

POLITICAL OPINION OF THE NORTHERN LEAGUE CONCERNING ISLAM IMMIGRATION.

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Resumen: Nowadays, of all social phenomena in the West European countries it is the problem of rapidly increasing immigration that causes the severest tensions. The majority society senses the fact that the immigrants in constantly increasing numbers are less and less able to integrate into the country of destination, which phenomenon has been causing increasing tensions leading to the strengthening of the extremist and nationalistic or micro-nationalistic parties all over Europe. The regionalist and populist party, the Northern League traces back the otherwise excessively complex problems mostly rooted in society itself to the over-simplified conflict between localism and globalisation.

Palabras clave: Northern League, Italy, Islam, migration, Umberto Bossi, populismo, euroscepticism

INTRODUCTION.

Nowadays, of all social phenomena in the West European countries it is the problem of rapidly increasing immigration that causes the severest tensions. This is in fact the only question for which no adequate answer has been found either on the national or on the community level, in spite of the programs facilitating social integration with access to significant European resources. For the time being the European Union lacks the

competence, while the member States are short of the necessary financial or human resources to be able to handle this cross-border problem.

Today we can recognise the parallel processes of the increase in the number of immigrants and the slowing down of their assimilation. The majority society senses the fact that the immigrants in constantly increasing numbers are less and less able to integrate into the country of destination, which phenomenon has been causing increasing tensions leading to the strengthening of the extremist and nationalistic or micro-nationalistic parties all over Europe.

The Northern League traces back the otherwise excessively complex problems mostly rooted in society itself to the over-simplified conflict between localism and globalisation.¹ Continuing the chain of thoughts on simplification, all this for many means that immigration is accounted for all the social tension.²

The issue of immigration is in the centre of the right-wing, populist party, the Northern League. Roberto Castelli a politician of the Northern League emphasised that immigrants arriving from outside the EU primarily extract resources instead of creating sources for the country.³

As a political poster of the Northern League for regional elections of 2005 in Piedmont communicates, the people of Piedmontese origin are the last in social service lines. We can observe that even though the leadership of the League dismisses accusations of racism and pronounces that the party is not violent there

have been interviews, political speeches, which might easily signal xenophobia.

"Guess who is last?"



We can mention as an example the case of Erminio Boso, a local leader from Trentino, who suggested that different train compartments be arranged for native Italians and immigrants in order to separate them from each other.⁴ At the same time, however, the NL does not intend to defend the local culture through violence, but rather through democratic legislation.⁵ This goal is also supported by Silvio Berlusconi, leader of the centre-right coalition, who announced already the day after the 2008 election victory that they would counteract illegal immigration in a more effective way, also through reinforcing the police. In May 2008, following the set-up of the new government, Roberto Maroni, minister of internal affairs, also promised more rigorous measures.⁶

1. THE PAST 20 YEARS.

The history of the NL started in the Veneto region.⁷ The predecessor of the NL together with practically all other leagues used to constitute the League of Veneto, a federation with an ethno-regional character. The party achieved its first important success in the 1983 elections, when in the region they received 4.3% of the total votes. In the second half of the '80-ies, however, the centre of the different regional leagues was re-located to Lombardy, and their leader Umberto Bossi won a seat in the Senate in 1987. Bossi, who recognised the limitations of ethno-regionalism, created the Northern

League which was officially founded in 1991 as a federation of leagues from different northern regions, replacing the originally linguistic, cultural community by an economic, social unity of interests. The reference base of the new party, instead of a single respective region, became the North, Padania,⁸ thus the road to policy-making at the national level opened as well.

Their first success was reached in 1992 when at the political elections the NL was supported by 8.6% of the voters turning it into the fourth party in Italy. This electoral success was significantly facilitated by the ongoing process of the collapse of the Italian party system of the First Republic as a consequence of the activity of the movement of "mani pulite" as well as the collapse of the Eastern block.⁹ Due to the change in the international environment and the corruption scandals concerning Christian Democrats (DC) and Socialists (PSI), the coalition (pentapartito) led by the Italian Christian Democrats lost power and was no longer needed. Simultaneously, as a result of the corruption scandals (movement of the mani pulite), the majority of traditional parties had to face a similar crisis situation. The League could easily step in to take their place.

