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CARLO DI RUDDIO AND THE AGE OF REVOLUTION

Nick Ridley



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Carlo di Rudio and the Age of Revolution

From a Europe convulsed by revolutions to an assassination plot and international secret diplomacy, to conflict between major European powers which changed the strategic power balance, to the American Civil War, and finally, to Custer's Last Stand, this tumultuous vista is told through the life and times of a comparatively little-known but indomitable revolutionary.

This book provides an account of the life of a little-known nineteenth-century revolutionary, Charles do Rudio, narrating the revolutions and insurgencies of nineteenth-century Europe from 1840 to 1870 and of the United States to 1880 in which di Rudio was involved, offering through his biography a unique perspective on the revolts and insurgencies that took place during this period and placing both his life and these revolts in the wider context of European history.

A fascinating narrative of a turbulent nineteenth century with analysis – in keeping with the author's speciality – of the revolts and insurgencies, taking the lessons of history relevant to our own times. This book will appeal to all those interested in the Age of Revolution and politics and society in the nineteenth century.

Nick Ridley is Visiting Research Fellow at Liverpool John Moores University. He specialises in international history, anti-terrorism, and history of insurgencies. His previous publications include *Michael Collins and the Financing of Political Violence* (2019) and three books on the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Dutch Revolt.

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Carlo di Rudio and the Age of Revolution

Nick Ridley

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Introduction

Carlo di Rudio and the Age of Revolution

This book has two objectives: firstly, to tell the story of the incredible life of a revolutionary, Carlo di Rudio, in the Age of Revolution; secondly, to give an account and explain the significance of those revolutions and insurgencies that occurred in the Age of Revolution.

The Age of Revolution, started in the late eighteenth century by what an eminent historian¹ designated the “duality of revolution”, namely, the French and Industrial Revolutions, lasted through the nineteenth century and transformed the economic and political landscapes, awakening nationalism. During this period, in the course of the rise of nationalism, new independent states emerged, including di Rudio’s beloved Italy. The revolutions of the nineteenth century were a major factor of this process. By the first decade of the twentieth century, nationalism and *raisons d’état* had led to the six major powers of Europe confronting each other in two blocs of triple alliances, leading to the First World War, the rise of the non-European powers the United States and Japan, and into what the same historian designates the Age of Extremes.

We are still, unfortunately, in the Age of Extremes. In keeping with the author’s other works and analyses on national insurgencies and revolts, the book will examine the revolutions in which di Rudio was involved, analysing with the criteria of the factors in which insurgencies succeed or fail. This may be a contribution to how to deal with current and future revolts, insurgencies, and terrorism, learning from the lessons of history.

There has been much scholarly research and many works on the influencers and statesmen participating and leading the revolutions of the Age of Revolution – Mazzini, Marx, Herzen, Kossuth, Garibaldi, Manin, Cavour, Lamartine, Napoleon III, Bismarck – but these national revolutions would not have occurred and not have ultimately succeeded were it not for the indomitable, determined fighting and enduring of ranks of the revolutionary foot soldiers – individuals like Carlo di Rudio, insurgent survivor.

Note

1 E. J. Hobsbawm *The Age of Revolution*



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1 Nationalist Awakening in Italy and Europe

Italy in the mid-eighteenth century consisted of no less than nine major states. Two were ancient republics dating back to the mediaeval era; these republics were the Republic of Genoa and the Serene Republic of Venice. One of the nine states, the Kingdom of Piedmont, under its ruler Victor Amadeus III of the House of Savoy, was independent and comparatively free from foreign influence.

Five were under the influence of the Austrian Habsburgs. These five included the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, ruled by son of the Empress Maria Theresa; Lombardy, ruled by the Archduke Ferdinand; and Modena, by Duke Francis IV; the Duke of Parma was married to Maria Amelia, daughter of the Empress Maria Theresa, and another daughter, Maria Carolina, was married to King Ferdinand of Naples. Finally, there were the Papal States, ruled by Pius VI. The French Revolution and the resulting European conflicts dramatically changed this.

During the course of the French Revolution, in various Italian states, pro-revolutionary societies and clubs and associations were formed. They were, understandably, regarded as subversive and suppressed by the authorities, with Jacobin groups acting clandestinely, plotting and being secretly encouraged by revolutionary French Foreign Minister Delacroix. In particular, he sent an agent to the Republic of Genoa to liaise and assist them in their subversive activities.

