sider the program it offered Italians during the crisis following World War I. For the moment, it is sufficient to note that Nationalism had roots in the conservative, critical liberal tradition, with its distrust of the Italian masses and its disdain for transformist expedients. But in Nationalism, that tradition lost its links to liberalism and turned into something else. At the same time, Nationalism was more confident and assertive than the tradition it was leaving behind. Italy's industrial development seemed evidence of new energy in the Italian middle class; the Nationalist movement was itself the vanguard of the new bourgeoisie that would eventually assume the leadership of the nation.

Nationalism emerged in reasonably straightforward fashion; it was aware of its intellectual and political roots and had no difficulty identifying its social constituency. By 1914, it had established itself as a major focus of opposition to the Italian political system. The development of syndicalism was much more tortured.

3 / *The Origins of an Antipolitical Vision*

Italian revolutionary syndicalism developed not from within the labor movement, but from within the Socialist party, as a product of the strategic disputes which Giolitti's conciliatory policy occasioned. Socialist collaboration with progressive middle-class groups in the resistance to Luigi Pelloux in 1899 and 1900 had already indicated that, in a relatively backward country like Italy, Socialists had much to gain by working with others in parliament. But some Socialists objected to the reformist minimum program which the party adopted in 1900 and to the support for the government which Socialist deputies provided during an important vote of confidence in 1901. When matters came to a head at the party's national congress in 1902, reformism emerged the victor; the congress approved parliamentary support for the government, sanctioned tactical alliances with progressive bourgeois parties, and endorsed the pursuit of reforms. The current that became syndicalism began to develop at the same time, as the young Neapolitan Arturo Labriola denounced reformism and called for the radical structural change that the reformists seemed willing to put off indefinitely.[1] At this point, however, there was no specifically syndicalist doctrinal alternative, and those on their way to syndicalism were difficult to distinguish from other antireformist intransigents like Enrico Ferri.

By 1902 Ferri and Labriola had established themselves as the chief spokesmen for the antireformist Socialists. In February Ferri had founded a review, *Il socialismo*, to compete with Filippo Turati's *Critica sociale*, but Labriola had his doubts about Ferri and in December of 1902 founded a weekly newspaper, *Avanguardia socialista*, to serve as his own journalistic instrument in the fight against reformism.

By early 1903, the antireformists seemed to be in the ascendancy. In 1902 Giolitti had temporarily altered his tactics, becoming less con-

genial to the left. So after numerous successful strikes during the previous year, strikers began encountering stiffer resistance both from the employers and from the authorities, and part of the Socialist rank and file began to sense the limits of the reformist strategy. Moreover, the reformists themselves were hesitant and uncertain; the Socialist parliamentary deputies officially withdrew support from the Zanardelli-Giolitti government only in March 1903, well after their support had ceased to yield tangible benefits.[2] Consequently, increasing numbers of Socialists and workers were receptive as Labriola and the *Avanguardia socialista* group worked to publicize protosyndicalist ideas. These intellectuals developed close contacts with labor organizers, and Labriola especially developed a considerable personal following among the Socialist workers of northern Italy.[3] Despite their bitter criticism of Turati and reformism, however, Labriola and his colleagues could offer, even during most of 1904, only vague, unimaginative proposals to intensify the class struggle as a strategic alternative.[4] They vehemently opposed collaboration with the bourgeoisie, but most of them still considered the Socialist party, not the labor union, to be the key entity in creating socialism.

When the Socialist party held its biennial congress at Bologna in April 1904, the syndicalists had distinguished themselves sufficiently from the other antireformists to offer their own motion on party strategy, but when they failed to win a majority, they quickly accepted Ferri's generic intransigent motion. Together the Ferri and Labriola groups managed to defeat the reformists and win control of the party. Despite Ferri's doctrinal leadership, the success of the Labriola current in drawing rank-and-file support away from reformism was primarily responsible for this antireformist victory.[5] As syndicalism gained doctrinal coherence, friction between Ferri's intransigents and the syndicalists quickly developed, indicating the limits to the compromise between them. The syndicalists grew increasingly frustrated with the Socialist party, but syndicalism seemed to be gaining momentum within the labor movement by the end of 1904. And the doctrinal alternative they were developing emphasized the role of the unions, as opposed to the party, in creating socialism.

Italy's first national general strike, which crippled Italian economic life for four days during September 1904, helped focus attention on revolutionary syndicalism.[6] The strike began, largely spontaneously, as a protest against the repeated killings of demonstrating workers by the authorities, but it quickly assumed a syndicalist tone when Labriola and other syndicalists active in the Milanese Chamber of Labor assumed important leadership roles. When Giolitti adroitly called for parliamentary elections just after the general strike, the Socialists lost a

number of seats. This defeat discredited syndicalist methods in the eyes of some proletarians, but syndicalism remained strong enough in the labor movement to be the dominant faction at the Genoa congress of the Labor Resistance Organizations in January of 1905.

The syndicalists looked to the future with confidence as 1905 began. That same January, Enrico Leone and Paolo Mantica launched *Il divenire sociale*, a bimonthly theoretical review, to provide a forum for the further discussion of syndicalism. Writing later in the year, Georges Sorel expressed his admiration for Italian syndicalism, praising the ideologues around *Il divenire sociale* and *Avanguardia socialista* as authoritative and stressing his optimism about the prospects for syndicalist development in Italy.[7] But 1905 proved the high-water mark of syndicalism as an autonomous current in Italian socialism. The ensuing decline in both the party and the labor movement raised difficult strategic questions that we will consider in the next chapter. First we must analyze the syndicalists' revolutionary blueprint, and their vision of the socialist future, as these were emerging during this period of relative promise.

The Giolittian strategy split Italian socialism partly because of the movement's heterogeneous social and regional bases. In both the party and the unions, reformism was the expression of new industrial working-class sectors, centered in Milan and the industrial North, who sought to combine material improvements within the system with the gradual development of socialism. However, Turati and the reformists were still thinking in the positivistic, quasi-deterministic terms that more imaginative socialists had begun to question in the 1890s, and they were not very clear about the relationship of their strategy either to long-term socialist goals or to the special Italian problems that were bound to obstruct the achievement of those goals sooner or later.[8] For Turati, revolution was the result of a consistently applied reformist strategy. But some reforms are more profound than others; in collaborating with Giolitti, the reformists were settling for short-term gains benefiting restricted groups in the North and neglecting structural reform concerned with the place of the South in the Giolittian system. With reformism setting the tone between 1900 and 1912, Italian socialism was becoming a kind of interest group within the system. The party collaborated with the reformist General Confederation of Labor (CGL), founded in 1906, in pressuring the government for special favors much the way business leaders did; sometimes business and union leaders combined tacitly to share government concessions.[9]

Believing that a deterministic and universalistic doctrine was applicable to Italy, the reformists could be calm and patient. From their perspective, up in Milan, Italy seemed increasingly a normal indus-

trializing country; the Italian idiosyncracies that preoccupied others seemed less troubling to them. Italian socialism could safely be rather limited in its short-term concerns, and the northern workers could enjoy with a good socialist conscience the material benefits which Giolitti offered. They could ignore the underlying flaws in the system, secure in their belief that they were history's chosen class and that the process in which they were involved would lead to socialism in the long run.

The pitfalls of reformism did not go unremarked in the Italian socialist movement, though the bulk of the opposition, led by Enrico Ferri and Costantino Lazzari, did not propose sophisticated alternatives.[10] Ferri understood the problematic side of the reformist strategy and insisted that the Socialist party must retain greater flexibility, supporting bourgeois governments when the situation seemed promising, but always warily, and only on a case-by-case basis. This strategy was plausible, but it could lead to opportunism and inconsistency—as it did in Ferri's case. On the other hand, those like Lazzari who offered more unconditional opposition to collaboration with bourgeois governments called simply for strict class separation and rigid intransigence. They were not asking questions about the circumstances or the methods that would be appropriate to a socialist revolution.

The most effective socialist critiques of reformism came from the independent southern socialist Gaetano Salvemini, on the one hand, and from the syndicalists, on the other. The basis of their criticism was essentially the same, but the alternatives they proposed were radically different. For Salvemini, it was the Socialist party's responsibility to take the lead in overcoming Italy's long-standing structural defects; there could be no evolution toward socialism unless those defects were overcome.[11] Salvemini showed persuasively how Giolitti's system rested on exploitation of the South through the tariff structure and through electoral interference. In playing Giolitti's game, the reformists were helping to perpetuate the present pathological system. As an alternative, Salvemini called on Socialists to build an alliance between advanced northern workers and southern peasants to fight for fundamental change. Without an approach to the South and the peasants, the Socialist party would remain a regional interest group, ensnared within the corrupting patterns of the present. For Salvemini, the first crucial reform was universal suffrage; given the right to vote, the southern masses would eliminate the South's rotten borough system, thereby destroying one of the bases of transformist politics. Then it would be possible to attack the tariff system. In general, the Socialist party had to overcome its restricted, regional character and become a national populist party, confronting Italian sociopolitical problems.

