

CHAPTER 1

*American Nationalism
Achieves an Ominous Fulfillment*

ON Saturday evening, February 19, 1848, a little after dusk, a special courier arrived in Washington at the end of a remarkably rapid journey from Mexico City. He had left the Mexican capital scarcely two weeks earlier, had hastened through the mountains and down to Vera Cruz, where he took ship to Mobile, and from there had pushed on in only four days to Washington. His first act upon arriving was to deliver to Mrs. Nicholas P. Trist two letters from her husband in Mexico, after which he went on to the house of Secretary of State James Buchanan. To Buchanan, he delivered a treaty which Trist had negotiated at Guadalupe Hidalgo on February 2 to terminate the war with Mexico.¹ By this treaty the United States was to acquire an area of more than 500,000 square miles, including what is now California, Nevada, and Utah, most of New Mexico and Arizona, and part of Wyoming and Colorado—next to the Louisiana Purchase, the largest single addition to the national domain.²

More than a century later, readers in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Salt Lake City, Phoenix, Tucson, Albuquerque, Santa Fe, and even

1. Norman A. Graebner, *Empire on the Pacific* (New York, 1955), p. 1; Milo Milton Quaife (ed.), *The Diary of James K. Polk* (4 vols.; Chicago, 1910), III, 345.

2. The area of the Mexican cession would measure 522,000 square miles if it did not include the portions of what is now New Mexico, Colorado, and Wyoming then claimed by Texas as having been part of the Republic of Texas, or 619,000 square miles with those portions included. The area of the continental United States is 3,022,000 square miles. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States, 1789-1945* (Washington, 1949), p. 25; Thomas Donaldson, *The Public Domain* (Washington, 1884), pp. 12, 124, 134.

Las Vegas might suppose that such a vast acquisition would have been hailed with wild enthusiasm, but this was by no means true. On the contrary, James K. Polk, a purposeful man then in the third year of his presidency, found the treaty most unwelcome. True, its terms were closely in accord with what he had wanted when he sent Trist to Mexico in the preceding April. But since that time, a great deal had happened. In September, General in Chief Winfield Scott had marched victorious into Mexico City. The occupation of the capital had brought Mexico to a crisis during which Santa Anna resigned as president, leaving the government one step away from collapse and the country itself ripe for acquisition. These events had stimulated some of the eagle-screaming expansionists in the United States to enlarge their aspirations, and to join in a clamor, which had been growing ever since 1846, for the annexation of the entire Mexican republic. Even before these developments took place, Polk had prepared to raise the price of peace, and as he made plans for his annual message at the end of 1847, he drafted a statement threatening that "if Mexico protracted the war," more land cessions, in addition to California and the Southwest, "must be required as further indemnity." His political caution later led him to fall back upon more ambiguous language, but by 1848 his original goals in California and the Southwest, which had once seemed so bold and aspiring, now began to appear parochial and unimaginative.³

At the same time, too, when victory was swelling Polk's ambitions, his emissary of peace had fallen into deep disfavor. Nicholas Trist, whose only previous distinctions had been his marriage to a granddaughter of Thomas Jefferson and his office as chief clerk in the State Department, had been selected to go to Mexico because he seemed a loyal Democrat who would do as he was told and would leave any of the potential glory to be harvested by Secretary Buchanan or other luminaries. But he had greatly disappointed Polk. First, he had indicated to the Mexicans a willingness to consider yielding the area in south Texas between the Nueces and the Rio Grande, which his instructions had given him no discretion to do.

3. Quaife (ed.), *Polk Diary*, III, 161, 163, 216-217. On the movement to acquire all of Mexico, see Edward Gaylord Bourne, "The Proposed Absorption of Mexico in 1847-1848," in his *Essays in Historical Criticism* (New York, 1901), pp. 227-242; John D. P. Fuller, *The Movement for the Acquisition of All Mexico, 1846-1848* (Baltimore, 1936); Albert K. Weinberg, *Manifest Destiny* (Baltimore, 1935).

This alone determined Polk, in October, to hasten his recall, which had already been ordered simply because the president did not want to appear too anxious for peace.⁴ Then, in December, the president learned that Trist, after initially quarreling bitterly with Winfield Scott, had become a warm friend of the Whig general in chief, and that the two of them had planned to use Scott's war fund to buy a treaty from the Mexican peace commissioners. It was the bane of Polk's presidency that his best generals were Whigs, whom he hated more than Mexicans, and he had no intention of countenancing a Democratic peace commissioner who would collaborate with them. Polk, now thoroughly aroused by the reports of the use of bribery, had begun to plan the recall of Scott and was restlessly awaiting the return of his dismissed emissary.⁵

Then the incredible happened. On January 15, a sixty-five-page letter arrived from Trist, who had not received the message of October 25 recalling him until he was already deep in negotiations for a treaty. He knew the administration wanted a treaty; he thought it was within his power to achieve peace and his moral duty not to waste this power. He believed that the letter recalling him was not binding because it was written without awareness of the circumstances in Mexico City. Thus the chief clerk, who had been appointed partly because of his expected pliancy, refused to be recalled and wrote on December 6 to inform the government that in his capacity as a private citizen he was continuing to negotiate a treaty of peace.