In 1993, leaving a political vacuum behind, the Italian Christian democracy finally dissolved, and the voter support of its successor parties also significantly decreased. Consequently, the vacuum in the internal politics was filled suddenly by a new type of political parties. In the 90s, at the right of the political palette there were three new parties that attracted most voters with a right-wing orientation: Forza Italia (FI), National Alliance (Alleanza Nazionale – AN) and the Northern League. This process naturally did not occur without any precedents as the routes of the Northern League can be traced back already to the 80s. At the same time, the National Alliance grew out of the Italian Social Movement (MSI, Movimento Sociale Italiano). In 1993, a new party emerged to oppose the centre-left coalition: Forza Italia. This party indeed constituted a totally new, unprecedented political construct. The huge gap in the right-wing was finally bridged by the media magnate Silvio Berlusconi.

As a consequence of the deepening political crisis in 1994 early elections were held, won by the centre-right coalition under the leadership of Silvio Berlusconi also known in politics as homo novus. Because of the conflict between

the coalition parties, the first Berlusconi government could only reign for a short period. Bossi signed the no-confidence motion handed in by the centre-left parties in December 1994, thus contributing to the government's failure.

Following the government's collapse, the League became isolated in the political sense; they were not content any more with the federal reform of the country, but additionally set as a goal the secession of Padania. Both the party's political aims and style turned more radical. In the campaign for the 1994 elections the NL went into opposition against both party coalitions ("Roma Polo", "Roma Ulivo").

Umberto Bossi attacked Berlusconi even more radically calling him "Mafioso of Arcore", comparing him to Goebbels and claiming that he was a person fully incompatible with democracy. With these attacks and its anti-Berlusconism, Bossi intended to regain his previous voters.¹⁰ Eventually in the early parliamentary elections the NL reached an unexpected success with gaining 10.1% of the votes. A possible reason of this rise may have been that the NL, unlike all other parties, placed the emphasises on the regional federal problems, and the so called Northern question.

Nevertheless the ambition for policy-making on the nation level and the regulation of the new 1993 election Bill made it necessary for the NL to join one of the election coalitions. The radicalisation of the League's political communication was shown in raising their voice against immigration, the Brussels technocracy and the harmful effects of globalisation. At the 1999 European Parliamentary elections the effect of the newly set political goals surfaced in the 50% shrink of the voters' base. Following this, Bossi decided to set up a coalition with Berlusconi in order to be able realise the party's political goals.¹¹ The novel Berlusconi-Bossi pact, embodying in the cooperation between the two parties, offered a new chance for the solution of the problems connected to the "Northern question".

Bossi also saw that in case the coalition could win at the 2001 elections, they could much better represent the interest of the Northern territories. In forming this conviction, he was helped by the fact that in the given field the two parties had very similar goals, namely the reinforcement of the regional president's position, the decrease of the State's role in the

economy, and the broadening of regional tasks and competencies. Although the League did not reach the 4% threshold (only 3.97%), and was severely reduced in its parliamentary representation, in the coalition House of Freedoms they could still participate in the II.

Berlusconi government, with Umberto Bossi getting the post of minister without portfolio responsible for the reforms. However he could not fulfil his basic goal, that is achieving devolution based on the English model, so the primary message of his 2008 election campaign was again the question of fiscal federalism and immigration, and this time putting emphasis on the security issue the NL doubled its voters base. In the beginning, the Northern League was a multi-ideological catch-all party whose ideology was a combination of political federalism, fiscal federalism and regionalism. Its political ideology shifted from libertarianism to a socially conservative approach, from pro-Europeanism to Euro-scepticism. The transformation of this anti-elitist party from a catch-all party to a populist one was recognised by Ilvo Diamanti¹²

2. REASONS FOR THE SUCCESS.

The rise and success of the NL was underpinned by several factors. Among them, first of all we can mention the growing regionalism and strive for autonomy, as a consequences of the dissatisfaction with the operation of the centralised State ("thieving Rome"). In addition the conflict between the North and the South also sharpened due to the growth of anti-South feelings, and intolerance. The dissatisfaction with the traditional parties was raised by the continuously deepening crisis of the so called first republic ('partitocrazia' (partitocracy), the imperfect nature of the two-party system, the period of pentapartito, movement of 'mani pulite' (Clean Hands), etc.) also beginning from the second half of the 1980. Due to the rigidity of the political system, the traditional parties were not able to revive from the inside, by themselves.

