

# THE UNIFICATION OF ITALY

## OR

### THE INVASION AND TAKE OVER OF THE KINGDOM

#### The narrative taught in school for the last 160 years

For many years the Italian unification **The Risorgimento** was enshrined as one of the greatest achievements of the House of Savoy (Kingdom of Sardinia), the King Vittorio Emanuele II, his ministers Cavour, Crispi and the famous mercenary Garibaldi with his 1,000 red shirts. The great King coming down the peninsula and the great hero Garibaldi landing at Marsala Sicily proceeding up the peninsula and the great meeting of the two half way up the peninsula at Teano. These people did not even speak Italian, the first sittings of the new united Italian parliament were conducted in French.

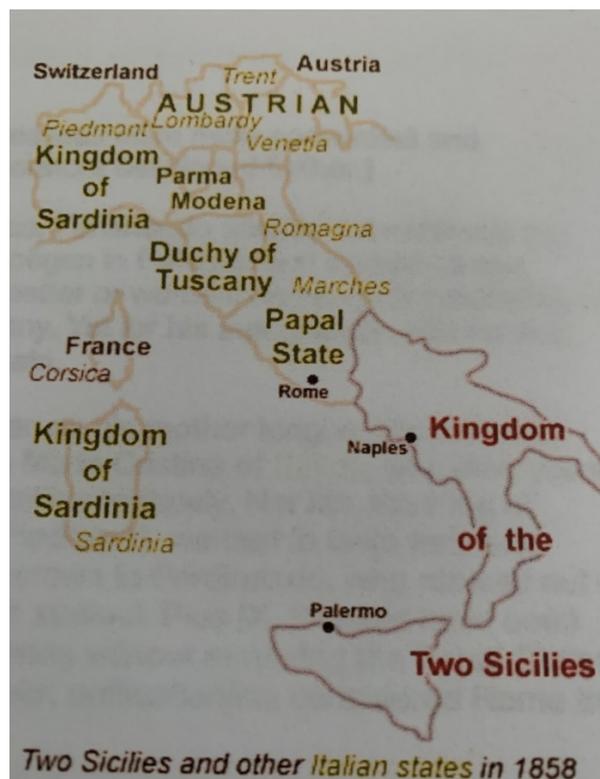
The way Italy was united is now questioned by historians in Italy and abroad, the unification wars around 1860 were unnecessary, Germany united herself as a federation without bloodshed.

Rome remained for a decade under the Papacy and became part of Italy only in 1870 the final date of unification. Napoleon III's defeat brought an end to the French protection for the **Pope Pius IX** and on September 20 – 1870 Italian troops breach Rome's walls at Porta Pia and entered the city, the Pope found himself a prisoner in the Vatican until the Lateran pact 1929.

#### Brief History

Until unification of Italy in 1861, **The Kingdom of the Two Sicilies** it was the largest, most prosperous, wealthiest and populous of the Italian states, the last dynasty to rule Sicily and almost half of the Italian peninsula, as a sovereign Kingdom is a branch of the Royal Houses of France and Spain, The Bourbons of the two Sicilies can trace back to 1130.

**The Italian Peninsula comprised of The Kingdom of Sardinia -The Austrian Empire -The Duchy of Parma & Modena - Duchy of Tuscany - The Papal State -The Kingdom of the Two Sicilies**



In 1731 **Charles (Carlos) de Bourbon**, a younger son of **King Philip V of Spain**, landed in Italy and soon claimed the crown of Parma & Modena inherited through his mother Elisabeth Farnese. It appeared that the young prince might not succeed his father as King of Spain because that right appertained to Philip's elder son by an earlier wife, so the tiny but flourishing Duchy of Parma would have to suffice.

Before long the ambitious Charles and his army swept through the Southern part of the Italian Peninsula and then to Sicily, wresting the island from the Austrian control. He was crowned King of Sicily in Palermo Cathedral in 1735. Establishing himself in Naples, the young monarch was the first King to actually live in the Two Sicilies in centuries. Charles ceded Parma to a younger brother.

Though the kingdoms of Naples and Sicily were not unified to form the two Sicilies until 1816 they had sometimes been ruled by the same Kings over the centuries usually from afar.

