# “The Most Dangerous Man in Europe”

*How Giuseppe Mazzini’s Nationalism Shaped the Italian Unification Period*

**Rachel Anderson**
**Eastern Connecticut State University**

Abstract

The Italian unification period of the nineteenth century finally saw the fragmented states of Italy become one nation as it stands today. This article explores how Italian nationalist Giuseppe Mazzini influenced Italy's unification. By using a combination of Mazzini's essays and autobiographical notes along with secondary sources on Mazzini and nineteenth century Italy, this article demonstrates that his writings allowed for the dissemination of nationalist thought throughout Italy and Europe more broadly. Mazzini was often discredited by his contemporaries and early historians as a failure due to his unsuccessful military revolutions, but only looking at his revolutionary actions fails to take into account the fact that Mazzini's life's work was educating the Italian people on the importance of national unity.

Article

Prior to the mid-nineteenth century, the modern state of Italy did not exist. Instead, the Italian Peninsula contained a series of duchies, kingdoms, and republics all governed by separate rulers, which were subject to all manner of foreign influence. France and Austria were the most involved in the governing of Italy, and after several hundred years, the inhabitants of Italy began to desire freedom from these foreign nations. In the early nineteenth century, France briefly occupied Italy, giving them a glimpse of the benefits of a nation. This occupation planted the seeds of nationalist thought in the hearts and minds of a number of Italians, who began to work diligently towards the goal of a politically unified Italy.

One of these inhabitants was Giuseppe Mazzini. Born in the Republic of Genoa in 1805, Mazzini delved into the world of politics quite early in life. He became involved in the secret societies, preaching political change until he was arrested and exiled for his activities and told not to return to Italy under threat of execution. Despite his geographical distance from the Italian Peninsula, his love for his perceived home and his desire to see it unified did not wane. Mazzini was a prolific writer and thinker, and while in France he founded his own secret society, Young Italy (Giovine Italia). This society became the vehicle for Mazzini to express his ideas about the eventual unification of Italy. His thoughts were quite specific and often did not align with other Italian nationalists of his time. While early Italian nationalists envisioned the future of Italy as a series of federal states, Mazzini envisioned the territory of the Italian Peninsula as one, unified Italian republic. While sometimes

criticized for his ideas, it did not deter Mazzini, and he worked tirelessly his whole life to pursue the cause of Italian unification. As this article explores, he sought to foster nationalism not only through the creation of Young Italy but also through establishing schools and newspapers, which helped create a sense of community and national identity. Educating Italians about their shared culture and history helped to strengthen his argument and garner support for the political unification of Italy. Unification did eventually happen, although not under the circumstances he wanted. Mazzini envisioned an Italy governed by a democratic republic, but Italy became a monarchy instead. Nevertheless, while Mazzini's personal attempts at a revolution never succeeded, it is through his writings on politics and nationalism, his educational initiatives, and his creation of Young Italy that he was able to influence others and help unify Italy.

Unifying Italy was an arduous task, thanks to the many republics, duchies, and kingdoms that occupied the Italian Peninsula. These states had been regarded as the "playground" of foreign powers, primarily France and Austria, for at least three hundred years. Making Italy whole entailed not only combining many separate states into one but also expelling the foreign powers that ruled them.[1] As Mazzini grew older, he began to understand the impact that France and Austria had on Italy. France especially tried to encourage agricultural development and create a middle class of landowners in Italy, but it only succeeded in causing economic turmoil.[2] Mazzini observed firsthand how French policies were ineffective and burdensome to the Italian people, reinforcing his belief that a nation must be governed by its own people.

While Mazzini envisioned an Italy that was wholly unified under one government, others thought of the future of Italy as a series of states or of an Italian kingdom featuring the same borders of Napoleon's Kingdom of Italy.[3] Other nationalists, such as the secret political society the Carbonari, did not conceive of the Italian Peninsula as being one nation as he did. Mazzini's belief that Italy should unify without foreign aid was also revolutionary. The common belief was that Italy would never be free from foreign influence without help from France. Mazzini, however, was "hostile to the idea of French supremacy in Europe."[4]

After France, Austria was the foreign nation most involved in meddling with Italian affairs. In 1831, Mazzini wrote a letter to King Charles Albert of Piedmont-Sardinia urging him to break ties with Austria. The letter was sent to the king and was also published in Marseilles, France, where Mazzini was in exile, and distributed around Italy. In this letter, he wrote that the people "seek the recognition of those rights of humanity which have been withheld from them for ages. They demand laws and liberty, independence and union."[5] He

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[1] John Gooch, *The Unification of Italy* (London: Routledge, 1986), 1.
[2] Alexander Grab, "From the French Revolution to Napoleon," in *Italy in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. John A. Davis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 26-37; Gooch, *The Unification of Italy*, 40-42.
[3] Maurizio Isabella, "Mazzini's Internationalism in Context: From the Cosmopolitan Patriotism of the Italian Carbonari to Mazzini's Europe of the Nations," in *Giuseppe Mazzini and the Globalization of Democratic Nationalism*, *1830-1920*, eds. C. A. Bayly and Eugenio F. Biagini (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 46.
[4] Isabella, "Mazzini's Internationalism in Context," 55.
[5] Giuseppe Mazzini, *The Life and Writings of Joseph Mazzini,* vol. I (London: Smith, Elder, & Company, 1864), 59.

