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The Italian Socialist Party (1892-1925) constitutional or revolutionary action

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revolutionary action**

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San Jose State University, 1990

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**THE ITALIAN SOCIALIST PARTY (1892-1925):
CONSTITUTIONAL OR REVOLUTIONARY ACTION**

A Thesis

Presented to

**The Faculty of the Department of Political Science
San Jose State University**

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

By

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ABSTRACT

THE ITALIAN SOCIALIST PARTY (1892-1925): CONSTITUTIONAL OR REVOLUTIONARY ACTION

by Eugene Michael Franco

The thesis of this paper is that, given the particular Italian economic, social, and historical conditions, the Italian Socialist movement did not develop to the same extent as other European Socialist movements, due to the divisions which lead to distinct constitutional and revolutionary parties. The Italian Socialist Party (PSI) is caught in the dilemma of constitutionalism versus revolution. This theory prevents the Socialist Party from taking effective action in the larger arena of Italian politics, but, nevertheless, the majority of its members still find no contradiction in its principles.

The main part of this thesis will discuss the development of the Italian Socialist Party from its organization in 1892 to its suppression in 1925, taking up the stages of unification, struggle for legitimacy, conflict between constitutionalism and revolution in political action, and the confirmation of its doctrine at the cost of withdrawal from the central political issues of the time.

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CHAPTER I

PROBLEMS IN SOCIALIST POLITICAL ACTION

Socialist political action provides an important example of a brave and essentially noble attempt to put a theory of social order into practice. Socialist theory defines a fully-developed scheme for what "ought to be" in the social order, as opposed to what "is," and its political action is directed toward the pursuit of the "ought." But this has resulted in most cases in incomplete fulfillment of its original aims because of the limitations of its theory in relation to the complexities of social conditions and practice it tried to mold.

Formulated in reaction to the excesses and inequalities of industrialization in Europe during the second half of the nineteenth century, and in response to the desires and needs of the new laboring class created by industrialization and urbanization, socialism has two basic components. It is a practical plan to change the institutions of the society so that economic activity comes under public authority and administration instead of private. It is also an all-embracing theory of history, society, and humanity.¹ Socialism sets out an explanation of the social reality as conditions determined by historical necessity. It assumes,

rationality, progressive improvement in the nature of man, given the proper conditions. It assumes that there is a specific just and right order of society which can be attained. These elements of socialism constitute a creed, a system of beliefs which explains completely the nature of reality and defines the desired goal of human endeavor.

The condition for attaining the just order of society is the establishment of economic institutions in which the production of goods and the distribution of wealth belong to the public sphere and are regulated by public authority. When public control of economic activity has been accomplished, and goods are distributed according to need, all will have the fullest opportunity for the development of their talents and character. The world will become a reasonable, well-ordered place.

This practical aspect of socialism, the establishment of a set of economic institutions regulated by public authority, is not inherently committed to any particular political method. It can and does operate effectively under both totalitarian and democratic political systems. But the change of control in economic institutions, from private to public authority, must be achieved in the realm of politics where decisions on the distribution of material wealth and on the exercise of power in the society are made. The adherents of socialism must take action in the sphere of politics in order to win the necessary power (i.e. public

support or toleration) to establish the desired set of economic institutions.

During the 1880s, when Marxian socialist ideas were winning adherents throughout Europe, most of the countries in which socialism developed strong followings had political systems that were democratic in varying degrees.² Democracy as a political method is not incompatible with public or any other form of control over economic activity. Leadership is chosen by the vote of the majority of the people, but the minority retain their rights. Democracy, then requires two conditions for operation: a free choice of alternatives for the people and protection of minority rights with majority rule.

At the time of the socialist movement's initial formation, men of the bourgeois and upper-classes were operating the institutions in Britain, France, Italy, Germany, and most of the European nations.³ But the democratic political method has no intrinsic identification with the bourgeoisie or any other economic class. It requires only the acceptance of the requirements for operation by all who seek to use it.

The socialists, seeking to implement their goal of public control of economic activity, had to formulate a policy and to organize their numbers for political action. Given the political situation of democratic institutions operated by men of the bourgeois class, the socialists had

the choice of operating within the existing political system and seeking to win political authority from the bourgeoisie according to the rules of the system, in order to institute socialist plans, or of condemning the existing political systems and trying to gain political control of the state by means outside of the jurisdiction or effective control of the existing authority.

The socialists had two guides by which to make this decision on political strategy: Marxian socialist theory and the actual political conditions in the society at the time. Marxist theory predicted the inevitable disintegration of the capitalist economy upon which bourgeois political power was based, and so condemned any cooperation, collaboration, or association with bourgeois political parties, programs, or activity. The actual political conditions provided the kind of channels, if any, available to the socialists for political expression. The former guide was reasonably constant for all of the socialist movements, but the latter varied considerably from country to country, resulting in the development of different strategies of political action among the various socialist movements.

In countries where democratic political systems had been established, the political means of popular election were available to the socialists, though with varying restrictions on suffrage. Most of the socialist

movements chose to use this method of legally recognized and orderly pursuit of political power rather than follow the violent and extra-legal attempt to destroy existing political authority advocated by the anarchists.⁴ Popular elections, especially if the franchise were extended to universal suffrage, would, without question, bring the socialists to power because the working class constituted a majority of the population and, according to socialist theory, the working class would rationally vote socialist. In 1891, at the Congress of Brussels, the II International officially adopted the policy of legitimate pursuit of political power by the method of parliamentary elections. It repudiated anarchist and any other extra-legal means of seeking political power as "uncivilized."⁵

Though deciding to use the accessible legitimate method of gaining political power by popular election, the socialist movements meticulously upheld the doctrine of Marx. Class warfare was the inevitable fact of history, and the socialists, as the leaders of the proletariat, could in no way associate or cooperate with bourgeois political programs. They must stand in implacable opposition to the bourgeois ministries and parties. Bourgeois parties and governments were incapable of instituting any durable change in the social order and the socialist movement must differentiate itself entirely from them. Consequently, socialist political organizations were formed to participate

In the competitive struggle for the people's vote as the mandate to political power, but, at the same time, they were committed to belief in class warfare and the necessity for the complete overthrow of the existing group in political power, the bourgeoisie.

By this decision on political strategy, the socialists found themselves in the dilemma of democratic socialism, the dilemma which has characterized the political action of all West European socialist movements. The socialists confronted the task of winning sufficient power in the society to oust completely the bourgeois political leadership in order to institute their plans for complete economic and social renovation, but without there being available any means outside the legitimate system.

On the one hand, Marxian socialist theory precluded the basic toleration of, and compromise with, the various existing groups of the society that would be required for effective democratic action. Any hint of compromise with the bourgeoisie was an anathema to the creed of class warfare. On the other hand, the socialists' commitment to constitutional means of gaining political power prevented them from taking recourse to any illegal but more effective method, such as force, to achieve their ends. This situation left the socialists with no basis for negotiation with opposing groups to secure their ends by the means customarily employed in the democratic system, compromise

and collaboration, and, at the same time, with no recourse to means outside of the democratic system to achieve their ends, if the first method should prove ineffective.

Marxian Socialism, as a guide to practical political action, has two great weaknesses. It limits its political base of power to one source, the proletariat. Other important sources of social power, such as schools, organized religion, liberal elements of the bourgeois class, or a liberal government might also be susceptible to plans for reform of social institutions. Where the aim of political action is to build support for a specific program, this deliberate limitation can seriously hamper a movement's effectiveness. Even more so, the incitement of intensely hostile feelings from other groups can damage a movement's potential for possible success. This position leaves Socialism vulnerable in another way. When Socialism restricts its potential base of power to one chosen source, it leaves its doctrine open to criticism if other political movements win support within the Socialists' declared realm.

Secondly, because Socialism is an all-embracing theory, it can admit no valid deviations from it, nor recognize as legitimate any action contrary to it. This is the crucial point upon which Marxian Socialism denies the liberty of independent thought or action on matters of social order outside of its defined scope. It allows no right to a dissenting minority, as this would admit weakness

or fallibility in its infallible scheme. In the tests and complexities of political action, infallibility is the most difficult of all qualities to claim or maintain.

The limitations of its theory are reflected in the Socialists' uncertain political action. This condition produces further difficulty in realizing the economic plan delineated by Socialist theory. As the Socialist political organization engages in the competitive daily struggle for political power, factual conditions and political practice produce evidence that conflicts with Socialist theory. Two alternative ways of dealing with conflicting evidence are open to adherents of a systematic theory. They can either accept the evidence as new information on the nature of reality and modify their beliefs accordingly, or they can reject the evidence, confirming their belief in the original theory, and willingly step outside part of the realm of practical political reality. This alternative requires socialist adherents to adopt faith as the bridge over inconsistencies between Socialist theory and political conditions. Such recourse to faith introduces a strong irrational element into political action.

Because Socialism is a fully-developed doctrine with a purpose, rationale, and claimed universal application and not just a set of practical measures desired in political action, it has an additional source of strength which more pragmatic movements do not have. It has a greater ability

to deny invalidating or weakening effects of attacks in practice by calling for renewed faith in doctrine. In this way, Socialism can ward off doubts and demands for revision in policy among its adherents to a far greater degree than can most political parties. But this same characteristic, while beneficial to the movement in maintaining the unity of its members in faith, can have a detrimental effect in practical action. By simply refusing to make any modifications in its theory or actions pursuing its principles, the Socialist movement can also risk the possibility of placing itself increasingly outside of the mainstream of political action, thus becoming less and less effective in its thoughts to realize its goals. This quandary of whether to reaffirm its principles, rejecting an advantageous, but deviant, course of action, or whether to modify its principles, accepting a divergent but more advantageous course of action is the persistent tension between ideals and action characteristic of political movements guided by a systematic theory. In the realm of politics with various agents competing for power and privileges, compromise on its declared principles may be the only way a particular movement can put into effect even a part of its specific program. Yet, by compromising its ideals, the movement risks losing its uniqueness and therefore of enacting any real change at all. From its first commitment to carry class warfare and total revolution by legitimate democratic

means, the Socialist movement has confronted the tension between stalemate in parliamentary political action and betrayal of its revolutionary ideals.

Some difference between principles and practice is stimulating to a political movement, spurring the movement to renew its efforts to fulfill its ideal more precisely. But if the realities of political practice and social conditions consistently conflict with a movement's theory, the movement will undergo severe stress. Such a condition is likely to provide doubt and loss of faith in the movement's principles among its adherents. For example, a Socialist party's failure to receive the expected portion of the electoral vote may cause some of its members to reconsider the party's intransigent stand on favoring only action which promotes the expectation of imminent revolution, which will dislodge the bourgeoisie. In their reflections, the disappointed members may conclude that, despite the party's theory, the revolution is not so imminent among the masses after all and that other measures must be adopted to win the support of the workers. The infallibility of a portion of the movement's doctrine is challenged, and differing anticipations of the political situation arise, within the movement.

Strong differences regarding the theory upon which a movement bases its action tend to develop further into differences among methods of political action within the

group. The more intense the differences regarding the movement's doctrine are, the less likely is the movement to carry out a common, unified action. Different perceptions of political realities and different interpretations of the movement's political needs require different policies of action.

Thus, a Socialist movement in which part of its members think the collapse of the capitalist system is imminent, and in which part of its members think the Socialist revolution is some time away, finds itself with two groups urging different and conflicting policies of action. While one group might incite the workers through the party press, to militant defense of the class struggle in preparation for the revolution, another group might play down the language of class struggle as it seeks to win, in a parliament, modest reforms in hours of work and wages for the workers. Once division in the common acceptance of the doctrine of a movement has been admitted, either overtly or implicitly, dissension on the questions of tactics and political strategy necessary to ensure the movement's ends is almost sure to follow.

By the same logic, different tactical approaches in political action require different types of organization and different bases of social power to carry them out, respectively, in the most effective way. A party engaged in an uncompromising class war needs a militant, disciplined

organization able to fulfill exactly and immediately orders from its leadership. No questioning of the authority or deviance from its commands can be allowed. It needs a cohesive membership dedicated completely to the aims of the movement, without other loyalties and distracting ties. Such a party would be strongest if restricted only to one class, the proletariat, or to those who adopt without reservation the aspirations and aims of the working class.

On the contrary, a party seeking to build a constitutional majority in order to enact its reforms, must develop an organization which can secure the necessary support from the electorate as a whole. This involves gaining the broadest possible social base for the party and, moreover, the toleration, if not the support, of all the major groups in the society. All, from whatever class or temporary affinity with Socialist principles, who will vote Socialist, are welcomed in this type of party.

When the dissent first raised in regard to a movement's original doctrine has reached, through the development of differences in strategy, the stage of demanding different types of organization and of requiring different kinds of social support for pursuing the movement's goals, the original movement has become so divided and changed in nature that not it, but two uncompromising factions now exist, and these naturally seek separation. The ties which once bound the groups together in the original movement have

been subordinated, by each faction, to newer and more precise values.

But movements may pass through these stages slowly, or reach one stage, and if the circumstances do not occur to precipitate the next, they may operate at a given stage indefinitely. The particular conditions in which a movement operates, internal and external resources, social and governmental institutions, the nature of other political groups in the country, and the character of the men who lead the party, test continually the plausibility of the movement's doctrine. If conditions change, however, and the members begin to question the movement's status quo in theory of action at the time, the impetus from dissension is likely to generate new division.

If a doctrine for political action is claimed to be infallible, its adherents forfeit the quality of reasonable adaptability in their principles and actions according to changes in social and political conditions. And, without reasonable adaptability in theory and practice, a political movement may be forced either to schism or to inactivity and ineffectiveness in its effort to realize its goals.

It is the thesis of this work that, given the particular Italian economic, social, and historical conditions, the Italian socialist movement did not develop to the same extent the divisions leading to distinct constitutional and revolutionary parties that the other

European Socialist movements did. The Italian Socialist Party is caught in the dilemma of constitutionalism versus revolution. The main part of this thesis will discuss the development of the Italian Socialist Party from its organization in 1892 to its suppression in 1925, taking up the stages of unification, struggle for legitimacy, conflict between constitutionalism and revolution in political action, and the confirmation of its doctrine at the cost of withdrawal from the central political issues of the time.

PRACTICAL PROBLEMS COMMON IN EUROPEAN SOCIALIST MOVEMENTS

The Socialist movements of the European countries experienced certain common problems in practice, and in their development, exhibited the pattern described in the preceding section. Political parties were organized on the basis of Marxian Socialist theory; conflicting evidence encountered in political action led to differences regarding theory, which in turn, led to differences regarding strategy and tactics in political action, and this condition led to demands for different forms of organization and different kinds of social support.⁴ With the last stage, the various Socialist movements split into constitutional and revolutionary parties, each establishing its distinct organization and commanding a separate base of social support. That is, all European Socialist movements except one, the Italian, experienced the stage of clearly defined schism. The Italian Socialist Party experienced the break-off of separate factions for clear constitutional or revolutionary goals but its majority remains at the present time committed to constitutional revolutionism. Nevertheless, the Italian movement participated in the general pattern of European Socialist development and this section will sketch briefly

that pattern.

The first major problem which all European Socialist movements faced was that of unifying the supporters of Socialist ideas into a single organized, political party. This task involved the conciliation of many liberal, and often contradictory, traditions and values concerning working-class action. In every country, assorted theories and societies had been formed for the aid of the working class. The anarchist ideas of Mikhail Bakunin and Peter Kropotkin, who called for the destruction of the state or any central authority and the free association of individuals in society, had found particularly receptive soil in Italy, Spain, and France, and to a lesser degree, in other European countries.⁷

Cooperative societies and their predecessors, mutual aid societies, had developed among the workers in several communities. Their chief purpose was to provide means of economic assistance and benefits to the workers within the capitalistic system of production. Workers' parties and the early forms of trade unionism had also appeared in most countries, for the purpose of making demands upon employers for higher wages, shorter hours, and improvements in working conditions. Some impetus toward reform in workers' conditions had also been initiated in much of Europe, with varying degrees of success and energy, by liberal elements of the bourgeoisie, humanitarian groups, organized religion,

or intellectuals. The common denominator of all these groups was their desire to improve the living and working conditions of the working class. The Marxian Socialist doctrine provided the most clearly developed and most comprehensive statement of working class aims in the political and social situation of the times. In Germany, France, Italy, and most of the countries of Europe, supporters of the working class adopted the Marxian Socialist theory as their official doctrine and formed unified political parties. It will be recalled the Brussels Congress of the II International of working class movements in 1891 voted Marxism to be the official doctrine of International Socialism.^a

Each of the Socialist movements had to settle its own dispute on political method. The struggle between the legitimists and the anarchists reached very heated stages in France and Italy. Even the well-disciplined German Social Democratic Party had its minor bout with anarchists. But, the matter was officially settled in favor of legitimacy for all socialist parties when the II International expelled the anarchist contingent from its ranks in 1891 and upheld legitimate means as the only appropriate method for Socialist political action.

