10 / *Participatory Totalitarianism*

The polemic between Panunzio and Costamagna, which unfolded in *Rivista internazionale di filosofia del diritto* during 1926, centered on the fundamental relationships between society and state and syndicates and state. The focus of disagreement was not so much specific institutional proposals, but what the new Fascist socioeconomic groupings were for, what problems they were intended to solve. The basic question was whether fascism was revolutionary or whether it was an adjustment in the existing state in light of a new threat. Panunzio had first considered these issues systematically in a lecture at the University of Ferrara in November 1922, and he stressed in his debate with Costamagna that this lecture had established once and for all his conception of the basic relationships among syndicates, society, and state.[1]

In the Ferrara lecture, Panunzio was responding most immediately to the concerns of the noted liberal jurist and former prime minister Vittorio Emanuele Orlando, who was troubled both by the threat which trade unions posed to the sovereignty of the state and by proposals to transform the state by giving the syndicates some form of political power. But in disagreeing with Orlando, Panunzio was also outlining, in abstract terms, a revolutionary conception which responded to the problematic relationship between society and state in Italy. According to Panunzio, the current development of syndical organization outside the state was not a symptom of social dissolution and pathology, but rather a manifestation of health, of energy and renewal in society.[2] This spontaneous development of social organization, which so troubled Nationalists and conservative jurists, Panunzio found to be the key to creating a new, radically popular state based on the organized society. The old liberal state had remained aloof and isolated from the people precisely because it was based only on abstract

individuals and not on the concrete, living society, which was now finding expression in economic organizations. With the liberal state exhausted, unable to contain the social content now overflowing it, it was up to the dynamic society to constitute a new state, based on the structured society of economic groupings. Even within the liberal order, Panunzio argued, social organizations tended spontaneously to federate and confederate, thereby creating in embryo the syndical state of the future.

But Costamagna saw that same syndical development as a threat, "a symptom of the liberal disintegration of the state." He denied that the kind of union development Italy had experienced was historically progressive: "the syndicate is a protest; it is not an instrument of creation. It is a symptom of a crisis of the law and of the state, not the source of a new law."[3] Costamagna viewed fascism not as a revolution constituting a new state through social organization, but as a means for the existing state to overcome a social pathology, "a contingent and transitory phase of difficulty for the state." Thus fascism would develop corporations, instruments of control from above, as antidotes to the crisis which spontaneous social-syndical development had caused.

Replying to Costamagna, Panunzio denied that fascism understood the relationship between society and state in such static terms. That relationship was really a dynamic process in which the society, a network of syndical organizations, was reconstructing the state on a new basis. Panunzio sought to pinpoint explicitly the basis of his difference with Costamagna: "The first principle for me is the Society. The State is a form, a way of being of the Society. Sociology is consequently prior to the Theory of the State."[4] Costamagna found this emphasis on the primacy of society distasteful and dangerous; it placed Panunzio in the tradition of contractualism and democracy. For Costamagna, the state was not a form which the dynamic society gave itself; rather it was prior and aloof and ordered society from above.[5] Although he agreed that new corporativist institutions were necessary, he insisted that they were to be organs of the preexisting state, to be used to control the increasingly threatening society.

In contrast, Panunzio proposed to make this traditionally aloof state more concrete and down-to-earth, and thereby more popular, by diffusing state sovereignty and legislative capacity into the organized society. Fascism was making the syndicates state organs not to enable the existing state to control the society, but to transform and broaden the state itself. It was for this reason that Panunzio, in his polemic with Costamagna and throughout his career as a fascist publicist, emphasized so strongly the revolutionary implications of the juridical recognition of the syndicates, which was finally accomplished with the 1926

syndical law. As the economic groupings in society gradually took over public functions, the people would participate more actively in public life, and the state would become increasingly tangible.[6]

While the state for Costamagna and other right fascists was a fixed point of stability vis-à-vis an untrustworthy society, Panunzio insisted that "The state is not a *given*, a mass of stone, that is what it is, and that always will be what it is. The state is not a fact but a process." He was seeking to demythologize the state, to make it accessible to the people: "The state is not simply there, but is made—and is made by us ourselves, with all our efforts, and it is made by revolutions, wars, and the passions and the blood of men."[7] Having matured and organized, Italian society had overflowed the old state form and was now beginning to create a more concrete and popular state based on its organizations. There was, to be sure, an important element of equivocation in Panunzio's conception, for it was not the social organizations that emerged spontaneously as Italian society matured which were now to become the foundation of the new state. Those organizations had been destroyed. We will encounter the practical implications of this basic ambiguity in the syndicalist position in the next two chapters. But it was not illogical to argue that the emergence of trade unions in Italy was fundamentally healthy, despite the excesses and the antinationalism of the *biennio rosso*. Within a different framework, the same capacities that made possible the trade union activity of the *biennio rosso* could make possible a new kind of state. The new Fascist organizations would have to be subject to surveillance—and education—by the new elite in the Fascist party, but Panunzio was offering a framework for understanding from within which it was possible to envision a popular direction for fascist corporativism. He was seeking to influence the process of change which he expected to follow from the juridical recognition of the syndicates. In 1927 he insisted that his conception was essential for getting beyond the mere letter to the meaning and spirit of the syndical law of April 1926.[8] In the same way, as we have seen, Curzio Suckert had stressed in December of 1925 that Panunzio's neosyndicalist conception revealed the true meaning of Rocco's law.

Whatever these other fascists chose to believe, Alfredo Rocco was hardly relying on Panunzio to interpret the purposes behind the 1926 syndical law. In speeches presenting the bill to parliament, and in all his statements as Mussolini's minister of justice, Rocco laid down his conception of fascism in the most unequivocal terms. Generally, in fact, Rocco simply followed the Nationalist blueprint that he had played the major role in devising, but it is useful to consider briefly what he was saying from 1925 to 1927, as Fascist minister of justice, about the meaning of the institutional change that fascism was then initiating.

Some of Rocco's measures were more conservative and authoritarian than totalitarian in thrust; he worked especially to enhance the power of the executive—and with it the monarchy—vis-à-vis the legislature. But while some right fascists emphasized this reactionary side of fascism almost exclusively, Rocco himself had no illusions that a mere "return to the *Statuto*" would be sufficient, for the power of parliament had been only part of the problem. The basic threat to the state's sovereignty was the general tendency toward social particularism, which found expression outside parliament as well as within it. If the Italian state was to survive, it had to move beyond liberal pluralism and dominate the society more directly—through totalitarian coordination of all social activities.[9]

Rocco portrayed the syndical law of April 1926 as a response to the most immediate social threat—and as the key to giving the Fascist state its postliberal form.[10] In presenting his bill to the Chamber of Deputies, he justified state control of the unions by recalling the anarchy that had resulted when the trade union challenge of the *biennio rosso* overwhelmed the weak liberal state. But since, as Rocco put it, "the syndical phenomenon is an insuppressible aspect of modern life," the state had to develop an active relationship with the syndicates, extending its sovereignty over them and taking on new form in the process.[11] When Agostino Lanzillo, in the Chamber discussion of Rocco's bill, worried that the state would impose an excessive, authoritarian kind of control, Rocco replied with characteristic bluntness: "The organization of the syndicates must be a means to discipline the syndicates, not a means to create powerful and uncontrolled organisms capable of dominating the state."[12]

The syndical law also extended the state's sovereignty by outlawing strikes and lockouts and establishing a labor magistracy to adjudicate labor conflicts. Rocco emphasized that he envisioned not merely a system of compulsory arbitration, which would retain the character of compromise between private interests, but the imposition of the state's authority over interests that were no longer to be viewed as private in the liberal sense. While the Italian state in its liberal form had remained agnostic in the face of class conflicts in the economy, it was now taking on a new fascist form, moving toward totalitarianism by becoming involved in more spheres of social activity. Major social phenomena like class organization and economic conflict would no longer be left to develop outside the state's control; social decisions which were made haphazardly through the struggle of particular interests in the liberal system would now be made by the state and imposed through law.[13]

Rocco's purposes were not only defensive. The Fascist state was moving toward totalitarianism partly to coordinate the national life for

new purposes. Organization would enable the state to foster the class collaboration essential for success in international economic competition. And more generally, through organization the Fascist state could instill the values necessary to overcome the indiscipline and laziness of centuries and make Italy a great military nation.[14]

