

## UNIFICATION OF ITALY

Nationalism and liberalism stimulated the revolutionary changes of 1848 throughout the Central Europe, especially in Italy, Germany and the whole of the Austrian Empire. The liberal revolutionaries in these countries, chiefly among the middle classes had attempted to bring about two important changes, that is, creation of a unified national state for each nationality and the establishment of a constitutional and parliamentary government in each state, with guarantees of personal liberty. With the revival of conservatism in the 1850's, the liberal movement in the Central Europe received a set-back. However, in spite of this initial setback, liberalism began to gain ground among a considerable minority. During the two decades from 1850 to 1870, this minority increased in number and influence. Gradually, liberalism became such a powerful current that it succeeded in achieving the unification of Italy.

### Background

For many centuries, Italy was nothing more than a geographical expression. It was a patchwork of small states jealous of one another. Never, since the days of the Roman Empire, was the Italian Peninsula been effectively united under one rule. Various attempts to bring the Italian Peninsula under one government had ended in failure. The division of Italy among the foreign dynasties was one of the chief hurdles in the path of the Italian unification. Austria had occupied the northern part of Italy. The Princes of the Hapsburg family of Austria ruled over the duchies of Parma, Modena and Tuscany. In the south, the Kingdom of Sicily and Naples was under the Bourbon dynasty.

Central Italy was under the temporal authority of the Pope. Apart from the political division of the peninsula, the Italians themselves had not yet developed a full sense of national consciousness. Different regions and towns of Italy had developed their own distinct traditions which led to local jealousies which in turn checked national growth. Historian and politician Metternich wrote that, 'In Italy, the provinces were against provinces, towns against towns, families against families and men against men'.

There was not only a political disunity among the Italians but they practiced distinct social and cultural viewpoints. Hence, there were difficult hurdles on the path to unification. Brief descriptions of such difficulties are as follows.

### The Austrian Empire

The biggest and immediate hurdle on the path of the unification of Italy was the Austrian Empire. The state of Lombardy and Venetia, which were the part of Italy, were in the possession of Austria. Italy could never think of unification if Austria was not moved out of those states. The Austria could only be removed with a huge and powerful army and the support of foreign powers and Italy did not have either of them.

### Reactionary Rulers

The monarchical form of government was reigning in different states of Italy. Their rulers believed in the divine rights of kingship. If the revolted had erupted in any of such state after 1815, the Austrian chancellor Metternich had helped the rulers of those states to crush the revolt. *The reactionary rule of Metternich was also a big hurdle on the way to unification.*

### The Various Plans for Unification

A major difficulty in achieving unification was the prevalence of variety of viewpoints among Italians on the issue of unification of Italy. Like, (i) the **Republicans** desired to establish a Republic of Italy. The main proponent of this viewpoint was **Mazzini**. (ii) Another group of patriots was the votary of a **Federation** headed by a Pope. **Geoberti** was their leader. (iii) There were Italians who felt strongly for a constitutional monarchy. They wanted to see the king Emmanuel II of Piedmont-Sardinia as the Emperor of a unified Italy under a **constitutional monarchy**. Hence, there was lack of a common vision for Italians on the question of ideology, which they might collectively adopt to unite their country. Otherwise, it was not possible to unify Italy.

### Lack of National Awakening

There was lack of national awakening among the Italians due to their recent past. The enslavement for number of centuries had made them to reconcile with their plight, which the providence had made them to suffer. Unfortunately, divergent social traditions and religious trends had developed in meantime. The Chancellor Matternich had very confidently declared thus: " In Italy, provinces are against provinces, towns against towns, families against families and men against men." He had rightly portrayed the situation which Italian patriots were finding quite difficult to salvage.

**Papal States:** The Pope was ruling a large part of Middle Italy. The papal state separated North Italy from South Italy. Hence, as long as, Pope was ruling, Italy could never have been united.

### Napoleon's Contribution to the Unification

A new epoch began, when Napoleon Bona parte conquered the kingdoms of Austrian and French princes. He even annexed the Papal State. He brought together the city states. Napoleon gave Italy an uniform system of administration. The Italians learnt the French ideas of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. They were introduced to concepts like self government and freedom of press. This intensified their sense of patriotism.