The administration could use this treaty or not, as it saw fit. For good measure, Trist lectured the president: he hinted that Polk planned a wrongful war of conquest; he implied that he and General Scott would save the administration in spite of itself; he denounced Polk's close friend Gideon Pillow as an "intriguer . . . of incompre-

4. For Trist's role as a kind of deputy for Buchanan with little discretionary power, see Quaife (ed.), *Polk Diary*, II, 465-468; for his recall, see *ibid.*, III, 185-199, and *Senate Executive Documents*, 30 Cong., 1 sess., No. 52 (Serial 509), pp. 91-95, 195.

5. Polk complained that he had been compelled from the beginning to conduct the war through the agency of two generals, Scott and Taylor, who were "hostile" to his administration. Quaife (ed.), *Polk Diary*, III, 58. For Trist's quarrel with Scott, see the correspondence in *Senate Executive Documents*, 30 Cong., 1 sess., No. 52 (Serial 509), pp. 120-127, 159-173. Eugene Irving McCormac, *James K. Polk* (Berkeley, 1922), pp. 509-512, quotes in full letters from the Trist papers on the reconciliation of Trist and Scott, and also letters of Trist to Scott, July 16, and Scott to Trist, July 17, 1847, showing clearly the intent to use bribes to secure a treaty.

hensible baseness of character." When Polk read this, his anger overflowed, and words of choking fury poured out on the pages of his diary: "His despatch is arrogant, impudent, and very insulting to his government, and even personally offensive to the President. . . . It is manifest to me that he has become the tool of General Scott . . . I have never in my life felt so indignant . . . he is destitute of honour or principle . . . a very base man."⁶

Polk wrote these words on January 15. Exactly five weeks later Mr. Trist's treaty arrived on his doorstep.

For two days, the president fought against the inevitable, but in fact he had no choice, and he knew it. For the Mexican War was highly unpopular throughout a large part of the country; it was regarded as a war of unjustified aggression on behalf of the evil institution of slavery; and Polk was denounced as a warmonger. The House of Representatives, under Whig control, had actually voted a resolution declaring its belief that the war had been "unnecessarily and unconstitutionally begun by the President of the United States";⁷ the public was yearning for peace; and the treaty was, after all, an exact fulfillment of Polk's own terms as formulated ten months previously. He diagnosed his own predicament and stated it forcefully to his cabinet:

If the treaty was now to be made, I should demand more territory, perhaps to make the Sierra Madre the line, yet it was doubtful whether this could be ever obtained by the consent of Mexico. I looked, too, to the consequences of its rejection. A majority of one branch of Congress is opposed to my administration; they have falsely charged that the war was brought on and is continued by me with a view to the conquest of Mexico; and if I were now to reject a Treaty made upon my own terms, as authorized in April last, with the unanimous approbation of the Cabinet, the probability is that Congress would not grant either men or money to prosecute the war. Should this be the result, the army now in Mexico would be constantly wasting and diminishing in numbers, and I might at last be compelled to withdraw them, and thus lose the two Provinces of New México and Upper California, which were ceded to the U.S. by this Treaty. Should the opponents of my administration succeed in carrying the next Presidential election, the great probability is that the country would lose all the advantages secured by this Treaty.⁸

6. Trist's letter in *Senate Executive Documents*, 30 Cong., 1 sess., No. 52 (Serial 509), pp. 231-266; Polk's reaction in Quaife (ed.), *Polk Diary*, III, 300-301.

7. By a vote of 85 to 81, *Congressional Globe*, 30 Cong., 1 sess., p. 95.

8. Quaife (ed.), *Polk Diary*, III, 347-348.

There was nothing to do but to send Trist's document to the Senate.

