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THE ROOTS OF ITALIAN FASCISM: SOREL AND SORELISMO*

JACK J. ROTH

THE role of Georges Sorel and Sorelismo in the roots of fascism is a problem in apocalyptic political conceptions—the desire for a drastic and total renovation of post-Risorgimento Italy.¹ The conceptual apparatus, however, required for the study of Sorel's impact on Italy has long been elusive. Possibly, for this reason much of the essential data has thus far been overlooked.

On the one hand, distinctions must be made between Sorel and his Italian following. The changing character of Sorel's political allegiances and doctrines must be distinguished from those of a multiplicity of individual enthusiasts and groups. These, once under his influence, proceeded on their own courses, in some cases maintaining positions long after Sorel had substantially abandoned them, in others exploring new ground. But distinctions must also be made within the Fascist movement where, among numerous other quarters, Sorelismo also took root. Benito Mussolini's views on Sorel were by no means constant; nor were they necessarily identical with those expressed by other Sorel enthusiasts in the groups that comprised

fascism either before or after the march on Rome. The problem is further complicated, not only by the rise in fascism of an opposition to Sorelismo, but also the appearance of a Sorelian opposition to fascism.

That Sorel's ideas could be operative in such diverse quarters may be attributed to their essential character as well as to the political and intellectual mood of prewar and postwar Italy. What this paper aims to establish is that Sorel's search in Italy was for a politico-spiritual conquest, that his thought and action initiated a Sorelian movement that took root in a variety of political and intellectual currents similarly oriented, and that Sorelismo both directly and indirectly figured significantly in the origins of fascism.

When Sorel began to write in 1886 he was almost forty, soon to retire as an engineer in the French civil service.² Within several years, however, he became a theorist of revolution.

Sorel's development as a revolutionary was determined largely by the course of events in France. It was undoubtedly the disasters of 1870–71 that led him to a Proudhonian moralism.³ Everywhere he

* This paper is a revision of one presented at a joint meeting of the American Historical Association and the Society for Italian Historical Studies, December 30, 1964.

¹ The influence of Sorel in France will not be discussed here; for a consideration of this problem see Jack J. Roth, "Revolution and morale in modern French thought: Sorel and the Sorelians," *French historical studies*, III (Fall 1963), 205–23.

² Georges Sorel, "Lettera auto-biografica," in Agostino Lanzillo, *Giorgio Sorel* (Rome, 1910), pp. 5–8, and Pierre Andreu, *Notre maître: M. Sorel* (Paris, 1953), pp. 23–112.

³ Georges Sorel, *Contribution à l'étude profane de la Bible* (Paris, 1889), *Le procès de Socrate* (Paris, 1889), and "Essai sur la philosophie de Proudhon," *Revue philosophique*, XXXIII–XXXIV (June–July 1892), 622–38, 41–68.

saw decadence—the growth of a utilitarian and materialistic democracy and the predominance of rationalistic intellectuals. From the beginning, he wanted a revival of “pessimistic values essential to Christian morals” and a “society based on work.” With the socialist parliamentary success of 1893, he announced his “conversion” to Marxism—it was the bourgeoisie who were decadent.⁴ But, inspired by Eduard Bernstein’s articles, Sorel too began to attack an orthodoxy he had never really supported.⁵ And he soon went radically beyond Bernstein. His reading of Henri Bergson convinced him that history was impelled by spontaneous movements which arose periodically in the masses. It was these movements that created new moral values and restored the *élan* to the historical process. In 1898 he published *L’Avenir socialist des syndicats*, a study that won attention, especially in anarchist and syndicalist circles.⁶ The syndicalist movement in France was for him the authentic manifestation of the revolutionary proletariat. He urged the

syndicates to isolate themselves from the corrupt world of bourgeois politicians and intellectuals, to work silently in creating the values and institutions of the future. With the Dreyfus affair in 1898, Sorel at first saw a great moral issue—the proletariat had to emancipate all who suffered injustice.⁷ But after the great Dreyfusard electoral victory in 1899 the defenders of Dreyfus, he thought, displayed the same selfish immorality as their opponents.⁸ He now had nothing but contempt for socialist politicians such as Jean Jaurès and Alexandre Millerand. Parliamentary democracy, he was convinced, corrupted everything it touched.

For Sorel these years had been marked by an increasing involvement in the Italian intellectual and political scene. He was attracted almost from the start to Italy’s tradition of political realism and emphasis on the psychology of politics. This interest was first expressed in articles on the work of Cesare Lombroso on the psychology of the political crime.⁹ With conversion to Marxism came closer ties. Antonio Labriola, the leading Marxist theorist, published in

⁴ Georges Sorel, “Science et socialisme,” *Revue philosophique*, XXXV (1893), 509–11; see also “Les théories de M. Durkheim,” *Devenir social*, I (Apr.–May 1895), 1–28, 148–80.

⁵ “Lettere di Georges Sorel a Benedetto Croce” (hereafter cited as “Sorel to Croce”), June 2, 1897, *Critica*, XXV (1927), 45; see also Georges Sorel, “Sur la théorie marxiste de la valeur,” *Journal des économistes*, XXIX (May 1897), 222–31; “Die Entwicklung des Kapitalismus,” *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, I (Oct. 1897), 544–47; “Pro e contro il socialismo,” *Devenir social*, III (Oct. 1897), 854–88; “Préface pour Colajanni,” *Matériaux d’une théorie du prolétariat* (hereafter cited as “*Matériaux*”) (3d ed.; Paris, 1929), pp. 175–200; and “Etude sur Vico,” *Devenir social*, II (Oct.–Dec. 1896), 785–818, 906–42, 1013–47.

⁶ Georges Sorel, *L’Avenir socialiste des syndicats* (Paris, 1898); see also his *Matériaux*, pp. 55–133. For the impact of the publication in France see Georges Valois, *D’un siècle à l’autre* (Paris, 1921), p. 133.

⁷ “Lettere di Giorgio Sorel a Uberto Lagardelle” (hereafter cited as “Sorel to Lagardelle”), Aug. 10 and 15, 1898, *Educazione fascista*, XI (Mar.–Nov. 1933), 239–42, 242–43; “La crise du socialisme,” *Revue politique et parlementaire*, XVIII (Dec. 1898), 597, 600, 607, 612; and “La scissione socialista in Francia in rapporto con la teoria socialista,” *Rivista critica del socialismo*, I (Oct. 1899), 869.

⁸ Sorel to Lagardelle, Aug. 21 and Sept. 14, 1901, pp. 328–30; Georges Sorel, “De l’église et de l’état,” *Cahiers de la quinzaine*, III (1901), 55–58, 61–64, and “Préface pour Gatti,” *Matériaux*, pp. 201–37.

⁹ Georges Sorel, “La position du problème de M. Lombroso,” *Revue scientifique*, LI (Feb. 18, 1893), 209; “La crime politique, d’après M. Lombroso,” *ibid.*, LI (May 6, 1893), 561, 563, 564–65; and “Une faute du crime politique,” *Archivio di psichiatria, scienze penali ed antropologia criminale*, XIV (1893), 450–55.

a review that Sorel briefly directed.¹⁰ Sorel wrote to the young Benedetto Croce and Vilfredo Pareto to contribute.¹¹ In 1896 Sorel discovered Giovanni Battista Vico, who gave sharper focus to his amalgam of Marx and Bergson.¹² In Vico he saw the distinction between mere conspiracy and revolution—only revolution gave birth to a new morale. And from Vico came the idea of revolution as *ricorso*, a return to a primitive state of mind. By 1898 Sorel published widely in Italy, and his work received extended discussion.¹³ But as his critique of Marx deepened—he called Marxism “social poetry”—his work aroused hostility.¹⁴ Labriola publicly denounced him for leading a war of secession. *Avanti!* attempted to block the publication of his articles. Sorel was much annoyed. But Italy seemed to him the only country where the critique of Marxism was serious. “Italy,” he wrote, “has been the educator of Europe; she could well assume that role once again.”¹⁵

¹⁰ The *Devenir social* was founded in 1895 and abandoned at the end of 1897.

¹¹ Sorel to Croce, Dec. 20, 1895, XXV, 38; Vilfredo Pareto, “Georges Sorel,” *La Ronda*, IV (Sept.–Oct. 1922), 541. Only seventeen letters of Sorel to Pareto have apparently survived; see Gabriele de Rosa (ed.), *Carteggi Pareiani, 1892–1923* (Rome, 1962), pp. 3–44.

