



Italia und Germania

The idea of the existence of a “shared fate” between the Italian and German processes of national unification in Italian public discourse (1848-1871)

Stefano Lissi

Cover illustration: Friedrich Overbeck, *Italia und Germania*, 1828, Oil on canvas, 94.5 x 104.7 cm, Neue Pinakothek, Munich

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Research Master History Thesis

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Date: 11/08/2020

Second Reader: Dr. mr. Frans Willem Lantink

Word Count: 38.910

Abstract

What does it take for two political entities to consider themselves allies? Usually two elements are required: shared interests and a shared enemy. Many among the ranks of the Italian national movement felt between 1848 and 1871 that the German and Italian national causes possessed both of them. It was believed that both nationalities aimed at the unification of their respective countries and were both being obstructed in this by the Habsburg Empire. Consequently, a “shared fate” was envisioned for the two nationalities: Germans and Italians were “natural allies” and were destined to forge their national unifications together by collaborating against the Habsburgs. Such an idea of a fundamental commonality of destinies between the two national causes experienced a widespread diffusion in the discourse of the *Risorgimento*, often also entering the political vocabulary of official relations between the two nationalities. Historiography has however until now often overlooked this idea, taking its existence mostly for granted and leaving the idea itself, its cultural origins, and its diffusion unproblematized. This thesis analyzes how such a concept, which could be considered as the product of early 19th century historicism and romantic nationalism, entered the political vocabulary of the Italian national movement and was used to foster political action. Using the history of ideas’ framework, along with a contextualist approach, this thesis not only sheds new light on an important episode of the history of relations between the Italian and German world, but also provides a powerful portrait of the element of transnationality of the Italian *Risorgimento* in the European scenario.

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Acknowledgements

Even if the front cover only portrays my name as author, countless other magnificent people contributed to the writing of this thesis, supporting me during the challenging times in which it was written.

Firstly, I would like to express my truly heartfelt gratitude to my thesis supervisor, Jacco Pekelder, for the extraordinary guidance he offered me during the entire writing process. Even during the difficult times of the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown, Jacco always followed me with remarkable constancy and commitment, providing me with inspirational advice and motivation. He is truly a model of the researcher and academic I would love to become.

A massive thank you goes also to all the friends and colleagues that offered me so much help and support during these times, encouraging me to give my absolute best. Most crucially, I would like to thank David, Diego, Michele, and Tom, for their inspiring feedback and suggestions, and, most importantly, for being amazing friends and always being there in time of need; Elia, my brother from another mother, for giving me unconditional support every day; Veronica, for the inspiration that I always get from our amazing conversations; Nikos, my Greek αδελφός.

An immense thank you goes also to Anne, my girlfriend, for the special support she gave me during the entire writing process, and for her inspiring feedback. I could not have made it without her.

Last but not least, my most important thank you goes to my family, which has been supporting me since the day I was born. This thesis is dedicated to them.

Introduction

During a visit to the Neue Pinakothek in Munich, my attention was captured by one painting in particular. The painting, whose imposing, yet humble aura seemed to draw the eye of every single visitor in the room, depicted two young women dressed in pastel-colored robes holding each other's hand: their calm facial expression conveyed a sense of shared empathy and understanding. The background appeared to present two landscapes from two different geographical locations. On the left, one could distinguish a small Romanic church typical of Northern Italy; on the right, a slim and pointy bell tower, typical of Germany, spired from a fortified city towards the blue sky. As the museum guide explained, the painting answered to the name of *Italia und Germania*, the two women being personifications of the two countries. It took Friedrich Overbeck seventeen years to complete the painting, from 1811 to 1828. The painting's most striking feature, apart from its unquestionable beauty, was the fact that neither Germany nor Italy existed as nation-states at the time the painting was finished. Why did Overbeck pay homage to two countries that did not formally exist? Why did the painter pair Germany with Italy, among all possible options?

The answer to both questions resided in the apparent "shared condition" of Italy and Germany in the first half of the 19th century. Both geographical scenarios were divided into a multitude of regional states and both were experiencing the rise of national movements aiming at national unification. Moreover, the Habsburg Empire was present in both countries as a highly influential political actor: in Germany, the Empire was among the most important, if not the most influential member of the German Confederation, as its statutory president; in Italy, the Habsburgs had direct control over the Austrian provinces of Lombardy and Venetia and retained an undisputed political influence on the rest of the peninsula. These similarities between the German and Italian scenario resonated in the minds of the national movements involved in the revolutionary upheavals that shook both Germany and Italy during the 19th century. Revolutionaries often referred to the two national causes as intertwined and aiming at the same objective: national unification. As a consequence, the expression "united by a shared fate" started to be used in newspapers and pamphlets to indicate the two national movements. It was believed that Destiny was pushing the two national causes in the same direction and that an alliance between them was not only the natural and inevitable consequence of such a process, but also a compulsory step towards national unification. This created the urge in many revolutionaries to make such an entente between the two "natural allies" happen in real life, putting the idea of the existence of a "shared fate" between Italy and Germany at the center of these political initiatives. It is important to underline that this idea, while entering the political vocabulary

of both countries, enjoyed greater popularity in Italian public discourse than in the German one. Initially adopted mostly by revolutionaries, the usage of the idea of shared fate then quickly made its way in the political vocabulary of official diplomacy and was actively used in official dispatches and proclamations.

This concept was in this sense often related to some kind of political action: it was not a coincidence, therefore, that its peaks in popularity in public discourse coincided often with active attempts of Italian political actors to achieve some kind of entente with their German counterparts. The first attempts made at fostering an alliance took place in 1848 – as an initiative undertaken mostly by Italian revolutionaries – and failed. Ten years later, other attempts were made, this time from the Kingdom of Piedmont towards the Kingdom of Prussia, resulting once again in failure. Such an alliance eventually took place in 1866, with Italy and Prussia waging war against the Austrian Empire. The term ceased to be used in its characterization as an inevitable shared struggle towards national unification after 1870-71, the biennium in which the unification of both countries was perceived as complete. As a consequence of these considerations, I chose to restrict the period of analysis of my thesis to the time interval between 1848-1871.

As of today, the two processes of national unification are often still being taught in schools and universities in a comparative fashion, being often presented as two faces of the same coin.¹ However, little to no attention has been dedicated to the study of the concept of shared fate between the Italian and German national unification, its pervasiveness, and its influence on people's actions. This thesis will provide an answer to these unresolved questions. This leads me to the main research question of this thesis: how was the idea of shared fate between the Italian and German processes of national unification conceived and re-negotiated over time in the public discourse of the *Risorgimento* between 1848 and 1871 and what was its role in the context of the relations between the two nationalities during those years?

This thesis is not intended as a comparative study of the two processes of unification. The inclusion of some elements of comparison in this thesis, when present, has been purely functional to the objective of contextualization and clarity. Moreover, this thesis does not try to provide a bilateral explanation of how the idea of “shared fate” was conceived and negotiated in the two countries: instead, it focuses purely on the Italian scenario, with the public discourse of the *Risorgimento* as subject and protagonist. The reason behind this choice is twofold: first, a comparative study on the presence of such a concept in both Germany and Italy would have created problems of feasibility, going also to the detriment of overall clarity and analytical depth of the thesis. Second, as mentioned

¹ “Italia e Germania a raffronto: una storia con i se che parla anche al presente”, *Il Foglio* (Roma, January 2, 2019), <https://www.ilfoglio.it/home/2019/01/02/news/italia-e-germania-a-raffronto-una-storia-con-i-se-che-parla-anche-al-presente-231108/>.

in the previous paragraph, the concept of “shared fate” enjoyed far greater popularity and resonance in the Italian scenario than in the German one. In this sense, this thesis deals with the history of an idea and its manifestations in Italian culture and politics between 1848 and 1871. The term “Italian” in this thesis should be intended as indicating that part of the population that identified as Italian, i.e. those who advocated or actively supported and worked for the establishment of a united Italian state – whether that was to take place in the form of a republic, confederation or monarchy. It does not refer to the whole corpus of inhabitants of the Italian peninsula. In other words, the term “Italian” is used in its identity connotation, rather than its purely geographical one.²

This thesis is structured in four main parts. In this introduction, I have included a historical discussion on the many academic perspectives around the relation between the Italian and German processes of unification. At the end of this historiographical debate, I also added an overview of how the concept of “shared fate”, its use and influence in Germany and Italy have been treated until now by academia. A reflection on my methodology and an overview of the theoretical framework used to write this thesis follows. Here, I have attempted to provide an explanation of the theoretical position of my thesis in the history of ideas’ field and how my methodology reflected this positioning. The introduction is rounded up by a critical reflection on primary sources. The first chapter aims to give a portrait of the cultural origins of the idea of shared fate. Here I argue the idea of shared fate being the product of the syncretistic interaction between three cultural sources active in the Italian peninsula from the early 1820s until 1848: romantic nationalism, historical teleology, and the Mazzinian project. The second chapter seeks to analyze the first widespread manifestation of the idea of shared fate in Italian public discourse in 1848 and its role in the relations between Italian and German revolutionaries. Here I argue the central role that such an idea played in creating a climate of expectations among Italian revolutionaries towards the sister revolution in Germany. The third chapter covers the period of the 1860s, when the idea of shared fate resurfaced under a new “institutionalized” shape. In this chapter, I analyze the role of protagonist the idea of shared fate had in Cavour’s “Prussian policy” in 1860-61, providing also an answer to the question of whether the idea of shared fate played a part in the conclusion of the Italo-Prussian alliance of 1866. Alongside the analysis of its role in the vocabulary of politics, this chapter also seeks to highlight the characterization that the idea of shared fate had in Italian public discourse in the 1860s and the reason

² For a comprehensive overview of the historiographical debate on the national sentiment in Italy during the Risorgimento see: Maria Pia Casalena. “Storiografia del Risorgimento: Indirizzi Storiografici degli Ultimi Trent’Anni e Uso Pubblico della Storia”, available at: <https://it.pearson.com/content/dam/region-core/italy/pearson-italy/pdf/storia/ITALY%20-%20DOCENTI%20-%20-%20STORIALIVE%20-%202016%20-%20Cultura%20storica%20-%20PDF%20-%20Storiografia.pdf> (accessed 24/07/2020)

behind its gradual disappearance after 1866. The thesis is rounded up by a conclusion, where a reflection on the results of the thesis and on the possibilities for further research is provided.

Historiographical Debate

The almost synchronic accomplishment of national unity in Germany and Italy has always attracted the attention of scholars, giving birth to compelling debates around the relation between the two processes of unification. In fact, such a topic was receiving the attention of scholars even before the national unification of both countries was completed. Such a debate was framed between 1861 and 1866 to serve the purpose of the nationalist agenda by German intellectuals such as Hermann Reuchlin or Heinrich von Treitschke, who urged Germans to follow the example of the Italians in order not to lag behind them in the struggle for unification.³ After the events of the Austro-Prussian war (1866), however, the Italian *Risorgimento* ceased to be seen in Germany as a “model” for the German one and was instead considered as its mere chronological predecessor.⁴ This did not mean that the two processes of unification ceased to be studied as a pair. On the contrary, the debate around the relation of the two unifications, while being constantly “updated” to suit the “climate of opinion” of the time, still attracted the attention of intellectuals. More crucially, the synchronic coincidence of the two processes of unification was often used politically as a “historical proof” of the “natural friendship” and “innate commonality of interests” between Italy and Germany: such interpretation gained a foothold especially between the late 1930s and early 1940s, in the context of the alliance between Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy.⁵

Despite being deprived of its political connotation after the fall of Fascism, the narrative of the two unifications as two faces of the same coin survived after World War Two. With the benefit of hindsight, scholars saw parallels between key characters of the two processes of unification: Cavour and Bismarck were the strong and cunning statesmen that understood the need for national unification and were ready to pursue it through aggressive diplomacy or *blut und eisen*; Victor Emmanuel II and Wilhelm I represented the bridge between the old and the new, both being depicted as monarchs of regional states ready to abandon the surpassed divine investiture in favor of the “modern” one coming from the principle of nationality. After the 1960s this perspective lost its throne in favor of a new turn that privileged the narration of the two experiences of unification as distinct

³ Thomas Kroll, “La Cultura Politica Tedesca dell’Ottocento e la Rivoluzione Italiana del 1848-49,” in *Memoria, Rappresentazioni e Protagonisti Del 1848 Italiano*, ed. Renato Camurri (Verona, Italy: Cierre Edizioni, 2006), pp. 39-62, 52.

⁴ Kroll, 55

⁵ “I Telegrammi Scambiati tra il Re ed il Fuhrer,” *La Stampa* (Turin), 23 May 1939

entities, thus highlighting the peculiarities and the differences, rather than the similarities of the two processes. This development, which could be seen as a natural product of revisionism and microhistory, found its most interesting contributions in the works of Adam Wandruszka and Ferdinand Siebert.⁶

In recent years, the study of the relationship between the German and Italian national struggles has steered towards a position of compromise. While still pursuing an analysis that aims at valorizing the many peculiarities that characterized the two unifications, scholars have also been trying to “bridge the gap” between the two national scenarios. This attempt is being done by highlighting the many transnational ties that intercurred between those involved in the two processes of unification. Such an effort has seen contributions targeting different groups. Some, such as Anna Maria Voci’s study on the relation between Camillo di Cavour and Germany, or Marco Paolino’s study on Mazzini’s views on the German process of unification have focused on single characters and their reactions to the idea of a united Germany.⁷ Far from being only intellectual histories of perceptions, these interesting studies also highlighted how these characters actively interacted with German intellectuals and politicians, and how the German world looked back at their reactions and initiatives. Others, such as Roland Sarti’s study on the relation between Young Italy and Young Germany within the framework of Mazzini’s Young Europe, or Ferdinand Göhde’s article on German volunteers in Italy during the Risorgimento, focused more on “groups” and their involvement and influence on the two national questions.⁸ In this sense, this new approach stems and benefits from the recent transnational turn of the history of nationalism.⁹

It is important to highlight that such a focus on transnationality did not just appear out of nowhere, a certain element of transnationality and exchange of ideas between different “national scenarios” being present also in earlier works. Studies such as the one provided by Siebert or

⁶ Adam Wandruszka, “Liberalismo e Nazionalismo Nel Movimento Unitario Tedesco e Italiano,” in *Le Relazioni Italo-Tedesche Nell'epoca Del Risorgimento: Conferenze e Discussione Dell'8. Riunione Italo-Tedesca Degli Storici, Braunschweig 24-28 Maggio 1968* (Braunschweig, Germany: Limbach, 1970), pp. 51-58.; Ferdinand Siebert, “La Comunanza delle Sorti Tedesche e Italiane nel Periodo dell'Unificazione,” in *Ibid*, pp. 76-87.

⁷ Anna Maria Voci, *La Germania e Cavour Diplomazia e Storiografia* (Rome, Italy: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2011).; Marco Paolino, “Mazzini e Il Mondo Tedesco,” in *Dalla Giovine Europa Alla Grande Europa*, ed. Francesco Guida (Rome, Italy: Carocci, 2007), pp. 57-70.

⁸ Roland Sarti, “Giuseppe Mazzini and Young Europe,” in *Giuseppe Mazzini and the Globalisation of Democratic Nationalism 1830-1920*, ed. Christopher A. Bayly and Eugenio F. Biagini (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 2008), pp. 275-297.; Ferdinand Nicolas Göhde, “German Volunteers in the Armed Conflicts of the Italian Risorgimento 1834–70,” *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 14, no. 4 (2009): pp. 461-475; Wolfram Kaiser, “Transnational Mobilization and Cultural Representation: Political Transfer in an Age of Proto-Globalization, Democratization and Nationalism 1848–1914,” *European Review of History: Revue Europeenne D'histoire* 12, no. 2 (2005): pp. 403-424

⁹ Other important contributions in this regard include: Maurizio Isabella, “Nationality before Liberty? Risorgimento Political Thought in Transnational Context,” *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 17, no. 5 (2012): pp. 507-515; Gilles Pécout, “Philhellenism in Italy: Political Friendship and the Italian Volunteers in the Mediterranean in the Nineteenth Century,” *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 9, no. 4 (2004): pp. 405-427

Wandruszka had in fact the merit of providing a broad overview of the cultural exchanges between German and Italian intellectual elites.¹⁰ Siebert in particular very convincingly highlighted the existence of an elite of Italian intellectuals deeply interested in the new philosophical and philological turns taking place in Germany in the first three decades of the 19th century.¹¹ The study of transnational ties between the two processes of unification also finds its supporters in institutions such as the association “Villa Vigoni” and research institutes such as the “Istituto Storico Italo-Germanico” (ISIG) of Trento.¹²

This transnational turn had also the merit of bringing the question of mutual perception between the two national movements to the attention of academia. Sadly, such a compelling topic remains as of now greatly understudied, with just a few, yet very interesting, studies published. What emerges from the existing contributions is that the Italian national movement and its main actors generally saw the establishment of a united Germany with favor. Renato Mori, who provided one of the most relevant contributions in this regard, highlighted how public opinion in Italy followed the process of German unification with “sympathy and fondness”.¹³ Some scholars have however disagreed with this interpretation, arguing about an innate anti-German sentiment in the Italian Risorgimento. In particular, the slogan *morte ai tedeschi*, “death to the Germans”, shouted by Milanese revolutionaries in 1848 against the Habsburg troops has become one of the main pillars of these critical views. As a consequence, Gustavo Corni argued about “a strong presence of anti-Germanic sentiment within the Risorgimento, that made Austria and Germany almost synonyms.”¹⁴ However, Corni’s argument is, at best, simplistic. Terms such as “Germans” or “Croats” were rather flexibly used during the *Risorgimento* – and especially in the Milanese uprising of 1848 – as derogatory terms for indicating troops of different ethnicities of the Habsburg empire.¹⁵ On the contrary, the distinction between Austria and Germany as political bodies always remained clear in the minds of the men and women of the Risorgimento. Therefore, the Milanese slogan should not be considered as a declaration of hostility against Germany as a nation – or rather, as the project of a future unified nation. Instead, it should be seen as an abbreviated and more handy term for “German-speaking troops of the Habsburg Empire”. Moreover, if the Milanese revolutionaries nurtured such a strong hatred towards Germany as a whole, how could one explain the fact that one of the first acts of the Milanese revolutionary government was the sending to the Frankfurt Parliament of a message

¹⁰ See: Siebert, “Comunanza delle Sorti”; Wandruszka, “Liberalismo e Nazionalismo”

¹¹ Siebert, “Comunanza delle Sorti”, 79

¹² More info available at: <https://www.villavigoni.eu/chi/?lang=en>; <https://isig-legacy.fbk.eu/about-us>

¹³ Renato Mori, “L’Italia e il processo di unificazione germanica” in *Le relazioni italo-tedesche*, pp. 21-38, 38

¹⁴ Gustavo Corni, “La Germania Vista Dall’Italia. Dall’Età Liberale Al Crollo Del Fascismo,” in *Studi in Onore Di Giovanni Miccoli*, ed. Liliana Ferrari (Trieste, Italy: Ed. Univ. di Trieste, 2004), pp. 399-416, 400.

¹⁵ The Habsburg empire was often mocked by Italian revolutionaries for being a multi-ethnic state. The army, which comprised, linguistically speaking, Germans, Hungarians, Slavs and Italians was often mocked for this as well.

of friendship to the Germans? In this sense, Franco Valsecchi pointed out that such an action demonstrates how much Italian liberals and democrats sympathized with the German national cause in 1848.¹⁶ Such sentiment was present not only in 1848, but remained embedded in Italian public discourse also in later decades, as Mori argued, stretching all the way to the final Prussian victory at Sedan against France.¹⁷

Despite so many contributions being produced on the peculiar relation between the two processes of national unification, almost no attention has been devoted to the concept of “shared fate” and its influence on the two national movements. Until now, historiography has looked at this belief considering it from a pure *realpolitik* perspective, suggesting that the aspiration to such entente was motivated purely by concrete geopolitical interests. In this sense, the “idea of a natural alliance” has been analyzed only through the history of international relations’ lens, reducing it to a pure product of political utilitarianism. Such an approach fails however to relate – and thus, to contextualize – this phenomenon to the mentality and the events of those times, being also unable to effectively problematize the *origin* and the *influence* of this idea. In this sense, a history of ideas’ framework would be better suited for such a task: however, quite paradoxically, until now no one has yet analyzed this *idea* through the history of *ideas*’ framework. Siebert was on the right path of providing such a contribution in his previously mentioned article. However, he missed out on the opportunity of doing so, opting to provide more of an overview of the cultural environment where such a concept might have originated, rather than a structured, contextualized, and nuanced analysis of the concept itself, its process of mutation, and its influence in Italian public discourse and politics. The main purpose of this thesis is to fill this lacuna by shedding light on these three aspects.

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

Writing the history of an idea has usually been seen in the same terms of hitting a moving target. Multiple methodological problems and theoretical dilemmas arise on the path of the researcher. What follows is a reflection on such a hurdled path: here, I will also highlight the theoretical position adopted for the writing of this thesis. The first theoretical question is arguably the most difficult to untangle. Is it possible to isolate an idea as an object of inquiry? As any researcher, the historian seeks to isolate the object of research in order to better understand its dynamics and its characteristics. This “isolation”, which could be also called “research focus”, is purely functional to the aim of highlighting

¹⁶ *Le relazioni italo-tedesche*, 118

¹⁷ *Le relazioni italo-tedesche*, 124

a specific aspect of a phenomenon and it is necessary both from a practical point of view and from a methodological one: for example, an economic historian that decides to investigate the economic aspect of the “space race” between USA and USSR might opt to leave out most of the cultural one from his/her research. This “isolation” can also be applied within the same sub-field of history: for example, a cultural historian might opt to investigate a certain cultural phenomenon through a certain methodology instead of others, or to focus only on the reactions of a certain social class or group. The possible examples of the application of this “isolation” technique are endless.

When speaking about the history of concepts, it is difficult to think of a more appropriate paradigm of the effort towards isolating concepts as objects of inquiry than the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* (from now referred to as GG).¹⁸ The GG, a historical lexicon of 122 socio-political concepts (in German language), was published between 1972 and 1997, with the historians Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, and Reinhart Koselleck as editors. Here, political concepts such as “democracy”, “lordship” and many others are investigated one by one as historical objects in alphabetical order with a special focus on language and etymology. At the same time, the editors complemented this approach with a special focus on social and political history: this was done by considering concepts as “contested intellectual constructions, which both register and shape what changes and what persists in the structures of societies.”¹⁹ This synergy between etymology and historical contextualization was done in an attempt to relate “conceptual change to structural transformations of government, society, and economy.”²⁰ Despite such a remarkable effort, the idea itself of isolating concepts as objects of study was heavily criticized: scholars of the “Cambridge School” such as John Pocock insisted that presenting concepts in such an isolated fashion risked eradicating them from their natural interrelatedness and from the complexity of their historical background, thus misrepresenting their character of “moving” objects.²¹ In this sense, I regard Pocock’s objection as perfectly legit. Concepts, as well as ideas in general, are, in fact, by nature, subject to constant change or renewal: after all, the act itself of a person conveying an idea through a written text, a dialogue, or other forms of media necessarily implies a certain level of customization of the same idea. This customization, by affecting the “physical manifestation” of the idea, necessarily modifies its conceptual nature.

¹⁸ Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, and Reinhart Koselleck, *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon Zur Politisch-Sozialen Sprache in Deutschland* (Stuttgart, Germany: Klett-Cotta, 1972).

¹⁹ Melvin Richter, “Reconstructing the History of Political Languages: Pocock, Skinner, and the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*,” *History and Theory* 29, no. 1 (1990): p. 38-70, 41

²⁰ Richter, 41

²¹ John G. A. Pocock, “Concepts and Discourses: A Difference in Culture? Comment on a Paper by Melvin Richter,” in *The Meaning of Historical Terms and Concepts: New Studies on Begriffsgeschichte*, ed. Hartmut Lehmann and Melvin Richter (Washington, D.C., United States of America: German Historical Institute, 1996), pp. 52-61.

Such a fluid nature of ideas, both in time and space, could easily push the historian to give up on any claim of representativeness and simply consider ideas or concepts as objects of inquiry that are by nature impossible to pin down. Since history is a discipline that primarily produces written research – in the form of academic articles or books – one could argue that such a “static” medium is by definition inappropriate to fully do justice to the “ever-changing” nature of ideas. As a result, isolating a specific concept or an idea could be considered – and often has been seen – as an impossible task, doomed to be either simplistic or unrepresentative of the natural movement of ideas. Since this thesis aims precisely at isolating an idea as an object of study, it is worth spending some words in order to provide an answer to these justified theoretical doubts.