The Senate received the treaty on February 23, but did not immediately begin deliberations upon it, for John Quincy Adams had been stricken on the floor of the House on the twenty-second, and congressional business was suspended until after his funeral.⁹ But then, the Senate acted with remarkable promptness. Within less than two weeks, ratification was voted. But before the brief contest was over, events had demonstrated that complex and highly mixed attitudes lay behind the votes which saved the peace settlement. Two especially significant amendments came to a roll call, and these two revealed the crosscurrents in the Senate. On March 6, Jefferson Davis of Mississippi moved an amendment which would change the boundary in such a way as to include much of what is now northern Mexico. Since Mexico could hardly be expected to accept this change, a vote for the amendment was virtually a vote to continue the war, but the amendment nevertheless received the votes of eleven Democrats, including Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois, Daniel S. Dickinson of New York, Edward A. Hannegan of Indiana, William Allen of Ohio, and seven slave-state senators. On March 8, George E. Badger, a North Carolina Whig, offered an amendment which would have deleted all territorial acquisitions from the treaty. Since it was a foregone conclusion that the treaty could never command a two-thirds majority in this form, the introduction of this measure placed Whigs who opposed both annexation and war in the dilemma that to end the war, they would have to accept annexation, or to prevent annexation they would have to prolong the war. Nevertheless, fifteen Whigs voted for the Badger amendment. Eight of them, including Daniel Webster, came from New England, one from New Jersey, one from Ohio, three from the border states of Delaware, Maryland, and Kentucky, and one each from North Carolina and Georgia. From these two votes it was evident that enough senators were dissatisfied with the treaty to defeat it. But when the decisive vote came on March 10, the opposing groups could not combine. Expansionists who wanted to annex northern Mexico feared to reject a treaty which secured California and the Southwest, and on the question of ratification only five of the eleven who had voted for the Davis amendment now voted in the negative. If these five had been joined by the fifteen Whigs who wanted no

9. Samuel Flagg Bemis, *John Quincy Adams and the Union* (New York, 1956), pp. 534-538; *Senate Executive Documents*, 30 Cong., 1 sess., No. 52 (Serial 509), p. 4.

territorial acquisition, they would have formed a bloc larger than the one-third necessary to defeat the treaty, but the opponents of expansion feared to reject annexation when this meant also to reject peace, and only seven of the fifteen who had voted for the Badger amendment voted against ratification. On the question of ratification, two additional senators, Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri and Sidney Breese of Illinois, voted in opposition. Altogether twenty-six of the fifty-eight senators had at various times voted against basic features of the treaty, but it was nevertheless ratified by a vote of 38 to 14.¹⁰ It was then hastily returned to Mexico and there approved by both houses of the Congress, so that ratifications could be exchanged on May 30.¹¹

Thus, by the acts of a dismissed emissary, a disappointed president, and a divided Senate, the United States acquired California and the Southwest. This gigantic step in the growth of the American republic was not taken with enthusiasm by either president or Congress, but resulted from the fact that the elements in opposition could find no viable alternative and no basis on which they could combine. It was an ironic triumph for "Manifest Destiny," an ominous fulfillment for the impulses of American nationalism. It reflected a sinister dual quality in this nationalism, for at the same time when national forces, in the fullness of a very genuine vigor, were achieving an external triumph, the very triumph itself was subjecting their nationalism to internal stresses which, within thirteen years, would bring the nation to a supreme crisis.

Although serious potential divisions lay beneath the apparent unity of a triumphant nation in 1848, the fact remains that the appearances were indeed auspicious. Judging by material indications, no country on the planet had made such rapid strides in the fulfillment of national greatness and national unity as the United States at the midpoint of this century of nationalism in the Western world. Here was a country so young that many of the citizens were

10. The secrecy provisions of the executive sessions in which the treaty was approved were promptly lifted, and though the debates were not published, the journal of proceedings, showing roll-call divisions, was printed as *Senate Executive Documents*, 30 Cong., 1 sess., No. 52 (Serial 509). See pp. 18, 24, and 36 for the votes on the Davis and Badger amendments and on approval of the treaty. Historians (with the exception of George Lockhart Rives, *The United States and Mexico, 1821-1848* [2 vols.; New York, 1913], II, 630-637) have consistently neglected the story of senatorial approval while writing over and over again the story of Trist's mission.

11. *Senate Executive Documents*, 30 Cong., 1 sess., No. 60 (Serial 509).

older than the republic, yet in less than sixty years since the inauguration of George Washington, the population had almost doubled every twenty years, increasing from 4 million in 1790 to 23 million by 1850. The area of the country had increased from 890,000 to 2,997,000 square miles, and the march of empire, begun by thirteen states strung precariously along the Atlantic seaboard, had not slowed its pace until the United States became a transcontinental, two-ocean colossus, with the superb endowment of natural resources that would enable it, in the twentieth century, to assume a position of world leadership. Meanwhile, the original thirteen had increased to twenty-nine states, so that the majority of the states owed their existence to the creative act of the federal government. The strength of the infant Hercules seemed more impressive than ever before as Yankee volunteers patrolled the streets of Mexico City.

