

IRONY, BUSINESS, POLITICS AND VIOLENCE AMONG ROMAN FOOTBALL FANS (1927-2005)

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The genesis of the “romanista” soccer fan (1927-1943)

In the capital of Italy, a town of almost four million inhabitants, soccer is one of the subjects most discussed on a daily basis. For us it is the most important topic, followed not particularly closely by political matters and by complaints about the economic crisis brought on by the arrival of the euro. Soccer has been an obsession of the adult part of the masculine population since the nineteen-thirties, the most beloved subject of chats in the workplace, on street corners, or at the bar (and in newspapers, on the radio, on television, and on the internet, depending on what decade you are talking about). It became the most important topic in 1927, when the Associazione Sportiva Roma was born. It's important to remember that soccer arrived in Italy at the end of the nineteenth century. It acquired popularity before the First World War, and was well-established by the Twenties. Soccer had been played in Rome for about thirty years before the birth of the ASR. There were three teams with a solid fan base: SS Lazio, SGS Fortitudo and SS Alba. Each of these clubs had started out practicing various sports at the time of the belle époque, and finally had chosen soccer as a primary activity. In the summer of 1927, after the end of the First Division National Championship, Lazio advanced to the group of the thirty strongest teams, most from the northern regions of Italy. Alba and Fortitudo should have disputed their inferior categorization. Italy was on the eve of the first soccer championship that permitted southern clubs to play in a round robin with northern clubs. In previous years, there had existed two different leagues for the north and for the south. But the idea of having just one roman team in the most important championship, and not a particularly strong team at that, seemed to the political élite to be an error that needed to be corrected.

The Fascist regime had been in power for five years. Benito Mussolini had just started a project that would centralize the control levers of national sport in Rome, the building of a sports centre called Foro Mussolini (now known as Foro Italico) on the shores of the Tiber. For the soccer championship of 1927-28, the first one that would be truly national, the Duce wanted the Capital to be represented by a team that could hold its own against the more expert clubs of the north, a team that could carry with honour the colours of the flag of imperial Rome: red and gold. In those years, even small towns of Piedmontese, Ligurian and Lombard provinces had stronger teams than Rome did. Further, following a political directive, in all of Italy a process of consolidation of economically weak teams to form larger, solider ones was in process. At the same time, teams were cleansed of their Socialist or Catholic association and were branded as Fascist. Mussolini made his desires clear to the Fascist hierarchs in charge of Roman sport. At first, they tried to merge Lazio, Alba and Fortitudo. They were unsuccessful due to quarrels between the teams. The strongest refusal came from SS Lazio, the Roman team with the most titles. Then the hierarch Italo Foschi had the smart idea of replacing Lazio with another club, the red-and-yellow Roman Football Club. The RFC, created in 1901 by an English initiative, had few supporters but enjoyed a good economic position. Foschi's plan was not opposed. The funds of the wealthy backers of the RFC, most of them Jewish, mixed with the number of supporters and the technical validity of Alba and Fortitudo. SS Lazio was safe. AS Roma was born.

Roma and Lazio played the 1927-28 championship in separate rounds. Neither of the two qualified for the playoffs, but Roma succeeded in winning a consolation tournament called the CONI Cup. On July 29th, 1928 in Florence, when the “wolves” played the final game against the “canaries” of Modena, an extraordinary crowd formed spontaneously in Piazza del Popolo. The announcement of the victory thrilled the crowd, which shouted, waved handkerchiefs and danced around and around the Egyptian obelisk which marked the centre of the square. The inhabitants of Via del Corso leaned curiously out of their windows, as in the times of the races of the *berberi* horses, when Rome was still ruled by the Pope. That day for the first time the Eternal City was shaken by an explosion of popular delight primed by soccer, which the citizens called “*fubballa*”. Roma played its home games of that championship and the successive one in the Appio Stadium, in the southern part of the city, along the Via Appia. In 1929 the “wolves” moved to a new Stadium built in the more central zone of Testaccio. The “eagles” of Lazio kept the Rondinella Stadium, situated in the north at the foot of the Parioli Hills, as a home field. In this somewhat confused manner, at the eve of the first “Serie A”, which grouped the twenty best clubs in a single pool (championship 1929-30), the city of Rome had two strong teams. One ancient and glorious, the other younger and ambitious.

It was immediately evident that even the fans of the two clubs were different. Lazio fans were the traditional likings middle-high bourgeoisie. People, as they said in that period, “with stinks under their nose”. AS Roma possessed two souls melted miraculously together: the first soul sprang from the unconditional affection of the people; the other was the result of the respect of an élite that had not recognized itself in the “foreign” colours of SS Lazio – a club that had the flaw of having descended from the pioneer sports passion of immigrants descended from the north of the country a couple of generations before. In substance, ASR was able to surpass by far the number of Lazio supporters. It happened so that, around the flag of the She-Wolf, people of different cultures and traditions melded together: the Romans of “seven generations” and those protagonists of the internal migration that, as they ascended from the south, the Regime had stopped at the doors of the Capital, in the first dormitory districts. In the years 1920-1940 the town passed from 600.000 to beyond 1.200.000 inhabitants, of which half were in the 22 central districts and the other half in the areas of the outside enclosure, in continuous expansion. The birth of a soccer club that had the right colours and the right name, come to fight the excessive power of the north, provoked the phenomenon of “*allupamento*”. A kind of process that involved the downtown districts and the suburban areas, like Garbatella, San Lorenzo, Tiburtino and Trionfale. If the Appio Stadium was the melting pot, the new ground of the ASR, the pleasant and cosy Campo Testaccio, was the real cauldron where passions boiled and thickened in the typical character of the “Testaccio people”. The blood temperament of the inhabitants of the working-class district transferred to the red-and-gold team, composed for the most part of local athletes. Thus, AS Roma lost that black veil linked to the circumstances of its birth. As a matter of fact, you could say everything of Testaccio except that it was fascist. The socialist vein of the turbulent district was long-standing and not completely suppressed. This process happened just as soccer was acquiring a large number of fans and was becoming the national sport, surpassing bicycle racing. SS Lazio had waited on the platform for a long time, but when the bus of popular passion finally arrived, Roma fans got on first.

Two years after its birth, ASR could count 1.200 members, separated into “ordinary”, “meritorious” and “lifetime” categories. It surpassed every other sports club in the city. The first collision between the two rivals happened at the Rondinella Stadium on 8 December 1929. That game explained how strange things had become. Nine-tenths of the stadium were occupied by Roma supporters. In that occasion, the fear of brawls kept Lazio supporters away. It would be incorrect to claim that, of every ten soccer fans in Rome, nine were *romanisti*. The ratio between *romanisti* and *laziali* must have been about 4 to 1. In the course of the Thirties, the mythical Campo Testaccio, a big square wooden box painted yellow and red, revealed itself to be much heartier than the Stadium of the National Fascist Party, where Lazio went to play. This simple fact marked the characters of the *tifoserie*: romantic and theatrically attached to their colours the *romanisti*; cold, ironic and a little snobbish the *laziali*, who bragged that they had important bosses, and even Mussolini’s sons, in their rows. ASR supporters did not suffer any kind of inferiority complex. They had in their symbol the She-Wolf of the *romulea* breed. They were the novelty that advanced in the “New Italy”. Both teams approached victory in the next championships, but Roma alone succeeded in 1942. The Wolves’ supremacy in the two annual derbies was overwhelming. AS Roma became the first soccer team of the Capital.