¹² “Etude sur Vico,” pp. 786, 796–809, 934–35, 1046.

¹³ For articles by Sorel see *Giornale degli economisti* (1898), *Riforma sociale* (1898–1900), *Rivista critica del socialismo* (1899), *Rivista di storia e filosofia del diritto* (1899), *Rivista italiana di sociologia* (1899–1902), and *Rivista popolare di politica lettere e scienze sociali* (1904–5). For comment on Sorel see Benedetto Croce, *Materialismo storico ed economia marxistica* (Bari, 1900); Vilfredo Pareto, *Les systèmes socialistes* (2 vols.; Paris, 1926); Antonio Labriola, *Essai sur la conception matérialiste de l'histoire* (Paris, 1897).

¹⁴ Sorel to Croce, June 7, 1899, XXV, 306; for Antonio Labriola's reaction see *Socialisme et philosophie: lettres à G. Sorel* (Paris, 1899), pp. iv–v, 207–24.

¹⁵ Sorel, “Préface pour Gatti,” p. 236.

By 1903 Sorel was convinced that only a catastrophic revolution could bring a *ricorso*. By now also he had acquired a following, modest in France but substantial in Italy.

Revolutionary syndicalism was first to have Sorel's support. The syndicalist movement had appeared in France and Italy in the 1890's. In the Confédération Générale du Travail founded in 1903 and the Segretariato nazionale della Resistenza established the preceding year, revolutionary elements were at first dominant. From 1903 to 1910 Sorel attempted to explain to militants and to the public generally the historical potential of these movements. In France his articles dominated Hubert Lagardelle's *Mouvement socialiste*, a review with numerous Italian contributors.¹⁶ In Italy the *Avanguardia Socialista* of Milan introduced Sorel to proletarian circles in 1903 with the translation of his *L'Avenir*.¹⁷ A more intensive collaboration was established with the doctrinal review *Divenire sociale* of Rome, where the first version of the *Reflections on violence* appeared.¹⁸ Moreover, Sorel's letters and articles were published frequently in numerous lesser newspapers and reviews,¹⁹ and almost all his books were translated.²⁰ Sorel noted that his work was largely ignored in France.

¹⁶ Regular Italian contributors included Arturo Labriola, Agostino Lanzillo, Angelo O. Olivetti, Sergio Panunzio, Paolo Orano, and Enrico Leone; Croce, Pareto, and Roberto Michels also published here.

¹⁷ The publication appeared in a series of brief instalments from June 28 to November 22, 1903.

¹⁸ Sorel published over forty titles here including several that appeared in instalments.

¹⁹ See especially: *Sindacato Operaio* (Rome), *L'Azione* (Rome), *L'Azione Sindacalista* (Rome), *Propaganda* (Naples), and *Guerra Sociale* (Turin).

²⁰ For a list see James H. Meisel, *The genesis of Georges Sorel* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1951), p. 299.

But in "the land of Vico," he wrote, he hoped "to find more competent judges."²¹

What Sorel wrote on the subject of revolutionary syndicalism was roughly comparable in both France and Italy.²² As a revolutionary movement he saw in syndicalism something similar to primitive Christianity.²³ It was motivated, as all great movements, by a "revolutionary myth." The myth was born of the loves, the fears, and the hatreds of the group. Its adherents felt themselves an army of truth fighting an army of evil. The myth of the proletariat was that of the general strike, an apocalyptic vision of the day the detested bourgeois regime would be destroyed. He saw in syndicalism an elite—only the most militant workers were in the syndicates.²⁴ The technique of the movement was violence, the refusal to compromise in word and deed.²⁵ He noted that the anarchists in the syndicalist movement had taught the workers not to be ashamed of violence. Class war had the same moral value as war between nations. Even certain criminal acts were proper if they were clear expressions of class war. And proletarian violence, he speculated,

²¹ Georges Sorel, *Insegnamenti sociali della economia contemporanea* (Milan, 1907), pp. 4-6, 388.

²² Virtually all articles that appeared in the *Mouvement socialiste* also appeared in the *Devenir sociale*.

²³ Georges Sorel, "C'è qualche cosa di religioso nel socialismo?" *Devenir sociale*, II (Nov. 1, 1906), 325-28; *Réflexions sur la violence* (hereafter cited as "*Réflexions*") (10th ed.; Paris, 1946), pp. 35-36, 44, 50; and *La décomposition du marxisme* (Paris, 1908), p. 50.

²⁴ Sorel, *Insegnamenti*, p. 38, and *Réflexions*, pp. 268, 350, 432.

²⁵ Sorel, *Insegnamenti*, pp. 53-55, 278 n, 389-98; Georges Sorel, "Morale e violenza," *Devenir sociale*, II (Feb. 16, 1906), 51-55; "La decadenza parlamentare," *ibid.*, IV (May 16, 1908), 169-71; *Réflexions*, p. 434; "Préface de 1905," *Matériaux*, p. 70; and *Le système historique de Renan* (Paris, 1905-6), pp. 198-208, 377.

might restore in the bourgeoisie something of its former energy. As a revolutionary order, Sorel saw syndicalism impelled by a morale.²⁶ A new value system would emerge from the revolution. It would inspire the perfection of machinery and the advance of production. The organization of syndicalist society would be determined by the needs of production—syndicalism would be a "society of producers." The technique of the new order would be the creation of a "society of heroes"—heroes of production.

By 1908 Sorel was convinced French syndicalism had been hopelessly compromised by reformism, but the future of the Italian movement was still uncertain.²⁷ Among an intellectual elite sympathetic toward syndicalism, his work had been acclaimed and widely discussed. Croce in the *Critica* and in his preface to the Italian edition of the *Réflexions* viewed Sorel's major concern the genesis of morality—with reservations, he accepted Sorel's formulation.²⁸ In Sorel's work Pareto praised the "concern for reality" and the "rejection of

²⁶ Sorel, *Insegnamenti*, pp. 172-73; *Réflexions*, pp. 17, 343-46, 351-54, 377-78, 382, 384-85; Georges Sorel, *Les illusions du progrès* (4th ed.; Paris, 1927), pp. 123, 136, 385, and *Introduction à l'économie moderne* (2d ed.; Paris, 1922), pp. 131, 137.

²⁷ Sorel to Croce, June 24 and Sept. 18, 1908; June 27, 1909, XXVI, 108, 195; Sorel to Lagardelle, Mar. 2, Sept. 27, and Oct. 31, 1908, pp. 966-67, 968, 970; Georges Sorel, *Lettres à Paul Delesalle* (hereafter cited as "Sorel to Delesalle") (Paris, 1947), Nov. 2, 1908, p. 108; and "Le confessioni," *Devenir sociale*, VI (Mar. 1-May 16, 1910), 45-47, 66-68, 84-86, 113-14.

²⁸ Benedetto Croce, "Cristianesimo, socialismo e metodo storico," *Critica*, V (July 20, 1907), 317-30. This article reappeared as the introduction to the Italian translation of the *Réflexions*, *Considerazioni sulla violenza* (Bari, 1909). See also Benedetto Croce, "Le droit comme économie pure," *Mouvement socialiste*, XI (May 1909), 349; "Hegel e Marx," *Cultura*, XXIX (Jan. 1, 1910), 7, 10; and "Socialismo e Massoneria," *Giornale d'Italia*, Oct. 6, 1910.

empty humanitarian declamations.”²⁹ But the syndicalist movement, he wrote to Sorel, might someday be transformed and reappear under another name. Roberto Michels, the “Italianized German” who also corresponded with Sorel, was drawn especially to his conception of a proletarian elite.³⁰ But it was in a variety of anarcho-syndicalist, syndicalist, and even socialist newspapers and reviews that Sorel produced his greatest impact. Here an assortment of academicians, journalists, and organizers were powerfully attracted to his views. Some belonged to the Socialist party and participated in elections. But they denounced the party for its cowardice and worked to advance more or less Sorelian conceptions. The *Avanguardia Socialista*, a workers’ weekly of Milan, was directed by Arturo Labriola. He was professor of political economy and Sorel’s leading Italian disciple—it was Labriola who inspired the general strike of 1904.³¹ The *Avanguardia* preached “heroic violence” and a workers’ republic dedicated to production.³² “Our thinking, it an-

nounced, “coincides with that of Sorel.” The most devoted of Sorel’s disciples here were Enrico Leone, Sergio Panunzio, and Emanuele Longobardi, all academicians. But here too the articles of the journalists Walter Mocchi, Paolo Orano, and the young Mussolini also appeared. Mussolini, for example, was a revolutionary socialist who did not accept the specifics of syndicalism.³³ But he proclaimed repeatedly his adherence to Sorel’s “catastrophic revolution” and “morale of producers.” The *Divenire sociale* was established by Leone and the journalist Paolo Mantica.³⁴ Croce, Pareto, and Michels published here, as did many of the contributors to the *Avanguardia*. The lawyer A. O. Olivetti; the academicians Alfonso de Pietri-Tonelli, Francesco Arcà, and Agostino Lanzillo; and several of Sorel’s French disciples also participated. But Sorel, by the preponderance of his own articles and by acknowledgment, was undisputed *maestro*.³⁵ At least a dozen additional newspapers and reviews might be cited that exhibited a marked Sor-