A disproportionate number of the syndicalists were also southerners. Panunzio, in fact, came from the same town as Salvemini—Molfetta, in Apulia—while Labriola, Leone, Lanzillo, and Razza also had roots in the South. Among nonsouthern syndicalists, a disproportionate number—including Olivetti, Corridoni, and De Ambris—came from Emilia-Romagna and the Marches, where preindustrial radical traditions remained strong, just as they did in the South. It is not surprising, then, that historians almost invariably portray Italian syndicalism as a reversion to these southern and preindustrial radical traditions. The syndicalist current is generally seen as a partly healthy reaction against reformism on the part of dissidents from geographical areas being left out as the Socialist party became predominantly northern in orientation. Syndicalism seems to have proven unproductive, however, because its strategy embodied too much of anarchism and old-fashioned catastrophic conceptions of revolution.[12]

The most influential interpretation of syndicalism as a demand for a southern strategy in Italian socialism is Antonio Gramsci's, outlined in 1926: "In the ten years 1900–1910 there took place the most radical crises in the Socialist and workers' movement: the masses reacted spontaneously against the policy of the reformist leaders. Syndicalism was born, which is the instinctive, elementary, primitive but healthy expression of the working-class reaction against the *bloc* with the bourgeoisie and in favor of a *bloc* with the peasants, and in the *first place with the peasants of the South*. Just so: moreover, in a certain sense, syndicalism is a weak attempt by the southern peasants, represented by their most advanced intellectuals, to lead the proletariat."[13] It is plausible, if a bit sanguine, to assume that syndicalism had a modicum of success in the labor movement because certain workers sensed the limits of the reformist strategy. And certainly the syndicalists reacted against the reformist compromise with Giolitti and shared the concerns about emigration and tariff protection typical of southern intellectuals. Moreover, Gramsci perceived correctly that syndicalism lacked an organic relationship with the industrial workers, that syndicalism was the orientation of disaffected nonproletarian elements seeking an alliance with the working class. But he lapsed into dogmatic schematism when he sought to link syndicalism to the special concerns and revolutionary aspirations of the South—and especially the southern peasantry. Gramsci had been strongly influenced by Salvemini, and he too considered the reformist strategy counterproductive because it neglected the South—and thus the potential for radical structural change which he felt the South embodied. He assumed that the syndicalists, as southern antireformists, must have envisioned a similar kind of revolutionary role for the South, even if they themselves were not

clear about it. From Gramsci's perspective, there were only two alternatives: reformism, favoring northern workers and neglecting the South, and a revolutionary alliance of northern workers and southern peasants to bring about structural change. The only coherent basis for rejecting the northern strategy of proletarian exclusiveness was belief in the southern strategy of worker-peasant alliance.

Such dualistic thinking, with its geographical determinism, has distorted our understanding of Italian syndicalism, producing some striking anomalies in recent interpretations. One major authority, insisting on the southern basis of Italian syndicalism, is hard put to explain why the syndicalists discerned absolutely no revolutionary or socialist capacity in the southern peasantry, finding this "one of the major deficiencies of a group that also derived from the experience of the proletarian world of the South."[14] But a disaffected southerner was not bound to believe the southern peasantry could play a central role in solving Italy's problems. Their southern experience convinced the syndicalists that the Italian problem was deeper than the reformists thought, but precisely for this reason, they felt that the solution required something radically new, which they found to be developing almost exclusively in the North.

The syndicalists were heirs to the preindustrial populism traditionally strong in the South and in Emilia-Romagna, but they sought a more modern and convincing blueprint for change. The Italian problem was especially acute in Naples, but the solutions lay in Milan—in industrialization, in the new industrial proletariat, and in modern Marxism. Many of the syndicalists were part of the generation of the 1890s that fastened on Marxism as a way of transcending apparently outmoded radical traditions. Although their radical populist underpinnings were never far beneath the surface, they began by considering themselves Marxists and by trying to work with orthodox Marxist categories.

This does not mean—obviously—that the syndicalists grasped the philosophical bases of Marxism, or shared Marx's grandiose conception of the meaning of the socialist revolution, in terms of man's alienation and potential for fulfillment in the unfolding of the historical process. Like most of those calling themselves Marxists at the time, the syndicalists simply were not operating on that level. It now seems, in retrospect, that what passed for orthodox Marxism during the first decade of the twentieth century was a bit simplistic, although interest in the Hegelian underpinnings of Marxism during the past half-century has made it easy to downplay features of Marxism which are less inspiring but at least as fundamental to Marxism as a doctrine capable of guiding active socialists. Certainly the syndicalists tried to understand reality in terms of what seemed a reasonably orthodox Marxism at the time.

Nevertheless, Marxism meant something different to them psychologically than it did to the reformists. Both the syndicalists and the reformists accepted the basic categories of the new Marxist socialism and experienced the upsurge of confidence that accompanied industrialization, but the syndicalists looked to Milan with longing, from a distance, while the reformists, we might say, had been born and raised in Milan—and were a bit complacent as a consequence.[15] They had the kind of comfortable, organic relationship with the industrial system and the working class that the syndicalists lacked. The syndicalists fastened onto Marxism since it made uniquely Italian problems less important and showed how the universal process of industrialization, and the emergence of new industrial classes, promised a better future for Italy. But as outsiders, watching from a distance as Italy industrialized, the syndicalists were subject to gnawing doubts that Italy had access to a universalistic escape route. This explains, in part, their shrill insistence upon the Marxist model, rigidly interpreted, including the need for intransigent class struggle. But this also meant that their commitment to Marxism was tenuous and contingent. The blander, more sheltered reformists could accept the universalistic categories of Marxism in a more absolute and untroubled way.

Arturo Labriola's case best illustrates the relationship between preindustrial concerns and Marxist perspectives in the development of Italian syndicalism. Born in Naples in 1873, the son of a modest artisan, Labriola became active in Neapolitan republican circles when only fifteen. But he promptly moved toward Marxist socialism as he grew frustrated with preindustrial Neapolitan radicalism. He began to contribute to *Critica sociale* in 1891, helped to organize the first truly socialist organization in Naples in 1893, and then joined the new socialist party which had been formed at Genoa the year before.[16]

In his conception of Italian problems, Labriola was deeply influenced not only by the situation in his native South, but also by conservative critics of the Italian state like Pasquale Turiello and Gaetano Mosca. As he searched for solutions to those problems, however, Marxism came to him as a revelation, since it seemed to offer a rigorous doctrine and method, in contrast to the vague, sentimental ideas of anarchism and Mazzinian republicanism.[17] At first Labriola insisted on a rigid, abstract brand of Marxist orthodoxy, even in the face of the developing revisionist challenge of the late 1890s. Writing in 1898, he strongly criticized Francesco Saverio Merlino and Georges Sorel for abandoning economic determinism and reverting to sterile, moralistic utopianism.[18] If socialism was an ethical and juridical matter, as these

revisionists suggested, and not the necessary product of the unfolding of capitalism, there would simply be no socialism. But there was still a dualism underlying Labriola's radicalism at this point: clinging to what then passed for Marxist orthodoxy afforded a measure of intellectual reassurance, but this sort of Marxism was of no immediate help in dealing with the Neapolitan and Italian problems he saw around him. Thus, despite his rigid Marxism, Labriola became a leading figure in the Neapolitan radical circle around the periodical *Propaganda*, founded in May 1899. *Propaganda* was concerned with local and regional problems from within the republican and antistatist traditions of southern radicalism. The revolutionary syndicalism which Labriola developed between 1901 and 1905 was an attempt to bridge the gap between his abstract Marxism and his more immediate local concerns.

Naples only frustrated Labriola, and he decided that the hope for radical change lay elsewhere. Late in 1902 he left for Milan, where he began publishing his antireformist newspaper *Avanguardia socialista* in December. Years later, Labriola recalled how different Naples and Milan had appeared: "For me, coming as I did from an area of old-fashioned artisan production, an area, in fact, in which this system was in decline, causing widespread and abject misery as it decomposed, that class of industrial entrepreneurs—especially in Milan—with its business sense and its audacity, was tremendously attractive."[19] It was the healthy new industrial classes who could redeem Italy, not the decaying preindustrial classes of the South. In the same way Filippo Corridoni, who gravitated to Milan from his native Marches in 1905, praised the city as one of the few in Italy rich in all the conditions necessary for the triumph of syndicalism—including a rapidly developing industrial system and vigorous class conflict.[20]

At the Socialist party's national congress in 1902, Filippo Turati sought to divide his opponents by dismissing Labriola as a petty bourgeois anticollectivist and republican obsessed with southern problems, as a radical considerably removed from the socialist orthodoxy which Ferri professed.[21] Turati was both right and wrong: in his sense of the Italian problem, Labriola remained a southerner shaped by preindustrial radical perspectives, but in his quest for solutions, Labriola looked to the emerging proletariat of the industrializing North.

The syndicalists, then, shared Salvemini's basic premise—that reformism was undermining the force of socialism as a radical antithesis to the Italian status quo. But this concern led them to argue that socialism must become more purely proletarian, not more populist in scope and not more immediately Italian in emphasis. They felt, implicitly, that the problems in Italy, including those of the South, were deeper than Salvemini realized and required more radical solutions than

he proposed. They insisted on a variety of Marxist orthodoxy: only the universal Marxist blueprint offered a way out for Italy; only insofar as Italy, through industrialization, approached the Marxist model could solutions be found. They agreed with Salvemini that the proletariat must not settle for gains within the system, jeopardizing the chance for radical change, but neither must the proletariat let itself be dragged into a populist alliance with suffering preindustrial groups like the one Salvemini proposed. Southern peasants, and disaffected preindustrial groups in general, were capable merely of sterile, old-fashioned insurrection, not of genuine revolution bringing new values to society.[22] The proletariat could redeem Italy only if it remained autonomous, developing its own values and institutions, as separate as possible from the other classes.

