Young Mussolini and the Intellectual Origins of Fascism

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This book is dedicated to
Giuseppe Prezzolini
who helped us make, and helped us
understand, history

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Preface

> One must bear in mind who the cadres of Fascism were, and realize that they came to a great extent from [revolutionary] syndicalism . . . . These men knew a good deal about mass movements and about how such movements are organized. Through the elaboration of various theories they arrived at the particular concept of national syndicalism . . . . What are the origins of this concept? . . . Originally it contained some residues of so-called Marxist ideologies . . . . Let us not forget that Mussolini was a socialist party leader.
>
> *Palmiro Togliatti*[1]

It cannot be said that Benito Mussolini is a neglected figure in the political and historical literature of our time. Beginning with the mid-sixties we witnessed renewed interest in him both as a leader of men and as a historical figure. On the other hand, there has been a systematic neglect of Mussolini as a political *thinker*. The folk wisdom of political science sees him as an unthinking political activist, moved to enterprise by an undivided lust for power. As Roy MacGregor-Hastie would have it, Mussolini "fluttered from philosopher to philosopher" deriving nothing but "momentary gratification from them" in his unrelenting pursuit of power.[2]

Moreover, until recently Fascism itself has been commonly viewed as all but totally devoid of intellectual content. "For many years," Zeev Sternhell has argued, "it was common form to see Fascism either as completely wanting in ideological concepts or as having gotten itself up for the sake of the cause in a few rags of doctrine, which therefore need not be taken seriously."[3]

This, by and large, is no longer the case. More and more fre-

1. Palmiro Togliatti, *Opere* (Rome: Riuniti, 1975), *3*, 561, 582ff.

2. Roy MacGregor-Hastie, *The Day of the Lion: The Rise and Fall of Fascist Italy (1922–1945)* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1963), p. 29.

3. Zeev Sternhell, "Fascist Ideology," in W. Laqueur ed., *Fascism: A Reader's Guide* (Berkeley: University of California, 1976), p. 316.

quently, it is now recognized that Fascism possessed a theoretical and ideological substance that was both interesting and sophisticated.[4] This admission, on the other hand, is often accompanied by the insistence that however interesting or sophisticated, the ideology of Fascism was nonetheless "full of contradictions."[5] Sometimes these contradictions are spoken of as "merged" or "synthesized."[6] How such merger or synthesis might have been accomplished is never revealed. One is left with the decided impression that the union of "contradictory" ideological elements was *ad hoc* and opportunistic.

In effect, conventional wisdom insists that Mussolini had few, if any, ideological convictions, and that Fascism was animated by a belief system in which an indeterminate number of contradictory elements were combined. Much of the substance of these convictions is found in a book written by Gaudens Megaro in the 1930's. And in fact his is the only book available to date dedicated specifically to the belief system of the young Mussolini.[7] At the time of its publication, Megaro's *Mussolini in the Making* was a revealing book that introduced, for the first time to English-language readers, the young Mussolini as the radical, antinationalist, anticlerical, and antimonarchial revolutionary—which was clearly unanticipated by those who knew only the Fascist Mussolini.

For all the merits of Megaro's book, no one has since undertaken to review the historical record. Between 1930 and 1970 an enormous amount of material has come to light. Not only have Mussolini's works been published in their entirety (something not accomplished until the 1960's), but also Renzo De Felice has published his massive political biography, which illuminates the circumstances surrounding Mussolini's intellectual and ideological development.[8] This work, and the large amount of literature from the period now available as a consequence of increased international communications and the development of more effective and responsive retrieval systems, afford the occasion for a review not only of Mussolini's intellectual convictions, but of the belief system out of which Fascism was to grow.

4. Cf. Mark Hagopian, *The Phenomenon of Revolution* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1974), pp. 354ff.

5. H. Roderick Kedward, *Fascism in Western Europe 1900–45* (New York: New York University, 1971), p. 6.

6. Paul Hayes, *Fascism* (New York: Free Press, 1973), ch. 1.

7. Gaudens Megaro, *Mussolini in the Making*.

8. Renzo De Felice, *Mussolini il rivoluzionario 1883–1920*.

In what follows I will attempt to reconstruct the intellectual and ideological development of Mussolini's political convictions, something that could not have been attempted in the 1930's. What the narrative reveals is an evolving system of thought rather than a synthesis of contradictions. I will argue that Fascism evolved out of the crisis of classical Marxism, and that the Marxism of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels was sufficiently vague and porous to accommodate all the theoretical elements later put together by Mussolini and the first Fascists to fashion their revolutionary ideology. I will argue that the young Mussolini was a Marxist "heretic," a believer disposed to introduce just enough variations into the thought of his Master to produce consequences that could only outrage the orthodox and transform the system. "Heresy," in my judgment, means precisely this.

All of this, of course, will be controversial. We have lived so long with the comfortable conviction that Fascism was of the right and as a consequence shared nothing with the left, that we are loath to consider any alternatives. However, Renzo De Felice has recently argued that Mussolini's Fascism shared considerable affinities with the traditional and revolutionary left.[9] This suggestion was enough to outrage Italian intellectuals and much of the international academic community. With all due regard for academic sensitivity, many specialists have recognized the similarity of ideas shared by intellectuals of the right and left. Palmiro Togliatti is only one of the intellectuals cognizant of that fact. Recently, Domenico Settembrini outlined some of the similarities shared by Lenin and the young Mussolini—both products of the revolutionary socialist tradition.[10] But furthermore, this discussion will attempt to establish that Fascism was a variant of classical Marxism, a belief system that pressed some of the themes argued by both Marx and Engels until they found expression in the form of "national syndicalism" that was to animate the first Fascism.

I will attempt to provide an account of the intellectual origins of Fascism, and as a consequence most of the following will be devoted to the "creative development" that characterized the evolution of classical Marxism into the first Fascism. As such, considerable space will be given over to short synoptic accounts of the

9. R. De Felice, *Fascism: An Informal Introduction to its Theory and Practice* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 1976), pp. 67ff.

10. Domenico Settembrini, "Mussolini and the Legacy of Revolutionary Socialism," *Journal of Contemporary History*, *11* (1976), 239–68.

thought of such men as Roberto Michels, A. O. Olivetti, and Sergio Panunzio. Michels is, of course, known to English-language readers as the author of the classic, *Political Parties*. What is not generally known is that he was also a revolutionary syndicalist and eventually served as an ideologue of the Fascist Party. Olivetti and Panunzio, unlike Michels, are all but unknown to Anglo-Americans, but both were interesting and stimulating political thinkers, and clearly influenced the intellectual and political maturation of Mussolini. If this book does nothing else, it will introduce its readers to some interesting political thinkers whose belief systems were as intricate and engaging as any in the revolutionary tradition.

All this considered, I have not attempted to capture the "true Mussolini" or "explain" the rise of Fascism. I have dealt with one aspect of the complexity that was Mussolini and Mussolini's Fascism—an aspect rarely handled with the seriousness, detachment, and application I believe it deserves.

Should any of this be successful, I will have accomplished enough to warrant the time and energy expended in the enterprise. Should that be the case, I hope I will have thereby repaid, in some small measure, the numerous kindnesses accorded me by many people both here and in Europe, some of whom I would like to thank publicly.

Donna Rachele Mussolini granted me more time than I had any right to expect, and allowed me to invade her privacy with questions that could only have been painful. Ing. Giovanni Volpe assisted me with literature and with suggestions that were extremely helpful. Professor Renzo De Felice, in turn, helped me in many ways. In the United States, several colleagues read and reread my manuscript and identified many of its shortcomings. For their part, my colleagues at Berkeley provided an atmosphere of intellectual stimulation so necessary for work of this kind. The Institute of International Studies at Berkeley, the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, and the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace provided the support that sustained the enterprise. Last but not by any means least, Maria Hsia Chang served not only as a research assistant, but assisted me with affection, kindness, and goodwill. To all these persons and institutions I owe everything that is of merit in this work. Its shortcomings, of course, are my own responsibility.

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Chapter 1 The Setting

> Fascism cannot be comprehensively understood without an understanding of Marxism. This is true not only because contemporary phenomena cannot be adequately understood without a knowledge of the facts that preceded them in time (and with which they are linked dialectically), but also because of the points of contact which, in spite of everything, remain. That which, to its advantage, distinguishes Italian Fascism from German National Socialism, is its painful passage through the purgatory of the socialist system, with its impressive heritage of scientific and philosophic thought from Saint-Simon through Marx and Sorel.
>
> *Roberto Michels*[1]

In November, 1871, when the first parliament of a united Italy met in Rome, Italian unity was a fragile reality. Michael Bakunin was not far wrong in insisting that a unified Italy was not a single nation, but a multiplicity of factions, each of which was distinguished by its own special, and sometimes exclusive, concerns. Italian unity had been "improvised"; it was the happy consequence of peculiar circumstances that had somehow conspired to produce effects to which many social and political groups had contributed, but over which none had clear control. Unification was only skin deep. The Italian people at the end of the nineteenth century did not constitute an organic political unity governed by an abiding consensus.

Italy was a nation that had not only just been politically unified, but that had only just begun the fateful ascent to industrial and economic maturity. It was, at its birth, an underdeveloped nation. In 1860 almost sixty percent of the total economic output of the nation was agricultural and only twenty percent was the product of small-scale industry.[2]

1. Roberto Michels, "Lineamenti di storia operaia nell' Italia degli ultimi venti'anni," *Educazione fascista, 11, 10* (1933), 356.

2. For information concerning the economic history of Italy at the time of unification,

1. The infant Benito Amilcare Andrea Mussolini in the arms of his mother Rosa Maltoni Mussolini.

After unification, the provinciality, the pervasive ignorance, the overt hostility to any government, and the indifference to national interests that characterized the masses fostered, among the strategic elites mobilizing the resources and the energies for nation-building, an indisposition to permit broad-gauged popular participation in government. As a consequence, at the time of Italy's unification only about two percent of the population had been enfranchised.

In our own time, both W. W. Rostow and A. F. K. Organski have described the general conditions that characterize nations preparing for economic and political modernization. We are told that among the preconditions for economic development is the "building of an effective national state—on the basis of coalitions touched with a new nationalism in opposition to the traditional landed regional interests, the colonial power or both."[3] Reactive nationalism fires the enthusiasm of select strata of the population of what has hitherto been a traditional society and sparks a movement for political unification and effective national sovereignty. Such developments are characterized by Organski as producing a political unity

> which may be viable but still is far from fully grown . . . . The fabric of political and economic unity is thin and torn. A vast chasm separates the rulers from the ruled, for though the common people are politically subject, they participate little in the life of the nation. The national government offers them little or nothing in services, and they for their part cannot be mobilized to contribute wealth, time, effort or concern to national purposes.[4]

The circumstances of Italian unification, political development, and initial economic modernization might be characterized in just such a fashion. By 1871 Italy had embarked on a program of nation-building, and the tasks of economic and political modernization followed closely behind. The processes were enormously complicated. Under the first impact of unification, it was agriculture that enjoyed the most immediate benefits, with the bulk of the profit accruing to the large landholding classes of northern and central Italy. Those

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cf. Shepard B. Clough and Luigi de Rosa, *Storia dell'economia italiana dal 1861 ad oggi* (Bologna: Cappelli, 1971), translated as *The Economic History of Modern Italy* (New York: Columbia, 1964); and Gianni Toniolo, ed., *Lo sviluppo economico italiano 1861–1940* (Rome: Laterza, 1973).

3. Walt W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth*, p. 7.

4. A. F. K. Organski, *The Stages of Political Development*, pp. vii, 8, 9.

who operated as the functional and strategic political elites, such men as Count Camillo di Cavour, Baron Bettino Ricasoli, Marco Minghetti, Luigi Carlo Farini, and Gino Capponi, came from this class. They constituted the backbone of the parliamentary liberalism of the Risorgimento, and they provided the effective staff for the governments of the late nineteenth century.

The fiscal policies followed by their governments were originally largely free-trade in persuasion, and although free trade served the general interests of the agricultural elites, it seemed to ill suit the first industries of the peninsula. Free-trade policies meant that small-scale industries were forced to compete with more efficient and well-entrenched foreign concerns. As a result, from 1860 until 1880 Italian agriculture was the prime beneficiary of Italian national unification.[5]

The overall increase in agricultural productivity reported during this period, the subsequent decline in food imports, and the high profit rates enjoyed by large-scale agricultural producers occurred along with the increased costs, the imposition of direct taxes, and the escalated rents that fell on the agrarian small-holder and renter. Although we have only fragmentary data from the period, the evidence suggests a general decline in both the salaries paid agricultural labor and the life circumstances of the small proprietor.

During this period the population of Italy increased about thirteen percent, from twenty-six million in 1861 to twenty-nine-and-a-half million in 1880. During the same period national income had increased by about twenty percent. There was a relative stability or a decline in per-capita income among small-holders and agricultural day laborers, while much of the increase in overall national income went to select strata of the population. In fact, selective increments in income produced an increase in savings, which rose from 1.4 percent in 1861 to 4.0 percent for the period from 1870 to 1880.

Since the beneficiary of agricultural expansion was the large landholding class—the element of the population least disposed to invest in indigenous industries—it is difficult to understand how capital was channeled into modern or industrial enterprises. The accumulation and selective employment of investment capital is understood to be one of the principal tasks facing new nations on the threshold of economic development. The transfer of capital from traditional (or agricultural) to modern (or industrial) sectors is a

5. See Rosario Romeo, *Breve storia della grande industria in Italia*, pp. 24–32.

prerequisite for self-sustained economic development. If a nation is to develop, "the income above minimum levels of consumption, largely concentrated in the hands of those who own land, must be shifted into the hands of those who will spend it on roads and railroads, schools and factories rather than on country houses and servants, personal ornaments, and temples."[6]

This shift was accomplished in Italy, apparently, largely through indirection. The new kingdom, recently unified, found itself surrounded by forbidding great powers. A truculent France lay crouched in the West. In the North, the Hapsburg Empire loomed large. In the East and South, Great Britain made its formidable presence felt. France had become heir to the tenancy of Nice and Savoy, which Italy claimed, and jealously guarded its new estates. The Austrians, in turn, still occupied many parts of Italy that many Italians, Mazzini among them, considered integral to the new nation-state. At the same time, Italy suffered a population growth rate exceeding that of every nation of Europe, while suffering from the lowest per-capita income on the continent. Italians, as a result, had begun to search out territories for colonization, as outlets, they claimed, for their increasingly large surplus population. But Italy's southward thrust was blocked by Britain and France.

Italy's international position was unenviable. The government had decided that the nation required a defense capability adequate to the protection and pursuit of national interests. As early as 1866 Italy had involved herself in a war with Austria, mobilized an army of over a quarter of a million men, and financed and built a modern navy equipped with armor plate, steam propulsion, and rifled naval cannon. The costs, of course, were astronomical. The national debt rose to 740 million lire. The consequence was a fiscal policy that forced the government to borrow extensively, inflate currency, and levy some of the heaviest tax burdens in Europe. Moreover, the development and servicing of modern military capabilities forced the Italian government to devote much of its revenue not only to the fostering and maintenance of a navy, a merchant marine, and local industries for the accoutrements of war, but also to the development of a modern transportation and communication system. In 1860 Italy had only 2,175 kilometers of railroad track in service. By 1880 over 8,713 kilometers had been laid. At the same time the beginnings of a telegraphic communication system were insti-

6. W. Rostow, *The Stages*, p. 19.

tuted throughout the peninsula. In 1860 there were less than ten thousand kilometers of telegraphic wire in all of Italy; by 1880 there were over twenty-six thousand. Italy was beginning the construction of a communications infrastructure without which modern development would have been impossible.

Largely under the goad of war and defense and by means of an elaborate system of loans, inflationary fiscal policies, and heavy taxation, the Italian government forced some investment capital out of traditional, nonproductive, or marginally productive uses into economically modern employments that would provide the foundation for industrial development. Military requirements fostered the growth of the communications and transportation infrastructure and at the same time helped to stimulate the development of indigenous metallurgical, textile, shipbuilding, naval servicing, and railroad industries.

With the development of the modern sectors of Italian economic life, new representatives made their influence felt in Italian politics. The most obvious result of their influence was the abandonment of the free-trade policy and the erection of tariff barriers to protect nascent and largely noncompetitive local industries. As early as 1878 the Italian government had raised tariff duties in order, at least in part, to reduce the government's fiscal indebtedness, which was largely generated by the demands of the military establishment. But beyond that, the Milanese industrial fair of 1881 made clear that almost all of Italy's new industries needed tariff protection if they were to survive. In 1886 the representatives of Italy's steel industry negotiated higher tariff duties on imported steel. A coalition of large wheat producers (who stood to benefit from an insulated market) and the representatives of certain nascent industries introduced a schedule of tariffs that afforded indigenous industries the protection they seemed to require.

After 1880 there was a significant change in the relationship between the traditional and modern sectors of the Italian economy. From 1881 to 1887 Italy's textile, mechanical, steel, iron, and chemical industries showed an annual rate of growth of 4.6 percent. Disaggregated, the statistics available indicate that the metallurgical industries showed a rate of growth of 22 percent per annum, the mechanical industries 9.2 percent, and the chemical industries 15.1 percent. At the same time savings rose from 4.0 percent to 6.3 percent of the total national income.

Although much of the capital for Italian industrial growth came from foreign investors, as early as 1884 the Italian government was itself underwriting the development of special industries, and transportation and communication facilities critical to the new nation's military needs. State funds, furthermore, provided for the gradual expansion of the educational system necessary to serve development, and the proportion of illiterates slowly declined from seventy-four percent of the population over six years of age in 1861 to sixty-two percent in 1881.

After 1880 Italy began to industrialize in earnest. In the Northern "industrial triangle" the cities of Turin, Milan, and Genoa began to take on some of the appearance of modern industrial urban centers. The interests of the growing entrepreneurial strata found expression in the insistent warning, regularly articulated by Alessandro Rossi (the founder of Italy's most modern wool-manufacturing firm at Schio in Venetia), that the state must "defend the nation's production." To defend production and expand and modernize the existing infrastructure, the fiscal policy of the state drew revenue from the traditional sectors of the economy—with the lion's share of the tax burden falling on the rural nonpropertied classes.

Under such conditions, with the development of modern industries that drew elements of the rural population into the cities and depressed those who remained, the first signs of a popular protest movement organized to defend the immediate interests of the working and propertyless classes were to be expected. Those elements of society that could not defend their interests through the exercise of suffrage began to organize the first "socialist" or "subversive" groups. As early as the 1870's workingmen's trade unions had made their appearance in Lombardy and Piedmont, and in 1872 the first nationwide union of working men was organized by printers. By 1885 there had been eighty-nine industrial strikes involving 34,000 workers.

Disturbances in the rural areas had a longer and more tortured history. Rural Italy was particularly impoverished, and most of the leaders of the Risorgimento had recognized that fact. All of them had attempted to address themselves to the "social question" as well as to the overarching interests of national liberation and unification. Mazzini had advocated a system of "class collaboration"—a kind of moral socialism that would insure equity to all Italians as well as provide for the collective interest. Carlo Pisacane, for his

part, advocated a form of national socialism in which collective ownership would provide for the massive and equitable development of Italy's potential.

By 1871 the socialists claimed 10,000 adherents in Italy. In November of that year Marx could maintain that socialism was making notable inroads on the peninsula. In the same year Bakunin insisted that his International of Social Democracy had enjoyed "an enormous development" in Italy. He added that one reason for this was the abundance of "declassed bourgeois youth" who, finding themselves without employment or career opportunities, lent support to Italian socialism. The declassed elements to which Bakunin and later Marx alluded were the students of Italian universities and secondary schools, almost all Garibaldinians, enflamed as much by nationalism as by the vague notions of socialism that had filtered into the Italian intellectual environment. Marx recognized the character of the Italian socialism of the period, and railed against the "displaced" bourgeois elements, "the lawyers without clients, doctors without patients . . . , students addicted to billiards, traveling salesmen and journalists,"[7] that made up its leadership. These were the same displaced elements that had provided the leadership and cadre of the movement for national unification.

Between 1871 and 1891 socialism in Italy was, in fact, composed of an indeterminate number of disparate elements. Even after the electoral reform laws of 1882 only seven percent of the population had access to suffrage representation; the remainder, largely the growing urban working classes and the landless peasantry, could address their grievances only through banditry and the creation of semilegal institutions. Peasant-based anarchist organizations, bandit and guerrilla bands, small groups of urban workers, and various bourgeois-dominated associations, all characterized themselves as "socialist." Among them were very few creditable Marxists. Their tactics were governed by local interests, and their episodic conflicts were generally directed against the representatives of the established government.

Many of the spokesmen who attempted to articulate the interests of the people during this early period made statements that were frequently confusing and often at odds with the statements of others equally devoted to popular causes. For example, Carlo Cafiero, the anarchist author of a summary of Marx's first volume of *Kapital*,

7. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Ein Complot gegen die Internationale Arbeiter Association," *Werke, 18*, 362ff.

argued that what Italy required most of all was an immense expansion of production based on the rationalization of enterprise and the massive introduction of machinery. In effect, what Cafiero and those like him were prepared to argue was that the newly united Italy required *industrialization*. Italy's first order of business was to create the economic base for an anarcho-socialist society.

Both Marx and Engels had made manifestly clear that socialism would be the heir of the stupendous achievements in industrial productivity generated by capitalism. Anyone who had read the *Communist Manifesto* with minimal care could not fail to be aware that classical Marxism spoke to the circumstances surrounding revolution in a *postindustrial* environment. Cafiero and those like him addressed themselves to Italy's underdevelopment. The "socialists" of the newly united Italy found themselves denizens of a *preindustrial* society that still displayed a Luddite resistance to machine production. Even as Cafiero was advocating technological and industrial development, workers were still destroying machines in an effort to defend their precarious household industries.[8]

The Italian socialism of the period was thus an amalgam of the most disparate factions. Some Mazzinian revolutionaries advocated class collaboration in order to maintain and enhance necessary production levels, others were antitechnological, and still others were making reactive anarchic responses to "class oppression." Some socialists rejected any form of class collaboration, others had committed themselves to gradual reform and parliamentary tactics, and still others were Bakuninites who advocated the abolition of any form of organized and institutional government.

Most of the socialists of the time had no clear doctrinal commitments. In fact, until 1890 there was little that could count as serious Marxist scholarship in Italy.[9] Most socialists simply reacted to the incredible poverty that weighed heavily on the popular masses; their socialism was more humanitarian than exegetical. They responded to the abject poverty of the *braccianti*, the agricultural day laborers of the rural countryside. They responded to the heartache of the agricultural vagrants and to the distress of Italians forced to emigrate to the more developed countries of Europe, often at wages significantly inferior to those paid to indigenous labor. The immigrant Italians served as the Chinese and Negroes of Europe. Ap-

8. Cf. R. Michels, *Storia critica del movimento socialista italiano*, pp. 35, 65.

9. Cf. Antonio Labriola's letter to F. Engels of February 21, 1891, in A. Labriola, *Lettere a Engels*, pp. 6–11; R. Michels, *Storia del Marxismo in Italia*, pp. 77–87.

proximately 100,000 Italians annually sought work outside of Italy during the years between 1876 and 1880. By 1887 almost a quarter of a million a year were emigrating. Many labored as temporary or seasonal workers in other countries and returned to Italy, but increasing numbers were forced to migrate across the Atlantic to North and South America.

Most socialists opposed the established government because they saw it as the executive arm of the possessing classes. The propertyless classes did not, in fact, feel any attachment to the central government. They were excluded by suffrage restrictions and their only familiarity with governmental institutions was through the tax collector. They did object to the military expenses, which consumed much of the state revenue. They also objected to the resources consumed nonproductively by the Church—a Church clearly identified with the possessing classes. And they objected to the national parliament as a gaggle of interest groups, each pursuing its own selfish material advantage.

Outside of these general orientations, the socialists of the period were divided by their commitment to different tactical and strategic formulae. As early as 1880 Andrea Costa argued that Italian socialism must recognize that it could not entertain dogmas. It must host divergent groups, each animated by different strategies and committed to different immediate goals. He counseled against subscription to unalterable courses of conduct—to "legalitarianism" or to "revolutionism." Italy, he insisted, was "neither England nor Russia."[10]

In 1892, what was to become the Partito Socialista Italiano was founded in an attempt to bring together all subversive and anti-establishment elements. After the founding of the Party there was a sustained effort to provide an intellectual rationale that would lend continuity to the movement, afford an interpretation of current affairs, and suggest an acceptable general strategy for organized political association. "Scientific socialism," the socialism of Marx and Engels, as opposed to the romantic anarchism of Bakunin, was more and more frequently invoked to satisfy these functional, pragmatic, and ideological requirements.

Nonetheless, the ideas that laced the Socialist Party together during this period remained sufficiently open-textured to accommodate wide divergencies. Basically, what held everyone together

10. R. Michels, *Storia critica*, pp. 76ff.

was their common appreciation of the same problems. In 1893, when Cesare Lombroso, the internationally known anthropologist and penologist, made an appearance at the Socialist Congress of Reggio Emilia, he identified massive unemployment, the resulting forced emigration of Italians, the pervasive illiteracy that afflicted the nation, and the impaired international status of Italy in the modern world as the critical problems that agitated socialists. Like many of the socialists of the period, Lombroso gave expression to a clutch of ideas in unstable combination. He was extremely dubious about the efficacy of Italian parliamentary democracy, actively concerned with the primitive social conditions prevalent in Italy, disturbed by the indisposition of Italians to respect themselves, and gravely preoccupied with the future of the nation.

Intellectuals attempting to address themselves to these problems sought guidance in a socialism as much influenced by sociological positivists like Herbert Spencer, Gustav Ratzenhofer, Gabriel Tarde, and Ludwig Gumplowicz, as they were by Marx and Engels. It is clear that the Italian Socialist Party, at its founding, could hardly be characterized as Marxist in any definitive sense. Although the thought of Marx and Engels made increasing inroads among socialist intellectuals, it would have been hard, in 1892, to identify an "orthodox" Marxist among them. Most were "subversives," responding to the kind of problems that we have now come to identify with underdeveloped nations undergoing the first stresses of cumulative economic change. These problems arise when increasing contact with a more modern world outside the traditional society creates a sense of real and relative deprivation, when the dislocations that attend economic change displace whole populations and dislodge large numbers of incumbents from their traditional roles, when increasing numbers of peasants become urban dwellers and the educational system begins to produce more and more upwardly aspirant intellectuals, when governments shift resources from one sector of the economy to another, and when new interest groups begin to agitate for a more equitable distribution of scarce resources. Considerable evidence indicates that these conditions promote free-floating hostility, an insistent desire for change, and a restiveness that is increasingly difficult to contain.[11]

It seems that all these elements combined to give rise to and shape

11. Consider the discussion in works such as Robert P. Clark, Jr., *Development and Instability* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974) and Denis Goulet, *The Cruel Choice: A New Concept in the Theory of Development* (New York: Atheneum, 1973).

the Italian socialism that was to influence the history of the peninsula so significantly throughout the twentieth century. Special political factors were to have their impact on all this and to further define the peculiar features of events in Italy.

Socialism

Between 1890 and the turn of the century a great deal of intellectual activity collected around the Italian Socialist Party. Not only were a number of academic luminaries, such as Cesare Lombroso, Enrico Ferri, Achille Loria, and Amilcare Puviani, attracted to the "scientific socialism" then understood to animate the Party, but Antonio Labriola had begun to produce the works that would long identify him as the philosopher of Italian Marxism.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century Antonio Labriola had completed his passage from the philosophical idealism and democratic radicalism of his early maturity to the dedicated Marxism of his final years. His essays on the materialist conception of history were to remain the touchstone of Marxist theory until well into the first decades of the twentieth century.[12] And Antonio Labriola was only the first (though perhaps the most important) of many thinkers who were to provide the intellectual substance of Italian socialism. The last decade of the nineteenth century saw the production of an impressive body of Marxist literature in Italy.[13]

The first compendium of Marx's *Kapital*, as we have seen, appeared in 1879, and thereafter the works of Marx and Engels began to slowly penetrate the Italian intellectual environment. But as late as 1884 Napoleone Colajanni could still maintain that Italian socialism had not yet produced a single serious work on Marx.[14] In fact, the political leaders of socialism who were to figure so prominently during the next decade, Filippo Turati and Enrico Ferri, were all but totally innocent of any Marxist sophistication when they made the transit, in the 1880's, from bourgeois radicalism to socialism. In this they were hardly distinguished from Andrea Costa and Amilcare Cipriani who, in the 1870's, were prime movers of Italy's first "internationalism." Costa's *Un sogno*, published as late as

12. A. Labriola, *Essays on the Materialistic Conception of History*. The major works of Labriola are collected in A. Labriola, *Opere*, edited by L. Dal Pane (Milan: Feltinelli, 1959), 3 vols. Labriola's exchange with Georges Sorel is contained in an English translation as A. Labriola, *Socialism and Philosophy*.

13. Michels provides an impressive bibliography in *Storia del Marxismo*.

14. Napoleone Colajanni, *Il socialismo* (Catania: Tropea, 1884), p. 35.

1882, was totally devoid of specifically Marxist content. If anything, Costa and Cipriani were in fact anarchists rather than Marxist socialists.[15]

It was only with the appearance of that indominable Russian exile, Anna Kuliscioff, in association with Filippo Turati, that Italian socialism began to take on unmistakably Marxist trappings. With the appearance of *La critica sociale* in 1891, under the editorship of Kuliscioff and Turati, serious Marxist literature began to circulate among Italian "subversives." The original impetus had come from the intellectual efforts of Germans and Frenchmen, but by 1900 Italian Marxist literature was second only to that produced by Germans in terms of quantity and theoretical quality.[16]

All this intellectual activity in the 1890's did not, however, produce an Italian socialism animated by a single doctrinal perspective. Men like Colajanni and F. Saverio Merlino, for example, who counted themselves socialists, continued to reject in substance the ideological importunings of classical Marxism. Colajanni remained throughout his life a social-Darwinist, convinced that socialism would be a product of a natural process of evolution and social selection. Merlino, for his part, rejected the central convictions of scientific socialism—the doctrine of surplus value, the unilaterality of economic determinism, the dictatorship of the proletariat, and the inevitability of class struggle.[17] Yet he remained a dedicated socialist.

Moreover, by the turn of the century several distinct intellectual currents began to sort themselves out even among those who provisionally accepted scientific socialism as their theoretical guide. With the founding of the Partito Socialista Italiano in Genoa in 1892, the Marxists had succeeded in alienating the anarchists and simple trade unionists from the movement, but this did not by any means establish the doctrinal or tactical unity of Italian socialism.[18] The first leadership cadre of the new movement included intellectuals like Enrico Ferri, Filippo Turati, Leonida Bissolati, and Andrea Costa—all markedly different in their orientation and all destined to influence the variants of Marxism that were to shape the revolutionary aspirations of the Italian proletariat.

15. Cf. the comments of Luigi Cortesi, *Il socialismo tra riforme e rivoluzione 1892/1921*, pp. 2–6.

16. R. Michels, *Storia del Marxismo*, pp. 73ff.

17. F. Saverio Merlino, *Pro e contro il socialismo*, pp. 12–35.

18. Cf. the various positions assumed by socialists before the turn of the century, in Gastone Manacorda, *Il socialismo nella storia d'Italia* (Rome: Laterza, 1975³), vol. 1.

Between 1893 and 1899 Italy was involved in a complex set of political, economic, and social tensions that found expression in an equally complex interplay of forces in the national parliament—all of which was to influence socialist thought significantly.[19] Between the time of the disturbance in Sicily in 1893–94 involving the impoverished agrarians of the island, through the international crisis of Italy's failed attempt at imperialism in Africa, until the social and political violence in Milan in May, 1898 that left 80 dead and 450 wounded, the leaders of the nation's parliamentary government attempted to rule the peninsula. After the violence of 1898, the government of Luigi Pelloux made the final concerted attempt to forcibly repress the popular forces of the left. Only a coalition of the liberal and extreme left succeeded in defeating his enterprise.

In the course of the struggle against political repression, the leaders of the new Socialist Party learned the virtues of collaboration with the more liberal elements of the bourgeois establishment. They also learned the merits of defending the civil rights embodied loosely in the Albertine Constitution, the foundation of the maturing Italian parliamentary system.[20] Under the test of circumstances, Turati and Bissolati devised a strategy that allowed them to maximize the political potential of their meager forces. It was in this political context that Turati spoke of "neither retreating nor attacking" under reactionary provocation. He spoke of an "adaptive and flexible response" to political circumstances. The posture of the Party was to be essentially defensive and accommodative, entering into collaboration with other parties of the left, the antimonarchists, the democrats, and the more left-oriented liberals, whenever political advantage so recommended.[21]

Turati's tactics were based on a strategy that regarded civil liberties, the opportunities of association, and mass communication as essential to the development and organization of the working class, which was itself the precondition for socialism. It was a strategy that not only made the defense of the *Statuto Albertino* central to the socialist purpose, but also was thought of as broadly democratic and essentially parliamentarian.

These tactics and that strategy (which his socialist opponents

19. Cf. Christopher Seton-Watson, *Italy from Liberalism to Fascism, 1870–1925*, Part II.

20. Cf. Ivanoe Bonomi, *Leonida Bissolati e il movimento socialista in Italia*, chs. 4–7.

21. Cf. the Introduction of Rodolfo Mondolfo to Filippo Turati, *Le vie maestre del socialismo*, pp. 16ff.

identified as "opportunistic"[22]) Turati considered appropriate for a transitional period between bourgeois liberalism and the advent of socialism. Turati argued that the minority Socialist Party had no alternative other than to remain "flexible and adaptive" with regard to the bourgeois parties of the popular left, in order to foster the institutional changes that were necessary not only to educate and mobilize the emerging proletariat, but also to protect the very existence of socialism as a movement. Any alternative strategy—one, for example, that viewed the nonsocialist parties as nothing other than a seamless reactionary mass—Turati conceived to be self-defeating, calculated to drive all the nonsocialist forces into defensive coalition. Turati, in effect, recommended that Italian socialism learn its lessons from the working-class parties of England, where the left regularly entered into alliance with the progressive parties against the forces of traditional reaction.

In substance, Turati entertained serious reservations concerning the possibility of a catastrophe that might bring down the capitalist system within the foreseeable future. Before the preconditions of socialism would mature on the peninsula, he imagined a long period of gradual change taking place through individual and collective education, political organization, and legal reform.[23] In 1899, immediately after he was released from confinement during the repression following the national disturbances of the previous year, Turati announced a program of democratization, a commitment to liberty, and a dedication to economic Fabianism—a gradual and legal transformation of capitalism into something approaching the desired collectivist social system.[24]

The "reformism" of Turati and Bissolati was in fact the Italian analogue of German political "revisionism." In its Italian expression, this interpretation of Marxism was perhaps more pragmatic and political than theoretical. Its German counterpart, on the other hand, was generally accompanied by an avalanche of analyses that sought a sure theoretical guide to political conduct for the socialist parties. Beginning with the critique launched by Eduard Bernstein in 1896, German socialism had undergone a searching and some-

22. Cf. the comments of R. Michels in his introduction to Enrico Ferri, *Die revolutionäre Methode*, pp. 29, 36, n. 1.

23. A representative collection of Turati's speeches in the Italian Camera is available in Filippo Turati, *Da Pelloux a Mussolini*.

24. Cf. "Il VI Congresso—Roma, 1900," in Cortesi, *Il socialismo*, p. 93. Cf. the minimum program of 1900, *ibid.*, pp. 132–35.

times traumatic reappraisal of the intellectual credentials of classical Marxism.

German political revisionism, like Italian reformism, gave every evidence of being prepared to enter into a long, evolutionary struggle for power within the legal confines of the bourgeois political order. The Italian disposition was the natural product of the Party's efforts to survive in the repressive political atmosphere that tormented Italian life between 1894 and 1899. Turati and Bissolati had steered the Party into coalitions with the popular left in order to bring down the reactionary governments of the right. They had found the alliance eminently serviceable for specific political ends and ultimately came to see such tactics as suitable for the transitional period between the bourgeois and the socialist epochs.

But to suggest that the reformism of Italian socialism was dictated *solely* by political and tactical concerns would be untrue. Italian reformism rested on a body of theoretical insights that bore considerable resemblance to the theoretical revisionism of Bernstein and his colleagues. In fact, even before Bernstein's major revisionist works appeared, Italian socialists had put together a collection of critical arguments that left much of what was considered classical Marxism suspect. As I have suggested, Merlino entertained substantial reservations concerning the theoretical system bequeathed by Marx and Engels. At about the same time Benedetto Croce published a major critique of historical materialism that caused Antonio Labriola considerable personal distress.[25] Croce's work was cited in Merlino's text and clearly exercised influence in socialist circles.[26] Croce, a sympathetic student and collaborator of Antonio Labriola, published between 1896 and 1899 a series of essays that equaled those of Bernstein in their intellectual rigor and political and theoretical implications.

In effect, by 1899 a theoretical crisis had settled down over the Marxism that had made its major inroads into Italy after 1892. Merlino, Graziadei,[27] and Croce had taken issue with almost every major Marxist contention. Nor could their criticism be plausibly dismissed as bourgeois. Merlino and Graziadei were members of the intellectual cadre of Italian socialism, and Croce acted as editor

25. Benedetto Croce, "Come nacque e come mori il marxismo teorico in Italia (1895–1900)," in *Materialismo storico ed economia marxistica*.

26. F. S. Merlino, *Pro e contro*, p. 17, n. 1. Merlino refers to Croce as "Benvenuto" Croce!

27. Antonio Graziadei, *La produzione capitalistica* (Turin: Bocca, 1899).

for Antonio Labriola's first explicitly Marxist publications. Croce, in fact, entered into correspondence with many of the socialist theoreticians caught up in the intellectual crisis that invested Europe's revolutionary movements. Thus, while Turati, Bissolati, and Claudio Treves were putting together the political reformism that was to dominate Italian socialism for more than a decade, the intellectual fabric of classical Marxism began to unravel.[28]

As reformism put together the tactics of an Italian Fabianism, internal Party criticism subjected the greater part of classical Marxism to increasingly detailed scrutiny. Antonio Labriola deplored what he took to be the erosion of doctrine, and at the same time admitted that the "doctrine itself is only in its beginning and still has need of many developments."[29] In fact, there were many Italian intellectuals prepared to augment, supplement, amplify, elaborate, and transform the inherited doctrine. With the passing of Engels from the scene in 1895, scientific socialism no longer had an authoritative arbiter of what should pass as orthodoxy. Between Engels' death in 1895 and the death of Antonio Labriola in 1904, several major currents of thought were to reveal themselves among the intellectual spokesmen of the revolutionary dispensation.

As early as 1896, before the crisis generated by Bernstein's revisionism actually broke over Europe, a resolute group of Italian socialists collected around Enrico Ferri and *Arturo* Labriola to give expression to a revolutionary current that resisted the blandishments of the reformism of Turati and Bissolati. Ferri, born a year before Turati, in 1856, was already internationally famous as a penologist and had served as a social-democrat deputy in the Italian parliament before his conversion to socialism in 1893. In that capacity, and with characteristic eloquence and vitality, he had identified himself as a "revolutionary socialist" opposed to the reformism that gradually articulated itself during the last years of the nineteenth century.[30]

At the Socialist Party Congress of Imola in September, 1902, two tendencies took measure of each other.[31] Ferri represented the intransigents, the revolutionaries, who had begun to oppose reformism as early as 1896 when the first outlines of Turati's poli-

28. Cf. I. Bonomi, *Leonida Bissolati*, pp. 16ff.

29. A. Labriola, *Socialism and Philosophy*, p. 96.

30. Cf. E. Ferri, *Autobiografia* (Milan: Folla, 1903); R. Salvadori, "Momenti dell'azione politica di Enrico Ferri (1908–1915)," *Bollettino storico Mantovano, 4* (Oct.–Dec., 1956).

31. Cf. the contemporary comments by Roberto Michels, "7. Kongress der italienischen sozialistischen Partei zu Imola," *Schwäbische Tagwacht* (Stuttgart, Sept. 15, 1902).

cies became apparent. Ferri's revolutionary opposition is difficult to characterize briefly. He objected to the style of reformism and to its opportunism. Ferri suggested, for example, that the legislative reforms advocated by the opportunists might easily inure the proletariat to bourgeois government, thus slackening the chains of oppression only to render those chains more tolerable. Ferri was prepared to grant that there might be occasion for alliances with the bourgeois parties, but he insisted on a general recognition that socialist revolutionaries must anticipate a time when violence would necessarily become a tool of socialist policy.[32] Revolution, not reform, was the goal of socialism.

In retrospect, Turati's argument that Ferri's position was only a variation on the general reformist postures of the Party seems correct, as does his view that Ferri's position did not represent a real alternative to the policies generally accepted by the Party. But Turati went on, with considerable insight, to indicate that the position assumed by Arturo Labriola, who had allied himself with Ferri, represented a far different intellectual current.[33]

For his part, Arturo Labriola argued that the reformism of the Party represented the narrow corporate interests of the urban proletariat of the industrial triangle of northern Italy. Arturo Labriola maintained that Italy remained locked in traditional and quasi-feudal political constraints, namely in the first stages of capitalist development. There were few real proletarians in Italy. Reformism, devoted to the piecemeal amelioration of the living conditions of that narrow constituency, was prepared to sacrifice the entire peninsula to the immediate interests of the urban proletariat.

Arturo Labriola's arguments were surprisingly modern. He argued that the principal enemy of Italy's economic development was the parliamentary state, that tangle of immediate and parochial interests obstructing the nation's overall economic maturation. The reformists, Labriola argued, like every other organized interest group, pursued the immediate interests of their own special constituency located in the industrial triangle of the North. They compromised general for special interests. As a consequence, the tactics of reformism merely supplemented and supported the parliamentary practices that impaired the nation's general economic growth. Reformism aided and abetted the established system of compromise

32. Cf. L. Cortesi, *Il socialismo*, p. 163.

33. F. Turati, "Il dissidio delle tendenze e il suo superamento nell'azione," in Mondolfo, *Le vie maestre*, pp. 39–47.

and political barter. All it accomplished, in substance, was to render the state's antieconomic policy more tolerable; in other words, reformism forced the establishment to provide minimal and immediate advantages to the urban proletariat at the expense of the historical development classical Marxism anticipated for the nation. As long as Italy languished in marginally developed economic circumstances, a socialist future was, in Labriola's judgment, precluded. As long as the state allocated benefits to special interests through arrangements that largely favored the landed aristocracy and disbursed taxes to support a wasteful military and a nonproductive church, economic development and modernization would be forestalled.

For at least the following reasons Labriola considered reformism, reactionary. By collaborating with the system in order to win immediate benefits for its clients, it impeded Italy's transit to modernity; it made the fabrication of a mature national industrial base an impossibility; a small class of industrial proletarians might enjoy modest increments in their standard of living through its efforts, but the socialist future was thereby compromised; under such circumstances Italy would remain in the limbo of precapitalist development.[34]

Transigents and intransigents, reformists and revolutionaries, fully recognized Italy's premodern and retarded economic and industrial circumstances.[35] What distinguished one group from the other was tactics and the theoretical rationale they considered appropriate to support their tactics.

Arturo Labriola argued that the Italian circumstances required a special analysis. He reminded Italian revolutionaries that the reform legislation of 1882 concerning voting rights, which reduced the minimum voting age from twenty-five to twenty-one and lowered the property qualifications, had succeeded only in increasing the number of eligible voters from two percent of the total population to about seven percent of the total population. Italy in fact remained a "censitary democracy," that is, a parliamentary system that rested on a very narrow suffrage base. A mass-based Socialist Party could not possibly hope to gain power through popular mandate. The al-

34. In this regard cf. D. Marucco, *Arturo Labriola e il sindacalismo rivoluzionario in Italia* (Turin: Einaudi, 1970), pp. 133, 146; and the comments of D. Settembrini, *Socialismo e rivoluzione dopo Marx*, pp. 578–89.

35. Cf. Turati's comments as early as the 1890's in Mondolfo, *Le vie maestre*, pp. 10, 14. Bonomi refers to Bissolati's similar judgments in Bonomi, *Leonida Bissolati*, p. 15.

ternatives open to the Party were alliance with the nonsocialist parties that threatened to dominate the coalition, or armed revolution involving the disenfranchised masses. The transigents, of course had given themselves over to the former alternative, whereas the revolutionaries opted for the latter.

For their part, the reformist elements in the Party ranks were supported by Giovanni Giolitti's rise to power in the Italian parliament. As early as 1889, when he was Minister of the Treasury, Giolitti had shown himself supportive of the legitimate aspirations of labor. As Prime Minister in 1892, he began his term of office by addressing a working-class association in Turin, much to the dismay of the traditionalists and conservatives in the government. In 1893 he announced his advocacy of a graduated income tax that would have levied increased taxes from the rich. Only the bank scandal that rocked Italian politics during that period prevented Giolitti from further political activity. As we have seen, after 1893 Italy suffered a period of political reaction precipitated by the agrarian revolts in Sicily. By 1898 circumstances favored the return of Giolitti to political prominence in an Italian parliament suffering all the tensions of political instability. In 1900 the anarchist Gaetano Bresci assassinated the King, and Victor Emmanuel III, at thirty years of age, assumed the responsibilities of rule.

The evident failure of simple repression directed against the partially enfranchised popular forces of the nation, and the unhappy circumstances of his father's death, probably contributed to the new monarch's disposition to entertain Giolitti's suggestions concerning the increased involvement of the lower classes in the parliamentary system. By 1901 Giolitti had apparently convinced some significant proportion of Italy's political elite to consider accommodating the nation's leftwing elements. He outlined a program that would recognize the legitimacy of workingmen's associations and their right to articulate and pursue their special interests in an environment of political liberty. This political posture would characterize Italian politics for the next decade.

Giolitti's strategy was predicated on the strict neutrality of the central government with respect to the conflict between interest groups—particularly with respect to the conflict between capital and labor. Its policy was to intervene only when the conflict provoked contraventions of statute law. Giolitti anticipated a government that would include all population elements united in goodwill

and in the service of mutual interests, and that might collaborate in the economic development of the peninsula.[36]

In 1901, after almost seven years of exclusion from office, Giolitti returned to power as Minister of the Interior. Almost immediately the working masses responded to what they understood to be a friendly government. The number of strikes escalated from 410 (involving 43,000 workers) in 1900, to 1,671 (involving 420,000 workers) in 1901. Giolitti, committed to democratic liberty and state neutrality in labor disputes, proposed a political alliance between the developing popular forces of the nation and significant elements of the establishment—an alliance that would ensure stability during a period of economic development.

In fact, the period now identified as "Giolittian" was characterized by an impressive economic expansion that could afford to underwrite the extension of welfare benefits to the popular masses, thus hoping to ensure their commitment to the established parliamentary system.[37] It was reformism that locked itself into this arrangement and it was against this arrangement that the revolutionaries arrayed themselves. This *connubio* between the bourgeoisie and the proletarian party precipitated the enflamed resistance of the antireformists.

By the beginning of the twentieth century the antireformists had begun to organize themselves into an intellectual and political faction within the Socialist Party. They began to put together a rationale in support of their position, which they understood to be truer to Marxist inspiration than any entertained by the reformists. By the time of the Socialist congress at Imola in 1902, the intransigents began to align themselves behind a collection of convictions that we now identify as revolutionary syndicalism.

Revolutionary Syndicalism

Arturo Labriola (no kin of Antonio Labriola) was born on the twenty-second of January, 1873, in Naples. As a youth he identified himself with socialism and by the turn of the century, before he

36. Cf. C. Seton-Watson, *Italy*, pp. 196–98.

37. Cf. Gioacchino Volpe, "Gli inizi dell'attività politica di Giolitti dalla crisi agraria all'opposizione subalpina, 1885–1886," *Clio, 1* (1966); Antonio A. Mola, "Alle origini del metodo politico di G. Giolitti," *Cuneo provincia granda, 3* (1970); G. Manacorda, "Il primo ministero Giolitti," *Studi storici, 1* (1961) and *2* (1962).

was thirty, he served as the intellectual leader of Marxist intransigents in Italy.

Labriola's intransigence possessed far more theoretical substance than that of Enrico Ferri, who for a time played a leading role in the ranks of the revolutionaries and antireformists. By 1902 Labriola was clearly under the ideological influence of Georges Sorel, one of the principal intellectual luminaries of French syndicalism. In fact, French socialism had developed some of the same tensions and dissensions that were subsequently to undermine the unity of its Italian counterpart, and Sorel played the role of intransigent to the reformism of Jules Guesde, Jean Jaures, and Alexandre Millerand, just as Arturo Labriola was to play a similar role in opposition to Turati, Treves, and Bissolati.

During the last decade of the nineteenth century, French socialism had produced the functional analogue of Italian reformism. A French revolutionism was the predictable consequence. Men like Fernand Pelloutier raised the cry of *trahison* against the orthodox Marxists. The Party leadership had betrayed the working class in the service of political collaboration with its class enemies. As early as 1899, for example, Pelloutier argued that the collaboration sought by the evolutionary and Fabian socialists of the Party could only corrupt the integrity of working-class efforts, dissipate the energy of their organizations, and compromise revolutionary opportunity.[38]

Sorel, born in 1847, was already in full maturity when he became the intellectual spokesman for this current of intransigent French socialist opinion. He became the major theoretician of French revolutionary syndicalism—an intransigent socialism that grew up as a reaction to the reformism of the orthodox Marxists. By 1901 Sorel had lost his enthusiasm for parliamentary democracy, a system of government that he saw as based on compromise between the many and varied parochial and selfish interest groups that make up the nation. Sorel's *Avenir socialiste des syndicats* had appeared in the spring of 1898 and in it he characterized parliamentary activity as a form of prostitution in which ideals are bartered, more frequently than not, for immediate and often temporary advantage.[39] Hence

38. Cf. Louis Levine, *Syndicalism in France* (New York: Columbia University, 1914). ch. 6; Irving L. Horowitz, *Radicalism and the Revolt Against Reason: The Social Theories of Georges Sorel*, pp. 23ff.

39. Georges Sorel, *Avenir socialiste des syndicats* (Paris: Jacques, 1901), pp. xii–xv; cf. the discussion in Pierre Andreu, *Sorel il nostro maestro*, pp. 97ff.

he adamantly opposed any effort at governmental, ministerial, or reformist socialism.

Instead Sorel advocated the organization of workers into fighting trade associations (*syndicats*), in which socialist ideals and socialist consciousness would be fostered in a direct and uncompromising struggle with the class enemies of the proletariat.[40] Only such conflict could steel the resolve and develop the sentiments among the working classes that would make them new men, worthy of being denizens of a new and liberated social system. One of the most characteristic elements of Sorel's thought was, in fact, a preoccupation with what has been called "Proudhonian moralism."[41] Sorel saw in the syndicates a vehicle for the generation and inculcation of heroic values that augured a new beginning for a Europe grown decadent, cynical, and shallow under the conditions of parliamentary democracy. In retrospect it seems reasonably clear that Sorel's Marxism was inspired by an abiding dedication to the moral regeneration of Europe.

This dedication manifested itself in a number of ways that are important to our discussion. As early as his conversion to Marxism, Sorel revealed, for instance, a preoccupation with individual and collective psychology—with the ideal and moral factors that help to explain individual and collective behaviors.[42] In 1895, in the November issue of *Devenir Social*, Sorel reviewed Gustave Le Bon's *Psychologie des foules*, and it is clear that Le Bon's notions concerning group psychology considerably influenced Sorel's own thought. Le Bon spoke of the "collective hallucinations" that move men to undertake hazardous enterprises, and of the collective "fictions" that inspire them to selfless acts.[43] By 1900 Sorel regularly referred to the ideals men put together to energize collective commitment and enterprise in time of conflict.[44] He understood such ideals to be the composite product of historical recollection, contemporary interest, and future aspiration. Karl Marx, Sorel

40. G. Sorel, *Avenir*, pp. 50–52.

41. Joseph Roth, "The Roots of Italian Fascism: Sorel and Sorelismo," *Journal of Modern History, 1* (1967), 30ff., Richard Humphrey, *Georges Sorel: Prophet Without Honor*, ch. 3.

42. Cf. G. Sorel, "La position du problème de M. Lombroso," *Revue scientifique, 51* (February 18, 1893), and "La crime politique, d'après M. Lombroso," *ibid., 51* (May 6, 1893).

43. Cf. Gustave Le Bon, *Psychology of the Crowd*, pp. 39–59.

44. G. Sorel, "I tre sistemi storici di Marx," in *Saggi di critica del marxismo*, p. 255.

reminded his fellow revolutionaries, had alluded to the mass-mobilizing functions of just such ideals in his account of the events that shaped the history of the Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte.[45]

In effect, by 1900 Sorel was arguing that the behavior of men was significantly influenced by psychological factors, and that any account of revolution must necessarily consider the ideals producing purposive and self-sustaining behavior. What was missing, Sorel maintained, in the Marxism that had been inherited from Marx and Engels was a competent *psychological theory*, one that might persuasively relate collective behavior to the social and economic realities of any determinate period.[46] Sorel argued that whatever convictions Marx entertained concerning individual and collective psychology were never framed in a scientific fashion. "The time has come," Sorel insisted in 1897, for a responsible theoretical "definition of the psychology of historical materialism."[47]

Antonio Labriola, the doyen of Italian Marxism, had himself alluded to the necessity of just such a theoretical addition to the preliminary sketch left by the founders of Marxism. He granted that Marxism as a science was "only in its beginning and still [had] need of many developments. We need," he went on, "the aid of that complexus of notions and knowledge which may be called, for lack of a better term, social psychology."[48] As early as 1895 Labriola had emphasized the need for adequate psychological generalizations that would convincingly relate individual and collective behavior to determinate economic and social conditions, in order to explain any given sequence of historic events.[49] What Sorel attempted was to provide the theoretical supplement lacking in the formulations of the founders of classical Marxism and their uncritically orthodox followers. Sorel felt it was necessary to account for the psychological mechanisms that might help to adequately explain human behavior. He insisted that revolutionary activity is inexplicable unless some account of the ideals that inspire collective action is forth-

45. Vide K. Marx, "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte," in K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Works* (Moscow: Foreign Languages, 1955), I, 247.

46. G. Sorel, "Bernstein e Kautsky," in *Saggi*, p. 278, 284ff.; and Sorel's "Preface" to Antonio Labriola's *Essays on the Materialist Conception of History*, in Labriola, *Socialism and Philosophy*, p. 190.

47. G. Sorel, "Preface," *ibid.*, p. 191.

48. Antonio Labriola, *Socialism and Philosophy*, p. 96; and cf. *Essays on the Materialist Conception of History*, p. 111.

49. Cf. B. Croce, "Come nacque e come morì il marxismo teorico in Italia," in *Materialismo storico*, pp. 280ff.

coming. To that end he addressed himself to those "myths," those "imagined futures," that inspire individuals and masses to revolutionary undertaking and without which their dedication and sacrifice are unintelligible.[50]

Thus, by the time European socialism became fully involved in what is now remembered as the theoretical crisis of Marxism, Sorel had already identified himself with those who entertained serious reservations concerning the scientific pretensions of classical Marxism. He had in fact written the introduction to the French edition of Merlino's *Pro e contro il socialismo*, one of the first books to articulate the theoretical objections to Marxism that then and subsequently characterized the work of Eduard Bernstein. Sorel, like Bernstein and Croce, was to argue that because Marxism was not a fully articulated theory, it could hardly provide grounds for scientific explanation and prediction. In effect, orthodox Marxism was *not* a scientific theory. Sorel saw classical Marxism as a collection of ingenious insights and speculations of special heuristic merit and practical political implication, but not as a rigorously formulated set of lawlike assertions that could warrant the employment of terms such as "inevitability," "necessity," and "determinism." Sorel insisted that any collection of propositions in which critical variables such as "economic forces," "forces of production," "class," "material base," and "ideological superstructure" remained ill-defined could not pretend to offer anything more than suggestive insights. Given such intrinsic conceptual shortcomings, such a collection of propositions could not contain confirmed or confirmable empirical truths.[51]

Having arrived at this understanding of classical Marxism, Sorel could only object to those orthodox Marxists like Paul Lafargue, Georgii Plekhanov, and Antonio Labriola who insisted on talking about the "necessary" and "inevitable" social and economic laws of scientific Marxism. Sorel could only be outraged by Labriola's inclination to characterize the processes of history as at once "necessary and inevitable."[52] Antonio Labriola, having granted that classical Marxism was innocent of any scientific theory of individual and collective psychology, could nonetheless insist that history

50. G. Sorel, *Saggi*, pp. 14ff.

51. G. Sorel, "Osservazioni intorno alla concezione materialista della storia," originally published in *Sozialistische Monatshefte* in 1898, and "La necessità e il fatalismo nel marxismo," originally published in *Riforma sociale* in August, 1898, and "I tre sistemi storici di Marx," originally published in *Riforma sociale* in July, 1900; all republished in *Saggi*.

52. A. Labriola, *Essays*, p. 9; cf. pp. 17, 24, 26.

pursues a necessary sequence, which "is not, and which cannot be, the result of our will but which on the contrary triumphs over . . . and subdues it."[53] Similarly, Plekhanov could maintain that "the psychology of society is always . . . determined by [its economy],"[54] as if classical Marxism already possessed a rigorous and confirmed scientific theory of human psychology.

To Sorel, all such talk seemed inordinately pretentious. Marxists like Lafargue, Labriola, and Plekhanov played fast and loose with such critical expressions as "determine" (*bestimmen*), "correspond" (*entsprechen*), and "condition" (*bedingen*), to characterize the relationship between critical but vague and ambiguous variables such as "real basis" (*reale Basis*), "modes of production" (*Produktionsweisen*), and "consciousness" (*Bewusstsein*). As long as critical variables and the relationship between them could only be characterized in such a fashion, there could be no justification for talking about "inevitable," "necessary," and "deterministic" outcomes.

In this sense Sorel accepted much of the substance of the criticism leveled against the orthodox interpretation of classical Marxism by such thinkers as Benedetto Croce, Giovanni Gentile, and Eduard Bernstein.[55] Sorel, in fact, accepted the various criticisms of classical Marxism as a putative scientific system. He was as prepared as Croce, Gentile, and Bernstein to admit ideological, moral, or psychological elements into the complex of factors that influence social and historical processes. On the other hand, Sorel was not prepared to grant that the legitimate criticisms lodged against classical Marxism necessarily entailed the acceptance of a policy of political reform, mass democracy, parliamentarianism, or all three. In effect, he accepted the conclusion that classical Marxism did not constitute a coherent scientific theory, but he rejected the notion that this meant that socialists must then pursue their goals through parliamentary means or political reform.[56]

53. *Ibid.*, p. 18. On the other hand Labriola maintained that Marxism did not offer "a promise or a prophecy" but rather a "morphological prevision" (*ibid.*, p. 45). How a "morphological prevision" differs from a "probabilistic prediction" or a "lawlike inevitability" is very difficult to determine.

54. Georgii Plekhanov, "The Development of the Monist View of History," in *Selected Philosophical Works* (Moscow: Foreign Languages, n.d.), I, 690.

55. Vide G. Sorel, *Les polémiques pour l'interprétation du Marxisme: Bernstein & Kautsky*, reproduced in part as "Bernstein e Kautsky," in *Saggi*. That Sorel was familiar with the work of Bernstein and Croce is well documented. Not as well documented is his familiarity with the work of Gentile; cf. Giuseppe Prezzolini, *La teoria sindacalista*, p. 268, n. 9.

56. G. Sorel, *Saggi*, p. 7.

Sorel, rather, advocated a "return to the spirit of Marx."[57] Marx was first and foremost a revolutionary who sought a profound reorganization of society. His purpose was not to "prove that such an eventuality existed, but to foster such an outcome."[58] In his work, according to Sorel's interpretation, Marx had consciously or unconsciously employed not science but "social poetry,"[59] which since time immemorial has served to prompt men to selfless, heroic, and historic acts.[60] Such poetry finds expression not in scientific assertions, but in complex speech composed of admonitions, injunctions, imperatives, and normative judgments. Sometimes these are explicit and sometimes implicit, but their intent is clearly demonstrated by the inclusion of terms such as "oppression" (*Druck*), "misery" (*Elend*), "subordination" (*Knechtschaft*), "degeneration" (*Entartung*), and "exploitation" (*Ausbeutung*) to characterize the relationship between men. For Sorel it was social poetry or myths that enjoined men to "Unite!" against such conditions.

To imagine that the complexity contained in this type of speech is pure science is to caricature science.[61] Social poetry or mobilizing myths may be expressed in the scientific mode because contemporary circumstances may make the masses more susceptible to that form of persuasion, but the essential nature of such speech is ethical and moral, rather than descriptive or explanatory. Its purpose is not simply to foster understanding, but to precipitate action, engage the will, and foster determination.

It is often the case that such myths are in fact unintelligible, having of themselves no cognitive yield whatsoever. They may be little more than bits of transparent foolishness and sometimes literal contradictions. None of this impairs their effectiveness, under appropriate conditions, as a means of mobilizing the sentiment that informs the will.[62] Myths may, of course, include cognitive assertions, and as such they may have significant heuristic importance. They may, in effect, serve considerable scientific purpose. However, that is not their *principal* function. Myths, social poetry, and imagined futures serve to shape the dispositions of men, direct their energies, and lend moral dimension to the group conflicts that all of man's history reveals.

57. *Ibid.*, pp. 12, 15, 326.
58. As quoted in G. Prezzolini, *La teoria*, p. 250.
59. *Ibid.*, p. 231.
60. G. Sorel, *Saggi*, p. 13.
61. G. Sorel, "Bernstein e Kautsky," *ibid.*, pp. 271, 294.
62. G. Sorel, "La necessità el il fatalismo nel marxismo," *ibid.*, p. 70.

For Sorel, the conflict that gave substance to the modern history of France was a conflict that was essentially moral in nature. Marxism was a myth that morally uplifted the working masses to the responsibilities of regenerative revolution. The socialist reformists who advocated a strategy of political barter with their class opponents had misunderstood the historical and moral challenge of the epoch. In the service of some immediate interest they were prepared to sacrifice the revolutionary obligations of the proletariat.

This was the analysis and these were the sentiments to which the first Italian syndicalists fell heir. Under the influence of this analysis the opposition of the Italian intransigents to socialist orthodoxy became more and more informed by the insights and assessments of Sorel. Among the syndicalists Sorel became more and more popular —his thought having greater impact among them than among the socialists of France. Italian revolutionaries became more and more convinced Sorelians. In Sorel's work they discovered or rediscovered the writings of Giovanni Battista Vico, Vilfredo Pareto, and Gustave Le Bon. In his work they found all the themes that were to shape their discussion for the next decade. By 1903 the *Avanguardia socialista* of Milan had become the forum for Italy's syndicalist and Sorelian revolutionaries, and in its pages were to appear the writings of Pareto, Croce, and Arturo Labriola, as well as those of a second generation of theoreticians who were to dominate Italian radicalism for more than a generation—Angelo O. Olivetti, Sergio Panunzio, Paolo Orano, and Agostino Lanzillo. The writings of yet another young intellectual and activist were also to be found there. He was as yet largely unknown but would rapidly rise to leadership among the most intransigent of the intransigents—Benito Mussolini. Before he involved himself in the enterprise, however, political circumstances, family influences, socialism, and revolutionary syndicalism were to shape the convictions of his youth and early manhood.

