on the expedition. It included Major A. St. Hill Gibbons, a well-known African explorer, Professor Alfred Kaiser, a Swiss scientific adviser with South African experience, and N. Wilbusch, a Russian civil engineer and the only Jew on the expedition. They set out on December 28, 1904, landed in Mombasa two weeks later, and spent two months exploring East Africa. During the expedition, they interviewed some Jews who had already begun settlement by farming in the area between Nairobi and the Mau Escarpment (the land originally suggested by Chamberlain) as well as settlers in the Uasin Gishu Plateau (the land suggested by Charles Eliot). These settlers were mostly from South Africa and were supported by Lord Delamare, the British noble who had helped lead a small group of settlers into East Africa in 1902. After returning from the expedition, Kaiser and Wilbusch each submitted their own individual report with Major Gibbons, the leader, reviewing their reports and adding his own insight. These were then handed to the Foreign Office.

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<sup>136</sup> Weisbord, *African Zion*, 205.

None of the reports painted a promising picture of East Africa. Kaiser reported that the Jewish settlers were not encouraging when discussing the difficulties which agricultural settlement faced in East Africa. The economic conditions were demanding, immigration expensive, and the amount of agricultural output did not equal the labor expended. Wilbusch, who seemed the most pessimistic of all, also declared that he found no useful raw materials. He also stated that land was best suited to cattle or ostrich breeding but that the limited availability of land made even this impossible and that only a few hundred families could be settled. Major Gibbons, who was the most optimistic, stated that he felt that of 4000 square miles of East Africa which could be colonized, only 1000 could be used for agricultural purposes while, as Kaiser and Wilbusch suggested, the rest was best suited for pastoral/animal industries. At the most, Gibbons felt 15,000-20,000 settlers could be sustained on the land and that an experimental scheme should be attempted.<sup>137</sup>

The report was submitted to the G.A.C. at Vienna on May 22, 1905. The conditions of the report convinced the body of delegates that the G.A.C. was unable to recommend that the Zionists proceed with the East Africa project. Recognizing the excessive time, money and energy that had been expended on the project, the G.A.C. still authorized the commission of a committee to meet with other Zionist bodies to see what they felt about the East African project. Finally, however, from July 27 to August 2, 1905, the Seventh Zionist Congress convened to consider the East African proposal in light of the commission's report. Nearly two years since Herzl had first announced Britain's proposal of East Africa, the Seventh Zionist Congress rejected the East African project based on the expedition's report and determined that no other

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<sup>137</sup> Weisbord, *African Zion*, 207-217; In an interview years later, Wilbusch stated that he felt that Gibbons had been sent on the expedition to return this relatively positive report. The objectivity of this statement, however, is thrown into question by the fact that there was considerable tension between Wilbusch and Gibbons while on the trip together. Regardless of Gibbons' intentions, however, the report was far from encouraging.

colonizing activity outside of Palestine and adjacent lands would be considered. On August 8, 1905, Britain received the official word that the Zionist movement had dropped the East African proposal.<sup>138</sup>

The Colonial Office, who received power from the Foreign Office over the East African Protectorate in April 1905, was clearly relieved that it was no longer obligated to help the Zionists establish a Jewish state in East Africa. With the negative report of the expedition and the continued elapse of time, Colonial Secretary Lyttelton was eager to offer the land reserved for the Zionists to British settlers who, he feared, would not want the land because of rumors that it had already been offered to the Jews. Prior to the meeting of the Seventh Zionist Congress, H.J. Reed of the East Africa Department suggested that they wait a month before renouncing their commitment to the Zionists. The assistant under-secretary, Reginal L. Antrobus, felt, however, that an outright rejection of Britain's responsibility to the East African project would offer the Zionists a reason to unite and pressure Britain into living through its obligations. The Colonial Office decided to remain quiet and allow the Proposal to die its natural death, thus diplomatically allowing the British to escape further responsibility with the Zionists. The decision of the Seventh Zionist Congress, then, was the official release that allowed the British to escape without damage to its political and social reputation.<sup>139</sup>

### **Split of the Zionist Movement**

While the official Zionist movement had rejected the East African proposal, some Zionists such as Israel Zangwill clung to the hope of its potential success. A delegate at the Seventh Zionist Congress, Zangwill's anger at the Zionists' abandonment of East Africa led to

