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THE ITALIAN CHAMBERS OF LABOR, 1890-1914: THE FORMATION OF WORKING-CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS

by
Kenneth Judson Kirkland

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
(History)
in The University of Michigan
1976

Doctoral Committee:

Professor Raymond Grew, Chairman
Professor Samuel Barnes
Professor David Bien
Professor John Bowditch

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife, Janet Moore Kirkland, without whom it would not have been possible.

PREFACE

The research for this work was conceived as a means of focusing upon the experience of the Italian working class in the Chambers of Labor, and the ways in which that experience and its interaction with Italian society led to the kind of working class consciousness which had developed by the eve of the First World War. Though this is not a study of the working class as whole--an impossible undertaking for a single individual--my strategy in research and writing was to approach the subject matter so that my conclusions would be applicable to the entire working class, and so that the range of problems considered would be wide enough to ensure that no significant variation on the nature of political attitudes and class consciousness would be ignored.

Since the range of sources for the history of the Chambers is wide--memoirs of activists, local and national newspapers, contemporary studies and pamphlets, local and national archives--but tends to be spotty for any one Chamber, my original research strategy was to select five Chambers for intensive study, integrating the results of this research with a broad range of secondary materials on other Chambers. Common patterns which emerged among the five Chambers could thus be identified and searched for elsewhere; as well, such an identification of common patterns could suggest profitable areas of inquiry among the sources and secondary literature available on other Chambers. In addition, the five Chambers selected presented a broad range of economic and social environments, previous histories of organization and politics,

and problems within the Chambers and the workers movement. This was not a "representative sample" in the sense that the term is used in survey research, of course, but it did cover all important variations of Chamber politics, economic settings, and previous histories of organization.

Milan's Chamber was the first to be founded in Italy, and the model for those that followed. Just as Milan claimed to be the "moral capital" of Italy, so the Milanese Chamber was the "moral capital" of the workers movement. In addition, Milan was one of the few Italian cities where industrialization was reasonably advanced, yet the working class was employed in a balanced mixture of small, medium, and large industries with no one sector of the economy predominant. Milan was also the center of the democratic radicalism which had grown out of the left wing of the Risorgimento, and thus had its own tradition of working class organization, leadership, and rhetoric. It was also the home of some of the more important predecessors of the Chamber, such as the Partito Operaio Italiano.*

Genoa, by way of contrast, had an economy in which the enterprises tended to be very large or very small; large concentrations of heavy industry such as shipyards and steel mills dominated the industrial suburbs, while the workers of the city, predominantly employed in artisan workshops, were overshadowed by the largest number of port workers in

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*The Partito Operaio Italiano (Italian Workers' Party) was the first Italian organization made up exclusively of workers. Organized more like a labor organization (subdivided along occupational lines and equipped with a strike fund) it nonetheless claimed to be a party and put up candidates for elections. It was active roughly from 1882 to 1892, when it was one of the organizations which joined at Genoa to found the new Italian Socialist Party. Many of its activists went on to become prominent in the workers movement, the Socialist and even the Communist Party. It is discussed in some detail in Chapter III.

Italy. In addition, the birthplace of Mazzini had long been the stronghold of Mazzinian organization and politics, a circumstance which strongly influenced the workers movement in the city.

Bologna was an industrial city in an agricultural province, and thus the only one of the five which had to deal with that duality in its membership. It was also the center of "Red Emilia," the socialist heartland; in fact, it was the first Italian city to elect a socialist municipal government (in 1914). Like Milan, it had a long history of democratic and radical traditions, nurtured in part by the students and faculty at its prestigious university, one of the centers of the Garibaldian tradition both before and after unification.

Florence had an especially strong artisan population and organization, and while it was one of the few areas outside of Liguria where the Mazzinian movement had deep roots (the other was the Romagna), it was also home to a strong anarchist movement, and had been--like Bologna--a center for agitation and propaganda by the First International. In addition, the working class of Florence had an unusually close relationship with the intelligentsia via the Istituto degli Studi Superiori. Florence did not experience the rapid per capita economic growth and increase in scale of production that Milan, Bologna, and Genoa did. However, modest increases in the scale and output of Florentine industry did take place, unlike the last of the five sample cities, Parma.

Parma was the only city of the five to show a decline in both industrial plant size and industrial employment during the period under study. It was predominantly a commercial and service center for the province, which was overwhelmingly agrarian. While agrarian, the province of Parma was not backward; its agriculture was modern, large-scale,

heavily capitalized "agribusiness," typical of what was taking place over most of the Po Valley. In addition, Parma was the home of the strongest and most broadly based syndicalist movement in Italy.

Together these five Chambers run the gamut; all facets of the previous history of the workers movement were represented in this sample, from the workers' societies through the Mazzinians to the First International and finally the POI. All political factions which had influence in any of the ninety-odd Italian Chambers are here represented, from the self-proclaimed "super-reformists" of Genoa to the revolutionary syndicalists of Parma. Workers from city and country, established artisan trades, and heavy industry, service workers and laborers--all were dealt with by one or more of the Chambers selected. Together they form a micro-cosm of the workers movement in Italy.

Like the workers movement as whole, though they are exceptional in some ways. While much of Italy remained isolated from the larger economic currents--particularly the south, and most markedly in Sicily and Sardinia--Milan, Genoa, and Bologna, and to a lesser extent Florence were areas of considerable economic and social change; indeed, with Turin, Milan and Genoa are the heart of Italy's industrial triangle where the most rapid and thorough transition to the "second industrial revolution" took place. Along with Bologna and some of the area around Naples, these northern provinces included a substantial portion of the total industrial economy of Italy. But when set together with the agriculture of Parma and Bologna, they make the sample that much more compelling, since the analysis of the transition provides again in microcosm a prelude of what all the Italian working class would face by the 1920's. As well, these industrial areas represented a wide variety of

industries, from the light and medium industry of Milan and Bologna to the large steel mills and shipyards of Genoa. Some of these firms were dependent on government contracts, such as the steel mills; others, like the artillery factory in Bologna were run directly by the government. Finally, all of the variety of workers in these cities were not only representative of the workers in Italy's workers movement, but made up a significant portion of it. By 1904, the combined memberships of the Chambers of Florence, Parma, Bologna, Genoa, and Milan made up nearly 16% of all organized workers in Italy.

There was still another way in which the Chambers chosen were not representative, and this was deliberate. All were located in provincial capitals and had been founded by 1896 (Milan, 1893; Bologna, Parma, and Florence, 1894; Genoa, 1896). Most Chambers were founded after 1900 and located outside the provincial capitals. Bologna, Genoa, and Milan were respectively the second, third, and fourth largest Chambers in the Kingdom in 1906 (the largest was that of Reggio-Emilia); Parma, with more than 12000 members, was among the largest ten. Only Florence was close to the national average of 3900 members. The choice was deliberate for two reasons. One was the accessibility of records: large and successful Chambers were more likely to generate more activities and coverage, and hence more likely to leave traces for researchers; second, the smaller Chambers attempted to emulate the larger ones, and often were prevented from doing so only by financial constraints. Thus any attempt to deal with Chamber aspirations must, of necessity, deal with the models which Chamber leaders themselves preferred, in order to find out what it was in practice as well as theory which drew the affections of workers.

As might be expected, each of these Chambers provided problems for the researcher. Florence was the least successful area to research, as

the degradations of floods and Fascism removed virtually all primary evidence. Archival evidence was also destroyed or useless in Milan, Genoa, and Parma, though there was enough newspapers, pamphlets, and other material to make up for most of the lacunae. Only Bologna had both full newspaper and archival evidence, as well as the usual range of other sources.

The study is organized into four chapters. The first deals with the structure of working class and the organization of the Chamber, where I point out how the Chamber's form enabled it to organize a working class which was fragmented and divided. The second chapter focuses on the activities of the Chambers; divided analytically, it establishes that behind the bewildering variety of programs and policies there was a clear pattern of activity, and that this activity was aimed at bringing together the working class on a basis other than trade-unionism; as well, the chapter demonstrates that the search for a non trade-union link among the sectors of the working class led inevitably to a dependence on politics as the means of holding this diverse class together. But there seems to be no explanation of why it was felt so deeply that the class must be united and or how a working-class politics could be developed in the Chamber activities; consequently, the third chapter is an analysis of the previous history of workers organizations since unification. In it I discuss how the previous history led the Chambers to select certain forms of organization as well as to develop their attitudes toward politics and culture. The result is that the Chambers emerge as a traditional form with new content, and serve as a new attempt to deal with the old problem of working class unification. As well, the third chapter suggests that some of the complexities and peculiarities of the workers movement lay in its relationship to the Risorgimento

and the heritage of that experience to the unitary state. In the final chapter the center of the discussion is the history of the Chambers and their impact on the working class from 1890 to 1914. Drawing together the threads of the previous chapters, it establishes that history, social structure and economic problems combined to lead the Chambers into an increasingly politicized stance. But that stance was not uniform, since the working class was not uniform, and the Chambers attempted, with varying degrees of success, to develop a politics and a practice which would simultaneously enable them to confront their most pressing political problems as well as mold their followers into a working class.

A study like this is not possible without the help of numerous people and institutions. My first thanks must go to the Foreign Area Fellowship Program which provided the financial support for my work in Italy, as well as a summer at the Widener Library of Harvard University. Both the Widener Library and the University of Michigan Library provided much useful assistance. In Italy, my first debt is to that marvelous research center, the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale of Florence, and its helpful staff. I also enjoyed the hospitality of numerous small libraries, which even though understaffed and pitifully short of funds, extended unfailing courtesy and aid to a foreign scholar. Particularly noteworthy in this respect was the Biblioteca Comunale Civica of Parma, but all of the following were unfailingly helpful and kind: the Biblioteca Comunale of Milan, the Biblioteca Comunale del Archiginnasio of Bologna, the Biblioteca Universitaria of Genoa and the Biblioteca Comunale and Gabinetto G.P. Vieusseux of Florence. Two institutes--the Feltrinelli Institute of Milan and the Centro Ligure di Storia Sociale of Genoa--provided many unusual documents, newspapers and pamphlets not easily

available anywhere else. Gaetano Perillo, the director of the latter as well as the editor of Movimento Operaio e Socialista took time and effort to give me the benefit of his study and reminiscences. Like Luigi Arbizzani of the Gramsci Institute in Bologna, who was similarly generous, he is a self-educated worker and Communist Party militant whose knowledge of the vagaries of the local movement was immensely useful.

Similarly helpful was Mario Mari, formerly secretary of the Sindicato dei Pensionati of the Florence Chamber of Labor, whose activities as a labor militant, anarchist, revolutionary syndicalist, and communist had begun in 1906 and who favored me with the tales of his youth which provided the kinds of insights not available elsewhere. The staffs of the Archivio di Stato in Bologna and the Archivio Centrale dello Stato in Rome were all that one could ask in the near-hopeless task of making order of the miscellany they conserve. Naturally, none of these people bear any responsibility for the errors or misinterpretations of this study, though all share in what strengths it has.

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CHAPTER I

In writing about the history of the working class, one of the most controversial points, and one least susceptible to analysis, is the nature and origins of class consciousness. Almost all theories of class which emphasize the importance of consciousness see that consciousness as the product of class conflict, and this provides an important starting point.[1] One of the first and best formulations of the nature of the relationship between class conflict and class consciousness is that of Marx, in a key distinction between "class in itself" and "class for itself" which he first elaborated in The Poverty of Philosophy:

> Economic conditions had in the first place transformed the mass of the people into workers. The domination of capital created the common situation and common interests of this class. Thus this mass is already a class in relation to capital, but not yet a class for itself. In the struggle . . . [between classes] this mass becomes united and constitutes itself as a class for itself. The interests which it defends become class interests. But the struggle of class against class is a political struggle.[2]

Marx here makes several points which will be of importance for our analysis. Class consciousness, he is saying, is not the inevitable effect of the existence of the class economically, but rather the product of class struggle and conflict; it comes about as the members of the class become aware of the situation in which they find themselves--as they discover, in other words, their "common situation and common interests." The recognition of their situation is their consciousness, and that consciousness makes the difference between the class "in itself"

and the class "for itself." The process is not inevitable, nor is it something that happens to workers; instead, the class "constitutes itself."

Marx further suggests that there must first be an economic change which transforms the mass of peasants, artisans, laborers and the "common people" into workers, and that this transformation creates a common situation which, when recognized, will be the basis of class consciousness. This last point creates some problems, since it is not always clear exactly what constitutes a worker. Nevertheless, historians and other social scientists have generally accepted this formulation, and argued that class consciousness follows a process of social homogenization which lowers the status of the artisan while raising that of the unskilled laborer to the common ground of a factory proletariat. This proletariat then becomes involved in conflict with employers and the employing class, a conflict which often becomes institutionalized and routinized through unions and various other legal and customary devices--boards of arbitration, labor courts, collective bargaining, and the like--which serve to develop an awareness of and set boundaries to class differences on the part of both workers and employers.[3]

Conflict, though, does not lead automatically to a revolutionary Marxist class consciousness. In his classic, The Theory of the Labor Movement, the American sociologist Selig Perlman argued that the interaction and conflict between workers and employers could and indeed should lead to the integration of workers into the political system and even into the values of the managing and employing class.[4] Another American sociologist, Lewis Coser, has suggested that conflict can serve healthy ends by allowing the development of systems in which the sources of the

conflict may be eliminated or ameliorated--either by modifying the circumstances surrounding the conflict or changing the entire system.[5] But whether the conflicts are eliminated or ameliorated, whether workers lose the perception that they have different interests from those of the employers (as Perlman suggests) or reform the sources of the conflict, or even overthrow the entire system to create one in which the conflicts no longer exist (as Coser suggests) all agree with Marx in the fundamental point that conflict is the key to awareness; that is, that it is only by engaging in conflict that the identity which becomes group or class consciousness emerges.

All of these formulations assume that the identity to be established is already objectively available; they assume, in other words, that the bourgeoisie and the proletariat already exist in broad form and that conflict serves to aid the process of discovery of that existence. Georges Sorel, for example, looked to conflict as a means of maintaining class identity on the part of both groups involved:

> The antagonistic classes influence each other in a partly indirect but decisive manner. Everything may be saved if the proletariat, by the use of violence, restores to the middle class something of its former energy.[6]

The thrust of this theorizing is to suggest that one should expect to find historically that the formation of working class consciousness follows upon the industrialization of a country, and in particular when the working class has been, if not proletarianized, at least sufficiently affected by the process of industrial capitalism to be well launched into conflict with the employing class.

The history of the Italian workers movement before World War I seems to offer little support for such generalizations, though. Long

before the process of industrialization had produced a large and united factory proletariat, Italian workers--a heterogeneous set of groups who were often separated by economic, social, and geographic distinctions--had developed a strong and operative sense of political unity. Though the unity was largely political, and focused on issues that often were only indirectly related to the economic problems of workers as such, the source of this unity lay in the consciousness acquired in recurring conflict which marked the history of the workers movement. Since the political consciousness and the political unity came before the large-scale transformation of the Italian economy by industrial capitalism, our attention must naturally turn to the aspects of the Italian workers' movement which led to the conflict, gave it its particular form, and managed to create a workers movement and a class "for itself," in Marx's phrase, before it was a class "in itself."

I use the term "workers' movement" throughout this study as a convenient English translation of movimento operaio, mouvement ouvrier, Arbeiterbewegung, and the like, in preference to the more familiar "labor movement." This is not meant as a deliberate obscurity, but is rather an attempt to avoid the connotation of "union movement" which is usually associated with it. Instead, I mean "workers' movement" to refer to the whole panoply of activities in which workers were engaged, and in using the term I wish to stress the point--made several times over in this study--that unions are a "subset" of the workers movement, but not its total substance. This point, too, follows from Marx, who argues that the struggle between classes is a political struggle, and that the workers' associations which may have been formed to struggle for wages soon take on a political character.

The history of the workers' movement can be inferred from indirect sources such as newspapers, strikes, police reports, and the like, and part of this study rests on such inference. In addition to that, however, it is the contention of this study that the workers' movement in Italy took institutional form as well, and that these institutions offer a more direct source for the study of the workers' movement. This means that the focus of our study will be not the trade and craft unions and their national federations (although these are central to a study of the labor movement), but rather the Camera del Lavoro (Chamber of Labor), the avowed representative of the working class. The Chamber was the point at which conflict between workers and other classes coalesced, and the matrix in which political conflict took place. In its role as a union, club, recreational center, cultural organization and instrument for self-education and self-determination, in its claim to represent the working class rather than a sector of it, it is by far the key point at which to begin a study of working-class consciousness.

The Chamber was not unique to Italy: similar institutions existed in the United States under the name of Labor Council, in England as the Trades Council, in France as the Bourses des Travail, the Orbetar Kommuner in Sweden and the ArbeiterKammer or Gewerkschaft Kartedle in Germany. In most countries, however, it was soon replaced in size and importance by the national craft and industrial unions and their federations, such as the French CGT or the American AFL (what Italians refer to as "category federations").[7] Only in Italy did the Chamber remain the center of the workers movement, the "maximum institution of the workers" in a contemporary phrase.[8]

This is not meant to imply that the Chamber was the only workers organization. During the period from 1890 to 1914 an enormous variety of organizations for the worker existed. Cooperatives (both consumer cooperatives and ones for production), mutual aid and friendly societies, leagues of resistance (roughly equivalent to local unions in American terminology), and the national federations of trade and craft unions that were Italy's equivalent of the CGT or AFL (The Confederazione Generale del Lavoro--CGL hereafter--was not organized until 1906), popular libraries and educational movements all flanked the Chambers of Labor. But these were single purpose organizations, limited in their membership and appeal. Only the Chambers attempted to combine all the functions of resistance (bargaining and strikes), cooperation, mutual aid, recreation, and social and political advocacy and representation into one organization. Only the Chambers made a serious attempt to organize all workers in their geographical area into one group. Only the Chambers claimed to speak for all workers, whether organized or not. Finally, the Chambers organized more workers, were more widely distributed geographically, and had been in existence longer than the unions.

The first Chamber of Labor had been founded in Milan in 1891, and at that time only the Federation of the Book (printers and allied arts) and some railway workers had a national union. Aside from these exceptions, most of the Chambers antedated the foundation of the national unions and the CGL by a decade or more. Not only were they older, but they had more members. In January, 1908, for example, two years after the foundation of the CGL (the General Confederation of Labor--Italy's first national labor confederation), there were 642,046 organized workers in the Kingdom of Italy. Of these, 57.5% (369,717) were members of a

Chamber of Labor. 247,073 (38.5%) belonged solely to a Chamber and no national federation, while the reverse situation--membership in a national federation without belonging to a Chamber--held for only 52,690 workers, or 8.2% of all organized workers. 19% of all organized workers belonged to a Chamber and a national federation simultaneously, while the remaining workers were members of autonomous local leagues of resistance.[9] The Chambers maintained their predominance among labor organizations throughout the entire pre-war period.[10]

Obviously, the Chambers had an appeal to Italian workers which other organizations shared only in part; perhaps the most striking testimony of their appeal was their growth and extension in the south at the same time as the federations were withdrawing to concentrate on the industrialized north and giving up their efforts at southern organizing. At Naples, Palermo, Catania and Messina the new organization flourished in the first decade of this century, spreading gradually (as in the north) from the provincial capital out to the furthest reaches of the old contadi. Though the first Chambers were founded in the north, by 1900 there were already Chambers in Rome, Naples, Foggia, and Catanzaro. From 1900 to 1905, Chambers everywhere underwent their greatest period of growth and diffusion before the war, jumping from a handful (Venice, Bologna, Parma, and Catanzaro) which had survived recent governmental dissolutions to 82 Chambers with over 320,000 members. Growth was much more rapid in the north than the south, but there were some twelve southern Chambers with over 35,000 members; no national federation nor even the socialist party had as high a percentage of its base in the south.[11] In fact, the government survey from which these figures are calculated probably understated the southern Chambers, since

several towns in Western Sicily had agrarian Chambers--made up of small peasants and sharecroppers--which do not appear in this survey. Though there is little statistical data on them, they seem to have been particularly active in the area around Corleone and Cefalù.[12]

The predominance of the Chambers within Italy, compared to the demise of similar organizations in other countries, as well as the success of the Chambers in both the industrializing North and the economic backwaters of southern Italy suggests an important characteristic of the Chambers: their appeal was not only to workers, but to many Italians, regardless of their economic status or their degree of involvement in industrial capitalism. Though the attraction to the Chamber was not entirely random with respect to the economic status of the potential member, there is enough variation to suggest that something about the Chamber had a special fit with certain facets of Italian social and political life--a subject to which we will frequently return in the course of this study.

The membership of the Chambers was made up of workers organized into leagues, divided along occupational lines by arte e mestiere--trade and craft. In some cases leagues were composed of mixed groups in allied arts, such as painters and plasterers. In the smaller Chambers, where there might be only two or three members of a trade in the Chamber, there were often one or two "mixed"--miscellaneous--leagues, whose membership was made up of all the trades who were too few in number to justify the existence of separate leagues. In many cases, other organizations--cooperatives or mutual aid societies were the most common--affiliated en bloc with the Chamber as well. Each league was headed by a secretary or capolega who was responsible for the collection of dues

and the distribution of the tessere (membership cards) in return. The dues, after a portion was subtracted by the league's treasury, were then turned over to the Chamber which in turn would forward an appropriate share to the national federation, if the league was so affiliated.

The Chamber was thus a confederation of leagues, and members joined via the league rather than on an individual basis. To reflect the confederal nature of the Chamber, it had two governing bodies: the executive commission and the general council. The executive commission was elected annually by universal suffrage of the membership, and consisted of from three to eighteen members, depending on the size of the Chamber. The general council, composed of delegates elected by the league in proportion to their membership (usually one delegate for every fifty or hundred members) met annually or semi-annually, and could be called into special sessions if there were a demand by some fraction of the Chamber membership (usually ten percent). It drew up and could alter the constitution, approved the budget, resolved controversies between the leagues and the executive commission, appointed the control commission, and generally set policy for the Chamber. The executive commission acted for the Chamber in general administrative and policy matters, meeting monthly (or more often in larger Chambers, or during times of crisis). The control commission--three to five members--was appointed annually and acted as the political and fiscal watchdog over the executive commission and the secretary. Though the control commissions did little in practice, their purpose seems to have been to avoid the domination of the membership by their leaders. This domination had been a frequent problem in the older workers societies, particularly

those organized by employers, prominent politicians, and the like. The general council and the executive commission appointed such other commissions as might exist: these were most commonly commissions for arbitration, study and propaganda, instruction, job placement, legal and medical aid, and the collection and the publication of statistics. These commissions were standing committees whose membership, aided by the secretary, were responsible for Chamber activities in their fields.

The work of day-to-day administration was carried out by one or more full-time paid administrators, the Chamber secretaries. They were in many ways the most important persons in the Chamber: their skill and leadership, and their abilities as orators, administrators, organizers, and writers were often crucial to the success or failure of the Chamber. Conscious of the need for a high level of skill in these positions, the Chambers usually attempted to recruit their secretaries on a competitive basis regionally or nationally. The larger and wealthier Chamber might have several assistant secretaries, as well as a librarian, portiere, or janitor. But even the poorest Chambers had at least one paid secretary.

At first the Chambers were often housed in buildings provided rent-free by the municipality; these were usually ex-monasteries or convents which had been seized in the secularizations following unification. As a Chamber grew and the need for space increased, especially when cooperatives, mutual-aid societies, and leagues all moved their offices into the Chamber headquarters, the Chamber would often move to its own building--the Casa del Popolo--House of the People. The move was sometimes brought on by political considerations, such as a clash between the municipal council and the Chamber, which might lead to the latter's eviction.[13]

Usually constructed by volunteer labor of the members and financed by contributions, the Casa del Popolo housed not only the organizations, but had rooms for meetings, lectures, and perhaps a library, bar, reading room, and little theater.

The Chamber's income came from dues (levied at an annual rate varying from twenty centesimi to four or five lire per person), subsidies from semi-public institutions such as the Chamber of Commerce or the Cassa del Risparmio (the state-chartered savings banks), profits from cooperatives, and assorted sources such as dances, lectures, lotteries, and subscription drives. With rare exceptions--such as the annual budget of nearly 60,000 lire which the Milanese Chamber enjoyed--the Chambers rarely disposed of large sums. Dues were hard to muster from meager wages, and municipal subsidies--a substantial portion of some Chambers' budgets--were dependent on the whims of municipal councils and the interventions of the prefect, which might vary sharply from year to year. As a consequence, there was sometimes a serious disjunction between aspiration and achievement on the part of the Chambers.[14]

Generally a Chamber was set up first in a provincial capital, and took the name of "Camera del Lavora di----------e Provincia." The claim to represent all the workers of a given area was meant seriously, but reality did not always live up to expectations, and in most cities membership was confined to the various urban leagues of the provincial capitals where the Chamber was located.[15] As a rule, the membership of the Chambers in industrial centers such as Milan, Genoa, and Turin, remained limited in practice to the urban workers and artisans; this was also true of the smaller industrial centers as well, such as the textile cities of Como, Biella, and Prato. This seems to have been the result

TABLE I

MEMBERSHIP COMPOSITION OF CHAMBERS OF LABOR SELECTED FOR STUDY, 1904

	Bologna	Florence	Genoa	Milan	Parma*
Artisans	2269 (6.2%)	3250 (33.1%)	855 (4.0%)	7064 (35.8%)	
Industrial Workers	2336 (6.4%)	2910 (24.7%)	5204 (24.7%)	4836 (24.5%)	1491 (9.9%)
Building Trades	4862 (13.4%)	1350 (13.8%)	472 (2.2%)	4582 (23.2%)	1641 (10.9%)
Agriculture	24677 (67.8%)	150 (1.5%)	----	----	9117 (60.5%)
Services	2262 (6.2%)	2148 (21.9%)	1253 (5.9%)	3240 (16.4%)	----
Port Workers	----	----	5405 (25.6%)	----	----
Maritime Trades	----	----	7909 (37.5%)	----	----
Total	36406	9808	21098	19722	15049

TABLE I--CONTINUED

*Figures from Parma do not sum to 100% since 18.5% of the membership affiliated through cooperatives or mutual-aid societies whose membership was not divided along occupational lines; the total given is, however, the total membership of the Chamber.

Figures are from 1904 except for Florence, which is from 1902. This was the closest date in time to the 1901 general census and the 1903 industrial census for which figures were available.

Sources: Florence: Firenze, Camera del Lavoro, La Camera del Lavoro e le sue sezioni, (Florence, 1902). All others: Ministero dell' Agricoltura, Industria e Commercio, Ufficio del Lavoro, Bolletino dell'Uffico del Lavoro (hereinafter abbreviated BUL), January, 1905, 275-6, 283; February, 1905, 287-9; 291-3.

TABLE II

LABOR FORCE COMPOSITION IN SELECTED CITIES, 1901 (SOURCE: 1901 CENSUS)

	Agriculture (percent)		Industry (percent)		Services (percent)	
Bologna	6853	(12.8)	34490	(64.3)	12328	(23.0)
Florence	4582	(6.3)	38534	(53.3)	29205	(40.4)
Genoa	4107	(4.1)	58983	(59.2)	36583	(36.7)
Sampierdarena	432	(3.0)	11188	(76.7)	2968	(20.3)
Genoa + Sampierdarena[1]	4539	(4.0)	70171	(61.4)	39551	(34.6)
Milan	8080	(3.1)	166510	(64.1)	85184	(32.8)
Parma	52319	(64.5)	19498	(24.0)	9302	(11.5)
Borgo San Donnino	35094	(64.6)	8516	(15.7)	10692	(19.7)
Parma + Borgo San Donnino[2]	87413	(64.5)	28014	(20.7)	19994	(14.8)

TABLE II--CONTINUED

[1]Sampierdarena was an industrial suburb of Genoa whose Chamber fused with that of Genoa in 1904. It and Genoa are combined since the 1904 figures for the Genoa Chamber are those of the new combined organization. However, I have separated them as well in order to point up in Table III the sharp differences in industrial concentration between the two cities.

[2]The figures for Parma and Borgo San Donnino are the figures for the circondari of those two cities rather than the comuni as is the case with the rest shown. This is because the Chamber drew its membership from an area roughly corresponding to the circondario. As in note 1, the purpose is to present the base from which the Chamber drew in order to offer some point of comparison among Chambers. Borgo San Donnino (present-day Fidenza; the name was changed during Fascism) had an independent Chamber at times but in 1904 there was only one Chamber for the Parma-Borgo S. Donnino area. (The circondario was the administrative unit between the comune--municipality--and province. The province of Parma, for example, was divided into the three circondari of Parma, Borgo S. Donnino and Borgotaro).

TABLE III

DEGREE OF INDUSTRIALIZATION OF SELECTED CITIES, 1903

	Percentage of industrial workers employed in *opifici*	Percentage of industrial workers employed in *opifici* having more than ten workers
Bologna	65.5%	49.2%
Florence	46.6	31.9
Genoa	45.5	30.9
Sampierdarena	79.6	72.7
Milan	69.8	60.0
Parma	16.5	9.5
Italy	54.6	. . . .

An *opificio* was legally defined as a plant where any "labors of an industrial nature are carried out by means of a mechanical motor." Where no motors were used, a plant qualified if it had at least ten workers employed "in a permanent way."

Source: Figures for this table were obtained by dividing the figures given in the industrial census of 1903 for each of the above categories by the number of industrial workers given in the general census (as listed in Table II) and expressing the results as a percentage. The first column shows the percentage of all industrial workers who were employed by *opifici*, regardless of the size of the plant; the second column shows the percentage of industrial workers who were employed in plants having more than ten employees. The percentage given may be considered as a rough measure of the proportion of industrial workers who were employed in a factory setting.

of the lack of resources rather than a conscious decision to exclude rural workers. There were two major exceptions to this generalization: Emilia-Romagna and Puglia. In Parma, Bologna, Ferrara, Modena, and elsewhere in the Po Valley Chambers drew on the entire province, with leagues of agricultural workers in almost every small town in the province. Similarly in Apulia, the Chambers in Bari, Brindisi, and Foggia long depended on their base in the countryside. What set these areas apart was a pattern of farming and land tenure which was distinguished by large farms and relatively few small farmers, tenants, and sharecroppers. Instead, the labor force was predominantly made up of braccianti--landless agricultural day-laborers. This "agricultural proletariat" made up the great majority of Chamber members in the countryside not only in these areas, but wherever this pattern of land tenure held, such as Monza, Macerata, and Trapani.[16]

In 1906, the first full national survey of the Chambers (conducted by the Labor Office of the Ministry of Agriculture, Industry, and Commerce) showed 82 extant Chambers. My own research has revealed at least four more, and a reasonable estimate would probably be some ninety in all. Most were of recent formation, since only sixteen had been founded before 1898, and all but four of these had been dissolved in the government crackdown following the Fatti di Maggio of that year. From North to South, the Chambers were distributed by Region as follows:[17]

TABLE IV--CHAPTER I

Piedmont	12	Umbria	2
Liguria	6	Latium	2
Lombardy	13	Campania	3
Veneto	5	Puglia	3
Emilia	13	Calabria	2
Tuscany	14	Sicily	6(?)
Marches	3	Sardinia	2(?)

NUMBER OF CHAMBERS DISTRIBUTED BY REGION, 1906

SOURCE: Bollettino del Ufficio del Lavoro, August, 1908. See Appendix I for fuller information on geographical distribution of Chambers.

The wide variety of locations was matched by a wide variety among members. The Chambers were a mixture of skilled and unskilled, artisans and lumpenproletariat, industrial workers and agricultural day laborers, small shopkeepers and sharecroppers. Naturally, the Chambers tended to reflect the shape of the local economy, but they were nationally rather representative of the working class as a whole. By this I do not mean to suggest that each occupation in the economy had a proportionate representation among the membership of the Chambers: differences in membership and differential rates of organization were important and had important consequences for the Chambers. Instead, I wish to underline the point that few if any groups did not at one time or another have some members in one or more Chambers, so that the Chambers at one time or another dealt with nearly every conceivable occupational group and problem--obviously, with varying degrees of success.

In studying membership I have attempted to deal with dues-paying members, the basis for all statistics cited in this study. It is trusm in labor history generally, and particularly so in Italy, that such figures need to be taken with a great deal of caution. In the first place,

they do not always reflect the level of support which a Chamber enjoyed, especially in moments of crisis. A typical example would be the general strike of December 1900 in Genoa, which drew almost five times as many strikers at its height as the Chamber had members.[18] Membership was generally calculated by the number of tessere distributed to each league secretary, a figure which was at best approximate. Newspapers are full of messages urging the league secretaries to make sure every member took out a tessera, and there are other indications that the number of tessere was lower than actual membership.[19] This seems mostly to have been due to reluctance to pay annual dues, which could easily come to one or two days wages for some of the more poorly paid occupations. As political dissension increased during the reformist-syndicalist struggles, many league members would refuse to take out a tessera as a sign of political opposition to the current executive council, or as a result of a "plague on both your houses" attitude.[20] The numerous personal squabbles which were often unconnected with ideological disagreements further exacerbated this problem, as did simple inertia.[21]

Like any organization, the Chambers evolved various strategies to combat the failure to pay dues. Aside from constant exhortation, there were occasional attempts to limit attendance at meetings and participation in elections to card-carrying members, as well as occasional suggestions that the Chambers might limit their efforts at support and intervention in disputes to the "organized"--i.e., those dues-paying members of a league already in existence rather than formed in the heat of the moment.[22] The most far-reaching efforts of this type were those proposed under the title of the Cassa Unica (Single Fund) at Parma in late 1907. Under this plan the member paid one fee which went to the

Chamber; the Chamber in turn divided it out among the Chamber, the league, the provincial syndicate, the local committee, and the strike fund. To receive any benefit, the member had to pay dues for all of them.[23] Since the Parma plan was fairly limited in its application, and few other methods seem to have had much impact on the regularity of dues payments, membership in the Chamber was probably larger than that reflected in the statistics, and a sense of belonging to the Chamber or identification with what the Chamber stood for was based on something other than the payment or non-payment of dues. There is no reason to suspect membership figures significantly overrepresent any one group, with the exception of a slight tendency for more highly paid workers to be more regular about paying dues, and this last was probably offset by Chamber policies of adjusting dues downward for women, agricultural workers, and other significantly underpaid groups.

Who were the workers drawn to the Chambers? Tables I and II provide some preliminary answers. Perhaps the most obvious point to be made is that it was not primarily the urban industrial proletariat. The transition to industry had just gotten underway in Italy (in fact industry would not become a larger source of employment than either agriculture or services until the late 1950's).[24] Parma was still overwhelmingly agricultural, and even the urban populations of Bologna and Florence show a surprisingly high percentage of agricultural employment. Moreover, the category of "industry" in Table II is the one used in the census: namely, those not employed in agriculture or services. It thus includes artisans as well as industrial workers. Table III shows the percentage of industrial workers who were employed in opifici. To qualify as an opificio, a workshop had to have some kind of motor, or at

least ten employees on a permanent basis. A carpenter's shop with a lathe, a water-powered grist mill, or even a potter's shop would fit the definition. Even so loose an approximation to the factory proletariat did not make up an overwhelming majority of the industrial labor force, since it may be safely assumed that those employed in opifici having ten or fewer workers were artisans, and no doubt many of those in the second column were employed in enterprises which more nearly resembled a large artisan workshop than they did a modern factory.[25]

Both Bologna and Parma had over 60% of their membership in agricultural labor, while the only other Chamber to report agricultural workers among its members--Florence--had only 1.5% of its membership among such workers. While the figures for Parma are very close to the 64.5% of the labor force in agriculture, only 12.8% of the labor force of the commune of Bologna were employed in agriculture. This overrepresentation of agricultural labor shows the extent to which the Bologna Chamber drew its membership from the whole province, rather than just the city. The lack of agricultural labor in Genoa and Milan points up in contrast their essentially urban base. In no Chamber was the proportion of workers in the services anywhere near as high as it was in the labor force; the urban Chambers of Milan, Genoa, and Florence all significantly overrepresented industrial workers at the expense of those in the services. Indeed, the services were underrepresented at Bologna and Parma as well, suggesting that the Chambers rested more strongly on artisans, and the agricultural and industrial laborers.

Nationally, agricultural workers comprised some 43% of all organized workers, and some 41% of workers organized in Chambers, so the high percentages in Parma and Bologna are not so far from the norm as are the low figures for the other three Chambers.[26] Workers in the building trades

constituted 9.3% of all organized workers in Italy (the largest single occupational group after agriculture), making the figures for Parma, Bologna, and Florence quite close to the national average. The departures from the national norms indicate the wide variations in the regional economies. The building trades made up only 2.2% of the Genoa Chamber, but workers in the building trades made up only 2.7% of all organized workers in Liguria, so the low figure is not surprising. By the same token, the 23.2% of the Chamber in Milan which the building trades made up is not surprising in view of the fact that the building trades accounted for about 20% of all organized workers in Lombardy. Agricultural workers accounted for nearly 70% of all organized workers in Emilia, and about 66% of all Chamber members in that area; here too, the variation from the national average is closely paralleled by the Chamber figures from Parma and Bologna. The large numbers of Genoese members in the maritime and portwork categories show Genoa's status as the leading Italian port; 64% of all organized maritime workers and 67% of all organized port-workers were in Liguria, where they accounted for 28% and 17%, respectively, of all organized workers in Liguria.

Taken together, all these figures point up the wide variations in local and regional economies which made for the domination of some areas by certain industries, and the consequent differential impact on organization. For example, nearly 42% of all organized agricultural workers in Italy were in Emilia, so that they clearly exerted a dominant role in the worker's movement there. But they were not as important in Bologna as in Parma, so that the inclusion of both Chambers in the study provides an example of an important variation in the relationship between urban and rural workers. Although Turin is traditionally thought of as the center of the metalworkers, about 19% of all organized metalworkers were

in Lombardy, and about 21% were in Liguria. As the most typical example of modern industrial workers, they were clearly important in their impact on Chamber life. Curiously, metalworkers alone made up nearly 25% of all organized workers in Liguria, while all industrial workers together only accounted for 24.7% of the Genoa Chamber. The disparity in the two figures shows the extent to which other Ligurian Chambers--Savona, Sampierdarena, Sestri Ponente, and Voltri--rested on industrial workers, while the Genoa Chamber remained more artisan in its composition.

The five Chambers are atypical in size--in fact, they account for nearly 16% of all Italian organized workers in themselves--but clearly they were faithful mirrors of the heterogeneous work force in their regions. All the Chambers shared this variety, a variety reflected in the fragmentation of the Italian working class itself. The degree to which the flexible federalism of the Chambers was appropriate to the widely variant nature of the workforce may be more clearly demonstrated by considering some of the data which emerge from the General Census of 1901 and the Industrial Census of 1903.

According to the 1901 General Census, the number occupied in the production of industrial goods (as opposed to agriculture and services) was 3,989,616, or about 16% of the population over ten, male and female. 37% of those over ten years of age--more than twice as many people--gained their income from agriculture. The number engaged in industry had in fact declined since the last census in 1882, which had listed slightly more than 4.2 million in that category; the decline may have been due to more accurate methods of gathering information in the new census rather than any real change. Nevertheless, it certainly suggests

a lack of real growth in the industrial population. With only 23.8% of its population engaged in industrial labor, Italy was thus one of the least industrialized countries in Europe. The corresponding figures for some other European countries were: England, 63.2%; Belgium, 46.0%; Germany, 43.6%; and Switzerland, 38.1%. Of all people exercising a trade or profession, Italy had 58.8% in agriculture. By comparison, France had 48.5%, Switzerland 45.6%, Belgium 38.7%, and England 11.6%.[27]

How were these workers employed? The three largest groups were the industries of "clothing and accessories" (a diverse group which included tailors, corset makers, glove and hat makers, shoemakers, laundresses, etc.) which made up about 22% of the total, the building trades with about 21% of the total, and textile workers with about 17%. These three groups, then, made up nearly 60% of the workers in industry. Another 10% were occupied in wood and straw working and the construction of furniture and domestic utensils, and an additional 10% in the metallurgical and mechanical industries. The remaining 20% were fractured into numerous small groups, of which the largest were food processing, extractive industries (primarily marble and sulpher) and sand, clay, and gravel production. It is worth noting that by these figures nearly 80% of Italian workers were engaged in the production of consumer goods rather than industrial products--a figure which further underlines the relative economic backwardness of the country.[28]

Yet even these figures overstate the number of industrial workers if we are thinking of a factory proletariat. If we subtract all those listed in the census as artisans, managers, owners of small shops or factories, clerks, domestic servants, and spinners and weavers on the putting-out system, the remainder is only 2,592,687, or about 65% of those whom the census defines as engaged in industry.[29]

Of these nearly 2.6 million workers who made up the industrial labor force, a large majority were in fact artisans, as a comparison with industrial census of 1903 shows. As a census of opifici[30] rather than a census of the general population, the industrial census excludes the building trades (who were not employed the whole year round) and the very smallest artisan workshops, but still lumps together, for example, a water-powered grain mill and the giant steel complex at Piombino on the island of Elba. Nevertheless, it only listed 1,412,262 workers as employed in opifici of all types. This means that only 35% of those who made their living from industry were employed in opifici, and only a little over half--about 54%--of the industrial labor force* was employed in opifici, and therefore constituted something resembling a factory proletariat. Even this half was still heavily artisan, as another figure from the industrial census indicates: these 1.4 million workers were employed in 117,278 opifici, for an average of about 12 workers per plant, including managers and clerical workers. This figure is the product of some stretching of the definition of opificio, judging by the extreme variation among the various sectors of industry. In such typically pre-industrial sectors as grain milling and brickmaking, the figures are quite low; slightly over 2 workers per mill in the former, and just under 4 workers per establishment in the latter. In more typically industrialized sectors such as textiles, weaving, and spinning, the figures are much higher: 52 workers per mill in wood, 88 in silk, and 183 in cotton, the most modern and highly mechanized branch of the textile industry.[31]

The highest concentrations of workers were in the mechanical industries, such as railway and tramway yards and workshops, and shipyards--

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*That is, the nearly 2.6 million who were not domestic servants, clerks, managers, and the like.

about 198 per plant--and the government workshops (arsenals, navy yards, and so forth)--about 385 workers apiece. The highest of all were the state monopoly's tobacco works, which averaged 778 workers in each of the 18 establishments. The pressure of the state as employer meant that organization was often slow to develop in the largest factories, which were more directly subject to the heavy hand of the government. Thus the pattern which saw working class organization beginning among artisans rather than factory workers was underscored by the structure of Italian industry; even when governmental interference in organization and the process of industrial conflict lessened under Giolitti, he still denied the right to strike the public employees, and continued the quasi-military discipline which had been a feature of the arsenals and navy yards. Even the private ownership of the large establishments would have made little difference, though, since they were so atypical. The categories which had the highest levels of concentration--railway plants and shipyards, government workshops and tobacco factories--employed only 3.5% of all workers covered in the industrial census. By comparison, the millers alone made up 4.5% of the same total.[32]

The distinction between the figures of the two censuses demonstrates, as the editors of the industrial census remarked, the extent to which "small workshops in crafts and trades . . . in our country employ many more hands than do true factories."[33] The largest divergences between the two censuses (aside from the roughly 500,000 construction workers who were excluded from the industrial census) were in the food, clothing, and wood industries where the artisan workshop was evidently the rule.[34]

If the high percentage of artisan workshops was one characteristic which clearly identified the Italian working class, then a relatively

high percentage of women and children in the work force was another. The 1901 general census gives a total of some 27% women in the labor force (based on the 2.5 million figure cited earlier). Though international comparisons on this point are a little difficult, since other censuses usually include domestic spinners and weavers whom we have omitted, it seems that this was one of the highest figures in Western Europe. If we include those same groups in the Italian figures (in order to make the two groups comparable), we find the percentage of women in the working class in 1901 to be the following: Italy, 35.3%; France, 35.2%; Austria, 27.4%; Belgium, 25.1%; Germany, 16.2%.[35]

The industrial labor force was unusually diversified in another sense as well. The industrial census indicates a much higher percentage of women--nearly 39%--than does the general census. The greatest part of that divergence is no doubt due to the exclusion of the overwhelmingly male building trades from the industrial census. (If the building trades are added to the industrial census, the percentage of women included in that census drops to slightly more than 30%). The explanation for the generally high proportion of women in Italian industry no doubt lies in the large numbers employed in the textile mills and tobacco factories, where women made up the majority of the work force.[36] This suggests another important point as well. While only 54% of the industrial labor force were included in the industrial census, nearly 78% of all employed women were included in the industrial census. This leads to the conclusion that working women worked in large factories, were domestic weavers or servants, or perhaps were agricultural workers. But they were rarely employed in the small workshop which was the dominant form of work and which was the focus of most organizing efforts and

early forms of organization.[37] Too, this suggests that organizing efforts in large factories were likely to be inhibited not only by the presence of the government as employer, but were also likely to have large numbers of women employed, who have been traditionally slower to organize than men. Again, the structure of Italian employment and the structure of the working class suggest that the typical organized worker was more likely to be employed in a small workshop than a factory.

As for child labor, the 1901 census indicates that about 17% of the working class were children under 15: 26.7% of the females and 14.5% of the males. The industrial census of 1903 indicates that only 14% of the workers were children, but the difference is probably due to the 1902 law which intervened between the censuses, prohibiting the employment of children under 12 and limiting the working day of other minors to 11 hours. Even such a small change (which still left Italian legislation of child labor one which "remains behind the great majority of European labor legislation," in the words of a contemporary observer[38]) was probably enough to make some impact on the practice of employing children (or at least on the practice of reporting such employment on government surveys). Moreover, the census defined child labor as that of children under 15; once that age was reached a child became an adult as far as the census was concerned. Other sources lead us to believe that extension of the definition of child to include adolescents would lead to the inclusion of much larger numbers of workers. A government study of miners found 27.8% of them to be under 21 years of age; a well-known study of the Milanese working class found that about 29% of the males and 19% of the females were under 19.[39] Another study of workers in the textile industry found almost 53% of them to be under 21: 59.2% of the females and 29.6% of the

males.[40] Evidently things had not changed much since the late 1870's when the Piedmontese industrialist Alessandro Rossi had written his passionate defense of the necessity of employing child labor in his textile mills.[41]

It does not seem excessive, then, to accept Giuliano Procacci's estimate of 40% of the Italian working class as being composed of women, children, and adolescents.[42] This implies that the turnover of workers due to age and marriage was rather high in Italy. Women rarely worked beyond the age of 30 or 40; the study of the Milanese working class found that about 59% of the women were under 29 and about 74% were under 39 years of age. Evidently marriage often marked the end of their career as wage earners, since only about 25% of Milanese working women were married. Men, not surprisingly, worked longer and the Milan study found the distribution of age groups in the working class to be about what it was in the population as a whole.[43] But this was not the only cause of the high degree of turnover among workers; another was the rapid urbanization of industrial centers, a characteristic of most countries during the early stages of industrialization. Between 1882 and 1901, when the general population was increasing at an annual rate of 0.73%, Milan's population was increasing at an annual rate of 2.75%, Turin's at 1.69%, and that of Genoa at 1.60%.[44] When this permanent immigration is added to the high rate of temporary migration that was--and still is--a characteristic feature of Italian working class life, we have a picture within the working class of an almost constant state of flux.

Temporary migration was widespread in Lombardy and Piedmont, where workers headed to the textile mills of Como and Biella, but it was common all over Italy. The most visible migrants were the landless

agricultural laborers (braccianti) who traveled up and down the Po Valley during the harvest and planting seasons, finding work in the grain fields, planting and harvesting rice in Alessandria and Bologna, and working in the sugar beet fields scattered throughout the valley. To a lesser extent, the same phenomenon was to be found in Tuscany, the Roman campagna, and Apulia. The building trades had long known emigrations to the centers of activity, and workers in this sector were among the most likely to spend the long working season abroad; in France, Germany, Belgium, Denmark, Switzerland, and Austria, Italian bricklayers, masons, carpenters, and cabinet makers contributed their legendary skills to the construction of Europe. The were flanked by numbers of unskilled laborers, who even then anticipated the European role which Italian workers still play; like the Irish in Great Britain, Italians were the "navvies and railway builders of the continent." Tuscan brickmakers traveled all over Italy to spend the spring and summer months working in the small shops which produced the bricks demanded by the building boom of the early 1900's, returning to Tuscany to live off their earnings during the winter.[45]

Yet another element in this flux was the worker who alternated between agriculture and industry. In the 1901 census, 461,142 workers declared that they had a secondary occupation; 206,153 of these declared their second occupation to be in the wood, straw, food, clothing, or building industries. Obviously most of these were peasants and braccianti who managed to find work during the winter season, in food packing and processing plants, building roads or working on land-reclamation projects for the government (construction was almost entirely labor-intensive at this point) or perhaps working in the hemp mills or peat plants of the

southern Po Valley. In Tuscany particularly, many agricultural workers used their spare time to make straw objects, particularly the so-called "panama" hats, and this no doubt accounted for many secondary occupations as well. Much Italian industry, especially in the smaller shops, was highly seasonal and had little trouble accommodating workers for only part of the year. The pattern is a common one in countries which are beginning to industrialize; somewhat more surprising are the 100,384 workers who listed their secondary profession as agriculture. No doubt many of them found work in the areas listed above, especially the textile industry, where the "worker-peasant" was a common figure.[46] Giuliano Procacci's comment is apt:

> The work of the fields constituted for many textile workers the refuge in periods of unemployment and the dead season, and at the same time acted as a kind of individual strike fund. The bitterness and length of some textile strikes . . . would not be explicable without taking this particular situation into account.[47]

From all of this discussion, we are able to identify some important characteristics of the Italian working class. Consisting of women, children, and adolescents to nearly half its number, it was young and characterized by a high degree of turnover of personnel. This turnover was accentuated by migration: from the countryside to the workshop or factory and back, from Italy to the rest of Europe and back, and of course from Italy to the rest of the world. Thus one of the most striking features of working class life was the instability of workplace personnel. New industries drew people from older jobs, and perhaps even destroyed those older jobs by their competition. Workers left one job to emigrate, for a season or a generation, only to return later. The movement from countryside to city, from labor market to housewife, meant that labor organizations would find it difficult to build up their

strength from the workplace; instead, the community was the natural unit of organization. And the institution which organized and spoke for the community was the Chamber of Labor, not the individual union. By speaking for the working class of Milan, for example, rather than any single group, it offered workers a chance to overcome the differences created by their situation; moreover, the study of the Chamber opens the possibility for a study of the working class rather than its subgroups.

Overwhelmingly employed in small artisan workshops, the Italian working class (in the cities and towns; the rural areas were a slightly different matter) naturally had a "labor aristocracy," or several of them. The most obvious aristocrats were the skilled workers, masters of their crafts--their arti; products of long apprenticeships, they were heirs to a tradition of values like pride in workmanship, respect for hierarchy in the workplace, and a firm belief in the worth and dignity of what they did.[48] At the same time, there was a second kind of "aristocracy" among the skilled workmen--who, although not trained through apprenticeship like the artisans, nonetheless possessed skills and aptitudes which were not standardized and whose jobs could not be filled by any worker off the street. In the first category fell traditional groups such as hatters, glovers, goldsmiths, printers, and the like; in the second group, new workers like gas workers, dockers, and so forth.[49]

In addition to these, there were numberless unskilled workers as well; the brick and hod carriers, porters, sweepers, and common laborers who supported and often worked with the skilled workmen and artisans. These were numerous not only because of the nature of the traditional economy, but because Italian industrialization, at least in its early stages, rested on a thorough-going exploitation of labor more than on

increased mechanization of the production process.[50] In the midst of the traditional economy was the new industrial economy in embryonic form, whose typical figure was the intermediate, semi-skilled workman. This last group, which eventually emerged as the center of the modern working class, was just arriving on the scene and was by far the smallest group within the working class. "That which characterized the Italian working class was not only the prevalence of unskilled labor [over skilled] but the fact that there was practically no intermediate stage between unskilled and highly skilled workers."[51] Only in the newest industries was there a tendency to relative homogeneity among the workers of a given plant. Lodovico d'Aragona, secretary of FIOM (the metallurgical workers' union) pointed this out at their second congress in 1903 when he drew attention to the fact that the "technical capacity" which characterized the "worker properly called" was increasingly less in demand, and that metal workers were being reduced to "tenders of more or less complicated machines."[52] But they were a special case, and would long remain so.

Such vast disparities between the various strata of the workplace--since unskilled and skilled workers and artisans were often employed in the same shop--had serious organizational implications. Skilled workers and artisans tended to be more supportive of their craft than they did of their workplace mates--a strike by Florentine turners in 1902, for example, was supported not by a strike of other workers in the plant, but by turners in other plants.[53]

As long as the gap existed, simple laborers and skilled workers would often have less to do with fellow employees of the same plant than with their friends and neighbors in the same community, who faced the

same problems as consumers of food and housing, and the like; and it was on these ties that the base of the organization rested. This also helped to offset the weakness of labor organization in a factory whose members might be coming or going to other factories or workshops, or whose workforce might fluctuate with the season or the vagaries of the economy.

