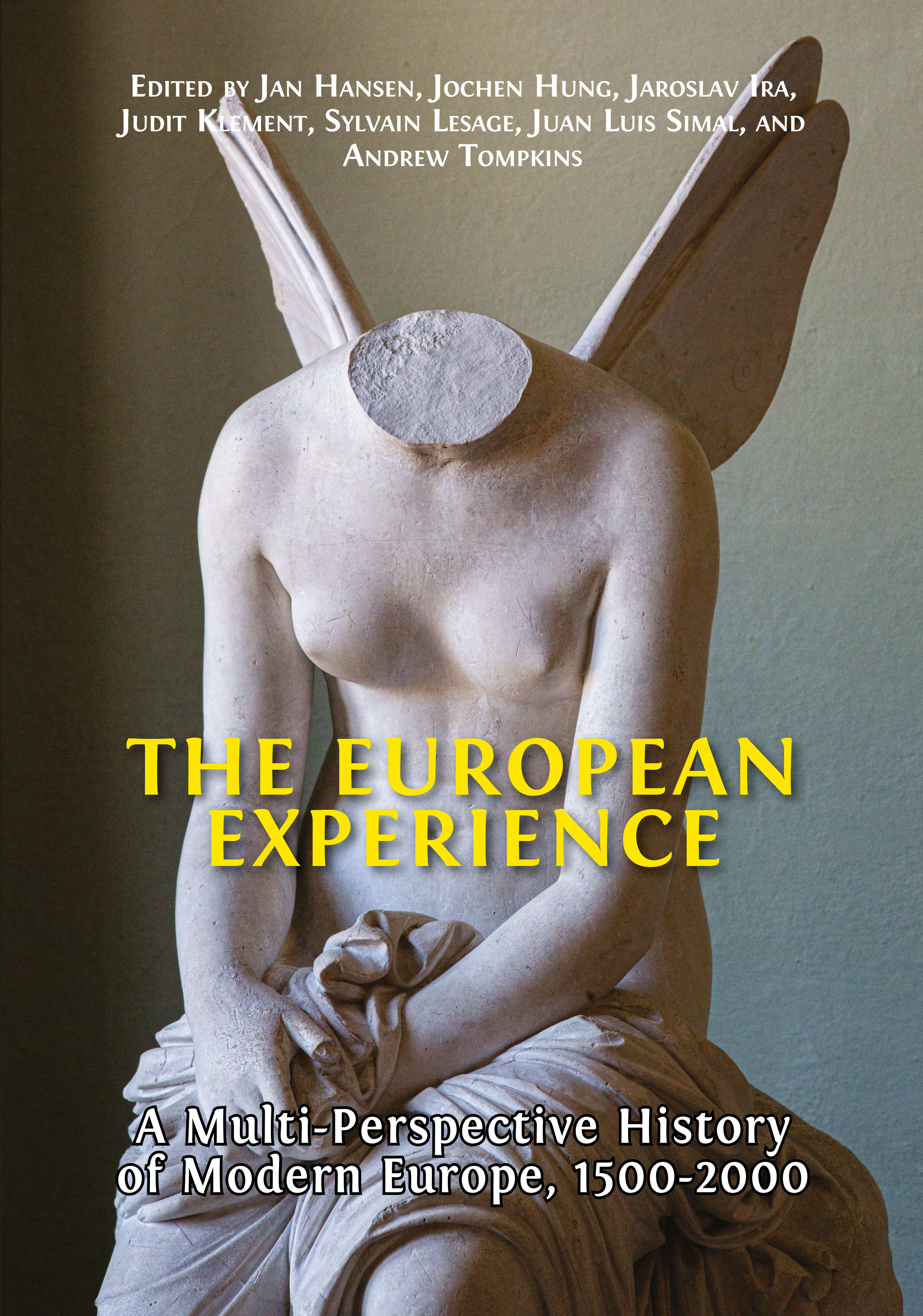

Edited by Jan Hansen, Jochen Hung, Jaroslav Ira,
Judit Klement, Sylvain Lesage, Juan Luis Simal, and
Andrew Tompkins

THE EUROPEAN EXPERIENCE

A Multi-Perspective History of Modern Europe, 1500-2000

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1.3.2 Migration and Diaspora in Modern History (ca. 1800–1900)

Ido de Haan, Juan Luis Simal, and Erika Szívós

Introduction

In the nineteenth century, the manifestation of European influence and power and the worldwide presence of Europeans were expressed in dramatic histories of migration. From the end of the eighteenth century, Europeans were on the move on an increasing scale, and this movement had a profound impact on the European continent and the world at large.