After Napoleon's defeat, the **Congress of Vienna** was called in 1815, to rearrange the map of Europe. The national sentiments of Italians were ignored and 'status quo' was maintained. Italy was once again divided as she was before the annexation of Napoleon. Austrian and French kings came back to Italian states. The patriots exclaimed "We have no flag, no political name, no rank among European nations. We have no common centre, no common market, we are dismembered" The division of Italy was

- 1) Kingdom of Naples and Sicily, under French prince.
- 2) Lombardy and Venetia, which were parts of Austria.
- 3) Parma, Tuscany, Madena, under relatives of Austrian King.
- 4) Papal state under Pope.
- 5) Piedmont, Sardinia and Savoy, under Italian dynasty called House of Savoy

### Leaders of the Unification Movement

The patriots of Italy formed secret societies, to revolt against despotic kings. Their aim was unity. The most well known of these was the **Carbonari** or **Charcoal Burners**. Its origin was in Naples. All discontented elements joined, it. They wanted to expel foreigners from Italian soil.

The **Carbonari** led a revolt in Naples in 1820 against the king Ferdinand I. People asked for a liberal constitution. The king agreed, but secretly asked help from Austria. The Austrian army came and suppressed the revolt.

While one revolt was put down, another lit in Piedmont. The king abdicated the throne in favour of his brother Charles Albert. Again Austria intervened and put down the revolt.

The French revolution of 1830 affected Italian states. There were revolts in Modena, Papal state and Parma, but Austria suppressed all the uprisings. This taught the patriots a lesson - that the common enemy in all states was Austria. It was therefore necessary to get rid-off Austria.

### **Joseph Mazzini**

He was born in 1805 in Genoa. His father was a professor at the University of Genoa. In his young days Mazzini had joined the Carbonari. He actively participated in the revolt of 1830, for which he was exiled. After his release in 1831, he founded a Society called "Young Italy". His aim was to mobilise the youth to the national movement. He had immense faith in youth power. He told the young men to speak to artisans, labour, workers and farmers, and make them aware of their rights. He wanted to make Italy a nation. He lost faith in Carbonari way of action, which led to weak revolts. He aimed at a strong national action. His pioneer propaganda broadened the political horizon of the Italians.

The other schools of thought were - Federalists who believed that Pope should take the leadership and establish an Italian confederation and secondly the Royalists who believed in the leadership of House of Savoy because it was Italian dynasty and the king was liberal.

### **Impact of the Revolution of 1848**

By the year 1848 the Risorgimento movement had stabilised. It meant that all Italian classes believed in resurrection or revival of Italy's glory. The revolution of 1848, resulted in a liberal constitution in Sicily. In Piedmont, the king granted several rights to the people. He even marched on Lombardy, and challenged the Austrians. However he was defeated in the battle of Custoza. He abdicated in favour of his son.

Italian patriots staged an uprising in Papal state. The Pope fled and a republic was proclaimed under Mazzini's leadership. But the French King sent troops to help the Pope. Mazzini's army was defeated. The Pope came back to power. Thus the revolts failed to achieve the unification.

The process failed because Austria and France were strong. It was impossible to defeat them without foreign help. Secondly, except Piedmont, all states opposed unity, because they would lose their autonomy. The patriots too were disunited. They lost hope in Mazzini's method. This was the condition when Count Cavour entered the next phase of the unification movement.

### **Count Cavour**

Count Cavour was the chief architect of Italian unification. He was born in 1810 in a noble family of Piedmont. He was student of modern parliamentary government. He believed that westernisation was needed for progress. He was a practical man and studied the Italian question, its problems and possible remedies. He served Piedmont as a member of the parliament and rose to the position of Prime Minister. He brought liberal reforms. He developed transport and communication. He lowered tariffs and taxes. He developed mining, agriculture and industry. He linked Piedmont to Western Europe through commercial treaties.

Thus Piedmont emerged as a model state. People agreed that she should lead the unification movement. Piedmont was the only state which had a strong army, to accept the challenge of enemy nations. Cleverly, Cavour grasped the condition of his success - isolation of Austria. Piedmont needed strong allies, to match Austria. He decided to seek alliance with France. The French King Napoleon III had been a Carbonari earlier and was supposed to be sympathetic toward Italian states. He took a diplomatic step in 1855 by joining the Crimean war at the side of England and France. He had no enmity with the other belligerent - Russia, but

he wanted to take some interest in international politics. When Italian troops complained about the war, he said "out of this mud of Crimea, a new Italy will be made".

