THE ‘SPACES’ OF ANTI-FASCISM IN ITALY TODAY

Philip Cooke

Introduction

At an early stage in the 2013 election process Beppe Grillo, the leader of the Five-Star Movement, got into hot water over his views on Fascism and anti-Fascism. Grillo and other politicians had gathered at the Viminal Palace in Rome in order to officially ‘deposit’ the symbols of the parties they represented. This process allows for symbols to be checked to establish whether they are misleading or, indeed, inflammatory. Before submitting his symbol, Grillo got into conversation with Simone Di Stefano, the Roman leader of Casapound – initially a social centre founded on neo-Fascist principles, but which had mutated into a political party and was contesting the election throughout Italy. At the election Casapound would go on to win almost 48,000 votes (0.14 per cent of the electorate) and no seats in the Chamber of Deputies. Grillo’s Five-Star Movement did, as we know, a lot better. Between mouthfuls (Grillo was constantly eating during the campaign, or so it seemed) the two discovered they had a great deal in common. At a certain point, Di Stefano asked the crunch question: ‘Are you anti-Fascist?’ Grillo’s response was not – as befits a skilled politician – an unequivocal yes or no, but instead he used the phrase ‘L’antifascismo non mi compete,’ which can be variously translated into English as ‘It’s not my responsibility,’ ‘It doesn’t come under my jurisdiction,’ or more literally ‘It doesn’t lie within my competence.’ It is not productive to submit Grillo’s chosen expression to minute textual exegesis. Suffice it to say that the exchange between Grillo and Di Stefano provoked a debate (one of many) which would run throughout the course of the election, and beyond. At a certain point, Di Stefano asked the crunch question: ‘Are you anti-Fascist?’ Grillo’s response was not – as befits a skilled politician – an unequivocal yes or no, but instead he used the phrase ‘L’antifascismo non mi compete,’ which can be variously translated into English as ‘It’s not my responsibility,’ ‘It doesn’t come under my jurisdiction,’ or more literally ‘It doesn’t lie within my competence.’ It is not productive to submit Grillo’s chosen expression to minute textual exegesis. Suffice it to say that the exchange between Grillo and Di Stefano provoked a debate (one of many) which would run throughout the course of the election, and beyond. Much of the debate was rather sterile, focussing on the ‘yes’ or ‘no’ issue which Grillo’s words attempted to circumvent. In one of many intriguing developments, the bronze monument in Parma dedicated to the partisan hero Guido Picelli was covered in pro-Grillo graffiti: ‘You are just a communist like Bersani. Viva Grillo!’ According to the director of a documentary film on Picelli this was a double outrage to the partisan’s memory. While the graffiti was bad enough, the suggestion that he was a ‘communist like the secretary of the PD’ was arguably a greater insult.

After the election, the issue appeared to die down for a bit, until 25 April, the official date of the Liberation of the city of Milan from the Nazis and the Fascists at the end of the Second
World War, and a national ‘anti-Fascist’ holiday. The 25 April has become the subject of much speculation in recent years, with calls from some Berlusconian quarters for it to no longer be a national holiday provoking outrage. Indeed, when Berlusconi first came to power in 1994, the 25 April celebrations became a demonstration against him and all he represented. But, if anything, Grillo provoked more indignation than Berlusconi (usually at his villa in Sardinia) has ever done, by releasing a spectacular tirade on his blog.3 Entitled ‘The 25 April is dead’, Grillo provided some very compelling reasons as to why this should be the case in Italy today: In the nomination of a member of the Bilderberg group to be president of the Council of Ministers 25 April is dead. In the big belly laugh of the P2 member Berlusconi being in Parliament 25 April is dead. In the destruction of the tapes of the conversations between Mancino and Napolitano 25 April is dead. . . . In the failed election of Rodotà 25 April is dead. In the resurrection of Amato, the treasurer of Bottino Craxi,4 25 April is dead. . . . In the million and a half young Italians who have emigrated in these recent years because there’s no work 25 April is dead. In the indifference of too many Italians who will soon have a nasty wake-up call 25 April is dead. Today let’s avoid talking about it, celebrating it; let’s keep silent out of respect for the dead. If the partisans came back amongst us, they would start crying.

