'family tongue', i.e. the language usually spoken in the home, which might be different.[34]

Nobody was satisfied with this equation of language and nationality: the nationalists, because it precluded individuals speaking one language at home from opting for another nationality, governments – certainly the Habsburg government – because they could recognize a hot potato without having to taste it. All the same, they underestimated its self-heating capacity. The Habsburgs put off the language question until after national tempers, so visibly overheated in the 1860s, had, as they thought, cooled down. They would start counting in 1880. What nobody quite appreciated was that asking such a question would in itself generate linguistic nationalism. Each census was to become a battlefield between nationalities, and the increasingly elaborate attempts of the authorities to satisfy the contending parties failed to do so. They only produced monuments of disinterested scholarship, like the Austrian and Belgian censuses of 1910, which satisfy historians. In truth, by asking the language question censuses for the first time *forced* everyone to choose not only a nationality, but a linguistic nationality.[35] The technical requirements of the modern administrative state once again helped to foster the emergence of nationalism, whose transformations we are about to trace.

[34] Brix, *Die Umgangsprachen*, p. 94. [35] *Ibid.* p. 114.



CHAPTER 4

# *The transformation of nationalism, 1870–1918*

> Once a certain degree of European development has been reached, the linguistic and cultural communities of peoples, having silently matured throughout the centuries, emerge from the world of passive existence as peoples (*passiver Volkheit*). They become conscious of themselves as a force with a historical destiny. They demand control over the state, as the highest available instrument of power, and strive for their political self-determination. The birthday of the political idea of the nation and the birth-year of this new consciousness, is 1789, the year of the French Revolution.[1]

Two hundred years after the French Revolution no serious historian and, it is hoped, no one who has read up to this point in the present book, will regard statements like the one quoted above as other than exercises in programmatic mythology. Yet the quotation seems a representative statement of that 'principle of nationality' which convulsed the international politics of Europe after 1830, creating a number of new states which corresponded, so far as practicable, with one half of Mazzini's call 'Every nation a state', though less so with the other half, 'only one state for the entire nation'.[2] It is representative, in particular, in five ways: in stressing linguistic and cultural community, which was a nineteenth-century innovation,[3] in stressing the nationalism that aspired to form or capture states rather than the 'nations' of already existing states, in its historicism and sense of historic mission, in claiming the

[1] K. Renner, *Staat und Nation*, p. 89. [2] *Ibid.* p. 9.
[3] Cf. Th. Schieder, 'Typologie und Erscheinungsformen des Nationalstaats' in H. A. Winkler (ed.), *Nationalismus* (Königstein im Taunus 1985), p. 128.

paternity of 1789, and not least in its terminological ambiguity and rhetoric.

Yet while the quotation at first sight reads like something that might have been written by Mazzini himself, in fact it was written seventy years after the 1830 revolutions, and by a Marxian socialist of Moravian origin in a book about the specific problems of the Habsburg empire. In short, while it might be confused with the 'principle of nationality' which transformed the political map of Europe between 1830 and the 1870s, in fact it belongs to a later, and different, phase of nationalist development in European history.

The nationalism of 1880–1914 differed in three major respects from the Mazzinian phase of nationalism. First, it abandoned the 'threshold principle' which, as we have seen, was central to nationalism in the Liberal era. Henceforth *any* body of people considering themselves a 'nation' claimed the right to self-determination which, in the last analysis, meant the right to a separate sovereign independent state for their territory. Second, and in consequence of this multiplication of potential 'unhistorical' nations, ethnicity and language became the central, increasingly the decisive or even the only criteria of potential nationhood. Yet there was a third change which affected not so much the non-state national movements, which now became increasingly numerous and ambitious, but national sentiments within the established nation-states: 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. Renner's quotation represents the first two, but (coming from the left) very distinctly not the third of these changes.

There are three reasons why it has not often been recognized how late the ethnic-linguistic criterion for defining a nation actually became dominant. First, the two most prominent non-state national movements of the first half of the nineteenth century were essentially based on communities of the educated, united across political and geographical borders by the use of an established language of high culture and its literature. For Germans and Italians, their national language was not merely an administrative



convenience or a means of unifying state-wide communication, as French had been in France since the ordinance of Villers-Cotterets in 1539, or even a revolutionary device for bringing the truths of liberty, science and progress to all, ensuring the permanence of citizen equality and preventing the revival of *ancien régime* hierarchy, as it was for the Jacobins.[4] It was more even than the vehicle of a distinguished literature and of universal intellectual expression. It was the *only* thing that made them Germans or Italians, and consequently carried a far heavier charge of national identity than, say, English did for those who wrote and read that language. However, while for the German and Italian liberal middle classes language thus provided a central argument for the creation of a unified national state – in the first half of the nineteenth century this was not yet the case anywhere else. The political claims to independence of Poland or Belgium were not language-based, nor indeed were the rebellions of various Balkan peoples against the Ottoman Empire, which produced some independent states. Nor was the Irish movement in Britain. Alternatively, where linguistic movements already had a significant political base, as in the Czech lands, national self-determination (as opposed to cultural recognition) was not yet an issue, and the establishment of a separate state was not seriously thought of.

However, since the later eighteenth century (and largely under German intellectual influence) Europe had been swept by the romantic passion for the pure, simple and uncorrupted peasantry, and for this folkloric rediscovery of 'the people', the vernacular

[4] 'All members of the sovereign (people) may occupy all (public) posts; it is desirable that all should fill them in rotation, before returning to their agricultural or mechanical occupations. This state of affairs confronts us with the following alternative. If these posts are occupied by men incapable of expressing themselves in, or writing, the national language, how can the rights of the citizens be safeguarded by documents whose texts contain terminological errors, ideas lacking precision – in a word, all the symptoms of ignorance? If, on the other hand, such ignorance were to exclude men from public posts, we would soon see the rebirth of that aristocracy which once used *patois* as a sign of protective affability when speaking to those it insolently called 'the lower orders' (*les petits gens*). Soon society would once again be infected by 'the right sort of people' (*de gens comme il faut*) ... Between two separated classes a sort of hierarchy will establish itself. Thus ignorance of the language would put at risk social welfare, or it would destroy equality.' (From Abbé Grégoire's *Rapport*, cited in Fernand Brunot, *Histoire de la langue française* (Paris 1930–48), vol. IX, 1, pp. 207–8.

languages it spoke were crucial. Yet while this populist cultural renaissance provided the foundation for many a subsequent nationalist movement, and has therefore been justifiably counted as the first phase ('phase A') of their development, Hroch himself makes it clear that in no sense was it yet a political movement of the people concerned, nor did it imply any political aspiration or programme. Indeed, more often than not the discovery of popular tradition and its transformation into the 'national tradition' of some peasant people forgotten by history, was the work of enthusiasts from the (foreign) ruling class or elite, such as the Baltic Germans or the Finnish Swedes. The Finnish Literature Society (founded 1831) was established by Swedes, its records were kept in Swedish, and all the writings of the chief ideologue of Finnish cultural nationalism, Snellman, appear to have been in Swedish.[5] While nobody could possibly deny the widespread European cultural and linguistic revival movements in the period from the 1780s to the 1840s, it is a mistake to confuse Hroch's phase A with his phase B, when a body of activists devoted to the political agitation in favour of the 'national idea' has come into existence, and still less his 'phase C', when mass support for 'the national idea' can be counted on. As the case of the British Isles shows, there is, incidentally, no necessary connection between cultural revival movements of this kind and subsequent national agitations or movements of political nationalism, and, conversely, such nationalist movements may originally have little or nothing to do with cultural revivalism. The Folklore Society (1878) and the folksong revival in England were no more nationalist than the Gypsy Lore Society.

