

unlikely to admit that equality yields legitimate inequalities. Rocco feared, in other words, that democrats would find any differentiation and hierarchy as inherently illegitimate, as a violation of the equality imperative. So Rocco viewed traditional hierarchy as the only alternative to complete leveling because he sensed an ambiguity that can indeed be found in some expressions of the democratic imperative in the twentieth century. But since twentieth-century reality has remained so far from leveling, and even from genuine equality of opportunity, we must judge Rocco's fears on this score obsessive. We can understand his overreaction only in terms of "ideological" distortion, traditional cultural lags, and psychological extremism. It was only because of his own place in society, and because of a psychological propensity, characteristic of extreme conservatives, to assume that situations tend to be carried to their absurd extremes, that Rocco could have seen reality as he did. And in general, the Nationalists' priorities, their preoccupation with some problems facing Italy and their neglect of others, resulted from these kinds of distortions.

Because it synthesized a variety of concerns and perceptions and developed a rigorous program in response, Nationalism became a major focal point during the postwar crisis, as Italians seeking to transcend the old order looked about them for convincing diagnoses and proposals. It was not necessary to share all the fears that went into Nationalism to find the doctrine a useful indication of the direction in which Italy must begin to move. Indeed, since Nationalism was so obviously important, it is tempting to see all the national syndicalist, nationalist, prowar, procapitalist, anti-Socialist, and antiparlimentary ideas at work in Italy's postwar crisis as variations on Nationalist themes. The syndicalists, however, were developing a program which also pointed beyond parliamentary liberalism toward totalitarian corporativism, but theirs resulted from an altogether different set of needs and aspirations. Their neosyndicalism became the other main focal point for those who sought a convincing alternative to both liberalism and Marxism in the confused situation of postwar Italy.

7 / *The Neosyndicalist Program, 1917-1921*

We have seen that the Italian revolutionary syndicalist doctrine which began to emerge in 1902 started to break down between 1910 and 1917, as tensions and ambiguities crept into it. But despite their doubts about the workers, despite their support for the war and their concern for the nation, despite their increasing preoccupation with Italian political problems, the syndicalists' stated objective continued to be proletarian revolution against bourgeois capitalism. They had not yet made a definitive theoretical step toward fascism. In 1917, however, the tensions reached the breaking point; confusion and ambiguity remained, but now the syndicalists managed to combine elements of their underlying populism with elements of their original syndicalism, creating a blueprint for change which they claimed was appropriate to immediate problems in postwar Italy. The Italian war experience after Caporetto, the Italian Socialist response to the Bolshevik revolution, and the theoretical revision which Panunzio led, all pushed the syndicalists in the same direction: away from the orthodox proletarian revolution against capitalism and toward a new populist revolution against liberalism, to be spearheaded by a new elite defined in terms of values or psychology rather than socioeconomic class. This doctrinal reconstruction took place before the syndicalists began to mix with fascism for good, and certainly it was not the result of Mussolini's influence. Ultimately, however, it did enable the syndicalists to encounter and influence a new constituency within the Fascist movement.

Italian syndicalism had been an unstable combination of Marxism and populism from the beginning, and the process of doctrinal revision involved evolution toward a new position from both directions at once. The syndicalists were not simply repudiating a tenuous Marxism in order to embrace explicitly a deeper populism. While the war experi-

ence rekindled their national populism, the syndicalists were also involved as European socialists in a theoretical revision which led them to advocate the kind of national political revolution they wanted in any case, as Italian populists. Since this revision was troubling and difficult, however, the syndicalists sometimes thought in terms of the old orthodox framework. But even on the Marxist level, their immediate focus during the postwar crisis was not on the proletarian revolution against capitalism, but on a preliminary, essentially political revolution not to be led by proletarians at all. Since this preliminary revolution largely coincided with the implementation of the potential for national redemption bound up with the war experience, populist and Marxist concerns were hard to distinguish in the syndicalists' thinking even between 1917 and 1921. They did not have to choose explicitly, since they envisioned a single process of radical change that would simultaneously sweep away the obstacles to Marxist-syndicalist development and create a viable, productive, "popular" nation. Gradually, however, the syndicalists' accents shifted, and they began to portray their neosyndicalist program not as a mere preliminary, but as an alternative to the Marxist revolution, a program relevant both to long-standing Italian problems and to the more universal problems of the European liberal order. The war experience was essential for all aspects of the process of revision since it simultaneously promised national redemption, raised questions about the relevance of Marxism, and seemed to have created new opportunities for the radical change needed to remove the obstacles to "normal" evolution according to the Marxist-syndicalist model.

Paolo Orano gave striking expression to the syndicalists' conception of the war's value for national redemption in his immediate postwar writings, collected in *L'Italia e gli altri alla conferenza della pace* (1919). In his enthusiasm over the Italian victory, he seemed to anticipate that a hard-working, productive Italy would emerge spontaneously and fully realized because of the war experience. Orano paid lip service to working-class leadership, but the transformation he envisioned required no special revolutionary role for the proletariat, which he found to be too immature to create a new society anyway. The war, he felt, had restored Italy's self-confidence by proving the country capable of serious things; now, at last, after centuries of indiscipline and disorganization, she would be able to get down to work, creating "the new miracle, that Italy of the labor aristocracy that can be the model of every other people that intends to endure." The new Italy would have an important new role in the world, not as a military imperial power, but as the bearer of new productivity values: "The world needs the Italian; Italian is synonymous with worker; he is an

organism of extraordinary energy, is resistant, adaptable, sober, thrifty; he is the poet of toil, the hero of excavations, the vanguard of the harvesters of the land, the essential raw material for the effort of continuing human progress."¹ Orano clearly wanted to believe that the war itself had been the Italian revolution, but all his exaggeration and forced optimism indicate his sense that it would not be so easy to reap the harvest of the Italian war experience.

And despite Orano's inspiring images, of course, the end of the war soon led to the *biennio rosso* and the threat of socialist revolution. In response, the syndicalists finally began cutting themselves off from the old orthodoxy for good, condemning the working class, declaring the class struggle to be counterproductive, and calling for collaboration between the workers and productive sectors of the bourgeoisie. Although some of them had begun to contemplate a nonproletarian preliminary revolution before the war, it was the *biennio rosso* which finally led the syndicalists explicitly to repudiate the orthodox revolution and to determine more precisely what an alternative revolution would have to involve. It would be a national, populist, political revolution, one with no special role for the proletariat.

We have seen that disillusionment with the Italian working class had become a common theme in syndicalist writing by 1910. World War I had seemed, in part, a chance for the Italian proletariat to redeem itself by selflessly joining the crusade to make the world safe for socialism. But since the workers, led by the neutralist Socialist party, had never grasped that the war was a crucial episode in their own struggle, syndicalist disenchantment with the proletariat had deepened. Then came the Bolshevik revolution in Russia and the threat of the wrong revolution in Italy in the aftermath of the war.

From the first news of the Bolshevik takeover, syndicalist criticism was unceasing—and sometimes quite penetrating. Russia seemed to have experienced the sort of revolution the syndicalists had always warned against: a revolution made not by a mature industrial proletariat, but by a party of nonproletarian intellectuals; a revolution in a country where capitalism had not completed its task of economic development, where the economy seriously strained by war, was in severe crisis. This could only be a parody of the socialist revolution.² The syndicalists insisted repeatedly that since the Russian revolution was an arbitrary utopia imposed on a backward country by a group of intellectuals, it could only produce a new variety of class domination.³ Moreover, the disastrous economic effects of premature revolution were already becoming evident in Russia.⁴ The problem appeared to stem partly from the technical incompetence of the Russian proletariat, but even more important, Bolshevism did not seem to be based on the

new productivist ethic which the syndicalists had always considered one of the crucial prerequisites for socialism.