But though a Socialist party had decided to use the legitimate means of parliamentary elections to carry out its plan for the capture of state power, it still had to reckon

with the constitutional government in office. At that time, most of the constitutional governments looked upon any organized effort to gain control of state power and to change radically the existing economic and social institutions as illegitimate and subversive. The bourgeoisie, in political power, had the full constitutional powers of the State at their disposal to use against the Socialists who threatened their power and privilege. In every country, the Socialists experienced a hard struggle with the constitutional government for legitimate recognition. In Germany, the Socialists were outlawed from political participation for twelve years under Bismarck. In France, the Socialists were threatened and curbed by three successive ministries in the 1890s. In Italy, the Socialist Party suffered severe persecution by the government.*

Established as legitimate parties with freedom to participate fully in the political system, the Socialist movements were confronted with the dilemma presented by commitment to constitutional means for the attainment of a revolutionary end. Inevitable questions were raised in each of the Socialist movements. To what extent should the Party engage in the operation of present bourgeois government in order to advance the cause of the workers? Should the Socialist Party collaborate with a bourgeois party or support the bourgeois government, if by doing so it could win substantial reforms for the working class? Or must it

shun any kind of reform for the workers sponsored by a bourgeois party or government on the grounds that such reforms could only be temporary and only obscure further the real issue, the deposition of the bourgeois class and the proletariat's assumption of power? The Socialist movements were caught in the old conflict between the desire to be effective in political action and the desire to maintain pure ideals.

This dilemma took on different forms in response to the specific situations in which the various Socialist movements operated. Certain kinds of conditions were common to each situation and helped to determine a party's eventual choice in the dilemma.

In broad outline, the Western European Socialist movements experienced the same series of conditions which affected their outlook toward constitutionalism or revolution. First, the various Socialist movements encountered circumstances in political action which precipitated breaches in theory. The available channel of political expression provided by a relatively early and broad suffrage had already influenced the Socialist parties' choice of constitutional means of action. France had instituted manhood suffrage in 1848; Germany adopted the measure for Reichstag elections in 1871, although the three-class restrictions in Prussia did limit its effectiveness; Britain enacted manhood suffrage in 1884.¹⁰

The line between the privileged and exploited classes did not remain clear-cut. Humane and liberal elements in the bourgeoisie also began agitating for social reforms. Governments enacted measures of social legislation: regulations on hours of work and child labor were passed, the beginnings of social assistance and workman's compensation programs were established, concessions were made on wages and hours by industrialists, and some recognition was granted to laborers' bargaining power with management. This situation caused some members in the Socialist parties to doubt the urgency of class struggle described in the doctrines of Marx and to disapprove of the violent phraseology characteristic of Socialist literature. Instead, they came to readjust their expectation of proletarian conquest of power to a longer period. To many Socialists, class struggle appeared to lose some of its urgency. But on the contrary, other groups in the parties saw these measures as only a partial response, tossed to the workers sporadically by capitalists to appease their employees most pressing demands. These Socialists warned against the dangers of these measures to awakening the workers' resolve for revolution.

The rapid rate and extent of industrialization in Europe had begun to show their consequent effects of a general rise in prosperity by the 1890s and the first decade of the twentieth century. The workers were generally better

off in their standard of living than they had been, contrary to the Marxist prediction of increasing misery for the working classes. This fact made the doctrine of class struggle lose some of its relevance for those working classes, and other issues such as nationalism, religion or individual liberties caught their interest and attachment in politics. Again, Socialists inclined toward constitutionalism saw that the general promise of total economic renovation would not be sufficient to win an electoral majority and considered proposals for specific reforms necessary to win and keep the working class vote. Yet, other Socialists, believing passionately in the implicit revolutionary character of the masses, held to their conviction that if the working class could only be awakened to the true situation, they would naturally support the Socialist revolution.

Under the circumstances of these three conditions, the Socialist movements in all countries developed reformist and revolutionary wings. Eduard Bernstein, in the German Social Democratic Party, developed the theory of revisionism, bitterly opposed by the revolutionists, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Kautsky. In France, the "possibilists" disassociated themselves from the revolutionary "Guesdists," and at the Congresses of the II International, reform versus revolution was the central subject of heated debate.¹¹

These differences in theory, then, led to different

kinds of tactics adopted by the reformist and revolutionist groups in the Socialist parties. The reformist groups encouraged specific proposals for social legislation in the Party's campaign programs and modification of the Party's revolutionary propaganda. In France, reformist groups gradually accepted the measures of parliamentary alliance and support of the bourgeois governments, thereby gaining access to direct influence on political decisions. In Germany, the large Socialist delegation in the Reichstag was denied the opportunity for direct influence in politics, but the reformists continued to build a large and well-financed organization for winning eventual parliamentary majority.¹²

Reformists in all countries began to lose some of their animosity toward the bourgeoisie and to engage more and more in compromise with them for short-term gains. In doing so, they dimmed the clear determination of winning control of state power for the working class. The reformists, too, saw value in maintaining associations with the growing trade unions, competitors for working class support, even at the expense of conceding certain aspects of Socialist political authority.

On the other hand, the revolutionaries grew increasingly discontented with the compromise and vacillation of the reformists, parliamentary alliances, and delays in achieving any thorough kind of social reform. Gross areas

of poverty and inequality still existed and most suffering was still unalleviated while privilege and injustice persisted. The revolutionaries sought more effective organization of the masses for the conquest of power.

At this point, all European Socialist movements experienced the crisis of World War I. The call to arms confronted the Socialists with the a conflict between two obligations: that of citizens to their nations, and to the cause of the international working class. Socialist movement had to choose whether to support its nation's effort in war, thus denying one of the major principles of Socialist doctrine, or whether to uphold the Socialists' condemnation of the war as the outcome of the faltering capitalistic system, but thus perhaps contribute to its nation's defeat.¹⁹ The issue pushed a showdown of primary allegiance and all Socialist parties, except the Italian voted to support their nation's war effort. In most cases, however, the action was not a sudden break with Socialist theory but rather the logical outcome of a series of minor departures in both theory and practice that had occurred within the Party over a period of years.

The experience of the war accentuated the difference between principles and practice which had developed earlier in most Socialist movements, but it was followed by an even more severe test. The new Communist International, formed and directed under the leadership of the successful

Bolshevik revolutionaries, called itself the organization of the true revolutionary workers parties. It alone could set the standards for the successful revolutionary action. Any other type of movement was merely one of bourgeois reform and could not properly be called revolutionary. To the end of establishing an elite organization of revolutionary working class movements, the Communist International issued a proclamation of "Twenty-one Points," that is, twenty-one conditions which a working class party must fulfill in order to be admitted to the III International and, therefore, to the ranks of the revolutionary elite. Among these conditions was the expulsion of all reformist members from the Party and all reformist policies from the Party's program. It required the adoption of the name "Communist" and acceptance of the direction of the Comintern in all matters.¹⁴ The conditions amounted to the denial of legitimate methods as the only means for the assumption of political power and also demanded changes in the Socialist Party's organization and membership accordingly. These terms proved so contrary to the beliefs and practice which the reformist element in each Socialist Party had built up over its years of political experience, that they were unacceptable. In nearly every Socialist movement, the demand for different types of organization and different kinds of social support made explicit the schism between reform and revolution already apparent in the parties. The

revolutionary elements split off to form Communist parties, while the remaining Socialist portion adopted a more outright reformist policy, including participation in bourgeois government. The European Socialist movements, in general, abandoned the policy of "constitutional revolution" as the separate wings of the parties organized into constitutional or revolutionary parties.

THE DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ITALIAN SOCIALIST MOVEMENT

The Italian Socialist Party (PSI) was the only European Socialist movement which did not divide into a democratic, gradualist party and a communist, revolutionary party. Instead, the Italian Party fractured between 1919 and 1922 into three parts. The extremist faction broke off and formed the Italian Communist Party. The rightist faction was expelled for attempting to support the bourgeois government against the Fascist threat; it organized, temporarily, a constitutionalist party. But the trunk of the old Socialist Party pledged to legitimate revolution remained intact. It retained the PSI name, tradition, and the core of its membership.

For what reasons should the Italian Socialist Party differ from the general pattern of European Socialist movements? It had been founded on the same set of principles and participated in the same broad cultural, political, and economic milieu. The differences between Italian Socialist development and the general pattern of European Socialist development were chiefly differences in degree rather than kind. But the degree of difference was significant enough to result in distinctive characteristics

for the PSI.

The specific conditions under which the Italian Socialist Party was founded and in which it operated differed considerably from those of the other European Socialist movements. Industrialization occurred later in Italy than in Britain, Germany, and France, and indeed as yet has not developed sufficiently to make the whole of Italy a modern industrial state. Only in the 1890s had important advances been made in the textile and metal industries. And the decade of the 1900s marked the nation's biggest period of economic expansion. Even then, industrialization in Italy did not create the huge army of urban industrial workers that was formed in Britain and Germany. Because Italy was slow in experiencing the effects of industrialization and urbanization, the issues of exploitation of workers and of class war did not become important in Italy until the late 1880s and the 1890s.

In the meantime, various other theories and schemes for assisting the poor and improving the miserable conditions of working people had been advanced and some had developed well-established traditions and loyalties of their own. The anarchist movement received a stronger following in Italy than in the more industrially-advanced countries. A Workers' Party had been founded to give organized expression to the workers' demands for higher wages, shorter hours, and arbitration boards for labor disputes. A

Frenchman, Benoit Malon, had introduced ideas of social reform through a parliamentary political movement. The beginning stages of industrialization in Italy produced diverse, ad hoc movements among the working class instead of a fairly steady development of one working-class party.

Consequently, when the Italian Socialist Party was formed in 1892, it suffered from two handicaps in comparison with the German and the French Marxist parties. It had a late start in its struggle for political power. It had no strong unifying Marxist tradition, its component groups already had definite traditions and established values of their own. From its inception, the PSI faced the task of creating and maintaining a cohesive spirit within the organization itself. This fact, particularly among the leadership, tended to keep the party weak by preventing the development of single-minded purpose in political action. Consequently, the Italian Socialist Party did not have the same importance in national politics as the other Socialist parties did in their respective countries for quite some time.

The institutional framework of the Italian government allowed no easy access to Socialist or any working-class movement, nor did it encourage the creation of a large, mass party. The franchise in Italy was widened in 1882, but the extension was not due to the government's magnanimity. It permitted seven percent of the population to vote instead of

the previous two percent. Manhood suffrage was instituted in Italy only in 1912. This situation prevented the development of the great, working-class electoral parties of Germany and Britain, or the relatively easy rise of a similar political force, as in France.

The privileged class in Italy remained unabashedly hostile to notions of relinquishing its privileges for social reform. The old aristocracy, and the owners of property and the means of production, retained a sufficient amount of belief in their status as holders of privilege by right or by superiority to dismiss, without qualms, challenges to this status or pleas for the expression of social conscience. Only very slowly and to a very small extent did any appreciable concern for the welfare of the working population infiltrate the privileged class. The hostility of the Italian privileged class to any concessions of its wealth or power reinforced the class-consciousness of the PSI, and the presence of no other significant reform movement in the country strengthened the Party's claims that only complete change in economic and political control would allow an improvement of social conditions for the working class.

The general lack of political sophistication among the Italian public made difficult any kind of organized specific political action which depended on mass support. The largest portion of the Italian population had no familiarity

with political or governmental experience except through heavy taxes and military demands. Over eighty percent of the population was illiterate in 1880 and the concepts of a national government, organized political action, or influencing governmental decisions were alien to these people. They tended to choose the simplest political alternative and not to discriminate between issues which could or could not be compromised. To the largest part of the supporters of the PSI, both democratic method and radical economic innovation were desirable general goals. Their comprehension of political issues did not go much beyond that general point, and, consequently, they did not demand more specific results.

Finally, the leadership of the Italian Socialist Party affected the Party's continued ambivalence between constitutionalism and revolution. Most of the leaders of the Party were educated bourgeoisie, drawn to the movement out of humane sympathy with the sufferings of the Italian poor. But most of them retained their respect for democratic institutions and constitutional procedure, and, despite the hostility of the privileged class, could not bring themselves to take illegal action to secure their ends. The Italian leaders' sympathy for the working class in their poverty and misery was so great that these men would be satisfied with nothing less than a radical change in the existing economic conditions, and no other political issue

was more important to them than that of the plight of the workers.

All of these conditions--late and rather limited industrialization, late unification of the Socialist party without a strong Marxist tradition, the narrow franchise, a hostile ruling class, a general lack of political sophistication among the people and a lack of political expediency among the leaders--contributed to the fact that the Socialist movement in Italy could accept the program of constitutional revolution without much challenge. The majority of the Italian working classes, to whom the Socialist Party directed its appeal, never became sufficiently involved in the national political life to see specific advantages in either legitimate reform or total revolution, or to see any incompatibility between the two goals. The Party's important leaders, similarly, never reached the point where a set of specific political conditions caused them to weigh the merits of revolution or legitimate reform against each other, and to find that the advantages of one alternative outweighed the disadvantages incurred from dropping the other. The PSI leaders suspended making a choice as to the primary value of their movement, and when the political situation did not allow the compatibility of the two values, the Party withdrew from political action. Sustained by the faith of its core membership, the PSI maintained and still maintains its original dual

policies.

Therefore, the Italian Socialist movement, while following the general European pattern, has done so at a slower rate and with less intensity. Contradictory evidence from practical experience did present challenges to the Socialist doctrine. Dissension over theory developed within the Party. These differences then broadened into different strategies and tactics in action. But these differences in theory and in strategy were debated only by the politically-active segments and leadership of the Party. The PSI's base of support, industrial laborers and peasants from the Po Valley, never seriously questioned the validity of the Party doctrine and continued to support the ideal of legitimate revolution. The specific historical events of the First World War and the post-war chaos arrested and distorted the modest economic and political developments of the 1900s in Italy, developments which in other countries had undermined the validity of the legitimate revolution formula of Marxian Socialism.

CHAPTER II

THE PARTY'S STRUGGLE FOR ESTABLISHMENT

On a hot August day in Genoa in 1892 the Italian Socialist Party (PSI) was formed. This newly constituted party represented the hopes of many diverse elements of the working class movement in Italy: Marxian Socialists, trade unionists, Mazzini republicans, parliamentary Socialists, and partisans of the old Mutual Aid Societies. It also represented the recognition by the recently converted Socialists that the previous separate attempts of these groups to protest the lot of the workers had been frustrated and were insufficient. The party's efforts must be given new direction to achieve any changes in the social situation.

The theoretical basis of the party was strictly Marxist. The Congress affirmed as fundamental truths the following principles:

All men have an equal right to the material and moral benefits of society, provided that they contribute to the creation and maintenance of these benefits according to their ability.

The prevailing economic system of private ownership of capital is progressively dividing the society into two opposing classes: the capitalist owners who monopolize social wealth by every means of exploitation and domination and the wage-earners, who produce this wealth but are driven further and further from enjoying the

fruits of their labor by the capitalist system. This condition is intolerable and, in the name of social justice, the capitalist system of private ownership must be replaced by a system of "collective ownership of the natural wealth and instruments of labor." Production will then be based on the general interest and will engage all working men. This system will ultimately succeed in bringing about that perfect social state where all men produce according to their ability and consume according to their need.¹

But the existing State, the program continued, can achieve no lasting reforms in society. The form of political institutions in society is determined by the form of economic relations and corresponds to the pattern desired by the prevailing economic class, which uses the political institutions to reinforce its dominance. The State, then, is the defender and tool of the bourgeois class and represents the domination of those who monopolize social wealth and power. It is, therefore, the natural enemy of the disinherited laborers. It must be abolished and replaced by a system of administrative relations among the various segments of the population, organized on the basis of production, exchange, and consumption, and federated according to their interests and to their needs.

The purpose of a workers' party, the Congress affirmed, is to provide conscious leadership to the militant proletariat in its struggle for political power. It must serve as the faithful interpreter of the proletariat's goals. Constantly, the Party must seek to strengthen the proletariat in its battle against bourgeois domination and to maintain its independence from any other leadership

group. The movement of the proletariat was seen as unique in the present society; all other contenders for power, even though they impose reforms, stem from the corrupt capitalist system and must be overcome.

With these statements, the Congress agreed unanimously on the necessity for the working class to rise in opposition to the existing political and economic system and to overthrow it completely. The delegates were not in complete agreement, however, on the form this struggle was to take. Two opposing conceptions of the workers' struggle were presented in a controversy which was not new to the workers' movement. The anarchists maintained that the oppression of the present state would drive the workers, sharing their same sufferings and the same hopes, into spontaneous revolution against the existing system in order to secure a condition of free and harmonious association among individuals. Poverty alone determined the will and the capacity of the masses to revolt.

The legalitarian socialists, led by the intellectuals of the Milan Socialist League, objected vehemently to the anarchist position. They rejected the anarchist methods of violent and sporadic uprisings as immature and insufficient in the social struggle. Moreover, such methods had failed miserably to arouse the masses. They asserted that the social revolution could not be miraculously achieved in a particular moment, but must be the outcome of innumerable

preparations. The revolution would be complete only when the new order commanded the vital organs and strata of society and possessed the full powers necessary to administer the functions of society.

The Marxian Socialists denounced the use of violence in the social struggle. Socialism, in essence, was a set of values to be translated into action. They asserted that violence was not a force, but only obscured social conscience. Thus, the social revolution would be stronger where there was less violence.