From 1929 to 1940, Campo Testaccio hosted a Sunday rite that acquired, in the eyes of many men and boys, greater importance than the church service or the fascist parades. On foot or by tram, by bicycle or by car, the fans reached the ground of Roma, settled just in front of the non-Catholic Cemetery where the mortal remains of the poet John Keats and of other eminent English and German characters rested. Supporters went to the stadium showing perfect self-control. In those days, Italian soccer fans were passionate but almost entirely non-violent. During the Thirties the game ruled the spectators, that is to say the complex of actions and circumstances, the atmosphere produced by the behaviour of the twenty-five men trotting on the field. The LUCE films show us images of dark crowds, which we know were brightened up by the “*pipinara giallorossa*” of the flags with the wooden staff, of the handkerchiefs inserted in the *fifaus* of the jackets, of the scarves of silk “Gloria” pulled outside the pockets and waved frenetically. Sometimes, a larger flag appears and is passed from hand to hand for a few moments, rolling above the heads of the people. You can see signs with writing and drawings, but no banners naming fan-groups. The idea of a “Roma Club” under the fascist Regime is inconceivable. Soccer fans found a comfortable way to be together and have a chat in the work place, or gathered under the arcades of the elegant shops in the center, in the coffee bars and in the pubs. Following the example of how it was done in northern towns, a fanzine of few pages was published in 1932, managed by some well-off fans. It was called “La AS Roma”. More popular than this fanzine was the main sports newspaper, “Il Littoriale”. Also very popular was the weekly satiric “Il Tifone”, which included writing from some of the best sports journalists. Other accoutrements of the Sunday soccer believers were the pocket calendar of the championship, the pre-match programme, the funnel to yell through, the tennis style visor, the paper carefully rolled up as a sunshade, the pin pasted on the collar of the jacket.

As a matter of fact, Campo Testaccio never met a band of youngsters animated by the will to provoke riots. Nevertheless, the field was a true bogeyman for the host teams. Already after the first games, it was forbidden to bring in umbrellas and sticks; and then the sale of the *gazzosine*, small bottles of sparkling

lemonade which the spectators enjoyed hurling onto the pitch when the show did not satisfy. Campo Testaccio was never disqualified for invasions or other reasons, but in April of 1939, with the disagreeable Ambrosian-Inter of Milan winning the game, the *romanisti* came very close to a disastrous end of the day. It happened that Inter players, stepping out onto the field provoked supporters seated in the “*popolari*” sector. The fans reacted with a rain of stones and spit. For the rest of the season, the federal bureau forbid access to the area of the balcony behind the Cemetery; that was the end crowded with men that worked in the nearby slaughterhouse and arrived filthy from the bags they carried on their shoulders. To tell the full truth, Campo Testaccio did not lack some rare case of an enraptured spectator invading the field. But the weak initiative of the fans towards the referees (suspected to serve the northerner cause) was due to the “general climate” and to the accurate control exercised by military policemen, with the plumes of the *carabinieri* that broke in the middle of the *Borsalino* hats. The bad part of the *tifoseria* expressed itself in the whistling, that hit like hail the players on the ground and the managers comfortably seated in the grandstand. The crowd could swiftly descend from exaltation to the most acute despondency. Campo Testaccio often burst out in romantic songs, but it did not resound with enthusiasm from the very first to the last minute. When things went badly, the crowd fell silent. The Achilles heel of the Stadium was its capacity, just 25.000 onlookers, that was insufficient to host matches of great importance, when the rivals were Juventus, Ambrosiana-Inter, Bologna, Naples or Lazio. On those days, it was difficult to find tickets to attend the game. Supporters also complained about how expensive tickets were. The president Renato Sacerdoti, and the two presidents that came after him, senator Antonio Scialoja and count Igino Betti, took the habit of balancing the budget by grading prices according to the eagerness of fans to see the games. Protests were not lacking. Ironic signs appeared in the stands. The ASR put into practice prices superior by a good 20% to those of SS Lazio. Managers were forced to do that because they had to pay the fees for the Stadium. Guys who didn’t have enough money in their pockets, made do by climbing to the top of the close by “Mountain of the Pots” or above the arcs of the old Aurelian Walls, from where they could make out a corner of the field. In the autumn of 1940 Campo Testaccio was finally demolished. Being of wood and not of marble and concrete, it had never pleased Mussolini, who recorded several complaints by the British Ambassador for the proximity of the “red-and-yellow chapel” to the Cemetery. The team transferred to the Stadium of the PNF and there it won its first *scudetto*, at the end of the 1941-42 championship. With the war underway, the day of the victory did not witness the dances and the parties that had marked the conquest of the CONI Cup. It was a joy lived in a quiet manner, the stadium half empty. After the fall of the Regime (July 1943), and during the terrible days of Nazi occupation (September 1943 - June 1944), Roma played a local championship. Despite the danger of the aerial bombardments, soccer fans continued to attend games at the National Stadium (former PNF), the Appio Stadium and the Rondinella Stadium.

The evolution of the species: from “romanista” to “ultrà” (1945-1977)

A few years following the end of the war, AS Roma fell into a serious economic crisis. It was compelled to sell its strongest player, the centre-forward Amedeo Amadei. In vain a pool of fans signed a document to hinder his transfer to the richer clubs of the north. Amadei was sold to Inter Milan. The affection of supporters for this player remained unbroken in successive years, to the point that in 1952, when Amadei ran for mayor of Rome, the “*Bakery boy of Frascati*” received so many votes that he arrived in second place after the former mayor. In this period of renewal of the popularity of football, fans liked to gather at the bar, where the radio acted as an irresistible siren. They compiled the Pools and rested at the tables on the pavement in the mild season. Their discussions were often so animated to persuade some proprietors to exhibit a sign: “Do not talk about sports or politics”. The new presidents of AS Roma, the Christian-democrats Pietro Baldassarre, Piercarlo Restagno and Renato Sacerdoti, tried to solve the financial deficit inaugurating the strategy of the cooptation of the more well-off supporters in the administrative group of the Club. Various novelties were introduced in the 1950-51 season. In order to support the team that played very badly, two managers of the local catering industry, Peppino Catena and Giuseppe Montanari, organized the so-called “Shipping of the one thousand”: a trip via special train to the Stadium of Genoa, where the “wolves” were called to play an important match. A month later, on the eve of the game Roma-Naples, the same Montanari and another fan, the proprietor of a restaurant in Piazza Navona, Angelo Meschini, published the first number of the weekly “*Il Giallorosso*”, defined as the “organ of the supporters”. Montanari utilised the paper as a platform to create a Circle of Red-and-yellow Fans. Other circles rose in several districts of the town. It was possible to identify them in the Stadium by the banner of material that bore their name. In the autumn of 1950 Montanari became the head of the Office of Travel and Organizations of AS Roma. It refused, nevertheless, to officially become the representative of the *tifoseria*. With Montanari, we can say that a new type of fan appears on the stage, capable of exploiting the passion for the team to his economic advantage. The hearty support of the fans did not prevent the “wolves” from being relegated in Serie B. Yesterday like today, ASR was beloved by stars that enlivened the local movie and theatrical world. One of these, Renato Rascel (the author of the song *Arrivederci Roma*), the very Sunday in which Roma played its last game in Serie A, interrupted his show at the Theater Sistina and,

standing on the stage, announced sadly: “Gentlemen, from this moment AS Roma is in Serie B. *Forza Roma!*”. He received in reply a roar of applause.