The third reason concerns ethnic rather than linguistic identification. It lies in the absence – until quite late in the century – of influential theories or pseudo-theories identifying nations with genetic descent. We shall return to this point below.

The growing significance of 'the national question' in the forty years preceding 1914 is not measured simply by its intensification within the old multinational empires of Austro-Hungary and Turkey. It was now a significant issue in the domestic politics of

[5] E. Juttikala and K. Pirinen, *A History of Finland* (Helsinki 1975), p. 176.



virtually all European states. Thus even in the United Kingdom it was no longer confined to the Irish problem, even though Irish nationalism, under that name, also grew – the number of newspapers describing themselves as 'national' or 'nationalist' rose from 1 in 1871 through 13 in 1881 to 33 in 1891[6] – and became politically explosive in British politics. However, it is often overlooked that this was also the period when the first official recognition of Welsh national interests as such was made (the Welsh Sunday Closing Act of 1881 has been described as 'the first distinctively Welsh Act of Parliament')[7] and when Scotland acquired both a modest Home Rule movement, a Scottish Office in government and, via the so-called 'Goschen Formula', a guaranteed national share of the public expenditure of the United Kingdom. Domestic nationalism could also – as in France, Italy and Germany – take the form of the rise of those right-wing movements for which the term 'nationalism' was in fact coined in this period, or, more generally, of the political xenophobia which found its most deplorable, but not its only, expression in anti-Semitism. That so relatively tranquil a state as Sweden should in this era have been shaken by the national secession of Norway (1907) (which was not proposed by anyone until the 1890s) is at least as significant as the paralysis of Habsburg politics by rival nationalist agitations.

Moreover, it is during this period that we find nationalist movements multiplying in regions where they had been previously unknown, or among peoples hitherto only of interest to folklorists, and even for the first time, notionally, in the non-western world. How far the new anti-imperialist movements can be regarded as nationalist is far from clear, though the influence of western nationalist ideology on their spokesmen and activists is undeniable – as in the case of the Irish influence on Indian nationalism. However, even if we confine ourselves to Europe and its environs, we find plenty of movements in 1914 that had existed hardly or not

[6] I owe these data, extracted from the Newspaper Press Directory of those years, to the unpublished researches into the Irish provincial press, 1852–1892, of Mary Lou Legg of Birkbeck College.

[7] See 'Report of the Commissioners appointed to inquire into the operation of the Sunday Closing (Wales) Act, 1881' (*Parliamentary Papers, H.o.C.*, vol. XL of 1890); K. O. Morgan, *Wales, Rebirth of a Nation 1880–1980* (Oxford 1982), p. 36.

at all in 1870: among the Armenians, Georgians, Lithuanians and other Baltic peoples and the Jews (both in Zionist and non-Zionist versions), among the Macedonians and Albanians in the Balkans, the Ruthenians and the Croats in the Habsburg empire – Croat nationalism must not be confused with the earlier Croat support for Yugoslav or 'Illyrian' nationalism – among the Basques and Catalans, the Welsh, and in Belgium a distinctly radicalized Flemish movement, as well as hitherto unexpected touches of local nationalism in places like Sardinia. We may even detect the first hints of Arab nationalism in the Ottoman empire.

As already suggested most of these movements now stressed the linguistic and/or ethnic element. That this was often new can be readily demonstrated. Before the foundation of the Gaelic League (1893), which initially had no political aims, the Irish language was not an issue in the Irish national movement. It figured neither in O'Connell's Repeal agitation – though the Liberator was a Gaelic-speaking Kerryman – nor in the Fenian programme. Even serious attempts to create a uniform Irish language out of the usual complex of dialects were not made until after 1900. Finnish nationalism was about the defence of the Grand Duchy's autonomy under the Tsars, and the Finnish Liberals who emerged after 1848 took the view that they represented a single bi-lingual nation. Finnish nationalism did not become essentially linguistic until, roughly, the 1860s (when an Imperial Rescript improved the public position of the Finnish language against the Swedish), but until the 1880s the language struggle remained largely an internal class struggle between the lower class Finns (represented by the 'Fennomen' who stood for a single nation with Finnish as its language) and the upper-class Swedish minority, represented by the 'Svecomen' who argued that the country contained two nations and therefore two languages). Only after 1880, as Tsarism shifted into its own russifying nationalist mode, did the struggle for autonomy and for language and culture come to coincide.[8]

Again, Catalanism as a (conservative) cultural-linguistic movement can hardly be traced back further than the 1850s, the festival of the Jocs Florals (analogous to the Welsh Eisteddfodau) being

[8] Juttikala and Pirinen *A History of Finland*, pp. 176–86.



revived not before 1859. The language itself was not authoritatively standardized until the twentieth century,[9] and Catalan regionalism was not concerned with the linguistic question until the middle or later 1880s.[10] The development of Basque nationalism, it has been suggested, lagged some thirty years behind that of the Catalan movement, although the ideological shift of Basque autonomism from the defence or restoration of ancient feudal privileges to a linguistic-racial argument was sudden: in 1894, less than twenty years after the end of the Second Carlist War, Sabino Arana founded his Basque National Party (PNV), incidentally inventing the Basque name for the country ('Euskadi') which had hitherto not existed.[11]

At the other end of Europe the national movements of the Baltic peoples had hardly left their first (cultural) phases by the last third of the century, and in the remote Balkans, where the Macedonian question raised its bloodstained head after 1870, the idea that the various nationalities living on this territory should be distinguished by their *language*, was the last of many to strike the states of Serbia, Greece, Bulgaria and the Sublime Porte which contended for it.[12] The inhabitants of Macedonia had been distinguished by their religion, or else claims to this or that part of it had been based on history ranging from the medieval to the ancient, or else on ethnographic arguments about common customs and ritual practices. Macedonia did not become a battlefield for Slav philologists until the twentieth century, when the Greeks, who could not compete on this terrain, compensated by stressing an imaginary ethnicity.

At the same time – roughly, in the second half of the century – ethnic nationalism received enormous reinforcements, in practice from the increasingly massive geographical migrations of peoples, and in theory by the transformation of that central concept of

[9] Carles Riba, 'Cent anys de defensa il.lustració de l'idioma a Catalunya' (*L'Avenç*, 71, May 1984, pp. 54–62). This is the text of a lecture originally given in 1939.

[10] Francesc Vallverdú, 'El català al segle XIX' (*L'Avenç*, 27, May 1980), pp. 30–6.

[11] H.-J. Puhle, 'Baskischer Nationalismus im spanischen Kontext' in H. A. Winkler (ed.), *Nationalismus in der Welt von Heute* (Göttingen 1982), p. 61.