Despite these new purposes, Rocco insisted that fascism was restoring sovereignty to the traditional Italian state, not creating a new state. It was possible to adjust the political system in order to make the masses identify more fully with the nation, but it was not possible to create a popular state based on some sort of homogeneous community. While liberalism portrayed society as a collection of equal citizens, fascism grasped "the necessary differences among men, the differences in their value, and the diversity of the functions entrusted to each individual." At the same time, Rocco linked fascism to German juridical theories which held that sovereignty rests not with the people, but with the state, understood as "an organism distinct from the citizens" who constitute the society at any given time. And he insisted explicitly on the rigidly elitist implications of this conception: "If in fact the state is sovereign, if it has in hand an overwhelming power, which dominates and disciplines all the other forces existing in the society, it means that the state carries out its own ends, superior to those of individuals."[15]

Especially given Rocco's powerful position, it was impossible to ignore the place of Nationalism within fascism, and the syndicalists sometimes applauded the Nationalists' contribution to the fascist revolution. Writing just before Rocco's syndical bill became law, Panunzio called for the publication of Rocco's speeches, to make them accessible for the essential work of political education that lay ahead.[16] Throughout the history of the regime, Panunzio portrayed fascism as a synthesis of syndicalism and Nationalism: syndicalism provided the social content and Nationalism the governmental form.[17] This interpretation stemmed in part from tactical political considerations, but the Nationalists and syndicalists did have some perceptions and goals in common.

The two groups were involved in a common departure from the tradition of Italian pessimism that found expression, for example, in Giustino Fortunato's gloomy conclusion to *Dopo la guerra sovvertitrice*. In contrast to Fortunato, they were confident that Italy, after the war, was ready to become a more viable nation. Belief in the value of the war was fundamental to both schools and was the primary bond in the fascist synthesis.[18] At the same time, both the Nationalists and the syndicalists linked Italy's prospects to the evolution of modern industrial capitalism. Fascism for both groups was in part a way of ordering the nation for its essential productive activity, a way of freeing the

potentially healthy economic nation from the old liberalism, with its political caste of lawyers and others divorced from modern production. So both envisioned a more substantial role in public affairs for those with capacities derived from experience in the modern industrial world. Both sought to promote economics to a higher place in the hierarchy of the nation's affairs.

Even when it came to institutional alternatives to the liberal order, the Nationalists and syndicalists had important ideas in common. Rocco and Corradini, Panunzio and Olivetti, Grandi and Bottai all saw the twentieth century as the age of social organization based on economic function. Panunzio, writing in 1926, emphasized explicitly that the common denominator between syndicalism and Nationalism—and the essence of fascism—was the principle of social organization, in contrast to liberal individualism.[19] For both Nationalism and syndicalism, social organization—and ultimately a corporative system—could give structure to liberal Italy's atomized society and enable the nation to concentrate its energies. The result would be a better integrated nation and a stronger state, able to exert more extensive and effective authority vis-à-vis the society. More generally, the Nationalists and syndicalists agreed that Italy could overcome her defects only by moving beyond liberal individualism, conventional politics, and the parliamentary system in the direction of totalitarianism. A further area of convergence, having to do with elitism and the process of revolutionary implementation, can best be considered in the next chapter.

Despite these points of agreement, the internal heterogeneity of fascism was so obvious to antifascists that many, like Alceste De Ambris, expected at first that fascism would soon disintegrate. As the years wore on, however, it became clear that fascism had more internal consistency than these skeptics had realized. The syndicalists and Nationalists played major roles in establishing the necessary "ideological" underpinnings, the basis for convergence among the heterogeneous components in fascism. The perceptions and purposes they shared define the basis of the fascist synthesis, the least common denominator that enabled committed fascists with different backgrounds to participate in the same regime. But while it did not disintegrate from within, neither did fascism as a whole ever develop a coherent theoretical framework or practical program. It had enough coherence to hold together and to destroy the liberal parliamentary system, but not enough to implement a meaningful alternative. While the points of agreement between syndicalist and Nationalist ideas define the basis of convergence, their points of contrast define the deeper disagreement in fascism, a conflict between populism and elitism that produced the underlying tension in the Fascist regime. It was partly because fascism

was so deeply divided against itself that the Fascist regime never accomplished much. If fascism was to avoid disintegration along the lines De Ambris and others anticipated, it had to maintain a certain ambiguity over the most basic questions—whether, for example, fascist elitism was a temporary means or a permanent end.

We have seen that the syndicalists sometimes emphasized the complementary quality of Nationalism and syndicalism, but they also explicitly attacked the Nationalists' doctrine, denying that it represented the meaning of fascism. Panunzio, for example, criticized Maurizio Maraviglia's inaugural lecture for the 1928–29 academic year at the University of Perugia, especially Maraviglia's insistence that the state was conceptually and historically prior to the nation.[20] Maraviglia's statist position led him to argue that fascism was changing the relationship between society and state not, as many seemed to suppose, by creating a new corporative state out of social organizations, but by organizing a corporative society within the preexisting national state—as a means to control the society. Panunzio grasped the stakes in the argument when he insisted that, on the contrary, the nation was conceptually and historically prior, the necessary substratum of the state. He criticized Rocco's insistence on the primacy of the state for much the same reason.[21] While Rocco had asserted that the fascist concept of the state was not new, that it could be derived from German juridical theories of state sovereignty, Panunzio insisted on the revolutionary quality of the fascist concept and thus of the Fascist state itself. The advent of syndicates made possible a state with a new social basis. In 1925, while portraying fascism as a synthesis of syndicalism and Nationalism, Panunzio warned that the Nationalist notion of the state was excessively abstract, that the idea of the state was empty without the complementary concept of a syndically based society. On another occasion, he insisted that fascism was more profoundly linked to syndicalism than to Nationalism, because fascism, like syndicalism, was radically populist, while Nationalism was restrictive and aristocratic. Panunzio charged repeatedly that the Nationalists were too preoccupied with such secondary problems as the juridical form of executive power and the relationship between executive and legislature; it was the syndicalists who were defining the essential relationship for fascism—between the organized society and the state.[22] And for the syndicalists, in sharp contrast to the Nationalists, the society-nation was always primary, the state always derivative. As Panunzio put it in 1933: "In place of the abstract entity—State—succeeds the real, concrete, psychological-sociological entity—Nation. . . . One should no longer speak of sovereignty of the State, but only of sovereignty of the nation."[23] Younger left fascist idealists like Giuseppe Bottai criticized Nationalism and right fascism for essentially the same reasons.[24]

While right fascists like Rocco and Maraviglia felt that democracy had worked too well, giving the masses too much power, left fascists like Panunzio and Bottai felt that parliamentary democracy had not proven an adequate vehicle of popular sovereignty and mass political participation.[25] An attempt to use socioeconomic organization to reconstruct the Italian state on a more popular basis was the keystone of the program of radical change which they proposed for fascism.

The problem of insufficient popular participation in the political system was the center of a cluster of five interrelated but distinguishable problems that the syndicalists sought to overcome through fascism. The other four were: the deficiencies in Italy's economic development; the problems of the Italian character and self-image; the atomization and lack of community in Italian society; and the weakness of the Italian liberal state, its inability to promote the collective interest. All of them were genuine problems, so there was some objective basis to the discontents which provoked the syndicalists' quest for solutions. But that quest led the syndicalists, through a kind of dialectical overreaction, to move beyond liberalism toward one form of totalitarianism. Although they were responding seriously, and sometimes effectively, to genuine problems, their perspective on these problems was somewhat skewed, and this led them to propose a blueprint for solution that was in some ways excessive, clumsy, and unrealistic. We can best consider the reasons for the excesses in the syndicalist program, and the relevance of the tricky concept "totalitarianism," after we have seen how the syndicalist-fascist program responded to the five basic problems. Since these problems seemed to be very much bound up together, the syndicalists proposed a single revolutionary process designed to overcome all five simultaneously. We cannot fully understand how that process responded to any one problem until we have considered all five, since the solution to each contributed to the solution of the others. Indeed we could consider the five problems in any order.

To begin the process, it seemed necessary to attack two clusters of more specific problems; in each cluster, problems with liberalism in general seemed especially acute in Italy because they had become interwoven with particularly Italian problems that tended to produce the same results. First, there were problems with the political system. The Italian state was aloof, and Italy still suffered from acute political alienation. But this was a problem partly because the liberal parliamentary system in general produced a merely representative democracy,

which enabled the masses to participate only sporadically and indirectly, through the suffrage system. Thus, as critics like Mosca and Pareto had shown, the people even in a liberal parliamentary system, with universal suffrage, were easily manipulated by demagogues and political elites. This system, with its abstract relationship between state and atomized individuals, could not overcome—and ultimately only reinforced—the traditional gap between people and state in Italy.