This increase in the mobility of Europeans took place, first of all, within Europe itself. Older accounts of the nineteenth century focused on urbanisation, understood as a unidirectional movement from the countryside to the cities. In fact, internal European migration was a rather complicated, back-and-forth movement of people between town and countryside on the tide of a seasonal and conjunctural labour market and the pulse of international conquest and conflict. An increasing number of people, enabled by improved highways and waterways, and—especially—the fast expansion of the railway, were able not just to leave their home, but also to travel back to places which they had never completely left—places with which they had remained in touch anyway, due to the expansion of the telegraph and the spectacular growth of the press.

The same can be said for the upturn in migration beyond Europe: even at this greater distance, facilitated by the construction of large and fast steel steam ships, migration was only partly a definitive emigration. Just as Europeans moved around within Europe, their global trajectory of migration was often more circular than linear. Even if European migrants settled permanently elsewhere, they remained in close contact with their 'homeland' (a term that itself captures the nostalgic way that the territory of departure came to be viewed). Additionally, increasingly invasive imperial rule by the British, French, German, Dutch, and Belgians subjected people beyond Europe

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to colonial rule, and implicated them in multi-ethnic empires, thus creating conditions for the migration of colonial subjects to the imperial centres in the century thereafter.

Ironically, these tides of global migration emerged alongside the growing influence of nationalism as an ideology, and of national states as the primary form of political organisation. As migrants transitioned from one country and culture to another, they increasingly identified themselves as members of diasporic communities, with strong ties to their nations of origin. At the same time, regional identities—for example of Galicians who moved to Madrid or Buenos Aires or of the many Frenchmen from the provinces moving to Paris—continued to play an important role in the broader context of developing nationalisms. As the national state created new constitutional frameworks that reinforced the position of national citizens, they also produced a new push-factor of forced migration in the form of mass expulsion of, or discrimination against, people who did not fit the specific characteristics of the nation as defined by the state.

Political Exiles, Deportees and Refugees

The increased mobility of Europeans was driven by various factors, of which economic needs and opportunities, infrastructural facilities, and legal constraints were among the most important. But just as important were political factors which forced people to migrate, such as political activism and violent conflict. Political exile was ubiquitous in nineteenth-century Europe. The phenomenon was, at the time, generally referred to as 'emigration' in most European languages—an etymological legacy of the French Revolution, when thousands of reactionary noblemen and clergymen known as émigrés (accompanied by their families and servants) left France to find refuge in neighbouring countries.

Typically, exile followed revolution and regime change. From 1789 onwards, supporters of the previous regime and unsuccessful challengers of the powers that be habitually went into exile. This continued until the Paris Commune and the socialist and anarchist upheavals at the end of the century. For instance, in 1821 many Italian liberals arrived in Spain and Portugal, where constitutional governments had been installed the previous year. However, the fall of both Iberian regimes in 1823 forced thousands of Spanish, Portuguese, and Italians to find shelter in other parts of Europe, especially England and France. Particularly significant was the Polish Great Emigration, which began after 1830 and grew further after the 1863 uprising against Russian domination. Also, the pan-European 1848 revolutions—and their suppression—sent thousands of Italians, Germans, Hungarians, Czechs and Romanians into exile. Many of them, known as the Forty-Eighters, left Europe for the Americas.

Among these exiles were many prominent political and intellectual figures, like the Italian Giuseppe Mazzini (1805–1872), the Pole Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1855), the German Heinrich Heine (1797–1856), the Frenchman Victor Hugo (1802–1885), the Russian anarchists Mikhail Bakunin (1814–1876) and Pyotr Kropotkin (1842–1921), or their socialist compatriot Aleksandr Herzen (1812–1870). Karl Marx (1818–1883), one of the foremost intellectuals of the century and a father of communism, lived and produced most of his works in exile in Belgium, France, and England. Some political leaders who lived part of their lives in exile, like the Italian Giuseppe Garibaldi (1807–1882) or the Hungarian Louis Kossuth (1802–1894), became truly European celebrities. The circulation of exiles promoted the spread of political ideas and the configuration of an international political culture based on the principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity.

