

Young Italy in Ticino

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Giuseppe Mazzini founded *Giovine Italia* (Young Italy) in Marseilles in 1831. Ticino immediately became one of its bases. In 1832 Giacomo Ciani, who had met Mazzini in Geneva in February of that year at Sismondi's house, gathered friends at Bironico to organize hospitality for the movement, becoming its principal propagandist in the canton.¹ Ticinese liberals joined: Stefano Franscini contributed to the journal *La Giovine Italia*. The young Antonio Gabrini, Pietro Olivero in Locarno, the former priest Ambrogio Bertoni of Blenio and Colonel Franchino Rusca, who led a section of *Giovine Europa*, were active members. Medical students such as Giacomo Vanoni, Giovanni Stoppani and Agostino De Marchi carried the movement into the universities of Pavia and Turin.²

Mazzini himself came to Lugano for the first time in June 1833. He was received at Palazzo Airoldi, then occupied by Count Giovanni Grilenzoni, who gathered some twenty guests in his salon. "Il Ticino io lo considero un punto importantissimo per la causa", Mazzini wrote to his friends in Lugano: he regarded Ticino as a most important point for the cause.³ His interest was practical. Ticino offered a printing industry, a long and porous frontier, a population that spoke Italian and a government that would not hand over his followers. In 1833 and 1834 his agents in Lugano raised money for the expedition into Savoy, which started from Swiss territory in February 1834 and ended in failure.⁴ The failure led to a first wave of expulsions from Switzerland and to Mazzini's move to Grenchen in the Canton of Solothurn, where he lived from 1835 to 1836.⁵

1 Notes

1. Giuseppe Martinola, "I mazziniani del Ticino", Scuola ticinese no. 86, PDF, https://m4.ti.ch/fileadmin/DECS/DS/Rivista_scuola_ticinese/ST_n.86/ST_86_Martinola_i_Mazziniani_del_Ticino.pdf (consulted 4

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October 2026), drawing on R. Manzoni, *Gli esuli italiani nella Svizzera* (Lugano 1922). The HLS article on Ciani (above) dates the Geneva meeting to 1831. ↩

2. Martinola, "I mazziniani del Ticino" (above). ↩
3. Martinola, "I mazziniani del Ticino" (above), on the meeting at Palazzo Airoldi and the quotation from Mazzini's letter. ↩
4. Martinola, "I mazziniani del Ticino" (above), on the collection of funds for the Savoy expedition; Carlo Moos, "Mazzini, Giuseppe", in *Dizionario storico della Svizzera* (DSS), version of 19 December 2023, <https://hls-dhs-dss.ch/it/articles/024168/> (consulted 4 October 2026), on the "fallita spedizione in Savoia nel febbraio del 1834". ↩
5. Moos, "Mazzini, Giuseppe" (above). ↩

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