In this paragraph I will conduct a brief exploration around the way the historian could consider his/her position regarding the study of an idea as an object “in motion”. Here, I argue that not only it is legitimate - in terms of representativeness of research - for the historian to provide “static” portraits of an idea, but that such an approach is also mandatory for effectively highlighting the process of constant motion and change of ideas. Let us go back to Pocock’s critiques against GG’s approach of “isolating” ideas as objects of study. As I mentioned before, Pocock insisted that any effort in “taking a picture” of a certain idea is destined to uproot the idea from its original background, thus “bastardizing” its original features and making the analysis historically inaccurate. What Pocock failed to consider was however that GG’s creators were fully aware of such a risk and that its form as a lexicon was the result of a compromise between methodological accuracy and an effort towards clarity for the reader. In other words, GG was to be seen as a matrix from which more thorough studies on the single concepts could stem rather than a definitive contribution on the analyzed concepts.²² The “static” photographs that GG took of the single concepts are not to be considered as the final product, but simply as pieces of a puzzle that future historians could use. In this sense, the “static feature” of the reconstructions of these ideas could be seen as purely functional to the purpose of clarity.

In the same way, I argue that providing “static” snapshots of a certain idea is also crucial for effectively highlighting its process of constant motion and change. In fact, without these “snapshots” we would not be able to detect the process of mutation, in time or space, of an idea. In this sense, one could compare an idea to a movie. A movie is by nature based on motion and the act of stopping it to concentrate on a single photogram would certainly be seen as artificial, as it disrupts the viewing. However, if one wanted to analyze the differences in the lighting, cinematography, or production design between scenes, stopping the movie and analyzing single photograms represents the most effective tool for this purpose. Without an analysis of individual, “static” photograms it would be

²² Richter, “Reconstructing the History”, 47-48

impossible to fully appreciate the differences between two scenes or understand the “process of motion” between different frames. In the same way, analyzing the “static” physical manifestations of an idea as if they were single photograms of a movie is, as counterintuitive as it may seem to Pocock, also the most effective way to fully appreciate and understand their constant process of mutation.

How to frame an analysis of these “static” photograms? This should be done necessarily through the physical manifestations of an idea, or how a certain idea was communicated. In fact, ideas as immaterial, eternal, and ontologically immutable principles do not exist, or at least, cannot exist for the historian: as Donald Kelley pointed out, “words and not ideas provide the medium of exchange and targets of inquiry.”²³ In the same way, the historian cannot consider ideas as well-defined substances born from nothing with a clear birth date: instead, ideas derive from other ideas, following a fluid process of mutation that can be traced through an analysis based on evidence. This was also clear to the editors of GG, who criticized the tendency of “treating ideas as constants, which although articulated in different historical forms, do not themselves change.”²⁴ This also implies that no idea inhabits the mind of a person without external influence, but that they are all the product of a process of communication between individuals. In other words, no person was ever born with a certain idea in mind, but acquired it – reframing it in his/her turn – from external sources, whether them being simple dialogues with other people, written texts, or other forms of communication. In this sense, I do not argue that the process of exchange, negotiation, and debate around ideas is something that exclusively takes place in the physical world. Instead, I argue that this process leaves traces *solely* in the material world: therefore, the historian, whose research – whether inductive or deductive – consists of interpreting evidence, should focus his analysis on these traces. As a result, any claim on physical manifestations of an idea being only pale shadows of the ideal “essence” – if really there is one – of such an idea loses its relevance to the ears of the historian: testing the ontological essence of ideas is something that simply falls outside the historian’s scope and purpose. Instead, physical manifestations of an idea, with all their complexity, diversity, and “inaccuracy” should be considered as the sole object of inquiry of the historian.

As a consequence, language assumes a crucial role in understanding the mutation of an idea, as Kelley’s quote mentioned in the previous paragraph stated. Clearly, such attention for language should be complemented by a critical reflection on the author’s intention and on his relation with the historical context. In other words, balanced attention should be devoted to text, intertext, and context. As any tasty dish is defined by the balance between its ingredients, an accomplished history of an idea is the product of the balanced interaction between these three components.

²³ Donald R. Kelley, *The Descent of Ideas: the History of Intellectual History* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 1-2.

²⁴ Richter “Reconstructing the History”, 42

My thesis attempts to achieve such a balance by first providing a reflection on the origin of such a concept, problematizing the main “shades of meaning” of the idea of shared fate, while at the same time contextualizing such a reflection in the historical scenario of those years.²⁵ My methodology for analyzing the origins of the idea of “shared fate”, was mostly inspired by two sources. The first one was Arthur Lovejoy’s theorization of “philosophical semantics” or

a study of the sacred words and phrases of a period or a movement, with a view to a clearing up of their ambiguities, a listing of their various shades of meaning, and an examination of the way in which confused associations of ideas arising from these ambiguities have influenced the development of doctrines, or accelerated the insensible transformation of one fashion of thought into another, perhaps its very opposite.²⁶

I was fully aware that such an approach, focusing mostly on text and intertext, should be complemented by an additional method that focused more on the context. In this sense GG’s method of understanding ideas and historical context as mutually influential to one another proved crucial for this purpose, constituting the second source of inspiration for my methodology.

The GG treats the accelerated speed (*Beschleunigung*) of conceptual shifts in meaning, considered as both effect and cause, during this period. The method assumes that concepts both registered and affected the transformations of governmental, social, and economic structures. Changes in them were perceived, conceptualized, and placed within one or another historical horizon only after struggles among groups about their meaning and evaluation. The GG combines the study of the language used to discuss state, society, and economy with identifications of the groups, strata, orders, and classes that used or contested this language.²⁷

The idea of a shared fate, while being the protagonist of my analysis, is in fact far from being its only actor. The historical context in this sense assumes a special role: events and actions played a crucial part in the creation and renegotiation of the concept of shared fate over the years. Such a relation of influence worked also the other way around, the concept of shared fate – or the various interpretations of it - influencing people’s minds and actions. In order to effectively shed light on this mutual influence, I chose to combine the above mentioned GG’s method with the framework or

²⁵ Arthur O. Lovejoy, “The Study of the History of Ideas,” in *The History of Ideas: an Introduction to Method*, ed. Preston T. King (London, United Kingdom: Croom Helm, 1983), pp. 179-197, 188.

²⁶ Lovejoy, 188 -89

²⁷ Richter, “Reconstructing the History”, 46; It is important to note that, unlike GG, which looked back as far as antiquity to trace the meaning of concepts, I will limit my analysis to the 19th century, both for reason of feasibility and research scope.

“mode of argument”, as Hayden White described it, of contextualism.²⁸ Adopting a contextualist position means, in short, assuming “that events can be explained by being set within the context of their occurrence. Why they occurred as they did is to be explained by the revelation of the specific relationships they bore to other events occurring in their circumambient historical space.”²⁹ These relationships could be seen as “threads” stemming from a core – the idea of shared fate – and propagating outward, both in the societal “space” and in time. The task of the historian adopting a contextualist approach is not only to isolate and analyze these threads and their origins, but also “to link them together in a chain of provisional and restricted characterizations of finite provinces of manifestly “significant” occurrence.”³⁰ Only after such an analysis it will be possible to determine the actual “impact” and “influence” of the concept of shared fate in its era. For the purpose of this thesis, I added three more features to the contextualist “matrix”. First, the analysis of these threads has been purely functional to the understanding and the contextualization of the main actor, the idea of shared fate. Second, as I have utilized such an approach to highlight a relation of mutual influence between events of those years and the concept of shared fate, I analyzed these threads as streams whose current flows in both directions. Third, I mostly focused on the diachronic threads of the concept of shared fate rather than on synchronic ones stemming in the galaxy of 19th century political doctrines. In other words, my analysis was focused on highlighting the diachronic mutation of this idea and its influence over time rather than on its relations to other perspectives on nationhood and teleological takes on history during the 19th century.

Sources

Three different types of primary sources were used. Newspaper articles allowed me to assess the pervasiveness and the articulations that the idea of shared fate acquired in Italian public discourse between 1848 and 1871. With public discourse I mean the one that took place between literate people: the choice of leaving out the illiterate “classes” was dictated by two main reasons: first, the objective difficulty of retrieving reliable sources on how these people reacted to the idea of shared fate; second, their relative lack of interest (or in some cases, the objective difficulty of making their voices heard) in participating in the debate around national unification in Italy.³¹ The approach of having the literate classes as protagonist of my research on public discourse is modeled on what Lovejoy described as

²⁸ Hayden V. White, *Metahistory: the Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore, United States of America: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 11.

²⁹ White, 18

³⁰ White, 19

³¹ William Salomone, “Statecraft and Ideology in the Risorgimento. Reflections on the Italian National Revolution,” *Italica* 38, no. 3 (1961): pp. 163-194, 172.

one of the main aims of the history of ideas: understanding “manifestations of specific unit-ideas in the collective thought of large groups of persons, not merely in the doctrines or opinions of a small number of profound thinkers or eminent writers”.³² Newspapers from different political orientations were analyzed. I included both left-leaning newspapers such as *L’Alba* (1847-49) from Florence and *La Concordia* (1847-50) from Turin as well as more moderate ones such as *La Nazione* (1859-today) from Florence. Moreover, official gazettes from provisional revolutionary governments, such as *Il 22 Marzo* (1848), voice of the revolutionary government of Milan, were included. These newspapers were carefully selected not only for the quality of their contributions, but because of their relevance with regard to their period of publication. *L’Alba* in fact was for the three years of its publication a newspaper of European reputation, attracting also the praise of Karl Marx in 1848; *La Nazione* was – and still is – a reference point for Italian moderates and has been published in Florence, which in 1864-70 was the capital of Italy. Moreover, the selection of these newspapers was operated in order to be coherent with the dominant “version” of the idea of shared fate in the two periods: therefore, in 1848 more space was devoted to left-leaning newspapers, while after 1860, due to the presence of the “institutionalized” version of the idea of shared fate, more space was reserved to *La Nazione*.

Geographically speaking, as hinted before, I mostly examined newspapers from Northern and Central Italy, with a preference for newspapers from Milan, Turin, and Florence. This was due mainly to these three cities being among the most vibrant cultural centers of the *Risorgimento* in the examined period. The absence of newspapers from Southern Italy is primarily due to the lack of relevant articles around the idea of shared fate in newspapers from that area: this could be ascribed both to the heavy censorship at play in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies and to the different cultural composition and characterization of the South when compared to the rest of the peninsula.

As the thesis is concerned mostly with the analysis of an idea which received the crucial influence of romantic nationalism, newspapers constitute particularly useful sources in this regard. In fact, as Benedict Anderson argued, newspapers were effective platforms for the development of nationalism, naturally encouraging the elaboration of new interpretations of fraternity, power, and time. In other words, they acted as essential tools for representing and renegotiating the “imagined community”: the nation.³³ As a consequence, newspapers constitute extremely interesting source material for the historian interested in mapping the development and the interaction of nationalisms.

The idea of shared fate was a concept present in the political and cultural vocabulary of a numerical minority – the pro-unitarian educated classes – of the inhabitants of the Italian peninsula of those years. Books and political pamphlets from liberal and democratic intellectuals were, along

³² Lovejoy, “History of Ideas”, 193

³³ Benedict Anderson, *Comunità Immaginate: Origini e Fortuna Dei Nazionalismi* (Bari, Italy: Laterza, 2018), 25-33.

with newspapers, the main source of information of these educated classes. A study on the concept of the “shared fate” would have been therefore incomplete without an analysis of these political writings and pamphlets. Special focus was put into the analysis of Giuseppe Mazzini’s works, due to the influence that his ideas on the necessity of transnational cooperation between nationalities had on the formation of the idea of shared fate. Works from other influential Italian intellectuals such as Cesare Balbo and Gino Capponi were also analyzed.

Another crucial type of primary sources that I analyzed is diplomatic correspondences and dispatches of the Piedmontese and Italian government. As one of the main aims of this thesis was to assess the pervasiveness of such a concept in the political vocabulary of the actual policymakers and its role as a rhetoric tool, an analysis of these primary sources was compulsory. For this purpose, I utilized the collection of diplomatic documents of the Kingdom of Italy between 1861 and 1871, available online from the Historical Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. For the analysis of the events in the Kingdom of Piedmont I utilized selected letters from Cavour, available in the works of Cataluccio and Voci. Lastly, it is important to highlight that the translation in English from the original sources in Italian is mine: the original quotes in Italian are available in the footnotes.

Chapter I: The Origins

In this chapter, I will explore the cultural origins of the concept of shared fate. Here, I argue that this concept originated from a complex interaction of several cultural currents of the late 18th and early 19th century. The most visible roots can be sought in two cultural phenomena of those decades: historical teleology and romantic nationalism. Another source of influence can be traced back to Giuseppe Mazzini's effort towards fostering a joint revolution of nationalities through mutual cooperation. Having arisen almost simultaneously in the fabric of history, these three currents of thought influenced each other in an almost symbiotic relation, decisively contributing to the birth of the idea of shared fate between Germany and Italy. In this chapter, I will not problematize the origins of these three cultural currents, nor provide a comprehensive and fully developed account of their many articulations in Europe, as this is not the main purpose of this thesis: instead, I will conduct a broad overview of how they could be considered as direct sources of influence for the creation of the concept of shared fate. In this sense, my exploration will be purely functional to understanding how the synergetic interaction between these three cultural phenomena created the ideal fertile ground for the development of the concept of shared fate in the following decades of the 19th century.

Historical Teleology

The term “shared fate” or *comunanza delle sorti* or *destino comune*, as it often appeared in Italian public discourse during the period considered, implied a clear referral to a metaphysical concept: Fate, or Destiny. It was believed in fact that Destiny as a metaphysical force was pushing the two nationalities towards independence. The timing of such an action was also of crucial importance: Destiny was committing such an act during the “era of the nations”, a period in which the principle of nationality was slowly replacing the one of divine investiture as the accepted source of legitimacy of power. In this sense, philosophers, intellectuals, and literate people started to look back at the history of their own geographical region, interpreting past events as the first steps of a long and inevitable historical path that had the establishment of a nation-state as its ultimate *telos*, or purpose. This tendency, called historical teleology – sometimes referred to also as historicism, constituted one of the two main pillars of not only the development of the concept of shared fate between Italy and Germany, but also of European national movements of the 19th century in general. Born as an anti-mechanist tool and as a product of the Enlightenment, historical teleology was then recrafted by Kant and Hegel in the wake of the new philosophical turns of Romanticism and Idealism. In order to understand how the concept of shared fate could be seen as directly deriving from the framework of

historical teleology, it is imperative to offer a broad overview of the historical origin and development of such a framework.

The creation of the term “teleology” is commonly ascribed to the German philosopher Christian Wolff (1679-1725), who, in 1728, included it in his *Philosophia Rationalis Sive Logica*.³⁴ Wolff conceived it as that “part of natural philosophy which explains the ends of things, and which thus far lacks a name, even if it is most ample and useful.”³⁵ Apart from the term, Wolff did not come up with anything dramatically innovative: instead, he simply joined a discussion dating back to Aristotle around the possibility of explaining things by their final product. However, it was Wolff’s characterization of this concept as temporalized that was to be of long-lasting effect. Wolff conceived in fact the teleological process as something that “promised the future achievement of a well-ordered doctrine, a disciplined *logos* with a clearly and distinctly defined ambit”, driven by a specific moving force, or *vis motrix*.³⁶ In this sense, Wolff aimed at criticizing the dry technicality of mechanist philosophers such as Descartes, Hobbes or Spinoza, for which the world could be reduced as a “comprehensive and total ‘chain’ of efficient ‘mechanical’ causes”, devoid of any moving force apart from human and divine action.”³⁷

It should be noted that despite Wolff’s first attempt at temporalizing teleology, no such thing as historical teleology existed yet. This was due to the fact that mechanist ideas of history were still dominant in the Enlightened cultural environment. During the Enlightenment, in fact, history was largely looked at as the tale of the progressive affirmation of Reason in time: such a perspective did not recognize the action of any mystical force in history apart from the mechanist ones. This was only natural, considering that with the increasing popularity of chemistry, physics, and biology, natural sciences started to be considered as potentially capable of explaining reality as a whole. In this sense, social sciences such as history started to be “contaminated” with terms and approaches borrowed from the realm of natural sciences, thus only enforcing a mechanist interpretation of history: “as Voltaire had it, physics was to provide the epistemological model for a renewed understanding of history.”³⁸

This changed with the arrival of the so-called “Prussian debate” at the end of the 18th century. As Henning Trüper has argued, it fell to “the Kantian critical project to recognize the bastard child *de iure* and bring Historical teleology into its own”.³⁹ Teleology occupied in fact a place of primary importance in Kant’s philosophical system. In his *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (1790), Kant highlighted

³⁴ Trüper Henning, Dipesh Chakrabarty, and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Historical Teleologies in the Modern World* (London, United Kingdom: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 3.

³⁵ Trüper, Chakrabarty, Subrahmanyam, 3

³⁶ Trüper, Chakrabarty, Subrahmanyam, 4

³⁷ Trüper, Chakrabarty, Subrahmanyam, 4

³⁸ Trüper, Chakrabarty, Subrahmanyam, 6

³⁹ Trüper, Chakrabarty, Subrahmanyam, 7

how humans were naturally inclined to ask themselves the *telos* of reality.⁴⁰ While not implying that such a *telos* existed, Kant highlighted the natural need of mankind to look for it. In his eyes, Reality as a whole was therefore measured by mankind, in one way or another, through a teleological scope: the final purpose of Nature laid in its intelligibility.⁴¹

Considering that Kant was essentially an Enlightened philosopher, one could be tempted to think that history was for Kant a clear tale of a progressive process of the intelligibility of Nature by humans. However, Kant never embraced such a linear idea of history: instead, he was aware that “Nature’s plan” of making itself intelligible was so hidden in the complex fabric of history to be almost undetectable. The intelligibility of history as the proof of the existence of such a gradual process of understanding was in this sense confined to limited episodes, “signs”, or hints that history left on its path, similar to Hansel and Gretel’s trail of breadcrumbs.⁴² The only way in which mankind could try to map such a process was through a semiotic study of these “signs”.⁴³ Even though any synopsis of Kant’s complex theoretical system is inevitably condemned to be too simplistic, it appears evident that his view on teleology refused any mechanist idea of a simple chain of events and contributed to building a more evident bridge between history and teleology. Such a bridge was to be completed by Hegel, who, building on the legacy of Kant’s system, developed a more evident link between the two concepts, resulting in the most influential conceptualization of historical teleology of the 19th century.⁴⁴

Hegel too envisioned history as a process. However, his perspective differed from the one of Kant on different aspects. Hegel saw history as a progress towards the establishment of freedom, meant as the maximally attainable extent of subjective and collective agency: such a process was “to take place in the form of the objectivation of reason, the workings of the ‘spirit’ in time, its tireless labor, in the sequence of nations, to give itself form and in this way to know itself”, as Trüper has argued.⁴⁵ Even more than in the Kantian project, history appeared to possess a “spirit”, a *Geist*. It is important to note that Hegel did not consider the *Geist* as a metaphysical essence: instead, this determining force of history was to be considered as a mere abstraction of something coming into existence only through the activity of finite agents.⁴⁶ The manifestations of this spirit were in fact evident in the shape of the institutions of the various societies: therefore, the spirit was visible in a

⁴⁰ Immanuel Kant, *Critica Del Giudizio*, ed. Alberto Bosi (Torino, Italy: Utet, 2013), 433-434.

⁴¹ Filippo Gonnelli, Introduction to Immanuel Kant, *Scritti di storia, politica e diritto*, ed. Filippo Gonnelli (Bari: Laterza, 2020): V

⁴² Trüper, Chakrabarty, Subrahmanyam, *Historical Teleologies*, 8

⁴³ Trüper, Chakrabarty, Subrahmanyam, 8

⁴⁴ Trüper, Chakrabarty, Subrahmanyam, 9

⁴⁵ Trüper, Chakrabarty, Subrahmanyam, 9

⁴⁶ Frederick Charles Beiser, *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 289-91.; Antonello La Vergata, Franco Trabattoni, and Patrizia Becherini, *Filosofia Cultura Cittadinanza* (Florence, Italy: La nuova Italia, 2011), 3.

fundamentally institutional framework. Moreover, such an objectivation of the spirit in time was not confused and hidden as in the Kantian project. Instead, it was periodic and tended towards progressively higher forms of objectivation, as a consequence of Hegel's dialectical process.⁴⁷ In other words, history was indeed a tale of the progressive establishment of freedom and such a tale, which was singular and unified, was divisible in clear-cut chapters. Once again, the final purpose of history laid in its intelligibility: however, Hegel applied a more confident and universalist vision than the one of Kant. As Trüper stated, "history was teleological progress towards freedom precisely to the extent that it understood itself; and in the very effort to understand itself, it made itself into an intelligible object."⁴⁸ The final link between the teleological argument and history was therefore established. Even if it was officially born, historical teleology still had no independence as a concept: instead, it was integrated as a cog in the complex machine of the Hegelian system, which saw it as a single part of a more complex system of natural philosophy in which mechanical causality and teleological directedness coexisted and worked in synergy.⁴⁹

Such a complex and interdependent perspective was to be lost in the various Hegelian philosophies stemmed from the work of the philosopher from Stuttgart.⁵⁰ Right-wing Hegelians interpreted Hegel's historicism from a conservative point of view, highlighting the historical importance of current institutions as the accomplished fruit of the historical evolution. Since the current state of things was the peak, or the reached *telos*, of history, Right Hegelians insisted that such *status quo* had to be preserved. On the contrary, Young Hegelians opposed such a view and countered it with a more progressivist one, where history retained its status as pointing towards a *telos* of freedom, but where such a goal was still to be achieved. This corresponded to an increased call to society for helping to achieve the *telos* of freedom: these calls took multiple shapes and touched upon cultural and social matters and, more crucially for the purpose of this thesis, often acted in synergy – in a mutually influential bond – with the new ideas of nationhood of romantic nationalism. Such a link was evident in the works of Young Hegelians such as Arnold Ruge (1802-80) and Karl Nauwerck (1810-91), who would later also be involved in the German national movement. As a consequence, Hegel's historical teleology was misplaced from its original place in the Hegelian system and started to be considered more and more as a legitimate object on its own. This was also made possible by the emergence of numerous historicist debates in the late 18th and early 19th century, among which the rise of philology, archaeology, and antiquarianism.⁵¹ Following the immense popularity of

⁴⁷ Trüper, Chakrabarty, Subrahmanyam, *Historical Teleologies*, 9

⁴⁸ Trüper, Chakrabarty, Subrahmanyam, 9-10

⁴⁹ Trüper, Chakrabarty, Subrahmanyam, 10

⁵⁰ Trüper, Chakrabarty, Subrahmanyam, 10

⁵¹ Trüper, Chakrabarty, Subrahmanyam, 10

Hegelianism, the concept of history as a process - whether an accomplished one or not – towards the establishment of freedom gradually started to gain a foothold in Europe.

In this paragraph we just explored what Hegel and Hegelians meant with freedom as the ultimate *telos* of history. However, having highlighted in the introduction how ideas are not immutable objects but get modified by the very act of communicating them, a question arises. How was the *telos* of history conceived by Hegel's readers in Europe? In other words, what did the European *intelligentsia* of those times mean by "freedom"?

Romantic Nationalism

In order to give a tentative answer to the question left open in the first paragraph, thus building the bridge between romantic nationalism and historical teleology, it is first imperative to spend some words on the origin and the characterization of the former. First, it is important to note that any attempt at defining romantic nationalism as a single, ontologically coherent, and homogenous doctrine across all Europe is destined to fail, as Paul Ginsborg has pointed out.⁵² So many and diverse were the declinations and interpretations on nationhood commonly referred to as romantic nationalism that a single definition of the phenomenon is a difficult, if not impossible task.

This however does not mean that basic common traits cannot be traced between these various declinations: on the basis of these, Joep Leerssen built a tentative definition of romantic nationalism as "the celebration of the nation (defined in its language, history, and cultural character) as an inspiring ideal for artistic expression; and the instrumentalization of that expression in political consciousness-raising."⁵³ In this sense, romantic nationalism can be considered more as a peculiar knot between two synchronic cultural phenomena rather than a coherent and well-defined doctrine. Ideas proper of Romanticism such as historicism, the attention to language, and the celebration of national folklore merged with the new debate on the essence and the legitimacy of nations, sparked by the political events of the American and French revolution and the Napoleonic period. For romantic nationalists, the nation lost its Hobbesian nature as an essentially juridical organism stemmed from a social contract between individuals delegating the power to a monarch, as well as its religious one, for which its ruler was legitimized by divine investiture. In their stead, the nation assumed an almost transcendent shape and was historicized as a living organism existing from the

⁵² Paul Ginsborg, "European Romanticism and the Italian Risorgimento," in *The Risorgimento Revisited: Nationalism and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Italy*, ed. Silvana Patriarca and Lucy Riall (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 18-36, 18.