then pointed out that "the universal dissatisfaction, and the hatred of Austria existing in all the states of Italy" were detrimental to the cause of Italian independence.[6] In Mazzini's autobiography, he noted that King Charles did receive the letter and that he must have read it, because shortly afterward he was informed that if he ever returned to Italy, he would be imprisoned. This was Mazzini's first piece of political writing, according to him, and it certainly made an impression.[7]

Many of Mazzini's writings centered on the idea of nationalism and his vision for the future of the Italian nation. He once wrote that "the nation is the sum total of all Italians, bound by a fraternal compact and living under a common law."[8] The difficulty lies in defining who constitutes "all Italians" and coming to a consensus on this common law. In his 1832 essay "On the Superiority of Representative Government," Mazzini wrote more on his definition of what makes a nation, stating "By nation we mean the entirety of citizens who speak the same language and are associated, under equal enjoyment of civil and political rights, for the common purpose of developing and progressively perfecting all social forces and their activity."[9] Whether or not the people of the Italian Peninsula had a sense of "Italian-ness" based on their shared language, they were certainly lacking a common association of political rights. Without this most basic foundation of a nation-state, the Italian people could never develop these "social forces" that Mazzini desired.

It is important to note that Mazzini's definition of nationalism is rooted in the Romantic ideas popular in Europe during the nineteenth century. The Romantic movement in relation to nationalism typically involved a sense of a "powerful mystique of the nation," a desire for a shared history, the "revival of ancient languages; an emphasis on the need for blood sacrifice; a cult of the hero" along with "the personification of the nation."[10] Many of these elements were present in Mazzini's ideas, especially the need to educate Italians on their shared history and language and the desire to create martyrs that could be turned into national heroes. Mazzinian rhetoric was designed to appeal to "history, genealogy, blood, land, and the nation's honor."[11] Mazzini hoped to appeal to Italians' Romantic sensibilities by relating it to his nationalist desires. The popularity of Romantic art and literature in Europe gave Mazzini the ability to harness those same themes and apply them to political and nationalist thought in order to reach a broader audience who would be receptive to his ideas.

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[6] Mazzini, *Life and Writings,* I.59.
[7] Mazzini, *Life and Writings,* I.57-63.
[8] Quoted in Alberto Mario Banti "Sacrality and the Aesthetics of Politics: Mazzini's Concept of the Nation," in *Giuseppe Mazzini and the Globalization of Democratic Nationalism*, eds. C. A. Bayly and Eugenio F. Biagini (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 59.
[9] Giuseppe Mazzini, "Democracy and the Nation," in *A Cosmopolitanism of Nations: Giuseppe Mazzini's Writings on Democracy, Nation Building, and International Relations*, eds. Stefano Recchia and Nadia Urbinati (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 50.
[10] Michael Huggins, "The *Nation* and Giuseppe Mazzini, 1842-48," *New Hibernia Review* 17, no. 3 (Autumn 2013): 15.
[11] Banti, "Sacrality and the Aesthetics of Politics," 68.

There was also a strong element of religiosity in Mazzini's definition of nationalism. He felt that the nation was "God's creation" and that God had a hand in shaping the nation and also giving it a specific mission. He once wrote that "[n]ationality is the role assigned by God to a people within the humanitarian travail. It is a people's mission, their task to accomplish on earth so that God's thought may be realized in the world. Nationality is the work that gives people its right of citizenship within humanity."[12] Mazzini believed God as well as the people had a significant role in shaping the nation and gave the nation its strength, although he did not conform to a particular religion. He believed that Christianity was too focused on the personal salvation, while he valued the idea of progress for humanity instead.[13] Essentially, the scope of Christianity was too narrow for Mazzini's purposes. While he certainly valued the role of the individual when crafting the nation, he was more interested in how individuals could work together, which played a role in Young Italy.

Recent scholars have called Young Italy a "new political religion." Historian Emilio Gentile defines the political religion as "a system of myths, symbols, and rituals that subordinate the significance and aim of individual and collective existence to a supreme entity."[14] In Mazzini's case, the supreme entity was the Italian nation. In crafting a national community, Mazzini helped to create these myths, symbols, and rituals to persuade people to put their faith in the nation. His vision of the struggle for the Italian nation also took on a religious tone. The nation could only be forged through the sacrifice of its heroes and martyrs before being resurrected.[15] Italy needed to unite so that it could become a true nation and fulfill its mission from God. As every nation had its own mission, it was important for Italy to achieve this so that it could take its place among the other nations of Europe. While Mazzini did feel that building a national community of Italians was important, it was more critical to him to unite under one political ideal above all.

The political ideal that Mazzini felt the most drawn to was that of the republic. Only a republic could properly represent all the inhabitants of a nation, because "for representation to be truly *national*, every citizen needs to participate in the election of his deputies through his vote."[16] He felt that everyone should have a voice in electing representatives for their nation, and the idea of a monarchy was anathema to the nation. In fact, "the nation is the only sovereign … the nation alone has the inviolable right to *choose* its own institutions, to *correct* them and *change* them, when they no longer correspond to its needs and no longer contribute to social and intellectual progress."[17] Within a monarchy, the monarch is sovereign and is therefore the one in charge of making decisions.

