

# THE POLITICS OF IMMIGRATION IN WESTERN EUROPE

*Edited by*  
MARTIN BALDWIN-EDWARDS  
and  
MARTIN A. SCHAIN

# Recent Immigration Politics in Italy: A Short Story

JOHN W.P. VEUGELERS

*The short history of recent Italian immigration politics spans four phases: (1) until 1986, an incoherent policy with little control over flows; (2) increased mobilisation of public opinion, followed by the extension of foreign workers' rights and a flawed amnesty campaign; (3) renewed mobilisation of public opinion in 1989, and Italy's alignment with the Schengen group; (4) lower political salience since the events at Bari in 1991. The mobilisation of public opinion drives cycles of immigration policy-making activity, but legislative procedures structure influence within policy networks and thus indirectly condition policy content. The weakness of xenophobia, the dismantling of the Ministry for Italians Abroad and Immigration, and preoccupation with the crisis of Italy's postwar system have made immigration an unimportant political issue since 1991.*

Italy is a country with a century-long experience of mass emigration, for which the arrival of hundreds of thousands of immigrants since the mid-1970s has raised entirely new political questions. While this article focuses on the cycles, content and effects of Italy's policy responses, associated processes are also examined, namely interparty and interministerial dynamics, the fluctuating pressures of public opinion, and the roles of unions, voluntary associations, and immigrant groups.

Four analytical questions underpin this historical account. First, in order to address the question of influence in policy-making, an attempt has been made to identify sides in the making of specific pieces of immigration policy, and to examine whether policy outcomes reflect conflict or accommodation between forces. The second question concerns the direction of policy in terms of liberalisation versus restriction: does a policy change expand or contract the flow of foreigners, increase or decrease their rights? The third question pertains to the centralisation of immigration policy: how extended is the policy-making network, and do decision-making or implementation tend to fall to the same actors? Finally, to what extent do policies bring Italy into harmony with international conventions and agreements?<sup>1</sup>

## FROM SENDER COUNTRY TO COUNTRY OF IMMIGRATION

Italy became a country of immigration later than other industrialised countries in Western Europe, partly because its postwar colonial ties were weaker than those of Britain, France, Belgium and the Netherlands. Yet, other countries which also lacked such ties – Switzerland and West Germany – became receiving countries before Italy. The major reasons for the delay in immigration to Italy were the greater pull of labour opportunities elsewhere, and the presence of a large domestic reserve of cheap labour. Until the 1970s, massive migration flowed from Italy's rural south and northeast to the industrial area between Genoa, Turin and Milan, as well as to France, Belgium, Switzerland, West Germany, Argentina, Australia and North America.<sup>2</sup>

TABLE 1  
EMIGRATION AND RETURN MIGRATION OF ITALIAN NATIONALS, 1950–86

Period	Departures	Entries	Net Balance
1950–60	3,137,712	1,395,623	–1,742,089
1961–72	2,956,667	2,135,438	– 821,229
1973–86	1,247,284	1,324,083	+ 76,799

Source: Odo Barsotti and Laura Leccini, 'L'immigration des pays du Tiers-Monde en Italie', *Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales* 5/3 (1989), Table 1.

As Table 1 suggests, the oil shock of 1973–74 marked a turning point in Italian immigration. Though return migration had long been high, after 1973 it exceeded emigration. Further, after the oil shock, Third World migration to Italy rose sharply as push conditions worsened in Africa and Asia while France, Switzerland, West Germany and Great Britain adopted more restrictive policies. By 1977 an estimated 300,000 to 400,000 aliens were in Italy, and their number continued to rise thereafter. The average annual increase in Italy's foreign population was 7.2 per cent between 1981 and 1985, and 16.7 per cent between 1986 and 1990.<sup>3</sup>

Unlike other industrialised societies in Western Europe, Italy became a country of immigration within a context of deindustrialisation and rising unemployment. Further, the country has an enormous underground economy and longstanding disparities in regional development. Thus, foreign workers were shut out of relatively well-paid, protected industrial jobs from the start. Instead, they found illegal work in small and medium-scale manufacturing, as well as jobs which Italians would not fill in the primary and tertiary sectors – in agriculture and fishing, in

TABLE 2  
FOREIGN POPULATION IN ITALY, 1975-91

	1975	1980	1985	1990	1991
Foreigners, in thousands	186.4	298.7	423.0	781.1	896.8
% of total population	0.3	0.5	0.7	1.4	1.6

*Sources:* Continuous Reporting System on Migration/SOPEMI, *Trends in International Migration* (Paris: OECD, 1992), p. 131, Table 1; Italy, Ministry of the Interior (1987, 1992).

restaurants and garages, and as pedlars and domestics. Often, the legal or economic status of foreign workers has been precarious because they tend to be self-employed, non-unionised, hired seasonally, or exploited in the underground economy.<sup>4</sup>