[12] Carnegie Endowment for International Peace: *Report of the International Commission to Enquire into the Cause and Conduct of the Balkan Wars* (Washington 1914), p. 27.

nineteenth-century social science, 'race'. On the one hand the old-established division of mankind into a few 'races' distinguished by skin colour was now elaborated into a set of 'racial' distinctions separating peoples of approximately the same pale skin, such as 'Aryans' and 'Semites', or, among the 'Aryans', Nordics, Alpines and Mediterraneans. On the other hand Darwinian evolutionism, supplemented later by what came to be known as genetics, provided racism with what looked like a powerful set of 'scientific' reasons for keeping out or even, as it turned out, expelling and murdering strangers. All this was comparatively late. Anti-Semitism did not acquire a 'racial' (as distinct from a religio-cultural) character until about 1880, the major prophets of German and French racism (Vacher de Lapouge, Houston Stewart Chamberlain) belong to the 1890s, and 'Nordics' do not enter the racist or any discourse until about 1900.[13]

The links between racism and nationalism are obvious. 'Race' and language were easily confused as in the case of 'Aryans' and 'Semites', to the indignation of scrupulous scholars like Max Muller who pointed out that 'race', a genetic concept, could not be inferred from language, which was not inherited. Moreover, there is an evident analogy between the insistence of racists on the importance of racial purity and the horrors of miscegenation, and the insistence of so many – one is tempted to say of most – forms of linguistic nationalism on the need to purify the national language from foreign elements. In the nineteenth century the English were quite exceptional in boasting of their mongrel origins (Britons, Anglo-Saxons, Scandinavians, Normans, Scots, Irish, etc.) and glorying in the philological mixture of their language. However, what brought 'race' and 'nation' even closer was the practice of using both as virtual synonyms, generalizing equally wildly about 'racial'/'national' character, as was then the fashion. Thus before the Anglo-French Entente Cordiale of 1904, a French writer observed, agreement between the two countries had been dismissed

[13] J. Romein, *The Watershed of Two Eras: Europe in 1900* (Middletown 1978), p. 108. A 'Nordic' race under that name first appears in the classificatory literature of anthropology in 1898 (*OED Supplement*: 'nordic'). The term seems to belong to J. Deniker, *Races et peuples de la terre* (Paris 1900), but was taken up by racists who found it convenient to describe the blonde, long-headed race they associated with superiority.



as impossible because of the 'hereditary enmity' between the two races.[14] Linguistic and ethnic nationalism thus reinforced each other.

It is hardly surprising that nationalism gained ground so rapidly from the 1870s to 1914. It was a function of both social and political changes, not to mention an international situation that provided plenty of pegs on which to hang manifestos of hostility to foreigners. Socially three developments gave considerably increased scope for the development of novel forms of inventing 'imagined' or even actual communities as nationalities: the resistance of traditional groups threatened by the onrush of modernity, the novel and quite non-traditional classes and strata now rapidly growing in the urbanizing societies of developed countries, and the unprecedented migrations which distributed a multiple diaspora of peoples across the globe, each strangers to both natives and other migrant groups, none, as yet, with the habits and conventions of coexistence. The sheer weight and pace of change in this period would be enough to explain why under such circumstances occasions for friction between groups multiplied, even if we were to overlook the tremors of the 'Great Depression' which so often, in these years, shook the lives of the poor and the economically modest or insecure. All that was required for the entry of nationalism into politics was that groups of men and women who saw themselves, in whatever manner, as Ruritanians, or were so seen by others, should become ready to listen to the argument that their discontents were in some way caused by the inferior treatment (often undeniable) of Ruritanians by, or compared with, other nationalities, or by a non-Ruritanian state or ruling class. At all events by 1914 observers were apt to be surprised at European populations which still seemed completely unreceptive to any appeal on the grounds of nationality, though this did not necessarily imply adherence to a nationalist programme. US citizens of immigrant origins did not demand any linguistic or other concessions to their nationality by the Federal Government, but nevertheless every Democratic city politician knew perfectly well that appeals to the Irish as Irish, to Poles as Poles, paid off.

[14] Jean Finot, *Race Prejudice* (London 1906), pp. v–vi.

As we have seen, the major political changes which turned a potential receptivity to national appeals into actual reception, were the democratization of politics in a growing number of states, and the creation of the modern administrative, citizen-mobilizing and citizen-influencing state. And yet, the rise of mass politics helps us to reformulate the question of popular support for nationalism rather than to answer it. What we need to discover is what precisely national slogans meant in politics, and whether they meant the same to different social constituencies, how they changed, and under what circumstances they combined or were incompatible with other slogans that might mobilize the citizenry, how they prevailed over them or failed to do so.

The identification of nation with language helps us to answer such questions, since linguistic nationalism essentially requires control of a state or at least the winning of official recognition for the language. This is plainly not equally important for all strata or groups within a state or nationality, or to every state or nationality. At all events problems of power, status, politics and ideology and not of communication or even culture, lie at the heart of the nationalism of language. If communication or culture had been the crucial issue, the Jewish nationalist (Zionist) movement would not have opted for a modern Hebrew which nobody as yet spoke, and in a pronunciation unlike that used in European synagogues. It rejected Yiddish, spoken by 95% of the Ashkenazic Jews from the European East and their emigrants to the west – i.e. by a substantial majority of all the world's Jews. By 1935, it has been said, given the large, varied and distinguished literature developed for its ten million speakers, Yiddish was 'one of the leading "literate" languages of the time'.[15] Nor would the Irish national movement have launched itself after 1900 into the doomed campaign to reconvert the Irish to a language most of them no longer understood, and which those who set about teaching it to their countrymen had only themselves begun to learn very incompletely.[16]

Conversely, as the example of Yiddish shows, and that golden

[15] Lewis Glinert, 'Viewpoint: the recovery of Hebrew' (*Times Literary Supplement*, 17, June 1983, p. 634).

[16] Cf. Declan Kiberd, *Synge and the Irish Language* (London 1979), e.g. p. 223.



age of dialect literatures, the nineteenth century, confirms, the existence of a widely spoken or even written idiom did not necessarily generate language-based nationalism. Such languages or literatures could see themselves and be seen quite consciously as supplementing rather than competing with some hegemonic language of general culture and communication.

The politico-ideological element is evident in the process of language-construction which can range from the mere 'correction' and standardization of existing literary and culture-languages, through the formation of such languages out of the usual complex of overlapping dialects, to the resuscitation of dead or almost extinct languages which amounts to virtual invention of new ones. For, contrary to nationalist myth, a people's language is not the basis of national consciousness but, in the phrase of Einar Haugen, a 'cultural artifact'.[17] The development of modern Indian vernaculars illustrates this clearly.

The deliberate Sanskritization of the literary Bengali which emerged in the nineteenth century as a culture-language, not only separated the literate upper classes from the popular masses, but also Hinduized Bengali high culture, thus demoting the Bengali Muslim masses; in return a certain de-Sanskritization has been noted in the language of Bangladesh (East Bengal) since partition. Even more instructive is the attempt by Gandhi to develop and maintain a single Hindi language based on the unity of the national movement, i.e. to prevent the Hindu and Muslim variants of the common lingua franca of North India from drifting too far apart, while simultaneously providing a national alternative to English. However, the ecumenically minded champions of Hindi were opposed by a strongly pro-Hindu and anti-Muslim (hence anti-Urdu) group which in the 1930s gained control of the organization formed by the National Congress to propagate the language, leading to the resignation from this organization (the Hindi Sahitya Samuelan or HSS) of Gandhi, Nehru and other Congress leaders. In

[17] Einar Haugen, *Language Conflicts and Language Planning: The Case of Modern Norwegian* (The Hague 1966); by the same author, 'The Scandinavian languages as cultural artifacts' in Joshua A. Fishman, Charles A. Ferguson, Jyotindra Das Gupta (eds.), *Language Problems of Developing Nations* (New York–London–Sydney–Toronto 1968), pp. 267–84.

