Journey to New Palestine:  
The Zionist Expedition to East Africa  
and the Aftermath of the Uganda Debate

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The Uganda Scheme was the subject of a bitter debate that split the Zionist movement.  
The expedition that set out on behalf of the Zionist Organization in December 1904 to  
explore the designated region in East Africa and submit its conclusions was supposed to  
lead to a final decision as to whether to accept or reject the British offer. This paper aims  
firstly to trace the history of the Zionist expedition to East Africa from the moment it set  
out until the publication of the report and to explore the reactions of the supporters and  
opponents of the Uganda Scheme to the conclusions of the delegation. Second, by  
studying the debate over the expedition and the Uganda question at the Seventh Zionist  
Congress, it examines the factors that led to the formation of the Jewish Territorial  
Organization, headed by Israel Zangwill, in August 1905.

Introduction

In early August 1906, a year after the end of the Seventh Zionist Congress and  
the final rejection of the Uganda Scheme by the Zionist Organization, the  
annual conference of the Jewish Territorial Organization (ITO), founded the  
year before, convened in London.  
Despite the time that had passed since they  
had quit the Zionist Organization, the residue of the Uganda debate still  
hovered over the attendees. Their fury at the Zionists had not subsided, and  
harsh allegations were levelled against those who had rejected the British  
government’s generous proposal. In the Territorialists’ eyes, the Seventh  
Congress was an act of deceit and the report of the team that had explored the  
designated region was full of lies.
The Zionist Executive’s report on East Africa is entirely an act of deceit. What England was offering, as is known, was not Uganda but a large portion of East Africa that has superb climatic qualities and is a place where millions of people can be settled. The Zionist scoundrels who wanted to bury the plan from the start had themselves asked the English government after Herzl’s death to point out to them a small region in East Africa to which to send the delegation. This is how the East African offer became the Uganda Scheme. Now it turns out that in the part of Uganda that the Zionist delegation recommended against there live Boers and Englishmen.

This was not the first time that Territorialists had accused the delegation and the opponents of the East African settlement plan of deceit and fraud. Chaim Yehuda Chazan, one of the leading supporters of the Uganda Scheme, had come out openly against the findings of the exploratory expedition at the Seventh Zionist Congress. According to the Congress minutes, Chazan claimed that Zionism’s primary point of departure should be the distress of the Jews and the need for some land, not necessarily Palestine. In his speech, Chazan emphasised two main points: first, the Zionist Organization had to meet the immigration needs of the masses; and second, the expedition report was not reliable. According to him, the delegation had not spent enough time touring the designated area to write a reliable report, and therefore it would be absolutely wrong to reject the plan. For this reason, Chazan accused Otto Warburg of contravening the decision of the Sixth Congress and perpetrating a veritable swindle (Schwindel in German). Chazan the Territorialist was not the only one to speak out against the delegation and its conclusions. Leopold Greenberg, Herzl’s right-hand man in England who had conducted the negotiations with the British government for the designated piece of land on Herzl’s behalf, also did so. On the second day of the Seventh Zionist Congress, immediately after Professor Warburg read out the main points of the report, Greenberg told the conference attendees that the conclusions were superficial and should be treated with extreme caution. The Zionists’ suggestion that Britain determine the boundaries of the territory, he claimed, severely weakened the British offer.

The Zionist expedition to East Africa set out 16 months after the Sixth Congress and only seven months before the Seventh Congress. The timing was extremely important to the success or failure of the plan. The conclusions of the report that was due to be published around the time of the Seventh Zionist Congress – the first without Herzl’s unifying leadership – had the potential to breathe life into the plan or, alternatively, to eliminate it finally from the Zionist agenda. For this reason it is worth examining whether the Territorialists’ allegations of a superficial, tendentious, unprofessional, and even dishonest
report were justified. After all, the decision made at the Seventh Congress to stick to the original Basel programme and oppose any attempt at settlement outside Palestine ultimately split the Zionist Organization and led to the formation of the ITO in August 1905. The aim of this paper is therefore twofold. First, I trace the history of the Zionist expedition from the moment it set out until the publication of the report. Was the delegation indeed unskilled and were its conclusions – as the Territorialists claimed – dishonest and deceitful? Or was the designated region unsuitable for settlement? Does the final conclusion of delegation member Nachum Wilbusch that ‘where nothing exists, nothing can be done’ accurately reflect the conditions of the area explored? Second, by means of the debate over the expedition and the Uganda question at the Seventh Zionist Congress, I seek to understand the reasons that led to the formation of the ITO, headed by Israel Zangwill, to explore the reactions of supporters and opponents of the Uganda Scheme to the conclusions of the delegation, and to determine the main points of the Territorialist ideology formulated immediately after the Congress in August 1905.

The Uganda Debate

The Uganda Scheme was first brought up by Herzl for public debate at the Sixth Zionist Congress, held in Basel in August 1903. Three months earlier, Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain had toured the British protectorate in East Africa and had been impressed with the region, which he regarded as suitable for European settlement. Back in England, he met with Leopold Greenberg and officially proposed the area for Jewish settlement. Immediately, vigorous negotiations began during which His Majesty’s Government recognised autonomous Jewish settlement in East Africa. Herzl brought this proposal to the Sixth Congress. Herzl’s argument was that for the first time since the Jews were exiled from the Land of Israel, not only was a superpower recognising their legitimate rights as a nation but was even prepared to grant them territory. The pogrom in Kishinev and the resultant shock to the Jewish people, the fear of additional future pogroms against the Jews of eastern Europe, and the increase in the westward flow of migration led Herzl to the conclusion that the British government’s offer should be accepted – if only temporarily.’

Herzl’s proposal and his support for the East African settlement plan caused a storm in the Zionist Organization. Two camps quickly formed. The ‘yea-sayers’ sought to promote the plan, while the ‘nay-sayers’ did all they could to torpedo it. At the end of a stormy debate, by a vote of 295 for, 178 against, and 100 abstentions, the Sixth Congress decided to send a Zionist exploratory expedition to the region in question. Its conclusions were to be brought up for a debate and final decision at the Seventh Congress.

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As soon as the Sixth Congress ended, the opponents and supporters of the plan started preparing from a political and public standpoint for the decisive Congress. On one side were the Ziyyonei Zion (the ‘Zionists of Zion’); on the other side were Herzl’s supporters, who called themselves ‘Territorial Zionists’. The opposition to Herzl was led by Menachem Ussishkin, a member of the Zionist Executive and one of the leaders of the Russian Zionists; he sent out large numbers of letters to his supporters, distributed circulars, met with activists, spoke throughout the Pale of Settlement, and took part in numerous meetings. Herzl’s supporters took similar steps, although in a less organised fashion. Their arguments centred on the claim that ‘creating a Jewish settlement based on autonomy under English auspices’ would be an inestimable achievement for the Zionist movement.

‘Without a land we are liable to lose everything’, the proponents of the East African settlement plan argued, ‘and by acquiring land we can save everything.’ Moreover, ‘founding villages in Palestine as things stand at present, without political rights or any political security’, is an irresponsible act with little chance of success.

After all, the gentlemen [the Zionists] cannot possibly fail to understand that such settlement, with no solid foundations, will not succeed, cannot succeed, and will certainly not lead to any results in the sense of our main aspiration. All it will do is add ruins to those that have long existed. Any new settlement in any land whatsoever needs support and numerous easements at first from the local government. The colonists will initially be exempt from taxes, and the land will be given to them for free or on credit to be paid for in installments. In general the government is trying to facilitate matters for the inhabitants in every way possible until they strike roots and become stable there. Meanwhile, our settlement in Palestine not only has no support from the government of Turkey but is encountering severe obstacles from it each and every step of the way.

The ‘Territorialists’ claim that it was hopeless to found villages in Palestine without the sponsorship of an international power was no different from the view expressed by Herzl eight years before in his book *The Jewish State*. In 1896, after more than 20 villages had already been established in Palestine, Herzl viewed Jewish settlement without the sponsorship of a foreign power as a dangerous infiltration. ‘Two regions are possibilities: Palestine and Argentina’, Herzl wrote.

Noteworthy experiments in colonization have been made in both places, although they have been based on the mistaken principle of a gradual infiltration of Jews. Infiltration is always bound to end badly. For there invariably comes a moment when the government, under pressure of the native population – which feels itself threatened – bars any
further influx of Jews. Consequently, emigration will be pointless unless it is based upon our guaranteed sovereignty.\textsuperscript{11}

The political Territorialists retained this opinion even after Herzl’s death; this was the focal point of the debate with the Ziyyonei Zion.\textsuperscript{12}

A split in the Zionist Organization appeared to be inevitable. In an effort to restore calm, Herzl decided just before his death to convene the large Zionist Executive for a special session in Vienna. Indeed, by the end of the session, after Herzl had publicly promised ‘not to forget Jerusalem’, the differences were seemingly resolved: the opponents of the Uganda Scheme thought Herzl had changed his mind and all his aspirations and intentions were directed exclusively toward Palestine. But this was not the case. The East African settlement plan remained on the public agenda. Herzl insisted that decisions made legitimately by the Congress had to be accepted and that the customary rules of the game must not be broken. For this reason, the Seventh Congress was decisive with respect to the Uganda Scheme. Both camps waged political and propaganda campaigns to win over the delegates.

Then, on 4 June 1904, Herzl suddenly died. His death stunned the Jewish world and substantially weakened the political faction of the Zionist Organization. Without their charismatic leader, the Territorial Zionists had difficulty passing such a controversial plan. Indeed, on numerous occasions during the debates in the Seventh Congress, Herzl’s supporters quoted their esteemed leader and asked listeners to continue on his path. One example is a speech delivered by Israel Zangwill, the British author and representative of British Zionists, when a resolution passed stating that Zionists must not ‘engage in colonization work outside Palestine’. Zangwill stated ‘in a trembling voice’ that at the end of the Sixth Congress Herzl had told him that if by the next Congress no charter were obtained for Palestine, it would be the last Congress for him. The Territorialist leader’s emotional speech was cut off by ‘protests and demonstrations of agreement’.\textsuperscript{13}

Zangwill’s disclosure to the Congress of Herzl’s desire to leave the Zionist Organization if no charter were obtained for Palestine accurately reflects a diary entry written by Herzl on 31 August 1903, at the end of the Sixth Congress. ‘I will now tell you the speech I am going to make at the Seventh Congress – if I live to see it’, Herzl wrote in his diary:

By then I shall either have obtained Palestine or realized the complete futility of any further efforts. In the latter case, my speech will be as follows: ‘it was not possible. The ultimate goal has not been reached, and will not be reached within a foreseeable time. But a temporary result is at hand: this land in which we can settle our suffering masses on a national basis and with the right of self-government. I do not believe that for the sake of a beautiful dream or a legitimistic banner we
have a right to withhold this relief from the unfortunate. But I recognize that this has 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 become myself a *Lover of Zion*. Palestine is the only land where our people can come to rest. But hundreds of thousands need immediate help. There is only one way to solve this conflict: I must resign my leadership. I shall, if you wish, conduct the negotiations of this Congress for you, and at its conclusion you will elect two Executive Committees, one for East Africa and one for Palestine. I shall accept election to neither. But I shall never deny my counsel to those who devote themselves to the work for the fulfillment of the beautiful dream. By what I have done I have not made Zionism poorer, but Jewry richer. Farewell.'