This process was further speeded up by the appearance of the so called "Northern question". As a result of the changes in the global economy, the crisis of the Northern metropolitan areas and the mass-scale industry also deepened. Since the 70-ies, however, it became evident that as a reaction to the bipolar Italy, a third type of developmental process started in the North East and Central Italy, mostly based on SME-s,

and on the so called “Made in Italy” economy sectors in the region, which owing to the characteristic features of the model is usually called the “Third Italy”. The rapid development in the local economy of the 1970-ies and 80-ies characterising the regions only strengthened the frustration of the emerging social strata, the reason for which may have been that their political representation was not in par with their economic weight. The NL could mostly gain a significant voter base in the smaller, mostly CD-minded towns of the Northern territories (the North East part of the “Third Italy”) during the 1990-ies.¹³

In summary, the Northern question meant on the one hand a general dissatisfaction with the local government, the State, the traditional parties, and the participation of the Italian State in the national economy, and on the other hand, due to the globalisation and international economic problems, detectably growing tensions in the broad layers of society. The slowing down of economic growth and the increase in the numbers of immigrants coming from outside the EU deepened further the problems within society.¹⁴

3. MICRO-NATIONALISM.

Following the dissolution of the bipolar international system, the nationalistic and xenophobic trends emerged both in Europe’s Eastern and Western parts, naturally to different extents, and most varied forms. These trends had been hibernated during the cold war era, although they were never fully extinguished. The NL bears all the characteristic features of micro-nationalist parties: it is anti-elitist, anti-state, anti-bureaucratic, it attacks traditional parties, it is exclusive and intolerant, xenophobic, and at the same time Euro-sceptic. The economic policies of the ethno-federalist, populist party are characterised by liberalism.

The party’s nationalism, however, is extremely specific, since the territory marked by it, that is Padania, can in no way be considered a homogeneous unit which could be clearly distinguished from the Southern territories of the country either from the cultural, historic, or linguistic aspects, as it embraces different regions with different historic roots and local dialects. This was recognised by the leaders of the NL as well, this is why they have kept speaking about Padania as a nation above nations, were striving to create the make-belief

that their real ties are their territorial unity and common economic and social interests.

The NL covered and extraordinary developmental rout in the period of nearly two decades. During this time the territorial unit which constituted the referential base of the party’s political program gradually grew broader. In the beginning, the League represented the interests of a single region Lombardy, but later it spread to a whole macro-region, Padania. Nowadays, while the original point of reference, i.e. Padania, still occupies the centre, the party is trying to make policy “on behalf” of the nation as a whole. At the beginning of the 1990-ies it was the Lombard League, and later its partial offspring, the NL, more specifically its leader Umberto Bossi who began to relate the most radically to the set of questions concerning the regional issue.¹⁵ In the flow of years even his already intolerant approach was gradually radicalised, as using as his point of departure the autonomy on the regional level, went on talking first about federation, than confederation, and finally independence, that is the overt secession of Padania.¹⁶

When Bossi, after the 2001 elections came into power the second time, his views also turned more moderate. Nowadays he appears to give priority to the introduction of the British type of devolution as the most important aim. This primarily means that in some important fields (like education, healthcare, and local police) he wants to ensure for the regions an exclusive legislative competence. At the beginning of the millenary years the Italian micro-nationalism seemed to be shrinking, and following the country’s joining the European Monetary Union there was a visible decrease in societal support of the NL’s: both in 2001 and 2006 the rate of their voters was extremely low (4%). This change in voters’ behaviour was also sensed by the League’s politicians, so they began to increasingly “represent the interests of the whole nation”. Bossi stood up against the deepening of the process of EU integration, he attacked the Brussels bureaucracy, criticised the soft policies shown in connection with immigration, did not support Turkey’s accession to the EU, and the NL as a sole Italian political party voted against the introduction of the Euro.

