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THE EARLY YEARS OF ITALIAN UNIFICATION AS SEEN BY AN AMERICAN DIPLOMAT, 1861 - 1870

ON March 17, 1861, Victor Emmanuel II of Sardinia assumed the title of King of Italy. With the exception of Venetia and the surviving portions of the Papal States, the political unification of the peninsula seemed to have been completed. "The united Italy," says a liberal historian, ". . . had suddenly become a fact . . . that even the apathetic multitude hailed with delight, and that made the reactionaries and the autonomists forget their narrow ideals in the pride of being citizens of a great nation."¹

There were, of course, some shadows in the general picture. The South had not wished this type of revolution, the clericals were naturally displeased with the subjugation of the Pope's territories, and the peasants throughout the peninsula had displayed a marked apathy as the new Italy was brought to birth and presented cautiously to Europe. On the whole, however, Cavour could look forward to the future with confidence. Much remained to be done, but the first great step had been achieved. The year was 1861, still the bright noon-tide of moderate liberalism; and men's hopes were still high and their spirits young.

From March, 1861, until his death in 1882 there was stationed in Italy as United States minister, George Perkins Marsh. Throughout this period he reported regularly to Washington concerning conditions in the new kingdom, and his despatches throw much light on the character of the new regime, as seen by an American liberal.² There

¹ Bolton King, *A History of Italian Unity, 1814-1871* (London, 1899), II, 182.

² Marsh resided at Turin until 1867, when he followed the Italian government to Florence, and later to Rome. He was born in 1801 at Woodstock, Vermont, and died in 1882 in Italy. He graduated from Dartmouth College in 1820 and studied law in Burlington, Vt. In 1835 he was elected to the state legislature and became a member of the supreme executive council of the state. From

is, from the conservative viewpoint, a special value to his opinions, since they reveal his gradual disillusionment with regard to the new government, and the slow but clearly perceptible shifting of his position from warm advocate to sharp critic of the young Italian state.³

The general tenor of his observations during his first three years in Italy might be summarized as follows: the task of fusing the various localities into a national whole was progressing successfully; unification brought all kinds of benefits to the Italian people, the future prospects of the new regime were very promising.⁴

He remarked, as one of the most encouraging signs for the future, the enthusiastic support received by the new government from the

1843 to 1849 he was a Whig member of Congress, and in the latter year he resigned to become Minister Resident of the United States at Constantinople. In 1852 he was charged with a special government mission to Greece, and, having traveled extensively in Europe, returned to the United States in 1854. Between 1857 and 1859 he served as railroad commissioner for Vermont. He assumed the post of United States Minister at Turin, March, 1861. He published several works, chiefly in the fields of philology and anthropology, e.g., *The Origin and History of the English Language* (1862), and *Man and Nature* (1864). He was the recipient of honors from several Italian academies. Cf. *Dictionary of American Biography*, XII, 297-298.

³ In this essay the quotations from Marsh's despatches have been transcribed from the originals in The National Archives, Washington, D. C. The footnote references indicate: a) the titles of the bound volumes as in the Archives; b) the serial number of each volume; c) name of the minister making the report; d) the serial number of each despatch; e) the date of each despatch at the point of origin.

⁴ *Vide passim: Italy*, Vol. X, Marsh (Apr. 3, 1861-Dec. 1, 1863). A typical extract: "Upon the whole, then, Italy seems to me to be now eminently the country of progress, and I believe the establishment of its political unity, which will be consummated by the recovery of the capital from the obscene birds of night [the Clericals!] that have so long hovered there, will be followed by an intellectual activity and productivity which will leave even the mental achievements of modern Germany behind it." (*Italy*, Vol. X, Marsh, n.n., Sept. 4, 1861). — This passage is important also as showing Marsh's lack of friendliness towards the papal party, an attitude which greatly increases the value of his subsequent testimony in defence of the papal case. — As an evidence of Marsh's careful habits, cf. the following from a despatch of 1863: "My object [he is referring to a projected trip through the *Mezzogiorno*] is to acquaint myself with the country. The different provinces now constituting the Kingdom of Italy, though under the same government, are . . . very diverse in the customs and characteristics of the people; and we cannot know Italy by a simple residence in its present capital" (*Italy*, Vol. X, Marsh, n.n., Dec. 1, 1863).

peasantry in every part of the peninsula.⁵ (This was a claim which at the time not even the liberals themselves were advancing.) In all classes except that of the clericals the sense of nationality was as thoroughly developed and as consciously felt as in any European race. No one, said Marsh, could question the resolution or the ability of the Italian people to accomplish that unity which, as a counterpoise to the overweening weight of the French and Germanic elements in Europe, would be as great a blessing to the general interests of the continent as to themselves.⁶

In 1864 the American minister was still apparently of the same opinion. Italy, he declared, was a large harmonious family, and even the South was distinguishing itself by whole-hearted devotion to the government.⁷ To this early testimony of Marsh there attaches a great importance, in view of the change in his views which was soon to come. His reactions from 1861 to 1864 certainly reveal him as willing to see the good points of the new order; and his uncomplimentary remarks concerning the papal and clerical regime show him to be anything but prejudiced in favor of the latter. The gradual

⁵ *Italy*, Vol. X, Marsh, No. 28, Oct. 28, 1861. In regard to the Scientific Exposition at Florence, Marsh said in this despatch: "The well-founded expectations of the government as to the beneficial effects of this first common gathering of the Italian people for so many centuries, seem likely to be fully realized, and I have no doubt that the Exposition will give a new impulse to the development of the spirit of nationality which is of itself so rapidly growing up."

