Chapter 3
Oppenheimer’s Path to Zionism

With Franz Oppenheimer I was acquainted with a member of the Zionist Organization whom I could not fit in my preexisting concept of Zionism. He emphasized his Germanness, he wanted to have nothing to do with the Jewish national idea and was nevertheless the opposite of an assimilationist.¹

This quote by Kurt Blumenfeld, who served for many years as secretary and president of the Zionistische Vereinigung für Deutschland [Zionist Federation of Germany] (ZVfD), as well as general secretary of the Zionist Organization between 1911 and 1914, demonstrates the difficulties Zionist contemporaries, especially of the younger generation, had in accepting Oppenheimer as one of their own. When Oppenheimer published his first article in a Zionist newspaper, in Die Welt in 1901, Martin Buber, its editor at the time, formulated a reserved welcome in an editorial article called “Wege zum Zionismus” [Paths to Zionism]:

There are some other paths to Zionism, bypaths so to speak. The most typical among them is maybe the path of the social theoretician who wants to implement his ideas on us. Zionism appears to him as the possibility for a huge social experiment. Men who come to us like that, usually without a proper understanding of the whole beauty of our national idea and incapable of penetrating it, are nevertheless a powerful stimulus. They bring new elements into our discussion that force us to find a positive stance towards the biggest movements of our time.²

Although Buber did not specifically name Oppenheimer, the placement of his editorial directly before the second instalment of Oppenheimer’s article created the impression that Buber was commentating on Oppenheimer’s debut in the movement – seeing in him a social theoretician lacking a Jewish nationalist conviction and acting out of ulterior motives.

Ignoring for a moment the question of how accurate Buber’s assessment was, we can certainly understand it as an early manifestation of an intergenerational conflict within the ZVfD that was gaining momentum on the eve of the First World War. The main point of contention was the redefinition of Zionist ideology by the younger generation as a commitment to dissimilation from Ger-


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many and, ultimately, emigration to Palestine.³ Blumenfeld, who was catapulted to the head of the ZVfD by the revolt of the younger, more radical, generation, knew that Oppenheimer’s opinion was not an anomaly.⁴ The lasting impression Oppenheimer left on him indicated Oppenheimer’s importance as an outspoken representative of first-generation German Zionists and their affirmation of the hybridity of their Jewishness and their Germanness. Oppenheimer’s 1910 article “Stammesbewusstsein und Volksbewusstsein” [Tribal and national consciousness], which exposed this intergenerational rift, was perceived by John Efron as an exemplary description of the first-generation’s declaration of belonging to European culture.⁵

Blumenfeld recognized that Oppenheimer adhered to an alternative source of Jewish pride or nationalism in seeking to combat assimilation. This was an important objective of Zionism in Western and Central Europe, which can be perceived as varying forms of identity politics grappling with marginalization in German society.⁶ Despite his post-assimilationist position and calls for a clear Jewish disintegration,⁷ Blumenfeld was never really free of the tension between the Germanness and Jewishness of his identity. Many years after the generational schism, Blumenfeld lamented the lack of appreciation in the young state of Israel for the contribution of German Zionists. They were accused of clinging to their German identity and failing to integrate in Israel. Furthermore, he praised the “German-Jewish symbiosis” as the force behind the creative contribution of German Zionists which “was generated through the collision of German culture and Jewish essence.”⁸

Hence it was not Germanness, which continued to play a role for German Zionists of both generations, that was at the core of the conflict, but rather how changing political attitudes – including the popularization of post-liberal

⁴ In a letter to Schalom Ben-Chorin dated December 12, 1954 Blumenfeld spoke of Bodenheimer, Friedemann, Klee and Oppenheimer as representatives of first-generation German Zionists who did not recognize that Jews can’t be Germans and that there are major differences between them. Kurt Blumenfeld, *Im Kampf um den Zionismus: Briefe aus fünf Jahrzehnten* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1976), 260–261.
attitudes and the völkisch and racial discourse – should affect the constant reim-
agination of the relationship of Jews to Europe, and what positions should Jews
occupy in these discourses. The wish to belong to European modernity required
constant actualization, and Zionism was the latest form of this process, ultimate-
ly questioning Jewish existence in the diaspora altogether.⁹

The positions Zionists occupied in the racial discourse initially deterred Op-
penheimer from joining the Zionist movement. Nevertheless, he joined the move-
ment with the conviction that diversity of opinion was welcome, with the Basel
Program forming the least common denominator. Oppenheimer’s active Zionist
engagement ultimately spanned almost two decades, with sporadic involvement
even in the decade thereafter. Oppenheimer’s familiarity with “the biggest move-
ments of our times” to Zionism, to quote Buber again, placed him in the discur-
sive interface between Zionism and communal socialism, colonialism, racial
theory and nationalism at the end of the imperial era, which will be the focus
of the following chapters.

First Encounters with Zionism

In his memoirs, Oppenheimer recounted the origin of his Zionist engagement as
a chance encounter with Oskar Marmorek and Johann Kremenetzky, members of
the Zionist Executive, also known as the Inner Actions Committee, in an express
train from Berlin to Vienna. Through their mediation, Oppenheimer came into
contact with Theodor Herzl, founder and head of the Zionist movement.¹⁰ Op-
penheimer’s retrospective portrayal of his Zionist engagement as unplanned
and unintentional might have been related to his eventual disillusion with the
movement. Nevertheless, we should not interpret it as a digression from his
life mission, as many of his German biographers do.¹¹

In his autobiography Oppenheimer described chance as possessing mystical
power capable of fusing life with a superior, if not divine, mission. Despite being
a rigid adherent of science, he described the pivotal moment in which he recog-
nized the foundational principle of his utopian socioeconomic theory, namely,
land enclosure and its dissolution through the settlement cooperative, as an al-
most religious experience: “And in an unforgettable night at the end of 1893 the

⁹ See also Stefan Vogt’s observation on the participation of Jews in the colonial, oriental, an-
thropological and racial discourse in Germany; Vogt, Subalterne Positionierungen, 115–118.
¹¹ See footnote 12 in the introduction.
lightning-like discovery, the moment of ‘grace’ so to speak, came to me that determined my life and aspiration. From that moment on I was literally ‘obsessed.’ A thought with tremendous implications possessed me; I did not belong to myself ... but from now on only to the cause.”¹²

But just how coincidental was Oppenheimer’s overture, in fact? Oppenheimer’s retrospective timeline was inaccurate and misleading in deflecting the initiative to join Zionism away from himself. Oppenheimer claimed that he had no concept of Zionism before this chance encounter in 1902. However, his first article in the Zionist newspaper Die Welt titled “Jüdische Siedlungen” [Jewish settlements] was published in four instalments, beginning with the issue on December 13, 1901. Immediately after the final instalment was published at the end of January 1902, Herzl commissioned Oppenheimer with the establishment of a Zionist settlement cooperative. However, this was not the first contact between Oppenheimer and Herzl. Herzl had previously conveyed his regards to Oppenheimer, perhaps wishing to signal his approval of Oppenheimer’s ideas about settlement. He may have even invited him to write about the settlement cooperative for Die Welt in the first place.¹³ Regardless of the invitation’s origin – whether it came from Herzl directly or from Marmorek and Kremenetzky¹⁴ – the aim of the top Zionist leadership was to get Oppenheimer to advise them on how to create a “province” based on his theories.¹⁵ The province they originally had in mind was El-Arish in British Egypt.¹⁶ However, the question remains: why did they think Oppenheimer would be willing to assist them?