Organization of the community was even more important in the rural areas, where the movement of workers from place to place was more accentuated than it was in the cities. Many small renters, sharecroppers, and the like changed employers from year to year (when they were not changing from day to day, as was often the case with the braccianti). But if the movement from employer to employer was high, the population was relatively more stable within a given geographical area.[54] As in the cities, organization in the rural areas by community provided a common status which helped to offset the divergencies among the various social groups which are subsumed in the facile characterization of "peasant."[55]

One of the marks of divergence between skilled and unskilled workers was the difference between the hours they worked and the wages they earned. Industries which had a high percentage of skilled labor worked shorter hours and received better pay. The shortest workday was nine hours--that of the typographers, the quintessential artisan group. In urban centers metalworkers and bricklayers worked a ten-hour day, although this figure tended to lengthen as one moved out of the larger cities or to the south--that is, as shops and yards existed in less industrialized environments. The normal workday, wrote Luigi Einaudi in 1900, was around twelve hours. In sectors of the economy where the large

installation was non-existent, the traditional dawn-to-dusk day--15-16 hours--was the rule.[56]

Wages showed the same pattern, with the addition that they varied by age and sex as well. A 1905 government study found that of women over 15, 40.3% received less than one lira a day, 40.7% received from L.1 to 1.50 a day, and only 19% made more than L.1.50 a day. Since women made up the bulk of the unskilled labor pool in the industries where they were concentrated, it is not surprising to find that they were relatively poorly paid; even so, the differential between their wages and the normal industrial wage of 2-3 lire a day suggests that their sex led to even lower wages than their status of unskilled laborer might indicate.[57] The Umanitaria study of Milanese workers found that 91.3% of the women made less than L.1.50 a day. Other unskilled workers--boys under 15 years of age--rarely made over one lira per day. Being young and female was doubly disadvantageous; the average daily wage of women under 15 was L.0.59.[58]

In the skilled trades, on the other hand, shorter hours went hand in hand with higher wages. FIOM members reported three lire and up a day as the most frequent wage. Journeymen and master bricklayers and masons made the same. Typographical workers did even better; compositors made five lire a day and more. In other areas where the artisan mode held sway, the sharp difference between skilled and unskilled wages and hours was the same. Felt workers, for example (mostly hat makers), were highly paid; 68% of the men received over three lire a day, while the women received wretched wages. Even in the industrialized textile mills, low wages were the rule for women and children, while the skilled male workers--pareurs, dyers, and foremen--received high ones.[59] The working

class, then, was badly cleaved by differences in working conditions and wages whose sharp distinctions were as notable as those caused by emigration and migration.

If these cleavages created a potential problem for a working class organization, the Chambers' peculiar form of organization was ideally suited to compensate for this problem. Since the basis of the Chamber was the league, and each league was organized by trade or craft, the solidarity of workers who had similar working conditions was assured. Though there may have been different wages received by the workers in a given league, each league was founded on the craft principle of hierarchy, and workers could reasonably expect to move up the hierarchy in time. In addition, the league was usually small enough so that the face-to-face contact necessary for a common understanding was not obscured; though all workers in a Chamber might not know one another, the average size of 100-150 members in a league meant that it was possible for the league to be more of a club than a labor organization. Finally, the leagues were joined together in a common organization, and it was clear that this organization had some common basis other than working conditions or relations with their employers, since these varied so widely among workers. As with migration, membership in the Chamber created a common tie among workers who might not otherwise have one. But what was this common tie?

The differences between artisans and unskilled workers were not just ones of economic status; economic status was an outward manifestation of two different ways of life, each with its own values and distinctive styles. One obvious sign of this was pride in a craft, the feeling that the worker "properly called" was different from a mere

mere manovale. The higher status attached to the exercise of a craft was reflected in the extreme differentiation of job titles to be found in the membership rolls of the Chambers. Bologna, for example, had separate leagues of hog butchers and cattle butchers--a distinction which tended to underscore the uniqueness of each craft. Even in industrial Milan, bronze workers, tin workers, turners, founders, and so forth all belonged to separate leagues even when they worked side by side in the same factory. The elaboration was most complete in the traditional crafts: bricklayers, for example, had a regular hierarchy of capo mastro (master), adulto (journeyman, roughly) first, second, and third category bricklayer, muratore da calce (mortar layer), and first and second category laborer. There were similar hierarchies among the stonecutters, masons, and pavers.[60]

No one wished to be considered a mere laborer, even if in reality he was just that. Instead, workers were organized into separate leagues, each with its own job title, even though the men who performed these jobs might work side by side, and the work itself might actually be unskilled labor. Genoese dockers, for example, whose work consisted of the shifting of boxes and bulk cargoes on wheelbarrows or on their backs had by 1904 organized themselves into over a dozen different leagues, each with its own title--and by implication, its own craft. There were "coal loaders," "coal unloaders," "coal receivers," "coal weighers," "coal porters," and "anthracite workers" among those whose work actually consisted of carrying baskets of coal on their backs from ship to the wagons on the dock that carried it away. There was similarly elaborate differentiation among workers who loaded and unloaded grains, and still another for workers in "general merchandise." It would have made more

sense to simply consider them as dockers or longshoremen, but such an organizational form would have meant that they were merely laborers; the elaborate hierarchy of job titles showed their affinity to the traditional crafts, and their claim to enjoy the dignity and status of skilled labor.[61]

The differentiation of job titles and the development of hierarchies would not be comprehensible unless we understand how powerful the model of the artisan form of organization was. Artisans were the core of the earliest labor movements in Italy as they were elsewhere, and it is no surprise to find that in Italy, as Robert Bezucha has found in Lyons, "the working class was born in the workshop, not the factory."[62] Even as organization spread outside the confines of the workshop, the model of organization which it spawned persisted.

But this is only part of the story. The working class was made up of more than the artisans and those workers who were able to adopt the artisan techniques to their uses because their skills were in equally short supply. A near-monopoly of skills was an impossible achievement for the mass of unskilled workers, the new factory proletariat, the braccianti--the "proletariat of the fields, in a widely used contemporary phrase--and the wide variety of tenants, sharecroppers, and other workers in the rural areas. What the artisan form of organization as practiced in the Chamber of Labor had to offer all of these workers was the elevation of their status to the dignity and respect which skilled labor enjoyed. Professionalization and a proliferation of new job titles may, in some circumstances, have the effect of dividing the workers from one another and creating artificial barriers among them just as the changes in the process of production are having precisely

the opposite effect--at least a recent study of the American working class has made this point rather forcefully.[63] But the simultaneous division of workers into leagues and their unification into the Chamber provided a means to overcome these barriers while at the same time creating a common basis for organization based precisely on that common status of dignity. It is important to recognize, of course, that seeing this point in retrospect is not the same as advocating that the workers and leaders of the Chambers saw it as well. The process of elevating all workers to the dignity of skilled labor may very well have been inadvertent; it was nonetheless important, and offers an approximation to understanding why the Chambers flourished as they did.

But dignity and respect are rather difficult to translate into organizational programs and activities. Given that the Chambers organized in the community on an artisan basis, both because of the disparate social structure of the Italian working class and the instability of workers in their workplaces, serious problems immediately arose about the form that organization should take and the content of their actions. Organization and action which had been elaborated primarily to meet the needs and desires of artisans (such as drives for cheap credit and apprenticeship schools) were obviously not appropriate for the whole working class; however, neither was it totally outmoded, since artisans were a significant minority. New forms of action, such as industrial unionism, were also valid for a part of the working class, but not the whole. Other actions which were primarily aimed at one group--such as improvements in the standard sharecropping contract, a rise in public works to be awarded to laborers' cooperatives for execution, or the development of mutual aid and friendly societies--could have an appeal for sharecroppers, <u>braccianti</u>, or skilled workers, but not necessarily for the

whole working class. Much of the history of the Italian workers movement, and that of the Chambers in particular, is concerned with the attempt to find a *via maestra* which would draw these elements together into one movement, with the search for a solution which would be common to all workers. Trade and industrial unionism, mutual aid, cooperation, self-education, political and social advocacy were all elements which had appeal to the different sectors of the working class, but none seemed adapted to the needs and desires of *all* workers. Similarly, none of these could be rejected out of hand, since all had relevance to one group or another.

Indeed, the Chambers spread their net wide. In general, the constitutions of the Chambers restricted membership to "wage workers" who "actively exercise a trade or craft," but even this definition, vague as it was, was applied rather loosely. The five Chambers of this study had at one time or another on their rolls leagues of "choristers," "civil clerks," "Magistrates Association," "orchestra professors," governesses, sextons, elementary school teachers, photographers, and doctors. (These last were *medici condotti*, doctors hired by the state to provide free or low-cost medical care to the poor, especially in rural areas; many early socialist and radical leaders were *medici condotti*.) When these elements are added to the disparities of wages, working conditions, migration patterns and the like described above, the picture that emerges is hardly consistent with the image most historians hold of the "working class"; yet it is clear that the Chambers thought of themselves as class organizations, and that this perception was shared by those outside of the workers movement.

In fact, one of the reasons why they were called Camera del Lavoro rather than Borsa del Lavoro (which would have been the correct translation of Bourse des Travail, their immediate inspiration) was that they were intended to be for the workers what the Chamber of Commerce was for the bourgeoisie: the representative of the class interest. There was moreover a difference of connotation as well: a Borsa del Lavoro, it was argued like the Borsa of Milan where stocks were traded, suggested a place where a commodity was bought and sold; a Chamber suggested a place where men met to decide their own fate. Like the job titles, the Chamber helped to preserve and underscore the dignity of labor.[64]

To return to the distinction first suggested by Marx, Italian society at the turn of the century would seem to present the rather unusual spectacle of a working class organized "for itself" in the Chambers of Labor, but one which was not yet a class "in itself," as the discussion of the characteristics of the working class makes clear. A major task of this study will be to define in what sense the membership thought of themselves as a class, and how the boundaries of that class came to be established.

The task is not easy, for conventionally the history of the workers movement has in fact been the history of the trade unions. It has been an almost universal assumption about trade-union organization that its strength lies in its ability to bring together workers occupied in the same trade or industry and to use that common ground as a basic bond of solidarity in the struggle for more humane working conditions and improved wages. The acceptance of this dictum in the past has led labor historians to concentrate on the formation of trade and industrial unions as the key to the history of the labor movement, and to treat the

Chambers and their counterparts elsewhere as transitory epiphenomena characteristic of the early stages of labor history, but destined to be rendered obsolete by the rise of the unions. This has been the case especially in the two major works in English on the Italian labor movement: Daniel Horowitz, The Italian Labor Movement, and Maurice Neufeld, Italy: School for Awakening Countries. (It should be noted that while part of this may be attributed to a characteristic Anglo-American approach, the view has been shared by some major Italian historians as well; though Italians tend to devote more space to the Chambers, the primary accent is still placed on the trade unions).[65] Yet it is clear from the discussion above that the Chambers were also strong and active organizations, which in fact had a larger membership than did the unions and continued to be important even after the unions had begun to occupy an important place in working class activity. After devoting the vast majority of his study to the foundation and growth of the CGL and its successors, Horowitz nevertheless concludes that

> the Italian industrial and rural workers continued to place their primary confidence in the Chambers of Labor for the very reasons which frequently earned the condemnation of the national trade union leadership: the Chambers' concern with broad political problems which went beyond specific trade issues.[66]

Horowitz' comment also suggests one of the reasons why the Chambers have been considered as transitory phenomena: their interest in something other than trade union issues suggests an "immaturity" of the working class, a failure to differentiate between political and economic issues and the organizations which are best adopted to secure political and economic goals. The division of labor between unions--which are supposed to be "non-political"--and political parties is generally considered a characteristic of developed societies. The failure to achieve

this division of labor is thus a reflection of the relative backwardness of the workers movement in Italy. This is particularly the thrust of Maurice Neufeld's work, which takes as its general theme the failure of "strong and free" (i.e., "non-political"; more specifically, non-Communist) unions to emerge in Italy. The viewpoint, although shaped in part by the Cold War attitudes prevailing when it was written, was shared by Rinaldo Rigola, the first secretary of the CGL, who as early as the 1920's expected the Chambers to disappear rapidly and who displayed some puzzlement at their continuing vitality.[67] Put this way, the suggestion that the Chambers are transitory already begins to sound suspicious. Any observer of contemporary Italy could quickly point out the continued vitality and activity of the Chambers of Labor, even in the 1950's and 60's. Although they were no longer dominant over trade union federations, the center of action on the local level continued to be the Chamber, particularly given the relative organizational and financial weakness of most Italian trade unions.[68] But if this continuity exists, why the suggestion that the Chambers were transitory?

The most obvious suggestion is that the Italian labor movement was somehow backward, perhaps sharing in the general backwardness of Italy. Based in part on the argument from example, this theory has an obvious fallacy. Though it is true that local organizations such as Labor Councils, Trades Councils, and the like were not very important in the labor movement in Great Britain, nor Germany, nor the United States, the persistence of local organizations such as the Chambers, as well as the Bourses des Travail in France or the Casas del Pueblo in Spain should immediately alert the scholar to differing patterns of the workers movement. The interest for the scholar lies not in the degree to which the

experience of the Latin countries was "backward" and that of the Anglo-Saxon ones was "modern," but rather in how the experience of the workers movement in each country can explain the nature of the working class to us.

To begin with, there is the clear suggestion that the patterns of mobilization of the working class are not tied to the rhythms of industrialization. Backward countries need not have backward workers movements, as the history of the Russian Revolution should automatically suggest. Instead, the forms of mobilization, their timing, and their aims offer us a chance to penetrate the obscurity of working class experience to discover not only what workers supported, rejected, reacted to or dreamed of, but also to illuminate the experience of the entire society.

But the topic of the Chambers of Labor would remain in deserved obscurity if its only interest were in illuminating some exotic and little-known facet of working-class history to us. The choice for a community organization rather than sectarian one tells us much about the whole culture in which Italian workers lived, and sheds light not only on them but on the social relationships, political activity, and the very structures and processes of Italian society as a whole.

The Chambers of Labor reflected a special reality in which Italian workers lived. Their popularity was a reflection of the extent to which they fit not only the needs and desires of the workers as workers, but also Italians. They played a critical role in the habits, styles, attitudes and consciousness of the workers of their time, and thus in the formation of the consciousness of the Italian working class. But the Italian working class did not live in a social vacuum, and the directions

it took and the way in which it interacted with other classes contributed to the forms of Fascism and of modern Italian society as well.

In the remainder of this study we shall enquire more closely into the social reality of the Chambers in the second chapter, in order to see more clearly what they did and what there was about them that attracted workers so strongly. But their choices of organizational structure and process were not made in the abstract; rather, they drew on both a fund of previous experience and the general tendencies of an entire culture. In order to understand the experience that shaped the Chambers, we turn in the third chapter to a "pre-history" of the Chambers, where by an analytical, rather than a narrative approach, it is possible to understand the historical logic which made the Chambers both an ideal instrument for meeting the problems and needs of workers in the twentieth century, as well as a new solution to some old problems of the workers movement which had persisted through nineteenth century Italy. Finally, in the fourth chapter we turn more specifically to the process of interaction between the Chambers and the government to see how this process shaped the lives of the working class and made for the formation of the consciousness of Italian workers. Our aim not to construct the model of trade-unionism and see how it functioned in a different context, but rather the pursuit of the experience of the Italian working class, both for its own importance and for the light it sheds on the history of modern Italy.

FOOTNOTES--CHAPTER I

[1]The literature on social class and conflict is massive, and here we wish only to cite some of the principal works which lie behind the formulation of the hypothesis suggested in the text. There is an excellent introduction to the problems associated with the study of class in T. B. Bottomore, Classes in Modern Society (New York, 1966). Two stimulating works by sociologists, from rather different approaches, are Stanislaw Ossowski, Class Structure in the Social Consciousness (New York, 1963), and Ralf Dahrendorf, Class and Conflict in Industrial Society (Stanford, 1959). Both men are Europeans, and avoid for the most part the approach of American researchers, who, in the words of one Italian writer, tend to "treat class as a problem, rather than a datum." This is particularly the case with Richard Centers, The Psychology of Social Classes: A Study of Class Consciousness (New York, 1961). The best studies avoid this approach and go directly into cases, building theory from observed behavior. The classic overview on the rise of the working class consciousness is by the indefatigable Jürgen Kuczynski, The Rise of the Working Class (London, 1967). Two first-rate case studies, one by a sociologist and the other by an historian, are John Leggett, Class, Race and Labor: Working-Class Consciousness in Detroit (Oxford, 1968) and Edward P. Thompson The Making of the English Working Class (New York, 1963). Of course, it is impossible to discuss class without discussing Marx. Though the entire Marxist corpus is concerned with class, I have drawn particular insight from the Class Struggles in France as an historical example, rather than a theoretical argument. (There is an extremely learned and witty dissection of American theorists of class such as Alvin Gouldner by Aris Acconero, the "Italian writer" mentioned above, in Rassegna Sindicale, December 1970 [VIII, 27] pp. 105ff).

[2]Marx, Karl, The Poverty of Philosophy (Moscow, 1973), p. 150.

[3]This view finds its purest expression in Ralf Dahrendorf, op. cit., as well as being shared to some extent in Lewis Coser, The Functions of Social Conflict (New York, 1956). The most recent and up-to-date historical overview from this viewpoint is that of J. F. Bergier, "The Industrial Bourgeoisie and the Rise of the Working Class, 1700-1914," in Carlo M. Cipolla, ed., The Fontana Economic History of Europe (London, 1973), Volume 3, pp. 452-506.

[4]Perlman's ideas were first formulated in his classic study, The Theory of the Labor Movement (New York, 1928). Perlman was one of the first labor historians in the United States, contributing one section to the massive study headed by John R. Commons.

[5]Coser, Lewis, "Social Conflict and the Theory of Social Change," British Journal of Sociology, VIII (September, 1957), 197-207.

[6]Georges Sorel, Reflections on Violence; the passage is quoted as cited by Lewis Coser in his article cited in note 5 above.

[7]There is a fuller discussion of the various international equivalents to the Chambers in Renato Brocchi, L'organizzazione della resistenza in Italia (Macerata, 1907) pp. xxxiii-xxxix. This book--written by the secretary of the Chamber in Macerata--is a mine of information about all aspects of the workers movement, written by an activist who had a clear and tough-minded view of the relative importance of the various strands of the workers movement. The suggestion that the Chambers were later to be replaced by the unions is mine, not his; but there is something of a suggestion in Louis Lorwin, Syndicalism in France (New York, 1914) that the Bourses des Travail--the original inspiration for the Chamber--may have been an exception to this generalization. See especially pp. 73-91; cf. also Val R. Lorwin, The French Labor Movement (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1954).

[8]The phrase seems to have been extremely widely used, and would be found in almost any contemporary working class newspaper. See, for example, La Battaglia Proletaria (Milan), January, 1909 issues.

[9]These statistics were published in the Bollettino dell'Ufficio del Lavoro (hereinafter abbreviated BUL), January, 1908, p. 31. Published monthly by the Labor Office of the Ministry of Agriculture, Industry, and Commerce from 1904 on, this is the only regular source of statistics and information on the workers movement in Italy that does not emanate directly from the movement itself; hence, its frequent citation.

[10]See BUL, January, 1908; January, 1909; January, 1910, January, 1912.

[11]Figures on the expansion of the Chambers are taken from the BUL, August, 1906, 367-373. By comparison, the Socialist Party had by 1905 only some 3-4% of its membership in the south.

[12]The only discussion of these Sicilian Chambers that I am aware of is by Giuliano Procacci, "Movimenti sociali e partiti politici in Sicilia dal 1900 al 1904," Annuario dell'istituto storico ilaliano per l'età moderna e contemporanea, XI (1959); see especially pp. 155 ff. There is some mention of the agrarian organization in Rene Rochefort, "Misere paysanne et troubles sociaux; un pays du latifond sicilien; Corleone," Annales, XIV (July-September, 1959), 441-460.

[13]This discussion of the general pattern of Chamber organization is repeated in some detail in Brocchi, xliii-lxii. I have found nothing in my own research to contradict the general outline given here, with a natural tendency for smaller and poorer Chambers to be less elaborate.

[14]Though exchange rates fluctuated somewhat, by and large the lira was roughly equal to a mark or a franc around the turn of the century, and was worth (in 1900 values) about 20¢ in American currency. 1 lira = 100 centesimi. Converting these values into contemporary terms is fraught with uncertainties, and I have preferred to leave wages, prices, and the like in their original units.

[15]In BUL, August, 1908, 370-379, there is a full survey of all extant Chambers, listing a number of important characteristics--succursali (subsidiaries in smaller towns, which are an important key to how widespread geographically membership was), functions (how many different activities it performed), the newspaper which served as its spokesman, size of budget, dues, and sources of income. Of the 82 Chambers listed, 33 had had municipal subsidies at one time or another. As of 1908, 12 of them had been lifted by the city or the prefect; in several cases, the subsidy had been granted more than once, but was lifted during moments of tension, such as the general strike of 1904, which cost several Chambers their subsidies--evidently as punishment. Most of these cases are discussed in more detail in Chapter IV below.

[16]The area of membership is also covered in BUL, August, 1908. Since agricultural leagues were organized by village as well as by profession (i.e., the leagues are listed as "braccianti league of X, sharecroppers league of X," etc.), the geographical extent of membership can easily be deduced by study of the Chamber rolls. There is some discussion of the agricultural leagues and their relationships with the Chambers in Giuliano Procacci, "Geografia e struttura del movimento contadino della Valle Padana nel suo periodo formativo (1901-1906," Studi Storici, V. 1 (January-March, 1964), 41-120.

[17]The distribution of the Chambers is also in BUL, August, 1908; the information on the Sicilian Chambers is in Procacci, "Movimenti sociali." Though the government office lists no Chambers in Sardinia, it appears that the Chambers in Cagliari and Sassari were functioning by then. Antonio Gramsci's older brother, Gennaro, was active in the Cagliari chamber and was a clerk for it at one time. Cf. Giuseppe Fiori, Antonio Gramsci: Life of A Revolutionary (New York, 1973). There is a fuller information about the geographical extent of the Chambers in appendix I.

[18]The most accurate figures on the Genoa general strike are in the writings of the young Luigi Einaudi, at that time chief economic reporter for La Stampa of Turin. The articles are now in his collected early writings, Cronache economiche e politiche di un trentennio, Volume I (1893-1902), Turin, 1959, pp. 205ff.

[19]Usually around the first of the year, when a new fiscal year was beginning, the local newspaper which covered Chamber affairs would carry appeals from the secretary to be sure that this year the leagues took out as many tessere as they had members. The fact that the appeals reappeared every year for every journal surveyed in this study (see list in Bibliographical Essay) suggests that the appeals fell on deaf ears. The careful statisticians of the Humanitarian Society noted the problem when they published their detailed history of the sections of the Milan Chamber, Origini, vicende e conquiste delle organizzazioni operai aderente alla Camera del Lavoro di Milano (Milan, 1908). On p. LXX, preceding the statistical breakdown of membership, they note that

> "The numbers refer to . . . the precise number of tessere taken out by the sections from the secretary; these figures, however, in most cases do not express the real numbers [Italics in original] of a given section, insofar as the tendency of these organizations has always been to pay for fewer tessere than they actually have members."

[20]Brocchi, who was himself a Chamber secretary and thus in a position to know, says that poverty was the main cause of the failure to pay dues. (pp. LXII-LXV). At Bologna, when the syndicalists took control in the 1906 executive commission elections, the membership declined precipitously. The reformist editors of La Squilla, the local socialist weekly, gleefully suggested that this was the result of disgust with the syndicalists, but the membership stayed low after the reformists regained control in 1908, and they ruefully admitted that some workers were so disgusted by the political wrangling that they had lost faith in the Chamber no matter which faction ran it. See La Squilla, January 6 and 13, 1906; October 30, 1908.

[21]There is an interesting illustration of the personal dispute in the affair of Ferdinando Cornacchia at Parma. A former Chamber secretary, forced to resign after his alleged mishandling of funds, he stayed on as capolega of the bricklayers. Despite repeated attempts by the Chamber to get the league to dissociate themselves from Cornacchia, they continued loyal to their leader and many bricklayers refused to take out tessere as a sign of protest. The Chamber finally expelled all the bricklayers for placing their faith in one man, rather than the organization. The dispute had no ideological overtones, but rather was a problem of personal versus organizational loyalties. (The relevant episodes for the dispute, which lasted over a year, are in the local socialist weekly, L'Idea: February 8 and 22, March 15 and April 26, 1902; April 25, 1903; and May 14, July 23, and August 6, 1904). The episode is worth noting for the consequence that the membership figures for the Parma Chamber for 1904, as published in BUL, February 1905, p. 291, list only 200 bricklayers, while a previous survey in L'Idea (January 1, 1902), had listed over 600. The difference is obviously the Cornacchia dispute. Such incidents, multiplied many times over, help to further underline the point that membership figures are at best suggestive of general trends, rather than giving exact data.

[22]Support for only the organized, rather than all workers, was a common attitude among reformist labor leaders. The acknowledged "super-reformist" leaders of the Genoa Chamber gave expression to this in late 1906 when they refused to call a general strike in support of striking seamen (whose union, run by syndicalists, had refused to join the Chamber or the CGL); instead, they "declared in general the necessity of disciplining the workers movement as far as solidarity is concerned and decided to invite all organizations to refuse to vote a subsidy for those agitations . . . in the territory of the Chamber [which] are not approved by it." Quoted in BUL, January, 1907, 462. Such actions would serve to keep workers in the organization by, in effect, failing to recognize them if they were not.

[23]The details in the Cassa Unica plan were outlined in L'Internazionale (Parma), the organ of the Chamber, January 14, 1906. The plan bears obvious similarity to the "New Model Unions" of Great Britain of several years previously, and suggests that despite the ideological differences between the syndicalists of Parma--the most powerful and influential syndicalist labor organization in Italy--and the moderates of the "New Model Unionism," that the necessity of organizational discipline led both in the same direction. This point was suggested to me in conversation by Reginald Zelnik, but--while intriguing--is not subject to further development on the basis of evidence available to me thus far.

[24]The exact figures are in Neufeld, pp. 527-8. Economic historians seem generally to accept Alexander Gerschenkron's dating of the 1896-1908 period as being the "big push" of Italian Industrialization. See his Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective (Cambridge, 1962), pp. 77ff. This judgement is confirmed and extended in the most astute of the Italian economic historians dealing with the perido, Luciano Cafagna. His essay, "L'industrializzazione ilaliana. La formazione di una 'base industriale' fra il 1896 e il 1914" is still the single most influential and important discussion of this period, despite its publication some thirteen years ago in Studi Storici, II, 3-4 (June-December, 1961), 690-724. Many of the same points are made in his recent English essay, "The Industrial Revolution in Italy, 1830-1914," published in Carlo M. Cipolla, Editor, The Fontana Economic History of Europe, Volume 4, Part 1 (London, 1973), 279-328.

[25]In this study, I use the term "artisan" to delineate a particular relationship to the productive process--one who, by and large, makes products himself with little or no supervision, and is largely or wholly autonomous with regard to decisions about the rate, nature, and so forth of what is to be produced. On a scale of decreasing autonomy, an artisan would be followed by a skilled worker, an unskilled worker, and a semi-skilled proletarian. This includes, then, but is not limited to, the traditional definition of the artisan as an independent craftsman. In making a distinction about autonomy of decision making, I am following the traditional Marxist definition of objective class status being a function of the relationship to the mode of production. This definition is not unique--indeed it is the central core of the classic study by Alain Touraine, L'evolution du travail ouvrier aux usines Renaults (Paris, 1954). It is applied by E. J. Hobsbawm as well. See in particular his essays, "General Labour Unions in Britain, 1889-1914"; "British Gas-workers, 1873-1914"; and "National Unions on the Waterside," now all reprinted in Labouring Men (New York, 1967).

[26]In BUL, January, 1908, pp. 70-71, 73-74, 81-83, there are several tables broken down by region which give the number of organized workers in each of several categories, as well as the total number in that category reported in the 1901 census. Though the comparisons are separated by nearly eight years, and vitiated by the considerations mentioned in the text, they do provide a rough basis for calculating the organized as a percentage of the organizable. The percentage figures are based on my calculations using the data supplied there, as well as the information in Table I.

[27]More precisely, the general census of 1901 and the industrial census of 1903 are: Ministero di Agricoltura, Industria, e Commercio (herinafter MAIC), Direzione Generale della Statistica, Censimento generale della popolazione del Ragno d'Italia al 10 febbraio 1901 (Rome, 1902-1904) five volumes; and Riassunto delle notizie sulle condizioni industriali del Regno, 1905-1906 (Rome, 1905-1906), e volumes. The latter is referred to as the industrial census of 1903 since that is when most of the information refers to, regardless of the title. They will be cited here as Censimento generale 1901 and Censimento industriale 1903, respectively. The figures for the number of workers are calculated from

Censimento Generale 1901 Volume V, pp. 124-5, table XXX. The comparisons with other countries--supplied by the editors of the census--are in the same volume, Table LXI, p. CXI.

[28]The distribution of the population by occupation is calculated from Ibid., Table XXXII, pp. 136-141.

[29]Loc. cit.

[30]The definition of opificio is given in Table III of this chapter. The industrial census was a census of opifici, but not conducted on a regular basis until 1911 and every decade thereafter.

[31]The figures in this paragraph are based on the information in the Censimento Industriale 1902: Volume I, pp. 12-15.

[32]Ibid., Volume I, pp. 12-18.

[33]Ibid., Volume I, p. 16.

[34]Construction workers were excluded because they were not permanently employed; i.e., they did not work for a full year at the same place, and in fact rarely worked much at all during the winter.

[35]The figures on the numbers of women are calculated from Censimento Generale 1901, Volume V, table XXXII, pp. 136-141 and Censimento Industriale 1903, Volume I, p. 18, Table VI. The international comparisons are figured on the basis on information supplied in the 1901 census, Volume V, Table LXI, p. CXI.

[36]Women employed in the textile industry made up an overwhelming majority of the workers. Cf. MAIC, La donna nell'industria italiana (Rome, 1905), esp. 10-12. There is an excellent description of labor and working conditions in the tobacco plants in the pair of articles by Franco Pieroni Bortolotti: "Vita di fabbrica e attività politica delle sigaraie fiorentine dal 1874 al 1894" and "Le lotte delle sigaraie fiorentine della fondazione della Camera del Lavora all'avvento del fascismo 1893-1922 (I)" both Movimento Operaio e Socialista in Liguria, Volume VI (1960); supplements (respectively) to numbers 4 and 5; pp. 3-21 and 3-22.

[37]The recent article by Louise Tilly and Joan Scott, "Women and Womens' Work in the Nineteenth Century," Comparative Studies in Society and History, January, 1975, in fact underscores this point by arguing that women were sent to the large factories to work as an extension of and substitute for their more traditional role as domestic servants and similar occupations. They were not taking up a trade in the workshop but rather were sending contributions to the family, and therefore were more likely to work in a large factory, and leave it at marriage.

[38]The information on children is calculated from Censimento Generale 1901 Volume V, Table XLVIII, p. XCIII, and Censimento Industriale 1903 Volume I, Table XI, p. 18. The observation on Italian labor law is from a contemporary study: L. Baudoin, La réglementation legale du

travail des femmes et des enfants dans l'industrie italienne (Paris, 1905), 35-36.

[39]On the miners, see MAIC, Ufficio del Lavoro, I lavoratori delle miniere (Rome, 1905) Volume I, Table 5, p. 59. The Milanese study is the classic one by the Società Umanitaria, Le condizioni generali della classe operaia di Milano (Milan, 1907), Table 54, p. 137.

[40]MAIC, La donna nella industria italiana (Rome, 1905), pp. 16-17.

[41]The writings are conveniently excerpted in Luciano Cafagna's anthology, Il Nord nella storia d'Italia (Bari, 1962), 227ff.

[42]Procacci, Giuliano, La lotta di classe in Italia agli inizi del secolo XX (Rome, 1970), p. 12.

[43]Società Umanitaria, Le condizioni generali, p. 137. Cf. MAIC, La donna, p. 56, Table XXV. A recent study by Louise Tilly reaches the same conclusions. See The Working Class of Milan, 1881-1911 (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Toronto, 1974).

[44]Censimento Generale 1901, Volume V, Table V.

[45]On international migration, there is a convenient summary in Bolton King and Thomas Okey, Italy To-Day (London, 1909), pp. 312-316 (from which I have taken the quotation in the text). The phenomenon of temporary migration was widespread and is well documented. The fullest study is the one by the Labor Office: MAIC, Ufficio del Lavoro, Le correnti periodiche di migrazione interna in Italia in 1905 (Rome, 1907). There is a fuller discussion of the problems of braccianti in Luigi Preti, Le lotte agrarie nella valle padana (Turin, 1955), which contains a great deal of information on migration passim. Some of this is described in more vivid detail in the first-rate local study by Alessandro Roveri, Dal sindicalismo rivoluzionario al fascismo: capitalismo agraria e socialismo nel ferrarese (1870-1920), (Florence, 1972). There is a good discussion of migration in the Roman Campagna in Alberto Caracciolo, Il movimento contadino nel Lazio (Rome, 1952). The fullest discussion of the impact of international migration on workers and their organizations comes in the essay by Ernesto Ragionieri, "Italiani all'estero ed emigrazione di laboratori italiani; un teme di storia del movimento operaio," Belfagor, XVII, 6 (November, 1962), 640-669.

[46]Two studies suggest strongly the importance of the worker-peasant in the textile industry: Carlo Azimonti (at one time a secretary of the Milan Chamber of Labor), L'ambiente operaio di Busto Arsizio (Busto Arsizio, 1909), esp. p. 31; and Pietro Secchia, Capitalismo e classe operaia nel centro laniero d'Italia (Rome, 1968), 176ff. The figures are from Censimento Generale 1901, Volume V, Table XXXVIII, p. 153.

[47]Procacci, Lotta di Classe, p. 14.

[48]An excellent introduction to the values of the Italian artisan is in Rinaldo Rigola's autobiography (he was a skilled woodcarver): Rinaldo Rigola e il movimento operaio nel biellese (Bari, 1930).

[49]Two of E. J. Hobsbawm's essays suggest how these new skilled workers managed to play a crucial role in labor organization: see "British Gas-Workers, 1873-1914," and "National Unions on the Waterside," pp. 185-210 and 241-272 in Labouring Men (New York, 1967). As he remarks about the dockers, "The number of men out of the milling crowd at the dock gate who were strong, balanced, and iron-nerved enough to try running up and down vibrating gang-planks with a hundred-weight sack on their shoulders--let alone to succeed--was very small. For practical purposes, the specialized man was . . . irreplaceable," Ibid., 246.

[50]Cheap labor costs--internationally compared--in a situation of increasing world competition made such exploitation practically inevitable. There is an excellent panorama of the situation of Italy in the world economy in Giorgio Candeloro, La crisi di fine secolo e l'età giolittiana, 1896-1914 (Volume VII of his Storia dell'Italia moderna) (Milan, 1974), pp. 94-136. The early extensive and intensive exploitation of unskilled labor is the theme of Stefano Merli's massive and controversial study, Proletariato di fabbrica e capitalismo industriale: il caso ilaliano, 1880-1900 (Florence, 1973), two volumes. Volume one is the study of nearly 1000 pages (!), while Volume II is documentary evidence, and nearly as long as the first volume.

[51]Procacci, Lotta di classe, p. 16.

[52]His speech is quoted in Paolo Spriano, Socialismo e classe operaia a Torino dal 1892 al 1914 (Turin, 1958), 90-91.

[53]This strike in fact led eventually to the general strike of 1902. But it is noteworthy that that progression was one from a strike of turners in one plant, to a sympathy strike by turners in other plants, to a general strike without ever having had a strike by all the workers at the plant where it had begun. See the description in the telegrams between Giovanni Giolitti, Minister of the Interior, and the prefect of Florence in Quarant'anni di politica italiana: dalle carte di Giovanni Giolitti (hereinafter Carte Giolitti), Volume II (Milan, 1962), documents 435-439.

[54]Renato Zangheri, "Introduzione," to Lotte Agrarie in Italia, (Milan, 1960), pp. XXIV-XXV.

[55]It is symptomatic that Italian employs a wide variety of terms to describe the various types of agricultural workers. Peasant is contadino, and properly refers to a small landowner, although it is often used in a generic sense as well. Roveri's study (cited in note 44 above) lists the following terms as well: boario, wage worker on a large farm whose work consists of tending animals; hired by the year; obbligato, worker hired by the year to be resident on a large farm and do general field work; compartecipante, similar to obbligato but paid in kind; mezzadro, share-cropper; colono, tenant farmer (farms an entire plot, as opposed to the compartecipante, who shares a given plot); and of course braccianto, day laborer.

[56]As quoted in Procacci, Lotta di Classe, p. 17.

[57]MAIC, La donna nell'industria italiana, table XXI, p. 44.

[58]Società Umanitaria, Le condizioni generali, p. 124.

[59]This information, from a variety of sources, is summarized in Procacci, Lotta di classe, p. 20.

[60]For Bologna, the job titles are in the list published in BUL, January, 1905, p. 276. There is a good discussion of the elaborate hierarchy among building workers in Giuseppe Felloni, "Le retribuzioni dei lavoratori edili a Genova dal 1815 al 1890," Archivio economico dell' unificazione Italiana (Series I, Volume XII, Fascicolo 3), Rome, 1963.

[61]The job titles are on the membership list of the Genoa Chamber of Labor, published in BUL, January, 1905, 284-285.

[62]Bezucha, Robert, "The 'preindustrial' worker movement: the canuts of Lyons," p. 93, in Robert Bezucha, ed., Modern European Social History, (Lexington, Mass., 1972).

[63]Aronowitz, Stanley, False Promises: The Shaping of American Working Class Consciousness (New York, 1973). See especially Chapter 4.

[64]The argument that they are class organizations is strongly emphasized in Brocchi, p. XXXIII. The distinction is important, and the initial foundation of the Chamber at Genoa was delayed while fighting went on over whether there should be Borsa del Lavoro for employment, or a "true Chamber of Labor," as supporters argued for. See Gaetano Perillo, "La Confederazione Operaia Genovese e le Borse del Lavoro," Movimento Operaio e Contadino in Liguria, II, 1-2, (January-April, 1956), 1-12. The arguments got prominent coverage at the time; see L'Era Nuova (Genoa), 24 March 1895, 31 March 1895, and 29 September 1895. The last covers a socialist congress where the concept of a Borsa del Lavoro was explicitly repudiated.

[65]For some examples of the "trade-unionist" approach to labor history, see the following, passim: Alfredo Gradilone, Storia del Sindicalismo (Milan, 1959); Italo Mario Sacco, Storia del Sindicalismo (Turin, 1947); Rinaldo Rigola, Storia del Movimento Operaio (Rome, 1947).

[66]Daniel Horowitz, The Italian Labor Movement (Cambridge, Mass., 1963), p. 334.

[67]Rigola's perceptions are in his lectures (delivered in the 1920's) on organizing practice and published as Manueletto di Tecnica Sindicale (Florence, 1947).

[68]The continuing role of the Chambers is discussed in Joseph LaPalombara, The Italian Labor Movement: Problems and Prospects (Ithaca, New York, 1957); Professor LaPalombara has also emphasized this point in conversations with the author. For a more recent view, see Nunzio Pernicone, "The Italian Labor Movement" in Tannenbaum and Noether, Modern Italy: A Topical History Since 1861 (New York, 1974).

CHAPTER II

At first glance, the wide variety of activities undertaken by the Chambers seems to defy any attempt at rational classification. Chambers were actively involved in "resistance"--organizing, striking, negotiating, arbitrating disputes, and so forth--and the foundations of the Chambers were the original leagues of resistance. But mutual aid societies and cooperatives also affiliated with the Chambers, and they encouraged the foundation and growth of new ones as well. They did not stop with economic activities, but had educational programs for their members as well, aiming at technical education, general culture, and the regeneration of the national culture and the increased political and social sophistication of their members. In addition, most offered legal and medical assistance when they could, collected statistical data on employment and the general economic and social conditions of their members, ran job-placement services, organized meetings and demonstrations of protest, and organized and directed general strikes of protest. From time to time their leaders appeared before the city council, prefect, or national government to plead the cause of the workers. All of these activities were efforts to ameliorate the problems and to meet the needs of Italian workers. Such efforts won them support from large numbers of workers, both in and out of the Chambers; but taken together those activities also represented an attempt to mold a respectable, coherent, and strong working class.

What kinds of problems did workers face? The most obvious and pressing were economic ones, and it was to these that Chambers first turned their attention. Born during a period of acute economic crisis, the Chambers' first actions were directed toward alleviating the unemployment which wracked Italian workers during the crisis of 1888-89.[1] Even when the crisis eased, nearly all workers faced the same problems during the difficult transition to industrialization from 1890 through 1914: low wages which rarely caught up with the cost of living, and "chronic unemployment, underemployment, and the fear of discharge."[2] As Table I shows, real wages for industrial workers rose slowly and irregularly during the whole Giolittian period, and even then the raise came from a very low base. This was in itself a severe constraint on normal trade-union action, since there was no way for a low-paid labor force with a high degree of unemployment to develop the surplus funds necessary for a powerful union movement. Instead, the Italian case bore a strong resemblance to the classic Marxist description of the decline in status of the working class and the creation of a "reserve army of the unemployed." In Val Lorwin's apt phrase, "People do not revolt against the averages, however."[3] Different groups within the Chambers and the working class had different strategies open to them; since no one group predominated, the Chamber necessarily found itself involved in all of the strategies elaborated below.

There are in theory three ways to face up to constant erosion, or at least stagnation of real wages: raise wages so that the necessities of life are within the reach of incomes, lower the cost of necessities to the level of current incomes, or take the distribution of necessities out of the market so that access to them is determined by some means

TABLE I, CHAPTER II

NOMINAL WAGES, REAL WAGES, AND COST OF LIVING
FOR INDUSTRIAL WORKERS IN ITALY

Year	Index of nominal wages (1913 = 100)	Index of cost of living (1913 = 100)	Index of real wages (nominal wage divided by cost of living)
1899	65.8	86.5	76.1
1900	68.9	90.0	78.5
1901	70.1	88.3	79.4
1902	72.0	87.7	82.1
1903	72.9	90.3	80.7
1904	72.6	91.4	79.4
1905	71.8	91.5	78.5
1906	74.6	93.2	80.0
1907	83.6	97.6	85.6
1908	83.1	96.6	86.0
1909	94.1	93.9	100.2
1910	92.1	96.5	95.4
1911	93.2	98.9	94.2
1912	96.0	99.8	96.2
1913	100.0	100.0	100.0
1914	99.7	100.0	99.7
1915	100.0	107.0	93.4
1916	113.8	133.9	85.0
1917	138.4	189.4	73.1
1918	170.6	264.1	64.6
1919	249.7	268.1	93.1
1920	403.1	352.3	114.4

Source: Antonio Fossati, Lavoro e Produzione in Italia dalle metà del secolo XVIII alla seconda guerra mondiale (Turin, 1951) 630-634.

other than personal wealth. These simple possibilities are worth noting because so many scholars of working class history--particularly Americans--have assumed a priori that the only solution to workers' problems was higher wages, that the prerequisite to higher wages was the creation of strong craft and industrial unions, and thus that everything which contributed to the formation of strong unions was ipso facto in the workers' interest. Such a view too easily implies that anything workers did which did not directly contribute to formation of a strong union movement was mistaken and--depending on the viewpoint of the writer--dismissed as either immaturity or the result of being led astray by doctrinaires and demagogues.[4] This tendency has led to a distorted view of the reality under which Italian workers lived, and in which the Chambers were firmly set. Under the old regime, for example, bread riots were met not by raising the wages of the sans-culottes, but by lowering the price of bread, and rioters and government officials alike expected such a solution. Particularly in the ex-duchies of central Italy, the days of the old regime were within living memory of Italian workers in the 1890's and 1900's.

To understand the Chambers as they were, it is important to remember that they regarded lowering costs or raising wages, or even socializing the distribution or production of goods and services as various ways of getting at the same problem. The choice of means implies a larger decision about the role of the Chambers and their members in the society; it implies as well a decision about the nature of the economy and how it is to be understood.

There is a mixed pattern of evidence relating to how well the Chambers understood the implications of their choices, which will be considered further below; but most of them thought of themselves--in the

words of the "father of the Chambers of Labor," Osvaldo Gnocchi-Viani--as "experimentalists in method and doctrine."[5] That is, most Chamber leaders were not ideologues; indeed, they rarely had consistent views of what actions were appropriate for which situations (with the exception of a minority of militant syndicalists and reformists, whose views on social action were rather more pronounced). Instead, they tended to see themselves as urging practical solutions to real problems without fixing themselves in any particular vision of society.

The strategies adopted for the solution of economic problems depended in part on the membership, since solutions that were useful for one portion of the membership might have little to offer another group. For example, an artisan who was an independent producer was not as subject to the ravages of inflation and unemployment. Since he could raise his prices to meet inflation--having control as he did over what he produced and how--his response to economic change could be quick and he had little need of collective support. Provided that changes in technology or the economy did not drastically reduce or eliminate the demands for his services or goods, he would be relatively immune to these threats. But truly independent artisans were rare, and with the exception of shoemakers, few were on the membership rolls of the Chambers. (The other most common exceptions were the blacksmiths, barbers, and the like in the small agricultural towns.)[6] Most of the artisans listed on Chamber rolls worked in small shops where their specialized skills, aided by their apprentices and occasionally by some degree of mechanization, produced the hats, gloves, canes, jewelry, and other products for which Italian craftsmanship is famous. For these men, the most obvious economic solution to their problems was the formation of cooperatives

for production, which would eliminate the master and give them the independence of the artisan again.

Cooperation for production had a rather limited appeal. By definition, it was confined to those endeavors where the demands for skill and capital investment were low enough to be met by the modest resources which most workers had available to them. Highly skilled workers whose craft did not require elaborate tools and workshops were drawn to cooperation as the nearly ideal solution to their economic problems: By 1907, Milan, for example, had cooperatives of hatmakers, canemakers, goldsmiths, glassblowers, and typesetters.[7] Recognizing the usefulness of production cooperatives, the Chambers encouraged them and provided them with various sorts of assistance. Many Chambers provided office space for cooperatives, did their bookkeeping and provided other technical assistance, including courses in cooperative methods for their members. In return, cooperatives often assigned a part of their profits to the Chambers, as well as serving as model firms in maintaining league standards of wages, hours, and working conditions. In some cases, Chambers even helped by encouraging members to invest in the cooperatives.[8] But cooperatives for production had limited usefulness in the cities, since most industrial workers had neither the skills nor the capital required; it was one matter for the goldsmiths to raise the small sums necessary to rent space and purchase a furnace and raw materials, but it would have been quite another matter for the workers of the Pirelli rubber factory to set themselves up as independent producers. Consequently, in Milan and Florence cooperatives never made up more than five percent of the Chamber membership. In Genoa, the figure was slightly higher since the port workers were technically organized into a cooperative which contracted with the port, rather than a league; in practice

however, the cooperative was nothing more than a hiring hall for league members.[9]

Like the production cooperatives, mutual aid was designed primarily for the needs of small artisans, and thus the mutual aid societies rarely accounted for more than three or four percent of the membership of the urban Chambers. Protected against the ravages of the economy of their independence, artisans were still subject to the uncertainties of sickness and death. By joining a mutual aid society and paying a small weekly sum, the artisan would be entitled to draw a benefit when he was ill; in the event of his death, the society would pay his funeral expenses as well as ensuring that members would turn out to attend his funeral and ensure a dignified passage from the world. Some of the older and wealthier societies even aimed at paying old-age pensions as well, but most of these schemes came to grief.[10] Insofar as all workers could benefit by mutual aid against illness and death, the mutual aid societies were useful to more than just the artisans, of course. But even the modest sums which this required--5-10 centesimi a week was the usual range--were beyond the means of many workers whose entire income was needed for the basic necessities of life.[11]

The persistence of mutual aid societies and cooperatives in rural areas was not so much a function of the real economic benefits they could provide, as a sign of their organizational precedence. In many cases, a local mutual aid society was the driving force behind the original organization of a Chamber--this was the case in Parma and Bologna, for example--and isolated societies in the rural villages were often the only form of organization for workers in the nineteenth

century. When a Chamber extended its organizing efforts into these areas, as the Parma Chamber did, it made more sense to invite the local society to join en bloc rather than create a new section from the ground up. This may explain the strong presence--over 18%--of mutual aid societies and cooperatives in the Parma Chamber. The persistence of cooperatives was related not to their role of producers, but rather in their role as means of alleviating unemployment, as discussed below.

For industrial workers, neither cooperation nor mutual aid could be of considerable assistance in meeting their economic needs. In the event of a strike, for example, hatters could go off and start their own cooperative and survive indefinitely; the workers at the Pirelli rubber factory could not.[12] But if industrial workers lacked the ability to turn their production into a cooperative form, some did share one characteristic with the artisans, or at least some of them did: their specialized skills. Highly skilled workers may not have been able to start their own cooperatives, but they were usually in short enough supply to be able to control the labor market where they were concerned. In other words, relatively skilled workers were able to organize and strike effectively, and they were few enough to make the organization work. Thus the earliest trade unions were among the skilled workers, such as the printers, who were the first occupational group in Italy to have a national union, the Federation of the Book, organized in the 1890's. In general, highly skilled workers such as the engineers and the firemen on the railways, pareurs and dyers in the textile mills, master bricklayers, and skilled metalworkers such as turners, founders, and trimmers, were able to organize early and effectively, and enjoyed higher wages and shorter hours as a consequence.[13] The Chambers

encouraged these and other groups to organize and strike, and the league of resistance was the fundamental unit of the Chamber.

But trade-unionism--"resistance" in the parlance of the Chambers--was limited in its practical application to a minority of workers, whose skills were so crucial to the production process that they could not easily be replaced in the event of a strike. For the manovali at the bottom of the labor hierarchy--the unskilled laborers, the women and the children--the situation was quite different. They had no distinctive skills and could easily be replaced. Moreover, they were almost always in abundance.[14] Particularly in the cities, where most industry was carried on by semi-skilled workers in the new factories, or a few skilled workers aided by masses of unskilled laborers, there was always a labor surplus, and the condition of the "reserve army of the unemployed" was a constant problem. Strikes could not be made effective for tobacco workers, for example, when any women off the streets could learn the skills needed in a few days, and there was no practical way of organizing all the potential workers in case of a strike. For these workers, the most useful economic activities which the Chamber could provide were the consumer cooperatives, which helped to lower the costs of the food which they bought and thus stretch their meager pay a little farther each week.[15]

In the countryside, the problem of unemployment was even worse. Aside from a few artisans in the towns and villages--blacksmiths, carpenters, shoemakers, and the like--there was no such thing as skilled agricultural labor. The status of a worker was not so much a function of his skills as it was a function of his relationship to the land in a given area. Thus a rural worker was a tenant, sharecropper, renter,

lessee, hired hand or day laborer depending not on how skillful a farmer he was (or might be, under the proper circumstances), but simply according to the opportunities available. No greater or lesser degree of skill was implied by one role or another, and movement from one role to another was often possible and occasionally common.[16] There could be no question of forming a union of the skilled agricultural workers to defend their right.

Under these circumstances, most forms of cooperation and mutual aid were similarly of little help to rural workers. Since commercialization of Italian agriculture--with a consequent increase in productivity per worker and thus a lower demand for labor--increased at a faster rate than industrialization, the rural workers were faced with the constant labor surplus. Simply put, modernization of Italian agriculture--particularly in the Po Valley and Apulia--created more workers free to take jobs elsewhere than the new industries could absorb.[17] The perennial labor surplus and consequent unemployment and underemployment meant that new economic strategies had to be devised in the rural areas.

The lack of clear skills and the abundance of workers meant the only successful way to control the labor market was to organize <u>everyone</u> in a given area; the entire community had to be organized and mobilized so that hiring could be done only through the Chamber or league. This method--<u>collocamento di classe</u>--was the aim of most rural organizers, and was often successful, due in part to some unusual tactics. One of these was the boycott, which had a rather different significance in Italy. When an organization agreed to boycott a proprietor, not only would workers refuse to work for him--to plant, to plow, to harvest, and the like--but the shoemaker would refuse his business, the

tailor would make him no clothes, the barber would refuse to shave him. Provided that the organization encompassed the entire community (and in small villages that was not so difficult as it might seem) the proprietor would be effectively ostracized, and forced to concede.[18]

The other obvious way of assisting rural workers was to create more jobs. A strong and successful organization could impose a minimum number of workers for a given task on a landowner; this minimum, referred to as the imponibile, would specify that for harvesting grain, for example, a proprietor would have to hire at union wages two workers for every hectare of land to be harvested. Other tasks might have a flat number: three workers to dig irrigation ditches, or two to repair a building, and so forth. This obviously was successful only insofar as a Chamber could enforce its will on the landowners, and varied according to how strong the Chamber or league was. In Mantova, where the history of rural organization went back to the strikes of the la boje movement in the 1870's, or Molinella, where the charismatic leadership of Giuseppe Massarenti and the tireless organizational efforts of hundreds of others led to near total organization of all possible workers, the imponibile could be successfully imposed. Where rural organization was weak, as in Lombardy or Tuscany, efforts at the imponibile rarely succeeded. But in the heartland of the movement, the lands of the Po Valley in the provinces of Ferrara, Mantova, Ravenna, Bologna, Rovigo, and Parma and Piacenza, the collacamento di classe and the imponibile remained the primary tactics and goals of the leagues of rural workers and the Chambers who represented them. The most successful areas were the ones with the longest history of organization, such as Mantova and Ravenna, where it was put into effect by 1902 or 1903. But all the areas of the Po Valley attempted it in the decade before the Great War.[19]

In addition to the imponibile, Chambers tried to increase employment in other ways. The most frequent was the formation of a labor cooperative which would undertake the execution of public works, or lease uncultivated lands and work them. The collective leasing, by far the most unusual tactic developed, was rare, primarily due to the fact that uncultivated lands were usually marginal and offered little return to those leasing. In addition, the commercialization of agriculture, particularly in the Po Valley, had led to a capital-intensive farming, and the cooperatives of perennially poor and often illiterate workers lacked the wherewithal to purchase high quality seeds, fertilizer, farm implements, and the like.