²⁹ Pareto, *Les systèmes socialistes*, II, 398–99 n., 408, 413; Vilfredo Pareto, *Manuel d’économie politique*, trans. A. Bonnet (Paris, 1909), pp. 134, 480 n., 495; Guido Sensini (ed.), *Corrispondenza di Vilfredo Pareto* (Padua, 1948), p. 38; Pareto to Sorel, Nov. 11, 1909, in Rosa (ed.), pp. 47–48.

³⁰ Roberto Michels, *L’Allemagne, le socialisme et les syndicats* (Paris, 1906), pp. 1–5, and *Le prolétariat et la bourgeoisie dans le mouvement socialiste italien*, p. 318.

³¹ See issues of September 1904; for comparison between the general strike and the Russian Revolution of 1905 see Arturo Labriola, “La Rivoluzione russa e la grandiosa manifestazione di Milano,” *Avanguardia Socialista*, Jan. 28, 1905.

³² For the general line of the newspaper see Arturo Labriola, “Perché siamo repubblicani,” *Avanguardia Socialista*, Aug. 23, 1903, and “Siamo noi anarchici?” *ibid.*, Apr. 7–8, 1904; Sergio Panunzio, “Socialisti ed anarchici,” *Avanguardia Socialista*, July 30, 1904, and “Psicologia dello sciopero,” *ibid.*, Jan. 14, 1905; G.

Allevi, “Il sindacalismo è la pratica del marxismo,” *Avanguardia Socialista*, Nov. 4, 1905.

³³ For Benito Mussolini’s articles discussing Sorel see “Ateil” *Avanguardia Socialista*, Mar. 13, 1904, and “La teppa,” *ibid.*, Dec. 10, 1904. Mussolini also published during this period in *La Lima*, *Il Popolo*, and *Lotta di Classe* (Forlì).

³⁴ For Enrico Leone’s views expressly on Sorel see his “Prefazione,” in Georges Sorel, *Lo sciopero generale e la violenza* (Rome, 1906), pp. iii–vi; Sorel’s French disciples who published here were Lagardelle, Edouard Berth, and Delesalle.

³⁵ A frequent contributor signed his articles “Soreliano.” For views of Sorel see Sergio Panunzio, “Alcuni pregiudizi socialisti,” *Divenire sociale*, II (Jan. 1, 1906), 12–15. For defense of Sorel’s opposition to a general strike in the “Ferrer affair” see “Asterischi polemici,” *Divenire Sociale*, V (Dec. 16, 1909), 275–76; some syndicalist periodicals, especially those with anarchist tendencies, were disturbed by Sorel’s opposition to a strike in protest against the execution of the Barcelona anarchist.

elian accent, modified by a special tendency.³⁶ They reveal not only something of the extent of the diffusion of Sorelismo but also the number of syndicalist organizers Sorel apparently reached—Alceste de Ambris, Michele Bianchi, Filippo Corridoni, and Edmondo Rossoni. The *Pagine libere* of Lugano, however, founded in late 1906 by the exile Olivetti, was possibly the most unusual of the Sorelian reviews. It was rigorously proletarian but also nationalist.³⁷ The Sorelian *ricorso* was linked with a renewal of the Risorgimento. The nation was declared to be the *massimo sindacato*. By 1910 Panunzio, Orano, and Lanzillo were prominent contributors, and somewhat less so, Corridoni, Rossoni, and Mussolini. The syndicalist movement, though it grew rapidly to the Socialist party congress at Rome in 1906, thereafter went into apparent decline.³⁸ At Milan that same year reformists transformed the Segretariato into the moderate Confederazione generale del Lavoro (CGL). A group of syndicalists led by Ambris and Bianchi established a counter-organization in Parma of some two hundred thousand. But the Parma strike of 1908 was of such violence that

the remaining syndicalists were expelled from the party. At the Congress of Bologna in December 1910 the syndicalist unions, disorganized and seemingly discredited, returned to the CGL. At Bologna a letter from Sorel was read to the assembled delegates. He announced that he had abandoned syndicalism.³⁹ Nothing could be expected from a workingman's movement won over to democracy.

Integral nationalism was next to attract Sorel's attention. In France his disciple Georges Valois had seized upon the notion of a possible "bourgeois revival" and beginning in 1906 attempted a doctrinal and organizational merger of syndicalism and monarchism.⁴⁰ But in Italy a parallel effort was underway. In 1903 Enrico Corradini, who had been under the spell of Gabriele d'Annunzio, established *Il Regno* in Florence with young Giuseppe Prezzolini as one of his chief contributors.⁴¹ With violence and bombast, the review called for a national revival and imperial expansion. In *Il Regno*, however, was the first sign of interest in Sorel on the right. But a clash among its founders on the general strike of 1904 led to its abandonment. In 1906 Corradini was joined by a small group of former syndicalists. These had

³⁶ In addition to those cited in n. 20 the following may be added: *La Difesa* (Florence), *Secolo Nuovo* (Venice), *Gioventù* (Milan), *Gioventù Socialista* (Rome), *Lotta Proletaria* (Mirandola), *Lotta di Classe* (Milan), *Demolizione* (Milan), *Bandiera Proletaria* (Mirandola), *Conquista* (Milan), and *Azione Diretta* (Florence).

³⁷ A. O. Olivetti, "Presentazione," *Pagine libere*, I (Dec. 1906), 1-3; see especially Olivetti's collection of articles from 1906-11 in *Cinque anni di sindacalismo e di lotta proletaria in Italia* (Naples, 1914), pp. 39-45, 47-49, 123-27, 149-67, 253-58. For A. O. Olivetti's view of the history of the periodical see his "Quindici anni di vita di una rivista indipendente," *Pagine libere*, VIII (Aug.-Sept. 1921), 274-80.

³⁸ For general treatment see Alfredo Gradi-lone, *Storia del sindacalismo: Italia* (2 vols.; Milan, 1959), II, 1-12, 91-121; Bruno Facinelli, *Sindacalismo soreliano* (Florence, 1938), p. 142.

³⁹ A. Pezzotti, "Une parti syndicaliste en Italie," *Mouvement socialiste*, XIII (Mar. 1911), 184-85; see also Georges Sorel, *Le confessioni* (Rome, 1910), p. 3, and "Giorgio Sorel e i monarchici francesi," *Giornale d'Italia*, Nov. 20, 1910.

⁴⁰ See Roth, pp. 209-11.