In conclusion we can say that the trends point into the direction, that the NL has been trying to make policy simultaneously as a micro-

nationalistic and a nationalistic party, even daring to face the threat that these various voters' needs can be occasionally counter-productive. The surprise of the 2008 elections was exactly that the party, having been considered by political scientist already slowly fading out, managed to double its votes. Despite the fact that the People of Freedom (PdL), centre-right party took over most of the reforms represented by the NL, the Northern League could again make sole possession of the title of the real "reform party". Thus even in our days they intend to represent the regional interest through nationwide policy-making. Contrary to all these factors, the League still remains the kind of regional party which cannot be easily or at all categorised along the scale of a traditional right-left party system. But representing territorial (Padanian) interests, it is still able to reach wide masses of the society.

4. FROM A PRO-EUROPEAN TO A EURO-SCEPTIC STANDPOINT.

The case of this regionalist, right-wing or rather neo-populist party is interesting because the LN changed its position regarding the European integration from a pro-European to a Euro-sceptic standpoint. The Lombard League, the predecessor of the Northern League, often referred in its political ideology to the European Integration Process. Already in the 1980s they envisioned the token of the independence of Lombardy in a Europe organised on federative basis. The basis of legitimating their anti-constitutional, secessionist intentions was provided by the just deepening European Integration. Nevertheless, they conceptualised Europe as a confederation of regions with the broadest possible competencies. They considered the Integration as an alternative to national identity. They did not support the development of an integration based on nation-states, centrally governed from Brussels.¹⁷

Umberto Bossi, in his book 'Wind of the North', wrote about the birth of regional states, the formation of a 'Europe of the regions' from the 'Europe of the peoples'. Obviously the constantly growing competence of the Brussels bureaucracy did not fit into this picture. The goal of this party was to create "the federal Europe of regions" based on the inter-regional (not inter-governmental) principle.¹⁸ Umberto Bossi envisaged the role of Brussels as threatening with the danger of a 'new Roman Empire'.

All the same, in 1993 the League voted in favour of the ratification of the TEU as they considered the establishment of the Committee of the Regions a major step which could lead towards the transformation of the EP on a federative basis and in a two-chamber form, since, according to their plans the upper chamber of the European Parliament would fulfil the task of representation of the sub-national regions.¹⁹

During the time of the first Berlusconi government in 1994, the Northern League proclaimed to represent a strong pro-European approach, without any Euro-sceptic attitude. The LN represented the stance that Italy had to fulfil the convergence criteria in order to enter the Single Currency Zone. Umberto Bossi, the leader of the LN wrote a letter to the European Commission asking about the possibility for Padania to join EMU.²⁰ (Quaglia, 2003. p. 15; Giordano, 2004).

The Northern League, at their Milan Congress in 1997, officially accepted the party's strategy whose motto suited the previous views of the NL concerning the integration: "free Padania in a free Europe". Their goal was to achieve a "federation based on the cooperation of independent 'small nations'". In this period the NL built their strategy on the fact that Italy was not expected to become member of the EMU. According to their expectations this would have strengthened the secessionist inclination in the people of the Northern regions and the formation of a unified Northern identity.²¹

The Northern League's Euro-sceptic stance appeared following Italy's official qualification to join the EMU. After joining the EMU at the millennium, the popular support for the NL decreased significantly. At the same time, Umberto Bossi began to declare increasingly Euro-sceptic views.

In 2000, at the Pontida meeting of the NL, Umberto Bossi claimed that the EU did not only threaten nation states in general, but even more so the small nations. He expressed his view that emphasising the principle of subsidiarity was only necessary in order to mislead people, as it was only useful for concentrating power at the community level.²² According to Umberto Bossi, the European left wing was striving to create a super-state similar to the Soviet Union. (Bossi, 2001) All over Europe there was a surge of indignation following that Bossi's named the

EU “the USSR of the West” and a “Stalinist super-state”.²³

Although the Italian government had a traditional pro-Turkish approach, the Northern League stood up against the opening of the accession process with Turkey because of its Muslim traditions and its number of population. In the Italian society there was no widespread debate on the question of the Turkish accession and at the same time the accession process was supported by the main Italian parties either.²⁴

Following the general elections of 2006, The LN in opposition represented a soft Eurosceptic attitude. In general, they emphasised that the Euro was the cause of the crisis of Northern Italy's small industries.