¹² Oppenheimer, Erlebtes, Erstrebtes, Erreichtes, 141–142.
¹³ Herzl’s first letter to Oppenheimer is not preserved. Nonetheless, Herzl mentioned it in his diary entry from January 25, 1902, where he also expressed his opinion on Oppenheimer’s article; see Theodor Herzl, Briefe und Tagebücher, vol. 3, Zionistisches Tagebuch, 1899–1904, ed. Alex Bein et al. (Berlin: Propyläen 1985), 336. In his reply from January 26, 1902, Oppenheimer apologized for belatedly reciprocating Herzl’s greetings, apparently because he did not have his address; see Alex Bein, “Briefwechsel zwischen Theodor Herzl und Franz Oppenheimer,” Bulletin des Leo Baeck Instituts 7 (1964): 21 and 25–28.
¹⁴ In Derek Penslar’s opinion, Oppenheimer’s article was commissioned by Herzl; see Derek J. Penslar, “Zionism, Colonialism and Technocracy: Otto Warburg and the Commission for the Exploration of Palestine 1903–7,” Journal of Contemporary History 25 (1990): 155. Alex Bein attributed the initiative to Marmorek and Kremenetzky; see Bein, “Franz Oppenheimer,” 7.
¹⁶ In his first letter to Oppenheimer from January 25, 1902, Herzl spoke about the settlement of “Egypt Palestine beyond ‘Egypt’s stream,’ because there I am dealing with the English government, therefore have no difficulties,” meaning El-Arish; see Herzl, Zionistisches Tagebuch, 336. In January 1903, Oppenheimer was appointed as a candidate for an expedition to El-Arish, even though he already cancelled once; see Herzl, Zionistisches Tagebuch, 489. However, his name did not show up on later candidate lists; see Selig Soskin, Franz Oppenheimer und die Pal-
Oppenheimer’s involvement with Zionism was strongly connected with his Jewishness in a more obvious way than his choice to study medicine and his position in the racial discourse. Prior to his Zionist engagement, Oppenheimer had already tried to utilize his land settlement concept for the betterment of Jews. Oppenheimer was on the board of the Verein zur Förderung der Bodenkultur unter den Juden Deutschlands [Association for the Promotion of Agriculture among Germany’s Jews], also known as Bodenkulturverein, founded in Berlin on October 24, 1897. According to the association’s report for the business year 1900–1901, its main objective was to “start a Jewish farmer colony that will prove how very well-suited German Jews are to pursuing agriculture activities on German land.”¹⁷

Although Oppenheimer regarded the social question as a universal question, he did regard the professional structure of Jewish society as an anomaly. In his debate with Sombart, Oppenheimer apologetically contextualized the concentration of Jews in commercial professions in historical dynamics. He was fully in agreement with the underlying assumption that the concentration of Jews in urban commercialism was negative and must be remedied. This explains why Oppenheimer thought that a special focus on an exclusively Jewish settlement plan was necessary, even though including Jews in general settlement cooperatives could theoretically achieve the same goal. The settlement cooperative aimed to make it possible for those who wished to abandon an urban lifestyle, yet were unexperienced in agriculture, to learn the necessary skills.

That Oppenheimer had a distinct approach concerning Jews beyond the scope of his universal social activity is an important point that has not been emphasized enough in narratives placing Oppenheimer’s Zionist engagement in the context of his other settlement activity. Such narratives were, of course, beneficial when analyzing Oppenheimer’s place in the history of cooperative settlement. They also correspond to Oppenheimer’s own autobiographical accounts of his Zionist settlement Merhavia, together with his settlements in Germany, while recounting the rest of his Zionist activity in another chapter. His activity on behalf of the Bodenkulturverein was totally left out of his memoirs, along with many of the details and conflicts connected with his Zionist activity, except for the one around the issues of Jewish belonging to Germany and racial discrimination in Palestine.¹⁸

¹⁷ 3. Jahresbericht des Vereins zur Förderung der Bodenkultur unter den Juden Deutschlands, 1900/1901, CAHJP.
Reading Oppenheimer’s Zionist activity within the settlement cooperative narrative supports the position of skeptical contemporaries like Robert Weltsch, who considered Oppenheimer to be an opportunist: “What attracted him to Zionism was – apart from his passionate wish to help his less fortunate fellow Jews – mainly the prospect of applying his theory to a new and vast scheme of land settlement which, he insisted, should be free from the faults of those in older, long-established countries.”¹ The timing of Oppenheimer’s public support for Jewish settlements seems to support Weltsch’s interpretation. Oppenheimer’s first attempt at founding a settlement cooperative had just failed and in June 1901 the general assembly of the settlement cooperative Freiland decided to go into liquidation.² This failure probably contributed to Oppenheimer overcoming his inhibitions about Zionism in search of new patrons.

Oppenheimer’s claim that, shortly before his death, Herzl agreed to create a training settlement specializing in horticulture, agriculture and manual skills for the preparation of Zionist pioneers, in Germany or in Galicia – and not in Palestine or anywhere else overseas – further spurred the accusations that he wanted to exploit Zionism for his own agenda.²¹ Oppenheimer conceptualized his settlement cooperative within the framework of the reform-oriented ideology of “inner colonization” as a tool to reverse the social woes of urbanization by strengthening the peasantry and resettling the proletariat in the countryside as farmers. Yet “inner colonization” simultaneously served German efforts to nationalize provincial areas in the East and subordinate ethnic minorities, most prominently Poles.²² Oppenheimer preferred “inner colonization” over overseas colonization, claiming that expeditions searching for virgin soil without land enclosure were superfluous and even counterproductive. Successful colonization depended on low market accessibility costs. Ideally, places of settlement should have some connection to Europe in the past or present.²³

¹ Robert Weltsch, introduction to Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook 9 (1964): xxv.
² CZA A161–63.
²¹ Oppenheimer’s letter to Fritz Epstein from January 13, 1921, CZA A161–10.
²² For more on the transmission of concepts from German “inner colonization” in conjunction with colonial aims into Zionist settlement practice, see Penslar, Zionism and Technocracy, 94–98.
²³ Oppenheimer, Freiland in Deutschland, 58–59. Freiland in Deutschland was written as a critique of Theodor Hertzka’s utopian novel Freiland, published in 1890, and Hertzka’s failed expedition to establish a Freiland settlement in Kenya, at the time under British colonial administration. By the time Oppenheimer published this book, he had some experience with the Eden agricultural settlement north of Berlin, which had roots in Berlin Freiland circles and the Friedrichshagener Dichterkreis. Oppenheimer was associated with both.
Oppenheimer claimed that the fate of Zionist settlement depended on successful integration and not on detachment from Europe. He believed that Zionist colonization had the potential to serve as an avant-garde for the utopian transformation of Europe. On the flip side, it could not escape Europe’s demise if the woes of capitalism, communism and nationalist chauvinism could not be overcome.²⁴ Oppenheimer’s skepticism of settlements prospering outside European trade networks was his main disagreement with Theodor Hertzka’s Freiland. Ein soziales Zukunftsbild (Freeland. A social Anticipation) concept, which Oppenheimer formulated in his book Freiland in Deutschland [Freeland in Germany]. Nevertheless, in his first letter to Herzl he claimed that the settlement cooperative “can admirably exist in every place on this planet.”²⁵

