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Recent Immigration to Italy: Character, Causes and Consequences

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ABSTRACT: During the 1970s Italy changed from being a country of mass emigration to one of mass immigration, taking over from Germany the role of Europe's main recipient of immigrants from less developed countries. By 1991 the officially registered foreign population in Italy stood at 860,000; however, clandestine migrants push the real figure above 1 million. Italy was generally unprepared for this immigration and policy has been slow to evolve. Analysis of residence permit data show that the immigrants come increasingly from Third World, especially African, countries, and that there is a relative concentration in the north of Italy. One third of the immigrants are Moslem. Employment data are scarce but indicate that around two-thirds are involved in low-grade service sector activities (street-trading, domestic service, hotel work etc.). There is a high degree of occupational specialisation amongst certain national groups (Senegalese street-hawkers, Tunisian fishermen, Filipino domestics etc.). The immaturity of the immigration is also revealed by marked gender and age assymetry. Five main causes are suggested as being behind the immigration: ease of entry; Italy's increasing prosperity; segmentation of the Italian labour market, opening up specific niches for immigrant employment; dominance of push factors from the countries of origin; and the demographic collapse in Italy. Within Italy, the reaction to immigration has not been very favourable. Opinion polls indicate that Italians have mainly negative and stereotyped views of immigrants and there is disturbing evidence of growing racism. Further inflows of immigrants are likely, whatever policies Italy attempts to put in place.

Introduction

Many scholars of migration have had occasion to remark that Italy is a classic laboratory for the study of migratory phenomena. This is true for a number of reasons. First, the scale of emigration from Italy is impressive: currently there are estimated to be more than 5 million Italians resident abroad and maybe 50 million people of Italian descent living outside the country, mainly in the Americas. Secondly, Italy has been the setting for a wide range of types of mass migration - overseas emigration, intra-European emigration, seasonal, temporary and permanent migration, return migration, internal migration and now, most recently, immigration. Thirdly, Italy has been a kind of historical pioneer for migration trends, setting the pace for migratory phenomena which subsequently became observable in other countries such as Greece, Spain and Portugal, Italy's geographical neighbours in southern Europe.

This paper looks at the circumstances surrounding Italy's remarkably swift transition from being a country of mass emigration (up till the end of the 1960s) to one of mass immigration (from the mid-1970s). It examines some of the data available on the character of Italy's immigrant population and discusses a series of factors that have been responsible for the rapid development of large-scale immigration flows into Italy. It also refers to some of the massive amount of recent literature available on the immigration issue in Italy, which has been a politically and socially highly emotive topic for the past decade or so.

The Context

Of all the developed countries of Western Europe and the OECD, Italy has experienced the most dramatic developments in international migration trends since the early 1970s. Up to this period Italy had been one of Europe's major centres of mass emigration, both to overseas countries (North America, South America, Australia) and to other European countries (principally France, Germany and Switzerland). Official data on the

Country	1981-85	1986-90
Austria	−0.7	+ 9.2
Belgium	−0.7	+ 1.3
Germany (West)	−0.3	+ 3.7
Italy	+7.2	+19.2
Netherlands	+1.2	+ 4.6
Sweden	−1.6	+ 4.5
Switzerland	+1.0	+ 3.2
Source: SOPEMI 1992, p. 17		

Tab 1 Average annual increase in foreign population in selected West European countries, 1981-90 (%)

annual number of emigrants or *espatriati* show totals of around 100,000 per year already by the late 1949s, rising to a maximum of 387,000 in 1961. Thereafter a steady decline in the yearly number of *espatriati* set in (152,000 in 1970, 92,000 in 1975, 40,000 in 1988). During the 1980s, *per contra,* Italy became Europe's major country of mass immigration, taking over the role, albeit at a much reduced scale, previously held by (West) Germany. The comparison with Germany has its limitations, however, since immigration into Italy has very different characteristics from the mass recruitment of *Gastarbeiter* by West Germany during the 1960s and early 1970s. What is certain is that in the early 1990s Italy has well in excess of 1 million immigrants living within its shores, most of whom are relatively recent arrivals from Third World countries in Africa, Asia and, to a lesser extent, Latin America. Tab 1 puts this growth in immigration in its international context by comparing Italy with a number of other West European countries. The table shows the acceleration or renewal of foreign population growth in all countries in the late 1980s, and the strikingly high figures for Italy throughout the decade.

This sudden switch from mass emigration to mass immigration caught both the Italian statistical service and the political system completely unawares and both have been slow to react. The national statistical agency ISTAT remained obsessed with measuring the emigration and return migration of Italian nationals rather than documenting the build-up and character of the foreign population living in the country. The decreased relevance of ISTAT's annual data on Italian emigrants and returnees within the ambit of the European Community's free movement of labour and within the context of growing numbers of immigrants was finally recognised in 1988 when the *espatriati* and *rimpatriati* data were discontinued.

Administrative and political structures for dealing with the immigrants have also been slow to evolve and Italy is still fumbling to formulate a proper policy on immigration. Since the character of immigration into Italy is different from the mass intra-European migrations of the pre-1973 era, when Italy was itself a major source of emigrants, reference to other countries' immigration policies is of only limited relevance. Furthermore, by arguing that Italy lacks a coherent policy to cope with influxes of foreigners, Italian statisticians have felt free to ignore inflows which are not properly recorded in official statistics. Thus, as in France where there has also been a lot of recent undocumented immigration, population projections in Italy err on the side of caution with regard to the contribution to demographic growth which is likely to be made by immigrants.