⁵³ Joep Leerssen, "Notes toward a Definition of Romantic Nationalism," *Romantik: Journal for the Study of Romanticisms* 2, no. 1 (January 2013): pp. 9-35, 35.; Ginsborg, "European Romanticism", 19

very beginning of history. This revolutionary concept of the nation as a living being entailed the existence of a hypothetical “national character” of each nation throughout history, or *Volksgeist*.⁵⁴ Such a *Volksgeist* was retroactively traced in the past even in realities where a nation was not present legally in the form of a state.⁵⁵ For example, Renaissance Italy, despite being divided into multiple regional states each with its own peculiar culture and society, was considered by Italian romantic nationalists as permeated by the same “Italian national character” of the one of the Italian national movement of the 19th century. The link between romantic nationalism and historical teleology is here evident. History was in fact “nationalized” and considered as a process functional and leading inevitably to the establishment of nations.⁵⁶ As Fichte stated, the social contract that bonded the citizens to the nation was diachronized and extended also to the past generations and the future ones.⁵⁷ This symbiotic relation between history and the nation also worked the other way round, as “history’s claims to precedence as a discipline were founded in large measure on its ability to tell the story, and perhaps foretell the destiny, of the nation”, as Geoffrey Cubitt has argued.⁵⁸

Temporally speaking, therefore, the nation was conceived as possessing ubiquitous presence in history. How to understand its spatial extension? In other words, what were the criteria for understanding nationality on a map? Multiple and diverse criteria were conceived by the various romantic nationalist movements in Europe. However, they all agreed upon one: unity of language.⁵⁹ The nation was therefore to be spatially determined in the extent of people speaking a shared idiom. A famous example could be found in the popular song *Was Ist des Deutsches Vaterland* (1814), in which the singer, after being asked multiple times about the borders of the German land, states:

Was ist des Deutschen Vaterland?
So nenne endlich mir das Land!
So weit die deutsche Zunge klingt⁶⁰

What is the German’s fatherland?
So name the great land to me, finally!
As far as the German tongue sounds

Clearly, language alone, in a European reality characterized often by parochialism or by the widespread use of local dialects, which sometimes had little or nothing to share with the hypothetic “shared” language, could only be the base, but not the single criterion for understanding nationality.

⁵⁴ Leerssen, “Definition of Romantic”, 16; the creation of this term is usually ascribed to either Hegel or Friedrich Carl von Savigny (1779-1861), but it also saw its first “unofficial” debut in the works of Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803).

⁵⁵ Geoffrey Cubitt, *Imagining Nations* (Manchester, United Kingdom: Manchester University Press, 1998), 8.

⁵⁶ Leerssen “Definition of Romantic”, 27; Anderson, *Comunità Immaginate*, 15

⁵⁷ Leerssen, “Definition of Romantic”, 19

⁵⁸ Cubitt, *Imagining Nations*, 9

⁵⁹ Anderson, *Comunità Immaginate*, 66; Leerssen, “Definition of Romantic”, 12

⁶⁰ Quoted in Leerssen, “Definition of Romantic”, 17. Translation is also original from Leerssen

As mentioned above, other criteria were differently implemented according to the various romantic nationalisms. Some focused more on the existence of “natural borders” legitimized by historicist perspectives; others claimed that a sense of shared history and culture was a paramount national value; others instead insisted more on blood and “race” ties.⁶¹ However, as Leerssen has argued, “almost no cultural or national emancipation movement of the nineteenth century fails to use the argument of linguistic identity as the main trump card among their claims.”⁶²

Such a revolutionary idea of the “essence” of the nation was diametrically opposed to many absolutist monarchies whose dynastic legitimacy resided in a divine investiture of the monarch from God.⁶³ All of a sudden, in fact, the nation was no longer embodied in the figure of the King, as the emblematic saying of Louis XIV “L’état, c’est moi” highlighted. Instead, as mentioned before, the nation acquired a life of its own as an independently defined spatial and temporal entity.⁶⁴ More crucially, the focus on nationality as defined by language was to create problems in multi-ethnic and multi-lingual states such as the Habsburg or the Russian Empire.⁶⁵ Especially in the case of the Habsburg Empire, multi-ethnicity was seen by romantic nationalists as the very negation of the principle of nationality and therefore considered as proof of the outdated and obsolete character of the Empire.

It is now time to put the final brick of the bridge between Hegelian historical teleology and the romantic nationalist idea of the nation. Since history was defined as a teleological process, divided in clear-cut eras, pointing towards the establishment of freedom through a progressive objectification of the *Geist* in institutional forms, and since romantic nationalism perceived history as “nationalized”, then the final *telos* of history consisted necessarily in the establishment or re-establishment of nation-states based on the new romantic nationalist system of legitimacy. This took different shapes according to the single geopolitical scenario: in the case of already legally existing nation-states such as France or Spain it took the shape of the king granting a constitution, thus renouncing to his obsolete dynastic power and accepting to rule by the will of the nation.⁶⁶ This was the case in the various European revolutions of 1820 and 1830, which were characterized by constitutional, rather than specifically nationalistic, goals. What happened however when such a state did not formally exist?

This was exactly the case with Italy, Germany, Poland, Romania. In these cases, we have nationalities that for romantic nationalists possessed a shared sense of history and a common

⁶¹ Cubitt, *Imagining Nations*, 10

⁶² Leerssen, “Definition of Romantic”, 13

⁶³ Lewis B. Namier, *1848: The Revolution of the Intellectuals* (London, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 1971), 24.

⁶⁴ Cubitt, *Imagining Nations*, 5

⁶⁵ Anderson, *Comunità Immaginate*, 21

⁶⁶ Giordano Altarozzi and Cornel Sigmirean, *Il Risorgimento Italiano e i Movimenti Nazionali in Europa: Dal Modello Italiano Alla realtà Dell'Europa Centro-Orientale* (Roma, Italy: Edizioni Nuova cultura, 2013), 10.

language, but that still lacked the objectivation of their *Volksg Geist* in the legal form of a nation-state: in other words, they were “stateless” nationalities.⁶⁷ For them, reaching the goal of freedom laid necessarily in achieving such legal status as unified and independent nation-states. In this sense, the fact of “lagging behind” nationalities that already possess a nation, such as the French, was often regarded by romantic nationalists of stateless nationalities such as the Italians as a striking proof of themselves being the most authentic carriers of the *Geist*. In fact, if history was divisible in clear-cut chapters, it was only natural for them to think that the *Geist* would objectivize more strongly in nations formed from scratch in this final age of the establishment of nationalities.⁶⁸ Their achieving independence, and thus, their reaching a status of nation-state would have served in fact as the final objectivation of the *Geist* in history. In other words, it was in the unification of “stateless nationalities” such as the Italian, the German, or the Polish in nation-states that history would have achieved its ultimate *telos*.

As mentioned previously, providing such a clear-cut and unified vision of the relation between romantic nationalism and historical teleology constitutes a necessary simplification of what was in reality a very diverse and rich European scenario concerning these two intellectual currents. Moreover, it should be noted that the penetration of these ideas was gradual and highly variable in European audiences, and often, not embraced at all if not by small minorities of the *intelligentsia*. Such an overview, however, even if generalized, is compulsory for understanding how compatible the Romantic idea of the nation and Hegelian historical teleology were. Clearly, as a consequence of what mentioned above, this symbiotic connection was framed differently according to each national scenario and even within the same national movement.

The Italian Scenario

Italy did not remain indifferent to these new cultural influences from the North of Europe. Despite it being traditionally French-oriented in terms of cultural influence, small groups of the Italian intellectual elite started to look with interest at the new intellectual turns of the German scenario in the 1820s and 30s.⁶⁹ As Siebert argued, “German irrationalism, historicism, idealism manifested themselves as of great relevance for avant-garde intellectuals in Italy.”⁷⁰ Such a phenomenon also profited and partly stemmed from the fertile reception of pre-Romantic and Romantic ideas in Italian

⁶⁷ Altarozzi, Sigmirean, 11

⁶⁸ Altarozzi, Sigmirean, 10

⁶⁹ Siebert, “Comunanza delle Sorti”, 79

⁷⁰ Siebert, 79

literature, which saw in Ugo Foscolo (1778-1827) one of its most important exponents. This new stream of “Germanist” influence benefitted also from direct cultural exchanges with German intellectuals, as a result of correspondence or proper journeys abroad. This also continued in the 1820s and 1830s, with intellectuals such as Gino Capponi (1796-1876) often committing themselves to long exchange trips in Germany. During these occasions, Capponi came in contact with intellectuals such as Friedrich Carl von Savigny (1779-1861), Leopold von Ranke (1795-1886), Friedrich Schelling (1775-1854), and Georg Gottfried Gervinus (1805-1871).⁷¹ Capponi, who later collaborated in two of the most important magazines of these years, *L’Antologia* (1821-33) and *Archivio Storico Italiano* (1841-today), constituted in this sense one of the main exponents of this “Germanist” current. Being featured in the most important magazines of the time, idealist and historicist perspectives slowly made their way in the debates of the most important parlors of the peninsula, despite initial strong resistance from classicist and reactionary intellectuals.⁷²

Of the many themes of Romanticism and Idealism, it was the renewed attention to history that captivated Italian intellectuals the most. Pioneered by Foscolo in *Dei Sepolcri* (1807), historicism became widespread in the discourse of Italian intellectual elites of the first three decades of the 19th century.⁷³ Part of this success can be ascribed to an urge proper of Romantic and anti-Classicist thinkers for rejuvenating the cultural panorama in Italy, perceived as dormant, the pale shadow of the one during the Renaissance or in the Middle Ages.⁷⁴ This urge was not only cultural but often also assumed a political shape: Italy had to claim back its place as an influential scenario in Europe, which it had lost in the last two centuries.⁷⁵ The idea that the Italian states were just mere puppets in the hands of the great powers also stemmed partly from the outcome of the Congress of Vienna, where Italian regional states played almost no active part in designing the new European status quo.

Therefore, historicism became very quickly a refuge for intellectuals nostalgic of a so-called “golden age” of Italian greatness, both in an artistic and political sense.⁷⁶ In this sense, the Hegelian philosophical system was destined to touch a sensitive spot. Firstly officially debated in Italy in 1832, the new Hegelian vision of history as a teleological process towards the establishment of freedom quickly attracted the attention of intellectuals such as Giuseppe Mazzini (1805-72), Carlo Cattaneo

⁷¹ Siebert, 79-80

⁷² Siebert, 80

⁷³ Sandra Costa and Maria Luigia Pagliani, “Archetipi Espositivi e Modelli Di Fruizione Dell’Antico Tra Settecento e Ottocento/Exposition Archetypes and Models of Use of the Ancient between the XVIII and XIX Centuries.,” *IL CAPITALE CULTURALE. Studies on the Value of Cultural Heritage* 9 (2019), pp. 83-124, 99.

⁷⁴ Ginsborg, “European Romanticism”, 21

⁷⁵ Silvana Patriarca., Lucy Ryall, Introduction to Patriarca, Riall *Risorgimento Revisited* :1-17, 4

⁷⁶ Adrian Lyttelton, “Creating a National Past: History, Myth and Image in the Risorgimento,” in *Making and Remaking Italy: the Cultivation of National Identity around the Risorgimento*, ed. Albert Russell Ascoli and Kristina Clara von Henneberg (Oxford: Berg, 2001), pp. 27-74, 27-29.

(1801-69), and Giuseppe Ferrari (1811-76).⁷⁷ In this sense, the positive potential of Hegel's idea of history appealed to the eyes of the young Italian national movement. In fact, Hegel's historical teleology fostered the hopes of those who advocated for a return of Italy to a position of prominence in European affairs, both in a cultural and political sense. As Fernanda Gallo has argued, "In this first period, Italian Hegelianism is ready to embrace the revolutionary potential of Hegel's philosophy and, despite the warning of Hegel himself, the dialectic of the philosophy of history helps it to look at the future with the promise of the arrival of a new age. Answering Hegel's call for freedom, Italy would have been again part of European culture, in the same way as in the age of Tommaso Campanella and Giordano Bruno."⁷⁸ In their eyes, the Italian *Volksgeist*, after having been dormant for the last centuries, was now ready to emerge again in a unified nation. History was in this sense being re-read through a teleological scope, with the establishment of Italy as the underlying goal of the entire process. As a result, historians and intellectuals of those times started producing historical accounts of Italian history in which historical characters such as Julius Caesar or Dante Alighieri were depicted as precursors of the fight for Italian unification. In other words, as mentioned in previous paragraphs, history was nationalized and teleologically interpreted with regard to the achievement of unification.⁷⁹ We can observe such a pattern in works of both liberal and democrat intellectuals, even though it assumed different shapes and entailed different political goals.

Among liberals, Cesare Balbo (1789-1853) produced an impressive contribution in this regard. Balbo, who embraced Savigny's theories on the *Volksgeist*, produced in these years nationalized historical accounts on Italian history in which romantic nationalism and historical teleology worked in true synergy.⁸⁰ Works such as *La Vita di Dante* (1839) or *Le Speranze d'Italia* (1844) also showed that such a perspective on Italian history was functional to Balbo's evident support for the Italian national cause. More specifically, *Le Speranze d'Italia*, a geopolitical analysis of the possible ways through which Italy could gain independence, contained a full historical account of Italian events since the fall of the Roman Empire. The title "Brief History of the struggle for independence, always pursued, never accomplished, during the last 13 centuries" given by Balbo to this historical overview, clearly highlights Balbo's teleological perspective on Italian history.⁸¹ Such a teleological perspective functional to the achieving of a political objective was not proper only of

⁷⁷ Fernanda Gallo, "Gli Hegeliani Di Napoli e Il Risorgimento: Bertrando Spaventa e Francesco De Sanctis a Confronto (1848-1862)," *LEA - Lingue E Letterature d'Oriente E d'Occidente*, no. 6 (2017): pp. 651-668, 653.

⁷⁸ Gallo, 654

⁷⁹ Siebert, "Comunanza delle Sorti", 81

⁸⁰ Maria Fubini Leuzzi, "Cesare Balbo," in *Enciclopedia Italiana Di Scienze, Lettere Ed Arti: Ottava Appendice*, ed. Paolo Cappellini (Roma, Italy: Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana fondata da Giovanni Treccani, 2012), pp. 343-349, 347.

⁸¹ Cesare Balbo, *Delle Speranze D'Italia* (Capolago, Switzerland: Tip. Elvetica, 1844), 54.

Balbo, but it remained a staple for nearly every historical account of Italian history during the *Risorgimento*.⁸²

As we have observed, the border between the Italian and the German intellectual scenario was a highly porous one: new perspectives on the substance of nations and on history were therefore received and re-shaped in the Italian scenario by the young Italian national movement. This created a sense of expectation towards an ideal future that would have seen Italy once again welcomed in the realm of the Great Powers as an independent state. As Siebert has argued:

It became evident with this national mobilization of historiography that this turning to history was characterized by a political undertone. Even more than in Germany, from ideological and scientific premises were drawn practical and political axioms. The most influential Italian thinkers and scholars of the first half of the 19th century were also at the same time active supporters of the cause for independence.⁸³

Mazzini and the Collaboration of Nationalities

Until now, no explicit referral to the idea of shared fate between the Italian and German unification has been mentioned. This is due to the fact that in the first three decades of the century the idea itself was still in its “incubation phase”. In fact, it still had not entered the vocabulary of Italian discourse, but fertile ground was being created for its subsequent diffusion: Hegelian philosophy of history had created an almost messianic belief in the progressive affirmation of freedom in history; romantic nationalism had individuated the shape of this freedom in the establishment of a nation-state. The transnational element was however still not present: even if Destiny was pushing nationalities towards the accomplishment of self-determination, this fight was still regarded as peculiar of each national scenario and not as a collective and interrelated one. In this sense, the last ingredient was missing: the focus on the importance of collaboration between stateless nationalities as a compulsory step towards success. Absent in the accounts of liberal intellectuals such as Balbo, this new “strategy” saw its most strenuous and famous supporter in Giuseppe Mazzini.

Mazzini is often considered as the most influential exponent of Italian republicanism and democratism of those years: some scholars, such as Denis Mack Smith, even referred to him as the most important ideologue of patriotic movements of the 19th century.⁸⁴ Mazzini began his political

⁸² The name “Risorgimento” itself, which could be translated as “new dawn, resurgence” clearly shows the interaction between Romantic nationalism and Historical teleology: Italy was not “created” as a juridical entity, but it “resurged” as an almost religious being that has been dormant for centuries.

⁸³ Siebert, “Comunanza delle Sorti”, 81

⁸⁴ Denis Mack Smith, *Mazzini* (New Haven, United States of America: Yale University Press, 1994), 2.

career as a member of the young Italian movement by joining the liberal-constitutional *Carbonari* secret society. Forced into exile in 1831 after the failure of the *Carboneria*, Mazzini quickly realized that a national cause pursued through the secrecy and elitism typical of the *Carboneria* was doomed to be unsuccessful.⁸⁵ As he envisioned it, a strategy based on unity and collaboration was the only one through which the cause of national unification could succeed: Mazzini advocated for unity and collaboration not only within the Italian borders, but also in the broader context of the European scenario. In this sense, Mazzini called on all the “oppressed nationalities” in Europe for a joint uprising against their rulers: success was in this sense reachable only through cooperation. By highlighting the need for mutual support, Mazzini also made his cosmopolitan design clear: the constitution of the various nation-states was not to be regarded as the final goal, but rather as an intermediate step towards the constitution of a European confederation of nationalities.⁸⁶

Mazzini put such a strategy into practice during the spring of 1834 with the foundation of Young Europe, a network of national societies entrusted with promoting collaboration between national causes around Europe.⁸⁷ Originally formed by the union of Young Italy, Young Germany, and Young Poland, Young Europe and its activities were quickly undermined by the lack of funds and by internal clashes between Italians and Germans. This condemned the organization to a quick disbanding in 1836.⁸⁸ Despite its rather short life, the memory of the organization remained ingrained in the collective mind of European democratism for many decades. Sarti pointed out that “Young Europe was a typical Mazzinian creation in the sense that its appeal and power resided largely in the name. It was above all a symbol of the future”⁸⁹ Mazzini’s almost religious faith towards the importance of collaboration between nationalities did not stop with the death of Young Europe. For the rest of his life, he continued to found committees, societies, and organizations with other exiled intellectuals from European countries in order to create “a concert of nationalities” to foster self-determination and democratism.⁹⁰

Cooperation, therefore, assumed a role of primary importance for Mazzini and his political project. The creation of a new European order relied on the various nationalities of Europe setting aside their jealousies and fighting a common enemy: the obsolete geopolitical *status quo* decided at the Vienna Congress, which was strangling, in Mazzini’s eyes, the natural inclination of nationalities

⁸⁵ Mack Smith, 4; Maurizio Isabella, “Mazzini’s Internationalism in Context: from the Cosmopolitan Patriotism of the Italian Carbonari to Mazzini’s Europe of the Nations,” in Bayly, Biagini, *Mazzini and the Globalisation*, pp. 38-58, 55.

⁸⁶ Sarti, “Mazzini and Young Europe”, 284-85; Isabella, “Mazzini’s Internationalism”, 58

⁸⁷ Mack Smith, *Mazzini*, 11

⁸⁸ Jefferson Adams, *Historical Dictionary of German Intelligence* (Lanham, MD, United States of America: Scarecrow Press, 2009), 213-14.

⁸⁹ Sarti, “Mazzini and Young Europe”, 297

⁹⁰ Mack Smith, *Mazzini*, 51

to unite in nation-states.⁹¹ Such a collaboration had to be coordinated by a central committee, which was entrusted with the crucial tasks of propaganda and education. In this sense, Mazzini did not just provide a utopian project of brotherly cooperation, but also attempted to foster its creation by providing a set of guidelines, making it a true work-in-progress project. Moreover, Mazzini historicized such a project, dating it back to the very beginning of mankind and assigning it a central role in the course of history:

Mankind moved forward on the path of Progress. Every stage of progress was achieved thanks to cooperation; and, vice versa, there has never been a single degree of progress achieved that did not open new opportunities for the cooperation of people.⁹²

In the Mazzinian project of cooperation, Germany was to play a role of crucial importance. In a manuscript written in 1832 – two years before the foundation of Young Europe – Mazzini highlighted how Germany was destined to act as the guiding example of the revolution in Northern Europe.⁹³ Such a prestigious role was motivated, in Mazzini’s eyes, by two reasons. First, by constituting themselves in a united nation-state, Germans would have annihilated Prussia and Austria, two pillars of the concert of Europe, crucially contributing to the success of the European revolution.⁹⁴ Moreover, Germans, due to their geographical position, were the only nationality that could help Poland free itself from the armies of the Czar.⁹⁵ Precisely for this reason, Mazzini thought it was a *moral duty* of Germany to take the initiative of the revolution. In *I doveri dell’Alemagna*, written in the same year, Mazzini explained that Germany was carrying a historical stain on his reputation that demanded redemption.⁹⁶ In his eyes, Germans – through the actions of Prussia and Austria – had been in fact historically guilty of decisively contributing to the dismemberment of Poland between 1772 and 1795, condemning it to be ultimately annexed by autocratic Russia. The immorality of such a striking act against the principle of nationality, which Mazzini — as the romantic nationalist that he was — considered as the protagonist of history as a teleological process, was evident. Germany, the country

⁹¹ Mack Smith, 51

⁹² Giuseppe Mazzini, “Fratellanza de’ popoli, 1832”, in *Scritti Editi e Inediti* (from now on as *SEI*) vol 2, (Imola: Galeati, 1907), pp. 255-259, 256: “L’Umanità camminò sulla via del Progresso. Ogni grado di progresso fu conquistato coll’associazione; e, reciprocamente, nessun grado di progresso fu conquistato che non aprisse una via, o un vantaggio all’associazione dei popoli.”

⁹³ Giuseppe Mazzini, “La Giovine Italia ai popoli della Germania e agli uomini liberi della Francia, 1832”, in *SEI* vol 2, pp. 273-284, 282

⁹⁴ Mazzini, “La Giovine Italia, 1832”, 260

⁹⁵ Giuseppe Mazzini, “Tribuna Alemanna. I doveri dell’Alemagna, 1832”, in *SEI* vol 2, pp. 260-64, 261

⁹⁶ Mazzini, “Tribuna Alemanna, 1832”, 261

“where history had seen the greatest efforts and the greatest products of philosophy and perfectionism” had to redeem itself from such a moral stain.⁹⁷

For this European misery to end, the Russian has to be repelled back to his snows; shall there be between him, Austria, and Prussia, a democratic Poland. Only Germany can help it to rise up and it has to; because with Germany lies the fault of that downfall. However, the German nation, due to the cunning plan of whom divided it, does not legally exist; we need to resurrect it.⁹⁸

By establishing a unified nation-state, Germans would have helped not only the cause of Poland, but also the Italian one. In fact, Mazzini thought that the German-speaking provinces of the Habsburg Empire would gladly accept being part of the newly formed Germany, condemning the Empire to a rapid decline: since the Habsburgs were the main guardians of the Restored *status quo* in Italy, such a sudden power vacuum would have deprived the Italian national movement of its most formidable opponent.⁹⁹

We can see how in Mazzini’s vision *realpolitik* utilitarianism and historicist arguments coexisted in a *pastiche* that individuated in Germany a potential partner of Italy in the upcoming fight for self-determination. Such a *pastiche* could also be observed in Mazzini’s conceptualization of the element of collaboration itself. As mentioned before, in fact, collaboration was both historicized and looked at from the pure utilitarian and synchronic perspective: in other words, collaboration was both useful and historically necessary.

Conclusion

If we consider the idea of shared fate as a dish, romantic nationalism, historical teleology and Mazzini’s impulse towards collaboration could be considered as its main ingredients. On the other hand, one should be aware that viewing these three influxes as clearly discernible and isolated cultural agents – despite being necessary for the sake of clarity to keep them apart – would constitute an excessive simplification, if not a mistake. In fact, the three were often tied together in syncretistic *pastiches* that varied according to different audiences within the Italian national movement. In this

⁹⁷ Giuseppe Mazzini “Alleanza del popolo francese col popolo d’Alemagna, 1832”, *SEI vol 2*, pp. 265-272, 265: “là dove la storia ha registrati i più grandi sforzi, i più grandi prodotti del pensiero e della perfettibilità”

⁹⁸ Mazzini, “Tribuna Alemanna, 1832”, 260: “Se dee aver termine la miseria d’Europa vuolsi rispingere il Russo ne’ suoi geli: e fra lui, e l’Austria e la Prussia stia una Polonia democratica. La sola Alemagna può rialzare quest’ultima e lo deve; poiché su di lei riflette l’onta e il danno di quella caduta. Ma la nazione alemanna, per l’astuzia di quelli che la divisero, non è: conviene richiamarla a vita.”