Returning to the inconsistencies in Oppenheimer’s autobiographical account, Oppenheimer was not first exposed to Zionist ideology through a coincidental encounter on a train but had already grappled with Zionist thought beforehand. In the course of 1901 Oppenheimer expressed his aversion to Zionism’s racial viewpoint in two separate articles. In one it was explicit, stating that it is remarkable that Zionism endorsed the same racial theories as those put forward by Gobineau, Dühring, Paul de Lagarde, Friedrich Nietzsche and Chamberlain.²⁶ In the other, published in May 1901 in the popular Jüdische Allgemeine Zeitung, the criticism was indirectly expressed in a more appeasing statement that the focus on agricultural settlement formed “the legitimate core of the Zionist movement.”²⁷ This demonstrated that Oppenheimer was aware of Zionism’s agricultural focus. After all, the Bodenkulturverein had Zionist members too.²⁸

Through the latter article Oppenheimer attempted to gain financial support from Jewish organizations, especially the Jewish Colonization Association (JCA), for the Bodenkulturverein. Oppenheimer recounted his failure to realize the cooperative settlement in Germany and suggested that such a model could benefit

²⁷ Oppenheimer, “Genossenschaftliche Kolonisation,” 258.
²⁸ For example, Max Bodenheimer and David Wolffsohn, who together with Fabius Schach co-founded the ZVfD, also founded in 1894 the Verein behufs Förderung der jüdischen Ackerbaukolonien in Syrien und Palästina with the purpose of transforming Jewish occupational preferences through agricultural settlement; see Reinharz, Fatherland or Promised Land, 98–99. Gustav Tuch, who founded the Bodenkulturverein of which Oppenheimer was a board member, was a supporter of the Kolonisationsverein Esra, the largest Hovevei Zion group in Germany, and wished one day to become a farmer in Palestine; see Daniel Wildmann, Der veränderbare Körper: Jüdische Turner, Männlichkeit und das Wiedergewinnen von Geschichte in Deutschland um 1900 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 100.
the JCA in several ways. First, it would supply colonies overseas, such as Canada and California, with exemplary colonists who could contribute to on-site training of agricultural workers. Second, the cooperative settlement would promote sustainability because it would create a corpus of workers imbued with solidarity through long term prospects and responsibility sharing, as well as social control. Although his plea was not intended for the Zionist leadership, both benefits would have been attractive for their colonization and nation-building project. Oppenheimer’s initiative in support of Jewish colonization schemes probably caught their attention and spurred their advance.

Oppenheimer was motivated to implement his settlement cooperative with Jewish settlers as part of his aspirations to prove the dynamics of race and, more specifically, the ability of Jews to change thus dispelling antisemitic prejudice. An occupational shift among Jews towards farming would “disprove the old, foolish belief that Jews are too lazy and too clever to dedicate themselves to physical labor.” Oppenheimer was well aware that there were already many Jewish farmers in Eastern Europe. But for the most part he considered the Ostjuden to be a “gaunt city proletariat that, in centuries of adaptation to city commerce, lost the musculature and strength … Anemic and neurasthenic, as they mostly are due to the pressure of wicked laws, they lack the necessary stamina for the strenuous activity necessary for the farmer. It is not in the race; such a claim would be nonsense.”

Oppenheimer appealed to Jewish philanthropists to show solidarity beyond merely providing for the bare necessities for emigration. He called on them to help “create for these people a livelihood, suitable not just for Jews but for the human being in general.” Oppenheimer maintained that the occupational transformation would be accompanied by the physical transformation of the Jew into a Mensch, a human being. As a personal bonus, succeeding in the implementation of his settlement cooperative with the helpless Ostjuden would prove its universal value.

30 This also corresponds to Soskin’s approximation regarding when Herzl and his close circle became aware of Oppenheimer; see Soskin, Franz Oppenheimer und die Palästina Kommission, CZA A161–78, 1.
31 Oppenheimer, “Genossenschaftliche Kolonisation,” 258.
Oppenheimer and Herzl

Zionists effectively followed the tradition of the Enlightenment and the educative efforts of the Maskilim in that they considered the commerce-oriented vocational and social structure of Jewish society unhealthy and in need of repair. In his plaidoyer to Jewish philanthropists, Oppenheimer proudly presented the success of the Israelitische Erziehungsanstalt at Ahlem, which was supported by the Bodenkulturverein, in altering the “Jewish” physique of Ostjuden:

When you visit the gardening school in Ahlem and see the young people there coming from the field with their tools on their shoulders, you are immediately confronted with a physiological puzzle. You see the large saucer eyes of the Galician Jews but, nevertheless, you miss something in the features ... Although Jewish, these Jews don’t look “Jewish.” It is the agricultural worker type! This people with their calm, steady gaze, giving evidence to the absence of nervousness, with their long striding gait, have partially lost the so-called racial characteristic of the Jews.

Oppenheimer urged Jewish philanthropists to abandon anachronistic approaches to philanthropy and adopt the more modern ones of the Verein für Socialpolitik [German Economic Association] that aimed at integrating the lower classes into the existing system and battling revolutionary tendencies. This included a renunciation of alms and the striving for transformation of the physical body, resulting in the creation of a homo hygenicus. This echoed in Oppenheimer’s perception of agriculture being “ethically and hygienically the most noble occupation.” In turn-of-the-century degeneration discourse, both among Zionists and in general, the return to nature and soil were perceived as natural rem-

33 Gustav Tuch, deputy chair of the Bodenkulturverein, was coopted to the Board of the Ahlem school. The Bodenkulturverein also assisted Ahlem financially. Although not specifically intended for Ostjuden the school report for the year 1900 indicated a significant Eastern European presence. From forty-six apprentices above the age of fourteen, there were twenty-one foreigners from Eastern Europe. The largest group was from Austria and perhaps Galicia which is the province specifically named by Oppenheimer in his report; see Lowenthal, “The Ahlem Experiment,” 168–173; See also Penslar, “Philanthropy,” 65–66.
34 Oppenheimer, “Genossenschaftliche Kolonisation,” 258.
36 Oppenheimer, “Genossenschaftliche Kolonisation,” 258.
edies for society.\textsuperscript{37} Hence \textit{Sozialpolitik} often focused on agriculture to strengthen the peasantry and secure national self-sustainability.\textsuperscript{38}

The shift away from philanthropy was one of the first subjects in the letter exchange between Herzl and Oppenheimer.\textsuperscript{39} Impressed by Oppenheimer’s affinity for technological and social experiments, Herzl informed Oppenheimer of his determination to implement his settlement cooperative model for Zionist settlement. In his diary he noted:

The final appeal, the comparison of the experiment of Rahaline [a cooperative settlement established in Ireland during the 1840s] with the Berlin-Zossen electric experimental railroad struck me, and I immediately decided to carry out Oppenheimer’s experiment. I wrote him so at once, but enjoined him to silence for the time being. First, I have to prepare the ground – the AC [Actions Committee, the Zionist executive] and the Bank [sic]; then too, the JCA with its greater resources would beat me to it. For they would not do it of their own accord, but they \textit{would} do it in order to crush me and eliminate me from competition. As the scene of action I designated Egyptian Palestine to Oppenheimer, on the other side of the “Brook of Egypt,” because there I shall be dealing with the English government and thus have no difficulties ... I still haven’t made up my mind whether I shall make the matter a national affair, i.e., use it for Zionist propaganda purposes – which should have the disadvantage of creating settlers for display, and the advantage \textit{ut uliquid fecisse videamur} [that we would appear to have done something] – or whether I shall get it started in all secrecy.\textsuperscript{40}

Herzl and Oppenheimer shared a common source of inspiration for their utopian constructs: Hertzka’s \textit{Freiland}. The book’s widespread popularity in bourgeois circles emanated from its cooperative spirit, posing a third way between egoistic individualism and communist collectivism.\textsuperscript{41} In the words of Israel Zangwill, founder of the Jewish Territorial Organization for the Settlement of the Jews within the British Empire (ITO): “without \textit{Freiland} there would have been no \textit{Judenstaat}.”\textsuperscript{42} Yet Herzl shared with Oppenheimer not only admiration, but also cri-

