



Voor vele sociale historici was nationalisme niet te verzoenen met het internationalisme van de arbeidersklasse (Archieven en Bibliotheek IEV)

BIJDRA GE

Nationalism, Ethnicity, and Social Movements

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Nationalism is undoubtedly one of the greatest forces for change in the twentieth century. Fascism and Nazism, the explosion of new states in Asia and Africa since 1945 claiming to be 'nations', and, most recently, the breakup of Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, and the Soviet Union into smaller nation-states all testify to the enormous consequences which nationalism can have. Despite this large importance in the world of politics, nationalism and ethnicity, for much of the mid-twentieth century, were rather neglected topics among historians and social scientists. Until recently, for example, the British sociologist Anthony Smith was one of the few social scientists writing in the English-speaking world to have made his reputation by concentrating on nationalism⁽¹⁾.

Since 1980, however, there has been an upsurge of writings on nationalism, a wave of scholarship which indeed shows no sign of abating as the 1990s progress⁽²⁾. One sign of nationalism's increasing importance as a scholarly topic is the publication in English of edited readers, for use by students or scholars who wish to acquaint themselves with the growing literature in the area⁽³⁾. The political importance of contemporary nationalism may be a sufficient explanation for this upsurge of interest in the topic. It is also, true, however, that changes in social scientific think-

ing also help explain the new interest in nationalism. In general, there has been a waning of interest in structural functionalist and Marxist approaches, which emphasized the control of resources as a driving force in society. Instead, there has been a new interest in the social construction of reality. Nationalism appears to be a case where people create social systems based as much on the need for identity as the desire for power or economic rationality. There appears to be, in the words of Geoff Bley and Ronald Syny, a shift in scholarship "from the moment of social history to the work of cultural representation."⁽⁴⁾

Nationalism has not traditionally been a major topic for students of socialism or labor movements. The assumption has been that nationalism has been primarily a rival of working class movements. The focus has thus usually been on why the internationalism espoused by Socialist and labor movements failed to overcome the nationalism of the rest of society⁽⁵⁾. Meanwhile, much of the explicitly Marxist literature has focused on examining the views of Marx, Engels, Stalin or other leaders toward nationalism. Even then, nationalist aspirations of ethnic minorities or suppressed nationalities have been the primary concern, not nationalism in existing nation-states which have established labor or Socialist movements⁽⁶⁾.

To the extent that there is a Marxist explanation for popular nationalism it has usually been to argue that nationalism is fundamentally a creed or tool of the lower middle class. The change of nationalism from liberal to conservative during the nineteenth century which many scholars see is, in this view, really due to a shift in its support. As the upper middle class attained power in the nineteenth century, it gradually abandoned nationalism as no longer serving its interests. The declining or threatened lower middle class, by contrast, used nationalism as a way to identify its needs - government intervention and the blunting of class conflict - with a broader, more diffuse constituency. This explanation plays a major role in interpretations of fascism and Nazism, but has been equally applied to nationalism in both Europe and the Third World ⁽⁷⁾.

It is questionable whether demonstrating the importance of the lower middle class in leading nationalist movements does much to illuminate nationalism as a phenomenon. Hroch, for example, shows that the lower middle class played an important role as nationalist leaders and activists. He does not demonstrate that the lower middle class played a greater role in leading nationalist movements than they did in leading other movements. The middle class broadly defined played an important role in almost all nineteenth century movements, including Socialism. The rank-and-file of Socialism was overwhelmingly workers, of course, but lower middle class individuals could be important leaders. August Bebel and Louis Bertrand built up substantial business enterprises while they were on their way to becoming Socialist leaders ⁽⁸⁾. Furthermore, nationalism as the program of a declining class is questionable: the lower middle class has not declined, but has expanded in the twentieth century ⁽⁹⁾. Most important, just because a group initially or most strongly puts forward a political position does not reduce that position's importance to simply that group. As even many scholars working from class

analysis recognize, many workers accepted the appeal of nationalism just as the middle class did ⁽¹⁰⁾. Nationalism has had an enormous appeal which cannot be reduced easily to the interests of those who began it or led it as a movement.

