

The Patriot, The President and The Pope

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Born on the 4th of July, Giuseppe Garibaldi was perhaps fated to become a world-renowned champion of liberty. Although inextricably associated with Italian unification, he was born in Nice, condemned to death in Genoa, learned how to fight (and dress) in South America, almost changed American history, and fought his last battle for the Republic of France.

His career as a champion of the Italian people began in 1834 when, at the age of 27, he tried to incite a republican revolution against the king of Sardinia-Piedmont, in whose navy he served. The plot failed and he escaped to France. Condemned to death in absentia by a Genoese court, he lived in exile in South America from 1836 to 1848. For a while he kept himself busy as a volunteer naval captain for the Rio Grande do Sul republic in its unsuccessful attempt at liberation from Brazil. He fancied the pampas fashions of the native gauchos, which he adopted as his signature style thereafter.

When it became obvious that the Brazilian Empire would not be easily thwarted, he moved on. In 1842 he led the Uruguayan Navy in a war of liberation against Argentina, and in the following year took command of a newly formed Italian Legion at Montevideo for the same cause. These were the first "Red Shirts" for which he would later gain fame. After distinguishing himself at the Battle of San Antonio his celebrity spread on both sides of the Atlantic. While briefly charged with the defense of Montevideo, his exploits captured the imagination of the writer Alexandre Dumas ("The Three Musketeers") who would eventually serve as his principal PR man. Twelve years in South America turned Garibaldi into an expert in guerrilla warfare, a style of fighting for which the French and Austrian armies that opposed him in later years were unprepared.

In 1848 Garibaldi returned to an Italy agitating for Risorgimento: resurrection and unification of Italy as an independent country. He first offered his services to the Papal States, which spanned central Italy and were ruled by the recently elevated, politically reform-minded Pope Pius IX. His offer was rejected by the pope, but accepted by the monarchy he had earlier tried to overthrow. Bygones were reduced to bygones and his death sentence was ignored since he'd now fight for unification of Italy under the king.

Later that year a popular insurrection erupted in Rome, capital of the Papal States. It was prompted by the pope's refusal to get with the unification program. A Roman Republic was established, and Garibaldi was elected a deputy. The republic was short-lived, however, as the pope returned within months in the company of French troops. Garibaldi and his followers held off a siege for several weeks, but were forced to come to terms. They were allowed to leave Rome, but were pursued by both the pope's French troops and those of Austria, through whose

Italian territories they were forced to retreat. Most of Garibaldi's followers were killed, captured or dispersed.

Garibaldi escaped to Tangier, and in 1850 landed in Staten Island. There he was invited to live in the home of his recently immigrated friend Antonio Meucci, inventor of the telephone, where he was briefly employed in the manufacture of his host's newly developed smokeless candles. Proceeds from the candles were used to support Meucci's inventing and to pay the salary that would enable Garibaldi's return to the sea. Garibaldi moved to Peru in the following year, and was soon made captain of a clipper bound for the Far East. He plied the seas on behalf of Peru until 1854, when the situation in Italy had cooled enough to allow his safe return.

Garibaldi cast his lot with Victor Emmanuel II, the liberal king of Piedmont-Sardinia, as the best hope for Italian freedom and unity. In 1860, Garibaldi led 1070 Red Shirt volunteers in a successful invasion of Sicily, ruled by the King of Naples, and in the following year captured Naples itself. In October of 1861, he turned the entire kingdom of Naples over to Victor Emmanuel. Umbria and Marche were soon after annexed from the Papal States, so that by the end of 1861 an almost united Italian kingdom was established. Rome still belonged to the pope, and Venetia to Austria.

Early in 1862, the king and his advisors hatched a plan to take Venetia. Garibaldi was recruited to raise a volunteer army and distract the Austrians with an attack in the Balkans. This would facilitate an invasion of Venetia by the king's troops. The king had second thoughts about the diversion, but Garibaldi, not one to waste a perfectly good army, decided to win Rome instead. Preferring to avoid war with France, which still protected the pope, Victor Emmanuel ordered his troops to stop Garibaldi. Garibaldi was defeated at the Battle of Aspromonte on August 29, during which he was wounded and captured. He was detained briefly at a fort in Varignano before being pardoned and released. Holding no grudge, Garibaldi accepted the king's offer to lead another volunteer force in an invasion of the Tyrol during the Prussian/Italian war against Austria. The quid pro quo for Italy's support of Prussia was Venetia, which became part of Italy in 1866.

