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THE 'LATEST' PUBLIC ENEMY: ROMANIAN ROMA IN ITALY

The case studies of Milan, Bologna, Rome and Naples

DRAFT FINAL REPORT

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21 January 2008

The research and writing for the report was funded by the OSCE/ODIHR and CPRSI. Osservazione is a non governmental organisation engaging in a range of activities aimed at combatting anti-Romani racism and human rights abuses against Roma and Sinti in Italy.

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INTRODUCTION¹

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Background

On 31 October, the violent murder of an Italian woman in Rome allegedly perpetrated by a Romanian Rom living in one of the several encampments existing in the Italian capital triggered the government to adopt an emergency decree (n.181/2007) aimed at facilitating the removal of EU citizens from Italy whenever they were deemed to represent a threat to public and national security. Mr Veltroni, mayor of Rome and national leader of the Democratic Party stated:

Before Romania EU accession, Rome was the safest capital in the world. We need to repatriate people again; otherwise cities like Rome, Milan and Turin can't cope with the situation (La Repubblica, 1 November 2007).

The decree was presented by key political figures of the government as a necessary response to the existing widespread alarm surrounding the arrival and settlement in Italy of Romanian migrants, in particular if of Romani ethnic origin².

To capture the spirit of the time, 'a continuing anti-foreigner outcry unmatched in Italy's recent history' according to Hopper (The Guardian, 2 November 2007), it may be helpful to recall the words of the prefect of Rome, Carlo Mosca, in the wake of the approval of the emergency decree. Mr Mosca stated:

I shall sign the first expulsion orders straightaway. A hard line is needed because, faced with animals, the only way to react is with maximum severity' (The Guardian, 3 November 2007).

It must also be noted that the comment did not prompt controversy.

The decree [*decreto-legge*], which is part of series of policy proposals labelled 'pacchetto sicurezza', while benefited from a wide support among the Italian public and political leadership, alerted some Italian NGOs and attracted the attention of international observers and commentators who saw in it a potential discriminatory instrument targeted at a single ethnic group: the Romanian Roma³.

¹ We wish to thank all individuals and organisations that helped us with their time and knowledge in Milan, Rome, Bologna and Naples. A special thank you to Julia Bell and Kristin Sian Jenkins for their help to translate and edit the final report.

² In a press release dated 7 November 2007, Amnesty International (Italy) invites the members of the Italian government and MPs 'to refrain from generalisations, to avoid allusions to an alleged collective responsibility of a specific migrant group, and not to use the unacceptable equation between poverty and attitude to crime': www.amnesty.it/pressroom/comunicati/CS127-2007.html

³ In the main European newspapers, the news on the Italian decree on the removal and deportation of EU citizen is reported extensively. During November '07, the Financial Times followed closely the initiatives undertaken by Italian central and local authorities to deal with the so called 'emergenza rom romeni'. On 28 November, a FT article ('Italian cities to clear gypsy sites') reports to its international readership that 'several local authorities across Italy are clearing out gypsy settlements, blaming rising crime on a mass influx of migrants caused by European Union enlargement'. On 3 November, an article in the Guardian ('Italian police begin to round up Romanians') reports that 'Italian police yesterday began combing shantytowns in Rome and other big cities to locate Romanians targeted for expulsion under legislation introduced after the gruesome murder of a woman on the outskirts of the capital

Rossana Rossanda, a well-known leftwing intellectual, crystallises this position, saying in an interview to Repubblica (3 Nov 2007):

The reaction of the Italian government to the murder of Mrs Reggiani was disgusting. There is no other word. I heard that police forces turned up in Romani encampments, among those miserable huts and shacks, to dismantle everything and evict innocent people. These, to me, are fascist behaviours, with no justification. I have never seen something like that [in Italy].

The views on the Italian initiative have therefore been extreme and diverse, ranging from those who condemned the decree as racist or a violation of human rights, to those who suggested that the decree is to a large extent in line with the EU Directive on the freedom of circulation of member states citizens in the EU territory (2004/38/CE), to those who consider the decree a mere populist response to public anxiety with no actual effectiveness.

The present research was undertaken in a two month period between the publication of the decree and when it ceased to be in force. In fact, according to the article 77 of the Italian Constitution, while the government can adopt, in 'extraordinary cases of necessity and urgency', provisional measures having the force of law, these measures lose effect from their inception 'if they are not converted into law within sixty days from their publication'.

On 19 December 2007, two weeks before the deadline (1 January 2008) for conversion into law of the decree, the Minister in charge of the liaisons with the Parliament, Vannino Chiti, reported to the assembly the decision of the government to renounce the conversion of the decree n. 181/2007, officially, because of legal flaws in the text approved by the Senate which were not amendable in the limited time available before the deadline⁴. Ten days later, on 29 December, a new decree containing 'urgent measures for combatting international terrorism and for extraordinary needs of public security' (n. 249/2007) was signed by the President of the Republic and published in the Official Gazette on 2 January 2008. While largely consistent with the previous decree in its contents, the new act has a broader policy scope including measures to combat 'international terrorism'⁵.

Aims, objectives and methods of research

The scope of research is defined by three parameters: the actual implementation of the decree; the public perception of the 'Gypsies' and the impact of both on Romani people living in Italy.

The main aims of research, therefore, are:

- to analyse the current situation of Roma in Italy, with particular attention to the Romanian Roma, in the period between 31 October 2007 and 31 December 2007;
- to investigate media coverage and public perception of Roma and Roma-related issues;
- to monitor policy and practice, both at national and local levels, to respond to the alleged 'invasion' of Romanian Roma.

this week' highlighting the widespread support of the hard line adopted by the government on the matter.

⁴ Up to 27 December 2007, the decree produced 510 removals of EU citizens, of which 181 for 'imperative reasons of public security' (Sole 24 Ore, 28 December).

⁵ See Vassallo Paleologo (2007) for a critical analysis of the decree 249/2007

In order to achieve the stated aims of research, the research team has carried a number of activities:

- Investigating the enforcement of the decree n. 181 both at the national level and, in four case studies, at the local level. These four cities were chosen for their geographical diversity, the size of the Romanian Roma population, and, the local history of settlement of Roma communities, in particular from Romania. Moreover, as the decree gives to *prefetti*, (the highest representatives of the government in the localities) a large margin of autonomy (see art. 19, 20, 21 of the Decree 181/2007), it was crucial to investigate the way the decree was interpreted and enforced locally;
- Monitoring local authorities' initiatives targeted at Romanian Roma. The focus on local authorities is central, since in the Italian context municipalities have a large autonomy in this area of governance and, as we observed in previous research (Sigona and Monasta, 2006; Sigona, 2006), their policy, approach and attitude towards Roma varies greatly;
- Monitoring media coverage of Roma-related issues in the period between 31 October to 15 December. The research team conducted a systematic review of press and an analysis of media discourse on two national newspapers ("La Repubblica" and "Il Giornale") and on one local newspaper from each of the case studies locations ("Corriere della Sera", Milan; "Messaggero", Rome; "Il Mattino", Naples; "Il Resto del Carlino", Bologna).
- Investigating the political debate around the failed conversion of the decree into law through in-depth interviews with key informants and an analysis of public statements given by key political players.
- Finally, and importantly, collecting and analysing qualitative data through field visits to camps and in-depth interviews with Roma and key informants on the impact of the current situation on the Roma and Sinti population living in 'nomad camps'. At present there is anecdotal evidence that the polarisation of the situation and the widespread negative attitude of the public towards Roma and Romanians – the two groups collapsed into one at the height of media hysteria at the beginning of November - is affecting also Italian Sinti and other foreign Roma, who perceive an increasing hostility towards them.

Roma and Sinti in Italy

The commonly used terms 'zingari' (equivalent to the English 'Gypsies') and 'nomadi' are exonyms, terms originally given to Roma and Sinti by others. They are still widely used, despite being generally considered misleading and derogatory⁶. They are adopted interchangeably as synonyms of Roma and Sinti and, more frequently, as short cut to refer to the totality of the several groups and subgroups which the anthropologist Piasere (1999) calls 'a world of worlds'.

For its impact on life opportunities of Roma and Sinti, an important initial remark which needs to be made concerns the variety of legal statuses found among members of these communities. The most relevant distinction is between those with and those without Italian citizenship. Among non-Italians, there are citizens of other EU member states, third-country nationals (TCN), among whom an important part

⁶ For a glimpse of the debate around terms in Italy see Colacicchi, P. (1998); Marta, C. (1996); Sigona, N., (2002)

are refugees and *de facto* refugees, and an increasing number of stateless people. As Sigona and Monasta (2006) argue in 'Imperfect Citizenships:

The question of citizenship and legal status is a crucial area of concern which covers a broad range of issues. For foreign Roma, personal documents and residence permits are a key priority. The constant threat of being expelled from Italy, the strict relationship between permits to stay and work contracts, the problem of non-recognition of marriages celebrated within the communities, the lack of a coherent and consistent practice in dealing with asylum claims, all pose a continuous burden on the everyday lives of foreign Roma. However, also Italian Sinti, despite their Italian citizenship, which makes them more secure, also have to cope with legal and bureaucratic difficulties and obstacles, in particular with regards to marriage recognition and access to social support.

Italian Roma and Sinti began to settle in Italy in the XV century. The Sinti mainly reached Italy overland from the North, while the Roma crossed the Adriatic Sea from the southern Balkan areas, settling in the southern part of the country.

In the absence of official statistics on the Roma and Sinti population in Italy, we rely on the estimated figure of approximately 130,000-150,000 Roma and Sinti currently living in Italy. The majority of them are, or were until not long ago, Italian citizens. The Sinti – among whom there is still a minority whose economic activities necessitate an itinerant lifestyle - fall into this last group. Among Italian Roma, the large majority have been settled for a long time (Karpati, 1969; Brunello, 1997; Piasere, 1991; Sigona, 2003; Marta, 2005).

Foreign Roma came to Italy in various migration flows. The most recent one, the arrival of Romanian Roma, is not easy to quantify⁷ because of the absence of ethnicity-based data in Italy, the lack of recognition of Roma as an ethnic group and, more generally, the (relative) freedom of circulation of individuals in the EU territory which makes it extremely hard to know how many people are effectively living in a country different from the one where they were born. This migration flow is currently producing widespread anxiety. Current estimates vary a lot and are very often used instrumentally to ignite public fear. The only available data refers to the overall migration of individuals from Romania who, according to Caritas/Migrantes (2007), represent to largest national group in Italy⁸.

Since the EU enlargement, the movement of Romanians in Italy has been characterised circular patterns of migration. For Romanian Roma in particular, frequent forced evictions from unauthorised settlements have been causing high mobility in the territory and the creation of several short-lived transient housing settlements which are ultimately impossible to track down and map.

⁷ The lack of reliable data on the presence of Romanian Roma in Italy was confirmed by two of our interviewees, respectively civil servants at the Italian Ministry of Interior and at the Department for Equal Opportunities. They both stressed the difficulties of governing a migration whose demographic dimensions are largely unknown, or only known through the filter of distorted public perception.

⁸ Tony Venables, ECAS Director, said on 15 January 2008: 'There is no need to fear the EU's latest enlargement, any more than the previous one. Most emigration from Bulgaria and Romania took place well before accession and continued to involve traditional countries of destination in particular Greece, Italy, Spain and Portugal'. Restrictions based on exaggerated predictions of an influx of job-seekers or a deviation of mobility to countries opening up their labour markets proved unfounded. Transitional measures were taken after the horse bolted.' See <http://www.ecas-citizens.eu/>

Amongst foreign Roma from non-EU countries, many of whom fled from conflict areas or from conditions of extreme poverty, a substantial number periodically have trouble with the renewal of 'permessi di soggiorno', leaves to remain in the country. This condition makes them subject to removal and deportation and, although actual deportations are limited because of the complexity of circumstances and the high cost of implementations, the prospects of these people are deeply affected⁹.

A growing number of Roma children born in Italy to foreign parents, have no documents, and have only in some cases received the status of being legally stateless. They live in a legal limbo which affects many aspects of their lives.

About one third of the Roma and Sinti population - including both Italian and foreign citizens - currently live in authorised or unauthorised camps in isolated areas, poorly connected to towns and with precarious and inadequate services (ERRC, 2000) .

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance has expressed concern not only about the living conditions in the camps, but also 'for the fact that the segregation of Roma/Gypsies in Italy appears to reflect the general approach of the Italian Authorities, who tend to consider Roma as nomads who want to live in camps'¹⁰. Similar concerns were previously expressed in 1999, by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD, 1999) which declared that 'in addition to a frequent lack of basic facilities, living in the camps not only leads to the Roma's physical segregation from Italian society, but to their political, economic and cultural isolation as well'¹¹.

The latest public enemy

Since the last round of the EU enlargement in January 2007, there has been a growing alarm in Italy over the risk of what some commentators have termed a 'tidal wave' of migrants coming from Romania and Bulgaria to 'invade' Italy. In particular, public and media attention has been focused on the migration of Romanian Roma. Old and deeply-rooted prejudices, wide-spread antiziganism (see ERRC, 2000; Sigona and Monasta, 2006; Sigona, 2006) and the specific characteristics of Romani migration and livelihood strategies, which make them a visible presence in most Italian cities, have all contributed to create a growing alarm of the Roma.

Local authorities and national government addressed this alarm by adopting mainly restrictive and *spectacular* measures aimed at 'reassuring' the public. Commenting on the incident in which Giovanna Reggiani died, Mr Prodi said: 'I can reassure you, we will never let this happen again' (The Guardian, 2 November 2007). The following days, immediately after the decree came into force, police forces carried out a systematic survey of authorised and unauthorised settlements. The raids, often nocturnal or in the early hours of the morning, put great pressure on residents, many of whom left, as will be discussed later. Moreover, the raids – widely reported by the media - served to collect data on the residents which could then be used to ensure that any individual did not overstay the three month period allowed by the EU directive on freedom of circulation if they failed to prove adequate and legal means of subsistence.

However, as a civil servant at the Department of Equal Opportunities pointed out, there is a lack of coordination between the central government departments and

⁹ For a discussion on the concept of deportability, see De Genova, 2002

¹⁰ ECRI's view was recently confirmed in the third report on Italy published in May 2006.

¹¹ See Sigona (2003); Sigona, (2005); Lapov (2005); Marta (2005).

between the central government and local authorities. With specific reference to the current 'emergency', he added:

Till not long ago the situation seemed to be under control and not beyond the competence of the central government [...] we probably underestimated the dimension of the phenomenon.¹²

Similarly, Mr Prodi in an interview to the Financial Times stated: 'nobody could expect that scale of influx. Nobody was expecting the outflow from Romania across Europe' (FT, 6 November 2007).

In the days immediately after the incident, in what may seem a late response, the government took the decision to create an inter-departmental working group involving several undersecretaries of state with the main task of strengthening cooperation and achieving a joined-up approach to Roma issues.

A different, although not mutually exclusive, proposal came from the prefect of Rome, Mr Mosca, who suggested the creation of a national agency for Roma. The aims of the agency would be to coordinate the work of various state departments and local authorities in order to achieve 'security and social inclusion', and to build a solid database of information on the presence and location of Roma and Sinti in Italy (Sucar Drom, 27 November 2007), because, Mosca argues,

Addressing the issue only with repression ultimately will create other problems of security

The incident inflamed the political debate. Politicians battled for the control of a crucial terrain of the political sphere, security: and key political players from different sides are trying to assert their position in the field.

A brief examination of the debate on the 'emergenza sicurezza' will help us to trace the boundaries of the issue at stake. Following the incident in Rome, there was a large consensus in the parliament on the need for intervention on the 'emergenza rom romeni', however, immediately after the publication of the decree, the unanimity disappeared, giving room to partisan political interest. The leader of the new Democratic Party and mayor of Rome, Mr Veltroni, expressed in the early hours after the incident in Tor di Quinto (Rome) deep sympathy for the family of Mrs Reggiani and argued for a tough reaction by the government. He labelled the emergency decree 'the first official initiative' of the Democratic Party which broke up the old dichotomy which sees 'security' as a prerogative of the rightwing and 'solidarity' of the leftwing. 'Before the accession of Romania into the EU, Rome was the safest capital in the world. We need to repatriate people again, otherwise cities like Rome, Milan and Turin can't cope with the situation'.

On the left side of the government coalition the decree caused deep tensions. The minister of welfare, Paolo Ferrero, played a key role mediating between the different positions emerging in his party, Rifondazione Comunista. According to RC Senator Milziade Caprili, 'the left must emotionally reconnect to the grassroots [...] Nomad camps are not located in wealthy neighbourhoods but in the periphery.' Similarly, the founder of RC, Fausto Bertinotti (Il manifesto, 6 November 2007), argued that it is time for the left to acknowledge the importance of security and not to deny that the influx of Roma from Romania can be a problem. But, we stressed,

we need to avoid scapegoating [the Roma], rather we should find the root causes of the problem. [...] there is a well-founded concern which could lead to a xenophobic outburst. It

¹² Department of Equal Opportunities, Rome, interview carried out on 13 Dec 2007

is not enough for the left to be tolerant; however any initiative of repression has to go alongside others of integration.

On the right side of the political spectrum, Mr Fini, leader of the rightwing party National Alliance and former deputy prime minister, led the way of 'a flood of vitriolic anti-immigrant rhetoric' (The Guardian, 5 November) with an outburst against Roma who, he stated in an interview to the *Corriere della Sera* (4 Nov 2007) 'have no scruples about kidnapping children or having children of their own for the purpose of begging' and 'consider theft to be virtually legitimate and not immoral' and felt the same way about 'not working because it is up to the women to work, even by prostituting themselves' and concluded, 'to talk of integration with people with a 'culture' of that sort is pointless'. Mr Fini accused the decree of being too bland and argued that in Rome alone, 20,000 people should be expelled and between 200-250,000 in Italy.