But the Italian liberal state was only half the problem. The second cluster concerned the quality of the social base and the nature of the society's values. Both Italian values and liberal values were too individualistic, with insufficient premium on the social sphere. The Italian people had been too egotistical and undisciplined, too narrow in their concerns, to develop a sense of the collective interest and to participate effectively in politics. Liberalism had only reinforced the uniquely Italian side of the problem by portraying society as a collection of equal citizens, each standing as an individual vis-à-vis the state. Despite the periodic elections, it left too great a distance between the individual and state for the ordinary individual to grasp political issues and to make himself politically effective. Moreover, liberalism placed too much emphasis on the private well-being of individuals and thus did not nurture the social potential that the syndicalists believed to be inherent in man.

But even though the liberal system had proven inadequate, the syndicalists were not prepared to abandon the original democratic aspiration. It was time, however, to try new institutions and new forms of political education.[26] The two-way problem of state and society called for a two-way, simultaneous process of solution: it was necessary to "lower" and enrich the state, and it was necessary to raise the masses, to politicize the individual through new forms of sociopolitical participation.

Each half of this process challenged the values and assumptions of liberalism, and we can best understand what the syndicalists had in mind if we consider the running debate with major liberals that their proposals provoked. Guido De Ruggiero criticized Panunzio's neosyndicalist proposals just after the March on Rome, insisting that the essential task for the present was not to replace parliament, but to develop a worthier form of political education.[27] Because of inadequate political education, the quality of Italy's ruling class had been poor, and thus the unhealthy patterns of the Italian parliamentary system had developed. Responding to De Ruggiero, Panunzio agreed that political education was the crucial problem, but he turned the tables by asking why parliamentary liberalism had failed so miserably as an educational vehicle.[28] At issue, of course, was a difference in perception

over whether the liberal parliamentary system had had its chance in Italy or not. Perhaps the syndicalists were too hasty in assuming that it had. But it was easy—and seemed plausible to others—for Panunzio to argue that since the essential political education had not been accomplished under the old system, with its territorially based suffrage system, it was time to try something else. Panunzio proposed that syndicates, made obligatory and extended throughout the society, could carry out the necessary political education and provide new forms of political participation. Through the expansion of syndicalism, the values of the labor aristocracy which the syndicalists had anticipated before the war would be made universal: "Mazzini's meaning has been revealed by Sorel. Through this ethic of association, which is syndicalism, we are aiming at a new aristocracy, that is, at a universal aristocracy and thus at a new democracy."[29]

Olivetti responded to the criticism of the liberals Luigi Albertini and Umberto Ricci in much the same way. In two rather sarcastic *Corriere della sera* editorials after the National Council meeting of August 1924, Albertini ran through the major syndicalist-fascist themes, questioning their novelty and effectiveness. He concluded that neosyndicalism would produce a narrow, selfish system "in which the day-to-day content would be low-grade bargaining over the division of the common spoils among the corporations strongest at the outset."[30] To give existing economic interests political power would only freeze present economic patterns, excluding new interests and ideas. Albertini stressed the continued viability of the traditional liberal framework, with political parties representing different conceptions of the collective interest competing in parliamentary elections and alternating in power. And true to the conservative side of his liberal heritage, he argued that the liberal system provided the best way for minorities, men of noble character and high ideals, to emerge to lead the disoriented, sluggish society.

In mocking the rhetorical justifications for fascist corporativist proposals, Albertini was clearly fastening upon A. O. Olivetti, who was quick to respond in a series of articles in *Il popolo d'Italia*. Olivetti wrote regularly for the official Fascist newspaper at this point, and his articles in polemic with Albertini were unsigned; he was speaking for fascism as a whole in taking on the distinguished liberal spokesman. After recalling the hostility between Mazzini and the nineteenth-century liberalism that was the source of Albertini's own position, Olivetti insisted that liberalism was now frozen and inappropriate, especially because of the impact of the war on the Italian nation. With dazzling rhetoric, he proclaimed the old liberalism to be "contrary to the violent and fecund expression of life on the part of a people which,

in the midst of the travail of its reconstruction, feels all of its will to power, strained to the point of spasm, in a glorious energy of renewal."[31] This blast must have left Albertini shaking his head, but Olivetti's argument that a more active kind of "liberalism" was necessary had considerable force. Politics, said Olivetti, had to be pulled down from the clouds and made accessible to the people; a more constant kind of political education was needed to raise the people to political consciousness and competence. The people were ready now, so it was time to go beyond liberalism to the sort of radical populist politics that Mazzini had had in mind in the first place.

Olivetti found another liberal adversary in Umberto Ricci, a distinguished economist whose criticism of fascist corporativism cost him his professorship at the University of Rome in 1927.[32] Much like De Ruggiero and Albertini, Ricci warned that a neosyndicalist system would yield a stifling "*polipolio*," a collection of monopolies each protecting its own narrow interests; to give these monopolies political power would undermine the collective interest and threaten the dissolution of the state itself.[33] Responding to Ricci, Olivetti insisted that the particularism initially at the root of economic organization would gradually give way to a new sociopolitical sensibility, thanks to organizational experience and education. Ricci had been wrong to suppose that there could be a genuine neosyndicalist regime "without a syndical consciousness, or rather an 'intersyndical' consciousness among producers." And besides, Olivetti went on, neosyndicalism would be conceivable only in the context of a postliberal "'organic state' that reflects and encompasses the whole effort of production."[34] For Panunzio and Olivetti, then, neosyndicalism as a form of political education could succeed where the old parliamentary liberalism had failed; and because the liberals failed to grasp the educational significance of syndicalism, many of their criticisms were simply irrelevant.

The syndicalists and the other left fascist idealists were "leftist," and differed radically from right fascists, precisely in their confidence that the masses could—and should—be made politically competent. Despite the political indifference of the masses at present, sociopolitical potential was inherent in man as such, not just in an elite. In the process of education, a moment of elitist manipulation would obviously be necessary, but elitism had only to be a temporary instrument, not a permanent condition of political life. To raise the individual to sociopolitical awareness, it was necessary to structure his life through organization, especially organization based on economic function, but also organizations for leisure-time activities, for women, for youth. In an address to the Chamber of Deputies in 1929, Panunzio called for the whole network of party organizations to be fused with the established

educational system, to create a vast, specifically fascist educational apparatus. This was essential since "fascism, confronting the whole man, wants to—and has to—mold and educate him from the earliest age."[35]

Through such organizations, the politically conscious elite could instill new values into wider sectors of society. But in addition, organizational involvement in itself enhanced the sociopolitical sensibility of individuals.[36] In 1938, after thirty-five years as a syndicalist, Panunzio was still arguing that group membership gradually developed the ethical-political capacity inherent in men, enabling the individual to transcend his "initial economic egotism" and to achieve "a unitary political economic-productive consciousness or, as we say today, a corporative consciousness."[37] With this new consciousness, the individual would be able to understand himself and his activity in terms of the collective interest. The syndicalists felt that organizations based on economic function could have the greatest impact, because the individual's job was his most "social" activity, and because it involved him every day. Within these organizations, the people would participate together in making decisions that directly affected them—and that also had broader implications. Gradually, the general, "political" nature of their activities, the impact they would have on the collective, would become clear to the organization's members.

The Fascist economic organizations could serve this pedagogical function, however, only if they themselves had responsibility for a kind of political decision-making. Here we encounter the other side of the overall process of solution which the syndicalists envisioned. Given the gulf between people and state in liberal Italy, it would not be enough merely to instill political values and then rely, as before, on universal suffrage and the parliamentary system. Rather, it was necessary to create a more tangible state by diffusing state attributes into the organizations constituting society. As these organizations became state entities through fascism, they would actually participate in the state's sovereignty by taking on legislative functions. Two stages would be involved. Their representatives would replace the old politicians in a revitalized parliament, but this legislative capacity would also be exercised more directly and immediately, by the syndicates themselves.[38] The new socioeconomic organizations would take over public functions that were presently the preserve of the old bureaucracy, and they would also carry out new public functions, for the state itself was to expand its sovereignty to encompass traditionally private forms of individual and social activity.