In terms of government, also, nationalism appeared to have made great strides. Andrew Jackson had shown that the president could be a national leader rather than a mere federal chairman of the board. A nationalistic Congress had adopted tariff laws to promote a nationally self-sufficient economy and internal improvement legislation to encourage a national system of transportation. In 1823, President Monroe had proclaimed for the United States a role in the Western Hemisphere which could be fulfilled only by a vigorous nation. Meanwhile, the federal courts were patiently laying the basis for a system of national law, a basis which John Marshall had proclaimed when he asserted, "The United States form, for many, and for most important purposes, a single nation. . . . In war, we are one people. In making peace, we are one people. In all commercial regulations we are one and the same people . . . America has chosen to be, in many respects, and to many purposes, a nation."¹²

By modern standards, the political structure of mid-nineteenth-century America was still quite inadequate for a vigorous nation. Andrew Jackson had avoided extensive use of federal power, sagely observing that the strength of the nation depended upon the devotion with which its citizens supported it and not upon the energy with which it performed governmental functions. He himself, by preventing recharter of the Bank of the United States, had effectively abandoned any effort to maintain a national monetary system.

12. *Cohens v. Virginia*, 6 Wheaton 413-414 (1821).

His party and the Whig party were both coalitions of local organizations rather than fully developed national political organizations.

But even if the political machinery did not bespeak a mature or complete nationality, there were nevertheless broad foundations of common experience and common culture on which American national unity was based. Students of the theory of nationalism generally agree that while nationalism itself is a subjective, psychological phenomenon—a matter of sentiment, will, feeling, loyalty—and not an objective phenomenon, capable of being measured by given ingredients, it is nevertheless true that a certain core of cultural conditions is conducive to the development of nationalism, and that among these conditions are "common descent, language, territory, political entity, customs and tradition, and religion."¹³ Although no one of these components is indispensable, most of them are usually present in any fully developed nationality.

By all of these measures, the American people in the 1840s showed a considerable degree of homogeneity and cohesion. The great immigration from Ireland and Germany began during the decade, but most of the population, save for the Negroes in the South, was of British origin, seasoned by long residence in America. Ethnically, America has probably never shown a greater degree of sameness than at the time when the nation was dividing and moving toward civil war.¹⁴

American speech, already distinct from that of England, provided just such a medium of nationwide communication as Noah Webster had striven for when he made it his object, through speller and dictionary, to promote a "national language [as] . . . a

13. For discussion of conditions requisite to the growth of nationalism, see Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism* (New York, 1944), pp. 13–18 (quotation is from p. 14); Frederick Hertz, *Nationality in History and Politics* (London, 1944), pp. 7–8; Carlton J. H. Hayes, *Essays on Nationalism* (New York, 1926); Louis L. Snyder, *The Meaning of Nationalism* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1954), pp. 38, 67–69, 113; Karl W. Deutsch et al., *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area* (Princeton, 1957), pp. 46–59. Most writers agree that the factors named in the text are somehow important to the development of nationalism, but they do not agree as to the nature of the process within which these factors operate.

14. In 1850, more than nine persons in ten were of native birth. The total population was 23,191,000, and the foreign-born numbered 2,244,000. More than 1,420,000 had come to America in the decade 1840–1850, which, even allowing for mortality and reverse migration, still indicates that there were scarcely 1 million foreign-born in the United States in 1840, when the population was about 17 million. *Historical Statistics* (1949), p. 32.

band of national union."¹⁵ Yankee twang and southern drawl, to be sure, flavored the speech of diverse sections, but these were less serious as barriers to communication than the provincial dialects of Yorkshire and Somerset in England, or of Gascony and Alsace in France.

The problem of a common territory had been a source of conscious concern to American patriots, who had at one time feared that the mountain barriers between the Atlantic seaboard and the Ohio Valley would mold the people of these areas into separate groups, or that the vastness of the Louisiana region would spread the population too thin for any real cohesion. But the development, first of turnpikes and steamboats, later of canals and railroads, had furnished a means to conquer distance and thus to neutralize its dispersive effect. Many Americans were acutely conscious of this fact. Thus it was John C. Calhoun of South Carolina who, in 1817, on the floor of the House of Representatives, warned that "whatever impedes the intercourse of the extremes with . . . the centre of the republic, weakens the Union" and that "not even dissimilarity of language tends more [than distance] to estrange man from man"; therefore, he exhorted his colleagues, "let us, then, bind the republic together with a perfect system of roads and canals." By mid-century, the transportation system was still by no means perfect, but it had developed sufficiently to enable internal trade, which had been negligible at the time of the Revolution, to outstrip foreign trade by 1831, and to reach a volume three times as great as that of foreign trade by 1847. In fact, a regional division of labor had grown up, in which the South produced exports for the entire country, the Northwest supplied foodstuffs for the South and for growing urban and industrial centers in the East, and New England and the Middle States handled most of the commerce and manufacturing of the nation. These features of sectional differentiation involved friction at some levels. But they also led to economic