On the basis of the above conditions, the Socialists termed the anarchists and their program incompatible with the best interests of the working class movement. They insisted that since the primary task of a working class party was to organize all laborers into a single, unified movement that would work clearly and efficiently toward the realization of their goal, such a party must eliminate any dissident elements that would frustrate its action. The socialists called upon the Congress to expel both the anarchists and the cooperativist element, which was seen as interested only in seeking easier terms of co-existence with the capitalist system for the workers.

By a majority vote, the Congress passed the motion expelling the anarchists and trade-unionists. This vote decisively determined the character of the new party for, in accepting the resolution of the legalitarian socialists, the

Congress had affirmed the necessity for the abolition of the capitalist system and the bourgeois state, and had rejected the use of violence to attain its goal.

The basic issues settled, the Congress, under the direction of the Milan Socialist League, hastened to constitute itself a party for the purposes of leading and organizing the working class in its struggle for social power. It set up an Executive Committee and a form of organization for local sections. Decisions on policy and principles would be made at periodic Congresses of the party members. The final authority in the new party would reside with the majority of the Congress, i.e. with the majority of party membership as represented by delegates from the local sections. The Socialist party accepted democratic principles within its organization, but denied it to social process. It would not grant representation or minority rights to capitalists who stood outside the circle of those working for the genuine welfare of the whole society.

In elaborating its strategy for pursuing radical social change, the PSI first wanted to win a wide base of social support. The party needed to attract supporters to its program in order to organize the proletariat. Prohibited from recourse to violence, the Socialists saw the necessity of using all the processes and position of social influence accessible to it, such as elections, public office, and the press. Through these it would voice its

protest against the bourgeois order and present its alternative program. Designating itself as the party of the working class, the PSI directed its appeal mainly toward the workers, the largest, most oppressed class of society. In its political activity to win popular support, the Socialist Party planned to deal with the immediate problems of the workers, focusing on their demands for shorter hours, higher wages, unemployment compensation, and the like.

The Party reconciled this activity in legitimate channels with its revolutionary program by considering securing improvements in the workers' immediate conditions to be a necessary preparation for the seizure of total power. Moreover, the Socialists differentiated their measures from similar reforms proposed by liberal parties or truly popular governments in that the Socialist measures would ultimately lead to abolition of private ownership, while the non-socialist reforms would leave the present economic base of society intact, thus failing to resolve the underlying social problem.

The Party's first task in the political struggle was to gain acceptance and freedom of action within the bourgeois society to carry out its program of seizing social power. To gain a firm establishment, the Party needed to increase its base of power and as a constitutional party, the principal means open to it were acquisition of electoral support and political influence in Parliament. This

presented a problem to the Socialists in that the steps which would lead to greater success in these methods of increasing its power, cooperation, and compromise with other representatives of social power might also weaken the strength of the Party's revolutionary character. The Party resolved the issue by adopting a policy according to which it would participate in electoral campaigns, but would maintain a rigid practice of non-collaboration with any bourgeois party. To consolidate its forces in Parliament, the Party agreed that the Socialist deputies should form a delegation responsible to the Party.² These measures represented the PSI's first compromise between its two goals in a practical situation.

The historical events illustrate, however, that the revolutionary goal of the Party hindered its constitutional development and that the Party's constitutional values hindered the development of its revolutionary character. In its bid for social establishment, the Party's revolutionary aims caused it to suffer stern repression at the hands of the State. These clashes presented serious threats to its legal existence, a primary requirement for a constitutional party. Three historical instances serve to illustrate this point: the uprising of the Sicilian peasants and sulphur miners in 1894, the rebellious demonstrations of the peasants and quarry workers in Lunigiana in the same year, and the bread riots in Milan, in

1898.³

These demonstrations were essentially outbursts of social unrest among the workers and peasants against particularly severe economic hardships. The Socialists, in each case, had not planned the outburst. But when it occurred, they had moved into the disturbance and attempted to direct it toward Socialist goals. The State, however, interpreted the incidents as Socialist-incited threats to the civil authority and took extreme measures against the Socialists in defense of the constitutional order.⁴ Military troops were sent to put down the demonstrations; Socialist leaders were arrested and imprisoned and, in 1894, the Socialist Party was ruled illegal. Its adherents were forbidden to assemble and its publications were suppressed.

Thus threatened, the party sought to defend its existence. Powerless to act against the State's superior force, the party took recourse to the only means of defense open to it, constitutional protest and appeal for popular support. It denounced the violent actions of the government as odious in civil society and explained its own position as unassociated with violent means. Rather, the conception of "revolutionary evolution" meant that the Socialist policy would gradually gain strength and support from the members of the society until it became the dominant force, when it would then declare the socialization of property by

constitutional means.⁵ Indeed, the Socialist leaders explicitly stated their rejection of violent action as a means for obtaining social power in the following statement:

If the use of violent means, which horrify the human conscience more for their stupidity than for their ferocity, is intended by revolution, we are not revolutionary, for such means are inadequate, hateful, and premature. And they are incompatible with, and contradictory to, our ideals.⁶

The Party Congress at Florence in 1895 gave formal expression to the Socialist renunciation of violence. It passed a resolution stating that: "no member of the PSI should accept the judgment of arms to resolve any question with any one for any reason on any topic."⁷ The Socialist leaders asserted the constitutionality of their own action in contrast to the atrocities it said were performed by the State. By drawing the distinction between social transformation and violent action in the use of the word "revolution", the Socialists could claim full legitimacy for their actions within the present order, thus diminishing the cause for their persecution by the State, and still adhere to their Marxist tradition of total social revolution, on which they based the party's appeal to the workers.

The effect of this policy, while consistent with the literal principles of its program, was to de-emphasize the revolutionary character of the party by pushing the transformation off into the future. The constitutional nature of the party, on the other hand, was emphasized. The party won a substantial increase in popular support but

largely for reasons beyond its Marxist appeal. The de-emphasis on revolution in its program of social change, combined with a genuine wave of sympathy felt for the party as the victim of State persecution, attracted non-proletarian elements to the party, notably intellectuals, students, and humanitarians indignant over working-class conditions.⁸ The general high regard for Socialism at this time among the notable Italian intellectuals is shown by a survey taken in 1895. Out of a selected group of intellectuals interviewed, 151 out of 194 endorsed Socialist beliefs. And, of the 151 respondents approving of Socialist doctrine, 110 did so without qualifications. The sample consisted of 105 writers, 63 scientists, and 26 artists.⁹ Later, in 1896, when the PSI felt sufficiently stable and wealthy to undertake the publication of a newspaper, many of the best intellectual figures of Italy pledged to contribute to this organ, Avanti!.¹⁰

The liberals, too, turned against the government in reaction against such repressive measures and threw their support to the Socialists in their concern for civil liberties. The general elections also reflected the new sympathy for the Socialist cause. In the national elections of 1895, the Socialists won seven additional seats over their previous five in the Chamber of Deputies. In fact, three of the Sicilian Socialists, who were sentenced to

prison for their role in the local uprisings, were among the deputies elected. The party received its strongest electoral support in the industrial provinces of Lombardy and Piedmont, with Sicily ranking next.¹¹ The number of Socialist deputies continued to increase in election after election.

This influx of supporters proved a mixed blessing to the party. They represented, on the one hand, an increased base of social support, but on the other, they introduced new demands and ideas divergent from the party's program and doctrine. The influx posed a fundamental conflict to the PSI. For success in constitutional action, it needed to secure the widest possible electoral base, yet for success in carrying out its revolutionary aims, it needed maximum control over membership and organization. The pressure of continued persecution from the State subordinated the resolution of this issue of discipline within the party, only to raise others.

The Socialist deputies, seeking to increase their strength in confronting the government in Parliament, agreed to an informal alliance with two parties of the Left, the Radicals and the Republicans. Neither of these parties accepted Marxist teachings, but they both joined the Socialists in rigid opposition to the government. The government's repressive tactics in handling recent episodes of social unrest had alienated them still further.

Together, the three delegations composed the "Extreme Left" in Parliament and strove to oppose any government measure.¹² That this strategy increased the influence the Socialists were able to exert in Parliament is demonstrated by an incident involving constitutional proceedings. The Cabinet, impatient with the incessant obstruction of the Extreme Left, attempted to force measures to limit debate upon the Chamber by royal decree. The Extreme Left raised vehement protest and the liberals and moderates in the Chamber, incensed by such unconstitutional procedure, joined them in opposition to the government. The king was forced to dissolve Parliament and to call for new elections in May 1900.¹³

The Socialists, elated by the success of this tactic, agreed to extend their cooperation with the Radicals and the Republicans to the ensuing election campaign. The three parties agreed not to file competitive candidates in order to maximize the strength of each party. This strategy also brought fruitful results for the Socialists; the party received an increase of twelve seats over its previous twenty in the Chamber. The Extreme Left together held sixty-seven seats.

These successes did not receive unanimous approval within the party, however. The majority of the proletarian membership regarded any collaboration with non-Marxist, i.e., bourgeois, parties as a betrayal of the workers'

cause. They feared that through such collaboration the party would become committed to policies which called for less than total expropriation of capital and abolition of the State. If so, the party would lose its revolutionary character and social problems would remain unsolved. Party leaders defended the policy, citing the necessity of attracting allies in pursuing a successful political strategy.¹³

Essentially, the issue under dispute was how the party could participate most effectively in the bourgeois political order to make gains for its cause and still maintain the distinct character of its principles. The incident raised the problem of conflicting goals and brought into overt disagreement differences of belief within the Party regarding the fundamental direction of its policy. But under the more urgent pressures from the State, the party postponed open discussion of the issue within its organization and therefore postponed also the search for a satisfactory resolution of it.

With the undeniable success of the 1900 elections, the PSI had won its first major battle. It had established itself firmly as a recognized representative of a segment of the population and as a participant in political affairs, receiving support from all regions of the country.¹⁴ It had proved itself a force which could not be suppressed, either in social activities or in Parliament. It had acquired the

necessary elements of legitimacy, sufficient popular support as shown by the electoral returns, approval and support by intellectuals and men of public affairs, a recognized measure of power in Parliament and substantial freedom of action within the present order, its leaders were released from prison, and its publications were permitted to resume operation. The PSI had become a duly established constitutional party and had achieved substantial advances towards its constitutional aims.

How did these advances relate to the revolutionary character of the party and in what ways had the party developed toward reaching its goal of revolution? In fact, each of these constitutional advances had tended to divert the party away from the simple pattern of revolution and to involve its energies in more and more complex adaptations to social life in the present order. As these problems arose, the immediate threat to the legal existence of the party, which was accorded primary importance, deferred consideration of them in terms of finding their best resolution to advance the goal of gaining total social power. Tensions rose noticeably within the party over its locus of authority, rules of discipline, resolution of differences, and control over membership, all of which were vitally important in the effective execution of a revolutionary program. Failure to confront these issues on their first appearance, and to establish precise, undisputed patterns or rules for

each of them, weakened the party's capacity to cope with political conditions on its own terms and to utilize even antagonistic social forces for its own ends.

These issues in the development of the party as an organization in seeking social control had been subordinated to the requirements of constitutional establishment in the first stage of the party's history. This pattern undeniably influenced the character of the PSI and the manner with which it would deal with later challenges in the political struggle for social power. Conflicting values demanded the subordination of one to the other in the party's struggle for establishment. The Italian Socialists placed the higher value on existence as a constitutional party; consequently, it developed those aspects which would strengthen it in constitutional activity and neglected those qualities which would prepare it for carrying out a program to overthrow the present order.

CHAPTER III

THE CHALLENGE OF POLITICAL ACTION

The election of 1900 marked the beginning of a new period in the development of the Italian Socialist Party (PSI) and its relation to society. The electorate had demonstrated a new support for the PSI by electing thirty-three Socialists to the Chamber of Deputies. This number represented an increase of thirteen over the previous delegation and included many of the Socialist who had been imprisoned following the Milan riots.¹ The king, interpreting the electoral returns as a popular registration of disapproval against the reactionary policies of the preceding government, and as increased sympathy for liberal and Socialist positions, chose a constitutionalist liberal, Giuseppe Zanardelli, to form the new Cabinet. Zanardelli's government undertook the task of re-establishing parliamentary procedure in the Chamber and of confirming the constitutional rights of free speech, free assembly, and free press to all persons or groups acting within the law. This change in governmental policy meant that the Socialist Party could pursue its policies without threat of arbitrary persecution from the government. Its leaders could legitimately propagate the Party's program and its journals

could freely be published.

The government also showed a new toleration for the Socialist program and a noticeable concern for social problems in general. Giovanni Giolitti, the new Minister of Interior, declared that the causes of the great differences between the rich and the poor lay in the process of industrialization and accompanying conditions. The squalor and poverty of the working class had been accentuated both by the press of population increase and the concentration of population in the cities.² Census figures show that the population of the country increased during the period of 1862-1901 by nearly one-third.³

<u>Year</u>	<u>Population</u>
1862	25,000,000
1872	26,801,154
1882	28,459,628
1901	32,475,253

The percentage of the total population living in communities of 2,999 inhabitants or fewer decreased by approximately twenty percent, while, correspondingly, the percentage of the population living in cities of 2,000 to 100,000 increased. In fact, the number of cities falling within the 20,000 to 100,000 range doubled. These conditions made temporary crises even more acute among the working class.⁴

On the other hand, there was a relative increase of prosperity in the society in response to its economic expansion. More savings were deposited in the banks. More consumer goods and services were available. Transportation

tion and communications facilities were extended and made accessible to a larger portion of the population. Greater economic advantages were now available within the society and the workers and peasants became increasingly aware of them. They also realized that pursuit of economic advantage was linked with political action. The increased number of poor in Italian society seemed to be the chief cause of imbalance in its condition.⁵ Giolitti defended the Chambers of Labor as representatives of the workers' interests before the Chamber of Deputies and advocated their legal recognition.⁶

The increased number of intellectuals who lent their sympathies and interest to the party illustrated another significant change in social attitudes favorable to the PSI. The group now showing sympathy for the Socialists included many who had previously been hostile to the party's efforts and beliefs.⁷ Avanti! reached a wider audience. Robert Michels describes public opinion toward the PSI in 1900 as changed in large part and observes that "the Socialists are no longer regarded as obscure conspirators or dangerous wrongdoers."⁸ The PSI was accorded both legitimacy for its operation and a new prestige within the society.

The party had gained increased support for two reasons: its stand against the abrogation of constitutional rights by the Pelloux and earlier governments in the late

1890s, and its position as the only political party devoted to alleviating the problems of poverty among the lower classes. Again, the party had received and welcomed the support of people who were not necessarily committed to the complete overthrow of existing institutions. The important point of this change in attitude toward the Socialists by the government, among the intellectuals, and among the general public, was that the PSI now had new opportunities to develop its constitutional character. Significant element in the society showed encouraging receptivity to Socialist principles.

In part, the causes for these changed social freedoms of political activity after 1900, coupled with the new social conditions, precipitated a tremendous growth in the formation of Peasant Leagues and Chambers of Labor.⁹ In 1900, there were thirteen Chambers of Labor in the country; in 1902, there were eighty Chambers with a total of 350,000 members. Peasant Leagues, which were almost non-existent in the previous decade, numbered 1,293 in 1902. The Leagues claimed a total of more than 250,000 members.¹⁰

Strikes and other labor agitations broke out in protest against inadequate wages and workers' benefits. This economic activity spurred political organization, too, and the membership of the Socialist Party increased sizeably.

These facts indicated a new interest in economic and

political questions on the part of married workers and peasants. The awareness of want, perhaps more than want itself, had been intensified among the working classes. This signified that the Socialist Party had new opportunities, also, to recruit supporters for its program of class war and revolution.

The changes in social attitudes and conditions implied a new role for the Socialist Party within Italian society. It now had the capability of acting politically. And indeed, the situation required action if the party were to increase its power and advance its aims as a social organization.

But these changed social conditions presented new problems to the PSI in its program of political action. To determine the best means of advancing its ends of achieving socialist control of society by constitutional means, the party needed to evaluate its new situation in terms of its ultimate goal. The party as a whole reaffirmed the general points of its doctrine: belief in the natural evolution of society toward the social order of collective management and ownership of property, conviction of the necessity of struggle between the social classes to bring this about, and conviction of the certainty of the proletariat's success in this struggle. But the new situation in which the party found itself, a situation which demanded responses to particular problems, made it necessary to state more

specific principles as bases for action. The attempt to do so made clear the fundamental incompatibility of the party's two principal goals, achieving total social revolution and following constitutional procedure. The greater the degree of specificity used in defining methods to strengthen the constitutional character of the party, the greater were the limitations placed upon the revolutionary nature of the party and vice versa. Mulling over this problem officially at the Party Congress at Rome in 1900, the delegates differed strongly over which set of principles the party organization should pursue, over which goal was primary.

Two groups, one emphasizing constitutional procedure and one emphasizing imminent revolution, defined different political requirements for Socialist success. These differences implied fundamental disagreements in their conceptions of the nature of social change and of the PSI's role in society. The group devoted primarily to constitutional means, led by intellectuals of the Milanese Socialist League, Filippo Turati, Leonida Bissolati, Claudio Treves, Ivanoe Bonomi, and others, reconsidered its conception of society and agreed that society would not necessarily be forced to a catastrophic end as the inevitable result of class warfare. It observed that in the complex process of political action the bourgeoisie could not be eliminated either by a general strike or by a parliamentary majority. Rather, the party must work to build a Socialist conscience

and a Socialist culture among the masses to enable them to take over the direction of society and, further, to sustain the new order. The moderates considered the preparation of the proletariat for its task of directing society to be the crux of the workers' struggle. Only when the absolute majority of the people had accepted the Socialist values of the equal worth of individuals--with regard to production, according to ability, and with regard to consumption, according to need--and when this majority had reached a sufficient stage of intellectual, physical, moral, and social development to enact the Socialist order and to uphold its laws, could the final aim of Socialism be realized.

