

**OPPOSING THE 'SYSTEM':
IDEOLOGY AND ACTION IN THE ITALIAN FOOTBALL TERRACES**

A Dissertation submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

by
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DEDICATION

For my spiritual father *Padre Pio da Pietrelcina* who is always there for me when I need.

In LUX

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ABSTRACT

Over the past two decades, the relationship between political extremism and football fans has been the subject of academic, political and policing debates throughout Europe. At football stadiums, in Italy in particular, it is common to witness manifestations of racist intolerance and ideological statements referring to regional, national and international issues. Concurrently, there has been a rise in conflict between Italian police forces and hardcore football fans. The fan-protagonists of such episodes are often groups known as the *UltraS*; the capital S is a neologism of this study to define neo-fascist oriented supporters. The nomenclature differentiates them from the wider hardcore football supporters who are instead referred in this research as *ultrá*.

Despite their presence among the Italian *curve* (football terraces), the *UltraS* have been the subject of very limited methodical ethnographic study. The present study seeks to correct this lacuna and is the result of ethnographic research conducted from 2003 to 2006 and updated from 2007 to 2009. This thesis seeks to evaluate the *UltraS* phenomenon via an examination of two nationally renowned groups located in the Italian capital of Rome. The groups, the *Boys* of AS Roma and the *Irriducibili* of SS Lazio, enact their performances on the respective *curve* of the city's Olympic Stadium. This research considers the *UltraS* gatherings as a form of 'ideological communitas'. In doing so, analysis introduces and explains the four essential elements of the *UltraS* logic: the principle of *non omologazione* (non-conformism), the concept of the 'true' *UltraS*; the opposition of Tradition versus Modernity in the *UltraS* condition, and finally the attempt by them to live up to the 'Warrior Spirit'. Analysis further identifies the ideological and anti-system based alliance between the *UltraS* of Lazio and Roma and other similar gatherings throughout Italy. This phenomenon, together with an increase ideologisation of the Italian *curve*, incidents such as the death at the hands of the police gun of the SS Lazio fan Gabriele Sandri in 2007 (and the concomitant violent *UltraS* reactions against a variety of institutions) and the appearance in 2008 of the *UltraS Italia*, may signify the beginning of an *UltraS* collective identity, and a concomitant emergent status of the *UltraS* as a social movement, which stands in opposition to the perceived repressive Italian State and its media allies.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In October 2008, the world champion Italian national football team (nicknamed the *Azzurri*) played a 2010 World Cup qualifying match against Bulgaria in Sofia. This occasion saw the first appearance of 150 members of the recently formed *UltraS Italia*. During the match, they chanted '*Duce, Duce*' ('Leader, Leader') in honour of the long dead Italian fascist leader Benito Mussolini. Celtic crosses were sported and the Roman salute was enacted during the pre-match playing of the Italian national anthem (La Repubblica –online- 12 October, 2008). The Italian media were outraged; their reporting of the incidents made the *UltraS Italia* instantly notorious. This episode illustrated to Italy, and the world, yet another manifestation of Italian induced football-related intemperance. It also confirmed the existence and strength of an ideologically influenced hardcore Italian football fan: the *UltraS*.

It is difficult to make sense of the emotions, logic and violence that the *UltraS* express without considering the nature of the football stadium. This locale provides for collective behaviours and a wide variety of associations. The common-sense correlation of the Italian term *tifo* (football supporters) with 'fanatic' is derived from the medical pathology of *typhus* with its classic symptoms of alternate phases of illness and well-being (Gould, 2002). A football fan in Italy is similarly characterised in the public eye by phases of 'normal' behaviour alongside temporary (football-related) abnormality. Social anthropologists would argue the case for applicability of the notion of *liminal* moments (Turner, 1977). Active *tifo* do not always see the entire actual match -a paradox and an absurdity in the eyes of 'ordinary' fans who pay their admission at the stadium- as they busy themselves in a variety of tasks. Those leading the chants turn their backs to the pitch to face fellow supporters urging them to voice their encouragement for the team and to create a spectacle. Some dedicate a great amount of their time outside of the stadium prior to the match, co-ordinating group operations with the goal of initiating or at least maintaining the social order of this micro-system. In this colourful, transgressive and carnivalesque milieu, disorder and ideological manifestations are rife (cf. De Certeau, 1984).

In the Italian context, the *UltraS* are inextricably linked with late Twentieth Century neo-fascism and are a crucial fixture within its Third Millennium manifestations. Their appearance in the *curva* - location in the stadium situated behind either of the two pitch goalposts - is fairly recent and corresponds with a political era remembered by the Italian

nation as *Tangentopoli* - 'bribesville' (Barbaceto et al. 2002). The *Tangentopoli* scandal erupted in full in the late 1980s; it did not only reveal the illicit financing of political parties and bribery of politicians but promoted a loss of faith amongst the Italian electorate in the integrity of their country's political life and indeed in wider Italian society. Such a perception remains and is not expected to wane in the foreseeable future.

Before such cause and effect is elaborated upon, the explanations that scholars have hitherto produced to make sense of hardcore football fandom in Italy (of which the *UltraS* are the latest and most important evolution) requires examination.

1.1 Hardcore football spectatorship: Italian Theories

The first significant ethnographic study on Italian hardcore (*ultrá*) football supporters was carried out by sociologist Alessandro Dal Lago (1990) who studied *ultrá* groups in the three northern Italian cities of Turin, Milan and Bergamo. Dal Lago shared a similar position to that espoused by the Oxford Brookes University researcher Peter Marsh (1978) about the ritualistic nature of football-related violence. In his explanation of the behaviour of the *ultrá* supporters, Dal Lago develops three assumptions. The first is based on the *freund und feind* (friends and enemies) division amongst such supporters. This division is intrinsic to the nature of football given that two teams, defined by two sets of symbols, compete for victory. This notion could, according to Dal Lago (1990), explain the polarisation upon which the hardcore football supporters base their social interactions.

The second supposition describes a football match as not only a challenge between two teams, but also a place where ritual precipitates clashes between friends and enemies. The football stadium facilitates this interaction as it is an autonomous (and ideal) place to express symbolic conflicts. Dal Lago identifies two factors that influence the intensity of such ritual conflicts. The first factor, which is the most influential, is based on the historical relationships of alliances or enmities amongst supporters. The second element is related to the events that occur during the football match that could influence the emotional equilibrium on the *curva*. The author acknowledges that symbolic violence can sometimes descend into real violence. Nevertheless, this ritual violence generally only occurs when the metaphoric actions of the hardcore football supporters are misunderstood by ordinary spectators or by the police, which interpret their rituals as threatening to society.

Dal Lago's final proposition defines the football stadium as an autonomous social setting where certain logics, which can appear incomprehensible to outsiders, are largely

rational. In a stadium, it is possible to experiment with emotions that are different from those experienced in 'normal' life. Furthermore, in a stadium, symbols attain meanings different from those that are manifest in 'normal' society. Dal Lago pragmatically divides the two realities of 'Stadium and Society'. Once the fans cross the imaginary boundary between these two realities, they change their way of acting. He states: '*of course, they are the same people or groups. What they have put on, however, trespassing the invisible membrane that surrounds the stadium, is another mental, cognitive and moral dress*' (Dal Lago, 1990, p. 39). Therefore, in the frame of the stadium, conflicts between supporters are not necessarily socially meaningful, but should be considered as rituals, with meanings that are best understood via the logic of football-related figurative hostility.

Dal Lago's ideas inevitably lead him towards a skeptical position on the link between fandom and political ideology. He stressed the groundlessness of claims that the *curve* are directly linked to political groupings or, most importantly, that they are even genuine expressions of political cultures. Instead, he considered the ideological symbols adopted by hardcore football supporters in accordance with Lévi-Strauss' (1966) concept of *bricolage*; items are taken from different sources, collated and re-contextualised with a new meaning. Such artefacts and their contextual use can be understood using the aforementioned logic of figurative hostility, notably 'the metaphor of war'. For example, the display of Celtic crosses, songs such as *Faccetta Nera* (Little Black Face) and enactions of the Roman salute would, in Dal Lago's examination, be understood as displays of ritual conflicts explained by the impulse to appear and be part of the show (Dal Lago and De Biasi, 2002).

Morality is integral to other Italian explanations. The Italian sociologist Antonio Roversi's (1992) research was based on fans of Bologna FC and sought to quantitatively evaluate Italian football spectators' violence. The main hypothesis of Roversi's work was that the hardcore football supporters should be considered as a 'moral community' that permit their members to enjoy experiences that are different from their daily routines. Such gatherings do not manifest anything particularly *anomic*. By contrast, such groups construct structures and collectively follow norms and symbols. Such groups thus represent, for the participants, a behavioural and cultural setting that satisfies their need for personal and social identity. This setting has a positive role as it substitutes for the often-decadent initiatory rituals provided by schooling, military service, and the church. However, there is also a negative dimension given that a world founded on strict values may restrict youngsters to the rigid role of a hardcore football supporter, thereby preventing them from experiencing the wider world.

In a previous discourse, Roversi (1991) identified three factors that accounted for the enduring oppositional stances in and around football. The first is the historical legacies ever evident when assessing the history of Italian football. Roversi defined the second dimension as the ‘Bedouin Syndrome’, which he considered contained the following characteristics:

The principle by which the friend of a friend is a friend, the enemy of an enemy is an enemy, the enemy of a friend is a friend and the friend of an enemy is an enemy. (p. 321)

At the same time, He recognised that not all hardcore football supporters’ conflict could be similarly reduced to this dynamic.

For the third dimension, Roversi became one of the few Italian academics to claim that political ideologies do indeed play a part in fuelling rivalries and violence, although he provided no concrete proof of extremist groups’ involvement beyond highlighting the use of neo-fascist symbolism. Such ideas remain thought-provoking and indeed relevant, but they would certainly have benefited from the inclusion of systematic ethnographic evidence. In 2006, Roversi attempted an evaluation of Italian ideologically oriented football fans but with an externalist approach (Blee, 2007). He reported no interaction between himself and the studied groups. In his explanation, he states:

‘The research that I present in this book was carried out whilst being comfortably seated in my office. I needed only a laptop, an internet connection and time available to navigate the internet’ (p.7).

Although Roversi’s works constitute an important contribution to the pursuit of knowledge about Italian football fandom, a pertinent criticism of this type of strategy and its limitations is made by Lorenzo, the webmaster of the AS Roma *UltraS* website. Roversi comments on the infamous Lazio-Roma game of 2004 (a game abandoned after the *UltraS* protested against the repression of the police)¹ and argues that two of the three Roma *UltraS*, who entered the pitch to speak to the Roma player Francesco Totti, were leaders of the *Opposta Fazione* neo-fascist group. Lorenzo affirms (and the *Boys Roma* confirmed to me) that the members of *Opposta Fazione* were no longer in the Roma *curva* and the two individuals who entered the pitch, even if neo-fascists, were acting alone and not as representatives of any *curva* group. A ‘netography’ gives freedom to the researcher to mediate reality, on the other hand used alone, it is unable to offer full and rich details of the human experience. Whether it increases our understanding of the *UltraS* is another matter.

¹ See chapter 11 for a detailed analysis of the event.

1.2 Amongst the ‘thugs’?

Ethnography can be a very powerful method for studying closed setting groups and for seeking to infer the motivations of the members from the privileged position of the ‘insider’. Ethnography involves ‘being there’ and ‘being here’. ‘Being there’ because the researcher was once amongst the group; ‘being here’ because the reader is now able to appreciate (or criticise) the work as the researcher has returned from ‘field work’ and presents the study in an academic text (Pearson, in Hobbs and May 2002, p. viii). The thesis presented in this research was a product of ‘being there’ and is now at the stage of ‘being here’.

No previous research on the *UltraS* has utilised an in-depth ethnographic approach, although, some studies claim such effort has been made. A recent example of these claims is evident in the study carried out by Italian criminologist Vincenzo Scalia (2009), who fails to detail the methodology and theoretical framework utilised for his research ostensibly with the *UltraS*. The methodology is described in just one sentence: ‘*I consider this work as the product of ethnographic research (Atkinson, 2007), both as a former ultra and as a current football fan*’ (p.42). The significance of the *UltraS* groupings, hence, cried out for an inquiry such as this, but investigating the individuals involved from an ‘insider’ perspective is notoriously complex. These groups do not usually welcome the non-partisan or the intellectually curious.

The research that follows focused on two *UltraS* groups in the Italian capital of Rome, the centre of Italy’s political power. One group was the *Boys*, followers of AS Roma who have been notoriously neo-fascist since 1972. They are the oldest *UltraS* in Italy. The other group was the *Irriducibili*, who follow SS Lazio and who, since 1987, have attained a notoriety based on toughness and violence both inside and outside of the Italian borders. They manifest a strong oppositional attitude towards Italian politics. As Giovanni (age 40), one of the leaders of the *Irriducibili*, explained:

‘I do not want to be too judgmental or maybe just judge the politicians, but there is a certain culture prevalent in Italy that favours chaos and moral degradation. We elect the wrong people and we have a wrong attitude towards the *res publica* (public interest).’

1.2.1 Objectives of this Thesis

I will begin this thesis aiming to give a detailed methodological account of how this research was attempted and the challenges I faced in such an investigation (chapter 2). In Section A (chapters 3, 4), I discuss the *Irriducibili* and *Boys'* social world. This section specifically concentrates on the historical development of the *UltraS* territory; their respective *curve* (the *curva nord* of the *Irriducibili* and *curva sud* of the *Boys*). This part of the study will also include data gained from the protagonists regarding the groups' histories.

In Section B (chapters 5 to 10), I try to evaluate the *UltraS* internal and external dynamics. After, having identified and clarified the strand of Italian neo-fascism that informs the groups' ideology (chapter 5), this section seeks mainly to make sense of the logic that motivates the groups attitudes and behaviours. Such inquiry intends to highlight the ideological boundaries of meaning in which the *Irriducibili* and *Boys* present themselves to the public (Corte and Edwards, 2008). Based upon the gathered data, I identify four significant characteristics of the *UltraS* logic: the principle of *non omologazione* (non-conformism); the concept of the 'true' *UltraS*; the centrality of notions of Tradition and Modernity in their thinking and doing; and the necessity of living by the 'Warrior Spirit'.

Such logic is employed both inside and outside of the football stadium, which contrarily to Dal Lago's (1990) analysis, is not considered by this study alien from the Italian society but conceived as its local and national reflection. The examination of the groups continues in chapter 9, which evaluates the *UltraS* manifestations of nationalistic and racist propaganda. Finally, chapter 10 examines the emergence and progressive strengthening of the *UltraS* phenomenon hypothesising the *UltraS* as an emerging social movement.

Section C (chapters 11 and 12) focuses on the *UltraS* 'foes' namely the media and the police. In 2008, I interviewed three established Italian sports journalists. One was Franco Arturi, deputy director of *La Gazzetta dello Sport*, which is the most established and popular of the Italian sport newspapers. Another was Giuseppe Tassi, a sport journalist and deputy director of *Quotidiano.net* (internet edition of the *Resto del Carlino*, *La Nazione* and *Il Giorno* editorial group). The third was Gabriele Marcotti, a journalist for the British newspaper *The Times* and the popular Italian daily *Il Corriere dello Sport*. These interviews endeavour to provide an insight into the Italian media and their rapport (or non-rapport) with the *UltraS*.

In 2009, I also questioned Dr. Domenico Mazzilli, a high ranking officer of the Italian police and President of the *National Observatory on Sport Events* of the Italian Ministry of

the Interior (chapter 12). Many of the answers he provided, focused on ‘technical’ points of view, thereby avoiding ‘socio-political speculation’, a term used by the Italian police to deflect analyses that they consider inopportune. The purpose of the chapter is to evaluate the efficiency of policing strategies for tackling violent episodes in and around the football stadium; these episodes often see the *UltraS* as the main protagonists. Moreover, for the first time in an academic investigation, chapter 12 reconstructs – with the help of the Italian Police – the complicated and lengthy development of the Italian anti-*UltraS* legislation and the effect that it has had on those whom it is meant to control.

To safeguard the privacy of the participants and avoid the legal implications connected to their activities, the names of the *UltraS* used throughout this thesis are fictional.

Chapter 2

Notes on Methodology

'(Any phenomenon) contains multiple truths, each of which will be revealed by a shift in perspective, method, or purpose...The task is not to exhaust the singular meaning of an event but to reveal the multiplicity of meanings, and...it is through the observer's encounter with the event that these meanings emerge.' (Mishler, 1979, p. 10)

Ethnography requires specialised skills and attitudes, but can be reduced to some very basic acts: listening and engaging in conversations with members of the groups studied, formally and informally interviewing members on issues of interest and collecting documents produced by the groups (Bryman, 2008). In this study, accounts that pertain to norms, social values and interactions related to the *Boys* and the *Irriducibili* were collected and collated without journalistic or politically mediated reality. Such data were evaluated to develop an understanding of the lifeworld of the groups chosen.

This research arose from ideas originating by reading of British criminologist Ian Taylor's works (cf. Taylor 1969; 1971; 1982; 1987; 1989). As an orthodox Marxist, Taylor was one of the first academics to consider the potential of Marx's notion of 'resistance' in his explanation of English hardcore football fans groups. According to Taylor's writings in the late 1960s and early 1970s, English hardcore football fans (i.e. hooligans) manifested an opposition arising out of the more traditional supporters' rebellion against the changes of 'spectacularisation' and 'professionalisation' that had occurred in the English game since the 1950s. Football hooliganism, in Taylor's Marxist sense, was a resistance movement to a variety of processes of 'bourgeoisification'. Such gatherings and actions had revolutionary potential. This study follows Taylor's hypothesis and is in line with Griffin's Neo-Consensus theory (1991, 2000), which considers fascism (and its modern manifestations) as a revolutionary-resistance doctrine. In doing so, this research endeavours to make sense of the *UltraS* as a potential extra-parliamentary oppositional movement.²

I chose the *Irriducibili* and *Boys* as the focus of this study for three motives. First, because of the political tradition of the Lazio region and its largest city, Rome, which offered fascinating insights into the way these groups represent it. The Italian *curve* embrace a political ideology, be it *rossa* (red-communism) or *nera* (black, neo-fascism), in part because

² For an indepth evaluation of the topic see chapter 5.

of the social and political history of the locale in which the football club and stadium belong. Therefore, a *rossa* (red, left wing) city, such as Livorno³, will mainly attract left and extreme left fan followers. A city that is traditionally *nera* (black, right wing), as in the case of Rome, will have curves that are predominantly formed by centre-right and extreme right supporters. Recent data (2009)⁴ show that there are 50,000 neo-fascists in Rome. The increase in neo-fascism is particularly evident among the youth in the capital. Some eight years ago, a mere 20 out of 400 high school students (aged 15 to 17) elected in the *Consulta Provinciale Studentesca* (District Students' Youth Council) represented the far right. By 2007, neo-fascists representatives were the majority and managed an annual budget of 80,000 Euros provided by the national government. Among the elected are representatives of *Azione Giovane* (the youth organisation of *Alleanza Nazionale*⁵, the direct descendent of the neo-fascist party *Movimento Sociale Italiano* –MSI) and the school-age movement of *Forza Nuova* (the largest neo-fascist party in Italy) known as *Lotta Studentesca* (Student Fight). Furthermore, the *Blocco Studentesco* (Student Block) of *Casa Pound Italia* (a newly formed national neo-fascist organisation)⁶ elected 55 representatives to the *Consulta* in 2008 (La Repubblica –online- 23 February, 2008).

In selecting the groups, the second motive was to examine one of the most important social aggregations of Roman youth: the *Stadio Olimpico* (the Olympic Stadium) and the two groups' 'symbolic' territories: the *curva sud* for the Boys and the *curva nord* for the *Irriducibili*. The *curva* is not only a sector of the stadium, but a location in which the 'rebels' of the city can find space to discharge a collective passion for their favourite football teams and to manifest their opposition against the current state of affairs of Italian society, politics and football. Cesare of the *Irriducibili* (aged in his late twenties) noted that the *curva* allowed fans: 'to express our ideas to 'public opinion' and show that we are not only UltraS or, like the media affirms, ' thugs' but people with a brain, able to think and unwilling to be ghettoized or unheard' (field note 23). The *UltraS* see the *curva* as their 'territory', as a home to be guarded and, if necessary, defended from the 'outsiders'. The *curva* is a venue into which welcoming friends or 'whoever wants to know our world free of preconceived ideas' (Antonio – aged 19 – Boys, field note 19). However, even if I began the study with minimal

³ Cf. <http://firenze.repubblica.it/dettaglio/livorno-riconferma-al-primo-turno-per-alessandro-cosimi/1647958>

⁴ Cf. <http://tv.repubblica.it/le-inchieste/fuori-dalle-fogne/30659?video=&pagefrom=3>

⁵ AN has recently merged (March 2009) with the movement *Forza Italia* to constitute a unified centre-right party under the presidency of Silvio Berlusconi. The party is called *Partito della Libertá* (PDL- Freedom Party). Cf. <http://repubblica.it/2009/03/sezioni/politica/congresso-pdl/seconda-giornata/seconda-giornata.html>

⁶ Cf. chapter 5.

pre-conceptions and I manifested a sincere desire to know the *Boys* and *Irriducibili*'s world, the interaction with the groups was not always easy and friendly during the research process.

Finally, the choice of the *Boys* and the *Irriducibili* was influenced by the need for the study's sample to satisfy the requirement of transferability, a central concern of sound academic research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). For the extremism of their ideology, the *Boys* and the *Irriducibili* are respected among similar *UltraS* groups. Many Italian *UltraS* regarded them as the example to follow. This dynamic of emulation, together with the nature of Italian fascism (in its modern form) -which tends to encourage uniformity of individuals via shared values, myths and beliefs (Kallis, 2000)- suggests a certain degree of transferability of the findings to other similar Italian groups. The logic of the *Irriducibili* was similar to the *Boys* regardless of the teams that they supported; so the logic of those studied might be similar to other neo-fascists, such as the *Boys San* of Inter or the *Settembre Bianconero* of Ascoli. Based on such possible transferability, this micro-scale study has macro-scale implications in terms of a better understanding of the whole Italian *UltraS* phenomenon.

2.1 The object of Suspicion

The primary problem I encountered while structuring the research was the initial distrust of the *UltraS* when seeking access to their social world. Research access is something approached via several dimensions; the most crucial is whether the setting in question is open or closed (Bell, 1969). The social setting of this study was closed due to the dislike by these groups of any type of media attention ever deemed to 'unfairly' represent them. In addition, there was a 'paranoia' concerning the constant police surveillance and intelligence gathering to which they were subjected. Suspicion toward 'outsiders' was, consequently, expected; it is a trait of any radical right group due to their perception of being persecuted by the State (Klandermans and Mayer, 2006).

Ethnographers seeking to study extreme ideological groups have also another difficult task. Ideally, they need to balance their ethical convictions - which could lead them to expose and hinder the very groups that they are studying - with the academic ethos of being *super partes* (Blee, 2007). The latter attribute is problematic for the *UltraS*. The *Boys* and the *Irriducibili* express an ideology for which few sociologists have empathy. For instance, I found it difficult to accept their discourse around 'race' and their viewpoint on the use of violence. In one conversation with Todde (a 28-year old law student at the University of Rome, who became later in the research process the 'gatekeeper' of the *Boys*), he recalled his

confrontations with a Manchester United hooligan opponent before a European fixture between the two clubs. Todde's boundary of violence normally admitted only kicks and punches; however, in this circumstance the opponent threw a bottle of beer in his face and attempted to 'glass' him. Livid in his recollection, Todde admitted that he knocked the opponent out and, as his head lay on a stair step, tried to jump on him. This act was prevented by other *Boys* who were aware that it could result in the death of the opponent. As more time was spent around the *Boys* and the *Irriducibili*, similar episodes were increasingly recalled. At times, those speaking asked me what I thought about their actions and what I would have done in such circumstances. I replied that it was not appropriate for me to judge individuals that I was researching, or to guide what they should think. Such a response seemed to be respected by my interlocutors. Nevertheless, the articulations of these accounts were a good sign, as far as the methodology of the research was concerned. The barriers between me (the 'researcher') and them were minimal. My presence did not appear to affect their conversations or behaviours. In academic jargon, 'reactivity' was minimal (Bryman, 2008).

Moreover, suspicion about the 'real' reason for research can arise from the academic world. Studies focusing on extreme right groups '*solicit accounts of morally indefensible behaviour*' (Blee, 2007, p. 125). During his research on the extreme right UK National Front party, Fielding (1981) had to address such distrust and He articulated a defence shared by this study:

'It can be argued that to discuss the National Front at all is to encourage it, and that no book, academic or otherwise, should deal with the subject. I find this absurd. The argument is absurd both in terms of my personal stance, which is that we must know all we can about those we oppose, and sociologically, for the sociological importance of deviant groups is undeniable. Nevertheless, I have not written a page-by-page condemnation of the NF and some may find my examination of the subject too dispassionate. My reply is that while my instinct was to reject these beliefs as forcefully as they were expressed, to have done that would have prevented me from building up a picture of the beliefs and their significance for members.(p.vii).

With that said, the issue was then how best to proceed with the research at hand.

2.2 Overt or Covert?

Ethnographic investigation requires that the researcher study a group by immersing themselves within a reality expressed by those studied whilst ostensibly being a member of the group (Chadwick et al. 1984). In my case, this was not possible. A covert approach could have minimised my anxiety concerning entry into a hostile social group like the *UltraS*;

nevertheless, the covert method presents shortcomings that should not be undervalued. Elms (1994) argues that such a role implies a duplicity that should not be ethically permissible. Such deception makes the groups studied '*unable to make choices for themselves according to the most adequate information available, [and] unable to act as they would have wanted to act had they known all along*' (Bok, 1978, p. 20). Moreover, a Canadian study into the extreme right stressed the difficulty of exploring issues with such subjects if they perceived the researcher as a potential member; questions would give rise to distrust and tension (Barrett, 1996, p. 132). In addition, a covert role would not allow for interviews or open examination of behaviours, providing instead a one-dimensional view of the social reality under inquiry (Burgess, 1984, p. 48).

Considering such disadvantages, I adopted an overt role, similar to that utilised by social anthropologist Armstrong (1998) in his enquiry on the 'Blades' football hooligans of Sheffield United FC. Hence, the covert approach to analysis of the *Boys* and the *Irriducibili* was not chosen for two main reasons. As noted earlier, the *Boys* and the *Irriducibili* have primarily aggressive and closed attitudes towards any type of perceived media inquiry that is considered unable (and unwilling) to represent them justly. This attitude, combined with the groups' paranoia concerning police surveillance, would have created a constant fear of being discovered and possibly assaulted during the research process. Furthermore, given awareness of the thought process of the *curva*, I supposed that my passion for the gym and martial arts would result in the *UltraS* mistaking me as an undercover police officer. In few instances during the study, I had 'to sweat' to become accepted and risked being attacked by unconvinced *UltraS*. The second reason about choosing an overt role was based, as mentioned earlier, on ethics; a covert role did not provide the *UltraS* with the possibility of deciding whether they wanted to participate in this study; I considered this consequence as unacceptable (Cassell 1980; Erikson 1967).

For the purpose of gaining entry into the social world of the *Boys* and *Irriducibili*, a minimum of knowledge about the *curva* way of life and values was needed. For this aim, I had an advantage over academic colleagues. Ethnographic research projects often have their genesis in the biography of the researcher (Rabinow, 1986), which was certainly the case in this instance, given that I had a childhood passion for football combined with a similar passion for martial arts. In the early 1970s, a family move from the north of Italy to Rome resulted in a five-year-old, myself, watching an SS Lazio side win its first ever *scudetto* (championship). The Lazio and *Azzurri* (the nickname of the national team) striker, Giorgio Chinaglia, became a personal hero of mine. The choice of club, whilst inspired by a familial

relocation, was also influenced by sartorial issues and resulted in a research position that saw me sharing passion and practise with those studied. The sky blue and white colours of the Lazio team shirt and the eagle insignia of the club appealed to a child like me, who was seemingly unaware of aesthetics and emblems. Suffering many times for the incompetence of the team, I remained, though, faithful to the *biancocelesti* (white and light blues).

An education during the 1980s in a Rome Catholic high school of repute saw my passage from a simple *tifoso* to something more. I started playing *calcio* at a high level with the *Eur-Olympia* club connected with AS Roma, whilst training in *Karate* and *Judo*. This situation, though, interfered with academic study and resulted in a high school failure in the Humanities. Football offered a possible alternative to re-sits. After a successful trial with a feeder club of SS Lazio, the family enforced a very tough decision – football or study? The familial commitment to big fees for an education without a commitment from their son saw a parting of the ways. Leaving active football, I dedicated my life to practising martial arts, attending periodically the Olympic Stadium to watch SS Lazio and pursuing academic qualifications. By attending the stadium, I started to experience the SS Lazio world from the perspective of the *curva*; I gained insight that would later prove useful in this research. My *curva nord* activities came to a stop in 1989 as they were replaced by my study of law at the University of Naples. My martial arts training, instead, continued during university. In 1998, as I left Italy for what was presumed to be a short language study experience in the UK, my Lazio scarf and flag were packed in my luggage.

In 1998 after leaving Italy and departing for what I still call the ‘London adventure’, I encountered many unexpected juxtapositions. Throughout this time, I maintained my Sunday match-day character as a fringe Lazio hardcore supporter. In London, whilst waiting on tables and serving at Carluccio’s deli near Oxford Street, I realised that I could put my knowledge of the *curva nord* to use. My stay in London proved to be an extended sojourn; 12 years later, I am now a citizen of the Metropolis and in the final year of my PhD dissertation explaining the *UltraS* phenomenon. In order to obtain bursary funding for post-graduate study, I re-visited my Roman contacts and described the nature of my research. The *Boys* and *Irriducibili* knew me as a son of the Eternal City. They knew where my family lived; if I was not one of them, I was not too distant either. The years that I had lived in London, however, provided me with a distance from my Roman past that was necessary for this research project. By leaving the eternal city and, most importantly, because of my UK academic training in social sciences, I gained perspective that permitted me to understand this past more clearly upon my return. My perceptions were more astute as I had learned a new way of

thinking. I was similar to those who I sought to study, but I was also different. The *UltraS* were aware of this distinction as well.

2.3 The Gatekeepers of Knowledge

Because of the nature of this research, I needed gatekeepers to facilitate on-going access to my groups of interest; so negotiation for such entry was necessary. Gatekeeping is considered a central problem faced early in the research setting; however, as Pearson (in Hobbs and May, 2002) details, negotiating access is not only a logistic problem to be overcome to gain data, the negotiations *are* data. Negotiations show how the groups studied interact with the ‘outsiders’ and in which ways they attempt to explain their social world. Identifying a gatekeeper involves not only asking analytical questions about the organisation/group under study, it also concerns determination of the location of such gatekeepers (Morrill et al. 1999). The most significant gatekeepers are understandably at the top of an organisation or group. Therefore, I chose Todde from amongst the *Boys* for such a role. He was part of the *direttivo* (the equivalent of a ‘members committee’) and very knowledgeable about the Roman and national neo-fascist world. In 2008, He also became involved with the *UltraS Italia*. Among the *Irriducibili*, I was lucky to research alongside the Boxer, who, at 40 years of age, was one of the historical leaders of the group.

Gaining access to the *Boys* proved to be less problematic than gaining access to the *Irriducibili*. The latter’s nation-wide notoriety had produced constant negative exposure in the Italian media and concomitant scrutiny by the police, which made any approach to its leaders difficult; an outsider like me needed to pass through a series of ‘filters’. Contacting the *Boys* via phone (a mobile number was advertised on their website) resulted in an appointment with one of their senior members in the *sede* (head office) located in San Lorenzo, one of Rome’s oldest districts.⁷ Once in the *sede*, I underwent an examination of sorts, which, to my astonishment, was conducted by a woman, Francesca. I found her to be an important member of the *Boys direttivo*. She had earned a high level of respect in the otherwise exclusively male group. Francesca was an attractive woman in her thirties. She was not only working at the head office, but was also a keen sportswoman who had trained in the Korean martial art of *Taekwondo*. Several pressing questions were fired at me by Francesca; she recollected a recent deceit by a person who had introduced himself to the *Boys* as a

⁷ The district of San Lorenzo was built in the late 19th century and is located near the centre of the City. Cf. <http://sanlorenzo.roma.it/quartiere/storia.php>

researcher, but who was a journalist intending to write an exposé on the *Boys*. The journalist published later what she considered lies about the group. She agreed to my somewhat vague request to be allowed to ‘hang out’ with the group. Confirming my anxieties, Francesca expressed her worries that I might be attacked by members at the stadium because I may be mistaken for an undercover police officer. For this reason she argued that one of the *Boys*, Antonio - who at 19 years of age was one of the youngest in the group but was very trusted - would keep an eye on me. I met Antonio quite a few times in the company of Todde. At the time, Todde was working in the head office of the *Boys* and was a *diffidato* (banned from the stadium). Antonio accepted the role as my ‘minder’. In fact, he was curious about my presence and my living in London, which was a city that he considered admirably ‘cool’. Despite the ‘cool effect’ I brought with me, the worries of Francesca became a reality. During the Roma-Lazio fixture of 2005, after having been invited by the *Boys* to watch the game from their position in *curva sud* and whilst using a tape recorder to record notes and record chants, I was approached by one individual who asked me in a threatening way if I was a *guardia* (police officer). Antonio immediately came over to speak with me to show that I was accepted and hence staved off possible violence. After a few more meetings at the head office and the emergence of mutual empathy inspired by my previous university background in Law, Todde became my gatekeeper.

My access to the *Irriducibili*'s world was, instead, more complicated. The group is far bigger in membership – some 6,000-7,000 people gather in the *curva nord* – than the *Boys*, who number 200 and are just one group amongst others who meet in the *curva sud*. I attempted to contact the Boxer, who had a Rome-wide reputation. I asked the men selling *Irriducibili* merchandise at the stadium for his whereabouts. They became increasingly agitated and hostile as I questioned them. I decided not to persist with this line of inquiry. My neighbour at the game, overhearing my request, explained that the Boxer was a person with strong personality who is known by every Lazio footballer, the club management and all regional sports journalists. My neighbour went on to indicate that he controlled his own publicity.

Having failed to meet with the group at the stadium, I pursued the *Irriducibili* in their *sede* near the Roman working class district of Ostiense, wherein they held meetings and prepared banners and choreographies for the matches. The owner of an adjacent shop informed me that the office was rarely opened because of supposedly constant surveillance

by the *Digos* (*Divisione per le Investigazioni Generali e le Operazioni Speciali*)⁸, the elite anti-terrorist police unit that operates in every Italian province. Fearing arrest, the *Irriducibili* meetings were discreet without a routine program or timetable. The *Irriducibili's* merchandising warehouse was the next point of contact that I explored. The *Irriducibili* produced dedicated designer label hats, jackets, shirts, scarves and stickers amongst other merchandise. After a few attempts, I found the telephone number for the warehouse. By telephone, I underwent endless security 'screenings' from the workers in the merchandising warehouse to be permitted to speak by telephone to a person near to one of the four leaders. Having taken my phone number with a promise to call me back, I waited – and waited – for a response from a representative of the *Irriducibili*. Desperate and ready to give up, I spoke to a member of the group who had lived in London previously. He promised to help me speak to the Boxer. Knowing the importance of the *Irriducibili* for my research, I also played my trump card. The Italian mother figure (*La Mamma*), the fulcrum of Italian families and society, is revered and a topic of sociological enquiry in itself. Eventually my mother called the warehouse again explained to the interlocutor that I was a student, and would fail to receive my PhD if I could not speak to the Boxer. The 'mother avenue' obtained what I and other sociologists before me had tried in vain to achieve. The Boxer agreed to meet with me at the Olympic Stadium. I met him during a Lazio-Inter match in 2005. As usual, he was very busy with preparations for the match, choreographies and chants. At the same time he was the only leader who was not banned from the stadium. He, thus, had the responsibility to lead his 'warriors'. After asking me questions about my research and why I chose the *Irriducibili*, he agreed to be my gatekeeper. The Boxer had relatives in London and liked the city, but most of all; he was quite impressed that I was working as an academic abroad. We agreed that no information about the *Irriducibili* would be discussed with the *Boys* and viceversa. From that moment, my access to the *Irriducibili's* social world became a reality. After long negotiations, I obtained the authorisation for the research from the other three *Irriducibili*

⁸ The *Digos* was established in 1978 via decree of the Minister of the Interior in the context of the reform of the Italian Secret Services. The main aims of the unit are to investigate and repress:

- national and international terrorist organizations;
- subversive associations which promote social divisions inciting violence for racial, ethnic, or religious motives
- associations which pursue the objective of the destruction of the independence and of the unity of the Italian State or the change of the constitutional order by illegal means.
- military or para-military associations
- links among national and international terrorist organizations with the flows of clandestine immigration and international weapons traffic
- informatics terrorism
- phenomena of "group violence" promoted by ideologies
- episodes of violence at sports events accomplished by organized factions

leaders – Giorgio, Giovanni and Federico. Once in the field, a combination of ‘snowball’ and convenience sampling was utilised to access data (Bryman, 2008).

2.4 Data Collection and Analysis

To gather data⁹, I used triangulation. As the term suggests, this approach employs more than one method to collect information (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). I employed the ‘Participant as Observer’ role (Gold, 1958); the *UltraS* knew of my researcher status and interacted with me regularly. I observed the subjects participating in a variety of activities at the stadium (preparing the choreographies, participating in match day and commenting on the clubs and rival fans). Just as important, I observed the groups outside of the stadium during their interactions with society, at their *sedi* (head offices) or leisure locations such as pubs. With some members of the groups I adopted a more ‘formal’ research role, with others a more relaxed open approach, depending on circumstances. The crucial element of my strategy, however, was a ‘sympathetic attitude’ (Fielding, 1981). This approach implies suspension of the researcher’s political ideas and preconceptions in an effort to obtain an objective inquiry. The duration of such observations ranged from four hours in the mornings, to daylong immersion at the stadium or at their head offices. At times, observation periods extended to late in the evenings at pubs. The groups accepted me; my closeness to them was important to the reliability of my accounts. I believe that good ethnographic research goes beyond the fieldwork milieu. As Hobbs argued, the researcher’s experiential and interpretive faculties continue to function long after the gate to the field has been closed (Hobbs, in Hobbs and May 2002, p. 48). Reflections made outside of the fieldwork context are crucial in what follows and serve as a good barrier to any accusations of ‘going native’ (Armstrong, 1998).

I complemented the Participant-Observation method with semi-structured interviews focusing on influential members (7 individuals) and casual conversations with 21 individuals (Haenfler 2004) carried out mostly at their *sedi*, but in a few instances at the stadium. Some members, such as the leaders, were interviewed several times. The length of the interviews varied according to the interest of the *UltraS* members in voicing their opinions. The semi-structured interviews were recorded with a digital recording device, then transcribed, coded and analysed. Casual conversations and observational notes were also written using a notebook. In some circumstances, including at the stadium or during meetings, I wrote notes

⁹ The data of this research were collected between 2003 and 2009.

into my mobile phone and, when home, immediately expanded the brief words into more elaborate field notes. In writing the field notes, I followed one of the maxims of ethnography: not speaking to anyone about what had occurred until the field notes were completed. Such precautions avoid the possibility that such 'chats' can 'rob note-writing of its psychological immediacy and emotional release, writing the day's events becomes a stale recounting rather than a cathartic outpouring' (Emerson et al. 1995, p. 41). Writing is an integral part of the research from the outset (Anderson, in Hobbs and Wright, 2006, p. 55). My field notes include narratives and, most importantly, indications about how the *UltraS* represent themselves and react in their surroundings. Field notes are essential to explanatory analysis (Katz, 2002). Figure 1 shows a field note, one of the first taken while trying to access the *Boys* group.

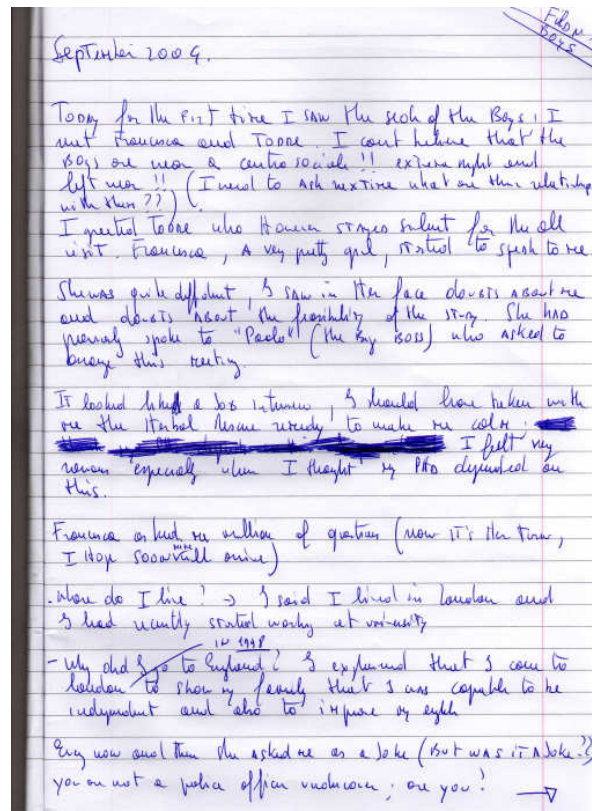


Fig1: Sample of Reflexive Fieldnote (2004)

Gathered data and consulted documents ranged from newspaper articles, the groups' fanzines (see Fig. 2), their websites, and the musical genres that they favoured.



Fig 2: Doc: 23 and 40. The Boys *L' Onore di Roma* (left) and the Irriiducibili *La Voce della Nord* (right)

These documents were collected before starting the study in the preparation phase and during the research process. In the preparation phase, such a strategy helped me to become acquainted with the groups and provoked thoughts about issues and specific topics to examine. Such information was important during the initial contact with the groups as I was able to demonstrate knowledge about their culture and history. I exchanged e-mails with some group members who helped me not only to organise meetings, but also to acquire information. Figure 3 shows a recent email from Todde, which was sent to arrange a meeting in London in 2009 to speak about the *UltraS Italia*.

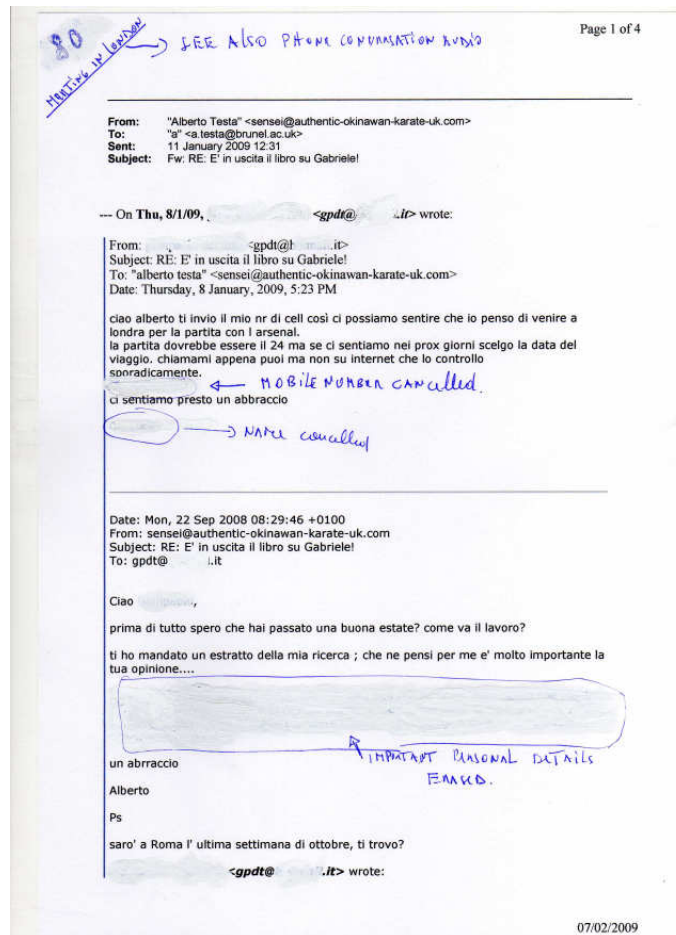


Fig 3 :Docum 80; Todde's email (2009)

Data were coded according to specific topics of interest (Haenfler, 2004): *ideology, personal traits, organisation, repression, politics, media, and norms*. The data were read, compared and re-read to identify phrases, terms and patterns of behaviour (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992). For instance, from the *groups' traits* topic, the themes of *non omologati* (non-conformist) and the 'Warrior Spirit' emerged. I continued to refine these themes while collecting new data. In seeking to achieve an outcome that would be both reliable and authentic (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), I complemented triangulation with participant validation, negative case analysis and data saturation. This method helped to make evidence clear and logical. Most importantly, this research strategy highlighted the 'Framing' processes of the groups and their implications for understanding the interplay between the groups and 'the outsiders' (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995; Guba and Lincoln 1989; Lincoln and Guba 1985). To this end, I provided to Todde and the Boxer a copy of their interviews and a summary of my study (Dodge and Geis, in Hobbs and Wright, 2006), underlining my

evaluation about the groups' logic and the concept of the football stadium as the contemporary *Agorà*. The latter concept was readily accepted (see section B). The logic of the groups was also well received as a fair representation of *UltraS*. The race analysis was acknowledged, although they both disagreed to a degree with the conclusion. More specifically, they both denied and played down the racist display as part of the 'normal' football rivalry dialectic. This response was expected; such research 'dialogue' aims not to generate agreement or consensus, but to note the unavoidable differences between the concerns of ethnographers and those whom they have represented (Emerson and Pollner, 1992, pp. 95-96).

I maintained regular contact with the Boxer until he was arrested with the other three *Irriducibili* leaders in 2006 for what became known as the Lotito affair. Claudio Lotito, the President of SS Lazio, became hated by the group in this period. In 2005, the *Irriducibili* accused Lotito of financial speculation – at the expense of the team – in his effort to build a new stadium for the club. The dispute soon spiralled with numerous threats made against the President. The *Irriducibili* then declared their support for Giorgio Chinaglia, who sought to facilitate the purchase of the club by an elusive Hungarian-based business group. Chinaglia was subsequently found guilty of financial manipulation and obstruction of the *Consob* (The National Commission for Societies and Stock Market).¹⁰ The leaders of the *Irriducibili*, while declaring that they were unaware of the non-existence of Chinaglia's investment group, were also arrested on similar charges (see chapter 12). I was unable to go to Rome to meet the Boxer and speak directly with him about the latest developments because he was under house arrest. One of my friends went to the *Irriducibili*'s warehouse to collect a scarf of the group on my behalf. After her visit to the warehouse, she called to tell me that the warehouse had been raided by the police the previous day. One of the group members, who was nearby, told her to go to a shop in the centre of Rome to collect the scarf. In doing so, she found the owner of the shop to be nervous and reluctant to show her any product that bore ideological symbols; however, upon mentioning the name of the Boxer and explaining my study, he revealed a hidden scarf. From that moment, via different sources – including Todde – I was to learn details of a long-term police operation targeting the *UltraS* of the Italian capital.

My relationship with Todde remains unchanged. We met in London in February 2009 before the occasion of the Arsenal-Roma match (European Champions league fixture) where he would have met some members of the *UltraS Italia*; he will likely play an important role

¹⁰ Cf. La Repubblica. (online edition).(2007,28, November):
www.repubblica.it/2007/11/sezioni/sport/calcio/multa-chinaglia/multa-chinaglia/multa-chinaglia.html

in future inquiries that do not have football as the exclusive topic. The research process is, thus, continuously negotiated and unfinished. What is presented here can be considered a classic ethnography. Friends were made and lost and the research both matured and regressed over time. It is a journey that is often avoided because not all want to interact with what Fielding (1981) would term 'an unloved group' nor seek to support the groups studied, but in this case the groups under investigation were afforded a sense of indulgence not usually permitted by their critics.

What follows intends to evaluate the groups' shared social world; in such setting that the *UltraS* motivations take shape (Klandermans and Mayer, 2006).

SECTION A

THE BOYS AND IRRIDUCIBILI'S SOCIAL WORLD



Fig 4. The Olympic Stadium, Rome

The football stadium is ostensibly a ‘non-location’, a political and cultural ‘free zone’. It is at the same time an integral part of the city and indeed of the nation, where people regularly gather to collectively express passion for their football teams. Such passion involves celebration, joy, intimidation, and antagonism (cf. Tuan, 1977).

The *Boys* and the *Irriducibili curve* are located in the city’s Olympic Stadium, the main sports stadium of Rome. The stadium is part of the historical sports complex of the *Foro Italico*¹¹ and originally was named *Stadio dei Cipressi* (Cypress Trees Stadium). The construction of the stadium began in 1928 under the direction of architect Luigi Walter Moretti. When finished in 1937, the structure became part of the fascist project that sought to give the capital a ‘sport city’ ethos, thereby symbolising the importance that fascist leader Benito Mussolini gave to the Italian sporting body in his pursuit of a fascist-led national identity (Bianda et al. 1983). The project was called *Foro Mussolini* and was renamed *Foro Italico* (Italian Forum) after the war and Mussolini’s death. During the fascist period (1922-1943), the stadium hosted sports events, parades and fascist rallies. In May 1938, it was the site of celebration for the visit of Adolf Hitler. In December 1950, the architects Carlo

¹¹ For more information on the stadium a reader is directed to *Bulletin du Comité International Olympique*, May 1958, No. 62; *The XVII Olympiad Rome 1960 (Volume One)* and D.Goldblatt.(2004). *Soccer Yearbook: The Complete Guide to the World Game*. London:DK Publishing.

Roccatelli and Annibale Vitellozzi began work to enlarge the stadium (named at the time *Stadio dei Centomila* or Stadium of the One Hundred Thousand). It was to become the ‘Olympic Stadium’ in honour of the XVII Olympic Games in 1960, which were hosted by Rome. Since then it has staged major international sports events.¹²

The Olympic Stadium manifests demarcations that reflect the city ; it hosts the fixtures of both teams that are supported by the *UltraS* of this study. Such a setting, however, did not tell an obvious story to the inquisitor. There were layers of meanings and, in a Foucauldian (1970) sense, levels of excavation to be explored in the search for what was ‘really’ happening. This section endeavours to inform the reader of the sense of place occupied by both *UltraS* groups. It provides an explanation of the historical development of the *curve* (*wherein* the *Boys* and the *Irriducibili* articulate their societal and political non-conformity) and of the concomitant tales told around the groups’ respective histories and organisations. In this section, I set out the crucial social historical aspects of the *UltraS*. Chapters 3 and 4, elaborate the main social history and key cultural features of the Roma and Lazio *UltraS*, bringing out in particular their distinctive social identities. This section, therefore, sets the scene in a sociological sense, enabling later sections to explore the *UltraS* in greater analytical depth and empirical detail.

¹² The stadium was restructured for the 1990 World Cup hosted by Italy. The *curve* were brought nearer the pitch by nine metres; more seats were covered, plastic seats and two large screens were installed for broadcasting. The capacity of the stadium was reduced to 82,000 (all seated) giving the stadium 14th position in the list of the world’s largest football stadiums and second position in Italy after the *Meazza Stadium* in Milan. The stadium hosted several *Italia '90* World Cup matches including the final between Germany and Argentina. Cf. <http://puntosport.net/gli-speciali-di-puntosport/i-templi-del-calcio/11782/stadio-olimpico-roma.php>

Chapter 3

Rome and Glory: The *curva sud* and the *Boys*

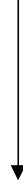
The complex evolution (due to many schisms) of the *curva sud* and its hardcore fans is perhaps best described by the following flow chart (below), which has been reconstructed with the help of Lorenzo, the webmaster of the best known site dedicated to the AS Roma, www.astromaultras.it, and Todde:

1967: The Beginnings

Guerriglieri curva sud [Curva sud Warriors], *Fossa dei Lupi* [Wolves Den], *Pantere Giallorosse* [Yellow-Red Panthers]

1970's – Continuation and Innovation

Fossa dei Lupi and *Pantere Giallorosse Boys* (1972), *Fedayn* (1972)



1977 Fusion

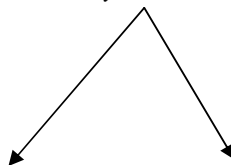
Commando UltraS Curva Sud (CUCS)

1980's - Accommodation

Boys, *CUCS* and *Fedayn*

1987 - Schism

Boys and *Fedayn*



Vecchio CUCS

CUCS GAM

1990's – UltraS emergence

Boys, *Fedayn*, *La Vecchia Guardia* [The Old Guard], *Opposta Fazione* [Opposite Faction], *Frangia Ostile* [Hostile Faction], *Arditi* [Temerarious], *AS Roma UltraS*, *Lupi* [Wolves], *CUCS*

21st Century

AS Roma UltraS, *Boys*, *Fedayn*, *Padroni di Roma* [Owners of Rome]; *Gruppi di quartiere* [Groups Representing Roman districts such as *S. Lorenzo- Primavall*], *Giovinezza* [Youth]; *Arditi*, *Offensiva Ultras*, *Eterna Legione*.

The starting point of Roma's *tifo* can be traced to the late 1960s when groups of young fans – the majority aged around 16 years – began to gather in numbers on the *curve* of

the Olympic stadium (C.f. Garsia,2004). These were the first AS Roma hardcore, organised fans. As was then fashionable, the nomenclature to celebrate the groups was borrowed from military heroism (hence the tag of *Arditi, Eterna Legione*) and from predatory animals (*Wolves* and *Panthers*). A few years later, at the beginning of the 1970s, the *Boys Roma* was formed; they displayed since their origin a neo-fascist ideology in both their modes of following and articulations of support.

In 1977, the *Fedayn, Pantere* and *Fossa dei Leoni* gatherings collectively constituted the *Commando UltraS Curva Sud* (CUCS).¹³ This fusion was considered necessary to strengthen the sense of unity among AS Roma supporters. The CUCS appeared for the first time in a Roma-Sampdoria fixture with the longest banner ever seen in an Italian *curva* at the time (42 metres in length) which proclaimed their name. Under this banner, all other AS Roma groups spontaneously gathered (Garsia, 2004). From this combination of words and artefact, the CUCS became the most nationally recognised representative fan entity of AS Roma, respected by similar groups because of their organisational capabilities and, when required, their fighting ability. From the end of the 1970s until 1987, the CUCS were one of the most important Italian supporter groups, manifesting the two important traits of the Italian hardcore football fans groups: consistency in numbers and cohesiveness in choreography and ‘spirit’, which was considered as a combination of loyalty, loudness in chants and a willingness to trespass into ‘territories’ belonging to rival fans at and around both home and away games (Cf.Garsia, 2004).

The shared enthusiasm, which brought the CUCS together, was also the reason for their demise. In 1987, schisms developed in the CUCS that centred on the club Presidency. President Dino Viola sold team captain Carlo Ancelotti to AC Milan and replaced him with Lionello Manfredonia, a former Lazio player hated by Roma supporters as he was, in their eyes, the personification of Lazio. He had, unforgivably, once made insulting gestures to the *Romanisti* during a derby game. Manfredonia’s arrival split the CUCS into the Old CUCS (who were prepared to forget the insult) and the CUCS-GAM (Group Against Manfredonia).¹⁴ The radical and tougher elements of the latter then shifted the *curva* ideology to one that supported both the football club and the City of Rome and used the slogan *Roma e Gloria* (Rome and Glory), underlining not only the pursuit of football glory but, just as importantly, the glory of the capital city, the one-time centre of power of the Roman Empire. Around the time of the schism, the *Opposta Fazione* (Opposite Faction) appeared in the

¹³ Cf.[http:// asromaultras.it](http://asromaultras.it)

¹⁴ Cf. [http:// asromaultras.it](http://asromaultras.it)

curva sud. This group was an elitist, self-selecting gathering that had been founded for showing other AS Roma groups the *UltraS* values founded as they were on an intransigent mentality based in neo-fascist ideology. To this end, the group was notably 'hard' in fights and offered no compromise in their opposition to the football establishment. The *Opposta Fazione* was an example of 'true' *UltraS*.