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<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 219.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 221-222.

his decision to split from the movement to form the Jewish Territorial Organization (ITO). Based in London, the ITO's main goal was to revive the East Africa project or, if not that, then some other practical scheme for Jewish settlement. Although it was condemned as a detriment to the Zionist scheme since it split a movement already weakened by the loss of Herzl, the ITO gained great popularity, especially in England. Zangwill continually contrasted the ITO, which he characterized as practical, businesslike and active, to the official Zionist movement, led by Russian Zionist Chaim Weizmann, which only pursued the Palestinian goal and which he saw as ineffective and fruitless. By 1914, the ITO possessed almost twenty branches in London and over thirty in the English provinces.<sup>140</sup>

Armed with the practical, persistent vision that had possessed Herzl, Zangwill began approaching the Colonial Office in 1905 for the chance to discuss the East African offer. In these meetings, which happened over a period of two years, Zangwill often evoked Britain's concerns over German influence in East Africa as well as continued Eastern European immigration to England because of the pogroms. Negotiations with the Colonial Office stalled until new hope was raised with the resignation of Conservative Prime Minister Balfour and, with him, several Conservative members of the Colonial Office. These vacancies in the Colonial Office were quickly filled by Liberal Party members, such as Winston Churchill, who expressed interest in helping the Territorialists. On March 26, 1906, Zangwill was given the opportunity to speak to the new Colonial Secretary, Lord Elgin, in which he was given the vague impression that the Colonial Office was willing to consider granting the Zionists self-government. However, Elgin was unwilling to present political sanction to the Jews before a specific plan was shown the British government with proof of financial backing. Zangwill and the ITO continued appealing to the government and even sent one of their followers to East Africa to discuss the

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<sup>140</sup> Cohen, *Churchill and the Jews*, 86; 90.

possibility of a Jewish settlement with the Protectorate's officials. The Colonial Office, however, was unimpressed by Zangwill's attempts to pressure British aid without first offering a practical plan to them.<sup>141</sup>

Meanwhile, Britain was also facing increasing problems with the Indian population in East Africa who protested British land reservation for whites. The officials privately admitted that there was no longer enough available land to sustain a Jewish settlement in East Africa. As time passed and violence against Russian Jews continued to escalate, the ITO conceded that East Africa was moving too slowly for their practical purposes. Instead, Zangwill began to promote Jewish immigration to America and Canada.<sup>142</sup> In this way, interest in East Africa as a Jewish homeland passed from the Zionist consciousness.

## **Conclusion**

In 1917, the Zionist movement achieved a huge political victory with Britain's Balfour Declaration, which stated that Britain would only accept Palestine as the homeland for the Jews. Although it would take several decades before the Zionists' dreams could come to realization, the state of Israel was finally founded in 1948. In honor of the incredible accomplishments of their great leader who helped lay the groundwork for such an accomplishment, the Zionists reserved a special burial place for Herzl on a revered hill named Mount Herzl.

Herzl and the Zionists had faced a monumental task of uniting a people with conflicting beliefs, cultures, and traditions. Herzl set about fixing the Zionist movement as he best knew—creating a political Congress, calling for revival of the Maccabean spirit of statehood and civic virtue, and insisting on the Zionists' following of his leadership. His unique call to take practical

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<sup>141</sup> Weisbord, *African Zion*, 240.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 247.

and visible action attracted both followers who supported Herzl's political theories as well as the desperate traditionalists from Eastern Europe who were eager to grasp any hope of escape from the violence of anti-Semitism. While Herzl's leadership in these political areas was invaluable, his inability to understand the cultural, historical and religious significance of Zionism to traditional Jews disadvantaged his presidency of the Zionist movement. Caught up in the excitement of this new movement, many ignored the fact that while Herzl had been able to externally unite the Zionists in a political Congress, the bridge between political Zionists and traditional Zionists was far from being breached. Herzl's eagerness to obtain a political charter also made him somewhat oblivious to the fact that not everyone saw the practical side of Zionism like he did.