⁹⁹ Mazzini, “Tribuna Alemanna, 1832”, 260

sense, the almost simultaneous presence of these three currents in the Italian scenario cannot be satisfactorily explained by a mere situational interpretation, as this would underestimate the complex relation of mutual influence at play between them. In other words, the link between these three cultural trends was not merely temporal and spatial, but also conceptual. Whether they should be conceptually considered as different faces of the same coin, it is not an aim of this thesis to suggest it. What appears clear is that the Italian national movement often regarded them as such, recognizing striking compatibility between them.

Precisely due to the great level of syncretism between these three currents, it is impossible to establish a clear “percentage of contribution” that each of these had in the creation of the idea of shared fate. It was instead the interaction and the syncretism itself between these three cultural elements that created the ideal ground for the development of the concept of shared fate. Historical teleology provided a view of history as a progressive process towards an ideal *telos*; romantic nationalism identified this final purpose in the establishment of nation-states based on the principle of nationality; the Mazzinian project stated that such final purpose was reachable only through mutual collaboration and stressed the active role that Italians and Germans had to play in such a collaboration.

It is worth noting that this level of syncretism was typical of the Italian scenario and most likely did not represent a homogenous European pattern. This is exactly why the concept of shared fate could be regarded, in the form in which is analyzed in this thesis, as a product of cultural currents active in the Italian peninsula and of Italian re-elaboration of foreign influences. In fact, even though two of these cultural influxes – romantic nationalism and historical teleology – could be regarded as transnational, as they stemmed from the German world, they were then remodeled by Italian intellectuals to answer to specifically Italian cultural and geopolitical necessities. Likewise, the Mazzinian idea of collaboration, which could be seen as a new version of Enlightened cosmopolitanism, was also remodeled on dynamics proper of the Italian scenario.

As mentioned before, it is too early to brandish an official birth certificate of the idea of shared fate, or at least, of its first manifestation. We have observed a prototype of it in the Mazzinian design, especially concerning Young Europe’s project. However, such a prototype had not yet reached the evolutionary stage of a concrete and self-justified proposal that would achieve in 1848. Moreover, it did not yet present the exclusivist and almost messianic characterization of Italy and Germany being the sole depositaries of the force of Destiny, despite hinting at a possible cooperation between them. In other words, even if a sense of shared fate between stateless nationalities was already in the air, and it was backed with a certain degree of historicist argument, this was still not perceived as exclusively belonging to Italy and Germany alone.

In this sense, until this moment, the idea of shared fate could be considered as a mere cog in the machine of the more complex Mazzinian design, and as present solely in the democratic-republican vocabulary. It was only in 1848, during the great turmoil of the “spring of nations”, that such a concept broke free from the Mazzinian system and became widespread in the press and in the official communiques of Italian revolutionary governments.

Chapter II: The Springtime of Peoples

Italy and Germany were ideal allies: their entente was not only desirable, but also historically necessary and inevitable. This would have been the likely answer to a potential question asked to any Italian revolutionary in March 1848 with regard to the sister revolution in Germany. Three main assumptions were behind such a belief: the striking synchronicity of the two revolutions in Italy and Germany; a teleological re-interpretation of Italian and German history by Italian intellectuals; a supposed shared enemy. All these elements contributed to creating a climate of great hope in Italy in the first two months of the revolutions of 1848-49, fostering calls for collaboration and political action from revolutionary governments in Italy towards their German counterparts. When these calls were coldly met by a large part of German revolutionaries, hope towards the Germans became disenchantment, optimism turned into indifference, extinguishing – at least for now – any belief in a collaboration between the two revolutionary fronts. In this sense, in 1848 we can witness for the first time an organic and widespread formulation of the idea of shared fate in Italian public discourse and its first entrance in political vocabulary. In order to understand how this first formulation could be seen as a product of the “spirit of ‘48”, a shared feeling of revolutionary euphoria and utopian optimism, it is first imperative to offer a brief contextualization of the first frantic months of the 1848 revolutions.

Fraternity in the Year of Revolutions

1848, an *annus mirabilis* for many of its contemporaries and an *annus horribilis* for many others, is still considered today as a major turning point in European history.¹⁰⁰ Between January 1848 and the spring of 1849, Europe was shaken by revolutions that appeared close to completely remodeling its social, cultural, and political character.¹⁰¹ Notably, it was the rapidity and the simultaneity of revolutionary events in the spring of 1848 that boggled European imagination the most. In just a few months, riots broke out in almost every major country of Europe – with the exception of England – quickly escalating to the size of proper revolutions. Various and diverse were the goals driving the struggle of the various revolutions, as well as the outcomes. Some of them were driven by constitutional goals, such as the ones in France, Austria, Denmark. Others, such as the Polish, the

¹⁰⁰ Jonathan Sperber, *The European Revolutions, 1848-1851* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 2.

¹⁰¹ Sperber, 112; Reinhart Koselleck, “How European Was the Revolution of 1848/49?,” in *1848, a European Revolution?: International Ideas and National Memories of 1848*, ed. Axel Körner (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 209-221, 211.

German, and the Italian revolution, aimed more at the achievement of national unification.¹⁰² What all of them had in common was a clear need for social and political change: the European status quo had to be revolutionized. Such a referral to a European dimension should not be seen as a mere rhetoric figure. Revolutions of 1848-49 were in fact, first and foremost, a European revolution, as Reinhart Koselleck argued:

it was not a revolution of Europe, for Europe was not a politically active entity. But it was a European revolution. [...] For despite common economic, social, and political challenges and conflicts, every single one of the riots, upheavals, civil wars, and constitutional reforms played their specific role in the context of the countries in which they occurred. But they did so all at the same time, in parallel fashion and in reaction to one another, so that single factors which may appear to be independent can only be judged properly within their European context.¹⁰³

The various revolutions in fact, despite being born independently as products of a specifically national framework, were quickly seen by their protagonists as single components of a more widespread European phenomenon.¹⁰⁴ Such a belief was also enforced by the striking simultaneity of the uprisings. In such a synchronicity, revolutionaries saw a powerful signal of the upcoming collapse of the “old order” and of the beginning of a new era.¹⁰⁵

This belief appeared to be confirmed by the unfolding events. Between February and March, revolutionary crowds seemed unstoppable: in Paris, King Louis Philippe was forced to abdicate in favor of the newly born Republic; in Berlin, after some resistance, King Friedrich Wilhelm IV allowed the election of a constitutional assembly; in Vienna, Chancellor Klemens von Metternich, after an uncontested leadership of over 25 years, was forced to resign and to go on exile; in Buda and Pest, the Hungarians obtained freedom of press and the right to form their own government from the Habsburgs; in Milan and Venice, the crowd expelled the Austrian garrisons and formed provisional governments. In the whole of Europe, monarchs were either overthrown or had been forced to give in to the demands of revolutionaries. To a generation infused with the powerful syncretistic blend of romantic nationalist ideas and historical teleology outlined in the first chapter, this simultaneity must have appeared as the signal of the upcoming achievement of the *telos* of history: the creation of new, liberal nation-states based on the principle of nationality. The simultaneity of the revolutions was in other words seen by revolutionaries as the striking proof of the legitimacy of their actions and that Destiny was on their side.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State* (Manchester ; New York ; New York, United Kingdom: Manchester University Press, 1982), 65.

¹⁰³ Koselleck, “How European”, 209, 219

¹⁰⁴ Koselleck, 219

¹⁰⁵ Koselleck, 211

¹⁰⁶ “Firenze, 17 Marzo”, *L’Alba* (Florence), 18 March 1848

On top of the mere simultaneity, also the impressive number of European cities in turmoil greatly contributed to this messianic belief of the coming of a new era. In fact, it showed revolutionaries the existence of a deep and shared need for change on a European level. It did so by highlighting the presence of foreign revolutionary fronts, united by an apparent commonality of goals and enemies. In this sense, as John Breuilly argued, one could see the 1848-49 revolutions as both connected and comparable.¹⁰⁷ All this created the widespread impression, in March, of a new era dawning in Europe. The democratic newspaper *L'Alba*, published in Florence, stated on 18 March:

Events are taking place at such a rapid pace that there is no time to reflect on them. As soon as you learn about one, here comes another one, even more incredible than the previous one. [...] It seems the time has come for democratic doctrines to rule mankind.¹⁰⁸

This collective climate of revolutionary euphoria, the so-called “spirit of 48”, should be considered in this sense both a product and a factor of the European dimension of the revolution. Such enthusiasm was also being enforced by the belief that, at least in the first two months, the revolutionary struggle seemed all directed against a single enemy, or, at least, a single enemy front: the post-Congress of Vienna political status quo, defended and enforced by the monarchs and governments of the “concert of Europe”. This belief in a shared enemy gave the various revolutions a sense of belonging to the same cause.¹⁰⁹ As a consequence, newspapers, and communiques of the various revolutionary movements started to report news of the successes of other revolutions with celebrative tones, enforcing the idea of an informal alliance between the various revolutions. Proclamations of sympathy and messages of support were also exchanged between revolutionary fronts, showing a common identity as a compact bloc aiming at the achievement of freedom “against the tyrants”. In this sense, the epithet “springtime of peoples”, usually assigned to the first months of the 1848-49 revolutions, refers to this belief of the various revolutions being united by common interests and aims against reactionary governments.

The widespread element of fraternity and its crucial part in the revolutions of 1848-49 has been the object of brilliant works from scholars such as Reinhart Koselleck, Axel Körner, and Simonetta Soldani.¹¹⁰ What has seldom been highlighted is however the extreme diversity and peculiarity of this element of fraternity. Even if expressed on a European level, calls for fraternity

¹⁰⁷ John Breuilly, “1848: connected or comparable revolutions?” in Körner, *European Revolution?*, pp 31-49, 31

¹⁰⁸ “Firenze, 17 Marzo”, 18 March 1848: “Gli eventi si succedono con tanta rapidità che non vi è più tempo a considerarli. Non appena ti sei reso ragione di uno, che ne sopravviene un altro più meraviglioso. [...] Pare giunta l’ora in cui le dottrine democratiche saranno al governo del genere umano.”

¹⁰⁹ Axel Körner “The European Dimension in the Ideas of 1848 and the Nationalization of Its Memories”, in Körner *European Revolution?*, pp. 3-28, 12

¹¹⁰ Körner, “European Dimension”; Simonetta Soldani, “From Divided Memory to Silence: The 1848 Celebrations in Italy” in Körner, *European Revolution?*, pp. 143-163; Koselleck, “How European”

and sympathy between revolutionary fronts presented characterizations and tentative goals that radically differed from case to case. In this sense, every call for fraternity was unique, as it referred to a supposed shared history, goals, or enemies between two nationalities. For example, when comparing the proclamations of commonality of interests and friendship that the Milanese government sent to the Germans and the Hungarians, one could immediately detect significant differences that go beyond the simple rhetoric form. The proclamation to the Hungarians stressed more the commonality of religious faith between the two countries and envisioned a future Hungary as an impenetrable stronghold against the Muslim “hordes”.¹¹¹ The address to the Germans instead focused more on Austria being a supposedly shared enemy and was characterized by a strongly secular tone.¹¹² Moreover, while in the German proclamation a project of concrete collaboration was more or less formulated, the Hungarian one could be seen as a mere harangue. For this reason, despite acknowledging the presence of a rather homogenous referral to a shared history in these calls for fraternity, each bilateral relation should be considered as unique and largely dependent on pre-existing geopolitical and social relations. As a consequence, it would be more appropriate to see the element of fraternity in the revolutions of 1848-49 not as a unified and homogenous one, but rather as a galaxy of differently shaped relations of fraternity, each one with its own characteristics and features, as well as with its goals and strategies.

In this sense, the concept of shared fate between Italy and Germany takes the shape of one of these “calls for fraternity”. As shown in the following paragraphs, the idea of shared fate between Italy and Germany occupied a prominent position in this galaxy of expressions of mutual sympathy between national revolutions in 1848. Sources clearly indicate that in the first two months of the revolutions the idea of a commonality of interests and fate between Italy and Germany stole the spotlight in Italian revolutionary discourse. This created a climate of hope in Italian revolutionaries with regard to the realization of an Italo-German entente. Such hopes were also fueled by the great popularity that Mazzini and his ideas about transnational collaboration of nationalities enjoyed in the Italian national movement. Many revolutionaries were in fact openly Mazzinian, especially among republicans and democrats. Moreover, the memory of the experiment of Young Europe – even if a failed one – still resonated in the minds of revolutionaries as a concrete example of collaboration between nationalities, as Sarti has argued.¹¹³

It should be noted however that the idea of shared fate with Germany did not completely monopolize the attention of Italian discourse about the opportunity of transnational collaboration. This was due to its coexistence with many other calls for fraternity to other nationalities, which

¹¹¹ “Parte non ufficiale, Milano, 1 Maggio”, *Il 22 Marzo: primo giorno dell’indipendenza lombarda* (Milan), 1 May 1848

¹¹² “Il governo provvisorio alla nazione germanica”, *Il 22 Marzo* (Milan), 7 April 1848, Milano

¹¹³ Sarti “Mazzini and Young Europe”, 297

prevented it from becoming a self-sufficient and exclusivist political goal. In other words, Italian revolutionaries, while considering the collaboration with German revolutionaries as highly important, were also interested in fostering cooperation with revolutionary fronts from other countries. However, in this galaxy of attempted relations of cooperation and calls for fraternity, the Italo-German one quickly became an undisputed protagonist. Built upon a supposed idea of commonality of geopolitical interests – at least in the eyes of the Italians – and enforced by striking historicist and temporal coincidences, this belief played no small role in the relation of the two revolutionary fronts in 1848.

Great Expectations

As mentioned before, it was not only the number of the revolutions in the European scenario, but also their striking synchronicity the main trigger behind the revolutionary euphoria of March 1848. This was also the case in Italy, the vast majority of revolutionaries seeing in this synchronicity a striking proof that Destiny was on their side. Among the many national scenarios, Italians noticed remarkable temporal and substantial coincidences between events in Italy and Germany. *Il 22 Marzo*, the official gazette of the Milanese revolutionary government on 31 March stated:

It is striking to see that the revolution in Berlin begun the same day as the one in Milan, was carried out in the same way, and proceeded with the same features. In both cities there was great heroism among the people, especially in the educated youth, great moderation, a great sense of unity among the citizens, as well as blind obstinacy and savagery in the garrisons and powerless and obscure hypocrisy in the governments [...] Berlin, just as Milan, used to look like an immense barracks and used to be the city of bureaucracy, of order, of egotism, accustomed to a long period of despotism: almost conditioned by that, it used to be despised by the fiery inhabitants of the other cities of Prussia and by the ones of Rhineland. But all of a sudden, it rises strong as a lion, eclipsing the examples of Palermo and Paris. The behavior of the King of Prussia is similar to the one of the viceroy of Milan, similar to the one of any king; the behavior of his militias, of his ministers, is similar to the one of each absolute king's militias and ministers.¹¹⁴

Riots in Milan and Berlin had indeed both begun on 18 March, reaching their conclusion between 21 and 22 March. Such a coincidence was interpreted as a symbolic one, Berlin and Milan being considered by *Il 22 Marzo* as guiding examples for the reawakening of their respective

¹¹⁴ “Notizie dell'estero: rivoluzione di Berlino del 18 marzo”, *Il 22 Marzo* (Milan) 31 March 1848: “È mirabile a vedere la rivoluzione di Berlino scoppiare nel giorno stesso che quella di Milano, spiegarsi nell'egual modo e procedere col carattere medesimo. In ambe le città grande eroismo nel popolo, specialmente nella gioventù intelligente, grande moderazione, grande unione ne' cittadini, e cieca ostinazione e barbarie nelle milizie, ed impotente e cupa ipocrisia nel governo. [...] Berlino come Milano sembrava una grande caserma, era la città della burocrazia, dell'ordine, dell'egoismo, assuefatto ad un lungo despotismo, e quasi materializzata da quello veniva disprezzata dagli ardenti abitanti delle città renano, e dell'altre della Prussia. E ad un tratto ella sorge feroce come un leone, o supera gli esempj di Palermo e di Parigi. La condona del re di Prussia è simile a quella del viceré di Milano, simile a quella di quasi tutti i re; quella delle sue milizie, de' suoi ministri è simile a quella delle milizie e de' ministri di tutti i principi assoluti.”

nationalities.¹¹⁵ In this sense, to a generation that saw in the semiotics of the “signs” of history the only mean through which to understand the will of the *Weltgeist*, such a temporal coincidence further enforced the belief of revolutions in Germany and Italy being on “the right side of history”. Moreover, since many other cities in Germany and Italy had revolted alongside Milan and Berlin in March, it was easy for Italian revolutionaries to see this synchronicity as between two entire *nations* and not only between two cities.

This abundance of possible “examples of synchronicity” in 1848 between the two nations was in this sense fully exploited by the Italian press: in an editorial published two weeks later, the same *Il 22 Marzo* recognized German southern states, which had also revolted in mid-March, as the guiding example for the Germans.¹¹⁶ Even Vienna, which had risen against its rulers in March, was used as an example of synchronicity. In this case, the added symbolic value of the capital of Austria itself revolting against its rulers further boosted the optimism of the Italians towards the commonality of interests between German and Italian revolutionaries. Such an unexpected political upheaval was regarded as the main sign of the victory of “freedom, a word that is no more an object of mockery in the resurrected Germany.”¹¹⁷ Such an inclusion of Austria as an integral part of Germany should not surprise the reader: Italian revolutionaries advocated for a *Großdeutschland* – at least in 1848, as they believed that, following the principle of nationality, German-speaking lands of the Habsburg Empire would join their Germanic brothers in a unified state.¹¹⁸

The synchronicity of the two uprisings was not the only coincidence that Italian revolutionaries found between the Italian and German revolutions. Through the lens of historicism, they built teleological bridges between the two revolutions: more specifically, both nationalities were perceived as “waking up” and “resurrecting” from a long slumber.¹¹⁹ This belief, which largely referred to their stateless condition, implied the existence of a “national essence” that had been silenced for centuries by external agents: namely, foreign powers interested in taking full advantage of the fragmented nature of Italy and Germany.¹²⁰ This idea was in this sense so much ingrained in the collective vocabulary of Italian revolutionaries that the name *Risorgimento* itself, used to describe the process of Italian unification, literally means “reawakening, resurrection”.¹²¹ In the hands of an *intelligentsia* deeply infused with historicism, this “historical coincidence” proved a multi-purpose tool to foster and legitimize desired political action. In this sense, the extreme versatility of

¹¹⁵ “Notizie dell’estero: rivoluzione di Berlino del 18 marzo”, 31 March 1848

¹¹⁶ “Politica estera. Germania”, *Il 22 Marzo* (Milan), 29 March 1848

¹¹⁷ “Torino, 16 Marzo”, *La Concordia: giornale politico, economico e letterario* (Turin), 17 March 1848

¹¹⁸ “Politica estera. Germania”, *Il 22 Marzo* (Milan), 29 March 1848

¹¹⁹ “Torino, 16 Marzo”, 17 March 1848; Anderson, *Comunità Immaginate*, 181

¹²⁰ “Movimento Annuale dell’Europa Civile”, *La Concordia* (Turin), 16 March 1848,

¹²¹ “Risorgimento” *Enciclopedia Italiana*, available at: <http://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/risorgimento/>

teleological re-writings of history, as Trüper has argued, was here used to the fullest.¹²² On the other hand, such a referral to an “abstract” shared value showed the difficulty of using actual historical events between the German and the Italian world as rhetoric tools to justify the existence of an “innate friendship” between the two nationalities. The relation between the two power centers had in fact seen more episodes of conflicts than collaboration in past centuries: the innumerable wars between the Germanic tribes and the Roman Empire; the conquest of the Kingdom of Italy by Otto I of Saxony in 961; the investiture controversy of 1076-1122; the endless wars between Friedrich I Barbarossa and the Italian communes between 1154 and 1183; the sack of Rome by the lansquenets of Charles V in 1527. These were only some of the examples of the impossibility of attempting to teleologically reframe historical events between the Italian and German scenarios as evidence of the innateness of Italo-German friendship. Instead, all these events were widely used as historical evidence of the always present hostility between the Austrian government and Italy.¹²³

This brings us in this sense to the third – and perhaps most relevant, in the eyes of Italians – contact point between Germany and Italy: the Habsburg Empire as a shared enemy. On paper, Italians did not regard the Austrian *people* as the enemy – even though this distinction was often, if not always, forgotten in real life: the true enemy was instead to be found in the reactionary elite of the Empire, embodied in the figure of the chancellor Klemens von Metternich (1773-1859), the undisputed protagonist of Austrian politics since 1814. The governing class of the Empire was in fact depicted as a class of parasites, which had realized that their only mean of survival was in keeping “national essences”, and in particular, the Italian and German ones, at bay.¹²⁴ Germans had come close in reawakening from this induced slumber in 1813, with the revolts against French rule, showing a clear will towards self-determination. However, reactionary intellectuals, along with the “great treason” of the European powers at the Congress of Vienna, had managed to put the German national essence back to sleep. Such a perspective was adopted by the newspaper *La Concordia*, from Turin, which on 17 March stated:

Even before that present events came to shatter political predictions of old diplomats, Germany had made the voice of its poets, of its people, heard [...] The poets of young Germany played the patriotic strings of the lyre of freedom [...] But the outdated athletes of the intellect, the rigid thinkers did not want to risk anything; [...] Therefore, the national issue took the shape of rhymes in young people, of discussions of abstract systems in old people.¹²⁵

¹²² Trüper, Chakrabarty, Subrahmanyam, *Historical Teleologies*, 12

¹²³ “Politica estera. Germania”, *Il 22 Marzo* (Milan), 29 March 1848

¹²⁴ “Il Governo provvisorio alla Nazione germanica”, *Il 22 Marzo* (Milan), 7 April 1848

¹²⁵ “Torino, 16 Marzo”, 17 March 1848: “Prima ancora che i casi presenti venissero a sbalordire le previsioni politiche de' vecchi diplomatici, la Germania aveva fatto udire la voce, de' suoi poeti, quella del popolo [...] I poeti della 'giovano Germania intanto percolevano le patriottiche corde della libera lira [...] Ma gli antichi atleti dell'intelletto, i gravi pensatori nulla non volevano arrischiare; [...] Dimodoché nei giovani la questione si risolveva in versi, ne' vecchi in disamina di sistemi”

Austria, however, only succeeded in postponing something that the Italians thought inevitable: even if momentarily narcotized, the explosive potential of the German will for self-determination was still there, ready to detonate at the first spark.¹²⁶ Once this happened, there would not have been any room for survival for the Habsburg Empire.¹²⁷ As mentioned before, Italians believed that Austrian Germans would secede from the Empire and joined their German fellows in a *Großdeutschland* defined by linguistic boundaries: this would have also caused other nationalities of the Empire to secede in distinct national states. In this sense, Italians, as mentioned before, did not believe in the existence of an “Austrian national identity”, considering it just an expedient of Austrian elites to induce fake parochialism and regional jealousies, thus keeping Austrian Germans separated from other Germans.

In this sense, Italians considered Germany as a “second Italy”, a country that possessed a glorious history and a legitimate and distinguishable national essence, divided into regional states due to the deception of Austrian elites. Overthrowing the elite in Vienna was therefore considered by Italians as a compulsory step towards the unification of both countries, as *Il 22 Marzo* stated, on 29 March: “Vienna was the base and the fuel of every plot aiming at keeping not only Italy, but also Germany, divided and dejected”.¹²⁸ For this reason, Vienna carried a symbolic meaning, as the living embodiment of everything that Italian revolutionaries were fighting against. Consequently, when Vienna itself revolted and Metternich resigned, Italians found in this a confirmation of their theories and their hopes towards Germany. *L’Alba* stated on 15 March that “Germany is on the verge of a portentous revolution.”¹²⁹ Driven by such unwavering belief in the commonality of interests between them and the Germans, Italian revolutionaries considered the reaching of an entente with Germany as a pure matter of time. Particularly telling is an article from *Il 22 Marzo* of 3 April, which spoke of the German and Italian revolutions as official allies, even if no formal agreement between the two fronts existed yet.¹³⁰ After just a fortnight from the outset of the revolution, Italian revolutionaries attempted to formalize such an entente with the Germans.