From the late 1980s and inspired by *Opposta Fazione*, political ideology became more evident in the *curva sud*. Out of this development, the *UltraS* started to emerge. At the time, many *vecchi* (older leaders) retired as they were disappointed by how their world was changing, although they did not stop being Roma *tifosi*. In 1993-1994, the CUCS re-grouped and some of the CUCS, in their view for the good of Roma, decided to unite with the older CUCS (Garsia, 2004). However, changes in the *curva sud* were unstoppable and the CUCS, being unable to attract many new members, lost their ascendancy. In 1999, the *Boys* became the leaders of the *curva sud*.

'The *Boys* brought a massive contribution to the CUCS acting with a behavioural logic that was tough and intransigent. This occurred until they decided to show their banner again for the Roma-Liverpool Champions Cup final. Many misunderstandings and a thousand differences (one was the political ideology promoted by the group) provoked the group to leave the CUCS and exist autonomously. The *Boys* wanted to be an 'action group' capable both of facing the 'enemy' immediately and commanding fear... During that period, the *Boys* were always the first to look for a battle (against rival fans) and never found anyone capable of making them retreat. In spite of the many difficulties; warnings from the authorities, repression from the police, we were always at our place to defend the city and the shirt. It has not been easy, but today we are proud to be still admired and feared. We have never hidden and never will.'¹⁵

Such a statement underpins the pride that the members of the *Boys* have for both their history and its associated logic. Since their constitution in 1972, as the above document illustrates, the *Boys* have sought to be an elitist group. Despite the 35 years between their inception and this research, the beginnings of the *Boys* are still considered a road map to some contemporary aficionados. A perfect representative of the group is Todde; he originates from a middle-class family, lives in an affluent Roma district. Todde, as previously mentioned, has a university background in law and a passion for history, especially that of the Roman Empire. He is able to perceptively articulate his opinions and beliefs, despite the potential risks of being considered a 'hooligan thug'. His arguments pertaining to the nature of the *Boys* are informed:

¹⁵ Document obtained from the *Boys* in 2005.

‘In 1972, Antonio Bongi manifested the first steps of the ‘furie giallorosse’ [yellow-red furies]. Their political sympathies, their rivalries with other groups and their anti-system- oppositional style were displayed long before the *UltraS* movement had made its first steps in Italy. The Boys of San Inter (1969) and the Boys Roma (1972) were the pioneers of the *UltraS* thinking; of a behavioural style to be adopted seven days a week not only inside the stadium and not only during a meaningless football match that lasts only 90 minutes.... ’

The above passage demonstrates not only the sophistication of the *UltraS* arguments used to cite historical and political events when describing the evolution of the groups, but can be considered a ‘world-view’ or at least the foundation of a distinctive cultural trait that makes a fundamental claim on the identity of group members.

Presenting the very first picture of the *Boys* then in the *curva nord* (see below), Todde explains the early days:

‘They are all kids, you can see from the faces. They gathered in the *curva nord*, which was -and still is - occupied alternate weeks by Lazio fans or by other teams’ supporters because there was no place for them in the *curva sud* being as they were the antithesis of the typical *curva sud* Roma fans which was at the time mainly communist in sympathy. Their motto was ‘Odiati e Fieri! Boys Roma oltre la morte!’ [Hated and Proud! Boys Roma Beyond Death]’



Fig. 5. Beyond Death: The *Boys* in the mid-1970s

Whilst talking, Todde revealed a manuscript written by Antonio Bongi, which accounts for the origins of the Roma *UltraS*:

‘We were in *curva nord* and we had the right [negotiated with the club officials] to have our own banner and four free tickets every match. We arrived at the stadium when the gates opened because we needed to position ourselves. I remember being impressed by the Torino *UltraS* who had already 50 banners in their end; I tried to

emulate them to save our voices. We started our chants when the referee whistled the beginning of the match. We had 200 drums, megaphones even electric trumpets connected to car batteries that made an infernal noise. We organised the buses to go to away matches and every now and then even the mothers of some of the members joined us!... I remember yellow-red trains (the same colour of the Roma team kit used) of carriages packed full of Roma supporters.

I then had my first experience with violence. The first fights astonished me. It was at Torino in 1973. The *UltraS* of Torino - notoriously left wing sympathisers - came to our end with sticks and wearing motorbike helmets. They stole our banner and some of us were assaulted. They tore and burnt the banner of the R.C. Giuliano Taccola [a Roma *UltraS* group] in the Maratona end; perhaps the most beautiful banner of the yellow-red supporters... These were the first signs of the 'piombo years' (bullet years) with political divisions evident even in the stadia. In the *curva sud* groups such as ours appeared. On the muretto (the small wall) appeared the banner proclaiming Guerriglieri della Sud (Warriors of the Sud) with their extreme right wing ideology. On the opposite side appeared the Fedayn from Quadraro-Cinecitta¹⁶. They were communists; their leader Roberto Rulli was a well-known militant and idealist. The Fossa dei Lupi (the Wolves den) was from Monte Cervialto, led by Stefano Scarciofolo and Vittorio Trenta. The Brigade Giallorosse came from Torrespaccata. The Commandos Lupi was organised by guys from Monteverde. Then there were the Pantere Giallorosse (The Panthers) and other minor groups...'

Although the history of the group is important for understanding the cultural roots of the *Boys*, this enquiry required a snapshot of the *Boys* of the 21st century. Marco (in his mid-20s) was willing to articulate the group structure and organisation:

Q: How does a Roma supporter become one of the Boys?

M: It is a pretty close group... it occurs mainly via friendship. We are a group with a strict organisation. We have a strong nucleus at Pomezia (a small township outside Rome) then another nucleus at Cerveteri (another Roman township) and another in Rome. We thus have some problems meeting mostly because of the distances involved but hold evening meetings over a pizza or beer. We meet weekly [in the head-office]. If Roma plays in the afternoon, we meet at 11 at the head office; if Roma plays at 8.30 in the evening, we meet at 6.30.

Q: How many members are active in the Boys?

M: Thirty; then we have people that pay for the membership but as I see it only do so for fashion ,being one of the *Boys* is pretty cool; they want 'to be' but not 'belong' working very little for the common good of the group. 'Active', means coming to the stadium regularly helping with banners etc.. we are a 30-strong elite, the others within number around 200.

Q: I heard the Boys have some selection criteria to avoid the cani sciolti (mugwumps) can you explain how selection is made?

M: The group grows via contacts; for instance I belong to the *Boys* and I can introduce a friend. The group then see if they like him or not and eventually he

¹⁶ The Quadraro district is home to a considerable number of Roma *Fedayn* and Lazio *Irriducibili*. It is a populous working-class districts of Rome which traditionally supported the politics of the Italian Communist Party (PCI).

becomes part of the group or he is rejected. In this way there is an informal selection and we have time to impart the ideals and values that he should possess in belonging. Our group is based on friendship and most of all trust... you must understand that it helps in extreme situations in the street knowing your mates will help you. You also see how a guy performs in the street. If you are afraid in the street, you are afraid in the stadium. We have a special sign that one is part of our elite group which is the insignia of the rising sun [symbolising the re-birth trait of fascism] worn on our hats.

The sense of bond and togetherness is something forever stressed by the *Boys*. The *UltraS* members live ‘their’ battles in what they perceive as unfriendly locations, in the Italian society – where their ideology places them as ‘strangers’ – and within the football stadium where their very existence is challenged by the Italian authorities, the football institutions and the police. For this reason, *la curva* and their *sedi* are conceived of as places of refuge where they can share their feelings with their peers or in neo-fascist terms with their *camerati* (comrades).¹⁷

Q: Basically, you have a group within the group?

M: Yes, you can get our membership card and come with us in the stadium but only ‘the elite’ are the vanguard of the *Boys*. You understand who is part of the elite because when we are about to start action the people displaying the rising sun are at the front. We have a defining chant repeated three times in the *curva* when we begin confrontations against our opponents [be they police or rival *UltraS*]. A leader shouts: ‘Chi siamo noi?’ [Who are we?] which is repeated three times; the collective answer in rhyme is ‘contro il sistema la gioventu’ si scaglia, boia chi molla e’ il grido di battaglia’ [Against the system the youth fight, damned are those who give up the battle chant]. There is a strong structure and sense of order. This can only be understood by taking into consideration that ours is a way of life that exists beyond the stadium. We have our dress code and language. The word ‘comrade’ is often used as is the Roman salute. The Celtic cross as a pendant or depicted in our tattoos is widely evident. We are, you might say, a subculture within both the stadium and society.

Q: How is the group structured?

M: We have a charismatic leader - the ‘big boss’ Paolo Zappavigna [Zapata], and we have the ‘nuova guardia’ (direttivo) consisting of five guys. Then come the ‘ordinary’ guys.

The *Boys* leadership has changed several times; mostly via violence. The usual procedure is that a group from a Rome district emerges and gets involved in violence with pre-existing leaders. The most recent change in leadership was brought about by two cousins. One – the toughest – was the ‘warrior’, the other was more of a politician. The leader Paolo Zappavigna was in control of the *Boys* group from 2001 until his death in 2005. Paolo died while this

¹⁷ The etymology of this term derives from *camera* (room) and evokes feelings of privacy and intimacy and a common safe location (Dechezelles, 2008).

project was being researched at the young age of 40 in a motorcycle accident. In 2001, Zappavigna found the *Boys* in a difficult situation; in the group were people considered at times out of control, disrespectful to the hierarchy and quickly prone to violence for its own sake in and around the football match. This for Zappavigna was not the *UltraS* code. Such reprehensible behaviour had to be stopped, consequently, Zappavigna and his cousin Paolo, together with other members of the *direttivo*, re-established order in the *Boys*. Crucially, the *Boys* were only one gathering amongst half a dozen in the *curva sud*; they did not control the others, nor did they claim to. In turn, the others left the *Boys* alone. In this accommodation, it was each to their own.

Q: Marco, How do you become a member of the Boys direttivo?

M: Seniority in years as well as charisma; in the *direttivo* there are people aged 18-30 and me.

Q: So why are you in the direttivo?

M: Because I am charismatic!! [laugh]...

The concept of ‘charisma’ emerges as a constant attribute admired and desired in both the *Boys Roma* and *Irriducibili*. Several studies in political science have focused on this concept and its link to the leadership of extremist gatherings (both political and religious) to make sense of group dynamics (Der Brug and Mughan 2007; Madsen and Snow 1991). It was evident that both *UltraS* groups had at their apex a charismatic leadership – Paolo Zappavigna for the *Boys* and Giorgio, Federico, Giovanni and the Boxer for the *Irriducibili*. As Der Brug and Mughan (2007) underline, the charismatic leader ‘*is obeyed not by virtue of a custom or a law, but by virtue of the faith he inspires*’ (p. 31). The main determinants of the success of charismatic leaders are also their perceived personal and exceptional merits (Charlot, 1971, p. 43). For an *UltraS*, such men are not only respected by their ability to fight but for the strong convictions about how to lead their lives.

Q: Marco, How are the messages on the banners agreed?

M: Some 80% of the ideas start from the ‘big boss’; if the youngsters want to propose an idea this is taken into consideration democratically by the *direttivo* that analyse it and give their evaluation. The idea is studied and revised until Thursday then on Friday and Saturday 3–4 *Boys* take care of the banner in 2-3 different places and the banner is made. For derby games, the preparation is longer with 10-15 *Boys* working on them because the banners can be very large.

Q: How does the group find money for its activities?

M: From selling apparel (hats, scarves, stickers, shirts, sweatshirts, flags etc..) 10% of income goes to the *Boys* as a group and 90% goes to the shop owner. Then self-taxation monies we earn are given to the cause and other monies come from

collections at the Stadium from the other supporters via a box where people, if willing, leave donations.

Q: Which gemellaggi [group twinnings] do you have?

M: Our ‘gemellaggi’ are political; the only friendship is with Taranto and abroad with the *ultrá* Sur of Real Madrid. The *ultrá* Sur often come to Italy and are allied with the *Irriducibili*. Our ‘big boss’ introduced them to the boss of the *Irriducibili*. We have also gemellaggi with Benfica of Lisbon and Panathinaikos of Athens who share our ideology.

We have problems, however, because not all our direttivo can travel abroad because of restriction orders on movement. You have to consider that we [Roma neo-fascist *UltraS*] have a specific hate for the English based on our ideology, we are not like the *Irriducibili* who have some sympathies for them because they share the same style. We are first Romans then *UltraS* our style of supporting is ‘Italian’ not British!! The English are a shit race by nature, they are arrogant. There is an old saying ‘dio stramaledica gli inglesi’¹⁸ [God curse the English!]. We support the Irish Republican cause....

Q: Is there one particular gathering that you dislike?

M: The fights with other groups arise mostly out of traditions; an exception is Siena. This is a hate born in our generation and our people that will continue in ten years time and longer [Siena fans are renowned ‘communists’ which elicits hostility from the Boys.].

In the above responses, Marco mentions two elements that differentiate the *UltraS* behaviour from other hardcore football supporters (*ultrá*). Both elements are influenced by political ideology. Political ideology not only strongly characterises the *UltraS* actions outside of the stadium, it also directs their behaviour as football supporters. The first element of note is the *gemellaggi* (twinning or friendship with a similar group); the main criterion for such a twinning is ideological. Such twinings are generally based on the value of *rispetto* (respect), which means that groups sharing similar logic can enjoy this status. The *UltraS* respect only *camerati*, regardless of nationality. The Roma *UltraS* had twinings with comrades from Benfica (Portugal), Hammarby (Sweden) and Real Madrid (Spain), while the *Irriducibili* had twinings with Espanyol, Real Madrid (Spain) Werder Bremen, Lokomotiv Leipzig and Lipsia (Germany), Panathinaikos (Greece) and Paris St. Germain (France).

A second crucial element is the reluctance in making twinings with English groups. The *Boys* are more vehemently opposed to the English than the *Irriducibili*, which had in the past established a twinning with Chelsea fans. The *Boys* articulated aggressive sentiments, as Marco demonstrates in the previous statement, towards anything from the UK. This sentiment

¹⁸ A slogan pronounced for the first time by the Italian–fascist journalist, Mario Appellius during the Second World War (Cf. Sposito, 2002).

was not without contradictions, considering that quite a few members considered London to be a ‘cool’ city. The ideological hatred that they had for the English maybe explained as part of their Italian neo-fascist make-up. Anti-English sentiments are traceable to the Second World War and arise from the role that the UK played in the defeat of Italian fascism. However, Marco’s hostility towards the English is not shared by all in the neo-fascist world and is not reciprocated by extreme right groups in the UK. International political alliances of the extreme right movements support this distinction. The neo-fascist *Forza Nuova*, chaired by the Italian born Roberto Fiore and quite popular among the *Irriducibili*, has close links with the British National Front and the UK Third Position (The Times-online-16 August, 2009). The Third Positionist magazine *Political Soldier* has a web store titled *Final Conflict* that sells merchandise of national and international neo-fascist groups. As Figure 6 shows, the *Irriducibili* and its paraphernalia are quite ‘trendy’.¹⁹

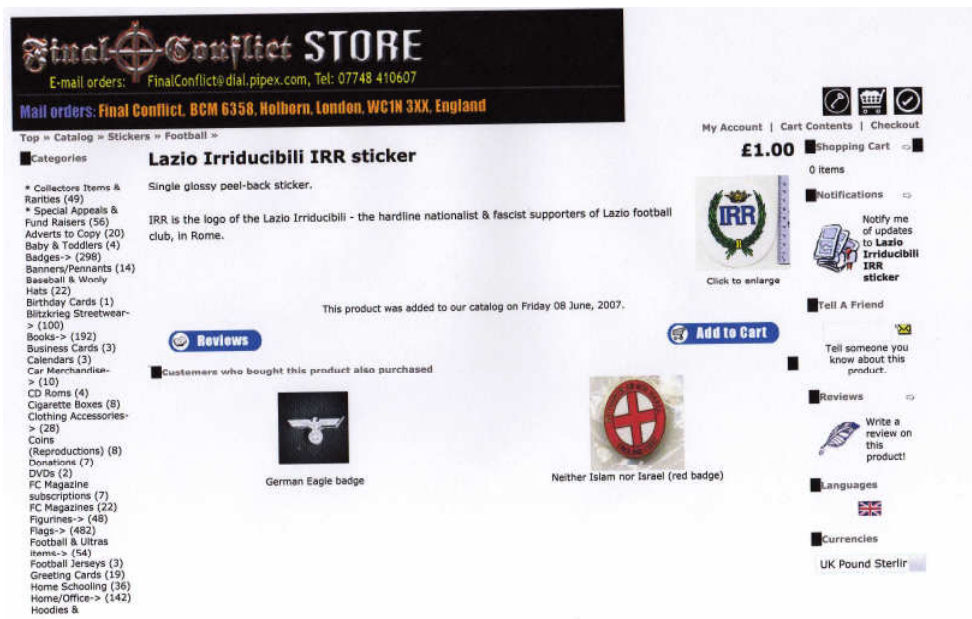


Fig 6. Badges to wear for the Final Conflict

This enlightening history and ideological explanation was intended to illustrate the complexity of the *UltraS* and the evolution of the *curva sud*. Having roles in both football and beyond, being an *UltraS* can be understood as a lived philosophy in which individuals are – ideally – prepared to agitate, articulate and ultimately assault in pursuit of a variety of aims.

¹⁹ The web sold the *Irriducibili* badge for the price of £1.00. The group is introduced as the hardline nationalist and fascist supporters of Lazio Football Club. Website accessed Monday, 26 January 2009 http://politicalsoldier.netfirms.com/shop/catalog/product_info.php?products_id=1070

The causalities described in academic accounts (see chapter 1) are clearly inadequate to explain the composition of the *UltraS*. Furthermore, the *UltraS* of Lazio, whilst similar in some respects to the *Boys Roma*, are also different as the subsequent account illustrates.

Chapter 4

‘Dare, Believe, Be Reckless’: la curva nord and the Irriducibili

The first *curva nord UltraS* group, the *Commandos Monteverde Lazio* (Greenhill Commando Lazio) appeared in 1971.²⁰ This pioneering gathering manifested a fashion for neo-military analogies²¹ seeking a public profile with their 22-metre long banner.²² Others were to join these gathering around the impressive banner whilst football success brought additional new members. In May 1974, SS Lazio won the *scudetto*. This victory and the ensuing euphoria provided a motivation for aspirants seeking similar participation and nomenclature.²³ The *Folgore* (named after the elite parachute regiment of the Italian Army that is much admired by neo-fascist youths) emerged, followed by the *Boys* and, again drawing on the military, the *Marines*. Some of the latter groups combined to constitute the *Eagles Supporters*, which were formed in 1976. The *Eagles Supporters* were spectacular for the time, accompanied as it was by drums, smoke bombs, confetti and thrown rolls of toilet paper. Their attendance averaged 2,000 members per game, which increased to 5,000-6,000 for important matches, particularly those played against Juventus and Roma.

A few years later in 1978, the neo-fascist *Vikings* appeared. They gathered in the *curva sud* and displayed on their banners the Viking *drakkar* and the sun.²⁴ The ideological imprint of this group did not impress everyone on the *curva nord* and in the late 1970s fights often broke out between supporters of the extreme right (among these the *Vikings*) and the more moderate *Eagles Supporters*. The 1980s, though, were the years in which the Lazio *UltraS* started to increase significantly their notoriety throughout Italy. The SS Lazio's *UltraS* were respected and feared by many Italian hardcore supporters for both their passion and the originality manifested most obviously in their choreographies and chants. Such admiration brought alliances with similar groups from Bari, Torino and Trieste. The 1989-1990 season was important for the *curva nord* as both Roman teams played home games at the *Flaminio* stadium since the Olympic stadium was being refitted to host the 1990 Italian World Cup final (Cf. Melli and Melli, 2005). The *Flaminio Stadio*, whilst smaller than the

²⁰ The term *UltraS* is used in this case because contrary to the Roma *Curva Sud*, the *curva nord* has historically a strong link to the Roman neo-fascist youth movement; hence since the beginning the fans groups were ideologically oriented.

²¹ Monteverde is the name of a long-standing district of southwest Rome. It includes in its boundaries *Villa Pamphili*, Rome's biggest park.

²² Cf. <http://news.lazio.net/2004/03/22/ultras-uniti-nella-guerriglia-ansa/>

²³ Cf. <http://ultraslazio.it>

²⁴ Cf. <http://ultraslazio.it>

Olympic stadium, was ideal for football supporters because of the proximity of seating to the pitch; in short, supporters were closer to the players. The same season, however, was characterised by strong repression of the *UltraS* by the authorities, as the latter were keen to avoid hooligan-related publicity prior to the World Cup. As was occurring elsewhere, the Lazio *curva nord* of the early 1980s saw new fan gatherings that reflected wider social changes. The subsequent years illustrated the importance of fan power in the Lazio context. The 1982-1983 season saw new groups: *Gruppo Sconvolti* (Sconvolt Group), *UltraS 74* and *Gruppo Rock* (Rock Group).²⁵ Significantly, in 1987, for the first time during a match, the central wall of the *curva nord* did not display the Vikings' banner. The exclusion of the Vikings signified the arrival of a hitherto unknown group. For the first time the banner of the *Irriducibili* was present. This group was to become the main force of the *curva nord* and the Italian *UltraS*.

The *Irriducibili* tell their own stories without external interpretation regarding their origins and evolution. In 2005, the Boxer articulated the origins of the *Irriducibili* by providing a document written by the *direttivo*:

'Our story starts in the eighties when the Italian *UltraS* movement was passing through a period of renewal. Many small factions were appearing in the various ends aiming to present a strong 'mentalita' (attitude) uncompromising in its philosophy against the system [as represented by the Italian authorities and the Italian football establishment] which was no longer manifest by the existing groups which the newcomers believed had lost their initial vitality. Every Lazio home match was organised meticulously; our new group met in a bisca [amusement arcade] in the Monteverde district and came up with the idea of wearing football scarves coupled with sewn-on football patches in the British style. In the meantime, the co-existence with the Eagles became tenser. Quarrels began over the different way of supporting [but most importantly] by the fact that many were leaving the Eagles to join our group. A Lazio-Barletta game saw the first scuffles between the factions [*Irriducibili* and *Eagles*] which needed police intervention.

The *Irriducibili* appeared for the first time in mid October 1987 during a Lazio-Padova Serie B match. We [*Irriducibili*] invited to the game many committed to Lazio to meet at the 'muretto' [a small wall in *curva nord*] and dislodge the Viking group who always gathered there. The name '*Irriducibili*' was original and suggested we would not compromise with the club or the media as many other fan groups had done. We wanted to support our team without *moralismi* [being judgemental] and 'sectarism' [being too harsh] against the previous behaviours of past *UltraS* which had created tension in the Lazio environment. We wanted to express a sense of discontinuity from the past, even choosing our own transportation for away matches. Instead of the bus provided by the *Eagles* [supporters club], we chose the train which gave us independence from scheduled travel. This proved popular and large numbers of fans began to travel with us. We adopted as our mascot *Mr Enrich*, a little man

²⁵ http://sslazio1900.it/lazio_curvanord.asp

who kicks furiously - the kick signifies rebellion - against the political and football system.'

Although not officially confirmed by the *Irriducibili*, the origin of their mascot *Mr. Enrich* may have been Andy Capp, a British newspaper cartoon character created by Reginald Smythe in the mid-1950s. Andy Capp was a politically incorrect and aggressive male, symbolic of the English Northern working class. At the same time, the *Irriducibili* caricature is younger than Capp and wears different clothing – buttoned down sleeveless 'polo' shirts and a 'pork pie' hat popular in the British 'Ska' and 'Skinhead' subcultures of late 1960s.



Fig. 7: *Mr Enrich* and Andy Capp: separated at birth?

Since the late 1980s, the *Irriducibili* of SS Lazio have controlled the part of the *curva nord* which is in close proximity to the pitch. To enter their 'land', one must be known or invited and must pass the gatekeepers of the *Irriducibili* – men chosen by virtue of their sense of perception and their willingness to challenge 'outsiders'. The *Irriducibili* make it their business to know everything that occurs in the *curva nord*. Upon accessing this area, the curious would see, at times, men collecting money to fund both social campaigns and the materials used to make the banners and pyrotechnics which are crucial to the match day spectacle. No extortion was practised; no unofficial tax was levied on those who entered. Contributions were voluntary and those collecting were trusted with the monies. In this space, the *Irriducibili* controlled the content of the banners and the nature of the chants. From here, the match-day organisation was co-ordinated; fans located here watched the match, discussed the game and provided a wide variety of commentary, be it insulting, encouraging, political or merely transgressive. The self-appointed leaders of the commentary, armed with tannoy, urged the rest to join them. At times, the *Irriducibili* would single out supporters who were not singing. The 'ordinary' (i.e. non-*Irriducibili* and non-*UltraS*) fans in proximity that were

not participating faced criticism by the protagonists and were encouraged to be more participatory with comments along the lines of: '*Come on guys lets sing all together for our team; why do you fucking come to the stadium if you do not support your team?*' On occasion, the leadership could send a few of the *Irriducibili* to speak to the non-participants to encourage them in the virtues of vocal support (field note 34). The Boxer's document elaborates further upon the group challenging beginnings:

'The *Irriducibili*'s beginnings were difficult. We had some flags bearing our name but we were different from the 'ordinary *UltraS*'; we were more unpredictable, 'Being original' was our motto and every time the more 'ordinary' fan looked at us, he wondered what we would have organised. At a Lazio-Verona fixture, drums were first used for supporting the team. Before a Lazio-Ascoli fixture, we published for the first time the 'Mr Enrich' fanzine which became very popular in the *curva nord*. In December 1987 at a game in Genoa, nearly all the Lazio supporters travelled by bus - but we used the train and at the train station 800 supporters who had travelled by bus met and followed us; we led this parade all the way to the Genoa's Marassi stadium. It was to become the new way to 'introduce' ourselves to rival supporters. From that day, all Lazio fans knew that every away match there was an unofficial *bianco-celeste* train travelling aboard it wearing the Mr Enrich insignia as the self-appointed vanguard of Lazio.

The 1989-90 season was the one that Lazio played in the Flaminio stadium. We (*Irriducibili*) were against the refurbishment of the Olympic stadium considering it a waste of public money and voiced this opinion in chants at the stadium. This was also the year of serious constant and heavy police repression. The first 'diffide' (stadium banning orders) were issued against us limiting our personal liberty and giving police the power to ban from any sports events those whom they 'considered' 'dangerous'. During the Lazio-Atalanta fixture the first serious battle between the *Irriducibili* and the riot police occurred; a similar battle occurred at the Roma-Lazio game when we voiced our condemnation against the 'diffide' with a famous banner stated '*Dio salvi gli UltraS*' [God Help the *UltraS*].

The 1990-91 season saw a return to the now totally changed Olympic Stadium. We did not like it and immediately in an attempt to oppose the diffide that were being thrown at us made a banner which read: '12 in campo? Solo quando lo vogliamo noi!' (Twelve on the pitch? Only when we want it)²⁶ and from that moment we refused to chant anymore in the stadium. We decided to strike [no chanting and banners] in the first 45 minutes of the match; no other *UltraS* did this. We also gave up choreographies for the derby stating instead our feelings on a banner which read: "lo spettacolo colora la *curva*, la solidarieta' la rende grande" [The show makes the *curva* alive, but solidarity makes it great!] We were thus accused in the media of not caring for our team. To the contrary the *Irriducibili* wanted to state how supporting was not compulsory, other values also counted, most of all friendship - especially with the guys that were banned.'

²⁶ The slogan stressed the importance of the *tifosi* as the twelfth player as they encouraged the team to never give up. Many Italian sports journalists acknowledge the importance of the *tifosi* in commenting on the performance of Italian teams.

Not all appeared so negative. The 1990s were also the years of the Union Flag emblem of Britain, which was adopted as the global flow of players' talent provoked new symbols to be displayed at Lazio games. In 1992, SS Lazio signed England international Paul Gascoigne. In response, the *Irriducibili* made a banner depicting a pint of English beer and the message 'it's ready for you' in honour of his somewhat notorious level of alcohol consumption. During the 1992-1993 season, the food tycoon Sergio Cagnotti arrived as SS Lazio president and brought new hope to the team (Melli, 2000). The same year brought the dissolution of the *Eagles Supporters*. New times brought new personnel and new leaders to the *curva nord*: the *Irriducibili*. The new president negotiated with the *Irriducibili* who continued to challenge the police. The following account collected from the Boxer tells this story:

'In the 95-96 season after we stopped Cagnotti selling Beppe Signori; we became the most creative *curva* in Italy. In 1996 the coach Zeman was sacked and Dino Zoff replaced him; the Roma derby saw the players received in the *curva nord* by a massive Mr Enrich that covered the *curva* and a giant 'Lazio' made up of blue balloons. In the 97-98 season the *curva nord* produced four great choreographies: a giant imperial eagle with our motto 'Osare Creder Spavaldi di Essere' [Dare, Believe, Be Reckless]; the symbol of SS Lazio with the writing 'Nobilta' *UltraS*: da Sempre' [UltraS Noble: From the Beginning] and the banner 'Noi Piu' Forti dell Indifferenza' [We are Stronger than the Indifference] by the way of protesting against police repression. In January 2000, we created a museum at the Olympic stadium containing effigies of the club's renowned historical figures ranging from founder Bigiarelli to Beppe Signori to celebrate the centenary...'

The season 1995-1996 was an important one for the group. In this year, their new fanzine *La Voce Della Nord* (The Voice of the North) was published for the first time. It soon became the magazine of choice for the whole *curva nord*. This same season, as the Boxer stressed above, witnessed the first strong challenge towards the group by Lazio club management, chaired by Sergio Cagnotti. The struggle began in June 1995, when SS Lazio top scorer Beppe Signori was sold to Parma. The supporters retaliated with a demonstration outside of the head office of SS Lazio, which forced the club to cancel the intended sale (Cf. Beneforti and De Salvo, 2000). In 1999-2000, as the club celebrated its centenary, the fans did likewise. Before a Lazio-Bologna fixture in January 2000, the *curva nord's* celebrations began at 10am at the *Piazza della Libertá*, where the club was founded.²⁷ Over 25,000 supporters paraded from the *piazza* to the Olympic stadium. The *curva nord*, and in particular the *Irriducibili's* choreographies, were the real entertainment of this day, based as they were

²⁷ Cf. <http://ultraslazio.it>

on a photo-mural of the great people in Lazio's history. By remarkable coincidence, Lazio won its second *scudetto* in the same season.

The *curva nord* is unquestionably controlled by a mixture of charisma on the part of the *Irriducibili* leadership and a sense of respect among the other fans that is invariably bound up in fear. Those who poked their noses in the *Irriducibili's* business or were seen as a threat to the group would be taken care of either immediately in the *curva* or outside the stadium, days later if necessary. However, the *Irriducibili* did not threaten or assault those that they considered insignificant. The violence used, said the protagonists, was being employed only when needed. The hegemony of the group and their leaders among the *curva nord* youth was palpable. The young *tifosi* think that being an *Irriducibile* is 'cool' and enjoy wearing their hats, sweatshirts, t-shirts and other merchandise. The former's peripheral status on the *curva* has served them well. They could recount in school on Monday their brush with the powerful *Irriducibili*. Their daring is rewarded by the possibility of being considered 'hard' by association.

The account of the Boxer focused on the history of the group; whilst fascinating, it did not inform of their way of financing or how they chose statements for the banners displayed in the *curva* and outside the stadium. Seeking elucidation on such matters, I tried to speak to one of the *Irriducibili's* leaders, Giorgio. In his forties, Giorgio was not only one of the historical leaders of the *Irriducibili*, but also had been linked by several Italian media reports to *Forza Nuova*.²⁸ Inevitably, the journalistic sources hypothesised a link between the party and the *Irriducibili*; however, this assumption was found to be incorrect. Giorgio was a very confident individual, eloquent and passionate in his convictions, as was demonstrated by what is known in Roman circles as the *due pizze in faccia* ('two pizzas on the face', a derivative of the Roman slang meaning literally 'two slaps in the face') episode. The incident occurred in August 1999, when the then president of SS Lazio, Sergio Cragnotti, decided without precedence to make his club supporters pay an entrance fee to attend the *Formello* (Lazio's training ground) to watch the squad train. Furthermore, he informed supporters that, if wanting to follow Lazio to away matches, they could do so only by using Francorosso tours²⁹ - a company which offered ticket sales and away game packages at a higher price than the *Irriducibili*. The latter started a campaign at the stadium against both of these impositions and Cragnotti's management via banners and chants. In response, the SS Lazio management appointed as mediator Guido Paglia, the communications director of the Cirio food company,

²⁸ See chapter 5 for an analysis about Forza Nuova.

²⁹ A large Italian travel/holiday company owned by Alpitour. Cf. <http://alpitour.it>

one of Cragnotti's businesses. In the course of mediation, Paglia promised to try to rectify the problem; however, this promise was not honoured, thus infuriating the *Irriducibili*. The battle lines were drawn. In October, Lazio management forbade the *UltraS* from watching the team train at *Formello*. In response, Lazio supporters met for a fan summit at a Rome hotel organised by the *Irriducibili's direttivo*. On this occasion, Paglia accused the *Irriducibili* of being the main cause of the dispute with the management. In response, Giorgio struck Paglia with two slaps (the 'two pizzas') to the face and kicked him in the buttocks. Negotiations, against all odds, continued with the club and eventually the entry charge to *Formello* was abolished and the Francorosso ticket to away games continued to be sold by the *Irriducibili*. The chief negotiator in this dispute that demonstrated the power of the *Irriducibili* was Giorgio.

I interviewed Giorgio in 2006. While working in the merchandising warehouse, he allowed a few questions to be informally put to him. The first question concerned his upbringing. He responded:

'I was living in a district of Rome in the 1970s called Quadraro, a place where exponents of *Autonomia Operaia* lived. You cannot understand what it meant for a kid like me aged 14 having ideology. In that period, being a Roma fan meant being communist and being a Lazio fan a fascist, so at times I had lots of fights and took beatings from these people [Communists]. The satisfaction was when I grew up and became *figlio di mignotta* [literally 'son of a bitch'; meaning smart in fighting, respected and feared] I was not a kid anymore from that time those who opposed me had to be careful....'

Our discussion continued as follows:

Q: Giorgio, When did you first become a member of the *Irriducibili*?

D: 'The *Irriducibili* were begun in 1987 but we all have a past in other Lazio groups; we [the leaders] have roughly 25 years of militancy in the *curva*. They originally called us the 'cani sciolti' (mugwumps) and then in 1987 we created this group'.

Q: Why this name - *Irriducibili*?

D: 'It is a name taken from an old choreography we produced. The name also reflects the nature of the group and many members identify themselves in the word'.

Q: Who chooses such words and symbols?

D: 'Sometimes we the 'direttivo' choose them; otherwise the young propose them to us; we have an office for group activity; it is an 'ideas factory' where we meet and exchange proposals. The same procedure is adopted not only for the choreographies but also for banners on topics that do not have anything to do with football. The group is very attached to the symbol of the 'imperial eagle' and the motto that truly represents us is under the eagle and reads: 'Osare, Credere, Spavaldi di Essere' [Dare, Believe, Be Reckless]'.
'

Q: What is your employment status?

D: 'My job now is pursuing the commercial possibilities of the *Irriducibili* (merchandising, distributions of the products etc..) There is a commercial part of the *Irriducibili* which goes under the 'Original Fans' brand. We supply our products to shops in franchising agreements throughout the Lazio region and abroad. The label is represented by an old English cartoon of the 70s *Mr Enrich* - a non-conformist rebel; he is as we are - against the 'system'.

What was interesting in Giorgio's statements was his social class. Coming from a similar working class root as the Boxer, he was able to lead a group that included many from middle-class backgrounds. This social dynamic was also present in the *Boys*. This cross-class element has been also a characteristic of the Italian hardcore *tifo* since its origin (Dal Lago and Moscati, 1992). Nonetheless, this trait becomes more significant when focusing on the *UltraS*, given that fascism is ideological glue that is stronger than class-consciousness. The *Boys*, for example, can count educated individuals among those in their group leadership. The *Irriducibili* and *Boys* included members studying at university (one of the recurrent degree courses was law); others amongst them were successful shop owners or small businesspersons, some were from solid working-class origins and others from the poor Roman districts. The *UltraS* were not gatherings by virtue of socio-economic determinism; they bonded because of their shared enthusiasm for both the football clubs and Mussolini's ideas.

One element that both the Boxer and Giorgio omitted from the group history was the challenge that the *Irriducibili* experienced to their *curva nord* hegemony. As many writers in the cultural studies tradition (Fiske, 1993; Hall 1997) as well as the Foucauldians would argue, whenever there is power there is resistance. The *Irriducibili* were forever claiming both football and ideologically purity. Despite this claim, they were to face accusations of compromise due to their 'merchandising' business. In 2006, the *Irriducibili* suffered a schism that resulted in the creation of a group called the *Banda Noantri* (Our Gang).³⁰

To understand the *Irriducibili-Banda Noantri* relations, one might compare the situation to that of the old *mafia*, not because this study agrees with such a correlation – so often used by the Italian media to make sense of the *UltraS*³¹ – but because of the similarity in how new leadership and groups emerge. Every *UltraS* group was founded by overthrowing

³⁰ This group evolved later into the *In Basso a Destra* (Low on the Right), which is presently part of the *curva nord*. The name indicates both the location of the *curva nord* where the group is located and their political orientation.

³¹ See chapter 11 for an evaluation about the relationship Italian media and *UltraS*.

the established entity. This overthrow was usually accompanied by accusations that its predecessor had grown fat, lazy and complacent with regard to the group's reputation. The one who takes power will inevitably face a similar threat to its hegemony. The *Irriducibili* were no different. In 2006, they faced accusations that they had lost their willingness for confrontation. The *Irriducibili's* merchandising operations led to allegations of being more concerned with appearances and enjoying notoriety based on designer garments than that based in action and fighting. They were challenged with the insult of manifesting the characteristics of *embourgeoisement*; that they had compromised and were now money-driven and pursuing a form of branded notoriety. Year before, in overthrowing the *Eagles* the *Irriducibili* had stated their dislike for any kind of market in the *curva*, even using the mantra: *No al Mercato in Curva Nord* (No to the Market in *curva nord*). In the eyes of their emergent critics, the *Irriducibili* had betrayed one of their founding principles.

The *Banda Noantri* sought to re-establish in the *curva*, in their own words, 'A model of pure *UltraS*'. They were similarly neo-fascists, but did not display their banners to avoid police attention (La Repubblica-online-14 November, 2007). The group was originally composed of some 40 men aged between 18 and 28 who identified themselves as 'pure and tough', always ready to fight – as the *Irriducibili* had espoused previously. Uncompromising and feared for their propensity to fight, this group was considered by the *Irriducibili* akin to the 'Casuals' – a collection of football hooligan groups present in Britain in the 1980s (Cf. Giulianotti, 1993). They were an extreme version of the *Irriducibili*.

The apparent schism was more ideological than actual. Codes, norms and respect were extended among the comrades, especially when they shared space in the stadium. The *Irriducibili* and the *Banda Noantri* remained comrades; their ideology maintained a climate of co-existence, even if it was disturbed by occasional disagreements. The story of Gabriele Sandri throws light on these dynamics. Sandri was a Lazio supporter, known to the Lazio *UltraS*. In 2007, he was killed by the gun of a police officer who was intervening to stop a fight between Juventus and Lazio fans at a petrol station along the Arezzo motorway approximately 120 miles from Rome (Corriere della Sera –online- 11 November, 2007). Sandri worked as a disc jockey in exclusive Rome nightclubs and was a proactive campaigner against drug use in such establishments. Originating from an upper middle-class background (his family owns a clothes shop in the affluent Balduina district), Sandri was also a comrade who was regularly amongst the Lazio *UltraS* gatherings at *Piazza Vescovio* in the Trieste district, part of what is known as Rome's *Zona Nera* (Black Zone) because of its populace's

sympathies for the Far Right.³² Significant figures of both the *Banda Noantri* (now called *In Basso a Destra*) and the *Irriducibili* were present in the car in which Gabriele Sandri was travelling before he was shot. They travelled as friends and stood together as they buried their mutual friend. .

By contrast, the AS Roma *curva sud* consisted mainly of four co-existing entities: the *Fedayn*, the *ultrás Romani*, a group who display neo-fascist sympathies, and the openly neo-fascist *Padroni di Roma* and *Boys Roma*. Such compromise illustrates that the *curva* could have very different arrangements for co-existence. The *UltraS* demonstrate their ability to negotiate and survive schism without damaging one another. The *UltraS* are not merely a spectacle of sorts, but are thinking subjects, capable of effective survival strategy and of intelligent articulations of both their *raison d'être* and *modus operandi*.

The chapters in this section have tried to underscore not only the differences in the development of the *curva nord* and the more fragmented *curva sud*, but they have also endeavoured to explain their ideologically inspired similarities. In this regard, the first central element to notice is the mutual good relationship between the *Irriducibili* and *Boys*, which is in line with the progressive attenuation among the two roman *curve* of their historical enmity. This is important to observe because it can be used to gauge the power of ideology, which may overcome traditional football fans rivalries, and to examine later in the thesis the emergence of the *UltraS* as a social movement (see chapter 10).

Apart from the highly structured nature of both gatherings, the *Boys* and the *Irriducibili* additionally evidence two interconnected ideological traits, namely a strong group unity and elitism. The groups manifest an internal cohesion fostered by ideology and culture, which are at the base of the intensity of the relationship between groups' members and the construction of the 'others'. Furthermore, the *UltraS* are elitist. The elitist trait of the *Boys* and *Irriducibili* is represented in the way they portray themselves as the 'super-hardcore

³² From the 1970s, this location witnessed the emergence of neo-fascist groups and gatherings of youths sympathetic to such ideologies. The district is also remembered in notoriety for the death of Francesco Cecchin, a young member of the MSI who died in 1979 having fallen from a wall in Via Montebuono whilst seeking to escape radical left militants. In the eyes of the latter Cecchin was guilty of posting far right electoral posters and needed banishing. The local branch of the far right *Forza Nuova* party annually commemorates the death of Cecchin in nearby Via Benaco, where the local branch of *Azione Giovani* (Youth Action) - the youth movement of *Alleanza Nazionale* - is also found. In the nearby Piazza Vescovio stands a 'Scottish' pub called *Excalibur*, which is very popular amongst the Lazio *UltraS*. (Cf. Il Messaggero 29/06/07)

supporters' always against any compromise with the hypercommercialisation of modern football and ever-ready to 'act' both socially and physically to promulgate their general ethos and specific style of supporting. The concept of being 'true' or more true than the fellow congregation is one of the most important ideas that emerge from this study and it helps to grasp the *UltraS* logic; the next section of this study intends to accomplish such task.

SECTION B

MAKING SENSE OF THE ULTRAS LOGIC



Fig.8: A motto to live by (*Irriducibili*)

The phenomenon of the *UltraS* is complex and its essence not easy to capture. The overall focus of this part of the thesis is to explore the main political and cultural aspects of the *UltraS*, which emerged from intensive fieldwork with this social formation. I begin chapter 5 examining the political ideologies of the *UltraS*, with particular reference to the Italian neo-fascist youth movement, more specifically the *Ordine Nuovo*, *Forza Nuova* and *Casa Pound Italia* groups. In chapter 6, I explore how the *UltraS* constitute forms of *Communitas*. Chapter 7 examines how *UltraS* may be understood with specific reference to the cultural-ideological tensions between tradition and modernity. In chapter 8, I address the ‘warrior’ masculinity espoused by the *UltraS* with specific consideration of the position of women in relation to these social gatherings. Chapter 9 investigates the *UltraS* stance concerning issues of ‘race’, notably their relationships towards immigrant groups in Rome, especially East Europeans. Finally, in the concluding chapter (10), I examine the historical shift from *ultrá* to *UltraS* identity, exploring in particular how this transformation may be explained with reference to Italy’s social system. Overall, this section examines the multi-faceted sociological character of the *UltraS*, demonstrating that no single line of explanation can account for the *UltraS* social, cultural and political complexity.

Chapter 5

Political Ideology and the UltraS

'Nessuna resa nessun lamento, linea di condotta....combattimento!' (No surrender, No complaint; our line of behaviour... Fighting!). *Irriducibili*

In 2005 when I met Federico (40 years old and co-leader of the *Irriducibili*) for the first time, he vehemently stressed that it would be irrational for any individual to try to join the *Irriducibili* without possessing neo-fascist sympathies. Ideology, he elaborated, was how the *Irriducibili* defined themselves as fascists (field note 23). When asked what role political ideology played in the *curva*, Antonio (*Boys*) answered:

'We are openly fascists and we think that everyone can see this in the *curva*...symbols, banners, chants express clearly what we think. Politics is present in the life of everyone so why being surprised that is also present in the stadium? You cannot imagine the pleasure we have in burning a picture of Che Guevara at the stadium! Even when we fight, politics play an increasingly important part...'

Consequently, all who claim membership to the *Boys* or *Irriducibili* must be prepared to publicly proclaim their adherence to the main tenets of fascism. Ideology gives meaning and justification to the *UltraS* actions and reinforces the cohesion of the groups and their individual identities. For this reason, an evaluation of the *UltraS* would be incomplete without an elaboration of the roots of their ideological credo.

5.1 The Movimentist roots of the Italian Neo-Fascist Youth

The impulse for political action among fascists and their heirs through the 20th and 21st centuries is promoted by the perception of both crises and decadence in the political, social and economic domains of Italy. Italian fascism, in its original doctrine – before the movement became a party and took power in the 1920s – functioned as an evolutionary dogma agitating for radical changes in the social, political and economic realms of the nation. Fascism played this role because of its radical socialist roots. But what defines Italian Fascism? British historian Roger Griffin (1991) defines this political doctrine as, '*a genus of political ideology, which has at its core, in its various permutations, the pursuit of a mythical palingenetic (renewal) derived from a sense of populist ultra-nationalism*' (p. 27). Italian Fascism is populist because, even if the State is ruled by an elite class, the legitimacy of political power is conferred by the people (Eley, 1986). Following the Neo Consensus theory of fascism (Griffin, 2000), this research considers Italian Fascism – and its modern

manifestations – as a revolutionary-oppositional creed. As the American academic Eugene Weber (1974) states:

‘fascism, too easily defined as counter-revolutionary, is not a counter-revolution, but a rival revolution: rival of the communist one which claimed to be the only one entitled to the label.’ (p. 28)

The fascist response seeks a ‘phoenix-like’ renewal in what Griffin terms a revolutionary political and cultural order, embracing all ‘true’ (believers) members of the national community. Giovanni (*Irriducibili*), in defining what means being a fascist, stresses the revolutionary trait of his ideology:

‘For me, a fascist is not on the right of the political spectrum; the right should be meant as the party of the industry and the rich. Defining yourself as ‘right’ means not being ‘Fascist’ but being something else. Mussolini was socialist and fascism has social roots. Fascism was never pro-capitalism and was anti-communism; it was revolutionary, a Third Way.’

Fascism was born in Italy after the First World War, animated by a strong socialist and radical component presented by the Revolutionary Syndicalists (RS). Revolutionary Syndicalism originated out of the extreme left faction within the Italian Socialist Party (Procacci, 1970). The RS claimed that, in an economically underdeveloped Italy, socialists had to appeal to national sentiment to win over the masses and dramatically improve industrial production. In such an under-developed economy, only the nation could pursue the economic progress presupposed by classical Marxism. This political vision is identified as National Socialism (Gregor, 1979). Two factions have co-existed within fascism, the pro-bourgeoisie (conservative) and the revolutionaries (or Socialists-Movimentists). It is on this Socialist- Movimentist component that the present study focuses on to make sense of the *UltraS* because this component has been historically the predominant one in most of the Italian youth neo-fascist groups (Lanna and Rossi, 2003).

The message of the Movimentist fascists was simple and social in nature: they wanted *socializzazione* to transform the economy into one in which the means of production of the industry and services would pass from private to public hands (Cf. De Felice, 1975). Corporatism³³, according to fascism, would overcome class struggle; workers and employers would be united in corporations related to the linked economic activity represented in *Camera dei Fasci e delle Corporazioni* (in the Chamber of Fasci and corporations) and

³³ Corporatism was a political system in which legislative power is exercised by the *corporazioni* that represent the nation’s economic, industrial and professional groups. It was a ‘Third Way’ between capitalism and communism based on the principle of class harmony over class conflict (Michelini, 1999).

controlled by the government. The instigator of such a political strategy was Nicola Bombacci, a friend of Mussolini and a former communist who became the adviser of Mussolini during the period of the Italian Social Republic in 1943 (Salotti, 2008).

After the Second World War, the *Movimento Sociale Italiano* (MSI)³⁴ represented within its structure the same division of fascism, the moderate (conservative) faction and the Movimentists one. The youth of the MSI, regardless of their social class and similar to the many extraparliamentary groups, represented a large majority in favour of the latter ideology (Rao, 2006). This fascination is comprehensible; revolutionary doctrines tend to appeal to youth because of what Weber would call *Wertrational*, which is best explained as a striving for a goal that in itself may not be rational, but is pursued regardless through rational means (Weber, 1958). Such values come from an ethical, religious and philosophical holistic context; they are not rationally chosen. The fascist Movimentist ideas aimed to tune and aggregate anti-system protest, young people, the unemployed, and the underclass to radically change the State system. The youth component of the MSI reinforced its identity via the experience offered by the *Campi Hobbit* (Hobbit Camps).³⁵ During the late 1970s and early 1980s, it found its sage in Pino Rauti (Cf. Rao, 2006). As a leader of the group *Ordine Nuovo* (New Order), Rauti articulated and opined on issues including anti-capitalism and Third Worldism, which argued that the underdeveloped Third World is a consequence of Western colonialism. Within the MSI, Rauti strenuously opposed the conservative, more moderate faction that was inclined to govern in political coalitions with the Christian Democrats. Today Rauti's ideological inheritance is evident in the Mayor of Rome, Gianni Alemanno, who was the youth leader of the MSI *Fronte della Gioventú* (Youth Front) from 1988 to 1991. Alemanno promoted the ideological agenda of the Movimentists wing of the MSI. During the 1995 MSI Congress, held in the city of Fiuggi under the leadership of Gianfranco Fini³⁶, the party adopted classical conservative positions and in so doing abjured its fascist legacy (Nello, 1998). This political decision, whilst important from a democratic point of view,

³⁴ The Italian Social Movement (*Movimento Sociale Italiano* -MSI) was the political formation that continued the legacy of fascism after Italy became a constitutional republic. The party was constituted in 1946 ; it merely proclaimed 10 principles, the main ones of which were: Italian territorial unity, the independence of the nation and, contrary to some suppositions, the promotion of an European Union based on equality and justice (Cf. Almirante and Palamenghi-Crispi, 1958).

³⁵ The Hobbit camps were cultural events for youth organised by the *Fronte della Gioventú*. They were called Hobbit in honour of the main protagonist of the mythological world of J.R.R. Tolkien, which articulated neo-fascist sentiment against modernity. The camps were places to play music and debate about issues such as the media, unemployment, the condition of women and ecological problems (Rao, 2006).

³⁶ Gianfranco Fini, President of the Chamber of Deputies and former president of *Alleanza Nazionale*, is one of the leaders of the newly formed PdL and he is a popular Italian political leader.

created many controversies within the neo-fascist world as Giovanni's statement demonstrates:

Q: Who do you think are the worst enemies and conversely the best friends of the Italian radical right?

G: 'That is a very easy answer; the worst enemies are people from our background and tradition who became 'moderate' for greed or power; people such as Gianfranco Fini and all his friends in Alleanza Nazionale. The worst thing for us is to cease the battle against this system in Italy; we value anyone fighting the system, even if they have different ideology from us. For instance, we did a banner praising Carlo Giuliani who was killed by the police during the Genoa G 8 protest because we value warriors even if their politics differ from ours; fighters for their ideals often pay a high price.'³⁷

During the 1995 congress, the MSI underwent a transition to become *Alleanza Nazionale* (AN). The congress is known as 'the schism of Fiuggi' since a faction of the MSI did not join AN, but remained faithful to the post fascist ideology of the old MSI, forming a new party named *Movimento Sociale Fiamma Tricolore* led by Pino Rauti (Nello, 1998). Alemanno remained in AN promoting the ideas of the Movimentists of the MSI albeit in a somewhat more moderate fashion. Alemanno later became the leader of the AN faction *Destra Sociale* (Social Right).³⁸ He was perceived by the *Irriducibili* and the *Boys* as the only respectable politician in AN because he did not repudiate his political roots as did Gianfranco Fini. During the 2006 Rome Mayoral electoral campaign, Alemanno was supported by the *Irriducibili*, who occasionally displayed banners in the Olympic Stadium urging others to vote for him.

The Movimentist identity of fascism is present today in the majority of the Italian neo-fascist youth and is certainly recognisable amidst the *UltraS*. This study identified three neo-fascist groups that ideologically influence the *UltraS*: *Ordine Nuovo*; *Terza Posizione* (Third Position; its legacy is present today in *Forza Nuova*) and *Casa Pound Italia*. These groups claim, in one way or another, to be followers of the philosopher Julius Evola and the previously mentioned 'socialist' ideas of Nicola Bombacci.

³⁷ See chapter 12 for an examination of the Genoa G8 episode.

³⁸ The Social Right promotes a social economy providing a range of services to citizens including the most disadvantaged groups. It promotes a strong defense of traditional values and national identity; among its political priorities there are an efficient regulation of the immigration, the protection of environmental heritage, the promotion of Italian history, art, and architecture and food. The Social Right is an important political component of the newly formed PDL. Cf. <http://destrasociale.org>

5.2 Ordine Nuovo



Fig. 9: The double-edged blade emblem of Ordine Nuovo on the left and the *Boys'* flag on the right (2008)

Ordine Nuovo (ON) was one of the major Italian post-war youth neo-fascist groups. Its roots can be traced to the magazine *Imperium* (Streccioni, 2000). This publication, which began in the 1950s, aimed to organize former neo-fascist youth. However, *Imperium* published only four editions before being closed down by the Italian government in 1950, charged with endeavouring to reconstitute the Fascist Party, which became a crime under Scelba's law passed in June 1952.³⁹ Among the members of the *Imperium* editorial board were Pino Rauti, Giano Accame, a journalist and former member of Mussolini's Social Republic who died in 2009, and philosopher Julius Evola (1898-1974). The editorial trait of *Imperium* consisted of an idealistic, ethical and ideological intransigence, which made the magazine required reading among the extreme right of the Italian neo-fascist youths. Evola was known to have stated that, whilst in contact with other neo-fascist youth groups, he felt more sympathy towards the youth of *Imperium* because they vehemently expressed their intransigence towards defending traditional values (Baldoni, 1996). Between the 1940s and early 1950s, the ideas evident in *Imperium* spread throughout the MSI. The purist (Movimentist) strand of *Imperium* became very popular amongst the MSI youth, who promoted a revolutionary stance on politics against the perceived decadence and corruption of the Italian political system (Cf. Baldoni, 1996). Nevertheless, such an influence was not appreciated by the top men of the MSI, who had accepted democratic methods as a means to obtain power and were seeking to develop a reliable, moderate European, conservative-right political party image. The purists were opposed to MSI leadership and strategy, wishing to recover fascist traditions as a means to lead the battle to regenerate Italy. The ON was against

³⁹ Mario Scelba was the Italian Prime Minister between 1954 to 1955; he is remembered in posterity for the promulgation of law 645 which forbade the exaltation and defense of the Fascist regime and the Fascist National Party. Cf. http://associazioneidecostituzionalisti.it/materiali/atti_normativi/XIII/pdf/11952_00645.pdf

collaboration – even strategic collaborations with democratic political forces. *Ordine Nuovo* youths were considered the ‘tough and pure’ of the Italian neo-fascist world (Giampietro, 1994). ON believed that the MSI betrayed the original aim of its foundation, namely ‘the continuity’ with social and political battles fought under the experience of Mussolini’s Social Republic (cf. Giampietro, 1994). The ON detached itself from the MSI in 1956 at the party’s fifth national congress in Milan. According to the ON’s doctrine, the two most important values of the neo-fascist militant were ‘order’ and belief in a spiritual elite. Adherents considered themselves akin to heroes fighting to defend traditional values. The ideology of ON was mainly based on the teachings of philosopher Julius Evola.

