

## CHAPTER 13

# Europe: How Did Nationalism

# Shape the Nineteenth Century?

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Few people would debate that in nineteenth-century Europe it was nationalism that dominated the political scene. Nationalism, devotion to the nation, replaced whatever was left of religious allegiance as the identifying characteristic of European peoples. Men and women began to think in terms of “I am a Frenchman,” “I am a German,” or “I am an Irishman.”

Nationalism is basically a state of mind, so those elements that make it up are difficult to sort out. Certainly a common language helps to define nationality—although people in New Zealand and Canada both speak English, yet there is no common bond of nationality between them. A shared history helps to define nationality, but exceptions again appear. So also do culture and religion help, but not definitively, forge a nation’s self. An extremely important constituent of every nationality has certainly been a desire to have a land that can be called its own. Yet even this criterion is not always present. For example, European Gypsies have apparently never felt a need for their own country or government.

It has been ethnic majorities that declare what nationalism is about. This means that minorities in a nation often were considered “outsiders” and suffered from overt or covert discrimination. This was surely true for the Bretons of France, the Poles of Germany, and the Basques of Spain. Drawing ethnic boundaries in the nineteenth century put minorities at risk.

The rise of nationalism in Italy and Germany demanded self-determination in the former, a unified country in the latter. In the Habsburg, Ottoman, and Russian Empires it sought the establishment of independent states, freed from the central control of Vienna, Istanbul, and St. Petersburg, respectively. It is little wonder that in these capitals, nationalism received no encouragement, for to do so would mean the end of the eastern European empires. When World War I occurred that is exactly what happened.

## SELECTION 1:

# Building a Nation

*In the following selection, author Anthony D. Smith looks at the ingredients that go into constructing nationalism. He defines those qualities that Europeans in the nineteenth century and Africans and Asians today must construct to build a sense of community. He uses the French term *ethnie* to describe what patriots call the national consciousness. Can you think of reasons why *ethnie* is strong in some countries and weaker in others? Can you think of other factors that contribute to national consciousness?*

Once nationalists had set out on the road to nation-formation, the problem of cultural and social integration became paramount, along with that of ethno-political congruence. To achieve integration and legitimate a set of borders and a "homeland," myths of descent were needed, not only for external consumption, but for internal mobilization and co-ordination. These myths might, or might not, make sense to outsiders, depending on their prior attitudes; far more important was their role in fostering internal solidarity and the sense of territorial "rootedness." National unity requires both a sense of cohesion of "fraternity" and a compact, secure, recognized territory or "homeland"; all nationalisms, therefore, strive for such fraternity and homelands. But, since neither are born overnight or *ex nihilo* [out of nothing], both presuppose a long history of collective experience. So "history" becomes the focal point of nationalism and nation-formation. The "rediscovery" or "invention" of history is no longer a scholarly pastime; it is a matter of national honour and collective endeavour. Through the tracing of our history, "we" discover (or "rediscover") who we are, whence we came, when we emerged, who our ancestors were, when we were great and glorious, who our heroes are, why we declined. . . . But the rediscovery of the "na-

tional self" is not an academic matter; it is a pressing practical issue, vexed and contentious, which spells life or death for the nationalist project of creating the nation.

Because of this urgent and deep-seated need, modern nationalisms have had to resort increasingly to unifying ethnic myths, even when there are competing *ethnie* [national memories] from which the new national culture must be forged. It is true that ruling elites, fearful of importing a "Balkans" situation into Africa, have tried to suppress what they term "tribalism," and have equated *ethnie* with what European colonialists called "tribes." But their pronouncements have rarely been matched by their actions. In practice, they have had to allocate resources on ethnic grounds, assign administrative posts according to ethnic population proportions, and even render to each ethnic culture its due in the areas where the majority are from particular *ethnie*. Of course, this has not been a voluntary or even-handed policy. Dominant *ethnie* have usually reaped advantages greater than those of the minority *ethnie*, and in some cases, like Kenya, have occupied most of the strategic political positions.

At the same time, such a one-sided recourse to the traditions and personnel of the dominant ethnic community, itself a tilt towards an "ethnic model" of the nation, carries grave dangers. The alternative strategy is to construct a new "political culture" out of the various ethnic traditions within the territorial state, by combining myths

Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origin of Nations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), pp. 148-49.

and symbols, seeking common denominators in the past (colonialism, racial discrimination) and even inventing a distant common origin or “age of heroism” such as other nationalisms have admired. In effect, this means that the new territorial nation-to-be must acquire ethnic dimensions and characteristics, if it lacks them; in Rousseau’s words, it must be given a “national character.”

