CHAPTER V

Metternich's Germany (1814-48)

In September 1814 all Europe went to Vienna—all Europe, that is to say, that counted politically—not the Europe of liberals and nationalists, the people who had overthrown their masters, the people of the future, but the dynasts and the bureaucrats, who were to reap the first fruits of the people's labors. It was a brilliant assembly including some of the ablest diplomats in modern history: Metternich from Austria, Hardenberg and Humboldt from Prussia, Talleyrand from France, Castlereagh and Wellington from Britain, and Alexander I from Russia. They had a frightening task before them, for the events since 1789 had so thoroughly disrupted the old Europe that it could not possibly be restored. They had to establish the pattern of a new Europe. They did so and created a pattern which was to endure with some changes for about a century.

As far as German affairs were concerned, the principal figure was Metternich. This astute, supple, charming, cultured diplomat came originally from the Rhineland but had early entered the service of Austria and become completely Austrian in his outlook. He was not unaware of the new forces abroad in the world; he had not wasted his time in Paris when he was ambassador there. Yet he knew that liberalism and nationalism, particularly the latter, were deadly poison to the Hapsburg realm, composed as it was of a complex mixture of nationality groups. These forces constituted for Metternich "the revolution," and he was determined to keep them in check. Thus his policy was to fight a rear guard action, to conserve, and to keep things as quiet as possible. This policy was not easy to achieve in the atmosphere of 1814 because the enthusiasm engendered by the War of Liberation did not show signs of weakening as quickly as it had been brought to life. Fervid romantic longings for a united Germany were uttered by poets, writers, and young people.

The basic dilemma of creating a united Germany is simple to under-
stand. There were two great German powers, Austria and Prussia. How would it be possible to combine them into some kind of state without robbing one or the other of its prestige and influence? This problem has been described as the grossdeutsch vs. kleindeutsch (greater Germany including Austria vs. little Germany without Austria) controversy, which was to complicate central European affairs for decades until Bismarck finally solved it by harsh, direct measures. At Vienna a committee was formed (consisting of Austria, Prussia, Bavaria, Württemberg, and Hanover) to bring in a proposal for a new German organization. In the meantime the diplomats considered territorial problems.

The angriest conflict concerned the fate of Poland and Saxony. Tsar Alexander wanted to reassemble partitioned Poland into a kingdom with himself as king. Prussia refused to give up some parts of Poland that she had acquired (West Prussia, Posen, and Danzig) and for the rest demanded the cession to her of the kingdom of Saxony, which had not deserted Napoleon. When Austria and Britain opposed this plan, it looked for a time as if a new war were in the offing. In the end a compromise was effected by which Prussia received about three-fifths of Saxony, but the shorn kingdom continued to exist. As further compensation Prussia acquired the rich provinces of the Rhineland and Westphalia, whose immense wealth under the ground of the Ruhr Valley was still unknown. She also received Swedish Pomerania. Prussia was much strengthened and, even more important, her new strength was in German lands rather than foreign. The cession of the western provinces to Prussia made it clear once again that there was no intention of restoring the prelates and princes who had ruled in that area before the revolution. The Holy Roman Empire was officially buried.

Austria did not get an increase in German lands other than regaining the areas that Napoleon had given to Bavaria. Instead she added to her non-Germanic possessions by receiving Lombardy and Venetia in Italy as compensation for relinquishing Belgium and some of the small west German possessions of the Hapsburg family.

Except for Saxony, the middle and smaller states were not much changed in their territories. Some of them actually received new lands (e.g., Bavaria gained some land in the north, and Hanover acquired East Friesland). In general, the pattern worked out by Napoleon in the first years of the century was maintained. There were no more imperial knights, and hundreds of the minor princes were mediatized. No ecclesiastical territories remained and only four free cities (Hamburg, Bremen, Lübeck, and Frankfurt). The new Germany consisted of only thirty-nine separate states.

These thirty-nine sovereign states were banded together into the
German Confederation after the Congress of Vienna
German Confederation, a loose but allegedly eternal federal organization. Both Austria and Prussia were members of the Confederation but only for their German lands, that is, lands which had formerly been in the Holy Roman Empire. Thus Prussian Poland and East Prussia were not in the Confederation nor was the great bulk of the Austrian non-German areas. On the other hand, several non-German monarchs were members of the Confederation: the king of Great Britain because he was king of Hanover, the king of Denmark as ruler of Holstein, and the king of the Netherlands for Luxemburg.