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[12] Quoted in Simon Levis Sullam, "The Moses of Italian Unity: Mazzini and Nationalism as Political Religion," in *Giuseppe Mazzini and the Globalization of Democratic Nationalism,* eds. C.A. Bayly and Eugenio F. Biagini (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 112-113.
[13] Roland Sarti, "Giuseppe Mazzini and His Opponents," in *Italy in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. John A. Davis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 76.
[14] Quoted in Sullam, "The Moses of Italian Unity," 109.
[15] Banti, "Sacrality and the Aesthetics of Politics," 63-65.
[16] Giuseppe Mazzini, "On the Superiority of Representative Governments," in *A Cosmopolitanism of Nations: Giuseppe Mazzini's Writings on Democracy, Nation Building, and International Relations*, eds. Stefano Recchia and Nadia Urbinati (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 51.
[17] Mazzini, "On the Superiority of Representative Governments," 50. Emphasis in the original.

According to Mazzini's school of thought, it is impossible for one single person to understand and accommodate the needs of an entire nation. Only a body of representatives elected through the democratic process could possibly hope to satisfy the needs of the Italian nation. Moreover, Mazzini argued in his "General Instructions for the Members of Young Italy" that "our Italian tradition is essentially republican; our great memories are republican; the whole history of our national progress is republican; whereas the introduction of monarchy amongst us was coeval with our decay, and consummated our ruin by its constant servility to the foreigner, and antagonism to the people, as well as to the unity of the nation."[18] His ultimate desire was to see Italy united under a republic, as that is what he felt was most natural to it. This feeling is most likely connected to the fact that Mazzini was born into an Italy that was ruled by foreign influence, specifically France. The consequences of living under foreign rule were severe, he feared, and he wrote in his autobiography that it had turned Italians into "forgetful slaves, deriving all things from the foreigner."[19] Mazzini believed that Italians had forgotten how to be Italian and believed his purpose was to remind them. He hoped that by educating them on their shared history, culture, and language, the people of the Italian states would realize that they were in fact one people in need of unity.

To aid him in educating his fellow Italians on his beliefs, Mazzini founded Young Italy. Originally aimed at recruiting only "young" Italians who had not been influenced by existing politics, including previous failed insurrections, Mazzini envisioned Young Italy as more of an educational society than a political society. He also felt that the Italian youth were "the bearers of new, romantic spirit and culture" and that only they were capable of the kind of national "resurrection" that Mazzini was seeking.[20] His goal was to teach its members about his vision for a unified, republican Italy and to have them subsequently go out and teach others, "appealing to the true instincts and tendencies of the Italian heart, mute at that time, but revealed to us both by history and our own previsions of the future."[21] Young Italy was certainly not the only organization with revolutionary goals. In fact, Mazzini was inspired with the idea for Young Italy while he was imprisoned in France after being exiled from Italy in 1831 for activities associated with another political society, the Carbonari. One of the reasons he wanted to found his own society was because he fundamentally disagreed with many of the Carbonari principles.[22]

While he may have disagreed with their principles, Mazzini's involvement in the Carbonari launched him into the world of Italian politics and helped him establish his own career. The goal of the Carbonari was to "conspire and agitate for government reform," with most members advocating for political representation and fair constitutions. Other more radical members argued for things like "anticlericalism, republicanism, and redistribution of property."[23] Although many of Mazzini's later ideas aligned with the more radical of the Carbonari, it is difficult to say what he believed during his time as a member because he

[18] Mazzini, *Life and Writings,* I.100-101.
[19] Mazzini, *Life and Writings,* I.7.
[20] Lucy Riall, *Garibaldi: Invention of a Hero* (Great Britain: TJ International, Padstow, Cornwall, 2007), eBook.
[21] Mazzini, *Life and Writings,* I.65, 34-35.
[22] Mazzini, *Life and Writings,* I.69; Sarti, "Giuseppe Mazzini and His Opponents," 82.
[23] Sarti, "Giuseppe Mazzini and His Opponents," 80.

was so young, and his opinions may not have fully developed yet.[24] Later in his life, Mazzini had quite a lot to say about the goals and principles of the Carbonari and how that influenced his own society. Overall, Mazzini felt that the Carbonari were becoming obsolete due to their outdated political beliefs and their failure to "appreciate the importance of the nation as the foundation of a new political order."[25] Upon joining the Carbonari in 1827, Mazzini wrote: "I reflected with surprise and suspicion that the oath [of allegiance to the society] contained nothing but a formula of obedience and not a word of the purpose … not a syllable which gave a hint as to federalism or unity, as to republic or monarchy. Just war against the government, no more."[26] This lack of a clear goal was disturbing to Mazzini, and he felt that while the Carbonari had many members, they did not know what to do with them.[27] His experience with the disorganization of the Carbonari inspired him to found Young Italy, after he was exiled to France for recruiting new members to the Carbonari. His time in an Italian prison before he was exiled gave him the time to reflect on how he would run his own organization, culminating in the creation of Young Italy.[28]