1942 Gandhi unsuccessfully returned to the project of creating a 'broad Hindi'. The HSS meanwhile created a standardized Hindi in its own image eventually building up examination centres for secondary and college diplomas and degrees in the language, which was therefore standardized for teaching purposes, given a 'Board of Scientific Terminology' for the extension of its vocabulary in 1950, and crowned by a Hindi Encyclopaedia, initiated in 1956.[18]

Indeed, languages become more conscious exercises in social engineering in proportion as their symbolic significance prevails over their actual use, as witness the various movements to 'indigenize' or make more truly 'national' their vocabulary, of which the struggle of French governments against 'franglais' is the best-known recent example. The passions behind them are easy to understand, but they have nothing to do with speaking, writing, understanding, or even the spirit of literature. Danish-influenced Norwegian was and remains the main medium of Norwegian literature. The reaction against it in the nineteenth century was nationalist. As its tone shows, the German Casino in Prague which, in the 1890s, declared that learning Czech – by then the language of 93% of the city's population – was *treason*,[19] was not making a statement about communications. The Welsh language enthusiasts who are even now devising Cymric place-names for places which never had any until today, know quite well that Welsh-speakers need no more cymricize the name of Birmingham than they do that of Bamako or any other foreign town. Nevertheless, whatever the motivation of planned language construction and manipulation, and whatever the degree of transformation envisaged, state power is essential to it.

How, except by state power, could Romanian nationalism insist (in 1863) on its Latin origins (as distinct from the surrounding Slavs and Magyars) by writing and printing the language in Roman

[18] J. Bhattacharyya, 'Language, class and community in Bengal' (*South Asia Bulletin*, VII, 1 and 2, Fall 1987, pp. 56–63); S. N. Mukherjee, Bhadralok in Bengali Language and Literature: an essay on the language of class and status' (*Bengal Past And Present*, 95, part II, July–December 1976, pp. 225–37); J. Das Gupta and John Gumperz, 'Language, communication and control in North India', in Fishman, Ferguson, Das Gupta (eds.), *Language Problems*, pp. 151–66.

[19] B. Suttner, *Die Badenischen Sprachenverordnungen von 1897*, 2 vols. (Graz–Cologne 1960, 1965), vol. II, pp. 86–8.



letters instead of the hitherto usual Cyrillic? (Count Sedlnitzky, the Habsburg police chief under Metternich, had practised a similar form of cultural-linguistic politics by subsidizing the printing of Orthodox religious works in Roman as against Cyrillic, in order to discourage pan-Slav tendencies among the Habsburg empire's Slavs.)[20] How, except through support by the public authorities and recognition in education and administration, were domestic or rural idioms to be transformed into languages capable of competing with the prevailing languages of national or world culture, let alone virtually non-existent languages to be given reality? What would the future of Hebrew have been, had not the British Mandate in 1919 accepted it as one of the three official languages of Palestine, at a time when the number of people speaking Hebrew as an everyday language was less than 20,000? What, other than a system of secondary or even tertiary education in Finnish, could remedy the observed fact that, as linguistic lines congealed in Finland towards the end of the nineteenth century, 'the proportion of intellectuals speaking Swedish was many times greater than that of the common people speaking it', i.e. that educated Finns continued to find Swedish more useful than their mother-tongue?[21]

Yet, however symbolic of national aspirations, languages have a considerable number of practical and socially differentiated uses, and attitudes towards the language(s) chosen as the official one(s) for administrative, educational or other purposes, differ in consequence. Let us remind ourselves, once again, that the controversial element is the *written* language, or the language spoken for *public purposes*. The language(s) spoken within the private sphere of communication raise no serious problems even when it or they coexist with public languages, since each occupies its own space, as every child knows when it switches from the idiom appropriate for talking to parents to the one suited to teachers or friends.

Moreover, while the extraordinary social and geographical mobility of the period forced, or encouraged, unprecedented numbers of men – and even, in spite of their confinement to the

[20] J. Fishman, 'The sociology of language: an interdisciplinary approach' in T. E. Sebeok (ed.), *Current Trends in Linguistics*, vol. 12*** (The Hague–Paris 1974), p. 1755.

[21] Juttikala and Pirinen, *A History of Finland*, p. 176.

private sphere, of women – to learn new languages, this process in itself did not necessarily raise ideological issues, unless one language was deliberately *rejected* and another *substituted*, generally – indeed almost universally – as a means of entering a wider culture or a higher social class identified with a different language. This was certainly often the case, as with assimilated middle-class Ashkenazic Jews in central and western Europe who took pride in not speaking or even understanding Yiddish, or, presumably at some time in the family history of the numerous impassioned German nationalists or national socialists in central Europe whose surnames indicate an obviously Slavonic origin. Nevertheless, more often than not old and new languages lived in symbiosis, each in its own sphere. For the educated middle class of Venice speaking Italian no more implied giving up speaking Venetian at home or in the market than bilingualism suggested a betrayal of his native Welsh language to Lloyd George.

The spoken language thus presented no major political problems either for the upper strata of society or for the mass of the labouring people. Top people spoke one of the languages of wider culture, and if their own national vernacular or family language was not one of these, their men – and by the early 1900s sometimes even their women – learned one or more of them. They would naturally speak the standard national language in the 'educated' mode, with or without regional accent or a touch of regional vocabulary, but usually in a manner which identified them as members of their social stratum.[22] They might or might not speak the patois, dialect or vernacular of the lower orders with whom they came into contact, depending on their own family origins, place of residence, upbringing, the conventions of their class and, of course, the extent to which communication with these lower orders required a knowledge of their language(s) or of some creole or pidgin. The official status of any of these languages was unimportant since, whatever the language of official use and culture, it was at their disposal.

For the illiterate among the common people the world of words

[22] No Viennese cabdriver, hearing the dialect of Ochs von Lerchenau, even without seeing the speaker, would be in the slightest doubt about his social status.



was entirely oral, and consequently the language of official or any other writing was of no significance except, increasingly, as a reminder of their lack of knowledge and power. The demand of Albanian nationalists that their language should be written neither in Arabic nor in Greek script, but in the Latin alphabet, which implied inferiority to neither Greeks nor Turks, was obviously irrelevant to people who could read no script. As people from different homelands increasingly came into contact with each other, and the self-sufficiency of the village was eroded, the problem of finding a common language for communication became serious – less so for women, confined to a restricted milieu, least so for those raising crops or livestock – and the easiest way of solving it was by learning enough of the (or a) national language to get by. All the more so as the two great institutions of mass education, primary school and army, brought some knowledge of the official language into every home.[23] That languages of purely local or socially restricted use should lose ground to languages of wider use, is not surprising. Nor is there any evidence that such linguistic change and adaptation met with any resistance from below. As between two languages, the one which was more widely used, had overwhelming and patent advantages, and no apparent disadvantages, inasmuch as there was nothing at all to prevent the use of the mother tongue among monoglots. However, the monoglot Breton was helpless outside his or her native area and its traditional occupations. Elsewhere he or she was little better than a dumb animal: a mute bundle of muscles. From the point of view of poor men looking for work and to better themselves in a modern world there was nothing wrong with peasants being turned into Frenchmen or Poles and Italians in Chicago learning English and wishing to become Americans.

If the advantages of knowing a non-local language were obvious, those of literacy in a language of wider circulation, and especially a world language, were even more undeniable. Such pressure as exists in Latin America for schooling in vernacular Indian lan-

[23] As early as 1794 the Abbé Grégoire noted, with satisfaction, that 'in general French is spoken in our batallions', presumably because men of different regional origins were often mixed.

guages lacking a written language has not come from Indians but from *indigenista* intellectuals. To be monolingual is to be shackled, unless your local language happens to be a *de facto* world language. The advantages of knowing French were such that in Belgium, between 1846 and 1910, far more native Flemish speakers became bilingual than French-speakers bothered to learn Flemish.[24] The decline of localized or small-circulation languages existing by the side of major languages, does not need to be explained by the hypothesis of national linguistic oppression. On the contrary, admirable and systematic efforts to maintain them, often at great expense, have not done more than slow down the retreat of Sorbian, Rhaetoroman (Romansch/Ladinsch) or Scots Gaelic. In spite of the embittered memories of vernacular intellectuals forbidden, by unimaginative pedagogues, to use their patois or language in the schoolrooms where lessons were conducted in English or French, there is no evidence that the pupils' parents *en masse* would have preferred an exclusive education in their own language. Of course the obligation to be educated exclusively in another language of *limited* circulation – e.g. In Romanian rather than Bulgarian – might have met with more resistance.