⁴¹ Enrico Corradini, "Per coloro che risorgono," *Il Regno*, Nov. 29, 1903; Giuseppe Prezzolini, "Marx era collettivista?" *Il Regno*, May 24, 1904. For good general studies see: John A. Thayer, *Italy and the great war* (Madison, Wis., 1964), pp. 192-232; Delia Frigessi, "Introduzione," "Leonardo," "Hermes," "Il Regno" ("La cultura italiana del '900 attraverso le riviste" [Turin, 1960]), pp. 11-85. See article by Giovanni Papini critical of Sorel, "Il sindacalismo è pericoloso," *Il Regno*, June 25, 1905.

not expressed an explicit dependence on Sorel, though in tone and argument they differed little from syndicalists who did.⁴² In lectures and discussion in numerous Italian cities, Corradini and his group explored further the possibilities of national renewal. Syndicalism and nationalism, Corradini observed, had a common "love of conquest," they were both "imperialist." Moreover, Italian imperialism was that of a "poor nation." The workers, therefore, in fighting for Italy, were fighting also for themselves. Corradinian nationalism by 1908 had arrived at a national syndicalism for "all producers" and an imperialism of a "proletarian nation." Though Corradini's lectures breathed the spirit of the *Réflexions*, he did not explicitly attribute his ideas to Sorel.⁴³ But Sorel wrote to Croce that Corradini "understands exceedingly well the value of my ideas."⁴⁴ Prezzolini, in the meantime, had in 1908 established *La Voce* in Florence in an effort to fashion a nationalism on a more spiritual and moral plane.⁴⁵ *La Voce*, open to all views, was also marked by an urgency of renewal and, initially, a considerable interest in Sorel. The first issue announced Sorel's

abandonment of French syndicalism, and in the next several months articles discussed various Sorelian themes.⁴⁶ In an interview Sorel expressed his expectation of an Italian national revival. Prezzolini in a study of syndicalism declared himself Sorel's disciple.⁴⁷ But he thought syndicalism still in its infancy. It would end as an institution of social integration and conservation. Sorel, in the meantime, drew closer to French nationalism. In 1909 in an interview in the monarchist newspaper he stated that he was not in principle opposed to a restoration.⁴⁸ But what was decisive for him was the appearance in 1910 of Charles Péguy's *Jeanne d'Arc*. Here the Christian and patriotic idea, he thought, had been brilliantly joined. This is what nationalism required—he had found in France another *ricorso*. Sorel announced his discovery simultaneously in the *Action Française* and *La Voce*.⁴⁹ In France he and his largely monarchist disciples established several reviews that attempted during the prewar years to bring together anti-democrats of left and right. But he was to write little in Italy, except in the *Resto del Carlino* of Bologna edited by a new admirer, Mario Missiroli.⁵⁰

Sorel viewed Italian nationalism, though his comments were fragmentary,

⁴⁶ Giuseppe Prezzolini, "Giorgio Sorel," *La Voce*, Dec. 20, 1908; Paolo Mazzoldi, "Il valore morale del sindacalismo," *La Voce*, Jan. 3, 1909; Alfredo Gargiulo, "Giorgio Sorel," *La Voce*, June 10, 1909; Agostino Lanzillo, "Colloquio con Giorgio Sorel," *La Voce*, Dec. 9, 1909.

⁴⁷ Giuseppe Prezzolini, *La teoria sindacalista* (Naples, 1909), pp. 217–64, 335.

⁴⁸ "Socialistes antiparlementaires," *Action Française*, Aug. 22, 1909.

⁴⁹ Georges Sorel, "Le réveil de l'âme française," *Action Française*, Apr. 14, 1910, and "Il risveglio dell'anima francese," *La Voce*, Apr. 14, 1910.

⁵⁰ These articles appeared primarily in 1910 and concern, for the most part, French nationalism.

⁴² These were Luigi Federzoni (Giulio de Frenzi), Maurizio Maraviglia, Roberto Forges-Davanzati, and Tomaso Monicelli; for articles see *Avanguardia Socialista*, *Lotta Proletaria*, and *Propaganda*; for discussion see Thayer, pp. 198, 206, 216–18, as well as Sergio Panunzio, "Il sindacalismo," *Civiltà fascista* (Turin, 1928), p. 355.

⁴³ See especially Enrico Corradini, "Sindacalismo, nazionalismo, imperialismo" (Dec. 1909), *Discorsi politici, 1902–1924* (Florence, 1925), pp. 51–71, and *Il volere d'Italia* (Naples, 1911), No. 66. For general discussion see Maurice Vaussard, *De Pétrarque à Mussolini* (Paris, 1961), p. 165.

⁴⁴ Sorel to Croce, May 4, 1909, XXVI, 195; see also Sorel to Delesalle, May 19, 1918, p. 145.

⁴⁵ For a good general study see Angelo Romanò, "Introduzione," *La Voce (1908–1914)* ("La cultura italiana del '900 attraverso le riviste" [Turin, 1960]), pp. 11–79.

also in terms of a Vichian *ricorso*. The movement was impelled, he thought, by a "national myth" of the unfulfilled Risorgimento.⁵¹ The interest in Alfredo Oriani and the demand for a continuing national revolution were indisputable signs of a reawakening. But nationalism in Italy required catholicism and he doubted that Catholic support would be forthcoming. Nevertheless, the Libyan war, he was convinced, had evoked a sentiment of national grandeur equal to that of the finest hour of the Risorgimento. Italian renewal might be the work of a bourgeois resurgence. In any case, the future of Italy, he wrote, "would not be made normally by evolution." As for the new order, its morale would be national and Catholic.⁵² He saw the organization of society in syndicalist terms, but he was now prepared to accept a national or "mixed" syndicalism of workers and employers. The regime would foster a "cult of the nation," the perfection of institutions at home and the pursuit of imperialism abroad.

By 1912-13 Sorel was convinced that the leaders of the Action française were more interested in writing about revolution than making one.⁵³ Again, in

⁵¹ Georges Sorel, "La rivolta ideale," *Indépendance*, III (Apr. 15, 1912), 172, 176-77; Sorel to Croce, Mar. 20, 1914, XXVII, 49; *Propos de Georges Sorel* (hereafter cited as "*Propos*"), ed. Jean Variot (Paris, 1935), p. 31; "Grandeur et décadence," *Les illusions du progrès*, p. 335; and *Lettere a un amico d'Italia* (hereafter cited as "Sorel to Missiroli") (San Casciano, 1963), May 27, 1914, p. 115.

⁵² Sorel, "La rivolta ideale," 165; Sorel to Pareto, May 27, 1914, in Rosa (ed.), pp. 3-4; Sorel, *Propos*, Dec. 12, 1912, pp. 31-32, 123, 140; and Georges Sorel, "Préface" to Edouard Berth, *Les méfaits des intellectuels* (Paris, 1914), p. xxxiii. See also Jean Variot, "Quelques souvenirs: le père Sorel," *Eclair*, Sept. 11, 1922.

⁵³ Sorel to Croce, Sept. 3, Nov. 20 and 24, 1912; Jan. 12 and June 22, 1913; XXVI, 437-39, 440, 442; and Sorel, *Propos*, pp. 260, 265-68.

Italy prospects for a national renewal seemed brighter. Sorel's new interest in nationalism was paralleled by his leading admirers. Croce in his study of Vico saw in Sorel "Vico in twentieth-century garb," but he now believed Germany, rather than Italy, might provide the model of a proletarian movement that would defend national traditions.⁵⁴ Pareto in his study of myths and Michels in his work on political parties also shifted their attention to nationalism and continued fulsome in their praise of Sorel.⁵⁵ But in the nationalist movement itself, virtually all signs of acknowledgment of Sorel's influence were to come to an end shortly after 1910. Briefly in Turin the monarchist and imperialist *Tricolore*, a weekly of a small group headed by Mario Viana, was inspired by the activities of Valois in Paris.⁵⁶ It invited the proletariat to accept a national syndicalist organization in the interest of Italian solidarity. Though Corradini and Missiroli gave the *Tricolore* their enthusiastic support, the newspaper was the last effort to establish an explicit link between Sorel and the nationalist movement. Late in 1910 Corradini's group in Florence, joined by new elements, established the Nationalist party.⁵⁷ The themes of a national syn-

⁵⁴ Benedetto Croce, *La philosophie de Jean-Baptiste Vico*, trans. H. Buriot-Darsiles and G. Bourgin (Paris, 1913), pp. 212, 263-64, 266; and "Cultura tedesca e politica italiana," *Italia Nostra*, Dec. 27, 1914.

⁵⁵ Pareto to Sensini, Jan. 16, 1910, in Sensini (ed.), p. 47; Vilfredo Pareto, *Il mito virtuista e la letteratura immorale* (Rome, 1914), pp. 220-21, 244-45; and Roberto Michels, *Les partis politiques*, trans. S. Jankelovitch (Paris, 1914), pp. 48, 256, and *L'Imperialismo italiano* (Milan, 1914), pp. 92, 180.

⁵⁶ "Presentazione," *Tricolore*, Apr. 3, 1909; "Il primo nazionalista d'Italia," *ibid.*; "La nostra azione," *ibid.* See also Gradilone, II, 114, and Vaussard, p. 180.