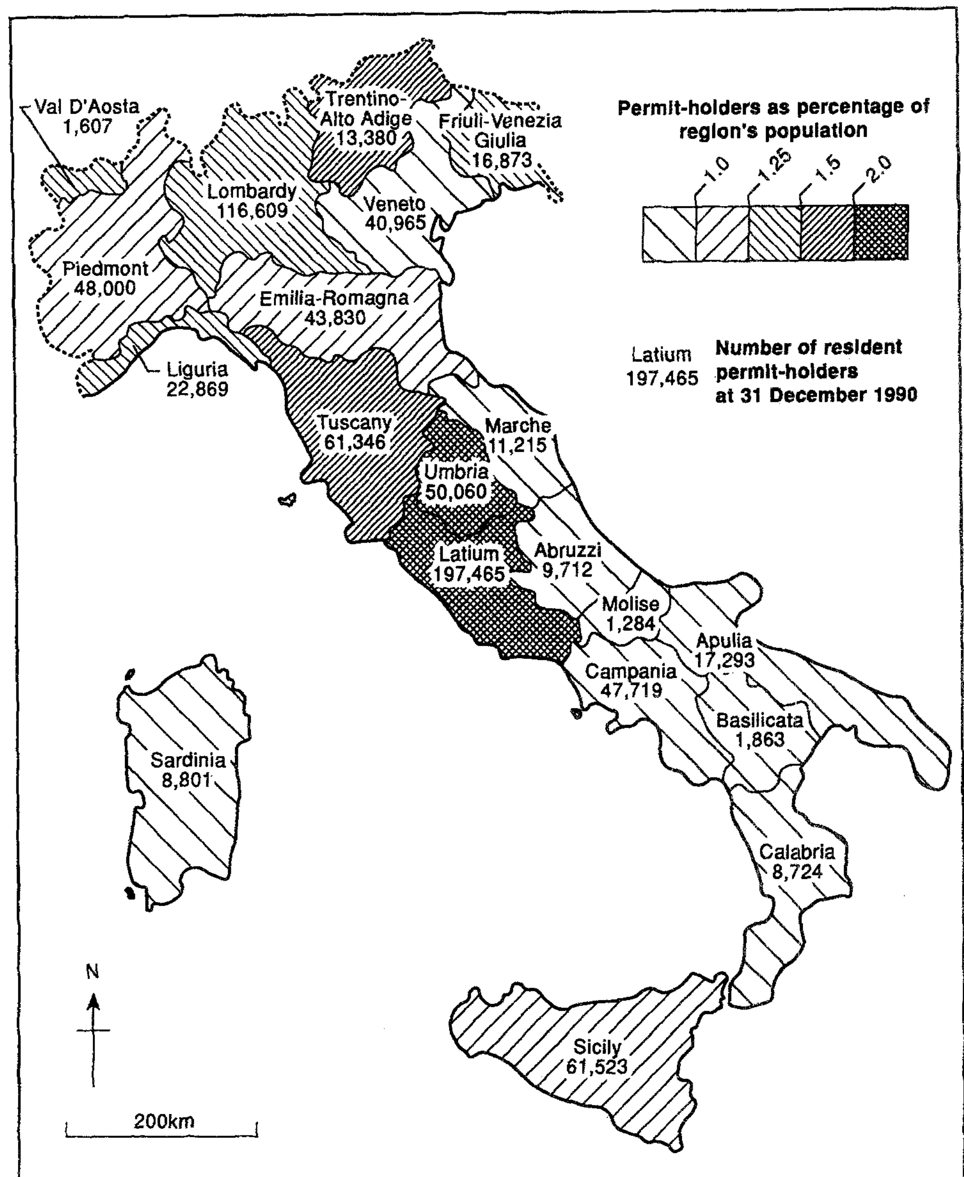
Origins and Character of Immigration to Italy

At a simple quantitative level, 1972 was the year that Italy's annual migration statistics first showed a positive balance. However, the data available do not allow us to disaggregate the relative influences of Italian emigrants returning from abroad *(rimpatriati)* and the arrival of true immigrants from other countries *(immigrati)*. At this time, returnees were undoubtedly the dominant group but we cannot say precisely to what extent. A further statistical complication arises from the fact that a (probably quite small) proportion of returning migrants were ultimately registered as foreign immigrants if they had taken foreign nationality, perhaps as the foreign-born offspring of Italian primary emigrants. "True" immigration, moreover, had started before 1972: Yugoslav immigrants were working in industry and construction in northern Italy and Tunisians had begun to arrive in Sicily in considerable numbers since the late 1960s (King 1984).

