This research work delineates the parabola of the fascist squads, from the period preceding the March on Rome until the central years of the regime, with some in-depth analyses up to 1945. The initial purpose is, therefore, to study how such an important phenomenon could have an influence not only in the period before the advent of fascism but also in the following years, playing a fundamental role in politics and in the evolution of the regime. The first part of the dissertation is aimed to analyze how fascist squads represented a new political style, both before and after the March on Rome, and how their use of violence, which was voluntarily employed and done to people, became a value with an end in itself as well as a terrorist instrument systematically used to kill enemies and to achieve power. The intimidating and terrorist potential that “squadrismo” could display helped to reinforce the fascist power and, at the same time, it allowed Mussolini to appear as a leader ready to normalize the situation. However, very often, the repression was only put on for show and this is evidence for Mussolini’s desire to maintain his relations with such loyal and stubborn, though quarrelsome and sometimes embarrassing, comrades. The members of the fascist squads are therefore leading characters in the consolidation of the fascist government during the first years after the March on Rome. The second part of the dissertation seeks to examine how the experience of the squads could achieve important political results.
and influence the lives of some diehard members and their social conduct. It was subsequently demonstrated how the attitudes and practices of the squads fitted in with the different political circumstances, by means of some exemplar biographies, such as those of fervent members like Arconovaldo Bonacorsi, Onorio Onori. The biographies of other specific social categories such as martyrs, dead and crazy people were also useful on this regard. The collective practice of violence represented a fundamental experience which was able to shape behaviours and attitudes lasting for a long time, but it also turned into efficient social strategies useful to the regime. In the final part the personal experiences are put together with the political context in order to emphasize the difficult and contradictory intertwining within the needs of the fascist regime and the long-lasting attitudes and behaviours of the squads. To do so, a new point of view has been chosen: the internal perspective belonging to the members of the squads who were interned by the police. These documents have been used only seldom, but they revealed highly interesting to detect the dynamics and the relations between squads and political hierarchies, and also to investigate the depictions and self-representations they gave of each other, from crimination to exaltation. If it is true that squads represented the «essence» of fascism, their study can be useful to analyse the whole parabola of the black shirts’ regime from a different perspective, in which squads represent a filter to investigate the evolution, contradictions and complexities of this period.

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