⁶ *Italy*, Vol. X, Marsh, No. 53, Oct. 20, 1862.

⁷ "There is no question that the belief in a community of interests, the consciousness of a national life, and the conviction that immense advantages to the whole Italian people have already resulted from the gathering of the different provinces under one political organization, are strong and rapidly growing sentiments throughout the peninsula. This, I have reason to believe, is scarcely less true of Naples than of the rest of the Kingdom. Distracted as the rural districts of Italy are by brigandage and priestly and political intrigues, the recent progress of the city of Naples, and of all the most populous part of the adjacent provinces in material prosperity, in intelligence, in public order and respect for law, has been extremely rapid; and that population seems hardly less attached to the new government than any others of its subjects. . . . Ten years ago Naples and its dependent territory were socially, morally, politically more degraded than Spain . . . but they have now left Spain far behind them in the march of substantial improvement" (*Italy*, Vol. XI, Marsh, No. 102, Sept. 19, 1864).

modification of his views, therefore, from mid-1864 onward, is all the more worthy of careful study.

In the very despatch mentioned immediately above there is a slightly ominous note. It is not to be denied, he admitted, that there was much dissatisfaction with the policy of the government in many parts of Italy; and political agitators, "Romish," Bourbon, and Mazzinian, were constantly putting the question: What has Italy gained by her pretended unity?⁸ It must be recalled, in fairness to the American minister, that his final conclusion in this despatch was that unification was being successfully accomplished. But the disquieting note of the criticism just quoted, arouses our interest; and the change in the sentiments of the American minister began to be even more marked three years later.

In the early spring of 1867 Marsh felt that the surrender of the Trans-alpine provinces, the cession of Nice in 1860, and the convention of 1864, had destroyed the hold of the Savoyard dynasty on the attachment of the Piedmontese people. The traditions of Venetia and Tuscany were republican; and the king and his government had acquired no popularity in the Two Sicilies or in the other territories which had been added to Piedmont.⁹ Royalty, therefore, as represented by Victor Emmanuel and his sons, had little moral strength in Italy. If the king was to retain his throne after a political revolution, he would owe his safety to the support of foreign powers and foreign influences.¹⁰ This was a distinct shift of opinion on the part of the American minister, and it became increasingly marked in his subsequent observations.

About a year and a half after the despatch just quoted, Marsh reported a conversation which he had with General Menabrea. The latter complained that although the political unity of all the Italian states was now an accomplished fact, yet their administrative unification was not altogether complete, and, therefore, the government could not display the necessary energy, "since it did not possess the moral

⁸ *Ibid.* There had been a faint foreshadowing of this idea in one of the laudatory despatches of two years before: ". . . and though Naples and Sicily may possibly, for the time, be lost to the House of Savoy . . ." (*Italy*, Vol. X, Marsh, No. 53, Oct. 20, 1862).

⁹ *Italy*, Vol. XI, Marsh, No. 174, Apr. 10, 1867.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

support which the possession of material strength supplies.”¹¹ These latter words were the General’s, as quoted by Marsh. The Italian leader seemed to be hinting delicately that the people’s loyalty required an occasional stimulus from the government’s coercive powers, which, unfortunately, were not as strong as desired.

In the spring of 1869 Marsh reported a revolutionary outbreak at Milan. Although he depreciated its political significance, yet he admitted that the unpopularity of the government’s tax methods might seem to justify the apprehension that any movement supported by the name of Mazzini would produce a widespread agitation.¹² Again, in the spring of 1870, a revolt occurred at Pavia, involving part of the army. Marsh discounted the movement’s political importance, but conceded that it was alarming as one of the too numerous facts which showed a great, and, he feared, increasing demoralization among the masses.¹³ By May, 1870, the American minister’s fears were still unallayed. He regretted to announce that disturbances of the public peace, of the same character as those to which he had already alluded, had been renewed in various parts of Italy. The movements were generally represented as being of a political nature, and as instigated by republican agitators.¹⁴

This last-mentioned despatch is an example of the transition state of Marsh’s opinions at this time. He was not yet convinced that the disturbances indicated any serious lack of popular devotion to the government, and he was inclined to blame them rather on the misrule of the former regimes. But he admitted that the “want of a sound public sentiment in respect to crimes and punishments” would, if

¹¹ *Italy*, Vol. XIII, Marsh, No. 287, May 20, 1870.