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{37} Vogt, “Between Decay and Doom,” 82.
  \item \textsuperscript{38} Penslar, \textit{Zionism and Technocracy}, 48–49.
  \item \textsuperscript{39} Bein, “Briefwechsel,” 21–22.
  \item \textsuperscript{40} Diary entry from January 25, 1902, in Herzl, \textit{Zionistisches Tagebuch}, 336; translation, bracketed addendums and emphasis in Penslar, \textit{Zionism and Technocracy}, 56.
  \item \textsuperscript{41} Clemens Peck, \textit{Im Labor der Utopie: Theodor Herzl und das “Altneuland”-Projekt} (Berlin: Jüdischer Verlag, 2012), 316.
  \item \textsuperscript{42} Cited in Adam L. Rovner, \textit{In the Shadow of Zion: Promised Lands Before Israel} (New York: NYU Press, 2014), 49. Hertzka’s \textit{Freiland} might have also inspired Joseph Chamberlain, at the time colonial secretary, to offer Herzl British East Africa for Zionist settlement. The introduction to Chamberlain is partially indebted to Zangwill’s efforts; see Rovner, \textit{In the Shadow of Zion}, 52–53.
\end{itemize}
tique of Hertzka’s colonization plans. In the preamble to his manifesto Der Judenstaat (The Jewish State), Herzl carefully disassociated his vision from Freiland utopias, which he considered to be “an ingenious bit of fantasy devised by a thoroughly modern mind schooled in the principles of political economy, but as remote from life as the equatorial mountain on which this dream state is located. And even seeing Freiland associations come into being, I should regard the whole thing as a joke.” In Herzl’s opinion, Freiland utopias were a fantasy because they lacked the most important motivation for their realization: social pressure. In contrast, the pressure of antisemitism made realizing a Zionist utopia possible.

Herzl’s ambivalence towards Hertzka’s utopian notions prompted him to recruit Oppenheimer, a prominent figure in Berlin’s Freiland circles. Oppenheimer also regarded social pressure as the driving force of history triggering mass migrations from places of higher social pressure to places of lower ones. And he saw the antisemitism driving the masses out of Eastern Europe as even stronger than the economic pressure on farmers leading to urbanization. In January 1902, Herzl sent Oppenheimer a manuscript of the chapter in his utopian novel Altneuland, which dealt with the new society at the village level, and informed him that he had decided to found a “Rahaline in Palestine.” Oppenheimer was glad to receive the manuscript, reminiscing about his adolescent literary attempts at utopian fiction, to which he would return thirty years later with his novel Sprung über ein Jahrhundert [Leap across a century]. He commented on their shared interest in utopian cooperatives and recommended one of his essays to Herzl. The exposure to Oppenheimer’s theories might have influenced the final draft of Altneuland and Herzl’s economic approach.

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43 In fact, Moritz Guedemann, chief Rabbi of Vienna, suggested that Herzl write a novel like Hertzka to illustrate his idea. For a comparison between Herzl’s Altneuland and Hertzka’s Freiland, see Peck, Im Labor der Utopie, 316–327. Herzl initially refused to write a utopian novel. He thought that conveying his ideas in this form would be irresponsible in view of the seriousness of Jewish plight; see Theodor Herzl, Der Judenstaat: Versuch einer modernen Lösung der Judenfrage (Zurich: Manesse, 2006), 5–6.
44 Herzl, Der Judenstaat, 6.
46 Herzl, Der Judenstaat, 6.
48 Herzl had high regards for Oppenheimer’s Siedlungsgenossenschaft; see Bein, “Briefwechsel,” 37. He also named Oppenheimer in a list of experts on the cooperative in Altneuland. According to Clemens Peck, Herzl was working on the details of the novel as he came into contact with Oppenheimer. Peck regarded the relationship with Oppenheimer as the missing link in the
Herzl’s relationship with Oppenheimer was formed at a turning point for the young ZO. The Fifth Zionist Congress held in 1901 in Basel publicly exposed rifts in Herzl’s authority over the organization. Whereas in prior congresses delegates were organized solely in Landesmannschaften according to their country of origin, at this congress an ideological opposition party emerged for the first time. The Demokratische Fraktion, as it was called, led by Martin Buber, Berthold Feivel, Chaim Weizmann, Ephraim Moses Lilien and others, managed to introduce cultural Zionism into the agenda of the congress. Afraid to upset his Orthodox base of Eastern European Jews, Herzl successfully buried any significant advances at discussing and securing funds for cultural programs.

Thanks to the advocacy of cultural Zionists, especially Buber, who was appointed by Herzl to be chief editor of Die Welt, practical Zionism was also on the rise and initial opponents of settlement slowly became receptive to the idea. It was becoming clear that the colonization of Palestine would require more than just “loading a people onto a ship like a herd of cattle,” as Buber put it.⁴⁹ The nation-building project should not be delayed until the arrival of the immigrants in Eretz Israel [The land of Israel]. Rather, it required preparation, Gegenwartsarbeit [present day work],⁵⁰ in the form of Jewish national education in Europe, as well as physical, economic and cultural amelioration. This Zionist program of preparing Jews to become citizens echoed conditions for Jewish emancipation set by Enlightenment-era Prussian policymakers, starting with Christian Wilhelm von Dohm, that were premised upon a transformation of Jewry. Orthodox Zionists were concerned because the process of cultural transformation accompanying Jewish emancipation resulted in the creation of liberal, conservative, secular and other modern forms of Judaism. They feared that including cultural transformation in Zionism would lead the masses astray.

Herzl was wary of the dangers that cultural Zionism posed to the unity of the movement. However, the strictly political character of Herzlian Zionism, which

was also a strategy of circumventing the potential conflict, was losing its appeal. At the Fifth Zionist Congress Herzl attempted a bold balancing act. He provided a stage for cultural Zionists, not only in the discussions, but also by allowing for the display of the first exhibit of national Jewish art at the congress. Furthermore, he included the issue of culture in his opening address. Yet in the final discussion about the Demokratische Fraktion's proposed cultural program, Herzl refused to allow sixty properly registered supporters to speak. Instead, he opened the stage for the objections of two Rabbis who did not duly register, resulting in thirty-seven delegates (13 percent of the delegates) leaving the hall in protest. Nevertheless, the cultural program was approved. The incorporation of cultural Zionism – with its portrayal of contemporary Jewish culture as sick and degenerate, and prejudice against traditional Judaism – combined with the fear that cultural Zionists were trying to promote a Jewish Ersatz-Religion inspired by German Romanticism, resulted in the founding of a “religious-national party,” the Mizrachi, the following year.\(^5\)

Despite the tide shifting towards practical settlement, Eretz Israel still seemed unobtainable. Although the sultan signaled his willingness to discuss Jewish colonization in the Ottoman Empire, Palestine remained off limits.\(^5\) Furthermore, concerns were raised by Zangwill that the sultan had nothing to offer in Palestine, since his holdings were barren, and because what little fertile land there supposedly was in the region was in private Arab hands.\(^5\) After the horrid pogrom in the Moldovan city of Kishinev, during the Russian Easter festival on April 6 and 7, 1903, a new sense of urgency swept over the Zionist movement. The extensive coverage, as well as the shocking visual portrayal of the pogrom in newspapers throughout the world, was unprecedented in the pre-Holocaust world. Jewish passivity was loudly condemned, most memorably by Haim Nahman Bialik in his poem “The City of Slaughter,”\(^5\) but also by Oppenheimer in his speech *Alte und Neue Makkabäer* [Old and new Maccabees], held in January 1906 in commemoration of what would amount to over 3,000 murdered Jews in a ser-

\(^{51}\) Schmidt, *Artists of the Fifth Zionist Congress*, 1–11 and 96.


