

***Words and Actions:  
Italian ultras and Neo-Fascism.***

Alberto Testa<sup>1</sup> and Gary Armstrong<sup>2</sup>

School of Sport and Education

Brunel University (UK)

“This is an Accepted Manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis in *Social Identities: Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture* on 01 July 2008, available online:  
[http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13504630802211951.](http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13504630802211951)”

---

<sup>1</sup> Email: [a.testa@brunel.ac.uk](mailto:a.testa@brunel.ac.uk)

<sup>2</sup> Email: [gary.armstrong@brunel.ac.uk](mailto:gary.armstrong@brunel.ac.uk)

## Abstract

*Over the past two decades the link – perceived and actual - between political extremism and football fans has been the subject of academic, political, and policing debate. It is not rare to witness manifestations of intolerance and ideological statements referring to regional, national and international issues at football stadia. In Italian football stadia, political representation has been evident for decades; politics has been integral to all realms of Italian society and culture since the origin of the nation. As one of the most significant Italian cultural practices, football has not been an exception. This combination of theory and action inspires thousands of young male football supporters. The football stadium might thus be interpreted as a 21<sup>st</sup> century social Agora, where political opinions- otherwise ghettoized in society- can be freely expressed in pursuit of a wider consensus. This paper explores the under-researched milieu of neo-fascist ideology as displayed in the contemporary Italian football stadia. Contributing original material and employing as conceptual frameworks the New Consensus Theory on fascism and the works of Julius Evola and Georges Sorel, this analysis hypothesizes that the neo-fascist's tenets manifested by the ideologically- oriented 'ultras' fan groups, may be understood as both a consequence of, and a resistance against the dominant socio- cultural and political values of contemporary Italy. The research conducted between 2003-2007 sought to evaluate two internationally renowned ultras groups located in the Italian capital of Rome: the Boys of AS Roma and the Irriducibili of SS Lazio who enact their performances on their respective 'curve' [football terraces] of the city's Olympic stadium. Utilizing the ethnographic method unique access was achieved in a notoriously difficult research milieu bringing the researcher into the social-cultural world of the participants and to the echelons of the extra-parliamentary Italian far right. Research sought to uncover the groups' social interactions, values, and political beliefs, as a way of contributing to an understanding of both the Italian ultras of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and indeed the wider political milieu of the modern nation-state of Italy.*

**Key words:** Nationalism; Fascism; football fandom; Evola; Sorel

Football (*il calcio*) has constantly mirrored the political circumstances of Italy and has been regarded as a legitimate arena for activism by political actors across the spectrum: Mussolini's PNF (Partito Nazionale Fascista), liberals, pro-catholic, and right and left organizations have all valued the game as a tool for their proselytizing (Agnew, 2006, Foot, 2006 Ginsborg, 2001; Martin, 2004, Porro, 1992). Political careers run synonymous with positions within football clubs.<sup>3</sup>

Over the past 30 years the presence of extreme ideological symbols and chants of (both the Left and Right) football fan groups have become very evident in Italy. This condition remains today facilitated by the persistence of old (and new) social unease that has afflicted Italy since its constitution and remains unresolved (Serra and Pili, 2003). At the core of this political disillusionment is a frustration around a political system that has been unable to fundamentally

---

renew itself. The constitution of new parties-big and small- are practically the same expressions of old logics and old ways of doing politics.

The decades of crises in the traditional forms of political aggregation and an increasing alienation of youth from mainstream politics was correlated in an increase in fan associationism in the early 1970s. As a consequence football passions became inter-linked with political ideology. The first half that decade witnessed large sectors of Italian youth, drawn from diverse social class backgrounds, practising a form of social insubordination which held political significance. When an exaggerated hostility against any form of authority was combined with the elaboration of stylistic peculiarities a general youthful tumultuousness was the outcome. In this temporal frame emerged the gatherings of fan groupings known colloquially as ‘ultras’ in and around the football stadia of Italy. Such groups differed from traditional supporters not only in their ‘unusual’ and more elaborate manifestations of support but also because they displayed a constant and pre-ordered aggressiveness to rival fans (Roversi, 1992). Their way of organising and acting was borrowed in part from the extra-parliamentary groups of the time involved in political-industrial conflict and university sit-in’s such as the left wing *Lotta Continua* and *Autonomia Operaia* from which many who gathered in the name of the ultras had prior experience. The organisation of the Sunday match be it via chants, banners and choreographies was influenced by other collateral midweek activities, which included know-how tactics to defend the stadium territories from rival ‘invaders’ and when travelling away methods to conquer the terrain of the situational enemy. Similar to political activism the notion of *tesseramento* (membership) was important to such gatherings. Many groups had membership campaigns which required a subscription and produced a membership card. The finances this brought in helped the group-in a sense – to grow in importance; income assisted the purchase of artefacts for choreographies. The impressive displays in turn attracted new members.

Whilst the 1970’s saw a strong street presence from the radical Left which had its manifestations in the football terraces (*curve*).The extra-parliamentary political Right also appealed to some in the same curve. This should not surprise a reader. The 1970’s was a decade in Italy pre-occupied by two crucial movements; the politicisation of the wider society and the concomitant widespread ideologically motivated violence. These were the times remembered today as the era of *eversione armata* (armed subversion) of the time of the *rosso* (red-synonymous with communism) and *nero* (black-synonymous with neo-fascism)and often deadly

battles between politically polarised youths. They were also the years of *stragismo*- ideologically based civilian slaughter most memorably the bombing of the Piazza Fontana in Milano wherein 16 people died (Ginsborg, 2001). The football match at times became the occasion wherein social tensions of the time were evident and enacted. That said the ultras movement of the 1970's was not strictly political; these just happened to be the years when everything contained a political significance. According to Triani (1994), the Italy of this period was divided by two visions; one could be called clerical-conservatism and included the neo-fascists, the other was communist. We challenge this and consider it more appropriate for neo-fascism to be placed alongside the latter due to its revolutionary potential. Both extreme ideologies were challenging the state system. Both brought their ideologies and struggles to all clusters of everyday life.

With the demise of much overt political protest by the late 1970's Italian youth moved inexorably away from politics. The 'death' of politics and the associated disillusionment of Italian youth saw them transfer the generational conflict from the political to the sporting arena (Grispigni, 1993 and Triani, 1994). The late 1970's saw stylistic divisions in the stadiums based around ideology. Military fatigues, camouflage jackets and military-style berets were worn by some factions. The names of the groups were at times drawn from revolutionary formations; *Tupamaros* in honour of the Bolivian 'terrorist' group or by contrast *Brigate* and *Commandos* in honour of state sanctioned military actors. Opponents might articulate *Hasta la Victoria Siempre* (Always towards Victory)-chanted in Spanish in sympathy with the Cuban revolution of Fidel Castro. The chant *Colpire il cuore dello stadio* (Let's Hit the Heart of the Stadium) paraphrased the slogan of the Red Brigades. The Neo-Fascists replied with a well known slogan of that political genre *Boia chi Molla* (Swine who gives up). The Neo-Fascists displayed the straight raised right arm 'Roman salute', the Left gave three-fingered gestures mimicking the P38 pistol- the weapon of death utilised by the Red Brigades.

Football rivalries still contained age-old local and regional elements. The endemic parochialisms of Italian life were forever enacted in such rivalries but the political angle was unprecedented. The groups that emerged from the 1970's were to develop *direttivi* (organising boards) consisting of those who having learned organisational abilities in the political sphere now poured such energies into the football one. Membership of the *direttivo* was based on years of loyal militancy to the group and a disposition to carry-out duties assigned by senior members. Authority was based in charisma and a sense of morality-trust was crucial as was a constant

presence in the *curve*. When the team was playing away courage had to be demonstrated during confrontations with rival fans. The ideal ultras was a man of ideas, words and ultimately actions. In response the police sought to prevent rival factions from enacting such conflict. By the mid 1980's the stadiums at time resembled fortresses with structural segregation and police personnel present in their hundreds. One consequence was a dislocation of hostilities between rival supporters to railway termini and city centres at times hours before or after matches. The 'rules of engagement' changed; what might have been honourable in the stadia and synonymous with football saw a greater controversy as to what was right and proper in confrontations as violence became progressively autonomous from the football match. As in the Italian political milieu of the previous decades, violence could be manifest randomly and disproportionately by both ultras and police. People died.