However, it was not just liberals, republicans, or socialists who experienced exile. Counterrevolutionaries and royals also did; in fact, they were the first to be called émigrés, in response to the French Revolution, and while Napoleon's exile to Elba and Saint Helena was forced, the last French Bourbon king, Charles X (1757–1836), left the country of his own accord after the 1830 Revolution. Isabel II (1830–1904), Queen of Spain, settled in Paris for the rest of her life after she was dethroned by the 1868 Revolution. Carlos (1788–1855), her reactionary uncle and rival in the Carlist War of 1833–1840, died as an exile in Trieste, which was then part of the Habsburg Empire. Dom Miguel (1802–1866), the losing party in the Portuguese Civil War, was banned in 1834 together with all of his descendants and died in exile, as did the French Emperor Louis-Napoléon (1808–1873) after he was ousted in 1871. The German Emperor Wilhelm II (1859–1941) was perhaps the last example of the nineteenth-century monarchs who went into exile: after fleeing the country on 10 November 1918, he died in the Netherlands in 1941.

Moreover, not all people who had left their homeland as a result of political circumstances belonged to a hereditary or intellectual elite. The Napoleonic Wars (1803–1815) were fought by multinational armies who, after the decisive Battle of Waterloo on 18 June 1815, ended up far from their native lands. Thousands of anonymous men and women spent years in exile in precarious situations. Some resided in spaces purposely designed to receive them, including what today would be called refugee camps. The acceptance of large numbers of political refugees was sometimes inspired by tolerance of political pluralism, yet more often than not, their presence was a source of anxiety for indigenous political elites concerned with the import of violent political radicalism. Notably, the dispersion of the demobilised soldiers of

Napoleon's *Grande Armée* fuelled fears of an international revolution among the elites of the post-revolutionary era. Similar fears were triggered by the exiled revolutionaries of 1848 and 1871, and to an even greater extent by the Russian, Italian, French, and Spanish anarchists who—after a series of bomb attacks in the 1880s—targeted European heads of state during the 'decade of regicides' in the 1890s. Each of these groups of political exiles were suspected to belong to international revolutionary networks—and for good reason, as many of these exiles aimed for this sort of international network. For instance, Giuseppe Mazzini, founder of the nationalist movement 'Young Italy', inspired the establishment in 1834 of the international association 'Young Europe'. Another example is the 'Central European Democratic Committee', formed in London in 1850 to bring about revolutionary political change on a continental scale. Also in London, the International Workingmen's Association was established in 1864 as the first of several consecutive 'Internationals' which sought to unite all workers of the world. Their ultimate failure to do so is characteristic of most of these international networks of exiled radicals. Yet, ironically, their attempts did mobilise their opponents to create similar international networks with counterrevolutionary aims. Notably, the various national police forces developed an international network in their attempt to monitor and control the movement of people through systematic forms of registration and documentation like passports and visas.

Policing the mobility of Europeans was also a manifestation of the increased power of the state. This increased power of the state was another important factor which induced a growing number of people to leave their homelands. Western European religious and political dissidents were, or at least were made to feel, forced to leave their homelands: for instance, repression by the Dutch state following the Protestant Church Secession of 1834 compelled some 7,500 Dutch orthodox Protestants to leave for Iowa and Michigan. Both after the revolution of 1848 and the Paris Commune of 1871, and also as a regular punishment, several thousand French political opponents were deported to the colonies of New Caledonia and French Guyana, the Jewish officer Alfred Dreyfus (1859–1935) among them. Much larger numbers of refugees were fleeing war, ethnic cleansing, and genocide. For instance, between 1821 and 1828 Greek nationalists forced some 200,000 Turks to flee from Greece. After the Crimean War of 1853–1856, the Russian Emperor Alexander II (1818–1881) forced a similar number of Tatars to move, mainly to Anatolia, yet these numbers were dwarfed by the hundreds of thousands of Muslims expelled after the Russian 'pacification' of the Caucasus (1859–1864). In the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War (1870–1871), 80,000 Germans were expelled from France, while 130,000 French citizens felt forced to leave Alsace-Lorraine. From the end of the century through to the First World War, the fragmentation of the Ottoman Empire and the continuous conflicts and wars that ensued in the Balkans and in Eastern Turkey led to the movement of an endless number of people—Armenians and Kurds, Bulgarians and Greeks—between contested territories. And between 1880 and 1914, long before the Holocaust, around 2.5 million Jews from Russia and Eastern Europe tried to escape persecution and murder, with many travelling across the Atlantic to the USA, while a small number went southwards, ending up in Palestine.