What Grillo was saying was arguably clear enough – the hopes, aspirations and desires of the partisans had not been realized. Italy was in a mess and, in the circumstances, celebrating 25 April seemed hardly justified. Quite what the political motives were behind this statement was another matter. The satirist Michele Serra approved with customary irony in his ever acute opinion column in *La Repubblica*. According to Serra, this was the first ‘left-wing thing’ (*cosa di sinistra*) which Grillo had uttered: ‘We had never realized that 25 April and anti-Fascism were so dear to his heart’ (26 April 2013). Serra grasped the apparent paradox, but felt it was an important sign of an acceptance of an ideological standpoint from an individual without politics. Equally, Grillo’s words were taken in many circles to be yet another insult flung at the Resistance and anti-Fascism in general. At Monte Sole, near Bologna, the site of the largest Nazi massacre of civilians in Western Europe, an 89-year-old former partisan muttered that if someone was half-dead, it was Grillo, and not 25 April (*La Repubblica* [Bologna], 26 April 2013).5 Rather more importantly, when the new speaker in the Chamber of Deputies, Laura Boldrini, gave her opening speech, the mention of the Resistance and anti-Fascism brought the chamber to its feet.6 That the new speaker was erroneously believed to be the daughter of one of Italy’s best-known partisans, Arrigo Boldrini, only further contributed to the apparent relaunch of anti-Fascism in the chamber and, naturally enough, further opprobrium towards Grillo.

The debate raised a number of relevant (and some irrelevant) issues. Some of these related strictly to Grillo and the ideology of the Five-Star Movement. On a wider level the polemic encouraged observers to reflect on the place of anti-Fascism in Italian politics, political culture and society, and of the role of the past in present-day Italy. Discussions of the relevance or otherwise of anti-Fascism are far from new, and this certainly explains why Grillo, whose
movement is all about novelty, innovation, difference and distance, should have wished not to identify the Five-Star Movement with it. The perception that the ‘anti-Fascist paradigm’ — which had been firmly established after the tumultuous events of July 1960 — was dissolving in some way can, however, be traced back to the 1980s (see also Gallerano, 1986; Baldassare, 1986; Ganapini, 1986; Pecchioli, 1985; Tranfaglia, 1985).

This was a period of ascendancy for Bettino Craxi and his PSI, which was characterized, amongst other things, by an attack on anti-Fascism and the memory of the Resistance in general. In an important article published in 1986, Nicola Gallerano effectively demonstrated the shift in the socialist left by comparing the editorials of the journal *Mondoperaio* from 25 April 1975 and 25 April 1985. In the first, Federico Coen described the celebration of the Resistance ‘not as a formal rite, but a political fact’. Against the ‘renewed virulence of the neo-Fascist infection’ the Resistance was an ‘obligatory point of reference’. In Gallerano’s own words Coen’s editorial was representative of a way of referring to the Resistance and to anti-Fascism which was common to the entire left, including of course an element of ritual: it expressed effectively the continuity and the transformative potential of a collective feeling, strongly unitary in nature and potentially hegemonic. It would be consecrated on a symbolic level in 1978 with the election of Sandro Pertini as the President of the Republic.

\[\text{(Gallerano, 1986: 109-10)}\]

