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978-0-521-15865-7 - Italy in the Making: January 1st 1848 to November 16th 1848

G. F.-H. & J. Berkeley

Excerpt

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PRELIMINARY

SITUATION ON JANUARY 1ST, 1848

I

At the beginning of the year 1848 the two principal factors in the situation were the influence of Pope Pius IX, now rather on the wane, and the still-invincible Austrian army.

By this date, all the small Italian nations except Naples were on the verge of an outbreak against Austrian domination. But to state this alone is to state nothing. What made the outlook so ominous was the fact that on the continent of Europe almost every civilised people was on the verge of an outbreak. During the coming eighteen months there would be bloodshed in nearly all the capitals: in Paris, Vienna, Berlin, Budapest, Prague, Warsaw and others; and—up and down Italy—in Rome, Milan, Venice, Naples, and Palermo, as well as in most of the secondary towns. For all the different types of revolution, whether national, racial, social or political, their crises seemed to have arrived simultaneously. Very soon insurgent nationalism would cause Czechs and Poles and Hungarians to rise against Germans and Russians; Croats against Hungarians; and Italians against Austrians. At the same time, racially there were three great upheavals, the Pan-German, the Pan-Slav and the Pan-Italian. Thirdly, in some countries the strife was social, such as the rising of the Polish serfs against their landlords. And lastly, as to Liberalism, there hardly existed a civilised nation in which progressive leaders were not claiming freer forms of government.

The above summary is not written with a view to dramatic effect, but because it governs the whole situation. The Revolution was about to break its bounds; and the widespread anarchy which would result was not fully realised by

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[More information](#)

any of the men in authority except Metternich. In Italy, however, there was one counterbalancing hope: that this world-upheaval would offer a wonderful chance of winning her freedom; and this possibility was clearly understood by most educated Italians. But, inevitably, it would be an opportunity of very short duration; and that fact was realised by hardly anyone, except, probably, King Charles Albert.

Among Italian nationalists the leader was still His Holiness Pope Pius IX. It was now a year and a half since, as newly-elected Pope, he had stepped voluntarily into the arena, and had declared that the old order of things could no longer continue. His great act of amnesty to political offenders had been received with almost unimaginable gratitude.

It was felt that here was a ruler who was ready to make sacrifices for the general good; and after each fresh concession immense crowds came to thank him with tears of gratitude, and knelt in their thousands to receive his blessing. Gradually they had set him up as their national leader in a war of liberation against Austria. Many of them failed to perceive that although he believed in free institutions and in uniting Italy, he was, first of all, a devoted priest. To risk the status of the Holy See was unthinkable; and thus he was torn between the two greatest calls that a man can hear,¹ his patriotism and his religion.

Now, by the beginning of the year 1848, he had granted almost all that it was possible for a Pope to concede. And although to thousands of people he was still their beloved Pio Nono, he knew that he was at the parting of the ways. The crowds did not mean to let him come to a halt in his

¹ He would refuse to become a constitutional sovereign and thereby submit his will to that of the people. But he had set up a Consulta or consultative assembly, and hoped thus to get good work done for his state. As to the problem of unifying Italy, he was opposed to the Mazzinian plan of union by fusion, but he had tried to carry out the scheme of Gioberti, a federation of the Italian states, whereby the separate identity of the Temporal Power could be preserved.

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

SITUATION ON JANUARY 1ST, 1848

3

career of concession. When he had tried to modify their New Year's Day demonstration, they had shown signs of anger. They were under the sway of the mob leaders, and those leaders meant to drive him on from point to point until they had compelled him to declare war and excommunicate the Austrians. They were determined that their war of liberation should also be proclaimed a Holy War.

Naturally Pius had no intention of excommunicating the Austrian soldiers or of declaring war against anyone unless in self-defence. His state was guaranteed by all the Great Powers of Europe.

