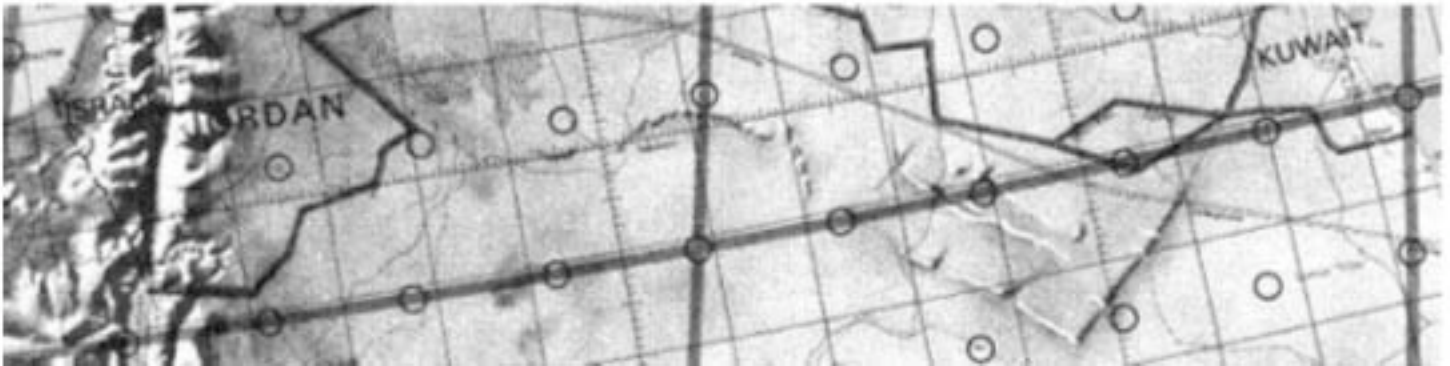


MIDDLE EAST PAPERS

Middle East Strategy at Harvard



Disraelia: A Counterfactual History, 1848-2008

by Walter Laqueur

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Counterfactual history is...

a reaction to the extreme de-personalization and determinism of current historical studies, with their emphasis on social history opposed to events and personality-driven history. —*Wikipedia*

Heinrich Graetz, *History of the Jews*, volume 8, preface.

Great were the hopes and expectations of European Jews when the walls of the ghettos came down. It was a long drawn-out process, and conditions varied from country to country. In Britain it began with the readmission of the Jews under Cromwell. In France, the Revolution and Napoleon proceeded with the emancipation of the Jews which had come underway at the time of the absolutist kings and the Enlightenment. In Eastern Europe, the decline and eventual disappearance of Poland hastened the process—

but it did not go very far, Jews were limited to a Pale of Settlement in Russia and to certain professions, they could not study and own land, and many professions were closed to them.



The number of Jews greatly increased between 1750 and 1850 and their life expectancy was considerably higher than that of non-Jews. They streamed to the major towns from the coun-

tryside where they had only a very meager living; even in Germany about one-third were peddlers and about the same number had no known source of income but depended on alms given by their coreligionists who were better off. The economic situation of the Jews in Poland and Russia actually deteriorated during this period, hence the increasing migration to the West. As the Jews moved to the cities, they came into conflict with the merchants and artisans, and this created new tensions.

The educated classes advocated in principle the emancipation of the Jews, but the great majority would still have favored that they left Europe. The Jews were aliens in Christian societies. Among the thinkers of the Enlightenment, anti-Jewish feeling was quite strong, and the great philosophers of the later period were not quite sure whether the Jews, being a miserable people, could be rehabilitated. Fichte suggested cutting off their heads and giving them new ones. The attitude of the Romantics yet one generation later was equally negative.

Among the Jews, many of the educated embraced Christianity in Western and Central Europe. This affected not only outsiders like Heinrich Heine but large sections of the Jewish establishment, the leading members of the community.

Soon after the Napoleonic wars had ended, a great many books and pamphlets were published in Germany and France, but also in Eastern Europe, discussing what could be done about the Jews, and in 1819 there were the first sporadic anti-Jewish riots.

The attitude of the Churches was ambivalent. They welcomed the baptism of so many

Jews, but a growing number of influential churchmen began to resist it. They doubted whether the conversion was genuine; the Jews did not truly believe in Christianity, but regarded it (as Heine had put it) as the entrance ticket to European civilization. They still felt solidarity with other Jews all over the world; Jews still looked like Jews and behaved like Jews. Their character could not be changed by the act of baptism. Some churchmen suggested making intermarriage mandatory (the philosopher Schopenhauer had also suggested this).

Others believed in the purity of Christian blood, just as Catholicism in Spain had in the 16th and 17th centuries. There was something in Judaism beyond the religion which could not be changed by baptism—except perhaps over many generations. According to them, Judaism was a tribe, a race, perhaps even a nation of sorts. And so anti-Judaism (the term anti-Semitism was to be coined only three decades later by Wilhelm Marr) became a major force in European politics and public opinion. In Western Europe, Jews were hated because a growing number was getting rich; in Eastern Europe where most of them lived, they were hated and despised because they were poor and useless.

Anti-Judaism manifested itself in steadily spreading pogroms beginning with the Hep Hep riots in Germany in 1819. They were mostly locally confined but they continued on an ever-growing scale year by year. They spread to Austria, Hungary, even upper Italy and above all to Poland, the Ukraine and Rumania. Local police forces did not at first intervene but advised the Jews to stay indoors as much as possible, especially on Sundays and Christian holidays. This ap-

proach worked for a while, but in 1823 bigger and more aggressive mobs attacked Jewish houses and shops and put them on fire. The number of fatalities was relatively small but in some instances (Frankfurt and Budapest 1823, Kalisch, Poznan and Galatz 1824) the fires went out of control and caused considerable damage to non-Jewish houses and businesses. As a result, smaller Jewish communities were advised to move to bigger cities where, the authorities argued, it would be easier to maintain public order. However, there was growing opposition to this influx on the part of the city councils and other interest groups. They suggested that the only reasonable way was the return of the Jews to the ghettos, but there was much dissension over where the ghettos should be located. Other heated debates concerned the fate of the Jews who had been baptized: Should they be kept for at least for a generation or two in special ghettos as a kind of purgatory?

Britain and France (with the exception of Alsace) were relatively free of pogroms in view



of the small number of Jews in these countries, but the mass attacks in Szegedin, Regensburg, Homel, Kishinev and various towns in Galicia kept

the Jewish question at the top of the European political agenda. The intellectual debate raged all over the continent. A number of philosophers, liberal churchmen and professors called the new anti-Judaism a relapse to the Middle Ages, a nasty blot to be removed as speedily as possible.