By 1985, however, Ruggero Guarini would argue that anti-Fascism had a negative side to it. It had carried out the job of underlining ‘the frequently tenuous similarities’ between the various political forces and, as a consequence downplayed their ‘frequently profound differences’. By this he was explicitly referring to the differences between the PCI and the PSI, the emphasis of which was a central pillar of Craxi’s political strategy. Guarini continued, in a key section, by suggesting that the binary oppositional formula ‘Fascism/anti-Fascism’ was less important than the ‘totalitarianism/democracy’ antithesis. Communism and Fascism, in other words, had some shared characteristics, particularly when it came to their refusal of ‘modernity’. Italian Socialist politics under Craxi were, by extension, ‘modern’. These ideas were taken up by another socialist thinker, Lucio Colletti, who wrote in the pages of the *Corriere della Sera* that if ‘democracy cannot but be anti-Fascist, the opposite is not always true’. The political erosion of the ‘anti-Fascist paradigm’ in the 1980s coincided with developments in the historiographical field which saw major changes in the way that anti-Fascism (and Fascism) were interpreted, with the major figures in the debate being Renzo De Felice in Italy and François Furet in France, the latter arguing that anti-Fascism was a ‘Trojan Horse’, designed to permit the entry of Soviet Communism into Western Europe.

The validity of anti-Fascism became a central theme of discussions in the mid-1990s when the fiftieth anniversary of the Resistance coincided with the collapse of those parties which had formed the ‘constitutional arch’ of the First Republic. In this period, De Felice was joined by the likes of Ernesto Galli della Loggia, who in his influential *La morte della patria* (1996) went even further by arguing that the anti-Fascist paradigm had never really existed, or was not as strong as was commonly believed to be the case. This view conflicted sharply with the sophisticated analysis provided by De Luna and Revelli (1995). The debate continued into the new millennium with Sergio Luzzatto publishing a strong condemnation of widespread revisionist tendencies in his 2004 book *La crisi dell’antifascismo* (see also Collotti, 2000; De Bernardi and Ferrari, 2004; Lupo, 2004; Mammone, 2006; Rapini, 2005; Rapone, 2000; Rogari, 2006;
Santomassimo, 2003 and 2004). As I write, Luzzatto’s adherence to anti-Fascism is now itself under fire as he has published a book (Luzzatto, 2013; Cooke, 2014) which examines, from a critical perspective, the brief partisan career of Primo Levi – arguably the greatest icon of Italian anti-Fascism.

It is clear, then, that the question of the contemporary relevance of anti-Fascism is one which has been frequently posed. In this chapter I will concentrate, as far as possible, on recent discussions, focusing on areas or ‘spaces’ of Italian life and society where anti-Fascism is still present. I take it as a given that Fascism is still at large in Italian society (see Chapter 28 in this volume).

The political parties

Traditionally anti-Fascism was the preserve of the political parties which emerged from the ruins of the Second World War and formed the constitutional arch (on this topic, see, above all, Pavone, 1995, which contains the most influential analysis of the presence of Fascism and anti-Fascism in the Italian Republic up to the late 1950s; see also Permoli, 1960 and, among others, Amendola, 1994; Lepre, 1997; Quazza, 1990; on Catholic anti-Fascism, see Malavasi, 1982). But after 1989, the tangentopoli scandals and much else besides, those traditional parties were either wiped out or sought new identities and, as a consequence, new ideas. The announcement that the PCI was to change direction was, most significantly, made by Achille Occhetto at a meeting with former partisans at Porta Lame in Bologna. As I have argued elsewhere (Cooke, 2011), the PCI’s attachment to the Resistance tradition was never quite as unequivocal as was generally perceived. What then of the new party’s (by which I mean the current PD) views on the Resistance and anti-Fascism?

The new PD came into being in 2007, under the leadership of Walter Veltroni. Senior party figures were asked to draw up a ‘manifesto of values’, which was issued in early 2008. As soon as the document was released, it was noted by many that there were no explicit references in it to the Resistance and anti-Fascism. Sensing a problem, Veltroni wrote a letter to Alfredo Reichlin (who had been involved in the Resistance movement in Rome) and other members of the commission which had drawn up the manifesto. The ‘perplexities’ over the absence were, Veltroni stated in his letter, easy to explain. The values (of anti-Fascism and the Resistance) were, quite simply, a given:

part of us, of our history and identity . . . The Resistance, the principles which gave it life and supported it, are part of the fundamental and natural patrimony of the Democratic Party . . . It is in the Resistance that the roots of our Republic are to be found. It is thanks to that civil and moral rebirth that Italy found freedom again . . . It is there, in that time and in those choices, that we find the values of ‘constitutional patriotism’ invoked by President Giorgio Napolitano.9