#### IMMIGRATION POLICY TO 1986: GAPS AND CLANDESTINITY

Until late 1986, Italian policy toward the entry, residence and rights of aliens lacked comprehensiveness. By framing immigration primarily as a threat to public order, the state failed to regulate and co-ordinate other dimensions of the phenomenon including flows, employment, housing, education, training, health and family unification. Moreover, the sudden rise of immigration since the 1970s was met by a profusion of ministerial directives and amendments whose opaqueness, inconsistencies and lacunae encouraged administrative discretion and arbitrariness.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, the statutes contradicted the Italian Constitution of 1948, which recognises the right of asylum, equal civil and social rights for foreign residents, and the limitation of Italian sovereignty by broad international laws. In particular: (1) the core of the law on foreigners (which dated from 1931 and was designed to bar anti-Fascists) subjected non-nationals to special restrictions over entry, movement, residence and property ownership; (2) under legislation passed in 1948, foreigners could be expelled if unable to show their funds were both sufficient and legally obtained; (3) in March 1982 the Ministry of Labour instructed local authorities to stop issuing work permits to non-EC citizens; (4) while Italy was a signatory of the 1951 Geneva Convention on Refugees, it did not ratify the Bellagio Protocol and thus was exempt from taking refugees on the now outdated grounds that it was a country of emigration; (5) when Italy ratified ILO Convention 143 (1975) in April 1981 with the aim of defending the rights of Italians living and working

abroad, it was endorsing principles not upheld at home, since the ILO Convention censures discrimination, defends freedom of movement, and recognises foreigners' equality in the areas of pay, job training and security, union and cultural rights, social security and family unification; (6) Italy's statutes failed to conform with the European Parliament's recommendation 990 of 1984.<sup>6</sup>

Italy's non-system of immigration regulation appears to have been harsh: in 1984 alone, 12,500 aliens were refused entry, a further 13,645 were expelled, and 26,684 others were either arrested or handed over to the authorities. Yet, foreigners without funds or steady legal employment could not regularise their status. A high level of clandestinity resulted, because restrictive laws coexisted with loose regulation and employers' readiness to break the law in hiring cheap, flexible labour. Though it is impossible to be precise about the extent of clandestine work, experts agree undocumented workers numbered in the hundreds of thousands by the early 1980s.<sup>7</sup>

Despite these problems, immigration politics emerged late in Italy. Public opinion was generally indifferent, and those involved in maintaining the system of clandestine work – foreigners, their employers in the underground economy, the state – kept silent about the situation. In any case, it was impossible to form a reliable picture of the new foreign presence because the state could not provide trustworthy statistics. Politicians and the general public could still believe that Italy was a stepping-stone for migrants, not a final destination. Immigrants also lacked a voice, for they had no voting rights and were not organised into autonomous associations or political groups. Finally, immigration remained a buried issue because there were no xenophobic political parties or movements exploiting it.

Attempts at immigration reform in the early 1980s were unsuccessful. Bill 694 of 1980 (*Norme integrative della disciplina vigente per il controllo degli stranieri*) made employment a condition of legal residence, and would have barred foreigners lacking a prepaid return travel ticket. While Bill 694 received Senate approval, it was withdrawn following criticism for its preoccupation with public order. The next important legislative proposal focused on the regularisation and control of migrant labour. Bill 1812 of 1982 (*Disciplina dell'occupazione in Italia di lavoratori subordinati stranieri extracomunitari*) was sponsored by Minister of Labour Di Giesi after consultation with the major unions, which at this point largely shared his ministry's blindness to questions of foreigners' rights and integration. The bill included measures to regularise undocumented workers, punish those who hired or trafficked in illegal workers, and regulate the entry and employment of foreign workers. Bill 1812

received the approval of a parliamentary committee (the *Commissione lavoro emigrazione del Senato*) but died when the Spadolini government fell in November 1982.<sup>8</sup>

#### PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES AND THE FIRST REGULARISATION CAMPAIGN

When France's *Front National* scored its breakthrough in the 1984 European elections, immigration still was not a public issue in Italy. However, in August 1985 Prime Minister Craxi linked recent terrorism in Italy to foreigners at the University of Perugia, and the mass media then indulged in a guessing-game concerning the 'true' number of immigrants in Italy. A terrorist attack on the Leonardo da Vinci International Airport near Rome in December 1985 reinforced public criticism of lax border controls and inadequate policing, though some also warned about the dangers of racism.<sup>9</sup>

The following year, Bill 1820 (which later became Law 943 of 1986) was presented in standing committees of the Senate and House of Representatives. Under the Italian system, a bill can pass without going before a plenary session of Parliament if the committees approve it. In this case, the committees' members belonged to parties in and out of government, including the Communist Party and the neo-fascist MSI (*Movimento sociale italiano-Destra nazionale*). The Communists worked in tandem with the Christian Democrats on Law 943. While the smaller parties usually pay less attention to international relations, both the Communists and the Christian Democrats had a few members whose activism in immigrant politics flowed out of their earlier involvement in emigration politics. These politicians also had close contact with the areas of Italian civil society which were most involved with immigrants – the labour movement and Catholic voluntary associations.