What this paper focuses on is how the ideology of neo-fascism has been articulated in the Italian context and how it is manifest in contemporary times. Most significantly the analysis seeks to illustrate how the ideology can and had been adopted around the national passion of *il calcio* thereby bringing its beliefs and actions to the eyes and ears of the spectating tens of thousands and the TV viewing tens of millions. Italian sociologist Antonio Roversi (1992) is one of the few academics who has argued for the significance of political ideology even if he has no ethnographic detail to sustain and most important to document the argument. Focusing on neo-fascist symbols displayed in the curves, he considers them as artefacts that appeal to youth because the rebelliousness they represent is conducive to the same youths pursuit of toughness and virility. What Italian anthropologist Alessandro Dal Lago (1990, p. 28) has termed the 'social power of the image' is relevant here, whereby when manifest at the football stadia -with its own logics- an actor can experiment with emotions and chant slogans and display symbols which are temporarily detached from the meaning ascribed to them in the everyday world. Re-ordered and re-contextualised, the symbols and the actors who celebrate them are useful in the contexts of ritualised conflict but not necessarily statements of political conviction. This we would argue neglects the nature of fascism and the important part that rituals play in reinforcing and diffusing its substantive rationality. For an understanding of this analysis needs to look at the philosophical underpinnings of the contemporary neo-fascists. Such words and texts support action; the articulations of violence for some make the unthinkable thinkable.

## From Tifo to Ultras

The football stadium is a sociologically relevant locale for the collective behaviours expressed therein and also for the variety of the forms of association that it evidences. In the 1980s, the spectacularization of the Italian '*tifo*' in the *curva* implied a stringent commitment for those involved in the choreographies.<sup>4</sup> It is out of such commitment that those taking the nomenclature of the ultras group trace their origins. The term 'ultras' is commonly applied to Italian football supporters who have been protagonists of violence with rival fans and police at and around football matches over the past 30 years. It is an historical term belonging to the French political language; during the Restoration period it signified the ultra-royalist partisans of the absolute monarchy. These supporters of authority and tradition stood in contraposition to the beliefs in human rights and individual freedom theorised by followers of the Enlightenment. The ultras originated in Italy in the 1970's embedded in both the age-old configuration of parochial football rivalries and in a response to wider political-ideological configurations. The term indicates generically hard-core fans that manifest behaviours that exceed that considered normal and traditional.

At the end of the 1970's the ultras subculture manifest -at all the big clubs-a greater level of co-ordination compared to the spontaneity that characterised the movements 1960s *Tifo* origins. The structure of the groups and the strategies evident in seeking to confront rival fans were more planned and instrumental. Collective identity was achieved par excellence in violent – if ritualised-confrontations; out of these scenarios grew a complex set of friendships and rivalries. Stressing faith in the team and similarly stressing their distinction from the tepid and inconstant ways of supporting evidenced by fellow fans the ultra groups were often defended by the club management in the face of media and political criticism. For some of the actors the articulations and confrontations represented a new moral order beyond pre-existing politics. The same people were not seeking to hide their ideological excesses (Triani, 1994).

The 1990's witnessed a proliferation of small ultras groups in various curves that, different from the past, did not originate out of schism within the larger more established groups but were autonomous from both the personnel and their constitutions. Some were lacking in political consciousness preferring self-presentation, self-indulgence and gratuitous violence. That said the politics that was in the stadium never went away. The focus of this paper is two groups

---

who exist in honour of the political legacies of the 1970's *curva* but who have developed a life of their own in the new millennium.

### **The Boys and the Irriducibili**

One of the most important social spatial aggregations of Roman youth is the *Stadium Olimpico* (Olympic Stadium) where the city's footballing tribes colonise the territories: the *curva sud* belongs to the *Boys Roma*, and the *curva nord* to the *Irriducibili* of Lazio. The stadium is ostensibly a non-location, a political 'free zone' in which a huge number of the city gathers to collectively discharge a passion for their football teams, via celebrations of joy, transgression, antagonism and non-conformity. The *curva* is a territory to be colonised, and when necessary, defended. The space has become an arena to narrate, abuse, accuse and protest on the current state of affairs of Italian society, national and international political issues and football.

The *Boys Roma* began life in 1972 united by the dual passions of 'la magica Roma' and the political ideas of Neo-fascism. Their existence superseded pre-existing amalgamations of the era and over the years the gathering became one of the half dozen groups that constituted the *curva sud*. At the time of the research the Boys had a 10 members of the *direttivo* and could count on some 50 'soldiers' in any conflict. Their place on the *curva sud* was demarcated by being taped off to discourage both non-members and the curious. Their consistency in over 25 years in promoting a neo-fascist ideology had inevitably seen them targeted by the authorities. Hitherto they endured everything the Italian state had thrown at them. The first Lazio ultras group appeared in 1971 with military analogies evident in the nomenclature *Commandos Monteverde* and later *Marines* and *Folgore* (after an elite Italian army unit). The Viking nomenclature appeared in the late 70's and with it the symbols of the double-blade axe and the Viking vessel. Not all in the curve were impressed and fights broke out over the political implications of such symbolism. The *Irriducibili* (*the irreducible, inflexible*) began in 1987 and since then became the hegemonic entity of all those gathered in the Curva Nord. They led the choreographies and decide the appropriate messages to be displayed on banners. A core of between 40-50 control the hundreds of others gathered in the *curva Nord*, passage to which is blocked by members who are unable to recognise the non-believer and of course the stranger.

In an attempt to make sense of the *Irriducibili* and the *Boys* distinctions in semantics is crucial. For the ‘ordinary’ Italian ultra the football team is the most significant entity in their existence. The *ultras* is anchored to footballing traditions and folklore and their chants represent the club, the city and their respective traditions. By contrast ultras such as the *Irriducibili* and the *Boys* put the group before the team; their ideological motif is above their footballing loyalties. They place a primacy on their merchandising and style above that available from the football club. Their words and songs are political commentaries. Crucially, the *ultras* share the same ideals in everyday life as those enacted in the stadium. Their code of violence has as ideological imprint.

Categorising *ultras* groups such as the *Irriducibili* and *Boys* (but also other groups having the same extreme -left or right- ideological traits) as stereotypical uneducated thugs from desperate lumpen class background does not work in Italy. These are people, particularly the ideologists of the groups, capable of articulating propaganda and political discourses which have nothing in common with the expression of football hooliganism as violence as an end to itself. We accept that there is a framework within which the *ultras* exist and these are in part contained in narratives of idealised masculinity. We would, however, argue that the analysis presented herein is novel in encapsulating the idea of the *Warrior* within the abstraction articulated into the mainstream (if marginalised) Italian political milieu. The manifestations of fascist ideology expressed by specific *ultras* groups should not be entirely understood primarily as a means to reinforce social and personal identities and traits of masculinities (Roversi, 1992). Neither should it be explained using Goffman’s concept of ‘frame’ and the metaphor of the war supposition (Dal Lago & De Biasi, 2002).

Using a conceptual frameworks the sociology of Max Weber ([Weber, 1958](#); Rossi, 1981; Freund, 1968; Ferrarotti, 1965; Ritzer & Goodman, 2003) and the New Consensus theory on Fascism (Griffin, 1998), the theoretical boundaries of this inquiry address fascism’s role as an agenda of social change combined with an examination of ‘Third Way’ nationalism propounded by Mussolini in the 1930s. The *Irriducibili*’s and *Boys*’ creeds can be identified as ‘resistance ideologies’ containing an intrinsic revolutionary value. Several times the *ultras* of this research identified themselves with ‘non *omologazione*’ (anti-conformity) and express via this concept



their loathing for political and social ‘conformism’ within and outside the football stadium. Instead they believe they are an avant-garde pre-revolutionary force.<sup>5</sup>

Such opinions require underpinnings. It is to such philosophies that analysis now turns.