¹² *Italy*, Vol. XIII, Marsh, No. 287, May 20, 1870. The following is typical of what the Regionalists were saying at this period: “Impartial history will record . . . the deplorable state to which Tuscany has been reduced by the new regime . . . She has experienced . . . the ruin of her finances; the dismissal of the most worthy and most intelligent of her officials; vexations; perquisitions; *processi economici* with no opportunity to present a defence; sentences of exile; stoppage of pensions acquired by many years of service, as at Fineschi and Buccella; and finally, that which is condemned even at Constantinople, the sequestration of private property, as occurred at Bargagli”. *Tumulti in Firenze la sera del 6 giugno 1861, ottava del Corpus Christi; storia contemporanea, descritti per un da Firenze, testimonio oculare* (Florence, 1861), p. 23.

¹³ *Italy*, Vol. XIII, Marsh, cipher portion, No. 299, Aug. 26, 1870.

¹⁴ *Italy*, Vol. XIII, Marsh, No. 287, May 20, 1870.

not corrected, ultimately prove dangerous to the political and social institutions of the country.¹⁵ Three months later his pessimism had taken on a more sombre color. He noted that the king was fearing a revolution in his kingdom, and the American minister believed that an event such as the downfall of the French Empire would inspire a serious effort to overthrow the monarchy in Italy.¹⁶

It was gradually becoming evident to Marsh that unification had produced two unforeseen and unfortunate results, which might be expressed thus: the exigencies of establishing a highly-centralized government had demanded the imposition of heavy taxes of various kinds on the provincial populations, and the government's agrarian policy had involved a radical reorganization of the system of land tenure. Both these necessities were highly unwelcome to the inhabitants of the rural districts. The government was between two fires; it must maintain its financial stability and it must carry through its program of land reapportionment, but both these objectives involved the cooling of popular loyalty to the State.

The American diplomat's first extended reference to taxation appeared in a despatch of January, 1868. Prince Carignan, acting as regent for the king (who was leading his troops in the Austrian war), was invested by parliament with full powers to launch a "national" loan, which, as Marsh remarked significantly, was popularly called a "forced loan." The American observed that this seemed to have been a "somewhat anomalous proceeding, the constitutionality of which, however, is, I believe, admitted by Italian jurists."¹⁷ We are given no important details concerning the character of this tax, but the manner in which it came into being evidently conflicted with Marsh's American constitutional prepossessions. Perhaps it is not too bold to surmise that it occasioned an analogous reaction in the minds of many Italians.

Not until a few months later did Marsh give a really vivid picture of the tax methods of the new regime. In the spring of 1868 the government imposed a tax on grist, i.e., milled grain, the most common staple of the poorer classes, the basic ingredient of bread. This

¹⁵ *Italy*, Vol. XIII, Marsh, No. 287, May 20, 1870.

¹⁶ *Italy*, Vol. XIII, Marsh, cipher portion, No. 299, Aug. 26, 1870.

¹⁷ *Italy*, Vol. XII, Marsh, No. 200, Jan. 20, 1868.

measure, said the American minister, involved the imposition of new burdens on an already over-taxed people, and had occasioned some manifestations of discontent.¹⁸ He explained that the tax was “designed expressly to compel contributions from classes whose utter poverty generally secures them from the exactions of the tax gatherer.”¹⁹ Six months later he described in greater detail the nature of this levy and the results which it produced. The tax on grist, he said, had produced some of the effects anticipated by its opponents, the enforcement of the law imposing it was resisted by the populace in many places, and the government was resorting to military force to put down the disturbance.²⁰

While the American minister was not gravely alarmed, he declared, nevertheless, that the government was seriously worried as to the results, and was reported to have made large concessions to the independent and spirited populations of Piedmont and Lombardy. In the Romagna the tax was being enforced by “measures which do not fall much short of martial law.”²¹ Marsh reaffirmed his belief that resistance to the law had not yet assumed a political aspect, but he feared that it would do much to weaken the moral influence of the regime, and that it would demoralize the people and dispose them to listen to revolutionary agitators.²²

All this is revealing, and is quite in contrast to the American minister’s optimistic reflections of a few years before. There is presented here no picture of an Italy united in a communion of national sentiment and loyally devoted to the government. Rather, the government appeared to be losing rapidly the affections of its subjects. The following description of the grist tax makes clear why this should be so:

The tax on grist . . . appears to me highly impolitic, unjust, and oppressive, its object being, like that of the *octroi* duty at the city gates, to spare the rich by extorting a contribution from those who have no property to tax, and whose daily earnings are scarcely sufficient to furnish them with the barest necessities of life.²³

¹⁸ *Italy*, Vol. XII, Marsh, No. 210, May 16, 1868.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Italy*, Vol. XII, Marsh, No. 239, Jan. 6, 1869.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

Marsh explained that the poor in Italy could afford little or no animal food, and, therefore, had to subsist almost exclusively on various preparations of meal and flour. The heavy tax on these staples was an impost on their minimal means of existence.²⁴ Under the circumstances it was not surprising that the lower classes of Italy should lack something of enthusiasm for the new government.