An enlightened monarch, **Charles de Bourbon** did much to develop his kingdom. Under him Naples became the wealthiest city in the Italian states and an important metropolis, boasting Europe's highest population after London and Paris. Ambitious building programmes resulted in grand palaces and led to industry advances for its time in fields such as metalworks, glass and porcelain production.

In 1759 **Charles** succeeded his elder half-brother, **Ferdinand as King of Spain**, taking his own older son **Carlo (later Carlos IV of Spain)** with him, he left young **Ferdinand** as King of Naples and Sicily, establishing that the Spanish and Neapolitan- Sicilian crowns were to be forever separate and distinct, in other words no single sovereign could succeed to both thrones.

**Charles**' immediate heirs never approached his intellectual stature, but **Ferdinand I** was at least competent if occasionally cynical. Seeking refuge in Palermo during uprising and then the French occupation of Naples, he eventually granted a Constitution to the Sicilians in 1812, in the process he abolished feudalism and established a peerage and parliament loosely based on the model of the British whose troops were then preparing Sicily against a possible Napoleonic invasion.

His first wife the mother of his children was the popular **Marie Caroline Hapsburg of Austria**, who is still remembered in the annals of history of the Palermitan aristocracy.

Upon returning to Naples Ferdinand promptly rescinded the Constitution and united the Sicilian and Neapolitan realms under one crown, prompting dissensions by malcontents over the next few decades. This was especially unfortunate because Sicily's British-influenced Constitution was far ahead of its time in its guarantees of human fundamental rights.

His son **Francesco I**, who succeeded in 1825 was a proven administrator, he wed firstly **Clementine Hapsburg of Austria**, but his heir was a child of his second wife **Marie Elisabeth of Spain**. **Francesco** died 1830 and succeeded by the Palermo-born **Ferdinand II**.

**Ferdinand II** seems to have been a born bureaucrat, but at least he was a shrewd one. He sponsored various agricultural projects which were at the cutting edge for their time. In 1832, he ordered the first differentiated refuse collection in what is now Italy, with focus on recycling glass. In 1839 he sponsored construction of the first railroad in Italy. Like his father he spoke Neapolitan as his mother tongue. His first wife mother of his heir Francesco was **Maria Cristina of Savoy**, who died young but was venerated as a saint almost immediately. Her kin the King of Sardinia **Vittorio Emanuele II**, wanted to unite Italy and effectively offered hypothetical crown to Ferdinand, who refused out of loyalty to the **Pope Pius IX**, it would have been impossible to unite the Italian territories without annexing the Papal States, moreover unificationists considered Rome the natural capital of a united Italy. Nobody in Italy dared to challenge Ferdinand II militarily, he commanded the largest army and navy in the Italian states and had shown his willingness to use it when necessary. The country's resources in arms manufacture were formidable, while the sulphur mines in Sicily and Basilicata provided for a seemingly infinite supply of gunpowder. Moreover, Naples' gold reserve eclipsed those of all the other Italian states combined.

When **Ferdinand** died very prematurely in 1858, he was succeeded by **Francesco II** (the pious son of the saint) That Francesco was half Savoy did not discourage the machinations of **Vittorio Emanuele II** and his minions **Cavour and Crispi**. The Savoy camp made **Francesco** a proposal similar to the one presented to his father to rule a united Italy including the Papal states which would be confiscated from the Pope, his prime minister **Carlo Filangieri** strongly urged him to accept the proposal, the impediment was Francesco's reluctance to occupy the Papal states or permit his Piedmont counterpart Vittorio Emanuele to do so, like his father Francesco refused.

Meanwhile a number of disloyal military and political figures plotted an overthrow of the House Bourbon with various Piedimontese agents, Foreign influence was also involved, when Garibaldi arrived in Marsala western Sicily troops of Britain Royal Navy, acting on orders refused to intervene to stop him. Back in Turin (Capital of the Kingdom of Sardinia) **Francesco Crispi and Rosalino Pilo**, exiled Sicilian plotters of former conspiracies supported Garibaldi Sicilian invasion even as King Vittorio Emanuele II at least officially was at peace with **Francesco II**. The disloyalty of Sicilian officer sworn to defend the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies added to the debacle.

Nevertheless, at this crucial point **Francesco II** could have intervened directly at the head of an expedition to Sicily and handily defeated Garibaldi's forces through use of what was at that time Italy's largest standing army. That he refused to do so spelled the end of his reign and wrote the destiny of Naples and Palermo as secondary cities ruled from Turin.

