INTRODUCTION

The events of 1848-9 in Italy at least made the direction towards unification somewhat clearer. The failure of the revolutions and the defeat of Piedmont by Austria meant that Charles Albert's claim that 'Italia fara da se' was nonsense. Success would require outside help to dislodge Austria from northern Italy. It also needed more positive leadership by a revived Piedmont. The man who was responsible for bringing about both of these was the Piedmontese chief minister, Count Camillo di Cavour. However, even Cavour could not totally control events, and the unification of Italy took some rather unexpected turns.

THE EFFECTS OF THE REVOLUTIONS OF 1848

The bloodshed and failure of 1848-9 did at least have the after-effects of drawing together different groups of supporters of unification and of making it very clear who were the main enemies. The removal of alternatives A number of ideas as to the future of Italy had been shattered or weakened: Gioberti's dream of a federation of Italy under the presidency of the Pope ended when Pius IX had shown himself clearly to be an enemy of liberalism and unification. Moderates had believed that a loose union of states might develop with links between reforming rulers. Now the Grand Duke of Tuscany, the ruler they saw as the S. T. Miller, Mastering Modern European History Stuart T. Miller 1988 190 model for the rest, was shown up as a puppet, kept on his throne only by Austrian bayonets. Mazzini still had a strong following but support was weakened by a series of failed attempts at uprisings in the 1850s. Also Mazzini still refused to support the sort of social reforms which would attract the peasantry and town workers. The Italian National Society By the 1850s, a lot of disappointed men were looking towards the only realistic alternative - the unification of Italy by the army of Piedmont. The Kingdom of Piedmont had three things in its favour: Of all the states of Italy, only Piedmont still had a constitution. To liberals this was a great symbol. Twice it had gone to war with Austria in 1848-9, and radical
nationalists urged it to do so again. To moderates and men of property, unification would be better under Piedmont's leadership because it could maintain order against the extremist revolutionaries. In 1857, the National Society was formed to support unification by Piedmont. Led by the Sicilian republican Guiseppe Ia Farina it attracted both hardened revolutionaries like Garibaldi and men of property. No attempt was made to consider how to reform society in Italy, because this would lead to argument and division.

THE OBSTACLES TO UNIFICATION What brought these groups together even more was the fact that their enemies, the obstacles to both liberalism and unification, were the same: Austrian repression in northern Italy was far greater than before 1848. This, together with the high taxation necessary to pay for a strong military presence, increased resentment even amongst moderates. In addition the flow of exiles to Piedmont increased, while in Britain and France there was growing sympathy for the Italian cause. The papacy was as great an obstacle. The papal government was one of the most corrupt and repressive in the peninsula. Italy was unified by Rome in the third century BC. For 700 years, it was a de facto territorial extension of the capital of the Roman Republic and Empire, and for a long time experienced a privileged status and was not converted into a province.

After the fall of the Western Roman Empire, Italy remained united under the Ostrogothic Kingdom and later disputed between the Kingdom of the Lombards and the Byzantine (Eastern Roman) Empire. Following conquest by the Frankish Empire, the title of King of Italy merged with the office of Holy Roman Emperor. However, the emperor was an absentee German-speaking foreigner who had little concern for the governance of Italy as a state; as a result, Italy gradually developed into a system of city-states. Southern Italy, however, was governed by the long-lasting Kingdom of Sicily or Kingdom of Naples, which had been established by the Normans. Central Italy was governed by the Pope as a temporal kingdom known as the Papal States.
This situation persisted through the Renaissance but began to deteriorate with the rise of modern nation-states in the early modern period. Italy, including the Papal States, then became the site of proxy wars between the major powers, notably the Holy Roman Empire (including Austria), Spain, and France.

Harbingers of national unity appeared in the treaty of the Italic League, in 1454, and the 15th-century foreign policy of Cosimo De Medici and Lorenzo De Medici. Leading Renaissance Italian writers Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio, Machiavelli and Guicciardini expressed opposition to foreign domination. Petrarch stated that the "ancient valour in Italian hearts is not yet dead" in Italia Mia. Machiavelli later quoted four verses from Italia Mia in The Prince, which looked forward to a political leader who would unite Italy "to free her from the barbarians".

The Peace of Westphalia in 1648 formally ended the rule of the Holy Roman Emperors in Italy. However, the Spanish branch of the Habsburg dynasty, another branch of which provided the Emperors, continued to rule most of Italy down to the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–14).

A sense of Italian national identity was reflected in Gian Rinaldo Carli's Della Patria degli Italiani, written in 1764. It told how a stranger entered a café in Milan and puzzled its occupants by saying that he was neither a foreigner nor a Milanese. "Then what are you?" they asked. 'I am an Italian,' he explained."

Dr (prof)Anjum Ashrafi
H O D History, B S College,
Danapur, Patna