The Milanese Proclamation of Friendship

The best example of the presence of such a vivid and systematic hope towards Germany can be found in the proclamation *Il Governo provvisorio alla nazione germanica* sent by the revolutionary

¹²⁶ “Torino, 16 Marzo”, 17 March 1848

¹²⁷ Namier, *Revolution of the Intellectuals*, 24

¹²⁸ Torino, 16 Marzo”, 17 March 1848: “Vienna era l’appoggio e il conforto d’ogni intrigo per tenere avvilita e divisa non solo l’Italia ma anche la Germania”

¹²⁹ “Firenze, 14 Marzo”, *L’Alba* (Florence), 15 March 1848

¹³⁰ “Parte non ufficiale, Milano 3 Aprile”, *Il 22 Marzo* (Milan), 3 April 1848

government of Milan on 6 April 1848 to “the German nation”. This was the first of a long series of calls for fraternity that the Milanese government sent to other revolutionary fronts in Europe. This effort towards transnational collaboration should not surprise the reader, as the provisional government was, at least in its early days, influenced by Mazzinian ideology.¹³¹ In this series of calls for fraternity, however, the one to the Germans stands out. The striking feature of this act does not reside solely in its content, but also in its early-onset timing: not even three weeks had in fact passed from the official proclamation of the Milanese provisional government. This clearly reveals a precise political will from the Milanese to prioritize an entente with the German revolutionary movement over the ones of other countries. Moreover, it highlights unwavering confidence about the Germans gladly welcoming such a call for fraternity. As we will see in this paragraph, reality proved to be quite the opposite.

The proclamation built upon the three *leitmotifs* we already explored in the previous paragraph: synchronicity of the two revolutions; an idea of history as teleologically and inevitably pointing towards the affirmation of nationalities; the idea of the Habsburg Empire as a shared enemy. This last feature directly pointed at the main - and quite openly stated – political goal that this message was trying to achieve: a joint effort from the two revolutions against Austria. The proclamation urged in fact the Germans to relinquish their ties with the Austrian government and to join their Italian brothers, with whom the Germans had in common the passion for arts and philosophy.¹³² The Germans needed to realize that the Austrian government, which they still perceived as a closer friend of theirs than the Italians, was in reality a devious one.

And the Austrian is an enemy of yours as much as is an enemy of ours. The Austrian (we state once again that we are talking about the Government and not the people) always disappointed and opposed the interests of the German homeland. Leading a jumble of people different in language, traditions, institutions [...] [the Austrian] always aimed at nothing else than encouraging fragmentation in every possible way.¹³³

Such a message was sent to the Committee of Fifty (*Fünfzigerausschuss*), the revolutionary governing body *ad interim*, which also contained among its ranks eight Austrian delegates and many other Austrophiles. It was therefore highly unlikely that a proclamation infused with such a straightforward hostility towards Austria would receive a favorable reception in the Committee. It is not clear whether

¹³¹ “Parte non ufficiale, Milano 9 Aprile”, *Il 22 Marzo* (Milan), 9 April 1848

¹³² “Il Governo provvisorio alla Nazione germanica”, 7 April 1848

¹³³ “Il Governo provvisorio alla Nazione germanica”, 7 April 1848, “E l’Austriaco non è più nostro nemico che vostro. L’Austriaco (diciamo ancora il governo e non il popolo ha sempre disdetti e contrariati gli interessi della Patria Alemanna. Posto alla testa di una accozzaglia di popoli diversi di lingua, di costumi, di istituzioni, [...] non mirò mai ad altro che a seminare la divisione per tutto.”

the Milanese failed to realize such a backdrop or deliberately chose to ignore it. When looking at the wording of the proclamation, the latter option seems more likely: perhaps the Milanese thought that the anti-Austrian tone of the proclamation would serve as the so-long hoped “spark” to reawaken their national spirit and to expel Austria from the Confederation. Such a hypothesis finds confirmation in the closing of the proclamation, which urged the Germans to prioritize ties with Italy than the ones with Austria:

We honor you so much that we believe you capable of placing the sacred principles of a shared fate and right above ethnical and linguistic ties. Come now, reply to our appeal, o brave, o learned, o generous Germans: shake this hand we are offering you with brotherly and friendly spirit: quickly repudiate any apparent complicity with a government whose massacres in Galicia and Lombardy erased it from the list of civilized and Christian governments. [...] Hooray to the German Nation!¹³⁴

While waiting for a reply from the Committee of Fifty, the Italian press kept high the enthusiasm around the commonality of fashion between the Italian and German revolutions. Such enthusiasm was also reinforced by the belief that the Habsburg Empire could not have sent troops against the Italians as long as the turmoil in Germany and Austria continued.¹³⁵ *L'Alba*, a democratic newspaper from Florence, euphorically roared on 14 April:

The current European turmoil has hoisted the three most important monarchs of Germany from their thrones: the Austrian Emperor, the King of Prussia, the King of Bavaria. [...] Italy has never seen a better moment than the current one to break its chains and to establish its holy independence on unshakable ground.¹³⁶

Such an optimistic climate was completely shattered by the reply – or better, the non-reply – from the Committee of Fifty. On 27 April, *Il 22 Marzo* reported with a shocked tone the unexpectedly cold reception that the proclamation had received in the Committee eight days earlier.¹³⁷ The Committee, after a rather heated debate, had in fact decided to leave the proclamation of friendship unanswered. The bet of the anti-Austrian tone did not pay off: the Committee regarded in fact inappropriate such an open attack against a member of the Confederation, especially if contained in a proclamation of

¹³⁴ “Il Governo provvisorio alla Nazione germanica”, 7 April 1848, “Noi vi onoriamo tanto che vi crediamo capaci d’anteporre ai legami di schiatta e di lingua i sacri titoli della sventura e del diritto. Deh! Rispondete al nostro appello, o prodi, o generosi, o dotti Alemanni! Stringete quella mano che noi vi porgiamo con animo fraterno ed amico: affrettatevi a disconfessare ogni apparenza di complicità con un governo che le stragi di Galizia e di Lombardia hanno cancellato dal novero dei Governi civili e cristiani. [...] Viva la Nazione Germanica!”

¹³⁵ “Firenze, 13 Aprile”, *L'Alba* (Florence), 14 April 1848

¹³⁶ “Firenze, 13 Aprile”, 14 April 1848, “l’attuale movimento europeo ha sbalzati improvvisamente i tre maggiori monarchi d’Allemagna: l’Imperatore d’Austria, il re di Prussia e il re di Baviera. [...] L’Italia non vide mai momento più bello di questo per spezzare le sue catene, e stabilire sopra basi incrollabili la sua sacra indipendenza”

¹³⁷ “Notizie dell’Estero. Germania”, *Il 22 Marzo* (Milan), 27 April 1848, Milan

friendship. Quite unsurprisingly, delegates from Habsburg regions such as Franz Schuselka (1811-1886) or Kajetan von Bissingen-Nippenburg (1803-1890) had been the loudest in protesting against such an anti-Austrian message.¹³⁸ This was no surprise to the Milanese: a protest coming from those same Austrian elites that the proclamation attacked was foreseeable. The reason behind the disappointment was another one:

What we did not expect was that a Committee with a non-Austrian majority and where everybody professed the great principles of justice and civilization let itself be drawn into a resolve worse than the one of Metternich if he still was in power. We were not expecting this.¹³⁹

No particular sign of support had in fact been shown by non-Austrian delegates towards the Italian cause. On the contrary, the support of Austrian interests in Italy had been almost adamant in the Committee. No better example can be found than in the words pronounced in the Committee by Karl von Stedtmann (1804-1882), delegate from Koblenz: “You revolted against Austria, but watch out, all of us stand behind Austria”.¹⁴⁰ Other deputies, such as Adolph Wiesner (1807-1867) quickly echoed the outrage against the address of the Lombards.¹⁴¹

The main reason behind such a hostile reception from non-Austrian delegates was to be found in another aspect of the proclamation: its synchronic receipt to the news of Italian irregulars encroaching in the province of South Tyrol. Between 14 and 20 April in fact, an expedition of Italian volunteers had been sent to urge the Italian-speaking population of South Tyrol to revolt against the Austrians.¹⁴² The Committee was outraged by this apparent duplicity of the Italians, which so openly violated what was perceived as German territory. Wiesner roared with outrage:

While the Lombards were stunning us with their incense clouds, their bellicose gangs invaded Tyrol. That Milanese proclamation is not worthy of a reply: on the contrary, we should act out our outrage for such duplicity, for such lousy politics. We praise the Tyrolese who will defend the German soil and we tell them: you are with us for the honor, for the freedom of Germany.¹⁴³

¹³⁸ “Notizie dell’Estero. Germania”, 27 April 1848

¹³⁹ “I Tedeschi e gli Italiani”, *Il 22 Marzo* (Milan), 30 April 1848: “Che però un’adunanza dove il più gran numero non era Austriaco e dove tutti professavano i grandi principii della giustizia e dell’incivilimento, siasi lasciata trascinare a una determinazione che peggiore del Metternich, se siedesse al potere, non si potea attendere, questo è ciò che non possiamo attendere.”

¹⁴⁰ “Notizie dell’Estero. Germania”, 27 April 1848: “Vi siete sollevati contro l’Austria, ma badate bene, dietro l’Austria stiamo noi tutti»

¹⁴¹ “Notizie dell’Estero. Germania”, 27 April 1848

¹⁴² “Spedizione dei nostri volontari nel Tirolo”, *Il 22 Marzo* (Milan), 4 May 1848

¹⁴³ “Frankforte, 18 Aprile- Dieta Germanica”, *L’Alba* (Florence), 2 May 1848: “Mentre i Lombardi ci avviluppavano colle loro nubi d’incenso, le loro bande guerresche invasero il Tirolo. Quell’indirizzo dei Milanesi non è degno di alcuna risposta: dobbiamo anzi esternare la nostra indegnazione [sic!], per una simile doppiezza, per sì brutta politica. Ma ai Tirolesi che difendono il terreno della Germania, innalziamo lodi e diciam loro: voi siete con noi per l’onore, per la libertà della Germania.”

The Great Illusion

To state that such a cold reception of what was perceived as a message of friendship caused disappointment in Italy is an understatement. For the entire month of May, disbelief, anger, and outrage populated the articles and editorials of the Italian press about Germany. Blinded by their initial optimism, Italians could not understand how their sister revolution in Germany could have chosen to defend the dynastic interest of a monarchy – even worse, the Habsburg one – over the ones of a fellow revolutionary cause. In their eyes, there was only one possible explanation: the Committee was composed of *sicofanti*, sycophants, who had sold themselves to the counter-revolution, and therefore did not represent Germany's views on Italy.¹⁴⁴ It was therefore expected that the rest of Germany would protest against the insolence of “a bunch of unworthy representatives”.¹⁴⁵

We hope that Germany, which has recently shown a clear will of disavowing Italian rights for an undefined accusation of trespassing, will become worthy of itself again, refusing to contaminate itself with a filthy mentality that political atheism, defeated but not yet destroyed, is attempting to inculcate in them through deception and shock.¹⁴⁶

Numerous appeals were sent from Italy to urge the Germans to distance themselves from the lousy politicians of the Committee. On 16 May, a message was sent from “the people of Lombardy and Venetia” to “the people of Austria”, in response to a previous Austrian address. In that message, Austrian revolutionaries urged the Milanese not to secede from the Empire, and to settle for a status of autonomy, such as the one granted to the Hungarians. Moreover, the Austrians stated, the Milanese descended from the Lombards, a Germanic tribe: this made them part of the great Germanic family too.¹⁴⁷ The Italian reply, despite paying attention to avoid a tone of open hostility, urged the Austrians to repudiate such a mentality, as it betrayed the main driving principle of the European revolution: the principle of nationality.

You, whose calls for nationality resonate thunderous on the Rhine, would adopt the opposite doctrine on the banks of the Po? Are there maybe two different types of justice, one of them serving the interests of political convenience? If the Russian, or the more civilized French, had been dominating for years a part of your great German homeland, tell me, could you accept from him, without any ambition, such conditions for freedom? If a foreign ruler freed one of your hands from captivity, would you not use

¹⁴⁴ “Frankforte, 18 Aprile- Dieta Germanica”, 2 May 1848

¹⁴⁵ “Dieta Germanica di Francoforte”, *L'Italia* (Pisa), 2 May 1848

¹⁴⁶ “Parte non ufficiale, Milano, 15 Maggio”, *Il 22 Marzo* (Milan), 15 May 1848: “Speriamo che la Germania, la quale di questi giorni accenna di sconoscere anche i diritti dell'Italia, per non so quale ubia di violato territorio, tornerà degna di sé stessa, disdegnosa di contaminarsi in una sozzura che l'ateismo politico, vinto ma non distrutto, cerca di imporle col raggio e colla sorpresa.”

¹⁴⁷ “Il popolo austriaco ai lombardi e ai veneti”, *Il 22 Marzo* (Milan), 16 May 1848

that hand to free the other one? Consequently, is the great Italian nation less entitled to conquer independence than the great German nation? Do you boast a more glorious history than ours? Does the spirit of civilization owe you more than what it owes us? Feel free to depict the Lombards as part of the Germanic breed, to see the Venetians as unconnected to the great Italian family. Those are nothing but delusions.¹⁴⁸

One week later, on 24 May, the association of Milanese students sent a spontaneous appeal to their Viennese counterparts.¹⁴⁹ Here, Milanese students urged Austrian students not to abandon the path of brotherhood between nationalities in favor of immoral and greedy dynastic interests.¹⁵⁰ Italians and Austrians had revolted against the same enemy: the governing elite of the Habsburg Empire, supreme oppressor of nationalities. To avoid pursuing the same tyrannical interests of the system they had sworn to fight, and thus starting a fratricidal war against their fellow Italian revolutionaries, Viennese revolutionaries had to respect the Milanese will of independence.¹⁵¹

The complex blend of emotions contained in these appeals provides us with a powerful reflection on the confusion that the cold reception of the address of friendship at Frankfurt had created in Italian audiences. Italian revolutionaries realized abruptly that the hopes they had been projecting on Germany were mostly based on nothing, as they severely underestimated the complex dynamics and relations at play in the German confederation. The Germans were indeed aiming at national unification but did not consider the Austrian Empire in the same villainous terms as the Italians did. For them, as Wandruszka pointed out, the Habsburg Empire did not represent a foreigner, but an established and ancient German dynasty.¹⁵² As such, it was easier for German revolutionaries to recognize themselves closer to Austrian interests than to Italian ones, even if this implied defending the policies of the Habsburgs. In other words, linguistic and ethnic ties tended to be seen by German revolutionaries in 1848 as more legitimate than the one of the supposed Italo-German “shared fate”.

In this sense, this also highlights the ambivalence of the revolution of 1848 as *both* European and national.¹⁵³ In theory, in fact, every revolution conceived itself as part of a widespread movement that was, above all, European. In practice, without an overarching institution coordinating the various

¹⁴⁸ “Risposta dei lombardo-veneti al popolo austriaco”, *Il 22 Marzo* (Milan), 16 May 1848: Voi, che fate sonar alte le voci di nazionalità sul Reno, vorreste propagare una opposta dottrina sulle rive del Po? Vi sarebbero forse due giustizie, una delle quali al servizio della convenienza? Se il russo, od anco il più civile popolo francese, dominasse da anni una parte della vostra gran patria alemanna, ditemi, potreste accettare da lui, senza una seconda mira, condizioni di libertà? Se il dominatore straniero vi liberasse dalle catene una mano non ve ne servireste tosto per sciogliere anche l'altra? E la gran patria italiana ha forse minori diritti di conquistare l'indipendenza che non la grande nazione alemanna? Vantate voi forse una storia più gloriosa della nostra? La ragione della civiltà ha forse con voi maggior debito che non abbia con noi? Voi vi provate pure a chiamare i Lombardi di lignaggio germanico, a fare anche dei Veneti un popolo distinto dalla grande famiglia italiana, Questi sono delirj.

¹⁴⁹ It is unclear whether these associations included only university students or also younger ones from gimnasia.

¹⁵⁰ “Gli studenti lombardi agli studenti di Vienna”, *Il 22 Marzo* (Milan), 24 May 1848

¹⁵¹ “Gli studenti lombardi agli studenti di Vienna”, 24 May 1848

¹⁵² Wandruszka, “Liberalismo e Nazionalismo”, 56

¹⁵³ Körner, “European Dimension”, 5

revolutions, revolutionary activity remained confined to pre-existing national boundaries, as Koselleck argued.¹⁵⁴ This also meant that revolutionary interests, despite a rather utopian aspiration towards universalist goals, often followed national political and economic goals. For the success of the “European” revolution this meant absolute disaster, as Koselleck pointed out: “As a result, the revolutionaries’ political intentions came to exclude each other, and the success of the revolution in one part of Europe blocked and annulled its success elsewhere. Since none of the postulated national boundaries were generally acceptable, the revolutionaries fought among themselves.”¹⁵⁵

At the end of May, when it appeared evident that no sign of protest would come from the rest of Germany, Italian hopes for an entente with the Germans received the definitive coup de grace. The *boria nazionale*, national arrogance, of the Germans had prevented them from realizing the commonality of interests between them and the Italian cause, *Il 22 Marzo* argued on 26 May.¹⁵⁶ Several attacks were directed against the double morals of the Germans: many of them suggested that the Germans, after so many centuries, still retained the *istinto predatore*, predatory instinct of their barbarian ancestors.¹⁵⁷ Others heavily criticized the expansionist philosophy of the Germans, which was completely incompatible with the spirit of the revolution and risked undermining it.¹⁵⁸ Such open hostility towards the Germans was however short-lived. In fact, it ceased completely by the end of June, leaving room to a certain degree of political indifference tinged with disillusionment and passive-aggressiveness. News on the revolution in Germany continued being reported, but without the enthusiastic climate of hope that had populated columns in March and April. Referrals to a shared fate between the two national causes and subsequent calls for collaboration became less common in editorials and articles: Germany as a whole ceased being in the spotlight in favor of more attention being spent on the ongoing war between Piedmont and Austria for the control of Lombardy and Venetia. The election of the Archduke Johann of Austria (1782-1859) as *Reichsverweser* by the Frankfurt Parliament did not help either.¹⁵⁹ Only Mazzinians and republicans continued believing in the possibility of transnational collaboration between the two revolutions. Instead, revolutionary governments, as well as liberal and democratic intellectuals in Italy had lost hope in that direction, seeing a more valuable and more concrete ally in the King of Piedmont, Charles Albert of Savoy (1789-1849). In this sense, any possibility of a political initiative from the Italians towards the Germans on the same line of the proclamation of friendship of April was definitively dead, as *Il 22 Marzo* stated in July:

¹⁵⁴ Koselleck, “How European”, 212

¹⁵⁵ Koselleck, 212

¹⁵⁶ “Parte non ufficiale, Milano 26 Maggio”, *Il 22 Marzo* (Milan), 26 May 1848

¹⁵⁷ “Parte non ufficiale, Milano 1 Maggio”, *Il 22 Marzo* (Milan), 1 May 1848

¹⁵⁸ “Notizie dell’Estero. Germania”, *Il 22 Marzo* (Milan), 12 June 1848

¹⁵⁹ “Parte non ufficiale, Milano 6 Luglio”, *Il 22 Marzo* (Milan), 6 July 1848

In the current state of events, we would never appeal to that Assembly in Frankfurt, which, corrupted by dynastic interests, has been until now as splendid in its principles as unjust and selfish in its deliberations.¹⁶⁰

The revolution itself did not have very long to live. The defeat at the battle of Custoza on 27 July forced the Piedmontese army to withdraw from Lombardy and to seek peace with the Austrians, handing Lombardy back to the Austrians. The fall of Milan constituted in this sense a fatal blow for the revolutionary struggle in Italy. Revolutionary activities resumed in 1849, with the short-lived Roman Republic of Mazzini and Garibaldi, resulting however in failure. The situation in Germany also looked dire: after the European revolution lost its momentum, the Frankfurt Assembly quickly became a powerless political actor and was dissolved in May 1849. Deprived of its main fuel, the optimistic climate of the spring of 1848, also the idea of shared fate between Italy and Germany lost its place in editorials and communiques, disappearing altogether with the death of the revolution. However, as shown in the next chapter, this did not coincide with the definitive death of the concept itself. Reframed according to the new shape of the national struggle, the concept of shared fate re-emerged in the 1860s, being now focused on the two new protagonists of the two processes of unification: Piedmont and Prussia.

Conclusion

In 1848 one can observe the very first concretization of the idea of shared fate in the vocabulary of Italian public discourse. As part of the European revolution of 1848, riots in Italian and German cities begun in the same month and seemed to point, in Italian's eyes, towards the same objective: the achievement of national unification. Influenced by a mentality that saw in this the main *telos* of history, Italian revolutionaries found in the apparent similarity between the two revolutions a confirmation of their theories and hopes: history was, in other words, giving them a sign. Three main elements of similarity were individuated between the two national causes: the synchronicity of the two revolutions, both commenced in March; a referral to a shared "reawakening" of the two national essences and of their subsequent will of self-determination from a slumber that had condemned them in previous centuries to stand divided and weak against internal and external enemies; a shared enemy individuated in the Habsburg Empire, the main responsible for this slumber in recent centuries.

¹⁶⁰ "Parte non ufficiale, Milano 10 Luglio", *Il 22 Marzo* (Milan), 10 July 1848: "Poichè ora mai ci appelleremmo invano a quell'Assemblea di Francoforte, che, traviata dalle mene di dinastia fu fin qui quanto splendida ne' suoi principi, altrettanto ingiusta ed interessata nelle sue deliberazioni."

Incited by these apparent similarities, Italians let themselves to a light-hearted optimism, which caused them to consider the reaching of an official entente between the two national causes as imminent.

Concrete initiative was taken in this direction by the revolutionary government of Milan, which at the beginning of April sent an official proclamation of friendship to the Germans to the Committee of Fifty in Frankfurt. The main political goal of such a message, which was characterized by a pronounced and straight-forward anti-Austrian tone, was to persuade the Germans to support the Italians in their fight for liberation against the Austrians. However, the Committee, which included also eight Austrian delegates, found inappropriate the prospect of answering to a proclamation that insulted one of the most important and revered states of the German Confederation. Paired with the news of the encroachment of Italian irregulars in South Tyrol, the proclamation was seen even by non-Austrian delegates more as an example of duplicity than of good-will from the Italians. Consequently, the proclamation was rejected and no answer was sent to the Milanese from Frankfurt. In this sense, the cold reception of the proclamation should not be attributed to a lack of will from the Germans towards transnational collaboration or to a rooted anti-Italian sentiment – even though these could have been present in Austrian delegates. Instead, the failure of the Milanese address was more due to the existence in Germany of strong cultural, political, and identity ties with Austrian interests that the vague argument of the existence of an inevitable and innate Italo-German commonality of fate was not able to dismantle. As a result, the historicist justification of the Italians failed to be recognized as legitimate by German delegates.

Italian revolutionaries reacted with shock and dismay to this unexpectedly cold reception of the proclamation. Blinded by an optimism based more on abstract mental constructions than on an actual and thorough understanding of the geopolitical and cultural features of the German scenario, Italians waited in vain for weeks for demonstrations of solidarity from the rest of Germany. At this point, disappointed by the apparent abandon from their fellow revolutionaries of the principle of nationality in favor of nationalist interests, Italians lost any hope towards a possible entente with the sister revolution. This situation lasted for the rest of the revolutionary events, until the definitive defeat in the summer of 1849. The idea of shared fate, however, did not die and was resumed and recrafted in the 1860s to suit the renewed struggle towards unification under the lead of Cavour's Piedmont.

Chapter IV: The Birth of Nations

After the disappointments of the “revolution of the people” in 1848, the *Risorgimento* found its new leader in the Kingdom of Piedmont.¹⁶¹ Thanks to a process of liberalization and to the adoption of a more aggressive and “European” foreign policy, Piedmont managed to establish itself as leader of the national struggle during the second half of the 1850s. This marked the beginning of a rapid process of national agglomeration, which resulted in March 1861 in the declaration of independence of the newly born Kingdom of Italy. In these same years, the idea of shared fate between Italy and Germany made its reappearance, both at the level of public discourse and in the highest echelons of Piedmontese and then Italian politics. It resurfaced under a new guise, modeled on the new idea of national unification propagated by Piedmont’s leadership. In this chapter I will conduct an exploration of the idea of shared fate in the 1860s, analyzing its new character, its diffusion, and its relation with the historical fabric of those years. Moreover, I will also highlight the causes behind its reappearance and then, behind its decline. In order to understand how the idea of shared fate resurfaced in this new “institutionalized” guise, it is first crucial to understand how Piedmont managed to gain the lead of the national movement.