Internal European Mass Migration

While exile, deportation, and refuge involved specific groups targeted for political reasons, much larger groups were mobilised for social and economic reasons. Various groups engaged in seasonal mobility or some form of temporary migration: aristocratic families moved regularly between their landed estates and urban residences; artisans and journeymen looked for work in other regions—and even in other countries—for extended periods of time, often settling down in remote cities; girls and older, unmarried women moved away from their villages and towns to seek employment as domestic servants; adolescents and young adults, primarily the sons of the nobility, the intelligentsia, and children of urban patricians, strove for personal growth and intellectual qualifications by attending secondary schools and universities in other regions, or by touring around Europe to visit all the sites of Western civilisation. But the lower strata of society—especially the peasantry, which at that time constituted the decisive majority of societies—remained largely tied to their birthplaces or narrow regions. The only exceptional situation in which young adult males from rural areas experienced the outside world *en masse* was war: tens of thousands of men, for example, participated in the Napoleonic Wars as soldiers between 1800 and 1814, in search of money, adventure, or heroism.

Here also, political and legal conditions were important. Despite the growing impact of states on the movement of people, the nineteenth century could become the age of migration due to the rising political influence of the liberal notion of 'laissez-faire, laissez-passer', which resulted in a general relaxation of legal constraints on mobility. This did not happen everywhere at the same time: in the United Kingdom, the partial repeal in 1795 of the 1662 Act of Settlement and Removal marked the end of parish serfdom. However, the central and eastern parts of Europe were characterised at that time by relatively immobile societies. That was especially true of the rural population, given the fact that serfdom was not abolished in all of Prussia until 1807 or in the Habsburg Monarchy until 1848, and was not abandoned in the Russian Empire until 1861. In certain areas of the Russian Empire, like the Baltic governorates or the Kingdom of Poland (the eastern half of Poland then under Russian rule) serfdom had ceased to exist earlier, and by mid-century, there were legal opportunities in all of the above-mentioned countries for serfs to buy the lands they cultivated. However, in practice very few people could take advantage of those opportunities to become independent farmers: most peasants remained subordinate, tied to the land owned by their landlords.

Migration did not and could not become a mass phenomenon as long as the necessary infrastructure remained severely underdeveloped or was missing altogether. In the German states (i.e. states that would after 1871 comprise Imperial Germany) and in the lands of the Habsburg Monarchy (e.g. Lower and Upper Austria, Bohemia, or Moravia), the road network was relatively well-developed and well-maintained, but in East-Central and Eastern Europe most roads and highways were not paved before 1850. The first railway lines appeared in the region in the late 1830s, but it took decades even in the more advanced areas for the railway network to develop into a dense web, and railway connections remained extremely scant in South-Eastern Europe until the last decades of the century.

While legal and infrastructural conditions enabled migration, the major motives for mass migration within Europe were economic push and pull factors: poverty, want, work, and pay. This implied that industrialisation, urbanisation, and migration were interconnected processes which mutually stimulated each other, yet never in a straightforward way: the availability of work was influenced by the shift from an agricultural to an industrial economy, forcing many people to move from the countryside to the city. But the development of industry was never strictly related to urbanisation, and industrialisation was unevenly spread across Europe. Emergent industrial centres in England and Northern Europe attracted many immigrants, but large-scale industries arrived only in the second half of the century in Central, Eastern, and most of Southern Europe. Perhaps not by coincidence, these latter areas were also sources of long-distance emigration to the Americas.