15. Noah Webster, *Dissertations on the English Language* (Boston, 1789), p. 397 and *passim*. On language as a factor, see Hertz, *Nationality*, pp. 78–89. The linguistic study of distinctive American speech has not lent itself to historical generalizations or to studies of historical development, but see H. L. Mencken, *The American Language* (4th ed.; New York, 1936), pp. 104–168, and *The American Language, Supplement* (New York, 1945), pp. 151–226. On the related subject of literary nationalism, see Hans Kohn, *American Nationalism* (New York, 1957), pp. 41–89, with valuable citations.

interdependence, and they contributed to making the area of the republic a common territory in a functional sense.¹⁶

In religion, all sections of the United States responded to the fervor of evangelical Protestant Christianity and to the ethics of a gospel which, by promising damnation for sin and salvation for repentance and virtue, emphasized the responsibility of the individual. Hard work and self-denial were virtues; idleness and self-indulgence were vices, and this was no less true in the backwoods of Mississippi than in the most rockbound strongholds of Yankee Puritanism—though lapses from grace might take more extravagant form and call for more emotional repentance in the backwoods. Enclaves of aristocratic Anglicanism and of intellectualized Unitarianism existed, but were minor, at least in numbers, while Catholi-

16. For Calhoun's speech, see Richard K. Crallé (ed.), *Works of John C. Calhoun* (6 vols.; New York, 1854-57), II, 188-192. For other contemporary statements showing an awareness of the importance of communications for national unity see Merle Curti, *The Roots of American Loyalty* (New York, 1946), pp. 113-118. For expressions of concern lest too extensive a territory should prevent the development of national unity see *ibid.*, p. 32; Fisher Ames to Christopher Gore, Oct. 3, 1803, on the acquisition of Louisiana ("We rush like a comet into infinite space"), in Seth Ames (ed.), *Works of Fisher Ames* (2 vols.; Boston, 1854), I, 323-324; warnings of James Jackson on opening Louisiana to settlement, Feb. 1804, as reported in Memorandum by William Plumer, in Everett Somerville Brown, *The Constitutional History of the Louisiana Purchase* (Berkeley, 1920), pp. 226, 228, 230; speech of Josiah Quincy, Jan. 14, 1811, on statehood for Louisiana in *Annals of Congress*, 11 Cong., 3 sess., cols. 534, 537 ("The Constitution . . . never can be strained to lap over all the wilderness of the West"); letter of Jefferson to John Breckinridge, Aug. 12, 1803 ("Federalists see in this acquisition [of Louisiana] the formation of a new Confederacy . . . and a separation . . . from us"), in Andrew A. Lipscomb (ed.), *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson* (20 vols.; Washington, 1903-04), X, 409; report of Major Stephen Long on his explorations and his discovery of a great American Desert, unfit for settlement but "of infinite, importance . . . inasmuch as it is calculated to serve as a barrier to prevent too great an extension of our population westward," in Reuben Gold Thwaites (ed.), *Early Western Travels* (32 vols.; Cleveland, 1904-07), XVII, 148.

It is remarkable that Calhoun and others, with their idea of strengthening the Union by improving communications, had arrived in an operative way at almost exactly the same functional approach to nationalism advanced at the conceptual level by Karl W. Deutsch. Deutsch argues that nationalism is best measured not in terms of "common attributes," which present certain fallacies and circularities of argument, but in terms of actual volume and intensity of communications. A high incidence of communication bespeaks a "complementarity" and a tendency toward national unity among the people who are involved in it, and a lower incidence between these people and others indicates the limits of the national unit. Viewed in this functional sense, common language and common religion are significant because they enhance communication within the in-group and diminish the communication between the in-group and other groups. Deutsch, *Nationalism and Social Communication: An Inquiry into the Foundations of Nationality* (New York, 1953).

cism still seemed exotic and suspect to most Americans.¹⁷ When, in the demoralizing hour of Lincoln's death, James A. Garfield affirmed that "God reigns and the Government at Washington lives," it was generally understood that the deity in question was a Protestant God quite as certainly as the government was a democratic republic.