Chapter 2 Young Manhood and Its Convictions

> The most important influence upon Mussolini's development, all the relationships and influences of the successive years notwithstanding, was that exercised by revolutionary syndicalism. Even after Mussolini concluded his socialist phase, the influence of revolutionary syndicalism revealed itself in the characteristic manner he conceived social relations and political struggle.
>
> *Renzo De Felice*[1]

Benito Amilcare Andrea Mussolini was born to Alessandro and Rosa Maltoni Mussolini on July 29, 1883, in the village of Dovia, in the Italian Romagna. He was named in honor of three revolutionaries, Benito Juarez, Amilcare Cipriani, and Andrea Costa, of whom the latter two were among the most important leaders of the first Italian socialism. Alessandro Mussolini himself had been an activist in the ranks of that socialism as early as 1873, when he was only nineteen, and by 1874 he was involved in political disturbances in Predappio. By the time of Benito's birth, Alessandro Mussolini was an active socialist who lamented that the unification of the peninsula had produced only a bourgeois Italy incapable of providing labor and sustenance for its population. He deplored an Italy that forced its sons to migrate to foreign lands, there to suffer oppression and to be denied the full measure of manhood. His "socialism" was thus an amalgam of national sentiments and humanistic scruples, and he was drawn to the revolutionary ideas and ideals of Carlo Pisacane, Giuseppe Mazzini, and Giuseppe Garibaldi.[2] He

1. R. De Felice, *Mussolini il rivoluzionario 1883–1915*, p. 40.

2. Cf. Mussolini, "Mio padre," *Opera omnia di Benito Mussolini*, hereafter referred to as *Opera* (Florence: La fenice, 1951–61), *3*, 274–76; Giorgio Pini and Duilio Susmel provide a selection of the articles published by Alessandro Mussolini in various socialist publications of the period in *Mussolini: L'uomo e l'opera* (Florence: La fenice, 1953), *I*, 404–407; Gaudens Megaro provides a brief profile of the elder Mussolini in *Mussolini in the Making*, Ch. 1; as does Ivon De Begnac, in *Vita di Mussolini, I*, 61–105. Cf. Francesco Bonavita, *Il padre del Duce*.

2. The young Mussolini as a revolutionary socialist agitator at nineteen years of age.

could entertain at the same time the anarchist ideas of Carlo Cafiero and the resolute military authoritarianism of Garibaldi, the nationalism of Mazzini and the internationalism of Bakunin. He was an avowed anticlerical who retained an abiding affection for the "Great One of Bethlehem," and on the walls of his simple home were to be found, side by side, portraits of the Madonna of Pompeii and of Giuseppe Garibaldi. Animated by these convictions, Alessandro Mussolini was active in the subversive politics of Romagnol socialism.

Benito Mussolini was born into this immediate intellectual environment. Around him, in the broader socioeconomic and political environment, the nation was embarking on irregular modernization and economic development. During the last decade of the nineteenth and the first decade of the twentieth century, Italy still remained economically, financially, and administratively underdeveloped. There were depressed areas that lacked the most rudimentary sanitation and educational facilities, as well as infant industries to be maintained and fostered and agricultural practices to be modernized. The nation was rife with illiteracy, brigandage, and pauperism. The national boundaries had to be defended, and overpopulation was driving hundreds of thousands of Italians to forced emigration.

During the last decades of the nineteenth century, Italy had passed through the first stages antecedent to economic "takeoff." A belated unification that had brought with it markets of increased scale, as well as political decisions and strategems, had succeeded in transferring resources from the traditional sectors of the economy to the nascent modern sectors. By 1900 Italy had begun a period of self-sustained, if irregular, cumulative industrial growth; around a core of critical industries, the chemical, metallurgical, mechanical, and hydroelectrical, the economy went into development. Italy had begun its drive to industrial maturity.[3]

These were the years in which Benito Mussolini made the transition from childhood to adolescence.[4] It was a period spent in the

3. Cf. the schematizations of W. W. Rostow, *The Stages*, and *Politics and the Stages of Growth* (New York: Cambridge University, 1971), and *The Process of Economic Growth* (New York: Norton, 1962), particularly ch. 8.

4. For Mussolini's own account of these years cf. "La mia vita dal 29 Luglio 1883 al 23 Novembre 1911," *Opera, 33*, 214–46; "Il mio diario di guerra," and "Vita di Arnaldo," *Opera, 34*, 101, 141–48. There are several instructive first hand accounts of the life of the young Mussolini; cf. Sante Bedeschi and Rino Alessi, *Anni Giovanili di Mussolini*; R. Alessi *Il giovane Mussolini*; the account of Antonio Beltramelli, *L'Uomo nuovo*, contains a great deal of first person testimony. De Begnac, *Vita di Benito Mussolini*, 3 vols., contains considerable detail. The best single source is De Felice, *Mussolini il rivoluzionario*, ch. 1.

poverty and affection of his family. His mother was a schoolmistress and his father an autodidact proud of his self-acquired literacy. Urged by his father and instructed by his mother, the young Mussolini began to read early. The woman who served as his godmother and who shared the intimacy of the family, reported, years later, that Mussolini would often wander off for hours to immerse himself in the books and pamphlets stored inside the large chest in the room where he and his younger brother Arnaldo slept. Not infrequently, his mother, Rosa, would have to insist that he put down his books and join the others at play.

When he was nine years old, his mother decided to send him off to Faenza to continue his education under the oppressive ministrations of the Salesian brothers. This was a bitter time that left a lasting impression on Mussolini and undoubtedly reinforced the anticlericalism he had inherited from his father. On the departure of the young Mussolini for Faenza, his father admonished him not to allow the clerics to stuff his head with nonsense about God and the saints. At Faenza he was identified as the son of a subversive, a circumstance that, coupled with his evident poverty, made his sojourn there particularly trying. Years later he was to recount to Emil Ludwig that the "insufferable and unmerited humiliations" he had endured at Faenza had made him rebellious.[5] In fact, the records at Faenza describe him as a child with a square face and vivacious black eyes, who was endowed with an "active intelligence and a singular memory, but possessed of anything other than a disciplined nature."[6]

By the summer of 1894, the eleven-year-old Mussolini had endured and learned much. His intelligence and his preoccupation with books were recognized. That summer he began to draw more closely to his father, and his father's ideas began to strike a resonance in him. As he worked at his father's forge he listened to the interminable political discussions the elder Mussolini conducted with his fellow "subversives." At times he read long passages out of Cafiero's compendium of Marx's *Kapital* to his father's "internationalist" cronies.

In October, 1894, he began a course of instruction at the Scuola Normale di Forlimpopoli that would lead to a teaching certificate.

5. Emil Ludwig, *Colloqui con Mussolini*, p. 195.

6. "Estratto della relazione dell'Istituto Salesiano di Faenza," appendix 16, in De Begnac, *Vita di Mussolini*, I, 312ff.

He was a bright student, often at the head of his class. He was forever occupied with books and newspapers and would regularly repair to the tiled roof of the abandoned church that adjoined the school building in order to read undisturbed. He was so preoccupied he would often miss meals, and many of the villagers remembered him, in later years, as the student they would frequently see walking along with his head buried in a book. His academic performance was, nonetheless, erratic, although he did display special accomplishment in history, geography, Italian, and pedagogy. By the time he was fifteen or sixteen he advertised himself as a socialist and became a student leader.

Socialist sympathies were of course common, if not typical, among the students of the Scuola Normale. Around the turn of the century, in fact, Italian socialists regularly alluded to the role of the declassed petty bourgeois and bourgeois student elements among those attracted to socialism. Amilcare Puviani and Scipio Sighele both argued that the overpopulation of young intellectuals, in an environment that could absorb only a small number of them, precipitated a struggle for existence among them that produced a pervasive sense of frustration and a preoccupation with the social question.[7] Similarly, Alfred Fouilée, in his essay of the period, alluded to an Italian "intellectual proletariat," the product of the inability of the retarded Italian economy to afford suitable employment opportunities to its intelligentsia.[8] An Italian prefect of the time, in confirmation of these assessments, lamented that socialism had made vast inroads among candidate elementary schoolteachers, who were underpaid, insecure, and exposed to harrowing competition for the few positions available.

Whether such an analysis is adequate to explain in general the role of the young declassed intellectuals in the socialist movement need not concern us. For our purposes it is enough to recognize that the young Mussolini, as such an intellectual, was one of many. He shared many of the attributes and attitudes of the young subversives of the period.

His father was, as we have seen, an ardent internationalist, an

7. Amilcare Puviani, *Teoria della illusione finanziaria*, and Scipio Sighele, *L'intelligenza della folla*.

8. Alfredo Fouillée, *Bosquejo psicologico de los pueblos europeos*, pp. 118ff., n. 2. For an extended discussion of such an "intellectual proletariat" cf. R. Michels, *Sozialismus in Italien*, pp. 218–34.

advocate of the socialism characteristic of the last quarter of the nineteenth century in Italy. Furthermore, almost all the authority figures in Mussolini's environment were aggressive socialists. Every positive reinforcement in that environment would have initiated him into the socialist subculture of discontent, which played a significant role in the complex of political subcultures that made up the poorly integrated Italian political life at the close of the nineteenth century.

By the time he received a teaching certificate on completion of his course of study at the Scuola Normale, Mussolini was a convinced "revolutionary socialist." The material and testimony surviving from this period indicate, not surprisingly, that his socialism was not much more than half-articulated outrage at contemporary Italian conditions, finding expression in the rationalist and socialist formulations he had learned in the heated political discussions conducted around his father's forge in Predappio. In 1898 he was incensed by the reports of the massacre of protesting workers under the guns of General Fiorenzo Bava-Beccaris in Milan.[9] Over the subsequent years, as a socialist agitator and journalist, Mussolini would refer to this tragedy with considerable regularity.[10] During the same time interval, he witnessed the doleful preparations undertaken by some of his neighbors for their emigration from their homeland. Years later he commented on the sadness that the spectacle had "etched in [his] memory."[11]

Direct evidence indicates that the traumatic events that shaped the consciousness of Italy as a newly united but poorly integrated nation also exercised influence on the political maturation of Benito Mussolini. These events sharpened an already keen political sensitivity, which Mussolini himself ascribed to the influence of his father and of his childhood experiences.[12] Those experiences apparently left him with a grievous sense of disquiet and perhaps humiliation, both for himself and for Italy. His father's example of political militancy channeled that sense of disquiet into the mainstream of a socialist dissidence. By the time he was seventeen, in 1900, Mussolini considered himself and was considered an implacable revolutionary.

9. Cf. G. Pini and D. Susmel, *Mussolini: l'uomo e l'opera*, I, 46ff.

10. Mussolini, *Opera*, *3*, 139; *4*, 63; *5*, 57, 59, 106; *6*, 44, 65, 165, 201; *7*, 314; *14*, 306; *35*, 3, 8.

11. Mussolini, "Vita di Arnaldo," *Opera*, *34*, 144ff.

12. E. Ludwig, *Colloqui*, pp. 39–41.

Years later, in his conversations with Emil Ludwig, Mussolini recognized that he had been, in fact, "rebellious" but not "revolutionary" during those postadolescent years.[13] Whatever intellectual content his rebelliousness took on was largely borrowed from his father and was supplemented by his own reading in the romantic, rationalistic, and socialistic literature we know he preferred. He assiduously read Giuseppe Mazzini's *Doveri dell'uomo*. One of his favored instructors, Carlo Giovanni Mor, gave him a copy of Roberto Ardigò's *La morale dei positivisti*, which lent shape and substance to the anticlerical and antireligious sentiments that were part of his father's intellectual patrimony. He read something of Bakunin and of F. Saverio Merlino, one of the authors who would contribute to the crisis of Marxism that was descending on Italian socialism.[14] He is also known to have read something of Kant, Spencer, and Rousseau, but how much is difficult to determine.

In a commemoration speech in honor of Giuseppe Verdi he made while still a student at the Scuola Normale, Mussolini lamented that the unification of the nation had produced only a bourgeois state, led by an egotistic ruling class, moved only by parochial and selfish interests, and incapable of fulfilling the promise of the Risorgimento; what Italy desperately needed was a revolution. Much to the consternation of the director of the school, Mussolini had made the commemoration a political event. This was his first public political statement. After his graduation, Mussolini, with this intellectual baggage, became an elementary school teacher in Pieve Saliceto in Gualtieri Emilia, and remained there from February to June, 1902.[15] In June, in a public speech commemorating the anni-

13. *Ibid.*

14. R. Alessi, *Il giovane Mussolini*, pp. 36, 44; Bedeschi and R. Alessi, *Anni giovanili*, pp. 31, 38; cf. Mussolini's letter of August 16, 1901, in *ibid.*

15. During this period Mussolini is supposed to have contracted the "syphilitic infection" that is supposed to have afflicted him throughout his life, to finally produce the "paresis" and "megalomania" of his final years. Whatever venereal affliction Mussolini may have suffered, it was almost certainly not syphilis. If it was, it was surely cured before it could have any impact on his intellectual or emotional life.

Many of Mussolini's biographers make the confident assertion that he was afflicted with syphilis although there is no convincing evidence that this was the case, e.g., Max Gallo (*Vita di Mussolini*, p. 16), Christofer Hibbert (*Benito Mussolini: The Rise and Fall of il Duce*, p. 26) and Paolo Monelli (*Mussolini: The Intimate Life of a Demagogue*, p. 46). That Mussolini was so afflicted was a piece of common gossip during his lifetime (cf. Galeazzo Ciano, *The Ciano Diaries*, p. 184). Antonio Trizzino has, in fact, published an account that attempts to explain Mussolini's complex behavior during the last years of his life as the psychic consequences of paresis (Antonio Trizzino, *Mussolini ultimo*).

Angelica Balabanoff, an exacerbated antifascist, was probably the first to give the notion

versary of the death of Garibaldi, the young schoolmaster repeated the sentiments he had expressed in his speech devoted to Verdi the year before.

At the end of the school year in June, 1902, Mussolini decided to embark on an adventure that would take him outside the confines of the realm to Switzerland. From that point on, he was to involve himself more and more intensively in the wider world of socialist agitation and socialist intellectual life. Having crossed the border into Switzerland, he found himself without funds and without pros-

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of Mussolini's putative syphilis common currency (*Il traditore Mussolini*, p. 14), and George Seldes repeated her account before the Second World War (*Sawdust Ceasar*, 44–47). Balabanoff's evidence for Mussolini's supposed affliction is based on a "confession" Mussolini purportedly made to her at their first meeting (probably in March, 1904). Since the credibility of Balabanoff's evidence depends on her ability to accurately recall that conversation, it is unfortunate that her memory is not completely reliable. She has provided us with at least three separate published versions of that conversation.

In perhaps her earliest rendering, she reported Mussolini had said to her, "Understand me, with a syphilitic and alcoholic father, what do you expect me to do?" (Balabanoff, *Ricordi di una socialista*, pp. 77f. This book appeared in 1927, published by Laub of Berlin, as *Erinnerungen*). Some time later, around 1934, in an account written for George Seldes, Balabanoff maintained that Mussolini had stated, "My father was a drunkard, and besides I have a congenital sickness for which I have him to thank" (Balabanoff, in Seldes, *Sawdust*, p. 41). In her last account, written in the early 1940's, Balabanoff reports that Mussolini stated, "I am ill, syphilitic, and my father is an alcoholic." (Balabanoff, *Il traditore Mussolini*, p. 14). The disease apparently gravitated closer and closer to Mussolini. At first it is *his father* who is syphilitic. Then they are *both* syphilitic, with Mussolini's syphilis congenital. In the last version it is *Mussolini himself* who is syphilitic.

There are a number of similar instances. In Theodore Rosebury's *Microbes and Morals*, p. 162, we are told that Mussolini "undoubtedly" had syphilis. In support of the claim, Rosebury cites a work by Dr. Dickson Wright. Unfortunately, Dickson Wright's article, "Venereal Disease and the Great" (*British Journal of Venereal Disease*, *47*, 4 [August, 1971], 295–306) makes no mention of Mussolini. In private correspondence (letter dated June 5, 1973), Dr. Rosebury indicated that he had consulted Wright's *unpublished* manuscript, which had mentioned Mussolini, but that the *published* manuscript had deleted all reference to Mussolini, which suggests that the evidence of Mussolini's affliction may not have been so "undoubted."

Giorgio Pini and Duilio Susmel have reviewed the evidence and indicate that neither the available documentary evidence and testimony nor the autopsy performed on Mussolini's remains support the contention (*Benito Mussolini*, I, 421, n. 67, 425, n. 36). Mussolini, in fact, was so annoyed by the rumors of his "affliction" that he asked Dr. Aldo Castellani, his personal physician for almost twenty years, to administer a Wasserman test to him and publish the results. The results, returned from two diagnostic laboratories, were completely negative. Castellani prevailed on Mussolini not to make a public issue of the rumor, but it does seem reasonably clear that the story of Mussolini's syphilis is a political canard (cf. A. Castellani, *Microbes, Men and Morals*, p. 130). This did not stop R. MacGregor-Hastie from maintaining that Mussolini contracted syphilis "supposedly" in Tolmezzo in 1907 (which would have made the 1904 confession to Balabanoff impossible), after which he proceeded to infect paramours and illegitimate offspring, and then murder witnesses in order to conceal the sordid facts (*The Day of the Lion: The Rise and Fall of Fascist Italy*, p. 30)!

pects for employment. As a result he endured a period of emphatic privation, and on one occasion he was arrested for vagrancy. He took whatever employment he could find, and earned his living as a manual laborer and as a clerk in small shops. In August, 1902, he made his first contacts with immigrant socialist groups. Through the offices of Gaetano Zannini, the secretary of the local socialists, Mussolini was introduced to the editor of *L'Avvenire del lavoratore*, who published Mussolini's first piece of socialist propaganda on August 2, 1902. From that point on, he became an active and fairly prominent agitator and intellectual in the Italian socialist circles of Switzerland.

In November, 1904, Mussolini returned to Italy to serve in the military from January, 1905 until September, 1906, when, after being discharged from the armed services, he undertook the responsibilities of an elementary schoolteacher in Tolmezzo. He remained there until August, 1907, and then transferred to Oneglia in February, 1908, to become a teacher of French in the Collegio civico Ulisse Calvi di Oneglia. By that time, Mussolini was twenty-five years of age and his political convictions had taken on identifiable configuration.

The Young Mussolini and Classical Marxism

Between 1902 and 1908 Mussolini gave every indication of principled commitment to the "scientific socialism" of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Everything he published during those years points to his intransigent and doctrinally orthodox socialism. He spoke, for example, of the "intrinsic laws" of economic production, that would produce a new class of proletarians destined to supersede capitalism. As he saw it, the supersedure of capitalism would be the consequence of a class struggle and the victory of the proletariat would entail the abolition of the state as an organized engine of oppression. The state, which prior to the anticipated revolution served only as a "committee for the defense of the interests of the possessing classes," would dissolve, after the revolution, into fraternally associated productive communes in which property would be owned and administered collectively. The state, after the revolution, would cease to be an agency of coercion and oppression and would transform itself into a community animated by a moral pur-

pose, namely to create for men an elevated condition of life unattainable by any alternative means.[16]

Given the conviction that Italy's problems could be resolved, in some definitive sense, only through effective class conflict, a number of practical consequences followed. Because the organized state was understood to be nothing more than a defense agency for the class enemies of the revolutionary proletariat, all extant and traditional institutions were compromised by the direct or indirect support they provided for the status quo. Since the Catholic Church was one of the institutions upholding the bourgeois social order, it was necessarily viewed as repressive—"an instrument of enslavement."[17] No less could be said of the military establishment and the colonial adventures that it fed and was fed by.[18] Both the Church and the military obstructed the historical mission of the revolutionary proletariat. The Church, according to the young Mussolini, taught passivity in the face of oppression and injustice, and the military, through the institution of compulsory service, inured men to blind obedience to their "superiors." Because of these convictions, Mussolini was opposed to the bourgeois state. He was an emphatic and exacerbated antireligionist, as well as an advocate of the reduction of the military budget and of resistance to compulsory military service.[19]

A similar logic made him antimonarchial and antinationalist. The monarchy had acceded to power in Italy only because it served the "economic interests of the conservative classes of Italy,"[20] the class enemies of the proletariat. Nationalism was understood to be a simple by-product of capitalism's preoccupation with its own immediate economic interests, a cloak behind which all the petty material interests of the ruling class could be concealed. Nationalism provided the emotional support for the established and traditional institutions that formed the substructure of the bourgeois

16. Mussolini, "Socialismo e movimento sociale nel secolo XIX," *Opera*, *1*, 43ff.; "Pagine rivoluzionarie: 'Le parole d'un rivoltoso'," "Il congresso dei socialisti italiani in Svizzera," "Per Ferdinand Lassalle," in *Opera*, *1*, 51ff., 55, 65ff.

17. Mussolini, "Il Natale umano," *Opera*, *1*, 26; cf. "Gli orrori del chiostro," "La libertà nera," "Divagazioni pasquali," *Opera*, *1*, 38, 111, 131; *L'uomo e la divinità*, *Opera*, *33*, 12ff., 19–22, 27, 36.

18. Mussolini, "'Monnetier' (La culla dei Savoia)," *Opera*, *1*, 57.

19. Mussolini, "La logica dell'uniforme," "La parola dei corrispondenti dalla provincia di Forlì," "Il caso Manfredi," *Opera*, *35*, 3ff., 6, 8; "Sport di coronati," *Opera*, *1*, 32; "Corrispondenze 'dall'estero'," *Opera*, *1*, 77.

20. Mussolini, "'Monnetier' (La culla dei Savoia)," *Opera*, *1*, 57.

state. It could be invoked to defend the Church, with its ancient roots in Italy; it could be mustered to support the military and its foreign adventures; it was essentially a conservative force and the root source of the fratricidal hatred that capitalism exploited to produce massive conflict and collective bloodletting.[21]

Thus, by the time Mussolini had reached first maturity, he had committed himself to the entire collection of Marxist orthodoxies. More than that, he was prepared to identify himself with the tissue of philosophical and social-science arguments that had become commonplace among the Marxists of the period. In August, 1904, when he was twenty-one, Mussolini published an essay entitled *L'uomo e la divinità* in the Biblioteca Internazionale di Propaganda Razionalista.

This pamphlet was a long and fairly well-argued diatribe against Christian theology and organized religion. It was written much in the style of the more exacerbated positivists, who, like Ferri, had identified themselves with revolutionary socialism. Academic positivists had of course long since rejected the metaphysics of orthodox theology, and Mussolini, while still a student, had been exposed to their arguments in the work of Roberto Ardigò. Ardigò provided much of the intellectual rationale for the humanistic convictions that Mussolini had inherited from his father—convictions reinforced by his unhappy association with religious agencies in his early youth. Institutionalized religion in Italy had, of course, long stood in the path of the revolutionary program of romantic and nationalist socialists like Mazzini and Garibaldi. But while Mazzini could still entertain a spiritualistic and noninstitutional religious commitment, the socialists of the last quarter of the nineteenth century had begun to systematically reject theology as an intellectual persuasion.

A great many influences in Mussolini's familial, social, and intellectual environment seem to have fostered in him an emphatically antireligious disposition. His essay of 1904 reveals many of those influences. The impact of Ardigò is evident,[22] but it is equally clear that Mussolini chose to go beyond the positivism that rejected both

21. Mussolini, "Una caduta," "Corrispondenze," "Corrispondenze 'dall'estero'," *Opera, I,* 9ff., 36, 77.

22. Mussolini's argument against Herbert Spencer's notion of the "Unknown" (*L'uomo e la divinità*, *Opera*, *33*, 6) is clearly parasitic on that of Ardigò (cf. Giovanni Marchesini, *Roberto Ardigò: l'uomo e l'umanista*, part II, para. 13). Cf. also Mussolini's references to Ardigò, *L'uomo e la divinità*, *Opera*, *33*, 12–14, 19.

materialism and absolute idealism as metaphysical, and assume a posture that he identified as "atheistic" and "materialistic."

The academic positivists of the period were prepared to reject both ontological materialism and ontological idealism as metaphysical, as devoid of any practical and pragmatic consequences. Ardigò spoke of a "psychophysical reality" reducible to sensations, from which men would sort out the constancies they identified either as "physical" or "psychic" reality.[23] Mussolini, on the other hand, rejected these subtleties and simply identified his position as a straightforward ontological materialism. He argued that the universe was "nothing more than the manifestation of matter—unitary, eternal and indestructible, having no beginning and which can have no end. Matter," Mussolini argued, expresses itself in

> modes which transform, evolve and move from one to another complex form. In this immense and continuous process of dissolution and reintegration nothing is created and nothing destroyed. Life, therefore, in its universal significance is nothing other than a perennial combustion of perpetually new energies. The universe is to be explained in the movement of [material] forces. All the phenomena studied by physics (heat, light, sound, electricity) are reducible to the vibrations, more or less intense, of matter. Eternal and immutable laws, that know nothing of morality or benevolence, dominate matter. These laws respond to neither the lamentations nor the prayers of men . . . . They govern all things: from the most minute to the most complex phenomena, from the appearance of a comet to the opening of a flower.[24]

One of the products of the complex organization of matter is thought—all the manifestations of the soul to which religion alludes. Mussolini argued that these manifestations are nothing but "the product of the work of the central organs of our nervous system, a simple result of the continuous labors of our cerebral cells."[25] He alluded to some of the principal research of the nineteenth century in psychophysiology—the work of Alexander Bain and Franz Joseph Gall included—and argued that the intercorrelation of psychic traits, localized areas of the brain, and architectonic features of the cerebral cortex indicate that the soul is nothing other than a function of a complex relationship between material ele-

23. Cf. the discussion in Erminio Troilo, *Idee e ideali del positivismo*, particularly, pp. 191ff.

24. Mussolini, *L'uomo e la divinità*, *Opera*, *33*, 6ff.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

ments. Man was seen as the product of natural evolution, and thought and spirit as the consequences of his adaptation to the organized social life necessary for survival. He argued that the ideological superstructure produced by thought and articulated in speech is nothing more than a reflection of the life circumstances and survival needs surrounding any particular human community at any particular time. Such ideological and intellectual artifacts, Mussolini maintained, serve to enhance the survival potential of the groups in which they originate. As social circumstances change, on the other hand, he felt that the morality of each social group must reflect those changes, or morality becomes dysfunctional and morbid. "Any given morality arises out of particular conditions and it survives and exercises dominion as long as those conditions persist, but with the disappearance of those conditions, that morality becomes an anachronism, and any attempt to provide its legitimation drives one into absurdities."[26]

Religious anachronisms and all their attendant absurdities can, of course, be pressed into the service of conservatism and reaction. Religious beliefs, Mussolini argued, constitute either instances of individual or collective cognitive disabilities, or intellectual props for political and social reaction. "True morality," on the other hand, "is a guide to conduct which, under specific social circumstances, conduces to the enrichment of collective life—the fulfillment of man's humanity."[27] Under contemporary circumstances, Mussolini insisted, a true morality would abjure religious fictions that counseled resignation, conformity, and passivity, and advocate resistance to evil, rebellion against injustice, and the suppression of class distinctions that made modern social life intolerable.

By the time Mussolini was twenty-one, he thus conceived himself to be as orthodox a Marxist as any in the ranks of the Italian Socialist Party. The collection of beliefs he articulated was that of the Party, and the rationale he advanced in its support was by and large indistinguishable from those found in standard Marxist tracts. He was sufficiently familiar with the primary Marxist texts to allude to Marx's *Kapital*, Engels' *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844, The Communist Manifesto*, and Marx and Engels' writings in the *Rheinische Zeitung* and the *Deutsch-Französische*

26. *Ibid.*, p. 18.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

Jahrbücher.[28] Moreover, he provided quotes not only from such commonplace sources as the "Theses on Feuerbach" and Marx's "Critique of the Hegelian Philosophy of Right," but also from a number of relatively obscure works.[29]

The authors with whom Mussolini was apparently familiar by this time run an impressive range from the most famous of antiquity (Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero, for example), to classic authors of the early modern period (such as Locke, Fichte, and Hegel), through many authors both prominent and obscure who were writing at the turn of the century (Kautsky, Sombart, Nordau, Faure, Pareto, Kropotkin, Ferrari, and Sorel, to mention only a few). Most of the ideas expressed in *L'uomo e la divinità* were paraphrases of those found in Marx's "Critique of the Hegelian Philosophy of Right" and Engels' *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*. Mussolini, at twenty-one, was a reasonably well-read, intransigent, revolutionary, and orthodox Marxist socialist. He felt that Italy's problems could be solved only by a successful and violent class struggle that would suppress private property and abolish class distinctions.

But more than this, Mussolini had a reasonably clear conception of the specific problems to which the revolution would be compelled to address itself in Italian circumstances. Italy was a nation afflicted with an administrative machinery that was cumbersome and ineffectual. The school system was unequal to its tasks, the administration of justice slow and uncertain, the tax system irregular and oppressive, the rail service incomplete and disorganized, river navigation neglected, agriculture in many regions primitive, and industry underdeveloped. Commerce was without order, the balance-of-payments deficits were oppressive, local finances were encumbered by debt, national defense was confined by restrictive conceptions, port facilities were insufficient, and housing needs were unmet. Finally, Italy was compelled by its underdevelopment to drive its citizens to emigration in the search for employment. In effect, Italy was an economically and politically retrograde nation, locked into a state system that was archaic and essentially "feudal" in character.[30]

Mussolini denied that such specifically Italian problems could be

28. Cf. Mussolini, "Karl Marx," "Socialismo e socialisti," *Opera*, *1*, 101–104, 143.

29. Mussolini, "Karl Marx," "La teppa," *Opera*, *1*, 92, 102; and *L'uomo e la divinità*, *Opera*, *33*, 18.

30. Mussolini, "'Prepariamo l'avvenire d'Italia'," *Opera*, *1*, 185–89.

resolved by traditional legislative reforms, whether those reforms were introduced by socialists or not. He insisted that the Italian parliament was little more than a service agency for parochial and special interests, irredeemably venal and corrupt.[31] Only revolution could bring the requisite changes, and revolution could be achieved only if a working-class elite, the intransigent leaders of a class-conscious proletariat, seized power.[32]

Mussolini speculated that such a revolution would probably come as a consequence of the "disorganization of the state following a war provoked by the reciprocal jealousies that attend [capitalist] competition for international markets. Revolutionaries would exploit the situation to apply themselves to their task . . . . The socialist revolution, initiated by a minority, would soon resonate among the majority . . . ."[33] The result would be the abolition of private property, the expropriation of all those who possessed the means to exploit human kind. The state as the defense agency of the possessing classes would no longer have any reason to exist. In its place would arise the fraternally associated socialist communes.

The revolution, so conceived, would be undertaken under the leadership of a party that would serve as a "revolutionary vanguard" of the entire proletariat. That vanguard would form a rival elite that would wrest, by revolutionary force, the control of society from the established but moribund elite. The proletariat, led by the rival vanguard elite, would include the mass of proletarianized agrarian workers, the *proletariato delle campagne*, the *lavoratori della terra*, that socialism had too long neglected.[34] Thus, by the time he was twenty-five, Mussolini had put together a belief system characterized not only by an informed Marxism, but also by similarities with the revolutionary syndicalist current that had matured within the Socialist Party since the turn of the century.

31. Mussolini, "Democrazia parlamentare," *Opera, I*, 58–60; "Opinioni e documenti: la crisi risolutiva," *Opera, I*, 70; "Il nostro commento," *Opera, I*, 113.

32. Mussolini, "Del socialismo svizzero nella Svizzera," *Opera, I*, 23ff.; "Socialismo e movimento sociale nel secolo XIX," *Opera, I*, 43–45; "Il congresso dei socialisti italiani in Svizzera," *Opera, I*, 54ff.; "La teppa," *Opera, I*, 91–93; "Karl Marx," *Opera, I*, 101–104; "Dopo l'eccidio di Roma," *Opera, I*, 114–16; "Intermezzo polemico," *Opera, I*, 127–29; "Per finire," *Opera, I*, 147–49.

33. Mussolini, "Pagine rivoluzionarie: 'Le parole d'un rivoltoso'," *Opera, I*, 51.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 52; "La grande battaglia," *Opera, I*, 133ff.; "L'agitazione agraria in Romagna," *Opera, I*, 164–66; "Intermezzo polemico," *Opera, I*, 128.

The Young Mussolini and Revolutionary Syndicalism

By the time Mussolini left the realm to undertake his adventure in Switzerland, the Sorelian syndicalists in the socialist ranks had begun to articulate an alternative orthodoxy to which they would give their allegiance. Arturo Labriola, Enrico Leone, and Walter Mocchi had founded the *Avanguardia socialista*, the periodical that would serve as the vehicle of syndicalist thought during a critical period of Marxism's intellectual troubles. Around them, a second generation of syndicalist thinkers were to collect—including Sergio Panunzio, Roberto Michels, Angelo O. Olivetti, Paolo Orano, Agostino Lanzillo, and Ottavio Dinale. All were Sorelian in orientation.

As Sorelians all were opposed, like Sorel himself, to the interpretation of Marxism that conceived it to be a repository of deterministic social science "laws," which made social change the automatic consequence of existing material factors. All were unremitting antiparliamentarians, seeing in political democracy a device for stabilizing the status quo and closing down socialist alternatives. All anticipated a violent struggle for political and social dominance, initiated by a proletarian elite. That elite, invoking apocalyptic "myths," and "imagined images of the future," would inspire the masses to acts of heroic sacrifice. Sorelians understood mass mobilization to be a function, at least in substantial part, of moral inspiration, the appeal to noble and urgent sentiment among the dispossessed.

Like Sorel, they maintained that the organizational infrastructure of the armed forces of revolution, as well as the first "cells" of the future society, were to be found in the working-men's syndicates that were growing up spontaneously throughout the peninsula. The syndicates would inure the proletariat to discipline and revolutionary obedience, and would foster the growth of a "morale of producers" that would sustain the industrial enterprise the revolution would inherit from capitalism.[35] The first syndicalists were insistent

35. For early expressions of these views cf. Arturo Labriola, "Perche siamo repubblicani," *Avanguardia socialista*, August 23, 1903; Sergio Panunzio, "Socialisti ed anarchici," and "Psicologia dello sciopero," *ibid.*, July 30, 1904, January 14, 1905, and "Alcuni pregiudizi socialista," *Divenire sociale*, 2 (January 1, 1906), 12–15; Vittorio Racca, "Prefazione," to G. Sorel, *Saggi*, pp. vii–xliii.

that only workers organized in effective working units could elevate their consciousness to the responsibilities of revolution and production. An exclusively political organization would not produce this result.

In their judgment, political organization in itself did little more than offer employment to the declassed bourgeois intellectuals who gathered like locusts around the working class. These intellectuals could only serve as carriers of the "bourgeois virus"; disposed as they were by their life circumstances to negotiate and barter for immediate and local advantage, they were intrinsically incapable of assuming the burdens of revolutionary leadership.

These convictions had begun to inform the revolutionary "intransigence" that made its appearance among Italian socialists as early as the turn of the century. Sorting themselves out of the "revolutionism" of Enrico Ferri, the intransigents organized around the Sorelian syndicalism of Arturo Labriola and Enrico Leone. They had put together an interpretation of Marxism admirably geared to the convictions and dispositions of the young Mussolini. One of the first articles he published as a socialist intellectual appeared, in fact, in the pages of the syndicalist *Avanguardia socialista*.[36] Throughout these first years of Mussolini's intellectual and political maturation, syndicalist themes were never far below the surface of his thought.[37]

When he was nineteen Mussolini published a laudatory review of a pamphlet by Costantino Lazzari, a syndicalist, advocating revolutionary intransigence on the part of Italy's socialism. Mussolini, on this early occasion, reviewed the various currents of socialist thought prevalent in Italy—the "new tactics" of Filippo Turati, the "abstentionist" socialism of Saverio Merlino, the "revolutionary method" of Enrico Ferri, and the special variant identified with Arturo Labriola—and he clearly opted for an antireformist, antiparliamentarian, and syndicalist alternative.

He advocated an uncompromising conflict between forces that sharply distinguished themselves—without the ambiguities that parliamentary barter and negotiation inevitably produce. He deplored political maneuver on the basis of compromise. Compromise im-

36. "Sebastian Faure," *Avanguardia socialista*, *2*, 44 (October 25, 1903), written when Mussolini was twenty years of age, his first article in this journal.

37. For one of the earliest statements of this position, vide Mussolini, "Pagine rivoluzionarie: 'Le parole d'un rivoltoso,'" *Opera*, *1*, 50–53.

plied flaccid and defective commitment to revolutionary purpose—an absence of moral energy. Mussolini reminded his readers that socialist revolution required an infusion of great moral force that would uplift the consciousness of the organized masses to the awesome responsibilities of the time.[38] The insistence on moral and ethical factors in the organization and pursuit of revolutionary purpose was, as we have seen, characteristic of the syndicalists. Sorel had insisted on the significance of moral factors in socialist agitation, and at about the same time Mussolini was alluding to its importance, Roberto Michels, himself a syndicalist, was arguing a similar case.

Roberto Michels, born in Germany in 1876, had already made the transit from orthodox socialism to syndicalism by the time Mussolini published his first socialist article. By 1902 Michels identified himself with the Italian intransigents and antireformists.[39] He insisted that "real socialist power does not lie in Parliament, but with the masses," and that the invocation of the masses required appeal to moral sentiment.[40]

In effect, Mussolini was expressing convictions that were common among the syndicalists. The Sorelians had insisted that any adequate analysis of individual and collective political behavior required the study, not only of objective and material socioeconomic factors but of the influence of psychological and moral elements as well. For their part, the more orthodox Marxists maintained that consciousness was nothing more than a reflex of material conditions and therefore functioned as an epiphenomenon, a predictable and necessary reflection of objective circumstances. For example, the young V. I. Lenin, writing under the influence of Engels and Plekhanov in 1894, argued that

> the conscious element plays so subordinate a part in the history of civilization . . . that a critique whose subject is civilization, can least of all take as its basis any form of, or any result of, consciousness. [History proceeds with determinate pace] whether men believe in it or not, whether they are conscious of it or not . . . . History [is] a process of

38. Mussolini, "La necessità della politica socialista in Italia," *Opera*, *1*, 15–18.

39. Cf. R. Michels, "Der Kongress der italienischen socialistischen Partei (Imola)," *Vowärts*, *19*, nos. 210–14.

40. Cf. R. Michels, *Le Mouvement Socialiste*, *144* (1904), pp. 193–212; "'Endziel', Intransigenz, Ethik," *Ethische Kultur*, *11*, 50 (December 12, 1903), 393–95; "Edmondo De Amicis, der Sozialist der Ethik," *ibid.*, *12*, 3 (1904), 21–22; "Beitrag zum Problem der Moral," *Die neue Zeit*, *21* (1903), 470–75.

> natural history, governed by laws not only independent of human will, consciousness and intentions, but, rather, on the contrary, determining the will, consciousness and intentions of men.[41]

This was the tissue of convictions to which Sorel and the Sorelians had so strenuously objected. Like them, Mussolini objected to the simple positivism that regarded consciousness as an automatic product of socioeconomic variables. He insisted, as did Michels and the principal theoreticians of syndicalism, on the "moral reality of socialism" as a major factor in mass mobilization, organization, and revolutionary struggle.[42]

In his earliest writings he showed a concern with the psychology of crowds and the factors that influenced collective behavior.[43] As early as 1903 the twenty-year-old Mussolini argued that sentiments constitute the dynamic motives of human action, without which the will is neither informed nor activated; material conditions provide the necessary ground for political conflict, but only sentiments, moral concerns, provide sufficient motive for action. These were truths, Mussolini insisted, that had been "demonstrated by psychology."[44]

Mussolini's allusion to the evidence of modern psychology was a clear reference to the work of such men as Gabriel Tarde, Gustave Le Bon, Gaetano Mosca, and Vilfredo Pareto, all of whom were familiar to syndicalist theoreticians. They were well known to Sorel, and by the time Mussolini took up his activities in Switzerland he was already familiar with the works of at least Le Bon and Pareto. There is evidence that Mussolini had read something by Pareto as early as 1901. Furthermore, it is reasonably well established that he attended a series of lectures conducted by Pareto at Lausanne in the summer of 1904. At about the same time, Mussolini reported on Pareto's address to the Second International Congress of Philosophy for the socialist press. By 1908 he could speak with some confidence of Pareto's theory of elites as "perhaps the most ingenious sociological conception of modern times."[45] In short, he

41. V. I. Lenin, "What the 'Friends of the People' Are and How They Fight the Social Democrats," *Collected Works* (Moscow: Foreign Languages, 1960), *1*, 1, 166. Engels had written, "Modern socialism is nothing but the reflex, in thought, of this conflict in fact," F. Engels, *Anti-Dühring* (Moscow: Foreign Languages, 1962), p. 367.

42. Mussolini, "La gente nuova," *Opera*, *1*, 19.

43. Cf. Mussolini, "Sport di coronati," *Opera*, *1*, 33.

44. Mussolini, "Ne l'attesa," *Opera*, *1*, 40.

45. Cf. Mussolini, "'L'individuel et le social'," *Opera*, *1*, 73ff.; "Intermezzo polemico," *Opera*, *1*, 128; De Felice, *Mussolini il rivoluzionario*, pp. 37ff.

found elements in the work of Pareto that were compatible with and contributed to the belief system he had already begun to put together.

That Pareto, as a bourgeois and nonsocialist theoretician, should have contributed to the articulation of revolutionary syndicalism is not surprising. Both Marx and Engels had found the work of an equally nonsocialist thinker, Lewis Henry Morgan, instructive and compatible with their social-science convictions. Much of Pareto's work was similarly useful to the syndicalists as Marxist theory, and its becomes clear why when one considers some of its substantive content. Not only did Pareto's assessment of the factors that contribute to individual and collective behavior agree with the convictions held by Sorel and the Sorelians, but as early as 1897 Pareto had also shown himself to be adamantly opposed to parliamentarianism. Like the syndicalists, he insisted that it was "useless, almost ridiculous" to expect parliament to resolve Italy's most urgent problems. For that reason he showed considerable sympathy for the intransigents among the socialists, those who felt that salvation would come from outside the confines of parliamentary compromise.[46]

Moreover, Pareto was an advocate of free-trade policies, and an opponent of both protective tariffs and military expenditures as uneconomical and antiproductive.[47] He, like the socialists in general, viewed Italy's retarded economic and industrial development as one of the country's principal problems, and, like the syndicalists in particular, objected to any policies based on redistribution rather than on increments of production. Like the syndicalists, Pareto objected to socialist reformism because he regarded its policies as another instance of special pleading—as an effort to redistribute utilities rather than increase their sum.[48]

The syndicalists welcomed all this as objective and scientific support for critical elements of the belief system they had made their own. Sorel had been a "productivist." He had advocated the maximization of capitalist production as a revolutionary goal. He took every possible opportunity to remind socialists that Marx and Engels had insisted that "no social order ever disappears before all the productive forces, for which there is room . . . have been developed; and new higher relations of production never appear before

46. Vilfredo Pareto, "Cronaca," in *Scritti politici*, *2*, 112, 206ff.

47. V. Pareto, "Pro e contro il socialismo," *Il secolo*, July 20–21, 1896, republished in *ibid.*, pp. 84–86; "Cronaca," *ibid.*, pp. 111–17, 193–97, 198.

48. V. Pareto, "Socialismo legalitario e socialismo rivoluzionario," *Il divenire sociale*, April 1, 1905, republished in *ibid.*, pp. 453–56.

the material conditions of their existence have matured in the womb of the old society."[49] Engels, in turn, had made massive economic development the necessary precondition for the elimination of capitalist production.[50] In that context Arturo Labriola, a syndicalist, could insist that as revolutionaries syndicalists were interested in the maximum development of productivity.[51] The emphasis on production, the preoccupation with the maximum development of the economic potential of the country, and the syndicalist affinity with the free-trade conceptions of Pareto and Maffeo Pantaleoni produced something of an intellectual scandal among the more orthodox socialists, and provoked Georgii Plekhanov to complain that what syndicalism sought was a "utopia of producers" animated by an "ethic of producers."[52]

Italian syndicalism clearly shared the free-trade and productivistic convictions of Pareto.[53] Implicit in these convictions was their objection to protective tariffs, to the nonproductive dissipation of investment capital on armaments, as well as to any special-interest legislation that favored a given clientele at the expense of the whole. In this latter regard, both Pareto and the syndicalists viewed parliament as the arena of special-interest lobbying, of a narrow and corrupt bartering away of the nation's economic future.

Pareto's insistence that social organization requires the presence of a tutelary elite and that social change involves the rotation or substitution of elites,[54] was as compatible with syndicalist convictions as were his antiparliamentarianism, his antireformism, and his productivism. When, in 1903, Vittorio Racca argued that the syndicalists recognized the historical role of elites, he could associate Pareto with that recognition. He indicated that Sorel and the Sorelians held the same convictions.[55] Moreover, as early as 1901 Pareto had maintained that "the greater part of human actions have their

49. K. Marx, *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (Chicago: Kerr, 1918), p. 12.

50. F. Engels, introduction to "The Class Struggles in France 1848–50." *Selected Works* (Moscow: Foreign Languages, 1955), *I*, 125; cf. Sorel, "I tre sistemi storici di Marx," *Saggi*, p. 253.

51. A. Labriola, *Riforme e rivoluzione sociale*, pp. 132ff.

52. G. Plekhanov, *Sindicalismo y marxismo*, p. 15; cf. pp. 11ff. In his exposition of syndicalism, Leone insisted that Marx had "always maintained that the necessary precondition for social revolution was the maturation of its economic base." E. Leone, *Il sindacalismo*, p. 81.

53. *Ibid.*, pp. 143ff.

54. V. Pareto, *Corso di economia politica* (Turin: Einaudi, 1949), II, paras. 659–67.

55. V. Racca, "Prefazione," to Sorel, *Saggi*, p. xliii.

origin not in logical reasoning but in sentiment." He went on to argue that any elite contending for or enjoying power uses appeals to sentiment to vindicate its stance.[56] Sorel's recognition of the role of myth and social poetry in mass mobilization and organization seems to have implied precisely this.

That the young Mussolini identified with these convictions is not surprising. As we shall see, the revolutionary syndicalists had been exposed to similar contentions in the writings of Le Bon, Gumplowicz, Mosca, Tarde, and Scipio Sighele, and in their view, such notions were fully consonant with the Marxism of Marx and Engels. As they saw it, the findings of modern social science fleshed out the theoretical and explanatory sketches left as the heritage of classical Marxism. Inspired by this intellectual position, Mussolini's syndicalist contemporaries were to produce some of the most interesting literature in the Marxist tradition, and Mussolini's political education was to be largely informed by that body of theoretical material. From his earliest manhood Benito Mussolini was under the influence of men like A. O. Olivetti, Sergio Panunzio, Robert Michels, Agostino Lanzillo, and Paolo Orano. During his first active years as a socialist agitator and intellectual spokesman, *Avanti!*, the principal organ of the Party he served, was staffed largely by syndicalists. Between 1902 and 1906, under the editorship of Enrico Ferri, Enrico Leone and Paolo Orano served on the editorial staff of *Avanti!* and gave an emphatically syndicalist tone to the Party press.[57] The most engaging literature available during Mussolini's socialist apprenticeship was that produced by the intellectuals of syndicalist persuasion, in which Benedetto Croce saw the most vital elements of the Marxist tradition.

56. V. Pareto, *The Rise and Fall of Elites*, pp. 27, 38.
57. Cf. Paolo Orano, *Il fascismo*, *I*, pp. 26, 37.

Chapter 3 Revolutionary Syndicalism and the Young Mussolini

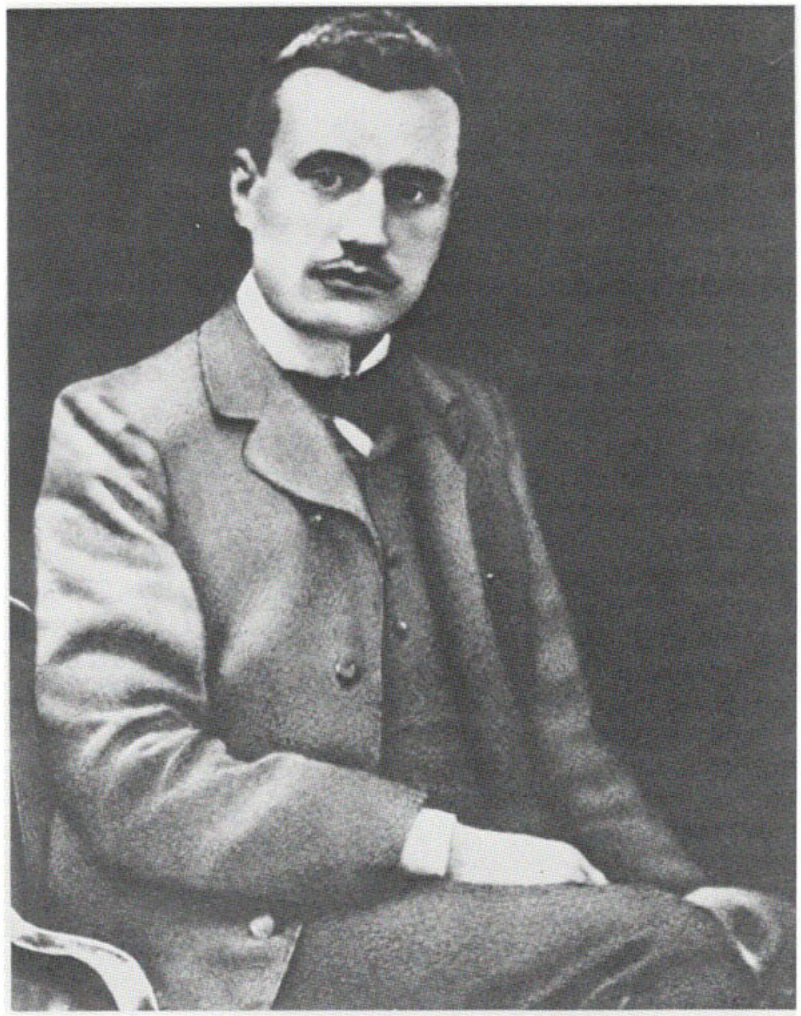
> I, who have been a syndicalist for five years, [affirm] . . . . [that] socialism, committed as it was to economic determinism, subjected man to inscrutable and little understood laws, to which he was required to submit. Syndicalism restores to history the effective will of man, who is both passive and active in turn—man who can leave the imprint of his influence on the things and the institutions which surround him—man who can exercise his will in a given direction. Syndicalism does not deny "economic necessity," but supplements that necessity with "ethical consciousness."
>
> *Mussolini*[1]

Between 1902 and the latter part of 1909, Mussolini was clearly under the influence of syndicalist thought. He lived and labored in an intellectual environment shaped by syndicalist analyses and informed by syndicalist ideals. It is impossible to reconstruct the thought of the young Mussolini without resorting to the body of theoretical literature produced by syndicalist thinkers during this period.

However, such a reconstruction is difficult, for other reasons. Mussolini's prose was almost always dense with allusion but stenographic in delivery. His thought was expressed in short, staccato bursts published in the newspapers and periodicals of the socialist press. At first inspection it appears transparent, but it remains, nonetheless, extremely dense and rich with implication. To draw out those implications and penetrate that density requires a careful search for conceptual and substantive connections, and an appreciation of the syndicalist environment in which the author operated.

For all that, it is nonetheless possible to lace together the belief system that animated the political activities of Mussolini during this

1. Mussolini, "La teoria sindacalista," *Opera*, 2, 124, 125.



3. Mussolini as a revolutionary socialist organizer in Switzerland in October, 1904.

preparatory stage of his intellectual development. That the inspiration of his belief system was Marxist is indisputable. That it was a Marxism with a difference is equally apparent. Since classical Marxism had already become unraveled, and had produced an indeterminate number of distinct if not mutually exclusive interpretations, the question of Mussolini's orthodoxy during this interval remains moot. He was recognized by his peers as a dedicated Marxist and was charged with the responsibilities of editing socialist publications for local socialist organizations in Tolmezzo, Forlì, and in the Trentino. He was recognized in socialist cultural circles as a gifted and outspoken orator, and he discharged his duties to everyone's general satisfaction. If his Marxism was different, it was no more different than the Marxism of Turati, or Bissolati, or Ferri. If Turati's was a reformist Marxism, Mussolini's was the Marxism of revolutionary syndicalism.

The Belief System of the Young Mussolini

Below the surface of his Marxism there was a collection of convictions that gave Mussolini's revolutionary beliefs their internal coherence. Beneath the overt elements—the commitment to class struggle and revolution, the objections to parliamentarianism, political compromise, militarism, monarchialism, and nationalism—there were other, more fundamental, components. First there was a kind of philosophical orientation that Mussolini described as a "sane positivism,"[2] a disposition to allow undeniable and positive facts priority in rational calculation, social science speculation, and revolutionary activity. It was a practical and pragmatic orientation that abjured dogmas and formulae and responded to real needs.[3]

Along with this orientation went the substantive conviction that all life is characterized by a struggle, manifesting itself among men as a contest between organized groups;[4] and that the historical character of this struggle is determined by the life circumstances governing each particular epoch. In the modern world the circumstances

2. Mussolini, "L'individual et le social," *Opera*, *1*, 73.

3. Mussolini, "La necessità della politica socialista in Italia," *Opera*, *1*, 17; "Socialismo e movimento sociale nel secolo XIX," *Opera*, *1*, 44.

4. Mussolini, "Lo sciopero generale e la violenza," *Opera*, *2*, 164; cf. "Fra libri e riviste," and "Centenario Darwiniano," *Opera*, *2*, 248ff., 9ff.

surrounding the prevailing mode of production generate a conflict of economic classes;[5] and as the modern productive system matures, the real interests of the various groups involved diverge to produce irrepressible conflict.[6] Success in the struggle requires organization and collective resolve.

This conviction held that every group involved in the conflict requires a sustaining principle of solidarity if it is to survive and prevail.[7] Every group must develop a sense of in-group amity, a commitment to serve the whole, and a sense of discipline and individual sacrifice. Conversely, it must maintain an out-group enmity, a diffidence toward out-group members, which would at best be a sense of reserve and, in appropriate circumstances, an overt hostility.[8]

Given these convictions, Mussolini was necessarily preoccupied with the psychology of groups. The theory of conflict required that each group develop a sense of community, a pervasive consciousness of collective identification.[9] In the case of Italy this meant that the proletariat would have to be educated to its responsibilities,[10] and that the necessary psychological attitudes would not be the simple and automatic by-product of material circumstances. The real and immediate material interests of any group may constitute the *necessary* conditions for a sentiment of group identity, but a sense of mission, a collective feeling of dedication, is also an essential ingredient.[11] A group becomes an effective and viable community only when it is animated by such sentiments of purpose and dedication. Under these circumstances ideas become a physical force.[12] They become weapons.

The process by which a group of men comes to develop the necessary psychology of community, dedication, and commitment was one that occupied the attention of the young Mussolini. He clearly understood that the process was complex and difficult, and that the majority of men were afflicted with a torpid consciousness that was, at best, difficult to raise to the responsibilities of the time.[13]

5. Mussolini, "Socialismo e socialisti," *Opera*, *1*, 142ff.
6. Mussolini, "L'individuel et le social," *Opera*, *1*, 73ff.
7. Mussolini, "La filosofia della forza," *Opera*, *1*, 175ff.
8. Mussolini, "Fra libri e riviste," *Opera*, *2*, 248ff.
9. Mussolini, "'La Voce,'" *Opera*, *2*, 55; cf. "Per Ferdinando Lassalle," *Opera*, *1*, 65.
10. Mussolini, "Nella morta stagione," *Opera*, *2*, 257; cf. "La poesia di Klopstock dal 1789 al 1795," *Opera*, *1*, 168.
11. Mussolini, "La teoria sindacalista," *Opera*, *2*, 126.
12. Mussolini, "Dopo l'eccidio di Roma," *Opera*, *1*, 115.
13. Cf. Mussolini, "L'attuale momento politico," *Opera*, *1*, 120.

To inform and activate the consciousness of the majority of men, what was required was the intercession of an active minority possessed of a reasoned faith,[14] and capable of providing moral inspiration. Such a minority would constitute a revolutionary vanguard, an exiguous "aristocracy" charged with historical responsibilities.[15] Men could become effective and self-regarding communities only when they are inspired to collective purpose by such "elites."[16]

The elites achieve their purpose by condensing complex doctrines into mobilizing myths, or reductions of dense reasoning into a form that can function as a political surrogate for religious faith among the masses.[17] Men are moved to heroism by such means. These myths inform, organize, and activate a collective will, and inspire a sense of mission that sustains a community in struggle.[18] It appears obvious that in Mussolini's judgment the vast majority of men are neither disposed nor equipped to undertake the arduous and time consuming task of putting together a reasoned doctrine that might guide revolutionary activity. That task is one necessarily left to a vanguard of revolutionary leadership, which is charged not only with articulating the belief system, but also with framing its fundamental tenets in mythic and symbolic form to inspire the masses.

So inspired, a community can face the challenges that protracted revolutionary violence necessarily entails. Mussolini insisted that such violence must attend the resolution of fundamental group differences. Marx himself, Mussolini reminded the socialists of Italy, not only recognized the necessity of violence, but insisted that socialists "far from opposing [such] so-called excesses [must take] the leadership of them in hand."[19] Marx regularly spoke of the violence that characterizes the birth of a new social system, and Mussolini was similarly convinced that violence is a necessary feature of substantive social change.[20] *Within* communities the principles

14. Mussolini, "Socialismo e socialisti," *Opera*, *1*, 137.

15. Mussolini, "Le parole d'un rivoltoso," *Opera*, *1*, 51, and "La crisi risolutiva," *Opera*, *1*, 70.

16. Mussolini, "Intermezzo polemico," *Opera*, *1*, 128; and "L'evoluzione sociale e le sue leggi," *Opera*, *2*, 251; cf. "Le parole d'un rivoltoso," and "Intorno alla notte del 4 agosto," *Opera*, *1*, 51, 62.

17. Mussolini, "Lo sciopero generale e la violenza," *Opera*, *2*, 164; and "Per Ferdinando Lassalle," *Opera*, *1*, 68.

18. Mussolini, "'La Voce'," *Opera*, *2*, 55; and "La Pasqua humana," *Opera*, *2*, 70ff.; cf. "La teoria sindicalista," *Opera*, *2*, 125.

19. Mussolini, "La teppa," *Opera*, *1*, 92; cf. K. Marx, "Address of the Central Committee to the Communist League," K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Works* (Moscow: Foreign Languages, 1955), I, 112.

20. Mussolini, "Intorno alla notte del 4 Agosto," "La teppa," "Per finire," *Opera*, *1*,

of solidarity obtain and the resolution of conflict involves negotiation and compromise, but *between* communities in pursuit of fundamentally different goals, negotiation and compromise become impossible. Challenges are met with force, and against force only violence can prevail.[21]

According to Marxist theory, in the modern world fundamental and revolutionary conflict arises between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The bourgeoisie represents the contemporary mode of production that is completing its historical cycle. As the capitalist mode of production attains its maximum development, the proletariat rises as the representative of an alternative social system.[22] The bourgeoisie, dedicated to the historical task of fabricating a modern industrial base, increasingly circumscribes the life space of the working classes. Each community is driven by its central and critical material interests into opposition.

This process reaches its culmination when the bourgeoisie fully discharges its historical mission, for maximum "economic progress is the necessary condition for the generation of a new society."[23] A fully developed economic system is the material base for revolutionary transformation. It signals the presence of a mature bourgeoisie and a proletariat prepared to assume the responsibilities of production. The future necessarily belongs to the "producers,"[24] those capable of taking up productive responsibilities that can no longer be discharged by a ruling class that has outlived its historical usefulness.

In anticipation, the proletariat must be fully prepared to assume its historical and entrepreneurial responsibilities.[25] It must be technically trained and psychologically united, inspired by purpose and capable of productive efficiency. And this preparation can only be effectively undertaken by a tiny minority, theoretically equipped and morally committed. They must know not only *what* to teach but

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62, 91ff., 147ff.; and "La teoria sindacalista," "Lo sciopero generale e la violenza," *Opera*, *2*, 128, 166ff. Marx maintained that "there is only one way to shorten, simplify and concentrate both the agonies of the old society and the birth pangs of the new—and *but one way—revolutionary terrorism*." Marx and Engels, "Sieg der Kontrerevolution zu Wien," *Werke*, *5*, 457.

21. Mussolini, "Lo sciopero generale e la violenza," *Opera*, *2*, 167.

22. Mussolini, "Socialismo e socialisti," *Opera*, *1*, 142.

23. Mussolini, "La teoria sindacalista," *Opera*, *2*, 127.

24. Mussolini, "Un grande amico dell'Italia: Augusto von Platen," *Opera*, *2*, 172.

25. Mussolini, "Le parole d'un rivolotoso," *Opera*, *1*, 51; "La comune di Parigi," "Nella morta stagione," *Opera*, *2*, 41, 256.

also *how* to teach it. It is not enough for them to recognize that economic conditions constitute the necessary foundation of change, but they must also know how to translate interests and historical requirements effectively into moral sentiments that can activate men and mobilize their will and energies. For if Marx argued that economics is the foundation of social life,[26] he also insisted that "of all the instruments of production, the greatest productive power is the revolutionary class itself."[27] Such a view necessarily confounds any simple interpretation of economic determinism. Economic conditions do not simply reflect themselves in the consciousness of the working class; that class is itself the greatest productive power in the economic base. Man is both the object and the agent of history; he is both fashioned by and fashions life. Insofar as Marx understood that to be the case, Mussolini argued, he was a "voluntarist."

Mussolini argued that the role of revolutionary leadership is of critical importance in shaping collective will. Only an elite can unite immediate interests, strategic requirements, and pervasive sentiment into an effective revolutionary policy,[28] and join together the doctrinal, practical, and ideal elements that can satisfy revolutionary intention.[29] In order to achieve its purpose and satisfy its historical responsibilities, the revolutionary elite must exercise authority over the masses in any potentially revolutionary situation. In this sense the young Mussolini described himself as an "authoritarian" and "aristocratic" socialist.[30] He was always diffident about spontaneous mass activity.[31] A revolutionary vanguard, he felt, must exploit the generic tendencies to group formation and group solidarity that characterize human social behavior. It must organize mobilizable elements and inspire them with symbolic and mythic invocation, always with an astute appreciation of the realities of any given situation.

To these ends, Mussolini asserted, Marxism serves as an inspiration for mass organization. Marxism is not a detached science, but rather a collection of recommendations, admonitions, and injunctions that energizes the will. Marxism, in recommending that revo-

26. Mussolini, "Karl Marx," *Opera*, *1*, 103.

27. K. Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy* (Moscow: Foreign Languages, n.d.), p. 196, as quoted in Mussolini, "Evoluzione sociale e lotta di classe," *Opera*, *2*, 30ff.

28. Cf. Mussolini, "La pasqua umana," *Opera*, *2*, 69ff.

29. Mussolini, "Socialismo e socialisti," *Opera*, *1*, 137–39; cf. "Socialismo e socialisti," *Opera*, *1*, 142–44.

30. Mussolini, "Sebastian Faure," *Opera*, *1*, 47.

31. Cf. R. De Felice, *Mussolini il rivoluzionario*, pp. 88ff.

lutionaries be concerned with the realities of any historical circumstance, appeals to both realism and high moral purpose. In Mussolini's view, it is an injunction to unite, organize, and struggle in the service of necessary social renovation.[32]

By the time he was twenty-six, Mussolini had put together the hard outlines of a doctrine of revolution that was to remain with him for the rest of his life. Beneath those outlines was the thought of half a dozen gifted theoreticians, revolutionaries whose intellectual endowment and Marxist commitment were beyond question. It was their thought that reflected itself in Mussolini's prose. He was the popular spokesman for a complex theoretical system, articulated during the first decade of our century, that was to influence Italian and European life for more than a generation. Every constituent that surfaced in his thought found its origin directly or indirectly in the writings of the revolutionary syndicalists, the first Marxist heretics of the twentieth century.