The syndicalists' deepest fear during the immediate postwar period was that Bolshevism would intoxicate the immature Italian workers, leading them to premature revolution. And of course maximalist rhetoric and labor unrest did seem to threaten a Bolshevik-style revolution during the *biennio rosso*. In a moving statement early in 1919, De Ambris expressed the dilemma confronting the syndicalists as they faced the possibility of the wrong revolution:

For more than twenty years we have lived in the midst of the workers because of the sincere affection that we have for them, and we dare say that we know them as few others do. We would be lying to ourselves and we are convinced that we would be betraying the proletariat as well if we were to keep to ourselves our conviction, which can be summarized in this way: only a small part of the proletariat is able to understand and carry out the great duties which the revolution would require of it. The great majority, ignorant of everything, disorganized and amorphous, feels only the negative elements of the revolutionary fact. The members of this majority would understand the revolution in the Russian way and would be easy prey to all the demagogues wanting to exploit them. The revolution in progress would thus produce the exercise of power in the name of the proletariat but for the benefit of this new band of parasites, along with the destruction of everything which has been produced by the slow conquest accomplished by humanity through centuries of painful effort.⁵

All syndicalist literature during this period, but especially statements intended for the organized workers themselves, constantly stressed the same anti-Bolshevik, antirevolutionary theme: the Italian proletariat was simply not mature enough for a real socialist revolution.⁶ Olivetti introduced the postwar series of *Pagine libere* in February of 1920 by reminding his readers that such a revolution could not take place until the workers had developed superior moral, political, and technical capacities—capacities that would enable them, among other things, to enhance production.⁷

But of course most of the Socialists and workers were not listening to the syndicalists' warnings, and the quasi-revolutionary agitation of the *biennio rosso* continued. Denunciations of the proletariat increasingly supplemented antirevolutionary statements in syndicalist writing. Responding to the occupation of the factories in 1920, Paolo Orano bitterly condemned the Italian proletariat for its alleged hostility to the discipline of production and stressed the importance of hierarchical differentiation in the factory.⁸ Agostino Lanzillo, after some initial ambiguity, similarly condemned the occupation of the factories, judging the movement infantile and counterproductive—the result of the workers' in-

itation with Bolshevism.⁹ And Panunzio offered a novel proposal for one still calling himself a socialist. Writing in *Pagine libere* in 1921, when he was finding fascism more and more interesting, he advocated longer hours and lower wages for the workers. The proletariat, having proven itself incapable of revolution, must get back to work and "contribute to the economic reconstruction of society, which is the formal premise of every social transformation."¹⁰

The tone of some of these remarks indicates that the syndicalists' bitterness against the workers stemmed not only from plausible differences in perceptions and strategy. Already in March 1918, in fact, the syndicalists were denouncing the workers in terms that betray an element of classic "petty bourgeois" resentment. Agostino Lanzillo, for example, deplored the workers' "frenzy for enjoyment" and the "lack of political and moral consciousness which permits the Turinese metal worker to fail to consider putting aside some part of his earnings in order to improve the condition of his children and to make possible the reproduction of those goods which he enjoys so voluptuously." This "rigid and ignoble egotism" makes the worker "despise any sacrifice" and "forget family and country."¹¹ A few weeks later, Panunzio praised Lanzillo's article and added his own scathing criticism:

The workers from now on should of course think of material improvements, but also and above all of their moral and intellectual instruction and culture, and must give up the idea that society is conquered by deserting and scorning schools and culture and by passing a good part of the day in bars, in taverns, and in other such places.

The organizers of Milan know better than I do these bitter facts; they well remember the cardinal principle of Georges Sorel that *socialism is entirely in the psychological evolution of the proletariat*. . . .

If a serious, rigorous, austere moral and educational character is imposed on the movement—precisely the kind of character that was the glory of the early, heroic period of socialism and of *socialist discipline* in Italy!—we will have in our country a political and social force of the first order, one destined, perhaps, to achieve greater success than is foreseeable today.¹²

Panunzio clearly was not giving up on the workers, but new ways of raising their collective consciousness apparently had to be found if they were to realize their potential. And in the short term, the workers could not be expected to bring about whatever radical change was possible. Despite their resentments, however, the syndicalists continued to admire the workers as modern industrial producers. Even as they began to argue for a different kind of radical change, they continued working-class support essential if a viable new order was to be created. So the syndicalists' statements about the proletariat between 1917 and 1921 manifested a fundamental and symptomatic ambiva-

lence: the egotistical, antinational proletariat could justifiably be coerced and manipulated; the productive proletariat must play a major role in the new populist order.

The consequences of the Russian revolution seemed to confirm that capitalism, despite its excesses and injustices, could not be dismissed lightly before it had completed its task of industrial development. The immaturity of the Italian workers was simply one indication that capitalism in Italy could not yet be scrapped. The war had greatly stimulated industrialization in Italy, but the adjustment to peacetime would be difficult even for the healthy side of the Italian industrial economy—and no time for revolutionary experiments. The syndicalists continually emphasized that bourgeois elements still had crucial economic roles to play in Italy after the war. De Ambris, writing in May of 1919, as the possibility of change in economic organization was being widely discussed, warned that "industry requires . . . a sum of technical and administrative capacities, a constant application of enlightened will, an intelligent audacity, and an exercise of individual initiative so remarkable that it is not presently to be found outside the industrial class."¹³ Obviously, then, there were valuable, productive members of society who were not workers. De Ambris perceived "certain industrial groups, within which persons having really superior intelligences and spirits ready for all the necessary audacities are to be found, examples of the captain of industry type, who can certainly by no means be accused of representing the parasitical segment of society, and who, in a society organized on different principles, would even occupy a place among the most valued elements of leadership."¹⁴ By implication, the task for now was to make the sociopolitical changes necessary to enable these groups to assume such positions of leadership.

The workers' task was to get down to work and to cooperate with this dynamic segment of the Italian bourgeoisie in order to maximize production and develop the country. The program of Rossoni's *Cultura sindacale*, a periodical intended for proletarian education, stressed that "If production is to be intensified, the cooperation of the proletariat with directing, intellectual labor is necessary. The proletarian and managerial forces, who today are unknown to each other or even combat each other, must come to know each other and join together."¹⁵ The syndicalists repeatedly urged Italian revolutionaries to concentrate on pushing the Italian bourgeoisie to fulfill its economic mission and called for cooperation between industrial workers and dynamic capitalists.¹⁶

Stress on the continued utility of capitalism and calls for solidarity among producers did not mean passive acceptance of the Italian status quo. Indeed, Italy's producers had to join together partly in order to overcome the parasitical elements that kept the healthier, more dynamic

sectors of Italian society from coming to the fore. Class collaboration to make such immediate, "preliminary" changes was possible, even though a measure of conflict over distribution was built into the capitalist order. The newspaper of the syndicalist trade union confederation, *Battaglie dell'UIL*, laid out the bases of the new program by quoting Filippo Corridoni, whose tentative proposal to shift the axis of social division had come to seem quite convincing to the syndicalists by 1919: "But has the present European war not made crystal clear to us the immaturity of the proletariat and the fact that there are still various problems for the classes to resolve in common, before they can confront each other without encumbrances? And has it not made clear how capitalist interests themselves can be dominated by other interests—dynastic or caste interests—entirely to their detriment?"¹⁷ Thus it was essential immediately to make the productive elements in the bourgeoisie aware of themselves—and of the differences that separated them from the less productive sectors.¹⁸

Once the syndicalists began to distinguish healthy from unhealthy economic activity, they had no difficulty seeing that the Italian political system was the immediate problem, for it was political links that enabled the parasites to thrive. Seeking to pinpoint the enemy, Olivetti found the speculative, parasitical element to be much too powerful within Italian capitalism and called workers and "authentic capitalists" to "a common defense against super-capital, which pushes everyone together to ruin."¹⁹ Olivetti had a reasonably accurate grasp of the financial manipulation involved in Italian heavy industry and of the role of the political system in making such activity possible. Early in 1920, he analyzed the bonds between the government, the Ansaldo steel trust, and the Banca Italiana di Sconto, and discussed the power which Ansaldo exerted within the Italian state.²⁰ In the same way, Lussaglio portrayed the protected steel industry, with its special access to bank credit and state support, to be at the center of a parasitical plutocracy dominating the entire Italian economy, as well as Italian politics.²¹ The syndicalists were pointing to a political problem calling for a political solution. The workers could not help to solve it by taking over factories from productive industrialists, but they could participate in the necessary change in political relationships and institutions.²²

