PLANNING A HEBREW STATE

ISRAEL ZANGWILL'S TERRITORIAL PROPOSITION Discussed by -

J. M. Barrie
James Bryce
Hall Caine
John Davidson
Sir Conan Doyle
W. S. Gilbert
H. Rider Haggard
Thomas Hardy
Maurice Hewlett
Jerome K. Jerome
Coulson Kernahan
Andrew Lang
Maurice Maeterlinck
Gilbert Murray
Sir Gilbert Parker
Max Pemberton
Arthur W. Pinero
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Richard Whiteing
H. G. Wells.

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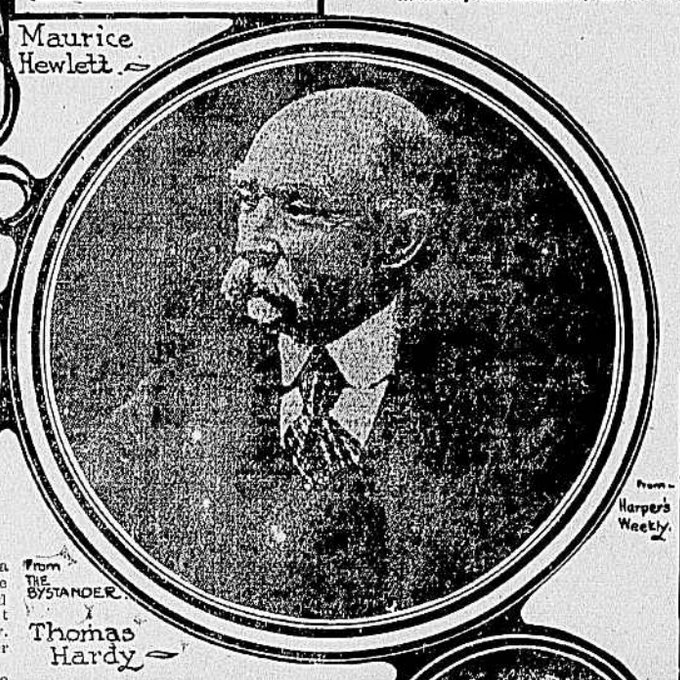
Israel Zangwill



Dr. Conan Doyle

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By ISRAEL ZANGWILL.

At a certain convival gathering of Englishmen of letters I found a good deal of kindly interest taken in the programme of the Ito (the Jewish Territorial Organization), which was occupying all my energies. It occurred to me in consequence to invite my casual interlocutors to express a formal opinion upon the topic—more particularly as the Ito, though theoretically unlimited in its quest of territory, had begun negotiating for a territory under British protection—and the views of divers English writers on such a project would reveal in some sort the temper and attitude of the British people toward the idea. All whom I asked fell in with my suggestion on the spot. Subsequently, to make the collection of opinions more representative, I sent the following letter to a number of other English writers:

Jewish Territorial Organization,
15 Essex Street, Strand, W. C.,
November, 1905.

Dear ——: A number of British men of letters have kindly consented to give me their opinion for publication on the scheme outlined in the enclosed pamphlet. I trust you will also favor me with a brief expression of your views. The scheme, in a nutshell, is to build up an autonomous Jewish State out of the refugees from persecution—a State which will likewise attract a number of prosperous and idealistic Jews. In our quest for a territory we wish, if possible, to take advantage of England's offer of a virgin soil under British suzerainty.

We have elements to offer England in return which are not to be disdained even by so mighty an empire, since scattered over her dominions across the seas of thirteen million square miles she has only a white population of twelve millions, which is less than one per square mile.

A flourishing settlement of one of the most potent white peoples on earth cannot but bring a gain of strength to any Power that accords it a stretch of territory at present waste. But, of course, an independent territory is theoretically open to the organization—even Palestine, if it were attainable.

Thanking you in advance for the help your kind opinion will give me, yours sincerely, ISRAEL ZANGWILL.