Mazzini put members of Young Italy to work with the goal of educating the Italian population about the benefits of republicanism and the existence of their national identity. In the "General Instructions for the Members of Young Italy," which has been reproduced in Mazzini's autobiography, he outlines the goals and expectations for members. He defined Young Italy as "a brotherhood of Italians who believe in a law of *Progress* and *Duty*, and are convinced that Italy is destined to become one nation … By the Nation we understand the universality of Italians bound together by a common pact and governed by the same laws."[29] Since his main criticism of the Carbonari was their lack of direction, Mazzini made sure to clearly define his goals and principles, leaving no room for doubt as to his ultimate goals. The goal of Young Italy was to cause a revolution, although "its labours will be essentially educational," and this education would continue even after a successful revolution. This sort of "national education" was very important to Mazzini, as he felt that a nation could not rise in ignorance.[30]

Mazzini considered the members of Young Italy "men of progress" who focused on the future independence of Italy and were therefore superior to the men of "Old Italy." Other men live in ignorance, believing that change can occur without having to accept the consequences or make sacrifices, while Young Italians had clear goals and principles of liberty and equality.[31] It was important to spread the message that "all true sovereignty resides essentially in the nation, the sole progressive and continuous interpreter of the supreme moral law."[32] Since Young Italy was primarily an educational society, Mazzini also

[24] Sarti, "Giuseppe Mazzini and his Opponents," 80.
[25] Isabella, "Mazzini's Internationalism in Context," 37.
[26] Quoted in E.E.Y. Hayes, *Mazzini and the Secret Societies: The Making of a Myth* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1956), 41.
[27] Mazzini, *Life and Writings,* I.70-71.
[28] Sarti, "Giuseppe Mazzini and His Opponents," 80.
[29] Mazzini, *Life and Writings,* I.96-97. Emphasis in the original.
[30] Mazzini, *Life and Writings,* I.99.
[31] Mazzini, "On the Superiority of Representative Government," 44-46.
[32] Mazzini, *Life and Writings,* I.100.

published a newspaper, *Giovine Italia,* or Young Italy, and members of the society were expected to publish articles on the principles of republicanism and unity. This newspaper was smuggled from France into Italy through Genoa and distributed in secret. To avoid detection from the Italian government, they would ship ten to twelve barrels at a time packed with newspapers which were then sent to individual towns. According to Mazzini, the demand for the newspaper began to exceed their supply, and several secret presses were established within Italy to produce more copies of *Giovine Italia*.[33]

Young Italy's primary goals, according to Mazzini, were education and insurrection. Education was expected to take place secretly within Italy, as Mazzini was still a wanted man, and publicly out of Italy, where Mazzini and other Italian exiles were afforded more freedom for nationalist activities. Mazzini himself was much more a man of thought than a man of action, but he still believed that a military insurrection would be necessary for the unification of Italy. He wrote in the "Manifesto of Young Italy" that "there is no true war without the masses. The secret of raising the masses lies in the hands of those who show themselves ready to fight and promise to lead the people to victory."[34] Moreover, Mazzini understood that an insurrection alone would not be enough to create the nation he desired. This insurrection must be accompanied by education, because "bayonets are truly powerful only when they assert or maintain a right."[35] An insurrection would also prove that Italy was capable of unifying without foreign help, an important national principle. The goal of Young Italy was to ensure that the impending revolution of Italy would last in the eyes of foreign powers and Italians alike.

As Mazzini had been exiled from Italy, the base of operations for Young Italy was located first in France and later in London. Historians estimate that by 1833, membership of Young Italy was likely around fifty to sixty thousand people.[36] Moreover, its largely urban membership meant that its network was "close to the seats of power." The governments of Italy and Austria feared its power, and conservative Austrian diplomat Klemens von Metternich reportedly referred to Mazzini as "the most dangerous man in Europe." France was pressured to expel Mazzini, causing him to flee to Switzerland briefly before settling in London.[37] Relocating to England proved fruitful for Mazzini, as he was able to make many contacts with influential writers as well as other Italian exiles willing to help him in his goal of creating a national, unified Italy.

It was during Mazzini's time in England that he was able to translate his desire to educate the people into reality. In the 1840s, he founded a free school for Italian immigrants in London, where he hoped that education would help to blur class lines. Mazzini felt it was the duty of the educated to teach the undereducated, and he was hopeful that this school would create a bond between the working-class students and the middle-class teachers.[38]

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[33] Mazzini, *Life and Writings,* I.105, 187-190; Sarti, "Giuseppe Mazzini and His Opponents," 83.
[34] Giuseppe Mazzini, "The Manifesto of Young Italy," in *A Cosmopolitanism of Nations,* eds. Stefano Recchia and Nadia Urbinati (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 36.
[35] Mazzini, "The Manifesto of Young Italy," 33.
[36] Sarti, "Giuseppe Mazzini and His Opponents," 83-84.
[37] Sarti, "Giuseppe Mazzini and His Opponents," 83-84.
[38] Sarti, "Giuseppe Mazzini and His Opponents," 89.

The school was for both adults and children, and the curriculum consisted of "classes in Italian language, Italian geography and arithmetic" and lectures on "morality or patriotic history."[39] The focus on Italian language was especially important because in Italy, the majority of people spoke only regional dialects. These dialects were quite different from each other, making it nearly impossible to communicate with people from other Italian states. The national language of Italian was spoken only rarely.[40] All of the lessons taught in Mazzini's school were designed to help create and support what he hoped would become the Italian national community.