Its Kings may not have all been exceptional but the Kingdom certainly was, despite later propaganda that painted it as backwards, here are some milestones and figures regarding Italy's most prosperous state just before controversial unification in 1860. The gold reserve plus circulating currency, based on "gold lire" in millions but valid as a measure of proportional value

Two Sicilies	443.2
Papal States	90.6
Grand Duchy of Tuscany	85.2
Kingdom of Sardinia	27.1
Venetia	12.8
Lombardy	8.1
Duchy of Parma	1.2
Duchy of Modena	.4

An estimated population of 7 million lived in the Kingdom had around 3,216 students enrolled in university, Piedimont and Sardinia alone had a population of 4.2 million and far fewer university students per capita. A particular myth about the people of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies and their wealth compared to that of other Italians is easily dispelled "the Landless Peasants", despite the presence of large estates held by the nobility, especially in grain growing areas, most Sicilians owned their own homes and at least a garden or a small parcel of land.

#### **A FEW ACCHEIVEMENTS IN THE KINGDOM OF TWO SICILIES RELATIVE TO THE OTHER ITALIAN STATES**

- First pension system in what became Italy (2% deduction from salaries)
- **Most printing presses of any Italian City (Naples with 113)**
- Lowest Taxes in Italy
- **Largest Naval yard based on number of employee (1,900 in Castellamare di Stabia)**
- Largest iron and steel engineering/manufacturing plant in Italy (at Pietrarsa)
- **Largest iron casting foundry foundry in Italy (Ferdinanda in Calabria)**

- Oldest continuously active opera house in Europe (The San Carlo in Naples 1737 and rebuilt 1816)
- **First university chair and department in economics (Antonio Genovesi)**
- First steamship in the Mediterranean (the Ferdinand 1 in 1818)
- **First recycling program 1832**
- First gas fuelled public lighting system 1839
- **First railroad in Italy 1839**
- First seismic observatory in the world (Vesuvius 1841)
- **First functioning electric telegraph in Italy 1852**
- Ranked 3d country in the world for industrial development (1<sup>st</sup> in Italy at the Paris Exhibition 1856)
- **First submarine telegraph in Europe**
- First military steamship in Italy (the Ercole)
- **First maritime code in Italy**
- First public housing complex/estate in Italy (San Leucio near Caserta)
- **Highest per capita number of physicians in Italy**
- First botanical gardens in Italy (Naples and then Palermo)
- **First school for the deaf in Italy**
- Lowest infant mortality rate in Italy (1850-1860)

**Garibaldi** disembarked at Marsala in western Sicily in 1860, the invasion resulted in terrible atrocities, actual reprisals of a kind unknown in Sicily in centuries, particular in the Etna region where Nino Bixio's troops massacred numerous unarmed civilians in the town of Bronte, this kind of things did not end in 1860.

With Garibaldi crossing of the strait of Messina in to Calabria, Piedimontese regular troops entered the invasion campaign directly. **Francesco II** still could have acted decisively but failed to do anything. In early September 1860 Francesco his consort and household accompanied by few loyalists left Naples. At Gaeta a fortress overlooking the sea north of Naples near the border of the Papal States, Francesco held out as long as he could, at the battle of Volturno in early October Neapolitan cavalry were overrun by Piedimontese troops which now invading the Papal States, a month later in early November the siege of Gaeta began. Francesco surrendered the city on 12 February 1861 and the deposed King and Queen departed for Rome.

The royal couple lived in exile in Rome, France Austria and Bavaria, They lived privately without great economic means, because **Garibaldi** had confiscated all the assets of the Bourbons, the Italian government proposed their return to **Francesco II** but only on the condition of him renouncing any claim on the Throne of The Two Sicilies, which He never accepted by replying "**My Honour is not for sale**". Francesco II died in 1894 at Arco in Trentino alto Adige (then was part of Austria now is northern Italy). The remains of Francesco II, is wife Maria Sofia and their daughter reunite after many years and rest in the Basilica of St Chiara in Naples since the 18 of May 1984.