The debate between Panunzio and De Ruggiero clarifies these new sources of political capacity—and reveals the basis of the left cor-

porativist departure from liberalism. In his critique of December 1922, De Ruggiero charged that Panunzio's devaluation of liberal parliamentary politics, and his proposal to base political life on economic groupings, manifested the mentality of historical materialism, which had portrayed the political sphere as a mere superstructure, reducible to the economic sphere.[39] Panunzio, it seemed, was merely offering a variation of the socialist criticism of parliamentary government; and the syndicates must have political power because of their importance on the economic level. In opposition to this materialist conception, De Ruggiero held that while politics develops first in a determined way out of economic relationships, it ultimately involves a creative departure—into the realm of freedom.

In criticizing fascism in his masterpiece, *The History of European Liberalism*, De Ruggiero focused more sharply on the syndicalist-fascist conception, although here he did not single out Panunzio by name.[40] In giving economic organizations political roles, he argued, fascism was infecting the state with the particularism of societal interest groups, thereby undermining the state's universal, genuinely political quality. Because they failed to understand the harmonizing role of politics, the fascists were seeking to make the formerly autonomous political sphere simply reproduce the socioeconomic conflicts in society. While an economic grouping was limited to a particularist perspective, a truly political grouping sought—and could to some degree attain—a universal perspective and program, based on a genuine sense of the collective interest. This political perspective could be achieved only by rising above the socioeconomic level of the syndicate, not by eliminating political parties and politicizing economic groupings and economic functions.

Panunzio and the syndicalists interpreted in quite the opposite way the process which De Ruggiero and the liberals condemned: fascism was not degrading the political to the level of economic egotism, but raising the socioeconomic sphere to the political level. Responding to De Ruggiero's critique of 1922, Panunzio insisted that his own conception involved not the triumph of *tecnica*, as De Ruggiero had charged, but the triumph of *politica*.[41] This was true partly because fascism was exposing the individual to a more thoroughgoing kind of political education, but primarily because fascism was expanding political sovereignty over the economy. From the syndicalist perspective, De Ruggiero's conception of politics as a unifying sphere above the particularism of society was hopelessly abstract; the liberal insistence on the separation of political state and economic society was a major source of the present crisis. The liberal state had remained too indifferent to what was going on in society. There was too much that it did not do, too many spheres of life that it did not harmonize—labor conflicts, for example, and the whole sphere of production, the economy itself. So the syndicalists insisted that it was fascism, not liberalism, that embodied the political principle. Just before the March on Rome, Panunzio argued that neosyndicalism was the way to make the political idea concrete—by giving it economic content: "Syndicalism . . . is the negation of the old political conception, the negation of the *parties*, the affirmation of the classes and of their organization in the corporations or syndicates, the rejection of the old, so-called ideological conception of politics, and certainly not, it must be emphasized, the substitution of the economic sphere as such for the political sphere, but rather the *promotion* of the economy to the political level."[42]

It was partly because the political sphere was to expand to encompass more of the socioeconomic sphere that the new economic organizations would have significant public functions to perform. At first they would assume control over such mundane decisions as collective labor contracts and job placement—areas traditionally of concern to the unions. But as the regime evolved and popular political capacities developed, fascist economic organizations would acquire more important kinds of public responsibilities, ultimately to include a form of economic planning.

De Ruggiero's critique did not stop with accusations of materialism. More specifically, he warned that in practice Panunzio's neosyndicalism, with its devaluation of parliament and the properly political side of the state, would only end up enhancing the power of the bureaucracy.[43] This was especially dangerous in the aftermath of the war, when government reliance on decree laws had made the bureaucracy more powerful than ever. Subsequent events justified De Ruggiero's fears: fascism did end up enhancing the power of the bureaucracy, since it undermined parliament but never managed to create a viable corporativist alternative. Nevertheless, De Ruggiero in 1922 had not fully grasped the radically decentralizing quality of the neosyndicalist conception and the antibureaucratic intention behind it.

Responding to De Ruggiero in *Il popolo d'Italia*, Panunzio agreed that the hypertrophy of bureaucracy posed a severe danger, but he insisted that there could be no turning back in the direction of parliament.[44] The parliament's loss of legislative power to the bureaucracy was by no means a temporary aberration caused by the war; as with so much else, the war had merely accelerated an already irreversible process. The only way out, Panunzio insisted, was to make the syndicates the basis of legislative capacity—first by bringing their representatives directly into the parliament. At the very least, this would raise the level of technical competence in the old representative bodies

and enable them better to resist further bureaucratic inroads. But this was only a point of departure for more radical change. It would be possible to break the stranglehold of the bureaucracy, making the Italian state less remote, by decentralizing legislative capacity into the occupational groupings comprising society. Those organizations gradually would take over many of the functions of the old centralized administration, thereby enabling the society more and more to govern itself.[45]

In offering these proposals, the syndicalists envisioned a network of varied organizations—new corporations grouping all those involved in a given economic category, as well as the more traditional syndical organizations. When Panunzio responded to De Ruggiero early in 1923, he was not specific about the social groupings that would handle various kinds of legislation. He implied at this point, and stressed more explicitly as the Fascist regime developed, that the new system would require flexibility and pluralism, with a complex network of organizational links, including various levels of intersyndical grouping. The precise configuration of the new order could not yet be discerned, but the purpose of the process was clear: through its network of corporativist organizations, the state could simultaneously expand and decentralize its functions, enabling the people to participate more constantly and directly in public life—and expand their political horizons in the process.[46] So the syndicalist-fascist blueprint required not only raising the masses through fascist education, but also "lowering" and expanding the state, to make the political sphere more tangible and accessible. To overcome the divorce between state and society in liberal Italy, a kind of decentralizing totalitarianism seemed to be required.

It was Panunzio who developed this program most systematically, but for all the syndicalists, the essence of fascism was the new relationship between the state and the economic society that the regime was creating by giving economic groupings political and legislative roles.[47] The corporations' status as state entities meant not that they were mere administrative organs of the state, but that they were the bases of political decision making. As Olivetti put it in 1928, in a speech at the International Center for Fascist Studies at Lausanne: "The corporations are the raw materials for the *self-government* of the nation; indeed, they are the nation itself, making itself state."[48] Luigi Razza called for these entities to absorb the legislative functions of bureaucracy and parliament and to regulate production by setting outputs and prices.[49] For Razza, the economic organizations were the essential political organs of the Fascist regime; they would afford the workers a serious role in decision making—especially in regulating the economy. Through fascist corporativism, the real economic nation would finally be able to govern itself, as economics and politics converged.

This unification of politics and economics was the core of the left fascist conception.[50] Panunzio proclaimed in 1934 that "today the economy and the political sphere are one and the same," while for Luigi Razza: "there is no economy torn away from the political sphere, and to act politically means to dictate the laws and the norms for the economic activity of a collectivity."[51] Fascism, then, was not an economic system but a political idea, an expansion of the political principle over central activities of the economic society which the liberal state had neglected. The Fascist state would discipline production, no longer leaving the economy to operate on its own, without reference to the collective interest. And that state would be composed of the people themselves, organized in their economic groupings; it was they who would do the regulating—and thereby act politically.

This was the direction for change which the syndicalists proposed and which left fascist idealists worked to have implemented in the regime. Giuseppe Bottai spearheaded this effort on the basis of a conception virtually indistinguishable from—and essentially derived from—the syndicalist blueprint we have just discussed. He repeatedly insisted that the Fascist corporative state was a postliberal political order, intended to make possible a more meaningful kind of popular self-government. The key step was to diffuse the political decision-making and power of the old centralized bureaucracy into the economically based groupings in society.[52]

The syndicalists were obviously preoccupied with the economic sphere, even though they insisted that fascism was a political system. They understood fascism as a new political form for the economy, and their second basic purpose was to make Italy more effective economically. Economic backwardness had seemed a major symptom of Italy's decadence, while industrial development had been the foundation for the confidence which marked the syndicalists' departure from pre-industrial radicalism before World War I. Italy's potential to become a more viable nation after the war meant in part that she could develop a healthier economy. Addressing the meeting on fascist culture in Bologna in 1925, Olivetti emphasized that the principle of more intense production was a major presupposition of both syndicalism and fascism.[53]