After the war, Cavour was called to the Paris Peace Conference. He went there and put forward the problems of Italian states. Napoleon III agreed to help Italy. He met Cavour and discussed the details. He promised to help Piedmont to drive Austria from Lombardy and Venetia. In return France would get Savoy and Nice. France would continue to hold Naples. At this juncture Austria declared war on Sardinia - Piedmont. To antagonise Austria, Cavour deployed troops along the border of Lombardy. Austria asked Piedmont to retreat but Cavour refused. Austria therefore declared war. According to the agreement Napoleon III personally, commanded French army to the war to help Cavour. Lombardy was occupied by Sardinia. When it appeared that Austria would lose Venetia, Napoleon III halted suddenly and retreated. He signed treaty of Villa-Franca with Austria.

Cavour was disappointed and resigned. By now Italians took destiny into their hands. They rejected the rulers of Parma, Modena and Tuscany. In this task they got moral support from England. The British Prime Minister said that the people had the right to change their kings. People from the three kingdoms wished to join Piedmont. This was an important step. Sardinia - Piedmont became a large state.

## Garibaldi

Giuseppe Garibaldi was born in Nice in 1807. He was a true supporter of Mazzini and became a member of Young Italy. He participated in a revolt against Piedmont and ran away to America. There he organised a movement of his followers called Red Shirts. He came back and helped Mazzini, to abolish the authority of the Pope. French forces came to Pope's rescue. Garibaldi lost the battle and fled again to America. He returned to Italy and spent a farmer's life in a small island. In 1854 Cavour called him and sought his help to complete the unification under the leadership of Victor Emmanuel, the king of Piedmont. Although Garibaldi supported republicanism, he accepted Emmanuel's leadership, for the sake of his country's unification. He brought his followers to fight the war against Austria in 1859.

In 1860 the patriots of Sicily rebelled against the French king Francis I. They requested for Garibaldi's help. He immediately sailed to the shores of Marsala with thousand followers. He defeated the king and occupied the whole of Sicily, in the name of Victor Emmanuel. Encouraged by the victory, he entered the main land of Italy, and reached Naples. The king had fled. Without giving a fight, Garibaldi, captured Naples in 1860. He then began to prepare for a march on Rome. To Cavour, the situation seemed full of danger. Rome was under the Pope. It was occupied by a French garrison. Napoleon III was a Catholic and did not want the Pope to be disturbed. Cavour understood that an attack on Rome would mean a war with France. Cavour decided to check Garibaldi's advance. He wanted to keep Garibaldi away. He assured to Napoleon III that Rome would not be attacked, but other areas of Papal state would be captured by Victor . He marched on the Papal areas and captured those. People accepted him as their king. Garibaldi saluted the king, gave him all the areas under him and retired to his home town. He refused the gifts, Victor offered him. He took only a bag of potato seeds with him.

## Victor Emmanuel and Completion of Unification

Victor Emmanuel was the son of Charles Albert the king of Sardinia - Piedmont. He was fortunate to get the services of Count Cavour. He gave full authority to Cavour to direct the course of the unification. By 1861, all areas except Venetia and Rome were out of the unification. Venetia was held by Austria and Rome by the Pope, with the help of French army, Cavour thought that without Rome, there was no Italy. Over work and extra stress brought his death in 1861. Victor decided to wait for an opportunity to conquer the two areas. In 1866, a war broke out between Austria and Prussia. Victor made an alliance with Prussia that Italy would fight against Austria and in return Prussia would help Victor to capture Venetia. Prussia won the war and compelled Austria to surrender Venetia to Italy. Rome alone was out of Italy. In 1870 a war broke between

France and Prussia. Napoleon III was compelled to withdraw French troops, from Rome, to be sent for the war. Victor seized the opportunity. Italian troops marched on Rome in September 1870. Pope retreated into the Vatican. The citizens of, Rome voted for joining the unification. Rome was declared the capital of the new and United Italy. Victor Emmanuel was accepted as the king.