When syndicalism proved able to penetrate only limited sectors of the labor movement, the syndicalists began to ask some new questions and eventually to recognize the national and political nature of the problems that had bothered them all along. Finally, in the aftermath of World War I, they began to encounter their natural constituency. But that constituency was not the southern peasantry; it had nothing specifically to do with the South at all. Nor did the syndicalists, as they evolved from would-be Marxists back to populists, begin to look more favorably on the innovative potential of Italy's South. It was possible for "southerners" to devise strategies for radical change in Italy quite different from those of Salvemini and Gramsci.

Italian syndicalism, then, was not merely a throwback to preindustrial populism, but neither was it a genuinely proletarian expression. Rather, it was an attempt by preindustrial radicals to find in the working class, and in the industrialization process generally, the basis for solution to problems that did not specifically afflict the workers and that did not stem from the organization of the means of production. Syndicalism in Italy was a quest for Marxist solutions to "populist" problems, and the result, inevitably, was an unstable combination of elements. But in attempting to work with Marxism, the radical populists who created syndicalism were led to consider Italian problems in new ways. And this experience, in turn, enabled them to devise the unusual synthesis which some of them suggested for fascism.

By 1902 Marxist socialism was in some disarray, and those who would become syndicalists could not, despite the attractions of orthodoxy, close their eyes to the revisionist challenge.[23] In criticizing Merlino and Sorel in 1898, Labriola had insisted that Marxist socialism must rise or fall with Marx's economic predictions. But he had changed his mind by 1902, when he published a highly significant series of

articles in *Rivista popolare di politica, lettere e scienze sociali*, edited by the Sicilian republican Napoleone Colajanni. Now Labriola was willing to admit that it was futile to try to make economic facts fit Marxist theories: the betterment in the condition of the working class during the preceding forty years could no longer be ignored. Moreover, there had been limits to the concentration of capital, and economic crises had not been the fearful phenomena which Marx had foreseen, but merely periods of adjustment, restoring equilibrium *within* the capitalist system. Such crises became increasingly rare as the industrial economy matured. But while Labriola had argued in 1898 that this revisionist view of the economic facts doomed socialism altogether, he now sensed that the success of capitalism, and the betterment of the workers' economic conditions, were actually stimulating the development of European socialism. Even though capitalism was not developing according to the Marxist blueprint, socialism seemed to be emerging anyway—especially through the institutions of the labor movement.[24]

It was only logical, if capitalism was not going to collapse on its own, for socialists to focus on the other side of the equation, the emerging industrial proletariat. Socialist conceptions were bound to become less deterministic and more voluntaristic: the coming of socialism depended not on objective economic factors but on the subjective will and capacity of the proletariat to replace the bourgeois capitalist order with an order based on its own principles. There was nothing inevitable about it; as Labriola put it in 1908, "If the working class does not decide to intervene in the economic relationships created by capitalism, capitalism will not break down."[25] But the new focus on proletarian psychological development raised troublesome questions. If capitalism could remain viable indefinitely, gradually improving the economic condition of the workers, why would the proletariat develop the will and capacity for socialist revolution? And if capitalists could eventually manage the economy without periodic crises, would a proletarian regime necessarily be superior? Classical Marxism had recognized the importance of the psychological development of the proletariat, but this was to have taken place in a context of growing misery and desperation; an altogether different psychological process was required in a context of economic improvement. Indeed, the solid, objective underpinnings dropped out altogether if socialism depended on the proletariat's noneconomic motivation. What had formerly been a necessary relationship between the proletariat and the new values that redeem society now became open and contingent.

The rapid growth of the Italian labor movement during 1901 and 1902, and the numerous successful strikes of those years, offered grounds for optimism, but socialist theory required a description of the

mechanism through which the organized workers were developing new, postbourgeois values and the will to implement them in the wider society. Labriola had the rudiments of a revolutionary syndicalist description in his important 1902 series; and he was borrowing from his former antagonists Sorel and Merlino, as well as from Vilfredo Pareto. These three thinkers offered the most helpful ideas as the syndicalists sought to develop a doctrine consistent with their instinctive opposition to reformism.

Arturo Labriola had come into contact with both Pareto and Sorel during the two years he spent abroad avoiding arrest for his involvement in the disturbances of 1898. In Switzerland, his former economics professor Maffeo Pantaleoni introduced him to Pareto, for whom Labriola then worked as a research assistant, compiling information on socialism and on income distribution that Pareto used in *Les Systèmes socialistes*.[26] And in this book, Pareto explored features of the emerging labor movement which the syndicalists would soon use as the basis for their new conception of socialism.

Seeking to observe social behavior from a detached, scientific perspective, Pareto perceived new moral qualities—those characteristic of new social elites—developing within the organized working class, the result of the education and discipline which the new labor organizations offered the workers. He was impressed by the self-discipline involved, for example, in the workers' willingness to pay regular dues and in their circumspect use of violence in strikes. Organizational membership and activity imposed a rigorous selection on the working class; in the event of a strike, especially, only the most committed workers remained, carrying out their duties in a selfless, disciplined manner. The energy and solidarity and self-reliance developing among the organized workers contrasted vividly with the symptoms of decadence which Pareto found in Italy's old elite, relying more and more on intrigue, corruption, and special favors like tariff protection to pursue its interests. Pareto concluded that this new elite was likely to assume the leadership of the society.[27]

It is possible to extrapolate the fundamentals of the syndicalist vision from Pareto's antithesis between an old decadent elite, surviving through its control of the political process, and an energetic new elite, emerging in society, uncontaminated by Italy's network of corruption. This conception helped the syndicalists formulate their theory, and they frequently cited Pareto's writings to buttress their own position.[28] Pareto offered direct support in 1905, when asked to contribute to one of the first issues of *Il divenire sociale*; within the "popular classes" in society, he said, a new elite, disciplined and self-confident, willing to use force, was gradually emerging.[29]

During his period in exile, between 1898 and 1900, Labriola also made contact with Georges Sorel, Hubert Lagardelle, and the circle around Augustin Hamon's *Humanité nouvelle* in Paris, although this direct encounter did not immediately affect Labriola's thinking.[30] He and Sorel still disagreed fundamentally over the best direction for Marxism, and besides, French intellectuals were too preoccupied with the Dreyfus affair to think much about the labor movement at this point. Still, Labriola and Sorel did discuss Sorel's recent essay, "Avenir socialiste des syndicats," which had appeared in *Humanité nouvelle* in March and April of 1898. A few years later, despite continued disagreement with Sorel, Labriola published a translation of this work in his *Avanguardia socialista*, in installments from 21 June to 22 November 1903. And Sorel's essay proved very helpful to the dissidents around *Avanguardia socialista* as they sought to devise an alternative to reformism; in fact, it ultimately proved more important in the development of Italian syndicalist ideas than Sorel's more famous *Reflections on Violence*. Still, Sorel's ideas were already accessible to Italian socialist intellectuals by 1903, for he was deeply involved in Italian socialist debates, through his correspondence with Francesco Saverio Merlino, Benedetto Croce, and Antonio Labriola, and through his contributions to such major Italian socialist reviews as Turati's *Critica sociale* and Merlino's *Rivista critica del socialismo*.

The idea of a link between Sorel and Italian fascism is not surprising, but it is usually assumed that Sorel taught future fascists about violence, myths, and elitism. The young Mussolini found these aspects of Sorel's mature syndicalist conception worth exploring as he sought to revitalize Italian socialism. But it was Sorel's earlier, quite different conception of socialism that attracted the Italian syndicalists and contributed to the doctrine of radical change that they later proposed as fascists. Sorel's conception of proletarian psychological development in 1898 did not depend on the categories of myth and creative violence that he developed later, under Henri Bergson's influence, in *Reflections on Violence*. In his earlier phase, Sorel was interested in the ideas of Francesco Saverio Merlino and in the practice of trade unionism both in England, the most advanced country, and in France, where Fernand Pelloutier was spearheading a kind of revolutionary syndicalism in practice.

As Sorel himself emphasized in 1910, it was Merlino's *Pro e contro il socialismo*, published in 1897, that first indicated to him how to renew the socialist doctrine, how to overcome the abstraction that was creeping into it as the inadequacy of Marx's description of capitalism became apparent.[31] Sorel wrote a thirty-five page review article on Merlino's book in 1897, then a preface to the expanded French version the next

year.[32] Merlino convinced Sorel that socialism was ultimately an ethical proposition, that it depended on the moral and psychological development of those who were to create it. For the workers themselves, Sorel argued, socialism was an ethical imperative, the expression of a desire to overcome exploitation and implement justice in society.[33] And Merlino, according to Sorel, was abandoning the dogmatic letter of Marx only in order to return to the scientific spirit when he called for an examination of actual social movements to determine whether values and institutions that would make possible a radically different society were in fact developing.[34] As Sorel put it in *Avenir socialiste des syndicats*, the key question for serious socialists was "to determine whether there exists *a mechanism capable of guaranteeing the development of morality*."[35] Despite Merlino's great contributions, however, Sorel found his conception too bland, too oblivious of the irreconcilable conflict between socialism and present society. While Merlino envisioned reform and growing solidarity within the present order, Sorel insisted that rigid class separation was necessary if the workers were to develop an alternative system of values.[36]