But the anti-Judaic literature, albeit on a much lower level of sophistication, was far more widely read. It ranged from relatively mild attacks to unbridled incitement and demands for the expulsion of the Jews. The moderates argued that European Jews, while small in number, had acquired within the last generation unprecedented political and financial power in a variety of fields—in banking as well as the media. Many of the new newspapers and publishing houses were in the hands of Jews, many of the writers were Jews or of Jewish origin. They were trying to hide. Why did the editor of the *Golden Treasury*, the best-known anthology of English poetry, call himself Palgrave whereas his real name was Cohen? Why Boerne and not Baruch? These attacks came from the political right as well as from the left. The left-wing anti-Judaists argued that the superrich Jews were bloodsuckers and should be expropriated. The great bestseller of the decade, Tousse- nel's *Les Juifs, rois de l'epoque*, which appeared in many tens of thousands of copies in all major European languages, was written by a disciple of the Socialist Fourier.

The extreme anti-Jewish literature made no bones about its conviction that there was no room for the Jews in Europe. *The Protocols of Satan and the Sanhedrin*, published in 1836, described in detail the giant Jewish conspiracy which threatened to enslave the Christian people of Europe. The Jews were secretly establishing an army headed by the chief Rabbi of Bratislawa seconded by the chief Rabbis of Filene, Lissa and Ostrowo. But since their numbers were insufficient, they were preparing terrible weapons of mass destruction, especially poisonous substances. According to their master plan, some of the

non-Jews would be corrupted and bought by them, the others would be cowed into submission by threats of the spread of horrible epidemics, and the leading anti-Jews would be arrested and put away in concentration camps. A particularly insidious new weapon was the new net of railways established all over the continent. Most of them were in the hands of the Jews (or would be acquired by them); this would eventually do away with national borders (and national traditions). It would lead to internationalization (occasionally the term globalization was used), the end of religion, patriotism and all the sacred values of the nations of Europe. An East German nobleman, von Hundsfott, in a widely-read pamphlet entitled *The Anti-Jewish Manifesto*, suggested that one-third of the Jews should be baptized, one-third deported to the Arctic region and one-third to the Sahara desert.

The wilder accusations and speculations of the radical anti-Judaists were studied but not taken very seriously by the authorities. But the governments were still heavily preoccupied by the “Jewish Question,” and this not so much out of humanitarian considerations but because there was the danger that the anti-Jewish pogroms would turn into general attacks against the established order. There had been already many cases of peasant unrest. Not only Jewish shop owners had been attacked and their shops devastated, but also their Christian competitors who were accused of “foul Jewish practices.”

To return the Jews to the ghettos seemed impractical, and it was in this context that the idea of a Jewish mass evacuation first occurred.

From a letter written by Sarah Austen in London to her friend Lady Anstrutter in Berkshire, 1842.

Dizzy came for dinner last night and the conversation was **sparkling** as always. He was alone, his new wife suffers from a head cold as many in London do at this time of the year. The talk was about literature, politics and of course the latest gossip. Dizzy was in excellent form, and those who do not know him well could easily gain the impression that he could not care less that Peel passed him over when his recent government was formed. But I have the impression (and my female intuition has seldom been wrong), that our friend is deep down quite unhappy. He faces a crisis. He is now thirty-eight years of age, a man of great talents and great ambitions. But he has not really settled down and in his own eyes he has been a failure—in literature as well as in politics.



For most of our countrymen, he has remained a stranger; a few may admire him but they do not trust him. They are willing to forgive him his foppishness, the strange way he dresses and behaves—we are most tolerant towards eccentrics. But many think he is too clever by half. He gets along with women much better than with men. This may one day help him with the Queen if he decides to pursue his political career. But the politicians think him too inconsistent, he has switched parties too often. And he has been hurt even though he does not show it. He was rejected or defeated as a candidate four times, he was jeered and booed after his maiden speech. He adores England and everything English, but there is too much in him that is not English.

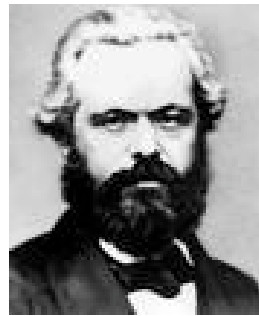
What surprised me most last night was his constant harping on Jews and Jewish affairs. You may remember that some ten years ago, when he was not in good health, his doctors advised him to take a long trip to a warmer climate. He went to Greece, Palestine and Egypt and the impressions gained on this trip seem to preoccupy him to this day. Everyone I know who went to Jerusalem returned with all kind of horror stories about the sad state of the holy city. But Dizzy thinks it is wonderful, inspiring, the center of the world and the greatest promise for the future of mankind. He wrote a few books at the time such as *Contarini*, which I don't think were among his best, and mentioned that he now works on yet another about a character named David Alroy of whom I never heard but who seems to fascinate him endlessly. It seems that this was a Jew in 12th-century Persia, a messiah of sorts who was called King of the Diaspora and who promised to lead the children of Israel back to their promised land. He was apparently also a great magician who could make himself invisible and enlisted the warlike mountain Jews of Azerbaidjan who were going to help him to recapture Jerusalem. The adventure ended badly but our Dizzy got carried away and seems to think that he may succeed where David Alroy failed. Can you imagine Dizzy engaging on a new career, king of the Jews? Is he serious—to the extent that he was or will be ever serious?

The gardens are magnificent at this time of the year...

From a letter by Moses Hess in Paris to Solomon Oppenheim in Cologne, February 1843.

Last night we had the weekly meeting of the German Workers Club. We talked about the

French socialists and their theories; it was of no particular interest. Weitling, a self-educated tailor from Magdeburg and Wilhelm Marr, his sidekick, went on and on about Fould and the other Jews who have been taking a leading role in developing a French railway net.



I went home with Dr. Charles (Karl) Marx, a young academic who recently arrived here with a wife. He married a German noblewoman and lives around the corner from me, rue Vaucy. I did meet him before and was greatly impressed, a young man of 26, erudite, sarcastic, with a sharp intellect, quite full of himself; he may go far. But in some respects he is astonishingly naïve. He truly believes that the whole history of mankind is nothing but the history of class struggles and totally underrates the importance of nationalism and religion in conflicts past, present and to come. As we walked along the Luxembourg and Boulevard Raspail I tried to talk some sense to him. But I doubt whether I made him rethink some of his views which are quite detached from political realities. He is deep into Hegelian philosophy and has only contempt for those who cannot follow his dialectical forays.