In addition to the British replies I have included a letter from Maeterlinck, which came to me at a mass-meeting of the Ito, presided over by the present Lord Chancellor, to protest against Jewish massacres.

To all these writers, whatever their views, I beg to tender my sincere thanks, and although I have found it necessary in some instances to annotate their letters and remove false impressions, I recognize with pleasure the magnanimity of their outlook. It is characteristic of the British writers that they do not regard the proposition of a British Judea from any point of view but that of the salvation of the unhappy race, whose tragedy has just touched such heights of horror in Russia. With the exception of Sir Gilbert Parker, who is a professional politician, none looks aside to the gain which would undoubtedly result to England if one of her comparatively virgin territories became the seat of a powerful and grateful colony. Even Sir Gilbert Parker passes immediately to an altruistic cosmic standpoint. Possibly the lion is too big to realize the possibilities of help latent in the mouse, and yet Cromwell, in reopening England and her colonies to the Jews, had imperial expansion and trade ascendancy very lucidly in his eye.

The unfortunate superabundance of unemployed population in Great Britain beclouds the fact that the rest of the British Empire is eminently in need of population. There are fewer people in population. There are fewer eople in Australia than in the four-mile cab radius of London, and Canada, which is almost another continent, has fewer inhabitants than postal London. How many people realize that Rhodesia, the mere toy of a chartered company, contains a dozen Englands, with little more than the population of Glasgow? That England shall feed these vast tracts from her surplus population is obviously impossible, especially as that surplus population prefers the United States. And yet "the wealth of nations" is clearly inhabitants. Thus, then, the suggestion that the "tribes of the wandering foot and weary breast," as an English oet styled them, shall find a secure resting place under the poet's own flag is not altogether onesided. Nevertheless, it is to the credit of the British writers that they have overlooked the side profitable to Britain. Even Mr. Rider Haggard, who writes gloomily to the Times of "the deserted lands of Britain" and of "the infinite dominions of the British Empire lying unoccupied and ready to support men in millions," does not bethink himself that in the impossibility of Anglo-Saxon settlers the next best thing is a white population which will carry on the Anglo-Saxon civilization, which its literature indeed helped to create.

J. M. Barrie Approves.

My Dear Zangwill:—I have been thinking over your scheme and it seems to me the finest and biggest that has been conceived for the help of mankind for many a day. As a romance it is fascinating, and it would be noble work to turn the dream into reality. Yours sincerely, J. M. BARRIE.

James Bryce's Views.

Dear Mr. Zangwill,—I cannot claim to have studied the subject regarding which you invite my opinion. But I have always warmly sympathized with the aim of the Zionist movement. It would not only provide a home for the oppressed Jews of Eastern Europe, but might also rescue from Turkish misrule a land once flourishing and in which both Jews and Christians everywhere must always be deeply interested.

If, however, the Zionist scheme be for the moment impracticable your next best course seems to be to obtain some virtually unoccupied or thinly occupied territory in which to plant the East European refugees, setting up there an autonomous Jewish community under the protection and supervision of a strong Power. Few such territories are now left, either in the Old or the New World, and probably the most promising is to be found in the highlands of British East Africa. Parts of that region possess a climate temperate enough to permit the Jewish race, which has shown itself capable of adaptation to very different climates, to do agricultural and pastoral work. You seem to be right in thinking that this is the best way of averting the difficulties to which a largely increased Jewish immigration into America or Britain might give rise. The matter has become more urgent in these last weeks owing to the frightful massacres in Russia.

Heartily wishing success to your efforts, I am, yours very truly, JAMES BRYCE.

Hall Caine's Greeting.

My Dear Zangwill,—At the earliest moment I shall send you the message you wish for about your colonization scheme. I sympathize with you sincerely and your difficulties with the rich men of your people, who find London the best Jerusalem, but do not particularly desire that their poorer Russian brethren should share it. It is very fine of you to give all this time and work to so good a cause, and if you do not get material advantage, you get something much better. With affectionate greetings, yours very truly, HALL CAINE.