Such polemics against "big finance capital" sound superficially like the petty bourgeois, anti-industrial protest which is often assumed to have been a major source of both fascism and revolutionary syndicalism. However, Olivetti attacked finance capital not because it threatened the little man, but because in Italy such capital had sought high short-term profits through speculation and governmental favors, not

long-term industrial development. In the same way, Lanzillo's anti-protectionism cannot be understood simply as a lower-middle-class consumerist and anti-productivist ideology.²³ The syndicalists had always been free traders, because of their belief—which was partly illusory, partly "rhetorical," and partly plausible—that the rigors of international competition would undermine the unhealthy portion of the Italian economy, thereby enabling the productive portion to flourish. The interpretive categories usually applied to fascism are so ambiguous that almost any fascist statement about the economy can be taken as evidence of petty bourgeois opposition to modern industrial society. In reality, it was not necessary to be a worker or an industrialist to develop a plausible and progressive view of the contemporary capitalist economy.

As they focused on the short term, the syndicalists began to sense that Italy's political problems were more fundamental than they had realized before. The political problem was apparently deeper than the economic problem—liberalism was apparently worse than capitalism. The parliamentary system seemed to have nurtured a parasitical "political class" that had to be distinguished from the vigorous capitalist bourgeoisie.²⁴ Now the syndicalists began seeking to explain the sources of the Italian political problem more systematically—and to propose solutions. Olivetti, for example, sought to explain why the parasitism of Italy's swollen bureaucracy was an integral part of her parliamentary system, by no means a superficial abuse that could be eliminated by reform from within the system.²⁵

As the problem of the bureaucracy made clear, Italy's political patterns had reinforced the problems of national character that were partly responsible for the condition of Italian society. For Olivetti, the corruption of the political class set an example which encouraged petty fraud at all social levels, while the stasis of Italian politics reinforced the superficiality to which Italians seemed especially prone.²⁶ Politics was inherently trivializing: "Everything is contingency, expediency, second-rate ability. Everyone seeks to circumvent difficulties, not to confront them. . . . All the parties have equal worth: all the groups are in communication among themselves, like the sewage system. All the men are only half-men, even masks. . . . The programs sound in the void: the words have use and exchange value and as such form the basis of the system of political bargaining."²⁷ Exploring the same set of problems, Alighiero Ciattini insisted on the distinction between the political and economic spheres that was by now fundamental to the neosyndicalist critique: "Although the parties promise the resolution of the universal problem, with their partisan and restricted activity they complicate the simplest problems. They constitute real 'political'—and thus artificial—classes. The economic classes are a logical and

natural reality. But the political classes constitute a fraudulent and parasitical incrustation."²⁸

It was possible to portray immediate political change and even short-term class collaboration in orthodox terms, as expédients necessary to remove the obstacles to "normal" social maturation. But as the syndicalists focused more sharply on the immediate situation, it seemed increasingly obvious that the present task eluded the old orthodoxy; what they had in mind was not merely an attack on feudal remnants like the monarchy in order to complete Italy's bourgeois revolution. Simultaneously, Panunzio, especially, was trying to reexamine the bases of socialism, asking about the place of Marxism in the socialist tradition. The rethinking that Panunzio spearheaded enabled the syndicalists to formulate more clearly what they were beginning to sense about the meaning of the immediate revolution.

When it had become clear—by about 1910—that syndicalism was not developing as expected, the syndicalists had tried to understand what had gone wrong in orthodox terms, focusing on feudal, prebourgeois remnants. Their thinking became confused and contradictory, however, because they sensed that the obstacles in Italy were anomalous, yet they did not question the socialist-syndicalist model itself. But finally the cumulative effect of wartime events and experiences forced the syndicalists to ask some new questions; too much was happening that seemed to escape the orthodox framework.

In his influential book *La disfatta del socialismo*, written in 1917, Agostino Lanzillo claimed that the war amounted to the definitive defeat of the old socialism—both as a doctrine and as a party with pretensions to leadership. Since they insisted on their traditional theoretical framework, the Italian Socialists could not grasp the significance of the war and thus could not hope to lead after the war was over. Lanzillo stressed that syndicalism, in contrast, could make a vital contribution to the new theoretical framework which had to be created if the European countries were to come to grips with the new reality after the war.²⁹ For Panunzio, too, the war raised questions and afforded opportunities which escaped the traditional socialist framework, yet the Socialists remained oblivious, refusing to participate in the essential doctrinal reconstruction.³⁰ As a result, the Italian Socialists would not be able to offer a credible claim to leadership after the war. The syndicalists would have to do better.

But they could hope to do so only if they faced up to the basic question about all the unforeseen obstacles and events: just how appropriate had the original model been in the first place? And how much was left—and still usable—of the original syndicalist conception? Gradually, as they considered these questions, the syndicalists began to

view the revolution they were proposing as something more fundamental than a mere preliminary; it was an end in itself, for the problems to be overcome were neither feudal remnants nor anomalous Italian obstacles to the universal model, but autonomous and universal problems in their own right.

In a tentative way, Panunzio had already begun the doctrinal reconsideration before the war, in response to the apparent impasse of socialism. After reaching a nadir of intellectual uncertainty late in 1913, he sought to formulate the questions that seemed necessary in an article in Mussolini's review *Utopia* in May of 1914.³¹ Influenced by the neo-Kantian thinking of the philosopher Iginio Petrone, he argued that socialism is an aspiration which ought to be realized, a matter of idealism, not materialism; socialism's scientific pretensions were fallacious. Panunzio sought to develop the implications of this notion in a series of articles which appeared in Ivanoe Bonomi's *Vie nuove* from 1917 to 1919. Socialism was currently in crisis, he argued, not only because of the war, but above all because of its theoretical bankruptcy, which should have been evident to socialists well before the war. If socialism was to survive, its theoretical foundations had to be completely reconstructed. Above all, socialism had to be more pluralistic and less reductionist; it was not the exclusive concern of the proletariat, to be created solely through the economic class struggle.³² In addition, Panunzio warned, socialism must cast aside its ruinous pseudoscientific trappings and recognize its utopian underpinnings. The essence of socialism was an aspiration to justice; creating socialism meant eliminating exploitation and, conversely, achieving solidarity through the universalization of productive labor. Panunzio found this instinctive negation of injustice—this utopianism—even at the basis of Marxism, which "is really the most powerful demand for a juridical ideal," despite its trappings of materialism.³³

The source for many of Panunzio's ideas in these articles was Francesco Saverio Merlino, the revisionist from the turn of the century whose ideas had helped to launch Italian syndicalism in the first place. In fact, Panunzio recommended Merlino's *Pro e contro il socialismo* to his colleagues as the basis for a socialist revision which would deny the canonical status of Marxism, relegating it to its proper, less exalted place in the socialist tradition.³⁴ For Merlino as for Panunzio, the heart of socialism was an aspiration toward justice, which required "the elimination of the parasitical class—the equality of men before the necessity of labor."³⁵ The obstacles to justice and solidarity in modern society were cultural patterns and social divisions that could not be understood merely as functions of capitalism. Ultimately, the lazy class of political parasites, not the vigorous class of capitalists, was the

enemy. The industrial workers had no special relationship to the social problem: they were not especially afflicted by it; they had no special responsibility for solving it. Socialism, in fact, had no connection with economic class at all: "Socialism is not the victory of one class over the others, but the triumph of the general interest over particular interests." The victory of socialism meant "the extension of culture and of the reciprocal sympathy among men; the spreading and intensification of public life and the multiplication of common interests and needs."³⁶ Merlino envisioned a greater social dimension to the individual's behavior and experience as the key to the new society.