Region	1980 no.	%	1985 no.	%	1990 no.	%
Africa	29,754	9.9	45,015	10.6	238,565	30.6
Americas	62,630	21.0	85,287	20.2	128,365	16.4
Asia	41,989	14.0	62,530	14.8	140,394	18.0
Europe	159,107	53.3	223,174	52.8	267,384	34.2
Other	5,269	1.8	6,998	1.6	6,430	0.8
Total	298,749	100.0	423,004	100.0	781,138	100.0
Source: SOPEMI 1992, p. 67; data are for 31 December in each year						

Tab 2 Residence permits granted to foreigners by region of origin, 1980, 1985 and 1990

Fig 1
Regional distribution of immigrants, 31 December 1990



The annual reports of the OECD's migration monitoring unit SOPEMI (Système d'Observation Permanente sur les Migrations) have charted the evolution of Italy's immigrant population since the mid-1970s. The reports quote a variety of sources, both official and private. According to a survey by Censis, a Rome-based research organisation responsible for investigating social issues, there were already between 300,000 and 400,000 foreign workers in Italy in 1977. This number more than doubled in the next five years to reach an estimated 800,000 in 1982. Further growth continued throughout the 1980s (Tab 1). However, precise indicators of this growth can only be given by official records, for instance those of foreigners in possession of a residence permit. These data for 1980–90 are displayed in Tab 2 which also records the changing balance of origin: as the decade progressed Africa and, less so, Asia became increasingly important in comparison to Europe, the Americas and the rest of the world. In other words Italy's immigrant population has become more and more dominated by people from Third World countries. African countries contributed less than one tenth of permit-holders in 1980 but nearly one third in 1990.

Fig 1 shows the regional distribution of the 781,138 permit-holders recorded on 31 December 1990, giving both absolute numbers and the relative concentration measured against the 1991 census figure for the total population of each region. Four out of Italy's 20 regions contain 56% of the total permit-holders: Latium (25.3%), Lombardy (14.9%), Tuscany and Sicily (both 7.9%). The relative concentration in the northern part of Italy shown by Fig 1 reflects the wider availability of work opportunities in the richer regions of the country. Umbria's high figure is

Country	No.	% total
Morocco	88,665	10.3
USA	59,669	7.0
Tunisia	46,276	5.4
Philippines	40,661	4.7
Germany	39,340	4.6
Yugoslavia	33,663	3.9
Great Britain	27,605	3.2
Senegal	27,036	3.1
Albania	26,191	3.0
France	24,879	2.9
Egypt	22,373	2.6
China	20,597	2.4
Poland	18,860	2.2
Switzerland	18,057	2.1
Greece	17,246	2.0
Brazil	16,267	1.9
Argentina	14,758	1.7
Sri Lanka	14,473	1.7
Spain	14,366	1.7
Romania	13,407	1.6
Ghana	12,782	1.5
Iran	12,605	1.5
Ethiopia/Eritrea	12,548	1.4
India	12,064	1.4
Somalia	11,842	1.4

Source: Ministry of Interior data in Servizio Migranti, 2 (3), 1992, p. 168, Table D4.

Tab 3 Immigrants to Italy by country of origin (data are for the first 25 countries, with at least 10,000 holders of residence permits, on 31 December 1991)

explained by the large number of foreign students studying at Perugia's "university for foreigners"; they stand out in a region with a relatively small total population. The data portrayed in Fig 1, however, represent a probably incomplete picture since there is thought to be a higher proportion of clandestine (non permit-holding) immigrants in the southern regions, particularly in Campania, Apulia and Sicily.

Moreover the real picture is a constantly shifting one as migrants arrive, leave and move around the country. Those working as itinerant traders and agricultural labourers are especially mobile. The most recent data on residence permit holders from the Ministry of the Interior show a total of 859,571 for 31 December 1991, an increase of 10% over the previous end-of-year figure. Although the broad regional distribution of permit-holders remains the same, a few regions changed their situation significantly during 1991. The number of permit-holders in Umbria fell by 66% (50,060 to 16,960) because of the introduction of new rules for student permits (the actual number of foreign students present did not change much, however). On the other hand the numbers of permit-holders increased substantially in NE regions due to the influx of refugees from ex-Yugoslavia (Friuli-Venezia Giulia up 37.3%, Emilia-Romagna 40%, Trentino-Alto Adige 25.7%). The biggest increase during 1991 was recorded by Apulia (53.4%), which bore the main impact of the flight from Albania.

Where do the migrants come from? The most remarkable feature of the answer to this question (Tab 3) is the extraordinary diversity of "supply" countries with no country, or group of countries, dominant to the extent that, say, Turks dominate in Germany, Maghrebins in France, or Afro-Caribbeans and South Asians in Britain. The diversity of origins obviously makes it very difficult to generalise about Italy's immigrants who come from a wide range of cultures and races and perform different jobs in different parts of the country. Some data on the employment characteristics of immigrants will be given later.

