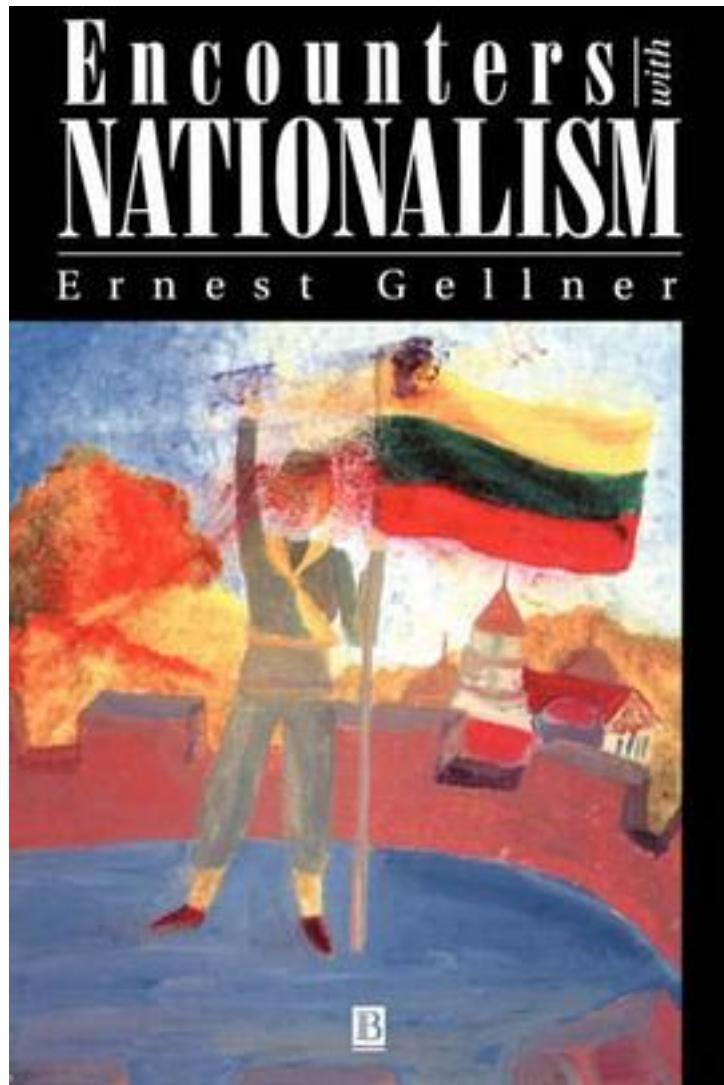


Encounters with Nationalism



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The forecast demise of nationalism under the new moral orders of communism and internationalism has proved illusory. In the present century, to an extent greater perhaps than in all others, nationalism has been the dominant force in the affairs of humankind. Why should this have been? Why is it that a national identity should continue to be the aspiration of almost all peoples without one and, at the same time, the justification - in the process of obtaining, securing and expanding it- for casting aside every trace and tradition of civility? In *Encounters with Nationalism* Ernest Gellner seeks some answers.

His approach is to consider first the ideas of the main modern thinkers on the subject, from Marx, List, Malinowski and Carr, to Masaryk, Heidegger, Patocka, Hroch, Havel and Said. He examines the origins, subjects and context of their writings, their interactions with culture and politics, and their influence - both on theory and on events. The range is wide, covering Eastern, Western and Islamic societies, and includes extensive discussions of the related themes of civil society, theocracy, communism, imperialism, capitalism and liberalism.

Professor Gellner is never less than trenchant. He is concerned here not only to understand, but to criticize. He confronts several powerful and fashionable notions that fuel and/or attempt to explain contemporary nationalism - among them postcolonialism. On the one hand he exposes their incoherence and irresponsibility; on the other he places them alongside ideas of real currency. Nor does he evade the controversy surrounding the nature of judgement itself: the reader will also find here concise and penetrating discussions of relativism, pluralism, objectivity and the possibility of universal values.

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