The Syndicalist Persuasion

From the beginning, syndicalism chose to look at the world with a hard and realistic eye. The syndicalists abjured abstractions, vague metaphysics, and philosophic systems. They sought to identify, catalog, and store the facts of the world, and to discover there generalizations that could serve as definitive regularities governing the behavior of men and things. In doing so they considered themselves true to Marxist methodology. Marx himself had described his method as "strictly scientific" and "severely realistic." He agreed with the characterization of his historical work as treating "the social movement as a process of natural history, governed by laws . . . ."[33] Engels, too, had spoken of discovering the "general laws of motion" governing men and things. He felt that these laws would be based on the interconnections revealed by the "facts provided by empirical natural science . . . ."[34]

In 1899, when Giacomo Barzellotti wrote the preface to Paolo Orano's *Il precursore italiano di Carlo Marx*, he alluded to Orano's

32. Mussolini, "La teoria sindacalista," "La sciopero generale e la violenza," *Opera*, *2*, 127, 163, 167.

33. Cf. Marx's afterword to the second German edition, *Capital* (Moscow: Foreign Languages, 1954), *I*, 17, 18, 19.

34. F. Engels, "Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy," in Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, *2*, 388ff.

method as "never proceeding from the point of view of theory, particularly in those sciences, social and historical, still in the process of formation, without first being fully cognizant of that 'cumulative, organized, established, verified, and precise experience' proper to each."[35] According to this method, the starting point is "positive history," the collection of confirmed facts, each lodged in what historians call a unique configuration. The social theorist then searches out and analytically classifies categories of events, defining each set precisely, to discern the confirmed and confirmable regularities that distinguish sociology from history. Sociological laws are those confirmed regularities that offer explanations and testable predictions. Positive history affords the data. This, in summary, was the positive method that Orano felt animated Marx's "historical materialism."[36]

Orano's method was obviously a transliteration of that advanced by Antonio Labriola, his teacher. Labriola taught his students that they must always treat "the theory of historical materialism . . . from the point of view of modern science," and abjure "fixed dogma or formula."[37] Marx's method, Antonio Labriola insisted, was that of "an absolute positive objectivism."[38]

This same positive historical method was also employed by the young Angelo O. Olivetti in preparing his dissertation in 1895, which was subsequently published as *Per la interpretazione economica della storia*.[39] The same method was elaborated by Arturo Labriola after the death of Antonio Labriola. What Arturo Labriola described as Marx's experimental dialectics was understood to be a complex and impressive analysis of a positive "anthropological

35. Giacomo Barzellotti, preface to Paolo Orano, *Il precursore italiano di Carlo Marx*, p. vi.

36. *Ibid.*, pp. 5, 167–214. Orano was the student of Antonio Labriola who objected, in various places, to positivism. That Orano identified his positive method with that of Labriola is understandable when one considers that Labriola objected to positivism because of its specific Comtean, Spencerian, and sometimes Darwinian content, rather than its methods. (Cf. Arturo Labriola's comments, *Riforme e rivoluzione sociale*, 1st ed., 1904, p. 226). Antonio Labriola argued that "our doctrine makes history objective and in a certain sense naturalizes it, going from the explanation of data, evident at first sight, . . . in order to find thereupon the coordination of these causes and of these motives in the preelementary processes of the production of the immediate means of existence . . . . Our doctrine does not pretend to be the intellectual vision of a great plan or of a design, but it is merely a method of research and of conception." A. Labriola, *Essays on the Materialistic Conception of History*, pp. 113ff., 135; cf. A. Labriola, *Socialism and Philosophy*, pp. 10, 55.

37. *Ibid.*, pp. 41, 147 n.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 211.

39. Pp. 4, 7.

humanism," an approach to the world and to history as an object of human experience.[40]

The syndicalist theoreticians sought to distinguish this positive humanism from the abstract positivism that attempted to reduce experience to discrete events. Unlike the abstract positivists, they thought of reality as harboring tendencies, and individual events as sharing in the genetic or developmental properties that characterize historical processes. Antonio Labriola had, in fact, suggested to Engels himself that the word "dialectical" be abandoned entirely, since it had been hopelessly compromised by the small talents that had collected around Marxism. He recommended, instead, the use of the phrase "the genetic method" to capture the cognitive import of "the dialectic."[41]

The genetic method conceived of social and historical events in developmental patterns that arose from the interplay of tendency statements and definitive assertions concerning human behaviors. Such general propositions would include explanations and predictions.[42] One might then achieve a significant and theoretical understanding of society and its workings. All of this implied that individuals were to be understood not as isolated elements, but by and large as functions of society, as organic constituents of the social whole. Arturo Labriola reminded Marxists of Marx's conviction that man was, in some essential sense, a social animal, an "ensemble of social relations."[43]

For his part, Orano argued, "Man becomes man only in, and for, society . . . . There is no human psychology outside the complex of social relations . . . . Just as the cell has its particular function insofar as it participates in the substance of an organism, so too does the individual have his particular functions, characteristically dispositional, insofar as he participates in society."[44]

People in society have specific social roles, which in turn are woven into historically determinate institutions. Thus individual behavior can be understood once the function of roles is understood, and roles can be understood once they are interpreted in institutional contexts. Institutions serve both manifest and latent functions once

40. Arturo Labriola, *Studio su Marx*, ch. 2, especially pp. 33, 38. (The first edition of this work was entitled *Marx nell' economia e come teorico del socialismo*, and was published in 1908.)

41. Antonio Labriola, *Lettere a Engels*, letter dated June 13, 1894, pp. 146ff.

42. Vide P. Orano, *La logica della sociologia*.

43. A. Labriola, *Studio*, p. 41.

44. P. Orano, *La psicologia sociale*, pp. 76, 80, 82.

the historical circumstances are understood. Historical sequences, Orano argued, can then be subjected to a regularity analysis and sociological interpretation can proceed effectively.[45]

The interpretive focus of syndicalist theoreticians was the organized community, a focus that precipitated a discussion about the nature of communities and their interrelationship. Very early in the discussion, syndicalists like Orano and Panunzio addressed themselves to the struggle for existence that shaped the relationships between organized groups.[46] In their writings of this period the syndicalist theoreticians regularly alluded to the work of Gustave Le Bon, Gabriel Tarde, and Ludwig Gumplowicz, all of whom saw struggle as a characteristic of the relationship between groups of men in historical communities.[47] Gumplowicz had identified groups as the primary and irreducible elements of human history—with history viewed as a function of the perpetual competition among the groups for space, sustenance, and the satisfaction of needs.[48] Tarde spoke of "the strife of opposition" between human groups as the substance of history.[49]

The character of intergroup struggle, in turn, was understood to be determined by the competitive life interests that animated each community. These include, among others, problems concerning the support capacity of the soil, the nature of the productive system, and the availability of resources. The communities in conflict might be, for example, nomadic and food-gathering hordes, agricultural or pastoral tribes, mercantile city-states, contemporary nation-states, or the classes within one such community. The syndicalists argued that the economic and social circumstances of the modern world had made the principal conflict between groups a conflict between *classes*.

On the basis of this analysis, the syndicalists proceeded to inquire into the factors that fostered and enhanced group (specifically class) resolve in the face of a protracted struggle. As revolution-

45. I have intentionally used more contemporary language here without, I believe, sacrificing the intentions of Orano and Arturo Labriola. Sergio Panunzio specifically speaks of social and institutional functions in characterizing the behaviors of individuals; cf. S. Panunzio, *Il socialismo giuridico*, pp. 193–200.

46. P. Orano, *La psicologia sociale*, p. 218, *Il precursore italiano*, p. 204.

47. Cf. S. Panunzio, "Socialismo, sindacalismo e sociologia," *Pagine libere*, 2 (1907), 170–181, 230–39; *Socialismo giuridico*, Part *I*, chs. 2, 3, Part 2, ch. 2.

48. Ludwig Gumplowicz, *Der Rassenkampf* (Innsbruck: Wagner, 1883), pp. 37, 39ff., 176–79; *Die sociologische Staatsidee* (Innsbruck: Wagner, 1902), pp. 78–80, passim.

49. Gabriel Tarde, *Social Laws: An Outline of Sociology* (New York: Macmillan, 1899), p. 7, and ch. 2.

aries, they sought to articulate a strategy for proletarian survival and success. In this, they profitted enormously from their familiarity with the sociological writings of Le Bon, Tarde, Gumplowicz, Pareto, and Gaetano Mosca.

Orano, for example, spoke of the "laws of imitation," and the "principles of solidarity" that drew individuals together to produce the pervasive sense of community that enhanced the survival capacity of groups in conflict. In his view, affinities of culture, language, interest, descent, and aspiration unite individuals in the communities in which they work out their destinies.[50] The processes by which these affinities become group sentiments developed into one of the central concerns of the syndicalists. As early as 1902 and 1903, Orano and Olivetti addressed themselves to this issue.[51] Basically, the question concerned itself with group or collective psychology, with which Marx and Engels had dealt only in aphorisms and vague suggestions.[52]

Authors like Pareto, Mosca, and Le Bon had insisted on the importance of a competent theory of psychology in order to understand history and politics. Pareto had averred that "at the base of political economy and the social sciences in general is, quite clearly, [a theory of] psychology."[53] Most syndicalists therefore advanced some convictions concerning collective psychology. Olivetti spoke of the psychology of groups. He argued, as a case in point, that collectivities could be animated to special purpose by an inspiring moral idea. A common moral purpose could inform collective behavior, to elevate the consciousness of the masses to collective heroism.[54]

Roberto Michels, both as a syndicalist and as a social scientist, occupied himself early with the historical and revolutionary role of

50. P. Orano, *La psicologia sociale*, pp. 218ff.; cf. the chapter, "The Social Psychology of G. Tarde."

51. Angelo O. Olivetti, "Il problema della folla," *Nuova antologia*, *38*, 761 (September, 1903); P. Orano, *La psicologia sociale*.

52. Cf. Arturo Labriola, *Studio*, p. 46. The fact is, most Marxists and Marx commentators recognized that neither Marx nor Engels had left a defensible theory of human psychology. Most, including Antonio Labriola, recognized that a Marxist theory of individual and collective psychology still awaited articulation and confirmation. Cf. Max Adler, *Marxistische Probleme* (Berlin: Vorwärts, 1922[5]), p. 1; Ernst Untermann, *Die logischen Mängel des engeren Marxismus* (Munich: Verlag der dietzgenchen Philosophie, 1910), p. 616; Thomas Masaryk, *Die philosophischen und sociologischen Grundlagen des Marxismus* (Vienna: Konegen, 1899), pp. 155ff.

53. V. Pareto, *Manuale di economia politica* (Milan: Libraria, 1919) p. 35. Originally published in 1906.

54. A. Olivetti, "Il problema," pp. 288ff.

the masses and their dynamic psychology. When Orano and Olivetti were publishing their works on group psychology, Michels published his first essay on the same theme.[55] In 1908 he formulated the central theses of the work for which he is still remembered—theses that deal with the generic psychological properties of men in association. Between 1903 and 1909 Michels displayed an abiding preoccupation with the psychology of groups and the organizations that sustain them, as did all the "sane positivists" among the syndicalists. His concerns were clearly Marxist and syndicalist, and at least through 1909 Michels persisted in thinking of himself as a Marxist revolutionary.[56]

During this same period he articulated a more and more elitist interpretation of the psychology of mass mobilization and mass organization. As early as 1903 Michels had argued that while moral sentiment, so important to collective action, was a mass phenomenon, intellectuals could give theoretical expression to those sentiments and, as a consequence, foster and sustain them.

By 1906 he was insisting on the general incompetence of crowds and their inability to make the rapid judgments so necessary for the survival of groups in competition. He spoke of their susceptibility to suggestion, as well as of their mimetic response to leadership models. He referred, finally, to the "atavistic need on the part of people to be guided by someone."[57] In 1903 Olivetti had also spoken of the susceptibility of crowds to the influence of a *meneur*.[58] Orano, in turn, insisted that the relationship of obedience and command, the phenomenon of modal collective behavior or moral contagion, could not be explained without the theoretical insights pro-

55. R. Michels, "Begriff und Aufgabe der 'Masse,'" *Das freie Wort*, *2* (1903), 407–12.

56. David Beetham argues that Michels' conversion to elite theory took place when he assumed academic responsibilities at the University of Turin and fell under the influence of Gaetano Mosca. This conversion is supposed to have marked his abandonment of syndicalism. (D. Beetham, "From the Work of Robert Michels," *Political Studies*, *25*, 1 [March, 1977], pp. 12ff.) Actually Michels had accepted some of the central tenets of elite theory as early as 1906. At that time he published his *Proletariat und Bourgeoisie in der sozialistischen Bewegung Italiens*, in which its influence is apparent; see *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*, *3*, 2, *4*, 1, *4*, 2 (1906). There are also suggestions of this conversion in the essays on the masses of 1903. In his introduction to the Italian edition of *Storia del Marxismo in Italia*, written in 1909, Michels reaffirmed his adherence to revolutionary Marxism (p. 7). As a matter of fact, most syndicalists, as early as 1903, spoke of their socialism as elitist and aristocratic and felt that their convictions were perfectly compatible with Marxist theory.

57. R. Michels, *Il proletariato e la borghesia nel movimento socialista italiano*, p. 372.

58. A. O. Olivetti, "Il problema," p. 286ff.

vided by modern social psychology, the laws of suggestion and mimetic response.[59]

Thus these ideas were in common currency among the syndicalists by the time they appeared in the writings of Mussolini. It was Michels who attempted to express them more systematically, and in fact the distinction between his conceptions and those of the remaining syndicalists (including Mussolini) arose from Michels' efforts to develop them *systematically* into a body of defensible theory. Between 1908 and 1909 Michels published a number of essays in which his conceptions of mass psychology, mass mobilization, collective organization, and leadership functions were all integrated substantially and coherently. All the critical theoretical propositions that earned Michels a place in the classical literature of political science appeared during this period,[60] when he was recognized as an "authoritative spokesman for revolutionary syndicalism."[61]

By 1908, Michels was maintaining that the history of mankind is the history of group conflict, each group animated by a group-sustaining sense of collective identity. The principal factors that foster and maintain that identity are, in his view, characteristically psychological. Group conflict requires the organization of groups, and organization requires courageous and competent leadership, although courage and competence are qualities with which few people are naturally endowed. Organization entails executive competence and authority, rapid strategic and tactical decision, and collective obedience. This is particularly true in the conflict situations that typify revolutionary and crisis situations. "A party organized for combat . . . requires a hierarchical organization."[62] "Whoever speaks of organization," he went on, "must necessarily address himself to the tendency toward the formation of an oligarchy."[63]

In Michels' judgment, all of this follows as a matter of course from the generic traits of the human beings who make up the organization. History, Michels argued, reveals that the mass of mankind is passive. Only under crisis conditions is the apathetic mass moved

59. P. Orano, *La psicologia sociale*, particularly p. 172.

60. R. Michels, *Political Parties*. This was originally published as *Zur Soziologie des Parteiwesens in der modernen Demokratie* (Leipzig: Klinkhardt, 1911) and in Italian translation as *La sociologia del partito politico nella democrazia moderna* (Turin: UTET, 1912).

61. S. Panunzio, *La persistenza del diritto*, p. 10. In 1909, Mussolini spoke of Michels as a "notable socialist revolutionary." Mussolini, "Fra libri e riviste," *Opera*, *2*, 248.

62. R. Michels, "Der konservative Grundzug der Partei-Organisation," *Monatsschrift für Soziologie*, *1* (1909), 14.

63. R. Michels, "Einige Randbemerkungen zum Problem der Demokratie: eine Erwiderung," *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, *25* (1908), 1621.

to political action. Under such conditions a small minority of men assume leadership roles and put together ideological formulations calculated to stir the interests and the sentiments of their potential followers. Such leaders, drawn almost always exclusively from the bourgeois and petit bourgeois intelligentsia, give shape to the aspirations of the mobilizable masses. The leaders become the embodiment of the revolutionary party's goals and the role models who infuse, through mimetic suggestions, an organizational and collective ethic.[64]

In 1909 Michels spoke of the "iron law of elites" governing the organization of men.[65] He was so confident of the definitive character of his formulations that he insisted they represented traits common to generic mankind and found expression in every organization.[66] At that time he acknowledged the influence of academicians like Pareto, Mosca, Tarde, and Scipio Sighele (whose *L'intelligenza della folla* of 1903 contained much of the substance of Michels' discussion).[67] All this discussion of the laws governing individual and collective psychic activity, the requisites and prerequisites of organizational survival in conflict situations, the suggestibility of crowds, and the mass veneration of leadership, surfaces in the literature of the period.[68]

These ideas had become so pervasive among the revolutionary syndicalists by 1909 that Olivetti, without equivocation, could talk of revolution as a struggle between contending elites "over the inert body of the anonymous masses." He reflected on the passivity and apathy of the average individual and the mobilizing function of a "triumphal idea," a moral inspiration of "historical individuals," that captures the imagination and represents the mediate and immediate interests of the times.[69] Sergio Panunzio drew much of this together to provide the substance of his *La persistenza del diritto*, published in the same year.[70]

64. R. Michels, "La fatalità della classe politica," originally published in *Riforma sociale*, *14* (1908), and republished in *Studi sulla democrazia e sull'autorità*, 1–27.

65. R. Michels, "La democrazia e la legge ferrea delle elites," originally delivered before the Sociological Society of the University of Vienna and republished in *Studi*, pp. 28–57.

66. *Ibid.*, pp. 33, 41.

67. S. Sighele, *L'Intelligenza della folla*.

68. Cf. Alberto Stratico, *La psicologia collettiva*.

69. A. O. Olivetti, "I sindacalisti e la 'elite'," *Cinque anni di sindacalismo e di lotta proletaria in Italia*, pp. 267–71. This essay is dated July 1, 1909.

70. The publication date of *La persistenza* is sometimes given as 1909 and at other times 1910. Both dates appear: one on the cover and the other on the frontspiece of the volume.

In *La persistenza del diritto*, Panunzio argued that the persistence and general pervasiveness of formal or informal law was a necessary property of collective life. He understood human life to be life in organized communities. Association is not only necessary to the fullness of life, according to Panunzio, but is a natural and spontaneous consequence of an inherent disposition toward collective solidarity. Men naturally live a life that is social and communal[71]—a conviction that Panunzio shared not only with the syndicalists and the principal social scientists of his time, but with Marx and Engels as well. For this reason, he saw his position as an extension of the Marxism to which he was dedicated.[72]

On this basis, Panunzio argued that human life, lived in common, beset by collective needs and collective interests, and shaped in conflict with competitive out-groups, gives rise to a group loyalty and a group sentiment that becomes the foundation for common goals and common aspirations. This loyalty and sentiment are functions of the suggestibility of the group's members. That suggestibility becomes the foundation of conventional behavior, which, in turn, becomes the psychological scaffolding of positive law and social sanction. Those who represent this law and sanction become society's authorities.

A viable community is one bound together by common goals, common sentiment, and a common struggle, which are all informed by the political formulae, the animating myths articulated by a leadership possessed of recognized authority. In Panunzio's judgment, every human group manifests these traits. Over the group's half-articulate membership, select persons exercise an authority sustained by habit and convention, which presupposes the suggestibility and mimetic disposition of the masses.[73] Every human group, however simple or complex, organizes itself in a hierarchy with a tiny minority functioning as leaders, and a mass that responds. Each community is animated by a moral sentiment, a consensus that is the product of felt needs and sustaining symbols. The leadership that addresses itself to those needs and represents those symbols mobilizes the masses to the tasks of each historical period. The system is best characterized as hierarchical and authoritarian. Whatever the deceptive democratic or parliamentarian trappings, every human

71. S. Panunzio, *La persistenza*, pp. xii, 18, 28, 71.
72. *Ibid.*, p. xiv.
73. *Ibid.*, ch. 7.

group displays these features, which in times of crisis become more overt. The structure of authority then becomes more transparent.

All of this was understood to have particular relevance in the Italian situation. Italy was a nation of only marginal industrial development. Therefore any allusion to a class-conscious proletariat could only have bearing on future developments. Italians were largely agrarians, artisans, domestic workers, and petit bourgeois—all population groups that characterize underdeveloped economies.[74] As a consequence, any effort to mobilize significant numbers of people to any sustained political purpose required a leadership capable of appealing not only to the immediate, disparate interests of the heterogeneous population, but to some sustaining and unifying ultimate concerns as well. For this reason, if for no other, the syndicalists objected to government by parliamentarian bodies.

Parliaments are composed of interest groups moved by the most immediate and simple material concerns. Given the very deficiencies in the development of capitalism itself in Italy, the syndicalists argued, a parliament that sought to serve every anachronistic interest group, every reactionary social element, and every traditional representative of the moribund economic order hardly recommended itself.[75] Under such circumstances, in the opinion of the syndicalists, each group pursues its own immediate interests to the general disservice of overall economic and industrial development. Whatever industry exists is rendered noncompetitive, protective tariffs reduce effective consumer demand, and scarce capital is dissipated in nonproductive expenditures.[76]

Syndicalism viewed industrial development as a historical and socialist obligation. Thus the syndicalist theoreticians favored the progressive evolution of the industrial bourgeoisie. Syndicalism sought to be the heir of a fully developed productive system. After the revolution it would administer a "society of producers" on a fully matured industrial base.[77] A parliamentary system, in the conditions that prevailed on the economically retarded peninsula, only obstructed the realization of these ends.

What was required under the circumstances was a political strat-

74. Cf. A. O. Olivetti, "I sindacalisti e la 'elite'," *Cinque anni*, pp. 267ff.

75. Cf. A. O. Olivetti, "Presentazione," "Tutti contro tutti!" "Senso di vita," in *ibid.*, pp. 3, 47–49, 132ff.

76. Cf. A. O. Olivetti, "La polemica sulle spese militari," *ibid.*, pp. 253–58.

77. Cf. A. O. Olivetti, "Il partito radicale," *ibid.*, 74, and "Polemica con J. Novicow," in *Pagine libere*, March 15, 1910.

egy governed by a collective ideal focused on remote, rather than immediate, responsibilities. To this end, the syndicalists wished to see an inspired, aggressive, active, and goal-directed bourgeoisie, kept sharp and on target by an equally inspired, aggressive, and goal-directed proletariat. The parliamentary system operated to dampen such purposive vitality. Principles were bartered for immediate interest, opposition was reduced by temporary expedients, and long-range interests were sacrificed to parochial and venal concerns.

Consequently, the syndicalists sought to polarize the principal historical agents that Marxism had taught them were operative in their environment, namely the enterprisory bourgeoisie and the industrial proletariat.[78] Syndicalism was charged with tutelary and pedagogical obligations. It was required to fashion a myth, a political formula, an imagined future, that might capture the interests and imagination of the working masses of the country and raise their consciousness to the level of the complex historical challenge that faced them. The masses, born in a retarded economic environment,[79] beset by ignorance and petty, parochial interests, and stunted by a corrupt parliamentary system, required the inspiration of a heroic doctrine to fire a sense of collective purpose and instill a commitment to sacrifice and discipline.[80]

Syndicalism had recognized early that industrial development was the precondition for socialism; classical Marxism had made this point clearly enough. The syndicalists were "committed to the maximum development of economic potential."[81] At the same time, they recognized the retarded state of the peninsula's economy. "It is necessary," Michels reminded the syndicalists, "to industrialize Italy."[82] The syndicalists in general were fully apprised of Italy's retarded industrial and political development. Many of them, in their search for a solution, insisted that protectionism, tariff and duty constraints against international free trade, served to obstruct all the processes of economic maturation. Arturo Labriola, Olivetti, and Leone were all outspoken critics of any infringement of free

78. A. O. Olivetti, "Sciopero generale," *Cinque anni*, p. 112.

79. A. O. Olivetti, "Rivoluzione liberale" (December, 1906), in Renato Melis, ed., *Sindacalisti italiani*, p. 172.

80. A. O. Olivetti, "Anima nuova," *Cinque anni*, pp. 152ff.

81. Arturo Labriola, *Riforme e rivoluzione sociale*, p. 132. Leone, like Sorel, spoke of "the full maturation of the capitalist order" as the necessary condition of socialism; Leone, *Il sindicalismo*, p. 20.

82. R. Michels, *Il proletariato*, p. 257; cf. pp. 22, 25ff., 29, 86–88.

trade. Olivetti, for example, identified protectionism with every manifestation of reaction to be found in Italy, namely nationalism, clericalism, and militarism. In his view, protectionism insulated the nation from external contacts and created an in-group bigotry that led to the most primitive chauvinism. That chauvinism, in turn, fed the militarism in which primitive nationalism found its most direct expression. Religion served to make the people submissive to the burdens that protectionism, nationalism, and militarism imposed upon them.[83]

On the other hand, free-trade, Olivetti argued, produced a society relatively free from religious bigotry, militarism, and crabbed nationalism. Moreover, free trade permitted the fullest development of the economic potential of the nation and the subsequent improvement of life. Olivetti identified England as a case in point. Only when England began to abandon free trade, under Joseph Chamberlain, did the ugly imperialism that led to the Boer War begin to manifest itself. Italy, Olivetti maintained, became protectionist during the second half of the reign of Umberto, at a time when involvement in colonial adventure and militarism became an intolerable burden on the nation. Protectionism produced a plutocracy, a control over the economy by money changers who impeded the normal economic development of the nation. Olivetti insisted that free trade, on the other hand, augmented the forces of production by liberating capitalism from the trammels of state interference. He argued that, confined by various forms of protectionism, capitalism stagnates, and with its stagnation the social movement grinds to a halt.[84]

As early as 1905 Arturo Labriola insisted that the syndicalists expected the social revolution to occur after the transformation of the economic and industrial conditions that prevailed in Italy. Syndicalism was directly related to the development of the economic potential of the community in that production became the necessary functional prerequisite of the social revolution. As the economy developed, the proletariat would develop the necessary technical capacity to maintain the highest productivity levels, the *sine qua non* of a higher stage of civilization. Labriola, like Olivetti, maintained that the development of the proletariat was functionally related to the progressive development of the economy. The development of revolutionary socialism, he argued, was only possible with

83. A. O. Olivetti, *Questioni contemporanee*, pp. 103ff.
84. *Ibid.*, pp. 125ff.

the development of modern industrial processes. "The socialist revolution would only be possible in a period of exuberant industrial development."[85]

In this sense, syndicalism was decidedly closer to Manchesterian political economy than to any school of orthodox state socialism. And it was this affinity that made the Italian syndicalists receptive to the free-trade convictions of Pareto and the Manchesterian economists. Both groups, the bourgeois advocates of free trade and the revolutionary syndicalists, felt that Italy's problems were generated by retarded industrial development and impaired economic maturation. Both emphasized the necessary role of production in the processes of modern social change. The problem for the syndicalists turned on how the mobilization of the working classes might be achieved along with the aggressive expansion of production. Such expansion would provide the material prerequisites of the future society. It would also foster the growth of working-class organizations throughout the peninsula. The immediate interests of the propertyless classes, however, made them susceptible to the anti-economic and reactionary blandishments of welfare and distributionistic socialism—a socialism that, like protectionism and nonproductive political economics, generally hindered the developmental potential of Italy.

By the end of the first decade of the new century, the syndicalists were convinced that only a revolutionary vanguard, equipped with a competent theoretical understanding of the historical tasks of the epoch and effective myths and political formulae, could energize the apathetic and corrupt masses. Only by such means could the elite fashion a suitable revolutionary machine out of the scattered social elements to be found in Italy. A revolutionary strategy such as this was based on an *anticipated* future rather than on *existing* material conditions. For this fundamental reason the syndicalists emphasized moral, ideal, and psychological factors in the mobilizational, organizational, and revolutionary processes. Any interpretation of classical Marxism that understands collective behavior to be nothing more than a reflex of material conditions must, the syndicalists believed, condemn revolutionary activity as visionary. In retarded economic circumstances, only partial reform and self-defense would be possible in the light of the strictures of simple economic determinism. An immature economic environment could

85. A. Labriola, "Sindacalismo e riformismo," and "Economia, socialismo, sindacalismo," in Melis, *Sindicalisti*, pp. 51, 53, 72.

only produce an immature proletarian consciousness as its reflection.

As a result, the syndicalists, to a man, objected to the determinism of Plekhanov and Paul Lafargue,[86] and to the formulations of Antonio Labriola, who spoke of historical processes as "triumphing" and "subduing" our will, and material productive processes as "determining" our consciousness.[87] Like Michels, they insisted that the development of consciousness and the commitment of will, sacrifice, and dedication, are complex procedures in which psychological and moral factors operate.[88]

By 1910 the revolutionary syndicalists of Italy had fabricated an ideology as coherent and as consistent as any of the period. That Mussolini was a representative spokesman of their belief system is now recognized by those who are most knowledgeable. In the recent past, both Enzo Santarelli and Domenico Settembrini have traced some of the outlines of their shared convictions.[89] There was no special "Mussolinian socialism" apparent in the thought of the young Mussolini. His convictions at this time were elliptical renderings of the thoughts of the most aggressive revolutionary syndicalists with whom he interacted.

Nor could his convictions at this time be identified, in any substantial sense, as nonMarxist, still less as antiMarxist. The syndicalists of the first decade of the century understood their beliefs to be radically Marxist in inspiration, and consistently Marxist in expression. When they addressed themselves to the historical role of elites, for example, they referred their fellow revolutionaries to Marx's own strictures in his "Circular Letter" of 1850, when he advocated revolution in an environment possessing few proletarians.[90] At that time he was the protagonist of revolution in an essentially precapitalist situation. Under those immature conditions he nonetheless advocated a "revolution in permanence" that would drive the bourgeoisie into radical social change. This could only be accomplished by a small minority of leaders, united in clandestine organizations, mobilizing masses with moral invocation to acts of

86. Cf. Paul Lafargue, *Il determinismo economico di Marx* (Milan: Formichiere, n.d.).

87. Antonio Labriola, *Essays*, pp. 18, 49.

88. As early as 1906 Michels had explicitly insisted on the shortcomings of an orthodox interpretation of classical Marxism in this regard; cf. Michels, *Il proletariato*, p. 33.

89. Cf. Enzo Santarelli, *Origini del fascismo*; D. Settembrini, "Arturo Labriola e il sindacalismo rivoluzionario italiano," in *Socialismo e rivoluzione dopo Marx*. Cf. J. Roth, "The Roots of Italian Fascism: Sorel and Sorelismo," *Journal of Modern History*, *1* (1967), 30–45.

90. Cf. D. Settembrini, *Due ipotesi per il socialismo in Marx ed Engels*, pp. 241–44; Otto Maenchen-Helfen, *Karl Marx: La vita e l'opera* (Turin: Einaudi, 1969), pp. 240ff.

symbolic and substantive violence, who would polarize the political environment and precipitate events. The emphasis on the functional and mobilizational significance of violence was thus regarded as intrinsically Marxist in inspiration.[91]

The persistence and prevalence of authority was, similarly, understood as Marxist. Engels had persuasively argued the merits of authority. Long before Michels, he had written: "Whoever mentions combined actions speaks of organization; now, is it possible to have organization without authority?" Not only did he consider authority an integral part of revolutionary organization and action, he anticipated that as long as there was industrial activity there would be authority, for "wanting to abolish authority in large-scale industry is tantamount to wanting to abolish industry itself, to destroy the power loom in order to return to the spinning wheel."[92] That both Marx and Engels had profound reservations concerning the "parliamentary cretinism" that typified the political systems of Europe was equally well confirmed. Whatever qualifications Engels introduced in his old age could not alter that assessment. Marx had insisted that the "revolutionary people" must take precedence over any parliamentary arrangement.[93]

Finally, that classical Marxism was not a closed system was a conviction held by many Marxists. The syndicalists argued that Engels himself, in the decade after Marx's death, had introduced many modifications of the original formulations.[94] Classical Marxism was a system of thought that was notably imperfect and incomplete in many ways. For the syndicalists, like the Marxists of the time (and of our time as well), classical Marxism was a point of departure, not a theoretical terminus. The syndicalists had, in fact, taken many theoretical cues from contemporary Marxists. They had learned from Bernstein and Karl Kautsky, from Antonio Labriola as well as Sorel. Their intransigent "heresy" was welcomed as a revitalization of Marxism by such orthodox Marxists as Karl Kautsky, Paul Lafargue, and Jules Guesde. Even non-

91. Cf. Arturo Labriola, *Riforme e rivoluzione sociale*, ch. 6.

92. F. Engels, "On Authority," *Selected Works*, *1*, 653ff., 636ff.

93. For a discussion of Marx's views on parliament cf. Michels, *Storia del Marxismo*, p. 59, and Arturo Labriola, *Riforme e rivoluzione sociale*, p. 160. Compare Marx, "Der Prozess gegen den Rheinischen Kreisausschuss der Demokraten," *Werke*, *6*, 256ff.

94. This is now generally recognized; cf. Norman Levine, *The Tragic Deception: Marx contra Engels* (Oxford: Clio, 1975); A. James Gregor, *A Survey of Marxism* (New York: Random House, 1965); it was well documented as early as R. Mondolfo, *Il materialismo storico in Federico Engels* (Genoa: Formiggini, 1912).

Marxists like Werner Sombart and Benedetto Croce saw theoretical merit in their undertaking, and Vilfredo Pareto recognized their contribution to the development of social science.

Consequently, revolutionary syndicalism was informed by an exciting and sophisticated belief system, and the syndicalists were convinced, with some good reason, that their system was true to classical Marxism. Even the voluntarism and the activism that became the earmark of the Marxism of revolutionary syndicalism did not detach it from its Marxist origins.[95]

This was the system of beliefs that gave shape and substance to the thought of the young Mussolini.[96] We know from direct and indirect evidence that throughout this period he was familiar with the thought of Arturo Labriola, Enrico Leone, A. O. Olivetti, Paolo Orano, and Roberto Michels, and probably that of Sergio Panunzio as well. They fabricated the theoretical system that he would carry into his subsequent intellectual and political development. If it was heretical, it was no more heretical than the variant of Marxism put together by Lenin or Kautsky. It was a Marxism that was to guide Mussolini through the difficult times that descended on the revolutionaries of the Italian peninsula between 1910 and the traumatic advent of the First World War.

95. Michels explicitly believed this; cf. R. Michels, "Intorno al materialismo storico," *Riforme sociale*, October, 1914, p. 846.

96. Gaudens Megaro's interesting volume on the young Mussolini fails to provide a coherent account of Mussolini's belief system, largely because of its failure to treat syndicalist ideas systematically. Megaro was apparently more concerned with the differences between the thought of the young and the mature Mussolini, than the reconstruction and development of his ideas. Cf. G. Megaro, *Mussolini in the Making*.

Chapter 4 Revolutionary Nationalism and the Young Mussolini

> Through centuries of conquest at the greedy hands of barbaric hordes, Italy has been, and remains, the goal of reverent pilgrimage by all of the notable geniuses of the North . . . . There shines the beacon of civilization. Irrespective of time and fortune it has not been extinguished. Rome, as it was in the times of Augustus, remains the city toward which men of all nations turn—and who loves Rome, must love Italy . . . . Italy is preparing a new epoch in the history of humanity.
> *Mussolini*[1]

Among the many themes addressed by Mussolini in the early years, there were several that, given their importance later in his life, merit some special consideration. These were the themes of nationalism and "national sentiment." The traditional wisdom is that Mussolini "somersaulted," at some point in his political career, from an antinationalist to a nationalist posture. Gaudens Megaro, one of the more responsible spokesmen for this interpretation, makes a great point of Mussolini's antinationalist disposition throughout this entire period.[2] Ivon De Begnac, on the other hand, in his prewar biography, insisted that as early as 1909 Mussolini had begun to fashion a concept of revolutionary nationalism that was ultimately to transform his syndicalism.[3] Mussolini's first biographer, Torquato Nanni, in a brief account written in 1915, maintained that Mussolini possessed a "sane and spontaneous patriotism" as early as 1909.[4] Megaro, in response, claimed the suggestion that the young Mussolini was at this time and in any sense a patriot was a complete fabrication.[5]

1. Mussolini, "Un grande amico dell'Italia: Augusto von Platen," *Opera*, 2, 171ff.
2. G. Megaro, *Mussolini in the Making*, ch. 6, section 8.
3. Cf. I. De Begnac, *Vita di Mussolini*, II, ch. 7, particularly p. 157.
4. Torquato Nanni, *Benito Mussolini* (Florence: *La Voce*, 1915), reprinted in Emilio Gentile, ed., *Mussolini e La Voce*, p. 167.
5. G. Megaro, *Mussolini*, p. 160.

With the abatement of political passion, it seems reasonably certain that the issue was far more complicated than either Mussolini's detractors or his apologists have made apparent. His thoughts on the subject of nationalism were far from precise throughout this period. The internal evidence indicates that his position was very complicated, perhaps confused, until the crisis of the First World War made resolution a political and intellectual necessity. Nonetheless, Megaro was clearly mistaken. By 1909, Mussolini did in fact have a concept of revolutionary nationalism and an appreciation of the historical role of the sentiment of nationality that provided the foundation for his subsequent views. On the other hand, his thoughts were not particularly precise. To trace the outline of these thoughts requires a somewhat detailed review both of his life circumstances at the time, and of the ideas advanced by the major syndicalists with whom he interacted. More than that, it requires a review of the impact on Mussolini of the ideas of the principal *Vociani*, the intellectuals who had collected around the publication *La Voce*, which became fairly prominent during the same period.

The immediate factor that prompted Mussolini to address himself to the complex issue of nationalism and national sentiment at this time was his assumption of political responsibilities in the Trentino —that part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire populated, in significant measure, by ethnic Italians. When the socialists of Trent (at that time in Austria-Hungary) began their search for a secretary of the socialist *Camera del lavoro* (Chamber of Labor) in 1908, Mussolini, at twenty-five, was sufficiently well known and sufficiently recommended to warrant being considered. At the end of 1908, the Italian socialists of the Trentino offered him an invitation to the secretariat, and Mussolini prepared himself for yet another expatriate adventure; he decided once again to leave the confines of Italy and take up responsibilities in a foreign land.

Mussolini, in departing for the Trentino, began a new phase of political development. There he assumed regular political obligations within the organized apparatus of the Socialist Party; there he collaborated with Cesare Battisti in the publication of *Il popolo* and its supplement, *La vita trentina*; there, between February and September of 1909, the young revolutionary began to articulate his specific convictions concerning the role of national sentiment in the dynamics of social revolution.

As I shall suggest, by the time of his residence in Austria-

Hungary, Mussolini was an advocate of a form of internationalism that did not preclude an effective role for national sentiment, and it was in the Trentino that he attempted, for the first time, to put together the outlines of a revolutionary nationalism that might be accommodated within the revolutionary internationalism he espoused.

By 1909, as we have seen, Mussolini had committed himself to a number of political convictions. He was convinced men were, in some intrinsic sense, social animals who found their sociality embodied in concrete common interests that shaped their individual activities to collective purpose. Mussolini argued that to live in a competitive world, men had been compelled to organize themselves in communities that shared sustained common interests and a binding code of moral conduct. Bound together in amity and cooperation, each community defended its life interests against antagonistic out-groups. In his view, historical, social, and economic conditions governed the nature, the extent, the institutional form, and the character of life lived in common. Within each community a minority of men, through exhortation, mimetic example, and appeal to interest, gave intellectual, moral, and political substance to public life. When economic, social, and historical circumstances altered the foundations of collective existence, "new men," those men who were to change the values of the old social order, became the harbingers of revolution—bearers of a new code of collective conduct.

It was eminently clear that, for both Mussolini and the syndicalists of that time, *class membership* was the principal association in the life of modern man. One's life interests were those of one's economic class. One's principal antagonists were members of an exploiting and superordinate class. Which is not to say that the syndicalists and Mussolini were not aware of the impact of national sentiment on the behaviors of men—individually and collectively.

Nationalism, Syndicalism, and the Young Mussolini

It is clear that traditional nationalism, the unthinking and commonplace patriotism of the "right-thinking" and educated citizenry, held little fascination for Mussolini. It is less clear whether the elements of another form of nationalism are not to be found among his earliest convictions. "Nationalism" is, of course, a vexatiously vague concept under any circumstances, and its political implications cannot be characterized with precision. In our own time, it

is generally accepted that there are any number of nationalisms among which one might identify "traditional nationalism," a kind of self-satisfied political apathy and conservatism. On the other hand, one might just as easily isolate a collection of ideas that could be spoken of as "revolutionary nationalism," a belief system calculated to provide the motive energy for a movement of national regeneration, modernization, and development.[6] It is fairly obvious that the young Mussolini rejected the first kind of nationalism; it is not clear that he rejected the second.

At the beginning of his political life, Mussolini conceived of group loyalties as intersecting in a complex and obscure fashion, in ways that he himself could not characterize in any simple manner. He frequently alluded to the various political, confessional, familial, and organizational loyalties of men. He spoke, for example, of his own attachment to the Romagna, and on occasion of his affection for his native Italy. As a Marxist, however, convinced that history was a function of changes in the economic substructure of society, Mussolini was prepared to argue that membership in an economic class was the basis of the most significant human commitments in the modern age. Whatever other loyalties attached themselves to human sentiment, they were somehow subordinate to, contingent upon, and derivative of, class commitment. All of which cannot be taken to mean that these other loyalties did not exist. They existed, and they often exercised a significant impact on historical events.

Mussolini was prepared to admit that he himself harbored loyalties other than simple class loyalty. As early as 1905, in a letter to Captain Achille Simonetti, the Commander of the Tenth Bersaglieri Regiment in which he served his military tour of duty, Mussolini unselfconsciously alluded to his sentiments of nationality. On that occasion he spoke with obvious pride of those Italian heroes "who, with their blood, had cemented the unity of the fatherland," and then he went on to maintain that Italians must be prepared to defend their homeland against anyone who might attempt to reduce Italy once again to a geographic expression.[7]

These sentiments were, of course, perfectly compatible with his

6. There are many books dealing with these distinctions. I have found the following particularly informative: Eugen Lemberg, *Nationalismus* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1964), 2 vols.; Konstantin Symmons-Symonolewicz, *Nationalist Movements: A Comparative View* (Meadville, Pa.: Maplewood, 1970); and Anthony D. Smith, *Theories of Nationalism* (New York: Harper, 1972).

7. Letter dated February 26, 1905, *Opera*, *1*, 216.

socialist convictions. Marx and Engels, Carlo Pisacane, Giuseppe Garibaldi, Enrico Ferri, and Cesare Lombroso had all found revolutionary socialism and national sentiments perfectly compatible under certain circumstances. Whereas for socialists and Marxists historical interpretation rests, ultimately, on an analysis that turns on economic variables, many socialist intellectuals argued that, under certain historical conditions, economic factors could only work their influence by invoking active human sentiments other than those attached to material interests. Mussolini, for example, had himself alluded to Ferdinand Lassalle's conception of socialism, which saw future society as a "moral union" of men united by "blood, geography . . . and intellectual interests" as well as by economic concerns.[8] Such a union could rest only on sentiments of solidarity—a solidarity not only of economic, but of ethnic, regional, and cultural interests as well.

This in fact was the interpretation of national sentiments made by Roberto Michels as early as 1904. At that time Michels insisted that internationalism does not mean an abandonment of one's fatherland. Socialists, he argued, were fully prepared to recognize this, along with the social importance of ethnic, linguistic, and cultural differences. What he denied was that these evident differences necessitated international war in any conflict of interests. He maintained, instead, that the evolving economy of the world made increasing international cooperation a historical necessity. As a world economy evolved, the major differences between communities would be more and more clearly defined as class differences. While national differences would remain as the foundation of sentiment and attraction, class differences would occupy center stage until the socialist revolution. In this sense the modern working-class movement was, in his judgment, "national and international at the same time."[9]

Michels recognized the natural disposition to favor one's native language and the culture into which one had been socialized. He defined patriotism as

> a heartfelt sentiment, the consequence of a shared language, culture and common life. Patriotism is not so much the consequence of political history, but of intellectual history, of relationships of descent [*Rassenverwandtschaften*]. It is a sentiment that is the product of a life shared

8. Mussolini, "Per Ferdinando Lassalle," *Opera*, *1*, 66.

9. R. Michels, "Der Internationalismus der Arbeiterschaft," *Ethische Kultur*, *12*, 15 (August 1, 1904), p. 113.

> in a narrower or broader association, in tightly or loosely knit communities, in a certain circle of ideas which renders the individual proud to be a member of this and no other community and which finally reveals itself as a will and disposition to protect the integrity of that community.[10]

Michels denied that these *natural* and predictable sentiments must lock men into relationships of perpetual conflict. War, in his judgment, need not necessarily be the consequence of patriotic sentiments. He maintained that class, not national, differences define communities in historical conflict. "It is economy," he maintained, "not race that is the decisive developmental factor." Contemporary man is divided "along class, rather than national, lines."[11] Which was not to suggest that a successful international working-class movement would produce an internationalism without nationalities or national sentiment. Michels was convinced that any internationalism would have to accommodate the natural group sentiments produced by a shared language, a shared culture, and a shared history. The principles of national self-determination and citizenship rights would have to be an intrinsic part of socialist internationalism.[12]

These were, in fact, convictions that were general among syndicalists and had been evident among some socialists for a considerable time. They were sentiments clearly expressed by Mussolini, who went so far as to argue that even an ideal internationalism would not be expected to "cancel the sense of nationality. Rather, it would encompass those sentiments in a grand dream of brotherhood."[13] Because of the syndicalist convictions he shared with Michels, it was not difficult for Mussolini to identify himself with the principle of "maintaining the ideal integrity of the nation," recognizing its "historic and moral rights . . . in the brotherhood of peoples."[14] That the thought of the young Mussolini should have included a regard for national sentiment is, therefore, not difficult to understand. Such notions were a part of syndicalist convictions as early as 1904.

When Mussolini took up his responsibilities in the Trentino, however, he was brought into sustained contact with Cesare Battisti, with whom he developed a fast friendship and shared a mutual

10. R. Michels, "Renaissance des Patriotismus," *Das Magazin für Litteratur, 73,* 5–6 (1907), p. 155.
11. R. Michels, *Patriotismus und Ethik* (Leipzig: Dietrich, 1906), pp. 17, 20.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
13. Mussolini, "Lo sciopero dei cantonieri," *Opera, 2,* 196.
14. Mussolini, "Ciccaiuolo," *Opera, 2,* 203.

respect. In that environment the elements of a new and antitraditional nationalism were to be further developed and shaped. Cesare Battisti was one of those ethnic Italians, born outside the confines of the newly united nation, for whom national identity was an issue of emotional and intellectual importance. He had been a nationalist of sorts long before he became a socialist. He identified with Italy —with its culture, its language, its history, and its traditions—and he spent his life defending its integrity and its independence.

For those like Battisti, who actually lived the problems endured by marginal men in an alien political environment, the issue of national sentiment was of critical importance. More than any of the socialists active within the political confines of united Italy, those men—born in the regions that had not been collected into the new nation during the last quarter of the nineteenth century—directly confronted the problem of national identity. As a consequence, the socialism of the Trentino was significantly different from that of the peninsula. After unification the socialism of the peninsula had become increasingly preoccupied with the social, to the neglect of the national question. People in unredeemed Italy, however, were caught up in the issue of national and ethnic survival.

Cesare Battisti was one of those Trentino socialists who had committed himself early to the defense of the *Italianità* of the ethnic Italians in unredeemed Italy.[15] From his earliest manhood, Battisti had defended what he called the national interests of the Italian-speaking population of the Trentino. As early as 1895, as a student, he had insisted on the principle of nationality as an irrepressible historical and political force, and he had called on the youth of Italy to "love the fatherland—render it strong, happy and prosperous."[16] He became a socialist when he became convinced that only socialists offered Italy the prospect of moral and spiritual rejuvenation and economic development. This was at a time when the first socialism still harbored the romantic and heroic impulse of the Risorgimento. He was convinced that socialism permitted him to undertake the sacred struggle in the service of his nationality; socialism, he was to maintain, provided for a true and disinterested defense of national interests.

As a socialist, Battisti felt that the problem of national conflict would be resolved by an international confederation of free and equal nations. As a socialist, he was prepared to argue that only the

15. Jane Hazon de Saint-Firmin, *Cesare Battisti e la fine dell'Austria*.
16. Cesare Battisti, *Scritti politici* (Florence: Edizione nazionale, 1923), pp. 3, 6, 328.

proletariat embodied in itself the best interests and the development potential of the peninsula—a development that would make Italy the equal of any other nation. He admitted that in the circumstances prevailing in the Trentino, class interests were not sufficiently binding to dissipate national loyalties and national animosities. He lamented the fact that each national group in Austria-Hungary showed a compelling egoism in the pursuit of its own interests—at the expense of other nationalities. As a result, he was prepared to urge a collaboration of all Italian-speaking classes in the service of the oppressed Italian-speaking community. He urged a joint effort with the "progressive bourgeoisie," arguing that the national cause was superior to persons and parties, and that the socialists of the Trentino, in their struggle against national oppression, were prepared "to fight side by side with the bourgeoisie."[17]

In the Trentino, given the numerical and economic inferiority of the Italian-speaking population, the only political program that had any prospect of success was the struggle for political and administrative autonomy, which would protect the cultural and political integrity of the Italian-speaking community. The demand for self-rule was the most advanced, the most revolutionary demand that could be attempted within the confines of Hapsburg dominance; any other political goal would have been quixotic. Considering its limited resources, there was little else to which the Italian-speaking minority could aspire. Nonetheless, the demand for self-rule by a divided, apathetic, and impoverished minority in a system of confederated autonomous nationalities was radical, since it implied the dissolution of the multiethnic Hapsburg Empire into a loose union of self-governing national communities.

In advancing such a program, there is absolutely no doubt that Battisti's political activities were animated by the strongest national sentiments. In our own time he would be identified as a revolutionary nationalist, an advocate of the liberation of his multiclass ethnic community from the exploitation and oppression of foreign domination. In the light of the options open to his disorganized and disspirited conationals, Battisti held that the struggle for autonomy of the region was, at that historical moment, the only realistic political goal that could engage the energies of revolutionary militants. Equally clear is the fact that Mussolini, assuming responsibilities at the side of Battisti in 1909, all but fully accepted Battisti's political convictions. In 1911 Mussolini published a long mono-

17. *Ibid.*, pp. ix, 66–68, 195.

graph, which contained his reflections on the Trentino and was perhaps one of the best of his published works, reflecting the mature judgment of the young revolutionary. In it are found almost all of Battisti's convictions. Much of the monograph, *Il Trentino veduto da un socialista*,[18] was probably outlined while Mussolini was still in Trent, because he had indicated his intention to write such a work as early as April, 1909. His subsequent political difficulties and delays in production postponed the appearance of the work until 1911. However, the essay contains clear intimations of Mussolini's commitment to national sentiment as a significant political reality as early as 1909–10.

Il Trentino deals with the efforts undertaken by the Italian-speaking minority to defend its national rights. Mussolini recognized that the political life of the Trentino was governed by irrepressible national antagonisms. He was quick to point out that even Austrian socialism, presumably committed to internationalism, followed national lines of cleavage. Many German-speaking socialists, he indicated, advocated a form of racial socialism, holding that the fruits of socialism could only be realized after the German-speaking population had gained firm control over the "inferior" peoples in the Empire. As early as May, 1909, after only a few months in the Trentino, Mussolini had indicated that the German-speaking socialists in Austria continued to slight their Italian-speaking political comrades. While Italians were attempting to divest themselves of invidious nationalism, German-speaking socialists continued to irritate ethnic and national sensitivities.[19] He also cited instances in which socialists of different national groups collaborated in their collective interest, but these instances were relatively uncommon.

Mussolini thus committed himself to the special defense of Italian interests in the Trentino. Moreover, he indicated that while the irredentists could not be taken seriously (because of the apathy that characterized the Italian-speaking population of the region) irredentism was, in fact, revolutionary. Unhappily, however, Mussolini went on, "everyone, is resigned to the Austrian yoke. The temperament of the population in the Trentino is not revolutionary —it is conservative."[20] Politics in the Trentino could not be intense, simply because a political nationality did not obtain. The

18. Mussolini, *Il Trentino veduto da un socialista*, *Opera*, *33*, 151–213.
19. Mussolini, "Bolzano," *Opera*, *2*, 119.
20. Mussolini, *Il Trentino*, *Opera*, *32*, 175.

revolutionary redemption of the Trentino was impossible at that time.

When Mussolini discussed the politics of the region, he indicated that two of the three active political parties in the Trentino, the liberal-nationalists and the *Popolari* (which he spoke of as the clerical party), were effectively antinational. The liberal-nationalists and the "clericals" regularly voted war credits for the Austrian imperial government—war credits that serviced a military machine directed against Italy. The nationalism of the liberal-nationalists was at best "tepid, platonic, and clandestine." What the liberal-nationalists sought, Mussolini maintained, was a strong government, feudal in character, that might defend their cash boxes. Their nationalism he viewed as a traditional "cardboard-nationalism." It was conservative and antinational. The *Popolari*, Mussolini maintained, were even worse. They were overt enemies of Italy. Their strategy, proclaimed in their publications, informed Italians that in order to obtain anything from the Austrian state one must be a faithful subject. They were, in fact, openly pro-Austrian and anti-Italian.

The Socialist Party, on the other hand, the third effective political organization in the Trentino, was founded on the principle of the autonomy of the Italian-speaking population—a principle that invoked "great emotion, particularly among nationalists." Mussolini spoke of the socialist struggle for national autonomy as "the most beautiful page in the history of the Socialist Party of the Trentino."

Mussolini, like Battisti, argued that only the socialists were prepared to defend seriously the interests of the Italian-speaking inhabitants of the Trentino; only the socialists resisted the blandishments and the pressures of the Austrian hierarchy; and only the socialists defended the cultural and economic integrity of the Italian speaking population. Socialists were so committed to that cause, Mussolini indicated, that they were even prepared to ally themselves with elements of the bourgeoisie to further it. It was evident that there were, however, in Mussolini's judgment, few bourgeois elements worthy of the challenge. "A new, youthful, and liberal bourgeoisie capable of committing itself to political struggle," he contended, "is not to be found in the Trentino." The bourgeoisie of the Trentino was made up of merchants and shopkeepers, just as the proletariat of the Trentino was made up of small artisans. Mussolini was arguing that the Trentino was economically underdeveloped: "the Trentino is not industrialized . . . and lacks an authentic

proletariat." Under the circumstances, any political solution to the problems of the Trentino was unlikely, and there was little opportunity for the recruitment of truly revolutionary masses. The old bourgeoisie and the rural population were passive under the constraints of the imperial domination, and the urban workers, the only population element that consistently supported the autonomy of the Italian-speaking community, had been misled by the self-proclaimed nationalists and had lapsed into political quiescence.

Because of this assessment of the realities of the situation, Mussolini, while recognizing the revolutionary character of irredentism, dismissed the importunings of the irredentists, whom he regarded as poseurs, bon vivants, and rhetoricians, more given to inflated speech than to serious analysis. He suggested that there was no way, at that historical juncture, that the Trentino could be restored to Italy. There was little prospect of the spontaneous dissolution of Austria-Hungary, which was laced together by an effective bureaucracy and defended by an efficient military machine. Even the orthodox socialists, Mussolini went on to point out, were prepared to defend the Austrian state. Nor was it likely that Austria would cede or sell the Trentino to Italy. The only other alternative was a war between Austria and Italy, and an Italian victory that would force Austria to cede to Italy its lost province.

Mussolini did not expand on this last alternative—a *military* solution to the question of Italy's unredeemed territories. The only *political* solution that was feasible—and its chances of success were minimal—was the concession of political autonomy to the Italian-speaking inhabitants of the Trentino by the Austrian government. But only with a European victory of socialism could the Trentino expect to become an equal partner in a confederation of equal partners. The alternative to that was a military solution in which Italy, by force of arms, would restore the Trentino to the fatherland. It is reasonably clear why this latter solution did not recommend itself to Mussolini.

Any military attempt to solve the problem of the Trentino at that juncture would have given political leadership to the liberal and parliamentary bourgeoisie, who had given every evidence of venality and lack of seriousness. As will be indicated, Mussolini dismissed traditional nationalism, the conventional nationalism of the time, as a "gouty nationalism, paralyzed even before moving," a nationalism that invested its aspirations in an army "that had

never won."[21] Under such circumstances any attempt at a military solution to the problem of Italy's lost territories would result in "defeat and shame."[22]

Under these conditions, Mussolini's objections to the irredentists, his resistance to the languid and venal traditional patriotism and nationalism of the period, cannot be understood as simple antinationalism. His nationalism, as we shall see, was revolutionary, developmental, and antitraditional. He objected to the military policies of the bourgeoisie as counterproductive, unrealistic, and burdensome on an economically retarded national community. He viewed the military not as the armed defense of the nation, but as the organized defense of class privilege. He interpreted the invocation of national sentiments under bourgeois auspices as a sacrifice of national interests.

On the other hand he was prepared, with Battisti, to recognize the political effectiveness of national sentiment in the service of revolutionary goals, and that "to fight for one's fatherland is to fight for one's love."[23] Battisti had cited the same quotation from the writings of the young student nationalist, Theodore Koerner, to support his contention that the "principle of nationality was . . . the symbol of so many victories."[24] Mussolini, in effect, accepted the substance of Battisti's political views and as such would be characterized, in our own time, as a revolutionary and developmental nationalist. As has already been suggested, he was committed to the modernization and economic development of Italy. Such a commitment was compatible with his socialist and syndicalist views and with the goals of what was later to be identified as the new, as opposed to the old, nationalism.[25] In this relatively clear sense, Mussolini's political convictions were the embodiment of syndicalist and revolutionary nationalist beliefs.

Ottavio Dinale, the syndicalist whom he had known in Switzerland and who was among his first political colleagues to meet him after his return from Trent, insisted that "evidently [Mussolini's] friendship and interaction with Cesare Battisti had profoundly affected his spirit. . . . The contact with Battisti, who was both a

21. Mussolini, "Nazionalismo," *Opera, 3,* 280ff.
22. Mussolini, "Il parlamento dei rammolliti," *Opera, 3,* 329.
23. Mussolini, "Figure di donne nel Wilhelm Tell di Schiller," *Opera, 2,* 35.
24. Battisti, *Scritti,* p. 3.
25. Cf. the collection by G. Prezzolini and G. Papini, *Vecchio e nuovo nazionalismo.*

socialist and a patriot . . . taught [Mussolini] to love Italy."[26] This love of country was an expression of Mussolini's recognition that men undertook political activity under the goad of national sentiment, which was one of the most common and effective sources of individual and collective energy. This was a relatively sophisticated rendering of the national and social inspirations that animated the earliest Italian socialism. Buttressed by the social-science convictions of Pareto and Sorel, as well as those of the ideologues of revolutionary syndicalism, Mussolini's national socialism was developmental, elitist, antiparliamentarian, more given to mass mobilization than to parliamentary politics, more concerned with the regeneration of collective morality than with simple economic determinism, and more concerned with the industrialization of the peninsula than with an expensive and ineffectual traditional nationalism. In Mussolini's view, Italy's future was contingent on a substitution or rotation of elites, on the advent of a new, youthful, competent, and aggressive political elite. That elite would dismantle all the supports of traditional bourgeois Italy.

Mussolini saw the Italy of this time constrained by the petty capitalism typical of underdeveloped communities. Burdened by ministerial and parliamentary incompetence and corruption, confined by agricultural and business practices that had become anachronisms, devoid of ideals, and afflicted with public apathy, Italy had failed to achieve its potential. Only revolutionary mass mobilization, high ideals, and alternative social models for collective life, could provide the regeneration and renovation of Italy. Bourgeois democracy, traditional clericalism, a rachitic and antinational monarchism, and an ineffectual and expensive militarism all militated against the birth of a greater Third Italy.

The form of nationalism that had begun to find expression in Mussolini's thought was the form recognizing the love of one's fatherland as a dispositional property shared by all men, while at the same time recognizing that the "proletariat is antipatriotic by definition and necessity."[27] The paradox was resolved by many syndicalists and a growing number of antitraditional nationalists. Traditional patriotism was seen to be a betrayal of revolutionary change, and was, therefore, antinational in effect. Mussolini had carefully demonstrated what he took to be the venality, the pas-

26. Ottavio Dinale, *Quaranti'anni di colloqui con lui*, p. 61.

27. Mussolini, "Il proletariato ha un interesse alle conservazioni delle patrie attuali?" *Opera*, 2, 169ff.

sivity, and the counterproductive character of the nationalism and patriotism demonstrated by the merchant and landed bourgeoisie of the economically retarded Trentino.

As long as the traditional political elites of the peninsula could use traditional nationalism and patriotism as an informing political myth, Italy would be condemned to endure a corrupt and self-serving parliamentarianism, an economically wasteful and ineffectual militarism, a retarded industrial and agricultural system, and international inferiority. Traditional nationalism and patriotism would make Italy's population passive, impoverished, illiterate, and inured to obedience. Italy would remain the "little Italy" of the end of the nineteenth century. A greater Italy could only be the product of vast changes introduced by social revolution—a revolution that would be characterized by the traditional bourgeoisie as subversive and antipatriotic.

The forms of developmental nationalism with which we have become familiar in the modern world share many features with this kind of "new" nationalism that became increasingly evident among the antitraditional radicals of Italy before the First World War. Developmental nationalists tend to be antitraditional in the sense that they oppose themselves to the institutions and symbols of the status quo. They are antibourgeois, but frequently distinguish between the old and the "productive" or "progressive" bourgeoisie. They generally find themselves opposed to traditional religion, which they regard as anachronistic and reactionary.

These convictions were to gradually find a place in the collection of beliefs that Mussolini made his own, and in these circumstances, while these ideas were taking on form and substance, Mussolini took up his association with Giuseppe Prezzolini and the intellectuals who gathered around the publication of *La Voce*, which made its appearance in December, 1908.

Mussolini and *La Voce*

Mussolini had hardly settled in Trent when he called the attention of his readers to the appearance of Prezzolini's *La Voce*. That Mussolini, as a revolutionary socialist, should have occupied himself with such a publication is notable for a number of reasons. *La Voce* was a lineal descendant of *Leonardo*, a magazine that Prezzolini himself described as "intoxicated with idealism." Both Benedetto Croce and Giovanni Gentile, in fact, saw *Leonardo* as an ally in

their struggles against the pervasive antiidealism that characterized the academic orientation of Italian intellectual life.[28] *Leonardo* and Prezzolini, furthermore, both shared something of their lives with *Il Regno*, founded toward the end of 1903 by Enrico Corradini, himself one of the principal originators of political nationalism in Italy. *Leonardo* and *Il Regno* were the "nuclei of Italian nationalism."[29]

Giuseppe Prezzolini, born on January 27, 1882, had become by 1905 the transmission belt for a collection of innovative currents in Italian intellectual and political life. He and Giovanni Papini (who was one year older than Prezzolini), introduced George Berkeley, David Hume, William James, and Henri Bergson to the intellectuals of the peninsula. Prezzolini and Papini interacted with Corradini, the nationalist, and Michels, the syndicalist, in an enterprise dedicated to the renovation and modernization of Italy. When Mussolini introduced *La Voce* to his readers, he spoke of its enterprise as a "superb mission" undertaken to "create the Italian soul . . . ," the schooled spirit of a new and greater Third Italy.[30] He maintained that both *Leonardo* and *La Voce* had committed themselves to the creation of a psychological unity among Italians, without which the nation could not strengthen its will or direct its energies.[31]

Like many of his socialist and nationalist contemporaries, Mussolini saw the Italy of his time embroiled in quasi-feudal relationships and afflicted with premodern administrative and economic institutions. Like them, he anticipated vast social, political, cultural, and economic changes that would make modern Italy an equal partner in a brotherhood of nations. He saw Italy shaking off the lethargy that had made it for so long the graveyard of Europe, a boneyard of anachronisms. He anticipated a regeneration of Italian energies and the creation of a vast community of producers, in a new century of movement and development.[32] In this context he alluded to those special qualities of "Latin genius and courage"

28. Cf. Emilio Gentile, "Storia di Prezzolini," in the collection *Prezzolini 90* (Milan: Quaderni dell'osservatore, 1972), pp. 13–45; G. Prezzolini, "Cronaca de *La Voce*," in *La Voce, 1908–1913* (Milan: Rusconi, 1974), pp. 15–20.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

30. Mussolini to Prezzolini, letter dated October 1, 1909, in Gentile, *Mussolini e La Voce*, p. 43; cf. pp. 8ff.

31. Mussolini, "La Voce," *Opera*, 2, 55; cf. G. Prezzolini, *L'Italiano inutile*, p. 240.

32. Mussolini, "Un grande amico dell'Italia: Augusto von Platen," and "Latham," *Opera*, 2, 171ff., 187.

Italians would bring to the vast undertaking that would give mankind increasing dominion over nature.[33] To accomplish this, innovative change must be channeled through the sentiments of men housed in "that highest collective organism attained as yet by civilized ethnic associations—the nation."[34]

Mussolini understood that the strategies he was recommending dealt with a transitional period and that ultimately mankind would be united in the brotherhood anticipated by revolutionary socialism. But in so far as Italy remained locked in a transitional phase of development, he, like Prezzolini, was an advocate of what could only be identified as revolutionary and developmental nationalism.