More common was the attempt to carry out public works, mostly road building or repair or bonificazione. This last covered the whole panoply of activities associated with land reclamation in the Po delta: the construction of canals, dikes, river and stream channels, and so forth. Contemporary photographs[20] clearly show that this work was done entirely with pick, shovel, and wheelbarrow, and thus was easily within the means of workers. In fact, there is considerable evidence that the central government regarded the execution of public works as a means of easing unemployment and keeping the social peace in the countryside;[21] under Giolitti, there was even a law passed which provided that public works under a certain value (gradually raised by 1904 to 100,000 lire) were not to be put up for bids but given to cooperatives by preference, and the cooperatives were not required to post the ten percent performance bond required of private contractors.[22]

Cities too, however, were subject to problems of unemployment and underemployment however, and this was true of manufacturing, the

TABLE II, CHAPTER II

SEASONALITY IN INDUSTRIES IN SELECTED ITALIAN CITIES, 1911

Duration of Annual activity:		12 months	9-12 months	6-9 months	Less than 6 months
Cities:					
Bologna	a)	362	49	5	5
	b)	1510	365	181	44
Florence	a)	365	14	2	--
	b)	1637	520	172	17
Genoa	a)	534	--	--	--
	b)	3951	110	9	14
Sampier-darena	a)	95	8	4	--
	b)	231	17	7	2
Milan	a)	1874	5	3	--
	b)	4143	1504	655	54
Parma	a)	53	5	1	--
	b)	341	133	55	6

All figures refer to opifici. Category a) is the number of opifici employing more than ten workers; category b) is the number with ten workers or less.

Source: Censimento Industriale, 1911. Volume III, pp. 28-29; 30-31; 54-55; 80-81; 84-85; 92-93.

most advanced sector of the economy. As Table II shows, many small firms and even some large ones were active for only part of the year. In general, small firms were much less likely to operate for twelve months than large ones. Since these figures are for opifici*, which employed only a portion of the workers in manufacturing, we would probably be justified in assuming a high degree of seasonal employment in firms which were too small to even be counted as opifici. Furthermore, these figures do not include construction workers, who made up nearly 10% of all organized workers. It goes without saying that construction work, like that of agriculture, was, as has been the case in every country, highly seasonal. Thus, in addition to low wages, Italian workers in every sector from manufacturing to agriculture, faced the problems of unemployment and underemployment.

Low wages and underemployment and unemployment, and the wide variety of approaches to solving these problems for the various groups which comprised the working class, suggest an obvious point about the Chambers--they were not, nor given their situation could they have been, trade unions. In fact, as organs of resistance, as trade unions, they were something less than ideal. The Milan Chamber of Labor, for example, had over 150 sections--each a different occupational group. Reggio Emilia, which had the largest Chamber in the Kingdom in 1904, had 679 sections.[23] It would have required superhuman energy and omniscience on the part of Chamber leaders and secretaries to be acquainted with the problems and peculiarities of each section, and to be able to handle adequately the burden of work which resistance created. Between 1901 and 1904, the Milan Chamber intervened in 264

*See Table III, Chapter I for definition.

different strikes (nearly two thirds of all strikes in the city), as well as helping to resolve 205 disputes which were settled without coming to a strike. This averages out, in the four years, to an intervention approximately every three days.[24] Clearly, the pace set could not long be maintained; though the Milan Chamber was the largest and wealthiest in Italy, it was perennially short of funds and even during the years just before the war it had a maximum of three full-time secretaries.

As Rinaldo Rigola, the first secretary of the CGL (Confederazione Generale del Lavoro; General Confederation of Labor) later argued, the Chamber was not as efficient at the practice of trade-unionism as was the union itself. Nonetheless, this does not necessarily imply the acceptance of his conclusion that the Chamber was a "primordial" form of organization destined to be replaced by the national craft and industrial unions.[25] While the unions continued to express the professional interests of workers, the Chamber remained the only organization to represent their general interests--social, civic, cultural, and economic--and to speak for workers not only as wage-earners, but as consumers, citizens, and human beings. We may take as an accurate first approximation of the Chambers' role the viewpoint of one Chamber secretary who wrote that when a particular segment of the working class battled economically, its instrument was the craft or industrial federation; when the whole class battled socially or politically, then the Chamber was the appropriate organization.[26]

In practice, this would mean that the new trade unions, such as the metalworkers or railway workers were more likely to be successful

in the attempt to deal with employers of a given plan or a given industry than would the Chamber of Labor, fractionated as it was among a hundred or more groups of workers. The problem lay in the nature of the Italian economy, which was still split by strong regional variations and was relatively backward in terms of industrial development. For trade-unionism to succeed, there had to be large groups of relatively homogeneous workers in modern industry, a condition which simply did not obtain. When practicing trade-unionists, modeling their behavior on the experiences of other countries, such as Germany or England, attempted to form trade and industrial unions, they succeeded only in provoking the Chambers of Labor whom they saw as backward and outmoded, and isolating the small group of modern factory workers for whom unionism was successful from the vast majority of the working class.[27]

Trade-unionism as one tactic among many maintained a place in the Chamber of Labor of course, and perhaps the Chambers could have worked along with the unions in a kind of division of labor if the unions' leaders had not been explicit in their demands that the Chambers turn leadership of the workers' movement over to them and retire from the scene. When the metalworkers' union (FIOM) met in its second Congress in May, 1903, the leadership's report to the Congress overlooked all its own errors, ignored the fact that the two largest and most successful metalworkers' strikes of the last two years had taken place against their advice and without their support--a clear sign of their own inability to lead workers--and blamed all their problems on the "indiscipline of local leagues and the interference of the

Chambers of Labor." The secretary, Lodovico D'Aragona, introduced a motion calling for the Chambers to be forbidden to interfere in the agitation of any local league unless specifically requested to do so by the Federation--even if the league were a section of the Chamber of Labor. Clearly, this was not an approach which the Chamber could sanction if it had any sense of self, and this became one more episode in the continuing acrimony between Chambers and federations.

If the Chambers were to represent the general interests of their membership, then they had to be concerned with more than just the economic problems of workers--they had to respond immediately to their real needs, whether they were economic, social, or psychological. The diversity of economic programs suggests a desire to respond to the varied economic needs of their members, but they were conscious of more than just the economic problems; we should not be surprised therefore, as is the historian of the Florentine Chamber, to discover (in a comment that could have been made of any Chamber) that

> If all the constitutions of the Chamber's sections devoted the greatest amount of space, as was natural, to the economic problem, it is truly surprising to see how many of them were pre-occupied with the moral . . . [28]

The varied nature of their programs is a sign of their perception of the wide-ranging nature of working-class interests; by studying these programs in some detail, it is possible to infer what the Chambers wanted and what they wished to become. The first preoccupation of the Chamber was naturally its continued existence

as an organization and the recognition that the Chamber was the spokesman for the class, just as the bourgeoisie had their spokesman in the Chambers of Commerce. As Rinaldo Rigola put it in his autobiography,

> Just as in the communal republics of the late middle ages, the comune was the center for the corporations of the arts and trades [i.e., the guilds], expression of the interests of the bourgeoisie, so the Chamber of Labor was the center of the leagues of resistance and the workers' cooperatives, the expression of the interests and desires of the working class.[29]

In the exercise of that representation, the Chambers placed few limits on themselves; almost every constitution contained the provision that the goal of the Chamber was to "contribute in every way and with every means to protect the worker, educate him, and make him conscious of his rights . . . "[30]

The Chamber's earliest claim to public recognition was based on the argument that the Chamber provided a public service. When the Consiglio di Stato suggested in late 1896 that it was illegal for a city to provide a subsidy for the Chamber of Labor, the national federation of the Chambers replied promptly:

> The Chambers of Labor cooperate in the public interest and aid the public peace . . . by providing job placement for workers (who are nine tenths of the population), giving them counsel, advice, balancing supply and demand for labor and conciliating disorders between entrepeneurs and workers. [Emphasis in original]

The national organization went on to suggest that even though their actions were aimed primarily at workers, the public interest was served thereby as well. If it were legal to provide for other

special interests--street lights in the downtown rather than the whole city, support of widows and orphans who were a minority of the population, and the like--then the special interest of the workers was in the public interest as well.[31] The general argument that the Chamber served the public interest recurred frequently in the decade of the 1890's, when the Chambers were often ordered dissolved as subversive institutions, especially in the governmental repressions of 1895 and 1898. The argument of the Genoa Chamber following its dissolution in December of 1900 (for the second time in less than four years) was typical:

> We are conscious of always having worked for the good of the Genoese working class, not to mention always being within the limits of the law, such that we were assisted by the majority of the citizens, the Chamber of Commerce, and even by the authorities of the police themselves . . .[32]

Because the Chamber of Labor was, in the words of Osvaldo Gnocchi-Viani, an "institution of Public Utility," whose initial activities--job placement, statistics on the labor market, and aid in mediating disputes--served not only the interests of workers but those of the entire community, the Chamber deserved the support and financial aid of the city.[33] Angiolo Cabrini, in a speech urging the city of Parma to found a Chamber, pointed out that the Chamber would serve to regularize and discipline conflict in the city; since conflict was in some measure inevitable, would it not be better to have a "calm and disciplined army" rather than a mob of "unconscious plebs, armed only with hunger and rage"?[34]

In their zeal to represent the Chambers as institutions of public utility, early leaders sometimes preferred to avoid discussion of any

but the most obviously non-controversial aims of the Chamber.[35] In the same speech mentioned above, Cabrini called the Chambers "associations of crafts and trades, vast employment offices and nothing more!"[36] When the relatively innocuous study which Werner Sombart prepared on the Chambers was sent to Filippo Turati for publication in Critica Sociale, the Milanese socialist leader refused to publish it, retracting an earlier promise with the explanation that Sombart's enthusiasm for the Chambers would

> compromise [them] by attributing to them certain goals, the suspicion of which would be sufficient to cause them to lose their municipal subsidies (as has already happened at Venice)--without which they are dead.[37]

Turati's letter brings up a point which we shall discuss in more detail in Chapter IV: the problem of the conflicting roles which the Chamber had to play. On the one hand, it was expected, as Rigola argued, to be "the expression of the interests and desires of the working class"; on the other hand, as a public institution financed in large measure by public funds, it was expected to act in the public interest. In a sense, the acceptance of public funds made them a quasi-public institution, a role which they did not always fully realize or appreciate. The role created no problems as long as the interest of the workers was in the general interest, but when the two clashed--most often when the prefect or police authorities decided that the Chamber was no longer acting in the public interest--the first victim was liable to be the subsidy, and the next might be the existence of the Chamber itself. Nearly all the existing Chambers were dissolved in 1896 under the authority of Prime Minister Crispi's "exceptional laws," and all but one of the Chambers were dissolved again in 1898 in the wake of popular disorders that year.[38] Inevitably such actions

led to the reassertion of the Chamber's public utility and the reminder that the interests which they pursued could not, by their very nature, fail to be in the public interest as well.

One of the more important demonstrations of their public utility was the provision of "education and instruction" for the Chamber members and the community at large. (The dual concept is very old in European thought; "education" traditionally meant moral education and the inculcation of virtue, while "instruction" referred to reading, writing, and the acquisition of similarly basic skills.) Renato Brocchi, secretary of the Chamber at Macerata, followed this definition in attempting to explain the Chamber programs by saying that education provided that "moral elevation" which came from a broader cultural orientation, while instruction, particularly the learning of a trade, would produce a worker who would be less subject to unemployment and make more money when he worked. It thus followed that the educational programs should be dual: professional and technical education would provide specific skills and talents, while general education would provide part of the mental equipment essential to every effective Italian citizen.[39] Still, as the example of Bologna suggests, the range of the programs provided by a Chamber and the goals they served were not only shaped by Brocchi's distinctions, but built on an older tradition and thus were at once more complex and more subtle than if they had been planned afresh. Bologna is not unusual in its attempt to absorb the educational activities which preceded the Chamber, as well as its drive to broaden in turn the range of possibilities open.

The first organized movement for popular education in Bologna was the Lega per l'istruzione del popolo (League for the Instruction

of the People), founded in 1872; its first president was Giosuè Carducci, professor of literature at the University of Bologna and the most famous Italian poet of his day. The league's avowed purpose was not the replacement of the instructional activities of the city's dozen-odd workers' societies; on the contrary, they helped to found the league and provided financial support for it. In contrast to the simple instruction in the elementary subjects of literacy and arithmetic which the societies provided, the aim of the League was to provide "true education" which would "speak to the heart of the worker," and treat him like an adult--an educational approach which the League believed the state schools were unable or unwilling to provide.[40] In an inaugural speech, Carducci defined the aim of the league as the introduction of the masses to the "generous fervor of the Risorgimento," and to share something of the excitement of the Risorgimento with the peasants and workers--who, by implication, had not participated in the original movement. Such an attitude was a common feature of the left-wing democrats--the followers of Garibaldi and Mazzini--who anticipated the contemporary criticism of the insufficiencies of the Risorgimento and its exclusion of the lower classes from any effective participation in either the movement or the political life of the new nation. The educational program was meant, therefore, to redress the balance.[41]

The league's lessons (each a series of lectures) were not so much a vibrant portrayal of the Risorgimento as they were a general education; though the largest number of lessons during the first year were in storia patria (27), there were as well lessons in law (17), hygiene (12), natural sciences (11), economics (10), bookkeeping (8),

morals (4), literature (4), administration (3), geography (3), "terrestrial physics" (2), and applied chemistry (2). Obviously such a disparate group of lessons was aimed not only at workers but at the university students and borghesi di mezzano stato who were reported to attend the lessons in droves.[42] Here it was possible for them to acquire a cultural gloss by attendance, just as their American contemporaries did in the Chautauqua movement. For workers, the lessons seemed to be aimed not only at raising their political consciousness (Carducci and most of the faculty were ardent Garibaldians, and it would not be hard to predict generally anti-monarchical and anti-clerical tone which the lectures on history and morals would have taken), but also at providing them with practical education as well.[43]

At first successful, the program began to decline in the 1880's; attendance fell off as the content of the courses became more narrowly literary and aimed exclusively at the middle classes, and the league itself was dissolved in 1887. This might lead one to infer that workers were not interested in education, but when the Chamber was founded in 1892 it took up the growth of educational programs as one of its first priorities. It apparently believed that workers wanted or needed such courses, and that worker dissatisfaction was not so much with education as it was the failure of the league to provide the appropriate type.[44] The Chamber began by trying to consolidate the various programs of the workers' societies into one while expanding their scope, but the attempt--an attempt to rebuild the League in effect--failed, apparently due to a lack of teachers.[45] When it was suggested that a branch of the Università Popolare* be founded in

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*The "Popular University" was an Italian version of the University Extension movement, modified by a greater emphasis on social and

Bologna, the Chamber eagerly joined in the plans, pledged financial support, and the Università Popolare "G. Garibaldi" was founded officially in February, 1902.

Supported by the Chamber as well as by the dues of its members, the new institution offered not only lessons as widely varied as those of the League had been, but tours of local historical and commercial sites, performances of plays, poetry readings and occasional band concerts as well. In the years just before the Great War, it added such novelties as magic lantern shows and early movies. Aside from its strictly "cultural" aspects, it began to offer instruction on practical subjects as well. Courses were given on such topics as family budgeting, home medical techniques, and a course on the techniques and methods of first aid, which was extremely popular and widely imitated. Later courses for women--the content remains obscure--were added, and a "kindergarten" (probably a form of day care) for the children of members who were attending events.[46] The relationship with the Chamber was generally happy, though occasional criticism came from the Chamber about the contents of the courses. Usually this criticism focused on the somewhat condescending attitude of some faculty who felt they were bringing "culture to the masses," an attitude which sat ill with workers who expected to be treated as adults, as the league had promised.[47] It would be better, said the Chamber executive committee in 1911, to avoid the temptation to lecture on everything and instead have "distributed in several lessons some subject which might be both useful and interesting for workers."[48]

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political content in France, from where it had spread to Italy. The impetus behind it was a middle class reform movement, the Italian Union for Popular Education.

Although the Chamber depended heavily on the Università Popolare it was not the only source of education for its members. The Chamber maintained a library and reading room as well; by 1905, it was spending over 200 lire annually for the reading room alone. While not a large sum, 200 lire was nonetheless close to the average annual wage of a braccianto, and was enough to purchase annual subscriptions to most of the general interest newspapers and periodicals of the time. With labor donated by members of the various leagues, and supervised by the members of bricklayers' league, the Chamber built a theater--the Teatro Sociale--which was used for the performances of various amateur workers' theater groups. The goal of the theater was to be recreational as well as educational, and not incidentally was a source of income for the Chamber. Thus the editors of La Squilla, the local socialist weekly which also served as the organ of the Chamber, urged workers to attend the theater, since it provided "intellectual pleasure" as well as helping the Chamber's finances.[49] Shortly afterward the editors proudly announced a performance of Camille by Alexandre Dumas fils.[50]

The Chamber occasionally sponsored lectures as well; in the spring of 1906, the Marchesa Gina Gente Tartarini (better known under her pen name of "Rossana"), a prominent literary critic and writer, spoke on the "Literary Achievements of Fogazzaro." Considering the topic and the admission charge of fifty centesimi, it is not surprising that she drew a crowd which consisted mostly of students and intellectuals, according to the police observer who attended.[51] The Chamber seemed to be meeting its members' interests somewhat better when the fiery activist Angelica Balabanoff spoke on "The Russian

Revolution"; she drew a crowd of "about three hundred people, almost all of the working class."[52]

The example of Bologna is instructive in a number of ways. In contrast to Brocchi's simple dichotomy between the higher cultural education and the practical assistance, it is possible to identify several goals which the educational programs fulfilled, goals which can further be seen in the educational programs of other Chambers as well. One of the most obvious of these was the introduction of workers into the dominant "high culture"; this was clearly the aim of the League for the Instruction of the People, and it was an aim which the Chamber and even more the Popular University inherited. At the same time, the left-wing democrats who animated the League and the Popular University, and from whom the teachers for the workers' courses came, aimed not only at the broadening of the workers' culture, but at the democratizing of that culture as well. As we shall attempt to demonstrate later on, they were hoping that the workers would serve as useful allies in their struggles against the outmoded cultural forms in Italy. But it would be a mistake to think that it was only the need for allies that brought intellectuals into this movement; the belief in a democratized culture as the basis of a sound political culture, the belief in the power of education of the common man as cure for the ills of society was as old as Robespierre's "republic of virtue," and these beliefs were the common currency of all the European democrats who were the hiers to the traditions of the Enlightenment.

Still another motif of the educational programs was the desire to modernize the workers and their cultural outlook; the numerous courses on science and technology, on modern hygiene, on sociology

and the other new disciplines which were born in the period before the First World War suggest a desire not only to have a cultured working class, but one whose culture was up-to-date and not trapped in the literary romanticism and philosophy of the traditional culture. In part because of the desire to make the programs scientific, in part because of the real economic benefits which were their product, the programs aimed at providing day-to-day practical assistance as well for workers, on topics ranging from family health and first-aid to the apprenticeship schools which taught the children of workers the trades which would upgrade them to skilled workers with the consequent improvement in wages and working conditions which skilled workers enjoyed.

The Chamber at Bologna was not unique in its desire to introduce workers into the larger culture; the Chamber of Cremona, for example, offered courses in Italian literature, economics, law, and conversational French.[53] At Cesena, the Chamber set up an "evening school of culture," which offered courses in literature and history.[54] The Chamber of Genoa instituted similar courses in "the Italian language, history, geography . . . and selected readings."[55] At Crema, the Chamber expanded its efforts to publishing a magazine, "edited in simple form and accessible to all workers," called La Lettura Popolare (Popular Reading).[56] Presumably workers whose interest was aroused by lectures or readings would be inspired to visit the Chamber library to further their education; 34 out of 75 Chambers surveyed in 1906 had libraries, and 23 more added libraries to their services by 1908.[57] Most of these were extremely small--one or two hundred volumes at the most, and the shortage of funds meant that they had to rely on donations

of books, rather than choosing books for themselves--but some were quite impressive. The Chamber at Bologna spent almost 200 lire in 1905 alone for "political, scientific, literary, and technical magazines and newspapers" for the library reading room.[58] These were in turn supplemented by cultural activities such as the Teatro Sociale which was used by various amateur groups in the city, as well as workers' theater groups.[59] In Milan, the Teatro del Popolo was jointly sponsored by the Chamber and the Società Umanitaria; capable of seating more than 2000 people, it presented programs designed to "acquaint the working masses with the higher world of culture."[60] At Reggio-Emilia, the Chamber sponsored a brass band and a "musical band" at its succursale in Guastalla.[61] All of these programs shared a common goal; in the words of one contemporary writer, they were "diffusors of culture" which would allow the workers to "raise themselves in a noble and harmonious aspiration to the pure light of the intellect."[62]

If the programs were designed in part to introduce workers to the larger world of culture where they had been strangers before, they also aimed to modify and democratize that culture. Hence the contents of the programs had not only the slightly patronizing aims of "raising the workers," but also that of introducing democratic and radical views into the educational courses. At Florence, the Chamber of Labor housed in its entry a statue of Michele di Lando, the wool-carder who led the popular revolt of 1378 against the Florentine mercantile elite who ruled the city. That he should have been the choice among all the figures of Florentine history was significant, and it implied a selection of him as a kind of "role model" for contemporary workers; as well, it suggested that workers who took on the task of challenging the current city elite were not breaking with tradition but on the contrary firmly

placing themselves with what might be thought of as the best part of Florentine tradition. Significantly, too, the first historical lecture delivered at the Chamber in Florence (by the young Gaetano Salvemini, then a student) was on Giano della Bella, the popular leader who instituted the Ordinances of Justice in 1293--laws which were designed to break the power of the magnates and make the city more democratic.[63]

Similar themes were emphasized in the historical lectures given at the Florentine Chamber in 1895. All shared the emphasis of showing how workers had a common inheritance from the past, or else emphasized the radical alternatives to past and present political choices. For example Giuseppe Pescetti (the first socialist deputy from Florence) lectured on "The Corporations of Artisans in the Florentine Republic and Modern Proletarian Organization," while Diego Martelli spoke on "Our Republican Artists." Others chose radical themes; thus there were lectures on the French Revolution of 1848, on Galileo, on the early socialist Carlo Pisacane, and the leader of a Neapolitan popular revolt, Masianello.[64] In nearby Sesto Fiorentino, topics in the Popular University's 1907-08 course included "Florentine Workshops of the Fourteenth Century," "Great Reformers: Luther, Calvin, Savanarola and Giordano Bruno," and an explication of the poetry of Rapisardi (a radical anti-clerical poet who was largely ignored by the literary establishment) by his daughter, Andrea Rapisardi Mirabelli.[65]

Clearly, the aim of such programs was to give their hearers a sense of their place in history and by implication to suggest that their exclusion from modern Italy had no justification in history. Such courses had the result of giving workers more ammunition for their

struggles, as well as making useful propaganda among the non-workers in the audience. But the content of these courses suggests a democratization of culture as well; what was being offered to workers was not just the traditional historical views, but the traditional culture and history interpreted in a general democratic key; in other words, the culture was transformed by the process of being spread, and workers had a chance to gain "their" history and "their" Italy. This was not only the view of the intellectuals who founded the League for the Instruction of the People, but persisted; as late as 1900 the choice of Garibaldi as the name for the Popular University represented the view that the University, like the hero himself, would champion the interests of the excluded and the oppressed. When the syndicalist majority took over the Chamber in 1912, despite their divergencies in other areas from the moderate socialists who had close ties with the left-wing intellectuals, the new newspaper which they published as the Chamber organ began carrying a series of articles on the history of the Risorgimento. These articles emphasized the themes common to modern "revisionist" views of that period: the lack of popular participation, the anti-Garibaldian views of Cavour, the cowardice and egotism of the Savoyard dynasty, and the ultimate betrayal of the people in the form the new Italy took.[66] When a public meeting was broken up by the police, the new paper went so far as to attack the police as "the new Austrians"--i.e., the oppressors once more.[67]

In addition to the traditional culture being passed on to the workers, and the democratizing of that culture in the process of its transfer, there were new forms of both culture and behavior offered in the educational programs. These new forms aimed at both the modernization of the culture which the workers would acquire, by making it more

up-to-date, more scientific, and more concerned with the problems of the real world, as well as the modernization of the workers themselves. The modernization of the culture was to be accomplished by the introduction of the natural and social sciences to the subjects treated by the educational programs, thus breaking with the traditional literary and humanistic culture. The modernization of the workers was to be accomplished by broader means, and I include in this not only the courses meant to acquaint workers with science and technology but the general movement toward the reform of traditional patterns of behavior; the drive to instill pride in their status, the campaigns against alcoholism and absenteeism, the attempts to improve family relations, and the general campaign to make workers more "respectable," even by bourgeois standards. This is not necessarily to argue that these programs were aimed at the embourgeoisment of the worker in any pejorative sense; as will be stressed below, there was an attempt to instill certain modes of behavior--such as punctuality, for example--which any organization can use, whether it be a capitalist factory or a workers' cooperative.

Even before the Chambers, the educational programs offered to workers had incorporated studies on science and technology, as the example of Bologna shows. Along with the history, law, and literature which were important components of the traditional higher education, the League for the Instruction of the People had offered lessons in hygiene, natural sciences, physics, and chemistry, as well as the new science of economics. As early as 1892 the Chamber in Milan had offered instruction in "the hygiene of the worker and the factory, electricity and the traction of the new electric trams," geometry,

and architecture. A couple of years later, courses in "mechanics, astronomy, and popular prejudices" achieved attendance levels which were "more than satisfactory."[68] In 1895, the Chamber at Florence had offered lectures on such topics as "Some Facts about Human Physiology Which Are Useful for Workers to Know," as well as the study of social problems such as "Workers and Taxes," "Juvenile Delinquents and Public Education," "The Protection of Infancy in Florence," "School Taxes," and "The Evolution of Social Life."[69] At Sesto Fiorentino, the Popular University offered the following courses in 1907-08: "Infant Hygiene," "The Therapeutic Action of Light in Skin Diseases," "Colloids and their Industrial Applications," "The Life of Plants," "Childhood Diseases in the Working Class," "Cutaneous Diseases in the Working Class," and "Superstition in Medicine."[70] It may be true that these courses had the "characteristic of contaminating the knowledge which the popular classes genuinely needed with expressions of a generic scientism," as Ernesto Ragionieri has commented on Sesto Fiorentino,[71] but in a country where "scientific culture, even at its most robust, never succeeded . . . in notably influencing the general development of thought,"[72] such courses represented a sharp break from the traditional educational curriculum towards a more modern content.

The most ambitious attempt to break from the past was no doubt the School of Social Legislation, sponsored jointly by the Milanese Chamber of Labor and the Società Umanitarian. The Florentine Chamber had a nearly identical school, modeled on that of its Milanese sister. In two year-long courses, the school gave a series of lessons on labor organization, occupational diseases and hygienic norms, protection of female and child labor, bookkeeping, political geography, statistics,

social insurance, professional representation, political economy, "social diseases" (i.e., diseases caused in part by social conditions, such as pellagra, rickets, typhoid, and cholera; the phrase has a rather different connotation in Italian than it does in English), public hygiene, labor contracts, discipline in labor conflicts, and "social ethics." The disparate nature of the subjects make it obvious that the course had no over-all unity; instead, each lesson was made up of a series of lectures and readings on the topic. Instructors were drawn from all fields: Rinaldo Rigola, secretary of the CGL, gave lectures on labor organization and professional representation of workers, for example, and it appears that the young economist Luigi Einaudi lectured on political economy.[73] The lecturers on the topics dealing with social issues usually were attached to the Società Umanitaria, which took a particular interest in such matters, as well as Angiolo Cabrini, who was active variously as a Chamber secretary, founder of the Partito Operaio, and socialist deputy who was the acknowledged expert of the socialist delegation of social legislation.[74] Still other lessons were taught by the leadership of the Chambers as well as local socialist teachers and professors. Where possible, the lessons were supplemented by field trips and "instructional tours"--a visit to observe a successful cooperative in action, or perhaps an observational tour of the day-care centers and camps run by the cooperative movement in Milan. In Florence, the tours seem to have included observations of local factories and working conditions as well as trips to cooperatives.[75] Successful completion of all lessons entitled the student to a certificate and presumably prepared him to assume the role of Chamber secretary, official of a national federation, or the

like.[76] But not all graduates finished as officials, and the stated aim of the courses was to train all who wished to attend. To that end, all classes met at night, so students could continue in their regular jobs while attending.[77]

The School of Social Legislation was obviously more than just an educational program designed to broaden the culture of its members; its lessons were a sharp break from traditional Italian curriculum and instead attempted to create a new form of education. By training its graduates in the issues which faced workers in their organizations, the School would begin to lessen their dependence on middle class experts and prepare the workers for the conduct of their own affairs, in line with the dictum that "The emancipation of the workers must be the creation of the workers themselves." It is thus possible to see the school as the first timid step toward the goal of the emancipation.

Along with the more formal programs went an emphasis on improving the lot of workers through a variety of informal means. It is possible to distinguish a gradation of goals which began with the attempt to inculcate standards of efficiency and professionalization and culminated in the campaigns for respectability and dignity of the working class.

It is clear the courses of the School of Social Legislation aimed not only at creating a new form of education, but of bringing a modern, informed, and professional approach to the working-class organization. Indeed, at one point the CGL even considered the possibility of forming a union for "organizers and activists," a view which suggests a professionalization bordering on the German model which brought such heavy strictures from Robert Michels.[78] In addition, of course, the Chambers wanted to provide the kind of professional

education which Brocchi described, and which is best represented by the various apprenticeship and professional schools, such as the one run by the bricklayers league and cooperative in Milan, which not only taught apprentices, but offered general courses in the "mechanical arts."[79] In Pavia, the tailors set up a school to teach their art to the children of other Chambers members, subsidized by the Chamber.[80] When they lacked the resources to set up schools on their own, they asked the assistance of city, as in Messina, where the Chamber petitioned the municipal government to reform the Scuola d'Arti e Mestieri by placing it under a special commission which would include workers' representatives.[81] In addition to the trade schools and apprenticeship schools, there were courses which were of immediate use for the worker's family as well, such as the ones offered at Bologna in first aid, family budgeting, and the like.

But to make professionals of workers on the job was not enough; there was as well an attempt to introduce new standards of individual conduct, standards which were very much like those of the middle class. But these were not so much a conscious attempt to make workers like the middle class, as they were an attempt to get workers to follow standards which might be those of any rational person. For example, the Chamber of Labor at Jesi published a pamphlet entitled The Ten Commandments of the Worker, which contained admonitions such as the fifth commandment, "Love your wife and make an enlightened citizen of her," while the sixth commandment urged workers not to exploit their children but to educate them. The eighth commandment read simply, "Don't get drunk."[82] The theme of anti-alcoholism was a common one, and several sections of the Milan Chamber of Labor cited it in reports

responding to an inquiry as to what benefits they thought Chamber membership had brought them.[83] One replied that the

> educational activity of the bricklayers league has tended to raise the moral and intellectual level of its members, especially those of rural origin . . . ; one can cite numerous examples of brutal, violent and drunken members who have lost these bad habits.

The iron furniture makers reported that their members had enjoyed a notable decline

> in alcoholism and the habit of taking Mondays off. One can count on the fingers of one hand the workmen who give themselves over to revelry and debauchery, whereas before many took off two or three days a week.

If these new habits were important in themselves, they were also important in building a respectable class--even by middle class standards--as the report of the Milan bakers underscored:

> The league and the Chamber have been responsible for a decrease in fighting and alcoholism, and this has meant a rise in respect on the part of the employers

The report of the glove makers emphasized not only the newly respectable nature of their behavior, but suggested that there was a rise in self-respect, as seems clear from the tone of pride with which they reported that the Chamber had

> refined and moralized the members, both through direct action and with the lectures, professional schools, the library and the courses of the Popular University. In order to be admitted, a candidate must prove that he has never been convicted of an infamous crime, and that he has never betrayed the cause of his colleagues.

A final goal was the inculcation of pride and dignity, which was in a sense the culmination of these other goals. Workers were to be professionals on the job, and sober off of it, hardworking, and good to their families. These achievements would then earn them the respect of the other classes, and in turn would lay the foundations for dignity and solidarity. Sometimes this was as simple as the reassertion of the old slogan, "Workers! You are small because you're on

your knees; arise!" which had been a familiar theme of socialist propaganda since the 1870's.[84] The Ten Commandments of the Worker began with the commandment, "Do not bend your back, even to the powerful" and ended with "Don't believe the working class is condemned to servility; aid the triumph of liberty and equality." The implications of this were drawn out in the report of the Milan glass workers, who reported that

> one of the results obtained by the league has been that of bringing the members to abandon the spirit of caste which was so firmly rooted; this has been achieved by lectures and newspapers which have sought to develop the spirit of solidarity.

As evidence, the glass workers pointed out that the "uncivil custom" of restricting membership to the sons of members had been abolished. Occasionally all of these themes came together, as in the case of the bottle makers whose whole report merely stated that membership in the Chamber had brought them "a larger unity of spirit, a decrease in alcoholism, and a greater sense of solidarity."

In addition to the obviously educational activities, the Bologna Chamber, like many others, offered occasional feste notturne which provided family entertainment as well as providing an opportunity to raise money for the Chamber. A typical one presented scenes from Verdi's La Forza del Destino and various scenes from Donizetti, violin and piano solos, songs by request from the audience, humorous monologues and other light entertainment, and "dancing until dawn." (This one even included a lottery, with chances being sold on donated prizes such as a liqueur service and a copy of Edmondo de Amicis' famous "social novel," Cuore).[85] The Chambers at Florence and Sesto Fiorentino encouraged attendance at the opera there, and devoted large amounts of space to opera criticism. In late 1913, La Difesa (the socialist

weekly which was the voice of the Florentine Chamber) called for performances of the opera to be moved to later in the evening, so that more workers could attend them.[86] That workers were influenced by their contact with the opera is undeniable; the birth registers of Sesto Fiorentino show a major decline in the number of saints' names and biblical personages given to children of peasants and workers, and their replacement not by radical names--such as Spartaco, Galileo, Libero, etc.--but by those of characters from the operas: Rigoletto, Alfio, Lola, Turridu, Aida, Tosca, Walkiria and the like.[87] Activities such as the feste notturne and the close attention to the opera represented not only an attempt to provide recreation which would supplement the general and technical education, but--particularly in the impact of the operas on the names selected for children--but a successful attempt at leading the workers to share in a common Italian culture.

There was still another aspect to the educational activities of the Chambers: that of teaching basic literacy, which was closely tied to the efforts at political education and action. Of 75 Chambers surveyed in 1906, 28 had evening courses which taught the fundamentals of reading and writing to adults, but as the Bologna Chamber remarked of its "special courses for illiterates and semi-illiterates," attendance "was not all that could be hoped for." Typical was the example of Mantova, which managed to muster 64 of its 1702 members for evening courses.[88]

Literacy was of course a basic requirement for Chambers who had aspirations to broaden or enrich their members' culture, but the teaching of literacy had other aims as well. When the Genoa Chamber began

to institute evening schools, it emphasized that the fight against illiteracy was not a "cultural question, but rather the practical one of providing the bare minimum of instruction necessary to provide labor."[89]

For other Chambers, the literacy course had a political aim: qualifying workers for participation in the administrative elections (i.e., the provincial and municipal ones; only the parliamentary elections were referred to as "political elections.") The Chamber at Reggio Emilia had a course designed to qualify workers which operated all year long.[90] The Chambers in Acqui, Cuneo, and Vercelli, on the other hand, had courses only during the periods immediately preceding the elections, as part of an intense "get out the vote" effort.[91] The literacy and educational requirements for local elections were the same as those for the national ones; the ability to read and write one's name, and the completion of the first two years of elementary school or its equivalent, as attested to by government examination. But property and tax qualifications were considerably lower, so that roughly two and one-half times as many men qualified to vote in local elections as in national ones. (Women were excluded from voting at all levels). Workers thus had a real opportunity to be effective here, in a way that was not possible in the national elections. In a study carried out by the Genoa Chamber after it instituted an office to aid workers in registering to vote, they found that 311 of the 1046 registrants it aided that year registered via the examination: "This figure is to be attributed to the . . . courses of instruction in the various parts of the city."[92] The school at Bologna was equally effective, registering "large numbers" of voters via the examination.[93]

Still other Chambers had courses that were designed not only to enable workers to vote but to acquaint them with the issues as well. Most of this activity fell under the general heading of oral propaganda--speeches, lectures, meetings, assemblies, and the like. In the light of its lack of success with literacy courses, the Parma Chamber concluded that for a proletariat which was mostly illiterate, and not accustomed to read much when it was literate, that oral propaganda and lectures ("understood as serious work and not fine-sounding words") were more effective and reached a wider audience.[94] Other Chambers were more successful with written work: at Intra, the Chamber decided early in 1906 to print up a small handbook containing the "principal legislation and legal provisions which might interest the working class" and in order to keep costs down and thus ensure a wider distribution, ordered it done by the local typography cooperative.[95]

There was, in addition to the aims which the programs had, an unintended effect on their participants as well. Though the educational programs aimed at introducing workers to high culture, and democratizing and modernizing that culture as well, the programs were not restricted to workers in their attendance or their effects. Instead, anyone who wished could attend the courses and gain what he or she might have missed in formal education. Particularly in the League for the Instruction of the People, and its successor, the Università Popolare, students need not be, and often were not, workers; instead, many of them were bourgeois and petit-bourgeois. In supporting these programs, the Chambers were not only building a sense of community among workers based on their common exclusion from the general culture, but the community thus built could be extended to include these others

as well. Among the students, regardless of their class origins, there was created the possibility of a community of interest based on their exclusion from the "official Italy" of high culture; in place of the official culture the Chamber offered a new form of culture--modern, scientific, and practical--whose appeal was primarily but not restricted to, workers.

Identifying the workers with the excluded helped to broaden the definition of working class, and laid the foundation for cooperation on some other basis besides the solidarity of the workplace; but it also created a tension between the common status of cultural exclusion and commitment to a renewed and modern culture on the one hand, and the divergent economic and social status of the students in these programs. Like the Chamber itself, the educational and cultural programs served--or aimed to serve--a general community purpose and meet the needs of workers specifically. The tension was not obvious so long as the workers' interests and the general community interest were not in obvious conflict; indeed, the cultural programs, like the employment activities of the Chamber, serve to underscore the Chamber leaders' belief that what was in the workers' interest was usually in the public interest as well. Only in rare occasions did the tension surface, such as at Bologna in the fall of 1914. When Italy did not immediately enter the war, many Italians became strongly convinced that intervention was necessary, and this included most of the faculty at the Università Popolare; the working-class students, on the other hand, were mostly strong supporters of a continued neutrality. The result was conflict, in some cases leading to outbreaks of shouting and even fisticuffs in the classrooms.[96]

Cultural, recreational, and economic activities all worked together, then, to create a common set of interests and activities for workers in the city where they lived. The feste notturne served as recreation not only for workers, but for their families as well. By breaking down older corporate ties--as the report of the Milanese glass workers cited on page 90 above suggests--it provided new and broader ties in their stead. As the workers attended courses, took trips together, learned about culture and the new science, discovered their history, prepared themselves for the practical problems of their jobs and their daily life, sent their children to learn new jobs, went to the reading room, applied for sickness pay, got aid in their strikes, bought their food from the consumer cooperative, and danced until dawn at their parties, the Chamber gradually became not only their union center but their social and educational center--their club--as well. It was more than the friendly societies of the artisans, because it aimed at a broader group than the purely corporate one. This did not necessarily imply a new political or social consciousness, however, and in at least one case--Milan--the recreational aspects for a time outwieghed the others. In a worried report to the Chamber, one of the secretaries complained that the cooperatives urged by the Chamber had been--unbeknownst to the Chamber organizers--gradually converted into cooperative wine-buying and drinking clubs, with a consequent loss of interest in other Chamber activities. The Chamber at Borgo San Donnino evidently had the same problem, since one of its largest constituent groups was the 350-member "Drinkers' Society" of Varano Melegari (a near-by village).[97]

The Chamber worked to enhance its role as a community center by acting as the spokesman for the workers; it thus added civic action

to its economic and cultural and educational activities. The Chambers acted for their membership--and in so doing for non-members as well, since their intercession was not of the type whose benefits could be limited to members alone. Instead, acting in what they thought was the interest of the workers, and by implication the public interest as well, the Chambers took action which could benefit all. For example, in Parma the Chamber sent representatives to the mayor in February of 1902, to ask him to begin work on the new railroad station scheduled for construction that year. Money had been budgeted, but work was not planned to begin until the spring. The Chamber representatives pointed out how severe unemployment was that winter, and the mayor, impressed by their arguments, agreed to order work to begin immediately. By the end of the month, construction was under way and 400 previously unemployed laborers had found jobs.[98] The action was not particularly difficult, nor was the intervention in the decision-making process disruptive or obtrusive. But it was a common way in which the Chambers acted as spokesman not just for their members, but for all workers in a given area. Similarly, in January, 1903, the secretary of the Bologna Chamber wrote to the prefect urging that minor works then being undertaken on the university buildings be continued and extended to alleviate winter unemployment. After consultation with the Royal Engineers (who supervised public works), the prefect replied that works on the interior could and would be stepped up, but in view of the adverse weather it would not be safe to have workers on the scaffolding outside.[99] In both cases, the request was made not only on behalf of Chamber members but the unemployed. As was the case with the cultural programs, the beneficiary was not the membership but the working class of the community.

Civic action was not limited to demanding employment, but was a general advocacy of workers' interests. A typical example of this advocacy came in Bologna in February, 1910, the postal contractor had fired three teamsters after they had had accidents with the mail coaches. The Chamber secretary wrote to the prefect arguing that it was only to be expected since they worked 10 to 14 hours a day, and that at any rate firing was too harsh a punishment. The prefect referred the matter to the director of the postal service, who persuaded the contractor to rehire the men and fine them instead.[100] Though this advocacy in many ways resembles traditional trade union handling of grievances and problems, the difference lies in both its representation of all workers, rather than just members, and its intervention with the political authorities, rather than employers.

The civic action was not confined to representing the interests of workers before the mayor or prefect, though, but often went to the general public as well. In many cases, the distinctions between civic, social, and cultural action blur as the same activity serves various ends. The most obvious example of this blurring is the favorite form of public action--the comizio. The comizio, depending on the circumstances, could be a meeting, demonstration, gathering, or get-together: the discussion of a Florentine comizio shows how these things flowed together. In 1911, the bakers' league inauguarated their new banner with a comizio. They began on Sunday afternoon in front of the Chamber of Labor, where a parade of about a thousand people was formed, including two brass bands and twenty banners of other workers' associations. Led by the bands, they marched from the center of town (where the Chamber was located) out to one of the working-class quarters where

the bakers had their headquarters, and where an expectant crowd had gathered. There then followed a ceremony of inauguration which included the reading of congratulatory telegrams by the president of the league, a speech by the patroness* of the banner, and other speeches by Giovanni Pescetti, a socialist deputy from Florence, Giovanni Agnolini of the National Federation of Bakers, Felice Anzi of Milan representing the International Federation of Bakers, and Sebastiano del Buono, the secretary of the Chamber of Labor. Commented the police observer, "Not even during the parade were there any incidents."[101] The parade was both an occasion for an outing, in which even families and children could participate, and a public affirmation of the existence of the bakers and their community--the working class. The bands, banners, and speeches testified to the existence of a strong and public organization, and was a visible demonstration of the solidity and public support of the organization. The speeches and ceremony were not only proof of the respectability of the organization, but an excellent way of passing an otherwise dull Sunday afternoon. More important, the fondness for ceremony suggests a culture which--like the innumerable parades of saints' images through the streets on the days of festa--sees in such manifestation a visible affirmation of the community of workers. This helps to explain the significance of the banner and an entire ceremony dedicated to it: in the words of one of the organizers of the Woman's League of the Milan Chamber,

> if the banner is useless for those who are already convinced, . . . it is necessary for those who are distant, for those who are divided, for those who are not conscious. For them, the banner is a lodestone and a beacon . . .[102]

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*A woman member of the league--an honorary role.

The significance of the comizio was much the same as that of the banner; it was "lodestone and beacon" to the other workers that the organization existed and was active, a symbolic representation of the organization to the community at large. The importance of such visible representation was stressed by Osvaldo Gnocchi-Viani in an acute analysis of working-class psychology: the worker, he argued

> wishes to see his ideas . . . incarnate in a way which appeals to his senses, so that he may see or hear or touch them; he wants to see them personified, for example, in a great and generous man, or represented in a living institution, or even by an historical event which reminds him of men and things, triumphs and tragedies. To purely internal or solitary emotions he prefers those which manifestly connect him to the outside would; therefore he is attracted to that which strikes his senses, even it it is only a simple banner.[103]

Thus a major purpose of the comizio was the symbolic representation of the organization and the organized working class, both to other workers and to the larger community. The comment of the police observer underscores an important aspect of this representation: that so large a parade and so long a ceremony could be carried out in "complete order" shows the strength of the organization. It was not a sudden outburst typical of popular disturbances, nor a "pre-political" riot, but an organized, disciplined, and even dignified form of public action. These were not the riotous plebs invoked by Angiolo Cabrini in his speech at Parma but workers conscious of their strength and proud of their solidarity. It may not have served a direct economic purpose, but it showed a sensitive understanding of psychological needs, reminding us again that the Chambers were considerably more than an ineffecient trade union.

This is not to say that a comizio could not serve economic purposes as well, but rather that these were served as part of a larger

effort. Here an example from Bologna illustrates the blending of various forms of action, as well as admirably illustrating the theory that guided the Chambers: the league and the federations were well adapted to serve the needs of the professional groups they represented, but the Chamber served the general needs of the working class. In 1903, the bricklayers' league decided to begin a general agitation for the accurate application and enforcement of the laws on hygiene and housing. "Considering that they did not have sufficient authority to bring their desires before the public . . . they asked the Chamber of Labor for assistance."[104] The Chamber agreed and decided to broaden the agitation to include the general problems of housing, particularly the recent precipitous rise in rents. They set out with articles in La Squilla describing the problems of working class housing and the violations of the laws, as well as discussions of the rise in rents. These were followed by a series of "partial comizi" in various quarters of the city to raise the questions and educate the public to the problem. The partial ones culminated several months later in a final comizio held in the city center and emphasizing the same themes.[105] This agitation served a number of purposes simultaneously, and deserves some analysis to point up each one.

The comizio defended the specific interests of bricklayers, since the accurate enforcement of the laws would require a great deal of repair work; indeed, the league began the agitation as a means of fighting unemployment among its members.[106] The final comizio in fact stressed the necessity of creating more and better working class housing in Bologna--something which would imply plenty of work for bricklayers, since Italian cities are built exclusively of brick and stone. But

it was not just a corporate interest which was at stake. All who suffered from sub-standard housing would benefit, and all who were feeling the pinch of high rents could support the call for increased housing. The Chamber was thus acting in the interests of the larger working class community, who were most likely to suffer from high rents and poor housing.

Like the cultural and social programs, the benefits of this action were not confined to members, but extended to the poor and lower classes generally. That the agitation was carried out in this form suggests the impact of educational programs as well. The comizi themselves were educational, designed to bring before the public the results of the Chamber inquest; moreover, the expectation that people would be disturbed by unhygienic housing assumed that the courses on hygiene could have affected those attending the comizi to the extent that they would agree that substandard housing was a problem--and since the students of these courses had been more than just workers, it was possible to expect that other inhabitants of Bologna would be moved to act by the discoveries which the comizi were publicizing.

Still another goal of the comizio was political intervention: only the city and the prefect had the authority to enforce the laws and begin the construction of low-cost housing, so the comizio was a form of political action as well. Moreover it was one calculated to be successful since it was not an attack on the government or the established order in the name of a subversive doctrine--such as republicanism, socialism, or organized Catholic clericalism--but was instead a demand that the government live up to its professed commitments. In this way, the Chamber was defending not only the interests of the

working class and the poor generally, but it identified those interests with modern standards of hygiene, health care, and housing--progress, in a word--and thus spoke for the community of Bologna at large. Though it was the representative of the workers in a way that the bricklayers' league was not--and the league's deference to the Chamber, "considering it did not have sufficient authority to bring their desires before the public," clearly illustrates the bricklayers' recognition of that fact--the Chamber's identification of the workers' interest with the values of progress and modernity made it appear that the Chamber spoke for the public interest, as opposed to the selfish interests of a few greedy landlords and lazy bureaucrats. In so doing, the Chamber established that the interests of the working class were the public's as well. These comizi not only demonstrated to the people of Bologna who the workers were and what their interests were, the comizi helped the workers to define their interests, as did the Chamber here when it went beyond the enforcement of the sanitary laws to call for more and better low-cost housing.

The interests expressed in the comizio were at first local, and confined to specific issues. At a 1902 comizio in Parma speakers called for the extension of arbitration courts to agriculture, and demanded the abolition of prison labor. As an overwhelmingly agricultural province, Parma was naturally interested in labor conditions in agriculture. Since prisoners were usually put to work making shoes, prison labor represented unfair competition to Parma, which was the site of the national shoemakers federation headquarters and boasted several shoe factories and a large cooperative.[107] Very quickly, many Chambers began holding joint comizi with other groups, a practice

which served to demonstrate solidarity by achieving it. For example, the Bologna Chamber and the Unione Socialista Bolognese--a dissident reform socialist group which had temporarily seceded from the national party because of the dominance of the revolutionary current at the previous congress--held a comizio to protest recent increases in rents.[108] Occasionally the numbers became quite large, as in the case of the Bolognese comizio of September 20, 1904 (the anniversary of the capture of Rome in 1870) to inaugurate the monument in Piazza VIII Agosto commemorating the uprising against the Austrians. Participants included the Chamber, the various leagues, representatives of the socialists, radicals, republicans, mutual aid societies, cooperatives, and Masonic lodges, and were joined by the banners of some 50 worker's organizations as well as half a dozen bands. Not surprisingly the crowd of some twenty thousand was described by the police as being "eminently democratic and anti-clerical."[109]

The comizio not only demonstrated solidarity with other groups by achieving it in practice but underscored a common problem which all the participants shared; their exclusion, real or imagined, from "legal Italy." All were groups whose participation in the Risorgimento had been marginal at best and who were identifying themselves with the more radical heritage of the Risorgimento: insurrection and anti-clericalism. By affirming their solidarity with one another as well as with those who arose and drove out the Austrians, they provided another basis besides the economic one for workers joining together as well, they announced their intention of becoming part of the national community, of being Italians as worthy as any others. Three years later the same groups held another comizio on the theme of anti-clericalism--it was titled dal Popolo contro la Chiesa ("From the

People against the Church"). Speakers vied to outdo one another in superlatives congratulating the government of the Third Republic in France for having unilaterally abrogated the concordat with the Holy See.[110]

Not every occasion demanded a comizio, and frequently the executive committee of a Chamber would issue an ordine del giorno--a motion or a resolution which, like the comizio, was intended to speak for the working class and communicate its sentiments to the community or to the government which systematically excluded it from political participation. Like the comizio as well, the ordine del giorno generally marked the intention of affirming the existence of the organized working class to the community at large, and frequently aimed at expressing protest against the government in the name of a broader solidarity or a larger community interest.

This tendency to speak through what was regarded as the workers' community to the government carried beyond the Chambers: when workers successfully fought municipal elections and gained control of the city council, the council too would call comizi and issue . . . ordini del giorno. (This tendency has remained in the workers' movement right up to the present, when Communist-controlled city councils have frequently been embroiled with the national government over their decisions to sponsor demonstrations or pass resolutions against the Vietnam war or protesting the Greek military junta). One of the first cities in Italy to have a socialist government, Sesto Fiorentino (a small city not far from Florence), "very frequently" issued such ordine del giorno, touching on themes as diverse as the solidarity with southern rural strikers, the Russian Revolution of 1905 and Libyan war. The

council called for the support of southern strikers, passed a resolution protesting the killing of several workers during a strike at Candela (a village in the province of Foggia) and appropriating fifty lire for the families of the deceased, and in another instance of killing adjourned in memory of the dead after ordering the flag over city hall to be decorated with black in sign of mourning (the Italian equivalent of flying the flag at half-mast). The proposed visit of the Czar of Russia prompted several protests to the government in the name of the "victims of Russian oppression," and the council also sent "fraternal salutes" to the Russian "people struggling for their own emancipation" during the revolution of 1905. The council also protested to the national government against the possible construction of a military installation in Sesto, and urged that spending be diverted from military to civilian needs. They did not fail to join in the general wave of protest against the execution of the Catalan anarchist intellectual Francisco Ferrer following the "Tragic Week" at Barcelona, nor were they any less emphatic in calling for an end to the Libyan War.[111]

The themes of the protests expressed by the city council of Sesto Fiorentino provide a good overview of the themes of the comizi and ordini del giorno of the Chambers and the workers movement generally. Affirming the existence of the working class community, they aimed at the expression of two recurrent motifs: the solidarity of the local organization with other individuals and organizations, locally, regionally, and later nationally and internationally; and the protest against the government in the name of the interests of the working class community, as well as the broader community of those

affected by the issues. The significance of these themes is that they provided a basis for the identity of the working class that did not rest purely on economic foundations; all workers could feel solidarity with other oppressed groups, and the basis was something other than the pure expression of corporate problems. Given the wide variety of economic conditions and the equally wide variety of economic solutions to these problems, the Chambers obviously could not have drawn wide support on the basis of economic issues alone. The common bond was not economic status, but one of opposition to the government on the basis of solidarity with other groups--oppressed by government action, excluded from the Risorgimento, or ground under by the economic system.