The countries in Tab 3 reflect a range of migratory circumstances. First, migrants from advanced countries, either in Europe or North America, are mainly high-status persons working in industries, offices, as teachers etc. This group also includes a large number of spouses of Italian citizens. The creation of the Single European Market and the increasing penetration of multinational enterprise into Italy are factors favouring the further steady development of this type of migrant settlement. Second, there are migrants from poorer European countries. Flows from Spain, Greece and Yugoslavia are of relatively long standing and have grown steadily since the 1960s. They also contain many students attracted to Italy by the low cost of, and ease of entry into, university education. Since 1991 new influxes from Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia have been propelled by the fighting in these parts of former Yugoslavia. Migrants from Poland, Romania and Albania are also of recent orgin, developing after the establishment of democracy and freedom of emigration in Eastern Europe. The Albanians are a special case, however, and emigrated in a flood in 1991, pushed out by the chaos of economic and political life in their own country (Pittau and Reggio 1992). Thirdly there are migrants from Africa. These too break down into a number of subgroups: Maghrebins, mainly from Morocco and Tunisia; migrants from the Horn of Africa where there are some historical colonial links to Italy (Eritrea, Somalia); and migrants from West Africa (Senegal, Ghana, Cape Verde etc.). Fourthly are Asian migrants. Filipinos are the largest and most distinct subgroup here, but there are also sizeable communities of Chinese, Sri Lankans, Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis. Finally, there are the immigrants from Latin America. In some respects (large numbers of students, similarity of language etc.) they are rather like the southern European group noted above.

In terms of the character of the immigration experience of the various groups listed above and in Tab 3, geographical distance from Italy is less critical than cultural distance. Religion is perhaps the key factor here. This tends to mean that immigrants from Catholic countries (South America, Cape Verde, the Philippines) have better chances of at least a measure of integration and acceptance than the Islamic migrants who come from just across the Mediterranean Sea. Of the total permit-holders (859,571 on 31 December 1991), 33.4% are Catholics, 33.8% are Moslem and 21.8% other Christians. However, if the data are

reworked for only Third World migrants, the Islamic percentage rises to 48% (Lucrezio-Monticelli 1992).

Unfortunately the available data do not allow anything like a complete overview of the employment characteristics of the immigrants. The following two estimates give only some idea of the general picture. Unpublished ISTAT data quoted by Montanari and Cortese (1993a) suggest that, in round figures, 9% work in agriculture, 28% in industry and the rest, 63%, in various service activities. A recent survey by Censis (1991), based on a sample of 1525 foreigners, revealed that 67.2% had a job (45.7% a steady job, 21.5% occasional work), 20.9% were unemployed, and 11.9% were economically inactive. Of those who were working, 10.7% were in the primary sector (10.4% in agriculture, 0.3% in fishing), 18.6% were in industrial employment (8.6% as unskilled workers, 5.1% as craftsmen, 4.9% in construction), and 70.7% were in the service sector (25.4% as domestic helpers, 15.9% as street vendors, 14.0% in hotels and the catering trade, 2.8% as white-collar workers, and 12.6% in various other tertiary sector jobs). An instructive comparison can be made with the sectoral distribution of foreign worker employment in (West) Germany in the early 1970s - 0.9% in agriculture, 3.3% in mining, 16.7% in construction, 62.7% in industry and 16.4% in services (Böhning and Maillat 1974). This difference cannot be wholly explained by reference to structural differences between the two economies - West Germany in the early 1970s and Italy in the early 1990s - but must have something to do with the different qualitative character of the new immigration to Italy.

Perhaps more useful than these limited data on employment is an appreciation of the various roles that immigrants play in the Italian labour market. Three situations may be identified. First, there are those who work as employees in various sectors of production - farming, fishing, industry, hotels etc. Since the jobs performed are overwhelmingly unskilled or at best semi-skilled, the immigrants require little or no training and, for employers, constitute an attractive source of labour willing to accept lower wages than local Italian labour. Moreover the illegal status of many of the immigrants makes them vulnerable to exploitation by employers who often work them long hours and pay them wages which are well below the official minimum rates. Seasonal farm work, concentrated around the areas of southern Italy (Latina, Neapolitan Plains, Apulia, Sicily) where intensive monocropping regimes prevail (vines, almonds, tomatoes, market gardening), is no longer appealing to local labour, except for some peasant women. Its progressive monopolisation by immigrant labour has driven wages down to levels which are below those acceptable to local workers. The use of immigrant workers in industry is more piecemeal but has been well documented by Barsotti (1988) in Tuscany (leather goods, ceramics, agricultural processing industries) and is also becoming widespread in similar small and medium industries in Lombardy, Piedmont, Veneto and Emilia-Romagna.

The second situational role of immigrants is as employees of individual families, for whom they work as full-time domestic helps, often on a live-in basis. These jobs are generally filled by female migrants from Catholic countries, notably the Philippines, Cape Verde and Colombia. Unlike the agricultural and industrial employees noted above, where there may be some labour market competition with local workers (depressing wages, increasing unemployment etc.), these domestically oriented jobs appear to have been specifically created for immigrant women who do not therefore compete with Italian female workers. In some respects they have taken over domestic duties previously performed by female family members (both old and young) within the traditional Italian extended family, which has now largely broken down.

Thirdly, we have self-employed immigrant workers. These range from poverty-stricken African street-hawkers to well-established communities of Chinese restaurateurs and Iranian carpet-dealers. As with most immigrant groups elsewhere in Europe, the phenomenon of ethnic entrepreneurship in Italy is increasing, a process which is favoured by Italy's increasingly tertiarised economy. Asian shopkeepers are gaining a foothold in the big cities, and the Chinese have secured a near-monopoly of the leather goods trade in and around Florence (Barsotti 1988).