Stated simply, Evola’s philosophy condemns modernity and democracy and manifests elements of totalitarianism and racism. Against notions of egalitarianism and fiercely anti-communist, Evola sowed the seed of what became known as the Third Position. In doing so, Evola promoted values that were antithetic to those presented by the Italian bourgeoisie, as he sought a revolution to produce a ‘traditional society’ that, whilst based on the concept of the State, radically transcended the economic dimensions of existence (Evola, 1993). Tradition was central to Evola’s doctrine (and to the *UltraS*). The society promoted by Evola was anti-democratic and based on superiority of birth. He suggested that only individuals born to the higher caste were capable of reaching the most elevated levels of spirituality. He indicated that society should be built on the values of ancient civilisations, the population divided hierarchically according to natural qualities evident in the individual. Such differentiation was inherited and not based on economic or material criteria; the noble caste, however, were at the top of the hierarchy. The warrior caste in any society, Evola argued, should also be located at top of the social hierarchy - above even the priest caste (Evola, 1993).⁴⁰ Evola’s warriors manifested important traditional virtues: obedience to authority, love of discipline and order, a willingness to sacrifice (both others and self), a capacity for great courage and a sense of honour. The ethos and spirit of the ‘warrior’ is evident in many *UltraS* statements. Giovanni (*Irriducibili*) articulates this idea as follows:

‘We will always fight for socially important topics, especially if ‘some’ want to discourage us. We are not doctors, lawyers or sociologists; our destiny is to fight both the football ‘system’ within the Lazio (i.e. the SS Lazio management) and fight Italian society for our ideology....’

⁴⁰ For an appreciation of Evola’s thoughts Cf. J. Evola (1996). *Cavalcare la Tigre*. Roma: Edizioni Mediterranee; J. Evola (2001). *Gli uomini e le rovine*. Roma: Edizioni Mediterranee.

For neo-fascist warriors, such as Giovanni, the first battle was against oneself; the warrior forever fought his weaknesses. According to Evola, modern man has less capacity than the warrior has to win over his negative ego and could be easily charmed by temptations that pervert the spirit. In the ideology of ON – and generally in all Italian neo-fascist youth groups – there is a constant negative reference to modernity, which, as shown later, is also expressed by the *UltraS*. This expression manifests itself in a criticism of a society in which materialistic values are believed to have dominated spiritual ones - the small trader over the hero.

The ON ideology rejected modern institutions and both Marxism and Capitalism because they were based on the triumph of materialism and economics over politics and spiritualism. At the same time, the ON ideology rejected elements of group identity and concrete political and social referents, focusing instead on the broader abstract notions of nation and people (Ferraresi, 1995). ON promoted a heroic, elitist and warrior vision of life based on the trilogy of anti-egalitarianism, anti-democracy and anti-communism. Their target was to recover ‘traditional values’, such as honour, hierarchy and loyalty; firstly from within the individual and then, once internalised, to be preached using exemplary behaviours defined against the ever-increasing societal moral degeneration (Ignazi, 1989). For ON, the master race was the Aryan people, who were represented par excellence by soldiers, military heroes and warriors, as exemplified by the Nazi regime’s SS and the Japanese Samurai and fighting orders (Cf. Ferraresi 1995; Sternhell 1989). The inheritor of the majority of the ideas of ON is the *Movimento Sociale Fiamma Tricolore* (MSFT). The link between the *UltraS* and ON is not only evident when evaluating the ideology of the groups -as will be explained later - but is also represented historically by the previous leadership of the *Boys Roma*. Guido Zappavigna, who was a cousin of Paolo Zappavigna, the leader of the *Boys* until his death in 2006, was a member of the NAR (*Nuclei Armati Rivoluzionari*; Revolutionary Armed Nucleus). The NAR was a terrorist group that operated in Italy between 1978 and 1981 (Colombo, 2007). It was constituted by members of the youth section of the Roman MSI who were inspired by the ideas of ON.

5.3 Terza Posizione and its 21st century inheritor: Forza Nuova

Terza Posizione (Third Position) was founded in 1978 and, it is widely acknowledged,

was the natural evolution of a youth group called *Lotta studentesca* (Students' Fight).⁴¹ It was intended to destabilise the current constitutional framework of Italy and to seize power by creating a State that rejected Marxism and capitalism (hence the name of Third Position). This operation would ideally have been carried out through a revolution that was gradually implemented and led by an elite avant-garde (Cf. Adinolfi and Fiore, 2000). Initially a youth political movement was strongly influenced by the ideas of Julius Evola. It manifested the co-existence of apparent extreme left within the radical right. In the 1970s, the TP fought side-by-side with Roman squatters of Palmarola (a Roman district) against the left-led local administration that sought to evict them. These types of actions are remarkably similar to what the *UltraS* identified as 'social campaigns'. Marco (*Boys*) explains their involvement in such social campaigns in the following:

'One time, we protested against the inefficiency of the management of the electricity supply company (ACEA) for Rome's working-class districts. This problem did not touch the affluent middle class districts, so we displayed banners stressing this problem on a demonstration following the death of a person last year due to electric cables being left without maintenance by the ACEA. We support, although are not involved directly, the Social Mortgage initiative led by the guys of Casa Pound and of the rock group *ZetaZeroAlfa* [see chapter 7]. Many causes have realised that a banner publicising their battles hosted by us in the stadium is more effective than making a CD. The banner is often shown for 30 seconds on national TV and can have a big impact.'

The political actions of TP were based on two strategies. The first wanted to target youth to 'educate' them on the idea of revolution and, if necessary, the use of violence to achieve political changes. The second strategy was to create a strong hierarchy-led structure; from this, an elite group would form who would manage power. Propaganda, cultural programs and violence against political opponents went hand-in-hand to achieve the ultimate aim of erasing the dominant Italian political system. At the same time, TP declared its solidarity with international 'liberation' movements ranging from the Basque separatists to the Republican movement of Northern Ireland and even the openly 'communist' struggles of the Nicaraguan Sandinistas (Flamini, 1985). The nucleus of their ideas was outlined by Judge D' Ambrosio during criminal proceedings against Gabriele Adinolfi, who had been charged with crimes linked to the constitution of the Third Position. The Judge affirmed that the doctrine's movement was based on four crucial elements: tradition, national independence, anti-imperialism, and militancy (Streccioni, 2000). The concept of tradition focused on the

⁴¹ The group originated in Rome via an alliance of five high school student groups who had become detached from the influence of the MSI (Streccioni, 2000). Two years of activity, focused on educational issues, evolved as the members grew up and moved towards more adult political issues. Eventually the three leaders, Roberto Fiore, Gabriele Adinolfi and Giuseppe Dimitri, founded *Terza Posizione*.

identity of the Mediterranean people, from which TP argued came the ‘new’ Italians who were inclined to revolution and radical transformation. National independence described the group’s determination to detach Italy from any international alliance and thus retain its autonomy in national and international decision-making. Their publication, *Terza Posizione*, made constant references to two concepts: *popolo* (people) and *revolution*. The *popolo* took the form of a myth of a populace who manifested positive and enduring neo-fascist values. This concept explains the inclination of TP to support the inhabitants of poor Roman districts in their socio-political struggles. Revolution meant not only seeking radical change in the Italian social system (as a substitute for old political establishment) but also sought to destroy the current ‘mentality’; to promote the value of personal sacrifice to achieve a social and political uprising (Cf. Adinolfi and Fiore, 2000).

The ideas of TP have not been lost over time; 30 years later, they are currently alive in *Forza Nuova*. In origin, *Forza Nuova* (New Force) was an internal faction of the MSFT. In 1997, the AN leader, Pino Rauti (the former ON leader), decided to expel *Forza Nuova* from the MSFT, believing that it was becoming too powerful and the catalyst of internal dissent (Padovani, 2008). *Forza Nuova* was founded by the expelled faction on September 29, 1997. The ideology of Forza Nuova (FN) is well-known within the Roman (and Italian) *curve*. FN was mentioned many times during the ethnography by both the *Irriducibili* and *Boys*. Crucially, the *UltraS*, though, stressed their position of non-subordination. FN is also one of the political parties that receives sympathies from well-known AS Roma football players, such as Daniele de Rossi and Alberto Aquilani (La repubblica-online- 01 October, 2008). FN is led by Roberto Fiore, who is a former European Parliament MP. From 2003 to 2006, FN collaborated in the creation of a political cartel called *Alternativa Sociale* (Social Alternative) led by Alessandra Mussolini (who is a niece of Benito Mussolini) and which included the *Fronte Nazionale* (National Front), *Azione Sociale* (Social Action) and *Forza Nuova*. The cartel aimed to make alliances with the centre-right coalition of Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi whilst stressing their autonomy. The project, however, was dismissed by Berlusconi, who did not wish to endorse the politics of Roberto Fiore because of his neo-fascist past. Determined to operate in the legitimate theatre of the Italian democracy, *Alternativa Sociale* ran for the European Union elections of 2004, the Regional elections of 2005 and the national elections of 2006. The coalition, however, did not produce the hoped-for results, obtaining a mere 0.7% of the votes for the Chambers of Deputies and 0.6% for the

Senate.⁴² The alliance subsequently crumbled and, in recent years, *Forza Nuova* has started a political crusade with more revolutionary overtones and, as a consequence, has obtained an increase in membership and has opened many (64) new sections.⁴³

Not all Italian neo-fascists groups have as their primary purpose the pursuit of pan-European unity or even the pursuit of a supra-national policy as remit. Some seek to address local issues. Such activism leads them to assist those who they perceive as helpless to the injustices of the powerful. The recently formed organisation *Casa Pound Italia* (CPI) demonstrates this tendency.

5.4 Casa Pound Italia and the UltraS

'If a man isn't willing to take some risk for his opinions, either his opinions are no good or he's no good.' Ezra Pound⁴⁴



Fig. 10: The fascists of the third millennium (*Casa Pound Italia*)⁴⁵

When I began my research, according to media coverage, FN and the *Movimento Sociale Fiamma Tricolore* (with its strong ideological ties to ON) were considered the most popular groups within the Olympic Stadium terraces; this was not the case. The above quotation represents one of the most explicit slogans of *Casa Pound Italia* that encapsulates

⁴² Cf. http://repubblica.it/speciale/2006/elezioni/camera/riepilogo_nazionale.html

⁴³ Cf. <http://forzanuova.org>

⁴⁴ Cf. <http://forzanuova.org>

⁴⁵ Cf. <http://kataweb.it/multimedia/media/6043835>

their action-based ideology. Whilst *Casa Pound Italia* is a rival to FN for the hegemony on the youth, they share the same Movimentist foundation; the Third Positionist Adinolfi is in the Gramscian sense the most respected intellectual in *Casa Pound Italia*. In 2005, Todde informed me about this group and its popularity amongst the Roman neo-fascist youth. This was also the first time that the link between *Casa Pound Italia* and the *Boys* and *UltraS* of Lazio became evident. Naturally, I sought to find out more about *Casa Pound Italia*.

Before becoming a national association, *Casa Pound Italia* was a building squatted in Rome in 2003 by youth of the *Occupazioni Non Conformi* (Non Conformist Occupations-ONC) whose aim was to reclaim social spaces in Rome for youth by occupying houses or locations left vacant by local councils. The name Pound was chosen in honour of the American poet Ezra Pound who argued against the negative influence of the banks in society. The banks promoted money as the crucial ethos of the western civilisation. Pound identified banks with the concept of usury (Accame, 1995). The ONC, present in the Roman neighbourhoods, are *Casa d'Italia*, *Casa Pound*, and *Casa Montag*. The organisation that leads the ONC is *Casa Pound Italia*. *Casa Pound Italia* organises events and activities of a counter-cultural ethos; it manages libraries throughout Italy, organizes conferences and meetings that are often attended by 'left' leaning intellectuals and writers. The peculiarity of this youth group is the inclusion of many female militants who have the same status, dignity and opportunities as the men. CPI also ran an Irish-type pub called the *Cutty Sark* in the *Colle Oppio* district near the historic centre of Rome, which was notorious for neo-fascism in the 1970s and was the location of a fundamentalist faction of the MSI's Youth Front.

Casa Pound Italia believes in the right to private property, but not as a reason to exploit others. CPI promote campaigns on social issues, such as disability rights, and collect medicines for the impoverished in countries such as Iraq. The housing campaigns, led by *Casa Pound*, claim to have obtained homes for hundreds of formerly homeless Roman families. They support orphanages and solidarity projects for the Afghans and the Karen population.⁴⁶ CPI numbers 300 militants and 200,000 sympathisers throughout Italy.⁴⁷ The most famous slogan of *Casa Pound Italia* is to promote the 'fascism of the Third Millennium', which signifies an attachment to tradition, but at the same time a revision of fascism to address current societal issues and problems. One of the most popular projects of

⁴⁶ One of the long lasting struggle in the World, the Karen ethnic group have claimed their independence from Burma since 1949 (Fong, 2008).

⁴⁷ Cf. <http://roma.repubblica.it/multimedia/home/5203008/2>

Casa Pound Italia is the *Mutuo Sociale*. The aim of the project is to create a regional organisation with public money that works to build a public infrastructure that takes into consideration the quality of life of the individuals. The project is supported by the *Boys* and *Irriducibili* who in the past advertised such ideas via banners and their fanzine distributed in the Olympic stadium, as shown figure 11.

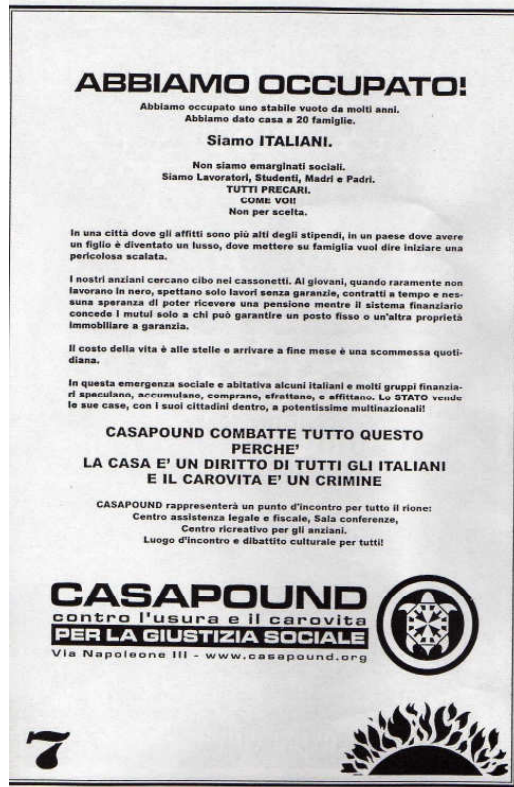


Fig 11:Docum 12,The *Boys* advertise one of Casa Pound projects aimed to tackle the housing emergency in Rome (2004)

This organisation seeks to sell properties via mortgages - at discount rates- to families who do not own houses. Such sales are to be arranged without interest rates and in instalments that do not go beyond 1/5 of the family income, which would stop if the members of the family become unemployed, thereby excluding profit-making speculation from banks. As explained earlier, CPI is influenced by third positionist Gabriele Adinolfi. Adinolfi's political commitment is prolific; as an organiser of several editorial ventures, most notably *Orion* and *Rinascita* (Rebirth), he also runs a website blog of counter-information called

Noreporter. The *Polaris* association⁴⁸ of this blog offers a variety of cultural activities as well as political debates concerning the ideas of Julius Evola and Nicola Bombacci. In 2007, after joining the *Movimento Sociale Fiamma Tricolore* (MSFT), the *avant garde* ideas of Casa Pound and its young leader (age 35) Gianluca Iannone collided with what he considered the ‘hunger for power’ strategy of the MSFT and lack of internal dialectic with all components of the party. Briefly, after the election of 2007, the MSFT leadership wanted to cooperate with the centre-right coalition of Silvio Berlusconi. In retaliation, the MSFT expelled Iannone in May 2008, creating a schism in the neo-fascist world and a new neo-fascist political group.⁴⁹ In 2005, I met the representatives of Casa Pound together with four Roma and Lazio *UltraS* in the *UltraS* favourite pub, the *Cutty Sark*, which is considered in both extreme right and left circles as ‘the most hated pub in Italy’.

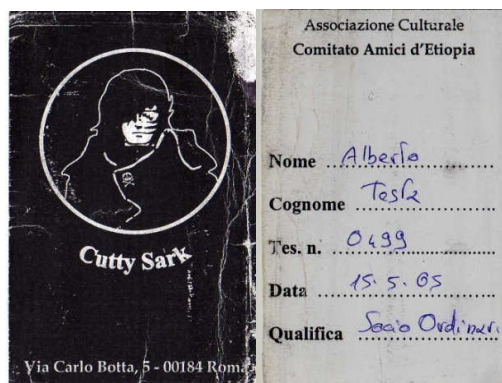


Fig 12: The membership card of the *Cutty Sark* pub in Rome.

5.4.1 Aboard the *Cutty Sark*

‘CONSTRUIREMO IL MONDO CHE VOGLIAMO!

La vita, così come ci ‘e stata confezionata, la gettiamo volentieri nel cesso.’

LET’S BUILD THE WORLD THAT WE WANT! This life, in the way that it has been shaped, is just worthy to be thrown in the toilet (Casa Pound).⁵⁰

The *Cutty Sark* is both a pub and a cultural association. A visitor needs to be invited before accessing the pub. Located near one of the most historic Roman streets, the black

⁴⁸ Adinolfi’s ideas, which were popular among the terraces, can be summarised in the following statements: Re-affirm the concept of national sovereignty. Give the nation a role and a destiny. Defuse the globalisation ‘bomb’ and overcome capitalism. Build social economies based on the three concepts of work, solidarity and commitment. Reject servility to money. Pursue the spirit of justice and cultivate common sense. Realise the people’s lobby that will fight and oppose political and economic oligarchies. Form the ‘elite’ (leadership) in spiritual, cultural economic and organizational spheres. Make a [counter] cultural revolution.

⁴⁹ Cf. <http://ladesra.info/?p=20691>

⁵⁰ Cf. <http://casapound.org>

armoured door sports the symbol of Captain Harlock, a Japanese cartoon character created by Leiji Matsumoto (former member of the Japanese Communist Party) in 1978.⁵¹



Fig 13: Captain Harlock, the warrior of the *Cutty Sark*

This cartoon strip has become a sort of heroic narrative of the Roman youth neo-fascism world. Harlock's story depicts the 'Warrior Spirit' proposed by Julius Evola. Harlock lives in the futuristic year of 2977, a time of peace due to the welfare state created by technologic development. Machines are working while people relax in front of the television in a state of apathy. The media-human link was deemed dangerous by Matsumoto and this is reflected in his cartoon. In Harlock's world, television rules individuals' lives and eliminates any positive impulse or motivation to improve the human race. Humans are unable to make decisions and are fed on fake happiness by the media. In such a state of lethargy, humans are incapable of feeling emotion or believing in ideals or values. There is only one man who understands the decline of the human race and who tries to resist - Harlock. Harlock has escaped from this human degeneration aboard his *Arcadia* galactic vessel. He tries to isolate himself in outer space, taking only the few necessities needed to survive. Aboard his vessel, he becomes the pirate 'Captain Harlock' and is, hence, hated by the authorities and considered a risk-free as he is from this artificial emotionless society.

The danger of cultural conformism is a common neo-fascist theme. Captain Harlock represents the ideal type of neo-fascist rebel. He is called to save people from an empty and superficial state of being. The Italian Neo-fascists youth perceive today's world as a progressive process of moral ruin; civilisation has created a post-industrial society that, whilst

⁵¹ Cf. <http://capitanharlock.com>

highly technological, erases cultural individuality to produce emotionally sterile humanity. Harlock is a 'national revolutionary' combatant that is willing to resist any hegemonic (and politically correct) societal discourses. The parallels between Harlock and Italian neo-fascists (and *UltraS*) are obvious. However, caution should be used in considering the use of cartoon characters by the *UltraS* as 'juvenile', even if it can appear at a superficial level of analysis. Cartoon characters are, as chapter 7 will show, figurative heroes (Mooij, 1998) for the *UltraS*. They are part of the *UltraS* culture and a means for the groups to represent their lifeworld and logic and to set behavioural examples in a setting, such as the *curva*, attended by the youth of the capital city.

Once inside the *Cutty Sark*, varieties of artefacts are available to read. Its walls are decorated like the eponymous old. The interior is adorned with pirate flags depicting skulls, English and European football scarves and stickers from global extreme right groups alongside similar stickers produced by Irish nationalists. One such sticker states: *England out of Ireland*. As explained earlier, for some Italian neo-fascists, England still is considered an enemy by virtue of the Second World War and its dominant Christian creed of Protestantism. Inside stand men and a few women, mostly aged in their 20s and 30s. Some of the former sport military style trousers and t-shirts. Some of the t-shirts bear slogans celebrating *Casa Pound* or mottos such as '*The fascism of the Third Millennium starts with squatting*', which publicly states a commitment to the *Casa Pound* housing strategy.

That said, the pub is heterogeneous in dress code, ranging in style from skinheads in their sub-cultural garments to people such as Todde adorned with elegant casual clothing. Most everyone had tattoos, mainly Runes⁵² or those which come under the genre of 'Celtic'. My visit to the pub coincided with a bout of tension between *Casa Pound* and local extreme left groups that centred on advertising space use to promote their contrasting initiatives. Every evening, *Casa Pound* propaganda leaflets that had been placed in strategic places of the city were removed by the extreme left groups. It was an 'underground' propaganda war that the city largely ignored, but one that had become more evident during elections. The *Cutty Sark* had been attacked several times by Roman extreme left militants and was once hit by a bomb in 2001, which caused only structural damage. People in the pub explained that danger came their way, not only by virtue of them drinking in the pub, thereby, declaring their political sympathies, but also when outside the venue for their spreading of propaganda,

⁵² The Runic Alphabet have been used for centuries as tools of divination and emerged in the Third Reich because Himmler (the Chief of the *Schutzstaffel* – the SS) was interested in occultism and in esoteric meanings of the runes. The symbol of the *Schutzstaffel* was created by the union of two *Siegs*, the rune of victory that has the shape of a thunder bolt (Mosse, 1984).

most notably leafleting political statements on the city advertisement boards. Security for the pub and people was thus paramount. Members volunteered to undertake security shifts both at the door and along the nearby streets in order to spot potential trouble. In expectation of the inevitability of having to fight for their cause, nearly every one of the pub staff was a practitioner of boxing or *Muay Thai*.⁵³

After an hour of drinking Dublin-brewed Guinness, Todde made introductions to three men in their early 20s from *Casa Pound*. One was a university student and Lazio *UltraS* (Paolo). The other two (Carlo and Luigi) were members of the *Boys*. A scenario unfolded of four *UltraS* of rival Roman factions speaking calmly about their battles over beer. This was not the first time that respect and friendship were evident between the two *UltraS* groups. In one of the documents in my possession written by the *Boys direttivo*, the group honoured, after one month, the death of an *Irriducibile* of Lazio, Sandrino.

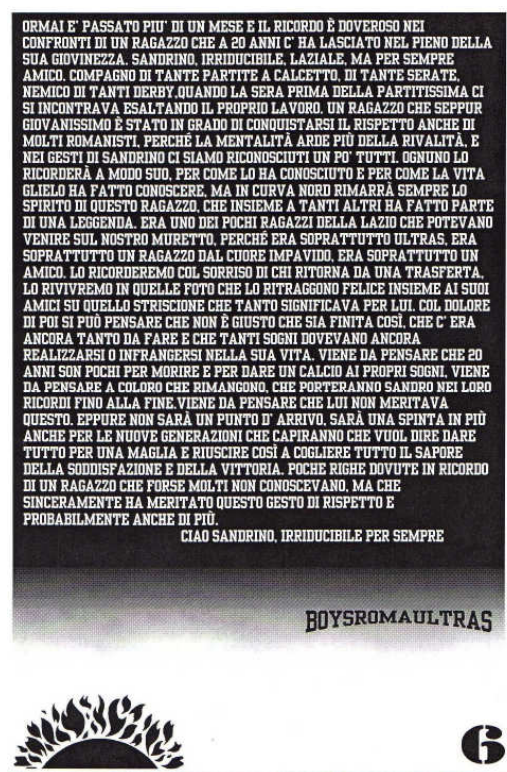


Fig. 14: Docum 22 (*Boys*)

‘It is one month from his death and it is just to remember a guy of 20 years who died prematurely. Sandrino, Irriducibile laziale and friend forever. Mate in many football

⁵³ *Muay Thai* (Thai Boxing) is a full contact martial art that originated in Thailand. It is often called the ‘Art of the Eight Limbs’ in recognition of the permitted use whilst fighting of the four limbs plus hands, shins, elbows, and knees.

matches and in many evenings out and an enemy in many derbies. When the evening before the derby we met, we mutually exalt our works for the event. A guy who, even if very young, has been able to gain respect among many Roma *UltraS*; because the mentalita' [logic of life, but also ideology] is more strong than the rivalry... in *curva nord*, the spirit of Sandrino will be always alive with others that are part of this great past (*curva nord*). He was one of the few Lazio fans who could come to our muretto [small wall] in *curva sud* because he was a true *UltraS* with a great heart and because he was our friend....' Boys

Returning to the *Cutty Sark*, when I asked the *UltraS* why they engaged in violence, the resounding answer was the determination to test themselves in physical confrontation. They spoke specifically about fights at the most recent Rome derby. When asked how they could by-pass rivalries and a history of violence to cease hostilities and drink in the same space, one answered and the rest agreed, '*we are all camerati, we believe in the same ideals, that's why!*' I was curious about this unusual answer and I questioned the Lazio *UltraS* about what would happen if, in and around a football match, there was a fight involving his comrades Todde, and the other two *Boys Roma* answered:

'We would not get involved. We have loyalty to our group, so we have to fight even if we see my friends from the other side of the barricades. So [to avoid this moral dilemma], we prefer not to be present in the situation.'

I then asked what he would do if he saw one of his *camerati* from Lazio being beaten up by Roma fans, Todde answered that he would fight side-by-side with the Lazio *camerati*. As seen earlier in the study, this was further evidence that being fascist was more important to be either *laziale* or *romanista*; ideology for the *UltraS* tends to overcome any football-related rivalries. All four *UltraS* explained this behaviour by arguing for a substantial difference between 'ordinary' fans and them; the love for the team was important, but their ideology and being a comrade (and hence sharing a way of life) was more significant. It is, therefore, possible to understand why many *UltraS* groups, even if football rivals, are united against those who they perceive as the common political enemy. I asked if there was a specific *UltraS* group that was particularly hated. They replied that such status was accorded to their equivalents in Naples. They recounted an unspecified recent match between Napoli and Roma during which a fan of the former group, supposedly the son of a *Camorra* (Neapolitan mafia) boss, was stabbed. This event created tension between the two sets of fans and rumours of revenge had been sent from the notorious crime 'family' when Roma next visited Naples. On the day of the return fixture, the *Boys* (and other AS Roma fans) were indeed attacked with Molotov cocktail incendiaries at a motorway service outside of Naples. This

episode, whilst extreme and probably unprecedented, indicates the risks that are evident in *UltraS* life when involved in such gatherings.

While speaking, Gianluca Iannone, the leader of *Casa Pound Italia*, started to interact with us. Iannone is not only an articulate leader, but also, following the ancient Latin motto *Mens Sana in Corpore Sano* (sound mind in a sound body), is a keen martial artist as he is a Thai boxing instructor. Iannone is also a highly respected politician among both the Italian neo-fascists and many political opponents, who recognise in him the ability to convincingly explain ideas and political strategies. He explained to the gathering that he had a busy few days ahead because *Casa Pound* was hosting comrades from England, Greece, the former Yugoslavia and Spain. Whilst listening to the talk about football and the status of Lazio and the Roma team, he interrupted to condemn *UltraS* football-related violence. Those present listened with great deference; a ‘sage’ was speaking. The *UltraS* violence was to him unnecessary and of poor judgement; violence was an extreme political tool to be used only when needed, not wasted on a ‘fucking football team’ and, most of all, not to be manifest when families were watching the match at the stadium, hence putting them in danger. He agreed with the four that the use of a knife in a fight was the act of a coward. Iannone’s strong condemnation of the *UltraS* violent behaviour supported the argument that the *UltraS* could not be manipulated by anyone - including their more respected comrades in the neo-fascist movement. They were non-conformist; they were in their words *non omologati*.⁵⁴

The martial arts link assisted again in this occasion as it enabled me to establish an empathic link with Iannone. After having heard some stories about the *Cutty Sark*, I asked the leader what *Casa Pound* was about and the nature of its enemies. He briefly spoke about the dangers of globalisation, which he saw as promoting the problem of illegal immigration and the evil of the capitalist system. The latter system was destroying Italian society because it made Italian people slaves to the banks and took away their control over their own lives. He considered the banks as a legal form of usury that destroyed the life savings of people and increased their debts, instead of helping them to build their life. This discourse represents the idea of the State of *Casa Pound*; for them, the State is a spiritual and ethical expression of a community that is needed to supersede superficial individualism.⁵⁵ The *Casa Pound* comrades left and I continued speaking to the *UltraS*. I heard their reasons and perceived their pathos, but what was revealed was still illogical: how could such young people dedicate themselves to an ideology that was so extreme and, for this reason, could never succeed in

⁵⁴ Cf. chapter 6 for an analysis of the concept of *non omologazione*

⁵⁵ Cf. http://casapound.org/chi_siamo.html

assuming power in Italy? I asked whether their ideology would ever prevail in Italy. Paolo replied and the others agreed:

‘We know we have chosen an ideology that will make us lose most of the time, but we believe in it and what we want to do via our battles is to live our belief and values and most importantly set an example to live....’

The neo-fascist rhetoric (adopted by Paolo) is a powerful means because from its stated position it offers a perceived solution to a problem that many cultures have not been able solve: how can one live for decades with absolute defeat, with deaths and a sense of failure. In the seemingly ‘tired’ Italian democracy, extremism and immobility have coexisted since its constitution. Nothing ever seems normal. For instance, the alternative State in the South of Italy provided by the Mafia and other criminal fraternities exists within the north-south divide, which sits in a society that has a seeming absence of ethics in public administration with overarching chronic governmental instability. Nothing of significance is really accomplished in this region; any change is cosmetic (Jones, 2003).

Since the 2008 schism from the MSFT, *Casa Pound Italia* has started to cultivate political ambitions. In 2009, I saw the emblem of *Casa Pound* on the wall of a street in the centre of Rome. I asked Todde to explain the symbol that, to my knowledge, was not part of the neo-fascist tradition.



Fig. 15: The turtle emblem of *Casa Pound Italia*

Todde claimed that the turtle (depicted in Fig. 16) with its shell was the symbol of the *patria*, which is based on the concept of a strong and closed community in which individuals find their self-realization. I then studied the symbol and I found out that the eight arrows (four black and four white arrows) converge at the centre, signifying unity (field note 100v). From a reading of the website of *Casa Pound Italia*, it was possible to identify a well-known occult symbol. The eight arrows of Casa Pound were exactly the opposite of the Chaos

symbol, where the arrows start from the centre and point outward in all directions. This symbol represents Chaos Magic, a form of magic that originated in England in the 1970s (Hine, 1995). Through a variety of rituals, chaos magic practitioners believe that they can change both their subjective experience and objective reality. It is a form of magic that exalts individualism, the opposite of what *Casa Pound Italia* preaches, which is unity against hardship. This connection with the occult highlights one of the other fascinating lines of enquiry related to Italian neo-fascism: the link to esotericism and the occult, which found an authoritative exponent in Evola.

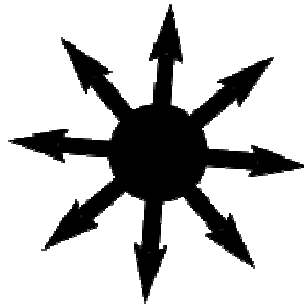


Fig. 16: The Chaos symbol

Todde, speaking about CPI and most importantly the *Boys*, underlined the importance of symbols for those sympathetic to fascism. The *Boys* had as their most significant symbol the double bladed axe, representing the affinity of the group's ideas with the Italian tradition of *Ordine Nuovo*. Symbols, as well as clothing, music and rituals are part of the *UltraS* culture and enable a sense of commitment among the groups' members that would endure, even in the face of possible social marginalisation. An evaluation of extreme right groups such as the *UltraS* cannot discount the powerful role of the culture in promoting the groups existence (Cf. Blee, 2007). The significance of culture is revealed in the following chapters, which also evaluate the *UltraS* logic.

Chapter 6

The UltraS *communitas* and the idea of Non Omologazione

As emerged in section A, the *Irriducibili* and *Boys* are organised gatherings; they are also driven by a series of shared norms, values, standards, behaviours and collective hierarchies shaped by political ideology. The *UltraS* find self-preservation of the group to be more important - contrary to the 'ordinary' hardcore football fans - than the football club that they support. The group must be defended in all circumstances and in all contexts. This sense of self-preservation was best expressed by the Boxer:

'We wish to create a strong group based on militancy, which is represented by dedication. We strongly support our social campaigns and rebut the media's false information. We will always fight back the repression of the police.'

The use of the term 'we' in the above statement points out the *UltraS* collective perception of not being treated fairly. The 'others' are represented by the Italian State, the football institutions, the police and the media that perpetrate their perceived discriminations. The *direttivo* of the *Irriducibili* and the *Boys* function to reinforce collective identity and, more specifically, the consciousness of belonging to a 'respected' group (Klandermans and Mayer, 2006; Friedman and McAdam, 1992).

Until now, the study has generically characterised the *Irriducibili* and *Boys* as groups, but I argue that they are more than simply groups. The *Irriducibili* and *Boys* might best be considered as a form of ideological *communitas* (Ferguson, 1999). The concept of *communitas* is different from that of a community (Hirsch, 2007). Individuals experiencing *communitas* might indeed find all of the elements that stereotypically define a community (people committed to one another and supporting one another), but can also be considered as part of a group that is undergoing 'a never ending shared ordeal'. As Rubenstein (1992) explains, society functions to define the differences between individuals, by limiting their interactions and dividing them, whilst *communitas* serves to unify, bond, and transcend structural relationships (p. 252). A *communitas* occurs in situations where individuals are driven together by a common experience of trial; it involves intense feelings of belonging that originate from having to rely on others in order to survive. In *communitas* such as the *UltraS*, identity is not lost, as Le Bon would claim (1895), rather according to Vider (2004): identity 'is shifted from a personal definition of 'self', emphasizing one's own values and

history, to a social definition of self which emphasises the values and history of the group' (p.143). The *Irriducibili* and *Boys* are strengthened when individuals emphasise group similarities over individual peculiarities.

In the case of the *UltraS* *communitas*, several shared ordeals serve to test the members. Such ordeals range from the constant worry of being banned from their *curve* by the Italian authorities to the sense of stigma (and discrimination) that they constantly perceive. In this regard, the *UltraS* *communitas* constitutes an efficient coping strategy for coping with stigma. Most scholars regard stigma as a social construction – a label attached by society – and point to variability across time and cultures in the specific attributes, behaviours, and groups that are stigmatised (Goffman, 1963; Crocker et al., 1998). Stigma exists in labelling, negative stereotyping, social exclusion and should always be considered within relations of power (Link and Phelan, 2001). In the *UltraS*, stigma originates from the group's status as hardcore football supporters, considered by the Italian media to evidence mindless thuggery and dysfunctional elements of both Italian football and society. There is also an ideological stigma attached to the *UltraS* as *communitas*. The *Irriducibili* and the *Boys* feel devalued in the eyes of others for their adherence to fascism⁵⁶.

'It is not a secret that the *Boys* were one of the first groups that brought ideology to the stadium. The stadium remains a place where we can be ourselves; so our ideology at least can be manifested albeit with difficulty. If we articulate our ideology in society is difficult to find a job - who wants to give a job to a 'fascist'?' Sara (*Boys*).

The *UltraS* discrimination and stigma discourses are consistent with those of the Italian youth neo-fascist movement who, over the years, have developed a strong rhetoric of marginalisation (Dechezelles, 2008). They also appear to have the same consequences; those so labelled continue in their ways. In 2009, I asked Todde if he felt marginalised for his beliefs and if this feeling would lead him to abandon his neo-fascist convictions and live a more socially acceptable way of life. He answered:

'Being openly fascist is very hard for me because it might prevent me from finding a job; this is the reason why I asked my father to help me starting my bed and breakfast business in Rome. Therefore, I can be independent and continue being myself. However, I do not care what they think about me; I will remain an *UltraS* and a fascist.'

Todde's attitude was shared by other members of the *UltraS* *direttivo*. They were, at times, discouraged, but also strongly motivated to continue being part of the group. The very nature of *communitas*, such as the *UltraS*, may explain this apparent contradiction. To those sharing

⁵⁶ After the constitution of the Italian Republic a strong stigmatisation of fascism was present for anyone who was a member or sympathiser of a neo-fascist group (Klandermans and Mayer, 2006).

their ideology and way of life, the *UltraS* offer both emotional and practical support (in some instances even money to pay for the lawyers of those who were arrested or banned from the stadium). In the words of Major and O'Brien (2005), one might see in the *UltraS* the seductive trilogy of: '*social validation for one's perceptions, social consensus for one's attributions, and a sense of belonging*' (p.405). One might then understand why, in numerous Italian football terraces, there are many aspiring 'Captain Harlocks' with their politically incorrect ideas. In this frame of mind, the arrests of the *UltraS* and others are perceived as attacks by the State. Such attacks do not push the *communitas* to a crisis or force their disintegration. By contrast, such attacks reinforce their myths and rhetoric; therefore, giving them strength and enhancing their power of social identification and ultimately recruitment among like minded youth.

Nevertheless, a member of the *Irriducibili* or *Boys* cannot experience *communitas* if he/she is not in a *liminal* state (Cf. Turner, 1969). When in a *liminal* state, while coping with the ordeal of being estranged from society, the *UltraS* experience a stronger sense of ideology-based cohesiveness that reinforces their sense of *communitas*. While the shared ordeal is an essential trait for any notion of *communitas*, ideology and culture create strong bonds among 'militants'. The feeling of unity is strengthened by the meaning of being a *camerata*: any comrade must be helped when in difficulty. This philosophy of mutual help is evidenced most obviously when the *UltraS* clash with rival supporters, particularly those manifesting a different ideology, and when confronting the riot police squads or the media. Todde explains this feeling of brotherhood:

'All the members of the group are *camerati*; you are willing to put everything on line for them, even your life. If a comrade dies or is being hit by a DASPO (banning order) or is in prison at Regina Coeli (Rome's prison), he still remains in our heart, he never disappears from his group, he is always present. The group has a strong identity, of which we are proud.'

Socialisation to the ideology, to the *communitas* and the *curva*, can occur at an early age. The most representative example of this assertion was the son of the leader of the *Boys* who often attended the *curva*. When in *curva sud*, he was taken care of and treated with great love by the *UltraS*. Family can, thus, play a crucial socialisation role; in this nucleus, youths learn not only to love their teams but are socialised to oppose the 'system'.

The appeal to an adolescent is, instead, evident at the entrance to the football stadium and in being part of such *communitas*. The youngster enjoys the *UltraS* sense of charisma together with their colours, banners and chants. The emotions that are experienced exercise a

fascination on the youth, which is added to the excitement of the football match. Access to the *communitas* in this adolescent and young adulthood stage is explained by Antonio (*Boys*) who argued that the *Boys* need different types of people to guarantee survival of the group. Contrary to what people think, the *Boys* need not only ‘fighters’, they also need people who are skilled at drawing banners, at selling merchandise and others with computer skills. To be a ‘true’ member of the *Boys*, though, is not so easy (field note 90). There are two types of activism; the ‘sympathisers’ and the ‘elite’; both types possess the membership card and consider themselves as *Boys* or *Irriducibili*. The structure of the *UltraS* *communitas* is represented by figure 17.

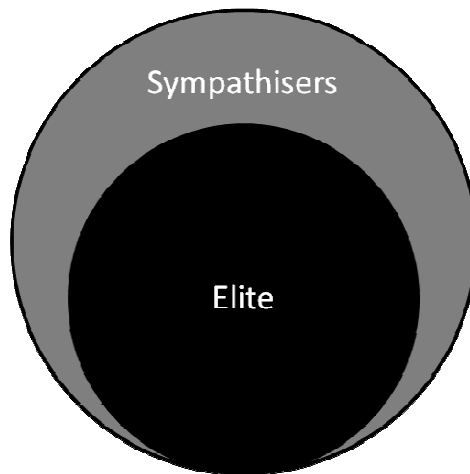


Fig. 17: Visual representation of the *UltraS* *Communitas*

To be a ‘sympathiser’ is relatively easy and is obtained by buying the groups’ membership card. Among the ‘sympathisers’, we can find the ‘show-off’ who wants to be part of the gatherings because being an *UltraS* (hence a neo-fascist) could be considered the Italian 21st century rebellion *du jour*. Adolescents, throughout history, are attracted to idealism, group conformism and causes that offer a sense of sacrificial choice. *UltraS*, with their fascist symbolism and quasi-mystical values, provide a sense of polarisation that is attractive to the psyche of any youth (Hebdige, 1981). The *UltraS* ideology and logic offer- as all totalitarian-based ideas do- abstract ideals (cf. Firth, 1973). Many of these ideals are integral to football fan cultures as they are based on celebrations of faith, loyalty, courage, myth, legend and the hero or warrior. This can be an unpredictable values and ideas mixture. The ‘sympathisers’ may join the *UltraS* because of the ‘Fashion’ element. ‘Fashion’ is the essence of modernity. It is tied to dissatisfaction, another feature of modernity (Marcuse, 1964). ‘Fashion’ exists through

imagination; we witness narcissistic and competitive displays that aim to give strength, provide a sense of pride and, at the same time, provoke envy, admiration and anger (Cf. Simmel 1950, p. 343; Heller 1985, p. 304). 'Fashion' also exists as a sense of hierarchy, as 'Fashion' has been described as an emulation of prestige groups (cf. Simmel, 1957). Dressed for a range of leisure pastimes, the adorned body possesses a multitude of displays (Simmel 1950, p. 344). The *UltraS* indulged in the cultivation of a range of 'looks' that in turn encouraged the 'show-off' (cf. Ehrenrech 1983). In Lash's (1978) argument, such representations may well attract the chronically bored and those seeking instantaneous intimacy. The *UltraS* could, therefore, be said to feel grandiose in their adornments and displays.

The 'elite' (which includes the *direttivo*) are by contrast the 'true' *UltraS* who are present, no matter what, at every match both at the Olympic Stadium and away. The more that we move away from the 'elite', the less intense become the black (extreme) shade of ideology (and concomitant motivation); it will never go beyond a dark grey, because both the 'elite' and the 'sympathisers' choose to belong in these groups due to their preceding and prevailing political socialisation. If a newcomer wish to be part of the 'elite' than must undergoes a ritual passage from 'ordinary' to true *UltraS*. To be part of the 'elite', the *direttivo* needs to trust the individual and to see him/her put the *Boys* or *Irriducibili* at the centre of their lives. These individuals firmly believe in the *communitas* ideology and way of life. This passage is also due to the worry that the group may be infiltrated by police and to satisfy the aim to be an elite group.

Only tried and tested members are allowed to cooperate and participate in the 'elite' activities. Gino (in his twenties), who was working in the magazine of the *Irriducibili* and was part of the 'elite', explains that at the beginning of his time with them, it was difficult to bond with the 'elite'. The phase during which an aspirant attempts to attend the head office of the group and become involved in as many activities as possible is complicated. This phase is difficult for the newcomer because every member seems to know each other and the novice feels excluded. On the other hand, if the newcomer shows 'balls', there is a strong chance that will be accepted (field note 78) and one day become part of the 'elite'. Showing that one has 'balls' means many things, ranging from not being intimidated by the police and rival fans to always being there when needed by the leaders. What Gino describes illustrates the *liminal* phase of a newcomer in their effort to gain access to the *communitas*. Three stages constitute a rite of passage in every culture: separation or *preliminal*, transition or *liminal*, and reintegration or *postliminal* (Van Gennep, 1908).

The *preliminal* phase in the *Irriducibili* example is represented by a newcomer detaching from their friends with whom they were watching the match. In this phase, it becomes evident that being a 'true' *UltraS* is so meaningful for the individual (who, it can be assumed, strongly shares the group's creed) that they wish to be part of the gathering. Turner (1969) describes as *liminal* the next phase experienced by Gino when he is no longer an 'ordinary' fan, nor an *Irriducibile*. '*Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial.*' (Turner, 1969, p.95). The *liminal* stage experienced by Gino serves as a trial; the newcomer discovers the depth of the meaning of being part of the *communitas*. Reinforced by ideology, the test –if passed – creates a tie that is stronger than that present in 'ordinary' social groups. The *postliminal* phase, after a period of liminality, is when the newcomer is integrated into the group with a new status, which, in the case of Gino, was acceptance into the *Irriducibili* as part of the 'elite'. Such comradeship is eventually born out of humility, ordeals, transition, and marginalisation.

The *communitas* of the *Boys* and *Irriducibili* allow an individual to construct meanings and be part of a gathering that provides a sense of refuge and a sense of being in the 'right place'. The self is refocused from the individual to the 'elite'. As mentioned earlier, to become a 'true' *Boys/Irriducibile*, the initiate must demonstrate a series of attributes (or at least an absolute willingness to accept them as directed by the leaders) that allow them to be considered trustworthy. Furthermore, when the occasion requires it, the members must use violence against those perceived as the enemy and thus must be prepared to suffer violence enacted on them in the course of such hostilities. Leaders share a sense of presence; they articulate their ideology as one who stands up for that which is socially 'just' and for the cause of their football teams, but most importantly they are prepared to fight for the *communitas'* causes. This strong sense of unity promotes in the *Irriducibili* and *Boys* an unusual, autonomous vision of the world and of justice, fairness and respect that drive the members' lives and make them loyal and consistent in their membership in the *communitas*. This logic of life is explained by Giorgio:

'Irriducibili means 'our way of life', our way 'to be' in everyday life not only at the stadium. For example, for two years now we are in a battle against the president of Lazio, Claudio Lotito which only those who share our 'mentality' could endure. He is tormenting Lazio and its supporters; many have thrown in the towel and do not come to the stadium because of him. For this reason, we are resisting and fight. The system [media, police, politicians] think that *Irriducibili* is synonymous with 'no-brain'; there are indeed some like this in the *UltraS* but we speak about our mentality ; we in reality fight this monster [the system] that has 30 heads and we try every now and then to cut one of the heads off. As far as the values of the *Irriducibili* are concerned,

we do not want to be associated with people that go to matches and do gratuitous violence. We are the *Irriducibili* of Lazio; we think about the team and its future and we do what we consider just. Friendship and respect are the things that we have gained a reputation for over the years. In the beginning, we were *feccia* (scum) to many and we are still considered so to some, but in life, there is *feccia* that can teach even the '*respettabili signori*' (respectable gentlemen) how to live.'

For Paolo (24 year old), the *Irriducibili* logic was beyond personal interests and could never be corrupted and compromised. The logic to which Paolo and Giorgio refer to involves a set of symbolic and behavioural codes that lead the collective and individual actions of the *Irriducibili* and *Boys* members. The *UltraS* celebrate and are convinced in their deviance based as it is on ethical belief; *their* logic supports them in any situations providing 'ethical' justifications to their actions including violence.

Whilst few wish to join such *communitas*, many are fascinated by it. The *UltraS*, consequently, provoke both consternation and fascination because they are perceived to be different from the norm. The difference is founded in liminality and *communitas*. To many this is a deeply human pursuit.

6.1 The norms of the *communitas*

The *Irriducibili* and *Boys* take ritualised procedures that are accompanied by a political ethos into the public domain. This ritualised *modus operandi* can function simultaneously on many levels and, like symbols, have a multiplicity of meanings for the participants (Turner, 1974). Most are mannered and stylised such that they contain elements of role, script, audience and stage (Goffman, 1967). The *UltraS* ritual is enacted within boundaries of the football culture and most importantly of the fascist ideology focusing on the celebration of masculinity, youth, strength, the regenerative power of violence and notions of mystical unity (Cf. Gentile, 1975). The precise role required of an *UltraS* is continually negotiated, but it exists in confines that are articulated as 'norms' (cf. Mead, 1938, p. 192; Cicourel 1973). As Boissevain (1974, p. 84) argues, norms are significant because they are the 'window dressing' of motive and partly decide the arena and the issues. In 2005, the *Irriducibili* 'elite' devised a test to socialise members to the norms of their *communitas*. The test was presented with irony but, behind the humour, were manifestations of the most important norms of the *Irriducibili*, considered the real *Laziali*. Figure 18 depicts the test.



Fig. 18: Test: What kind of Lazio fans are you?

The test is clear to the aspirant *UltraS*. There are different scenarios and the *Irriducibile* newcomer needs to choose what they would do in a specific situation. The more points the newcomer accumulated, the less they were considered a ‘real Laziale’ and *Irriducibile*. For instance, case number 3 awards 100 points to those who would insult an elderly lady when aboard a train; 50 points would be awarded to those who perform the Roman salute with a joint of marijuana in their hands (an *Irriducibile*, or a fascist, is against any drug use); 50 points would be awarded to one who steals beverages from the stadium vendor. Those who gained 0 points would be regarded as a real *Laziale* (and *Irriducibile*); those who gained more than 200 would be regarded as a ‘fake’ and, thus, no longer accepted to be a *Laziale* because the test found him to be a liar. The test was also meant to show the public that the *Irriducibili*, whilst a *communitas* inclined to violence, lived by a code of conduct (see chapter 8).

The norms of the *Irriducibili* were not dissimilar to those of the *Boys*. Obviously, the violence of the *UltraS* is a trait that perturbs various ‘others’ and this feeling is unquestionable; however, their violence, although condemnable contains a *raison d'être*. The use of a knife, for instance, was deprecated; it was seen by both gatherings as an act of cowardice. Federico (*Irriducibili*) preferred the use of fists, but utilised, if needed, belts and batons. He considered an attack as ‘gutless’ if the entity you were with clearly outnumbered the rivals. Moreover, Federico considered ambushes as cowardly as attacking rival groups

that may contain women and children. Todde agreed and explained his conception of violence and the socio-historical tradition in which Roman knife violence exists:

‘There is a big tradition of knife carrying in Rome, since the times of the Popes and the Rome of the ‘bulli’ [local gangsters], when someone would say ‘hey you have looked at me bad’ and a fight would arise, but it was done with a sense of equality and both parties were armed. Traditionally, the ‘rule’ was *famo a calci a cazzotti* [let’s use punches and kicks]. The knife problem became evident when one tifo of Genoa, without any provocation, was stabbed in the heart by rival fans when he was speaking to his girlfriend at a phone booth! This provoked a reaction in the *UltraS*, who pledged an agreement which has lasted for 10 years.’

Todde refers here to the death in 1995 of Genoa supporter, Vincenzo Spagnolo. He died because of a stab wound inflicted by a Milan supporter. Todde explained more about the nature of accommodating violence:

‘Then came a group of Roma *UltraS* - [BISL - a group which fights using blades] and changed the slogan ‘basta lama basta infami’ [stop blades stop scum] into ‘basta infami solo lame’ [Stop Scum Only Blades], which meant the scum, i.e., police informers, should be punished with knives if necessary. I do not even know if they are in the *curva* anymore. For them, real *UltraS* only enter a police station when arrested. This gathering also argued that a man needed courage to stab a person and face the consequences. I am personally against it because such actions destroy the real values and codes of the street, namely, fight without dirty tricks. We fight with the fist and sometimes with batons or chains, tables, bottles, but we remain in limits that are not sadistic. Of course, you hit opponents to cause harm, but it is very different from inflicting stabbing wounds.

Here in Rome, there is not one football Sunday where someone is not stabbed, often by youngsters- not by our group. Now, during a fight involving 10-15 persons when someone falls or turns his back, he risks being stabbed. The stab is given 90% of the time to the backside because, if the perpetrator is arrested, he will not be charged with Attempted Murder. Wounding from the waist down sees the lesser charge of Bodily Harm. The purpose of such a wound is meant to signify that you have been hit from behind as you ran like a coward.’

Todde’s account was informative on many levels. It stressed that a code existed among the *Boys*, but he also admitted that this code was not uniformly shared by all *curva sud*, which underlines its fragmentation in comparison with the hegemony of the *Irriducibili*’s *curva nord*. It is, consequently, seemingly accepted that the young and foolhardy or impulsive could enact wounding in defiance of the *Boys*. The admission underlines the absence of desire of the *Boys*, or the lack of ability to enforce ‘moral’ codes concerning violence outside of their gathering in *curva sud*. The articulation, whilst seeking to locate the use of a knife within the masculine norms of old Rome, explained that wounding was perpetrated in such a way as to avoid the possibility of serious criminal charges and to humiliate rather than kill those on the

receiving end. The fact that such acts are perpetrated makes the response of the Italian State and the police justified.

6.2 Non Omologazione: The Non-Conformists

The concept of *non omologazione* (non-conformism – to the duality of the Italian State and the Italian football establishment) is one of the four core elements of the *UltraS* logic and a crucial viewpoint to the strong alienation of the *UltraS* from the wider Italian society. Both gatherings despise what they consider to be *omologati* (conformist). Giorgio explains the concept of being *omologati*:

'Omologati means 'under control' of the current political system; in line with the rules of the game. A simple citizen who works in an office is *omologato*; their system of life is imposed by dominant power and values and they conform. It does not break the balls of the powerful. We are as politically incorrect as our symbol – Mr Enrich; we do not answer to any political parties regardless of ideologies; we have members who can be supporters of political parties but they never speak in that setting for the *Irriducibili* – neither will they try to exploit our name. We dislike Italian politics; it is a farce! We are not like the so called 'disobbedienti sociali' [social disobedient]⁵⁷ or extreme communists that state their rebellion to society, but are comfortably helped by their parties (PDS; Rifondazione Comunista). It is easy to be a 'disobbediente sociale' blocking the train containing our soldiers going to Iraq [indicating the desire of Italians to remain uninvolved in the Iraq offensive /war] and actually we agree with them and would have done it with them, but, unfortunately, if we attempt something similar, the police would have shot us; we would have the Digos (anti-terrorist units) in our homes. We fight the system without political protection; you risk your skin [meant be courageous] like we do!

Remember, however, that we are an opinion-making force. Last week, we advised supporters not to go the stadium in protest against the Lazio President and 15,000 accepted our suggestion.⁵⁸ We scare political power because if, hypothetically, we leave our *UltraS* identity and we move into politics, we could do damages.'

What can be gathered from Giorgio's explanation is the other side of the *non omologazione* coin; as emerged earlier, the *UltraS* communitas are profoundly anti-system. More specifically, the 'system' concept has a national dimension, which includes the Italian State and football, but also an international one with rhetoric around anti-capitalism, anti-Anglo-American politics and anti-globalisation. The character of Paolo Zappavigna, the leader of the

⁵⁷ The term is applied to radical left militants who do not recognise the authority of the State.

⁵⁸ Giorgio clarified to me that the President of SS Lazio Lotito's management was guilty in the eyes of the *Irriducibili* of managing Lazio ineffectively and specifically of not spending enough money to reinforce the team. Such a policy was creating disenchantment among the fans and fewer of them attended the stadium. At the same time, from a more prosaic perspective, one consequence was a decrease in the sales of the *Irriducibili*'s merchandise.

Boys and a feared figure by many in the Italian hardcore football supporters movement, was the ultimate personification of such anti-system philosophy:

‘Our motto is always sided and never conformist, never together the force of disorder (a clever play on words that targets the police who, in Italy, are forever identified with the term *forze dell’ordine* -Forces of Order).’⁵⁹

Zappavigna’s loathing for the *omologazione* and for the ‘system’ is a powerful and appealing message central to Italian neo-fascism in and out the football terraces. The *UltraS* concept of being always against institutions is demonstrated by the following statement made by the AS Roma *Opposta Fazione* group (see Chapter 3).