International and Global Migration

Throughout the entire nineteenth century, and long into the twentieth century, many more emigrants left Europe than immigrants from elsewhere who entered the continent. In this period, some 55 to 60 million people left Europe. In relative terms, Argentina became the country with the largest immigrant community: around 1914, fifty-eight percent of its eight million inhabitants were first- or second-generation immigrants, often from Spain and Italy. Other popular destinations were Brazil, Australia, and Canada. Yet in absolute numbers, about a third of all European emigrants left for the United States of America. Emigrants to North America initially came predominantly from the British Isles (including Ireland), Scandinavia, and Germany. After 1870, emigrants from Central, Eastern, and Southern Europe began to join them, with numbers reaching mass proportions of one million a year in the first decade of the twentieth century. They left Europe on giant ocean liners through seaports, the most important of which were Hamburg on the North Sea and Trieste on the Adriatic. Those who left Europe for the United States arrived at New York first, and crossed the threshold of the 'New World' through the port on Ellis Island where they were registered by the US immigration authorities. By the eve of the First World War, East-Central, Eastern, and Southern European emigration had reached mass proportions.

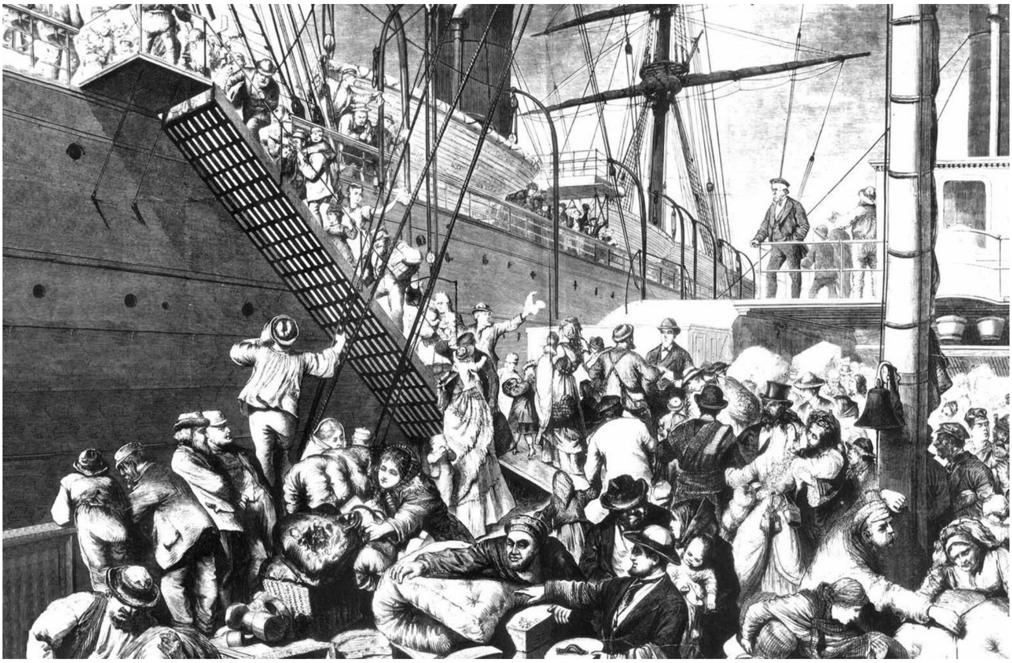

Fig. 1: 'From the old to the new world': German emigrants for New York embarking on a Hamburg steamer (1874), European Geosciences Union, https://www.egu.eu/medialibrary/image/2841/illustration-depicting-germans-emigrating-to-america-in-the-19th-century/.

People who emigrated to the United States and to other target countries were mainly motivated by economic considerations: poverty, lack of professional opportunities, and infertile lands were the most common reasons why they made the strenuous journey. Mass emigration in particular from the poorest areas and provinces of Southern, Central, and Eastern Europe was a significant phenomenon. For example, out of the total number of three million emigrants from the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, 1.7 million came from Hungary; many of them were natives of mountainous regions with meagre opportunities for agricultural cultivation. Some emigrants, however, were not destitute at all, as emigration required investments. In several cases, people sold their houses or landed property in order to finance their trip and establish themselves in the Americas. These more enterprising types were seeking the opportunity to improve their status and accumulate savings overseas which could also be invested back home. Such intentions seem to be confirmed by noticeable rates of re-migration: some migrants in fact travelled back and forth between the United States and Eastern or Southern Europe two or three times.