Looking back on the scene after ninety years, certainly most of us will agree that if the Pope was thus debarred from declaring war, that fact also debarred him from having a state at all. But in 1848 such ideas as this did not exist. The Papal State had been solemnly re-established by all the World Powers in 1815, only thirty-three years earlier. It was absolutely safe, and Pius must have felt himself treated with outrageous ingratitude, if not by the people, at all events by the popular leaders. As long as he had concessions to make, they had fawned on him; but now they were raising his own people against him; and several of these were men who, but for his amnesty, would still have been in exile or even in prison.²

The question remained: if war broke out, what did he intend to do? Perhaps his position is best illustrated by his

² In a despatch of January 15th, 1848, Count Lützow, the Austrian ambassador, described a very interesting interview with Pius: "Je m'apercevais qu'il voit et qu'il redoute les nuages qui couvrent l'horizon de l'avenir. Des exclamations telles que 'Que ferons-nous? Que deviendrons-nous?' Lui échappèrent à diverses reprises. Il convint avec moi qu'il ne Lui restait plus rien à concéder à ses sujets, et qu'il ne tenait qu'à eux de profiter des avantages qu'Il leur avait accordés et largement distribués. Sa Sainteté me parla avec peine de l'ingratitude avec laquelle tous les sacrifices qu'Il a portés ont été recompensés. Sa Sainteté se plaignait amèrement de ne pas avoir été compris..." Vienna H.H.S.A., Rome, 1848.

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

4 SITUATION ON JANUARY 1ST, 1848

well-known interview with Professor Montanelli of Pisa University. Montanelli³ was a lecturer—a bearded, excitable little man, an intellectual and rather a visionary, but honest and self-sacrificing. In the course of a short stay in Rome he succeeded in obtaining an interview with Pius. During such interviews Pius nearly always made a favourable impression; at the age of fifty-six he had still his share of good looks, and of course would never lose his air of breeding and his gentle sense of fun; but on this occasion he seemed to be rather weary. The interview lasted nearly two hours and was certainly more important and more dramatic than either of them realised at the time.⁴

Pius spoke with surprising frankness: evidently he wanted to make an end of the vast misunderstanding. After complaining several times of the constant misuse that was made of his name, he told Montanelli that he knew that a war of independence was inevitable: that, as an Italian, he wanted to see the foreign invaders driven out of his country, but that as Pope—as the universal Father—he could never declare a war of independence against Austria.

“But”, said Montanelli, “when all Italy is seething with warlike enthusiasm; when Lombardy rises and calls upon the young men from every part of Italy to come to her rescue, will not the Italian populations of the State of Your Holiness want to take their share in the effort?”

“I see that too”, said Pius; “I see that it will be impossible to restrain them... They will go.”

Strange as it may seem, these words came as a revelation to Montanelli. He, like all the rest of Italy, had pictured the Pope as leading a military and religious crusade against the Austrians. Now the true situation dawned upon him: that the Papal State was not a national but an international institution: that it could not declare war unless it were invaded: that Pius would let his young men go—for, indeed, he could

³ *V. Italy in the Making*, II, 128.

⁴ Montanelli, *Memorie*, II, 56.

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

SITUATION ON JANUARY 1ST, 1848

5

not possibly prevent them even if he had ever wanted to do so. But that was all. Anyone interested in the Revolution can imagine the fearful disappointment to an enthusiast such as Montanelli. In his splendid vision of the future it seemed now as if the principal figure had vanished.

All depended on keeping his “great Pius” in the movement.

He continues: “I was convinced that for Italy, which was without political or moral unity, and was emerging from slavery without any well-defined principles of freedom, the name of Pius standing above all the transitory chaos of revolution, constituted the force which was acting as an impulse to some men, as a restraint to others and a bond of union for all: and that if we should be deprived of his prestige before we became ordered as a national entity, we ran the risk of breaking up into small and powerless factions. . . .” And so great was his distress that he threw himself on his knees and, with tears, entreated Pius not to abandon Italy.

This interview shows us that Pius IX had foreseen the coming crisis: his sympathies were with his young men but his religious duty was with the Holy See—and within five months of that day his hegemony of the Italian national movement was to be one of the chief developments of the year 1848.