To the moderates, who accepted the principle of Marxian materialism that economic conditions determined the moral and cultural qualities of people, development of the moral and cultural qualities of the proletariat presupposed a change in the industrial and economic structure of society. By this reasoning, the constitutionalists believed that it was possible to improve the lot of the workers before the rule of the proletariat was established. The PSI must concentrate its efforts first on achieving practical reforms for the workers in their daily life and work. For, as the proletariat developed its culture and capacities, it would inevitably bring about the Socialist order.

In planning a Socialist program on the basis of these

principles, moderates believed that the party must consider which measures should be taken to promote the economic, social, and cultural development of the proletariat as well as which measures would increase the party's political power. The party's test for accepting any method in the immediate political situation must be whether or not it would advance the development of the proletariat. Conversely, any policy which tended to hinder this development must be rejected.

The moderates concluded that the conditions of society required two practical policies for Socialist success. First, the PSI must "consolidate its liberties", i.e., strengthen the position of legitimacy it had won in the constitutional order. The moderates urged steps which would increase the party's effectiveness in a constitutional order: 1) to ensure guarantees of the rights of citizens before the courts and the police; 2) to reinforce the constitutional rights of freedom of speech, assembly, and the press which were necessary to the party's political operation; and, 3) to achieve universal suffrage and proportional representation. The party must secure the complete neutrality of the State in regard to all disputes between capital and labor. And it must try to secure universal suffrage and proportional representation so that the full force of the proletariat could participate in the political struggle. This position implied that the

Socialist Party must discipline itself to the full practice of constitutional rules in relation to the rest of society.

The moderates set the "conquest of political power" as the second task for the PSI. They defined this conquest as the extension of the party's electoral base, seeing the polls as the only means to power open to a constitutional party. To extend its base of electoral support, the Socialist Party had to demonstrate to the workers that it represented their hopes and aspirations and that it strove to redress their grievances.

In order to marshal its political power most effectively to carry out such tangible improvements, the PSI faced another problem of strategy. It must sustain the support of the members and followers which it had already gained. This objective required the party to take cognizance of the demands of its supporters and to strive consciously to reinforce their faith in Socialist beliefs and programs. The party must give substance to the demands of its current supporters as well as seek to enlarge the base of its support.

The moderates proposed measures which would benefit the working class directly as guides for party action. They urged such legislation as regulations on labor for women and children, compensation for injured or disabled workers, and improvements on laws governing the conditions of work. The moderates' proposals also included measures which were

designed to strengthen the social position of organized labor and to extend its area of social influence. The development of a nationwide arbitration system for labor disputes, nationalization of transportation and industries in the natural resources sector where cooperatives were not feasible, and the creation of a Ministry of Labor were to be among these steps.

The moderates advocated the pursuit of another type of policy for the party program, measures which would improve the general culture and welfare of the workers. These included compulsory secular education without charge to all children through the fifth elementary grade, and development of public sanitation systems and hygiene regulations.

Taken as a whole, these proposals for political, economic, and cultural reforms formed a logical coherent program of action in regard to workers' problems for a constitutional party. No one's rights would be harmed by violent action. The proletariat would develop its capacities in the legal manner which it must sustain in the Socialist order. The needs of the present would be met. The moderates called it the "Minimum Program" or "that which we cannot do without" in the development of the Socialist order of society.¹¹

The second major group within the PSI, composed largely of veterans of the old workers' movements prior to the PSI and young idealists fresh from their study of Marx,

emphasized the urgency of social revolution. It interpreted the party's increased capability for action in its new circumstances as confirmation of the inevitable success of the proletariat in winning control of society. It considered the persecutions of the PSI in the preceding period as evidence for the necessity of the class struggle and received the signs of response to Socialist propaganda endeavors from the workers as encouragement for the party's efforts. This group was more convinced than ever of the validity of the Socialist aims as set down in 1892, and of the certainty of the party's success in pursuing this program. The only way to win lasting reforms for the workers in society was for the workers to assume power. Under Socialist guidance, the workers must take control of management and production. The capitalist system and the bourgeois state must be completely replaced. Only then can the new Socialist order of society be designed and executed in detail. Consequently, the extremists defined the primary task of the Socialist Party in this period to be concentration on achieving complete control of society at the earliest possible time.

To bring about this change, the extremists contended that the Socialists only needed to arouse the workers to act in their own interests, which were embodied in the Socialist Program. The Socialist Party must present the accurate prospectus of social events to the workers and instruct them

in the method of realizing their aspirations--equitable shares of the goods and privileges of society which would allow them to develop their fullest capacities as human beings. The party must above all present its program to the workers as unique and distinct from all other parties. It must concentrate all its efforts on achieving its central goal, control of society. It must avoid the danger of developing an attachment to the bourgeois order by any political activity. Therefore, the party must never collaborate with bourgeois parties on any policy, as this practice could only compromise Socialist aims. It must be wary of securing reforms for the workers, lest they become too content with their present conditions and lose the sense of urgency of achieving the social revolution necessitated by the class struggle. It must be careful not to become too involved in projects which would distract the energies of the party from concentrating on its central goal.

Most of all, the extremist group feared the appearance of factions in the party, differing over principles and political strategy. Such a breach would foolishly weaken the party's strength against its enemies.

Given these considerations, the extremists recommended strict adherence to the original Socialist principles defined in 1892 as the basis for PSI policy in its new opportunity for political action. Non-collaboration with bourgeois parties or the bourgeois government and continued

recruitment of workers to give force to the Socialist program must be pursued to achieve the revolution. This group urged the party to reaffirm these principles as its "Maximum Program" and to base its strategy on them as their highest hopes.¹²

A third group within the PSI expressed its conception of the workers' struggle and proposed a program for the party at the same Rome Congress in 1900. Led by Arturo Labriola, a follower of Georges Sorel, this group advocated the syndicalist program for the Socialist Party. It held that the workers would organize a general strike as the quickest and simplest way to eliminate the bourgeoisie. If all the workers laid down their tools at once, they would totally incapacitate society and enervate the bourgeois power system. The workers could then assume power and take up the direction of society. This position commanded only a small body of supporters at the Party Congress and did not offer serious competition to the Minimalist and Maximalist factions. Significantly, however, it directed its pleas for support only to working men and to radicals.¹³

By their statements, the two major groups within Italian Socialism posed the fundamental conflict within the party. One group emphasized constitutional procedure in party activity; the other stressed the necessity for imminent revolution. Both were recognized goals of the party. Yet, the differences in the specific programs

outlined to fulfill these two goals revealed basic differences in the assumptions underlying the acceptance of the two goals.

The Minimalist and the Maximalist groups based their respective programs on different conceptions of society. The Minimalists viewed society as a complex order of human institutions where all of men's various qualities and conditions--moral, intellectual, spiritual, economic, political, and social--interacted with and influenced each other. The worth of all individuals is equal and no man has the right to do violence against another. Change in the order of society, therefore, must be gradual.

In contrast, the Maximalists regarded society as a simple association of men in which one particular form of social organization was imposed upon the whole by the class which held the most power, i.e., which controlled the wealth and privileges of society. Change in the social order could only be brought about by superior power. If the other members of society felt this prevailing order to be unjust or wrong, they only needed to organize in a sufficiently strong body to force the ruling class out of their positions of power. Once this fact was accomplished, the oppressed members could abolish the old order and establish a new order according to their ideals of social justice.

The two groups also differed in their conception of

the nature of the PSI as a social organization. The Minimalists regarded the true character of the party to be what it actually is at a given period. Using this guide, the party leaders should assess its strengths and its weaknesses and plan policy to maximize its existing strong points. In this way, the party could consolidate its gains and minimize its losses in the process of achieving the Socialist Program.

The Maximalists, however, considered the true character of the party to be the ideal of what it should be. On this basis, party policy should always be designed to fulfill the ideal. Any faults in the party's organization and action should be corrected, any weaknesses should be eliminated; but the party must act always on the basis of its ideal form. Anything less would make the party lose its uniqueness, and fail to solve in any enduring manner the problem to which it addressed itself.

Disagreement on these three assumptions--the nature of society, of social change, and of the PSI as a social organization--led to widely differing conceptions of the role of the party in the present society. The logical conclusions of the reasoning of the Minimalists were incompatible with those of the Maximalists and vice versa. The Minimalist group conceived the role of the party to be that of providing leadership toward a gradual transformation of the material and moral conditions of the society to the

point where the majority of the people would voluntarily accept the principles and enact the provisions of the Socialist program. Performance of this role required above all the practice of constitutionalism, the acceptance of certain restrictions on the party's own social action in order not to violate the legal rights of others, and conversely, ensuring its own freedom of action from violation by other parties or social institutions.

The Maximalist group, on the contrary, considered the role of the Socialist Party to be solely one of leadership of the proletarian class in its struggle for seizure of complete control of the society. This role required the party's rejection of any responsibility to the existing society and the concentration of all its efforts on the one goal of securing workers' control of society as soon as possible.

The programs for the PSI in response to its new conditions for potential action presented by the two groups demonstrated clearly that the two goals to which the party subscribed in theory were incompatible. The Minimalists' program grew out of the constitutionalist principle that control of society cannot legitimately rest in the hands of one particular group or class, but must be based upon the consent and approval of the majority of the population. The Maximalists, however, recognized only one class, the proletariat, as legitimately eligible for the direction of

society and denied the premise that this proletariat owed responsibility to any other class or order of social control. Either group could not accept the principles of the other and still hope to realize its own objectives.

Pressured by the fear of schism, the Socialist Congress attempted to resolve the differences between the Minimalists and the Maximalists by adopting both programs, the first as the means to the second. The Socialist leaders justified this decision by carefully worked-out reasoning. They declared the Minimum Program to be the guide to the immediate problems of economics and politics which the party faced. In this way, it would serve as the means to the party's greater end, the revolutionary transformation of society into a system of workers' control, defined by the Maximum Program.¹⁴ The Congress bolstered this somewhat artificial reasoning by re-asserting the general Socialist goals in traditional Marxist language. Both the Maximalist and the Minimalist groups professed their allegiance to the ultimate aim of collective ownership and management of the society's production and their solid unity in assisting the workers in the class struggle. The Socialist Party had officially adopted a new program to serve as its basis for political action.

Despite its blending of these two goals by adopting both the Minimum and the Maximum programs, the PSI failed to solve equally satisfactorily the practical problems

involved. In practice, the two programs were still logically in conflict on two areas essential to the operation of the party. These were the relation of the party to the existing structure of society and the composition and internal organization of the party. In the first area, the problem remained unresolved of whether the party should be constitutional in relation to the democratic state and to other parties and institutions within the society. This problem would arise in decisions regarding the party's tactical strategy, whether or not it should seek expansion of its power only by means of the legally established channels of elections, parliamentary alliances, and participation in the "bourgeois" government. It would be thereby involved in the kind of relationships that other elements of the working class movement, such as trade unions and peasant leagues would have to the PSI. Resolution of this question determine the party's policy in regard to situations of social unrest or popular agitations--strikes, uprisings, and local demonstrations of discontent, both in ideological content and in terms of tactics.

The second area in which the Minimum and Maximum Programs would conflict in practice was over the party's composition and internal organization. Dependent upon the position taken on the means of expanding its power, the party, if constitutional, must seek to increase its membership and electoral support by every means possible,

admitting all persons who wished to identify with the PSI for any reason. If the party rejected any responsibility to the existing system, but sought to carry out its program to replace it completely, it must seek to maintain control over its membership, admitting only those who were wholly dedicated to Socialist principles and programs, refusing admittance to all others. Such members might introduce doubt and dissension into the party ranks. Similarly, problems are inherent in the combination of the Maximalist and Minimalist goals regarding the internal organization and structure of the party. A constitutional party would require final authority within the party to be held by the membership. In a party emphasizing revolution, final authority must lie unconditionally with the leaders.

Discipline within the party would also present occasions for controversy. In a Maximalist program, no minority position contrary to that of the leadership could be tolerated. The leaders must be free to give or change orders at will as they judge the situation and be able to rely on these orders being executed by the membership. Under the Minimalist conception, expression of minority opinion was a constitutional right.

The role of doctrine was construed differently under each program. The Minimalists would logically use it to adjust party beliefs to changing factual conditions in the social situation. The Maximalists, however, saw its

importance as lying in interpreting changes in factual conditions in the light of Socialist principles, thereby reinforcing the convictions and faith of Party members in these principles.

Conflict on these issues would create further conflict on the matter of tactical maneuverability for the party. Failure of the Congress' motion to resolve the question of whether the party should act in accordance with constitutional principles or in accordance to the principle of expediting the workers' revolution would hamper the development of a party organization adequate to carry out either goal successfully. The ability of its organization to meet the challenges of daily political problems and to use them to further its ultimate objective would alone determine the effectiveness of the party. The actions of the PSI under its dual program in regard to the practical problems posed by its new social situation demonstrated the tendency for each goal to limit the development of the other, thus leading to ineffectiveness of the party in establishing and reaching any objective.

CHAPTER IV
PRACTICAL PROBLEMS OF THE DUAL PROGRAM
IN PSI ACTION AND ORGANIZATION: 1900-1920

Part I. The Challenge of Expanding
Bourgeois Institutions

Able to engage in political activity without threat of suppression, the PSI entered fully into the constructive pursuit of its program of collective ownership and management of production under the Dual Program in 1900. It continued its operation under this program for the next twenty years of its history. During this period, however, the PSI encountered specific political events and conditions which served to test the program's viability.

The Party confronted three major historical problems during this period. Through the years 1900-1911, a liberal-reformist, democratic government was in power and oversaw the gradual development of the nation's economy. Second, it faced the issue of "patriotism" versus Socialist principles raised by the war crises of 1912 and 1914, and again in a different form, by the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. And third, the economic and social crisis following the end of World War I presented the party, then at the peak of its numerical strength, with specific demands for

political action. In each situation, the party proved unable to define a workable policy of action under the Dual Program. Each challenge made the two groups within the party recognize more distinctly the inadequacy of the Dual Program to serve as a guide in principle or in policy for realizing their particular objectives. It became increasingly apparent that the two goals of following constitutional procedure and promoting urgent total social revolution required different policies in relation to the existing government, political parties, and social institutions, and that they required different forms of organization within the party itself. Consequently, when the explicit opportunity for the PSI to take political action was presented in the social crisis following World War I, the party was unable to act. It could not muster its powers to carry out a single goal and thus proved its ineffectiveness as a social organization. The schisms of 1921 and 1922 within the party were, therefore, not surprising.

The purpose of this chapter is to illustrate the progressive deterioration of cohesion within the PSI as the party's two goals proved incompatible in practice. One group sought to sustain the legitimacy which the party had won over the previous eight years and to extend it further. The Italian economy showed no signs of imminent collapse in the first decade of the twentieth century. Rather, it showed signs of a marked expansion, as did its accompanying

bourgeois institutions. The latter, indeed, showed tendencies toward social reform and revitalization. To the Minimalists, this meant that the PSI would have to counter these tendencies and establish its own scheme of social transformation with the majority of the population. The PSI might even have to appeal to certain middle class groups for support on non-revolutionary grounds. Once it received this support, the party could hope to use it to initiate reforms and to transform the society to the point where the majority would accept the Socialist order.

The other strong group in the party recognized the signs of economic discontent and inclinations toward political action among the industrial workers and the peasants as verification of the party's original theses of class warfare and the necessity for overthrowing completely existing bourgeois institutions. The Maximalists contended that the PSI must, above all, represent the true interests of the working class and the ideal of the Socialist society in all political issues and questions of the day. It must clearly demonstrate its intention of revolution. In this way the workers would recognize their natural allegiance to the PSI and organize under its direction to replace the bourgeois institutions. The Maximalists sought to appeal only to the workers; and they felt that, to gain the workers' full confidence, the PSI must prove beyond doubt that it had no taint by association with "unjust"

bourgeois institutions. Moreover, the PSI must not betray the workers who had already accepted the party as the defender of their needs and the leader of the social revolution.

The social composition of the party at this time presented an interesting pattern. In 1903, Robert Michels conducted a survey of Socialist Party membership, sending questionnaires to all sections of the party. Eight hundred and three sections responded and reported a total of 33,686 members for the PSI as of December 31, 1903. The breakdown of this membership, according to profession, is given in the following table:¹

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Percentage of Total Membership of PSI</u>
Industrial workers	42.3%
Artisans (skilled workers)	14.9
Agricultural laborers	15.0
Share tenants	6.1
White-collar workers	3.3
Small businessmen	4.9
Professionals	2.7
Students	1.1
Others	9.7

By far the largest portion, nearly three-fourths of the total membership of the party, consisted of rural and urban manual laborers. This is a very significant figure in the party's history. The petit bourgeoisie accounted for approximately fourteen percent of the total membership and the intellectuals only four percent. The smallness of this latter group is noteworthy, considering that the leadership of the party was drawn heavily from this group of educated

persons. Of the thirty-three Socialist deputies in Parliament in 1903, twenty-eight were university graduates. Three of the remaining deputies were engaged in lower middle class occupations and only two were wage-earners. Only one of the party leaders, Costantino Lazzari, was a wage-earner and he was an accounting clerk.²

The gross differences in number and in character between the manual workers and the educated group presented recurring problems to the party. Though the leadership of the party was shared among the small group of less than four percent of the party's total membership, the final authority for party action rested with the large segment of manual workers. This segment, the least experienced in political action, was to prove the most inflexible to change. Secondly, though the PSI's legitimacy in society rested chiefly with the professional and middle-class elements, the proportion of these groups to the manual workers in the party membership was small.