\(^{53}\) Rovner, *In the Shadow of Zion*, 65; Alroey, “‘Zionism without Zion’?,” 15–16.

ies of 657 pogroms rolling over the Pale of Settlement in the years 1905 and 1906.\textsuperscript{55}

In his speech, Oppenheimer contrasted the victims of this wave of pogrom who were the “true heirs of the Maccabees,” since they organized their own defense militias, with the victims in Kishinev who surrendered to mass slaughter without even attempting to resist, thus “poisoning our sorrow with contempt.”\textsuperscript{56}

Shortly after the Kishinev pogrom he urged Herzl to take action: “Kishinev drives my blood into my forehead twenty times a day. Allow me therefore to inquire into the results of your February expedition. It is time that something happens.”\textsuperscript{57}

Time seemed to be running out for the Jews of the Russian Empire and Herzl wanted to quickly secure a charter with one of the great powers. He was wary of real-life settlers’ unpredictable behavior potentially jeopardizing future charter negotiations for Palestine.\textsuperscript{58} Other Zionists like Ber Borchov were also wary of placing the future of Zionism, and even world Jewry, in the hands of immigrating Jewish masses: “The eyes of the entire world would look upon our actions in our ‘territory,’ and the smallest report, even if false, of unjust treatment of the locals” would intensify antisemitism, and unleash a wave of “horrifying propaganda against us.”\textsuperscript{59}

While Borchov, founder of the Poalei Zion party that synthesized Marxism with Zionism, believed that the awareness of the gravity of their action would deter the Jewish proletariat from mistreating indigenous peoples, Herzl and Oppenheimer had less faith in the settlers’ good will, preferring the promotion of rigid discipline, not only for the settlers but for the whole chain of command, including Oppenheimer’s relationship with Herzl which was becoming strained.

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\textsuperscript{57} Letter from Franz Oppenheimer to Theodor Herzl dated May 25, 1903, in Bein, “Briefwechsel,” 26. The February expedition explored the potential of settlement in El-Arish.
\textsuperscript{58} Entry from January 25, 1902, in Herzl, Zionistisches Tagebuch, 336; translation in Penslar, Zionism and Technocracy, 56.
\textsuperscript{59} Cited in Rovner, In the Shadow of Zion, 62.
Oppenheimer’s Dissent from Political Zionism

Despite his dependency on Herzl within the movement, Oppenheimer was always a proponent of practical, not political, Zionism. In his memoirs, Oppenheimer extended his criticism of Herzl to Herzl: “Herzl’s ideas about the course of colonization were actually just as vague, since he was not at all an economist, and were even more confused than those that Theodor Herzl had concerning the founding of his paradise in Kenya. He saw the goal but not the way to the goal.” In personal correspondence with Herzl, Oppenheimer disclosed his reservations about Herzl’s plan for mass immigration to follow the sealing of a charter. He thought this would be reckless, ending not in the realization of utopia but in chaos and disastrous destitution. Oppenheimer believed, and the historian Gezel Kressel concurred, that he succeeded in convincing Herzl to start on a smaller scale with experiments in local conditions upon which a gradual economic build-up would commence, thus increasing absorption capacities for new immigrants. By joining forces he and Herzl could complement each other, since they possessed different leadership skills necessary for the realization of utopia. In the language of Oppenheimer’s leadership typology, Herzl was a visionary and an admonisher, setting the goal and urging the masses to start working towards achieving it. Oppenheimer, on the other hand, was a thinker and an organizer, in other words a technocrat, planning each step of the way to the goal and engineering the new society.

Oppenheimer, a rookie to Zionism who was keen to begin settlement, unknowingly forged alliances with practical Zionists who were bitter enemies of Herzl and political Zionism’s charter creed. While waiting for Herzl to make good on his word to found Oppenheimer’s settlement cooperative in “Egyptian Palestine,” Oppenheimer founded the Jüdische Orient Colonisations Gesellschaft [Jewish Orient Colonization Society] (JOCG), together with Davis Trietsch, and

60 Oppenheimer, Erlebtes, Erstrebtes, Erreichtes, 212.
63 Officially spelled with a “K” as Jüdische Orient Kolonization Gesellschaft but in most correspondence with a “C” and abbreviated as JOCG, OCG, or JCG, e.g.; see Bein, “Briefwechsel,” 28–36.
served as the chairman of its board of directors. The JOCG succeeded Sha’are Zion [The Gates of Zion], founded in 1898 by Trietsch and Leo Motzkin, among others, to promote settlement in countries adjacent to Palestine. It was Trietsch who coined the term “Egyptian Palestine” for the El-Arish area which fell under Egyptian, and indirectly, a more cooperative British rule in 1887. Since it lies to the east of the Brook of Egypt, the westernmost border of biblical Canaan, founding a settlement there could be considered settling Eretz Israel, according to Trietsch’s exegesis.⁶⁴

The JOCG intended to utilize a cooperative colonization scheme that had been successfully tried in California to settle “muscularly weak and unpracticed urban tradesman.” Those planning to emigrate could purchase shares in advance and pay by instalments to make it more affordable. This initial capital would be used to hire experienced local workers for the strenuous work of preparing the fields and planting fruit trees. Immigration would only commence once the first phase had been completed, so that the inexperienced urban settlers would be left with the easier work of cultivation and harvest. The designated area for this settlement plan was “the Orient” which, with a footnote, was described as “Palestine and its adjacent countries.” The JOCG gave the settlement of Palestine only a slight priority over the settlement of other territories in the vicinity: “By the decision where the beginning should be brought about, Palestine should be preferred by equal or even only almost equal conditions.”⁶⁵

Cooperative models were popular among German Zionists. Trietsch emphasized that his advocacy of the cooperative idea pre-dated the creation of the JOCG and his collaboration with the Oppenheimer. Yet the cofounders of Sha’are Zion felt that cooperative theory was not yet ripe enough for practical implementation.⁶⁶ Attitudes changed once the cooperative expert Oppenheimer came on board. Beyond the interest in cooperative settlement, Trietsch shared with Oppenheimer the reverence for land socialization advocate Henry George.⁶⁷ Trietsch

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⁶⁴ Olivier Baisez, “‘Greater Palestine’ as a German-Zionist Idea before the British Mandate Period,” Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook 61 (2016): 15–18. It was, however, nominally still Ottoman territory. Objections by the sultan and the Egyptian government to the plan resulted in its ultimate withdrawal; see Friedman, Germany, Turkey, and Zionism, 104.

⁶⁵ Bein, “Briefwechsel,” 28–31. The term “Palestine and the Orient” was in use until the First World War and in the ensuing creation of the British Mandate to refer to broader colonization schemes in neighboring countries not under the control of the Ottomans; see Baisez, “‘Greater Palestine,’” 9–10.