Solidarity with other workers was one of the earliest themes of comizi and ordine del giorno and gradually extended from the local level to the international one. Commonly it was simply an affirmation of support, as in the case of the municipal council, but financial support and other action became increasingly important. Thus the Chamber at Milan voted to support a strike of agricultural workers at Ferrara by taxing each member one day's pay as a contribution to the strikers, as well as sending Chamber organizers and administrators to take the place of those arrested during the strike.[112] During the agricultural strike of 1908 at Parma, the Chambers of Bologna, Milan, Florence, and others supported the strike with monetary donations; Florence and Bologna in addition agreed to make arrangements to take care of the children of the strikers so they could resist longer.[113] Nearly every local strike was accompanied by an appeal for funds to support strikers; the usual method was to open a subscription in favor

of the strikers, but it was not uncommon for a Chamber to vote a surtax on members rather than relying on voluntary contributions.[114]

In addition to the solidarity, the note of protest was often present as well; typically, a comizio called for support of a group in the name of solidarity and protest simultaneously. Thus the Milan Chamber opened a special subscription for the victims of the 1907 earthquake in Calabria, arguing that a class government would take care of its own class with only "crumbs" for the "poor," particularly where--as in the South--the people suffered from "a medieval system of economic oppression and feudal politics." Workers were urged to donate only to the Chamber fund and no other.[115]

Several Chambers joined in expressing their solidarity with Jules Durand, a French organizer who was arrested and tried for "moral complicity" in the death of a worker during a clash between strikers and police. (The Briand government argued that since Durand had called the strike--he was secretary of the coal workers in Le Havre--any violence resulting from it was his moral responsibility). As a direct threat to the existence of the organization as a principle, the Durand agitation was the occasion for numerous protests and comizi in Italy.[116] When the district attorney in Lawrence, Massachusetts won the death penalty for Ettor and Giovanitti--two organizers for the IWW--from a local jury on the same argument, protests among the Chambers were similarly widespread.[117] Solidarity with workers thus was extended from the local to the international level, and the comizi helped workers to see on the practical level what the connection between their problems and the problems of all workers were.

That workers' organizations should be sensitive to attacks on brother workers or the principle of organization itself was laudable,

but not surprising. What was more remarkable was the sensitivity to what workers considered political repression. Some of this was just the expression of human solidarity--as in the case of the numerous expressions of support for the Russian people during the revolution of 1905, or the spontaneous wave of protest which swept Italy when the news of the execution of Francisco Ferrer arrived.[118] But the most frequent expressions of protest were against the policies of the Italian government. Sometimes condemnation of repression, sometimes calls for changes of policies, the recurring protests defined the interests of the working class in opposition to the interests of the government, and furthered the self-definition of workers by opposition to the prevailing trend of Italian society.

Like the solidarity issues, protests were often directed to local issues; thus the Milan Chamber scheduled a comizio demanding that bakery owners observe the law requiring them to provide at least one and a half days off per week for their workers. The bakery owners had observed the law in their own fashion, by closing bakeries on Sunday and Monday in the hope that the general public would be so irritated by having to go from Saturday to Tuesday of each week without fresh bread that they would demand an end to the law and the bakery owners could return to the six-and-a-half day work week which they preferred. The purpose of the comizio was to get the prefect to force the bakery owners to rotate their workforces' days off in order to provide more work for bakers and allow bakeries to remain open all week.[119] An ordine del giorno shortly afterward called on the City of Milan to lower family taxes and local taxes on food.[120]

A recurring theme in this agitation was the constant battle against the caro-viveri: high cost of living. At first marked by

generic protests against high prices, with the occasional demand--as at Parma--that price controls on food be instituted, the protests became quickly aimed at the government as being responsible for these prices. From complaints about high prices, comizi and protests soon aimed at specific governmental policies which needed alteration, while other protests called for new policies and actions to meet the problems.

In early 1907, the Chamber at Florence gave its support to a general agitation against the recent rise in rents, while in Bologna the Chamber set up a commission to study the problem of high rents and suggest appropriate forms of protest to the Chamber.[121] A month later, the Milan Chamber instituted a general campaign of protest against high rents.[122] By 1910 there were still generalized complaints about the high cost of living, and the Bologna Chamber called a generalized comizio of protest against it in October of 1910.[123]

At the same time, Chambers began to be more specific about their protests, and protests became more commonly not complaints about the high cost of living in general, but about specific factors which were responsible for this cost. The most often cited cause were the "hunger taxes": the municipal taxes on food brought into the city, and the national grain tariff. Both were taxes which were an important part of the social and economic system. The food taxes--an Italian version of the French octrois--were one of the very few taxes allowed the municipalities, and provided most of the income which was not subject to the veto of the prefect.[124] It has been argued that the wheat tariff, by protecting backward and marginal producers from international competition, allowed the southern landowners to survive as a rentier

class which would not have otherwise been economically viable. Whether or not this was so, the tariff was warmly supported by nearly all the southern deputies in parliament, and the governments who depended on these deputies for their majority.[125] Consequently, opposition to the municipal taxes or the wheat tariff necessarily brought the Chambers into conflict with powerful local and national interests.

Even though this brought them into conflict with the governing classes, the Chambers were strong and vocal in their Calls for the abolition of the wheat tariff. In October of 1908, the Florentine Chamber followed a comizio of protest against the wheat tariff with an announcement that a committee of agitation to campaign for the abolition of the tariff was being formed, with representatives from the Chambers of Florence, Pistoia, Empoli, Prato, and Sesto Fiorentino (all local Tuscan Chambers) as well as from most of the mutual-aid and cooperative societies in the province.[126] Similarly, the Milan Chamber sponsored a whole series of comizi in 1908 protesting the high price of bread and demanding the abolition of the grain tariff.[127] In Parma, the Chamber leaders proposed a general strike of protest against the high cost of living, especially bread; the membership voted the proposal down and called for more national support of the campaign to abolish the "tariff on hunger."[128] Similarly, calls for the abolition of the municipal food taxes were frequent and widespread.[129]

But the calls for reform were not the only agitation pursued; recognizing that in general they were bound to fall on deaf ears (except in the few cities where the socialists had won the majority on the municipal council), the Chambers went on to provide solutions to the immediate problems of workers facing high food prices. Most of these

solutions were some variation on the consumer cooperatives which had been a part of the workers movement for decades. The Chambers added to this tradition by calling for the municipalization of public services, which had been a plank of the socialist platform ever since the Socialist Party had adopted a minimum municipal program in 1895.[130] In addition to the municipalization of public utilities (such as the provision of water, gas, and later electricity and public transit--nearly all of which in most Italian cities were run by private companies operating under municipal concession), such as that called for by the Parma Chamber in 1905--which called for the city to take over the provision of gas, water, and transport along the "English model" (presumably the Fabian proposals were what they had in mind)[131]--Chambers suggested the municipalization of bakeries, butcher shops, and other suppliers of consumer goods as well.

One of the more comprehensive programs was that proposed by the Chamber in Milan, which outlined in a series of comizi and meetings the following proposals for meeting the high cost of living:

1) Gradual abolition of the grain tariff and all taxes on foodstuffs, replacing them with a progressive income tax;

2) Use of municipal land for construction of low-cost housing;

3) Construction of municipal bakeries, to be run on a non-profit basis;

4) Importation by the city of frozen Argentine and Australian meat to be resold at cost to butchers and consumer cooperatives [a reform which had already been effected at Genoa and Bologna];

5) The opening of non-profit municipal pharmacies by the city;

6) The institution of laws standardizing the weighing and packaging of food.[132]

One year later in 1913 the Florence Chamber called a convention of all cooperatives, Chambers, and mutual aid societies in the province to discuss the high cost of living. In addition to the standard calls for abolition of the food taxes and the wheat tariff, it proposed several new activities as well. After affirming the need for cooperative distribution of food, the Chamber argued for the public ownership of flour mills and bakeries where cooperation was not feasible and called for new cooperative wheat farms and pasta factories. They also supported the formation of a consortium for purchasing wheat en bloc for cooperative and public mills as well as a permanent committee to urge on the government the necessity for "bread and pasta, which make up the greater portion of the worker's diet, at the lowest price possible."[133]

Like the calls for educational reform and the issues of solidarity, the Chambers' protests against the high costs of living and their plans for dealing with those costs were not limited in their effects to Chamber members, but to all who suffered from inflation. Workers, and others whose incomes were caught in the squeeze of high prices as well, could easily gain the impression that the Chamber was the champion of their interests against the interests of a selfish minority, such as grain speculators or latifondisti. Since nearly all of these proposals involved some action by the local or national government, the Chambers set up a tension between the local government--which was often the principal source of their funds--and what they attempted to define as the public interest. Workers who followed the protests in their newspapers or attended the comizi might soon be convinced that whatever their problems--high cost of food, high rent, poor education, lack of jobs, or the like--the Chamber was the

representative of their interests against the government, and that indeed their very identity could be defined in opposition to the official Italy of prefects and Parliament.

The image of the government which emerged from the comizi and from protests was of one which not only neglected the interests of the workers and the general public for the sake of a selfish elite, but of a government which was actively repressive against workers. One of the recurring themes of protest was that against the eccidi proletari--"proletarian massacres"--which marked the Giolittian era. The term was applied whenever workers were killed or injured by police or soldiers--usually in the course of a demonstration or while troops were trying to keep order during a strike. Without exception, every such incident provoked comizi of protest, motions and resulutions, and frequently led to general strikes as well. Word spread quickly of these incidents, and protests followed nationally regardless of their origins. In 1902, there were killings in Granmichele, in Sicily; in 1903 at Berra (Ferrara) and Candela in the province of Foggia. In 1904 several striking miners were killed in Buggerù in Cagliari (Sardinia) and three demonstrators were killed and eight wounded in Torre Annunziata, outside of Naples. In 1905 it was the turn of Turin, where police broke up a crowd during a metalworker's strike with gunfire; in 1907 Milan joined the list when carabinieri fired into a crowd which had gathered to jeer and throw rocks at a trainload of departing strikebreakers who had unsuccessfully attempted to break a strike of gasworkers. In 1909, three women and a child were killed at Langhirano near Parma, when police tried to disperse a crowd which was protesting the execution of Ferrer. When, in 1910 seven people were killed

during an agricultural strike in Bari, it was easy to conclude, as did the Milan Chamber, that "these incidents stretch in a chain throughout the whole of the Giolitti governments." Though the pace slowed down afterwards, three more people died at the southern village of Rocca Gorga in January, 1913, and nearly thirty people were killed during the "Red Week" of June, 1914. Each of these events led to a comizio in nearly every Chamber, many or most of them in the form sketched here.

The recurrence of these protests, which were always given prominent space in the newspapers and were often the occasions for local clashes as well, could easily give the workers the impression that they were living in a country which was bitterly hostile to them, an impression which was reinforced by the campaign "pro vittime politiche"--in favor of "political victims," which was the occasion for nearly fifty comizi between 1910 and 1914. All called for the release of "political prisoners" and the dropping of charges which would allow workers and organizers who had fled the country to return. Sometimes these were combined with protests against the prison conditions as well, as in the case of Maria Rygier, a militant anarchist orator whose letters describing conditions in her prison had been serialized by the socialist daily, Avanti!. Outraged over the conditions described, the executive committee of the Milan Chamber urged in a resolution that "one cannot, one must not, in the fatherland of Beccaria, allow a woman to waste away in such horrible agony . . . ".[134] As in the case of the "proletarian massacres," the campaign in favor of the political prisoners could easily give workers the impression that the government was not only against their general interests, but violently hostile to their leaders and activists. Indeed, the Bologna Chamber

went so far as to call a comizio of protest against "the domestic policy of the government."[135]

In culture, in social policy, or in discussions of political protest, then, the Chambers worked at counterposing the broad interests of the working class--which were identified with the interests of the poor, or of the politically oppressed, or of those who believed in the rights of free speech and assembly, or who felt themselves part of the world of progress and modernity, or those who felt themselves excluded from the official Italy of the Risorgimento--to the narrow interests of the government. In so doing--consciously or not--they laid the basis for a unity which rested on something other than the immediate economic interests of specific groups, and thus prepared the way for overcoming the divergent economic interests of different sectors of the working class.

This is not to imply that the Chambers neglected the interests of their own members for those of a more broadly conceived community. Part of their authority to speak for workers rested on their championing of their members' interests, and even more on the provision of direct aid where possible. Much of this direct aid consisted of helping workers gain the rights provided them by the social legislation of that era. Numerous Chambers, for example, had offices for legal and medical assistance, where legal aid was provided for those who could not afford it, or who needed it for defense in political cases. (The predominance of lawyers in socialist politics owes its origins in part to these services; many lawyers launched their political careers with brilliant defenses of workers and peasants arrested in early-day strikes or organizing activities). With the passage of laws on workmen's compensation, these offices, assisted by the medical aid offices,

would help workers to file claims under the law. They provided verification that a claimed injury existed, that it had been caused in the workplace, and that the worker had the right to claim compensation. The Chamber at Milan, with the aid of the Societa Umanitaria, had the most highly developed program in this area, and here, as elsewhere, served as a guide and model for the other Chambers.[136]

The range of services provided by this office is exemplified by the 1906 annual report. In that year, the legal office took 38 cases involving 44 workers before the arbitration courts (probi-viri), whose decision set legally binding precedents. They handled 27 civil suits for workers and the Chamber, defended 42 workers involved in 34 criminal cases (these were usually arrests made during demonstrations, picketing, or the like); for 17 of these they won acquittals. In addition, the office helped 106 workers prepare their cases requesting indemnities for industrial accidents.[137] These were not formal court cases but were negotiations either with their employers or the insurance companies and generally resulted in gaining payment where none was offered or winning a larger payment than had been originally proposed. In addition, they provided help in various other areas, such as the verification of contracts, handling sums for minors, and other legal tasks. They were assisted by the medical office in working with the victims of industrial accidents. Members of the medical office visited 220 workers injured on the job, had 12 hearings where they confronted the doctors hired by the insurance companies, and made 20 visits to specialists to ascertain the degree of disability caused by the accident. Representatives of the medical office also attended the first International Congress on Industrial Diseases held that year, in order to keep abreast of new developments in their field.[138]

The most comprehensive office for social assistance was the Segretaria del Popolo, which served as a general clearing house in gaining assistance for workers, whether Chamber members or not. The Segretaria provided information on all charities in Milan, helped to determine whether workers were eligible to receive aid, told them where they could find it, and assisted them in filling out the ubiquitous forms. The Società Umanitaria, impressed by the success of the Milan office, helped to fund similar ones at Florence and Genoa, and they were widely imitated elsewhere.[139]

In the context of these actions, the economic activities--mutual aid, resistance, and cooperation--can be more easily understood for what they were: an important adjunct to the Chamber, but not the sole reason for the Chamber's existence. They were obviously the most important of the direct services which the Chambers provided to members, and gave the members incentive for joining as well as giving the Chamber credibility to act in other areas, but they were not the point of the Chamber's existence. Instead the economic activities supported the members, clarified the needs of specific groups, and--as in the case of the Bolognese bricklayers--made movement toward class and community action easier. Though the Chamber did not neglect the economic improvement of its members, it was more than just a vehicle for this. It was more than a cultural or recreational center, though it was those things too. It was in fact the center of working class life, a fact underscored by its physical location. After 1900, most Chambers were housed in a building known as the Casa del Popolo (House of the People), usually owned and often built by the Chamber--usually with the labor and donations of the members. In addition to the Chamber,

the Casa del Popolo often housed the offices of the leagues, the co-operatives and mutual aid societies, the library and reading rooms and perhaps a hall for meetings, and a theater or cooperative restaurant or cafe as well. Frequently the local socialist newspaper or Chamber newspaper would have its editorial offices in the Casa del Popolo, and groups ranging from the educational societies to the militant anti-militarists of the League of Future Conscripts would be allowed to hold their meetings there. Physically, organizationally, and psychologically the Chamber became the center of working class life:

> . . . the worker went to it not only to request a subsidy in time of need; it became a forum for discussions, a center of attraction and recreation, a school for civil, political and social education.[140]

As such, it fulfilled the expectations which its earliest supporters had for it: Osvaldo Gnocchi-Viani, father of the Chamber of Labor, argued in an early pamphlet that one of the major goals of the Chamber was to bring workers together in different settings so that they would discover that their problems were caused by the system, and not by any individual failings.[141] He was strongly supported by Eugenio Giacchi, one of the leaders of Florentine socialism, who wrote in a popular pamphlet that the "advantages of the economic struggle are not so much in the immediate benefits as they are in the moral benefit of the new self-consciousness" which would emerge from that struggle.[142]

Because of the broad variety of programs it offered, the Chamber was able to meet the heterogenous needs of its members and those of the larger community it served in a way that single-purpose organizations could not; if one group or another became predominant in it, the Chamber could shift emphases in a way its constituent organizations could not. The key to its flexibility was its broad understanding of

the needs of workers, an understanding neatly summed up by the executive committee of the Milan Chamber in 1913:

> If the proletariat were only 'producer,' resistance would be sufficient for the defense of its labor; but the proletariat is also 'consumer' and thus participant in the entire social movement. It is constrained therefore--if it does not wish to bury itself in a narrow-minded and foolish corporativism--to participate in all the struggles of civil life for the triumph of its own ideals of social emancipation.[143]

As Giuliano Procacci has pointed out, this meant that even economic setbacks--the loss of a strike, the rise of unemployment--or internal disputes did not take away the Chamber's role:

> Because of its composite nature, joining in one organization the trade-union guidance of the various 'sections' as well as the political . . . representation of all the workers of a given city, the Chamber of Labor could in a certain sense exist regardless of the fluctuations of membership. It was a symbol--the 'commune of the workers'--and as such had an almost material existence; nor did it cease to represent something even when its life was stunted and its activity reduced.[144]

What strikes the observer of these institutions is not the uniqueness of their programs--all workers movements in Europe at one time or another produced trade unions, mutual aid societies, cooperatives, workers' educational programs, and various groups which spoke for the workers in a wide range of public forums and over a broad set of issues. But it is unusual to find all of these activities emanating from a single organization and to find such an organization occupying not a marginal role, but the central one in a growing workers movement. More important perhaps was the precocity of such programs, being by and for the "working class," conceiving the interests of the working class in such a broad manner, when the class itself barely existed as a coherent unit.

That such a broad range of activities helped to build coherence in a fragmented class seems clear in retrospect, and by defining the

problems of workers in such a way as to make the solutions to those problems matters of general interest, the Chambers laid the groundwork for alliances between workers and others in the society who shared their concern with progress, modernity, and justice. But it would be attributing superhuman insight to the Chamber leaders and members to suggest that they could clearly see what the pattern of their activities was, and where their actions were leading them. They were, as they insisted, practical men looking for real solutions to daily problems. But choices of solutions are never made in a vacuum. Chamber leaders worked in political and intellectual context which made some solutions attractive and obscured others, and the context was in part the creation of the history of their movement and that of united Italy as well.

The tendency of the Chamber to demonstrate solidarity with the groups excluded from legal Italy suggested the recurrence of a problem which went back to unification, as did the Chambers' desire to win for their members the right to be full citizens of the national community. To understand why the Chambers were organized as they were, and where their attitudes on matters of public intervention and culture and education came from, we turn in the following chapter to the history of the workers movement before the Chambers. This history will also help to elucidate the peculiar strains and strengths which the Risorgimento had created in Italy, and enable us to see the crucial position which the Chambers occupied in the relationship between government and society, a relationship and position which form the subject of the final chapter.

FOOTNOTES--CHAPTER II

[1]Merli, Stefano, Proletariato di fabbrica e capitalismo industriale (Florence, 1972), Volume I, 642-661.

[2]Neufeld, op. cit., discusses the general situation on pp. 310-313; the quotation is taken from p. 317.

[3]The theme of the "reserve army of the unemployed" as the prevailing factor in the history of the Italian workers movement is ably argued in an important article by Idomeneo Barbadoro: "Problemi e caratteristiche del movimento sindicale italiano," Rivista Storica del Socialismo no. 19 (May-August 1963), 227-295. The same theme is heavily emphasized in his more recent Storia del sindicalismo italiano (Florence, 1973), two volumes. Val Lorwin's observation is in his now classic article "Working Class Politics and Economic Development in Western Europe," American Historical Review, LXIII, 2 (January, 1958), 340.

[4]The best example of the tendency to dismiss anything but the most blatant reformist views as being the fault of demagogues and/or immature workers is probably the work of Peter Stearns. See his essay in Workers and Protest (Itasca, Illinois, 1971), or his book Revolutionary Syndicalism and French Labor (New Brunswick, N.J., 1971). This is of course the theme of writers like Horowitz and Neufeld as well.

[5]This was their own characterization; see Letterio Briguglio, Il Partito Operaio Italiano e gli anarchici (Rome, 1969), 3-6.

[6]See the membership rolls in Appendix II of this study. The highest levels were in the small towns of the Parma Chamber, where workers seem to have joined out of a community solidarity.

[7]The Milanese cooperatives are listed in the general study by the Società Umanitaria Origini, vicende, e conquiste delle organizzazioni operaie aderenti alla Camera del Lavoro di Milano (Milan, 1908), LXXI-LXXXVI. (Hereinafter cited as SU, origini).

[8]There are literally thousands of reports of cooperative activities in the newspapers which served the Chambers, and to list them all would require a separate chapter. Some of the general relationships between the cooperatives and the Chambers are described in the contemporary study by Edward A. Lloyd, The Co-Operative Movement in Italy (London, 1925). The most elaborate ties between cooperative movements and Chambers were in the Po Valley, and some local studies are very useful here: see particularly Biagio Riguzzi, Socialismo e sindicalismo nel parmanese (Bari, 1931); Rinaldo Salvadori, La Repubblica socialista mantovana (Milan, 1966); and on Ferrara, Alessandro Roveri, Dal sindicalismo rivoluzionario al fascismo (Florence, 1972).

[9]See membership figures. For Genoa, see Bettinotti, 69-75; Proccacci, Lotta di classe, 299.

[10]The mutual aid societies were often placed in difficulties by demography. Primarily founded by artisans, the societies often found it difficult to attract new members when the old ones retired, since many younger workers were interested in entering declining professions, and without the contributions of the younger workers the treasuries were rapidly diminished. Only general societies, which attracted members regardless of occupation, seemed immune from this problem. This problem was obvious to some observers from the very beginning; see the acute analysis in Aristide Ravà, Le associazioni di mutuo soccorso e cooperazione nelle provincie dell' Emilia (Bologna, 1888), esp. Chapter I. cf. the same points made by Brocchi, op. cit., 50-73.

[11]There is no good comprehensive survey of the activities of the mutual aid societies in Italy, outside of some general works on the politics of their general congresses. The work by Ravà, op. cit., is the fullest discussion of which I am aware that ignores the politics to concentrate on the "nuts-and-bolts" of operations.

[12]The Milanese Chamber especially was quite explicit in its views that cooperation and the hiring hall served not only to aid workers, but were particularly helpful for striking workers in enabling them to find work to tide them over until the strike was decided. See the discussion in the annual report for 1906, summarized in BUL, June, 1907, 1233-1234.

[13]The differential rate of strikes by occupation occupies part of the larger study Adriana Lay, Dora Marucco, and Maria Luisia Pesante, "Classe operaia e scioperi: ipotesi per il periodo 1880-1923," Quaderni Storici 22 (January-April, 1973), 87-147, from which this information is gleaned. This of course confirms the hypothesis suggested in the famous study by Clark Kerr and Abraham Siegel, "The Inter-industry propensity to strike--An International Comparison," in Kornhauser, et. al., Industrial Conflict (New York, 1954), 189-212.

[14]Barbadoro, "Problemi," 230-245; cf. Neufeld, 316.

[15]On the tobacco workers, see Franco Pieroni Bortolotti, op. cit.. The problems of unskilled workers as a whole are discussed in Idomeneo Barbadoro, Storia del Sindicalismo Italiano, Volume II: La CGdl, pp. 201-262.

[16]The peculiarities of this mass of agricultural labor have been the subject of some acute studies in recent years. The earliest, and the richest in demographic data is the study by Giuseppe Medici and Giuseppe Orlando Agricoltura e disoccupazione. I: I braccianti della bassa pianura padana (Bologna, 1952), esp. pp. 75-102; there are also some interesting points in Luigi Preti, Le lotte agrarie nella Valle Padana (Turin, 1955), passim. The significance of this mass for labor organization has been acutely dissected by Renato Zangheri in his introduction to the collected Congresses of the National Federation of Landworkers (usually referred to as the Federterra , Lotte Agrarie in

Italia, (Milan, 1960), IX-XCII, as well as Barbadoro, in the first Volume of his Storia del Sindicalismo, La Federterr, 3-56. On the local level, the discussion of Ferrara by Roveri is first-rate, 23-42.

[17]The commercialization of Italian agriculture and its effect on the agricultural workers has been amply documented in the standard study by Emilio Sereni, Il capitalismo nelle campagne (Turin, 1968).

[18]The boycott's aims and functions are well described in Enrico Dugoni's report on strikes and boycotts to the 1908 Federterra congress, in Lotte Agrarie, 172-176. Concrete examples of the boycott are common, and nearly every issue of L'Idea in 1906 has a list of the boycotted porprietors and reminders that no organized worker should provide them any services whatsoever. Particularly in Bologna the boycott seems to have been very successful. In a report to the Interior Minister in 1914, the prefect of Bologna pointed out that the landowners were easily broken by the use of the boycott, which involved all workers in the community rather than just the braccianti who did the planting and harvesting. As the prefect suggested, a tight organization of landowners could have defeated the boycott by assisting the boycotted owners, but they were too "egotistical," and allowed themselves to be defeated in detail. See "Rapporto sulle condizioni politiche della provincia, 1914," ASB, c.7, f. 1, b. 843.

[19]The most detailed discussion of the imponibile and its various successes is in Zangheri, Lotte Agrarie, XXXVIII-LXVIII. For a detailed study of Mantova, see Salvadori, op. cit., 273-294.

[20]There are two first-rate collections of photographs of this period, both of which have many views of the bonificazione and its thousands of workers equipped with pick, shovel, and wheelbarrow. Edited by Luigi Arbizzani, they are Sguardi sull'ultimo secolo: Bologna e la sua provincia, 1859-1961 (Bologna, 1961) and Su,compagni, in fitta schiera. Il socialismo in Emilia-Romagna dal 1864 al 1915 (Bologna, 1966). Roveri has an excellent discussion of the range and impact of the bonificazione in Ferrara, 1-22.

[21]The most striking examples of this are to be found in the Giolitti papers, particularly those that date from his tenure as Minister of the Interior under Zanardelli (1901-1903). The selection of these published as Quarant' Anni di Politica Italiana: Dalle Carte di Giovanni Giolitti (Milan, 1962. Three Volumes) has hundreds of examples, particularly in Volume II, esp. pp. 110-178. Several standard works on the Giolittian era take the use of public works as a means of maintaining the peace for granted: cf. Giampiero Carocci, Giolitti e l'età giolittiana (Turin, 1961), passim. Carocci was one of the editors of the Giolitti papers. The analytical article by Franco de Felice, "L'età giolittiana; panorama storiografica," Studi Storici, X,L (January-March, 1969), 114-190, convincingly argues that such a program was an important part of the equilibrium of forces which maintained Giolitti in power. A more recent work offers increased evidence and supports these conclusions. See Giorgio Candeloro, La crisi di fine secolo e l'età giolittiana, 1896-1914, Volume VII of his Storia dell'Italia moderna, (Milan, 1974), in particular 122-136 and 235-254.

[22]Neufeld, 242-43.

[23]BUL, February 1905, 297-301

[24]These figures are taken from Barbadoro, Volume II, p. 125.

[25]In his Manueletto di tecnica sindicale (Florence, 1947), 24-27. The work is a series of lectures delivered at the Milan School for Social Legislation (described below in the text of this chapter) during the 1920-21 period. This viewpoint is widely accepted among American scholars; cf. Neufeld, 318-319.

[26]Brocchi, p. XXXII. Brocchi was secretary of the Chamber at Macerata.

[27]The inadequacies of the trade-unionist approach are discussed in considerable detail by Idomeneo Barbadoro, [note 15] Storia del Sindacalismo Italiano, Vol. II: La CGL, 71-201. Barbadoro is an official of the CGIL (present-day successor to the CGL). For the importance of the German model to Italian socialists, see Ernesto Ragionieri, Social democrazia tedesca e socialisti italiana (Milan, 1961).

[28]Capitini Maccabruni, Nicla, La Camera del Lavoro nella vita politica e amministrativa fiorentina (dalle origini al 1900) (Florence, 1965), 229.

[29]Rinaldo Rigola, Rinaldo Rigola e il movimento operaio nel biellese (Bari, 1930), 132. Some observers went so far as to see the Chambers as the germs of a new society, as did Gaetano Salvemini when he wrote in 1903 that

> as the communes of the middle ages represented the first nuclei of modern society in the midst of feudalism, thus in the heart of present capitalistic society the Chambers of Labor are the first manifestation of the society of the future.

As quoted in Eugenio Carin, La cultura italiana tra '800 e '900 (Bari, 1965), 134. The notion that the Chambers were the first glimpse of the society of the future was rather widespread, and seems to be derived from an observation of Marx's in his "Instructions for delegates of the provisional general council," 1866. The following quotation is taken from the collection of documents on the First International edited by the Institute of Marxism-Leninism, Documents of the First International: The General Council of the First International, 1864-66 (Moscow, USSR, 1964), pp. 347-348.

> Trades' Unions originally sprang up from the spontaneous attempts of workmen at removing or at least checking that competition in order conquer such terms of contract as might raise them at least above the conditions of mere slaves . . . On the other hand, unconsciously to themselves, the Trades' Unions were forming centers of organization of the working class, as the medieval municipalities did for the middle class. If the Trades' Unions are required for the guerilla fights between capital and labor, they are still more important as organized agencies for superseding the very system of wages labour and capital rule. [Italics in original].

[30]The phrase is from the draft project for a constitution for all Chambers approved at the first congress of the Chambers in 1893 at Parma. See Resoconto del primo congresso delle Camere del Lavoro d' Italia (Parma, 1893), p. 33.

[31]Stefano Merli, Proletariato di Fabbrica e Capitalismo Industriale, Volume II, I Documenti (hereinafter Merli, Documenti), 673-674.

[32]Reproduced Ibid., 859-60.

[33]Ibid., 43-44.

[34]Angiolo Cabrini, Di una Camera del Lavoro in Parma e provincia (Parma, 1892), p. 8. In view of Parma's history of what E. J. Hobsbawm has called "pre-political" riots in the Oltretorrente district, this was a telling argument; cf. Biagio Riguzzi, Sindicalismo e riformismo nel Parmanese (Bari, 1931), 69.

[35]Some historians have taken this as proof that the Chambers were only "firemen of the revolution"; Merli, is conspicuous among these by calling the Chambers

> organizations not of struggle but of direction and management of certain public offices and functions interested in the problems of labor and workers. (Volume I, p. 669).

Much the same theme is taken by Renzo del Carria, whose Proletari senza Rivoluzione (milan, 1966, 2 volumes) praises the spontaneity of workers against the "legalisms" of the Chambers and some socialists.

[36]Cabrini, op. cit., 14-15.

[37]The letter is in the Sombart Archive; is quoted in Ernesto Ragionieri's study, "Werner Sombart e il movimento operaio italiano," Rivista Storica del Socialismo, 10 (May-August, 1960), p. 339. Sombart's study was published as "Studien zur Entwickslungsgeschicte des Italienschen Proletariats. IV. Die Arbeiterkammern (Camere del Lavoro) in Italien," Archiv für Soziale Gesetzgebung und Statistik VIII (1895), 521-574.

[38]See Appendix I for details.

[39]Brocchi, op. cit., 112.

[40]Luigi Arbizzani, "Dalla lega per l'instruzione del popolo all' università popolare di Bologna," Emilia VIII, 25 (March, 1954), p. 69.

[41]Ibid., p. 70. This is of course the generally accepted interpretation of the Risorgimento now, but at the time it accorded ill with the hagiographic understanding of the process which was current. The early versions of Risorgimento history are discussed in the standard handbook by Walter Maturi, Interpretazioni del Risorgimento (Turin, various editions).

[42]Ibid., p. 70.

[43]Ibid., p. 71.

[44]Ibid., p. 72. Arbizzani emphasized strongly this point in his conversations with the author in the spring of 1971.

[45]Luigi Arbizzani, "I 'samaritani della cultura': L'università popolare di Bologna," Emilia, VIII, 29 (July, 1954), 209-210.

[46]Ibid., p. 211.

[47]A certain amount of condescension had been part of the Università Popolare movement from the beginning, though it was not inevitable. An Italian version of the English University Extension movement, the movement had acquired a greater social and political content in France, from where it had spread to Italy. The impetus to found these institutions came from a middle-class reform movement, The Italian Union for Popular Education (Unione Italiana dell'Educazione Popolare). Aided by an earlier movement called the Teaching League (Lega per l'Insegnamento), which had concentrated primarily on the organization of popular libraries, the Union found eager allies in the Chambers and among the reformist wing of the Socialist Party--indeed, Argentina Altobelli, a Bolognese socialist leader and long-time secretary of the National Federation of Landworkers was president of the Union for a period, and active in the popular education movement. The standard work on the whole drive for popular education is that by the late Dina Bertoni Jovine, Storia della Scuola Popolare in Italia (Turin, 1954). Details on the Università Popolare are to be found on pp. 351-375.

[48]The criticism was expressed in the annual report of the Chamber, Relazione morale e finanzario (Bologna, 1911), 48-49.

[49]La Squilla (Bologna), 13 January 1906.

[50]Ibid., 26 January 1906.

[51]Ibid., 25 March 1906. There are also details in Archivio dello Stato, Bologna (Hereinafter ASB), Prefettura di Bologna--Gabinetto, Categoria 6, Fascicolo 2 (1906), Busta 419. Report of Questore [Chief of Police] to Prefect, 23 March 1906.

[52]ASB, Gabinetto Prefettura, c.6, f.2 (1906), b. 419. Questore to Prefect, 31 March 1906.

[53]Werner Sombart, op. cit., p. 555. (See note 37 above).

[54]Ibid., 554.

[55]BUL, January-February 1906, 293.

[56]BUL, July 1906, 143.

[57]BUL, August 1906, 367; July-August 1908, 492.

[58]BUL, March-April 1906, 427. In more concrete terms, this was about equal to half the annual wage of an unskilled laborer, and represented about 3 1/2% of the Chamber's annual budget. An annual newspaper or magazine subscription was about 5-15 lire, so 200 lire could cover most of the major general interest periodicals of the time.

[59]BUL, March-April 1906, 407.

[60]Società Umanitaria, L'opera della Società Umanitaria dalla sua fondazione ad oggi--Primo Maggio 1911 (Milan, 1911), 127-129.

[61]BUL, May-June 1904, 619.

[62]Nino Turati, Le biblioteche popolari in provincia di Milano (Milan, 1908), 17-18.

[63]Capitini Maccabruni, 225; Sombart, 555. The statue still stands in the current Chamber.

[64]Capitini Maccabruni, 235-6.

[65]Ernesto Ragionieri, Sesto Fiorentino: un comune socialista (Rome, 1953), 184.

[66]L'Azione Sindicale (weekly newspaper published by the Bologna Chamber); 3, 10, 17. 23 and 30 August; 5, 12 and 19 September of 1912.

[67]Ibid., 19 October 1912.

[68]SU, Origini, lxiii. The courses were surely less grandiose than their titles suggest, but I think the intent is clear.

[69]Capitini Maccabruni, 235-6.

[70]Ragionieri, Sesto Fiorentino, 184.

[71]Ibid., 183-84.

[72]Giorgio Candeloro, Storia dell'Italia Moderna, Volume VI, 289.

[73]The Milanese school is described in some detail in Società Umanitaria, L' opera della Società Umanitaria, 131-135. The detail about Einaudi was suggested by Alberto Rossi, "Liberismo e teoria economica nell'opera di Luigi Einaudi (1901-1912)," Studi Storici XV,1 (January-March 1974), 121-146.

[74]Cabrini's role in the workers movement and the socialist party is well-discussed in Giuseppe Mammarella, Riformisti e rivoluzionari nel Partito Socialista Italiano, 1900-1912 (Padova, 1968), passim.

[75]Trips to view new industrial installations were fairly common. At Bologna, the Chamber organized a tour to the Cooperative Glassworks in near-by Imola, urging workers to attend not only because of the scientific and technical interest but also because the trip (scheduled for March 19) coincided with the anniversary of the Paris Commune (!). (To make attendance at the trip easier, the Chamber allowed workers to pay the five lire cost in monthly installments of a lire each, surely one of the earliest "go now, pay later" arrangements on record. More importantly, it shows the Chamber's concern with even the minutest details of members' problems.) La Squilla, 6 and 27 January, 1906.

[76]BUL, November, 1909, 753 (describing the Florentine School).

[77]Ibid., November 1909, 753-754.

[78]Marchetti, La CGL, p. 150.

[79]Ibid., lxii.

[80]BUL, December 1905, 1923.

[81]BUL, May 1906, 832; July 1906, 645. The Chamber of Commerce came to their aid and the petition was successful. A similar event took place at Terni, where the Chamber petitioned the municipality for a trade school. The city agreed to appropriate 2000 lire for it, but the prefect overruled the expenditure. See BUL, June 1906, 148.

[82]The 'Ten Commandments' are reproduced in Raffaele Molinelli, "Il movimento repubblicano a Jesi dal 1900 al 1914," Movimento Operaio V, 3-4 (May-August 1953), 608. With some variations they were widely reproduced and seem to date back to the time of the First International.

[83]The survey was conducted early in 1905. The results are summarized in SU, Origini, xli-xliii, from which all the following quotations are taken.

[84]There is a particularly good example of this in the special issue of L'Era Nuova produced for May Day, 1893, which is reproduced in Nora Dora Goldschmidt, "Nascita della Camera di Lavoro di Genova," Movimento Operaio e Contadino in Liguria II, 1-2 (January-April 1956), p. 24.

[85]La Squilla, 3 February 1906.

[86]Ragionieri, Sesto Fiorentino, 179.

[87]Ibid., 181-32.

[88]BUL, May-June 1904, 902; March-April 1906, 427.

[89]Il Lavoro (Genoa) 1 June 1904.

[90]BUL, December 1906, 1236.

[91]BUL, August 1906, 374.

[92]BUL, November 1907, 1162.

[93]La Squilla, 9 December 1904.

[94]Camera del Lavoro di Parma e Provincia, Notizie e relazioni, 1902-1905, (s.l., s.d., but most probably Parma, 1906), 21.

[95]BUL, May-June 1906, 641.

[96]These details were supplied to me by Luigi Arbizzani during our conversations in the spring of 1971.

[97]The report to the Milanese Chamber was published in pamphlet form: Carlo Azimonti, I circoli famigliari e le cooperative di consumo nella città e provincia di Milano agli effetti della organizzazione di resistenza (Milan, 1913). The tone of the pamphlet is clearly disapproving, and the pamphlet was evidently meant as a warning and an admonition, since it was published by the Chamber. The Drinkers' Society (Società dei Bevitori) is included in the list or organizations adhering to the Borgo San Donnino Chamber prepared by the prefect of Parma sometime in 1914: Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Rome, Ministero Interno, Direzione Generale della Pubblica Sicurezza (hereinafter ACS, Min. Iterno. Direz. Gen. P.S.), Divisione Afari Generali e Riservati, (1903-49), Categoria G-1, Busta 37, Fascicolo "Camera del Lavoro Riformista di Borgo S. Donino."

[98]L'Idea (Parma), 25 February 1902.

[99]ASB Gabinetto Prefettura, c.6, f.2, b.12 (1903). Romeo Mingozzi (Chamber secretary) to prefect, 7 January 1903; Prefect-Reale Genio Civile, 9 January 1903; Reale Geno-Civile Prefect, 10 January 1903; Prefect-Mingozzi, 11 January 1903. Note that this was a quick process. That the prefect consulted with the engineers the day after he received the letter, and replied favorably four days after the initial request suggests that this was not regarded as an intrusion, and is in fact remarkably responsive for a bureaucracy which has a reputation for torpor and ineptitude. It may be in part that this was due to Mingozzi's personal reputation; a later report by the questore compared him favorably with his successors as Chamber secretary and referred to him as "un uomo intelligente, accorto, equilibrato." Letter of 19 May 1906 in c. 7 f.1 & 2, Buste 548 & 147 (1906-1907).

[100]ASB Gabinetto Prefettura, c.6, f.2, b.229 (1910) Chamber secretary-prefect, 18 February 1910; Direttore Generale delle Poste-Prefect, 23 February 1910.

[101]ACS Min. Interno., Direz. Gen. P.S., Ufficio Riservato (1911-1915). Associazioni, f.25, b. 19. Prefect of Florence to Minister of the Interior, 4 July 1911.

[102]Linda Malnati, in a speech given at the inauguration of the banner of the Federazione Femminile. La Battaglia (Milan), 6 February 1897, as quoted in Merli, Volume I, 848.

[103]Osvaldo Gnocchi-Viani, Il Partito Operaio Italiano (Milan, 1893), p. 40.

[104]ASB Gabinetto Prefettura, c.6, f.2, b. 491. Questore-prefect, 4 January 1903. There is extensive correspondence here as well as in b. 318 (1904).

[105]Nearly every issue of La Squilla between January and March of 1904 has some mention of the campaign and describes one of the partial comizi.

[106]ASB Gabinetto Prefettura, c.6, f.2, b. 491, Prefect to Questore, 6 January 1903.

[107]L'Idea (Parma) 13 September 1902.

[108]La Squilla, 30 December 1905.

[109]ACS Min. Interno, Direz. Gen. P.S., Gabinetto (1903-05). f.11, b.8. Questore of Bologna to the Prefect, 21 September 1904 (a copy which had been sent to Rome).

[110]La Squilla, 10 January 1907; 17 January 1907.

[111]These examples are taken from Ragionieri, Sesto Fiorentino, 136-137.

[112]La Battaglia Proletaria (Milan, published by the Chamber of Labor) 13 July 1907.

[113]La Battaglia Proletaria, 9, 16, 23 and 30 May 1908. This contains full reports about the plans of other Chambers as well. There are also some details in BUL, June 1908, 1196.

[114]La Squilla, 30 May 1908.

[115]La Battaglia Proletaria, 9 November 1907.

[116]There is a good discussion of the national actions taken in support of Jules Durand in L'Internazionale (Parma, organ of the Chamber and national spokesman for the revolutionary syndicalists), 31 December 1910. Cf. La Battaglia Proletaria 14 January 1911. The CGL joined in the campaign at the prodding of some of the Chambers; see Luciana Marchetti, ed., La Confederazione Generale del Lavoro negli atti, nei documenti, nei congressi, 1906-1926, (Milan, 1962), 123-124. (Hereinafter, Marchetti, La CGL). As a direct threat to the organization, the Durnad case had the same significance for Continental organizations as did the Taff Vale decision in Britain.

[117]There is some background on Ettor in Almanacco di L'Internazionale (Parma, 1913), 64-70; the national protests are covered in Avanti!, 30 July 1912. Cf. L'Idea 5 April 1913.

[118]The national repercussions of Ferrer's execution are covered in L'Internazionale, 16 October 1909. Memorial comizi for Ferrer were held at Parma (L'Internazionale, 9 October 1910) and Bologna (L'Azione Sincidale, 5 October 1912). The possibility of a comizio in favor of the Russian Revolution had the Bologna authorities extremely worried. ASB Gabinetto Prefettura c.6, f.2 has four thick buste of correspondence related to the plans for keeping order at the comizio: 854, 13 and 129 (1950); 745 (1906). La Squilla devoted almost the entire issue to it: 20 January 1906.

[119]La Battaglia Proletaria, 22 February 1908.

[120]Ibid., 19 December 1908.

[121]BUL, February 1907, 312, 349.

[122]Ibid., March 1907, 460.

[123]La Squilla, 10 October 1910.

[124]The financial structure of the municipality and the role of the prefect in local finance are admirably discussed in Robert Fried, The Italian Prefects (New Haven, 1963), especially Chapters Two and Three.

[125]In recent years, Emilio Sereni has made the topic of the grain tariff and agricultural marketing all his own. See his essays collected in Capitalismo e mercato nazionale in Italia (Rome, 1966), esp. "Il nodo della politica granaria."

[126]BUL, December 1908, 1209.

[127]Ibid., June 1909, 1114.

[128]Ibid., February 1901, 310.

[129]Ibid., January 1909, 125; February 1909, 311; March 1909, 412. Nearly every issue for that year reports at least one protest against the food taxes.

[130]There is an excellent discussion of origins, models, and goals of Italian "municipal socialism" in Ernesto Ragionieri's essay, "La formazione della programma amministrativa socialista in Italia," now reprinted in Politica e amministrazione nella storia dell'Italia unita (Bari, 1967), 193-262.

[131]ACS Min. Interno, Direz. Gen. P.S., Gabinetto (1903-05), f.44, b.28. Report of the Prefect of Parma, 5 March 1905.

[132]BUL, May 1912, 647.

[133]Ibid., May 1913, 474-75.

[134]The calls against the eccidi proletari are so common it would be easy to devote several pages of notes to them. Some of the more representative are the events of Turin; L'Idea, 12 May 1906 and La Squilla, 13 May 1906. On Milan, La Squilla, 19 May 1907. The condemnation of the Giolitti government is in La Battaglia Proletaria, 20 August 1910. On Rocca Gorga, see Avanti!, 8-9 January 1913 and L'Idea, 18 January 1913. The agitation "pro-vittime politiche" produced comizi at (among others) Parma (L'Internazionale, 10 April 1909; L'Idea, 11 December 1911 and 4 January 1912) and Bologna (L'Azione Sindicale, 8 June 1912 and 5 October 1912). The discussion of Maria Rygier's case is in La Battaglia Proletaria, 23 February 1909. Many of these incidents are discussed in more detail in Chapter IV.

[135]ACS Min. Interno, Direz. Gen. P.S., Gabinetto (1903-05), f. 25, b.9. Prefect to Minister, 26 August 1904.

[136]BUL, June 1907, 1233.

[137]Ibid., 1234.

[138]Loc. cit.

[140]Raponi, Giulia, "Nascita e primi sviluppi del movimento operaio a Foligno," Bollettino della Deputazione della Storia Patria per l'Umbria LXII (1963), p. 24.

[141]Osvaldo Gnocchi-Viani and Giovanni Garibotti, Le Camere del Lavoro industriali e agricoli (Cremona, Camera del Lavoro, 1893), 16.

[142]Eugenio Ciacchi L'organizzazione di mestiere e l'organizzazione socialista politica (Colle d'Elsa, 1896), 4.

[143]Editorial in Il Proletariato (organ of the Milan Chamber) 18 October 1913.

[144]Procacci, Lotta di Classe, 298.

CHAPTER III

The diversity among the various constituent groups which the Chambers attempted to serve was matched by the extraordinary range of activities which the Chambers undertook on their behalf. Since this range of activities extended far beyond the economic ones of trade-unionism, mutual-aid, and cooperation, the economic changes which gave the Italian working class its particular physiognomy--especially the wide divergencies among the various groups within the working class--were considerably offset by the provision of programs which laid the basis for non-economic bonds among these workers. The result was a kind of complementarity--a special fit--between the programs and the groups they served. This complementarity was the produce of the convergence of the process of change which shaped the working class and the historical experience of the workers movement in Italy, which made for certain choices in emphasis by the Chambers.

While the first two chapters have described the Italian working class and the activities with which the Chambers attempted to serve that class, in this chapter we turn to the previous experience of the workers movement which led the Chambers to emphasize certain kinds of activities and forms of organization, as well as to see certain issues as salient. It was this experience which led them to make the choices they did, and those choices made them important in a way that the trade unions, mutual-aid societies, and cooperatives were not.

Of the issues with which previous working-class organizations had concerned themselves, the most important were centered around three

major themes: the question of politics--or more properly, the public role which the workers' organizations should play, and the question of the proper relationship between them and the state; the problem of culture, and the question of what kind of culture the workers' organizations should transmit and teach; and the problem of organization, and the question of what the proper form and nature of a workers' organization should be. These themes were in fact part of a larger problem: what was the role and purpose of a workers' organization? Each political tradition, each ideology offered a different answer, and all the answers offered had, or seemed to have had some validity for one group or another, one region of the country or another. The kinds of solutions offered to these problems strongly influenced the Chambers and helped to prepare them for the role they were to play in Italian life during the Giolittian era.

This is thus not intended to be a brief history of the workers movement before the Chambers, but a selective analysis of those elements essential to an understanding of the Chambers and their predecessors. The most important of these predesessors were the various Workers' Societies (Società Operaie), which were first founded during and after the revolutions of 1848; the Mazzinian workers' organizations, of which the most important was the Genoese Workers' Confederation (Confederazione Operaio Genovese, usually abbreviated COG), founded in 1853 and active through the 1890's; the First International and its associated labor organizations, the Fascio Operaio, active primarily from 1870 through the early 1880's; and the Partito Operaio Italiano (Italian Workers Party), founded in 1882 and active until 1892 when it merged with the newly founded Italian Socialist Party. Each of these organizations represents one of the broad strains of ideology and experience

which fed into the Chambers: the self-help and mutual aid of the Workers' Societies, the democratic radicalism of the Mazzinian tradition, the anarchist and Marxist strains (overwhelmingly the former in Italy) of the First International, and what might be called the social democratic tradition of the Italian Workers Party. Naturally, each of these movements had its own peculiarities as well, but it is worth underlining that in terms of the traditions represented, Italy did not vary dramatically from the experience of other Continental European countries, where in differing strengths and emphases the same four strains fed into the workers movement as well.[1]

The earliest discussion of the role and purpose of workers organizations took place among the Piedmontese societies during the 1850's. These Workers' Societies were mutual aid groups, paying benefits for sickness and, less commonly, for retirement, disability, unemployment and funerals out of a treasury financed by weekly contributions from members. Primarily consisting of artisans and skilled workers, the societies were often the successors to the old craft guilds and continued the guild traditions of being recreational, educational, and sometimes religious centers for their members as well. Historians of the labor movement throughout Europe are familiar with them, and their general physiognomy does not seem to have varied too much from country to country. In Italy, the earliest ones appear to have been in Piedmont, where some of the Turinese groups date from the beginning of the eighteenth century, although they have occasionally been documented in other areas of the peninsula as well.[2] (The impression of Piedmontese precedence may simply be due to the greater amount of research that has been done on Piedmont).

Most of these early workers' societies were suppressed during the Restoration (1815-1848), when the Italian states generally adopted some version of the French LeChapelier law which outlawed "combinations" of workers. Generally regarded as the vestiges of the guilds which had been suppressed during the period of Napoleonic dominance, the societies did not reappear in significant numbers until the liberalization which followed the revolutions of 1848. Even then, they were largely confined to Piedmont, the only state to maintain the relative freedom of assembly, association, and the press which King Carlo Alberto had granted to stave off insurrection in the early days of 1848. Outside of Piedmont, only Tuscany and Lombardy seem to have had noticeable numbers of societies. Following unification, though, their numbers grew rapidly and by the 1890's nearly 800,000 Italians were members of at least one workers' society.[3]

The earliest discussion of the role and purpose of organization came from the General Workers' Mutual Aid Society of Vigevano (a small town in Piedmont), organized with the aid and support of two local brothers, Stefano and Vincenzo Boldrini. Both were lower middle class professionals: Vincenzo was a lawyer and Stefano a causidico (a kind of legal advisor). Their leadership made the society of Vigevano the driving force behind the organization of the annual congresses of workers' societies in Piedmont, and they devoted enormous energy to growth and development of these organizations all over the Kingdom of Sardinia. Not always too sure of their own eclectic ideology, they nonetheless implanted several concepts which long endured in the Piedmontese movement, an achievement due more to their skill as organizers and politicians than to any power as theorists. But their

success also rested on the fact that somehow the ideas they hit on in their haphazard way found a resonance among the workers who joined the societies.[4]

Basically, the Boldrini brothers sought to strengthen provincial organization, believing that a decentralized movement would be less likely to arouse the suspicion and the potential ire of the government; they urged that workers societies be completely independent, even if that meant foregoing advantages such as legal recognition of the societies or receipt of donations from officials for the societies' treasuries. Their aim was an organization which would develop the workers' own capacities, recognize themselves as a class, and take consciousness of their own force. An essential precondition for such development was the benevolent neutrality of the government, and the Boldrinis felt that this could only be assured by the strictest neutrality on the part of the societies themselves. Partially at their urging, the Second Congress of Workers Societies (Alessandria, 1854) voted down several proposals to present petitions to Parliament complaining of excess taxes and calling for energetic action against grain speculators. The Congress declared that it must not involve itself "by acting in areas of governmental pertinence."[5] Though this was not always completely adhered to, the formula was frequently invoked at Congresses thereafter.[6]

But aside from avoiding the attention of the government, the goals of the Boldrini brothers were rather nebulous, and it did not necessarily follow that one form of organization was any more appropriate than another for their achievement. The primary aim was the experience of organization itself, which brought workers out of apathy

and resignation, provided them with an alternative to dependence on charity and paternalism, and gave them independent ideals to pursue by such means as the organization was capable of discovering.[7] In the words of a speaker inaugurating the banner of the workers' society of Voghera, the society acted "by animating the weak to make themselves strong through order, temperance, and labor."[8]

In other words, organization was almost an end to itself, and provided that the societies did not become easy tools of the government or a battleground for parliamentary candidates looking for support among the educated and better-off artisans who could vote, the Boldrini brothers did not have unequivocal views about the form of organization best adapted to meet the societies' needs. Nonetheless, the earliest societies adopted the form which was to characterize their successors down through the Chambers of Labor: a society made up of all workers in a given area, subdivided by occupation.

Organization in this form was not necessarily the best adapted to the practice of resistance; trade and industrial unions were far more efficient, a point which suggests that resistance was not the primary purpose of the worker's societies. On the other hand, neither were they solely mutual aid organizations. The subdivision by occupation would have created unnecessary complications in a society whose sole purpose was the collection of dues and payment of benefits--a purpose entirely unrelated to occupational status. The organization adopted by the Workers' Societies did have two important strengths: it recognized each worker's loyalty to his craft, or "art"; this was particularly significant because having a craft distinguished the operaio from the mere laborer. Unlike the guilds, which emphasized

the exclusiveness--and the occasional exclusivity--of the craft, the Workers' Societies recognized as well a common status for all workers. The point was made deftly by a representative of the Milan hairdressers, Faustino Sanseverino, at the Milan Congress in 1860:

> Every craft has its own society and its treasury to provide for its particular interests; the general association (along the Genoese model) provides for the general interests of the working class: education, recreation, correspondence [with other workers' groups], etc.[9]

The "Genoese model" which Sanseverino invoked was that of the Consociazone (later reorganized as a Confederazione) Operaia Genovese, the Genoese Workers' Confederation which was the most important of the Mazzinian workers' organizations. Founded in Mazzini's birthplace in 1853, it was an association of workers' societies subdivided by trade and profession. Like the Piedmontese groups, it had centralized mutual aid and instruction and served to defend not only the economic interests of the members but to act as a cultural and recreational center as well. In addition, it openly proclaimed itself to be a political association as well, inspired by the thought of Giuseppe Mazzini.[10]

The Genoese Workers' Confederation added political activity--in the form of demonstrations, fund-raising, political action and protest--to the general tasks of education and recreation which Sanseverino had suggested in Milan, but retained the organizational structure which had characterized Workers' Societies: separate leagues for the various trades, federated into one society on the local or regional level. Both the First International and the Italian Workers' Party continued the tradition of organization, even though they felt that the concept of the "general interests of the working class" had to be enlarged to include resistance--strikes and collective bargaining--

and eventually participation in the political process. The former was the particular concern of the International, and the Italian Workers' Party maintained that concern while supporting the latter in addition.