A major reason for the failure of social historians to connect nationalism and working class history is the perception that nationalism is essentially anti-liberal or reactionary. For many theorists and historians, the authoritarian and exclusionary nature of nationalism was clear by the period 1880 to 1914 and has largely remained so ever since. Nationalism, in the conventional view, is essentially reactionary even though it began as a liberal creed. In the early nineteenth century, nationalist prophets such as Mazzini called for a "brotherhood of peoples", that is, every nationality in Europe governing itself and cooperating with other nations: "Every people has its special mission, which will cooperate toward the fulfillment of the general mission of humanity. That mission constitutes its nationality." ⁽¹¹⁾ Nationalism in this period was as much cultural as political, with militants reviving the literature or historical consciousness of their own people and not challenging other national groups' political positions. According to the conventional view, this period of 'liberal nationalism' changed once Germany and Italy unified as national states, the European powers began competing with each other as nationally-defined states, and Eastern European peoples tried to imitate these powers by setting up nationalist political movements.

This new period of 'conservative nationalism' supposedly revealed nationalism's true face. According to E.J. Hobsbawm, there occurred "a sharp shift to the political right of nation and flag, for which the term 'nationalism' was actually invented in the last decade(s) of the nineteenth century." ⁽¹²⁾ This came about because nationalist militants demanded separate political communities for every group, no matter how small,

rather than allowing different nationally-conscious groups to cooperate within one state. What this meant is that ethnicity, which increasingly really meant language, became the sole theoretical basis for statehood. The result was inevitably intolerance and chauvinism against other ethnic or national groups. This negative picture of European nationalism has become the basis for views of nationalism in general, anywhere in the world. For Elie Kedourie, nationalism has been a predominantly, a baleful warlike force in Europe and the Third World alike, while Joseph Rothschild sees nationalism in almost all societies as 'ethno-politics', an intrusion of the irrational into political discourses⁽¹³⁾.

Before exploring how nationalism and working class history could be brought together more fruitfully, it is important to question this essentialist argument that nationalism is inherently conservative. Drawing on Armstrong and Breuilly, I would define nationalism as the belief that a community based on a common history, language, or ethnic heritage should have its own political authority over it which is defined by that history, language, or common ethnicity and that this authority should transcend all other identities within the community. The exact basis of the nation can be non-ethnic as in the United States or Switzerland, it can be as large as Russia or as small as Frisia, and whether or not it possesses or achieves complete political independence is open-ended. To repeat, ethnicity or language are not essential for nationalism. The essential elements about nationalism are that it is a belief that a group of people share a common heritage and a belief that this commonality should be represented politically⁽¹⁴⁾.

This broader definition of nationalism can help us take a new long at the historical role of nationalism. The arguments about the importance of conservative nationalism in Europe before 1914 are easily exaggerated. Despite their agitation, con-

servative nationalists in the late nineteenth century were able to do little to slow down the pace of international economic integration⁽¹⁵⁾. The view of nationalism as inherently chauvinistic portrays late nineteenth century Europe as seething with ethnic strife. From Ireland in the west to the restive national minorities under Austro-Hungarian rule in the east, the potential for conflict was enormous. But one must resist the temptation to read history backwards. Because these ethnic conflicts simmered before 1914, only to be followed by the War and the hyper-nationalism of fascism and Nazism, does not mean that the problems of national minorities were insoluble nor that national conflicts caused the First World War. From the point of view of 1913, the violent dissolution of existing states and the creation of new, nationalist states was not necessarily the likeliest solution. Indeed, if one puts aside for a moment what emerged during and after World War I, one is struck by how moderate most ethnic conflicts were before the War.

Ireland, despite its long history of violence in the early modern era and despite the violence which succeeded World War I, was not seething with revolt. Some version of Irish Home Rule rather than complete independence might still have been achieved⁽¹⁶⁾. Although glorified by nationalist hagiography in the decades following Irish independence, the revolt against Britain during World War I known as the "Easter Rising" was condemned by most Irish nationalists when it broke out in 1916⁽¹⁷⁾. Within Imperial Germany, there was the strong possibility that a Catholic-Liberal agreement in the Reichstag, supported by the Socialists, would offer more recognition to minority rights. In Alsace, the most that partisans of French identity wanted was recognition of Alsace-Lorraine as a self-governing *Land* or state like the other federated *Länder* of the German Reich⁽¹⁸⁾. Austria-Hungary as a multi-national state was seen as doomed already in the nineteenth century, and a long line of historical scholarship has used it as the linchpin of the argument