Veltroni finished his letter by stating that the reference to the values of anti-Fascism had the potential to ‘unite, and not divide, the country’ and for all these reasons he felt that there should be a more explicit reference to them in the PD document. Veltroni’s letter was well crafted, and certainly seems to have calmed the nerves of those members who were troubled by the lacuna. But it does reveal a problem. Despite his claims that anti-Fascism was, according to Veltroni, an unquestionable pillar of the party’s identity, the very fact that he had to remind the commission of this indicates that there was a perception of some ambivalence. This ambivalence
has become clearer as time has passed. While it is clear that anti-Fascism has never been jettisoned completely from the PD’s ever-shifting identity, its attachment to it is now, more than ever, more ritual than real. A search of the party’s website throws up a few press articles, sundry organized events, but nothing which could be even loosely described as a theoretical document containing the word ‘anti-Fascism’. After the resignation of Pierluigi Bersani, who made ritual references to anti-Fascism throughout his leadership of the PD, Fabrizio Barca announced his desire to stand for election as the party’s new leader. Barca is the son of Luciano Barca, a communist intellectual and one-time editor of the communist daily *l’Unità*, who died in November 2012. Despite his pedigree, however, Fabrizio Barca’s policy statement of April 2013, ‘A new party for good government’, only mentioned Fascism once (in relation to the reform of the ‘public machine’), and anti-Fascism did not figure.

In the 1980s the Italian Socialist Party and its leader Bettino Craxi were, as we discussed above, one of the principal actors in the dismantling of the ‘anti-Fascist paradigm’. The current leader of the new Italian Socialist Party is Riccardo Nencini. The press archive of the party’s website reveals that in 2009 Nencini wrote a letter of support to Giuliano Vassalli, the constitutionalist, who had organized a conference to protest against Bill n.1360 (aimed at creating an ‘Order of the Tricolour’ open to all war veterans irrespective of which side they fought on). At the party congress the previous year Maria Grazia Caligaris (a regional councillor in Sardinia) made a speech which included the indignant cry:

> The other word which is no longer pronounced is anti-Fascism! And in Sardinia the President, who was elected by the people did not support the celebrations of 25 April!!!!!

> The Governors lack democratic culture, discredit the institutions, but buy the paper founded by Antonio Gramsci.$^{10}$

So, therefore, some evidence of some anti-Fascist feeling amongst the new socialists. But, as it currently stands, the party’s statute and its ‘manifesto of values’ contain no references to anti-Fascism. In fairness, the page dedicated to the history of the party describes how in 1943 the then PSIUP (the Socialist Party of Proletarian Unity) was largely composed of ‘influential personalities of the anti-Fascist left’ (but only Sandro Pertini gets a mention). Much more space is, predictably, given to the figure of Bettino Craxi, whose ‘Socialist Gospel’ of 1978 was, so we are told, inspired by the thought of Proudhon and Carlo Rosselli. As many veteran socialists pointed out at the time, Rosselli would have been turning in his grave in Florence, if he heard that his ideas had been appropriated by the man who, more than any politician of the institutional left, was responsible for the massacre of the spirit of anti-Fascism in Italy. What remains of the old PSI is, therefore, essentially the PSI of Craxi, and not of Pertini, Nenni, nor for that matter of Filippo Turati or Giacomo Matteotti.

It is a relatively easy, if slightly painful task, to expose the now tenuous adherence to anti-Fascism on the part of what remains of the traditional parties of the Italian Left (with the exception of *Rifondazione Comunista* – see below). What it more interesting is not perhaps the shift away from anti-Fascism, but a general abandonment of the past in Italian politics (see Chapter 25 in this volume). Throughout the First Republic the symbols, rituals and language of politics were deeply embedded in Italian history from the Unification onwards. Legitimization was sought by reference to history. The past, or at least large elements of it, has now passed.