‘..... The *opposta* [opposite] mentality emerges in opposition to the modern [supporter]; rebellious to the rules imposed by a life and a system lacking ideals. The ‘*opposto*’ *UltraS* does not have [football] myths, neither does he make the game [of football] his reason for living; instead he exploits the stage of the stadium to show rebel spirit, to shout to the world that he will not compromise. The *UltraS* is ‘*opposto*’ because ‘against’ is the way of life for those who lead: slave of nothing and no one, fight the arrogance of those who wear a uniform [the police] and the hypocrisy of certain media.’ *Opposta Fazione-Roma* (early 1990s)

The *Irriducibili* and *Boys*’ anti-democratic sentiments are evident. Nonetheless, a reader should not consider this attack against the democratic system as only originating from the *UltraS*; extreme left ideology has in common with Italian neo-fascism revolutionary and resistance potential. This potential is also reflected in the Italian football terraces. When Livorno FC was promoted to *Serie A* (in season 2003-2004) after 55 years in lower divisions, the attention of the national media focused on the politicization of their *curva*. The Livorno *Brigate Autonome Livornesi* (BAL-Livorno Autonomous Brigades) was the most extreme Leftist in Italian football. They would praise Stalin and Lenin, and regularly sing *Bandiera Rossa* (Red Flag; the Italian communist anthem and the music equivalent of the Fascist *Giovinetta*).⁶⁰ The BAL are also respected abroad; in 2009 The FC Livorno played a friendship match against the Turkish team Adana Demirspor. The match was organised by the supporters of the Turkish team because of their love for the Livorno team and its BAL,

⁵⁹ Cf. La Repubblica. (online edition; 2007,11, November): www.repubblica.it/2007/11/sezioni/cronaca/tifosi-morto-2/eversione-ultra/eversione-ultra.html

⁶⁰ The anthem of The Red Flag has become the official anthem of the Italian proletariat and the Italian Communist Party. As with other music based on social struggles it seems that *Bandiera Rossa* originated in the north of Italy in the Pianura Padana region around the 1800. It became widely diffused during the *Biennio Rosso* (The red *biennium* 1919-1920) which culminated with the workers’ occupation of many iron works in the north of Italy.

which are considered the only one to challenge the capitalistic and burgeoise football system (Corriere della Sera-online- 03 September,2009). For their politicisation, the BAL came under the scrutiny of the *Digos*, who consider them similar to the *Irriducibili* and *Boys* as an extraparliamentary formation.

Being *non omologati* means more than just being anti-system. Moreover, the *non omologazione* principle is reflected in the *UltraS* relationship with political parties that share their ideology.

Q: Giovanni, Are you – *Irriducibili* – linked to any Italian parties?

G: If people want to call us politicised yes we are but, and this is crucial for us, we are politically incorrect. We do not worship any parties even if we have some political roots in common. We never bring symbols of political parties into our curva. We do not manifest deference in favour of anyone be they the Pope or the President of the Republic. The media speak about politics only when we use the stadium to send our messages, but they forget or pretend to forget very important national and international football matches where the big names of Italian politics are present to show that they follow football for opportunistic reasons- namely to gain votes.’
Giovanni (*Irriducibili*)

Therefore, the *Irriducibili* and *Boys*, should not be considered a subordinate political section of neo-fascist parties that intend to increase their votes and proselytes among the youth of the *curve*, as is often suggested by the media. This view of the *UltraS* is simplistic and underlines a lack of knowledge about these groups. The *Irriducibili* and *Boys* can be considered authentic extraparliamentary groups, which – with a love of their football team – express a political ideology and, with it, visions of how society should be shaped autonomous from any political parties or pressure groups. They refuse to be subordinate to any political groups, even if sharing similar values. Their autonomy from formal politics was forever stressed. Marco (*Boys*) argued this vehemently by stating, ‘*although I attend meetings with people from Forza Nuova or MSFT, I do not have any membership card, we are completely autonomous.*’ Perhaps the most striking example of the autonomy of these groups occurred at the 2006 regional elections in Lazio. The list of *Alleanza Nazionale* candidates included Giulio Gargano, a politician with a long history in the Christian Democrats and, thus, not particularly appreciated by those with a neo-fascist vision of society. However, Gargano was supported by both *UltraS* groups because he was willing to lobby for the reform of *diffide* (football stadium banning orders) alongside the left-leaning Green MP, Paolo Cento. Cento was, at the time, the nearest interlocutor in the Italian parliament of the *Irriducibili* and *Boys*.

Even if Cento was championing the rights of the *UltraS*, the *Irriducibili* were far from Cento's personal political ideology⁶¹.

The *communitas* of the *Boys* and *Irriducibili* are territorial; no one, not even a group linked to a party that they support, can enter their 'social space' and dictate. Aware that they can move votes and opinions amongst sections of Roman youth, they do not want to lose this potential by being subsumed by any neo-fascist groups or parties. At the same time, both gatherings have relationships with politicians who they consider useful in the defence of their interests as *UltraS*. From this perspective, they might be considered a political and pragmatic lobby aimed to ensure self-preservation.

Once in the stadium, the *UltraS* ideology finds an arena for action that they are denied in the wider everyday society by both public order policing and the banalities of everyday life, with its requirements of the workplace, neighbourhood and the pursuit of individuality. Inside the stadium occupying 'their' territory, the neo-fascist *UltraS* are willing to push their ideas using slogans, banners and violence. A neo-fascist outside of the stadium watches almost inertly the assumed decadence of the Italian society; however, inside the stadium, passivity changes into action. Such men - and women - believe that their only choice lies in opposing the decadent present to both make them feel alive and superior to the rest of their fellow citizens. Theirs is a rage against Reason. For the protagonists of neo-fascism the project of the Italian democracy has proven a failure. They see the construct of the nation State as a failure in permitting both corruption and in being unable to control those considered alien to Italian life. The football system is similarly decadent, the 'beautiful game' aesthetic is tarnished by the hideous realities of individual venality and corporate finance. In this setting, fascist ideology plays a crucial role in facilitating interactions with others and, consequently, serves to help the individual pass from theory to action; the unthinkable becomes thinkable. Ideology provides, as Geertz would argue (in Corte and Edwards, 2008), a consistent structured system of symbols, values and beliefs by which the groups interpret society and football. The *UltraS* logic operates as a selection tool and helps the 'elite' discern who is part of their world and who is not. The latter need to be fought.

⁶¹ When politicians and the *UltraS* meet, the latter can use the elected individual in their pursuit of self-preservation; the former deny that the party machine can influence them in any way. Concomitantly, career projections from the *curve* to Parliament were occasionally sought and sometimes attained. Some leading *curve* individuals attempted to become MPs due to their ability to create consensus and procure the youth vote (cf. De Sisti, 1996). In Reggio Calabria, the *Curva* of Reggina once had in their group Giuseppe Scopelliti who, for some five years (from to), was (and remains) the *Alleanza Nazionale's* Mayor of Reggio Calabria -one of the biggest cities in the south of Italy.

Chapter 7

The 'true' UltraS and the Modern world

'I am proud to be a Boys, a 'true' UltraS group that is part of the history of the curva sud.' Todde (Boys)

An important element in making sense of the *UltraS* logic is represented in the above quote; the sense of authenticity mentioned by Todde is a significant trait that the *Irriducibili* and *Boys* share and can be identified in the concept of the 'true' *UltraS*. Authenticity in this study refers to, *'the sense that one's life, both public and private, reflects one's real self.'* (George, 1998, p. 134; Vannini and Franzese 2008). The sense of authenticity expressed by the concept of 'true' *UltraS* is the strong affirmation of the *UltraS* *communitas*. It is another means by which the *UltraS* strengthen the 'we' versus the 'others' dynamic. Those who do not express their logic are not 'true' *UltraS* and do not deserve to be respected. Giovanni (*Irriducibili*) explained another facet of being a 'true' *UltraS*, *'if I see anyone smoking pot or taking drugs in curva or near me, outside the stadium, I will slap him.'* Giovanni's statement stresses the difference between being a 'true' *UltraS* and being part of the superficiality of contemporary youth. He underscores the *UltraS* drug-free living philosophy, which is not considered dominant in the wider society or in the football terraces. The 'true' *UltraS*, in Giovanni's opinion, does not approve of recreational drug use by themselves or when evidenced among their peers; this aversion against any types of drugs is one of the norms of the *communitas*.



Fig .19: The 'No drugs campaign' leaflet of the *Irriducibili* supported by the *curva nord* (2005)

In such statements and drawings is evident the *UltraS* collective stance against the shallowness and individualism of the youth culture fuelled in the *UltraS* eyes by a mediocre

and valueless society. This attitude can be understood as a symbolic opposition against this society (Haenfler, 2004).

Authenticity was also expressed by the involvement of the *UltraS* in their social battles. Giorgio explains:

‘One of our social battles is against paedophiles; one of our banners at the stadium advertised the ‘telefono azzurro’⁶² because we consider the stadium and our *curva* an extraordinary ‘palcoscenico’ (stage) and a means to fight ‘social battles’. With our battle against paedophiles, we had also the support of the tifosi who, whilst distant from our ideology, are willing to collaborate with us on the issue. No other organised manifestation held at Piazza Venezia (the historical piazza of Rome and the place renown for Mussolini’s fascist celebrations) compares to the power of expressing our ideas in the *curva nord* ; la curva is our piazza; our powerful piazza!’

Giorgio’s statement not only shows the will of the *UltraS* to campaign for issues that they consider ‘just’, it also demonstrates the radical nature of the ‘true’ *UltraS*. The *Boys* and *Irriducibili* are extreme in everything they do. Opposition to the imposed social standards and expectations enables the *UltraS* to forcefully follow their path in life, which is in the end guided by their ideology (Haenfler, 2004). They speak the unspeakable and, in so doing, further isolate themselves from mainstream society.

7.1 The Power of Culture (in ideology)

The concept of the ‘true’ *Irriducibile* or *Boys* is not only constructed around ideology, it is also based on cultural practices. The centrality of culture in ideological youth gatherings is pointed out by Blee (2007), who cautions us from making the mistake of considering only ideologies and ideas as the essential tools with which to create bonds amongst those we consider ‘militants’. I contend in this study that, to understand militant groups, such as the *UltraS*, one needs to focus on how culture is used in both internal and external interactions to shape the sense of ‘similarity’ and, just as significantly, the sense of ‘difference’ (Dechezelles, 2008). The uniqueness of such an analysis provides explanations of how such groups both recruit and survive.

How one uses the concept of culture in such inquiry is complicated. At one level, culture is a form of mental programming (Hofstede 1983; 1991); nevertheless, it is also visible among the *UltraS* in four ways: symbols, heroes, rituals and values. Amongst the

⁶² *Il Telefono Azzurro* is a non-profit-making association founded in 1987 which aim to protect children from abuse; it operates a free telephone line to report any crimes against children.

UltraS, all four elements combine to create a sense of ideology. Figure 20 illustrates such a process.

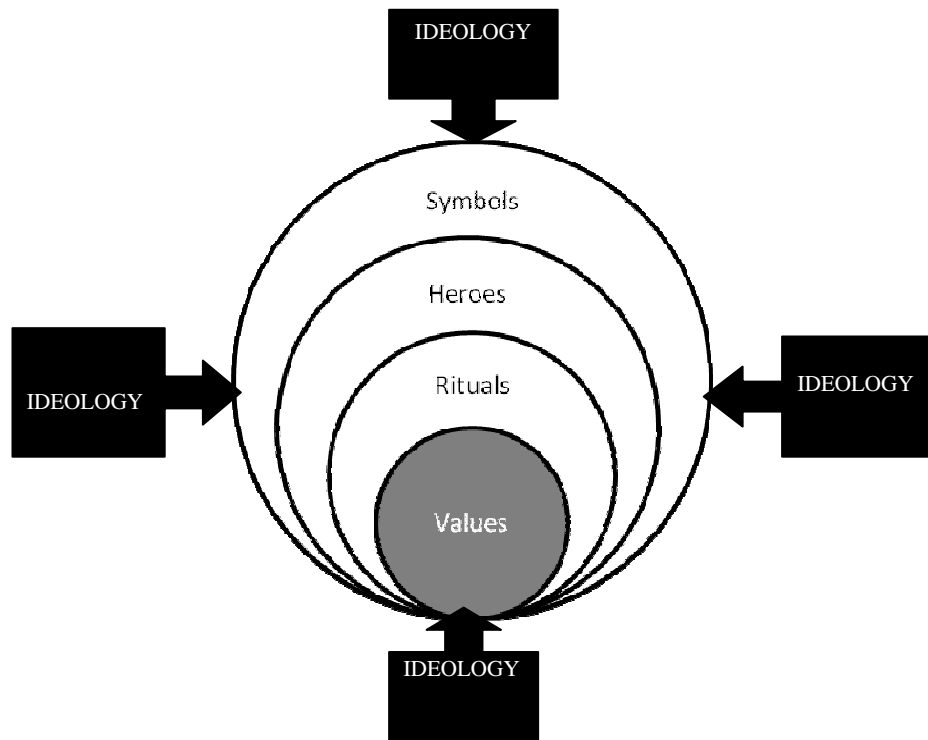


Fig. 20: The cultural model of the *UltraS*

This four-part analysis requires elaboration. I begin with the symbols that represent the most readily available manifestation of the *UltraS* culture. Due to their significance, symbols are located at the boundary of the above circle. Research can explain the meanings of the groups studied via an investigation on how symbols are used in everyday discourse (Spradley, 1979). Symbols advance ideas and make those ideas appear to be tangible (Sandelands, 1998). The *UltraS* symbols, often connected with the idea of tradition, comprise words, gestures and objects that have particular significance recognisable only by those who share their specific culture and logic. In the case of the *Boys* and *Irriducibili*'s, recurrent symbols are the term *camerata* or *short* sentences that are used to end a dialogue, such as *In alto I cuori* (keep high our hearts) or *Saluti Romani* (Roman salutes). The main *UltraS* symbols are loaded with significance and include the Celtic cross, the Eagle (for the *Irriducibili*), and the sword. Symbols are also represented by clothes and music, as I will detail later in the chapter.



Fig 21: the symbolism of the heroic.
An Irriducibile Tattoo and motto:
'Honour and Fidelity

According to Hofstede (1983; 1991), heroes can be real or imaginary and exist as behavioural models. For the *UltraS*, Benito Mussolini is an individual hero, but so are the deceased comrades of the *Fronte della Gioventù* (Youth Front) - killed by the hated communists during the late 1970s and early 1980s in Italy. Whilst often remembered as individuals, such people also exist in a collective sense of heroism. Heroes are also the *diffidati*' (the *UltraS* hit by the stadium banning orders) and their leaders, such as Paolo Zappavigna and the Boxer who represent for the *Boys* and the *Irriducibili* examples of 'true' *UltraS*. As mentioned earlier, cartoon characters such as Mr. Enrich for the *Irriducibili* and Lupin III⁶³ for the *Boys* are *UltraS* figurative heroes aimed to socialise the youth of the *curve* to their lifeworld. Similar to Harlock, Lupin III represents an anti-system hero, a 'gentleman thief' who steals from the rich, not only to his advantage, but also to help the needy.



Fig. 22: Boys pin representing Lupin III

⁶³Lupin III exists in Japanese (manga) comics as the Nephew of Arsène Lupin, a character created by French writer Maurice Leblanc. (Cf. <http://lupinthe3rd.net/files/profili/lupin.htm>)

Rituals define a culture and, via them, the *Irriducibili* and *Boys* seek to distinguish themselves from the ‘non believers’. One of the rituals used by the *UltraS* is the ‘gladiator salute’ way of greeting. Such a salute is also used as a hidden way to profess their ideological identity and widely shared by the Italian neo-fascist community (see Fig. 23).



Fig. 23: The leader of Forza Nuova Roberto Fiore and the ‘gladiator Salute’⁶⁴

Travelling to an away fixture by train or car is also a form of ritual, as it serves as a time for the preparation of banners and choreographies for the forthcoming match. Every *UltraS* ‘elite’ member has a role in such activities. The leaders generally chose the catch phrases; amongst the *Boys* Paolo Zappavigna (the leader of the *Boys*) decided the slogan, and preferred ironic catch phrases. If the banners had an ideological motivation, then a member of the ‘elite’, such as Giovanni (for the *Irriducibili*) or Todde or Lele (for the *Boys*), carried out the task of putting words on cloth. The length of the preparation of the choreographies depended on the type of match. The ordinary games saw the preparation of banners generally at the head office when the banners were not large. For the much anticipated derby, the location of the preparations changed. Large warehouses were rented outside of Rome that provided enough space for the preparation of the choreographies and production of banners. The parading of banners and displays of graffiti were significant for the ‘true’ *UltraS*; such words and slogans not only promoted the values and logic of the *communitas*, but warned the ‘outsiders’ of their territory and the danger faced if they trespassed beyond said boundaries.

⁶⁴ Cf. <http://milano.repubblica.it/multimedia/home/5013924/1/4>

While symbols, heroes and shared rituals may be the most visible parts of a culture, values are fundamental to every culture (Hofstede, 1991). For the *UltraS*, values are broad tenets that state a preference for certain behaviours over others (Hitlin and Piliavin, 2004). The spirit of the ‘warrior’ encapsulates all of the values that the ‘true’ *UltraS* should follow: those around honour, faith, the sense of duty and fairness, which should be expressed in both ‘battles’ and daily interactions.⁶⁵

Being a ‘true’ *UltraS* relates to how participants present themselves to the ‘others’. The *Irriducibili* and *Boys* express this trait via the concept of ‘Style’ (cf. Hebdige, 1981). Marco (*Boys*) explains:

‘We wear elegant casual clothing in contrast to many of the *curva sud* supporters. We dress casual. We take care of the aesthetic, we want to show off our ideals and hence we want to present ourselves in a decent way- with ‘Style’. This way of dressing and thinking has to be a daily choice, not one reserved only for the stadium.’

UltraS ‘Style’ is a collective presence that is associated with symbolism, image and identity. It exists beyond notions of social class. ‘Style’ is manifest most obviously in their clothes, posture and gait. In the above statement, Marco connects their clothing with a way of being and, most importantly, with the function of promoting the group. Such a casual ‘Style’ is very popular among both the *UltraS* and the Italian neo-fascist youth. Instead of the black bomber jacket or the Doc Martens boots of the stereotypical European extreme right groups, the *UltraS* wear expensive jackets, such as those made by the English *Stone Island* or *Aquascutum* or the Italian *CP Company*. The *UltraS* not only adopt and appropriate a ‘Style’; they at times create ‘Style’. One of the *Boys*’ more popular items of merchandise is the Diabolik sweatshirt taken from the eponymous Italian cartoon character.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Cf. chapter 8 for a more detailed analysis.

⁶⁶ The cartoon character, *Diabolik*, was created by Angela and Luciana Giussani in 1962 and appears in a publication titled *Casa Editrice Astorima*. He is a ruthless robber who, using sophisticated technologies, with the beautiful Eva Kant, steals money and jewels from rich families, banks or from people who have obtained money via illegal means. Cf. <http://diabolik.it/index.asp>.



Fig.24 : The Diabolik sweatshirt

The Diabolik sweatshirt is worn by a ‘true’ *UltraS* when facing confrontations to avoid being identified by the police CCTV; ‘Style’ is thus at times linked to concealment.

Via ‘Style’, the *UltraS* want to give the ‘others’ the impression of toughness, exalting the power of their *communitas*. The concept of *habitus* here, is useful sociologically for examining the *UltraS* ‘Style’; *habitus* on an individual level, provides the *UltraS* with a cognitive and motivating structure that helps them to deal with various situations (Bourdieu, 1984). Crucial to the *UltraS habitus* are notions of the body, particularly garments, displayed symbols, and items that are consumed (Shilling, 1993).

Music is also part of the *Irriducibili* and *Boys* *communitas*; music helps to mark the *UltraS distinction* from the ‘ordinary’. For some members, their taste in music is varied, such as Giovanni (*Irriducibili*) who explained that his favourite group was the *270 bis*⁶⁷ and that he enjoyed the songs of Massimo Morsello for the beauty of the lyrics and their messages.⁶⁸ This music was also popular among the *Boys*; it was often played in their *sede*. Another music group quite popular among the *UltraS* were the *ZetaZeroAlfa* (ZZA). The *ZetaZeroAlfa* songs attack, as the *Irriducibili* and *Boys* do in the *curve*, the *omologazione* of the Italian youth and, with this group, the Italian political and cultural systems. In 2005, during a visit to meet the *Boys* in their head office, I saw a stereo that was playing the ‘hard

⁶⁷ Cf. <http://.270bis.com>

⁶⁸ Massimo Morsello was the co-founder -with Roberto Fiore- of *Forza Nuova*. Morsello at various times has described himself as a fascist, a catholic, a fugitive and a politically incorrect song-writer. Certainly he had many strands to his bow; Morsello was once a member of the MSI youth organization and a member of the *Nuclei Armati Rivoluzionari* (NAR– Revolutionary Armed Nucleus) a terrorist group that operated in Italy between 1978 and 1981. He was also a talented and successful song writer within the international world of the radical right. He died of a tumour in 2001. (Cf. <http://massimomorsello.it>)

punk' *ZetaZeroAlfa* CD placed among a statue of Benito Mussolini and shelves displaying their merchandise. The lead singer of the music group, Gianluca Iannone, as detailed earlier, is also the leader of *Casa Pound Italia*. The *ZetaZeroAlfa* band began playing concerts in Rome in 1997 and has performed 80 concerts, at the time of this writing, both in Italy and abroad. Their most recent concert tour, entitled *European Revolution*, included Eindhoven, Marseille, Stuttgart, Paris and Madrid. They have become so popular that the notable music magazine *Rolling Stone* dedicated the March 2008 cover to Iannone. The message of the *ZetaZeroAlfa* encourages followers to intervene in political and cultural domains and to use their sense of 'Style' to disseminate oppositional messages. Much of their merchandise, especially the T-shirts, is popular amongst the neo-fascist movement, including the *UltraS*, and the messages contained in said garments promote their philosophy of action (see fig. 25).



Fig. 25: T-shirt 'Beauty is in Acting!'

The ZZA CD entitled *Dictatorship of the Smile* contains the songs *il grande fratello* (Big Brother) or *Indipendenza* (Independence), which focus on the negative role played by the media in society. According to the lyrics, television rules individuals' lives, eliminating any positive impulse or motivation to improve the human race. The pessimistic message states that humans are unable to make decisions when fed fake happiness by the media. In living in such a state of lethargy created by this artificial welfare, people are unable to feel emotions and to believe in ideals and values. The suggested tool of resistance to this society is culture. Such an idea is not new; Italian communist Antonio Gramsci similarly argued for the power of culture in his theory of Hegemony (Cf. Ricchini et al. 1987). The novelty of these songs is in the use of hegemony by a neo-fascist group, a concept that had long been ascribed to the extreme left.

Culture does not only encompass what the *UltraS* wear or the music they listen to, but is crucial to how they express their ideas. The fanzines *l'Onore di Roma* (the Honour of Rome-Boys) and *la Voce della Nord* (the Voice of the North-Irriducibili) are important pamphlets that intrigue the curious and offer a means by which the 'sympathisers' may understand their visions of life. Such publications portray the marginalisation discourses that the *UltraS* live by, yet, at the same time, promote positive social identifications and seek new recruits that mark their 'distance' from society.



Fig. 26: 'Never defeated' (La Voce della Nord)

Figure 26 presents the 'true' *UltraS* who never concede defeat against the Italian State (symbolised by the handcuffs). The casual style of clothing is emphasised. The title of the cartoon is 'Never Defeated'. The unknown *Irriducibile* writer explains: 'It is not true that a lion in a cage does not change! He has only two paths, either he breaks the cage and resists till he dies or he becomes old, lives and dies in ways the others have decided for him!!!' This depiction, like so many others in the *Irriducibili* and Boys fanzines, also serves another essential function: the document emphasises the epic vision of the life of the *Irriducibili*. It aims to establish the norms that the 'true' *UltraS* should follow by creating images that highlight the communitas struggles and, at the same time, express a sense of pride and the magnificence of their resistance. Distant heroes are celebrated in the fanzines. Such characters are represented in metaphoric tales and exist in mottos and, most importantly,

representations of epic actions. The following document of the *Irriducibili* illustrates this depiction (fig. 27).



Fig. 27: 'The Last samurai' (La Voce della Nord)

In this document, the *Irriducibili* exalt the *Bushido* (the way of the Japanese samurai; Yamamoto et al. 2001). The samurai, in the eye of the *Irriducibili*, represents admirable self-confidence in making life's decisions and in their concomitant rejection of superficial values. For the Samurai, the path that leads to honour is the most important one to travel. The article underlines the heroic vision sought by the *Irriducibili*, arguing: 'if something is missing from a samurai, it is fear.' The implication is that fear (not the police) is the number one enemy of the 'true' *UltraS*. The same concept can be found in the Boys' fanzine, as is shown in figure 28.



Fig. 28: 'Let's finish them' (L' Onore di Roma)

The axe is swung by the muscular hero astride his horse as he fights against the universal symbol of evil, the serpent. The lack of fear, evidenced in the hero's ability to commit himself to fighting for the common good, underscores the will of those gathered in the *UltraS* name not to bow before authority in their fight for survival. The serpent can represent many things: the State, the police or Italian society. Figure 29 shows how the *Boys* fanzine can utilise the myth and symbols of the Roman Empire. It criticises the AS Roma football players who are considered to be mercenaries, who are interested only in money and not in making the Roma club great and worthy of representing the greatness of their Roman ancestors.



Fig. 29: 'Fatherland, Honour and Fidelity:
The 11 mercenaries in the pitch do not deserve us'
(L' Onore di Roma)

Both *fanzines* have similar internal layouts; both contain columns that are dedicated to comments on the teams' results and vicissitudes. In addition, anti-Italian State 'editorials' are evident as well as articles on issues that are not pertinent to football. The *Irriducibili* call such editorial selections *Non Solo UltraS* (Not Only *UltraS*), as is illustrated in figure 30.



Fig. 30: 'I consider you the last of the Idiot' (*La Voce della Nord*).
Article about the hegemony of the USA over the world.

The *Non Solo Ultras* editorials demonstrate their commitment to what the *Irriducibili* term 'social campaigns', somewhat of an euphemism, for topics that, as shown earlier in the study, range from international politics (the Iraq war, the Middle East conflict) to domestic problems, such as housing shortages, illegal immigration and political malpractice.

Regardless of stylistic and symbolic differences (e.g., the Roman Empire myth is recurrent in the *Boys* than the *Irriducibili* fanzines), the fanzines promote their commitment to the sense of *communitas* (Fangen, 1998). Both fanzines present the social and the logical world of the *UltraS*; a world which is based on a sense of hostility toward those who do not share their logic. The contest becomes one of celebrating the past against a decadent present.



Fig. 31: The Head-office of the *Boys Roma*⁶⁹

7.2 Tradition versus Modernity

Being part of the *Boys* or *Irriducibili* clearly goes beyond football. The *curva* stands as the locale where being part of the *communitas* is appreciated without social class stratification, and where the myth of Rome as the glorious capital of the Roman Empire is celebrated. As Marco details:

‘I do not believe in ‘Roma’ as a football team, it would be limiting and superficial; I believe in what it represents, the AS Roma represents the capital city with its glorious traditions. It is sufficient to walk around Rome to breath this ideal - not Rome today with Veltroni [the former centre left Mayor] with the smog and the traffic - walk along the *Fori Imperiali* [Imperial Forum] and feel the power of ancient times. We need to be proud of living in this city.’

The Rome of the Empire and the fascist Italy are seen as ideal models of society. The articulation (and myths) of the ‘ideal’ society are common themes in the *UltraS*, as they are amongst other neo-fascist groups. Such narratives and images are based on legendary tales about ‘origins’ and ‘roots’ (Cf. Dechezelles, 2008). Consequently, an understanding of traditionalism⁷⁰ is central for a proper understanding of the *Boys* and the *Irriducibili*’s way of life.

⁶⁹ Cf. <http://soccercasuals.splinder.com>

⁷⁰ The most compelling definition of Traditionalism is given by Allison: ‘the word came primarily to refer to the oral handing down of lore and legend’. Cf. L.Allison "traditionalism" : <http://oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t86.e1399>>

When asked who he believed to be the most important Italian historical figure, Giovanni (*Irriducibili*) replied:

‘Benito Mussolini!... in the first 13-14 years of his [Mussolini’s] regime, he built a national identity and gave pride to the country, especially at the international level, for the only time in Italian history. The ‘professional’ politicians of today are petty bureaucrats who think only about a good salary. Who is the most negative politician at the world level? That is easy! The President of the USA; the *Irriducibili* believe that if many nations today have to live with the fear of terrorism, this is due to America.’

The traditional and symbolic universe of the *UltraS* world revolved - as did Giovanni’s statement and others collected from both groups— around the myth of Benito Mussolini. The glorification of the figure of the *Duce* was, as evidenced throughout the study, a dominant aspect of the culture of the *Irriducibili* and *Boys*. *Il Duce* was represented as the greatest of men in Italian history. Mussolini was seen as the only Italian politician who had been able to represent the interests of his people and, most importantly, to restore Italy to prestige due to its glorious past. This legendary status of Mussolini was fostered (it was not spontaneous) by the ‘elite’ via narratives and symbols. In Giovanni’s statement, the strong nostalgia for fascism is crucially conveyed in opposition to the politics of contemporary Italy, where political principles, according to the *UltraS*, are used to assert individual ego more than to help people. This populist inclination is fundamental to the *UltraS*; it should not be considered peculiar because apparently in contradiction with their elitist nature; the *UltraS* originated in a setting- the football stadium- that exalted rhetorical narratives around abstract ideals (i.e. the football club) to appeal to the crowd. The yearning for a return to the celebrated past requires that a ‘true’ *UltraS* know and honour the glorious history of their *communitas*. Being part of such *UltraS* *communitas* means that they have not only a willingness to celebrate past actions against the ‘system’ or, for instance against *le zecche* (‘ticks’- communists- in neo-fascist slang) of the FC Livorno BAL, but also a willingness to commemorate and respect the traditions and roots of their neo-fascist ideology.

Behind the rhetoric of the *UltraS*, there is a common theme represented by the concept of cultural memory (Assmann, 1997). Memory is a phenomenon that is related to the present; our perception of the past is influenced by the present. Memory is also forever changing. The past is reinterpreted or reinvented to give new meaning to the present. For those who embrace fascism (and its modern ideological manifestations), there is the myth of the ‘golden age’, a glorious past that is constantly compared to an uncertain and worrying

present. The myth expressed by fascism, and adapted by the *UltraS* to their everyday experience in and outside the football stadium, is transformed into accomplishment. Myth is a projection that is different from a utopian vision. It is a logical representation that could be rationally examined. It is not important that the myth is realisable; its purpose is to be the engine of human action in its appeal to those seeking radical change and to stress the moral legitimacy of the *communitas* of the neo-fascist collective. The importance of symbols and, most importantly, their connection to the glorious past was stated by Marco (*Boys*):

Symbols are very important!! Not just how they are used, but most of all in what they represent. Sometimes we see the rune [the runes] in neo-fascist groups; however, they do not belong to our tradition or culture, but more to a northern European one. We use the fascio littorio, which was a symbol of authority during the Roman Empire. During the Regime of Mussolini, it signified both a will to regain the territories that once belonged to the Roman Empire and the pursuit of national unity overcoming the North-South tensions ever evident in Italy. The Celtic cross linked to the Roman Emperor Constantinus is part of our heritage, but, in Italy, it is forbidden by law to display because it is considered neo-fascist!! [He then revealed tattoos depicting the Celtic cross]. The sun is the most important theme for us; if you listen to the old song of the youth movement of the MSI (Tomorrow Belongs to Us!), the sun is always present; we use it because strangely enough it is not infamous as an extreme right anthem.'

For the *UltraS*, symbols constitute repertoires of action that signpost the importance of past events – whether real or imagined – thereby providing popularly accessible ‘points of entry’ for individuals to locate and contextualise their own personal experiences within the broader collective (Gamson, in Mazer, 2008). Antonio (*Boys*) elaborates upon this theme: ‘*The Celtic cross, one of our symbols, is forbidden in the stadium, so we substitute this with the arrow, another type of Runa that symbolises a certain political [but also religious] identity.*’

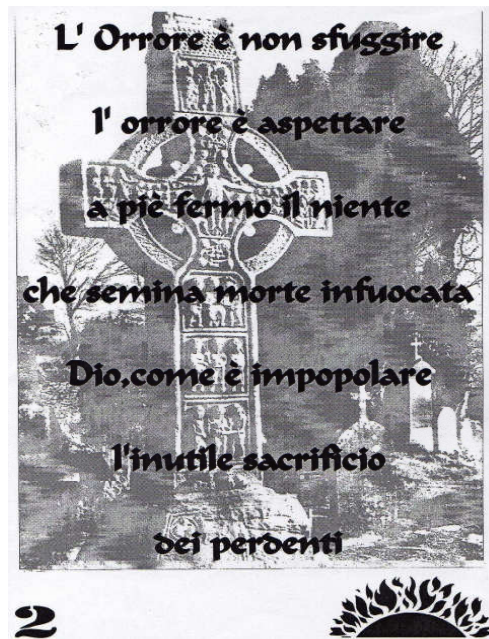


Fig. 32:

The Celtic cross and one of the Boys credo:
*'Dismay is not escape; Dismay is to wait for the
 nothing that promotes a burning death.
 God, how sad is the behaviour of those
 whom do not act'*

The Celtic cross was one of the most widely used symbols connected with tradition among the *Irriducibili* and *Boys*. When asked about this relationship, both groups based their explanations on the link of the symbol to traditional Roman Catholicism and to the history of the Celts. The link between this symbol and the political extreme right originated in the organisation *Jeune Europe* (1960). The *Jeune Europe* was founded by Jean Thiriart (1922-1992) and manifested anti-American and anti-Semitic sentiments. The Belgian politician tried to create a European Revolutionary Party - an anti-imperialist party based in the ideology of the extreme right (Macklin 2005, pp. 320-321). The *Jeune Europe* exported the Celtic cross to Italy, where it became the symbol of the *Fronte della Gioventu'* under the influence of Pino Rauti in the 1970s (Cf. Ferrari, 2009). In Italy, the Celtic cross was banned by Law No. 205 (approved in June, 1993) because it was associated with neo-fascists and those who supported racial, national, ethnic and religious discrimination. The relationships between symbols, meanings and tradition, in the case of the *UltraS*, are not casual. Symbols (connected to the past), legendary tales and myths not only serve to unite the *UltraS* but also to drive their action via inspiration (Mazer, 2008). The symbols-tradition correlate is also very evident in the *Irriducibili*. Their most important motto *'Dare, Believe, be Reckless'* is illustrated by the Imperial Eagle. The Eagle symbol possesses dual meaning. First, it represents

the SS Lazio; however, the SS Lazio Eagle is quite different in shape from the *Irriducibili Eagle*, which is very similar to the fascist Imperial Eagle. Figure 33 shows the latter in Bergamo standing outside of the post and telecommunications office. It is one of the ‘artistic’ legacies of the fascist period displayed by the city council.



Fig 33: Left, the *Irriducibili's* Eagle and their motto 'Dare, Believe, be Reckless. Right, the Imperial Eagle in Bergamo

The Imperial Eagle represents many aspects of tradition for the Italian neo-fascists. Julius Evola (1993) explains that the eagle has both Olympic and heroic meanings. The former because the eagle was sacred to Zeus, a divinity who was represented in the Aryan-Roman tradition by Jupiter. Zeus/Jupiter was the god of light and power. For the Ancient Romans, the appearance of an eagle was a good omen, a divine sign of impending victory against the barbarians (Cf. Evola, 1993). Symbols serve as a sword to the *UltraS* that may be used in 'battles', primarily against the modern world, which neglects traditions. Confined by ideas of modernity, rationality and technology and a world in which cultural practices are increasingly commodified, the absence of a sense of 'soul' results in disenchantment (cf. Weber 1963; 1968). 'Traditional values' in the *UltraS* eyes, celebrate a sense of pride in the Roman, fascist and national historical roots. Such values are, together with myth, articulated to oppose the dominant and 'politically correct' societal values. They are consciously used by the *UltraS* to

reinforce members' motivation to shape their logic, knowledge, and behaviour (Rafaeli and Kluger 1998; Rafaeli and Worline 2000).⁷¹

7.2.1 Tradition and Modernity: Football Opposed

The concept of tradition has also a decisive influence on how the *UltraS* conceive 'modern' football. In the name of tradition, the *UltraS* are '*against a football system that, in the name of modernity, promotes impunity from its own mistakes of debts of millions of Euros*' (Boys' slogan). To its critics, 'modern' football manifests a total lack of values and is synonymous with corrupt politics, governance mismanagement and hypercommercialisation, which treat fans as consumers and not as one of the most important elements of *calcio*- the spectacle.

'In this *calcio* bought by money - where Buffon is worth more than all the Chievo football team- there is no space anymore for values:⁷² the tifoso has been replaced by the spectator, the manager-fan by professionals; the football fan-players have disappeared, replaced by mercenaries ready to change their teams every year. The *UltraS* mentality is fighting this to ensure that football passion can defeat money; to give the stadium back to their legitimate owners (the supporters). To fight such repression is not violence; it is the will to conquer what has been sacrificed in the name of business. *UltraS* follow the team anywhere. The television is for spectators [not *UltraS*]; the *UltraS* refuse compromises with anyone. *UltraS* honour the team shirt regardless of who wears it. *UltraS* fight 'il calcio moderno.' Boys Direttivo

The lamented changes of Italian football mostly occurred during the 1980s and 1990s, most notably with marketing of the game broadcasting rights and the rise of Pay TV. Concomitantly, the game became increasingly spectacularised and dramatised via the introduction of the three points for a win and the modification of the offside rule to encourage more goals. Changes in the matches' scheduling - to suit satellite TV programming - promoted the transformation of the supporter to a consumer who was exploited for maximum financial profits (Malagutti, 2002). Whilst in previous decades, football was always in pursuit of the *Lira*, the interest of the club Presidents and club owners was not linked merely to the immediate pursuit of profit, but more to a sense of personal prestige and fame. However, the new media influences of the last 20 years gave the teams large amounts of money in

⁷¹ The impact of symbols on human behaviour has been documented by several studies. The most complete is the work of Carver and Scheier (in Schlenker, 1985). The researchers placed a mirror or a camera in a lab and hypothesised that such symbols would either make subjects focus on their publicly-perceived traits (such as if they look good to other people) or the private elements of self (such as if they feel good themselves). The results were remarkable. The mirror made the participants focus on their own values, while the camera made them focus on the participants' values and views. The authors concluded that symbols elicit a specific behaviour and work as a bridge from thought to action (Rafaeli and Worline 2000).

⁷² A reference to Gianluigi Buffon, the then Italian national goalkeeper currently a World Cup winner and one of the best players in world football.

exchange for broadcasting rights and, via these opportunities, exploited a vast global player market. In this 'capitalistic' (and potentially highly profitable) football milieu, many thousands of paying supporters were destined to lose their sense of importance that they presumed their role had granted them in the past. Their financial investment could not compare with that provided by the paying TV viewer. Nevertheless, who can resist the forces of global capitalism and broadcast gigantism? The Boxer argued that the *UltraS* are the only opposition against those who would like to hegemonise the stadium and to remove who does not fit its profit-making logic. In this 'new worst' *calcio*, according to the Boxer, football traditions and the values, which have sustained the game, do not count anymore. Similarly, Giorgio condemns both modern football and modern politics. To him, the two issues are congruent:

'The football system and the political one are the same - both are corrupt; look at where we watch football. In the Olympic Stadium, the fire brigade can only enter to a certain point because of the wrong design for the 1990 Italian World Cup. On that occasion, everyone 'ate' a slice from the mondiali cake!! It is a stadium that is the safest in Italy [stated ironically], so safe that, every Sunday, they need to ask the provincial authority [the Prefect] for permission to use it. They use us as a smoke screen to distract the media instead of focusing on problems that are more serious. They accuse us of being the cause of families moving away from the stadium, but, in reality, the situation is the ridiculous cost of the tickets. The day before yesterday, at Treviso [in Serie B], because they were playing Milan, tickets were selling at 130 Euros!! We are considered trouble, but we annoy the 'palace of power...'

On April 2003 at the Olympic Stadium, the *UltraS* publicly demonstrated against the current way of contemporary Italian football. On this occasion, the *UltraS* attempted to unify the Italian hardcore football supporters of different loyalties to proclaim and resist the contemporary culture of football and to publicise and oppose the tactics of police and the criminalisation of the whole hardcore football supporters movement. The gathering of the various groups' leaders (the *Irriducibili* and *Boys* were the main organisers) was not very united due to the ever-evident political division within the hardcore football supporters movement. Attending from Rome were the neo-fascists groups, such as *Boys Roma*, *UltraS Romani* and the *Irriducibili*. Further *camerati* came from Inter Milan, represented by the *Boys San* and *Fighters* of Juventus, and *UltraS* of Verona, Brescia and Milan. Supporters who were more ideologically oriented to the extreme left from Livorno, Ternana, Perugia and Cosenza decided not to participate. The demonstration saw 6,000 *UltraS* shout slogans such '*UltraS-free*'; '*We hate pay TV and SKY*'; '*No to police repression, No to your calcio*'. The *Irriducibili* stated in their slogans:

'Per una legge più equa e contro la criminalizzazione indiscriminata degli UltraS' (In favour of a more fair law and against the indiscriminate criminalization of the UltraS); *Per un calcio più a misura di tifoso e contro il calcio moderno* (In favour of a football more focused on the supporter and against modern football).' Boys

In another instance in 2005, the *Irriducibili* decided to oppose the way in which their team was managed. After the replacement in July of 2004 of the food tycoon Sergio Cragnotti's as President, the new president, the Roman real estate tycoon Claudio Lotito (according to the *Irriducibili*, linked politically to FI and AN) sought to repay the debt of 107 million Euros that the club owed to the Italian tax system by asking the government for permission to delay the payment and permit the club to pay in 20 yearly instalments, thereby avoiding bankruptcy. The fans had their own way of dealing with the issue. In March 2005, The *Irriducibili* organized a sit-in outside of the Rome based Italian Ministry of the Economy. Violence erupted and ten Lazio supporters and four police officers were injured.⁷³ Fortunately for SS Lazio, and thanks to public activism, after 10 months of negotiations with the leaders of the *UltraS* group, the club reached an agreement with the government and committed to pay 140 million Euros over a period of 23 years.

Today football produces more wealth for its employees (the football players) than its employers. To better understand this situation, it is necessary to go back to the 1990s. The first important transformation of this era in Italian football occurred at the legislative level with Law No. 586 (1996), which confirmed the transformation of professional football to a business-oriented system (cf. Braghero et al. 1999). The new law allowed for the distribution of profits among football clubs shareholders and opened a new phase in as much as football became an ever-greater spectacle. It became part of Italian show business, which was owned and controlled by those in search of profits (cf. Papa and Panico, 2002). Further legislation affected football clubs' budgets, most notably the revolutionary Bosman ruling of December 1995, which gave football players in the EU broad freedom (and power). At the end of their contracts, players could ask their clubs for money to stay. In order to avoid losing the players, the clubs were forced to renew the contract, paying huge amounts of money in some cases (Buzzanca and Di Loreto, 2003). Italian clubs risked financial disaster. For decades, they had included in their projected budgets future profits based on the presumed income from the transfer of players at the end of their contracts. In these circumstances, the link between *il calcio* and politics was evident. To minimise the effects of Bosman's ruling on the financial status of Italian football, Romano Prodi's centre-left government (from 1996 to 1998)

⁷³ Cf. http://italy.indymedia.org/news/2005/03/749755_comment.php

introduced law No. 586. This law allowed football clubs to itemise in their budgets the credit (i.e. losses) accrued by the players and, crucially, allowed the clubs to pay off the losses over a 3-year period. It was an ad hoc law aimed solely at helping to resolve the debts of the elite clubs (Falsanisi and Giangreco, 2001). However, this law did not stop the crisis. In July 2002, eight clubs failed the financial scrutiny of the COVISOC.⁷⁴ Amongst these were SS Lazio and AS Roma. Faced with this economic crisis, the Italian football authorities, in the shape of *Lega Calcio* who controlled *Serie A* and *B*, asked the new Italian Premier Berlusconi for assistance (Liguori and Vincenzi, 2002). The centre-right government responded in February 2003. The Parliament modified law No. 91, thereby allowing the clubs of *Serie A* and *B* to devalue 50% of their assets, as represented by footballers, and to pay the debts accrued in the purchase of players in 10 yearly instalments. The situation has not changed and may worsen because of today's world-wide economic crisis. Many Italian football club presidents need to cover with their own money the yearly debt of the club; an example is the oil tycoon Massimo Moratti – president of Inter-Milan. Even the 'wealthy' AC Milan has debts of 30 million of Euros, while the Juventus' debts are 20 million. The Italian Football Union has forecast a 20% cut of the players' salaries and complains about this 'injustice'. On the other side of the 'barricade', the president of Fiorentina and fashion tycoon Diego Della Valle argues: '*I and my brother feel uneasy paying all that money to players, knowing that there are people who come to the stadium earning a thousand Euros a month struggling to make ends meet*' (La Repubblica –online- 05 December, 2008).

The negative perception of 'modern' Italian football influences the relationship between football and the *UltraS*, especially if we consider their ideological aversion to capitalism. Marco articulates this belief:

'The *UltraS* logic no longer acclaims the football player. They are not like a Giannini or Conti⁷⁵ of long ago; they do not care about the supporters anymore, so we do not support them as individuals. Before, when a player was injured, he was frequently with us watching the match from the terrace, not anymore. They do not give emotional contact to us, so they do not merit anything in return. They are mercenaries out for the money; we leave this silliness to the normal *ultra* supporters who think

⁷⁴ The COVISOC - *Commissione di vigilanza sulle società calcistiche* – [Committee for the Control of the Football Clubs] is tasked with controlling the financial propriety of Italian football clubs and to guarantee the regular procedures of the Italian Football Championships.

⁷⁵ Giuseppe Giannini (nicknamed 'The Prince' on account of his good looks) was a former captain of the Roma team. He so loved Roma that he never left the club during his playing peak from 1983-1996. He finished his career in Austria at Sturm Graz. Conti is another example of a player attached to the Roma colours, playing from 1973 until 1991 and winning a *Serie A scudetto* in 1982-1983 and the 1982 World Cup with the *Azzurri* in Spain.

Totti is the king of Rome [laughs]. Our banners are more about Roma the club for its tradition or about the social issues that affect Rome and Italy.'

The statement of Marco is significant since for the 'ordinary' football fans Totti is considered emblematic of AS Roma. The detachment of the *Boys* from the players as expressed by Marco finds support on one of the covers of their fanzine, as is illustrated in figure 34.



Fig. 34: *What champions...
What Mercenaries..for you only indifference!*

The *UltraS* were (and are) prepared to fight against what they dismissively call *calcio moderno* (modern football) and its highly commercialised – but ultimately disastrous – economic performance and scandalous mismanagement. If they had not, who would have? For them the mass of fellow supporters are too compromised to care or protest. For the *UltraS* to oppose, promote and resist is their duty. Nevertheless, whilst dismissive of the game's materialistic pursuits of efficiency, profit and productivity, the *UltraS* searched for and appreciated at the same time the abstract qualities of the game, especially when it found proponents who embodied the 'Warrior Spirit'.

Chapter 8

The 'Warrior Spirit'

'Nessuna notte è così lunga da impedire al sole di risorgere'
[No night is ever so long as to stop the sun rising] Slogan of the *Boys Roma*.

The key to analyse the *UltraS* 'Warrior Spirit' is bound up in notions of identification, best defined as: *'the choice of another, from whose perspective we view our own behaviour'* (Glaser, 1956, p. 440). An *UltraS* identifies oneself as having 'Warrior Spirit', hence, will ideally manifests all the values represented by this attitude. The best description of the 'Warrior Spirit' was given by Giovanni (Irriducibili) when he argued that: *'Fighting is the essence of being UltraS; many joined the group for the desire to confront the opponent'*. Giovanni's statement clearly illustrates the warrior-violence correlate; however, such a statement does not tell the whole story of the *UltraS*-warrior couplet. How a warrior should behave is perhaps best explained by the following excerpt, which was published in the *Boys'* fanzine in 2005 and signed by the *direttivo*:

'The expert warrior resists insults: he knows the strength of his punch, the ability of his hits. Facing an unprepared opponent, he stares him in the eyes and achieves the victory without bringing the confrontation to a physical level. As soon as the warrior learns from his spiritual master, the light of the faith begins to shine in his eyes and he does not need to demonstrate anything to anyone....The warrior of the light knows his immense strength: he does not fight with those who do not deserve the honour of the combat.'

The concept of honour is an integral attribute of the *UltraS* 'Warrior Spirit'. New recruits to the *Irriducibili* and *Boys* must abide by unwritten codes of honour. The sanctions resulting from breaking this code can range from exclusion –or loss of authority and prestige- to physical challenge. When the issue of honour is analysed in a sociological speculation, the following questions are raised: Does the ideology of honour allow for discretion? In addition, who, or what, writes the scripts in which honour is enacted? Honour is both an individual and group attribute that must be claimed and maintained, it is therefore a mechanism of power that is used to initiate and resolve conflicts (cf. Campbell 1964; Blok 1981). A notable aspect of honour -bound contest and response is that a man ought to respond only to the challenge of an equal (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 105). The *UltraS* individually or collectively lose honour if found incapable of responding to a confrontation. Such outlook is expressed by the *Boys* previous statement.

For the *UltraS*, honour provides a code for both interpretation and actions on two levels. One is as a 'system of symbols, values, and definitions' to think about and interpret as a phenomenon. On a second level, honour embodies the *UltraS* acts, which are organised into 'categories, rules, and processes...which may be specific to the given culture.' (Friedrichs, 1977, p. 284). Being an *UltraS* warrior does not only mean being able to fight, it also requires the individual to be able to pay the price for his/her convictions, which, in the *Boys* and *Irriducibili's* case, is inseparable from their fight against the 'system'. For instance, amongst the *Boys*, everyone who was *diffidato* (banned from the football stadium) displayed a gold double-blade axe pendant given by the *direttivo* and symbolising, not only political identity, but also the respect of the 'elite' for the way the member behaved in challenging the authorities. The member received the pendant as recognition of his/her warrior status.

The 'Warrior Spirit' directs not only the *UltraS* actions and the value of honour but also encapsulates faith. Values need to be fulfilled to become part of the moral duty of an *UltraS*. For the *Boys*, faith is disjoined from the AS Roma team (contrary to 'ordinary' hardcore football fans) because it has ideological connotations. Faith means stressing the glorious traditions of Rome that, as mentioned earlier, from a neo-fascist point of view underlines the glorious Roman Empire. Faith for Giorgio (*Irriducibili*) has the same purpose; it means being consistent in what one believes and not renouncing the way of life chosen, even if violence needs to be used. Football support and neo-fascist ideology evidence similar senses of piety and excessiveness; they are belief systems that result in the traits stressed and admired by the *UltraS*. Honour and faith, in the case of the *UltraS*, are inseparable from the sense of duty –the *UltraS* must do what they consider to be 'right'. This attitude emerged from Giorgio's explanation of why the *Irriducibili* were so respected by other *UltraS*:

'After the death of 'Paparelli'⁷⁶ we decided to make the Laziali become more respected. Over the years, the *Irriducibili* have faced all *UltraS* groups in all possible ways, even the less orthodox ones. We are the elite of the *UltraS*, check the papers since 1987. Those were different years; there was less police repression. We used to leave Rome to see Lazio play away sometimes the day before to be in front of the rivals end in the morning. We challenged them in their homes! Nevertheless, at the same time, we have never done malicious and infamous actions and perhaps this is the reason why we are respected. We are always fair.'

Doing what was ideologically right was an issue stressed by Marco (*Boys*). In the following statement, he explained why there was so much hostility toward the fans of Livorno FC:

⁷⁶ On the 28th of October 1979 a petard fired from the *curva sud* by Roma supporters during the Rome derby killed a Lazio supporter by the name of Vincenzo Paparelli.

‘The Livorno supporters, when relegated to Serie B, produced a banner upon which was written: ‘*Tito ce lo ha insegnato le foibe non sono un reato*’ [Tito has taught us: the Foiba is not a crime]⁷⁷. No police seized this banner; this is something very shameful. We will never tell the police to go and seize this banner because we are against the ‘*infami*’ [informers]; we deliver our own justice instead.’

Doing ‘the right thing’ justified fighting rival fans *per se* and made the assault more enjoyable when such fans manifested politics that are diametrically opposed to those of the *UltraS*. At times –in a conventional fashion– the opponents were denigrated and denied the status of ‘true’ *UltraS* and were called communists. These slights justified violence following the ‘right thing’ framework. Another example of doing ‘the right thing’ is given by Todde who represent the ‘communists’ of Siena and Bologna as both cowards and police delators:

‘Historically, we never found difficulties in small cities like Siena. They know we - Romans - travel in big numbers; hence a city, such as Milan - with Inter and Milan - can have a fight with 5,000-6,000 Romans. However, places like Empoli and Perugia have in total 1,000 supporters and do not have the numbers to give us trouble. They know that if they ‘break our balls’ [annoy us], the Boys will destroy their stadium, so they are not hostile.

At Siena, however, once there were 30-40 fans who were desperately looking to fight Roma fans; they did not cowardly want to face us but they were looking for families and ‘ordinary’ fans. In Siena, 5-6 Roma *UltraS* saw this aggression against these families and tried to defend them. They received lots of ‘botte’ [Roman slang for beatings]; however, two Sienesi was stabbed during these fights. These Sienesi went to the police. This is very bad because the *UltraS* code is to clean dirty clothes within the family and not be an ‘*infame*’ (informer). They have not followed the rules; they used the police to defend themselves. They have behaved like the Bolognesi [fans of Bologna FC] that are deemed throughout the *UltraS* movement as cowards and spies because they report their fights to the police.’

Informed by the context of Italian masculinity and the added complexities of a political ideology, the *UltraS* carry a heavy burden due to their ‘sense of right’. Following this framework, the confrontations that the *Boys* and the *Irriducibili* entered into might best be considered as ‘competitions’, which they have to win as part of their obligation to both protect and save their world. This concept of competition is explained by social

⁷⁷ ‘*Foiba*’ is a term that describes a natural deep cavity (one might use it to describe a quarry). Beyond this technical description the term equates for many Italians with the nation’s tragic era between 1943 to 1946. In the region of Istria, Trieste and most of Venezia the Yugoslavian militia of General Tito used the *foiba* to eliminate Italian fascists as well as civilians of all political creeds, guilty in the eye of Tito of being Italians (cf. <http://tgcom.mediaset.it/cronaca/articoli/articolo169293.shtm>). Thrown into the *foiba* men and women were beforehand robbed of their houses and possessions. Women were raped and men tortured. The number of Italians killed has never been formally established. On February 10, 2007, the President of the Italian Republic Giorgio Napolitano (a former leader of the Italian Communist Party and later the Democratic Party) gave medals to the relatives of 30 Italians massacred by Tito’s militia. (Cf. <http://rainews24.rai.it/it/news.php?newsid=67396>).

anthropologist Bailey (1969), who applied the analogy of a ‘game’ when studying the behaviour of politicians. Bailey argued that much adversarial behaviour in politics was based on a minimal consensus around what extremes (or boundaries) of behaviour could be tolerated. Even when political behaviour might sink to violence, there were rules, tacitly or explicitly accepted, that could be divided into those that were proclaimed (normative) and the tacit (pragmatic).