Merlino's emphasis on the concrete developments in the labor movement led Sorel to look there for evidence of the emergence of socialism. He turned first to Paul de Rousiers's study of the English labor movement, and this promptly led him to write *Avenir socialiste des syndicats*.[37] Sorel wanted to explore the value of labor organizations for moral development, and he concluded that the organized proletariat was in fact developing the virtues necessary for socialism. Strikes, especially, demonstrated that the old, narrow egotism was giving way to solidarity in proletarian behavior: "The workers consider that the strikers must all be taken back, and they do not hesitate to make the greatest sacrifices in order to obtain the reinstatement of their excluded comrades."[38] Gradually, a socialist society was emerging in the practice of the workers' syndicates; new values were developing, and the syndicate was assuming ever more practical functions, indicating that it could become the proletariat's institutional alternative to the bourgeois parliamentary state. In his early syndicalist works, Sorel consistently emphasized the socialist import of mundane, everyday activities, in order to make socialism a proposition for the here and now, in opposition to the utopian, catastrophic conceptions which he imputed to the orthodox.[39]

Francesco Saverio Merlino (1856–1930) influenced Italian syndicalism not only indirectly, through Sorel, but also directly.[40] A Neapolitan who grew up in the traditions of Neapolitan anarchism during the 1870s, Merlino spent many years in exile, during which he began to make a substantial contribution to the European revision of Marxism.[41]

His articles in the Belgian review *La Société nouvelle* in 1891, criticizing Marxism and German socialism from an anarchist point of view, were promptly translated into German and discussed by Eduard Bernstein in *Die Neue Zeit*. At the same time, Merlino was also questioning the basic tenets of anarchism, finally breaking with the anarchists around his old friend Errico Malatesta in 1897. The first major fruit of his questioning of both Marxism and anarchism was *Pro e contro il socialismo*, published in 1897, the book which especially attracted Sorel. Sorel and Merlino began a regular correspondence in 1897, and Merlino played a major role in the diffusion of Sorel's ideas in Italy during the years that followed.

Like Sorel, Merlino found the new syndical organizations to be instruments of the new values and juridical relationships necessary to make socialism a reality.[42] He also saw in the labor movement the basis for a form of socialism that would avoid the dangerous utopianism of both anarchism and collectivism. Against the anarchists, Merlino insisted that the moral influence and discipline which social groups exert on the individual were inevitable and beneficial. On the other hand, he warned that collectivism and centralized control of the economy would inevitably lead to authoritarianism, to proliferating bureaucracy, and to economic inefficiency. The mechanisms of price, competition, and supply and demand would be necessary even in a socialist economy. Still, Merlino's central concerns were political, juridical, and ethical. The orthodox socialist overemphasis on economic matters, he charged, led to simplistic assumptions about the political side of present problems and socialist alternatives.[43]

Although these ideas helped the syndicalists devise their doctrine, Merlino was not a revolutionary syndicalist himself; he valued the unions as instruments for decentralized decision making in society, not as instruments of revolutionary class struggle. In fact, Merlino emphasized the scope for reform within existing society, for harmonious cooperation with the progressive bourgeoisie. The syndicalists, on the other hand, would portray the union as the instrument of class separation and revolutionary struggle. Only later, while they were revising their doctrine, did they begin to realize that they had always viewed the deeper social significance of the labor movement much as Merlino had.

Though less directly influential, Emile Durkheim's ideas were also involved in the intellectual interchange which served to focus Italian syndicalism. Sorel's *Avenir socialiste des syndicats* was partly a response to the corporativist proposals which Durkheim had recently offered in *Suicide* as an antidote to anomie. In a long essay in 1895, Sorel had discussed Durkheim's sociology, claiming to find difficulties that could

be resolved only if Durkheim adopted social class categories and turned to socialism.[44] Still, Durkheim's ideas helped to clarify Sorel's thinking about social problems, for Durkheim emphasized the need for a new moralizing agent in society and suggested that organizations based on economic function could play the decisive role. But Sorel insisted in *Avenir socialiste des syndicats* that Durkheim's proposed corporations would be less effective than the emerging labor syndicates, which had already demonstrated such remarkable capacities.[45]

Durkheim reviewed Merlino's *Formes et essence du socialisme* in 1899, praising its basic thrust and drawing out implications that pointed beyond traditional socialism: "It especially would be a considerable step forward, benefiting everyone, if socialism would finally quit confusing the social question with the question of the workers."[46] The social problem, Durkheim insisted, was moral and cultural at root and transcended matters of economic class and material distribution. He found Merlino's antistatism excessive, since the development of the state had made possible the liberation of individuals, but he agreed that the modern state tended to become oppressive and needed to be balanced by intermediate groupings. And of course Durkheim had already begun to emphasize the moral value which organizations based on economic function could have for the atomized individuals of modern society.[47] Organizing society into a network of occupational groupings was the key to overcoming the basic defects of the liberal and capitalist order.

Despite major differences, Durkheim, Merlino, Sorel, and Pareto converged in some significant ways as they sought solutions to present problems. And the cluster of ideas we have discussed provided a foundation for the supplement to traditional Marxism that the dissident socialists around Arturo Labriola were seeking to develop. The syndicalists borrowed selectively from these critics of orthodox Marxism as they sought to come to terms, simultaneously, with the revision of Marxism and with Italy's peculiar problems. Even those who ended up fascists continued to pay homage to these four figures and to use their ideas. In 1917, at the pivotal moment in the syndicalist evolution toward fascism, Panunzio returned to Merlino for intellectual guidance, and later, as a fascist, he frequently credited Merlino with initiating the process of socialist revision which had culminated, he insisted, in fascism.[48] We will have occasion to consider this provocative assertion, and to return to the network of intellectual relationships we have just discussed, when we seek to place Italian fascism in the perspective of European history in the concluding chapter.

By 1900, Labriola was beginning to admit that much of value could be found in the ideas of Merlino and Sorel,[49] but it was not until 1902,

in his articles in Colajanni's *Rivista popolare*, that Labriola began to integrate their ideas into a coherent synthesis of his own. In this series, in fact, the conception of present problems and the vision of socialist ends that would underlie Italian syndicalism were becoming clear, even though Labriola was still far from proposing a revolutionary syndicalist strategy. He portrayed the syndicate as the crucible in which the proletariat was developing its own ethical and juridical alternative to the bourgeois order.[50] The syndicates were ideal nuclei for the future society; they would provide the institutional framework for the coordinated but decentralized economic system in the socialist order. In their concern over salaries and working conditions, the labor organizations were already preparing for the noncollectivized economic planning required for socialism. Labriola expected that manual workers and technical and managerial employers would soon come together within the syndicate, making it possible to overcome the hegemony of the capitalist within the factory.

Labriola's emphases had changed considerably since 1898; the essence of socialism had become ethical, juridical, and, in the broad sense, political. Thus the task for socialist theorists was to analyze not the flaws in capitalism, but the flaws in bourgeois values and in bourgeois legal and political relationships, in order to explain how alternatives could develop within the labor movement. This was the doctrinal task that the emerging syndicalist current would soon set for itself. Writing in *Avanguardia socialista* in November 1903, the young student Sergio Panunzio, who had been strongly influenced by the translation of Sorel's *Avenir socialiste des syndicats*, pinpointed the central tenet of syndicalism: since socialism was the unique expression and responsibility of the proletariat, then the labor syndicates, as specifically proletarian products, had to play the crucial role in achieving socialism.[51] The workers' organizations could serve both as pedagogical instruments, fostering revolutionary capacities and socialist values, and as the alternative, postbourgeois institutions necessary for the new proletarian order. The source of social redemption was to be found in the labor movement; the treacherous path of parliamentary politics led nowhere.

As we have seen, Giolitti welcomed the industrial development that produced a more sophisticated working class and sought reformist collaboration in order to bring the workers into the system. The reformists, for their part, believed that they could best promote socialism by taking advantage of the opportunity to win improvements for the most advanced sectors of the working class. Syndicalism was the radical antithesis of this relationship between the Giolittian system and reformist socialism; leave the society alone, the syndicalists were saying, so that the workers can develop their own values and institutions and gradually lead society as a whole beyond the traditional socio-political patterns. The workers seemed a unique and precious source of novelty.[52]

Through industrialization and syndical organization, the proletariat was emerging as an elite, distinguishing itself from the people, the great masses of Italians. Only insofar as the proletariat made itself an elite, the bearer of new values and capacities, could it make a real revolution. Conversely, only the organized industrial proletariat narrowly defined (though including the landless workers in the heavily capitalized agriculture of the Po Valley), and not the Italian masses, could constitute a revolutionary force. According to Olivetti, "The syndicalist mentality can only mature in the factory or in intensive, industrialized agriculture: it supposes, then, large industry and the intense vibration of capitalist life, and of necessity must leave behind itself all the grey zone of small industry and small agriculture: the artisans and the petty bureaucracy, the various kinds of domestic wage-earners, etc.; that is, a whole mass which is specifically proletarian, but incapable by its very structure and economic position to feel the unique revolutionary impulse that is syndicalism pulsating in its veins and stimulating its will."[53]

Because they were more pessimistic than the reformists about the depth of Italian problems, the syndicalists were less confident about the resiliency of the emerging socialist alternative. They sensed that the reformists underestimated the menace Giolitti represented. Reformism meant contact with politicians and the existing state, and this could only contaminate the labor movement, leading the proletariat to settle for favors within the system. The workers would come to understand socialism as a mere accumulation of reforms, won by the Socialist party in parliament, rather than a genuinely new form of life, which they themselves had to develop.[54] Labriola argued in a 1910 lecture that "the syndicalists are preoccupied above all with the *transformation* of society. The question of the *betterment* of the workers within the limits of the current society is very important, but it is not connected to the specific end which the syndicalists propose."[55] If that end was to be achieved, the syndicalists argued, the proletariat had to create something new on its own.

