The Risorgimento in Transnational Perspective

Veranstalter: Oliver Janz (Rom/Berlin); German Historical Institute in Rome (DHI Rom); British School at Rome
Datum, Ort: 14.04.2011-15.04.2011, Rom
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On the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the proclamation of the Kingdom of Italy, the German Historical Institute in Rome along with The British School at Rome jointly hosted a conference aimed at investigating the place of the Italian Risorgimento in transnational perspective. As OLIVER JANZ (Rome) pointed out in his introductory paper, this methodological approach turns out to be more and more important in current research as the national parameters which have traditionally dominated historical investigation prove to be inappropriate in answering the political and cultural questions of the 'New History of Risorgimento Nationalism'.[1] In contrast to most of the other Risorgimento proceedings that were held this year, Janz presented the Italian state formation and nation-building as a transnationally related process. For this reason, the intention of the conference was to contribute to the growing scholarship of recent years reconfiguring our understanding of how Italian developments took place within larger regional and global frameworks along with their transnational and cross-regional significance. Accordingly, scholars form Germany, Great Britain, and Italy were invited to discuss the complex interactions between national and transnational factors that led to the formation of the Kingdom of Italy in 1861.

The first paper was delivered by MICHAEL BROERS (Oxford) considered the Napoleonic Empire in Italy, 1796-1814, and took up the question of the French policy of acculturation and cultural imperialism there. He argued that the relationship between imperial France and conquered Italy went beyond mere material exploitation. Moreover, the French imperialist strategy included two further aspects: to enlighten the Italians and to integrate the Italian peninsula into the Napoleonic regime. By implementing new administrative structures as well as the Code Civil, France tried to transform and homogenise Italy's regional configurations. Presuming that their political principles were universally applicable, the French did not tolerate any exceptions or modifications. But for several Italians these structures, so crucial for the empire, were impossible to accept due to their strong regional and local traditions. The Napoleonic notion that the Italian society was quite similar to the French was soon proved wrong and resulted in mutual hostility between rulers and ruled. Broers concluded that the difficult relationship between imperial France and conquered Italy reveals therefore not only the mechanism of state formation and nation-building but also the complex process of transnational acculturation within the framework of an empire.

DAVID LAVEN (Manchester) gave a particularly nuanced account of Lombardy-Venetia as part of the Habsburg Empire in the period between 1815 and 1866. Owing to the fact that the 'black legend' of Austrian domination proved to be so persistent in Risorgimento historiography, he emphasised that neither the Habsburg authorities nor their administration, both organised as separate entities in Lombardy-Venetia, were extremely oppressive. With regard to this observation, it was central to Laven's argument that transnational history can be enriched successfully by the methodical approach of the New Cultural History. He exemplified his notion thoroughly, giving various biographical sketches of representatives of the ruling Austrian and Italian elite, who were often raised in a pan-European environment different from their later 'national' affiliation, and by considering perceptions of bureaucratic procedures in contemporary literature. A fur-

[1] For an overview see Albergoni, Gianluca, „Sulla „Nuova Storia" del Risorgimento: Note per una discussione, in: Società e Storia, 120 (2008), pp. 349-366; Banti, Alberto Mario; Ginsborg, Paul, Per una nuova storia del Risorgimento, in: Storia d'Italia, Annali 22, Il Risorgimento, Turin 2007, pp. xxiii-xli; Mannori, Luca, Il Risorgimento tra „nuova" e „vecchia" storia: Note in margine ad un libro recente, in: Società e Storia, 120 (2008), pp. 367-379; Körner, Axel; Riall, Lucy, Introduction: The New History of Risorgimento Nationalism, in: Nations and Nationalism 15, no. 3 (2009), pp. 396-401.

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ther aspect of Laven's paper was the transnational evolution of Venetian identity. He argued that foreign intellectuals, like Pierre Antoine Daru, Leopold von Ranke or Lord Byron contributed profoundly to the notion of *Venezianità*. Moreover, also the Habsburg Empire supported to a certain extent Venetian municipal loyalty in order to prevent the emergence of a strong anti-imperialist sentiment. But according to Laven, Venetians generally did not seem to be very interested in the Italian patriotic discourse of the Risorgimento. Regarding the correlation between the imperial and municipal level, he then proceeded to encourage a more intense consideration of sub-national and local histories for current transnational historiography.