Having accepted two different types of social support and having committed itself to two conflicting models of social change, the PSI confronted the political problems of the time, declaring its unity in devotion to the cause of the working class. The first problem which the Socialist Party met upon its emergence into free political action in 1900 was a liberal, democratic government concerned with introducing social reforms of its own. What relation the

PSI should bear to the State in its effort to enact this program of social transformation preoccupied the party as the question demanding the major focus of its attention and energies through the years 1900-1911. Three historical phenomena occurred within this period, each of which forced the issue to the party's immediate attention and required some kind of decision.

The favorable climate for social reform during the decade was the first of these phenomena. The intellectuals wrote about the need for social reform. Parliament sponsored an inquiry into poverty, investigating the living conditions of the peasants, and an intensive report was presented to the Chamber. The Catholic Church stated its position on the issues of poverty and social welfare, and liberals in Parliament were interested in introducing reforms. In fact, over the decade, Parliament enacted a series of social welfare laws. Largely initiated by Giolitti, the list of welfare measures included the following: 1) a series of public health programs; 2) regulations regarding the prevention of accidents in factories; 3) limitations on working hours for women and children; 4) a national insurance and pension scheme; 5) relief for poverty in the South; 6) manhood suffrage; and 7) subsidies for cooperatives.^a Clearly, the Socialists by no means had a monopoly on ideas or proposals for social change.

In presenting its concepts of reform and in seeking to win supporters for them, the PSI had to formulate some kind of policy toward the specific attempts for reform being made within the society. According to the Minimum-Maximum Program, the PSI's task was to improve the working and living conditions of the working class in order to enable it to bring about the social revolution. Social reforms initiated by bourgeois parties or the bourgeois state could mean either of two things: an opportunity to further the improvement of the workers' conditions, or a hindrance to the workers' realization of the injustice of the existing regime, thus showing the necessity of overthrowing it.

Within the party, the Minimalist and Maximalist groups reacted differently to the bourgeois tendencies toward reforms. The Minimalists, committed to the constitutional procedure of social change, considered the receptivity to social reform on the part of the government, the parties, the intellectuals, and the population generally as an advantage to the party's cause. They saw an opportunity to increase electoral support by continuing and extending the informal alliance established in the previous decade with the "closely-related" Radical and Republican parties. At the PSI Congress at Imola in 1902, the Minimalists proposed that the party ally with "closely-related" parties in local elections.⁴

The possibility of using the PSI's increased prestige

and authority to speak for the working classes to better advantage in Parliament seemed important to the Minimalists. At Reggio Emilia in 1893, the PSI Congress had resolved that the Socialist deputies in Parliament should form a delegation to increase the effectiveness of their efforts, but stated that this delegation should be held directly responsible to the Party Executive. The Executive Committee, in turn, was elected and given its general direction by the Party Congresses.⁵ This practice had been continued under the Dual Program. The Minimalists complained that the Socialist Delegation was unable to act decisively on specific daily issues as they arose in Parliament. Opportunities were lost before the Party Executive could be consulted or a Party Congress called. To gain more flexibility for Socialist action in Parliament, the Minimalists recommended that the Socialist Parliamentary Delegation be removed from the control of the Party's Executive Committee.

Since the Minimalists comprised a majority of the PSI Parliamentary Delegation,⁶ this proposal would, in effect, have freed the Minimalist deputies to carry out their own conception of the Socialist program in Parliament. The Party Executive would be relegated to a secondary position without substantive control over Socialist activity in this important area. The Party Congress defeated this measure at Imola in 1902,⁷ but the Minimalists continued to seek other

means of increasing Socialist power by constitutional methods.

The question of gaining more support for measures advantageous to the Socialists by cooperating with non-Socialist parties gave rise to the more serious issue of whether the government should be supported when it initiated measures of social reform. Through the years 1903-1913, Giolitti introduced such a series of legislative proposals and, in each case, the question arose concerning what position the PSI should take in regard to government-sponsored reform.

The issue presented itself at the first Party Congress following the adoption of the Dual Program, the Congress of Imola in 1902. The Minimalists considered any proposal which brought genuine improvement to the workers an advantage to the Socialist cause of raising the general standard of living among the workers, and one which the party should support. The Minimalist position declared that there was no possibility of judging the question whether or not the PSI should support the government except on the basis of each particular case and set of circumstances. The question continued as a source of dispute throughout the period.

The Minimalists felt the party's progress toward increasing its number of supporters and areas of power through electoral alliance with other parties and parliamen-

tary collaboration and support of the government when appropriate for the Socialist cause was hampered by one characteristic--its revolutionary-Marxist tradition. The militant language and radical tone taken by the Maximalist deputies in Parliament made the atmosphere "unpleasant" and, the Minimalists charged, frightened the government from making possible concessions to Socialist demands.⁹ The Maximalists refused to discuss day-to-day political problems in anything but terms of class war and revolutionary language.

Secondly, the Minimalists criticized the propaganda disseminated by the Maximalists as typical of the outdated PSI assertions of the preceding decade and as presenting to the workers an oversimplified and visionary conception of the Socialists' struggle and the nature of the future society. They feared that the traditional conception would lead the workers to believe that the task of establishing a Socialist order would be easy and could be carried out quickly. The workers would then fail to see the difficulty in the prospective process of social change and, consequently, would not understand the delays and the frequent changes of method involved in bringing about the legitimate transformation of society into the Socialist order successfully.

The next weakness which the Minimalists saw in the PSI's action under the Dual Program was the lack of a

realistic sense of responsibility to the society. The Minimalists voiced this criticism first at Imola. But the workers' General Strike of 1904 provoked the strongest reaction by the Minimalists against any type of violent or direct action undertaken in behalf of the workers' movement. Action outside the limits of law and concern for the society's welfare would not only alienate public sympathy from the Socialist Party and hinder the party's chances for increasing its strength by legitimate means, but it also would go beyond the limits of essential Socialist principles. The pith of the Socialist program was legitimate social change for the general welfare.

Considering the effects of the PSI's traditional characteristics of militancy and lack of sense of responsibility to the existing order upon its present action and situation, the Minimalist group recommended that the party largely drop its violent Marxist language in favor of terms less offensive to other groups. It urged also that the party present its goals in more realistic terms, in order that the workers and other members of the population might understand more clearly both the problems and gains involved.

Last, the Minimalists reiterated their conviction that only by following a well-developed policy and by acting responsibly within the society could the PSI achieve the necessary conditions of approval and acceptance to carry out

its aims of establishing collective ownership of property and management of production. All three recommendations for change requested essentially that the PSI temper its revolutionary manner and adopt a more moderate tone in politics.

The Maximalists judged the inclinations and acts of the bourgeois governments and parties toward social reform to be a danger to the Socialist Party's program and expansion. They regarded any reforms instituted by the bourgeois government or achieved in collaboration with bourgeois parties to be temporary appeasements granted to the workers' grievances and intended to divert the workers from their natural course of revolution against the existing order. The Maximalists held that the PSI's policy in regard to any non-Socialist proposal for reform or scheme for political action should be total abstinence from any kind of cooperation or support. They objected vigorously to the practice of informal electoral alliances with the bourgeois parties which the PSI had taken up in 1900, and declared that it should be dropped. Although the Minimalists succeeded in passing a measure which officially sanctioned such alliances in local elections at the Congress of Imola in 1902, it was over the objections of the Maximalists.

Later in 1902, an incident occurred in the local elections of Cremona which particularly incensed the Maximalists. The official PSI newspaper, under the

editorship of Leonida Bissolati, a member of the moderate group, supported the candidate of the Radical Party in fulfillment of such an electoral agreement over a local Socialist running for the same office.⁹ The Maximalists considered such an act to be one of flagrant indiscipline and an unconscionable violation of Socialist principle.

Similarly, the Maximalists felt the PSI should refrain completely from any cooperation with the bourgeois parties in Parliament. Such cooperation could only taint the Socialist objectives with partial reforms. The PSI must not appear to the workers to be wavering in its ideal of total social revolution. The Maximalists had agitated for discontinuing the informal parliamentary alliance which the PSI had established in 1895. They feared that parliamentary cooperation would lead to a weakening of the party's resolve to carry out a complete social revolution. The Maximalists insisted on this point of non-cooperation with bourgeois parties for the PSI again and again throughout this period and the Maximalist deputies continued their own policy of refusing to do so in Parliament.¹⁰

The Maximalist position on the question of whether the PSI should ever support the government followed from its stand on electoral and parliamentary alliances with bourgeois parties. It was unconditionally negative. Various incidents occurred which led the Maximalists to clash with the Minimalists over PSI practice in this regard.

At the Congress of Imola in 1902, Antonio Labriola stated the position of the Syndicalists, the extreme faction within the Maximalist group. He declared that the PSI should stand in uncompromising opposition to the government even on its proposals of simple reforms such as--regulation of working hours and enforcement of sanitary conditions. He reasoned that these measures only distracted the workers' attention from the necessity for revolution and lulled them to false contentment with their lot.

In late 1902, certain Socialist deputies agreed to participate in government committees in Parliament, including one which drafted proposals for a military project.¹¹ The Maximalists were outraged at this action taken under the Socialist Party name. They thought that PSI action in Parliament should be restricted to presenting proposals which were distinctly Socialist in nature.

The issue of PSI support for the government stirred continual controversy within the party over the period from 1900 to 1911. The Party Congresses of Imola, Bologna, and Rome debated the issue at length and with much strong feeling on both sides. When the Minimalists assumed the leadership of the party in 1908, they directed its action in Parliament until 1911 according to their convictions, but not without opposition from the Maximalist element.

The importance of the Maximalists' criticism of the character and operation of the PSI was that the practices

which it considered detrimental to the development of the party were the same practices which the Minimalists regarded as most essential. The one characteristic of the PSI which the Maximalists found harmful to its mission as the vanguard of the proletariat was its tendency towards gradualism and conciliation with the bourgeois parties and institutions. The PSI, according to the Maximalist conception, had to demonstrate to the laboring classes its complete rejection of, and disassociation from, the bourgeois order of society.

The division within the party leadership over these issues became more pronounced. The leaders supporting the Minimalist position were intellectuals, journalists, lawyers, and university graduates. They were, on the whole, men associated with the moderate journal Critica Sociale, and committed to ideas of legitimate social change. Their number included Filippo Turati, editor of Critica Sociale, Leonida Bissolati, Camillo Prampolini, Nicola Badaloni, Claudio Treves, Ivanoe Bonomi, and Antonio Gramsci. Almost the whole of the Socialist Parliamentary Delegation followed the Minimalist position, as well as the heads of the workers' cooperatives.¹²

The Maximalist leaders, in contrast, were men bred on workers' socialism: Costantino Lazzari, Romeo Sordi, E. C. Longobardi, and Arturo Labriola. A cluster of Socialist deputies associated with the syndicalist ideas of Enrico Ferri defended the Maximalist position, as did the leaders

of the workers' societies and trade unions.¹² The two differing perceptions of the workers' struggle, which these men had subordinated in 1892 to the need for strength gained from common endeavor, began to re-emerge in the problems of judgment and initiative of daily political action.

The second historical phenomenon which the PSI had to consider during the years 1900-1911 was change in the composition of the party's membership. This was due, in part, to the new policies which the party exercised and, in part, to changes in the political outlook of various segments of the population following new developments in their economic and social conditions. As the Socialist party began to lose its stigma and to gain respect from the State, the intellectuals and, among the population, generally, the extent of its attentive audience enlarged. Outside the class of manual laborers, not only professors and university students, but also white-collar workers and State employees found Socialism attractive and responded to the appeal of its new Minimum Program. Railway employees, telephone and telegraph operators, and elementary school teachers, for example, were all employed by the State. Poorly paid, they had little or no reserve against illness or loss of their jobs. The reforms outlined in the Socialist Minimum Program represented the closest solution to their problems offered in contemporary politics. A large

number of white-collar workers, many of them State employees, joined the PSI for these reasons, while not committing themselves to the end of total social revolution or the destruction of capitalist bourgeois institutions.¹⁴ The Minimalists regarded this addition to the PSI's number as an increase in the party's electoral and parliamentary strength and as an advancement in the party's acceptance by the society.

At the same time the PSI received this influx of new members, it received an additional increase in membership from another segment of the population. Revolution-oriented workers from newly formed Chambers of Labor and from syndicalist-influenced labor organizations joined the PSI as the proper organization through which to manifest what they saw as their political interests and to conduct their political activities. Agricultural workers from the recently organized Peasant Leagues also joined the PSI. These groups made their attachment to the PSI as the party of the proletariat in the class war. To them, it seemed the instrument by which the future social order of collective ownership and management of production would be brought about.¹⁵

The Maximalists considered this addition to the party's ranks evidence of the fact that the workers were realizing the necessity for class warfare and were looking to the PSI for leadership in the social revolution. A

marked increase in the number of labor disturbances and agitations in the early years of the decade appeared further proof to the Maximalists that the time for the mass workers' uprising was very near.

The Maximalists vigorously opposed the entry of white-collar workers into the party ranks. They considered the white-collar workers alien to the real revolutionary class, the manual laborers. The white-collar workers, it was felt, did not accept the necessity for overthrowing existing institutions and therefore only constituted a hindrance to the PSI. The admission of these white-collar workers to the party would undermine its revolutionary strength.

A party which supports itself on the shoulders of the white-collar workers employed by the State, or that goes begging protection from them could never be a serious danger to the existence of the State. In fact, the State has but one function for the white-collar workers, that of the purse, of granting increases in wages for them.¹⁶

At the Congress of Bologna in 1904, the issue of membership composition was debated at length. The Maximalists, led by Labriola's more extreme group, expressed their definitive opinion that "the party must bar all those adherents who came from the middle classes, for example, the petty rural proprietors, the school masters, and white collar workers."¹⁷

Conversely, the Minimalist group regarded the entrance of the new revolutionary element into the party as a

hindrance to its conception of the PSI's development. They called this increase of the revolutionary element injurious to the party but declared it impossible for the Socialist Party, traditionally the refuge of the discontented, to prevent the infiltration of "maniacs who are not able to adapt" into its ranks.

The Minimalists, seeking the widest possible base of social support, could refuse admittance to party membership to no one. The Minimalists were afraid that the revolutionary character and acts of these new workers' groups would alienate support already won for the party from the non-proletarian elements of the society and frighten away possible recruits from these groups.

An incident which illustrates the offense done to the base of support of one wing of the PSI by actions undertaken for the success of the other wing is the General Strike of 1904. Labor disturbances had broken out again in Sicily in the fall of 1904. Discontent spread among the workers. The Syndicalists, led by Labriola, initiated the general strike, organized through the Chambers of Labor. The strike was carried out as representing the entire labor movement, though without the approval of the Minimalist Socialists. The strike was successful, inasmuch as workers in all industries throughout the nation left their jobs. It brought no conclusive changes in the organization of production, however, and after a few days of expectant

waiting for the total collapse of the economy, the strikers, disillusioned and hungry, returned to work.

The real effects of the strike appeared after the workers were back on their jobs. Prime Minister Giolitti, had allowed the strike to play itself out without the interference of the State. Then he called a general election. The general public was disturbed by the display of workers' radicalism demonstrated by the strike and was annoyed at the inconvenience caused by the stoppage of public transportation and communication facilities-- sanitation, light, and drinking water services, the daily press, and the production of bread. Consequently, in the ensuing election, the Socialist Party lost parliamentary strength. The number of its Parliamentary Delegation dropped from thirty-three to twenty-seven.¹² The Minimalists were shocked and indignant over the occurrence of the general strike. This radical action by the workers had offended the groups in the society to which the Minimalists looked for support and which granted the legitimacy necessary to their conception of the PSI's success.

Indeed, the event prompted the Minimalists to reconsider the traditional Socialist doctrine in the light of present social conditions. At the next congress of the party, the Congress of Rome in 1906, a group on the right within the Minimalist faction presented a proposal to the assembled delegates which denied the Marxist theory of class

warfare and the inevitable disintegration of the capitalist institutions. It proposed, instead, reform within existing institutions as the program for social change for the PSI. In presenting the resolution, this group of Minimalists admitted they were renouncing the privilege of representing the Marxist tradition.