⁵⁷ *Il nazionalismo italiano: atti del Congresso di Firenze* (Florence, 1911), pp. 129-36. See also

dicalism and the imperialism of a "proletarian nation" reappeared. But there was no mention of Sorel. Moreover, though *La Voce* explored the significance of Sorel's involvement with the Action française, new French interests were introduced.⁵⁸ By 1914 Corradinian and Vocist nationalism, separated by the Libyan war, had drawn closer, and there was now little interest in Sorel in either.⁵⁹ At the Congress of Milan Alfredo Rocco, the nationalist economic theorist, rejected "syndicalism" as a foreign word.⁶⁰ Nationalists were hereafter to speak of "corporations."

As for the syndicalist movement, if nationalism had turned toward a form of syndicalism, so too elements in syndicalism turned increasingly toward varieties of nationalism. The establishment of Orano's *La Lupa* in Florence in 1910 was an attempt from the Left what the *Tricolore* had undertaken from the Right.⁶¹ The weekly identified itself as the Italian exemplar of Sorel's new orientation—and it demanded war in Libya. The syndicalists Labriola, Mantica, Arcà, and Pietri-

Tonelli joined here with the nationalists Corradini and Missiroli. The two movements, it was declared, had the same enemies. Italian imperialism, moreover, was that of a "proletarian nation." But no agreement was reached in *La Lupa* on the structure of a national syndicalism. The *Pagine libere* of Lugano also defended Sorel and supported the war. But the review remained "proletarian."⁶² In the Libyan war Olivetti, Panunzio, and Lanzillo saw the possibility of an unforeseen revolutionary renewal. But elsewhere in syndicalist circles, where in the past Sorel had been highly regarded, his ties with monarchists were denounced as a betrayal and the Libyan war condemned as a bourgeois venture. The *Demolizione* of Milan, the *Gioventù Socialista* of Parma, the *Bandiera del Popolo* of Mirandola, and the *Propaganda* of Naples were newspapers in which syndicalist organizers were particularly prominent. Their views were echoed by Mussolini.⁶³ But the renunciation of Sorel was not in all instances to be permanent. In any case, the Libyan war resulted in the rebirth of an independent syndicalist movement.⁶⁴ At Modena in 1912 the *Unione sindacale italiana* (USI) was established, an organization of 150,000. But even here the new proletarian nationalism of the syndicalist professors soon appeared, especially in Corridoni's syndicalist groups

A. William Salomone, *Italian democracy in the making* (Philadelphia, 1945), pp. 129–36; Thayer, p. 207.

⁵⁸ Giuseppe Prezzolini, "Bollettino bibliografico: lavori su e di Giorgio Sorel," *La Voce*, Nov. 10, 1910.

⁵⁹ There was no sign of interest in Sorel in the *Idea Nazionale* (Florence), the Nationalist newspaper founded in 1911; *La Voce* demonstrated only intermittent interest after 1911.

⁶⁰ Quoted in Herbert W. Schneider, *Making the fascist state* (New York, 1928), p. 150. In Alfredo Rocco's articles and speeches dating from 1913 there is not a single reference to Sorel: *Scritti e discorsi politici* (Milan, 1938).

⁶¹ Editorial, "La Lupa," *La Lupa*, Oct. 16, 1910; Enrico Corradini, "Nazionalismo e sindacalismo," *La Lupa*, Oct. 16, 1910; B. Fabre, "Monarchici e sindacalisti contro la repubblica," *La Lupa*, Oct. 16, 1910; Paolo Mantica, "La democrazia socialista e il suo contrario," *La Lupa*, Mar. 21, 1911; Paolo Orano, "Verso Tripoli," *La Lupa*, Sept. 10, 1911.

⁶² Giulio Barni, "Tripoli e il sindacalismo," *Pagine libere*, V (Dec. 1–15, 1911), 481–96; Giulio Colamarino, "Angustie sindacaliste," *Pagine libere*, V (Dec. 1–15, 1911), 568; A. O. Olivetti, *Pro e contro Tripoli* (Turin, 1911), pp. 11, 14, 22, 57, 91. On Olivetti's expulsion from Switzerland in 1912, see Guido Pedroli, *Il socialismo nella Svizzera italiana, 1880–1922* (Milan, 1963), p. 101, and Gradilone, II, 98.

⁶³ Benito Mussolini, "L'ultima capriola," *Lotta di Classe* (Forlì), Nov. 26, 1910; "Fine stagione," *ibid.*, Dec. 17, 1910; and "Note e lecture," *ibid.*, July 8, 1911.

⁶⁴ Gradilone, II, 96–97.

in Milan. Corridoni was an intense admirer of Sorel and also corresponded with him.⁶⁵ But Corridoni, above all, revered the heroes of the Risorgimento. He had transformed the idea of the general strike into that of a "revolutionary war of liberty." During the rioting of Red Week in June 1914 his syndicalists marched through the streets of Milan singing the hymn of the Risorgimento, shouting *Viva Italia* and waving the national tricolor.⁶⁶

When the war came Sorel detested it.⁶⁷ He was contemptuous of his own France. To Croce he wrote that he wanted a German victory. But he still hoped that from the war a *ricorso* might spring, a "catastrophe" that would hurl Europe into a "new middle ages." Early in 1918 he found another *ricorso*—the Bolshevik revolution. Once again he began to publish. In France he wrote intermittently for the *Revue communiste*. But in Italy he published over sixty articles, for the most part in the *Resto del Carlino* and the *Tempo* of Rome.

The Bolsheviks, Sorel thought, were impelled by revolutionary myths that were both "social" and "national": the

hatred of the workers and peasants for their masters and the hatred of the people generally for an alien regime imported from the West.⁶⁸ In the factory soviets he saw an elite that performed the role he had once assigned to the syndicates. The technique of the movement was violence. As for the Bolshevik order, it was impelled by the moral energies released by the revolution. The dictatorship of the proletariat was a "society of producers," but in Lenin, Sorel for the first time saw the merits of charismatic leadership. The technique of the order was twofold: an internal policy rooted in a pragmatic Marxism and a foreign policy aimed at the conquest of a world dominated by an effete and decadent West.

Sorelismo continued into Communist circles. The USI, which had opposed intervention, briefly adhered to the Third International and still bore the mark of Sorel's influence.⁶⁹ But a new center of Sorelian interest arose in a group of young Communist intellectuals in Turin who established the *Ordine Nuovo* in 1919. The newspaper was directed by Antonio Gramsci with Palmiro Togliatti and Angelo Tasca among the leading contributors. All admitted to varying degrees of Sorel's influence.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ See Sorel to Corridoni, Apr. 19, 1907, in Ivon de Begnac, *L'Arcangelo sindacalista: Filippo Corridoni* (Verona, 1943), p. 883; see also Begnac, pp. 101, 108, 109–10. Filippo Corridoni ("Leo Celvisio"), "Cortigiani," *Conquista*, Feb. 15, 1911; "Irredentismo borghese ed antipatriotismo operaio," *Gioventù Socialista*, Sept. 7, 1913; and "Vita sindacale milanese," *Conquista*, Nov. 8, 1913.

⁶⁶ Begnac, p. 770; Schneider, p. 142; Richard A. Webster, "From insurrection to intervention: the Italian crisis of 1914," *Italian quarterly*, V–VI (1961–62), 42–43. Prezzolini defended the workers during "Red Week"; see Thayer, p. 257.

⁶⁷ Sorel to Croce, May 5, 1915, XXVII, 121; see also René Johannet, "Un précurseur de la révolution nationale: Georges Sorel," *Candide*, XVIII (July 16, 1940), 5; Georges Sorel, *L'Allemagne a-t-elle le secret de l'organisation?* ed. Jean Labadie (Paris, 1916), pp. 17–19.

⁶⁸ Georges Sorel, "Lénine d'après Gorki," *Revue communiste*, II (Jan. 1921), 401–13; "Pour Lénine," *Réflexions*, pp. 437–54; *Propos*, pp. 55, 61; "Zarismo e bolscevismo," *Resto del Carlino*, May 9, 1919; "Chiarimenti su Lenin," *ibid.*, July 23, 1919; "La diplomazia e la Russia," *ibid.*, July 24, 1920; "La 'barbarie' Moscovita," *ibid.*, Oct. 8, 1920; "Bertrand Russell in Russia," *ibid.*, July 8, 1921; and "La marche au socialisme," *Les illusions du progrès*, pp. 344–45, 348, 382–83.

⁶⁹ Gradilone, II, 102–3. Cf. Armando Borghi, *La rivoluzione mancata* (Milan, 1964), *passim*, on the role of the USI in the factory occupations of September 1920.