The Confederation had a Federal Diet which met at Frankfurt under the permanent presidency of Austria. It really amounted to a conference of ambassadors because the members of it were simply named by the respective monarchs. It had the right to declare war and make peace. Each member agreed not to make alliances endangering any of the others or to go to war against another member of the Confederation. One interesting provision was the article which stated that each member of the Confederation was to be granted a constitution based on a representative body. As is the case with all constitutional states, the German Confederation could have operated in any one of a number of ways depending on the attitudes of those in charge. As things worked out, the Federal Diet became almost an annex of the Chancellery in Vienna.

With the establishment of the Confederation Germany entered what is frequently called the Vormärz period ("before March," in reference to the revolutions which broke out in Vienna and Berlin in March 1848). It is a dull period politically, marked by censorship, repression, and the stultification of new ideas. It is nevertheless an important period economically and socially, because during these years the industrial revolution began to make its first important impact on Germany, especially in the western provinces. This development brought with it shifts in social stratification and the whole web of German life, so that political change was bound to follow in spite of Metternich's efforts.

Much of the liberal and nationalistic agitation focused on students at the universities, particularly those outside Austria and Prussia. These youths had been intoxicated by the heady wine of patriotism during the War of Liberation. Their bodies had been trained in the physical culture schools of "Father" Jahn and their spirits urged on by the writings of Fichte and Arndt. They longed for the fine days only a few years before when Lützow had led his Free Corps of youths against the oppressor. They were in no mood now that the victory had been won to see it betrayed by a spirit of repression. This kind of attitude was especially strong at the University of Jena where the Burschenschaft movement was founded. The Burschenschaften were clubs of students who met to sing
patriotic songs and indulge in beery teen-age nationalism. The movement spread throughout north Germany and culminated in the Wartburg Festival on October 18, 1817. This festival was staged at the romantic castle of the Wartburg near Eisenach where Luther translated the Bible. It was in commemoration of Luther and also the battle of Leipzig. The students sang around a great bonfire into which they threw symbols of repression and censorship, a corporal's stick and a policeman's pigtail.

One of the most extreme of the liberal leaders was a professor named Karl Follen at Jena. Among his students was a boy, Karl Sand, who became so enthusiastic about the cause of German nationalism that he resolved to strike a blow against oppression. He chose as his victim August von Kotzebue, a playwright who was in the pay of the Russian government. Sand murdered Kotzebue in Mannheim in March 1819. This act of terrorism determined Metternich to take severe action.

Metternich had become increasingly alarmed by the wave of student political activity. It led in a direction which endangered the whole conservative structure so dear to him. He was also worried about the liberal actions undertaken by some of the south German governments. In accordance with the provisions of the act setting up the Confederation, several governments, among them Bavaria, Baden, and Saxe-Weimar, had granted constitutions of a more or less liberal hue. Frederick William III in 1815 promised the Prussian people that he would grant them a constitution, but fortunately, from Metternich's point of view, he had done nothing about it. In fact he never did. Prussia had completely departed from the liberal reformist attitude of the period of Stein and Hardenberg and was now a willing seconder of Metternich's projects.

Accordingly Metternich called a meeting of several of the German states, including Prussia, at Karlsbad in July 1819 and persuaded them to pass the Karlsbad Decrees, which were later enacted as law by the Federal Diet. These decrees were reactionary in the extreme. They set up a series of commissioners at each university to see that all laws and disciplinary regulations were strictly obeyed, to check on "subversive" faculty members, and to make sure that no unauthorized societies existed. They furthermore set up a complete censorship of all written material longer than twenty pages throughout the Confederation. This was a prior censorship in which a publisher had to submit everything to the censors before publication. For years to come nothing smacking of liberalism was legally printed in Germany, and a brisk smuggling traffic developed mainly with Switzerland where many of the German liberals fled.

Although Prussia fully supported Metternich's conservative course in political matters, she showed more capacity for progress and modern ideas in other spheres, notably education and economics. The Univer-
sity of Berlin, now under the spiritual guidance of the major philosopher Georg Wilhelm Hegel, continued to set the pace for German learning. In economics the most important act was the foundation of the Customs Union (Zollverein) in 1819. This institution has been regarded by some historians as a first step toward the unification of Germany under Prussian auspices. It seems more likely that it was a practical application of common-sense administration dictated by the peculiarities of the Prussian economic scene.