To make Herzl's task of political Zionism even more difficult was the infectious impatience which Herzl infused into the Zionist movement. Within a year after the publication of his revolutionary pamphlet, *The Jewish State*, Herzl had already managed to organize a Zionist political force structured with its own Congress and democratic involvement. He was promising them similar success in the establishment of a homeland. Why could he not also achieve this within a few years? This impatience was made all the more urgent by the news of anti-Semitic violence in Eastern Europe. These anxieties for immediate success were exciting but also unrealistic. Herzl and the Zionists were expecting to convince a powerful state to grant a political charter to a newborn and untested Zionist movement. In addition, they also expected to transplant an entire people into an unfamiliar land in a matter of a few years. All these were monumental, colossal goals to achieve within a short space of time. Expectations for the early Zionists, however, ran high and, in this way, anger and frustration came just as quickly as failure. Herzl's inability to earn charters for the lands of Palestine or El Arish tainted his reputation as

well as the Zionists faith in his desire to obtain Palestine. The ultimate announcement of the East African proposal revealed the weakness of an organization that had been brought together in idealism and excitement, but which differed ideologically, culturally, and practically.

Herzl's statement of a future resignation at the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> Zionist Congress suggests his understanding that Palestine was the only acceptable option to Zionists. The bitter criticism that erupted in his face at the Sixth Zionist Congress awakened him to the intense divisions in the Zionist Congress between those who only sought political autonomy and those who desired the traditional cultural and historical homeland of Palestine. As such, in order to save the unity of the movement, Herzl was determined to only see East Africa as a bartering tool to obtain better land from England, such as El Arish or Palestine. It seems then that once Herzl published the letter addressed to Sir Francis Montefiore in late 1903 there was no legitimate chance for a settlement in East Africa. Any further negotiations that Herzl entertained in the beginning of 1904 was more from an interest of using Britain's obligation to East Africa to obtain Palestine or El Arish.

As time and patience within Herzl's failures evaporated, it seemed that only Herzl's dynamic leadership (on display at the emergency G.A.C. conference in Vienna) was the glue that kept the movement together. Following his death in 1904, the split of the movement into the Zionist Congress and the ITO seemed inevitable. Future attempts to obtain East Africa by Zangwill and the ITO continued to run into the same practical problems as Herzl and ended in failure.

Britain's approach to the East African project also reflects the difficulties which the project faced as the political and social scene of Britain changed over the course of a few years. Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain had indeed seemed genuinely concerned with the

amelioration of the Jewish situation by the fact that he continually advocated for Greenberg and, later, Zangwill, even after his exit from office. However, as an adept statesman, Chamberlain was also aware of British advantages to offering aid to the settlement of a Jewish homeland. These included domestic concerns surrounding the controversy of limiting Jewish immigration through the Alien Acts as well as colonial concerns with the development of the East African Protectorate. Both of these realities affected Chamberlain's offering of East Africa for a Jewish homeland.

The prospective for the advancement of these British interests through the Jewish homeland quickly changed in the course of a few years. When Chamberlain resigned from his position as Colonial Secretary to focus on promotion of tariff reform, the Zionists lost one of their biggest promoters in British government. In addition, the concerns which had influenced Chamberlain's consideration of the Jewish settlement of East Africa became less relevant to the British. The publicity caused by the announcement of the East African proposal had led to considerable interest in land grants by both British and South African colonists. The land was quickly being claimed and it seemed more profitable to invest the land with loyal British subjects than the alien immigrants of Eastern and Western Europe. Also, in 1905, the Alien Act was finally passed and avoided, in much extent, the previous accusations of anti-Semitism. In these ways, many of the reasons for Britain's initial interests in aiding the founding of a Jewish homeland were mitigated by the changing political scene in Britain.