The syndicalists, sensibly enough, viewed capitalism with ambivalence: it still seemed the most effective means of economic development, but it could not be counted on to unfold automatically in the collective interest. Capitalism fostered a selfish, "materialistic"

outlook and a relatively chaotic, unstable economic system. In principle, political action could alleviate these deficiencies, but the links between the political and economic spheres in liberal Italy had only exacerbated the unproductive side of capitalism. As a result, Italian economic development had been chaotic and sporadic. The weak liberal state had left the economic system to operate unchecked, but then had sought political support by offering favors to special interests; the strong Fascist state, on the other hand, would reverse this relationship, extending political control over the economy, the central sphere of social activity.[54] As Rossoni put it in 1929, the best course available in Italy for now was to stimulate to productive uses the capital and property that had long remained "irresponsible and incapable of any beneficial function whatsoever," especially in certain regions.[55] For all the syndicalists, fascism would politicize both economic activity, which would become a public function, and private property and capital, which would lose their absolute private status and become pragmatic instruments in the society's effort to maximize production.[56]

The syndicalist-fascist blueprint sought to combine economic planning with spontaneity, to provide greater coordination of production without the collectivization and bureaucratic control which the syndicalists had always considered to be stifling and inefficient.[57] Planning through a decentralized network of corporations would be much more flexible, and thus more effective, than planning from the top, through the centralized bureaucracy. At the same time, there would still be free competition among economic units. Particular firms and economic sectors were no longer to be left to operate unchecked, pursuing their short-term interests, but neither was the state to operate them directly, undermining individual initiative. Under the aegis of the expanded state, each economic sector would develop the forms of ownership and management which experience indicated to be the most productive. The result would be a mixed economy, with a place for private, state-owned, parastate, and even syndically owned entities.

So the syndicalists proposed to constitute self-governing groups of producers not only to further popular participation in public life, but also to promote ordered productivity in the economy. It was possible to pursue both through a single process, since it would be largely the decentralized political coordination of the economy that would make possible a more intense kind of popular political participation. As the new economic organizations gradually took on political attributes, their major responsibility would be to regulate the economy.[58] Their concerns would be down-to-earth and practical. As Olivetti emphasized to the Commission of Eighteen in 1925, the Fascist corporations would foster

a greater use of statistics in the economy and would use statistics themselves as they studied concrete economic problems.[59] Through the use of statistics, and ultimately, through the corporative network itself, decisions about profit rates, or collective labor contracts, or the impact an improvement in working conditions would have on a firm's competitive position, would become less arbitrary and short-sighted, and more rational and "technical." For Panunzio as well, the use of statistics would keynote the factual, hard-headed studies of particular industries and firms that the corporations would carry out in coordinating the nation's economy.[60] The syndicalists saw the corporative order as a means to greater practicality in Italian life, an antidote to the tendencies toward rhetoric and abstract speculation in the culture. They liked to think that this productivism went hand in hand with the participation they were also seeking, but this juxtaposition entailed some significant tensions, which we will consider in concluding this chapter.

The syndicalists also expected to enhance production through the other half of the process—through "corporativist" education. The new values to be inculcated were to be practical, productive values; each individual, whatever his place in the economy, would learn to grasp the social dimensions of his economic role and thus to understand his labor in "political" terms, as a social duty and function.[61] Invoking Sorel's ethic of producers, Panunzio insisted that fascism was transforming the ordinary man, the old economic man, into a producer—a creative, moral individual fit for the new world of industry, which required enthusiasm and self-discipline. Indeed, fascist corporativism was a means of democratizing technocracy, of making universal the values and capacities which all the producers needed to become effective, lucid participants in the politicized economy.[62]

Whatever the practicality of this conception, it is clear that the syndicalists hardly viewed fascism as a means to preserve traditional values. Panunzio insisted that the traditional conception of the nation as a cultural, historical, political, and moral entity was incomplete; the nation was also an economy, in some ways essentially an economy.[63] Fascism for Panunzio was a vehicle for enhancing the role of the economy in the national life, and he could plausibly argue that it was the humanistic liberal tradition, and not fascism, which dismissed the economic sphere as merely material and thus inferior. By implication, it was the old liberals, not he and the fascists, who refused to adjust to "modernity" and the exigencies of industrial production. Again and again, the syndicalists and other left fascists linked fascism to productivism and industrial development.[64] For Giuseppe Bottai, for example,

the corporative system was to promote technical progress and economic rationalization in an effort to maximize the economic capacities of the nation.[65]

The syndicalists viewed fascism, then, as a means to overcome traditional values, to make Italian life more practical and productive. Their program for fascism was a response to a third long-term problem—the apparent weaknesses of the Italian character which had preoccupied them all along.[66] The fascist revolutionary process would complete the work which the Risorgimento had only started, revitalize Italian society, and enable the Italians to get down to serious business.

As they dreamed of a fascist Italy, the syndicalists often manifested in exaggerated form cultural sensitivities that were widespread in Italy. Speaking shortly after the March on Rome, Edmondo Rossoni stated proudly that now, with the advent of fascism, conciseness and punctuality were no longer only American, English, and German traits.[67] A few years later Rossoni insisted: "This is not an era of serenades with guitar and mandolin. It is a dynamic era, not only in the formation of the new *sentiments* of the Italian people, but in all aspects of the life of the nation."[68] But sometimes the syndicalists managed to examine the defects of Italian life more sensitively and systematically. In his *Caratteri della vita italiana*, published in 1927, Alighiero Ciattini sought to trace the relationships among what he considered to be the major Italian vices—superficiality, impracticality, cynicism, egotism, political factiousness, and disrespect for the law. The Italians had only "a superficial, external ability, fit more for *judging* than for *acting*, suitable more for *criticism* than for *creation*, inclined more to abstraction than to concreteness." These tendencies, Ciattini felt, helped to explain "the prevalently individualistic nature of the Italian temperament." At the same time, "in no country is the use and abuse of rhetoric so widespread as in Italy," and this rhetoric often obscured the impracticality of Italian culture. The whole syndrome produced an all-pervading cynicism which contributed, in turn, to the petty indiscipline in Italian society: "Among the peoples of the earth, the Italians are perhaps the least respectful, the least obedient to the laws and to rules in general. This does not change the fact that we have on our backs one of the heaviest and most complicated bureaucratic-juridical apparatuses."[69]

In conclusion, Ciattini called for simplification, for weeding out the outmoded, empty forms of Italian life, for a new realism, practicality, and sincerity.[70] It was up to fascism to lead the way, as Ciattini emphasized in a manifesto also published in 1927:

> It is necessary to make Italy young again, to free her from the whole rotten breed of antiquarians, rhetoricians, false mystics, revellers, "culture quacks," aesthetes, from all those who, if they were to prevail, would make our country into one big hotel, or reduce it to a museum, or an academy, or a romantic vacation spot—admired by all the idlers and pseudo-sentimentalists, but lacking in any serious reason for living.
>
> It is necessary to make of Italy—in accord with the Duce's generous effort—a country sober in words and gestures, rich in civil works, serious, disciplined, compact, loving wholesome and humble things. There is the material for this. Our people is sound, when it is not polluted, diverted, and disheartened by the rummaging and false pleading of the so-called intellectual classes operating on the margins of productive life.[71]

Since 1909, Marinetti and the Futurists had expressed much the same sensibility in more extreme terms, but the mixture of hopes and traumas, confidence and despair, realistic criticism and exaggerated cultural insecurity underlying Ciattini's statement had been fundamental to the syndicalists' vision from the beginning. The forms of Italian fascism are simply incomprehensible if we neglect the problems of self-image, the cultural sensitivities, which statements like Ciattini's reveal. It has been argued that fascism exploited such cultural self-doubts,[72] but in fact fascism embodied and manifested them; they were a major source of fascism in the first place.