Piedmont and the Risorgimento

Having left Piedmont in the previous chapter as a power humiliated twice by Austria, one might wonder how such a state managed to become the almost uncontested leader of the national movement in such a short period. This outcome was the result of a gradual process, which began immediately in the aftermath of the First War of Italian Independence in 1849. While King Charles Albert had lost his credibility after the two defeats of Custoza (1848) and Novara (1849), his abdication in favor of the young son Victor Emmanuel II (1820-1878) somehow prevented the military reputation of the Kingdom from collapsing altogether.¹⁶² Such a decision saved the reputation of the Savoy dynasty in the eyes of the national movement but left Victor Emmanuel alone to conduct peace negotiations with the Austrian General Josef Radetzky (1766-1858). The behavior of Victor Emmanuel during the Armistice of Vignale, concluded on 24 March 1849, not only helped reinforcing the still precarious reputation of the defeated Kingdom, but also earned him the respect of a large part of Italian liberals

¹⁶¹ During the entirety of this thesis I preferred to refer to the state ruled by the Savoy dynasty as “Kingdom of Piedmont”, instead of “Kingdom of Sardinia”. This choice was due to the uncontested political supremacy of Piedmontese elites in comparison with the Sardinian element, which was instead mostly a pure façade.

¹⁶² Derek Edward Beales and Eugenio F. Biagini, *The Risorgimento and the Unification of Italy*. (Harlow, United Kingdom: Longman, 2002), 103.

and the national movement. This was due to his claims of having defended the *Statuto Albertino* – the liberal constitution granted by his father to revolutionaries in the previous year – against the Austrians, who supposedly wanted him to repudiate it.¹⁶³ In reality, Radetzky had never asked for the abrogation of the *Statuto* in the armistice terms, aware as he was that such a request would have further destabilized the King in front of his people, thus creating the potential for further civil unrest in Piedmont.¹⁶⁴ Despite this, Victor Emmanuel was able to paint his “defense” of the *Statuto* as a sincere embracing of liberal and unitarian ideas and a heroic act of resistance against a foreign power.¹⁶⁵ This in its turn strengthened the image of Piedmont as the only reliable support that the national movement could count on against Austria and earned Victor Emmanuel the nickname of *re galantuomo*, gentleman king.¹⁶⁶

This process of polarization of the liberal and moderate fringe of the national movement around the leadership of Piedmont took some time. Such a process was closely linked and fostered by the profound institutional and cultural change that the Kingdom of Piedmont underwent in the 1850s. More specifically, liberals were being won over by the progressive change of the Savoy monarchy from “constitutional” to “parliamentary”, as Derek Beales and Eugenio Biagini have argued.¹⁶⁷ This process saw its main promoters and actors in the two prime ministers of that decade: Massimo d’Azeglio (1798-1866) and, more crucially, Camillo Benso di Cavour (1810-1861).

The son of one of the most prestigious families of the Kingdom, Cavour constituted an atypical figure as a Piedmontese politician. A fervent advocate of liberal ideas and infused with unitarian hopes since a very young age, Cavour devoted himself in the 1830s and early 1840s to a series of travels throughout Western and Central Europe, in which he got the chance to meet key figures of European liberalism such as Adolphe Thiers (1797-1877), Francois Guizot (1787-1874) and Prosper Merimeè (1803-1870). This experience would prove crucial for his conduct as Prime Minister, as it granted him a more “European” vision than the one typical of the Piedmontese ruling class. After his return in Turin, he founded in 1847 the pro-unitarian newspaper *Il Risorgimento* (1847-57), from which he praised the efforts of the national movement. Following a fast-paced political career, he entered the ranks of the Piedmontese parliament in 1848, of the government in 1850, and obtained his first mandate as Prime Minister in 1852.

During the ten years of Cavour’s ministry (1852-1861) – interrupted only by a brief period of absence between July 1859 and January 1860 – Piedmont increased its speed on the path towards

¹⁶³ Beales, Biagini, 103

¹⁶⁴ Beales, Biagini, 104

¹⁶⁵ Beales, Biagini, 104

¹⁶⁶ “Vittorio Emanuele II Re d’Italia” in Giovanni Sabbatucci and Vittorio Vidotto, *L’unificazione Italiana* (Roma, Italy: Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana fondata da Giovanni Treccani, 2011): available at

http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/vittorio-emanuele-ii-re-d-italia_%28L%27Unificazione%29/ (accessed 24/07/2020)

¹⁶⁷ Beales, Biagini, *The Risorgimento*, 105

becoming a liberal power. Building on D'Azeglio's legacy, Cavour carried through economic and social reforms aimed at secularizing and modernizing Piedmont: partial free trade was introduced; railways and infrastructure were improved; the army was reformed; the clergy was deprived of its privileges.¹⁶⁸ At the same time, Cavour flirted with the national movement, not hiding his projects of a gradual agglomeration of Italian territory under the Kingdom of Piedmont. In the peninsula, Cavour promoted the foundation of the *Società Nazionale Italiana* (SNI) in 1856-57, a political association aiming at promoting Piedmont's leadership in the national question. The SNI quickly grew in its numbers, taking advantage of the crisis of popularity that Mazzini and his republican solution to the Italian question were experiencing in those years.¹⁶⁹ At the same time, Cavour pursued an aggressive foreign policy, aiming at gaining the support of the European powers for the Italian cause against Austria. The catastrophic defeat in the war of 1848-49 had in fact clearly shown that no path was open for Piedmont but the one of disaster if the small kingdom endeavored to fight Austria alone: the Savoy monarchy needed powerful allies.¹⁷⁰ Cavour found such an ally in 1858 in the France of Napoleon III, who, eager for military glory and for an expansion of French influence in Northern Italy, agreed to support Piedmont against Austria.¹⁷¹

We can clearly see how Piedmont in the 1850s slowly endeavored on the way of what Benedict Anderson described as "official nationalism": the progressive embracing by monarchies of the national idea, its values, and goals as the new source of legitimacy.¹⁷² Such a turn is clearly visible in a letter that Cavour sent to Victor Emmanuel in 1858, in which the Piedmontese statesman referred to the principle of nationality as a fundamental belief of the Kingdom.¹⁷³ Clearly, such an embracing of the principle of nationality was somehow tempered in specific official occasions, especially with regard to foreign relations. This caution was dictated by the will to prevent giving the impression to countries still based on legitimism and the idea of divine investiture that Piedmont was on the path of radicalism.¹⁷⁴

The institutional transformation of the Kingdom and Cavour's aggressive foreign policy captivated the imagination and boosted expectations of a large part of the Italian national movement around the moral leadership of Piedmont. In this sense, Turin managed to win over liberals and moderates, proposing a model of compromise between tradition and innovation without hiding future

¹⁶⁸ Beales, Biagini, 110

¹⁶⁹ Francesco Leoni, *Storia Dei Partiti Politici Italiani* (Napoli, Italy: Guida ed., 1975), 102.

¹⁷⁰ Francesco Cataluccio. "Brassier De Saint-Simon e la politica italiana della Prussia dal 1855 al 1861", *Archivio Storico Italiano* 120, no. 3 (1962), 281-246, 301

¹⁷¹ Beales, Biagini, *The Risorgimento*, 119; Siebert, "Comunanza delle Sorti", 84

¹⁷² Anderson, *Comunità Immaginate*, 80-82

¹⁷³ Cavour to Victor Emmanuel II, Baden-Baden, 24 July 1858, quoted in Mack Smith D., *The Making of Italy 1796-1870*, (New York: Walker and Company, 1968), 238-247

¹⁷⁴ Mori, "L'Italia e il Processo", 23

aspirations of leading the national struggle.¹⁷⁵ While the idea itself of Piedmont as leader of the national struggle was already present in 1848, now, also thanks to the crisis of Mazzinianism, such a belief enjoyed far more widespread popularity. A proof of the popularity of this “monarchic solution” to the Italian question at the end of the 1850s can be found in the widespread use of the infamous VIVA V.E.R.D.I. graffiti in 1858-59: what looked like a simple sign of support to the Italian composer Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901), was in reality an acrostic for “Viva Vittorio Emanuele Re D’Italia” (long live Victor Emmanuel, King of Italy).¹⁷⁶ It is worth noting, however, that such a process of catalysis was not unanimous: a considerable part of the radical left and Mazzini were disgusted by this “monarchic” shift, which was seen as an act of treason to the idea of nationality.¹⁷⁷ At the same time, other key figures of Italian republicanism, such as Daniele Manin (1804-57), leader of the Venetian revolution in 1848 and former President of the Republic of St. Mark (1848-49), started to publicly endorse Piedmont as the new leader of the national struggle.

As the idea of the “monarchic initiative” gained momentum within the Italian national movement, hopes, fears, and projects around the idea of national unification changed accordingly. The “institutionalization” of the *Risorgimento* in an established and recognized political actor such as Piedmont shifted the attention on it as the main protagonist of a struggle that in 1848 was instead still mostly regarded as a spontaneously collective one.¹⁷⁸ If in 1848 it was mostly the people who had the responsibility to free themselves, now the role of leader was assigned to an existing state, Piedmont. As a result, the cosmopolitanism and romantic nationalist idealism of the revolutions of 1848 gave way to a narrower and “top-down” idea of state-building, led by an existing state with “legal” methods, such as treaties, negotiations, and wars. This caused also the “European dimension” of the *Risorgimento* to change. Since the national movement now largely looked at Piedmont as the leader of the national struggle, it also indirectly entrusted Cavour with being the representative of such a national cause abroad. In other words, I argue that the Mazzinian effort towards European collaboration “from below” between nationalities lived on “diplomatized” and conducted “top-down” in the traditional form of international relations. The project of a spontaneous European network of solidarity between nationalities “from below” survived only in the hopes of Mazzinians and the radical left. The rest of the national movement now looked at Piedmont’s foreign policy as the foreign

¹⁷⁵ Beales, Biagini, *The Risorgimento*, 99

¹⁷⁶ Michael Sawall, “Viva V. E. R. D. I.: Origine e Ricezione Di Un Simbolo Nazionale Nell’anno 1859,” in *Verdi 2001: Atti Del Convegno Internazionale, Parma, New York, New Haven, 24 Gennaio-1 Febbraio 2001 = Proceedings of the International Conference, Parma, New York, New Haven, 24 January-1 February 2001*, ed. Fabrizio Della Seta, Roberta Montemorra Marvin, and Marco Marica (Firenze, Italy: Leo S. Olschki, 2003), pp. 123-131.

¹⁷⁷ Despite their loss of popularity, Mazzinians remained active until the end of the *Risorgimento*, with events such as the failed expedition of Carlo Pisacane (1818-57) against the Borbons in 1857. Moreover, Garibaldi himself, despite gravitating in the orbit of Piedmont, remained a powerful symbol of Republicanism in Italy.

¹⁷⁸ *Le Relazioni Italo-Tedesche*, 91

policy of the *Risorgimento* itself. As we will see later, it is precisely within the framework of Cavour's foreign policy that the idea of shared fate re-emerged. In order to understand the framework and the reasons behind its reappearance, we should first take a look at the geopolitical situation in which Piedmont found itself at the onset and in the aftermath of the Second War of Italian Independence (1859).

Allied with France, Piedmont was looking at Germany as a geopolitical scenario that could have potentially decided the fate of the war before this even started. In light of Austria's influence within the German Confederation, Cavour feared an intervention of the Confederate army alongside the Austrians in Italy. Such an outcome, felt anything but unlikely by both Cavour and Napoleon, had to be avoided at all costs. Napoleon, in fact, would have never risked engaging the entire Confederation, as it would have likely meant fighting a war both in Italy and on the Rhine.¹⁷⁹ Cavour had realized in 1858 – also thanks to Napoleon's advice – that the only way to prevent such an undesirable outcome was in encouraging the rivalry between Prussia and Austria within the Confederation.¹⁸⁰ The main goal of this strategy was to ensure the neutrality of Prussia: this would have likely created a fracture within the Confederation, thus preventing the mobilization of the army against the Franco-Piedmontese coalition. Secretly, Cavour hoped that Prussia would take the chance to stab Austria in the back, igniting the process of German unification in the same way as Piedmont had done in Italy.¹⁸¹ At the same time, Cavour was aware that the latter prospect, attractive though it was, was highly unlikely for the time being.¹⁸² In this sense, Cavour confessed in 1858 to the Prussian envoy Karl Guido von Usedom (1805-1884): “I console myself in thinking that, on this occasion, I will give an example that probably, in some time, Prussia will be very happy to imitate”¹⁸³

For now, therefore, the efforts of Cavourian foreign policy were fully devoted to the goal of Prussian neutrality. In theory, the moment was favorable: Prussia had just experienced a change of government, shifting – in theory – towards the same liberalism professed by Cavour. A new moderate government led by Karl Anton Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen (1811-1885) had just replaced the conservative ministry of Otto Theodor von Manteuffel (1805-1882). Alexander von Schleinitz (1807-1885), known for his German patriotic views, had been appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs.¹⁸⁴ Despite these favorable premises, Berlin maintained a rather elusive behavior, both to Cavour's advances and to Austrian requests for help in Italy. Such hesitancy could be explained by the fact that Berlin saw the two possible outcomes of a war between the Franco-Piedmontese and Austria as

¹⁷⁹ Voci, *La Germania e Cavour*, 6

¹⁸⁰ Voci, 10; Cataluccio, “Brassier de Saint-Simon”, 296

¹⁸¹ Voci, *La Germania e Cavour*, 11-12; Cataluccio, “Brassier de Saint-Simon” 284

¹⁸² Cataluccio, 296

¹⁸³ Mori, “L'Italia e il Processo”, 23

¹⁸⁴ Voci, *La Germania e Cavour*, 18-19

equally threatening. An Austrian victory would have increased Austrian prestige in the Confederation and would have solidified the humiliating terms of the Olmütz agreements of 1850. Instead, a French victory would have put Italy under French influence, making it possible for Napoleon to invade Germany both from the Rhine and from the Alps.¹⁸⁵

In the end, Prussia opted for not intervening in the war, especially after a failed attempt of bargaining with Austria its intervention in the war in exchange for a radical revision of the Confederation's institutional structure.¹⁸⁶ Moreover, since Austria had declared war first, Prussia considered itself freed from the federal obligation of mutual defense in case of external attacks against a member of the confederation. However, after the rapid-fire successes of the Franco-Piedmontese armies in Lombardy – especially in the battle of Solferino – Berlin shifted towards a status of armed neutrality, trying to convince London and St. Petersburg to do likewise.¹⁸⁷ Feeling threatened by Prussian movements of troops on the Rhine region, as well as by the enormous losses suffered at Solferino, Napoleon decided to end the war prematurely and unilaterally, without consulting Cavour.¹⁸⁸ The peace of Zurich saw the annexation of Lombardy to the Kingdom of Piedmont, but crucially, not Venetia or the regions of Central Italy, core goals of the Franco-Piedmontese alliance.¹⁸⁹

Such a turnaround from Napoleon profoundly marked Cavourian foreign policy towards France between 1860 and 1861, as Voci has argued.¹⁹⁰ Dissatisfied with Napoleon's behavior, Cavour started looking for an alliance that “could represent if not an alternative, at least a coexisting option with the one with France and that allowed him to obtain immediate diplomatic support to Piedmont's conquests and then support of the new state [Italy] in the concert of Europe.”¹⁹¹ For this goal, Cavour turned his eyes towards Great Britain and, more crucially, Prussia. Encouraged by Berlin's neutrality during the war of 1859, Cavour fully devoted himself to foster the creation of an alliance between Piedmont (then Italy, after the official declaration of independence of 17 March 1861) and Prussia.¹⁹²

Cavour's Prussian Policy

It was precisely in the context of this tentative alliance that the concept of shared fate re-emerged. During negotiations with the Prussian ambassador Joseph Maria Brassier de Saint-Simon (1798-1872), Cavour often referred to a “shared historical mission” and “common interests” between the

¹⁸⁵ Cataluccio, “Brassier de Saint-Simon”, 285, 301

¹⁸⁶ Cataluccio, 285

¹⁸⁷ Voci, *La Germania e Cavour*, 20

¹⁸⁸ Siebert, “Comunanza delle Sorti”, 85

¹⁸⁹ Siebert, 85

¹⁹⁰ Voci, *La Germania e Cavour*, XIII

¹⁹¹ Voci, XIII

¹⁹² Voci, XIII

two countries.¹⁹³ For him, Prussia was destined to be a “Germanic Piedmont”, following Turin’s footsteps in assuming the lead of the German national struggle. This belief mainly stemmed from Cavour’s predictions about the future position of Prussia in the Confederation. Cavour in fact was aware of the explosive potential of the Austro-Prussian rivalry and of the increasing popularity in Germany of the calls for Prussian leadership. Consequently, he believed that the combination of these factors, sooner or later, would push Prussia to embrace the requests of those Germans who requested Berlin to lead the national movement. After all, such a will had been already manifested in 1849, when the Frankfurt Parliament had offered the crown of Emperor to the Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm IV. Therefore, it was in Berlin’s best interests to accept such an invite and to use it at its advantage to “found a proper Germanic empire”.¹⁹⁴ If Prussia chose to ignore such an invitation, it would have positioned itself on the “wrong side of history” and against the spirit of their era, as Cavour mentioned to Brassier in June 1860:

The Italians want to be Italians, they will get there sooner or later, just as Germany will eventually be united, because our time is characterized by this irresistible tendency: nationalities want to agglomerate. [...] You raised the German flag in Berlin; this will be your strength, just as the Italian flag is ours. You have many scruples about principles that I understand and respect; these principles will make it look to you perhaps as an insult if I wanted to establish an analogy between your position and ours, but this will not stop the progress of things.¹⁹⁵

In this sense, Cavour showed understanding of Prussia’s concerns about relinquishing the legitimist principle in favor of the principle of nationality. At the same time, he highlighted the inevitability of the latter imposing itself as the new standard source of legitimacy for nations. It was only a matter of whether Prussia wanted to have an active part in this inevitable process or to face it passively. The only way for Prussia to avoid further civil turmoil or revolutions lay, in Cavour’s eyes, in replicating what Piedmont had done in Italy between the 1850s and the current decade. Such an example had in fact shown that it was possible for an existing state to contain the potential excesses of the national movement in an orderly fashion. Not only this solution constituted a great opportunity for Prussia to solve the “German Question” and gain the hegemony in the German world, but it would have also prevented the German national movement from leaning towards republicanism or communism.¹⁹⁶ Such a path would have necessarily passed through a confrontation with Austria, which was, in

¹⁹³ Siebert, “Comunanza delle Sorti”, 85

¹⁹⁴ Cavour to Brassier, 2 June 1860, quoted in Cataluccio, “Brassier de Saint-Simon”, 345

¹⁹⁵ Cavour to Brassier, 2 June 1860, quoted in Cataluccio, 345: Gli Italiani vogliono essere Italiani e presto o tardi vi riusciranno, così come la Germania finirà con l'unificarsi; caratteristica della nostra epoca è infatti la irresistibile tendenza delle nazionalità a saldarsi in maniera stretta. [...] Voi avete innalzato a Berlino la bandiera tedesca; sarà la vostra forza allo stesso modo che la bandiera italiana ha rappresentato la nostra. Voi avete scrupoli al riguardo dei principi, che comprendo e rispetto; questi principi vi faranno forse ritenere un insulto l'analogia fra la vostra e la nostra posizione, ma non fermeranno il corso degli eventi.

¹⁹⁶ Cataluccio, 284

Cavour's eyes, also the true arch-enemy of the *Risorgimento*.¹⁹⁷ In this sense, Cavour insisted on the fundamental identity between Prussian and Piedmontese interests: both of them, willingly or not, were united by a shared fate that demanded them to be at the forefront of the two processes of national unification and to face Austria as a shared enemy. So firm was Cavour's belief in the time being ripe for Prussia to assume this task that he confessed in private to Brassier on June 1860:

If for hypothesis you would like to accept my services in Berlin, once everything is accomplished in Italy and if I still have a few months to live, I am sure I will manage to unify your Germany in a very short time, because the ground is quite fertile, the historical period is favorable and a vigorous necessity makes this a priority.¹⁹⁸

At first sight, this new characterization of the idea of shared fate closely resembles the same idea in 1848 in all its main *leitmotifs*: the referral to similarities between the Italian and German scenario; the historical inevitability of the process of national agglomeration; a common enemy individuated in the Habsburg Empire; the necessity of collaboration in order to overcome such a shared enemy. What radically changed from the 1848 conceptualization of the idea of shared fate was the identification of the “protagonists” of the two national essences. If in 1848 the two whole nationalities were seen as main actors, without specific roles being assigned to established regional states, in the 1860s the idea of shared fate was tailored for Prussia and Piedmont, seen as the most legitimate embodiment of the national essence. Such a belief was also dictated by historicist, morphological and sociocultural similarities usually pointed out between the two nations in those years, as Wandruszka pointed out:

in particular, because of their position in relation to the whole nation: both were situated not in the center, but at the margin of the national territory, in the north. Also, both of them were more renowned for their military and for their state organization rather than for their cultural life; both of them were considered, with worry and mistrust, as “half-barbarian” and, at times, with hope and admiration as the long-hoped “necessary tyrant that leads to unification”. Both Prussia and Piedmont were compared to Macedonia of Philip II and Alexander the Great: this parallelism gained a foothold as the educated bourgeoisie of the 19th century was very familiar with ancient history.¹⁹⁹

In this sense, Cavour was only one amongst many who in the early 1860s began considering the two states as the only proper torchbearers of the two national essences. Such an idea started gaining

¹⁹⁷ Cataluccio: 286

¹⁹⁸ Cavour a Brassier, 2 June 1860, quoted in Cataluccio, 345: “Se per ipotesi si volesse a Berlino accettare i miei servizi, una volta concluso tutto in Italia e se mi sopravanza qualche mese ancora di vita, sono certo di unificare la vostra Germania in pochissimo tempo, poiché il terreno è abbastanza pronto, il periodo storico è favorevole e una vigorosa necessità spinge a ciò”

¹⁹⁹ Wandruszka, “Liberalismo e Nazionalismo”, 51

ground not only in Italy, but also in Germany. After the war of 1859 and, more crucially, the expedition of Garibaldi's thousand in 1860, in fact, the German national movement had been looking at the Italian events with sympathy and often, admiration.²⁰⁰ What was before considered by educated and liberal German audiences as a geographical reality incapable of a coherent and unified political program, now suddenly assumed the role of "model for the hoped foundation of a German national state".²⁰¹ In this sense, Italy's official declaration of independence on 17 March 1861 further boosted the power of the "Piedmontese model" in the eyes of those Germans who advocated for a united Germany.²⁰² A clear example of this sentiment in Prussia can be found in an article of the *Neue Preussische Zeitung* of 11 June 1861, in which the author highlighted how "Italy's achievements have greatly impressed the spirit of the German people" and how "the smartest citizens do not intend to oppose Italy, but instead long for following its example."²⁰³ Prussian intellectuals such as the left-liberal Franz Gustav Duncker (1822-1888) as well as the democrats Arnold Ruge and August Heinrich Simon (1805-1860) repeatedly called on Prussia to build a united Germany following Piedmont's example.²⁰⁴ These feelings of sympathy were also echoed in the Prussian House of Representatives, where the leader of the liberal moderates, Georg von Vincke (1811-1875), presented an amendment, approved by the House, asserting that it was in Prussia's and Germany's best interests not to oppose the formation of Italian unity.²⁰⁵ Cavour himself also actively endeavored to increase the popularity of the "Piedmontese model" in Prussian audiences. Transnational support was in fact given to Prussian newspapers that had declared their sympathy towards the Italian cause. Newspapers such as the *Deutsche Zeitung* received exclusive access to the news of *Agenzia Stefani*, Piedmont's official press agency, as well as a preferred channel of communication with Edoardo de Launay (1820-1892), the Piedmontese ambassador in Berlin.²⁰⁶

Despite the parallelisms drawn between Prussia and Piedmont, the idea of shared fate had to wait a bit more for its descent from Cavour's political project to Italian public discourse. In fact, Cavour's projects towards Prussia did not receive extensive coverage by newspapers in Italy, which also paid little attention in 1860 to the idea of a possible alliance between Piedmont and Prussia. This should be attributed more to the specific historical moment rather than to a lack of interest in Italian audiences with regard to an alliance with Prussia. Too many were in fact the events taking place in those frantic months for distant projects about foreign policy to gain the spotlight in public discourse. The third and fourth Cavour ministry (January 1860- June 1861) in fact encompassed one of the most eventful

²⁰⁰ Kroll "Cultura Politica Tedesca", 51; Voci, *La Germania e Cavour*, XIV

²⁰¹ Kroll, "Cultura Politica Tedesca", 51; Wandruszka, "Liberalismo e Nazionalismo", 53

²⁰² Wandruszka, 53

²⁰³ *Neue Preussische Zeitung* (Berlin), 11 June 1861, quoted in Voci, *La Germania e Cavour*, 91

²⁰⁴ Voci, 54, 85-86, 91

²⁰⁵ Mori, "L'Italia e il Processo", 21

²⁰⁶ Voci, *La Germania e Cavour*, 53

periods in the history of the peninsula: the annexations of the duchies of central Italy in March 1860; the victorious expedition of Garibaldi between May and September 1860; the Piedmontese invasion of the regions of Marche and Abruzzo in August 1860; the declaration of independence of March 1861. This plethora of events completely stole the spotlight in the Italian press, leaving little space for other events.