He is working, he told me, on a long essay on the Jewish question. All religion is bad, but some are worse than others. Judaism is (or in any case has become) worshipping mammon, unless the Jews get rid of Judaism they shall never be fully emancipated. When I asked him what this meant in practical terms, I did

not get a clear answer. Why are the Jews disliked, why do people want to get rid of them? (And this includes, I told him, many of our own comrades including the wild Bakunin, a militant revolutionary second to none, who was also at our meeting. And Marr—I would not be surprised if one day he will be the leader of an anti-Jewish party in Germany.) I told Marx, if Jews are disliked it is not because of their religion but because of the shape of their noses. There is something beyond religion, even beyond mammon which you do not want to accept.

Do not be childish, Marx said, the whole issue is not of such great importance. With the stormy development of the economy, with capitalism as a powerful engine, borders will disappear, internationalization will make giant strides. The confrontation will be between rich and poor not between nations, peoples and races. Weitling and Marr are well-meaning but they are simpletons, not very intelligent; for some time to come we shall have to face backward and reactionary views even among some of our own comrades, but not for very long.

I gave up, the man is so sure of himself, but he knows no more about the Jews than about their enemies. The other day he called Lassalle, the agitator from Breslau who is emerging as the leader of our party in Germany, a “Jewish nigger.” But if Marx would look into the mirror for a moment, he would realize that his complexion is not exactly lilly-white; his close friends call him the “Moor.” But I sensed it was pointless to argue with him and so I said: Marx, I wish you luck, you are one of the best minds in our movement, maybe one day you will be our leader and the whole

world will know your name. But however much you will distance yourself from Judaism and the Jews, you will always remain for the others the Communist rabbi, the Jew Marx. Marx snorted contemptuously, who cares?

Note from Baron Heinrich von Buelow, foreign minister of Prussia, to Carl Nesselrode, Russian foreign minister, 1845. Strictly confidential.

Your Excellency will remember our discussion about the Jewish question during your recent visit to Berlin. In the meantime I had the opportunity to discuss this with Prince Metternich in Vienna.

Metternich said that while he was not in a position at the present time to take the initiative, he was very supportive as far as the promotion of Jewish emigration from Europe was concerned. The Jewish problem was of increasing concern to the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, especially in its Eastern parts. Metternich also made some interesting practical suggestions. The financial costs of an emigration project of this kind would exceed the resources of the countries of Europe which might contribute but could not carry the main burden. He proposed that the Rothschilds should be approached and asked to establish a central fund together with some other Jewish bankers. Some of them have grown very rich in recent decades and they will realize that it is in their own best interest if at least half of their coreligionists would leave Europe, so as to prevent growing political tensions from which they, the bankers, would be the first to suffer. He also suggested Turkey as the main place to which European Jews should be directed, either to Palestine or

some other part of the Ottoman empire. They have after all a historical connection with the Holy Land. Of course, there will be resistance in Constantinople, but this could perhaps be overcome if we enlist the support of Britain and France and explain to the Sultan the great financial benefits that may accrue to the Sublime Porte.

I should be grateful for the comments of your Excellency and remain with profound respect etc. etc.

Stratford Canning, British ambassador in Constantinople, to Lord Palmerston, excerpts. (The dispatch cannot be exactly dated, but was written either in 1842 or 1843.)

I fully share your conviction that it is in the best interest of HM government to strengthen the Sublime Porte in every possible way against Russian pressure. However, only after my recent arrival here did the overwhelming odds we are facing become fully clear to me.

The Ottoman empire has been stagnating since about 1700, their defeat at the gates of Vienna and the peace of Karlovats. It has been retreating at all fronts, in Europe as well as in Asia and Africa, and since the recent war (1827) stagnation has turned into rapid decline. Why did we have to follow the Russian lead in making war on Turkey on behalf of the Greeks? The Philhellenic foolishness and Lord Byron's antics proved to be stronger than the pursuance of our interests. The Greeks would have received independence sooner or later in any case. But the defeat we inflicted on the Turks, above all the battle of Navarino, strengthened Russian influence in the Near East, made the Sublime Porte appear a sinking ship and gave fresh

impetus to all the separatist movements. The tribes at the Persian border have been on the offensive, so have been the Wahhabis on the Arabian peninsula, and Mehmet Ali in Egypt, while calling himself Viceroy, has virtually unlimited powers, having expanded his rule from Damascus to Khartoum.

This year we shall have to deal with a new Sultan, Abdul Mecid. He is a youngster aged 19, not ungifted (his French is quite good, no English unfortunately), his heart is in the right place and he has the full support of the Grand Vizier, Mustafa Reshid. But will he be

strong enough to carry out the reforms which are so long overdue?



I have the gravest doubts. He may just push through one of his pet projects, to replace the turban by the fez, but the aversion against any new ideas, against any innovation,

technical or otherwise, is so deeply rooted that I cannot envisage any major progress in the coming years and decades. This would mean further weakening of the country. The local Pashas will be either powerless, unable to collect taxes, which would lead sooner or later to bankruptcy. Or they will become more or less independent of Constantinople following the example of Mehmet Ali. The Russians, liberally distributing baksheesh in the Royal palace, would become virtual masters not only of the Bosphorus but of the Eastern Mediterranean.

The situation is critical—the present agony could continue for another hundred years, but the whole edifice might collapse within a

year or two following the slightest turbulence.

In these circumstances, the immigration of Jews could be a stabilizing factor.

Note verbale, the Russian ambassador in Berlin to Foreign Minister von Buelow.

... the Tsar found your and Metternich's suggestions of great interest. How to proceed? We believe that the approach to the Sultan and the Grand Vizier should come from Prussia. The Sublime Porte is notoriously distrustful, any such suggestion made by us would unfortunately be thought detrimental to Ottoman interests, an attempt to undermine the Sultan's rule etc. But if the approach is made by you, the reception could be more favorable. Ideally, the whole initiative should be kept secret, but this might be impossible for any length of time. For this reason we suggest the appointment of an international commission for the economic development of the Ottoman empire which should study the feasibility of this project and present its findings within a year to us as well as the Sublime Porte—how many Jews could be absorbed, in which parts of the Ottoman empire and so on. In other words, the Sultan would be in a position to reject the project if it does not meet with his approval. The members of this study committee should be appointed as soon as feasible. It might be a good idea to include a number of academics so as to disguise the true, political purpose of the venture.

Paris, December 1845 (from the Rothschild archives).

Nathanael Rothschild opened the meeting which took place in his private home. Present were his brother Lionel from London, Li-

onel's brother-in-law Moses Montefiore, Solomon Maier Rothschild from Vienna, Achille Fould, Bischoffsheim, Moses Warburg, Baron de Hirsch, Oppenheim from Cologne and two others who wished to remain anonymous. Nathanael swore those present to secrecy; any premature disclosure could mean the end of a scheme which at this stage was as yet in an exploratory stage. He reported that he had been contacted by leading statesmen and even royalty concerning the emigration of about two million Jews from Europe to overseas, preferably to the Ottoman empire, if the political preconditions could be arranged.