⁶⁷ Oppenheimer published two articles on Henry George, as his relationship with Trietsch began. The first was a book review published in 1901 called “Dühring und Henry George,” in
translated George’s lecture on the humanity of the Mosaic laws into German.\textsuperscript{68} Oppenheimer was introduced to George’s thought through the leader of the Berliner Freiland group, Hermann Krecke, with whom Oppenheimer drafted the statutes for the Eden fruit growing cooperative founded in 1893 north of Berlin.\textsuperscript{69} The emphasis on fruticulture in the JOCG plan echoed the concept of Eden. Through Oppenheimer Trietsch became familiar with the garden city idea becoming its main proponent within the Zionist movement.\textsuperscript{70}

Herzl, who was at odds with Trietsch since his motion at the First Zionist Congress to immediately begin Zionist colonization with the settling of Cyprus,\textsuperscript{71} was aggravated by his protégé’s collaboration with Trietsch. Although Herzl adopted Trietsch’s concepts of “Egyptian Palestine” and the Brook of Egypt, he considered him a renegade.\textsuperscript{72} Herzl’s turn to practical settlement was partially motivated by his wish to prevent rogue settlement schemes. He recruited Oppenheimer not only due to their common interest in mutualism and the cooperative spirit, but also out of spite for the JCA to which Oppenheimer addressed his first

\textit{Zeitschrift für Sozialwissenschaften} 4 (1901): 799–804. The second was an article published in installments: “Henry George und sein Werk,” \textit{Neue Freie Presse}, Vienna, August 15, August 22 and August 28, 1902. In a letter to Herzl from May 25, 1902, Oppenheimer, seemingly anxious to know if his essay was accepted for print in the renowned Viennese newspaper, tried to get insider information from Herzl, who was the editor of the newspaper’s arts section; see Bein, “Briefwechsel,” 23. Herzl’s reply is not preserved.

\textsuperscript{68} Henry George, \textit{Moses der Gesetzgeber}, translated by Davis Trietsch (Berlin: Welt-Verlag, 1920). The book was a translation of a lecture given many times by George. George presented it for the first time in 1878 before the Young Men’s Hebrew Association of San Francisco under the title “Moses – Apostle of Freedom.” George’s observation that slavery and class division were caused by land monopoly, and his single remedy to the problem, i.e., replacing taxes with a single tax on land profit, were an enormous influence on Oppenheimer. Oppenheimer singled out land enclosure as the culprit and suggested his utopian solution of the settlement cooperative.

\textsuperscript{69} Oppenheimer, \textit{Erlebtes, Erstrebtes, Erreichtes}, 153–254. Oppenheimer led the agriculturally oriented wing of the Bund der Deutschen Bodenreformer, founded in 1898 by Adolf Damaschke, to implement land and land taxation reforms. For more on Oppenheimer’s involvement in the founding of Eden, which successfully survived through the turbulent regime changes of twentieth century Germany; see Vogt, \textit{Franz Oppenheimer}, 157–160.

\textsuperscript{70} Ines Sonder, \textit{Gartenstädte für Erez Israel: Zionistische Stadtplanungsvisionen von Theodor Herzl bis Richard Kauffmann} (Hildesheim: Olms, 2005), 46. Oppenheimer was ambivalent about introducing garden cities to Palestine because he feared allocated funds would come at the expense of his settlement cooperative; see Sonder, \textit{Gartenstädte}, 86–94.

\textsuperscript{71} Caspari and Lichtblau, \textit{Franz Oppenheimer}, 57–58.

\textsuperscript{72} Herzl uses these terms in his entry from January 25, 1902; see Herzl, \textit{Zionistisches Tagebuch}, 336.
appeal to Jewish philanthropists.\textsuperscript{73} Herzl wanted to forestall a possible cooperation between Oppenheimer and the JCA by making him an offer first.\textsuperscript{74}

On April 24, 1903, Sigmund Werner, who replaced Buber as editor of \textit{Die Welt} after his falling out with Herzl, published a prospect of the JOCG in the paper at Oppenheimer’s request. In an editorial comment, Werner emphasized that the JOCG was a private enterprise but, nevertheless, of “indisputable interest” for Zionists. Herzl was furious and accused Oppenheimer of splintering the movement. To further drive a wedge between Trietsch and Oppenheimer, Herzl disclosed to the latter an intrigue by Trietsch on behalf of the JOCG. During a meeting of the Zionist Prussian district committee Trietsch petitioned, supposedly in the name of the Breslau regional office, for the commissioning of the JOCG to implement settlement, instead of the “incompetent” Zionist Executive Committee. The reaction of the ZVfD headquarters was to publicly dissociate themselves in the \textit{Die Welt} from the JOCG asking its members to do the same because the association violated Zionism’s charter precept.\textsuperscript{75}

Oppenheimer attempted, to no avail, to mediate between Herzl and Trietsch, while Herzl increased the pressure on Oppenheimer to dissociate himself from Trietsch.\textsuperscript{76} In his defense, Oppenheimer claimed that he never understood the conflict between political and practical Zionism.\textsuperscript{77} Additionally, he did not want to seem subservient to political maneuvering. He demanded an impartial explanation from Herzl as to why small-scale settlement experiments in Cyprus were harmful to Zionism. After all, British rule there would be beneficial to their success, which was in turn necessary for further fundraising, public relations, and providing experienced settlers for colonization in Palestine. To lure the reluctant Oppenheimer, Herzl disclosed to him that the ZO was considering acquiring

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{73} Oppenheimer, “Genossenschaftliche Kolonisation,” 261.
  \item \textsuperscript{74} Herzl, \textit{Zionistisches Tagebuch}, 336. Davis Trietsch had a similar interpretation for Herzl’s preliminary interest in his Cyprus settlement plan. According to Trietsch, Herzl’s interest lasted as long as he believed that Trietsch was in contact with the JCA or other financially endowed organizations; see \textit{Stenographisches Protokoll der Verhandlungen des VI. Zionist-Congresses} (Vienna: Verlag des Vereines “Erez Israel,” 1903), 38. Herzl vehemently denied this accusation. In a reversal of the argument, Herzl claimed that Trietsch was only willing to work with him because he believed Herzl had the necessary financial means for settlement. Herzl claimed to be more than willing to work together with the JCA, which he tried to win as a partner for the El-Arish plan; see \textit{Verhandlungen des VI. Zionist-Congresses}, 115–116. Herzl clearly tried to forestall the JCA approaching Oppenheimer, as his diary entry demonstrates.
  \item \textsuperscript{75} Bein, “Briefwechsel,” 26–32.
  \item \textsuperscript{76} Bein, “Briefwechsel,” 33–39.
  \item \textsuperscript{77} \textit{Die Welt}, “Bericht über die Sitzung des Grossen Aktions-Komitees: am Montag den 6. und Dienstag den 7. Januar 1908,” January 10, 1908, 10.
\end{itemize}
ing a plot in Palestine on which Oppenheimer’s settlement cooperative could be established. Further, he invited Oppenheimer to hold a lecture at the Sixth Zionist Congress in Basel scheduled for August of the same year, on the condition that Oppenheimer publicly pledge allegiance to Herzl and the Basel Program before the announcement of the congress program.⁷⁸

Under time pressure Oppenheimer finally conceded. In July he stepped down from his position as chairman of the board of the JOCG, adding to the declaration dictated by Herzl that he maintained his prerogative to “promote with all my strength also other causes, be they Jewish or general humane ones, as long as they don’t cause conflict with my Zionist credo.” The JOCG was not implicitly mentioned in the statement and Oppenheimer remained torn about his resignation from the board. He disclosed to Herzl his sorrow about the damage that his resignation caused the JOCG and his disapproval of a charter as a prerequisite for settlement. After all, his utopian vision was grounded on the transformative powers emanating from small-scale settlement cooperatives, not on state intervention or large-scale reforms. Oppenheimer still remained an active member of the JOCG. His hopes rose again when Trietsch showed him an offer from British officials for the JOCG to purchase land in Cyprus. Only in January 1904, after the failure of Trietsch’s Cyprus plan and the revelation of improper allocation of funds, did he finally resign his JOCG membership.⁷⁹