There were further implications of the reformist strategy which made reformism—and ultimately the Socialist party itself—seem dangerous to the syndicalists. The reformists' determination to pursue reforms within parliament made them excessively concerned with winning electoral support; as a result the Socialist party was becoming too heterogeneous, representing not the class interests of the proletariat,

but those of any social group that offered votes.[56] Moreover, the party leaders, and especially the Socialist deputies in parliament, were developing narrow, personal interests of their own, even their own clienteles, like other Italian parliamentary groups.[57]

Despite this emphasis on the proletariat, the syndicalists lacked a serious understanding of the industrial labor experience; they based their doctrine on an abstract, unrealistic conception of proletarian behavior and never devised an effective alternative to reformism on the level of strategy.[58] Revolutionary syndicalism in France and Spain emerged more organically and spontaneously from the experiences of certain sectors of the working class.[59] There were few middle-class intellectuals involved in Spanish syndicalism, which won control of the labor movement in Catalonia, the country's leading industrial region, between 1908 and 1910. The situation in France was more complex, but Sorel and the "New School" around *Mouvement socialiste* were seeking merely to interpret the actual practice of the French labor movement, which developed a militant, revolutionary syndicalist orientation from within the Fédération des Bourses du Travail, founded in 1892 and spearheaded by Fernand Pelloutier until his death in 1901. Syndicalism seemed firmly established within the French labor movement by 1906, when the Confédération Général du Travail formally adopted the syndicalist blueprint at its national congress at Amiens. To be sure, the resolutions of labor leaders at national congresses do not necessarily reflect the priorities of the workers themselves, but syndicalism seems for a few years to have expressed the aspirations of certain sectors of the French working class. In Italy, the syndicalist doctrine was more clearly the product of a group of intellectuals, operating within the Socialist party and seeking an alternative to reformism.

Generally, the Italian syndicalists were willing to concede that syndicalism had not developed spontaneously in the Italian labor movement and that the Socialist party still had an essential, though temporary, educational role—to make the organized workers aware of their crucial revolutionary and socialist mission.[60] Although the development of the labor movement seemed cause for optimism, there remained the danger that the young unions might become mere interest groups, concerned only with their members' economic betterment. Once the party had made certain that the unions were firmly committed to syndicalism, it could still serve as the political instrument of the organized workers, representing purely proletarian interests in parliament.[61]

The syndicalists admired the proletariat as a new, productive class born of the industrialization process. But it was particularly the experience of organization which seemed to be preparing the workers for

social leadership, fostering not only the capacity for revolution but also the anti-bourgeois values that would give the new proletarian regime a socialist character. The individual industrial worker had revolutionary value only after he had been transformed by organizational membership. Sergio Panunzio summarized the central proposition of Italian syndicalism when he wrote in 1906: "Thanks to today's syndical organizations, the brute and disorganized labor forces, which have exerted so many vain efforts throughout history to redeem themselves from slavery, become intelligent, aware, organic forces; the static masses are converted into dynamic, distinct, and stable combinations and associations. So the syndicate marks a high degree of perfection, or elevation, in the mental, psychological, moral, and social evolution of the proletariat."[62] Following Gabriel Tarde and the Italian social psychologist Pasquale Rossi, Panunzio explained how groups elaborate norms which the members internalize. He also borrowed selectively from Durkheim to buttress the syndicalist view that the workers' organizations were developing new ethical patterns.[63] This emphasis on the value of organizational membership recurs constantly in syndicalist writings.[64] The syndicalists, even as fascists, never abandoned their heavy emphasis on the value of organization for radical change in Italy. Organization seemed a source of both moral development and political consciousness for the atomized, egotistical Italian masses. In organizing, moreover, Italian society seemed to be developing the strength and resiliency it needed to stand up to the exploitative Italian state.

We can best understand the mechanism through which the syndicalists expected socialism to emerge if we examine Enrico Leone's position first, and then show how most of the syndicalists went beyond it. Because Leone was one of the most able and well-educated of the syndicalists, some have assumed that he spoke for the others on complex theoretical matters.[65] But Leone's conception was atypical. All of the syndicalists recognized that the workers had organized in the first place to better their economic position. Leone sought to stay on the economic level, trying to ground his theory of syndicalist revolution solidly in the economic interests of the workers. His conception of the historical mainspring that would produce socialism was already worked out in its essentials by 1900; his later revolutionary syndicalism only described the mechanism whereby his conception would be implemented in practice.[66] Although he accepted the revisionist critique of Marxist economics, Leone fashioned another strictly economic conception of the coming of socialism based on the new marginal-utility, welfare economics of Léon Walras and Vilfredo Pareto. He agreed with the other syndicalists that the making of socialism depended on prole-

tarian will, rather than on internal contradictions within capitalism; he conceded that voluntarism and a consequent measure of indeterminacy must again be part of socialism. But he sought to minimize this indeterminacy by showing that it was economic interest, not some new subjective value system, that inspired the workers' will to create a new order.[67] Although socialism depended on the subjective motivation of the proletariat, rather than the objective unfolding of capitalism, that motivation was the utilitarian hedonism of economic man. Pursuing their own economic self-interest, the organized workers would continually strike, thereby cutting into the share of output going for profit. Ultimately, profit would be eliminated altogether, because it prevented the proletariat from maximizing its own economic well-being; parasitism would be eradicated as the producers took over the economic apparatus. Leone insisted that socialism would now become truly scientific, since it turned out to be the consequence of laws elaborated independently by scientific economists.

Because the proletariat could win this economic struggle against its capitalist adversaries only if it were stronger, Leone's conception, like the majority syndicalist position, required that the proletariat acquire the new virtues of solidarity and self-sacrifice which would give it power in the class struggle. But these virtues were merely instruments that would make victory possible; they were not viewed as the primary motivating force that had set the workers on a revolutionary course in the first place. The essence of the revolution remained the elimination of capitalism, not the implementation of the new values. Leone feared the abyss that seemed to open as soon as socialists ventured beyond the economic level; if modern socialism was "an ethical ideal, instead of the expression of a relationship of economic forces, any expectation of ours about its future chances would amount to a mere expression of confidence, not to a conviction derived from the real development of historic, social and economic facts."[68]

With his quasi-deterministic vision of the revolutionary future, Leone was able to face with greater equanimity than his colleagues the failure of syndicalist ideas in the Italian labor movement. Success required new virtues, but the motivation for socialism was merely a matter of economic interest. When the proletariat proved more interested in pursuing immediate economic gains than in developing anti-bourgeois values, Leone's syndicalism was not undermined to the same extent that the majority syndicalist position was. It was partly for this reason that Leone maintained his faith in the proletariat, opposed the Libyan War and Italian intervention in World War I, and did not share in the postwar redefinition of the social revolution that led so many of his former colleagues to fascism. In fact, Leone's ideas evolved very little; his postwar pamphlet for the railroad workers could almost have been written in 1905.[69]

The other syndicalists tended to follow Leone's hedonistic model whenever they argued in purely economic terms.[70] But in their view, the workers' movement would become increasingly independent of the economic concerns which provided its original impetus.[71] The hedonistic economic strike could produce merely quantitative adjustments within the present system, not a qualitative departure. But even though purely economic disputes did not have revolutionary implications, they did lead to organization and to a method of struggle that produced, as Franz Weiss put it, "a psychological transformation in the proletariat, developing within it the sentiments of brotherhood, of solidarity, of sacrifice, of personal dignity, of individual responsibility, of self-help."[72] The external bonds of interest which had originally united the workers were becoming new internal links of duty and solidarity, and the specifically proletarian morality which resulted was the key to the workers' will, and capacity, to institute a superior order.[73] Gradually, the organized worker would come to understand both the essence of the bourgeois order and his capacity to replace it with an order based on his own radically different principles. And it was this desire to implement new values, not a desire for economic betterment, that would lead the proletariat to revolution.

Two major steps beyond the deterministic version of Marxism were necessary to reach the kind of socialist voluntarism that most of the syndicalists professed. Leone took the first step, arguing that the proletariat must actively intervene in the historical process and willfully destroy capitalism if there was to be revolutionary change. He emphasized explicitly that the impetus toward socialism lay within man, not in abstract economic laws.[74] But he refused to accompany his colleagues as they made the second, far more treacherous step. The new voluntarism for the others meant not merely that the proletariat had to act to create socialism, but that its role as a universal class depended exclusively on its subjective qualities, rather than its objective place in the economy. The new values were not merely instruments enabling the workers to fulfill their revolutionary role, but the justification for that revolutionary role. With this second step, the relationship between the proletariat and the new order—whether it was called socialism or something else—became far more problematic and contingent.

Whether one emphasizes materialism or voluntarism in Marxism, the proletariat's place in the historical process is defined objectively and follows from its position in the system of production. Whatever subjective values the proletariat must develop to create socialism follow from its objective socioeconomic position. For the syndicalists, how-

ever, the proletariat could be considered the universal class only if it made itself such through a process of psychological development. It did not enjoy this unique historical status automatically, "objectively," because of its special place in the socioeconomic sphere, as it did even for the voluntaristic Marx. The implication was that the leadership role in the revolutionary process was defined subjectively, in terms of values or psychological states, and not objectively, in terms of socioeconomic situation. The proletariat was apparently in the best position to develop new values—and seemed to be doing so during the first years of the new century. But in fact the leadership role was up for grabs, since it depended exclusively on subjective states. Thus the syndicalist commitment to the proletariat was merely empirical—and depended upon the further development of new values in the labor movement.