Franco Frattini, vice-president of the European Commission, responsible for Justice, Freedom and Security, and senior member of Forza Italia, stated: 'the decree is not enough as it limits its scope to the removal of dangerous subjects and not to those without adequate resources as well' (*Il Messaggero*, 4 Nov 2007). Similarly, the leader of the centre-right Catholic party, Pierferdinando Casini, claimed that racism and xenophobia are the result of excessive tolerance by those that 'transform a country into a land where it is convenient to arrive from Romania because here everything is permitted and nothing is punished' (*Corriere della sera*, 5 November 2007).

On 4 November, the Romanian president Traian Basescu appealed to Italian and Romanian politicians to 'refrain from making statements that could make the situation more tense. We support any criminal being punished but we can't agree with the humiliation of Romanians'. The statement was followed by several high profile bilateral meetings between key ministers of the two countries and by a joint request by the two prime ministers to the European Commission for a communitarian intervention in this area¹³.

The appeal of Mr Basescu didn't prove very effective and a few days later the PM Tariceanu gave an interview to the Italian newspaper 'La Repubblica' (8 November 2007) in which he showed his deep concern for 'the statements of some Italian rightwing politicians [...] who with inflammatory words demand the expulsion of the Romanian ambassador or the removal of 200,000 Romanian citizens [...] it is unacceptable and recalls to my mind fascism'.

The leader of the rightwing separatist party Northern League, Umberto Bossi, attempted to reframe the problem by enlarging the issue to migration in general. In his terms:

Nowadays everyone speaks of Roma and Romanians and forget that there are many other immigrants, which bring many other problems. It is not only the Roma to cause trouble in this country'.

Another member of the Northern League echoed the leader:

¹³ In an interview that stirred some controversy in Italy, the president of the European Commission, Mr Barroso, stated: 'Some member states are already using the European social funds to promote initiative to integrate the Roma. And, to be honest, it is not up to the European Commission or to the European Parliament to work for Roma integration. It is a duty of the member states, which have to solve the problem not only at the national level, but also regional and even local, with the support of NGOs and the Church' (Interview in '*Il Messaggero*', 21 November 2007).

It is sad to see the current government guiltily taking action too late, copying badly ideas we first put forward with rigour.

A worrying side effect of this 'tough' approach on Roma is the opening up of more spaces for rightwing groups to mobilise and campaign openly against Roma and immigration in general, often hidden behind *self-proclaimed* grassroots committees of local disaffected citizens. These groups are now organising petitions and demonstrations against 'nomad camps' all over Italy. Football fans chanted racist slogans against Romanians and Roma during Serie A matches. Isolated attacks on Romanians and against Roma camps by gangs have been reported in the days immediately after the incident and throughout the period of this research although no investigation has at the time of writing brought the offenders to justice. The risk of do-it-yourself justice is palpable and creates deep concern. For the prefect of Rome Mr Mosca, 'the climate of hatred over the last few days is the trigger that has stirred up such animal instincts'.

In the week following the murder of Mrs Reggiani, a banner appeared outside the 'Regina Coeli' prison where the Romanian citizen suspected for the crime was being kept in custody: 'Death penalty for the bastard'. In the same days, the following statements were reported in the media:

- *It is clear that there is no control in the country, we should deploy the army* [La Destra]
- *The leftwing government is responsible for the invasion of Italy by millions of people* [La Destra]
- *If the government doesn't get rid of the nomad camps, we will do it ourselves!* [Forza Nuova]



And if it was your mother, your wife or your daughter?

Close down nomad camps and expel Roma NOW!

Source: www.forzanuova.org

The leader of the ultra-right racist group Forza Nuova, Roberto Fiore, on the website of the group states:

Time is running out. We had explicitly warned: Woe to whoever touches our women! From today onward, our comrades and all Italian are morally authorised to use methods which go beyond simple protests to defend our compatriots.

To conclude, the decree n.181/2007 did not come out of the blue. Forced evictions of Romanian Roma from unauthorised settlements, followed often by the destruction of belongings and no provision of alternative shelter, have been in the news continuously in the last years. To give an idea of the dimension of the issue, the municipality of Roma alone, according to data available on the website of the City Council, has evicted more than 5,000 people in the last six months alone and more than 15,000 since being in power.

However, an important point on the medium and long term impacts of the current crisis was made by one of our interviewees at UNAR,

We see a deterioration of the public discourse. What was once considered racism is now deemed acceptable and it is often reinforced and legitimised by the instrumental use of allegedly objective evidence.

Moreover, as the posters below show, these actions became also an important feature of the last electoral campaign, where the two frontrunners for the position of Mayor of Rome made the removal of unauthorised settlements, the relocation of authorised ones to more marginal areas and the regeneration of neighbourhoods a central battleground of their electoral manifestos (see Sigona, 2006).

Finally, it can be pointed out that the deportation of Romanian citizens (although in different legal circumstances) is nothing new. According to official figures, there were 11,628 Romanian deportees in 2004, 10,702 in 2005 and 7,926 in 2006.



The rightwing claim: 'In Rome, 34 squat buildings, 106 nomad camps and no evictions! Veltroni damages Rome'.



And the centre-left response: 'New small lies from Alemannino. While in Rome in five years 8,000 people were moved out of illegal settlements and tens of Romani camps were closed down, Berlusconi's government, of which Alemannino was a minister, allowed uncontrolled arrivals without rules or border controls'.

National press and 'emergency'¹⁴

Our analysis of the coverage of the theme of security in the national press concentrates on two newspapers which reflect the two main political views. While *La Repubblica*, (which prints 700,000 copies), reflects the opinion of the centre-left, identifiable in the newly born *Partito Democratico* (Democratic Party), on the other hand *Il Giornale*, (which prints 200,000 copies), expresses the opinion of the centre-right, and in particular that of *Forza Italia*.

Both newspapers focus their articles on the topic in question from the 2-8 November and then drop it in the days to follow.

Overall, we notice that with the current crisis, the ethnonym 'rom', which in our previous research on media discourse we found marginally in use compared to other terms such as 'nomadi' or 'zingari' (Sigona, 2006), has been coopted as part of the media vocabulary.

The centre right newspaper *Il Giornale*, as well as a series of news articles dedicated to the topic, gave some comment features the task of forming the opinions of its readership. If on the one hand the newspaper jumped on the bandwagon of terror in the 'hunt for the monster' or the need of very strict intervention, in which it severely criticised the government's laxity, on the other hand it condemned the gang attacks which victimised some Romanian citizens in a supermarket car park in Rome. The murder of Giovanna Reggiani became an occasion to highlight the current government's weaknesses in the sector of security, where the right is notoriously stronger, and where the centre-left attempts to find a compromise between the various positions, with some difficulty. This was all carried out with significant racism towards the Roma, who were depicted in a "bestial" manner.

The debut can be found in the article from the 2 November 2007 entitled "Pitiless killer: I only stole a bag". The article began with the following:

"What sort of eyes does a monster have? Eyes which come directly from the pits of humanity, from nights in savage times, from the brutality that is more present now than during prehistoric times. [...] On the arms there are still some scratches that accuse and make an impression, even if in the rough life of a Rom, small wounds and grazes are common".

However, in another article from the same day, the newspaper quoted a Romanian woman called Antonia who 'with affection, care, tenderness and attention' looks after author of the article's mother, and clarifies that "not all us Romanians are like this...those are delinquents, why do you let them enter? Immediately afterwards the journalist and rightwing opinion maker Giordano Bruno Guerri adds: 'Of course not all Romanians are like that. The Roma are different; a nomadic population that lives by stealing. Of course there are exceptions but that is essentially their culture.

The following day the newspaper published news on the implementation of the decree n.181. It clearly emerges that the Roma are the targets to be hunted down in the camps. The title is 'The Prefecture race: the winner is he who hunts the first Rom'. The subtitle is alarming by playing with figures which proved excessive by far: 'Widespread controls all over Italy: five thousand names on the list of dangerous criminals'.

In order to clarify the current government's overly moderate position on the question of security and immigration, *Il Giornale* quotes two Romanians with political positions

¹⁴ This section was written by Francesca Saudino with the collaboration of Nando Sigona.

of a certain importance; Dimitru linca of the *Partito degli Immigrati* (Immigrants' Party) and Gheorghe Raica, a representative the *Lega Nord* (Northern League) and councillor of Alessandria. The first clarifies that 'In the criminal world there is a buzzword and our country is considered the place where everything is permitted', 'in your political class there is a do-good [*buonismo*] approach and an exaggerated permissiveness'. The second man explains that 'the truth is that the do-good approach of this government generates degradation. It is paid for with contributors' money and at times with human lives'.

The journalist Mario Giordano gives his opinion on the decree n.181 and on the criticism towards the centre-left, in particular towards Walter Veltroni. In an editorial he summarises many aspects of the question: 'Do we want to state things as they really are? Rome's crime was the first crime of Veltroni's era as secretary of the *Pd*. The strategists of the Walter-communication cannot accept the idea that in the city administered by the future leader of the centre-left, one can die in such a way, while returning home from shopping. For this reason Veltroni kicked up a fuss to explain his needs to the government. He succeeded straightaway. And in fact the government called an emergency meeting. Has this ever happened before? [...] In fact the race to catch some random Roma and put them on the plane is rather comical.'

An important contribution to the debate on the Roma issue comes from the interview to Don Rigoldi, the chaplain of the Beccaria juvenile prison in Milan. The title is 'The Roma? Few of them work, the others live on robberies and prostitution'. In the column the chaplain clarifies that: 'First of all let us distinguish the Romanians from the Roma' and then 'we must have the courage to repatriate the Roma. Here they are almost worse off than there. They destroy themselves.'

Romania is also criticised for 'exporting' the worst criminals like Italy did with the Mafia at the end of the nineteenth century. Amongst the criminals exported are 'Mailat the murderer'. The journalist Scarpino states 'It is legitimate to suspect that policemen and administrators of the Roman Province have pushed the bad guys towards the border, like one does with tuna fish when one channels them towards the *tonnara*, only that in this case we are the victims'

However, the most authoritative editorial on *Il Giornale* is written by Gianni Badget Bozzo, a priest and Forza Italia ideologist. His broad ranging criticism ranges from Catholics to Communists, from the Pope to the European Union. His idea is that immigration will increase more and more and it will put an end to the Italian nation as we currently know it. At the root of this he says there is 'a unique factor in Europe: Italy has lost the feeling of being a nation, of being a state founded on a nation'. While other states such as France, Germany and England have the feeling of being a nation 'only in Italy has the nation stopped having an identity'.

This is because 'two significant cosmopolitan cultures governed her after fascism: Catholicism and Communism. In neither of the two is the idea of the nation deep-rooted'. On the topic of the Roma, the editorialist used the term 'gypsies' many times, a term which is no longer used in journalistic language and neither in this newspaper. He says: 'The Roma are not the Romanians [...] their nomadic lifestyle leads them to live near cities but not in them. They are therefore on the margins, hated and feared'. One interesting point in the article concerns the protection that Roma receive from European institutions. Bozzo says: 'In Italy, gypsies have a bad reputation because they are seen as people who carry out robberies, hold ups, muggings, begging and even kidnapping of children. A recent failed attempt has been discovered. The Roma have a special status in Europe because of their persecution under the Nazi regime [...]. For this reason, criticising the gypsies or the Romanians creates problems, not only with Romania but also with the European Union'.

La Repubblica also dedicates approximately 30 pieces to the issue during the period analysed. Some of them recount the facts and others comment on them. The dominant element of the centre-left press is the embarrassment and the disorientation linked to the fear of saying something different, and which is not the condemnation of all the Romanians and especially the Roma. Saying something more articulate, and attempting to identify the causes and reasons without falling into the stereotype of the 'inherently criminal gypsy', means immediately being accused of collusion with the criminals and of being a do-gooder. In any case, some articles provide a detailed analysis of the perverse mechanisms of fear which the media encourages and of the disorientation which the country finds itself in, in particular for young people.

On 2 November, *La Repubblica* dedicated four articles to the topic of security and decree n.181. One of these explained the dynamics of the political relationship between the government and the mayor of Rome and leader of the Pd, Walter Veltroni. It is entitled: 'Veltroni's fury and Prodi's moves. The Pd-effect and Palazzo Chigi accelerates. A hard line is necessary not to risk the Far West'. Attention is brought to the fact that in Italy there are many honest Romanian workers, however, the situation is so alarming that if one does not intervene in an energetic manner, national security will be at risk.

The same day, an editorial by a well-known Jewish journalist and supporter of the PD, Gad Lerner, posed embarrassing questions to the centre-left readership and concluded: 'We are embarrassed by the sensation of having to come to terms with a sub-humanity which has come amongst us from too near and with all their documents scandalously in order'.

Also on that day an article was published entitled: 'The barracks are pulled down but the Roma do not budge – Rome blitz on illegal camps'. The nomads say "either you pay for our return journey home or we're staying here". The main topic was that no matter how misleading, decree n.181 had been drawn up ad hoc for the Roma and in particular to legitimise the evictions from unauthorised camps.

On 3 November 2007 the spontaneous exodus of the Romanians was documented, 'A one way ticket. Tens of fleeing Romanians. Yesterday the buses at Rome Tiburtina bus station were full of people going to Romania'. "What are we doing here?", the question the interviewees ask the interviewer.

On the same day the newspaper also voices the protests from the Romanian authorities: 'For the second time in two days the Romanian Prime Minister Taricenu protested against the expulsions of his co-citizens. He wants to know the criteria and he calls the reaction xenophobic'.

The comment made by Ilvo Diamanti in his editorial on 6 November 2007 is very interesting: 'In Italy a disturbing ghost is lurking about. It is called insecurity'. 'Nine out of ten people (almost everyone) thinks that criminality has increased in Italy' and then: 'the fear of foreigners has increased. Now 47% of Italians consider immigrants a danger to public order and personal security' and that therefore 'there is a strict bond between insecurity and immigration'.

The following day Adrian Sofri, an influential opinion maker, made his comments. The article is entitled 'If the mouse-man becomes the man to fear'. Sofri highlights the paradoxes of our society in relation to the topic of criminality, of the relationship between big scale mafia and the small scale deviances in the collective imagination. He begins with the following: 'You'll see: the emotion felt after the capture of the penultimate God-father will not match that felt about the crimes committed by the last mice-men. The boss does not really scare people, he stirs disdain or curiosity, his criminal hand written notes will be studied and a TV series will be made out of them.'

The mouse-man provokes an anaphylactic shock. It is another thing altogether. The plague, stuff for pest control'.

MILAN

Livia Brembilla with Nando Sigona and Lorenzo Monasta

Introduction

Milan is one of the most prominent towns of the northern Italy, capital of Lombardy, the region with the highest population density and the most advanced economic development among all of the Italian regions. The town is administratively divided into nine decentralisation zones, and each of these elects its local council composed of 41 councillors.

At the present the population residing in the Municipal area of Milan is 1,304,263¹⁵. Out of these 170,619¹⁶ are foreigners: 13.1% of the total population.

Taking into account the whole province of Milan, the citizens distributed in the 189 municipalities are 3,869,037¹⁷, out of which 391,000¹⁸ are foreigners. Looking at the trend of foreign residents, between 2004 and 2006, the most significant increase in Milan in percentage terms was that of people coming from European countries and in particular from non-EU member states (+28,7%)¹⁹, as Albania, Romania and Ukraine.

Milan is nowadays an important international business and industrial centre with tertiary services, finance, fashion and publishing as main activities.

According to the latest data on employment (2006) by the statistical office of Lombardy Region, Milan is the town with the highest employment rate of the region with 68.1%. It has the highest percentage of employed women (60.5%) and the unemployment rate has been decreasing: down to 3.9%²⁰ for both in 2006.

The municipal government is ruled by a centre-right coalition led by the mayor Letizia Moratti, elected in May 2006 with 52% of the votes, while the centre-left candidate, Bruno Ferrante, got 47%.

Such a result is coherent with previous elections which since 1993 - with the election of the mayor Formentini of the Northern League party - saw the city governed by centre-right coalitions, characterised by repressive attitudes towards immigrants and sometimes openly intolerant policies.

Roma and Sinti in Milan

A survey on Roma and Sinti settlements in Lombardy, carried out in 2006 by the Regional Observatory for Integration and Multi-ethnicity (ISMU), offers an up-to-date portrait of the situation of Roma and Sinti in the region (Ambrosini and Tosi, 2007).

According to the survey, the Roma and Sinti living in Lombardy are approximately 13,000. Some 44.9% of these are Italian citizens, 50.4% are foreigners, mainly from Bulgaria, Macedonia, Bosnia and Romania, and 4.6% have dual citizenship.

¹⁵ Source: anagrafe Comune di Milano 31.12.2006

¹⁶ Source: anagrafe Comune di Milano 31.12.2006

¹⁷ Source: Istat, mappa dei Comuni italiani, 2006

¹⁸ Source: Caritas/Migrantes (2007)

¹⁹ Source: Caritas/Migrantes (2007)

²⁰ Source: rilevazione sulle forze di lavoro 2006- ufficio statistico regionale

In the region of Lombardy there are 241 camps, out of which 45 are in the area of the Municipality of Milan. These 45 can be divided into three types of settlements: authorised permanent camps, authorised temporary camps and unauthorised temporary camps, with an overall estimated population of 4,130 people. Another 2,300/3,100 people dwell in the remaining 100 camps of the Province²¹. The Roma living in houses are estimated to be around 1,400 people, even if researchers consider this to be an underestimated figure.

