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German unification and freedom movement in the 19th century.

The period between 1800 and 1848 was a time of great change and upheaval in Germany, marked by both the movement toward unification and the struggle for greater freedom and democracy. During this time, many Germans were grappling with questions of national identity and what it meant to be German in a time of political and social transformation.

One of the most significant events during this period was the movement toward German unification, which gained momentum in the early 19th century. As historian James Sheehan notes, "The idea of a united Germany, of a nation-state that would bring together the various German-speaking territories, had been politics and culture since the middle ages" (Sheehan, 1993, P. 2). This movement was driven in part by a desire to create a more unified and cohesive political entity, but also by a sense of shared cultural and linguistic heritage among Germans.

At the same time, there was also a growing push for greater political freedom and democracy in Germany. As Sheehan notes, "the demand for political rights, for representative institutions, and democratic forms of government was a major part of the movement towards German unification" (Sheehan, 1993, p. 3). Many Germans felt that the existing political system was outdated and unresponsive to their needs, and they sought greater participation in the political process.

Despite these aspirations, however, the movement toward German unification and greater freedom was fraught with challenges and setbacks. For example, the Congress of Vienna in 1815, which sought to restore the pre-Napoleonic order in Europe, placed significant constraints on the ability of Germans to unite and organize politically. Additionally, there were significant differences in language, culture, and political ideology among Germans that made the process of unification difficult and contentious.

Nonetheless, the period between 1800 and 1848 was a crucial one in the development of German national identity and political culture. As Sheehan note, “By the mid-19th century, the idea of a united Germany, with a single political entity and a shared national culture, had become a powerful force in German society” (Sheehan, 1993, p. 4.). This sense of national identity was shaped not only by political and cultural factors, but also by the shared experiences of Germans in the face of economic and social upheaval.

In conclusion, the period between 1800 and 1848 was a time of great change and transformation in Germany, marked by both the movement toward unification and the struggle for greater freedom and democracy. While the path towards German unification was not always smooth, this period was a crucial one in the development of German national identity and political culture, and laid the groundwork for the eventual unification of Germany in 1871.

References:

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