Fascism was the antidote. For all the left fascist idealists, fascism was changing the very ethos of Italian culture, making Italians more serious and disciplined, more practical and hard-working. Orano declared in 1929 that now, through fascism, the Italians had overcome the moral laxity which had led to the corruption once endemic in Italian political life.[73] The younger fascist Augusto Turati, in his numerous speeches as party head from 1926 to 1930, constantly underscored the "anti-Italian" quality of fascism. His statements were filled with rhetoric and exaggeration reflecting his populist, petty bourgeois background, but their thrust was explicitly productivist, modernizing, and antitraditional. This former soldier and *squadrista* insisted that fascism was by no means to exhaust itself in activism and enthusiasm: "What is needed is a virtue which is rarely Italian, but which is certainly fascist: the virtue of patient perseverance, the virtue of industrious silence . . . a virtue by means of which we can transform ourselves . . . into a marvelous people of builders, of workers, of craftsmen." In another speech Turati called for "a patient effort to overcome ourselves, a continuous discipline of our behavior. . . . We must learn to scorn many of the things that yesterday we loved."[74] The war for Turati had been the catalyst enabling some Italians, at least, to begin the process of changing first themselves, and then their country. After the war, they had soon realized that the lazy, egotistical middle-class way of life no longer suited them; the result had been fascism, which was extending the new ethos into the entire society.[75]

The program the syndicalists proposed for fascism was also intended to solve the fourth long-term problem—the lack of community in liberal society, and especially, again, in atomized Italy. The syndicalists from the beginning had been seeking the basis for a deeper solidarity in their poorly integrated nation. Mazzini's vision of Italian unity had not been realized in the nineteenth century, but it had remained as a goal for those who found inadequate the kind of unity that had developed instead. The basis for a more intense kind of national community, for the left fascists as for Mazzini, was common "politicized" labor, labor understood as a social duty.[76]

Productivism and the new solidarity went hand in hand. Economic modernization, as pursued within the framework of fascist corporativism, was a great common enterprise which would bring everybody together.[77] The new solidarity would become possible in part because the nation, through fascism, was coming to understand itself essentially as an economy, and it was their economy—their economic interdependence—that the Italians most immediately shared. Because of the objective necessities of the productive process, a technical hierarchy in the economy remained necessary, but since this differentiation was essential for efficiency, it was quite consistent with the solidarity of Italian producers, which was based on a common commitment to the nation's goal of maximum production.[78] In the same way, the syndicalists generally conceded that class differences over distribution were an inevitable feature of the modern world, and thus in part the ongoing need for syndicates as well as corporations proper. But the fact of class differences did not preclude the development of a broader solidarity based on common participation in the politicized economy, although the new ethic and discipline obviously had to be extended to everyone, not only to the workers.[79]

The syndicalists hoped to create within the nation the same closely knit, psychologically based unity which they had originally believed to be developing within the workers' organizations. After the war, in fact, Olivetti continually referred to the Italian nation as "the largest syndicate," envisioning a kind of monolithic national solidarity.[80] And Paolo Orano, reviewing a book by Panunzio in 1929, expressed quite explicitly his desire for this sort of solidarity, insisting that, through fascism, "the psychological process toward the pure unity of the people is becoming irresistible in everyone."[81] For Agostino Lanzillo, in the same way, extreme homogeneity was necessary if Italy's extreme social fragmentation was to be overcome; fascism was "to mold into one body and to inspire with a single spirit a heterogeneous plurality, to render mutually comprehensible forces and currents of life that did not interact and that did not understand each other. A grandiose, difficult, rigorous undertaking that can resolve the entire drama of Italian life."[82]

The fifth problem which fascism was to overcome was the weakness of the Italian liberal state—its susceptibility to special interest pressures and its inability to harmonize important areas of social life through law. We have seen that the liberal De Ruggiero criticized neosyndicalism and fascism for degrading the political sphere to the level of economic particularism in society. However, the syndicalists argued that it was before, under the liberal parliamentary system, that economic particularism had undermined the political, that the state had been too weak to protect the collective interest.[83] Here again, a combination of purely Italian and more general liberal problems was responsible.

First was a general problem: because the liberal state had sought to remain aloof from the socioeconomic sphere, too many aspects of socioeconomic life were left to develop on their own, outside the sovereignty of the state. The Italian people had remained so indifferent to the liberal state partly because it had not been involved in areas of vital concern to them.[84] A major example, which the syndicalists cited again and again, was the problem of labor relations under liberalism and the civil law system. Betraying their bourgeois underpinnings, liberal states had developed careful systems of laws governing property relations, but had remained relatively indifferent to labor relations.[85] The individual worker had been left to deal with the individual employer on his own, on terms that were anything but equal. The workers had organized in order to confront the employer collectively, but their syndicates had no legal standing, so the collective labor contracts they won remained outside the law, not enforceable by the liberal state. This argument was not merely speculative: in practice Italian employers had not always lived up to their collective contracts, and the workers could not turn to the state for redress, because the liberal state claimed no sovereignty over this sphere of social activity.[86] It was partly for this reason that the workers could not identify with the state. And this lack of broad social support was a major source of the state's weakness.

In Italy, especially, the economic sphere, left out in theory, crept into the state by the back door. The Italian political elite had yielded to interest group pressures because it was desperate for political support. The people, suspicious of the state from the beginning, found their suspicions confirmed as the political elite, suspicious of the people, made the national state the vehicle for a collection of interest groups. Individual Italians remained skeptical of the civic virtue of their fellow citizens and thus tended—partly in self-defense—to exploit the state and disobey the law. The politically strong used the state for their own narrow interests—and got away with it because of the political apathy

and cynicism of the weak. Neither the strong nor the weak had enough confidence in the state to identify with it and to accept the legitimacy of the law. The Italian state had remained too weak even to enforce some of the laws it did make. The syndicalists liked to point to the example of social and labor legislation, which often either was not applied at all or was violated with impunity by employers.[87] Thus Olivetti, calling for a labor magistracy in 1925, emphasized the inadequacy of existing Italian labor legislation, which no one, he said, took very seriously; the state's failure to enforce what laws there were discredited the state in the eyes of the working masses.[88]

Through the process of change which the syndicalists outlined, the Fascist state would cut at several points into this vicious circle of cynicism, corruption, and disobedience. Most basically, since the nation-society was fundamentally an economy, a strong and legitimate state could be constructed only on the basis of the economic organizations in society.[89] More specifically, two kinds of change were necessary for Italy to have a strong state. First, the state would have to enforce the law more vigorously. Panunzio always insisted that the essence of the state in the limited, immediate sense was its enforcement power. While legislative capacity was to be diffused into the organized society, the state proper would become primarily a vehicle—and a much more effective vehicle—for enforcing the laws, including the laws made by the economic groupings out in society.[90] In the same way, Olivetti proposed a special labor police to enforce labor legislation.[91] But the state would also have to extend its sway over the socioeconomic sphere, both to check particularist abuses and to further the interests of ordinary people. It was especially through law that the state could promote the collective interest, so as fascism expanded the "political" sphere, more and more individual and social activities were to be brought within the sphere of law.[92] Syndical membership was to become obligatory, collective labor contracts were to be legally binding, and ultimately the economy itself would be regulated through law. The corporations would actually be making law as they ordered the economy; the stipulation that property and capital be used as instruments of the collective interest would similarly take legal form—and be subject to enforcement by the state.[93]

In extending the state's sovereignty over new areas of social activity, fascism was making the state more tangible and concrete—and thus more comprehensible. The state had to reach out and encompass the people before they could learn that the law should be a collective instrument, before they could become politically competent. The Fascist state was moving in this direction by giving the economic organizations in society legal standing as state entities and by making the

creations of those organizations, like collective labor contracts, legally binding and enforceable by the state. As the sphere of law was both expanded and diffused into the organized society, the socioeconomic groupings would make laws governing all the conditions of labor, laws which the strong Fascist state would rigorously enforce.[94] More generally, the syndicalists lauded the Fascist Labor Charter of 1927 for its commitment to give labor the same kind of legal standing and protection that property had long enjoyed.[95] Thus the syndicalists could claim that the Fascist state had transcended class, while practice had proven the liberal state and legal system to be the instruments of bourgeois property-owners.

However, the syndicalists did not deny the political reality and significance of many of the economic interests that had sought to take advantage of the liberal state. While the liberals claimed that politics ought to transcend these interests, the syndicalists insisted that they be expressed openly, through economic organizations having a public character, subject to state sovereignty. This would be a major function of the fascist corporative system, which would enable the economic categories to elaborate and pursue their interests, but within a framework of expanded state sovereignty that would ensure that they be harmonized with the collective interest. This open and coordinated pursuit of economic interests would be healthier, and more productive in its consequences, than the corrupting, surreptitious struggle for political influence that had characterized the liberal regime.[96]

So the syndicalists claimed, in rebuttal of liberal criticism, that fascism was not turning the state over to special interests, but exerting the state's sovereignty over them by making them public and responsible. The political coordination of the economy needed to spur economic growth would strengthen the state vis-à-vis socioeconomic particularism at the same time. The liberal state's weakness with respect to the economic sphere had produced both political corruption and economic disorder; by expanding the state's sovereignty over the economy, bringing the economic interests into the state, fascism was overcoming both.