While the concept of the "general interest of the working class" continued to enlarge over the forty-five years that spanned the period from the foundation of the Workers' Societies to the first Chamber of Labor, the preferred form of organization remained the same. When the First International discussed the form which the Fascio Operaio (the labor organization which they founded) should assume at their second Regional Federation Congress in Bologna in March, 1873 (as good internationalists, they avoided the use of the term "national"), the Congress passed a resolution urging

> all sections to study every means of resistance in all the relationships between capital and labor, [and] . . . in every case, in order that it may be easier to practice resistance, it is useful to organize the various sections by trade and craft, and federate them [together].[11]

One of the few detailed studies we have of the Fascio Operaio in action, Elio Conti's study of Florence, confirms that the new organization, despite its sharp ideological and political break with the Mazzinians and the older societies, retained the organizational form which they had preferred.[12]

When the North Italian Federation of the International (which soon became the Italian Workers' Party) met at Milan in February, 1877, the question of organization was raised once more. Once again the preference for the organization by trade and craft, federated into larger groups was clearly upheld. Speaking in favor of the organization, Osvaldo Gnocchi-Viani argued that such organization represented the whole class (as the Genoese Mazzinians believed) in the act of class

conflict (along the lines suggested by the First International) in a dialectical synthesis of the experience of the workers movement up to that point. When a delegate argued that the new party should simply be made up of general associations of all workers in a vicinity regardless of occupation, so as to avoid provoking conflict with employers and the government, Gnocchi-Viani was explicit in his reply:

> if general associations do not provoke coalitions of the bosses, it is a sign that bosses do not fear them, a sign that privileged capital has nothing to fear from them, it is a sign, in short, that the cause of labor has nothing to hope for from them . . . Societies of trades and crafts are feared, on the other hand, precisely because they represent labor in the struggle with its adversary. And since struggle, from my viewpoint, is what best builds solidarity, thus I believe the societies of trades and crafts, more than any other organizational form, enhance the development of solidarity. It is not, after all, physical closeness which makes one worker support another, but rather the development of their reciprocal interests as workers.[13]

Indeed, when the Italian Socialist Party was founded at Genoa in 1892, it took the name "Italian Workingmens' Party" (Partito Italiano dei Laboratori), did not even add the title "Socialist" to its name until 1893, and kept the organization by trade and craft until 1895, differing from the Italian Workers Party only in admitting political associations on the same basis as trade groups.[14] Thus the organizational form adopted by the Chambers, while perhaps unusual to an outside obersver, was in keeping with an unbroken tradition of labor organization for the last fifty years in Italy.

If the traditions of the workers' movement were clear on what the preferred form of organization was to be, they were rather more ambiguous on the aims of that organization and its ultimate role. Although it was clear by the time of the foundation of the Chambers in the 1890's that a workers' organization must be concerned with the general problems

of the working class, the previous history of the movement had offered a number of different versions of what those general problems might be and how they might be confronted. The two areas where discussion was most frequent and revealing were in the recurring discussions over the problem of "politics"--or more properly, the discussion of the public role which the organizations should play--and in the frequent concern with the nature and purpose of the educational and cultural programs.

Of the two, the problem of politics seemed to arouse the most fervor, leading to innumerable arguments, battles, and secessions. In the vision of the Boldrini brothers, which prevailed at the annual congresses of the Workers' Societies from 1853 through 1860, "politics" were something to be avoided; avowedly apolitical, the societies were to concern themselves only with the problems of the workers. By "politics," the brothers meant the pronouncements by workers on public problems, and their involvement in elections to Parliament. Their vision of politics was, as Papa comments, a "qualunquistic" one: they understood it only as the spirit of division, party animosity, and clientelism.[15] Their sentiments were shared and even more strongly supported by Giuseppe Boitani, the secretary of the Workers' Society of Turin, editor of the Gazzetta del Popolo of Turin, and close friend and admirer of Camillo Cavour, the Piedmontese statesman under whose aegis unity was achieved. Boitani was concerned not only that workers attention might be divided between the practical projects that he supported, such as the mutual aid programs and the consumer cooperative which he initiated in 1854, and the vaguer political concerns which he opposed; he was particularly worried that workers might be attracted by the ideas

of Mazzini, a prospect that frightened him and Cavour. An editorial in the Gazzetta del Popolo, typical in its tone of admonition and paternalism, gives a good picture of the sentiments of Boitani. After listing the numerous benefits of the Piedmontese constitution, the editorial concluded,

> Do you know, oh workers, what all this is? It is Liberty. Let it do its work. Occupy yourselves with mutual aid, and instruct yourselves; and when liberty is threatened it certainly will not be Signor Mazzini's League of the People which rises to defend it, but the entire nation. Signor Mazzini and his party want to take you beyond liberty. Do you know what you will find there? Oh unhappy men! Only your undoing, and the ruin of the Fatherland.[16]

In Boitani's views, it is clear that the apoliticism, while apparently designed to safeguard the workers from the dangers of division, was also designed to safeguard the political status quo from any intervention from below.

But it would be a mistake to think of Boitani's views--which were shared by the Boldrinis in many ways--as being solely apologetic for the status quo. The workers' movement existed in part at the sufferance of the Piedmontese government, and only the benevolent neutrality of the government ensured that the workers' associations would not be dissolved as subversive. Though mutual aid and education, consumer cooperatives and cheap credit were not panaceas for workers' problems, they did provide tangible benefits to some, and these benefits would assuredly be lost if the government were to dissolve an organization and seize its assets.

At the same time, the benefits were limited to some workers rather than all; and it was with this problem that Mazzini and his followers began their analysis of the "social question," an analysis which was to end in the drive for an increased public role for the workers' societies.

Mazzini's interest in the workers' movement did not really begin until his exile in London, where he became acquainted with the English workers' movement.[17] Even then, he maintained his earlier view that material progress was strictly tied to moral progress, and this meant that Italian workers had first to support the movement for independence and unity; only then, he argued would they achieve an environment suitable for the resolution of their problems.[18] Just as Marx would argue in The Jewish Question that the solution to racial problems lay in the reordering of society along socialist lines, Mazzini believed that the solutions to workers' problems--indeed, to the problems of all Italians--lay in the creation of a unified, independent republic based on universal suffrage and the principle of association.[19] Before 1860, therefore, the Mazzinians in Genoa and other workers' societies limited their actions to enlisting worker support for the unification of Italy. Though they were largely voted down by the moderates, the Mazzinians made their first gain at the Congress of Novi, in September 1859. With Lombardy recently liberated from the Austrians, and revolts underway in Tuscany and the Romagna, the Congress was suffused with patriotic excitement, an excitement fed by a surprise visit from a delegation of Milanese workers, only recently freed from Austria. After voting to hold the next Congress in Milan, a motion was made that the societies open a subscription for Garibaldi's Million Rifle Fund. Despite the warnings that this was a political act, the Congress overrode its more moderate members and even the Boldrini brothers split, with Stefano opposed and Vincenzo supporting the successful favorable vote.[20]

For the Mazzinains, then, the public role of the workers' societies could and should be considerable enlarged, a point that was made

even more forcefully at the next two Congresses: at Milan in October, 1860, and Florence, September, 1861. The Mazzinian delegates were not specifically concerned that workers should enter politics to defend their interests, but rather that workers should join the general popular movement for the resurgence of Italy--a perception which was to have some profound limitations on the public role of the societies later, as will be discussed below.

There was no doubt that the Congress of Milan thought of the unification as a great popular movement. In his opening address, the chairman Riccardo Sineo (representing the workers' society of Mondovi) spoke favorably of the Five Days of Milan in 1848, and argued that history of the workers' societies showed that democracy was no peril to the social order. To wild applause, he concluded,

> After the miracles our volunteers have accomplished these last two years, nothing great should be attempted without the people. With the people, all that is noble and sublime may be achieved.[21]

It followed therefore that the people, including the workers, were entitled to participate in the life of the new state, and two delegates promptly proposed that Congress vote a motion favoring universal manhood suffrage. Although this was much too radical a change, the Congress did vote by a two-thirds majority a motion to the effect that "The Congress moves that the electoral laws be reformed so that the working class may have its just part in the nomination of [Parliamentary] Deputies," thereby committing the societies to a new public stance.[22]

In Florence the following year the victory of the Mazzinian viewpoint was even more complete, and more convincing, since this was the first truly national congress. Over 125 societies were represented, spread geographically from Palermo in the South to Como on the Swiss

border.[23] The Permanent Commission, which was charged with drawing up the agenda for the Congress, voted to exclude all "political questions" from discussion, a motion commended by the moderately conservation La Nazione of Florence. Speaking for the middles classes under whose aegis unification had been achieved, the newspaper argued that

> From the moment in which the mutual aid associations are converted into political associations, their nature will be falsified, they will fail in their aims, and their prosperity will be compromised by diffidence and suspicions, which are the death of charity.[24]

Typically, the editors thought of traditional social relations based on deference and obedience; the associations were charitable groups, not workers' organizations. Workers' associations had no public role, aside from approving and supporting the work of unification as it was accomplished. Their activities were to receive and distribute charity, and to act as organizers of mutual philanthropy. In reply, the Mazzinian La Nuova Europa of Livorno pointed to a new public role for the societies which would accord with the new Italy:

> We beg you to remember that our associations, born and raised in the shadow of liberty . . . understood the idea of mutual aid in terms of a vast popular brotherhood which would see to the material and moral betterment of the poorest and most numerous class, making ample use of the rights of free political discussion sanctioned by the constitution.[25]

But even so mild an assertion of political rights badly divided the delegates. Mazzinian delegates almost immediately challenged the permanent commission's decision and opened the discussion of whether or not the societies should take stands and become political associations. In the bitter debate that followed, 101 of the 205 delegates stalked out of the hall, led by the older Piedmontese societies who feared the discussion was nothing more than an attempt to "capture the societies for Mazzini. Those remaining eventually voted 74 to 30 in favor of a motion which read that the

> Congress declares that political questions are not extraneous to its members when they recognize them as being germane to their growth and development.[26]

The Mazzinian triumph was complete. Following the passage of this motion, the remaining members of the Congress voted for national unification of the societies, for universal suffrage, compulsory secular education, and voted to adopt Mazzini's The Duties of Man as the work "best adapted for the highest type of popular education."[27]

Even at the cost of a schism, the societies seemed committed to a new form of public action. But they were not yet to become full fledged political associations. In an editorial written for La Nuova Europa after the Congress, Franco Bartolomeo Savi argued that workers should not be involved in politics if by "politics" one meant "the academic discussion of facts, administrative arrangements, and the affairs of cabinets." On the other hand,

> If you understand politics as I do, as the great manifestations of national consciousness which bring vigor and force to the soul of the people . . . if by politics you mean those acts which are inspired by love of country, tending to constitute the nation, to raise the people from blind instrument to the dignity of a free citizen, then I believe these politics must be professed not only by individual workers but by their associations [as well].[28]

In other words, Savi saw the workers' associations as part of the broader movement of regeneration which the Mazzinians associated with the new age of the nation; he urged politics as a means of moral activity, as distinguished from the merely material aims of mutual aid, cooperation, and credit. But he was not prepared to admit the workers' societies to full integration into the political life of the new state.

As the leader of the Mazzinian movement, the history of the Genoese Workers Confederation exemplified something of what Savi's ideas meant in practice. After the Tenth Congress of the Workers'

Societies in Parma in 1863, when it was clear that the schism could not be healed between moderates and Mazzinians, the Genoese Workers Confederation became the de facto center of the Mazzinian movement, and acted for the societies between Congresses.[29]

The Genoese Workers Confederation continued the public action of support for the completion of the Risorgimento. As they had since their foundation, they raised funds, organized protests, and recruited volunteers. Beginning in the 1850's, they had organized an annual target-shooting contest, in order to have a supply of trained marksmen ready to serve in a volunteer army of national liberation.[30] They raised funds and recruited volunteers for Garibaldi's expeditions to the Trent in the war against Austria in 1866, as well as his abortive attempts to liberate Rome from the French which ended in disaster at Aspromonte in 1862 and Mentana in 1867. Many of the member societies were active in supporting abortive insurrections in Venetia (an Austrian province until its liberation in 1866) and Felice Dagini, secretary of the waiters' society, went to help organize insurrection.[31] The Confederation organized public demonstrations of protest against the government for its conclusion of a treaty with the Papacy (thereby unnecessarily legitimizing it); for moving the capital from Turin to Florence in 1862 (thereby, it was felt, abandoning the goal of Rome as the capital of united Italy); for its military bungling in the defeats at land and sea of Custoza and Lissa at the hands of Austria in 1866; and protested to the Swiss government against its decision to expel Mazzini.[32] The Confederation also actively promoted candidates for the municipal council (a largely symbolic gesture, since they were resolutely anti-Masonic and thus refused to join electoral coalitions

with other radical and anti-clerical groups); however, they refused to participate in national elections as a sign of protest against the refusal of Parliament to concede universal suffrage.[33]

In other words, the Confederation attempted to recruit and mobilize workers for the great process of moral regeneration of national political life which they saw at hand. Workers' problems were to be solved by concentrating on the problems of national unity, and the Confederation was quick to condemn anything which interferred with that process. They still clung to the faith which animated those who believed that unification would automatically improve the lot of workers, and that if the improvement had not come immediately it was because the work of unification was not yet complete.[34]

For example, a dispute arose in Genoa early in 1866 between the porters and the city regarding the wage rates which the city set. The Confederation appointed a commission to intervene with the mayor and lend support to the porters, an action approved by the Confederation Assembly in February "with applause and words of encouragement." But in June, when the porters proposed holding a public meeting to air their grievances and request public support, the assembly voted down the proposal, arguing that "the porters must not come forth during these times with demonstrations which are not appropriate." The difference in attitude was clearly caused by the war against Austria which had begun in mid-June, and it was equally clear that the crusade to liberate Venetia was more important than the proters' grievances.[35]

As late as 1883 the belief in the primacy of political action continued to animate the Confederation, with disastrous results for its future as a workers' organization. In that year, Mazzinian interests and those of the workers diverged sharply during a strike by the

engineers and firemen of the Rubattino Steamship Company. With the death of Rubattino earlier that year, the company had passed into the hands of the newly formed trust, the Italian Navigation Company (Compagnia Italiana di Navigazione, or CIN), which had promptly provoked a strike by its attempts to "rationalize" the management. The Confederation called a meeting to discuss the strike and some members pointed out that they would be better able to support the strike and future ones like it if all the workers in Genoa were members of a single organization with strike funds--

> . . . in other words, a Chamber of Labor. Ottone and Galletto [the two leading members of the consulate which headed the confederation] said that such an action, purely worker in its origins would be dangerous for the Mazzinian cause if supported, and would be moving into the field of socialism.[36]

Another delegate suggested that the real problem was that the CIN was almost an emanation of the government, receiving as it did massive subsidies and favorable treatment; therefore there was a political problem facing the Confederation. The CIN existed only because there was a governmental system extant which sustained privilege and upheld inequities. The fault lay not with "the management, nor the owners, nor Depretis [then Prime Minister] because one privilege sanctioned and sustained all the others: against it--the monarchy--it was necessary to battle."[37] The membership voted to sustain the continuing struggle against the monarchy rather than support the strike, and the strike rapidly collapsed. Long-range political goals--essential to the larger goals of the Mazzinian movement--clearly took precedence over immediate social or economic needs. The historian of the Confederation, ardent partisan though she is of Mazzini and the organization, titles the section of her book dealing with the period after the strike, "The Decadence of the Confederation."[38]

These examples illustrate a basic dilemma of the Mazzinian organizations: how were they to keep their specific political identity and remain workers' organizations, dedicated to meeting the needs of workers, simultaneously? As long as political issues were clear--no one would oppose the unification of Italy, or the liberation of Rome, Venice or Trent from the foreigner--the public role of the societies was clear. They were to support the Risorgimento and share in its benefits. But after 1870, when the Risorgimento was complete, the benefits did not materialize, and the disillusionment with the new state which had begun in the 1860's was complete. The Mazzinian response was to assert that the Risorgimento had been betrayed by the failure to develop a republic based on universal suffrage, and hence the workers' associations had to share in the general work of moving toward that end.[39]

Nevertheless, as the example of the Rubattino strike shows, continuing to push forward with solely Mazzinian political approaches, concentrating on agitation, speeches, commemerations and eventually elections--as some of the animus toward the new state gradually began to calm--ran the risk of having the organization lose its distinctiveness as a workers' organization, and simply becoming one more political grouping. This is in fact what happened to the Confederation during the period after the Rubattino strike: its membership became increasingly dominated by political societies--the process had begun with the admission of the Society of Veterans of Battles for the Fatherland (Società Reduci Patria Battaglie) in 1867--and by the late 1880's it had become little more than an electoral committee for the Republican Party.[40] The alternative would have been to concentrate on issues

which seemed more directly workers issues--the high cost of living, low wages, and the like--but as Ottone and Galletto had pointed out, this would have been dangerous for the Mazzinian cause, since it ran the risk of having the COG become a workers' organization rather than a distinctively Mazzinian one.

The new public role that Mazzinians urged, and which the Confederation attempted to put into practice thus created several problems for the workers' organizations. After the abortive collapse of an insurrectionary attempt in early 1870, the Mazzinians abandoned insurrection as a method and concentrated on other forms of political action.[41] But at the same time, they refused to admit the legitimacy of the existing political system, boycotting national elections and calling for the abolition of the monarchy. In the 1860's and 70's the Confederation attempted to confine its public action to enlisting support for worker's causes but at crucial moments--such as the porters' agitation or the Rubattino strike--they refused to subordinate the Mazzinian goals to "purely worker" ones. To make such submission would have been to admit that Mazzini was wrong and that more than unification was necessary to solve workers' problems. But if they admitted this, they would cease to become Mazzinians, and thereby lose their larger political and social program. There were many leaders, of which Osvaldo Gnocchi-Viani was one of the more famous, who chose this course and left the organization voluntarily or involuntarily.[42] The other course was to focus more on political action; this method kept them distinctively Mazzinian, but caused the Confederation when it adopted it to lose its distinctiveness as a workers organization and simply become one more political party. Either way, it was clear that the Mazzinian response was not to be the

appropriate one for workers' organizations looking for a definition of their public role.

The First International in Italy, the only serious competitor for the allegiance of workers at this time, ran some of the same risks. It too shared the assumption that only a political solution was available for the problems of workers. That solution was insurrection. The clearest statement of the principle came in the deliberations of the Bologna Congress of March, 1873. Under conditions of great difficulty--the Congress was moved from Mirandola to avoid a police raid, was raided twice during its three days of deliberations and nearly a third of the delegates were eventually arrested--the Congress did settle on a declaration of principles and means for realizing them. After outlining motions in favor of atheism, federalism, anarchism, and collective property, it went on to announce that it believed only in insurrection as a means:

> The Congress declares that it does not recognize any political action outside of that which, in concert with all the proletarians of the world, leads directly to the actualization of these principles, rejecting therefore any cooperation or complicity with the political intrigues of the bourgeoisie, no matter how democratic or revolutionary they declare themselves to be.[43]

What the International proclaimed was a declaration of independence from Mazzini and other radical democrats in as forceful a way as possible. Mazzini's system rested on a belief in God; the International declared itself atheist. Mazzini believed in the association of capital and labor; the International called for a form of class warfare. Mazzini was the prophet of the national state; the International called for local, federal, and regional autonomy. In a larger sense, Mazzini and his followers recognized a special role for the workers' movement, but it was a role which the movement was to play for the good of the

people as a whole, and Mazzini was too quick to denounce workers' actions which might endanger the cause. The growth of the International was instead a declaration of independence for the workers' movement.

But what was the new role which the workers organizations were to play? Like the Mazzinians, the International expected the organization to be educative; to disseminate the principles on which the International rested, and to achieve them as it could. In practice this meant the organization of resistance, but not for the economic improvement of the workers so much as to prepare them for the struggle. It was to be symbolic of the larger action going on; hence the normal use of the terms "resistance and the class struggle" together, implying that they were largely synonomous. The most important public role of the organizations was to lead in the insurrection, not for patriotic purposes--as had been the case with the eternal Mazzinian conspiracies--but for the cause of the people, which was no longer identified with that of the nation.

The model for that insurrection was to be the Paris Commune, which had stirred enormous interest in Italy, as it had all over Europe. While the bien-pensants trembled and governments redoubled their security efforts, radicals and deomcrats of most stripes gave the Commune their support at first, seeing in it the continuation of the struggle of the French Republic against Prussian militarism. As in 1848, Paris once again seemed to be in the vanguard. The continuity with the tradition of 1848 was highlighted by Garibaldi, who gathered a force of volunteers once more and rode off to the Vosges. Former veterans, augmented by those who might have wished to accompany him before but were unable to do so, joined in the struggle, and many stayed on to fight in the Commune when Garibaldi returned to Caprera. Even after he had left,

Garibaldi continued to offer public statements of support for the Commune and for the International, widely--though mistakenly--presumed to be the real leaders of the Commune. Perhaps his most notable phrase (judging from the frequency with which it appeared on the mastheads of newspapers thereafter) was his remark, "The International is the rising sun of the future."[44] Whether exalted as a successful socialist experiment, praised for the leadership of the First International, or simply viewed as the revolt of the people "oppressed by the privileges of the caste which sustains the monarchy," as Il Gazzettino Rosa of Milan put it,[45] the Commune enjoyed general support among the various leftist leaders in Italy--the remains of the "united front" of 1848 and the "action party" of the Risorgimento. Only Mazzini opposed it, and his opposition suddenly cut him off from a great deal of popular support and cost his followers the leadership of Italian workers.[46]

The support of the Commune was based more on "a generic humanitarian ideal of the struggle for the redemption of the disinherited"[47] than it was any clearly reasoned commitment. Andrea Costa, one of the founders of Italian socialism and the first socialist deputy has left in his memoirs a glimpse of the excitement which the commune inspired:

> Remember, oh comrades, 1871 and '72? How we tremblingly awaited the latest news from Paris; how we searched for the statutes of that potent International Association; how we read with anxiety what even the newspapers of the adversaries wrote about it? The rapidity with which the new spirit was propagated in Italy was marvelous . . .

As Costa went on to comment, their "new spirit" was more instinctive than reasoned, and based on little or no knowledge of what the International or the Commune was really like:

> We threw ourselves into that movement pushed more by a desire to break with the past that oppressed us and did not correspond . . .

> to our aspirations, rather than a conscious understanding of what we wanted. We felt that the future was there; time would determine which ideas would inspire us.

This kind of commitment was what Mazzini had inspired during the heroic days of the Risorgimento, but which his opposition now cost him and his movement:

> Mazzini above all alienated the warmest and most generous part of the new generation, raised under the new science, by raging against the fallen Commune, and attributing the misfortune of France for the most part of materialistic theories.[48]

The commitment to political action along the lines which Mazzini had inspired is not surprising when we remember that many of the followers of the International were former followers of Mazzini as well. As much as the formal doctrines differed, on the day-to-day level Mazzinians, democrats, and Internationalists often cooperated with one another as friendly adversaries all sharing the goal of the "emancipation of the workers," rather than deadly enemies, as much recent research has shown.[49]

The International shared with the Mazzinians and the Garibaldians the feeling of profound anger and revulsion at the outcome of the Risorgimento. What set it apart during the ten years or so of its effective existence (roughly 1870-1880) was its interpretation of the Risorgimento as a class phenomenon, rather than holding to the notion that it was morally and politically incomplete. This interpretation led to its total condemnation of the world of official Italy. As the Bologna Congress put it,

> Between us and the State, between us and the bourgeoisie and its government, between us and their immorality, their violence, their privileges, their cabals and monopolies, there is absolute incompatibility.[50]

This did not necessarily mean outright condemnation of Mazzini, but merely the clear separation of the cause of the people from that of the

nation. The Fascio Operaio of Bologna, for example, called a special meeting on the evening after Mazzini's death March, 1872, and ordered the banner of the Fascio to be veiled in black for a month as a sign of mourning.[51] But when they met later that year to discuss what their role would be in the upcoming festival of August 8 (which marked the rising against the Austrians), they voted an address which asserted that

> if the privileged classes have reason to celebrate the eighth of August, the workers do not have these reasons; on the contrary, they have the right to protest against the bad faith of the privileged classes, who take no account of the sacrifices and sufferings of the people whom they have exploited to their own advantage.

After listing instances of betrayal of the workers by the ruling classes, they concluded that the Fascio

> while it remembers with sorrow the dead of August 8, will not participate in the commemorative festival. And it sends a fraternal salute to the German [i.e., Austrian] workers.[52]

But the success of the International as an organization depended on more than the repudiation of patriotic rhetoric and the harnessing of sympathies for the Commune; they had to demonstrate the success of their views or, like the Mazzinians, be caught between "conspiratorial immobilism or revolutionary messianism (two views which were strongly present and negatively influenced the action of the International)," in the opinion of one historian favorably disposed toward the International.[53] This meant the staging of a successful insurrection. Accordingly, plans were laid and a Committee for the Social Revolution was formed, to harness the latent radicalism which the International was sure existed.

The insurrection itself, planned to begin on August 8, 1874, was a miserable failure everywhere. Although planning had extended from

Bologna, which was to be the center of the agitation, through Tuscany, the Marches, Umbria, Rome, Naples, and Puglia, and arms and ammunition had been smuggled in from Switzerland, it never even approached success. A preliminary meeting at Villa Ruffi near Rimini on August 2 was surprised by the police and all the participants were arrested. Andrea Costa, head of the Committee for the Social Revolution was arrested on August 5, and even Bakunin was forced to flee disguised as a priest.[54]

Over the next few years, there were several more attempts made, culminating in a final glorious failure in 1877. The young Errico Malatesta and Carlo Cafiero, a pugliese aristocrat who was an early adherent of the International, led a band of about thirty would-be revolutionaries to San Lupo in the province of Benevento, south of Naples, and for a few days occupied a pair of villages in the Matese mountains, earning the name "banda del Matese." But suspicious local peasants declined to join and instead betrayed them to the police, who arrested the entire group five days later.[55]

By then it was clear that insurrection, the "social liquidation" which the Internationalists frequently looked forward to, was to be postponed indefinitely, condemned to failure by the apathy of their potential followers. The incompetence of their organizers, and the ferocious repression of the government. What saved the International from the fate of the Mazzinians was first of all their public demonstrations of solidarity for their accused, as well as the massive publicity at the trials, which could and often did turn an unsuccessful act into a triumph of propaganda. The organizations of the Fascio Operaio also took up the active cause of the workers in a way that the Mazzinians had not. First, the Fascio Operaio, while maintaining the International's

belief in the primacy of insurrection, devoted significantly more time and effort to organizing "resistance and the class struggle"--strikes and demonstrations against employers, negotiations, collection of statistics on the job market and the economy, and the like. Second, it developed an organizational strength which allowed it to be more directly involved with workers' day-to-day economic problems.[56]

When severe government repression fell upon the International in 1877-79--at one point, almost every major leader and most minor ones were in jail, on trial, or had fled abroad to avoid these fates--a process of critical rethinking of alternatives about the public role of the workers' organizations began. As a consequence, one branch of the International--the North Italian Federation (Federazione dell'Alta Italia)--began to draw apart and, guided by Enrico Bignami of La Plebe (the small paper in Lodi which remained faithful to Marx in the split) and Osvaldo Gnocchi-Viani, the ex-organizer for the Genoese Workers' Confederation, began to move toward the position that workers' movement needed to demonstrate and retain its independence, but that immediate political action was not necessarily the only means of accomplishing that independence.

The different public role which the North Italian Federation envisaged was described at their congress of Milan in February, 1877, in an address by Gnocchi-Viani on the means for achieving the triumph of socialism. After outlining what he called the "experimentalist" position, which saw socialism as something continuously unfolding rather than created ex novo at a given moment, he went on to argue that all methods which led to the final approach of socialism should be acceptable; revolution, as conceived by the anarchists, was only one of these

methods. This had important consequences:

> Revolutions are not improvised, nor are they made at a prearranged time; it is necessary to wait, either by choice or out of necessity. And in the meantime, if socialism does not give a hand to other means, if it does not come with other means to the aid of the classes who suffer the most, it risks benumbing itself, losing faith in itself, leaving the way open for our astute adversaries to throw themselves in the midst of the suffering classes, deluding them with this or that remedy, acquiring their sympathy and hindering our own work.[57]

Gnocchi-Viani thus pinpointed an important problem: the danger that a revolutionary rhetoric would create expectations that could not be fulfilled, and the failure to live up to these expectations might leave workers easy prey for whoever promised immediate improvements. He then followed with a comparison which suggested the route that the workers movement should follow, and the strategy which would most likely lead to the triumph of socialism:

> Socialism . . . because it must become everything, must be everywhere. Christianity, if it was in fact everything, was so because it accepted every means; it wanted to remake man and his times and so it took charge of man at the cradle and did not even abandon him at the door to his tomb, because it wanted to follow him into an imaginary other world; and to remake the times it became, according to events and circumstances, propagandist, philosopher, warrior, conspirator, artist, poet, revolutionary, everything; and today, even though it has been reduced to a cadaver it impresses us with its monuments which defy the centuries. Why should not socialism adopt--not the same method--but a similar one, adapted to our times?[58]

Gnocchi-Viani was calling for the independence of the workers movement but not predicating that independence on insurrection as the International had. Instead it was to be open to any method that served the needs of its members. Rather than offering a moral or political alternative, it was, like Christianity, offering a separate way of life, distinctive in all of its aspects including the public one.

This new attitude was carried over into the organization of the Italian Workers' Party (Partito Operaio Italiano), which was organized

in 1883 out of the North Italian Federation of the International with the leadership of the Milanese League of the Sons of Labor (Lega dei Figli del Lavoro), guided by the newspaper Il Fascio Operaio with the intellectual backing of Gnocchi-Viani, Enrico Bignami, and the young Filippo Turati, who acted as a "kind of intellectual reserve to which the Party could resort in times of material and moral necessity."[59] The new group grew rapidly and by 1885 had absorbed the Lombard Workers' Confederation (an organization similar to the Genoese Confederation but organized under the political auspices of radicals rather than Mazzinians) and had developed a close working relationship and common constitution with the General Association of Italian Peasants of Mantova, instigator of the first major agricultural strikes in modern Italian history.[60]

What set the Italian Workers' Party apart from the International or the Mazzinians was not its independence from other groups--this had after all been an important component of all worker groups from the Boldrinis on--but rather the way in which that independence was conceived. In its first appearance in the election of 1882, the new party put it this way:

> The difference between us and the other parties is this: when the electoral campaigns are over, and winners and losers alike return to the silence which characterized them before, the workers party instead will remain; since its members are humiliated and exploited every day, so every day it must return to the breach for the conquest of all that it awaits.[61]

Accordingly, it declared itself not to be a political party but a "social party," "absolutely extraneous to any political or religious party" but one which nonetheless "will participate in the struggles of public life as a distinct class which works for its own emancipation."[62] The same Congress which approved the constitution agreed that any deputies

or municipal counselors elected by the party would be workers, and voted to pay them a salary (Italian deputies were unapid at the time) in order to avoid putting them under any obligation to whoever might offer to pay their expenses. They also agreed that active participation in provincial and local elections would be an important part of their activities.[63]

The difference was in the relatively limited role political action would play--it was to be one method of meeting workers' needs, rather than the method, in contrast to the Mazzinians with their emphasis on the Republic and unity or the International with its focus on revolution. Both these latter groups had felt that any other action would represent a betrayal of workers' true interests and had denounced those who advocated other solutions as illusionists, seducing the workers away from the true goal. By contrast, the Italian Workers Party placed its faith in the organized will of the working class; the test of fidelity to interests was not commitment to one overarching goal, but the class composition of the organization. The party's constitution limited membership to "manual laborers of both sexes, from the city or the countryside, the disinherited wage earners directly dependent on bosses, entrepreneurs, merchants, and capitalists." The public role of this organization was to "organize workers by trade and federate them in the name of the right to survive"; this organization was to "represent their class in its struggle against the privileged class as much in the economic field as the moral and political ones."[64] All actions were legitimate, provided they were initiated and maintained by the workers themselves; an organization composed exclusively of workers would be incapable of betraying workers' interests.

Though in the future disputes could and did arise over the appropriateness of any given action or program, the Italian Workers Party left to the Chambers an important patrimony: the notion that a full and active, modest but continuing public role in defense of workers' interests was not only legitimate but necessary for any workers' organization.

Like the history of attitudes toward the public role of the organization, the problems of culture seemed to go through a three fold-evolution. The societies of the Piedmontese period spent a major part of their congresses debating the content and purpose of education; indeed, the two aims of the movement were stated to be "mutual aid and mutual instruction." The Mazzinians reaffirmed the commitment to education as an important part of the workers movement, and the POI carried the tradition on. Only the International, with its activist emphases, tended to downgrade education per se, preferring to stress propaganda and the educational aspects of action. But this common interest did not rest on common views of the content and purpose of education, and debates were strong over what the content of "mutual instruction" should be, and what kind of culture the workers programs should be made to transmit.

For the Piedmontese societies, education was in and of itself a good. Heavily influenced by the enlightened and rationalist ideas which were the common currency of democrats all over Europe, the members of these societies did not question the efficacy of that education of any sort. All the congresses passed motions asking the state to establish compulsory elementary education, in several cases asking the communes to provide free books and supplies for the poorer students as

well. Equally often, the Congresses prepared motions asking for evening elementary schools, technical and vocational schools, and even Latin schools (i.e., the predecessor to the lycée). But this activity was primarily aimed at the education of members' children. And while this was regarded as an important activity--the Asti Congress of 1853 provided prizes and recognition for the fathers of good students, and the Vigevano Congress of 1856 approved motions which set up procedures for the censuring of members who neglected their children's education and approved a kind of secular godparent who would be responsible for the education of the child in the event of parents' death--the societies' main interests lay in the education of their members, which they expected to accomplish without state aid and support.[65]

When the societies met to discuss the content of educational programs, there was general consensus that these programs were to appropriate the fruits of culture for the workers, and there was a heavily patriotic tone to this culture. At the Congress of Genoa (1855), for example, it was agreed to offer a prize for the best summary of Italian (not Piedmontese, and this was five years before unification) history for workers, and the congress further approved a memorial to the Congress of Italian Writers

> to remind them how much the working classes have contributed to the advancement and progress of Italy, especially during the communes of the Middle Ages, and urge them to pay the tribute of recognition to the workers, consecrating their pens and minds to the writing of a summary of history which would make known the vicissitudes of the <u>patria comune</u> and promote affection for it.[66]

The inference to be drawn from this activity is that workers expected their societies to offer them the chance to participate in, and be recognized as a legitimate part of, Italian national culture. They thus shared in the common nineteenth century assumption that "culture"

was a received body of ideas and values which other classes had and which they wished to share. The evening schools and libraries which they sponsored furthered these ambitions, and the heavy emphasis on the education of their children suggests that they, even more than the members, were to have an equal opportunity with the wealthier classes at this participation. It is important to note that this did not necessarily imply the acceptance of subordination of workers, as later socialist and communist historians have tried to suggest;[67] the national culture was nearly as foreign to the middle classes as it was to the workers in the 1850's.

The Genoese Workers Confederation, the strongest of the Mazzinian organizations, did not differ notably from the Piedmontese societies in the content of its cultural and educational programs. As befits a society which placed a much higher value on the moral emancipation of the worker (as opposed to his mere material interests, such as higher wages) it spent more time and effort on its evening schools, libraries, and the like, and these were a great success; long after the Confederation had been reduced to a Republican electoral society and completely overshadowed by the Genoese Chamber of Labor, such classes drew hundreds of students. Not until the Fascist repression of 1925 were the workers' classes ended.[68] But the subjects remained the same: basic classes in literacy and arithmetic, history and political economy for a more sophisticated political education, and classes in fencing and hygiene for the whole man. All of these served to instruct, in the Mazzinian phrase, "the rights and duties of man and citizen," but they would have been no different for peasants, petit-bourgeois, or the middle or upper classes.[69]

The International attempted to change matters by de-emphasizing the educational activities, deriding them as typical examples of the political quietism which characterized all their competitors. Instead, they stressed the educational values of strikes and insurrections, arguing that workers need to learn by action rather than the "sentimental simpering" of the Mazzinians. Taken to its logical extreme, this viewpoint led to the notion of "propaganda by the deed"--the assasinations and terrorism of one branch of the movement in the 1890's and 1900's. But their actions were designed to demonstrate in practice the kind of human redemption which the International looked for, and to underline the point that just as socialism would be more than a replacement of the bourgeois ruling class by the workers, so the new workers' culture had to be more than just the extension to them of bourgeois and national culture.[70]

This new view of workers' culture suggested that workers should expect, indeed demand, that their education be relevant to them, that it teach them how to manipulate their environment and deal with the problems which they faced in their daily lives. The most articulate exponent of this view was Gnocchi-Viani, and in the manifold activities which earned him the title of "papà delle Camere del Lavoro" he transmitted this view to the workers who formed and led the Chambers. His views were a natural corollary to his comparisons between socialism and Christianity; if socialism and the workers movement (terms which were nearly synonomous in his mind) were not just political attitudes, but a whole new way of life, then the cultural programs should reflect that fact. He thus rejected attempts to introduce general culture into the programs, calling instead for a content which would be directly

applicable to the problems of workers and their movement. This new view is neatly contained in a series of letters between Gnocchi-Viani and Alfredo Casati, a young worker who later became one of the leaders of the Italian Workers Party, in 1883-84. Casati had been writing poetry and sending it to Gnocchi-Viani for his comments, as well as for possible publication in La Plebe, for which Gnocchi-Viani was an editor. He urged Casati to abandon his poetry and put his intellect at the service of the workers' movement:

> You have a natural intellectual awareness; apply it to modern studies rather than classical; study the workers' question in all its social relationships and write in prose . . .. You could become a good writer and orator for your brothers in labor, but you'll have to change your ways. Aren't you aware that the great world movement of the proletariat is neither classical nor poetic, but eminently modern, prosaic, and economic? . . . You should dedicate yourself not to writing volumes, but pamphlets, or better still newspaper articles. The great propagandist today is the newspaper, and Victor Hugo was right when he said the newspaper has killed the book.[71]

When Casati persisted in writing poetry, Gnocchi-Viani continued to dissuade him, arguing that he could see the attraction of the muse, but this was neither the time nor the place for it:

> you continue to love the Muse, that Muse to whom I too have burned my grain of incense, and now repudiated, because it seemed, and still seems, that the epoch of our muse had not yet arrived.

He went on to argue that the Muse had its lures, but that workers as bright and skillful as Casati are rare; the time may come to write poetry, but now the work of intellectual leadership of the working class is more important. In particular need of support is another muse, that of science, and especially social science, which needs

> young intellects, virgin and blooming with life in order to conquer the army of prejudices, errors, and superstitions which still holds the field in the midst of society.[72]

Gnocchi-Viani, in effect, was arguing for a different kind of culture

than Casati had in mind--not the self-consciously "proletarian" poetry which his letters contained, but the study of workers problems and the possible solutions to them. Gnocchi-Viani agreed that there was nothing wrong with poetry per se; "it gives the color of enthusiasm to your convictions and embellishes your prose." But it was not what workers needed. Casati should take his muse

> and make a holocaust [of her] on the altar of the Proletariat, and consecrate your mind to the profound study of all the problems which constitute the Worker Question . . . I know that you love your class with a love capable of uncommon abnegation . . . [73]

Beyond this argument was the stress that Gnocchi-Viani placed on a distinctive kind of culture for workers. Gnocchi-Viani was dissatisfied with the growth of traditional cultural forms "proletarianized," as in the sentimental social novels of Edmondo de Amicis, or the "revolutionary" romantic poetry of Mario Rapisardi; the model for all of these had been the writings of Victor Hugo, particularly Les Miserables, which is often cited as an important source in the autobiographies of old militants.[74] Giving a radical content to old forms had made up an important part of the cultural activity of leaders like Carducci and Cavallotti; breaking the monopoly of culture held by the wealthier classes was nearly as important as breaking the monopoly of political rights to these leaders, and commitment to end the cultural monopoly was what animated the leaders of the Lega per l'istruzione del Popolo, and later the Università Popolare movement. As in the case of the public role of the workers' organizations, though, Gnocchi-Viani was pushing for independence; social science, the study of society, would lay the foundation necessary for workers to realize that the society was, as Vico had proclaimed, a human product capable of being humanly modified.

In Gnocchi-Viani's view, the new Italian Workers Party would by its very existence help move to that end by making workers conscious of their own strength. As he was later to argue in a pamphlet extolling the Chambers of Labor, when workers meet to discuss their position and take action, they learn that their problems are caused by society, rather than any fault in themselves.[75]

What emerges from Gnocchi-Viani's correspondence with Casati, in other words, is the basis for a change in the definition of "culture." In nineteenth century Italy, the measure of a cultured person would have been his familiarity with Greek, Latin, the writings of classical antiquity, and the best of modern philosophy and literature. To this culture--the transmission of which to workers was the aim of most popular educational programs--there can be seen dimly counterposed a vision of a new culture, one which could be measured by its familiarity with science and social science, with the technology of both the material and the social world: the new cultured man would not only know how machines worked, or how to use geometry or physics, but how to build and maintain organizations, how to expose false propaganda, how to elicit and use solidarity. The two views of culture are quite distinct: one sees it as art, a thing above and apart from the concerns of daily life; the other sees culture as part of daily living, as the active, conscious, and disciplined use of daily knowledge and experience for social ends, so that culture becomes, as Raymond Williams has written, "a way of life."[76]

It is not completely clear whether Gnocchi-Viani grasped all the implications of what he was suggesting; what is important is that such a vision, even dimly held, managed to link the inchoate new culture of the workers both with the traditions of the liberating power of social

and technical knowledge which went back to Diderot and the Encyclopedists on the one hand, and with the new positivist social science which dominated the Italian scene at the end of the nineteenth century, represented by men like Cesare Lombroso and Enrico Ferri in criminology, Pasquale Villari in history, Gaetano Mosca and Vilfredo Pareto in sociology and political science, and Umberto Cosmo and Arturo Foà in literature and linguistics. By appearing to be engaged in a common intellectual enterprise with such luminaries the workers movement seemed to become part of the larger social and intellectual movement of the future, with consequences that Paolo Spriano has pointed out:

> The figure of the socialist thus earned its intellectual citizenship, even if it had not entirely lost the air of a reckless and audacious extremism which had been associated with it since the first anarchist uprisings.[77]

In practice, the Italian Workers' Party did not embody this approach, but rather (in the mathematical sense) approached it as a limit. The interests of its membership seemed to lie more in developing the new areas of resistance and political action, and while education remained important--many of the sections carried as their title Circolo di Studi Economici-Sociali--it took second or third place in the allocation of resources. But the idea remained alive and was passed on into the movement of the Chambers, serving as prod, goal, and inspiration for years thereafter. As in the case of the public role of the organization, the accepted view became one that held the independence of the movement to be vitally important, and requiring that such independence be guaranteed by the class organization. Gnocchi-Viani's close associates remembered that two leitmotivs of his thought were the need to educate workers to their duties and missions, and the need for them to do it without being dependent on outside intellectuals.[78] Fulfillment

of these conditions would lay the ground for the development of this new culture. Like his French contemporary, Fernand Pelloutier, Gnocchi-Viani held that only these conditions would allow the voluntary assimilation by workers of the educational possibilities of their organizations; in turn, the new workers who would be animated by these new cultural visions would be the sole guarantee of the existence of an independent, self conscious workers movement that would be capable of fulfilling its historic mission.[79]

As the heterogeneous nature of the educational activities discussed in Chapter II suggests, however, the Chambers did not receive an unambiguous guide to the future from Gnocchi-Viani. Instead, the educational programs of the Chambers drew elements from all of the tradition in a way that suggests not a choice but an inability to choose. The self-help of the workers' societies, the patriotic values of the Mazzinians, the demonstrations and propaganda of the International, and in some ways even the new culture of Gnocchi-Viani all found a place in the educational activity of the Chambers of Labor. Tradition played an important role in the maintenance of these programs, but tradition did not offer a straightforward guide to what the ideal workers' educational program might be.

Tradition was clearer on some other points, though. By the beginning of the 1890's the previous history of the workers movement had established that in two important areas--organization and public activity--the independence of the workers movement based on class solidarity and organization by, of, and for workers themselves was a prerequisite to emancipation. The Chamber of Labor was thus a logical culmination of previous history; just as workers believed the Chamber

of Commerce was for the bourgeoisie, so the Chamber of Labor was first of all to be the representative of a class. (In fact, given the relatively circumscribed and bureaucratic duties of the Chamber of Commerce, the Chamber of Labor had much broader goals and visions; what is important is rather the perceptions by working class leaders of what the Chamber of Commerce was and what the new Chamber of Labor was to be.) As diverse as the various currents here discussed were, all had concurred that workers deserved their own representation.

The form of the organization had been established as well. From the pioneer workers' society of Vigevano through the Genoese Workers' Confederation, the Fascio Operaio, the Lombard Workers' Confederation and finally the Italian Workers' Party, all had adopted the form of a single organization for a given area, subdivided by sections organized by trade and craft.

The continuing debate over the public role of the workers' organizations had brought out another interesting point as well. Since all had agreed that the organization needed to focus on the general questions of interest to all workers, the debate had really focused on what those general questions were and when and how the organization should act on them. There was no doubt that the organization would take those actions when necessary; in other words, there was to be no division of labor between political action, economic work, and educational activity. In this the Chambers followed closely the heritage of the past, and not until the late 1890's did even the new Socialist Party attempt to work out an organizational division between the Chambers on the one hand and the Party on the other. In the meantime, the modest but varied public role which had been the heritage of the

Italian Workers Party (and which was in its turn the outcome of previous experience) was left to the Chambers to carry out.

Still another heritage accepted by the Chambers was the emphasis on the local or regional association rather than the national one. The formation of the workers' societies with their annual Congresses should logically have led to regional and even national organization, but it did not, primarily because of the opposition of the Boldrinis.[80] The Genoese Workers Confederation eventually became Ligurian in its organization, and the Mazzinians fought hard for, and eventually won, adherence of all the Societies to the Artisan Brotherhood (Fratellanza Artigiana). The Brotherhood might have become the beginnings of a true national organization, such as the French Federation des Bourses des Travail, but it was dominated by the Mazzinians, whose dominance was only achieved at the cost of a schism. National organization thus appeared less as an intrinsic necessity for workers than the design of a minority--as indeed it was for Mazzini.[81] As the example of Lasalle in Germany shows, though, even domination by one man was not necessarily fatal to national organization. Even for Mazzinians the problem was complicated by the untimely death of Mazzini, which came at the very time when unification had been achieved in the Artisan Brotherhood. His three most authoritative successors--Maurizio Quadrio, Aurelio Saffi, and Rederico Campahella--sharply disagreed with one another, and none was able to offer a convincing claim to be the legitimate interpreter of Mazzini's thought.[82]

The First International, though it drew members from widely scattered areas, was unable to construct a national workers' organization as well; more important, it was unwilling to. Though not all members thought of themselves as anarchists, nearly all thought of themselves

as "anti-authoritarian," and had seceded from the General Council precisely because they did not wish to be dictated to by Marx and Engels.[83] It followed that such an organization would not be interested in building a strong, national organization of workers; the whole concept was distasteful. Even the Italian Workers Party was hesitant on this point at first, owing in part to its internationalist origins. The result was that none of the groups who preceded the Chambers were capable of, or interested in, national organization, and the organization of workers on the local or provincial level had become the norm.

But the predecessors of the Chambers had been active on this level, with the consequence that few economic or social groups among the working class had been left untouched by one movement or another. The Piedmontese societies had begun as societies of skilled artisans in the larger towns and cities of Piedmont. The Mazzinians were strongest among the same social groups, but they added Genoa, Livorno, Florence, and the southern Romagna (around Ravenna) to their areas of influence. The International expanded socially, with many semi-skilled and unskilled workers joining the Fascio Operaio in Bologna and Florence, and it also influenced rural workers in many parts of the Po Valley. Geographically, the International was the first organization to have a fully national distribution. Not only were there sections in the major cities of Rome, Milan, Venice, Genoa, Florence, Bologna, Naples, and Palermo, but the documents of the International show an astonishing number of provincial centers and villages represented, at least briefly. It was most lasting in its impact, however, in the Po Valley, in an area that ran from Milan down the via Emilia Parma and Bologna to Ravenna, thence north to Mantova and back to Milan. Other important areas were

in Florence, Rome, and Naples. The Italian Workers Party did not significantly expand geographically--it was primarily restricted to Lombardy, Piedmont, and part of Venetia--but it did actively recruit all kinds of urban workers as well as significantly large numbers of rural workers.[84]

As a consequence, of the eighteen Chambers of Labor represented at their first Congress of the twentieth century (Milan, July 1-2, 1900), not a single one had had to be organized ex novo; all had a previous history of organization and experience to rely on.[85] But such diffusion also meant that each Chamber had a different heritage of organization and activity, and the common form could conceal major differences. Nonetheless the common form also simplified the transposition of a method from one area to another, and the Chamber for the first time allowed the development of the workers movement within a common matrix.

If tradition left some clear guides for the Chambers, it also left some unresolved problems, to which the Chambers were to be the new solutions. Like the Italian Workers Party, the Chamber was to represent the class in its general interest--as its social voice, as its cultural guide, as its club, and in its public actions. By organizing the whole class, it would avoid the suspicion that it was a partisan political grouping like the Mazzinians or the Internationalists. By being determinedly apolitical and concentrating on meeting the real needs of workers, the Chambers could avoid the internal disputes over tactics which had taken up so much of the precious history of the workers movement, as well as demonstrate their claim to be institutions of public utility. But there still remained the question of what the goals and ends of

the workers organizations were to be. Once the organization was established, once it began to win the self-respect of its members and the respect of the rest of society, where did it go? The Chambers, not being committed a priori to any long-range solutions--as their predecessors had been--could work out this problem in practice, with each Chamber free to seek its own solutions according to the needs and desires of its members. Like the Italian Workers Party, the Chambers could safely assume that the working class, once its destiny was in its own hands, would be incapable of betraying its own interests.

In one sense, then, the Chamber was an attempt to learn from the past. It followed the guidelines of organization and activity in the general interest of the class, established by its predecessors. But it did not see association as an end in itself, for obviously the association of workers did not necessarily guarantee their emancipation. The Chambers had learned from the Mazzinians that the emancipation of the worker was not to come about as part of the general emancipation of the people, but rather, as the International had suggested, through the achievements of workers themselves. The formulation was clear, but its application remained vague. What would happen if the organized working class could not agree on what constituted emancipation? Suppose there were dissidence within the Chamber; by what standards could arguments be compared and resolved? What if agreement were possible within a Chamber, but not between Chambers? Traditions and experience offered no guides here, without reverting to anarchist, radical, or republican standards of judgment. These were problems that the Chambers would have to resolve for themselves, as, equipped with the experience of the previous forty years, they were to set out in the continuing quest of the elusive emancipation of the worker.

FOOTNOTES--CHAPTER III

[1]This has not always been clear from older research, which has sometimes been too concerned with whether or not workers discovered the truth and/or errors of the Marxist way; the lack of comparative studies has been a further roadblock to understanding. Two works which manage to overcome these problems to give some understanding of the general context of the European socialist and workers movement, as well as weigh the relative importance of the four strains mentioned are George Lichtheim, A Short History of Socialism (New York, 1970), and Wolfgang Abendroth, A Short History of the European Working Class (New York, 1972).

[2]There is a short overview of the origins of mutual-aid in Piedmont in Emilio R. Papa, Origini delle Società Operaie (Milan, 1967), 9-38. Considerably more detailed on the period before 1848 is Gian Mario Bravo, Torino operaio; mondo del lavoro e idee sociali nell'età di Carlo Alberto (Turin, 1968). An excellent brief description of post-Napoleonic Italy touches occasionally on the mutual-aid societies is in Volume II of Giorgio Candeloro's Storia dell'Italia moderna, Dalla restaurazione alla rivoluzione nazionale. See esp. 9-74, 239-333.

[3]Neufeld, 57-66. Details on the number and extent of the societies are in Antonio Fossati, op. cit., 134. Before 1850, about 35% of the 48 known societies were in Piedmont. Between 1850 and 1860, the number of Piedmontese societies jumped from 17 to 98, the latter figure representing 62% of all Italian societies. It appears that workers' societies were not widely active in the south until after unification. See Alfonso Scirocco, "Associazioni democratiche e società operaie nel mezzogiorno dal 1860 ad Aspromonte," Archivio Storico per le Provincie Napoletane (1967).

[4]The Standard work on the Congresses of the workers' societies as well as those of the Mazzinians, the International, the POI, and others is Gastone Manacorda, Il movimento operaio Italiano (Rome, 1971), third edition. Though it briefly treats the Boldrini brothers, the fullest treatment is in Papa, 111-150. Manacorda's first edition was in 1953, and was only slightly revised for the 1963 and current editions.

There were meetings of workers' societies hosted by the Turinese one in 1850, 1851, and 1852, but the formal organization of the Congresses began at the suggestion of the Boldrini brothers. The first Congress was held at Asti in 1853, and they were annual through 1861, though sporadic thereafter.