The upshot of our brief account of the formation of nations in the modern world is that all nations bear the impress of both territorial and ethnic principles and components, and represent an uneasy confluence of a more recent “civic” and a more ancient “genealogical” model of social and cultural organization. No “nation-to-be” can survive without a homeland or a myth of com-

mon origins and descent. Conversely no “*ethnie*-aspiring-to-become-a-nation” can achieve its goals without realizing a common division of labour and territorial mobility, or the legal equality of common rights and duties for each member, that is, citizenship.

After reading this selection, consider these questions:

1. What is needed for a people to become a nation?
2. Is it possible for a people to exist without a homeland? Can you cite some examples?
3. What are some symbols of American nationalism?

## SELECTION 2:

# Evils of the Revolutionary Spirit

*The statesmen who ruled Europe after the Napoleonic era all opposed nationalism. They recognized that if nationalism succeeded it would mean the end of monarchies in multiethnic states where a dominant group held power to the exclusion of others. This was especially true in eastern Europe.*

*The strongest and most able of those resisting the growth of nationalism was Prince Klemens Metternich, the Austrian minister of foreign affairs from 1809 to 1848. His imprint was on every major political decision made in central Europe during this period. He devoted his policies to suppress any liberal or revolutionary movements that called for limits on the power of rulers or the breakup of multinational empires. In his memoirs, excerpted below, he discusses the “evils” of revolution and change that he feared would upset the thrones of Europe’s kings.*

**T**he evil exists and it is enormous. We do not think we can better define it and its cause at all times and in all places than we have already done by the word “presumption,” that inseparable companion of the half-educated, that spring of an

unmeasured ambition, and yet easy to satisfy in times of trouble and confusion.

It is principally the middle classes of society which this moral gangrene has affected, and it is only among them that the real heads of the party are found.

For the great mass of the people it has no attraction and can have none. The labors to which this class—the real people—are obliged to de-

vote themselves, are too continuous and too positive to allow them to throw themselves into vague abstractions and ambitions. The people know what is the happiest thing for them: namely, to be able to count on the morrow, for it is the morrow which will repay them for the cares and sorrows of today. The laws which afford a just protection to individuals, to families, and to property, are quite simple in their essence. The people dread any movement which injures industry and brings new burdens in its train.

Men in the higher classes of society who join the revolution are either falsely ambitious men or, in the widest acceptance of the word, lost spirits. Their career, moreover, is generally short! They are the first victims of political reforms, and the part played by the small number among them who survive is mostly that of courtiers despised by upstarts, their inferiors, promoted to the first dignities of the state; and of this France, Germany, Italy, and Spain furnish a number of living examples.

We do not believe that fresh disorders with a directly revolutionary end—not even revolutions in the palace and the highest places in the government—are to be feared at present in France, because of the decided aversion of the people to anything which might disturb the peace they are now enjoying after so many troubles and disasters.

In Germany, as in Spain and Italy, the people ask only for peace and quiet.

In all four countries the agitated classes are principally composed of wealthy men—real cosmopolitans, securing their personal advantage at the expense of any order of things whatever—

paid state officials, men of letters, lawyers, and the individuals charged with the public education.

To these classes may be added that of the falsely ambitious, whose number is never considerable among the lower orders, but is larger in the higher ranks of society.

There is besides scarcely any epoch which does not offer a rallying cry to some particular faction. This cry, since 1815, has been *Constitution*. But do not let us deceive ourselves: this word, susceptible of great latitude of interpretation, would be but imperfectly understood if we supposed that the factions attached quite the same meaning to it under the different *régimes*. Such is certainly not the case. In pure monarchies it is qualified by the name of national representation. In countries which have lately been brought under the representative *régime* it is called development, and promises charters and fundamental laws. In the only state which possesses an ancient national representation [Great Britain] it takes reform as its object. Everywhere it means change and trouble.

After reading this selection, consider these questions:

1. Why does Metternich blame the middle class for stirring up nationalist sentiment?
2. Why does he claim that the masses of people have no interest in nationalism? Do you think he was correct in this assumption?
3. Why does Metternich have no use for constitutions?