In Mazzini's mind, education was the most important tool a nationalist could have. He wrote in his 1860 book *The Duties of Man* that education "is the great word that encapsulates all our doctrine. The vital question which agitates our century is the question of Education … We must find an educational principle … that will guide men toward the best, that will teach them constance in sacrifice."[41] He continued to build on this more in his autobiography, saying that "national education" was vital and that it served to bind people to their "fellow-countrymen," creating a "social duty by the inculcation and transmission of the national programme."[42] Mazzini hoped that by educating Italians, they would learn to think of themselves as a people with a shared history and, more importantly, a shared future.

The working class was another demographic that Mazzini sought to include in his efforts. In addition to *Giovine Italia*, he also produced another newspaper titled *Apostolato Popolare* (Apostleship of the People), which was directed "to Italians and especially to Italian workers."[43] This newspaper was a part of Mazzini's attempt to create a national community by reaching "as broad an audience as possible." He published a variety of topics, such as "current affairs reporting, nationalist editorials … biographies of famous Italians … and reviews of novels and histories."[44] It was an attempt to create a national culture by making Italian workers realize that they had something in common with the famous Italians, including novelists and historians. Mazzini also used this newspaper to encourage workers to organize and also that they should work together with the upper classes to create a unified society. Moreover, he advocated that a national language should be established, because it would help them see themselves as Italians rather than as "Genoese, Piedmontese, or Neapolitans" due to their regional dialects.[45] He understood that the press was a powerful nationalist tool, and that it could help create an "imagined community," a term Benedict Anderson used to describe the formation of a nation and the way that people

[39] Denis Mack Smith, *Mazzini* (King's Lynn: Biddles Ltd., Guildford and Kings Lynn, 1994), eBook.
[40] Derek Beales and Eugenio F. Biagini, *The Risgorgimento and the Unification of Italy* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 75.
[41] Quoted in Sullam, in "The Moses of Italian Unity," 122.
[42] Mazzini, *Life and Writings,* I.298-299.
[43] Quoted in Lucy Riall, "The Politics of Italian Romanticism: Mazzini and the Making of a Nationalist Culture," in *Giuseppe Mazzini and the Globalization of Democratic Nationalism*, *1830-1920*, eds. C.A. Bayly and Eugenio F. Biagini (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 172.
[44] Riall, "The Politics of Italian Romanticism," 172.
[45] Smith, *Mazzini*, eBook.

begin to perceive themselves as part of a larger group.[46] More importantly, Mazzini used *Apostolato popolare* to speak directly to Italian workers, telling them "if the revolution is to succeed, it must be carried out *for you* and *with you*, while all the previous revolutions have been attempted *not for you* and *without you*."[47] This kind of message helped push Mazzini's republican ideas because it encouraged workers to want representation through a democratic republic. Thus, Mazzini was attempting to awaken Italian workers to the kind of political rights they could have, if they were willing to participate firsthand in the revolution he envisioned. For this reason, nationalism was a means to an end for Mazzini. He believed if he could cultivate an Italian national identity, the people would see the need for a political revolution that would then achieve national unity.

Another necessary step for the political revolution was an insurrection. Mazzini believed that a national education combined with an insurrection was the perfect formula to achieve Italian unification. In many of his essays, Mazzini focused on the unity of "thought and action," meaning that it was impossible to have revolutionary thought without revolutionary action. A true revolution needed to be educational, cultural, and political in order to succeed.[48] He attempted several military insurrections, but they almost never succeeded, and if they did, they never lasted long. In 1831, Mazzini left France to help a group of Italian exiles plan a revolution on the island of Corsica, off the coast of Italy. He and his companions planned to assist provisional governments in Parma, Modena, and the Papal States with the goal of "bringing the various states of Italy closer together."[49] Many Corsicans were already armed and ready to cross to the mainland, but conflicts among the revolutionary groups caused delays, allowing Austria to step in and stop the uprising in its tracks.[50]

Later in 1834, Mazzini was involved in an invasion of Savoy, which ended almost before it even began. Mazzini expected a peasant revolt that never came, and many of his forces defected. He took this loss very hard and reportedly "suffered a mental breakdown and had to be carried off the field unconscious."[51] The failed attempts at a military revolution speak to Mazzini's idealist viewpoint of what the Italian unification process would look like. While he was an excellent writer, he did not have the skills to successfully complete an insurrection in the way that he wanted. His ideas did not always translate well into reality, which left him open to criticism from others. For example, a former member of Young Italy formed a new society called the Sons of Young Italy, because he felt that Mazzini did not pay attention "to the material needs of the people."[52] Mazzini felt he was called to a particular purpose, but that purpose did not always align with what he could realistically achieve. Mazzini had hoped that a small group of revolutionaries would have the power to

[46] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2016), 6.
[47] Riall, "The Politics of Italian Romanticism," 172; Quoted in Sarti, "Giuseppe Mazzini and His Opponents," 89. Emphasis in the original.
[48] Riall, *Garibaldi,* 29.
[49] Smith, *Mazzini,* eBook.
[50] Smith, *Mazzini,* eBook.
[51] Sarti, "Giuseppe Mazzini and His Opponents," 85.
[52] Sarti, "Giuseppe Mazzini and His Opponents," 88.

overthrow the foreign influence of Austria as well as the governments of all of the Italian states. This was an incredibly idealistic view, and it was proving to be impossible.

