



The Growth of Nationalism 1848-1871

Carlton Hayes

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BETWEEN 1830 and 1848 the idea of political democracy had made steady progress throughout Europe among both the workingmen and the middle class until in the eventful days of 1848 it had thrown the whole Continent into turmoil. That it had not produced immediate results commensurate with its aims and purposes was due in part to the fact that certain peoples of Europe divided their allegiance between the idea of political democracy and the notion of patriotic nationalism. A little reflection upon the national and racial movements in the Habsburg dominions will furnish concrete examples of the way in which a sense of nationality could fatally choke an aspiration for democratic government. It appeared as if the patriotic instinct was more primitive and more powerful than the democratic ideal, and that in many instances the forces of reaction might rely upon the former to thwart the latter. The point was, of course, that in most countries democracy was the program of but particular classes, while patriotism provided a spacious platform on which an entire nation could stand shoulder to shoulder.

Consequently, in the period from 1848 to 1870, the bulk of Europeans seemed to rest from agitation for liberal constitutions and other paraphernalia of democracy, exhausted, as it were, by the chronic factional tumults which, throughout the Era of Metternich, and down to the domestic upheavals of 1848, had stirred every state, and to expend their energies more unitedly upon colossal attempts at nation-building. To be sure, democracy continued to make some headway between 1848 and 1870, but it was dwarfed in historical significance by such achievements as the national unifications of Italy and Germany...



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