The workers could be counted upon to lead only because, through a difficult process of psychological maturation, they were coming to embody values diametrically opposed to those underlying the liberal capitalist system. Solidarity was the most important. The workers were learning to live according to the principle of solidarity on a day-to-day basis; the revolution would extend this principle of solidarity to the whole society.[75] The foundation of the new solidarity would be common productive labor. As he reached maturity and lucidity, the industrial worker would come to understand the need for labor in society and to embrace his own productive role.[76] The syndicalists idolized the worker partly because he was the special product of the new industrial age and would come to affirm industrial labor, machine production, and the factory system. A crucial criterion of the workers' maturity was the extent to which they had overcome their nostalgic resistance to the technical forms of modern economic organization and had embraced the industrial system as their own. In attacking the existing order, the proletarian elite would be seeking to extend its principle of labor to the whole society as the foundation for the new solidarity; the workers would overcome the nonproductive elements, thereby making possible a classless society of producers.[77]

This solidarity did not imply a leveling in the production process. The syndicalists stood in awe of the complexities of modern industrial production and respected those who knew how to organize businesses and run factories. As a major part of their socialist maturation, the workers were developing the technical capacities necessary to manage society's productive apparatus effectively, but the syndicalists considered that some sort of functional hierarchy within the factory would always be necessary, for objective, technical reasons.[78] Since this differentiation would meet productivist criteria and thus serve the general interest, the syndicalists did not worry that a new kind of political privilege or domination would result.

Extraordinary training, involving a good deal of hardship and sacrifice, would be required for the workers to come to maturity. The strike was essential as an instrument for this training, not primarily as an instrument for economic improvement. The criteria that distinguished a pedagogically valuable strike emerge most clearly in syndicalist polemics against revisionist, nonrevolutionary labor union supporters like Antonio Graziadei and Leonida Bissolati. Graziadei agreed with the syndicalists that the workers' organizations, and not the Socialist party, would play the determining role in the creation of socialism. But his conception of socialism was still evolutionary and reformist: simply by struggling for the economic betterment of their members, the syndicates were pursuing socialism. The criterion of success in a strike was immediate economic gain.[79] From the syndicalist perspective, this conception of the strike was narrow and egotistical; a truly revolutionary and "syndicalist" strike, like the one in Parma in 1908, was distinguished by its explicitly political tone, by its class consciousness, transcending a narrow corporate outlook, and by the strikers' awareness that together they were creating something new, which would ultimately provide the basis for a socialist society. A valuable strike both fostered and manifested the solidarity, lucidity, idealism, and self-sacrifice of the organized workers.[80] Even a defeated strike could widen horizons and engender new capacities in the workers involved.[81] But it was this contempt for the merely utilitarian in their conception of the strike that led the syndicalists into tactical excesses in practice and soon made their doctrine unpopular in most of the working class.

The syndicalists never translated their dream of an alternative society into a practical blueprint, showing how the values they thought they saw developing in the labor movement could be generalized to the whole society. The new social order was to be a network of syndicates, but they never explained the mechanics of organizational relationships in future society. Still, the syndicalists' images of the future reveal the frustrations and aspirations that had made these particular Italians radical opponents of the present order. Through the vigorous, self-reliant economic organizations now emerging, the society would gradually become capable of governing itself, without the corrupting parliamentary state and the stifling centralized bureaucracy, without politicians as intermediaries.[82] The conventional political sphere would disappear altogether, replaced by a direct democracy of producers, in which "political" participation would be more constant and immediate than under the liberal suffrage system. Social authority in the new

order would be at once stronger and more decentralized, in response to the contradictory qualities of the Italian state, which was in some ways too weak to govern an especially atomized society, and in some ways so strong that it stifled society.

The syndicate itself afforded an image of the tightly knit, highly organized society the syndicalists desired as an antidote to the disorganization and atomization of Italian society.[83] They conceived the alternatives in extreme terms: the petty egotistical individualism of the present could be overcome only by giving a strong social dimension to all aspects of the individual's experience and behavior. Within the labor organizations that would eventually make up the new society, undisciplined individuals were already learning to accept their social duty, to internalize ever more social obligations.[84]

So the syndicalists sought antidotes to the disorganization and indiscipline of their society, but their vision also responded to the stifling centralization of the Italian state. They envisioned a society composed of semiautonomous organizations with plenty of scope for grass-roots initiative and economic competition. To overcome the peculiar cluster of problems in Italy, it was necessary to elevate and socialize the individual through organizational membership and, at the same time, to diffuse political decision-making into the society, making the economically-based organizations themselves the focus for participation in public life.

The syndicalists clearly fell heir to some of the antistatism of the Italian anarchist tradition, but they were neither proindividualist nor antiauthoritarian. Again and again, in fact, they explicitly denounced anarchism and proclaimed the superiority of their own conceptions of both the revolutionary process and the socialist future. Panunzio, for example, longed for something more solid and structured than the simple, transitory groups of isolated individuals which he found in the anarchist vision: "[Syndicalism] acknowledges not *unstable*, fleeting human aggregations, but *stable* and durable ones; it acknowledges, like anarchism, 'free associations,' but those having an *organic* not an *atomistic* character, an *institutional* and not a *contractual* basis."[85] Arguing explicitly against the anarchists, Panunzio, Labriola, and Olivetti each explained that syndicalism anticipated the destruction of the state in its present bourgeois configuration, but not the disappearance of formal social authority in general.[86] The workers' organizations seemed to be developing their own forms of authority, even within the confines of present society. Manifesting the tight psychological unity characteristic of proletarian organization, this syndical authority was much stronger and more effective, not more relaxed, than the social authority of the bourgeois system.[87] The syndicates, in fact, were already beginning to

evolve a system of collectivist law, ensuring the social character of individual behavior. In the socialist order, this new kind of law would govern society as a whole, giving juridical expression to the new solidarity and replacing the bourgeois legal system, with its individualistic assumptions. Indeed, revolution was required in large part because the present bourgeois ruling class was too decadent to bind society together with an effective legal system; the proletariat, in contrast, would extend the sphere of law, arresting the present trend toward generalized exploitation and social disintegration.[88]

Despite their antistatism, then, the syndicalists were hardly antiauthoritarian individualists. As they later recognized more clearly, they rejected the existing state not only because it was stifling and corrupting, but also because, paradoxically, it was too aloof and limited—and ultimately too weak—to protect the collective from exploitation and to constitute an effective source of authority in the lives of Italian individuals. The syndicates were attractive as intermediate bodies which had emerged in opposition both to the state and to the reigning individualism of bourgeois society, and which seemed to be narrowing the gap between individuals and the source of social authority. The new order would not rest, like the bourgeois order, on a mass of isolated individuals, but on the network of syndicates, with their strong bonds among individuals.[89]

Since specifically proletarian institutions were essential for socialism, the syndicalists denied that a genuine revolution could be made through traditional forms of popular insurrection. Here again, the accents of syndicalism and anarchism were radically different, although historians have usually lumped the two together. It has been argued, for example, that De Ambris and Corridoni shared the anarchists' simplistic conception of the requirements for overthrowing the Italian regime, their Bakuninist belief in a spontaneous rising of the people.[90] But the syndicalists consistently held that a viable new order could not be created suddenly, through barricades and violent insurrection, but only through a long, gradual process of industrial development and proletarian maturation.[91] Writing explicitly in critique of anarchism, Lanzillo insisted that "if the proletariat wants to make the revolution . . . a life of sacrifice, of labor, of intense technical and psychological, intellectual and moral preparation is necessary."[92] This patient preparation served, as Tommaso Sorricchio put it, "to preserve syndicalism from anarchist and insurrectionary follies and degenerations."[93] Anarchist tactics produced only pointless revolts, which appealed to peasants and declining bourgeois groups; the syndicalist general strike had nothing to do with old-fashioned popular insurrection.[94]

The syndicalists did not expect a general strike to overthrow the

capitalist system in the foreseeable future. The proletariat still needed a long period of maturation before it would be fit for leadership. Syndicalism required patience.[95] The syndicalists did not consider any of the great Italian strikes of the prewar period to be definitive revolutionary episodes—not even the general strike of 1904, the Parma strike of 1908, or the Red Week agitation of 1914.[96] Alceste De Ambris, discussing the Parma strike while in progress, emphasized that "the idea of a catastrophe capable of creating a new world is not one that we advocate, since we are persuaded that the road to be traveled is still very long and that we are scarcely in the first stages."[97] Although he portrayed this strike as an especially valuable pedagogical experience, De Ambris consistently denied that it was intended to spark full-scale revolution against capitalism.[98]

The episode in which syndicalist purposes have been most seriously misunderstood is Red Week, the spontaneous, quasi-insurrectionary popular uprising which paralyzed almost all the major cities in Italy for at least two days in June of 1914. Students of the movement, failing to distinguish syndicalism from anarchism, have simply assumed that the syndicalists considered Red Week to be the great revolutionary opportunity they had been waiting for.[99] In his detailed account of Red Week, Luigi Lotti lumps the syndicalists with the anarchists and republicans, but nowhere does he show that the syndicalists saw Red Week as a genuine chance for revolution. Indeed, his account makes clear that it was real anarchists like Errico Malatesta and Armando Borghi who believed the uprising had serious revolutionary possibilities. De Ambris and Corridoni did work to intensify the strike movement, but only in order to enhance its psychological value, not because they wanted to transform it into the revolution. When, during Red Week, the movement in Parma began to get out of control with stone throwing and violence, the syndicalists called off the strike in only its second day.[100] In this episode and in general, the syndicalists simply did not share the anarchist belief in the value of spontaneous popular uprisings.