### **The Social Myth and Inevitable violence**

The revolutionary trait of Italian fascism is a product of its Marxists origins. Such origins were combined with Mussolini’s 1930s ideas around the revolutionary syndicalists movement inspired by the writings of George Sorel (1847-1922) particularly the idea of the ‘social myth’ (Rees, 1991). According to Sorel, socialism could only appear after a period of violent revolution perpetuated by a disciplined proletariat (Jennings, 1999). Sorel’s argument manifested a combination of spiritualistic themes and Marxism. The nature of man in Sorel’s account was based on acting spontaneously via the concept of Free Will. In order to act, a whole range of images - which he termed ‘myths’ - had to be present in the human conscience that might influence instinct, producing action. Sorel divided these images into ‘spontaneous’ and ‘instinctive’. A true myth did not provide a rational concept of a future society but served as a mental picture, a dream, a great emotional force that could motivate violent revolutionary activity. Such myths could not be subjected to rational discussion.

Myths did not describe things. Their function was to determine action via mass inspiration. The myth was the immediate expression through images of the will that waited to be transformed into accomplishment. Myth was a projection into the future; essentially different from the vision of utopia, which was an intellectual representation that could be rationally examined and discussed having a value more theoretical than practical.<sup>6</sup> It is not important if the myth was not realizable; its purpose was to be the engine of human action in its appeal to those seeking radical change.

Sorel’s anti-intellectualism, manifest in his writings and his passion for revolutionary activities (in place of rational discourses), made him one of the most influential intellectuals in Mussolini’s ideology as this statement given by Mussolini in Naples on October 1912 demonstrates:

*‘We have created our myth. The myth is a faith, it is passion. It is not necessary that it shall be a reality. It is a reality by the fact that it is a good, a hope, a faith, that it is courage. Our myth is the*

---

*Nation, our myth is the greatness of the Nation! And this myth, this grandeur we wish to translate into a complete reality, we subordinate all the rest'* (Le Van Baumer, 1978, p. 748)

Sorel's ideas justified violence, not as a tool adopted with a rational calculus to obtain specific results (what Weber would identify as a formal-rational domain) but as a vital force that catalyzed latent spiritual energies.<sup>7</sup> Sorel concluded that logical and premeditated activity was useless in the face of irrational nature. The discontent of the proletariat had irrational and emotional origins. Solutions hence could not be found using rational means but by harnessing and unleashing the extraordinary power of the irrational and mythical. Once harnessed by the working class, or at least by their leaders, this irrational nature could set free mythical forces as the world had never before seen. An individual then must believe in violence both as a fact of life, and as a necessary condition of mankind for moving, changing and achieving. Violence was the cost to pay for progress. Whilst the vision was irrational it would succeed because it offered man a belief not logic.

In Sorel's analysis, Marxism failed because it sought rational reasons and reasonable explanations to the problems of the working class. Political interventions, based on a rationality framework, were to Sorel ineffective (Mayer, 1943). Sorel identified general strikes (that belonged to the category of myth) as a tool for the masses to fight capitalism. Sorel argued that the general strike was opposed by reformists (the moderate faction of Italian socialist party) led as they were by their own utopia of intellectually transforming the *status quo* of society. The worker by contrast had to be ready to perpetuate violence to transform society. The proletarian predicament was not just a political one but one that required professional solutions - hence strikes and trade union violence. The individual needed to develop faith in the irrational and follow the workers' impulses to action.<sup>8</sup> This way of using violence can be found in the Italian fascist 1930 phenomenon of '*squadrisimo*' - aggregation of militants who, via violence, attempt to impose their political ideology.

Collaboration within the state's framework could be strategically effective. This idea originated via an atypical Italian interpretation of Hegel's dialectic (Croce, 1921). In the writings of the Italian Hegelians, the contradictory and reciprocally exclusive thesis and anti-thesis do not disappear completely as they do in Hegel's pure dialectic but coexist, even if contrasting one

---

another.<sup>9</sup> This interpretation of Hegel's dialectic is the core of the fascist idea of '*corporativismo*' (corporativism), a political concept which conceived the law-making power exercised by civic congresses, which represented the interests of the economic, industrial, agrarian, and professional classes. This was the bulwark of the fascist vision of economy, which saw proletariat and bourgeoisie co-existing in the synthesis represented by the state.

### **The Origins of the 'Third Way'**

To make sense of the *ultras* ideas, actions and expressions of nationalism it is important to explain the nationalistic dimension of Mussolini's fascism. Italian fascism in the 1930's was a combination of state and romantic nationalism. The general feature of nationalism is the assertion of the primacy of national identity over competing claims of class and religion. State nationalism projected the nation as a community composed of individuals contributing to the state's maintenance and strength. In romantic nationalism -a particular strain of nationalism that originated as a resistance to the universalism and rationalism of the Enlightenment- linguistic, cultural and historical factors are considered the most important 'glue' to national identity and specific territory (McLean, 1995). In this logic, the important meanings and values, which form societies and provide the context for human action, are local and not universal.

The development of romantic nationalism and its anti-rationalistic traits can be applied to the attempt to make sense of the Italian neo-fascist nationalist dimension, which could be termed *Revolutionary nationalism*. This should be seen as a third way between the champions (at any cost) of the processes of globalization - which the neo-fascists believe homogenize and erase national identities- and the 'false patriots'. According to neo-fascists, the 'Italia' of false patriots is an entity based on commercialization and capitalism, which neglects both regional identities and the expressions of glorious local traditions. False patriots deny Italy a significant political and moral role at international level accepting servility to the political hegemony of Britain and America. Such protagonists are anti- English and anti-American because both are historically opposed to Italy. Contempt is expressed towards those servile to Anglo-American ideas and their associated ways of life based on consumerism and individualism.

Such revolutionary nationalism is conceived around the idea of a nation sharing a sense of common participation with collective destinies. This type of nationalism sees Europe as an

---

empire of *'patrie'* (fatherlands) following a social and fascist tradition. Significantly it sees Europe as neither white nor Christian but as an alliance of national-revolutionary forces which encapsulate traditionalist and integralist of the former Soviet Union and will include Islam in this. Such people seek a Europe constructed on concept of diverse ethnic and cultural identities; a Europe based on autonomies and regions. They affirm at one and the same time the joint identities of Italian nationalism and the European ideal.

Revolutionary nationalists follow the ideas of Jean Thiriart<sup>10</sup> and French New Right intellectual Alain de Benoist.<sup>11</sup> The fundamental theme of their philosophies is the fight against globalization, considered a domain of the international finance controlled by Jews and Freemasons. Drawing on the anti-rationalistic and anti-humanistic ideas of thinkers such as Julius Evola (1993, 1999) and Rene Guénon (1975,2000), the neo-fascists see their battles against the 'modern' world which deliberately neglects traditions. The doctrine stresses the subordination of the ego to the collective and seeks a re-evaluation of the idea of nation considering it as an organic community of people, which exists in opposition to a liberal, hyper-individualistic society.