Warfare has been one of the major topics in current historical debates on the Risorgimento. A central – but up to now historiographically nearly neglected – facet of this field of research is the role of international volunteers fighting for and against national unification in Italy. FERDINAND N. GÖHDE (Florence) and SIMON SARLIN (Rome/Paris) explored the phenomenon of armed volunteering from different angles. While Göhde concentrated on German volunteers participating in the armed conflicts as adherents of both Mazzini and Garibaldi as well as in defence of the Papal states between 1834-70, Sarlin explored the motivation of those men fighting on behalf of the exiled King Frances II of Naples in the wars of southern 'brigands', 1860-63. Taking a closer look at the question what encouraged the Germans to decide to fight one side or the other, Göhde revealed that the individual set of stimuli was quite similar across the political spectrum. Apart from their idealist motives to fight for democratic principle, national unification or Catholicism, a great deal of Germans volunteered in a foreign expedition in Italy for venturesome purposes. It was their chance to experience their idea of Romanticism along with alternative forms of martial and brotherly camaraderie. Other Germans simply needed to bridge a gap in their military careers. Additionally, economic considerations were quite significant. For many German émigrés fighting in Italy was an opportunity for employment. But being paid normally made the difference between professional soldiers, mercenaries and volunteers. Consequently, foreign volunteers were either described by their own side as brothers in arms or as mere disreputable mercenaries by the respective other side. In parallel with that perception, Italians and Germans passed their own national stereotypes on to the various armed groups and forces in which they served. The conscription practice and network recruitment across the borders was another remarkable aspect of Göhde's paper. Despite legal restrictions, strictly prohibiting foreign recruitment, a number of committees and offices were founded either close to the German frontier or in London, Zurich and Paris to employ young Germans and exiles. Those experiences and perceptions contributed to the process of democratising and internationalising the language of friendship and collective sentiment.

By focusing particularly on the foreign volunteers in southern Italy, Simon Sarlin examined the strong impact of the Risorgimento on conservative and Catholic opinion. From 1860 to 1863 hundreds of men from all over Europe joined the guerrilla forces that were set up by the Neapolitan government-in-exile. From their point of view, Italy's unification was the result of an illegitimate conquest. Consequently, they saw themselves as a part of a people's revolt in the Mezzogiorno against Piedmontese domination and against a state that had been unified by using armed force in 1859/60. Nevertheless, the international mobilisation of Spanish, Belgian, Swiss, and German volunteers, alongside well known representatives of Carlism like the Spanish generals José Borges and Rafael Tristany, reflected not only the existing European resistance to the Italian nationalist movement, but also the dispute about the endeavour of secularisation. By supporting a counter-revolution, the volunteers were able to show their solidarity with the conservative powers of Europe and their intention to defend the temporal and religious sovereignty of the papacy. Accordingly, Sarlin stressed the fact that the participants in the 'Antirisorgimento' were involved in conflicts that were both civil wars in the Mezzogiorno as well as episodes in a more profound ideological struggle in Europe.

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The most enduring political hero of nineteenth-century Italy, Giuseppe Garibaldi, was the topic of LUCY RIALL'S (London) paper. As an expert on the cult of Garibaldi she argued that his whole political career oscillated between national and transnational networks. Thus, his courageous actions and the successive creation of his political image as the 'Hero of the two worlds' in tribute to his military expeditions in both South America and Italy confirms to be an excellent object for transnational history. Although Riall declared that it was not her original intention to analyse the political myth of Garibaldi from a transnational point of view, she confirmed that it is inevitable to indicate obvious transnational aspects in his biography as well as the embedding of his public life in the currents of Romanticism along with the emergence of modern mass politics in Europe. As supporting evidence Riall referred to Garibaldi's three periods in exile when he established his transcontinental contacts with other revolutionaries and émigrés. Additionally, she assessed the impact of Garibaldi's extraordinary popularity and global appeal on the republican myth of the Risorgimento and on international democratic activism.

On the second day, the workshop was hosted by The British School at Rome located since its foundation at the impressive Sir Edwin Lutyens's Pavilion, finished in 1911 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the unification of Italy. MARCO MERIGGI (Naples) started off the session with an in-depth examination of the transnational aspect of the Southern Question in Italy. Not only journalists, novelists and politicians from northern Italy but also travellers who came from far beyond the Alps contributed effectively to the spatial and figurative invention of the Mezzogiorno. Both domestic and European travel literature, described the south either as a picturesque and exotic area of rural backwardness or as a territory of multi-layered deficiencies. Thus, Meriggi suggested that the analysis and comparison of this text genre can provide a profound understanding how these narratives reciprocally conceptualised the imaginative geography of Italy and influenced the Orientalist discourse along with the debate about cultural imperialism.