This open renunciation of Marxist theory by the Minimalists in turn offended the revolutionary current in the party. They blamed the failure of the general strike on the Minimalists' gradualism and reformism which sapped the revolutionary enthusiasm of the proletariat. At the Rome Congress, the manual workers, representing the majority of the party, did not understand the practice and implications of the reformism of the Minimalists and were frightened by its seeming exaggerations and inconsistencies with the proletarian cause. Consequently, the Congress did not adopt the Minimalist resolution.²¹ But neither did it pass a program of open class war, continued strikes and agitations by the workers, as advocated by the Syndicalists. Public sympathy was against radical action, in contrast to the widespread support in the earlier uprisings in Sicily, Lunigiana, and Milan. This was demonstrated by the Socialist losses in the elections immediately following the General Strike of 1904. Parliamentarism seemed to have penetrated the public mentality to the degree that any other means seemed imprudent or immature.²²

The General Strike of 1904 had an unanticipated effect in reference to the potential source of social power to which the PSI directed its appeal. The Catholic leadership had been growing increasingly more tolerant of the secular state and less doctrinaire regarding its ban on political participation by its adherents. The episode of the General Strike had aroused Church leaders to the threat posed to their own institutions by a radical workers' movement and to a sense of their own responsibility in the existing society.²³ The stimulus to the not yet developed political sensibilities of the Catholic leadership represented a potential competitive force among Catholic workers and peasants with which the PSI had not reckoned. The rise of the Popolari, the Catholic mass party, after the war of 1914-1918 was to demonstrate the force of this competition.

As a result of the experience provided by the strike, the two groups within the PSI realized more clearly the antagonisms between their basic positions. Still, neither group could convince the majority of the party membership, the manual laborers, of the rightness of its position alone. And neither group would deny its mission of leadership of the working class or its devotion to this cause. Consequently, the PSI Congress of 1906 confirmed once more the equivocal program of the necessity for class struggle and the practice of legal means in carrying out the Socialist aims of collectivization for the workers.²⁴

The last major historical phenomenon which the PSI confronted in carrying out its program for workers' revolution was the product of the gradual development of the nation's economy which had occurred during the decade. This had also allowed cultural and social improvements for the population. Moreover, the nation experienced, during this decade, a period of domestic and external peace, which allowed the social changes to evolve relatively free from interruption or severe crisis.

Many of the workers' needs which had been demanded so militantly in 1901-1905 had been fulfilled by a combination of welfare legislation and a general increase in economic prosperity. More jobs were available; more consumer goods were in the shops at lower prices; wage increases had been granted; some of the more pressing social reforms had been enacted. At this time, the national federation of trade unions elected to its Executive Committee men of Minimalist Socialist political convictions. This signified that the General Confederation of Labor (CGL) confirmed a policy of legal reform in pursuing the interests of the workers. The Syndicalists and their proposals for simple revolutionary action by the workers' movement had, to a considerable degree, been discredited in the eyes of the general population by the general strike.

These changes in the economy had produced changed attitudes in the population. As their needs were more

satisfied, Italians became less discontented and less susceptible to proposals for revolution. The attachment of the trade unions to the Socialist position represented a very significant shift in terms of the Maximalist program. The CGL represented approximately 800,000 workers. This was a large portion of the specific population to which the Maximalists appealed for support. This shift to what was essentially the Minimalist position presented a serious liability to the possibility of the Maximalists ever winning unqualified control of the party, or more important, the society.

The PSI's official policy of "integralism" was at this time highly superficial as a statement of the party's values and as a directive to its actions. Neither the Minimalist nor the Maximalist wing admitted the validity of limitations imposed upon its own values by the requisites of the other's values. The party's acceptance of the integralist formula depended, therefore, largely upon the personality of the faction's leader, Enrico Ferri. Ferri, a dynamic, magnetic personality, had a remarkable capacity for making difficult problems appear to be very simple. Supremely confident in his own powers, he inspired confidence among other people in his personal ability to handle complex situations and issues. The situation arose that the integralists' dynamic, if erratic, leader suddenly left his offices in the Party Executive in 1908.²⁵ This occurrence undermined the

Integralists' policy thoroughly in the party and left the position of leadership open. Since the acceptance of social reform by legitimate means had generally increased with the society and among a significant portion of the workers' movement also, the Minimalists won the control of the PSI's Executive Committee quite easily in 1908. The Minimalists' base of support had widened considerably in the two years since 1906 and it continued to increase through the next three years.

Although the Minimalists declared, when they assumed control of the leadership, that revolutionary syndicalism in the workers' movement was dead, they could not, by their own principles of legitimate procedure, expel the remnant of the revolutionary group from the party. Nor was revolutionary fervor dissipated outside the Socialist Party and the CGL. In certain regions of the country, particularly Parma, Ferrara, and Milan, fresh revolutionary uprisings among peasants and industrial workers occurred in 1906, 1907, and 1908. The incidents spurred political and economic organization among the workers and they adopted the doctrine of class warfare and total revolution in their newly-formed Chambers of Labor and Peasants' Leagues.

An interesting turn of events took place among these new revolutionary groups in 1908. Frustrated after a series of strikes and agitations had ended in failure, the workers became sympathetic to the appeals of the new prophets of

revolutionary nationalism which began to be heard in Italian society. Gabriele D'Annunzio represented the spirit of this movement. The ease with which revolutionary workers shifted their loyalties is significant in the light of a later crisis in the party, in 1914.

At the end of the period 1900-1911, the PSI had developed to the point where the two wings within it realized the discrepancies between their positions in the workers' movement. Each succeeded in winning a separate base of social support for its distinct principles and character. The quandary of the party, however, consisted in the fact that the majority of the party members, the manual workers who were largely silent in party discussions and debates, remained unwilling to relinquish fully the tradition of revolution or to forego the possible achievements of reform within the existing social structure. They provided the most substantial base of support for the workers' movement and neither of the two rival groups of leaders were willing to cut themselves off from it. Nor was either group willing to renounce its claim to leadership of the universal workers' movement. To do so would have reduced the validity of the principles each group advocated. For each group, this supposition provided the basis for its reasoning and principles.

At the end of the party's first decade under the Minimum-Maximum Program, the incompatible duality between

programs of legitimate action and total social revolution remained the goals accepted and tolerated by the majority of the PSI members. This group was largely inactive in political affairs and did not face the practical contradictions involved in attempting to carry the Dual Program into action. Social conditions in Italy were such that the Dual Program remained plausible to this segment of the population. It was accepted by the workers insofar as the Minimalists affirmed total social revolution to be the net result of their efforts. The Minimalist leadership, dedicated first to legitimate goals, appeared superficial to the gross largest element of the party's membership, and, to be permanent, had yet to win this membership to a position where it shared its convictions fully.

Part II. Patriotism versus Socialist Principles

The Socialist Party had been gradually growing in cohesion under three years of relatively unchallenged Minimalist leadership when it confronted the jarring event of national war. The Giolittian government declared war on Turkey September 9, 1911, ostensibly to protect Italian investments in Libya which were being threatened by increased Turkish activity in the province. The war was brief, though costly, and in 1912 Italy won her show of strength and forced Turkey to cede Libya and Cyrenaica.²⁶

The Libyan War posed a difficult issue to the PSI in 1911. The party could not avoid this major event in Italian politics; it had to take a position in regard to it. According to the traditional Socialist principle, war was the inevitable result of the capitalist system. Capitalist nations engage in war, driven by their internal necessity for imperialist concentration and international competition in order to perpetuate themselves. They are driven to war also by the need to disperse domestic political conflicts, which will ultimately prove their downfall. War is a sign of deterioration of the capitalist nation and the Socialists must stay steadfast in their principles of unqualified opposition to the bourgeois institutions in order to lead

the working class in its inevitable triumph.

Yet, in 1911, the PSI had reached a new point of strength within the legitimate society. The Socialist Parliamentary Delegation numbered forty deputies and promised to become substantially higher with the prospect of passage of the government-initiated manhood suffrage bill in the next year. In fact, the government had recently recognized the increased influence and strength of the Socialist Party in Parliament by offering a cabinet post to Bissolati, a member of the PSI Parliamentary Delegation. Substantial improvements and reforms had been secured in working class conditions through legitimate means. To oppose the government's policy of war in confirmation of traditional Socialist principles would mean the rejection of all the party ties to the legitimate society--the gains it had made and liaisons it had established. On the other hand, to support the bourgeois government's war policy would mean effective renunciation of the basic principles of the Socialist Party.

The party was immobilized in its first reaction to the declaration of war, but then split deeply under the pressure of the crisis. The legalitarians on the right end of the Minimalist continuum, Bonomi, Bissolati, and their followers urged that the PSI support the government in its war enterprise. These men had, in the preceding three years, undertaken a campaign through Avanti! to educate the masses

to parliamentary methods and legitimate goals. They had consistently cooperated with the liberal governments of the past decade and they still felt this policy to be productive and essential for the workers' cause. They refused to consider the government's declaration of war sufficient cause for disrupting their pattern of parliamentary cooperation in the name of what they considered "outworn revolutionary principles."²⁷

The nucleus of revolutionaries in the Maximalist wing reacted vigorously to the situation and confirmed without hesitation the traditional Marxian Socialist principles. The event represented to them the unquestionable confirmation of their revolutionary thesis. The manual workers in the party, led by Lazzari and representing the largest segment of the party membership, also confirmed immediately their original Socialist convictions and declared that the PSI had no choice but to denounce the government's engagement in war. Hostile demonstrations against the government punctuated their assertions.²⁸

The most interesting reaction to the crisis within the PSI was that of the Turati-Treves group, the remaining section of the Minimalists. Although the members of this group saw merit in the practice of legitimate methods in behalf of the working class, they still accepted the basic Marxist principles regarding the fate of bourgeois institutions. Secondly, they were bound by their own principles of

legitimate action in regard to the authority within the party. The legitimate authority rested with the majority of the party members, and Turati and Treves would not consider transgressing the majority's will. The unity of the working class movement, under a single set of leaders, was by far its most potent political characteristic and they would not disrupt it.

At the Party Congress of 1912, the Maximalists clearly received the majority of the membership's support for their proposal of unconditional opposition to the government, then engaged in war with Turkey, and unqualified reaffirmation of Socialist principles. Dominating the Congress, the Maximalists succeeded in winning another victory. The new nucleus on the left in the Maximalist wing, incensed by the overtures of the legalitarian Bissolati to the bourgeois government, demanded that he and his small group of followers be expelled from the PSI. A previously little known figure in the Maximalist ranks made the speech requesting the expulsion of these veteran party leaders. He was Benito Mussolini, a fiery Romagnole who preached a new kind of Socialism, one that was more violent and more emotional than usual even for the Maximalists. His demands and doctrines for PSI action were even more extreme than those of the Maximalist proponents of Syndicalism who initiated the general strike.

Though not wholly in agreement with the language and

assertions made by the Maximalists concerning Socialist opposition to the national war, the Turati-Treves Minimalist group submitted to the Maximalist proposal as the official PSI program voted by the majority of the party representatives. The Congress concluded with the Maximalists assuming control of the PSI Directorate. Lazzari took over the chairmanship and Mussolini, the fast-rising new figure among party leaders, became editor of Avanti!.

The change in the PSI's character and activities under the direction of the Maximalists became quite apparent. Avanti!, previously engaged in soberly educating the masses of workers to parliamentary methods and legitimate goals,³⁰ now incited the workers, through its pages, to take up the most radical and direct kind of action in order to bring about the social revolution.³¹ Sporadic outbursts of violence and strikes, instigated by Socialists, occurred in several areas, particularly among the share-tenant peasants in Emilia-Romagna.³² The party had assumed a distinctly radical and belligerent manner in its relations with existing parties and institutions.

As this new radical character of the PSI developed more and more fully in the party's activities and statements, the Turati-Treves contingent became increasingly critical of the Maximalist leadership. They denounced this new form of Socialist behavior as "fatuous revolutionary idealism" and charged Mussolini with throwing over the

philosophy of historical materialism as the core of Socialist principle. They criticized Mussolini's propaganda as claiming impossible achievements for the strength of will and ideas of a few select men.³³ The Minimalists' dissent from the Maximalist direction of the PSI grew, and the party's temporary external cohesion induced by the crisis of 1912 decreased.

The outbreak of European war in 1914 brought a still more severe crisis to the PSI. The war of 1911-1912 had been a relatively limited, national enterprise, but it had still compelled the Socialists to reconsider profoundly their ideals and the program of their party. In the summer of 1914, the major countries of Europe were at war, and Italy faced the possibility of becoming involved. As the Socialist Party had recently affirmed, the support of any war policy stood in direct contradiction to its ideals. Yet, the question posed by Italy's possible involvement in an European or more extensive war was whether the existence and strength of the Italian Socialist Party was separate from, and independent of, the Italian nation. The direct challenge of international war to the principles and essential character of the Socialist movement demanded the formulation of a specific policy by the PSI in terms of its goals in regard to the war.

Officially, the PSI reacted to the situation with remarkable cohesion. Having just defined its position with

respect to war in true Marxist terms in 1912, the PSI, as a whole, staunchly reaffirmed its convictions in opposition to all war as the instrument of capitalistic imperialism. The Socialist Party declared its official policy in regard to the war to be unconditional neutrality. In September, 1914, the PSI issued a statement explaining its position. Reportedly, the statement was prepared jointly by Turati and Mussolini, the leaders of the two internal factions within the PSI, and represented the substantial consensus on the issue within the party membership.

This high degree of cohesion shown by the PSI lasted about three weeks. Mussolini grew restless under the bonds of the same policy of inaction toward war advocated by Turati, Giolitti, and the Church.²⁵ The Socialists were not advancing their interests by mere neutrality. Faced with the dilemma of reconciling his previous position, that war was utterly incompatible with Socialist principles, with a desire to have the PSI take a more forceful policy, Mussolini reconsidered the causes of war. He accepted the distinction between kinds of war drawn by Jean Jaures, the French Socialist whose party had voted to support its government in the war effort. Mussolini concluded that there were two kinds of war: not only was there war for conquest, which Socialism must condemn on principle, but also there was war to end wars, which Socialism should support and carry to the finish. Mussolini judged the war

of 1914 to be of the second kind, and therefore urged the PSI to take up the policy of intervention and to fight, in the name of Socialism, to "end all wars."³⁴

The other Socialist leaders reacted immediately to this deviation from the party position. They had just rationalized their expulsion of the Minimalists' legalitarian group in 1912 for urging the proletariat to support the State when it was involved in the dangerous enterprise of war, on the grounds that any support of war was heretical to Socialist principles. Although Mussolini's reasons were different, he still asked the workers' movement to support war, which defined in Socialist terms could only mean supporting the imperialist efforts of a capitalistic, bourgeois regime. This was intolerable to the Socialist leaders: they promptly expelled Mussolini from the PSI. The editorship of Avanti! passed into other hands.³⁷

Scarcely subdued by his expulsion, Mussolini immediately began to mobilize support for his position of intervention in the war. He could not forget his rejection by the Socialist leaders and attacked them in his new daily paper, Il Popolo d'Italia. He declared his intention to seek the favor of the proletariat, and thereby to "raise the standard of schism" among the followers of the PSI.³⁸

A group on the extreme left within the Maximalist wing did follow Mussolini from the PSI. This loss affected the party more in terms of quality than in quantity; the group

was small, but it represented some of the most vociferous elements clamoring for direct action in the party. It was composed of the frustrated workers and peasants from the Parma and Ferrara regions, young men attracted by the excitement and glory promised by Mussolini's bold proposal and men generally discontented with their lot and with life in general.³⁹

With the expulsion of Mussolini, the PSI had not severed its two most widely-differing factions, the thoroughly legitimatist group among the Minimalists, which renounced the Marxian theory of class war and the inevitable demise of bourgeois institutions, and the group which urged war, revolution, and violent action indiscriminately of Marxian purpose within the Maximalist wing. These excisions from the party served only to confirm, for the body of the party membership, the validity of their traditional beliefs. The remaining section of the Maximalists retained the leadership of the PSI under Lazzari. They and the attenuated group of Minimalists found common cause in protesting the European war as intolerable for the international brotherhood of workers. But even their agreement on this general protest was based partially on different reasons. While Lazzari and the Maximalists steadfastly asserted their opposition to the war on Marxist grounds, Turati, speaking for the largely Minimalist Socialist Parliamentary Delegation in the Chamber, argued against Italy's intervention in

the European war because it would result in unavoidable paralysis of the nation's economy and damage to its culture. Turati's argument reflected concern for the preservation of the nation's existing order, in contrast to the Socialists' stated aim of destroying that form of economy and creating a new culture. The fundamentally different commitments of the two groups within the party appear even at this point of ostensible unanimity.

The policy of protest against the war, however, was the extent of offensive strategy proposed for the PSI by the party leaders in regard to the event of war in terms of its pursuit of the social revolution. Not even the fact of Italy's actual entry into war in May 1915, shook the PSI in its convictions. Instead, the party solemnly rededicated its efforts to maintaining its Marxist ideals. Obligated to define some policy in political action with regard to the nation's war enterprise, the PSI stated its official position as being "neither to adhere nor to sabotage."⁴⁰

This program was, in itself, a compromise policy. The Socialists refused to support the war on the grounds that it was the product of the capitalist system; yet the PSI would not hinder its prosecution or take any intentional measures which would harm the national state in its efforts. Given its political position, this was about the only policy the Socialist Party could take. To support the national war effort would have meant renunciation of its Marxist

principles, which the party had just affirmed twice at painful cost. The PSI was too committed to Marxist principles to deny them, at this point, with regard to the fact of war. Moreover, the war was not popular in the nation; other groups including the Church, were as openly opposed to it as the Socialists.⁴¹ But non-support of the war effort and a deliberate attempt to undermine the national state, particularly when it was already in danger, were altogether different. The latter action would no doubt have alienated the PSI from national life altogether.

