

Garibaldi in South America: An Exploration

by Richard Bourne, London, Hurst, 2020, xx + 240 pp., £25.00 (hardback), ISBN 978-1787383135

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Giuseppe Garibaldi was one of the most iconic characters of the whole nineteenth century. Ever since his lifetime, the 'Hero of the Two Worlds' has inspired emancipation movements, claimed the attention of sovereigns, party leaders and common labourers, and aroused fear and suspicion among diplomats and politicians on both sides of the Atlantic. After his death, Garibaldi continued to influence republican groups, who immortalised him on stamps, lithographs, and glove boxes, while the red shirt became a universal symbol of freedom. His statues stand out in the major squares of American and European capitals, as well as in remote corners of Rio de la Plata and small villages in southern Italy. But is Garibaldi still so widely celebrated? Or is his memory now relegated to documentaries, the occasional work of fiction, and the interest of academic historians?

These seem to be the questions that inspired *Garibaldi in South America: An Exploration*. Richard Bourne, senior research fellow at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies and an acute observer of contemporary Brazilian politics, has dedicated his latest book to the most exciting and spectacular part of Giuseppe Garibaldi's life: his adventure, first as a corsair and then as a *gaucho*, in South America. The choice of topic contains a partial answer to the questions above. Garibaldi's acquired status as a global hero depended not on his courage in defending the Roman Republic or on the success of the Expedition of the Thousand, but rather on his revolutionary feats in support of the Farrapos, in Rio Grande do Sul between 1837 and 1841, and on his military bravery in supporting the republican government of Fructuoso Rivera in Uruguay, during the so-called Guerra Grande between 1842 and 1848. Indeed, long before Italian Unification, his name echoed on both sides of the Atlantic in the imagination of men and women who had read about him and admired his sincere commitment to the cause of freedom. As Bourne explains, Garibaldi was not simply a nationalist patriot, but the quintessential internationalist, fighting for whatever he thought would support the liberties of individuals, no matter what their nationality, race, or social origin. In an age in which liberalism is considered obsolete, his life speaks of the vanguard of nineteenth-century ideals, as well as the advanced and cosmopolitan character of the Risorgimento.

The book is organised into four sections: the first two deal with Garibaldi's history and legacy in Latin America; the third follows the author on the roads of Brazil and Uruguay as he searches for traces of Garibaldi; finally, the fourth contains some reflections on the historical significance of the life of the Hero of the Two Worlds. The reconstruction of the beginning of Garibaldi's epic is concise and based on the extensive existing historiography. Bourne provides an enthusiastic account of Garibaldi's arrival in Rio de Janeiro, describing his involvement in the Farrapos Revolution, and sketching out his first meeting with Anita, his comrade-in-arms and future wife. The account alternates between romantic descriptions of ventures on Brazilian land and sea and detailed reports of filibustering raids against the Empire's navy. While this part mainly focuses on the adventurous side of his life, the chapter on the Italian Legion in Montevideo delves more deeply into Garibaldi's moral background, as

well as the ideological entanglement between Risorgimento republicanism and Uruguayan republicanism.

In Bourne's view, South America was the political cradle of a man destined to become the archetypal Risorgimento patriot. On the one hand, Garibaldi's experience on the far-away, savage battlefields in the New World provided him with the basics of commanding troops, directing a military campaign, and facing the risks of a civil war. It was an apprenticeship for future conflicts in Europe against the Austrian and Bourbon armies. On the other hand, fighting in a foreign land, commanding a legion of émigrés, alongside French, Spanish, and American volunteers, redefined the meaning of *italianità*, and the related values of brotherhood and national identity, in a more cosmopolitan framework. Furthermore, it served to persuade his comrades-in-arms that they were involved in a greater epic, not circumscribed within the cause of a faction or a party, but addressing the supreme achievement of human emancipation. Taken as a whole, these ideological and political elements were the pillars of *garibaldinismo* itself in the following decades on both sides of the Atlantic.

Nevertheless, as the author recognises in the third section of the book, the legacy of Garibaldi has now vanished. Despite his story remaining a reminder of the links between Europe and the New World, it is increasingly rare in the memory of modern Latin American public opinion, apart from a few commemorative events or anniversaries. One of the reasons for this, according to Bourne, has been the lack of interest by the new left parties in Brazil and Uruguay, which focus their campaigns on social reforms and attempts to erase the traces of recent dictatorships. This illustrates the ideological inclination of Latin American parties towards the political legacies of the twentieth century, an attitude that obscures the complex, but maybe more enduring, heritage of the age of revolutions and the era of civil wars. Finally, from a global perspective, it clearly explains the distance – and not only in chronological terms – between nineteenth-century society and the world we are living in.

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La Lega. Una storia

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The result of a long-term research project by Paolo Barcella, professor of Contemporary History at the University of Bergamo, this book examines the history of the League party (*Lega*) since its beginnings as a movement pushing for autonomy in the northern Venetian region, through its successive experiences in government and until the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Together with *I Rom. Una storia* by Sergio Bontempelli, Barcella's book inaugurates a new series – *Nodi dell'Italia repubblicana*, published by Carocci – which examines key topics in Italy's republican history. Edited by Michele Colucci, the main aim of the series is to introduce readers to central issues present in current political debates. Each volume backtracks to the origins of a selected topic, offering an overview of the social, political and