As a result of her annexations in 1815, Prussia was now a varied state economically. Although the great majority of her subjects still worked on the land, there was a significant growth of industry in both Silesia and the Westphalian area. Agriculturally she was also far from homogeneous, with large estates in the east farmed by peasants just out of serfdom, while in the west the typical holding was a small plot worked by its owner. Furthermore, Prussia was so situated that she did a great deal of transit business, conveying goods to south Germany. In all her activities she was hampered by a wide variety of tariff scales and currencies. She decided to establish a uniform set of moderate duties and to invite other German states to conform to her tariffs and to merge the administration of customs on a pro rata basis. The first treaty of this sort was signed with tiny Schwarzburg-Sondershausen in 1819. Gradually the Customs Union grew, though not without difficulty because competing unions appeared in the south and west. Prussia consistently refused admission to Austria, not only on political grounds but because she feared the dumping of the large Hungarian grain crop into Germany. By 1844 most of Germany was in the Union, though certain states, notably Hamburg, stayed out even after the creation of the German Empire in 1871.

The efficient and ruthless enforcement of the Karlsbad Decrees and the general spirit of exhaustion after the Napoleonic turmoil conspired to prevent any serious outbursts of revolutionary enthusiasm in the twenties. However, by 1830 a new generation of young people had grown up for whom the old stories were ones of glory and not of suffering. A new wave of lawlessness developed, but not a very serious one.

The movement in 1830 was sparked by three revolutions abroad. In July the French deposed Charles X and replaced him with the bourgeois monarch, Louis Philippe, and a liberalized constitution. The Belgians revolted from their Dutch rulers and after some months succeeded in establishing an independent state. Even in pathetic Poland there was an effort to overthrow the Russian oppressor. In Germany the principal outbursts were in Brunswick, Hesse-Kassel, and industrial Saxony. In the first two the rulers were forced to abdicate, while in the third
modern constitution was granted. The revolutionary spirit remained active and culminated in 1832 in the Hambach Festival where 25,000 people clamored for changes, some of them even advocating a German republic.

Metternich was not slow in reprisal. He had a series of six articles passed by the Federal Diet which forbade German rulers to do anything that would reduce their sovereignty, prohibited German state parliaments to refuse appropriations as a weapon to secure concessions, and disallowed the states to prejudice any laws of the Federal Diet. There were many who felt that these laws were an infringement of local sovereignty, but Metternich succeeded in having them enforced. Repression now became an exact science. Public meetings, publications, political activity, and associations fell under the heaviest censorship and surveillance. The outbursts of 1830 had led to a worse situation than before. The immediate result was an absurd effort by some ill-trained radicals to seize the Federal Diet at Frankfurt. It failed and simply gave the authorities an excuse for even harsher measures.

Repression may have reached its high point in the kingdom of Hanover. When Queen Victoria succeeded to the throne in London in 1837, the kingdom of Hanover was separated from the British crown because of the old Salic law which forbade inheritance by a woman. So Victoria's uncle, Ernest Augustus, duke of Cumberland, became king of Hanover. He was a tough-minded old conservative who had no patience with liberal stirrings. Therefore he abrogated the fairly liberal constitution which his predecessor had granted a few years before. This became a national cause célèbre when the king dismissed seven of the outstanding scholars of all Germany from the University of Göttingen because they refused to take an oath to the new regime. The "seven" were immediately hired in liberal south German states, and some of the states even questioned Ernest Augustus' right to abrogate the constitution; but the Federal Diet, backed by both Austria and Prussia, supported the monarch's actions, and he was able to impose a very authoritarian constitution. The "Göttingen seven" remained a symbol of resistance to oppression.

Within five years both Austria and Prussia underwent a change of monarch. In 1835 Emperor Francis of Austria died and was succeeded on the throne by his son Ferdinand (1835–48), who was mentally incompetent. Ferdinand relied more than ever on Metternich, especially in the realm of foreign affairs, but he set up a conference of advisers in domestic affairs. In fact, the government was controlled by Metternich and Count Kolowrat, whose particular field of competence was finances.

In 1840 Frederick William III followed his colleague in Vienna, recommending on his deathbed to his heir that no constitution be granted
to Prussia. The new king, Frederick William IV (1840–61), was a bizarre personality, certainly different from his Hohenzollern ancestors. He was a romantic, a dreamer, a dilettante of the arts. He enjoyed being loved and was astonished and aggrieved when he saw signs of opposition. Politically he was patriarchal, believing that a king should rule his subjects as a loving but strict father rules his children, with the implication, of course, that the child should render implicit obedience to his parent. He had no time for modern liberalism but fancied the use of the provincial estates—partly because they were a late medieval creation, and partly because with their heavily rural composition they were likely to be conservative.