Thus, from both the Zionist and British perspectives, Jewish settlement in East Africa seemed less likely as criticisms from both the Zionists and the British government seemed to make both Herzl and the British uncomfortable with the East African plan. Despite the disappointment brought by East Africa, however, Herzl and the early Zionist movement had

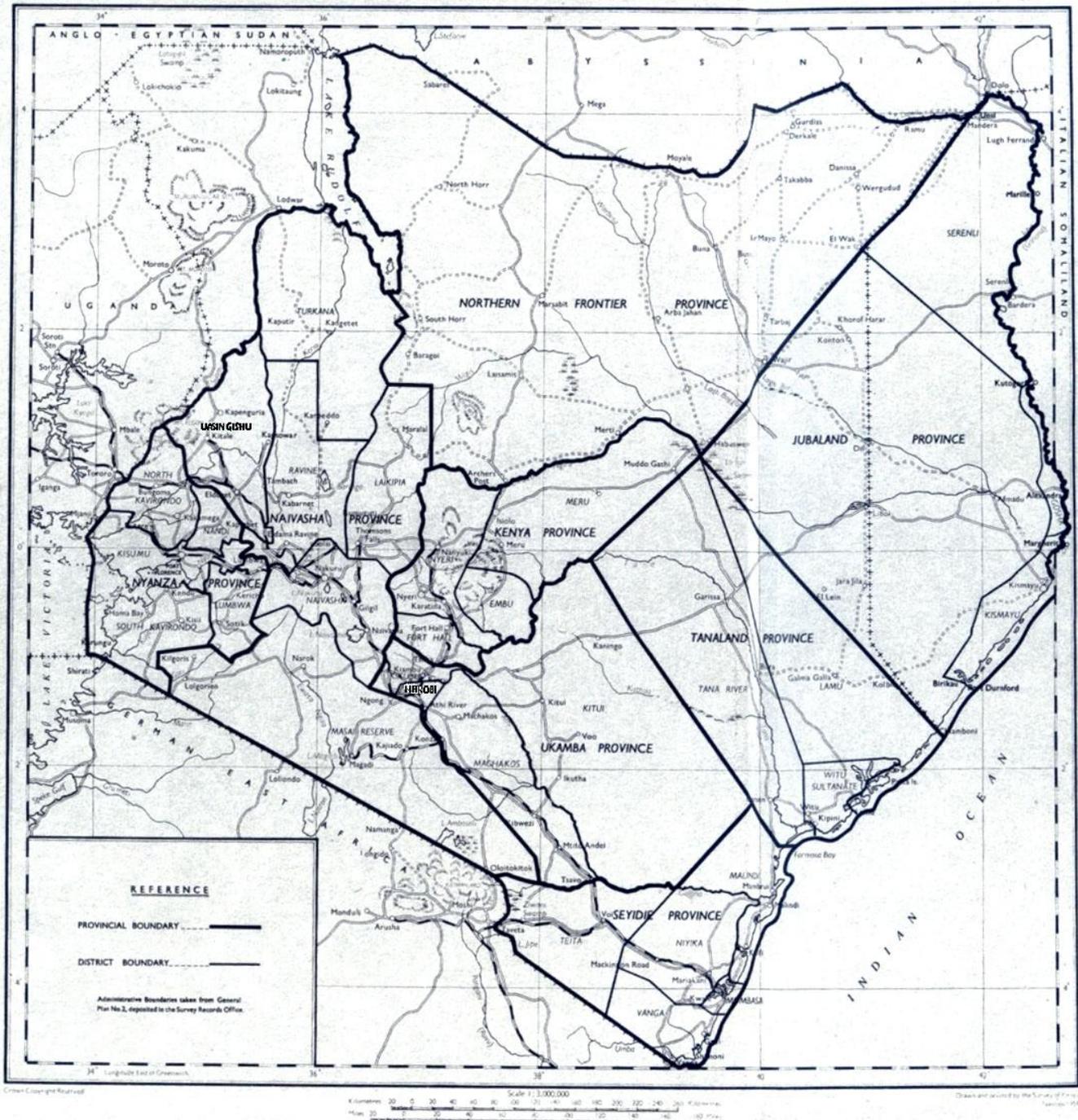
succeeded in laying the groundwork for political obtainment of Palestine. Their persistence and hard work established a relationship with Britain that eventually bore fruit in Britain's Balfour Declaration. The road to this establishment of a Jewish state had taken centuries, but, after years of persecution, Jews were finally able to call Palestine their home.