[5]Manacorda, 60-61.

[6]Diffidence toward the government was based not so much on fears that the government would attack them directly as it was that governmental interference would gradually turn them away from workers' concerns

to provide a kind of cheering section for royal policy, as had happened at Turin, which, being the royal capital, was more directly subject to such interference. See Papa, 51-57.

[7]See Papa's discussion, 113-121.

[8]Cenno storico sulla associazione operaia di m.s. di Vigevano (Vigevano, 1884), as quoted by Papa, 117n-118n. The speaker was from Vigevano, which was the base of the Boldrinis.

[9]Genoa was the area where this form of organization was most highly developed in the Consociazione (later Confederazione) Operaia Genovese. The comment is particularly striking coming from Milan, where the craft association was much more common than in Piedmont or Liguria. Speech is from the original resume of the Congress, reproduced in Papa, 290. Cf. Manacorda, 71-76.

[10]The most complete study of the Confederation is the book by Bianca Montale, La Confederazione Operaia Genovese, 1853-1892 (Pisa, 1960). (Hereinafter cited as Montale, La COG). She is virtually alone in the field, and aside from occasional references in standard works such as those of Papa, Manacorda, and Nello Rosselli, Mazzini e Bakunin (Turin, 1967), other details come from her as well, such as in her Mazzini e le origini del movemento operaio italiano (Genoa, 1973). (Hereinafter Montale, Mazzini).

[11]The full resolution is in Pier Carlo Masini, ed., La Federazione Italiana della Associazione Internazionale dei Lavoratori: atti ufficiali, 1871-1880 (Milan, 1964), 65-66. (Hereinafter Masini, Atti). This documentary collection may be usefully supplemented with his analytical essay, "La Prima Internazionale in Italia; problemi di una revisione storiografica" in Il movimento operaio e socialista: bilancio storiografico e problemi storici (Milan, 1965).

[12]Elio Conti, Le origini del socialismo a Firenze (1860-1880) (Rome, 1950); see esp. 128-141. The Fascio had 14 sections and almost 2000 members in 1872 at its foundation; the Florentine Chamber remained about the same size until 1904 or so.

[13]Masini, Atti, 183. Taken from the stenographic records of the Congress. As a former member of the Genoese Workers Confederation, an ex-combatant with Garibaldi in France, an Internationalist and later "father of the Chambers of Labor," Gnocchi-Viani's opinion was an informed one and helped persuade the congress to vote unanimously.

[14]The best short description of this foundation is in Candeloro, Vol. VI, 376-384; 430-438.

[15]Papa, 68-69.

[16]Gazzetta del Popolo 15 January 1861, as quoted in Papa, 73. There is a general discussion of Boitani in pp. 60-77.

[17]Montale, Mazzini, 18.

[18]Ibid., 15-20.

[19]Of course the relative weight that he gave to these factors varied enormously over time with his perception of the political situation, and his voluminous writings inevitably are somewhat contradictory. For what follows I have relied principally on Caetano Salvemini, Giuseppe Mazzini (London, 1956), Rosselli, Manacorda, Papa, and Montale, supplemented usefully by Gugliemo Macchia, "Pensiero e azione sociale nel Mazzianismo dal 1860 al 1872," Rassegna Storica Toscana, XIII (1965), 79-101.

[20]Manacorda, 70-71; cf. the official summary in Papa, 238-251.

[21]As quoted in Manacorda, 72.

[22]Manacorda, 72-73. The debate over the motion is in the official summary reprinted in Papa, 303-308.

[23]See the list in Papa, 312-319.

[24]La Nazione, Florence, 26 September 1861; as quoted in Conti, 61.

[25]La Nuova Europa (Livorno) 9 October 1861. As quoted in Conti, 61-62. Emphasis mine.

[26]Papa, 327. The debate is reproduced in pp. 319-327.

[27]Manacorda, 77-88.

[28]Editorial in La Nuova Europa (Livorno) 23 October 1861. Although unsigned, it is virtually identical to the notes for an article which Montale reproduces in La COG, 32-33.

[29]Montale, La COG, 39-41. For the attempts to reunite, which foundered at Parma, see Manacorda, 83-93. Cf. Rosselli, 74-97. Savi was one of the leaders of the Confederation.

[30]Montale, La Cog, 47.

[31]Ibid., 40-54.

[32]Ibid., 39; 41; 49; 48; 53; 56; 61.

[33]Ibid., 49-51.

[34]Elio Conti quotes a 19-year old Garibaldian volunteer in 1859 as touching example of that faith; shaved by all classes: I have my mother and another brother. When I bade them farewell they wept, but I shed not a tear and begged them to be calm because after our victory things would be better; I asked them to pray for our success. I believe that I would die happy knowing my sacrifice would make so many people so happy. (p. 13).

[35]Montale, La Cog, 59. Minutes of meeting of June 19, 1866.

[36]Ibid., 131. Minutes of meeting of 9 November 1883. The entire episode is discussed in detail, 127-135. The delegate who suggested the "Chamber of Labor" was anonymous, and the choice of words, while striking, seems to have been fortuitous.

[37]Ibid., 132.

[38]Ibid., 139.

[39]Rosselli, passim; Candeloro, Vol. VI, 37-50.

[40]Montale, La COG, 155-175.

[41]Candeloro, Vol. VI, 41.

[42]Gnocchi-Viani was expelled for Internationalist activities in 1873 "with sorrow, because he has always been honest and worked for the good of the worker," Montale, La COG, 93. Cf. Montale, Mazzini, 102-129.

[43]Masini, Atti, 64.

[44]"L'Internazionale è il sole dell'avvenire" apparently first appeared in a letter to Celso Ceretti, a socialist leader in the Po Valley, written 22 September 1872. To this day, the rising sun is used as part of the symbol for the Socialist Party in Italy. See Candeloro, Vol. VI, 46.

[45]Il Gazzettino Rosa, 31 March 1871, as quoted in Rosselli, 250.

[46]The discussion of the International and the Commune here follows Rosselli, 241-255. The general impact of the Commune and the fear which it inspired was brilliantly portrayed in Federico Chabod, Storia della Politica Estera Italiana, Volume I: Le Premesse (Bari, 1951), 403ff. The fear of the commune was well detailed recently by the young Polish historian, Jerzey W. Borejsza, "La svolta degli anni 1870-1871 nella storia europea," Studi Storici, XIV, 3 (July-September, 1973), 614-541.

[47]The phrase is Bianca Montale's, Mazzini, 109. See her discussion of the impact of the Commune, 102-129. One sign of this was the Democratic Mutual Aid Association of Macerata, which in December 1871 made Marx, Garibaldi, and Mazzini its honorary co-presidents.

[48]Andrea Costa, Bagliori di Socialismo. Genni Storici (Florence, 1900), 39-40.

[49]See Montale, Mazzini, 108-110. Ragionieri has suggested that it was the 1890's before formal differentiation came about. "Mazzinianismo, garibaldinismo, e origini del socialismo in Toscana," Rassegna Storica Toscana IX, 2 (July-December 1963), 143-158. The differentiation was a slow process in Emilia as well. See Giuseppe Berti, "Gli inizi del socialismo parmense-piacentino, 1870-75," Rassegna Storica del

Risorgimento, LI, 3 (July-September, 1964), 369-406; Isabella Zanni Rosiello, "Aspetti del movimento democratico bolognese, 1859-1870," Bollettino del Museo del Risorgimento. Bologna (1961), VI, 99-175.

The passage of leaders from Mazzini via Garibaldi to the Commune and the International has been convincingly established by Giulio Trevisani, "Appunti sulla influenza della tradizione garibaldina nel movimento operaio italiano" Rivista Storica del Socialismo, IV, 13-14 (May-December, 1961) 645-662. There is an excellent first-hand account of the process in the memoirs of Luigi Musini, the Parma physician who fought with Garibaldi in the Vosges and later joined Andrea Costa to become Italy's second socialist deputy: Da Garibaldi a socialismo (Milan, 1959).

[50]Masini, Atti, 55.

[51]Ibid., 229-30.

[52]Ibid., 262-63.

[53]Masini, "Internazionale," 94.

[54]The fullest account of this inglorious failure is in Volume II of Aldo Romano's massive Storia del Movimento Socialista in Italia (Bari, 1966-67), L'egemonia borghese e la rivolta libertaria, 1871-1882. See also Richard Hostetter, The Italian Socialist Movement, Volume I: Origins (Princetion, 1954). There are some interesting details in Masini's Storia degli anarchici italiani da Balunin a Malatesta (Milan, 1969).

[55]The best description is that of Franco Della Peruta, "La banda del Matese e il fallimento della teoria anarchica della moderna 'jacquerie' in Italia," Movemento Operaio, July-September 1954, 127-154.

[56]Mazini, "Internazionale," 94-103; cf. Conti, esp. 128-143; Romano, Volume II, passim. Compare with the account of Mazzinian action in Macchia.

[57]Masini, Atti, 165.

[58]Ibid., 166. The minutes of the entire Congress are reproduced, 152-194.

[59]Costantino Lazzari, Memorie, as quoted in Candeloro, Vol. VI, 297. The best recent discussion of the origins and development of the POI is here.

[60]On the early history of the POI, see Manacorda 169-176; 186-192; 199-206; 217-253. There is ample detail on the Mantova movement in Rinaldo Salvadori, La reppublica socialista mantovana da Belfiore al fascismo (Milan, 1966), 7-160.

[61]La Plebe (Milan), 20 October 1882; as quoted in Manacorda, 190.

[62]From the constitution of the POI, reprinted in Manacorda, 372-377.

[63]Approved at the Congress of Mantova, December 6-7, 1885. See the description in Manzcorda, 230-235.

[64]From the preamble and Article I of the constitution of the POI.

[65]Papa, 151-172 discusses the main themes of the Congresses; extracts from their proceedings follow, 173-252. Aside from his work there is a great void on the subject, although there are some interesting points in Dina Bertoni Jovine, Storia della scuola popolare in Italia (Turin, 1954) esp. 340ff. There is no work on Italy to compare with George Duveau's masterpiece, Le Penseé ouvrier sur l'education (Paris, 1954).

[66]Ibid., 210.

[67]Manacorda, passim.

[68]Montale, La COG, ff.

[69]Ibid., 47-50.

[70]Masini, "L'Internazionale," 108-113.

[71]Gnocchi-Viani to Casati, undated. Casati papers, Feltrinelli Library, Milan. Emphasis in original.

[72]Gnocchi-Viani to Casati, 19 June 1883. Casati papers. Emphasis in original.

[73]Gnocchi-Viani to Casati, loc. cit.

[74]Anselmo Marabini, Prime lottesocialiste. Lontani ricordi di un vecchio militante (Rome, 1949). On nineteenth century culture see Candeloro, Volume VI, 273-289; Croce, History of Italy. 129-144. Particularly illuminating are Eugenio Garin's sparkling essays, La cultura italiana fra '800 e '900 (Bari, 1962).

[75]Gnocchi-Viani and Giuseppe Garibotti, Le Camere del Lavoro industriali ed agricole (Cremona, 1893), 16.

[76]This distinction is developed by Raymond Williams in his studies of English working-class life in Culture and Society, esp. 45-60. The theoretical implications of the differences between culture as art and culture as a way of life are more fully explored in his The Long Revolution (both New York, 1961). The heavily traditionalist nature of the Italian curriculum is underscored by Edward Tannenbaum,

> In no other modern European country did a class of would-be mandarins cling so blindly to a fixed classical tradition as did the Italian 'intellectual bourgeoisie' during the liberal period.

See his article in Tannebaum and Emiliana Noether, Modern Italy (New York, 1974), 231-253.

[77]Paolo Spriono, Socialismo e classe operaio a Torino (Turin, 1958), p. 69.

[78]See the two memoirs by Filippo Turati and Felice Anzi (a long-time activist and leader in the Chamber of Labor at Milan) in the collective work edited by Paride Mantovani, Vita ed opere di Osvaldo Gnocchi-Viani (Verona, s.d.), 34-48.

[79]There are numerous points of similarity between the thought of Pelloutier and that of Gnocchi-Viani, a fact which suggests the two men may have been closer together than ahs been hitherto documented. Certainly they both were, in their own words, "libertarians dedicated to the emancipation of the worker"--the title of "revolutionary syndicalist" was bestowed ex post facto on Pelloutier. There is an excellent short article by Alan Spitzer which discusses some of his ideas on education and culture, which are strikingly-similar to those of Gnocchi-Viani; see his "Anarchy and Culture; Fernand Pelloutier and the Dilemma of Revolutionary Syndicalism," International Review of Social History, Vol. VIII, part III (1963), 379-388.

[80]Papa, 151-172.

[81]Montale, La COG, 112-120; Manacorda, 77-103.

[82]Montale, Mazzini, 118.

[83]Masini, "Internazionale," 122-135.

[84]On the geographic and social parameters of the societies: Papa, 51-77; on the Mazzinians, Montale, Mazzini, 50-76; on the International: Masini, Atti, passim; Romano, Volume II, Passim; on the POI, Letterio Briguglio, Il Partito Operaio Italiano e gli anarchici (Rome, 1969), 150-165.

[85]Merli, Documenti, 788-89. The Chambers represented were Brescia, Codogno, Florence, Imola, Lodi, Milan, Monza, Novara, Padova, Pavia, Perugia, Piacenza, Rome, Turin, Sassari, Cremona, Messina, Genoa.

CHAPTER IV

By the time the first Chamber of Labor was founded in Milan in 1891, the previous evolution of the workers movement had laid the foundation for it to be accepted as the natural outgrowth of tradition The Chamber had incorporated the wide range of activities in which previous organizations had engaged, and made them all its own. In addition, the Chamber was solely a class organization--only workers could be members, and though advice and support might be offered by outsiders, they could never share in the direction of the Chambers. Finally, the Chamber embodied two important inheritances from the previous tradition: it was a local or regional federation of trade and craft sections, dedicated to the defense of working-class interests, and it was independent of all political parties and groupings; apoliticism--the extension of membership to all workers regardless of their affiliation as Mazzinians anarchists, democrats, catholics, or the like--was immediately written into the constitution of the Milan Chamber and copied by all others thereafter.[1] It was, in short, an organization which embodied the principle that "The emancipation of the workers must be the creation of the workers themselves." While the tradition of the local federation remained unquestioned, no problem more bedeviled the Chambers than the quuestion of politics.

The problem arose out of the dual meaning of the tradition of apoliticism. For the Chambers, apoliticism meant a willingness to welcome all members of the working class, and was a means of avoiding

ideological wrangling among members. While it was suggested that apoliticism was a sign of timidity by Chambers, who were afraid to offend the municipalities who often provided housing and subsidies,[2] the Chambers did not believe that apoliticism was a necessary precondition for the subsidy; on the contrary, as Gnocchi-Viani put it at the 1900 Congress of the Chambers,

> A Chamber of Labor . . . is, by its very existence a legal entity and as such it is the duty of the law to recognize it and support it. . . . The State, therefore, if it wishes to be the effective representative of the whole society and not just a faction of its citizens must . . . recognize the Chamber as a free association, thereby respecting its civil rights and, contributing to its existence.[3]

But if apoliticism was not the defense of the subsidy, it was more than just the acceptance of all members of the working class; it was also a declaration that the Chamber was not part of an organized political faction, such as the socialists, republicans, or radicals. Instead, the Chambers served the common good, as was emphasized in their repeated declarations in Chapter II.

There was an ambiguity in the declaration of apoliticism, then; while the Chamber was not a party, nor attached to one, and while it remained at the same time open to members of all political persuasions, it nonetheless did not renounce public action nor a public role for itself. But by defining its public role as being in the general interest, rather than serving the ends of a party or a faction, the Chambers were able to defend their action as being "non-political." The ambiguity inherent in this definition was not apparent until their conception of the public interest clashed with that of the government's, and their actions lost them their subsidies or even led to their dissolution.

As early as 1896, the Chamber of Labor in Turin, founded only five years before, attempted to mediate in a strike of tanners. Even though this was only a mediation, and not an attempt to support the strike, the owners demanded the city council revoke the subsidy of 6000 lire annually which had been previously granted. The council did so, and the Chamber was suddenly faced with the realization that even so innocent an act had been branded as "political," and thereby their annual budget halved.[4] In the next few years, there followed a series of losses of subsidies and occasional orders of dissolution by the prefect. At stake was the Chambers' concept of apoliticism, which the government refused to recognize.

For having intervened in a strike--again by an offer of arbitration--at the Orlando shipyards, the Chamber of Livorno was ordered dissolved in December of 1896.[5] With the accusation that they had supported a national strike of typecasters and interferred with the departure of strikebreakers for Hamburg, the Chambers of Genoa, Sampierdarena, and Sestri Ponente were all dissolved in the same month. When brought to trial in 1897, Pietro Chiesa, one of the directors of the Chamber was able to prove, citing the evidence of several employers, that the work of these Chambers had always been "useful to both workers and padroni"; still, the dissolution was not revoked until the following year.[6] In January, 1897, it was the turn of the Chamber in Rome for having supported a public demonstration in favor of unemployed workers; in Venice, which had already lost its subsidy in 1895, the Chamber was occupied by police and several leagues were dissolved in September of 1897.[7]

Clearly these were not examples of partisanship, nor actions designed to increase the influence of a party, but rather of action in the public interest and for the public good as they saw it. In practice, they demonstrated the impossibility of agreement on what was "political." Particularly when powerful local interests were at stake--the shipyards, the port, the capital city, or even the bakers (in the case of Venice)--the apoliticism of the Chambers could easily be labeled as "politics." In Prato, the local Catholic newspaper took up the attack against the Chamber, calling it "a threat to every national industry" and warning that under the Chamber's guidance "every vestige of religious sentiment in the people will be rooted out."[8] When its very existence seemed to make it a target for local attacks, then it was not surprising to see the Chamber move to defend itself, as when the Chamber of Labor in Rome approved a motion calling for workers to register and vote in order to obtain

> that social and economic improvement which we will hope for in vain as long as public power is in the hands of our eternal exploiters.[9]

While this was a clear call to increased public action, it was not necessarily a call to "politics." Though it might be regarded as such by governments, it was possible for a Chamber to take such action and still remain aloof from parties, thereby increasing its public role while remaining "apolitical."

Allied with their defense of workers there was a strong element of generic reform-mindedness in the programs of the Chambers. Inspired by the goals of the positivist education which they provided, the Chamber of Labor at Bologna set out to study the conditions of workers by means of questionnaires whose results would provide a basis for proposing reforms in working conditions to the municipal council.[10] The

agitation for hygienic housing and modern standards of cleanliness in new housing, discussed in Chapter II above, was a similar example of this approach. The Bologna Chamber also undertook the formation of tenants' leagues, and defended these leagues before landlords and the municipal council.[11] In addition, the Chamber took up such causes as agitation for a reduced tram fare for workers, better observance of child labor laws, an end to night and Sunday work, and other generally "popular" causes.[12] Indeed, no problem was too small for the Chamber; in Pian di Macina--a suburb of Bologna--the Chamber managed to involve itself in a dispute between people of the town and the mayor when the latter banned the raising of pigs in residences. The townspeople were glad for the hygienic improvement, but turned against him when he was unable to provide a place on the edge of town to keep pigs, an important source of food and income. The Chamber managed to calm the dispute by arranging for land, as well as for a general series of improvements--construction of public lavatories, repair of the sewers, and hiring of a full-time street cleaner--designed to improve the public health.[13] Espousing these causes on a regular basis, with frequent contact between the mayor, prefect, and the Chamber--smoothed, no doubt, by the long service of the ex-Internationalist schoolteacher, Romeo Mingozzi, who was secretary from 1893 to 1904, and whom the police chief described as "a level-headed, clever, and intelligent man"[14]--made it easy for the Chamber to see itself as a kind of loyal ooposition, speaking for the people. While the Chamber managed to avoid large-scale confrontation (at least until the general strike of 1904), and thereby become the only Chamber to survive the mass dissolutions of 1898-99, it nonetheless found itself gradually drawn into local

politics because of its opposition. Once again, the very programs of the Chamber, even when successful, led the Chamber out of apoliticism into politics.

But the Chambers were drawn even more into full-scale political action among the other Chambers of the Po Valley, and undermined further the old commitment to apoliticism, by their close ties with local politicians. In places like Reggio Emilia, Ravenna, Parma, Mantova, and other areas where both the farming pattern and the large-scale land-reclamation schemes had given rise to large numbers of braccianti, who were the backbone of all workers' organizations in these areas, including the Chambers, close ties between these organizations and socialist deputies elected from these areas were a matter of sheer necessity. Unemployment, particularly during the winter months, was a pressing problem which was most commonly attacked by the formation of labor cooperatives by the braccianti, which would then undertake the performance of public works. (See Chapter II). While the government was willing to provide them, the exact allocation of the works by area were made, as the prefect of Bologna complained, by "political rather than technical criteria." Consequently, the tie between a local deputy and the braccianti organizations was a firm one, since he dispensed their patronage works. The closeness of this tie is exemplified by the braccianti of Mantova, who used to march through the streets to the Chamber at election time chanting

> Evviva il socialismo
> e chi l'ha inventato;
> fu Enrico Ferri,
> il nostro deputato.
> [Long live socialism
> and he who invented it;
> it was Enrico Ferri,
> our deputy][15]

Even when the Chambers wished to concentrate on social, economic, or cultural programs and activities, they soon found these led them back into the public sphere. All of their activities, no matter how innocuous, were sooner or later bound up with their public role as spokesmen for the workers and defenders of them "in all the contingencies of their lives."[16] While the ambiguity of apoliticism as a refusal to be part of a faction on the one hand, and the avoidance of political activities on the other hand, remained, it was the policies of the government which eventually brought this ambiguity into the center of a crisis.

The crisis was precipitated by the political repression of the government, which combined with the internal pressures of the Chamber to drive them into political action. Thus, as the author of a recent survey of the historiography of the workers movement in Italy has written,

> The close tie in the workers movement, especially in Italy, between the economic moment and the political moment has its fundamental root in the fact that, until the end of the [nineteenth] century, the struggle was for the guarantees of elementary democratic liberties, first among them the liberty of organization.[17]

The move toward politics was particularly marked during the decade of the 1890's, when two major crises faced the Chambers: the Sicilian Fasci of 1892-94, and the wave of disorders in the winter of 1897-98 which culminated in the May Events (Fatti di Maggio) of 1898. Both were widespread popular expressions of discontent, and both resulted in governmental repression and hostility which the Chambers saw as being directed, at least in part, towards them.

The Sicilian Fasci were local organizations based on peasants and agricultural laborers, a rural version of the Fascio Operaio which

the International had spawned (and directly inspired by that example). They adopted a general program of sharecropping and tenancy rights, an end or at least a diminuition of local taxes, the collective leasing of governmental demesene lands and uncultivated private ones. The first of the Fasci were organized in 1892, and the current prime minister, Giovanni Giolitti, regarded their requests as equitable and their program as moderate. He left them alone for the most part, despite pressures from Southern landowners and aristocrats to crush them, relying instead on normal police measures to keep the Fasci from becoming an insurrectionary outburst. But increasing pressure from the right, as well as his involvement with the various scandals connected with the Banca Romana, brought down his government in late 1893, and he was replaced by Francesco Crispi. Crispi's early radicalism (he had been Garibaldi's secretary in Sicily in 1860) had been replaced by what he conceived as the defense of the achievements of the Risorgimento. However, he easily confused the "defense of the existing political and social order . . . with the defense of the unity and independence of the fatherland."[18]

Crispi quickly proclaimed a state of seige in Sicily (roughly equivalent to a declaration of martial law) in January, 1894, and proceeded to the massive dissolution of the Fasci and trials of all the important leaders by courts martial. He won considerable support for his actions among the voters, particularly when the proclamation came at a time the state seemed threatened from several directions. Marble miners in the Lunigiana (province of Massa-Carrara) had attempted an uprising of protest against the Sicilian repression in January, led in part by anarchists. There were additional protests in Apulia as well,

and it was easy for the public to gain the impression that these were two elements in a long chain of conspiracies.[19] The impression was heightened by an attempt on his life by an anarchist on June 16, and when the President of France, Sadi Carnot, was assassinated by an Italian anarchist on June 24, the stage was set for the presentation of his "anti-anarchist laws" to the Chamber of Deputies in July. Two of them were relatively innocuous: one providing for the control of the sale and possession of explosives was aimed at the terrorist wing of the anarchists, and one increasing the penalties provided in the press laws for supporting terrorism and inciting soldiers to disobey orders was more of a sop to the sensibilities of the Right. But the third law forbade all "meetings and associations" which had as their aim the "subversion in fact of the social order," gave the executive the power to decide which organizations were subject to the law, and made domicilio coatto ("enforced residence"--house arrest at some remote village, usually southern) mandatory for all members of dissolved associations. Although its severity was offset somewhat by the provision that this was to be an exceptional law, valid only through December 31, 1895, its vague definitions meant that its provisions could be easily extended to include other groups besides the anarchists at whom it was ostensibly directed, and in October, 1894, Crispi ordered the dissolution of the newly formed Italian Socialist Workers Party.[20]

The party, as founded at Genoa two years before, had resulted from the merger of the Italian Workers Party (POI) with Andrea Costa's Socialist Revolutionary Party, as well as numerous small groups and individuals. Consequently, while many people had joined the party as individuals, the groups who had made up the POI were affiliated with

the new party en bloc; the new party had continued the policy of encouraging both individual and group memberships. Thus many leagues, as well as some mutual-aid societies and cooperatives--some of whom were by now sections of the Milan Chamber, as well as other Chambers which had been founded in the areas where the POI had been influential--were ordered dissolved, and two Chambers--those of Genoa and Venice--were ordered dissolved as well. Two Chamber secretaries, Giuseppe Croce of Milan and Angiolo Cabrini of Parma, were forced to flee the country in order to avoid domicilio coatto, and many other socialist activists, some of whom had been active with the Chambers, were compelled to flee the country or be subject to the same fate. Though not primarily aimed at them, the exceptional laws did strike down two Chambers and sent the secretaries of two more fleeing the country; the impact was all the more striking since the application of the laws seemed capricious. The decision for dissolution was made by the prefect, rather than the courts, so there was no appeal and no chance to fight the ruling.

The consequences for the Chambers were immediate and obvious. Almost all began to take a more active role in the lives of their cities, canvassing their membership and speaking out for them. In the elections of 1895 the Chambers were busy soliciting the participation of their membership; indeed, as late as 1896 "practically speaking, it was still not possible to draw a clear line between the [Socialist] party and the workers' organizations."[21] This was due not only to the heritage of the POI, but even more to the recognition by the Chambers that only a more liberal and progressive government would allow them to function. As one legal scholar has observed of the 1890's,

> The freedom to strike, if it were to be more than an expression of principle, could not be separated from a series of institutions and organizational structures . . . which decisively influenced the concrete possibilities of working-class agitation: freedom of the press, of assembly, and of association were indispensable pre-requisites of the effective exercise of the right to strike.[21]

The recent changes in the electoral laws, which had returned to the uninominal districts for deputies, aided the Chambers, for it focused attention and effort on the local level where the Chambers were strongest. As a consequence, twelve socialist deputies were elected, including three "protest candidates": Rosario Garibaldi Bosco, Nicola Barbato, and Giuseppe De Felice-Giuffrida, all leaders of the Fasci who had been condemned by courts martial. As condemned criminals, they could not serve and their elections were annulled; nonetheless, all were re-elected in by-elections. De Felice and Bosco were elected in their home grounds of Catania and Palermo, respectively; the real surprise was Barbato, elected in the Fifth District of Milan where the Chamber had a large number of supporters. The election of Barbato is of some importance, for it shows that the Milan Chamber, which had played an important role by mobilizing workers to vote, regarded the defense of the Fasci as part of their own defense. The leader of a Sicilian group elected in a Milanese district symbolized the movement from local to national concerns.[22] By the winter of 1897-98, the regime was thoroughly unpopular with most workers. The policies of repression had been exacerbated by the poor harvests and the international repercussions of the Spanish-American War, which sent bread prices soaring; the government's decision to raise the price of salt (a state monopoly) and the wheat tariff did nothing to improve matters.

The Chambers of Labor, especially in the Po Valley and Tuscany, threw themselves into the promotion of meetings and demonstrations

against unemployment and the high cost of living. In particular they were concerned with the high cost of bread, which still made up the major portion of worker's diet. The Second Congress of the Chambers in August, 1897, had passed a motion calling on each Chamber to begin action which would force the government to abolish both the wheat tariff and the local entry taxes on food, "replacing this immoral income with taxes which are based on the ability to pay." In addition, most Chambers demanded an end to demeaning charitable programs and called for jobs for their members instead.[27]

Barely three years after the experience of the exceptional laws, the Chambers were once again threatened. Disorders broke out in the south in January, 1898, and spread north culminating in the "May Events" in Milan. In the aftermath, every Chamber in the country with the exception of Bologna was dissolved. In Milan itself, the Chamber was dissolved for its role in the May Events; elsewhere, protests and general strikes against the Milan events led to the proclamation of states of seige and the dissolution of Chambers. The Fatti di Maggio have generally been taken to mark still another in the long series of riots against poverty and misery which go back to the peasants' revolt of Sicily, and continue through the brigandage of the 60's and the macinato revolts of the 70's. Yet there was an important new component to these disturbances, as a recent and authoritative study by Louise Tilly has shown.[28]

In her study, she convincingly demonstrates that the Milanese revolt was not a rising against poverty and misery as traditional interpretations have it, nor the work of outside agitators at the head of a lumpenproletariat as the Milanese bienpensants thought, nor the reaction

of workers mobilized by alienation from changing society or the frustration caused by rising expectations, as some recent historians have argued. Instead it was the decision of the Chamber to organize demonstrations against the repressive policy of the government and the high food prices caused by the government's policies which caused the government to order the military occupation of the city and the "restoration of public order." When the Chambers began to exercise their right to speak for the workers, the result was the "May Events": "it grew out of a clash between the claims of workers for the right to demonstrate and the guns of the state assembled to deny those claims."[29] Chamber leaders rightly perceived the Milan events as a direct blow at them; when they attempted to protest they suffered the same fate. The impression of a wave of reaction sweeping the country was reinforced by the hundreds of arrests and military trials for all those remotely suspected of having participated in the disorders, the dissolution of all the Chambers but Bologna, and perhaps most offensive, the decoration and public congratulation of General Bava Beccaris by King Umberto for having saved the country from revolution when his troops had just killed over four hundred people in Milan.[30]

Momentarily averted when Di Rudinì's government fell in June, 1898, the threat returned when he was replaced by General Luigi Pelloux, a man who had the reputation of being a moderate progressive, but who had also ordered the dissolution of the Parma Chamber a month before.[31] In early 1899, Pelloux introduced a series of repressive decrees, and in June, 1899, presented a new set of exceptional laws. These would have severely limited public assemblies by allowing the judicial authorities (later amended to allow the prefects instead) to dissolve organizations which they judged subversive, restrict the freedom of the press

when it threatened to disturb public order, and ban strikes by public employees. (This was the law invoked by the prefect of Genoa when he dissolved the Chamber there in December, 1900). Like Crispi and Di Rudinì before him, he was unable to distinguish between the defense of the liberal state and the gains of the Risorgimento on the one hand, and the defense of the social and economic order on the other.

> As a good functionary, he had at heart the pure and simple defense of the State, or as he preferred to say, of 'institutions,' and was therefore a pure conservative, who could become reactionary when the social movement threatened the social and political status quo.[32]

While the socialists and the "popular parties"--radicals and republicans--established a sort of popular front in opposition to Pelloux, beginning with the obstructionism of 1899 and 1900 and culminating in the general elections of June, 1900, where they increased their parliamentary seats from 67 to 95 (of whom 32 were socialists), the Chambers began reorganizing clandestinely. Although only Bologna and the newly founded Chamber at Monza were legally active, Chambers all over the north had begun to meet first in secret and then openly as the government turned its attention to the election. In Genoa, the Chamber which had been dissolved since the Fasci was finally reconstituted in July, 1900, and almost immediately ran into strong local reaction. The newspaper which spoke for Genoese business and commercial interests, Il Secolo XIX, attacked the Chamber as a "socialist committee of action" and called for the arrest of its leaders as dangerous subversives. Businesses fired and blacklisted leaders, and flatly refused to meet with Chamber leaders who attempted to initiate negotiations or arbitrate in disputes. The prefect banned a poster listing the benefits of Chamber membership and inviting new sections to form. Finally, on

December 18, the prefect, citing the subversive composition of the executive committee (six socialists and an anarchist) dissolved the Chamber and seized its office and records. That night the Chamber leaders met and called a general strike of protest, sending two secretaries to Rome to negotiate with the government. When the prefect refused to withdraw or modify his decree, the strikers continued, eventually rising to some 20,000 workers, or nearly four times the membership of the Chamber. The strike was finally successful, and on the 23rd the same executive committee was triumphantly re-elected after the new Prime Minister, Saracco, overrode the prefect. In February, the Saracco government fell following a blistering attack by Giolitti over the government's handling of the strike, and was succeeded by one headed by Giuseppe Zanardelli, with Giolitti as his minister of the interior.[33]

Under the pressure of the events of the "Bloody Decade," the Chambers had come to experience the importance of political action to their own survival. But this experience had been a gradual one. The leaders of the Chamber of Labor at Genoa, which had been dissolved in 1896 only eleven months after its foundation, concluded that only a close relationship with the Socialist and "popular" parties (Radicals and Republicans) would be capable of safeguarding them. While their Chamber had been dissolved, Milan's had not; they concluded that the crucial difference was the protection afforded Milan's Chamber by the presence of Turati and other deputies in Parliament.[34] But even the election of deputies had not saved them from the second dissolution of December, 1900; only the successful general strike had finally been responsible for what--although they could not know it at the time--was to be the last dissolution of a Chamber of Labor until Fascism arrived on

the scene. But the other Chambers had not had to go through the experience of Genoa, and in general the effect of the "Bloody Decade" was to convince the Chambers that they had been fighting for their lives, and only the concerted action of the socialist and popular parties had been able to save them.

At the same time, the government had clearly come to regard any demonstration as being a political one, even the most innocuous. The dissolutions of the Chambers had come not because they were subversive parties, as had been the case of the anarchist and socialist groups, but rather because they were considered to have been responsible for "exciting hatred among social classes," a crime punishable under Article 247 of the Penal Code. A contemporary legal scholar has in fact argued that the judges and prosecutors had moved away from defending the free market from excesses such as violent strikes and instead

> showed a clear desire to strike at the roots of working-class organizations, at their methods and their real possibilities of success, in order to obstruct in every possible way the direction and promotion of strikes and demonstrations of protest.[35]

Government hostility, combined with the experience of fighting for their lives during the 1890's naturally led the Chambers to a closer identification with and dependence on the Socialist Party.

At the same time, the frequency as well as the character of strikes began to change. Giolitti's rule was marked by an attempt at neutrality in economic strikes, and the Chambers along with the rest of the workers movement took advantage of the new policy to launch a wave of strikes in 1902-02. From 27 strikes involving some 13,000 strikers in agriculture in 1900, the number rose to 629 with 223,000 participants in 1901, and 221 with 147,000 strikers in 1902. Industry

showed a similar jump, going from 383 strikes with about 81,000 participants in 1900 to 1042 with 197,000 participants in 1901, and 810 strikes with about 195,000 participants in 1902. Many were successful, and wages rose as a consequence. Setting 1913 as the norm, the index of nominal industrial wages rose from 65.8 in 1899 to 72.9 in 1902; even when corrected for inflation the index of real industrial wages rose in the same period from 76.1 to 80.7.[36]

This wave of strikes represented an unprecedented phenomenon in the history of the workers movement. Though many of them were at first directed just by committees elected during the strike to negotiate for workers, from 1900 to 1904, it became more and more common for a league, trade union, or Chamber of Labor to take a hand in the planning, direction, or solution of the strike. In 1901 only 13% of all industrial strikes took place with any direction from a workers organization; this increased, with a slight relapse in 1903, to 56% of all strikes in 1905. More impressive still was the fact that 74% of all strikers in 1905 were led by some form of organization.[37] Workers organizations underwent astonishing growth during this tumultuous period. From the dozen or so Chambers extant following the end of the crisis of the Fatti di Maggio, their numbers increased to 57 by 1904 and 76 by 1905. At the same time, the four extant national unions (lithographers, bakers, building trades, and printers) were joined by twenty-one more founded between 1900 and 1904. These were somewhat more ephemeral since, eight of them had already gone out of existence or been merged with other unions by 1904, but the combination of these two factors, together with the foundation of the National Federation of Landworkers in 1901 with over 150,000 members and its growth the following year to nearly a quarter of a

of a million, makes it clear that the workers movement was really born as a mass phenomenon during these years.[38]

At the same time that rapid expansion of strike activity was going on, with the consequent increase in the workers' organizations, the character of strikes directed by the Chambers of Labor began to change. Though the strikes by unions and leagues for wage increases or improvement in working conditions were still common, the example of Genoa began to be followed by other Chambers who found in the municipal general strike both a potent weapon for the defense of the general interest of the working class in their area, as well as a most obvious and direct form of public action. Where the Chambers differed from the unions was in their enthusiastic acceptance and support of this new weapon.

As the representative of all the workers in a given community, it was not surprising that sooner or later a Chamber should decide to call them all out on strike, provided the issue at stake was broad enough to interest all the members, as the question of the Chamber's right to survival had been at Genoa. The general strike did not represent a radical break with tradition, but fused two elements as old as the workers movement itself: the demonstration and the strike. In practice a general strike usually consisted of workers marching to a public place where they carried their banners, accompanied by their bands, and then met to hear speeches and decide on action to be taken. In other words, it was as though they had attended a <u>comizio</u> on a working day. Though the idea may have been new, it is noteworthy that the practice remained within the traditional forms, and indeed the general strike of Genoa was a spontaneous response to the threat of dissolution; there were few theorists of syndicalism in the Italy of 1900,

and little or no discussion of the idea of the general strike preceded its appearance in practice.[39]

Although the general strike remained a local phenomenon until 1904, the issues over which general strikes were called were ones which potentially interested all Chambers. When striking Turinese gas workers were replaced by soldiers in February, 1902, (Giolitti held that provision of essential public services outweighed the desirability of neutrality in labor disputes), the Chamber there called a general strike to protest their move and demonstrate their solidarity with the gas workers. Giolitti's promised neutrality did not seem to amount to much if the gas company had free labor courtesy of the state while workers were left to starve in the hope that the Union des Gaz (a French company like many Italian utilities) might agree to their demands--a rather unlikely outcome under the circumstances. Over a week later, when it seemed that Turin might come to a halt economically Giolitti gave in and ordered the soldiers removed, at the same time calling on the prefect to arrest all those responsible for the strike, preferably by night. When this did not bring immediate calm to the city, Giolitti blistered the prefect:

> If the provisions I have ordered for tonight do not eliminate the disorders by tomorrow I will judge your work as insufficient and provide a remedy . . . no prefect has been as weak as that of Turin. Tell the questore in my name that I will hold him personally responsible if all the instigators of this movement are not arrested and denounced to the judicial authorities by tonight.[40]

Giolitti to the contrary, the "disorders" did not end until the Union des Gaz agreed to negotiate and an agreement was signed four days later. In his final report to Giolitti, the prefect expressed his dismay at the strength of the Chamber's new-found weapon, which had prevailed

in spite of the arrests of over 600 people (including two socialist deputies, Quirino Nofri and Oddino Morgari, whose parliamentary immunity was ignored for the occasion), and the manning of the lights, telephones, bakeries, and trams by soldiers, firemen, and police:

> It is certainly grave that in a city as ordered, hard-working, and tranquil [as this] that at a given signal and only for the sake of solidarity, that the Chamber of Labor is capable of putting some 20,000 workers on strike . . . and could direct and determine the course of action.[41]

As a demonstration of solidarity, the strike was a natural weapon for the Chamber to be drawn to; like the other forms of political action, it was also a defense of principle. If employees could not even be recognized by employers, and supported in their intransigence by the state, then the right to existence was useless and the battles for survival would have been for nothing. In this case, the issue was not the wages or working conditions of the gas workers--that had been responsible for the strike of the gas workers along--but the refusal of the employers to recognize the league and the Chamber, and the failure of the government to remain neutral. If the issue were broad enough to interest the leaders of the Chamber, it was also broad enough to interest the membership in fighting for it.

Over the next few years the general strike began to occur more frequently. In Varese the following month workers went out in support of workers striking at the Molina paper mills; in August, Florentine workers went out in support of the turners at the Pignone foundry. In both cases the issue was the failure of the employer to recognize the Chamber as the representative of the workers. Clearly these issues were the same as they had been at Turin, and the use of the general strike, like the growth of the Chamber itself, was becoming more than a local phenomenon.

At the same time, the general strike was becoming more and more clearly a demonstration, and one whose function was something more than the attempt to convince a recalcitrant employer to negotiate. At Savona, (where the youthful Alceste De Ambris, later to gain national recognition as the secretary of the syndicalist Chamber of Parma, was secretary), the first use of the general strike came in August, 1902, to protest the firing or suspension of nearly 700 of the 2000 workers in Terni ironworks in a dispute over recognition of the league. But on January 10, 1903, the metalworkers walked off their job, joined by the rest of the Chamber to attend the funeral of an ironworker who had been electrocuted--the first such death ever at Savona. On October 15, 1903, another industrial accident led to a general strike; this time the Chamber was joined by nearly every other organization in the city. The Socialist and Republican Parties, the Radicals, the Christian Democratic section and even the local Evangelical Church (Waldensian), joined the Chamber in a protest over an unusually horrible death--four workers had had molten steel poured over them, and their bodies were premanently cast in it. The management was forced to melt down the piece and their bodies were removed as impurities via the Bessement process, so that not even a corpse remained for burial.[42] The events of Savona demonstrate the general strike had become more than a strike; it was a demonstration of protest, and a protest which was directed not against wages but against what they felt was the callousness of the employers to human life. If, as Gnocchi-Viani had remarked in 1896 at the opening of the Chamber of Labor in Genoa, the goal of the Chamber was to ensure that labor was no longer to be an object but rather to be recognized as an attribute of a human being, the general strike of protest at Savona was a movement in that direction.[43]

But it was not only employers who seemed callous to human life. The period of Giolitti's rule was marked by frequent "proletarian massacres"--the wounding or killing of workers in clashes with the police or army. Characteristically during this period the clashes did not grow out of battles between the forces of order and the workers over the right to strike and demonstrate, as had been the case during the Fatti di Maggio, but rather from the armed defense of the "liberty of labor"--the right of strikebreakers to work without the interference of the local Chamber or league. Most often they were in agricultural areas, where unemployment was most severe and strikebreakers easiest to recruit. Between 1900 and 1904, 242 people were killed or wounded in these varied clashes; the worst ones took place at Candela (Foggia), Berra, and Cerignola in the Po Valley.[44] The example of Berra (in the province of Ferrara) might well be taken as typical of them all.

Near Berra, a large farm recently developed by land reclamation was owned and run by a corporation owned by the Bank of Turin. Unlike the other proprietors in the area, the Società Bonifica delle Terre Ferrarese flatly refused to negotiate with the braccianti leagues in the area, and instead paid strikebreakers from Piedmont twice the wage requested by the strikers (as well as their transportation) to do the work of the harvest. Fearing clashes, the prefect stationed troops on the bridges which led from Berra across the canals to the farm. When a delegation, accompanied by a crowd of about 500, requested permission to cross the bridge and urge the strikebreakers to solidarity, the lieutenant in charge apparently lost his nerve and opened fire. Four people were killed and about twenty more were wounded, and the news led to general strikes of protest in Ancona, Florence, Bologna, and several

other Chambers, as well as massive demonstrations by the Chamber at Ferrara.[45]

In 1904, this bloody procession was joined by two more incidents: Castelluzzo, in the province of Trapani (Sicily), where local carabinieri fired into a crowd demonstrating against the dissolution of their cooperative and killed and wounded eight people, and Buggeru in Sardinia, where a dozen striking miners had been killed. This time the result was a national general strike of protest, originally proclaimed by the Milan Chamber of Labor, and lasting from September 17th through the 22nd. The strike was most successful in the areas with the longest history of organization; most frequently it was called and halted by the local Chamber of Labor. The first such strike in the world got near total participation of all the Chambers in Italy, and suggested that over and above the economic, social, and geographical divisions which cleaved the working class, they had for the moment found a common principle in their anger and outrage against the national government.[46]

The general strike of 1904 also suggests that all the trends which had led to the undermining of apoliticism had finally come to fruition. Whether local elities were moderate or conservative, whether the Chamber had conceived of itself as an opposition or a partner, whether its own political outlook was moderate or radical seemed to make no difference. The general strike had been supported by the reformist leaders at Florence, Milan, and Bologna; it had been supported by the <u>super-riformisti</u> of Genoa, who had not called a strike over any issue for the previous two years.[47] For the moment, differences had been put aside and all engaged in a common effort.

But this common effort in the name of class solidarity, if it were able to overcome some differences, almost immediately became the cause

of others. The expression of class solidarity, while bracing to the movement and momentarily frightening to the government, was at the same time a visible expression and further cause of some bitter divisions among and between the Chambers, as well as the larger workers movement itself.

The general strike had the effect of polarizing some strains within the socialist party, as well as carrying over some of this polarization into the workers movement and particularly the Chambers. Loosely defined, there were "reformist" and "revolutionary" wings within the socialist party; the latter was most conspicuously led by Filippo Turati, Claudio Treves, and Leonida Bissolati. The reformist group had its strongest expression in Turati's newspaper, Critica Sociale, but was also represented in the editorials of Avanti!, in the party directorate, and among the parliamentary deputies and the leaders of most of the trade unions. (In fact, before World War I, only the railway workers and seamen ever had leadership from the revolutionary or syndicalist groups). The revolutionary group, with various fluctuations, was led by the Neapolitan Arturo Labriola, who with Walter Mocchi and Enrico Leone had founded at Milan the Avanguardia Socialista as a counter to the reformists. At first marginal in the party, their position had been strengthened by an informal alliance with the more intransigent of the old leaders of the Italian Workers Party, led most conspicuously by Costantino Lazzari.[48]

These two groups were loosely defined, and there were numerous subgroups within each wing. Rather than formal statements of theory, they tended to be moods:

> the fear of a renewed reactionary offensive which would have impeded a gradual and ordered social progress for the reformists, an ill-defined nostalgia for the intransigence of their origins for the revolutionaries.[49]

While the Italian socialists were not unaware of the revisionism associated with the theory of Bernstein in Germany and the practice of Millerand in France, reformism was considerably broader than an Italian reflection of revisionism. Instead it was a loosely grouped movement of all who believed in gradual reforms, partial conquests, and steady progress. While some leaders, such as Bissolati and Bonomi who eventually left the Party in 1912 to found a new reformist one, were attracted to Bernstein, Turati and other leaders of the reformist wing had defended Bebel against Bernstein in Germany, and had more in common with Jaurés than with any other foreign leader. Turati occasionally cited Bernstein as an a posteriori justification for his own views, but only occasionally, and never followed Bernstein to his most unorthodox conclusions.[50] Reformism thus included some revisionists, but was more a temper than a theory.

The revolutionary opposition was even more heterodox. It ranged from southern radicals such as Labriola who were initially opposed to reformism because the electoral base in the south was too limited to allow it to succeed, through writers like Merlino who hovered on the edge of anarchism, to old operaisti such as Lazzari, who had little faith in the intellectuals who ran the party and whose opposition derived more from a class critique than from a theoretically revisionist base such as Sorel's. It was only the polemics opened up by the practice of the Chambers and the Federations, and the gradual identification of reformist and anti-reformist groups inside the Chambers and Federations, that made it possible to clarify the two stances somewhat.

The groups opened up with a polemic immediately following the general strike of 1904 with the reformists accusing the revolutionaries of

having attempted to transform a brief but justifiable protest into a revolutionary movement which had no chance of success; the revolutionaries had in turn argued that the strike had clearly helped to free workers from the illusion that parliamentary politics and minor social reforms would ever improve their lot. In fact, neither side had had much control over the movement. If the revolutionaries, who had recently supported a slate which had won the election to the executive commission of the Milan Chamber, and who thereby were in a sense responsible for the strike (since the Chamber had called for a national strike in response to the massacres), had been in on the calling of the strike, they were certainly not alone. The strike had been called in part in response to spontaneous strikes at Monza, Lodi, and Milan itself; when the Milan Chamber attempted to call off the strike on the 18th of September, they were forced to change their mind when the news arrived that other Chambers were planning to go out on strike the 19th. The leadership of the Socialist Party had met and voted to oppose the strike, but kept its decision a secret until the strike was over so as not to antagonize the strikers. Neither side in the dispute had really been responsible for the proclamation or the ending of the strike.[51] More importantly neither side was able to use any concrete criteria to measure the efficacy of the strike. If the reformists could say, with some evidence, that the strike had brought no real benefits to the workers--particularly in terms of wages and working conditions--even the more reformist Chambers were able to reply that that was not the point of the strike. The strike may or may not have "raised the consciousness" of Italian workers, as the revolutionaries claimed, but there was no way of telling. Instead, each pointed to the strike as

as the proof of its own political outlook, and neither was able to discuss the strike in non-political terms.

The general strike thus represented an important step in the politicization of the workers movement, a final stage in the process which had been underway since the first Chamber of Labor was founded. While the previous history of the Chambers was the history of the foundation and growth of the organizations, over the next decade the primary theme was the struggle within the politicized Chambers which came to be known as the "division of tendencies."

The division first appeared in 1902, with the formation of the National Secretariat for Resistance. This organization was designed as coordinating body between the Federation of the Chambers of Labor and the newly emerging trade unions. Alarmed at the hostility between the Chambers and the Unions, 24 federations met with the Federation at Milan in November, 1902, and elected a commission made up of four representatives from the unions and four from the Chambers, with two well-known reformist organizers as their permanent secretaries: Angiolo Cabrini and Rinaldo Rigola. Its duties were to promote new unions where none existed, coordinate national campaigns of the workers movement, arbitrate conflicts among members, and represent the Italian movement at the International Labor Office. But its most important goal was to "calm and mediate the growing conflicts between the Chambers and Federations."[52] Conspicuously absent from the list was any attempt to lead the workers movement. Instead, it was supposed to provide some guidance while leaving the Chambers and the Federations autonomous in their own ill-defined sphere of competence.

The first indication of the views of the secretariat came from Cabrini, who wrote shortly thereafter that the

> meeting was unanimous in affirming that Resistance must gradually become the special competence of the trade union federations, which, because of the intense quality of local life in life in Italy, so much more important than in other nations, must proceed in accord with the Chambers of Labor.[53]

In other words, the real work of the resistance movement was to be undertaken by the federations, while the Chambers were to be tolerated because local life and politics were still so intense in Italy. In fact, in the second Congress of the secretariat, held at Genoa in 1904, it was argued that the limited resources of the workers movement needed to be concentrated in areas where organizing was most likely to be successful. Cabrini went on to propose that the Federations take responsibility for all organizing efforts, the exclusive direction of strikes and agitations, including any general strikes, proposing of social legislation and the like. The Chambers, which were to be tolerated primarily because they organized workers who did not yet have federations for them, were instead to devote their attention to "municipalization of public services, the diffusion of popular instruction, the formation of hiring halls, and the development of cooperation and mutual aid."[54] Over the protests of the Chamber representatives, the motion was approved.[55]

The preference for the Federation over the Chamber was clearly associated with the reformist wing of the Socialist Party, and the passage of Cabrini's motion represented a victory of sorts of the reformists. What distinguished their views from those of the Chambers was their emphasis on a division of labor between the Party and "economic organizations." While the latter was the center of political leadership for the working class, the Federations could specialize in the practice of resistance. This did not necessarily imply that Federations were to abstain from politics, but rather that the politics

of the Federation differed in important ways from those of the Chambers.