Hence there was no special enthusiasm for linguistic nationalism from either the aristocracy or big bourgeoisie on one hand, the workers and peasants on the other. The 'grande bourgeoisie' as such was not necessarily committed to either of the two variants of nationalism which came to the fore towards the end of the nineteenth century, imperialist chauvinism or small-people nationalism, and still less to small-nation linguistic zeal. The Flemish bourgeoisie in Ghent and Antwerp was, and perhaps still in part remains, deliberately francophone and anti-*Flamingant*. The Polish industrialists, most of whom saw themselves as Germans or Jews rather than Poles,[25] clearly saw their economic interests best served by supplying the all-Russian or other super-national market, to an extent which misled Rosa Luxemburg into underestimating the

[24] A. Zolberg, 'The making of Flemings and Walloons: Belgium 1830–1914' (*Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, v/2, 1974, pp. 210–15.

[25] Waclaw Długoborski, 'Das polnische Bürgertum vor 1918 in vergleichender Perspektive' in J. Kocka (ed.), *Bürgertum im 19. Jahrhundert: Deutschland im europäischen Vergleich* (Munich 1988), vol. 1, pp. 266–89.



force of Polish nationalism. The Scottish business classes, however proud of their Scottishness, would have regarded any suggestion that the Union of 1707 should be abrogated as sentimental idiocy.

The working classes, as we have seen, were rarely apt to get excited about language as such, though it might well serve as a symbol for other kinds of friction between groups. That most Ghent and Antwerp workers could not even communicate without translation with their comrades in Liège and Charleroi did not prevent both from forming a single labour movement, in which language caused so little trouble that a standard work on socialism in Belgium in 1903 did not so much as refer to the Flemish question: a situation inconceivable today.[26] In fact, in South Wales both bourgeois and working-class liberal interests joined to resist the attempts by the young Lloyd George's nationalist North Wales Liberalism, to identify Welshness with linguistic Welshness and the Liberal Party – the national part of the Principality – with its defence. They were successful in the 1890s.

The classes which stood or fell by the official use of the written vernacular were the socially modest but educated middle strata, which included those who acquired lower middle-class status precisely by virtue of occupying non-manual jobs that required schooling. The socialists of the period who rarely used the word 'nationalism' without the prefix 'petty-bourgeois', knew what they were talking about. The battle-lines of linguistic nationalism were manned by provincial journalists, schoolteachers and aspiring subaltern officials. The battles of Habsburg politics, when national strife made the Austrian half of the empire virtually ungovernable, were fought about the language of instruction in secondary schools or the nationality of station-masters' jobs. Just so the ultra-nationalist pan-German activists in William II's empire recruited heavily among the educated – but the *Oberlehrer* rather than the Professors – and the half-educated of an expanding and socially mobile society.

I do not wish to reduce linguistic nationalism to a question of

[26] Jules Destrée and Emile Vandervelde, *Le Socialisme en Belgique* (Paris 1903, originally 1898). To be precise the 48-page bibliography contains a *single* title on the Flemish problem – an election pamphlet.

jobs, as vulgar-materialist liberals used to reduce wars to a question of the profits of armaments firms. Nevertheless it cannot be fully understood, and the opposition to it even less, unless we see the vernacular language as, among other things, a vested interest of the lesser examination-passing classes. Moreover, each step giving the vernacular greater official standing, especially as a teaching language, multiplied the number of men and women who could have a share in this vested interest. The creation of essentially linguistic provinces in post-independence India, and the resistance to the imposition of one vernacular (Hindi) as the national language, both reflect this situation: within Tamilnadu literacy in Tamil opens state-wide public careers, while the maintenance of English does not put the Tamil-educated person at a national disadvantage with respect to those educated in any other vernacular. Hence the crucial moment in the creation of language as a potential asset is not its admission as a medium of primary education (though this automatically creates a large body of primary teachers and language-indoctrinators) but its admission as a medium of secondary education, such as was achieved in Flanders and Finland in the 1880s. For it is this which, as the Finnish nationalists were clearly aware, linked social mobility to the vernacular, and in turn to linguistic nationalism. 'It was to a large extent in Antwerp and Ghent that a new secular-minded generation, educated in Flemish in public secondary schools... produced many of the individuals and groups who formed and sustained a new *Flamingant* ideology.'[27]

Yet in creating vernacular middle strata, linguistic progress underlined the inferiority, the status insecurity and resentment which were so characteristic of the lower middle strata and made the new nationalism so attractive to them. Thus the new Flemish-educated class found itself poised between the Flemish masses, whose most dynamic elements were drawn to French because of the practical advantages of knowing that language, and the upper levels of the Belgian administration, culture and affairs, which remained unshakeably francophone.[28] The very fact that, for the same post, a Fleming had to be bilingual whereas a native French speaker needed only the barest nod to the other language, if that,

[27] Zolberg, 'The making of Flemings and Walloons', p. 227. [28] *ibid.* pp. 209ff.



underlined the inferiority of the lesser language, as it was later to do in Quebec. (For jobs in which bilingualism was a genuine asset, and bilingual speakers of the lesser vernacular were therefore at an actual advantage, were normally subaltern.)

One might have expected the Flemings, like the Québécois, with demography in their favour, to look to the future with confidence. After all, in this respect they were more favoured than the speakers of ancient and declining rural idioms like Irish, Breton, Basque, Frisian, Romansch or even Welsh which, left to themselves, plainly did not look like effective competitors in a purely Darwinian interlingual struggle for existence. Flemish and Canadian French were in no sense threatened as languages, but their speakers did not require a socio-linguistic elite, and conversely, the speakers of the dominant language did not need to recognize the educated users of the vernacular as an elite either. What was under threat was not their language but the status and social position of the *Flamingant* or Québécois middle strata. Only political protection could raise these.

Essentially the situation was no different where the linguistic issue was the defence of a declining idiom – often one which, like Basque and Welsh, was virtually on the point of extinction in the new industrial-urban centres of the country. Certainly defence of the old language signified defence of an entire society's old ways and traditions against the subversions of modernity: hence the support which such movements as Bretons, Flemings, Basques and others received from the Roman Catholic clergy. To this extent they were not simply middle-class movements. Yet Basque linguistic nationalism was not a movement of the traditional countryside, where people still spoke the language which the hispanophone founder of the Basque National Party (PNV), like so many later linguistic militants, had to learn as an adult. The Basque peasantry showed little interest in the new nationalism. Its roots were in the (urban and coastal) 'conservative, Catholic and petty-bourgeois milieu'[29] reacting against the threat of industrialization and the godless immigrant proletarian socialism it brought with it, while rejecting the big Basque bourgeoisie whose interests bound it to the

[29] Puhle, 'Baskischer Nationalismus', pp. 62–5.