Those who misinterpret the syndicalists' intentions during Red Week also misinterpret the lessons they drew from the experience. It has been argued that the failure of Red Week finally brought the syndicalists down to reality, proving to them that the revolution they advocated was not possible in Italy, at least for now.[101] But since the syndicalists had always distinguished their revolution from spontaneous popular insurrection, Agostino Lanzillo could argue, quite plausibly, that the failure of Red Week had confirmed, not undermined, the syndicalist strategy, with its emphasis on gradual proletarian maturation.[102] Just after the end of Red Week, De Ambris reaffirmed what

he and the other syndicalists had been saying for years—that the Italian proletariat was still not ripe for revolution, and that revolutionary capacity could only be developed gradually, over a long period.[103]

Just as Italian syndicalism was not a throwback to preindustrial insurrectionary traditions, neither was it an aspect of the new antipositivist, antirationalist culture that began to emerge, in Italy as elsewhere, with the dawn of the new century. At first glance, the revolutionary syndicalist reaction against reformism, in both Italy and France, seems part of the more general voluntarist reaction against positivism and deterministic socialism. It is often assumed that the Italian syndicalists can be dismissed as second-rate participants in this cultural movement because of their alleged cult of violence and elitism and their apparent interest in myth and irrational forms of mass mobilization and behavior.[104] The syndicalists were apparently Sorelians, and Sorel, though easily misunderstood, was a major figure in the European revolt against positivism. Some dialogue did develop between a few of the syndicalists and the avant-garde intellectuals around Giuseppe Prezzolini's *La voce*. Prezzolini included several syndicalist pieces in *La voce* and even published a book about syndicalism in 1909.[105] But this dialogue never amounted to much; the syndicalists continued to develop their own ideas in their own way. Indeed, they had little use for the esoteric notions of their antipositivistic contemporaries. Sergio Panunzio, writing in 1910, attacked Marinetti and the futurists for their irrationalism and exaltation of violence. Since they ignored the need for rational limits to human activity, Panunzio argued, Marinetti's ideas could only lead to "the most brutal and mechanical irrationalism."[106] During the debate over Italian intervention in World War I, when any syndicalist fascination with violence could surely be expected to have come to the fore, the fervently interventionist Panunzio went out of his way to express his contempt for what he considered the bestial morality of Stirner and Nietzsche.[107] Panunzio portrayed the war as a means of expanding the sphere of justice against the sphere of irrational force. In the same way, A. O. Olivetti repeatedly criticized the revival of "mysticism" in Italy, singling out Giovanni Papini for special scorn.[108]

The syndicalists owed only a limited intellectual debt to Sorel, as they themselves recognized when they reflected honestly on the development of their ideas. Writing in 1918, Sergio Panunzio stressed that the Italian syndicalist emphasis on the values of organization gave syndicalism "a clearer and less involved, more comprehensible and more rationally intelligible aspect than it had with Sorel."[109] The Sorelian and Italian versions of revolutionary syndicalism already differed fundamentally in 1905, when Sorel first published, in *Il divenire sociale*, the articles that would form the basis of *Reflections on Violence*. Sorel

had developed new interests and concerns since he had written *Avenir socialiste des syndicats* in 1898, while the Italian syndicalists had continued to refine the ideas they had derived, in part, from Sorel's earlier work. They had more in common with Hubert Lagardelle than they did with Sorel, for Lagardelle, too, continued to stress that the workers were gradually maturing and that socialism was gradually emerging through the everyday activities of the labor organizations.[110]

In their conception of the proletariat's revolutionary motivation, the Italian syndicalists did not follow Sorel in emphasizing the role of myth. The workers, in the Italian conception, would come to embody principles and values antithetical to the present order. When they recognized that they had sufficient power for success, their will to realize the values they embodied would be sufficient to motivate them to act. The vision of future success, of course, would stimulate the proletariat in its gradual process of maturation, but the workers would be lucid, would clearly understand what they were doing. They would make a revolution because they knew they were capable of creating the society they wanted. Italian syndicalism seemed to have no need for Sorelian myth.[111]

During the prewar period, the syndicalists were reluctant to admit their differences with Sorel, no doubt because of the prestige which Sorel enjoyed in wider Italian intellectual circles. Once Sorel had made available his theory of the social myth, some of the Italian syndicalists were tempted to take advantage of it, applying it to any type of nonrational motivation. Leone's hedonistic motivation might be considered rational, but the proletariat's will to realize its own values involved sentiment and passion, so the syndicalists sometimes portrayed the revolutionary transformation in Sorelian language.[112] However, since their own syndicalism, with its stress on lucidity, was ultimately incompatible with myth, their use of the concept was invariably confused and awkward. Gradually the syndicalists came to admit that they had never really embraced the categories of Sorel's mature conception. We have seen that by 1918 Panunzio was explicitly distinguishing Italian from Sorelian syndicalism; this divergence culminated in Enrico Leone's postwar attacks first on Sorel in *Il neomarxismo: Sorel e Marx* and then on the philosophical underpinnings of Sorel's mature syndicalism in *Anti-Bergson*. Of course, Leone was especially likely to reject Sorel's ideas, since of all the Italian syndicalists he was the most concerned with economic analysis and the most determined to rely on economic motivation. Lanzillo and Orano found Sorel's approach temperamentally more congenial, yet even their ideas were ultimately incompatible with his. True to Sorel's earlier position, the Italian syndicalists continued to stress the key role for workers'

organizations as both moral instruments and institutional alternatives to the bourgeois state. Sorel, however, under the influence of Bergson, began to place less emphasis on the values of organization and to seek the agency of moral regeneration elsewhere. Compared with Sorel's mature position, the Italian syndicalists' conception was a bit simplistic, but they ultimately could not accept the emphasis on myth as a motivating force and the links between myth and moral development so important in his revised theory.

Sorel found excessive rationalism to be both a source and a symptom of the contemporary decadence which the revolution was to overcome; the redemptive potential of the proletariat depended on its freedom from this excessive rationalism of the bourgeois order. Sorel admired the "primitive" qualities of mind which made the proletariat especially susceptible to myths.[113] He found the proletariat capable of the sublime and heroic sensibility which was crucial for moral renewal precisely because of these "myth-making" qualities of mind. The Italian syndicalists, on the other hand, did not find excessive rationalism at the root of bourgeois decadence, so the proletariat's ability to redeem society did not depend on nonrational qualities of mind. For Sorel, the sublime revolutionary spirit would underlie moral renewal.[114] For Italian syndicalism, the reverse would be true: the new morality would be the source of the proletariat's will to a new order. The Italians expected a new morality from group suggestion and experience, not from heroic, warlike passions, not from the revolutionary spirit itself.

We have seen that the syndicalists from the beginning had wanted to transcend anarchist conceptions of revolution; Marxism came as a revelation because it seemed a more precise, scientific kind of socialism. As participants in the revision of Marxism, of course, the syndicalists focused on the psychological development of the proletariat, rather than on the internal contradictions of capitalism. But they continued, consistently enough, to criticize anarchism and all catastrophic conceptions of revolution. Socialist voluntarism did not have to mean mysticism and non-rational motivation. Since the Italian syndicalists remained strongly positivistic, it is not surprising that Sorel's conception of socialism as a mystery, its coming as a catastrophe baffling description, ultimately proved abhorrent to them.[115] Panunzio argued that syndicalism would cure the Italian workers of their previous quasi-anarchistic socialist beliefs; with the advent of syndicalism, he said, socialism was no longer a matter of religion and faith, but a matter of lucidity and real capacity.[116] Writing in 1908, Labriola found Sorel's theory of myth ingenious but clearly subversive of Marxism's attempt to dissolve myths and illusions by getting at the material bases of truth.[117] In his memoirs of 1939, he recalled the Italian syndicalist

skepticism about the Bergsonian elements in Sorel and reaffirmed a basic principle: "Myths, fables, and revelations are precisely the contrary of socialism, which proposes to teach individuals as such to fashion for themselves their own lives, and in thus constructing their lives, to see within themselves as in clear, transparent water."[118] This lucidity was a constant syndicalist ideal; if the worker was to make a revolution and create socialism, he had to understand precisely and cognitively the nature of the process and his own role in it. Since, in the Sorelian conception, a transformation motivated by myth would not necessarily produce any of the situations foreseen in the myth,[119] the Italian syndicalists wondered why a revolution based on myth could be expected to create socialism. To them, this conception seemed dangerously close to old-fashioned catastrophic conceptions of revolution, while, for Sorel, the problem dissolved, because the myth-making mind was also the morality-making mind. Morality for Sorel was incompatible with rationalism; indeed, myth and morality would grow together.

The syndicalists were no more fascinated with violence than they were with myth. The final expropriation of capitalism would probably be violent, and the proletariat would succeed only if more powerful than its adversaries. But violence was simply the moment of transition in revolution, the final test of proletarian capacities; it was not, in itself, creative. Nor did the Italian syndicalists argue that strikes had to be violent if they were to have a psychological impact. The exercise of violence had no intrinsic moral or creative value in Italian syndicalist theory.[120]

Finally, the elitism of Italian syndicalism was not so much a cult and goal as a tactic and instrument. Following Pareto, the syndicalists argued that revolutionary change in history occurs only when new elites emerge to impose their new values on the inert remainder of society. So a creative minority would have to lead; to wait for a majority could only undermine the possibility of a genuinely new order.[121] The syndicalist conception implied that some measure of mobilization and indoctrination would ultimately be required to enable the new elite to instill its values. But the syndicalists were emphasizing the essential role of elites only in periods of revolutionary transition, not in society in general. They were not advocates of permanent elitism, but socialists who believed that man as such was capable of internalizing the superior values which a new elite offers society. The elite, then, would be open; ultimately its values and attributes would become universal. Here the syndicalists departed from Pareto, as we will see in more detail in chapter seven.

