

The Uganda Project

BY SIDNEY L. SHIPTON

The expulsion of Israeli advisors in March, 1972, and the more recent expulsion by General Amin of the British Asian population has put the name of Uganda in to the headlines. But to Jews and to Zionists Uganda has a further connotation although a more ancient one and if the proposed scheme for the settlement of Jews in Uganda at the turn of the century has been brought to fruition there might be yet a further reason for Uganda being in the news today.

To look back at the historic events we must at first understand the background to the situation in 1903 and 1904. Several years earlier in 1897 Dr. Theodor Herzl had founded the World Zionist Organization to realize the age old dream of re-establishment of a Jewish State in Palestine. A dream of Jews for some 2,000 years. Palestine at that time was not an entity on its own but merely part of a Province of the Turkish Empire and in spite of discussions and negotiations carried out in the main by Dr. Herzl with Heads of States the fulfillment of the dream was not to be at that time.

In another part of the world namely an area between Russia and Poland known as the Pale of Settlement Jews were suffering from Tzarist Government inspired racial discrimination of the worst order and indeed it was at this time that the word 'pogrom' became in common use. A sympathetic British Government offered to Theodor Herzl and the El Arish Project in the Sinai Desert for settlement purposes but this

plan was rejected by the Egyptian Government ostensibly because of the impossibility of there being sufficient water from the Nile for irrigation purposes. In fact the rejection of the plan was for political reasons but nevertheless such a solution became abortive.

From the formal point of view the issue before the Congress was to despatch a Commission of Enquiry to investigate and when this Resolution was accepted by the Congress the opponents immediately withdrew and some indeed wept and said Kaddish (a Memorial Prayer for the dead) on the basis that Zionism which envisaged the recreation of the Jewish State in the Jewish Homeland of Palestine was dead. In passing it is of considerable interest to note that the main opponents to the Uganda Scheme were the Jews from Russia the ones who had suffered the most, whereas the Jews from the West were for the Scheme.

The 7th World Zionist Congress on July 27th 1905, found the Investigating Commission divided in its views since the two Jewish members felt the land was unsuitable and the one non-Jewish member believed it could accommodate 20,000 farmers. At this stage the Congress by a large majority declined the British offer at the same time declaring that the Zionist Organization adhered to the basic principle of Zionism, namely the creation of a Jewish State in the Jewish Homeland of Palestine emphatically rejecting any colonization outside of Palestine (some of the delegates who still favored the East African Project withdrew from the World Zionist Organization and under the writer Israel Zangwill created the Jewish Territorial Organization with

a program of creating a Jewish State anywhere in the world, but that of course is another story.

One cannot, however, but feel that the racial prejudice which has motivated the expulsion of the Ugandan Asians might have been even more intense for a Ugandan Jewish population. From all points of view it is therefore fortunate that the Uganda Project of 1903 conceived as a temporary expedient to alleviate suffering if nothing else did not come to fruition.

NEW YORK -- Mrs. Charlotte Jacobson, Chairman of the American Section of the World Zionist Organization, will deliver the principal address at the opening session of the fifteenth year of the Herzl Institute.

NEW YORK -- The American Jewish Committee has called on the government of the U.S. to "deny to the USSR most favored nation status as well as other forms of large scale economic aid" until the Soviet Union stops demanding exorbitant exit fees from Jewish intellectuals and until it ends other forms of harassment of its Jewish population.

NEW YORK -- On the eve of Israel's 25th Anniversary, Ziontal Books, 48 Eldridge St., New York City, has imported two volumes that are best sellers in Israel. The work is "Shema Yisrael: A Guide to a Deeper Appreciation of the Jewish Heritage, Past and Present" by Dov Rosen the original Hebrew edition has been reprinted five times in less than three years, and has now been translated by Leonard Oschry into English.

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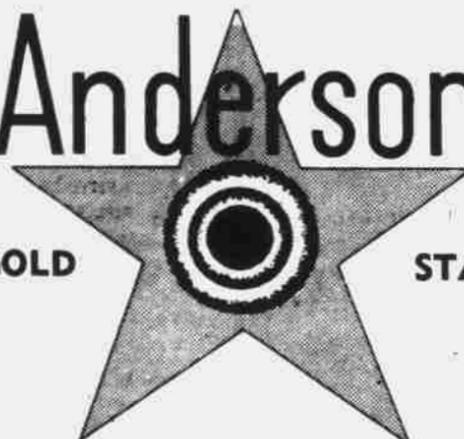
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