

Anti-semitism in Europe pervaded from the very earliest times of the presence of the Jewish faith on the continent. From those earliest times the people of the Jewish faith faced discrimination and persecution, as happened during the Reconquista and during the Inquisition. The Jewish people persisted, however, but anti-semitism manifested itself in a much more modern and apparent manner beginning with the Dreyfus Affair; it was from this time that anti-semitism would play a very important and unfortunate role in modern European history, witnessing marked changes in social attitudes towards anti-semitism and in the Jewish population of the continent. The Dreyfus affair demonstrated the persistent anti-semitic attitudes in Europe, but its ending also proved that it was possible to move past this persistent trait. While the French government moved towards policies that were less discriminatory or hostile towards Jewish people, such was not the case elsewhere. Anti-semitism ran rampant in Eastern Europe following the publication of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion in 1903; pogroms occurred in Russia and Eastern Europe that targeted Jewish people with 60,000 dying in Ukraine alone. In Germany and its neighbouring states, anti-semitism took on a much worse quality, one moving towards more racially based ideas that would lead to the policies enacted by the Nazi Reich beginning with the Nuremberg Laws. Emigration of Jewish people became commonplace due to the rising anti-semitic tensions in Central and Eastern Europe during this time; the West of the continent was unable to provide much of the security that the Jewish people felt they required in such trying times.

The Dreyfus Affair marked the beginning of the brand of anti-semitism that would be witnessed in Europe in the early 20th century, even though anti-semitism had existed for centuries. The Dreyfus Affair simply proved to the world the enduring quality of this behavior, but it also set Western Europe apart for demonstrating that there were many now willing to stand up against it. This was a positive thing, but it did little to help. In the east of the continent, conditions worsened for the many Jewish people who resided there and who had resided there for decades to centuries. The anti-semitism of Eastern Europe took on a politically motivated perspective. The motivations behind the pogroms that targeted people of the Jewish faith or of Jewish ancestry in Russia and Eastern Europe in the early 20th century were that many of these countries believed the Jewish people to be conspiring against them to gain political and economic power. Considering the conditions of Eastern Europe and Russia and the relative lack of serious industrialization compared to the rest of the continent, issues of economics were a very serious subject. Should any group have presented itself as a potential threat to the economic and political power of Eastern Europeans, that group would have been the target of great violence as the Jewish people were. This helped to cause many Jewish people to begin fleeing either westward or out of the continent entirely.

Germany is the often looked to case of anti-semitism. It is important to analyze the history of anti-semitism in the country prior to the Holocaust, however, in the period between the 1890s and 1939. It was during this time that anti-semitic tensions in Germany took on racial qualities that were also motivated by economic and political factors as in Eastern Europe. Especially after Germany was defeated and devastated in the Great War, anti-semitism was once

again on the rise. The German people, economically ruined and politically weak looked for someone to place their blames upon. They blamed the members of the Entente for the conditions they had forced upon Germany unfairly, and the National Socialist Workers' Party of Adolf Hitler convinced the German people to take a cue from their underlying anti-semitic tendencies and blame the Jewish people for retaining wealth and political power that Germany so desperately needed. In the eyes of many Germans, the Jewish people were responsible for not only withholding valuable aid from the state, but they were a different race that had actively worked against the German people and weakened the state due to their inherent impurity. Many German scientists of the Nazi government that took power in the early 1930s propagated lies of racial differences between Jewish people and ethnic Germans. This simply became the norm of Germany. The Nuremburg Laws codified these beliefs by separating Jewish people on a racial basis from many interactions with each other and with ethnic Germans. These racial views, derived originally from economic and political strife, would prove devastating to the Jewish population of Europe.

Not only did the violent outcomes of anti-semitic behaviours in Germany and Eastern Europe diminish the Jewish population of the continent, but the inflammation of these tendencies worried many of the Jewish people who remained unaffected. They chose willingly to depart from the continent and seek safety and fortune elsewhere, typically in the United States or in the British Mandate of Palestine as part of the return to the homeland movement. With the departure of the Jewish people also came the departure of their finances, which may have affected economic situations in certain parts of Europe and thus may have contributed to continued anti-semitic tensions. However, the important takeaway is that the rise of anti-semitic tendencies ended up driving many Jewish people away from the continent. This severely impacted the demographics of the Jewish population of Europe, and it would be even more severely impacted by ongoing violence against the minority.

Anti-semitism in Europe had always existed prior to the Second World War, and even persists today among some however unpopular and incorrect it may be. The Dreyfus Affair of the 1890s only served to reignite anti-semitic tensions and to reveal to the world that such tensions had persisted since the earliest days of Judaism in Europe. Whether this anti-semitism be motivated by finances, politics, religion, or racial beliefs, the end result was that many Jewish people suffered violence, discrimination, or economic, political, or social ruin. Such results ended up causing the other effect of many Jewish people departing from Europe. The Second World War would only make the situation worse and advance the situation towards the end of widespread anti-semitism in Europe and the rise of a Jewish state in the Middle East. Between the 1890s and 1939, anti-semitism was re-revealed in Europe and evolved to take on terrible qualities with terrible results.

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