Mussolini thus regarded the program of *La Voce* as similar to his own. His conviction that revolutionary change required an infusion of revolutionary consciousness into the masses of the peninsula by a minority of devoted men was shared by Prezzolini. In an article published in 1903 in the nationalist publication of Corradini, Prezzolini had indicated that his views had originated in the work of Vilfredo Pareto and Gaetano Mosca. At that time Prezzolini had argued that Pareto's theory of elites and Mosca's critique of democratic theory had destroyed the fiction that political leadership responded to, or represented, the will of the people. Prezzolini insisted that "history has demonstrated that throughout time and space, ranging from the most primitive and least populated to the most developed and populous societies, from the Papuans to that of the Yankees of North America, there have forever been two classes of persons . . . one dominating and the other dominated."[35] Prezzolini, the developmental and antitraditional nationalist, had in effect, accepted the same notion of political rule entertained by Mussolini, the revolutionary socialist.

Mussolini and Prezzolini were members of a generation of intellectuals who had read Pareto's *Les systèmes socialistes* and Mosca's *Elementi di scienza politica* and had become convinced that democratic or parliamentary government was no more than a façade to conceal the rule of a self-serving elite. Both the syndicalists and many of the nationalists who organized themselves into the first nationalist groups in 1903 under the leadership of Enrico Corradini had convinced themselves that representative government was an

33. Mussolini, "Bleriot," *Opera*, 2, 194.

34. Mussolini, "Il proletariato ha un interesse alle conservazioni delle patrie attuali?" *Opera*, 2, 169.

35. Prezzolini, *Vecchio e nuovo nazionalismo*, p. 39.

artifice, a political myth, designed to conceal from the masses the dominance of a self-selected, self-perpetuating, and self-serving traditional ruling class.

The syndicalists and the antitraditional nationalists shared these convictions. Both attributed their origin to Pareto and Mosca—the source of their shared antiparliamentarian disposition.[36] Antiparliamentarianism became a constant theme among an active segment of the political nationalists that had begun to organize after 1903. It had also been a theme regularly invoked by the syndicalists. Prezzolini was an early spokesman of this tradition among nationalists, since he, like Mussolini, understood society to be the consequence of a relationship between those who are ruled and the minority that rules. Also like Mussolini, he was convinced that each ruling minority sustains its dominance by invoking political formulae, that provide rules for the conformance behavior of the masses. Leaders, *meneurs*, supply role models for citizen behavior. Masses are rendered governable by imitative impulse and shaped by suggestive myths, by ideals. Political change was understood to be the consequence of a new political myth advanced by a new political elite. For Prezzolini, what Italy lacked in order to face effectively the challenges of the twentieth century was just such a renovative myth, as well as "a model and a voice—that is to say, a man," who could appropriately inform the collective psychology of the Italian people.[37]

Prezzolini shared with Mussolini the anticipation of a new Italy, one that would compete with England and France, one that would raise mills and factories and struggle for foreign markets. He foresaw an Italy that would cease to be the land of cheap hotels, easy women, beggars, and brigandage. It would become an Italy of inventions and expositions, an Italy that would be quoted on the stock exchanges, an Italy once again the bearer of international weight.[38] Prezzolini's vision was one shared with many politically aware Italians, but, among those who could be called "modernizing," that vision involved a radical alteration of political and social institutions. As early as 1904, Prezzolini deplored the parliamentary political system that democratic mythology had imposed on Italy,

36. Franco Gaeta, *Nazionalismo italiano*, p. 14.

37. Prezzolini, "La borghesia può risorgere?" in Papini and Prezzolini, *Vecchio e nuovo*, p. 55.

38. Prezzolini, "Le due Italie," *ibid.*, pp. 71ff.

claiming that Italy had made a fetish of parliament, which ruled the peninsula in the service of parochial and selfish interests.[39]

The radical wing of the nascent nationalist movement—whose convictions found clear expression in Prezzolini's prose—shared a common core of political, sociological, and psychological beliefs. Between 1903, when Corradini founded *Il Regno*, and 1910, when the *Associazione nationalista* first organized itself, one could hardly speak of a single Italian Nationalism. There were, as Gioacchino Volpe indicated, and as almost every commentator has since recognized, a multiplicity of nationalisms in Italy during this period.[40] There were democratic nationalists and republican nationalists, free-trade nationalists and anti-free-trade nationalists. Some nationalists were all but exclusively irredentists, some were simply traditionalists who gloried in Italy's past, and others were modernizers who lamented the dolce far niente, the immobility and the rhetoric of traditional Italy.

It was among the *radical* nationalists that the current of anti-parliamentarianism, activism, elitism, and productivism and the commitment to apocalyptic Nietzschean struggle were to become most emphatic. In fact, among some of the more prominent intellectuals who identified themselves as revolutionary nationalists, there was an unambiguous recognition of the kinship they shared with the revolutionary syndicalists with whom Mussolini was aligned.[41] In 1909 Enrico Corradini alluded to the traits shared by syndicalism and nationalism, arguing that syndicalism, as a reaction to reformist socialism, had opposed itself to compromissary democracy and parliamentary wilfulness, and had committed itself to a form of elitism that saw revolutionary leadership invoking the dormant energies of the masses of the peninsula by quasi-religious and mythic appeal to the service of Italian rebirth. The syndicalists, Corradini indicated, were prepared to use the mythic and symbolic language of religious invocation to mobilize the latent energy of the masses in a revolutionary strategy completely foreign to the accommodating political tactics of traditional Italian liberalism. Syndicalism, like revolutionary nationalism, was, in Corradini's judgment, an active association of men bound by interest and sentiment in pursuit of a regenerate future. It was a movement infused

39. Cf. G. Volpe, *Italia moderna*, vol. 3.
40. G. Volpe, *Italia in cammino*, ch. 5.
41. Cf. Francesco Perfetti, ed., *Il nazionalismo italiano*, p. 25.

with revolutionary morality, a school of collective solidarity, prepared to struggle for its convictions. It was a movement that anticipated the creation of a race of heroes, animated by the moral virtues of the giants of antiquity.[42]

In that same year, 1909, the publishing house of Francesco Perrella of Naples issued Prezzolini's *La teoria sindacalista*. Mussolini received the book in April and published a long review of it in May, 1909. His review is interesting for a variety of reasons. It reveals the affinities shared by at least one wing of the nascent revolutionary nationalist movement and the radical syndicalists with whom Mussolini himself identified; and it reveals the common collection of political convictions that made up the ideological baggage of some of the antitraditional activists in this period of Italian history —however Anglo-American commentators choose to distinguish between them in terms of a right-wing or a left-wing persuasion. The ease with which intellectuals like Prezzolini could move from what would be conceived, in ordinary language, to be the right to what is taken to be the left is evidence enough of the insubstantiality of the distinction. Nor was Prezzolini alone in this respect. There were many intellectuals making an easy transit from socialism to nationalism and particularly from syndicalism to nationalism—a transit that was to be made, around the same time as we shall see, by Georges Sorel himself.

At the time of his collaboration with Corradini's nationalists, Prezzolini had argued in support of Italian rebirth under the auspices of the productive bourgeoisie, drawing a critical distinction between the productive and the traditional bourgeoisie. Prezzolini prescribed modernization of the Italian spirit as the precondition of national development. This could be accomplished only by aggressive and productive modernizers. After 1905 he became an insistent critic of traditional and rhetorical nationalism, which he, like Mussolini, viewed as fanciful, unrealistic, and antimodern. He sought a means to shape the consciousness of Italians to the tasks of the modern world, and thus he began, in his own words, to "evolve" to the point where he could occupy himself with the problems of social development with a certain detachment—a detachment that made him neither bourgeois nor proletarian. After 1908, he argued that the distinctions that so exacerbated Italian political life were factitious and insubstantial. What Italy required, in his judgment, was

42. Enrico Corradini, "Sindacalismo, nazionalismo, imperialismo," *Discorsi politici*, pp. 51–69.

less rhetoric, fewer artificial political distinctions, and more action. What Italy required—however and by whomever it might be accomplished—was a vast program of modernization, the inculcation of the time-sense of modern industrial society in a population so long content to operate in the timelessness of agrarian society, an increasing emphasis on civic responsibility among those given to the easy violation of law, and an expansion of modern industrial capability that might allow the nation to survive in the twentieth century. All of which suggested to him that the critical problems afflicting the peninsula were not amenable to the kinds of solutions entertained by the polemical literature of party politics. What Italy required was cultural and economic development, and these tasks could be addressed either to the bourgeoisie or to the organized or unorganized proletariat. The serious question was: how and by whom were these problems to be solved? Prezzolini maintained that the responsibilities he had urged on the productive bourgeoisie in 1903 were the same as those that the syndicalists were then, in 1909, prepared to assume.[43]

The main body of Prezzolini's book of 1909 contained the now familiar themes the young Mussolini had made his own; orthodox socialism had committed itself to a form of historical determinism that regarded individual and collective consciousness as a simple function of economic factors, and with the rejection of strict determinism and the unconvincing faith in inevitability, syndicalist revolutionaries had come to recognize the significance of ethical, psychological, and idealist influences. The development of revolutionary consciousness was seen not simply as a reflex of economic conditions, but, at least in significant measure, as the result of the intervention of human will and the vital energy of dedicated men. Syndicalism, Prezzolini maintained, was the public and organized expression of ethical impulse, a school of virtue and heroism for the revolutionary class. Central to its ethic were sacrifice, dedication, struggle, and decisiveness. The truth of Marxism lay not in its pretended "science of society," but in its effectiveness in providing the rules for revolutionary conduct. The specific goal of syndicalism was to inure men to those rules, to create the new men for the new society. The assumption of such obligations left syndicalism, in Prezzolini's judgment, unalterably opposed to the compromise and the indecisiveness of traditional parliamentary politics.

43. G. Prezzolini, *La teoria sindacalista*, pp. 7–13.

Parliamentarianism could function only if men were malleable, disposed to tolerance and compromise, and prepared to negotiate principles for tactical advantage. Syndicalism, as a school of virtue, could only be intransigently opposed to the entire ethic of parliamentary political life. Syndicalism required the leadership of an aristocracy capable of providing a model of superior rectitude, an example capable of elevating the consciousness of the masses.[44]

The central argument of Prezzolini's book is also to be found in the writings of Arturo Labriola, Orano, and Olivetti—works with which Mussolini was already familiar. Equally familiar to him was the theme of increased productivity—the promise advanced by syndicalism that it would not only preserve but enhance the productive capability of the economically retarded peninsula. The syndicalists recognized, Prezzolini argued, that capitalism had created the most advanced industrial base ever enjoyed by mankind. Syndicalism was committed to the protection and enhancement of that productive base. It sought to inherit the patrimony of capitalism and increase its abundance. It required, he went on, that

> the bourgeoisie remains faithful to its program and to its mission, to produce in greater abundance, to effectively employ its capital, to transform marginal home industries into factories, to improve agriculture that often, and in large part, languishes under techniques as old as Barbarossa, to tunnel through mountains, to bring steam and the telegraph to the East and to Africa, to increase available energy supplies and not dissipate resources in ineffectual humanitarian gestures.[45]

Prezzolini maintained that any form of traditional nationalism—the nationalism that found expression in vague sentiments of patriotism and that was wedded to the liberal tradition of parliamentary maneuvering and compromise—was unequal to Italy's tasks. That kind of nationalism was incapable of capturing the enthusiasm and commitment of the dispossessed. The working masses saw traditional nationalism as a rationale for privilege, as the effort of the propertied bourgeoisie to enlist popular support in the defense of its private wealth.

Prezzolini held that the regeneration and modernization of Italy required the mobilization of the masses, who in his judgment remained embroiled in the reformist and corrupt politics that had infected the first four decades of Italian unity. He argued that only

44. *Ibid.*, p. 95, 179–181.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 109ff.

"a war which has gone badly," or hunger, or massive economic dislocation could energize the passive population. He went on to suggest that a program of development would necessarily involve the entrepreneurial and professional middle classes, whose talents, he insisted, Italy required for industrialization. Moreover, it was among the educated bourgeoisie that the symbol manipulators, the propagandists, the ideologues, and the intellectuals were to be found who might bring revolutionary consciousness to the masses and fire in them the necessary antitraditionalist feelings.[46] All this might be accomplished under special conditions and under syndicalist auspices.

This was the book that Mussolini described as an accurate account of the theory of syndicalism.[47] Mussolini's review was in fact an approving summary of the book. The tasks assumed by the syndicalists included the formation of a new character and the inculcation of new virtues designed for an epoch of vast changes, which would find the proletariat and the conservative bourgeoisie in an irrepressible conflict for the dominance of the political and productive processes. The conflict involved the mobilization of moral sentiments to supplement the economic conditions that were pitching society in the direction of social revolution.

Mussolini saw this as syndicalist both in content and in expression, and he found it all eminently compatible with the intentions of men like Alfredo Oriani, whose book, *La rivolta ideale*, he described as magnificent in the review devoted to Prezzolini's *La teoria sindacalista*. Oriani, Mussolini reminded his readers, had affirmed "that every epoch has but one charge: 'to develop the human character'"—to instill in the mass of mankind the consciousness needed by the responsibilities of the age. That consciousness would find expression in intransigence, in the will to sacrifice, and in the disposition to accept violence as the ultimate arbiter of differences between mutually exclusive world views. For Mussolini, shaping that consciousness in the masses was the critical task that faced syndicalism. He argued that "syndicalism as a doctrine is now complete. What is lacking are men. It is necessary to shape them . . . . I believe that the working masses, purified by syndicalist practice, will develop that 'new human character'."[48]

In June, 1909, Mussolini repeated the same themes in his review

46. *Ibid.*, pp. 204ff.
47. Mussolini, "La teoria sindacalista," *Opera*, 2, 124.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 128.

of the new Italian edition of Sorel's *Reflections on Violence*.[49] The emphasis was on the development among the masses of a consciousness serviceable to revolution. Mussolini, like Sorel, held that consciousness was a function of protracted struggle. Only in struggle do men develop and display the uplifting and self-sacrificing virtues of the heroes of antiquity. Only in the fire of intense and protracted conflict are men infused with that new energy and those new moral values that the times require. Mussolini saw this responsibility, the inculcation of revolutionary virtue in the masses, as a task that was "grave, terrible and sublime."

Mussolini's discussion of these now familiar themes is clear evidence of the persistence of some central commitments critical to his political beliefs. In his review, he emphasized the theory of political myths, particularly the general strike as a mobilizing myth. He expressed the same antipathy to parliamentary and reformist democracy that had been a constant of his political writings since 1902. Like Sorel, Pareto, and Prezzolini, he objected to the humanitarianism and compromise that characterized reformist socialists and bourgeois democrats. He emphasized the necessity of violence as the test of true commitment to a revolutionary world view. He insisted, in an argument that has become increasingly commonplace in our own time, that differences arising from alternative conceptions of the social world cannot be mediated by reason or compromise without betraying one's moral obligations. Reason and compromise can function only within the confines of a common Weltanschauung; where the life interests of two communities differ in fundamentals, compromise can only be the consequences of intellectual servility or moral indigence.

By the end of 1909 Mussolini had developed a number of political convictions. He was an elitist, an antiparliamentarian, an advocate of the development of a modern and antitraditional Italy, and a propagandist for regenerative violence. He shared these convictions with an increasing number of Italian radicals both of the right and the left (whatever those distinctions are taken to mean).

Both the syndicalists and the revolutionary nationalists had made mass mobilization a central concern of their revolutionary strategy. The nationalist movement, however, remained embroiled in traditional nationalist rhetoric, whereas the syndicalists had committed

49. Mussolini, "Lo sciopero generale e la violenza," *Opera*, 2, 163–68.

themselves to the renovation and regeneration of Italy, and had made antitraditionalism the capstone of their political strategy. The syndicalists argued that Italian development could take place only under the auspices of a radical socialist program. Irrespective of these distinctions, both held mass mobilization, under the tutelage of a vanguard elite, to be the critical antecedent to revolution. What was required by both the radical nationalists and the syndicalists was the inculcation of the requisite revolutionary consciousness among the masses. The issue to which Mussolini was compelled to address himself in the Trentino was whether national sentiment might serve to marshal the masses to the service of revolution.

At the close of this period Mussolini repeated the entire argument for a new nationalism. He was prepared, in fact, to recognize the universality of nationalist appeals,[50] and to grant that men were disposed in general to identify with their ethnic community. But he continued to deny that this identification dissipated class distinctions. Along with Prezzolini, Mussolini argued that the differences that obtained between classes made *traditional* nationalist appeals ineffectual in mobilizing the masses.

He was convinced that the traditional bourgeoisie was concerned with nothing more than exploiting national sentiment in the service of its own special interests.[51] He argued that if the masses were to be mobilized in the service of revolution, the appeal could not be made to traditional patriotic and nationalist sentiments, and that the bourgeoisie of the Trentino was a clear instructive case.[52] Such nationalism, Mussolini maintained, was prepared to sacrifice the interests of the Italian fatherland whenever a profit might be turned in doing so. He was quick to renounce this kind of nationalism—the nationalism of the traditional bourgeoisie.[52]

Similarly, his critique of what he called the clerical party of the Trentino (the *Popolari*) was based on its antinationalism. He reminded the *Popolari* that the Church had persecuted Italian patriots since the beginning of the movement for unification,[53] and he reminded the ethnic Italians of the region that the Church and its minions had been overtly and systematically antinational throughout

50. Mussolini, "Il proletariato ha un interesse alle conservazioni delle patrie attuali?" *Opera*, 2, 169.

51. Cf. Mussolini, "Medaglioni borghesi," *Opera*, 2, 102.

52. Mussolini, "Dopo un processo," *Opera*, 2, 64.

53. Mussolini, "Ciccaiuolo!" *Opera*, 2, 203.

the eighteenth century. He described the clerical party as one which had not only negated "progress [and] the freedom of thought," but one which, "in Italy, had denied the Fatherland."[54]

Thus, while the young revolutionary was prepared to grant that national sentiment could be invoked to mobilize the masses, he denied that either the traditional bourgeoisie or the "clerics" could put that sentiment to any other than reactionary and antinational purpose. He argued that if the masses were to be energized by tapping the sentiment of nationality, only the revolutionary socialists could effectively and legitimately commit that energy to national purpose. In this fairly clear sense, then, Mussolini was opposed to traditional patriotism and conventional nationalist appeals.

He was emphatic in his rejection of the nationalism of the privileged classes, and was quick to aver that the propertyless had nothing to defend in a nation that was not their own. The bourgeoisie, by making nationalism as much of a political fetish as parliamentarianism, could employ national sentiment to defend their traditional privileges and ensure the security of their property. Moreover, bourgeois nationalism bred the parasitic military establishment, which was more disposed to suppress dissent within the nation than to win wars against a foreign enemy.[55] Finally, the revolutionary nationalism to which Mussolini had begun to allude would have to be, in some ultimate sense, compatible with an ideal socialist internationalism. Thus, while he was prepared to grant that "the nation constitutes the most advanced collective organism attained by civilized ethnic groups" in our own time, he anticipated a time when mankind would negate national antagonisms in a universal brotherhood of peoples.

By 1909 Mussolini was beginning to articulate a conception of nationalism appropriate to his syndicalist convictions. He was prepared to grant that mass mobilization could only take place on the basis of an appeal to sentiment as well as to economic interest, and that one of the most pervasive sentiments entertained by masses of men was the sentiment of nationality. Thus, even in his ideal socialist brotherhood of peoples, he anticipated the persistence and integrity of Italian culture and political identity.[56] More than that, within the confines of the world as it was then, Mussolini invoked

54. Mussolini, "Vecchia Vaticana lupa cruenta," *Opera*, 2, 208.
55. Mussolini, "La crisi," *Opera*, 2, 7.
56. Mussolini, "Bolzano," *Opera*, 2, 119ff., "Emigranti italiani," *Opera*, 2, 238.

images of a greater Italy, a revolutionary and new Italy that would satisfy the requirements of contemporary development, a modern Italy committed to the rapid expansion of its productive capabilities (the precondition for attaining the equality that was necessary to enter the community of nations as an equal partner).[57]

Mussolini's revolutionary nationalism, while it distinguished itself from the traditional patriotism and nationalism of the bourgeoisie, displayed many of those features we today identify with the nationalism of underdeveloped peoples.[58] It was an anticonservative nationalism that anticipated vast social changes; it was directed against both foreign and domestic oppressors; it conjured up an image of a renewed and regenerate nation that would perform a historical mission; it invoked a moral ideal of selfless sacrifice and commitment in the service of collective goals; and it recalled ancient glories and anticipated a shared and greater glory.

Through this form of nationalism Mussolini found a common cause with the *Vociani*, who had provided much of the substance of the new nationalism that had begun to manifest itself among the intellectuals staffing the nationalist *Il Regno* at the time of its founding. Many of the same intellectuals, holding the same ideas, had staffed Papini's *Leonardo* and had ultimately passed into the ranks of *La Voce*. Mussolini found many of their ideas fully compatible with his socialist internationalism. His ideas attempted to synthesize socialist and nationalist elements—to reaffirm, at a more sophisticated level, the nationalist and socialist aspirations of Italy's first socialism. It was a form of national socialism that was at once elitist, voluntaristic, moralizing, mass-mobilizing, and antiparliamentarian.

Beneath the surface of his prose, Mussolini's core of convictions lent coherence and continuity. While in the Trentino, those convictions led him to enter into correspondence with the nationalist newspaper *Alto Adige*, and in a raid on their offices the Austrian police gained possession of the correspondence. On this basis, Mussolini was charged with agitation against public order and the imperial house, and the process that would lead to his expulsion from Austrian territory was begun.

57. Mussolini, "La sciopero generale e la violenza," *Opera*, *3*, 165; cf. "L'attualità," *Opera*, *2*, 240.

58. G. Megaro, *Mussolini in the Making*, pp. 151–61; R. De Felice, *Mussolini il rivoluzionario*, p. 67.

The police records of Trent show that the Austrian government had convinced itself that he was not only a dangerous social revolutionary, but also an irredentist.[59] The police reports alluded to the fact that he was not only a revolutionary socialist, he was, in a perfectly comprehensible sense, a nationalist as well.

59. R. De Felice, *Mussolini il rivoluzionario*, p. 73.

Chapter 5 The First Interlude: The War in Tripoli

> I like this man very much. He is a revolutionary in the classic manner. This valiant Mussolini lacks only one thing—he is not a socialist and a syndicalist at one and the same time.
> *Amilcare Cipriani*[1]

Mussolini was expelled from Austrian territory on September 26, 1909. For a few days he remained in the proximity of the Austrian border—apparently in the hope that socialist agitation in the Trentino against his expulsion might compel the Austrian government to allow him to return. It was a forlorn hope. On October 5, Mussolini was back in his native Romagna—his train fare borrowed from his father.

For Mussolini the months between October and December were spent in abject poverty. He had almost no income and few options. There was the possibility of a position as a civil servant, and there was the prospect of emigrating to the Western Hemisphere. Mussolini toyed with both alternatives, and it was only when the offer of a paid post as the secretary of the Socialist Federation of Forlì came, that he rejected them both. This post included the editorship of a small socialist weekly, a paper Mussolini himself chose to call *La lotta di classe*, *The Class Struggle*. Mussolini, at twenty-six, had finally assumed leadership obligations among the organized socialists of his native land. From 1909 until 1914 he was to function as a local, regional, and subsequently as a national, leader within the socialist ranks. He was to move, during those years, from the editorship of a small provincial weekly to responsibility for the largest socialist daily in Italy, *Avanti!*

The years between Mussolini's expulsion from Austria in 1909 and the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 were filled with political activity. For reasons I will indicate, these years were a long interlude in Mussolini's political maturation. For the first two years after his repatriation from Austria, Mussolini was intensively

1. G. Pini and D. Susmel, *Mussolini: l'uomo e l'opera*, *1*, 189.

and almost exclusively involved in the local politics of the Romagna, where the Mazzinian republicans had long dominated popular politics, and where their struggle with the socialists was bitter and, not infrequently, violent. Mussolini became immersed in the local conflict to the almost complete exclusion of every other consideration, until the outbreak of the war in Tripoli in September, 1911. Italy's declaration of war against the Ottoman Empire forced him to turn his attention to national and international politics, and his political response to the challenges of that crisis mark, for our purposes, the close of a discrete period in his life—a first interlude.

This period counts as an interlude because the intellectual development begun in 1909 and manifest in the revolutionary nationalism of the young Mussolini did not continue. Mussolini, as a local Party functionary, became, in fact, somewhat lodged in the orthodoxies of the Socialist Party. He had always identified himself with the revolutionary wing of the Party, more frequently than not characterizing himself as a syndicalist. But by 1910 the syndicalists had not only been officially expelled from the Party, but also their recruitment potential seemed to be severely circumscribed. Mussolini was apparently faced with the alternative of continuing to identify himself with the syndicalists and breaking with the official Party, or continuing his membership in the Party, with an effort to capture it from within, and disassociating himself from the syndicalists. It seems reasonably clear that he opted for the latter course. Yet it is equally clear that in so doing Mussolini did not forsake any of his revolutionary and syndicalist convictions.

On his return to the Romagna and his assumption of the duties of editor of *La lotta di classe*, Mussolini used the first issue of the weekly, which appeared on January 9, 1910, to reassert his antiparliamentary and revolutionary commitments. He reaffirmed his conviction that the most fundamental features of the time were those generated by "the struggle of class against class—a struggle which finds its culmination in a total revolution."[2]

Mussolini regarded the two protagonists of the struggle, in perfect orthodoxy, as the bourgeoisie, on the one hand, and the proletariat, on the other.[3] There was, once again, a recitation of now

2. Mussolini, "Al lavoro!" *Opera*, *3*, 5.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 5ff.; cf. "Impotenza," "La commedia," "L'A.B.C. sindacale," "Il parlamento della malavita," "Avanti, o barbari!," "Per il socialismo forlivese," "Commento al nostro congresso," and "Primo Maggio 1910," *Opera*, *3*, 33ff., 37–40, 43, 66, 69–76, 80–81, 83–84.

familiar Mussolinian convictions; and the struggle between the classes took on a quasi-military character with the proletariat led by an exiguous vanguard minority and the bourgeoisie arrayed against it, armed with all the institutions of the state. He remained emphatically antiparliamentarian and clearly committed to moral violence to induce the birth of a new social order. Outside the context of unredeemed Italy, Mussolini's revolutionary nationalism was to remain a secondary theme—but remain it did. He continued to speak of "the new Italy which continues to develop, which labors and acutely feels the need of new forms . . . of national life."[4] The obverse of this nationalism, his objections to the "false nationalism" of the bourgeoisie, reappeared also.[5]

By 1910, at twenty-seven, Mussolini was prepared to act as a leader of provincial revolutionary socialism in a regional socialist organization that counted about 1,400 members. He published a weekly that was distributed rather widely and that managed to stimulate a degree of socialist agitation and propaganda unusual in an area long dominated by the republicans. Moreover, it is clear that Mussolini's specific postures were largely dictated by organizational considerations. He was a member of the Socialist Party; furthermore, he was a member of a minority faction; his commitment to the Party largely determined his general response to social issues; his revolutionary commitment made him singularly intransigent; and his aspirations to national leadership in the Party led him to view his local leadership as a springboard to national responsibilities.

It is quite clear that Mussolini was grooming himself for national leadership. He sought—and the evidence is convincing—to use his leadership of the provincial socialist organization as a step to national leadership in the Party. Consequently, in pursuing local objectives, he used every occasion to repeat his reservations concerning the established leadership and to display his special leadership qualities.[6] Since he was operating at a local level, it was local politics that occupied most of his time. All the evidence we have indicates that he devoted himself to these problems without respite and succeeded in convincing the membership of the provincial body that he was specially gifted in leadership qualities. So enthused

4. Mussolini, "L'attuale momento politico," *Opera*, *3*, 12.

5. Mussolini, "La coltura a Forlì," *Opera*, *3*, 24.

6. Mussolini, "Il Don Chisciotte della mezzadria," "Lo sproloquio di Don Chisciotte," "La questione del giorno," *Opera*, *3*, 77–78, 88–90, 151–52.

was the membership that he was offered an increased stipend for his work—which he refused.[7]

Throughout 1910 Mussolini remained preoccupied with problems that were essentially local in character—the struggle between the socialists and the republicans of Forlì, the strife between sharecroppers and small property holders and the agrarian day laborers in the outlying areas—but always, apparently, with an eye to the national leadership of the Party. He used every opportunity to berate the national Party leaders for their compromissary politics, their accommodation to the parliamentary system, and their indisposition or inability to assume truly revolutionary responsibilities.

Mussolini's revolutionary socialism retained, throughout this period, all the syndicalist characteristics it had assumed as early as 1903. Socialism remained a matter of shaping human consciousness to the service of revolutionary renovation.[8] It remained essentially elitist, committed to quality rather than quantity,[9] and clearly antiparliamentary. It continued to share more affinities with the ideas of the *Vociani*, the revolutionary syndicalists, and some elements of the nascent revolutionary nationalist movement, than it did with the majoritarian socialism of Turati, Treves, Bissolati, and Bonomi. References to Orano and Olivetti appear regularly during this period, and though Mussolini was to become increasingly critical of organized syndicalism, the ideas of Olivetti, to be found in the pages of the syndicalist *Pagine libere*, clearly surface in his prose. He became increasingly dissatisfied with Party policies.

In the spring of 1910, in what was apparently a move of desperation, Mussolini made very clear that he was prepared to lead the socialists of Forlì out of the Party should the Party continue to display what he considered to be political immorality and revolutionary inconstancy. In October, 1910, when the Socialist Party held its national congress in Milan, Mussolini came away convinced that it had become an "enormous cadaver." He advocated its quick interment and proposed the formation of an autonomous revolutionary socialist party. He regularly denounced the behavior of Party leaders, the representatives of socialism in the *Camera*, who either participated in political combinations of convenience with nonsocialists or who, like Bissolati, had been offered ministries by the monarchy or who, like Enrico Ferri, continued to voice tradi-

7. Cf. "Per il socialismo forlivese," *Opera*, *3*, 72.
8. Mussolini, "Purifichiamoci," *Opera*, *3*, 19.
9. Mussolini, "La nostra propaganda," *Opera*, *3*, 26.

tional bourgeois patriotic sentiments in the Italian parliament while advertising themselves as revolutionary socialists.

In the spring of 1911 Mussolini advocated the secession of the socialists of Forlì in a premature attempt at national leadership. In April the Forlì section approved, with unanimity, its autonomy from the official Socialist Party. At the third congress of the entire provincial federation on April 22, of the thirty-eight sections represented, twenty-seven voted for immediate separation from the Party. If Mussolini had hoped that the example of the *forlivesi* would provide similar defections in the other provinces, he was to be disappointed. Their gesture was destined to remain just that, and the Socialist Party prepared for its national congress to be held in Modena in September.

Although Mussolini and his followers had thus effectively isolated themselves from the Party, he continued to attract followers in the Romagna. By the middle of 1911, the number of organized Mussolinian sections in the province had increased from thirty-eight to forty-four. The number of youth groups had increased from twelve to fifteen, and a women's organization had been formed. Membership increased from 1,800 to over 2,100. By the time of the Modena Congress, the twelfth national socialist congress, Mussolini was in control of 2,000 votes that the revolutionary wing of the Party, represented by Francesco Ciccotti, sorely needed.

Ciccotti advised Mussolini to reconsider his "noble indiscipline" and lead his secessionists back into the Party in a proposed effort to revitalize it from within. Mussolini was in an unenviable position. The secession of the *forlivesi* had not produced the large-scale defections from the reformist Party he had anticipated, and now even the revolutionary faction had solicited his return. His failure to lead any appreciable sections out of the Party had left him politically disabled, but his reentry into the Party at that time might well have been seen as an admission of failure.

As it happened, Mussolini was not forced to make an immediate decision on the issue. In the middle of September, 1911, all of Italy was shaken by developments on the international scene—events that were to overshadow the factional and local struggles in the Party. War between Italy and the Ottoman Turks appeared imminent; Italy was gearing itself up for war in North Africa and the Near East. The socialists and all the elements of the popular left were thrown into turmoil by the prospect. While Mussolini had been preoccupied with the provincial struggles and interparty strife, vast

forces had begun to change the shape of Italian economic, social, and political life. These forces came together and exploded in what is now known as the war in Tripoli.

As has already been suggested, Italy from 1900 until 1911 underwent profound economic transformation. What is now called the Giolittian period brought with it the expansion of an economic infrastructure capable of supporting industrial growth. Financial institutions were restructured to meet the growth needs of the economy. The behavior patterns of industrial society gradually began to make inroads among various segments of the Italian population. Investments in plant doubled and tripled in the mechanical, textile, metallurgical, chemical, hydroelectric, extractive, and transportation industries. There was a decided shift from light to heavy industry. By 1907 Società Elba, Terni, Ilva, Piombino, Ferriere italiane, Ligure Metallurgica, and Savona were increasing Italian steel production to meet the growing demands of shipping, heavy industry, land transportation, and armaments. The 72-million-lire stock value (computed at 1938 rates) of the Italian steel combines in 1900 was to increase to 312 million lire by 1913.

In effect, by the beginning of the second decade of the twentieth century, Italy had laid down the economic base for aggressive and relatively confident social elements that envisioned a significantly different new Italy. With the exception of the serious financial and economic crisis of 1907, Italy had enjoyed a period of unprecedented industrial growth. Representatives of what Mussolini himself had described, while in the Trentino, as the new and aggressive "productive" bourgeoisie, had begun to make their appearance. In 1910 the *Confederazione Generale dell'Industria Italiana* (*Confindustria*), an association of Italian industrial leaders, was organized as an outgrowth of the Industrial League of Turin, founded in 1906. Both were the direct consequences of the proliferation of organized industrial and business interest groups produced by the economic changes of the Giolittian period. At the same time the *Associazione fra le Società Italiane per Azioni*, the Association of Italian Joint Stock Companies, was organized.

These developments, as would be expected, produced an increasing self-confidence among some elements of the Italian population, and an increasing sense of capability, a determination to gain control over their future. It seems that this rekindling of the Italian spirit found expression in a variety of forms. Gioacchino Volpe, for example, refers to a new mood among segments of the popula-

tion that gave voice to the "energetic and optimistic vitality" rooted in the "reality of the modern epoch, the epoch of the machine and of the 'strenuous life'." [10] Gabriele d'Annunzio exulted in the spectacle of industrial cities and smoking chimneys. The Futurists, under the leadership of F.T. Marinetti, were calling up images of an antitraditional and Futurist Italy that would abandon its preoccupation with museums and ancient artefacts, concentrate on speed and machines, and become infused with a new religiosity—the commitment to technology and productivity.

During this period, as we have seen, in the pages of *Il Regno* and *Leonardo* Giovanni Papini and Giuseppe Prezzolini were advocating a more pragmatic, aggressive modern Italy, in which collective consciousness would be steeled to great collective purpose. All of these were literary, intellectual, artistic, and political expressions of the vast economic changes that had begun to manifest themselves by the turn of the century. Papini could speak of a reborn Italy as early as 1906 and Prezzolini of Italy's increasing ability to defend its interests in a world dominated by producers, those capable of the aggressive defense of their collective interests.

The fact is that until then orthodox socialism in Italy had not devoted much intellectual energy to problems that were specifically national or international. At the turn of the twentieth century Italian socialists had been almost exclusively preoccupied with the social problem, and other problems became the province of the remaining political associations. The general problems of national defense and international politics that the new nation had inherited with unification were dealt with by the socialists largely in terms of slogans: the military establishment, which required "economically unproductive expenditure," served only to suppress dissidence; the bourgeois state was nothing more than a "committee for the defense of class interests"; the working class had "no fatherland" and could not be expected to defend the nation; international war would be the occasion for civil war, since the working classes had become far too sophisticated to shed blood in the service of the propertied class; and there were only two nations in the world—the "oppressed" and the "oppressors."

Behind this façade of indifference to national interests, however, it was clear that there were appreciable numbers of Italian workers who profitted from the proliferation of heavy industry, which served

10. G. Volpe, *Italia in cammino*, p. 109.

the needs of an expanding military apparatus. Workers in the iron and steel industries, for all their socialist convictions, were ill-prepared to countenance a reduction in military spending if that reduction threatened their relatively improved standard of living. Those elements of the working class that benefited from the same protectionist policies insulating the infant industries of Italy, those that profitted from social legislation introduced by the collaborationist policies of reformist socialism, and those that found support in the administrative and executive policies of the bourgeois state all supported the established machinery of government. They had, in effect, something to defend in the bourgeois nation. They had a fatherland.

Whether the socialists were prepared to admit it or not there had been, by 1911, significant changes in the general mood of Italy. The nation that had greeted the twentieth century afflicted with a pervasive sense of incompetence and inadequacy, had begun to show signs of energy and determination. There was a growing dissatisfaction with Italy as it was—modest, passive, and ineffectual; there was an increasing preoccupation among intellectuals with the writings of Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, and Bergson—philosophers of will and creativity; there was an increasing fascination with risk, adventure, challenge, sports, and the organization of collective energies; and there was a growing discomfort with the lethargic, factious, compromissary, formalist, corrupt, and traditional Italy, the Italy afflicted by that abiding sense of inferiority common to peoples locked in retarded economic circumstances.

Despite these rising expectations, Italy found itself, in 1911, the weakest of the European great powers. Italian military expenditure was not a third of that of Germany, Russia, or France; Italy's manpower capability was below that of Austria-Hungary; its merchant and naval shipping ranked sixth in the world; and it was surrounded on every side by aggressive and expansionist powers.

As early as 1890 the Italians had indicated to Lord Salisbury of the British Foreign Office that an extension of French control along the Mediterranean in Morocco might well require Italian moves in Tripoli, to safeguard Italy's defense capabilities in North Africa. Otherwise, French control of North Africa and Austrian control of the eastern seaboard of the Adriatic would make Italy the most effectively encircled "great nation" on earth. To Italy's increasingly assertive mood were added more insistent problems. One of the most urgent was the demand for land to provide for the colonial

settlement of Italy's surplus population—surplus that reflected itself in Italian outmigration. Despite the rapid improvement of the nation's economic life, over half a million Italians emigrated each year, most of the time to face humiliation and rejection at the hands of residents in the more highly developed industrial nations.[11]

Many Italians regarded the colonization of North Africa as a viable solution to the problem of surplus population. The sparsely populated North African coast was viewed as a promised land in which the landless agrarian population could obtain suitable arable lands under the protection of the Italian flag and Italian arms. Many Italians, and many socialists among them, pointed to the grievous loss suffered by the nation through the forced emigration of so many citizens—a loss that was by no means offset by the return of part of the wages earned abroad to dependents on the peninsula. Italian labor contributed to the economic well-being of nations throughout Europe and the Western Hemisphere—to the competitive detriment of the homeland.

The most acceptable long-range solution, almost every commentator realized, was massive industrialization. But Italy was a land extremely poor in natural resources, without any of the principal prerequisites of rapid industrial development. Werner Sombart calculated that Italy at the beginning of the twentieth century was at least a quarter of a century behind Germany in industrial development. In 1902 Italy produced less than 0.5 million tons of coal, and imported over 5.25 million tons. The lack of fossil fuels was only partially offset by the exploitation of hydroelectric power. And only in the north of Italy were the cities close enough to the mountains to make hydroelectric power a feasible alternative.

All this considered, many argued, the most immediate solution was expansion and colonization, the acquisition of suitable territory for settlement and resource exploitation within defensible proximity of the peninsula. Many socialists reminded their confreres that Friedrich Engels himself, with similar arguments, had licensed the French conquest of Algiers, arguing that advanced bourgeoisie civilization was clearly preferable to Bedouin barbarism.[12] Karl Marx had spoken of the English conquest of India as serving a similar historical function.[13] More specifically, in 1902 as orthodox a

11. Cf. R. Michels, "Studien zur Entstehungsgeschichte des italienischen Imperialismus," in *Sozialismus und Faschismus in Italien*, pp. 53–138.

12. F. Engels, "French Rule in Algeria," in Shlomo Avineri, ed., *Karl Marx on Colonialism and Modernization* (New York: Doubleday, 1968), p. 43.

13. K. Marx, "British Rule in India," in *ibid.*, pp. 83–89.

Marxist as Antonio Labriola called socialist attention to "the aggravated phenomenon of emigration, which, with a few exceptions carries away men . . . whom our home capital would invite to our home colonies, if we had any." [14]

By 1911 Italy was no longer the nation that had suffered defeat at Adowa at the hands of Menelik's Ethiopians. It was a nation that had developed an increasing self-assertiveness and confidence. Modern industry had taken root in the northern industrial triangle. More and more frequently the youth of Italy aspired to a place in the world of modern nations. Italy had too long remained the last among civilized states. There was a cry for a new national consciousness, an increased self-respect, and an appeal to masculine adventure. For many it was the time to undo the shame of Adowa. They argued that Italy's doleful attempt at African colonialism in the nineteenth century had failed because of the interference of the more advanced nations of Europe. But circumstances, they insisted, had now significantly altered.

By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, the relationships between the great powers of Europe had changed. In 1907 the Austrians had annexed the provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina and were threatening expansion into the Danubian Basin and through the Balkans to Salonika. The Russians had made countermoves, and both powers were engaged in elaborate political maneuvering. The French, in the meantime, had continued to expand along the North African coast and were prepared to move against Morocco. As a consequence the British were disposed to allow the Italians to attempt a redress of balance.

The decline of the Ottoman Empire had become increasingly apparent, and it seemed that everyone was prepared to accept its dismemberment. Many Italians argued that under such circumstances a war against the Turks and the annexation of Tripoli might well be successful. The great powers of Europe were unlikely to intervene, and Italy felt itself capable of undertaking the enterprise. The war, it was argued, would solve Italy's demographic problems and, many thought, its resource problems as well. The mood of the peninsula seemed appropriate to such an adventure, and Italy would finally enter the ranks of the great powers.

In the months that preceded September, 1911, a series of incidents occurred or were contrived, and when the French moved into

14. Antonio Labriola, *Socialism and Philosophy*, pp. 156ff.

the capital of Morocco in September, 1911, the Italians sent what was tantamount to an ultimatum to the Turkish authorities in Constantinople. On September 29, 1911, after a declaration of war, the Italians attacked the Turkish forces in Tripoli and Cyrenaica. Italian naval units sank a Turkish destroyer and a torpedo boat, blockaded Turkish forces in Tripoli, and bombarded the Ionian port of Prevesa. Tripoli itself was quickly put under siege, and Italian marines stormed the town. In ten days the Italians were in control of the coast of the eastern Mediterranean. Tobruk was bombarded; Derna and Benghazi captured. By the end of October the Italian navy was at the Dardanelles defying the Turks to engage in battle.

For the first time since its unification, Italy was displaying the properties of a great power, but the unaccustomed events created enormous tensions for orthodox socialism. There was little evidence that the conflict was simply a brigand's war, a war solely for the profit of capitalists. While there was some indication that war might mean profit for certain industries and financial institutions, it was difficult to write off all the events as the simple consequence of capitalist machinations. There was clearly broad-based popular support for the war. How much of a problem the war caused for socialist intellectuals is shown by the divergence they displayed in attempting to understand it. As we have seen, the socialists had a repertoire of slogans for such occasions. They opposed international war as the product of capitalist avarice; they opposed the military as the armed militia of the bourgeoisie; they opposed patriotism as a device exploited by the ruling class to inure the oppressed to docility; and in a long series of international conferences the socialists had insistently rejected international warfare. All of which hardly enabled them to come to grips with the reality of the war.

In fact, the crisis of September, 1911, made evident to thinking socialists that they had not really begun to address themselves to the problems of national and international politics. As the crisis matured, many Italian socialists began to review socialist commitments, and some of them recalled that early in the century the German Social Democratic Party had been prepared to grant that German socialists would defend the fatherland against aggression. At that time there were many who reminded the Germans that the effort to decide who might and who might not, be an aggressor, under the conditions that prevail in crisis circumstances, could be very difficult indeed. But moreover, there were many Italian socialists who reminded their comrades that Eduard Bernstein, the heir

of Marx and Engels, had suggested not only that it was conceivable that socialists might defend their native land out of concern for their own interests, but that it was equally conceivable that socialism might justify colonialism. Bernstein reminded socialists that the progress to which they were committed might best be served by the conquest of savage and barbarian peoples. Both Marx and Engels, he argued, had suggested as much. Bernstein maintained that Marx and Engels were committed to the principle that, in conflicts between peoples at different levels of socioeconomic development, "the higher civilization ultimately can claim a higher right." "Savages," Bernstein went on, "have only a conditional right . . . to the land occupied by them."[15] It was clear, he said, that such postures might become indistinguishable from social patriotism or national chauvinism, but that fact alone should not lead socialists to fail to assess each case on its merits.

The issue of what was to count as aggression and of when the higher civilization had the right to occupy the land of "savages" could hardly be resolved by slogans. As soon as the decision was no longer one of principle but of calculation, any number of difficulties arose. Socialists evidently did not have a simple rule governing cases that involved the nation in international conflict or colonial enterprise, whether that conflict was between advanced industrial states or between advanced and economically retarded communities. Friedrich Engels, for example, had justified the North American conquest of Texas on the grounds that it had wrested the land from the "lazy Mexicans who did not know what to do with it." The Yankees, Engels told the socialists of the period, had "increased the medium of circulation, . . . concentrated in a few years a heavy population and an extensive trade on the most suitable part of the Pacific Coast, . . . built great cities, . . . opened up steamship lines . . . which will actually open the Pacific Ocean to civilization for the first time."[16] This provided a historical justification for the undertaking. Engels had made similar judgments about the German expansion eastward at the expense of the Slavs—peoples, he insisted, without a national, historic tradition. Even the Turks, in his judgment, were "a thoroughly degenerate nation,"

15. Eduard Bernstein, *Evolutionary Socialism* (New York: Schocken, 1961), p. 178ff.

16. F. Engels, "Democratic Panslavism," in K. Marx and F. Engels, *The Russian Menace to Europe*, ed. by Paul W. Blackstock and Bert F. Hoselitz (New York: Free Press, 1952), p. 71.

and part of that "ethnic trash" destined to succumb to expansive "mighty empires."[17]

There was, in fact, a perfectly comprehensible Marxist tradition in support of national expansion as a natural by-product of the maturation of an economic system. Given Marx's convictions concerning the distributive defects of capitalism as an economic system, the search for market supplements outside the capitalist system became inevitable. Such expansion, in turn, introduced the rudiments of an advanced industrial system in retarded economies. Thus colonial expansion could be seen as serving the purposes of history. For classical Marxism the extension of the capitalist system throughout the world was inevitable. Capitalism was charged with the historical responsibility of producing the economic base of the future socialist society, and part of that process involved expansion outside the confines of the original system. For this reason Marx argued that British imperialism was doing the work of history, and Engels could justify Yankee expansion into what had been Mexico.

Similarly, when Antonio Labriola, as early as 1902, was questioned about the socialist position on the possibility of Italy's expansion into North Africa, he lamented the "chronic anticolonialist" disposition of the socialists. In his judgment, it was a simple prejudice. Moreover, he insisted that Marxists could not in fact remain indifferent to national interests, since the nation was the contemporary vehicle of economic development. Part of that development involved economic competition and the search for market supplements for capitalist productivity as well as resource supplements to sustain the enterprise.

For Antonio Labriola, as an orthodox Marxist, Italian expansion in North Africa was a predictable requirement of Italy's economic maturation. More than that, the northern coast of Africa would allow Italian proletarians to find employment under the national flag rather than as pariahs in foreign capitalist undertakings. The maturation of Italy's retarded economy required, in Labriola's judgment, expansion into North Africa. Just as Engels had justified French expansion in Algeria and Yankee expansion in Mexico, Antonio Labriola anticipated Italian expansion into primitive North Africa.[18]

All these considerations came together to create, with the advent

17. F. Engels, "Hungary and Panslavism," *ibid.*, pp. 62ff.

18. Antonio Labriola, "Sulla questione di Tripoli," *Scritti politici: 1886–1904*, ed. by Valentino Gerrantana (Rome: Laterza, 1970), pp. 491–99.

of the war in Tripoli, a further crisis among socialists, who, both inside and outside the Socialist Party, found themselves involved in a theoretical crisis and a crisis of conscience. Some socialists in the Party and some syndicalists outside the Party opted to support the war. The arguments of the syndicalists are particularly noteworthy, for in the discussion generated by the crisis, they drew out some of the interred implications of classical Marxism.

Revolutionary Syndicalism and the War in Tripoli

Before the outbreak of the war in the Mediterranean, the syndicalists recognized that in economically underdeveloped circumstances, socialism must inevitably involve itself in the interests of the politically defined nation. Socialist ideas, to penetrate the consciousness of the masses, must, under retarded economic conditions, appeal to national sentiment.

As nations undertake their drive to industrial development, national sentiment increases in correlative measure. Industrial and economic development have always been accompanied by strong national sentiments. No less could be expected in Italy. And in fact Arturo Labriola identified a strong positive correlation between the rates of industrial development and national sentiment. Therefore he recommended that syndicalists "must proceed from the point of view of the present reality, in which socialism is neither outside nor above, but directly involved, in the nation. . . . In other words any complex of ideas, in order to influence whatever class, must respect national tradition . . . . National sentiments incorporate and supersede social sentiments" under such conditions.[19]

The rationale for this position was gradually articulated in the months to follow. In November, 1911, Angelo Olivetti formulated the entire argument.[20] Olivetti suggested that there were two ways of assuming revolutionary obligations. One way—Hegelian, Marxist, and syndicalist—was dialectical and involved allowing, indeed assisting, the prevalent economic system to mature fully as the precondition of a socialist succession. The alternative way—reformist and superficial—attempted to mitigate the disabilities that attend

19. Arturo Labriola, *Le tendenza politiche dell'Austria contemporanea*, pp. 10, 13.

20. A. O. Olivetti, "L'altra campana," in G. Barni, *et al.*, *Pro e contro la guerra di Tripoli*, pp. 107–22.

capitalist development. The first way was calculated to result in inevitable social transformation. The second way patched up the existing system and delayed the advent of its successor.

True revolutionaries, in Olivetti's judgment, supported any strategy that fostered the development of a "society characterized by industrial and productive abundance and technical efficiency . . . . Whatever impairs the achievement of bourgeois purpose, obstructs the historical accession of the proletariat." Thus, while the immediate, empirical, interests of the proletariat may have turned on salary increments and welfare benefits, such concerns may in fact have proved to be reactionary and conservative, first by impairing the full maturation of the capitalist system, and second by making the impaired system more tolerable.

If Italy was not to remain forever in the limbo of precapitalist circumstances, Olivetti argued it was necessary that the masses contribute to large-scale industrial and economic development, and to mobilize the masses for such purposes, it was necessary to appeal to national sentiment. In response the masses could take pride in "the founding of a new factory, improved agriculture, a new railway line, even if these accomplishments under present conditions rebound exclusively to the benefit of the capitalists." The syndicalists anticipated a new society of producers, and the necessary preconditions for its appearance included massive industrial and economic development. Since development could only take place under the political auspices of the nation, the proletariat was understood to have an investment in national identity.

All of this was put together as the basis of an argument that sought to justify proletarian support for the war against the Turks. As capitalism went into phased development, so the argument proceeded, it must at some point expand beyond its national confines. Marx had insisted on the necessity of that expansion as early as the *Communist Manifesto*. Moreover, both he and Engels had justified such expansion on the grounds of the rights of civilization against "savagery" and "barbarism." When Engels sought to justify the German annexation of Schleswig, he characterized the Danes as only "half-civilized" and legitimatized Germany's aggressions by an appeal to "the rights of civilization against barbarism, progress against stagnation." With the same right, Engels went on, France annexed Flanders and Alsace.[21] In his support for Italy's war

21. F. Engels, "Der dänisch-preussische Waffenstillstand," *Werke*, 5, 395.

against the Turks, Arturo Labriola very carefully cited these specifically Marxist quotes.[22]

According to Labriola, the war in Tripoli would not only provide impetus to the economic development of the peninsula, but it would be a revolutionary war that would break the European hegemony of the advanced capitalist powers over those nations in the process of development. The war against the Turks, although undertaken by a bourgeois government, was no less revolutionary for that.[23] Marx himself had indicated that England's economic dominance over the European continent had made nationalism and national interests a proletarian concern. Nationalities that resisted the iron dominance of England were doing some of socialism's work.[24]

Years later, when Engels sought to justify proletarian involvement in Bismarck's war against France, he did so with essentially the same rationale, maintaining that even if the war reinforced the position of the reactionary chancellor, it would nonetheless do a bit of socialism's work. It would assure a unified national base for the development of both the Reich's economy and the working class itself. It would further Germany's economic and industrial growth and, consequently, the maturation of the working class.[25]

Giulio Barni, reflecting these arguments and anticipating Italy's involvement in the war in Tripoli, indicated that the internationalist aspirations of orthodox socialism would remain an "empty and insubstantial formula" until the nations of the world had all achieved the same level of economic development. Until that time, *national* aspirations would remain, corresponding to the historical and economic needs of each community in competition for equity and survival.[26] "Internationalism," Barni maintained, "does not correspond to the real needs or ideals of the working class" for the simple reason that the developed nations preempted the resources and space of the underdeveloped nations, generating the rivalries on which nationalist sentiment was based.[27]

For at least these reasons Olivetti recognized some pervasive affinities between syndicalism and nationalism. They were both primarily committed to massive increments of production and na-

22. Arturo Labriola, "L'Europa contro l'Italia," in *Pro e contro*, p. 55.
23. *Ibid.*, pp. 55–61.
24. Cf. K. Marx, "Die revolutionäre Bewegung," *Werke*, 6, 149.
25. Engels to Marx, August 15, 1870, *Selected Correspondence* (Moscow: Foreign Languages, n.d.), pp. 294ff.
26. Giulio Barni, "Dopo la conferenza di Buda-Pest," in *Pro e contro*, pp. 29–31.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 33.

tional development; they were vital, energetic movements directed by an aristocracy, an elite of producers.[28] Both sought, as Barni clearly recognized, a social revolution that itself required "the bourgeoisie [to] complete its historic parabola, of which expansionism, and the furthest penetration of capitalist industrialization, constitute essential and inevitable phases."[29] Both syndicalism and nationalism recognized the historical mission of the bourgeoisie, the former with an eye to the ultimate prevalence of socialism and the latter with a much narrower perspective.

In the judgment of Labriola, Olivetti, and Barni, as long as Italy remained underdeveloped, the bourgeois aspirations of nationalism were an affirmation of Italy's developmental potential, the necessary antecedent to socialist revolution. Engels himself had insisted that revolution could only obtain in circumstances in which the bourgeoisie had attained full maturity, and by implication had fully industrialized and modernized its economy:

> The revolution sought by modern socialism is the victory of the proletariat over the bourgeoisie . . . . To accomplish this, we need not only the proletariat, which carries out the revolution, but also a bourgeoisie in whose hands the productive forces of society have developed to such a stage that they permit the final elimination of all class distinctions . . . . This stage of development is only reached in bourgeois production.[30]

In effect, if socialists choose the ends—the socialist revolution—they must also commit themselves to the means—the fullest maturation of capitalist economy. Since the full development of capitalism implied economic expansion and colonial penetration, the socialists could hardly object to Italy's "necessary" war against the Turks. In making war on the Turks in the service of capitalist development, the bourgeoisie of Italy was doing a bit of socialism's work. To reject the war on the basis of humanitarian scruples would be to reject the ends sought and would be, in fact, reactionary and counterrevolutionary.

By the middle of November, 1911, some of the most important syndicalists had opted to support bourgeois Italy's war against the

28. While Olivetti identified the differences between the two movements, it is clear that he was prepared to recognize their emphatic similarities in terms of mass-mobilization strategies and antidemocratic orientation; cf. Olivetti, "Sindacalismo e nazionalismo," in *Pro e contro*, pp. 11–27.

29. G. Barni, "Tripoli e sindacalismo," in *Pro e contro*, pp. 153ff.

30. F. Engels, "Russia and the Social Revolution," in K. Marx and F. Engels, *The Russian Menace to Europe*, edited by P. W. Blackstock and B. F. Hoselitz, p. 205.

Turks in the service of what they took to be revolutionary purpose. Arturo Labriola, Olivetti, Orano, and Dinale all chose to view the war as progressive in effect. At the same time, Roberto Michels was undertaking his own assessment of the war, which two years later matured into his *L'imperialismo italiano*.[31] Michels brought together all the arguments invoked by the syndicalists who supported Italy's war in the Mediterranean. He argued that, given Italy's population density, its dearth of resources, and the retarded state of its economic system, expansion into North Africa to settle excess population and to search out resources was historically justified. But moreover, Italian expansion was a function of Italy's political and international humiliation at the hands of the more advanced industrial powers. Italy was beginning its developmental trajectory. Its population, both bourgeois and proletariat, was animated by a recognition that the national community was entering a critical period of challenge.[32]

The fact that there was little sustained proletarian or popular opposition, and the creditable performance of proletarian soldiers in combat, demonstrated that the war had tapped some profound historical needs of the Italian people. As Marx himself had suggested, the hegemonic capitalist powers had created a situation on the continent in which entire peoples found themselves in proletarian circumstances. Italy's war against the Turks was not only a war against a half-civilized people, but was a war against the combined forces of international plutocracy. Michels quoted Arturo Labriola, who maintained that Italy, in making war, was struggling "against the intrigues, the threats, the money and the arms of reactionary and plutocratic Europe that will not allow the 'minor' nations a gesture or word that might compromise its iron hegemony."[33]

Italy was, in effect, a proletarian nation—oppressed, humiliated, deprived, and revolutionary.[34] Its war was a revolutionary war—progressive, developmental, and historically necessary. In Michels' argument there was, as a result, a combination of nationalist and syndicalist concerns. He alluded, for support, to the writings of Enrico Corradini, whose nationalist appeals to the syndicalists were informed by just such a logic. The syndicalists aspired to the creation of a nation that was the equal of any advanced industrial power,

31. R. Michels, *L'imperialismo italiano*.
32. *Ibid.*, pp. 178–80.
33. Arturo Labriola, "L'Europa contro l'Italia," *Scritti politici*, p. 61.
34. Michels, *L'imperialismo*, pp. 92–95.

as a precondition to social revolution. Nationalists aspired to the same ends. Both recognized that this purpose entailed the creation of a collective revolutionary commitment involving dedication, obedience, sacrifice, and combativeness. It required the generation of collective skills, improved technology, assiduous labor, and a pervasive sense of national mission.[35]

Interestingly enough, and quite independent of these specific political and international developments, Georges Sorel had also moved in the direction of a synthesis of nationalist and syndicalist aspirations. As early as 1906, he had joined with a number of Italian syndicalists who had begun to envision a revitalization of the bourgeoisie that might compel it to discharge its historical obligation, namely the creation of an adequate economic base for a future society of producers. These men included Luigi Federzoni and Roberto Forges-Davanzati, who had themselves joined with Enrico Corradini, the nationalist.[36] Sorel recognized that Corradini had used his ideas to put together his national syndicalism and his proletarian nationalism.[37] In 1909, Sorel wrote to Croce that Corradini "understands exceedingly well the value of my ideas."[38] By 1910 Sorel himself had found inspiration in the nationalist ideas of Charles Maurras and Charles Péguy.

Sorel, quite independently of events in Italy, conceived of the national idea as a regenerative myth, a symbolic speech act that would mobilize collective energies behind a program of national rebirth and development. He therefore became involved, tangentially, with *Action Française* and more directly with the publication of the nationalist *Cite Française*.[39] At the same time, Orano's *La lupa* explicitly turned to Sorel for the rationale uniting syndicalism and nationalism.

Thus, by November, 1911, the intellectual rationale for an Italian *national* syndicalism had already been put together by some of the most notable revolutionary syndicalists. Massimo Rocca (Libero Tancredi) rehearsed all the arguments that had become standard: revolution required that the bourgeoisie fully discharge its historical responsibility—the economic development of the country. The war

35. *Ibid.*, p. 93.

36. Cf. J. Roth, "The Roots of Italian Fascism: Sorel and Sorelismo," *Journal of Modern History*, *1* (1967), pp. 35ff., n. 42.

37. Cf. E. Corradini, "Sindacalismo, nazionalismo, imperialismo" (December, 1909), *Discorsi politici, 1902–1923*, pp. 51–71.

38. James Meisel, *The Genesis of Georges Sorel*, p. 219.

39. Cf. P. Andreu, *Sorel il nostro maestro*, pp. 283–86.

with Turkey represented a stage in the necessary development of Italian capitalism; consequently, the war was historically progressive.[40]

Rocca argued that the aggressive and enterprising industrial bourgeoisie, as distinct from the somnolent and passive landed bourgeoisie, supported the expansionist and colonialist war on the coast of North Africa. That war was an episode in the necessary evolution and development of the entrepreneurial bourgeoisie. Rocca reminded the syndicalists:

> Industrialism in England and France had necessitated the colonial enterprise of the entrepreneurial and mercantile capitalists. The development of the German industrial bourgeoisie, as a case in point, followed the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, and that of the American industrial bourgeoisie, the conflict with Spain. Similar developments in Japan required the wars against Russia and China.[41]

It was predictable, he concluded, that the appearance of the new bourgeoisie in Italy would be accompanied by expressions of expansive energy and vitality, and would manifest itself in some outward thrust that would involve the nation in armed conflict.

All this made perfectly clear the significance of the surfacing of the new nationalism that was the literary and political form these historical and economic realities assumed. The emergent industrial capitalists envisioned a future Italy that would be massively industrialized, capable of competing as an equal with the plutocratic nations of the continent.

Rocca argued that as syndicalists, Italy's most radical revolutionaries must deplore the fact that the peninsula was bottled up in underdevelopment. In such circumstances, the nation could not produce the labor-effective and technically competent proletarians who were to be the denizens of the new society of producers. History required, as Engels had repeated many times, both a true bourgeoisie and a true proletariat—population elements that signaled the full maturation of the nation's economic base and that were the harbingers of social revolution.

Rocca maintained that contemporary circumstances revealed the emergent minorities, the nascent industrial bourgeoisie, and the rising proletariat, shared a common purpose: "the preservation and

40. Cf. E. Corradini, "Nazionalismo e sindacalismo," *La lupa*, October, 1910; P. Orano, "Verso Tripoli," *ibid.*, September 10, 1911.

41. Libero Tancredi, "Una conquista rivoluzionaria," *Pro e contro*, p. 191.

development of production."[42] That shared mission revealed itself in a common national sentiment that a *national* syndicalism might well accommodate. The war in Tripoli had exposed the real foundation of the pervasive national sentiment that had surfaced among the popular classes of the peninsula. Rocca argued that his analysis provided a Marxist explanation of a phenomenon that would otherwise remain a mystery for revolutionaries.

By the end of 1911, the revolutionary syndicalists had put together a Marxist "heresy" that was to influence the subsequent development of the revolutionary movement in Italy. That heresy radically reduced the distance between the pure syndicalism of 1904 and the new nationalism that had begun to appear at almost the same time.

Mussolini and the War in Tripoli

This was coalescing in September, 1911, when the war in Tripoli interrupted Mussolini's factional struggle within the Socialist Party. He was forced, as a provincial leader, to adopt a position in the face of events. The position he ultimately assumed was influenced by a number of tactical and theoretical considerations. First, it was quite evident that after the expulsion of the syndicalists from the Socialist Party in 1906, its potential as a mass-mobilizing movement was reduced to an absolute minimum. Consequently, Mussolini was understandably not inclined to identify with the declining fortunes of organized syndicalism.