The lack of positive signals from the Prussian government also contributed to the momentary absence of the idea of shared fate in newspapers. On one hand, Italians were becoming increasingly aware of the popularity that the idea of Prussia conducting a “Piedmontese-style” unification was achieving among the German national movement. On the other, Italians needed an official objectification of such a sentiment in a concrete manifesto or a political initiative in Prussian politics to start nourishing concrete hopes towards an alliance between the two states. This was an indirect product of the new “top-down” idea of nation-building made popular in Italy by Piedmont, which had established the state, and not the people, as the main actor entrusted with advancing the cause of national unification. In other words, as long as the idea struggled to gain its legitimacy in the political vocabulary of Prussian politics, no room was open until 1861 for the formation of a widespread climate of hopes in Italian public opinion about the conclusion of an alliance with Berlin.

As previously hinted, despite Piedmont’s best efforts, Berlin showed significant reluctance to grab Cavour’s hand. Prussia in this moment found itself in a moment of transition, in which different groups were pushing towards opposite directions and were incapable of agreeing on a single course of action, as Francesco Cataluccio has argued.²⁰⁷ This made Prussian foreign policy rather timid, unclear, and unwilling to promise anything to Turin. Cavour was frustrated by this behavior, as a letter from Heinrich Geffcken (1830-1896) – the resident minister in Berlin for the Hanseatic cities – to the historian Maximilian Duncker (1811-1896) showed:

Cavour did not hesitate in admitting that Prussia and England are Piedmont’s natural allies, but he asked me at the same time: what can you do with these people? The Prussians did not obstruct us, but they did not help us either. Moreover, they categorically refuse to recognize that we have multiple interests and aims in common with them, as our respective kingdoms are, without a single doubt, in a very similar situation. The Piedmontese envoy in Paris, Nigra told me: “What is missing in Berlin is a true leader”.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁷ Cataluccio, “Brassier de Saint-Simon”, 288

²⁰⁸ Geffcken to Duncker, Berlin, 17 September 1860, quoted in Voci, *La Germania e Cavour*, 5: “Cavour non ha avuto nessuna difficoltà ad ammettere che la Prussia, assieme all’Inghilterra, siano gli alleati naturali della Sardegna, ma, mi ha chiesto, cosa si può fare con questa gente? I Prussiani non ci frappongono ostacoli, ma non ci hanno neanche minimamente aiutato e ricusano qualsiasi comunità di intenti e di interessi con noi, mentre la situazione analoga di entrambi gli Stati è fuori di ogni dubbio. “Ce qui vous manque à Berlin, c’est une tete”, mi ha detto l’inviato sardo a Parigi, Nigra.”

Such elusive conduct from Berlin had multiple causes behind it. Piedmont – and then Italy – was perceived by many figures in the government as too much under French influence to be trusted. The specter of Napoleon III hiding behind Cavour and the possible threat of being caught in a French pincer from the Rhine and the Alps led many in the government to see with mistrust the forming of a strong national reality south of the Alps.²⁰⁹ This persisted despite Brassier’s best efforts to convince Berlin that a strong Italy was in Prussia’s best interests. For him, the more territory and strength Italy gained, the more could have subtracted itself from French influence.²¹⁰ Other factors, such as legitimist concerns from King Wilhelm I about the dethroning of monarchs of the smaller Italian kingdoms, led Berlin to substantially ignore Cavour’s proposals. This elusive behavior towards Piedmont’s efforts protracted until June 1861, when Cavour’s premature death brought his “Prussian policy” to a sudden stop. However, the idea of shared fate in its “Piedmontese-Prussian” shape did not follow Cavour into the grave, as it had already started infiltrating Italian public opinion in the first months of 1861.

Prussia: a Germanic Piedmont?

Despite the fiasco of Cavour’s Prussian policy, something had already started to change in public opinion in 1861. In this sense, the above-mentioned approval of von Vincke’s amendment at the Prussian House of Representatives in February 1861 had a great impact, constituting the previously mentioned “objectification” of the sympathy that Prussian public opinion had for the Italian cause. In fact, the amendment – and its approval by the House – unequivocally highlighted to the Italians the existence of a strong current in Prussian politics favorable to the establishment of a national reality south of the Alps.²¹¹ The newspaper *La Nazione* praised on 12 February von Vincke’s open-mindedness and courage, which made him speak up against the ambiguous policy of von Schleinitz.²¹² Regarded as the “true voice” of the Prussian people, von Vincke’s amendment was perceived as an evident symptom that the Prussians were finally embracing the “Piedmontese example”:

The Prussian parliament, by not opposing the Italian right to unity and independence – that is to say, to *exist as Italy* – has also established the same right for Germany, who also want to exist not only in an

²⁰⁹ Voci, 20

²¹⁰ Voci, 22-23, 64

²¹¹ Mori, “L’Italia e il Processo”, 21

²¹² “Le sorti dei popoli sono così strettamente collegate”, *La Nazione* (Florence) 12 February 1861

abstract way, but also in a concrete one: surely, the existing government's policy will have to be changed accordingly.²¹³

Unlike in 1848 however, the press did not indulge in unrealistic short-term expectations. The approval of von Vincke's amendment was without a doubt a good sign, but Prussia's path towards embracing the principle of nationality – and thus towards Italy's arms – was regarded just at its onset.²¹⁴ Italian press was in fact aware of the moment of transition that Prussia was finding itself into, divided between those who longed for a more anti-Austrian policy and those who instead believed in a Germanic solidarity against the Italians. Von Vincke's amendment being approved clearly showed the latter's gain of momentum: however, the penetration of such an idea in the government and its subsequent translation into active initiatives would have probably required more time. No doubts were however cast on the inevitability of Prussia eventually embracing its historical role as "Germanic Piedmont".²¹⁵

Why were Italian expectations towards Prussia more "moderate" and "realist" than the ones nourished by Italian revolutionaries towards German ones in 1848? First, there was more awareness of the many geopolitical nuances of the German scenario than in 1848. This was due to more accurate journalism and to the introduction of new devices such as the telegraph, which, shortening the waiting times for news reports, also shortened the physical and cultural distance between the two countries.²¹⁶ This deeper understanding of German geopolitics prevented the formation of unrealistic hopes such as the ones in 1848. Second, the "institutionalization" of the Risorgimento and its model of unification from above made the idea of progressive change through political compromise much more palatable than in 1848. Therefore, if 1848 was characterized by unrealistically high expectations, due to excessive optimism in the idea of "fraternity from below" and to the ignorance of German dynamics, now expectations were more proportionate to the new "institutional" model of national unification.

Consequentially, the hesitance of the Prussian government did not cause the same shock or outrage of the cold answer from the Germans in 1848: Italian columnists knew that time was required to Prussia to fully understand its historical role.²¹⁷ In other words, Italian hopes towards Prussia were characterized by a rather peculiar *pastiche* of *realpolitik* considerations and historical teleology. On

²¹³ "Le sorti dei popoli sono così strettamente collegate", 12 February 1861: "il Parlamento Prussiano, non impugnando il diritto della Italia all'unità e all'indipendenza, che è quanto dire all'essere, ha raffermao quello di Germania, che essa pure vuole essere e non parere; e certamente la politica del gabinetto di Berlino sarà costretta a subire qualche modificazione"

²¹⁴ Mori, "L'Italia e il Processo", 23

²¹⁵ "Le sorti dei popoli sono così strettamente collegate", *La Nazione*, 12 February 1861, Florence.

²¹⁶ Mario Coglitore. "'Pandaemonium'. Il Telegrafo Elettrico Come Fonte per Lo Studio Della Storia Contemporanea." *Storicamente* 12, no. 25 (2016). <https://doi.org/10.12977/stor642>

²¹⁷ "Le sorti dei popoli sono così strettamente collegate", 12 February 1861

one hand, they regarded Prussia's embracing its role as "Germanic Piedmont" as an inevitable historical development. On the other, they realized that such a process would need time, given the many ties between Prussia and Austria and the hesitance of the Prussian government. Compulsory for Prussian elites to understand their country's historical mission would have been the arrival to power of a "man of Providence", who, inspired by the spirit of time and skilled in the art of politics, would have assumed the leadership of the national agglomeration process.²¹⁸

Such a messianic belief in the necessity of an extraordinary leader for Prussia was clearly modeled on the example set by Cavour for Piedmont. Once again, therefore, Italians looked at Germany through an "Italian scope", picturing their idea of unification as the only "legitimate" one for Germany. Aware of the great resonance achieved in Germany and Europe by "their" process of national unification, after 1861 Italian press and intellectuals tended to portray the *Risorgimento* almost as a textbook model for any nationality aspiring at national unification. Boasting their achieved independence almost as evidence of the effectiveness of such a "recipe for national unification", Italians considered it as a winning formula also for the German question. It was in other words a master-disciple relation the one that Italians envisioned between them and the Prussians. Consequentially, Italians expected the German unification to take place following the script of the Italian one. Such a "recipe" entailed Prussia first undergoing a period of internal reforms tending towards liberalism and then, once the pact with the liberals had been sealed, taking the lead in the national movement.²¹⁹ The "messiah of unification" was supposed to be the advocate of this orderly process, possessing in himself a sincere embracement of liberalism and the political skills required to lead the national movement both within the German scenario and abroad. While waiting for the arrival of this "Germanic Cavour", expectations about Prussia's historical role, and therefore also about its natural alliance with Italy, remained present but hibernated.

Contrary to what we might think with the benefit of hindsight, such a figure was not recognized in Otto von Bismarck (1815-1898): his election as new Prime Minister of Prussia in 1862 in fact raised mostly cold reactions in Italian newspapers.²²⁰ Liberals and moderates, while appreciating his anti-Austrian views, were perplexed by his conservative and almost reactionary background, coming as far as defining him a "don Quijote of absolutism".²²¹ The comparison with Cavour did not even come to mind, as Bismarck was considered by Italian newspapers as completely incompatible to the liberalism professed by the revered Piedmontese statesman.²²² Many also pointed out that Bismarck did not possess Cavour's cunning and maneuvering skills, accusing him of being

²¹⁸ Geffcken to Duncker, Berlin, 17 September 1860, in Voci, *La Germania e Cavour*, 5

²¹⁹ "Lettere Berlinesi", *La Nazione* (Florence), 4 October 1862

²²⁰ "Lettere Berlinesi", 4 October 1862

²²¹ "Lettere Berlinesi", 4 October 1862

²²² "Lettere Berlinesi", 4 October 1862

indiscreet and excessively rigid, incapable of the Count's political finesse.²²³ Italian public opinion, therefore, nourished many reservations about Bismarck's abilities, not considering him a suitable candidate to make Prussia perform its historical task.²²⁴ Even prominent politicians such as the Italian Ambassador to Paris, Constantino Nigra, considered Bismarck the wrong man for this task.²²⁵

Although confidence in Bismarck was low, hopes towards an alliance with Prussia remained vivid. This was mainly due to the mounting disillusionment towards France as champion of the Italian cause. Crucial in this sense was the failure of Garibaldi's expedition to Rome, blocked by the Italian regular army on the Aspromonte plateau in August 1862, for fear that the French, strenuous defenders of papal sovereignty, would intervene. This episode reawakened old memories of the French repression of the Roman republic in 1849 and caused Napoleon to lose some of the popularity he had gained in 1859.²²⁶ In addition to the Roman question, in which France was increasingly being seen by the public as an obstacle, the Venetian question was also marked by tints of resentment towards France. Public opinion in fact increasingly blamed Napoleon for the sudden stop imposed by him to the campaign of 1859, at the very moment when Venice was in sight of the Franco-Piedmontese army.²²⁷ It should be clarified that there was no open hostility towards France, since the newspapers, critical though they were, also tended to acknowledge France's crucial contribution in the conquest of Lombardy. Moreover, France's position as Italy's main cultural model, both at the level of the cultural elites and the Piedmontese political class, prevented any feeling of open hostility.²²⁸ Despite that, more and more people started turning their attention beyond France, in search of an alternative ally more interested in helping Italy to solve the question of Venice and Rome. Prussia, due to its characterization as potential "Germanic Piedmont" was in this sense been increasingly suggested as the main candidate for this role.

No action was however taken by the Italian government in the direction of trying to foster an alliance with Prussia. As highlighted by Siebert, what the Italian political class lacked was the political courage for a decisive demarcation from France.²²⁹ Cavour's sudden death had in fact left a significant power vacuum in the newly born Italian state, the successive ministries failing to retain a level of control comparable to the one Cavour had over the King and the Parliament. The subsequent political instability of the years 1861-1865, characterized by five different ministries in a quinquennium, did not help either.²³⁰ This inevitably resulted in a hesitant foreign policy, conditioned

²²³ "Lettere Berlinesi", 4 October 1862

²²⁴ "Diario Politico", *La Nazione* (Florence), 1 October 1862; "Lettere Berlinesi", 4 October 1862

²²⁵ Nigra to Visconti Venosta, Turin, 30 August 1863, quoted in Mori, "L'Italia e il Processo", 28

²²⁶ Mori, 25-26

²²⁷ Siebert, "Comunanza delle Sorti", 85

²²⁸ Siebert, 79

²²⁹ Siebert, 86

²³⁰ Beales, Biagini, *The Risorgimento*, 152

by the need for French approval, almost resembling the behavior of a proper protectorate. Another blow against those who hoped in an Italo-Prussian entente came in 1864 from the newly nominated ministry of the Francophile Alfonso La Marmora (1804-78), who had made no mystery of his skepticism towards Bismarck's intentions.²³¹ In that same year, La Marmora's doubts seemed to be confirmed by Bismarck's alliance with Austria against Denmark, which resulted in the defeat of the latter in the Second Schleswig War (February-October 1864) and the duchies of Schleswig, Holstein, and Saxe-Lauenburg being ceded to the formers.²³² This was also noticed by the press, which, despite still believing in a potential commonality of interests between Italy and Prussia, realized the lack of political will from both political actors to move in this direction in this precise historical moment. Consequently, even if relations between the two countries remained friendly, an alliance between Italy and Prussia was considered highly unlikely in 1865.²³³ As the next paragraph will highlight, Italian public opinion was however in for a pleasant surprise: just a year later, on 8 April 1866, Italy and Prussia concluded an anti-Austrian alliance.

The Italo-Prussian Alliance

The sudden conclusion of the Italo-Prussian alliance caught public opinion in Italy by surprise. Such an unforeseen outcome certainly astounded a columnist of *La Nazione*, who remarked in June 1866 how "one year ago it would have been considered madness to imagine it."²³⁴ Along with shock, however, such an unexpected outcome was greeted with enthusiasm: at last, the two "natural allies" had come to their senses and had fulfilled their historical destiny of waging war together against their common enemy, the Habsburg Empire. Before investigating further the reactions the alliance created in public opinion, it is compulsory to provide an answer to two questions: what caused the diplomatic situation to change so abruptly in the space of just two years? Was the idea of shared fate involved in such a process? In order to provide an answer to these questions, we have to take a step back in 1865.

After just a few months from the Treaty of Vienna (30 October 1864), tensions were mounting up between Prussia and Austria on the delicate issue of the governance of the duchies obtained from Denmark after the Second Schleswig War. Despite an attempt at preventing an escalation was conducted with the signing of the Gastein Convention (14 August 1865), tensions between the two powers remained high. In this sense, Alan Taylor has suggested that the question of the duchies was

²³¹ Alan J. P. Taylor, *The Struggle for the Mastery of Europe, 1848-1918* (Oxford, United Kingdom: Clarendon Press, 1954), 158.

²³² Siebert, "Comunanza delle Sorti", 86

²³³ *Le Relazioni Italo Tedesche*, 122; "Il trentino, la provincia del Tirolo e la Confederazione Germanica", *La Nazione* (Florence) 22 June 1866

²³⁴ "Il trentino, la provincia del Tirolo e la Confederazione Germanica", 22 June 1866

just the mere visible part of a more profound contrast that had its ultimate prize in the dominance over the German Confederation.²³⁵ In September, Bismarck confirmed to the Italian charge d'affaires in Berlin, Efsio Quigini-Puliga (1827-76) that the Convention had just succeeded in postponing the inevitable.²³⁶ Further hints were sent by Bismarck between the end of 1865 and the beginning of 1866 to the Italian ambassador Giulio Camillo di Barral (1815-1880) about the prospect of a future confrontation with Austria.²³⁷ At the same time, Bismarck clearly stated to the De Barral his unwillingness to further escalate things, leaving to Austria the initiative of a breakup.²³⁸ In some sense, Bismarck's refusal to take the initiative against Austria only helped reinforcing La Marmora's mistrust towards the real intentions of the Prussian statesman.²³⁹

What ultimately caused La Marmora to relinquish his doubts and to see potential in Bismarck's shy opening was the increasing necessity for Italy to solve the "Venetian Question". Italy had in fact been trying to get Veneto – still in Austrian hands – from 1861: several peaceful attempts had been made in this quinquennium, all of them resulting in failure. In October 1865, La Marmora sent the count Alessandro Malaguzzi de Valeri (1812-1896) to Vienna, in a last attempt to buy the region from Austria.²⁴⁰ Italian claims on Veneto were also actively supported by Napoleon III, who had made the solving of the Venetian question one of the priorities of his foreign policy, as Taylor has pointed out.²⁴¹ When the negotiations between Malaguzzi and the Austrian government broke down in February 1866, a more appealing solution to the question of Venetia came to the attention of the Italians. The sudden abdication of the Prince of Romania from the throne in that same month had left a power vacuum in the region, leading Nigra to suggest that Austria could get Romania in exchange for the cession of Veneto to Italy.²⁴² Napoleon agreed to this idea, but at the same time suggested La Marmora to corner Austria into accepting such a swap through the negotiation of a military alliance between Italy and Prussia.²⁴³ In Napoleon's eyes, the news of the negotiations would convince Austria that this swap was more advantageous to them than a war against an Italo-Prussian alliance.²⁴⁴ However, Vienna, fearing that an eventual annexation of Romania could trigger an escalation with Russia, refused the offer.

²³⁵ Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery*, 157

²³⁶ Giancarlo Giordano, *Cilindri e Feluche: La Politica Estera Dell'Italia Dopo L'unità* (Roma, Italy: Aracne, 2008), 57.

²³⁷ De Barral to La Marmora, Berlin, 2 March 1866 in Ministero degli Esteri, *I Documenti Diplomatici Italiani* [from now on as DDI]. *Prima Serie: 1861-1870 Vol VI* (Rome, Italy: Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, 1980), 412-413

²³⁸ La Marmora to Nigra, Florence, 10 June 1865, *DDI vol VI*, 38

²³⁹ *Le Relazioni Italo-Tedesche*, 120

²⁴⁰ Giordano, *Cilindri e Feluche*, 58

²⁴¹ Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery*, 159

²⁴² Taylor, 160

²⁴³ Nigra to La Marmora, Paris, 21 March 1866, *DDI vol VI*, 480; Nigra to La Marmora, Paris, 22 March 1861, *DDI vol VI*, 480

²⁴⁴ Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery* 161

In this way, while the opportunity for the Romania-Veneto swap vanished, the negotiations with Prussia did not: “what they [Napoleon and La Marmora] had begun as bluff, they now had to pursue in earnest”, as Taylor has pointed out.²⁴⁵ Such a potential standstill was avoided by Bismarck’s proposal to grant Italy Veneto in case a war with Austria broke out. At the same time, the Prussian statesman put as a condition for such a proposal the signing of an entente that required Italy to go to war alongside with Prussia if war broke out with Austria in the space of three months.²⁴⁶ By mentioning the prospect of Italy being granted Veneto, Bismarck had pushed the right button, both with regard to Napoleon and to La Marmora. After being reassured by Paris that Napoleon would protect Italy against an Austrian attack in case Berlin betrayed the treaty of alliance and left them alone, La Marmora gave the green light for the signing of the treaty of alliance between Italy and Prussia, which was signed on 8 April 1866.

It is not my intention to give a detailed account of the successive diplomatic events between the signing of the alliance and the outbreak of subsequent war.²⁴⁷ The main goal of such an overview of the diplomatic process that led to the Italo-Prussian alliance was in fact to underline how such an entente was caused by the peculiar European geopolitical situation of those years and did not represent in any way the product of a precise initiative influenced or based on the idea of shared fate. In this sense, Italy was solely interested in obtaining the Veneto, no matter if this passed through a purchase from Austria or an entente with Prussia. In other words, the conclusion of the alliance was purely functional to the Venetian question and did not represent the product of the “inevitable commonality of destiny” that the press and public opinion had been picturing for the two countries. Moreover, the Italian initiative was not even entirely autonomous, as it partly stemmed from Napoleon’s one and was conditioned by his approval. In this sense, despite the undoubted presence of a strong will in Italian public opinion for an agreement with Prussia, such an alliance was largely due to a precise political plan functional to the obtainment of Veneto and partly stemming from Napoleon III’s European ambitions. Attempting a comparison, while Cavour’s “Prussian policy” in 1860-61 was characterized by a desire for greater independence from French protection, the Italo-Prussian alliance of 1866 was part of a plan encouraged and conceived in complicity with Napoleon himself.

Italian public opinion, however, saw it differently. Such an alliance was portrayed as something more than a mere utilitarian entente: it constituted the natural outcome of the commonality

²⁴⁵ Taylor, 161

²⁴⁶ Taylor, 161

²⁴⁷ For more information on the diplomatic events before and after the signing of the treaty of alliance see: Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery*, 142-71; Christopher Duggan, *The Force of Destiny: a History of Italy since 1796* (Boston, United States of America: Houghton Mifflin, 2008).; Bruce D. Loynd, *Bismarck and Napoleon III: the Diplomacy of the German Crisis of 1866* (Ann Arbor, MI, United States of America: Univ. Microfilms Internat., 1985).; William Carr and Harry Hearder, *The Wars of German Unification 1864-1871 (Origins Of Modern Wars)* (New York, United States of America: Routledge, 2014).

of substance and fates between the Italian and German national essence. As *La Nazione* highlighted on 20 June 1866, it was evident

[that] the principles of nationality and freedom are represented and championed in Germany and Italy by Austria's enemies, and that the alliance between Prussia and Italy does not originate only from opportunism and short-term interests, but it is based on the concordance of vital and long-lasting interests between the German and the Italian people.²⁴⁸

This article constituted only the tip of the iceberg of a proper press campaign focused on Germany and Prussia: between spring and summer 1866, Italian newspapers were invaded by a multitude of editorials and feature articles on the political, social, and economic dynamics not only of Prussia, but of the entire German Confederation. Clearly, it cannot be ruled out that some of this attention was encouraged by the government: however, it appears sensible to think that most of it was the natural outcome of a public opinion that had been nourishing expectations on such a political outcome for years.

In this sense, the idea of shared fate in its “institutionalized” shape, present in the undergrowth of Italian public opinion since 1861, was now set free by recent political events. The sudden and unexpected conclusion of the alliance had however left many questions open in the minds of the Italians. One in particular accompanied the debate on the Italo-Prussian shared fate in newspapers: could Bismarck truly be considered the long expected “Germanic Cavour”? Against all expectations, in fact, under Bismarck Prussia had managed to fulfill its historical task: allying itself to Italy and thus embracing the cause of German unification. In spite of this, the press still did not consider Bismarck worthy of being compared on equal terms with Cavour's almost mythical figure.²⁴⁹ In the same way, the main Prussian political protagonists were frequently linked to those who had led Italy to independence, such as Victor Emmanuel or Garibaldi, but were always depicted in a position of inferiority.²⁵⁰ It was therefore a strange parallelism the one that Italian newspapers painted between Italy and Prussia: columnists clearly pointed out a clear commonality of interests and goals between the two countries, but remained firm in their belief in the moral superiority of Italy, of which Prussia could at most aspire to be a pale imitation.

Every nation has the great men it deserves. Germany has seen splendid minds in all sorts of science, letters, art: if its statesmen have so far been almost without exception miserable, it is because,

²⁴⁸ “Lettere di Germania”, *La Nazione* (Florence), 20 June 1866: “i principi della nazionalità e della libertà sono rappresentati e propugnati in Germania come in Italia dagli avversari dell’Austria, e che l’alleanza prusso-italiana non deve la sua origine soltanto a ragioni d’opportunità e d’interesse momentaneo, ma si basa sulla concordanza degli interessi vitali e durevoli del popolo tedesco e del popolo italiano.”