However, in the mid-1790s, events escalated. The French governing body, the Directory, was waging war against Austria in the latter's province, in what is now Belgium. To expand the war, the Austrian territories in Italy were targeted. A young revolutionary, General Napoleon Bonaparte, invaded with an army. Piedmontese forces engaged and were utterly defeated in a series of swift battles. At the Armistice of Cherasco, Piedmont was allowed to remain independent but ceded Nice and the province of Savoy to France. Nice and Savoy had been unilaterally annexed by the French revolutionary government back in 1793. Now, Bonaparte, by enforcing an armistice on Piedmont, compelled Piedmont to formally acquiesce in their loss.

Bonaparte and the French forces pushed on through Lombardy to Milan, and history witnessed for the first time – and it was certainly not to be the last – the military genius of Napoleon, combined with the new form of revolutionary

4 *Nationalist Awakening in Italy and Europe*

warfare. Between August and November 1796, he inflicted three complete defeats on the Austrians at Castiglione, Arnold, and Rivoli. He had crossed into mainland Venetia and enforced the Venetian passive acceptance of French occupation by sending one of his generals to, and cowing, the ancient Venetian assembly and presenting his demands. The French were now moving north with the clear and threatening target of Vienna itself. The Austrians sued for peace.

The Campaign of '96 shook Europe to its foundations. A twenty-seven-year-old gunner had opened a campaign in Nice and closed it within sixty-five miles of Vienna.¹

Austria made peace with France in January 1797 at Leoben, subsequently confirmed at the Treaty of Campo Formio in October 1797. By this, Austria accepted the loss of the Austrian Netherlands and Lombardy. The Republic of Venice was cynically carved up between the revolutionary France and Austria. Austria was ceded as a concession territory of the Republic of Venice, the mainland territory of the Republic east of the Adige, and the city itself. The remainder of the Republic west of the Adige was added to the Bonaparte-conquered territory of Lombardy, which had been formed into a French revolutionary republic, the Cisalpine Republic. Three months earlier, Jacobins and royalists in the Republic of Genoa had risen against each other and fought bitterly. French troops intervened and restored order, placing it under the French jurisdiction in the form of the Ligurian Republic. Two ancient independent republics had ceased to exist, and the Austrians had been expelled from northern Italy.

In 1799, French forces took Naples and established the Parthenopean Republic, which consisted of the former Kingdom of Naples. However, Austria and Russia were soon after to declare war on France and take back Naples, and Russian forces invaded North Italy, liberating the territory and invading Piedmont itself.

Fortunately, they were held up by one of the finest Marshals of Napoleon (who was now head of France as First Consul), Marshal Andre Massena. He counter-attacked and repulsed the invaders. Then Napoleon crossed the Alps and, in 1800, utterly defeated the Austrians at Marengo, which, combined with their defeat at the Battle of Hohenlinden, forced them to make peace. By the peace of Lunéville, lenient to Austria, the French Cisalpine and Ligurian Republics were re-affirmed, and the Austrian acquisition territories of the former Republic of Venice were re-affirmed.

In 1804, Napoleon became Emperor of the French, and Piedmont and Genoa became a direct part of the French Empire. After Napoleon's arguably greatest victory over Austria and Russia in 1805 at the Battle of Austerlitz, Austria made peace. By the Treaty of Pressburg, Austria lost the city of Venice and the mainland territories, and also, on the other side of the Aegean, the former Venetian provinces of Illyria and Dalmatia all ceded to France. During the course of

the Napoleonic empire, the French Empire annexed the Duchy of Parma, the city of Piacenza, and the Duchy of Tuscany in 1808; in the following year, they annexed the Papal States (Napoleon imposed a concordat on the pope) and, in 1809, annexed Illyria and Dalmatia. The client Kingdom of Naples was created in 1806, given first to Napoleon's brother Joseph, and then when Joseph became King of occupied Spain, the Kingdom of Naples was given to Napoleon's brother-in-law Marshal Murat.

In Italy, the nine pre-revolutionary and conservative states were now reduced to three entities, those directly in the French Empire, the Kingdom of Naples, and a third. This third entity, established in 1805 and ruled by Napoleon's able stepson and soldier Eugene de Beauharnais, was the Kingdom of Italy, consisting of the northern territories of Lombard, Venetia, and the Marches, which were taken from the former Papal States, the region around Ancona and Trentino.