Moreover, the theoreticians of syndicalism were moving very rapidly, and had clearly left the more orthodox socialists behind them. For some time before the outbreak of the war in Tripoli, Mussolini had watched the developments among the syndicalists with considerable misgivings. In December, 1910, he reported on the syndicalist congress at Bologna and was clearly puzzled by the fact that syndicalism had drawn itself closer and closer to the nationalism that had begun to invest the peninsula.[43] He was equally puzzled by Sorel's rapprochement with the nationalists of France.[44]

The theoretical developments that rapidly revealed themselves in the works of the most prominent syndicalists clearly troubled Mussolini. Syndicalism had been excommunicated from the official

42. *Ibid.*, pp. 196, 204, 214.
43. Mussolini, "Fine stagione," *Opera, 3*, 289–92.
44. Mussolini, "Note e letture," *Opera, 4*, 46.

Party. Freed from Party constraints, it was to undergo a significant theoretical development that might well have made it so exotic as to cancel out its mass-mobilizing and revolutionary potential. Mussolini, as we have suggested, was aspiring to national leadership in the revolutionary movement. It is unlikely, at that time, that he would have felt any compelling reason to identify with the declining fortunes and the heretical theoretical notions of the syndicalists. For their part, the more radical syndicalists like Olivetti, Labriola, and Rocca felt little compulsion to remain orthodox. Syndicalists had been effectively isolated from organized socialism, and they felt few institutional constraints. They could pursue their innovative analyses without tactical and organizational considerations.

So Mussolini found himself in an increasingly awkward situation. In leading his own faction into autonomy from the official Party, he found himself with few attractive options. If he opted for the national-syndicalist position on the war, he would have to abandon his intention of capturing the Party from within. He would be compelled to attempt to attract the membership of the established Party from without, and the prospects of success were, at best, marginal. At the same time, the revolutionary wing of the Party was attempting to recruit him for an assault on the established leadership. Operating from within the organization, their potential for success seemed more impressive.

The advent of war in Tripoli thoroughly confused the leadership of the Party and by the end of 1911 Mussolini found himself with considerable space in which to maneuver. The maneuver he chose was one that gave every evidence of tactical success, and did not require that he abandon the elements of the new nationalism that he had espoused after his experience in the Trentino.

Among the syndicalists there were those who, recognizing the merit of the arguments based on Italy's economic and industrial underdevelopment, could still oppose the war. Alceste De Ambris, for example, argued that the war, rather than accelerating industrial maturation, would arrest the normal economic development of the nation and strengthen the forces of reaction—the traditional military and the retrograde aristocracy and landowning classes.[45] Moreover, Italy's involvement in North Africa would weaken its position in Europe and allow Austria to improve its leverage, not only in Italy's

45. Cf. Alceste De Ambris, "Contro il brigantaggio coloniale e per l'interesse del proletariato," in *Pro e contro*, p. 81; cf. the entire article.

lost provinces in the north, but also in the strategically critical Balkans.

De Ambris recognized the necessity for capitalist development, but insisted that North Africa would allow neither space nor occasion for the growth of a healthy capitalism. For at least these reasons, De Ambris resisted the arguments of what he identified as syndicalist nationalism.[46] Similarly, Paolo Mantica, taking up arguments that had become standard among the syndicalists, recognized the expansionism inherent in capitalist development, but considered the enterprise in North Africa to be little more than an adventure that would foster only a parasitic capitalism, rather than substantive economic and industrial maturation.[47] Alfredo Polledro also maintained that the war would do little to enhance Italy's development. It would dissipate energy, strengthen the rachitic monarchy, further entrench the gouty military establishment, and retard the economic modernization of the south.[48]

Thus, at this critical juncture in his political life, Mussolini had his choice of arguments. If he opted against the war, he could restore and enhance his leadership within the established Party structure without having to abandon the theoretical position he had already achieved. There were a considerable number of syndicalists who themselves opted against the war. Moreover, the *Vociani*, themselves spokesmen for the new nationalism, had opposed the war for many of the same reasons articulated by De Ambris, Mantica, and Polledro.

Moreover, as early as April, 1911, Mussolini recognized that the more advanced Sorelians, led by Sorel himself, had come dangerously close to identifying themselves with nationalism and monarchism, an identification that would destroy their credibility within the structure of organized socialism.[49] Since Mussolini sought to discredit the established reformist leadership of the Party by insisting on their putative rapprochement with the monarchy, he could hardly be expected to identify himself with any faction that might be similarly charged.[50]

46. De Ambris, "Quattro mesi dopo," *ibid.*, p. 97.

47. Paolo Mantica, "Colonialismo, funzionarismo, militarismo e reazione," *ibid.*, pp. 99–105.

48. Alfredo Polledro, "Tripoli e triboli," *ibid.*, pp. 123–38.

49. Cf. Mussolini, "L'ultima capriola," and "Fine stagione," *Opera*, *3*, 271ff., 289–92; cf. "Vecchia," *Opera*, *3*, 130ff.

50. Cf. Mussolini, "La prima dedizione ufficiale dei riformisti alla monarchia: il 'caso' Bissolati," *Opera*, *3*, 336.

Mussolini's principal targets, at that time, were the right-wing reformists, particularly Leonida Bissolati, from whom the King himself had sought advice during the ministerial crisis of 1911.[51] With the outbreak of the conflict in the Mediterranean, Bissolati gave qualified support to the government. Many of the arguments he used bore sufficient similarity to those entertained by the national syndicalists to make them suspect to Mussolini.[52]

It seemed that if Mussolini assumed an emphatic antiwar position, he could make another bid for leadership. Supported by the revolutionaries in the Party, he could isolate the followers of Bissolati, which would put him within operational distance of the followers of Turati. There were good tactical reasons for taking a strong stand against the war. Since the syndicalists had been excised from the Party ranks they could offer no assistance in the struggle. The revolutionaries who remained in the Party were the more orthodox radicals who could be mobilized against the war. As long as Mussolini aspired to the leadership of the organized socialist movement, any alternative to opposition to the war in Tripoli was by and large precluded. All these tactical and political considerations created considerable theoretical tensions for Mussolini. The elements of a new or revolutionary nationalism that were surfacing in his thought remained marginal but nonetheless there. But the necessity of disassociating himself from the extra-Party syndicalists and Bissolati's reformists hindered any further development.

As we have seen, the new nationalism opposed the old ideology of traditional patriotism. But this opposition did not imply a rejection of Mussolini's aspirations for Italy. The rejection of the bourgeois state, he argued, did entail the negation of the fatherland, but he was quick to add that every negation dialectically implied an affirmation: "In every hatred there is love." The renunciation of the bourgeois nation and the old nationalism did not mean the automatic rejection of a new Italy, an "Italy purified."[53]

Mussolini's objections during this period to patriotism and militarism are to be read in this context.[54] He consistently inveighed against the false love of country that led Italians to overlook their shortcomings,[55] since that kind of patriotism was a way of avoiding

51. Cf. I. Bonomi, *Leonida Bissolati e il movimento socialista in Italia*, pp. 109ff.
52. Cf. I. Bonomi, *Dieci anni di politica italiana* (Milan: Unitas, 1924), pp. 57–111.
53. Mussolini, "L'attuale momento politico e i partiti politici in Italia," *Opera, 3*, 288.
54. Cf. Mussolini, "Sequestrati!" and "L'antimilitarismo in Austria," *Opera, 3*, 54, 156.
55. Mussolini, "La coltura a Forlì," *Opera, 3*, 24.

the critical issues facing the peninsula. Italy needed a rapid resolution of its economic and social problems, which included poverty, a terrible rate of illiteracy, and a retarded economic system—to mention only a few. In view of such urgent needs, Mussolini objected to the economically nonproductive expenditures dissipated on a military institution that gave every evidence of being incapable of winning a war, and that seemed only to serve to repress internal revolutionary dissidence.

Mussolini's objections were directed against the traditional nationalism that conceived of its program exclusively in terms of the conventional trinity of "monarchy, the army and war . . . . Three words, three institutions, and three absurdities."[56] The monarchy was, in his judgment, antinational both in principle and in practice. It was an antiquated and ineffectual institution. The army, in turn, was incapable of winning a war.[57] Before Italy embarked on military adventure, Mussolini argued, it might better employ its energies in resolving the internal problems of retarded development. In effect, his opposition to the traditional nationalism of 1910 presupposed a commitment to the kind of new nationalism advocated by the *Vociani*.

Like the *Vociani* and De Ambris, Mussolini argued that a colonial war at that time could only serve as an occasion to spill the sacred blood of the proletariat in the service of a diversionary "patriotic Moloch." Under such circumstances, the flag of the bourgeois state and the bourgeois nation could be regarded as nothing more than a rag to be "planted on a dung hill."[58] Like the *Vociani* and the syndicalists who opposed the war, Mussolini argued that the war was not in the national interest. Only a vacuous and illegitimate patriotism, he said, could drive the popular masses into a war that served no one's interests but those of a thin caste of profiteers. Therefore revolutionary socialists had to remain committed to the conviction that any such war between nations could only become a war between classes.[59]

Thus, although the features of a revolutionary nationalism continued to lend a special character to Mussolini's thought, circumstances forced him to emphasize an intransigent orthodoxy. His first

56. Mussolini, "Nazionalismo," *Opera*, *3*, 280.

57. Mussolini, "Il parlamento dei rammolliti," *Opera*, *3*, 329.

58. Mussolini, "Il contradditorio di Voltre," *Opera*, *3*, 137; cf. "L'attuale momento politico," *Opera*, *3*, 12ff.

59. Mussolini, "Messagio di pace," *Opera*, *4*, 53.

clear statement about the events in the Mediterranean was made on September 23, 1911. Mussolini was convinced that millions of workers would be opposed to any adventure in Tripoli, and he remained certain that such a conflict could only divert the nation from the resolution of its complex and grave internal problems.[60]

On September 23 the first announcements of the possibility of military action against Tripoli were broadcast. On September 24 the *Federazione socialista* and the *Camera del lavoro* of Forlì organized a committee to decide what action the socialists should take. The order of the day announced a general strike in opposition to the war. On Tuesday, September 26, 1911, a general strike stopped all productive activity in the area. Telegraph lines were torn down and the rail lines between Forlì and Meldola were sabotaged. At the railroad station crowds attempted to halt the departure of military trains, and there was considerable violence and injury. The agitation continued until September 27, when it became obvious that the general strike was far less than general—it was effective almost exclusively in Emilia. On September 28, the Italian government sent an ultimatum to the Turkish government, and on September 29 war was declared.

Mussolini continued his opposition even after the official declaration of war. The arguments he invoked were fairly standard socialist arguments, but he also suggested that the war would be far from easy to win—a presentiment that proved to be accurate. He warned that the defeat of the Turkish forces in the field might be accomplished, but that the indigenous population might well undertake irregular warfare in their resistance to the Italians[61]—a warning that the military might well have heeded. Guerrilla warfare did in fact occur, producing the bestialities characteristic of that type of violence.

Many of the arguments Mussolini invoked were arguments coined by the syndicalists and the *Vociani*. They emphasized that the war was not in the national interest. Mussolini maintained, for example, that whatever evidence was available (and there had been expert surveys of the region) indicated that the coastal region Italy aspired to colonize was unsuitable for development and could not, in any fashion, help resolve Italy's problem of overpopulation. Furthermore, he urged Italians to consider the possibility that military

60. Mussolini, "Tripoli," *Opera*, *4*, 59.
61. Mussolini, "La guerra?" *Opera*, *4*, 74.

action in North Africa and the Near East would expose Italy's flanks to the Austrians.[62] In effect, his arguments turned largely on the question of national interest rather than Marxist orthodoxy.

On October 14 the authorities prepared to take action in the Forlì region against the leaders of the popular resistance to the war. On the afternoon of that day they arrested Mussolini at the Café Garibaldi. He went into custody without resistance. More to himself than to anyone else he said, "I understand. They want me to finish my book on John Huss in prison. They don't seem to know that they are doing me a service."

Mussolini's defense at his trial, given what we know of his convictions at the time, was perfectly predictable. He denied any direct responsibility for the violence that had occurred and insisted that his resistance to the war was prompted by a love for the fatherland. He distinguished his commitments from those of the traditional nationalists by maintaining that what they desired was the territorial expansion of Italy, while what he desired was a cultivated, rich, and free nation.[63] All of which was perfectly consistent with his commitment to a new, renovated Italy—a persistent element of the new nationalism heralded by the *Vociani* of Prezzolini and the syndicalists, whether they supported or opposed the war.

Unlike Olivetti, Michels, Labriola, and Rocca, he did not pursue the logic of the new nationalism. This was probably, as I have suggested, the result of largely tactical considerations. Mussolini's intention at that juncture was to reanimate and revitalize the Socialist Party to revolutionary purpose. Had he opted for the war, he would have cast himself into the arms of the syndicalists or the reformists. Neither eventuality would have served his immediate political purposes. His only real alternative was to attempt to strengthen his position in the Party. His defection in 1910 had served only to temporarily isolate him. Now he could argue that the reformists had vacillated in the face of the challenge of 1911. He, however, had taken an effective and outspoken stand against the war in accordance with traditional socialist principles. He could argue from a position of strength. He had been arrested and was to be convicted and serve a term in prison—circumstances that in-

62. Mussolini, "Lo sciopero generale di protesta contro l'impresa di Tripoli," *Opera*, *4*, 67, 71.

63. Mussolini, "'Se mi assolverete mi farete piacere, se mi condannerete mi farete onore'," *Opera*, *4*, 104ff.

creased his credibility with the members of the Party. And that credibility would offer him the occasion to attempt, once again, to capture the leadership of the Party.

The war in Tripoli offered Mussolini the opportunity both to escape the embarrassment of his first failure and to undertake another attempt from a position of special advantage. His opposition to the war would earn him national prominence and sympathy from the stalwarts of the Party. The years that followed were to confirm that his judgment of the most appropriate position to assume with regard to the war had been correct. In the period immediately following the war, Mussolini rose to national prominence and became, for all intents and purposes, the leader of the Socialist Party of Italy. That he did not lead the Party to revolution simply meant that his leadership was to be only another interlude in his political life.

Chapter 6 The Second Interlude: National Leader of Socialism

> Mussolini is not an ordinary socialist. You will perhaps see him one day as the leader of a consecrated battalion, saluting the flag of Italy with his sword. He is an Italian of the fifteenth century, a condottiere. He is the only man with the strength to correct the weaknesses of the government.
>
> *Georges Sorel*[1]

Because of his advocacy of the general strike, Mussolini was charged with eight counts of obstructing the public authorities in the performance of their duties, advocating violence against persons and property, and directly inciting the specific damage inflicted on telegraphic and rail lines in the Forlì region. At the trial, which began in Forlì in November, 1911, the prosecutor demanded eighteen months imprisonment for Mussolini. On November 23, he was convicted and sentenced to twelve months imprisonment, but in February, after a judicial review of the case, the sentence was reduced to five months. During that time he wrote the biographical notes that have survived as *La mia vita dal 29 Luglio 1883 al 23 Novembre 1911*, and completed work on his monograph entitled, *Giovanni Huss il veridico*. While in prison, Mussolini continued his intellectual pursuits, and it is interesting to note, in view of his public objections to Sorel's increasingly heterodox theorizing, that his preferred author while confined was Georges Sorel—which suggests that Mussolini's orthodoxy, even at that critical moment, was more tactical than doctrinal.[2]

In retrospect, Mussolini's strategy during this period seems clear. He fully planned to make another attempt to capture the leadership of the Socialist Party, and he made quite clear to Pietro Nenni, who shared his confinement, that he intended to make every effort to reform the Party, to divest it of its parliamentary infatuation,

1. J. Meisel, *The Genesis of Georges Sorel*, p. 220, n. 21.
2. Cf. Pietro Nenni, *Vent'anni di fascismo*, pp. 21ff.

4. Mussolini in 1912 as a national leader of the Italian Socialist Party.

and to compel it to recognize that the reconstruction of the social order required the judicious and liberating violence of the organized masses. He was determined to refashion the leadership of the Socialist Party into a small, determined, and committed vanguard in the service of socialist revolution. To accomplish this he had to isolate the reformist leadership that had corrupted the Party, and to these ends, he recognized that he had to work *within* the Party apparatus. He had become convinced that his first effort to gain the leadership had been premature. On that occasion, he had escaped total failure by chance alone; the outbreak of the war in the Mediterranean had provided a diversion that allowed him time to prepare another attempt gracefully. However, he clearly understood he could use neither the weakened syndicalist organizations nor specifically syndicalist arguments in his next attempt. Thus, while syndicalist convictions remained central to his revolutionary beliefs, Mussolini's political considerations and tactical concerns counseled restraint and a maintenance of distance.

As it happened, political events facilitated his efforts to accede to Party leadership. Almost immediately after his release from prison, an anarchist, Antonio D'Alba, made an unsuccessful attempt on the life of King Victor Emmanuel. The right-reformist socialist deputies Bonomi, Bissolati, and Cabrini congratulated the king on his escape. Mussolini used this incident to demand that the Party excise those elements that had become parasitic, and that diverted it from its revolutionary purpose.[3] He argued that their conservative and servile attitudes to the king and the government were part and parcel of the disposition that had led them to support the war in Tripoli.

His next step was to bring the *forlivesi* sections back into the Party, since they would be needed in any bid for leadership. On April 14, Mussolini in fact proposed that these sections reenter the Party, and at the same time he undertook to strengthen them. The notoriety gained on the occasion of the general strike had brought new and younger recruits into the fold. By June, there were 1,300 members in the Mussolinian sections and the circulation of the *Lotta* had increased to over 2,500 copies. Mussolini was carefully putting together his resources in time for the Party Congress to begin on July 7, 1912 in Reggio Emilia.

3. Mussolini, "Ai lettori della 'Lotta'," *Opera, 4*, 114; cf. "Documenti per una nuova 'Storia di dieci anni'," *Opera, 4*, 116–19.

The evidence we have indicates that Mussolini went to the Congress of Reggio Emilia with a fairly well developed strategy.[4] Both before and during the congress he maintained discipline in the Romagnol sections, assuring himself of unanimous support for whatever moves he made. His purpose was to insist on the expulsion from the Party of the reformist deputies—Bissolati, Bonomi, Cabrini, and Guido Podrecca—thus reinforcing the position of the revolutionaries, among whom he now had considerable bargaining power. The excision of the right-reformist wing of the Party would enable Mussolini to make a bid for national leadership and perhaps even succeed to the editorship of the Party daily, *Avanti!*

From contemporary sources we have convincing testimony that this was Mussolini's purpose. And his strategy was eminently successful. Almost from the moment that he rose to speak at the Congress of Reggio Emilia he dominated the Party delegates, and his motion for the expulsion of the reformist deputies won overwhelming approval. Not only did Mussolini capture the imagination of the delegates, but his name was included in the list of new Party hierarchs. At twenty-nine, he had succeeded to the highest ranks of the Socialist Party of Italy.

Mussolini's rise through the Party had been spectacular. In about a decade he had risen from the position of an unknown agitator among Italian emigrants in Switzerland to a leadership role. Hitherto almost unknown, at the Congress of Reggio Emilia he emerged as an orator of almost unparalleled power. Young, thin, stern of manner, indifferently dressed, with large, dark, luminous eyes, his speech punctuated with sharp, incisive gestures, he touched the spirit of the delegates, and he became the spokesman for a rising generation of revolutionaries. He became known for his intransigence, personal courage, hard resolve, complete indifference to personal discomfort, and readiness to sacrifice for his beliefs. He had suffered arrest, expulsion, and prison for his opinions. He was a revolutionary cut to the classic pattern.

It is interesting to note that Lenin, in reporting on the Congress of Reggio Emilia, fully endorsed Mussolini's position. He outlined for his readers the history of the Italian Party and indicated that the movement had given rise to two "basic trends: revolutionary and reformist"—with the reformists, in committing themselves to par-

4. Balabanoff's insistence that Mussolini was forced into his position of leadership by his friends at the Congress of Reggio Emilia simply will not stand up against the evidence; cf. A. Balabanoff, *Il traditore Mussolini*, pp. 33ff.

liamentary and legislative reform, embroiled in the bourgeois system. The revolutionaries, he went on, had remained firm in their commitment to an intransigent class struggle. In expelling the reformist deputies, they had restored the integrity of the movement, already strengthened by the expulsion of the syndicalists whose role in the working-class movement, in Lenin's judgment, had become negligible. Mussolini's faction had, in effect, chosen the right path.[5]

Lenin's endorsement is interesting, particularly in retrospect. Many have commented on the views shared by the young Mussolini and Lenin,[6] since it is evident that their Marxism did in fact have substantial similarities. Both insisted on intransigent opposition to bourgeois parliamentarianism, reformist policies, and compromissary political strategies. Both considered the Party a hierarchically organized agency for the effective furtherance of socialist objectives. Both envisioned a leadership composed of a minority of professional revolutionaries, who would serve as a catalyst in mobilizing mass revolutionary sentiment. Neither had any faith in the spontaneous organization of the working classes. Both argued that the preoccupation with immediate economic interests condemned exclusively economic organizations to a bourgeois mentality of calculation for personal profit and well-being. Both argued that only organized violence could be the final arbiter in a contest between classes. And both agreed that revolutionary consciousness could only be brought to the masses from without, through a tutelary, revolutionary, and self-selected elite.

Yet their views were not identical in certain important respects. As we shall see, Mussolini's political convictions were distinctive among the variants of Marxism prevalent in the revolutionary thinking of his time. His views were the complex product of a diversity of influences, among which are to be counted the impact of syndicalist and *Vocian* opinion. So it was with a volatile doctrinal mixture that Mussolini faced the subsequent three years of internecine party strife. In terms of immediate political objectives, if his success at the Congress of Reggio Emilia was to be anything more than an episode, Mussolini was compelled to strengthen his position. The small circulation and limited impact of the *Lotta di classe* was

5. V. I. Lenin, "The Italian Socialist Congress," *Collected Works* (Moscow: Foreign Languages, 1963), 18, 170–72.

6. G. Megaro, *Mussolini in the Making*, p. 187; Ernst Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism*, p. 157; Nenni, *Vent'anni*, p. 31.

hardly a suitable tool for this task. What Mussolini required at this juncture was a national, rather than a regional, publication, with more imposing credentials and a wider audience. The obvious choice could only be the Party daily, *Avanti!*

Equally obvious was the fact that accession to the editorship of so important a journal would not be easy, even after his imposing success at the Congress of Reggio Emilia. Immediately after the congress, in fact, Giovanni Bacci was named editor of *Avanti!*, and behind him loomed the reformist influence of Claudio Treves. There was no prospect that the essentially reformist administration of the Party was prepared to countenance the advent of Mussolini to the editorship.

Treves and Filippo Turati led the surviving left-wing reformists of the Party, and Mussolini's immediate goal was to win Party support for his position before Treves and Turati could fashion a new majority around their position. To accomplish this, he sought a vehicle with a wider range than his own *Lotta* through which he could speak freely to the membership of the Party. His choice was the weekly *La folla* (edited by Paolo Valera), an extremely popular radical publication, whose appeal to the Party membership was based on populist and intransigent revolutionary argument. Valera provided Mussolini with a forum from which he could attack the left-wing reformers of the Party without hesitation or reserve, and using the pseudonym, *L'homme qui cherche*, Mussolini began a relentless assault on the faction led by Treves and Turati.

It soon became clear that Bacci, because of his age and infirmities, could only serve as a transitional head of *Avanti!*, the most important publication of the Socialist Party. Valera himself called attention to the serious lack of leadership evident in Bacci's editorship, and he insisted that the administration of *Avanti!* be assigned to someone who would provide direction to the Party paper. By the end of October, 1912, three months after the Congress of Reggio Emilia, *La folla* was calling for Mussolini, whom it referred to as the brain of revolutionary socialism, to accede to the editorship of the official Party publication.

At the meeting of the administration of *Avanti!*, which took place between November 8 and 10, Mussolini was nominated as editor by Costantino Lazzari, and at the close of the meeting, the young revolutionary was chosen unanimously. He had succeeded in sealing his previous success at the Congress of Reggio Emilia. On December 1, 1912 he assumed his new responsibilities.

Mussolini and the Leadership of the Socialist Party

Once director of *Avanti!*, Mussolini proceeded almost immediately to attempt to construct a new constituency. He made overtures to the syndicalists, the anarchists, and those elements that had remained peripheral to the official Party. He even had Angelica Balabanoff (whose Marxism he considered rigid and unrealistic) appointed as assistant editor in an apparent effort to organize all the available revolutionary factions against a possible reformist counterattack.

Significantly, the revolutionary syndicalists quickly reappeared in Mussolini's entourage. Articles by Arturo Labriola, Enrico Leone, and Sergio Panunzio were immediately published in *Avanti!* under Mussolini's editorship, while the first three articles submitted by Treves, as representative of the left-wing reformists, were summarily rejected. Years later, Antonio Gramsci, in writing of Mussolini's editorship of *Avanti!*, maintained that Mussolini slowly, but securely had transformed the paper into a forum for the syndicalist theoreticians, who became his assiduous collaborators.[7] Moreover, many of the *Vociani* gravitated around his leadership, and when, at the end of 1913, Mussolini was to found his own theoretical journal, *Utopia*, the convictions we have identified with the radical syndicalists and the *Vociani* began to appear with insistent regularity.

Mussolini, in the two or three years between his ascension to Party leadership and the crisis of the First World War, was to become not only a political, but an intellectual leader of the Party. Almost all the dynamic and revolutionary elements of the peninsula described themselves, during this period, as *Mussoliniani*. This was as true of the intellectuals, like Amadeo Bordiga and Antonio Gramsci who were later to found the Communist Party of Italy, as it was of the *Vociani* who were to follow Prezzolini and Papini into the ranks of the new nationalism.

Of all the fictions that have collected around the history of the young Mussolini, perhaps none is as threadbare as the notion that he was, at this time, a simple activist, an antiintellectual devoid of convictions and innocent of any acquaintance with socialist or Marxist theory. The fact is that the twenty-nine-year-old Mussolini

7. Antonio Gramsci, "Alcuni temi della quistione meridionale," *Scritti politici*, p. 731.

was recognized by his peers as a revolutionary intellectual whose education, intelligence, and accomplishments were hardly inferior to any who exercised influence in the Party at the time. He was not only knowledgeable in the classical theories of Marx and Engels, he was well read in French and German and was familiar with a broad range of literature outside the strict confines of what passed as socialist thought. After he assumed responsibility as leader of the Party, Mussolini undertook the theoretical obligation of instructing in the School of Socialist Culture under the auspices of the Party. Moreover, he frequently addressed himself to the intellectuals of the Party—and on occasion to non-Party intellectuals —who almost always came away impressed with his preparation and delivery.[8] He was, during this period, the constant object of socialist scrutiny, yet there is scant contemporary evidence that he was ever considered ill-prepared, uninformed, or nonsocialist. Although in retrospect his socialism reveals features that ultimately were to mature into a notable heresy, at the time it was considered no less orthodox than that of any number of other Party theoreticians.

Mussolini's efforts, as Party leader and editor of *Avanti!*, brought considerable success to Italian socialism. The distribution of *Avanti!* increased from 30,000 daily sales before Mussolini's assumption of responsibility to 40,000 and then to 50,000 copies, and at one point, in 1913, reached 74,000 daily. By 1914 the average daily sales were 60,000 copies, with occasional sales of 100,000. The number of sections of the Party also increased. In 1912 there had been 1,003 sections with 28,689 members; by early 1914, there were 1,565 sections with 45,102 members. Few would deny Mussolini's critical role in attracting the increasing membership and promoting the increased sales of *Avanti!*

In April, 1914, the Socialist Party held its national congress in Ancona. The political elections of October and November, 1913 resulted in an impressive success for the Party, which, with the increase in membership, the expansion in the number of sections, and the compelling increment in sales of *Avanti!*, augured well for the Party's approval of Mussolini's overall policies.

At the Congress of Ancona, in April, 1914, Mussolini in fact achieved a definitive victory. He emerged the clear victor and became, in the judgment of sympathizers and opponents alike, the

8. Cf. R. De Felice, *Mussolini il rivoluzionario*, p. 185 and P. Valera, *Mussolini*, pp. 11–13.

dictator of the Socialist Party.[9] In its description of the Congress of Ancona, *Azione socialista* described Mussolini as an "ascetic figure whose voice . . . and agitated gestures . . . exercized a fatal and seductive fascination" over the delegates at the meeting.[10] The vast majority of delegates and leaders voted in support of Mussolini's political postures, and in the traumatic months that followed there was little if any erosion of that support. Mussolini had achieved the goal for which he had long labored and for which he had groomed himself from his earliest maturity. But achievement of his goal was not to bring the satisfactions he had anticipated. Although militant in word and committed in sentiment, the Socialist Party remained beset with factional disputes, little disposed to submit to effective central control.

Mussolini was aware that his victory at Reggio Emilia had not resolved the crisis that had afflicted Italian Socialism at least since the turn of the century. In November, 1913, he announced the publication of a new theoretical journal, to be called *Utopia*, that would appear under his direction, and that would provide a necessary revision of socialism, a new and revolutionary interpretation.[11]

This was necessary, the new leader of the Socialist Party insisted, because European socialism had lost much of its dynamism. It had become static. It had failed in almost every enterprise. Throughout Europe, membership in the socialist parties had remained constant. Experiments in social legislation and reform engineered by socialists had produced little of substance, and the attempt to share power with the bourgeoisie had resulted only in socialism's discredit. Socialists had shown little resolve in the face of new government repression. In countries like Germany the organized socialist movement had done nothing to obstruct the issuance of new military credits by the Reichstag.

Socialism, in Mussolini's judgment, had remained embroiled in the mechanical positivism of the turn of the century—a positivism committed to a conception of evolutionary progress that saw social change as incremental rather than catastrophic. In opposition, the young *duce* of socialism argued that everything we know of the natural, and by implication, the social world indicates sudden, unexpected, and profound, rather than simple and incremental,

9. Cf. T. Nanni, *Bolscevismo e fascismo al lume della critica marxista*, p. 179; I. Bonomi, *Dal socialismo al fascismo*, p. 16.

10. Cf. De Felice, *Mussolini*, pp. 194ff.

11. Mussolini, "Al Largo," *Opera*, *6*, 5.

change. What Mussolini, as the responsible director of *Utopia*, proposed to do was provide a forum for the discussion of the critical political and theoretical issues afflicting socialism as a doctrine.

The publication of *Utopia* (which was to continue for approximately a year, from November, 1913 until December, 1914) provides a record of the thought of a broad faction of the Italian socialist movement and permits us to reconstruct, with a considerable degree of plausibility, the development of Mussolini's thought during this critical period. Rather than dismissing the importance of its content, as some of Italy's professional socialist intellectuals have chosen to do, Giangiacomo Feltrinelli and Renzo De Felice have insisted that the publication is not only an "interesting document for the history of the crisis of Italian socialism," but is essential to a reconstruction of the positions assumed by its director, who at that time was the almost undisputed leader of the Party.[12]

Mussolini himself seems to have had a specific purpose in founding the journal. Not only did he intend it to help him organize those forces that would serve in the forthcoming test of strength at the Congress of Ancona, but it was also designed to allow him to attract young theoreticians, whose "intelligence was ignored, but capable of rejuvenating [revolutionary] theory with a new interpretation, be it orthodox or heterodox."[13]

The fact is that *Utopia* did attract many of the most important young theoreticians of socialism. Angelo Tasca and Amadeo Bordiga, both of whom were to become prominent socialist theoreticians, contributed articles to its pages. Mario Missiroli, subsequently one of the most prominent publicists in Italy, collaborated. But more important for our purposes was the appearance in the pages of *Utopia* of articles by syndicalists as well known as Georges Yvetot, Arturo Labriola, Agostino Lanzillo, Sergio Panunzio, and Enrico Leone. For Mussolini, himself, there is little doubt that the journal provided the opportunity to publish selectively ideas he found stimulating, and there is little doubt, from contemporary testimony, that his ideas exercised considerable influence on young intellectuals both inside and outside the Party. For the youth of the Party Mussolini was a supreme guide.[14]

12. Cf. R. De Felice, *Introduction to Utopia* (Milan: Feltrinelli, n.d.), p. vi.

13. Cf. "Mussolini e 'La Voce' (1912–1915)," in *Il Borghese*, June 25, 1964, p. 351.

14. Amadeo Bordiga, in *Storia della sinistra comunista* (Milan: Programma Comunista, 1964), p. 68; cf. Paolo Spriano, *Storia del Partito comunista italiano*, p. 15.

Mussolini's ideas remained remarkably consistent throughout the period beginning in 1909 and ending at the close of the "second interlude" in 1914. For one thing, he continued to insist on his Marxist and socialist orthodoxy and on the integrity of Marxism as a responsible account of social processes. He affirmed the accuracy of Marx's anticipation of the continued concentration of capital and the political power that attends it.[15] In a public lecture in Cesena, Mussolini made an argued defense of the Marxist conviction that economic and social evolution is the consequence of the transformation of the instruments of production and the development of the forces of production.[16] Marx remained, for the young socialist leader, the Immortal Master.[17]

At the same time, those elements that might in some meaningful sense be characterized as Mussolinian continued to recur. In *Avanti!*, on March 29, 1913, Mussolini argued that:

> the struggle in human society has always been, and will always remain, a conflict between minorities. To appeal to the absolute majority—quantitatively—is an absurdity. It will never be possible to organize the majority of the proletariat in economic and political organizations. And what of the other social elements? The class struggle is, fundamentally, a struggle between minorities. Majorities follow—submit. Has it not always been a minority, through the machinery of government, that imposes its will on the great mass?[18]

In this elitism was a decided diffidence concerning the innovative role of majorities in social life.[19] Mussolini insisted that he himself would never submit to the dictates of the majority.[20] He envisioned the torpid masses not leading, but being led by exceptional men. He argued that the vast majority of men, left to their own devices, succumb to the blandishments of their meanest economic interests. Only the leavening of a dedicated minority, animated by a political faith, could move the submissive masses to the pursuit of their ideal and revolutionary purposes.[21] Like Lenin, who advanced substantially the same convictions in his *What is to be Done?*, Musso-

15. Mussolini, "La concentrazione della ricchezza e il 'profeta fallito'," *Opera*, *3*, 306–308.
16. Mussolini, "Ciò che v'ha di vivo e di morto nel marxismo," *Opera*, *3*, 3–5.
17. Mussolini, "Richiamo agli smemorati," *Opera*, *6*, 228.
18. Mussolini, "Le ragioni del cosidetto 'pacifismo'," *Opera*, *5*, 134.
19. Mussolini, "Caccia al 'buon senso'," *Opera*, *5*, 142.
20. Mussolini, "Contabilità politica e politica contabile," *Opera*, *6*, 29.
21. Mussolini, "Replica a Graziadei," *Opera*, *6*, 248.

lini insisted that the working class, organized in syndicats (trade unions), could achieve only bourgeois consciousness without the intercession of a self-selected political vanguard.

In maintaining such a posture, Mussolini remained true to the syndicalists' convictions that informed his thought. The syndicalists had voiced such convictions as early as 1903, and by 1911 Michels had articulated them in a mature work that was destined to become a social science classic. As we have seen, Michels had suggested as early as 1908 that political organization implied the subordination of the mass to hierarchical control. With the publication of his *Zur Soziologie des Parteiswesens in der modernen Demokratie* in 1911 (an Italian edition of which appeared in 1912), this conviction was fully articulated in an argument that has now become famous in the literature of political sociology.

Michels argued that contemporary politics is governed by the illusion that the democratic masses influence or control the activities of their political representatives, when in fact inherent in all party organization is a tendency towards aristocracy, or rather towards oligarchy. He spoke of the peculiar and inherent instincts of mankind that create the circumstances in which a small elite exercises control, through necessary fictions, over crowds subject to suggestion and mimetic influence.[22]

These were, as we have seen, convictions that had become commonplace among the syndicalists, the new nationalists, and the most prominent *Vociani* by 1911. They derived from a sociological tradition that included Gumplowicz, Mosca, Le Bon, Pareto, and Sorel. By 1911, Michels was the most articulate spokesman of that tradition among the authors with whom Mussolini was familiar.

In 1911, Mussolini argued that revolutionary intentions could be served only through an organization sustained by the mobilizing skills of a small number of revolutionary leaders. Such leaders would organize the revolutionary party into a hierarchical and quasi-military organization, possessing iron discipline, and infused by an animating sentiment and an articulated faith.[23]

Given these notions, which he shared with the principal spokes-

22. R. Michels, *Political Parties*, pp. 11, 12, 15, 24; cf. Michels, "L'Oligarchie et l'Immunite des Syndicats," *Mouvement Socialiste*, *15*, 247–48 (1913), 90–96.

23. Mussolini, "Il programma del Partito Socialista," *Opera*, *5*, 328; "Un 'blocco rosso'?" *Opera*, *6*, 86; cf. "Il valore attuale del socialismo," *Opera*, *6*, 182; "Contro la massoneria," *Opera*, *6*, 173.

men of the theoretical syndicalism of the time, it is clear that Mussolini's commitment to historical materialism was qualified by the judgment that one could not assign "hyperbolic importance to a man as an economic animal."[24] Equally significant in the calculations that enter into revolutionary strategy was his understanding of man as a creature of creative intelligence, sentiment, and will. If the instruments of production lay, as Marx insisted, at the root of social change, then it was the intellectual potential of man that created those instruments.[25] If men were moved to action by economic considerations, they became effective political agents when enflamed by a mythic sentiment, a faith, for it is faith that moves mountains.[26] Finally, the theoretical consciousness of the revolutionary intellectual elite, animated by such sentiment and faith, impelled men to action by will.[27] In this sense, Mussolini's interpretation of historical materialism was fundamentally *voluntaristic*.[28] In fact, he saw Marx himself as a voluntarist,[29] and his entire revolutionary program was based on just such ideal or psychological elements.

Mussolini did not hesitate to call this interpretation of classical Marxism idealistic and more modern, alien to the simplistic positivism that had encumbered revolutionary socialism with its quietism and its belief in necessary working out of inevitable laws of social change.[30] It was idealistic because what we might now call ideational or psychological factors were seen to be part of the complex of forces that precipitated social transformation. Mussolini took issue, in this regard, with Engels' assertion that Marxists were unconcerned with moral issues per se, that morality has served no other purpose than to justify the rapacity of the dominant classes. Mussolini argued that moral argument served to provide moral ends, the prefigurations of a future social order, and that the mobilization of the masses required such a moral purpose.[31] Only when pos-

24. Mussolini, "Lo sviluppo del partito," *Opera*, *5*, 123.

25. Mussolini, "Ciò che v'ha di vivo e di morto nel marxismo," *Opera*, *3*, 365.

26. Mussolini, "Da Guicciardini a . . . Sorel," *Opera*, *4*, 174.

27. Mussolini, "Il valore attuale del socialismo," *Opera*, *6*, 181ff.; cf. "Lo sviluppo del partito," *Opera*, *5*, 122.

28. Mussolini, "Prefazione a 'Il socialismo rivoluzionario'," *Opera*, *5*, 175.

29. Mussolini, "Il Congresso di Brest," *Opera*, *5*, 92; cf. "Il valore attuale del socialismo," *6*, 182.

30. Mussolini, "Intermezzo polemico," *Opera*, *6*, 273.

31. Cf. Mussolini, "Tentativi di revisionismo," *Opera*, *5*, 206ff.; "La politica della strage," *Opera*, *5*, 55.

sessed by such a purpose is man capable of achieving the impossible.[32]

These were the convictions that led Mussolini to call his notion of socialist revolution heroic, religious, and idealistic.[33] The idealism and the spiritualism to which he regularly alluded had little to do with epistemological idealism, with the notion that ideas and spirit somehow precede matter. His idealism reduced itself to a conviction that men are moved by ideal purpose, that individual and collective human psychology plays a determinate role in the progression of history, and that select human beings, giving voice to a profound moral sentiment, can activate the elemental energy of the masses, and thereby reshape and regenerate the world.

All of these beliefs are, of course, no more than mature expressions of the convictions held by Mussolini as early as 1903 and 1904. They were beliefs shared with the *Vociani*, Sorelian syndicalists, and representatives of the sociological tradition in which society was shaped and dominated by elites.

In 1911, Michels had argued these same convictions in an essay devoted to the materialist conception of history. At that time, Michels reminded socialists that the conceptions of Marx and Engels were sufficiently vague and porous to allow alternative interpretations that recognized the influence of ideological and political factors on the simple and complex events that make up history. Michels argued that the most plausible economic interpretation of history affirmed that while economic factors influenced history, perhaps as the necessary conditions for historical change, many other factors also contributed to historical outcomes. The economic substructure of society influenced and was influenced by superstructural elements as divers as religious, political, and ideological beliefs. There were clear instances in which historical events were influenced, if not determined, by such factors.[34]

Michels argued, in effect, that one could not assign hyperbolic importance to economic factors in the explanation of historical sequences. Any reasonable account of events must involve ideological and psychological variables. In order to adequately understand collective phenomena, Michels insisted, one must appeal to collective

32. Mussolini, "A battaglia finita," *Opera*, *5*, 194.

33. Mussolini, "Ricordando," *Opera*, *6*, 71.

34. R. Michels, "Wirtschafts- und sozialphilosophische Randbemerkungen," *Archiv für Rechts- und Wirtschaftsphilosophie*, *4*, 3 (1911), 437–48; cf., also his extended comments on the role of moral or ethical factors in politics, "Der ethische Faktor in der Parteipolitik Italiens," *Zeitschrift für Politik*, *3*, 1 (1909), 56–91.

psychology, to the beliefs, faith, and sentiment, that animate human behavior.

Even if Mussolini was not directly aware of Michels' contemporary essays, he was certainly familiar with similar ideas that had long been circulated among the syndicalists and the *Vociani*. As early as 1906, for example, Giovanni Papini had advanced almost all these ideas in one essay:

> All significant movements have been the work of organized and committed minorities . . . . Understood pragmatically, Italy's mission requires that a certain number of Italians (probably young men) create [among Italians] given psychological dispositions [*stati d'animo*]—sentiments, goals, etc. . . . [Italians] must come to recognize the superiority of the power of the spirit over men and things.[35]

These themes remained as constant for Papini as they had for Mussolini. In 1912, Papini published his autobiographical *Un uomo finito*. Mussolini, although caught up at that time in the hectic political struggles of organized socialism, took the time to read it and found it extraordinary and admirable.[36]

The central theme of Papini's book was voluntarism—an almost pathological preoccupation with refashioning and refurbishing the old world. Papini spoke of mobilizing militant youth into an antitraditional army that would shape the old world into its image of the future. He spoke of an idealism that would salvage a humiliated and debased Italy. He inveighed against the positivism that made Italy quiescent, that made its population passive. He spoke of the will to believe transforming the submissive into active agents and manifesting itself as an active will. Papini spoke of his own inverted and transformed socialism and of a spiritualism that would set men in motion. He spoke of firing ideas into the somnolence of Italy to open a new epoch in the history of mankind,—an epoch of heroism that would see the creation of a new man. He spoke of a philosophy of action, of doing, of redoing, and of transformation and creation. He held that theories were the levers of action, and ideas were hammers for restructuring society.[37]

This was what Papini, many of the *Vociani*, and the syndicalists were to call pragmatic idealism—a philosophy calculated not only to understand the world, but also to save it, transform it, and en-

35. Giovanni Papini, "Il mestiere d'Italia e il sogno d'una grande missione," *Politica e civilità*, pp. 59, 61.

36. Mussolini, letter to Torquato Nanni, July 2, 1913, *Opera*, *5*, 358.

37. G. Papini, *Un uomo finito*, pp. 67ff.

large upon it. It was a philosophy that would make concrete the will—a will grounded in motivating sentiment and directed by reason.[38]

Years later Mussolini documented the affinities he shared with the *Vociani* at this time, the pragmatism, the return to ideals, and the commitment to informative action.[39] Thus, when Benedetto Croce alluded to the idealism of the young Mussolini as a leader of Italian socialism, he characterized his idealism as informed by pragmatism, the mysticism of action, and all the voluntarism that for years had been a part of the intellectual climate of Giolittian Italy.[40]

There is little doubt that such notions echoed in the thoughts of most of the men who had influenced Mussolini. They were to be found, as we have seen, in the most influential writings of Sorel, who was himself to devote a book to the *Utility of Pragmatism*.[41] As early as 1909, Prezzolini had also addressed himself to the pragmatism of Sorel.[42] Many of the syndicalists who had followed Sorel's lead and who had significantly influenced Mussolini's thought had moved away from the simplistic sociological positivism of the turn of the century to a position that heralded the rebirth of the spirit and the pragmatic effectiveness of organizing human beings in the service of an ideal purpose. In 1913, Paolo Orano, who in 1903 had written a studied defense of sociological positivism, could argue that the syndicalists considered social change the consequence of informing collective human consciousness with a religious and mystic commitment. It was faith and sentiment, he argued, that were the motors of life.[43]

Just as he had argued in a positivist fashion in his *Psicologia Sociale* of 1903, Orano insisted in 1913, using more modern formulations, that collective psychology could be transformed by the impact of moral ideas. In 1903 Orano had identified these ideas—as had Mussolini—with positivism. In 1913 they were characterized as the spiritualization of positivism. The substantive content had nevertheless remained the same. Only its philosophical characterization had significantly altered. Mussolini's thought had undergone the same alteration. The simple positivism of his early essay,

38. G. Papini, *Pragmatismo*, p. 36.
39. Cf. I. De Begnac, *Palazzo Venezia*, pp. 118, 131.
40. B. Croce, *Storia d'Italia dal 1871 al 1915*, p. 252.
41. G. Sorel, *De l'utilité du Pragmatisme*.
42. G. Prezzolini, *La teoria sindacalista*, pp. 247–53.
43. P. Orano, *La rinascita dell'anima*, pp. 21, 25.

L'uomo e la divinità, interlarded with quotations from the positivists Ardigò and Herbert Spencer, had, by 1913, transformed itself into a form of pragmatic idealism with its appeal to Henri Bergson, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Arthur Schopenhauer.

During this period Mussolini found himself attempting to accommodate all these elements in his orthodox Marxism, and it is clear that the accommodation created considerable conceptual tension. As early as 1911, Mussolini insisted that "Karl Marx was not necessary for socialism . . . . We are not theologians, nor priests, nor bigots of literal Marxism . . . . It is not necessary to interpret Marxist theories to the letter."[44] If Marx was a prophet, he went on to argue, one should remember that prophets had a poor record of accomplishment. Every intellectual system, the product of academic lucubrations, had, he insisted, certain weak aspects, and not even Marxism had escaped such an eventuality.[45] The laws of Marxism, according to Mussolini at this point, were relative; they were tendencies, and, as such could not be interpreted dogmatically.[46]

Armed with this more modern, idealistic interpretation of Marxism advanced by Sorel as early as 1900, Mussolini faced the closing and most demanding period of the second interlude in his political and intellectual development. In the decade between his sojourn in Switzerland and his accession to the leadership of the Socialist Party, Italy had become subject to all the structural tensions of rapid industrial development. The Giolittian period was characterized by a rapid if irregular growth of the economy, and men found themselves caught up in all the exhilarating tensions of vast social change. The intellectual leadership of the nation, the radical politicians and the poets, thinkers, and novelists, gave voice to an insistent demand for change, for renovation. The brooding pessimism of the last decade of the nineteenth century gave way to a conviction that men *could* be masters of their destiny. Many Italians no longer felt vulnerable, since they had begun to gird themselves against a world they thought they now understood, and had begun to work themselves out of the shock of underdevelopment. Assertive forces began to make more and more emphatic demands. The process that had already begun with the turn of the century continued. All the vital forces of the nation began to organize themselves in defense of what they felt to be their own particular interests.

44. Mussolini, "Profeti e profezie," *Opera*, *3*, 313, 314.
45. Mussolini, "Ciò che v'ha di vivo e di morto nel marxismo," *Opera*, *3*, 365.
46. Mussolini, "Prefazione a 'Il socialismo rivoluzionario'," *Opera*, *5*, 175.

Business associations, labor organizations, Church groups, and political parties all struggled for advantage in a changing environment. Conflict surfaced frequently and with considerable violence. The turn of the century had witnessed the violence of contending factions, and the early twentieth century was to see this continue. On January 6, 1913, about a month after Mussolini had assumed responsibility as editor of *Avanti!*, the constabulary fired on a crowd in Rocca Gorga, in Frosinone, that had gathered to demand adequate medical facilities, water, and light. In the violence, seven farmers were killed and about a dozen wounded.

An entire series of such excesses followed—at Baganzola, Cervara, and Comiso. Mussolini's response was to advocate defensive violence on the part of the population—an advocacy that cost him another arrest for inciting to subversion and violence. The violence marked another incident in the eventful life of Benito Mussolini, but, more important, the incidents that commenced in early 1913 did not cease until the insurrection of Red Week in June, 1914—an episode that was to close this second interlude in Mussolini's early maturity.

Passions remained high in Italy during the eighteen months between the violence at Rocca Gorga and Red Week, as it came to be known. In May, 1914, the revolutionary syndicalists, joining forces with radical republicans, socialists, and anarchists, called for a day of solidarity in support of the anarchist, Augusto Massetti, who had attempted to assassinate an army officer in protest against the role of the military in suppressing the forces of popular protest. The subversives chose June 7, the anniversary of the promulgation of the *statuto* that governed the nation, as the day for the popular demonstration.

The demonstrations took place in many cities of the peninsula, generally without incident. In Ancona, however, the public authorities expected violence and had augmented the local constabulary with military forces. As the demonstration developed, the constabulary and the military tried to contain the crowds, apparently to prevent them from coming into contact with those celebrating the more orthodox anniversary of the *statuto*. So confined, the radicals reacted by stoning the police and the military, who responded by opening fire on the crowd, leaving two persons dead, another mortally wounded, and at least ten injured.

Reports of the massacre spread rapidly throughout Italy. In An-

cona, on the morning of June 8, the *Camera del lavoro* called a general strike in protest. Enrico Malatesta, Italy's most venerable anarchist, incited the mobs to revolution. On June 9, the civil authorities ceded control in Ancona to the military. The call to a general strike echoed throughout Italy.

The events at Ancona had provoked a spontaneous response. None of the political leaders of the radical factions were prepared for the events that rapidly unfolded. Only on June 9 did the leadership of the Socialist Party call for a general strike. The CGL, the General Confederation of Labor, which was Italy's largest labor organization, lent its grudging assistance. It quickly became clear that the CGL would support the strike for a maximum of forty-eight hours. It was to be, in their judgment, a symbolic gesture. No one was quite sure what was happening, how much cooperation was available, or what was to be done. Barricades were thrown up in Rome, Florence, and Parma. In Umbria, Naples, Bari, Palermo, and Sardinia crowds were in the streets. Especially in the Romagna and in the Marche there were serious incidents. Churches were sacked and local republics were proclaimed. Prices were lowered by decree, taxes abolished, villas burned, military officers disarmed, and the red flag was flown from town halls. Ancona itself was held by rebels for a week. In Milan, Mussolini had joined forces with Filippo Corridoni, the young syndicalist, to organize an effective general strike.

However it soon became obvious that without organization, leadership, a specific strategy, or a clear set of immediate goals, the spontaneous frenzy of the mob could hardly mature into revolution. The CGL announced the end of the general strike after forty-eight hours, and the government dispatched 10,000 troops to restore order in the Romagna and Emilia. Mussolini and Corridoni were arrested, and Malatesta fled the country.

The tragicomic events of Red Week were to have a pervasive influence on Italian political life. Not only did they shock the nation with the realization that mob action could force the central government to abdicate its authority in vast areas of the realm, but they indicated to many revolutionaries that spontaneous revolutions were foredoomed to failure. Years later, ruminating on the events, Mussolini was to describe the events of Red Week as simple chaos.[47]

47. Mussolini, *My Autobiography*, p. 33; but cf. Mussolini's contemporary judgment, "La settimana rossa," *Opera*, *6*, 256–64.

Torquato Nanni, discussing this period, indicates that Mussolini, although he at that time publicly supported the effort, was extremely skeptical about popular and spontaneous insurrections.[48] Moreover, it seems that the entire sequence of events merely confirmed, for the young revolutionary, the ineffectiveness of institutionalized socialism in Italy.

Mussolini had long considered the Socialist Party a corpse that he had sought to reanimate with a more modern interpretation of revolutionary strategy. For all his efforts and for all his successes as a leader of the Party, the Party remained factional, divided by personalism, localism, and a serious lack of discipline. Mussolini's convictions concerning the making of revolution were by this time firmly fixed, and everything that had transpired during Red Week had confirmed his conviction that Italian socialism was ill-equipped for the enterprise. The Party had failed to satisfy any of the requirements Mussolini considered necessary for effective mass action: the intellectual and political vanguard of the revolution had failed to provide consistent leadership; the Party had not achieved effective control of the available forces; and there had been no system of communication linking the various regions involved in the insurrection. Mussolini could have hardly been surprised at the outcome of events. In fact, everything he wrote in *Utopia*, and many of the articles he hosted in its pages, demonstrated his conviction that a massive revolutionary revision of socialist theory was essential.

Mussolini and *Utopia*

As has already been indicated, this was in fact the specific intention of *Utopia*. From its first issue, it recommended significant changes of emphasis and substance in what all the participants continued to call revolutionary socialism. The contributors to Mussolini's journal included a significant number of notable syndicalists and independent theoreticians, and the changes of emphasis and substance they brought to the enterprise anticipated the doctrinal developments that were to both resolve the crisis of socialism and prepare the advent of Fascism.

As I have suggested, Mussolini himself heralded a revolutionary revision of socialism in the prefatory essay that introduced the new journal. Not only did the subsequent essays reassert Mussolinian

48. T. Nanni, *Bolscevismo*, p. 177.

notions concerning the requirements of successful revolution, but a variety of theoretical elements introduced revisions with far-reaching consequences.

For example, in the first issue of *Utopia*, Giovanni Baldazzi not only characterized August Blanqui, the famous elitist and insurrectionist, as a model revolutionary—something to be expected from the intransigents of Mussolini's faction—but he also endorsed Blanqui's advocacy of an authoritarian and centralized political system to achieve the purposes of the revolution. Baldazzi's enthusiasm for Blanqui's antiparliamentarianism would have been no surprise—Mussolini's position in that regard was well known—but his endorsement of centralism might well have been unexpected. Blanqui's passionate idealism, his appeals to revolutionary heroism, and his ethic of discipline and sacrifice were all fully compatible with the Mussolinism of socialism's radical faction,[49] but the rejection of regional and local autonomy seemed to conflict with Mussolini's own commitment to decentralization as a defense against the expansion of state bureaucracy.

Mussolini had for some time taken a clear stand on the virtues of municipal autonomy against the centralized state, and yet in one of the earliest issues of *Utopia* he published, as a lead article, an essay by his immediate subordinate, Giuseppe De Falco, advocating that the attempt by the revolutionary socialists to capture municipal government should be abandoned. De Falco argued that such attempts were archaisms counter to the processes of centralization required by large-scale industrialization.[50] Six months later, Mussolini published an article by Panfilo Gentile discussing the question of central as opposed to local autonomous authority.

Gentile raised objections to the general syndicalist opposition to centralized state authority. The proletarian syndicalists, Gentile argued, treated the economic labor organizations and the authority of the state as antithetical terms. He argued that this position was indefensible. Revolutionaries, he went on, could not countenance the complete suppression of the state. If revolutionaries were committed to equity, for example, then any conflict between individuals must be mediated by an objective arbitrator. But if one granted the need for a mediator in a conflict between individuals, how much more necessary arbitration would be in a conflict of interest between

49. Giovanni Baldazzi, "Augusto Blanqui," *Utopia*, *1*, 1 (November, 1913), 18–25.

50. Giuseppe De Falco, "Devono i socialisti 'conquistare' i comuni?" *Utopia*, *2*, 2 (January, 1914), 33–38; cf. Mussolini, "Sulle elezioni amministrative," *Opera*, *6*, 114ff.

two or more organized interest groups. The state would be necessary, in Gentile's judgment, to moderate and regulate the activities of all the productive elements in the national economy. Consequently, the state would be charged with critical functions even in a socialist and revolutionary regime. Syndicates, organized productive units, could not be regarded as sufficient unto themselves. Even contractual arrangements between the units of the productive system required some superior authority to adjudicate the fulfillment and default of obligations, and then "the concept of the state, driven out the door by the syndicalists, reenters through the window." The modern nation-state, in Gentile's judgment, constituted an indisputable progress over the fragmentation suggested by antistate syndicalists. The nation-state, based on geographic and ethnic realities, constituted a historical form of collective authority necessary to organized modern life.[51]

In the same issue in which Gentile's article appeared, Giovanni Baldazzi added an acrimonious critique of the notions of Alceste De Ambris, who had advocated the revolutionary conquest of local government. Baldazzi, repeating arguments already advanced by De Falco, insisted that only a national political body could organize the necessary functions of a modern economic community. Only the central machinery of national government could organize an effective communication and transportation system, assure order, stabilize the relationship between cities and provinces, and reorganize public services. All modern nations, he went on, even when they are constituted on a federative basis, have been compelled to centralize in order to rationalize the economic infrastructure and assure public order and services.[52]

Actually, much of this was implicit in the work of the principal syndicalist theoreticians as early as Panunzio's *Sindacalismo e medio evo*, published in 1911. In this essay, Panunzio maintained that his insistence on the autonomy of syndicates did not imply anarchy. He did speak of decentralization and federalism as a defense of liberty, but maintained that continued social and economic order required law and authority.[53] While he spoke of the syndicalist opposition to the politically constituted state as an engine of

51. Panfilo Gentile, "Stato e sindacato," *Utopia*, *2*, 9–10 (July, 1914), pp. 273–77.

52. G. Baldazzi, "Sindacalismo communalista e sindacalismo rivoluzionario," *Utopia*, *2*, 9–10 (July, 1914), pp. 284–90.

53. Cf. not only S. Panunzio, *La persistenza del diritto*, but also his *Il diritto e l'autorità*.

oppression, he also emphasized the necessity for a concentric series of spontaneously organized social groups, obedient to law and authority and conforming to the integral economic and psychological needs of modern populations.

Panunzio went on to speak of social groups entering into law-governed coordination with other groups, a coordination he sometimes characterized as informed by domination and control. In fact, Panunzio did not hesitate to speak of such an organization as a modern state, a state composed of various, multiple, and coordinated corporations. Such corporations would not be opposed to one another, but would be united, interdependent, federated, organized, governed by a supreme federated social organ, and armed with authority and law. The entire system would be animated by the shared ideas, sentiments, and beliefs fostered by the pedagogical efforts of the social aristocracy, that would be required by every organized group.[54] In effect, Panunzio maintained, syndicalism was not anarchic, but given to organization, authority, and law.[55]

In substance, the ideas that found expression in the essays by Baldazzi, De Falco, and Gentile were not far removed from those entertained by Panunzio as an authoritarian syndicalist. All recognized, as had Engels before them, that modern industry required organization, authority, and control. Whether one chose to call the institutions that discharged those functions the "state" or the "authoritarian, centralized, and coordinated unity of corporations" was a matter more of taste than of substance. In retrospect, all these ideas were portentous. Combined with the repeated insistence on sacrifice, discipline, hierarchy, and the invocation of mass sentiment by a vanguard nucleus using mythic language and social poetry,[56] they suggested the outlines of a heretical socialist doctrine concerning revolution and the state.

The impression that just such a development was in fact taking place is further supported by the reemergence of elements of the new nationalism Mussolini had entertained as early as 1909. During this period Mussolini, for example, defended the candidacy of Amilcare Cipriani to elective office and spoke of him as one devoted

54. Cf. S. Panunzio, *Sindacalismo e medio evo*, pp. 7, 17ff., 34ff., 41, 43, 62, 67, 72ff., 80ff., 88.

55. *Ibid.*, pp. 104ff.

56. Cf. the articles by Mussolini, "L'impresa disperata," *Utopia*, *2*, 1 (January, 1914), 1–5; Valentino Piccoli, "Bergson e Sorel," *Utopia*, *2*, 3–4 (February, 1914), 94–100; Angelo Tasca, "I socialisti e la scuola," *ibid.*, pp. 100–104; Gino Fanoli, "Teppa e proletariato," *Utopia*, *2*, 9–10 (July, 1914), pp. 253–56.

to national interests, as one who had given of himself both physically and spiritually to the cause of the fatherland. Socialism, Mussolini insisted, was not antinational but antinationalist. It was, in his judgment, an integrative force in the service of truly national purpose. Only through socialism, he felt, could Italy be reborn as a nation. Whoever voted for Cipriani voted for both progressive patriotism and socialism.[57]

Also suggestive is the fact that Mussolini's monograph on John Huss, written at the beginning of this period, regularly referred to the influence of national sentiment in the mobilizing of revolutionary energy. Mussolini remained as aware, during this period, of the efficacy of appeals to national sentiment as he had been in the Trentino. He clearly understood that the proletariat of Italy, which had given so many of its sons to the cause of the fatherland, would respond to appeals to national sentiment. A form of nationalism thus appeared both in the pages of *Utopia* and in Mussolini's writings of the period.

The national syndicalists had, of course, broadcast a form of nationalism as early as 1910, and Michels had attempted to provide for the influence of national sentiment in his academic analyses of collective political behavior. Michels had spoken of the abstract character of internationalism, as opposed to the vital and energetic sentiment of national identity often betrayed by the most proletarian elements. "Anyone who observes the world without prejudice," Michels argued, "recognizes that we live in a time of emphatic national sentiment."[58] This was, he went on, particularly true of nations suffering economic retardation, as was the case in Italy. Michels argued that the irregular development of capitalism left some nations at a grievous disadvantage, which provoked among the popular masses a sense of outrage, humiliation, and a desire to try to bridge the gap between themselves and the more favorably circumstanced foreigners.

This, of course, was the substance of the familiar proletarian nationalism to which many syndicalists referred during the crisis of 1911 and 1912. It was based on Italy's industrial and economic retardation, to which Michels, among others, regularly alluded. Michels devoted, in fact, a long analytic essay to the relationship between industrialization and relative overpopulation, in which he

57. Mussolini, "Pro candidatura Cipriani," *Opera*, *6*, 43–47.

58. R. Michels, *Probleme der Sozialphilosophie*, p. 73; cf. "Zur historischen Analyse des Patriotismus," *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*, *36*, 1–2 (1913), 14–43.

argued that what Italy lacked to solve its population problem was the intensive expansion and technological development of industry by which Germany had solved similar problems.[59] In effect, Italy's proletarian nationalism was a function of its retarded capitalist development—a theme that was central to the new nationalism common to the national syndicalists, the nationalists of Corradini, and the *Vociani*.

This theme found a prominent place in the pages of *Utopia*, where Mussolini reminded his readers that socialism must always bear in mind the realities that often disconfirm the dogmas and formulae of traditional socialism. He reminded them that orthodox socialists had been in error when they imagined

> that capitalism had completed its cycle. Instead, capitalism displays the capability of continued development. It has not yet exhausted itself. It presents itself as a multifaceted reality . . . . At its base (of course) is the antithesis of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. But class can be factored out into a plurality of categories, and—a consideration neglected to this day—diverse psychologies. The bourgeoisie is a bloc, but characteristically heterogeneous in composition. There is a landed bourgeoisie, old and conservative, and an industrial bourgeoisie, youthful and ardent.[60]

The implications of these judgments were not drawn out. But in the essay in which they appeared, Mussolini was addressing himself to Prezzolini, a known advocate of the new nationalism, of the rebirth of Italy. As early as 1909, when Mussolini had collaborated with Cesare Battisti, Prezzolini had argued in fact that the new bourgeoisie—that youthful and ardent element—might be instrumental in the creation of the New Italy. Battisti, in his struggle to defend *Italianità*, had joined forces with just such elements, and in his article on the Trentino Mussolini had alluded to the possibility of their serving the socialist revolution as revolutionary allies.