that nationalism meant irreconcilable conflict. Yet recently, economic and political historians have argued that the empire was more viable than usually asserted⁽¹⁹⁾. Furthermore, the conflict between nationalities in Austria-Hungary is used as a case study of chauvinist nationalism more by historians working on the origins of World War I and by scholars writing on nationalism in general than by specialists on the ethnic groups themselves. Even extreme German nationalists like the Pan-Germans in Hungary vacillated before the War over whether they should support a policy of Germanization, work with the ruling Hungarians, or try to formulate some other strategy⁽²⁰⁾. According to a standard history of the Balkans, "the goals of the Romanian opposition remained the restoration of Transylvanian autonomy and the assurance that the nationalities would enjoy a political position proportionate with their numbers."⁽²¹⁾ In retrospect, the nationalist tension created by ethnic minorities, conservatives, or reactionary movements before 1914 looks milder than often asserted⁽²²⁾.

Most important, nationalism in this period appears more conservative because scholars have too often seen conservative nationalists as the only authentic patriots. One striking gap in both the historical and social scientific literature on nationalism is the failure to look critically at the relationship between nationalist pressure groups and governments, particularly in the era before 1914⁽²³⁾. The Pan-German League and the *Action française* were tiny movements before 1914, yet they serve as the model of pre-1914 nationalism. The Catholic Center party, the French Radical movement, and, most of all, the Socialist parties were much, much larger. They also claimed that they were nationalist or patriotic, but historians of nationalism have hardly looked at what they meant by that⁽²⁴⁾. Conservative nationalism appears as nationalism, while liberal, Socialist, or Catholic leaders who advocated their own varieties of nationalism are not seen as nationalists. In a recent book on German nationalism, for

example, Michael Hughes mentions several times in passing that there were competing versions of patriotism and nationalism in the *Kaiserreich*. Yet the vast majority of his examples of 'nationalism' are drawn from the right-wing, even though genuinely conservative parties usually represented only about a third of the electorate⁽²⁵⁾. Conservative nationalism was unmistakably a strong current in the *fin de siècle*, but it was not necessarily the wave of the future. Indeed, when the First World War broke out, Western publicists proclaimed that nationalism represented a liberal force which the Allies were defending against the authoritarian imperialism of Germany and Austria-Hungary⁽²⁶⁾. By seeing nationalism only as conservative, scholars have too often ignored the crucial role played by nationalism in appeals for social justice and the extension of democratic rights such as women's suffrage. In Britain, France, Scandinavia, the Low Countries, and the United States during late nineteenth and twentieth century progressive movements often used the term 'national' to indicate solidarity between rich and poor and the obligation of citizens to care for the whole of society. The rich literature on the rise of the welfare state provides many examples of national unity being offered as a reason to support social welfare measures⁽²⁷⁾.

Indeed, the very terms 'nationalism' and 'nationalist' go back to this meaning. Hobsbawm, for example, appears to be incorrect in arguing that 'nationalist' was invented as a term in the last decades of the nineteenth century to describe the new, more reactionary kind of patriot. The followers of the utopian novelist Edward Bellamy in the United States in 1888 appear to be the first propagators in the English-speaking world of the term 'nationalism'. They used it to describe their philosophy of 'fraternal cooperation' and nationalization of railroads and utilities for the public good. In other words, one of the first wide-spread uses of the term 'nationalism' had nothing to do with ethnicity or language, but instead promoted

political unity as a means towards social reform⁽²⁸⁾. The term did not appear in French until the 1890s, and there, too, it was not exclusively a term of the Right⁽²⁹⁾.

In sum, the view that nationalism was largely aggressive and reactionary before 1914 and that this kind of nationalism shaped the era and caused World War I may be exaggerated. Nationalism remained a broad movement, with both liberal and conservative manifestations. The aggressive, reactionary types of nationalists were not influential in most countries. Nor is blaming the outbreak of the War on nationalism a strong argument. One could more accurately blame the system of rival great powers, powers whose policies were only controlled indirectly by nationalism⁽³⁰⁾.