Frederick William IV is in many ways a precursor of his grandnephew, Emperor William II, who shared many of his characteristics. Like William he began his reign with the relaxation of unpopular regulations, but this honeymoon period did not last very long. The people of Prussia soon discovered that Frederick William believed in divine-right rule just as much as his father had and in even a less practical way. Yet modern developments caught up with this old-fashioned monarch. During the forties the Prussian government found that its expenses exceeded its income. New types of projects, notably the building of a railroad network, were bringing the state close to bankruptcy. Frederick William was forced to take counsel with representatives of the people, but he did not envisage a constitution, which he characterized as a sheet of paper “between God in heaven and this land.” He adopted instead the sham medieval idea of calling together the diets of the various provinces of Prussia into a new institution called the United Diet. The provincial diets were elected on a class basis, so that the United Diet emphasized the aristocratic classes. It met in 1847 and was presented with two government bills on financial problems. The delegates immediately developed an opposition, demanded some real control over legislation, and in particular requested a summons periodically. The king would have nothing to do with such ideas, and as a result the Diet was dismissed without accomplishing anything. However at this meeting some of the members banded into groups, incipient parties, which were to appear again the following year.

The sterile quality of political life in the Vormärz veils the basic importance of the period. The industrial revolution, which started in England, was now reaching the continent with increasing force. During the thirties and forties France felt its impact with the attendant incidence of strikes and the development of new social doctrines. Belgium too was quickly industrialized, thanks in part to her rich coal possessions. The movement was slower in the German Confederation where the politi-
cal climate was antipathetic, but it made real progress. In the west the great coal reserves were tapped. The firm of Krupp had already laid its foundations in Essen. Towns like Düsseldorf and Cologne, which were to become industrial giants in the late years of the century, were beginning to feel the new impetus. In the east there was expansion both in Saxony and Silesia where there were important natural resources. Berlin and the eastern part of Prussia remained relatively untouched, but Vienna developed considerable industry, and new quarters of the city grew up outside the old fortifications. None of this was comparable to the phenomenal growth after 1871, but it made its influence felt.

A good part of the industrial growth revolved around the beginnings of railroad building. It had its start in Bavaria, but before long the obvious advantages of the railway became clear and the states rivaled one another in construction. In fact, the problem of financing railways forced Frederick William IV to summon the United Diet. Railways require coal and steel in large quantities; thus they started a chain reaction. The railroad system found a prophet in Friedrich List, the most important economic thinker of the period. List was banished from Württemberg for his ideas, emigrated to the United States where he made a fortune, and then returned to Germany with diplomatic immunity as the American consul in Leipzig. He was one of the first to recognize the military possibilities of a thorough railway network. He was also a nationalist to the core and in his writings objected to the economic liberalism of the school of Adam Smith. Instead he advocated a system of economic nationalism complete with a high protective tariff.

With the increase in industrialization, even at the relatively low level of these decades, went also a change in the social organization. The new classes of the proletariat and the wealthy bourgeoisie, which were to have such importance in the future, began to appear—and with them the familiar problems of housing, labor relations, sanitation, education of the masses, etc. Until this time industrial and commercial life in Germany had been dominated by the guilds, which carefully regulated the details of the workers’ lives. France abolished her guilds during the great revolution; in fact she even forbade the formation of any association of working men. However, Germany still preserved her guilds in most areas. This led to great difficulty because the new capitalistic large-scale industry which was just beginning to appear could not fit into the old guild regulations, some of which were antiquated. The introduction of new machines and techniques had the inevitable effect of causing technological unemployment, which sometimes resulted in bloodshed, as in the case of the weavers of Silesia who destroyed the new machines which were robbing them of their livelihood in the forties. Two worlds were
in conflict—two worlds that were irreconcilable. The new economic forces were ready for a change, even an abrupt one, particularly since the middle forties were years of depression for both industry and agriculture.

There were plenty of people ready to suggest what form the change should take. Despite the repression, the years of Metternich’s dominance produced political and social critics of all hues, ranging from a gentle liberalism through democracy to the most extreme forms of the new doctrine of socialism. And all of them, except the Marxian socialists, were wedded to the doctrine of nationalism.