In discussions held in the parliamentary committees, the MSI's deputies (but not the MSI's senators) registered the only consistent dissent with the bill. However, in a backroom deal the neo-fascist deputies agreed to abstain rather than cast their dissenting votes. In return, the bill was reworded so the MSI-backed CISNAL union might have a place in the new advisory board on immigrant affairs.<sup>10</sup> A leading Christian Democratic sponsor of the bill, Franco Foschi, later thanked the MSI deputies 'who had chosen not to identify themselves with positions which had brought success to the far right in France'.<sup>11</sup> The bill was then passed with no votes against – and three MSI abstentions.

At this time, immigrants were not autonomous political actors. Their interests were mediated by the *Comitato per una legge giusta* organised

by Aldo de Matteo of the *Associazioni Cristiane dei Lavoratori Italiani* (ACLI). The *Comitato per una legge giusta* performed three main functions: (1) expanding the pro-immigrant lobby beyond Catholic groups like the ACLI and Caritas (a charity long involved with Italy's immigrants) by bringing in unions and lay associations representing a range of ideological and partisan tendencies; (2) co-ordinating intensive lobbying of all the parties; (3) forming public opinion through meetings, articles and press conferences which explained that foreigners did not steal jobs from Italians. The mobilisation of public opinion turned out to be decisive, not only in forming a partisan consensus, but also in getting the law passed despite resistance from the Foreign Ministry and the Ministry of the Interior.

The making of Law 943 (1986) confirms that in Italy, as in France, Great Britain and former West Germany, positions on immigration tend to cross-cut established party cleavages.<sup>12</sup> This episode also confirms that interparty dynamics in Italian policy-making cannot be mechanically deduced from partisanship, the social bases of party support, or the structure of coalitions.<sup>13</sup> Instead, the making of Law 943 is a classic example of *trasversalità*: politicians' positions cross-cut partisan divisions, while log-rolling brings the opposition on side and thus perpetuates the Italian parties' colonisation of state and society.

The making of Law 943 also shows how the postwar Italian political system has been able to provide a modicum of efficacy, despite what Giuseppe Di Palma calls the system's low overall performance.<sup>14</sup> True, the bureaucracy is over-regulated, pervasive clientelism stifles change, and proportional representation creates unstable coalitions and frequent government turnover. Still, a good part of the system's limited performance is achieved in the multi-party parliamentary committees. Outside of their meetings, lobbyists for different interests seek to influence committee members. In the committees, partisan intransigence relaxes as politicians confer with civil servants, forge compromises, strike deals, distribute patronage – and enact the majority of Italy's laws.<sup>15</sup>

After more than a decade of rising immigration, administrative confusion and societal indifference, Law 943 of 1986 (*Norme in materia di collocamento e di trattamento dei lavoratori extracomunitari immigrati e contro le immigrazioni clandestine*) gave Italy the foundation for a more comprehensive and coherent immigration policy. The law applied specifically to employees from non-EC countries (*lavoratori subordinati extracomunitari*), their immediate families, employers and the relevant public agencies. Briefly, the Law had three main features: (1) foreign workers were given the same rights as Italian workers, in accordance

with ILO Convention 143 (1975); (2) future admissions of aliens were tied to labour market needs; (3) irregularity or clandestinity were to be controlled by introducing an amnesty allowing the regularisation of undocumented workers, and by punishing those who hired or trafficked in undocumented workers.<sup>16</sup>

The amnesty administered under Law 943 was only a partial success. As may be seen from Table 3, the status of only about 105,000 foreigners (17 per cent of whom were women) was regularised, less than half the estimated total of clandestine workers.<sup>17</sup> Many factors hampered the campaign. The powerful Ministry of the Interior did not fully co-operate, and the regularisation process tested the efficiency of no less than three of Italy's bureaucracies: the local administrations (*comuni*) for documentation, local police headquarters (*questure*) for regularisation, and provincial labour offices for registration on the employment roll. Another problem was the lack of publicity surrounding the regularisation campaign, despite all the media attention lavished on 'the immigrant problem' after the terrorist attack at Leonardo da Vinci International Airport a few months earlier. Finally, while Law 943 punished employers who hired undocumented employees, documented foreign workers would earn the same as Italians. Many undocumented foreigners apparently chose not to regularise rather than price themselves out of the labour market. Others registered as unemployed while continuing to work illegally in their old underpaid jobs.<sup>18</sup>

Apart from these problems of implementation, Law 943 represented only a start because it did not lift Italy's geographic exemption from the Geneva Convention on Refugees. It also begged the issue of foreigners' political rights, such as the right to vote in local elections, and the linkage between immigration levels and employment policy was never institutionalised. Finally, Law 943 applied mainly to workers, and even then only to full-time employees (whether employed or formerly employed). It failed to address the status of students or seasonal, professional, part-time, co-operative or self-employed workers.