Oppenheimer’s loyalty pledge was published in Die Welt as an excerpt from the correspondence with Herzl. It also included the editor’s endorsement of his Zionist convictions in conjunction with the agenda for the approaching Zionist congress, in which he was now announced as an expert speaker on “colonization.”⁸⁰ Herzl requested that Oppenheimer’s lecture not be specifically about Palestine. Rather it should make the case for any territory for which at the time being a charter could be acquired. Oppenheimer should consider the “general principles which ... naturally with due consideration for any prevailing circumstances, would have to be put into practice in our colonization.”⁸¹

Herzl’s request was convenient for Oppenheimer, who often struggled with the constraints of Zionist ideology. At the beginning of their relationship Herzl sent Oppenheimer diverse pieces of Zionist propaganda to shape his concep-

⁷⁸ Bein, “Briefwechsel,” 38–43.
⁷⁹ Bein, “Briefwechsel,” 44–54, citation on p. 44.
⁸¹ Herzl’s letter to Oppenheimer from July 14, 1903, in Bein, “Briefwechsel,” 45, translation in Penslar, Zionism and Technocracy, 57.
In early 1903, he was approached by the editorial staff of the *General-Anzeiger für die gesamten Interessen des Judentums* who according to their own statement sent letters to over a thousand renowned men and women with three questions on Zionism, hoping to thus assemble an extensive catalogue of pro and con arguments on this passionately debated issue. Oppenheimer’s reply was published on March 5, 1903, in the *General-Anzeiger* and the following day in *Die Welt*. Unsure about his convictions, Oppenheimer sent Herzl the draft for preapproval to make sure it did not contain any “heresies” and to receive Herzl’s affirmation that Oppenheimer was really a Zionist. Oppenheimer described Zionism as a complex movement with various, sometimes contradictory, positions making it impossible for one person to identify with all of the movement’s components. He, for example, was a “resolute opponent of the racial theory which was crucial for many Zionists.”

Oppenheimer expounded that antisemitism’s racial component was merely a mask for economic-social issues that should be solved with the same methods as the social question at large, and specifically his settlement cooperative. This was, he thought, the natural solution to the “Jewish question” since it was in its core a Jewish solution. He elucidated that nationalized land had its roots in the Mosaic laws of the Jubilee. Additionally, the “many suffering people” that Zionism intended on resettling, “sigh more heavily under the triple scourge of absolutism, capitalism and antisemitism than ever any human race in all history.” Due to their acute distress, he concluded, it was only natural that they served as trailblazers for the universal solution of the social question. The Zionist leadership’s decision to adopt the necessary preconditions for Oppenheimer’s social experiment in the form of nationalized land, as well as cooperative colonization, enabled Oppenheimer to call himself Zionist in his own sense: “I am a Zionist because, and insomuch as, I am a devout Socialist.”

Buber’s hope that Oppenheimer would fuse Zionist aims within grander universal trends was fulfilled, according to Kressel, in respect to socialism. Kressel,

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83 *General-Anzeiger für die gesamten Interessen des Judentums*, February 5, 1903, 1. The forty-fourth, and last, contribution was published on May 11, 1903. I could not find a published reply by a woman.
who authored Oppenheimer’s only Zionist biography, claimed that the infusion of practical settlement with universal socialist aims, together with his role in convincing Herzl to integrate practical agricultural settlement into political Zionism, were Oppenheimer’s main contributions to the movement.\textsuperscript{88}

**Oppenheimer’s Debut at the “Uganda Congress”**

In August 1903, while in Basel, Herzl presented the Sixth Zionist Congress a possible charter with the British government in East Africa, also referred to as Uganda, which would enable a foreseeable start to practical settlement. Herzl had reached a dead end in negotiations with the Ottoman sultan over Palestine. At the same time, he was deeply affected by the deteriorating circumstances of Russian Jewry after the Kishinev pogrom. Consequently, he decided to prioritize finding a refuge for the persecuted Eastern European masses over the settlement of Palestine.

Again, his first major opponent was Trietsch who dominated the first afternoon of the congress with accusations that Herzl had abandoned the Basel Program by pursuing a charter in a land that was not even adjacent to Palestine, and thus incapable of being incorporated into a future “Greater Palestine.” A long and stormy debate followed. Max Bodenheimer, who presided over the proceedings, tried to restore order with an oversized gavel, which broke into fragments as accusations were hurled across the room. These included Trietsch’s scandalous attempt to transfer responsibility for El-Arish settlement to the JOCG and the discovery of calculation errors in the JOCG brochure. Herzl was well prepared for the battle against Trietsch. He invited to the congress a woman from Galatz in Romania who had participated in a failed Cyprus settlement expedition organized by Trietsch. From the podium Herzl read her statement, noting her husband’s death, the loss of her entire property and her resulting dependency on alms for her and her six children.\textsuperscript{89} Herzl portrayed Trietsch as irresponsible in matters of settler welfare to discredit him and the JOCG.\textsuperscript{90}

The next day the discord between the JOCG leadership and Herzl continued to permeate the discussion. In the morning Alfred Nossig reiterated Trietsch’s disappointment with Herzl not first consulting the Zionist congress before turn-

\textsuperscript{88} Kressel, Franz Oppenheimer, 10.
\textsuperscript{89} Verhandlungen des VI. Zionistcn-Congresses, 34–60.
\textsuperscript{90} Verhandlungen des VI. Zionistcn-Congresses, 117–119. Israel Zangwill also repudiated the JOCG because of the fragmentation and division it was causing in his speech on the third day of the congress; see Verhandlungen des VI. Zionistcn-Congresses, 129.
ing down the sultan’s offer to settle Jews in other places of the Ottoman Empire. In Nossig’s opinion, small, detached settlements in the vicinity of historic Palestine could, if carefully planned, ultimately lead to the formation of a large, connected settlement territory. Herzl’s preference for a charter over settlement in the vicinity of Palestine without a charter was in his opinion the wrong approach. To demonstrate this point, he expounded on English colonization in Africa, which began with small, disconnected acquisitions by contract as well as by force. These were later connected by rail, extending English domination almost unnoticeably over the whole continent. There were many interjections that the ZO should not be compared with the British Empire since it did not have the same resources, especially military ones. Nossig replied: “We are not a great power such as England. Neither do we want to colonize the whole continent, nor are we conquerors. All we want is to get our small, ancient fatherland back and I believe we will fare well to obtain it with the same means, obviously with the exclusion of cannons and blood, with peaceful means, with the plow in the hand.”

In defense of the leadership, Alfred Klee dismissed the idea of small-scale colonization as “backward” and rendered obsolete by the efforts of political Zionism. Moreover, he argued, it would be unattainable without military backing. As he saw it, the Zionist movement’s purpose was to attain recognition for the Jews as a nation through the acceptance of their demand for a publicly and legally assured homeland. And England’s offer of colonization in British East Africa was in this respect a great success for Zionism. Daniel Pasmanik suggested that a new commission should explore the feasibility of Palestine settlement in order to resolve conflicts over benefits of small-scale colonization and to stay focused on the ultimate objective while discussing the establishment of a “night asylum” in British East Africa for displaced Russian Jews. This was not the first time that the foundation of a committee for the exploration of Palestine was suggested at a Zionist congress. In fact, an unprompted committee had already been formed in 1902 in Berlin by Nossig, Trietsch, Motzkin, Warburg and other practical Zionists.