One particularly painful failure for Mazzini occurred in 1844, when he promised his help to the Bandiera brothers, who were from Venice, which was a part of Austria at this time. The Bandiera brothers were serving in the Austrian navy, had a secret society of their own, and wanted to raid southern Italy. After some consideration, however, Mazzini tried to dissuade the Bandiera brothers from their plan. He was not able to stop them, and the brothers were captured and executed.[53] Privately, Mazzini was devastated by their failure, but in public, he thanked them for their brave sacrifice and treated them like martyrs. In a eulogy he wrote for the brothers, he stated, "*It matters little that they have not succeeded.* The Angel of Martyrdom is brother to the Angel of Victory."[54] With this seemingly harsh statement, Mazzini's motives were made clear. The failed insurrections led to condemnations by many of his supporters, but it allowed him to craft martyred national heroes from the ashes of their failure. As Mazzini once wrote, "Italy will live when Italians shall have learned to die … And for that there is no teaching but by example."[55] These revolutionary attempts were only a small piece of the puzzle in Mazzini's larger nationalist agenda. He was much more successful in pushing his agenda through his writings than through his actions, and his military failures left him vulnerable to criticism from his contemporaries and historians alike. However, one English writer did admit that while the insurrections did fail in their immediate goal, they "produced a hundred proselytes for every martyr who died."[56]

Despite his failures, Mazzini continued to hope for an Italian revolution, and in early 1849, he saw his chance. The Revolutions of 1848 had swept through Europe thanks to a combination of political discontent and nationalism. More specifically, Europeans were beginning to desire republicanism and democracy over constitutional monarchies.[57] In the aftermath of these revolutions, Rome was declared a republic and a constituent assembly was elected, which included Mazzini. He described his arrival in Rome as an epiphany, stating: "Rome was the dream of my youth, the mother of all my ideas, the religion of my soul."[58] Thus, the Roman Republic was established with Giuseppe Mazzini, Carlo Armellini, and Aurelia Saffi elected as a triumvirate to lead it.[59] For Mazzini, this should have been the foundation of his Republic of Italy. He hoped to use Rome as a base to establish a power structure strong enough to free the rest of Italy from foreign influence. It was not to be, however.

The Roman Republic lasted less than five months before it collapsed when it was invaded by French troops in order to restore Rome to the pope, who had fled before the republic was declared due to a sharp decline in his popularity. The Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia

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[53] Sarti, "Giuseppe Mazzini and His Opponents," 91; Smith, *Mazzini*, eBook.
[54] Quoted in Riall, "The Politics of Italian Romanticism," 174. Emphasis in the original.
[55] Quoted in Riall, "The Politics of Italian Romanticism," 175.
[56] Quoted in Smith, *Mazzini*, eBook.
[57] Johnathan Sperber, *The European Revolutions, 1848-1851* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 56.
[58] Quoted in Sarti, "Giuseppe Mazzini and His Opponents," 94.
[59] Sarti, "Giuseppe Mazzini and His Opponents," 95.

never acknowledged the legitimacy of the Roman Republic, and neither did any other European nation. Only the United States of America offered them diplomatic recognition.[60] Historian Eugenio Biagini called the republic "a great liberal-democratic experiment," and there is really no better description.[61] The lack of recognition from the rest of the world indicated that no one but Mazzini and his followers thought the Roman Republic had a fighting chance at success. With the history of foreign meddling in Italy, it was only a matter of time before either France or Austria stepped in to put a stop to the republic. Mazzini wanted to fight until the end, saying that "the struggle cannot end until [we] are either victorious or utterly overthrown." He was overruled, however, and the Assembly voted to cease the defense of Rome.[62]

Mazzini had maintained high hopes for the Roman Republic, telling the Assembly shortly after his arrival that, "after the Rome of the Emperors, after the Rome of the Popes, comes the Rome of the Peoples."[63] He had anticipated that Rome would be able to help Tuscany shake the foreign influence of Austria, and that other Italian states would also fall under Roman protection, in order to render "possible a magnificent National movement."[64] Mazzini envisioned the Roman Republic as the first step towards a finally unified Italy, with himself as its leader. On the fall of Rome, Mazzini had much to say about how once again foreign influence had a negative effect on Italy. In his 1849 essay "Concerning the Fall of the Roman Republic," Mazzini addressed his concerns to a British audience, condemning them for not coming to the defense of Rome when the French invaded. He felt very strongly that the balance of power was destroyed and that foreign interference ruined Italy's chance to be unified. It was unfair, he said, that the men of Rome chose their own government only to surrender it to the French, who they were trying to distance themselves from.[65] It is also possible that Mazzini expected more aid from England, as by this time he had lived in England for over a decade, had cultivated many English followers, and had established a community of Italian exiles in England. Mazzini also wrote directly to the ministers of France, shaming them for destroying "the national revolution" of Italy, yet also warning them that they had only delayed Italy's national mission.[66] Although Mazzini was not directly involved in the writing of the Roman constitution, it was still the best example of his republican ideal.[67] Someday, he hoped to see it implemented in a unified Italy.