II

The Austrian army in Italy, about which Pope Pius IX and Professor Montanelli were talking, was undoubtedly one of the best in Europe at that day, and at the same time one of the most peculiar. To obtain a vivid perception of it we need only read the following list of the units and their nationalities.⁵

⁵ Our chief authorities for the Austrian army are the *Feldzug*, Hillebrandt, Kunz, Heller, Fabris, Meyer Ott, Radetzky’s writings; the memoirs or letters left by various officers (such as Schönhals, Benedek, Pimodan, etc., etc.). For other names *v.* the Bibliography.

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

6 SITUATION ON JANUARY 1ST, 1848

STAFF

Commander-in-Chief	Field-Marshal Count Radetzky
Chief of General Staff	Field-Marshal Hess ⁶
First Adjutant-General	Field-Marshal Carl Schönhals

FIRST ARMY CORPS

Commanding Officer	Field-Marshal Count E. Wratistlaw
Chief of Staff	Lieut.-Colonel von Nagy
Adjutant of Army Corps	Major von Woyciechowski

WEIGELSPERG'S DIVISION (H.Q. Milan)

Maurer Brigade (Milan)

	*B. S. G.	
2nd Regt Ottochaner Borderers, 1st Batt.	1 . .	Croats
3rd Regt Oguliner Borderers, 1st Batt.	1 . .	Croats
Kaiser Jägers, 11th Batt.	1 . .	Italians
44th Regt Archduke Albert's Infantry, 3rd Batt.	1 . .	Italians

Gyulai Brigade (Magenta)

Kaiser Jägers, 2nd Batt.	1 . .	Tyrolese (Aust.)
Kaiser Jägers, 3rd Batt.	1 . .	Tyrolese (Aust.)
Kaiser Jägers, 4th Batt.	1 . .	Tyrolese (Ital.)
43rd Regt Geppert Infantry, 3rd Batt.	1 . .	Italians
Horse Battery, No. 1	. . 6	

Schaafgotsche Brigade (Milan)

Regt Sardinia (re-named Radetzky) Hussars	. 8 .	Hungarians
Horse Battery, No. 3	. . 6	

WISSIAK'S DIVISION (H.Q. Milan)

Wohlgemuth Brigade (Milan)

1st Regt Kaiser Infantry, 1st and 2nd Batts.	2 . .	Moravians
21st Regt Paumgarten Infantry, 1st and 2nd Batts.	2 . .	Bohemians
Field Battery, No. 2	. . 6	

* B. = Battalions; S. = Squadrons; G. = Guns.

The battalions were roughly 1000 strong, with six companies each: the squadrons about 180 strong; and the batteries about 150 men with six guns. *Feldzug*, 1, 6. *Fabris*, 1, 203.

⁶ Hess did not arrive until May 12th after the battle of Santa Lucia. Before that the Chief of Staff had been Colonel Johann Wratistlaw, an officer of less standing; Radetzky's chief adviser had been Schönhals, who was much disappointed at the arrival of Hess.

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

SITUATION ON JANUARY 1ST, 1848

7

Clam Brigade (Milan)

	B.	S.	G.	
18th Regt Reisinger Infantry, 1st and 2nd Batts.	2	.	.	Bohemians
33rd Regt Gyulai Infantry, 1st and 2nd Batts.	2	.	.	Hungarians
Field Battery, No. 1	.	.	6	

SCHWARZENBERG'S DIVISION (H.Q. Brescia)

Schönhals Brigade (Cremona)

18th Regt Archduke Albert Infantry, 1st and 2nd Batts.	2	.	.	Italians
51st Regt Rukawina Infantry, 1st and 2nd Batts.	2	.	.	Hungarians
23rd Regt Ceccopieri Infantry, 3rd Batt.	1	.	.	Italians
Field Battery, No. 7	.	.	6	

Archduke Sigismund Brigade (Bergamo)