#### THE 'MARTELLI LAW' AND THE SECOND REGULARISATION CAMPAIGN

In December 1988 Premier Ciriaco De Mita charged Rosa Russo Jervolino (a Christian Democrat and the Minister for Social Affairs) with the preparation of a new immigration bill. Though anti-racist groups had organised since 1987, and the mass media were now paying more attention to 'the immigrant problem', the predominant public attitude toward immigration remained one of surprise rather than hostility or concern.<sup>19</sup> The unions were now lobbying on behalf of



TABLE 3  
REGULARISATIONS AND NON-EC RESIDENTS IN ITALY, 1986-90

	Regularised under:		Resident on 31 Dec. 1990
	Law 943 (1986)	Law 39 (1990)	
Morocco	19,283	50,538	77,971
Tunisia	8,919	29,918	41,234
Algeria	671	2,132	4,041
Libya	169	176	2,604
Egypt	5,261	7,180	19,814
Ethiopia	2,392	1,512	11,946
Somalia	1,208	4,344	9,443
Senegal	7,531	16,643	25,107
Ghana	3,296	6,600	11,443
Nigeria	1,104	3,776	6,855
Cape Verde	682	530	4,991
Mauritius	1,218	2,799	5,367
Philippines	9,538	13,351	34,328
China	4,498	9,747	18,665
Sri Lanka	9,494	4,527	11,454
India	1,241	2,339	11,282
Pakistan	958	3,137	6,497
Bangladesh	385	3,444	4,883
Brazil	905	2,867	14,293
Argentina	900	2,518	12,893
Colombia	474	960	5,524
Dominican Republic	530	1,685	4,415
Peru	632	1,976	5,253
Chile	813	787	4,248
Venezuela	216	387	5,046
Yugoslavia	6,386	12,226	29,790
Poland	466	5,539	16,966
Hungary	72	424	4,147
Romania	180	686	7,494
USSR	24	334	6,447
Turkey	774	1,576	4,695
Iran	2,900	2,601	14,630
Lebanon	467	1,592	5,802
Jordan	473	999	5,703
Other Developing Countries	5,807	9,348	62,171
Other Countries	5,445	6,839	117,689
Total	105,312	216,037	635,131

Source: Continuous Reporting System on Migration/SOPEMI, *Annual Report-1990* (Paris: OECD, 1991), p.22, Table 8.

immigrants, but their efforts were fragmented by the number of ministries involved in immigration affairs.

Minister Russo Jervolino lacked influence, however. While Social Affairs is a weak ministry without an independent budget, other ministries involved in immigration affairs had large budgets, more senior

ministers, and different agendas. The Ministry of the Interior was directly involved in the Trevi agreement on international crime and terrorism, and played up immigration as a threat to public safety. The Foreign Ministry, which was responsible for border controls rather than the integration of immigrants into Italian society, also played down immigration reform, for it did not want to compromise negotiations over agricultural trade, fishing rights and natural gas with the Maghreb countries which sent so many immigrants to Italy. And in the eyes of the parties, the subjects of immigration policy – Italy's foreigners – counted for little because they did not belong to the electorate. As in 1986, when public reaction to terrorism spurred new immigration legislation, more decisive government action awaited another sensational event.

Vice-Premier Claudio Martelli grabbed the responsibility for a new immigration bill when public opinion reacted strongly to the murder of an immigrant from South Africa, Jerry Essan Masslo, in August 1989. Martelli was a newcomer to immigration politics, and the party he represented, the Socialists, had no specialists in the area. However, public opinion was now mobilised and expectant, and as both Vice-Premier and the senior Socialist in the coalition government, Martelli had more influence over the parties and his fellow ministers than Russo Jervolino. Martelli was also to show strong political will, particularly when Minister of Labour Donat Cattin suddenly tried to relax the conditions under which foreign workers could register in provincial labour offices.

Whereas Law 943 (1986) was passed in committee, the Martelli Law followed a different legislative path. It began as a decree law (*decreto-legge*), a government emergency decree which expires within 60 days unless Parliament converts it into a law. As with Law 943 (1986), the mechanics of the legislative procedure affected participation in the key consultations as well as the new law's content.

According to press coverage at the time, the making of the decree law involved collective debate and negotiation. In fact, the decree was conditioned by the foreign policy concerns of top bureaucrats who wanted to show the EC that Italy was serious about controlling immigration. Before the government issued the decree law, a high-profile discussion carried by the mass media – mostly about goodwill and the importance of pluralism and racial tolerance – attracted intellectuals and representatives of parties, immigrant groups, associations and social movements. For the Socialists, the near consensus of public opinion on immigration signalled a chance to show national leadership while mending their party's image as a promoter of social solidarity.

Martelli engaged in a series of consultations which seemed to import

into the policy process the openness and liberalism of the public discussion on immigration. The framing of the law was another matter, however. A group of civil servants from different ministries together convinced Martelli that a liberal policy toward North Africa would further alienate the EC, which saw Italy's borders as porous. Instead, the new law should simply harmonise Italy with the Schengen group.<sup>20</sup> The initial resistance of unions, Catholic voluntary associations, and the Christian Democrats weakened after they were persuaded that a more liberal policy might open the way for an Italian *Le Pen*.

