

Of all the individuals involved in the unification of Italy, none played a more important role than Giuseppe Mazzini.

Justify this comment and vanquish its detractors.

The obstacle to the unification of Italy lay in the Congress of Vienna in 1815. Italy was restored to the Ancient Régime and was divided into five duchies and Kingdoms. Two wealthy parts, Lombardy and Venetia, were placed under Austrian rule and thus imposed a threat towards unification.

The entire process of Italian unification was a tragic-comic military blundering, political instability and repression, and at times Civil War. It was stamped by inconveniences. However, it was finally united with the annexation of Venetia. Geographically, Piedmont played a major role in the unification. The movement which Italians call the *Risorgimento*, which means resurgence or rebirth, led to the formation of a united Italy. Giuseppe Mazzini was the most prominent figure of this cultural, political as artistic movement. They also believed that the unification did not come about by an accidental or sudden war of diplomacy but via the gradual evolution of the Italian nation. An obstacle towards unification was certainly the lack of patriotism among the population which comes down to a lack of a central government and of a unified legal system.

The theme of patriotism and national unity were picked up by Giuseppe Mazzini, who was a archetypal romantic national, in the 1830's. It seems a reasonable attempt because he directly affects the masses which are important in order to oppose the government and establish a new democratic constitution.

Giuseppe Mazzini was born in Genoa in 1805 and grew up in an academic and intellectual atmosphere. He was immensely intelligent but nevertheless suffered from great depression. He turned his thoughts to politics and becoming a revolutionary nationalist when he was sixteen during the aftermath of the 1821 revolution in Piedmont. He was inspired by the idea of political devotion to the cause.

Giuseppe Mazzini was fully dedicated to the cause of Italian unification. He believed in what he said and was trying to act upon what he believed. This brought him great respect wherever he went. The fact that he spent half his life in exile made his work rather more challenging. He challenged the attitude of *Cabonari*, a group of people aiming to get rid of Austrian dominance, because of their vagueness of their aims and ambition. He was betrayed by one of the members and after becoming secretary was sent to prison for three months. His life should be dedicated to working for the independence and unification of Italy via the Cabonari. However, his aims would be clearly defined: His political philosophy was based on a belief in the existence of God; in the equality of men and races; in the progress of mankind, and in the rights and duties of the individual in society. He also believed that Christianity should be replaced by something else which would be democracy. God was therefore no longer speaking through priests or scriptures, but through the people. What people wanted was thus God's will. The people wanted national independence and unity. Rulers had therefore be challenged.

When he was released from prison in 1831, he launched his new secret society from Marseilles, *Young Italy*. This Society was a brotherhood of Italians who believed that her country was destined to be united by the law of progress and duty. They wanted to

reconstitute Italy as one free independent nation of equals. It should also be republican and Unitarian. Republican because every country was, by the law of God, to form a community of free and equal brothers and Unitarian because without unity there would be no strength which is needed to unite a country. Further more, the means by which it proposes to reach its aim are education and revolution. These two had to harmonise in the respect of education teaching the necessity of revolution and the revolution being national, as its aims. The people joining his organisation had to swear to commit themselves fully to the cause of *one free, independent republican nation*. Constitutional monarchies were only acceptable as governments of transition. A Uniform in national colours had to be worn.

Charles Albert finally became King of Piedmont in 1831. Mazzini promoted revolution and warned him. He did this by means of an open letter saying that the people want *liberty, independence and unison*. The aim of this letter is not clearly identified hence he himself did not really believe in it. Perhaps he wanted to show that Charles Albert's involvement with liberalism was now over, that nationalists could not therefore expect any help from the monarchy and that their only hope lay with the republicans. Now, he spent his time organising Young Italy. He distributed propaganda material. His first achievement was the revolt among the army in Piedmont which was crushed by the government. Mazzini collected volunteers in Switzerland, Poland and Germany in order for a planned attack on Piedmont. These few men collected were everything he could rely upon at this time. The Mazzinian dream was not to be realised until 1833-34 because it had far too idealistic and intellectual aims. He continued his political activity from distance.

His influence in the 1830's and 1840's was not too strong. He was criticised by Marxist historians for not recognising the need for agrarian reform which would have turned his movement into a popular one due to widespread support. The demonstrations, attacks and mutinies achieved nothing and ended more or less ignominiously. However, he was admired and gained respect by those whom he met. The nationalist movement in the 1840's was weak due to a diversity of opinion which from a united Italy should take. Mazzini wanted a democratic republic. His opponents favoured the idea of Piedmont leading the other Italian states.

Mazzini was elected as the leader, of the *Roman Republic Triumvirate*, a group of three men were to rule the city. Mazzini gained support by abolishing the detested grain tax which allowed the agricultural sector to grow. This resulted in an enormous increase in his popularity in the Roman Republic.

My client was certainly one of the most influential figures in Italian Unification. Through his conviction and passion for his cause he mobilised great support. He set up the foundations, intellectually, politically and through his greatest achievement, Young Italy. Life for him would have been easier if he had mobilised the peasants by making agricultural matters more adequate and setting the intellectual standards of his movement lower. Therefore, he can certainly be regarded as the most important figure in Italian unification.