The vision which most federations held of politics was a limited one, confined primarily to intervention in the political process in ways which could benefit their members, rather than the whole working class. For example, the Building Trades Federation (Federazione Edilizia) strongly supported the Giolittian project for working-class housing, the case operaie. The law promulgating this reform allowed cooperative building societies to incorporate for the purpose of constructing low-cost housing. The new houses were exempt from certain taxes, and the price was kept down somewhat by the non-profit nature of the building cooperatives. But the housing thus constructed was still expensive, and only the better-paid minority of workers could afford to live in them. The Federation's support was based in part on its belief that some of its members could afford these houses, but even more on the fact that numerous jobs for its members would be created.[56] The problem of housing, when confronted by the Chamber of Labor at Bologna on the other hand, led to the series of comizi discussed in Chapter II, which supported the building trades in their desire for more jobs but went beyond that goal to propose a program of general utility for the entire working class. As one author has written of the Building Trades Federation, rather than "a politicized conception of the resistance movement"--such as the Chambers had--the Federations had a "trade-unionist conception of the political movement."[57]

This is not to imply that all the Federations were reformist in their views, nor all the Chambers revolutionary. While diffidence between the Chambers and Federations remained, and the general strike of

1904 took place against the wishes of the Secretariat under the leadership of the Chambers, some Chambers still were strong in their support of the Secretariat. The Genoa Chamber in particular earned itself the nickname of the "stronghold of reformism," for its support of the views of the Secretariat and the CGL later. It strongly upheld the view that the leagues should not strike without first seeing if the employer were prosperous enough to make concessions, and the organization wealthy enough to sustain a strike.[58] Its views on political action were limited to the suggestion that the Secretariat compile a list of the desiderata in social legislation on the basis of the suggestions of the Chambers.[59]

While sharing some of the views of the reformists, the Genoa Chamber's own interests lay primarily in expanding the sphere of organization. In late 1901 it led the foundation of the Unione Regionale Ligure, made up of the Chambers of Genoa and Sampieradarena, the old Mazzinian Genoese Workers' Confederation, and a dozen cooperatives and mutual aid societies from the area. It followed this up with a plan in 1902 to institute consumer cooperatives, as well as to transform the port workers' leagues into cooperatives. An editorial in the Chamber's newspapers urged this work as a model for all Chambers, since "it brings real benefits through patient work which does not have need of vibrant publicity."[59] Shortly thereafter they summed up their view of the class struggle, as practiced in Genoa:

> 'class struggle,' therefore, signifies the abandonment of all tumult and violence, placing instead sole trust in the organization, the disciplined association, which treats with isolated proprietors or their organizations for the amelioration of labor contracts, using those instruments which civilization and the law offer to every citizen and class of citizens: the right to vote, the freedom of association, of assembly, and of the press.[60]

Their practice of the class struggle can be seen in the care which they took to develop first the organization of the port workers, then the

Unione Regionale, and finally the development of their own daily newspaper, Il Lavoro. With the election of Pietro Chiesa to Parliament, they had organization, a newspaper and a deputy to offset those of the bourgeoisie. The unions collaborated in the development of an autonomous port authority, to which all employers had to submit. When the coal merchants attempted to hire workers from someplace other than the Chamber office, the Chamber put pressure on the workers not to strike, while at the same time urging the authority to force the coal merchants to accede to their demands. They were successful, and the Chamber reported with pride in their 1903 review that

> while in 1902 strikes were rather frequent, in 1903 this double-edged weapon was never used by the organized workers who battled with very much more refined instruments.[61]

The essence of their policy, then, lay in an "indirect collaboration between a compact and responsible labor movement and an enlightened employer class."[62] The key was their desire to work with the organized workers, and they frequently refused to support strikes which had not been sanctioned by a federation or the Chamber itself. When revolutionaries became predominant in the Secretariat, and urged their members to support the struggles of peasants in Granmichele, where they had recently been another "proletarian massacre," the Chamber resigned from the Secreatriat. Revolutionary critics of the Chamber promptly split from it, and organized a new Chamber in Sampierdarena, the industrial suburb of Genoa to the north. Here they published their own newspaper, which accused the Chamber of locking itself away from the majority of Genoese workers; it announced instead a general policy of working with non-organized workers as well as organized, so that the Chamber would be worthy of its name, and reminded its readers that

organization was not an end in itself but only a means to the emancipation of the worker.[63]

As the example of the Genoa Chamber points out, it was not just a dispute between Chambers and Federations which was at the heart of the division of tendencies. Instead, it was a perception of the role and purpose of the Chamber, and its relationship to the other workers' organizations. Genoa's stronghold was based on the provision of economic services to its members, with the political role of the Chamber limited to occasional suggestions for mild social reforms. What distinguished its opponents was their commitment to a form of class solidarity which went beyond the immediate interests of the membership. The revolutionary (and later syndicalist) Chambers of the area around Genoa--Sampierdarena, Voltri, Sestri Ponente, Savona, and Volte Ligure--instead concentrated their efforts on working with the unskilled and often unorganizable workers in the heavy industries, and manifested a strong commitment to the use of the general strike at the slightest protest, whether it be for local issues or in solidarity with strikers across Italy.[64] In Genoa on the other hand, support was not only limited to organized workers but organized workers who shared the outlook of the Chamber. In late 1906, the seamen's union was locked in a bitter strike with several shipping companies. The union, which had left the Chamber in the 1890's and was now the only federation other than the railwaymen to have a syndicalist leadership, asked the Chamber for financial support and a general strike in solidarity, since the interest of the seamen and the portworkers (who now made up nearly 40% of the Chamber) were so close. The Chamber's executive commission refused and voted a motion in which they also

> declared in general the necessity of disciplining the workers movement as far as solidarity is concerned and decided to invite all organizations to refuse to vote a subsidy for those agitations which, in the territory of the Chamber are not approved by it, and outside of the Chamber, not approved by the CGL.[65]

In effect, the Chamber was confining its attention and energies to those groups who could be successfully served by its "patient work." Those workers who could not benefit by the cooperatives and mutual aid societies in which the Chamber placed such great faith--such as the industrial workers in the shipyards and steel mills--were left to the revolutionaries. By no coincidence, these industries were also the ones which were closest to the government, depending as they did on high protective tariffs, government contracts, and outright subsidies to remain viable. Organizing these workers would bring the Chamber directly against the interference of the state, and the Genoa Chamber had no desire for that sort of confrontation as well.

This organization was complemented by the electoral activities in which the Chamber engaged. For the administrative elections of July, 1906, the Chamber joined with the local socialist, republican, and radical parties as well as the Chamber of Clerks, the Cooperative Federation, and the old Mazzinian Genoese Workers Confederation to present a common list of candidates for the municipal council. As well, the Chamber supported the candidacies of Pietro Chiesa and other Chamber leaders to Parliament, thus binding the various organizations more tightly together, and creating an interlocking network of political and economic organizations, a point which they reported with pride:

> The Chamber of Labor has integrated . . . all the functions of the proletarian movement: from resistance to cooperation to mutual aid, from welfare to culture, and has not closed itself in corporativism; rather, by forming cordial relationships with the clerks and others, and participating in all the activities which concern public life,

> it has constructed an edifice which will withstand any storm, no matter how severe.[66]

While the leaders of the Genoa Chamber proclaimed themselves reformist, then, their reformism was more in the nature of their shared perceptions of the importance of gradual progress. They did not believe the Chamber of Labor was to be surpassed by the federations, but instead accorded the Chamber a central place in their interlocking network of organizations. Thus they placed primary emphasis on the strength of the organization, as such; while they shared the title of reformism, they differed in significant aspects from the reformists of the federations, who in turn did not always share the viewpoints of reformists in the Socialist Party.

The other current in the division were the revolutionaries, and later the syndicalists. Where they differed from the reformists of Genoa was in their consistent emphasis on class policies, regardless of whether the beneficiaries of these policies were organized workers or not. This outlook was particularly strong in the Po Valley Chambers of Bologna and Parma, where the problems of recurrent unemployment and underemployment meant that confining their efforts to a few workers only undermined the success of the entire effort. In practice the Parma Chamber was as enthusiastic in its promotions of cooperatives and mutual aid societies, and described the combination of these with the leagues, closely integrated so that members of the economic organizations were also members of the leagues, and profits of the cooperatives were distributed to all members of the Chamber, as making for "the most perfect type among all the Chambers of Italy."[67] Where it differed was in its readiness to support other workers, and its pursuit of policies which were aimed at the entire community. Almost as soon as it was reorganized,

it voted to tax its members 20 centesimi a week to support the strike at nearby Montechiarugolo, where it felt the very existence of the Reggio Chamber was at stake.[68] The Chamber joined with the Humanitarian Society in setting up an office for those planning to go abroad to work which would help them to find jobs and get their passports in order, as well as to advise them where strikes were going on so they would not become "unwitting scabs."[69] At the same time, they began separating themselves from the socialist party. In 1902, a negative vote by the local socialist section had been enough to force the executive committee of the Chamber to resign; two years later the Chamber voted, over socialist protest, not to endorse any candidates in the local elections, and by 1906 had attacked the Genoa Chamber for "dividing the working class with petty sectarianism."[70] When the attempt to found the CGL was made in late 1906, the Chamber was wary, abstaining from the initial meeting and accusing the organizers of being a "handful of reformists who wish to make themselves the masters of the workers movement."[71] By 1907, they had already called a dozen general strikes, including one which lasted for four days until the city agreed to put price controls on bread and pasta.[72]

The difference in attitudes, which in its early years was still somewhat inchoate, was aggravated by the policies of Giolitti, who directly or indirectly managed Italian politics until the outbreak of the First World War. Giolitti was willing to concede that workers had the right to organize and to strike for higher wages, and to be heard in the national government the same way other groups were--through their deputies, through indirect pressure via prominent representatives, through their press. The state, he felt, should only intervene in

strikes to uphold the laws, not to favor one side or the other. In practice this meant that would not favor employers over employees, nor would he favor strikers over strikebreakers. In announcing that the government should try liberty rather than the repression which with his predecessors had failed, Giolitti laid down a fundamental principle of his political outlook:

> No one should delude himself that he can stop the popular classes from winning their share of economic and political influence. The friends of institutions have one duty above all, that of persuading these classes--and persuading them with facts--that they have much more to hope for from current institutions than from dreams of the future; that their every legitimate interest will find effective tutelage in the current social and political order.[73]

If this seemed to promise the freedom of the Chambers to exist, it legitimized that existence only in a limited area. Giolitti's espousal of liberty was predicated on the ability of the current system to absorb and satisfy the demands of workers without modifying the system in any serious way, on the ability of the liberal state to provide emancipation without undergoing fundamental change. For the Chambers, it conceded only the right to organize and strike without outright repression, but left unsaid what the government's reaction might be in the event that the rest of the panoply of Chamber activities came to the government's attention.

One of the limits became obvious very quickly; Giolitti did not feel that the general strike was a legitimate expression of interests by workers. He did not hesitate to intervene in Turin when the gas workers struck, and when the Chamber in Florence called a general strike in support of the turners at the Pignone foundry, he sent the Inspector General of Public Security, Cesare Ballanti to Florence with instructions to oversee the prefect, and provided six thousand troops to aid

in keeping order. He then instructed the prefect that he was to refuse to negotiate with workers or the Chamber:

> It is necessary that the deployment of force and the action against the criminals and provocateurs be such as to demonstrate to all that a general strike can only result in a loss for the working class.

Later he wired Ballanti expressing his aim of completely defeating the strike. After urging that all arrests he ordered be made by night, he went on to sum up the effects of his plan:

> Firmly maintaining the military occupation of the city, the prohibition of any meetings and rigidly executing the order to prevent the formation of any assembly of any kind, the general strike cannot help but be of extremely short duration and will serve to demonstrate that the use of similar means will only hurt the working class.[74]

A second limit was Giolitti's strong belief that strikes by public employees were illegitimate under any circumstances. When the railway workers, who were the most obvious example of public employees, threatened to strike in February, 1902, Giolitti responded by militarizing the railways; that is, by conscripting or recalling to service every employee so that a strike would become a mutiny, punishable in the military courts by death. Although this could not last indefinitely, it kept the railways running long enough to negotiate an agreement, and the strike was averted. But it also demonstrated that Giolitti could be quick and ruthless in the punishement of strikes outside of what he defined as the sphere of liberty.[75]

The most important limit was his commitment to defend the "liberty of labor," the right of strikebreakers to work without interference from strikers. In practice, this often meant the provision of troops to stand guard over the strikebreakers, preventing the strikers not only from intimidation of the strikebreakers, but even from communication with

them. Its importance lay in the fact that nearly all of the "proletarian massacres" under his rule were the results of clashes in these situations. While this was no doubt an improvement over the nineteenth-century of practice of forcibly repressing a strike or substituting striking workers with soldiers, the difference between the two policies was not always readily apparent; particularly to those who were shot.[76]

Clearly Giolitti's policies favored one side in the division of tendencies within the politicized Chambers. Opposition to the general strike, an emphasis on the peaceful resolution of disorders within the limits of the law, and even opposition to strikes by public employees were all positions held by the reformist wing of the socialist party, as well as by Chambers such as Genoa. Giolitti's own goal was to convince workers "that their every legitimate interest will find effective tutelage in the current . . . order," as he had said to the Chamber following the Genoa strike. Most historians now agree that Giolitti's policies were an attempt to bring the socialists, or at least a part of them, into the political system where they would enlarge the social bases of consent. In fact, at one point he went so far as to discuss with Bissolati and Turati the possibility of socialist participation in the government.[77] What had been a debate over the nature and purpose of workers' organizations gradually became, because of Giolitti's policies, a debate on the attitude that workers' organizations--including the Socialist Party--ought to assume towards Giolitti and his governments. Was it worth trading off votes of support for the budget--including military expenditures--in order to ensure that the government which had guaranteed the "regime of liberty" stayed in power? Were the gains of social legislation worth the surrender of the right to strike by the railwaymen?

The problem was exacerbated because Giolitti's policies not only seemed to be clearly tilting toward one side in the debate within the workers movement, but they also continued to supply ammunition for the opposite side. If this were a regime of liberty, argued the revolutionaries, why did the "proletarian massacres" occur--and keep occuring? But it was not only the violence and repression, powerful arguments though they were, which raised questions about Giolitti's policies. The most telling argument was that Giolitti and the reform movements, characterized by the programs of Chambers like Genoa, were sacrificing the needs and the desires of the majority of Italian workers to the satisfaction of a narrow group of interests. Real improvements were being made--new laws on the allocation of public works to cooperatives, improvement of the protection of women and children in the work force, reforms in old-age and disability pensions, improvements in workmens' compensation, laws favoring the construction of low-cost housing, and the like. But not all workers were in a position to take advantage of these new laws, nor, as the analysis of Chapter I points out, were most workers even in a position to benefit from the improvements which unions and cooperatives were able to bring them. Fundamental change would be necessary, such as ways of meeting the rising cost of living. And here the Giolitti government failed. Measures such as reform of the tax system, to shift the burdens into a progressive mode, failed dismally. Lowering of the grain tariffs and abolition of the consumption taxes which the cities levied--changes which would immediately benefit all workers, whether organized or not--were never seriously considered, and the Chambers who urged such reforms discovered that they were ending up on the revolutionary side in the division, without really realizing it.[78]

Giolitti's policies, then, had the effect of supplying ammunition to both sides in the debate, without providing a clear and unequivocal path for either. Giolitti was undoubtedly the most liberal and progressive in his outlook of all the prime ministers of pre-war Italy, and he was a vast improvement over the likes of Crispi, di Rudinì and Pelloux; whether or not he was worthy of support, whether or not his policies were satisfactory would depend on the impact of these on different occupational and geographical groups of workers. Since the various Federations and Chambers experienced Giolittian policies differently, it was a slow and difficult process for them to develop a national response to these policies; the process was even more contorted because of the division within the movement.

The first sign of the difficulty which this dual impact of Giolittian policies was going to create came in the attempts to found a national organization of workers, to be modeled on the Confederation General du Travail recently organized in France. The constant bickering within the Secretariat of the Resistance, its inability to lead, and in its lapse into inactivity after the general strike of 1904 led numerous workers organizations to demand the formation of a new group. Yet the desire for a national organization, so clearly felt after the general strike, took two years to accomplish, because of the suspicions that one side or another was attempting to use the national organization for its benefit. The initiative to found the new CGL came from the metallurgical workers union, FIOM, who in February, 1906 proposed that the unions meet to work out a preliminary project. While this had not only a strong reformist cast to it--the leader of the metal workers was Lodovico D'Aragona who had been active in the Genoa Chamber--it was supported in

a preliminary meeting by a group made up entirely of federations, and thus ran the risk of being considered a reformist meeting which was also going to be anti-Chamber in its outlook.[79]

What saved the organization was the broad outlook of its organizers, particularly Ernesto Verzi, whose program outlining the goals and purposes of the new organization managed to keep to the reformist outlook while at the same time incorporating and making his own some of the more telling criticisms of the revolutionary syndicalists. He strongly criticized the restricted and partial nature of unionism, pointed out how limited to the vast majority of the working class the benefits of social legislation were, and denounced the "simplistic concept of class struggle which concentrates on the battles within the factory while ignoring the larger question of the capitalist system itself." He went on to argue that not only was it necessary to unify Chambers and Federations, but that this unity could only be founded on a common program which would not ameliorate, but offer an alternative to the capitalist system. This means defending real income, so as not to allow the bourgeoisie to "take away with their left hand what they have conceded with their right." He went to argue that only a program which looked to the whole class, rather than a limited fraction of it, one which made use of all means, including parliamentary politics, could lead to this goal. In the meantime, the debilitating controversy must be over come: organizations must eliminate

> every political agitation which is not the true politics of the working class so that the new organization which we are creating today will be freed from the influence of the parties; only when the proletariat is no longer riven by fratricidal internal struggles will it be able to march secure and proud to its victory, the well-earned fruit of its labors.[80]

Verzi's program, while remaining markedly reformist in its views--a characteristic which would distinguish the CGL for the rest of its history--nonetheless struck a responsive chord among numerous organizations. While Parma remained diffident, Genoa joined in immediately, and Florence and Bologna followed along shortly. The Milan Chamber, which had been the site of the organizational meeting and remained the headquarters of the CGL for several years, not only joined in but echoed some of Verzi's themes in the opening editorial of its new newspaper, whose first issue was published three months after the foundation of the CGL. La Battaglia Proletaria immediately proclaimed itself to be a newspaper published by workers for workers, and that it would have nothing to do with

> the elegant theoretical discussions of the professors and lawyers who argue over the most syndicalist way of murdering the unions.[81]

Like Verzi, the Milan Chamber hoped to avoid the debilitating political dissidence; instead, it resurrected some of the old Italian Workers' Party themes; the notion of avoiding politics by concentrating on the needs of the working class was to be a recurrent theme of the writings in La Battaglia Proletaria. But the guide of the old POI was not to be an infallible one. Ex-POI members were not only prominent in the Chamber--one of them, Carlo dell'Avalle was Chamber secretary until 1911, when he resigned to join the right-wing dissidents of the Reform Socialist Party--but among the critics. The most prominent spokesman at Milan for the syndicalists was the ex-POI leader Costantino Lazzari, whose oppositionist views would eventually lead him to be in the founding congress of the Communist Party when it broke from the socialists after World War I.

At Parma too, the Chamber attempted to concentrate on the workers and avoid politics. In this case the inspiration came from the First International, which was the name not only of their newspaper, L'Internazionale, but whose spirit they consciously attempted to resurrect in creating the National Council of the Resistance, an organization for those groups who were opposed to the CGL.[82] Though resurrection of the International was to remain a familiar theme among the syndicalists--the Bologna syndicalists called for a return of that "that fighting spirit which animated the International" in 1912[83] and the Parma Chamber did its best to make the old Internationalist Amilcare Cipriani into a contemporary hero by running him as a protest candidate,[84] the International was no infallible guide to the future either, as the careers of former Internationalists such as Andrea Costa and Romeo Mingozzi, the reformist secretary of the Chamber at Bologna demonstrated. Instead, the responses of both Milan and Parma are indicative of the confusion in which the Chambers found themselves. Unable to develop a political response which would unify the Chambers and the Federations, caught between the shifting policies of Giolitti and the constant swings in policy of the Socialist Party, which had changed from revolutionary to reformist and back at nearly every Congress, the Chambers were hard-pressed to find a solid role for themselves.

The problem of developing a unified political response was perhaps most acute at Bologna, where the Chamber was the scene of political struggles which finally culminated in a major schism. Initially favorable to the CGL, the Chamber which had attempted to maintain a position of "loyal opposition" within the city came under heavy attack from both employers and the municipal government. While the Chamber remained

favorable to the CGL, it did not hesitate to resort to the municipal general strike to demonstrate solidarity with other workers. When the worst of the "proletarian massacres" yet took place in 1905 at Granmichele in Sicily (over 40 dead and nearly 100 wounded), the Chamber called a one-day general strike of protest, taxed each member one hours' pay for the families of the dead, and called on all other organizations to do likewise.[85]

The Chamber came to face severe opposition as a consequence. Already there had been two attempts by employers to force workers out of the Chamber. In December, 1904, the Chamber had attempted to organize the tramworkers, and the company had replied by offering to recognize the new organization, and even give them a room to meet in on the job, provided only that they seceded from the Chamber. Next month, the corset workers went on strike and their employer, a certain Poncaldi, refused to negotiate until they went back to work, seceded from the Chamber, and gave up any requests for higher wages in exchange for a promise from him that he would consider future improvements in their wages. While the tram workers won their point, the corset workers were forced to cede.[86]

In June, 1905, these were followed by the loss of the Chamber's subsidy, with the loss explained by the mayor, the Marchese Tanari, as not a question of lack of funds, but rather as a policy choice: addressing the city council he said

> In fact, the Chambers of Labor, from an instrument of measured development of peaceful struggle in the economic field, have become little by little in the hands of the socialist party transformed into political institutions of combat, of tools for class struggle against the bourgeoisie. (Murmers, shouts of protest).

After reading to the audience a motion from the last Chamber meeting in favor of socialization of the means of production, he went on to say

> And just as the socialists do not owe us a penny for the organizations which they propose to battle, so we, for the same self-evident reasons, will not vote the subsidy. (Various shouts. In the seats reserved for the general public there were heard numerous outcries and violent invectives).[87]

The public outcries recorded on the transcript became at that point so strong that the meeting had to be suspended and the room cleared by the police. The Chamber came under strong criticism by the syndicalists, and in spite of numerous meetings to discuss the Chambers' problems, the membership began to fall off. By mid-1907 the syndicalist discontent had become so strong that a syndicalist slate won the executive committee elections, and they were in charge of a 48-hour general strike of protest in October against a new "proletarian massacre," this time in Milan.[88] Surprisingly, the conduct of the general strike did not differ from an earlier one which had been called in 1906 by the reform leaders of the Chamber.[89] In both cases the issue had been killings of workers by police in northern cities; both had widespread support in the city, and even under the syndicalist leadership the reform socialist groups, republicans, and anarchists all supported the strike for the sake of solidarity.

But the climate of public opinion was increasingly turning against the Chamber of Labor. The general strike of 1907 was described in lurid terms in the national newspapers as well as the local conservative ones, with tales of violence, intimidation, and headlines like "Bologna in the hands of the hoodlums." The prefect was moved to defend the Chamber (and himself) by deploring the newspapers which helped to create the impression "among the <u>bienpensant</u> part of the citizenry that a revolution was underway." After pointing out that total damage was less than 185 lire, and that only 26 people had been arrested, half of whom were

acquitted, he registered a strong protest against the inflammatory role of Tanari, whom he quoted as saying that

> Our duty today is to man our posts. And the post of every honest man is that where he can and will defend the conquests of our Risorgimento against a tyranny whose source is obvious even to the blind, and whose actions represent the worst possible form of liberticide.[90]

Clearly the prefect was concerned to protect his own job, but his report suggests the extent to which the political action of the Chamber had made it the subject of severe attack.

The report of the prefect also suggests that he had recognized a point which Tanari was unable to see: the increasingly political action of the Chamber was not socialist, and the Chamber was remaining apolitical in the sense that it was not officially affiliated with a faction, even while it was taking an increasingly active public role. In June, 1906, he had replied to a request for information from the Minister of the Interior (in response to an interrogation by Marescalchi, the Catholic conservative who represented a rural area near Bologna) with the information that "The Chamber is not run by subversive elements." Even though public order is disturbed,

> nothing has emerged which could serve as evidence for an indictment against the Chamber, nor even any administrative proceedings.[91]

When the Ministry of Justice called on the prefects to exercise extreme vigilance on the Chambers because they were thought to be supporting the national anti-military campaign inspired by the League of Future Conscripts, the prefect again defended the Chamber by pointing out that the inspiration came from the Young Socialist League, and the Chamber's role was limited to providing meeting space--something they did for all groups on the left.[92]

The Chamber itself was unable to decide how close its ties with the Party should be, and this contributed to the recurring shifts in

the Chamber elections. The general strike of 1907 was followed by the election of reformists to the executive committee in the elections of January, 1908, a dominance which they maintained until 1912. The return of the syndicalists to power came in the midst of the most severe crisis the Chamber had yet faced.

The crisis came when the Chamber was faced with no less an issue than its survival. The problem had begun when a building contractor named Lambertini had formed an organization of other employers to deal with the bricklayers league. After long negotiations had failed to bring an agreement in early 1911, the new organization locked out the bricklayers, who in turn responded with a general strike of protest on April 14. According to the leaders of the strike, the point was to demonstrate to Lambertini that if he had the support of the Agrarian Association (the landowners group) the bricklayers had the Chamber and the agricultural workers behind them.[93] Although this episode eventually was settled peacefully, and work had begun by June, the process of conflict was barely initiated. In the fall of that year, Lambertini widened his organization to include all employers remotely involved in construction--brickmakers, cement factories, and the like--and renamed it the Federation of Construction Industries (Federazione Industriale Edile, or FIE), to which most employers belonged.[94] The following spring the syndicalists won control of the Chamber, and in their new newspaper called on workers to be unafraid of a lockout. Instead they openly welcomed the challenge of Lambertini as a test of strength, refused in advance any arbitration, and called on workers to have faith only in their organization.[95] By mid-April the FIE locked out every employee in Bologna, and announced that only those who could show proof that they

had left the Chamber would be rehired. The Chamber accepted the challenge and proclaimed a general strike "ad oltranza" (open-ended). But the strike eventually ended with no significant concessions, and the lock-out was still in effect by late fall.[96] At a bitter meeting in December, 1912, the reformists accused the syndicalist leadership of having led the workers to ruin, and in the ensuing uproar the Chamber split. Approximately 10,000 members joined the 23,000 members of the provincial Landworkers Federation, which had previously been independent, to form the Camera Confederale del Lavoro, while another 8,000 remained loyal to the syndicalists in the Camera del Lavoro Vecchia.[97]

The spring of 1913 brought a renewed offensive by the FIE, hoping to take advantage of the division to "utterly destroy" the workers' organizations in Bologna. But this time it was Lambertini who failed. While he had been able to take advantage of the divisions among the workers in 1912, as well as gain the support of public opinion since the socialists had become extremely unpopular because of their opposition to the Libyan war, in 1913 the situation had reversed. The new Camera Confederale cooperated with the old Camera Vecchia, and Lambertini's allies deserted him. Instead, both Chambers won the right to survive, and the conflict had won over workers to both the Chamber and the socialist party; by late 1914 they held the city council of Bologna, the provincial council, and every town of any importance in the province.[98] By 1914 the Confederal Chamber had grown to 32,000 members, while the Syndicalist one had about 18,000 members. Clearly the Chambers had in spite of all their struggles triumphed.

A schism, the loss of subsidies, the battles of the moderates and a three year struggle to stay alive, combined with the ravages of running

political disputes had not eliminated the Chambers; on the contrary, they had flourished, and their combined membership exceeded the peaks ever reached by the old Chamber. The FIE, on the other hand, had disappeared, and even the Agrarian Association could not hold a majority of the landowners as members. Instead, they fought with one another and not only lost their strikes as a result of their inability to present a untied front, but had lost control of the government as well. The prefect lamented that they could not even count on the votes of their tenants and sharecroppers, since

> the sharecropping contract requires on the part of the owners a spirit of liberality which the vast majority of them lack.[99]

What had enabled the Chambers to survive? In the first place, they had clearly met the aspirations of their members. The political struggle had not weakened the two Chambers in Bologna, but had enabled them to respond both to the changing conditions of their environment and the desires of their members. Even at their worst--divided by politics, isolated by their opposition to the war, and frontally assaulted by the employers, they had joined together in a fight for survival. The lessons of the Bloody Decade had paid off in making them tough organizations, and their traditions were too deep for them to disappear. Though membership fluctuated, they could count on a solid core of workers, and others responded in moments of crisis such as the general strikes. In spite of the loss of the subsidy, they had raised enough money to keep the organization going, publish two newspapers, and construct their own Casa del Popolo. However amorphous its role, it had clearly won for itself a place in the life of Bologna. If it wavered and showed uncertainty, it was no more uncertain than the socialists or indeed the workers themselves; its twists and turns, its crises and its

successes, were the clearest sign that the workers themselves were attempting on their own the arduous task of constructing for themselves an approach and a policy which would enable them to adapt to the changes of Giolittian Italy and successfully pursue that emancipation which had so long eluded them.

Not all the Chambers selected for study were as badly divided as Bologna, but the experiences of Parma and Milan clearly show that though the environments and the responses to them had differed enormously, by 1914 they too had come to a surer sense of their place in Italian life and had, at rather heavy costs, learned some lessons about the process of constructing a workers movement.

The other Chambers shared the same general economic environment which had helped to shape events at Bologna. Up until 1908, industrial growth and economic growth generally remained high; in the most reliable study of these phenomena, Alexander Gerschenkron has calculated the annual average rate of industrial growth in the period 1898-1908 at 6.7%; by contrast, for the period 1908-1913 the rate was only 2.4%.[100] But the economic picture was a little more complex than that, although this fundamental contrast between the periods before and after 1908 holds true. In 1902, industrial wages rose while profits declined. In 1903-4 both declined, and the decline in real wages continued through 1905, while profits began to increase once more. In essence, the relationship between real wages and profits returned to what it had been before the interruption of the period 1901-02, when the strike fever was at its height. After 1905, wages continued to rise, but never as fast as prices or profits. The mini-boom of 1907 kicked off an inflationary spiral in which wages constantly chased prices without ever quite catching up.

After rising briefly in 1909 to their pre-war height, real wages again fell and did not reach the 1909 level once more until 1920. In addition, all the Chambers had to deal with the sharp rise in the cost of living and the high levels of unemployment provoked by the Libyan War of 1911-12.[101]

Declining real wages at a time when the economy was not growing as fast as it had cuased major problems for most Chambers. They were asked by their members to do something about the nagging increases in the cost of living when the economy did not seem capable of rendering any more. Moreover, the slowdown in the economy meant that those industries who were most sensitive to market pressures were least likely to be in the mood for conceding wage increases. In other words, Chambers who were most likely to face the problem of declining real wages were in the cities like Milan, Bologna, and Florence, where industries were small to medium, concentrated primarily in the production of consumer goods, and thus most likely to be hit by recession. On the other hand, in Liguria, on the island of Elba, and in Terni, the industry that existed was mostly heavy industry--steel, shipbuilding, and related industries--or shipping, both of which were somewhat shielded from market pressures by the large amounts of government contracts which they received and the strong tariff protection which they enjoyed. This was particularly true at Terni, where the steel mills were virtually the product of military planning and spending, and executed almost all their work for the Marine and War Ministries.[102] Still other areas moved to a different rhythm entirely, as the agricultural market, while national, did not always move through the same phases at the same speed as did the industrial one. In contrast to the relatively affluent conditions of

1901-03, or the stagnation of 1907-08, the economy was no longer moving nationally. Instead, the regional variations in economic change were more striking, due in part to the rapid growth of industry in the last fifteen years, which had more clearly separated the industrial from the non-industrial areas. As a result, the conditions across trades in a given area were more likely to be uniform than they were across the same trade nationally. In matters such as unemployment and the high cost of living--the two most fundamental economic issues which workers' organizations faced in the Giolittian era--it was easier for a Chamber to develop a response which was valid for the workers in its area, than it was for a federation such as the metallurgical workers--whose members were employed in plants ranging from the 1500 workers in the Terni factory at Savona to the dozen or so plants at Bologna which repaired agricultural machinery and which employed only 15-20 workers apiece. Hence the ability of the Chamber to respond to social change in a way that was impossible for the national unions or parties became crucial during this period.

As had been the case at Bologna, the Chamber at Parma faced a direct threat to its existence. The recurring struggles between the Chamber and the government in Parma had led early on to a loss of both their subsidy and the free housing which the city had provided for them. In response to what the Royal Commissioner called their "provocative attitude toward the government," the Chamber lost their housing in September, 1906.[103] The following spring, the municipal council allocated 3000 lire for the subsidy, and then following a demonstration voted to donate the money to the local Charity Congregation instead. Since the Chambers had always been conspicuous in their opposition to the charity programs, this was a deliberate insult, and taken as such.[104] Shortly

thereafter, the Parma Chamber held new elections, and the executive commission elected was made up of supporters of the syndicalist view. The local paper, L'Idea, remained in the hands of local socialists who were reformists, and the Chamber began to publish their own newspaper.

While the syndicalists remained active in their opposition to the newly-founded CGL, and promoted the National Council of the Resistance as an alternative to it, their primary activity remained the reorganization of the Chamber. Under the plan approved by the general council in January, 1908, all of the leagues would be grouped into seven provincial syndicates, divided along occupational lines. In place of the leagues there would be local committees in each village, with several in Parma, to handle the bookkeeping, dues collection, and the like. The ostensible aim was to decentralize the administration, while putting all funds into a common one; thirty percent of the income would go to a central strike fund, while another twenty percent was for the league's strike fund. Ten percent each went for the administrative costs of the local committee and the syndicate, while the remaining thirty percent went for the administration and propaganda budgets of the Chamber itself.[105] The reorganization served both to knit the components of the Chamber more closely together, as well as to reduce the amount spent on administration.

The new Chamber immediately faced a threat from the Agrarian Association of Parma, which broke a previously agreed-upon province wide contract with the landworkers in March, 1908, and called a province-wide lockout instead.[106] The Agrarian Association claimed that they were no longer bound by the contract since a number of landworkers' leagues had seceded from the Chamber to form a new one at Borgo San Donnino, which had ties to both the CGL and the National Federation of Landworkers.

Since no one spoke for the workers as a whole, the contract could not be honored.[107] In spite of the split, though, the new Chamber at Borgo S. Donnino pledged itself to "total struggle" to maintain the old contracts signed in 1907. Likewise, the Parma Chamber agreed to take up work on the basis of the old contracts, but absolutely refused to recognize, negotiate with, or respect the contracts of any members of the Agrarian Association. Instead, it asked all members who were working to give ten percent of their wages to the strikers, prepared for children to temporarily leave for other Chambers in order to enable their parents to hold out longer, and in a General Council meeting gave the Executive Commission full power to use any means from the boycott to the general strike to "bring the Agrarian Association to its knees."[108] By May, even the Borgo San Donnino Chamber had pledged to subsidize the strike in any way possible, totally boycott any proprietor who was associated with the Agrarian Association, and declared themselves ready to support a general strike if necessary.[109] Under the impact of a situation in which both the Agrarian Association and the Chamber of Labor seemed bent on destroying one another, the political dissidence was temporarily put aside. In view of the direct threat to the Chamber, the National Federation of Landworkers pledged its support in early May, and the Milan Chamber helped to gather funds for the Parmese strikers, which eventually amounted to over 70,000 lire.[110]

The strike reached its climax in June, when the Chamber declared a general strike in Parma, accompanied by the massive abstention from work of not only all the workers in the countryside who had previously been working, but even the specialized workers who took care of cattle, abandoning them and in many cases turning them loose to wander the

countryside. The Agrarian Association proclaimed that only violence could settle the "social question," and began forming armed squads for the defense of their property. The general strike ended only when the government sent in troops to occupy the city and the Chamber of Labor; there were numerous clashes between the troops and the strikers, while the strike continued in the countryside. But the large numbers of arrests combined with the loss of the leaders of the Chamber finally broke the Chamber, and the strike itself, though it dragged on sporadically, eventually ended in defeat for the Parma Chamber.[111]

What was remarkable was not that the strike failed--it had, after all gone against a tightly knit organization at a time of division in the Chamber, with the consequent internal weakness and recurrent arguing with other workers' groups--but that the Chamber survived and even flourished. The following spring, after a lengthy trial at Lucca, all of the leaders of the Chamber who had fled abroad or been arrested during the strike were acquitted, to the jubilation of the Chamber.[112] By 1911 the new secretary of the Chamber, Tullio Masotti (who had become secretary while De Ambris was in exile in Brazil) wrote that the strike represented the victory of the organized working class in that it had saved the Chamber from the "insane storm of reaction" and made it possible for it to go on to new victories. It was not due to any intervention from outside, but rather the sheer might of the organization was such that it could no longer be repressed, no matter how vicious the repression became.[113] Indeed, while the Parma Chamber had had 15,049 members in 1904, by 1914 it had 20,582 despite the secession of 5639 to the dissident Chamber in Borgo San Donnino. In other words, it had doubled its membership in a decade that saw the bloodiest and longest agricultural strike in Italian history--no mean feat.

As was the case in Bologna, the political dissidence had led to a schism, but this had not lessened the importance of the Chamber as an institution. Instead, the Parma Chamber had become more clearly a political institution, speaking not only for local workers but for dissident groups all over Italy who shared to some extent the syndicalist views on working class organizations. It took responsibility for the editing and publishing of L'Internazionale, was the organizer of the dissident National Committee of the Resistance which attempted to carry the syndicalist views into the CGL; when the syndicalists decided that they had no hope of winning the CGL over to their views, the Parma Chamber took the lead in founding the Italian Syndical Union (Unione Sindicale Italiano or USI) in 1912. Unlike Bologna, the Chamber at Parma faced a strong and united adversary in the Agrarian Association, which was as determined to meet the Parma Chamber in combat as the Chamber was determined to meet it. Indeed, as one scholar has commented in writing about the strike of 1908 at Parma,

> The Agrarian Association of Parma did not limit itself to cursing the state; it directly substituted itself for the state.[114]

In a situation which so much resembled continued combat, even the slightest incident could be an occasion for a confrontation. At one point Giolitti had to reprove the prefect of Parma for an excess of rigor. The incident came about when a group of republicans and socialists asked permission to hold a public meeting to protest the treatment of prisoners. The prefect told them that they would have to move it from the center of the city to the working-class district of Oltretorrente, so that they would not provoke the military band concerts which were held in the center of Piazza Garibaldi every Sunday. When the groups

attempted to put up a poster saying the prefect had forbidden the meeting (which for all practical purposes he had, as there were no large public places in the Oltrtorrente), the prefect forbade it as a falsehood. Giolitti had to remind the prefect that

> It would be better if you adopted somewhat more flexible criteria where public meetings are concerned, since too rigorous a set of limitations easily inflames the spirit and may increase the risk of a major disturbance of the public order.[115]

This incident serves to illustrate how heavily charged with political significance even the smallest incident had become, when a simple demonstration could provoke the prefect to measures which brought reproof even from Giolitti. At times the Chamber of Labor seemed to be deliberately attempting to provoke the authorities, as they had earlier in 1912 when they attempted to put up a marble plaque honoring a volunteer from Parma who had been killed in the battle of Fontina, following Garibaldi's defeat at Aspromonte, by the Italian army. The rhetoric of this inscription was clearly designed to anger the authorities and at the same time make the identification between the current Chamber and the Garibaldian and Internationalist heroes of the past whose language regarding the state had been the same:

> Rome or death! Called to danger,
> his uniform rejected for the Red Shirt
> Giovanni Botteri
> paid with his blood, extracted by a
> royal bullet in the butchery of Fontina
> after Aspromonte, guilty of having deserted
> the king for the Nation on September 2, 1962.
>
> On the fiftieth anniversary of this fratricide
> Parma and its people
> invoke the fall of their glorious son,
> and wish here to exalt for all eternity
> his heroism and his martyrdom.[116]

The link between the martyrs of the past and those of the present was made even clearer by a ceremony the following month, in which the Chamber held

a demonstration that attracted some 6000 people, five bands, and 108 leagues with their banners to Langhirano, a small town outside of Parma where several people had been killed in a demonstration in 1908. Here numerous speeches were made and a marble monument, donated by the anarchist Chamber of Massa-Carrara, was unveiled in their memory.[117]

What had happened was that the struggle had made the Chamber of Parma into a political organization, and one which had no need of the CGL or the Socialist Party. In numerous polemical debates with the reformist Chamber at Borgo San Donnino, the Chamber emphasized repeatedly that the separation of political and economic issues ran contrary to the history and tradition of the entire workers movement; hence their dissidence with the CGL, which attempted to separate the trade unions from politics. As for the Socialist Party, their reaction was not just against the reformists, but against the notion that the party was the representative of the working class. Even when the revolutionary faction gained control of the party after 1912, and Mussolini became editor of Avanti! the secretary of the Parma Chamber could write that their success lay in that organization which

> enabled us to escape from the influence of extra-syndical forces--which, even with the best intentions in the world, end up giving the specific interests of the working class second place to those of a person, a group, or a society.[118]

In other words, the Chamber was arguing for the notion that the working class needed no representative, that the Chamber was sufficient unto itself, and that the struggles of the Chamber obviated the necessity for the CGL and the Socialist Party. As the report of the general council put it in 1913 (in reply to an editorial in the reformist L'Idea,

> Signore reformist: for you the syndical organization, when it cannot give the workers a much battered and mutilated crumb of bread

> more, must give them instead a plethora of deputies and councilmen; the high socialist ideal with which your organization is permeated is reduced to nothing more than this. For us instead the organization is not only the means for economic improvement within the limits of the capitalist system, nor even less a hiring hall for unemployed politicians, whether they battle for corporative causes or in the name of large general interest . . .; it is instead the school in which the proletariat learns to struggle and therefore to live, educating itself to sacrifice, the only true foundation of faith.

After quoting an accusation that the syndicalists deliberately stirred up trouble to find an "injection of caffeine" for themselves, they replied

> Certainly: a workers' organization only lives insofar as it has an enemy to combat. Now the merit of our organization is to have discovered the enemy outside of the fields and factories: in the government and in the State, in militarism, in the law, in all of those elements which constitute, in other words, the forces of capitalist oppression.[119]

As the Genoa Chamber had done with its reformism, the Parma Chamber took its experience with syndicalism and attempted to generalize it into a model for the rest of the workers movement in Italy. Though this syndicalism was in part based on a response to the intellectual currents of Europe which had made a loose ideology of syndicalism, such as the writings of Lagardelle and Sorel in France, there were few signs of these writings in the polemics of the Parma Chamber. Instead, it was an attempt to make sense of their own experience with the bitterness of local political action and their repeated confrontations with the Parmese Agrarian Association. Bologna was able to profit by the model in their struggle with the FIE; where Bologna differed was in the nature of their struggle for survival, which had been won only because of the cooperation of the Chamber, the provincial landworkers organization, and the Socialist Party. As a consequence, the syndicalists and the moderates in the Chamber, both of whom could point to successes of their approach, were unable to come to an agreement and the split in the Chamber was the

result. In Parma the political split coincided with the geographical division between Parma and the plains of the province, so that that the large and successful cooperative associations of the plains left the Parma Chamber to found their own grouping in Borgo San Donnino.

Both the reformism of the Genoa Chamber and the syndicalism of Parma, as well as the variations on both practiced at Bologna, are signs of the extent to which the Chamber had become a politicized institution. At Genoa, the apoliticism had remained as both a tendency to avoid political confrontation with the government, as well as opening the organization to workers of all political views. Though their ties were close to the Socialist Party, they also effectively cooperated with local Republicans and Radicals as well. While concentrating on building the organization, they also made sure it was well integrated into local life. Like them, reformists in the Po Valley were distinguished by the interlocking networks of Chambers, cooperatives, and political groups. The ties between local deputies and municipal governments, who guided and supplied the public works on which the cooperatives depended, and the Chambers which coordinated these activities, were close. Where the Chambers substituted confrontation for cooperation, as in Parma, the ties between the deputies and the cooperative organizations were so close that schism, as Borgo San Donnino, was clearly necessary. Indeed, the Borgo San Donnino organization continued to support their deputy even after his expulsion from the Socialist Party for his support of the Libyan War. The inability to select between the models offered by the combative syndicalists of Parma and the organization-minded reformists of Genoa was at the root of the major schism in Bologna. The relationship to the party on the one hand, and to the regional or national working class on

the other, was the key issue. These Chambers were not only illustrative of some ranges of response, they included nearly all forms of response. The agrarian syndicalists of Parma had their counterpart in Ferrara, Piacenza, Mirandola, and Carrara, who all faced death struggles with local elites. The interlocking network was a feature not only of the Camera Confederale of Bologna or of Borgo San Donnino, but of Reggio Emilia, Ravenna, and Mantova. The urban syndicalism of Bologna, with its sharp split from the rural workers, had its impact in Turin and Ancona as well.

Even the geographical splits in Parma and Bologna were replicated elsewhere. By 1914, the dock workers made up nearly 40% of the Chamber, with the balance made up primarily of small artisans within the city. As a consequence, they clung tightly to their traditional reformist practices, and their success enabled them to substitute cooperation with the authorities for confrontation. On the other hand, the surrounding Chambers of Savona, Sampierdarena, Sestri Ponente, and Voltri had large numbers of workers in heavy industries which were closely tied to the government. Particularly during the Libyan War and the tension attendant upon the Balkan Wars and the outbreak of World War I, the government was particularly concerned that these industries, vital to any war effort or preparation for war, not be disturbed by labor disputes. As a consequence, the Chambers in these areas found themselves facing an opposition which was much stronger and more bitter, less inclined to the reciprocal do et dus which was the heart of the Genoese practice.[120] Nonetheless, the political dissidence, the disagreements over methods, and even the schisms had not weakened the role of Chamber; on the contrary, the institution of the Chamber of Labor, whether guided by syndicalists,

anarchists, moderates, revolutionaries, reformists, or even republicans as in Jesi and other towns of the Romagna was more deeply rooted than ever.

Of all the Chambers, Milan was the one which attempted to incorporate the experiences of the other Chambers into an attitude and a policy which would enable it to make use of the best parts of the views of all factions. While all the Chambers had gradually become politicized, only at Milan was there a clear attempt at debating what that politicization might mean for the Chamber. For if the Chambers at Parma and Genoa were political organs, their political practice was not new, but rather an attempt to put into practice older views. The violent rhetoric and the attempt to combat the state on all fronts was nothing more than the revival of the First International in a new guise, and the criteria for measuring the success or failure of political action was in the combativeness it instilled in workers. Similarly at Genoa, the reformist views were the most extreme expression of a generically "popular" and democratic strain which went back to the views of the workers' societies. Only at Milan was there a conscious attempt to carve a definite role for the Chamber and the workers movement as a whole. This was because the Milan Chamber, while sensitive to the political role it played, did not wish to close itself off from the rest of the workers movement. In an attempt to define its views, it wrote in the newly-founded Il Proletariato that its program was one of a "middle way between corporativism and syndicalism." While the economic movement had to keep sight of the final goal of socialism, the Chamber and the Party both had their own spheres action. It went on to suggest that the "economic general

strike" which the syndicalists proposed as a universal answer was pointless. Either a general strike should be one of protest--which would be for a limited time only--or insurrectional, in which case it should not end until the revolution was over, one way or another.[121] In a later article on "Proletarian Politics," the Chamber clearly summed up its views by noting that the gains which were made in higher wages could be wiped out by political actions such as war, taxes, and the like. Hence the proletariat had to use political struggles to defend its class interests, just as the bourgeoisie used politics to defend their interests:

> If the proletariat were only a 'producer,' resistance would be sufficient for the defense of its labor; but the proletariat is also 'consumer,' and thereby involved in the entire society. If it does not want to lock itself in a selfish and petty corporativism, it must participate in all the struggles of civil life for the triumph of its own ideals of social emancipation.[122]

The logical conclusion was that the Chamber must engage in both politics and economic agitation, and bring to both a class viewpoint.

The issues around which the Chamber mobilized, and on which it took political stands fall naturally into two groups: the defense of working-class organizations and organizers from the degradations of the government, and the continued protests against the government policies which were injurious to the working class as a whole. The first was the continuation of their role as "organizations for defense of democratic and statutory liberties"; the second was their attempt to define in practice what the class attitude was to be, and to abandon the attempt to defend the general interest in exchange for the defense of class interests.

Most prominent in their defense of working-class organizations and their leaders were the frequent protests against the "proletarian massacres," which, the Milan Chamber had as early as 1909 complained,

"stretched in a chain through the whole of the Giolitti governments."[123] In January 1913 alone, there were three of these at Boganzola in Parma, Comiso in Syracuse, and Roccagorga outside of Rome where seven people were killed and nearly forty injured. In every case the Chamber staged protest demonstrations, the one for Roccagorga drawing nearly 40,000 people.[124] As well as the protests, the Chamber took up the cause of organizers ranging from Ettor and Giovanitti, in whose defense they called a comizio,[125] to the syndicalist organizers of a metallurgical strike in Milan. This last was particularly important, for the Chamber had voted down a general strike in support of the metallurgical strike, in spite of the request of the USI for support; but when the sentences handed down to the USI leaders seemed excessively repressive, they did not hesitate to call a general strike of protest.[126] The Chamber played an important role in Red Week (June 7-14, 1914), and afterward formed a national committee to defend the "political victims" of that outburst.[127]

More revealing of the Chamber's attitudes were the positions it took on political issues. The Chamber was strongly against the Libyan War, and even refused to vote money for the families of the war dead, arguing that a war designed and carried out by the bourgeoisie should be paid for by them.[128] Anti-war protests were frequent, averaging one every two weeks or so for the duration of the fighting in Libya. The celebration of May Day, 1912, was a "solemn protest against the war, reaction, and for the amnesty of all political prisoners.[129] But the Chamber also began arguing against the government's role in other matters, denouncing the role of the police in strikes as that of an "obsequious instrument of capitalism,"[130] and calling on the government to put its unemployed to work instead of "dispersing the national treasury

on the bloody sands of Libya."[131] When Giolitti promulgated the new electoral law which broadened the suffrage, the Chamber immediately scheduled a series of meetings to explain how its provisions discriminated against workers.[132] The themes of anti-war protest and class defense came together in a large demonstration in December, 1912, which aimed at making clear the various strategems by which the government was attempting to conceal the costs of the war, as well as demand progressive income taxes, amnesty for political prisoners, and abolition of those articles of the penal code which were most frequently used to arrest activists.[133]

The general themes of anti-war protest were not only against the brutality and loss of life in war, but specifically aimed at the costs of war to workers--unemployment, high taxes and inflation, the diversion of expenditure from public works, and the general abandonment of the interests of the working class for those of the middle class. In this the Chamber was able to emphasize its solidarity with all workers, regardless of their political views, and at the same time pinpoint responsibility for these problems. While the Socialist Party wavered, and some members of the party actually supported the war, the Chamber remained firmly in its class positions, and urged workers to vote only for those socialist candidates who had actively opposed the war.[134]

When this delicate balance between the syndicalist and reformist forces brought the Chamber into controversy with the CGL, they did not hesitate to attack even the organization to which they had been so long attached. In November of 1913 the Milan Chamber called for a national meeting of the Chambers to discuss the problems of unemployment and proletarian unity, inviting all Chambers to attend, regardless of whether

they were members of the CGL or not. The Chamber of Genoa not only refused to attend the meeting, but sent out a circular urging all Chambers to boycott the meeting as a deliberate attempt to break the discipline of the CGL. The following day the Governing Council of the CGL condemned the meeting, calling it a "deliberate act of insubordination," and ordering them to cancel the meeting.[135]

The Chamber responded by voting to ignore the CGL's motion, arguing that they had a legitimate right to meet, and the CGL had "no monopoly of representation" of the working class. Rigola promptly replied the following day with a letter attacking the meeting once more, and arguing that the federations really represented the workers--the Chambers merely represented those workers who for one reason or another did not have a federation for their category yet. This was a deliberate insult, and the presence of Rigola and D'Aragona at a meeting at the Chamber that night did nothing to help the situation. Rigola argued that only the CGL was authorized to deal with "general questions," but was shouted down by the audience which called out, "And if you don't do it . . .?"[136]

What Rigola was suggesting went beyond the political distinction between reformism and syndicalism--he was arguing against the very existence of the Chambers. As a consequence, the Chamber voted unanimously to break discipline and hold the meeting on December 15, 1913. The subsequent meeting, which took as its theme "proletarian unity," adopted a motion that urged that Milan and the Chambers which had attended take the lead in unifying the working class. It was up to them, argued the Milanese secretary Adelino Marchetti, to recognize that many of the syndicalist attacks were based on criticisms of real problems which the workers recognized, and that a Chamber which wished to maintain its

position as the real leader of the working class (thus explicitly refuting Rigola's views) must take the best points from reformism and syndicalism and transcend both, in the process supplanting both the CGL and the USI. As each Chamber could provide unity on the local level by overcoming the debate over syndicalism, they could work together to provide organization form for the unity of the working class which neither the CGL, nor the USI, nor even the Socialist Party could provide.[137]

The significance of this meeting lies in the Milan Chamber's attempt to go beyond the political debates and find a position which would enable all Chambers to join together--clear proof that the Chamber of Labor had won for itself a role in Italian life, no matter how amorphous. While this role was vague, there was a definite sense emerging from the meeting that only the Chambers of Labor were the real representatives of the working class, and that while the reformist and syndicalist arguments had obscured it, the Chambers could find that role. Unlike the leaders of the USI, they knew the conditions of the working class in their area and could, they hoped, lay the basis for a unity. Unlike the CGL, they knew that the place of the Chambers was central, and not ephemeral. While they undoubtedly had differences with the Socialist Party, they knew that it alone could not lead workers. As political institutions, speaking for the working class, they had to be successful if that working class's emancipation, so long elusive, were ever to be achieved.

FOOTNOTES--CHAPTER IV

[1]Camera del Lavoro, Milano, Statuto e regolamento (Milan, Camera del Lavoro, 1900), Article 3. Every Chamber had a provision similar to Milan's: see Felice Anzi, Origini e funzioni delle Camere del Lavoro (Milan, Camera del Lavoro, [1922?] 9-10; Brocchi, L'organizzazione, 6-9.

[2]Stefano Merli goes so far as to accuse the Chambers of "servility" to the needs of industrial capitalism, and attempts to attribute a desire to avoid confrontation at all costs. This seems to me a clear misunderstanding of the significance of apoliticism. See Proletariato di fabbrica, 631-754.

[3]Relazioni ed ordini del giorno approvati al Congresso delle Camere del Lavoro tenutosi a Milano nei giorni 1-2 luglio 1900, as reproduced in Merli, Documenti, 801-802.

[4]Paolo Spriano, Socialismo e classe operaia in Torino (Turin, Einaudi, 1958), 72.

[5]Merli, Proletariato di fabbrica, 731.

[6]L'Era Nuova (Genoa) 20 December 1896. See Nora Doria Goldschmidt, "Il primo scioglimento della Camera del Lavoro di Genova," Movimento operaio e contadino in Liguria, 2 (May-August 1950); 45-52. On the trial see Avanti! 15 July 1897.

[7]Merli, Proletariato di fabbrica, 732-33.

[8]Osvaldo Gnocchi-Viani, Dieci anni di Camere del Lavoro in Italia (Bolgona, Camera del Lavoro, 1899) 25; 37.

[9]Merli, Proletariato di fabbrica, 757. This was in January, 1896.

[10]Camera del Lavoro di Bologna, Progetto di una inchiesta statistica su tutte le condizioni della vita operaia (Bologna, Camera del Lavoro, 1900).

[11]ASB, Gabinetto Prefettura, c.6, f.2 (1908) b.608. "Agitazioni della lega dei inquilini."

[12]Arbizzani, "La Camera," 336-338.

[13]ASB, Gab. Pref., c.6, f.2 (1910) b.298. "L'agitazione di Pian di Macinia."