### **Articulations of the Revolutionaries**

Asked what it meant to be *'di destra'* (radical right) 'Todde'<sup>12</sup> of the *Boys* answered that he did not recognise himself in the common parlance of political concepts generally but would if forced associate himself with the 'old right' (characterized by the bureaucratized dimensions of fascism) or with the Marxist-Leninist left. Arguing that these concepts were now obsolete, Todde spoke of the necessity to overcome a specific Italian conservative middle class culture and to form new ideas around politics, to build a national, socialist front. As a core member of the *Boys*, he would both articulate such views and when necessary fight those who opposed him. At times he would celebrate the written word provided by co-members. The following poem written by the *Boys* in 2004 (author unknown) highlights the duality of nation and brotherhood:

*I walk along the streets bold and proud. I am the son of an ancient EMPIRE  
I serve my fatherland, I am Italian*

---

*I am proud to make the Roman SALUTE*  
*Attached to affections and to religion {catholic}*  
*Never will I bend my will in front of the 'master' [Italian authorities]*  
*The motto that I follow is*  
*Will, Power and Freedom*  
*I do not love the weak and promiscuous*  
*I am not violent*  
*I do not wish to repress*  
*But I wish that everyone remains in their nations*  
*People respect me*  
*Because they know I am a perfect citizen*  
*I wait for the Celtic Sun to rise*  
*In the hope that everything will improve*

A similar logic can be heard from Giovanni<sup>13</sup> of the *Irriducibili* who argued to us that immigration was caused by '*mondializzazione*' (globalization) that pushes the populations of the third world to the west. In his articulation the real enemy of Italy was not the immigrants but who and what pushes the people to emigrate. This causes danger for both them in their perilous migratory journeys, and for 'us' (indigenous Europeans) because their subsequent arrival eroded indigenous cultures. Pride in the nation and the sense of 'people' expressed by the two groups brings prejudice and admiration, the latter for the underdog, the former for those who repress them. Both groups see themselves in the category of the 'repressed' and manifest the symbols of defiance manifest by both the Palestinians and Irish Republicanism which assist in their anti-Israel and anti-British articulations. The anti-Israel stance is visually evident by the frequent display by the *Irriducibili* in the Curva Nord of the Palestinian flag and their chants in praise of the repressed: '*Palestine: Never Give Up*'.

The Palestinian issue sees the Boys similarly express their opinions against 'Zionism'.<sup>14</sup> The following document titled *Liberta' per La Palestina* (Freedom for Palestine) was published in the Boys fanzine *l' Onore di Roma (The Honour of Rome)*.<sup>15</sup>

---

*It is right to dedicate a space to what is happening in the Middle East<sup>16</sup>, about the aggression of Israel against the Palestinian people, about the invasion of lands that rightly belongs to another population, also lands that for the Christians represent the Holy Land. 10 days ago the Cis-Jordan invasion began by the Israel army which Sharon has deployed using as an excuse Palestinian terrorism. The reality is different. The war has always been an option since the Palestine Liberation Organization leader Arafat was confined to his office and kept under surveillance 24 hours a day. They forbade him to see people from the international community. This is already a despicable act in itself because Arafat was elected democratically by the Palestinian people and the Israelis have no right to deprive him of power by the use of force. In the meantime in the rest of Palestine the war 'against terrorism' runs wild. Entire cities are bombed 'to drive out terrorists', curfews are imposed; houses are either destroyed or occupied. The world seems initially surprised; no one condemns the Israeli aggression. A world pacifist delegation travelled to Palestine; landed where the Israeli police were waiting for them, they hit them and sent them home. Only some MPs are allowed in due to the arrogance of the Israeli authorities. In the meantime along the streets the massacres continue and Israeli gunfire hits ambulances. In Europe we have news about ambulances used as targets by Israeli soldiers because they carry injured Palestinians. This is documented by reporters always looking for sensational news even risking their lives; as a matter of fact the soldiers, to demonstrate once more that the witnesses of wars are always tedious observers, decide to shoot the press. Among them, an Italian journalist died<sup>17</sup> hit by a tank while documenting the assaults of Israelis troops upon Palestinians. All the world continues to show its disapproval against Sharon, who disregards international protests and continues his path enforcing the siege of the Palestine continuing to keep Arafat in forced exile and threatening to kick him out of his own country. During these last days even Bush has demonstrated in a timid way his disapproval. Because the Americans are always ready to run and help every nation and then deceitfully colonize them, in this case they just intervene lightly [irony]*

*Firstly: the Israeli army has been armed- and probably still is - by American firms. All their weapons are made in U.S.A. Secondly: The Israeli are one of the strongest minorities in the world, their power comes from an almost total control of the economy especially in industrialized countries. Aggression against Israel could cause a reaction of the worlds' dominant class [linked to the world economy] and bring economic reprisals. Only the Pope has tried to oppose this slaughter because this war is fought on the Holy Land and in these times the fighting involved the church of the Nativity Bethlehem; the church dedicated to the nativity of Jesus!! Israeli soldiers have surrounded it, bombed, occupied it and they are*

---

*continuing to shoot inside the walls. This demonstrates that the Israeli intend to respect this friendship that our Pope has so strongly wished [irony]. It is useless to continue justifying this war as a reaction against terrorism because as senator Andreotti said, who would not in the current conditions fearing to be shut in an Israeli concentration camp, be inclined [pushed] to stuff themselves with TNT to promote his /her cause. SOLIDARITY FOR THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE*

(Boys Roma)

The anti-American stance of revolutionary nationalism is also evident in the following statements published in the Boys' fanzine addressing the US intervention in Iraq.<sup>18</sup>

### *Anglo-American arrogance in Iraq*

*While I am holding a pen [to write this article] at the same time there is an American soldier in the Iraq region who is holding a rifle and is about to take part in the second infamy of this new millennium, indispensable to ensuring the 'freedom in the world' [irony]. The first one was the war in Afghanistan where, after having fought and defeated the Taliban regime, western forces have left because of the absence of any economic benefits, with the exception of some opium plantation [irony] leaving the Afghan people in shameful conditions. The second infamy that we are watching on our TV images coming from Iraq looks like the set of a blockbuster Hollywood movie [irony]. For the powerful, the dramatic and spectacular celluloid deaths are not different from the real deaths of soldiers and civilians in a conflict. The reasons [for this war] advertised by Bush as about international justice and terrorism does not have any real basis. Iraq has not respected the UN resolution, but compare this with Israel that has not respected 200 UN resolutions. Or the U.S.A. which often bypasses the UN resolutions. As far as the second reason is concerned [terrorism] we need to consider that Iraq is a secular state which does not abide by extremist Islamic principles of the terrorist groups of Bin Laden. No proof exists or episode confirms the involvement of Saddam Hussein in terrorist actions. Furthermore the states that have weapons of mass destruction are numerous and either pro-American or are visited by VIP tourism or have less petrol than Iraq [irony]. This is the real reason behind the Iraq war. We need also consider that in moments such as this when the economic system hegemonised by the west is in a crisis, American economists are pushed to use new imperialist ideologies to renew the economic-industrial process via a war economy to conquer a monopolistic position in the world energy-petrol industry. Everyone knows this, even our politicians -always servants of the American power- influenced by the restrictive*

---

*and tedious presence in ITALIAN land of American military bases ready always to forget with great infamy our history.....*

(Boys Roma)

Anti-US sentiment saw sympathy of sorts for the most unlikely of captives The *Irriducibili*'s 2006 statement on their website about Saddam Hussein proclaimed the following:

*'While I am writing, many images of Saddam Hussein, the former president of the Iraq, are flooding the websites of major online newspapers. The pictures show an old man, tired from the prison experience. But still in his eyes it is possible to see a strong sentiment of anger against those judging him. As a group we cannot comment on the judicial part of the matter because we did not read any judicial document but, as people with brains, we can express an opinion on what such a process in Iraq means today.*

*As Irriducibili we well understand unfortunately on our skin the inefficiencies and injustices of our judicial system. And many times because of this we were convinced that perhaps in no other country in the world existed a judicial system worse than the Italian one. Actually we have found one in Iraq; we laugh at a tribunal that by its nature should be impartial.. is a tribunal impartial composed of judges appointed by a 'joke' government in a 'joke' state that does not have any national sovereignty? Can it be considered impartial when the judges are appointed by those who have arrested him? What will be the likely outcome of the process? Which sacrosanct defense rights have been granted to Saddam Hussein? This tribunal was chosen just to condemn the 'criminal' Saddam Hussein in an exemplary fashion; chosen by those who one day decided to invade that country, to remove the president freely elected, destroy the cities, indiscriminately kill the population, foment ethnic hate and impose laws, rules... This is the real process around Saddam Hussein whom we do not want in any way to make a martyr.*