One party, however, can always be relied upon to keep the flame. *Rifondazione Comunista* (RC), a section of the old PCI which could not go along with Occhetto’s change in direction after 1989, maintains a strict adherence to the values of anti-Fascism and the Resistance. The party has, in Bianca Bracci Torsi (herself a former partisan) a senior party member who is
responsible for anti-Fascism at a national level. There are regional and city representatives and
the party is particularly committed to spreading the message to its young members. Following
an enquiry to RC’s press office I received a lengthy and detailed email describing the extent
of the party’s activities in this area. It is worth quoting an extract:

The opposition to Fascism in all its forms . . . has always been one of the founding
principles of the Party of Communist Refoundation, together with the constitution,
which gathered the legacy of those struggles. The Resistance to Fascism, from its first
appearance to its end, and the war of liberation against the Republic of Salò and the
Nazi occupiers are not for us glorious pages of a history which has passed and should
be celebrated, but a daily commitment against a possible move backwards, in Italy and
Europe, to dark times which are once again favoured by an epochal crisis of that form
of capitalism which in the different forms of Fascism has always found its closest ally.
What is needed is a rediscovery of an awareness of the past, of the courage and
steadfastness of those times, and an understanding of the present.

Inevitably statements such as this strike a chord with those people who are sympathetic to the
Resistance and anti-Fascism. But like it or not, those people are a small minority in Italy today.
RC, which was part of the ‘Civil Revolution’ alliance in the 2013 elections, obtained no seats
in the Chamber of Deputies or the Senate.

Youth and the social centres

Since the institutional left has, by and large, abandoned any real sense of adherence to anti-
Fascism, who, if anyone, has taken up its mantle? In the main, allegiance to anti-Fascism (or
what is described as anti-Fascism) now resides within the complex and fractured galaxy which
is represented by the ultra-left, many of whom reside in the ‘social centres’ of Italy’s cities.
These groups have embraced modern methods of communication, notably Facebook. In a way
this reveals they have caught up with the neo-Fascists, whose Web presence, particularly in the
1990s, was far better organized than their opponents. ‘Antifascismo Militante Italiano’ (AMI),
for example, was established in February 2011 ‘with the aim of spreading ANTIFA culture
(which must be distinguished from a generic anti-Fascist culture’). Its Facebook page describes
its fundamental ideals – elimination of the European Union and the single currency, a cultural
revolution of the entire people ‘which for years has believed in capitalism’, state ownership of
major companies, the elimination of the banking system and of xenophobic and nationalist culture.
In a message to this author, representatives of AMI further explained what they stand for:

Phil, we will reply to you on Facebook so that all messages are public. AMI above all
is not a movement, or a collective or a committee. It is not formal at all. It’s simply
a page which encourages militant anti-Fascism through direct action. And since there
is nothing formal about us, there are no direct links with any anti-Fascist organization.
AMI is simply a way of understanding anti-Fascism which counters institutional ‘do-
gooding’ anti-Fascism. We promote direct anti-Fascist acts with the sole objective of
destroying and preventing any Fascist act with all the means available to us.

Florence, if the Web is anything to go by, would appear to be a magnet for these types of new
anti-Fascist organizations. On its website the ‘Brigades of Active Solidarity’ describe their attitude
to anti-Fascism in the following way:
We believe that the struggle against fascism did not conclude with the Liberation and the Resistance, but that there is an urgent need to fight against every reappearance of Fascism (*rigurgito fascista*), which sadly we note grows every day, above all in a moment of crisis such as this in which xenophobic hatred and the desire for order risk spreading to wide sections of society. We are convinced that the memory of the Resistance should not be reduced to a mere monument, but is the starting point for a daily antifascism.11