After the fall of the Roman Republic, Mazzini's influence began to decline. In the short term, his time in Rome "heightened his stature as a democratic leader," but in the long term, his

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[60] Sarti, "Giuseppe Mazzini and His Opponents," 95.
[61] Eugenio F. Biagini, "Mazzini and Anticlericalism: The English Exile," in *Giuseppe Mazzini and the Globalization of Democratic Nationalism*, *1830-1920*, eds. C.A. Bayly and Eugenio F. Biagini (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 151.
[62] Sarti, "Giuseppe Mazzini and His Opponents," 94-96; Giuseppe Mazzini, *The Life and Writings of Joseph Mazzini,* vol. V (London: Smith, Elder, & Company, 1869), 195-210.
[63] Quoted in Sarti, "Giuseppe Mazzini and His Opponents," 94.
[64] Mazzini, *Life and Writings,* V.192-193.
[65] Giuseppe Mazzini, "Concerning the Fall of Rome," in *A Cosmopolitanism of Nations: Giuseppe Mazzini's Writings on Democracy, Nation Building, and International Relations*, eds. Stefano Recchia and Nadia Urbinati (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 208-210.
[66] Letter to Messrs. de Toqueville and de Falloux in Mazzini, *Life and Writings,* V.249, 254.
[67] Sullam, "The Moses of Italian Unity," 119.

movement was dying. This was due in part to Count Camillo Benso di Cavour, who was Mazzini's rival in every way. As historian Roland Sarti observed, "Cavour detested republicanism, popular initiatives, and all political agitation that he could not control."[68] His belief in "Piedmont's Italian mission" along with other policies drew more moderate nationalists to him and made the movement appear more "respectable," pulling support away from Mazzini. In November 1852, Cavour was declared the Prime Minister of Italy, giving him an even larger platform to push his own agenda, which opposed Mazzini's.[69] The rise of Cavour left Mazzini with a shrinking number of followers on the sidelines of the Italian nationalist movement.

Although Mazzini was no longer as popular as he once was, he still made efforts towards creating a national, unified Italy. He formed the Party of Action from London in 1853, which was "democratic in principle and autocratic in practice." He also was involved in several small insurrections, even though they had no hope of succeeding, purely out of his commitment to the nationalist cause.[70] Mazzini was a true nationalist, who held fast to his beliefs not only in times where he felt he might succeed, but in times where he seemed doomed to fail. He never surrendered his dreams of seeing a unified Italy with a thriving national community.

In 1859, the chance for a unified Italy finally seemed possible, albeit not the way Mazzini wanted it. Cavour and Napoleon III were goading Austria into a war with Italy, with the goal of removing Austria from Lombardy-Venetia followed by the creation of four new Italian states. Giuseppe Garibaldi, a famed military general and former follower of Mazzini's, believed that Austria could only be overthrown with the aid of the French. Mazzini wholeheartedly disagreed but had to acknowledge that Garibaldi's opinion was becoming more popular among the Italian people.[71] He was afraid that an alliance with France would "surrender the nation to the discretion of the foreigner" and that any chance of a republican revolution would be gone.[72] However, when Austria declared war in April 1859, Mazzini quickly changed stances and lent his support by telling his followers to prepare for insurrections within Italy. He secretly hoped that the war would awaken a desire for a popular revolution among his fellow Italians.[73] Mazzini became even more hopeful for a revolution when Napoleon III signed an armistice with Austria in July 1859 without consulting Cavour. Under this armistice, Italy would be a "loose confederation" that included Austria by way of Venice with most of Lombardy given to France.[74] Mazzini took this armistice as evidence that foreign powers were not interested in helping to liberate Italy. Even when Napoleon had promised to work with Cavour for the benefit of Italy, he still betrayed Italy for his own gain. After the disaster that was the war of 1859, Mazzini wrote to King Victor Emmanuel II, Charles Albert's successor, and urged him to reject the

[68] Sarti, "Giuseppe Mazzini and His Opponents," 97.
[69] Gooch, *The Unification of Italy,* 23.
[70] Sarti, "Giuseppe Mazzini and His Opponents," 99.
[71] Riall, *Garibaldi,* eBook; Smith, *Mazzini*, eBook.
[72] Sarti, "Giuseppe Mazzini and His Opponents," 102.
[73] Smith, *Mazzini,* eBook.
[74] Smith, *Mazzini,* eBook.

armistice and claim the crown of a united Italy.[75] In this instance, the cause of national unification was greater than the republican cause. Mazzini was willing to throw away his dream of a republican Italy, because in that instance, he chose to support unity in any form.

Mazzini then hatched a plan, which required the help of Garibaldi. Garibaldi and his followers, known as "The Thousand," sailed to Sicily where he led a revolution in the name of King Victor Emmanuel II. Mazzini was still not pleased about unification under a monarch, but he was aware by this time that it was the only way Italy would unify at all. He helped Garibaldi from the sidelines by sending emissaries to Sicily to help prepare for the coming insurrection.[76] Over the next several months, approximately 20,000 men came to join Garibaldi in Sicily. In August 1860, Garibaldi and his men had successfully captured Sicily and turned their eyes to Naples on the mainland. Upon arrival in Naples, one account stated, "the whole of the southern part of the kingdom … has been conquered by Garibaldi single-handed and without an army at all … the people rising and the troops falling back or capitulating as he advanced."[77] After the easy victory in Naples, Garibaldi looked to Rome as his next target. Cavour, however, had invaded Rome first in order to upset Garibaldi's plan and also sought to take over the government in Naples. Demoralized without the promise of help from Piedmont, Garibaldi did nothing and chose to wait until the following summer to continue the campaign.[78] In October, Garibaldi held a public vote where Italians overwhelmingly voted to have Naples and Sicily join "a new and united Italy." Garibaldi then surrendered control of both states to King Victor Emmanuel, who would be "king by will of the people."[79]