Herzl probably never really intended to quit. These were moments of human weakness of a leader who was under tremendous stress and pressure. His ‘future speech’ as it appears in the diary is important not because of the seriousness of his intentions but due to the way that Israel Zangwill – the future president of the ITO – interpreted his words and used them for his political purposes.

Herzl, as stated, did not have the opportunity to give his speech at the Seventh Congress, but the Territorialists – especially Zangwill – viewed themselves as his successors and his representatives in the debate with the *Ziyyonei Zion*. In light of this tenuous political situation and fights between the supporters and opponents of the plan, the conclusions of the team that went to East Africa to explore the area proposed for settlement were of great importance. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the exploratory expedition to the African continent created expectations in the Jewish world. In his autobiography, *Trial and Error*, Chaim Weizmann recalls having difficulty recruiting British Jewry for Zionist activity because many of them were waiting for the ‘report on the offered territory’. I was ‘helpless in the face of such naivete’, wrote Weizmann. Shlomo Zemach experienced something similar, but in Palestine, not in England. As soon as he arrived in the country, Zemach took a diligence from Jaffa to Rishon Lezion. Its arrival caused great excitement in the village and it was surrounded by a crowd of farmers – not because Zemach had come but because issues of the newspaper *Hahashkafah*, with an extensive survey of the delegation’s departure for Africa, had arrived in the same carriage.

When the diligence entered the village and stopped outside the synagogue, many of the locals were waiting for it and surrounded it. Every Tuesday and Friday, Feivel would bring with him from town
Eliezer Ben-Yehuda’s *Habashkafah*, which was published in Jerusalem twice a week, and everyone would rush to get a copy from him. But this time it seemed to me that the crowd was very excited and eager for the news. Something big must have happened there: had Port Arthur fallen? … The news was written at the top of the page in big fat letters: The delegation was on its way!¹⁶

A favourable report could give a major boost to the political Zionist faction in the Zionist Organization. In contrast, negative conclusions could cause the idea to be shelved, as occurred with the El-Arish plan when a delegation deemed the region unsuitable for Jewish settlement due to a shortage of water. However, before we judge the work of the delegation, it is worth focusing on the main points of the British plan as proposed by the Colonial Secretary to Herzl’s representative in England, Leopold Greenberg.

**New Palestine**

On 20 December 1901, the construction of a railroad linking the port of Mombasa (on the coast of the Indian Ocean) with Lake Victoria was completed. The establishment of the Uganda Railway in the heart of the African continent had begun five-and-a-half years earlier, on 30 May 1896. It was an ambitious imperialistic initiative intended to strengthen the British hold on Africa and British control of the sources of the Nile. More than $5 million had been invested in building the Mombasa–Lake Victoria line, which extended over 576 miles (920 kilometres) and included 43 stations and 1,200 bridges. Thousands of working hands had been needed, so the British had brought to Kenya many Indian workers and had used the services of the local Africans. The workers paid an extremely high price for the imperialistic ambitions. Many of them died of illness or accidents or were killed by lions.¹⁷

The completion of the railway was an extraordinary engineering feat for the British, but it was not profitable. The locals did not use it, and few Europeans came to Kenya at all, and to Lake Victoria in particular. In order to cover their mounting losses while also strengthening their hold on the region, the British wanted to settle a white European population in the area between Lake Victoria and Ethiopia.¹⁸ Meanwhile, on another continent and in a context completely unrelated to the British venture in East Africa, the Kishinev pogrom broke out and westward emigration resumed. The Jews’ distress in eastern Europe was exacerbated and Herzl’s efforts to obtain a charter for Palestine were to no avail. Because the British were in the midst of negotiating with the Zionists at the time over a region for Jewish settlement near Palestine, it was only natural to try to offer them East Africa as a settlement option. The British interests in East Africa coincided with the interests of the political
Zionists in the Zionist Organization.

Indeed, following his trip through the East Africa Protectorate in late December 1902, Colonial Secretary Chamberlain brought up the idea of settling the Jews in Uganda. In mid-March 1903, Herzl met with Chamberlain and Foreign Secretary Lansdowne. At this meeting they discussed the El-Arish plan, and Uganda seems to have come up for the first time as a settlement option. In the conversation that ensued, Chamberlain told Herzl that on his trip to East Africa he had seen a country for him: Uganda. A month later, Greenberg met with Chamberlain and the Zionists were offered an area for the settlement of a million people. From this point on, the idea gathered momentum, and in April 1903 the Zionists started developing a 'Jewish colonization scheme' for East Africa. The proposal submitted by Greenberg to the British government was a detailed plan with a precise definition of the identity of Jewish settlement in the area. In a detailed document that includes an introduction and seven sections divided into numerous subsections, the Zionists asked His Majesty's Government for official recognition – 14 years before the Balfour Declaration – of the Jews as a nation and of their right to autonomy in their own piece of land.

The Jewish settlement plan in East Africa was to be implemented in two stages. First, the British government would approve Jewish settlement in the territory and 'the entire management and control' would be transferred to the Jewish Colonial Trust of the Zionist Organization or 'administrators of the said territory formed in accordance with the constitution'. The designated region would be held in trust by the Jewish Colonial Trust in order 'to allow the same to be used by Jews for settlement therein of the Jewish National Idea'. In the second stage, during the trusteeship period, the Zionist Organization would be entitled to submit to His Majesty’s Government – by 31 December 1909 – 'terms of a Constitution for the regulations, administration and good government of the Settlement'.

The constitution can be divided into articles about the structure and functioning of the government of the East African territory and articles dealing with the relationship between the Jewish settlers and the locals. According to the paragraphs dealing with the nature of Jewish settlement in East Africa, the territory designated for settlement would be 'Jewish in character and with a Jewish Governor to be appointed by His Majesty in Council'. The settlers would be given the necessary authority to enact laws and regulations for internal administration in order to ensure well-being and sound governance; to impose taxes to finance police work and education and for all other purposes; to appoint 'Judges and Officers for the administration of Justice'; and to provide 'Courts of Justice for the administration of civil and criminal law in the territory'. It was decided that the new settlement would be named 'New Palestine', 'or such other name as may from time to time be approved of
and with the consent of His Majesty’s Secretary of State; and there would even be a national flag. The constitution was also supposed to guarantee the Jewish settlers’ right to expand the territory designated for settlement, as expressed in Article 5 of the Jewish Colonization Scheme, Section 15:

For acquisition with the consent of his Majesty’s Secretary of State of any other lands and premises in British East Africa and elsewhere whether abutting upon or contiguous to the said territory or not and the enlargement of the boundaries of the said territory and the extension to any new or additional lands of the right powers and privileges vested in or exercised by the settlement.

This article was extremely important to the proponents of the East African settlement plan, since the purpose of Jewish settlement was to rescue, as quickly as possible, the hundreds of thousands of Jews in eastern Europe who had begun to emigrate westward. If Jewish migration were diverted from the United States to Africa, additional land reserves would be needed. As we shall see below, the Jewish settlement plan in East Africa covered an area much larger than that explored by the delegation. Consequently, the Jewish Colonization Scheme refers clearly and explicitly to the local population and its rights. It states that ‘all settlers in and inhabitants of the territory … be free from molestation in respect to their persons and property and under the protection and control of his Majesty’s Government’, provided that they obey the orders and terms stated in the Jewish Colonization Scheme. However, the Scheme gave the Jewish settlers the right to expel from the territory anyone who was liable to oppose settlement and break the laws:

For granting to the settlement power to exclude from the said territory any person or persons proposing to enter or settle in the same who shall or may be deemed to be opposed to the interests of the settlement or the government thereof or the dignity of his Majesty the King and the power with the previous consent of His Majesty’s Secretary of State to expel from the territory without being liable for compensation or otherwise any person not fully and completely abiding by the ordinances, rules and regulations for the time being in force in the territory or committing or conniving at a breach of the Constitution of the settlement.

This provision is particularly interesting because the issue of the rights of Ugandan natives never came up in the deliberations of the Sixth and Seventh Congresses. Neither the supporters nor the opponents of the plan thought the matter was worth considering; they completely ignored the local population and its ties to the land. It seems that both camps adopted the British imperial conception and saw no problem in making Guas Ngishu white man’s land.
The case of the Territorialists is particularly interesting because in 1905 their leader Israel Zangwill wrote an article entitled ‘The Zionist Danger’, in which he warned the Zionists against ignoring the fact that Palestine was already populated. According to Zangwill, this was an inestimably serious obstacle because it meant that no one would want to move to Palestine. In Africa this question did not concern him. In fact, in some cases – at least according to the Zionist draft – he did not even reject the idea of expelling natives who disapproved of Jewish settlement in the region.

Compared with the detailed Zionist plan, the British proposal was quite modest. In a letter to Greenberg on 14 August 1903, Clement Hill wrote:

Lord Lansdowne will be prepared to entertain favourably proposals for the establishment of a Jewish Colony or settlement, on conditions which will enable the members to observe their National customs. For this purpose he would be prepared to discuss ... the details of a scheme comprising as its main features: the grant of a considerable area of land, the appointment of a Jewish Official as chief of 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, such Local Autonomy being conditional upon the right of His Majesty’s Government to exercise a general control.