The town reacted without hysteria to the situation. The *laziali* counted on a collapse of their rivals, so that they could reverse the numerical ratio that was unfavourable to them. Instead, the supporters of the She-Wolf rallied around the Club, more united than ever. On June 28 of 1951 the group-leaders, meeting in a restaurant on Via del Corso, declared their allegiance to the management. The president Sacerdoti created a type of subscription which permitted the subscriber, for a rather modest sum of money, to become life annuities partners, gaining the chance of voting in the social assemblies and the possibility of admittance to the seat of the Club. In the course of the championship, the network of fan clubs formed the Associazione Tifosi Giallorossi “Attilio Ferraris”, named for the first, glorious captain of the team. An official connection between this association, led by twenty *capotifosi*, and the Club was created. The activity of the circles and the number of subscribers guaranteed big attendances in the Serie B championship home games. An army of thousands of supporters organized themselves to follow the away game by motor-coach, by train and by car. Legions of Romans invaded the small towns of the Italian provinces, north and south, sometimes clashing with local fans. “Il Tifone” criticized the braggart attitudes of the supporters in the away games accusing the “new fans” of seeking to raise money from the trips. AS Roma ended its “season in hell” positively and returned finally to Serie A.

At the end of the Fifties, after having reached the number of 80 adhering groups and 24.000 members, the “Attilio Ferraris” dissolved. It happened mainly because of the intervention of the police, which ascertained the transformation of several of the seats of the circles, usually pubs, into actual gambling-houses. In this case also, the passion of fans helped business. The Roma Clubs had also been places of aggregation which had carried out an important programme. The activity of the healthiest of these circles, like “Esquilino”, included the classic tournaments of cards and billiards, but also medals offered to champions and messages of good will sent to sports stars and other clubs. There were rooms reserved for youngsters, supplied with ping pong tables, *calciobalilla* and pin-ball. A model for this kind of activity were the “Enal” circles, which organized after work activities. The presence of the “Attilio Ferraris” had not had any influence on the Club’s management. This was influenced by the fact that, at the request of Sacerdoti, the 30.000 members had been arranged hierarchically in three groups: “ordinary”, “life annuities” and “advisors”. In the general assemblies, held every year at the end of the season, the will of the “life annuities” partners could not change the decisions of the President. Sacerdoti was very able to maintain the trust of the majority of the advisors, around twenty individuals that, paying out five millions liras each, guaranteed themselves a voice in the administration of the Club. This type of selection created a managerial group formed by building manufacturers, “*cinematografari*” (small-scale businessmen engaged in the industry of movie-making) and dealers. But a board of directors composed of twenty men which gathered 100 million liras was inadequate to manage a society in a position of competing for the victory in the Italian soccer championship. The *scudetto* continued to be the prey of the northern clubs, driven by rich industrialists like Agnelli and Rizzoli. So was born the paradox of a soccer association, the AS Roma, representing the Capital and with a base of clients that had no equal in Italy, was nevertheless incapable of winning. This fact started to look like an incurable illness. It created a self-pitying attitude in the *tifoseria*. The city papers steered public opinion toward a comfortable dogma: the northern plot to keep down the southern clubs by the manipulating the referees. This suspicion, born during the Fascist Era, matured in the post-war years and stimulated supporters to violent rebellion. The incident of a fan invading the field to attack a referee occurred in 1959 in the Olympic Stadium, opened five years before and granted in lease to Roma and Lazio. Almost simultaneously, the first deviant behaviours appeared aboard the special trains which transported roman supporters in the towns of the north. Fans threw bottles when the train slowed down, damaging railway carriages. The new president, Anacleto Gianni, was compelled to pay enormous damages and to apologize to the state railway. And all this despite the fact that he had paid 70% of the expenditures of the trip.

Except for these first hints of violence, in the lucky years of the “economic boom” the love for soccer was still lived in a soft way, that had fertile ground in the typical humour of Romans. Every derby was marked by imaginative and spectacular betting. The fans of the two teams mixed without problems inside the stadium and ended the day eating and drinking together in some inn of the Flaminio district. The special trains, and above all the motor-coaches, carried the *laziali* of the provinces into the city for the first time. The scriptwriter Ennio Flaiano underlined this fact in one of his novels. The difference between the two *tifoserie* stabilized to the present ratio of two and a half *romanisti* for each *laziale*. It also crystallized the idea of Roma “belonging to the people” vs. Lazio “pervaded by an aristocratic temper”, description coined in 1955 by the left-wing writer Vasco Pratolini in his comments on the derby for the magazine “Il Campione”. The caricature of the *romanista* fan, profoundly attached to the team in spite of the losses to Milan, Inter and Juventus, was propagandized at the national level by several successful movies. The producers Nanni Loy (*L’audace colpo dei soli ignoti*) and Dino Risi (*I mostri*) used stars like Marcello Mastroianni and Vittorio Gassman. Also Alberto Sordi introduced in his movies the comical character of the *romanista*. From that time on, this theme remained common in the *commedia all’italiana*.

We can look at the Sixties as at a time in which soccer was still performed without violence. It is possible to underline, nevertheless, some new phenomena. The boom of production of Fiat favoured the birth of the figure of the fan on board his “utilitarian”, roaming the congested roads around the stadium, with the flag fluttering outside the window of the small car. On the terraces you could see the first smoke-bombs and listen to portable radios transmitting live the second halves of the games. The spectators egged themselves on with the classic “*Roma! Roma! Roma!*”. This obsessive shouting was supported by several noisy tools like whistles, trumpets, firecrackers and “*raganelle*” (tree-frog rattles), all made of plastic. The South Bend (*Curva Sud*) of the Olympic Stadium, due to the fact that from that side the teams stepped on to the field, became the seat of the most enthusiastic fans. They began distribute fanzines with the latest news on the game, distributed just outside the stadium; sheets that proved useful for the triumphant torchlight processions. After their first sensational appearance in the Fifties, banners became necessary accoutrements. They were home-made and no longer represented circles but rather more intimate units, groups of fans organized at a restaurant or a bar. The strongest club and organizer was the “XII Giallorosso”, born in 1963 in a bar on the remote eastern side of the city.

The incredible attachment of the supporters to the team gave rise to some almost pathetic episodes: in 1965, responding to an unfounded rumour that warned that the Club lacked the money to guarantee an away game, some fan leaders organized a collection in the Theater Sistina. The beloved captain Giacomo Losi himself gathered the money in a bucket passed among the people. Immediately after this incident, the Club returned into the orbit of the Christian Democrat Party. The Member of Parliament Giulio Andreotti drove the climb to the presidency of his collaborator Franco Evangelisti, already president of the Italian Boxing Federation. In the decade from the middle of the Sixties to the middle of the Seventies, several important events influenced the participation of the fans in the life of the Club in a radical way. The first was the transformation of AS Roma into a joint stock company. In 1966-67 the ASR was at the head in Italy of the movement for the joint stock company (*società per azioni: SpA*), that was driven from the necessity to get loans from the *Banco nazionale del lavoro*. Loans could not be granted to sports associations “not designed to make profits”. AS Roma acted as experimental laboratory because it was the Italian soccer club with the greatest debts. The transformation in *SpA* closed the period of 4.000 partners who managed the club. It put an end to the annual general assemblies and to the executive board stretched out to 36 elements to guarantee a financial base. The Company was monitored, from that time on, by a restricted group of shareholders in possession of an substantial bank account. Their leader was the proprietor of the majority parcel of shares, that is to say the President. The first one of this new lineage of presidents, the building manufacturer (affiliated with the Italian Communist Party) Alvaro Marchini, issued thousands of shares immediately and invited supporters to subscribe: buying two shares, the supporter gained a special card which gave him access to the Tiber Grandstand, that is to say one of the better sections in the Olympic Stadium. The commonly known generosity of Roma fans guaranteed the success of the speculation. Like the toppling of dominoes, the birth of the *SpA* led to a second event: the effort of the *SpA* to create a secure base of “customers”, promoting the organization of fans in associative structures. The third event was the appearance, inside the fan associations, of groups composed of teen-agers. And since Western Societies were living the era of youthful rebellion sprung from the left-wing university movements, with the teen-agers arrived political militants, who had decided that the stadiums were an ideal place to show themselves. Sports blended with politics, the passion for a soccer team representing the local *campanile*, applied to a struggle in arms and slogans conducted by politically engaged youths that shared the illusion of changing society, created a type of supporter a lot more complex than the previous one. A new “species” destined for an important role. The soccer fan blended to politics led to the extremist fan, that is to say the “ultras”.