*We always fight when we believe there is injustice; but this time for the first time we invite all to be confident; Saddam Hussein will be condemned to death ( a vice that the Americans imported into Iraq in 2006 from their 'civilised' land and continue to assassinate people using the electric chair as did the French with the guillotine two hundred year ago) with all his advisers who like him would prefer to die in prison instead than collaborate with the Americans.*



*Trusting in justice, we hope that the same justice that will kill Saddam Hussein one day (hopefully soon) will punish those who committed crimes such as the slaughters of Sabra & Sahila, the massacres in Iraq by the Anglo-American troops using white phosphorus; the civilians killed during the invasion of the country, the Palestinian population who no longer have houses destroyed by bulldozers, the torture in the concentration camps of Abu Graib and Guanatanamo Bay. For the past crimes (Vietnam, Dresden, Roma, Berlin, Hiroshima , Nagasaki, Baghdad, Kabul, Belgrade) and so on.....*

*We are full of hope, but we also know that it will be difficult because the tribunals that will judge these 'signori' are designated by those themselves!*<sup>19</sup>

### ***Racism in the football agora?***

*"Il concetto della razza dipende dall'immagine che si ha dell'uomo... Come salda base della mia formulazione presi la concezione tradizionale che nell'uomo riconosce un essere composto da tre elementi: il corpo, l'anima e lo spirito. Una teoria completa della razza doveva perciò considerare tutti e tre questi elementi"[ The concept of race is influenced by the vision that one has of the human being...I have a traditional conception as a strong base of my idea; this recognises in the human being three elements: the body, the soul and the spirit. A complete theory of the race needs to consider all these three elements]* (Evola mentioned in <http://www.ultraslazio.it/evola.htm>)

The above statement taken from the ultras Lazio website - an internet group heavily influenced by neo-fascist ideology with strong links with the *Irriducibili* - represents well the concept of race as discussed amongst neo fascists *ultras*. It is not the purpose of this paper to evaluate the varieties of fascist concepts around race nor the anti-Semitic persecutions against Italian Jews during the fascist regime.<sup>20</sup> Instead analysis will focus on the ideological imprint of race within Italian neo-fascism and hence on Julius Evola who played an important role in shaping anti-Semitic ideas and more generally the concept of race among contemporary Italian neo-fascist youth. Evola, aware of all the political and cultural ferments present in 1930's Europe, explored the issues of race when writing the *Vita Nova* and *Bilychnis* both of which

---

proved controversial essays, challenging the ideas expressed by Hitler's national socialists.<sup>21</sup> Evola's racial theories reject Hitler's simplistic notion of biological racism and introduced instead the notion that human existence was represented by three elements: the body, soul and spirit. The spirit is the metaphysical element worn down by centuries of secularisation and modernization.<sup>22</sup> Evola believed there were two types of Aryans; the Ario-Germans and Ario-Romans, and the latter was superior in soul and spirit to the German in providing raw material for a national cultural rebirth (Griffin, 1998). For Evola mixed races and racial degeneration were the negative consequences of modernity (Germinario, 2001). As a consequence Evola's philosophy argues that in the fight against modernity, society needs to return to the traditional differences of the races; resistance against modernity is resistance against racial mixing. The struggle against modernity implies a process of renewed differentiation and hierarchization of races. To govern this world of differences Evola sought a solution not in the imperialism of one or few nations but *an empire*; a racial imperium which Evola supported via the alliance between Rome and Berlin shaped on the model of the Roman Empire.

The *ultras* world of difference was a difficult one to comprehend. At the beginning of the 1990's, the appearance of ideologically oriented symbols in the curves and upon the bodies of the participants equated *ultras* with fascist and racists in media and academic circles. This correlation is too simplistic. To understand racist manifestations in the stadium and those connected to the groups studied two considerations should be made; the first requires locating of racist expressions in relation to the wider Italian populace<sup>23</sup>. The second needs to address the ideological matrix of racism and its concomitant anti-Semitic manifestations. A reader need note that there are three typical attitudes around race and xenophobia within the *ultras* movement:

- a) In the majority of cases an ambiguous attitude prevails because of the varied opinions in the groups about both race and migrants.
- b) In some groups the leadership express strongly and openly their ideas around race.
- c) Some groups even if are not composed by people linked to xenophobic ideologies, accept passively such articulations when voiced by others in the *curva*

---

Racist behaviours thus manifest ambiguous and contradictory forms. It is not uncommon in the Lazio *curva nord* to hear racist insults directed towards black players of the opposition teams, whilst black Lazio players are lauded as idols by the same supporters. One notable instance concerns Fabio Liverani, who is of Italian-African heritage, and was part of the 2004 Italian World Cup winning team. In 2001, the *Irriducibili* were accused by the Italian media of being responsible for writing racist slogans around the city of Rome against Liverani, newly arrived from Perugia. For the racists, the player was guilty of having a black Somalian mother and to having admitted that in the past he was a fan of Roma team. The *Irriducibili* were immediately presumed guilty, even if one of the leaders *Diabolik* declared in a statement to newspapers: '*the Irriducibili disagree and dissociate from the writings and symbols used against Liverani. We invite Lazio fans to show solidarity with the player and the team today during training*' (Cardone, 2001, La Repubblica online edition). This unequivocal message of solidarity (rather than racism) was not enough to save the *Irriducibili* from being further accused of racism by the growing 'media circus', even if since the episode the player has often stated his good relationship with the group.

Sometimes in the pursuit of offending, pragmatism and self-censorship is evident; at times supporters realize they will not be able to offend the black players of other teams without offending their own and so will use other insults. Some players carry sufficient cultural baggage to facilitate multiple insults. When the black Dutch Jewish player Aaron Winter was bought by Lazio in 1992, anti-Semitic messages emphasizing the racial purity of Lazio covered walls in Rome. Sentiments were also evident in graffiti at the same time –written by Lazio fans- that proclaimed '*romanista sionista*' which aimed to insult Roma fans by accusing them of being sympathetic to the Zionists cause.

Making sense of the use of such insults sometimes requires research to look beyond racism as ideologically- oriented logic. What is argued here is that there are two types of racist insults in the stadium: spontaneous-ritualised and the organised one, both- to complicate the issue further –are evident in the two groups studied and at times can intertwine. The racist insult as a tool to hit opponents is found in all Italian curves. Such insults - invariably directed to opposition black players - often originate from the fans seated in places of the stadium deemed more 'respectable' ( *tribune, distinti* ) than those in which the *ultras* locate themselves. Chants of

*'Negro di merda'* (shit nigger), *terrone* (a derogatory word for a southern Italian<sup>24</sup>), *zingaro* (gypsy) and *Albanese* (Albanian) and the notorious monkey grunts often belong to the spontaneous category of insult and are invariably related to something happening on the pitch. The reader who knows about Italian football and regularly watches games is aware that these types of chants often originate and finish in a very spontaneous fashion involving the all stadium not only the *curve*. (Parks, 2002, Serra and Pili, 2003).<sup>25</sup>

One could argue that the insult directed at southern Italians are a form of ethnic insult based not on skin colour - or other genetic traits - but integral to the concept of difference. Alternatively one might consider the insult as a symbolic references to cultural norms and traditions. These remark would not seek any ideological justification amongst the *Boys* and the *Irriducibili* because their fascism considered territorial unity and a national sense of identity crucial to all Italians. There is thus not a conscious will to racially abuse other Italians; where such abuse is evident, it is a spontaneous-ritualised form of offence-giving, deprived from deeper political meanings.