The above examples give some clues to the uniqueness and immaturity of the Italian immigration system. These features may be synthesised as follows. First, there is a high degree of occupational specialisation. Immigrants from certain countries tend to work in one sector only. Some examples are Moroccans and Senegalese in street-trading, Tunisians in fishing, and Filipinos and Cape Verdians in domestic service. Secondly, there is a marked degree of gender assymetry. According to the permit data for 31 December 1990, 87.5% of the Cape Verdians and 69.7% of the Filipinos in Italy are female, whereas the male percentage is overwhelmingly high for Senegalese (96.9%), Moroccans (90.6%), Tunisians (89.0%) and Egyptians (85.9%). These figures are linked both to the character of employment and to culture and religion. The female migrants who work in domestic service and hospitals are predominantly Catholic (indeed certain aspects of their recruitment and pastoral care are overseen by religious institutions); the male migrants from North Africa and Senegal are Moslems and work in "male" jobs as street-vendors, fishermen, agricultural labourers and construction workers. Third, there is, for most groups, marked age assymetry as well. For instance, 67% of all Tunisian immigrants are under 30 years of age; only 0.3% are over 60 years old. Some corresponding figures for other groups are Moroccans 46.6% and 0.7%, Somalians 55% and 1.2%, Senegalese 47.5% and 0.1%, Cape Verdians 32.1% and 0.8%, and Filipinos 36.3% and 0.6%. The somewhat lower percentages of Cape Verdians and Filipinos under 30 years of age are due to the fact that female domestic helpers and child-minders are often recruited at a more mature age and, given their relatively secure and stable employment possiblities, they tend to stay for longer in Italy.

Causes of Immigration into Italy

The following factors may be suggested as contributing to the development of mass migration into Italy since the 1970s. In most cases the evidence supporting these hypothesised factors is based on observation and interpretation rather than on simple data. Nevertheless the causal linkages are usually quite evident.

The first factor, or set of factors, centres around the ease of entry to Italy and its evolving function as a "replacement destination" for migrants excluded by the closing off of the traditional immigration countries of NW Europe during the second half of the 1970s. Restricted entrance to France, Germany, Belgium etc. diverted the migration flows originating from southern Mediterranean and Third World countries to the more marginal areas of Western Europe's economic system – initially to Italy and then, although to a lesser extent, to Spain, Greece and Portugal. Italy's geographical position in the centre of the Mediterranean, the permeability of its borders (with a long coastline and a land border easily crossed by remote mountain routes) and the laxness of formal entry control procedures have made the country a magnet for immigrants from poor countries. Tightening of entry controls would be inconsistent with Italy's open-door policy to tourists. In fact many immigrants arrive on one-month tourist visas and simply stay on as illegal immigrant workers.

The second reason for the growth of immigration into Italy is the country's growing prosperity. Italy has led the way in the reduction of the economic and social gap between the countries of N and S Europe. Much of N and central Italy is now on a par with France, Britain and the Benelux countries as far as income and welfare levels are concerned. Italy's growth in per capita GDP was the highest in the EC Nine over the period 1960–85 – at constant prices the increase was 129.7% for Italy, compared to Belgium 121.9%, France 121.7%, (West) Germany 105.3%, Ireland 104.5%, Denmark 98.3%, the Netherlands 93.9% and the United Kingdom 74.4%. This increasing standard of living, paralleled by the tardy but ultimately effective establishment of a welfare state, made Italy an attractive destination for labour migrants seeking a foothold in Europe.

Probably more important than the simple increase in prosperity, however, have been the peculiar character and evolution of the Italian labour market and the ways in which the economy has been restructured in the post-industrial era. These processes of restructuring – which can be considered the third factor in our list – have created a dual economic system and labour market in which the informal or underground economy and the secondary labour market of casual, unorganised labour have flourished. As deindustrialisation and the contraction of certain areas of public service employment have reduced the size of the primary labour market of secure, unionised, pensionable jobs, so the secondary labour market has become relatively more important, partly as a strategy of maintaining competitiveness by reducing labour costs. Typically the secondary labour market consists of insecure, part-time and seasonal work which is only attractive to marginal workers such as women and immigrants. Migrant workers have also responded to (and been responsible for) the segmentation of the Italian labour market, a process in which a number of migrant groups have been able to monopolise certain relatively non-competitive niches in the job market such as domestic service, low-grade seasonal hotel work, street-trading, harvest work and fishing. The high degree of ethnic specialisation in many of these fringe sectors of the labour market was commented on earlier.

Where a distinction can perhaps be drawn is between employment niches where there is a definite demand for low-cost flexible immigrant workers (domestic servants, seasonal harvest work, sweatshops), and those niches where the immigrants have created a vocation for themselves. The best example of the latter are the street-traders. Some of these, notably the Moroccans, have established their stalls within the framework of regular markets. The Senegalese work at an individual level, hawking their wares in all big cities and tourist resorts. With their black skins, rudimentary Italian ("vu cumprà", "tutto è bello" etc.) and their tawdry selection of trinkets, sunglasses, belts, fake Lacoste tee-shirts etc., they are a sort of emblem of the *extracomunitari* or non-EC wandering migrants who have made such an impact on the social landscape of Italian city steets.