The caravans and campervans are still the main housing solution especially in the 65 municipalities of the region, which also report the temporary presence of *giostrai* (workers of marry-go-rounds). While the *giostrai*, all of Italian nationality, often prefer living in mobile homes because of their lifestyle and job, in most other cases caravans and campervans are to be considered temporary emergency housing solutions.

The town of Milan remains an exception with a wide presence of unauthorised camps: many settlements are transient, self-built, and sub-housing standards.

The municipal administration set up nine equipped stopover settlements (nine areas, out of which three in *via Triboniano*) located in *via Bonfadini*, *via Martirano*, *via Negrotto*, *via Idro*, *via Chiesa Rossa*, *via Rogoredo*, *via Novara*, *via Triboniano* and *via Barzaghi*. The fact of calling this camps 'stopover settlements' is the consequence of the firm idea that the Roma are nomads and like moving from one place to another despite the fact that most Roma are willing to stay and do not come from a nomadic life in their country of origin. However, this concept helps in maintaining the situation temporary avoiding planning and serious integration policies.

In six out of the nine equipped camps residents are mainly Italian Roma Harvati. Khorakhané Romá from Bosnia and Macedonia live in the settlement of *via Novara*, while Romanian Roma live in the other two camps²².

As for the presence of Romanian Roma in Milan, the first significant group settled in Italy more than a decade ago (10 years in average), a more recent flow followed Romania accession to the EU. Around 550 people live in the authorised camp of *via Triboniano*; 250 more live in an unauthorised camp in the *Bovisa* area and around 270 Caramidai Roma who lived in an unauthorised camp in *via San Dionigi* were evicted in September 2007: since some of them have been hosted by the *Casa della Carità* (House of Charity), a structure linked to the parish of Milan, some others in the municipal males dormitory of *via Ortles*. Most of this people come from villages around Craiova, town situated in Southern Romania. In the province of Milan, there is a large settlement of Romanian Roma (around 500) in Sesto San Giovanni, living in the building of the Falk, a now-closed steel factory. Finally, there are many other familial groups living scattered on the whole provincial territory who find it difficult to settle on an area and, forced by evictions, move from place to place in the area of Milan and for this reason their presence is difficult to be quantified.

Milan was the first town in Italy where a Roma community – specifically the community of the *via Triboniano* settlement – signed with the municipal administration a "pact for legality and sociality". The pact, in patronising terms, commits the Roma to observe the 'main norms of civic cohabitation'. Later the pact was extend also to the residents of all regular camps in Milan²³. At the beginning of

²¹ Source: Caritas/Migrantes (2007)

²² Source: census 2005, Opera Nomadi Milano

²³ For a critical reading on the 'pact' see Monasta, 2007; Monasta and Sigona, 2007

its mandate, the administration had a different approach from the previous local government, opening the dialogue on the issues of 'Roma in Milan', talking about security but also about rights to be guaranteed to these people, proposing the experimental adoption of this pact for sociality and legality in the *via Triboniano* camp, with the objective of managing problematic issues not only from a repressive point of view. As an observer pointed out, 'the Roma went on from being considered irredeemable criminals to be considered criminals who could be re-educated if induced to understand that rights are linked to obligations' (see Vitale, 2007).

After only six months such approach went through a radical change: the escalation of intolerance and the fear of Roma, grown as a consequence of the episode occurred in the Municipality of Opera and drummed up by the alarmism generated by the mass media, led the local government to abandon its initial approach, taking it back to a policy of evictions and zero tolerance.

On 14 December 2006, 75 people, mainly women and under ten years old children, were evicted from the unauthorised camp of *via Ripamonti*, in Milan, where they had lived for some years, to be taken to Opera, in an area in which the Civil Protection had started to set up a tent encampment. Such operation, result of a deal between the municipal administration of Milan, the prefecture, the Municipality of Opera and the Province, was a temporary solution in the perspective of finding a more appropriate location and solution. According to the deal, the Roma families would have had to stay in Opera from December 2006 to April 2007. But shortly after the move, their presence began to create discontent in the local population, inflamed by activists of National Alliance and *Lega Nord* parties (at the opposition in Opera) who organised a rebellion of 400 people against the decision of the Municipality and the *Caritas Ambrosiana* (an important Catholic association of Milan), which led to damaging vehicles of the Civil Protection, insulting the Roma and the night of the 21 December, setting fire to tents, with the result that six were burned and seven removed. After continuous protests and episodes of intolerance, on 10 February 2007 the Roma families living in the camp *spontaneously* decided to leave.

Such events, according to some of our interviewees, constituted a turning point in the way the Roma issues is dealt with in Milan, determining in effect the closing of any sort of dialogue with Roma, and starting the season of repression and deterrence.

This change was not the result of the behaviour of the Roma community not respecting the pact of legality or infringing the law. The change in the approach of local authorities was instead the result of the decision by some parties to capitalise on the wide-spread intolerance of the electorate.

Even the president of the Province of Milan, governed by the centre-left, in the first months of 2007 started expressing himself in support of the '*security turn point*', launching the alarm on: the inadequate and soft immigration policy of the central government, the lack of funds and the need to stop the continuous and unmanageable flow of Romanian and Bulgarian Roma. '60 thousand *sans papier* and 5000 nomads in Milan and the province are a too heavy load for the metropolitan area'²⁴ he stated at the signing/signature event of the 'Pact for a Secure Milan', on 18 May 2007. The event was hosted by the prefect of Milan with the participation of high-ranking representatives of the Ministry of Interior, Milan City Council and Milan Provincial Council.

²⁴ Ansa: statement by the president of the Province of Milan F.Penati, 18 May 2007

The pact established a special dedicated fund for security, immediately available to the authorities to 'guarantee flexibility and promptness to the actions and initiatives for security in the metropolitan area of Milan'²⁵.

The institutions and the politicians

The presence of Romanian Roma in Milan is perceived and interpreted in different ways both by the institutional bodies (Municipality, Province and Region) and by the associations and voluntary groups that work on the field with Romanian Roma communities and communities of Roma from other countries. According to the city councillor Andrea Fanzago of the Democratic Party, the behaviour of the mayor Moratti has changed in time. While initially, Fanzago states:

With the election of Moratti, we saw a slight inversion: rights and security, legal pact, the Roma should not be left alone. If they are managed well, the quality of life of the Roma and of the urban context in which the camp is located improve.

After six months, Mr Fanzago recalls, the approach of the local government became tougher and focused around the security of citizens against the Roma.

For the local police, city councils haven't got the adequate instruments to manage the arrival en mass of Romanian Roma. A local police spokesperson said:

There are thousands of Romanians who are still arriving [in Milan]. We have a continuous flow and in Triboniano only there are 50-60 new arrivals each week. However, because the Triboniano camps are the most guarded, they don't stay long and shortly after begin to move around. Personally, I think no more authorised camps should be opened, we are full and, besides, people don't want them.

According to Maurizio Pagani, member of Opera Nomadi in Milan, the perception of the Roma issue as a threat to security is largely due to the increasingly violent language adopted by politicians and the mass media:

However, what really happened and it can be dated back of a couple of years, is a change in the political language which, especially in electoral time, becomes particularly violent and racist. The use of such vocabulary and arguments somehow prepared and legitimated subsequent violent actions. On one side there is a linguistic repertoire used to define who are the Roma today which is openly hostile, offensive, violent and biased; on the other side, there is the local government that translated this language into policy which are as much violent. Against common sense and, I think, against the law.

The perception of an increasing intolerance in the public sphere is confirmed by Sister Claudia, *Caritas Ambrosiana* who works at the camp of *via Novara* with Bosnian and Macedonian Roma:

Culture is becoming more and more intolerant and this produces racism. This is determined by a growing individualistic way of thinking.

In such a situation of tension and conflict, the actions carried out by the Municipality and the way it intends to move on are not clear and are not shared nor communicated to the non-government organisations working in the field. Decisions regarding how to manage the "Roma emergency" are not being discussed in the City Council because decisions are made by the local Government, with the exception of the decision to approve the pact of the *Via Triboniano* camp. This is confirmed by the councillor Fanzago who admits his lack of knowledge regarding what the administration will do next.

²⁵ Ansa: statement of the president of the Province of Milan F. Penati, 18 May 2007

The councillor also stresses the incapacity of finding a way out of an exclusively emergency logic in dealing with this problem, directly correlated with a second critical problem afflicting in general the town of Milan that is the access to housing, which became more and more onerous and not sustainable for low income families.

However, despite the apparent shift of approach, it must be pointed out that in the local government policy and practice there has been also continuity over the last few years. In the period 2003-2007, the Municipality ordered 340 forced evictions, out of which 65 in 2007.

Has the decree n.181 triggered further change? According to Pagani:

In Milan the number of evictions didn't increase. The decree didn't modify anything. Probably, its main impact was to push those political forces and section of civil society who might in the past have had doubts and uncertainties on acting against Roma, to support openly evictions and repressive policy.

The only political initiatives in support of Romanian Roma focussed on the camp of *via Triboniano*. After two fires, in 2007 the administration divided the area in three camps, demanding the collaboration of the *Casa della Carità* in the management of the areas. For all of the other settlements evictions remained the only solutions. The impact of this strategy is highlighted below by two key informants:

On one side there is no perspective, no perspectives are visible; on the other, if I were in their shoes [local government], even I wouldn't know how to move. The situation is very difficult to solve. It needs very long and hard work. However, it is obvious that responding only with evictions is totally useless.²⁶

The worse is not what they do at *Triboniano* but the fact that they are not doing anything in the other sites. They are going backwards, even with respect to policies that were deficient and insufficient before, but that looked at the whole set of problems of the Roma community in town.²⁷

The policy of neglect adopted towards the other authorised camps concerns also Sister Claudia. She says:

After a time when expectations were high and people moved towards social integration - all the children were going to school, there were many boy and girls going to high school, several household heads had a job, some women followed literacy courses etc. - there came this feeling of neglect and decay. The containers started to be damaged. The sewer keeps overflowing. Even if the official innuendo is "move out of the camp", there are no resources to move out. All residents applied for social housing, but nobody obtained it. The waiting list is very long, over seven thousand applicants. This is wearing for them, and for us who accompany them. One says: but they expect everything from institutions. No, not everything. Just something.

A common complain coming from NGOs is the lack of communication with the local authority, and the situation apparently got worst in the last few months:

The big problem is the fact that the municipality does not communicate [with us]. The dialogue is only internal, and with few others. There is no institutional table despite the promise contained in the pact.²⁸

Overall, the local situation in Milan seems to be the reflection of a wider national situation, both in terms of ways of dealing with this so called "emergency", and in terms of implemented actions.

²⁶ Fiorenzo Demolli, coordinator of the *via Triboniano* camp for the *Casa della Carità*

²⁷ Maurizio Pagani, vice-president of *Opera Nomadi* Milan

²⁸ Sister Claudia Biondi, *Caritas Ambrosiana*

Enforcing the decree n. 181/2007

In concrete terms in Milan, the enforcement of the decree n. 181/2007 produced the filing of people, in particular of Romanian Roma, who live in different areas of town. A spokesperson for the local police, "Problems of the Territory" unit, sums up what was done in Milan:

We file them; we have a form where we fill in their data and when they arrived in Italy. From that moment, they have three months to find a job and a suitable accommodation, because to stay in Italy you need to have an income, a job, to be able to sustain yourself, to find a house etc. After three months, if the person is found, and we see check that all of the data are in the database, we check if they have found a job and all the rest. If he doesn't, then we take him to the police station and he should leave the country. However, we should see what the decree says because before, with the Bossi-Fini it was different but now that they are in Europe [in the EU], with the decree we should be able to take them, hold them until the trial is carried out.²⁹

Up to the time the interviewees were conducted, in the whole province of Milan four Romanian Roma had been expelled for having committed serious offences. According to the local police, the decree doesn't allow mass removal of foreigners and the expulsions served to launch a reassuring message to the public opinion.

Politicians and the media presented the decree as a capable to deliver immediate expulsions of a large number of people.

The decree, in theory, while in force, offers the possibility to expel those who are considered dangerous for society, but even then the police has some doubts:

Once you send a person away, he can come back again! The problem is that they have the passport, they say they come to Italy for holidays and then we find him after years and reapply the same mechanism. We have all these data, we have colleagues at the office that put everything in the computer and enter the data... and now the project has just started, but we need to see in three months when we will start finding those who have been filed three months ago what will happen.³⁰

The associations that work with the Roma do not report people hit by the expulsions decree, except the *Casa della Carità* that is following, with legal support, a person of the Triboniano camp, considered socially dangerous because he does not have a job, stopped the evening of the 2nd of November 2007.

Local press

The newspaper "*Il Corriere della Sera - Milano*" in the period between the 31st of October and the 15th of December 2007 published 35 articles on the issue of security associated with the so called "*Roma emergency in Milan*". The most used term to identify the recipients of the security package is "*rom*" (the Italian for Roma) (in 25 articles) followed by the term "*romeni*" (Romanians) (in 12 articles) and "*nomads*" (in 10 articles); only three articles write about "*rom romeni*" (Romanian Roma) – with some details regarding the areas from where the groups are from – and three about "*zingari*" (Gypsies). However, all of the articles are about Romanian Roma except one about a "*Slavic Roma*".

The term "Romanians" is often used as a synonym of "Roma", who are still identified as nomads by many of the members of the municipal administration and by the journalists too, most of all in the titles of the articles. Two examples: "Nine years old

²⁹ Local police worker – "Problems of the territori" Unit , Municipality of Milan

³⁰ Local police – "Problems of the territory" Unit, Municipality of Milan

snatcher caught and runs away sixty times. Nomad child always manages to run away from the foster care community" (1 November, *Corriere di Milano*); "Roma use fountains as public shower: two nomads employed as guardians" (3 November, *Corriere di Milano*).

The terms "Gypsies" or "nomads" have been used mainly on the articles published on 3 November, the first day of the enforcement of the security decree, while after that day these terms have been left aside and have been substituted with "Roma" and "Romanians". Interesting the statement of a Romanian citizen expelled on 3 November and reported a few days later (12 November): "We are not Gypsies, while the murderer of *Tor di Quinto* is a nomad, so what do we have to do with all this?".

The term Roma is mainly associated and cited in articles regarding security, shanty towns, exploited minors and often even in this case switched with the term Romanians.

Chronologically retracing the articles in the monitored period, the *Corriere di Milano* starts writing about the so called "*security package*" issue on 31 October, day in which the mayor Letizia Moratti made a plea to the President,

so that institutions take charge of the growing need of security and justice for the Italians, especially the most vulnerable. The authority of the President is needed so that effective responses can be given to citizens quickly and firmly.

On 3 November, the newspaper reports that in the hours after the decree came into force it is already started in Milan the "*cleaning up operation of Romanians*". 15 Romanians found between the Central Station and *via Cenisio* ended up at the Police HQ. Four of them had been filed already by the police because of several offences (robbery, theft, drinking and driving) and the prefect ordered their removal the same night. The deputy mayor of Milan, Riccardo De Corato, commented:

We could expel many more than the 100 we have already identified if we add all those who cannot support themselves

From this article on, for the whole month of November, almost every day (except Saturdays and Sundays) an article on the Roma, or the Romanians or local nomad camps was published.

On 4 November, the *Corriere* reports some statements in which he clarifies that the intention is not to 'launch a hunt for Romanians' and that concerning the offences committed by Romanian citizens, more than half are committed by Roma.

On 5 November, an investigative report on Roma shanty towns stresses the difference between the authorised camps of *via Triboniano* and the unauthorised camps of *Bovisasca* and *Gratosoglio*. The article denounces the existence of shanty towns located between the houses and the university and the question asked is whether such settlements should be tolerated: the deputy mayor replies that the situation is under control and those who will not register themselves will be repatriated.

The following day, page 3 opens with the intimidating title "To be send away the foreigners who are not able to provide for themselves" paraphrasing a statement by the mayor Moratti. The councillor for social services Mariolina Moioli adds that this is the only antidote "to stop the continuous arrivals from Romania". On the same page there is the news of the decision of the Municipality to end the contracts to three Roma cooperatives: one engaged in building work, one in gardening and one in cleaning. Moioli explains her decision saying 'our aim is to assure that all our resources are well spent and produce services'.

A positive but somehow patronising report on a family, first defined as Romanian and later Roma, appears on 9 November. The article is based on the story of the three

minor children, model students despite living in a shack surrounded by garbage, who ask only to be let going to school. The article shows how the same newspaper can contain article which contradicts its own editorial line which up to that point seemed to support the evictions of those unable to maintain themselves and socially dangerous. Another positive aspect of the article is one of the rare times that the opinion of a Romani person is heard:

Dad is a construction worker and works every other day. Let us suppose that we can save money to go stay in a regular house, but who out of you Italians would rent or sell a house to a Roma?

On 15 November an alarming title “Outlaw children: when life is fear” introduces the story of a boy, that according to a school girl ‘should be Romanian’ and that armed with a knife scares the students of her school.

An article on 19 November reports that Milan is divided between open demonstrations of intolerance, as the roadblocks organised by members of the extreme right group *Forza Nuova*, and demonstrations of solidarity.

The next day the housing issue is in focus. The topic is a ‘*Revolt against the Roma squatters. Out of public houses*’ in Quarto Oggiaro, periphery of Milan. Some members of the tenants’ association state: “*it is impossible to live with the nomads. A mess can happen anytime*”. Few days later, Mr Decorato, the deputy mayor, replies to protesters stating the will to employ security guards who will look after the most at-risk buildings.

On 22 November, Alexander Athanasiu, European MP, offers an analysis of the events and frame is discussion in a European perspective, inviting politicians and ordinary people to avoid any form of discrimination and xenophobia towards the migrants.