The former set broad limits for possible action and allowed the players a choice. They were general guides for conduct, allowing for articulations of ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ judgements that could justify behaviour. The latter – tacit (pragmatic rules) – dealt with the effectiveness of action. These rules were wide-ranging, from accepted ways of winning without actually cheating, to cheating without being found out. Consequently, what Bailey (1969) termed ‘pragmatic exceptions’ (p. 113) could build against the normative rules and result in either a new set of rules or end with ‘stock-taking’ to restore the desired norms. As Bailey (1969) argued for political contests, confrontation was the product of a sense of competition as well as being a message of strength; confrontation could also be considered a challenge, ‘*which the receiver has an option to receive and act upon*’ (p. 100). In the course of such scenarios, decisions are usually made under ‘*conditions of uncertainty*’ (p. 70), particularly when there is no apparent rule to guide action or, somewhat conversely, when there are several possibilities. In the oppositional culture of the *UltraS*, strategies of competition and challenge are ever evolving. Such innovation sees in part a deliberate deviation from normative rules (that are considered ‘fair play’), a circumstance that is facilitated by the ‘rules’ of engagement never anticipating all possible stratagems. Competing teams in these social dramas can function without formal leaders or normative rules. This caveat facilitated the adoption of pragmatic rules that enable some to ‘*coerce or influence others*’ (p. 35) when a decision has to be made or action has to replace thought. Such innovation need not offend existing norms; not least because competing personnel could be wide and loose enough in acceptance of what was ‘correct’ and permissible to permit individuals who made seemingly outlawed moves to both partake and remain – ostracism was difficult to execute. If victory was the outcome, then that which was considered cheating was now considered effective; other groups would be within their rights to follow suit.

Violence does not explain *in toto* the ‘Warrior Spirit’. In 2009, I asked if the *Boys* considered themselves ‘active’ outside of the stadium. Todde answered, ‘*Yes; however, the Boys are more than this, our most important commitment is about the social campaigns and not forgetting the guys hit by the Daspo or who are not with us anymore, such as Gabriele [Sandri].*’ A warrior like Todde does not forget his *camerati*. For the *UltraS* warriors in death, the

camerati are remembered. This duty of memory not only occurs within football, as with Sandri.

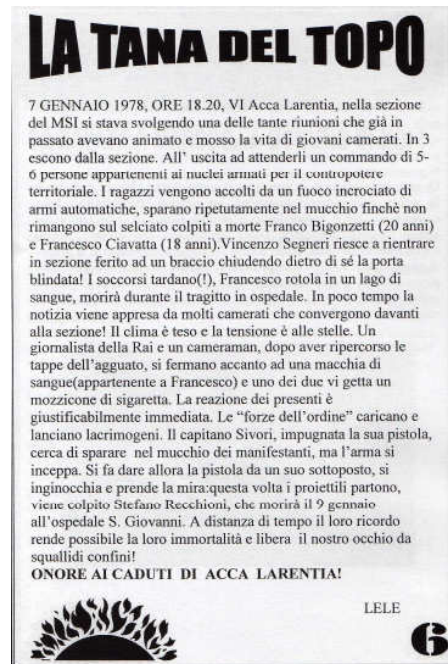


Fig. 35: Lele's *Acca Larentia* article

Lele of the *Boys* (age 23), in the above document, remembers the 7th of January 1978, when in *Via Acca Larentia* in Rome (a well known local section of the MSI), after a meeting of the MSI Youth Front, two members Franco Bigonzetti and Francesco Ciavatta were killed by a six-strong commando unit of the terrorist group *Nuclei Armati*. Another militant, Stefano Recchioni, died during the subsequent clashes with the police. Lele explains the clashes with the police that day:

'After a few hours, the news of the event became known by many *camerati* who arrived in front of *Acca Larentia*. The tension was strong; a journalist of the RAI (equivalent of the BBC) and a camera operator filmed the street where the shooting occurred and stopped in front of Francesco's bloodstain on the street.... One of them threw down a cigarette butt; the crowd reacted immediately. The police charged; Captain Sivori took his gun and shot in the middle of the crowd, but the weapon locked; so he asked for another and targeted Stefano Recchioni, who died the 9th of January at the San Giovanni's hospital. After many years, their memory makes them immortal and frees our eyes from squalid boundaries! Honour to the fallen of *Acca Larentia*.'

It is not the intention of this study to evaluate whether the episode of *Acca Larentia* occurred as Lele wrote it; the journalist Luca Telese does this in detail in his book *Cuori neri* ('Black Hearts'; Telese, 2006). What is important here is the aptitude of the *UltraS* warriors to commemorate the dead heroes, as this trait is integral to their logic. In Lele's passage, it

seems that all of the dislikes and contempt focus on the police, who are considered as much assassins as the terrorists who killed the *camerati*. In the *UltraS*, commemoration - together with symbols, myths, and heroes- defines their ideological boundaries with society and, at the same time, incites the group members to hate the 'enemy'.

The Boxer was the living embodiment of the 'Warrior Spirit', which in the end can be described as a combination of thought and action. Meeting the Boxer was always a difficult task; he was busy leading the group and with his own job. At the time (2006), he had a clothes shop in Rome. I eventually interviewed him at the sede of the *Irriducibili*. Located in a pleasant Rome district, the first thing that a visitor notices is the security gates that surround the premises. Inside the house, the foyer reveals an aqua scooter (one of the members practised this sport). A corridor reveals a series of furnished offices with adjacent waiting rooms. Beyond the offices, stands a large warehouse with shelves that are full of merchandise - hats, sweatshirts, T-shirts, jackets etc., pictures of the Lazio team and a large imperial Eagle emblazoned with the words '*Dare, Believe, Be Reckless.*' The radio broadcast spreading through the building reminds listeners that they are tuned into *La Voce della Nord* (the Voice of the *Curva Nord*). Our conversation was preceded by exchanges around a mutual enthusiasm for boxing and martial arts. The Boxer's friend, Alessio Sakara, known as *Il Legionario* (the Roman Legionnaire), is a successful professional fighter in the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC).⁷⁸

Physicality is important to the Boxer. Upon meeting, he remarked, as others before him, that I looked like '*piú na guardia che un professore*' (more of a police officer than an academic). Such a comment was attributed to our mutual interest in combat sports. A well-known regional boxing coach and a former semi-professional boxer, his pugilistic skills are renowned amongst the *UltraS* – if the Boxer fights, he rarely loses. He is a complex figure; his comportment suggested a very tough character which tends to scare people. Upon talking with him and gaining mutual trust, his various qualities emerged. Like the members of the *UltraS* 'elite', the Boxer had a strict code of honour that is also typical of those who practice combat sports at a higher level. The first few questions asked of him were about politics and his thoughts about the current state of Italian society. He answered that the First and Second Republic were the same; the cards of politics have been just shuffled, but the people in power remained the same. He felt great pride as an Italian, despite what he considered the major problem of Rome, namely the illegal immigration from the Eastern European countries:

⁷⁸ The UFC is a full contact no holds barred tournament where fighters compete against each other regardless of their fighting style. Cf. <http://ufc.com/>

‘At times I do not like to be Italian; too many things are wrong, especially in Rome. The situation with immigration is crazy. I am proud to be Italian when I am abroad. We need to wash our dirty clothes in private. I hate it when Italians go abroad to speak bad about our country. Every country has its own defects, but few people ‘sputtanano’ (slander) their own country like the Italians. It is impossible to walk in Rome during the night without seeing young prostitutes, most from Eastern Europe. The ‘Albanian and Romanian plague’ is responsible for this unacceptable condition.⁷⁹ It is not politics that exploits the *UltraS*, but the *UltraS* that use politics to resist the State.’

Change of various nature justified his politics. For the Boxer, the practise of football spectatorship had changed for the worst. He considered that fandom has always been overtly political, but that the ideological and political statements now needed to be disguised because the police and the State did not like to hear the ‘truth’ from the *curva*. Beneath his calm and muscular exterior, the Boxer manifested an anger and incredulity towards the Italian State. Regardless of what the Italian authorities and its representatives brought to his door, he remained undeterred. He carried the strength of political conviction and was willing to pay the price for what he deemed to be the ‘right’ way.

8.1 Footballers: Once were ‘Warriors’?

‘Warriors’ wearing team colours in the football pitch are more evident among Lazio teams than Roma ones. This distinction is because quite a few Lazio footballers have openly declared their sympathy for the fascist ideology. Consequently, the *UltraS* of SS Lazio have more role models to identify with than their AS Roma counterparts. One player who is currently ‘exiled’ in the USA is sought by the Italian authorities for his part in the proposed takeover of the SS Lazio in 2005: Giorgio Chinaglia. Born in Carrara, Chinaglia moved with his family to Cardiff, Wales at the age of nine. His football career began with Swansea City. Two years later, he moved to Italy and joined Massese, in Serie C. He was to later move to Internapoli, also in Serie C, and then to Lazio, in Serie A in 1969. In the 1971-1972 football season (when Lazio were in Serie B), *Giorgione* Chinaglia (Big Giorgio) topped the leading goal scorers table of the Serie B with 21 goals. He was the force behind Lazio’s return to Serie A. During that season, Lazio played great football and were contenders for the *scudetto*. Included in the Italian national team in 1972, Chinaglia scored his first goal with the *Azzurri*

⁷⁹ The Albanian link with European prostitution is well known; and has appeared in the Soho district in London. To evaluate this issue a reader is directed to a 2001 research project of the ECPAT (*End Child Prostitution, Pornography and Trafficking*) which at page 29 dedicated a chapter on the London red light district. <http://antislavery.org/homepage/resources/Children.PDF>

against Bulgaria (cf. Pennacchia, 2001). The fans remember the great team of this era managed by Tommaso Maestrelli, including players such as Giuseppe Wilson, Luciano Re Cecconi, Felice Pulici, Renzo Garlaschelli, Vincenzo D'Amico, Luigi 'Gigi' Martini, Mario Frustalupi and Giancarlo Oddi. In this team, Chinaglia was the undisputed and charismatic leader. In the 1973-1974 season, this team won the *scudetto*; Chinaglia scored 24 goals. The following season, he scored 14 goals, but realised his adventure with Lazio was about to end, particularly when his friend Maestrelli became terminally ill (Recanatesi, 2006).

At the end of the 1975-1976 season, Chinaglia accepted an offer from the New York Cosmos, where he joined Pele, Franz Beckenbauer, Carlos Alberto and Johan Cruyff. He also established residency in the USA. During his USA soccer adventure, Chinaglia proved to be the best striker in the history of the North American Soccer League (NASL). In seven seasons, he scored 193 goals in 213 matches. He won the prize for best striker for the NASL in 1976, 1978, 1980, 1981 and 1982. He was considered the best player of the tournament in 1981, and was the protagonist of the four Soccer Bowls won by the Cosmos in 1977, 1978, 1980 and 1982. Whilst living in the USA, Lazio supporters pushed him to become Chairman of Lazio, a position he held from 1983 to 1986 (cf. Risoli 2000). Always controversial, Chinaglia was issued with an arrest warrant in 2006 by the *Guardia di Finanza* for alleged extortion and insider trading due to irregularities concerning ownership of the SS Lazio club. Chinaglia once again resides in the USA, now as a fugitive from Italian justice. In his absence, in November 2007, Chinaglia was fined 4.2 million Euros for financial irregularities concerning ownership of SS Lazio. The former champion was found guilty of financial manipulation and obstructing the *Consob* (The National Commission for Societies and Stock Market) inquiries in connection with an alleged attempt of a foreign-registered chemical-pharmaceutical group to acquire control of SS Lazio.⁸⁰

Regardless of such dealings, the SS Lazio team, which won the 1974 *scudetto*, was seen (and still is) by the Lazio *UltraS* as a team of warriors led by Chinaglia. The team of Chinaglia and Maestrelli was the answer to the prayers of SS Lazio fans, who hitherto had known only the disappointment the game offers. At the same time, the SS Lazio team created great controversy in a period characterised by the politicisation of all realms of Italian society. The fans not only watched a strong football team, but a team made by men with whom they could identify politically. The men led by Chinaglia did not fit the cliché of the 'modern footballer' and were inclined to controversial gestures. They trained with passion for

⁸⁰ Cf. La Repubblica. (online edition, 28th November 2007) : www.repubblica.it/2007/11/sezioni/sport/calcio/multa-chinaglia/multa-chinaglia/multa-chinaglia.html

the real match; at times, they brawled with their opponents.⁸¹ This macho (warrior?) passion was reinforced by a passion for parachuting, which at the time was considered synonymous with militaristic sympathies and thus an inclination to be ideologically on the right. Chinaglia and three of his teammates regularly went shooting in their leisure time. The squad terrified the newly-signed via initiation ceremonies that included blank cartridges fired from pistols. Public statements made by the players told of their intentions to vote for the MSI. This voiced intention was enough to identify the players as fascists in the eyes of political opponents; despite this, the Lazio team did not endeavour to influence Roman voters. Years later, however, Luigi Martini became an MP of *Alleanza Nazionale*; Franco Nanni stood for election in support of the Mayoral candidates of Gianni Alemanno. Felice Pulici was a candidate with Francesco Storace (a former senator of *Alleanza Nazionale* and now leader of the party *La Destra* – the Right). Giorgio Chinaglia was a fan of Giorgio Almirante, the one-time leader of the MSI. Many Lazio players wore the Celtic cross and the Lazio team of the *scudetto* year were greeted with the Roman salute. The team and its leader represented the rebel spirit in combination with an ideology that was – and remains – promoted by the concept of ‘going beyond’ and being aligned with the system and its values. For the *Irriducibili*, Chinaglia and his men are heroes and warriors.

In the *curva nord*, one does not need to be Italian to be a warrior. In 2000 during the SS Lazio versus Arsenal Champions League fixture, the Lazio player, Serbian-born Sinisa Mihajlovic, called Arsenal’s Patrick Viera *scimmia di merda* (shit monkey). No action was taken by the referee and, despite obvious verbal altercations between the two at regular intervals, both played the duration of the game. The Lazio player later confirmed that he had indeed called Viera a ‘shit monkey’, but only in response to Viera calling him a ‘gypsy shit’.⁸² The following Champions League match saw Lazio play the Ukrainian team of Shakhtar Donetsk; Mihajlovic made a pre-match on-pitch announcement stating his sorrow for expressing such an insult to Viera and inviting the Lazio supporters to cease their grunting toward black opposition players. I asked the Boxer to comment about the matter and he dismissed Mihajlovic’s initiative, which they thought was not spontaneous but rather was imposed by the Lazio management in the face of threats from the UEFA. They argued that

⁸¹ The ‘rebel’ trait of the Lazio team was evident in the 1970-1971 season. After a 2-2 draw in an Inter-City Fairs Cup tie between Arsenal and Lazio in Rome, (Chinaglia scored both goals) the players, whilst eating in the same restaurant but at different tables, exchanged pleasantries. A gift of leather bags from Lazio to the visiting players was little appreciated by the British, who considered the item effeminate. A brawl between the two tables was won by Lazio players who were very experienced in such matters. For the biography of Giorgio Chinaglia, see Pennacchia (2001).

⁸² Cf. <http://news.lazio.net/2005/12/16/lazio-juve-diventa-partita-a-rischio-cor-sera/>

Viera should have also apologised to Mihajlovic. The Lazio fans liked this import. The Serbian arrived at Lazio from Red Star Belgrade. Whilst at the latter, he had begun a friendship with the hard-core supporters and was a personal friend of the 'Tigers' hooligan group and its leader Zeljko Raznatovic, better known as *Arkan*. When the civil war began in Yugoslavia in 1991 – catalysed by a football match between Dinamo Zagreb and Red Star – the first militias were drawn from the football terraces. *Arkan's Tigers* militia was notorious for its brutality and mass murders. In 2000, during a home game, the *Irriducibili* produced a banner depicting the Serbian paramilitary leader, which caused a huge controversy amongst the media and Italian politicians who interpreted it as a tribute to the notorious paramilitary commander (*Corriere della Sera* -online- 01 February, 2000). Motions at the Chamber of the Deputies were written in condemnation; politicians sought to stop the *UltraS*.

The outcome was an Olympic stadium full of police for the next month. Federico (*Irriducibili*), when questioned in the course of this research, strongly denied any political links or sympathies attached to the banner. The banner was, according to him, constructed for and displayed out of admiration for their tough player Sinisa Mihajlovic, who was Arkan's friend. This episode might be interpreted as admiration for Arkan, who was never shy about having his image circulated, particularly the one of him in military fatigues holding a tiger cub. Uncompromising in his pursuits, he was considered a hero by many Serbians and a symbol of Serbian Nationalism.⁸³ This type of personality would fit the warrior-like typology that was so admired by the *UltraS*. Following the *Arkan* episode, the tension between police and *UltraS* worsened. At a Lazio-Udinese game, plastic bottles were thrown at nearby *carabinieri* in protest against their repression. The police responded by charging at the *UltraS* at the exit of the stadium injuring, according to the *Irriducibili*, the elderly and children alike. The *Irriducibili* declared that some innocents left the stadium in ambulances. They claimed that they stood by the bloodstains in the streets caused by the police who supposedly beat Lazio supporters for hours. Moreover, the *Irriducibili* asserted that they had been interviewed by journalists who, after the interviews, defended 'wrongly' the actions of the police.

⁸³ Cf. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/612295.stm>

8.1.2 Paolo Di Canio: *Un Irriducibile*



Fig. 36: The 'official' kit of the 'Irriducibile Warrior' modelled by Paolo Di Canio (retrieved from the *Irriducibili*'s website).

One footballer who refused to apologise for his ideology was considered by the group to be a 'true' *UltraS*. He was, by anybody's calculation, a brilliant footballer. The symbol of the *Irriducibili* values *par excellence* was and remains Paolo di Canio, who was a member of the group in his youth. Tattooed on his arm are the Roman numerals of *DVX* – a Latin appellation for *Il Duce*. Throughout his playing career, Di Canio personified the *Irriducibili* motto of *Dare, Believe, Be Temerarious*. In doing so, he created a global controversy in 1998. After having played and won many trophies – notably the *Serie A scudetto* in 1995 with AC Milan and the UEFA Cup with Juventus – Di Canio moved to Scotland in 1996 to play for Glasgow Celtic and then moved to Sheffield Wednesday for a fee of £4.2m to play in the English Premier League, where he became the club's top scorer in the 1997-98 season. Whilst recognised for his sublime football skill, Di Canio was also recognised as a player whose passion for the game occasionally spilled over into violent conduct. Such conduct reached a nadir in 1998 when, in a Sheffield Wednesday vs. Arsenal fixture, Di Canio, furious at a refereeing decision, pushed the referee over. The official left the pitch on a stretcher; Di Canio was sent off. He was fined £10,000 by the Football Association and banned for 11 matches. Leaving for Italy, he refused to return to his club. To solve the situation, Wednesday sold him for a bargain of £1.7m to West Ham United in January 1999. During his four-year stay in East London, he scored 48 goals and became the hero of the Hammers fans. He won the Premier League Player of the Year award as West Ham finished fifth. In 2000, he won the BBC Goal of the Season Award (cf. Di Canio and Marcotti, 2001).

The tough but ‘honourable’ code of the *Irriducibili* is well represented by two important gestures manifested by Di Canio. One occurred in 2000, during an Everton-West Ham match, the Everton goalkeeper, Paul Gerrard, was prostrate as a consequence of an injury sustained seconds earlier. With the match poised at 1-1, the ball was passed to Di Canio in a goal-scoring position. Instead of exploiting the situation and scoring what would have been an easy goal, Di Canio caught the ball and stopped the match, pointing to the prostrate keeper⁸⁴. The home fans understood the chivalrous gesture and gave him a standing ovation. Di Canio received an official letter of commendation from FIFA President Sepp Blatter and was later awarded the FIFA Fair Play award. Upon leaving West Ham following a public row with the manager, Di Canio played for nearly two seasons (but only 31 games) with the South London club, Charlton Athletic. He had the possibility to play another season with Charlton Athletic, but chose to accept a massive salary reduction in order to play for his beloved Lazio.

The other took place in 2005 when I met di Canio at the invitation of the Boxer, who asked if I was interested in meeting a ‘true’ *Irriducibile*. I met the player after an SS Lazio training session at Formello (the sports centre located just outside of Rome, where the team trained). I was in the company of the Boxer and Daniele (a geeky looking *Irriducibile* in his twenties who worked on their website and drew many of their materials). At the entrance of Formello, because of bad weather, were a few ‘*tifosi*’ watching the *biancocelesti*. The security on duty recognised the Boxer and let us enter without question. Inside, there were regional and local journalists. One of them immediately spoke to the Boxer and sought to understand the current mood of the group regarding President Lotito. Left alone with Daniele, I asked him about the relationship between Di Canio and the *Irriducibili*. He replied that Di Canio was a good friend of Giorgio and that the *Irriducibili* loved Di Canio because, despite his fame, he did not forget his roots or the ‘guys’.

While waiting for the Boxer to return, we entered the room where the SS Lazio players came to sign autographs or speak to the *tifosi* after having finished their training. The Boxer asked the representative of the club, who was dressed very formally with the official tie and jacket of the team, to call the player. After a while, Di Canio entered. He immediately recognised the Boxer, who gave him the new T-shirt of the *Irriducibili*, which he wore while the Boxer took pictures for the *Irriducibili* website. Di Canio, thus, helped the *UltraS* promote their merchandise without asking for any fee. Once finished, the Boxer asked Di Canio to

⁸⁴ Cf. http://news.bbc.co.uk/sport1/hi/football/teams/w/west_ham_utd/1076058.stm

‘have a word’ and introduced me. He smiled and told the Boxer to give me his mobile number and we started to speak.

The connection between Di Canio and the leaders of the *Irriducibili* was so strong that when, as mentioned earlier, the four leaders were arrested in 2007 and were waiting for the judicial process but facing home detention for the Lotito-Lazio affaire, Di Canio met Giorgio for dinner.⁸⁵ He supported them even in such difficult moments. Di Canio always defended the *UltraS* against allegations that they knew Chinaglia’s attempt to facilitate the purchase of the SS Lazio by a group of foreign investors to be a fraud.

The year 2005 saw the *non omologato* Di Canio involved in another controversy – the Roman Salute affair. During the Lazio-Roma derby of 2005 (won by Lazio 3-1), Di Canio performed the Roman salute towards the joyful throngs of the *Irriducibili* in an expression of joy at the result. The photograph of this gesture created worldwide controversy.⁸⁶ Di Canio repeated this gesture during a Lazio-Livorno fixture (a highly political match due to the Livorno supporters extreme left sympathies) and received a fine of 10,000 Euros and a one-match suspension by the Italian Football Association. Later, during a Lazio-Juventus fixture, he performed the salute yet again, signifying to the *Irriducibili* the indomitable ‘Warrior Spirit’ to never bow in the face of authority. He was again fined 10,000 Euros and suspended for one game. When questioned, Di Canio explained that his salutes arose out of a sense of belonging to ‘my people’, adding ‘*when you have values, you’re always in the right*’ (Agnew, 2007, p. 273). One of Di Canio’s defenders was Italian Premier Silvio Berlusconi, who explained that the salute ‘*did not have any meaning, (Di Canio) is an exhibitionist, but a good lad*’.⁸⁷ Di Canio’s Lazio contract was not renewed in the summer of 2006 following his disagreements and dislike of the club President and majority shareholder, Claudio Lotito. He left Lazio in July 2006 to finish his career in 2008 at the Cisco Roma club, playing in Serie C2.

8.2 Boys and Girls: Gender issues and the UltraS

I held the preconception in the beginning of the research that neo-fascist gatherings would not involve female participation. This assumption was wrong; whilst evidencing extreme masculinity, the *UltraS* communitas contained women. In 2005, I was invited by the Boxer to accompany him to the Lazio-Milan match. I entered the Olympic Stadium and went

⁸⁵ Cf. <http://news.lazio.net/2007/02/20/di-canio-chinaglia-e-stato-un-buffone-la-repubblica/>

⁸⁶ Cf. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/4158591.stm>

⁸⁷ Cf. <http://news.lazio.net/2005/12/20/berlusconi-di-canio-un-bravo-ragazzo-ma-esibizionista-ansa/>

to the *curva nord* to meet him, as instructed. The group was located near the pitch in an area that had been delimited to prevent entry by non-members. I explained to the inquisitive *UltraS* that I was expected by the Boxer and, on hearing this, they let me in. While waiting for him to arrive, I saw the Boxer on the pitch walking towards the *curva nord* in the company of Paolo Di Canio. Both stood at the side of the perimeter fence and said hello to the thousands of *Irriducibili*. During the match, I started speaking to Giuseppe (a law university student aged in his late 20s) who was curious about my presence. The *Irriducibili* knew each other and I was definitively an unknown face. Rumours about my UK provenance and link to the Boxer were spreading. I spoke to Giuseppe about my research. I told him that I was also in contact with the *Boys*; he knew a few of their names. He asked me if I had done research on English hooligans, as he was fascinated by the topic. At a certain point, he stopped and introduced me to his ex- girlfriend Monica (of similar age and a university student in communication science). Monica explained her status as one of the group's veterans, having been present amongst them for more than five years. She spoke of her admiration for the Boxer, who in the meantime was busy holding the megaphone and leading the *curva*'s chants. She elaborated on her perception of the *Irriducibili*, indicating that the group was based on friendship. She complained that such elementary values were not publicised in the media coverage that they received, which was overconcerned with violence: '*We have been persecuted by journalists and police who take any excuses to call us thugs.*' I asked Monica about the nature of her relationship with others in the group. She responded that, while respect was given by the *direttivo* to every member in the past, the situation had gradually changed. Despite this change, the four leaders were able to keep order. There were 'kids' emerging – what she called the 'new generation' – who were difficult to handle. She indicated that the Boxer had to 'deal' with them quite a few times. They were around 16-18 years of age and did not have respect for seniority. She implied that they likewise did not give her the respect due to her as a female. They were trouble for the *Irriducibili*. She did not want to speak about them any further because they were standing near her. In the tumult of a goal celebration, she looked scared and uneasy until the veterans moved down the stand to the proximity and hugged each other.

After a while, the Boxer called me. I left Monica after exchanging email addresses. Once at home, trying to make sense of the day, I realised the importance of investigating the 'female' dimension of the *UltraS*. Put simply, their role was not that of a warrior. In general, the female element of the group was more task-oriented, but definitely not ornamental. They had roles to play (in organising the match day event and banners) and, whilst not counted on

to partake in any brawls, could be relied upon to watch the back of a *camerata* and not reveal information to the police. They were similarly expected to show duty and honour to those they lived amongst. This presence may shock observers who study hardcore football fandom. Anyone who knows the British hooligans realises that the female component is non-existent. The presence of women in the *UltraS* challenges international and Italian academic orthodoxy. A case in point is Cere (2002), who states:

‘The most important thing to note about female football support is its ‘invisibility’ in Italian society at large, and that of *ultra*’ supporters in particular, in all areas of social communication....’ (p. 168).

This was not the case for the *Irriducibili* and the *Boys*.

The *Boys* also had female *camerati*, but provided roles for them different from those in the *Irriducibili*. The difference in roles was perhaps due to the different ideologisation of the *Boys* compared to the *Irriducibili*. The *Boys* were more profoundly influenced by the Adinolfi-Casa Pound Italia strand of fascism, in which women played an active role in the collective life of the ideological communitas. One of the *Boys* was 20 years old Sara, in her first year of a political science degree at the University of Rome, La Sapienza. In 2005, I asked Sara to explain her involvement with the *Boys*:

Q: ‘Sara’, how many times do you visit the head office?

S: Now, every day. But soon, I will start my university lectures, so I will come depending on the lecture schedule.

Q: What do you do in your free time?

S: Most of my free time I spend with my friends here.

Q: Do they (*Boys*) pay you to attend here?

S: At the end of the month, they give me money for expenses because I am a student and students, as you know, are not known to be rich.

Q: How long have been in the *Boys*?

S: Five years. One year ago I started working in the head office. I have been an active member for two years now. This means that I follow the group to all away matches.

Q: In a group such as the *Boys*, with a neo-fascist ideology, the common consensus is that women do not count. What do you think? How many women are members of the *Boys*?

S: The *Boys* has two women who take part in any decision concerning the group and then we have many women members who come to the stadium to follow the team and sympathise without holding a membership card.

Q: Is your relationship with the guys ‘equal’?

S: The decision part is determined by six people; they are the ‘vets’ [the status of veteran is established through loyalty to the groups and courage in ‘action’]. They make decisions and I am not part of it because I am young, but there is a girl who is one of the vets. I show my attachment to the group and to the team. I am part of them

with the same rights and duties. I belong to the *direttivo*. We have 30 members of the *direttivo* that do security at the stadium. We share resources for the good of the group. For instance, tomorrow we have to go to Florence to get some materials, so someone has made their car available to me.

Women such as Sara and Francesca (see chapter 2) were neither invisible nor kept from arenas of the above-cited ‘social communication’ in the *Boys*. Francesca was the ‘filter’ to research access to the higher (male) echelons. The Italian context would appreciate the female for aesthetic purposes, this is a society and political system that forever praised style over substance and which is rather conservative and unequal in terms of gender relations. Nevertheless, I argue that women were both present among the *UltraS*. In the case of the *Boys*, female members were publicly involved in spreading the *communitas*’ values in the *curva sud*. What follows is an attempt to ascertain Sara’s experience amongst the *Boys communitas*:

Q: So what does it mean for you to be one of the *Boys*?

S: It is an elite group of *UltraS*. The group has, since 1972, shown great attachment to the team of Roma and its tradition. I am with them first because of a love of football. I want to share this with guys and girls that have the same passion and life vision as me. With them, I also travel a lot, so it is good fun! When you travel by train around Italy and abroad, emotional attachment to the group is built up. I do not find this at university. I have many more friends here in the *Boys* and this friendship is real; it lasts.

Q: What are the main values of the *Boys*?

S: A *Boys* is not only a *Boys* at the stadium, but also outside of it. A *Boys* leads by example in their lifestyle. They are faithful to the team. We always say friendship is one of the most important values. If something happens to one of us, it is as if it happens to all of us. A good example is given by the members of the groups that are ‘*diffidati*’, you know, the object of a stadium banning order. They are remembered at the stadium during matches with banners or, if our members have been arrested, the *Boys* share the cost of their legal representation.

Here Sara highlights one of the main differences between the *UltraS* and ‘ordinary’ hardcore football supporters. It was also significant that a woman manifests no differences in the way of thinking or commitment to the *UltraS* lifeworld. In contrast to the ‘ordinary’ supporters, the *Boys and Irriducibili* are *UltraS* in and outside of the stadium. Their use of ideological symbols, banners and chants is not just part of the stadium ritual, but is intimately intertwined with their values, which are informed by their ideology. Their values function to inform their actions (Schwartz 1990; Klandermans and Mayer 2006).

The interview continued:

Q: What would you say to the people that negatively judge the *Boys* and the *UltraS*?

S: The *UltraS* is a movement; we are united against the common enemy, which is the

State repression and the police.

Q: Why is the bust of Benito Mussolini in the head office of a football fan group?

A: It is an important symbol to show our political ideology.

Q: What does Mussolini mean for you?

S: I see Mussolini as an influential man; he had charisma and the first thing that comes to my mind is 'order'. Italy needs order even if I would not like to see a dictatorship of the right.

The cult of Mussolini's persona (also articulated earlier by Giovanni of the *Irriducibili*) was expressed by both the 'old' members (in their late thirties/early forties) and youths, such as Sara. The figure of Mussolini evokes imagery of a quasi-religious figure. There are a multitude of parallels evident here with established religions. A walk around ancient Rome reminds the flaneur of the Divine every few metres. Themes of violence are inherent to fascism and neo-fascist ideology and reveal a strong link with religion. Such a symbiosis justifies the myth of *Il Duce*. As Falasca-Zamponi (2000) details:

'If blood and regeneration had been characteristic features of World War I, they also became the identifying traits of the Fascist movement. Within this highly spiritualized vision of violence, the fascists who died during violent actions were turned into "martyrs" for the fatherland. The dead from violent causes became one more reason to affirm the sacred values of fascism....' (pp. 45-46)

I then made the following observation:

Q: Sara, I heard that some of the Boys have friendships with people of Forza Nuova, especially the Latina section.

S: These are personal friendships. We are completely autonomous of the parties and they never influence us. We have similar ideals with *Forza Nuova*, but we are completely independent. No political groups or party would dare to say they represent *Boys*. If there are official political manifestations of parties, we do not attend them; members can, if they wish, go for personal reason to attend rallies, but never as *Boys*.

Q: What about the symbols that the group uses on merchandise?

S: We do not put unmarketable symbols in our materials; how can a person wear a swastika? We use marketable symbols that are 'cool' such as the double axe of *Ordine Nuovo*.

Ultimately, Sara belongs to a group that supports a football club. Not being an amateur player – or a former one – Sara enjoyed the game, but had reservations, as the next statement shows, about the way in which it is organised.

Q: What is your assessment of Italian football?

S: Too many people 'eat' on Italian football. Exceptions exist, but many players are not attached to the colour of the team as in the past. Loyalty does not exist anymore. The *Boys* have zero contact with the team management. We are very independent, so

when we think that they are doing something wrong, we have the freedom to voice our dissatisfaction.

Sara had a career aspiration typical of many undergraduate students and had worries about her future and the difficulty of finding a job without having connections.

Q: What do you want to do when you finish university?

S: I will get my first degree in political science, then either I continue studying for another two years with a specialisation in the same area or I will do a conversion course to gain a degree in law. Then I will see my options. I applied to work at the Senate, but it is a place where, if you do not know a politician, you will not work.

Sara's last phrase deserves careful reflection. She accentuated the nepotism that remains a strong cultural practice in Italy. In 2008, the Italian Supreme court declared that providing a recommendation on behalf of someone seeking a job or wanting to resolve a personal matter is an offence. In Italy, there is the belief –confirmed by reality – that it is impossible to obtain a job without resorting to nepotism. This situation is especially difficult for youth such as Sara who feel disheartened and insecure about their future (Telegraph –online- 25 March, 2008).

Females often write in *Boys'* fanzine. The duty to defend the *Boys* for their actions during the notorious Roma-Lazio derby that was interrupted by the *UltraS* in 2004 was given to Katia.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ Chapter 11 will focus on the relationship Media-UltraS and on the incident mentioned by Katia.

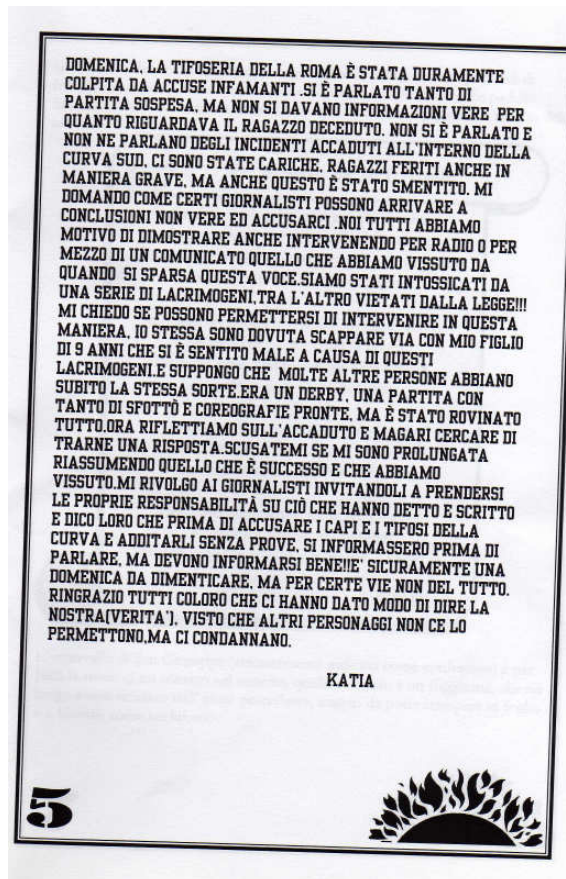


Fig. 37: Katia's writing in the Honour of Rome (2004)

In the above document, Katia accused the police of using hardcore repressive tactics; she affirmed that her son of nine years of age was, like others, made ill because of the tear gas fired by the police in the stadium. Katia also invited the media to use more objectivity in their reports of the *UltraS* and, most of all, to first ascertain the facts before reporting.

The fanzine of the *Boys* contains articles dedicated to women. The article copied below articulates the International Woman's Day (IWD), highlighting the importance of the day (a celebration of women supported in Italy by Leftist groups and feminists). The writer describes the mimosa flower (customarily given to women on that day), describing it as a perfumed, delicate -but at the same time, resilient- symbol of strength and femininity; this analogy exactly represents the ideal of the females of the group. The words are offered as a metaphor for those women who follow the path of the *UltraS*.

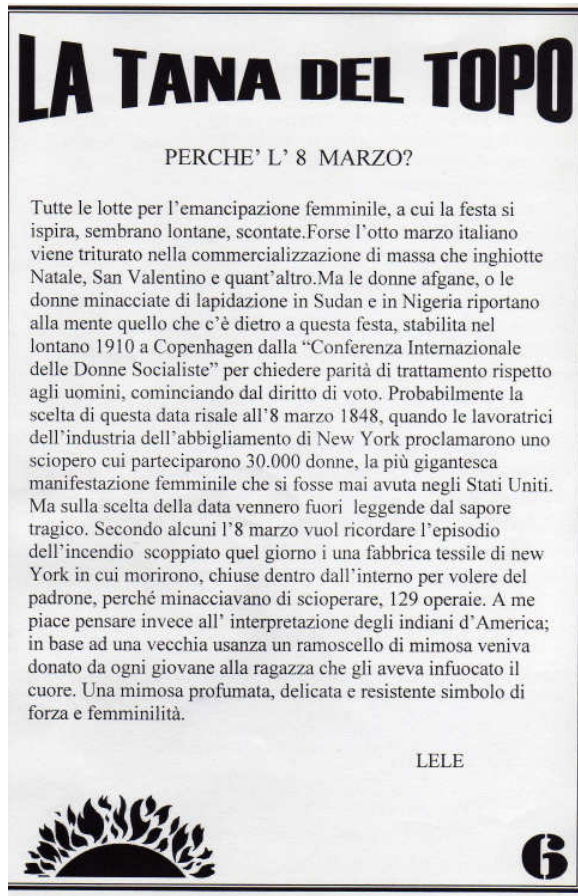


Fig. 38: 'Making sense of the 8th March' (*L' Onore di Roma*)

Although, this study does not pretend to be a definitive voice on the link between gender and *UltraS* or between gender and Italian neo-fascism; what was presented here aims to serve as a spring board for future research. Willing to accommodate women, open to men of a wide range of ages and not concerned about occupational status or social origins, the *Boys* and the *Irriducibili* might be considered all-inclusive gatherings with few parallels in Italian society. However, inclusion in these groups is restricted by shared orthodoxy in political opinion. To join the *UltraS* means to adhere to certain ideological concepts, of which *Patria* (fatherland) and 'Race' are essential.

Chapter 9

Conceptualisations of Nation and Race

'The motto of the Boys is 'Patria, Onore e Fedeltá' (Fatherland, Honour, and Fidelity). Marco

The ideologies of nationalism and racism are related to and contrast each other because of their shared historical origin and traits (Miles, 1993). The overlapping of these concepts is certainly present in the *UltraS* discourses as Giovanni (*Irriducibili*) demonstrated in the following statement:

'The Italian radical right still represents the fundamental values of Italian society – the family and the concept of Patria [fatherland]. When the family is substituted by single parents or 'natural unions' or when people will not be proud to be part of the Italian nation, and when those who arrive from abroad have more rights than Italians; then our society will dissolve.'

Giovanni stressed two important foundations of the desired neo-fascist society: *Patria* (fatherland) and family. These beliefs have a long neo-fascist pedigree. The *Decalogo del Balilla*⁸⁹ (The Commandments of the Balilla, 1929; cited in Galeotti, 2000) at point one argued: '*Ama la Patria come i genitori; ama i genitori come la Patria* [Love your fatherland as you love your parents, love your parents as you love your fatherland]'. But such love comes at a price - some had to be excluded. Exclusion was mainly based on a sense of common self. Giovanni explained:

'It is useless to speak about 'multi-ethnic' models of co-existence or even 'European' models. To have social peace, every nation has its own identity that needs to be respected. We can see the English situation where social peace is forever disturbed by the multi-ethnic society imposed by the UK government and championed by Tony Blair. We are not 'racists'; we support the concept of tolerance, but this exists only when there is reciprocity, otherwise it is all bollocks. For example, when a Muslim wants to build 10 mosques here in Italy, he has to allow us Christians to build 10 churches in his country. It would be more equal if they allow us to put a crucifix in Muslim schools just for the principle of reciprocity.'

Hence, in the *UltraS* reasoning, the exaltation of the *Patria* does not necessarily translate to the exaltation of a 'race' over and above all others. The exaltation of *Patria* is underlined by

⁸⁹ In April 1926, the PNF, via law n2247, constituted a youth organization the *Opera Nazionale Balilla* (ONB) comprising children aged from 6 to 18 years (Cf. Tognarini, 2002).

differences founded mainly in cultural and religious identity, which constitute the *UltraS* barriers to immigration and are the crucial factors to the immigrants exclusion. In this context, racism and nationalism intertwine. This discourse is the expression of what can be termed as ‘neo-racism’, which is increasingly emerging in Europe (Spaaij and Vinas 2005; Balibar and Wallerstein 1991; Martín-Cabrera 2002). In simple terms, prejudice is normalised mainly via cultural and religious differences and not notions of racial superiority (Gullestad 2002; Wieviorka 1995).

The significance of symbolism, once again, helps the *UltraS* to communicate and promote their beliefs around nation, as is stated by Marco (*Boys*): ‘*Our symbols are the sole nascente [Rising Sun] and l’ascia bipenne [double blade axe]. The sole nascente has a political value; the sunrise represents a new era for our nation – a rebirth - the symbol of the sun is also found in the Celtic cross*’. The ‘elite’ of the *Boys* demonstrated their collective heroic identity by being the only ones to wear the hat displaying the *sole nascente* insignia, which is a lesser-known symbol of nationalistic neo-fascism. It symbolises the re-birth of fascist ideology.



Fig. 39: The *Boys* with their Rising Sun symbol

However, where and when will this re-birth of the nation, in the words of Marco appear? In addition, from where does such a belief originate? The answer sees the roots of *UltraS* expressions of nationalism in Mussolini’s fascism. Griffin (1991) defines fascism as being populist and ultra-nationalist. Among the most important elements of Ultra-nationalism are the uniqueness of national culture and an ever-growing awareness of shared history, ethnicity

and language (p. 201). Italian neo-fascism draws on such elements, but adds new dimensions, most notably the concept of Revolutionary Nationalism, which, in 21st century Italy, is represented by *Casa Pound Italia*. Revolutionary nationalism should be interpreted as a 'Third Way' between those who champion (at any cost) the processes of globalisation, which the neo-fascists believe homogenise and erase national identities- and 'fake patriots'. According to the Italian neo-fascists, the *Italia* of 'fake patriots' is an entity based on capitalism and selfishness, which neglects regional identities and expression of glorious local traditions. The current political class deny Italy a significant political and moral role at the international level by accepting a servile position in relation to the political hegemony of Britain and America. Contempt is concomitantly manifest towards those servile to Anglo-American ideas and ways of life that champion consumerism. This Anglo-American opposition shares common traits with the French *Nouvelle Droite* (New Right) and its guru Alain de Benoist. Anti-Americanism and the fight against globalisation, which is considered a domain of international finance controlled by Jews and Freemasons, are the main themes of De Benoist (Cf. De Benoist and Champetier, 1999) and can be found in the *UltraS* sentiments evidenced in and around the Olympic Stadium. The anti-American stance of the Boys is displayed in the following account, published in the group's fanzine and addressing the intervention in Iraq by the USA, titled *The Anglo-American Arrogance in Iraq*:⁹⁰

The reasons [for this war] as advertised by Bush are about international justice and terrorism, but do not have any real basis. Iraq has not respected the UN resolution, but what about Israel that has not respected 200 UN resolutions, or the U.S.A. which often bypasses the UN resolutions ?.....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].....We need also to 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

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

⁹⁰ Issue no. 12 2002-2003

‘While I am writing, many images of Saddam Hussein, the former president of the Iraq, are flooding the websites of major online newspapers. 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. 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?

....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. 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, and 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!’⁹¹

The *UltraS* nationalism is, consequently, conceived around the idea of a *patria* sharing a sense of common participation with a collective destiny. Such a society had to be fought for; battles had to be won; warriors were needed. It is this representation of ‘remote traditions’ that gives the *UltraS* a sense of moral and cultural authority and, most importantly, authenticity that produce a direct link to the past.

However, pride in the *patria* and a sense of ‘people’ expressed by the two *UltraS* communitas provoke prejudice amidst admiration. The most unlikely of groups can be offered the plaudits. Realism and contradiction are evident. The *UltraS* celebrate the symbols of defiance manifest by both Palestinians and Irish Republicans, which assist their anti-Israeli and anti-British articulations. The anti-Israeli stance was evident in the frequent display by the *Irriducibili* in the *curva nord* of the Palestinian flag and their chants in praise of the

⁹¹ The prophecy of the *Irriducibili* was fulfilled on December 30, 2006, when the former Iraq president was executed by hanging, having been judged –and found guilty- by a special tribunal on charges of crimes against humanity.

repressed: *'Palestine: Never Give Up'* (see figures 40-41). Some of these sentiments are genuine, many are pragmatic.



Fig. 40: The *Irriducibile* banner: *'Palestina Never Give Up'* (2005)



Fig. 41: The Palestinian flag and the *Irriducibili*

Using the Palestinian issue, the *Boys* concomitantly express their opinions against what they negatively define 'Zionism'. The following document titled *Libertá per La Palestina* (Freedom for Palestine) was published in the *Boys* fanzine:⁹²

'It is right to dedicate a space [in our fanzine] on what is happening in the Middle East⁹³, about the aggression of Israel against the Palestinian people, about the invasion of a land that rightly belongs to another population [the Palestinians], also a land that for the Christians represent an Holy ground. 10 days ago, the Cis-Jordan

⁹² Issue 10 – season 2001/2002

⁹³ 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.

invasion began by the Israel army deployed by Sharon 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 [however] condemns the Israeli aggression...

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; in 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 hit by a tank while documenting the assaults of Israelis troops upon Palestinians.'

Here, the *Boys* demonstrated once more that they are articulate individuals in tune with current international and national political affairs. They refer to Raffaele Ciriello, an Italian photographer killed by Israeli defence force 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 offensive⁹⁴.

The *Boys* finished their document by writing:

'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 colonise them, in this case they just intervene lightly [irony].'

At other times, contempt for Israel was combined with similar hatred for the global capitalism of the USA. The only bulwark, for the *Ultras*, seemed to be Roman Catholicism:

'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 world's 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 the 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

⁹⁴ Cf.

http://archiviostorico.corriere.it/2002/marzo/17/addio_Milano_Raffaele_Ciriello_nessuna_co_0_0203179202.shtml

current conditions fearing to be confined in an Israeli concentration camp; who would not considered [pushed] to stuff themselves with TNT to promote his/her cause.? SOLIDARITY FOR THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE.'

As is very evident by now, the football stadium in Rome (and throughout Italy) is a place to articulate the legacy of a nation. The Olympic stadium symbolises *in posse* this function. The main street via which spectators access the stadium is dominated by the *Obelix*, bearing the dedication to *Mussolini Dux Dux* and is adorned by a sequence of symbols, mottos and the most important stages of the fascist regime (Caporilli and Simeone, 1990). This connection to the past is so strong that, around the stadium on match day it is possible to find stands selling not only merchandise of the teams of AS Roma and SS Lazio, but also busts of Mussolini and other fascist regalia. The authorities appear to ignore such enterprise; the merchandise is sold in defiance of the Mancino Law passed in 1993, which prohibited the use of political symbols linked to fascism. Such artefacts are also to be found on sale on stalls in the city of Predappio (the burial place of Mussolini). In Rome, the same artefacts are on sale in the popular *Via Sannio* Market and in *Via Conca d'Oro*. Badges in praise of Mussolini can also be found sold by entrepreneurs outside of the *Colosseum*. Certainly, there is no shortage of buyers.

9.1 The Racist-UltraS Couplet

The Italian football stadium is not dissimilar to those in other countries; it is a site of racism and xenophobic intolerance.⁹⁵ A recent study (2007) conducted by the Italian Observatory on Racism and Anti-racism in Football⁹⁶ underlined a phenomenon of 'normalisation' manifest in the Italian media and football organisations around the issue of racism; although the media discourses strongly focus on the *UltraS* societal 'threats'. In analysing the 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 football seasons, the study identified 134 episodes of racism around the game, which were categorised in two typologies: 'indirect' racism (or propaganda), which manifested regardless of what was occurring in the pitch, and 'direct' racism, which was defined as targeting players of different skin colour, religion or origin.

Regardless of its numerous manifestations, racism has a unified theoretical basis. It is composed of two elements: 'inferiorisation' and 'differentiation'. 'Inferiorisation' leads to the isolation of individuals in social and economic domains of a society (Spaij and Vinas, 2005). 'Differentiation' (creation of the 'others') is not necessarily based on biological explanations,

⁹⁵ Cf. <http://edition.cnn.com/2008/SPORT/football/06/18/racism.europe/index.html>

⁹⁶ Cf. <http://no-racism-news.noblogs.org/post/2007/11/08/attacco-antirazzista-2007>

but on cultural rejection and nationalistic distinctiveness (Spaaij and Vinas 2005; Wieviorka, 1995). Differentiation discourses are evident among *UltraS* as this poem written by the Boys *direttivo* (and given to me) shows:

'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
Nevertheless, I wish that everyone remains in his or her 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'
Boys

For the *Boys*, the ethical bond is the differentiation variable, based on a generalised sense of shared kinship and expressed in their proclamation of fatherland united by a common religion, Christianity.

The racist manifestations of the *UltraS* can be quite intricate. Behaviours in the *curve* that fit the description of being 'racist' can be ambiguous and contradictory. The first type of insult originates from Italy's north and south divide; such chants and insults are mainly spontaneous and ritualised. In 2006, at the Olympic stadium during the Rome derby, the *Boys* started chanting, '*Paolo di Canio- Napoletano, Paolo Di Canio- Napoletano!* (Paolo di Canio- Neapolitan)' in response to Paolo di Canio playing the ball (even though Di Canio was not born in Southern Italy). Opposition players and rival fans face the accusation of being a southerner, considered prejudiciously to be a person who does not wash, nor work, but lives to exploit State welfare. The term 'southerner' can be synonymous with *napoletano* [Neapolitan, from the southern city of Naples]. One could argue that such slurs directed at southern Italians are a form of racial 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 reference to cultural norms and traditions. Such remarks would not seek any ideological justification amongst the *Boys* and the *Irriducibili* because their fascism considers territorial unity and a national sense of identity crucial to all Italians. In this case, it does not

appear to be a conscious intent to racially abuse other Italians, but these deplorable episodes might be determined by the spontaneous emotional engagement of the match and a fierce rivalry with, in the case of the Boys, the Neapolitan fans. Knowing that Di Canio was quite respected by the *Boys*, I asked one of the *Boys* why the group abused Di Canio, who was also a *camerata*. He said that, at that moment, he was a *Laziale* - and the accusation and type of chant were meant to be funny.

The second and more insidious type of insult is ethnic, which comprises different dimensions that focus on skin colour, religious difference and the perceived danger of irregular immigration, mostly from Eastern Europe. In 2007, at the Lazio versus Dynamo Bucharest match, monkey grunting erupted from the *curva nord* against the Ghanaian-born Dynamo Bucharest player George Blay. Following my request to explain the motivation of the monkey grunts, Federico (*Irriducibili*) unconvincingly justified the noise. According to his reasoning, it was manifest as a means to distract opposition players and should not necessarily be regarded as an expression of racial contempt. To complicate the issue further such types of insult, as a reader who knows about Italian football is well aware, can both originate and finish in a very spontaneous fashion, involving the whole stadium, not only the *curve*. These dynamics are also present in other football stadiums in Europe.⁹⁷ Ignorance concerning race and ethnicity can be manifest in the stadium, not only among the *UltraS*, but also among the 'ordinary' and respectable fans. This behaviour illustrates that racial bigotry is present not only in the football stadium, but also outside of the stadium, in the wider society and going beyond ideological explanations. Moreover, behaviours that fit the description 'racist' manifest ambiguous and contradictory forms in the Roman *curve*. It was not uncommon in the Lazio *curva nord* to hear racist insults directed towards black opposition players, whilst black Lazio players were lauded by the same supporters. Sometimes in the pursuit of offending an opponent, pragmatism and self-censorship were evident. At times, supporters who might use racially inspired insults realised that they would not be able to offend the black players of other teams without offending their own team.

The connection between ideology and racism produced one of the most compelling *UltraS* statements about race displayed on the *Lazio UltraS* website. This internet group is neo-fascist and has strong links to the *Irriducibili*:

⁹⁷ Spaaij and Vinas (2005) argues:

'Few commentators acknowledged the fact that the racial abuse during Spain's friendly against England was not simply provoked by a right-wing ultra group, but involved a large section of the home crowd (-reportedly up to 80 per cent'. (p.149).

‘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 ideas; 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.’ (Julius Evola mentioned in <http://ultraslazio.it/evola.htm>)

The articulations of Julius Evola are crucial for defining the *UltraS* thoughts concerning race and ethnicity. For Evola, the term ‘race’ is synonymous with quality; a person having values is a person of race.⁹⁸ Evola rejected Hitler’s biological ideas of racism, and this distance from Hitler’s racism was also stressed by the *UltraS*; Todde for instance, when asked about the issue of race in 2008, replied: ‘*we are against immigration, but not against the immigrants; the biological racism of the Nazis is not part of our tradition and beliefs.*’ Evola introduced instead the notion that human existence is represented by three elements: the body, the soul and the spirit. The spirit is crucial in this analysis, as it manifests the metaphysical element that is worn down by centuries of secularisation and modernisation. The element of body in Evola’s rationale is based on a specific appearance. Evola believed there are two types of Aryans: Ario-Germans and Ario-Romans. The latter group was considered superior in soul and spirit to the former and provided the raw material required for a national cultural rebirth (Griffin, 1998). For Evola, ‘mixed races’ and racial degeneration were the negative consequences of modernity (Germinario, 2001). Consequently, Evola’s philosophy argues that, in the fight against modernity, society must 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 hierarchy of races. However, even if Evola’s racism is quite distant from the biological racism of the Nazi – it contains instead cultural and esoteric elements (Cf. Rossi, 2007) - the potential consequences of this conception are tragically the same.

Accusations of racist (and especially Anti-Semitic) attitudes were strongly challenged by both groups in the media. One notable instance concerned footballer Fabio Liverani, who was of Italian-African heritage, and part of the 2004 Italian World Cup winning team. In 2001, the *Irriducibili* were accused by the Italian media of being responsible for spreading racist slogans around the city of Rome against Liverani, who was newly arrived from Perugia. According to the racists, the player was guilty of having a black Somalian mother.

⁹⁸Evola’s ideas around race are mainly detailed in J. Evola, (1937). *Il mito del sangue*, Milano: Hoepli; J. Evola, (1941a). *Sintesi di dottrina della razza*, Milano: Hoepli; J. Evola, (1941b). *Indirizzi per una educazione razziale*. Napoli: Conte.

The *Irriducibili* were immediately presumed blameworthy even if Giorgio, declared in a statement to the newspaper *La Repubblica*:

‘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)

At times, the *UltraS* went beyond individual to challenge belief systems; some actions and words of the *UltraS* were aimed at faiths at odds with Christianity. Giorgio (*Irriducibili*) deliberated upon such ‘others’:

‘The organisation of today’s society causes crimes because, in some cases, stealing is the only way of surviving. It also favours intolerance towards others. Let’s take an example, in Rome’s Parioli district (a very affluent area), instead of building and funding a park (perhaps it would have been even better to spend this money in the peripheral districts), they have allowed the building of a mosque. They allowed people that are against our way of life and our religion to build their sanctuary; their symbols, which stated for centuries their tradition against ours. I cannot accept this!! We Italians are not owners of our land any more. I cannot accept that, in our schools, for instance, someone spoke about taking away the crucifix to avoid offending people belonging to other religions! I have never been interested in religion, but I am ready to participate in a religious war against this idea. That crucifix symbolises not only Catholicism, but also Italy and its history. To the ‘beggar’ [Muslim] with the daughter with the veils who does not like it, I would say ‘go away to your country with your daughter and make her wear however many veils you want.’ If you want to stay in Italy, accept our way of life or leave.’