The Great War itself, by contrast, I would argue, dramatically shifted currents within nationalism from liberal to conservative and at the same time vastly expanded the influence of conservative nationalism. When the new nations and larger nationalist movements emerged after the War, it was to be in a completely different environment, one which by itself made liberal nationalism less likely to survive and reactionary nationalism more likely to seem natural⁽³¹⁾. If 1919 marked the emergence of nationalism outside Europe in Asia and Africa, the immediate post-War years saw the real deepening of nationalism inside Europe. In the case of national minorities such as the Flemish and the Irish, the War revolutionized their situation. Irish independence became possible only because of the War. Popular nationalism in the majority populations of the great powers, too, re-defined itself and became truly widespread for the first time. Obviously, some manifestations of this were troublesome. For the first time in centuries, the ethnic Germans across Russia and eastern Europe began to be defined and defined themselves as 'Germans', in a way which connected them to a state outside the one in which they lived⁽³²⁾. Expulsions after the War of Greeks, Turks, Arme-

nians, Est European Jews and Germans marked the first sign of the drastic measures which some Europeans would undertake in the name of nationality, race, or ideology⁽³³⁾.

If nationalism then is not inherently reactionary, how can we move towards a fuller understanding of the role of nationalism and ethnicity? The literature on social movements provides an important set of insights into how people organize themselves to bring about social and political change, insights which may be useful for the study of nationalism and which have not always been taken into account by scholars on Socialism and labor history⁽³⁴⁾. Much of this literature for a long time argued that people initiate or join social movements because they wish to advance their interests or feel deprived of resources or rights which they deserved⁽³⁵⁾. Researchers beginning in the 1960s and 70s focused on why some movements succeed while others fail. Success, authors such as Zald, McCarthy, and Gamson argue, depends on the mobilization of resources and, as Morris and McClurg argue, on political opportunities. Thus, how many resources aggrieved groups can gather to launch their social movement is crucial for their success. Resources can be literacy, the aid of more educated or wealthy groups, or access to money, media, or meeting places. Political opportunities are usually crises among elites or transitions in who holds power. These political crises or transitions permit social movements to advance claims farther than they would be allowed to do so normally⁽³⁶⁾.

One major advance in social movement theory has come with the study of the so-called 'new social movements' which have arisen in North America and Western Europe since the 1960s - groups working in favor of women's issues, ecology, legal freedoms for homosexuals, and international human rights. More so than with the traditional objects of social movement theory such as the labor movement, these movements

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Het fenomeen nationalisme wordt dikwijls geassocieerd met rechts en autoritair

are concerned with questions of identity and meaning. Who is involved in these movements and what their goals are are questions which must be answered differently than with traditional objects of study. These questions can usually only be fully answered by closely looking at the participants' ideas of what they are doing. This has led scholars to examine the cultural context of movement activists' ideas: what cultural currents influenced them, what kind of ideals or claims are they appealing to, and how do they define themselves in relation to other members of their societies? Or, in a succinct phrase, how do members of a social movement 'frame' their claims and their sense of identity⁽³⁷⁾?

Social movement theorists have, for the most part, not applied cultural analysis to the study of nationalism⁽³⁸⁾. One reason for this is that they have focused largely on "collective actors who are excluded or marginalized in the political order."

⁽³⁹⁾ This has meant studying movements of 'protest': usually left-wing or radical movements more often than moderate or right-wing ones, but also movements which engage in overt, public displays such as demonstrations, strikes, rallies, and boycotts. The keys to the late nineteenth century rise of mass politics in which nationalism played such a role, however, were the vast expansion of the suffrage and the number of new political actions which evolved. Besides elections, the repertoire of actions included not just the rally and the strike, but the newspaper editorial, the pamphlet, and the letter-writing campaign and, most critical of all in some ways, the fund-raising drive. Several writers have drawn a distinction between the highly-organized movements typified by the late nineteenth century Socialists and the more fluid, informally organized new social movements of the late twentieth century. In terms of their organization and the methods they employed, however, most social movements in the late nineteenth century other than the Socialist actually more resembled the new social movements of re-

cent history. Many of the lower middle class, nationalist, and populist organizations had a well-organized core of members, but otherwise had a penumbra of loosely-affiliated individuals around them. Their actions are also not part of what is usually considered 'collective action'. Much of it took place in print or in people's homes, clubs, or offices. Yet through elections, fund-raising, and political lobbying it could have a profound effect. It was in this fluid situation that nationalist appeals played a powerful role.

