

earliest concrete milestone given is 7 years after the tablet was composed. This led me to prepare a research note on the subject, and on that basis I believe that the two powers referred to are in fact Russia and Germany, rather than Russia and France.

The Russian allusion does seem clear, as the wave of pogroms that started in 1881 gained widespread publicity and spread throughout the land, the word pogrom itself entering English with a Times editorial a mere two months after the Lawh-i Maqṣud. More importantly, the 1881 pogroms generated the first Aliyah (1881-1914), a wave of Jewish emigration, with a significant proportion going to Palestine and the Ottoman empire, with many of them settling in Haifa, and of course Jerusalem, Jaffa and Hebron. This is I think an important context for the tablet. The Lawh-i Maqṣud was revealed on January 20, 1882. On December 30-31 previous the first Zionist congress in history was held in Romania, prompted by the pogroms, with the aim of planning settlements in Palestine. The coverage of the pogroms was global, and the complicity and responsibility of the Russian government and police in particular were widely reported throughout the year.

Most particularly however, I think the key context of this tablet is the establishment of the May laws in Russia, which coincided with the pogroms and took place under the administration of Count Ignatiev as Minister for Internal Affairs between May 1881 and May 1882. He held that the answer to stopping pogroms in Russia was to remove Jews from rural villages and countryside. The deliberations of the Committee he set up for the expulsion leaked, and generated wide press coverage and debate.

In fact this was a hot issue in the Ottoman empire (see N.J Mandel, MES, 10.3, 1974 ([ismi.emory.edu/home/documents/Readings/Mandel, Neville J. Ottoman Policy.pdf](http://ismi.emory.edu/home/documents/Readings/Mandel_Neville_J_Ottoman_Policy.pdf)). Sultan Abdulhamid decided to oppose Jewish settlement in the Autumn of 1881, and a file was found in the Ottoman archives titled "Situation of the Jews; Question of their Immigration into Turkey:1881". In Constantinople, when Oliphant visited in mid 1882, there were already 200 Jewish refugees living there, Constantinople of course being one of the key nodes of communication for the Bahá'í community, specially in the Holy Land, and conversations likely to have taken place.

Putting it all together, the outbreak of pogroms, their global coverage, including of Russian police instigation and complicity, the government response culminating in the May laws, and the wave of Jewish emigration it prompted to Ottoman Palestine, including at Constantinople, beginning just under a year before the revelation of the tablet, all point with great confidence to Russian being one of the powers referred.

Upon further consideration, the Research Department's identification of France as the second power seems tenuous. The French antisemitism that would culminate in the Dreyfus Affair only really kick-starts in 1886 with the publication of Drumont's *La France Juive*, and his founding antisemitic newspaper in 1892. Around the tablet of Maqṣud there was no significant political antisemitic

movement on a par with the Russian Empire. On the contrary, in 1880, the French Chamber of Deputies voted by 344 votes to 91 to have Cremieux, a French Jewish lawyer and champion of Jewish rights, buried at public expense. Similarly, in Austria the anti-semitic movement begins to crystallise politically after 1882.

Rather, it seems by far more likely that it is Germany that the tablet alludes to. 1881 saw the establishment of the Berlin Movement, a loose coalition of various antisemitic parties and groups, coinciding with Bismark's anti liberal charge. In 1880 a petition was launched by high ranking individuals to rescind Jewish legal emancipation, and was signed by 265,000 adult males. It led, in November 20-22 1880, to a 2 day debate on "the Jewish Question" in the Prussian House of Deputies, where the government spokesman gave a lukewarm defense. 2400 students petitioned to disenfranchise the Jews. On July 17-18 1881 anti-Jewish riots took place, six months before the tablet was written. Nothing on the scale of Russia took place, but virtually every German newspaper had weekly and even daily articles on The Jewish Question throughout the whole of 1881 and 1882 (Pogroms and Riots: German Press Responses to Anti-Jewish Violence in Germany, Sonja Weinberg). It is in these two years that anti-semitism can be said to have become a political movement.

Given the presence of Jewish refugees in the Ottoman empire, the intense Jewish lobbying of the Ottoman empire for permission to settle in the Holy Land, etc, it is more than likely that any conversations about anti-semitism in Russia with Ottoman Jews by local Bahá'ís would have raised the topic of the situation in Germany, particularly in view of the negotiations by German and English businessmen to open a railway from Baghdad to Smyrna and settle the Jews along the way. Another vehicle would even possibly be Laurence Oliphant, who took a leading role in lobbying for Jewish refugees at the Sublime Porte and visited Akka in 1882. It makes sense that he would have had significant discussions with Bahá'ís leading up to an interview being arranged with the Master, and those conversations, given the messianic motivation and interest in Oliphant's work on behalf of persecuted Jews, and their settling in the Holy Land, would most likely have included discussion of The Jewish Question. One would have to have a look at the Ottoman Press for additional evidence of how the developments in Germany were covered for further avenues.

Whatever the channels however, it seems to me there is no credible alternative to Germany as the second anti-semitic Great Power after Russia.

As for the constitutional dimension, Czar Alexander II signed a groundbreaking constitution just months before Bahá'u'lláh's tablet, that would have created a two chamber legislative assembly, one of them indirectly elected. This was March 1881. That same day he was killed, and his successor rejected it. And of course there is Bismark's imperial Constitution, created in 1871 which created the German Empire.

I should also have added, in terms of the international press, that one fascinating study of the conversations that took place in Ottoman coffeehouses derived from spy reports, there were conversations translated from French,

German, Arabic, Greek, Bulgarian, Russian and Rumanian. The international press was digested and discussed orally, so with daily reports in every German newspaper throughout the year leading to and following the Lawh-i Maqsud, the discussions in Germany would have found their way to Constantinople, and naturally to the hearing of the resident Bahá'ís and pilgrims flowing from and to Akka.

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