

Title:

The Uganda Scheme

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Summary:

Theodore Herzl, the visionary who founded Zionism, was an assimilated Jew, who did not consider Palestine the optimal choice for a resurgent Jewish nationalism.

Keywords:

Article Body:

Theodore Herzl, the visionary who founded Zionism, was an assimilated Jew, who did not consider Palestine the optimal choice for a resurgent Jewish nationalism.

When the British offered to him a homeland in East Africa (today's Uganda), he accepted and proposed it to the Sixth Zionist Congress in Basle in 1903. After bitter recriminations, the Congress decided (295 for, 178 against) to send an "investigatory commission" to the territory to inspect it and report back.

Herzl vowed that the Uganda scheme is not a substitute for the reclamation of Palestine as the historic homeland of the Jewish people. But his actions defied his speech. He pursued the British proposal to his death (in 1904) as did many other prominent Jewish leaders, organized in the Jewish Territorialist Organization (ITO).

The plan was decisively abandoned only after the Balfour Declaration which granted the Jewish people a homeland in Palestine under the British mandate.

Yet, in the meantime, other territorial plans emerged: in Canada, Australia, Iraq, Libya, and Angola. Close to 10,000 Jews settled in Texas. Stalin created a "Jewish Homeland" in Birobidjan. Even the Nazis tried to revive some of these "solutions to the Jewish question" - notably in Lublin, Poland and in the island of Madagascar.