The fact that it was a democratic republic was a further bond uniting the American people in a political communion. Travelers from abroad were forcibly reminded of the strength of the political ties which bound the citizens of the United States together, for the Americans boasted of them incessantly. After being asked how he liked "our institutions," the traveler seldom had time to reply before his questioner would launch into a vainglorious harangue on the decadence of monarchies, the merits of a system in which the people were sovereign, and the superiority of republicanism, American style. So strong was the belief in American political values that it was hardly deemed excessive for Andrew Jackson in his farewell address to say that Americans were "the guardians of freedom to preserve it for . . . the human race," or for James K. Polk to call the Federal Union "this most admirable and wisest system of well-regulated government among men ever devised by human minds."¹⁸

If common political ideals and loyalties bound the American people together, a common culture and a common tradition reinforced the political ties. Here was a body of more than 20 million people who had no privileged aristocracy and, except for the Negroes, no

17. "Protestantism was, in truth, a patriotic touchstone . . . the Bible figured as a sacred patriotic symbol." Curti, *Roots*, pp. 77-79. On religion as a factor, see Hertz, *Nationality*, pp. 98-145. In 1850 the census reported all church buildings and the numbers of people whom they would accommodate. The enumeration showed 37 Jewish churches, 1,227 Roman Catholic ones, and 36,584 Protestant ones. The Jewish churches were estimated to accommodate 19,000 people; the Catholic, 676,000; the Protestant, 14,000,000. It was recognized that the Catholics had greater numbers in proportion to their church accommodations, but even when heavily discounted, the figures are revealing, and are more reliable than many church statistics. Compiled by the author from J. D. B. De Bow, *Statistical View of the United States: Compendium of the Seventh Census* (Washington, 1854). Independent estimates in 1844 by Robert Baird, *Religion in America* (New York, 1844), pp. 264, 271, 283, placed the numbers thus: Protestants, 15,364,000; Catholics, 1,300,000; Jews, 50,000.

18. James D. Richardson (ed.), *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents* (11 vols.; New York, 1907), II, 1527; III, 2225. For notable specimens of extravagant glorification of America, see Curti, *Roots*, pp. 30-64; Weinberg, *Manifest Destiny*, pp. 107-111, 117-119, 127, 171, 194, 202-207.

proletariat and peasantry. True, the South had a tradition of planter leadership, and in New England deference was still due to ministers, magistrates, sea captains, and East India merchants. But in both areas, elite leadership had to be democratically exercised, as the Federalists discovered when Jefferson carried every state in New England except Connecticut in 1804, and as the Whig gentry of the plantation South learned when the hell-roaring Jacksonians swept them out of office and kept them out until they learned to match hard cider and log cabins against buckskin and plain hickory.¹⁹ Although urban working men were beginning to be a significant factor in the population, the vast majority of Americans still lived by the cultivation of the soil, and their lives were patterned by the rhythms and rigors of nature.²⁰ Pitting their muscle against the elements, these men were independent, aggressively individualistic, and fiercely hostile to external controls. Prizing the opportunity to become unequal in personal achievement and hating the inequality of pretension to status, they cherished an unsleeping distrust of public authority and glorified the virtues of simplicity, frugality, liberty, and self-reliance. Despite the nuances of regional difference, Americans conformed to this basic pattern from one end of the Union to the other. The fact that Negroes were largely excluded from this pattern constituted a great exception but did not seriously weaken the prevalence of these attitudes otherwise.

With a body of common values to unite them, they shared pride in the memories of the War for Independence. As the Revolutionary generation passed from the scene, Americans became increasingly

19. Fletcher M. Green, "Democracy in the Old South," *JSH*, XII (1946), 3-23; Green, *Constitutional Development in the South Atlantic States, 1776-1860* (Chapel Hill, 1930).

20. In 1850 the population of the United States was 15 percent urban and 85 percent rural. The population of the North (the free states plus Missouri) was 20 percent urban and 80 percent rural; that of the South (the slave states except Missouri) was 8 percent urban and 92 percent rural. (California is not included here.) "Urban" means living in towns of more than 2,500 population. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Sixteenth Census of the United States: Population* (4 vols.; Washington, 1942), I, Tables 7 and 8. Also in 1850, the number of free males gainfully employed was reported at 5,371,000, with 2,400,000 in agriculture and 944,000 in manufacturing establishments which produced more than \$500 per year output. The slave states' total of 1,569,000 included 957,000 in agriculture and 160,000 in such manufacturing; the free states' total of 3,802,000 included 1,572,000 in agriculture and 784,000 in such manufacturing labor. In only four states (Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, and New Jersey) did the numbers in manufacturing exceed those in agriculture. Compiled by the author from De Bow, *Compendium of the Seventh Census*.