⁷⁰ Palmiro Togliatti, "La battaglia delle idee," *Ordine Nuovo* (1919), and Angelo Tasca, "Perché

But Gramsci was the most consistently interested in Sorel. He did not accept, he wrote, "everything" in Sorel. But he did accept the idea of the "spontaneity" of the proletarian movement, the workers' councils as the seedbed of the future society, the role of creative violence, and the vision of a "society of producers." After 1921 the newspaper became a daily, the official organ of the Communist party, and periodically republished Sorel's articles.⁷¹

Fascism was also welcomed by Sorel. He had been watching Mussolini since 1912 when the revolutionary socialists won control of the party and Mussolini became editor of the *Avanti!*⁷² He had predicted that "Mussolini was no ordinary socialist," that he was a *condottiere* who would someday turn to the Right. But in 1915 Sorel favored neither the formation of the Fasci nor Italy's intervention.⁷³ He was repelled, moreover, by the vulgarities of D'Annunzio and Filippo Marinetti. In his correspondence during the war he watched closely

the antiwar socialists and syndicalists.⁷⁴ But after the war he was mystified by their failure to take decisive revolutionary action. Moreover, the seizure of Fiume now convinced him that D'Annunzio had to be taken seriously. The reactivated Fasci of 1919 renewed his interest in Mussolini's activities. For some time, however, he was deeply pained by the ferocity of *squadristo* and the destruction of workers' organizations.⁷⁵ But letters to Croce and Misiroli by 1921 make clear his attraction to fascism.⁷⁶ By March 1922 he stated, "the two capital facts of the postwar era are: the action of Lenin, which I believe lasting, and that of Mussolini, who will certainly triumph." Sorel did not live to hear of the march on Rome.

What Sorel wrote on the Fascist movement was fragmentary, but he clearly viewed it as a *ricorso*.⁷⁷ He saw the movement impelled by both "social" and "national" myths. He had studied such a "union," he wrote, but he never fully understood it. "This national and social 'discovery,'" he said, "is purely Mussolinian." Fascism was the consequence of the failure of the state to protect the bourgeoisie and the failure of Italy's statesmen to receive

siamo comunisti," *Ordine Nuovo* (1919), in Paolo Spriano (ed.), *L'Ordine Nuovo (1919-1920)* ("La cultura italiana del '900 attraverso le riviste" [Turin, 1963]), pp. 185, 268. Antonio Gramsci, "Il partito comunista," *Ordine Nuovo*, Sept. 4 and Oct. 9, 1920, and "Cronache dell'Ordine Nuovo," *ibid.*, Oct. 11, 1919. See also Charles Rappoport, "Giorgio Sorel," *Ordine Nuovo*, Feb. 26, 1921. Sorel republished here "Lenin secondo Gorki," Feb. 27, 1921.

⁷¹ See Sorel's obituary (signed "m.s."), "La morte di Giorgio Sorel," *Ordine Nuovo*, Sept. 1, 1922.

⁷² Variot; Sorel, *Propos*, Dec. 14, 1912, p. 32; Sorel to Barrès, n.d. (before 1914), in Giorgio Pini, *The official life of Benito Mussolini*, trans. L. Villari (London, 1939), p. 245; Agostino Lanzillo, "Idee letterarie di Giorgio Sorel (con pagine inedite)," *Opere e i giorni*, I (Feb. 1923), 49-53.

⁷³ Sorel to Croce, Nov. 28, 1914, XXVII, 115. See also two articles by Sorel against intervention: "Un giudizio di Giorgio Sorel su l'intervento dell'Italia," *Avanti!* May 15, 1915, and "Il destino dell'Austria," *ibid.*, May 16, 1915.

⁷⁴ Sorel to Croce, Dec. 28, 1918; Jan. 6, Feb. 1, Mar. 23, and Apr. 4, 1919, XXVIII, 49-51; Sorel to Delesalle, Mar. 23, 1919, p. 180.

⁷⁵ Sorel to Croce, July 30, 1920, XXVIII, 192; Sorel to Delesalle, Mar. 19 and 24, 1921, pp. 215-17.

⁷⁶ Sorel to Croce, Aug. 26, 1921, XXVIII, 195; Sorel to Misiroli, Apr. 16, 1921, pp. 306-7. See also Roberto Michels (ed.), "Lettere di Georges Sorel a Roberto Michels," *Nuovi studi di diritto, economia e politica*, II (Sept.-Oct. 1929), 293 n.; Sorel, *Propos*, pp. 53-57, 66.

⁷⁷ Sorel, *Propos*, pp. 55-56; Georges Sorel, "Stato e proprietà rurale," *Resto del Carlino*, Nov. 10, 1919; "I consigli operai," *ibid.*, Mar. 22, 1921; "L'avvenire dell'Italia," *ibid.*, June 11, 1919; "Burocrazia e autonomie locali," *Tempo*, Sept. 13, 1921; Sorel to Croce, Aug. 26, 1921, XXVIII, 195.

the nation's just demands at the peace conference. The Fascists he thought an elite and Mussolini he called a "political genius." As long as the Blackshirts were masters of the street their opponents could hope for no success. As a revolutionary order, he saw fascism impelled by a morale compounded of the "social" and "national." The state would be restored in grandeur under Mussolini's leadership, resting on a corporate social and economic base. He saw in fascism a regime devoted to internal reconstruction and imperial expansion.

The Sorelian ferment continued into the nascent Fascist movement. Interest in Sorel was still sustained by Croce, who though tending toward a "cautious liberalism," nevertheless accepted Fascism as both inevitable and beneficial.⁷⁸ Pareto in the celebrated *Trattato* and Michels, somewhat less so, in his work on nationalism and imperialism, continued to give the prestige of their names to Sorel; both accepted Fascism.⁷⁹ As for the Fascist movement itself, Mussolini possibly turned interventionist under the influence of his close friend Corridoni.⁸⁰ Sorelian elements were, in

any case, very prominent in the *Popolo d'Italia* and the Fasci of 1915—Lanzillo, Panunzio, Longobardi, Olivetti, Orano, and Prezzolini. Moreover, the syndicalist organizers Corridoni, Rossoni, Ambris, and Bianchi broke with USI to form an interventionist syndicalist group.⁸¹ As for the reactivated Fasci of 1919, these were, for the most part, survivors of the prewar Fasci. But the *Popolo d'Italia* now demanded a republic and a national syndicalism based on class co-operation.⁸² Fascism, however, now needed labor support. It found it in the successor to Corridoni's interventionist groups. These were reconstituted in 1918 under Rossoni in the anti-communist, anti-socialist Unione italiana del Lavoro (UIL) numbering some 150,000.⁸³ In the UIL's *Italia Nostra* and particularly in the revived *Pagine libere*, directed by Olivetti who was an officer of the UIL, Sorelismo still flourished, linked with a "neo-Mazzinian idealism."⁸⁴ When Rossoni left the UIL to join fascism, he brought with him what was to be the nucleus of the Fascist labor syndicates.⁸⁵ These, established at Bologna in January 1922, were headed by Rossoni and numbered some 500,000. Fascism, however, also needed the support of the small but highly in-

del socialismo," *Avanti!* Feb. 15, 1914, and "Il dovere dell' Italia," *Lavoro*, Dec. 30, 1914. See early issues of the *Popolo d'Italia* (1914-15) for articles by members of Mussolini's interventionist group; there appear to be no specific references to Sorel.

⁸¹ Gradilone, II, 100, 103-4.

⁸² See early issues of the *Popolo d'Italia* (1919); there appear to be no specific references to Sorel.

⁸³ Gradilone, II, 104-11.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 105; A. O. Olivetti, "Ripresa," *Pagine libere*, VI (Feb. 15, 1920), 1-3, and "Rinnovare," *ibid.*, VIII (July 1921), 233-39; and "Sindacalismo e mazzinianismo," *ibid.*, IX (Apr. 1922), 121-29; Sergio Panunzio, "Socialismo in ritardo," *Pagine libere*, VIII (Aug.-Sept. 1921), 289-96.

⁸⁵ Gradilone, II, 105, 108-11.

⁷⁸ Benedetto Croce, *Pagine sparse: pagine sulla guerra* (Naples, 1919), pp. 86-87, 89-91, 102, 106-7, 114, 124-25, 237-43, 311, and *Contribution à ma propre critique*, trans. J. Chaix-Ruy (Paris, 1949), p. 51; "Tener fede al liberalismo e aiutare cordialmente il fascismo" dice Benedetto Croce in una intervista," *Giornale d'Italia*, Oct. 27, 1923.