Montefiore opened the discussion and said that the scheme should be given serious con-



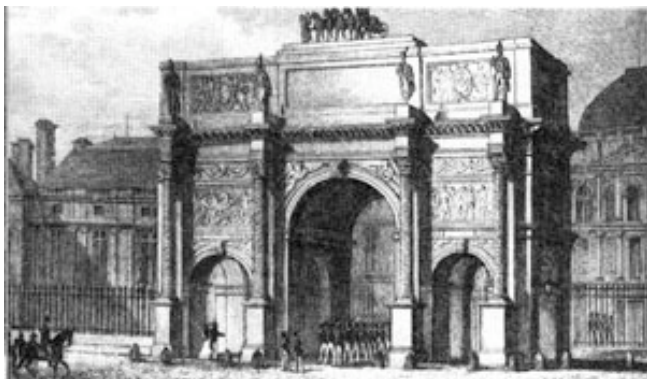
sideration in view of the precarious situation of the Jews in many European countries and the unwillingness of both governments and the general public to push forward the emancipation of the Jews.

But he foresaw enormous difficulties. The Jewish question was most acute in Eastern Europe, but the government of the Tsar was quite hostile—it wanted to get rid of the Jews but at the same time engaged in extortion. General Paskevich, Viceroy of Poland, had told him that Jews could leave Russia only if each family paid a considerable ransom—this was the law of the land and no exception would be made for the Jews.

At the same time, the Ottoman authorities were extremely opposed to any change in the status quo. The influx of so many foreigners and non-Muslims would be considered an at-

tempt to undermine their authority. They talked endlessly about *tanzimat* (reform) but were deadly afraid of it. The Muslim population was easily inflamed against the Jews (and everyone else), as the recent persecutions in Damascus had shown. (Several Jews were arrested, tortured and killed there on blood libel accusations.) Lastly, the Sultan was no longer in full control of the southern parts of the empire, and one would have to negotiate separately with Mehmet Ali, Viceroy of Egypt, who had been for a while the effective ruler of Syria and Palestine. However, he proposed full cooperation with the investigation committee which was to be appointed.

The discussion lasted to a late hour. Most of those attending were of the opinion that if the scheme would receive massive support from the main powers, if the other preconditions existed, if there was sufficient willingness among the Jewish communities to collaborate, then those assembled and their friends should not stand aside. Several names of leading figures were mentioned to popularize the scheme at the right time among the European Jews, among them the British politician Disraeli, as well as Montefiore and a number of rabbis. The fear was expressed that the rabbis would not get along easily with each other.



Vienna, January 1847, Executive Summary of the report of EIC (European Investigation Committee), appointed twelve months ago to study the feasibility of Jewish settlement in regions of the Ottoman empire.

We have the honor to submit our final report and want to express our particular gratitude to Major Helmuth von Moltke, seconded to the Ottoman army, to Captain Felix Jones of the Indian civil service, William Tanner Young, British Consul in Jerusalem, as well as (follows a list of twenty more names) for their invaluable help and advice.

Our conclusions, in briefest outline, are that mass settlement of European Jews in regions of the Ottoman empire is possible if there is the willingness on the part of said Jews to settle and adjust themselves to difficult conditions, and if the necessary financial means will be at their disposal. We would rule out Anatolia and the Hejaz but also Syria which is comparatively densely populated. However, historical Palestine is relatively empty and the same is true for parts of Mesopotamia. We would except from the region of settlement Jerusalem, which should be a *corpus separandum*, an internationalized city, in view of its importance for the world's leading religions. The Pashaliks of Baghdad and Basora should also be outside the region of settlement, even though the number of Jewish residents in Baghdad is reportedly larger than that of the Muslims.

There are only rough estimates concerning population statistics in these regions—perhaps 200-300,000 in Palestine, several Bedouin tribes in the desert between the Jordan and the Euphrates and Tigris, perhaps 400,000 in the Pashaliks of Mossul and

Kirkuk. The city of Baghdad had 170,000 inhabitants, but after the recent plague epidemic which raged for three years and the flooding of the Tigris, this figure has shrunk to a mere 20,000. To quote a recent report received by the Indian government (Rawlinson to Malmesbury), "no province might be easier to govern than the Pashalik of Mesopotamia but with all its advantages the Pashalik of today is almost a desert."

We suggest Jewish settlement in Palestine, above all the coastal plain, the Esdraelon valley and Galilee. It is unlikely that this area can absorb more than a million inhabitants over a decade, but we see further possibilities for settlement in Western Iraq (Mossul, Kirkuk). It is our feeling that it will be easier for European Jews to get along with the Kurdish tribes than the easily fanaticized Sunni and Shiite population in the North. Settlement on a smaller scale should also be explored in Southern Palestine and the oases in the desert between the Jordan and the Tigris.

We do not believe that many will find work in agriculture in view of the dearth of water and other resources, but we see good prospects for industry and trade. The regions are rich in minerals which could be developed by enterprising Jews. We also see a great future for the development of railway lines crossing

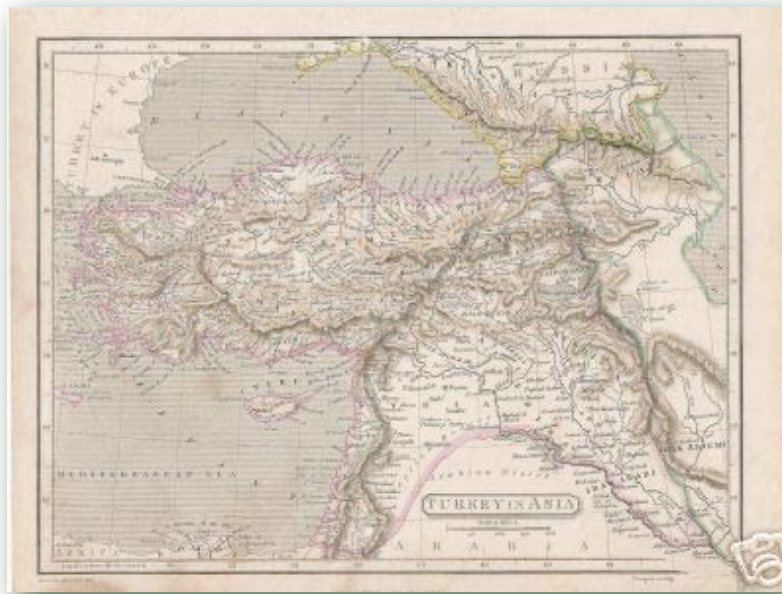
what is now a desert. With the development of steamships, the number of visitors and pilgrims will rapidly increase.