Beyond such economic motives, decisions to emigrate—and more importantly, the choice of country and region to which to migrate—were made on the basis of a wide range of other parameters, which together shaped a global 'migration system'. One important factor was the deliberate policies of European states to facilitate migration via financial and practical support (for example), or through direct deportation. In most cases, these policies were the product of a desire to be relieved of the burden of poor, unproductive, or criminal(-ised) citizens. Another important factor influencing the destiny of migrants were the policies of the receiving country. For instance, migration to the USA only took off after an Indiana court in 1821 banned the 'redemption system', in which destitute migrants were forced into bondage after they had to borrow money to enter the country. Similarly, migration to Australia was stimulated by the London-based Australian Colonial Land and Emigration Commission.

Perhaps even more important for the decision of where to migrate were family ties and local communities. From connections to preceding pioneer migrants in communities such as these, aspiring emigrants received information about the requirements of travel, and practical support once they arrived at their destination. They received crucial information about prospects of work, again conditioned by contacts with earlier migrants in the same profession or trade. And as these interconnections created forms of 'chain migration'—of one group following another—migrants also remained connected to the national communities they had left behind, contributing to the emergence of nationally defined immigrant communities that only partially assimilated into a new national identity. Many of these migrant communities were also geographically clustered: the Irish in Boston, the 'German Belt' between Ohio, Nebraska, Wisconsin, and Missouri; the Dutch who established Holland in Michigan. This continued interaction between homeland and host country also allowed for the possibility of a future return to Europe. Numbers varied dramatically: no more than five percent of all Jewish immigrants to the USA returned to Europe, while eighty-nine percent of the Bulgarians and Serbians returned before the First World War, and half of the Italians who moved to the USA between 1905 and 1915 moved back to Italy.

Despite the fact that migration between Europe and the Americas was the most substantial movement of people in the nineteenth century, it is important to note that other parts of the world were also part of this global migration system. For instance, between 1848 and 1882, some 300,000 Chinese labourers came to the USA, mainly to work in railway construction or gold mines—until the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 banned all Chinese migration (until 1943). Even more significant is slavery and the slave trade. Although the number of people enslaved and traded quickly declined in the first half of the century (and came to an end in the second half) its impact on the USA and other migrant societies remained crucial. Equally important is how the end of slavery resulted in intra-imperial migration of indentured labourers, who were needed to compensate for the loss of labour from enslaved Africans, and who were employed under conditions that differed only marginally from that of slavery. People were also on the move in the nineteenth century between non-European parts of colonial empires—between India, Kenya, and South Africa, between the Dutch Indies and Surinam. In this colonial framework, we also catch a glimpse of the history of the odd one out: France. While it was for most of the century the only European country with an immigration surplus—as a result of the large number of British, Belgian, German, Italian, Russian and notably Polish immigrants—some 700,000 French nationals moved to Algeria after it was occupied in 1830 and incorporated as a department of the French state in 1848.

Conclusion

From the point of international and especially overseas migration, the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries formed a continuum. The First World War, however, represented a serious break, and after 1914 mass migration from Europe was no longer possible in its previous forms. The reasons were three-fold: first, countries which formerly sent and received migration (e.g. Germany and the Habsburg Monarchy, and the United States, respectively) became enemies during the Great War; second, state borders and state formations changed beyond recognition in and after 1918; third, in the 1920s, strict immigration quotas were introduced in the United States by the Emergency Quota Act of 1921 and additional legislation, which meant that the citizens of former empires' successor states could no longer emigrate to the USA in the same numbers as before.

Discussion questions

1. This chapter shows that migration was a common experience in nineteenth-century Europe. Describe how this experience differed in different parts of Europe, e.g. Eastern Europe and Western Europe.
2. Think about similarities with and differences from Europe today: how has this experience changed or remained the same?
3. How has migration shaped Europe's engagement with the rest of the world in the nineteenth century?

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