This was the proposal that Herzl brought to the Sixth Zionist Congress. From his perspective, it was an extraordinary diplomatic achievement that would constitute a suitable solution to the Jewish hardships. At the end of a stormy, tense debate, the decision was made to send an expedition to the designated region in East Africa to study conditions there and the likelihood of successful settlement. The expedition was not to be funded by the Zionist movement; outside sources of funding would have to be found.

The Journey to New Palestine

On 15 September 1903, Herzl noted in his diary that based on his information and reports from the British government, ‘this territory is fertile and well suited for the settlement of Europeans’. Presumably, therefore, he wrote, ‘it may be assumed that the long-sought place of refuge for the most unfortunate among our fellow Jews, who are suffering material distress and roaming about homeless, has been found’. At this point Herzl still did not know what exact area in East Africa was being earmarked for Jewish settlement. Some of the territory that in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries formed part of the British protectorate in Uganda was transferred to the East Africa Protectorate in 1902. Thus, the term ‘Uganda Scheme’ became established among his contemporaries, although in fact the area offered by the British —
albeit near Uganda – was entirely part of Kenya from 1903.

The man who first suggested an area suitable for Jewish settlement was the British commissioner of East Africa, Charles Eliot. In a letter to Foreign Secretary Lansdowne in early November 1903, Eliot suggested the Guas Ngishu Plateau in north-western Kenya as having potential for Jewish settlement. Having visited there two months earlier, Eliot was personally familiar with the designated region. ‘I need here only repeat’, Eliot wrote to the Foreign Secretary,

That it is a grassy plain, well watered and possessing a temperate climate. In August I myself found it disagreeably cold but this objection would doubtless not be felt by Jews from Eastern Europe. The plain is surrounded by forests which yield good timber, and is practically uninhabited, owing to tribal wars, not to any defect. The position is sufficiently isolated to protect the Jews from any hostile demonstrations of other races.31

The borders of the region proposed by Eliot were as follows: in the south, the equator; in the east, the Elgeyo Escarpment; in the west, Mount Elgon and the Kabras Escarpment; and in the north, an imaginary line extending eastward from Mount Elgon.32 Altogether the area of the designated region was about 16,000 square kilometres (slightly smaller than the State of Israel according to the partition plan), with the option of expansion north toward the desert region of Lake Turkana if necessary. On 25 January 1904, Greenberg met with people from the Foreign Office, and for the first time he was shown a map, with which they explained the borders of the proposed region.

Charles Eliot was not the first visitor to be impressed with the Guas Ngishu Plateau. He was preceded by the noted British traveller and commissioner in East Africa, Harry Johnston, who in 1901–02 had conducted a comprehensive survey of living conditions in the area.33 Johnston’s findings indicated that the Guas Ngishu Plateau was suitable for European settlement: the area was not settled by tribes, it had precipitation and abundant vegetation, and there were no diseases liable to endanger the inhabitants. Based on his numerous trips to Africa in general and East Africa in particular, Johnston claimed that the Guas Ngishu Plateau was one of the most beautiful areas in the British protectorate.34 It should be noted that the specific area offered to the Zionist Organization was merely a non-binding recommendation. However, it is unanimously agreed that this was the most fertile, best region for settlement in Kenya that Britain could offer.

According to Herzl’s original plan, there were to be two expeditions to Guas Ngishu: the first would be a scientific expedition to examine the conditions of the land and the climate, whereas the second would focus on
the potential for Jewish settlement. ‘Since here an area even remoter from
civilization is involved’, Herzl wrote in his diary in mid-September 1903, ‘and
since, utilizing the two dry seasons, two expeditions will probably have to be
sent – first a predominantly scientific one, then a predominantly practical one
– the expenses are likely to be substantially higher.’

Indeed, fundraising was the main problem that Herzl and the proponents
of the East African settlement plan encountered. The Sixth Zionist Congress
had resolved that the funding for the expedition would have to come from an
outside source and not from the Zionist Organization itself. For this reason,
Herzl contacted the Jewish Colonization Association (ICA) in September 1903,
asking it for funding. ‘Perhaps I may assume that you have followed the
deliberations of the Sixth Zionist Congress at Basel’, Herzl wrote to the
directors of the ICA:

The way things are at present, and without encroaching in any way upon
the political decision of our next Congress, I believe that I am acting in
the spirit of the purely philanthropic cause that you serve when I ask
you whether you would care to participate in raising the funds for the
expedition … the various funds of our organization must not be drawn
on to defray the expenses of this expedition, since no Palestinian
territory is involved … Therefore I envision the contribution of the
I.C.A., which I budget at about 8,000, as a deposit on the separate
account of the East African Expedition at the Jewish Colonial Trust in
London.

The ICA did not agree to Herzl’s request. Its condition for funding the
expedition was that settlement in East Africa be entirely apolitical, and
therefore Herzl could not agree. Shortly after the ICA refused to take part in
the East African adventure, several Zionist activists from South Africa contacted
Herzl, offering their assistance. The first to do so was Max Langermann, who
wanted to cover the cost of the expedition on condition that he headed it.
Herzl was willing to accept Langermann’s money but refused to make him a
member of the team, because he thought its composition should be serious
and scientific. Herzl was also contacted by Samuel Goldreich (president of
the South African Zionist Federation) and Benzion Aaron. This request, too,
was rejected by Herzl because of a disagreement over the composition of the
delegation.

As time passed, it became clear that it would be extremely difficult to raise
the necessary money for the expedition. The delegation’s departure was
delayed, and there were increasing concerns that the British government
would withdraw its offer. A surprising, unexpected solution came – after
Herzl’s death – from E.A. Gordon, a Christian Englishwoman who was
sympathetic to Zionism and decided to fund the expedition provided that she
could remain anonymous and that she would be given her money back if the expedition – for whatever reason – did not take place.\(^\text{40}\) In a meeting with Greenberg, Mrs Gordon agreed to donate £2,000. Although this made the expedition to East Africa possible, it was not enough for a comprehensive, serious survey of the designated area. According to Herzl’s calculations, the expedition to El-Arish had cost about £4,000, and this one was expected to require at least twice that.\(^\text{41}\)

As soon as the funding was found, the small committee of the Zionist Executive, headed by Otto Warburg, a German Zionist leader and botanist, began the task of putting together the team that would go to East Africa. Major A. St Hill Gibbons, an experienced explorer and investigator who had published several books about his travels in Africa, was appointed head of the expedition. He was joined by Alfred Kaiser, a Swiss Christian botanist who had studied the Sinai Desert and converted to Islam for the purpose of his research. Nachum Wilbusch, an engineer, was the third member of the team. In terms of his skills, Wilbusch was not qualified for the investigative tasks of the expedition; he became a member by coincidence. From a public standpoint, Warburg could not afford to send an exploratory expedition on behalf of the Zionist movement that did not include a representative of the movement. Precisely when they were starting to wrap up preparations for the trip to Africa, Wilbusch arrived in Berlin. ‘Prof. Warburg’, Wilbusch stated in his memoirs, ‘was interested at the time in the expedition to Uganda and suggested to me that I take part in it and investigate the prospects of industry in the Guas Ngishu region. Because I did not have to return to the country until the next Passover, I accepted the proposal.’\(^\text{42}\) On 25 December 1904, the three met in Basel with Leopold Greenberg, who presented to them the four conditions that Herzl said were essential for acceptance of the British offer by the Zionist Executive:

1. The territory has to be sufficiently extensive to admit of an immigration of such a character as should be eventually a material relief to the pressure which to-day exists in Eastern Jewry.
2. It follows that the territory has to be one colonizable by such people as ours.
3. The Concession has to be invested with such autonomous rights as would ensure the Jewish character of the settlement.
4. Perhaps governing all, the enthusiasm of our own people in respect to the offer has to be of such a nature as will overcome all the obvious difficulties which under most favourable conditions will be bound to arise in the creation of the settlement.\(^\text{43}\)

After negotiations, Greenberg signed the three to a contract setting out
payment terms and the mandate of the expedition. Gibbons, as head of the expedition, was to be paid £7,500; Kaiser would receive 6,000 marks, and Wilbusch, at his request, would go as an unpaid volunteer. The contract stated explicitly that Gibbons would head the expedition and Kaiser and Wilbusch would be subordinate to him. Kaiser ‘shall deal with and report principally upon matters relating to Geology, Meteorology and Botany and shall generally act as Naturalist of the Expedition’. Wilbusch ‘shall deal with and report principally upon matters relating to Engineering’. It was also noted that the report had to be in Greenberg’s hands by ‘the third day of April one thousand nine hundred and five or as soon thereafter as practicable but not later than the third day of May one thousand nine hundred and five’.

The next day, 26 December 1904, the delegation set out from Basel for East Africa. Two days later, in the port of Trieste, they boarded the SS Afrika of the Austrian Lloyd’s line, and on 13 January 1905 the three arrived in the port of Mombasa, on the shores of the Indian Ocean. The next day, they hired escorts and porters and that same afternoon they boarded a train for Nairobi. Unlike Gibbons and Kaiser, who were very familiar with Africa and spoke local languages, Wilbusch was on his first trip to the continent. His first encounter with the local population and its ways of life made a profound impression on him. ‘The local blacks [in Mombasa], Wilbusch wrote in his memoirs, ‘are from the Swahili tribe, and they are the most developed of the blacks, wearing clothing and doing all black work; whereas the blacks from the interior are completely savage. They walk around naked, are incapable of any work, don’t know the value of money, and don’t want to get it.’

The delegation reached Nairobi on 15 January and continued equipping itself for the trip to the designated region. The next day Wilbusch and Kaiser met with Mr Marcus, the head of the local Jewish community, who had lived in India for 18 years and had been in Nairobi since 1899. In their conversation, Marcus described the conditions for settlement and the agricultural, economic, and political conditions in the region. Overall, he said that conditions for settlement were comfortable and there were even a few Jewish families, such as the Rudkins, the Londons, the Hotz brothers, the Platzman brothers, the Naglers, the Solaskis, and a young man by the name of Bloch, who had settled in the area and whose businesses were not faring badly. ‘I was very enthusiastic about the presence of Jewish settlers in this place’, wrote Wilbusch,

in primeval forests, amidst savage blacks and beasts of prey, Jews living in primitive fashion in mud huts and planning to settle here, create new lives, and change the face of creation. I envied them. I thought such pioneers should come and settle in Palestine, fill the dwindling ranks of Bilu, and boost the flagging spirits of the people of the villages, who had
picked up materialistic aspirations and Territorialist ideas. Of course, because of my job I could not say this."

