

precarious domestic political context and in a very changeable international environment – in the service of a minor dynasty that was never convinced by the merits of constitutionalism and with a monarch who though interested in enlarging his kingdom constantly worked against his imprudent and impudent minister who always treated him as an equal and, on particularly stormy occasions, with disrespect.

The truth is that Cavour would have found it very difficult to defend his position as Prime Minister of Piedmont had he not taken the opportunity to shift the focus of his government ‘to the side of foreign affairs’, thus allowing the ‘Italian problem’ to ‘take the place of domestic reforms, which were seen as always more difficult’ (p. 301). By shifting the balance between internal and international politics, Cavour managed to keep public opinion ‘in a state of continual tension, creating a kind of prolonged wait for war considered inevitable, with Austria’ (p. 355). In such an excited atmosphere, Cavour managed the miracle of bringing forward a daring national policy (demonstrating that he was ready to use all means possible, even at the risk of provoking international reaction and dangerous popular mobilisation) without ever surrendering liberal constitutionalism, on which the autonomy of his government depended. As Cavour declared in 1860, ‘Italy’s ultimate glory will not be that it knew how to constitute herself as a nation without sacrificing liberty to independence, but that she was able to free herself from absolutist rule without succumbing to revolutionary despotism. Now, there is no other way to achieve this other than through Parliament, the only moral force that can overcome sectarianism and preserve the sympathies of liberal Europe for us’ (p. 481).

If Italy was Cavour’s political life insurance and the parliament ‘frequently a secure refuge’, whereas for Garibaldi and Vittorio Emanuele it was ‘an obstacle’ (p. 446), one must remember that the achievement of ‘the revolution with a King’ can only be understood historically if it is linked to the absolutely extraordinary capacity of Cavour to put together the pieces of a puzzle which was incomprehensible to most, utilising politics as an instrument able to multiply resources and opportunities. ‘I do not know why’, he wrote in 1848, ‘but this cursed politics always fascinates me’ (p. 82): a fascination and an agony which, for us, takes on the features of great history.

Reference

Romeo, R. 1969–1984. *Cavour e il suo tempo*. 3 vols. Rome-Bari: Laterza.

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17 Marzo 1861: L’Inghilterra e l’unità d’Italia, by Pietro Pastorelli, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 2011, 177 pp., €14.00 (paperback), ISBN 978-88-498-2793-4

Pietro Pastorelli died in August 2013, aged 81. A historian of Italian foreign policy and diplomacy, Pastorelli worked for over 30 years at the Sapienza university of Rome (1974–2007) and served for over 20 years as the President of the Foreign Ministry Commission for the

Reorganisation and Publication of Italian Diplomatic Documents (1990–2012). *17 Marzo 1861* represents Pastorelli's penultimate work.

17 Marzo 1861 – the title refers to the date on which Cavour officially requested the British government to recognise the new Kingdom of Italy – is very much the work of an 'old school' diplomatic historian: there is not a single 'discourse', 'deep image' or 'soft' historical source to be found anywhere within the book's 170 pages. Instead, what we have is an old-fashioned narrative of Anglo-Piedmontese relations during the tumultuous events of 1860 and early 1861; so old fashioned, in fact, that had this reviewer been asked to guess when the book was published, he would have said some time in the 1950s or 1960s, rather than the 2010s. In part, this is a consequence of Pastorelli's sources and approach. In terms of primary sources, he relies entirely on published diplomatic correspondence – and many of these volumes themselves date back to the 1950s and 1960s. As to secondary sources, Pastorelli simply does not use any: there is no mention of the numerous diplomatic studies published around the centenary of Italian unification by (among others) Federico Curato, Giuseppe Giarrizzo, Derek Beales, Denis Mack Smith, Harry Hearder, and Noel Blakiston; and there is no acknowledgement of the more recent 'cultural' interpretations of British popular and political attitudes towards Italian nationalism offered by Paul Ginsborg and Christopher Duggan. This is clearly a deliberate choice: Pastorelli's intention is not to try to explain or interpret why the British and Piedmontese governments acted in the ways they did, but merely to present the 'facts' as they are revealed in the documents; he leaves it up to the reader (he says) to decide what it all means. In particular, Pastorelli is keen to see whether the 'facts' show Britain to have been 'the co-patron saint, with France, of Italian unity, or . . . the Perfidious Albion' (p. 14) of late Fascist historiography. Quite why Pastorelli should feel the need to ask the question is a mystery, though, since virtually every study written on the subject since the 1950s recognises that British moral and diplomatic support was an important, although not decisive, factor in the 'making' of Italy.