As was the case with traditional anti-Fascism, these new militant anti-Fascists honour their fallen heroes. The most celebrated of them is Davide Cesare or ‘Dax’, who was an anti-Fascist member of the ORSO (Officina della Resistenza Sociale – Social Resistance Workshop). Dax was attacked on 16 March 2003 after a night out in the Porta Ticinese area of Milan, well known for its left-wing bars, and stabbed to death. According to an article in English, one of Dax’s friends was stabbed outside Milan’s central station in December 2012, in a clear indication that Fascist violence was not over. The tenth anniversary of Dax’s death saw a large demonstration in Milan, with police estimating 5,000 demonstrators, and the demonstrators themselves 10,000. According to the author(s) of ‘Milan’s Black Night’ the demonstration showed that Davide’s struggle, not just against fascism but also capitalism, continues today despite all violent attempts to subdue it. Indeed, perhaps it is the turnout on Saturday of not only antifascists but of working class militants from a wide range of struggles that still gives meaning to the slogan: ‘Dax lives’.12

The demonstration for Dax culminated on the Sunday with ‘People’s Sports for Dax’. And perhaps one of the more interesting developments within the social centres is the development of sporting associations and facilities which promote ‘anti-Fascist values’. In the main what is on offer is combat sports designed to provide a powerful blend of ‘training and activism’. Martial arts, boxing (and indeed mountain-climbing) are traditionally seen as right-wing sports, with gyms as recruitment centres, so the idea is to offer access to training in these disciplines in order to counter this tendency. According to a recent Web article on ‘Italy’s anti-Fascist gyms and boxing clubs’, from which the above quotations were taken, the history of these organizations began with the opening in Turin in October 2001 of the Palestra Popolare AntiFa Boxe within the Askatasuna social centre. There are similar facilities in Florence (the Palestre Popolaresse), which offers boxing, contemporary dance, aikido and t’ai chi, Milan, Bologna, Palermo (the Antifa Boxe), Cosenza and many others. In January 2012 the ‘first popular sports network meeting’ took place in Ancona.13

The Constitution

The Italian constitution is a text which still enjoys the status, indeed almost mystical aura, of a sacred document. The Constitution was drafted during the period of anti-Fascist unity after the Second World War. While the Constitution itself continues to be seen as generically anti-Fascist, there are specific clauses (and laws) which are often the subject of discussion. Of these the most significant is the XIIth disposizione transitoria (transitional provision), which bans ‘the reorganization, in any form’ of the Fascist party. Clause XII inspired the 1952 Scelba law, and other laws brought in over the years. Unsurprisingly, there have been a number of recent attempts to have Clause XII removed from the Constitution, and just as many initiatives to defend and promote it. In March 2011, for example, a group of PdL senators presented a disegno di legge costituzionale (bill) which would have abrogated the clause. The promoter of the bill was Cristiano

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De Eccher and it was signed by Francesco Bevilacqua, Achille Totano, Fabrizio De Stefano (all members of the PdL) and Egidio Digilio (of the Fli). The text of the bill, written in the standard impenetrable language which characterizes such documents, argued that if the clause was ‘transitory’, then historical circumstances had changed, and it was now time to ‘close a chapter which has no reason to remain open and, in addition, to reduce those spaces of special legislation which, in any case, hardly correspond to a full realization of the principle of liberty’.

In September 2011 two Neapolitan artists contributed in an innovative and interesting way to the debate on neo-Fascism and the application of the Constitution. Sebastiano Deva and Walter Picardi arranged for a giant poster to be placed on view in a street in the centre of Naples. The poster contained the image of the carved head of Mussolini which is to be found at his tomb in his birthplace of Predappio. Above it, in large letters, was the slogan Nessuna Luce Mio Duce (No Light My Duce), and to its right the invitation to viewers to consult the Facebook page Cripta Mussolini. The two artists were participating in an art exhibition known as ‘Campania Senses’ which was due to open later that month at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Casoria. As they explained, the idea behind the poster and their exhibit was to request the closure to the public of Mussolini’s crypt, a place of pilgrimage ‘in complete contempt of the fundamental dispositions of the Italian constitution’. The artists had themselves visited the crypt in the month of August, where they had met ‘parents who brought their children to do the Fascist salute, adults, old people, boys and girls. The remains of the Duce, unfortunately, represent a potent attraction for people . . . who exalt Fascist culture’. The Facebook page was designed so that visitors could leave their comments on the issue, in order to create a collection of ‘anti-Fascist thoughts’ which would be turned into a book and placed in the crypt in Predappio itself in 2012. The exhibition at Casoria was a reproduction of the crypt in a claustrophobic environment in which participants would ‘experience the black heart which is still beating in the history of our country today’ (La Repubblica, 13 September 2011). Needless to say, Mussolini’s crypt is still open to the public, and Predappio continues to attract a large number of visitors. A pilgrimage there is still an essential rite of contemporary neo-Fascist culture.

