

Notes- Examining how nationalism evolved in the last decades of the 19th century

After 1870, nationalist ideology evolved in a different direction. Nationalism became increasingly populist and began to appeal more to those on the right wing of the political spectrum than the left. The idea of “us v them” nationalism also increased during this time, bolstered by modern scientific racism. Some fanatics and demagogic political leaders tried to build extreme nationalist movements by whipping up racist animosity toward imaginary enemies, especially the Jews, and the growth of anti-Semitism after 1880 showed the most negative aspects of European nationalism before WWI.

Idea of Making National Citizens

“We have made Italy. Now we must make Italians.”

As the nation-state extended voting rights and welfare benefits to more and more people, the question of national loyalty became more and more pressing. Politicians and nationalists made forceful attempts to ensure the people’s conformity to their laws. A big issue was how they could ensure that national governments would win their citizens’ allegiance.

This issue was pressing.

The recent unification of Italy and Germany, for example, had brought together a mix of different customs, loyalties, and in some cases languages. (Regional differences in language)

In Great Britain, deep class differences still dampened national unity. Across central and eastern Europe, different ethnic groups with distinct languages and cultures challenged the prospect of nation building. Even in France, only about 50% of the French people spoke correct French and there was still disconnect between Paris and the rural areas.

But, by 1890s most ordinary people had accepted the notion of national belonging. Different reasons for the popularity—

- Modern nation states imposed centralized institutions across their entire territories which reached even the lowest citizens
- Universal military conscription, introduced in much of Europe except Britain, exposed young males to patriotic values
- Free compulsory education helped with the language differences and taught children the glory of national traditions
- Introduction of common currency, standard weights and measurements, and a national post office helped erode regional differences
- Boasting images of grand historical events or prominent leaders
- Improved transportation and communication networks broke down region differences and reinforced the national idea as well
- Literacy rates increased—more and more people read about national history or latest political events
- Different intellectuals etc... promoted national pride
- New symbols and rituals brought nationalism into the lives of ordinary people
 - o Capital city, flag, military uniform, and national anthem

- Symbols- Britain's John Bull, France's republican Marianne, America's Uncle Same, Germany's Michel
- National holidays – Bastille Day in France, Sedan Day in Germany
- Royal weddings and jubilees- Queen Victoria
- Public Squares and Parks

Nationalism and Racism

Most people in the late 19th century believed that race was a product of heredity. Many felt pride in their own national racial characteristics—French, English, German, Jewish, Slav, and many others—that were supposedly passed down from generation to generation. Unfortunately, pride in one's own heritage easily leads to denigration of someone else's.

Modern attempts to use race to categorize distinct groups of people had their roots in the Enlightenment. Race theorists claimed that their ideas about racial differences were scientific, based on hard biological "facts" about the bloodlines and heredity. Count Arthur de Gobineau divided humanity into the white, black, and yellow races based on geographical location and championed the white "Aryan race" for its supposedly superior qualities. Social Darwinist ideas about the "survival of the fittest" when applied to the "contest" between nations and races, drew on such ideas to further popularize stereotypes about inferior and superior races.

The close links between nationalism and scientific racism helped justify imperial expansion. Nationalist racism also fostered domestic persecution and exclusion, as witnessed by Bismarck's Kulturkampf and the Dreyfus affair.

According to race theorists, the nation was supposed to be racially pure and ethnic minorities were viewed as outsiders and targets for reform, repression, and relocation. Thus the ethnic Russian leaders of the Russian empire targeted minority Poles and Czechs for "Russification" a process by which they might learn the Russian language and assimilate into Russian society. Germans likewise viewed the large number of ethnic Poles living in East Prussia as a "national threat" that required "Germanization" before they could be seen as equals to the supposedly superior Germans. For many nationalists, driven by the ugly currents of race hatred, Jews were the ultimate outsiders, the stereotypical "inferior race" that posed the greatest challenge to national purity.

Jewish Emancipation and Anti-Semitism

The changing political principles and the triumph of the nation state had revolutionized Jewish life in western and central Europe. The turning point came in 1848, when Jews formed part of the revolutionary force in Vienna and Berlin and the Frankfurt Assembly endorsed full rights for German Jews. In 1871 the constitution of the new German Empire consolidated the process of Jewish emancipation in that nation. It abolished all restrictions of Jewish marriage, choice of occupation, place of residence, and property ownership. However, even with this change, exclusion from government employment and discrimination in social relations remained.

By 1871, a majority of Jewish people in western and central Europe had improved their economic situation enough to enter the middle classes. Most Jewish people also identified strongly with their respective nation-states and saw themselves as patriotic citizens.

Vicious anti-Semitism reappeared with force in central and Eastern Europe after the stock market crash of 1873. Drawing on long traditions of religious intolerance, ghetto exclusion, and periodic anti-Jewish riots and expulsions, this anti-Semitism also built on the exclusionary aspects of modern popular nationalism and the pseudoscience of race. Fanatic anti-Semites whipped up resentment against Jewish achievement and Jewish “financial control” and claimed that the Jewish race or “blood” posed a biological threat to Christian people. Such ideas were popularized by the repeated publication of the notorious forgery “The Protocols of the Elders of Zion,” a falsified account of a secret meeting supposedly held at the First Zionist Congress in Basel in 1897. The “Protocols,” actually written by the Russian secret police, suggested that Jewish elders planned to dominate the globe. Such anti-Semitic beliefs were particularly popular among conservatives, extreme nationalists, and people who felt threatened by Jewish competition, such as small shopkeepers, office workers, and professionals.

Anti-Semites created nationalist political parties that attacked and degraded Jews to win popular support. Karl Lueger and his Christian Socialist Party won striking electoral victories in Vienna in the early 1890s. Lueger, mayor of Vienna from 1897 to 1910, combined fierce anti-Semitic rhetoric with municipal ownership of basic services, and he appealed especially to the German-speaking lower middle class- and to a young Adolf Hitler.

Before 1914 anti-Semitism was most oppressive in Eastern Europe, where Jews suffered terrible poverty. In the western borderlands of the Russian empire, where 4 million of Europe’s 7 million Jewish people lived in 1880 with few legal rights, officials used anti-Semitism to channel popular discontent away from the government and onto the Jewish minority. Russian Jews were denounced as foreign exploiters who corrupted national traditions, and in 1881 to 1882 a wave of violent pogroms commenced in southern Russia. The police and army stood aside for days while peasants looted and destroyed Jewish property and official harassment continued in the following decades.

The growth of radical anti-Semitism spurred the emergence of Zionism, a Jewish political movement whose adherents believed that Christian Europeans would never overcome their anti-Semitism. To escape the burdens of anti-Semitism, leading Zionists such as Theodor Herzl advocated the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine- a homeland where European Jews could settle and live free from prejudice. Zionism was particularly popular among Jews living in Russia. Many embraced self-emancipation and the vision of a Zionist settlement in Palestine, or emigrated to western or central Europe and the United States. About 2.75 million Jews left central and eastern Europe between 1881 and 1914.