4th Regt Szluiner Borderers, 1st Batt.	1	.	.	Croats
17th Regt Hohenlohe Infantry, 1st and 2nd Batts.	2	.	.	Gorizian Istrians
38th Regt Haugwitz Infantry, 3rd Batt.	1	.	.	Italians
45th Regt Archduke Sigismund's Infantry, 1st Batt.	1	.	.	Italians
Field Battery, No. 9	.	.	6	

WOCHER'S DIVISION (H.Q. Milan)

Strassoldo Brigade (Saronno)

5th Regt Warasdiner Kreuzer Borderers, 1st Batt.	1	.	.	Croats
8th Regt Gradiscaner Borderers, 1st Batt.	1	.	.	Slovaks
7th Regt Prohaska Infantry, 1st and 2nd Batts.	2	.	.	Carinthians
10th Batt. Feld-Jägers	1	.	.	Austrians
Field Battery, No. 3	.	.	6	

Rath Brigade (Milan)

43rd Regt Geppert Infantry, 1st and 2nd Batts.	2	.	.	Italians
Freysauff Grenadiers (from 33rd, 52nd and 61st Regts)	1	.	.	Hungarians
D'Anthon Grenadiers (from 38th, 43rd and 45th Regts)	1	.	.	Italians
Field Battery, No. 8	.	.	6	

Archduke Ernst Brigade (Lodi)

4th Regt Imperial Uhlans	.	6	.	Galician Poles
2nd Regt Bavarian Dragoons	.	6	.	Austrians
Horse Battery, No. 4	.	.	6	

Artillery reserve

One battery, No. 1	.	.	6	
One rocket battery, No. 1	.	.	6	
Total of First Army Corps	35	20	66	

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

8 SITUATION ON JANUARY 1ST, 1848

SECOND ARMY CORPS

Commanding Officer	Field-Marshal Baron D'Aspre
Chief of Staff	Major von Schmerling
Adjutant to Army Corps	Major Taude

WIMPFEN'S DIVISION (H.Q. Padua)

Lichtenstein Brigade (Padua)

	B. S. G.	
6th Regt Warasdiner S. Georger Borderers, 1st Batt.	1 . .	Croats
9th Regt Peterwardiner Borderers, 1st Batt.	1 . .	Slovaks
Feld-Jägers, 8th Batt.	1 . .	Italians
Feld-Jägers, 9th Batt.	1 . .	Austrians
Mounted Battery, No. 2	. . 6	

Prince William Taxis Brigade (Vicenza)

27th Regt Piret Infantry, 1st and 2nd Batts.	2 . .	Styrians
52nd Regt Archduke Franz Karl Infantry, 1st and 2nd Batts.	2 . .	Hungarians
Field Battery, No. 4	. . 6	

LUDOLF'S DIVISION (Treviso)

Auer Brigade (Udine)

10th Regt 1st Banal Borderers, 1st Batt.	1 . .	Croats
11th Regt 2nd Banal Borderers, 1st Batt.	1 . .	Croats
16th Regt Zanini Infantry, 3rd Batt.	1 . .	Italians
26th Regt Archduke Ferdinand d'Este Infantry, 3rd Batt.	1 . .	Italians

Culoz Brigade (Venice)

13th Regt Wimpffen Infantry, 3rd Batt.	1 . .	Italians
47th Regt Kinsky Infantry, 1st and 2nd Batts.	2 . .	Styrians
Angelmayer Grenadiers (from 16th and 26th Regts)	1 . .	Italians
5th Garrison Batt.	1 . .	Italians

PRINCE HANNIBAL TAXIS DIVISION (H.Q. Verona)

Boccalari Brigade (Verona)

32nd Regt Archduke Franz d'Este Infantry, 1st and 2nd Batts.	2 . .	Hungarians
38th Regt Haugwitz Infantry, 1st and 2nd Batts.	2 . .	Italians
6th Garrison Batt.	1 . .	Italians
Pioneers (four companies)	. . .	
Field Battery, No. 5	. . 6	