conscious of their heritage from the men of an age which had come to be regarded as heroic. It was this consciousness which made Lafayette's visit a national festival in 1824-1825; which prompted the completion of the Bunker Hill monument in 1843 and the beginning of the Washington Monument in 1848; which inspired a South Carolinian in 1854 to found the Mount Vernon Ladies Association to preserve Washington's home as a national shrine; and which caused men to uncover their heads in the presence of a bronze bell that had pealed for independence in 1776. Deep patriotic sentiment had inspired Everett and Webster to famous orations which echoed in countless schoolhouses; it had enshrined the Constitution as a "palladium of all our liberties," to be venerated and not merely to be admired; and it had apotheosized George Washington, who was certainly no democrat, but who neatly avoided classification as an aristocrat by being transferred to the category of a god. It had made the twenty-second of February and the fourth of July national holidays at a time when Thanksgiving still remained a regional festival and Christmas still seemed too popish to be countenanced by Yankees of the true persuasion. On these days of gargantuan eating and drinking, Americans poured forth torrents of overblown rhetoric to voice the boundless innocence and pride with which they loved their country.²¹

The exuberant nationalism of the forties has long been recognized by historians, but what has often been overlooked is that this sentiment seemed to prevail in the South as vigorously as elsewhere. Although southerners consistently subscribed to the constitutional doctrine that the United States was a federation and not a nation, they sometimes forgot their political metaphysics in moments of enthusiasm, and allowed unguarded expressions to escape. Thomas Jefferson himself had done so in 1785, when he said, "The interests of the states . . . ought to be made joint in every possible instance, in order to cultivate the idea of our being one Nation."²² In the early

21. On American nationalism considered with reference to theoretical concepts of nationalism, see Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism*, pp. 268-325; Kohn, *American Nationalism*; Curti, *Roots*; Wesley Frank Craven, *The Legend of the Founding Fathers* (New York, 1956); David M. Potter, "The Historian's Use of Nationalism and Vice Versa," in Potter, *The South and the Sectional Conflict* (Baton Rouge, 1968), pp. 34-83; Paul C. Nagel, *One Nation Indivisible: The Union in American Thought, 1776-1861* (New York, 1964)—the last especially rich in illustrative evidence.

22. Jefferson to James Monroe, June 17, 1785, in Lipscomb (ed.), *Writings of Jefferson*, V, 14. For another use of the term "nation," XV, 46.

period of the Republic exuberant nationalism had been as prevalent in the South as elsewhere, and even after sectional dissensions became acute, nationalistic attitudes continued to find expression. Thus it was at Charleston, South Carolina, in 1845, that young Edwin De Leon, later to be a stalwart of secession, launched the ultranationalistic "Young America" movement by proclaiming that the United States was in the full flush of "exulting manhood," and that if there were a young Italy, a young Ireland, et cetera, there should be a "young America" also.²³ At Raleigh, North Carolina, in 1849, a local editor could boast on the Fourth of July, "There are but few places in the Union, where, in proportion to means and population, the day is celebrated with more lively enthusiasm."²⁴ In 1854 the *Southern Quarterly Review* rejoiced in "our position as the leading power of the Western world," and in January 1861 *De Bow's Review*, of New Orleans, proclaimed that European immigration to America might result in "a race of men nobler than any which has hitherto worked to adorn God's beautiful earth." Even a southern fire-eater like Pierre Soulé of Louisiana was capable of invoking in 1852 "reverence for the institutions of our country, that devout faith in their efficacy which looks to their promulgation throughout the world." Stephen R. Mallory of Florida, in 1859, used a nonfederative figure of speech when he exulted that it was "no more possible for this country to pause in its career than for the free and untrammeled eagle to cease to soar." Two years later he was secretary of the navy in a government at war with the United States.²⁵

Against this background of basic homogeneity, common ideals, integrating policies, increasing cohesiveness, rapid growth of the republic, and ardent national loyalties, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo seemed a crowning fulfillment of American nationalism.

It was a timely moment for such a triumph, for nationalism, in the early months of 1848, appeared to be coming into its own throughout the Western world. In Europe, where nationalism was distinguished by a markedly revolutionary flavor, a new surge of national-

23. Edwin De Leon, *The Position and Duties of "Young America"* (Charleston, 1845); Merle E. Curti, "'Young America,'" *AHR* XXXII (1926), 34.

24. Quoted from *Raleigh Register*, July 7, 1849, by Fletcher M. Green, "Listen to the Eagle Scream: One Hundred Years of the Fourth of July in North Carolina (1776-1876)," *NCHR*, XXXI (1954), 318.