Whilst the ideology of the neo-fascists can celebrate the struggle of Muslim groups (such as the Palestinians or Iraqis) against what they consider to be Anglo-American and Zionist imperialism, this celebration should not be seen as support for their religion, especially if such a religion tries to establish itself in Italian cities. The majority of Italian neo-fascist sentiment is linked to Catholicism with a minority related to paganism. The *UltraS* supports this claim; they see themselves as champions of Catholicism. One such example is provided by an editorial written in the *Boys* fanzine in 2003, which invites fellow believers to act against the ‘sinister’ forces of globalisation, modernity and liberalism and reminds readers of the pride that 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 attend⁹⁹. The deputy Prime Minister Fini needs to think well before the law to give the immigrants the votes is proposed. Many other threats of this kind [referring to Smith’s initiative] are around the corner and can get out of our control. Guys, we

⁹⁹ Adel Smith was the leader of the *Unione dei Musulmani d'Italia* located in Ofena (L'Aquila) which seeks political representation for Muslims in the Italian Parliament.

live in a world where the sacred is not important anymore; where all is sacrificed to the rhythms of production and mass consumerism disregarding sentiments and values. These people act out of revenge and not feeling. Instead of fighting with honour, they fight with infamy. Their eternal dissatisfaction is about to bring horrifying imbalances.... 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 do not deserve our respect. First in the list [to hit]: Adel Smith!

The same sentiment was evidenced weeks later by the *Irriducibili* within the Olympic Stadium. A banner that they produced stated: '*Adel Smith buffone - fuori dalla nostra nazione*' [Adel Smith Clown - Out of our Nation].

9.1.1 The UltraS and the Eastern European Immigration

The minority ethnic group that provoked particular resentment among the *UltraS* were, though, white Eastern Europeans. The problems thrown up by irregular immigration to Italy, particularly from Romania and Albania, were strongly felt by the *UltraS* due to the perceived correlation between this ethnic group and crime in Rome along with the seeming inability of the authorities to tackle such crime. Given this context, one of the typical Boxer's statements is understood: '*you can look at the curva and understand your city.*' These words are (potentially) profound. People in the Roman *curva* have, for many years, articulated what the Roman population, as a whole, perceived as a problem. The anti-illegal immigrant sentiment appears to be linked to an objectively perceived public emergency that involves a lack of control by the local authorities and police over individuals involved in crimes. The fear of crime provokes prejudicial attitudes and seeks simplistic solutions.

It should be noted, though, that the perception of an ever-increasing influx of Romanians (and specifically Romanian gypsies) into Italy is supported by objective data. Romanian immigrants doubled in number in three years based on data compiled by the ISTAT annual survey on the presence of foreigners in Italy (La Repubblica –online- 31 October, 2007). Residents in Italy classified as 'immigrants' on January 1, 2007 numbered just short of three million (2.938922), which is an increase of 10.1% over the previous year. Since the balance of the Italian population is negative (-6912 units in 2006), the increase in foreigners growth is quite significant. The Boxer was dismissive of the newly arrived citizens, considering Albanians and Romanians as the people responsible for the unacceptable

level of street prostitution in Rome.¹⁰⁰ Although generalisations are unfruitful and censurable, it is important to remember that the stereotype of the crimogenic Romanians is supported by official crime data. In 2007, Romanian citizens were involved in 14 episodes of serious violence in Italy, which resulted in deaths of 13 individuals (La Repubblica –online- 01 November, 2007a). The 2008 report on crime published by the Ministry of the Interior argued that Romanian organised crime was gaining strength and visibility in Italy (Il Tempo –online- 22 February, 2009). Moreover, the same newspaper article reported that an astonishing 90% of committed crimes in Milan involved Romanians, which placed them at the top of the ‘crime ranking’ of foreigners residing in Italy. In Rome, Romanian-related offences accounted for 31% of recorded crimes.

One event that caused a national outcry- and an *UltraS* reaction- occurred in October 2007 when Giovanna Reggiani, who was 47 years old and the wife of a high ranking Naval officer, was murdered at Tor di Quinto (an area in the north of Rome) whilst returning home from shopping. She was attacked by a 24-year old Romanian, dragged into a shed, raped and thrown into a nearby street. She died shortly afterwards. Following this tragic episode, the former Mayor of Rome, Walter Veltroni, rounded on the Romanian government, telling them ‘*You cannot open the hatch before the entry of Romania into the EU*’. He stressed that, before the arrival of these co-patriots, Rome was one of the safest cities in the world. The former Italian centre-left Prime Minister, Romano Prodi, called his Romanian equivalent to express the anger of the Italian government. Giorgio Napolitano, President of the Italian Republic, spoke of the act as one of ‘barbaric aggression’. In the *Serie A* matches the following Sunday, the players of AS Roma and SS Lazio wore black armbands in respect for the deceased. Gianni Gumiero, the victim’s husband, declared: ‘*I am desperate. If I was not a devoted citizen, I would do justice by myself*’ (La Repubblica –online- 01 November, 2007b).

Some vigilantes sought justice beyond the courts of law. A punitive blitz in the Roman working-class area of Tor Bella Monaca against Romanians followed. This high-density immigrant area was subjected to attacks by groups of young men clad in motorcycle helmets or balaclavas. They attacked four Romanians in a parking lot. Such men were not ‘unknown’ to the Lazio *UltraS*. The four Romanians were hospitalised. Journalists of *La Repubblica* interviewed the local Italian population and asked their opinion about the attacks. Some answered that Romanians were lazy, indolent and regularly and publicly drunk. They

¹⁰⁰ To evaluate the issue the reader is directed to the ECPAT 2001 (End Child Prostitution, Pornography and trafficking) which at pag 29 dedicated a chapter on the London red light district of Soho; cf. <http://antislavery.org/homepage/resources/Children.PDF>

made the public arenas, be it a park bench or public transport, potentially dangerous places for decent citizens to pass (La Repubblica –online- 02 November, 2007).

Not all attacks on Romanians should be considered as provoked by vengeance. In August 2007, just two months before the death of Giovanna Reggiani, during the Lazio-Dynamo Bucharest Champions League fixture in the Olympic stadium, the Bucharest team and their fans were the subject of hostile chants. Amongst other insults, the Lazio *UltraS* chanted "*Gypsies: Go Away*". Outside the stadium, five Romanian fans were stabbed; none sustained life-threatening injuries (La Repubblica –online- 14 August, 2007). Football plays many roles both obvious and subtle, recognised and unrecognised, in such debates and highlights historical reasons for such discourses.

Lacking a significant colonial history, Italy was not prepared for the massive immigration from Albania and the former Eastern Europe from 1990 onwards. The Italian election of April 2008 recently changed the policies concerning illegal immigration. Silvio Berlusconi and Walter Veltroni created two large parties, one of the centre-right and one of the centre-left, to ostensibly simplify and give stability to the Italian government. A dominant cause – for those seeking political office – was the worry over irregular immigrants and associated crime. The centre-left mayors, in many cities from Parma to Bologna, initiated voluntary groups promoted as ‘city angels’ to provide security and public reassurance in parts of the city that were notorious for drug use and violence. Such citizens did not have the power to arrest or seek to engage directly with suspects, but their presence was considered an attempt to discourage criminality. The electoral campaign saw Berlusconi and his *Partito Delle Libertá* victorious with an electoral promise based on two criteria. One criterion was the necessity to make electoral procedures simpler in order to improve the political stability of Italy (hitherto never accomplished), which, in doing, so favoured the constitution of the two big parties and concomitantly eliminated the smaller ones. The political campaign also centred on the worries of Italians concerning public safety and unregulated immigration from Eastern Europe. Berlusconi committed himself to a ‘zero tolerance’ policy against crime, especially that committed by non-nationals. He promised greater severity in custodial sentences as punishment from crimes. In 2008, the Italian Police Chief Antonio Manganelli, in a speech to the Chamber of Deputies, (3 July) stressed, in an alarmist fashion, the illegal immigration-crime link:

‘Those responsible for widespread crime offences in Italy in the report were 30% illegal immigrants, while the percentage increases to 50-60% in the North of the country (Il Giornale –online- 22 April, 2008).

The politics of fear played a part in the outcome of the election. The role-call of those allied with Berlusconi reminded observers of the recent past of the Far Right. His campaign team included *il Duce*'s granddaughter, Alessandra Mussolini, and Roberto Calderoli, a senior member of the Northern League, who was once tipped to become Deputy Prime Minister. Formerly Minister of Reforms in Berlusconi's last government of 2006, Calderoli, at the height of controversy over the publication in a Danish newspaper of a cartoon considered blasphemous by Islam, had taken his shirt off to reveal the same cartoon penned onto his vest on live television. The same man, in articulating his opposition to the building of a mosque in Italy, organised a 'Pig Day' in 2007 in an attempt to offend Muslim sentiments (Il Resto del Carlino-online- 13 September, 2007). The election of 2008 saw small parties, which were characteristic of Italian politics since 1948, erased. The Communists, the Greens, and the Socialists are no longer represented in Parliament, as they did not acquire the 4% quorum to obtain representation. The anti-immigrant rhetoric of the Northern League allowed its representatives to gain 60 MP's and 25 Senators a significant result¹⁰¹.

Today, the neo-fascists, which since 1948 were represented in parliament by the MSI, have no elected representatives. *La Destra* (the Right), a small party originating from the radical faction of AN in 2007, the *Movimento Sociale Fiamma Tricolore* and *Forza Nuova* collectively gathered a mere 2.7% of the total vote for the Chamber of Deputies and 2.3% for the Senate. In the Lazio electoral region, the Right almost reached the Senate with 3.8% of the vote. In the Lazio 1 electoral district, the percentage vote for the Chamber of Deputies was the highest in the region. Such data support two arguments. First, the Lazio region is once again confirmed as the historical bulwark of neo-fascism, which was evident in the subsequent Mayoral election (see below). Second, even if the majority of neo-fascist parties did not gain representatives, the ideas of neo-fascism are alive in this region (as in all Italy).

Nevertheless, the lack of parliamentary representation of the extreme right should not deceive a reader. In Berlusconi's government, the leader of *Azione Sociale*, Alessandra Mussolini, is the elected deputy in the Campania region and a national board member of *the Popolo della Libertá* (PdL). Another faction is, as mentioned earlier, led by the former *Alleanza Nazionale* member and new PdL Mayor of Rome, Gianni Alemanno.

¹⁰¹ <http://repubblica.it/speciale/2008/elezioni/camera/index.html>



Fig. 42: Roman salutes for the newly elected Mayor Gianni Alemanno¹⁰²

The ideology of fascism still holds appeal in Italy. The extreme right is now more central to the Italian State than at any time since the demise of Mussolini. Italy has shifted to the Right since Berlusconi's first electoral victory in 1994. The Left's 2006 victory was an anomaly. The disillusionment with politics of the Italians has ushered in the new Far Right anti-politicians, like Umberto Bossi, Alessandra Mussolini, Roberto Calderoli and Gianni Alemanno. The populace seek out variations of Authoritarian Populism. They are enraged as the economy declines and find the criminal acts of some immigrants to be a target that manifests vague opposition to globalisation. In April 2008, Gianni Alemanno defeated the Democratic Party's candidate Francesco Rutelli and was elected Mayor of Rome. Alemanno was also elected for his intransigent approach to the 'problem' of illegal immigration. Alemanno's 16-point 'pact for Rome' promised to 'immediately activate procedures for the expulsion of 20,000 nomads and immigrants who have broken the law in Rome. He also promised to eliminate illegal Romanian gypsy camps.¹⁰³ The mood and protest of the Romans against the failing management of illegal immigration in the capital, which had been expressed for at least a decade by the *UltraS* of Roma and Lazio (speaking in their *piazza* freely and without the filters of political correctness), may have found an institutional and political outlet.

¹⁰² Cf. <http://repubblica.it/2008/04/sezioni/politica/elezioni-2008-sei/campidoglio-festa/campidoglio-festa.html>

¹⁰³ Cf. http://romapunto.it/?costante_pagina=il%20patto%20con%20roma&id_lingua=2

Chapter 10

The UltraS: An emerging social movement?

'Since the beginning of our constitution, we have had clear ideas about politics in the stadium. We believe it cannot be avoided, because every man, hence, every UltraS has his own ideals and beliefs, and it seems right that, especially in this place of aggregation, he can manifest them.' Juventude Crociata -Crusade Youth¹⁰⁴

The above statement of the *UltraS Juventude Crociata* of the city of Padova exemplifies the sense of ideologisation of the Italian *curve*. At the macro-level, this study argues that the *UltraS ideological*, behavioural and cultural elements can be understood-similar to the arguments of Gentry (2004) regarding gatherings of extreme right skinheads- as manifestations of an emerging social movement.

Social movements do not originate from a vacuum, but they arise from precedent experiences (Taylor, in Klandermans and Mayer, 2006). The *UltraS* are a good example of this process; they find their roots in both the Italian youth neo-fascist and hardcore football supporters movements. In this study the notion of social movement¹⁰⁵ is defined as a *'collectivity acting with some degree of organisation and continuity outside institutional channels for promoting or resisting change in the group, society, or world order of which it is a part'* (Simi et al., 2004, p. 3).

However, before delving into the *UltraS* as social movement hypothesis, it is fruitful to outline their historical appearance. What follows illustrates the *UltraS* origin from the wider Italian hardcore supporters (*ultrá*), and allows us to see how the *UltraS* constitute at least in part a particular response by one section of Italian youth towards the social, cultural and political restrictions that they encounter within the broader social system.¹⁰⁶

10.1 From *ultrá* to *UltraS*

The *UltraS* grew out of *ultrá* gatherings. The term *ultrá* was used to generically indicate (regardless of political orientation) all hardcore Italian football fans (invariably

¹⁰⁴ The *Juventude Crociata* are the *UltraS* of Padova FC. Amongst the *Padova Curva* the *Juventude* is notoriously extreme; many of its members belong to extreme right extra-parliamentary groupings. Cf. <http://tifonet.it/free/juventudepd/>

¹⁰⁵ More specifically I refer in this study to 'power-oriented' movements, which contrary to participation-oriented movements, act in concert to achieve group influence to make or block change in society (Morrison, 1971).

¹⁰⁶ For a more detailed and dedicated analysis, a reader is directed to A. Roversi (1992). *Calcio, tifo e violenza*. Bologna: Il Mulino.

males between the ages of 16 and 40) who manifest behaviours that, at times, exceed that considered the 'norm' in terms of linguistics, bodily comportment and, ultimately, violent practices. The etymology of the word *ultrá* is based in French political discourse. During the Restoration period (1815–1830), the word *ultrá-royaliste* indicated partisan loyalty to the Absolute Monarchy. The *ultrá-royaliste* championed the interests of property owners, the nobility and clericalists. They were the supporters of authority and royal tradition in contraposition to the philosophies of human rights and individual freedoms proselytised by followers of the Enlightenment (Regoli, 2006).

During the 1950s, Italian football was characterised by a generally relaxed and informal football fan culture. Fan club offices were places to buy match tickets and gather with the like-minded to listen to the State radio commentary when the team played outside of town. The football match was a parochial town event and a social gathering; whilst episodes of violence were present, they did not become tragic or out of hand. There were, on occasion, scuffles between opposing fans, usually concerning long-standing district and regional rivalries and fights were sometimes evidenced amongst groups that supported the same team over on-the-pitch incidents (Roversi, 1992).

The chronology of the appearance of such hardcore football fans groupings is hotly debated. While Roversi (1992) argued that the first violent clashes between Italian rival fans occurred during the 1970s, the English sociologists from the Leicester University Centre for Football Research criticise this native-born assertion. They assert that such episodes have occurred since the origin of modern Italian football and cite an event in 1959 during a Napoli versus Bologna match, when 65 people were injured following a pitch invasion. This study favours the interpretation of Roversi whilst accepting that the debate arises out of a misunderstanding of that considered fan intemperance to that which defines the presence and practices of those considered *ultrá*. The period of the late 1960s is the fulcrum between these two paradigms.

The first half of the 1970s witnessed large sectors of Italian youth from diverse social classes practicing a form of socio-political insubordination. When combined with an exaggerated hostility against any form of authority and the elaboration of subcultural peculiarities, a general juvenile tumultuousness was manifested. In this temporal framework, appear to emerge the *ultrá*. The appeal of such gatherings to Italian youth at the end of the 1970s was a sign that Italian politics (and trade unions) had lost any monopoly that they may once have had on mobilising both youthful and general public opinion and indeed their behaviours (Triani, 1994).

Ideological divisions of Italian society, reflected in cities and regions, were usually mirrored by the political sympathies manifest at the local football stadiums. In this era, one could find Left-wing hardcore football fan groups, including the AC Milan *Brigate Rossonere* (Red-Blacks Brigades), and the *Brigate gialloblue* (Yellow-Blue Brigades) of Modena. On the opposite side were Verona's *Brigate Gialloblú* (Yellow-Blue Brigades), and the *Boys SAN* of Inter–Milan (constituted by members of the *Fronte della Gioventú* –the Youth Front Organisation of the Italian neo-fascist party *Movimento Sociale Italiano*). These groups, together with the *Boys*, can be considered the first manifestation of what this research identifies as the *UltraS*. However, apart from the few exceptions mentioned, the hardcore football fandom of the 1970s cannot be considered strictly political and was not so directly oppositional to the Italian 'system' as the *UltraS*. Grispigni (1993) argues that the 'death' of politics and the associated disillusionment was a characteristic of Italian youth of the time, that - returning from the disappointment of the movement of protest of 1968 and 1977 - transferred the generational conflict from the political to the sports arena' (in Triani, 1994, p. 75). The youthful pursuit of excitement and conflict was to be satisfied henceforth in the football context via identification with colours, symbols and territories of football-related belonging. This pursuit could be very consequential.

10.1.1 The Rise of the UltraS

In October 1979, the Lazio fan Vincenzo Paparelli was killed by a Roma fan who fired a petard from the *curva sud* (Mariottini, 2004). The same day, football-related violence occurred in the cities of Ascoli, Milan and Brescia, causing many injuries and widespread criminal damage. These data were important for Italian football; football spectators' violence from this time forward became a key issue in media discourse, state institutions and public opinion. The latter called for repressive measures from the State to eradicate the *teppisti* (thugs). Many house searches of suspects were subsequently made by the police, who began targeting the most notorious individuals. The headquarters of hardcore football fan groups were raided and banners, drums and choreographic materials were seized (Borghini, 1987).

The escalation of the hardcore football fans' violence between the 1970s and early 1980s indicates the transformation of the phenomenon. It was in the 1980s that the Italian hardcore football fan movement reached its apex in terms of the number of participants and episodes of violence. The development of a complex of friendships and rivalries regulated at first glance by the logic of the 'Bedouin Syndrome' ostensibly ensured that the friends of an

ally became friends, and the enemies of an ally were enemies (Bruno, in Marchi, 1994). This simplistic formula was, though; open to challenge by historical antecedents and personal and political negotiations. Moreover, in the 1980s, it was possible to witness the exacerbation of security measures, most notably CCTV surveillance and the use of hand-held metal detectors at stadium entrances. Football Stadiums took on the appearance of fortresses with riot police surrounding the vicinities and parading in large numbers at the stadium clad in riot gear. This change engendered a polarisation of hardcore football fan groups that had hitherto co-existed. While the policing impositions reduced episodes of violence in the stadium, a 'dislocation effect' resulted in a concomitant rise in violence outside of the stadium, in town centres, railway stations and tube stations (Roversi, 1992). In addition, the Italian political crisis provoked contempt for traditional forms of political aggregation. The increasing alienation of youth from mainstream politics correlated with such football fan associationism. Individual and collective political hopes, joys and frustrations surfaced like never before in the stadium.

The 1980s ended with serious incidents of fan violence (Marinelli and Pili, 2000). In 1988, during an Ascoli versus Inter-Milan match, Nazareno Filippini was killed by a group of Inter Milan hardcore fans, having been repeatedly struck by kicks and punches. On June 4, 1989, during a Milan versus Roma game, a Roma supporter, Antonio De Falchi, died of a heart attack following an assault carried out by rivals from Milan. Amongst the traditional factions, younger formations appeared who celebrated their ability to break boundaries. By the mid-1980s, new gatherings had joined the *curve*. These were the *cani sciolti* (Hot Heads) those considered by all in the stadium difficult to control. This term was applied to youngsters by the established organised *ultrá* groups (Vincenti, 2000). These youngsters did not recognise themselves as a pre-existing fan group – nor did they seek such an association - and did not collaborate with pre-existing supporter formations. They did not originate out of schisms within the established groups; they were autonomous from all pre-existing fan constitutions. The majority of this new demographic, invariably aged between 14-16 years, was lacking in political consciousness and had little historical knowledge of the *ultrá* movement (Roversi, 1992).

The new *curve* formations represented an Italian society that, during the 1980s, celebrated individualism, self-indulgence and ostentation. As a consequence, the era saw a refusal among much of its young generation to engage or participate in matters that were political or required a sense of dedication. The nomenclature of the *curva* groups reflected this ethos; names with political connotations were substituted by those linked to

psychological conditions and drug and alcohol consumption. Examples of these gatherings were the *Sconvolti* (Deranged), *Kolletivo Alcoolico* (Alcoholic Group), *Wild Kaos* and *Arancia Meccanica* (Clockwork Orange- from the controversial 1971 Stanley Kubrick film that presented a dystopian vision of violent nihilism).¹⁰⁷ The dislike and opposition to such metamorphosis was evident in the constitution of groups in the more notorious *curve*, such as Roma, Milan, Bergamo, Naples and Genova, who took on the title *Vecchia Guardia* (Old Guards). Such gatherings emphasised the principles of collective unity and group collaboration that had inspired the origins of the hardcore football supporters' movement. It is, perhaps, in this period that the ideology of the hardcore football fans became more meaningful in content.

From the early 1990s onwards, there has been a systematic ideologisation of the Italian *curve*. Hardcore supporters groups throughout Italy started to more frequently display common emblems or mottos related to neo-fascism on their banners (Marchi, 1994). The stadium became a setting in which it was permissible to express both concepts of selfhood and collective political will. The observation that ideological displays are evident in and around football should not surprise a reader. The 1990s were a decade of profound political and economic crisis for Italy. An entire political system was falling apart under the acts of *tangentopoli*; public opinion was tiring of corrupt politicians. The electorate punished the distrusted political parties, which were decimated in the corruption inquiries of the Italian magistrates. Sentiments of political renewal were represented by extreme parties, such as the *Movimento Sociale Italiano*, which subsequently became *Alleanza Nazionale* or by new political parties such as Silvio Berlusconi's *Forza Italia*, founded in 1994, and Umberto Bossi's *Lega Nord*, founded in 1996 (Pagani, 2003). The era also saw increased popularity of national revolutionary movements on the extreme right spectrum, such as *Forza Nuova*, *Movimento Sociale Fiamma Tricolore*, *Fronte Nazionale* and the reaffirmation of extreme left ideological parties, such as *Rifondazione Comunista* (New Communist Party).

In 2009, I interviewed Dr. Domenico Mazzilli, a high ranking officer of the Italian police and President of the National Observatory on Sport Events of the Italian Ministry of the Interior (see chapter 12). The Ministry of the Interior confirmed the existence of 58 *UltraS* groups with more than 15,000 members throughout Italy. The *UltraS* are, thus, a relatively large nation-wide grouping that interacts across regions. Whilst they are not a threat to parliamentary democracy, their very existence is a stain on the Italian body politic. The

¹⁰⁷ For an in depth account on the history of the Italian hardcore football supporters movement cf. C. Balestri, & G. Vigano. *Gli Ultra': Origini, storia e sviluppi recenti di un mondo ribelle. Quaderni di Sociologia*, 34.

political concern that they carry with them is two-fold; they are prepared for violence and they are unpredictable having unknown potential.

10.2 The UltraS Collective Identity

Over the past 20 years, it has been possible to witness in the *curve* not only a rise in ideologisation, but also a concomitant increase in *UltraS* politicisation. Simi et al. (2004) stress the main elements of the process of politicisation that can be applied to the *UltraS*, namely the belief in the possibility to resist or change things for a common cause. For the *UltraS*, the shared causes are their very survival; they have common opponents (the police, media and football institutions); they resort to tactics, such as a supporters' strike, in which they refuse to sustain the football teams during the match to voice their discontent. Further shared elements are a willingness to engage in violence, public protest campaigns and maintaining a recognisable organisation, which, in the last two years, has emerged in the newly founded *UltraS Italia* (see later). The politicisation process among the *UltraS* marks the development of their collective identity, which is an important attribute of any social movement. Collective identity is a sense of 'we' based on cohesion and solidarity around which individuals act (Cf. Simi et al. 2004; Klandermans 1997). Traditional rivalries, as this study demonstrates, can be forgotten to oppose a perceived persecution of the State against their common way of life. The capital of Italy, Rome, can be considered a good example about the capability of the *UltraS* in their struggle against the Italian State. The *UltraS* of Roma and Lazio have gradually preferred resistance against the State, its repressive laws and the police to clashes against rival fans. Whilst aware of differences, Marco (*Boys*) underlines the comradeship *between the Boys and the Irriducibili*:

'The leader of our group had a personal friendship, based also on the same ideological outlook of life, with one of the *Irriducibili* leader. When he died in 2005 all the *Direttivo* of the *Irriducibili* attended his funeral and raised their hands doing the roman salute in sign of respect. We are more explicit and openly political than the *Irriducibili*. We produced a banner stating 'No American peace on my land!!' We are anti-NATO [they do not want American military bases in Italy]. We are against Italian soldiers in Iraq; we do not want to waste Italian blood for an American war.'

Similar dynamics are emerging among other *UltraS* groups throughout Italy. Few in Italy would ever imagine the possibility of hardcore *tifosi* of Juventus and Roma sitting together in the stadium and watching a football match. Nevertheless, this is precisely what is happening with the *UltraS Italia*, who gathers to watch and support the national team as a symbol of the concept of *Patria*.



Fig. 43: The kit of the *UltraS Italia*:
The original polo and buckle.

In 2009, I asked Todde, who had recently been involved with the *UltraS Italia*, about them. Namely, I questioned if there were aspects in this group to consider the *UltraS Italia* as an expression of the ability of the *UltraS* to organise themselves at a national level. He told me that the number of the members was currently approximately 600 and that the *camerati* of Lazio, Roma and Inter had recently joined the ‘project’. Other members were drawn from Juventus, Ascoli, Verona, Udine, Trieste, Napoli, Genova and elsewhere. In Todde’s analysis, the same logic that explained the actions of the *Irriducibili* and the *Boys* was valid for the *UltraS Italia*. Even if many of the members are neo-fascist sympathisers, they considered themselves autonomous from any political party. The national mobilisation of the *UltraS*, which is pertinent to their being considered a social movement, is expressed by their direct actions. The *UltraS* direct action takes several forms. At its most primitive, it is exhibited by the presentation of common banners containing messages of accusation and defiance. At a higher level, as shown previously, it is evidenced by social campaigns that they perceive as ‘just’. Direct action is also demonstrated at an organisational level via their radio programs, which they use to proselytise and spread their ideas. Whilst these typologies have become a constant background noise, when an issue is considered meritorious, the *UltraS* can mobilise and attack the State. Although we cannot affirm yet that the *UltraS* structures and connections are formally delineated among the groups, the sense of an emerging movement is present and is certainly based on a common foe and a common strategy of opposition.

In 2007, the death of the Lazio *UltraS* Gabriele Sandri provoked an unprecedented violent reaction manifested by *UltraS* groups throughout Italy. Groups from Taranto, Milan, Rome, Parma and Torino challenged the police in protest against the killing, but also in rage

against the militarisation of the football stadiums and the cumulative repressive measures that the Italian state had undertaken against them. A common theme of the chants was '*Polizia Assassini*' (Police - Murderers); graffiti against the police were written on walls of cities such as Milan, Rome and Padova.¹⁰⁸ In Rome, the reaction of the Roma and Lazio *UltraS* in the streets – assisted by the decision of the authorities to cancel the AS Roma-Cagliari match a few hours before kick-off – was extremely violent. Some 20 police officers were injured in the disturbances. At the time of the violent disturbances, four *UltraS* were arrested and charged with offences pertaining to terrorism.

In March 2008, a further 16 Lazio *UltraS* were arrested in police raids in connection with the events.¹⁰⁹ The same year, during the Triestina-Rimini match in *curva Furlan*, a banner was displayed to honour Sandri and the *UltraS* of Lazio.¹¹⁰ The November funeral of Sandri attracted more than 5,000 mourners. Banners displayed by them demanded justice for his death and condemned what they perceived as their 'crazy' repression by the State. The disorders that followed Sandri's death were, in the words of the Italian Minister of Interior, Giuliano Amato, a manifestation of '*a blind rage, led by madly criminal minds subversive against the police, its vehicles and its symbols.*'¹¹¹ The same man (without revealing his sources) informed the Parliament of planned disorder, subversive articulations, and diversionary tactics employed by those seeking '*to attract the police and Carabinieri around CONI (Italian Olympic Committee), to leave unattended the police barracks with the intention of making their attack easier.*'¹¹² In this case, the behaviour of the Italian police force was exemplary. The police could have reacted and shot people. In one instance, the *UltraS* attacked the *Maurizio Giglio* barrack, which was full of weapons, ammunition and vehicles. The law allowed the police to shoot in that circumstance to protect the public, but due to great skill and professionalism, the police avoided a possible tragedy (Bonini, 2009). The images of the riots, which were broadcasted globally, were not good for the reputation of Italy.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. <http://padovanews.it/content/view/21955/109/>

¹⁰⁹ Cf. <http://ecn.org/antifa/article/1831/Arrestati20estremistididestra>

¹¹⁰ Cf. <http://curvafurlan.forumfree.net>

¹¹¹ Cf. <http://rainews24.rai.it/notizia.asp?newsid=75727>

¹¹² Cf. <http://rainews24.rai.it/notizia.asp?newsid=75727>

10.3 Deprivation: A reason for the UltraS mobilisation?

The identification of the *UltraS* as a rising social movement does not end our attempt to complete a macro-level investigation of the phenomenon. The task of the researcher remains one of trying to understand the emergence of the movement. One answer may lie in the Relative Deprivation Theory (RDT), a construct that, according to Walker and Smith (2001), is an exciting topic for research and is employed in various ways to make sense of the rise of a variety of collective identities and social movements. RDT argues that, *'whenever groups find a benchmark that implies they could or should be better off than they are, a condition of relative deprivation exists and a psychological strain (cognitive dissonance) triggers participation in collective behaviour.'* (Buechler, in Snow et al., 2004, p. 49). Deprivation, or the sense of deprivation, is a condition that has resonance in both the individual and the socio-cultural setting. According to the RDT, when groups develop legitimate expectations¹¹³ and- at the same time- a conviction that these expectations will never be satisfied¹¹⁴, they may develop a cognitive dissonance that focuses on feelings of prejudice and discrimination (Morrison, 1971). In a power-oriented movement such as that of the *UltraS*, to reduce this psychological strain, a belief in a structural solution (in the case of the *UltraS*, the solution is comprised of violence, campaigning and lobbying of the Italian parliament) is conceived against the larger social structure outside of the group. At this very moment, mobilisation and resistance manifest. Morrison (1971) explains:

‘The dissonance is not psychologically disabling for the individual because its effect is overridden by the belief that the blockage will be removed by group action (structural faith), and by the belief that some feature of the larger social structure outside the individual can be blamed for the blockage-structural blame-‘(p. 10).

The RDT highlights the elements that may lead to the emergence of such movements, as well as providing reasons for their consolidation. Research should, consequently, be aimed at investigating the objective conditions that lead to discontent and, ultimately, action (Kornhauser 1959; Davies 1971).

The *UltraS* have always considered their cause rightful; furthermore, they consider the *curve* to be their territories upon, and within which, they have the right to voice their opinions and ideology. The recent and sudden escalation of tougher laws and the State

¹¹³ It does not only aim for particular objective but it believes ought to have it.

¹¹⁴ The perception of blockage must increase rather suddenly otherwise, the legitimate expectation would not develop.

repression have promoted a perception among them of blocked expectation and a concomitant sense of outrage concerning notions of injustice and inequity. Such a sense of grievance increasingly leads the *UltraS* to see themselves as societal outcasts and fosters conflict with the State and the media. The latter, according to the groups, have sided with the State oppressor. Consequently, the group's rhetoric of discrimination has increased. Previous research focusing on Italian youth neo-fascist gatherings supports this contention (Klandermans and Mayer, 2006). At the same time, such feeling is not necessarily negative in the immediate sense of the gatherings and in the wider sense of the movement. Klandermans and Mayer (2006) highlight different ways of coping with discrimination, all of which are applicable, to a different degree, to the *UltraS*. Among the most relevant is 'social creativity', whereby the groups respond to discrimination by defining themselves as superior to others (Tajfel and Turner, 1986). The *UltraS* belief in their superiority to other hardcore supporters is evidenced by their consideration of themselves as 'pure', not polluted like the 'others' by the commercialised logic of modern *calcio*, in which mercenaries (i.e. the football players) are idolised. In comparison to the 'ordinary' youth, the *UltraS* stress their 'superior' values. They feel that their ethical stance justifies their violence and way of life and makes bearable the perceived social stigma. They believe that it is 'morally' worth it. The key strategy for coping with discrimination lies in what Klandersmans and Mayer (2006) define as social support and a sense of bonding. The ideological and cultural traits that make the *UltraS* feel strong are also those that create a feeling of belonging and strength throughout the movement. As Todde argues, *'Although there was an attempt to organise ourselves at the national level before Sandri's death [He refers to the first emergence of a national group called the Vikings Italia], after Sandri's death and the injustice carried out against one of us, there are more interactions among all of the groups and one of the result is the UltraS Italia.'*

On the occasion of Sandri's death, for the first time, many *UltraS* throughout Italy displayed banners in their stadium and wrote about the death on their websites in honour of Sandri and in solidarity with the *UltraS* of SS Lazio. They were also supported by the popular music group *ZetaZeroAlfa* that currently display on their website the picture of Sandri demanding: *'Justice for Gabriele'*.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ Cf. <http://zetazeroalfa.org>



Fig. 44: *UltraS* Identity website in honour of Sandri. One of the web meeting points of the *UltraS* (2009)

There may be, however, another facet of the *UltraS* grievance that merits evaluation; this relates to their nature of an ‘extreme’ youth movement. The pervasive sense of dissatisfaction by the Italian youth is mostly related to the legitimate expectations by youth of an efficient political class that works in their interest. Traditionally, Italian politics has been unsympathetic and blind to youth. The *UltraS* do not trust Italian politics and, of course, oppose it. Such anti-political discourses were a common theme and persisted in many interactions that I had with the *UltraS*. These feelings are widely present throughout the whole *UltraS* movement. As youth, the *UltraS* do not miss any chance to declare their dislike for Italian politics and their incompetent youth policies; this hostility is well represented in the following Marco’s statement (*Boys*):

‘I do not like politics and do not follow it!! I am an extraparlimentary; I follow the Third Position - the ‘revolutionary’ position. The Italian system is putrid; if the tree is sick to the root, it cannot give good fruits. The problems are not the fruits that need to

be changed, but the tree that needs to be eradicated or at least cured. Sometimes I agree with Bertinotti [the leader of *Rifondazione Comunista*, and former president of the Chamber of Deputies]. The extreme left and right converge on some issues....'

The term 'putrid' used by Marco can be considered a fair representation of the mood of the youth of the *curve*, an important part of the Italian youth. In 2009, the international organisation *Transparency International* polled Italians to determine what they believed to be the most corrupt organisation in the country. Astonishingly, 44% of the participants indicated the Italian political parties (La Repubblica –online- 03 June, 2009).¹¹⁶ The Italian journalist Bosetti, in his article, '*Why is the political power in the hands of the old?*' (2008) identified as one of the main causes of the malfunction of the Italian political system its *gerontocrazia* (gerontocracy); young politicians are underrepresented and not in key places to exercise power. Furthermore, Italy is far from achieving the requisite of a just society -namely having a system based on meritocracy. In Italy, a career, especially in the State-controlled domains, is accomplished by personal recommendations and seniority that greatly de-motivates its youth (Abravanel, 2008).

In addition, Italian Sociologist Carboni (2008), in his most recent study of the Italian political class, affirms that, in the Italian parliament, individuals of poor political skills, but loyal to the party, function merely to reinforce the leadership that has chosen them. Too many MPs are elderly professional politicians. According to Della Loggia (2008), Italy is a country that exists on political immobility, a society that is fragmented and lacks a strong political and institutional framework. It is a country that has a significant public debt and that, instead of introducing much needed reforms related to education, health and justice - to name but a few - is instead blocked by litigious local and national leaders who promote a system based on political parties and not on people (Corriere della Sera –online- 25 October, 2008). Furthermore, Italy is a nation wherein governments, regardless of political line, are unable to erase organised crime in the regions of the South; not by chance, these regions experience higher youth unemployment rates.¹¹⁷

Della Loggia believes that the Italian social and political *status quo* is because society is a prisoner of its past and focuses on the same political discourses, contrapositions, and old 'low politics' (Corriere della Sera –online- 25 October, 2008). As Clark (1996)

¹¹⁶ Cf. <http://transparency.org> .

¹¹⁷ Recently Eurostat (the statistics department of the European Community) in his study about the European youth unemployment situation has documented that six Italian south regions have reached the alarming threshold of 30% with Sicily at the 37 %. (Cf. <http://blog.panorama.it/economia/2009/02/16/disoccupazione-giovanile-6-regioni-del-sud-tra-le-prime-in-ue>)

acknowledges, such a milieu can be defined as a systematic way of doing politics, where concessions and favouritism are institutionalised and where conceding favours to obtain votes develops into a consistent and non-written rule. The majority of Italian politicians have never been employed outside of the political arena. Politics is their only means of revenue, which makes them inclined to adhere to a systematic and methodological administration of power to survive and obtain an income. This situation creates conflict, protest and resistance, especially amongst the youth, who are the most penalised.

The inefficiency of the Italian politics, political parties and protagonists has provoked opposition diffused among the whole electorate. The well-known Italian journalist Eugenio Scalfari (2007) explains this situation in the following statement:

‘... Grows the numbers of Italian citizens who totally refuse this political class.... There is a growing refusal of ‘these’ political parties, of ‘these’ politicians.... It is a total refusal on all levels: taxes, public order, legality, inequalities, freedom. Thumbs down on everything. They [the political class] need to go.’ (La Repubblica –online- 16 September, 2007)

The statement by Scalfari is reinforced by the recent emergence of a popular movement organised by the renowned Genovese comedian Beppe Grillo who, during his stage and broadcasting career, was a vociferous critic against the malpractice of Italian politics and its politicians.

‘We are against right and left; we do not have hope anymore... this should have been the government who would have changed everything. We need young people and new ideas not policies originating from ‘pensioners’ of 70 years [referring ironically to the existing politicians] they are all old!! The aim [of this manifestation and movement] is to ‘kick them out from the palace’ and most of all to express our dislike and weariness of a politics which is more and more millions of miles away from the citizens and their needs.’ (La Repubblica –online- 09 September, 2007)

The protest gradually took shape via the comedian’s Internet blog and, during his Italian tour, found its first public manifestation with a protest meeting held in Bologna’s Piazza Maggiore in September 2007. The main objective of the movement was to ‘clean’ Italian politics from its so-called rationalisation, wipe out its professionalisation and expose its lack of ideals. The *Bologna* meeting, called ‘V-Day’ (i.e. Vaffanculo Day, or Fuck Off Day), aimed to collect signatures for a petition urging the creation of a new law to prescribe the ineligibility of politicians in the future with criminal records (25 MPs in Parliament in 2007 held such a status). The movement also sought to disallow Italian citizens from being elected as an MP if they held a criminal conviction or were in the legal system awaiting a verdict. Another

purpose of this movement was to get rid of the ‘professional politician’. To this end, the protesters proposed that no Italian citizens could be elected as an MP more than twice and that anyone elected had to come from a grass-roots selection procedure and not be parachuted in by a party system. Some 50,000 signatures were collected, as the Piazza was linked via the Internet to 179 cities (30 of them foreign-based). In March 2009, Grillo launched an electoral list closed to his movement throughout Italy for the forthcoming administrative elections. Commenting the event Grillo said: *‘The parties are dead. We are the only virus that crosses our disappeared ‘little’ Italy: perhaps we lose today, but our ideas are the ones that will win in the future’* (La Repubblica –online- 08 March, 2009).

The inability of the Italian State to respond to the concrete needs of people, especially its youth, who see their existence as increasingly uncertain in this political framework, can be said to contribute to the creation of an ideological vacuum. The search for security and certainty can then promote the diffusion of any extreme ideologies founded on ‘action’. The attraction of a political formula like neo-fascism professed by the *UltraS* is, thus, not hard to understand. The esteemed sociologist (and novelist) Umberto Eco (1995) lists various characteristics of what he terms ‘Ur Fascism’; the most relevant for this study is irrationalism. ‘Ur Fascism’ is based on the cult of action for the sake of action; there is no struggle for life, but rather a ‘fight for life’. According to this formula, pacifism is collusion with the enemy; action is good in and of itself, and must be implemented without reflection. As Giorgio reflects:

‘I am waiting for that day when I will be in Piazza a Roma to ‘take’ Rome with the others. I could be 50 years old or older - it does not matter- but the rage that we have with this political system is huge. This society -and I refer to modern society not only Italy- creates privileges; many people have jobs so low paid that they cannot afford to marry or have children, they can be tempted to ‘deviate.’

Giorgio expressed once again the populist nature of the *Irriducibili* and the desire of the *UltraS* to be protagonists, to act. It is a populism shared by the *Boys* and that has spread throughout the Italian *curve*. The *UltraS* do not believe in the Italian State and, while supporting their teams, they use the stadium for their own pronouncements. Such a statement implies an apocalyptic vision of Italian society; they suggest that Italians must be awoken in order to eliminate the inefficient politicians. This discourse is clearly subversive in nature.

10.4 The football stadium as the 21st century Italian Agorà

The *UltraS* movement is the opposite of the immobility that is dominant in Italian society. The groups will fight for their ideas no matter the outcome and no matter the medium that is used. As Eco recognised in his reflection on fascism, in any mythology, the hero is an exceptional being that is closely linked to the cult of death. *Heroism* is the norm. The fascist hero aspires to death as the ultimate reward for a heroic existence. As Antonio (Boys) argues: ‘*Who dies or is a victim of this State in our groups is not forgotten and will be always remembered.*’ The heroes celebrated by Italian *UltraS* are people who fight for their ideals. Their heroes are the deceased – their ‘fallen’ are those such as Paolo di Nella;¹¹⁸ others are the ‘victims’ of the DASPO or those imprisoned for being *UltraS*. As Eco (1995) notes for those devoid of alternative social identities, *Ur-Fascism*, presents a privilege of being born with a sense of nation going back to the Roman Empire, of being Italian, the inheritor of these ancient and venerable values, cults and histories. Significantly, the *Boys* and *Irriducibili* sport the colours of the Italian flag in their merchandise.

The *UltraS* have parallels elsewhere. For many, modern society lacks meaningful relationships, beliefs, strong values and a sense of place (Klapp 1969, p. 318). In modern cities, there is an absence of strong identifications for a strong point of reference. In this context, many correlate themselves with the most unlikely of individuals and movements. The Boxer recognises this fact. He describes his reason for the response that it provokes:

‘When we speak about issues such as the Palestine *Intifada* and Saddam Hussein’s Iraq they do not like it; they do not like political topics at the stadium because they could create a consensus; this scares politicians who cannot control votes. This is the reason for the strong police repression....’

In distant places, obscure texts, and myths of origin are found amongst narratives and practices. The *UltraS* aspire to such texts and myths, even if their origin has no relevance to a Roman or Italian context. Their sympathy for the Irish Republic cause arises out of their seeing Ireland as a nation that forever resists an imposed discourse via myth, legend and song - and ultimately violence. The Irish nationalist populations celebrate the warrior; the

¹¹⁸ Paolo Di Nella is considered by Italian neo-fascists as one of their martyrs against the communists. He was honoured in 2005 by the former centre-left Mayor of Rome, Walter Veltroni, with a street dedication in a historical Roman park. In February 1983, Di Nella was acting as a member of the Youth Front (the youth movement of the fascist political party, the MSI) placing posters at Piazza Vescovio, aiming to raise environmentalist issues concerning the preservation of the historical park of Villa Chigi. He was attacked by a group of the extreme left who struck him on the head. He died after seven days in a coma. Cf. http://archivistorico.corriere.it/2005/maggio/15/Rinasc_Villa_Chigi_con_viale_co_10_050515103.shtml

nationalist murals are admired, stressing, as they do, a sense of identity through symbols, non-conformist heroes, and national (and submerged) identities. The Palestinian cause offers the same admiration-logic. Such support is not required, it is what such people symbolise that matters. The wish of the *UltraS* to be heard and counted is evidenced by Giovanni's articulations (*Irriducibili*):

I can tell you even more; for a while, a well-known and popular extreme left-leaning newspaper [Il Manifesto] dedicated articles about us and praised us for our social battles against drugs and paedophilia; ironically they said we were fascist that did not know how to be communist. How ignorant! Many do not know the social doctrine of fascism has many things in common with the revolutionary left. Unfortunately in Italy fascism has been always depicted as reactionary whilst in origin it was nothing like that; unfortunately these things are taught in history books that our children study where many things are represented following dominant ideology, ... for us, communism has been reactionary while real fascism was revolutionary.'

The ideology of the Italian neo-fascists, as expressed by the *UltraS*, has potential in the Roman (and in the Italian) *curva*. It has revolutionary power and has found in the stadium an outlet. As Giovanni elaborates:

'Until the emergence of our group, everyone thought that the typical *UltraS* was an imbecile who goes to the stadium to watch the match, perhaps drunk and seeking violence. We want to send a message to the public; the *Irriducibili* showed the public that *UltraS* can think beyond football. We did this firstly with our fanzine and then with our radio programme. Via these tools, we can express our opinions and defend ourselves from media attacks; this was the main reason why we started radio programmes. The fanzine pushed the *Irriducibili* thought at the games, our radio show keeps it alive all week. We wanted to underline that the *Irriducibili* are Lazio *UltraS* but they are also citizens wishing to have their opinions heard. We have been pioneers; we tried to make other *UltraS* realize that we are a potent lobby and we can make a difference at the elections.'

Giovanni's' statement stresses the status of the *Agorà* of the Olympic stadium. *Agorà* is an ancient Greek term meaning public meeting place (Camp, 1992). It is a location in Ancient Greece that is intended primarily for public assembly. Only later was it also used as a market place. *Agorà* is the location where the *oikos* (private dimension) and *ecclesia* (public dimension) meet. It is the location where private problems are dealt with in a meaningful way. This locale is used to articulate, not just to draw narcissistic pleasures or to search for some relief through public display, but to collectively seek the tools that are powerful enough to lift individuals from their privately suffered misery. It is the space where ideas may be born, take shape and be considered the 'public good'. It pursues the 'just society' or at least provides comfort in a sense of 'shared values' (Bauman, 1999). The Italian football stadium is one of the few remaining Italian modern social *Agorà*. It is a site where not only football,

but also ideological opinions – often the antithesis of notions of political correctness – and direct actions are freely expressed in the pursuit of a wider consensus and resistance. Todde affirms this:

‘The football stadium allows us to bring our battles -via the media- to 40 million Italians. Before in the stadium you would rarely find socio-political issues raised by *UltraS*. It is the only place that we can speak freely about our ideas without being charged with subversive association. In other places, we would be repressed. We are people that do not want to be made stupid by consumerist repression; we want to discuss and to confront. The stadium ends are ours and here we can express who we are and impose our rules. We go to the stadium and articulate our ideas because the State does not allow the individual to freely speak out because of rampant political correctness. We fight this lack of freedom mainly with negative campaigns, but when the State allows us to express our values, we also send constructive and positive messages.’

In their *Agorà* -stadium, the *UltraS* have a liminal arena for the public performance of stigmatised behaviour. In ritual and display, they have words and symbols and, similar to Rappaport’s (1979) debate on religious protagonists and performance, the believer ‘gives substance to the symbol, as the symbol gives him form’ (p. 200). The *Agorà* -stadium becomes for the *UltraS* another means of identification; it can be considered at the same time a place for the outlaw and socially excluded and a locale where the *UltraS* can resist repression. Football support coupled with a strong ideology induces notions of the ‘Fundamental’, but as Vrcan and Lalic (1999) have argued in the context of post-1991 Croatian football and football-related political ideology, the escalation of conflict makes it possible to die because of symbolism.

This section aimed to make sense of the complex social forces that motivate the *Irriducibili* and *Boys*. The roots of the political ideology which inspires the *UltraS* lifeworld is oppositional, as in all Italian neo-fascist youth groups. The main patterns of the *UltraS* reasoning namely the *non omologazione*, authenticity, Tradition and adersion to Modernity, and the ‘Warrior Spirit’ - together with the *UltraS* way of conceiving issues related to national identity and race- unveil the ideological but also cultural traits of what can be conceived as the *UltraS* *communitas*. To completely make sense of any *UltraS group*, though, it is important to locate them in a wider context considering the increasing diffusion throughout Italy of similar gatherings and their common strategy of opposition to the police and the State.

The notion that can be used to summarise this section is that of ‘Framing’. The *UltraS* are constantly ‘Framing’ their messages. ‘Framing’ and ideology are two sides of the same coin to interpret the *UltraS* way of life. They are different but connected (Corte and Edwards 2008). While ideology – supported by culture – represents stability and provides certainty and values to social groups, ‘Framing’ is flexible, unpredictable and is responsible for the construction of their meanings (Corte and Edwards 2008; Snow et al., 2004). When opposing the ‘others’ or fighting their battles, the *UltraS* make choices and erase some information; this process is what Goffman (in Corte and Edwards, 2008) identified as ‘impression management.’ Put simply, the *UltraS* package the reality, leaving out what does not fit and keep that which can create a consensus. ‘Framing’ is the key, for example, to understanding the *UltraS* recruitment dynamics among the *curva*. The framing of social stigma and the sense of persecution create a consensus in the group and serves to proselytise their cause to the Italian neo-fascist world. Todde explained that many youth with neo-fascist ideological sympathies approach groups such as the *Boys* identifying with their plight, enraged by what they perceive as a police persecution against fascists.

‘Framing’ processes have implications not only at micro but also at macro level. In the current Italian social and political context, the *curva* and, more generally, the football stadium, re-affirms its social status and function as an *Agorà*, a site of communication, one of the few surviving places in which a group may jointly express sentiments of rebellion and collective identity. The *UltraS* ideology is meaningful; they are organised and interact both locally and nationally, they are present throughout the country and are able to mobilise themselves to fight common ‘enemies’. A climate of hate and vendetta ensues, diffusing progressively among the whole Italian *curva* led by the *UltraS*, which has repercussions for the Italian public order.

To understand these extreme youth gatherings, we need also to consider that the members of the *Irriducibili* and *Boys* shape their own world that is constantly delimited. This domain includes two major actors: ‘we’ (the *UltraS*) and ‘the others’ who are deemed outsiders to their way of life. This attitude is particularly important in the evaluation of the *UltraS* racist dimensions. As found in studies conducted on the Italian extreme right youth movement (Klandermans and Mayer, 2006), the *UltraS* never admitted with me to being racist. They were offended by comparisons to Nazis. Federico (*Irriducibili*) rejected accusations of racism and provided the following story in response:

‘I am against anyone who calls me a Nazi! What I do not like are people who come to my country and commit crimes; Albanians and Romanians are destroying Rome

with their camps. I am not racist. One day, I was waiting in my car at the traffic light for the green and, as usual, there was a young female gypsy who was trying to clean the car window screen and was asking for money. Suddenly, a municipal police officer (traffic police hired by the Mayor with less power than ordinary police and who are usually not armed) started to mistreat the girl. I jumped out of my car and almost kicked his arse. I hate injustice! ‘

In this account, the anti-system stance of the *UltraS* was stressed over and above racial prejudice. Such an account shows the complexity of the racist dimension. Their racism exists; it is expressed in the stadium and it has different dimensions. It is ritualised, it is ideological (specifically prejudice towards the ‘Jews’ always identified as ‘Zionists’) and reflects the broader worries of many Roman-Italian citizens regarding the State’s mismanagement of illegal immigration (especially from Eastern Europe), which is widely perceived as a threat to the security of the city. However, the root of their racism is ‘oppositional’. The *Boys* and the *Irriducibili* are hostile to anyone outside of their world, regardless of race and credo and this is one of the most important traits they have in common with other Italian *UltraS*. As they are popular in the *curve* and connected nationally we can, therefore, hypothesise the emergence of both a social movement and a common oppositional strategy against the media and the police. It is on these dynamics that the final part of the study focuses.

SECTION C

THE 'WARRIORS' AND THEIR FOES



Fig.45: The *UltraS* and their foes

Offering a road map to live by and narratives to act within, the *UltraS* ideology and culture define the boundaries of the possible. While the Italian neo-fascists try to promote their ideology within society, the *UltraS* consider themselves bearers and promoters of this ideological 'way of life' within the Italian *curve*. The football stadium, therefore, remains dangerously the most important Italian mediatic *piazza*, as a result, one of the most efficient *Agorà* of the 21st century Italian youth socialisation.

By locating themselves against the dominant values of Italian society, the *UltraS* require and acquire a symbolic and ideological system to act as a guide to action. Symbols and tales motivate the logic of both the 'elite' and 'sympathisers' and fuel their hostility to the 'deceiver' media and the 'oppressive' arm of the State namely the police. Chapters 11 and 12 conclude this thesis by investigating the relationship between the 'warriors' and the people and institutions that they identify as their enemies.

Chapter 11

Contested meanings: the Italian Media and the UltraS

Football in Italy is not only a significant cultural practice; it is also an important industry. Over the past few seasons, Italians have spent millions of Euros on admission tickets for football matches and football magazines and on the football betting game called *Totocalcio*.¹¹⁹ If we compare that amount of money with some of the nation's biggest industries, football finds itself close to the top. His Holiness the Pope, in his Sunday *Angelus*, has repeatedly spoken about the powerful effect that football exerts on any Italian province and Italian social life generally. The common saying that football is the foundation of the State exceeds the meaning. Nowadays such a relationship is felt more than ever. During the *Campionato di Serie A* (the major Italian football Championship) one finds a common Sunday scenario: following lunch, families and friends gather in football clubs or bars with pre-paid TV channels, or at home to watch TV or listen to the radio. One can witness the same story every Sunday, and hear from bars the commentator's voices particularly via the radio programme *Calcio Minuto per Minuto*. Following the match, the requisite TV broadcast of *90th Minuto* presents the first interviews of the coaches and players, accompanied by the *Schedina* and the hope for a point's accumulation numbering 14 in the *Totocalcio* lottery, for a fortune in winnings. The comment *Scusa, Scusa Ameri* (Excuse, excuse me Ameri) heard among friends is frequently said, imitating a phrase often used during the football radio programme of RAI¹²⁰ *Tutto il calcio minuto per minuto* (All Football Minute by Minute) by the now-deceased sport journalist Enrico Ameri to announce that a goal has been scored in a Sunday *Serie A* match.

The link between football and the media is very strong and this is particularly relevant in Italy (Porro 2001, 2008). The Italian media, for instance, have greatly contributed to the popularisation of the 'beautiful game'. Media have a tremendous influence on supplying publicity and creating the need for advertisements. Equally, football influences the media: it is the reason why many newspapers exist. Not everything in this relationship is constructive; the saturation coverage of football by the Italian media has created some dysfunctions; among these, we find the triviality of many sport talk shows that in content resemble barroom

¹¹⁹ The *Totocalcio* is a prize contest. The punter, using the betting card (*schedina*), must predict the outcome of 14 football matches every Sunday.