## SELECTION 3:

# A Revolution on Trial

**I**n 1848 Metternich's system of repressing nationalism and liberalism fell apart as revolution swept across Europe. In the cities, workers, students, and professionals demanded change, taking to the streets in mass demon-

*strations. The police and army were called out, but their members were often sympathetic to those whom they were called upon to resist. Lives were lost in clashes between the opposing sides. Metternich had to flee Vienna leaving behind his house in flames.*

*In February 1848 the French set the spark as demonstrators in Paris sought to be free of the staid and corrupt government of their king, Louis-Philippe, and to set up a republic. Among them were Socialists who looked to Louis Blanc for inspiration. In the provisional government the Socialists had their way in setting up national workshops for the unemployed. National elections then followed, returning a National Assembly much more conservative than the Parisian partisans who wanted social change. Traditionalists in the National Assembly made the national workshops a special target. In June the National Assembly called on the army to take over Paris, and its soldiers effectively crushed the workers' social revolution, leaving four hundred dead and three thousand arrested. The leaders among Blanc's supporters and their followers were put under arrest and brought to trial. The testimony that follows is that of a railway worker conscripted to fight for the revolution.*

**A**ccused Hearing the recall I went out with my musket. They gave me some drinks and led me to the barricade blocking the way. There they [the Parisian leaders] said to me, "Look, are you going to shoot?" "Hell," I said, "what at?" "Are you going to shoot?" they repeated, "If not, you'll have to hand over your musket." And they took it away. The next day they made me take one from a wounded man. . . . I only fired twice.

*Q:* Why did you agree to fire?

*R:* I was carried away, like lots of others. The ones who wouldn't go along with them got called idlers and were maltreated.

*Q:* But did you not know that when you fired on Paris you were firing on your brothers?

*R:* Yes. But they told us it wasn't the same thing. A man like me up from the country, who had never heard these things talked about, had never seen anything, and who couldn't read or write—a man like me is easily led astray.

*An insurgent leader at the Barrières de Charanton . . . gave as the reason for the revolt the desire for a democratic and social republic. I asked him to explain what he meant by social; he replied . . . the right of workers to form associa-*

tions and to take part, according to their ability, in public and private enterprises.

*[In another trial the accused was an engineering worker.]*

*Accused* Citizens, the Republic has always been my only idea, my only dream. Twice I have been thrown into jail for working for the setting up of the democratic republic. . . .

*Q:* What do you mean by a social Republic?

*R:* I mean a republic with social reforms. Universal suffrage has been decreed, but that doesn't do the people any good. It is an instrument that the people do not use, that they do not know how to use. I want free and compulsory education for all and the organisation of work through association; finally I want to ensure that the worker receives the product of his labour, a proportion of which is at present taken away from him by the man who provides the capital. Then there would be no poverty, and so there would be no Revolution to fear. If the authorities had done that instead of fruitlessly spending vast sums on the National Workshops there would not have been an uprising in June. The workers enrolled in the National Workshops would rather have done proper work than received money for doing nothing.

After reading this selection, consider these questions:

1. Do you believe the testimony of the railway worker that he and many like him may have been coerced into the struggle?
2. Why do you think that in the countryside there was not the same enthusiasm for the revolution?
3. Do you think that the national workshops were possibly a solution to unemployment? Can you think of modern examples?

## SELECTION 4:

# The Prussian Revolution

**B**y March 1848 the revolutionary fever had spread to the German states, especially Prussia, where there was a significant group of liberals who wanted German unification and constitutional government. King Frederick William IV hesitated to use troops against demonstrators in Berlin and agreed to call a constitutional assembly. Over time the conservatives surrounding Frederick William convinced him that he should act vigorously to restore his rule, with the result that the Prussian Constitution was issued by the king, not the National Assembly.

*In the following selection, a modern historian reflects on why the liberals in Prussia failed, much like those in France.*

**I**n provincial and state parliaments, city councils, clubs and associations, and in the private correspondence of liberal notables, we can detect a new sense of crisis and opportunity. In this already volatile setting, the revolutionary violence which began in Italy and France during the first weeks of 1848 had an immediate catalytic effect. At the end of February, the news of the French monarchy's fall set off widespread political agitation and popular disorder east of the Rhine. For better or worse, people throughout central Europe were about to begin their first large-scale effort at effecting fundamental political change from below.