At the extreme left of the spectrum there were a number of lunatic fringe theorists, usually bizarre characters, who advocated a wide variety of communal organizations. Karl Marx summed them up conveniently with the scornful phrase “utopian socialists,” though some of them deserve rather better from posterity than that nickname. Marx himself was born in Trier and educated at the University of Berlin where he fell under the spell of the doctrines of Hegel, who had then only recently died. However, he reversed some of the doctrines of the master from their original idealism to a complete materialism and started to work out at length his eventual system. Returning to west Germany, he formed the association with Friedrich Engels that was to last his whole life; together, while writing for a newspaper entitled the *New Rhenish Gazette*, they developed the principles which were first enunciated in the pamphlet *Communist Manifesto* in 1847. This call to arms found very little response at the time, but later, when in exile in England, Marx and Engels composed the enormously influential *Das Kapital*.

To the right of Marx and Engels was a whole variety of political thinkers. Some of them were stirring poets like Heine and Herwegh; others were sober university professors and publicists. Some wanted a liberal constitutional monarchy on the pattern of Great Britain; others felt that only through a republican organization could the conflict between Austria and Prussia be resolved. If the country got rid of both Hapsburg and Hohenzollern, then all German people could be welded into a new pattern. A number of German thinkers studied the new United States and became devoted to the doctrine of democracy and the equality of man. Others looked back with nostalgic idealization to the Middle Ages, which, they thought, had constituted a moral, Christian, and heroic society. This attitude was given much impetus by the romantic movement in literature which was then at its apex in Germany.

It is not easy to define romanticism. It differed from country to country, and the leading romantics were themselves often such wild individualists that they defy classification. In fact, individualism is one of
the main criteria of the movement. Allied with it was a strong sense of subjectivity and a desire to be free of the trammels of artistic form. The romantics condemned the men of the Enlightenment for their “cold” rationalism and their efforts to apply reforms without taking into consideration human emotions and the long period of development of so-called irrational institutions. This sense of development, of evolution, is very important to the understanding of romantic political thinking, for it merged into the school of historicism which sought to understand a phenomenon through studying its history. This kind of thinking, of which the spiritual father is probably Edmund Burke, inevitably tends toward conservatism and even the glorification of the past almost for its own sake.

Among the important early romantics were the brothers August Wilhelm (1767–1845) and Friedrich (1772–1829) Schlegel. August Wilhelm is primarily a literary figure and will be remembered for his wonderfully sympathetic translation of Shakespeare and also of a number of the masterpieces of Latin Europe. Friedrich was more concerned with history and philology and in his Philosophy of History invited attention to the Middle Ages. He showed consistency in his attachment to the medieval tradition by finding happiness in his later years through his conversion to the Catholic church.

One of the most characteristic of the romantic poets was Friedrich von Hardenberg (1772–1801), who wrote under the name of Novalis. His poetry was filled with the infinite longing, the bereaved love, and the burning intensity of the complete romantic. One of the themes of his prose was a glorification of the Middle Ages as the period of Christian unity when all worked in harmony under one sovereign for common goals. This naïve lack of historical understanding was typical of the period and had eventual political implications.

At a more sober level there was serious work in historiography, philology, and the study of folk literature. It is no coincidence that the great Freiherr vom Stein, following his eclipse at the Congress of Vienna, spent most of the rest of his active life in charge of a massive project to edit and publish the documents of the German Middle Ages. The resulting collection in many volumes, the Monumenta Germaniae Historica, remains one of the main sources for the medievalist. The brothers Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm became the founders of Germanic philology. Their taste for the past was whetted by their earlier preservation and rewriting of the immemorial fairy tales of the German people, which have remained so beloved in all lands. A similar work was done by Clemens Brentano and Achim von Arnim, who assembled and published the
most famous collection of German folk songs, *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* ("The Boy's Magic Horn").

Joseph Görres (1776–1848) was one of the earliest romantics to turn his thinking to politics. A devoted Rhinelander, Görres, like so many advanced Germans, at first welcomed the French Revolution; but as it advanced into the Napoleonic period, he became disillusioned and bitter. As editor of the *Rheinischer Merkur*, he was a very influential publicist and even won the respect of Napoleon. After 1815 he shifted his animosity from France to Prussia, to which his homeland now belonged. He had the Rhinelander's scorn for Prussia, which was augmented by his contempt for anything Protestant. He eventually had to escape and ended his days at the University of Munich still espousing the medieval and Catholic ideal.

