

## Giuseppe Mazzini, *The Duties of Man* (1844-58)

*Giuseppe Mazzini (1805-1872) was one of the most important thinkers and writers of the Italian Risorgimento. In 1831, Mazzini organized the secret revolutionary society, Young Italy, devoted to the unification of Italy under republican government. He spent much of his life in France, Switzerland, and England, trying to foment revolution in Italy from abroad. With the outbreak of revolution in 1848, he returned to become a member of the government in the Republic of Rome (1849), but went into exile the revolution failed. The Duties of Man was his most influential work; he began writing in 1844, but the entire work was not published until 1858.*

*As you read this selection, Chapter Five of Duties of Man, consider: why does Mazzini seem to think that a country is useful and necessary? What defines a country or a nation for him? Who is, or should be part of the nation, for him? Who (or what ideas) does he seem to be arguing against? What does he want? What seems familiar to you as you read it, and what might be new in the mid nineteenth-century or specific to Italy?*

### Chapter V: Duties to Country

Your first Duties—first, at least, in importance—are to Humanity. You are men before you are *citizens* or *fathers*. If you do not embrace the whole human family in your love, if you do not proclaim your faith in the unity of that family—consequent on the unity of God—and in the brotherhood of the Peoples who are appointed to reduce that unity to fact—if wherever one of your fellow-men groans, wherever the dignity of human nature is violated by falsehood or tyranny, you are not prompt, if able, to help that wretched one, or do not feel yourself called, if able, to fight to relieve the deceived or oppressed—you disobey your law of life, or do not understand the religion which will bless the future....

Without Country, you have neither name, token, voice, nor rights, no admission as brothers into the fellowship of the Peoples. You are the bastards of Humanity. Soldiers without a banner, Israelites among the nations, you will find neither faith nor protection... Do not beguile yourselves with the hope of emancipation from unjust social conditions if you do not first conquer a Country for yourselves. Where there is no Country, there is no common agreement to which you can appeal; the egoism of self-interest rules alone, and he who has the upper hand keeps it, since there is no common safeguard for the interests of all. Do not be led astray by the idea of improving your material conditions without first solving the national question. You cannot do it. Your industrial associations and mutual help societies are useful as a means of educating and disciplining yourselves; as an economic fact they will remain barren until you have an Italy. The economic problem demands, first and foremost, an increase of capital and production. While your Country is dismembered into separate fragments—while shut off by the barrier of customs and artificial difficulties of every sort, you have only restricted markets open to you—you cannot hope for this increase. Today—do not delude yourselves—you are not the working-class of Italy; you are only fractions of that class; powerless, unequal to the great task which you propose to yourselves. Your

emancipation can have no practical beginning until a National Government, understanding the signs of the times, shall, seated in Rome, formulate a Declaration of Principles to be the guide for Italian progress, and shall insert into it these words, Labor is sacred, and is the source of the wealth of Italy.

....In laboring according to true principles for our Country we are laboring for Humanity; our Country is the fulcrum of the lever, which we have to wield for the common good. If we give up this fulcrum we run the risk of becoming useless to our Country and to Humanity. Before associating ourselves with the Nations which compose Humanity we must exist as a Nation. There can be no association except among equals; and you have no recognized collective existence.

.... Wherever you may be, into the midst of whatever people you have been driven by circumstances, fight for the liberty of that people if the moment calls for it; but fight as Italians, so that the blood which you shed may win honor and love, not for you only, but for your Country. And may the constant thought of your soul be for Italy, may all the acts of your life be worthy of her, and may the standard beneath which you range yourselves to work for Humanity be Italy's. Do not say I; say we. Be every one of you an incarnation of your Country, and feel himself and make himself responsible for his fellow-countrymen; let each one of you learn to act in such a way that in him men shall respect and love his Country.

Your Country is one and indivisible. As the members of a family cannot rejoice at the common table if one of their number is far away, snatched from the affection of his brothers, so you should have no joy or repose as long as a portion of the territory upon which your language is spoken is separated from the Nation.

Your Country is the token of the mission that God has given you to fulfill in Humanity. The faculties, the strength of all its sons should be united for the accomplishment of this mission. A certain number of common duties and rights belong to every man who answers the question "Who are you?" with "I am an Italian." Those duties and those rights cannot be represented except by one single authority resulting from your votes. A Country must have, then, a single government. The politicians who call themselves federalists, and who would make Italy into a brotherhood of different states, would dismember the Country, not understanding the idea of Unity. The States into which Italy is divided today are not the creation of our own people; they are the result of the ambitions and calculations of princes or of foreign conquerors, and serve no purpose but to flatter the vanity of local aristocracies for which a narrower sphere than a great Country is necessary....

A Country is a fellowship of free and equal men bound together in a brotherly concord of labor towards a single end. You must make it and maintain it such. A Country is not an aggregation; it is an association. There is no true Country without a uniform right. There is no true Country where the uniformity of that right is violated by the existence of caste, privilege, and inequality—where the powers and faculties of a large number of individuals are suppressed or dormant—where there is no common

principle accepted, recognized, and developed by all. In such a state of things there can be no Nation, no People, but only a multitude, a fortuitous agglomeration of men whom circumstances have brought together and different circumstances will separate. In the name of your love for your Country you must combat tirelessly the existence of every privilege, every inequality, upon the soil which has given you birth. One privilege only is lawful—the privilege of Genius when Genius reveals itself in brotherhood with Virtue; but it is a privilege conceded by God and not by men, and when you acknowledge it and follow its inspirations, you acknowledge it freely by the exercise of your own reason and your own choice. Whatever privilege claims your submission in virtue of force or heredity, or any right which is not a common right, is usurpation and a tyranny, and you ought to combat it and annihilate it.

Your Country should be your Temple. God at the summit, a People of equals at the base.

Do not accept any other formula, any other moral law, if you do not want to dishonor your Country and yourselves. Let the secondary laws for the gradual regulation of your existence be the progressive application of this supreme law. And in order that they should be so, it is necessary that all should contribute to the making of them. The laws made by one fraction of the citizens only can never by the nature of things and men do otherwise than reflect the thoughts and aspirations and desires of that fraction; they represent, not the whole country, but a third, a fourth part, a class, a zone of the country. The law must express the general aspiration, promote the good of all, respond to a beat of the nation's heart. The whole nation therefore should be, directly or indirectly, the legislator. By yielding this mission to a few men, you put the egoism of one class in the place of the Country, which is the union of all the classes.

A Country is not a mere territory; the particular territory is only its foundation. The Country is the idea that rises upon that foundation; it is the sentiment of love, the sense of fellowship that binds together all the sons of that territory. So long as a single one of your brothers is not represented by his own vote in the development of the national life—so long as a single one vegetates uneducated among the educated—so long as a single one able and willing to work languishes in poverty for want of work—you have not got a Country as it ought to be, the Country of all and for all.

Votes, education, work are the three main pillars of the nation; do not rest until your hands have solidly erected them.....