The Kingdom of Italy, albeit a French client state and only part of the Italian peninsula, had come into being for the first time in centuries.

The constitution of the Napoleonic Kingdom of Italy was, in reality, a facade.² The legislative body was quietly suppressed, and in late 1805, the task of registering laws was given to the Senate. However, this body had little political power; it was a collection of Italian nobles, Italian senior clergy, and senior officials and acted as a consultative body. Italian ministers, whilst also consulted, awaited instruction from Prince Eugene. Real power was vested in Prince Eugene and, behind him, the imperial government in Paris.

The ministers were Italians, as were the local administrators. The Kingdom of Italy was centralised, with administrative units being, like those in the French Empire, departments, ruled by a prefect. Departments were, like their French counterparts, sub-divided into cantons. Milan, for example, was no longer the capital of the Austrian province of Lombardy but the centre of the department of Olona. Administrators were from the nobility or important individuals or officials in the community. Selection was careful, and the kingdom was fortunate in having, overall, hard-working, efficient, and honest individuals as prefect, for which Napoleon, from the beginning, ensured that such a post would be both worthwhile and well-paid. One such prefect in the north-east, near Venice, was Count di Rudio, from a long line of local aristocracy, and about whose descent we shall learn more later.

There were significant changes in the legal system. The *Code Napoleon*, the sweeping legal system and laws that had been implemented in France by Napoleon, was introduced. The Civil Code was introduced in 1806, the Criminal Code partially in 1807 and then fully by 1810, and the Commercial Code in 1808. Judges and magistrates were appointed by the head of government and were independent and could not be removed. The judiciary was organised on the French model and judges paid by the state. A gendarmerie was introduced with five gendarmes, two Italian and three French, to each canton to uphold the criminal law, and all under either a local police chief or the French military commander.

Under the centralised administration, the education system was placed on the French model. Reforms were made standardising curriculum, and schooling was made compulsory for all children. Military schools were established, and universities, while placed under control and certain censorship, were increasingly funded and efficiently organised and administered.

Some economic progress was made under French rule in the Kingdom of Italy. The trade war with Britain, in which France and Britain imposed blockades against each other in their respective Continental System and Orders in Council, impacted Italy as it did all areas of the French Empire and client kingdoms and states. But trade throughout the Italian peninsula, between the territory of the French Empire, the Kingdom of Naples, and the Kingdom of Italy, flourished, as it was free trade. (Before, all nine Italian states and entities had strict customs barriers.) Waterways were improved, and a network of roads was built. Agriculture was assisted by French improvements in communications, drainage systems, and flood prevention. Agricultural production increased dramatically and helped give the Kingdom of Italy a favourable balance of trade. Indirect taxation on many goods was increased, and taxation revenues rose up in 1811, but public debt spiralled due to the cost of monies and levies for Napoleon's armies. The standard of living of the lower classes decreased but was partly alleviated by prefects setting up in departments welfare centres and soup kitchens.

However, Napoleon and Prince Eugene did not govern Italy as a charity. The kingdom paid substantial amounts in annual military tributes, as a contribution to the upkeep of the *Grande Armée*. The Kingdom of Italy paid an annual sum to the imperial coffers of 30 million francs.³

The Army of Italy was part of the *Grande Armée*, but Italian troops formed separate Italian units, and it did inspire a sense of Italian military identity. Prince Eugene proved to be an able organiser and trainer of troops, and Italy provided a significant number of troops to Napoleon in his campaigns. Between 1802 and 1815, 165,000 were conscripted to the *Grande Armée*, a proportion of 2% of the population of the Kingdom of Italy: 30,000 Italian troops fought in the Spanish campaign, 27,000 fought in the Russian campaign in 1812, and 28,000 fought in the campaigns in Germany in 1813–1814. The majority of NCOs remained French, but increasingly, the Italian army was officered by Italians, and more Italian generals took commands during the period between 1802 and 1812. So successful was Eugene's recruiting and organising and the overall performance that Napoleon found it possible to make phased withdrawals of French troops from the kingdom, a situation which never occurred in any other of the French client kingdoms. Eugene and his Italian units fought at Borodino in the Russian campaign, at Leipzig, and during the French collapse of 1814, his units defeated the Austrian invaders and successfully held the defensive lines. They capitulated on Napoleon's abdication.

During the decline and retreat of French forces in 1814, there was little resistance to the French forces by the Italians, but also, there was sullen apathy to the