

GIUSEPPE MAZZINI, (1805-1872)

Italian nationalist and patriot, who, together with Giuseppe Garibaldi, Camillo Benso di Cavour, and Victor Emmanuel II, is considered one of the "patron saints" of the Italian Risorgimento. While still in his teens Mazzini committed himself to the cause of Italian independence and unity. Forced into exile in 1831 for his revolutionary activities, he began to recruit followers and organize uprisings against the rulers of the various Italian states. His association, Giovine Italia (Young Italy), founded in the 1830s, attracted adherents throughout the peninsula and among Italian political exiles everywhere. With the exception of Giuseppe Garibaldi, no other Italian Risorgimento leader enjoyed greater international renown than Mazzini in his time. His revolutionary vision extended beyond the limited objective of Italian national unity. Mazzini's primary goals were the end of Austrian hegemony in Italy and of the temporal power of the pope, Italian unity, republicanism, democracy, and the liberation of all oppressed peoples. Imbued with a messianic zeal, he believed that, united under the banner of "God and people", Italians would succeed in ridding themselves of their various rulers and establish a democratic unitary republic with its capital in Rome. This new Italy would lead other subject peoples to freedom and liberty and embody a "third" Rome, successor to ancient and papal Rome. A new Europe, controlled by the people and not by sovereigns, would replace the old order. By the 1840s Mazzini had become the recognized leader of the Italian nationalist revolutionary movement. His appeal to Italians, restive under oppressive governments, was unrivaled, if not unchallenged. Intellectuals and artisans, men and women, all responded to him. Many lost their lives in abortive revolts inspired by his teachings.

In 1848 Mazzini's dreams seemed to be realized, when news of the successful revolutions throughout Europe reached him in his English exile. As the revolutions progressed like brush-fires up the Italian peninsula, Mazzini arrived in Milan. He was greeted enthusiastically by the people, less so by their leaders. Divided among themselves on whether to accept the invitation of Piedmont-Sardinia to become part of a greater kingdom under its king Charles Albert in return for the latter's military help against Austria, they resented Mazzini's presence and his advice to set political differences aside for the moment and to cooperate with Charles Albert in the name of national unity. On April 30, 1848, Carlo Cattaneo, Giuseppe Ferrari, and other republican leaders of the Milanese revolt proposed to overturn their pro-Piedmontese provisional government and request French assistance against Austria. Mazzini opposed them, urging support for the efforts of the Italian monarch and army, rather than appealing to foreign troops. This drew angry criticisms from the republican leaders who accused Mazzini of betraying his republican principles. The quarrel proved futile. Marshall Radetzky was already regrouping his forces against the Piedmontese army which he would eventually defeat at Custozza on July 25, 1848, to reestablish Austrian control over Lombardy. Meanwhile events in Rome were becoming radicalized. After the assassination of the papal minister Pellegrino Rossi and the departure of Pope Pius IX from the city on November 24, 1848, the Romans proclaimed a republic in January 1849 and invited Mazzini to join them. Mazzini's arrival marked the beginning of the most dramatic period in his life. Elected to the Triumvirate, the republic's executive body, he finally had the opportunity to participate actively in laying the foundations for what he hoped would be a new democratic united republican Italy. His slogan "thought and action" became reality. Since 1834, he had planned revolutions from afar, while others had risked their lives. Now, as Triumvir

of the Roman Republic he became an active participant in what was to remain his supreme revolutionary experience.

Like the other insurgent regimes throughout the peninsula, the Roman republic had a brief, intense life. In response to an appeal by Pope Pius IX, French soldiers appeared at the outskirts of Rome on April 30, 1849, and there began the city's futile, brave defense. The various reforms planned by Mazzini could never be effected as survival became the dominant concern. Finally, the city could no longer hold out against the French, and Rome opened its gates to the troops of the Second Republic on July 3, 1849. On July 1, two days before the entry of the French troops, the Constitution of the Roman Republic, was passed by the popularly elected Assembly, and it was solemnly proclaimed in the Campidoglio (City Hall) two days later while the French occupied the city. A disconsolate Mazzini, unmolested by the French garrison, lingered in Rome until the middle of July, when he left Italy once more for exile. He continued to conspire, but the revolutionary élan that had inspired Italian nationalists to follow Mazzini before 1848 faded in the 1850s. The revolutions of 1848-1849 ended the revolutionary phase of the Risorgimento and marked the beginning of a realignment of political forces in Italy and elsewhere in Europe. While Mazzini continued to be held in high esteem, respect, and even affection, Italian nationalists began to turn to the monarchical leadership offered by Camillo Benso di Cavour and his king Victor Emmanuel in Piedmont-Sardinia. In 1861 the Kingdom of Italy was proclaimed at Turin, capital of Piedmont-Sardinia, by a Parliament in which sat elected representatives from all of Italy except Venetia and Rome. A disillusioned Mazzini never accepted monarchical united Italy and continued to agitate for a democratic republic until his death in 1872.

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