Several implications followed from Panunzio's ideas in *Vie nuove*, including his intellectual encounter with Merlino. It seemed that reality was more complex than orthodox socialists admitted. There were many social problems, some of which were not reducible to the capitalist organization of the means of production, and they could not all be solved at once. Conversely, it was possible to go ahead and solve some of them without attacking capitalism. Even within a capitalist framework, there could be a significantly greater measure of solidarity and justice and a much greater premium on the collective interest. These goals had always been central to socialism, but they were not the responsibility of any particular socioeconomic class; the industrial proletariat had no special role in achieving them. Moreover, if there was no single blueprint, if all problems were not interrelated in a determined way, socialists would have to become more eclectic and pragmatic. They could go ahead and attack particular, immediate problems, but they would have to be willing to learn, first, from any social thinker whose insights illuminated the problem at hand and, second, from experience. Writing in 1918, Panunzio found Marxism still to be relevant, but he warned that if socialists continued to look to it for the solution to all social problems, they would undermine its ongoing value.³⁷

Merlino could help the syndicalists to deepen their understanding of social problems and of socialist ends, but the problem of means remained. If the proletariat had no special role, where were the new values to come from? In their initial revolutionary conception, the syndicalists had been much concerned with the mechanism that would produce new values and capacities, because they sensed how difficult it would be to break out of the prevailing patterns in Italy. Indeed, this concern dominated their thinking, impeding systematic consideration of the problems they were seeking to overcome. The proletariat was to struggle against capitalism not so much because capitalism seemed the basic problem in society, but because something new could apparently develop through the process of struggle itself. It was this belief in the

value of proletarian autonomy, organization, and struggle for developing a solution to the social problem—whatever it was—that the syndicalists had learned from Sorel.

The syndicalists, then, had originally done precisely what Merlino warned against and portrayed socialism as the special concern of the proletariat because they sensed the depth of the strategic problem. Despite his clearer analysis of social problems and socialist purposes, Merlino could not explain how social solidarity and the collective interest might eventually triumph. He insisted that the moral-psychological change in society which was crucial for socialism would not follow automatically from a change in society's material and institutional structure.³⁸ Indeed, he found such moral change a prerequisite for effective institutional change. So the crucial moral change could not wait until after the revolution—but how could it be brought about from within the present institutional structure? The path to socialism turned out to be a vicious circle. At least intuitively, the syndicalists grasped quite well this fundamental dilemma of radical change; their original doctrine was primarily an attempt to show how the new social virtues could be created within the present flawed society. In the labor syndicates, those virtues would have an autonomous institutional basis for their development.

Panunzio's rediscovery of Merlino was a two-edged sword. On the one hand, it helped the syndicalists to understand what they had always sensed about social problems and to articulate what had always been essential in their vision of the future. Economics, capitalism, socioeconomic class, the proletariat—the syndicalists had originally overemphasized all of them because of their preoccupation with the strategic problem. On the other hand, the problem of means now returned; if the syndicalists were to deemphasize the proletariat and class struggle in their conception of socialist revolution, their original explanation of how the new values could be created was no longer of any use.

Another long-time acquaintance, Vilfredo Pareto, offered ideas which helped the syndicalists redefine the revolutionary force—and which reinforced the change in their conception of immediate Italian problems that was already under way. As they cast off the components of their Marxist superstructure, the syndicalists found Pareto increasingly relevant and explicitly admitted their intellectual debt to him.³⁹ Pareto also paid attention to what the syndicalists were saying as he sought to fathom the future during the volatile wartime and postwar years. In *The Mind and Society*, published in 1916, he anticipated that syndicalism might play a major part in saving a disintegrating society.⁴⁰ After the war, he discussed and quoted Lanzillo's *La disfatta del social-*

ismo, citing with approval Lanzillo's contention that syndicalism could have a key role in creating the new "ideology" that was essential if the radically new postwar world was to be confronted effectively. Pareto also found in Olivetti's introduction to the postwar series of *Pagine libere* evidence of the pragmatism and realism that had made the syndicalists immune to abstract conceptions like Bolshevism.⁴¹

Marxism had been attractive to the syndicalists as a universalistic doctrine of radical change based on industrial development, but Pareto's anti-Marxist categories seemed better to illuminate what they sensed was wrong with their society. Pareto insisted, in explicit opposition to Marx, that the basic differentiation in society is according to value-psychological states, not socioeconomic class. A society ripe for revolution is one whose ruling elite has grown too egotistical and effete to promote the collective interest or even to keep society together. As the ruling elite grows decadent, elements in the society mature, developing new collectivist values; if the ruling elite fails to renew itself by absorbing these new elements from below, then only revolution can revitalize the society. The new elite throws out the old and disseminates its new solidary values. Since the crisis is one of values, it must be values or psychological states—and not socioeconomic class—that define the revolutionary force.

Viewing the situation from this perspective, the syndicalists had no trouble identifying the elements in Italian society that had the potential to constitute a new elite. The key was the war experience. The syndicalists sought at first to portray the war as a full-fledged revolution, but increasingly, they had to admit that the war had only started the process, creating a new, nonproletarian revolutionary elite.

In *La disfatta del socialismo*, Lanzillo portrayed the war as revolutionary in both senses, betraying the ambiguity in his thinking. On the one hand, the war had been a mysterious attempt to overcome the increasing decadence and moral anarchy of European society, and it had indeed turned into the cataclysm necessary to change everything. Above all, the war experience had instilled the social discipline and solidarity that the syndicalists had always considered the keys to the new order.⁴² On the other hand, Lanzillo invoked Pareto and suggested that the war was producing a new revolutionary elite—a new ruling class that "must assume the leadership of the nation" after the war was over.⁴³ The austere mentality of those who had been involved in the war would play a fundamental role in forming a new national consciousness in Italy. Hence the war had forged a revolutionary force—one which did not coincide with any particular socioeconomic class, but which was imbued with virtues much like the ones the syndicalists had originally expected the revolutionary proletarian elite to develop.

Writing in 1919, De Ambris similarly recognized the existence of a new revolutionary force, produced by the war and distinct from the proletariat, and advocated a coalition of war veterans and workers to make the limited, non-Bolshevik revolution that Italy needed.⁴⁴ Two years later, he denounced the Socialist party for its blindness to the revolutionary potential of nonproletarian elements in Italy after the war. The self-sacrifice and solidarity engendered by the war were precisely the virtues required for revolution. The party's failure to approach the veterans, De Ambris felt, was the logical corollary of its dogmatic neutralism, its narrow indifference to the war and the war's impact on Italy.⁴⁵ By this time, as we will soon see in more detail, De Ambris himself was seeking to build a movement of renewal around the veterans and "legionnaires" who had followed Gabriele D'Annunzio to Fiume and there applauded De Ambris's own neosyndicalist constitution, the *Carta del Carnaro*. His major collaborator was A. O. Olivetti, who also called for a national revolutionary coalition—including syndicalists, legionnaires, veterans, and other interventionist leftists—to create a new producers' Italy.⁴⁶

As fascists, the syndicalists continued to portray the revolutionary force in Paretian terms; the proletariat had failed, but a nonproletarian elite could assume the mantle of leadership.⁴⁷ Now the syndicalists could admit the contingency of their initial commitment to the proletariat. Massimo Rocca made the point in an article with the telling title "Sorel's Error," published in July 1922 in the Fascist journal *Gerarchia*. Experience had proven, he insisted, that both Sorel and the Italian syndicalists had been wrong in assigning to the workers—and to them alone—the task of moral renewal in society. The moral regeneration of Italian society initiated by the war was manifested primarily, though not exclusively, in the middle classes.⁴⁸ Under the circumstances, dogmatic emphasis on the proletariat could only contaminate the still useful parts of syndicalism. Writing a year later, in the newspaper of the Fascist trade union confederation, Panunzio subsumed the initial Sorelian conception of the role of the proletariat under Pareto's more general conception of the role of a new elite. A key role for a Paretian elite remained, even though experience had indicated that it was not to be Sorel's proletariat.⁴⁹

But the syndicalists accepted only in part Pareto's conception of the elite's role, for their objectives had always been—and continued to be—fundamentally incompatible with his overall social theory. They never ceased to believe that there is genuine progress in history toward justice and solidarity, while Pareto viewed history as cyclical and society as permanently elitist—despite periods of postrevolutionary solidarity. Pareto insisted that the new elite, even if it happened to be the prole-

tariat, would govern society in its own interests, preaching solidarity simply in order to maintain its position. It would not attempt to universalize the new values in an effort to establish an authentic democracy. Moreover, this elite as well would ultimately grow too egotistical and effete to hold society together, so it would have to be replaced by still another new solidary elite as history continued its cyclical course. The syndicalists were coming to understand the characteristics and purposes of revolutionary elites in terms much like Pareto's, but they continued to believe that the revolutionary elite would provide a greater measure of solidarity and justice than society had known before.