It has been argued that the elitism of Olivetti and Panunzio meant

the authoritarian leadership of "a minority of class conscious leaders" over the rest of the proletariat in the revolutionary process itself.[122] From this perspective, syndicalist elitism converged with the revolutionary vanguard conceptions of Mussolini and, ultimately, Lenin. But the syndicalists did not envision a manipulative relationship between elites and followers within the revolutionary movement. All the organized workers had the potential for elite status; the organized industrial proletariat would make the revolution on its own, imposing on an inert society the new values it embodied. After 1906, since the workers' organizations were not proving equally receptive to revolutionary syndicalist ideas, the syndicalists had to admit that the organized industrial workers would not all attain elite status simultaneously. For the moment, the workers of Parma, for example, formed an elite within the industrial proletariat because they were particularly syndicalist in orientation. But never did the syndicalists foresee a revolution in which the enlightened workers would lead while the much larger number of nonsyndicalist workers followed. The syndicalists did not deny the function of leadership or propose a cult of mass spontaneity, but there would be no qualitative distinction in consciousness or value between whatever leaders emerged during the revolutionary transition and their followers.

Despite its eclecticism and revisionism, then, Italian syndicalism cannot be explained either as a reversion to outmoded insurrectionary traditions or as a modern irrationalist heresy. The syndicalists genuinely desired—and tried—to work within the Marxist tradition. But theirs was bound to be an unstable variety of Marxism, since their populist underpinnings were never far from the surface, and since it was not clear that convincing diagnoses of Italian problems could be found through Marxist categories. Despite tensions and obvious inconsistencies, however, the syndicalists clung to Marxism until about 1910, because it was easier, psychologically and intellectually, than probing the troubling Italian problems on their own terms. Those problems, they told themselves, could be understood in terms of Marxism's universalistic categories. Capitalism was at the root of the divorce between individual and society in Italy, and between the public and private spheres of the individual's existence; capitalism determined the exploitative character of the Italian state, which was merely an instrument for the interests of the bourgeoisie. At the same time, the syndicalists portrayed the revolution in essentially economic terms, as the expropriation of capitalism by the workers.[123] And they believed in international proletarian solidarity. Insofar as Italy had some peculiar, "prebourgeois" problems, these could also be understood in Marxist terms—as feudal leftovers.

But some of the syndicalists' intuitions about what was wrong with Italy could not be satisfactorily explained in Marxist terms, even though Marxism was the most attractive doctrine of radical change available. In analyzing the Italian state, the syndicalists followed the standard line of criticism developed over the past several decades by both conservatives and radicals: the state promoted the protectionism, the high military spending, the electoral and bureaucratic corruption which skewed Italian economic development and degraded Italian public life.[124] In analyzing these patterns, Olivetti noted the existence of a parasitical "political class," dependent on the state and independent of the usual economic classes, yet he still found this class to be a product of the normal Marxist class struggle.[125] But if the state was the expression of a new, ill-defined political class, and not the tool of the capitalist bourgeoisie, could it really be understood in Marxist terms—and overcome through a Marxist revolution? The syndicalists were not yet ready for such questions. When they sought to explain the unhealthy features of the Italian state, they withdrew into their Marxist framework, portraying the state simply as the organ of political domination for the capitalist bourgeoisie.[126] Nevertheless, the syndicalists repeatedly strayed from the basics of Marxism, contending that the state, rather than the capitalist substructure, was the fundamental enemy, that its destruction was the basic goal of the revolution.[127]

The Italian state hardly seemed the vehicle of a vigorous productive middle class; it was rather the corrupter of Italy's bourgeoisie. The class charged in classical Marxism with the task of developing Italy economically was not fulfilling its historic function. Lacking entrepreneurial energy, its members clung to state favors for their economic well-being.[128] But Italian bourgeois decadence was, for the syndicalists, only one aspect of a deeper problem of the Italian character itself. In his introductory article to the first issue of *Pagine libere*, Olivetti expressed very clearly this gnawing syndicalist concern: " . . . the virus of all the foreign dominations still runs in our veins; our outlook is still degraded by all the humiliations we have suffered; the cunning we learned in the age of servitude takes the place of real competence in us. We are still dragging behind us the rags of our baroque and Arcadian seventeenth century; nor have we yet dusted from our backs the filthy powder of our frivolous eighteenth century; we still have in our veins the Papacy, the Saracens, the Spaniards, Aretino, Loyola, and our shoulders still ache from the Croat's club."[129] A petty anarchical individualism, a lack of organization and discipline, and a propensity for parasitical, exploitative activity seemed to the syndicalists somehow characteristic of the modern Italian. Panunzio, writing in 1905, found the Italians "accustomed to the academy and infected with the spirit of the Baroque

seventeenth century," and went on to warn that "we are not an *orderly* and *organizing* people, but a disorderly and disorganizing race." Olivetti cited "the monotony of our traditional national *dolce far niente* [sweet idleness]," while Paolo Orano satirized the parasitical mentality and social uselessness of Italy's swarms of lawyers.[130]

In discussing the transition to the new order, the syndicalists emphasized change in political forms and social values, not economic revolution to change the organization of the means of production. Alighiero Ciattini, for example, contrasted the emerging syndicalist solidarity not with the ethics of capitalism, but with the narrow sectarianism underlying the behavior of political parties.[131] At first, the syndicalist divergence from Marxism appears only a matter of emphasis, for obviously Marxists too are concerned about solving the problems of political exploitation and social atomization they see in liberal bourgeois society. But in fact, the divergence was more profound, for it concerned the autonomy—and thus the sources—of those extra-economic problems. The syndicalists' emphases suggested that those problems were autonomous, problems in their own right, and not, as in Marxism, derivative of the economic substructure. But if they were autonomous, those problems could be—indeed, had to be—attacked directly. And this in turn raised questions about how much of the Marxist blueprint for solution, focusing on the role of the proletariat and on changes in economic organization, really had to be followed. It was by no means clear that a mechanism for overthrowing capitalism was required, nor was it clear that the proletariat had to play the lead role.

The syndicalists' initial doctrine was abstract and riddled with tensions, because, in their desperate search for solutions, they fastened onto a mechanism for revolution that kept them from thinking clearly about the nature of the problems to be solved. They liked the new values and institutions that emerged from the proletariat's struggle against capitalism, so it seemed necessary to insist that capitalism was the basic problem in society—and the target of revolution. In fact, however, those new values and institutions were appealing because they seemed antidotes to an altogether different set of problems. Focusing on capitalism prevented the syndicalists from explaining those problems, and thus from determining which aspects of the revolutionary process they envisioned were essential and which were secondary and contingent.

The initial syndicalist vision responded to genuine Italian and liberal problems, but in a hopelessly abstract and utopian way. Still, elements of this conception could be developed further, producing greater theoretical clarity and a more effective practical program. It was possible, for example, to devise ways of basing political life on a net-

work of socioeconomic organizations, decentralizing decision making and strengthening social discipline, without all the excesses of revolutionary syndicalism. But the syndicalists had to be clearer about what they were trying to do if they were to offer a more realistic blueprint for solving the problems that had bothered them all along.

The failures in practice which the syndicalists encountered after 1904 revealed the inadequacies of their doctrine—both the revolutionary syndicalist emphasis on vigorous class struggle, and the Marxist interpretation of Italy's problems. Frustration and defeat soon forced the syndicalists to confront more explicitly the problems that had made them alienated radicals in the first place. By the time they became fascists, they understood both their underlying objective and the obstacles to its fulfillment more clearly than they had during the orthodox period of revolutionary syndicalism in Italy. But the syndicalists never abandoned their quest for the kind of society which found utopian expression in their vision of a syndicalist future—a disciplined, closely knit society of producers governing itself through economically based organizations, with no need for old-fashioned politics. This was the goal they proposed for fascism.

4 / *The Corruption of the Proletariat*

In introducing the Italian translation of Sorel's *Reflections on Violence* in 1907, Benedetto Croce gave Sorel credit for identifying the central uncertainty of modern socialism—the question of how the proletariat was to develop the capacity to institute a superior order.[1] According to socialist theory, the proletariat was to play the kind of historical role the bourgeoisie had played when it led European civilization beyond feudalism, demonstrating great courage, ability, and idealism in the process. But it was questionable whether the proletariat was developing comparable attributes. Croce reminded his readers that the socialist labor movement could be of transcendent historical interest only if it was preparing to create something new, not if it was merely a force for material improvement within the existing order. By 1911, Croce felt that further experience had closed the matter; he pronounced socialism dead in a widely discussed interview in *La voce*.[2] Socialism could have emerged only according to the syndicalist blueprint, from within the labor movement, but the labor organizations were concerned solely with immediate material advantage. If the proletariat was not interested in socialism, hopes for a socialist society had no basis. Croce noted that the Italian syndicalist intellectuals were turning away from the usual socialist concerns and were developing instead a critique of the modern parliamentary state.

Croce and Sorel had known each other since 1895, when Croce agreed to collaborate on Sorel's new review, *Devenir social*; they began a long correspondence that same year. In a letter just after the *La voce* interview was published, Sorel endorsed Croce's observations on the death of socialism, and indeed he was coming to the same conclusion himself.[3] Writing to Mario Missiroli the previous November, he lamented that "syndicalism is falling apart" and claimed to be "happy no longer to have any connection with the revolutionary movement."[4] In letters to Croce early in 1911, Sorel complained that the existing