The following presentation dealt with the Roman Question from a transnational perspective. Concentrating on the orientalization of the Catholic Church and Rome, MANUEL BORUTTA (Bochum) argued that between the Enlightment and the revolution in 1848 the liberal European public often perceived Rome as either a place of despotism and lethargy or as a location of romantic melancholy and aesthetic experience. The reluctance of the papacy and curial administration to implement political reforms following 1848 intensified the impression of educated Europeans that Rome was diametrically opposed to modernisation. They declared the *caput mundi* as metaphorically deceased (*'Roma è morta'*). Italian liberals wanted to overcome this perception of backwardness and transformed the Roman question into a national task coined in the slogan „Rome or death" (*'Roma o morte'*). Nonetheless, the decision to proclaim Rome as the future capital of the newly united Kingdom of Italy was not self-evident in 1861. Borutta stated that the wish to create a „Third Rome of the people" in fact expressed the predominating anti-clericalism as well as anti-Catholicism of Italian liberals. They were exceedingly afraid of prospective democratic forces within the catholic camp. Both, orientalisation and anti-clericalism have to be seen in a broader European and global framework, revealing the strong transnational interdependence of national and denominational concepts.

Finally, CARLOTTA SORBA (Padua) focused on the development of the transnational character of the *Opera all'italiana*. Created as new musical genre in urban Italy in the 17th century opera soon became an essential element of court life and an aristocratic form of entertainment in all European countries. By the end of the 18th century opera had developed subsequently into a popular commercial phenomenon for the paying audience spreading its success to other continents. As a result, the first New York Italian Opera House opened in 1833 and from the 1840s many travelling troupes of Italian origin began to visit all parts of the globe. Since the whole musical ensemble was dominated by Italian composers, librettists, musicians, opera-singers, and impresarios, opera

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was inevitably associated with Italian culture. Furthermore, Italians had already defined a distinct codification of literary and musical conventions as well as a highly standardized theatrical terminology that was adopted by critics and audiences in Europe and overseas. Sorba then investigated how opera was identified as a genuine Italian product for a commercial cosmopolitan theatre market and as means of communication to convey concepts of progress, romanticism and republican liberalism. Especially among the Italian political exiles in Latin America opera became a synonym for patriotic ideals after the revolution of 1848. Sorba defined the *Opera all'italiana* as a 'transnational hyper system' that exported Italian musical expertise and political ideals of the Risorgimento throughout Europe as well as to North and South America.

In their concluding remarks, Lucy Riall and Michael Broers offered a number of thought-provoking comments both on the papers and on the methodical approach of transnational history. Two themes emerged from the subsequent participant's discussion, each of which marks out a terrain for future research. The first was the need to achieve a closer link between the significant foci – such as cultural imperialism (Broers), internal colonisation and cross-regional influences – through which the interaction between internal and external factors of national-building can be explored. Given that much research on the Risorgimento has centred more or less exclusively on the national level, transnational history offers a challenge as well as an opportunity to adjust this imbalance. But to define potential transnational protagonists (Riall), institutions (Borutta, Sorba), and networks (Göhde) that traverse the factual and literary boundaries of the nation is methodologically a complex matter. Consequently, the analysis of the tightly corresponding key parameters serves to highlight both the value and the limitations of the theoretical approach of transnational history.

The second, closely related theme concerned the formation of spatial, 'geo-political' and 'geo-cultural' identities. Here, it is very appealing not only to look after the traditional areas of friction between the nations but to consider also local and regional configurations within supra-national projects and transnational frameworks (e.g. Empire-building). Thus, it enabled regional units to retain their special status within the nation more successfully. Furthermore, setting the nation in relation to regional entities leads to question of the internal peripheries and sub-national identities (Meriggi, Laven, Sarlin). Examining the political, economic and social differences as well as rivalries between the regions from a transnational perspective proposes a valuable insight into the contrasting experience of spatial identity formation in nineteenth-century Italy.

Thanks to the scientific coordinator Oliver Janz and the two organising institutions, this exchange of opinions and recent research will initiate a long-lasting debate over methodological conceptions and current historiography of the Italian Risorgimento in transnational perspective.

Conference Overview:

The Risorgimento in Transnational Perspective

Michael Matheus (DHI - Rome): Welcome

Oliver Janz (DHI - Rome): Introduction

Michael Broers (Oxford): Italy in the Napoleonic Empire

David Laven (Manchester): Foreign Rule? The Lombardo-Veneto as part of the Habsburg-Empire

Ferdinand N. Göhde (Florence): Tedeschi nei conflitti armati del Risorgimento

Simon Sarlin (Rome / Paris): L'Antirisorgimento come esperienza europea

Lucy Riall (London): Garibaldi. A transnational Story

Christopher Smith: (The British School at Rome): Welcome

Marco Meriggi (Neapel): Nord e Sud in prospettiva transnazionale

Manuel Borutta (Bochum): European Orientalism, Italian Nationalism and Catholic Globalisation: The Roman Question revisited

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Carlotta Sorba (Padua): Tra cosmopolitismo e nazione: L'opera italiana nel Risorgimento

Lucy Riall und Michael Broers: Comments and Conclusions

Organisation: Oliver Janz

Tagungsbericht *The Risorgimento in Transnational Perspective*. 14.04.2011-15.04.2011, Rom, in: H-Soz-u-Kult 11.11.2011.

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