⁷⁹ Vilfredo Pareto, *The mind and society*, trans. A. Bongiorno and A. L. Livingston (4 vols.; New York, 1935), III, 885-989, and *passim*; Pareto, "Georges Sorel," 541-58; Roberto Michels, *Le prolétariat et la bourgeoisie dans le mouvement socialiste italien* (2d ed.; Paris, 1921), pp. 344-45, and *First lectures in political sociology*, trans. A. de Grazia (Minneapolis, 1949), pp. 126, 137, 166.

⁸⁰ Gradilone, II, 36-37, 100; L. Rosenstock-Franck, *L'économie corporative fasciste en doctrine et en fait* (Paris, 1934), p. 22; Schneider, pp. 9, 142. Benito Mussolini was writing favorably of Sorel once again; see "Il valore storico

fluent Nationalist party. When in September Mussolini announced that the monarchy would not be disturbed, he received that support. But in the Nationalist party there was no longer any sign of interest in Sorel.⁸⁶ In the final months before the march on Rome, Mussolini founded and directed the doctrinal review *Gerarchia*.⁸⁷ Here Pareto, Lanzillo, Orano, and others clearly linked Sorel with the origins of fascism. His "pessimistic voluntarism," his doctrine of creative violence, his concept of "morale of producers"—all this, it was said, had passed into the Fascist movement. When Sorel died *Gerarchia* announced in an obituary that it would not be Lenin but Mussolini who would fulfil the mission of the *maestro* of syndicalism. The Fascist legions, it declaimed, "lower their banners to the lonely French thinker who has parted for quiet eternity."⁸⁸

Sorelismo was to continue after 1922; though the postwar decades can be treated only briefly, the fate of Sorel's following is illuminating.

In the twenties the "official" biographies of Mussolini and his interviews in the press repeatedly asserted the primacy of Sorel in the origins of fascism.⁸⁹ But

⁸⁶ Notably, in the daily *Idea Nazionale* and the doctrinal review *Politica*, founded in December 1918.

⁸⁷ See especially Massimo Rocca, "L'errore di Sorel," *Gerarchia*, I (July 25, 1922), 370-75, which in spite of the title admitted to a considerable influence; also Agostino Lanzillo, "Giorgio Sorel," *Gerarchia*, I (Sept. 25, 1922), 526-29; Vincenzo Ciotti (signed "Volt"), "Vilfredo Pareto e il fascismo," *ibid.*, I (Oct. 25, 1922), 597-600.

⁸⁸ Lanzillo, "Giorgio Sorel," p. 529.

⁸⁹ Pietro Gorgolini, *The Fascist movement in Italian life* (London, 1923), pp. 23, 52. In a widely repeated quotation from an interview with a Madrid newspaper in 1926, Mussolini reportedly said, "It is to Georges Sorel that I owe the most"; for full quotation see Gaëtan Pirou, *Georges Sorel* (Paris, 1927), pp. 53-54.

in fact the force of Sorel's ideas was now to diminish rapidly. Croce found fascism lawless and immoral by 1925,⁹⁰ Pareto had died in 1923, and Michels was no longer interested in Sorel. The syndicalist intellectuals Lanzillo, Olivetti, Panunzio, and Orano received high academic rank and important party posts, as did the former organizers Rossoni and Bianchi. The academicians never failed to comment on the Sorelian origins of fascism, but their writing was now, for the most part, devoted to a legal and economic elaboration of corporatism. Many became contributors to Rossoni's *Stirpe*⁹¹ and Curzio Malaparte's *Conquista dello Stato*,⁹² which from 1924-28 briefly revived interest in Sorel in Fascist circles. But the Sorelians were now embattled. In nationalist and in some Fascist quarters there was outright hostility to Sorel—he was identified as the proponent of proletarian syn-

See also Giovanni Gentile, "The philosophical basis of fascism," *Foreign affairs*, VI (Jan. 1928), 290-304, and *Origini e dottrina del fascismo* (Rome, 1929).

⁹⁰ Croce, "Liberalismo," *Critica*, XIII (Mar. 20, 1925), 125-28.

⁹¹ Agostino Lanzillo, *Le rivoluzioni del dopoguerra* (Città di Castello, 1922), p. 103; A. O. Olivetti, "Sindacalismo eroico," *Augustea*, II (Dec. 15, 1924), 5-6; "L'anti-marxismo di Giorgio Sorel," *Stirpe*, VIII (Jan. 1930), 7-11; and "Sindacalismo integrale," *ibid.*, II (Apr. 1924), 277-79; Sergio Panunzio, "Ipotesi ed eventi," *Stirpe*, I (Dec. 1923), 19-20; Edmondo Rossoni, "La corporazione fascista," *Stirpe*, I (Dec. 1923), 5-8.

⁹² "Curzio Malaparte" was the pseudonym of Curzio Suckert; for Curzio Malaparte's general ideas see: *L'Europa vivente: teoria storica del sindacalismo nazionale* (Florence, 1923), and *Italia barbara* (Turin, 1926). For articles of interest see: Curzio Suckert, "Filippo Corridoni, martire operaio," *Conquista dello Stato*, Oct. 1, 1924; "Il fascismo e il partito repubblicano," *ibid.*, Mar. 1, 1925; "La conquista dello stato nella concezione organica di Sergio Panunzio," *ibid.*, Dec. 15, 1925; (signed "Spectator"), "Mussolini e il fascismo nel '21: una lettera inedita di Giorgio Sorel," *ibid.*, Dec. 15, 1928.

dicalism and the defender of Lenin.⁹³ This hostility, in all probability, was a mark of the continuing swing of the regime toward economic conservatism. The "Rossoni affair" of 1928–29 ended with Rossoni's resignation as head of the Fascist syndicates and appointment to the Fascist Grand Council.⁹⁴ Every surviving element of syndicalist autonomy was now broken.

Sorelian tendencies continued, however, in anti-Fascist quarters. In Communist circles Gramsci's *Ordine Nuovo*, until suppressed in the mid-twenties, continued to claim Sorel for the proletariat.⁹⁵ And, among liberals, a new tendency appeared in the *Rivoluzione Liberale* of Turin directed by Piero Gobetti.⁹⁶ Gobetti, joined by Labriola, Missiroli, and Max Ascoli, attempted to revitalize liberalism by socializing it. Gobetti wrote that he had inherited the "Sorelian spirit," at least "the healthy part of it." Until suppressed in 1925, the review engaged in lively polemics with Gramsci and Malaparte, frequently on Sorel.

⁹³ Anonymous, "In fondo alla rivoluzione," *Critica fascista*, V (July 15, 1927), 261–63; Lorenzo Giusso, "Giorgio Sorel e il terzo stato francese," *Critica fascista*, VII (Aug. 1929), 292–94; Arnaldo Fioretti, "Il compito degli organizzatori," *Lavoro Fascista*, Apr. 24, 1930; Giuseppe Bottai, *L'expérience corporative* (Paris, 1929), p. 32; Carlo Curcio, "Oltre Sorel," *Resto del Carlino*, Feb. 26, 1930; Ugo d'Andrea, "Nazionalismo e sindacalismo," *Giornale d'Italia*, Apr. 10, 1928.

⁹⁴ Rosenstock-Franck, pp. 36–48; Franz Borckenau, "Fascisme et syndicalisme," *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale*, VI (July, 1934), 341; Francesco Ferrari, *Le régime fasciste italien* (Paris, 1928), 234–35, 240.

⁹⁵ Georges Sorel, "Una pagina di Sorel: pessimismo e rivoluzione," *Ordine Nuovo*, Sept. 18, 1936; Edouard Berth, "Anatole France," *Ordine Nuovo*, Mar. 1, 1925.

⁹⁶ See especially the issue of December 14, 1922, devoted entirely to Sorel; also Piero Gobetti, "Storia dei comunisti torinesi scritta da un liberale," *Rivoluzione Liberale*, Apr. 2, 1922, and "Postilla," *ibid.*, Apr. 29, 1924.

