

# Industry & Nationalism: The Unifications of Italy & Germany

Industrialization did more than change the human workforce with the introduction of machines. All across Europe, the power of the middle classes who demanded national independence were strengthened. Business leaders especially hoped to benefit from national unified markets while politicians and journalists channeled worker discontent into nationalistic fervor.

## Italy: 1848-1860



The movement to unite Italy into one unified cultural and political entity was known as the *Risorgimento* (Resurgence). For centuries, Italy had consisted of a number of smaller nation-states; previously, leaders of various failed democratic revolutions had called for the unification of Italy into a single country. Count Camilo de Cavour (1810-1861), then Prime Minister of Piedmont in the Kingdom of Sardinia, wrote an essay on how railroads could unite Italy economically in the Industrial Age. In 1858, he formed an alliance with France that included a pledge of military support against Austria, Italy's major obstacle to unification. After driving out the Austrians, revolutionary assemblies in the central Italian provinces of Tuscany, Parma, Modena, and Romagna voted in favor of unification with Sardinia in the summer of 1859.

In the spring of 1860, Giuseppe Garibaldi, the leader of the revolutionary Red Shirt army, known as the Thousand, in southern Italy worked to overthrow the unpopular Kingdom of Two Sicilies (Naples). By the end of the year, Garibaldi had liberated Sicily and Naples; Cavour, however, worried that Garibaldi, a democrat, would replace Sardinia, a constitutional monarchy, as the unifier of Italy. To put an end to Garibaldi's offensive, Cavour organized *plebiscites*, or popular votes, to annex Naples to Sardinia. Garibaldi, outmaneuvered by the experienced realist Cavour, yielded his territories to Cavour in the name of Italian unification. In 1861, Italy was declared a united nation-state, the Kingdom of Italy, under the Sardinian king Victor Immanuel II.

## Germany (1863-1871)

During the early nineteenth century, Germany was still broken into smaller nation-states. Prussia was the only German state that could match the power and influence of its rival, the Austrian Empire. They were comparable in terms of size, population and wealth. Austria opposed the idea of German unification as it saw this as a threat to its own empire. Austria contained many non-German lands and people, although there was a significant percentage of German-speakers in the empire. German unification would prevent them from annexing their non-German holdings, forcing them to relinquish vast amounts of power and wealth. If they broke away to join a unified Germany, Austria would be smaller and weaker. To this end, Prussia and Austria were rivals.



Economics strengthened Prussia's hand. Prussia organized the German states into a customs union (called the *Zollverein*). This essentially created a free-trade zone where products made in German provinces would not have taxes added to their price but products that came from other countries would be charged the additional tax. Prussia's chancellor, Otto von Bismarck, followed a policy of "blood and iron" to unite Germany through economic and military power. Prussia had industrialized faster than Austria and France. Bismarck combined skillful diplomacy and Prussian military might to achieve German unification. Prussian military leaders made use of new technologies, like the railroad and the rifle, to build the most powerful army in Europe. After a series of successful wars against Denmark, Austria, and France, Germany was finally united in 1871. The King of Prussia then became known as the *Kaiser* (emperor) of Germany.