In defining a program for action, the party leaders were bound by another consideration. They wanted, above all, to maintain the following they had secured: they did not want to lose any other portion of the "working class movement." The PSI now received its support principally from two elements in the population: the industrial workers of the North and peasants. The party's strength among the latter group was concentrated largely in the Po Valley. Uncultured and uneducated, these groups could grasp the significance of war only as it impinged on their personal or local affairs. They supported the PSI as the party of the working class. Different reasons for supporting war or distinctions between various kinds of war had no meaning for them. Given the nature of this audience, class solidarity was the most potent policy the PSI leaders could advocate and still maintain these groups' support.⁴² In essence, the

party had confirmed the continuation of its position in neither being wholly for or wholly against the existing order. This program offered, however, no specific, constructive policies for the establishment of Socialist institutions in Italian society.

By assuming an official role of protest against the war, the PSI acquired new stature. As the party continued its criticism of the war policy and of the government for executing it, it publicly disassociated itself from the initiation of the war or any of the sacrifices and bad conditions imposed by it on the population. Having denied any responsibility for the war's prosecution, the Socialist leaders offered their principles as the only sure and humane basis for peace. The population, growing increasingly discontented and dissatisfied with the strains imposed upon them by a war which they had not really wanted from the start, became more and more receptive to Socialist claims. The Socialist Party gained new respect and recognition. They addressed the nation and Europe with increased authority, speaking as the voice of the masses.⁴⁹

The formal organization and activities of the PSI as a political party, however, had been disrupted during the war years. No Congresses had been convened; the official channels of communication from the Executive Committee to the sections and between the various sections had broken down. Groups of Socialists developed their particular ideas

about specific party practices and values in relative isolation from each other as the conditions of war continued.⁴⁴

Turati's group defined a remarkable set of reforms designed to correct basic economic and political problems in Italian society, which it proposed the PSI initiate through Parliamentary legislation. These reforms included provisions for: 1) a republican constitution, 2) a single-chamber government with universal suffrage, 3) the election of magistrates and high officials, 4) social insurance, and 5) a program of public works and land reclamation.

Lazzari still held the position of nominal leadership in the party. He and his followers strictly maintained the policy of workers' solidarity in the class war. A new distinct group had formed on the extreme left of the Maximalist segment. This was the circle of young men who had formed their conception of a workers' party program around the ideas of Lenin. They had become impatient with the vacillations and internal factionalism of the PSI. They considered its old leaders inept and its program indecisive and ambivalent. They were fully convinced of the need for destroying bourgeois institutions, verified by the tangible evidence of existing social and economic conditions in Italy. They urged the Socialists to use the events of European war as the premise for radical action against the bourgeois state.

The PSI's organizational apparatus for pursuing a definite program in political action had gradually become more a nominal association of separate groups than an efficient, cohesive party. Two events in late 1917 illustrated very clearly the lack of agreement on basic principles and prospective action in the PSI. In October, the Italian military forces suffered a defeat by the Austro-German armies at Caporetto. The defeat was virtually a national disaster. It shook the confidence of the entire nation and forced a recognition of the possibility of defeat upon the people with terrifying reality. Only a few weeks later came the news of the Bolsheviks' seizure of state power in Russia. The extreme wing of the Russian workers' movement had succeeded in carrying out its revolution.

Italy's critical military defeat at Caporetto forced the Minimalist Socialists to reconsider their position in regard to the war. To the Minimalist leaders, support of the national war effort now became a question of protecting the freedom of operation the Socialists enjoyed under the Italian national state. The Minimalist leaders foresaw the results of national defeat to be not the demise of the bourgeois national government, which would facilitate the Socialists' assumption of power, but the subjugation of the Italian workers as well as the rest of the population to the terms of defeat imposed by foreign conquerors. Therefore, they changed their position and called on the PSI to support

the nation in its dangerous enterprise.⁴⁵ This shift in position was very significant. It admitted the Socialists' dependence upon the national state for protection of its existence. Also it took cognizance of the fact that even at the point of the fallure of bourgeois institutions, the workers' movement was not strong enough to assume power itself. When the Bolshevik Revolution occurred a few weeks after Caporetto, the Minimalist group regarded the event with abhorrence because of the Bolsheviks' use of violence. They felt this method of gaining power, besides being barbaric, violated the essence of Socialist principles which received their validity from the fact that the institution of Socialism would be the legitimate wish of the immense majority. They recognized the establishment of social control by the workers' party in Russia, but did not commend the means as a model for other workers' movements, least of all for civilized Italy.⁴⁶ The change of social order was no miracle and could be achieved satisfactorily only over the protracted period of time needed to accomplish all the tasks involved.

The Maximalists, however, regarded Italy's defeat at Caporetto as a sign of the bourgeois state's near collapse in accordance with the Marxist prophecy. They interpreted the event as encouragement for the PSI to redouble its efforts in the class war, as the bourgeois institutions were weakening and the success of Socialism was near.

When the Maximalists learned of the Bolshevik Revolution, they rejoiced without qualification. The prophecy had been fulfilled in Russia. Surely fulfillment was close at hand for the Italian working class. The Maximalist leaders urged the PSI to follow the inspiration of the Bolsheviks' success and to intensify its revolutionary propaganda and preparation among the Italian working forces to hasten their direct seizure of power.⁴⁷

The new Leninist-oriented group, on the left, in the Maximalist wing, interpreted the nation's defeat at Caporetto as sure evidence of the weakness of the bourgeois state. The PSI's policy, then, should unquestionably be to take advantage of this weakness of the bourgeois state and work for its complete defeat in order to establish workers' control of the society.

This group greeted the Bolshevik Revolution as representing the complete success of a working class movement's struggle to gain power. Not only did the new faction look upon the Russian movement's revolution as encouragement to the workers' struggle in all countries, but also as the successful model after which the workers' parties should pattern their own strategy. The group of young Leninists, Antonio Gramsci, Amadeo Bordiga, Angelo Tasca, and Palmiro Togliatti urged the PSI to drop what they saw as all other distracting and enervating policies such as parliamentary cooperation, and follow the example of the

Bolsheviks.⁴⁰

This was the internal condition of the Socialist Party when the war ended in 1918. The leaders were divided into three distinct groups, each with its own specific program for PSI action and each contradicting to the others. Furthermore, each group addressed its appeal for Socialist action to a separate social element. Turati and his companions spoke for Socialist action in the Chamber of Deputies; Lazzari and Bombacci urged insurrection among the workers in the streets, and Gramsci, Bordiga, Togliatti, and Tasca called for a select group of men who would be capable of executing the revolution against the existing institutions of social power. The unifying ties between these different groups were the general hope of transforming the lot of the working class and the dedication of their efforts in behalf of the whole of the workers' element in Italian society.

Part III. Post-war Demands for Socialist Action

After the war ended, the PSI found itself in a unique position for political action. Economic and social conditions of the country were ones of grave disorder. The strains of war, coupled with the demands of post-war rebuilding, rehabilitation of veterans, widows, orphans, and reconversion of the economy and facilities of the society to peacetime operation posed an immense task for the stablest of governments. The Italian democratic government was not functioning in the most capable manner. People were discontented and disillusioned over the results of the seemingly fruitless war undertaken by the government, and by government confusion and inaction in the chaotic post-war situation. The PSI had maintained its role of protest against the government's policy throughout the war, and now offered the single alternative for political action which was not associated with the war. Large numbers of Italians turned readily to the hope and alternative offered by the Socialists. This wide response to Socialist claims was not a specific commitment to Marxist principles for the larger part of the population, but rather demonstrated a general discontent with the present situation and a general willingness to support new leadership and a new policy in

government.

The national elections in November, 1919, the first since the war had begun, confirmed the Socialists' new strength. The PSI received the largest single percentage of the votes cast--32.3% of the total. This vote entitled the party to a plurality of 156 seats in the Chamber of Deputies.⁴⁹ This great popular shift to the Socialists made it by far the strongest party in the country. The next largest was the Catholic Popular Party, appearing for the first time on the ballot in 1919, which won 100 seats in the Chamber. But the Socialists did not receive a clear majority of the votes cast and therefore could not legitimately claim the right to enact their program in toto.

Consequently, the PSI again faced its recurrent problem of political action. The thousands who had come to support the party demanded and expected that the PSI do something in regard to the shortages of food, jobs, inadequate equipment, spiraling prices, and worn-out public facilities. Bound to refrain from illegitimate means of social action, the PSI did not have majority support within the society for the legitimate enactment of its program, but it was officially committed to the enactment of nothing less than a complete transformation of the social order. The urgencies of the situation compelled the party to act or lose contact with the wave of popular support it had received at the end of the war.

Each of the three groups within the leadership of the party advocated a policy for the PSI which was exclusive of the other two groups' policies. The largest number of the party's old membership, the group from the Maximalist wing, remained committed to the old program of rejecting bourgeois institutions and continuing to build, outside of them, the evolutionary workers' force which would legitimately assume social power.

Turati's group, the Minimalists, continued to insist on the renunciation of violent means by the party and on the exercise, whenever advantageous for the workers, of legitimate means to advance their cause. In this way the PSI would continue to build its majority within the society and soon would have legitimate control of the society by the will of the majority.

The group of young Leninists urged the PSI to repudiate legitimate and democratic methods altogether in pursuing the workers' interests, and to affiliate with the Communist International, accepting its program and observing its discipline in the local Italian situation. They felt that the PSI should undertake in political action only those projects which would contribute to its ultimate goal, seizure of total power. With the largest segment of the party's membership affirming the old Dual Program, the PSI confirmed this policy as its official program when its delegates convened in 1919 at the first Party Congress since

the beginning of the war.

The PSI organization for securing political power was badly fractured. The three leadership groups were committed to three particular sets of principles and programs which they could not compromise. The effective base of support of each group was distinct from the other. Popular support for the party rested on the general desire for change promised by Socialist ideals. The party had not resolved its basic conflict between legitimacy and total social revolution in political action. With serious internal disagreement in the party organization, the increasing pressure on the PSI to take action in order to demonstrate the validity of its doctrines placed the party in an impossible situation. The movement as a whole could no longer withstand the strain.

CHAPTER V
THE DISINTEGRATION OF THE
ITALIAN SOCIALIST PARTY

The peak of the pressure exerted upon the Socialist Party for some kind of political action came in the fall of 1920. Up to this time, the party had been steadily increasing its following among the population. In the summer of 1920, the PSI claimed a quarter of a million members and the support of 3,000,000 workers organized in politically affiliated Chambers of Labor.¹ The party had progressed significantly also in its work of organizing cooperatives and new syndicates of workers. In September 1920, two events occurred which required decisions on political action. But, since the party as a whole could arrive at no common policy, the distinct segments within it reached decisions based on their own principles and split, each claiming to be acting alone in the "true" interests of the Italian working class.

In late August 1920, after a period of prolonged, unsuccessful negotiation between the metal industry's management and the metalworkers' union over wage increases and workers' benefits, the metal workers' union moved to occupy the factories. The union intended to limit the

factory occupation to the metal industry and asked only the granting of its particular requests on wages and benefits from the industry. Discipline among the union members in response to this directive was strict, and the movement was successful. Large factories, key to the metal industry, were occupied by workers first in Milan and Turin. The metalworkers' occupation spread throughout the country. The State, afraid of fanning bloody civil strife, refrained from blocking the spread of the occupation or forcing the workers from the barricaded plants. Giolitti, again Prime Minister, announced the government's neutrality in regard to the dispute.

The issue created by this event was not confined to the workers' movement. Management of the metal industry did not immediately capitulate to the workers' demands, and the question arose whether the occupation should be extended to other industries in a bold workers' seizure of control of the means of production. The PSI, the party of the working class striving for revolution and control of production, confronted a situation which was extra-legal, but also one of potential revolution.

The Socialist leaders were badly divided over which course of action to take. The Maximalists fervently urged the PSI to seize the opportunity and carry out the workers' revolution. The State was impotent and Socialist popular support was at its highest point. They asserted that the

prophesied time for revolution had come. The Minimalists, however, worried about the practical aspects of workers' control of the society at this time. Would the workers be able successfully to plan and administer production in the factories? Would they be able to carry out trade negotiations and to master the technical knowledge required? Or would the occupation collapse in a farce of inefficiency and incapability, thus seriously disordering the functional operation of the society and discrediting the workers' movement totally in the eyes of the population? The party leaders called a special congress on the issue and engaged in exhausting debate. They finally requested a special session of Parliament to deal with the issue. The irony of the Socialists' appeal to this "useless, bourgeois institution" to arbitrate a dispute between workers and management illustrates poignantly the incapability of the party to deal with the situation from the basis of its own strength.

Officially, the PSI extended its full sympathy to the metal workers in their struggle, but resolved to limit the occupation of the metal industry. In practice, this double policy accomplished nothing for the PSI. Without help from the Socialists, the metal workers could not possibly hold out for essential changes in worker/management relations, and their discipline began to crumble. On the other hand, the government and the industrialists built up a bitter resentment against the Socialists, who continued to

propagandize for the metalworkers "insurrection." On the basis of this experience, these two important social groups grew determined to squelch the Socialist threat to civil peace and the existing order.

The events of the occupation itself settled with the passing of time. When the militancy of the workers had dissipated sufficiently, Prime Minister Giolitti intervened and proposed terms for settlement of the dispute. Management accepted them; the metal workers' federation ratified them; the workers left the barricades and returned to their jobs. Ostensibly, the government's terms included concessions to trade unions' power. The most widely acclaimed of these was the representation of workers' organizations, together with industrial organizations and technicians, on a council newly-established to make recommendations for government legislation on problems in the development of production and worker/management relations. Actually, the increase granted to workers' influence or control in the process of production was negligible. The PSI had shown only disorganization and confusion in a propitious moment for practical action. From that point on, popular support for the Socialists began to fall away.

Almost immediately after the PSI failed to turn the factory occupation to its favor in political action, it confronted another event which required a decision on the essential character of the party, this time in regard to the

primary values of the party and the nature of its internal organization. The Communist International issued a list of conditions, Twenty-One Points, which a workers' party had to fulfill in order to gain admission to its organization, thus qualifying as a truly revolutionary party. Essentially, the III International's standards required that workers' parties: 1) abandon all legitimist, reformist characteristics, activities, and segments of their memberships; 2) accept the aims of the workers' revolution for the international proletariat and dedicate their efforts unquestioningly to fulfill this aim as directed by the III International, which took as its guide the successful example of the Russian Bolshevik Revolution; and 3) in recognition of its new character and calling, change its name to "Communist."²

This proclamation provoked serious internal rifts in the Socialist Party. It offered enlistment among the ranks of the revolutionary elite, guidance from and association with the men who had executed the most successful workers' revolution, and the prestige and recognition of the Italian party's true revolutionary character among the workers' parties of other nations. The price demanded the repudiation of the PSI's previous thirty years of history as the Italian party of the working class. It required the rejection of associations formed, and practices engaged in, over those last thirty years. It meant the expulsion of men

who were sincerely devoted to the improvement of workers' conditions and who had spent their lives in the service of the PSI. It required, in essence, the rejection of one of the party's founding principles--the aim to achieve social transformation through legitimate means.

The party called a congress in January, 1921, at Leghorn, to act officially on the issue. The three factions within the PSI reacted to the ultimatum of the III International in character with their previously stated positions. The Minimalists, led by Turati and Treves, advocated that the PSI refuse the offer of the Comintern program flatly. To them, it did not represent the true Socialist principles of mature effort to improve the economic and social conditions of the proletariat, and to develop the workers' political and moral capacities. The program sanctioned violent means which true Socialists could not condone. In this resolution, the Minimalists received the support of the majority of the Socialist deputies in Parliament, the officials of the General Confederation of Labor and the cooperative organizations.

The group of Leninists on the extreme left, now called the Ordine Nuovo (New Order) group because they had founded their own Journal by that name in Turin, immediately recommended that the PSI accept without qualification the terms of the Comintern program. They had been won to Lenin's efficient, disciplined conception of a workers'

party, and now considered it impossible for a "genuine" workers' party to act in any other way. To them, it was imperative that the PSI drop its legitimist elements if it sincerely sought to carry out the workers' revolution.³

The largest, and most traditional, portion of the Maximalist wing, now called the Center, presented a compromise solution. They desired that the PSI accept the principles of the III International's program as a revolutionary party, but to refuse some of the conditions. For example, the Centrists would refuse to expel a significant portion of the party members, the Minimalists, or to accept direction from the Comintern in local party affairs without question. This group, led by Giacinto Serrati, felt it unnecessary that the PSI should have to prove its revolutionary character, since it, alone of all European Socialist parties, had maintained its opposition to the national war policy throughout the World War.⁴

After a long, intense, heart-rending debate at the Congress of Leghorn, the issue came to a vote. The Center motion of "unitary communism" received the majority and became the official program of the party.⁵

The Leninist fraction had stated its terms in language too strong to be retracted. After the majority vote for the Center motion was announced, the Ordine Nuovo leaders refused to accept it as their program. They claimed that "the majority of the Congress, by its vote, has placed

itself outside the Communist Third International."⁴ With this declaration, the Leninist delegation abandoned the PSI Congress and, on the next day, January 21, 1921, in another hall in Leghorn, it officially founded the Italian Communist Party.