Nachum Wilbusch’s worldview was diametrically opposed to the political Zionist worldview on which the East Africa settlement plan was based. His worldview, which regarded Palestine as the centre of Zionist activity, underlay his negative report on the Guas Ngishu Plateau.

The delegation was delayed in Nairobi for two days. Then they proceeded by train to Nakuru, their last stop before the journey on foot to Guas Ngishu. At Nakuru they lost precious time because it turned out that much of their research equipment had been left behind in Nairobi and would take four more days to arrive. Only on 23 January – ten days after their arrival in Mombasa – did the team members, along with a few dozen porters and escorts, set out on foot for Guas Ngishu, about 100 kilometres from Nakuru. After vigorous walking, they reached Ravine Station, located on a small, steep hill 6 kilometres north of the equator and only 13 kilometres from the designated region. They spent a few days at Ravine Station so that Gibbons could complete the final arrangements for the trip.

On 29 January 1905, 16 days after arriving in Mombasa, the delegation reached the Guas Ngishu Plateau. Because a lot of time had been wasted finding porters, bringing research equipment that had been forgotten in Nairobi, and making various other arrangements, Major Gibbons decided to break up his team into three parts. Wilbusch was sent west with nine porters for a week, after which he was to hook up with Alfred Kaiser in the Sirgoi region. Kaiser was sent north to Sirgoi to set up the main camp, after which he would proceed to the northern part of the territory all the way to the foothills of Mount Elgon. Gibbons himself went to the eastern border of the territory, intending to travel as far north as possible in hopes of reaching the Chipchangane Mountains. Because they split up, three separate reports were ultimately submitted to Leopold Greenberg in May 1905.

The Conclusions of Gibbons’ Report
Gibbons divided his report into five sections: climate, land, water sources, access to the region, and the local population. His overall impression of the climatic conditions was favourable. The minimum temperature ranged from 6 degrees in the early morning to 26 degrees in the afternoon. To a great extent, the weather resembled a European summer. The soil of the plateau is for the most part of that rich’, Gibbons noted, and certain areas had a great deal of grass, making it possible to raise sheep and goats. In addition, most fruit trees that grew in Europe could easily grow in Guas Ngishu, too. The area was rich in water sources, which were definitely sufficient for settlement. One advantage of the region, Gibbons noted, was that there were no swamps and
therefore no public health problems of any sort. Moreover, the area was almost entirely uninhabited, except for a few spots in the periphery of the territory (between Mount Elgon and the Chipchangane Mountains). The most convenient access to the region was from Ravine Station along the route that the delegation had taken. Gibbons’ report was thus quite positive. He concluded that over time, under certain conditions, the land could be prepared for Jewish immigration. Because the attempt to bring so many settlers into the region was unprecedented in scope, he suggested experimenting with a small number of settlers before the masses arrived.

To supply a test sufficiently authoritative to justify the expenditure necessary for so extensive a colonizing scheme as the one proposed, it seems to me there is but one feasible method. An agricultural expert should be sent out with a small staff of intelligent farmers – say ten. This staff should then be selected, and for experimental purposes a farmer should be in charge of each district, and under his superintendence and direction ten peasants should be each allotted a small piece of land. The second year would give a very good idea of the possibilities of the larger scheme.

The Conclusions of Kaiser’s Report

Kaiser’s report begins with a general survey of the boundaries and general characteristics of the territory, commerce in the region (commerce was completely undeveloped), access to the railway, infrastructure, roads (mostly narrow paths made by the natives), and the condition of the local population (most of the area was uninhabited). The temperature in Guas Ngishu, as measured by Kaiser, was very similar to that measured by Gibbons, although Kaiser also mentioned the humidity in the area. In the morning humidity was around 74 per cent; in the evening it was 33 per cent. From a health standpoint Kaiser noted that Guas Ngishu was free of disease and epidemics, and therefore it should be considered a healthy place for people. However, ‘the sanitary conditions for cattle-breeding, it cannot be said to be of greater value than other parts of the African continent which are free from the tsetse fly’. Agricultural pests were also rife. ‘The voracious wandering locust, which causes hardly any damage’, said the report, ‘is so frequent here that they sometimes cover the bushy ground for miles, and offer an ever-ready feast to thousands of birds of prey.’ As for the success of the Jewish settlement plan in Guas Ngishu, Kaiser claimed, it would be wise to take advantage of the experience of Marcus in Nairobi. This man knew the advantages and disadvantages of the area and could be very helpful. However, there was liable to be a problem with the non-Jewish white settlers in the region – some of whom, Kaiser said, were anti-semitic – who were vehemently opposed to the plan and were deeply concerned about Jews moving to Kenya in general and
Guas Ngishu in particular. In summing up his report, Kaiser determined that the Guas Ngishu Plateau was unsuitable. ‘That Jews would be able to colonise a country’, Kaiser wrote in the last page of his report,

if they were able to carefully select the persons who would carry out their scheme of immigration, is beyond all doubt, and I even believe that they could once more become a real pastoral people, as the Dutch, the Germans and the French have done. However, economic conditions on the Guas Ngishu Plateau are so unfavourable that a portion of the immigrants would certainly leave the country again, and there would thus never be a real colonizing association which could work successfully. The immigration would cost millions, and the actual usefulness of the whole scheme would be totally out of proportion to the labour expended. I consider the territory extremely unsuitable for a purely Jewish settlement, be it carried on by a co-operative association or through private enterprise, and equally unsuitable for a mixed settlement administered through a chartered company. If Jewish capital, Jewish labour and Jewish blood is to serve the Zionist idea, a more promising country must be found, not a land that is so remote from all communication with the rest of the world, that makes such heavy demands on the settlers, and is so little fitted to consolidate the bonds uniting Jews.

The Conclusions of Wilbusch’s Report

Before I commence my report I should like to point out that it is absolutely impossible to explore a whole country in just four weeks, and to arrive at any definite conclusion, and only in an extreme case, such as if the country were either notably fertile or absolutely unfertile, would it be possible to arrive at an immediate decision in regard to its suitability or non-suitability for emigration purposes.

Thus begins Nachum Wilbusch’s report, which is very negative compared with the other two. Indeed, the entire report stresses the poor quality of the land and its inability to absorb the Jewish immigrants who would be coming. Wilbusch’s report is especially interesting because unlike his two colleagues, Gibbons and Kaiser, he was highly familiar with Palestine and had a comparative perspective. According to his report, the land was unsuitable for agriculture; the temperature differentials between day and night were too large; the winds were strong; the rivers had insufficient water; there was a shortage of trees (and especially of trees that would make good firewood); the settlers would be too dependent on the natives, who, unlike the whites, were capable of working in the hot sun; and transportation was problematic. Two flaws were particularly problematic from his perspective: first, the absence of any infrastructure for the development of suitable industry in the region; and

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second – an issue that Wilbusch considered even more critical – every Jewish immigrant who wanted to settle there successfully would have to invest a large sum of money. According to his calculations, each settler would need an initial sum of £1,800. His conclusion was clear and unequivocal: ‘Where nothing exists, nothing can be done.’

In response to the negative conclusions of Kaiser and Wilbusch, Gibbons – the head of the expedition – inserted an addendum in his report containing incisive criticism of the way they had worked. Based on his wealth of experience and his numerous journeys in Africa, Gibbons sought to undermine his colleagues’ conclusions. His main argument against Kaiser was that he had examined the land from the perspective of a scientist and not from the perspective of a potential settler. ‘The man of science devotes most of his energy to the mysteries of Nature, and these mysteries are for the most part – especially in Africa – more closely associated with the counter-balancing checks on natural production than with what, from the point of view of the supply of humans needs, may be termed constructive nature.’ Due to Kaiser’s flawed methodology, his conclusions were unreasonable. To shore up his position, Gibbons included in his appendix examples of regions in Africa that were climatically and geologically similar and in which settlement had succeeded and agriculture had developed. But not only was Kaiser’s research method problematic; he also had not precisely followed the explicit directions that he had been given. For example, Kaiser had situated the main camp in the channel of a riverbed in Sirgoi, making it hard to find him. As a result, Wilbusch and Gibbons had had trouble linking up with each other, precious work time had been wasted, Kaiser’s departure for the Mount Elgon area had been delayed by a week, and he had not had enough time left to carry out his assignment properly.

Gibbons’ criticism of Wilbusch was much harsher. The conclusions of Wilbusch’s report, Gibbons claimed, should be viewed as ‘crude conjectures of a very limited and unmethodised experience, and cannot recommend that it be taken into serious consideration.’ Wilbusch’s inexperience in exploration in general and exploration of Africa in particular had led him to draw conclusions that were simply wrong. For instance, Wilbusch did not realise that they had arrived in East Africa at the end of the dry season, and this was why the grass had turned yellow and there was little water flowing in the riverbeds. Had he known that equatorial regions have only two seasons, rainy and dry, he would have realised that the landscape that he saw was typical of large portions of Africa and not only the Guas Ngishu Plateau. Moreover, in the course of his work Wilbusch made a navigational error and spent much of his time looking for Kaiser’s hidden camp. In his memoirs, too, Wilbusch described getting lost, being terrified when he couldn’t find Kaiser, losing his compass, having an unpleasant encounter with two Boer settlers, running out
of food, and experiencing a gnawing hunger. For about six days – from 5 to 11 February – he searched for Kaiser and his porters.

The next day I was rescued. On February 11, the twelfth day of my solitary journey, about an hour before noon, a convoy of eleven porters appeared, coming from the south and bringing a load of rice to the main camp north of Sirgoi. We stopped them and took some pushu. Finally my men have food. Three hours later the Masai returned with the porter and brought rice sent by Mr Kaiser. I also received two letters from home, the first after seven weeks apart, as well as a friendly letter from Mr Kaiser expressing his joy that I was finally discovered and saying that he is waiting for me so that we can go on together to Mount Elgon. I was happy that day.

From the moment he met up with Alfred Kaiser until the day the delegation left Guas Ngishu, Wilbusch stayed in the main camp in Sirgoi. For two weeks he did not leave the camp. He spent his time writing his report and reading Harry Johnston’s book *The Uganda Protectorate*. In other words, Wilbusch surveyed and explored the designated land for only seven days out of the four weeks that they spent in Guas Ngishu. This fact, as we shall see below, was not ignored by the Territorialists. However, the main criticism of Wilbusch focused not only on the number of days that Wilbusch spent exploring the plateau but on his inexperience and the mental images that he had brought with him to Africa. ‘It is unnecessary to reproduce more of the many inaccuracies and faulty conclusions with which Mr. Wilbusch’s report abounds’, Gibbons stated.