Every crack in the Marxist "superstructure" of syndicalism opened the way for elements from the populist foundations that were forcing their way to the surface at the same time, independently, thanks especially to the war experience. The whole process was obviously pointing the syndicalists toward a synthesis of the socialist-syndicalist tradition and Italian populist ideals. The ideas of Giuseppe Mazzini enabled the syndicalists to complete the synthesis, for the great populist prophet of the Risorgimento seemed to have anticipated many of the essentials of the new national syndicalist revolution. Writing in *Il popolo d'Italia* in January 1917, Panunzio called for the study of Mazzini, whom he deemed the greatest Italian since Dante; Mazzini's lofty concepts would inspire the politics of the future.⁵⁰ Panunzio anticipated a new socialism, to be derived from various systems—from Mazzini's above all. But socialists could learn from Mazzini, Panunzio warned, only if they distinguished the living elements in his thought—the ideas about association, education, and mission—from the outmoded elements—especially the romantic religious ballast. Olivetti highlighted the similarities between syndicalism and Mazzinian populism again and again, finding especially significant their common emphasis on the collective basis of the moral ties which hold society together.⁵¹ Quotations from Mazzini were sprinkled throughout issues of postwar syndicalist periodicals, while an untitled, boldface manifesto in the first issue of Olivetti's *La patria del popolo* exhorted Italians: "Onward to the People's Italy which Giuseppe Mazzini prophesied!"⁵²

Mazzini seemed relevant because he had repudiated both liberalism and Marxism, claiming to offer an alternative to both. He opposed the abstract liberty and individualism of 1789, but at the same time he rejected the primacy of class struggle and denied that the industrial proletariat had any special progressive role. On the purely national level, Mazzini remained the symbol of the unfulfilled promise of the Risorgimento, since he had envisioned a different kind of Italian unity, a genuinely popular community based on tight psychological bonds

and deep social commitments. In contrast to the pessimistic, defensive political class which emerged from the Risorgimento, Mazzini was confident, even wildly optimistic, about his country's prospects. Not only could Italy put herself together along genuinely popular and communitarian lines, but she had a universal mission of moral leadership in overcoming the major problems of the present liberal era. While Mazzini was a fervent nationalist, his nationalism was not exclusivist and aggressive, but congruent with internationalism and humanitarianism.

The syndicalists' new interest in Mazzini helped make it possible for them to join forces with wider groups of disaffected Italians, including Mazzinian populists like Armando Casalini who were interested in the labor movement as the basis for bringing Mazzini's ideas up to date. Just as the syndicalists were doing, Casalini emphasized the populist elements in Sorel's thinking and portrayed Mazzini as a precursor of syndicalism, "the teacher of moral energy" who sought to inspire the worker to fulfill his mission as a producer for society. Thus syndicalism and Mazzinianism were complementary; syndicalism—modern social organization rooted in the economy—was necessary to make Mazzini's populist, communitarian vision concrete. Through syndicalism, Casalini felt, it would finally be possible to implement the Mazzinian and democratic ideal of popular government, which individualistic ideas and parliamentary institutions had only frustrated.⁵³

By synthesizing what seemed to be the living elements in syndicalism and Mazzinianism, the syndicalists also helped to make their blueprint accessible to young war veterans like Dino Grandi and Italo Balbo, who would provide the core of fascism as a mass movement in 1921. A cult of Mazzini was intimately bound up with their conception of the meaning of the war experience and with their dreams of radical change.

As the syndicalists reconsidered their position, they discovered, above all, the autonomy of the political. The liberal parliamentary system was inadequate because of problems of its own, not because it was the instrument of the capitalist bourgeoisie, not because the means of production were organized in a certain way. Nor was it simply the lack of economic equality that made a mockery of political and juridical equality in the liberal system. And since the inadequacies of political liberalism did not stem from economic inequality and exploitation, it was neither necessary nor possible to focus on the economic sphere in the quest for solutions. This meant that radical leftists did not have to wait for capitalism to mature and give way before lasting solutions to some of the central problems of the liberal system could be found. The democratic aspiration that had guided leftists all along could be

achieved by changing political forms, by moving beyond universal suffrage, popular sovereignty, and the parliamentary system to a more radical, concrete kind of democracy, a postliberal superdemocracy.

This conclusion seemed to result from the breakdown of the Marxist framework. But the syndicalists' populist concerns were pushing them in the same direction, for they argued increasingly that the war experience could prove the catalyst for a populist political revolution—the solution to the long-standing national political problem—enhanced political consciousness, and the organization of ever more economic categories during and after the war meant that the society was spontaneously overcoming the atomization that had made the old political patterns possible—and even necessary. Since the Italian people were maturing, Olivetti contended, Italy could finally do away with "this filthy political class which shamefully rots and exploits her." He anticipated "a revolution of the Nation against the State, of the producers against the politicians, of the concrete economic categories against the spurious and lying parties."⁵⁴

So the universal leftist and the national populist levels in Italian syndicalism finally came together. Through a populist revolution against the liberal political system, it would be possible to overcome peculiarly Italian problems and general problems of the present order in Europe at the same time. As conscious leftists, seeking to participate in the most advanced European radical currents, the syndicalists could do what they had "subconsciously" most wanted to do all along—to replace the Italian liberal political system. Still, since their new synthesis stemmed in part from a reconsideration of the bases of socialism as a universal doctrine, the syndicalists could consider their conclusion about the autonomy of the liberal political problem to be valid for the radical leftist tradition in general. Socialism was in crisis everywhere, not just in Italy, but the syndicalists had found the key to the necessary revision.

Panunzio, especially, showed how Italy's potential for populist renewal could be translated into concrete sociopolitical change, solving the basic problems of liberalism. Writing in 1918, he emphasized that Italy's "classes" were finally developing solid organizations as a result of the industrial development and the social awareness which the war had fostered.⁵⁵ After the war, the "concrete and organic" economic groupings in society would become the bases of political life, replacing the parties, the electoral districts, and the suffrage system of liberal politics. So despite all the doctrinal revision, the syndicalists continued to view social organization based on economic function as the key. But now they began to realize what had been implicit in their conception:

to organize society on the basis of economic function was necessary in order to create the foundation for a new politics—not for a new economy. And the syndicate was not primarily an instrument of class struggle, but a source of new values and capacities. Thus syndicalism was a doctrine of organization for all those with productive roles, not just for the proletariat. The syndicalists pointed to the spontaneous organization of nonproletarian sectors—those they often characterized as “intellectual” labor—as evidence that the Italian nation was coming to maturity.⁵⁶ Thus the syndicalists were still insisting on the elements of their original doctrine which had enabled them to depart from pre-industrial populist radicalism in the first place. In a letter to Mussolini published in *Il popolo d'Italia* in November of 1919, Panunzio stressed the superiority of his national syndicalist blueprint for political change, based on the realities of modern socioeconomic development, to the much-discussed constituent assembly idea, which reflected, he said, an abstract and outmoded form of populism.⁵⁷ Two years later, Panunzio returned to *Avenir socialiste des syndicats*, which he termed “the fundamental work on syndicalism by Sorel,” to accent the continuity in the syndicalist tradition; he highlighted the moralizing attributes that had always attracted the syndicalists to socioeconomic organization.⁵⁸

Before considering proposals for a neo-syndicalist political order more systematically, we will find it useful to examine Panunzio's highly significant article, “Nationality and Humanity in Education,” published in *Cultura popolare* in October 1918. Although Panunzio here did not explicitly emphasize the role of economic groupings, he did consider carefully the link between the war experience and the opportunity for a new kind of populist politics. This piece reveals with unusual clarity the basic purposes that would later guide the left fascist quest for a postliberal, totalitarian superdemocracy.