Italy was officially united, apart from Venice and Rome, albeit under a monarchy rather than a republic, and "few [were] more disappointed than Mazzini and Garibaldi, the two men who had looked forward to this moment most keenly and who had sacrificed most for its attainment."[80] Mazzini's disappointment is understandable, as Italy was not the republic he had dreamed of. Yet there is still something to be said for the fact that Garibaldi, as a former follower, was still acting under Mazzinian influence in the act of unifying Italy. While Garibaldi may have become a monarchist, he still believed in the idea of national unity that Mazzini had always advocated for. The vote taken in Naples and Sicily showed an overwhelming amount of support for a unified Italy, and for that Mazzini had the right to be proud, even if the result was not ideal.

During the last decade of his life, Mazzini continued to advocate for a republican Italy. The Italian governments continued to see him as a threat, thanks to his attempts to agitate workers into another revolution. It was in 1860 that Mazzini wrote his book *The Duties of Man*, which he aimed at Italian workers, who he wanted to view the government as an enemy so they would feel compelled to take political action.[81] In 1861, he was asked to

[75] Smith, *Mazzini,* eBook.
[76] Sarti, "Giuseppe Mazzini and His Opponents," 104.
[77] Quoted in Riall, *Garibaldi*, eBook.
[78] Riall, *Garibaldi*, eBook.
[79] Riall, *Garibaldi*, eBook*;* Smith, *Mazzini*, eBook.
[80] Sarti, "Giuseppe Mazzini and His Opponents,"104; Denis Mack Smith quoted in Riall, *Garibaldi,* eBook.
[81] Sarti, "Giuseppe Mazzini and His Opponents," 106.

compile his political papers into several volumes and to write accompanying autobiographical notes. During the process of collecting the papers to be published, Mazzini engaged in some self-reflection, writing that "he was in any case a man of heart rather than head, someone whose enthusiasm and sympathies mattered more than his intelligence, and who was interested much less in political theorizing than in transforming society."[82] He continued to advocate for complete unification with Venice and Rome, and in 1866 a war broke out that resulted in Austria surrendering Venice. However, Austria presented Venice to France, and in Mazzini's words, Napoleon "tossed [it] to Italy as a penny might be thrown to a beggar."[83] Finally in September 1870, Italy captured Rome, completing the unification of Italy at long last. Mazzini could not celebrate however, as he was in prison after one final insurrection attempt. He had denounced the monarchy several years prior, and after his release from prison he lived the last years of his life in secrecy. [84] He continued to be unhappy with the Italian monarchy and had difficulty reconciling the national unity he had always wanted under the monarchist symbol that he hated. In an article published in 1871, Mazzini wrote that he regretted that national unification was achieved by "a narrow and privileged elite governing in their own sectional interest" rather than a truly spontaneous act of the Italian people. In the last years of his life, Mazzini was "only the shadow of his former self," due not only to illness but also to his grave disappointment in the outcome of his life's work.[85]

Ultimately, Giuseppe Mazzini had a very long and tumultuous political career with varying degrees of success. He died on March 10, 1872, in Italy under an assumed name, thinking of himself as "the monarchy's outlaw."[86] While Italy was not the republic he desired in his heart, he could rest knowing he had done his part to bring unity to the Italian Peninsula that he loved so much. Historians agree that it is difficult to quantify the exact influence that Mazzini had on Italian unification, but it is undeniable that he played a large role. Throughout his life, he advocated for the creation of a national community within a unified, republican Italy. Although he was exiled for many years, his devotion to Italy never wavered and only increased over time.

Young Italy was arguably Mazzini's greatest achievement. He used the society and its members as a tool to spread his thoughts and ideas throughout Italy. Through his school for Italian immigrants in England and his many publications, he was able to educate his followers on what it meant to be Italian and craft a national community with a shared language, culture, and history. His efforts to include the working class were essential to the popularity of his ideas. It showed his good intentions to include everyone in the Italian nation, not only the aristocratic population of Italy.

Mazzini's ideas on republicanism and unity without foreign influence helped the Italian people realize that Italy could, in fact, stand alone as an independent nation. Previous

[82] Quoted in Smith, *Mazzini*, eBook.
[83] Smith, *Mazzini*, eBook.
[84] Sarti, "Giuseppe Mazzini and His Opponents," 107.
[85] Smith, *Mazzini*, eBook.
[86] Sarti, "Giuseppe Mazzini and His Opponents," 107.

Italian nationalists had only conceived of Italy as a series of federal states, but Mazzini was revolutionary in his idea of Italy as one, large territory. While his dream of an Italian republic failed, the idea behind it succeeded—that Italy could be whole and its people should have a voice. Nevertheless, Mazzini was disappointed in the outcome. The disappointment is understandable, but the hindsight of history demonstrates the far reach of Mazzini's ideas throughout Italy. Mazzinian nationalism influenced the actions of notable figures like Giuseppe Garibaldi, but it also influenced the average, everyday Italian in small ways that is impossible to quantify. Moreover, while his exile from Italy meant he was distanced from the material realities of Italy, it was that distance that caused him to rely most strongly on his belief in the Italian nation and the Italian people—and it was this strength of belief that was so powerful in shaping modern Italy.