In part, Decree Law 416 of 30 December 1989 simply codified previous ministerial directives.<sup>21</sup> Very briefly, it:

- ended Italy's exemption from the 1953 Geneva Convention on Refugees, and specified asylum-seekers' legal rights;
- broadened residence categories, and gave nationals from non-EC countries the right to enter Italy for reasons of tourism, education, health or work (whether self-employed or as employee);
- provided for entry visas 'where prescribed';<sup>22</sup>
- asked ministries to co-ordinate and systematise immigration flows and the socio-cultural integration of non-EC migrants, given conditions in the labour market, universities and social services;
- clarified expulsion procedures, and gave aliens legal means of contesting expulsion orders;
- announced a second amnesty campaign.<sup>23</sup>

A decree law clears the first hurdle once it receives government approval. However, legislation by decree '. . . cuts both ways. It gives the government special powers of initiative and enforcement, but the need for immediate conversion by Parliament, and the risk that a filibustering minority can block it, also advise against controversial provisions.'<sup>24</sup> Two of the established parties used the second step in the legislative process as an opportunity to test the political payoff from xenophobia. The MSI and the *Partito repubblicano italiano* (PRI) threatened passage of the new law by tabling over 60 restrictive amendments in Parliament.<sup>25</sup>

It may be recalled that the co-operation of the neo-fascist MSI allowed passage of the 1986 immigration law. While anti-immigrant hostility has breathed new life into far right parties elsewhere in Western Europe, racism has never been central to the MSI's ideology. When the Martelli Law was under discussion, the MSI's main problems were the blockage of its electoral support at about 6 per cent, and the fact that the end of the Cold War was turning the party's traditional *raison d'être*, anti-communism, into an historical relic. MSI leader

Gianfranco Fini tested xenophobia before and during discussion of the Martelli Law, but then backed off. Neither he nor his short-time successor, Pino Rauti, have since pursued the anti-immigrant strategy of their counterparts elsewhere in Europe. Immigration remains a controversial and potentially divisive issue within the MSI, so its leaders must weigh the potential gains from xenophobia against risks to the party's unity and image.<sup>26</sup>

More serious was the hostile position of Giorgio La Malfa, leader of the PRI. While the PRI attracts even less electoral support than the MSI, the party enjoyed greater political leverage because it belonged to the government coalition. Playing on fears of crime and social turmoil, the PRI pressed for more restrictive legislation, and championed the Florentine shopkeepers who organised and attacked foreigners while the Martelli Law was before the House early in 1990. La Malfa's gamble does not appear to have paid off electorally, for in the April 1990 administrative elections his party lost support.<sup>27</sup> Nonetheless, by stalling and threatening to create a governmental crisis, La Malfa extracted concessions before 90 per cent of the House approved the new law on 28 February 1990.<sup>28</sup> All but one of the 13 original articles of the Martelli decree were amended by Law 39 (1990):

- many of the Parliament's modifications were isolated, concerning matters such as refugee status, educational and professional equivalencies, and residence, study, and work permits;
- the border police received wide powers of discretion in granting entry to asylum-seekers;
- annual budgets were now specified, including:
  - 20 billion lire annually to the Ministry of the Interior for processing refugee applications
  - 30 billion lire annually to fund local immigrant and refugee support and information centres
  - 19 billion lire in 1990, 29 billion lire in 1991 and 1992 respectively, for added policing
- staffing allocations were also specified:
  - 300 new social workers, sociologists and psychologists to be hired by the Ministry of Labour
  - 1,000 new police positions

Comparison of the decree and the subsequent law reveal the parties' particular prejudices toward foreigners. For example, Parliament changed Article 7.2 to read:

Those aliens who breach entry and residence laws shall also be

expelled from the national territory, as shall those who are directly or indirectly responsible, in Italy or abroad, for serious infractions of currency, customs, or other Italian fiscal laws, or of laws protecting the artistic heritage, *or concerning labour trafficking as well as living by the avails of prostitution or the crime of statutory rape and other sexual offences.*<sup>29</sup>

In sum, when the parties converted the Martelli decree into law, they shifted the emphasis toward public order and gave significant discretionary, budgetary and staffing means to the ministry which had carried so much administrative weight in past immigration policy – the Ministry of the Interior.

As Table 3 shows, more than twice as many aliens were regularised under Law 39 (1990) than in the 1986 campaign. The second campaign was better publicised via radio and television, and 500,000 copies of the Law were translated into eight languages and distributed to foreigners. The second regularisation campaign was also better funded and staffed, the help of voluntary associations was officially encouraged, and authorities were instructed to accept any of a wide variety of documents as acceptable identification. Nonetheless, discrepancies in bureaucratic procedures and efficiency reproduced the north-south split in the country's development, and the Ministry of Labour's attempts to help foreign workers to register led to a minor clash with the Ministry of the Interior.<sup>30</sup>

