Migration: Crash Course European History #29

Crash Course: European History
https://youtube.com/watch?v=MN8fjAjLLpg
https://nerdfighteria.info/v/MN8fjAjLLpg

===== Introduction =====

Hi, I'm John Green and this is Crash Course European History. So between 1840 and 1914, an astonishing 40 million people left Europe. It was one of the greatest migrations in human history, and it might seem a little odd because, like, after all, Europe was leading in technological and other innovations at the time. Agriculture was thriving, railroads were creating an increasingly dense network across the continent to move goods more efficiently and connect people to each other.

So why would anyone, let alone 40 million people, wanna leave the most prosperous region in the world? Well, for one thing, in many European communities, the idea that people *could* move was new. Peasants were less likely to be legally required to be legally required to work the land their ancestors had worked, but also Europe's prosperity was not universal or even widely shared.

And so while nations became richer than ever before, many of the people in those nations were left out of that prosperity. The more things change- roll the intro, Stan, I'm about to get political.

===== NewSection (1:10) =====

Okay, so one third of those 40 million emigrants were from the United Kingdom, which is surprising, because the UK was becoming a global world power and perhaps the most prosperous European nation. But you have to remember that at the time, all of Ireland was part of the UK, and in the "Hungry Forties," some 1.25 million Irish people migrated to avoid starvation. A good example that inequality often coexists with prosperity. Then from 1850 until 1914, Irish people migrated at a rate of 65,000 per year, more than two million additional people.

Among them were two of my great grandfathers. This Irish diaspora which stretched from Austria to India was summarized famously in Irish expat James Joyce's novel Ulysses when the character Bloom says "A nation is the same people living in the same place," and then a moment later adds, "Or in different places." The Western hemisphere was a common destination for these new migrants, as were Australia and New Zealand. The first British immigrants to Australia were convicts, but later the British government offered large tracts of land in Australia and New Zealand to wealthy entrepreneurs, land that was seen as available, although in fact it was the traditional land of aboriginal people.

People also moved in search of work opportunities, especially because projects around the world needed laborers. Once slavery was abolished, European entrepreneurs and colonial plantation owners used agents to comb India and China in particular to find workers to indenture- that is, to bind to a project through a written contract. They would cajole and routinely lie about working conditions and the lengths of these contracts.

Women, for instance, were often promised jobs as nursemaids in English households, and then found themselves shipped to plantations in the Caribbean or the South Pacific, or even to brothels. Similarly, agents manipulated people in Scandanavia and Eastern Europe, promising them a golden future and convincing them to emigrate, especially after The Global Economic Downturn of 1873. Thanks to refrigeration and a more global market for meat, prices for food and livestock were declining.

Villages in some areas were decimated, especially in places with shorter growing seasons, like Scandanavia. So land there was supporting fewer and fewer farmers as food prices declined. Between 1886 and 1900, more than 10% of all Swedes emigrated. Many went to North America, which is why the pickled herring is so good in Minnesota. The experience of these emigrants was mixed. In some cases, they built strong and prosperous communities, in others, they struggled mightily.

Eventually migration did lose its luster in Sweden, in part because, you know, lots of people had left which meant there were more work opportunities for the people who remained, and in part because hydroelectric energy yielded lots of new jobs and national wealth. Renewable energy! It's the future!

And the past.

===== NewSection (4:17) =====

In other cases, migrants followed their own family or village network to new lands. This is how, for instance, Sicilian emigration to North America often worked. Sicily had long been denuded of its trees for Greek shipping and locals were facing taxation from a new national government that was dominated by manufacturers and financiers in the north. Sicilian men and some women migrated, whether alone or with family, many to North American towns and villages where they worked a variety of jobs.

A good number returned home after earning enough to set up a store or finance a family member's business, and the women who remained after their male relatives left created clusters and communities of so called "Widows in White," waiting for funds to be sent home or for their relatives to return. So between 1870 and 1890, most of Europes emigrants were from prosperous and powerful countries. 47% came from Britain, another 18% from Germany. But between 1890 and World War I, other regions began to dominate.

Millions left Austria, Hungary, and the Russian empire. "Entire regiments left in 1907 in order to earn money in America," wrote one observer of the scene. "Many houses stood empty, and many others only old women and small children remained behind. In some villages the entire young generation left home... Everyone believed that America was the Promised Land, a true paradise." Ah, America, where the streets are paved with cheese.

Am I the only person who remembers the movie American Tale? Possibly literally yes. Did the center of the world just open?

Is there an American flag stuck inside of a diet Dr Pepper can in there? I'm a little worried this might be against the rules of how you're supposed to display the flag and I apologize. We just- we didn't have anything else!

If you've watched a lot of Crash Course, you've seen a lot of this American flag. But did you know that it is not just any American flag. It is the American flag that our friend and colleague Mark was given when he became an American!

Our office, like so many offices in the United States, has been tremendously strengthened by immigration. And that shouldn't be a political statement.

===== NewSection (6:24) =====

In the Russian empire, many people left but especially Jews. Christians had assaulted Jews and their property for generations in acts called pogroms, and after the assassination of Tsar Alexander II in 1881 by political radicals, Russians launched more pogroms.

The government had tried integrating their vast empire composed of more than a hundred different ethnic groups with a program called "Russification," but when that did not work to its satisfaction, the government changed course towards negative integration, vilifying non Russian ethnic and religious groups, expelling or restricting several of them. Jews were foremost among those groups.

