

0. ITALY and 19TH-CENTURY REVOLUTION - Story
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This image depicts an 1861 lithograph which recreates Giuseppe Mazzini's short-lived triumph in Rome. Mazzini led a group of revolutionaries into the city, captured it and declared Rome a Republic on the 9th of February, 1849. By July 12, of that same year, Rome was back under French control.

For Giuseppe Mazzini—who advocated for revolutionary uprisings in his quest to unify Italy—the timing of his ideas could not have been better.

Revolutionary ideas were sweeping across Europe, during 1848. The “Young Italy” leader believed that a pan-Italian revolution would benefit all Italians living in the peninsula.

Heading a guerilla force, Mazzini personally marched into Rome, seized the city and declared it a republic. This caused the sitting Pope—the head of the Catholic Church who was living in Rome—to flee the city.

Although the various revolutionary attempts by Italians throughout the peninsula, during 1848, didn’t achieve their desired results—since they were quashed by the controlling foreign powers—those revolutionary attempts were successful in a different way.

They demonstrated that many Italians—including people in the professional class (doctors, lawyers and shopkeepers) and students—wanted their own, unified Italian state.

The next man to tackle the very difficult job of unifying Italy was Count Camillo Benso di Cavour. Beginning in 1852, he was the Prime Minister of the Italian State of Sardinia.

Beyond controlling Sardinia—an island located off the western coast of Italy—Camillo Benso (whose mother tongue was French, although he spoke some Italian) and his government also controlled areas in northern Italy (including Savoy, Piedmont and Nice).

He, like others, believed that Italy had to be united under one flag. (Cavour also liked the idea of conquest.)

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Media Stream



Rome Declared a Republic in 1849

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