Despite the book's decidedly 'retro' feel, and the fact that it treads *very* familiar historiographical ground, Pastorelli nevertheless tells this old story well. Over five chapters, Pastorelli charts the ups and downs of Anglo-Piedmontese relations. On the one hand, he discusses the positive role played by the British minister at Turin in Cavour's return as Piedmontese prime minister in January 1860, the support given by the liberal Palmerston–Russell government to the Piedmontese annexation of the central Italian duchies in the spring of 1860, the protection afforded to Garibaldi's Red Shirts at Marsala in May by the presence of the Royal Navy in the harbour, the British insistence that the Italians be left to sort out their own affairs during the summer of 1860, and – of course – the British decision to recognise immediately the new kingdom of Italy in March 1861 (only the United States and Switzerland followed suit). On the other hand, he highlights the British government's deep distrust of Cavour following the cession of Nice and Savoy to France in the spring of 1860 (something that Cavour had consistently denied he would do), and its constant concern that Cavour (despite his protests to the contrary) was seeking to stir up Slav nationalist sentiment against Austria in Eastern Europe in an effort to weaken the Habsburgs' hold over Venetia. At no point, though, did the British government seriously consider turning its back on Piedmont or the broader liberal national movement in Italy: 'I heartily congratulate you on the creation of the new Italian kingdom', Russell informed the Piedmontese minister in London in March 1861, '*Felix faustumque sit* is my fervent wish and I trust we may look forward to a period of freedom and peace for Europe' (p. 154).

Pastorelli's skill as a narrator makes *17 Marzo 1861* a good read, but it is not enough to make the book a *must* read. For this, one must still turn to Derek Beales' classic *England and Italy*,

1859–60, which still feels fresh and relevant today despite being published more than half a century ago.

Reference

Beales, D. 1961. *England and Italy, 1859–60*. London: Nelson.

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Il Regno delle Due Sicilie e le potenze europee, 1830–1861, by Eugenio Di Rienzo, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 2012, 229 pp., €14.00 (paperback), ISBN 978-88-4983-22-59

In the many and crowded debates that characterised the 150th anniversary of Italian unity in 2011, the history of southern Italy attracted considerable attention, and not only from professional historians. In this context, a number of little known political events that took place within and beyond the borders of the Kingdom of Two Sicilies came to the fore. These illustrated the influence and (more or less legal) intervention of the principal European powers in Italy, which determined the historical and institutional ‘destiny’ of the kingdom. Some pieces of the complex puzzle that led to Italian unification, however, were still missing. Eugenio Di Rienzo’s recent work completes the picture. Through extensive research based primarily on diplomatic sources – once again shown to be of fundamental importance in the reconstruction of historical events – he documents many little and barely known aspects of the crucial period 1830–1861. Di Rienzo places in the contemporary international context the foreign policy choices and conduct of France and England especially, both of which were always attentive to, and worried by, political changes in the Italian states.

England always considered itself to be in credit with the Kingdom of Naples for having supported it at several crucial historical moments, beginning in 1799. The most recent ‘help’ from England had been during the Neapolitan revolution of 1820–1821, which had resulted in the adoption of the 1812 Spanish Constitution, a text considered subversive by all of Europe’s rulers. On that occasion, the ambiguous neutrality of England had been a crucial factor in the invasion of the kingdom by Holy Alliance forces. The invasion resulted in the brutal suppression of the first constitutional experiment attempted in pre-unification Italy.

In the following decades, England did not react well to what it perceived as displays of arrogance on the part of King Ferdinand II, who sought to be ‘independent’ from French and especially English influence. In pursuit of this goal, Ferdinand from the 1830s had adopted a policy of absolute neutrality, a dangerous strategy that irritated the Western European powers, particularly when it became tied up with the defence of Neapolitan economic interests (the so-called ‘sulphur war’ with England was emblematic of this). The tension between Ferdinand and England escalated notably from 6 July 1846, when Lord Palmerston, who had little sympathy for the Bourbon king, became British Foreign Secretary. After the repression of the Neapolitan constitutional experiment of 1848, Ferdinand ordered the arrest of leading patriots who had