¹²⁰ *Radiotelevisione* (RAI) is Italian State radio and television broadcasting.

debates. Heated arguments (and even brawls) among sports journalists frequently occur on such shows. At times, such behaviours are promoted, as they improve the audience ratings. One sports talk show, hosted by journalist Aldo Biscardi,¹²¹ exemplifies this trend. The tone of the commentators and conversations has progressively worsened in recent years. Triani (1994) argues that in Italian TV sports, broadcasting there is a constant disappearance of intellectuals, meaning that to be heard, the commentators adopt simplifications bordering on vulgarity.

Three Italian newspapers give extensive coverage to sports (especially football): *la Gazzetta dello Sport*, *il Corriere dello Sport* and *Tutto Sport*. Moreover, on Monday, all Italian newspapers focus on the Sunday football league results. Many national and satellite TV channels dedicate entire programs to the games, their tactics, results analyses, and trivia. One can find regional and local televisions focusing on their local teams and fans; these broadcasts are often led directly by hardcore football supporters. It is in this context that radio programs such as the *Irriducibili* and *Boys's la Voce della Nord* (the Voice of Nord) and *Giallorossi si diventa* (Yellow-Reds) emerged and became popular in the Lazio region in the late 1990s.¹²²

11.1 The voices of the reason?

The media have extraordinary power in today's society, not only to make 'things visible' but also to manipulate what people think (Entman, 1989). They provide definitions and explanations, and present both problem and solutions (Cavender 2004; Cavender et al. 1993). The media portray real or 'supposed' dangers, giving people the opportunity to react, to protest and to be actors in the subsequent outrage. They particularly help in shaping opinion and orientation in relation to deviant behaviours and crime. (Cavender, 2004). With this in mind, an analysis of the media-*UltraS* (and hardcore football supporters) relationship needs to be attempted. My starting point focused on a central question: How do the *UltraS* perceive the media? Among the *Boys* and the *Irriducibili*, the media provoked strong sentiments. These were not without ambiguities. Generally, the *UltraS* had an avoidance relationship with the media: '*we avoid [overtone of disdain] speaking to the press. The group has its hierarchy and needs to have only one public voice. The only one who has media*

¹²¹ The television broadcast title *il processo di Biscardi* (the Trial of Biscardi) is broadcast every Monday after the Sunday football matches and since 2006 is hosted by channel 7 Gold.

¹²² The broadcasts were used to advertise the *UltraS pensiero* (i.e. values, opinions) about football but also about political and social issues. Moreover, listeners could hear stories around the groups' social initiatives.

*contacts is the 'big boss' (Boys). Giorgio (Irriducibili) never failed to stress his and the group's dislike of the Italian media; for him the media discriminated against the *UltraS* and specifically against the *Irriducibili*. Considering them hypocrites, Giorgio could not comprehend why they focused on the *Irriducibili's* display of the Celtic crosses (which he admitted were not only a Christian symbol but also a neo-fascist one) but at the same time failed to stigmatise football players (such the Livorno's striker Cristiano Lucarelli) for displaying tattoos of communist icons like Che Guevara, or groups that openly supported communism. Communism for Giorgio committed as many crimes against humanity as Fascism.*

The *UltraS* also considered the media as an ally of the forces of their repression. The Media acted as a tool to serve the interests of the 'system'. They also believed that media money was the main reason why Italian football was lacking in values. This was a common feeling, not only among the *UltraS* studied, but also by a large part of the Italian hardcore supporters groups regardless of ideology. This attitude, however, contains a strong contradiction; while ostensibly fighting the media, the *UltraS* aim to be in the stadium because it is the only place where, because of the media coverage, they can be visible and heard in promoting their way of life, their ideology and, in the case of the *Boys* and the *Irriducibili*, their struggle against societal and football institutions.

In November 2008, three well-known Italian sport journalists were interviewed with the purpose of explaining their viewpoint on the *UltraS* phenomenon and the relationship between their trade and the *UltraS*: Franco Arturi (deputy director of *la Gazzetta dello Sport*, an historical and popular Italian sports newspaper); Giuseppe Tassi¹²³ (sports journalist and deputy director of *Quotidiano.net*); and Gabriele Marcotti (journalist of *The Times* and of the Rome based *Corriere dello Sport* -another major national sport newspaper). The interviews allowed them to reply to the *UltraS* accusations and to explain their points of view about the *UltraS* phenomenon. From these interviews, two patterns of inquiry emerged around the media-*UltraS* dynamics; one we might term 'alarmist and interventionist' (Arturi and Tassi), the other 'skeptical' (Marcotti).

Asked what he thought about the hardcore football supporters and more specifically the *UltraS* phenomenon, Arturi argued the following:

'We should not be afraid of words such as 'terrorism' and 'terrorists'; for example when a person commits a crime, he/she is a criminal. In Italy we tend to be tolerant

¹²³ Cf. <http://club.quotidianonet.ilsole24ore.com/tassi>

and to use meaningless formulae... we in fact seem not to criminalise... I argue that if anyone imposes fear in a *curva* and masterminds a strategy of terror then he is a terrorist. The *curve* enjoy territorial immunity; the police do not enter these locations because they are strongholds of these groups.'

Tassi took a similar line and called the *UltraS* group 'young thugs disguised as football supporters'. Arturi, more than Tassi and in accord with most of the national press, identified the groups (often without any distinctions between them and 'ordinary' supporters) as 'outcasts' from the Italian 'civil' society requiring strong State intervention to control them. In addition, Arturi, in defending his hypothesis of associating the *UltraS* with terrorism, argued that ordinary people in the *curve* were expropriated from their seats and the stewards or the police could do nothing about it. In his opinion, many Italian stadiums events resembled anarchy: there were no rules and the *curve* were dominated by groups who chanted horrible slogans and exposed disgusting symbols. The accusation that the situation is akin to anarchy highlights a hasty observation of the journalist with regard to the social world of the *curve*. There are indeed words spoken and chanted that many would not agree with; that said, the *curve* have historical customs and norms justifying specific behaviours that an outsider can understandably perceive as illogical. In the *curva* the principle of seniority, for instance, is strictly respected by groups regardless of ideology. Such seniority highlights the supporter-team connection, and is considered by the fan as a badge of loyalty. If an individual has occupied a seat for many years, then that seat, regardless of its number, is considered 'reserved'. This process does not follow the dominant reason of the wider society, but it is perfectly logical to both the 'ordinary' *curva* supporter and the *UltraS*.

Another source of contention between the *UltraS* and the media was the groups' involvement in social campaigns. During his leadership of the *Boys*, Paolo Zappavigna was the main promoter of these campaigns. The first such project was focused around agitation for a national referendum to abrogate law No.40, 2004, which regulated assisted procreation. The law banned testing on human embryos and prohibited more than three embryos from being implanted in a womb simultaneously. The law also forbade fertilization by the use of semen or ova provided by persons other than the couple. Zappavigna collected signatures proposing a referendum to abrogate the law. He did this in the *curva sud* and convinced groups therein to create a huge banner urging people to sign the referendum. These actions helped the protagonists reaching the necessary target signatures for a 2005 referendum to proceed. However, due to pressure from the Catholic Church, technical confusion around the issue and the effectiveness of the oppositional campaigners convincing people not to vote

(only 25.9% voted), the law remained unchanged (La Repubblica –online- 13 June, 2005). The second cause Zappavigna tried to support was that of the Argentinian Desaparecidos.¹²⁴ In doing so, he invited into the *curva sud* Estella Carlotto, a representative of *The Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo* (Grandmothers of *Plaza de Mayo*) and collected monies for their cause in the *curva sud*.

The *Irriducibili* were not only against paedophilia and against drugs, as previously documented, but they also aimed to raise public awareness on other issues, as Giorgio explains:

‘We help a dog refuge near Rome for mistreated and abandoned dogs; we got involved five years ago because they did not have funds and the refuge was about to be closed and the dogs killed. Now the place is a safe haven supported by Laziali. We also help an association in the fight against tumours in children; we donated to the hospital Bambin Gesù¹²⁵ a machine called the ‘Retcam Photography System’ to help diagnose tumours and complex eye diseases¹²⁶. They invited us to a dinner and once there received from us this very expensive machine. We also collaborate with the Italian Anti-Tumour Association. We are involved in the fight against vivisection; we have thought to do as many do in the UK to go to the university/drugs companies labs and free the animals. We are against vivisection especially when testing for cosmetics; we have also financially supported people who lost their homes when their building collapsed in Rome [he did not remember the date during the interview]; in that occasion, Lazio supporters lost their lives. We are available to any socially worthwhile battle; we have a radio and a television program that is open to any cause if we can help. Just to have one of us on the radio speaking about the initiative is helpful.’¹²⁷

The response of the *Gazzetta dello Sport*’s journalist to such projects was dismissive; Arturi compared such gatherings to the Mafia and dismissed the campaigns as ‘ordinary’ good actions any citizen would undertake. He rejected the accusation from the groups that the media did not advertise their social campaigns but only their violence, and affirmed that when such groups were involved in social campaigns his newspaper informed the public. Nonetheless, he dismissed the campaigns as a publicity stunt conducted to ‘buy’ a sort of immunity for the groups’ violent acts. Arturi maintained that the press had to fight the *UltraS* because in Italy ‘we live in an emergency state.’ Tassi spoke from a more moderate stance

¹²⁴ The term literally means ‘disappeared’ in Spanish and is applied to people arrested for ostensibly political reasons by the police of the Argentine Junta of the 1970s and early 80s. It is estimated that between 1976 and 1983, up to 30,000 dissidents went ‘missing’. The *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo* (Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo) are mothers and grandmothers of the “disappeared”. Since its foundation in 1977, the organization has also been searching for over 200 “disappeared” children, some born in clandestine detention centers during the captivity of their mothers or “disappeared” with their parents after being taken into custody by members of the police or security forces. Cf. <http://abuelas.org.ar/italiano/storia.htm>

¹²⁵ A hospital in Rome internationally renowned in treating children’s diseases.

¹²⁶ The two initiatives were also acknowledged by the newspaper *Il Manifesto* (issue 04/06/03) ; a popular national newspaper that propounds a communist ideology.

¹²⁷ Giorgio refers to the radio broadcast, *La Voce Della Nord*.

and tried to differentiate supporters. He argued that the press had the right to strongly denounce the violence of mindless thugs like the *UltraS* and the degeneration of the *tifo*, but needed not to dismiss the good side of the hardcore supporters' movement. Tassi believed that their choreographies are an integral part of the footballing show and contributed to the 'good' atmosphere of the stadium.

It would be incorrect and naive to consider the media as 'evil,' as many *UltraS* and hardcore supporters would argue. On the other hand, the same risk of being accused of naiveté is evident if we analyse, without a critical eye, the Italian media coverage of events connected with these 21st century 'folk devils' (Cohen, 1980). As Todde argues with some justification: '*they [the media] seldom write the real fact; they do not understand the UltraS phenomenon in its entirety and most of all are superficial and lazy in researching and understanding.*'

It is, therefore, important to recognise that the media, in their function to inform, link events together; they build or 'map' events into larger, wider frameworks of meaning so that viewers come to 'know' more than just what is happening. From that knowledge viewers and listeners also construct 'pictures of the world, scenarios of action.' (Hall, 1975 in Doran, 2008, p.198). Two examples suffice here: one relates to the *UltraS* studied, the other concerns the hardcore football fans of Naples (who are not generally ideologically oriented). These two examples underline the risk that the exercise of the mandate to inform can bring.

The first instance illustrates one of the flaws of certain Italian press and its inclination to readily identify conspiracies. The episode in question occurred at the final game of the 2003-2004 *Serie A* season between Roma-Lazio. The match saw normal pre-match mingling, accusations and boasting between the rival fan groups, augmented by mutual chants of abuse and occasional missile throwing in the stadium. What was unprecedented was the mass confrontation between the forces of the law, clad in their designer riot gear, and the momentarily united ranks of Roma and Lazio supporters some 60 minutes later. This Roman fan alliance, which Arturi in our interview defined as 'unnatural', was unique in terms of the numbers and anger involved but not unusual to the participants. The uniqueness originated from the nature of the event. The dynamics around this 2004 fixture were bizarre. In the second half, a rumour circulated in both *curve* that, in the pre-match mêlée between fans and police outside the stadium, a police vehicle had struck and killed a young boy. This rumour had the effect of transforming the vociferous antagonism between both sets of supporters and the police into an open conflict. The police subsequently faced attack from angry *UltraS* throughout the Olympic Stadium. The police responded with baton charges. The two football

teams, clearly in shock over the happenings on the terraces, stopped play shortly after the beginning of the second half when smoke bombs were let off, making it difficult to watch events on the pitch. In the hiatus, three men in their 30s – Roma *UltraS* – entered the pitch. One put his arm on Francesco Totti’s shoulder, the Roma captain and Italian international, and spoke with him demanding he lead the players off the pitch (thereby suspending the match) both out of respect for the dead and in a show of protest against the supposed police brutality. The next 20 minutes made for global debate. Totti discussed matters with Lazio’s Serbian-born enforcer, Sinisa Mihajlovic. The referee, sensing their fear, approached the pair and in typically macho language encouraged the pair to continue playing. Meanwhile the public address system broadcasted denials that a child had been killed. In the chaos, Totti spoke to the AS Roma coach, Fabio Capello. His words were recorded as stating: ‘*If we play on now... they’ll kill us*’ (Panorama –online- 22 March, 2004). Sensibly, the majority of players did not want to continue. The *Prefetto di Roma*, (the highest provincial authority of public security) then entered the pitch demanding the referee and players restart the game in the interest of public order. The referee then took a call on a mobile phone from Adriano Galliani, the President of the Italian League; after a short conversation, the game was abandoned. The police were powerless in this football context. By the end of the night, 15 fans and 60 police were reported to have sustained injuries and some 36 fans were arrested.

The interruption of the match brought global notoriety to the city of Rome and Italian football. Several Italian newspapers ran headlines the day after, which compared the *UltraS* to the Sicilian Mafia. The following ‘discourse’ published by the Italian magazine *Panorama* reported the *tifosi* invasion in the following impressionistic fashion:

‘They approach Totti threateningly and spoke agitatedly to the captain. Sky’s [Murdoch’s television channel] camera operators were sent away as if they were spying (which is an unacceptable violation of the right of information). The players’ faces are perturbed and frightened; it is not possible to hear it but the scene suggests that they have been threatened.’ (Panorama –online- 22 March, 2004)

An important trait of media discourse is their ability not only to reflect reality but also to construct it; expressions of reality are often used to construct representations that fit a particular ideology (Fairclough, 1989). According to Fowler (1996), ideologies are, amongst other discursive structures, articulated in lexical processes. Even if the journalist admits the impossibility of listening to the conversation, expressions such as ‘perturbed’ and ‘frightened’ direct the reader to an assumed scenario.

The three main *UltraS*, Stefano Carriero, Roberto Maria Morelli and Stefano Sordini, who had entered the pitch from the terraces, were arrested as they left the pitch. Days later, the Roman magistrate Giorgio Maria Rossi released the three from police custody arguing that they had not threatened Totti. The supporters had entered the pitch to inform Totti of the (false) death of the boy and asked him to abandon the game so that fans could go home and therefore the angry reprisals against police would cease. Whilst entering the field of play is not permitted under the regulations of the Italian Football Federation, the circumstances at the Olympic Stadium did not belong to the realm of normality. The *UltraS* had shown the nation watching TV on a Sunday evening that in some situations they had enormous power, they strongly denied the media's theory that they had organised the episode to show their power. The three *UltraS* also denied having threatened Totti. Francesca dismissed the plot allegations as silly, arguing that if she would have known that the Boys and the other *UltraS* were planning to destroy the stadium and attack the police she would not have gone to the Olympic Stadium. The Boxer instead accused the media in this occasion of being *infami*:

'They just wrote what they wanted without even asking us what we thought and our version of the story. If the *Irriducibili* are involved there is surely something 'dark' behind it. Almost every journalist behaves in the same way ; when we plan a nice show in the *curva* with banners, choreographies either they will not cover it or will minimize our work; if instead there are problems at the stadium is our fault we are the mindless thugs, the fascists, the delusional; I say instead they are the scum.'

After a few days of online research seeking to find out more about the epilogue of the episode, I discovered an article of *La Repubblica*- dated 2007 and titled '*The suspended derby was not a plot, the magistrates established the facts about the 2004 match*' – that informed the reader:

'The magistrates beliefs after nearly three years of investigations were crucial to the fate of the seven Roman fans suspected. All the serious criminal charges (among these private violence and incitement to disobey the laws of the State) were dropped while they still faced minor charges of violations of the law on the safety of the stadiums and creation of panic which will be prescribed only a pecuniary fine.' (La Repubblica –online- 05 February, 2007)

Oversimplifications about bad practice of the Italian media would be inappropriate here; nevertheless, this is an obvious example of the media's ability to re-present reality creating meaning via a careful selection, presentation, organisation and re-construction of the news (Hall,1982, in Juris, 2005, p.422).

Another episode involving media coverage - this time non-ideologically oriented- occurred at the first match of the 2008-2009 season. The respected Italian journalist Oliviero

Beha reported the episode in his popular blog.¹²⁸ On the first match of the *Serie A* season, Roma and Napoli drew (1-1). The media informed the public of 1500 hardcore Neapolitan fans attacking a train station in Naples, forcing 300 passengers to get off the train. Four controllers of *Trenitalia* (the Italian state railway company) were reported as being wounded and the train was apparently damaged and looted. At their arrival at the *Roma Termini* railway station, the aggressors were said to have thrown paper bombs and tear gas. *Trenitalia* estimated the damages at 500,000 Euros. The Italian newspapers carried the headlines, ‘*Naples’ ultra’ owner of the train: Trenitalia: damages for 500,000 Euros*’; ‘*ultra’ out of their minds, trains and train stations destroyed*’ (La Repubblica –online- 31 August, 2008).

Beha was the only journalist to publish the account of the German sport journalist Reinhard Krennhuber who was also chief editor of *Ballesterer FM Radio*. Krennhuber, together with his colleague Jacob Rosenberg, had travelled with the Neapolitan hardcore fans to Rome for the match. Krennhuber, when asked about what really occurred that day in his interview with Thomas Hirner of the *DerStandard.at*,¹²⁹ stated:

‘Firstly, it is incorrect to say that the fans of Naples threatened and pushed 300 passengers to get off of the train; we also did not see any train controllers attacked. The train should have left at 9.24 am but after 11 am *trenitalia* representatives came aboard to advise the passengers to leave the train and take another one. We left at 12, 30 with a train completely full. When we arrived, the match had already started by 52 min; it is a shame the fans had paid for their train and stadium tickets. The frustrated fans started to demolish the toilets but I am unsure how such damages reached 500,000 Euros...I cannot imagine why a person should loot a train; what is there so important to loot? I also find it strange the news about the tear gases at Termini.’

The journalist of the *DerStandard.at*¹³⁰ asked Krennhuber if they were afraid; he answered:

‘We did not fear the Naples fans, they had not attacked the police in the train station nor at the stadium, because they knew what was at stake... The allegations that the incidents were planned and orchestrated by the fans or even by the camorra (organized crime organization of Naples) seem totally absurd.’

Krennhuber concluded:

‘In the future, I will believe even less the news of Italian media about clashes involving fans. There is an enormous discrepancy between what we experienced that day and what the media reported. All day we did not meet a fellow journalist. The

¹²⁸ Cf. <http://behablog.it/>

¹²⁹ *Derstandard.at*. (2008, September 04). Schikanen bewusst geplant?. Retrieved January 14, 2009, from <http://derstandard.at/?url=?id=1220457342474>

¹³⁰ *Derstandard.at*. (2008, September 04). Schikanen bewusst geplant?. Retrieved January 14, 2009, from <http://derstandard.at/?url=?id=1220457342474>

media had not done any research on the spot; they are collecting information from the local authorities. In addition, in their coverage the fans' version is not taken into account or only minimally. *Raiuno* (the Italian equivalent of the BBC) was the only broadcaster to permit the fans and ordinary people to speak, instead of just politicians and representatives of various authorities on the facts. The versions of the fact from the ordinary people and the fans are similar to ours'.¹³¹

In his interview, Krennhuber portrays the Italian media as too lazy to find out what really occurred and too reliant on the 'spin' of authority. It is difficult not to notice that Krennhuber's argument is similar to many *UltraS* opinions about the media.

The example of the Naples fans illustrates the media's process of 'encoding' (Doran, 2008). According to Hall et al. (1978), journalists have easy access to the versions of events given by individuals or institutions in positions of power. These groups become the 'primary definers' of crucial society issues because they have privileged access to information out of the sight of the public (Doran 2008; Hall et.al. 1978). Deviant actions and their coverage are often shaped around the perspectives of the 'primary definers'. The primary definers interpret the event creating a dynamic by which, 'the first interpretation is discursively powerful and extremely difficult to alter, once established' (Hall et al. 1978, in Doran, 2008, p. 201). In our analysis of the media, we also need to be cautious in characterising them as passive recipients. Once the journalists receive the primary definers' versions, they act to select and shape these viewpoints; as a result, they are not merely passive tools in the hands of the powerful. Events are 'coded' in each paper's own mode of address and into its public idiom; the media often adapt the tale of the primary definers using versions of reality that fit into the common language used by the 'average joe,' giving further strength to discourses characterised by 'popular force and resonance' and 'naturalising' these views for the audience (Doran, 2008). Moreover, both examples mentioned earlier underline the role of the Italian media as agents of moral resentment (Cohen, 1980). The media-*UltraS* dynamics (and more widely the whole of the hardcore football fans), however, cannot be completely understood using just Hall's hypotheses; it is complex and multi-dimensional. An excess of media coverage is also another issue in this highly complex media-*UltraS* relationship; dense coverage is a dysfunction that may become dangerous. The excess focuses mainly, but not exclusively, on negative actions, real or perceived. This trend appears to be rooted in two factors; the first is economic, namely the need to sell news. The other is specific to the *UltraS* identity, notably their logic and characteristic as an oppositional movement. Two different

¹³¹ Derstandard.at. (2008, September 04). Schikanen bewusst geplant?. Retrieved January 14, 2009, from <http://derstandard.at/?url=/?id=1220457342474>

opinions emerged from the interviews with the Italian sports journalists. From one side, Arturi did not mention any problems related to an excess of coverage even if he rightly underlined the difference in quality of the coverage according to the skills of the journalist:

‘The press - I would add the ‘good’ press, because as always in life there are the average journalists, good journalists and bad journalists – is one of the pillars that underpin a democratic country, these ‘Mafiosi’ see the police and the media as an obstacle to their criminal business. If the press intervene strongly it is due to living in a state of emergency.’

The third journalist Gabriele Marcotti, though, held a different view:

‘Violent acts from hardcore fans receive less coverage in the UK media than in Italy. For example, two years ago, Chelsea and Tottenham fans fought and 13 Tottenham fans were wounded and ended up in hospital; if you search, you will find only brief reports. I do not remember any Italian match ended with 13 fans wounded but I imagine, if this episode had occurred in Italy, the press would have covered the event for ages. If we want to be cynical we could say that broadcasting channels such as BBC and SKY do not cover the phenomenon so much to avoid damaging football as a product and business. We can also say that they do not want to encourage an emulation process. When the Italian inspector of police- Raciti- tragically died , the Italian TV channels showed the episode millions of times; I am not sure how necessary this obsessive coverage is; can this instead have an opposite effect?’

While Arturi’s statement argued for the supposed ‘emergency’ situation that justifies an excess in media coverage, Marcotti pointed out an ‘obsessive’ coverage of negative episodes involving not only *UltraS* but also any hardcore-football fans. Marcotti’s argument is supported by the literature (Marani, 2003).

The first, apparent, justification of the Italian media coverage of the *UltraS* phenomenon might be best explained by the statement ‘*bad news is good news*’. Fights between rival fans are more likely to be reported than the *UltraS* campaigns against paedophilia. A more articulate explanation might help focus this issue. According to Cavender (2004), the pleasure that audiences draw from crime stories comes from the eternal battle between good and evil. Such stories ideally contain, as protagonists, heroes (the State, the police and the media) and villains (the ‘mindless’ football thugs). This representation is a constant feature of news about crime. The media increases the tension/drama between the two forces, which is good news albeit hardly ‘fair’ coverage.

‘This similarity of presentation produces a unity of narrative themes about crime. Crime, in the real world, but also as depicted in the media, becomes a part of the agenda of public discourse.’ (Cavender, 2004, p. 339)

In their presentation of crime/deviant news (such as those involved the *UltraS*) a clichéd scenario ensues. The tension has to be built up; the enemy is defined. The drama is then played out and the public's interest is used to justify all subsequent coverage.

The other possible explanation focuses on the specificity of the *UltraS* having a dual vested interest, not only as hardcore football fans but also, as this study explains, as a 'genuine' neo-fascist extraparliamentary groups motivated by a logic of 'action' and opposition against the Italian authorities. As stated previously, the *UltraS* consider themselves outside the 'system'. They, hence, need the *Agorà* of the stadium and seek, via this location, the possibility of mass audience in their struggle for visibility (Juris, 2005). Confrontations, together with banners and fanzines based on ideology, are a good means to attract media attention, which then decontextualise and re-shape the events to highlight the *UltraS* criminal or deviant traits (Gitlin, 1980), augmenting in this way the *UltraS* sense of injustice and marginalisation. The militant nature of the *UltraS* encourages the media to represent any aspect of their protest as dangerous. Their symbolism, ideology, and warrior/rebellion spirit does not provoke inquiry but seems only to help the media constructing them as a threat to the social order. Arturi, commenting on the *UltraS*, considered them: *'more than terrorism, this is Mafia! Within the stadium, there are Mafiosi attitudes. The contempt shown for journalists can be only understood in this context'*. Therefore, groups of militants, such as the *UltraS*, increase the media discourses of fear and terror, and serve to justify a strong repression that at times involves not only the *UltraS* but also 'ordinary' supporters. This type of coverage, on the other hand, can strengthen the very phenomenon, especially considering the nature of *communitas* of the *UltraS* where there is a strong group identification based on 'a shared ordeal'. This media strategy can work to increase the cultivation of perceived stigma (Corte and Edwards, 2008). Once again the stigma – discrimination element plays a central role in understanding the dynamics between the *UltraS* and the 'others' including the media. As Marco argues:

'We tend to defend the young guys of 17/18 from the control and labelling of the State; you must understand that being an *UltraS* and being a neo-fascist can be devastating for the future of these guys. In Italy, there is not a democracy; we are guarded and filed by the police; we do not expose these youngsters to this danger even if we fight; the *direttivo* is in the first row; the young follow. We do not want to expose them when they will have the maturity they will choose; we do not want to let them become attached to a label so they will not be discriminated against like many of us are.'

The risk of reinforcing their discourses of persecution and discrimination is real.

In a study of the Italian neo-fascist militants carried out by social scientists Milesi et al. (in Klandermans and Mayer, 2006), the data stressed that the crucial element, which motivated the participants to join the 'action', was the discrimination suffered by those who embraced this ideology. Similar to the *UltraS*, the young participants underlined discrimination during their adolescence or early adulthood at high school and university. Milesi et al. argued that such discrimination did not discourage them from identifying themselves in public as fascist. In fact, it had the opposite effect, reinforcing such identification. In the past, these perceptions have brought the *UltraS* to act together against oppressive institutions.¹³² This type of coverage might, as Corte and Edwards (2008) point out, reinforce the claims of marginalisation made by the *UltraS*, and supports their vision of being the righteous victims of persecution perpetrated by a system-wide conspiracy. The sense of 'being against' creates tension, anger and hate that could develop into new forms of attack against the State. Concomitantly, this type of coverage also contributes to promoting the underdog discourse that can help recruitment in the *curve* (Corte and Edwards, 2008).

While this study does not suggest in any way to restrain the democratic freedom of the media to inform the public, it proposes a more balanced use of media coverage as a strategy to contain the *UltraS* violence in light of not only this study but of findings and experiences in other countries. For instance, a negative correlation was found between a decrease in media attention and the violent actions of Austrian hardcore football fans (Marani, 2003). Perhaps the British attitude towards this phenomenon, which the journalist Gabriele Marcotti supports, could be exported to Italy.

¹³² For example the derby in 2004, has no precedent in football history, even during the Italian period of the 'bullet years'.

Chapter 12

Dura Lex Sed Lex: The Response of the ‘system’

‘Le squadre ferme nel centrocampo sulle gradinate scoppia l’inferno, le squadre ferme nel centrocampo sulle gradinate scoppia l’inferno.... [The teams stop at the centre of the pitch, in the terraces there is hell].

FRANA LA CURVA FRANA SULLA POLIZIA ITALIANA, FRANA LA CURVA FRANA SU QUEI FIGLI DI PUTTANA [The terrace collapses on the Italian Police, the terrace collapses on those sons of bitches]

Volano calci, pugni e spintoni, macchie di sangue sugli striscioni! [Kicks, punches, shoves fly; blood stains on the banners!] Volano calci, pugni e spintoni, macchie di sangue sugli striscioni!

FRANA LA CURVA FRANA SULLA POLIZIA ITALIANA, FRANA LA CURVA FRANA SU QUEI FIGLI DI PUTTANA

Se deve esserci violenza che violenza sia ma che sia contro la POLIZIA!!! [If there must be violence, ok but against the Police]. Se deve esserci violenza che violenza sia ma che sia contro la POLIZIA!!!

FRANA LA CURVA FRANA SULLA POLIZIA ITALIANA, FRANA LA CURVA FRANA SU QUEI FIGLI DI PUTTANA

Digos.....BOIA [DIGOS.....SHIT]

Digos.....BOIA

Digos-Digos-Digos.....BOIA-BOIA-BOIA

The chant above, sung by *Gli Hobbit* - one of the best known Italian neo-fascist rock groups - is a popular song among the *UltraS*. The song’s words depict the level of anger against the Italian police. Giorgio attempts to articulate this rage:

‘Football is based on business and people like us have become trouble. They have tried to sterilise the environment; they try to make the experience of watching a football match like going to the cinema. We live with passion, feelings, with ideals – this is our way of watching football. We are not against the police who punish those who throw bottles on the pitch or who create violence but this has to be proven; justice cannot be discretionary. People get banning orders without being proven guilty....’

The Italian police forces have, for decades, found themselves as the bulwark against football related disorders. They have endured a high price in terms of both resources and the deployment of manpower. In this spiral of violence, involving reactions and counter-reactions, the police have increasingly become the focus of the anger of the *UltraS*. In return, the police have sought to enact increasingly repressive legislation created to combat their attackers. Over a five-year period (2003-2008), 1,114 incidents involving fans and police were documented, equating to 222 per year (one per day when one takes public holidays and

feast days out of the equation). Resulting from these incidents, 5,388 injuries were recorded; 6,000 people were arrested and 2,000 were charged; and 20 people have died in circumstances related to football disorder since 1963.¹³³ Furthermore, in the same years (2003-2008) other alarming data were published by the National Center for Information on Sports Events (CNIMS), a body of the Department of Public Security of the Ministry of the Interior. They indicate that 574 police officers were injured during this period.¹³⁴

Following the Heysel tragedy¹³⁵ in August of 1985, a permanent multi-disciplinary commission was established by the Italian Ministry of Interior. The commission was composed of the Chief of Police, the President of the Italian National Olympic Committee-CONI, the Director-General of National Professional League, the Secretary General of the Federation Football -FIGC, and a representative of the *Serie C* league. This commission was truly a crisis unit established to address football fan violence. In 1988 (again at the Ministry of the Interior), a joint commission was formed - with the participation of the Ministry of Tourism and the FIGC - for the preparation of legislative proposals against violence related to sporting events. The Italian Parliament had to take into account the post-Heysel framework of pan-European policing cooperation. Consequently, on November 1, 1985, the Convention on Violence and Disorders of Spectators at Sporting Events came into force.¹³⁶ It is in these contexts that later laws against the *UltraS* (and neo-fascist manifestations in the Italian *curve*) should be understood.

In June of 2006, the Ministry of the Interior¹³⁷ presented an intelligence document compiled by the *Squadre Tifoserie* (fan units) of the DIGOS. According to this report, of the 487 football clubs comprising some 80,300 supporters, nearly half - 245 - expressed a political orientation (71 to the extreme right, 61 to the moderate right, 34 to the extreme left, and 87 to the moderate left). Some extreme ideological factions were recognised in the

¹³³ Cf. Il Sole24.com, *Diritto e società*.

http://professionisti24.ilsole24ore.com/art/AreaProfessionisti/Diritto/DIR_VIOLENZA%20STADI.shtml?uuid=822462e6-b75d-11db-ae4c-00000e251029&type=Libero; A reader is also directed to the following texts: D.Mariottini (2004). *Ultraviolenza, Storie di sangue del tifo Italiano*. Torino: Bradipolibri.

¹³⁴ Source: The National Centre of Information on Sports Events (CNIMS) of the Department of Public Security of the Italian Minister of the Interior - <http://osservatoriosport.interno.com/dati.html>

¹³⁵ The tragic event occurred on the occasion of the European Cup Final between Juventus and Liverpool, and saw 39 (mainly Italian) supporters crushed to death following crowd disorder.

¹³⁶ The first pan-European awareness about the cross-border dimension of football violence goes back to the Council of Europe's 1984 *Resolution on Violence Associated with Spectator Sport*. In August 1985, the *European Convention on Spectator Violence and Misbehaviour at Sports Events and in Particular at Football Matches* followed. From the European Union came the April 1996 *Guidelines for Preventing and Restraining Disorder Connected with Football Matches*, followed by *The European Parliament's Resolution on Hooliganism and the Free Movement of Football Supporters* in May of 1996.

¹³⁷ Report on crime in Italy in 2006, presented by the Ministry of the Interior on June 30, 2006. pp. 399-400 http://interno.it/mininterno/export/sites/default/it/assets/files/14/0900_rapporto_criminalita.pdf

document as having been involved in ideological propaganda and proselytism, specifically the distribution of fanzines with a political content. The report also recognised the presence of the *UltraS* in political events, as well as their participation in criminal activities with no apparent link to sporting manifestations. This should not come as a surprise to the reader. Some form of protest was enshrined in the very existence of the Italian State, and some of it was criminal. Football was not an exception. What was exceptional was the realisation that the *UltraS* had provoked the Italian State to hire people for the specific purpose of stopping them. For example, the *Sezione Tifoserie* (Fans Unit) -which collected data on the *UltraS*, exchanged such information and coordinated the activities of the *Digos* - was established by the Italian Ministry of the Interior. The personnel in the Fan Unit sought to develop a systematic intelligence-gathering activity focusing on links between extreme ideologies and football fandom. In pursuit of this, the Fan Unit was in weekly contact with representatives of official fan clubs and constantly monitored their supporters. The police were often covert in their methods as they collected and collated information and intelligence on the more secretive *UltraS*. At times, they sought both assistance and assistants from inside such gatherings. The figure of the informer in police and security services was ostensibly regulated by the criminal law, which aimed to balance the needs for discretion (i.e., the judge cannot oblige police to reveal the names of their informants) and transparency. In the latter pursuit, the legal system could not use the information in a court of law if the informants were not available to be examined as witnesses. The ability to pay such informants was not prohibited by law, and police could use such monies according to their organizational practices.¹³⁸ The police have never revealed the extent of the use of informers against the *UltraS*.

12.1 The Italian Anti-UltraS legislation

The first law dedicated to confront football violence was introduced in December of 1989 and become known as No. 401. The legislation was, in part, a response to an event that occurred earlier the same year, when Antonio De Falchi died from cardiac arrest caused in no small part by an attack from Milan hardcore football supporters during the Milan-Rome fixture (Cf. Mariottini, 2004). The first part of the law, however, focused on tackling illegal betting on football matches. The second part aimed to prevent and suppress violence around

¹³⁸ The status of and procedure around the role of informer has been recognized in Italian courts. *"The police and secret services informers are usually paid or obtain other benefits - providing them occasionally, but systematically with intelligence."* Cf. Judgement No. 36720 of the *Courte di Cassazione* (Supreme Court) on June 12th, 2001.

sporting competitions.¹³⁹ Over the years the law has been frequently modified in an attempt to make it more applicable and rigorous. Unfortunately such changes have complicated matters; modifications have invariably been the products of urgent Decrees – Laws issued by the government and changed at a later date, usually with modifications by the Parliament.¹⁴⁰ Such *ad hoc* intervention has created a large body of laws and modifications of pre-existing laws that have proved difficult to implement, though this often occurs in Italy. As the hardcore football supporter phenomenon changed, so did the law. The *UltraS* movement emerged at the beginning of the 1990s. During this period, racist and anti-Semitic discourse became evident in the Italian *curve*. The government and Parliament, with good reason, responded by passing measures attempting to repress such objectionable manifestations. Law No. 401, aimed specifically at repressing the neo-fascist *UltraS*, was modified via *decreto legge* (Decree-law) in June 1993 to contain specific criteria for punishing expressions of racial, religious, and ethnic discrimination.¹⁴¹ This law also permitted the arrest of individuals attempting to bring into the sports arenas emblems or symbols of associations, organizations, movements, or groups having as their aim the incitement of racial hate and discrimination. This crime was punishable by arrest and between three months to one year in custody if convicted – a penalty that increases proportionally with the severity of the offense. However, the legislation and concomitant stadium surveillance did not deter all of those it was designed for.

A central piece of legislation in the anti-*UltraS* armory appeared in 1995, when Law No. 45 introduced the DASPO. The prohibition of access to places where sports events take place was a power given to the *Questore* (local Police Chief); such a DASPO could be imposed on anyone convicted of crimes and, more controversially, on those not arrested or

¹³⁹ Law No. 401 is titled *Interventi nel Settore del Gioco e Delle Scommesse Clandestine e Tutela della Correttezza nello Svolgimento di Manifestazioni Sportive* (Interventions in the Sector of Play and Clandestine Betting and Protection of Fairness in the Conduct of Sporting Events).

¹⁴⁰ The original law was composed of 9 articles and 21 sub-articles. Via continuous modifications the law is now composed of 16 articles and 41 sub-articles. This makes it very difficult to make sense of the modifications. These modifications are:

a) Law No. 24, 537, art. 35, 1993 (G.U. 303, 28/12/1993);

b) Decree-Law, No. 557, art. 11, comma 4, 1993; the decree was converted into Law No.133,1994 (G.U. 305, 28/2/1994, n. 48);

c) Decree-Law, No. 717, 1994; it was converted into Law No. 45, 1995 (G.U. 25/02/1995 n. 47);

d) Law No. 388, art. 37, comma 5, 2000, (G.U. 29/12/2000, n. 302);

e) Decree-Law, No.336, 2001; it was converted into Law No.377, 2001 (G.U. 20/10/2001, n. 245);

f) Decree-Law, No.28, 2003; it was converted into Law No.88,2003 (G.U. 24/04/2003, n. 95);

g) Decree-Law, No.162,2005; it was converted into Law No.210,2005 (G.U. 17/10/2005, n. 242);

h) Decree-Law, No.8,2007; it was converted into Law No.41,2007 (G.U. 05/04/2007, n. 80).

¹⁴¹ Decree-Law, No. 122, art. 2, comma 2, 1993; it was converted with modifications into Law No. , 205, 1993.

convicted in a court of law but considered instrumental in episodes of violence.¹⁴² In reality, the DASPO could be imposed by the *Questore* irrespective of convictions or complaints against the person. The *Questore* could, therefore, demand that a person provide - in writing - the address of the place where they may be found during sports events. The *Questore* could then require the person to appear once or more during a specified period in a police station during the day of the sporting event. The DASPO could also be applied to minors aged between 14 and 18 years who were considered threats to public order and safety. It might be enacted around places where sports events were held or places of transportation of football supporters. Violation of the DASPO and non-attendance at designated 'sign on' police stations might result in a custodial sentence lasting between one to three years, or a fine ranging from 10,000 to 40,000 Euros (Law No. 410, art. 6, paragraph 6, 1989). Arrest is also permitted in the case of breach of the terms of the DASPO (Law No. 410, art. 8, paragraph 1 bis, 1989). Pending trial, the courts could ban access to the places where sports events were held. The DASPO was strongly opposed by both the entire hardcore football supporters' movement and the *UltraS*.

In 2001, Law No. 401 was modified again following the death of a Messina fan who was killed when struck by a petard thrown by rival fans during a match with Catania.¹⁴³ Amongst the most important elements of this change was an increase in DASPO timescales and duties. Those subjected to a DASPO were now to appear at the police stations on one or more occasions at pre-established times. The potential length of the DASPO was also increased from one to three years. The application of the DASPO and the obligation it brought to appear at a police station could be issued by the court for between two to eight years' duration. Guilt was assumed and redress was very difficult. The Constitutional Court (Judgment No. 512, 2002) affirmed the constitutionality of the DASPO obligation to appear at a police station. Simultaneously, the court remarked that the *Questore* was required to check the need and urgency of the DASPO order, as well as the satisfactoriness of its contents in terms of duration. The court also allowed a judge to assess whether the DASPO was (and remained) necessary. The judge could simultaneously order the perpetrator to undertake socially useful activities for the benefit of the community. When I asked Dr.

¹⁴² According to the interpretation of the law, sporting events were defined as any competition taking place promoted by sports federations and the institutions and organizations recognized by the Italian National Olympic Committee (CONI). The measure may also be applied for misbehavior around sporting events taking place abroad in other EU member states.

¹⁴³ Decree-Law No. 336, 2001; it was converted - with modifications - into law in 2001. Cf. *Gazzetta Ufficiale* No. 245 October 20, 2001

Mazzilli (President of the *National Observatory on Sport Events* of the Italian Ministry of the Interior, ONMS) about the legal nature of the DASPO and its efficacy, he replied:

‘The DASPO is an ‘atypical’ prevention measure applicable to a specific type of fans judged dangerous for the public security. The DASPO can also be issued for sports events taking place abroad and it can also be imposed by authorities of other Member States of the European Union for sports events taking place in Italy. The constant application of DASPO, in recent years, has allowed to ban from the stadium dangerous individuals who had committed violations of the Italian laws that safeguard public security at sports events. At the time of this interview, 4185 DASPOs have been issued and the measure has successfully tackled violence at football matches.’

Law No. 401 was modified yet again in February of 2003¹⁴⁴, via the introduction of the controversial *arresto differito* (deferred arrest). The deferred arrest enabled the detention of those suspected of involvement in football related violence up to 36 hours after the perpetration of the crime (based on video-photographic evidence or other, never defined ‘objective elements’). The Decree-Law also prohibited fans from bringing smoke bombs and petards into the stadiums. Transgression was punishable with arrest, and if found guilty, custodial sentences ranging from 3 to 18 months and fines of up to 500 Euros. Some of the amendments permitted the police to act as both judge and jury. For example, Article 6 gave the police the power to prevent individuals from entering the stadium if the local *Questore* considered them dangerous based on the elusive concept of ‘intelligence.’

Five days after the February 2007 death of the police inspector Filippo Raciti (following the violence instigated by *UltraS* against police forces at the end of a Catania-Palermo match); the Italian Government issued the Decree Law No. 8. This law had a severity without precedence in Italy¹⁴⁵. Decree Law No. 8 increased and strengthened previous anti-*UltraS* measures. Law No. 41, 2007, demanded that football matches scheduled for stadiums that had not been structurally updated (following the terms of Decree Law in 2003) would henceforth take place ‘in the absence of spectators.’ The decision was to be made by the *Prefetto* following the recommendations of the National Observatory on Sport Events. The law also became more punitive for fans caught in the stadium or in nearby parking or transport areas with petards, batons, and blunt objects. Those arrested and convicted faced imprisonment ranging from one to four years, the punishment increased if the crime delayed the scheduled start or caused the cancellation of the match. The punishment

¹⁴⁴ Converted into Law No. 88, with modifications in 2003.

¹⁴⁵ <http://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2007/04/04/stadi-sicuri-pene-piu-dure-adesso.html>

would be increased by up to an additional half if any such act caused personal injury. Furthermore, the law limited the number of tickets any single fan could purchase to four and maintained the prohibition on football clubs selling blocks of tickets to visiting fans. On the back of every match-day ticket was now a message stressing the obligation for the buyer ‘to respect the rules of the stadium’ as an essential pre-condition for entry. Fans were also required to show a valid identity card (checked by stewards at the stadium entrance) as part of the admission criteria. Fines ranging from 5,000 to 20,000 Euros could be imposed upon stewards who fail to implement the law. The clubs were charged with the responsibility of issuing and selling tickets individually numbered and matched to a seat. The sale of tickets on the day of the match was prohibited. Breach of this law was punishable with fines ranging from 2,500 to 10,000 Euros. The law also forbade clubs to give discounted tickets or any other benefits to fans convicted of football-related offences; the penalty was a fine issued by the *Prefetto* ranging from 50,000 to 200,000 Euros.

In 2007, the Italian government explained that the problem of controlling fans in the stadium was linked to the difficulty of managing sports facilities, almost all of which were owned by local authorities and entrusted to clubs for football matches. For these reasons, the government intended to work towards a system of structures characterized by clearly identifiable liability. With the support of the Parliament, the government identified the regulatory measures affecting the safety of the stadiums that remained unrealized or circumvented since 2003.¹⁴⁶ The negligence of these measures was implicated in the shadow of police Inspector Raciti’s tragic death. With a few exceptions (such as the Olympic Stadium in Rome), football stadiums are the property of their respective municipalities. They are lands and structures given in concession to the custody of the clubs. This situation has made for a problematic scenario involving the application of safety procedures, notably due to uncertainty about who has to bear the expenses of implementing structural changes and the wages of safety personnel. Arising out of the debate over Raciti’s death, the control of behavior in the stadiums was effectively privatised with governmental stipulations. The management of order and public security inside the stadiums became the obligation of the football clubs, under the supervision of the *Gruppo Operativo di Sicurezza* (GOS - Group Operations Security) and police commanders. The GOS¹⁴⁷ are essentially responsible for football stadium safety management, which includes all responsibilities demanded by the *Questore*. As of February 2008, all stadiums with more than 7,500 seats were required to

¹⁴⁶ Decree-law No. 28, 2003; it was converted into Law No. April 24, 2003.

¹⁴⁷. Cf. *Allo stadio con gli steward* (September 2007). *Polizia Moderna*. Roma: Ministry of the Interior Press.

have at least one steward for every 250 spectators, as well as a coordinator for every 20 stewards. Failure to comply with these regulations brought the threat of closure. Stewards were required to search fans as they entered the stadium.

The regulation of fan inflow and outflow was also tasked to the stewards. The stewards enforced the norms specified for the use of the sport structure and the behavioral obligations as prescribed by the law. In execution of such duties, the law confers upon them the status of public officer; any assault upon them is treated as an assault on a police officer. The stewards' tasks were a product of collaboration with the police, who were required to be promptly informed of any problems that might interfere with public safety. Institutions that provided steward training had to be certified by the ONMS. When I spoke to journalist Franco Arturi, he indirectly criticised the introduction of the stewards in the stadium. He observed that the presence of the police in the stadium was now less visible, especially in the curve still under the control of the *UltraS* whom he memorably identified as 'terrorists'. I asked Dr. Mazzilli his opinion about Arturi's remark; in answering he focused on the introduction of the stewards:

'Via the introduction of the stewards - they have started to operate since the 1st of March 2008 - in the Italian football stadiums, the police forces are displaced outside the stadium. It is not the responsibility of the police to be in the *curve*, the stewards have the function of hospitality, management and control of fans, obviously in collaboration with the police forces.'

Other procedures were promoted to change the relationships of fans with clubs and players. The *tessera del tifoso* (fan membership card), launched by the ONMS (together with CONI, FIGC and the Italian Football League), began in March of 2008. Promoted as providing a number of benefits for subscribers, the card gave priority for purchasing tickets, provided for dedicated entry gates, and created a category of 'official' and 'loyal' supporters. Individuals subjected to DASPO were excluded from any official relationship with the clubs.

The anti-*UltraS* legislation is characterised by an over-production of laws and ad hoc passing of special legislation that ,not only have proved difficult to implement, but tends to increase the sense of victimisation of the 'ordinary' fans and, most importantly, the neo-fascist groups. This has increased their hostility towards the Italian State. The disproportionate number of laws in Italy is a widely known problem; it was a topic during the last 2008 electoral campaign, which saw the former Mayor of Rome, Walter Veltroni, representing the centre-left *Partito Democratico* (PD-Democratic party) and Silvio Berlusconi, candidate Prime Minister for the centre-right *Popolo della Libertá*. In the

electoral program, Veltroni underlined his commitment about controlling the production of new laws and decrees to avoid what he negatively termed the ‘Italian legislative jungle.’ Veltroni stated that there were currently 21,000 laws in Italy - five times more than in Germany and double that of France. To reduce the progressive bureaucratization of the legislative system and make the application of the laws more efficient, fast, and certain, the PD proposed to abrogate 5,000 laws by the end of 2008, to reduce all the laws and State’s rules to just 100 *testi unici*, and to limit special laws to 1,000 (La Repubblica –online- 31 March, 2008).

The overproduction of laws added to the inefficiency of the Italian justice system; court processes are also notoriously slow. The recent *Eurispes Report*¹⁴⁸ of 2007 titled ‘*Giustizia al Collasso*’ (Collapsed Justice) focuses on this very problem. The average duration of the judicial process is some 35 months (i.e., three years) for processing in the first instance and 65 months (i.e., five and a half years) if the case went to appeal. During the period from 2001 to 2004, civil cases increased by 64%, and those in the Court of Appeal increased by 122%. The *Corte di Cassazione* saw a rise in hearings of 33%. Criminal cases increased by 16% in the *Istruttoria Fase* - 60% in the first instance, and 24% on appeal. A rise of 4% was recorded for the *Cassazione* Court. In 2007, there were no fewer than 10 million legal cases pending (4 million civil and 6 million criminal); a further 700,000 final sentences were still not completed. The *Eurispes* data further reported that the justice system was heavily in debt, and its financial resources were inadequate to meet the needs of state prosecutors. The total debt of the Ministry of Justice amounted to 250 million Euros. According to the *Eurispes*, the populace did not trust the justice system, and a sense of insecurity came with that absence of trust. The consequence was voters’ cynicism, which, regardless of their political sympathies, ranged from 80% of those sympathetic to the center-right to 60% preferring the political left.

The inadequacy of the justice system also hit the *UltraS* of this study, contributing to the current amplification of the rage of the movement. The leadership of the *Irriducibili* – all interviewed in this study – was arrested in 2006 and detained in prison for more than eight months. In the eyes of the Italian *UltraS*, four Italian citizens had been subjected to the abuse of the *Custodia Cautelare* (Preventive Custody) legislation. This case was highlighted in the Italian parliament in December of 2006 by Paolo Cento (an MP for *Verdi* - Green Party), the Vice Minister for the Economy; Antonio Buonfiglio (MP *Alleanza Nazionale*); and Sergio

¹⁴⁸ The *Eurispes* is a non-profit institute which aims to study and research political, economic, and social issues.

D'Elia (Secretary of the MP's Chamber (MP for the *Radical Party* with an extreme left past), in a petition to the Minister of the Sport, Giovanna Melandri. The document was also signed by two other MPs, Mauro Murgi and Paola Frassinetti (AN), and Paola Balducci (Green Party). In February of 2007, the latter three articulated their opinions in the pressroom of the Italian parliament. Buonfiglio argued that the four *UltraS* had been imprisoned for more than 100 days, and that the silence from the Italian media was quite strange. Cento focused on the anomaly of this *provvedimenti* (internment without trial), claiming that pre-trial preventive custody was used to such an extent that would have been not tolerated in any other civilised country. Cento declared his confidence in the magistrates but argued that, in the Italian justice system, the pre-trial detention should be the exception; instead, it is a common practice. He argued:

‘The four leaders of the *Irriducibili* are an emblematic case. Our [Cento and colleagues] appeal is to put the case under the magnifying glass; they, like any citizen, have the right to a fair trial without prejudices. It is important to assess whether there are conditions for ending such preventive custody.’¹⁴⁹

D'Elia added to this consideration, stating:

‘This morning [01/02/07] I spoke with the *Irriducibili* leaders, for the fourth time in 45 days. I found them nervous and anxious due to their experience. Their prison is a sort of ‘advance’ for a crime eventually committed: they have been not even called in for process... This case of the 4 Lazio fans is an ‘ordinary’ example of the Italian administration of justice, or perhaps non-administration. A citizen has the right of certainty of the length of justice. A judgment in 4 years would be unfair because the length of justice or has to be contemporary with the facts [to be judged] or is an injustice. This state has 40% of prisoners awaiting trial... the guys are not saints, they have made mistakes and sometimes used violence, but they are not potential extortionist... What I want to emphasize is that they have been found guilty already in the press and via public opinion they are already guilty - and for this there will not be any compensation for the damages suffered; the only proper place to determine whether or not they are guilty should be the court. The only compensation possible is that if convicted the length of justice should be made as short as possible.’¹⁵⁰

The accused are currently facing a very long process, while at the same time, paradoxically, the *Irriducibili*'s accuser and victim has also been charged by the Italian justice. In 2009, the president of Lazio, Claudio Lotito, was condemned to a two years custodial prison and fined 65,000 Euros for the same ‘supposed’¹⁵¹ crime of market agiotage of a financial operation related to the SS Lazio in 2005 (Corriere della Sera –online- 03 March, 2009).

¹⁴⁹ http://claudiocaprara.it/?id_blogdoc=1388209

¹⁵⁰ http://claudiocaprara.it/?id_blogdoc=1388209

¹⁵¹ The term “supposed” is used because the four *Irriducibili* have not been yet considered guilty and condemned by an Italian Court.

12.2 Italian Models of Policing

‘...What is the objective of policing? What is the meaning of prevention? How should we evaluate police discretion? What is the meaning of community, etc.? Stated differently, the choice of a police model should give a detailed answer to the question: What kind of policing do we want? In this sense, a police model always implies statements concerning values, objectives and norm.’ (Ponsaer, 2001, p. 470)

The prevention and repression of violence in and around sporting events are tasks given to the somewhat intricate Italian public security arrangement.¹⁵² These tasks are designed to protect the freedoms and rights of citizens, the maintenance of public order and the protection and preservation of property. Further duties seek to enforce compliance with laws and regulations (be they State, regional, provincial, or municipal) and the provision of emergency assistance in case of disasters and accidents. The apex of this system, at a political level, is the office of the Minister of Interior, who is responsible for national public security and the preservation of order and public safety. The Minister coordinates – with the assistance of the provincial public security – the activities of the Italian police forces. The Minister is assisted in the exertion of these powers by an advisory body of the National Committee of Order and Public Safety. Crucial to this task in each province is the titled office of *Prefetto* and *Questore*. To this end, they control the provincial police and coordinate their activities. In exercising power, the *Prefetto* calls upon an advisory body – the previously mentioned Provincial Committee – for advice on order and public security. The *Questore* has the task of the technical management, accountability, and coordination of public order and public safety. The *Prefetto* and *Questore* will inevitably use police for this purpose. To ensure security at football stadiums, the Italian State commits on average 10500 law enforcement personnel to the task. Of these 10500, 6300 are drawn from territorial forces (local police in whose remit the stadium is situated). An additional 700 are drawn from special police forces (transport police, dog units), and 3500 are from specialist reinforcement units, of which some 66% belonged to the anti-riot units of the State Police and 34% belonged to the *Arma Carabinieri*¹⁵³. The deployment of police personnel over the past five years can be summarised by the following tables.

¹⁵² Cf. Art. 1 (Powers of Public Security Authority); T.U. of laws of Public Security and Art. 24 (Institutional Functions of the State police), Law No. 121 April 1, 1981.

¹⁵³ Details derived from an interview with Dr. Francesco Tagliente former President of the National Observatory for Sports Events, the Ministry of Interior- Cf. F. Tagliente (2004). *Rapporto 2004 del Osservatorio sulle Manifestazioni Sportive*. Roma: Laurus Robuffo.