All things seem to have been looked on with the eyes of the son of a Russian landowner. The writer seems to have expected a Volga or Danube on a plateau six to nine thousand feet above sea-level, and to have considered everything from the standard of a developed country. He cannot conceive that future transport and economic conditions will alter with economic and industrial progress. His final maxim – ‘where nothing exists, nothing can be done’ – supplies a keynote to the whole report, the existence of undeveloped land does not enter into his consideration, nor does he realize that the existence of raw material is to some extent dependent on the hand of man.

**The Survey Report: Deceit and Fraud or an Honest Appraisal?**

On 28 February 1905, the delegation completed its work and left the Guas Ngishu Plateau for Nairobi. Kaiser and Gibbons spent a few days in the city, whereas Wilbusch went straight to Mombasa and then to Palestine. In May
1905 – two months before the Seventh Congress convened – Gibbons submitted the report to Leopold Greenberg. Altogether the delegation had spent four weeks and three days in Guas Ngishu (from 29 January until 28 February 1905). The conclusions in the report regarding the prospects of Jewish settlement in East Africa were not uniform. Kaiser and Wilbusch stated vehemently that the land was not suitable for settlement, whereas Gibbons claimed that the region, though undeveloped, definitely had settlement potential. It seems that of the three opinions, Gibbons was the most serious and in-depth for several reasons:

1. The Guas Ngishu Plateau had been explored comprehensively and seriously for the first time by Harry Johnston, the British commissioner in East Africa, in 1902. The maps that he drew and his conclusions were available to the explorers. Indeed, among Nachum Wilbusch’s papers in the Central Zionist Archives are copies of the maps drawn by Johnston in Guas Ngishu. The maps give a very clear picture of the vast potential of the region. Johnston measured the quantity of precipitation there and found it to be suitable and good; the flora was varied, ranging from savannah to forests; the region was disease-free – ‘perfectly healthy’, as he put it; and finally, the area was not populated by natives. His conclusions and his general impressions of the region were consistent with those of Gibbons and Charles Eliot, the commissioner of East Africa at the time of the expedition.

2. The British had designated the Guas Ngishu Plateau for white settlement. At first it was intended for the Jews; after the Zionist Organization rejected the offer, it was designated for non-Jewish settlers. The white settlers in Kenya were well aware of the advantages of the region and this is why they were worried about Jewish settlement. Had the Guas Ngishu Plateau been a place where ‘nothing exists’ and ‘nothing can be done’, it is highly doubtful whether there would have been opposition to Jewish settlement in Kenya.

3. Of the three explorers, Gibbons used his time the most efficiently. Wilbusch, as stated, spent only about a week exploring the land, was lost for another week, and stayed in the camp for two weeks while Kaiser and Gibbons went off on their explorations. Kaiser himself was delayed through no fault of his own by Wilbusch, because he had been instructed to wait for Wilbusch and then travel north with him toward Mount Elgon. Hence, Gibbons’ report was the most serious and accurately reflected the conditions of the land.

4. The advantages of the region were well known to the leaders of the Zionist Organization, too. Herzl, as stated, wrote in his diary that ‘this territory is fertile and suitable for European settlement’.

In early 1907, Zionist...
Organization president David Wolffsohn visited Jerusalem. In a conversation with a resident of Jerusalem, Ephraim Cohn-Reiss, he said that on his way from South Africa to Palestine he had visited Guas Ngishu. ‘He saw the land and it is not at all a “land that devours its inhabitants”, as many said of it because of their love for Zion’, Cohn-Reiss wrote in his memoirs about his impressions of his meeting with Wolffsohn. ‘The name “flowing with milk and honey” is more apt, but we must not say this in public’, Wolffsohn told him.‘Only in 1933, 28 years after their meeting, did Cohn-Reiss first disclose the details of his conversation with Wolffsohn.

5. In his memoirs Ha-Masa le-Uganda [Journey to Uganda], Wilbusch claims that Gibbons had to write a favourable report on the designated region. ‘Both Kaiser and I’, wrote Wilbusch, ‘felt that the Major wanted to present everything deliberately in an incorrect light, prettier than it really was. According to Kaiser, he was being paid two and a half times what [Kaiser] was’. Kaiser, too, had misgivings in this regard; he was afraid that if he wrote that the land was not suitable for Europeans, he would not receive his due. In other words, according to Wilbusch, Gibbons deliberately prettified the report in order to make the people who had sent him happy so that he would be paid for his work. Wilbusch was wrong about Gibbons’ honesty. In January 1906, Gibbons delivered a scholarly lecture at the Royal Geographical Society in London, where he described the delegation’s experience in great detail and referred to Wilbusch just once – as a ‘Gentleman who had never before travelled in Africa’. In this lecture, too, Gibbons praised the Guas Ngishu Plateau and touted its advantages and the importance of settling it. Thus, eight months after the publication of the report, by which point he had already received his fee, Gibbons still held the same opinion of the region he had explored. Furthermore, the forum in which he spoke is indicative of the importance that the British saw in the region and their desire to learn of its possibilities. Thus it is hard to imagine that Gibbons wrote a report that he did not believe just to placate the people who had sent him.

Even though Gibbons’ report was the most reliable, the Seventh Zionist Congress got the impression that Guas Ngishu was unsuitable for Jewish settlement. In the service of the ideological debate between the Ziyyonei Zion and the ‘Ugandists’, Gibbons’ conclusions were de-emphasised and more negative portions of the report were accentuated in order to crush the proposal once and for all. It should be noted that the official expedition report was published in instalments in Die Welt, the official journal of the Zionist Organization. It presented the conclusions of Gibbons, Kaiser, and Wilbusch, as well as Gibbons’ harsh criticism of Wilbusch. However, the expedition report was published very near the date of the Seventh Zionist Congress, and...
the Congress delegates did not have time to read it thoroughly and consider how each of the explorers had reached his conclusions. Ostensibly, the Congress delegates appeared to have all the tools they needed to determine whether or not the Guas Ngishu Plateau was suitable for settlement. In fact, however, the expedition log (just as one example) was not published and readers of Die Welt got the impression that all three had explored the region fully but reached different conclusions. None of the readers knew — unless they had purchased a copy of the original report — that Wilbusch had been lost and had not explored the region properly. As far as the readers knew, his assertion that ‘where nothing exists, nothing can be done’ was as valuable as Gibbons’ conclusion.

At the Seventh Congress in late July and early August 1905, not only were the disagreements between the team members in East Africa and the flaws in Wilbusch’s work not given adequate attention, but there seemed to be an attempt to conceal them. In the deliberations on the second day of the Congress, Warburg described the aims of the expedition and stated that Wilbusch had presented ‘his impressions in a most thorough manner with respect to the water supply’. Major Gibbons ‘disagrees with Wilbuschewitz about these and other details’, Warburg maintained, ‘but these are only general and do not undermine the opinion as a whole’.

74 Greenberg, in contrast, who took the podium immediately after Warburg, tried to point out his mistake and noted that the disagreements between the two team members were fundamental:

Three parts of [the report] comprise the reports of the three participants in the expedition (each of them separately) and the fourth is the summary by Gibbons, the head of the expedition, of the reports of the other two. … Wilbusch’s report is negative any way you look at it. He expresses a negative opinion and states that the area is worthless and suitable only for the local residents and beasts of prey. Gibbons, on the other hand, is highly critical of Wilbusch’s report and says it is unworthy.75

Nevertheless, the people present at the debate seem not to have been aware of the gap between Warburg and Greenberg because Wilbusch asked for the floor immediately after Greenberg’s speech in order to explain what he meant by ‘where nothing exists, nothing can be done’, and to respond to Gibbons’ criticism of his report. The Chairman cut him off on the grounds that he had been given the floor solely to convey his impressions and that Gibbons was not there to respond.76 From this point, the ideological debate over the Uganda Scheme began in the Congress and the opponents and proponents started making their speeches. The brief debate that took place on the second day of the Congress indicates that the delegates did not have a complete
picture of the flawed work of the investigative team and its disagreements. It seems that the Congress delegates – both proponents and opponents – were not aware of the simple fact that the expedition members could not have reached positive or negative conclusions about the designated region. The general – though unjustified – impression was that the area was unsuitable for settlement.

The only delegate to the Congress who was aware of the problematic nature of the team’s conclusions was Yehuda Chazan. In his address to the Congress on 28 July, Chazan accused Warburg of direct responsibility for the failure of the expedition. ‘After a stormy debate at the Sixth Congress’, Chazan said, ‘it was decided to dispatch the expedition to explore the land in East Africa.’ At that Congress it was also stated that ‘the shekel funds should not be used to pay for the expedition’. The funding of the expedition, he explained, had to come from outside sources, but ‘for two years not a single word appeared in Die Welt, the organization’s official journal, asking for contributions for this purpose, even though pleas for donations for other purposes were printed’. Chazan’s statement – which was factually true – led him to the conclusion that ‘the Constitution Committee of the Congress failed to carry out the Congress’s resolution and trampled a decision made after three days of deliberations’.

However, Chazan also had criticism of the composition of the delegation and especially of Wilbusch’s dubious qualifications, alluding to his getting lost and his following instead of leading.

Professor Warburg announced to us that a team of expert professionals had been sent. At the same time I was reading the expedition report in which the head of the expedition, Gibbons, states that one of its members, Mr. Wilbuschewitz, had minimal qualifications and instead of leading had to be led.

Moreover, Chazan accused Warburg of deliberately trying to remove the Uganda Scheme from the public agenda without having the authority to do so. ‘I direct my question to Prof. Warburg’, Chazan said. ‘Is it a fact that when he was asked why an inexperienced person ignorant about Africa was sent as a member of the delegation, he replied, “First let us get rid of the Uganda joke”? At this point in the debate, catcalls were heard from the Congress delegates. Unperturbed, Chazan continued: ‘Prof. Warburg read to us today the report that says Uganda is unsuitable for us. And I ask him a direct question: Has the Congress’s decision really and truly become a farce?’ Chazan seems to have been one of the few to realise that because of the way the expedition had been conducted no unequivocal conclusions could possibly have been reached and that the report had been presented in a tendentious manner.
Major Gibbons admits that the delegation spent four to five weeks in Uganda and that it was impossible to explore the area in such a short time. The gentlemen on the Constitution Committee therefore hastened to convene a Congress at which they could read out Mr. Ussishkin’s conclusions. … We see in the Uganda question a rare opportunity to actualize Zionism and therefore we will not treat it as a farce. We say this: We cannot reject the project based on the conclusions of the delegation that spent a pleasant three weeks and wrote us a feuilleton.  