That the new bourgeoisie, through their enterprisory skills, might well aid in a revolutionary socialist program that sought to "develop the new forces of society . . . a society in which civilization would be more intense and frenetic—dominated by the rhythm of the machines"[61] was thus already explicit in the thought of the young

59. R. Michels, "Simultaneità dei tre termini: aumento della populazione, crescenza dell'immigrazione e decrescenza dell'emigrazione in Germania," in *Saggi economico-statistici sulle classi popolari*, pp. 215–72.

60. Mussolini, "L'imprea disperata," *Utopia*, 2, 1 (January, 1914), 1–5.

61. Mussolini, "Il valore storico del socialismo," *Opera*, 6, 82.

Mussolini. These elements of the new nationalism were evident in the pages of *Utopia*, which referred, in an easy if vague manner, to an anticipated identification of the proletariat with the nation—a nation in the process of intensive development.[62] These themes recurred with some frequency in the pages of *Utopia*, and Gerolamo Lazzeri reminded revolutionary socialists that Mussolini had, in fact, always advocated a policy that was perfectly and profoundly national.[63]

Thus it becomes evident that the period we have termed the second interlude in Mussolini's political development was not without importance. During this period, he had resolved some of his difficulties with the theoreticians of revolutionary syndicalism. He was committed to the theoretical postures of syndicalism, but was opposed to the apoliticism of some syndicalist organizations, to their commitment to exclusive economic struggle. He transferred syndicalist convictions about mass mobilization and collective psychology to the problem of mass mobilization under *uniquely* political auspices. His revolutionary socialism had already become a transformed and open Marxism. Although he continued to have reservations concerning a national sentiment that pretended to obviate the differences between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie,[64] he was clearly prepared to make distinctions between the revolutionary potential of the various factions of the bourgeoisie. At the same time, he continued to oppose popular as distinct from class appeals.[65]

Red Week had been, for Mussolini, a grave disillusionment. The Party that he led and had attempted to reinvigorate had been incapable of directing the spontaneous revolutionary energy that had exploded during the first weeks of June, 1914. It seems reasonably clear that he had had misgivings even before the events of June. In May, weeks before the violence, Mussolini had published in *Utopia* an essay by Sergio Panunzio that severely criticized organized socialism. Panunzio had maintained that institutionalized socialism gave every evidence of being an elaborate machine for accomplishing nothing at all, of being an impotent industry, an "enormous army mobilized to occupy itself in idleness and inaction."[66]

62. A. Tasca, "I socialisti e la scuola," *Utopia*, *2*, 3–4 (February, 1914), 110.
63. Gerolamo Lazzeri, "Italiani e Slavi a Trieste," *Utopia*, *2*, 2 (January, 1914), 53.
64. Cf. Mussolini, "Sulla breccia," *Opera*, *6*, 38, "Tregua d'armi," *Opera*, *6*, 218.
65. Mussolini, "Il Congresso di Ancona," *Opera*, *6*, 179.
66. S. Panunzio, "Il lato teorico e il lato pratico del socialismo," *Utopia*, *2*, 7–8 (May, 1914), 204.

Panunzio's views, those of a revolutionary syndicalist, were very close to those of Mussolini. He spoke of socialism as an idealism, for revolutionary commitment required an involvement with a prefigured and transempirical reality, that went beyond the realities of the present.[67] Panunzio, like Michels and Mussolini, felt that history was the consequence of the intersection of objective and subjective factors, and that revolutionary ardor and commitment were critical subjective factors. These subjective factors could be mobilized and organized by a movement that was absolute, intransigent, intolerant, and capable of invoking, organizing, and sustaining the elemental energies of the masses. Panunzio conceived this as a synthesis of syndicalist and socialist thought, a new revolutionary ideology that would be mass-mobilizing, aggressive, voluntaristic, idealistic, hierarchical, authoritarian, integralist, and intransigent.

Before the outbreak of the First World War, Mussolini had experienced his hour as the leader of institutional socialism. His successes cannot be denied. He had attracted impressive numbers of new recruits into the Party, he had resolved the financial problems of its principal propaganda organ, and he had served as the intellectual leader of an important and innovative faction. What he had failed to do was to make a revolution. He had failed to invoke, mobilize, and discipline the masses in the service of his vision of the future.

He did not contemplate his failure for long. Just as the war with Turkey had thrown the revolutionaries of Italy into turmoil and had created the circumstances that saw him rise in the Socialist Party, the First World War was to create the political space in which he would accede to power over postwar Italy.

67. In his *Il diritto e l'autorità*, Panunzio had already begun to invoke the standard arguments of the Italian neo-idealists in support of his interpretations.

Chapter 7 The Crisis of the First World War

> I have thought—and reflected much. I have suffered much. As long as I felt I could, I defended the mandate transmitted to me by the directorate of the Party—I advocated absolute neutrality [for Italy in the present conflict]. But there came a day when the situation made persevering in that course an impossibility. We had lost our way.
> *Mussolini*[1]

Once again, in the late summer and early autumn of 1914, international events overshadowed the continuing internal crisis of Italian socialism. On June 28 the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Hapsburg throne of Austria-Hungary, was assassinated in the Bosnian capital of Sarajevo. The turbulence of Red Week was hardly over when the peninsula was once again caught up in an epidemic of excitement. Throughout the nation the death of the Archduke, who had publicly proclaimed his intention to one day make war on Italy, was greeted with positive jubilation. All of Rome took on a festive air, and crowds broke out into patriotic songs on hearing the news.

The death of the heir apparent to the Hapsburg throne was greeted with relief and jubilation not only because he was known to be ill-disposed to Italians, but also because Italy's relations with Austria had become increasingly strained since the war in Tripoli. Italy's victory over the Ottoman Turks had destabilized the entire Balkans, and in a series of diplomatic and political maneuvers Italy and Austria had found themselves locked in a conflict of interests. Austria had made clear its intention of extending its influence to Salonika in Greece—a clear threat to Italy's commercial, political, and military concerns in the area.

Furthermore, Austria-Hungary was, in the minds of many Italians, the hereditary enemy, the major opponent in the Italian wars

1. Mussolini, "Le ragioni del dissidio e le dimissioni," *Opera*, 6, 411.

of liberation and unification of the nineteenth century. And as though that were not enough, in the first fifteen years of the twentieth century, Austria revealed itself as a still more ominous threat. While Italy attempted to expand its influence in the Balkans, particularly in Albania, the Austrians made clear their intention of bringing Serbia and perhaps Montenegro increasingly under their control. To achieve this, Austria's military budget had doubled between 1910 and 1914, and the navy budget had trebled.

Even Italian socialists, so loath to consider the possibility of a European conflict, had begun to warn of the grave peril of Austria's increasingly menacing moves. In 1911, Arturo Labriola reminded Italians that Austria was in a position to encircle the peninsula in an iron ring, violating "every legitimate right of the Italian population."[2] Mussolini's dislike of the Austrian monarchy was, of course, no secret, and his opposition was regularly couched in terms of Italy's national interests.

In general, however, most socialists were disposed to leave foreign affairs to the bourgeois diplomats. Foreign affairs were understood to be essentially the concern of the bourgeoisie and their "lackeys." The only unequivocal foreign-policy position assumed by institutional or orthodox socialists since the turn of the century made them unalterably opposed to international war under any circumstances. The Second International had met with some regularity during the first years of the century, and on each occasion had reiterated its position: there would be no international war. In the event of war, the working class would simply lay down its tools in a general strike, and the possibility of war would evaporate. That the circumstances surrounding an international conflict would in reality be much more complicated was something the international socialist movement was soon to learn—and learn well.

As the war began to take shape on the horizon, Italy found itself in an unenviable position. Under the leadership of Antonino di San Giuliano, the Foreign Minister, the nation had become increasingly tied to the Triple Alliance, the supposedly defensive union of Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy. San Giuliano's dread of French hegemony in the Mediterranean had led him to link Italy's international position inextricably with that of Austria-Hungary, at a time when the Austrians were making it increasingly obvious that their interests differed from those of Italy. Arturo Labriola had warned

2. A. Labriola, *Le tendenze politiche dell'Austria contemporanea*, p. 76; cf. Mussolini, "La situazione internazionale," *Opera*, *6*, 290ff.

Italy's subversives that the military and dynastic elite of Austria was prepared to organize and lead the Slav masses of the Balkans to dominance in the Eastern Mediterranean, and by 1914 the Archduke Franz Ferdinand was identified with this policy. Thus his assassination was welcomed by both bourgeois and subversive Italians. Mussolini, in commenting on the assassination, spoke without equivocation of a "hateful and hated Austria."[3]

In effect, at the time of the crisis provoked by the assassination of Franz Ferdinand, Italy had every reason to entertain grave reservations concerning her alliance with Germany and Austria. Since the end of the war in Tripoli, Italy and Austria had repeatedly clashed in the Balkans, and as recently as eight weeks before the assassination, Austria had been outraged to discover that the Italians were assisting the Montenegrins in the construction of temporary fortifications at Lovcen, a promontory that overlooked and threatened the Austrian naval base at Cattaro. The situation became so tense that the Germans tried to mediate.

The reason for German concern was obvious, and their concern increased along with the probability of a general European war. Should Germany and Austria find themselves at war with France and Russia, their joint relative strength was sufficient to afford a real possibility of success. But should England become involved, Italy's intervention on the side of the Triple Alliance might be of decisive importance, since only with Italy's active assistance would the odds still be manageable. Italy possessed the fourth largest navy and the fifty largest army in Europe. Should Italy opt to intervene in the war on the side of France, Russia, and England, the economic and military strength opposing Austria and Germany would clearly be unmanageable. Not only would Italy cast its economic weight on the scales, but the border between Austria and Italy would become a theater of military operations, effectively tying down much of the Austrian army and leaving Germany to face the French, Russian, and probably the British armies alone. Equally important, the combined French, British, and Italian navies would assure domination of the seas by Germany's enemies.

In this context the events of the next few months unfolded. In the first week of July, the Italian ambassador to Berlin reminded the Italian Foreign Office that the alliance with Austria was nonviable from almost every point of view. He reminded San Giuliano

3. Mussolini, "Commento al delitto di Sarajevo," *Opera*, 6, 240.

that nine-tenths of the Italian population had not forgotten that Austria still possessed provinces inhabited by populations of Italian race and tongue. He went on to point out that Italian economic, dynastic, and political interests opposed those of Austria at almost every juncture. "In reality," he concluded, "there is not one single question in which the interests of Italy are not, or are not thought to be, in conflict with those of Austria."

During the second week of July, Mussolini alluded to the possibility that any conflict in the Balkans would probably escalate into a general European war.[4] On July 23 Austria dispatched an ultimatum to Serbia. During this period both the German Foreign Office and the German military staff insisted that the Austrians make every effort to keep Italy in the Alliance. The Germans warned that mobilization for war should not be undertaken if Italy could not be so secured.

The Italians, under the leadership of San Giuliano, temporized and vacillated, and in this critical situation the Austrians decided to act decisively, hoping for a quick and contained conflict. On July 28 hostilities broke out between Austria-Hungary and Serbia. Italy immediately notified Austria that the provisions of the Alliance between them had stipulated that Italy would be informed before any diplomatic or military moves by Austria in the Balkans. Since Italy had not been consulted, the Austrians in declaring war had effectively violated both the letter and the spirit of the Alliance.

Unhappily, San Giuliano succeeded in conveying the impression to the Austro-Germans that Italy might still be induced to enter the conflict on the side of the Central Powers, if some arrangement could be made that would satisfy Italian interests in the Balkans. Only on August 1 did the Italians announce to the world, almost casually, that Italy would remain neutral. Berlin and Vienna were not officially notified of Italy's decision until August 3. By that time, Germany was already at war with Russia and the general European conflict had begun.

Mussolini and the Advent of War in Europe

Under these circumstances, it is not difficult to anticipate the position Mussolini would assume. He insisted that the conflagration

4. Mussolini, "Fra una guerra e l'altra in oriente," *Opera*, *6*, 254.

was clearly precipitated by the Austrians, and that the inept policies of San Giuliano had embroiled Italy in a national disaster by linking its future with the Central Powers. Italy's only reasonable course was absolute neutrality in a war that was not its own. But more than that, as a socialist Mussolini invoked the tradition of antimilitarism and demanded that the Party, its agents, and its agencies assume an intransigent neutrality, even if the conflict should expand to include the major powers of the continent.[5] It is clear that in Mussolini's view Italy had absolutely nothing to gain by aiding Austria's policy of expansion in the Balkans. He went on to indicate that should the Austrians attempt to punish Italy for its neutrality by embarking on a punitive war, they would find themselves confronted by the determined resistance of those subversives the bourgeoisie had long accused of antipatriotism.[6]

Mussolini's insistence on absolute neutrality for Italy at this juncture was governed by traditional socialist convictions and a clear concern for the national interests of the peninsula. Like many socialists, Mussolini had always been prepared to advocate the defense of Italy against foreign aggression. As early as 1906 he had spoken of the defense of Italy against the barbarians of the north as a sacred obligation. We have, moreover, considerable contemporary evidence to show Mussolini had never felt that socialism should be committed to the notion that the "proletariat has no fatherland." Massimo Rocca reported that even before the outbreak of the conflict in the Balkans, Mussolini had dismissed the slogan as a theoretical caprice.[7] Throughout his sojourn in the Trentino, Mussolini, as we have seen, had defended the specific *nazionalità* of the Italian subjects of the Hapsburg monarchy. He spoke regularly of defending their national consciousness and of awakening a new national consciousness in the service of a new and regenerate Italy. He had spoken of cultural, political, and geographic realities that made nationality a factor in the history of the modern world, and he had regularly reminded socialists that every nation forges its own socialism.[8] His conception of socialist internationalism involved the conviction that equal and independent nations, each possessing its own unique culture and character, would one day come

5. Mussolini, "Abbasso la guerra!" *Opera*, *6*, 287ff.; cf. "Grido d'allarme," *6*, 289.
6. Mussolini, "De profundis," *Opera*, *6*, 295.
7. Massimo Rocca, *Come il fascismo divenne una dittatura*, p. 40.
8. Mussolini, "La settimana rossa," *Opera*, *6*, 263.

together in peace and fraternal harmony. This future internationalism was based on equality and the voluntary association of national communities, but the events in Europe had most painfully revealed that the prospects for this kind of internationalism were remote indeed. German socialists, in overwhelming numbers, had voted war credits to the Kaiser. Austrian socialists had mobilized themselves in their nation's service. French socialists, even the most emphatic internationalists, had rushed to the defense of the fatherland. On August 4, at the beginning of the war, Mussolini wrote in the pages of his own *Utopia* that the "socialist international was dead," and that indeed it may never have existed.

Everything we know of Mussolini at this time allows us to understand his position. He had long opposed Austria-Hungary as the embodiment of militarism and the oppressor of nationalities, and the prospect of Italy's entry into the conflict as an ally of Austria could only have been abhorrent to him. In Mussolini's judgment, it was in Italy's best interests to remain out of the conflict. Not only did Italy have nothing to gain by fulfilling the requirements of the Triple Alliance, but as he went on to point out, the Italian armed forces had been seriously weakened by the protracted war in Tripoli and could hardly stand the test of a major conflict. Finally, opposition to the war, at that initial stage, was fully compatible with his institutional obligations as a leader of Italian socialism.

From the beginning of the conflict it was evident, however, that Mussolini's sympathies were with the partners of the Triple Entente, particularly with France and England. When the Germans violated Belgian neutrality, Mussolini published his outraged reaction in the pages of *Avanti!* The most immediate assistance Italy could offer France and Belgium at that moment was absolute neutrality, since Italy's treaty obligations would otherwise have involved it in a war against the Entente, and when the Italian government announced its official neutrality, Mussolini could have only been satisfied. To his readers he pointed out that "ironically, the posture of the government constitutes the order of the day for the proletariat."[9]

As long as the issue was whether Italy should enter the conflict on the side of the Central Powers, there was little difficulty in assuming a definitive position. Mussolini, like most other Italians, was opposed to the military and political alliance with Austria and

9. Mussolini, "La dichiarazione di neutralità dell'Italia," *Opera*, 6, 298.

Germany. It is true that for a brief period of time the Italian Nationalists favored fulfilling the obligations of the Triple Alliance, but their opinion soon changed. Public sentiment and every rational calculation counseled Italy's detachment from the Austrian and German alliance. Therefore neutrality was the order of the day.

For socialists, of course, the situation became more complicated almost immediately. Mussolini was not the only commentator to allude to the death of the socialist international. He was not the only socialist theoretician to remind socialists that national sentiment, national aspirations, and national identity had figured in events since at least the time of the Napoleonic era. German and Austrian socialists had voted war credits to their respective governments. French and Russian socialists had opted to take up arms against the enemies of their respective countries. In France, Gustave Hervé, who not long before had advocated that the French proletariat plant the French flag on a dung heap, appealed to the national War Ministry to be allowed to be among the first to defend the nation against the German invaders. The internationalism of socialism, if it were not dead, seemed to be rapidly dying.

Reflecting on these events, Mussolini remarked that it was unrealistic to imagine that socialists would allow their respective nations to be martyred. Since international socialism had failed to stop the conflict, socialists found themselves in a position where they were compelled to face the hard, practical realities of events.

As though to emphasize these considerations, Mussolini published, in the first issue of *Utopia* to appear after the outbreak of hostilities, a brief article by Sergio Panunzio challenging the postures assumed by institutional socialism in the face of events. Panunzio remarked that the absolute neutrality of the official organs of the Party was in fact anything but absolute. *Avanti!*, Panunzio reminded his readers, clearly hoped for the defeat of Austria and Germany. Neutrality, Panunzio argued, implied that the victory or defeat of the Central Powers would be a matter of indifference to socialists—an implication that most socialists were not prepared to accept. If Italian socialists wished for the defeat of Austria and Germany, they had to face the possibility that Italy might intervene at one time or another, to help deliver some perhaps decisive blows. Moreover, events had revealed with absolute transparency that the principle of nationality was a factor in the political reality of the contemporary world, and the serious consideration of Italian na-

tional interests might well be incompatible with a commitment to absolute neutrality.[10]

As though the article by Panunzio were not enough, Mussolini published an essay by Massimo Rocca, the national syndicalist, in the same issue. Rocca was one of Mussolini's collaborators on the staff of *Avanti!*, and he was to figure very prominently in the months and years ahead. Rocca argued that the European war was the result of a multiplicity of factors, including dynastic, political, and sentimental variables. He denied that a simple interpretation in terms of economic interests could satisfactorily unravel the tangled skein of events, or that the war could be attributed exclusively, or in major part, to bourgeois interests, for it was a bourgeois government that had taken the stand on neutrality.

Rocca went on to allude, as had Panunzio, to the reality of the Italian nation—a reality from which grew a profound national sentiment—and since "sentiment is the motive force of action" one could "neither neglect nor deplore the significance" of national interests.[11] If this was the case, Italy's neutrality in the European conflict could only be viewed as conditional rather than absolute. Men respond to motives of sentiment, said Rocca, and sentiment reflects not only economic but national realities. In effect, Rocca implied that Italy had *national* interests that might well require an abandonment of neutrality.

In an apparent effort to balance the ledger of opinions, Mussolini published in the same issue an article by Tito Barboni, who undertook a defense of the Party's call for absolute Italian neutrality. Barboni's defense, it is interesting to note, was not couched in terms of principle. He argued that it was quite true that the defeat of the Central Powers was in the interest of the world, as well as of the proletariat, but, he maintained, they could be defeated *without* the abrogation of Italian neutrality. In effect, he argued that Italian neutrality was not absolute. Should the Central Powers, at some point in time, appear to be on the verge of victory, a due concern for the world, as well as the proletarian, interest would counsel Italy's intervention.

Along with Barboni's article, Mussolini translated a short and rather commonplace argument by Karl Liebknecht, who charac-

10. S. Panunzio, "Il socialismo e la guerra," *Utopia*, 2, 11–12 (August–September, 1914), 323ff.

11. L. Tancredi (M. Rocca), "La guerra aristocratica," *ibid.*, pp. 326–33.

terized war as "the most profitable business enterprise yet devised by modern capitalism."[12] For all its orthodoxy this did not help in the least in the deliberations of the moment.

The issue of *Utopia* of August-September, 1914 seemed to contain almost the entire range of Mussolini's thought during that fatal autumn. As we have seen, he had already anticipated a continental conflict as early as the first weeks of July—something most socialists had refused even to contemplate at the time. In discussions that took place in July, Mussolini voiced grave reservations concerning the internationalism of the German socialists. He had had, after all, some experience with the Austro-Germans while an active socialist in the Trentino. He not only anticipated, as early as mid-July, the defection of the German and Austrian socialists from their putative obligation to resist war with every means, but he voiced his own personal discomfort, at that time, with the inflexible insistence on the absolute neutrality, of Italian socialism. He was convinced that the Party should maintain its flexibility in the unprecedented events that had befallen the continent, and he voiced his distress at the inability of the Party to act decisively. He was well aware of the sentiments that enflamed the Italian population. Anti-Austrian sentiment was all but pandemic, and after the violation of Belgian neutrality popular sentiment was equally aroused against Germany.

Moreover, Mussolini was obviously uncomfortable, after the official announcement of Italian neutrality, with a political position that was almost indistinguishable from that of the bourgeois government. Furthermore, he was aware of the arguments, long familiar in the most radical circles, that sentiment is the lever of collective action. Bottled up in absolute neutrality, institutional socialism found itself unable to channel, to its own purposes, whatever mass sentiment was available.

At the outbreak of the conflict there had been almost absolute unanimity among the ranks of the subversives. The Socialist Party and the Syndicalist *Unione Sindacalista Italiano* (USI) immediately opted for neutrality. All were opposed, as was Mussolini, to the implementation of the articles of the Triple Alliance, which would have made Italy a partner in the Austrian enterprise. But after the announcement of Italian neutrality, the first defections in the subversive ranks manifested themselves. All the considerations we

12. T. Barboni, "Attorno alla neutralità dell'Italia," *ibid.*, pp. 334–42; Karl Liebknecht, "L'internazionale 'Dorée' dello sciovinismo," *ibid.*, pp. 364–66.

have briefly reviewed were compelling enough to win adherents to the position that Italy must consider a flexible neutrality and the possibility of entering the conflict on the side of France and England.

On August 18, Alceste De Ambris, one of the most prominent of Italy's syndicalists, addressed himself to the problems of the Italian subversives. He spoke of the issues facing the nation, which could not be resolved by an appeal to slogans. The next day he addressed himself to the realities facing the Italian syndicalists. He objected to a blind dogmatism that tied them to absolute neutrality and that did not permit them to distinguish between one war and another. He called for a massive revision of the theoretical commitments of the subversives that had shown themselves to be maladapted to the events convulsing the continent. Both bourgeois pacifism and socialist internationalism, he went on, had shown themselves to be inadequate. He deplored the disposition among subversives to passively assign all historical responsibility for the crisis to the political and economic elites of the bourgeoisie. Responsibilities were shared, he felt; the people and their leaders were obliged to make their positions known without equivocation. He called on Italians to take a forthright, explicit, and activist position against the "feudal, monarchial, and military" system that found barbaric expression in Kaiserism. And he spoke of a war against such a system as revolutionary in character. He alluded to Blanqui, who had advocated a revolutionary and popular defense of French freedom against German invasion in 1870. He concluded by calling on the revolutionary forces of Italy to reconsider the entire issue of Italian neutrality.

Soon afterward, De Ambris's colleague, Filippo Corridoni, while still in prison for his syndicalist activities, abandoned the commitment to neutrality and adopted the position that a war against the Central Powers could be both national and revolutionary. On September 6 Corridoni, when released from prison, called on revolutionaries to remember the combative and patriotic spirit of the Paris Commune, to abandon neutralism, and to prepare to take up arms in a revolutionary war against the absolutism and reaction of Austria and Germany.

Under the impact of the conversion of De Ambris and Corridoni, the USI split, with the majority opting to defend the insistence on Italian neutrality. But the question of Italian neutrality had been painfully opened for the revolutionary elements in Italy. Amilcare Cipriani, the celebrated subversive whom Mussolini had actively

supported in the recent electoral contests, joined those who called for Italian intervention against Austria. Ottavio Dinale, one of Mussolini's oldest syndicalist confidants, took a similar stance at almost the same time. In the meantime, Cesare Battisti, Mussolini's collaborator in the Trentino, had fled Austria. On August 22 Battisti appealed to the Italian War Ministry to accept him as a simple line soldier in the armed forces, in the event of a war against Austria. On September 14 he addressed himself publicly to the socialists of Italy, and advocated a "sacred war of liberation" against Austria in the service of those Italians still under the Hapsburg yoke.

This current of sentiment was by no means rare among the organized subversive groups, and it was particularly prevalent among the youth. The national publication of the socialist youth, *Avanguardia*, called for the socialists to march against the Teutonic hordes. When, during the first week of September, representatives of the German and Austrian socialist parties met with the leadership of the Italian Socialist Party in an effort to assure Italy's strict neutrality, the representatives of Italian socialism made it quite clear that socialist neutrality was by no means indifferent to the fate of France, Serbia, or Belgium. Italian sentiments clearly favored those nations that had suffered aggression. The Rome section of the Party published a violently anti-German manifesto—so violent, in fact, that Mussolini felt it necessary to protest to Costantino Lazzari that the manifesto compromised the claim of socialist neutrality.[13]

During this period Mussolini was buffeted by many pressures. In his first comments on the assassination of the Archduke, he had spoken, as we have seen, of a hateful and hated Austria that constituted a brutal force oppressing the national aspirations of subject peoples.[14] His Anglo-French and Belgian sympathies were equally unconcealed. As early as the end of August, Cesare Battisti reported that in a private conversation Mussolini had spoken of a war against Austria as an inevitability. Years later, Georges Lorand, the Belgian deputy, reported that during this period Mussolini had intimated to him that the absolute neutrality of the Socialist Party would probably collapse in the face of the rapidly changing circumstances. At the same time, Mussolini is reported to have stated to Ottavio Dinale that his obligations and his Party loyalties obliged him to adhere to the Party position, but that institutional socialism in the

13. Mussolini, letter to Lazzari, September 3, 1914, *Opera*, *6*, 442.
14. Mussolini, "Commento al delitto di Sarajevo," *Opera*, *6*, 240.

very near future would have to face the transit from neutrality to active intervention against the Central Powers.[15]

Not only did Mussolini contemplate advocating Italian intervention because of his conviction that the Central Powers embodied European reaction, it is equally evident that his concept of mass mobilization, namely his convictions concerning the inculcation of revolutionary consciousness, would have favorably disposed him to advocate intervention. The syndicalists had long argued that war, whether class war or international conflict, would clearly provide an occasion for such mass mobilization. De Ambris, for example, had, like Mussolini, opposed the war in Tripoli, not because it had been a war, but because it had been the *wrong kind* of war. De Ambris had in fact argued that war might well provide an excellent occasion for the inculcation of revolutionary sentiment, but a "piratical war," a calculating war for colonial aggrandizement, was at best a poor learning experience. It was clear that a war that was not piratical, that would afford instruction in heroic and revolutionary sentiment would have his approval. And in 1914 De Ambris had found such a war. It is equally clear that Mussolini held the same convictions. He had never objected to syndicalist theory on mass mobilization and the inculcation of revolutionary consciousness through heroic and violent enterprise; he had only opposed their apolitical and narrow economic organizational tactics.

From the beginning of the European conflict, then, Mussolini unofficially entertained the real possibility of Italy's involvement. He was, and had long been, aware of the efficacy of nationalism as a mobilizing sentiment. In 1914, he was prepared to countenance Italy's involvement in the war on the basis of national concerns. He had gone so far as to communicate his misgivings on the official Party position of absolute neutrality to Filippo Corridoni, the syndicalist with whom he had had, just a short time before, such serious differences. He told Corridoni, who had already committed himself to Italian intervention in the war against Austria, that he shared his sentiments, but could not declare himself because of his official responsibilities to the Party.

For weeks, Mussolini was sorely troubled. Every scrap of evidence we have from the period indicates as much. On September 9, while he still officially defended the Party position, he warned so-

15. O. Dinale, *Quarant'anni di colloqui con Lui*, p. 64; cf. R. De Felice, *Mussolini il rivoluzionario*, p. 244, n. 2.

cialists that their position was becoming increasingly precarious. Like almost all socialists, he was prepared to grant that the war had been provoked by the economic rivalries between England and Germany, but he also argued that socialists had the unenviable choice, in the event of an Italian declaration of war, of a general strike against the war or the submission to mobilization. Should the Party opt for a general strike, there was the possibility of suppression and the consequent reaction, or there was the possibility of a successful strike. In which case, the Party, now governing the nation, would have to face possible invasion by the formidable Austro-German forces. In that event the Party had the choice of either martyring the nation by opening its frontiers to the enemy, or fighting a defensive war. In the latter case the socialists would have called a general strike against the war only to find themselves fighting a war. That socialists would opt for the former alternative, and simply open the nation to invasion by the "barbarians from the north" was clearly an unacceptable alternative.

Absolute neutrality, Mussolini argued, was proving to be a cul-de-sac. Both the government and the socialists had to face the situation as it had matured, and none of the belligerents appeared content to allow Italy the luxury of absolute neutrality. Should the Austro-Germans win the conflict, Italy could expect to be punished for having disregarded its commitments to the Alliance. Should the Entente win, Italy would be excluded from the peace agreements that would involve its vital interests in the Balkans and the Mediterranean. If, in the effort to escape its dilemma, the government attempted to honor its obligations to Austria and Germany, the socialists would call for armed insurrection, and then the socialists would be faced with the problems that would attend that desperate policy. But the government seemed ill-disposed to attempt to fulfill the obligations of the Alliance. The only alternative then, was a war against the Central Powers. At that point, the socialists would have to face the challenge of calling for a popular insurrection against such a war—a war that Italian sentiment increasingly favored. Once again, institutional socialism would face an insoluble problem. Mussolini suggested that while war on the side of the Central Powers would mobilize all socialists against the government, war against Austria and Germany would have to be treated in an entirely different manner. He insisted that the socialists should not be confined by traditional dogmas. He argued that ideas must

be subject to change under the pressure of concrete circumstances.

Thus by the middle of September Mussolini was prepared to argue that the socialists should advocate what was for all intents and purposes a conditional rather than an absolute neutrality for Italy. While he maintained the official position in print, he had introduced so many qualifiers that his own convictions could hardly be characterized as supporting absolute neutrality. At about that time Professor Giuseppe Lombardo-Radice resigned from the Party over the issue of absolute neutrality, and he called on Mussolini to equivocate no longer. In the process, Lombardo-Radice published fragments of some of the private correspondence between Mussolini and himself in which Mussolini had expressed some of the sentiments I have reviewed. Mussolini responded by repeating those sentiments. He admitted that his neutrality with respect to the war was conditional and that he favored the cause of France. He went on to repeat that if the government declared war against Austria, it would find him sympathetically disposed. He went on to indicate that at the outbreak of hostilities, the position of the Party was determined by its unanimous conviction that war on the side of Austria would have provoked a revolutionary reaction by the proletariat. Now that the situation had materially altered, the government would not find socialists opposed to a war *against* Austria. He realized that a war against Austria might well complete the unification of Italy, restoring to the realm its lost provinces.

He went on to plead, however, that active support of such a war would require a "renunciation of our past" and would "prejudice our future." For thirty years, official socialism had adamantly opposed itself to international warfare. The principle of absolute neutrality was a defense of the continuity of orthodox socialist conviction. It signified an ideal opposition to the entire concept of war, which was the final exploitation of the proletariat. At the same time, he made it clear that such ideal opposition did not mean active opposition to a war against Austria.[16]

Mussolini had placed himself in an increasingly vulnerable position. The neutrality he supported was a conditional neutrality that would not actively oppose a war against Austria. He was prepared to recognize the ideal motives of a war of liberation against the Central Powers. On the other hand, he defended the principle of

16. Mussolini, "La situazione internazionale," *Opera*, 6, 361–63.

absolute neutrality in order not to break the continuity of orthodox socialist sentiment against international conflict.[17]

Mussolini's arguments in support of absolute neutrality became less and less convincing, and we know that he became increasingly troubled. The final episode in the unfolding drama of Mussolini's conversion to the cause of Italian intervention came with the publication, on October 7, of an open letter to Mussolini from Massimo Rocca. Rocca called on Mussolini to obscure his real convictions no longer. He reminded Mussolini of all the concessions he had made in his public and private discussions of the Party's insistence on absolute neutrality. He reminded Mussolini that he had committed himself to a defense of the national soil in the event of invasion, and that he had thereby granted that the socialists were involved in specifically national, as distinct from exclusively class, concerns. Furthermore, he reminded Mussolini that he had admitted privately that he would participate with enthusiasm in a war against Austria. Rocca argued that absolute neutrality was a totally misleading representation of such sentiments. At best Mussolini's neutrality was conditional, and probably it could not be characterized as neutrality at all.[18]

The next day, October 8, the *Resto del carlino* published Mussolini's reply to Rocca. In that reply he spoke of the previous eight weeks as having provoked a "transvaluation of values," as having taxed the intelligence and integrity of every thinking person in Italy. Every organ of public opinion, he went on, was caught up in the same maelstrom. No one had shown absolute consistency. He had remained, however, a francophile throughout the period, an advocate of victory for the parties of the Triple Entente. He reminded Rocca that he had consistently taken a position against the Central Powers and that he had stated, in print, that as a socialist he would not actively oppose a war against Austria. A war against France would have been antiidealistic; a war against Austria would have found resonance in the sentiments of the socialists.[19] Yet he still considered himself an advocate of the Party's insistence on absolute neutrality. It is unlikely that even Mussolini himself was fully satisfied with his response to Rocca. He was attempting to defend a political posture in which he no longer had confidence.

There was a further exchange with Rocca in the days that fol-

17. Mussolini, "Neutralità e socialismo," *Opera*, 6, 376–79.
18. Cf. the complete text in Rocca, *Come il fascismo*, pp. 51–59.
19. Mussolini, "Intermezzo polemico," *Opera*, 6, 381–85.

lowed, but on October 14, Rocca departed for France as a volunteer to fight the armies of the Kaiser. He left Mussolini still more troubled than before. The exchange with Rocca was the final piece of polemics before Mussolini published the article that was to set his political course through the most momentous years of his life.

Mussolini and the Advocacy of Conditional Neutrality and Intervention

On October 18, Mussolini, in the pages of *Avanti!*, called on the socialists to review the official commitment to absolute neutrality. In one of the finest pieces he ever wrote, the young socialist marshalled all the arguments we have reviewed, and advocated that institutional socialism abandon its commitment to absolute neutrality in favor of an "operative and active neutrality" that would allow the Party the flexibility required in the rapidly changing circumstances.

For the purposes of our reconstruction, there is one theme that appears in the article of October 18 that is worthy of special attention. Mussolini reminded the socialists that national problems existed even for international socialism. He alluded to the national socialism that had been part of the oldest tradition of European and Italian socialism, and he reminded Italian socialists of their obligations to their conationals still in the Trentino. The concept of the nation, he went on, still exercised historical significance; the socialists of Belgium and France, rising to the defense of their respective nations, had given ample evidence of that. To suggest that Italians should be completely indifferent to the fortunes of their nation because of their proletarian origins would be the height of folly. The giants of socialism, Mussolini continued, Cipriani, Vaillant, Hyndmann, and Kropotkin, had all responded to the appeal of national, as well as of proletarian, interests.

Mussolini concluded his editorial by insisting that the formula of absolute neutrality was reactionary and dangerous in principle. It forced the socialists of Italy to respond in a stereotyped manner to the rapidly changing circumstances. To persist in defending a dogmatic position in the face of rapidly changing events was not only hazardous, but aided the conservative forces of Italy whose only interest was the maintenance of the status quo.[20]

20. Mussolini, "Dalla neutralità assoluta alla neutralità attiva ed operante," *Opera*, 6, 393–403.

Mussolini's call for an "operative and active" rather than an absolute neutrality contained nothing more than he had already publicly stated in the weeks before its publication. What had changed was a clear commitment to abandon the *slogan* of absolute neutrality. That Mussolini should have written the editorial is, therefore, easy to understand. His position had remained essentially unaltered since the outbreak of hostilities. What had changed was his conviction that the call to absolute neutrality might serve some obscure ideal purpose. His personal position, as we have seen, was never absolutely neutral. His official position, however, was as a spokesman for the Party injunction—absolute neutrality. Mussolini's conversion to conditional neutrality and possible intervention, therefore, does not require explanation. What requires explanation is the length of time he retained his commitment to the official formula.

Actually, Mussolini himself had candidly and publicly admitted that to abandon the official position on neutrality would be to jeopardize his past and prejudice his future. For ten years, he had labored long and arduously to rise to leadership of the Socialist Party. He had succeeded because he had remained the most intransigent advocate of revolutionary socialism in the institutionalized Party. For three decades, traditional socialism had held the conviction that international war was not only morally wrong but intrinsically impossible because of the maturation of the proletariat. To have challenged that position would have been to place his position of leadership in immediate peril. Corridoni had recognized as much and understood Mussolini's reluctance to challenge the official position. In a letter to his brother, Corridoni stated that while Mussolini shared his views on the necessity of Italian intervention in the war, he could not take a public stand for fear of being excommunicated by his Party. Mussolini was well aware of what was at stake. He could not be indifferent to the costs involved. All of his mature life had been devoted to attaining a position of dominance in the institutionalized revolutionary movement, and by 1914 he had achieved unique stature in the Party.[21] Mussolini had far more to lose than De Ambris, Corridoni, Dinale, or Rocca, all of whom had little invested in the traditional Party. Any move against the official position might very well have cost Mussolini his leadership position—an eventuality that did in fact materialize.

Thus, throughout August and September, 1914, Mussolini con-

21. Cf. Giovanni Zibordi, "Continuando a discutere di cose interne di famiglia," in *Opera*, 6, 493; cf. Giuseppe Fiori, *Vita di Antonio Gramsci* (Bargi: Laterza, 1966), p. 112.

tinued to insist on absolute Italian neutrality, while at the same time admitting that absolute neutrality was conditioned, among other things, by sentimental and ideal attachment to the cause of the Triple Entente. His equivocations were transparent. On September 19 *Azione socialista* alluded to the "two Mussolinis," and on October 13 *La Voce* cataloged the difficulties of maintaining both positions to which Mussolini had committed himself. The *Vociani*, who had opposed the war in Tripoli, favored Italian intervention against the Central Powers. Finally, on October 17 *Azione socialista* spoke pointedly of "Hamlet Mussolini" and called on him to resolve his political schizophrenia. At that point, Mussolini could not, for fear of losing all credibility, delay any longer. On October 18 he published his call to renounce the commitment to absolute neutrality.

During this period, Mussolini found himself in a similar position to the one he had been in at the time of the war in Tripoli. He had no specific compunctions against violence or war. Revolutionary socialists had always recognized, in his judgment, the necessity of violence in the service of historical change. Mussolini recognized that war might very well produce the revolutionary crisis conditions that could precipitate massive social change. His position, as we have seen, was very similar to that of the national syndicalists, many of whom, including Panunzio, Dinale, and Rocca, had supported Italy's war against the Ottoman Turks in 1911. On the occasion of the war in Tripoli, Mussolini had emphatically rejected war for a number of reasons: he had refused to ally himself with the national syndicalists, who had had, at that time, scant possibilities of political success; the syndicalists could not have hoped to command the allegiance of the masses; furthermore, he had refused to identify with the reformist factions that had supported the war, since he was convinced that they, still less than the national syndicalists, were unable to conjure up the forces necessary for revolution. Opting against the war in Tripoli had given Mussolini the opportunity of capturing the leadership of the Party.

Mussolini's calculations had proved competent and the Congresses of Reggio Emilia and Ancona had left him one of the most important leaders of revolutionary socialism. For two years, from 1912 until the end of 1914, he had held that position. Now at the end of 1914 he had assumed a posture that clearly threatened everything he had worked for. The reasons that compelled him to that fateful and costly choice require, therefore, some careful review. There were theoretical reasons—the collection of syndicalist con-

victions that saw men mobilized to apocalyptic ideal and mythic purpose, with war as an important occasion for the mobilization of passions to clear and collective ends. There were political reasons—his opposition to Austria, specifically, and to the feudal political systems of the Central Powers. There were also reasons, which he never concealed, based on calculations of national interest. The war would complete the unification and the development of the new nation, restore the lost provinces of *Italia irredenta*, and stimulate the final phases of capitalist modernization. Finally, Mussolini was evidently embarrassed to assume a common cause with the bourgeois government that had officially committed itself to neutrality.

But Mussolini had had many of these same reasons at the time of the war in Tripoli. The principal difference between the two periods rests in the fact that in 1911 the young *duce* still believed that the official Socialist Party might yet be tempered into a revolutionary instrument. In 1914, it is unlikely that he still entertained this belief. Red Week had thoroughly disillusioned him. The Party, his own leadership notwithstanding, had been incapable of organizing the revolutionary sentiment, the elemental energies of the masses. The proletarian forces had been disorganized, factious, irresolute, and bungling. After two years of intransigent revolutionary leadership the Party remained a "corpse," a bustling enterprise occupied with nothing at all, an army mobilized to go nowhere. In June, Red Week had burned itself out in tragicomedy. In July, war had broken out, and the Party had acted no more decisively than it had during the crisis of Red Week. Mussolini made his contempt known among his immediate collaborators. In the pages of *Utopia*, he had hosted a number of articles that expressed precisely those sentiments. Thus, while it is clear that the decision to abandon the official position on absolute neutrality was not made without serious misgivings, it is not an inexplicable decision. Nor is it necessary to introduce French gold as an explanatory hypothesis. Mussolini's decision to abandon the official position was one of theoretical, political, and sentimental conviction rather than the consequence of bribery. He had never been venal. Everything we know of him bespeaks his indifference to personal wealth. The suggestion that he would have altered his position because of real or fancied personal financial gain is so implausible as to recommend its forthright rejection. All the evidence we have indicates that Mussolini's decision was based on the clearly stated considerations we have re-

viewed. They were considerations he had entertained from the very outbreak of hostilities, before any suggestion of bribery could be plausibly entertained.

Few contemporary authors still claim that Mussolini's conversion to the cause of Italian intervention in the First World War was purchased by French, Allied, or big-business money. His behavior during the crisis was the consequence of a much more complicated set of considerations, and there is significant evidence that when he made his decision, he still thought it possible to carry the Party with him. He seems to have imagined that he could commit himself to intervention, which offered him the opportunity of mobilizing masses to an ideal and mythic enterprise, and perhaps still retain his position of leadership in the Party. Yet he was not, it would seem, very sanguine about the prospect. It seems probable that he prepared for the eventuality that the Party would move against him, and he began to think of providing himself with another daily that might serve as a forum for his ideas. It was at this juncture—and the date of the beginning of negotiations remains to this day obscure —that he entered into protracted contact with Filippo Naldi of the *Resto del carlino* in an effort to obtain operating funds for his projected new newspaper.

Mussolini seems to have prepared himself for any eventuality. If he succeeded in carrying the Party in the direction of conditional neutrality and possible intervention, he intended to continue to operate as an official spokesman for Italian socialism. If he failed, he would need a vehicle to communicate to those both inside and outside the Party. He assiduously pursued the negotiations with Naldi, which were conducted with meticulous care, and it is clear that Mussolini refused to accept any funding that might require him to modify his own convictions about the war and Italian intervention. He fully expected to use his own personal newspaper to try to win over those socialists and subversives who were not irrevocably committed to the official position. His extra-Party daily was not necessarily designed to oppose the institutional socialism he had so long served. There had been many precedents for this kind of activity. The early syndicalists had published their *Avanguardia socialista* while still officially members of the Party. Treves's reformists had published *Il tempo* in competition with *Avanti!* without scandalizing the Party. Revolutionary factions, taking exception to one or another Party position, had published *La soffitta*. Yet none had been denigrated as traitors to the Party. All had retained their

active membership in its ranks. Mussolini had every reason to believe he could still make accommodations with the Party even if he were to take issue with its pronouncements concerning absolute neutrality, especially since even some of the most intransigent socialists were prepared to grant the correctness of his position. Even Antonio Gramsci, who was later to found the Communist Party of Italy, defended Mussolini's position in an article published in the *Grido del popolo* of October 31, 1914.[22]

Mussolini also had good reason to believe that the most dynamic and active elements of socialism were detaching themselves from the intransigent neutrality of the Party. On October 5, some of the most radical of Italy's revolutionaries, including De Ambris, Corridoni, Olivetti, and Rocca, had written and published a *Manifesto* calling on the workers of Italy to demand intervention on the side of England and France in defense not only of civilization and liberty but of the holy cause of social revolution.

The *Manifesto* of October 5 argued that while as revolutionaries they recognized the war as the product of bourgeois and capitalist machinations, it was impossible for the working class to remain passive in the face of events. The working-class international had shown itself impotent in the face of catastrophe. The Austrian and German socialists had committed themselves to their respective nations and to the victory of those nations—a victory that could only bring in its train a barbaric feudal and military system that would destroy the revolutionary potential of the European and Italian working class for the foreseeable future. Under the stark reality that faced the socialists, the insistence on Italian neutrality meant aiding and abetting the Austrophiles among the Italian clergy, and giving significant advantage to the hateful Central Powers. Furthermore, the social revolution to which all socialists aspired could only be achieved by completing the tasks of national unity and development. The *Manifesto* argued that for Italy the national revolution had not yet been completed. There remained many Italians outside the political confines of the nation. Only when these population elements were incorporated in their "proper natural, linguistic, and racial confines" might the class struggle be brought to its historical culmination. The culmination would produce a working-class international that had viable potential, for internationalism presupposed

22. Cf. R. De Felice, *Mussolini*, pp. 266ff.; Alberto Pozzolini, *Antonio Gramsci: An Introduction to his Thought*, p. 28.

the resolution of outstanding national problems. The *Manifesto* identified its signatories as members of the newly organized *Fascio rivoluzionario d'azione internazionalista.*

On October 10, eight days before Mussolini's call for an abandonment of absolute neutrality, the first issue of a new series of *Pagine libere* appeared. The *Pagine libere* of Olivetti was to serve, at that juncture, as the journal of the new *Fascio.* In the preamble to the first issue, Olivetti called on revolutionaries to review their doctrinal commitments in the face of the present portentous reality. He called for an abandonment of "mummified doctrines, rancid and hypocritical formulae, the formal intransigencies that have represented only a pervasive fear of reality . . . . Everything," Olivetti maintained, "needs to be worked over: philosophy, economic theory, and political considerations."

Olivetti admonished socialists to face the urgent issue of making the social revolution *national* in character, for events had shown that the sentiment of nationality "superseded and influenced every other." Once infused with national sentiment, revolutionary socialism would commit itself to the recognition that the animating concern of contemporary society was that of development. The "new man" of the national socialist future would be a man convinced that human will dominates the material world by refashioning it—by producing.

At almost the same time Corridoni, who had signed the *Manifesto* of the *Fascio*, stated that the social revolution could not be achieved wherever it violated "the principle of nationality." The national struggle for unity and independence had, in his judgment, historical, economic, cultural, and political priority. In arguments reminiscent of those of the national syndicalists, Corridoni argued that traditional socialism had lightly dismissed the national sentiments of the working classes while events had proved them mistaken and had dissolved the old antinationalism.[23] De Ambris, another of the signatories of the *Manifesto*, insisted that the war had become a national and revolutionary duty.

That these ideas found resonance among the most radical of Italy's revolutionaries is shown by the fact that even the young Gramsci, two weeks after Mussolini's call to abandon the principle of absolute neutrality, could write that events had created problems

23. Cf. I. De Begnac, *L'arcangelo sindacalista (Filippo Corridoni)*, p. 495; Trillio Masotti, *Corridoni*, pp. 90, 98.

for the *Italian* proletariat in particular. Gramsci held that the war had posed special national problems for the revolutionary movement.

All these notions had been anticipated in the ideas expressed by Mussolini throughout the years immediately preceding the first interlude in his intellectual life that began with the war in Tripoli. In the crisis of the First World War, all those ideas, overlarded by the intransigence necessitated by his struggle upward in the Party structure, now resurfaced. The voluntarism, the activism, the revolutionary and populist nationalism, all began to come together to form a new, mass-mobilizing ideology.

Official socialism realized all the implications of Mussolini's conversion. On the day after Mussolini's call for a change in Party policy, the directive committee of the Party called a meeting to discuss the issues involved. The meeting was a heated exchange between Mussolini and the orthodox majority, almost all of whom favored adherence to the traditional commitment to absolute neutrality. In the face of almost unanimous opposition, Mussolini submitted his resignation as editor of *Avanti!* An effort was made to avoid this, and it was suggested that Mussolini take a leave of absence for a three-month period—a suggestion he immediately refused. On October 20, he resigned his office as editor. Mussolini apparently still hoped, without much conviction, to stay in the Party and convince its membership to follow his lead.

His resignation from *Avanti!* left him not only without funds, but without a forum from which he could hope to influence the deliberations of the Party. After his resignation and his refusal to accept any termination payment, he returned home to his wife and told her simply, "Dear Rachele, we find ourselves once again in that same misery we knew while in Forlì. I no longer have a newspaper and I haven't a cent. We have to care for the baby and I imagine that life will be hard for us. In any event, I have decided to advocate Italy's entry into the war."

On November 10, Mussolini addressed the Milanese section of the Socialist Party to defend his position. In arguments that echoed the sentiments of the national syndicalists and the *Vociani*, he told them that socialists had failed to understand the sequence of momentous events that had engulfed Europe because

> socialists have failed to examine problems which were specifically national. The international failed to occupy itself with them, and the international is dead—overcome by events . . . . It is necessary to attempt a

> reconciliation between the nation, which is an historical reality—and class, which is a living reality. It is certain that the nation represents a level of human progress that we have not as yet transcended . . . . The sentiment of nationality exists and cannot be denied. The old anti-patriotism has run its course.[24]

On the same day, in an interview with the *Resto del carlino*, Mussolini affirmed the same position. Socialism, he insisted, whether it wishes to do so or not, must operate on the grounds of a national reality. "I have asked myself," he went on, "if internationalism is an absolutely necessary constituent of the notion of socialism. A future socialism might well concern itself with finding an equilibrium between nation and class."[25]

He concluded with his resolve to advocate immediate Italian intervention in the war against Austria and Germany. He was well aware that the "thoughtless masses" had given themselves over to absolute neutrality, but he also knew that thinking socialists had already acceded to a qualified and reasonable neutrality. A small minority, almost all national syndicalists, had passed into the interventionist camp. It was with that minority he chose to ally himself, in order to reach the malleable masses. He felt he would be able to accomplish his task, the refashioning of collective consciousness, when he could speak to the people every day. And he would speak in the pages of a new daily to be called *Il popolo d'Italia*, the *People of Italy*. Five days later the first issue appeared on the streets, and its lead editorial was entitled "Audacity!"

24. Mussolini, "La situazione internazionale e l'atteggiamento del Partito," *Opera*, 6, 427.

25. Mussolini, "Mussolini riconferma la sua avversione alla neutralità," *Opera*, 6, 431.

Chapter 8 Intervention

Marxism teaches us that the proletariat must compel the bourgeoisie to the resolution of bourgeois problems.

Our epoch, unique in history—has seen the appearance of the anonymous and multitudinous masses . . . on the world scene . . . . [The] anonymous and immense mass . . . is the human material for the new history.
Mussolini[1]

The first issue of *Il popolo d'Italia* did not call for conditional neutrality, but for war against the Central Powers. Here Mussolini realized he spoke for only a small minority of activists. He realized that many who had followed his leadership in the past would not follow him now, but he expected to collect other rebellious spirits who saw, in the challenge of war, a solution to Italy's social, national, and international problems.[2]

All the implications of Mussolini's prointerventionist position were not immediately evident, but some did surface almost immediately. Mussolini had long recognized that international war required the most intimate collaboration among all social, political, economic, and parochial interests of the warring nation. He shared this recognition with Filippo Corridoni who, for this reason among others had opposed the war in Tripoli. At that time Corridoni had written that international war would require the mobilization of all citizens around the concept nation, which would in turn require that the nation take precedence over class.[3] He argued that the commitment to international war implied, at least temporarily, a suppression of the class war. Neither Corridoni nor Mussolini were pre-

1. Mussolini, "Il partito del 'Ni'," *Opera*, 7, 182, "I morti che vivono," *Opera*, 7, 120, 122.

2. Cf. Mussolini, "Audacia!" and "I termini del problema," *Opera*, 7, 5–7, 13–15.

3. Cf. Filippo Corridoni, *Le rovine del neo-imperialismo italico*, Giovanni Bitelli, *Filippo Corridoni e il sindacalismo operaio antebellico*, 41ff.

5. Mussolini and the syndicalist Filippo Corridoni at a meeting of interventionists advocating Italian entry into the First World War in May, 1915.

pared to abandon, in 1911, the orthodox socialist position on class warfare to serve a war in Tripoli in which they saw no merit.

In the European conflict of 1914, however, both recognized that the circumstances were vastly different, although the implications of committing themselves to Italy's intervention in the conflict remained the same. If Italy were to effectively wage war, the nation itself must take precedence over any of its constituent elements. So transparent was this implication that it was drawn out, and stated explicitly by Mussolini on November 19, just four days after the first issue of *Il popolo* appeared on the streets.

Socialism and Bourgeois Tasks

Mussolini argued that the proletariat of Italy could not be indifferent to the international crisis that had embroiled Italy. The threat of war—a war that involved the interests of every economic and social category of the population—had forced collective national concerns to the fore. Traditional socialists had long argued that national problems were bourgeois responsibilities. Mussolini was prepared to grant as much, but added that if the bourgeoisie proved incompetent or ill-disposed to solve national problems, the revolutionary proletariat, whose interests were inextricably involved, would be compelled either to undertake their resolution, or to drive the bourgeoisie to take up their historical tasks for fear of revolution from below.

In so arguing, Mussolini had seized on a formula that was to be used by almost every revolutionary movement of the twentieth century—under certain conditions, the revolutionary proletariat must either itself perform, or otherwise compel the bourgeoisie to perform, the tasks history had assigned it.

According to the notions of nineteenth century Marxism, the tasks of nation-building, national integration, and industrial development were part of the bourgeois historical mission. In the twentieth century, however, it was to become increasingly obvious that the bourgeoisie was, in many instances and for many reasons, either ill-disposed, ill-equipped, or unable to accomplish its tasks. Under such circumstances, the responsibilities would increasingly fall upon the proletariat, or its most conscious element, the revolutionary party.

The first people to collect around Mussolini and *Il popolo d'Italia*

were all convinced that bourgeois tasks still faced the newly unified nation. Olivetti and Corridoni, for example, had addressed themselves to Italy's political and economic retardation. In the last manuscript he wrote in late 1914 or early 1915, Corridoni spoke of Italy's industrial and political immaturity. "Three quarters of Italy," he argued, "remains in precapitalist conditions . . . . It is perfectly obvious that we must apply ourselves to furthering bourgeois purpose—that we goad the bourgeoisie into working more assiduously in fulfilling its mission."[4]

The nations that began industrialization late, Corridoni asserted, found themselves significantly disadvantaged in the modern world. They had little developmental capital and were thus condemned to be afflicted with "rachitic" industries and to assume the role of second-class participants in international competition.[5] The consequence of economic retardation in the twentieth century was an immature proletariat and inadequate proletarian organizations.

These arguments were familiar among national syndicalists and had found their place in the writings of Mussolini as early as 1909. In the crisis of the war, they came together to provide the first intimations of the political and economic doctrine of Fascism. As I shall suggest, these same arguments were also to appear as significant elements in the revolutionary rationale of most mass-mobilizing socialist movements in the twentieth century.

Many of the revolutionaries who had begun to collect around the standard of interventionism argued that the war would resolve some of the principal tasks of Italy's bourgeois period, among which was the incorporation of the lost provinces. It was understood that the tasks of national unification and integration were bourgeois tasks, but because of Italy's late development, its peripheral industrialization, its irresolute bourgeoisie, and its immature proletariat, those tasks might not be accomplished without the intercession of special revolutionary forces. Analogs of these arguments have now become commonplace among revolutionaries in underdeveloped countries, but during the first decades of the century they could only sound heretical to the orthodox.

For our purposes, it is clear that such arguments had already begun to work their influence on Mussolini. Five years before, in the

4. As quoted, I. De Begnac, *L'arcangelo sindacalista: Filippo Corridoni*, pp. 617, 621.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 622; cf. Vito Rastelli, *Filippo Corridoni: la figura storica e la dottrina politica*, pp. 35, 38.

Trentino, he had accepted Battisti's injunction to collaborate with the young and dynamic bourgeois elements in the defense of the national problems of Italians under Austrian rule. In the critical months of 1914 Mussolini was once again prepared to suspend the class war in order to resolve national, if bourgeois, problems. If the war posed national problems, and national problems were by definition bourgeois problems, the proletariat could not remain indifferent to them. The proletariat, in fact, might have to compel the bourgeoisie to discharge its historical tasks.

Thus, by the last week of November, 1914, the young Mussolini had given the socialists of the Party more than enough grounds for serious concern. Not only had he broken Party discipline on the question of neutrality, undertaken to publish a daily in competition with the official Party organ, but he also had begun to harbor ideas that significantly strained the Marxist orthodoxy of the period. As might well have been expected, Mussolini was officially expelled from the Party on the night of November 24 for "moral and political unworthiness," less than four weeks after Italo Toscani had characterized him as the symbol of socialism for Italy's revolutionary youth.

In the long history of Italian socialism there were few occasions of more drama, emotion, and enmity than Mussolini's expulsion from the Party. The meeting was dominated by high emotion—a tense scene, fraught with impending violence, much like that of a revolutionary tribunal.[6] Mussolini was hardly allowed to speak. He was hooted and jeered at. No formal charges were made because it was held that everything he had done since his call for a revision of the Party's stand on neutrality was proof of his moral and doctrinal turpitude.

There is little doubt that Mussolini came away painfully shaken by the events of that evening. But more important than the personal trauma involved was the fact that the emotions provoked by the event seem to have locked the official Party into an inflexible posture that was to serve it ill during the long years of the First World War. During that period Italian socialism was to temporize, vacillate, and posture. But its policy of neutrality during a world conflict of the proportions of the 1914–18 war succeeded only in creating a gulf between itself and the nation that was to suffer so grievously.

6. Cf. the contemporary account in *La folla* (Milan), no. 47, November 29, 1914, contained in *Opera*, 7, 451–54; compare this with the fanciful rendering in A. Balabanoff, *The Traitor: Benito Mussolini and his "Conquest" of Power*, I, 5, p. 154.

Its subsequent policy of neither adherence nor resistance to the war conveyed to many the unmistakable impression of political and strategic sterility and incompetence, and succeeded only in isolating the Party. While the Party sulked during the years of conflict, other political and social forces were to enjoy political and social advantage. New groups were to organize and compete for power. New social elements were to emerge that were to have fateful impact on the nation.[7]

It would seem that Mussolini had driven the Party into a position from which it could not, or would not, extricate itself. In the months that followed his expulsion, his relentless criticism of the official position could only force the Party leaders to a more concerted and surly indisposition to change. Any deviation by the Party from its absolute and intransigent neutrality would have been seized on by Mussolini as evidence of his prescience. The dispute between Mussolini and his former colleagues became increasingly bitter and violent in the months that followed. Relationships deteriorated to the point where duels were fought. The exchange of abuse became so vile that there is little that could be compared with it even in a journalistic tradition alive with vituperation and personal vilification.

The day after his expulsion, Mussolini made transparently clear that he intended to implacably and obstinately oppose the official position. The leaders of the Party, he said, were incoherent, irresponsible, and cowardly at best; at worst, they were worms, carrion, moral defectives, degenerates, and bribed agents of the Kaiser. The official socialist press, in its turn, referred to Mussolini as a lunatic, a venal traitor, a mountebank, and an egotist. Almost immediately, the official position was that Mussolini's defection had been suborned. He had been converted by bourgeois gold, and *Il popolo d'Italia* had been subventionized by warmongers who sought profit in mass destruction. As early as November 23, *Avanti!* insisted that Mussolini had been bought by the bourgeoisie and that they had imposed their program on him.

Beneath the literary pyrotechnics, there were real and substantial issues. In retrospect it seems clear that Mussolini was essentially correct in his negative appraisal of the options left to the Party by its intransigence. The Socialist Party of Italy was never, in fact, able to resolve its dilemma; only at the end of the war, with the experience of the Bolshevik revolution as a guide, could some ele-

7. Cf. particularly, R. De Felice, *Mussolini il rivoluzionario*, pp. 261ff.

ments of the Party develop a reasonably coherent, if unsuccessful, strategy. Only the communists, under the leadership of Bordiga and Gramsci, were to formulate an alternative to the nonpolicy official socialists had pursued for more than three years. Only the communists were prepared to draw out the full implications of absolute neutrality and invoke class war against the "imperialist war of redivision."

But the leadership of the Party had made mistakes—evidence of their lack of nerve or of their inability to see their way through to an alternative, rather than of their cowardice or venality. Their mistakes were those made by honest, if undistinguished men faced with enormous responsibilities, burdened with a long tradition, and confined by a body of theory formulated many years before for different climes and different circumstances.

As for Mussolini, at this juncture, he was the better tactician. Mussolini was to exploit all the new opportunities that circumstances made available. It is clear that the reasons for Mussolini's defection from the Party were political and theoretical, not venal. Equally certain is the fact that his political postures were not imposed on him by his bourgeois masters.

We now know that Mussolini had made his decision concerning Italy's involvement in the war long before he had any contact with bourgeois benefactors. Actually, the charges leveled by the leaders of the Party turned on the founding of *Il popolo*. The charge was that Mussolini's daily was funded by bourgeois capital and consequently Mussolini's activities were in the service of capitalism.

From the evidence provided by over half a century of investigation, it can be said that the economic support for Mussolini's venture came from a variety of sources, at least some of which he could not at the time identify. Most of the money was provided through the offices of Filippo Naldi, editor of the *Resto del carlino*. The money originated among a number of different people, some of whom were interested in an articulate opposition to the prevalent neutralist sentiment. There may have been some contributors, like Giovanni Agnelli of Fiat and Mario Perrone of Ansaldo (and we have no direct evidence that they did so contribute), who could have been expected to support intervention in the hope of improving their profit potential (although their interests would probably have been more complicated).[8] But it would be difficult to similarly

8. C. Valerio Castronovo, *Giovanni Agnelli*, pp. 87ff.

explain the financial support and guarantees given to Mussolini by Giuseppe Giulietti of the *Federazione dei lavoratori del mare*, the organized maritime workers.[9] The *Federazione*, as a workingmen's union, was affiliated with the General Confederation of Labor and the Socialist Party of Italy, and could hardly qualify as a bourgeois paymaster.

In fact Mussolini had decided that he was obliged to advocate Italy's intervention of the war. To do so he needed an effective forum, and his negotiations with Naldi provided the wherewithal for that forum. That some capitalist funds gave him the possibility of publishing his own daily no more made Mussolini a captive or a tool of bourgeois interests than Lenin's acceptance of German assistance and funds during the First World War made him a captive or a tool of German imperialist interests.

Moreover, as Mussolini was to argue later with tedious regularity, there was no one group of interests that could be plausibly identified as bourgeois. There was the industrial bourgeoisie, the landed bourgeoisie, the small propertied classes, the bourgeois intellectuals, the retail merchants, the commercial classes, and the professionals—all with their own peculiar purposes.[10] Mussolini maintained that the bourgeoisie as a general class was disposed toward pacifism and neutrality,[11] and the evidence we have from the period indicates that he was quite correct.[12] He insisted that the economic class categories invoked by the orthodox socialists to explain complex collective behavior were simply inadequate to explain the political dispositions of Italians. Both neutralism and interventionism cut across all class and category lines.[13]

At this point in his life, Mussolini realized that he was almost isolated.[14] He had failed to precipitate any large scale defections from the official Party, since he had opted for active intervention in the war. It was clear that the majority of Italians supported neutrality, while a sizeable minority favored a conditional neutrality that would permit Italian diplomats to negotiate with both sides in

9. De Felice provides ample discussion and full documentation concerning the first funding of the *Popolo d'Italia*; *Mussolini*, pp. 272–78.