The energy and initial success of the revolution came from the fact that many different

groups in German society were brought together by their dissatisfaction with the status quo. Like almost every modern revolution, 1848 was a "revolution of conflicting expectation," carried out by men who did not share a common vision of how discontents might be dissolved.

From the beginning, there were important differences between those who saw the revolution as primarily a political phenomenon aimed at constitutional reform and those who saw it as a way to relieve economic and social problems. The relative importance of and relationship between these groups, which Bruno Bauer called the "national" and "social" elements of the revolution, varied from place to place. In a few regions there was not a great deal of social unrest, and liberals remained the only visible spokesmen for change. But sometimes popular unrest swept aside or simply ignored the liberals: this happened in the south and west where peasants attacked manor houses to express their hatred of seigniorial

James J. Sheehan, *German Liberalism in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1978), pp. 52-53, 55.

obligations and in cities where artisans destroyed machines which they felt threatened their livelihood; elsewhere men seized the opportunity created by the revolution to assault an unpopular official or protest against an unpopular policy. . . .

More important than the election law [for the National Assembly] and its application were those habits of mind and action which shaped Germans' relationship to their political system. It is hardly surprising that a political culture which had developed over decades was not suddenly transformed by an election campaign lasting a few weeks. In some areas (and these are the ones we tend to know the most about), the local leadership was able to generate considerable interest in the campaign. But elsewhere apathy and habits of deference persisted and popular involvement

in the political process remained rather low. Overall, it seems probable that less than half of the adult males in the population took advantage of their right to vote.

The election campaign in various parts of Germany suggests that a great many liberal leaders, no less than the masses of the electorate, remained closely tied to the habits of the prerevolutionary era.

After reading this selection, consider these questions:

1. What did German liberals expect from a revolution?
2. Why are revolutions always difficult?
3. Was the conservatism of the Germans similar to that of the French (selection 3)?

## SELECTION 5:

# The Argument for an Independent Italy

*The growth of nationalist spirits and liberalism could not be curbed, neither by Metternich's arguments nor by the failure of the revolutions of 1848. Liberals continued to demand greater personal freedom and national unification, and among the middle class their arguments were persuasive.*

*Italy, like Germany, represented a geographic region still politically divided, but with much agitation for change. As an example of nationalist fervor, the writings of Giuseppe Mazzini could not be equaled. His target was the Austrian army that occupied the north of Italy and controlled, through threats, the rest of the peninsula. In 1845 Mazzini wrote the following letter to an Englishman describing the situation of Italy, but it was only in 1870 that Mazzini's goal of a united nation was finally achieved.*

Italy is a vast prison, guarded by a certain number of jailers and gendarmes, supported in case of need

Giuseppe Mazzini, "Letter to Sir James Graham," in *Selected Writings*, ed. N. Gangulee (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1974), pp. 70-71.

by the bayonets of men whom we don't understand and who don't understand us. If we speak, they thrust a gag in our mouths; if we make a show of action, they platoon us. A petition, signed collectively, constitutes a crime against the state.

Nothing is left us but the endeavor to agree in

secret to wrench the bars from the doors and windows of our prison—to knock down gates and jailers, that we may breathe the fresh life-giving air of liberty, the air of God. Then, a career by pacific means of progress will be open to us; then will begin our guilt and condemnation if we cannot bring ourselves to be content with it.

I am no partisan of that Jesuitical maxim, *the end justifies the means*; but I must confess, it seems to me equally absurd, equally unjust, to exalt into an axiom the opinion that on all occasions and at all times censures the application of physical force. It appears to me more rational to say—whenever a way remains open to you in a just cause for the employment of moral force, never have a recourse to violence; but when every moral force is seared up—when tyranny stretches so far as formally to deny you the right of expressing in any manner so ever what you conceive to be the truth,—when ideas are put down by bayonets,—then, reckon with yourself: if, though convinced justice is on your side, you are still in a weak minority, fold your arms and bear witness to your faith in prison or on the scaffold—you have no right to imbrue your country in a hopeless civil war: but if you form the majority, if your feeling prove to be the feeling of millions, rouse yourselves, and beat down the oppression by force. Cowardly to bow the head before brutal violence upholding injustice, when the arms that God has given you suffice for its overthrow, is to degrade yourself to the passive condition of the animal—to betray the sacred cause of truth and of God—to enthrone tyranny for ever,

under the pretext of abhorring physical force.