#### APPENDIX A

### **The Administrative Boundaries of the Old East African Protectorate 1918<sup>143</sup>**

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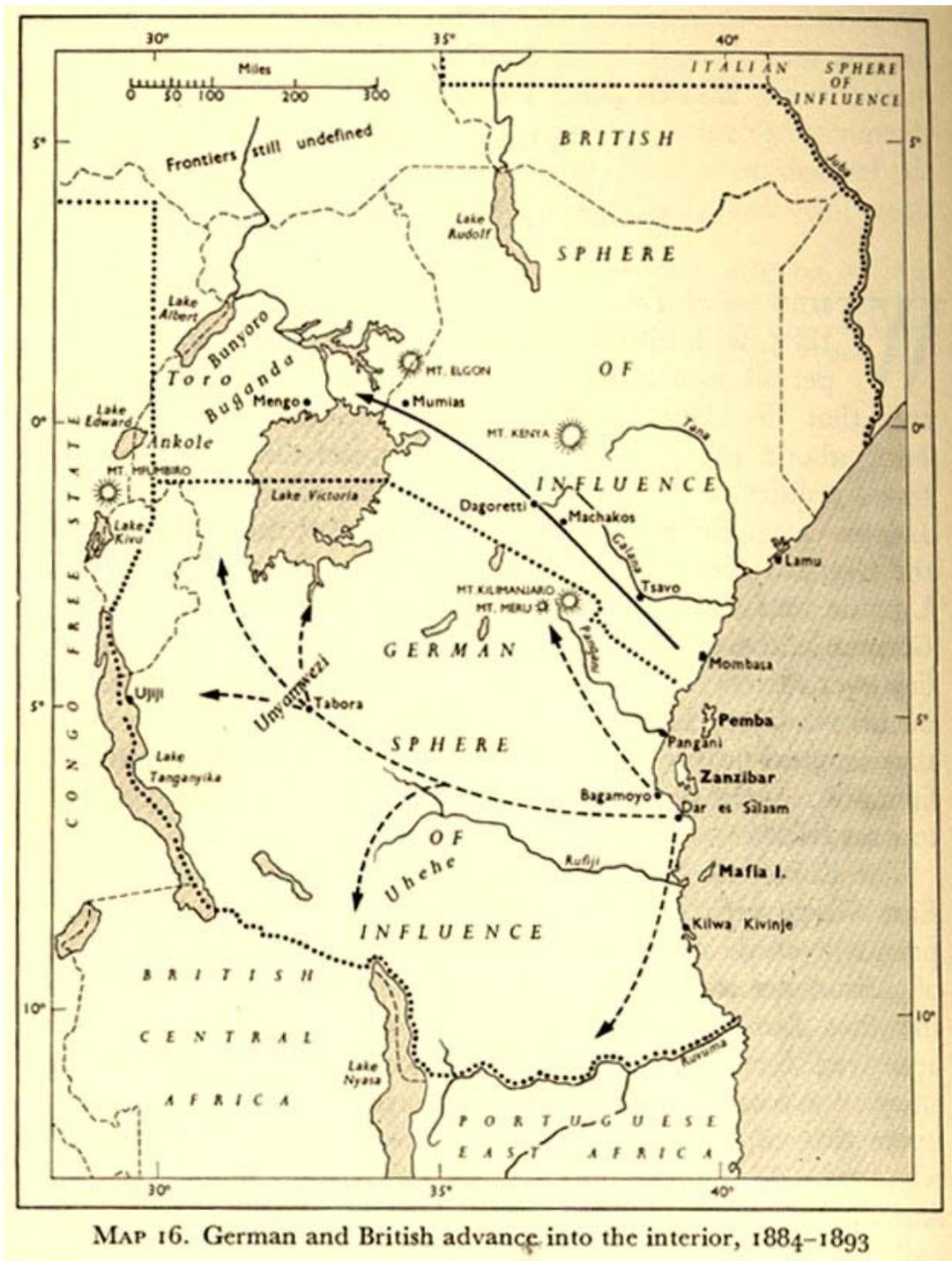
<sup>143</sup> Weisbord, *African Zion*, inside cover.