In the case of the *ultrà* of AS Roma (according to the rules of Roman dialect, the original word was soon distorted into “*ultrà*”), the ground of cultivation of the species is spotted in the birth of the Roma Junior Club. In 1966 the Office Organization of ASR, trying to lead boys back to the stadium (the new generations were distracted by rock music and other interests), devised an project inspired by modern business criteria. ASR managers made contact with the upper schools and launched a soccer tournament. The “Junior Club” season ticket granted the boys aged 16-20 a discount of 50% on the entrance to the Roma games; those under 16 years payed a very low price for admission. The result of this strategy was that the South Bend became almost entirely “under 21”. In the early Seventies, simultaneously with the development of the “Junior Club” project, a new generation of Roma Club was borne, this time on direct impulse of the Company. The initial impetus was created by the arrival of a well-known coach, Helenio Herrera, who had created the luck of the oilman Moratti’s Inter. Herrera “the Magician” came down from Milan with the boast that he would win the championship. Another important help to the formation of the Roma Club came from the monthly magazine “Giallorossi”, an excellent forum for the circles that sprouted up like mushrooms after the rain. In April of 1973, about 60 circles united as the Italian Association of Roma Club (AIRC). The president that favoured the development of the Roma Club, accommodating the coordination centre of the fans in the seat of the Club, was Gaetano Anzalone, a young manufacturer of great success in the era of the building boom. The constitution of the AIRC brought back into the public eye the figure of the *capotifoso*. Anzalone, who called himself “the president-fan”, was very able

to use the leaders of the *tifoseria* to influence public opinion. This strategy guaranteed a leadership that survived, for several agitated seasons, the mediocre performance of the team. As Anzalone had planned, the presidents of the circles were able to organize the “activists” of the fan groups. These were few in number compared with the mass, but they had a decisive impact, because the quiet majority, that is to say the old style fans, at the end of a negative game left the stadium murmuring some complaints and returned home to enjoy the comments on television. When necessary, Anzalone used the system he had created to get rid of delicate responsibilities, like when he put to the vote amongst the *capotifosi* the question of the transfer of the captain of the team. The fan leaders, for their part, wanted to rise in the social ranks with the goals of attaining the most power possible and generating business for themselves. In this way a game of *do ut des* started between AS Roma and the fan leaders. Anzalone knew how to keep the leaders at the proper distance. He had some problems with just one of them, a native of the lower-class district of Garbatella. This *supertifoso*, Sergio Terenzi, was a militant communist and expert in union matters. Terenzi kept the leadership of the coordination of the circles for two years, its work concerning mainly two areas: the organization of the buses for the away game and the maintenance of order in the stadium. An order that, even if improved respect to the Fifties and Sixties, did not hinder the increase of violence, with some rather sensational mass invasions of the field. It was in these years of development of the Roma Club circuit that the psychological pressure exercised by the organized fans towards the management, the athletes, and the technical staff became heavy. The 20.000 partners of the AIRC found in the seats of the Roma Club a place to socialize and a way to stay close to the team. They could meet the players who visited the fan club and they could save on the cost of maintaining a presence in the many soccer fields of Italy. Some of the fan leaders used the contacts that they were able to establish at all levels to advance their own business interests. In 1972 a special fan-group was born that followed the team on a chartered airplane. The “Personal Jet” had its seat in Ostia, the beach resort outside Rome. It linked being a fan to tourism. Five years later, the first women’s sections appeared inside the Roma Club circuit. The precariousness of the agreement between Anzalone and the organized fans was unmasked in 1977, when Terenzi pointed his finger at the structural flaws of the system. A lot of Roma Club existed solely on paper. They were kept alive to manipulate the elections of the executive board. Terenzi criticized the scarcity of initiative in the social realm and the passivity shown towards Anzalone despite his questionable management techniques. Therefore, Terenzi created the Roma Independent Clubs, about two thousand affiliates united around the symbol of the She-Wolf. The She-Wolf was opposed to the “cub”, an advertising brand invented by Anzalone to support the marketing of the Club (scarves and gadgets, then a sponsor on the shirts). The ASR, in fact, was the first Italian soccer club to risk the exploitation of its own image, with the purpose of getting its perpetual economic crisis under control. Amongst the various and original initiatives of Anzalone, there was also the building of a sports centre outside of Rome’s ring road. Anzalone wanted “Trigoria” for speculative and logistical reasons, in the attempt to increase the price of some of his land and to make available a modern training area to senior and junior teams. Above all, Trigoria sports facilities were planned to detach players and staff from the suffocating presence of the organized fans. Trigoria marked the end of an era: the interruption of the almost familiar relations between the fans and their idols, dividing physically the first from the second. Until then, the supporters could easily meet the champion in the streets of Rome. The connection between players and fans had no limits except in death. On March of 1969 a crowd of 150.000 people had attended the funeral of the player Giuliano Taccola in the Church of S. Lorenzo, dead the Sunday before in the stadium of Cagliari. The advent of joint stock companies, the organized fans linked strictly to the Club, marketing and the first sponsors, the sports centre situated far outside the town -- taken together, these novelties outlined a future that would have lead to the sunset of romantic soccer. They marked the dawn of soccer as a business first and foremost.

The last of the authentically romantic fan characters was Dante. His period of greatest popularity extended from the end of the Sixties to the first half of the Seventies. Dante was a sort of centurion, strong and big as in the Roman Imperial tradition. By profession he was a street sweeper. Dante was the first leader of the South Bend. Standing on the “*muretto*”, one of several small walls in the stands, he became a specialist in making lavishly theatrical “speeches”. The crowd asked for them by shouting out his name. With a the dramatic gesture of a preacher, he silenced them instantly. He raised his hands to the heavens and dominated the Bend with his booming tenor voice: “*This morning it rained... (roar of the crowd), now there is the sun... (roar), there is the sun to help Roma... (roar), that is great and strong... (roar), and that today will win... (roar), Rrroooma!*”. The chorus of the Curva Sud lowered the curtain. When the team was playing an away game, the show was repeated, culminating in the words: “*Because we are guests in this attractive town... (this introductory phrase was followed by praise of the local attractions) but, we will kick their asses!*” (shouts of approval mixed with laughter). Home and away, another tour de force of Dante was the announcement of the line-up, preceding by a few minutes the official one over the loudspeaker. Dante listed the names of the eleven players and interpreted the desires of the seventy thousand “coaches” inside the stadium. When Roma’s opponents scored a goal, he was suddenly taken ill in a theatrical manner, and immediately his friends carried him outside. Dante, whose repertory of caricatures had their roots in the Roman nineteenth century tradition, was an idol for those boys that,

grown up in the “Junior Club”, organized themselves later into the ultras fan-groups. Dante acted as a *trait-d’union* between the old kind of fan and the new one that was in cultivation.