The question of the quality of the Guas Ngishu Plateau in terms of settlement was not resolved conclusively by the Congress delegates either. If we compare the condition of Palestine at the time with the condition of the region explored by the team, Guas Ngishu was by no means ‘a place where nothing exists [and] nothing can be done’, as Wilbusch claimed. On the contrary, there is not a shadow of doubt that had the exploratory expedition been sent in December 1904 to the Lower and Upper Galilee, the Jezreel Valley, or the sand dunes north of Jaffa on which the city of Tel Aviv was subsequently built, they would have seen things much worse than they found in Guas Ngishu. Given the malaria, swamps, and local population, the conclusions of the report would surely have been negative. This assertion should not be seen as merely hypothetical, since many people from the First Aliya were in favour of the idea of settlement in East Africa.

Based on their personal experience and the price they had paid to settle in Palestine in the late nineteenth century, the plan to settle in East Africa under British auspices was a reasonable, logical solution. Any attempt at settlement in Palestine without the support of a foreign power and without constant infusions of capital seemed to them hopeless. This feeling is reflected in Shlomo Zemach’s memoirs, Shana Rishona. Zemach arrived in Rishon Lezion on the day on which Habasbkafab announced on its front page, ‘The delegation is on its way.’ The excitement and tumult surrounding the expedition piqued his curiosity and he decided to go to the meeting called for that day in the home of a farmer named Ben-Ze’ev. The praise he heard for Territorialism disappointed him profoundly. ‘Gradually the fog in my brain started to disperse’, Zemach wrote in his memoirs.

Something isn’t right here. From the start things weren’t right, when Mr. Freiman triumphantly announced that the delegation was on its way. But why were people’s eyes shining with a strange fire when they heard Zangwill’s speech? Why such hostility in those eyes? ‘Zionism without Zion is no better than Zion without Zionism!’ Mr. Yudelovitch’s captivating voice rang out, and his listeners seemed to concur with what he was saying in his jubilant voice. And why were these tired farmers, who at first looked half asleep, so excited, hinting to each other and
holding their cigarettes in trembling fingers? And why did their wives’
corseted bosoms start stirring in their confinement? I sat there agitated
and simmering. How can they hear Zion being shamed and
dishonoured and not protest?

Zemach, who was spending his first day in Palestine, was so ‘agitated and
simmering’ that he asked for permission to speak. The other people at the
meeting were astounded: What would a young man who had just arrived in
the country have to say about the subject? ‘You came this morning … and
you’re already preaching’, one of the attendees said to him. ‘We like
hitsige yingelayt [hot-blooded young people]; we were also hot-blooded when we
were young. But what does the word fiver [fever] — yes, fiver — mean? Do you
know? And what does oygnvaytik [eye pain] — yes, oygnvaytik — mean? Do you
know?’ Zemach’s memoirs are consistent with a letter from a resident of
Rishon Lezion, David Yudelevitch, who wrote the following to his friend Dov
Lubman in November 1903:

I read almost all the details of the [Sixth] Congress in the pages of Die
Welt. … What can we do when our Russian brothers, instead of ‘wisdom
and reflection’, instead of ‘brains and logical European law’, have just a
well-honed mind and zitsflaysh? The well-honed mind attracts their
zitsflaysh to sit on the floor and lament the destruction of the Temple,
and instead of rejoicing that a fresh piece of land has been found on
whose soil we can stand and build, plant, govern, and be filled with
content, they cry, … protest, etc.

Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, the reviver of the Hebrew language and one of the
most prominent figures in the Yishuv at the time, was also an advocate of the
Uganda Scheme and Territorialism. In his newspaper Habasbkaf, Ben-
Yehuda printed a series of articles entitled ‘The Jewish State’, in which he
expressed his unqualified support for the idea of a Jewish state in East Africa.

Because a great government, one of the greatest in the world, has
opened the gates of Africa to us and, like Cyrus, has called on us to go
found a free Jewish state there, where we can live as free men and do
what is good and right in our eyes under the paramount protection of
the great, free English nation. Is every one of us not appalled by the
thought that if we let this great moment pass, perhaps tomorrow,
perhaps in another year, or in two or three years, we will have lost this
good opportunity?

Like the Territorialists, who preferred the ‘welfare of the people’ over the
‘welfare of the land’, Ben-Yehuda argued on behalf of the Ugandists in Palestine
that ‘for us, the people are the main thing. We say that if it’s possible for the
people to be in the land, that’s best, but if not, if there is any doubt about this possibility, for now we will build a nation in any land, as long as it belongs to the people, so as to anticipate the danger hovering over the people!”

It was clear to the shapers of the Zionist movement’s immigration policy in Palestine, too, that the country had a limited absorption capacity and that the thousands of immigrants whom they expected to arrive could not be absorbed. The Zionist movement was opposed to indiscriminate mass immigration and favoured a selective immigration policy that would give priority to the rich over the poor. When the movement had to choose between the ‘welfare of the people’ and the ‘welfare of the land’, it decided that the latter took precedence. Palestine was not a refuge; anyone looking for a solution to hardship would find it in America. In two respects – the condition of the land and its absorption capacity – Palestine was much worse off than the Guas Ngishu Plateau. Nevertheless, the Zionist Congress decided to reject Guas Ngishu on the grounds of unsuitability for settlement, even though it was clear to the Congress delegates, including the Ziyyonei Zion, that Palestine was much less suitable in terms of climate and geography, and that its deficiencies were much more numerous than those in East Africa.

Unsuitability of Guas Ngishu for Jewish settlement was thus not the real reason for the rejection of the Uganda Scheme. After all, the conditions in Palestine were no better and the difficulties of settling and holding on to the land troubled the Jewish settlers there in the late nineteenth century and during the twentieth century. Why, then, were Wilbusch’s negative conclusions accentuated while Gibbons’ more optimistic conclusions were ignored? Why did none of the Ziyyonei Zion point out that Wilbusch’s report was the most problematic of the three and should not be relied on? After all, Wilbusch did not really explore the designated region; he spent his time searching for the camp or waiting for his colleagues. Why did the Ziyyonei Zion not simply make the weighty moral assertion that even if Guas Ngishu were suitable for Jewish settlement and had good climatic conditions, the Land of Israel – with all its drawbacks – was the land of the Jewish people and the object of thousands of years of yearning. Was this principle not enough to take the plan off the agenda and persuade the Congress delegates that only in Palestine would the Jewish people achieve fulfilment? Why was it necessary to create the illusion that Uganda was not suitable for Jewish settlement and Palestine was?

The Aftermath of the Uganda Debate and the Founding of the Jewish Territorial Organization

The emphasis on Wilbusch’s problematic report and the downplaying of Gibbons’ conclusions indicates first and foremost the extreme fear the
Ziyyonei Zion had of the Territorialist camp in the Zionist Organization. Otherwise, why would it be necessary to twist the report in such a way? As the plight of the Jews in eastern Europe was exacerbated and emigration to the West increased in scope to an unprecedented degree, Territorialism found fertile ground among eastern European Jewry. It was clear to both sides that a favourable report would advance the East African settlement plan and weaken Jewish settlement in Palestine. The British government’s sponsorship of the Guas Ngishu settlement project together with the region’s geographical advantages could have substantially strengthened the political Zionists. Even Max Nordau was well aware of the ramifications of a favourable report. In an interview with a London journalist in early 1905, he said that a favourable report would mean acceptance of the British offer.

The urgent question that concerns us today is East Africa. The commission has just set out and will return in March. Its report will be presented for discussion at the next Congress, and if it is favourable, we will be obligated to accept the British offer. It seems to me that the way we have to go is absolutely clear. We will have to accept a charter from the British government in the name of the Jewish Colonial Trust.

The Ziyyonei Zion thus chose to emphasise Wilbusch’s unprofessional report over Gibbons’ report because it suited their worldview better. Any hesitancy or second thoughts about settlement in East Africa would have led to support for the Uganda Scheme. The devotees of Palestine could not let this happen, even if it meant making an incomplete, inaccurate presentation – ‘lying’, according to the Territorialists – of the expedition report. Indeed, at the Seventh Congress the Uganda Scheme was conclusively rejected. It was stated clearly and unequivocally that only in Palestine could Zionism be fulfilled in practice. With the elimination of the Uganda Scheme, practical work in Palestine was recognised as the main area of activity of the Zionist movement.

However, the distortion of the report indicates something about the way the practical Zionists, headed by Ussishkin, and the Territorialists tried to contend with the plight of the Jews, which was growing worse in the early twentieth century. The years 1904 and 1905 were particularly difficult ones for the Jews in the Russian Empire. The Russo-Japanese War, the 1905 Revolution, pogroms, and economic hardship exacerbated the Jewish problem. The Pale of Settlement became a pressure cooker for millions of Jews, who started emigrating at an increasing pace to every corner of the world. But despite this bleak situation, the Ziyyonei Zion and Ussishkin did not accept that with the land burning under the Jews’ feet, they had to find a haven for the Jewish people as quickly as possible, even if it meant giving up on Palestine. Any activity not directly aimed at practical work in Palestine was invalid in their eyes. In an open letter to Theodor Herzl in February 1904, Menachem
Sheinkin wrote,

We are considered dangerous because of our idea of mixing the
question of the starving people with the question of national revival. We
are as compassionate as the rest of our Jewish brethren, our hearts ache
over the fate of our people, who are starving to death … but we must
not mix the temporal with the eternal.89

A similar attitude is found in a letter written by Menachem Ussishkin to
Benzion Mossinson in December 1903: ‘According to this programme, you
must speak clearly and fearlessly, without pulling any punches. (1) The main
goal of Zionism is to save the Jewish people and not our poor brethren from
Russia and Romania.’90 This worldview led to their opposition to the Uganda
Scheme, as well as to their opposition to their fellow Zionists who voted in
favour of ‘work in the present’ at the conference of Russian Zionists at
Helsingfors in November 1906. As Ussishkin and his supporters viewed things,
Palestine – with all its limitations and poor absorption capacity – had to
remain the focal point of Zionist activity, come what may.