The forceful distinction between "revolutionary" and "non-revolutionary" working class parties defined by the Comintern had compelled the long-dreaded schism within the PSI. This division was caused by no expulsion, but by the voluntary separation of one wing from the body of the party. The loss of the Communist faction did not affect the PSI greatly in terms of numbers, but it did mean the loss of one of the elements in the party that urged a decisive, specific program of action. It meant also the open repudiation of one of the PSI's basic goals by a qualitatively significant element of the working class movement, the young intellectuals.

The remaining body of the PSI accepted the Centrist program as voted at Leghorn and continued its legitimate, but revolutionary policy. Prospects for increasing its social power worsened steadily however. Although the PSI considered itself an adherent to the principles of the III International, this organization did not extend membership to the PSI. Rather, it admitted to its exclusive circle the Communist fraction of the Italian working class movement, the newly-formed Italian Communist Party (PCI).

Second, the social situation in Italy at this time was deteriorating steadily. The problems of unemployment, rising inflation, low wages, and a mounting national debt contributed to general social confusion and disorder.⁷ The Chamber of Deputies, the legitimate ruling body of the society, was hopelessly fragmented by Catholic, nationalist, liberal, and Socialist blocs. No single delegation was large enough to command a majority in order to enact a forceful program of administration to deal with the multiplying problems. The Socialist delegation, the largest bloc in Parliament, refused to participate in any bourgeois coalition and continued to obstruct any government measures proposed. It thus contributed substantially to the paralysis of Parliament.

The Socialists continued to instigate strikes and other hostile demonstrations against these bad conditions and the bourgeois government, but themselves produced no practical changes or initiated any constructive action. In fact, their strikes and demonstrations were disorganized and carried out in a spontaneous, sporadic fashion, rather than directed toward a specific, purposeful end.⁸ As a consequence, the Socialists' popular following began to decline, and the liberals in Parliament and the industrialists became more convinced of the Socialist threat to the social order and more committed to their destruction.

At this time, another movement capitalized on the

Socialist misfortunes and struck directly at the Socialist base of power, the masses. The Fascists first won support from the enemies of Socialism, as they focused their political activity on eliminating the Socialist threat to the civil order. The Fascists intensified their efforts to win the support of the masses, compiling a record of unpunished illegal acts carried out with the well-known accoutrements of clubs, black shirts, and castor oil.² They burned the buildings of Socialist headquarters, destroyed the local Avanti! presses, intimidated Socialist personalities, and even roused the Socialist civic government from office in Milan.

The Socialists refused any organized retaliation against these outrages on the grounds that they engaged only in legitimate action and denounced all violent methods. Still, the party refused to recognize any threat to its assumption of power but the bourgeois State. The Socialist deputies in Parliament continued their obstruction of the bourgeois government's action and accentuated the weakening of this government's maintenance of legal order.

The beginnings of the shift in the electorate away from the Socialists were manifested in the results of the elections called by Giolitti in May 1921. The Socialist percentage of the total vote fell from 32.3 percent (1919) to only 24.7 percent. The Socialist contingent in Parliament dropped from 156 to 123. The Fascist Party rose from

previous marginal importance in Parliament to the role of a member of Giolitti's "national bloc" with thirty-five seats. In the same election, the new Communist Party showed its entrenchment in national life by winning fifteen seats.¹⁰

The Minimalist element in the party became increasingly alarmed at the mounting Fascist illegalities and urged that the PSI cooperate with the bourgeois government to put down Fascist lawlessness. The main section of the party, again called the Maximalists, however, regarded such a measure as an unholy violation of Socialist principles. This group, led by Serrati, was chiefly concerned with wresting recognition from the Communist International of the PSI's true revolutionary character. In fact, in an attempt to convince the III International of this truth, it issued a statement condemning collaboration between the Socialist Party and bourgeois parties in Parliament.¹¹ The III International still refused to recognize the PSI as meriting membership in its association, however, on the basis of continued Minimalist participation in the party.

Mussolini noted at this time the possibilities offered for the advancement of his movement by Socialist inertia. He observed that continuation of Socialist policy of refusing to collaborate with bourgeois parties in parliament, while maintaining strict observance of legitimate methods in social action, rendered the PSI, the strongest

single force in the nation, powerless to obstruct the Fascists' bid for power. Mussolini foresaw that "the National Right, in which the Fascists are the majority, can be the arbiter of the life or death of governments; no government can govern without it. We therefore declare ourselves," he continued, "particularly pleased. Fascism now has before it a great field of possibilities; it can do great things. not gestures but deeds, not mere words..."¹²

With the way thus facilitated, Mussolini opened full attack on Italian social and legal institutions in his quest for power. Fascist activity intensified and its areas of social control steadily increased. Parliamentary action was reduced to argumentation.

As the pressure of the political crisis grew more acute, the Minimalist deputies in the PSI finally broke with the Party Executive and openly gave advice to the bourgeois State on the policies of governing. Turati set aside his lifelong principle of non-collaboration with bourgeois parties and answered the King's summons for consultations regarding the formation of a new Cabinet after the fall of the Facta Government on June 15, 1922.

The Party Executive, led by Serrati and representing the rump Maximalist section, immediately seized upon this act as one transgressing the sacred revolutionary principles of Socialism and as grounds for expelling the Minimalist element from the party. The Party Executive repudiated

Turati and his companions in the following day's Avanti!, charging that by their political talks with the monarch, the Minimalists had "with their own hands, shattered the unity (of Socialist principle) of which, until yesterday you would have had us believe you were the tenacious and ardent supporters."¹³ At the following PSI Congress in Rome in October 1922, Serrati succeeded in mustering a majority vote for expelling the Minimalist wing from the party, hoping, by this act, to demonstrate the PSI's revolutionary character to the III International. The Maximalist margin in this decisive vote was very narrow, 32,000 votes over 29,100 for the Minimalist motion, which proposed that the PSI as a whole support the parliamentary regime against Fascist efforts to destroy it. Nevertheless, the Maximalist vote carried and the Minimalists were exorcised from the PSI.¹⁴

The proud, long-vaunted unity of the Italian working class party lay fragmented in three autonomous parties. A small but firmly committed segment of Leninist revolutionaries made up the PCI. A significant portion, the Minimalists, formed the Unitary Socialist Party. They had not relinquished their ideals of social change for the benefit of the working class, but could not deny merit and usefulness to the existing bourgeois institutions. The body of the PSI, very much reduced in size, remained committed to the principles of class war by legitimate methods.

Instead of solving the PSI's political problems as the

Maximalist group expected, the expulsion of the Minimalists from the party only heightened its confusion. The III International, instead of welcoming the PSI into its ranks as the official representative of the Italian working class, urged the Socialist Party to fuse with the PCI, already an authorized section of the III International. The "purified" Socialists faced a new tension. They had not realized that separation from the reformist Minimalists would bring the PSI closer to another threat to its identity, fusion with the Leninist PCI. To receive no merit for its long tradition of serving the Italian working class and to be asked to renounce its name and symbols for fusion with the coldly theoretical, which the Minimalists saw as only destructive young PCI proved anguishing and frustrating for the PSI leaders. In addition, the mass of the PSI membership was not willing to use violent action indiscriminately, but were committed to assume power when the revolutionary majority had been built.

In domestic politics, the Fascist offensive against the legal order and parliamentary government became bolder and bolder. The editorial offices of Avanti! were burned in Rome, but PSI leaders still refused to recognize any serious threat to their existence except that presented by the capitalist classes. They were preoccupied at the time with the task of defining their status as the only party representing the true revolutionary interests of the Italian

working class. Two nights before the "March of Rome", PSI leaders boarded the train to Moscow to attend a Congress of the III International in order to plead the party's new case for recognition.

The next events in Italian history are well-known. Mussolini's men encountered no resistance in their occupation of Rome. The Facta Cabinet resigned; the King invited Mussolini to form the new Cabinet. Fascist leadership continued to expand its control in the society, assisted by the Fascist squads. Popular support turned to the Fascists.

Following Mussolini's accession to power, the PSI suffered almost continuous attacks. Fascist squads burned and wrecked Socialist buildings, intimidated party members and broke up Socialist-affiliated cooperatives. The party's membership declined, and its local organizations found it increasingly difficult to carry on propaganda or political operations. Its influence in social affairs diminished rapidly.

The leadership of the Socialist Party foundered with no clear sense of direction under the Fascist attack and the III International's rejection of its revolutionary validity. Serrati, chairman of the party, appeared increasingly muddled and unsure of the PSI's actual identity.

At this point, a new figure rose to leadership in the PSI fragment. Bringing fresh energy and dedication to the workers' cause, Pietro Nenni assumed the leadership of the

party in August 1923, expelling Serrati from membership. Nenni redefined the purpose of the PSI in its tradition of a working class party striving to build a legitimate proletarian majority in order to institute the Socialist order. The now-diminished group of manual workers within the party, the segment which had originally formed the majority, continued their allegiance to this conception of Socialism and purpose for a worker's party. It was this conception which sustained, and fell heir to, the tradition and symbols of the PSI's previous thirty years of existence as the Italian workers' party. The Italian Socialist Party that emerged from the crises of 1919-1923 reaffirmed the principles of legitimate revolution. The political stringencies of fascism curtailed activities and opportunities for action by it or any other party until the Fascist suppression of all other political activity in 1925. This remnant of the Socialist Party, however, maintained its conception of political action through underground activities during the twenty-five years of Fascism, and is essentially the same PSI that is operating in Italian politics today.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The Italian Socialist Party (PSI) had started to develop the same bifurcation that was common to the other European Socialists who accepted the formula of legitimate revolution. Under this formula it passed through the stages of unification, establishment as a constitutional party using legitimate means to secure the revolution in economic and social arrangements, and entrance into the field of politics. During the decade of the 1900s, when the Socialists first participated in national political life as a recognized party, serious differences in theory developed as evidenced by the Minimalist and Maximalist programs. These led, in turn, to differences concerning strategy and tactics, as illustrated by the election-oriented policy of the reformists and the strikes and direct action, with repudiation of parliamentary reforms, advocated by the revolutionaries. In fact, these differences very nearly led to division of the two main factions into separate organizations in 1904-1906. Only Serrati's impractical but emotionally-appealing centrist formula held the organizational unity of the party together at that time. For a brief period, from 1908 to 1911, it appeared as if the

degree of conflict between factions was diminishing within the party, with the reformists gaining ascendancy and gradually leading the PSI as a whole to an acceptance of constitutionalism as its primary value.

But the superficiality of this tendency became apparent over the crisis of the Libyan War, when the democratic reformists were ousted from the party upon their refusal to break the attachment the PSI had established with the democratic government, despite the government's policy concerning imperialistic war. The revolutionists assumed control of the party at this juncture, but the shallowness of their support within the party was demonstrated by the expulsion of Mussolini over his advocacy of a war policy in 1914.

These two crises put the party fairly well back to its old formulation adopted at the Congress of Genoa in 1892--constitutionalism in political method, but no cooperation with the bourgeois parties or government, and revolution in the economic and social field, but no use of force or violent means. The majority of the party reaffirmed its old beliefs and rejected the possibilities of either constitutionalism alone or revolution using violence as aberrations from the faith. In doing so, it withdrew from making any decision on the crucial issue of politics in the country at the time.

The PSI remained steadfast in its official abstention

from either support or sabotage of the governments' war policy, and the fact that it was able to do so illustrated the party's lack of involvement in national political life. When the events of the post war situation provided opportunities for the PSI to take either the constitutional or revolutionary route to political power, either of which would have required the rejection of the other for success, the majority of the party failed to see any real conflict in values between the two kinds of action. The majority of the party's supporters refused to abandon the old formula of constitutional revolution. They kept the original faith and would tolerate no deviation from it. The theory was not questioned; only the political situation was not yet right for its success. Cleansed of deviations to Left or Right, the Italian Socialist Party rededicated itself to its original purpose of constitutional revolution. The ban on all non-Fascist political activity came in 1925 with Mussolini's assumption of total political power in the country.

Forced underground by the Fascist ban of all non-Fascist political parties in 1925, the PSI attempted to carry on at least token activity in exile. During the troubled period from 1925 to 1930, the Socialist leaders indulged in considerable re-examination of their past policies, which had led to this loss of freedom, and in searching for possibilities of regaining freedom of

political action in their country. After much introspection, the Socialist leaders agreed that the major purpose of all Socialists must be to create and sustain unity of the working class, both for its eventual assumption of political power through democratic elections and for immediate purpose of fighting against Fascism.

In conclusion, most of the Socialist movements found the old theory unworkable in their political conditions. To carry out an effective constitutional program for reform, a Socialist movement had to secure support from sources outside the proletariat, too. Or, to institute economic collectivism in the most expeditious way, a party had to dispense with the conventions of constitutionalism, and utilize skillfully all of the opportunities available to a minority party for the conquest of power. Support of the masses was sought in this method, but as support or toleration, rather than participation in the actual assumption of power. The theory of constitutional revolution became too simple for the working classes in the European countries. In the conditions which precipitated the decline of class consciousness, the masses did not vote automatically for the Socialists' program of revolution, but supported other loyalties in politics: religion, nationalism, and individual liberties.

A simple program of economic and social revolution failed to receive a constitutional majority in any European

country, and became increasingly removed from the central political issues of the country. Measures either more pertinent to national political life or more effective in gaining political power, had to be adopted for successful political results.

ENDNOTES

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⁴Christopher Seton-Watson, Italy from Liberalism to Fascism: 1870-1925 (London: Butler and Tanner Ltd., 1967) pp. 157-161.

⁵Christopher Seton-Watson, op. cit., pp. 157-158.

⁶Carlo Sforza, op. cit., pp. 159-161.

⁷Christopher Seton-Watson, op. cit., pp. 67-72.

⁸Ibid, pp. 157-160.

⁹Ibid, pp. 109-110.

¹⁰Peter Gay, op. cit., pp. 268-271.

¹¹Christopher Seton-Watson, op. cit., pp. 157-161.

¹²Peter Gay, op. cit., pp. 100-101.

¹³Ibid, pp. 274-279.

¹⁴Christopher Seton-Watson, op. cit., pp. 600-601.

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¹Robert Michels, A Critical Study of the Italian Socialist Movement (Firenze, Le Voce, 1926) 219-222.

²Robert Michels, op. cit., pp. 126-127.

³Denis Mack Smith, Italy (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1959) 173-175.

⁴Denis Mack Smith, op. cit., pp. 173-175; 192-197.

³Robert Michels, op. cit., p. 163.

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¹¹Ibid., p. 193.

¹²Wayland Hilton-Young, The Italian Left (London: Longman's Green and Co., 1949) 39.

¹³Ibid. pp. 42-43.

¹⁴Robert Michels, op. cit., p. 208.

¹⁵Wayland Hilton-Young, op. cit., p. 39.

¹⁶Robert Michels, op. cit., p. 193.

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²Ibid., pp. 225-26.

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⁴Robert Michels, op. cit., pp. 225-226.

⁵Giovanni Giolitti, Memories of My Life (Monza: Garzanti Editor, 1945) 63.

⁶Wayland Hilton-Young, op. cit., pp. 54-55.

⁷Robert Michels, op. cit., p. 251.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid., pp. 223-24.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 221.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 219-222.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid., p. 226.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 213-217.

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¹Robert Michels, op. cit., p. 286.

²Wayland Hilton-Young, op. cit., p. 46.

³Ibid., p. 35.

⁴Ibid., p. 59.

⁵Ibid., p. 26.

⁶Robert Michels, op. cit., p. 243.

⁷Ibid., p. 254.

⁸Ibid., p. 256.

⁹Ibid., p. 262.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 262-264.

¹¹Ibid., p. 262.

¹²Ibid., p. 243.

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¹⁴Ibid., pp. 297-298.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 303.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 303.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Wayland Hilton-Young, op. cit., p. 59.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Robert Michels, op. cit., pp. 265-269.

²¹Ibid., p. 269.

²²Ibid.

²³Denis Mack Smith, op. cit., p. 226.

²⁴Robert Michels, op. cit., p. 271.

²⁵Wayland Hilton-Young, op. cit., p. 62.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 65-66.

²⁷Ibid., p. 66.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ivanoe Bonomi, From Socialism to Fascism (London: M. Hopkinson and Co. 1924) 177.

³⁰Cecil J. S. Sprigge, The Development of Modern Italy (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1944) 107.

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³⁴Ibid., p. 116.

³⁵Ibid., p. 120.

³⁶Wayland Hilton-Young, op. cit., p. 78.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Pietro Nenni, Ten Years of Tyranny in Italy (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1932) 42.

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⁴³Cecil J. S. Sprigge, op. cit., p. 142.

⁴⁴Wayland Hilton-Young, op. cit., p. 83.

⁴⁵Cecil J. S. Sprigge, op. cit., p. 159.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 159-161.

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¹Pietro Nenni, op. cit., pp. 77-80.

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⁴Ibid., p. 46.

⁵Ibid., p. 47.

⁶Ibid., p. 48.

⁷Denis Mack Smith, op. cit., pp. 329-355.

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