5. ANTI-ISLAMISM.

In the program of the NL the emphasis had fell earlier on the traditional parties, the central State, and the Southern territories, beginning from 1998, however, the major enemy image of the League began to change. Since then the immigrants coming from outside the Union have been made responsible for the growing problems of the North. In 1998, on the website of the NL a paper was published on the topic of immigration. The author of this contribution outlines a real conspiracy theory in which the immigrant is merely a tool of the alliance of the international left-wing and the multinational financial capital with the aim of achieving global power. According to his view the most important goal of the international left-wing is to weaken the West European culture and create chaos through using immigrants. Obviously, according to his opinion, in this conspiracy countries with high population are also active participants, since they send their people to Western Europe with the purpose to overpopulate the host societies, which anyway experience a decrease in their population. In his view, the USA hides behind the conspiracy among multinational companies, immigrants and the international left, because it is in their interest to weaken Western Europe as one of the priorities. With the help of the local left wing, immigrants occupy whole living quarters, and the local (Padanian) population starts to get into the minority status.²⁵

Among the politicians of the NL, Mario Borghesio, who has been MEP since 2001, appears to be the most ardent follower of anti-

Islamism. In his opinion both in the public and the private sphere one can expect dramatic conflicts because of the difference in traditions and customs. He worries that all over Italy there will soon be Islamic enclaves, and these will definitely contribute to the dissolution of the local Italian society.²⁶

The NL distinguishes between various types of immigrants. The main target of its xenophobia is the Muslim immigration. Gianni Baget Bozzo, one of the politicians of the NL, recommended in his open letter to Umberto Bossi to defend Padania from islamisation.²⁷ The NL implemented the ideology of Alexandre Del Valle in their political argumentation.²⁸ In the columns of the daily paper *La Padania Del Valle* often received a chance to explicate his opinion. According to him the USA used to support fundamentalism to fight against communism during the bipolar international system. Consequently the principles of the NL's foreign policy have frequently dissented from the official Italian foreign policy standpoint. As Umberto Bossi stated, Russia played a kind of wall defending Europe against the advance of the Islam. It is no wonder then that the NL sympathised with the Serbians during the Kosovo conflict and with the Russians during Chechen conflict. Standing up against the arrest and accuse of Ratko Mladić, Mario Borghesio, a MEP of NL emphasised that in his view Ratko Mladić is a real patriot whose only ‘fault’ happened to be that he wanted to stop the advance of the Islam.²⁹

In September 2001, following the terrorist attack against the USA, Francesco Enrico Speroni, NL MEP, and cabinet head of the ministry of Umberto Bossi said in an interview while referring to the dangerous situation, that the Italian borders should be closed in front of Muslims. On behalf of the Italian government, however, Rocco Buttiglione, the then minister without portfolio for EU policies distanced himself from the above statement, and announced that Speroni represented his private opinion, and not that of the government.³⁰

Umberto Bossi stated that the battle against the Islam can only be successful via the birth of as many Padanian children as possible. Umberto Bossi also objected to removing the crosses from the walls of classrooms in several schools, justified by the local authorities with the growing number of students from different religions. In his opinion this may be considered

the first sign of retreat from the Islam taking grounds, as Islam, anyway has the stronger traditions. Some politicians also raised their voice against the ex-minister of Education, De Mauro permitting the Muslim students to wear the veil in school. Politicians of the NL argued that with this step the left-wing government made it possible to renew discrimination against and suppression of women. Sonia Viale (President of the Padanian Women organisation) emphasised that it meant the beginning of the holy war.³¹

For the NL the establishment of mosques in Italy is considered as one of the most apparent symbols of the “Islamic invasion”, and they have grasped every chance to protest against this phenomenon. The NL has also been providing possibilities for the spread of anti-Islamism through the channels of its various media (Telepadania, Radio Padania Libera, La Padania). In 2001 Italy had about half a million Muslims, whose majority were immigrants. Yet, up to 2000 only 3 legal mosques operated in Italy (Milan, Rome, Catania). On October 14th 2000, 1500 supporters of NL protested against the fact that in Lodi (a town near Milan) the local Muslim community had received permission to build a mosque. The demonstrators were walking in the streets with posters like “Let’s save our traditions!”, and “Down with the mosque!” Still in the year of 2000 several important Italian centre-left politicians, among them, Giuliano Amato, and Romano Prodi claimed that the NL was closely approaching the extreme rightist European parties, and qualified this phenomenon to be dangerous.³²