[14]ASB, c.7, f.2 (1906) b.548. Questore to prefect, 19 May 1906.

[15]The prefect's complaint is in ASB, c.9, f.1&2. (1914). "Dimostrazioni." Prefect to Minister of the Interiod, 22 December 1912. The chant of the braccianti is quoted in Salvador, La repubblica socialista mantovana, 197. The links between the socialist deputies and the public works are discussed in some detail in Salvadori, as well as in Roveri, Dal sindicalismo rivoluzionario, Prete, Le lotte agrarie, and Zangheri, introduction to Lotte agrarie.

[16]The phrase is from the program adopted by the first congress of the Chambers (1893). Resoconto del primo congresso, 1.

[17]Mariella Nejrotti, "Le origini e le prime vicende (1880-1904)" in Aldo Agosti et al., Il movimento sindicale in Italia (Turin, Fondazione Einaudi, 1970) 12. The problem was not unique to Italy. As David Landes puts it,

> unionism was a civil rights movement in the sense that we understand the term today. The early unionists were bargaining for equality as citizens as well as better working conditions. "Labor and the Labor Movement" in Norman Cantor, ed., Conversations with Historians (New York, Ginn, 1971) 2:157.

[18]Candeloro, Volume VI, 427.

[19]Though the events were obviously connected, they were hardly conspiratorial. See the description of Sicily in S. F. Romano, Storia dei Fasci siciliani (Bari, Laterza, 1959). For the events in the Lunigiana see Camillo Bernieri, Cento anni di storia sociale a Carrara (Milan, Feltrinelli, 1961) and Renato Mori, La lotta sociale in Lunigiana (Florence, LeMonnier, 1958). There is a brief analytical description of these events in Louise A. Tilley "Italy," 147-155, in Charles Tilly, Louise Tilly, and Richard Tilly, The Rebellious Century (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1975) while the clearest description of the impact of these events on national politics in Candeloro, Volume VI, 403-454.

[20]Persecution of the party had already extended to even the smallest detail. On May 10, 1894, the Minister of the Interior had sent all prefects a circular which explained in detail how to prosecute any attempt to perform Turati's "Hymn of the Workers" which was the party anthem. Printed copies could be sequestered. If sung in public, the singers could be prosecuted under the same law which allowed the sequestration, provided it was done "in a threatening manner"; otherwise the singers could be arrested for making "seditious outcries in public." Still another provision could be used if it were sung at night, while a fourth law was applicable if it were merely played by a band. A month later, the Ministry of Justice followed it up with a similar circular so that there would be no acquittals for such arrests. The circulars are reproduced in Neppi Modona, Sciopero, potero politico, e magistratura, 374-76.

[21]Candeloro, Volume VII, 36.

[22]Ibid., 83. Syntax altered for clarity.

[23]Adalberto Nascimbene, Il movimento operaio in Italia; la questione sociale a Milano dal 1890 al 1900 (Milan, Cisalpino-Goliardico, 1972) 180-186; Candeloro Vol. VI, 450-456; Mack Smith Italy, 170-172.

[24]Circular of the Guardasigilli, 29 April 1897; reproduced in Neppi Modonoa, Sciopero, 380.

[25]Reproduced ibid., 378-379. Italian law, under article 247 of the penal code, punished with sentences of three months to a year, and fines of 50 to 1000 lire, "whoever publicly supports an action which the law defines as criminal, or incites disobedience of the law, or incites hatred among the various social classes in a way perilous to the public tranquility." This catch-all provision, which could only be evaded by holding private meetings, was supplemented by the public security law of 1889, whose article 3 allowed the police to arrest and hold for up to three months--without trial--anyone who "emitted seditious outcries in a public place" provided there was no section on the penal code under which they would not be subject to more extreme prosecutions. Ibid., 113.

[26]Ibid., 85-86.

[27]The Chambers' motion is reproduced in Merli, Documenti, 626. On the general background and cause of the disorders of 1898 see Neufeld, Italy, 218-223; Candeloro, Volume VII, 51-54. On the events themselves, see the contemporary account by Nicole Colajanni, L'Italia in 1898 (Milan, Feltrinelli, 1961) and the more recent Raffaele Colapietra Il novantotto (Milan, Gallo, 1959). There is some informative material on the role of the Chambers in Carlo Pinzani, La crisi politica di fine secolo in Toscana (Florence, La Nuova Italia, 1963), esp. 115-223.

[28]Louise A. Tilly "I fatti di maggio: The Working Class of Milan and the Rebellion of 1898" in Robert Bezucha, ed., Modern European Social History (Lexington, Mass., D. C. Heath & Co., 1972) 124-158. The argument is extended and refined in her study of Italy in The Rebellious Century.

[29]Ibid., 155.

[30]It was in fact this act which led a group of Italian anarchists in exile in Paterson, New Jersey to set in motion the chain of events which culminated in the assassination of King Umberto by one of their number two years later.

[31]Ruguzzi, Socialismo e sindicalismo nel Parmenese, 82-87 describes the dissolution of the Parma Chamber made under Pelloux's orders as commanding general of the IV Corps.

[32]Gastone Manacorda, introduction to Luigi Pelloux, Quelque souvenirs de ma vie (Rome, Istituto per la storia del età moderna e contemporanea, 1967), LX.

[33]The fullest reconstruction of these events is Gaetano Perillo, "Ricostituzione e secondo scioglimento della Camera del Lavoro di

Genova," Movimento Operaio e contadino in Liguria, 2 (May-August, 1956) 53-75. Interesting details also in Mario Bettinotti, Vent'anni di movimento operaio genovese (Bari, Laterza, 1931), 50-51. The prefect justified his actions in a revealing letter to Giolitti of December 26, 1900; Carte Giolitti, I, document 480.

[34]Editorial in L'Era Nuova (Genoa), 20 December 1896.

[35]Neppi Modona, Sciopero, 89.

[36]For wages, see Table I, Chapter II. Strike statistics were collected and published by the Ministry of the Interior, here taken from Candeloro, Volume VII, 140-141; see also Zangheri, Lotte Agrarie, XXXVIII-XXX.

[37]Figures from Barbadoro, La CGL, table 27, p. 133.

[38]Lotte Agrarie (Report to Second Congress, April 1906), 135. On industrial workers see BUL, January 1905, passim.

[39]Indeed the idea of the general strike seems largely to have been that of the typographer Lodovico Calda, then Chamber secretary. The evening before the strike he brought the leaders of all the leagues together, at one point locking them in the same room, until they took some action which would be binding on all. Bettinotti, Vent'anni di movimento oeraio genovese, 50-51.

[40]Carte Giolitti, II, documents 273, 274, 276, 280, and 281. Telegrams from Giolitti to the prefect of Turin, 22 and 23 February, 1902. These documents outline the initial stages of the strike. The "remedy" Giolitti had in mind was his usual: transfer of the prefect to a post in southern Italy. When the prefect of Pisa failed to keep the crowds away from the royal train when it passed through, the unfortunate man found himself transferred to Foggia a week later.

[41]Ibid., 312. Prefect of Turin to Giolitti, 5 March 1902.

[42]On Florence and Varese, see Neppi Modona, Sciopero, 120. On Savona, Arrigo Cervetto, "Le lotte operaie alla siderugica di Savona" Movemento Operaio, 6 (July-August 1954) 545-565.

[43]Osvalde Gnocchi-Viani, Evoluzione economica del proletariato (Genoa, Camera del Lavoro, 1896) 8-9.

[44]Neppi Modona, Sciopero, 120.

[45]The details on this incident are in Roveri, Dal sindicalismo rivoluzionario, 123-132. See his Appendix III, 363-373, which contains the protest of Bissolati, Giolitti's reply, and the animated sicussion of the Chamber of Deputies of June 29, 1901.

[46]Giuliano Procacci has written a thorough and detailed discussion of the origins, course and consequences of the strike: "Lo sciopero

generale del 1904" Rivista storica del socialismo, 17 (September-December, 1962) 401-439, now reprinted as the last chapter of his Lotte di classe.

[47]For Carrara see Bernieri, Cento anni di storia sociale a Carrara, 173-178. On Genoa see Il Lavoro (Genoa), 26 March 1904; 21 September 1904. Participation in the strike is discussed by Procacci, passim.

[48]There is a considerable amount of literature on the history of the socialist party. Some of the more useful works are the short history by Francesco Pedone Il Partito Socialista Italiamo nei suoi congressi (Milan, Edizioni Avanti!, 1959-63); three volumes; which contains much detail, including texts of the deliberations of the Congresses. There are two anthologies of articles, speeches, and debates with intelligent critical introductions to each piece; the one edited by Gastone Manacorda, Il socialismo nella storia d'Italia (Bari, Laterza, 1970) spreads its net rather wide; Luigi Cortesi's Il socialismo tra riforme e rivoluzione; dibattiti congressuali nel PSI, 1892-1921 (Bari, Laterza, 1969) is more limited in scope, as the title suggests, but equally useful. Gaetano Arfè touches on many important themes in his Storia del Avanti! (Milan, Edizioni Avanti!, 1956), and has attempted a critical history of socialism, Storia del socialismo italiano, 1892-1926 (Turin, Einaudi, 1965) which is often stimulating. The problem of the division within the party is the theme of Giuseppe Mammarella's Riformisti e rivoluzionari nel Partito Socialista Italiano, 1900-1912 (Padova, Marsilio, 1968).

[49]Mammarella, Riformisti e rivoluzionari, 68.

[50]Ibid., 84-89 discusses the general impact of European revisionism on the Italian movement.

[51]Procacci, "Lo sciopero generale."

[52]Congresso delle Camere del Lavoro e III Convegno della Resistenza, Azione Triennale (November 1901-December 1904) del Comitato Federale e Segretariato della Resistenza (Milan, 1905) 13. (Hereinafter Azione triennale).

[53]Avanti!, 7 November 1902.

[54]Azione triennale, 11. Cf. Franco Catalano, introduction to Marchetti La CGL, XV.

[55]The approval was possible only because voting was based on the numbers of workers represented, and Cabrini had juggled the figures to give a predominance of votes to the federations. According to him, the federations represented 205,362 members, while the Chambers had only 188,440. The Labor Office, which was more accurate in these matters, calculated two months later that there were 150,102 members in the federations, and 347,249 in the Chambers. See Barbadoro, La CGL, 141.

[56]Annamaria Andreasi, "La federazione edilizia e il movimento sindicale italiano (1900-1915) Annali della fondazione Luigi Einaudi (1968), 213-255.

[57]Ibid., 216.

[58]L'Era Nuova (Genoa) Editorial 9 June 1901.

[59]Ibid., 5 January 1902. See also Gaetano Perillo, "Socialismo e classe operaia nel Genovesato dallo sciopero del 1900 alla scissione sindicalista (2)" Movimento operaio e socialista in Liguria 6 (September-October 1960), 164.

[60]L'Era Nuova, editorial, 23 February 1902.

[61]Il Lavoro (Genoa) 26 March 1904.

[62]Procacci, Lotta di Classe, 299.

[63]Perillo "Socialismo e class operaia . . . (5)," Movimento operaio e socialista in Liguria 7 (July-December 1961) 284-288; Lotta Socialista (Sampierdarena) 16 March 1907.

[64]Perillo, Ibid., 290-307.

[65]BUL, January 1907, 462.

[66]Il Lavoro (Genoa) 27 March 1904. For the elections see Perillo "Socialismo e classe operaia . . . (6)," 307.

[67]Camera del Lavoro di Parma e Provincia, Notizie e relazioni, 1902-1905 (Parma, Camera del Lavoro, 1906?), 2-5.

[68]L'Idea (Parma) 7 September 1901.

[69]Ibid., 19 December 1903.

[70]Ibid., 26 April 1902; 17 June 1904; 20 January 1906.

[71]Ibid., 21 and 29 September, 1906.

[72]Ibid., 26 June 1907.

[73]From his speech of 4 February 1901, attacking the Saracco government for its handling of the Genoa strike. Fundamental to an understanding of Giolitti, it is reprinted in Luciano Cafagna, ed., Il Nord nella storia d'Italia (Bari, Laterza, 1962) 368-381. The quotation is from p. 381.

[74]Carte Giolitti, II, 445, 447, 451. Giolitti to Ballanti 31 August 1902; 446, 450. Giolitti to prefect of Florence 31 August 1902. When the possibility appeared that there might be a general strike of

sympathy at Pisa, Giolitti's instructions were equally explicit: "If a strike is declared in solidarity with those arrested, it would be affair to be repressed immediately with maximum energy and severity . . ." Document 467, Giolitti to prefect of Pisa, 2 September 1902.

[75]There is a short description of the railway agitation in Candeloro, Storia dell'Italia moderna, VII, 142-43. For its impact see Libertario Guerrini, Organizzazioni e lotte dei ferrovieri italiani 1861-1907 (Florence, Edizioni Rinascita, 1957) 275-304.

[76]Carocci, Giolitti e l'età giolittiana, 65-66.

[77]Mammarella, Riformisti e rivoluzionari, 154-56.

[78]In this I follow the argument of Candeloro, Storia dell'Italia moderna, VII, 137-158. The key to any broad change in income distribution was a reform of the regressive tax system, and although Giolitti proposed several changes, he was never willing to risk a vote of confidence on any of them; consequently, nothing was accomplished.

[79]Even Rigola admitted that it could easily have appeared as a "narrow and sectarian initiative"; see his Storia del movimento operaio 306-307.

[80]Verzi's speech to the founding meeting of the CGL, 29 September 1906; reprinted in Marchetti, La CGL, 3-6.

[81]La Battaglia Proletaria (Milan) 29 January 1907.

[82]See the report of the meeting which led to the Comitato Nazionale della Resistanca, Il convegnoa sindicale di Parma 3 Novembre 1907 (Parma, Camera del Lavoro, 1908).

[83]L'Azione Sindicale (Bologna) 8 June 1912.

[84]Almanacco de L'Internazionale (Parma, Camera del Lavoro, 1912), 15-22.

[85]ASB, Gab. Pref., c.6, f.2, b.650 (1905). Questore to prefect, 24 August 1905. La Squilla (Bologna) 26 August 1905.

[86]Ibid., c.6, f.2, b.769 (1904) and b.20 (1905) cover the tramworkers. See b.144 (1905) on the corset makers.

[87]Ibid., c.7, f.1&2, b.548 (1906) and b.147 (1907). Transcript of the city council meeting of 15 June 1905.

[88]La Squilla (Bologna) 8 June 1907; 19 October 1907.

[89]La Squilla (Bologna) 13 May, 26 May, 9 June 1906.

[90]ASB, Gab. Pref. c.6, f.2, b.778 (1907). Report of prefect to Direzione Generale della Pubblica Sicurezza 21 October 1907. Clippings

from all local newspapers describing the strike, as well as the telegrams from the local correspondents of Il Secolo (Milan), Corriere della Sera (Milan), and La Stampa (Turin) are included in the folder.

[91]Ibid., c.6, f.2, b.354 (1914). Prefect to Minister of the Interior 13 June 1906.

[92]Ibid., c.6, f.2 (1908) b.300 and 589 (Combined). Questore to prefect, 24 February 1906 (Copy sent to Rome).

[93]ASB, Gab, Pref., c.6, f.2, b.267 (1911) covers the negotiations leading up to the lockout, while the strike is covered in b.344. The point of the strike is spelled out in the special newspaper published by the strikers, La voce dei serrati 22 April 1911.

[94]Ibid., c.7, f.1 Prefect to Minister of the Interior, 22 September 1911.

[95]L'Azione Sindicale (Bologna) 30 March, 6 April 1912. The syndicalist victory in the elections is reported in L'Internazionale (Parma) 2 March 1912.

[96]Ibid., 13 April, 8 June, 10 August, 9 November 1912.

[97]Ibid., 15 March 1913. La Squilla, 22 March 1913.

[98]ASB, Gab. Pref. c.6, f.2, b.675 (1912) and b.385 (1913); c.7, f.1, b.637. Letter of Lambertini to prefect 29 September 1913, announcing dissolution of FIE is in b.843 (1914).

[99]Ibid., c.7, f.1, b.843 "Rapporto sulle condizioni politiche della provincia."

[100]Alexander Gerschenkron, Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1962), 77.

[101]Carocci, Giolitti e l'età giolittiana, 72-73; for the economic impact of the Libyan War on workers, see Maurizio degl'Inoocenti, "La guerra libica, la crisi del riformismo, e la vittoria degli intransigneti," Studi Storici 13 (July-September 1972) 472-481; see also Table I, Chapter II, on wages.

[102]The economic problems after 1908 are discussed in some detail in Candeloro, Storia dell'Italia Moderna, VII, 349-359. For a fuller discussion of Italy's first "military-industrial comples," see Enrico Guaita "Alle origini del capitalismo industriale italiano: la nascita della 'Terni,'" Studi Storici 11 (April-June 1970) 292-312.

[103]L'Idea (Parma) 13 October 1906. Italian cities were temporarily governed by a Royal Commissioner whenever the municipal council was unable to elect a mayor--since the mayor was elected the same way deputies chose a prime minister, this was not an unusual situation.

[104]BUL, April 1907, 944.

[105]L'Internazionale (Parma) 4 January 1908; 18 January 1908; 28 December 1907.

[106]Ibid., 7 March 1909.

[107]On the secession and Agrarian Association's response, see L'Idea (Parma) 8 and 29 February, 25 March 1908.

[108]L'Idea 25 March 1908; L'Internazionale 24 March 1908.

[109]L'Idea 30 May 1908.

[110]Support for the strike was announced by the Milan Chamber in La Battaglia Proletaria 9 May 1908. The landworkers described their role in the report of the executive commission to the 1911 Congress, reprinted in Lotte Agrarie 236; 248.

[111]See Riguzzi, Socialismo e sindicalismo, esp. 117-125. The fullest reconstruction of the strike is in Thomas R. Sykes, "The Practice of Revolutionary Syndicalism in Italy," (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1972) Chapter 3.

[112]L'Internazionale 19 April, 9 May 1909. During the trial the paper was published daily, rather than weekly.

[113]L'Internazionale 17 June 1911.

[114]Maria Adelaide Salvacco "Riflessi parlamentari delle lotte agrarie emiliane" in Renato Zangheri, ed., Le campagne emiliane nell' epoca moderna (Bari, Laterza, 1957) 223.

[115]ACS Min. Interno, Direz. Gen. P.S., Ufficio Riservato (1911-15) b.394, f.88. Prefect-Giolitti, 24 November 1912; Giolitti-Prefect, 28 November 1912.

[116]ASC Min. Interno, Direz. Gen. P.S., Ufficio Riservato (1911-15) c. C-1, f.44, b.37. Prefect to Direz. Gen. P.S., 17 August 1912.

[117]Ibid., b.58, f.44. Prefect of Parma to Minister of the Interior, 28 September 1912.

[118]Tullio Masotti, "L'organizzazione proletaria nel Parmenese," Almanacco de L'Internazionale, 32-33.

[119]L'Internazionale 15 February 1913. As examples the editorial listed agitations against the Libyan War, against colonialism, "pro vittime politiche," in favor of Ettor and Giovanitti, the general amnesty, for reform of the penal code and against the "proletarian massacres."

[120]See the series of articles by Adelchi Baratono on Genoese socialism in Avanti! 18 July, 19 July, 28 July, and 4 August 1913. On the attitudes of heavy industry and the government see Carocci, Giolitti e

l'età giolittiana, 110-125; Candeloro, Storia dell'Italia moderna VII, 349-359.

[121]Il Proletariato, 23 August 1913.

[122]Ibid., 18 October 1913.

[123]La Battaglia Proletaria (Milan) 20 August 1909.

[124]Avanti!, 8 January, 13 January and 20 January 1913.

[125]Ibid., 29 July 1912.

[126]Ibid., 20 May, 14 June 1913.

[127]Ibid., 7-14 June, 1914; 18 July 1914.

[128]Ibid., 17 November 1911.

[129]Ibid., 2 May 1912.

[130]Ibid., 26 April 1912.

[131]Ibid., 8 May, 17 May, 3 June, 20 June, 23 June 1912.

[132]Ibid., 21 August 1912.

[133]Ibid., 1 December 1912.

[134]Ibid., 23 October 1913.

[135]Ibid., 5, 25, 26, 28 and 29 November 1913.

[136]Ibid., 30 November 1913.

[137]The discussions are in Unità proletaria. Resoconto stenografico del convegno delle Camere del Lavoro (Milan, Camera del Lavoro, 1914). 23 Chambers attended the meeting or pledged support of its views, including the anarcho-syndicalist Chamber of Ancona, as well as those of Rome, Venice, Verona, Modena, and Florence. See also Il Proletariato (Milan) 27 December 1913; 10 January 1914.

CONCLUSION

The Italian working class at the beginning of the twentieth century was a widely diverse group, cleaved not only by the differential economic and social geography of Italy, but by differences within the class itself. As I stress in Chapter I, the economic and social status of workers varied not only from region to region, from province to province, but among the workers of a given area as well. The late arrival and hesitant pace of Italian industrialization meant that the working class was not yet a modern and nearly homogeneous industrial proletariat; on the other hand, neither was Italy a feudal state with a mass of undifferentiated serfs and peasants either. Instead a modern industrial economy and a near-modern artisan one co-existed in the same areas; thus we have the sight of the Chamber of Labor in Genoa made up of laborers and small artisans while virtually next door the Chambers of Savona, Sampierdarena, and Sestri Ponenete drew on the workers in the shipyards and steel mills of those towns and of Genoa itself. Similarly the countryside showed a mixture of large-scale commercial farming which employed masses of braccianti and at areas cultivated by sharecroppers, tenants, and small-holders.

Nonetheless, the Chambers of Labor managed to draw their membership from all of these and other groups--clerks, shopkeepers, and lower middle class elements--as well. It would be difficult to imagine many economic issues which held such groups together; that they did hold together clearly contradicts the general assumption that a common economic

status is the basis of working-class organization. The absence of common economic bonds suggests that the links lay elsewhere.

In Chapter II, the wide range of Chamber activities is studied with the aim of understanding what it was the Chambers did for their members and how they held together such a variegated group. It is clear that the Chambers were more than trade-unions; indeed, they lacked the personnel and resources to be as efficient in winning improvements in wages and working conditions as the craft and industrial unions--the "category federations." Moreover, the analysis in that chapter argues that even if they were unions the tactics of strikes, negotiations and collective bargaining--what Italians refer to as "resistance"--were applicable at best only to some of the Chamber's members. Though cooperation and mutual aid--the other two traditional areas of working-class economic activity--were useful for some members as well, they too could not have satisfied the needs of all Chamber members. Thus it seems that the Chambers were not primarily economic organizations, though the winning of economic improvements for their members was part of their programs. If that were so, then what was the basis for the Chamber? What did it provide that attracted and held members?

The key was their dedication to the protection of the workers "in all the contingencies of their lives." Rather than see the workers merely as sellers of labor power on the market, they tried to deal with them as human beings, and with their problems. The very selection of the name "Chamber of Labor," with its implied notion of being to the working class what Chamber leaders perceived the Chamber of Commerce was to the middle class, argues for a wider view of workers' interests. And the discussion of the activities of the Chamber in Chapter II shows how

the Chamber began with the attempt to deal with the everyday problems of workers in a direct and practical way, and finished by becoming the spokesman, in the name of the working class, for a broad public interest in progress, democracy, social justice and social equity. By laying the grounds for unity based on something more than economic ties, by identifying the interests of the working class with a more broadly defined public interest, the Chambers attempted to cling to their status as public institutions while at the same time serving the interests of their membership, defined as the working class. While their direct services and their intervention in the economic struggles of the leagues helped win them the legitimacy that enabled them to speak for the workers, at the same their definition of working-class interests enabled the workers to be part of more broadly defined groups--the poor, the politically oppressed, those who believed in the rights of free speech and assembly, or those who felt themselves part of the world of progress and modernity, or those who felt themselves excluded from the official Italy of the Risorgimento. In all of these definitions, the key to their coalition was the counterposing of broad interests to the narrow interests of the government, or the selfish interests of the groups which supported it. Almost without realizing it, the Chambers were preparing the way for overcoming the divergent economic interests of the different sectors of the working class, by building a broad coalition of opposition.

If the study of the Chamber's activities provides us with some measure of the nature of the relationships between the Chambers and the members, it does not always clarify why so many functions should be located in the same organization, nor why these functions should assume

the shape they did. Hence Chapter III turns to the previous history of the workers movement in order to unravel these problems. Three points of interest emerge from that discussion. The first is the historical models of organization, where we point out that all Italian workers groups studied, regardless of their differences on other issues, had regarded the optimum association as one which provided for subdivision by trade and craft so as to allow particular interests to be handled by the league or section, while the general interest of the working class was the responsibility of the general association. Thus the structure of the Chamber was the one sanctioned by tradition, and the creation of an autonomous union, such as the category federations were, was the distinctive break from these traditions.

But if the traditions were clear on the form appropriate for the expression of the general interest of the working class, there was less agreement in two areas where the general interest had expression: the cultural programs and the public role of the organization. Here we pointed out the initial desire to share in the culture of the middle classes was succeeded by the Mazzinian goal of a new culture for all classes. In turn the International suggested that the experience of action was the most important form of learning for members, and thus they subordinated the specifically "cultural" actions to the general ones of organizing and acting. The exchange between Gnocchi-Viani and Casati suggests still another view of culture, one which was not divorced from, but rather grew out of the daily lives of workers. This last view, only dimly articulated, made possible a link between the limited views of a class culture and the traditions of the Enlightenment on the one hand, and the new positivist social science on the other hand. As

such, it would help to establish those links between workers and the broader society mentioned in the discussion of Chapter II.

It was in the debates over the public role of the Chambers that the heritage left to the Chambers was most ambiguous. Simply put, the Piedmontese societies preferred to maintain what is today referred to as a "low profile" publicly, to avoid both governmental repression and paternalistic guidance. By contrast, the Mazzinians argued for workers' organizations to be full participants in the public life of the new nation; in the vision of a new age of association in the nation, the workers' societies would have a new public role, part of the new public role which all men would enjoy. From an avoidance of politics, in other words, the Mazzinians pushed for a dependence on politics alone as the solution to the material and moral problems of workers. Similarly, the Internationalists felt that politics alone could solve workers' problems, but not the politics of Mazzini; instead social insurrection was the goal. Both argued against participation in the dirty game of electioneering or representation to the authorities as improper for workers' organizations. Though both views were probably useful correctives to the quietism of the Piedmontese societies, their views were at the same time sectarian; consequently the triumph of Mazzinian or Internationalist views was easily perceived as the triumph of their sect, rather than an improvement over the positions held by the Piedmontese societies. As a result, each was strong in certain areas, and among certain social groups, but neither was able to offer any national leadership to the workers movement.

Only the Italian Workers' Party (POI) attempted to make a serious case for a modest but continuing and effective public role for the workers'

organizations. Politics was to be a useful aid, but not the ultimate solution. When the debate over the public roles was revived during the struggles between syndicalists and reformists, the syndicalists' call for direct action echoed the Internationalist feeling that only politics conceived as immediate overwhelming action offered any hope to the workers. The position left by the POI was more useful, but more ambiguous: they argued that the test of whether or not public action was appropriate for the organization was not its relationship to some long-term goal but whether or not it came from a genuinely class-based organization. The organized working class could not betray its own interests, and thus the existence of the organization, ipso facto, legitimated its actions.

The Chambers were left with a clear guide from the past as to the kind of organization they should have, but were left with some problems as well. The debates over culture had never been clearly resolved and the Chambers thus attempted both to appropriate the traditional culture for their members and to create the bases for a new one as well. While the link with the new positivism made possible the relationship between socialism and the intellectuals of Italy, and in some cases directly impinged on the creation of a Chamber--as at Genoa, where evolutionary positivism was the common ground of socialist intellectuals and working-class leaders who felt themselves bound together against the Mazzinians among the workers and the avaricious mercantilism of the Genoese middle class--at the same time the commitment to more traditional forms of cultural activity often found the workers movement bound up with traditional politicians and institutions.

The question of public roles was more complex, and makes up the bulk of the discussion in Chapter IV. The early apoliticism of the

Chambers was perhaps less a quietism on the Piedmontese model than it was an attempt to avoid the internal wrangling among anarchists, socialists, republicans, and democrats which would be the inevitable consequence of taking a stand. Since the Chambers were all founded in areas where one or another of their predecessors had been active, they were organizing workers who had been members of one or another group and often held strong political opinions. As a consequence, apoliticism was at first a new solution to the old problem of factionalism in the workers movement. Apoliticism was also a defense against the government; by acting in the public interest, rather than for a faction, Chambers supported their claim to the office space, subsidies, and other benefits which they demanded of the local governments.

Nonetheless, the tradition of apoliticism came under strong pressure both internally and externally. While the structure of the Chamber naturally predisposed it to broad solutions to workers' problems, the traditions of the Chambers and the movement itself led it further into a generic reformist and even into close ties between individual deputies and organizations. At the same time, the hostility of the government during the 1890's naturally led to an increased dependence on the socialist and popular parties. By the time Giolitti came to power, the Chambers had clearly learned that the defense of civil rights and liberties, as well as the commitment to reform in the public interest, implied a larger and more independent public role than had heretofore been the case.

The expression of this public role took many forms, but the most characteristic was the general strike of protest, an outcome which was to have fateful consequences for the future of the Chambers. By the time of the general strike of 1904, which represented a national

culmination of the pressures toward an increased political role for the Chambers, the common experiences of the Chambers seemed more important than their differences. But the debates over the strike, as well as the official reactions to it, clearly indicated that the general strike could no longer be evaluated by traditional indices of effectiveness, and it became a symbol for the differences of opinion within the movement which became known as the "division of tendencies."

The division of tendencies began as a debate within the socialist party between reformist leaders such as Turati and an ill-defined "revolutionary" opposition, composed in part of southern activists such as Arturo Labriola and Gaetano Salvemini, and intransigent leaders of the old Italian Workers Party, such as Constantino Lazzari. While only peripheral to the Chambers at first, it became more seriously an issue with the identification of the reformist wing with the leadership of the new category federations. These new unions attempted to relegate the Chambers to a minor place in the workers movement by taking over the economic activities, while eschewing politics which was to be the sole province of the Socialist Party. The Chambers' opposition to a movement which questioned their existence was strong, and their diffidence led to the long delay in the foundation of the CGL. Beyond these differences, though, lay a deeper one manifested in the debates over the attitude that the socialist party and the workers movement as whole should adopt toward the government of Giolitti.

Giolitti's own policies exacerbated the debate by favoring one side. His avowed aim of separating the economic and political movements of the workers, as well as providing neutrality in labor disputes while severely repressing general strikes, clearly favored the reformists. At the same

time, the Chambers drew the conclusion from his repression of their use of the general strike, as well as the recurring "proletarian massacres," that support for him against the possibility of an early return to the policies of Crispi or Pelloux was not worth the price to be paid. Their perception of his government as basically repressive--a perception increased by the hostility of local elites, as well as by the independent role of the judiciary which clearly aimed at striking at the roots of their movement--made them more receptive to the arguments of the revolutionaries and the syndicalists. Nonetheless, the syndicalists remained a minority within the workers movement, and an even smaller minority within the Socialist Party. While the reformists retained control of the Party, the workers movement was badly split, and even the revolutionary faction which gained control of the party in 1911 under the leadership of Mussolini did not always agree with or support the syndicalists. In turn, the syndicalists themselves were divided between the intellectual organizers such as Walter Mocchi and Labriola, and the working-class activists such as Tullio Masotti, Pulvio Zocchi, and Angelo Faggi. The presence of anarchist leaders such as Armando Borghi and Maria Rygier among the syndicalists did nothing to decrease the confusion.

As a consequence, each Chamber was thrown back on its own resources, where it attempted to discover an appropriate public role for itself that took into account the needs and aspirations of its own members as well as the attitudes of local elites. While the resultant emphasis on local activities and resources emphasized the usefulness of the Chamber as an institution, the common experience of the Chambers was diluted by the uniqueness of their environment. The examples of Genoa, Parma, Bologna, and Milan all show that the Chamber had by now become indispensable; at

the same time, they clearly show a wide range of responses to the common problems of workers. Some of these divergencies are explicable in terms of the changing membership base; the port workers of Genoa, the landworkers of Bologna, and the landworkers of Borgo San Donnino all found a satisfactory solution to their needs in the practice of reformism. On the other hand, there was more to the dispute than that, since the members of the Parma Chamber did not differ significantly from those of Borgo S. Donnino.

Clearly part of the debate was a political one, and the question was not only one of the efficacy of a given practice, but of the larger political issues facing workers. While the debate at Bologna was so bitter that it led to schism, the debate at Milan took place within the Chamber, and was decided by the gradual shift in policies which the Chamber pursued.

The larger issue of the attitude toward the government was eventually shaped by the changing perception of the government which the Chambers held. While the Chamber at Genoa remained firmly convinced of its ability to serve its members by participating as an accepted part of the political system--one more pressure group to be taken into account in the delicate balance of forces which determined the allocation of public resources--other reformist groups grew more wary of the easy identification of the good of workers with the good of a small group of organized workers. The syndicalist insistence on class solidarity kept the issue of a wider definition of the needs of the working class alive, even though this issue was obscured by the insurrectionary stance which they demanded accompany this perception. The combined effects of the Libyan War and the economic crisis of 1913 exposed the weaknesses of the

Giolittian system more clearly, and an increasingly hostile mood took the Chambers. Milan shows more clearly than elsewhere how this mood came about, and how a policy which incorporated this mood while building on the experience of the Chambers to offer a national guide might be possible. To the schism of Bologna, the Milan Chamber counterposed an example of how it would be possible to debate and yet maintain unity; hopefully, a unity which would supercede the reformist and the syndicalist views.

But it was not only the experience of the Chambers which was shaped by these trends. The Parma strike of 1908, the Bologna strike of 1911-13, the Milan ones of 1913-14, and the near-insurrection of Red Week in July, 1914, suggest the same conclusion: workers were developing a militant sense of identity founded on opposition to the government and faith in the Chambers as their only legitimate representatives--in other words, workers were developing a sense of class consciousness founded on their membership in the Chambers, and defined in their opposition to the state. But this new consciousness depended on the loss of the older view of the Chamber as representative of the public interest, and replacement of it with a view of the Chamber as the expression of a class interest.

This class interest was met with an increasingly hostile class interest of the middle classes, who resorted to organizations and violence of their own in an attempt to meet and defeat this new working class. The exasperation of the middle classes at the failure of the Giolittian government to defend their rights, and their desire to strike down these new organizations suggests that the Giolittian age was not one of "Italian Democracy in the Making," as William Salomone famous book has it, but one of Italian democracy undermined. The State increasingly

lost its role of the mediator of social conflict, as both sides came to regard it as irrelevant. The history of the Chambers before 1914, then, is the history of the obsolescence of the liberal state which was the creation of the Risorgimento. While momentarily dampening the conflict, the experience of the First World War would demonstrate its technical, military, and economic obsolescence. When the conflict flared up in the aftermath of the war, exacerbated in part by the War itself, the workers would not defend the state, while the middle classes would jettison it if Fascism offered to better safeguard them from the new working class which was born in the Chambers of Labor of the Giolittian age.

APPENDIX I: DISTRIBUTION OF CHAMBERS OF LABOR BY REGION AND BY YEAR OF FOUNDATION, 1890-1905

NORTHERN ITALY

	Piedmont	Liguria	Lombardy	Veneto
1890	Turin[1]		Brescia	
1891			Milan	
1892			Pavia	Venice
1893			Monza[1] Stradella[1] Cremona	Padova[1]
1894				
1895		Sampierdarena		
1896	Turin	Genoa Sestri[1]	Lodi	
1897			Codogno[1]	
1898				
1899		Sestri[1]	Monza	
1900			Mantova	Padova Verona
1901	Casale Biella Intra Novara Vercelli Alessandria	San Remo Savona Spezia	Como Crema Gallarte Leco Lodi Varese	
1902	Acavi Asti Cuneo Ouada	Voltri		
1903	Tortona		Vigevano	
1904				Udine Vicenza
1905				

APPENDIX I--CONTINUED

NORTHERN ITALY

	Emilia	Tuscany	Marches	Umbria
1890				
1891	Piacenza			
1892				Foligno
1893	Bologna Parma	Florence		
1894				
1895				
1896		Livorno Pisa		Terni[1]
1897	Borgo San Donino	Prato		
1898		Massa		
1899				
1900	Imola	Pistoia	Macerata[1]	
1901	Ferrara Ravenna Reggio	Empoli Pescia Pisa Viareggio Sesto	Ancona[3]	Terni
1902	Cesena Faenza Forlì Modena	Arezzo Carrara		
1903	Rimini			
1904			Jesi	
1905		Lucca Siena		

APPENDIX I--CONTINUED

SOUTHERN ITALY

	Latium	Abruzzi	Campania	Apulia
1890				
1891				
1892	Rome			
1893	Civitavecchia			
1894			Naples	
1895				
1896				
1897				
1898				
1899				
1900				Foggia
1901			Salerno Torre An- nunziata	
1902				Bari
1903				
1904				Brindisi

APPENDIX I--CONTINUED

SOUTHERN ITALY

	Basilicata	Calabria	Sicily	Sardinia
1890				
1891				
1892				
1893			Syracuse	
1894				
1895				
1896		Catanzaro Cosenza[1]		
1897				
1898				
1899				
1900				Sassari
1901			Messina Palermo	
1902			Trapani	
1903			Catania	
1904			Sortino Grattieri[4] Collescho[4]	
1905		Reggio		

Sources: Unless otherwise indicated, all information comes from Bollettino dell'Ufficio del Lavoro, August, 1908, 370-373.

[1]Stefano Merli, Proletariato di fabbrica e capitalismo industriale, Volume I, 659-660.

[2]Giulia Raponi, "Nascita e primi svillupi."

[3]Enzo Santarelli, Aspetti del movimento operaio nelle Marche, 192.

[4]Guiliano Procacci, "Movimenti sociali," 155.

APPENDIX II: MEMBERSHIP COMPOSITION AT BORGO SAN DONNINO, BOLOGNA, FLORENCE, GENOA, AND PARMA CHAMBERS OF LABOR OVER TIME

	Bologna		Florence		Genoa			Parma		Borgo S. Donnino
	1904	1910	1894	1902	1896	1904	1914	1904	1914	1914
Artisans----------Number	2269	2182	1350	3250	2408	855	1340)			
Percent	6.2	15.9	27.2	33.1	61.0	4.0	13.7)			
							)	1491	3997	180
Industrial----------Number	2336	2825	1280	2910	725	5204	1760)	9.9	19.4	3.2
Percent	6.4	20.6	25.8	29.7	18.4	24.7	18.0)			
Building trades----------Number	4862	5560	190	1350	230	472	783	1641	3635	706
Percent	13.4	40.6	13.8	5.8	2.2	2.2	8.0	10.9	17.7	12.5
Agricultural----------Number	24677	1228	380	150	----	----	----	9117	9983	3010
Percent	67.8	9.0	7.6	1.5	----	----	----	60.6	48.5	53.3
Services----------Number	2262	1899	1766	2148	462	1253	1538	-----	-----	----
Percent	6.2	13.8	35.6	21.9	11.4	5.9	15.7	-----	-----	----
Dock Workers----------Number	-----	----	----	----	130	5405	4041	-----	-----	----
Percent	-----	----	----	----	3.3	25.6	41.3	-----	-----	----
Maritime----------Number	-----	----	----	----	----	7909	320	-----	-----	----
Percent	-----	----	----	----	----	37.5	3.3	-----	-----	----
Other: (Not organized by occupation)										
Number	-----	----	----	----	----	----	----	2800	2967	1743
Percent	-----	----	----	----	----	----	----	18.6	14.4	30.9
Total Members	36406	13686	4966	9808	3945	21098	9782	15049	20582	5639

APPENDIX II--CONTINUED

Sources: Bologna, Genoa, and Parma 1904: Bollettino del Ufficio del Lavoro, January 1905, 275-6; 283; February 1905, 291-3.

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APPENDIX III: MEMBERSHIP COMPOSITION OF MILAN CHAMBER OF LABOR, 1891-1907

	ARTISANS		INDUSTRIAL		BUILDING TRADES		SERVICES		
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Total
1891	1173	30.4	195	5.0	1607	41.6	880	22.8	3855
1892	2049	26.9	927	12.1	1952	25.6	2676	32.2	7678
1893	1333	29.8	272	6.1	1823	40.8	1042	23.3	5279
1894	2254	42.2	355	6.6	1695	31.8	1030	19.3	5334
1895	1706	36.2	525	11.1	1708	36.2	775	16.2	4708
1896	2479	38.6	942	14.7	1705	26.5	1328	20.7	6334
1897	7274	47.6	4379	28.6	1529	10.0	2032	13.3	15005
1898	1326	24.5	1249	23.1	2100	38.8	737	13.6	5087
1899	1723	26.8	1901	29.6	2100	32.6	707	11.0	6431
1900	7406	41.5	6023	33.8	2755	15.4	1581	8.8	17617

APPENDIX III--CONTINUED

	ARTISANS		INDUSTRIAL		BUILDING TRADES		SERVICES		
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Total
1901	11904	36.1	8532	25.9	6243	18.9	6221	18.8	33212
1902	15034	34.6	11932	27.4	6321	14.5	10213	23.5	43142
1903	10238	34.9	6652	22.7	5520	18.8	6947	23.7	29273
1904	7064	35.8	4836	24.5	4582	23.2	3240	16.4	19722
1905	7252	36.6	4624	23.3	3757	19.0	4181	21.1	20432
1906	6634	32.4	6399	32.6	3005	15.3	3865	19.7	19726
1907	8812	33.0	8254	31.9	4807	17.9	4618	17.3	26741

Source: Società Umanitaria, La Camera del Lavoro di Milano e le sue sezioui, 1891-1907, pp. LXX-LXXXVI.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY

Labor and working class history presents a number of difficulties for the historian, but none more so than in the problem of documentation. This is particularly the case in the current study, where the focus was not on ideological currents within the labor movement, but on the experience of working class organizations. The most helpful documentation would have been the records of the Chambers of Labor themselves, but labor organizations are notoriously poor about maintaining their records, and the Chamber of Labor was no exception. What records were maintained were dispersed in the violence of the 1920's and the dissolutions of the organizations following the Fascist seizure of power. Instead, I have been able to use three main sources of direct reporting of Chamber activities and aspirations: police reports, Chamber publications, and newspapers. Since the fabled Italian fondness for police bureaucracy has a basis in fact, police reports when available are often voluminous in detail. Unfortunately, police observers did not observe so much routine Chamber activity as they did the public acts--strikes, comizi, interventions with the prefect, and the like--with the result that only police records would produce a highly distorted view of the Chamber's actions. Moreover, archival records themselves have not always survived intact. At Florence, for example, the police records before 1898 were destroyed in the flood of 1966, though the magnificently detailed work of Nicla Capitini Maccabruni for the 1890's, and Elio Conti for the 1860's and 70's, provide some measure of recompense. The Florentine police records

after 1898 were not deposited in the archives until 1944; the threat of exposure of their activities during Fascism to the Resistance leaders led the Florentine police to destroy those archives shortly before the liberation of Florence. Parma's state archives went up in flames in 1944 along with headquarters of a German armored division found by American bombers; the site is now marked by a parking lot. Both Milan and Genoa suffered extensive damage during the war and the underpaid staffs are still in the process of reordering their archives. Only Bologna had a reasonably complete series of archival documentation, as my frequent citation of it attests.

Where possible, I supplemented these archives with reports filed by the prefects with the Ministry of the Interior in Rome, but these were frequently disappointing, since they provided rather general analysis and description of situations, instead of the concrete detail which is the stuff of historical reconstruction. The occasional publications of the Chambers--usually annual reports--were helpful and often a gold mine of otherwise unavailable information; in addition, they were crucial in establishing what activities Chamber leaders themselves considered important. But the fullest source of detail were the newspapers which carried the news of meetings, reports of activity, and frequently were the site of discussions over the nature and purpose of the Chambers. Usually they were four-page weeklies, often published by the local socialist party, but occasionally by the Chambers themselves. In Parma, I replied on L'Idea, published by the socialists there, and, after 1907, L'Internazionale, which was the official newspaper of the Chamber as well as being the only national spokesman for the syndicalist factions elsewhere. In Bologna, La Squilla played an analogous role for the

socialists and Chambers, being supplemented briefly by L'Azione Sindicale (published by the Chamber during the syndicalist dominance of 1912-1913). La Difesa should have supplied the same information for Florence, but it was lost in the flood of 1966. In Genoa, L'Era Nuova, published from 1894-96 and again from 1900-1903, was the official organ of the Chamber and provided a rich vein of material, as did the daily Il Lavoro after 1904. The latter newspaper was more of a general newspaper for Genoa--it was a daily, rather than being a weekly like the others cited above--and often went a week or two at a time with no news of the Chamber. Milan was best favored by newspapers, since the Chamber published its own weekly on two different occasions: La Battaglia Proletaria (January 1907 through October 1911) and Il Proletariato (August 1913-August 1914). After it was moved from Rome to Milan in October of 1911, the socialist daily Avanti! often had detailed coverage of Chamber activities as well.

The only other source for regular reports of Chamber activity was the Bollettino dell'Ufficio del Lavoro of the Ministry of Agriculture, Industry, and Commerce; published monthly from 1904 on, it carried reports submitted to it by Chamber secretaries, published the results of its statistical inquiries, and was a general mine of miscellaneous information ranging from the fascinating to the trivial. Unfortunately, after about 1910 it ceased carrying reports from specific Chambers and instead devoted itself to general studies--useful for a background to the Chambers, but lacking in the concrete detail characteristic of earlier issues.

Of the published secondary material, very little focuses specifically on the Chambers. In fact, there is only one book--that of Nicla

Capitini Maccabruni on the Florentine Chamber, which covers only the period from its foundation in 1893 up until 1900--and three sets of articles on the Chambers of Bologna and Genoa. The articles of Nora Dora Goldschmidt and Gaetano Perillo make for a reasonably complete history of the Genoa Chamber, while that of Luigi Arbizzani takes the story of the Bologna Chamber up to 1900 only. It is truly astonishing to discover such a near total absence of studies in this area. The gap is partially made up by the numerous local studies of the movemento operaio, but these share a problem with the historiography of the workers movement in general in Italy.

Almost overwhelmingly, the historiography of socialism, anarchism, and the whole complex of organizations and movements which fall under the rubric of the movimento operaio in Italy is written by Marxists, and often by members--sometimes very highly placed--of the Italian Communist Party. (The late Ernesto Ragionieri, whose works have served as an important guide for me--as my frequent citation of them attests--was until his death a member of the Central Committee of the PCI). For ideological reasons, and even more to cultivate that sense of historical continuity which is the distinguishing mark of almost all Italian political groups, their devotion to the study of the workers movement is unrivaled, and their efforts in reconstructing that history have been prodigious. But at the same time, they bring a peculiar perspective to that study which needs to be emphasized. Their primary concern has been to awaken their readers to the variety and richness of the movements which preceded the foundation of the socialist and later the Communist Party, and in so doing they necessarily have provided a great deal of information for scholars who may not share their judgments on the political

effectiveness of the movements they study, nor their analyses of their impact on future developments.

I do not mean by this to suggest that Italian Communist or Socialist writing has the dreary monotony of that of the Soviet Union or the German Democratic Republic; no party in the world allows the wide range of opinions, particularly in historical writing, as does the Italian one, and the debates which are sometimes provoked in the official journals, such as Studi Storici, (the quarterly publication of the Gramsci Institute in Rome, which is an emanation of the party) are as stimulating and wide-ranging as one could wish. But it does mean that social and economic history in general, and the history of the workers movement in particular, is largely conducted within the framework of the rich and supple legacy left to the party by Antonio Gramsci, and only rarely do contributions from other sources slip in. When they do--as in the work of Bianca Montale on the Mazzinian workers movement--they too are partisan, intended to win a rightful place in history for their subject.

In spite of the Marxist legacy, the history of the workers movement in Italy was for a long time the political history of leaders, movements, and congresses. Typically it resulted in work like Gastone Manacorda's Storia del Movimento Operaio Italiano which is in fact the reconstruction of the congresses of the moderate societies, the Mazzinians, the International, and the POI, culminating in the foundation of the socialist party in 1892. The work is beautifully accurate, pioneering in its information, subtle and penetrating in its analyses; still, it remains not a history of the workers movement but a history of what was discussed at the Congresses of some representative groups. Much of what is cited in the bibliography follows that pattern: it is essential

background information, but not the kind of study on which a social history may be constructed. More useful are the numerous local studies which attempt to deal with all phases of the workers movement, such as Ernesto Ragionieri's study of Sesto Fiorentino, Paolo Spriano's work on Turin, or Rinaldo Salvadori's on Mantova. Here the problem is more subtle. These works are often detailed studies of social and economic situations of the community studied, and attempt to make connection between that situation and the political events studied (indeed, since Marx's own work on the 1848 revolutions in France or the Paris Commune, this has been the type of study at which Marxists have excelled); at the same time, their overriding concern has been with the emergence of a disciplined, self-conscious and militant workers movement and party. Thus historical "blind alleys" like the cooperative movement and the mutual-aid societies tend to be underplayed or ignored in favor of the party and trade unions which a modern proletariat is supposed to have, and the movements which do not exactly fit the pattern of emerging class-consciousness and its necessary expression in the form of party, tend to be slighted. The confluence of the various strains of radical thought in the Chambers, for example, is not recognized for the eclecticism it was, nor is there any attempt to see how this eclecticism influenced the pattern of working-class action; instead it is discussed--in a slightly embarrassed tone--as "ideological clarification manquée," a concept which is only useful to someone who comes to study an area with an explanation prepared in advance.

More serious for my own work, most of this historiography begins with the assumption that there was such a thing as a working class, and that the emergence of this class as a clearly defined, self-conscious

group, was inevitable. From this assumption is further deduced the view that the only correct result for this to take is an orthodox, mass-based, socialist party. The acceptance of this assumption as a datum, rather than an analytical question, means that these works assume that workers will renounce syndicalism and anarchism, as well as sympathies for the Mazzinians and democrats, and move spontaneously into what is viewed as the mainstream. If they do not, then the explanation lies in the failures of the party to lead properly, or the assumption that the trade unions were too narrow-minded to battle capitalism intelligently.

But my own inquiry has been concerned with explaining matters that most Italian historians take for granted. If workers supported syndicalism, it is not because they were petty-bourgeois at heart, or because the workers were misguided; I assume that it was because syndicalism offered them a response which they felt was appropriate to a perceived need; therefore the task of the historian is to inquire as deeply as possible into the nature of working class life to discover what they needed and wanted, and why syndicalism seemed to supply it.

The vast historiography of the workers movement, therefore, was not so much a foundation on which to build generalizations as it was a source to be mined for relevant information, gingerly sidestepping the analytical pitfalls which awaited me. Not all the works here mentioned fall under these strictures, of course, but most presented problems.

The enormous opus of Stefano Merli (two volumes amounting to nearly 2000 pages) presented a different problem. While crammed with information--the second volume is all documents, many of them impossible to find elsewhere--Merli's views are just the opposite of those discussed above. Shaped by the experience of the "extra-parliamentory left" of

the late 1960's and 1970's, Merli's aim is to demonstrate that there was 1) a genuine industrial proletariat in Italy as early as 1880, and 2) that it was betrayed by all working-class organizations, particularly the Chambers, and that therefore it was only true to itself at moments when it took to the streets in revolution--such as 1898. There are other works as well which aim to show that the syndicalists were the real leaders of workers, and that they represented a spinta dal base ("spurt from the rank and file") in reaction to the craven reformists. But these views, as well as the ones which look to the emergence of an orthodox party, are both shaped by a kind of present-mindedness which looks to history only to find who were the predecessors who would lead to workers to discover the proper viewpoints on politics--those viewpoints, of course, being the ones held by the writer of the inquiry.

Of course no historian approaches a topic with an open mind, and I would be the last to claim that I do not have preferences and political views of my own, which consciously or unconsciously shaped my choice of a topic of inquiry, my methods, my selection of evidence, or my modes of argumentation. But even if that means only that my biases are different from those of most Italians, there have been few historians whose work has been helpful in defining the questions I wished to raise and in finding the kinds of evidence needed to answer those questions.

Foremost among the historians whose work was helpful was Giuliano Procacci, to my mind the most brilliant social historian in Italy, and an Italian equivalent to masters such as Eric Hobsbawm or George Rudé, in England or Georges Duvier or Michelle Perrot in France. His articles on the structure of the working class, the bases of the agrarian movement in the Po Valley, and the general strike of 1904 would be enough to mark

him as outstanding; they are reprinted in his La lotta di classe in Italia agli inizi del secolo XX along with two brilliant chapters dissecting the social bases of reformism and syndicalism in the Socialist Party before 1904. No other Italian historian has demonstrated a better grasp of the interrelationships between social change, organizational practice, and ideological formulation. Another important guide has been Idomeno Barbadoro, whose essay "Problemi e caratteristiche storiche del movimento sindicale italiano" is a first-rate discussion of the problems of interpreting a movement which has always been passed over in favor of the political analysis of a given situation. His two on the CGL and the National Federation of Landworkers are rare exceptions to the generalization that Italian historiography by and large fails to do the kind of social history which illuminates and ultimately explains the political analysis. In a somewhat different category is the work of Franco de Felice, "L'età giolittiana: panorama storiografica," which is a brilliant review of the strengths and weaknesses of the writing on Giolittian Italy. The collective review of the literature on the workers movement, Il movimento sindicale in Italia; rassegna di studi, 1945-1969 provided many stimulating ideas, but I must agree with the authors that

> a specific historiography [of the workers' organizations] does not exist. There is no lack, in truth, of general works . . . some of them ambitious in scope; but except for some marginal cases we have few historical analyses of the workers movement inserted in the general context of the economic and political problems of the country, but considered in an autonomous mode. (p. 8)

This dissertation, and the work which will eventually follow from it, is intended in some small way to go toward filling that enormous void.

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