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## XVII. The Transformation of Liberalism and Nationalism, 1871-1914

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## XVII. The Transformation of Liberalism and Nationalism, 1871-1914

### Abstract

In the first half of the nineteenth century liberalism and nationalism were key concepts of the major political and economic movements within Western Civilization, As has been explained in the preceding chapter, by the end of the century new radical movements — socialism, syndicalism, and anarchism — had supplanted them on the extreme left of the political spectrum. By 1914 this new Left was a significant factor in many countries. However, it was still a minority movement and, for most people living in the Western World between 1871 and 1914, nationalism and liberalism were more important in determining the texture of politics. Even many conservatives now compromised with them. That these were not the same liberalism and nationalism which had been the watchwords of reform half a century before should not be surprising because the world in which they operated and often conquered had also changed. [*excerpt*]

### Keywords

Contemporary Civilization, Liberalism, Nationalism, Socialism, Anarchism, New Left, Revolution, Political Boundaries

### Disciplines

Comparative Politics | Political History | Political Science

### Comments

This is a part of [Section XVII: The Transformation of Liberalism and Nationalism, 1871-1914](#). The [Contemporary Civilization](#) page lists all additional sections of *Ideas and Institutions of Western Man*, as well as the [Table of Contents](#) for both volumes.

### More About Contemporary Civilization:

From 1947 through 1969, all first-year Gettysburg College students took a two-semester course called Contemporary Civilization. The course was developed at President Henry W.A. Hanson's request with the goal of "introducing the student to the backgrounds of contemporary social problems through the major concepts, ideals, hopes and motivations of western culture since the Middle Ages."

Gettysburg College professors from the history, philosophy, and religion departments developed a textbook for the course. The first edition, published in 1955, was called *An Introduction to Contemporary Civilization and Its Problems*. A second edition, retitled *Ideas and Institutions of Western Man*, was published in 1958 and 1960. It is this second edition that we include here. The copy we digitized is from the Gary T. Hawbaker '66 Collection and the marginalia are his.

### Authors

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XVII. THE TRANSFORMATION OF LIBERALISM AND NATIONALISM, 1871-1914

In the first half of the nineteenth century liberalism and nationalism were key concepts of the major political and economic movements within Western Civilization. As has been explained in the preceding chapter, by the end of the century new radical movements -- socialism, syndicalism, and anarchism -- had supplanted them on the extreme left of the political spectrum. By 1914 this new Left was a significant factor in many countries. However, it was still a minority movement and, for most people living in the Western World between 1871 and 1914, nationalism and liberalism were more important in determining the texture of politics. Even many conservatives now compromised with them. That these were not the same liberalism and nationalism which had been the watchwords of reform half a century before should not be surprising because the world in which they operated and often conquered had also changed.

In the years under discussion in this chapter the Western World underwent no wave of revolutions comparable to that of 1848, and no general shifting of political boundaries. Revolutions and transfers of sovereignty were limited to the fringes of the area. In the Western hemisphere, an imperialistic United States and local nationalism destroyed Spanish colonial rule in Cuba and Puerto Rico in 1898, and helped separate Panama from Colombia in 1903. Whereas Canada and the United States instituted significant reforms within the framework of their respective constitutions, the Latin American republics shifted uneasily between revolution and constitutionalism, dictatorship and democracy. The most dramatic changes in Europe occurred on the periphery of that continent. In the Iberian peninsula, assassinations and revolutions punctuated the strife between conservative royalists and reformers, with a short-lived republic appearing in Spain in 1873-1874, and a permanent one in Portugal in 1910. In the Scandinavian peninsula, Norwegian nationalism caused a bloodless separation from Sweden in 1905, after which both countries followed parallel courses under limited monarchies. In the Balkan peninsula, nationalist uprisings among the subjects of the Turkish sultan persisted throughout this period. By 1914 it was parceled out between independent states, each with a facade of constitutional monarchy inadequately concealing the oligarchic character of the unstable regime. Along Europe's eastern border, the Tsarist government of Russia resolutely suppressed liberal and radical demands for reform until 1905, when a revolution exacted the

establishment of a parliament. Reaction soon recovered its grip, and the powers of the elected legislature were whittled away.

Elsewhere in Europe changes were less spectacular. Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland, and Italy continued to evolve within constitutional frameworks. The same was true of Britain, despite the vigor of Irish nationalists and their demand for "Home Rule." Similar demands among the subject nationalities of Austria-Hungary were met with stern repression in the Hungarian half of the Dual Monarchy, but in Austria the constitution was gradually liberalized. The German Empire remained as it was established by Bismarck in 1871 -- parliamentary and constitutional in form, but with real power residing in crown, army, and bureaucracy. In France, after the defeated Second Empire collapsed in the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871), moderates crushed an attempt by Parisian radicals to establish a republic. When the victors failed to agree on the form of a monarchy, France slipped into a republic (1875), her third, an unloved regime which nonetheless gave her greater political stability than she had enjoyed since 1789.

# EUROPE

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1914