The ultras style originated in the north of Italy (Turin) and ran rapidly down the Peninsula. It melded the South American style (trumpets and drums) and the English model (chants and songs, scarves with the colours of the team lifted above the head to mimic the motion of ocean waves, physical confrontations with the opposing fans). The first ultras formation in the Capital was born in 1972 inside of AIRC. It was called Boys-Furie Giallorosse and settled in the North Bend, using the typical drums which never stopped beating. Its mandate consisted in reviving that area of the stadium which remained less enthusiastic in comparison with the Curva Sud. Almost to answer the Boys, other ultras groups appeared in the South Bend, organized with drums. Groups of thirty or forty teenagers, coming from the outer areas of the town: Brigade Giallorosse, Commando, Panthers, Wolves, Marines, The Pit of the Wolves. They had a precise political orientation. On the *muretto*, standing with Dante, the Guerrillas of the South fan group occupied the right side. On the other side, to symbolize the ideological distance that separated them, they were faced by the Fedayn of Quadraro Cinecittà. This was a very feared band made up of youths belonging to the extra-parliamentary left-wing groups *Lotta Continua* and *Potere Operaio*. The Fedayns had a saying: “We will destroy all that is not red-and-yellow!”. One of their best songs said: “And when the priest dies the bells sound / the whores cry and their pimps / But when my time shall come I don’t want Jesus Christ / but just the flag of the Fedayn gangsters”.

Identifying themselves as a new species of fans, the ultras groups felt the need to take possession of the South Bend in an exclusive way. So, in March of 1973 in occasion of a derby, they chased the Lazio supporters out. From that time on, the two *tifoserie* divided themselves into two groups located at each Bend: the South to the *romanisti*, the North to the *laziali*. The partition of the Bends was the signal that an historical era was ending. It was no longer possible for the supporters of the opposite factions to share the same seats in the most highly emotional parts of the stadium. Besides, the South Bend became more and more just for the young. The sons detached themselves from the fathers, moved by the need to form a “pack” and create a fandom that better expressed their anger. The ultras style was characterized by being dynamic, imaginative, noisy, violent, with no other rules than those they chose for themselves. The Olympic Stadium - an installation built twenty years before by the Fascist generation in conformity with the sports ideals of XIX century - became the faithful mirror of the society sprouted from the Sixties. The Bends were now the stands of the wild rebels, with their style of supporting that stimulated the smoke-bomb reply of the police. The grandstands were the adult observatories, that is to say men more calm in the attitudes, inclined to be critical towards the ultras fan-groups. These *paterfamilias* were accompanied by the sons who did not seek to join the horde roaming free. The flags and the banners of the horde warned the adults by using a mixed of disturbing signs: fierce heads of wild beasts, the pirate Rogers, the face of the Alex, the protagonist of the movie *A Clockwork Orange*, fascist symbols, the angry face of Che Guevara, the American Indian warrior adorned with a red-and-yellow band, marijuana leaves. The ultras modeled their military apparel after that of the extra-parliamentary groups and of the Guerrillas of South America. They wore long hair and uncultivated beards, Basque, military or windbreaker jackets, Eskimos, velvet and bell-bottom pants, Clark shoes.

Even if the young boys of the Curva Sud had filled the stadium with enthusiasm and cheerfulness, Sundays began to be lived by the “moderate” supporters in the fear of riots. A lot of teenagers were responsible for episodes of gangsterism in the long hours (the gates opened in the morning) preceding the game. The service of order of the stadium, run by AIRC, confiscated in a few months an arsenal of weapons: guns, rocket launchers, dummy pistols, monkey wrenches, bolts, chains, knives, bolts, tear gas, *sampietrini* (the paving stones characteristic of Rome), slingshots and steel spheres. It was necessary to build a mobile tunnel to grant the players an easy exit from the field, without risking being hit by bottles and oranges hurled by the fans. Between 1970 and 1975, the ultras phenomenon spread like a blot of ink, to the point that in 1976 the FIGC announced in Rome the first national summit on the soccer violence. That year, the degeneration of some of the ultras fringes was evident. The public opinion was alarmed about the beginning of the “guerrilla warfare and urban combat”, a type of action taken on loan from the political struggle and that meant clashes, outside and within the stadium, between the ultras and the policemen with the helmets (the special anti-riot group called *Celere*). The Olympic Stadium, which until the end of the Sixties had remained almost a sacred enclosure in the whiteness of its marbles, reflected the situation in process: it was rapidly disfigured, dirtied by layers of graffiti. Also on the walls of the *palazzi* the outrageous writings, squirted swiftly with the aerosol sprays or painted with care, became a part of the urban landscape. A positive fact came to mitigate the situation, at least in the Capital. Between the end of 1976 and the beginnings of 1977, some of the most important clans that made up the ultras accepted the proposal of the Roma Club to reunite in a single association affiliated with AIRC. The Roma Club had been prompted by AS Roma, interested in monitoring its fan base. Surpassing the obstacle of the different political ideologies, the Commando Ultrà Curva Sud was borne. As a symbol, this big group chose the letters U and R split by a lightning bolt. On January 9 of 1977, in occasion of the game Roma-Sampdoria, the CUCS boys, armed with eight drums and two large flags, put their banner in a low area just at the centre of the South Bend. In the following Sundays, they removed by force all the people that went to sit there (the Olympic

Stadium still did not have numbered seats), delimiting an area which belonged to them only. With the birth of the Commando Ultrà began the most glorious era of the South Bend.

The myth of the South Bend (1978-2005)

The season 1977-78 marked the beginning of a decade in which the South Bend, united and excited from the growth of the team and maintaining an on-going conversation with ASR, gave the best of itself. The supporting expressed in shows and choreographies recalled the tradition of the baroque and popular parties of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. They were really hundreds of years that under the Roman sky you could not see smoke, colours and fantasies like those that revived the Olympic Stadium in the Eighties, under the presidency of Dino Viola. The performances were possible thanks to the passionate action of a member of the AIRC executive board, Fausto Josa, who charged himself to lead the boys like a good enlightened father, lavishing sympathetic advice. The Commando formed a kind of board, which included an executive group, a cashier, a person in charge of the boys under 14 and a public-relations man. AS Roma made available a warehouse for materials inside the stadium: drums, banners and flags, megaphones, smoke-bombs. Josa, a wholesaler who worked in the central district of Esquilino, began to arrange the Sunday choreographies of its locals, helped by the endless enthusiasm of the boys. The ultras shows assumed the characteristic of being always new, made basically of paper and cloth. Fantasies that agreeably astonished the rest of the public and well expressed the humour and the celebratory spirit peculiar to the Roman spirit. The CUCS, supported by the Club, became the main agent of these performances. They distributed objects to the spectators to display and clap in unison: thin plastic gloves, coloured cardboard, rotating rolls of paper and cloth, flags of every kind and size. They even prepared special choreographies, using fireworks and balloons. Their chants of incitement, organized to the point that the figures of "heads of the chorus" were equipped with megaphones, surpassed in effectiveness the well-known songs of the English fans, primed by alcoholic euphoria and therefore less sophisticated. In the dead phases of the game, the stadium was shaken by an underground shudder when, from the Bend in motion, anglo-saxon songs were raised ("que serà serà, for ever will drinks, will drinks") or the evocative hymn of the French *Marsigliese*, of course adapted to fit the situation ("we will sing until the death, raising high our colours"). The leaders of the CUCS succeeded in keeping a certain autonomy from the Club, funding itself with collections and the sale of stickers and scarves. The Coordination Center of AIRC granted them, with the help of ASR, a set of cards, which the boys had the right to sell. The Golden Era marked the birth of a ultras fan-group composed of girls (*Ragazze Giallorosse*, 1984). But, in these years, the leaders of the Commando had to fight two big problems: infiltration by political agitators and the urban combat "hit and run" of some fringe groups. When the agitators of the right/left wing asked for an affiliation card, the ultras leaders had one requirement: "Here you are allowed to support Roma only". Nevertheless, the habit of the young fans to adopt contradictory symbols (the sign of the P38 of the "Autonomous" mixed with the Roman salute, partisan and fascist songs) produced an environment of misunderstanding in which the agitators moved easily. Nevertheless, the South Bend performances maintained spectacular. The leap of quality was especially notable in occasion of the derbies, when the Commando won by far the duel with the Eagle's Supporters, seated in the North Bend, a contest enlivened by the "battle of the songs" and by the "battle of the banners". These duels utilised largely the Roman dialect to mock the rivals. The banners were prepared the night before the game. The fear was that spies could penetrate and reveal their content. Just before the game, the hurling of insults between the two Bends had a spontaneous character, because the ultras boys went to the stadium equipped with paper, cloth and brush. The slogans could be created on the spur of the moment. Once, in the season 1983-84, being proud of the *scudetto* which adorned the Wolves shirts, the *romanisti* greeted the *laziali* with a white banner and the red notice: "Ciao, envy-ers". In the return-match, the *romanisti* showed another big banner that declared with pride: "City of Rome, lift your eyes and look at the sky... it is the only thing greater than you!". But they were frozen by the prompt reply of the *laziali*: "You are right, in fact the sky is white-and-blue!".

