



PROFESSOR DISPELS MYTH

(Boston, September 22) As a result of interviews with the protagonists, UMB Professor Spencer Di Scala claims that he has dispelled the myth that Giuseppe Mazzini was the "pen" of Italian unification, Camillo Cavour the "mind," and Giuseppe Garibaldi the "sword."

"I have a pen, but am not one," said Mazzini. "Plus, I prefer to spend my time in exile in London playing the guitar, smoking cigars, and being invited to dinner by friends such as Carlyle, the greatest practitioner of the 'Great Man' theory of history. I am one of those Great Men, or so my girlfriend Giuditta Sidoli assures me. Anyway, my great idea was to tell people that Italian independence and unity could be achieved, even if nobody at the time thought it was possible. Of course, my idea that Italy should be unified as a unitary republic was not achieved because a monarchy was set up. I resented Victor Emanuel II refusing to rescind the death sentence against me even after Italy became unified, but he really didn't mean it because he made no attempt to arrest me when I returned to



Italy, where I died. Keep in mind that Italy was unified, so my idea did influence people. Too bad that my friend Garibaldi did not wait to hold a constitutional convention to set the conditions for the South joining the North in a united Italy, as I advised him. If he had done that, we would have had at least a more progressive monarchy and a South that could have become part of the country but taking into consideration its unique conditions. As far as a republic is concerned, even though this did not occur in 1861, it did happen in 1946, so as happens to many prophets (and I consider myself one), I was far ahead of my time.

Count Cavour instead admitted that he had a mind, but stated that he often lost it when gambling, although it often worked out in the long run. "I love poker and am pretty good at it, as was your President Nixon," Cavour insisted. "Sure, I apply my ideas on gambling to diplomacy, and I did pretty good at that as well. In fact, I did much better in bringing about the independence and unity of my country than those two nuts Mazzini and Garibaldi. The European establishment hated both of them back in my time, and they never would have received any support. If it hadn't been for me, Italian unification would never have taken place. After all, I was the one who convinced the powers of Europe not to intervene when that radical anticlerical Garibaldi wanted to attack the Pope in Rome. Why, if he had done that, not only the Austrians but all the other Catholics in the world would have intervened against him, even, I think, the



Catholics in Massachusetts. Then they would have restored not only the Pope but the other Italian monarchs as well. Had that happened, GOODBYE Italian independence and unification. Also, Mazzini and Garibaldi think that Italy should have been united under a republic, but that was impossible at the time; the other powers would have intervened and crushed the movement, and, again, GOODBYE unification. It is true that the monarchy was not as progressive as it could have been after unification, but that was because I died soon after while still a young man (the doctors think it was cancer, but who knows). Had I lived as long as Bismarck, I am certain that I could have implemented much more equitable and efficient policies, but that is the luck of the draw.”

Reached while on horseback, General Garibaldi said that he had a sword, but that it had rusted since spending so much time on his island paradise of Caprera. "It is very humid there," he said, "although it is true that the beach in Brazil where I was fighting for freedom in Latin America and where I met Anita was also very humid, but I was younger then. I had a full beard, a red shirt, and a poncho and Anita thought me attractive enough to leave her husband and run away with me to Italy. I wonder why they don't call me The Poncho instead of The Sword."

“I disagree with both Mazzini and Cavour,” the general said. “It’s well enough for Mazzini to talk. I agree with many of his ideas, but I resent his accusing me of just handing over the South to the North without calling a



constitutional convention. Some historians agree with him, but they are all wrong. I had a chance to make a united Italy then and there, for the first time after the fall of the Roman Empire, and I grabbed it. You students know what happens when you call conventions: arguments, talk, delays. I am a man of action, both with the ladies and with the sword. I don't like to talk. If I had called a convention, I would have opened up the possibility of the powers of Europe intervening when the inevitable deadlock occurred, so I don't agree with Mazzini. As far as Cavour is concerned, he is a bourgeois stick-in-the-mud. Sure, he fancies himself a great diplomat, but he really did not change things as radically as I thought they should be altered. First of all, I don't like him because he gave away my birthplace, Nice, to the French. Imagine that! I am one of the main artificers of Italian unity and he gives away my birthplace to a foreign country!

“Then he stops me from attacking Rome and getting rid of the Pope because, he says, the European powers would have intervened! But in this case, I was ready to fight them all! And I would have had the support of the people! If we had gotten rid of the scourge of the Papacy after two thousand years, Italy would have been better off! Look at all the harm the Church caused the country during that time, and even after unification down to the present day! Sometimes you have to act decisively for the greater good of the future to come. I was ready to do that. I was reasonable enough when I gave the South to Victor Emanuel II, allowing him to proclaim a united Italy even though I favored a



republic and was criticized for it, but I was not willing to compromise when it came to the Pope. In fact, after unification, I tried to attack Rome twice and both times the monarchists stopped me. Once I was even wounded. Can you believe it, wounded by an Italian bullet! Politicians disgust me!”

Taking note of these remarks and the different versions of how Italy should have been unified, Professor Di Scala went on to write the true story of Italian unification, which students can learn about in this week’s lesson.

Spencer DiScala, PH.D. Copyright 2007