The new regime's land policy, also, had proved to be unpopular with the peasants and lower *borghesia*. With the double aim of breaking the feudal monopolies — especially that of the clericals — and of modernizing the conditions of tenure, the state had, in 1860, destroyed the large holdings and distributed them in small portions among what, it was hoped, would be a new progressive class of small owners. The results, however, belied the anticipations of the politicians. In the first place the new owners found, to their dismay, that their new status of free proprietorship brought them far less economic advantage than they had experienced under their former condition of tenantry. Marsh explained why this was so:

There is, especially in Tuscany, another consideration which operates with some force to repress the ambition of land-holding among the laboring class. Farming lands are [i.e., have been] in the past almost universally let upon shares and upon terms so favorable to the cultivator that he would in general be a loser by exchanging tenantry for proprietorship.²⁵

The leases under the old tenant system were, indeed, always for a single year, and the landlord could dismiss his tenant by a notice given in the autumn; but the peasant found it to his interest to give satisfaction to the proprietor, and changes were by no means frequent.²⁶ Marsh cited instances of peasant families who had held the same farm, on annual lettings, for four or five centuries.²⁷ In the second place, there was the unexpected fact that the peasants in many localities were unwilling after 1860 to receive their land portion, precisely because it

²⁴ *Italy*, Vol. XII, Marsh, No. 239, Jan. 6, 1869.

²⁵ *Italy*, Vol. XI, Marsh, No. 187, Aug. 16, 1867.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

had been confiscated from the clergy :

In the Alpine and northern Apennine regions the rural population is comparatively independent of the clergy, and there is good reason to believe that the peasantry will largely avail themselves of the opportunity of escaping from the condition of tenants and becoming land-owners But in Tuscany and in Sicily, it is very doubtful whether many of them will venture to incur the animadversion of the church by appropriating to their private use lands long set apart for the benefit of the priesthood.²⁸

Incidentally, it is pertinent to ask the question, would clerical influence have been still so operative, if it had not been based on a yet-enduring affection of the people for the clergy?

Such, on Marsh's testimony, was the general character of the government's financial and agrarian administration. It seems safe to surmise that the defects of that administration go far to explain the popular dissatisfaction remarked by the American minister in the later years of the sixties.²⁹ There had been no lack of prophets foretelling these results. Federalists like Proudhon, Perez, Regnault, and Chevillard, had pointed out the evils of centralization as exemplified in France, and had warned the Italians that a similar form of government would bring the same disadvantages to the peninsula. The prophets were, apparently, being vindicated by the grumblings and complaints

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Marsh's strictures were confirmed by the official *Il bilancio del regno d'Italia negli esercizi finanziari dal 1862 al 1912-1913* (Roma, Tipografia dell'Unione editrice, 1914). The following are some of the more significant facts to be noted from this publication: 1) The imposts lightened or removed in 1879 and 1880 were replaced by others almost as heavy (pp. 33-34). The *proventi tributari* which in 1877 were 17 billion lire, leaped in 1888-89 to 287 billion (*ibid.*). 2) The increased public expenses consequent on unification far outran the capacity of the treasury, so that the national budget never was balanced permanently until 1906 (pp. 11-24). 3) Heavy taxation was an urgent necessity in order to prevent the financial system of the State from collapsing entirely (pp. 27-40). Cf. in detail, the following sections of this work: "Prospetti riassunti le entrate e le spese accertate per gli esercizi finanziari dal 1862 al 1912-1913" (pp. 402-576); "Entrate e spese effettive" (pp. 27-51); "Le entrate effettive ordinarie" (pp. 89-91); "Redditi patrimoniali" (pp. 92-96); "Imposte dirette" (pp. 97-104).

in the provinces of the south, the center, and the north.³⁰

There remains to be considered the new regime's ecclesiastical policy, according to which the real value of the revolution of 1860-1870 must largely be judged. The moderate liberals, who carried through the unification of Italy, always claimed that they never sought to cripple the Church as a spiritual institution, nor to infringe upon any of her spiritual rights. This may have been true. But many of their measures had precisely these effects, whether intended or not. The aim of the Italian government was, confessedly, to subordinate the Church to the State without destroying the independence of the Church in the latter's proper sphere of the spiritual. But in this program there was a fatal fallacy. To subordinate the Church to the state so as to make the State the supreme and last arbiter in matters of disputed or doubtful jurisdiction between the two powers — this was effectually to destroy the independence of the Church as a corporate institution.