91 Verhandlungen des VI. Zionist-Congresses, 78–82, citation on p. 81.
92 Verhandlungen des VI. Zionist-Congresses, 84–85.
93 Verhandlungen des VI. Zionist-Congresses, 91–92. Nordau coined the term “Nachtasyl” in his speech in support of Zionist settlement of British East Africa; see Verhandlungen des VI. Zionist-Congresses, 71.
94 “Das Komitee zur wirtschaftlichen Erforschung Palaeastinas,” Palästina 1 (1902): 10. Pasmanik’s suggestion to establish Palestine exploration committee at the Sixth Zionist Congress was prompted by the appearance of a donation in the balance sheets by Yehiel Tschlenow of
Oppenheimer’s lecture was delivered on the morning of the fourth day after being postponed from the day before under the pretext that the lecture was not yet ready. This gave Nossig cause to believe it might not happen at all. However, had a special interest in Oppenheimer’s lecture, which he personally set in the agenda and apparently reviewed before its delivery. Herzl deliberately chose Oppenheimer to “create an atmosphere receptive to the idea of Jewish settlement outside Palestine,” and now intentionally placed his talk amid the debate about British East Africa. But the vote on whether to create a committee to study the suitability of Zionist settlement in British East Africa was adjourned due to Herzl’s absence from the discussions’ final stages. The next morning, at the height of suspense, instead of holding a vote to form the East Africa Committee, Herzl asked the delegates to listen to Oppenheimer’s lecture so that “some facts will be brought into the debate occupying us now and that we receive a proper conception of the sense and course of colonization.”

In his lecture Oppenheimer implored for urgent action by demonstrating that colonization is a lengthy, protracted process. Oppenheimer described his three principles: mutual aid, agricultural focus and national ownership of land. The aim was to accelerate natural national development, which usually takes generations, of a Jewish nation lacking in occupational variety. The first step would be to create a network of agricultural cooperatives, preferably utilizing experienced Jewish farmers from Galicia, Romania and Russia, until market conditions attracted big industry. The process could be expedited through the creation of purchasing cooperatives increasing the buying power of farmers by cutting out the middleman, and through economic incentives such as the distribution of all profits to the settlers. These tools, which were lacking in past philanthropic settlements, would lead to profitable farms. The colony would gradually become self-sufficient and could start taking loans to expand and enable new forms of business beyond agriculture. Although Oppenheimer presented his economic principals as universal, he did explicitly name Palestine at the beginning of his lecture. Later he remained obscure as to whether the fatherland he

530 francs for the funding of a such a committee; see Verhandlungen des VI. Zionisten-Congresses, 110.
95 Verhandlungen des VI. Zionisten-Congresses, 124.
96 Verhandlungen des VI. Zionisten-Congresses, 140.
97 Verhandlungen des VI. Zionisten-Congresses, 182.
98 Herzl chose Oppenheimer over Hillel Joffe for the keynote talk on settlement. Joffe was already involved with settlement in Palestine; see Penslar, Zionism and Technocracy, 57.
99 Verhandlungen des VI. Zionisten-Congresses, 177.
100 Verhandlungen des VI. Zionisten-Congresses, 182.
was talking about was the historical one or simply the fatherland of the second-
generation born and raised in this new homeland. Additionally, Oppenheimer
emphasized the important motivational power of the longing for Zion. Yet, he
added, this was not the only power at work in the hearts of Jews. They have
both their proletarian class consciousness, as well as a tribal consciousness of
heritage from a superior people.¹

Immediately after Oppenheimer’s lecture, the discussion returned to the
burning question at hand: the East Africa Commission. Oppenheimer’s lecture
was opened for discussion in a late-night supplementary meeting with exception-
ally low attendance. Even Nossig, who repeatedly insisted that Oppenheimer-
er’s lecture be discussed,¹⁰² was absent, as was Oppenheimer, who had already
left Basel to the dismay of the delegates in attendance.¹⁰³ Nevertheless, a heated
debate ensued. Trietsch, who emphasized his close relationship to Oppenheimer
in the founding of the JOCG, criticized the inappropriateness of an agricultural
focus for urban Jewish pioneers. Once he reverted to his El-Arish plan the sparse
audience got even smaller. Pasmanik voiced his concerns that Oppenheimer’s
settlement cooperative had not yet been tried. While it was a worthy enterprise
facilitating agricultural autarky, Pasmanik warned that Zionism should not lay
all its eggs in one nest. Instead, it should also enable private enterprise in the
style of English colonization. Others in the assembly advocated for Oppenheimer’s
plan. The chair, Bodenheimer, reminded Trietsch that Oppenheimer’s speech
was about universal – and not geographically specific – settlement.¹⁰⁴

The congress ultimately decided to appoint a commission for the study of
British East Africa and, due to increasing pressure, a commission for the explo-
ration of Palestine as well. In the words of Heinrich Loewe: “The Palestine com-
mission is a requirement for future activity in Palestine, and what we can spare
for Uganda we want to also be able to do for Palestine.”¹⁰⁵ In contrast to prior
resolutions concerning the committee, the petition brought forward by the Ger-
man delegation also provided a two-year budget, enabling the committee to
begin exploring Palestine and adjacent countries, and to also publish a scientific
journal. It also included further goals that were not yet budgeted: the establish-
ment of a laboratory for agronomical and technical research; a laboratory for the
study and control of endemic and contagious diseases; and an agricultural and

¹ Verhandlungen des VI. Zionisten-Congresses, 182–195. For more on Oppenheimer’s use of
the term “consciousness” in his sociological model of identity, see chapter 6.
¹⁰⁵ Verhandlungen des VI. Zionisten-Congresses, 274.
technical information office. Another far-reaching decision impacting Oppenheimer’s plan was the creation of a cooperative trust within the Jewish National Fund (JNF), as well as the resolution to nationalize land ownership as a prerequisite for cooperative settlement. As the Sixth Zionist Congress came to an end, the beginning of Zionist colonization seemed imminent. Oppenheimer, Warburg and Soskin were voted into the board of the newly founded Commission for the Exploration of Palestine. Oppenheimer and Warburg were also appointed to the East Africa Commission, a position Oppenheimer never filled.

This chapter has traced Oppenheimer’s path into the Zionist movement from his involvement with sociology and agricultural cooperative settlements. His coming on board was not coincidental, as he described it, but ensued from prior engagement to bring about an occupational shift of Eastern European Jews towards agriculture. Although his acceptance in the movement largely depended on Herzl’s grace, Oppenheimer was not an advocate of political Zionism. His endorsement of immediate small-scale settlement and connections with other practical Zionists brought him in conflict with Herzl until he renounced these connections. This was accompanied by Herzl’s backing of Zionist settlement according to Oppenheimer’s agricultural cooperative model in the foreseeable future – an important victory for Oppenheimer and other practical Zionists – yet it remained to be seen where this colonization would begin.

The next two chapters will focus on the journal *Altneuland* that Oppenheimer, Warburg and Soskin edited in their capacity as board of the CEP. These chapters will analyze how *Altneuland* sought to prepare the road for Zionist settlement through a scientific examination of the geographical, cultural and political conditions of the region as well as the appropriate scope and method for colonization. The editors of *Altneuland* were proud of the roots of this approach in German colonial practice and viewed the journal as a part of a growing body of German colonial literature. As such the journal also contained many notions and ideas common in German colonial literature, such as colonial fantasies. Thus the German Zionists publishing in *Altneuland* can be viewed as German colonialists with a Jewish twist, as will be demonstrated in the following chapters. *Altneuland* contributions by Jewish and non-Jewish colonization experts will be contextualized both within a Zionist and a German discourse on Jews and Palestine, creating a broader framework to understanding Oppenheimer’s grappling with Jewish identity in the imperial era.