#### FORGETTING THE DEBACLE AT BARI

While the Martelli Law was being made to gain control over Third World immigration, the Second World was falling apart. By the time Vice-Premier Martelli signed the Schengen agreement in November 1990, Italy was receiving increasing numbers of immigrants from Eastern Europe. Already in July 1990 some 4,000 Albanian asylum seekers had landed at Brindisi, and in February 1991 another handful of Albanian soldiers and civilians asked for asylum. The following month, at a time Italy was barring foreign workers, a further 21,300 Albanians were allowed into the country. While the government was divided over what to do next, the administration was incapable of meeting the new arrivals' basic needs in food, shelter and medical care. Eventually, the government decided to grant work permits to all of the Albanians, then to relocate them across Italy.<sup>31</sup>

On 7-8 August 1991 another 15,000 or more Albanians landed at the port of Bari. This time the government stood firm by repatriating most

of the new arrivals, restricting maritime landings, and pledging \$70 million in aid to Albania. While the events at Bari received wide mass-media coverage in Italy and abroad, the ensuing public polemic was brief. La Malfa tried to exploit the events at Bari by blaming them on the so-called Martelli Law, but public opinion dropped the issue once the Albanians were gone. Indeed, since Bari both politicians and the general public seem to have decided that Italy's future policy toward Second and Third World immigration lies in the hands of the Schengen group, if not the EU.<sup>32</sup>

Indifference on the part of the government and top politicians underlies the history of the short-lived Ministry for Italians Abroad and Immigration. Instituted by government decree in April 1991, the ministry's responsibilities included the planning of immigration flows and the co-ordination, direction and promotion of initiatives in the areas of employment, information, statistics and legislation. The government appointed Margherita Boniver of the Socialist Party as the new minister, but without portfolio, which meant the new ministry had no budget of its own. Further, its authority in immigration matters could not infringe upon the competencies of other ministries.<sup>33</sup>

Without a strong minister, lacking its own budget and staff, the Ministry for Italians Abroad and Immigration could not wrest the leadership on immigration policy from other ministries. The responsibility for dealing with the crisis at Bari reverted to Minister of the Interior Vincenzo Scotti rather than Boniver, and most of her ministry's budget for 1992 was allocated to deal with the Yugoslavian refugee crisis. Nor did the Ministry for Italians Abroad and Immigration receive added authority under the citizenship law enacted in February 1992. Instead, citizenship remained primarily a responsibility of the Ministry of the Interior, along with the Foreign Ministry and the Ministry of Justice.<sup>34</sup>

The Ministry for Italians Abroad and Immigration was dropped not much more than a year after its birth, when the new Amato government was formed in June 1992. On the face of it, the ministry's demise did not reflect a lesser preoccupation with immigration on the part of the new government. That commitment was weak under previous governments. Moreover, the Boniver ministry was not the only one eliminated – other ministries disappeared too, and in this light the Ministry for Italians Abroad and Immigration was simply one of the casualties in Premier Amato's fight against the Italian spoils system known as *lottizzazione*.

Yet, the Boniver ministry could hardly have been corrupt or clientelistic, for it had few resources to tempt anyone. Instead, it was axed precisely because none of the parties had a material interest in its survival. Further, the ministry disappeared before being absorbed into

another ministry, the first time this has ever happened. For immigrant groups and their allies, the Ministry for Italians Abroad and Immigration seemed both a policy co-ordinator and counterweight to the large ministries. Without it, the representation of immigrants' interests once again became fragmented and overstretched by the task of addressing different ministries. Meanwhile, the powerful Ministry of the Interior continues to carry the most weight in immigration policy.

The established political parties have been largely silent on immigration since the events at Bari. Immigration was not a partisan issue in the general elections of April 1992, and neither the MSI nor the PRI have systematically pursued the xenophobic positions that tempted them when the Martelli Law was in the making. The new northern Leagues, whose ideology tends to put Third World immigrants and southern Italians into the same stigmatised social category, are currently the most xenophobic parties. Yet, even if anti-immigrant hostility unifies part of the Leagues' subculture, it has yet to become a consistent theme in leaders' public statements. All this could easily change, given the Leagues' ongoing growth, increasing voter dealignment, and the continued erosion of the Left and Catholic subcultures.<sup>35</sup>

Italy's immigrants have yet to organise into a coherent political force. They do not vote, and they lack both economic influence and autonomy from unions and Catholic associations. Existing immigrant associations display an absence of strong leadership and are fragmented along regional and ethnic lines. When Vice-Premier Martelli consulted with immigrant representatives in 1989-90, they seemed unacquainted with the political issues, out of touch with their communities, and unable to present concrete demands. The Catholic associations have long lobbied on behalf of foreigners, and continue to do so, but this does not help the immigrants' organisational autonomy. And while the biggest trade unions worked hard to recruit foreign workers between 1986 and 1990, like the Catholic associations they will not put independent resources at the disposal of immigrant groups. Moreover, in lobbying and collective bargaining the unions tend to neglect foreigners' special needs in the areas of housing, language, and social and health services.