all-Spanish monarchy. Unlike Catalan autonomism, the PNV had only fleeting support from the bourgeoisie. And the claim to linguistic and racial uniqueness on which Basque nationalism based itself, is one which rings familiar to every connoisseur of the petty-bourgeois radical right: Basques were superior to other peoples because of their racial *purity*, demonstrated by the uniqueness of the language which indicated refusal to mix with other peoples, above all with Arabs and Jews. Much the same can be said of the movements of an exclusively Croatian nationalism which first emerged on a small scale in the 1860s ('supported by the petite bourgeoisie, primarily by the small-scale retailers and tradesmen') and gained some foothold – again among the same kind of economically hard-pressed lower middle classes – during the Great Depression of the late nineteenth century. It 'mirrored the opposition of the petite bourgeoisie to Yugoslavism as an ideology of the wealthier bourgeoisie'. In this instance, since neither language nor race were available to mark the chosen people off from the rest, a historic mission of the Croat nation to defend Christianity against invasion from the east served to provide strata lacking in self-confidence with the required sense of superiority.[30]

The same social strata formed the core of that sub-variety of nationalism, the movements of political anti-Semitism which appear in the last two decades of the century, notably in Germany (Stöcker), Austria (Schönerer, Lueger), and France (Drumont, the Dreyfus affair). Uncertainty about their status and definition, the insecurity of large strata situated between the unquestionable sons and daughters of manual toil and the unquestioned members of the upper and upper middle classes, overcompensation by claims to uniqueness and superiority threatened by someone or other – these provided links between the modest middle strata and a militant nationalism, which may almost be definable as a response to such threats – from workers, from foreign states and individuals, from immigrants, from the capitalists and financiers so readily identifiable with the Jews, who were also seen as the revolutionary

[30] Mirjana Gross, 'Croatian national-integrational ideologies from the end of Illyrism to the creation of Yugoslavia' (*Austrian History Yearbook*, 15–16, 1979–80, pp. 3–44, esp. 18, 20–1, 34 (discussion by A. Suppan).



agitators. For these middle strata saw themselves as embattled and endangered. The key word in the political vocabulary of the French Right in the 1880s was not 'family', 'order', 'tradition', 'religion', 'morality' or any similar term. It was, according to the analysts, 'menace'.[31]

Among the lesser middle strata nationalism thus mutated from a concept associated with liberalism and the left, into a chauvinist, imperialist and xenophobic movement of the right, or more precisely, the radical right, a move already observable in the ambiguous usage of such terms as 'patrie' and 'patriotism' round 1870 in France.[32] The term 'nationalism' itself was coined to reflect the emergence of this tendency, notably in France and a little later in Italy, where Romance language lent itself to this formation.[33] At the end of the century it seemed quite novel. However, even where there was continuity, as in the 'Turner', the mass gymnastic organisations of German nationalism, the shift to the right of the 1890s can be measured by tracking the spread of anti-Semitism from Austria into the German branches, and the substitution of the imperial (black–white–red) tricolour for the Liberal–national (black–red–gold) tricolour of 1848, and the new enthusiasm for imperial expansionism.[34] How high up in the middle-class scale we find the centre of gravity of such movements – e.g. of 'that rebellion of groups of the lower and middle urban bourgeoisie against what they saw as a hostile and rising proletariat',[35] which drove Italy into World War I, may be a matter of debate. But work on the social composition of Italian and German fascism leaves no doubt that

[31] Antoine Prost, *Vocabulaire des proclamations électorales de 1881, 1885 et 1889* (Paris 1974), p. 37.

[32] Jean Dubois, *Le Vocabulaire politique et social en France de 1869 à 1872* (Paris n.d. – 1962), p. 65, item 3665. The term 'nationalisme' is not yet recorded, and remains absent from A. Prost *Vocabulaire des proclamations électorales*, which discusses the rightward shift of the 'national' vocabulary in this period, esp. pp. 52–3, 64–5.

[33] For France, Zeev Sternhell, *Maurice Barrès et le nationalisme français* (Paris 1972); for Italy the chapters by S. Valtutti and F. Perfetti in R. Lill and F. Valsecchi (eds.), *Il nazionalismo in Italia e in Germania fino alla Prima Guerra Mondiale* (Bologna 1983).

[34] Hans-Georg John, *Politik und Turnen: die deutsche Turnerschaft als nationale Bewegung im deutschen Kaiserreich von 1871 bis 1914* (Ahrensberg bei Hamburg 1976), pp. 41ff.

[35] Jens Petersen in W. Schieder (ed.), *Faschismus als soziale Bewegung* (Göttingen 1983), p. 122, citing a source from 1923.

these movements drew their strength essentially from the middle strata.[36]

Moreover, while in established nation-states and powers the patriotic zeal of these intermediate strata was more than welcome to governments engaged in imperial expansion and national rivalry against other such states, we have seen that such sentiments were autochthonous, and therefore not entirely manipulable from above. Few governments, even before 1914, were as chauvinist as the nationalist ultras who urged them on. And, as yet, there were no governments which had been created by the ultras.

Nevertheless, if governments could not entirely control the new nationalism, and it could not yet control governments, identification with the state was essential to the nationalist petty-bourgeoisie and lesser middle classes. If they had no state as yet, national independence would given them the position they felt they deserved. To preach the return of Ireland to its ancient language would no longer be a propagandist slogan for men and women studying elementary Gaelic in Dublin evening classes and teaching what they had just learned to other militants. As the history of the Irish Free State was to demonstrate, it would become the qualification for all but the most subaltern civil service jobs and passing examinations in Irish would therefore be the criterion of belonging to the professional and intellectual classes. If they already lived in a nation-state, nationalism gave them the social identity which proletarians got from their class movement. One might suggest that the self-definition of the lower middle classes – both that section which was helpless as artisans and small shop-keepers and social strata which were largely as novel as the workers, given the unprecedented expansion of higher education white-collar and professional occupations – was not so much as a class, but as the body of the most zealous and loyal, as well as the most 'respectable' sons and daughters of the fatherland.

Whatever the nature of the nationalism which came to the fore in the fifty years before 1914, all versions of it appeared to have

[36] Michael Kater, *The Nazi Party: a social profile of members and leaders 1919–1945* (Cambridge MA 1983), esp. p. 236; Jens Petersen, 'Elettorato e base sociale del fascismo negli anni venti' (*Studi Storici*, XVI/3, 1975), pp. 627–69.



something in common: a rejection of the new proletarian socialist movements, not only because they were proletarian but also because they were, consciously and militantly *internationalist*, or at the very least non-nationalist.[37] Nothing seems more logical, therefore, than to see the appeals of nationalism and socialism as mutually exclusive, and the advance of one as equivalent to the retreat of the other. And the canonical view among historians is indeed that in this period mass nationalism triumphed against rival ideologies, notably class-based socialism, as demonstrated by the outbreak of war in 1914 which revealed the hollowness of socialist internationalism, and by the overwhelming triumph of the 'principle of nationality' in the post-1918 peace settlements.

Yet, contrary to common assumptions, the various principles on which the political appeal to the masses were based – notably the class appeal of the socialists, the confessional appeal of religious denominations and the appeal of nationality were not mutually exclusive. There was not even a sharp line distinguishing one from the other, even in the one case when both sides tended to insist on an, as it were, ex-officio incompatibility: religion and godless socialism. Men and women did not choose collective identification as they chose shoes, knowing that one could only put on one pair at a time. They had, and still have, several attachments and loyalties simultaneously, including nationality, and are simultaneously concerned with various aspects of life, any of which may at any one time be foremost in their minds, as occasion suggests. For long periods of time these different attachments would not make incompatible demands on a person, so that a man might have no problem about feeling himself to be the son of an Irishman, the husband of a German woman, a member of the mining community, a worker, a supporter of Barnsley Football Club, a Liberal, a Primitive Methodist, a patriotic Englishman, possibly a Republican, and a supporter of the British empire.