We suggest an administration based on a cantonal system with far-reaching regional autonomy: three in Palestine, two or three in Western Mesopotamia, one for the wide area between Palestine and the North. They should be accountable financially to central offices located in Jaffa and Mossul, and to an international committee consisting of members, of the Ottoman government and one

representative each of the European powers. Overall Ottoman political sovereignty will not be affected. This system may sound complicated but it may work in our opinion. It all depends on whether the immigrants from Europe will show both enterprise, patience and tact, and

whether the local population will realize the great benefits that will accrue to them from this common venture.

There will be no doubt resistance, some malcontents will argue that they prefer backwardness to sharing their country. However it ought to be born in mind that this resistance could probably be overcome with good diplomacy as well as the liberal distribution of baksheesh. Furthermore, as we have pointed out earlier on, the Ottoman empire is a diverse polity with many thousands of Chris-



tians, Circassians, Copts, Chaldaeans, Armenians, Turcomans and a dozen other nationalities, not to mention the many Bedouin tribes. The region we have in mind is sparsely populated—perhaps a million or less—and whether yet another nationality will be added may not make a great difference, given a minimum of good will from all sides.

It is impossible to predict whether, as a result of these developments, one or several states will eventually come into being, what language will be spoken, what religion will be predominant, or whether there will be peaceful coexistence between the various religions. We have no doubt that there will be conflicts between the various parties involved, but there seems to be a reasonable chance that they might be resolved.

Berlin, March 1847. *Vossische Zeitung fuer staats-und gelehrte sachen* and Ludwig Philippson in the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*: A report about a European Jewish meeting to discuss the future in light of EIC report.

The meeting, which took place in the Ephraim Palais on the Molkenmarkt, was attended by leading representatives from all major European Jewish communities. It was opened by the British parliamentarian Disraeli, who was elected unanimously president with Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Kalischer of Thorn and Rabbi Yehuda Alkalai of Bosnia/Croatia as his deputies. Sir Moses Montefiore was elected honorary president.

There was a general debate about the proposal made by several European governments to promote the emigration of Jews from Europe to the Ottoman empire. The following arguments against this scheme were

most frequently voiced: While aware of anti-Jewish sentiment and action in much of Europe, the prospects were not as dire as predicted by some, especially if the governments concerned would take a more active part in removing the existing anti-Jewish legislation. This was the view taken by several radical democrats of Jewish origin. While Zion remained dear to all Jews, it was more than doubtful whether mass settlement was possible or desirable in present conditions. Widespread banditry was reported from many parts of the Ottoman empire; it was not at all clear who would defend the defenseless Jews against such attacks.

Orthodox rabbis maintained that such a mass return should occur only in the days of Messiah, to act prematurely would be against G'd's will, it might be considered blasphemous. Some amount of emigration from Eastern Europe might be necessary, especially if the governments concerned would not take a constructive part in normalizing the conditions in which most Jewish communities were existing at the present time. However, a variety of other possibilities should be explored, above all North and South America.

The minority view was that the Jewish condition in Central and Eastern Europe was more precarious than generally assumed. If Jews would not take the initiative, others would, and the results could be lamentable, perhaps even tragic. Emigration was a necessity and the only part of the world with which Jews had a historical, religious and emotional connection was Palestine and the Near East.

Disraeli in a passionate speech reminded those assembled that social and political conditions quite apart, Jewish existence in many

European countries was at present a life without dignity, self-esteem and honor, and that a return to their native country would be more than a social reform, it would be a long-overdue moral revolution restoring pride to the Jewish race. The people which had given birth to the Maccabeans and Bar Kochba would be able to defend itself in its old/new homeland. However, all Disraeli achieved was a resolution that the suggestions for the resettlements of Jews should be further studied and be further discussed in another well-prepared meeting in Vienna, in a year from now.

Mehmet Emin Ali Pasha, Ottoman Foreign Minister, to Reshid Pasha, Grand Vizier, October 1846.

Your excellency asked me to summarize very briefly my views on the suggestions made increasingly often by European powers concerning the settlement of Jews in the Ottoman empire. The other day a member of the British parliament named Disraeli came to see me—an amusing and clever man. He tried to persuade me that we would enormously benefit from these schemes, economically and politically. He seems to be their chief diplomat, the front man of all the leading Jewish bankers. Of course, he exaggerates, but there is some truth in what he says.

Broadly speaking, I favor this initiative even though it is impossible to say at the present time whether many Jews will want to move to our country (and how many we want to accept). While East European Jewry is at present in a miserable state,



many of them are quite capable and enterprising individuals and would be a positive element as far as the reforms we want to see carried out are concerned. They certainly share our views about Russia, the main threat facing our country. Would they blend in with the other religious elements in our country? In principle, no one but Muslims can be trusted, but I feel the Jews will be more loyal subjects than the Greeks, the Armenians, and even the Arab tribes with whom we share a common religion.

As for Syria, Lebanon and Palestine—this region only spells trouble (as Mehmet Ali found out at his cost when he tried to rule it). These people unfortunately understand only the language of the sword and the whip. Whether there will be one more nationality, one more religion, does not really matter. If the Jews fail, it will be their funeral not ours. If they succeed, they will contribute to prosperity and stability in our country.

Vienna Jewish Congress, October 1848 (from *Die Presse*).

This meeting had been scheduled to take place in March, but was postponed as the result of the revolutions, riots and pogroms in several European countries. The murder of thousands of Jews in Poland, the Ukraine, Rumania, Hungary, and to a lesser extent in Prussia and other German states overshadowed the proceedings. Rabbi Alkalay in his opening speech quoted the Biblical saying from the book of Job, *asher yagornu, ba*—what we predicted and feared has come to pass. The great majority decided in favor of the proposal to promote emigration to regions of the Ottoman empire following the suggestions of the EIC. Disraeli had been to Constantinople and had received the permis-

sion to proceed from the Grand Vizier who had transmitted instructions to the local Pashas.

Jewish applicants were to register within the next month at offices in about hundred European cities (a list is in the appendix). Time was of crucial importance. The Rothschilds together with a group of other leading bankers accepted responsibility for the financial aspect; some of the funds needed would be in the nature of a gift, but half would be a loan to be repaid within fifty years. Some of the funds would be used for transport and living costs during the first two years of the stay of the immigrants in their new homes, but half was to be earmarked for the establishment of new industries and the building of the infrastructure. Barons Hirsch and Fould would be in charge of transport—from Odessa and Trieste. At the present time it was impossible even to estimate how many immigrants were to be expected. The proposal to hire an international armed guard to protect the immigrants against banditry was defeated. Disraeli said in his concluding speech that Jews, well-trained and armed, would fulfill this function; the vicious circle of depending on the protections of others had to be broken.

From the diary of Heinrich Heine, Trieste, December 1849 (published in part in the *Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung*).