The Italian liberals held that the State, after vindicating its position as grantor of the Church's right to exist as a society within the state, would then allow the Church freedom to exercise its spiritual functions. But this was a mere quibble; for the State, if it had the power to confer the former right, had certainly the lesser power of restricting at will the Church's activity. If the State could give being to a society, the State could certainly and rightfully control the acts of its own creature.

So, even though the Italian government had no explicit intention of destroying the Church's spiritual freedom, such would be the logical effect of the government's policy. The present writer, however, in the light of the evidence presented by Marsh, believes one might make a more weighty charge: it would seem that the Italian government deliberately sought to cripple not only the temporal influence and prestige of the Church, but her purely spiritual activity as well. The following extracts from the despatches of the American minister tend to prove that the direct and deliberate aim of the rulers of Italy was to

³⁰ Cf. the following French writers against political centralization: P.-J. Proudhon, *La fédération et l'unité en Italie*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1862); Elias Regnault, *La Province, ce qu'elle est; ce qu'elle doit être* (Paris, 1861); Jules Chevallard, *De la division administrative de la France, et de la centralisation* (Paris, 1862).

destroy the Catholic Church in Italy in her purely spiritual character.

In the fall of 1861 Marsh had a private interview with Baron Ricasoli on the subject of religious liberty in Italy. At the moment the status of the Church-State question was this: the Pope had refused to negotiate on the basis of the "free Church in a free State" plan, and the government's intention henceforth was to break down gradually by means of an attack, under strictly legal forms, all papal and clerical opposition to the state claims.

The baron, after observing that "the papacy, considered as a temporal power, was the great enemy to the liberation of Italy, and to its political, moral, and social prosperity," continued in an even more forthright vein:

It was moreover mischievous, he said, not only in its character of a territorial sovereignty, but as a *spiritual power relying upon coercion for its influence and support* . . . Religion ought never to be clothed with any authority to enforce its dogmas or its precepts.³¹

The implication here is clear: the spiritual freedom of the Church was to be attacked, for the good of Italy. The baron was making a clear-cut distinction between the purely temporal and the spiritual or religious character of the Church.

Marsh further clarified Ricasoli's meaning. After noting the view of many that the deprivation of the Pope's temporal power would increase his purely spiritual authority, the American went on to say that this, however, was not the view of the "most enlightened" among the liberals, nor was it their desire. They were ready, he believed, "to denounce the doctrine of coercion and restraint in religious matters altogether." They expected, under all circumstances, a diminution of the *spiritual power and influence* of the papacy and of the clergy, and were ready to accept a constitution which would place every form of religious belief on a footing of absolute equality in the state. It was, he said, very generally admitted that religious servitude and civil liberty could not long co-exist.³²

It is needless to point out that in the language of nineteenth-century liberals, such expressions as "the doctrine of coercion and restraint in

³¹ *Italy*, Vol. X, Marsh, Private, Turin, Sept. 4, 1861: "Notes Private and Confidential for the Hon. Mr. Seward." [Italics inserted.]

³² *Italy*, Vol. X, Marsh, n.n., Sept. 4, 1861.

religious matters" meant simply the doctrine which asserted the right of the Catholic Church to exercise, in matters of faith and morals, effective and independent jurisdiction over her subjects. This jurisdiction is absolutely essential for the exercise of her spiritual functions; this jurisdiction the Italian government, on Marsh's testimony, sought to destroy.³³

During the carnival festivities of March, 1862, the American minister noted the "manifestations of popular detestation not only of the Papacy as a temporal power, but of the whole moral machinery of the Romish Church."³⁴ If this detestation was really "popular," it would supply an argument of some weight against the clerical regime. But popular demonstrations, particularly at that period in Italy, have frequently proved to have been more synthetic than sincere. But the real point of the remark is this: it reflects Marsh's mind, and his idea of what the people *should* be detesting; and Marsh's mind, as we know from the whole tenor of his despatches, was with regard to the matter, in agreement with the mind of the leaders of the Italian government.³⁵

Finally, the rulers' aim of destroying the spiritual power of the Catholic Church in Italy was indicated by the results of that policy, and by the American minister's approval of those results. He declared that the "moral emancipation" of the people from the influence of the Church of Rome was rapidly progressing. The lower clergy, to a very great extent, he said, were throwing off the yoke of the papacy, and a very large number of priests in southern Italy were openly advocating the formation of a national church which, though certainly not Protestant in a theological sense, would be virtually independent

³³ For the liberals' view on this subject, cf. R. De Zerbi, *Chiesa e stato e il libro dell' on. Minghetti* (Naples, 1878). The author presents his theory of the State as tutelary of all other societies' rights, and holds the "relative" and non-divine character of the Church's rights. The unescapable conclusion from this book is that the State, in effect, controls (i.e., claims to control) the exercise of the rights of the Church completely. Further, the author openly asserts the State's right to intervene in religious matters (pp. 38-39).