A week later, on 29 November, the newspaper reports on the visit of the mayors of the Romanian villages wherefrom most of the Roma living in Milan come from. The title of the article is: “the mayors of the Roma: let’s stop the exodus”. For the first time, we find a more constructive and less alarming discussion of the issue.

After two weeks of silence, on 12 December, a whole page is dedicated to the conclusion of a police investigation that brought to the arrest of the heads of a criminal gang operating in the area of Milan Central Rail Station exploiting Roma minors for begging and prostitution.

Finally, on 15 December, a full page comments the mayor’s decision to ‘extends the legality pact to all camps’. The title is: ‘Roma camps? Remove those without a job’. In a colloquium between the mayor and the minister of internal affairs, Mr Amato, Moratti suggested the appointment of the prefect Gian Valerio Lombardi to commissioner for the Roma emergency. The idea is to put the management of camps in the hands of no profit organisations and to keep pressure on EU Roma with removal of those not complying with the EU directive on freedom of circulation.

The Roma and the emergency

The Italian people have the right to be hungry because of what happened in Rome. But what do we have to do with it? If I do something wrong, I pay. But not the whole Romanian people. I agree with this law: if you mess around, you steal, commit violence, commit crimes, I agree that you should be expelled (Rom in via Triboniano camp).

The decree was the political response to a wave of anti-tziganism that grew in the last months and it is embedded in a broader conservative and narrow minded political culture. According to one interviewee:

The decree is the product of a culture that is more and more intolerant and selfish, based on the illusion that it is possible in a globalised world to maintain unconquerable fortresses. But if before people were embarrassed to admit it publicly, [...] now the restraints have gone and we are rolling down in a situation that appears to me extremely worrying.³¹

In the last months such an atmosphere of tension seems to have had a negative impact on the life of Roma living in regular and unauthorised camps, especially on the informal relations with Italian people:

Before, when I used to have a job, every morning I would stop to drink a coffee in a bar. And the morning the incident happened I was in Rome. The barman asked me, "Do you know what your Romanians do here?" and I replied, "No, what do they do?" And he told me of the incident [...]. And he added, "You too should be careful, because you Romanians are only here to mess around. But he made a mistake, he should pay. If I were the judge I would have given him the electric chair because he needs to pay." I never stopped at that bar since.³²

Many are now afraid because of the decree. I don't know if it is a good law, I can't give you an answer to this problem, but this means integration of the Roma into society has been stopped.³³

According to the social workers of *Segnavia* who work at the unauthorised camp of Bovisa:

'[the camp residents] felt threatened even physically. They probably didn't suffer from physical attacks, but the feeling of strong insecurity in which they are living because they stay in an unauthorised camp in which they risk an eviction any day was exacerbated by the fact of feeling even more insecure because of what is happening in the media. Residents started to leave the camp less. They are scared and they say they make a lot less money. Some girls have started saying they are Albanian, not Romanian.'

Fear was the minimum shared denominator among Romanians together with the feeling of injustice over being punished for something they are not responsible for.

'If you are on the road and they think you are Romanian, they will beat you. Of course, I'm scared. Even for my children. I heard that some Italian boys with a motorbike hit a Romanian woman.'³⁴

This fear is also the result of the everyday discriminatory acts against the Roma (of all nationalities). Some reply they are used to it, 'because this is the way it is'. Discrimination, however, it is not a recent phenomenon, even if it did grow dramatically in the last years together with intolerance, according to Sister Claudia:

'Intolerance grows and it is allowed to grow. People are biased by very strong prejudices.'

Discrimination happens on the streets:

'The explosion of the situation in Rome led to a freezing of the relationships with the Italians. Thus, if before there were people who used to insult or be impolite to Roma, now it is even worse.'³⁵

³¹ Sister Claudia Biondi, Caritas Ambrosiana

³² Rom, via Triboniano camp

³³ Rom hosted in via Ortles, formerly at San Dionigi camp

³⁴ Rom, via Triboniano camp

³⁵ Aidworker, Segnavia/Padri Somaschi, Milan

It happens in places like markets, bars, supermarkets:

'I sell shoes. In some markets there are many people. And some people started saying "Look, the gypsies are coming" and started to do something. When I see things like this happen, that everybody could attack and kill you because you would not be able to protect yourself, I leave the shoes and go.'

As a consequence of this worsening of relations and increase in intolerance, a number of Roma families, especially those living in unauthorised camps, decided to go back to Romania or to send their children back to the grandparents, because the unsteadiness and the fear had become unbearable:

'Some people went back home because they were scared. Not because of the decree, nobody was expelled because of the decree. They expelled themselves because of fear. They said: "We don't feel safe here." They took the children away.'³⁶

Of the residents of the *Triboniano* camp, nobody seemed to have left as a consequence of these incidents. However, the job relationships were the most affected by this situation: several Roma lost their job, both those who were working with legal contracts and those who worked irregularly.

'I'm losing my job. I don't know if it is because of this problem but I used to be treated well ... but recently... I think in a few weeks I'll be fired. I think there is a phobia after what happened in Rome.'³⁷

'We are still working, but it's getting harder. [...] after the crime in Rome. I feel very sorry. It is incredibly bad, and it is not only that person who commits a crime, a lot of people commit crimes. Even among us, even among Italians. But since then, they started not wanting to give us a job anymore.'³⁸

Only a few people did not suffer from this atmosphere of growing intolerance, because of the deeper relationships established with the Italians over many years:

'With the Italian friends the relationships did not change. Even now I'm working with them, with my team, my friends. However, they told me: "Be aware that there are crazy Romanians around and stuff like that." And I replied: "I don't care. I've been here for eight years, I have regular documents since 2002, I am a resident. My children were born here, my brother works with me".'³⁹

Despite the above mentioned difficulties, the majority of the Roma interviewed still has a positive image of Italy. Even if now intolerance is perceived a lot more, in Italy they see the possibility of emancipation, of living in a dignified way and of giving their children a future that they don't see in Romania.

'I used to picture Italy as a tolerant country. This is my idea as I never had problems in Italy, I always worked. Before I used to amuse myself and say I was Romanian, and the Italian boys and ladies used to greet me. I liked to say I was Romanian. Now I feel ashamed and fearful. My situation was better one year ago, two years ago.'⁴⁰

'We always had good thoughts about Italy, because I work here and I earn 800 euros a month. If I go to Romania I make 150 euros a month. I can live on 1000 euros a month here, I can eat well, stay healthy, pay the bills, send my children to school. Romania is a tragedy. To stay in Romania, you earn 150 euros a month, how can you pay the bills,

³⁶ Aidworker, Segnavia/Padri Somaschi, Milan

³⁷ Rom hosted in via Ortles, formerly San Dionigi camps

³⁸ Rom, via Triboniano camp

³⁹ Rom, camp 3 in via Triboniano

⁴⁰ Rom, camp 3 in via Triboniano

with this and that. Anyway, Italy is better, because the salaries are higher. The problem is that we are both at home now, my wife and I.⁴¹

And the NGO workers report the same situation:

'On one side they say that in Italy you don't live well, that there are a lot more chances for a better life in other European countries, more guarantees and services. But after that, when you ask why they don't move to Germany, why they chose Italy, they stop. It is difficult to say what perception they have. Because, for sure, other countries are better, but at the same time there is more tolerance in Italy.'⁴²

The perception of local government varies a lot according to the different accommodation of interviewees: they all agree in deploring the decree n.181/2007, perceived as a group punishment for an act committed by a single person. But, the Romanian Roma living at the *Triboniano* regular camp are largely grateful for and satisfied with the policies carried out by the Municipality of Milan. According to an interviewee:

'The Municipality behaves in a very good way. The Municipality gave us a hand, they helped us out with the job, with services, with documents. They helped us with a caravan. The Italian people have been very welcoming and the most respectful in the whole world that I know, even in history.'⁴³

For those who live in a more precarious situation it is different, carried by the tide of frequent threats of evictions:

'There are behaviours that are not discrimination as such, but should be considered as torture, that are independent from the decree even in the case of the evictions and demolition of the shacks. Because if you hear everyday, "Tomorrow I will come and evict you, tomorrow I come and evict you..." and it goes on for months, keeping people in the grip of fear, it is a form of psychological torture.'⁴⁴

Many however have a tense relation with the police whether they live in a regular or unauthorised settlement: the police are felt like a menace, an unwanted presence, and relations have got worse as a consequence of the decree:

'but since then they started not to take us at work, the police started to come here at night too, hit on the door, ask you to sign a compulsory act. They started with this law, they started to mistreat us a lot more. They come and wake us up at 5, at 3, at 4, hitting on the door, wanting us to walk out to sign an act.'⁴⁵

'They behave in a very bad manner even if you are regular. I need to show the residence permit, identity card, job contact, pay check. They hold you for hours closed at the police station. It never happened to me, but it happened to my friends.'⁴⁶

⁴¹ Rom, via Triboniano camp

⁴² Sister Claudia Biondi, Caritas Ambrosiana

⁴³ Rom, camp 3, via Triboniano

⁴⁴ Aidworker, Segnavia/Padri Somaschi, Milan

⁴⁵ Rom, via Triboniano camp

⁴⁶ Rom, camp 3, via Triboniano

Summary

To conclude:

- Since the public uprising against Romanian Roma in Opera (Milan) in December 2006, the approach of the local authority towards this community has become tougher and stricter;
- In Milan, a large part of the public opinion and of the political leadership appears unsympathetic to the recent arrival of Romanian Roma which is perceived as an 'invasion' and a security threat.
- The incident in Rome further strengthened the local government's repressive approach against Romanian Roma.
- Political debate is dominated by 'security', 'public order' and 'evictions'. It is characterized by harsh language, bold generalisations and sometimes open expressions of racism.
- While the number of removal orders was limited, an indirect effect of the decree was the mass collection of biometric data.
- The systematic use of evictions as a deterrence instrument started in 2003 and continued throughout the recent 'emergency' without substantial change.
- Local press paid great attention to the issue throughout November. The misuse of the terms 'Roma', 'Romanian', and 'nomad' was frequent.
- Episodes of intolerance towards Roma (not only from Romania) were reported by interviewees who felt threatened by the current public outcry and by the statements of politicians.
- Some families left Milan for safer destinations. Some were reported to have returned to Romania.

BOLOGNA

Piero Colacicchi with Lorenzo Monasta, Eva Rizzin and Nando Sigona

Introduction: Roma and Sinti in Bologna

The town of Bologna (140,000 square kilometres, approximately 400,000 inhabitants, 1,700 Romanians, of whom 700 are Roma by December 2006⁴⁷) has seen groups of Roma and Sinti pass through since the XV century. The presence of these groups in Bologna is documented especially through bans and expulsion decrees issued from the XV to the XIX century. In more recent times, the groups that most frequently moved around the city and the suburbs were Sinti.

According to official figures, in the province of Bologna there are ten authorised camps - six are 'long-stay camps', one is a 'transit camp', one is labelled a 'long-stay area for special use' and two are refugee camps built in the 1990s to host Roma refugees from former-Yugoslavia. These camps are managed directly by their residents only in one case, for all the others it is either the Municipality managing them directly (five cases) or through a convention with an NGO (four cases). By the end of November 2006, the residents in authorised camps numbered 571 (147 households) with 68.3 per cent of them being Italian citizens⁴⁸.

The first Roma to arrive as immigrants came from the Balkans at the end of 1980s. They were about 190 people from the Krajina region, and another 270 from Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Macedonia and Kosovo followed soon. They settled on the banks of the *Reno* river. A third migratory wave, over 300 people, arrived in 1991 from the same areas. They lived in self-made shacks, in tents, some in campers. They chose those marginal areas because it was easier for them to hide, given the fact that many had no residence permits. Only some of them were regularized in 1989 through the Martelli immigration law, the first law that tried to come to terms with the growing trend of immigration to Italy. Many were left out, but stayed in hiding, in the hope that a new law would regularize them too (Brunello, 1997).

In the meanwhile the number of Italian Sinti living in Bologna was also growing (around 700 by 1990), residing in authorised camps or in privately owned areas. On 23 December 1990, the killing of two Sinti by a gang of right wing policemen (the so-called "Banda della Uno Bianca") in the unauthorised camp *in via Gobetti*, and another attack by the same group in the camp of *via Persicetana*, pushed many to live town.

Between 1990 and 1994 the city administration approved a plan to build five "aree attrezzate per nomadi" (serviced areas), equipped with shacks, and basic water and sanitation facilities. Two, better organized, hosted Sinti. The other three were built for Roma originally from the Balkans. Living in the authorised camps entitled regular migrants to official residence, which is a necessary requirement to work, to buy or rent a house, to join the National Health Service and to obtain other basic services. Many Roma immigrants though, that were irregularly in Italy, stayed so for years, since all migration laws put in place after the 1989 Martelli law proposed very similar or even stricter systems of regularisation. Some Roma didn't manage to get a regular

⁴⁷ See: http://www.osservatorioimmigrazione.provincia.bologna.it/index_newsletter.asp

⁴⁸ See: <http://www.provincia.bologna.it/immigrazione/pdf/DatiSintiRom2006.pdf>

permit to stay until recently and are forced to make a living through begging. Many children, born in Italy of those migrants, have never received resident permits and have been irregular since birth.

In 1993 a survey by the Italian Refugee Council (Cir) found 882 Roma from former Yugoslavia, 560 of which had a right to be officially recognized as refugees according to Italian law n.390. Many of those who received refugee status were given shelter in 14 reception centres funded by the law n. 390/1992 with a daily sum of 35,000 lire (17.50 Euro) per person allocated to local authorities and NGOs supporting refugees. With time, people were advised to convert their residence permit based on refugee status into working permits. The advice proved in some cases risky as the job market is not particularly open to Roma. Losing a job or being unemployed meant losing a key requirement for the renewal of the residence permit. Several families, after a period in reception centres, applied successfully for social housing.

Two of those centres still exist: one in Sasso Marconi and one in Castel Maggiore. Both are managed by the Bologna Municipal government and are still inhabited by Romani families of Serbian and Bosnian origin.

During the local government led by Mr Guazzaloca (mayor of Bologna, 1999-2004) not much was done for Roma and Sinti. Several new unauthorised camps grew along the *Reno* river and in a piece of land at the border between Bologna and Castel Maggiore.

Early morning on 19 September 2002, following a written order by Mayor Guazzaloca, the police intervened along the Reno riverbank, in Borgo Panicale, to destroy all shacks that had been built there. The residents, a small community of Romanian Roma, were all taken to the police station and, after a 24 hour detention in which they were kept in complete isolation, were deported to Romania, despite many having filed a request for a leave to remain for employment'. According Valerio Monteventi, city councillor in Bologna:

The procedure through which the shacks were destroyed, the people identified and the expulsion carried out ignored completely basic human rights. No right to appeal against the expulsion order was given to the Roma.'

The operation ended with 33 people forcedly removed, 10 receiving a written order to depart from Italy and 22 just evicted from the illegal camp and left on the road. On 16 October 2002, the former *Ferrhotel* (hotel for train travellers) of *Via Casarini*, in Bologna, was occupied by squatters and became what was called *Scalo Internazionale Migranti*. The Romanian Roma moved there together with other groups coming from other illegal camps that were also demolished.

Present day

In June 2004, Sergio Cofferati was elected mayor of Bologna supported by a coalition of leftwing parties. The following year, the mayor - former general secretary of the largest Italian trade union (CGIL) - launched an action plan called 'Battle for legality'. According to the plan, solidarity actions towards the weaker members of society must be associated, when necessary, with repressive actions. The rationale of the plan is that by balancing solidarity with respect of law is the only way to guarantee social cohesion and to protect the weaker members of society, the first victims of crime.

Local government and the community with their tools can and must act with solidarity to correct the negative effects and the unwanted outcomes of law, but neither can accept the violation of law becoming political praxis. Illegality, whatever reason produces it, cannot be justified (quote from an early draft of the 'Battle for legality', November 2005)

Thus, Cofferati ordered the eviction and demolition of illegal camps, and only in a few cases, residents were offered an alternative shelter. In most cases those people whose camps got demolished were just left homeless. As a result of this policy Cofferati gained the nickname of 'The Sheriff' and ended up clashing against the radical left groups of his coalition who accused him of totalitarian attitudes, and left the ruling coalition on 11 October 2007 after the mayor decided to sign a "pact for legality" with the support of the rightwing party *Alleanza Nazionale* (National Alliance).

The mayor's 'battle for legality' led among the others to a series of forced evictions. On 10 March 2005, a squatted building where about 100 people – mostly Romanian Roma – were living in *Via Cesarini* was closed down. Some of the residents were offered shelter in a municipal reception centre '*Villa Salus*', a former private hospital, run – with a very firm hand, according to some interviewees - by the Red Cross. That lasted until 30 June 2007, when villa Salus was also closed and all the residents sent away. 80 Romanian Roma families were put in apartments partially financed by the local authority.

Aside from these families, the local government persisted in its deterrence policy which used forced evictions as a symbolic act to reassure the local community and to make Bologna less and less attractive for Roma. Evictions carried out by local police and private contractors are followed by the systematic demolition of shacks and often by the destruction of personal belongings. Here follows a brief chronology of the evictions.

On 21 March 2005, the first of this new series of evictions took place in the *Lungo Reno* area. Ten shacks got destroyed and about 30 Roma ended up on the road without any help. Answering to a formal query at the City Council assembly, Mr Cofferati declared:

The eviction of the camp and the destruction of all shacks and property was done according to my orders. Social workers were not present because only adult males with no residence permits were there and therefore there was no need for social support.