Panunzio was concerned with one of the central questions about the modern European political experience—whether the liberal parliamentary system had proven to be an effective vehicle for genuine democracy. The answer could only be negative, he concluded, and the reason lay “in the fact, the irrefutable fact, of the lack of popular culture and education.” Panunzio revealed what he felt had been wrong with the liberal parliamentary system when he outlined his conception of the way out of the long impasse of democracy. In participating in the war, the people learned to ask political questions—about, for example, the responsibility for this war that so deeply affected them. They became aware of the stakes of political decisions and began to sense their own potential political weight:

All those who fought and who felt the war will no longer lack interest in politics and public affairs. . . . Until yesterday, a worker, an ordinary woman,

a peasant could not care less whether the radicals or the conservatives were in power, whether protection is better than free trade or not. How we had to struggle and sweat, as true friends of the people, to attract the common people and the obstinate and uncultured multitudes and interest them in politics and political problems! Politics was “abstract.” The people shrugged their shoulders and let things go their own way. The few political manipulators . . . went about their business. . . . But today the people . . . have understood in concrete terms what politics means. They have understood . . . that politics is their business—and a very important kind of business at that. They have understood that politics means the possibility of war, of wars that are of direct concern to the people. They have understood that to abstain . . . from politics is to leave the way open to the latest oppressors of the people, the petty politicians and demagogues. . . . They have understood, in sum, that they have to control politics directly and participate actively and effectively in public affairs.⁵⁹

First, the people would insist on control of foreign policy; for Panunzio, this would constitute mankind's greatest advance since 1789. But the people would immediately discover that mastery of foreign policy required mastery of domestic policy and that if they were to direct both, they would need the right kind of education. The problem of democracy was above all a problem of popular education, and thus Panunzio was quick to heap scorn on modern apostles of irrationalism. But it was not enough merely to defend existing forms of education, which relied too heavily on “formulas and mechanical exercises and memorization and rhetoric.” The Italians, Panunzio felt, had remained politically incompetent because for generations they had been given abstractions about civic “rights and duties.” Instead, they should be taught to grasp, for example, Italian economic and demographic problems, the requirements of industrial and agricultural development, and the workings of commercial relations and diplomacy.⁶⁰ In the aftermath of the war, the people would demand from education the expertise they needed to deal effectively with the complex domestic and international problems that had always eluded them before.

At the same time, however, Panunzio warned that narrow technical training was not the answer. This point merits special emphasis—first, because of the instructive contrast between Panunzio's educational proposals and those which the Nationalist Luigi Federzoni was offering during the same period, and second, because Panunzio's position could easily be misinterpreted, given the usual interpretive categories. Speaking in Rome early in 1917, Federzoni called for a more technically oriented education as a means to overcome the indiscipline and indifference in Italian labor, defects that damaged the competitive position of Italian industry.⁶¹ He proposed to educate working-class youth directly for their economic role—for apprenticeship in the factory. Federzoni obviously had no qualms about stunting the potential politi-

cal capacity of the workers through a system of education that would prepare them technically and psychologically for subordinate roles in the industrial system.

Panunzio had proposals like Federzoni's in mind when he warned: "The people, from now on . . . will demand—as I have always advocated . . . against our backward supporters of professionalism in education and in culture and of technical instruction in general—an education of general culture, a humanistic education, an education that instructs the spirit; and unlike certain people who—whether out of ignorance or out of cunning—would like to divert and prevent the development of an education appropriate for a democracy, the people will not call for education to become 'the maid-servant for the economic interests' of the bourgeoisie."⁶² At first glance, we might see Federzoni as the dynamic modernizer, seeking to make education relevant to the modern industrial world, and Panunzio as the petty bourgeois intellectual, resentful of the new technical culture and seeking to preserve traditional humanistic forms of education. But Panunzio issued his warning not because he resented modern industrial civilization, but because he feared that a narrow technical education would undermine the chance of the lower classes for real political competence. This concern certainly did not keep Panunzio from seeking a more practical education—to equip ordinary Italians to make judgments about the problems of the new industrial world.

Panunzio felt that if education was to promote meaningful democracy, new techniques would have to be used as well.⁶³ For example, newspapers and films could be used in the classroom to make education more politically relevant. Panunzio obviously sensed the novel possibilities which the mass media offered for politicizing people. At the same time, he proposed to broaden popular political horizons by developing a system of free international and domestic travel—ultimately to include everyone, not just those in school. Experience indicated that real democracy required mobilizing people, organizing and politicizing more of their leisure time and everyday activity.

The syndicalists were beginning to envision a postliberal, totalitarian kind of politics. In a perceptive analysis of the crisis of modern liberalism published in 1921, Alighiero Ciattini concluded that the parliamentary state in Italy—and in general—was in crisis because of its illegitimacy, stemming from the divorce between the people and the political system. Bridging this gap, he insisted, "requires that the collective will be expressed not only at intervals, by means of the suffrage, since in fact it cannot be expressed in this way. It is essential instead that it continuously pulsate and overflow with regard to the most vital problems of the collective life."⁶⁴ The crisis of the liberal state

could be overcome only by making the people more political, by involving them more directly and constantly in public life.

The best vehicle for more thoroughgoing political involvement seemed to be the syndical organization, since it mobilized the individual on a day-to-day basis, in terms of concrete economic functions and problems. Thus the syndicalists proposed to change the foundation of political life from automatic membership in a geographically defined electoral district to more or less obligatory membership in a grouping based on economic function. The first step was to change the basis of political representation. In an influential article published in *Il popolo d'Italia* in May of 1919, Lanzillo insisted that representation based on economic grouping would yield "the authentic representation of the legitimate interests and the organic forces of the country."⁶⁵ He proposed a bicameral system, with the lower house to be composed of representatives of the trade unions, business associations, and other productive groups in society. As a reflection of the nation's legitimate economic interests and conflicts, this corporative chamber would contrast sharply with the democratic parliament, which reflected illegitimate, merely "political," concerns. A senate elected by the lower house would deal with more general problems and defend the interests of society as a whole. Lanzillo insisted that only those producers who were politically conscious enough to join an association should be represented; the others were too weak and asocial to merit a political role. But even though some members of society presently lacked the virtues they needed for participation, political activity remained open to all those who became involved in economic organizations. Potentially, at least, full mass participation could be attained by organizing all of society and by instilling the necessary political virtues.

The other syndicalists offered similar proposals, often departing from Lanzillo's conception by advocating obligatory syndical membership for all categories of producers. Panunzio proposed obligatory membership and added some other novel proposals when he discussed Lanzillo's blueprint in an influential article in *De Ambris's Il rinnovamento* a few months later.⁶⁶ Like Lanzillo, Panunzio wanted both the chamber and senate to be based on syndical representation, but he insisted that it would not be enough merely to alter electoral procedures and the composition of parliament. Legislative capacity itself had to be transferred from the parliament and the bureaucracy into the economic groupings comprising society. At this point, Panunzio was only trying to indicate the most fruitful direction for change, not to outline a fully developed system. A plurality of economic-technical parliaments might prove superior to one single parliament, but in any case, it was necessary to move cautiously, learning from experience.