John Davidson's Criticism.

My Dear Zangwill: Three things in the first of the Ito pamphlets fix themselves in my mind.

1. The religious import of a Jewish colony. In your reply to Mr. Lucien Wolf you say, "It is obvious that in a Jewish colony religious Jews would find a far better environment for their religion than anywhere else." If that were cetain I would be against a Jewish colony. I wish the Bible to be laid upon the shelf for a hundred years at least, and to be taken down again only when all men can regard it as what it is, the remarkable literature of a remarkable people. But I question very much if the Jewish religion would thrive in a Jewish colony. I believe the Jew clings to the worship of Jehovah mainly because of his alienage. Were the Jew permanently established in a country of his own, free from the religious intolerance of his general present environment, which concentrates his thought upon the past and intensifies and sublimates his hereditary faith, I am convinced that the Hebrew mind and imagination would soon transcend an effete mythology.

2. The impossibility of Zionism: In Dr. Nordau's letter of October 1st to you he maintains that "Zionism strives for the final solution of the Jewish problem, which, in my opinion, can only be found in Palestine." There is at present no Jewish problem. It has been in solution throughout the Christian era. The problem will emerge with the realization of the autonomous colony. But the crucifixion of the Man who forgave the woman taken in adultery, and who said, "Suffer little children to come unto me," makes a second exodus to Palestine impossible in the meantime—perhaps forever. I am not casting a stone. The only thing to do with Christ was to kill him. I would myself have shouted for Barabbas. Nevertheless, the Jew cannot return to Calvary and the Mount of Olives. The thing is elemental, and is felt the moment it is stated. How the Zionists overlooked it I cannot think.

3. The splendid adventure of an autonomous Jewish colony; and your own generous idea—"A city of refuge for all the oppressed Jews of the world." To my thinking, an autonomous Jewish colony would be indeed an adventure of the utmost hardihood, and therefore a thing I should rejoice to see. That this astonishing race, which appears in the world first as a body of slaves, which during the fifteen hundred years of its occupation of Palestine attained to peace, prosperity and renown for the brief space of one reign, King Solomon's; a race five-sixths of which vanished—in a night, was it?—a race of ungovernable individuals, able in its magnificent pride to submit to anything, but utterly unable to harmonize with itself or with the world; that this enigmatic people, after several thousand years of travail and persecution, should now consider the advisability of gathering itself together from the ends of the earth to attempt autonomy is a thing unparagoned in history. Nothing would interest me more, nothing would be better worth a trial than an autonomous Jewish colony. I hope to see it done, and done consummately—the thing we thought could never be.

Pardon my delay in replying to your letter; I have only to-day received it.

With the most cordial wishes for the success of your enterprises, I am sincerely yours, JOHN DAVIDSON.

Mr. Davidson is playing with words when he says there is no Jewish problem. And so far from its being elementally evident that the Jews cannot return to Calvary, a Jewish bodyguard around the Holy Sepulchre would be a much more elemental revenge for the whirligig of time to bring.

Sir Conan Doyle Admires Pluck.

My Dear Zangwill:—Pray excuse my delay. I have been exceedingly busy. I have thought much of your scheme for the settlement of the refugee Jews. Of course, I entirely sympathize with it. It seems monstrous and inhuman that on all the face of God's earth there should be no resting place for these unhappy people, who, driven out of one land, are refused admission into all others. Their position is like the poor non-combatants in the Middle Ages, who were driven out of the besieged city by the garrison but refused a passage through their lines by the besiegers. I would do anything I could to help them to a permanent home. But the more one thinks of it the more the practical difficulties grow. No doubt the British Empire has many tropical and semi-tropical sites vacant for such a colony. There is East Africa, the Highlands of Uganda, Northern Rhodesia, New Guinea and doubtless many other places which I have not thought of. But the Jew has never been an agriculturist.

