

HISTORICAL PROFILES / Italy

Italy from 1815 to 1860: The Italian Risorgimento

In 1815, the Treaty of Vienna restored the pre-Napoleonic monarchies. Italy was divided into several small states, ruled by absolute monarchies. Much of northern Italy was under the Austrian Empire. Soon afterwards, among urban middle classes, a movement for constitutional rule and for Italian national unification started (the Risorgimento). In 1820–21 and 1831, liberals attempted constitutional coups in different states. In 1848–49, new uprisings broke out in different parts of Italy and republics were proclaimed in Rome and Venice (they were rapidly crushed). The King of Sardinia granted a constitution, which in 1861 would become Italy's constitution. In 1859–60, a combination of popular insurrections and military intervention by the Kingdom of Sardinia transformed Italy into a nation state ruled by a constitutional monarchy.



The hanging of liberal patriot Ciriaco De' Menotti (26 May 1831), who had organised an uprising for national unification in Modena

1890



During the insurrection known as the 'Five Days of Milan', Italian patriots capture a cannon from Austrian troops

1848



The meeting between General Giuseppe Garibaldi and King Victor Emmanuel II in Teano (28 October 1860)

1861

Italy from 1861 to 1922

In 1861, when Italy became a nation state under King Victor Emmanuel II, most Italians were poor, illiterate, disenfranchised peasants. In the following 60 years, the country experienced a late but intense industrialisation, mass migration, the development of a vibrant trade union movement and the beginning of social legislation; primary education became compulsory. Life expectancy rose from 29 in 1861 to 49 in 1921. The era of mass politics began: in 1892 the Socialist Party was founded, in 1919 the Catholic Popular Party and in 1921 the Fascist Party. In the 1910s, male franchise became universal. Wars enabled Italy to annex Venice (1866), Rome (1870), Trento and Trieste (1918). The traumatic experience of World War I caused social and political upheavals and paved the way for the Fascist rise to power in 1922.



A pupil disciplined by his teacher. Picture from a board game known as the Game of the Goose

19th century



The trademark for Chocolat des Pyramides produced by the company Talmone, based in Turin (Italy)

31 July 1894



Flag of the Female Workers Friendly Society (Società di mutuo soccorso femminile) of Cremona, bearing the motto “All for one and one for all”

Unknown (probably end of the 19th–beginning of the 20th century)

Italian colonial ambitions in the Mediterranean and the Italo-Turkish war over Libya (1911–12)

After national unification, Italy was striving to achieve great-power status. Colonial expansion was part of this policy. In 1881, the establishment of a French protectorate over Tunisia (where many Italian migrants lived) was considered a major political defeat by many Italian politicians. In 1882, Italy joined Germany and Austria-Hungary in the Triple Alliance and started colonial expansion in the Horn of Africa. In 1911, Italy waged war on Turkey for the conquest of Libya. The Socialists and some liberals opposed colonial expansion, but most of the press supported it, claiming that Libya could become an outlet for Italian migration and that the Arabs would welcome Italian rule; they were wrong. The war officially ended in 1912, but Libyan anti-colonial resistance lasted much longer. It would only be crushed 20 years later, by Fascist brutal repression.



The opening of the Simplon Tunnel between Italy and Switzerland
1903



'The War on Trial'
1913

Anticolonial booklet published by the Italian Socialist Party, against Italian colonial expansion in Libya



The Old Woman from Candia [Heraklion, Crete, Greece], the Only Person who Remained in Apollonia on the Day of the Occupation
1912–13(?)

An old Greek woman who was the only person remaining in the Libyan town Marsa Susa when the Italian army occupied it



El Sayyid Muhammad Idris al-Mahdi al Senussi (1889–1983), from 1916
Chief of the Senussi Muslim order
1920



Omar al-Mukhtar (1861–1931), leader of anticolonial resistance in Libya
Unknown (1920s?)