In order to grow, that large side of the South Bend that followed the ultras style had to confront a serious crisis, following the killing of a Lazio supporter. On October 28, 1979, during the usual preliminaries of the derby, livened up by the insults exchanged by the players in the press during the preceding week and, on Sunday, turned even more intense by the heavy exchanges of insults between the two Bends, which were also divided by political orientation (left-wing for Roma and right-wing for Lazio), a rocket was launched by the Curva Sud. The missile, of the type used to send maritime signals and of English manufacture, whistled with a wake of smoke through the whole vault of the stadium. It ended its race just in the right side of the North Bend. The rocket had not been thrown with the intent of causing damage to people. But, by unlucky accident, it hit in an eye Vincenzo Paparelli, 33, a father who was sitting calmly with his wife, at a safe distance from the ultras. The North Bend emptied instantly, and the day continued in chaos. In the late afternoon, there were several engagements with the police and Lazio ultras assaulted the headquarters of AS Roma, which was still situated in the centre of town, next to the Circus Maximus. In a few days, police agents hidden in the South Bend succeeded in identifying the perpetrators of the misdeed, three ultras of which one, the launcher, was well-known under the name of "Tzigane". The three boys tried to escape but, eventually (Tzigane stayed hidden than a year), were arrested. The government ordered a series of measures to stop the violence in the stadiums.

The country was fully immersed in the “Years of Lead” of political terrorism, and the CUCS was accused of “organization of a terror group”. Ultras banners were confiscated and forbidden for the rest of the season. The rehabilitation of the CUCS was favoured, the next championship, by the good attitude of the new president Dino Viola, who wanted to meet the leaders of the South Bend and accepted with pleasure the card (number 2101) which the boys offered him. Viola appreciated the ultras mentality, based on a type of faithfulness to the colours not polluted by interests of business. On the opposite side, there stood some of the leaders of Roma Club, which Viola despised profoundly. He could not tolerate their attempts exploit the Company, driven by Viola with an iron hand in a velvet glove, for business purposes. In 1983 Viola started his magazine “La Roma”, which officially represented the Club, with input from the CUCS leaders. The good relations between the presidency and the Commando allowed, in the early Eighties - lucky years full of good results culminating in the victory in the championship 1982-83 - a decrease in violence. Commentators noted the transformation of the AS Roma ultras style and argued that it should be admired and taken as a model by the other ultras groups of the Country. In 1986 the South Bend was awarded the international “Fair Play Trophy”. That year, after the unforgettable show of the South Bend at Roma-Juventus, even the well-known choreographer Renato Greco confessed that he attend the Olympic Stadium hoping to learn something.

As in the Testaccio days, the Olympic Stadium reverberated with song. The South Bend had its poet in “Geppo”, a bearded troubadour who wrote hymns and chants streaked with romanticism. A famous songwriter and singer, Antonello Venditti, created two lovely songs: “Roma Roma Roma” and “Thanks Roma”. The latest is still the official hymn of the Club and is broadcasted by the stadium loudspeakers at the moment the “wolves” step on to the field. Geppo and Venditti songs were whistled or sung by a lot of Romans in the days of the conquest of the second *scudetto*, when the town dressed itself with banners and the masquerade of people and things (roads, squares, walls, shops, houses, fountains painted and decorated with eccentricity) lasted for months and, in some cases (the Garbatella district), for years. In May of 1984 Venditti sat in the South Bend among the ultras, at the final match of the Cup of the Champions which opposed AS Roma to FC Liverpool. Through a mega-concert which gathered one hundred thousand people in the Circus Maximus, the singer soothed in the night the pain for the unexpected defeat of the “divine” Brazilian Falcao, of the right wing Bruno Conti, of the “bomber” Pruzzo, of the captain Di Bartolomei and company. The shock gotten from Roma-Liverpool was strong. For different reasons it determined the beginning of the end of the “Magica Roma” of Dino Viola. The fans suffered very much. The conquest of the CdC would have represented, to their eyes, a way to get revenge against the hated Juventus of Gianni Agnelli. “Juve” ruled Italian soccer and was accused at every occasion of buying itself the *scudettos* it won one after the other, stealing them from the She-Wolf. It is difficult to capture the atmosphere of tight connection between soccer and politics that was established in those years in the Capital. The excessive exhibitionism of the politicians in the stadiums began with a couple of victories: of the National Team in the World Cup in Spain in 1982 and of the *scudetto* to Roma. One of the leaders of the Country, the aforesaid Andreotti, openly supported the ASR cause. So did the mayor Luigi Petroselli, who attended all the away games too. Viola himself, exploiting the popularity he had achieved, ran for office in the ranks of the Christian Democrats and succeeded in obtaining the office of senator of the Republic. The challenge between Juventus and Roma, also the challenge between the “proletarian” Turin, driving the national economy, and the “fatty” city of Rome, seat of politics, reached very high controversial levels. At least in Rome, it became a main motive of daily life. Newspapers and television made it almost an obsession. Suffice it to say that, in June of 1985, the day after the Liverpool hooligans massacred the *juventini* in the Heysel Park of Bruxelles, graffiti appeared on the walls of San Lorenzo, a central district whose inhabitants are famous for their support of ASR. The sentence, as fierce as it was crazy, left passers-by open-mouthed. It said: “Juventus minus 36. Thanks Reds”.

All good things must come to an end. The process of disintegration of the CUCS began in the summer of 1987. President Viola, who intended to rule the Company like a businessman leaving nothing to romanticism, sold the captain of the team Carlo Ancelotti to AS Milan of Berlusconi. In exchange, it received a lot of money plus the midfielder Lionello Manfredonia, called to replace Ancelotti in the role. Manfredonia was a former player of Lazio, specially hated by the roman supporters, who thought he was disrespectful and, more seriously, he had been suspended a few years before because he had sold some games. The matter of whether of not to accept Manfredonia split the Commando like a knife an apple. Following the opinion of the leaders, two different groups were born: the Old CUCS and the CUCS-GAM (Group Against Manfredonia). They took position on opposite sides of the South Bend: The GAM started a strike. Finally, it could not stand the pressure of the Bends and accepted the official excuses of Manfredonia. Nevertheless, the relations between the two blocks remained tense. The CUCS (no longer GAM) registered itself as a trade-mark, with the intent of exclusively exploiting the sale of scarves and stickers. In order to continue to advertise its activity, the CUCS found space in a competing magazine to the official one of the ASR, that accommodated the Old CUCS. In the meanwhile, a big event was on the horizon: the closing of the Olympic Stadium, for a reorganization to accommodate the World Cup in 1990. At the end of the championship, on May 15 of 1988, the boys of the Commando took the first blow of the pickaxe to their beloved *muretto*, that is to say the den from which they had