What social scientists may need to consider is the degree to which the late nineteenth century formed a distinctive chapter in the development of collective action. Almost all the movements which have enriched and torn apart twentieth century society emerged within the short span of a few decades - Socialism, anarchism, racial anti-Semitism, radical nationalism, and democratic Catholicism. Historians have long seen the period as the era of 'mass politics', but have usually studied movements in isolation. They have not conveyed to most social scientists the sense in which a large variety of movements created 'mass politics'. Justifiably, most social movement theorists see the era of democratic revolutions, the period from the late eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century, as the major breakthrough in popular politics. This closely resembles the argument of Jürgen Habermas that a 'public sphere' in which individuals could debate and re-conceptualize their own society only emerged when spokespersons of the middle class divorced themselves from traditional categories⁽⁴⁰⁾. States in the western world began to redefine themselves as dependent on the people or at least minimally accountable to the public. The newspaper editorial, voting, strikes, the election rally, the petition drive, and the demonstration all emerged as means by which people could express their will. Yet, again like Habermas, most social movement scholars then jump from the early and mid-nineteenth century to the challenges in the mid-twentieth century

which bureaucratization and mass consumer culture pose for the survival of a genuine public sphere. To the extent that the late nineteenth century is dealt with, it is seen as the seedbed of bureaucratization and mass consumer culture⁽⁴¹⁾. Yet the late nineteenth century was also crucial in actually making the promise of the democratic revolutions a reality. As late as the 1860s, there were virtually no national organizations of any kind nor a large-circulation press anywhere on the Continent. The creation of the French Radical, German National Liberal, and Catholic *Zentrum* parties and the rise of mass circulation newspaper were fundamental developments, and ones whose implications were complicated and drawn-out⁽⁴²⁾.

It is in this context that it is useful to see nationalism as a 'framing device', a rhetorical symbol or kind of discourse which can help define the boundaries of a social movement. In a real sense, what Socialists and their competitors in the pre-World War I period were doing was debating what the content of national unity would be. The appeal of nationalism, no matter how artificial, as a unifying force is undeniable. Nationalism holds out the potential, at least, for moving people to sacrifice for a higher cause than self-interest or short-term gains. The elasticity of nationalist appeals is a large part of the national idea's power. Nationalism can promise to overcome the divisions created by class or by issues created in private life such as religion and family. At the same time, at least rhetorically, it can be used to re-affirm the core values which class, religion, and the family inculcate. On an everyday basis, most people always feel smaller loyalties more intensely than nationalism. War or the specter of war has always played such an important role in arousing national feeling just because normally that feeling is lacking. The secret of nationalism has been to convince people of something which is not obviously the case. As Ernest Renan put it shrewdly in his classic essay in 1882, "Forgetting, I would

even say historical error, is an essential factor in the creation of a nation."⁽⁴³⁾ How can this more open, more plastic view of nationalism inform our study of social movements such as Socialism and working class organizations?

First of all, it is important to see that whole communities only very rarely experience national feeling on the same level. Instead, nationalism or ethnic identity is almost always the work of minorities. When we say that a nation-state or an ethnic group experiences an upsurge of national feeling, this typically is because a small group of committed activists has succeeded in winning over their more neutral brothers and sisters. These nationalist activists strive, with greater or lesser success, to convince their neighbors to see themselves as, first of all, members of an unified nation. As John Breuilly puts it, "Nationalism is usually a minority movement pursued against the indifference and, frequently, hostility of the majority of the members of the 'nation' in whose name the nationalists act."⁽⁴⁴⁾

Second, what made the nationalist activists of the late nineteenth century have the potential audience that they did is the growth of the state. When central governments in the nineteenth century began to take over functions which had been the concern of guilds, towns, churches, and aristocratic lords, politics became defined as national. What conservative nationalist activists wanted was for their fellow citizens to identify actively with a certain nationalist version of the central government, one in which there would be harmony within the boundaries of the state and an impressive show of strength vis-à-vis other states. Liberal nationalists - including Socialists, Catholic Democrats, and progressives - wanted national unity to mean a commitment to care for all classes and to broaden access to governmental power.