A major aspect of this expansion of the state's sovereignty was the establishment of a labor magistracy to settle labor disputes without strikes and lockouts. This innovation had been included in De Ambris's *Carta del Carnaro* and had been among the steps which Panunzio had advocated for fascism from the beginning. There was widespread syndicalist support for the proposal both before and after the syndical law of April 1926 finally established a labor magistracy.[97] Normally, the appropriate economic groupings, now become public entities, would interact on their own to resolve conflicts and to work out collective labor contracts, which would, of course, be legally binding and en-

forceable by the state. But should these organizations reach an impasse, they would have recourse to the labor judges. The liberal state's emptiness was most obvious in its willingness to let conflicting social interests resolve their differences through the classic methods of class self-defense—strikes and lockouts. Major economic decisions were left to be resolved through the anarchy of relative power, with no guarantee that the result would be best for the nation or even fair to the parties involved. The outcome was fortuitous, not political. Moreover, the old methods involved an unnecessary and damaging interruption of production.

Ultimately, then, the entire process of change which the syndicalists proposed for fascism would contribute to the creation of a stronger state. The expansion of the state's sovereignty, the more direct kind of political participation, the new solidarity based on shared productive values—all served to create the social consensus and the sense of political responsibility necessary for the state to become the sphere of the collective interest.[98] Through fascism, the syndicalists believed, the once-vicious circle was beginning to run in the opposite—benign—direction: the state was strong because people identified with it and believed it was theirs; they believed in it because it was strong and effective in ordering socioeconomic life and pursuing the collective interest. Now that the Italians had begun to trust each other and to understand the state, and now that the state was worth believing in, they were beginning to respect and obey the law. According to Augusto Turati, in one of his speeches as party leader in 1926, a "sublime task" of fascism was to teach the Italians the meaning and value of law, to enable them to experience the law as "an active principle embodying their own efforts and energies," and no longer as something rigid and alien.[99] Paolo Orano, discussing a lecture by Panunzio in 1929, made explicit the relationship between the new popular political sensibility and the strength of the new Fascist state: "It is the sublime political sense that increasingly animates the Italians. From this sentiment millions and millions of men unite and subordinate themselves to obey a single Goal and a single Power, which are not even visible and tangible like the small ancient city-state. Sergio Panunzio finds the extraordinary element in the fact that this sentiment is not to be explained by the mechanism of physical coercion by the public power, but, on the contrary, this sentiment determines that coercion and power and makes them possible."[100]

There was no cult of the Duce, no emphasis on common submission to a charismatic leader, in the way either Panunzio or Orano portrayed the subordination of all Italians to the new Fascist state. Rather, as they viewed the situation, people believed in the new state,

giving it the strength the old state had lacked, because it was a new kind of state, totalitarian to the core. The sphere of law was expanding; the private sphere was becoming public; individual sensibilities were becoming political; and civic duty and function were replacing the private, individualistic basis of social relationships and law. As Panunzio put it in a particularly unattractive statement: "The law, even that involving hereditary property, is no longer understood—it should be noted well!—as pure private law, but as a civil duty and function; we are all animated instruments in that truly Beethovenian symphony which is the national life."[101]

The concept of "totalitarianism" has come under considerable attack in recent years, and justifiably so, since it has often been misused.[102] We cannot abandon the concept, however, because it is not merely a value-laden conceptual tool developed by cold-war political scientists, but a category which the Italian fascists invented and applied with pride to the novel regime they were trying to create.[103] It was an essential part of the Italian fascist self-image, even though the Italian fascist regime was never totalitarian in fact. But Italian fascism, in practice as well as in theory, was a departure beyond liberalism in the *direction* of totalitarianism. We can make sense of what totalitarianism meant to the fascists, and use the concept effectively ourselves, if we understand it not as a "system," in which components like ideology, mass party, and charismatic leader "function," but simply as a post-liberal direction. To move in this direction means to extend the sphere of law, to mobilize the masses in order to "politicize" more and more of the individual's life, and ultimately to eliminate or devalue authentic politics. Only by moving in this direction did it seem possible to left fascist idealists to bring the masses into the state, to unify the nation, to instill productive values, and to create a state strong enough to pursue the collective interest. Our inquiry has indicated that the totalitarian impetus in twentieth-century European politics did not stem only from reactionary impulses, or from pathological desires for power by the leaders, or from pathological cravings for authority and submission by the led.

Nevertheless, while the syndicalists were responding to genuine problems of the Italian liberal order, their totalitarian antidote was a kind of dialectical overreaction: from atomized society to monolithic unity, from insufficient political consensus to the elimination of politics, from political alienation and anarchical individualism to a total identification of the individual with the state, from a relative dearth of productive values to a conception of the nation as an economic entity. The syndicalists dreamed of Italian society as a monolithic pro-

ductive mechanism, so unified in its common economic activity that conventional politics would be superfluous: "The Nation is, today, with the problem of discipline and authority resolved, a great economic entity."[104] Olivetti, responding in 1925 to criticism by the liberal Mario Borsa, anticipated that a postpolitical mentality would emerge through fascism, with no more political opinion in the strict sense, no more political class, no more political parties.[105] In 1928 Olivetti concluded, a bit prematurely, that "the State is no longer anything but the Nation itself, ordered in its economic activities, which provides itself with self-government."[106] But while liberal politics would wither away, the syndicalists portrayed fascism as the triumph of the political in a more general sense. At the much-discussed meeting on corporativism held at Ferrara in 1932, Panunzio exulted that fascism was overcoming the old economic idea and ushering in a new era dominated by the political idea; fascism was "this profound elevation of the State, of the Political, over all of life."[107] Individuals were learning to understand themselves in terms of a public or social perspective; the formerly private citizen was becoming a public producer. And the sphere of law was expanding over new areas of social life, making the formerly private economic sphere public and political.

But the process was not establishing the basis for a genuine politics, for the syndicalists insisted on a degree of solidarity incompatible with value-based political conflict. The nation, as they understood it, was not so much a polity, with divisive but legitimate differences in social goals, as an economy, in which all participated, in some ways as equals, in the drive to maximize national production. The syndicalists sought through fascism to foster the political awareness that liberal Italy had apparently lacked, but this education merely equipped the individual to work hard for the society and to think in terms of the collective interest as he participated in making collective socioeconomic decisions. Fascism was instilling national-political values, but there was only one legitimate set of these values, valid for everyone. So fascism was not developing individuals capable of autonomous political values, nor was it establishing a meaningful political process for the resolution of the inevitable and legitimate conflicts among those values. As the syndicalists overreacted to the genuine flaws in Italian liberalism, moving toward totalitarianism, they ended up denying the presuppositions for a genuine form of politics.

Insofar as the problems the syndicalists claimed to find were real, and insofar as we take their responses to be plausible, we must judge those problems themselves to be the causes of the syndicalist response, including their contribution to fascism. But we may conclude, first, that the problems were not as serious as the syndicalists believed them

to be, or second, that while the problems were that serious, more viable solutions would have been possible from within a liberal parliamentary framework. And insofar as we judge the syndicalists' response, with its totalitarian rejection of politics, to have been an overreaction, and thus an anomaly, we require further explanation. The syndicalists' reaction was unnecessarily extreme, and thus we must identify the personal and contextual admixtures that account for the excesses in their position.

In the first place, it is not unusual for fragmented societies without much political experience to have difficulty finding the consensus to establish the legitimacy of politics. In this sort of context, public authority is more likely to become the vehicle for special interests than it is in politically more mature countries. The prevalence of political particularism and corruption may lead sensitive observers to believe that politics is illegitimate altogether. In confusing political partisanship with corruption, radical critics may come to advocate the replacement of political values by purely technical ones.[108] To the extent that Italy can be understood as simply one modernizing country among others, the left fascist rejection of politics was a function of backwardness—and was not without precedent.

If we view the syndicalists and their fascist constituents as individual personalities, it is clear that they were extremists with a low tolerance for the ambiguities and conflicts of genuine politics. The syndicalists had always hated politics, which they identified with mere factional squabbling. Writing during the Matteotti crisis, Olivetti lamented that, in Italy at least, every movement with ideals that became a parliamentary political party ended up corrupting itself, denying its origins, and finally bogging down in petty factional struggles.[109] He was so intolerant of ambiguity that he inferred from the corruptibility of politics that politics was inherently corrupting and must be eliminated. The individuals who became syndicalists and left fascists had in common personal values and psychological needs, not derived directly from their socioeconomic positions, which led them to seek a degree of solidarity incompatible with genuine politics.