The second type of racist insult is often pre-determined organised and ideologically influenced, and manifest by groups in the curves, linked to neo-fascism. Such actions and words are often based on anti-Semitic sentiments or against strong faiths often at odds with Christianity and articulating opposition towards irregular immigration (usually from Albania and Africa). It is important to point out that although neo fascists can see on a positive light the struggle of hardcore Islam against the Anglo-American and Zionist imperialism, this is solely dictated by *realpolitik*. Italian Neo-fascism is strongly linked to traditional values hence the majority of the movement is strongly supportive of Catholicism and opposes any religion seeking to establish itself in the national territory and indeed Europe. One such example is provided by an editorial written in the *Boys* fanzine in 2003 which evokes Evola's myth of the warrior and reminds readers of the pride they should manifest in Italian Catholic identity against Islam.

*'I would have preferred to speak about other things but my conscience leads my hand. Adel Smith -president of the Italian Muslim Union- has appealed to the Tribunal of Aquila [an Italian City] to eliminate the cross from all the Italian schools which your sons attend<sup>26</sup>. The deputy Prime Minister Fini needs to think well before the law to give the immigrants the votes is proposed. Many other risks of this*

---

*kind [referring to Smith's initiative] are around the corner and all can go out of our control. Guys we live in a world where the sacred is not important anymore; where all is sacrificed to the rhythms of production and mass consumerism pushing away sentiments and values. These people acts for revenge and not for feeling. Instead of fighting with honour they fight with infamy. Their eternal dissatisfaction is about to bring really horrifying imbalances...*

*The modern world offers aberrant shows. Should we not act and see the decadence that surrounds us? I ask you ultras, you warriors of the new millennium, defenders of the ancient values; they are attacking our identity and we will not allow it! Those who do not respect our culture [values/beliefs] do not deserve our respect.*

*First in the list [to hit]: Adel Smith!*

Boys Roma

The same issue was also evidenced by the *Irriducibili* within the Olympic Stadium 'agora' with a banner they produced which stated: '*Adel Smith buffone - fuori dalla nostra nazione*' [Adel Smith Clown - Out of our Nation].

### **The Warriors Honour?**

The relevance of this analysis to other places and football generally is difficult to establish. Italy remains utterly unlike any of its European neighbours. The powerful creativity of the Italian soul has always manifest a 'dark heart' evident in a penchant for political turmoil, endemic corruption, organised crime and a willingness to embrace political extremism and its concomitant violence (Jones, 2003). At the same time the Italian nation has fascinated the world with its style, cuisine, sensuality and its obsession with *calcio* (football). Indeed, the great Italian-born polymath (and Professor of Sociology) Umberto Eco (1990) opined in exasperation that social revolution was not possible in his native land because the populace put too much of its time, passion and energies into the Sunday afternoon fixtures of the professional football leagues and the accompanying state radio broadcast titled *totocalcio*. Eco failed to consider that social revolution was possible precisely because of the Italian obsession with football and that the potential for political change might well be facilitated by political advocates at the opposite end

of the spectrum to that he considered the vanguard. The Italian state certainly consider the threat posed by the groups researched merits the mobilisation of elite Anti-Terrorist police units.

Using the anti-rationalistic and anti-humanistic ideas of thinkers such as Evola (1993, 1999) and Guénon (1975, 2000), the Neo-Fascists see their battles primarily against the ‘modern’ world which neglects traditions. Feeling besieged and wary of a secular morality the Neo-Fascists entrench their positions. The Italian state’s inability thus far in assimilating the long term presence of immigrants creates a climate of social anxiety which can rapidly assume an aversion to notions of diversity and functions to reinforce the sense of group identity creating: ‘*a sense of belonging and defining a community both in relation to external enemy (the immigrants) and to of internal enemies’ (the state system)*’....(Cotesta, 1992). Comfort of sorts is found in the characteristically anti-dogmatic arguments of Sorel about human instinct, but are not accompanied by any systematic philosophical framework (Humphrey, 1952). The seminal work of Sorel, *Reflections on Violence* is for so the most controversial books of the twentieth century. As Jennings (1999) writes: “... *J B Priestley argued that if one could grasp why a retired civil servant had written such a book, then the modern age could be understood.*” (p. 1). That understanding is still being sought

The Neo-Fascists exist in the collective. Adherents follow the philosophical teachings of George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Giovanni Gentile in their stressing of the subordination of the ego to the collective. Such doctrines seek a revaluation of the idea of nation considering it as an organic community of people, which exists in opposition to a liberal, hyper-individualistic society. For the two groups studied herein the *curva* is the one locale of the city where values of loyalty, courage, honour and fidelity find fertile ground. Friendships exist here beyond notions of class. In this milieu the value-oriented rationality of fascism and its’ beliefs in the ‘eternal yesterday’ (Elwell, 1996) allow them to articulate their ideologies and contradictions. Such themes and values work in what Sapir (1994) would recognise as master-ideas which have spatial significance. In their stadium agora’ the *ultras* have a liminal arena for the public performance of stigmatised behaviours (Turner, 1969). In ritual and display they have words and symbols and similar to Rappaport’s (1979) debate on religious protagonists and performance, the believers “gives substance to the symbol, as the symbol gives him form” (p. 200).

Opposed to globalisation-yet enjoying the skills of the foreign born footballer-they are contemptuous of the commercial logic of contemporary elite level football but cannot walk away

from the spectacle it provides. Dismissive of the games materialistic pursuits of efficiency, profit and productivity they are willing to search for the abstract qualities the game provides be it faith, courage and the figure of the hero/warrior. The *Irriducibili* and *Boys*' political conviction is deeply anti-capitalist, anti-liberal but also anti-conservative and whilst strongly supportive of an Italian nationalism opposes Italian political conformism based as it on the corruption democracy and political parties. They celebrate their social deviance from what they contemptuously dismiss as *omologazione della gioventu'* ( youth conformism) commercially-duped politically servile followers of contemporary Italian football<sup>27</sup>. They are knowingly deviant from their peers because they have a sense of belonging expressed most evidently within a quasi-military organization wherein authority, charisma and personal style of command are crucial. They are deviant because they consider violence instrumental and essential for the affirmation of their rights and values. Considering themselves instead the pure and the uncompromised, they seek to fight an Italian football system based on the deleterious power of money and its concomitant corruption, and an Italian political system which manifests the same traits.

The football authorities and the state have not taken their actions lightly. The battleground is thus between those to whom the state grants legitimacy in violence to defeat those who are ever willing to evoke Evola's myth of the Warrior prepared to fight 'the system' as manifest by the Italian state and the football authorities. The *Irriducibili* and the *Boys* are disillusioned with the body politic of Italy. In such a milieu they seek comfort in both ancient and new identities wherein myth is central. Their violence is not right nor is it senseless. It is, however, tragic as Marco of the *Boys* stated when questioned about his philosophy: *meglio vivere un giorno da leone that 100 da pecore* [better to live one day as a lion than 100 as a sheep]. In living the leonine lifestyle, however, such individuals face the possibilities of death. Since 1963, more than 60 young men have died in and around the occasion of top level professional football matches in Italy.<sup>28</sup>

---

## Acknowledgements

The authors are indebted to the constructive comments provided anonymously by the readers and the editorial advice offered by Brooke Johnson. The research was part-funded by a bursary provided by the School of Sport and Education, Brunel University negotiated by Professor Sue Capel and Professor Jennifer Hargreaves. Thanks are due to Sports Science Subject leader Professor Ian Campbell for facilitating the time for both research and writing. The final proofs were completed with the invaluable technical assistance of Irmani Darlington.

Last but not least our thanks are due to the *Boys* and the *Irriducibili* for enduring the research questions and permitting access to their world. Grazie Ragazzi!

## Notes

3. The current leader of the Italian opposition, Silvio Berlusconi, was formerly President of AC Milan. A crucial figure in Italian politics for decades was the recently deceased tycoon Gianni Agnelli who, as well as being President of Juventus, was also for many years a senator for the Italian Republican Party. The deceased Christian Democrats senator Dino Viola was also one-time President of AS Roma. The former president of the Italian Football Federation Franco Carraro was at one time an MP, Mayor of Rome, and Socialist Minister for Sport. The current president of the *Lega Nazionale Professionisti*, Antonio Matarrese, is a former Christian Democrat senator, still involved in politics. Football and politics are not separate worlds in Italy.