6. IMMIGRATION.

Nowadays in Italy one of the directly experienced challenges causing the highest social tensions is the increase in the numbers of illegal immigrants (clandestini). During the past decades Italy has turned from a country of emigration into a country of immigration. While between 1860 and 1970 30 million Italians left the country, in 2007 3.4 million legal immigrants (higher by 17% than in 2006), and about 650 000 illegal immigrants considered Italy their new home. Besides this the number of the immigrants who arrived from the crisis areas (the Balkans, and North of Africa) was gradually growing (by 20% in 2007). In addition to the legal immigrants, however, more and more illegal immigrants have crossed the

borders. While between January and September of 2007, the estimated number of illegal immigrants was as high as 14,200, in the same period of 2008 this figure increased by a staggering 60%, denoting the infiltration of more than 23,600 illegal immigrants.³³

The total problem of migration hides a paradox that is difficult to dissolve, since the immigrants constitute both the fulfilment of the need for labour forces and at the same time an imminent danger for the society. The explanation for this statement is that because of the economic and demographic problems, legal immigrants are obviously needed for the labour market, but at the same time due to their problems of social integration and the increase in crime rates, whether rightfully or unfoundedly, associated with illegal immigration, they also tend to induce intolerance in the Italian society. In the background of the rapidly growing immigration which began in the 1990-ies, we can detect the following reasons: on the one hand the regulation was far from being all-embracing and complete, and on the other hand there had been significant changes in the demographical processes (decreasing number of births). Simultaneously the aging of the society brought about a decrease in the labour forces, and the Italian economy is more and more badly in need of immigrants, providing young and cheap labour force. Large numbers of immigrants work e.g. in the Italian construction and textile industries and in the agriculture. ISTAT (National Institute of Statistics) published data on January 1st 2008, according to which 3.5 million immigrants lived legally in Italy, more than 5% of the total population. To this figure, however more than 1 million unregistered illegal immigrants must be added. The majority of immigrants lives in big cities: the ratio of foreigners in Milan is 14%, and out of every 4 underage children one belongs to an immigrant family. In Rome there is an estimated number of 300,000 immigrants, 10% of the total population of the capital.

7. LEGISLATION CONCERNING MIGRATION.

In 2007, during the government of the centre left wing, the Group of Strategic Reflection (Gruppo di Riflessione Strategica) was organised within the premises of the Foreign Ministry. By the beginning of 2008, the Group compiled the 2020 Report – the choices of foreign policy (Rapporto 2020. Le scelte di politica estera). As it was

stated in a 2008 opinion poll, more than 90% of the respondents thought that the most important national interests of Italy include the energy supplies, the fight against terrorism, and the control over illegal immigration.³⁴

The 2008 strategic document, considering the increasingly frustrating situation called attention to the fact that in order to successfully handle migration agreements with the related countries (Italy's agreement with Albania, Tunisia) are not sufficing, but there is also a growing need for international and European cooperation. The regulations of the past decade (the Turco-Napolitano, and Bossi-Fini Bills) were intended primarily to control legal immigration. In spite of the efforts of the Italian government to regulate legal migration by yearly calculated ad hoc quotas, the illegal migration could not be decreased in this way. The Turco-Napolitano Bill (1998), besides establishing transitory camps (e.g. on the Island of Lampedusa) increased the number of the expelled. The Bossi-Fini Bill (2002) introduced even more severe regulations, as a result of which by this period the number of expelled foreign citizens approached the figure of yearly 50,000 persons. Nevertheless, even under these severe regulations, illegal immigration did not decrease in the following years, but on the contrary it rather increased.

In addition, after the 2008 elections, the 4th Berlusconi government also placed the personal security of the citizens into the focus of the governmental program and policies. The gradually growing need for security also facilitated the growth of society's support for the NL. As a result, the Berlusconi government regarded ensuring this kind of feeling of security among the people as one of its major tasks. The Senate of the Parliament mainly under the influence of the NL also passed the so called Security Package in July 2009. The package, among others, contained the possibility of organising local civil guards (*ronde*). These organisations cannot bear any military character, neither can they be attached to political parties, trade unions, or fan clubs.

The package contained in addition to the stricter measures against sexual crimes, stronger punishment for illegal immigration (fines from 5000 to 10000 euro). The decisions concerning immigration were criticised by not only the centre-left opposition, but also by the Vatican, as well as several human rights organisations.