The Senegalese are also emblematic of the fourth factor behind mass immigration to Italy: the dominance of "push pressures" over "pull" factors. Unlike the European migrations of the 1950s and 1960s which resulted largely from the demands of NW European industrial capital for cheap labour, the influx into Italy is driven by forces emanating largely from the countries of origin. Thus in most cases Italian employers did not set out specifically to recruit workers from abroad; rather the immigrants arrived and employers then took advantage of the consequent supply of cheap labour. The migration stream was driven initially by poverty, demographic growth and political instability in the various countries of origin; subsequently it became sustained by personal networks of chain migration. Chain mechanisms have yet to involve the transfer of entire families, however; instead it is more an individual process linked to the availability of information and backing from a friend or relative. Barsotti (1988) found that about 70% of the immigrants he surveyed in Tuscany had immigrated alone, but 90% had been able to count on prior information regarding work possibilities and the type of environment they would encounter.

The final structural factor behind mass migration into Italy is the demographic setting. Most of the immigrants (except those from Europe and North America) come from less-developed countries which have annual rates of population increase of around 2-3%. The Mediterranean Basin corresponds to a demographic gradient that is probably the sharpest in the world today. On the N side of the sea, Italy has the lowest birth rate in the world, a total

fertility rate of 1.3 children per women. On the S shore are countries whose populations are growing fast, with the mean number of children per woman at around 4–6, depending on the country. Using UN demographic projection data (medium variant scenario), Montanari and Cortese (1993b) have calculated that the countries of the S Mediterranean (Morocco to Egypt) will add 31.3 million working-age people to their populations between 1985 and 2000, and another 52.4 million between 2000 and 2020. The 8–10% anual rates of GDP growth necessary to merely keep the unemployment rate at its present level are unobtainable in the foreseeable future (Venturini 1988); increased pressures for emigration are therefore unavoidable.

Because of its geographical location, Italy will probably continue to be in the front line of this potential migration. How many people will actually migrate? This is the great unknown. It depends partly on the implementation of migration policies, both at a national and a European level. Certainly Europe, let alone Italy, will not be able to absorb all the surplus manpower being generated by the North African rim countries. On the other hand, the further development of immigration may be encouraged by the demographic behaviour of the Italian population, with the birth rate far below replacement leval (King 1993). Increased migrant inflows are by no means automatic, however: as we shall see in the next section, political and popular reaction against the *extracomunitari* is strong in Italy, and the shortfall in labour supply presaged by the low birth rate may be cushioned by the present high youth unemployment rates, by rationalisation of jobs (mechanisation, computerisation, robotisation etc.), by delayed retirement and by greater participation of females in the labour force.

Immigrants in Italy: the Reaction

The recency of the immigration phenomenon in Italy means that its objective (as opposed to perceived) impact on Italian society is as yet modest. The immigrants are very much "outsiders" and the social costs of receiving them, in terms of education, social welfare etc. are still low since the vast majority of the immigrants are young, economically-active adults who in most cases do not compete very directly with Italian workers (Bonifazi and Golini 1990). On the other hand, the marginal social and occupational position of the immigrants does increase the likelihood of their being involved in illegal and semi-illegal activites which might lead to intolerance and hostility from the host population, perhaps reinforced by stereotypes portrayed in the mass media and in debased political rhetoric. In fact, since the mid 1980s the media have devoted a huge amount of attention to the immigration issue, the extent of the coverage being out of proportion to the size of the problem. With their tendency to concentrate on "newsworthy" aspects of immigration, the media, especially the newspapers and popular magazines, have tended to sensationalise rather than inform or educate. Thus the impression has taken root that the "problems" and "threats" posed by immigration in Italy are greater than they really are (Melotti 1990).

Evaluation	1987/8 survey (n = 1500)	1991 survey (n = 1800)
Low (< 0.7 million)	13.6	9.8
Medium (0.7 -1.5 million)	18.8	15.3
High (1.5 -3 million)	17.6	19.7
Very high (> 3 million)	13.7	20.9
Don't know	36.2	34.3

Source: Bonifazi 1992, p. 28

Tab 4 Public estimates of the number of immigrants in Italy (%)

This may account, at least partly, for the fact that, amongst the member populations of the European Community, Italians are the most concerned about immigration and generally hold the most negative attitudes towards foreign immigrants. A *Eurobarometer* poll conducted in all twelve countries of the EC in early 1991 indicated that 63% of Italians thought that there were too many non-EC immigrants in their country, compared to figures of 54–56% for France, Belgium, Germany and the United Kingdom (where the statistical presence of immigrants is much greater) and much lower figures for the other countries (eg Netherlands 44%, Spain 23%, Ireland 12%). The growing strength in recent Italian elections of right-wing parties, both the traditional extreme-right (the neo-Fascist MSI) and the "new right" *leghe* or "leagues" of northern Italy, has also derived some impetus from xenophobic feelings. The spectacular electoral success of the *leghe* in Lombardy and adjacent regions in 1992 was based not on overt racism but on a general policy of regional chauvinism which was mainly aimed at interference from Rome and the spread of Mafia-style corruption from the south of Italy. Nonetheless the *leghe* have certainly helped to create a climate in which immigrants, be they from the south of Italy or from the Third World, are blamed for various social ills such as unemployment, drugs, prostitution and crime, and targeted for acts of violence by local vigilant-style gangs of Italian youths.