It was only when one of these loyalties conflicted directly with

[37] This is considered in chapter 4 of E. J. Hobsbawm, *Worlds of Labour* (London 1984) and by the same author, 'Working-class internationalism' in F. van Holthoon and Marcel van der Linden (eds.), *Internationalism in the Labour Movement* (Leiden–New York–Copenhagen–Cologne 1988), pp. 3–16.

another or others that a problem of choosing between them arose. The minority of committed political militants would naturally be far more sensitive to such incompatibilities, so that it is safe to say that August 1914 was a far less traumatic experience for most British, French and German workers than it was for the leaders of their socialist parties, simply because – for reasons partly discussed above (see chapter 3, pp. 88–9) – supporting their own government in war seemed to ordinary workers quite compatible with demonstrating class consciousness and hostility to employers. The South Wales miners who shocked their revolutionary syndicalist, and internationalist, leaders by rushing to the colours equally readily brought the coalfield out in a general strike less than a year later, deaf to the accusation that they were unpatriotic. However, even militants might happily combine what theorists regarded as incompatible: for instance, French nationalism and total loyalty to the USSR, as many a militant of the French Communist Party has shown.

Indeed, the very fact that the new mass political movements, nationalist, socialist, confessional or whatever, were often in competition for the same masses, suggests that their potential constituency was prepared to entertain all their various appeals. The alliance of nationalism and religion is obvious enough, especially in Ireland and Poland. Which is primary? The answer is far from clear. Much more surprising and unnoticed is the vast overlap between the appeals of national and social discontent, which Lenin, with his usual piercing eye for political realities, was to make into one of the foundations of communist policy in the colonial world. The well-known international Marxist debates on 'the national question' are not merely about the appeal of nationalist slogans to workers who ought to listen only to the call of internationalism and class. They were also, and perhaps more immediately, about how to treat working-class parties which simultaneously supported nationalist and socialist demands.[38] What is more – though this did not then figure much in the debates

[38] For a brief summary, G. Haupt in Haupt, Lowy and Weill, *Les Marxistes et la question nationale* (Paris 1974), pp. 39–43. The Polish question was the chief, but not the only one of the kind.



– it is now evident that there were initially socialist parties which were or became *the main vehicles of their people's national movement*, just as there were essentially socially minded peasant parties which (as in Croatia) naturally developed a nationalist dimension. In short, the unity of socialist and national liberation of which Connolly dreamed in Ireland – and which he failed to lead – was actually achieved elsewhere.

One might go further. The combination of social and national demands, on the whole, proved very much more effective as a mobilizer of independence than the pure appeal of nationalism, whose appeal was limited to the discontented lower middle classes, for whom alone it *replaced* – or appeared to replace – both a social and a political programme.

Poland is an instructive case in point. The restoration of the country after a century and a half of partition was achieved not under the banner of any of the political movements devoted exclusively to this object, but under that of the Polish Socialist Party, whose leader, Colonel Pilsudski, became his country's liberator. In Finland it was the Socialist Party which, *de facto*, became the national party of the Finns, scoring 47% of the vote in the last (free) elections before the Russian Revolution of 1917. In Georgia it was another socialist party that acquired this function, the Mensheviks; in Armenia, the Dashnaks, who were affiliated to the Socialist International.[39] Among the Jews of eastern Europe socialist ideology dominated national organization both in the non-Zionist (Bundist) and the Zionist versions. Nor was this phenomenon confined to the Tsarist empire, where indeed almost any organization and ideology envisaging change had to see itself in the first place as representing social and political revolution. The national feelings of the Welsh and Scots in the United Kingdom did not find expression through special nationalist parties, but through the major all-UK opposition parties – first Liberals, then Labour. In the Netherlands (but not in Germany) the modest but real national

[39] On the failure of Finnish nationalism to compete with the Socialist Party, see David Kirby, 'Rank-and-file attitudes in the Finnish Social Democratic Party (1905–1918)', (*Past & Present*, 111, May 1986), esp. p. 164. On the Georgians and Armenians see Ronald G. Suny (ed.), *Transcaucasia: Nationalism and Social Change* (Ann Arbor 1983), esp. part II, the essays of R. G. Suny, Anahide Ter Minassian and Gerard J. Libaradian.

feelings of a small people were translated mainly into left-wing radicalism. The Frisians are consequently as over-represented in the history of the Netherlands left as the Scots and Welsh are in that of the British left. The most eminent leader of the early Dutch Socialist Party, Troelstra (1860–1930) had begun his career as a Frisian-language poet and leader of 'Young Friesland', a Frisian revival group.[40] In recent decades the phenomenon has also been observable, though it has been to some extent concealed by the tendency of old petty-bourgeois nationalist movements and parties, originally associated with pre-1914 right-wing ideologies (as in Wales, Euskadi, Flanders and elsewhere) to put on the fashionable costume of social revolution and Marxism. Nevertheless, the DMK, which has become the main vehicle of Tamil nationality demands in India, began life as a regional socialist party in Madras, and similar shifts towards Sinhalese chauvinism may unfortunately be detected in the left in Sri Lanka.[41]

The point of these illustrations is not to assess the relationship of the nationalist and socialist elements within such movements which, justifiably enough, preoccupied and troubled the Socialist International. It is to demonstrate that mass movements could simultaneously express aspirations which we regard as mutually exclusive, and, indeed, that movements making a primarily social-revolutionary appeal could form the matrix of what were eventually to become the mass national movements of their peoples.

Indeed, the very case which has been so often cited as the decisive proof of the supremacy of national over class appeal, actually illustrates the complexity of the relations between the two. Thanks to some excellent research, we are today quite well informed about a crucial case for judging such a conflict of ideas, namely the multinational Habsburg empire.[42] In what follows I summarize an

[40] A. Fejtsma, 'Histoire et situation actuelle de la langue frisonne' (*Pluriel*, 29, 1982, pp. 21–34).

[41] For a brief account of the shift from ultra-leftism to Sinhala chauvinism in the JVP movement (Janatha Vimukti Peramuna) which led the rural left 'youth' uprising of 1971, see Kumari Jayawardene, *Ethnic and Class Conflicts in Sri Lanka* (Dehiwala 1985), pp. 84–90.

[42] See Z. A. Zeman, *The Break-up of the Habsburg Empire, 1914–1918* (London 1961); and the collection of studies *Die Auflösung des Habsburgerreiches. Zusammenbruch und Neuorientierung im Donauraum* (Schriftenreihe des österreichischen Ost- und Südosteuropainstituts, vol. III, Vienna 1970).



interesting exploration of opinion by Peter Hanák, based on the analysis of a large body of letters between soldiers and their families censored or confiscated during World War I in Vienna and Budapest.[43] In the first years there was not much nationalism or anti-monarchism among the correspondents, except for those belonging to an *irredenta*, such as the *Serbs* (notably those from Bosnia and Voivodina) who overwhelmingly sympathize as Serbs with the Serbian kingdom and as Slavs and Orthodox with Holy Russia; among the *Italians*, and – after the entry of Romania into the war – among the Romanians. The social base of Serbian hostility to Austria was clearly popular, but the bulk of the nationalist letters from Italians and Romanians came from the middle class or intelligentsia. The only other major national dissidence was to be found among the Czechs (to judge by the letters of war-prisoners, which admittedly included a large body of patriotic deserters). However, more than half the active enemies of the Habsburgs, and volunteers for the Czech forces in Russia, came from the middle class and intelligentsia. (The letters from Bohemia to prisoners were much more cautious and hence less instructive.)