On 19 October 2005, state police, *carabinieri*, local police officers and city cleaners with bulldozers destroyed all the shacks in the camp that grew between *Via Triunvirato* and *Via Agucchi* and cleaned the area so that people could not easily rebuild their shacks. The Romanian Roma who lived there got arrested. Only a small group managed to escape in time. Some of the arrested Roma ended up in the CPT (temporary detention centre), others were expelled to Romania. The exact number of people involved in this action is not available because the area was sealed by the police and no social workers or NGOs were allowed in at the moment the operation was carried out.

On 17 November 2005, an eviction order was enforced on the Lungoreno. All the shacks were destroyed but only after most of the inhabitants had been transferred into containers in a camp equipped by the Municipality in *Via Santa Caterina di Quarto*, in San Donato. 13 of the people who lived along the Lungoreno were put into the CPT. Nothing is known of them after that.

On 20 June 2006, 10 shacks at the unauthorised camp in *Via Gobetti* were destroyed upon request by the University that needed to build new faculty buildings. Most of the people who lived in the camp managed to run away before the police arrived.

On 4 August 2006, an abandoned building called *Ex Centro di Formazione Professionale Casteldebole* in which various groups of Romanian Roma had lived as squatters for a while, was evacuated and all entrances blocked so as not to allow anybody else to occupy it.

On 14 October 2006, about twenty Romanians – mostly Roma – ran away from the *via Pò* camp while their shacks got bulldozed. On 23 October 2006, an illegal settlement was bulldozed in the *Cave Reno* area, on the banks of the river *Reno*, near the *Borgo Panicale* area. A few days later a new settlement had already sprung up under a bridge nearby, where many people from the previous camp took shelter inside large cement tubes which were to be used for building work on the motorway.

On 18 November 2006, a large camp located in *Via Bignardi*, near *Via Gobetti*, next to the *Navile* Canal, was demolished following an order from the Mayor. 123 Romanian citizens, mostly Roma – including 60 children and 14 women - were arrested by the police and taken into custody. That same evening 40 Roma were put on a flight to Romania and immediately repatriated. 14 ended up in a CPT, 13 in jail for disobeying orders to leave the country, and 50 people who had managed to escape before the police had surrounded the camp took refuge wherever possible. The same day, the *Via Scandellara* Roma camp, illegally sprung up on a private area – where it is said that the Roma were paying the owner to stay – caught fire. Thirty huts and shacks were burned. 100 Romanian Roma who were living there escaped but lost all their belongings. Nobody was hurt.

On the same day, 41 Romanian Roma moved into an abandoned farm house in *Via Malvezza* for the night, then into Bologna's main square. After a long negotiation with the city administration representatives, they were moved into a building in *Via dell'Industria*. They stayed there for several weeks and then they were transferred to an unused school.

On 14 December 2006, 50 Romanian Roma squatters, mostly women and children, living in the *Via Malvezza* farm house were taken into custody by the police. 30 were put on an airplane and sent back to Romania. Six were arrested for failing to follow orders to leave the country; the rest were kept in custody for a day and then released with written orders to leave the country.

On 12 July 2007, another farm house is evacuated in *Via Malvezza*. 100 squatters, about 30 of them children, ended up in the street and, after moving from one place to another, camped in a public park, in *Viale Marx*. A few days later, the police surrounded the *Viale Marx* settlement and forced the Roma to leave.

On the 25 July, 20 Romanian Roma were sent away by the police from a *Lungo Reno* camp. The following day another eviction in *Via Marco Polo*.

On 29 August 2007, the police confiscated a camper in which a family of twelve – 10 children – were living. They were part of the group of Roma who were evacuated from *Via Malvezza* a month before.

On 29 October 2007, local police, state police and *carabinieri* surrounded a camp on the banks of the *Reno* river, near *Borgo Panicale*, and evicted seventy Romanian Roma after having identified them, and destroyed all shacks and huts the Roma had built as shelter.

Local press: articles from the newspaper “*Il Resto del Carlino*”

“*Il Resto del Carlino*”, a centre right paper selling over 160,000 copies in Bologna and Emilia Romagna region, is one of Italy's oldest papers, its first issue having appeared 150 years ago.

In the period 31 October-15 December, 54 articles dealing with Roma issues were published and are here examined for their content: 1) to understand the newspaper's position on the emergency decree and its enforcement and 2) to analyze the frequency and context of three key words – rom, zingaro, nomade, all synonyms in Italian – to determine their relative connotations.

Taking into consideration that on 19 November a 5-year-old Rom of Romanian origin, Florin Draghici, died in a fire and two of his little brothers were badly burnt – a story that moved the people of Bologna and made the front page in all the national newspapers - the Resto del Carlino articles can be roughly divided into three main groups: 1) from 31 October, and especially after 2 November until 19 November; 2) from 20 November to 29 November; 3) from 30 November to 15 December.

During the first period, 17 articles were published, 4 of which dealt with evictions and the destruction of camps. In these articles the term “zingaro” appears 20 times against the term “rom”, which appears 16 times. During the second period, that is after the tragedy of Florin Draghici, in 22 articles dealing with the fire and then the funeral, the term “zingaro” appears three times: twice on 20 November (once in brackets and once in a quote in which a Rom answers to the journalist: ‘we are not what you call zingari’) and again on 25, in a quote in which the term is attributed to a nameless “non-Romanian” Romani woman. After that, the term “zingaro” disappears altogether; while the term “rom” appears 38 times. During the third period, there are 15 articles dealing again with evictions, expulsions and the “Security Pact” and the term “zingaro” comes back again, but only 9 times while the term “rom” comes up 30 times. It seems therefore that the journalists considered it embarrassing to use “zingaro” when writing about people in mourning after such a tragedy.

The term “zingaro” (total 32 times) in fact is always used to infer a somewhat negative situation or in all together derogative sentences. “During the *rom* emergency the *zingari* – as everybody calls them [the Romanian Roma] by now - ...” (03/11)⁴⁹; “A group of *zingari* moves towards the bus station, their typical meeting place” (05/11); “The *zingari* are there to bivouac from morning to evening” (05/11); “The *zingari* [...] can only take” (05/11); “If they realize that you are a *zingaro*” (25/11); “Dressed as a *zingaro*” (01/12); “Two young *zingari* leave their clan” (05/11); “The *zingari* must always hide”.

The term “rom” (total 96 times) appears in all kinds of different contexts. It is usually used in reference to persons belonging to this particular ethnic group, without clear connotations implying judgement. “At least 1,500 are the *rom* living in town either in apartments or as squatters” (03/11); “*Rumeni rom* don’t mix with the others” (05/11); “Florin Draghici, a *rumeno* of the *rom* ethnic group” (20/11); “The *rom* do create problems, but they are EU citizens by now” (28/11); “Villas near shacks (in Cerat): the mysteries of the *rom* people” (01/12).

The term “nomade” appears only twice. Once as a straightforward synonym of *rom* (or *zingaro*) (03/11) and once accompanied by “campo”: “campo *nomad*” meaning “nomad camp” (11/12).

“Rumeno” or “romeno” (total 45 times) is used to mean “person from Romania”. It appears sometimes by itself, sometimes in connection with *rom*: “*rumeni e rom*” meaning Romanians and Roma, or “*rom rumeni*” meaning Romanian Roma. “Camps in which *rumeni* and *rom* live together” (11/11). “We need immigrants and we must socialize with *rom*, *rumeni*, ...etc” (17/11). In one article *rom* and *rumeni* are mixed together: in fact we have *romeni* (three) and *rumeni* (one) in similar contexts (04/11). Still the confusion between *rom* and *rumeni* is not as prominent in Bologna as elsewhere. After Florin’s death an article declares: “The *rom* are afraid – and so are the *rumeni*” (20/11). “Florin Draghici, a young *rumeno* of the *rom* ethnic group” (20/11). “The officer of the Romanian police” (02/11).

⁴⁹ All dates are given the Italian way: day of the month / month. The year is not mentioned being always 2007.

Coming to the content of the articles they reflect the different moods of the city during the three periods already described. During period one, four out of 17 articles describe immediately". On 09/11: "Delinquency blocks development: Only 30% of the apartments will be rented in the Bononia building" because "*rom* and *zingari* live in the nearby park" (09/11).

The articles published during the second period (20-29/11) are mostly about the fire evictions, while the rest of the articles report statements by local politicians for or against the Mayor's policy of forced evictions. "The *rom* are still there" (31/10) is the title of an article describing the uselessness of forced evictions. "Expulsions: just to keep people quiet." (02/11). "After the bulldozers: they must be at least 1,500. The invisible people who live in tents and under bridges" (03/11). On 04/11 Sebastian Zlotea, Roma and Sinti representative at the "Circolo Migranti" is quoted declaring that he will start a hunger strike against the decree n.181. In the same article, Constantin Constantin, representative of the Romanian community in Bologna, is quoted asking for "rights". Again, on 04/11, an eviction that took place at *Prati di Caprara* is described during which 22 *rumeni* were arrested. For seven of them the Prefect signed "the very first expulsion papers [...]" but they will not be expelled and the circumstances in which it took place, about the Draghici family, the funeral, and comments by the Mayor and by politicians, some very critical of the circumstances and of the way the Draghici family was forced to live. On 20/11 *Il Resto del Carlino* publishes four articles.

The *rom* – and *rumeni* – are afraid. Many don't trust the official version. [...]. I don't want to give my name, but you know how it is with us *rom*. Someone started the fire. [...]. Behind the hospital many *rom* are hiding.

On the same day the uncles of the dead child declare: "We are proud of being *rom*". On 21/11 the Mayor states: "Such tragedies must never happen again". In another article someone offers a job to the dead child's father. Also: "Help me take Florin back to Romania". On 23 November, the day before the funeral, an eviction took place during which 31 Roma adults and 8 children who were squatting in an abandoned factory were sent away with no alternative offered. Mr. Monteventi, city councillor, commented:

Even the funeral was not enough to stop the daily hunt for *rumeni*!

The Mayor responded: "Bulldozers help us keep people from putting up stable camps in areas belonging to the Bologna administration". On 25 November, a teacher comments: "There must be 1,500 people living in those shacks!" The vice mayor replies: "Nonsense: they are just a few hundred". Then the funeral in Romania and the comments by Romanians fill up one article a day for the next four days.

After this, the atmosphere goes back to normal. On 30 November Ms Bartolomei, a journalist sent to Cerat, in Romania, to write about Florin's funeral, writes an article entitled "Was Florin's death only due to an accident? People in Cerat suspect foul play." The journalist doesn't openly show offence, but the article contains three "zingaro" next to seven "rom".

From 1 December onwards, most articles have something to do with the "Security Pact", forced evictions and expulsions and with a young Romani girl whose brother was charged for violence against her. In this last group of articles the term "zingaro" comes up six times. On 11 December an article deals with a group of 17 people of "Slavic origin, 12 of whom are children", who just got evicted from Via della Volta and moved to Via Piratino. From the last names, quoted in the article – Seferovic and Halilovic – one understands that they are Roma from Bosnia.

The situation in Bologna after 2 November 2007

Sergio Cofferati, mayor of Bologna, gave several interviews and one can easily follow his way of thinking through newspapers and public statements. On 14 December, "Dire" press agency reports the blessing of Cofferati to the government decision to adopt a tougher approach against crime which he himself had in the previous weeks strongly campaigned for, together with the increase of the mayor's power with respect to public security. Congratulating the prefect of Bologna for the 30 expulsion orders signed up to then, he states:

Aside from the actual numbers, I think it is an efficacious signal in relation to the typologies we are dealing with. The expulsions have to do with individuals considered dangerous because of their criminal activities and were rapidly carried out. [...] However, it is difficult to correctly evaluate the Security Pack decree before its definitive shape is defined [by Parliament]⁵⁰.

Different views came out in some interviews with key informants we carried out in December in Bologna.

Valerio Monteventi, independent city councillor elected with Partito di Rifondazione Comunista, pointed out the importance of the Roma issue in Bologna and how the emphasis of Cofferati on security and order has put the ruling coalition in serious crisis. Mr Monteventi strongly criticised the tough approach of the local police and the way they enforce evictions. 'It is now common practice – he adds – to destroy shacks and cut tents so that can't be reused and to 'convince' Roma to leave the city'. He also made reference to a large eviction he had witnessed on 23 November when 70 Roma people with children, squatting in an abandoned factory, were sent away with no alternative place to stay. People are forced to be continuously on the move in the municipal territory and it is therefore hard to estimate how many people live in this situation. According to Mr Monteventi, overall there are more than 1,500 Roma in Bologna, mostly Romanian, but there are also Italian Roma, Sinti and Roma from former Yugoslavia.

Regarding this later group, Monteventi pointed out how, despite the interest being focused on Romanians, deportations of non-EU citizens are still happening.

The enforcement of the decree n.181 in Bologna was discussed with the lawyer Andrea Ronchi. He pointed out how the number of expulsion orders is very limited and each order is individual and that it is therefore not possible to talk of mass expulsions. This view is confirmed by another interviewee, lawyer Nazzarena Zorzella, who stated:

'I think one can say that there were attempts at mass expulsion, but they did not actually happen [...] even though some of the expulsion orders were prepared in such generic terms that when appealed against the court had to accept the appeal'.

People who received expulsion orders were in most cases picked up in the act of misdemeanour or crime (petty theft, burglary, resisting arrest etc), tried using an urgent procedure, sent to a CPT and then served with an expulsion order. According to the level of 'threat' the person presents to society, the order can be either enforced immediately with deportation or the person is given a limited time to leave the country by their own means.

Mr Ronchi has heard of Romanian citizens sent to Romania within 48 hours without enough time to put an appeal on the order. Mr Ronchi followed two cases: an 18-year-old man and a 19-year-old woman, both Romanians, both with no criminal

⁵⁰ "Dire" press agency, 14 December 2007:

record. Accused of resisting arrest, they were sentenced to 10 months, they were left for two nights in a CPT and then immediately put on a flight and repatriated.

'Most Romanian Roma' - Mr Ronchi says – 'would like to stay here. In fact they make plans to remain in Italy and work. Some have been in Bologna for at least 10 years' and, he adds, 'the local government has not yet made any effort to facilitate their integration'.

For Sevastian Zlotea, Romani representative at the *Circolo Migranti del Partito di Rifondazione Comunista*, many Romanian Roma left Bologna in the last few months because of the continuous evictions ordered by the mayor. The precarious living conditions made worse by the deterrence strategy of the local government forced them to leave. In the period of research, something like 200 Romanian Roma, Mr Zlotea reports, fled from Bologna, among them at least 80 children who were all going to school in Bologna. 'There are still many Roma hiding – Mr Zlotea says - but their lives have become even more precarious than before'.

According to Dimitris Argiropoulos, the decree had a terrible effect on the Roma communities in Bologna, but it is important also to understand how these communities reacted. On one hand, many of the old Romanian Roma who were regularized in early 2007 through the entrance of Romania in the EU escaped from the city of Bologna and went into hiding far away from the city – 'I found three Roma families up on a mountain near the town of *Porretta* [...] They had mounted their tents in the woods and tried to look like tourists, just camping', he says.

Others, who have been in Bologna for a shorter period, living in rapidly built camps that could be moved from place to place, reorganized themselves by moving to the small towns all around the city. In those places it is much easier to find jobs and houses to rent.

Mr Argiropoulos also pointed out that 'while before, when Romanian Roma were irregular, they were finding easily job without contract, since they became EU citizens it is more difficult for them to obtain regular contracts and decent treatment'. Irregular jobs are more difficult to find now also because with the current climate employers are more worried about being charged for employing immigrants without a contract.

A more general effect of the decree n.181 was, according to Argiropoulos, to make Italians more and more concerned about security and 'feel like they have a duty and a right to control all non-Italians. Whenever someone visibly foreign goes to an office the first thing they ask him is for his/her residence permit, even if this has nothing to do with the job on hand'. This is having repercussions also on other migrant communities, even those established in town for a long time. He adds that police checks have increased also for non-EU Roma and Italian Sinti.

As Nazzaren Zorzella, lawyer in Bologna, summed up,

'Comparing the two periods – before and after Cofferati and before and after the decree n.181 – the second seems less dramatic than the first. Most of the evictions took place after Cofferati was elected and life for Roma could not change much for the worse after the decree n.181'.

Summary

In conclusion:

- In spite of official statements, most interviewees agree that the highest number of expulsions concerned Romanian Roma.
- The mayor fully supported the enforcement of the decree n.181 which he saw as coherent with his 'battle for legality' begun in 2005.
- The decree did not bring a substantial change to the way Romanian Roma are treated in Bologna, as Cofferati had pursued a tough approach since 2005.
- The term '*zingaro*' is always used in the press to infer a somewhat negative situation and in derogative sentences. The term 'Rom' has more objective and descriptive connotations.
- Most expulsion orders concerned people with a criminal record. Evictions, however, have affected all the Romanian Roma living in camps.
- Many Roma migrants, especially from Romania, left Italy 'spontaneously' for fear of the current alarm about Roma, or opted for less visible places – such as small towns - on the outskirts of Bologna where it is easier to find irregular jobs, houses and schools for their children.

ROMA

Ulderico Daniele and Stefano Montesi with Nando Sigona

Rome: economic and social growth model

In recent years Rome, with a long period of centre-left administrations and growing economic and demographic trends (2,697,000 inhabitants, +1.8% compared with 2005), seems to be the focus of a new visibility, not only linked to the archaeological and monumental heritage, or to its central religious and institutional role. A series of cultural, economic and political initiatives have boosted what even the international press calls a new "Roman renaissance".