10. Cf., Mussolini, "Per la libertà dei popoli, per l'avvenire dell'Italia," *Opera*, 7, 78.

11. Mussolini, "Il dovere dell'Italia," *Opera*, 7, 106.

12. Alberto Monticone, *Gli' italiani in uniforme 1915/1918*, ch. 3.

13. Mussolini, "'Sputarsi addosso,'" 7, 335.

14. Cf. Mussolini's comments, "'Finché mi resta una penna in mano, e un revolver in tasca, io non temo alcuno,'" *Opera*, 7, 33; "L'on. Palancagreca e . . . compari," *Opera*, 7, 288.

the conflict to Italy's territorial advantage. But only a small, active minority favored Italian intervention on the side of the Entente powers. If Mussolini had sought to solicit bourgeois support, there was more bourgeois support for neutrality, conditional or otherwise, than there was for active intervention. On the other hand, it was obvious that he would need financial support if he were to have any political leverage. That support would come, at least in part, from those elements of the bourgeoisie that favored intervention, or that at least wished to undercut the pervasive neutralism that seemed to dominate Italian public opinion at the time. Mussolini was, in effect, exploiting whatever support he could to further a course of action he had decided on for theoretical, strategic, and tactical reasons. It was evident, for example, that he would participate in interventionist activities involving political factions with which he did not identify. At interventionist rallies, Nationalists, Futurists, reformist socialists, radical republicans and Mussolinians would join forces for a common purpose, but they all maintained their independent political profiles. The Nationalist Association, indeed, was among the first to charge Mussolini with venality and corruption.[15] For a long time, as we shall see, Nationalists viewed Mussolini with emphatic suspicion, and Mussolini continued to distinguish himself from them.[16]

During the interlude between the onset of hostilities and Italy's entry into the war, the subversive interventionists maintained their own political posture vis-à-vis the many others who were urging Italy's involvement. Even before Mussolini's decision to enter their lists, the revolutionary syndicalists, led by Olivetti, Corridoni, and De Ambris, had articulated an interventionist rationale that distinguished them from the other interventionist elements. When, in December, 1914, Mussolini joined the *Fascio autonomo d'azione rivoluzionaria* (the reconstituted *Fascio rivoluzionario d'azione internazionalista*) he committed himself to their rationale. It was a rationale he had already made his own, and the transit was effortless.

The central arguments in the rationale—and those that are perhaps least interesting for our reconstruction—dealt with the principle of nationality. That is to say, the subversive interventionists

15. Cf. Mussolini, "Ad armi corte," *Opera*, 7, 25; cf. "Chi paga?" in *L'Idea Nazionale* (Rome), no. 89, November 21, 1914.

16. Mussolini, "Italia, Serbia e Dalmazia," *Opera*, 7, 308; "Dimissioni!" *Opera*, 7, 333; "L'adunata," *Opera*, 7, 139–41.

argued that the war was a war of those prepared to defend the independence and integrity of nations against those given to imperialist and annexationist design. The Central Powers had violated the integrity of Serbia and Belgium, and had kept hundreds of thousands of national Italians confined within the Hapsburg domains. In the nineteenth century Germany had stripped France of Alsace-Lorraine and had violated the integrity of Denmark.

Equally emphatic was the contention that the Central Powers represented reactionary authoritarian and military systems, whereas the Entente was the defender of more progressive systems. Finally, the Central Powers were aggressors in the conflict. Their defeat would restore the integrity of nations overcome by Austro-German arms, and prepare the way for a true international of free and equal member states. Finally, the disappearance of the Central Powers, the defeat of the Hohenzollern and Hapsburg monarchies, and the suppression of reactionary Turkey would create the preconditions for the effective organization of the working class.[17]

To the objection that Czarist Russia could hardly pass as progressive, Mussolini responded that the vast mobilization required by the war had injected the popular masses into the affairs of each nation, and that those masses would predictably undermine reactionary authoritarianism. He anticipated that Russia would be convulsed by social revolution as a direct consequence of the war.[18] The requirements of war would finally integrate the people into the political processes of every nation,[19] all of which could only augur vast social changes and make the war itself revolutionary.

For Italy the war would mean, finally, the conclusion of the processes begun with the Risorgimento. Italy would not only obtain a territorial integrity denied it by the diplomacy of foreign powers throughout the nineteenth century, but the common people would finally become participant members of the nation.[20] The war would be Italy's first national war; it would finally make of the people of

17. Cf. Mussolini's version of these arguments, "Considerazioni sulla guerra," *Opera*, 7, 54; "Per la libertà dei popoli, per l'avvenire dell'Italia," *Opera*, 7, 76–81; "Tre guerre, tre formule," *Opera*, 7, 91–93; "Fronda," *Opera*, 7, 127; "Contro la Germania," *Opera*, 7, 136–38; "Risposta a Barbato," *Opera*, 7, 344–48; "'Viva la guerra liberatrice!'" *Opera*, 7, 393–95.

18. Mussolini, "Il dovere dell'Italia," *Opera*, 7, 109; cf. "La necessità dell'intervento," *Opera*, 7, 67.

19. Mussolini, "Ombre e penombre," *Opera*, 7, 341–43, particularly, "La beneficenza in rapporto al socialismo," *Opera*, 7, 72–75.

20. Mussolini, "Viva Milano guerriera!" *Opera*, 7, 388; cf. also, "Risposta a Barbato," *Opera*, 7, 345–47.

Italy that infrangible unity that was the ultimate realization of nationality. The war would finally reveal Italy to the Italians and create a national consciousness that would forever dispel the stereotype of the Italians as men of little substance. Out of the test of war would emerge a regenerate Third Italy, the new Italy that would stand as an equal in the congress of nations.[21]

Mussolini and Mass Mobilization

All these eventualities were based on the mobilization of *masses* in the service of *national* ends. For the first time Mussolini explicitly conjured up the image of the "anonymous and multitudinous masses" as the recruitment base for the revolution. He spoke of the availability of those masses as the most significant factor of the modern epoch. He insisted that failure to understand the implications to be drawn from that fact would nullify any political strategy. Only men capable of invoking the anonymous and immense masses could mobilize the energy for the exacting social and political changes heralded by the new age.[22] In an account that paraphrased the convictions of his early youth, Mussolini argued that the masses, left without inspired and inspiring leadership, would lapse back into passivity. Only a special leadership, shaping the consciousness of the masses through appeals to idealism and sentiment and informing them through mimetic example, could elevate them to the tasks of the period. Informed by a common mission, the masses would become the agency of historical change.

It becomes obvious that during the crisis of the war, Mussolini had shifted his focus from the proletariat to the masses. His appeals were thereafter addressed to the people rather than exclusively to the working class. Symptomatic of this shift is the title of his daily, *Il popolo d'Italia*, the *People of Italy*. In the Romagna, at the end of 1909 when he had to choose a name for his newspaper, he had chosen *Lotta di classe*, the *Class Struggle*. This symbolized the change in the center of gravity of his system of political beliefs. Between 1909 and 1914 he had operated within the confines of the orthodox socialism of the Party, and had conceived of class struggle and proletarian intransigence as the distinguishing species traits of revolutionary socialism. Now Mussolini was prepared to argue that

21. Mussolini, "La prima guerra d'Italia," *Opera*, 7, 196–98; "E guerra sia!" *Opera*, 7, 418ff; "In ogni caso," *Opera*, 7, 270–72.

22. Mussolini, "I morti che vivono," *Opera*, 7, 120–22.

there was no such thing as a specifically proletarian position on the war.[23] Experience, he insisted, had shown that there were proletarians who were irredeemably pacifistic and others who had joined the vanguard of the interventionists. The interventionists, if they were to mobilize support for Italy's revolutionary war, would have to appeal not to the proletariat alone, but to all living and dynamic elements of the population—whether or not those elements could be characterized as proletarian according to socioeconomic indices.

It followed that if the interventionists were to appeal across class lines, the class struggle would either have to be abandoned or suspended for the duration of the war. Some alternative political formula would have to serve as the rationale for mobilizing the masses to sacrifice and discipline. What that formula might be would not be difficult to anticipate.

Even before his expulsion from the Party, Mussolini admonished socialists to remember that the outbreak of war had revealed that socialism had never really addressed itself to specifically national problems.[24] By December 5, 1914, he was prepared to argue that the war had revealed an unanticipated phenomenon at variance with everything orthodox socialism had led men to expect, namely that the populations of the contending nations had solidified themselves into homogeneous units. Class distinctions had been reduced to the extent that men identified themselves not in terms of class, but in terms of a primary *national* loyalty.[25] On December 13, Mussolini maintained that the international conflict that had broken out in August had revealed a singular novelty, "an undeniable fact," the reality of a fusion of peoples with their respective nations in a block of national unanimity. That fact, he went on, bore the unmistakable sign of a "germ of a new and unanticipated political construction"[26]—a political community in which the people, the state, and the nation might merge into seamless unanimity.[27]

Revolutionaries, Mussolini maintained, must become fully aware of the reality that the war had revealed:

> The nation has not disappeared. We used to believe that the concept was totally without substance. Instead we see the nation arise as a pal-

23. Mussolini, "Il proletariato è neutrale?" *Opera*, 7, 305; "L'ideale di Marcora," *Opera*, 7, 275–77; "Il monito di Oriani," *Opera*, 7, 253.
24. Mussolini, "I termini del problema," *Opera*, 7, 13–15.
25. Mussolini, "La necessità dell'intervento," *Opera*, 7, 66ff.
26. Mussolini, "Guerra di popoli," *Opera*, 7, 72ff.
27. Mussolini, "Ombre e penombre," *Opera*, 7, 341ff.

> pitating reality before us! . . . Class cannot destroy the nation. Class reveals itself as a collection of interests—but the nation is a history of sentiments, traditions, language, culture, and race. Class can become an integral part of the nation, but the one cannot eclipse the other.[28]
>
> The class struggle is a vain formula, without effect and consequence wherever one finds a people that has not integrated itself into its proper linguistic and racial confines—where the national problem has not been definitively resolved. In such circumstances the class movement finds itself impaired by an inauspicious historic climate.[29]

For the young Mussolini, the recognition that the nation still occupied so critical a place in the social and political dynamics of his time suggested that those historical tasks that Marxist theory had assigned to the bourgeoisie had not yet been completed. As far as Italy was concerned, the process of national unification and integration was clearly not yet complete. Italy was still in the stage of national revolution. It was the test of arms during a period when the nation still faced bourgeois tasks that would complete the process, that would create a national consciousness, a moral and psychological unity, the precondition for a new Italy.[30]

If the war contained the promise of Italy's ultimate unity, and if that unity was the precondition for development, socialists could not disregard their responsibility. If the bourgeoisie had failed to discharge its historical responsibilities—and there remained nations as yet incapable of the development required by classical Marxist theory—then the socialists were compelled to take up bourgeois tasks in the ultimate interest of the proletariat.[31]

These convictions, long common among national syndicalists, joined with the recognition that the retarded social and economic conditions of the peninsula could only produce an immature proletariat, led easily to a political strategy committed to the mobilization of *all* population elements in an effort to complete the historical mission of the bourgeoisie. On the basis of this rationale, the recruitment base of the revolution would no longer be the proletariat (however broadly viewed), but the masses or the people. Similarly, the mobilizing minority, the vanguard leadership, would no longer be the vanguard of the proletariat, but those men in the population,

28. Mussolini, "Il dovere dell'Italia," *Opera*, 7, 101.

29. Mussolini, "Un appello ai lavoratori d'Italia dei Fasci d'azione rivoluzionaria," *Opera*, 7, 118.

30. Mussolini, "Per la libertà dei popoli, per l'avvenire dell'Italia," *Opera*, 7, 77.

31. Mussolini, "Fronda," "Il partito del 'Ni'," *Opera*, 7, 128, 182.

of whatever class origin, who were audacious, dynamic, and revolutionary. Mussolini ascribed these characteristics to the leaders of the *Fascio*.[32]

These were the convictions with which Mussolini identified during the period of agitation for Italy's intervention in the First World War. From October, 1914 until May, 1915, these ideas took on greater and greater coherence in his speeches and writings. Throughout the period he still considered himself a socialist[33], but a *national* socialist who advocated a form of social revolution that would successfully discharge the historical tasks of the bourgeoisie. Mussolini harkened back to the national socialism of Pisacane, Mazzini, and Garibaldi, whose names were to appear more and more frequently in his discourses and articles of the period.[34] The age of the giants of socialism, Pisacane, Mazzini, and Garibaldi, when socialism had given itself over to the bourgeois task of building nations and defending national independence, was, for Mussolini, the golden age of socialism.[35]

These were the ideas he communicated to the first *fascisti*, the members of the *Fascio d'azione rivoluzionario*. He admitted that they still lacked coherence,[36] but they were ideas that could animate a movement for Italy's regeneration. He realized he had failed to revitalize the Socialist Party. Orthodox socialism had remained transfixed by shopworn and ineffectual ideas, housed in a hopelessly inadequate organization dominated by inept leadership.[37] Failure to recognize the most elementary realities of the contemporary world had left the Socialist Party the victim rather than the master of events.

Under the challenge of the First World War, all the ideas that Mussolini had entertained as a young man increasingly came together in fateful combination. None were in themselves novel. They had all appeared in fragmentary and muted form in his early speeches and published works. There were obvious changes in em-

32. Mussolini, "Adesioni e solidarietà," *Opera*, 7, 57.

33. Cf. Mussolini, "Chiodi e croce," "Per l'espulsioni dal partito," "Per la libertà dei popoli, per l'avvenire dell'Italia," "Il dovere dell'Italia," "La parola a Galleani!" *Opera*, 7, 18, 40ff., 80, 98, 160.

34. Cf. Mussolini, "I morti che vivono," "I documenti dell'abbiezione neutralista," "Dopo l'adunata," "Sacrifici e vantaggi," "La sfida," "Nel vicolo cieco," *Opera*, 7, 121, 131, 152ff., 275, 282, 350.

35. Mussolini, "Il dovere dell'Italia," *Opera*, 7, 103.

36. Mussolini, "L'adunata," *Opera*, 7, 140.

37. Mussolini, "I documenti dell'abbiezione neutralista," "Anima e ventre," *Opera*, 7, 85, 129.

phasis and some of the interred implications were drawn out, but everything Mussolini had written before 1914 implied that Italy had not yet transcended the bourgeois nationalist phase. And yet, until 1914, he had continued to address himself exclusively to the proletariat. He had long before recognized the merits of the syndicalist arguments about Italy's economic and political retardation, and yet he had insisted on addressing himself exclusively to the proletariat —a proletariat that could only have been immature in terms of his conception of history.

One can only suppose that the institutional obligations he had assumed—his effort to achieve leadership in the organized socialism of his time—had obscured his vision. Nonetheless, the elements of the new nationalism were already evident as early as 1909 when he was only twenty-six. Yet only his expulsion from the Party freed him from conceptual constraints. By the beginning of 1915, he had begun to put together an ideology that was to shape Italy for the next generation.

This process was not unique to Mussolini; on the contrary many members of the first *Fascio* underwent the same ideological development. A. O. Olivetti, in a lead essay in *Pagine libere* announcing the organization of the *Fascio*, spoke as early as October 10, 1914 of an Italian socialism infused with national sentiment, a socialism that would complete the tasks of Italy's unification and integration and begin a process of accelerated production that would put it among the advanced nations of the earth. The new man who would arise from Italian national socialism would be preeminently a producer. Italian national socialism would lift Italy to that "necessarily transitional level" beyond which the goals of traditional socialism might be achieved. Olivetti addressed himself to the common goals of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie that found expression in national interests.[38] By May 1, Olivetti could speak effortlessly of the nation as "that permanent historical, cultural, and civil patrimony" that unites men of all classes in a common sentiment in pursuit of their historical tasks. Since Italy had yet to complete its national integration and develop its productive capabilities, the most fundamental immediate interests of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat were mutually compatible.[39]

38. Cf. A. O. Olivetti, "Ricominciando," and "Salutatemi i pacifisti," in *Pagine libere*, October 10, 1914, and "Noi e lo stato," *ibid.*, November 15, 1914, and "Postilla a 'Socialismo e guerra sono termini antitetici?' Ancora per la neutralità di Aroldo Norlenghi," *ibid.*, March 20, 1915.

39. Olivetti, "Nazione e classe," *L'Italia nostra*, May 1, 1915.

The same collection of ideas is to be found among the writings of the principal spokesman for the subversive interventionists, particularly in the last documents left us by Filippo Corridoni and in the articles of Sergio Panunzio. Under the pressure of events a small but aggressive minority of subversives had broken away from the orthodoxies of classical Marxism and had begun to formulate a rationale for radical intervention in the process of development. These ideas were not fully integrated, and the individual variations among the ideologues of the nascent Fascist movement were emphatic. Taken together, however, although they varied with each spokesman, the ideas were innovative and etched an ever-widening gulf between the *fascisti* and the orthodox organized socialists.

On the basis of the rationale they had begun to formulate, the first Fascists began to develop the strategies of mass mobilization that were later to characterize them. They, and Mussolini first among them, believed that man was moved by insistent appeals to sentiment rather than by reason per se. The masses, when exposed only to rational argument, could be expected to lapse back into torpor. Sorel had taught the first Fascists that much. Mass mobilization required an evocative grand idea, a shared and compelling sentimental mission. All the dramaturgy, the histrionics, the symbols, and the moral persuasion that were later to characterize the postwar movement were already evident in the public meetings of the Fascist interventionists. The conviction that parliamentary activity was ineffectual, if not simply reactionary, was as much a consequence of their commitment to special strategies of mass mobilization as it was of their reasoned conviction, born out of the works of Mosca and Pareto, that parliaments were simply devices to allow ensconced elites to maintain the status quo under the fiction of popular rule. In their view, parliamentary rule was not only ineffectual in mobilizing for collective purpose, it was inept, incompetent, corrupt, and deceptive. Under the conditions demanded by Italy's "fateful mission," the first Fascists called for the extirpation of parliament.[40] Parliamentary activity, governed as it was by the most immediate concerns of articulate interest groups, could only fail the long-range collective interests of the nation. The massive changes required for the regeneration of Italy could only threaten immediate concrete interests. The parliamentary representatives—the old, the propertied, the established professionals, and the suborned spokesmen

40. Mussolini, "Abbasso il parlamento!" *Opera*, 7, 376ff.

for special interests—were the embodiment, the first *fascisti* insisted, of the conservatism of so-called democratic government.

The Advent of War

With respect to the challenge of the war, the *fascisti* argued that the government of Italy had temporized and attempted to negotiate a conservative advantage, first with the Central Powers and then with the Entente, and there was considerable truth in their arguments. During the months between August, 1914 and May, 1915, the government of Italy attempted to barter its assistance for one or another specific territorial or interest advantage, first with Austria and Germany and then with Russia, France, and England. For an extended period of time the government bargained with both sides. Its tactics were in the tradition of Italy's conservative ruling elite.

During this time the small band of *fascisti* were driven to desperation. From the start their activities were harassed. Opposed by a calculating government, an indifferent population, and socialist intransigence, the few thousand *fascisti* called ineffectual mass meetings in an effort to influence events. The available evidence indicates that the government had instructed the agencies of public security to maintain order by controlling interventionist demonstrations. The vast majority of Italians maintained a studied lack of concern, but the socialists, at the commencement of the Fascist campaign, met their efforts with violence.

So repressive was the socialist opposition to the interventionists that even the more democratic socialists objected. On February 27, 1915, Anna Kuliscioff wrote to Turati that

> the Socialist Party is doing everything possible to violate the freedom of speech and the right to demonstrate on the part of the interventionists. *Avanti!* has gone so far as to identify as 'provocatory' any antineutralist meetings. In sum, the liberty of association and of speech are, in fact, abolished by members of our Party.[41]

Out of this complex of pressures, the *fascisti* developed the free-wheeling aggressiveness that fully satisfied Mussolini's temperament. This pattern, which in Kuliscioff's words began to take on the features of civil war, was to continue through the First World War and find full and savage expression in the postwar period.

Throughout this vexed period, from November, 1914 through

41. De Felice, *Mussolini*, p. 299.

May, 1915, Mussolini found himself sorely pressed for financial support. There were regular appeals for funds dotting the pages of *Il popolo d'Italia*. There is evidence that some funds came from one or more government agencies, from those who wanted to offset the almost all-pervasive neutralism that prevailed, in order to give the government more room to bargain. There is evidence that the Italian Foreign Office provided some funds, not to bring Italy into the war but to provide another card for Italian diplomats in the negotiations with Vienna. All that was necessary was some agitation for war in order to make a plausible case that Italy might enter into a conflict against the Central Powers. This would render Austria more susceptible to Italy's demands. Thus while the security police were harassing the interventionists, some of the members of the Foreign Office were providing subventions for Mussolini's publication.

It is quite certain that Mussolini could not identify the source of these funds. It is doubtful that he would have accepted any government subvention. The money that came to the press—and it apparently was never a substantial sum—was carefully laundered. But whatever the case, it is clear that Mussolini remained his own man during the period, and in fact all the documentary evidence indicates that throughout the war government officials remained very suspicious about the subversive interventionists, whom they held were "prepared to make war in order to overthrow the state."

In this complex situation Mussolini undertook a frenetic campaign to gain support for intervention. The men who collected around him came from a variety of backgrounds. There were revolutionary syndicalists who followed Corridoni and De Ambris. There were individualistic national syndicalists like Massimo Rocca. There were *Vociani*, for whom Giovanni Papini and Giuseppe Prezzolini were spokesmen. There were independent national syndicalists like Olivetti, Dinale, and Panunzio, and any number of reformist socialists and radical republicans. All had made Italy's entry into the war their common cause. Together they began to put together the rationale of Fascism.

Almost at the beginning of the European war, Italian diplomats had begun their tortured negotiations with the participants on both sides. In early August, the Italian ambassador in St. Petersburg had delivered the conditions under which Italy might be prepared to enter the conflict on the side of the Entente. The Russians cheerfully prepared to allow the Italians to seize Austro-Hungarian territory—Valona and the Trentino. The British and the French pro-

posed that the Italians might add Trieste to the list of territorial booty. The Russians then added dominance of the Adriatic. Since the Entente was bargaining with the territory of their opponents, they could be far more generous than the Austro-Germans.

At almost the same time the Austrians and Germans failed in their offensive at Tannenberg and at Belgrade. The changed military situation reduced the interest of the Entente in Italian intervention. In September the Germans had fallen back from the Marne, and the Russians won battles in Galicia. The Serbs and Montenegrins proved to be difficult opponents for the Hapsburgs, and the Italians suddenly found themselves in a poor bargaining position vis-à-vis the Entente powers. Baron Sidney Sonnino had taken the place of San Giuliano, and Antonio Salandra, the Prime Minister, advised him to attempt negotiations with the Central Powers. In January, 1915, the Austrians responded to his efforts by suggesting that the Hapsburg Empire was not prepared to offer much. The Germans tried to convince Vienna to be reasonable, but since it was Austrian territory that was being bartered, the Austrians remained recalcitrant. In March neither the Russians, on the side of the Entente, nor the Austrians, on the side of the Central Powers, were prepared to offer the Italians anything of substance.

All of this bartering and "merchandizing of souls" outraged the forces that had collected around the *fascisti*. Salandra in an exchange of letters with Sonnino, indicated that a resolution would have to be forthcoming. He was prepared to act without the support of parliament and without the acquiescence of the king, who continued to display the singular lack of decisiveness that characterized his entire career. Salandra's letter of March 16, 1915 to Sonnino indicated that he was prepared to countenance a complete rupture with the Central Powers; and that he was prepared to engineer such a rupture without the explicit consent of the king or parliament.

Salandra was prepared to act on his own initiative—and with the connivance of Sonnino. He was not ready to throw Italy into the war, but it was clear that he was ready to preclude any active association with the Central Powers. Salandra began to argue in terms of the fulfillment of Italy's national aspirations, the completion of Italy's reunification. All of this was viewed as an expression of traditional Italian conservatism.

By the end of March, Salandra and Sonnino had begun insistent negotiations with the Entente. During that period Salandra had requested and received, in substantial part, evidence from the prefects

of the realm that the population remained in large part neutral in sentiment or at best indifferent to the fate of either party in the European conflict. Meanwhile the interventionist campaign picked up energy. Gabriele D'Annunzio had begun to mobilize Italians with the cry that Italy was no longer "a museum, a horizon painted with Prussian blue for international honeymooners—but a living Nation!" And the most aggressive elements in the population, shaken out of their lethargy of underdevelopment by the changes wrought by two decades of intensive economic activity, responded with applause and enthusiasm. Italy was to be a Great Nation, and would compete for place and space in a world dominated by those who had hitherto oppressed or been indifferent to her. Cesare Battisti reminded Italians of their obligations to those of their blood and culture who languished under the dominance of the Hapsburgs. The Futurists of Marinetti reminded Italians that only war would produce the new consciousness, the necessary racial pride, that would make Italians new men for the modern epoch. In his Manifesto to Students, Marinetti spoke of a new age for Italy in which one would find "an enthusiastic glorification of scientific discovery and modern technology"—a glorification that would be a by-product of Italy's entry into the war. Only war would accelerate improvements in "agriculture, commerce and industry. War would rejuvenate Italy, provide opportunity for men of action, and compel the nation to live no longer in the past . . . but with the forces native to the nation." The war would produce an Italy of greater glory.[42] Papini and Prezzolini republished, in turn, their essays on the new nationalism, which upheld a "new Italy that would exult . . . in industrial and commercial life . . . ," that would charge both proletarians and the bourgeoisie with the fulfillment of historical responsibilities. Papini's "A Nationalist Program" was republished. In it he called on Italians to conjure up a new popular passion that would be the sentimental ground of action. It would be a *national* passion giving the lie to the thin internationalism to which socialists pretended to adhere. National passion, for Papini, would invoke the energy of all individuals and classes to collective ends.

To steel that passion, group psychology required, Papini argued, "out-group enmity," an opponent on whom all diffuse and half-articulated sentiments might be focused. Out-group enmity is the

42. F. T. Marinetti, "Manifesto agli studenti," *Futurismo e fascismo* (Foligno: Campitelli, 1924), pp. 90–97.

obverse of "in-group amity," which produces a feeling of belonging and comradeship. History moves, Papini maintained, not on economic factors but through psychological states. A small elite of leaders, commanding the collective energy of the masses, could move Italy to higher stages of civilized life. It was war that would create the vast opportunity for the acceleration of Italian development.[43]

The revolutionary syndicalists and the *Mussoliniani* invoked all these themes, and the central theme remained the revolutionary war. *Il popolo d'Italia* acted as a catchment for all these notions. Although it never served as the official organ of the various forces grouped together under the *Fascio*, *Il popolo* was recognized among them as an authoritative voice. Most of the spokesmen of these ideas found a place on its staff or in its pages.

Through March, April, and May the interventionists continued their activities in the streets and disseminated their propaganda. While the government negotiated secretly, the interventionists became increasingly impatient. Only in May did *Il popolo* receive some financial support from France, probably through the intercession of French socialists who wished to support the dissident socialists in their clamor for Italy's intervention.

By the end of April the Italian government had signed the Treaty of London. The Entente conceded to Italy the Tyrol as far as the Brenner-Gorizia, Trieste and the Julian Alps as far as Fiume-Istria, the Dalmatian coast between Zara and Spalato and the offshore islands as far as Ragusa. All that was required was a victory for the Entente. In return Italy was to enter the conflict within the month. Salandra proceeded to inquire if the military would be prepared for military operations by the last week of May, and he received an affirmative reply. On May 24 Italy declared war against Austria-Hungary. Italy had entered the First World War. In the lead article of *Il popolo d'Italia*, Mussolini wrote:

> Foreigners still see us in the guise of itinerant singers of songs, dealers in statuettes, and as Calabrian bandits. They ignore—or pretend to ignore—the new, the greater Italy. This [new Italy] will reveal itself in the war that begins today . . . . Never before as in this moment have we felt that the fatherland exists, that it is an irrepressible datum perhaps inexpungable in human consciousness.[44]

43. Cf. G. Papini and G. Prezzolini, *Vecchio e nuovo nazionalismo*.
44. Mussolini, "E guerra sia!" *Opera*, 7, 418, 419.

Among the forces most active for intervention were the members of the *Fascio*. They had collected around themselves a nucleus that was to shape the history of the interwar years. The membership of the *Fascio* included a segment of Italy's cultural elite that identified itself with the political, social, and economic development of retarded Italy. The political leadership of the *Fascio* was made up of social revolutionaries who had long before recognized the underdevelopment of the peninsula and who had for years sought to discover a lever with which to move Italy into the twentieth century. They were dissident Marxists who were prepared to drive the bourgeoisie to the completion of bourgeois tasks. They were men whose conception of social dynamics was based on the conviction that revolutionary leadership must be capable of detonating the elemental energies of the masses. They were men who had no confidence in the gouty and reluctant institutions of a governmental system that allowed interest groups to continually obstruct grand and historic designs.

While the Fascists were organizing the first outlines of a mass-mobilizing belief system, the advance elements of the new bourgeoisie were making their appearance. Between 1901 and the outbreak of war, Italy's industrial productivity had increased approximately 90 percent; and foreign trade had increased by 118 percent. In the same period, capital investment in the manufacturing industries far outstripped capital investment in banking and transportation. The electrical, textile, mechanical, and chemical industries showed impressive rates of growth. Although steel production lagged far behind that of the advanced industrial nations, output became increasingly important. The modern sectors of Italy's economy were showing impressive growth capabilities. The war could only precipitate the process. The first *fascisti* could only welcome the signs of the new and greater Italy.

Those who collected around the *Fascio* had long been restive with Italy's somnolence—the new bourgeoisie with their passive financial assistance, the more aggressive intellectuals who had grown tired of Italy as a warehouse of antique treasures and dusty mementos, the revolutionaries who wanted a modern nation, and the simple workers who anticipated a better life in a regenerate fatherland capable of competing against the more privileged nations of the world. And there were also rowdies filled with the free-floating hostilities aroused by challenge and the promise of adven-

ture, idealists who sought a better world without national oppression, social theorists who welcomed the occasion to try out their strategies of mass mobilization, dramaturgy, and choreography of street demonstrations, and revolutionary nationalists who aspired to an Italy that would take its place amidst the more modern nations of the globe.

All of these elements were there in unstable combination. They were held together by the historic challenge they now faced, and by the sure political sense of the young Mussolini, who, throughout this period of personal poverty, isolation, and the embittered hostility of those who had a short time before lavished respect and affection on him, could still insist, "I will have my compensations later. Those who have rejected me still have me in their blood and still love me. They have sought to destroy me because they did not understand me. But one day they will say to me: you were a pioneer and a precursor." [45]

45. Mussolini, as quoted, G. Pini and D. Susmel, *Mussolini: l'uomo e l'opera*, *I*, 270.

Chapter 9 War and the Doctrine of the First Fascism

> It is necessary to give a social content to the war [in terms of an internal policy for the nation] . . . . Such a system of ideas I choose to call in brief: national syndicalism . . . . What this involves is the mobilization and activization of a combination of economic forces for whom the maximum of productive capabilities corresponds to the maximum well-being for the working masses . . . . To this end, three forces must interact: the state, industrialist and workers' organizations . . . . [All of this is calculated to] augment the productive potential of the nation and increase its capability to expand and effectively compete in the future peaceful rivalry among the nations of the world . . . . Lift high the nation!
>
> *Mussolini*[1]

Believing Italy was about to enter on a new epoch in its history—an epoch that would see the completion of the nation's belated unification, integration, and development—Mussolini faced the advent of war. On the declaration of war there was a temporary pause in Italy's internal political struggle. Many of the interventionists left for the front as volunteers. Corridoni and De Ambris left at once, as did many of the "democratic" interventionists. Mussolini himself tried to enlist immediately, but his enlistment was refused. As a member of an age-group subject to imminent call to duty he was told to return to civilian life until his entire class was mustered to service, but by July he had become so impatient that he began to explore the possibility of enlisting in the Italian volunteer corps in France.[2] He was dissuaded from this course by the insistence that his class would be called on not later than autumn of 1915.

1. Mussolini, "Dopo guerra: andate incontro al lavoro che tornerà dalle trincee," *Opera, 11*, 470, 471, 472.

2. Some biographers have made a great deal out of Mussolini's "failure" to volunteer

6. Mussolini as a footsoldier on the Austro-Italian front during the First World War.

Early in July, still waiting his call to duty, Mussolini bid farewell to Corridoni, who was leaving for the front. While Mussolini waited, he continued his appeal to Italians to be worthy of the historic challenge they faced with the onset of the revolutionary war. The subversive interventionists, who before the war had identified themselves as socialists and syndicalists, all regarded the war as intrinsically revolutionary. They imagined vast changes settling down on Europe as a result. Reaction and conservatism would succumb to the dynamic social forces conjured up by the conflict. Out of the conflagration a new Europe and a new and greater Italy would emerge. Ultimately, after the victory of the Entente, a grand union, a fraternization of nations would come about. Each nation would attain its full potential in a voluntary association of free and equal nations. The war would solve the nationalities problem; each nation would be composed of a unified, integrated, and independent people. Minorities, hitherto suppressed or mute, would each find a place in political communities of their own. Composite and artificial empires, like those of the Romanovs and the Hapsburgs, would dissolve under the heat of a people's war. As we have seen, these were the first ideas broadcast by the interventionist *Fascio*. And they were the ideas entertained by Mussolini himself as he prepared to enter the military service of his country.

On August 25, 1915, Mussolini's class was called to service, and on September 2, inducted as a simple infantryman, he took leave of Rachele and Edda, his first born, and left Milan. On September 15 he was in the war zone, having passed into occupied Austrian territory. On September 16 he arrived at the waters of the Upper Isonzo. At the front he was assigned to the Eighth company of the Thirty-third battalion of the Eleventh Bersaglieri Regiment. His first

for military service. Paolo Monelli suggests that Mussolini's attitude was typical of many Italians who chose to remain coy and not precipitate events (P. Monelli, *Mussolini: The Intimate Life of a Demagogue*, pp. 71ff.). Laura Fermi suggests Mussolini preferred "to fight a war from an office desk with pen and ink rather than at the front lines with gun and grenade" (L. Fermi, *Mussolini*, p. 132). Roy MacGregor-Hastie leaves the reader with a confused picture of the circumstances surrounding Mussolini's entry into service (R. MacGregor-Hastie, *The Days of the Lion* [New York: Coward-McCann, 1963], p. 63). Intransigent critics, like George Seldes, simply attribute to cowardice the three-month delay in Mussolini's departure to the front. The evidence we now have at our disposal indicates that Mussolini made several efforts to enlist, but was ordered to await the call of his age-group (cf. R. De Felice, *Mussolini il rivoluzionario*, pp. 321ff.). For Mussolini's comments cf. "Le miseriole del 'Kri-kri'," "A Pagnacca' e compari," "Franchi e . . . marchi," "Il 'Vorwärts' subugiardato," "Alla gogna!" and "Il tacco sul verme," in *Opera, 8,* 77, 83, 110, 145, 193.

night in the trenches was punctuated by rifle and machine-gun fire and periodically illumined by flares. Two days after his arrival in the war zone he was offered the position of regimental historian, a clerical assignment that would have taken him out of the firing line. He refused the assignment and spent the next two months in the forward positions.

The fighting on the Isonzo front was among the most bitter of the war. The Italian army, undergunned and ill-prepared, found itself facing an opponent well entrenched in deep defenses in mountainous terrain. Italian troops were continually exposed to enemy small-arms and artillery fire, and whatever territorial gains, measured in meters, they could wrest from the Austrians hardly compensated for their grievous losses.

On October 22 some of the interventionists fighting on the Carso front dispatched a greeting to Mussolini to commemorate his arrival: "While waiting for orders . . . for the general advance . . . our purest thoughts turn to you, our spiritual leader [duce] and comrade-in-arms." The last person to sign the letter was the twenty-eight-year-old Filippo Corridoni. He met his death the next day, in a direct assault on the Austrian trenches. On November 1 Mussolini was notified of his death by a soldier who told him that Corridoni had fallen and added, "He got what he deserved. It is what every interventionist should get." The episode typified the bitterness that had resurfaced to afflict internal Italian politics throughout the remaining years of the war. Neutralists and antiinterventionists, particularly among the organized socialists, continued to object to Italy's involvement. The interventionists and later the veterans who survived the war began to draw themselves together in defense of their honor and in memory of their dead comrades.

In the months that followed, Mussolini discharged his duties well. He was cited for his spirit and his serenity in the face of challenge. In the seventeen months he served in the armed forces, Mussolini spent approximately eight months under fire on the Isonzo and Carso fronts. The mortality and casualty rates in the forward positions were so high, it was almost inevitable that his name would ultimately appear on one list or another. At about one o'clock in the afternoon of February 23, 1917, Mussolini was gravely wounded when a mortar, which he was operating in training exercises, exploded. Five of his comrades were killed and several others wounded. He himself was peppered with metal fragments, his right

leg shattered to the bone, his left arm paralyzed, and his right clavicle exposed under his torn flesh and bloody tunic.

During his subsequent treatment, more than forty pieces of metal fragments were removed from his body—most of the surgery conducted without anesthetics. For years his right leg did not heal; for months he used crutches to move about. After he was wounded Mussolini was released from any further military duties. For the remaining twenty-two months of the war he continued the struggle with his pen. He exhorted, cajoled, incited, admonished, prescribed, proscribed, remonstrated, and recommended.

The Belief System of the First Fascism

Between February, 1917 and November, 1918, Mussolini had ample opportunity to draw together all the elements of his prewar interventionist commitments and fashion a coherent ideology that would direct his postwar activities and shape the outlines of the first Fascism. All the convictions behind his decision to advocate intervention in the war were drawn together more and more systematically to provide the substance of a mass-mobilizing belief system, which revealed its patent affinities with the arguments put together by the syndicalists to justify Italian involvement in the war against Turkey a few years before. Mussolini refined those arguments and supplemented them with insights drawn from his own experiences during the First World War. This effort at ideological systematization had in fact begun when Italy entered the war. Mussolini regularly identified May, 1915 as the date that saw the first stirrings of the New Italy.[3] The ideology he was in the process of putting together would animate that Greater Italy; it would afford the prescriptive social content of the war.[4]

As I have suggested, the nation and its development became the critical concepts around which that ideology collected itself after the crisis of intervention. Mussolini conceived of the nation as a great historical creation,[5] reinvoking a notion that had already appeared

3. Letter to Bissolati, dated June 20, 1916, *Opera, 8,* 305, "Indietro i 'Boches'!" *Opera, 9,* 22, "L'offerta," *Opera, 10,* 14.

4. Mussolini, "Patria e terra," *Opera, 9,* 55, "Dopo guerra: andate incontro al lavoro che tornerà dalle trincee," *Opera, 10,* 469–74.

5. Mussolini, "Se fosse vivo," *Opera, 8,* 105.

in his earliest articles, where he had spoken of the nation-state as a political community of men united in a moral association integrated by blood and place and by economic and cultural interests.[6] What had been a relatively minor theme in his youthful belief system became a critical concept in the ideology he was now articulating.

Throughout the war, Mussolini regularly invoked the immortal fatherland[7] as the *prima facie* object of loyalty for *all* Italians, of whatever class origin. He had already appreciated that if the war were to finally integrate the new nation, the natural recruitment base for a movement that sought to further such processes would be the entire people, rather than any class or regional subgroup. Once the tasks of the revolution became the bourgeois tasks of political integration and economic development, appeal had to be made to national rather than class interests. Recruitment in the service of the revolution had to dilate to include the people in its entirety.[8] Thus the proletariat became a subgroup of the people to be mobilized.

As we have seen, these consequences were implied in his decision to look at matters from a *national* perspective. But having decided on the nation as the primary object of loyalty, Mussolini was driven to analyze more closely the adequacy of the class analysis that characterized Marxist social and political interpretation. He argued that class was a vexatiously vague concept. One might provide an explicit and formal definition for geometric figures, but class was an empirical concept and referred to a living, hence variable reality. Consequently, in any concrete circumstances, only approximations of what class might actually be understood to mean could be provided. Classes as such did not exist. Only men existed, who generally entertained interests and sentiments that varied with time, place, and circumstance. Class was, in fact, a very complex and fugitive concept. Any effort to define class in terms of a simple dichotomy of proletarian as distinct from nonproletarian or bourgeois interests would be inadequate in the face of concrete reality. The interests that animated the working population of economically retarded Italy did not add up to an identifiable proletarian conscious-

6. Mussolini, "Per Ferdinando Lassalle," *Opera*, *1*, 66.

7. Mussolini, "Su le mani!" *Opera*, *8*, 8; "Porta Pia," "Intermezzo," "Unità di animi," *Opera*, *9*, 205, 293, 307; "L'Italia è immortale," *Opera*, *10*, 349; "Giuramento," *Opera*, *11*, 103.

8. Cf. Mussolini, "Intermezzo polemico: Lotta politica e lotta di classe," *Opera*, *6*, 279; compare "Dopo l'adunata proletaria di Genova," *Opera*, *11*, 21.

ness as distinct from a bourgeois consciousness.[9] In the reality of the contemporary world, Mussolini argued, it is often the case

> that members of the so-called bourgeoisie . . . find themselves in conflict with other individuals similarly bourgeois—and members of the so-called proletariat often find themselves opposed by members of their own class. Similarly, it can happen that members of the so-called bourgeoisie might well seek out alliances with members of the so-called proletariat [in the pursuit of common interests].[10]

For years the more orthodox Marxists had insisted that the proletariat had no interest in the fatherland, that the entire concept of a common fatherland was simply a bourgeois fiction. By November, 1914, Mussolini, like the national syndicalists, had recognized that the proletariat had in fact an enormous investment in the fatherland. For one thing, the proletariat could expect only diminished welfare in a disadvantaged nation, only oppression and exploitation by foreigners in a political community of no international substance.[11] The war had made this self-evident. The violation of national territory and defeat in war could only weigh heavily on *all* classes, which Mussolini took to be immediate evidence of a basic interest and sentiment that subtended all class differences.[12] But in addition to the immediate interests of the working people there was an equally undeniable in-group sentiment of cultural and biological affinity. Circumstances had revealed the intimate relationships shared by the proletariat with its historic fatherland,[13] and the proletariat could, in fact, no longer deny the fatherland.[14] It could no longer distinguish its own cause from that of the nation as a whole.[15] More and more insistently, Mussolini came to recognize that the ultimate interests of the proletariat were intimately and fatally linked with those of the fatherland.[16] Any socialism that failed to understand this fundamental reality was a socialism without a political future.

For Mussolini, therefore, the socialism of the future could only

9. Mussolini, "Divagazioni pel centenario," *Opera*, *11*, 44–47.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 47.
11. Mussolini, "L'armée nouvelle," *Opera*, *8*, 124.
12. Mussolini, "Aspetti del dramma," *Opera*, *10*, 8ff.
13. Mussolini, "Patria e terra," *Opera*, *10*, 55.
14. Mussolini, "Fra il segreto e il pubblico," *Opera*, *10*, 139.
15. Mussolini, "Per la consegna della bandiera alla batteria 'Cesare Battisti'," *Opera*, *11*, 18.
16. Mussolini, "La politica delle organizzazioni operaie," *Opera*, *11*, 354.

be a *national* socialism, in which all population elements would find their place, a representation of their fundamental interests, and a *prima facie* object of loyalty. In such a political system, class would be fully absorbed into the nation. All would become fused in the idea of the nation—the ideal and sentimental expression of the reality of fundamental material and ideal common interests.[17] Without the reality of a political community possessing independence, resources, development, and prestige, no single individual, nor any constituent group, could ensure its own survival or find welfare and fulfillment.

For Mussolini the war had revealed these truths in all their transparency. Before the war, no one could really have anticipated a national "collectivism so complete and integral."[18] It was the war that revealed the most fundamental of common interests and welded peoples into an organic unity in their respective nations.[19] For Italy, the war would thus finally complete the bourgeois task of national integration.[20]

Much of this had already been suggested by the revolutionary national syndicalists, but Mussolini was to augment these notions in significant fashion. His military experience came to dominate his thought with greater and greater insistence. He began to perceive military enterprise, under crisis conditions, from a new perspective. If political integration was a revolutionary concern, the conscription of millions of men to serve the nation under the most demanding conditions had created a sense of community among Italians. The war had dissolved the regionalism and the commitment to parochial interests that had so long left Italy a geographic expression after its unification.[21] In the trenches, Mussolini asserted, "no one [spoke] any longer of returning to his village or region. One [talked] of returning to Italy. Thus Italy appeared, perhaps for the first time in the consciousness of so many of her sons, as a united and living reality—as a common fatherland."[22]

In fact, it was not long before Mussolini began to use military models and military experiences to characterize his social ideal. In

17. Mussolini, "Battisti," *Opera*, *9*, 44.
18. Mussolini, "La tenda," *Opera*, *9*, 251.
19. Mussolini, "Il sangue è sangue," *Opera*, *8*, 32.
20. Cf. Mussolini, "Intermezzo," *Opera*, *9*, 293; "Un dato del problema," "Al cittadino Moutet," *Opera*, *10*, 30, 179; "Bandiere al sole!" "Giuramento," *Opera*, *11*, 93, 103.
21. Cf. Mussolini, *Diario di guerra*, *Opera*, *34*, 73.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 32.

his *Diario di guerra*, he declared his satisfaction with the sense of camaraderie and integration that united both men and officers under arms. Once national integration became a revolutionary goal, the reduced sense of class distinction became a welcome consequence of military service. What had heretofore been objectionable became a revolutionary virtue. For Mussolini, the army thus came to represent an expression of the most radical integral collectivism, an almost mystic union of men in the pursuit of ideal ends.[23] It is clear that the experience in the trenches provided Mussolini with an object lesson in group psychology. The opinions he had long shared with the syndicalists concerning the mobilization of men to collective purpose were exemplified in the behavior of soldiers under front-line conditions, where simple men became the embodiment of virtue and heroism. Under peer-group pressure and in mimetic response to the behavior of strong leadership, ordinary men bore the afflictions of wounds and the prospect of death with stoic calm.[24] This was the warrior ethic, he insisted, that he had long advocated.[25] It could now be put to the service of national political integration.

What Mussolini had discovered in his experiences in the trenches was a kind of "military national socialism," the fraternity, conviviality, and integral collectivism that distinguishes the life of men under arms. Under the taxing conditions of modern warfare, with its large numbers of aggressive and purposeful men organized into a hierarchically structured community, Mussolini perceived the prefiguration of new political forms. The postwar world would see nations similarly mobilized into revolutionary organizations, led by "saints or warriors," and animated by grand purpose.[26]

The syndicalist convictions Mussolini had harbored as a local and then as a national leader of revolutionary socialism came together during the war years to produce a remarkably coherent conception of mass mobilization, collective organization, and minoritarian leadership in the service of national integration. For Mussolini, the only socialism that could prove viable after the war was a socialism animated by the myth of the nation. A myth was, for Mussolini, "an ideal representation of a possible future"[27] (an alternative future for the historical national community) that would be capable

23. *Ibid.*, p. 14; letter to G. De Falco, September 23, 1915, *Opera*, *8*, 294, and letter to the editors of the *Popolo d'Italia*, October 25, 1915, in *Opera*, *8*, 294, 2196.

24. Mussolini, *Diario di guerra*, *Opera*, *34*, 34.

25. Mussolini, "Onore agli operai," *Opera*, *10*, 24.

26. Mussolini, "L'attimo che fugge," *Opera*, *9*, 150.

27. Mussolini, "Resistere per vincere," *Opera*, *10*, 195.

of striking resonance in the sentiments and among the interests of the masses.[28] Appealing to those sentiments, and those interests, a vanguard elite, an audacious minority, might detonate the elemental but latent energies of the numberless masses.[29]

With the recognition that Italy faced essentially bourgeois tasks, all these elements came together with a measure of internal coherence they had not hitherto enjoyed. Nations faced with the responsibilities of political integration, economic modernization, and industrial expansion could only meet those challenges by mobilizing their entire people, rather than only restricted segments. In effect, the war compelled Mussolini to accept the assessments made by the national syndicalists as early as 1910. The implication was that under prevailing circumstances the nation must take precedence over class. Mussolini had long resisted that final inference, but with the advent of war in 1915 he could no longer escape the logic of his position.[30]

Every Italian, and every workman among them, knew what it meant to be a denizen of a nation devoid of status and prestige.[31] Because of a history of humiliation at the hands of their more powerful neighbors, every Italian could respond to the appeal to political integration in the service of national regeneration. To bring about that regeneration what was required was a state of affairs affording mass mobilization the probability of success. Regeneration required a leadership characterized by audacity and will, and an organizational structure that could accommodate the masses and ensure their united and disciplined response. Mussolini began to consider the specific conditions necessary for the mobilization of potential recruits.

He argued that certain conditions were necessary to marshal the masses to the service of regenerative revolution. These conditions might include a war that had gone badly, and pervasive economic dislocation.[32] Here Mussolini was simply restating convictions

28. Cf. Mussolini, "L'offerta," *Opera*, *10*, 15.

29. Mussolini, "La data," *Opera*, *11*, 370; cf. "Il discorso di Wilson," *Opera*, *11*, 385.

30. Cf. Mussolini, "Battisti!" *Opera*, *9*, 44; "Trincerocrazia," *Opera*, *10*, 142; "Orientamenti," "'Tu quoque' Jouhaux?" *Opera*, *11*, 118, 359.

31. Cf. Mussolini, *Diario di guerra*, *Opera*, *34*, 45; "Nell' attesa," *Opera*, *10*, 21; "Scoperte," *Opera*, *11*, 289; see particularly the interview with Edmondo Rossoni, "Idee e propositi durante e dopo la guerra dell'Unione italiana del lavoro," *Opera*, *11*, 265.

32. Mussolini, "L'ora dei popoli," *Opera*, *9*, 116ff. In this article Mussolini argued that revolution would be a low-order probability in Italy in the postwar period. At the time

held by the syndicalists at least as early as the turn of the century, but now he had given them new and more significant import. Olivetti, Panunzio, and Michels had argued that men, taken collectively, were disposed to habitual and traditional behavior until a crisis provoked the occasion for a "transvaluation of values"—a process precipitated by a minority prepared to assume the demanding responsibilities of leadership.

After 1915 Mussolini believed these processes were necessary to mobilize the masses in order to develop and modernize the nation. To move men to such an enterprise he believed that leadership must tap collective sociopsychological dispositions. The latent energies of the masses would be detonated by an appeal to their aspirations rather than to their immediate economic interest. The revolutionary leadership was anticipating a future, rather than reflecting the present. Having understood the messages of Pareto, Sorel, and Le Bon, the syndicalists and Mussolini maintained that sociopsychological, rather than simply economic, factors were the most critical in fostering revolutionary change. Collective will could be invoked in times of crisis, and war and economic dislocation were among the principal occasions of crisis. Certain economic conditions might be necessary for revolution, but only mass mobilization behind effective leadership could be sufficient for its success.

This was particularly true in environments where those characteristics that classical Marxism identified with advanced capitalist economies did not exist. Thus, when the Bolsheviks announced a Marxist revolution in Russia, Mussolini summarily dismissed the claim. Russia, he reminded his readers, met none of the material preconditions of a classic Marxist revolution. Russia, like Italy, had not traversed the capitalist stage of economic development; it was not ripe for socialism. As every Marxist knew, Marx had insisted that "no social order ever disappears before all the productive forces, for which there is room in it, have been developed; and new higher relations or production never appear before the material conditions of their existence have matured in the womb of the old society." Whatever had transpired in Russia, it could not have been a *Marxist* revolution. What had happened, Mussolini argued, was a destabilization of Russian society as a consequence of military

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he wrote, Italy had not suffered the grievous losses of the last year of the war. Moreover, at that time Mussolini clearly underestimated the amount of economic distress the postwar period would bring in its train.

defeat. The Bolsheviks, aided and abetted by the Germans, had insinuated themselves into the disintegration. Whatever social changes they superintended were not the product of economic but of psychological, that is to say, moral and ideal, factors.[33] War and its effect on the psychology of the masses, not inevitable economic processes, operating with lawlike necessity, had brought revolution to Russia.

To this analysis, Mussolini added his own innovative convictions concerning the leadership required to mobilize the dormant dislocated masses. He had always spoken, of course, of a revolutionary vanguard. As we have seen, these were convictions he shared with the syndicalists and the *Vociani*, but the war gave him the opportunity to specify the unique population elements that would provide that leadership in Italy. By December, 1916, Mussolini no longer alluded to the proletarian vanguard, but to the "aristocracy of the trenches" as the new elite destined to dominate the Italy of tomorrow.[34] Thereafter he was to allude regularly to the survivors of the trenches as the leaders of Italy's postwar regenerative revolution.[35]

The survivors of the trenches had learned both to lead and to obey. In Mussolini's view, they had become involved in a grand collective enterprise in which they had gambled their health, their sacred honor, and their lives. Tempered and radicalized by the experience, they would no longer be content with the old, gouty, and passive Italy. A youthful, audacious, and steeled minority,[36] they would oppose the old generation, whose only accomplishment had been to fashion a corrupt and status-deprived nation out of the potential of the Risorgimento. Such a new and youthful minority could effectively lead the restive masses.[37] A strategy that would energize the sentiment and interest of the torpid population would be required, as well as an organization capable of effectively housing them and an animating faith to steel them to martyrdom and sacrifice.[38]

33. Mussolini, "Divagazioni pel centenario," "Divagazione," *Opera*, *11*, 44–47, 341–44.

34. Mussolini, "Pace tedesca, mai! Nelle trincee non si vuole la pace tedesca," *Opera*, *8*, 272.

35. Mussolini, "E in più," "L'episodio di Parigi," "L'ora dei popoli," *Opera*, *9*, 20, 33, 118; "Trincerocrazia," *Opera*, *10*, 140–42; "La vittoria fatale," "L'ora presente," *Opera*, *11*, 85ff., 143, 145.

36. Mussolini, "Approcci e manovre," *Opera*, *9*, 247.

37. Mussolini, "Guerra di popoli," *Opera*, *8*, 56ff.

38. Mussolini, cf. "Intermezzo," *Opera*, *9*, 294ff.; cf. "L'offerta," *10*, 15.

Throughout this period, Mussolini remained preoccupied with how one might maintain the morale of mass populations. He began to formulate the rationale for the choreographic and ritual features of the Fascist movement. Men were, in Mussolini's judgment, inured to discipline, sacrifice, and collective commitment by persuasive invocation and appeal to sentiment, and imitation accustomed them to such behavior. Yet he realized clearly that the invocation of sentiment alone would not suffice. Men are moved by both sentiment and interest. Years later, Mussolini insisted that to

> control the masses, it is necessary to employ two levers: enthusiasm and interest. Whoever utilized but one of the two runs grave risks. Mystic commitment and political concerns condition each other. The one without the other is arid; enthusiasm without a concern for interests loses itself in the fluttering of flags.[39]

He had isolated a theme that would attract the most dynamic segments of Italy's population through an appeal to their most fundamental, general, and long-term material interests. As early as October, 1917, Mussolini identified this theme—the maximization of the nation's production, the economic development of the peninsula. The theme of production and development was to permit Mussolini to appeal not only to a diffuse but compelling national *sentiment*, but also to the current and future *material interests* of his audience. He had begun to articulate the first coherent mass-mobilizing, nationalist, and developmental ideology of the twentieth century.

By the end of 1917, Mussolini regularly referred to the critical importance of production, and specifically industrial development, to the new Italy. A revolutionary government of Italy would face the task of "salvaging, protecting and assisting [the nation's] magnificent industrial development," of building the very foundation of the new and greater Italy.[40] By 1918, the demand that Italy expand its productive capabilities had become a central and critical theme of his political ideology.[41] "We have become," Mussolini maintained, "and will remain, a people of producers!"[42] With rapid industrialization Italy would reveal itself as a modern nation, no

39. E. Ludwig, *Colloqui con Mussolini*, pp. 119ff.

40. Mussolini, "Direttive," *Opera*, *9*, 259.

41. Cf. Mussolini, "Produce per vincere," *Opera*, *10*, 100; "Il fucile e la vanga," "Consensi," *Opera*, *11*, 35, 348.

42. Mussolini, "La vittoria fatale," *Opera*, *11*, 86.

longer a stop on the odious itinerary of a Baedeker guide book, no longer peopled by dealers in dusty art objects, no longer a refuge for the idle. Italy's economy would no longer be characterized by agriculture and home industries alone, nor would ownership remain largely in foreign hands.[43]

The implications of these convictions were evident almost immediately. If the regular growth of industrial production was imperative for the revolutionary Italy of the immediate future, then the orthodox socialism of the time became, at best, irrelevant and, at worst, a positive hindrance to revolutionary development. According to classical Marxism, socialist revolution was possible only as the culmination of a historical and economic process—extensive industrialization under the auspices of the bourgeoisie. Socialism, according to orthodoxy, was based on the inheritance of capitalist productive capability. Moreover, only extensive industrialization could produce the necessary masses of class conscious proletarians who would serve as agents of the revolution. Thus revolution, in the classical Marxist sense, was no more than a future possibility in countries that had not as yet completed the bourgeois phase of economic maturation.[44]

Classical Marxism and traditional socialism therefore seemed to be largely irrelevant for revolutionaries in underdeveloped and industrially retarded nations. In underdeveloped nations the tasks that face revolutionaries are not those concerned with seizing the means of production, but rather those concerned with achieving a system of government that could foster the rapid industrialization of the economic base. What Italy required, Mussolini argued, was not a Marxist adventure—so inappropriate to the social and economic conditions of backward Italy—but a recognition that Italy's economic and industrial system needed the effective organization of *all* the vital factors of production. Social discipline and control by an informed and competent enterprisory hierarchy were called for.[45] Economic systems, he insisted, are enormously complex and consequently very fragile. Any attempt to impose socialism in the orthodox sense could only threaten Italy's economic future and would be, in effect, counterrevolutionary.

The logic of Mussolini's argument was eminently clear. Italy's tasks were essentially bourgeois tasks. Italy required national inte-

43. Mussolini, "Patria e terra," *Opera, 10*, 56; cf. "Scoperte," *Opera, 11*, 288.
44. Cf. Mussolini, "Divagazione," *Opera, 11*, 341ff.
45. Mussolini, "Il fucile e la vanga," *Opera, 11*, 35.

gration, the final resolution of the problem of national unification—both political, in terms of its territorial integrity, and social, in terms of involving the entire active population in the national enterprise. Italy required economic and industrial development, technical efficiency, and a modern system of production—all a part of the historical bourgeois mission. The issue, as Mussolini identified it, was not whether Italy had bourgeois tasks before it, but rather whether Italy had a bourgeoisie capable of discharging its historical obligations.[46] Should the bourgeoisie prove inadequate to its tasks, the historical responsibility would fall on both the popular masses and a vanguard elite conscious of its tasks.[47] Such a political position obviously required a commitment to class collaboration, a disciplined union of all the dynamic productive categories of the nation—the productive proletariat as well as the productive bourgeoisie—in the service of the community's productive potential and its continued capacity to expand.[48] Mussolini characterized this union as a new democracy, "a sane and honest regime of productive classes."[49]

Within the complex of forces that made up the nation, Mussolini now identified a new and dynamic productive class, the industrial or enterprisory bourgeoisie, whom he saw as fundamentally different from the traditional class of owners.[50] This new class and the productive proletariat shared a common interest and could work together in the economic and industrial development of the fatherland. Thus united, Italians would be a new people, the population of a Greater Italy that would be created by a new race of producers.[51]

Mussolini argued that when Marxism was a vital intellectual and political force, socialists had been prepared to involve themselves in bourgeois tasks. They had, for example, regularly struggled for national liberation and national unification both on the peninsula and throughout Europe.[52] If socialists had been prepared to assist in the task of national unification, how could they absent themselves from the historical mission of Italy's industrial development? If

46. Mussolini, "Popolo e borghesia," *Opera*, *8*, 71.
47. Mussolini, "Novità," "Consensi," *Opera*, *11*, 243, 348ff.
48. Mussolini, "Andate incontro al lavoro che tornera delle trincee," *Opera*, *11*, 470ff.
49. Mussolini, "Quale democrazia," *Opera*, *10*, 417.
50. Mussolini, "Milano darà un miliardo?" *Opera*, *10*, 259.
51. Mussolini, "Il mio collaudo sullo 'SVA'," *Opera*, *11*, 171.
52. Cf. Mussolini, "Guerra al Turco!" *Opera*, *8*, 179.

according to classical Marxism, economic maturity was the precondition for the advent of socialism, how could socialists refuse to participate in the program for its realization? Mussolini insisted that the only socialism that would be viable in the twentieth century would be a socialism prepared to identify itself with the nation[53] —a national socialism committed to national development, both economic and political. The commitment to national tasks involved fundamental common interests uniting all the special economic and parochial interests of the population. The most pressing of those tasks were bourgeois in character, but under the historical circumstances of the twentieth century much of the responsibility for them was to fall to the collaborative efforts of the productive bourgeoisie and the national working classes.

Mussolini's argument effectively identified traditional socialism as both antinational and antisocialist. On the other hand it clearly appealed to both the progressive or entrepreneurial bourgeoisie and the national proletariat—both destined to play a critical role in the postwar environment. The industrial bourgeoisie opposed organized socialism on the grounds that it was anachronistic and antinational, and the working class opposed it for not being socialist enough.

Of course, the productivist theme had been prominent in the writings of many of the syndicalists, who had been preoccupied with the retarded economy of the peninsula. Sorel himself had been equally emphatic about the productivist ethic—in itself a bourgeois phenomenon. Battisti, in the Trentino, had argued that a union of the new and dynamic industrial bourgeoisie and the industrial working class might provide the energy for the resolution of Italy's national problems. Moreover, the syndicalists had argued that revolution in Italy would require the mobilization of the masses rather than of the proletariat per se, since because of Italy's retarded industrial development, the urban proletariat was a meager resource base for mobilization. Mobilization could only be conducted under the auspices of a select vanguard minority. Years before the war, the national syndicalists had argued that national sentiments might well be effective in mass mobilization. Finally, most revolutionary socialists and syndicalists had long identified organized socialism as conservative, counterrevolutionary, reformist, and parliamentarian. Mussolini had succeeded, under the crisis conditions of war, in putting these ideas together in a novel configuration, but it was

53. Mussolini, "Delenda Austria!" *Opera*, *9*, 94.

not so novel as to be unrecognizable. As a consequence, many revolutionary socialists and syndicalists passed quickly into the ranks of the interventionists and made up the leadership and effective cadre of the first *Fascio*. They recognized in Fascism the substance of revolutionary socialism.

By the fall of 1918, the thirty-five-year-old Mussolini had drawn together all these notions into a coherent revolutionary belief system that he chose to call "national syndicalism." National syndicalism would guide Italy from the stage of economic vassalage, dominated by foreign export capital, to the status of an independent, sovereign, and industrial community. The axiom, the essential commitment, of the belief system was production. Italy, Mussolini said, must be compelled to

> produce, produce with efficiency, with diligence, with patience, with passion . . . . Producers represent the new Italy, as opposed to the old Italy of balladiers and tour-guides . . . . The reality of tomorrow will be marvelous. There are those capitalists possessed of a sense of their historic function who are prepared to dare; there are proletarians who comprehend the ineluctability of this capitalist process and can appreciate the mediate and immediate benefits this process can deliver . . . . To confine the productive forces of Italy is to condemn Italy to return to the level of nations of the second order.[54]

In August, 1918, Mussolini changed the subtitle of *Il popolo d'Italia* from "A Socialist Daily" to "A Daily of Combatants and Producers"—a signal that the revolutionary movement of the future would be a union of veterans and productive elements, bourgeois and proletarian together.[55] Veterans, of whatever class, would be the future aristocracy of the new Italy.[56] Producers, of whatever class, would constitute its membership. National sentiment would be the medium that would unite them all in a revolutionary and developmental nationalism.