The partisan associations

Of the various partisan organizations established during or shortly after the Second World War, the largest is the ANPI (Associazione nazionale partigiani d’Italia). For years the association’s president was the communist senator and partisan leader from Ravenna, Arrigo Boldrini. As time passed, the ANPI leadership began to address the issue of what would happen to the organization once its membership eventually dwindled to a few ex-combatants aged 90 or above. At the 2001 congress held at Abano Terme (near Padua), a motion was put forward by some partisans, including Massimo Rendina from Rome, which asked for a change in the ANPI statute to permit young people to join the organization. The motion was vigorously opposed by Boldrini, who argued that the organization would lose its identity if membership was opened up to those who had not actively participated in the Resistance. Boldrini, who was in his mid-80s at the time, slapped the table in irritation. At one point Rendina himself gave an impassioned speech, saying that a choice had to be made between a change in identity and death. He was privately backed up by Giovanni Pesce, the Milanese partisan who had become something of an icon for protesting students in the late 1960s. There was certainly a feeling at this congress amongst the more left-leaning participants that changes were going to happen within an organization which, for a variety of reasons, had never really managed to connect with the younger generations (an exception being during the 1970s). By the next congress, in 2006, Boldrini’s failing health meant that he was no longer capable of continuing as president. He was elected
honorary president, and replaced by the Genoese Raimondo Ricci, who allowed a change in the ANPI statute which opened the doors of the association to non-partisans. Article 23, which details who can join the association, now contains a paragraph stating that

in addition membership is open to . . . those who share the patrimony of ideas, the values and the aims of the ANPI and who intend to contribute, in their role as anti-Fascists . . . to the preservation, care of and diffusion of the knowledge of the events and values that the Resistance passed on to the new generations as a founding element of the Republic, of the Constitution and the European Union . . . an essential part of the patrimony of the country.15

Not much had changed in the language used by the ANPI, but the decision to allow in non-partisan members was a significant one. At the 2011 congress, held in Turin, it was reported that membership had risen from 95,000 in 2008 to 131,000. Ricci ascribed these healthy numbers to the ‘authoritarian turn’ under Berlusconi which had shown itself in the ‘continuous attacks on the Constitution, considered by the premier as an obstacle or impediment to the business of governing’ (La Repubblica, 24 March 2011).

Another novel development at the 2011 ANPI conference was the fact that the opening speech was made a woman, Marisa Ombra, who argued that

the partisans are not dying . . . [the young] will be the new ANPI: we are trying to approach the young people so that they can become the new ruling class of the association. The new partisans are the women, the students, all those Italians who with their generosity, passion and enthusiasm are erecting a wall against those people who are undermining rights and the civil way of life.