Table 1. The use of the Italian territorial police forces during the Football League championships

CHAMPIONSHIPS SERIE	2003/2004	2004/2005	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008 (up to 5.11.2007)
A	23,780	27,276	23,603	23,551	28.263
B	25,918	19,253	20,137	23,626	15.367
C	29,340	27,030	26,275	24,336	22.484
TOTAL	79,038	73,559	70,015	71,513	66.114

Table 2. Police Mobile units used as back up during the Football League championships

CHAMPIONSHIPS SERIE	2003/2004	2004/2005	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008 (up to 5.11.2007)
A	14,287	15,085	13,043	13,978	13,599
B	13,345	8,856	10,648	13,245	6,475
C	6,706	9,266	9,057	8,701	7,507
TOTAL	34,338	33,207	32,748	35,924	27,581

There are also entities created to work specifically for the prevention and repression of violence at sporting events. As underlined earlier, the most important is the *l'Osservatorio Nazionale Sulle Manifestazioni* (National Observatory on Sport Events; ONMS), located at the Ministry of the Interior. The OMNS was established in 1999 and institutionalised by law in 2005.¹⁵⁴ It is composed of 13 representatives of sport institutions and police forces with the right to vote and notify public security authorities of their assessments of public disorder in order for decisions to be made.

The OMNS has recently seen its powers increased. Via 2007 legislation¹⁵⁵, the following functions were tasked to the existing body: a) to monitor the phenomenon of violence and intolerance occurring at sporting events; b) to monitor the safety of Italian sports stadiums; c) to examine problems linked to scheduled sporting events and assess the levels of risk to the public presented by such competitions; d) to promote initiatives for the prevention of violence and intolerance in collaboration with sport associations, fans club, and local and national government; e) to define measures that could be adopted by the sporting societies to guarantee the safety of sporting competitions; f) to publish an annual report on the phenomenon of violence and intolerance at sporting competitions. The OMNS also has the

¹⁵⁴ Decree-Law No. 162, 2005, 'Further Measures to Counter the Phenomenon of Violence at Sporting Competitions'; it was converted into Law No. 210, 2005.

¹⁵⁵ Law No. 41 April 4, 2007 (G.U.2007, n. 80).

power, via legislation passed in September of 2007¹⁵⁶ to implement the use of the stewards in sports stadiums, as well as the procedures for their training and qualification. The ONMS introduced a threat level classification for each game based on specific indicators: the characteristics and structural requirements of the stadiums, profiles of the fans (based on historical precedence, previous conflicts, and recent behaviors), the type of game, the consequences of the result, and the possible link to other events. The ONMS then make suggestions to the provincial public security authorities, who usually implement them. In such tasks, the ONMS is supported by the *Centro Nazionale di Informazione sulle Manifestazioni Sportive* (The National Center for Information on Sports Events - CNMS).

The CNMS has been operating since 2002, and is similarly located at the Department of Public Security of the Ministry of Interior. The CNMS collects analyses and processes data on football spectator violence. It is also the national contact point for the exchange of both domestic and international information around the policing of football. The establishment of CNMS was in response to the Council of Europe's concerns over security around international football. One strong recommendation was that national governments establish national football intelligence centers. The consequence of such powers and policing personnel was the end of spectating as it had been known for decades. The ONMS established criteria and procedures to regulate banners and other material held by fans whilst in the stadiums.¹⁵⁷ These include materials for creating choreography, i.e., drums, percussion instruments, and other means of disseminating sound. The ONMS regulations permitted only flags bearing the colors of the club teams or those of countries represented on the pitch in international games. Banners that displayed a content which manifested racial discrimination, violent messages, or anything considered to be of an 'offensive nature' were banned. Also banned were megaphones, flags that might impair other fans sight of the pitch, and all material not authorized in advance by the police.

The match-going experience changed even upon entering the stadium. By 2007, all football clubs were required to provide stewards holding metal detectors at the stadium entrances. Furthermore, electronic computerised technology was required to check all admission tickets. The installation of CCTV cameras externally and inside any sport facility-stadium capable of holding more than 10,000 spectators was also a prerequisite for obtaining a ground license. The route taken to this state of affairs was part of the action/reaction that so

¹⁵⁶ Decree-Law No. 8, 2007 '*Urgent measures for the prevention and suppression of phenomena of violence related to football competitions*'; it was converted into Law No. 41, 2007 (G.U. 2007, n. 80)

¹⁵⁷ Cf. Decision No. 14/2007 of the 8.3.2007 (http://usavellino.it/documenti/file/Esposizione_striscioni.pdf).

typified legislation pertaining to football-related disorder. It is also important to note that in any evaluation of the Italian public order policing system, confusion is the first and most challenging barrier to overcome. The presence of five national police forces¹⁵⁸ on top of local/municipal police forces makes for great difficulty in applying theoretical models to real life situations. Nevertheless, it is safe to conclude that the model that best fits the Italian policing situation is Ponsaer's (2001) 'military-bureaucratic' model. All policing entities in Italy are organised using a military style hierarchical structure where little is left to discretion and more is left to the ethos, 'you will do this because I tell you to.' In this type of organisation, much is left to internal inquiries and very little to external accountability. The most important form of external accountability is provided by the Italian magistrates, who intervene when disciplinary procedures are required. Internal inquiries are more valued than external, but in some cases this presents a risk because, as Ponsaer argues, the logic of such engagement manifests the practice of: 'When faced with a decision, find a rule; when a rule cannot be found, make a rule' (p. 473).

Witnessing the police forces in action against the *UltraS* underlines elements of the 'military-bureaucratic' model. The first is legitimacy, which is the authority of a police action justified by the pursuit of an 'absence of disorder' (Cf. Ponsaer, 2001). Consequently, physical force (at times excessive) is justified because it guarantees 'peace' in the wider community. The moral panics against the *UltraS* also justify the use of physical force; being evil means a police 'beating' is legitimate or at least unquestioned. At least in the case of the *UltraS*, the prevention strategy is linked with the logic of the bureaucratic model, which aims at efficiency and control as well as prevention (which, while valued, is used less than repression). Such procedures provoke reactions from those on the receiving end, Marco articulated the feelings of the *Boys* towards the police:

¹⁵⁸ The central command for policing functions lies with the office of *Presidente del Consiglio* (i.e., the Prime Minister) who delegates to the Minister of the Interior in which the *Dipartimento della Pubblica Sicurezza* (Department of Public Security) is located. The *Capo della Polizia* (Chief of the Police) is the head of the State police (a role created during the fascist era). The Chief of Police is also the *Direttore Generale della Pubblica Sicurezza* (Director General of Public Security) and co-ordinates the five police forces: the *Polizia di Stato* (State police, answerable to the Minister of the Interior); the *Arma dei Carabinieri* (the *Carabinieri* - an army corp with police functions - answerable to the Minister of Defence); the *Guardia di Finanza* a force specialised in public order prevention and on financial and tax crimes (answerable to the the Minister of the Economy); the *Polizia Penitenziaria* (the Prison Police who function in the Italian prison system and answerable to the Minister of Justice). Finally comes the *Corpo Forestale dello Stato* (the parks police answerable to the the Minister of the Agriculture and Forestry, who specialise in the management and preservation of national environments and heritage parks).

‘...when we see them attack our friends, or when they arrest them (and you know that once in custody the police will beat you up) you remember it. If one day some police become isolated from colleagues {during our scuffles} we will hit him and he will pay for everyone. I am angry; do you know that 90% of police officers use their baton reversed to cause more damage? They shoot tear gas at eye level and if you fall when they charge, they kick you. After the derby, there was a group of *Laziali* and *Romanisti* - 500 against 200 police - and there were several charges and at every charge, some remained on the ground [unconscious]. In the course of these disturbances, a Guardia di Finanza officer went down; he received seven stab wounds and they broke a flashlight on his body. His police colleagues could not move; they could only watch. One of the big men of the *UltraS* threw the officer back to his colleagues saying: ‘take him back because he is not good even to set on fire’. It was a gesture of unheard of brutality but did not tell the full story. If the police ‘take you’, they ask you why did you hit our colleagues and they kick your face. We reminded them of this on a banner that read ‘*pestaggi nelle carceri, pestaggi nelle caserme questa e la prova che tu sei solo un verme*’ [Beating in the prisons. Beating in the police cells. This is the proof that you are a scum]. It is not just us.... The same brutality can be seen in the ‘No Global’ case and the Diaz school when there were many beatings. The difference is the ‘No Global’ are more powerful (and supported by the left) and so can publicise their cause better.’

Research conducted in May of 2007¹⁵⁹ indicated that the State Police, together with the *Carabinieri*, occupy the first place in terms of confidence given by Italian citizens. There are good reasons for such admiration. The Italian police forces, together with the judiciary, were crucial in the defeat of domestic terrorism of the 1980s. The Italian police were able to draw on the benefits of greater resources and advanced technologies to face complex crime phenomena that require more than uninformed police intervention. The subsequent investigations led to the capture of the murderers and the suppression of the groups they acted in the name of. The police were also crucial to the successful containment of the Mafia and other criminal organisations, via the capture of important fugitives such as the Mafia boss Totó Riina in 1993 and Bernardo Provenzano in 2000.

Though they are trusted, the police have recently been involved in few football related controversies. In 2007 at the match of Roma versus Manchester United, the clashes between rival fans also saw police intervention. Manchester United accused the Italian police of brutality against their fans. The statement of the Manchester United FC officials was quite clear:

‘The disturbing scenes witnessed in the Stadio Olimpico last night shocked everyone at Old Trafford. In what the club views as a serious over-reaction, local police handed out indiscriminate beatings to United supporters. In those circumstances, neither Manchester United, nor AS Roma is able to call the police to account. As a result, the club warmly welcomes the government examination of the incidents and will collect

¹⁵⁹ The research was carried out by the Istituto Piepoli SpA and titled ‘*Confidence in the State Police*’. (http://poliziadistato.it/pds/primapagina/sondaggio_piepoli/la_fiducia_nella_polizia_di_stato.pdf).

witness statements from fans to submit to the Home Office.’ (Telegraph –online- 02 March, 2009)

In commenting on the Italian police action, the British newspaper The Independent argued: ‘*football is still a military operation [in Italy] where its policing is about containment of trouble inside the ground through the use, or threat, of violence*’ (The Independent –online- 08 April, 2007).

To date very few police officers have been successfully prosecuted in an Italian law court for misdemeanors against football fans. Nonetheless, the *nucleo mobile* or *Celere*, which has been repeatedly on duty at the stadium, has been often accused of disproportionate use of force. The journalist of *La Repubblica* Carlo Bonini (2009) describes the lives of three real members of the *Celere* in his book. He explains the *Celere*’s world with one effective catchphrase ‘*odiati e hanno imparato a odiare*’ (hated and they have learned to hate).

The *nucleo mobile* was successfully prosecuted in 2008 for excess use of force albeit not in relation to their policing duty at the football stadium. During the 2001 G8 meeting in Genoa, disturbances occurred between the Italian police forces and the international *No-Global* movement.¹⁶⁰ Disorder arose in different areas of the city, supported by a heterogeneous range of international groups ranging from anarchists to extreme left and right groups. The center of Genoa suffered damage estimated at millions of Euros, arising out of disturbances between protestors and police. The event will be remembered for the tragic death of protester Carlo Giuliani and the actions of the police at the Diaz School. The episode of Carlo Giuliani occurred in *Piazza Alimonda* when 15 protesters armed with batons surrounded a Land Rover with three Carabinieri aboard. Giuliani died when shot at close range by one of the officers. The Diaz School episode occurred on July 21 at the school given by the local authority as headquarters for the protesters’ cause. The police stormed the school after a group of police officers was attacked at a nearby school. The police suspected that inside were sympathisers of the Black Bloc. At the time of the police raid, 93 people were reportedly sleeping. All were arrested, the majority of them taken away with injuries - some serious. Weapons such as batons and chains were reportedly found on the premises. Many of those arrested accused the police of brutality. The Italian magistrate began an inquiry under the collective action taken by protestors. In 2007, all the Italian newspapers published the following quote: ‘*It was like a Mexican butcher shop*’ (La Repubblica –online- 13 June, 2007). The comment was made by Dr. Michelangelo Fournier, the commander of the ‘*settimo*

¹⁶⁰ Cf. <http://repubblica.it/dossier/genova/index.html>

nucleo mobile di Roma-Celere’ (the seventh mobile unit of Rome; one of the Roman riot police units), which participated in the irruption at the Diaz School. He continued answering the questions of public prosecutor Francesco Cardona Albini: ‘*During the investigation I did not have the courage to reveal such a serious behavior (referring to the police) because of my loyalty for the unit*’ (La Repubblica –online- 13 June, 2007). In 2008, after seven years the epilogue of the judicial process saw 12 members of the *settimo nucleo mobile di Roma* condemned for the Diaz operation (La Repubblica –online- 13 November, 2008).

This study does not aim to support the *UltraS* rhetoric that ‘frames’ all police as violent. There are situations in which police, especially anti-riot units, need to intervene with firmness for public safety. It is also quite naive to neglect the fact that episodes of gratuitous police violence occur all over the world.¹⁶¹ Furthermore, when such episodes have occurred in Italy, the State has been able to punish the perpetrators according to the law. That said, it is interesting to underline that the same police unit found guilty by the Italian justice was also the most evident expression of the policing strategy used at the football stadiums in Italy to contain the *UltraS* violence (Bonini, 2009). During the research, the *UltraS* never failed to compare their repression with the episode involving the G8, as Marco (*Boys*) details:

‘We have almost every Sunday a small ‘Diaz’ episode. In Orvieto 200 *UltraS* were put in a *caserma* [police barrack] and beaten up. Against Napoli the year Roma won the scudetto, the police stopped our train at Torricola and all of us in the train were beaten up. The train was later stopped at Formia and when two police officers entered to inquire about 300 of us -perhaps they believed they were Rambo- they started to shoot their pistols at people. I was at a fountain getting water and the people started to count the bullets. Someone more cunning than them knew how many bullets the guns had and then when they ran out of bullets..... [laughs]...[he did not say but implied the police office were cornered and beaten].’

12.3 The View of the ‘Persecuted’

The *UltraS* target the police forces, who are asked with the duty of applying the law against them. The latter have chosen the strategy of tackling the *UltraS* problem by the use of tough repression. Such a strategy has its own risks. The episodes of *UltraS* direct attacks on representatives of the Italian State, such as those occurred for instance following Sandri’s death, underscore the power and danger of an ideology like fascism rooted in a location such as the football stadium, which is attended by thousands of youth and is able to contain a mix

¹⁶¹ The latest supposed example occurred in the UK, in 2009, at the G20 protests in London. (Guardian –online- 15 April, 2009)

of myths, values, and beliefs that can be collectively transformed into actions. Figures 46, 47, and 48 show an email sent to me in 2008 titled ‘*The Real Infamy of the Italian State*’. The email illustrates the rage of the *UltraS* after finding out that the officer who killed Sandri was, at the time of the email, still part of the transport police of *Santa Maria Novella* in Tuscany (he was later suspended and in July 2009 given a six year custodial sentence for the shooting).¹⁶²

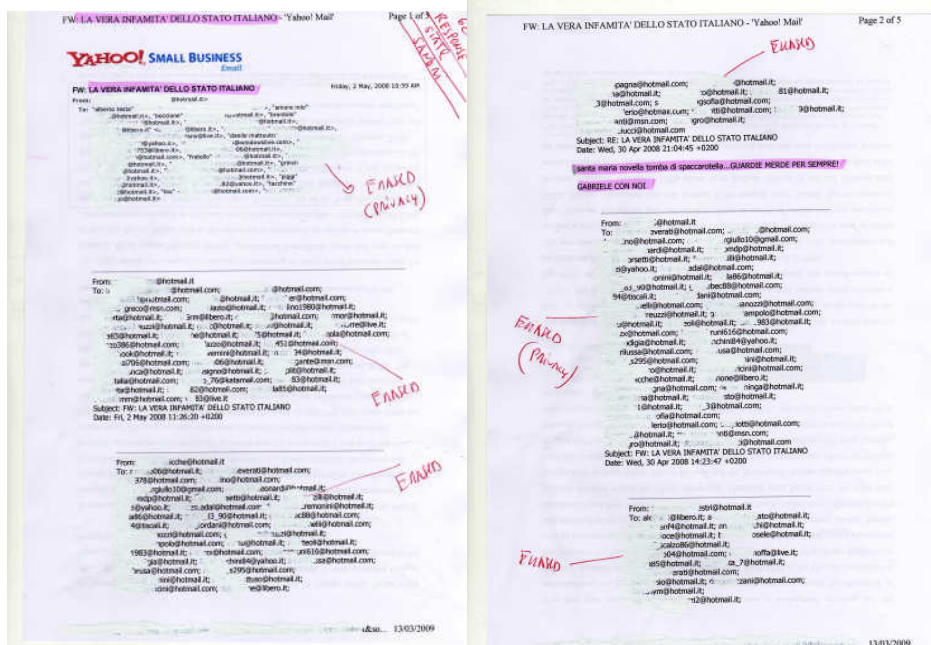


Fig .46: the Outrage of the *UltraS* about Sandri’s homicide

¹⁶² Cf. <http://it.reuters.com/article/topNews/idITMIE56D0TD20090714>

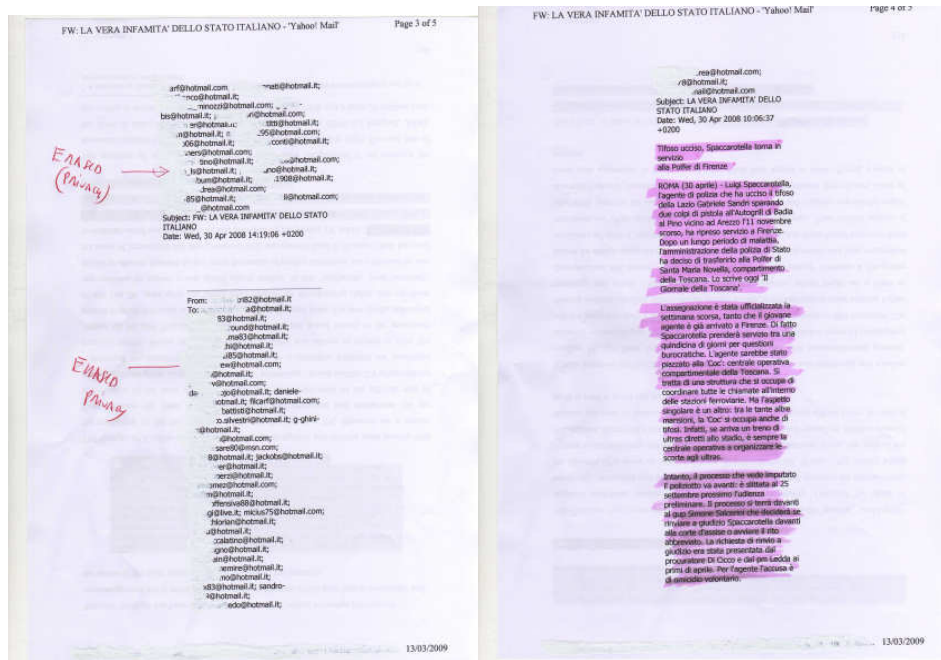


Fig. 47: the Outrage of the *UltraS* about Sandri's homicide

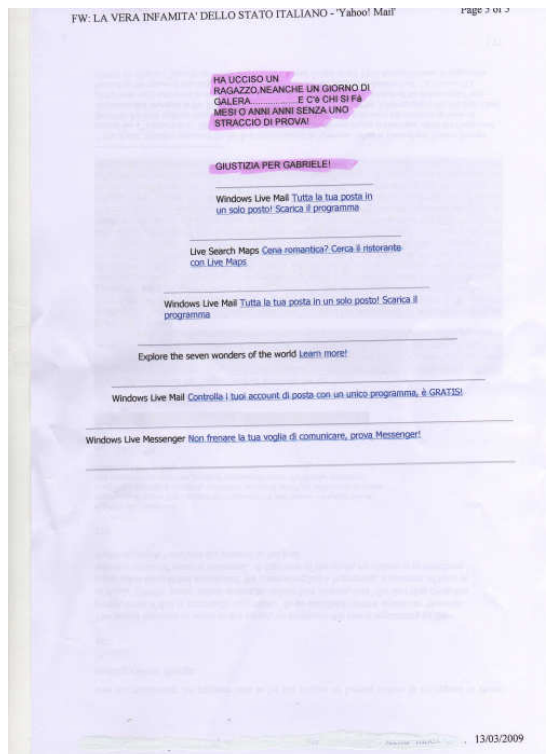


Fig. 48: The *UltraS* 'Anger (and threat) in rhyme

The last page of the email (figure 48) articulates possible threats to the police officer: ‘*Santa Maria Novella* (the location where the officer was working) coffin of Spaccarotella (the surname of the police officer); Gabriele with us!’ The last part of the email says: ‘He has killed a boy and sees not even one day of prison... And there is someone who stays in prison for months or years without any proof’ (the email refers to the prison experience of the *Irriducibili*’s leaders).

The email is another demonstration of the *UltraS* oppositional logic which has certainly subversive traits. The only difference with the Italian ‘revolutionary’ youth groups of the seventies (from the extreme left and right) is a clear lack of planning. What the *UltraS* express is at the moment just rage: anger against a State –and football system- that they do not respect and that to erase them. If the *UltraS* ‘Warrior Spirit’ is not understood (and why should it be by non believers?) unpredictable consequences may result.

12.3.1 The Danger of the Curve Radicalisation

Among the most controversial norms which aimed to target the *UltraS* and were enforced by the police are the possibility to forbid the fans’ banners and the, previously mentioned, DASPO. I asked Dr. Mazzilli to articulate the first norm, he answered from a strictly procedural point of view without allowing any comments:

‘The national observatory adopted this directive the 8th of March 2007. This intervention was necessary to protect the security of the spectators, athletes and referees and all the people involved in the management of the sport event. The rule forbids the introduction in all the sports structures of banners or any other related object used for the fans choreography if not authorized before hand by the Questore.’

The response of the *UltraS* was quite clear; they believed that via such a procedure, the spectacle that is *il calcio* was finished. Actually the whole hardcore football supporter movement, ‘ordinary’ fans and the *UltraS* alike, have criticised the prohibitions, deeming them alarmist responses that do not respect the rights of the individual and manifest discriminatory policing.¹⁶³ Particular criticism was also reserved for the DASPO mainly because they are imposed by the *Questore* (police) rather than a court of law and, whilst ostensibly subject to judicial review, have to date not been scrutinised by the Constitutional Court. Supporters mainly criticise the extension of Decree-Law *Amato* 2007 until 2010 as hopelessly open to abuse permitting as it allows arrest up to 48 hours later if the suspect is

¹⁶³ Cf. http://progettoultra.it/cms/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=502&Itemid=172

identified through photographs or video footage. Similarly, the minimum penalty for football-related crimes is considered excessive compared with sentencing tariffs for more serious crimes committed outside the sporting context. In the eyes of the fans, this makes it impossible for the courts to impose fair and just punishment.

The Italian police have inevitably invested resources in gathering intelligence intended to prevent violent episodes at football matches. The primary strategy of the police is still perceived by the *UltraS* to be in favor of hard physical repression. This tactic is integral to any pro-reactive debate around policing and the technical orientation of law enforcement. Such a tactic may create a massive divide between citizens and the police and may diminish public confidence.

The police would argue that they do not seek either dialogue or the confidence of the *UltraS*. Such a distance is strongly perceived by the *UltraS*; the police are considered as a danger to their values and way of life. Such a reality has destroyed any possible dialogue. The perception that they are treated as ‘special threats’ only fosters further tension increasing the *UltraS* sense of perceived discrimination and possibly promoting their strong reactions. Giorgio explains this feeling:

‘*UltraS* does not mean gratuitous violence; we need to be careful when labeling *UltraS* ‘violent’. Sometimes we are involved in violence; but then you see that in normal life a person can be stabbed for a quarrel in any city. Violence exists in society and the stadium reflects this. The stadium has been for many years a comfortable box to ghettoize a part of Italian youth. At the stadium there is much more repression and demonization of the *UltraS*. Simple banners such as those in support of Giorgio Chinaglia are no longer allowed..’

The ‘perceived’ criminalisation at the hands of police is not a sentiment shared only by the *UltraS*. Other elements of the hardcore football supporters’ movement, even those who follow the interpretations of Marxism or anarchism, are similarly angered by policing strategies. The repressive policies of the Italian State have unwittingly united the *UltraS* and other hardcore supporters (regardless of their ideological connotations) around a cause. In the *UltraS* discourses, the police are the armed wing of a repressive State. Sara (Boys) *explains* this thought:

‘I think [the police] create tension; personally I get nervous when I see police dog units [at the stadium] and officers in riot gear etc.. This does not help; the Italian stadiums are becoming fortresses; there are already emotions and rivalries among fans then if this climate of war is added, you can understand why these things [violence] happen. A girl of 20 years old as me when goes to the stadium does not want to feel criminalized; I

believe many violent acts will not happen if there were less police. Too many police make me [and the *curve*] nervous; [I would like to have] less repression and militarization in the stadiums. I am a female and I get angry for this militarization [imagine what the guys feel..] it happened that they [the police] ordered me to open my purse on the train to check it; I felt as a terrorist. When we go to see the match of the AS Roma away because of the police searches we always leave late; once we had to go to Messina and the train was scheduled to leave at 1 pm, it left at 3 because of the police search. They treat you as a terrorist and this logically produces rancor in people; it promotes rancor in me that I am a girl imagine the effects on the Boys and other *UltraS*...'

Figure 49 illustrates an article by the *Irriducibili* printed in their fanzine in 2005. The article is titled 'Now let explain us the difference between the 'right' and the 'left.'



Fig. 49: Politics from the *Irriducibili*'s perspective.

In this article, the *Irriducibili* criticised the media, the State, and the police underlining how those who do politics from the extreme left are always justified by the Italian media. In doing so, they reinforce their discourse around what they considered the double standards of the media and the State. This article strengthens the image that the *UltraS* want to portray as victims of a conspiracy orchestrated by a media-State alliance. Opp and Roehl (1990) argue that repression in many social movements tend to promote micromobilisation that creates the incentive and reduces the price of membership. Academia has also taken into consideration the effects of police repression on ideological motivated protestors, and the *UltraS* quite

clearly fit into this category. Because of what is considered 'brutal' police repression, protesters often gain support from people who did not suffer directly from the excesses (De Nardo 1985, p. 191). Not only are the *UltraS* interactions with outside society mediated by ideology, but their fighting/resisting for survival in a collective way (at micro level via their *communitas* and at a macro level via their movement) is intrinsically political. Todde argues that the DASPO are absurd because they deny individuals the freedom of choosing to watch their team. He thinks that the most hated thing about the DASPO is that even if a person is eventually declared innocent, he/she has still been greatly affected by the banning order. Who or what will compensate this loss of personal freedom?

This strategy, although at times necessary, needs to be used cautiously to avoid a further radicalisation of the *UltraS* protest. Forced sanctions (such as the DASPO) are 'deprivations, the threat of sanctions is equivalent to the concept of anticipated deprivation, the innate emotional response to both is anger' (Gurr 1969 in Opp and Roehl 1990, p. 522). The football stadium has always been an exceptional location in Italian society. It is now akin to a state of emergency wherein those who enter are filtered. The citizens who enter now have to reveal all personal data as demanded. Entry has prerequisites. Those not wanted cannot come near the event due to the requirement of signing-on at police stations at the same time. Unprecedented measures and unprecedented circumstances have acquired the status of legitimate repression and come with ever-expanding exceptionalist logic. The risk of failure cannot be considered. The police and ultimately the Italian State would risk accusations of incompetency if they failed to control this footballing and ultimately political carnival.

The *UltraS* clearly have a social-political agenda, and in pursuing their aims have provoked a political response.

'We are defined by the police as a snake that needs its head cut off. I am one of the three that compose this head and this is the reason why two of us (me and Toffolo) are *diffidati* (banned from the stadium). Nevertheless, they failed because despite this the snake is in good health and moves. We fight outside the stadium and believe me we will continue to do so.' Giorgio (*Irriducibili*)

When asked how efficient the police are, considering the strategy of tackling the *UltraS*, Dr. Mazzilli, limiting his answer to a mere articulation of data as to reinforce the idea of a winning Italian State, replied:

'We need to consider that during this period we had the tragic occurrence of Catania (Inspector Raciti's death) which highlighted once again the football violence emergency. Specifically: 1.114 matches with injured (the annual average was of 222.8); 3.831 injured among the police forces (annual average of 766.2); 1.557 injured among civilians (annual average of 311.4); 1.726 individual arrested (annual

average of 345.2). In the current championship (2008-2009) there is a reduction of 72% matches with injured, 81% of injured among the police forces, 83% of injured among civilians, 39% of arrested and 40% of reported by the police. If we want to be, more precise these are the latest data of January 2009 on the Serie A championship 2008-2009 (which at the times of the writing is not yet concluded):

- The number of matches with injured is decreased of 28.2% (from 38 to 28)
- The number of matches with the use of teargas is diminished of 83.3% (from 6 to 1)
- The numbers of injured among the police forces is decreased to 41.3% (from 104 to 61)
- The numbers of injured among civilians is decreased to 66.1% (from 62 to 21)
- The numbers of injured among civilians is decreased to 66.1% (from 62 to 21)
- The numbers of persons arrested is decreased to 53.1% (from 129 to 60)
- The numbers of persons reported by the magistrates is decreased to 46.9% (from 409 to 217)
- The spectators in series A have increased of 10.7% with a match average of 24.825 (last championship was of 22.430)

So it is possible to say that the data are comforting and clearly show the decrease of all indices relating to violence linked to football spectatorship if we consider the last five years.'

In March 2009, 60 *Sconvolts* of the Cagliari FC attacked the city prison by throwing stones and threatening prison officers. Their anger was provoked by the prison death of their leader, Giancarlo Monni, who fell ill with bronchopneumonia (Il Giornale-online-08 March, 2009). On the 14th of July 2009 the long lasting judicial trial that saw accused the police officer Luigi Spaccarotella (who killed Gabriele Sandri) ended with a manslaughter verdict and a six year prison sentence instead of a verdict of homicide and a sentence of between 14 and 21 years in prison (as requested by the public prosecutor). The anger of the *UltraS* and the friends of Sandri immediately erupted. In court the *UltraS* chanted 'shame, buffoons, bastards', the *carabinieri* had difficulty in controlling the rage directed towards them (La Repubblica –online- 15 July, 2009a). During the following night, stones and bottles were thrown against the police in *Ponte Milvio* (an area in the north of the city near the Olympic Stadium). The same *UltraS* group threw petards against the Ponte Milvio *carabinieri* station damaging a motorcycle and a car. Two arrests were made and flags celebrating Mussolini were found in the house of the arrested which was subsequently raided by police (La Repubblica –online- 15 July, 2009b).

The data of the Ministry of the Interior are undoubtedly a credit to the work done by the Italian police, but do they imply a reduction in the radicalisation of the *curve* and suggest

that the policing strategy is working? The appearance of the *UltraS Italia* and episodes such as those mentioned earlier suggest a move in the opposite direction. *La Repubblica* newspaper does not agree with the figures of Dr. Mazzilli; according to this newspaper there are now 63 *UltraS* groups, accounting for 75% of all Italian hardcore football supporter groups (La Repubblica –online- 17 March, 2009). Regardless of whose figures are correct, a reader should find from both sources that the *UltraS* are not a small collective and, from the various episodes chronicled in this study, are capable of resisting if their existence is challenged. Caution should be taken in choosing the ‘right’ strategy to tackle this problem; the terrorism of Italy in the 1970s provides lessons about the power of youth protest and its inclination to become dangerously subversive

Chapter 13

Concluding Remarks

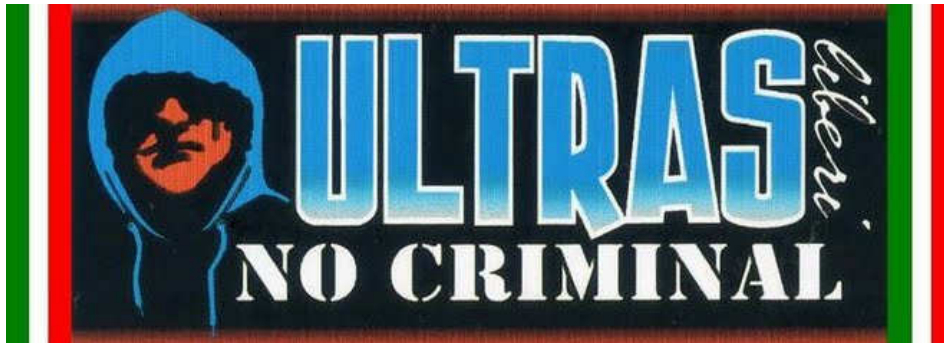


Fig. 50: The *UltraS* Freedom Banner

‘Certainly, we [UltraS] will not bow in front of their [State and Media] psychological violence, they can arrest us or isolate us from ‘our’ world, but something is sure, we will always be proud and faithful to ourselves [and ideals]. The UltraS, in their own way, are great artists.... Maybe because, differently from the mass, they are able to deeply understand the ills of life... or more simply because, in life, they are conscious of being the leading actors.’ Andrea (Boys)

Any discussion around the *UltraS* needs to be addressed from two perspectives: in terms of method (combining the theoretical and empirical) and social spaces (both inside and outside of the football stadium). As this study has illustrated, these dualities are interconnected via a belief system within the *UltraS*, which is strongly based on ideology and that drives participants to actions. In such a milieu, individuals make the transition from theory to action without the need for consistency. It is in explaining this dynamic that the *UltraS* present an academic challenge and a focus of concern for the various authorities.

This thesis set out with the task of providing new sociological findings regarding the *UltraS* in Rome. The main method was qualitative, with a focus on ethnographic work, while the evaluation sought to locate the *UltraS* firmly within the broader structural contexts of Roman and Italian football, and more generally Italian society. In this regard, the discourses of the *UltraS* provided a potent, highly reflexive bridge between the particular and the general, most evident in their discussions about their wider ideologies and the perceived failings of Italian society (and football institutions). This study, the first ethnography in academia about the philosophical life view of the *UltraS*, has hopefully offered a basis to explain – to some degree at least – the meaningful sense of identity which these social groups provide for a significant minority of Roman (and indeed Italian) youth. Once the *UltraS* social and ethical outlooks are adequately set out, the ‘mindless thugs’ characterisation,

which provides a basis for their dismissal by the media and other commentators, might be directly confronted.

This concluding chapter seeks to offer a reflexive overview of the highly multifaceted and ever-contested issues evident throughout this thesis. At the same time, I tried to draw together, the thematic strands that best explain the *Boys* and *Irriducibili*. It is hoped that the study knowledge adds to the subject of Sociology of Sport providing a more accurate account of the *UltraS* than previously known. The same can be asserted for what we might call 'Italian Studies'. More is now known about the *UltraS* and their effective location in the context of the Italian capital Rome (and Italy). Most importantly, such knowledge also aims to contribute to the mainstream discipline of Sociology in terms of uncovering and analysing the logic and motivations, which are at the base of the *UltraS* behaviour and collective self.

The research was presented in three sections. In Section A, I explored the *UltraS* territories-*le curve*- and the groups' histories. From this analysis, the *UltraS* cohesion and elitism emerged as their primary traits. The *direttivo* of both groups represent not only a collective of individuals united by a strong friendship but a symbolic nucleus on which the *UltraS* power of identification is located.

Section B sought to bring out the different historical, political and cultural dimensions relevant to an understanding of the *UltraS*. In chapter 5, I examined the ideological basis that motivates and leads the *Irriducibili* and *Boys* 'thoughts and actions. The chapter tried also to demystify the belief that Italian fascism (and its 21st century development) should be primarily considered as an ultra-reactionary doctrine. The chapter, instead, stressed that the strand of fascism, which a large section of the Italian youth neo-fascism movement promote (of which the *UltraS* are part of) has a Movimentist dimension with revolutionary-resistance potential. This ideological characteristic, together with the *UltraS* actions, can justify arguments that explain the *UltraS* as extraparliamentary oppositional groupings.

Chapter 6 analysed the natures of the *UltraS* gatherings identifying them as form of ideological communitas. The inquiry detailed the internal order of the communitas and the phases of passage of an 'ordinary' *curva* fan to a fully-fledged *UltraS*. Two distinct trajectories were identifiable in the expressions of the *UltraS* activism: the 'elite' and the 'sympathisers'. The 'elite', which includes the *direttivo*, promotes and shares the *Ultras* ideological and cultural DNA. All of the *UltraS* 'elite' appear to display the convictions of the purist and at the same time, share a strong sense of mutual responsibility concerning social action and cultural values towards both rival hardcore supporters and the forces of 'repression' (i.e. the police, the State and the media). The importance of the 'elite' is

displayed when its members are in action; such leaders – by virtue of their action and charisma – if not subject to the DASPO, are always in the vanguard during ‘battles’ with groups of other fans and police. The *UltraS* ‘sympathisers’ are similar to Linden and Klandersmans’ extreme right groups and their ‘compliant’ activists (Linden and Klandersmans, 2007). The ‘sympathisers’ share the ideology of the *communitas* but are only involved as long as membership is considered ‘fashionable’, or as long as specific friends are involved with the group’s ‘elite’.

Chapter 6 also introduced one of the four main elements of the *UltraS* logic namely the principle of *non omologazione*. This concept underscores the deviant nature of this type of gatherings. The *UltraS* know they are deviant because they consider violence as instrumental and essential for the affirmation of their rights and values. They celebrate their deviation from what they obsessively dismiss as *omologazione della gioventú* (youth conformism) considered to be duped and politically servile to dominant societal logics.¹⁶⁴

The following chapters (7-8) tried to explain the sense of authenticity expressed by the *UltraS* *communitas* via the concept of ‘true’ *UltraS*. There are several common elements displayed by the two *UltraS* *communitas* that are shared by other similar ideologically led gatherings throughout Italy. The *UltraS* *communitas* is located in a legendary world and founded in a shared symbolic repertoire (such as the Celtic cross, specialist clothes, and non-mainstream music), values (such as reverence towards Mussolini or the Fallen of the *anni di piombo*) and codes of behaviour (especially faith in their ‘deviant’ way of life). In their actions, banners and campaigns – what might otherwise be termed as their ‘internal figurative universe of liturgy, ritual, symbol, myth and commemoration’ (Gentile, in Roberts 2007, p. 5) – the *UltraS* make visible the supported shortcomings of the political and footballing systems. The *UltraS* *communitas* have also a strong cultural dimension, which is expressed in an ideal society based on traditionalism.

The ‘Warrior Spirit’, which emerges in chapter 8 in all its significance, clarifies the *UltraS* values. The *UltraS* belief in the warrior way of life promotes the logic of ‘never giving up’ and is at the foundation of their inclination to violence. It also provides an ethical justification for actions deemed important to both defend and affirm the existence of the *communitas* and its ‘traditional’ values. The ‘Warrior Spirit’ encapsulates and celebrates notions of self-sacrifice, honour, duty (to the *communitas*) and, most importantly, faith (in the

¹⁶⁴ 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).

communitas lifeview). Such faith in the path to follow carries a 'quasi-religious' connotation in its supposed infallibility. It is difficult, though, to convince the believers of any sense of delusion.

The last two chapters evaluated the nationalistic and racial dimensions of the *Boys* and *Irriducibili* and located them in the recent developments of the Italian football fandom phenomenon. Chapter 9 highlighted the importance of the concept of *patria*, which implies for the *UltraS* the subordination of the ego to the collective and seeks the re-evaluation of the concept of a nation, considering it as an organic collective of people that exists mainly in opposition to a liberal, 'modern' hyper-individualistic society. Chapter 9 also showed that the *UltraS* displays of racism is complex and at times incoherent; racist insults maybe the results of spontaneous outbursts (i.e. ritualised forms of insult) which aim to comment, albeit in a contemptible way, the events at the football match. These forms of insult can originate from the tribunes stands and spread to the whole *curva* or vice versa. These types of insult can intertwine with racist offences that are more ideologically motivated. However, the roots of the *UltraS* manifestations of racism –which, even if strongly rebutted by the protagonists, exist - should be mainly found in their way of denying entry to their territory to one considered an 'outsider'. Their racism has to be seen as yet another manifestation of their oppositional culture, which is integral to their sense of communitas.

Finally, chapter 10 located the *Irriducibili* and the *Boys* among similar gatherings in what this study hypothesise as the emerging *UltraS* movement. The key concepts to understand the *UltraS* as a social movement are their collective power of social identification and their feeling of grievance. The *UltraS* communitas promotes the importance of collectivity as the first and most important factor. This process creates strong ties among the members. This sense of bond can be very appealing to youth. The *UltraS* have (and can sustain) strong identification power because they have defined boundaries that cannot be crossed by the 'others'. They have also an internal homogeneity that arises out of ideology and culture; this trait produces a well-rooted internal structure and, given the communitas common goals, provides a sense of destiny in the believers (Campbell 1958; Hamilton and Sherman 1996). Many individuals, but mostly youth, exist in an uncertain milieu. This context facilitates identification with groups such as the *UltraS*. The extreme societal insecurity that is evident in so many Italian youth due to the state of political affairs may contribute to the young becoming attracted to extreme ideology (Hogg et al. 2007; Hogg 2005) and to promote social identification with gatherings such as the *Irriducibili* and the *Boys*. (cf. Staub 1989; Taylor and Louis 2004).

Caution, though, should be observed in considering the appeal of these gatherings as being primarily about a sense of rebellious, 'anti-systemic' logic or due to a simple love for football. Interactions between group members are crucially based on a defined mix of emotions and duty towards the sense of *communitas*. Members are exhilarated by the group's pre-match choreographies and in playing the 'cat and mouse' game with the authorities in attempts to bypass their control be it inside and outside the football stadium. The indefinable 'buzz' is also felt before conflict, be it against the 'communists' or the variety of other opponents, notably *le guardie* (the police). Being amongst groups such as the *Boys* or *Irriducibili* is for many an imaginary act of identification with both real and symbolic others and ideals. This allows individuals such as Todde or Giorgio or Lele to play with their self-images (Armstrong 1998; Glaser 1958; Strauss 1969; Lacan 1977). In the variety of situations which the *UltraS* both created and responded to, participants were able to pursue activities that collectively they would possibly consider repugnant – or at best strange – if practised alone (Armstrong 1998; Simmel, 1957, p. 313). Via such performances, participants are transported from superficiality to fantasy in an attempt to close the gap between their imagined and experienced pleasures (Armstrong 1998; Campbell 1989; Bauman 1992).

The *UltraS* feeling of grievance, instead, originates and is strengthened by societal discourses that depict them as 'mindless thugs' and aims to marginalise them because of their neo-fascist creed. The strong repression -which the *UltraS* fear can erase them from their *curve*- and their convictions to live by the 'Warrior Spirit', instead, are at the base of their emergence of movement and their attempts to react against the State with some forms of collective strategy. The most evident first manifestation of the existence of the *UltraS* as a movement is represented by the *UltraS Italia*.

The final part of the study (Section C) aimed to clarify the relationship between the *UltraS* and their fierce opponents namely the media (chapter 11) and the police (chapter 12). These relationships were primarily explored with reference to the groups studied but also with reference to the wider movement. In chapter 11, the power of the media to re-present reality and its risk in relation to the *UltraS* phenomenon were highlighted. Two media positions emerge one is the alarmist (for the *UltraS* phenomenon) and the other stresses the excess of coverage, both might be considered to pose problems when considering the *UltraS* reactions. Chapter 12 aimed to give credit to the work done by the police in containing football violence but also offered a critical reflection on the strategies adopted to tackle the *UltraS*. This approach, together with a repressive and at times confusing legislation *corpus* – criticised also by non-*UltraS* within the Italian hardcore football supporters' world- can

instead unwillingly facilitate the *UltraS* rhetoric of marginalisation and stigma and further their radicalisation.

This research acknowledges that readers may well seek answers to questions, which I may not have posed. This will always be the case in any sociological inquiry. All academic studies have limitations. The best defence that I can offer is to ask that the reader accept the limitations of my endeavours. The main shortcoming of this study is connected to its visual dimension or, more specifically, the domain of Visual Sociology (VS) wherein visual materials are utilised as a means of presenting the world of the social groups under investigation.¹⁶⁵ Although this has been attempted via the use of photographs, the full utilisation of this method remains open to further work. Two barriers limited the use of VS analysis. The video camera, one of the most popular tools in VS, was too invasive for the *UltraS* leaders and its use risked jeopardising access to a setting that, by its nature, is 'closed'. In addition, the techniques of Visual Sociology are quite complex and should be utilised only when the researcher is competent. If not, they risk becoming a choreographic complement of the research without an accompanying critical dimension.

At least two potential directions for future inquiry have emerged from this investigation. Both involve 'gender'. Whilst this study has examined the gender dimension of the *Irriducibili* and *Boys*, the surface of this topic has only been scratched. The issue requires more investigation, notably on the level of 'presence' of female hardcore football supporters in Italy in ideologically motivated gatherings. This study has highlighted the position (more so in the *Boys* than the *Irriducibili*) of women, and has produced new findings that have been generally overlooked in previous work on the gender dimensions of both Italian neo-fascist groups and hardcore football fan gatherings (as the *UltraS* might be considered to be a synthesis of these two worlds). The phenomenon of the female *UltraS* has been confirmed in recent times by the Italian media. In 2008, 20 *UltraS* were charged by the public prosecutor following clashes that occurred in Rome after Gabriele Sandri's death. Among the 20 who were fighting the police was a 25-year old woman. The other side of the *curva* ideological barrier provides another example. In 2005, on the occasion of a Ternana versus Perugia fixture, 13 hardcore supporters of the former – politically Leftist – group were arrested.

¹⁶⁵Cf. <http://visuelsociology.org>; H.Becker. (1974).Photography and Sociology. *Studies in the Anthropology of Visual Communication*, I, 1, 3-26; G. Rose. (2001). *Visual Methodologies*. London: Sage; F. Mattioli.(1991) *Sociologia Visuale*. Torino: Nuova Eri.

Among these were three women recorded on CCTV cameras throwing stones and rudimentary bombs (made with gunpowder) towards police.¹⁶⁶

More importantly, the gender dimension requires a thorough ethnographic study in relation to the ideas surrounding the 'Italian fascists of the Third Millennium'. Here I refer to *Casa Pound Italia*, a collective worthy of its own specific enquiry, not only for its links to the *UltraS* world but also because of its anti-conformist, Movimentist interpretation of fascist ideology which is gaining popularity in Italy. *Casa Pound Italia* support an organisation entitled *Donne e Azione* (DEA), identified by the media as *femminismo neofascista* (neo-fascist feminism). The projects of DEA are advertised via a radio program titled *FuturArdita*, hosted by the Casa Pound radio station, *Radio Bandiera Nera*. Apart from the work of Blee (2002) that focused on the American feminine far right, the issue of women's political activism in Italy has been overlooked for many years and is, therefore, in urgent need of systematic examination.

13.1 Understanding the Curve Warriors

In concluding, inspired by the anti-rationalistic ideas of thinkers such as Evola (1993; 1996), the *UltraS* see their battles primarily against the 'modern' society that in their consideration is morally decadent. They might be understood as existing in a framework wherein tales – both football related and politically inspired – of idealised scenarios of masculinity are ever-present. In their behaviours, the *UltraS* seek to combine notions of the warrior with abstractions drawn from a variety of Western thinkers. They are, thus, a combination of theory and action, as most obviously displayed inside the football stadium. Shaping their self-presentation using fascist ideology's myth and values, communities like the *Boys* and *Irriducibili* seek to build an autonomous social space that confers social status. This strategy enables members of the *UltraS* to emerge from an otherwise undifferentiated crowd of discontented Italian youth. Like their mainstream neo-fascist counterparts, the *UltraS* find their sense of function, survival and unity in a critical and antagonistic stance toward the society from which they feel marginalised. Their opposition is articulated through a logic that they argue is antithetical to the normative, cognitive and behavioural codes that are otherwise promoted and defended by Italian society. The *UltraS* existence also demonstrates the consistent – and ironic – overlaps between them and Italian Leftist political movements, and

¹⁶⁶ Cf. http://poliziadistato.it/articolo/12755-calcio_Polizia_Terni_arresta_13_ultras_ternana

their growth reflects the sense of marginalisation of non- Leftist youth movements which lack the political shelter available to the left – radical elements of both political and social movements.

The neo-fascism the *UltraS* express, and which motivates their opposition, makes no pretence to be a new ideology, instead they espouse old ideas mixed with a heavy dose of Romance. Neo-Fascism is Romantic in its vision promoting, as it does, a sense of community, the importance of tradition and the necessity of honour and order. At the same time, this political genre attracts those who, whilst preaching the virtues of order, are fascinated by the potential the groups hold for degrees of chaos. In this sense, the *UltraS* appear to be similar to football fans the world over who follow an entity – football’s rules and ideology – that has not fundamentally changed since the late nineteenth century. Supporters ever manifest a sense of the Romantic in their club-related memories in narratives that have few parallels in contemporary society. Their discourse around notions of tradition fits with a pursuit of higher meaning and values, under what Berger (1967) called a ‘sacred canopy’. Anthropologists the world over have recognised variations on the ‘sacred canopy’ in both death-defying and finite belief systems. Such a canopy helps to vanquish the dread of the void. The narratives of such sacredness are often spoken by self-appointed prophets who, therefore, attract followers. As Griffin argues, just as modernity destroyed the tried and trusted certainties of myth and religion (i.e. the sacred), one should expect alternative sacred canopies to appear or be sought beyond mysticism and religion. Some seek a paradise in the here and now; their appeal often lies in offering a sense of renewal. For the *UltraS*, tradition, with all of its myths, memories and symbols, accomplishes two functions: it serves to increase their sense of cohesion and it reinforces the boundaries between them and ‘others’ (Smith, 1998). Repertoires of action that signpost the importance of past events – whether real or mythical – give accessible ‘points of entry’ to the *UltraS*, allowing individuals to locate and contextualise their own personal experiences within the broader collective (Gamson, in Mazer 2008). Even if the myths, memories and symbols contained in the notion of tradition based on narratives and texts are individually experienced, they are also shared within the *communitas*, creating a ‘consistency’ through communication and action (ritual) (Mazer, 2008).

In contrast to their ‘ordinary’ peers, the *UltraS* do not see their daily life as consisting of the past, present and future. For them the past – its values and traditions – is more significant than the future and is a means to interpret their present. British historian Griffin (2005) best sheds light on why ideological *communitas* – such as the *UltraS* – see tradition as

such a crucial part of their existence. Drawing on sociologist Peter Berger's (1967) ideas around the instinctive terror of nothingness and the absurdity such a feeling brings, Griffin questioned whether modernity is soul-destroying and if modern life has been drained of all senses of spirituality and transcendental purpose. Where Durkheim might see a situation that would precipitate *anomie*, and which others might see as a source of disorientation and despair, Griffin broadens the debate and considers the possible responses induced by this state of existence. The result for some is a search for a new cultural form, which Berger termed *nomas*, a condition best defined as a transcendent order that seeks higher meaning and values.

Although, the *UltraS* can be certainly considered football supporters, they are 'out of the ordinary'; they gather in the name of SS Lazio and AS Roma, but are not slavish followers of the entities considered at surface level to be their 'love objects'. Both groups were aware that the management of the football clubs would condemn them and, given their primarily financial-self interest and involvement with the club, were considered liable to both theft and financial betrayal. Few footballers of either clubs were revered. Many were considered the ultimate mercenaries whose love for the team shirt and the club would last as long as their contract. Football manifested the confusion they were seeking to address. Opposed to the processes of globalisation yet enjoying the skills of foreign-born footballers and wearing football shirts adorned with the insignia of transnational corporate finance, the *Boys* and *Irriducibili* are at the same time dismissive towards the commercial logic of contemporary elite-level football. Yet, the *UltraS* at the same time appreciate the abstract qualities of faith and courage that the game facilitates. Consequently, they are prisoners of the game that they consider to be so corrupted because they depend on football to impart structure and meaning to their existence, nor can they walk away from the spectacle that it provides.

As is evident in this analysis, the *Irriducibili* and *Boys* hold political convictions that are deeply anti-capitalist, anti-liberal but also anti-conservative. Yet, whilst strongly supportive of an Italian nationalism, their politics oppose Italian political conformism, though they have little to offer by way of visions of a new social order. Their *leitmotif* instead is based around articulating a variety of fears and a sense of political, social (and football) disillusionment. Meanwhile they contest – with violence – their opponents and the repressive police. Significantly, they refuse to be defeated. As Marco (*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, such individuals face the

possibility of injury or even, in some circumstances, death. Since 1962, more than 60 young men have died around the occasion of a Serie A/B/C football match and whilst such casualties are not all *UltraS*-related, their existence can be said to perpetuate the possibility of football-related deaths.¹⁶⁷

Their oppositional behaviour never formally contemplated the erasure of democracy. Actually, they recognised that the dictatorship model of fascism was not defensible and that the brand of fascism espoused by Mussolini needed to be re-considered in the context of contemporary Italian society. The *UltraS* and indeed the neo-fascists' existence is a phantom politics. The 'ideologists' of the *UltraS* know the actuality of political power would be far from romantic. They celebrate the Saló Republic but distance themselves from the fascism of the regime of Mussolini because this seizing of power saw the end of idealism and the necessity of political pragmatism with all its iniquities. The *UltraS* are not pro-Dictatorship but are ever-seeking new ideas for a new society and will even romance about the pre-fascists contexts of modern Italy in the glorious past that they pursue. On the other hand, not all their existence was negative and oppositional. They sought consistently to set an example to peer groups and indeed provoked piety in their style and articulations – especially those that stressed non-conformity. They exemplify how to live in both a financially modest and bodily pure context. Their resistance to the exploitative logic of the capitalist system and their vehement anti-drugs message revealed these values. They sought to reach their fellow youth mainly inside (within the hardcore football supporters' world) but also outside of the *curve*. However, the oppositional stance of the *Boys* and *Irriducibili* (and of the whole *UltraS* movement) comes at a price. Assuming the role of 'social critic' entails consequences. The Italian State – via both its agents and the electoral process – is tasked to control those disillusioned with democracy and willing to turn to violence to resist or to provoke change. The critical posture of the *UltraS* at times offends and at other times violates the social order however tenuous this is in the Italian context ; this creates an inevitable (and justifiable) reaction from the agencies of power that are being challenged.

Claiming the stadium as their *Agorà* they were implicitly admitting that they preferred the notion of the assembly to that of representative democracy. The *UltraS* prefer noise, slogans and when necessary direct action/confrontation. Whilst the *UltraS* might see their role as bringing some sense of Athenian 'people power' to the football stadium we might

¹⁶⁷ Cf. *No to Violence. More Civilization in the Stadium; More Progress in the City* (2006). This document was produced by the Local Government office of Naples.

consider that debates about Democracy have been over-concerned with the notion of *demos* (people) at the expense of the role of *Kratos* (rule) which has frequently utilised force; strength and domination is integral to order and stability (cf. Runciman, 2009). When the Assembly was superseded by representative democracy and with it elections, political parties and charismatic leaders, the result was a democratic process that saw Europe become the global killing fields in the first half of the twentieth century. Democracy suffers from founding myths; it is frequently chaotic and forever needs a sense of purpose. The *UltraS* remind us of this.

Ultimately, these ‘warriors’ of the 21st century Italy reflect some crucial aspects of their own society – the centrality of football to Italian public life and social identities, the widespread ambivalence towards modernity, the search for fundamental values within a social system that seems to have lost its way, the alienation of youth towards a perceived gerontocratic society. Perhaps the irony is that if ‘oppressive’ forces such as the condemnatory media, the repressive police, and the ‘tough’ authorities, all have their way then the *UltraS* -who are in the public domain and who are known to these powerful figures, will be forced to disappear – and given the political and cultural history of Italy and its ongoing political and cultural contradictions, the *UltraS* may well be replaced by who knows what?

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