The bill made it obligatory to prove legal residences for the registration of children born in immigrant families. The critics of this regulation expressed their doubt concerning the bill, and they warned of the danger of creating an invisible generation, excluded from the State registration, social and health care systems. Dario Franceschini, the then current head of the Democratic Party compared the bill to the racial purity laws of the fascist regime.

Although the bilateral treaty of 2008 between Italy and Lybia proved to be a very effective tool in order to decrease illegal immigration, yet, due to the events of the Arab Spring, and the collapse of the Kadhafi regime a new wave of illegal immigrants reached Italy by the tens of thousands. This is why the Northern League, and its leader Umberto Bossi at the beginning did not agree to the participation of the airborne raids.

CONCLUSIONS.

The riots of 2005 in the poverty stricken suburbs of Paris shed light on the problem all over Europe, and thus also in Italy that West European Countries on their own are not able to provide adequate reactions to the tension connected to Islam fundamentalism emerging also in these countries due to the mass scale migration. It is in our days that Italy faces the most vehement period of discussions concerning the Islam springing from cultural conflicts (e.g.: the creation of mosques). The Italian society is still Catholic in its majority, and Catholicism is still a decisive power in the Italian society and politics, despite the recent trends of Secularisation, this society is still not ready to integrate the overwhelmingly Islamic immigrant communities. The problems concerning this dichotomy have occurred more and more frequently in everyday and political conflicts. The Islam has changed from an external factor into an internal one.

Since the above mentioned data also prove that the country was not in the position to solve the growing tensions on her own, Italy like other Mediterranean States has supported the motion to create a Common European Immigration Policy.

Notes.

1., Discorso di apertura del Congresso della Lega Lombarda on. Umberto Bossi. *Pieve Emanuele* 8. 9.

10. febbraio 1989”, www.leganord.org/a_2_discorsi_08_09_10_89.htm.
2, „Intervento del Segretario Federale on. Umberto Bossi. Seduta Pontida 4. Giugno 2000.” www.leganord.org/a_2_discorsi_pontida_4_06_2000.html.
- ³http://www.annozero.rai.it/R2_HPprogramma/0,,1067115,00.html.
- ⁴ Sul "treno degli africani" Vagoni separati? No, grazie Il Verona-Brennero, 150 chilometri di tranquilla normalità di PAOLO RUMIZ <http://www.repubblica.it/online/politica/boso/reportage/reportage.html> (19 gennaio 2003)
- ⁵ „Bossi e Maroni: lavoriamo per garantire sicurezza e legalità”, <http://www.leganord.org/dblog/articolo.asp?articolo=1042>. (17/05/2008)
- 6, „Maroni: »E' il momento fermezza«” http://www.corriere.it/politica/08_maggio_16/maroni_momento_della_fermezza_0876e0b6-2329-11dd-8746-00144f486ba6.shtml.
- ⁷ About the Northern League see: Diamanti, Ilvo – Segatti, Paolo: Orgogliosi di essere italiani. in: *Limes*. 1994. N. 4. 15–36. p.; Diamanti, Ilvo (1996): *Il male del Nord*. Donzelli. Roma.; Diamanti, Ilvo (2003): *Mappe dell'Italia politica*. Il Mulino. Bologna.; Diamanti, Ilvo (1993): *La Lega*. Geografia, storia e sociologia di un nuovo soggetto politico. Donzelli. Roma.; Diamanti, Ilvo: *Vecchie e nuove subculture*. In: *Il Mulino* 2002. N. 4. 645–652. p.; Diamanti, Ilvo: *Immigrazione e cittadinanza: la percezione sociale*. In: *Europa Europe*. 2000. N. 6. 66–78. p.
- 8 Padania is the area of Northern Italian regions such as Liguria, Piedmont, Lombardy, Veneto, Trentino-Alto Adige, Friuli, Emilia-Romagna and Tuscany
- ⁹ About the transformation of the party system see also: Ignazi, Piero (1997): *I partiti italiani*. Il Mulino. Bologna.; Ignazi, Piero (2008): *I partiti politici in Italia*. Il Mulino. Bologna.; Mammarella, Giuseppe (2008): *L'Italia contemporanea. 1943–2007*. Il Mulino. Bologna.
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