After the twenties, Sorelismo, both Fascist and anti-Fascist, seemed exhausted. To be sure, Mussolini in the celebrated article in the *Enciclopedia* in 1932 asserted the primacy of Sorel and Lagardelle's *Mouvement socialiste* in the origins of fascism.⁹⁷ But Croce now regretted that Sorel's books had been "the breviary of fascism" and had possibly influenced nazism.⁹⁸ And Sorel's disciples prepared further studies of corporatism.⁹⁹ Briefly, the labor review *Problemi del lavoro* discussed the revival of Sorelian fundamentals among French neo-syndicalists.¹⁰⁰ But from now on Fascists of rank insisted, when Sorel's name arose, that fascism was born in 1919 and was the work of Italians.¹⁰¹ As for anti-Fascist interest in Sorel, Gramsci in prison from 1929 to 1935 filled his notebooks with comments, occasionally on Sorel.¹⁰² By the beginning of the World

⁹⁷ Benito Mussolini, "La dottrina del fascismo," *Scritti e discorsi* (12 vols.; Milan, 1934), VIII, 67–69; see also Emile Ludwig, *Entretiens avec Mussolini* (Paris, 1932), pp. 81, 169, and Emile Schreiber, *Rome après Moscou* (Paris, 1932), pp. 92, 114.

⁹⁸ Louis Gillet, "Naples nouvelle," *Revue des deux mondes*, CIII (Feb. 15, 1933), 786; Croce to Vossler, Aug. 25, 1933, in Vittorio de Caprariis, *Carteggio Croce-Vossler, 1899–1949* (Bari, 1951), p. 342.

⁹⁹ Agostino Lanzillo, *Studi di economia applicata* (Padua, 1933); Sergio Panunzio, *Le camere dei fasci e delle corporazioni* (Rome, 1939), and *Teoria e storia del sindacato* (Rome, 1938).

¹⁰⁰ See issues from 1933 to 1937, especially "La dottrina dei neo-sindacalisti francesi," *Problemi del lavoro*, Dec. 1, 1937.

¹⁰¹ See Ministero delle Corporazioni, *Informazioni corporative*, IV (July–Dec. 1931), 509, for address of Luigi Razza; Giuseppe Bottai, *Il consiglio nazionale delle corporazioni* (Verona, 1932), p. 21; see articles in *Lavoro Fascista*, Jan.–Feb. 1936; Bruno Biagi, "La corporazione," *Gerarchia*, XIII (May 1933), 355–67; Andrea Billi, "G. Sorel e la critica," *Archivio di studi corporativi*, IV (1933), 143–58; E. Malusardi, *Elementi di storia del sindacalismo fascista* (Lanciano, 1938), p. 2.

¹⁰² See Antonio Gramsci, *Il materialismo sto-*

War II a new kind of literature on Sorel had appeared and has been expanded considerably since the war—reminiscences, anthologies, and scholarship.¹⁰³ Sorelismo was dead.

In any conclusion regarding Sorel and Sorelismo one must resist the temptation of dismissing either as politically opportunistic and irresponsible—the essentials in apocalyptic conceptions are not political but religious.

Sorel's search was always for a *ricorso*. For him the prototype of a *ricorso* was primitive Christianity. A *ricorso* was a movement impelled by a charismatic excitement. It strove for a sublime end. Sorel's search led him always, therefore, to the political extremes among those who seemed most eager for drastic and total renovation. Until the war he was hoping for both a French and an Italian renewal. But after 1914 his hopes turned almost entirely to Italy. What drew him to the Bolshevik revolution was not Russia (in which he had never demonstrated any interest) but bolshevism. And the failure of the proletariat in Italy led him to fascism. But Sorel was no mere "observer." So deeply did he believe that he frequently saw in a movement what in reality was not there. His career, therefore, was almost necessarily a suc-

cession of hopes and deceptions. What facilitated his movement among the extremes was his essential pragmatism. To be sure, he most desired a *ricorso* on the Left. But he found in the extremes not only an essential similarity but personally acceptable alternatives. The extremes were for him merely aspects of a single system of thought, a single mood of revolt. Though the apocalyptic idea was always in evidence in his work, it nevertheless tended to deteriorate. Though never vulgarized, by the postwar years it had lost much of its initial subtlety. The *ricorso* became less an essay in Christian pessimism and more a problem in social engineering.

Sorelismo was relevant in Italy. Sorel's revolt against materialistic and mechanistic thought drew him into a current of irrationalism and activism already underway. His preoccupation with decadence and heroism found receptive ground in the widespread conviction that the Risorgimento had failed to bring spiritual and moral renewal. His impact was, moreover, an aspect of Italy's continuing intellectual dependence on French thought—Sorelismo was to a considerable degree a Franco-Italian phenomenon. But Sorelismo is difficult to delineate. Its range was seemingly unlimited—from Croce's *Critica* to obscure workers' weeklies in the provinces. At the center were the syndicalist professors and a few nationalists. On the margins, acting with more or less independence, were several members of an intellectual elite and a number of organizers and journalists. It was the diversity of these elements that undoubtedly made possible the dissemination of Sorel's ideas on virtually all intellectual levels. The limits of Sorelismo, however, are complicated by its political indeterminacy. Sorelian tendencies were to be found not only in var-

rica e la filosofia di Benedetto Croce (Turin, 1949), pp. 56, 79, 81, 83, 86, 105–6 n., 109–10, 175–76, 240, 242–43; *Lettere dal carcere* (7th ed.; Turin, 1950), pp. 180–82; *Letteratura e vita nazionale* (Turin, 1950), pp. 19, 142, 168; *Note sul Machiavelli sulla politica e sullo stato moderno* (3d ed.; Turin, 1953), pp. 4–5, 99–100, 139; *Passato e presente* (3d ed.; Turin, 1953), pp. 35, 54, 111–12, 156–57, 186–87. Gramsci's intellectual dependence was largely on Croce.

¹⁰³ See especially Giuseppe Prezzolini, *L'Italiano inutile* (Milan, 1953), pp. 130–33. See also the anthologies of Mario Missiroli, Giovanni Spadolini, Aldo Valori, and Roberto Vivarelli and the articles and books by Giuseppe La Ferla, Giuseppe Santonastaso, Cesare Goretti, and Renzo Peccerini.

ious forms of proletarian revolutionism but also (though weaker), in revolutionary nationalism. Sorelismo could be for Libya or against it, for intervention or against it. It was in communism and fascism and even in a radical liberalism. But Sorelismo nevertheless possessed marked common denominators. It had essentially similar apocalyptic views. It saw in the extremes the only alternatives. And it desired, above all, a "society of heroes."

Fascism was indebted to Sorelismo. Mussolini had been on the margins of the movement before the war. It may be that he had little ideological baggage. It may also be that he was without scruples. Mussolini may or may not have needed Sorel. But fascism needed Sorelismo. The Sorelian ferment was both a symptom and, unwittingly, an effective agent in the prewar preparation of fascism: by its vogue of "creative violence," in its proletarian revolutionism inclined toward nationalism, in its nationalist revolutionism inclined toward a "solution" of the social problem, and by its precedent for a coup d'état set by the Fasci of 1915. The chaos of the postwar years created multiple revolutionary opportunities, better on the Right than on the Left. What fascism now devised were the appropriate slogans, organization, and modes of action—it was *squadristo* that forced the decisive nationalization or neutralization of what remained of proletarian revolutionism. Seen in this light, the fascism that came to power in 1922 may be regarded, to a considerable degree, as an organized and vulgarized

transformation of the prewar Sorelian movement. If Mussolini could boast that fascism had no ideology, it was because for him Sorel's myth could be a lie, the role of an elite could be assumed by a gang of toughs, and violence could degenerate into gangsterism. It must be admitted, however, that the doctrinal quality of Sorelismo, especially in the form that aimed to transcend the conventional categories of Left and Right, rendered Sorelismo's transformation into a non-ideology or even an anti-ideology no great intellectual feat. In this form Sorelismo may very well have survived as the one continuous "ideological" thread in fascism. Moreover, it may be true that some groups arrived at fascism by other routes. It may also be true that not all Sorelians ended in fascism. But for those partisans of Sorel, both named and nameless, who joined with Mussolini in these fateful years, Sorelismo was the root of "their" fascism.

Sorel's work in Italy was itself something of a *ricorso*. It was born of violence in pursuit of the sublime. It was, wrote Croce, "the construction of a poet thirsting for . . . austerity, . . . sincerity, . . . stubbornly trying to find a hidden fount from which the fresh pure stream would well forth; and tested by reality, his poetry vanished even in his own eyes."¹⁰⁴

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¹⁰⁴ Benedetto Croce, *History of Europe in the nineteenth century*, trans. H. Furst (New York, 1963), p. 306.