In contrast, the advocates of the Uganda Scheme were more aware of and
sensitive to Jewish hardship in eastern Europe and the impending
catastrophe. From their perspective, no more precious time could be wasted
waiting for Palestine to become a major destination for immigration and a
haven for the Jewish people. The solution had to be here and now, with no
delays, so that the Jewish people could stand on safe ground. It was a
pessimistic, perhaps apocalyptic attitude in terms of the Jewish future in
eastern Europe. For this reason, Zangwill argued that if the Zionist
Organization rejected the British offer it could not give a mere ‘no’; instead, it
had to ask London for a different large area for Jewish settlement. After all, he
warned the Congress delegates, if they rejected the East African settlement
plan, they would feel as if they had extracted a rotten tooth but they would
quickly find that it was in fact the only tooth.91 The nation had to establish a
state, Zangwill explained; it was not the state that would establish the nation.
A Jewish state would save ‘tens and perhaps hundreds of thousands of
wandering Jews’, he explained.

Jewish migration is a fact. Each year hundreds of thousands of Jews
leave Russia. Why do they have to scatter, be swallowed up in foreign
cultures, and lose their identity? Kaiser and Wilbusch admit that the
Jewish people is just as capable as any other nation of having a thriving,
independent state. Are we less gifted than those who made the swamps
of Venice, the deserts of Australia, or the colonies of New England
bloom?92

In view of the pogroms in eastern Europe, Zangwill tried to explain to the
Congress delegates that the Zionist Organization ‘is not just a parliament of the Zionist movement’ but ‘a parliament representing Jews from twenty-three countries. We have an obligation not only to the Zionist movement but to the entire Jewish people, and we must save the Jews even against their will, whether or not they pay the shekel’.93

This mood is expressed in a letter from Moshe Rosenblatt, an associate of Max Mandelstamm’s and a well-known activist in Kiev, to Israel Zangwill in early November 1905. Three months after the Seventh Zionist Congress, a terrible pogrom had erupted in the city; Jews had been murdered and their property plundered. Rosenblatt described the horrors without embellishment:

Screaming in the streets, shouting in homes, in basements, in attics, in caves. The screams of infants and children, the voices of fainting women, the moans of the dying, old people’s broken bones being hurled from the upper stories pierce the air of Kiev! Infants and small children are crushed, ripped in half, and thrown to the dogs! They slice open the stomachs of pregnant women, cut off body parts of healthy people, and flay their flesh with iron combs.94

In light of the horrors he had seen, he asked Zangwill to restart negotiations with the British government over Uganda as quickly as possible. ‘The panic is tremendous, to the point that such emigration has never before been heard of’, Rosenblatt wrote to Zangwill.

This emigration exceeds all emigrations in the world since the beginning of time! People are coming in their thousands to Mandelstamm, crying, asking for territory, and screaming. ‘We’ll go not just to Uganda, but even to the Dark Mountains, as long as we can get away from this! We’ll make do with meagre bread and water for the rest of our lives. We’ll wear rags if only we can breathe the air of a Jewish land.’ Our goal in this letter of ours is this: Please, distinguished President! Please, Crown of Israel! Print these words of ours in the English newspapers! We beg of the Jewish leaders in England: Go to the King of England and to the ministers – you, our President, Mr. Zangwill, should head the delegation and ask them to give us Uganda right away, because the entire Hebrew nation wants Uganda, and the Ziyyonei Zion replied to the proposal of their own accord without consulting their people. If necessary, we will provide you with 100,000 signatures of 100,000 Jews in Kiev and its suburbs, in addition to the signatures of millions from Odessa, Warsaw, Minsk, Bialystok, Vilna, Yelisavetgrad, and so on and so forth. We all want Uganda! We all want to escape from this bloody land! We do not feel sure of our lives! Please,
Jewish leaders in England, please, Mr. Greenberg, go back to Territorialism for the sake of the spilled blood of your brothers and sisters. ... Go to the government and ask it to give us Uganda, to improve its gift slightly. Just say the word and all the emigration will be rerouted there."

The distress reflected in Rosenblatt's letter was the main factor that prompted the Territorialists to leave the Zionist Organization. Israel Zangwill, Nachman Syrkin, and their followers felt that the Zionist Organization had not taken the East African settlement plan seriously and that it had been dropped too quickly, before a serious, in-depth discussion had been held. Moreover, from the Territorialists' perspective the Seventh Congress had been conducted unfairly and improperly from a political standpoint, and the *Ziyonei Zion* had presented a mendacious report of the expedition's conclusions just when eastern European Jewry was struggling desperately to survive. As they saw it, this was an act of deceit and fraud and was cause enough for them to quit the Zionist Organization and establish the ITO in August 1905.

With the founding of the ITO, the Territorialists' doctrine was reduced to two main issues: immediately rescuing Jews in distress in eastern Europe and finding them a suitable territory. The Territorialist movement, headed by Zangwill, saw itself first and foremost as a rescue movement. According to the Territorialist doctrine, the 'welfare of the people' took precedence over the 'welfare of the land'. Consequently, the ITO's goal, as articulated in its platform, was straightforward: 'to procure a territory upon an autonomous basis for those Jews who cannot or will not remain in the lands in which they at present live'. To achieve the desired objectives, the constitution said, the ITO would strive to unite all the Jews who supported this goal, maintain contact with governments and private and public institutions, and establish the financial and other institutions needed to achieve the goal. "We say", the Territorialists argued, 'that the most important matter, under present circumstances, is the saving and revivifying of our people and our culture, and that a land exists for a people and not a people for land.'

Conclusion

A hundred years have passed since the initial publication of the expedition report. The Zionist Organization managed to achieve its main goal and establish a state for the Jews in Palestine. In contrast, the Territorialists vanished into historical oblivion and their idea of bringing the Jews to safe shores somewhere other than Palestine now looks like a utopian venture with no chance of success. But in the early twentieth century Territorialism appeared much more realistic and feasible than Zionism. Palestine was at the
time a remote district on the edge of the Ottoman Empire, and much of it was rife with malaria and other diseases. Only by paying a hefty human price for their desire to settle in Palestine, and by raising funds and recruiting British support, did the settlers turn the Zionist dream into reality. The political Territorialists who had received British sponsorship 14 years before the Balfour Declaration sought to establish a state for the Jews in a region whose conditions were better than those in Palestine for a price much lower than that which the Zionists paid. Ussishkin and the **Ziyyonei Zion** were well aware of the Territorialists’ weighty rational arguments and were afraid of them. As they saw it, only the perilous economic situation, the persecution of Jews, and pogroms could give the Territorialists an opportunity to broaden their support and weaken the side that regarded the settlement of Palestine as the heart of the Zionist enterprise. In such a situation, all that the opponents of the East African settlement plan had to do was to stress Wilbusch’s part of the expedition report, even though his conclusions were the least reliable and professional. During the Seventh Congress, they thereby made the Territorialists’ sole argument – that a land suitable for the absorption of masses of Jewish immigrants had been found – irrelevant. The Uganda Scheme was dropped along with any future proposal for settlement anywhere other than Palestine.

Those of Herzl’s supporters who refused to accept the decisions of the Congress resigned from the Zionist Organization in protest and in August 1905 formed the Jewish Territorial Organization. They then started incessant attempts to find a land for the Jews. The ITO’s assumption in negotiating with various countries for a vacant autonomous region was that any country would benefit from having a large Jewish population in it or in one of its colonies. As time passed and the diplomatic contacts were unsuccessful, Zangwill realized that the Territorialists’ plan to establish autonomy for the Jews was not feasible. In part, Zangwill’s failure was due to the political conditions of the early twentieth century, which were changing in a way that was not always consistent with the ITO’s aspirations. The position of the Liberal Party in England regarding Jewish settlement in East Africa was totally different from that of the Conservative Party. The rise of the former to power in late 1905 put an end to Zangwill’s plans to settle Jews there. Similarly, as soon as Portugal’s fears of Anglo-German domination of Angola died down, its interest in settling Jews there diminished. The imperial-political basis for the negotiations proved unstable and volatile. A great deal of luck was needed for the Territorialists’ national aspirations to coincide with the interests of the countries with which the ITO was negotiating; instead, in November 1917 Zionist interests coincided with British interests, resulting in the Balfour Declaration. Another reason for the failure of Territorialist diplomacy was the adamant refusal of the countries with which the ITO was negotiating to create a distinct Jewish
national political entity within their borders. They agreed to let in Jewish immigrants as individuals but opposed organised immigration with national aims. From this standpoint, the Territorialist idea was fundamentally at odds with the concept of the modern state that had taken shape in Europe in the mid-nineteenth century, according to which all power should be concentrated in the hands of one central authority and national, cultural, and linguistic differences should be blurred. The efforts of Zangwill — and to a great extent Herzl as well — were anachronistic in view of the rise of integral nationalism in Europe. So long as they tried to obtain immigration permits for the Jewish people rather than for the Jewish immigrant, they were doomed to failure.

The Uganda Scheme was not just a failed attempt at settlement in East Africa. At the start of the twentieth century, the plan posed the fundamental question of whether Zionists had the right to sacrifice the persecuted eastern European Jews on the altar of the Land of Israel. Should not meeting the immediate physical needs and creating a haven for millions of migrants take precedence over the yearning for the Land of Israel? This question stood out starkly in the struggle between the Territorialists and the Zionist movement in the 1930s and 1940s, when six million Jews were murdered in Europe.