4. The origin of the word *tifo* is uncertain; its common-sense correlation is within fanaticism. It is commonly believed that the etymology derives from the medical pathology typhus which had the symptoms of alternate phases of illness and well being just as a football fan is characterized by phases of ‘normal’ behaviour and temporary mental or perhaps sociologists would argue liminal alterations. Cf. Bontempelli, M., ‘Tifo e Tifi diversi’, [Tifo and different types of Tifo] ; in Titta Rosa, G., & Ciampitti, F. (1934). *Prima antologia degli scrittori sportivi* [Anthology of sports writers]. Milano: Carabba Edizioni.

5. British political scientist Griffin (2000) disagrees with those from the political left and centre who refute the possibility of fascism as an ‘avant-garde’ pro-revolutionary force. In arguing this thesis, Griffin cites a Marxists’ predisposition to consider anything but socialism as ‘reactionary’. Consequently fascism, based as it is on the drastic change of society albeit in an anti-socialist direction, would be deemed ‘counter-revolutionary’.

6. In evaluating Georges Sorel’s thought, it is important to realise that the end of the Nineteenth Century were the years where the philosophical doctrine of ‘vitalismo’ (vitalism) prevailed on rationalism. In vitalismo, life has peculiar traits that are not present in inanimate substance and cannot be explained entirely using the laws of physics. The key concepts in *vitalismo* were: humanity, history, experience, corporeal nature, instincts, irrationality, subjectivity, perspective, value of the individual thing, change, disease, death. One of the most prestigious exponents of this conception of existence was Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche.

7. This is also a clear example of Weber’s rationalization theory at work; a contraposition between formal rationality (expressed by positivism) and resistances based on value rationality and value-oriented actions.

8. Bearing in mind the above, we define fascism as a: “Modern political ideology that seeks to regenerate the social, economic, and cultural life of a country by basing it on a heightened sense of national belonging or ethnic identity. Fascism rejects liberal ideas such as freedom and individual rights, and often presses for the destruction of elections, legislatures, and other elements of democracy. Despite the idealistic goals of fascism, attempts to build fascist societies have led to wars and persecutions that caused millions of deaths. As a result, fascism is strongly associated with right-wing fanaticism, racism, totalitarianism, and violence” (Cf. Griffin, R (1995) <http://www.brookes.ac.uk/schools/humanities/staff/FAECRG2.htm>)



9. The reference was gathered from the non-peer reviewed Journal of Historical Review published by The Institute for Historical Review (IHR). Founded in 1978, one of the IHR's main aims is to deny the genocide of Jews by the Nazis. The article retrieved was written by an established academic James B. Whisker, a Professor of Political Science at the University of West Virginia.
10. Jean Thiriart (1922 -1992) was the founder of the organization, *Transnazionale Europea* (Transnational Europe) of the *Jeune Europe* (1960), and of the *Parti Communiste European* (1965) all manifestly anti- American and anti-Semitic arguments. The aim of Thiriart was to create a European Revolutionary Party; anti-imperialist but based on the ideology of the extreme right.
11. Alain de Benoist, the ideologist of the French New Right focuses his analyses on philosophical, social, historical and political issues. He examined the controversial issue of religiosity in contemporary Europe and on the concept of democracy highlighting its potentiality and limitations. His anti-imperialism sees him articulate the need for every nation to defend their values against the forces of globalization.
12. Todde is not his real name. Aged 24, he belongs to an 'ordinary' Italian middle class family with an university background in law.
13. Giovanni is 40 years old, from a middle class family with a university background in the Humanities.
14. The term Zionism defines a movement aimed to create a Jewish home in the historic land of Israel known as Palestine. This occurred in 1948 with the constitution of the state of Israel. However, as McLean (1995) underlines: 'Palestine was by no means unoccupied when Jewish settlement began, but populated by an Arab people, the Palestinians, who were, for the most part, forced into exile by a form of settlement which became, in effect, a military conquest' (p 538)
15. Issue 10 – season 2001/2002
16. This article was written in April 2002 at the time the Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat was confined to his office compound in the West Bank city of Ramallah by Israeli troops during an escalation of the Israel-Palestinians conflict. Arafat died in 2004.
17. The Boys refer to Raffaele Ciriello an Italian photographer killed by Israeli gunfire in the West Bank city of Ramallah in March 2002. Ciriello was working for the well known Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera*. According to press reports and eyewitness testimony, he died during an Israeli military offensive.
18. Issue no. 12 2002-2003
19. The prophecy of the Irriducibili was fulfilled December 30 2006, when the former Iraq president was executed by hanging having been judged –and found guilty-by a special tribunal on charge of crimes against humanity most notably for the murder of Iraqi Shi'ites in the city of Dujail in 1982 following an attempted assassination by the Shi'ite minority .
20. For a thorough history of this issue a reader is directed to the works of Italian historian Renzo De Felice particularly Cf. De Felice, R. (2005). *Storia degli Ebrei italiani sotto il Fascismo* [History of the Italian Jews during Fascism]. Torino: Einaudi.
21. Evola's ideas were subsequently elaborated in the books *Sintesi di Dottrina della Razza* [Synthesis of the Race Doctrine], *Indirizzi per un'educazione razziale* [Guidelines for a Racial Education], *Tre aspetti del problema ebraico* (Three Elements of the Jewish Problem), and *Il Mito del Sangue* (The Myth of the Blood) and in the introduction to *Protocolli di Sion* (the Protocols of Zion). For Evola the term 'race' was synonymous with quality; a person having values is a person of race.
22. Cf. Evola, J. (1971). *Maschera e volto dello spiritualismo contemporaneo*. [The profile of the modern spiritualism]. Roma: Edizioni Mediterranee.

23. Cf. De Sisti, S. (1996-1997). *Politica e Tifo calcistico*. [Politics and Football Fandom]. Unpublished Thesis. Bologna: University of Bologna.

24. Anti-southerner insults have been present in Italian society since unification, a relic of the strong cultural and economic divisions between the north and south of the country. The classical insult is to accuse the southerner of being '*terrone*' a person who does not wash, nor works, but lives to exploit the state welfare. The generic 'southerner' is at times specifically *napoletano* [Neapolitan, from the southern city of Naples]. This type of insult is evident in one of the most popular chants of the Roma curva sud during recent derbies against Lazio directed at Lazio's most popular player, Paolo di Canio. '*Paolo Di Canio napoletano; Paolo Di Canio napoletano*'.

25. In 2000 the Irriducibili became protagonists for an episode that occurred during a Lazio versus Arsenal Champions' League fixture. The Lazio player, Serbian-born Sinisa Mihajlovic, called Arsenal's Patrick Viera 'scimmia di merda' (shit monkey); the Lazio player confirmed that what said to Viera was true was a response to Viera calling him 'gypsy shit'. The following Champions League match saw Lazio play Shakhtar Donetsk, Mihajlovic made a pre-match on the pitch announcement stating his sorrow and inviting the supporters of Lazio to cease their grunting toward black opposition players. The Irriducibili dismissed (and still do) Mihajlovic's initiative which they thought was not spontaneous but imposed by the Lazio management. They argued that Viera should have also said sorry to Mihajlovic; as far as the grunting was concerned the Irriducibili justified them as a means to distract opposition players and not as a manifestation of racism. Diabolik stated that in curva nord there were black Lazio supporters and never once were they attacked or abused by the Irriducibili.

26. Adel Smith is the leader of the *Unione dei Musulmani d'Italia* located in Ofena (L'Aquila) which aims for political representation for Muslims in the Italian Parliament.