APPENDIX B

Map of German and British Advance into the East African Interior, 1884-1893<sup>144</sup>

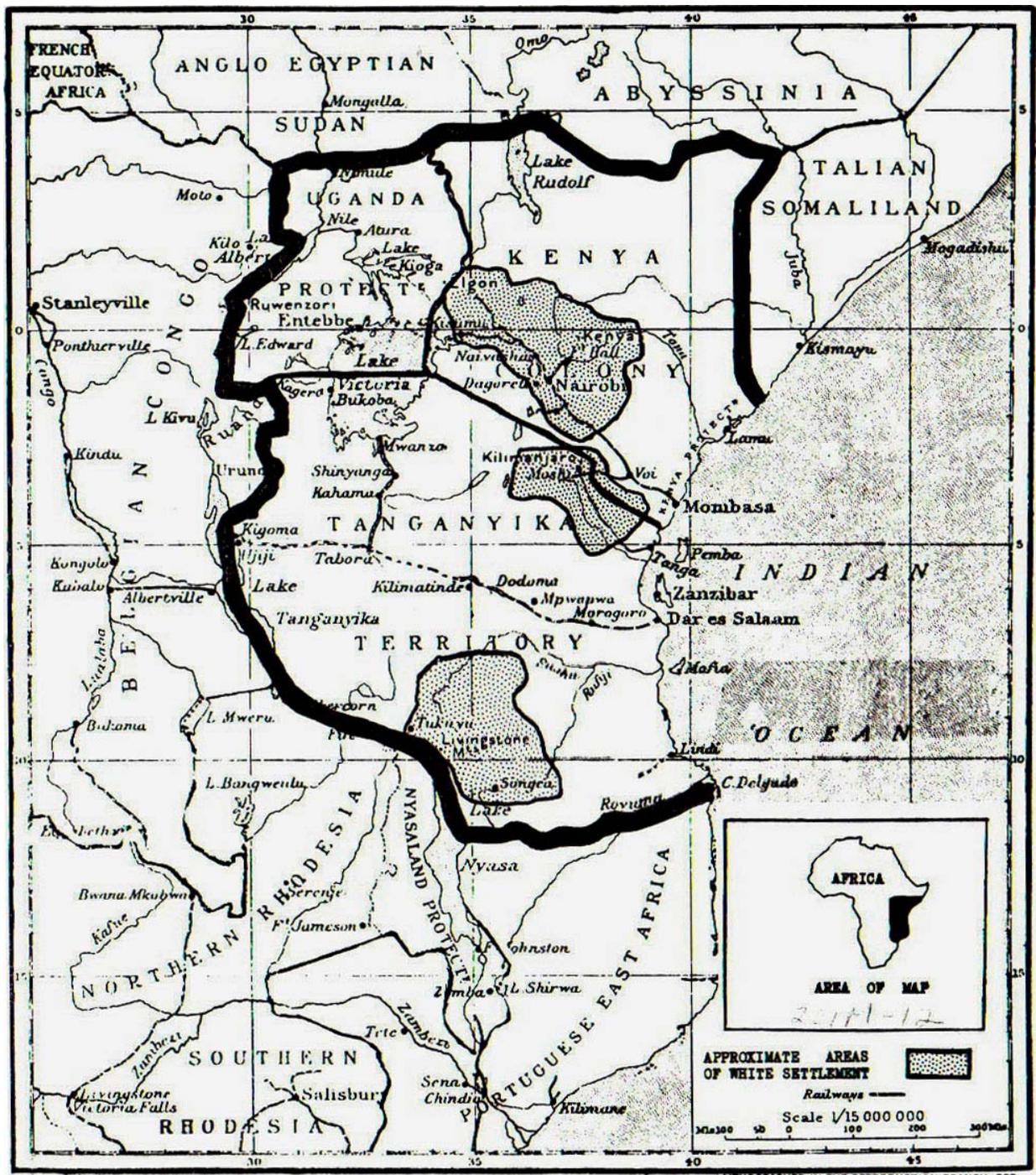
<sup>144</sup> Roland Oliver and Gervase Mathew, eds., Map 16, German and British advance into the interior, 1884-1893, *History of East Africa*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 392.



APPENDIX C

Major Areas of White Settlement in East Africa<sup>145</sup>

<sup>145</sup> Buffalo Central Library Map Collection, 201M-12: Major areas of white settlement in British East Africa.



NO. A-3592-R & A, OSS  
8 MAY 1945

Map adapted from A.G. Church, "East Africa & New Dominion"

LITHOGRAPHED IN THE REPRODUCTION BRANCH, OSS

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