In addition, the syndicalists ended up overreacting to the political problems of liberal Italy partly because they shared some of the traditional lack of confidence in the political capacity of the Italians.[110] Italy could become a more healthy and productive nation, but only if she abandoned any pretense of real politics. Although these unadmitted doubts about Italian political capacities had some basis in fact, Italy's political experience had not been so different from experiences elsewhere that the attempt at democratization from within a liberal framework had to be abandoned. Largely because of cultural self-doubts, the

syndicalists underestimated the extent to which the defects they saw in Italian politics could also be found elsewhere—and could be considered tolerable, if not edifying. They saw others as more disciplined, organized, and politically responsible than they were and Italians as even more deficient in these areas than they were in fact. Thus they overreacted to the genuine abuses in Italian liberal politics, gave up what appeared a futile attempt to catch up to countries with healthier liberal systems, and threw out politics altogether.

There was also a "petty bourgeois" component in the syndicalist overreaction, for their thinking betrayed a superficiality, a tendency toward rhetoric and abstraction and exaggeration, which their marginality vis-à-vis the modern industrial economy helps to explain. As we listen to them exalting the tightly knit nation of producers that was emerging, it is hard to forget that they were on the outside looking in. They stood in some awe of industrialists and the whole industrial world, and thus in part they played up the value of technical attributes at the expense of political attributes. Rossoni, for example, lauded the ambitions and capacities of the aggressive industrialist, who compared very favorably, he felt, to a mere politician.[111] At the same time, the syndicalists tended to be giddily optimistic, insisting that Italy was not inferior, but superior, that in finding a postliberal politics appropriate to her, she was pointing the way to a postliberal future for everyone. Desperately wanting to believe in their society and in themselves, but afflicted with unadmitted doubts, the syndicalists succumbed to "petty bourgeois" myths rather than engage in the more difficult, less glamorous task of building the foundations for a more viable kind of politics.

Not surprisingly, this propensity detracted from the force of the syndicalist-fascist program. Despite some realism and ingenuity, the syndicalists were too prone to exaggerated enthusiasm to understand the tensions in their program, to grasp the need for choices, to establish clear priorities. Nevertheless, their paradoxical blueprint, with its decentralizing totalitarianism, was ingenious as well as awkward, for it did respond to a set of mutually reinforcing problems. It was paradoxical partly because of the complex, contradictory quality of the chief enemy, the Italian liberal state, which was at once nonpopular, overcentralized, and weak. Fascist corporativism seemed a way to decentralize, dissolving the bureaucratic power bloc, without reviving the dangers of regionalism. Decentralization through corporativism would ultimately strengthen the still fragile Italian state by involving the formerly passive society in the state's decisions. At the same time, the syndicalists claimed to have found a way to make the state at once more coercive and more popular; the expansion of the sphere of law would go hand in hand with greater popular involvement in the state.

What was increasing was not control of the society by the old, restricted state, but self-regulation by the organized society, which was now taking on state attributes. This would be a participatory totalitarianism. And in combining spontaneity with political discipline and planning in the economic sphere, the syndicalists were proposing a way to overcome a more general modern dilemma at the same time.

Although it required a significant measure of insight for the syndicalists to devise this program, the attempt to confront these problems all at once inevitably led to clumsiness and loss of force; sharp focus on one problem necessarily meant blurred focus on another. The components were hard to fuse, but clearer thinking about the necessary choices and trade-offs would have been possible. The relationships between populism and productivism, between participation and modernization, between community and technocracy are especially problematic. It is not valid to assume that the populist thrust in fascism was inherently antiproductivist and antimodern;[112] the two impulses logically could be, and were in fact, combined in the goals of leftist fascists. But the result could only be an uneasy mixture, given Italy's uneven industrial development. In the Italian context, to seek the fuller participation of the existing people in politicized economic decision making was not the same as to seek more political power for productive sectors in order to speed economic development. The syndicalists merely glossed over this point of tension through the concept of "producer"; it was only the producers in Italy who merited fuller political roles. But insistence on this partly rhetorical category increased the danger that existing economic patterns in Italy would end up being frozen, since the category was applied so indiscriminately to those with roles in the present underdeveloped Italian economy, with all its flaws and weak spots. And in general, when the syndicalists were confronted with frustrations and tensions, they lapsed into exaggerated enthusiasm and rhetoric that kept them from facing up to the dilemmas in their conception. They simply were not as realistic as they might have been, and this damaged their effectiveness in the regime.

Like the Nationalists, then, the syndicalists ended up moving beyond liberalism toward totalitarianism, but the two groups were responding to a different set of problems, on the basis of different values and needs. The syndicalists' totalitarian departure did not stem from a mania for total control over everything, resulting from fear and an extreme psychological need for order. They longed for a tightly knit community of producers with no need for politics, but they genuinely desired autonomy, spontaneity, and real decision-making power for the socioeconomic groupings operating within this rigid framework. In a statement that combines most of the purposes we have discussed in

this chapter, Olivetti insisted on the popular sovereignty that had to underlie the new Fascist state—which would be radically totalitarian:

> . . . a merely political system can stand empirically on the basis of force or contingently on the basis of an equilibrium—stable or not—of interests, while the corporative state cannot exist and function without an extensive consensus of the people. . . . A state that wants to be, and every day increasingly becomes, an *ordered and spontaneous society of producers*, implies and demands the consensus and the awareness of the producers themselves regarding their own political-economic position in the new order. In substance such a constitution cannot be artificial, bureaucratic, authoritarian: either it is natural and spontaneous or it does not exist at all. Here there is no place for the counterfeit of politics. Here the integral citizen, called to fulfill his duty as an associate in the economic nation and to exercise his right of joint ownership in the political sovereignty, must express all of himself, with all of his conviction, with all the discipline and with all the virtue of one who wants to rise from bourgeois-socialist anarchy to a higher, solidary form of civilization, within the sacred limits of the nation.[113]

Speaking at the University of Pisa in 1930, the younger fascist Giuseppe Bottai expressed in the most explicit terms the postliberal, populist totalitarianism of the left fascist vision. After insisting that corporativism was the essence of fascism, Bottai sought to explain the relationship between fascism and the great tradition of the French revolution. The revolution had been made in the name of the political aspirations and capacities of man as such; it indicated that the individual was ready to anchor himself in a state of his own. But these ideals had not been realized through the liberal parliamentary system, which perhaps had been the necessary first step—but which had frustrated those ideals at the same time. Liberalism, Bottai argued, had become an atomizing force because it portrayed the juridical order as a system of limits, to defend the individual from the state, rather than as "the form in which the life of the social man is realized, the form in which the individual celebrates his essence as social man." Now it was necessary to fulfill the original promise of the French revolution, to go beyond liberalism and create a deeper, more immediate relationship between individual and state. The individual, said Bottai, "must coincide completely" with the state: "The conclusion and the definitive fulfillment of the principles of 1789 is therefore a state in which *the whole life of the citizen is truly and completely realized, in which the citizen finds and truly composes his moral personality, in which he finds an effective and total ordering of his life*."[114] Bottai understood fascist corporativism as a means to provide this totalitarian state based on an intensely politicized society. In overcoming the problems which liberalism had

left unsolved, fascism was not repudiating, but fully implementing at last the ideas of 1789.

Despite their intolerance of politics, the syndicalists and the other left fascist idealists were genuine populists, while Nationalism was elitist to the core. This was an authentic difference of principle, not merely a difference over which social classes were to replace the exhausted liberal elite. Nor was this merely a difference between "revolution from above" and "revolution from below." Although both the Nationalists and syndicalists were seeking to create a healthier nation and a stronger state, although they agreed on the need to expand the sphere of law and "politics," they differed radically over what made a nation viable and a state strong.

Despite its tensions and weaknesses, the neosyndicalist conception provided an autonomous, populist basis for fascist corporativism and totalitarianism. So the origins of the basic thrust in fascism were more varied than the usual interpretation would have it, and the unfolding of the regime itself was much more complex than it would have been had Nationalism been the only substantial program at work. The program the syndicalists offered was capable of practical development, of influencing the direction of fascism, making it more genuinely populist than right fascists desired. To make the syndicates state entities, even to make collective labor negotiations public functions, could be vehicles of control from above, or ways of giving political attributes directly to the society. Everything depended on how the regime would develop in practice.