I don't think he has any soil hunger in his blood; he is gregarious, he goes where there are crowds of people and where money is to be made—small blame to him. But after you had settled your colony in Africa I expect within five years every one of your colonists would find himself in Johannesburg. South Africa might in some ways afford a better place for a colony, since there is plenty of land unoccupied and there would be no great money making city to draw them away. But that of course could not be under the British flag.

If your journalists and financiers, who really rule the world, were in dead earnest over this matter they could by hook or by crook get Palestine. If they are not in dead earnest then it looks as if it were not a real racial impulse destined to success.

However, it is poor work pointing out difficulties. I admire your pluck in facing them and wish you heartily every success. Yours very truly, ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle is somewhat mistaken in thinking that the Jew has never been an agriculturist. The ancient Jews of course were fighters and farmers who left trade to the Philistines. Even to-day there are 100,000 Jewish agriculturists in Russia, and thousands more in Palestine, the Argentine, America, etc. It is quite true that the Jew is gregarious, and this factor of his psychology must be allowed for in all colonization schemes. But the idealistic factor which makes even Johannesburg one of the centres of the ITO must also not be omitted, and to suggest the behavior of journalists and financiers as the test of the genuineness of a racial impulse is surely rather unscientific.

W. S. Gilbert's Opinion.

Dear Mr. Zangwill:—I am afraid my studies in sociology have been too desultory to justify me in expressing any very definite opinion upon your scheme for Jewsh territorial organization. In common with all Englishmen I deeply deplore the persecution to which Jews are subjected in certain countries, and I can understand that such a scheme as you suggest may provide a valuable method of meeting the emergency. But (speaking as one who knows very little about the matter) it seems to me, at first glance, to be a false economy to encourage British Jews to emigrate. They are under no social or political disabilities in these islands, and certainly they are among the most intelligent, hard working, thrifty and charitable of our population. No doubt those who know more about the matter may be able to knock the bottom out of my argument, but as you have paid me the unmerited compliment of asking for my opinion I venture to give it for what it may be worth. Yours very truly, W. S. GILBERT.

I. Zangwill, Esq.

Mr. Gilbert may be assured that there will long remain Jews in England to appreciate his wit and wisdom.

H. Rider Haggard on Palestine.

My Dear Zangwill,—I presume that your autonomous Jewish State if established in British territory would acknowledge and be obedient to the Crown and imperial power. If this is so I can see no possible objection to its creation, provided that a suitable land can be found where the experiment would be welcomed by the people and authorities. That something should be done these last abominable Russian massacres show clearly enough. I confess, however, that ever since I visited it I have had a sentimental hankering to see Palestine reoccupied by the Jews. Why cannot some of the members of your community buy the place? They would hardly miss the money, and I should imagine that its present possessors would be open to a deal. Believe me, sincerely yours, H. RIDER HAGGARD.

I hav already point out that Zionism has the unique distinction of being the only enterprise in the Christian era not financed by Jewish capitalists. Its comparatively small funds are almost entirely made up of the savings of the poor.

Thomas Hardy on Sentiment.

Dear Mr. Zangwill: It would be altogether presumptuous in me—so entirely outside Jewish life—to express any positive opinion on the scheme embodied in the pamphlet you send to me. I can only say a word or two, of the nature of a fancy. To found an autonomous Hebrew State or colony, under British suzerainty or not, wears the look of a good, practical idea, and it is possibly all the better for having no retrospective sentiment about it. But I cannot help saying that this retrospective sentiment among Jews is precisely the one I can best enter into (so that if I were a Jew I should be a rabid Zionist, no doubt), and I feel that the idea of ultimately getting to Palestine is the particular idea to make the imaginative among your people enthusiastic—"Like unto them that dream," as one of you said in a lyric, which is among the finest in any language, to judge from its moving power in a translation. You, I suppose, read it in the original. I wish I could. (This is a digression.)