The recent publication by Censis (2006) of the "Report on Rome: the evolution of the city" offers a detailed analysis of what has been termed the "Roman development model". In this publication Rome is described as having the unprecedented role of "engine of national growth", with an increase in the municipal GNP of 6.7% between 2001 and 2006, in countertendency with the rest of Italy, and an unparalleled growth in the employment rate of 13.7%. "A metropolis more linked to the European standards of growth than to the Italian ones" (Censis, 2006: 2), the city wants to be characterised no more and not just for its capacity to attract flows of national and international tourism, but for the elaboration of an "entirely original model of growth" (Censis, 2006: 6).

At the same time it needs to be emphasized how the significant growth of the real estate market has constituted in the last five years one of the invisible mechanisms of economic growth of the capital city, according to a process which includes both the progressive gentrification of the areas around the historical centre⁵¹, and the development of new areas outside the border marked by the GRA (big bypass roadway) with the recent publication of the Municipal Urban Plan⁵².

In this scenario, the presence of migrants reflects how Rome can be considered a true "national core" of immigration: the 432,000 resident foreigners in the Provincial territory make it the second province in terms of number of migrants, while if we limit our scope to the municipal area, Rome outnumbers Milan, with a significant rate of minors and new born babies to foreign parents (Caritas/Migrantes, 2007). Romanian migrants constitute the largest national group in the urban area (Osservatorio Romano sulle Migrazioni); by far surpassing that of more long-established migrant groups (i.e. Philippines, Bangladesh, and Albania).

The presence of migrants constitutes a central as well as an invisible element of economic and social growth: both the real estate market boom and the growth of the building sector have found in the presence of migrants⁵³ their essential engine and the main component on which to reallocate the human and social costs of economic growth.

⁵¹ Pompeo F. *Dov'è finita la periferia? Retoriche e pratiche urbane a Roma tra nuove centralità e vecchie esclusioni*. Atti del VII Convegno *Abitare la frontiera*. Fondazione Michelucci, 2007: in press.

⁵² Anci and Cresme, 2005)

⁵³ The real estate market is benefitting enormously from immigrants in need of housing to whom landlords charge overpriced rent (often double that the market value) without legal contracts (see Cresme, 2002; Caritas, Camera di Commercio, Osservatorio Romano sulle Migrazioni, 2006)

The presence of migrants and their social role in Rome is relevant, although often undervalued. Migrants working as house maids, construction workers, or in the field of commerce and services contribute significantly to the city wealth even if often working irregularly; yet we find more and more appeals and political initiatives for legality and security vis-a-vis migrants whose use of public spaces is often perceived as a threat by the rest of the population.

On one hand, the fatalities at construction sites - even public ones (see FILLEA-CGIL, 2006) - or in overcrowded and substandard housing⁵⁴ and Roma settlements⁵⁵ due to fire or cold, are overlooked in the press. On the other hand, any criminal episodes involving migrants are used to stir up public indignation and are dealt with a repressive and *securitarian* approach⁵⁶.

The (unwanted) presence of Roma is at the centre of a continuous public debate in Rome (see Sigona, 2006) and represents a testing case for public policy aimed alternatively at urban regeneration and then at security. The closure of the camp of *vicolo Savini* constitutes a significant example of the management of the Roma in Rome. Built in the mid-1980s on a land with no proposed use in a relatively central area of town, the camp was inhabited by groups of Roma who had previously been scattered throughout the whole southwest area of Rome. Since the mid-1990s, the presence of the University of Rome 3 resulted in a regeneration plan for the area and, as a consequence, the camp became a political problem not only for the harsh living conditions of one thousand Roma living there, but also because it did not fit with the plans of the expanding university⁵⁷.

The long path that ended with the closure and dismantling of the camp of *vicolo Savini* in 2005 can be read today as an example: the Roma, and among them a relevant number of people born in Rome, were moved to the new camp of *Castel Romano*, 25km away from the city, 5km from the closest village, located in the border area between a natural park and the *Pontina* road. This settlement was used in the Security Pact of Rome as model camp for other 4 large settlements, each meant to host more than a thousand inhabitants. Nevertheless, the living conditions in the 'model' camp proved to be harsh. Environment pathologies – including cases of hepatitis and other infectious diseases probably due to polluted water supplies – and a drastic decline in school attendance by children were brought to public attention. Furthermore, the excessive cost of relocation and maintenance of the camp was pointed out.

⁵⁴ During winter 2006, a mother and child from Bangladesh died while trying to escape from a fire that was burning the house in which they lived, in the Esquilino borough, together with other 7 countrymen. Cfr. Il Messaggero January 14 2007.

⁵⁵ Only to mention the two most recent cases happened last summer, a young Roma couple lost their lives in the container fire at the equipped camp of via dei Gordiani, a few days after the visit by the Minister of Internal Affairs, Amato; and in October 2007, during the Rome film festival, a newborn child died in one of the shacks located on the course of the Tevere river.

⁵⁶ In autumn 2006, after an arson attack led by a group of Italian local residents on some shacks in the Roma settlement of Ponte Mammolo (Rome), the prefect of Rome at the time, Achille Serra, asked the Government to tighten control over incoming migrants to prevent tensions with locals.

⁵⁷ In May 2002, a Head of Department at 'Roma 3' stated that '[Roma] cultural identity doesn't fit well with the urban culture' (Il Manifesto 19\5\2000), while the Rector of the University, Guido Fabiani, in several occasions stated that 'the proximity between the university and the camp is generating an impossible situation [...] the solution needs to be found soon, otherwise we will have to make a decision regarding the permanence of Rome 3 in this area (press release 44\2000).

While the proposal of the four mega-camps outside the urban perimeter has for now been put aside, especially due to the strong opposition of the prefect of Rome, the local government has not as yet developed any alternative plan to deal with Romani camps. Instead, waves of panic over the situation sweep the public and constitute the constant background of continuous emergency approach in which interventions on the "Roma issue" are being elaborated and carried out (See Sigona, 2006).

The Roma in Rome

In Rome there are 35 large Roma settlements scattered in most of the twenty municipalities, with an estimated population of 6,500 people, most of them coming from the Balkan area. Only 5 out of 35 settlements are inhabited by Italian Roma (445 residents), representing 7% of the total. In addition to the 35 camps there are other smaller settlements (*baraccopoli*) where about 5,000 Romanian Roma live. There are also about 2,000 Italian Roma and 1,500 foreign Roma who live in houses. In total, the number of Roma living in Rome is estimated by NGOs working with Roma to be about 15,000-18,000 people. Among the foreign Roma, many have no leaves to remain (*permesso di soggiorno*) or their leave to remain has expired⁵⁸. Most of the camps are located in the East part of the capital, mainly in the Municipalities V, VI, VII and VIII. But some of the camps with critical sanitary, infrastructural and logistical problems are located in the Municipalities XI, XV and XX⁵⁹.

Only recently, the local police carried out a survey on the number of residents in authorised and non-authorised camps. The results, reported last autumn, are from 74 camps in the whole municipal area (see "La Repubblica", November 3rd 2007), while no updated information was given regarding the total population.

About half of 15-18,000 inhabitants, it is assumed, are from Romania. They mainly live in unauthorised and transient settlements. In fact, the influx of Romanian Roma began in the mid-1990s and some of them have gradually been put in authorised camps. The settlements of *Casilino 700* and *via di Salone* were the first, followed by other camps in which the administration has intervened, like *Ex-Snia Viscosa*, whose residents were relocated to the *Tiber* camping site.

The most significant flow of Romanian Roma towards Rome started after 1 January 2001, when a visa was no longer needed to visit Italy. In contrast, the recent accession of Romania into the European Union does not seem to have caused the announced - by the politicians and the media - "invasion", if we consider that the route between Italy and Romania has been in fact open for several years (See ECAS, 2008).

These arrivals, according to most interviewees, broke the relative calm which had been reached after the settlement of the Roma from the Balkans in the 1980s and 1990s.

According to the chief of the VIII unit of the municipal police⁶⁰, Antonio Di Maggio, 'the situation was more or less under control, we could say we knew what was

⁵⁸ See Opera Nomadi Sezione Lazio (<http://archivioromanolil.blog.tiscali.it/jz2674929/>)

⁵⁹ Source: Comune di Roma, "Piano di Intervento finalizzato all'integrazione delle comunità rom/sinti"

⁶⁰ It is an operative unit of the Municipal Police that was progressively given by the municipal administration the responsibility to intervene on authorised and unauthorised camps. The actions of this group are often at the centre of controversy, especially for their methods of intervention.

happening and where and who was responsible'; this was the result of a strong public investment in the building of camps that allowed concentration and control of the Roma. In contrast, the arrival of the Romanian Roma was not met by a similar strategy, nor did the local authority try to open a line of dialogue with the newcomers. For this reason, in the first years of the new Millennium, a growing number of small unauthorised settlements sprang up along the banks of the *Tevere* and *Aniene rivers*, in parks and in disused buildings. These people come mainly from Craiova, Timisoara and rural areas of southwestern Romania. Even if, at the beginning, the limited number of people and shacks mean that these settlements tend to remain invisible, gradually the concentration of people grows, as in the case of the *Ponte Mammolo* area or alongside the river in *via della Magliana*. At the same time, associations and institutions see the number of spontaneous settlements grow throughout the whole Municipal territory, occupying larger stretches of the riverside, from *Tor di Quinto* to *Ponte Milvio*, from *Magliana* to the *Porta Portese* bridge.

These settlements gave rise to a new geography of precarious living in town, a mobile geography because of being constantly under the pressure of natural emergencies, like the floods of the *Tevere* that forced the Municipality of Rome to give shelter to several thousands of people in autumn 2004 and in the same period of 2005, and because of being affected by the irregular administrative status of the Romanian Roma, who could be expelled like any other migrant up to 31 December 2006. However, the major cause of precariousness of these settlements is the intervention of the police forces and of the VIII Unit of the municipal police which, on the orders of the municipal administration, has adopted a strategy of continuous evictions and the destruction of shacks inhabited by the Roma. According to nonprofit workers, but also according to the only administrative representative that agreed to participate in our research work, the only policy adopted towards the unauthorised settlements has been that of destruction of settlements, without establishing any sort of dialogue with the communities involved, without putting into place any emergency intervention to respond to the basic needs of those evicted, and without considering the hypothesis of attempting to overcome the actual problem of shanty towns.

The consequence of this political decision has been to produce a sort of forced nomadism inside the urban space, where small camps grow much faster than they are dismantled (we encountered a similar phenomenon also in Milan and Bologna). Furthermore, as Paolo Ciani of the Comunità di S.Egidio pointed out, with the continuous reappearance of shacks and settlements, the fear and the feeling of distrust in the institutional action grows among the citizens.

As a consequence, the Romanian Roma did not even have access to that form of segregated inclusion that was offered to the Bosnian Roma in the 1990s. The coming of the new millennium seems instead to have radicalised the local authority approach to Roma, being now focused almost entirely on reducing their presence, trying to make their existence more and more precarious and depicting them as a "public threat".

Monitoring of local press

Articles on the situation of the Roma in Rome were published everyday in the period between 31 October and 15 December 2007, both in the national and local news sections of *Il Messaggero*, a newspaper founded in 1878 which sells about 250,000 copies a day.

The murder of Giovanna Reggiani brought the Roma issue from the local section of the newspaper to the national one.

In almost all of the articles the term "Roma" is employed. The term "nomads" is used in some articles, while only in one case the terms "*zingarelle*" (little gypsy girls) is found, in the case of minors arrested for theft. In another case, in an article on theft, "pickpockets" was used in the title, while "band of nomads" is used in the article. (9 December).

A number of articles report and comment on the Reggiani incident on 1 November 2007, one is entitled: 'Assaulted by a Romanian, denounced by an old Romanian lady. The assailant arrested in the nearby nomad camp'. No reference at this point to the ethnic origin of the assailant. On the first page, in a comment piece ("End of tolerance"), the author Vincenzo Cerami, writes that "a tough approach was needed already before the tragedy and now a radical change of strategy for the management of this disturbing phenomenon has become urgent". The call for 'tough measures' is a leitmotiv of the Roman press.

The newspaper also reports a statement by the mayor of Rome, Walter Veltroni, who – the journalist points out – does not fear being accused of intolerance towards Romanians. Veltroni says:

Before the accession of Romania into the EU, Rome was the safest capital in the world. [...] no need to hide that there is a specific problem, if we consider that 75 percent of the arrests for theft and rape come from the same country and that all of the crimes happen in the same way

On 2 November, instead, the newspaper gives some space to the news that the suspect was arrested thanks to the testimony of a Romani woman. However, soon afterwards, the author says:

Police searches in Roma camps started in Milan (were 1,400 Romanian Roma have been filed) and Rome, where in nine months 5,241 people have been evicted from different illegal sites and today 15 camps have been searched and 12 people were arrested.

Elsewhere, an article reports the opinions of some Romanian workers, one of whom is concerned to see his dream of integration fading away because of 'these folks that you call Romanians, but are actually Roma'.

Political leaders took the chance to intervene in the debate pointing at the Roma as the main cause of urban insecurity. The vice-president of the EU commission, Franco Frattini, in an article with the title "raze the camps to the ground, the expulsions are not enough", states:

the operation should be double: expulsion and dismantling of shanty towns. France did it this way. [...] In a Roma shanty town, 90 per cent of the people don't rely on legal resources to live" (2 November).

On 5 November, Gianfranco Fini, leader of the National Alliance party (A.N.) declares that it is impossible to integrate the Roma and demands "a good cleaning up expelling 250,000 Romanians", associating Roma and Romanians in a single group.

Local politicians of both political sides tend to follow their national leaders, and add their voices to the chorus demanding mass expulsions and the destruction of shanty towns.

On a wall of a school in Tivoli, close to Rome, someone wrote: "behead all of the Romanian children" and signed with a Celtic cross (8 November 2007).

A remarkable exception to the general tone of the debate comes from the husband of Mrs Reggiani. On 3 November, he states:

We must be able to distinguish between people, a Rom from another Rom; a Romanian from a Romanian, and Italian from an Italian

In the local newspaper *Il Messaggero*, a series of reportages on nomad camps and shanty towns flourishing in Rome appeared throughout the period of the monitoring:

On 7 November, a long article attacks the decision of the local government to build the camp of Castel Romano, whose building and management costs are far from value for money: 'a 12 million Euro ghetto and children who don't even go to school'. The title of the article is eloquent:

Managing the containers camp on the outskirts of Rome where a thousand Roma were relocated costs the same as a five star hotel. But living conditions are precarious.

In the piece, the author notices how 'in the Castel Romano camp there are 250 children, but only 50 go to school. Every day five buses arrive, but they do their journey almost empty. The school is one hour away because the Roma were settled [before the relocation] in Ponte Marconi [a more central area of Rome]'.

On 16 November, *Il Messaggero* publishes a map of the unauthorised settlements in Tor di Quinto, the neighbourhood where Mrs Reggiani was murdered, together with an article entitled: 'Tor di Quinto, the siege continues'. In the piece, the author points out how despite the claims by local authority some of the unauthorised settlements are still in place even in areas, like along the riverbank, which are dangerous for the security of their inhabitants.

The mapping of unauthorised settlements continues in the following days and on 24 November, another long piece (The town of shacks) deals with the situation in Tor Cervara (Rome) where 'at least five thousand minors live in tents and caravans. The local district does not have the means to cope with a problem of this scale and asks for the support of the Rome government to deal with 'an unstoppable flow of desperate Roma immigrants', who live in extreme housing conditions.

On 7 December, the newspaper gives an alarming estimate of five thousand children living in the shanty towns of Rome. And a week later, on 13 December, it reports on a new unauthorised settlement discovered in the caves along the riverbank of the Aniene river in the area of Ponte Mammolo where 200 people from Eastern Europe live.

In most articles we see two arguments facing each other: on the one hand, security - mainly in relation to Italian citizens but occasionally also with reference to inhabitants of camps especially if children - and on the other hand, the living conditions of the Roma which are extreme and inhumane.

The institutions and the last Roma emergency

The enforcement of the decree n.181 in Rome has strengthened what appears to be a general policy of rejection and deterrence for Roma, and has further emphasised the focus on security which was already present in the rhetoric of the local government.

To start with, we should point out that in Rome, as elsewhere in Italy, the decree did not lead to mass removals of EU citizens, yet, as elsewhere, the large majority of removal orders targeted Romanian Roma (see *Il Messaggero*, 20 December). 'Up to today [20 December 2007], on the basis of the decree we removed 63 EU citizens. The fight for legality and security continues'.

According to lawyers and associations interviewed⁶¹, most of the expelled were Romanian citizens who had already a significant number of sentences to serve, and for this reason had been considered by the prefect "in a position to be a threat to public security".

Therefore, not even in Rome, where the incident which pushed the government to issue the emergency decree happened, did we see an extensive application of the removal orders. However, the decree, together with the atmosphere of national emergency in which it was issued, constituted the essential frame for reinforcing the existing strategy of systematic evictions of unauthorised settlements.

The key result of the decree was the systematic and frequent use of forced evictions: in a short period of time a campaign was launched to demolish unauthorised camps throughout the whole municipal territory, affecting an unknown number of Roma. The first to be evicted were the inhabitants of camps in the northern part of town - where both Mr Mailat, charged with the murder of Mrs Reggiani, and the Romani woman who made it possible to identify the alleged murderer were living. In the following days the camps of the eastern side of town were evicted, in particular along the course of the *Aniene* river. Later, the riverbanks of *Tevere* were 'cleared up'.

Settlements of different sizes were destroyed: from those inhabited by a few hundred people – like the one in *Ponte Mammolo* or in *via dell'Imbrecciato* - to those of few shacks – like those of *via Riva Ostiense* and *Ponte Marconi*.

This cycle of evictions was not accompanied by any intervention to tackle the emergency situations in which people would find themselves because of the loss of their shelter. Social services were asked to intervene only in rare cases. In any case, the places available in municipal reception centres, intended only for women and children, would not have been adequate to host all those in need.