This is the second night I have not been able to sleep. I went down to the harbor watching the embarkation of hundreds of Jews on the steamships which had been rented by Hirsch commuting between this harbor and Jaffa. Five hundred are leaving every day, even on Sabbath, the rabbis having decided that this was a case of *pikuah nefesh*—the commandment of saving souls overrides the full obser-

vation of the Sabbath laws. Another 500 are leaving daily from Odessa.

What heartrending scenes! Tears came to the eyes of an old cynic like me. The children of the ghetto leaving a continent that has wrought them so much misery, burned on the stake in the Middle Ages, pogroms in the present new Middle Ages. No one was mourning to leave this continent of suffering and humiliation, and yet who had thought that a history of almost two thousand years would end like this?

By the waters of Babylon we were sitting and weeping—from the desert we came and to the desert we shall return. Judaism is not a religion, it is an affliction. As I watch the children of the ghetto, the poorest of the poor



entering the ships with their few bundles, I cannot dispel dark forebodings. It was not just the separation of families for a long period, with husbands and young bachelors traveling as an *avant garde* and their families and friends following once they will have

taken care of elementary living conditions. Will they be able to survive in wholly unfamiliar, often hostile conditions or will they disappear without a trace in the deserts of Arabia? They will have to fight nature, an inclement climate and diseases. They cannot and should not transfer the ghetto but will have to begin a new life in every respect. Will they be able to defend themselves against the elements in a bandit-infested country? Sometimes I feel that there still are enormous energies in this old people which

only wait to be released, at other times an inner voice tells me, “Too late.”

Montefiore and Disraeli were at the harbor with words of encouragement, promising all kind of help, narrating stories about their travels in these parts. Disraeli approached me, he knows my poems and recited two by heart. He told me to be of good cheer, what do they have to lose but their chains? Montefiore, a giant of a man, and Disraeli, in his red waistcoat speaking with the help of translators to some of the departing Jews and Jewesses, sounded genuine. But they have been over there for a short time as honored guests with red carpets wherever they went. How will these poor wretches, Europe’s stepchildren, fare—pale, weak, so defenseless? Perhaps this is another desert generation and whatever hope there is rests with the next generation. But the odds are against them.

I went to bed with a heavy heart, not at all sure whether I had witnessed the last act of a long tragedy or the beginning of something wholly new.

Marx in London to Heine in Paris, January 1850.

...I share your misgivings. In fact I am certain nothing can come of this project. After so many centuries in the ghetto, the Jews are not capable of doing any constructive work. Degeneration has proceeded too far and lasted too long. You talk about new industries—but what and where? Weaving silk and carpets? The Persians are doing it better. There are no raw materials upon which new industries could be based in the Ottoman empire, except may be salt from the Dead Sea and that stinking substance called petroleum which is

good for nothing except perhaps putting tar on our streets....

The Admor of Sadagora to Rabbi Hirsch Ostrower in Lissa, March 1853.

Blessed be you my son and favorite pupil and your house and all of Israel, Amen. I have been young and now I am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread (Psalms 37:25). You told me about the commotion in your fold and the questions you are asked—should we stay or leave? Does the house of Israel have a future in Europe? Should we move our tents to the Holy Land even though it is in the hands of strangers? Should we embark for the land of the Hurons and Iroquois where, some false prophets are saying, the fleshpots of tomorrow will be found? (Exodus 16:3) I wish I had an answer, my son, but there is no guidance in our holy books, and even the wisest of the wise among us fall silent. Let us not put our trust in princes (Psalms 146:3). Perhaps we shall see clearer in the days to come; in the multitude of counsellors there is safety (Proverbs 11:14).

Peace be within thy walls.

Encyclopedia Britannica, eleventh edition 1911, “Ottoman Empire” (excerpts).

...world affairs seem to have bypassed the eastern regions of the Ottoman empire during the second half of the 19th century. The influx of almost two million European Jews between 1849 and 1855 caused far-reaching changes in the economy and social structure of the empire. But these took place only gradually.

The immigrants were dispersed over the eight cantons originally envisaged by the EIC, extending from Jaffa to Kirkuk. Living

conditions during the first years were extremely harsh for the newcomers and they were endlessly complaining about their bitter fate. It is estimated that about 100,000 of them left the country, mostly for America.

However, beginning in the 1860s there was an impressive upswing in economic activity in manufacture, trade and transport. The decision of the Rothschild committee early on to send some 500 of the most gifted young Jews to study at European universities and technical colleges bore fruit. A number of light industries were established which gave employment to hundreds of thousands of Jews, Bedouin and Arabs. These industries caught up and in some instances overtook the United States as well as Europe. Modern cities developed in Disraelia (as the region came to be called), with modern amenities.

A few of these industries ought to be singled out: the canning of food which made it possible to export fruit and vegetables to Europe at all seasons; textile industries which produced new, cheaper and more effective fabrics such as viscose as well as synthetic dyes; a pharmacological industry which pioneered various analgesics; and various cardiac medicines based on Dead Sea salts but also synthetically-produced substances. Dr. Paul Ehrlich lived in Disraelia for more than a decade and Pasteur came for frequent visits. A whole range of new medical technologies were developed. Lastly, a photographic in-

dustry came into being which pioneered gravure and color printing, with the help of European inventors such as Daguerre and Fox Talbot, who spent years in Disraelia. Also a small and simple camera, predating the Kodak Brownie (1901) by ten years, was mass-produced and conquered the world markets.

There was some agricultural development but in view of the lack of water resources it was decided to restrict it. A new set of railway lines now crisscrosses this region and several harbors have been built to modern standards.



Planners now deal with the preparation of airfields, as this mode of traffic is thought likely to dominate the coming decades.

Population: This region counts now twelve million inhabitants, more than half of them of Jewish extraction. The birthrate

is high (about 4.5), and infant mortality lower than in most European countries. Inter-marriage, much to everyone's surprise, is fairly high. Illiteracy has virtually been stamped out and there are eight major universities and corresponding technical research institutes.

As a result, this Eastern region of the Ottoman empire is now of greater economic importance than the Western section. Politically the Jews have been moving very cautiously. They have not pressed for independence but on every occasion profess loyalty to the Sublime Porte and friendship to the other ethnic minorities in the Empire. At the same time, the cantons have given them a great measure

of independence to develop their own culture and indeed their way of life. Hebrew, Turkish and Arabic are official languages, on the same footing. In the northern cantons Kurmanji (Kurdish) is taught but also Balachi, Gilek and other dialects.