The years of war, but especially the first Russian Revolution, raised the political content of the intercepted correspondence dramatically. Indeed, the censors' reports on public opinion unanimously observed that the Russian Revolution was the first political event since the outbreak of war whose shock-waves penetrated to the lowest levels of the people. Among the activists of some of the oppressed nationalities such as the Poles and Ukrainians, the event raised hopes of reform – perhaps even of independence. However, the dominant mood was a desire for peace and *social* transformation.

The political opinions which now begin to appear even in the letters of labourers, peasant and working-class women, is best analysed in terms of three interlocking binary opposites: rich–poor (or lord–peasant, boss–worker), war–peace, and order–disorder.

[43] Péter Hanák, 'Die Volksmeinung während des letzten Kriegsjahres in Österreich-Ungarn' in, *Die Auflösung*, pp. 58–66.

The links, at least in the letters, are obvious: the rich live well and don't serve in the army, the poor people are at the mercy of the rich and powerful, the authorities of state and army and so on. The novelty lies not only in the greater frequency of complaints, in the sense that in different ways the poor in uniform and on the home front were being equally mistreated, but in the sense that a revolutionary expectation of fundamental changes was now available as an alternative to the passive acceptance of destiny.

The fundamental theme in the correspondence of the poor was war as a disruption and destruction of the *order of life and labour*. Consequently the desire to return to a decent orderly life increasingly implied hostility to war, to military service, to the war economy, etc. and the wish for peace. But once again we now find complaint transformed into resistance. 'If only the good Lord would bring us peace again' turns into 'we've had enough', or 'they say the socialists are going to make peace'.

National feeling comes into these arguments only indirectly, chiefly because, to cite Hanák 'until 1918 national sentiment had not yet crystallized out, among broad masses of the people, into a stable component of consciousness, or because people were not yet conscious of the discrepancy between loyalty to the state and to the nation, or had not yet made a clear choice between the two'.[44] Nationality appears most often as an aspect of the conflict between rich and poor, especially where the two belong to different nationalities. But even where we find the strongest national tone – as among the Czech, Serbian and Italian letters, we also find an overwhelming wish for social transformation.

I will not follow the censors' detailed monitoring of changing moods in the year 1917. But Hanák's analysis of a sample of about 1,500 letters written between mid-November 1917 and mid-March 1918 – i.e. after the October revolution – is instructive. Two-thirds were written by workers and peasants, a third by intellectuals, roughly in the national proportions corresponding to the national composition of the monarchy. 18% of these letters represent primarily the social theme, 10% the desire for peace, 16% the national question and attitude to the monarchy, and 56% a

[44] *Ibid.* p. 62.



combination of these, namely: bread and peace – if I may simplify the issue – 29%, bread and the nation 9%, peace and the nation 18%. The social theme thus appears in 56% of the letters, the peace theme in 57% and the national theme in 43%. The social and in effect revolutionary note is particularly struck in letters from Czechs, Hungarians, Slovaks, Germans and Croats. Peace, which a third of the letters hope to receive from Russia, a third from the revolution, and another 20% from a combination of both, naturally appealed to correspondents of all nationalities, with a qualification I will note. Of the letters on the national theme 60% represent hostility to the empire and the more or less open wish for independence, 40% are loyal – or rather, if we omit the Germans and Hungarians, 28% are loyal. 35% of the 'national' letters expect independence as a result of an Allied victory, but 12% still believe what they want to be achievable within the frame of the monarchy.

As one might expect, the wish for peace and social revolution went together, especially among Germans, Czechs and Hungarians. But peace and national aspirations were not so readily compatible, just because national independence seemed to depend so much on an Allied victory. Indeed, during the Brest-Litowsk negotiations, many nationalist letters disapproved of an immediate conclusion of peace for this very reason. This is notable among the Czech, Polish, Italian and Serbian elite letters. The period when the October revolution made its first impact was one in which the social element in the public mood was at its strongest, but at the same time a moment when – as both Zeman and Hanák agree – the national and social elements in the desire for revolution began to diverge and conflict. The great January strikes of 1918 marked a sort of turning-point. In a sense, as Zeman observes, in deciding to suppress revolutionary agitation and continue a lost war, the authorities of the Habsburg monarchy made sure that there would be a Wilsonian rather than a Soviet Europe. But even when, in the course of 1918, the national theme finally became dominant in popular consciousness, it was not separate from or opposed to the social theme. For most poor people the two went together, as the monarchy crashed.

What can we conclude from this brief survey? *First*, that we still know very little about what national consciousness meant to the mass of the nationalities concerned. To find out we need not only a great deal of the sort of research of which Hanák's plunges into the censored letters are one example, but, before this can be useful, a cold and demystifying eye cast at the terminology and ideology surrounding 'the national question' in this period, particularly its nationalist variant. *Second*, that the acquisition of national consciousness cannot be separated from the acquisition of other forms of social and political consciousness during this period: they all go together. *Third*, that the progress of national consciousness (outside the classes and cases identified with integralist or extreme right-wing nationalism) is neither linear nor necessarily at the expense of other elements of social consciousness. Seen from the perspective of August 1914, one might have concluded that nation and nation-state had triumphed over all rival social and political loyalties. Could one have said so in the perspective of 1917? Nationalism was victorious in the formerly independent nationalities of belligerent Europe, to the extent that the movements which reflected the real concerns of the poor people of Europe, failed in 1918. When this happened, the middle and lower middle strata of the oppressed nationalities were in a position to become the ruling elites of the new independent Wilsonian petty states. National independence without social revolution was, under the umbrella of Allied victory, a feasible fall-back position for those who had dreamed of a combination of both. In the major defeated or semi-defeated belligerent states there was no such fall-back position. There collapse led to social revolution. The soviets, even short-lived soviet republics, were to be found not among the Czechs and Croats, but in Germany, German Austria, Hungary – and their shadow rested on Italy. Nationalism there re-emerged not as a milder substitute for social revolution, but as the mobilization of ex-officers, lower middle and middle-class civilians for counter-revolution. It emerged as the matrix of fascism.

# CHAPTER 5

## *The apogee of nationalism, 1918–1950*

If there was a moment when the nineteenth-century 'principle of nationality' triumphed it was at the end of World War I, even though this was neither predictable, nor the intention of the future victors. In fact, it was the result of two unintended developments: the collapse of the great multinational empires of central and eastern Europe and the Russian Revolution which made it desirable for the Allies to play the Wilsonian card against the Bolshevik card. For, as we have seen, what looked like mobilizing the masses in 1917–18 was social revolution rather than national self-determination. One might speculate on what effect a victorious all-European revolution might have had on the nationalities of the continent, but such speculation is idle. Except for Soviet Russia, Europe was not reconstructed on the basis of the Bolshevik policy on the 'national question'. Essentially the continent became, for the first and last time in its history, a jigsaw puzzle of states defined, with rare exceptions, both as nation-states and as some kind of bourgeois parliamentary democracies. This state of affairs was extremely short-lived.

Inter-war Europe also happened to see the triumph of that other aspect of the 'bourgeois' nation which was discussed in an earlier chapter: the nation as a 'national economy'. Though most economists, businessmen and western governments dreamed of a return to the world economy of 1913, this proved to be impossible. Indeed, even had it been, there could have been no return to the economy of freely competitive private enterprise and free trade which was the ideal, and even part of the reality of the world economy in the heyday of British global supremacy.