You cannot in conscience apply the principles of your normal state to our peculiar condition. You cannot censure or repudiate our means of action, the only ones left us, without declaring by implication that despotism is a good thing, that the liberty of which England boasts is an evil.

I put to every true Englishman this simple question—imagine eighty thousand French soldiers stationed in Ireland or Scotland; imagine that, whenever the people in that portion of the English territory remaining free called for improvement, advancement, or change in their internal laws, the eighty thousand foreigners should intrude the points of their bayonets, and say, “In the name of brute force, stir not”; what would you do?

What would you do, we have made up our minds to do; we are trying to understand each other, so as to be able to do it. That sums up the Italian question: in that consists what today you brand with the name of *conspiracy*—what you would hail to-morrow, should we triumph, with the title of *glorious victory*.

After reading this selection, consider these questions:

1. How does Mazzini describe the Austrian occupation of Italy?
2. How does he justify the use of armed insurrection against his country’s oppressors?
3. Does success or failure determine whether the “conspiracy” or “victory” shall be attached to a revolution?

## SELECTION 6:

# The Final Chapter for Garibaldi

**T**he great hero of Italian patriots was Giuseppe Garibaldi, one of the most flamboyant revolutionaries of the nineteenth century. Garibaldi was constantly at war against the foreigners who governed Italy, and since his early insurrections ended in failure, much of his life was spent in exile. It

*was finally time for a victory in 1860. He landed first in Sicily and then took Naples away from its king, but the superior forces of Sardinia-Piedmont forced him to compromise. Instead of a republic, the kingdom of Sardinia-Piedmont merged with the conquests of Garibaldi in southern Italy.*

*But Rome and the territory around it still remained outside Italy. Until 1870 a French army guaranteed papal rule there. Then, with the outbreak of a war between France and Prussia, Garibaldi believed that the moment he had been waiting for had arrived. Despite the opposition of the Italian king and cabinet he called on volunteers to take Rome, disgusted with the hesitancy of the government in Florence, then serving as the Italian capital. It was several months later that, with all French troops withdrawn, the Piedmontese army entered Rome. (In 1929 the pope was given rule over tiny Vatican City.) The following is a modern historian's account.*

Leaving the military men and the politicians arguing behind him, Garibaldi marched. Nearly all his old officers and his friends tried to dissuade him; but, encouraged to believe that all he had to do was to "fire a few musket shots even in the air" and the Italian army would be with him, he launched his attack, pushing past the papal forces at Monterotondo. His march, though, had been made too late. Louis Napoleon, given due warning of his intentions, had sent a strong French force back to Civitavecchia. Mazzini warned Garibaldi of his danger, and advised him to retire towards Naples and await a more favourable opportunity. But Garibaldi "obstinately marching to defeat was in no temper to listen to anybody, Mazzini least of all." And on 3 November he came upon the French army, armed with the new Chassepot-rifle and supported by papal troops, at Mentana.

"Garibaldi commanded his men in person," the American consul in Rome reported, "and endeavoured many times to check the retreat of his forces. They could not, however, stand against the greater coolness and steadiness of the advance of the regular troops. . . . It is generally reported in the Italian papers that the pontifical force was defeated and only saved by the presence of the French. This is utterly untrue."

There could be no doubt, though, that Garibaldi's ultimate defeat was overwhelming. His army suffered heavy casualties, lost 1,600 men as pris-

oners, and was driven back in confusion across the frontier.

Garibaldi was himself arrested for the last time, protesting in vain as the police pulled him out of the special train he had ordered to take him back to the coast, that the King and the politicians had encouraged him to attack Rome and then abandoned him. He was taken first to Varignano and then escorted back to Caprera [his home]. . . . Garibaldi looked an old man now. He was pale and thin, his face lined with pain and disappointment, and his hair and beard were almost white. He felt bitter and betrayed, resentful towards the politicians and the Court, the French, the Church, the Italian army and Mazzini, whom he blamed unjustly for the desertion from his force before the battle of Mentana, denying now that the man had ever been his master.

"In great need of money," as he put it, he settled down to write a novel, holding the pen with difficulty in his stiff fingers and on some days unable to grasp it at all.

It was a distressingly bad book.

After reading this selection, consider these questions:

1. Why was Italy still not a single nation up to 1870?
2. Why do you think Garibaldi paid little attention to others' advice?
3. When Rome did fall to Italian forces, it was a Piedmontese army that annexed it to Italy. Why do you suppose it had greater success than Garibaldi?