It was not easy for the Jews to gain the trust of the Kurds and Arabs, but the Jewish leaders showed shrewdness in selecting their partners, above all the heads of the Rishawi and Dulaimi tribes on the Euphrates, the leading, most dynamic figures in Kurdistan and Mesopotamia. They have solemnly sworn that there would be absolute equality in the administration of the region, and they have by and large kept their promise. They have explained to their interlocutors that separately, each for himself, they would achieve nothing, but if they stuck together, they might become one day the richest and most powerful region in the whole Near East. No one talks in present conditions about full political independence, taxes are paid to the Ottoman tax collectors. However, given the slow but seemingly inescapable disintegration of the Ottoman empire, it seems only a question of time until Disraelia will be an independent state with its own government. Where will its capital be?

Encyclopedia Britannica, supplement 1932.

During the Great War, soldiers from Disraelia did not have to serve outside their own region; they persuaded the Young Turks that their economic and technical contribution to the war effort would be more important.

The state of Disraelia came into being as the result of the peace treaties of Sevres and Lausanne. It is a democratic republic with Tel Aviv as its capital, but Mosul as the second

capital where the parliament is convened during the winter months. A president is elected for four years and there is the principle of alternation, by which a Jew is invariably followed by a Kurd or an Arab, unless there is an overwhelming (three-fourths) majority for reelecting the incumbent.

During the turbulent period immediately following the Great War, Disraelia was several times attacked by its neighbors, but these attacks were easily repelled owing to its own superior organization and modern equipment. More serious was the separatist strife inside the country in the late 1920s and the early 1930s. Matters came to a head with the assassination in 1929 of the president of Disraelia, Emanuel Marx (a grandson of Karl Marx, the Socialist thinker) by a group of Jewish fanatics who demanded the division of the country and the expulsion of all non-Jews. These extremists were harshly dealt with. Their crime was considered not just political murder but high treason; twenty of the ringleaders were executed following the verdict of a military court appointed during the state of emergency. About



150 of their militant followers were expelled from the country for perpetuity. Later there was an attempted coup in the Kurdish-Arab sector which also aimed at the partition of the country. This extremist group had tried to engage in terrorism during a few weeks but found no mass support. The main figures were apprehended and shot; appeals for clemency were disregarded.

Following these unfortunate events, mass meetings took place in which the unbreak-

able unity of the country was reaffirmed by leaders of all sides. Freedom of religion is absolute but religious incitement is severely punished. Since then calm has prevailed in the country.

Various authors, *Disraelia: An Intellectual History*, page 32.

Disraeli resigned from all his positions in 1860 after the survival of his project seemed assured. In his last speech to the Disraelia General Assembly he said, "If you truly want it, it won't be a fairy tale." He returned to his British career and became prime minister in 1868. He died in 1882 and is buried in the garden of his villa on Mount Carmel. After his death, this building became a refuge for distinguished political refugees from all over the world. Trotsky spent several years there in the 1930s and later also Che Guevara, Solzhenitsyn, as well as Ayatollah Khomeini and most recently the Saudi entrepreneur Osama bin Laden. On fine autumn evenings in the late 1960s one could watch these four walking in the Carmel forest, surrounded by several learned rabbis, heatedly discussing fundamentalism, pro and contra.

The impressive building also served as an Institute of Advanced Philosophical Studies. It is difficult even to imagine the intellectual history of the late 20th century but for a number of historical confrontations which took place in this building, such as Heidegger debating Wittgenstein.



Giselher von Dirksen, German ambassador in Tel Aviv, to Foreign Ministry in Berlin, November 1933.

I saw earlier today Sleiman Abdul Hadi, the Disraelian foreign minister, at his request. He said that recent speeches by Herr Hitler, the new Chancellor, in which some unfriendly remarks about German Jews and Jews in general had been made, had provoked concern in this country. While he fully realized that every country was at liberty to deal with its subjects as it saw fit, he had to emphasize that there were considerable sympathies in Disraelia, not only among the Jews, for the Jews in Germany, and that such speeches would not contribute to a better climate in world affairs. If Germany was unhappy with the 200,000 Jews remaining there, Disraelia would be happy to receive them. At the same time, Abdul Hadi extended an invitation to the Fuehrer to come to Disraelia early next year. What was the occasion? An interesting technical experiment would be carried out, and knowing the Fuehrer's interest in modern technology, he thought he would not want to miss this.

How to explain this somewhat cryptic invitation? I suspect I have the explanation. Last week General von Horstenburg, our military attaché, returned somewhat shaken from an event to which all military attachés had been invited. He was in a highly excitable state, almost incoherent—quite unusual, given his stolid character. He repeated time and time again that he had just witnessed the greatest revolution in military warfare in thousands of years. Pressed by me, he revealed confidentially that the Disraelians had succeeded in producing a super-bomb which they call an atomic bomb, capable of destroying a city of

many square miles, that is to say the biggest cities in the world. He had watched the explosion in the desert. The Disraelian chief of staff in his short speech had stressed that the energy thus released would never be used for military purposes, but the implications were clear to all those present.

There had been rumors to the effect that Disraelian research institutes had been engaged in research in this direction (nuclear fission), but we had no idea that they had made that much progress. Moreover, this seems to be not the only breakthrough in military technology they have achieved. I am sure that this information will



be checked by the proper institutions in Berlin and submitted to the Fuehrer in person. Given this breakthrough and the newly developed oil fields in the north of the country, this certainly amounts to a geopolitical revolution of the first magnitude.

“Disraelia in 2007: The Probable Scenario,” *The Journal of Futurist Studies*, June 1967.

The foreign policy of the state would be neutral (albeit not neutralist). Lobbyists on behalf of the United States and NATO would be active in trying to establish closer relations in various fields and pressing for military bases. Russian lobbyists would be trying equally hard to explain the benefits of a close rapprochement with their country. However, Disraelia would also be part of various regional defense schemes and would participate in common maneuvers with Iran.

What would be Disraelia’s standing in the world? It goes without saying that it would be a key member of the United Nations, perhaps even considered for permanent membership in the Security Council and chairing the Commission for Human Rights.

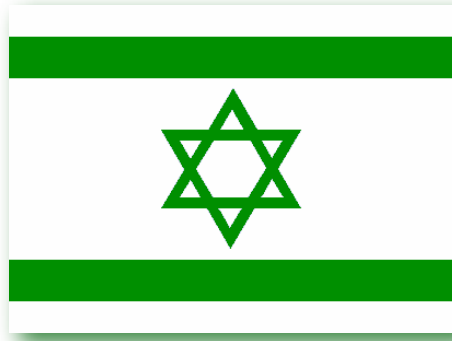
In the cultural area, generous support would be given by Disraelia to struggling universities in the United States and Britain. The U.S. Association for the Promotion of Middle Eastern Studies would pass an almost unanimous resolution demanding an urgent expansion of cultural exchanges with Disraelia, as well as a more constructive attitude towards this country, to rectify past neglect by the White House and Congress. Leading political science professors of the neo-realistic school, the various Mzezinskis and Bodenheimers, would complain in their books that the lack of warmth in the relations between the two countries was not in the best interest of the United States, that there was much to be learned from the Disraelia experience. Leading Middle East specialists such as Juan Finkelstein, Rashid Massad, and Joel Judt would take the lead in founding a Washington-based pro-Disraelia lobby.