25. Quotations from *Southern Quarterly Review* and from Mallory in Weinberg, *Manifest Destiny*, pp. 199-207; from *De Bow's Review* in Curti, *Roots*, p. 72; from Soulé in Curti, "'Young America,'" p. 39.

ism really began on February 24. On that day, while Polk, in Washington, was waiting for the Senate to take up Trist's treaty, a mob in Paris, milling about the Tuileries, frightened Louis Philippe into abdicating the throne of France and making way not, as he supposed, for his grandson, but for a republic. On that very same day, copies of a thirty-page octavo pamphlet written in German, by Karl Marx, then in Brussels, lay fresh from the press in a London warehouse. This *Communist Manifesto*, as it was called, was published four days later, but the vast explosion which it ultimately set off was long delayed, and thus the most momentous event of 1848 exercised no perceptible effect during that year. Instead, it was the tumult in Paris that detonated a string of revolutions which, in rapid succession, drove Metternich from Vienna, the Habsburg emperor from his throne, and the pope from the Vatican. In the brief interval while America was waiting for Mexico to ratify the treaty of peace, nationalism scored repeated triumphs in various parts of Europe. In Italy in March, patriots from all parts of the peninsula united under the King of Piedmont and drove the Austrians into the mountain defenses of the Quadrilateral. Cavour, Mazzini, and Garibaldi were all at work. In Hungary in April, the Magyars under Louis Kossuth demanded and were promised a separate Hungarian ministry for their country. In Frankfurt in May, liberal Germans who had deposed the king of Bavaria and overawed the king of Prussia met in a parliament to frame a constitution which would bring liberal nationalism to all of Germany. Meanwhile, Denmark had already moved peacefully from absolutism to constitutional government. In Prague, also in May, the St. Wenceslas Committee affirmed the historic rights of Bohemia and called for a pan-Slavic congress to unite the Slavic people. In Poland, in Croatia, in Serbia, nationalism was stirring into life.

But this tide fell as swiftly as it had risen. The last American troops left Mexico in August. By the time they did so, a French army had smashed an insurrection of the workers during the terrible Days of June, at the barricades in Paris, and France had ceased to be a generative force for liberal nationalism in Europe; by the end of the year, Napoleon the Little would be at the head of the government. In Italy, the Piedmontese troops had sustained a crushing defeat at Custoza, and Milan had fallen again under Austrian control; within another year, the king would abdicate, the last desperate struggles of the Italian people would be suppressed at Rome and Venice, and

Garibaldi would be on his way to exile as a candlemaker on Staten Island. In Germany, the Frankfurt Parliament had begun to let its nationalistic energies trickle away in a footless war with Denmark and in futile academic debate; in another year, its members would learn that no one wanted an imperial crown conferred by them, and the remnant of their body, transferred to Stuttgart, would be ignominiously locked out of their hall. As an aftermath of '48 in Germany, Carl Schurz came to America, Karl Marx went to the British Museum to become a preceptor rather than a practitioner of revolution; and Otto von Bismarck began to plan for a national unification, which would be based on blood and iron and not on liberal reform. In Bohemia, Marshal Windischgrätz had made quick work of the Pan-Slavic Congress, and at Budapest, the Magyars were beset by the very force which they had themselves invoked, as Croatian and Serbian nationalists revolted against Hungarian control; Kossuth was soon to become a hero, sublime in his defeat, a lionized exile on a triumphal American tour which took him in 1852 to dinner at the White House with President Fillmore, while his high-spirited entourage was breaking up the furniture at Brown's Hotel.²⁶

After a transient hour of glory, seasoned with incredibly romantic episodes of heroism and drama, liberal nationalism in Europe had met with disasters from which it never recovered. The fact that it had done so made the success of the national experiment in America all the more crucial to the fate of democratic nationalism in the modern world. This was the essential truth which Abraham Lincoln later affirmed at Gettysburg when, without once mentioning the word "America," he defined the Civil War as a testing to determine whether "this nation or any nation so conceived and so dedicated can long endure."

But although liberal nationalism seemed to enjoy an ascendancy in America at the end of 1848 which contrasted dramatically with its debacle in Europe at that time, it in fact faced challenges in the New World almost as portentous as those which had overwhelmed it in the Old. The American victory over Mexico and the acquisition of the Southwest had sealed the triumph of national expansion, but

26. Priscilla S. Robertson, *Revolutions of 1848: A Social History* (New York, 1960); Arnold Whitridge, *Men in Crisis: The Revolutions of 1848* (New York, 1949); Carl Wittke, "The German Forty-Eighters in America," *AHR*, LIII (1948), 711-725.

it had also triggered the release of forces of sectional dissension. Much of the national harmony had rested upon the existence of a kind of balance between the northern and southern parts of the United States. The decision to fight the war had disturbed this balance, and the acquisition of a new empire which each section desired to dominate endangered the balance further. Thus, the events which marked the culmination of six decades of exhilarating national growth at the same time marked the beginning of sectional strife which for a quarter of a century would subject American nationalism to its severest testing. Perhaps it may even be said that the developments which gave American nationalism the strength to survive also generated a supreme threat to its survival.