Bonifazi (1992) has reviewed the various opinion polls carried out within Italy during 1987–91 by the Milan-based Doxa Institute and by the Institute of Population Research in Rome on the question of immigrants. These polls show that Italians have generally negative, exaggerated and worsening opinions on immigration. In 1991 nearly three-quarters of Italians surveyed thought that there were too many immigrants, compared to only 49.7% who held such a view in the corresponding survey of 1987/8. This 25 percentage point increase in less than four years cannot be explained purely by the actual increase in immigrants living in Italy over this period but must have something to

Opinions	1987	1989	1991
Only or mainly advantages	13.3	13.1	5.1
Advantages and disadvantages	24.1	29.0	23.9
Only or mainly disadvantages	49.3	43.1	61.0
Don't know	13.3	14.8	10.0

Source: Doxa survey data summarised in Bonifazi 1992, p. 29

Tab 5 Perceived advantages and disadvantages of immigration to Italy (%, all surveys n = 2000)

do with changing mass perceptions influenced by the media and popular political debate. What is perhaps less clear is the relative importance of deep-rooted shifts in public opinion as opposed to particular events like the much-publicised Albanian influx of 1991 which must have affected survey results on immigration to a degree.

The emphasis given to immigration in the mass media is probably responsible for the fact that significant proportions of Italians think that there are far more immigrants in Italy than there really are. This tendency to over-estimate has become more widespread in recent years (Tab 4). For instance, in the 1991 survey more than one fifth of respondents thought that there were more than 3 million immigrants in Italy (roughly three times the actual amount). If the figure is re-calculated to exclude the don't knows, almost one third (31.8%) of those who made an estimate opted for a figure of over 3 million.

Doxa survey data reveal that the predominant picture of immigration, held by over half the respondents, is the one represented by the African street vendor, a finding which confirms that the collective imagination is focussed mainly on the more visible side of immigration which is easy to stereotype, even though African hawkers are by no means the largest group of immigrants. Doxa data also show an increasingly negative perception of immigration as regards the balance of advantages and disadvantages (Tab 5). In particular, attitudes hardened over the two years 1989–91. When the most commonly-cited advantages and disadvantages are tabulated, the immigrants' perceived links to crime and social problems received more emphasis in 1991 than in 1987 (Tab 6). Finally, the public desire for more restrictive policies on immigration is also clear, particularly when the responses for 1989 and 1991 are compared (Tab 7).

Tab 6 Most commonly cited advantages and disadvantages of immigration to Italy, 1987 and 1991 (%, n = 2000)

	1987	1991
Most commonly cited advantages:		
1. Foreigners are needed to do work rejected by Italians	20.7	32.6
2. It is good to have contacts with other cultures	19.3	15.7
Most commonly cited disadvantages:		
1. Foreigners take jobs away from Italians	49.6	41.3
2. Foreigners cause terrorism and crime	10.3	19.5
3. Foreigners create new social problems	7.9	16.8

Source: Doxa data cited in Bonifazi 1992, p. 30

In general there has been a lamentable lack of policy, at all levels from national to local, on immigrants in Italy. Local policies are only effective in parts of the north of Italy, such as Lombardy, where immigrants are becoming well-established in the workforces of certain industries (Ambrosini 1992). Of all Italian cities, only Milan has a proper infrastructure of support for its large immigrant population. Elsewhere the solution is usually left to charity organisations. National level policy only started to respond to the situation in the late 1980s, with the passing of Laws 934 in December 1986 and 39 in February 1990. Both of these laws lay down rules and regulations which ought to guarantee the occupational and socio-cultural integration of non-EC migrants already present in the country. By international standards, these laws can be regarded as quite liberal. They also encouraged clandestine migrants to legalise their position. Although these amnesties had some success, particularly the second one wich resulted in 214,000 regularisations, the broader elements of a policy for coping with immigration are not yet in place. The bureaucratically complicated way in which all public administration and policy functions in Italy – in particular the delays in releasing funds – have caused enormous delays in getting such facilities as reception centres, language courses and job training schemes off the ground. One concrete step forward was the setting up of a "Ministry for Expatriates and Immigration" in April 1991. As its name implies, this ministry has a dual function. First, it has responsibility for supporting the Italian communities abroad, by means of their education, training and assistance for repatriation as well as helping them to preserve their Italian cultural identity. Second, it operates in the field of immigration planning by providing information, education and training for immigrants and by formulating policy on future immigration flows. As yet, it is too early to make a judgement on its achievements.

Perhaps, the biggest problem to be tackled is the growing racism in Italian society. Although some have argued that the traditional welcoming attitude towards foreigners who come as tourists means that Italy has no background of racism, it is also true that "internal racism" on the part of northerners towards southerners has a long and well-established history. Andall (1990) asserts that the racial antagonism which exists between northerners and southerners would appear to be a valid gauge of the level of hostility that could develop in Italy towards people belonging to unfamiliar cultures and races. It is, for instance, symbolic that in the north of Italy southerners have long been referred to disparagingly as *marocchini* or "Moroccans". Andall (1990) provides a depressing litany of racial prejudice, violence and even murder directed against

extracomunitari; such racist attacks are on the increase, although many go unreported. Among specific instances she mentions are the brutal arrest and expulsion of street-traders from Rimini (1989) and Florence (1990) on the prompting of local retailers, the thuggish control of street-traders and agricultural workers in Campania by the Camorra (the Neapolitan Mafia), and the hidden exploitation of domestic workers by their employers who confiscate their passports, subject them to long hours of work and fire them if they become pregnant. Arena (1989) and Raffaele (1992) have written on the specific problems of female immigrants in Italy who, in addition to their marginal position in the Italian labour market, have to cope with a double dose of male domination, both at the hands of their own societies and within Italy where *machismo* and repressive racial and sexual stereotypes are still rife.