NOTES

1. Stop praying / to dead walls. / Where the black-skinned people are / there is a free land. In Chaya Weizmann-Lichtenstein, Be-Tsel Koratenu [Under our Roof] (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1947/48), p.115. This paper is part of a comprehensive study of the Territorialist ideology 1882–1956.
3. Ibid.
6. Only a few studies have dealt with the Zionist expedition to East Africa. Robert Weissbord’s pioneering book African Zion: The Attempts to Establish a Jewish Colony in the East Africa Protectorate, 1903–1905 (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1968). For more on the expedition, see Eliyahu Benjamins, Medinot la-Yehudim [States for the Jews] (Tel Aviv: Ha-Kibuts Ha-Meuchad, 1990), pp.88–99, especially pp.45–46. Benjamin’s important book reprints documents and gives a brief explanation but without analysing the events and their importance in the historical context. Eitan Bar-Yosef’s recent paper ‘Why Not Uganda: The Zionist Delegation to East Africa, 1905’ is part of a broader study tracing the connection between the Zionist enterprise and British imperial culture, thus the emphasis is on the text as a reflection of colonial-imperial images. The paper focuses on the experiences of the delegation and the Territorialists’ reaction to its conclusions. See Eitan Bar-Yosef, ‘Why Not Uganda: The
7. The question of whether Herzl was a Judenstaatler, i.e., someone aspiring to establish a Jewish state anywhere suitable for settlement under the auspices of a superpower, or a full-fledged Zionist who viewed the Uganda proposal as a bargaining chip to put the Jewish question on the agenda for international discussion has been addressed by historians. Yosef Goldstein sees the East African settlement plan as a continuation of the Territorialist idea brought up by Herzl in *The Jewish State,* in the El-Arish plan that he had tried to promote the year before, and in other proposals around the same time. See Yosef Goldstein, *Bein Tsiyonut Medinit le-Tsiyonut Ma'asit: Ha-Tenua ha-Tsiyonit ha-Rusiya be-Reshitah* [Political Zionism and Practical Zionism: The Russian Zionist Movement at its Inception] (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1991). In contrast, Yeshayahu Friedman argues that Herzl never regarded the Uganda Scheme and other settlement plans as practical options. He consented to the British proposal in East Africa only because he felt he could not reject the offer of a friend as loyal as the British Colonial Secretary. See Isaiah Friedman, ‘Herzl and the Uganda Controversy’, in Ritchie Robertson and Edward Timms, eds., *Theodor Herzl and the Origins of Zionism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), pp.39–53. For more on Herzl’s attitude toward the Uganda Scheme, see David Vital, *Zionism: The Formative Years* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1982), pp.430–43. See also Michael Heymann, ‘Herzl ve-Tsiyonei Rusya: Mahloket ve-Haskama’ [Herzl and the Russian Zionists: Dispute and Agreement], *Biyomut,* 3 (1975/76), 56–99. See the collection of documents on the Uganda debate in Michael Heymann, ed., *The Minutes of the Zionist General Council: The Uganda Controversy,* 2 vols (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 1977). On the establishment of the ITO, see Gur Alroey, ‘Erets le-Am ve-Lo Am le-Eretz: Ha-Histadrut ha-Teritorialistit ha-Yehudit (ITO), ha-Tenua ha-Tsiyonut veha-Hagira ha-Yehudit be-Reshit ha-Me’a ha-Esrim’ [A Land for a Nation and not a Nation for a Land: The Jewish Territorial Organization (ITO), the Zionist Movement, and Jewish Immigration in the Early Twentieth Century], *Iyyunim bi-Tekumat Yisrael,* 14 (2003/04), 537–64.

8. On Ussishkin’s efforts against Herzl and his plan, see Yossi Goldstein, *Ussishkin: Biografia 1863–1919* [Ussishkin’s Biography], vol.1 (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1999), pp.175–86.

9. Proclamation of the Territorial Zionists, 5664 (1903/04) [no exact date given], Central Zionist Archives (hereafter CZA), A36, folder 8, p.2.

10. Ibid.


12. It should be noted that the Territorialists were joined by two leading Hovevei Zion activists: Max Mandelstamm and Israel Jasinowski.


18. See letter from Charles Eliot to Foreign Secretary Lansdowne, 4 November 1903, CZA, A87, folder 365, p.49.


21. Copies of the records of the negotiations between Leopold Greenberg and the British Foreign Office were transferred from the Foreign Office files to the Central Zionist Archives. The
documents on Jewish settlement in East Africa were photocopied from the Public Record Office (PRO), Foreign Office (FO), file 785, and transferred to the Central Zionist Archives, A87, folder 365.

22. See Jewish Colonization Scheme, CZA, A87, folder 365, p.2.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid., p.6.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid., p.3.
27. See Bar-Yosef, 'Why Not Uganda' (note 6), especially pp.93–7.
32. Ibid.
33. The private archives of Nachum Wilbusch in the Central Zionist Archives contain four maps of Johnston’s survey of Guas Ngishu. The maps indicate the quality of the land and its inherent potential. See CZA, A555, folder 49/2.
34. See Eliot, *The East Africa Protectorate* (note 17), p.88. In a ‘secret’ letter to his wife Vera, Chaim Weizmann describes his meeting with Harry Johnston. In their conversation, Johnston did not say that conditions in the area were unsuitable for settlement, but he did express concern that ‘impossible [sic] to establish a fairly large colonization project even in 25 years time’. The British government’s offer seemed to him ‘as irony in respect of the Jews’, and he thought British public opinion would oppose the initiative. In addition, Johnston warned against opposition by white settlers who were prepared to fight against foreign Jews entering their land. See Weizmann, *Letters and Papers*, vol.III (note 15), p.53. For more on the meeting, see Weizmann, *Trial and Error* (note 15), pp.89–90.
36. Ibid., pp.1564–5.
37. Ibid., p.349.
40. See Weissbord, *African Zion* (note 6), pp.203–4, especially n.15.
44. CZA, K14a, folder 109.
46. Ibid., pp.48–49.
47. Ibid., p.56 (emphasis added).
49. Ibid., p.6.
50. Ibid., pp.11–12.
51. Ibid., p.16.
52. Ibid., p.23–8.
53. Ibid., p.44.
54. Ibid., p.52.
55. Ibid., p.56. In Elspeth Huxley’s book *White Man’s Country*, she relates that a group of settlers approached the commissioner of the East Africa Protectorate, Charles Eliot, and asked to escort the delegation in order to ‘help’ it in its work. The delegation, Huxley says, was accompanied...
by a man from the British Foreign Office and several British settlers. They encountered herds of
elephants and menacing Masai tribesmen who frightened them so badly that they did not let go
of their guns. Furthermore, their escorts told them of cannibal tribes living nearby. The fear had
its effect, and the delegation stayed in Guas Ngishu for only three days. See Huxley, White Man’s
Country (note 17), pp.117–34. It should be noted that Huxley’s story has no basis in reality. No
Foreign Office representative and no white settlers accompanied the delegation at any stage.
There is no evidence of it in the official report. Moreover, the delegation spent about four weeks
in the Guas Ngishu Plateau and not three days, as Huxley says. On this subject, see also

56. Expedition report (see note 43), p.56.
57. Ibid., p.67.
58. Ibid., pp.68–9.
59. Ibid., p.96.
60. Ibid., p.16.
61. Ibid., p.10.
62. Ibid., p.19.
63. Wilbusch, Ha-Masa le-Uganda (see note 42), p.78.
64. See Expedition report (note 43), pp.63–5.
65. Weissbord, in African Zion, hardly mentions the reliability of Wilbusch’s report or the fact that
Wilbusch did not explore the designated area at all, instead wasting most of his time first
searching for the camp and then waiting for Kaiser and Gibbons.
67. See CZA, A335, folder 49/2.
68. On Charles Eliot’s impressions of Guas Ngishu, see CZA, A87, folder 365, p.49.
69. See note 25 above.
70. Ephraim Cohn-Reiss, Mi-Zikhrnot uit Jerusalem [Memories of a Son of Jerusalem], 2nd
71. Wilbusch, Ha-Masa le-Uganda (see note 42), p.96.
Geographical Journal, 273 (March 1906), 242–57.
73. The expedition report was published in installments in Die Welt. Gibbons’ report appeared on
23 June 1905; see Die Welt, 25 (23 June 1905), pp.1–5. Kaiser’s report was printed in three
issues, 26, 27, and 28; see Die Welt, 50 June, 7 July, 14 July; Wilbusch’s report was printed in
issues 28 and 29 on 14 July and 21 July 1905, pp.10–11 and 5–7, respectively. Gibbons’
criticism appeared on 21 July 1905, in issue 28, pp.7–10.
74. Protokoll (see note 4), p.62.
75. Ibid., p.67.
76. Ibid., p.69.
77. Ibid., pp.93–4.
78. Ibid., p.94.
79. Ibid.
80. Ibid., p.95.
81. Zemach, Shana Rishona (see note 16), p.78.
82. Ibid., pp.80–81.
83. Literally, ‘sitting flesh’, the word denotes perseverance.
84. David Yudelevitch to Dov Lubman, 1 November 1903, Rishon Lezion Archives, folder 16,
pp.4–5.
85. Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, Ha-Medina ha-Yebudit: Ma’amirim Shonim al Devar Hatza’am Mizrah
Afrika [The Jewish State: Various Articles about the East African Proposal] (Warsaw: Medina,
1905), p.4. This volume is a collection of Ben-Yehuda’s articles that were originally printed in
Habashat ha-fab. The excerpts are taken from the book and not the newspaper.
86. Ibid., p.9.
87. On the Zionist movement’s immigration policy in the early twentieth century, see Margalit
Shilo, ‘Tovat ha-Am o Tovat ha-Arets: Yahasah shel ha-Tena ha-Tsiyonit le-Aliya bi-Tekufat ha-
Aliya ha-Sheniyah’ [The Welfare of the People or the Welfare of the Land: The Zionist Movement’s
Attitude toward Immigration during the Second Aliya], Cathedra, 46 (Tevet 1987)


90. Heymann, ‘Herzl ve-Tsiyonim Rusya’ (see note 7), p.84.

91. Protokoll (see note 4), p.75.

92. Ibid.

93. Ibid., p.70. In response to Zangwill’s speech, M. Shire, one of the leaders of the Jewish Socialist Party in England and an opponent of the Uganda Scheme, said in his own speech, ‘This Congress [the Seventh Congress] is not an assembly of Jewry but of Zionist Jewry only.’ For this statement he was rewarded with a long, tumultuous ovation (ibid., p.84).

94. Moshe Rosenblatt to Israel Zangwill, 6 November 1906, CZA, A36, folder 53B.

95. Ibid. (emphasis original).


97. Ibid.

98. ‘Vos mir zaynen un vos mir vilen’ [What are we and what we want], n.p., n.d. (1906?), CZA, A36, folder 8 (emphasis original). For similar expressions, see also ‘Tsirn yudishn folk - vegg a yudishe fray-land’ [For the Jewish people – about a Jewish state], n.p, n.d. (1906?), CZA, A36, folder 8.