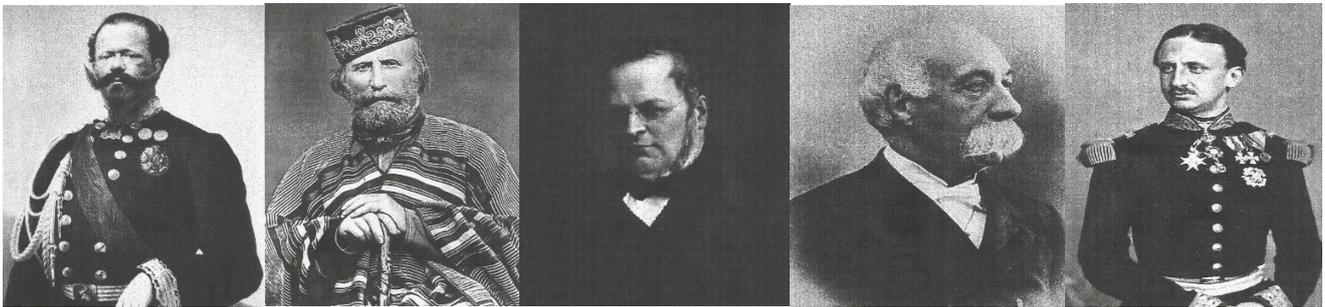
Until 1866 a series of protest and riots particular in Palermo demanded the return of King Francesco II, by the Piedimontese troops occupied Sicily to suppress these movements and any other dissent. Throughout the South thousands of rebels (Briganti) of the resistance movement mostly ex-soldiers of the Two Sicilies were sent to die in secret northern prison camps such as "**Fenestrelle** (a large fort in the Alps) similar to concentration camps, thousands more were sentenced to death and executed, in 1868 the Piedimontese Government sought to purchase an Argentine island to house these prisoners, thereby eradicate any chance of their story making its way in to popular mind.

Naturally the press was censored more than ever, regarding Fenestrelle and everything else, the monastic schools which constituted an important part of the education system were closed as churches owned land was confiscated, yet in Sicily few public schools were established to fill this void until the twentieth century , as a result whereas in 1860 illiteracy throughout Italy was about equal from north to south it become comparatively worse in the former Kingdom after 1861, in the wake of the fall of the Two Sicilies the region was abandoned but exploited, taxes were increased, and so was military conscription, with a disproportionate number of southerners serving in Italy's twentieth century wars, by 1900 industry was being developed in

Milan and Turin rather than in Naples or Palermo, migration began after 1861, and the level of organized crime increased.

What occurred in Italy from 1861 until 1945 was a classic text book example on how not to run a country, and the effects are still there throughout Italy to this day, a particular striking effect is Italian lack of nationalism or a sense of unity as a people. One of the myriad reasons for this is the mediocre Modern Italian History taught in schools, so while most Italians are blissfully ignorant of the facts of the **Risorgimento**, they are equally ignorant of the fact that in 1947 the nation was the first to acknowledge having committed both war crimes and crimes against humanity. Closer to everyday life the economic divide between North and South is very real, there used to be Two Sicilies but now there are two Italies.

Until their deposition by referendum in 1946 and the establishment of the Italian Republic the Savoys could be said to have reigned with sovereign authority over one dominion or another for almost a thousand years, the head of the dynasty was exiled from 1946 to 2002, the last **King of Italy Umberto II** died in exile 1983, his only son **Prince Vittorio Emanuele**, resides in Switzerland but visits Italy occasionally, he has a son **Emanuele Filiberto**.



**Vittorio Emanuele II**  
1820 - 1878

**Giuseppe Garibaldi**  
1807-1882

**Camillo Benso count  
of Cavour**  
1810-1861

**Francesco Crispi**  
1818 – 1901

**Francesco II**  
last King of The Kingdom of  
The Two Sicilies  
1836 - 1894



**Umberto II the Last King Italy (the last King of the Savoy dynasty)**  
1904 - 1983

## Rocky Valente

### EXTRACTS FROM

- **Best of Sicily Magazine**
- **Kingdom and House of the Two Sicilies – Luigi Mendola**
- **The Savoys – Vincenzo Salerno**
- **Giuseppe Garibaldi – Man and Myth – Filippo Spadafora**
- **Francesco II Last King of the Two Sicilies – Vincenzo Salerno**

- [Kingdom of the Two Sicilies - Wikipedia](#)