³⁴ *Italy*, Vol. X, Marsh, No. 39, Mar. 10, 1862.

³⁵ Add the two following extracts: "There are no statesmen in Italy who do not believe that the exercise of not merely temporal sway but of *any* species of coercive authority by the papacy or by any other ecclesiastical jurisdiction is absolutely irreconcilable with the existence of the new order of things" (*Italy*, Vol. X, Marsh, No. 49, Aug. 5, 1862, italics Marsh's).

of the Roman See, and politically hostile to the "claims of the Roman See to civil or ecclesiastical supremacy."³⁶

If language has any meaning, this signifies a clear and explicit intention on the part of the government to extinguish the Catholic Church as a spiritual force in Italy.³⁷

It is in vain that the liberals should have attempted to attenuate the significance of such statements by saying that they meant merely the reduction of the temporal or "moral" influence of the Church, and, to a greater degree, her "ecclesiastical supremacy;" for the Church's moral influence and ecclesiastical supremacy are precisely

³⁶ *Italy*, Vol. X, Marsh, No. 53, Oct. 20, 1862. [Italics inserted.]

³⁷ An evidence of the substitute morality and religion which, at least in the more radical quarters, was being urged, is seen in the rather grotesque *Catechismo Garibaldino*, from which the following are some extracts:

"Q. Make the sign of the cross.

A. In the name of the Father of my country, of the son of the people [the references are to Garibaldi] and of the spirit of Liberty, amen!

Q. Who has created you a soldier?

A. Garibaldi has created me a soldier.

Q. For what end?

A. To honor, love, and serve Italy.

Q. How does Garibaldi reward those who love and serve Italy?

A. With victory.

Q. What are the joys of victory?

A. To behold Garibaldi, and all sorts of pleasure with no sorrow.

Q. Who is Garibaldi?

A. Garibaldi is a *spirito generosissimo*, blessed of heaven and earth.

Q. How many Garibaldis are there?

A. There is only one Garibaldi.

Q. Where is Garibaldi?

A. In the heart of every loyal Italian

Q. How many persons are in Garibaldi?

A. In Garibaldi there are three persons really distinct — the Father of his country, the son of the people, and the spirit of Liberty!

Q. Which of these three persons became man?

A. The second, that is, the son of the people.

Q. How was he made man?

A. He took a body and a soul, as we did, in the most blessed womb of a woman of the people."

The moral effect of this practical equating of Garibaldi with the Divinity can be easily surmised. The full title of the work is: *Catechismo Garibaldino; istruzioni da farsi ai giovanetti italiani dai 15 anni* (Milan, 1866).

what the Church lives by, precisely *her spiritual function acting*, precisely the indispensable requisites of her spiritual independence. To destroy these to the extent of raising up a new "national church" in Catholic Italy was to destroy the Church as a free spiritual institution in Italy.³⁸

It is to be noted that the clericals and their supporters were not easily overcome. The papal *Syllabus* of 1864 was received by large masses of Italians with a respect which, to the government, was exceedingly disturbing, and which, to historians, should be a warning urging them to recheck their evidence concerning the degree of popular support accorded to the anti-clerical policy. The strength of the Catholic party was indicated by the failure of the Free Church Bill, and by the Senate's rejection of the proposals of 1865 and 1866 for more suppressions of monasteries and convents. The government was forced to work for what would be, at least on the surface, a com-

³⁸ That this was the government's aim was certainly believed by the parliamentary deputy, Guerrieri Gonzaga, who rejoiced that the Italian State, after its occupation of Rome, "will *no longer have a rival in the religious and ecclesiastical sphere*, except that of a generic integration of the religious activity of private citizens and of private associations" (*Diritto*, Turin, Oct. 15, 1862, italics inserted). To reduce the Church to such an "integration . . . of private citizens" meant, in plain words, to destroy the independent corporate existence of the Church. Signor Gonzaga continued: "The state cannot rest on a peaceful and secure foundation until it has succeeded in *infusing into the despotic Church that same liberal spirit and the same modes of governing* which are of the essence of the political order" (*ibid.*, italics inserted). Obviously, this is a declaration of a determination to tamper considerably with the purely spiritual constitution of the Church. The United States, thought Gonzaga, had erred in conceding too much liberty to the Catholic Church: "The weakening in the United States of the ancient Protestant tradition, and the supreme prevalence there of the spirit of individual freedom has worked to the disadvantage of the authority and solidity of the state, and opened the way for the usurpations of the Church. The benefits which the Romish Curia has been able to derive in the United States from the liberty originally won by the Protestants in that country, constitute a damage to that Republic, are an attack on her traditions and future, and point a warning to other nations" (*ibid.*). This is indeed a tribute to American free government from an unimpeachable source.