directed the chants of the South Bend in the golden years. Fragments of travertine were put into pockets, carried home and cared for like religious relics. For the two successive championships, Roma played in the Flaminio Stadium, which had a limited capacity and lacked an athletic track. These facts made it very much more like the British grounds than the old Olympic Stadium. It favoured a rapid evolution of the formal procedures of the fans. The “English”, style characterized by the motion of the scarves held high above the heads, replaced the “Torcida” style, which was more chaotic, eccentric and centered on pyrotechnics. Beside this, the Flaminio proved to be a dangerous place because of the ease with which the ultras succeeded in provoking brawls and disorder. The transformation of the style happened at the moment of the return of the fans into the Olympic Stadium, in the 1990-91 season. To the old *curvaroli* (the inhabitants of the Bends), the *Curva Sud* appeared new and covered, with 22.000 numbered plastic seats, and also divided with windows in the central zone on two sides (the *distinti* areas). That vision did not delight them. The new acoustics made it difficult to get the Bend singing with the aid of megaphones. Besides, the feeling of freedom that the old Olympic granted, with the open sky and the possibility to scan the horizon, was lost. The stadium, now, appeared an installation more controllable and not fit for the ultras. The South Bend, divided again in many groups, resembled a little too much a cage for the wild beasts.

The death of Dino Viola and the coming to the presidency of Giuseppe Ciarrapico, a right-wing profiteer, made the situation worse. Ciarrapico, cultivating the project of creating a base of ultras friendly to him, in the heart of a traditionally left-wing *tifoseria*, began to distribute free cards and hidden financing to the ultras he liked more. Most of these guys had joined the political group Forza Nuova, and some had belonged to a neo-Nazi band involved in a terrorist massacre. In the South Bend there was a further split of the CUCS as the group Opposta Fazione, which had right-wing tendencies too, broke off. The political disagreements split the supporters. Some ultras groups showed the Roman salute, hoisted Nazi-fascist banners and screamed racist slogans. They were whistled at from time to time by the rival groups. In the away games the neo-fascist ultras were the instigators of riots and their manoeuvres of physical and verbal intimidation inspired a small part of the press to dare to criticize the management of Ciarrapico. In an extreme attempt to recover the old spirit and to guide the direction to the Bends, Fausto Josa oriented his efforts towards the North Bend, driving the birth of the group Roma e Basta. That “enough” meant that the Bends did not have to be a space for political propaganda. In 1993 Ciarrapico, involved in a scandal, left the presidency. But the damage was done. Some of the leaders of the right wing had found an excellent platform on the radio, the new phenomenon that had grown rapidly after the conquest of the *scudetto*. In 1993-94 the neo-fascists tried without success to obtain money and support from the new president Franco Sensi. Their protest at Trigoria, when they tried to get over the gates and, finally, were stopped by police intervention, caused a great stir, because it was covered on national television news. In an away game, those ultras which were very accustomed to urban warfare, stabbed a chief of police, and injured many policemen with a furious attack conducted with hatchets, sticks and bombs. But they were imprisoned, so their action, an effort to blackmail the Club, was ineffectual. After that, the “black beaters” were rapidly cast out by the same people who, behind the scenes, had encouraged them. Fans with charisma who spoke well were finding in the jungle of radio and television their space of manoeuvre for legal and secure economic gain.

The *ultrà* groups reacted to all this chaos by looking for a tight reunion. The Commando, deprived of some of the old leaders, reduced to a few hundred from the five thousand of the past, sought to revive its old lustre. But it made a mistake in trying to revive the style of the Seventies, based on drum beating and folklore. At the beginning of the season 1999-2000, the Commando had to yield to the will of the Bend, which claimed another leader in order to face “the turn of the generations”. The CUCS, after a bitter episode of dispute, retired in a corner under the notice board of the stadium. Other groups seized for themselves the central low part of the Bend: the “heart” of the South. The *ultrà* inheritance was taken by the AS Roma Ultras, the most determined of the myriad of groups of varied ideology emerged from the cultural humus of the Nineties. The ASRU was strong in number and well organized, thanks to the sale of the material it self-produced. It pursued the “modern” style of supporting, based essentially on the repetition of the songs, the claps and the political ostentation of symbols. This was the characteristic style of the right-wing ultras, by now leader of the South Bend. This was a kind of supporter much linked to the clan, and that found in the South Bend the sole space of aggregation which the society allowed him. (The *ultrà* had had, and continued to have, the social centres). He liked to dress casual and to put on caps on his more or less shaved head. He could come from the bourgeoisie or from the lumpen-proletariat. He could be indigenous of the elegant district Prati or of areas like Tor di Nona, a poor district where the camps of the gypsies suffered the racist and xenophobic behaviours of the younger inhabitants. The way he acted was the faithful mirror of the type of youth driven out of the “reflux”, after the stormy years of the rebellion of the students allied to the proletarians. A youth extended in the generations (from 14 to 30 years and beyond), richer, we would say almost “hopeless” cynic, according to the spirit of the times. And, most of all, not involved in the utopian project of building a better civil society. The ASR Ultras was at the height of the situation. It did not regret the choreographic *ultrà* tradition, when the *scudetto* of 2001 was greeted with a simple and evocative show: 60.000 flags waving incessantly. As in 1983, the town celebrated the victory, even more appreciated because it happened after that of Lazio the year before, with an extraordinary sense of

celebration, of the pleasure of the fun, of the masquerade and of the irony. The *laziali* were mocked in all the conceivable ways. The captain Francesco Totti, native of Rome and beloved leader of the team, was deified. His shirt number 10 was sold by the tens of thousands, official or pirated. His poster adorned the rooms of myriad kids, and entered the studios and the bedrooms of “aged” children. There was at least one case of divorce primed by the refusal of a husband to grant the request of his wife of removing Totti’s face from above the head of the bed, where before was nailed the less cluttering Jesus crucified. The happy *romanista*, no more affected by the millennial self-pity that undermines his generous nature, got back a nice character. The victory recharged the “caricature” (in the positive sense of popular mask) of the *romanista* “kind-hearted” and “party-lover”. But it lasted a brief time. It underwent a hard blow in occasion of the night derby Lazio-Roma on march 21 of 2004, broadcast live. In the half time interval, three guys representing the ultras groups got on the ground of the game and spoke to Totti. Under the eye of the cameras, and therefore of millions of astonished Italians, they communicated him their worry for situations of violence that could surge from a moment to another inside the stadium, already for an hour, in the surroundings of the South Bend, policemen and ultras were confronting each other with blows. There was a terrible rumour that travelled through the Bend: it that accused the police of having killed a young fan of Roma, run over by a car. The rumour was unfounded, created to pressure the police. But the result of this action was that, from the police headquarters of Rome and with the approval of the executive board of the Italian Federation of Football, the order arrived to suspend the game. The exit of the fans was calm. The casualties were limited to policemen (153) and to extremist fans. Nevertheless, the impression that this case provoked in the public opinion was enormous. The press gave a hint of a plot schemed by the ultras to damage the Federcalcio, hitting it in the resource of the television rights. The ultras groups laid to the forces of order the greater responsibility, accusing them of having stirred up the tension with a vicious management. A trial of the arrested fans is forthcoming.