Mussolini also anticipated a new political form, functionally adapted to the revolutionary and developmental demands of the new Italy. Government would be composed of committees of special competence that would supervise the dynamic economic and social processes of the nation. Rather than by a parliament composed of lawyers and professional politicians, the new Italy would be governed by an assembly of technically and scientifically competent

54. Mussolini, "Orientamenti e problemi," *Opera, 11*, 283ff.
55. Mussolini, "Novità," *Opera, 11*, 241.
56. Mussolini, "L'ora presente," *Opera, 11*, 143.

committees. Parliamentarianism was the institutional embodiment of regional, confessional, and the most restricted class and category interests. The government of the revolutionary future would be a government of expertise. Traditional parliamentarianism had dissipated Italy's potential and impeded its modernization.[57] In the future, the representatives of the nation would be select members of specific productive categories.[58]

In September, 1918, Mussolini called attention to the ideas of the French syndicalists expressed in the publications of Leon Jouhaux. Mussolini found in his writings, and in those published in the *Bataille Syndicaliste*, the same ideas he had already begun to advocate. The French syndicalists called for a communion of producers of all class origins in the service of accelerated national production. The orthodox class war found no place in their deliberations. Their syndicalism had become national in orientation and had committed itself to the "coincidence of interests between capitalists [*datori di lavoro*] and the workers themselves."[59]

Before the end of the First World War Mussolini had thus brought together all the elements of an ideology of revolutionary developmental nationalism. The elemental new nationalism that had surfaced in his writings as early as 1909 had matured into a belief system fundamentally different from but organically related to the orthodox, if revolutionary, socialism that he adhered to until 1914. In retrospect, it is clear that his socialism in fact harbored all the convictions that he was subsequently to refashion into the ideology of nascent Fascism.

National Syndicalism and the Belief System of Fascism

These convictions had come to distinguish the syndicalists from other Italian revolutionaries. Between the ideas of Mussolini and those of the revolutionary syndicalists there was an informal but identifiable logic. The ideas were laced together by a number of central convictions that surface and resurface in the prose of many syndicalist theoreticians with whom Mussolini is known to have

57. Cf. Mussolini, "Dal vecchio al nuovo ministero," *Opera*, *8*, 234; "Verso la meta," "La casa delle parole," "La formula," *Opera*, *9*, 208, 264ff., 296; "Fra il segreto e il pubblico," "Malessere," *Opera*, *10*, 137, 143ff.; "La finzione," *Opera*, *11*, 266ff.

58. Mussolini, "Dopo quattro anni," *Opera*, *11*, 55.

59. Mussolini, "'Tu quoque', Jouhaux?" *Opera*, *11*, 356–60.

been familiar. Filippo Corridoni, for example, with whom Mussolini interacted at the time when the first *Fascio* was trying to persuade Italians to go to war, articulated a rationale for Italy's involvement in the war that served to shape Mussolini's own thought. During the last months before his departure for the front lines, Corridoni wrote what was to become his political testament—*Socialismo e repubblica*. In it are some of the principal themes that were to lend special coherence to the belief system Mussolini identified with the social content of the war.

In *Socialismo e repubblica*, Corridoni took pains to describe the special circumstances that influenced revolution in underdeveloped economic environments. Syndicalists had long referred to Italy's industrial and economic retardation, but by the time of the First World War, that recognition had become their primary revolutionary preoccupation. Italy, Corridoni reminded his revolutionary audience, languished in the "swaddling clothes" of preindustrial development. Therefore Corridoni insisted that the *postindustrial* revolutionary strategies recommended by Marx and Engels in the *Communist Manifesto* were transparently inappropriate. The proletarian revolution was not on Italy's immediate agenda, but the fulfillment of the bourgeois industrializing mission was. If socialism was to be a practical eventuality, the peninsula must be economically integrated and industrially developed. Those tasks could not be discharged by simple class struggle.

Corridoni felt that nations like Italy that undertake late industrial development face special problems if they are to compete effectively with those already advanced. The bourgeoisie of such communities is often timid, inept, ill-disposed to take risks in the investment of capital, and possibly unable to rise to the challenge of the times. Moreover, he pointed out that the proletariat, lodged in preindustrial or semiindustrialized circumstances, not only may lack the necessary technical and labor skills, but may be driven by their own immediate material interests to obstruct the developmental process. Populations of underdeveloped nations may be too afflicted with timidity, individualism, egocentricity, provinciality, and incompetence to assume their responsibilities in a program of intensive economic development.[60]

Italy, which had only just begun its process of development, required will, dedication, sacrifice, organization, direction, and col-

60. Cf. T. Masotti, *Corridoni*, pp. 107ff.; I. de Begnac, *L'arcangelo sindacalista (Filippo Corridoni)*, pp. 525ff., 600–602, 683ff.

lective purpose. Italy, which found itself in essentially precapitalist circumstances, afflicted by a lack of initiative and organization, needed a special revolutionary propulsive force to complete the arduous mission imposed on it by the demands of the twentieth century. The bourgeoisie, stalled in its economic development, must be compelled, by proletarian revolutionaries if necessary, to complete the process. Only an industrialized and economically modern community could possess a mature and a responsible working class.[61]

Corridoni's testament is explicit enough to suggest many of the implications drawn out by Mussolini in the years to follow. The process of development anticipated by Corridoni clearly involved both the bourgeoisie and the proletariat in an overarching national purpose, implying that any mobilization for revolutionary purpose must appeal to both population elements, and that any such appeal must be couched in terms of a national rather than a proletarian myth.

Corridoni died in the war, but there were others, like Olivetti (who had collaborated with the first interventionist *Fascio*) who were quick to draw out the implications of his work. If Italy remained only marginally industrialized and the revolution of the twentieth century required complete industrialization, then the immediate task of revolutionaries was to act as the midwife of economic development. Then revolution could not appeal to proletarians alone, but must address itself to all productive classes. That such an appeal could be undertaken was the real basis for the pervasive nationalism so evident among all classes of citizens on the peninsula.[62]

Olivetti spoke of a national socialism, a revolution of producers, that would animate revolutionaries in an environment of economic underdevelopment and international disadvantage.[63] The socialism of such disadvantaged communities would protect and foster industrial development. Only thus could the nation pursue the developments presupposed by classical Marxism.[64] In March, 1915, Olivetti addressed himself to the community of interests that united

61. F. Corridoni, *Sindacalismo e repubblica*, pp. 19, 20, 22, 26, 32, 37–39, 41, 46, 48, 55, 70; cf. De Begnac, *L'arcangelo*, ch. 32.

62. A. O. Olivetti, "Ricominciando," *Pagine libere*, October 10, 1914. All of Olivetti's writings of this period are available in *Battaglie sindacaliste: dal sindacalismo al fascismo*, an unpublished two-volume collection made available by his family.

63. A. O. Olivetti, "Salutemi i pacifisti," *ibid.*

64. Cf. A. O. Olivetti, "Noi e lo stato," *ibid.*, November 15, 1914.

the various economic strata of populations faced with the task of industrial development. He understood that community of interests to be the material foundation for the national sentiment so prevalent on the peninsula. In 1918, Olivetti anticipated revolutionary mobilization taking place among all classes in the service of those collective interests. Under such conditions, Olivetti maintained, membership in a given class does not align one *against* the nation, but unites one *with* the nation. Whatever competition between classes survives under such conditions takes place *within* and *subordinate to* the ultimate interests of the national community. The working classes under such circumstances would not abandon the tasks that faced the underdeveloped nation, but would demand greater participation in the undertaking. The nation required an intensified production. The patriotism of the working class was a commitment to enhanced production and was therefore a coherent manifestation of the combination of national sentiment and class interests typical of national revolution at a given stage of economic development.[65] In Olivetti's view, it was a patriotism fully compatible with the revolutionary tradition of Italian socialism, the tradition of Carlo Pisacane, Giuseppe Garibaldi, Andrea Costa, Cesare Battisti, and Filippo Corridoni.[66]

Thus, by the close of the First World War, Olivetti anticipated a revolutionary mobilization that could recruit among all classes of the peninsula. Like Mussolini, he anticipated the masses, rather than simply the proletarians, being drawn into a revolutionary movement of development and renovation. He conceived of a national populism, a recruitment from all segments of the population in the service of the historical and developmental tasks that faced the nation.[67]

At almost the same time, Sergio Panunzio was articulating many of the same ideas. He spoke of all classes being integrated into the bosom of the nation.[68] He had already spoken of the critical role of the nation at the present stage of the world's development.[69]

65. A. O. Olivetti, "Postilla a 'Socialismo e guerra sono termini antitetici? Ancora per la neutralità' di Aroldo Norlenghi," *ibid.*, March 20, 1915.

66. A. O. Olivetti, "Nazione e classe," *L'Italia nostra* (the publication of Edmondo Rossini), May 1, 1918.

67. A. O. Olivetti, "Ripresa," *ibid.*, May 1, 1918; cf. his letter to the members of the Unione Italiana del Lavoro, of June 8, 1918, in *ibid.*

68. S. Panunzio, "Una forza," *Giornale del mattino*, Bologna, April 28, 1918, republished in *Stato nazionale e sindacati* (Milan: Imperia, 1924), p. 34.

69. S. Panunzio, "Principio e diritto di nazionalità," written in 1917 and republished in *Popolo, nazione, stato* (Florence: La nuova Italia, 1933).

All this was also to be found in the writings of Roberto Michels at the time. Michels reminded socialists that the Italian revolutionary tradition had Carlo Pisacane as one of its founders. And it was Pisacane who had called up the energies of the masses of the peninsula in the service of the nation, as the great proletariat against the constraints imposed on it by the advanced plutocracies of the Continent.[70] He reiterated the syndicalist conviction concerning the critical role of sentiment in mass-mobilization and revolutionary action, and referred to the function of national sentiment in the contemporary world.[71]

This collection of ideas from which Mussolini put together the ideology of the first Fascism was held together by a few central themes, including the recognition that revolutionaries on the peninsula were compelled to contend with an industrial, intellectual, and moral environment that was characteristically precapitalist. Although syndicalists, as we have seen, had long been familiar with the classical Marxist belief that a mature bourgeoisie and a mature proletariat were a function of advanced industrialism, in 1915 Arturo Labriola felt obliged to reiterate the Marxist argument. "Marx," he told his audience, "made capitalist industrialization . . . the primary agent of historical progress." Therefore revolutionaries should favor the extensive and intensive development of industry, and any policy that fosters industrialization was "objectively revolutionary."

For these reasons, Labriola continued, Marx favored the success of more advanced nations in conflict with the more retrograde.[72] The internationalism that inspired the early documents of classical Marxism clearly anticipated a situation in which all sovereign nations had achieved a relative parity in terms of economic and industrial development. Under the disparities that existed in the middle of the second decade of the twentieth century, Labriola argued, Marx's arguments concerning socialism's obligations in the event of war between bourgeois states were clearly relevant. Once again Labriola reminded socialists that Marx had favored a German vic-

70. R. Michels, "Der patriotische Sozialismus oder sozialistische Patriotismus bei Carlo Pisacane," *Archiv für die Geschichte des Sozialismus und der Arbeiterunegung* (edited by C. Gruenberg. Leipzig: Hirschfeld, 1914).

71. R. Michels, "Appunti sulla sociologia di Vilfredo Pareto," *Nuova antologia, 162* (November–December, 1917), 392–97.

72. Arturo Labriola, "I principii di C. Marx in materia di politica estera," Appendix to *La conflagrazione europea e il socialismo* (Rome: Athenaeum, 1915), pp. 209ff., 212.

tory against France in the Franco-Prussian War because he saw in that victory the potential for German industrial development and the consequent development of a centralized and effective working-class movement.

Thus Labriola recognized that the antipatriotism so assiduously cultivated by the orthodox socialists was manifestly inappropriate. Antimilitarism and antipatriotism were strategies appropriate to normal times when class conflict was the primary historical contest. But on the occasion of war, international problems must take precedence over class struggle. Just as Marx and Engels recognized the merit of proletarian support for Bismarck's war, Labriola was prepared to recognize the merit of revolutionary support for the war against the Central Powers. That war favored the more advanced Entente powers against reactionary Germany, Austria, and Turkey. Labriola was also prepared to recognize that the war might very well provide enormous stimulus to the development of Italy's retarded industrial system. Military expenditures might not be the nonproductive dissipation of investment capital conceived of by the more orthodox Marxists. In fact, if classical Marxism were in any substantive sense correct, war and imperialism *must* attend the economic development of nations, and "expenditures for the military which at one time were understood to be expenditures that compromised the liberty of the nation, are now appreciated as expenditures for the commercial and industrial expansion of the community." To fail to recognize all this was to struggle against the conditions prerequisite to socialism.

Imperialism and economic expansion were therefore progressive phenomena. The analogy drawn by Labriola on this occasion is instructive. He argued that at the beginning of the industrial revolution, the sentimental socialists, the Luddites and their like, attempted to restrict the expansion of machine production to protect the working class from the undeniable exploitation that such production carried in its train. But if commodity production had been successfully restricted to household manufacture, the prospects of social evolution would have been hopelessly impaired. Resolution of the problems of the epoch, Labriola insisted, required the unlimited expansion of machine production. Critical communists, the classical Marxists of the nineteenth century, had fully understood that. Similarly, conservative and sentimental socialists may have opposed war and imperialism in an effort to relieve the burdens

that inevitably fall on the working classes, but in so doing they served counterrevolutionary purposes.[73]

The crisis of the First World War had thus thrown up many of the arguments that had long been implicit, and given greater emphasis to those that had long been explicit in the rationale of the revolutionary syndicalists. Among the syndicalist theoreticians themselves there remained, of course, critical points of disagreement. Corridoni, at his death, was an irrepressible republican, while Panunzio spoke of a national monarchy. Olivetti remained throughout this period emphatically opposed to the state as an agency of national integration, while Panunzio and Michels were prepared to concede its functional role in modern circumstances. Olivetti remained an advocate of free-trade economics, while Arturo Labriola began to argue the developmental merits of tariff protection in order to insulate noncompetitive but essential national industry from the preemptive strength of foreign enterprise. But it is clear that revolutionary syndicalism, a heretical Marxism, provided the central arguments for the Fascism put together by Mussolini on the eve of international peace in 1918. Revolutionary syndicalism had provided the elements of the social content that Mussolini was to give to the First World War.

Mussolini, Fascism, and Orthodox Socialism

By the end of the war so much had happened and Mussolini had become so wedded to his heretical belief system, that he was loath to identify with traditional socialism in any way. The traditional socialists of Italy had maintained their posture of neutrality throughout the war, at the time when Mussolini's most intimate comrades had fallen. Corridoni had died in the trenches of Frasche; Battisti had been executed by the Austrians after his capture. Too many men had died, many of them Mussolini's friends and comrades, to leave Mussolini with any inclination to catalog the affinities he shared with Marxist socialism. In his judgment, because of the neutralism of organized socialism it had forfeited any claim it might have had to participate in the future of the victorious new Italy.[74] He had excellent tactical and emotional reasons for dis-

73. A. Labriola, *La conflagrazione*, pp. 4ff., 21ff., 31ff., 35ff., 54ff., 73, 85, 187ff.
74. Mussolini, "Diocleziano e Cugnolio," *Opera*, VIII, 217ff.

associating himself from organized socialism. But the first Fascism was nonetheless the natural child of revolutionary socialism.

Besides the tactical and emotional distance that had opened between Mussolini and the Party he had so long served, there was the reasoned conviction that orthodox socialism had become an anachronism in the twentieth century.[75] As we have seen, Mussolini considered the Marxism that had gained power in Russia to be no more than an episode—its ideology a bundle of contradictions.[76] Russia had succumbed to a socialism given over to the terror and compulsion that attends "primitive accumulation" in an effort to put together the investment capital necessary to restore the productive processes of a nation shattered by war and afflicted with retarded industrial development. In the name of communism, the socialist revolution had domesticated labor to that end.[77] Whatever tortured justification Russian Marxists might offer, the reality was that Leninism was profoundly confused, with its Marxism little other than a by-product of monumental military defeat and national disintegration.

In Mussolini's judgment, only a socialism that was prepared to make its peace with the nation and that was prepared to assume developmental obligations could be a viable candidate for political power. The orthodox socialism of Italy was incapable of adapting to the political, social, and economic requirements of the contemporary world. Its appeal remained tendentiously proletarian, and its opposition to the war waxed and waned with Italy's military fortunes. When Leninist sentiment began to find expression among the socialists of the extreme left, Mussolini described it as criminally traitorous, with the Italian Bolsheviks no less paid agents of Germany than were Lenin and his entourage.[78]

Although Mussolini finally decided that the term "socialist" had become so debased and devoid of specific meaning that he recommended its abandonment, he was quick to remind his readers that he was prepared to assimilate everything that remained vital in its tradition. He argued that his objections to socialism were addressed

75. Cf. Mussolini, "XIV Luglio," *Opera, 11,* 202.

76. Mussolini, "Cartelle cliniche," *Opera, 8,* 277; "Divagazione," *Opera, 11,* 341–44.

77. Mussolini quoting Paul Axelrod, in "L'ordine regna," *Opera, 11,* 191ff.

78. Mussolini, "In tempo opportuno," "Le vicende russe," *Opera, 8,* 70, 189; "Da Stürmer a Lenine," "Il 'morale'," *Opera, 9,* 72, 82ff.; "Nell'attesa," "La pace dell' infamia," "Il patto della schiavitù," "I misteri svelati," *Opera, 10,* 20, 111, 149, 311; "Che cosa è la pace dei 'Boches,'" *Opera, 11,* 220.

to the form of socialism that had rigidified into dogma and was no longer capable of confronting concrete reality with any intellectual independence. He insisted, like Arturo Labriola, that there were potentially many forms of socialism, each with a national and variable character. There was a German socialism, pedantic and convoluted. And there was a Latin socialism, more pragmatic and limpid. But the socialism that orthodoxy had produced in Italy had somehow suffered a grievous involution. Mussolini reminded Italians that socialism, of whatever sort, had been traditionally national in orientation. That the socialist neutralists of Italy failed to recognize this was confirmation of their intellectual destitution.

Mussolini once again reminded the orthodox that both Marx and Engels had supported Bismarck's nationalist war against the France of the "little Napoleon." Moreover, both Marx and Engels had actively advocated Germany's nationalist opposition to the policies of Czarist Russia, to the point of welcoming the prospect of a Russo-German armed conflict. Nor did all this seem to embarrass either of the founders of scientific socialism, even when such advocacy was fully consonant with the most reactionary pan-German designs. Marx was an advocate of war whenever such a war might have progressive consequences. In no sense would he have supported the defeatist theses of Italy's socialists and Bolsheviks.[79] Since *nations* fought wars and some wars were progressive, the *proletariat* of a nation fighting such a war was obliged to support the nation in its struggle.

Furthermore, Mussolini, like Michels, called the attention of his readers to the fact that Italian socialists from Pisacane to Garibaldi had always entertained both socialist and national sentiments. Those socialists who chose to abandon the nation in the pursuit of socialist interests not only failed in their obligations to the many who had died in a revolutionary and progressive war, but also violated the letter and the spirit of the best traditions of socialism.

By the end of the war, Mussolini had adamantly set his face against the orthodox socialists as politically obtuse and morally indigent, against politically organized Catholics as defeatists, and against the Giolittians as the prime representatives of the old, ineffectual, and corrupt traditional parliamentarianism. Not only were these the representatives of the self-serving system of the past, but

79. Mussolini, "'Kamerad!'" *Opera*, *8*, 11–14.

all were the contemporary advocates of a negotiated peace with the Central Powers. The socialists had failed to understand the political and economic realities facing an emergent Italy. The Catholics represented the crippled traditions that had confined Italy to the status of a second-class power. The Giolittians represented the parochial interest groups that made a truly united and dynamic nation an impossibility.

By the end of the First World War, Mussolini had clearly identified both the potential allies as well as the enemies of nascent Fascism. He had a clear strategy of mass mobilization and had, in principle, isolated those population elements to whom he would appeal. He had an ideological program calculated to exploit the sentiments and interests of those elements. He had special entrée, as a wounded veteran himself, to that select class of young men, the "aristocracy of the trenches," that he anticipated would serve as the cadre of a mass movement.[80]

It was not difficult for Mussolini to transpose the ethic of work, sacrifice, and discipline embodied in the life of the trenches to the entire national community. Throughout the war he insisted that the distinction between the front and the civilian rear be abolished, and that all Italy be "militarized," united by symbolic language and mythic appeal to collective purpose. He demanded that the free-enterprise economy of the peninsula be transformed into a "command economy." He demanded unity, discipline, sacrifice, and selflessness. For Mussolini the military model was eminently suitable for a society suffering protracted crisis and subject to the onerous demands of a historical mission.[81] This exemplified the integral collectivism to which he alluded at the commencement of Italy's involvement in the conflict—the new political form unanticipated in any of the received doctrines of the nineteenth century. It was not difficult for Mussolini to transfer the essentials of this model to a postwar Italian environment. The same ethic of work and sacrifice, the same hierarchical command structure, the same sense of collective purpose, the same mobilization of the masses who might wring victory from overwhelming challenge, the same united will

80. Mussolini, "L'episodio di Parigi," *Opera*, *9*, 33.

81. Cf. Mussolini, "L'armée nouvelle," *Opera*, *8*, 121; "L'attimo che fugge," "Le tende," "Decidersi," "Unità di anime," *Opera*, *9*, 150, 251, 269, 309; "L'offerta," "Disciplina di guerra," "Col ferro e col fuoco," "Zona di guerra," *Opera*, *10*, 15, 36ff., 71, 124; "Il 'morale'," "Le vecchie classi," *Opera*, *11*, 133, 250.

that could bend circumstances to national purpose—all might well be invoked to sustain the national syndicalist society of producers in Italy's immediate future. Mussolini's model of the new Italy had begun to take on the features of a "barracks socialism." The model of the Greater Italy was a military model, and the virtues of the revolutionary new man were to be military virtues.

In the trenches Mussolini had seen timid men become courageous under the silent pressure of their peers and in imitation of their leaders. He had seen men shed their provincialism and narrow concerns. He had seen them identify themselves with their nation, submit without question to command, suffer wounds without complaint, and die with the name of the fatherland on their lips.[82] All of this could only strike response among the convictions Mussolini had long entertained. The war had provided the occasion for the test of syndicalist convictions concerning the behavior of men facing mortal challenge. Mussolini had long believed that organized violence, in which men were prepared to gamble their lives, would produce the new men who would manifest the traits of Sorel's heroes of antiquity. Under such circumstances spirit could conquer matter.[83] The voluntarism that had long animated Mussolini's thought thus received concrete expression. Italy's developmental nationalism would be animated by a romantic militarism and an irrepressible voluntarism.

By the fall of 1918, as the First World War was drawing to its close, Mussolini had fashioned an ideology that he would use in his bid for political power during the next four years. At the end of the war he fancied himself a tribune without a party and without an organized following, but with an ideology containing the potential for political success. Mussolini had synthesized out of the various intellectual and political convictions of his early youth a dynamic body of thought capable of tapping the energies latent in broad strata of the Italian population. There were few intellectuals who did not respond to the ideas of men like Papini, Prezzolini, D'Annunzio, and Marinetti who conjured up images of a new and modern Italy. Papini and Prezzolini spoke of a new Italy possessing a modern time sense, reverberating with the throb of modern machinery and modern technology; D'Annunzio wrote eloquently of a new race of Italians, competent and productive, aggressive and independent, inventive and creative; Marinetti spoke of a religion of

82. Cf. Mussolini's discussion of this period in *My Autobiography*, ch. 2.
83. Mussolini, "Osare!" *Opera*, *11*, 121ff.

modernity, of a Futurism that would bring to Italy the electric beauty and power of machines.[84]

For many Italians the prospects of the new century were exhilarating. They wished to leave the little Italy of the past behind them; the war had been Italy's baptism into the new century. In 1915 Italy had thrown itself into the war and had suffered losses proportionately greater during its forty-one months of conflict than had Britain or France in their fifty-one. Sixteen percent of Italy's population had been mobilized for war—more than that of any other Allied power save France—and Italy's casualty rate had been higher than that of any Allied nation. Twenty-two percent of its national income had been consumed in the war. But Italy had won. In the process Italy had suffered a humiliating defeat at Caporetto, but had united in a solid phalanx at the Piave and had held against impressive forces. Italian industry had produced prodigious quantities of war material. The Italian air force had wrested control of the air over the battlefields of the north. D'Annunzio, in a heroic gesture, had bombed Vienna with leaflets, and Italian torpedo boats had swept the Adriatic. Italian shock troops, the *Arditi*, had given unassailable evidence of personal courage and incredible fortitude.

The war had given many Italians the sense that Italy was no longer an inferior in the family of nations. Many Italians no longer felt the sense of vulnerability that had afflicted their fathers at the turn of the century. They had come to possess a sense of destiny, of power and purpose. Among the entrepreneurial classes, Italy's productive accomplishments under the goad of international conflict had generated a sense of competence and of confident selfassurance. For the intellectuals called away from their professional and academic training, the war had been an experience that had inured them to challenge and conflict. These "warrior-intellectuals" had emerged victorious from the most cataclysmic conflict yet known in human history. Few of them expressed any disposition to return to the little Italy of prewar vintage. They aspired to a new Italy in which their sacrifice and service would be respected. No less was true of the simplest Italian, who, conscripted to military duty, envisioned a changed Italy in which his aspirations might be somehow fulfilled.

Mussolini, during the three-and-a-half years of war, had put together an ideology that could appeal to these sentiments. However

84. Cf. A. J. Gregor, *The Fascist Persuasion in Radical Politics*, pp. 154–66.

successful organized socialism might be in the short run, its inability to attract the support of returning veterans, its inability to offer any serious support to Italy's new industries, and its occasional aping of a foreign Bolshevik model in its search for a solution to Italy's domestic problems all augured ill for its long-term success. Mussolini, on the other hand, had provided in his outline of a revolutionary movement and government for the most dynamic and powerful elements that would be active in Italy's postwar environment. Few Italians could foresake the nation in whose name so many men had died. To insist, as did the orthodox socialists and communists, that so many Italians had died in the benighted service of capitalism left many Italian families, bereft of their sons and fathers, without dignity or consolation. Mussolini argued that every man who had fallen in the war had been a martyr, every man who had served had been a hero, and every man who had returned was a member of a new aristocracy. The men who had survived the war could hardly believe the socialist insistence that their sacrifices had been in vain, that they had been too craven to refuse, or that they had been duped into service. Almost all socialists later recognized that the inability of organized socialism to accommodate the returning veterans cost socialism dearly.[85]

However, Mussolini could appeal to veterans not only for membership, but also for cadre. Moreover, he could expect to receive material and moral support from the productive bourgeoisie. For he insisted that the Italy of the future would be productive. To the general class of petit bourgeois Italians—bureaucrats, civil servants, small merchants, and artisans—Mussolini offered the opportunity of upward mobility and financial security in an expanding economy, in which they could expect status, dignity, and fulfillment. To the national and productive proletariat he could offer the same image of an expanding economy in which all strata of the population would find increasing well-being and identification with a national community that would command international respect. To all these potentially dynamic, restive, and aggressive elements Mussolini could promise that the Italy of old, with all its parliamentary corruption, ineptitude, and indecisiveness, its collective humiliations, its shallowness and passivity, was a thing of the past. Italy was no longer to be an agrarian adjunct to Europe, serving

85. Cf. A. Tasca, *Nascita e avvento del fascismo* (Florence: La nuova Italia, 1950), ch. 7 and the documentation, pp. 200f., n. 55.

foreign interests, subservient to foreign capital, and a cipher in international deliberations.

In effect, Mussolini had intuited the modal temper of a developing nation. Consciously or unconsciously he sensed the responsiveness of Italians to the histrionics, the dramaturgy, the symbolisms, and the trappings of aggressive national reaffirmation and regeneration. Consciously, he involved himself in the historical project we now call modernization, the phased development of a transitional society to the level of industrial maturity. Mussolini consciously sought to foster a new national consciousness, an integration of all population elements in a complex program electric with high emotion—a program that would dislocate many, and breed the anxieties and satisfactions characteristic of all vast social, economic, and political change. He was fully aware that such an undertaking must involve every active segment of the population. He spoke of the collaboration of all Italians in the undertaking. He spoke of a central hierarchy of command to superintend the process. He spoke of national unity against a threatening outside world. He spoke of a collective enterprise that would lift Italy, a proletarian nation, to the level of the most advanced nations of the earth. He spoke of past accomplishments, of collective humiliations, of shared victories, and of a future glory—all effectively orchestrated to capture the shared sentiments of a people that had suffered the long trauma of retarded economic and political development.

Months before he called the meeting that would count as the founding of the Fascist movement, Mussolini had fabricated an ideology that carried within itself the potential of the future political victory. Since it contained elements to be found in germ in the earliest Italian revolutionary thought, it was an ideology to which many Italian socialists were ultimately to give their allegiance. Enrico Ferri, Guido Podrecca, and Nicola Bombacci, leaders of socialism for many years, were to pass into its ranks. Numerous syndicalists, Sergio Panunzio, A. O. Olivetti, and Paolo Orano among them, were to become and remain its principal ideologues. Entire socialist organizations were to defect to the Fascist legions.[86]

Fascism had grown out of socialist thought. Its ideology was socialism's first explicit heresy. The First World War had reshaped Mussolini's revolutionary socialism into the first mass-mobilizing,

86. Cf. the discussion in Paul Corner, *Fascism in Ferrara, 1915–1925* (London: Oxford University, 1975), ch. 7.

developmental nationalism of the twentieth century. With that ideology Mussolini was to dominate Italy and influence Europe for a generation—and open an epoch that is not yet behind us.

Chapter 10 Conclusions

> The Communist Party [made a serious] tactical error in so far as it conceived Fascism solely as a military phenomenon and neglected its ideological and political characteristics. We must not forget that Fascism in Italy, before it struck down the proletariat with an act of terror, achieved an ideological and political victory over the working-class movement.
>
> *Clara Zetkin*[1]

By November, 1918, almost half a year before the meeting which has gone down in history as the date of the founding of the Fascist movement, Mussolini had already put together an ideological system that was as coherent as any that was prepared at that time to enter into competition for the political allegiance of Italians. Fascism's intellectual credentials were as compelling as any. For all their immediate and subsequent reservations, men of the intellectual caliber of Vilfredo Pareto, Roberto Michels, Giovanni Gentile, Giovanni Papini, Curzio Malaparte, Giuseppe Prezzolini, and Benedetto Croce saw merit in the first Fascism.[2] Michels went on to become one of Fascism's most prominent ideologues,[3] Gentile its philosopher, and Malaparte its most capable pen. A considerable number of neo-Hegelian and Gentilean idealists very quickly identified themselves with Fascism and found in its ideological persuasion the fulfillment of their philosophical and social aspirations, and thinkers like Balbino Giuliano and Ugo Spirito were no less com-

1. C. Zetkin, "Der Kampf gegen den Faschismus," in E. Nolte, ed., *Theorien über den Faschismus*, p. 99.

2. There is an abundance of literature devoted to the "fascism" of each of these authors. For our purposes some of the more interesting are, Ulisse Benedetti, *Benedetto Croce e il fascismo* (Rome: Volpe, 1967); Stelio Zeppi, *Il pensiero politico dell'idealismo italiano e il nazionalfascismo*; Dino Fiorot, *Il realismo politico di Vilfredo Pareto* (Milan: Comunità, 1969); Piet Tommissen, "Vilfredo Pareto und der italienische Faschismus," in Ernst Forsthoff and Reinhard Hörstel, eds., *Standorte im Zeitstrom* (Munich: Athenaeum, 1974).

3. Wilfried Röhrich, *Robert Michels: vom sozialistisch-syndikalistischen zum faschistischen Credo*, and Frank Pfetsch, *Die Entwicklung zum faschistischen Führerstaat*.

7. Benito Mussolini at the time of the founding of the Fascist movement in 1919.

petent than any of the intellectuals who gathered around other revolutionary movements of this century.

Fascism made its appearance in 1919 possessing sufficient intellectual attraction to win the adherence of some of the finest minds in Italy. There are few historians today who can still insist with any confidence that neither Mussolini nor Fascism had an ideology. Even before the official founding of the movement, Mussolini had organized a belief system that was not only intellectually coherent, offering a strategy to mobilize the support necessary for the seizure of political power, but that also contained the principal outlines of the system of revolutionary government. Prominent syndicalists and Futurists were present at the founding of the movement. Ultimately, the nationalist intellectuals, Enrico Corradini, Alfredo Rocco, and Roberto Forges-Davanzati, were also to join its ranks.

The tactical postures of Fascism, particularly during its first years of life, were experimental and tentative, like those of any revolutionary movement in the twentieth century. But Mussolini had long since identified the population elements to which he would appeal, the returning "aristocracy of the trenches," the national proletarian elements, and the new and dynamic bourgeoisie. When the struggle in the agrarian regions of the Po Valley propelled Fascism into national prominence and threatened to make the movement essentially agrarian in character, Mussolini very carefully controlled the situation to ensure that Fascism would remain an urban movement of the industrial north.[4] It was to remain a Milanese and modernizing movement, animated by the "apotheosis of the industrial development of the nation."[5]

Exploiting every theoretical, strategic, and tactical blunder made by his opponents, Mussolini was able to build a mass movement out of the combustible elements spun off by the war and the economic dislocation that followed. Socialists of all factions failed in every way that Mussolini was successful. They failed to make accommodation for the returning war veterans. There were ugly incidents in many parts of Italy; returning veterans were insulted and on occasion assaulted by socialists, and in some instances tortured and killed. Which made Mussolini's blandishments to the new aris-

4. Cf. V. Castronovo, "Il potere economico e il fascismo," in Guido Quazza, ed., *Fascismo e società italiana*, p. 73.

5. Giovanni Ansaldo, "Il fascismo e la piccola borghesia tecnica," in Constanzo Casucci, ed., *Il fascismo*, p. 208.

tocracy more and more seductive. The first and most aggressive components of the nascent movement were in fact, war veterans—young, aggressive, trained to combat. All were irretrievably lost to organized socialism and ill-disposed toward the commonplaces of the traditional parties.

In the rural areas the "maximalist" socialists insisted on land to the peasants in poor imitation of Bolshevik slogans. What the socialists had not counted on was the presence of a new class of agrarian small-holders who, in the buyers' market produced by social unrest in the countryside, had for the first time acquired ownership of property. To these new landowners, the socialist slogans and the seizure of land by the landless posed a threat of traumatic magnitude. Some of the first Fascist squads in the Po Valley were composed of these men and their sons who had just returned from the carnage at the front. Large landholders in turn, could provide the financial support to give the Fascist squads the mobility, firepower, and equipment that permitted them to lay waste, in short order, the elaborate organizational structure of rural socialism painfully assembled over more than three decades.

Rural socialist organizations suffered all the disabilities of Italian socialism. They were disorganized and factional. The *emiliani*, for example, undertook a provincial socialism and pretended to provide for their own defense and play their own politics. Mussolini was long familiar with the institutional fragility of socialist organizations. He knew it would not take long to dismantle all of its political machinery. Mussolini had every reason to expect that the forces of public order, the constabulary and the military, would not provide very effective defense for the antinational subversives. Every effort made by the central government to maintain public order and defend the freedom of political association was thwarted by the indisposition of the police and military either to seriously hinder Fascist purpose or to defend organized socialism.

For more than three years Italian socialism had set its face against the military as it fought, with grievous losses, against a formidable enemy. When the soldiers were demobilized, they returned home to find themselves still the objects of socialist abuse. The first Fascist squads were composed in large part of veterans, who often wore their combat decorations and parts of their uniforms in their forays against the socialists. It was unlikely that the military would take up the defense of the socialists against men who were defending the honor of those who had fought for the salvation of the nation.

Under the circumstances, there were many gross breaches of military discipline. There were occasions when the military allowed the Fascists to use their equipment and their arms against the socialists. There were times when military personnel, still in uniform, participated in Fascist punitive raids. There is very little evidence that any of this was the consequence of a conspiracy on the part of the military leadership to bring Fascism to power. The evidence indicates that the highest leadership of the military attempted to maintain discipline, but that Fascism had attracted the spontaneous favor of many of the lower echelons of the officer corps.

The constabulary was no more disposed than was the military to aid the socialists in their postwar struggle with Mussolini's Fascism. For years the *carabinieri* had rankled under the socialist judgment that they were the paid lackeys of capitalism. For years they had suffered abuse and humiliation. When the Fascists began their organized attacks on socialist organizations, the constabulary had little difficulty in deciding where their sympathies lay.

Under all these evident disadvantages, the rank and file membership of the socialist organizations began to defect in large numbers, and soon over half a million workers were organized in Fascist syndicates. Socialism gave every evidence of disintegration.

In the urban areas, Fascism's commitment to modernization made it attractive to both the enterprisory and petty bourgeoisie. Socialism, on the other hand, had disrupted the peninsula with labor agitation that involved millions of man hours a year; services had been interrupted; and industries, suffering all the disabilities of retooling and reorganizing for peacetime production, found themselves burdened not only by two-digit inflation, a dearth of markets, and a withdrawal of international financial support, but also by a continuous series of work stoppages and obstructions. Fascism's productivist thesis promised order, stability, and support for Italy's dislocated industries and financial institutions. Fascism further promised to control inflation, balance the national budget, suppress parliamentary obstructionism, introduce efficiency, and rationalize plant under the auspices of the dynamic, productive bourgeoisie.

Fascism became still more attractive after the threatened middle classes and the harassed entrepreneurial bourgeoisie, who had witnessed the chaos of Red Week, suffered the seizure of the factories by the workers in the fall of 1920. Fascism promised a restoration of tranquillity to the nation, and order to its productive processes.

In May, 1921, the national elections produced results that au-

gured difficulties for organized socialism. The socialists lost thirty-four seats in the national elections; the Fascists won thirty-five. Mussolini, who two years before had won only a few thousand votes, now received 172,491, more than twice the number of his socialist opponent. By May, 1921, there were almost 200,000 dues-paying members of the *Fascio*; by the end of the year there were 250,000. Hundreds of thousands of workers joined the Fascist syndicates. Support and sympathy for the movement increased. *Il popolo d'Italia* flourished and socialist organizations and publications began to wind down. The Socialist Party disintegrated under the pressure and fragmented into ineffectual factions. By the beginning of 1922 it was becoming increasingly obvious that Fascism could no longer be contained.

The traditional government under the leadership of Giolitti began to lose credibility. Its inability to resolve all the problems that weighed on postwar Italy—internal and external difficulties, economic problems of dislocating magnitude, protracted civil strife that cost hundreds of lives, disabling strikes, financial crises, raging unemployment, and industrial contraction—all contributed to its declining fortunes. By the end of the summer of 1922, it was evident to almost everyone that Fascism, in one way or another, would soon gain power. When Fascism did make its move, and commenced an armed march on the capital, the king could not be sure that the army would obey the order to resist the Fascist legions. Fascism had brought together a coalition of forces so formidable that resistance seemed, to say the least, ill-advised.

The history of the Fascist seizure of power has been the object of innumerable treatises, tracts, and volumes. It is not my object here to reconstruct the history of the four years that brought Fascism to power. Rather, my purpose is to suggest that Fascism's strategy and tactics were prefigured in the belief system Mussolini had fabricated months before the meeting at San Sepolcro in March, 1919 that marked the official founding of the movement. That belief system had clearly identified the forces to which Mussolini would appeal in the postwar period. It also outlined the tactics for neutralizing potential opponents and defeating the antinational and counter-revolutionary Socialist Party. The insistence that Mussolini, at that time, had "neither philosophy, policy nor program"[6] is by and large mistaken. By the end of 1918, Mussolini, at thirty-five, had

6. R. MacGregor-Hastie, *The Day of the Lion* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1963), p. 29; cf. C. Hibbert, *Benito Mussolini: The Rise and Fall of Il Duce*, p. 42.

as clear a conception of the world and the forces that shape it, as effective a strategy for coming to grips with those forces, and as ample a repository of anticipated tactics available to him, as any revolutionary in the twentieth century. More than that, he had identified the critical issues of his time. He had fashioned a mass-mobilizing ideology of rapid industrialization. While he shared many of the doctrinal and political convictions of other political forces in his environment, he was the only political leader among them gifted enough to put together a winning combination. The syndicalists had early entertained notions of Italy's need to modernize and industrialize, but they had failed to break out of what is now called "economism"—the attempt to create revolution by employing only the forces of organized labor. Mussolini understood that revolution was exquisitely political in nature, and that revolutions are made by invoking both mass sentiment and specific group interest. Organizations devoted exclusively to the pursuit of economic interests find it increasingly difficult to invoke the diffuse sentiments necessary to mobilize masses to broader purpose. Many syndicalists ultimately came to understand precisely this. As a result, they joined the Fascist ranks not as syndicalists but as Fascism's first ideologues.

The Futurists had also advocated the modernization of the peninsula, but they had inextricably involved themselves in obscure aesthetic preoccupations and consequently isolated themselves from the ordinary citizenry who desperately wanted political leadership that would address itself to the practical problems facing the country after the war. To have any impact on the course of events, the Futurists could only give themselves over to Fascism, the Fascism that addressed itself to the immediate political, economic, and social issues that enflamed the politically active population. The Futurists were to give Fascism a certain style, a dramatic and histrionic flare, but Fascism was to give substance to Futurism. Out of the combination, some of Futurism's first agitators were to become the intellectual and organizational leaders of Fascism. Giuseppe Bottai, for one, was to occupy some of the most responsible posts in Fascist Italy.

Mussolini shared with the Nationalists of Corradini and Alfredo Rocco many convictions about the nature of man and society, including the realization that Italy required extensive modernization if it were to meet the challenges of the new century. But Mussolini was also aware that the processes of modernization and industrialization would require the mobilization of the numberless and anony-

mous masses of the nation. They would have to be integrated into the process. Most of the Nationalists had failed to grasp fully the implications of this necessity and had remained aloof and aristocratic. They, like the revolutionary syndicalists, were intellectuals and, for one reason or another, had had scant success in tapping the commitment of the ordinary Italian. Until Nationalism's union with Fascism, it remained a small, largely intellectual, political association. It was Corradini himself who recognized that it was Mussolini's Fascism that had brought the masses to the service of national purpose. Having accommodated themselves to Fascism, the Nationalists were to provide the established regime with some of its most distinguished leaders—Alfredo Rocco and Roberto Forges-Davanzati among them.

Some commentators have treated these developments in a strange fashion. Benedetto Croce, for example, insisted that Fascism was little more than a variant of Futurism, and Karin Priester, more recently, has argued that it was Nationalism, and particularly Alfredo Rocco, that provided Fascism with a philosophy.[7] Others have insisted that Giovanni Gentile provided whatever intellectual substance Fascism could muster. As a matter of fact, almost every element of what was to become the official doctrine of Fascism is to be found in the social and political thought of the young Mussolini long before Fascism had become a political reality.

By the end of 1918 Mussolini had drawn together all the constituents of a belief system within which could be accommodated Futurism, revolutionary syndicalism, Nationalism, and neo-idealism. Moreover, Fascism was able to attract the support of the new industrial bourgeoisie, whose material and moral assistance was so critical during the period before the accession to power. Fascism could also recruit among the urban petty bourgeoisie, which was exacerbated by the continued turmoil of the peninsula, threatened with financial ruin by inflation, and alienated by the orthodox socialists who saw in it only nonproductive and parasitic elements. Small landholders, sharecroppers, and large segments of the working class itself could be mobilized by the appeal inherent in the program of national regeneration in which all could expect to profit and find a place.

Because Fascism's appeal proved to be so broad, Mussolini never became the captive of any organized interest group. For years Marx-

7. Karen Priester, *Der italienische Faschismus: Ökonomische und ideologische Grundlagen*, pp. 304ff.

ists have insisted that Fascism was both the creature and the agent of capitalism, and yet the best evidence indicates that Fascism, while it may have accommodated them, was never captured or domesticated by industrial or financial interests—much less was Fascism their creature.[8] In our own time, even Marxists have had to admit that the advent of Fascism meant subordination to the regime by the monopolies, and that the settlement of questions that for centuries were the prerogative of the big capitalists became in some measure the function of the Fascist bureaucracies.[9]

If that much could be said of the relationship of Fascism to its capitalist nonmovement allies, no less could be said of its relationship to the remaining population elements that provided its support base. Fascism was no more an exclusively middle-class movement than it was the agent of finance capital. Still less was it the embodiment of the irrational and furious impulses of mass man. Fascism was a mass-movement of solidarity, animated by a reasonably specific ideology, intent on ushering Italy into the twentieth century as a great power. To that end Fascism recruited where it could and employed every strategy and tactic it thought appropriate.

Fascism gained power in postwar Italy, at least in part, not only because it possessed convictions that addressed themselves to the critical problems afflicting Italy as an underdeveloped nation, but also because it outlined a strategy and pursued detailed tactics that gave it every political advantage denied organized socialism and Catholic populism. Fascism had preempted every viable theme from nationalism to modernization. As a consequence, it collected a coalition of forces more substantial, more enduring, and more broadly based, than the meager collection that mustered Italy through its struggle for unification. At least part of that success was due to Mussolini's political genius—his ability to isolate and address himself to the most critical issues of his time.

Fascism and Mass-Mobilizing, Developmental Dictatorships

But Mussolini had accomplished more than that. He had articulated a political formula that was to prove immensely attractive to

8. Cf. Roland Sarti, *Fascism and the Industrial Leadership in Italy, 1919–1940*; Piero Melograni, *Gli industriali e Mussolini*.

9. Alexander Galkin, "Capitalist Society and Fascism," *Social Science* (USSR Academy of Science), *2*, 1970, p. 130.

the political revolutionaries of our time. Since 1918 most revolutionary movements have displayed certain ideological commitments that, were it not for our entrenched preconceptions, could pass as analogues of the first Fascism. For all the talk of proletarian revolutions in the twentieth century, no revolution of our time has been proletarian in any intelligible sense of the word. The socialism and the internationalism of such movements—not to speak of their democracy—has been equally idiosyncratic.

Russia, China, and Cuba, for example, choose to identify themselves as "dictatorships of the proletariat," which is as curious as it is unconvincing. In no case was the major recruitment base of the revolutionary movement proletarian. In all cases the proletariat, as a class, was identified as immature. In all cases their consciousness had to be brought to them from without by declassed professional revolutionaries.

Lenin first introduced this creative development into Marxism at about the same time that the Italian syndicalists and Mussolini were expressing similar ideas. In our own time Mao Tse-tung committed himself to a notion of "political education," rooted in the belief that the masses can be invoked only by the thought of an exceptional leader. Irrespective of class status, one can become a proletarian and possess revolutionary consciousness only by making appropriate responses to the thought of Mao Tse-tung. Even more curious is the suggestion of the Castroites that anyone can be proletarianized by taking up arms, under the hierarchical guidance of a few bourgeois intellectuals, in the cause of the revolution.

That little of this makes any sense in the context of the Marxism of Marx and Engels has become evident to almost everyone not irremediably committed to the tortured dialectical creative developments that classical Marxism has suffered at the hands of revolutionary leadership. It does make eminently good sense as an analogue of Fascist arguments. It was Mussolini who maintained that the new man of our century and the revolutionary consciousness that was to animate him would be products of the persuasive efforts of a small revolutionary vanguard. It was he who explicitly denied that revolutionary consciousness would be the possession of a single class or the automatic by-product of economic processes. It was he who insisted on the influence of ideal elements in the remaking of man. It was he who rejected the explicit determinism of classical Marxism and the orthodox socialism of the turn of the century. It was he who argued that men generally respond to evoca-

tory myths, prefigurations of a revolutionary ideal. Today those myths conjure up images of proletarian revolutions where there are no proletarians, international working-class solidarity where there is only internecine strife between socialist states, and a democratic withering away of the state where there are the most elaborately hierarchical state structures ever known.

The fact is that when revolutions take place in environments unripe for socialism, that is to say, in economies that suffer from delayed or thwarted development, recruitment has to take place among the most diverse nonproletarian elements—peasants, progressive gentry, the national bourgeoisie, and the like. Thus more and more of the talk of revolutionaries becomes mythic and symbolic. Revolutions take place under the hegemony of the nonexistent or absent proletariat, and the people, rather than the proletariat, are more and more frequently invoked. While the slogans remain internationalist, appeals are more and more frequently made to national interests, national history, and national aspirations. The Chinese Communists have never hesitated to employ nationalist appeals. The Cuban revolutionaries came to power behind the national flag, and with the cry, "The Fatherland or Death!" enscribed on their guidons. Among modern revolutionaries, mass mobilization has taken on a singularly deceptive character. But for all that the strategy and tactics are those first fully articulated by Mussolini and the national syndicalists of the Italian peninsula.

The revolutionaries of the twentieth century have gradually creatively developed the socialism of the nineteenth century, until precious little now survives of the orthodoxy shared by Marxists in the period before the First World War. The revolution that was to be the product of capitalist maturity when an economic system had exhausted its potentiality for growth is now heralded in the most backward economies on earth. The revolution that presupposed the "universal development of productive forces and . . . world intercourse" and that would be "possible [only] as the act of the dominant peoples 'all at once' and simultaneously"[10] is now thought to occur in the form of national liberation movements, not among dominant peoples possessing a developed economic base, but among

10. K. Marx and F. Engels, *The German Ideology* (Moscow: Progress, 1964), pp. 46ff. "The communist revolution will, therefore, not be a national revolution alone; it will take place in all civilized countries, or at least in Great Britain, the United States, France, and Germany, at one and the same time." F. Engels, "Principles of Communism," in David Ryazanoff, ed., *The Communist Manifesto of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels*, p. 333.

oppressed peoples burdened by underdevelopment. The revolution that would be the "ineluctable" consequence of objective, economic conditions, that would manifest itself "independent of the will or the guidance of particular parties or classes," [11] is now seen to arise from the intercession of a vanguard party and its exceptional leaders —men possessing the genius of Lenin, the telluric force of Castro, and the "spiritual atom bomb" of the thought of Mao Tse-tung. The revolution that was to be the result of the "spontaneous, class conscious action of the vast majority of men" [12] is now thought to develop from the transformation of men's consciousness through ideological suasion. The revolution that was to abolish the state and relegate it to the museum of antiquities has produced political systems in which the state has become a seemingly permanent fixture, "the all-peoples state." Although the revolution was regarded as the heir to the enormous productive base of mature capitalism, it is now seen as the prerequisite to industrial development. Although the revolution was intended to bring emancipation to workmen in the form of a massive reduction in the amount of labor to be extracted from them,[13] it now imposes all the weight of socialist "morality"—dedication, intensive labor, self-sacrifice, frugality, service, and obedience. And more and more frequently the model of socialist man is a military model. Men are exhorted to pattern their lives after the Peoples Liberation Army or the life-style of guerrilla heroes. The consciousness of an entire society is to be renovated by military virtues and adherence to the thought of one leader, who is the "never-setting red sun" or the *Jefe*.

Although Engels insisted that anyone who attempted to make a socialist revolution in environments without proletarians and bourgeoisie had not learned "the ABC of socialism," [14] modern revolutions occur in peasant countries like China or its African counterparts. Although Marx and Engels maintained that the proletariat has no fatherland, twentieth century Marxists have invoked images of a workers' and peasants' fatherland, renewed and rendered powerful by national revolution. Although national boundaries were considered bourgeois anachronisms, modern Marxists devote themselves

11. *Ibid.*, p. 330.

12. For Marx the proletariat was "a class which forms the majority of all members of society, and from which emanates the consciousness of the necessity of a fundamental revolution." K. Marx and F. Engels, *The German Ideology*, p. 85.

13. Cf. K. Marx, *Capital* (Moscow: Foreign Languages, 1962), III, 799ff.

14. F. Engels, "Soziales aus Russland," in Marx, Engels, *Werke*, XVIII, 557.

to restoring lost territories to the fatherland. So intense is the dedication to the restoration of "China irredenta," for example, that two socialist countries teeter on the brink of nuclear annihilation.

All of this is painfully familiar. Mussolini addressed himself to all of these issues half a century ago. By the end of the First World War he had anticipated almost all the ideological postures history has forced on the Marxisms that followed him. As he intimated, socialism would have to adapt itself to the history, the culture, the traditions, and the circumstances of each nation. He anticipated a German socialism, and an Italian national socialism, just as we have experienced a Russian Marxism, a Sinified Marxism, an African socialism, and a Cuban socialism.

The fact is that almost every revolution in the twentieth century has undertaken obligations that would have been totally unanticipated by the socialism of the turn of the century. Karl Kautsky, as an orthodox socialist, could still insist, even after the Bolshevik revolution, that the will to socialism could only be

> created by . . . great industry . . . . This will first appear amongst the masses when large-scale industry is already much developed . . . . To the ripening of the conditions, the necessary level of the industrial development, must be added the maturity of the proletariat, in order to make socialism possible. [This will] be obtained by the exertions of the proletariat in opposition to the capitalist.[15]

These were the orthodox socialist convictions about which the syndicalists had reservations early in the century. If great industry was the necessary antecedent to socialism, socialism was hardly a prospect for most of the world in 1920, and certainly not for Italy for the foreseeable future. The syndicalists and Mussolini argued that the vast majority of the nations of the world faced bourgeois tasks—national independence, integration, and the generation of great industry. If the bourgeoisie proved inadequate to their historical mission, revolution must intercede. It would be a revolution led by men fired by a mythic vision and mobilizing masses to their purpose, masses innocent of the consciousness that would otherwise have to wait for the advent of large scale industry.

Mussolini argued that men under such circumstances are given the consciousness necessary for revolution through the intercession of a vanguard party, an organization of professional revolutionaries

15. Karl Kautsky, *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, pp. 12ff., 15.

capable of shaping the masses to their historical tasks. It would seem that most contemporary revolutionaries are prepared to grant as much. The most articulate among them speak of the people as "a blank sheet of paper," on which the "most beautiful words can be written," as "malleable clay with which the new man . . . can be formed." [16] Mussolini, for his part, spoke of the masses as precious metal that required working.

For the orthodox and democratic socialism of the turn of the century all this was heresy. When Lenin suggested that consciousness must be brought to the proletariat (and by implication, the nonproletarian masses) from without, Rosa Luxemburg insisted that the suggestion was elitist and nonMarxist and would lead inevitably to a military ultracentralism.[17] Disregarding these warnings, contemporary revolutionaries more and more frequently invoke military models, military vocabulary, and military postures to characterize the procedures by which men acquire socialist consciousness. Guevara spoke of the man of the socialist future as being prefigured in the guerrilla warrior. He spoke of conditioning men to "heroic attitudes in everyday life." [18] Maoism is laced together by the "emphasis on martial virtues. The language of war, strength, and courage runs like a red thread through all of Mao's works. This is not merely one of the important strains in Mao's personality and thought; it is almost the central strain." [19]

The logic of these convictions is relatively clear. Men and their revolutionary consciousness are fashioned in apocalyptic struggle, by revolutionary war. They are shaped to historical tasks by exceptional leadership. Recruits can come from any class, for in environments devoid of proletarian masses, the peasants, the national bourgeoisie, and even the progressive gentry will do as well, since all can be refashioned by the renovative thought of the leader in the armed revolutionary struggle to liberate the nation. Rather than any specific internal class enemy, the enemy is imperialism, the reactionary and oppressor *nations*, that thwart the independence and industrial development of the oppressed nation.

That this is an echo of the thought of the young Mussolini hardly requires documentation. Mao's call for a union of all progressive

16. Mao Tse-tung, "China is Poor and Blank," in Stuart Schram, ed., *The Political Thought of Mao Tse-tung*, p. 352; Ernesto Guevara, "Man and Socialism in Cuba," in John Gerassi, ed., *Venceremos!*, p. 397.

17. Cf. Rosa Luxemburg, *The Russian Revolution and Leninism or Marxism*, pp. 82–95.

18. E. Guevara, "Man and Socialism," p. 388.

19. S. Schram, *Political Thought*, p. 125.

classes, the proletariat, the peasantry, the petty bourgeoisie, and the national bourgeoisie, against foreign invasion to fulfill the developmental needs of China was a patent analogue of the class collaboration invoked by the national syndicalism of Fascism. Mussolini had suggested that to view the people as the recruitment base of revolution, the exclusive appeal to the proletariat must be abandoned. Today those who have creatively developed socialism insist that "the term 'people' has different meanings in different countries . . . and . . . at this stage of building socialism, all classes, strata, and social groups which approve, support, and work for the cause of socialist construction belong to the category of the people."[20] Mao insisted that because the entrepreneurial capitalists, the national bourgeoisie, and the working class both supported the building of socialism, they had a common desire for unity, which found expression in a Sinified Marxism, a Chinese socialism, a national variant of socialism uniting nationalism and socialism to form a mass-mobilizing ideology that would overcome the vestiges of feudalism, modernize China, and make it an equal among nations.

Castro's variant of socialism is no less singular, originating as it did in a movement composed of literally all population elements, in which the bona fide working class played only a marginal role. It is so singular that even the most tolerant of Marxists have found it difficult to assimilate into the now shapeless tradition of modern socialism. In fact, the fabric of socialism has become so unraveled that even the best-disposed Marxists have begun to suffer serious misgivings. The reasons are not difficult to divine.

Castroism arose as a movement that described the orthodox socialist and communist parties of the Western Hemisphere as reactionary and conservative. A similar charge was leveled against organized socialism half a century ago by the first *fascisti*. The reasons for the charge were essentially the same. Moreover, Regis Debray has characterized Castroism as a movement animated by a revolutionary nationalism that, Debray admits, shares obvious affinities with the "fascism" of Juan Domingo Peron.[21] These affinities proved to be so close, in fact, that Che Guevara, during his adventure in Bolivia, entered into formal alliance with Argentinian *Peronistas*.[22]

20. Mao Tse-tung, *On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People* (Peking: Progress, 1964), p. 2.

21. Regis Debray, *Essais sur l'amerique latine* (Paris: Maspero, 1967), pp. 122–26.

22. Cf. Daniel James, *Che Guevara* (New York: Stein and Day, 1970), pp. 182ff.

Moved by nationalist appeals, Castro's revolutionary movement was a broad-front organization of several classes rather than one composed of proletarian or peasant-proletarian factions. Thus whatever revolutionary consciousness animated the masses, it was not the consequence of theoretical study and political apprenticeship, but a by-product of mortal combat.[23] Like the *Mussoliniani*, the *Fidelistas* have scant confidence in intellectualization. In their opinion, men are mobilized to revolution not by objective economic conditions or by rational argument, but by commitment to a total world view and the unity of combat.

Juan Bosch has spoken of Castroism as a communist nationalism, a synthesis of Marxist and nationalist appeals, a socialism that has recruited and energized masses through a "mass struggle that took the form of a patriotic war" conducted in order to restore "national independence."[24] So many changes have overtaken Marxism that it is no longer suspect for socialists to invoke patriotic sentiments in the service of national independence and regeneration. The views that at one time were sufficient to excommunicate Mussolini from the Party he had served no longer impair the credibility of socialist leadership. Even the fact that the bulk of Castro's original financial support came from bourgeois sources is not enough to render him suspect.

Moreover, the *Fidelistas* were and remain unregenerate voluntarists. For them revolution was made by the will, determination, and charisma of select leadership. Castro is recognized not as a determinist, but as a voluntarist. Castro did not "wait for 'objective conditions' to 'mature' to some point of inevitability. [He] created the revolution."[25]

Whatever the differences dictated by historical circumstances, whatever the options open to one movement that time and conditions denied to others, some of the most prominent revolutionary movements of our time share remarkable affinities with the first Fascism. Most of their features were anticipated in the social and political thought of Mussolini. Most of these movements arose in economic, social, and political environments that suffered from de-

23. Cf. Cléa Silva, "The Errors of the Foco Theory," and S. Torres and J. Arone, "Debray and the Cuban Experience," in Leo Huberman and Paul Sweezy, eds., *Regis Debray and the Latin American Revolution*, pp. 23, 55, 59.

24. Juan Bosch, "An Anti-Communist Manifesto," *ibid.*, p. 101.

25. Peter Worsley, "Revolutionary Theory: Guevara and Debray," *ibid.*, p. 131.

layed industrialization. They involved populations that were, for the most part, nonproletarian, in which revolutionary sentiment was conjured up through nationalist appeals by a small professional vanguard party composed of the petty bourgeois intellectuals produced in abundance in marginally developed social systems. These movements, despite their talk of Marxist intentions, pursue what were to Marx and Engels bourgeois goals—the independence, unification, integration, and development of the nation under hierarchical auspices. These revolutions have detonated the energies of peoples who have languished, sometimes for centuries, in the humiliation and powerlessness of underdevelopment.

How the tasks of the revolution are accomplished depends, of course, on too many contingencies to catalog here. At times the power deflation and complete political collapse that follows a long war afford such a movement absolute control over society. Under different circumstances, a revolutionary movement might have to share power with social and economic elements that have survived the prerevolutionary crisis. Private property is sometimes completely nationalized and at other times subject to degrees of bureaucratic control. In any case, the tasks set by the mass-mobilizing, developmental dictatorship foster hierarchical control under the auspices of a unitary party of solidarity, at the apex of which stands the *duce*, the *jefe*, or the chairman. The masses are caught up in the process and are orchestrated by techniques that have now become familiar political instrumentalities.

The rationale for these developments was set down fifty years ago by Mussolini. By the time he had reached full maturity he had anticipated the outlines of the political systems that would dominate our century. An unwillingness to familiarize ourselves with the published work of the young Mussolini himself has left us with a shallow and inaccurate assessment of the ideological foundations of the first mass-mobilizing, modernizing movement of our century. Transfixed by Marxist appraisals that have caricatured Fascism as the simple creature and the purchased agent of finance capital, we have continued to misunderstand the events in Italy of half a century ago.

Whatever it subsequently became, the first Fascism was an ideology capable of tapping the broad-based sentiments of outrage born of what Mirko Ardemagni was later to call Italy's "ancient humiliations," the slavery, submissiveness, and impotence Italy had en-

dured for centuries.[26] Fascism was, for millions of Italians, a promise of relief from that sense of vulnerability suffered by all peoples locked in underdevelopment. It heralded increased control over processes that had hitherto brought only distress to the vast majority of the population. It augured redemptive change, a refashioning of the fragile unity with which Italy had entered the new century. Like similar movements that were to arise throughout the century, Fascism provided a sense of continuity by identifying itself with the historical traditions of the nation, and yet it presented itself as a thoroughly modern and revolutionary innovation. With its promise of modernization, an increase in international status, and the expansion of productive capacity Fascism was able to collect around itself every vital segment of the community. The sure conviction of their own competence allowed the first Fascists to allay the pervasive sense of inferiority and inadequacy that still afflicted so many newly urbanized and recently displaced population elements. Its program of expansion was sufficiently attractive to the established industrial elite, the white-collar bourgeoisie, the small entrepreneurial classes, the professionals, the dislocated intelligentsia, large segments of the organized working class, and the large and small landholding agrarians, to rapidly assure its success. Having won the support of the young, the recently demobilized, the active military, and the constabulary, having neutralized the Catholic populists and the forces that supported parliamentarianism, and having defeated organized socialism, there remained no force on the peninsula capable of resisting Mussolini's Fascism.

For almost a quarter of a century Italian political life and subsequently European political life was significantly influenced by the thought of Benito Mussolini. But more than that, the critical problems that have revolutionized our century were anticipated, in large part, in his thought. As early as 1933 Fascist ideologues, and Mussolini himself, anticipated an involution of Bolshevism that would produce, for all its talk of socialism, a fateful analogue of Fascism.[27] Since then so many movements and so many political regimes have manifested those traits that we have begun to recognize the family resemblances shared by them all. Those resemblances bring us back once again to the thought of this century's first socialist heretic—the young Benito Mussolini.

26. Marko Ardemagni, *Supremazia di Mussolini*, p. 91.

27. Cf. the discussion in A. J. Gregor, *The Fascist Persuasion in Radical Politics*, pp. 184–88.

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