What of the attitude of leading European and American intellectuals of the left and the right, of bishops and moral philosophers? Most of them would be enthusiastic in their approach, almost embarrassingly so, holding up the achievements of this state as a shining example for the rest of humankind. One American ex-president would announce that he and his wife had decided to retire to a place in southern Disraelia to grow a new brand of groundnuts. The Disraelian government would make an unofficial approach to the British Broadcasting Corporation com-

plaining that the one-sided laudatory reporting on all things Disraelian was unfair and embarrassing, and likely to provoke resentment among neighboring countries. (BBC correspondents had been shown weeping uncontrollably at the recent funeral of the prime minister of Disraelia.)

The International Association of Conflict Resolution would convene its annual convention in Disraelia, to discuss Robert Frost's "Good fences made good neighbors—true or false?" The majority consensus would be that putting up fences or walls has been the best solution for keeping the peace from the days of the Great Wall of China to the present (e.g., the walls between India and Pakistan in Kashmir and between Yemen and Saudi Arabia), to prevent minor skirmishes from turning into major battles. The fences (to be called henceforth Walls of Peace and Pacification) would be made mandatory by the United Nations to help peacekeepers all over the world.

True, some contrarian voices would still argue that the state, however great its achievements, however humanitarian its policies, was colonialist in nature, founded in part by settlers from Europe. But these dissenting voices would not be taken very seriously. Against them it would be maintained that Disraelia had come into being well before most other member states of the United Nations, including those in the Middle East. If as the result of this process a few had been forced to leave their original places of residence, such cases had occurred all over the world. No one would demand the return of millions of refugees from India and Pakistan



of 1947 vintage; the Indian Constitution in its preamble made this legally impossible. No one would demand the return of German refugees from Russia and Eastern Europe. More than ten million had been affected at the time. To bring up such historical incidents would be morally and politically justified only in a much wider framework—if one questioned all migration in history, or at least during the last thousand years. However, such an approach, it would be agreed, would create more problems than it would solve.

Some extreme Islamic sects might engage in incitement against this secular state, but no responsible Arab or Muslim politician would dare to support such propaganda, no more than they would dare to attack China, India or Russia just because Muslim minorities are allegedly persecuted in these countries. On the contrary, Muslim theologians from Al-Azhar to Indonesia would praise the state as a model of friendly coexistence between the Muslim world and the people of the book. A minor Muslim pilgrimage to Al-Quds (Jerusalem) would be instituted, bringing several hundreds of thousand pilgrims each year to pray at the Aqsa Mosque and visit the Dome of the Rock.

Walter Laqueur, "Disraelia: A Counterfactual History," *Middle East Papers*, April 1, 2008.

Once the state had come into being, there would be an almost unlimited number of possibilities of how it would develop; we cannot possibly know whether the Second World War would have taken place and if so what

role Disraelia would have played in it. It is quite likely that a Cold War would have occurred and that it would have ended as it did. There would have been crises, domestic and external, affecting the state as has been the case with regard to all nations all over the world. There would have been setbacks; not all dreams would have ripened.

But there is much reason to believe that this state, given a high birth rate, would have some sixty million inhabitants at the beginning of the 21st century. It would have advanced industries, leading the world in fields such as nuclear and computer technologies. It would be the fifth-largest oil producer in the world, economically reasonably healthy with a growth rate of 6-8 percent, competitive with Europe, America and even Asia. It would have powerful armed forces, living in peace with its neighbors, at least to the extent that peaceful relations could be expected in this unquiet part of the world. It would not be a model state, but by the standards of time and place, considered much better than average. No one would dare to question its right to exist, and those who did would not be taken seriously.

Could such a state have come into being? Perhaps—assuming that the great anti-Semitic wave would have occurred in Europe eighty years earlier than it did, provided the Ottoman empire would have disintegrated eighty years earlier, and provided that the Jews of Europe would have read the signs of the times correctly, and under wise leadership would have followed a policy leading them to peaceful solutions.

But Hitler appeared on the scene only in the next century, and the Ottoman empire survived another eight decades. The Jews did not emigrate when it might have been possible, because there seemed no cogent reason to do so at the time. There is a world of difference between 1848 and 1948; what was possible a century earlier was no longer possible a hundred years later. Jewish assimilation was much more advanced; Arab nationalism had awakened.

One century could have been the difference between a strong and rich state, universally respected, and a small and relatively weak country, isolated, without important natural resources. There is a vast difference between a state of six million inhabitants and one with sixty, fortified by considerable oil fields and reserves. In terms of *Realpolitik* as well as moral legitimacy, six million are bad, an invitation to all kind of calamities; sixty million are beyond good and evil, other categories apply. To quote *Animal Farm*, four legs good, two legs bad. Or as Marx would have put it in a letter to Moses Hess (who never finished studying his Hegel): quantity is becoming a new quality. What is considered normal behavior in the case of a state counting sixty million is a moral outrage when done by a small country. In the circumstances, a small state was bound to be considered an intruder and an enemy. A bigger and stronger state might have been accepted.

These basic insights of political science and moral philosophy have unfortunately not yet been fully digested by many in Israel and outside it. ••

Walter Laqueur



Walter Laqueur has written more than twenty books, translated into as many languages. He was a co-founder and editor of the *Journal of Contemporary History* in London and the *Washington Quarterly*. Concurrently he was chairman of the International Research Council of the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). He has taught at Georgetown, Chicago, Harvard, Johns Hopkins, Brandeis, and Tel Aviv universities. He lives in Washington, D.C.

Middle East Strategy at Harvard

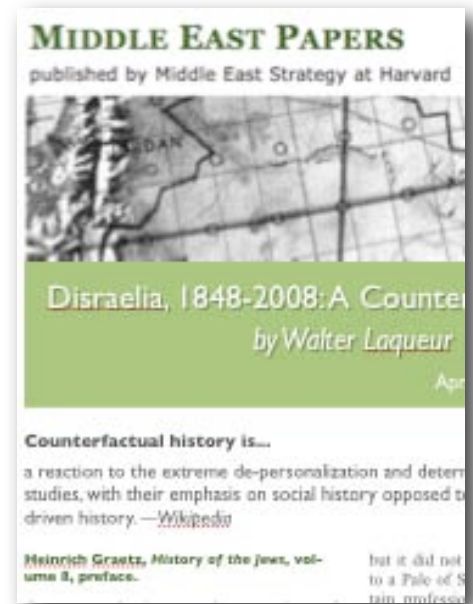


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