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

SITUATION ON JANUARY 1ST, 1848

9

<i>Nugent Brigade (Verona)</i>			
		B. S. G.	
7th Regt Brooder Borderers, 1st Batt.	1	.	Slovaks
45th Regt Archduke Sigismund's Infantry, 3rd Batt.	1	.	Italians
48th Regt Archduke Ernst Infantry, 1st and 2nd Batts.	2	.	Italians
Field Battery, No. 6	.	.	6
<i>Simbschen Brigade (Verona)</i>			
7th Hussar Regt Reuss	.	8	Hungarians
4th Cavalry Regt Windischgratz	.	8	Bohemian-Moravians
Horse Battery, No. 5	.	.	6
<i>Artillery reserve</i>			
One battery, No. 2	.	.	6
One rocket battery, No. 2	.	.	6
Total of Second Army Corps	26	16	42

About 70,000 men in all: 61,000 infantry; 5000 cavalry; 108 guns

What a strange state of things in a garrison town, to hear perhaps four or five different languages in the streets! It must have tended to add to the difficulties of the officers, just as it did during the Great War.⁷ But at the same time we shall find counterbalancing factors which made Radetzky's army one of the best in Europe.

The history of the Austrian military service has been traced, through the wars against Frederick the Great, to feudal days when Vienna was an outpost of Europe against the Turks. But in the present work we need only go back forty years to the period of desperate reorganisation against Napoleon; and since 1831 Field-Marshal Radetzky had been in command. It was mainly he who had taken the conscripts of all these various races and had formed them into what seems a rather strange army—for it was an entity apart from

⁷ In 1918 a British officer told one of the present writers that several days earlier he had captured a batch of Austrians at the Asiago plateau and that around him he heard nine languages being spoken at the same moment: English, French, Italian, German, Hungarian, Czech, Polish, Rumanian (and one other now forgotten), and that this did not make for efficiency, especially as the men had had no regular ration for over twenty-four hours!

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

10 SITUATION ON JANUARY 1ST, 1848

nationality: it was a soldier-organisation in which loyalty to the Kaiser was the watchword, and courage the universal *culte*; a splendid military machine, aristocratic and yet professional, hard as Bessemer steel, but, alas, employed in holding down the Italian population; and necessarily, in time of war, prepared to treat their villages as foreign territory.⁸

In 1848, however, the language differences were a more serious difficulty than ever heretofore, because each language represented a separate patriotism and a separate nationality. It was a danger which had long ago been foreseen by Radetzky. In December 1834 he had written on the subject of forming one national army:

We possess various provinces which never could be transformed into military countries because no trust can be placed in their loyalty. To this category belong Italy, and perhaps also Poland. Moreover we have other provinces over which we have not full control, such as Hungary and Siebenbergen; in them our Imperial Master could only obtain a few recruits to bring his depleted Hungarian regiments up to strength. How can we hope that these countries will adopt the military system of the hereditary dominions? And what results from such abuses? The German provinces have had to bear the burden alone, and thus are punished instead of being rewarded for their genuine loyalty and self-sacrifice. And unfortunately this is still the case. The German is called up at eighteen years of age. He serves fourteen years and then, after the expiration of his enlistment, he is liable for duty in the Landwehr for a further thirteen years—that is to say, until his 45th year. On the other hand the Italians and Tyrolese serve for only eight years and are then free from all further duty; while the Hungarian depends entirely on the discretion of his State. How can there exist any conformity here?⁹

⁸ A specimen of Radetzky's views on politics: speaking of Prussia he said, "To hit Napoleon she worked out her system at that time. Since his overthrow everything has gone out of its course; nowadays instead of the true soldier-spirit we deal out everywhere nothing but political humbug (*Schwindel*), just as formerly religious fanaticism. God alone knows when the folly of men will come to an end. I fear it will not be until there arises some great conqueror who will make the peoples tremble for their independence." Radetzky, *Denkschriften*, p. 538.

⁹ Radetzky, *ibid.* p. 539.