Adam Müller (1779–1829) was probably the most thoroughgoing of the political romanticists. Müller was born a Prussian, but after he became an adult he turned completely against Prussianism and the Enlightenment. He joined the Catholic church and moved to Vienna where he breathed more congenial air. He knelt at the feet of Edmund Burke and thus was welcome in the circle of Metternich and his close associate Friedrich Gentz, who had translated Burke. Müller looked back with longing to the feudal society, which he felt to be most in accord with the will of God. He had the highest respect for the role and position of the state, which he believed to be above those who composed it. Thus all the liberal thinking of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was aberration. Such thinking occurred mostly in the west; the Germans who had adopted liberalism were slaves to Western thought; true Germans, men of the heartland of Europe, are above the pettiness of the French revolutionary ideology. Müller, then, was not only a conservative; he carried the belief in the superiority of Germans even further than Fichte or Herder.

The dramatist who accomplished most in asserting German nationalism was Heinrich von Kleist (1777–1811). Kleist was a complex character, though a Prussian, and his plays are varied and sensitive. His last two dramas, however, have Germanism as a theme. The *Hermanns Schlacht* tells of the battle between the German tribal leader Arminius (Hermann) and the Romans in the time of Augustus Caesar. It is obviously a call to arms against Napoleon. Since then Arminius has been a great favorite of German nationalists. The *Prince of Homburg* is laid in the period of the Great Elector and concerns a young, rebellious nobleman who later realizes the need for complete obedience to the state because it embodies the moral law.
One of the most eccentric and influential figures in the history of German nationalism was Friedrich Ludwig Jahn (1778–1852), generally known as Father Jahn. He was born in the heart of the Prussian kingdom during the reign of Frederick the Great and early became embued with a strong sense of Prussian patriotism. Later on he expanded this Prussianism into a feeling for German nationalism, but always with deep admiration for the Hohenzollern tradition. His principal fame arose from his work in the training of German youth. During the years of the Napoleonic triumph he became disgusted with his own generation and concluded that the future of the German nation lay in the hands of the young men. He identified himself with the Free Corps movement during the war of 1813 and even more with the Turnerschaft (“gymnastic institute”) and the later Burschenschaften. In 1811, while Jahn was an instructor in a famous school in Berlin, he started to take his students out into the open for gymnastic exercise. These exercises were intended not only to strengthen the body, but were conceived on clearly military lines to instill in the boys a strong feeling for the “German,” i.e., the soldierly virtues. The movement spread throughout Germany during the century and became a characteristic expression of German nationalism. Jahn’s most important writing was not unexpectedly called Deutsche Volkstum (perhaps best translated as “German Racatism”). This work glorified German race, customs, history, and language, and called on the German people to get rid of any sense of inferiority and to take unlimited pride in the fact that they were Germans. In his later years Jahn was vastly dissatisfied with the settlement at Vienna, which had not erected a real German state. He called for further warfare to create such a state, which was to include both Switzerland and Denmark as well as the conventional German area.

A good deal more sophisticated than Father Jahn but no less devoted to the nationalist cause was Ernst Moritz Arndt (1769–1860), whose very long life almost spanned the years from the Seven Years’ War to the Seven Weeks’ War. Arndt, like so many others of his generation, was impelled toward nationalism by Napoleon’s German conquests. He spent some time with Stein at the court of the Russian emperor in 1812 and returned with the victorious armies. He taught for a while at the University of Bonn but was dismissed because of his connection with the Burschenschaft movement. One of Frederick William IV’s bids for popularity at the outset of his reign was the reinstatement of Arndt, who was also elected to the Frankfurt Parliament in 1848 and hailed as a national hero. Arndt wrote many patriotic poems and songs, of which the best known is Was Ist des Deutschen Vaterland? ("What Is the German's Fatherland?") According to the song, that fatherland exists
wherever German is spoken. In fact, much of Arndt’s nationalistic thinking stemmed from the concept of language. The purity of a people’s language is the acid test of its general purity. He insisted that of the European languages German was closest to its origins and had become the least bastardized. For him humanitarianism and cosmopolitanism were anathema, and he had a particular animus against the Jews because they had become an international people.

Unquestionably the most important philosopher of the period was Georg Wilhelm Hegel (1770–1831). Born a south German Protestant in Stuttgart, his life was outwardly a placid one, spent almost completely in an academic environment. He taught at Jena and Heidelberg and in 1818 was invited to the new University of Berlin, where during the twenties he became the great figure of learning and founded a school of younger students who were to be very influential in the future. This is not the place to discuss the nature of Hegel’s abstract and subjective thought. It must suffice to say something about his ideas as they related to the state, for he did a good deal to shape the thinking of later German political figures.