The liberal journal, *Il Pungolo*, urged that education in Italy should be completely divorced from religion: "Education should be made independent of religion It is an evident fact that there cannot be conceived a good system of studies unless that system is totally independent of all religious elements" (No. 48, Aug. 6, 1859).

promise — pensions to the clergy as compensation for their confiscated properties, and even bribes to the bishops. The fact was that the government, in seeking to break the power of the Church, was obliged by the unexpected vigor of the Catholic opposition to employ greater caution, even at the risk of displeasing the more rabid of the anti-clericals.

The anti-clerical program was all the more anomalous in view of the fact that Italy was still overwhelmingly Catholic. This was admitted and even boasted of by the king himself, who, referring to the opening of the negotiations with Rome in the fall of 1865, professed his “desire to satisfy the religious interests of *the majority* of his subjects.”³⁹

The last portion of Marsh’s testimony during the years 1861-1870, deals with the Italian government’s seizure of the city of Rome. At the beginning of 1870 the determination to occupy without delay the Eternal City was agreed on by the Lanza cabinet. The necessity of placating Napoleon III had been rendered an anachronism by the outcome of the Franco-Prussian war. Pius IX was deaf to all offers of compromise, for he knew that no compromise offer would include the retention by him of his sovereign rights to his territories. After some transparent efforts to legalize the seizure, the troops of General Cadorna entered the Porta Pia on September 20, 1870, and Italy had won her capital.

Marsh’s comments at this time have considerable value, principally for two reasons: first, they indicate the existence of a strong popular opposition to the government’s policy toward the Church, and, secondly, they reveal that the policy, at least in regard to its Roman aspect, was decidedly condemned by the American minister himself. First, as to this popular opposition.

Marsh, writing in January, 1870, said that the Italian statesmen believed that “not merely resistance to Rome, but any substantial reform in the Roman Church . . . by the government, *would not be sustained by the people* unless such action of the government was sanctioned by the Italian prelacy and episcopate.”⁴⁰ This statement could have only

³⁹ *Opinion*, Nov. 18, 1865, enclosed in: *Italy*, Vol. XI, Marsh, No. 127, Nov. 18, 1865, italics inserted.

⁴⁰ *Italy*, Vol. XIII, Marsh, No. 276, Jan. 10, 1870, italics inserted.

one meaning: the government realized that its church program did not enjoy popular support except insofar as it could be approved by the bishops.

With regard to the seizure of the city of Rome, Marsh's views may be summarized thus: it was necessary for the welfare of Italy that Rome be taken, but the government's previous commitments with France, and the specific methods employed in the seizure, were illegal—and as such, he thought, to be condemned—and there was no indication that they accorded with the wishes of the Roman people.⁴¹ By the Convention of 1864, said the American minister, Italy admitted the right of France, and by implication, of every other Catholic power, to interfere in the relations between the kingdom and Rome. The ministry weakly failed to denounce the return of the French troops in 1867 as a breach of the convention by France, and “it is not easy to see on what principle Italy can now occupy Rome, without the consent of the Pope, if not also of the government of France.”⁴²

Furthermore, there had always been a professed hope that when the incubus of the French occupation was withdrawn, there would be a spontaneous rising of the Roman people, imposing enough in its character to paralyze the opposition of the papacy to the annexation of the Papal States to the kingdom of Italy. The advocates of the convention, at the time of its promulgation, encouraged the belief that the Emperor of France looked forward with satisfaction to such an event, and even that the real object of the convention was to facilitate the acquisition of Rome by Italy, by means of a revolution effected by the Romans themselves. This, it was alleged, would be no breach of the convention, nor would it authorize a renewal of French occupation.⁴³

⁴¹ *Italy*, Vol. XIII, No. 299, Aug. 26, 1870. The liberal journal, *Corriere di Milano*, made at this time a remarkable admission concerning the strength of the Catholic party in Italy. It would be unwise, said the *Corriere*, for the government to grant universal suffrage, for in universal suffrage the Catholic party would find a support. The majority, counted head by head, lives in the country districts [*campagna*], and the country districts favor the *curate*. The article concluded with the naive reflection that, “therefore, the government's opposition to universal suffrage arises not from self-interest, but from a sincere love of liberty” (*Corriere di Milano*, Feb. 11, 1869).

⁴² *Italy*, Vol. XIII, Marsh, No. 299, Aug. 26, 1870.

⁴³ This whole paragraph is a paraphrase of part of the despatch No. 299, cited immediately above.

