

ITALIA 150



150th Anniversary of the Unification of Italy: ITALIA 150

Il Risorgimento, The Resurgence of Italy, was realized 150 years ago on March 17, 1861.

Italy finally was unified. The unification was achieved through the ideology and actions of the three main protagonists of Il Risorgimento: Giuseppe Mazzini ("The Soul"), the political philosopher; Giuseppe Garibaldi ("The Sword"), the military patriot; and Camillo Benso, Conte di Cavour ("The Brain"), the pragmatic statesman. Mazzini's belief in independence, Garibaldi's ardent fighting on the battlefields and Cavour's adept diplomacy culminated in this day when Vittorio Emanuele II, House of Savoy and the King of Sardinia, was proclaimed the first King of Italy. The first capital of a united Italy was Turin.

This year, 2011, Italy and Italian communities worldwide commemorate this significant historical event. After years of invasion and foreign occupation, by 1859, Italy consisted of several distinct states: the southern Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, ruled by the Spanish Bourbons; the northern regions, ruled by Austria; the central independent states; the Papal States, governed by the Roman Catholic Church with the support of France; and the independent Kingdom of Sardinia-Piedmont, ruled by Vittorio Emanuele II.

Il Risorgimento began well before 1861. After years of invasion and foreign occupation, a national movement had gained momentum beginning in the 18th century, reaching its peak in the 19th century. The goal was to rid the peninsula of foreign rule and oppression and to establish an egalitarian, constitutional, republican government.

During the early 19th century, several forces emerged: new ideology, which aroused public awareness; military attempts, which pushed forward small,

repeated insurrections and three Wars of Independence (1848-49, 1859 and 1866); and political maneuvering to make independence a reality.

By 1861, the Kingdom of Italy was a reality even though the Papal States and Veneto remained outside of the unified Italy. In 1866, Veneto was annexed; in 1870, the Italian army occupied Rome when France withdrew its troops to participate in the Franco-Prussian War, and, thereby, as a consequence, withdrew its support of the Papal holdings. Rome then became the capital of a unified Italy.

The champions of the resurgence of Italy and the ideals of unity, liberty and independence created the foundation for the Republic of Italy, which became a reality in 1946.

ITALIAN UNIFICATION TIME LINE:

1848-49 First War of Independence. Insurrections in several areas of Italy.

Mazzini and Garibaldi join forces in Bergamo.

Republic declared briefly in Rome; Mazzini "triumvir" of the new republic.

1851 Garibaldi, now in exile in Staten Island, N.Y., becomes a U.S. citizen.

1852 Cavour becomes Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia.

1858 Cavour provokes revolutions in Lombardy to incite war with Austria.

1859 Second War of Independence (Austro-Sardinian War). Military successes of Franco-Piedmontese forces.

Maj. Gen. Garibaldi and his "Hunters of the Alps" fight in Lombardy.

As Sardinia triumphant over Austria, Lombardy is transferred to Sardinia. Central states unite.

1860 Kingdom of Sardinia annexes central Italian states by ceding Nice and Savoy to France, negotiated by Cavour.

Garibaldi and *I Mille* "Red Shirts" liberate Sicily. Marching toward Naples, Garibaldi turns over the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies to Vittorio Emanuele II, King of Sardinia.

1861 March 17: Unification of Italy. Vittorio Emanuele II declared King of Italy. Turin is the capital.

1865 Capital transferred to Florence.

1866 Third War of Independence (Austro-Prussian War) Italy is rewarded for its war participation on the side of Prussia, by Prussia's giving Veneto to Italy.

1870 Rome is annexed to the Kingdom of Italy.

1871 Rome is the capital of the unified Italy.

Italian Heritage & Culture Committee of New York, Inc. For more than thirty five years the IHCC has organized events, concerts, exhibits and lectures, celebrating Italian culture. Each year a theme representative of the history and culture of Italy and Italian Americans is highlighted.

The IHCC promotes Italian culture by focusing on schools and taking a leadership role in promoting Italy and its cultural contributions.

www.italyculturemonth.org