27. In his study on the British Far Right National Front party Fielding (1981) well understood that: 'political deviance is important to this field (extreme right ideology) because it is an area in which the deviant's perception of social reality not only differs rather abruptly from that of the majority but also does so in an unusually coherent manner (p. 2).

28. Cf. Il Sole24.com, *Diritto e società*.

[www.professionisti24.ilsole24ore.com/art/AreaProfessionisti/Diritto/DIR\\_VIOLENZA%20STADI.shtml?uid=822462e6-b75d-11db-ae4c-00000e251029&type=Libero](http://www.professionisti24.ilsole24ore.com/art/AreaProfessionisti/Diritto/DIR_VIOLENZA%20STADI.shtml?uid=822462e6-b75d-11db-ae4c-00000e251029&type=Libero);

Mariottini, D. (2004). *Ultraviolenza, Storie di sangue del tifo italiano*. [Ultraviolenza, Accounts of blood of the Italian Tifo]. Torino: Bradipolibri. Papa, A., & Panico, G. (2002). *Storia sociale del calcio in Italia*. [Social History of the Italian Football]. Bologna: Il Mulino. Galeano, E. (2005). *Splendori e Miserie del gioco del calcio*. [Football's Splendours and Miseries]. Milano: Sperling & Kupfer.

## Notes on contributors

Alberto Testa is a lecturer in the Sociology of Sport at the School of Sport and Education, Brunel University. A native of Rome, he has been a lifelong follower of Lazio and conducted research in the late 1990s and again between 2003 – 2006 with the supporters of Lazio and Roma.

Gary Armstrong is a Reader in the Sociology of Sport at the School of Sport and Education, Brunel University. His monograph *Football Hooligans: Knowing the Score* (Berg: Oxford 1994) was an ethnographic analysis of a group of football hooligans in the English city of Sheffield.

## References

- Agnew, P. (2006). *Forza Italia: The Fall and Rise of Italian Football*. Reading: Ebury Press.
- Cardone, G. (2001). . *La Repubblica* (online edition).  
([Http://www.repubblica.it/online/calcio/liverani/liverani/liverani.html](http://www.repubblica.it/online/calcio/liverani/liverani/liverani.html))
- Cotesta, V. (1992). *La cittadella assediata. Immigrazione e conflitti etnici in Italia*. [The city surrounded. Immigration and ethnic conflicts in Italy]. Roma: Editori Riuniti.
- Croce, B. (1921). *Philosophy of the Spirit and his History: Its Theory and Practice (Trans. Ainstre)*. New York.
- Dal Lago, A. (1990). *Descrizione di una battaglia* [Description of a battle]. Bologna: Il Mulino.
- Dal Lago, A., & De Biasi, R. (2002). *Introduzione all' etnografia Sociale*. Bari: Laterza
- De Felice, R. (2005). *Storia degli Ebrei italiani sotto il Fascismo* [History of the Italian Jews during Fascism]. Torino: Einaudi.
- De Sisti, S. (1996-1997). *Politica e Tifo calcistico*. [Politics and Football Fandom]. Unpublished Thesis. Bologna: University of Bologna.
- Eco, U. (1990). *Travels in Hyperreality*. London: Harcourt.
- Elwell, F. (1996). *The Sociology of Max Weber*, Retrieved March 3, 2005.  
([Http://www.faculty.rsu.edu/~felwell/Theorists/Weber/Whome.htm](http://www.faculty.rsu.edu/~felwell/Theorists/Weber/Whome.htm))
- Evola, J. (1971). *Maschera e volto dello spiritualismo contemporaneo*. [The profile of the modern spiritualism]. Roma: Edizioni Mediterranee.
- Evola, J. (1993). *Rivolta contro il mondo moderno* [Rebellion against the modern world]. Roma: Edizioni Mediterranee
- Evola, J. (1999). *Cavalcare la tigre* [Ride the tiger]. Roma: Edizioni Mediterranee
- Ferrarotti, F. (1965). *Max Weber e il destino della ragione* [Max Weber and the fate of the reason]. Bari: Laterza
- Fielding, N. (1981). *The National Front*. London: Routledge.
- Foot, J. (2006). *Il Calcio: A History of Italian Football*. London: Harper Perennia.
- Freund, J. (1968). *Sociologia di Max Weber* [Max Weber's Sociology]. Milano.
- Galeano, E. (2005). *Splendori e Miserie del gioco del calcio*. [Football's Splendours and Misereries ]. Milano: Sperling & Kupfer.
- Germinario, F. (2001) *Razza del sangue, razza dello spirito. Julius Evola, l'antisemitismo e il nazionalsocialismo (1930-1943)*. [Race of Blood, Race of Soul. Julius Evola, the antisemitism and nazionalsocialism (1930-1943)]. Torino: Bollati Boringhieri
- Ginsborg, P. (2001). *Italy and its Discontents 1980-2001*. London: Penguin Books.
- Griffin, R. (1998). *International Fascism. Theories, causes and the New Consensus*. London.
- Grispigni, M. (1993). *Combattenti di strada. La nascita delle culture giovanili in Italia*. [Street fighters. the origin of the youth cultures in Italy]. In A.A.V.V., *Ragazzi senza tempo. Immagini, musica, conflitti delle culture giovanili*. Genova: Costa & Nolan.
- Guenon, R. (2000). *La crisi del mondo moderno* [The crisis of the modern world]. Roma: Edizioni Mediterranee
- Guenon, R. (1975). *Simboli della Scienza Sacra* [The symbols of the sacred science]. Milano: Ed. Adelphi
- Humphrey, R. (1951). *Georges Sorel: Prophet without Honor. A study in Anti-Intellectualism*. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Jennings, J. (1999). *Sorel: Reflections on Violence: Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Jones, T. (2003). *The Dark Heart of Italy: Travels Through Time and Space Across Italy*. London: Faber and Faber.
- Le Van Baumer, F. (1978). *Main Currents of Western Thought*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Martin, S. (2004). *Football and Fascism*. Oxford: Berg.

- Mariottini, D. (2004). *Ultraviolenza, Storie di sangue del tifo italiano*. [Ultraviolence, Accounts of blood of the Italian Tifo]. Torino: Bradipolibri.
- Mayer, J. (1943). *Political Thought in France from Sieves to Sorel*. London: Faber & Faber
- MClean, I. (1995). *Concise Dictionary of Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Papa, A., & Panico, G. (2002). *Storia sociale del calcio in Italia*. [Social History of the Italian Football]. Bologna: Il Mulino.
- Parks, T. (2002). *A Season with Verona*. London: Vintage.
- Porro, N. (1992). Sport, political system and sociology in Italy. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 27.
- Rappaport, R. (1979). *Ecology, Meaning and Religion*. Richmond: North Atlantic Books.
- Rees, P. (1991). *Biographical Dictionary of the Extreme Right since 1890*. New York: Simon & Schuster
- Ritzer, G., & Godman, D. (2003). *Sociological Theory (6th ed.)*. London: McGraw. Hill
- Rossi, P. (1982). *Max Weber. Razionalità e razionalizzazione* [Max Weber. Rationality and rationalization]. Milano: Il Saggiatore
- Roversi, A. (1992). *Calcio, tifo e violenza* [Football, Fans and Violence]. Bologna: Il Mulino.
- Sapir, E. (1994). *The Psychology of Culture: A Course of Lectures*. New York: Morton de Gruyter.
- Segre, D. (1979). *Ragazzi di stadio* [The youth and the stadium]. Milano: Mazzotta.
- Serra, C., & Pili, F. (2003). *Quelli Dello Stadio* [Those of the Stadium]. Roma: Laurus Robuffo.
- Titta Rosa, G., & Ciampitti, F. (1934). *Prima antologia degli scrittori sportivi* [Anthology of sports writers]. Milano: Carabba Edizioni.
- Triani, G. (1994). *Bar Sport Italia*. Milano: Elenthera.
- Turner, V. (1969). *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. . Ithaca: Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Weber, M., Gerth, H., & Wright Mills, C. (1958). *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. USA: Oxford University Press.