Hegel thought in terms of eternal becoming, of an evolution in history in which the so-called World-Spirit marches along taking various forms at various times. The World-Spirit by its very nature creates its opposite, and the result is a synthesis of the two which becomes the next World-Spirit. (This is the dialectic of history, which Karl Marx combined with his economic interpretation of history to develop “dialectical materialism.”) Hegel insisted that “Whatever is rational is real, and whatever is real is rational.” Thus it became necessary to show that those institutions which were real were also rational, and few institutions at the time were so “real” as the state. In fact, Hegel said that the State was the highest and most perfect manifestation of the Universal Reason. Thus the State came to take precedence over the individual and also over religion, which was composed of “beliefs” only rather than “knowledge.” The State further became the representative of the World-Spirit and the most powerful state at any given moment was that representative par excellence. Note that the criterion is power. Hegel had recognized Napoleon as the World-Spirit during the time of his dominance. After 1815 he saw Prussia in that role and thus became the official philosopher of the Prussian state. One almost had the feeling that the dialectic was to come to its end with the triumph of Prussia. The point need hardly be labored that in later decades the influence of Hegel was to prove very useful to Bismarck.*

* For these comments concerning Hegel I am much indebted to Kurt F. Reinhardt, Germany 2000 Years (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1950), pp. 502–5.
As has been noted, the generation that grew up after 1830 differed somewhat from its forerunners. This was as true in the field of literature and intellectual speculation as it was in politics; in fact, the two were closely allied. The period between 1830 and the revolutions of 1848 was dominated by the so-called Young Germany group. This was a movement destined neither to last long nor to produce many important figures. The group had much more respect for liberalism, democracy, and general emancipation than its predecessors. It had a sense of social responsibility and a scorn for the wild individualism of the romantics. It was patriotic but not obsessed with the passionate nationalism of those who could remember the Napoleonic period better. The young people who grew up in these years were to be among the more moderate leaders of the movement of 1848.

The only major literary figure associated with the Young Germany movement and one of the greatest of all German writers was Heinrich Heine (1799–1856). Heine was a complex and interesting personality because he was drawn in several different directions. He was a Jew born in the Rhineland and, unlike many Rhinelanders, a patriotic German. His Jewishness, a racial rather than religious factor, was of constant concern to him; except in Prussia German Jews had not been granted equality of civil rights. He was also drawn by his wit and literary sensitivity toward France, where he spent most of his productive life. Soon after the French revolution of 1830 Heine moved to Paris, maintaining himself as a publicist and journalist. His last years were ones of agony for he developed a fearful spinal disease, was bedridden for years, and died a slow death.

Heine's lyrical gift was rivaled only by those of Goethe and Schiller. His short poems are among the greatest in the language; many of them, notably the Lorelei, were set to music by the romantic composers and have become the most beloved of German songs. His prose writing, a good part of which was political in nature, shows qualities of irony, bitterness, and wit. To an extent he was prophetic. He lamented the future he saw for his beloved Germany, where he feared the results of over-nationalism and the influence of the romantic philosophers. Even if Heine had not been a Jew, his work would have been banned in Nazi Germany.

During the romantic period Germany retained her pre-eminence in music. The composers were not of the stature of Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven, but they remained the leaders in European music. Four of them were particularly outstanding. Franz Peter Schubert (1797–1828) led a short and miserable life as far as externals are concerned. He never went far from his native Vienna; he spent some of his most productive
years teaching school, which he disliked; he rarely had any money and often had to live off friends; occasionally he received a taste of aristocratic patronage; his health was frequently very bad; and he died at thirty-one. Yet his output was immense. He is the father of the form of the Lied ("song") built around a well-known piece of poetry. Schubert wrote more than six hundred of these. He also composed eight symphonies, including the "Great" C major and the much-loved Unfinished, and a host of religious, piano, and chamber works. His gift for melody was supreme; for form, he was less talented and showed himself a true romantic.

Robert Schumann (1810–56) also had a difficult life. He was the son of a central German bookseller and editor. At an early age he showed great talent at the piano and was given lessons by Friedrich Wieck, father of Clara Wieck, whom Schumann later married. Until 1840 the great bulk of his composition was for the piano, the instrument with which he was always most at home. In 1840 he married Clara and started to compose songs in the tradition of Schubert and also symphonic music. The latter is not his strongest music, with the exception of the famous Piano Concerto in A. He was a very competent music critic and rejoiced in the discovery of large numbers of manuscripts by Schubert, which had lain neglected since that composer's death. He also was among those who discovered Brahms, with whom Clara Schumann maintained a friendship for many years. Schumann's mental powers started to fail after 1850. He tried to commit suicide, and then was put in a mental home where he died in 1856. Schumann's greatest legacy, besides the stories of the sweetness of his personality, is his wonderfully melodic piano music.