Type of policy	1987	1989	1991
Encourage immigration	24.9	31.8	13.0
Do not encourage immigration	57.1	50.7	75.0
- prohibit it completely	7.8	7.2	10.9
- allow it only in exceptional circumstances	24.2	17.7	37.8
- open door policy with many controls	21.9	23.0	24.3
- open door policy with minimal controls	1.8	1.6	0.9
- don't know	1.4	1.2	1.1
Don't know	18.0	17.5	12.0

Source: Doxa survey data in Bonifazi 1992, p. 33

Tab 7 Public opinion on types of immigration policy needed for Italy, (%, all surveys n = 2000)

Conclusion

As the above account has made clear, the situation of immigrants in Italy is fraught with many difficulties and injustices. Immigrants are exploited at work, live in sub-standard housing, and encounter hostility from the indigenous population. Their social marginalisation is already expressed in clear signs of residential segregation in most of the major Italian cities (Andall 1990). Lack of reliable data and cumbersome bureaucratic procedures make it difficult to plan the services for immigrants that have been approved by recent legislation. Despite the regularisation drives of 1987/8 and 1990, many immigrants are still clandestine and therefore "hidden" from official view. Hidden migrants are more closely linked to the black economy, and therefore their impacts and problems are more difficult to quantify.

Further increase in the amount of clandestine arrivals cannot be ruled out, for the following reasons. First, Italy's geographical position with regard to the aforementioned sharp demographic gradient between N and S shores of the Mediterranean makes it logical that it will continue to be a major recipient of migration propelled by push pressures from North Africa and beyond. Second, the complex links between immigration, labour market segmentation and the hidden economy may become self-reinforcing. That is, as the black economy gains strength in response to processes of restructuring and competition, the demand for cheap, flexible labour may draw in more immigrants. Another possibility might be that, as already-present immigrants move from the shadow economy into more regular jobs (for instance in north Italian industry), they will need to be replaced by new cohorts of irregular immigrants, the supply of which would seem to be inexhaustible. On the other hand, if Italian economic policy moves against the informal sector, or if that sector itself becomes affected by the economic crisis, demand for unofficial immigrant labour might contract. The importance of the black economy in Italy can hardly be overstressed. Estimates of its relative size during the 1980s ranged from the low "official" estimate of ISTAT of 14% of Italian GNP to others ranging up to 30%. According to Venturini (1992) between 50% and 80% of immigrant workers in Italy are engaged in informal employment.

The final point concerns the specificity of immigration into Italy. The question may be asked: is Italy aligning itself with the established model of labour immigration in NW Europe or does it form a "new" model in its own right – perhaps one to be followed by other countries? The evidence presented and discussed in this paper suggests that, whilst reproducing some similarities of the established model, Italy can also claim to be in the vanguard of a new European migratory experience, which is also currently being shared by Spain, Greece, and to a lesser extent Portugal (King and Rybaczuk 1993). The similarities between Italy and Germany, France, Belgium etc. simply derive from the fact that, throughout the world, all advanced capitalist countries have a considerable part of their economy based on the widespread utilisation of foreign labour. Since the 1960s Italy has joined this group of countries; as the internal supply of worker-peasants became used up by expanding industry so Italy, like Japan (which has a sizeable quantity of Korean workers, both legal and illegal, and which most closely approximates the structure and recent economic history of Italy), turned to foreign labour (Ascoli 1986). However, the key differences between Italy and other advanced European economies are those of timing and economic structure (bigger Italian tertiary sector, less important weight of manufacturing industry, and a dynamic underground economy). By the time Italy used up its "reserve army" of rural labour, the European crisis of economic restructuring had begun. During the 1970s official statistics show a drop not only in agricultural employment (by 924,000) but also a loss of 481,000 industrial jobs. Thus the mass of the immigrants to

Italy have not become industrial workers as in the German model, but post-industrial (even if pre-industrial in some respects) migrants. The reshaping of the Italian economy in the 1970s and 1980s, with its shift away from big industry and the primary labour market towards flexible production, a segmented labour market and the expansion of the (already important) informal economy, created demands for new types of immigrant workers. In character these demands matched the supply of migrants on offer from a much poorer type of country than was the case with the industrial migrations of the 1950s and 1960s. The stronger role of push factors than pull forces also contributed to immigration becoming more hidden than was the case with the intra-European migrations of the previous decades. Given the practical impossibility of completely closing Italy's frontiers to immigration, this clandestine movement, driven by powerful demographic and economic and unpredictable political forces, will be difficult to contain in the years ahead, whatever migration policy Italy eventually adopts.

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