The implementation of the eviction orders reveals an important 'side effect' of the decree n.181. According to the testimonies of some Roma and some NGO workers, many evictions were preceded by a visit to the settlement by the police (often local and national police working in tandem), who would communicate to the residents the forthcoming demolition of the settlement and the possibility of expulsion according to the new regulations.

This strategy proved very effective from the point of view of local authorities, as residents scared by the threat of expulsion very often left the settlement before the arrival of police forces. The absence of inhabitants not only makes it easier and faster for the local police to proceed to the demolition of shacks but also permits the local authority to claim that there were no people in need of social assistance and shelter as the settlement was abandoned at the time of their visit.

Another new element brought by the decree concerns the general planning of interventions carried out in Rome: the main actors in this phase are the Prefecture and the Police Headquarters of Rome, coordinated by the Mayor's Office⁶², with a marginalisation of the City department for social affairs normally in charge of providing assistance to people in need.

A key episode to understanding the current approach to the 'Roma emergency' happened early in December. On 6 December, the mayor of Rome, Mr Veltroni, in a

⁶¹ We are especially grateful to the lawyer Mario Angelelli and the staff of the 'Sportello Legale Immigrati – Progetto Diritti'.

⁶² Despite several attempts, it was not possible to interview any spokespersons from the Prefecture, the Police Head quarter or the entourage of the Mayor.

press conference gave some figures stressing the commitment of his government to taking a tough approach to unauthorised settlements. The mayor appeared at the conference accompanied by the Questore of Rome (the local head of police) and the city and regional councillors in charge of security. The figures put forward by Veltroni are impressive: over 6,000 people “evacuated”, and over 1,000 shacks demolished in one year. In fact, out of 6,000 Roma evicted, only 900 were offered shelter, and this was merely temporary shelter in reception centres. According to the head of Police, the success of these operations is proved by the fact that the outflow of Romanians who ‘voluntarily’ choose to go back to Romania is larger than the inflow of Romanians arriving in town (*Il Messaggero*, 7 December). On the basis of this figure, Mr Veltroni also officially communicated the decision of the local government to abandon the plan to build large camps – ‘villaggi di solidarietà’ as he labelled them – as there was no need of them anymore.

The interventions carried out in the period of enforcement of the decree n.181 show an attempt by the political leadership to claim a growing control over people and urban space, marked by actions aimed at ‘clearing up’, ‘reclaiming’ and ‘regenerating’ neglected urban areas. The rhetoric of “security” has become the common ground on which opposite political coalitions agree or battle. The Roma – to whom a long series of deeply-rooted stereotypes and negative imaginaries are attached - are the preferred target for such actions. The stereotyping of Roma as criminals, and not fit for urban life etc, are ingrained in the practice of key political leaders and civil servants operating at local level. According to a senior official of the Rome local police, *all* the Roma make their living from criminal activity, with different criminal specialisations according to their geographic origin.

The impact on Roma

If we observe it from the point of view of the Roma, of the evicted men and women, this systematic series of interventions assumes a very different connotation.

Unauthorised camps are, in fact, inhabited by people with very different migration experiences and histories. Many have been living for a long time in Italy, building relationships and developing social ties with the local community. The story of G. and B., a Romanian Roma couple who arrived in Rome in 2002, captures something of this diversity. The two, together with their four children, lived in at least five camps on the municipal territory and spent significant periods of time out of town. They lost all of their belongings kept in their shacks in each of the evictions, and every time they had to start again in the search of a place where to live.

A similar experience of what we can call urban diaspora was done by V., who arrived in Italy in 1999. Facing a lack of economically sustainable alternatives after the March 2007 eviction from the *Villa Troili* settlement, he found shelter in one of the unauthorised camps. After the demolition of his new shacks in November, V. had to look for another space which happened to be so far away from the place where he was working as assistant in a wholesale fruit and vegetable shop, that he lost his job and his income.

The story of D., who arrived in Italy 11 years ago from Craiova, reveals a series of effects that evictions have on all members of a family: apart from the impact on employment, the frequent evictions are also responsible for disruption in the schooling of his daughters who saw their aspirations periodically frustrated with each eviction. Moreover, what D. has ultimately lost in this never-ending series of evictions is his family altogether, as his wife and daughters found shelter in a municipal reception centre for women and children, and then one daughter decided to migrate to England, and he is forced to sleep in his car looking for a parking space every night.

Next to these stories of frustrated and interrupted attempts to integrate, we find the experiences of those who instead decided to leave the municipal territory, forced to a new invisibility. While not able to estimate the number of those who adopted this strategy, both the NGO workers and the Roma interviewees tell of many who decided to leave Rome to look for shelter elsewhere in Italy⁶³ or to go back to Romania. In both cases, these are short or mid term strategies, that foresee the return to Rome as soon as the focus on the Roma fades. It is significant how, on this issue, all interviewees – Roma, NGO workers and institutions – seem to agree in predicting the return of the Roma who left town in these last weeks, and the likely reappearance of spontaneous camps and shanty towns, in even more invisible and inaccessible areas of town.

The enforcement of the decree created a climate of fear among Romanians in general. Anecdotal evidence tells us of people insulted in the street, in shops or on public transport; Romanian children bullied at school; Romanian workers without regular contracts fired because to avoid police controls. The story of M. is one of these. He arrived in Italy from Romania four years ago and was employed without a contract in a small building firm. Worried about the consequences of the decree n. 181, M. asked his employer to find a way of regularising his work, but by way of response, his employer not only refused but also reduced the number of hours and subsequently M.'s salary, because, as M. recalls, in these weeks it would have been counterproductive to present the firm to the clients with a Romanian as employee.

The negative effects of the decree were not only suffered by the Roma: the eviction strategy forced NGOs to retune a series of activities and initiatives designed for the Roma. Some of whom, despite living in unauthorised settlements, had started to approach the institutions and public services, starting with the health services and schools. But systematic evictions weakened and ultimately ruined such attempts, forcing NGOs to abandon more long term initiatives in place of emergency measures.

This picture seems to testify how the effects of the decree n.181 went well beyond the relatively limited number of enforced removals, to cause a general worsening of living conditions for the Roma and for other migrants, weakening their position and marginalising them further from society.

In conclusion, as D. states in a very eloquent and concise way, the question that should be put to the politicians and decision-makers has to do with the idea of integration that goes with the quest for security:

When they say that Roma should integrate... how can a people integrate when their [those calling for Roma integration] aim is just to make our life impossible?

⁶³ The internal migration of Romanian Roma is confirmed by the Provincial councillor of Naples, Isadora D'Aimmo, who expressed her concern for the arrival of new Roma from Rome [see next chapter].

Summary

In conclusion:

- In the context of the so-called 'Roman Renaissance', migrants bring an important, although rarely acknowledged, contribution to Rome's economic growth. However, their public identity is defined almost exclusively in relation to the debate on 'security';
- The arrival of Romanian Roma (since 2001) in Rome should be understood within the pre-existing framework of an already critical situation for Roma in Rome and a long-established policy of building nomad camps.
- The appearance of several unauthorised settlements has been met with a strategy of forced evictions. Local authority, and to a lesser extent NGOs, did not until recently make any effort to build up a dialogue with newcomers.
- The latest 'Roma emergency' and the enforcement of the decree n.181 became the opportunity for the even more systematic use of evictions and demolitions of settlements as a way of deterring Romanian Roma from staying.
- The enforcement of the decree produced as a direct effect a limited number of removals. However, the fear produced by the general climate of hostility towards Roma and the threat of expulsion and eviction by police forces pushed many Roma to leave Rome for other destinations in Italy or to go back to Romania.
- The strategy of evictions, rather than representing a viable solution to Roma integration and social cohesion, works only as a short-term measure to calm public anxiety.
- Despite continuous evictions, unauthorised settlements spring up again and again – in areas which are more precarious and unsafe - demonstrating the need to develop long-term housing policy for Roma.

NAPOLI

Francesca Saudino and Barbara Pierro

Introduction

The city of Naples has a resident population of approximately 1,004,500 people. The male population is lower than the female population, while the number of children is higher than the national average. In the Municipality of Naples in particular, the percentage of children under the age of five is 5.29%, which is higher than the 4.59% registered at national level. In contrast to the national situation, the final data on the demographic structure in 2001 Census reveals a demographically young Municipality.

According to data reported by Caritas/Migrantes (2007), Campania has an immigrant population of 168,285. Naples, its main city, has the highest presence of foreigners, with 5.8% of the legal immigrants living in the city, equal to 87,065 people.

The report shows that the largest communities are from Ukraine, Poland, Morocco, Albania, China, Sri Lanka, Romania and Nigeria. The leave to remain for employment make up 68.5 % of the total and the presence of children and young people (14,920) have increased in comparison to the previous years. They make up for 8.9% of the total immigrant resident population. For the residents of Naples, housing and employment are two crucial issues. Recently the administration appears to be paying particular attention to these two themes, providing specific measures in favour of the immigrants and allocating funds for housing support and the creation of job opportunities including those in cooperatives.

From the point of view of the potential for productivity and the effective participation of foreigners in productivity activities, the situation in the Municipality of Naples is less satisfactory than the national one. In fact both activity and employment rates are lower than the national rates; the activity rate is equal to 42.67% (Italy 48.56%) and the employment rate is 29.28% (Italy 42.64%). This situation is confirmed by the high level of unemployment in Naples 31.39% (Italy 11.58%) which refers to the Italian and foreign residents.

The city is governed by a centre-left coalition re-elected in May 2006 with Mayor Rosa Russo Iervolino in charge.

The situation of the Roma population

The majority of the Roma population in the city and province of Naples live in makeshift settlements made up of shacks built from improvised materials inside areas lacking the most basic utilities (water, electricity, bathroom and toilet facilities etc).

The arrival of the Romanians in Naples dates from different moments. According to the city councillor in charge of social affairs, from the years 1998-99 onwards there have been several inflows from Romania. According to some NGO interviewees, however, the city only became aware of the presence of the Romanian Roma from approximately 2002 onwards. Today, the Romanian Roma in the city all live in camps in precarious conditions. As there is a lack of reliable data, we carried out visits to the unauthorised camps inhabited by Roma from different places of origin. Clearly, this report makes no claim to provide complete coverage of the situation.

- In Poggioreale (Naples) 50-60 Romanian Roma families have lived behind the city's cemetery in Via del Riposo for approximately 3 years. They told us

they all come from Bucharest and other nearby towns and in particular from Calaraşi. In Naples they have adapted despite the terrible living conditions they find themselves in. None of their children attend school. Some families who attempted to enrol their children in schools were denied the right to do so. They have little contact with the local Neapolitan community. Apart from *Opera Nomadi*, who visited the camp for a vaccination campaign for the children, no associations or institutional representatives have ever been to the camp. They told us that they encounter many difficulties when they turn to A.S.L (Local Health Service) and nearby hospitals to obtain medical services. The men are involved in the collection of iron and other metals, while the women beg.

- In Ponticelli (Naples) the makeshift camp where 15-20 Romanian families live, is situated in a rather isolated area not too far from the Bipiani blocks of flats constructed with asbestos and still standing after approximately 25 years. Here foreigners of other nationalities live under a bridge which connects the suburbs to the motorway. Similarly here, the camp which grew up approximately 3-4 years ago lacks all basic living utilities. The administration in this part of town intends to build a second centre for the Romanians, situated in an area isolated from the rest of the district.
- In Bara (Naples) there is a camp made up of approximately 15 shacks built by Romanian Roma. For approximately three years they have been living in this hidden area, only accessible on foot and situated on the margins of a crowded district. Before reaching the camp there is a section of road between the motorway flyover and the tollgate with heaps of pestilent rubbish. The voluntary sector and charity institutions only come here sporadically. All basic utilities are lacking and the contact with the local community is limited if not non-existent. There is no school for the children, and water is provided by an Italian family in exchange for a little money from each of the families. They use a generator for electricity.
- In S. Pietro a Patierno (Naples) approximately 100 Romanian Roma have lived in a makeshift camp for approximately three years. It is covered with rubbish, which is partly produced by the Roma and partly illegally dumped by Italians. The Comboniani Fathers are the only people in contact with these families.
- In Frullone (Naples) approximately 50 Romanian Roma, many of whom are children, found accommodation in an abandoned mental hospital which is in a dilapidated condition. The local government, which was called upon to find alternative accommodation for these people, intervened around mid December, only after an eviction which took place due to the implementation of the safety regulations of the building. At night the people were transferred to the 'Deledda' reception centre.
- In Scampia (Naples) there are approximately 4 makeshift camps all situated in the same area and two adjacent authorised camps located behind the Secondigliano prison along a high speed road. The inhabitants of the makeshift camps have lived in the district for approximately 20 years. These camps are more or less organised according to the engineering and economic skills of their inhabitants. In all cases, basic public living utilities, such as a sewage system, water, electricity etc, are lacking. The majority of the inhabitants appear to be unauthorised, without permits to stay and do not have the possibility of obtaining Italian citizenship. The second and third generation immigrants born in Italy have difficulties in obtaining Italian citizenship due to their inability to demonstrate the requisite of a legal

residence as required by Italian law (see Sigona and Monasta, 2005). In the area currently inhabited by the Roma, the local government is planning the construction of several reception villages (in addition to those created in 2001) made up of housing containers which are undersized in relation to normal housing, in order to be able to act without changing the town-planning scheme.

In the Province of Naples:

- In Torre del Greco, in a pine grove not too far from one of the two Salerno-Reggio Calabria motorway lanes, approximately twenty Romanian Roma families found refuge inside old sheds and cement structures which look like sentry posts from the Second World War. They have been there for approximately three years and they came from an evicted camp in Casoria (Naples) where they used to live. They have experienced numerous difficulties in obtaining medical help from local medical services which they have turned to. Few of their children have managed to enrol in school. The women make their living from begging while the men are mainly musicians. The area where they currently live is under construction due to modernisation work being carried out on the motorway. The Comboniani Fathers and occasionally Caritas visit this place.
- In the port of Torre Annunziata in the past thirty years approximately thirty Roma of ex-Yugoslav descent have lived inside a small settlement. They live in brick houses, previously occupied by earthquake victims, where they pay for utilities. Recently a municipality councillor paid a visit to them and announced their eviction without any mention of an alternative housing solution or when any of this would take place. These families all carry out small scale street vendor activities and if it were not for the lack of permits to stay and the impossibility of obtaining citizenship, they would work legally. According to the Roma, if they were to be evicted from their current location, they would want to have small plots of land where they could build housing.
- In Giugliano approximately 5-600 ex-Yugoslav Roma live in around ten unauthorised camps which lack all basic utilities and are situated far from the city centre without any public transport available (buses, underground etc). The camps are located in an industrial zone, near to the largest illegal garbage dumping site of Europe (Esposito, 2005; Pilla, 2005; Legambiente, 2004). The entrepreneurs are collaborating with the local and provincial government for the creation of a project which will enable the camps to have a less negative impact on the industrial activities, which suffer from the existence of the settlement given that the Roma appear to use the water and electricity supplies of the industrial site.
- Approximately one hundred ex-Yugoslav Roma live in Casoria in a makeshift camp without water, electricity, sewage system or public sanitary services. The majority of the Roma are not in possession of a legal permit to stay or a residence permit. At the moment the Provincial government appears to want to create a project which involves the restructuring of the camp through self-construction, however for the last two years the whole thing has come to a standstill and the reasons remain unknown.

The Romanian Roma emergency

The local press

Overall throughout the period from the 31 October 2007 to the 15 December 2007, in the 19 articles written on the topic published in 'Il Mattino' (Napoli), the most frequent term used to identify the subjects to security legislation is 'Romanian', used in 16 articles, followed by the term 'Roma', which appears in 12 articles. This is followed by the term 'nomad' found in 4 articles, while the term 'gypsy' appeared only twice. Whereas the term 'nomad' is almost always used as a synonym for 'Rom', the term 'gypsy' is instead a term of comparison. On one occasion on 4 November 2007, the Public Prosecutor Raffaello Falcone stated:

The Romanians have evolved from an organisational point of view. They are no longer gypsies or nomads by choice or people who willingly turn their backs on western civilisation. They have developed predominance in the slave trade.

The use of the terms is highlighted also in a quote published on 16 November 2007, where a Romanian woman married to an Italian, said: "The fact is that people think of Romanians as delinquent gypsies".

On the whole it seems that the term 'gypsies' and in part also the term 'nomad' have been almost totally eradicated. The term 'nomad' was often used to identify the nomad camps and sometimes as a synonym for 'Rom'. Currently the term used is that of 'Rom', which has come to be associated with emergency, security, and delinquency, and often gets used to refer to Romanians. Only a few articles shed light on the relationship between the two terms.

Here follows a chronological overview of what Il Mattino published between 31 October and 15 December on the new security legislation and its local enforcement. On 1 November 2007, before the decree came into force, a statement by the Mayor of Naples is reported. First of all, the Mayor expressed her support for the decision of the government to introduce the 'security package' with bills which would be re-discussed in Parliament, instead of the quicker option of a decree. Secondly, she underlined the necessity to study the text in depth as she was against the transfer of public security powers to mayors. In this article there is no mention of Romanians, Roma or nomad camps.

From the following day, on 2 November 2007, and for the next several days, the press started to cover the issue extensively. Gradually the articles became increasingly marked by extreme confusion and contradictions - even between different articles in the same newspaper. The most evident contradiction concerned the difference between the Romanians and the Roma.

The same day on the first page of the local news section, the newspaper deals with the issue with the headline "Roma camps ready for eviction". In another part of the same issue, the headline is "Romanians, the expulsion plan is set". The same day there is also coverage of Mayor Rosa Russo Iervolino's somewhat moderate position, who warns "No witch hunting. Italians are violent too".