But Marsh had no faith in the soundness or sincerity of this opinion, and he declared that,

in any event, there are at present no indications of a disposition, on the part of the Roman people, to resort to energetic measures for the overthrow of the pontifical government.⁴⁴

The Italian government, Marsh continued, was concentrating on the Roman frontier a military force far greater than would be necessary to overcome any resistance which Rome could make. This display, he thought, was "designed to afford a moral support to possible popular movements in the Roman territory,"⁴⁵ and it was even rumored that an insurrection was in the first stages of preparation,

. . . though there is no evidence that the people of the city or country are now ready to participate in it.⁴⁶

Marsh in a later despatch repeated his view that the Italian government could not invade the city of Rome without the violation of legal obligations. By the first article of the Piedmontese Constitution of 1848, he recalled, the state was pledged to the exclusive maintenance of the Catholic religion; by repeated ministerial and royal declarations it was pledged to the absolute separation of Church and State and the recognition of absolute equality of rights in different religious sects; and by the Convention of 1864 it had admitted the right of foreign intervention between itself and the papacy, and had "pledged itself to defend the pontifical territory against any assertion of right by the Italian people."⁴⁷ The final conclusion of the American minister

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Italy*, Vol. XIII, Marsh, No. 299, Aug. 26, 1870. An apparently valid indication of the Romans' loyalty to Pius IX in 1870 was furnished by a memorial offered to the pontiff on the occasion of his jubilee in July of the following year. The memorial contained the signatures of approximately one-half the male population of the city. The conditions under which the signatures were secured, as well as the admitted integrity of the sponsors of the plan, lend considerable credibility to the theory that this was a sincere and spontaneous expression of esteem. Cf. *Sopra la sottoscrizione romana raccolta ed offerta a Pio IX P. M. in occasione del suo Giubbileo pontificale, dalla società per gl' interessi cattolici, osservazioni di C. M. Curci d. C. D. G.* (Roma, 1871).

⁴⁷ *Italy*, Vol. XIII, Marsh, No. 301, Sept. 9, 1870.

was, that Italy could not take Rome without a violation of all these solemn promises. The government, he affirmed, had no friends among the states of Europe, and, in a European congress, could not count on a single vote upon any of the issues between the Italian state and the Pope.⁴⁸

The American minister believed that the seizure of Rome was, at the critical moment, dictated by "popular violence" employed against a weak ministry which, in the matter, was vacillating to the point of sheer paralysis.⁴⁹ His final judgment, as well as his appreciation of the essentially *Realpolitik* character of the men who made Italy, was well expressed in a passage written in late 1870. He remarked that one now often heard men of a certain standing in public life say that the quality of the formal stipulations of an arrangement with the papacy was of no importance, because in practice those stipulations would be a dead letter, and the government would be administered in entire independence of the papacy, however strongly the government might bind itself to respect the stipulations.⁵⁰ This view of the subject, thought Marsh, indicated a low political morality, but it was very likely to find favor with many who looked upon the possession of Rome as opening a new epoch in the national life which could not be inaugurated at too high a price.⁵¹

The American minister, in other words, watching his friends consolidate their seizure of Rome, approved, on the whole, what they had done, but he was considerably shocked at what he regarded as the il-

⁴⁸ *Italy*, Vol. XIII, Marsh, No. 301, Sept. 9, 1870. The success of the Italian politicians in overcoming any scruples connected with pledge-breaking is suggested by the following: "Although the Italian ministry pledged itself to carry out the 'national program' at the session of the senate three weeks ago, the President of the Council solemnly assured the senate that the government would in no case resort to force, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, early last week, declared, in the most explicit manner, to eminent statesmen opposed to the movement, that the Italian troops would *never* enter Rome, and that they would simply occupy strategic points, none of which would probably be within twenty miles of the city" (*Italy*, Vol. XII, Marsh, Sept. 21, 1870, italics Marsh's).

⁴⁹ *Italy*, Vol. XIII, Marsh, No. 303, cipher portion, Sept. 12, 1870.

⁵⁰ *Italy*, Vol. XIII, March, n.n., Oct. 27, 1870.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

legality and immorality of their methods.⁵² Viewing the scene with an American's respect for acquired and legal rights, his aversion for papalism was overcome by his dislike for the high-handed policy of the Italian liberals.

As to the general picture which Marsh presented of the first decade of rule by the new government, this much may be said: the honeymoon period was over, and domestic disunion, inefficiency, and suffering were beginning to appear. There were clearly visible, also, the outlines of a theory of administration which has in our day become known as the method of the totalitarian State, a method which seeks to dominate all other societies within the national boundaries. This was the New Italy; but it had not brought to the people a freer, larger, and happier life. And the people, apparently, were aware of this. The wind was rising; there were ominous signs in the sky.

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⁵² The *Civiltà Cattolica* made these charges against the Roman plebiscite of October 2, 1870: "We have noted, in studying the foreign press, that therein [no references are given] the Roman plebiscite is censured on four main points: 1) on the day of the voting there were present in Rome from all over Italy many thousands of non-Romans; 2) antecedent to the voting there were not compiled electoral lists, wherefore anyone could vote on that day, and repeat his vote as often as he pleased; 3) several foreigners actually published in English and German journals the statement that they had been admitted to the voting, and had voted several times; 4) the voting did not begin until mid-morning, and the results were announced promptly that evening, a rapidity impossible if an honest count were taken" ("La fedeltà dei Romani al S. Padre", *Civ. Catt.*, Ser. VIII, III (1871), 531).