The rise of national feeling and the creation of states are so closely connected that many scholars have defined nationalism as essentially the addition of popular support to the otherwise auto-

mous process of what is sometimes called state-making. For E.J. Hobsbawm and Charles Tilly, national movements are either "state-seeking" or "state-led". That is, either nationalists seek a new state based on their ethnic or national group or a state itself which is founded on a national group is encouraging national feeling as way to buttress its authority ⁽⁴⁵⁾. These categories capture a good deal of the nationalist agitation of the last two centuries, but much of nationalism is been neither state-seeking or state-led. Rather it has occurred within existing states and has been led by people who are frequently not part of the state. Indeed, one could argue that the archetypical conservative nationalists whose behavior struck the first scholars of nationalism have been precisely those who are neither state-seeking or state-led. The *Alldeutscher Verband*, the *Action française*, and the conservative British imperialists were bent on forcing the nation-state in which these groups lived to be more nationalist. They appealed to their fellow citizens of the dominant ethnic group, as well as their government, in order to purify society, expel foreigners, limit immigration, or support an aggressive foreign policy ⁽⁴⁶⁾. If one needs a label, 'state-changing' would describe this important, even crucial form of nationalism. In other words, nationalism is about politics, but it is often about something much broader than simply control of the state. A new kind of social or cultural politics is often the goal of nationalists. Thus, it is vitally important to realize that the rising nationalism of the periode before World War I was really two closely-related, but different trends.

On the one hand, there was a strong growth of nationalist sentiment during the course of the nineteenth century. Peoples who were indifferent to national feeling in the early 1800s became much more likely to identify themselves as members of a national state by the end of the century. This 'nationalization of the masses' as George Mosse called it, occurred through the expansion of popular education - usually controlled by national go-

vernments - as well as through the spread of national histories, literatures, monuments, and conscription into national armies ⁽⁴⁷⁾. As Benedict Anderson argues in his influential book, the nations created by nationalist movements are 'imagined communities' ⁽⁴⁸⁾.

But it is clear that this broad increase in national sentiment did not necessarily define one's political beliefs. Nationalism was a 'framing' device, a discourse which could make one's claim or asserted identity more comprehensible to other people. National identity did not dictate the content of the 'frame of reference'. People still could define themselves as opposed to other members of the same national state on the basis of political ideology, religion, or, most powerfully, class ⁽⁴⁹⁾. Thus, we see two broad forces at work. Nationalism came to define the arena in which politics took place, regardless of which political movement was at work. At the same time, a variety of ideological groups fought about what national unity would mean.

As a result of these conflicting forces, workers had a complex relationship to nationalism. This can be seen in the areas where nationalist feeling was most aroused, the cause of empire and assertion of national strength in foreign policy. The attitudes of workers towards imperialism, for example, are, as Richard Price has shown, easily misunderstood. British workers at the time of the Boer War rarely embraced imperialism as a cause: "The typical working-class reaction was not imperialistic, patriotic, or jingoistic" ⁽⁵⁰⁾. At the same time, British workers defended the conduct of British soldiers in the field against critics. Pacifist or pro-peace activism was not attractive to them. They could only be mobilized to protest government foreign policy when leaders made a clear connection between their economic concerns or security and the larger world of international politics.

The German Social Democratic movement maintained its official resistance to militarism, and many workers drawn to Socialism con-

demned the arms races, colonialism, and great power conflict⁽⁵¹⁾. At the same time, many rank-and-file workers and even many leaders accepted the existence of the military's independence as a necessary evil to protect the nation⁽⁵²⁾. Similarly, many German workers could feel some sympathy for Poles in Posen who resisted Prussian government policies on using the German language. But these same workers could still see the Poles as backward and 'traitors' to the working class cause when they set up their own Polish labor unions. German workers usually overlooked the hostility against Poles in the Ruhr which led Polish workers to organize their own unions⁽⁵³⁾.

French syndicalists saw internationalism as a unique contribution of their national situation, while working class leaders in the Austrian empire tried to maintain solidarity by allowing different national movements to arise⁽⁵⁴⁾. Individual workers could also move easily, especially when they were young, between a variety of allegiances, sometimes defining themselves as according to ethnic loyalties and other times according to more internationalist Socialism. Wenzel Holek, a German-Czech brickyard worker, in the 1880s shifted between the German Socialist Party, the Czech socialists, and Czech nationalism⁽⁵⁵⁾.

The two most troubling or complex areas for analyzing national or ethnic feeling are race and the appeal of mass fascist parties. In racially-divided societies, race has sometimes been a major form of identity for workers, but one which scholars of working class history have often avoided. As writers such as Tomas Almaguer, Noel Ignatiev, David Roediger and Alexander Saxton point out, however, workers of Northern European descent in the United States have often defined themselves as 'whites' in order to uphold their position against Asians, Afro-Americans, or Hispanics. Class identity was subsumed within race, or was defined within the boundaries of racial divisions⁽⁵⁶⁾. While this has been less studied in European history, racial or ethnic identity, especially in the

case of anti-Semitism, was often a potent factor in the culture of workers in Europe as well⁽⁵⁷⁾.