**Conclusion**

Anti-Fascism is by no means dead and in the above discussion I have tried to give some examples of where it is currently ‘located’. What is clear, however, is that these different anti-Fascist strands are disparate and very rarely coordinated to create something organic. This lack of cohesion is perhaps best exemplified by a recent example from the city of Florence, which can certainly claim a distinguished anti-Fascist past – it was the home of the Rosselli brothers, of the partisan insurrection of August 1944, of Piero Calamandrei, of the journal Il ponte, of Tristano ‘Pippo’ Codignola, and of Angiolo Gracci, amongst many others.16 In early March 2013 Florentine members of various ANTIFA groups organized a counter-demonstration to protest against the march in memory of the victims of the foibe. The ANPI were involved in the discussions and arrangements in what appeared, on the face of it, to be an exemplary illustration of cooperation between the old and the new in anti-Fascism. Things did not turn out as hoped. Before the march began the 88-year-old former partisan Silvano Sarti was harangued by a woman who was not yet thirty: ‘Oi, Sarti, off you go. Go and throw them out of this march. We’d said no party flags, but above all no PD flags. Shame on them. They’re in with the Fascists.’ What had happened, albeit rather unexpectedly, was that two representatives of the PD, Marta Torcini and Maria Teresa Focardi (the daughters of partisans as it turned out) had decided to participate and brought along their party flags with the intention of waving them in the streets of Florence, along with those of the anarchists and the young members of the social centres. Members of the left-wing trade union the CGIL were also there, as were thirty members of SEL (Left Ecology Freedom). Discussions became more and more animated with the two PD women at the centre
of a growing storm. Insults flew (‘You’re not going anywhere with that flag’; ‘The PD is the party that runs Florence and lets the Fascists take to the streets’) which were countered with the accusation, ‘You say you’re anti-Fascists, but you’re just like them.’ At one point a young man tried to set light to one of the PD flags. Eventually, the march began with the ANPI trailing 100 metres behind those of the social centres, which left an awkward gap in the procession. When it came to the representatives of the CGIL and the PD to start walking, they were stopped. In protest, the members of the SEL refused to march. Anti-Fascist unity, if ever it had existed in the twentieth century, was clearly going to be difficult to achieve in the twenty-first.

Notes

1 The video of the encounter can be viewed on YouTube and a number of other websites.
2 Giancarlo Bocchi on the Facebook page of Il Ribelle. Guido Picelli un eroe scomodo. Monuments to the Resistance and to anti-Fascism are, of course, an important part of the landscape (see Galmozzi, 1986), although there are few new ones to speak of.
3 For the full text see www.beppegrillo.it/2013/04/il_25_aprile_e_morto.html (accessed 14 February 2014).
4 Bottino is not Craxi’s real first name, which is Bettino. This is a play on words: bottino means ‘booty’.
5 Monte Sole is now a park with an efficient visitor centre which deals with busloads of school trips – including schoolchildren from Germany. The massacre is the subject of Giorgio Diritti’s film L’uomo che verrà (2009).
6 The speech can be viewed on YouTube via a search for ‘Laura Boldrini discorso di insediamento’.
7 It was in June and July 1960 when an anti-Fascist movement inspired by former partisans brought down a coalition government which included the neo-Fascist MSI. These events paved the way for the period of centre-left governments in Italy. On 1960, see Cooke (2000a).
8 The bibliography on De Felice is huge. For the most succinct statement of his view, in the form of an interview with Pasquale Chessa, see De Felice (1995). For an attempt at a rebuttal, see Pistillo (1998). More generally on the reception of De Felice’s work, see Fiorentino (2002). Furet’s most popular work on the subject is his 1983 book, translated into English in 1999.
9 The letter can be found at www.festademocratica.it (accessed 14 February 2014) under the title ‘I principi della resistenza e dell’antifascismo parte del PD’.
14 The full text of the bill, which contains many moments of unintended hilarity, is available online at www.senato.it/leg/16/BGT/Schede_v3/Gdler/36662.htm (accessed 14 February 2014).
15 The statute can be consulted on most websites in the ANPI network. See, for example, www.anpigiovaniudine.org/node/205 (accessed 14 February 2014).
16 Gracci (partisan name ‘Gracco’) was the focal point of Florentine extra-institutional Resistance memory. His death in 2004 was seen by many as a decisive moment in the decline of the anti-Fascist spirit in the city. On Gracci’s ‘Resistenza continua’ social movement, see Cooke (2000b).

Bibliography