One act of vilification really stands out: officials in the police department of the Ministry of the Interior produced a phony account called "Protocols of the Elders of Zion." It documented a Jewish plot entirely concocted by these Russian officials for a Jewish takeover of the world, and that forgery shows us just how determined people were to demonize Jews so that they could be persecuted, expelled, and even killed. In fact, the protocols spread across Europe and the world with increasingly disastrous results and even today it often fuels anti Semitic conspiracy theories. And in this atmosphere of escalating pilgrims and persecution, Ukranians, Lithuanians, Poles, and others fled the Russian empire at the turn of the 20th century, among them tens of thousands of Jewish people.

In contrast, non Jewish ethnic Russians were forbidden to leave. So as in Ireland, migration from the Russian empire had an ethnic, religious, and class dimension that was fostered by governments and their agents. In Hungary, agents searched out Croatians, Ukranians, and other ethnicities, often the poorest in society, to sign up for foreign ventures.

This was part of Hungary's attempt to "magyarize" Hungarian society; that is, make the population more culturally Hungarian. In Austria-Hungary, some officials promoted migration, but others were opposed to it, and each group of opponents had their own reasons. Military planners saw villages emptied of potential recruits, nationalists wanted people of their own ethnicity blocked from leaving their communities, and large land owners often found that cheap local labor had fled to places where there were better jobs.

In 1903, the government decreed that Hungarian men would not be allowed to emigrate, although loopholes kept this draconian law from ever being fully effective. Austria had especially attempted to curb emigration without much luck. Emperor Francis Joseph even sponsored a project to try to get emigres to returns.

Other efforts to curb population outflows focused on the agents recruiting people to emigrate. Countries passed laws against recruiters after 1850, and brought some of them to trial as illegal traffickers of women and children. And British reformers even got legislation passed to check the Chinese and Indians entering into indentured contracts were not being enslaved by those contracts.

Across Europe, these agents were often stereotyped as being Jewish, and the Christian migrants were seen as their innocent victims. And because women might be drawn into prostitution, the supposed criminal activity of agents was another reason for chivalrous men to remove not just women's rights, but their mobility. And so you see here how two marginalized communities become more marginalized by systems of power.

All that noted, officials tended to allow those deemed "inferior" in one way or another to leave, often even encouraging their departure. For instance, the Jewish Colonization Association, formed in 1891, was allowed to recruit across Russia as the empire implemented more policies for ethnic purity.

===== NewSection (10:15) =====

How these emigrant voyagers fared varied widely. Let's go to the thought bubble. For most, the voyage out of Europe was grueling, even death defying as border guards and travel personnel often stripped them of their already meager possessions. Other experienced additional trauma, especially when epidemics broke out, as Jews, like the Irish, were increasingly labeled as "slovenly," or "germ-ridden," officials administered shock remedies.

In her autobiography, Mary Antin, a Jewish migrant from Belarus to the United States late in the 19th century, remembered being herded "like animals," forced to remove her clothing, then "a slippery substance that might be any bad thing" rubbed on her body, ending with "the steam [of the shower] blinding us." The treatment was a sanitary effort, but the way it was administered felt cruel and dehumanizing. Others experienced the end of the journey as traumatic. Although the time it took to cross oceans had dramatically declined because of steam ships, arriving in a big and unfamiliar coastal city could be profoundly disorienting.

People who had been accustomed to a rural pace of life were now searching for arduous, low level work where they could be expected to work ten or more hours per day, six or seven days per week. Those left behind were also effected by emigration. "Dear Husband," Teofila Borkowska of Warsaw, Poland wrote in 1893 to her husband in the United States, "I don't know what to do from longing and regret. I comfort myself only that you won't forget me..." Teofila, living in poverty and shunned by her neighbors, never again heard from her husband.

Thanks, thought bubble. I guess.

===== NewSection (11:53) =====

After centuries of serfdom and slavery, movement itself was sold as pure freedom, despite its paradoxes and complexity. To move from rural areas to urban spaces, or from one nation to another, or one continent to another, did constitute a form of liberty, and one that had not been available to most of those 40 million emigrant's ancestors. But the propaganda campaigns that encouraged movement also targeted certain classes of people as undesirable to have in a community. Those suffering from pogroms or famines were being further marginalized and often blamed for their own suffering, and for any other suffering in the community.

The Irish were accused of being "famous everywhere for their indolence" and criticized (?~12:41) (misspelling in the video text box) for their "cunning, brutalized features." They had "themselves to thank for their poverty." Mary Antin, meanwhile, recalled being spit on by non-Jewish children as well as enduring the pogroms that often began with the trio of "the crosses and the priests and the mob" passing through her neighborhood. As it turns out, migration for many was coercive, dangerous, and even lethal. For others, it was an escape from poverty and deprivation.

One Swedish emigrant, perhaps remembering his meager fare of brown bread and herring, celebrated his move to the United States by saying, "God save me from all that is Swedish." Except for the herring, one hopes. But that perspective certainly wasn't universal. Once again, how history looks depends upon where you are sitting.

Thanks for watching, we'll see you next time. Crash Course is filmed here in the Jaden Smith studios in Indianapolis. Thank you to Jaden Smith, and indeed all of our patrons at patreon.com/crash course.

We've got lots of other crash courses, including one about artificial intelligence which is absolutely fascinating. Thanks again for watching, and as they say in my home town, don't forget to be awesome.