While the press continues to follow the more sensational aspects of immigration, including skinhead attacks on foreigners, and the Leagues continue to test xenophobia, now there is the sense that Italy is no longer the soft underbelly of the European Union. It sent the Albanians packing while the whole world watched, and attention has shifted to Germany as it deals with its own refugees, guest workers and neo-nazis: Italy should just wait and see what is done about immigration at the EU level, then follow. If Italy's postwar political system were still in place,

the next cycle of immigration policy-making would await another sensational event capable of capturing public opinion.

However, since 1992 Italy has experienced a political crisis without parallel in the rest of Western Europe, and this crisis has pushed immigration off the political agenda. The social and political inclusion of foreigners is not a priority in a country burdened with a new wave of terrorist bombings, the privatisation of its largest firms, constitutional and electoral reform, the defence of its embattled currency, huge budgetary and public sector debts, one fight against the Mafia and another against a corrupt public contracting system, business scandals, and the continued disintegration of its established political parties.

The new political system which is expected to emerge from the crisis ought to be characterised by new structures of policy-making and inter-party competition. Accordingly, the patterns identified in the present study may belong to a dying way of doing politics. If the present crisis does indeed bring on the transformation of the political system, future research will have to trace out the implications of such change, not just for Italy's immigration politics, but for its policy-making and interparty dynamics as a whole.

#### NOTES

Research funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, and Princeton University's Council on Regional Studies and Center of International Studies (MacArthur Foundation Fund). Thanks also to Guido Bolaffi, Roberto Chiarini, Stephen Hellman, Richard Katz, Roberto Magni, Gianfausto Rosoli, Nadia Urbinati, Mark VanLandingham, the Centro Studi Emigrazione, and the Canadian Academic Centre in Rome. An earlier version of this article was presented at the 1992 Meetings of the American Political Science Association in Chicago.

1. This article draws on interviews the author conducted in 1992 with Italian politicians, civil servants and trade union officials. All have participated in immigration politics, and their statements were cross-checked. Interviewees were assured of confidentiality, so they are not cited as sources.
2. Antonio Golini, 'L'Italia nel sistema delle migrazioni internazionali', *Studi Emigrazione* 25/91-92 (Sept.-Dec. 1988), pp.544-65; Umberto Melotti, 'L'immigrazione straniera in Italia', G. Cocchi (ed.), *Stranieri in Italia* (Bologna: Misure/Materiali di Ricerca dell'Istituto Cattaneo, 1990), pp.31-43.
3. Continuous reporting system on migration/SOPEMI, *Annual Report - 1980* (Paris: OECD, 1981), pp.113-14; idem, *Trends in International Migration* (Paris: OECD, 1992), p.17, Graph 2.
4. Marina Capparucci, 'Fasi di accumulazione e flussi migratori: Italia e Terzo Mondo', *Studi Emigrazione* 25/91-92 (Sept.-Dec. 1988), pp.570-80.
5. Between 1963 and 1985 no fewer than two dozen ministerial directives (*circolari ministeriali*) and amendments were issued for residence matters alone, mostly by the Ministry of Labour, *Dossier Europa Emigrazione* 11/7-8 (July-Aug. 1986), pp.46-7.
6. Gianfausto Rosoli, 'Problemi e prospettive degli interventi legislativi sull'immigrazione in Italia', *Studi Emigrazione* 23/82-83 (June-Sept. 1986), pp. 476-91; Jacqueline



