***Those who fail to learn from history are condemned to repeat it****.*

*Churchill, paraphrasing Santayana*

[Back story on Guiseppe Mazzini and the failure of Cosmopolitan Liberalism].

It was in this context that Mazzini penned the first of his three great essays on Cosmopolitan Ideals and National Sentiment – *Humanité et Patrie*, or *Humanity and Country*. Eleven years later, as the sentiment was changing and a new wave of liberalism was breaking across Europe with a national character – especially in France and the emerging Italian and German nation states – he would write in the London People’s Journal *Nationality and Cosmopolitanism*. Twenty-four years after that, in the wake of his own victories in Italy, cloaked with the labels of “The Father of Italy” in his home country and “The Prophet” abroad, he capped off his ideological trilogy with *Nazionalismo e nazionalità*, or *Nationalism and Nationality.*

Mazzini’s three essays are primarily written for the leaders of Europe’s liberal movements, that he perceived had let their ideology detach them from success. He tries to weave a balance between demanding progress and respecting the old, contextually in a climate where some contemporaries were rejecting nationalism as an outdated ideal worthy of hostility and being overthrown.

Mazzini opens the first of his essays, and repeats it sub textually in the other two, with the claim that every progressive movement in Europe should synthesise ‘Humanity’ as its objective and ‘the Country’ as its origin. He highlights that every movement that has failed or become corrupted has done so because it failed to pay appropriate respect to at least one of those two key ideas. Any popular movement must pursue humanity, otherwise it will be absent purpose. Any progressive movement must acknowledge the collective desire for nationhood, both to be popular, but also find a launching point to start.

He highlights that a liberal movement, with a focus on what is to come, and a disdain of what has passed, may neglect the importance of the Country in seeing too far forward. That because they believe the idea of nationality is an old idea, and is waning, they may see past it, and adopt a globalist, internationalist character to their movement, labelling their movement “cosmopolitan”. That they may resent using nationalism in their movement, because the character of the movement will characterise their future.

He responds by simply saying that to grow fruit the soil must be fertile. A revolutionary cannot choose their battlefield, and by elevating themselves so far above the ordinary people, intellectually, they become useless to their cause. He argues that a cosmopolitan will find themselves isolated by individualism, whilst a nationalist will find themselves empowered by association. The synthesis of Liberalism and Nationalism is the only way for Liberalism to succeed.

History has been kind to Giuseppe Mazzini. It’s easy to appreciate that in the earlier years of Mazzini’s activity, in the 1830s, for a liberal the unstoppable tide of progress seemed to be destined to wash away the ‘nation’ as it was understood. And, most certainly, it did – but what replaced it was a stronger form of the ‘nation’ than we had seen before, which most certainly was not what the average liberal would have seen coming. Perhaps this is part of why it feels so comfortable to refer to Mazzini as a “prophet” today.

Mazzini makes a simple claim. That popular movements cannot be successful without starting with the country and using the country. And, for the liberal movement of the 19th century, he was proven right. All the cosmopolitan uprisings failed to reach a critical mass, and only the uprisings that anchored around a national identity succeeded. In Italy, in France, in Germany, this was universally the case.

But history does not stop its kindness to Mazzini there. Giuseppe lived to see himself proven right, but I wonder if the prophet saw what the next century would bring in our next ideological clash – when the newly dominant liberalism meets the new ‘New’, socialism, fascism and anarchy.

Marx, writing his works just as Mazzini’s ideological seeds had grown into vibrant flowers, once again rejected nationalism. Marxist socialism called for a more radical form of cosmopolitanism – internationalism – neglecting the lessons Mazzini had just taught. Alongside Marx we see other communist writers, such as Bakunin who take a more radical approach than even Marx, laying the ideological foundations of anarchism and the complete rejection of the nation in its entirety, describable as a form of “anti-nationalism”.

But when we turn the page to the 20th century, and we see those ideas manifested, we find the same thing we saw in the 19th century. Internationalist socialist movements regularly rise and are just as quickly brushed aside without critical momentum. The socialist movements that succeed are those that either openly embrace a nationalist element (China, Cuba, Vietnam, Yugoslavia), or co-opt a nationalist narrative (the Bolsheviks in Russia during the civil war) before eventually conceding to a nationalist, even imperial, narrative to remain stable.

Perhaps no better of a case study exists than in 1930s Spain – where we see a direct clash between nationalism, cosmopolitanism and internationalism. In Spain we see three radical movements vie for the attention of the masses – Fascism, Socialism and Anarchism.

The internationalist anarchism was the least successful, being absorbed by their socialist brethren and then wholly defeated by fascism. The cosmopolitan socialism was well placed to win outright initially – having control of the government, international support from the USSR, and control of the most important cities in Spain (Madrid, Barcelona, et. al.). But in just three years the socialists find themselves outnumbered and outmatched by the massive appeal and near-religious fervour of Franco’s fascist forces. The fascists inevitable success would probably have been predicted by Mazzini, because Franco knew how to succeed. Franco started with ‘the Country’ and used nationalism to devastating effect, blending religion and tradition into a brand of ethnonationalism that resonated with the people and ensured his eventual victory.

The social movements of the 21st century – those built around race, gender and the environment – have, perhaps unsurprisingly, a similar cosmopolitan foundation to Marxism and Classical Liberalism. They would do well to not forget the same lessons as their predecessors.

*N.B. If you’re wondering why there is no analysis of the future in the wake of the infant nationalist populist movements of the early 21st Century, or the clear parallels between past failures and Clinton’s abysmal Cosmopolitan Presidential campaign,* ***this essay was originally written in 2016, prior to the electoral successes of Donald Trump****. At the time of writing, although I had considered writing about Marine Le Pen and Pauline Hanson, I thought it too long a bow to draw to put them in the same camp as the truly overwhelming popular movements of Garibaldi’s Risorgimento or Hitler’s National Socialists. Trump’s movement came closer and would have been worth comment.*