

Nations and nationalism
since 1780

Programme, myth, reality

SECOND EDITION



E. J. HOBSBAWM



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Preface

This book is based on the Wiles Lectures which I had the honour to give at the Queen's University of Belfast in May 1985. The location suggested the topic. For the sake of convenience the somewhat concentrated contents of the four lectures to which the Lectureship commits the visitor have been spread out. There are now five chapters of unequal length, an introduction and some concluding reflections. The manuscript has also been revised, partly to take account of some later material, but mainly in the light of the discussions with the invited group of experts, which is one of the chief attractions of the Wiles Lectures for those fortunate enough to give them. I am grateful to all those who organized the lectures and those who took part in the discussions, and in particular to Perry Anderson, John Breuilly, Judith Brown, Ronan Fanning, Miroslav Hroch, Victor Kiernan, Joe Lee, Shula Marks, Terence Ranger and Göran Therborn, for criticism and stimulation and especially for making me think further about non-European nationalism. However, I have concentrated mainly on the nineteenth and earlier twentieth centuries, when the subject is rather Eurocentric or at any rate centred in the 'developed' regions. Since I have been some time talking and asking questions about nations and nationalism, there are many others who have given me ideas, information or references to books I would not otherwise have known about. At the risk of unfairness I single out Kumari Jayawardene and the other South Asian scholars at the World Institute for Development Economics Research in Helsinki, and my colleagues and students at the New School for Social Research in New York, who have heard and discussed some of this material. Much of the research for this

book was made possible by a Leverhulme Emeritus Fellowship, and I should like to express my appreciation for the generous assistance thus provided by the Leverhulme Trust.

‘The national question’ is a notoriously controversial subject. I have not sought to make it any less controversial. However, I hope that these lectures in their printed form will advance the study of the historical phenomena with which they attempt to come to grips.

London 1989

The last chapter has been extended and largely rewritten to take account of events since the text of the first edition was completed.

London, March 1992