²⁴⁹ “Firenze, 13 Aprile”, *La Nazione* (Florence) 14 April 1866; “Firenze, 14 Aprile”, *La Nazione* (Florence), 15 April 1866

²⁵⁰ “Lettere di Germania”, *La Nazione* (Florence), 24 June 1866

politically speaking, the entire nation has barely come out of childhood. Without doubt, Prussia will neither do nor can do what Piedmont has done; but it is foolishness to blame the Count of Bismarck for everything, if he is not a Cavour.²⁵¹

Such a condescending tone should not be interpreted as a sign of hostility against the Prussians or as an example of duplicity, but rather as an attempt to underline the merits of the "Piedmontese example" with regard to Prussia. In other words, for Italian public opinion, Prussia and Italy were indeed united by a shared destiny, but this did not mean that they were on the same level: Italy, for having achieved independence first, was perceived by the Italian press as the most authentic bearer of the national principle.

As the war progressed, however, it became clear that the "Italian moral supremacy" was not met by equally glorious results on the battlefield. In fact, Italy immediately suffered a humiliating defeat against the Austrians at Custoza on 24 June 1866. The press, while admitting the disaster, tried to minimize it, reassuring the public of the army's unchanged capabilities and of its certain successes in the future.²⁵² However, July passed without victories from the Italian side. This, combined with the decisive Prussian victory at Sadowa on 3 July, made it very difficult to maintain such an attitude of superiority over the Prussian ally. Italian columnists published endless and rather incoherent apologetic articles aimed at saving the army's face. At the same time, word came from Berlin that the sympathy towards the Italian ally was waning and that "the Italian name, one writes, runs the risk of losing the prestige it acquired in recent years".²⁵³ A victory was necessary to save the country's honor before the end of the war: Italy, however, suffered another decisive defeat by the Austrian navy at the Battle of Lissa on 20 July. The war therefore ended without a decisive Italian victory: on 26 July Prussia, with Napoleon's approval, concluded the Armistice of Nikolsburg with Austria, which marked the end of Austrian political influence on the German question.²⁵⁴ Italy, in order not to fight Austria on its own, joined the armistice on 29 July and signed a similar armistice with Austria at Cormons on 11 August. Italy finally obtained Veneto, but not in the way it would have wanted. Austria in fact refused to cede it directly to the Italians and instead ceded it to Napoleon, who then

²⁵¹ "Lettere di Germania", *La Nazione* (Florence), 3 July 1866: "Ogni nazione ha i grandi uomini che merita. La Germania ha visto splendidi ingegni in ogni specie di scienza, di lettere, d'arte: se i suoi uomini di stato sono stati finora quasi senz'eccezione miserabili, gli è perchè, politicamente parlando, l'intera nazione è uscita appena dall'infanzia. Senza dubbio, la Prussia nè farà, nè può fare ciò che ha fatto il Piemonte; ma è stoltezza recare tutta al conte di Bismarck la colpa, s'egli non è un Cavour."

²⁵² "Firenze, 3 Luglio", *La Nazione* (Florence), 4 July 1866

²⁵³ "Firenze, 23 Luglio", *La Nazione* (Florence), 24 July 1866: "Il nome italiano, ci si scrive, corre rischio di perdere quel prestigio che s'acquistò negli ultimi anni."

²⁵⁴ Italian press attempted to present Garibaldi's strategic victory against Franz Kuhn von Kuhnnefeld at the Battle of Bezzecca (21 July 1866) as a decisive victory. In reality, Garibaldi suffered four times the number of casualties of Kuhn, the latter also managing to take 1100 Italian prisoners. For this reason, the Battle of Bezzecca cannot be considered a decisive victory, despite the propaganda to which it was subjected in post-Risorgimento historiography.

turned it to Italy. As we will see in the next paragraph, the outcome of the war would produce radical consequences on the idea of shared fate, determining first its decline in its current form and then its mutation.

The Decline of the Idea of Shared Fate

The way in which Italy obtained Veneto, combined with the impotence shown during the war, caused a sharp decline of the “myth” of the *Risorgimento* both in Italy and in Germany.²⁵⁵ Consequentially, the characterization of Italy as a moral example for the German unification lost also most of its momentum. Many Germans, previously advocates of the necessity to take Italy as an example, now regarded the *Risorgimento* as a simple temporal predecessor, unworthy of the historical greatness of the *Reichsgründung*, as Kroll has pointed out.²⁵⁶ In a similar way, the condescending tone with which Prussia was described in Italy during spring and summer disappeared. It was replaced by a friendly, yet respectful, tone that presented the German national struggle on the same moral level as the Italian one. As the idea of Italy being the moral example for Germany gradually lost ground, so did the idea of shared fate. In the years comprised between the end of the war and the Franco-Prussian war of 1871, the term not only gradually began being mentioned less frequently by Italian press, but also started to change its main message.

Such a decline was a direct product of the outcome of the war. Prussia had in fact demonstrated even to the most skeptical ones its political and, most importantly, military capabilities. This also happened in a context in which the “morally superior” Italy had failed to prove itself on the battlefield. The overall impression that this created in Italian public discourse was that Prussia was politically and militarily able, as well as clearly determined, to complete the process of German unification with its own strength.²⁵⁷ Austria’s exclusion from the German scenario, as a consequence of the Armistice of Nikolsburg also strengthened in the press the impression that the accomplishment of German unification was politically impossible to be stopped.²⁵⁸ As *La Nazione* argued on 4 August 1866: “slower, perhaps much slower than the Italians, but with the same irresistible constancy, the Germans are directed to their national unity.”²⁵⁹

In this sense, two of the key aspects of the idea of shared fate started to phase out. First, Austria’s simultaneous expulsion from the Italian scenario and from the German one deprived the

²⁵⁵ Kroll, “Cultura Politica Tedesca”, 55

²⁵⁶ Kroll, 55

²⁵⁷ “Firenze, 3 Agosto”, *La Nazione* (Florence), 4 August 1866

²⁵⁸ “Firenze, 3 Agosto”, 4 August 1866

²⁵⁹ “Firenze, 3 Agosto”, 4 August 1866: “Più lenti, forse molto più lenti degli Italiani, ma colla medesima costanza irresistibile i tedeschi vanno incontro alla loro unità nazionale.”

idea of shared fate of the *leitmotif* of Austria as a shared enemy. Second, the belief in Prussia being strong enough to complete the unification on its own weakened the idea of collaboration as a necessary mean through which to achieve the goal of national unification. Consequently, the idea of shared fate relocated again in the undergrowth of Italian discourse, undergoing a process of gradual mutation, which would end only in 1871. In this year, the third – and last – key element that still held together the characterization of the idea of shared fate as a concept serving the purpose of national unification fell. Such an element consisted precisely in the backbone of the idea of shared fate: the goal of national unification. Prussia in fact, after defeating France in the Franco-Prussian war (1870-71), completed the process of unification by proclaiming the birth of the *Deutsches Kaiserreich* on 18 January 1871. Similarly, Italy had annexed Rome the year before, after the French garrison had been withdrawn after the French defeat against the Prussians at the Battle of Sedan (31 August- 2 September 1870), thus ideally closing down the season of the *Risorgimento*.

The concept of the Italo-German shared fate did not die but lived on in the political vocabulary of Italian-German relations under a new guise. More specifically, it survived in a limited context, reshaped as historicist evidence of the existence of a commonality between the two countries. In fact, the mutual national unification, from a political goal based on historicist evidence, became, after the unification, historicist evidence at the service of other political goals. As such, the memory of a common destiny was set up in a selective manner and aimed at presenting the two unifications more in their aspects of commonality than discord, as Wandruszka has pointed out.²⁶⁰ This metamorphosis took place immediately after the proclamation of the German Reich in 1871. Evidence of this new shape of the idea of shared fate can be found in an article of *La Nazione* about the celebrations held on 12 March 1871 by the German community in Florence for the proclamation of the Reich. In the opening speech, the spokesperson of the German association stated: “From 1859 until today, Germany and Italy, throughout the course of their national development, have not discontinued a reciprocal giving and receiving.”²⁶¹ The speech strongly highlighted the mutual influence and sympathy between the two processes of unification, united by common intentions and interests: if Italy owed the success of its unity to German victories, it was only thanks to the Italian example that the “slow German things had finally set in motion.”²⁶² This selective memory meant that the two processes of unification were seen as perfectly convergent and mutually collaborative, as Wandruszka pointed out.²⁶³ Consequently, this also meant suggesting the existence of an extreme affinity between

²⁶⁰ Wandruszka, “Liberalismo e Nazionalismo”, 51

²⁶¹ “Germania e Italia”, *La Nazione* (Florence), 15 March 1871: “Dal 1859 fino ad oggi la Germania e l’Italia, per tutto il corso del loro sviluppo nazionale, non hanno discontinuato un dare e ricevere vicendevole.”

²⁶² “Germania e Italia”, 15 March 1871

²⁶³ Wandruszka, “Liberalismo e Nazionalismo”, 51-52

the two national spirits. Such a characterization was clearly distinguishable in the conclusion of the speech of the German association:

Being thus the two states born together, as two fruits of the same historical gestation, as two products of an identical national work, as an expression of the same national right, fighting against the same internal and external adversaries, I find in these facts the most evident proof that these two states are destined to continue in the most intimate agreement and that no good or evil can happen to one without the other suffering the benefit or the damage.²⁶⁴

Conclusion

The idea of shared fate experienced in the 1860s both its moment of maximum diffusion and its decline. Its resurfacing took place in a moment of great change for the *Risorgimento*, Cavour's Piedmont being gradually regarded as the leader of the national struggle by the majority of Italian patriots. It was within the framework of Cavour's foreign policy, and more specifically, in his attempts to foster an alliance with Prussia between 1860-61, that the idea of shared fate re-emerged. In the course of such negotiations, the idea of shared fate was frequently used by Cavour, retaining multiple *leitmotifs* of its characterization in 1848, while at the same time differing in one fundamental aspect: the identification of its protagonists. For Cavour in fact, it was Prussia and Piedmont – and not the whole German and Italian nationalities – who, united by common interests, were destined to conclude a “natural alliance” against Austria and to be in charge of the two processes of national unification. Such a new shape of the idea of shared fate was in this sense a direct product of the new “institutionalized” narrative of the *Risorgimento* made popular by the leadership of Cavour's Piedmont. At the same time, it stemmed from Cavour's awareness about the presence of a considerable portion of Prussian public opinion looking at the Piedmontese unification of Italy with sympathy and with the hope that Berlin would follow Turin's example in Germany. In this sense, the re-emergence of the idea of shared fate in its new “Piedmontese-Prussian” shape in this period was caused by two main aspects: the presence of signals of sympathy towards the Italian cause from Prussia; the new understanding of the *Risorgimento* as led by an existing nation-state with “legal” methods.

²⁶⁴ “Germania e Italia”, 15 March 1871: “Essendo così i due stati nati insieme, come un doppio frutto della medesima gestazione storica, quale doppia meta di un identico lavoro nazionale, quale espressione dello stesso diritto nazionale, in lotta contro gli stessi avversari interni ed esterni, io trovo in questi fatti la prova più evidente che questi due stati sono destinati a continuare nell'accordo più intimo e che nessun bene nè male può accadere all'uno senza che l'altro ne risenta il beneficio o il danno.”

Despite the Prussian government's lack of interest in such proposals, news of the presence of these Italophile feelings in Prussian public opinion also reached the ears of Italian public opinion in the first months of 1861. This favored the creation of a climate of expectations towards Prussia, seen as inevitably destined to conduct a "Piedmontese" type of unification in Germany and, consequently, to clash with Austria. As Italy was seen too as destined to clash with Austria for the possession of Veneto, Italians believed in a fundamental commonality of interests between the two nations: soon, they believed, Prussian governing elites would realize that too, making the "natural alliance" between the two countries possible. In this sense, this parallelism recognized a fundamental commonality of interests between Italy and Prussia, while at the same time placing the Italian Risorgimento in a position of superiority as moral example over the German national struggle. The conclusion of the alliance between Italy and Prussia in 1866 touched in this sense a sensitive spot in the Italian public opinion, which saluted it as a striking confirmation of their idea of Prussia as "Germanic Piedmont". In reality, such an alliance was largely the product of a momentaneous convergence of Italian, French, and Prussian political interests, in the negotiations of which the idea of shared fate had little to no influence or presence.

If the conclusion of the Italo Prussian alliance represented the zenith of the idea of shared fate, the aftermath of the Italo-Austro-Prussian war of 1866 could be considered the beginning of its nadir. This was due to the disappearance of two aspects at the core of the idea of shared fate as a result of the outcome of the war. First, the idea of the importance of collaboration as the only mean through which Italy and Germany could achieve independence disappeared. The size of the Prussian victory at Sadowa had in fact convinced Italians that Prussia was now strong enough to complete the unification of Germany with its own strength. Second, the expulsion of Austria as an influential political actor both from the German and the Italian scenario, caused also the *leitmotif* of Vienna as the shared enemy of the two national causes to lose its strength. Five years later, the accomplishment of the two unifications, with the proclamation of the German *Reich* in Versailles and the annexation of Rome to Italy the year before, deprived the idea of shared fate of its overriding goal: the accomplishment of the two national unifications. If this marked the end of the idea of shared fate as a concept characterized by the goal of the two national unifications, it gave way to a new conceptualization of the same idea, in which the joint achievement of the two national unifications was now seen as historicist evidence of the affinity between the two countries.

Conclusions

What this thesis has sought to achieve was to fill a clear gap in the historiographic literature on the German and Italian national unifications. Although academia has sometimes vaguely hinted at the existence of the belief in a fundamental commonality of goals between the two processes of national unification, no study has so far analyzed such an idea through the history of ideas' framework or tried to assess its place in the historical fabric of those years. As a result, such an idea has been largely taken for granted, without its position in the cultural and political landscape of the time being problematized through a critical approach to primary sources. This thesis filled this lacuna by providing a detailed and critical overview of the origins, the diffusion, the process of mutation, and the interaction with the historical context of the idea of shared fate. In doing so, this thesis not only gives voice to a historical phenomenon otherwise condemned to the academic oblivion, but also provides a basis for further studies to be conducted on such a topic. In these concluding remarks, I will tie together the many aspects explored in these pages by providing an answer to my two main research questions. This will be followed by a critical reflection on the challenges and opportunities that lay ahead for the researcher interested in further exploring this topic.

In the introduction I declared the analysis of the idea of shared fate to be guided by two main questions: how was the idea of the “shared fate” between the Italian and German processes of national unification conceived and re-negotiated over time in the public discourse of the *Risorgimento* between 1848 and 1871? What was its role in the context of the relations between the two nationalities in those years?

While providing a definition of an idea always produces more of a tentative sketch rather than a hyperrealist portrait, it still serves the purpose of understanding the core recurrent *leitmotifs* of the idea in a given period of time. In this sense, the idea of shared fate could be conceptually dissected in order to highlight its main components during its period of diffusion in Italian public discourse (1848-1871). The main *leitmotifs* that characterized it in the shape in which it is analyzed in this thesis were: an overriding goal, identified in the achievement of national unification for the Italian and German scenario; a procedure through which to accomplish such a goal, identified in a mutual collaboration and/or alliance between Germans and Italians; a cultural legitimacy behind such an alliance, found in the existence of a fundamental commonality between the two national essences, corroborated by historicist, geographical or geopolitical evidence; a shared enemy, found in the Habsburg Empire. These *leitmotifs* constituted the theoretical backbone of the idea of shared fate and remained constant during the period taken into examination.

Along with providing a “static” portrait of the idea, another key goal of this thesis was to map its mutation in time and its mutual relation with the historical context. As with any idea, it is impossible to define a precise birthdate for the concept of shared fate. We can nevertheless identify a period of incubation, dating from the aftermath of the Congress of Vienna to 1848, in which the idea gradually formed. The idea itself was the product of the synergetic and syncretistic interaction between three cultural currents active in the Italian peninsula in the first four decades of the 19th century: historical teleology, which conceived history as a regimented process tending towards an ideal *telos*; romantic nationalism, which identified such a goal in the establishment of nation-states based on the principle of nationality; the Mazzinian project, which portrayed transnational collaboration between nationalities as the only mean through which to achieve such a goal. Influenced by this *pastiche*, many Italians who advocated a united Italy started looking beyond the Alps, identifying a supposed “commonality of interests” with the Germans, due to the mutual stateless condition and to the presence in both national theatres of a supposed shared antagonist, the Habsburg Empire.

It was during the incredible upheavals of 1848 that the idea of shared fate gained the spotlight in Italian public discourse. In the context of the collective enthusiasm due to the scope and the overwhelming initial success of the European Revolution, Italian revolutionaries began to believe that the historical *telos* of a Europe based on nation-states was within reach. Encouraged by a striking simultaneity between the ongoing revolutions in Italy and Germany, Italian revolutionaries began to convince themselves that an entente between them and the Germans constituted a natural outcome of a process written by Destiny. The cold reception by German revolutionaries of the preliminary proposals made in that direction, however, shocked the Italians, who, out of ignorance of German geopolitical and cultural dynamics as well as of excessive trust in the idea of the fraternity of people, had already taken a positive response for granted.

This outcome and the failure of the revolutions silenced the concept of shared fate for a decade, until its reappearance in the 1860s, in the context of the renewed struggle of the *Risorgimento*, “institutionalized” under the new leadership of Cavour’s Piedmont. Its resurfacing took place first in 1860 in the context of Cavour’s attempts at the creation of an alliance with Prussia and then, a year later, in Italian public opinion. In both cases, the idea of shared fate objectified in the belief of Prussia being destined to imitate in Germany what Piedmont had accomplished in Italy in 1861: a national unification conducted “from above”. This meant that Prussia was on its course towards an inevitable confrontation with Austria: this made it the “natural ally” for Italy, who saw in Austria its nemesis. Its resurgence in this shape was a product of the increasing awareness in Italy of the presence of a large fraction of Prussian public opinion and politics that were looking at the Italian cause with

sympathy and the unification led by Piedmont as an example for Prussia to follow. For the time being, however, both Cavour and Italian public opinion had to note the lack of political will in the Prussian government to follow such a course. After Cavour's death, the idea of shared fate in the above-mentioned characterization remained in the sphere of public discourse, even if hibernated.

The conclusion of the Italo-Prussian alliance in 1866, even if the idea of shared fate had no role in the political process that led to its signing, was saluted by Italian public opinion as the striking proof of Prussia being destined to replicate in Germany what Piedmont had done in Italy. However, due to Piedmont having already accomplished the foundation of Italy, Italian public opinion claimed a moral primacy of Italy over the Prussians, condescendingly depicting their allies in a position of moral inferiority. The Italian military disasters during the war with Austria, compared to the Prussian victory at Sadowa, swept away this tone of patronizing superiority.

The end of the war also marked the beginning of a period of decline of the idea of shared fate in public discourse. The expulsion of Austria from both the German confederation and the Italian peninsula had in fact deprived the idea of shared fate of one of its key elements: the supposed shared nemesis. Moreover, the military strength demonstrated by Prussia at the Battle of Sadowa convinced the Italians that Prussia was more than able to conclude the unification of Germany without external help: this rendered another key factor of the idea of shared fate, the importance of collaboration, somehow outdated. This kickstarted a decline of the idea of shared fate, completed in 1870-71, when the proclamation of the German *Reich* and the Italian conquest of Rome ideally concluded both unification processes. Deprived of its main goal, the idea of shared fate lived "in captivity" in the lexicon of Italian-German relations, the simultaneous unification being presented as ineffable historical evidence of the extreme affinity between the two national essences and exhumed as a prosaic formula when political interests demanded it.

Let us move to the second research question, which mostly referred to the role of the idea of shared fate on relations between Italians and Germans in those years. Sources have clearly highlighted the central role that the concept had on relations between Italian and German revolutionaries in 1848: in fact, it constituted the undisputed protagonist of the only proper "institutional" attempt – if we consider revolutionary governments as institutions – aimed at fostering transnational collaboration between the two revolutions in that year. In this case, its role here was not limited to a mere prosaic formula: instead, it was presented as the main and self-sufficient justification for the creation of an entente between Italy and Germany. Its role in Cavour's foreign policy was both similar and different from the one it had retained in 1848. Similar, as it was actively used as the main argument to convince the Prussian government of the necessity of an alliance between Italy and Prussia; different, as the historicist argument was not presented as self-sufficient, but instead coexisted with other motivations

more related to concrete geopolitical interests. Instead, the absence of the idea of shared fate in the political process that led to the Italian-Prussian alliance of 1866 appears quite evident. The Italo-Prussian agreement, precisely because it was the result of a strategy concocted with third parties – Napoleon's France – did not present in its negotiation phase the idea of shared fate. The idea of shared fate can therefore be clearly found in the language of international relations between Italians and Germans only in 1848 and 1860-61, and usually utilized only by the Italian side. This is a clear indicator of its characterization as a phenomenon stemming from cultural and geopolitical dynamics proper of the Italian scenario, as stated in the introduction.

Two additional opportunities for reflection should be added. First, the idea of shared fate, despite proliferating in a purely national scenario, should be seen as fueled by dynamics that go beyond the mere national borders, as it depended on the presence of signals from Germany – or by events interpreted as such by the Italians. The idea of shared fate in fact had as main *leitmotif* the belief in a fundamental commonality between the two national essences. As such, its success and diffusion depended on the manifestation of signs of friendship from Germany in the same way a fire depends on oxygen. According to the mode, the content, and the number of these signs, the idea of shared fate changed, shaped by how Italians interpreted them. In this sense, this thesis confirms the claims of researchers such as Wolfram Kaiser who have described national boundaries in the second half of the 19th century as highly porous ones and subjected to cultural and political transfer.²⁶⁵ In doing this, it also specifically contributes to the “transnational turn” that the history of nationalism and the history of the *Risorgimento* are experiencing in these last two decades and that have been outlined in the introduction.

The second point of reflection refers to a question that might have arisen in the mind of the reader during the consultation of the last chapter: why did the idea of shared fate fail to re-emerge in 1866-71 with France as the common enemy of Italy and Prussia? In fact, from the end of the war of 1866 to the beginning of the Franco-Prussian war, Italy and Prussia could be seen as both having France on their path as an obstacle. In fact, Napoleon was at that time against both the annexation of the southern states by Prussia and against the annexation of Rome – in which he also retained a garrison – by Italy. While paying attention not to fall into alternate history, such a question can be answered quite promptly. The idea of shared fate failed to re-emerge in an “anti-French” guise because, even though large parts of public opinion openly disapproved of Napoleon III, France was never unanimously considered an enemy by Italian public opinion in those five years. This happened for various reasons: the clear role of cultural model that France had for Italian elites; the still vivid memories of the crucial help France had given in 1859 to the Italian cause; the myth of the French

²⁶⁵ Kaiser, “Transnational Mobilization”, 415

revolution and the revolution of 1830, which led liberals and democrats to put the blame on Bonapartism, and not on France as a nation; the presence of pro-French circles at court which also included King Victor Emmanuel and former Prime Minister La Marmora. All these factors prevented France from taking on the role that had been Austria's as the nemesis of both the Italian and the German cause, thus neutralizing a possible reuse of the idea of shared fate in an anti-French sense.

Lastly, it appears clear that the study of the diffusion of an idea is strictly linked to the method of analysis. In this thesis I opted to examine the idea of shared fate through a qualitative study of sources selected by me for their relevance and content. This choice was also made compulsory by the nature and the ambition of this thesis to be the first critical attempt to conceptualize the idea of Italo-German shared fate and to study it through the history of ideas' framework. The main task was therefore to provide a definition of the concept and to contextualize it in the historical fabric, with a special focus on the mutual influence between the two. The need to highlight this mutual influence made the choice of a qualitative method the most suitable one for the task. However, there is no doubt about the potential of this thesis to serve as a basis for further studies aimed at studying the idea of shared fate from different perspectives and with different historiographic methods. Particularly interesting would be a quantitative research with the most recent text-mining software on the linguistic patterns that characterized the manifestations of this idea in Italian public discourse. This method would offer a deeper perspective on the various shades of meaning that this idea had depending on the audience, opening fascinating macro-perspectives otherwise not easily detectible by a purely qualitative approach. In the same way, it could be interesting to explore a topic only briefly mentioned here, namely the reactions of the German national movement to this idea and the role of these reactions in the unitary debate in Germany. This thesis, in fact, cited in its concluding chapter a speech of the German association in Florence in which the idea of shared fate was explicitly mentioned – even though only in its celebrative guise – by Germans. This could lead us to hypothesize a certain reception of the idea of shared fate in a fraction of the German national movement: however, more research is required to test the plausibility of such a hypothesis.

What instead appears as clear as the sky from the findings of this thesis is the tendency of national movements of the 19th century to look beyond their national “boxes” and to build complex relations between them on the basis of even more complex *pastiches* of geopolitical interests, socio-economic patterns, and cultural constructs. By providing a detailed overview of one of these constructs, this thesis seeks to encourage future researchers to shed further light on the transnational aspect of European history of the 19th century, condemned for too long to be a history of “national islands”.

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