A life of refinement, money, fame, and association with the great was the fortunate fate of Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy (1809–47), but he never reached the musical heights of either Schubert or Schumann. He was born into a wealthy Jewish family which had converted to Protestantism. He received a very careful and thorough musical education and became as famous as a pianist and conductor as he later was as a composer. Like the other romantics, he was a child prodigy, composing the Midsummer Night's Dream overture at the age of seventeen. He traveled extensively in Europe, particularly in Great Britain, as pianist and conductor, and reached the height of his career in 1835 when he became conductor of the famous Gewandhaus orchestra in Leipzig. Here he had great latitude in choosing his programs and delighted in resurrecting the lost works of Johann Sebastian Bach, whose memory he admired above all others. Mendelssohn died young but left a rich legacy of
symphonies (Scotch, Italian, Reformation), the oratorio Elijah, more celebrated than any work in that form since the days of Handel, and a host of minor works.

Of all the romantic composers Carl Maria von Weber (1786–1826) comes nearest to being a figure in the history of nationalism, but only accidentally. Weber came of a theatrical family and spent most of his short mature life traveling, producing operas, and composing operas of his own as well as numerous instrumental and vocal works. It was in the field of opera that he grew to fame. In 1817 he became director of German opera at Dresden; there he wrote his three important operas, Der Freischütz, Euryanthe, and Oberon. The fact that a director of German opera was appointed in addition to a director of Italian opera indicates that the German form was now recognized as separate. Weber comes between Mozart and Wagner; Der Freischütz, between The Magic Flute and Tannhäuser, though it does not approach either of these. In Der Freischütz Weber chose a German subject, in Euryanthe a medieval one, and in Oberon a fairy fantasy; opera was distinctly liberated from its preoccupation with classical and contemporary subjects. Furthermore, Weber advanced the techniques of orchestration so that he appears in the history of music as a forerunner of both Berlioz in France and Wagner in Germany. He is an important link.

Although German romantic music before Wagner was not explicitly nationalistic, in other ways it fitted in with the general romantic current, which was distinctly nationalist. Liberalism and conservatism occupied a secondary place in the minds of the leaders of thought. Either could have marched hand in hand with nationalism, but the battle that was to be fought in German history from 1848 to 1871 was to decide which it was to be. From intoxicated youth to sober age, nationalism was in the air.

Even the stodgy courts realized the universality of the feeling and suggested a wide variety of plans to create some sort of German union that would be more firm than the Confederation and still preserve something of the sovereignty (if sovereignty be divisible) of the various states. Frederick William IV suggested a sort of revival of the Holy Roman Empire as a federal state with more power given to the Federal Diet. He was willing to grant the primacy to Austria with the thought that Prussia would constitute a lord lieutenant with the particular mission of defense and the bearing of arms. This idea got lost in the turmoil of 1848.

In the middle forties the nationalists were faced with an immediate problem which was to prove a test case of nationalism and one of the most complex problems in European diplomatic history. This was the
question of the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein, the Tristan and Isolde of German history. Holstein was in the German Confederation; Schleswig was not. Holstein was almost completely German; Schleswig more than half German, the rest Danish. Holstein was bound by the Salic law in which inheritance could not come through the female line; Schleswig was not bound by this law. Yet the two provinces had been ruled by the same ruler for centuries, and they were determined to remain that way. The ruler of both was also king of Denmark. In January 1848 King Christian VIII died and his heir Frederick VII was a childless divorcé. The possibility loomed that when Frederick died the throne of Denmark would pass to a cousin whose claim came through his mother; thus the problem of the Salic law in Holstein arose. Even more important at the moment was the nationalistic agitation in Denmark whose objective was to integrate Schleswig into Denmark proper. This program infuriated both the Germans in the two duchies and also nationalistically minded Germans elsewhere. It seemed clear that trouble could be expected from this quarter not only on national grounds but also because of the strategic location of the two duchies whose fate was of major interest to both Britain and Russia.

Things may have seemed relatively peaceful even by Metternich's standards in 1846 and 1847. Yet the historian today knows that there were many stirrings—political, economic, social, and intellectual—that were just beneath the boiling point. Once again it was not events in Germany that produced the actual outbreak but events in France. In late February 1848 the people of Paris arose, deposed their king, Louis Philippe, and established a republic. The year of revolution had begun.