The only plan that seems to me to reconcile the traditional feeling with the practical is that of regarding the proposed Jewish State on virgin soil as a stepping stone to Palestine. A Jewish colony, united and strong and grown wealthy in, say, East Africa, could make a bid for Palestine (as a sort of annex)—say, one hundred years hence,—with far greater effect than the race, as scattered all over the globe, can ever do; and who knows if by that time altruism may not have made such progress that the then ruler or rulers of Palestine, whoever they may be, may even hand it over to the expectant race and gladly assist such part of them as may wish to establish themselves there.

This expectation, nursed throughout the formation and development of the new territory, would at any rate be serviceable as an ultimate ideal to stimulate action.

With such an idea lying behind the immediate one, perhaps the Zionists would reunite and co-operate with the new territorialists.

I have written, as I said, only a fancy. But, as I think you know, nobody outside of Jewry can take much deper interest than I do in a people of such extraordinary history and character, who brought forth, moreover, a young reformer, who, though only in the humblest walk of life, became the most famous personage the world has ever known.

Believe me, yours sincerely, THOMAS HARDY.

Mr. Hardy's fancy is the baldest fact. He has expressed in a nutshell my own views on every point of a complex question.

Anthony Hope Admires.

My Dear Zangwill: I have read your pamphlet with great interest. I think that every man with the least historical imagination—or historical gratitude, either—must cordially approve and indeed admire your project. I hope you may live to see your new Palestine a flourishing settlement, strong in the best Jewish traditions.

Yours very truly, ANTHONY HOPE HAWKINS.

Maurice Hewlett's Plan.

My Dear Zangwill:—The opinion of men of affairs would, I think, be more valuable even than those of men of letters. Obviously the Jews are quite right to secure nationality and independence for themselves, and there are many ways of doing it more modern and more efficacious than carving them with a sword. Money is one, and no doubt a series of pamphlets might be another. But my reading of history constrains me to point out that never since this world was first put in order has a community been permanently established by means of pamphlets or the opinion of philosophers, to say nothing of literary men's.

If I were a Jew, and interested (as I am sure I should be) in the welfare of my countrymen, I should do everything in my power to organize them or, if I were called upon, to lead them. When once the will of the Jewish people could be expressed by organization, and the fruits of it, no power in the world could impede it.

These are the veriest truisms, which I should have thought worth stating had not your letter convinced me that they had been overlooked. Truly yours, M. HEWLETT.

Mr. Hewlett's truisms are not true. New Zealand and South Australia were both founder by the pamphlets of the philosopher, Gibbon Wakefield. Since Carlyle it has been the favorite foible of writers to underrates the power of thought. Yet God in creating the world said first, "Let there be light."

Jerome K. Jerome's View.

My Dear Zangwill:—I think you know my views as to the possibility of the Jewish race reaching Jerusalem via East Africa. To me it seems their nearest way. I remember an old picture Bible over which I loved to pore when I was a boy. It contained a map representing the wanderings of the Children of Israel through the wilderness. It was a zigzag course, I recollect—now approaching, now leading directly away from the Promised Land—but led there in the end. Those forty years have been multiplied by many and the dark cloud and the fiery hand still move before you, erratic, bewildering as before. Gather together, that you may prepare yourselves. History is moving swiftly. How long before the broken rearguard or retreating Mohammedanism shall be finally shaken from it western trenches? Be ready. If there be offered to it any spot on earth where in peace and freedom it may unite to fashion itself again into a nation, let Judaism and Jehovah's name gather there to prepare itself, so that when the summons comes it may find not a scattered mob, but a nation with its loins girded. Let the Jews regard this proposed settlement as a training ground where the nucleus of the nation may be recreated. From their prisons of misery, their deserts of starvation, let them come together to learn in practice the lessons of self-government, of organization, of self-reliance. What matter whether the land lie east or west: to the Roman all roads led to Rome. In stagnation only could he remain exiled. When he moved, he moved toward Rome. Shall not the Jew say likewise:—"Let us arise, for all ways lead us to our heart's desire. Yours in sympathy and hope, JEROME K. JEROME.