- Costa-Lascoux, 'L'Europe des politiques migratoires: France, Italie, Pays-Bas, RFA', *Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales* 5/2 (1989), pp.167-73; Piero Calabrò, 'I non-diritti dei clandestini e degli irregolari, i nuovi diritti degli stranieri con la legge n.39/90', *Da clandestino a cittadino: Riflessioni e proposte sulla condizione dell'immigrato in Italia* (Rome: Ital-Uil, 1990), pp.9-13.
7. Gianfausto Rosoli, 'Aspetti giuridici dell'emigrazione straniera in Italia', *Dossier Europa Emigrazione* 10/9 (Sept. 1985), pp.10-11. According to an undersecretary from the Ministry of Labour, up to 1.4 million non-EC workers were in Italy in 1986; see Italy, *Senato della Repubblica*, 9th Legislature, 529th sitting, 11 Dec. 1986, p.14.
  8. M. Laura Vannicelli, 'Immigrati: il disegno di legge n.1812 del ministro Di Giesi', *Dossier Europa Emigrazione* 7/4 April 1982), pp.11-12.
  9. On media coverage of immigration in 1985, see Gianmario Maffioletti, 'Fatti di parole', *Dossier Europa Emigrazione* 11/2 (Feb. 1986), pp.9-11.
  10. *Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana*, 12 Jan. 1987, Article 2.2(b).
  11. Italy, *Camera dei Deputati*, 9th Legislature, 13th Commission, 7 Mar. 1986, p.17.
  12. Herbert Kitschelt, 'Left-Libertarians and Right Authoritarians: Is the New Right a Response to the New Left in European Politics?', paper presented at the Conference on the Radical Right in Western Europe, Univ. of Minnesota, Minneapolis, USA, 7-9 Nov. 1991, p.23, n.51.
  13. Most Italian studies of public policy focus on parties or jurisprudence. Determining whether the parties' role in making Law 943 was typical requires a different understanding of public policy. See Gloria Regonini 'Le politiche sociali in Italia: metodi di analisi', *Rivista Italiana di Scienza Politica* 15/3 (Dec. 1985), pp.335-77; Gianfranco Pasquino, *Istituzioni, partiti, lobbies* (Rome: Laterza, 1988); Maurizio Ferrera, 'Italian political science and public policies: A late but promising encounter', *European Journal of Political Research* 21 (1992), pp.469-81.
  14. Giuseppe Di Palma, *Surviving Without Governing* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1977), pp.5-7, 194-8.
  15. 'During the first five legislatures (1948-72) over 75 per cent of all laws were passed at committee stage.' Paul Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics 1943-1988* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990), p.488, n.30.
  16. *Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana*, 12 Jan. 1987.
  17. Continuous reporting system on migration/SOPEMI, *Annual Report - 1989* (Paris: OECD, 1990), p.94, Table 3.
  18. Continuous reporting system, on migration/SOPEMI, *Annual Report - 1988* (Paris: OECD, 1989), p.32; Raimondo Cagiano de Azevedo and Leonardo Musumeci, 'The new immigration in Italy', Roberto Leonardi and Piergiorgio Corbetta (eds.), *Italian Politics: A Review*, Vol.3 (London: Pinter, 1989), p.75.
  19. Luigi Manconi, 'Razzismo interno, razzismo esterno e strategia del chi c'è c'è', Laura Balbo and Luigi Manconi (eds.), *I razzismi possibili* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1990), p.46.
  20. Roberto Magni, 'Dal lavoro alla persona. La riforma degli attuali meccanismi delle leggi di immigrazione', *Studi Emigrazione* 30/109 (Mar. 1993), p.128.
  21. Bruno Nascimbene, 'Lo straniero in Italia: profili giuridici alla luce della l.n.39/90', *Studi Emigrazione* 27/101 (March 1991), p.120.
  22. In order to be admitted to the Schengen group, Italy had to require visas from nationals of Turkey, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya. Jacqueline Costa-Lascoux, 'L'espace Schengen', *Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales* 7/2 (1991), p.166.
  23. *Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana*, 30 Dec. 1989, pp.26-30 ('Norme urgenti in materia di asilo politico, di ingresso e soggiorno dei cittadini extracomunitari e di regolarizzazione dei cittadini extracomunitari ed apolidi già presenti nel territorio dello Stato').
  24. Di Palma, (note 14), p.192.
  25. Dwayne Woods, 'La questione dell'immigrazione in Italia', Stephen Hellman and Gianfranco Pasquino (eds.), *Politica in Italia* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1992), pp.279-80.
  26. Piero Ignazi, *Il polo escluso. Profilo del Movimento Sociale Italiano* (Bologna: Il

- Mulino, 1989); Manconi (note 19), pp.52-4; Roberto Chiarini, 'Le Mouvement social italien et la question des immigrés', paper presented at the Joint Sessions of the European Consortium for Political Research, Bochum, Germany, April 1991. For an example of contrasting positions within the MSI, compare the interviews with Alessandra Mussolini and MSI deputy Teodoro Buontempo in *Panorama*, 22 Nov. 1992, pp.74-5.
27. Laura Balbo and Luigi Manconi (eds.), *I razzismi reali* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1992), pp.99-102.
  28. *Corriere della Sera*, 23 Dec. 1989, p.11.
  29. *Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana*, 28 Feb. 1990 (parliamentary modifications to the decree law emphasised by the author).
  30. Massimo Saraz, 'La legge 39/90. L'osservatorio sulla sua attuazione', Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, *Atti della Conferenza Nazionale dell'Immigrazione* (Rome: Editalia, 1991), pp.388-9; Marina Forti, 'Inclusi, esclusi, semi-esclusi', Balbo and Manconi (note 19), pp.105-22.
  31. Of this group, 9,000 found work, 8,500 registered as unemployed, another 645 were granted political asylum, and 1,143 were later repatriated. Continuous reporting system on migration/SOPEMI, *Trends in International Migration* (Paris: OECD, 1992), p.66.
  32. *Ibid.*; Woods (note 25), pp.280-1; Balbo and Manconi (note 27), pp.26-9.
  33. *Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana*, 22 April 1991.
  34. *Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana*, 15 Feb. 1992. The new citizenship law retained the primacy of the *jus sanguinis* principle, but the conditions for naturalisation by *jus soli* were relaxed somewhat: a non-EC citizen might acquire Italian nationality after 10 years of legal residence.
  35. Vittorio Moioli, *I nuovi razzismi: Miserie e fortune della 'Lega Lombarda'* (Rome: Edizioni Associate, 1990); Renato Mannheimer (ed.), *La Lega Lombarda* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1991); Dwayne Woods, 'The Centre No Longer Holds: The Rise of Regional Leagues in Italian Politics', *West European Politics* 15/2 (April 1992), pp.56-76.