Olivetti devised a similar neosyndicalist political order in his *Manifesto dei sindacalisti* of 1921, which the syndicalist trade union confederation, the Unione Italiana del Lavoro, adopted as its official program.⁶⁷ Armando Casalini singled out Olivetti's document for special praise, arguing that the neosyndicalist politics it envisioned would at last make possible an effective form of popular sovereignty. He insisted, moreover, that populism and productivism were two sides of the same coin.⁶⁸ Casalini's conception manifests the interpenetration of the economic and political spheres that was basic to neosyndicalist thinking. The nation—the polity—was essentially an economic entity, and politics had to move toward economics in its composition and functioning. Ultimately, politics would become a kind of popular technocracy serving, in particular, to order the economy. The old forms of political grouping and political conflict were unnecessary, even illegitimate, and could be eliminated altogether.

Given the nature of the problems in liberal Italy, however, simply changing the forms of political participation would not suffice. Often the syndicalists failed to explain what was required, partly, no doubt, because they were reluctant to face up to the manipulative implications of the strategy they proposed. They overemphasized the extent to which the members of modern society, in Italy and elsewhere, were spontaneously organizing into economic groupings, and they indulged in much rhetoric about the war and the "real nation" of the producers. Thus they sometimes argued as if the Italian nation was already a vast confluence of economic organizations, a tightly knit productive entity that had only to free itself from a parasitical political encrustation to realize its full potential. In fact, however, the underlying sociocultural patterns that had given rise to Italy's old political system had not been fully overcome, so the revolution would have to penetrate to the social and psychological levels. Panunzio insisted again and again that if Italy was to develop a new political system, Italian society had to be made into a network of syndicates—"in order that they themselves can organically constitute the state."⁶⁹ And he admitted that certain new values had to inform an organization before it would be fit to serve as a unit in the society he envisioned. Contemporary Italy had lots of syndicates, "but these are bodies without a soul . . . the muscles and bones, the vertebrae and detached pieces of an organism *that has not yet been formed*."⁷⁰

So the new political order required not merely the continued organization of society, but also something deeper—a psychological revolution, a transformation of values.⁷¹ As Ottavio Dinalé put it in 1921: "Beyond reforming the bureaucracy, there are habits to be inverted, a new ethic to be constituted: To suppress parasitism and to

erect in its place . . . the criterion of production, of labor; to substitute the interests of the collective for those of the cliques and clientele. A rather vast program, which implies nothing less than the complete remaking of that entity which is the Italian."⁷² Alighiero Ciattini linked the habits that had to be changed to liberal political forms: "if neither the governed nor the governing prove equal to the situation, because they are corroded and decayed by cheap parliamentary competitions; if particularism triumphs everywhere;—then legislative reforms . . . are [a] mockery. . . . Something else is necessary. Our ethical foundations must be completely rebuilt. Our entire intellectual patrimony must be restored. The time has come to have our examination of conscience."⁷³ Writing in 1921, Ciattini emphasized that solution could take place only on the level of values and minds; given the depth of the problem, political reforms and institutional changes could not in themselves be sufficient.⁷⁴

Society had to be organized, then, not only to provide a new basis for political participation, but also to create a vehicle for instilling the perennial syndicalist values. Through the new organizations, it would be possible to politicize the Italians, to make the people fit for the ongoing participation in public life that would now be expected of them. All aspects of the individual's behavior and experience had to be given a greater social dimension—above all his labor, his key social function. The industrial economy under capitalism still required a hierarchical differentiation of function, but a kind of classless society of producers would result once common national productivist values had been instilled. The same vision of a monolithic society had guided the syndicalists from the beginning: the "real" Italian nation would be a hard-working productive unit, without parasites, without political parties—indeed, without traditional politics at all.⁷⁵ In the short term, however, a new revolutionary elite would have to further the organization of society into economic groupings and instill the requisite political values.

As the syndicalists began to propose their new program, syndicalism as a form of socialist economic organization came to seem a secondary objective. Olivetti explained in 1919 that syndicalism "can accept not only the violent conquest of the state, but also peaceful evolution within the confines of a free democracy."⁷⁶ The most important thing was to create this new context. The changes in economic organization which productivist criteria might dictate in the future would take place gradually, industry by industry. Further revolution would not be required because the real revolution, creating a new sociopolitical order and new "socialist" values, would already have been accomplished. As capitalism fulfilled its tasks of development, perhaps it could peace-

fully grow old and wither away. The syndicalists generally did not rule out the possibility, but this was not their chief concern for the present.

The economic sphere was no longer the focus for revolutionary change, but a major purpose of the new political system would be to order the economy. From their new, non-Marxist perspective, the syndicalists did not find it necessary to overthrow the capitalists or to change the organization of the factory in order to overcome some of the problems of the present economic system. The kind of political and cultural change they were proposing would lead property and capital to be used more productively, in the general interest. According to Olivetti, socialists did not question the potential productivity of capital, but they did find much of it presently used in a sterile, speculative way, because it remained purely private, free of political coordination.⁷⁶ In the program he proposed in 1919, Panunzio suggested ways of transforming property from an individual right into a social function.⁷⁸ Ownership of the means of production would no longer be absolute; if the present "owner" proved inept or lazy, the state could entrust the property in question to someone else. The capitalist economy's operations, then, were not determined by its own internal laws; the right kind of political coordination would make possible qualitative improvements in its functioning.

The fruit of the reappraisal which the syndicalists carried out from 1917 to 1921 was a blueprint for radical change that could have considerable appeal to the young war veterans, with their vague hopes for renewal. What Italy required was not economic revolution against capitalism, achieved by the proletariat, but political revolution against liberalism, led by a new revolutionary force defined in terms of values, not socioeconomic class. In making this revolution, Italy would be redeeming herself as a nation and leading the world beyond liberalism at the same time. And the war, which meant so much to the veterans, had indeed been vital, having made Italian society capable of the new postliberal order, and having forged a revolutionary vanguard with the will and capacity to bring it about.

By late 1920 the neosyndicalist conception was beginning to capture the imagination of many of the veterans who were becoming involved with Mussolini's *Fasci di combattimento*. But before we can understand the relationship between syndicalist ideas and early fascist aspirations, we must consider what the syndicalists were doing in practice during this pivotal period from 1917 to 1921. Despite everything—all the mutual hostility, all the theoretical revision—the syndicalists remained much concerned with labor organization and education. Even though the workers could not presently claim to lead, there

remained important pedagogical tasks to be carried out in the labor movement since the new order would require proletarian support and involvement. At the same time, however, the syndicalists were looking around for the nonproletarian elite that could bring about the new revolution. This two-sided practice reflected continued ambiguity in their thinking about the role of the proletariat and about what they themselves should be seeking to accomplish in the immediate future. But generally, given their new theoretical perspective, there was room for both kinds of enterprise.

Syndicalist activity in the area of labor organization and education focused on the Unione Italiana del Lavoro (UIL), the syndicalist trade union confederation founded in June 1918. Edmondo Rossoni and Alcide De Ambris were the most influential organizers in the new confederation, while Olivetti's intellectual leadership was officially confirmed in 1921 when the UIL adopted his *Manifesto dei sindacalisti* as its program. The syndicalists hoped to win over the mass of Italian workers to the UIL and national syndicalism, but the UIL's attraction in the labor movement proved limited. This is not surprising, given the widespread enthusiasm for Bolshevism in Italian labor and the interventionist and nationalist orientation of the UIL itself.⁷⁹ And of course the UIL's neosyndicalist conception of present prospects was not flattering to the working class. While warning against premature revolution, the syndicalists continued to exhort the workers to improve themselves morally and technically. But now the emphasis shifted away from anticapitalism and the class struggle, toward love of labor and austere self-sacrifice.⁸⁰ Filippo Corridoni was held up to the workers as an exemplar, a selfless hero who had died for the nation. Olivetti praised Corridoni as "the quintessence of the new humanity that is being fashioned in the world of labor."⁸¹

For now, however, leadership could not come from the workers, and the syndicalists experimented with a variety of supplements to the UIL in search of a nonproletarian revolutionary force. Some, like the Unione Socialista Italiana, an organization of left interventionists founded in 1918, never really got off the ground. But another organization of left interventionists, Mussolini's *Fasci di combattimento*, formed in Milan on 23 March 1919, proved more promising.