Coulson Kernahan's Irish View

My Dear Zangwill,—Absence from home on a lecturing tour has prevented me from replying earlier to your letter. As a Gentile and a fellow craftsman I grudge sometimes that you should give to Zionism what is of such value to humanity, to letters and to art. But 'tis a selfish grudging, and I wish my own forlorn country, Ireland, could count such sons as you. I wish, too, that it were to Ireland you Jews could come to found your colony, for we are likely soon to be as widely scattered over the face of the earth as you. We, too, are of a tribe of Ishamel. We, too, are looking for a Moses to lead us to our promised land. There are tracts of Ireland scarcely less desolate than Africa, and your coming among us might bring new prosperity to a dying race.

Yet, come you to Ireland or go you to Africa, or finally—as I believe you will—to Palestine, my sympathies are wholly yours. Was it not your Heine who said that if only one Jew were left alive pilgrims would travel from the world's end to see the last representative of a nation which had given humanity its God?

We Christians owe so much to your great and marvellous nation that it is unthinkable you should appeal in vain to us for sympathy and help.

It is not for me to offer advice, for I am but an outsider upon a subject on which you and your colleagues are experts. But I do think, failing Palestine for the present, you would do well to reunite your people in some such colony as that which Mr. Lyttelton offered you. Scattered as you are (as we Irishmen are) you cannot combine sufficiently to bring to bear the enormous leverage which is needed to reconstruct Zion as a nation. Hope eventually for Palestine, work that Palestine may eventually be your goal, but, in the meantime, close with the most suitable and most attractive offer which promises a colonizing centre in which you can unite your splendid energies, from which you may look toward your longed-for Palestine. That God will one day restore Zion to her place among the nations is my hope and belief.

I am, my dear Zangwill, always yours, COULSON KERNAHAN.

Andrew Lang's Wish.

Mr. Kernahan's brilliant solution of the Irish and the Jewish question at one stroke may be commended to Mr. Bryce. Our programme, however, would still demand "Home Rule."

Dear Mr. Zangwill,—I need not tell you that you have my sympathy and admiration, but I have none of the special knowledge of which great quantities are needed before one can form an opinion on your project. I can only wish "more power to your arm." A. LANG.

Maurice Maeterlinck Approves.

My Dear Friend,—The dogged and noble energy with which you and yours are defending the unfortunate victims of Russian madness, the zeal and the brotherly love with which you are preparing for them a refuge prevent one, despite the shameful indifference of a world which thinks itself civilized, from yet desparing of the human conscience. You are incontestably performing the best and the most urgent work of justice that could be possibly performed at this moment, and all my thoughts are with you.

I clasp your hand effectionately. MAETERLINCK.

Gilbert Murray's Wit.

Dear Mr. Zangwill,—I sympathize vehemently with the Ito movement and will try to write you a letter in the course of a week or thereabout. I am rather hard pressed with work from day to day. I don't at all wish to reduce the number of Jews in England, however. Yours very truly, GILBERT MURRAY.

Sir Gilbert Parker Approves.

Dear Zangwill,—Your manifesto is suggestive and powerful. I believe that you are presenting one impartial solution of a world-wide problem, and I also think that, with territory properly chosen and with wise administration, a great Jewish colony or independent State would be a source of strength to the British Empire, or to the world, respectively, besides organizing the powers and remarkable faculties of a great people. Believe me, dear Zangwill, yours sincerely, GILBERT PARKER.

Max Pemberton on Duty.

Dear Zangwill,—you are speaking of and working for great things, and I cannot help but feel that the brains of the country must be with you. It will remain, I suppose, an irony to the end that the greatest things find the rarest expression in our system of "betwixt and between," which, as Alan Breck reminded us, was

(Continued on Fifth Page.)

HALL CAINE. W. S. GILBERT. ANTHONY HOPE HAWKINS. MAURICE MAETERLINCK. JOHN DAVIDSON. ARTHUR W. PINERO. MAX PEMBERTON. COULSON KERNAHAN.