

# Revolts Against the Old Order: 1815-1850

## New Ideologies: Liberalism And Nationalism

During the nineteenth century, new ideologies developed as Europe went through great economic and political changes set in motion by the Industrial Revolution and by the French Revolution and Napoleon. Liberalism begins with the belief that people should be able to make their own choices. It took two forms during the nineteenth century: economic liberalism and political liberalism.

Economic liberalism, or classical economics, espoused the belief that not only should people have the right to own businesses, but governments should also allow businesses to function free of government interference. The case for *laissez-faire* was made most forcefully by Thomas Malthus and David Ricardo, economists who set the issue in the context of population increases. Malthus believed that the population could expand only so much before outrunning the food supply. Building on that idea, Ricardo's "iron law of wages" held that as wages rose, people had more children, which eventually led to lower wages because of an increased number of workers. Political liberalism, rooted in the thinking of John Locke and the *philosophes* of the Enlightenment, focused on people's basic rights, including the rights to freedom of speech and equality before the law. Those who advocated these rights encouraged the development of constitutional governments; legislative assemblies; and the extension of suffrage, the right to vote.

The nineteenth century also saw the flowering of nationalism, the unity that comes of shared traditions, languages, customs, religions, and ethnicities. Nationalism fed desires for independence from imperial control and unification with others of a shared nationality to form a nation-state. Nationalism was especially strong in Germany, Italy, and the Austrian Empire.

## Socialism

Another group offered a different solution to the problems of industrialization. Socialists favored sharing resources, rather than competing for them. Socialism holds that the shared ownership and operation of the methods of production offer hope for better lives for the working classes.

The earliest type of socialism was utopian socialism, which advocated the voluntary end of capitalism based on the merits of socialism. Utopian socialism appeared in many forms, primarily in Britain and France.

Socialists such as Louis Blanc and Charles Fourier believed that organizing workers into groups would lead to thriving societies. Blanc advocated the organization of workers into workshops or cooperatives, while Fourier taught the creation of model societies through the analysis of personality types and rotation of work. Other socialists, including Robert Owen and the Comte de Saint Simon, thought that compassion and Christian principles would flower in socialist communities. Owen worked toward that goal by creating communities for workers in Scotland and the United States.