The discussions between Mussolini and the syndicalists in 1913 and 1914 about an alliance to break out of the impasse of contemporary socialism had finally come to fruition in November 1914, because of the war. As the journalistic focus for much of the interventionist Left, Mussolini's *Il popolo d'Italia* provided a major vehicle for the ideas of Panunzio, Lanzillo, and other syndicalists during the war and the immediate postwar period. Relations between Mussolini and the syn-

dicalists were cordial enough to make possible an ongoing exchange of ideas. When early in 1918 De Ambris and others prepared to begin publication of *Il rinnovamento*, which was to play such an important role in the syndicalists' doctrinal revision, *Il popolo d'Italia* offered its greetings and best wishes to the new publication. *Il rinnovamento* sent the proofs of the lead article of its first issue to *Il popolo d'Italia*, which eventually reprinted the article.⁸²

Like the syndicalists, Mussolini reconsidered his socialism during the war, and by 1919 he had apparently embraced some of the most important neosyndicalist tenets—including productivism, national syndicalism, and corporative representation. The syndicalists significantly influenced Mussolini's thinking during this period.⁸³ Mussolini visited Panunzio in Ferrara for a few days in January 1916, while on leave from the front, and this contact may have been especially important in Mussolini's evolution toward a new perspective.⁸⁴ On the eve of Mussolini's departure, Panunzio was the major speaker at a dinner gathering of interventionists, given partly in Mussolini's honor.⁸⁵ Agostino Lanzillo's ideas seem to have been influential as well: Mussolini's conception of the role of the war in rendering irrelevant the old socialism clearly owed a great deal to Lanzillo's *La disfatta del socialismo*.⁸⁶

So there was much interaction between Mussolini and the syndicalists after they came together in November 1914, and by the end of the war they had some important things in common. As part of the same interventionist sector of the Italian Left, they faced the same practical problems in the postwar context, especially the isolation from the bulk of the Italian labor movement. Like the syndicalists, Mussolini was warning against Bolshevism and premature revolution, stressing the further viability of capitalism and the need for collaboration among producers, calling on the workers to identify with the nation, and affirming the value of the war. Both sides foresaw that a new kind of political force would emerge from the war, one which might have a decisive impact in postwar Italy. But even though the syndicalists had enough in common with Mussolini to continue contributing to his newspaper after the war, the most important of them maintained their intellectual autonomy, along with certain of their prewar ideas which Mussolini had never shared. By 1919 the syndicalists certainly did not consider Mussolini to be their intellectual leader. But given his apparent interest in neosyndicalist themes, he was coming to seem a plausible political leader for the uncertain postwar period.

It was clear that Mussolini had a good deal of political talent, and his *Fasci di combattimento* immediately attracted the interest and participation of a number of syndicalists. Agostino Lanzillo was a member of the unsuccessful Fascist slate of candidates in the elections of Novem-

ber 1919, while Alceste De Ambris maintained close ties with the *Fasci di combattimento* in 1919 and drafted the first Fascist program.⁸⁷ But both became disillusioned with fascism in 1920, when the movement seemed to become merely an instrument of bourgeois reaction. De Ambris definitively broke with Mussolini at the end of 1920 because of Mussolini's relative indifference to the fate of Gabriele D'Annunzio's regime at Fiume, in which De Ambris, strangely enough, had become the chief adviser to the *Comandante* himself.

The city of Fiume, formerly the major port of the Croatian-Hungarian portion of the Habsburg Empire, was the subject of a complex and bitter dispute between Italy and Yugoslavia after the war. In September of 1919, with Italy's hopes for the annexation of Fiume frustrated at the Paris peace conference, the noted poet and adventurer Gabriele D'Annunzio led a band of "legionnaires," mostly soldiers and veterans, in a march on Fiume, where he established a regency to hold the city for future Italian annexation. De Ambris, seeking a force to lead the Italian revolution, traveled to Fiume late in November 1919 to meet with D'Annunzio and to assess the situation, which, he decided, offered serious revolutionary possibilities. At the same time, a number of D'Annunzio's followers were pressuring him to give the Fiume regime a more clearly leftist orientation. The most influential was Captain Giuseppe Giuletti, a colorful figure and something of a syndicalist himself, who used his position as leader of the powerful Italian maritime union to get supplies to Fiume periodically. The Nationalists, who had supported D'Annunzio from the beginning, began to fear that his movement might escape their control and pose a serious threat of leftist revolution within Italy. As the Nationalists grew cooler, D'Annunzio began to rely on De Ambris, whose ideas and personality he found most impressive. Finally, early in January 1920, De Ambris replaced the Nationalist Giovanni Giuriati as head of the Fiume cabinet; he remained one of D'Annunzio's closest collaborators until the Fiume regency was suppressed the following December.⁸⁸

The most significant fruit of the year-long collaboration between De Ambris and D'Annunzio was the *Carta del Carraro*, the neosyndicalist constitution which the Fiume regency promulgated in September 1920. This quickly became the most important single vehicle of syndicalist influence on the young veterans in fascism. D'Annunzio gave the document a high-blown rhetorical form, but De Ambris provided its substance, synthesizing the major elements of the neosyndicalist conception that he and his colleagues had been developing since 1917.⁸⁹ De Ambris portrayed the *Carta del Carraro* as the basis for the political and cultural revolution which Italy presently required.⁹⁰ This revolution, he admitted, would not fully achieve syndicalism, but it would

not be possible to replace capitalism with a full-fledged syndicalist economic system in the foreseeable future. And in any case, syndicalism proper was "a world in process of formation" which could not be created all at once. The immediate task was for syndicalists and other revolutionaries to complete the movement for renewal which began with interventionism, to overcome the political and sociocultural patterns which, among other things, were obstructing the evolution of syndicalism. Yet this immediate revolution would not be merely a preliminary, despite some ambiguity in De Ambris's thinking, because it would create an order based on new postliberal values and on the same solidarity of producers which the syndicalists had always considered the essence of socialism. Like Lanzillo, Panunzio, and the others, De Ambris devised a bicameral legislative system, with both houses based on economic groupings. All producers would be obligatory members in one of the ten corporations, which would organize each of the productive categories comprising society. In addition to representative and other political functions, the corporations would strive to perfect both the techniques of production and the discipline of labor. With political sway extended over the economy, property would become a social instrument, and a magistracy of labor would adjudicate labor conflicts. The new state was to be the authentic expression of a unified, homogeneous community of producers.⁹¹

Since the Fiume regime was by now in crisis and would last only three more months, there was little opportunity to test the constitution in practice. Still, De Ambris was hoping primarily to provide a model which would attract much wider support for a national syndicalist revolution in Italy itself. The *Carta del Carnaro* was quite influential among the heterogeneous sectors that made up the nationalist, anti-Bolshevik Italian Left, but De Ambris had hoped that the document would also attract the Socialist party's rank and file into the new revolutionary movement. In this hope he was frustrated, for his interventionism had made him a traitor in the eyes of most of the workers. Besides, D'Annunzio wanted leftist support in order to put pressure on the Italian government, not because he was seriously interested in some sort of revolutionary march on Rome.⁹²

As he sought to forge a revolutionary coalition around the Fiume experience and the *Carta del Carnaro*, De Ambris assumed that he had sure allies in Mussolini and the Fascist movement. When in September and October of 1920 De Ambris was working on a program for insurrection, complete with a march on Rome, he circulated a draft within the *Fasci di combattimento*, subsequently modifying the program to meet fascist objections.⁹³ But Mussolini was himself in the process of a fundamental change in strategy, completed between mid-October and

mid-November 1920, which required a kind of double game with the Fiume movement.⁹⁴ This new strategy soon led to a rebellion against Mussolini within the mushrooming Fascist movement, in the name of the antiparliamentary revolution of the *Carta del Carnaro*. Before we can understand Mussolini's strategic shift, which led to his definitive break with De Ambris and ultimately to a severe crisis within fascism, we must focus more sharply on the future Duce and his purposes in the fluid situation of postwar Italy.