Fascist movements generally failed to draw a large proportion of workers to their cause. But it is important to realize that they did draw a significant minority of workers. And even though the group of workers who supported the Nazi party, for example, was much smaller than those who supported Socialism or Communism, they had an importance much larger than their numbers. They often did the 'dirty work' of the Nazi party by demonstrating in the streets. "Without the tens of thousands of wage-earners whom the Party had attracted by 1933", writes Timothy Mason, "it would never have been able to assemble its civil-war army in Germany's big cities."⁽⁵⁸⁾

Nonetheless, one could argue that racial or ideological divisions between workers demonstrate the crucial role which political and social leaders play in framing issues. Race has continued to be a divisive issue in the United States, but the deep divisions of the nineteenth century could be, however briefly, overcome during certain periods. During the 1930s, the industrial unionism of the CIO, for example, brought together white and Afro-American workers in a way which is astonishing given the hostility with which many white workers had defined 'worker' as white⁽⁵⁹⁾.

What this fluidity of nationalist and ethnic feeling means is that workers can be mobilized around national or ethnic feeling in a variety of ways - liberal, conservative, in support of an existing nation-state or an ethnic minority. Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau has shown that French soldiers in the trenches during the First World War stubbornly held to a belief in the justice of their country's cause while, at times, pitying their opponents and threatening their own leadership which they felt mistreated them. The *poilus*, the rank-and-file soldiers, could scorn the excesses of the ultra-patriots behind the lines, but they still saw themselves as patriotic, as nationalists in their own sense of the concept:

"It is therefore impossible to understand the fighting men of 1914-1918 without reference to national feeling. This formed the solid foundation of their mental world."⁽⁶⁰⁾

Nationalism, then, is a set of values to guide how a community of people should identify themselves and express that unity in the political realm. It shares with religion and cultural ideologies like anticlericalism or progressivism a sense of binding individuals together through shared beliefs about what kind of political community should exist over individuals and how that community should be structured. People should sacrifice some of their private freedom or well-being to achieve what claims to be a public good. Like other belief systems, it claims to coax individuals to aim at something higher than selfish ends.

Nationalism urges people to see the values undergirding this political community as more valued, more meaningful than many, if not most, other groupings to which people within a political entity belong. Unlike religion or other ideologies, however, nationalism almost never can remain private. It virtually always seeks to institutionalize these beliefs in some political form even if this form may not be a sovereign state. In this sense, nationalism is a tool to change society, to get people to change or intensify certain beliefs and to change their public or political behavior based on these beliefs. But beyond being about beliefs and politics, nationalism is amazingly broad and flexible. We impoverish our understanding of nationalism by using the Pan-Germans or *Action française* as its archetypes and forgetting what the much more numerous Catholic *Zentrum* party, French Radicals, and the SFIO and SPD meant when they said that they were nationalists or patriots. Nationalism can be enormously destructive in its consequences, but it need not always be. Nationalism has probably always had liberal and conservative components. Similarly, modern states are an independent phenomenon whose leaders have a wide variety of responses to nationalism at their disposal. They can mobilize na-

tionalist support, manipulate it for their own ends, or be overwhelmed by it. Nationalists, too, can accept working with existing states, attempt to alter them, or try to undermine them.

Many observers have been surprised at the strength which nationalism displayed in the former Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia after decades of oppressive Communist rule, as well as the vigor of both regionalism and nationalism within the European Community. Others have been befuddled by the apparently progressive role of national feeling in democratizing movements in countries as diverse as Poland, the Philippines, and South Africa.

Nationalism is and, in probably different guises than we can predict now, will continue to be a vital political force in the world. Yet until we recognize how relatively impoverished our understanding of nationalism is, we will continue to be surprised at its power and variety. Much of what passes for theory and historical interpretation of nationalism has actually been powerfully shaped by a mis-reading of the past. If we see nationalism as a political creed which appeals to diverse individuals who want to create new communities or solidarities, and recognize that its political impact can be equally diverse, we may be less surprised by our own world.

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