The three step hierarchy of the *romanista*: ultras, partner, “regular”

In the ultras groups mentality of the third millennium a strong feeling dominates: the awareness of being at the centre of a conspiracy driven by the economic and political forces that rule society. The figure of the ultras soccer fan (and of its more nationalist brother, the hooligan) would be seen as an obstacle to the organization of a sports show on the American model, ruled by business. Under this point of view, that unites the FIFA and UEFA managers, the powerful television networks, the “servile” press and the forces of order, the ultras fan is a harmful species; an animal which deserve to be driven to extinction. In the opinion of the majority of the ultras groups, the personal notices to enter the stadiums, the numbered seats, the obstacles to the fan-groups that want to follow the team in the away game, and, last but not least, the blind aversion of the press, are the tools by which the leaders of the corrupt western society try to destroy the ultras planet. In Italy, for example, in the near future will come into effect the identification of the onlookers at the moment of the purchase of the ticket for the game. Also in reply to this type of attack, the urban ultras shelter in an effective strategy: they stretch out in fight bands. Bands that seek to clash with the policemen more than with the hostile supporters. The police pursues the purpose of eliminating the “game” of the clash between opposite factions, a kind of action which is essential to the ultras warlike mentality. But, by doing so, it obtains the result of turning itself into the main target of the ultras, united by an objective which matters much more. It is undeniable that the hate of the ultras towards the forces of order is now stronger than any other consideration. It can be summarized in a simple belief, recently written down by one of the leaders of the ASR Ultras: “They (the policemen) are bound and commanded by the power. They are slaves, we are free men”. Hard words like stones which do not leave room for mediation. The police feel that they are between the anvil and the hammer. It is aware that it cannot prevent Sundays of violence. A Commissioner of the State Police, Flavio D’ambrosi, writes in a book on the argument, published in 2004:

(...) The Soccer Clubs exclude to maintain contacts with the ultras. In reality, it seems they favour the existence and the activity of the fan-groups, paying them the away game and weaving thick nets of exchanges in the area of the merchandising, official or not. Without any doubt, a greater harshness towards the ultras groups, carried on by the Clubs, would lead to a smaller incidence of violent episodes in the Sundays soccer, especially if as deterrent should be adopted tools of penalty of the rioters involving the Clubs too. The problem of the violence in the stadiums is therefore of not easy solution. (...)

Stronger than the hate for the police, is the hate for Lazio supporters. If episodes of coalition between *romanisti* and *laziali* have occurred in recent years, it is sure that they had a character of short duration. The red-and-yellow ultras despises the “*lazielle*” (boor pronunciation) from the depth of his heart. The accusation is of having betrayed the Urbe *ab origine* (the name and the choice of the colours) and so of not being worthy to represent it. Obviously, on this side *romanisti* are wrong. The history of SS Lazio is a story of dignity and unconditional love for the city of Rome. The complex development of the metropolis, especially with the introduction of the immigration factor, does not permit other ingenuous generalizations of this kind. Considering the social and political variables, a lot of things changed with respect to the past, and these things are destined to change more, and more sensitively. It is still true that South and North Bends symbolize the old positions of the “northern” SS Lazio and “southerner” AS Rome. But it is also true that the expressions “Lazio

of the Parioli Hills” and “Roma of Testaccio” do not have any link with real society. The access to the ranks, at least in town, no longer has a more traceable typology to wealth or geography. Today, the “*pischello*” (adolescent boy) becomes *laziale* or *romanista* for a friendship, or because the chants of the Irriducibili or those of the ASR Ultras are more evocative than the other side. With the process of social homogenization ruling, it suffices this to attract a teen-ager. In the global village devoted to the religion of “appearing”, in the fan-groups we register the triumph of Aesthetics. It is true that Lazio ultras maintain a solid tradition of right wing, block that gives the reactionary “paint” to the rest of the *tifoseria*. Nevertheless, in the last years we have witnessed a process of release from extreme positions, like the racism that prevented the management of the Society from buying players of colour or of Jewish belief. (To the contrary, AS Roma in the Eighties and Nineties had very beloved Brazilian champions). There is an even more important fact, forerunner of changes, to consider, and that is the reception in the ranks of the “eagles” of the immigrants and of their sons which, being borne in Rome, speak and think in dialect. They become red or blue according to the aesthetical and chance criteria of whom says.

In the Nineties the immigrants embraced the red-and-yellow faith nine times out of ten. In 2005 it is not more so. The consumer society impose itself. A decisive factor on the choice is the greater presence of AS Roma in the mass-media. The local networks (both radio and television: an exclusive phenomenon of the Capital) that annotate the red-and-yellow events are the triple with respect to those that orientate themselves on the “white-and-blue”. Some divide democratically between the two fields. The journalists, the leading spirits of various species and the *capotifosi* which populate the world of the Roman networks are authentic stars. They collect reasonable earnings by speaking almost exclusively of soccer. From 10 September of 2004 “Il Romanista” appeared in town, that is the first example in the world of a daily newspaper completely dedicated to a soccer club. Other periodicals and fanzines are born and die swiftly in the name of ASR. On the web you can find more than twenty sites dedicated to the Club, the most of them ruled by ultras, besides the official one of the Company and the very attended site of Francesco Totti. There is a background of collectors that exchange materials of every kind and epoch (shirts, programs of the entries, distinctive, cards). There are official and unofficial shops which sell red-and-yellow stuff only. Books, vhs and dvd videos are often sold with magazines and daily newspapers. The tendency of the means of communication to give greater coverage to Roma forced the “Corriere dello Sport” – accused, so like “Il Messaggero”, of being a flanker of the red-and-yellow cause – to give itself some rather rigid criteria of partition. But Roma is undoubtedly the favourite because, according to data, the brand ASR sells the quadruple than SSL. The *romanisti* are the best consumer in absolute and in percentage to their number. Roma has more importance, leaving aside the results it obtains or does not obtain in the championships. About 600.000 are the *laziali* “practicing”, more than 1.500.000 the *romanisti*. In the lot of the Italian soccer clubs, Roma is at the fourth place for number of supporters, to the shoulders of Juventus Turin, AS Milan and Inter Milan. Less of the hundred part of the She-Wolf believers belong to the ultras category. They represent, in a certain sense, the warlike aristocracy, the point of a pyramid that has as its base the moderate supporter (we call them “regular”, like the glass of Coca Cola filled with ice cubes sold at McDonald’s), which can be or not to be one of the 40.000 subscribers of the Club, and like intermediate foundation the partners of the Roma and Fan Club. Almost 100.000 affiliated count the two associations of partners recognized from the Company: the AIRC and the UTR (Unione Tifosi Romanisti, born in 2000 from a split of AIRC). The half of the Roma Club have seat in town, 10% in the region, the rest in Italy or abroad. A negligible contribution are, instead, the Fans Club, that is to say the circles dedicated to the players: a phenomenon exploded in the Nineties and today in decline. AIRC and UTR maintain cordial contacts with the *SpA*, to which they are firmly connected. They do charity performances too. The relations between the block formed by ASR and the two associations of supporters and the restless ultras universe are difficult and seesawing. Also the ultras fan-groups, despite their financial limits, dedicate to do charitable works. They are not such “bad wolves” as the media want to paint them.

The staircase of values that just now we determined does not mean, however, that the ultras fans nourish more love for the colours with respect to the “regulars” or to the partners of the Roma Club, Fan Club and Personal Jet. When, in 1999, the AS Roma was for the first time quoted on the Stock Exchange, the race to the purchase of the shares was won by the “regular” fan. Simply, the ultras groups have a different way of supporting. They show an increase of the engagement squandered, in limits of energies and personal involvement. To explain well the concept, we would like to add a last consideration. To any roman supporter you can meet around the world, ask which is the ideal or the person that he would not betray ever and ever. He shall answer to you arguing not about a political party, of his best friend or of his wife. But, after a slight pause accompanied by an ironic smile that goes back directly to the times of Julius Caesar, he will look in your eyes and finally burst out his indisputable truth: “the Magical Roma!”.

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