Garibaldi was one of the most popular and admired figures at a time when sentiments of national unity and political self-determination were strong on both sides of the Atlantic. This was certainly the situation in the United States, where his exploits in Italy were followed by political leaders both north and south. Southern leaders drew encouragement for secession and independence, while in the north, Garibaldi's military prowess was coveted. It was long rumored, in fact, that Lincoln offered a Union command to Garibaldi. American scholars have tended to downplay or dismiss this for lack of documentation, although

Garibaldi's British biographer, Jasper Ridley, described it in some detail in his 1974 work. A Garibaldi command would be a master stroke by Lincoln, since early in the war his generals were not particularly competent tacticians. The North relied on a solely volunteer army at first, so who better for a Union command than the most famous warrior in the world, a fighter experienced in attracting volunteers to himself and whatever cause he was supporting?

The Lincoln-Garibaldi connection was elevated in credibility early last year. According to the Italian newspaper *Il Giorno*, in January of 2000 historian Arrigo Petacco found a note written by Garibaldi in 1862 addressed to "S.M. Vittorio Emanuele II Re d'Italia. Torino", while sorting through boxes of material donated by the royal family in exile. Garibaldi explains that he has been offered a command in the army by the president of the United States. He feels obliged to accept, but asks for the king's opinion. This is remarkably gracious deference, considering the fact that Lincoln's request reached Garibaldi at Verignano while he was detained and nursing his wounds from the Battle of Aspromonte.

The king's response suggested that Garibaldi must make his own choice, but that his homeland should always be his priority. Garibaldi decided to accept the offer, but on two conditions: that he be named Commander-in-Chief of the Union army, and that slavery be abolished. Since Lincoln already claimed the title of Commander-in-Chief, Garibaldi was offered the rank of Major General and an independent command commensurate with his reputation. Lincoln would not accede on the slavery issue, even though abolitionists in his administration were encouraging him toward the same objective. He did not want to test the loyalty of the four slave states that remained in the Union.

Within the next several months, however, after victory in the Battle of Antietam, Lincoln decided to take the risk and made his preliminary proclamation of emancipation, promising freedom to all slaves in the Confederacy effective the first day of the new year. The realities of war motivated this move in order to deprive the South of its free farm labor, to attract black recruits to the Union army, and to cultivate European support. The Confederacy had been hoping for help from England and France, since the war had virtually suspended the world's cotton supply, but Lincoln's recasting of the war as a crusade for human freedom obviated intervention. The South remained obstinate and the Emancipation Proclamation was issued on January 1, 1863. With the slaves in the rebel states "free", in ink more than in fact, Garibaldi was again courted, but for command of just one northern unit. He declined, having become occupied with other matters.

Garibaldi mounted his last campaign for Italian unity in 1867. Leading a volunteer army, secretly subsidized by the king, he tried to occupy Rome. He was defeated by the defending French troops, but once again bore no grudge. A few years later he fought his last fight on behalf of the French Republic in its war

with Prussia. He was later elected a member of the French National Assembly. While he was busy fighting for France, Rome's French defenders were withdrawn to join the war against Prussia and the city fell to Italian troops in September of 1870. The papacy lost the last remnant of its centuries of political power and Italy was finally united, with Rome declared her capital.

Italy was whole again, but the pope may have had the last laugh. Perhaps anticipating the inevitable end of his earthbound rule, Pius IX convened the first Vatican Council in 1869. On July 18 of the following year, one day before the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War, he established the pope's primacy over the bishops and the faithful everywhere. The pope was no longer just a father figure, counselor and mediator in the affairs of the Church, he was now chairman of the board. He could intervene at any time in any diocese in the world, and the bishops were obliged to submit and obey. More importantly, he finessed the council into proclaiming the dogma of papal infallibility. The pope was now incapable of error when making ex cathedra decisions on matters of faith and morals. Popes for centuries had rejected the notion of papal infallibility because they found distasteful the concept of being forced to live with a predecessor's pronouncements. But Pius IX succeeded in establishing an ecclesiastical reign just as his temporal rule was about to end.

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