From 3 November onwards the intention of the press appeared to be to add to the climate of general alarm by creating confusion. The headline was "Roma alarm" and the title of the main article was "Expulsion plan: 2,400 immigrants targeted". The same article starts with the following words:

At least 2400 nomads might be forced to leave Naples according to the figures provided by the prefecture

and it continues:

Expulsion and specific checks are made possible if a nomad (or any foreigner) commits a crime. If for example, particular tensions can be observed in a camp, the head of the Police can decide to carry out mass checks. Once the expulsion decree has been signed, the foreigner can either leave or become clandestine.

The article created confusion over many aspects. Firstly it referred to the expulsions of immigrants without specifying that the decree had only brought about changes to the residency regulations for communitarian citizens. The article also associates nomads, foreigners, Roma, Romanians and immigrants with the checks in the camps, implying that dangerous foreigners are only to be found in the camps and therefore that conducting a search there will automatically unearth someone to expel.

The positive aspect of the article was that for the first and last time during the period in which the press was examined, the Roma's opinions are quoted. Nevertheless, this was done without changing the tone of the climate of conflict. On this occasion the so-called Slavic Roma of long-standing stay were the ones to talk. Zoran said:

We have nothing to do with the Romanians. People who do such terrible things like what happened in Rome should be killed rather than expelled. What have we got to do with that? (Il Mattino, 3 November 2007)

Giuliano said:

We want to be buried here. The Romanians are different. They have just arrived. It's the Italians' fault for having accepted them into Europe (Il Mattino, 3 November 2007).

An article on another page also covers the situation from the Romanians' point of view:

Nomads barricaded inside caravans. The local residents say: "It's time to get them out of here." When the people in the camps see the journalists their fear rises and they close their doors; 'There's nobody here'

On 3 and 4 November the newspaper dedicated another entire page to the question and above all expressed the fear that the evictions in Rome might bring people to Naples. The headline on 4 November was "Families expelled from Rome are arriving". On the same day, despite the alarming title "Sexual violence is at the head of the crime list", the newspaper reports the statistics with regard to crime in Naples. The article opened with

In Naples where there is criminal chaos, the Romanians have not had, at least until now, a leading role in the crime. Far from it, the truth is that the Camorra with its age-old conspiracies controls them (omission). The fact remains that the statistics from the police, 'carabinieri' and finance police, assign the delinquents from the land of Dracula a bottom place in the crime list.

After these three days (on 7 November) the newspaper does not cover the issue again until 10 November, when a short article reports on an expulsion order,

The first expulsion order took place against two homeless people; a Romanian citizen and a citizen from Guinea who were caught selling objects taken out of the rubbish skip.

Erroneously, the author refers to the decree in relation to the removal of non-EU citizens. Moreover, it is hard to believe that the sale of rubbish is a threat to public security.

On 15 November the newspaper reported on an eviction in Ponticelli, an eastern district of Naples. Here nine people were identified and given expulsion orders, two others were taken to the CPT (temporary reception centre) in Bari, and one person was given a forced expulsion order by plane. Once again the message transmitted is that the intention is to clear out the dangerous Roma and that the Roma are to be expulsions take place".

In the press period examined, the newspaper *Il Mattino* reports on another significant piece of news; the ground floor of a house inhabited by Romanian citizens located close to the Chiaia zone, a rich and wealthy area of Naples, was set on fire. Three Italian youths had claimed justice for themselves and sought revenge for an alleged robbery, which revealed itself unfounded, and had risked killing six people. In all four articles reporting on the event, only Romanians are mentioned and not Roma or nomads. Only in one interview to a Romanian woman married to an Italian, are both terms used as a comparison; "The Romanians are not all Roma or delinquents". The article quotes the statements made by the youths who carried out the act "What should we have done, waited until the Romanians did what they did in Rome, where they raped and killed a woman?" The neighbours gave the following testimonies on the victims: "They were good people, they worked until night time and they were integrated". On 12 December 2007 *Il Mattino* reverts to the piece of news and reports that the Judge for Preliminary Investigations of the Juvenile Court of Naples issued the arrest of two children for an arson attack, attempted multiple murders, and intentional injuries with aggravating racial circumstances. It was the first time that the Juvenile Court of Naples had given weight to an aggravating racial circumstance, and it was also one of the few in the whole of Italy. The phone interceptions quoted in the newspaper were decisive:

These gypsy bastards have come to rule in our own country. Do we have to wait till they do what they did in Rome?"

Institutions and politicians

The intervention of local institutions regarding the application of the national decree can be explained by some declarations made by politicians and local administration bodies, as well as by the number and the type of interventions put in place.

Following the first signs of national alarm, the Mayor of the Municipality of Naples Rosa Russo Iervolino urged people not to create a witch hunting climate given that Italians, particularly in a city like Naples, also commit crimes and it was therefore unjust to be ruthless against foreigners and particularly Romanians.

The representatives of the Municipalities where the number of Roma, Romanians and others are higher were not of the same opinion. In fact, after the eviction which took place in the camp in Ponticelli on 14 November 2007, the Vice President of the Municipality declared:

If the check carried out in the camp in the Via Virginia Woolf street is the first of a series of interventions, it could be considered a good start. If, instead, it is only an exemplary action then it is incapable of changing the situation and therefore it is unable to appease the justified worries of the citizens in the neighbourhood.

In contrast, during the most troubled days of the emergency, Isadora D'Aimmo, the provincial councillor in charge of immigration, stated,

The fear that the (announced and carried out) evictions by Veltroni and the Prefecture in Rome have already brought here a considerable number of the Roma, who were already moving down the Domiziana land strip towards our city, proves that such evictions are not advisable and they destroy any planning of the interventions

When interviewed on the matter, the Vice-Prefect Gabriella D'Orso explained the position of the Neapolitan Prefecture

With regard to the decree I do not have a judgement, the government wanted it, we cannot do anything else but apply it, however we have decided to apply it *cum grano salis* (with a pinch of salt) to crack down only on the truly dangerous people.

D'Orso maintained that the evictions carried out in the city in the past days were not caused by the decree but for previous reasons such as the eviction of the Romanian citizens living in the Ex-Frullone. Concerning this point she stated,

People have been talking about this eviction for six months. The building is unsafe and could collapse. There are children involved. A solution was sought for months. There was a real risk. It is purely a coincidence that the eviction took place a few days after the decree.

However, D'Orso affirms that the Ponticelli eviction "was probably also a way to put a stop to the possible risk of waves of people coming from Rome. Someone claimed to have seen 14 caravans".

Immediately after the enactment of the decree, the Prefecture called a meeting with the local authorities to try to take stock of the situation. D'Orso said "On that occasion the Prefect gave clear instructions to avoid indiscriminate evictions but if anything, to continue with checks".

In her opinion the current situation

is an emotive response to a whole series of difficulties that have been taking place for a while and which are caused by a total reciprocal lack of recognition between the newly arrived Roma population and the people who said 'You want to stay here, you like living in this way, well then do so'. People ignored them and therefore over time the situation worsened.

In an interview quoted in the *Il Mattino* newspaper on 3 November 2007, she stated,

We ask the Municipalities to carry out censuses to evaluate how many nomads need to be accommodated. There are also substantial groups of Roma living in Giugliano, Casoria, Caivano and Torre de Greco. An organisational mechanism which is already in place for nomads of other nationalities, will now be put in place for the Romanians".

Mr Riccio, Naples' city councillor for social affairs, holds a very critical position towards the government and this measure. First of all he wants to make it clear that the decree has not brought about any real changes in legislative terms, but it has simply transferred the power to expel EU citizens from the Ministry of the Interior to the Prefect. Furthermore, this transferral does not establish a transfer of competencies in the true sense of the word, but only a transfer of actions. What has been implemented he said "was a wrong way of implementing the administrative decentralisation in so far as this should have allocated power to the local authority, otherwise we should have called it a commissarial administration". In regard to the Neapolitan situation and the Prefecture's intervention, he says

When the decree came into force, the Prefecture of Naples didn't know what to do with it. As a first step, it expelled a Chinese migrant [sic!] and immediately afterwards eight Romanian Roma, all of them previous offenders

According to Mr Riccio, the measure was an administrative mistake and was discriminatory in the way it was implemented.

In conclusion, the position of the Neapolitan institutions is that of including the Romanian question in the more general Roma question, which is also considered an emergency even if it concerns people who have been living in Naples for a decade or more. Nevertheless, on the other hand, perhaps out of duty to conform to the expectations of the national government, the authorities in charge had to carry out some symbolic actions such as the three evictions, one of which was already planned. One targeted citizens from Ghana and other non-EU countries. The eviction in Ponticelli seemed to be an exemplary measure, as the following paragraph will clarify.

The expulsion measures

During the period of the application of the decree, approximately 15 expulsion orders were issued. Furthermore, during this period (from 3 November to 31 December 2007), the local administration carried out some other measures, which despite not being connected to the decree n.181/2007 in any way, appear to have been influenced by the widespread climate of alarm and fear. These acts involved the evictions of the Ex-Frullone and the Ponticelli Roma camp, both inhabited by Romanian Roma and the camp in the Via Marina street where the Romanian Roma no longer lived, as well as more thorough checks in Roma camps.

Almost all the expulsion measures (approximately 10 out of 15) were issued on the 14 November 2007 following a blitz intervention in the unauthorised Ponticelli Roma camp. They were all issued to Romanian citizens. The lawyer Cristian Valle is defending these ten people.

Although the institutions declare their intention is only to hit really dangerous individuals, when one analyses the measures issued, a different situation seems to emerge. The typology of the orders, which are almost identical to each other apart from some small differences, is the following: in the introductory part of the removal decree there are two options with two blank boxes to cross and an empty space to insert a written text. The two options are: arrested or charged. After having crossed one and/or the other, the official serving the expulsion has to indicate the arrests and/or the charges against the person. The measure continues with a series of "considerations" and concludes by highlighting that given that the person cannot prove to have an income to support himself, or to be integrated into a family and society context, it is presumed that this person lives on earnings from criminal activities. The arrests and the charges recorded in the ten measures examined involve some cases not always crimes.

Amongst these, six measures are founded entirely on one charge, one on a previous arrest (without charge). In two cases a charge for begging is reported, which in Italian legislation does not even constitute a crime. The other cases concern single episodes even older than two years. The most frequent ones are theft and receiving stolen goods.

With regard to the measures, the lawyer Mr Valle stated that

the ten expulsions which I am following all concern Romanian Roma. Therefore, in the appeal I make it known that we are dealing with a hypothesis of collective measure, both because it concerns citizens of the same Romanian nationality, but also because the measures affect one same ethnic group; the Roma. Amongst the measures issued, 1/3 provide for the accompaniment to a *cpt* (a temporary reception centre), 1/3 for the immediate expulsion by aeroplane, 1/3 for expulsion orders with the obligation to leave the country in one month. Under many aspects the measures contradict EU regulations. One of the most obvious contradictions is that they do not refer to a sentence against the person, since they only report on cases of arrest and charges. Furthermore, even if there had been a sentence, its mere existence could not, according to the law, justify expulsion.

The measures analysed report cases of very minor social danger, which in all cases do not have a definite sentence. They are all founded on the assumption that the lack of an income and not being integrated into a family and society context - without being able to explain how this is verified - constitute an indication of the fact that the person lives on earnings from criminal activities.

The Roma and the 'emergency' in Naples

Overall, the interviews reveal a situation of general tolerance both from the institutions (The Prefecture, the Police and the Municipality) and the citizens.

However, this is contrasted with a situation of difficult and restricted access to services and entitlements, recorded before and after the decree. These include admission to school, medical treatment in hospitals and local health centres, and access to the housing market.

This climate of what could be considered all in all a peaceful cohabitation with the local communities underwent changes following the incident in Rome and the media attention that followed. Some Roma interviewees recounted episodes of widespread intolerance from ordinary people they meet in the streets and on the *circumvesuviana* trains where they use to play music. Many Roma told of phrases frequently repeated to them such as the following: "You're all criminals. Go back to your own country". In Torre del Greco for example, a Romani woman told us about three family groups who left Italy for Romania following the decree, due to the climate of great fear which had become widespread. The children in particular had been subjected to racist treatment at school. She also added that two weeks after the enforcement of the decree, many people still do not go out of the makeshift camps where have taken refuge to go begging because they are afraid that their children will be taken away from them. What is described is an indiscriminate fear, partly due to police checks and partly due to actions of intolerance from people on the streets. The interviewees also said they were refused the necessary medical treatment at a hospital, where the explanation given was that as they were EU citizens they must have had an insurance in Romania which would be able to cover the medical expenses. This appears to be an abuse of power by the hospital and presents a presumed crime, due to the provisions of the law in force with regard to temporary medical assistance. Until the 31 December 2007, medical treatment must be given independently of medical insurance.

In the Poggioreale camp where all the Romanian Roma come from Calarasi and Budapest, Yanco and Costantin told us that following the decree, the police arrived in the camp to record the dates of birth of certain family groups without giving any explanations regarding the aim of the check. In Torre Annunziata, Slavic Roma who live in a small camp, told us that a week after the decree, the traffic wardens came to carry out a check, but that there were no problems because none of them had a criminal record. Marco who was interviewed wanted it to be known that the police and the administration know about them and the fact that they are not involved in crime, but that the real problem remains the difficulty in obtaining documents.

The Slavic Roma, particularly those living in the unauthorised camps in Scampia, have also lived through days of great fear. In theory the application of the decree should not have modified anything nor added new possibilities and motivations for expulsions. When met in the days following the government's extraordinary emergency decision, the Slavic Roma had their televisions switched on all day. Watching programmes with high levels of intolerance and racism created a general climate of panic and mistrust. Everyone in the shacks had their suitcases packed and they were ready to leave in case the situation worsened, and for fifteen days after the decree, they avoided going too far from the camps.

The interviews reveal that no distinction is made between Romanian Roma or Slavic Roma but also non Roma Romanians.

For the man in the street, for television and for the government bodies, all Roma are considered the same due to the fact that they live in the same places and have the same culture and the same customs. Sometimes this is intentional and other times it is due to widespread ignorance. This extensive situation of confusion and homogenisation of people who each have a different individual story and reality to tell, makes the Roma feel like victims, as they do not possess the necessary tools to

enable them to claim their rights and to carry out actions to overcome the discriminatory conditions which they live in.

Costantin concluded her description by telling us that she had the impression that the condition of the Romanian Roma had worsened the moment they became EU citizens, and that the newspapers and the government are wrong when they affirm that the Roma are only Romania's or Italy's problem; everyone should realise that the Roma are a burning urgent issue which Europe should deal with.

Summary

In conclusion:

- The way the 'Romanian Roma emergency' was addressed in Naples reflects and it is adjusted to – although with some significant differences - the framework defined at national level by government policy and media discourse. This is evident both in relation to the identification of the problem and its solution
- In official statements, the terms 'Roma', 'Romanians' and 'nomads' are almost always confused with each other
- The expulsion orders did not target the real criminals, but only certain Romanian Roma with limited criminal records living in unauthorised settlements
- The decree was followed by frequent searches by police in Romani camps – including those inhabited by non-EU citizens
- The local press followed the news in the aftermath of the enactment of the decree and occasionally the rest of the time of our monitoring
- The local press repeatedly confused the terms 'Roma' and 'Romanians', and often didn't make any distinction between EU citizens and Third country Nationals;
- The climate of social alarm and intolerance produced fear and anxiety among Roma (not only from Romania)
- The Roma feared for their safety especially with regard to attacks that might be carried out by ordinary Italian citizens (for example arson attacks) and, to a lesser extent, they feared police searches
- Some Roma left Naples voluntarily due to fear of racism. Meanwhile, others arrived mainly from Rome where the situation was deemed even more dangerous.

CONCLUSIONS

Nando Sigona

When the Italian government issued as a matter of urgency the decree n. 181/2007 aimed at facilitating the removal of dangerous EU-citizens from Italy, responding to the widespread public outcry which followed the murder of Mrs Reggiani in Rome, European institutions and NGOs expressed their concern at the risk that the decree would be targeted exclusively at one ethnic group – namely the Roma from Romania – and would end up legitimising public anxiety and fear towards migrants coming from new EU member states. Mr van der Linden, President of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly stated:

‘the arrest of a Romanian suspect in this murder should not, however, lead to a witch-hunt of Romanians. The Italian government may have the right to expel a number of persons on public safety grounds, but all decisions must be subject to judicial review and taken on an individual basis rather than collectively’.

One of the aims of research was therefore to monitor the enforcement of the decree.

According to data available to us⁶⁴, up to 18 December 2007, the decree had led to 408 expulsions, of which 262 were for security reasons, 124 for imperative reasons of public security and 22 for cessation of requisites of stay in the country (Sole 24 Ore, 19 December 2007). This data is also confirmed in the four cities which we investigated in more detail: Milan, Bologna, Rome and Naples. Although some high profile politicians on the Right had demanded the mass expulsion of Romanians, and others on the Centre-Left had predicted this also, it is now evident that it is in fact not relevant to talk of expulsions or deportations on this scale.

Nevertheless, as the research has shown, the decree had an impact that went beyond the enforcement of few hundred removal orders, as it played an important symbolic role in response to the growing anxiety of the public over the arrival of migrants from EU accession countries. What follows is a summary of the ‘side effects’ of the decree, with particular attention to the impact on the Romanian Roma living in Italy of the current ‘emergency’.

First, the enforcement of the decree required the mapping of the presence of Romanians in Italy. The police appear to have targeted in particular Romanian Roma and conducted a systematic search of unauthorised settlements and encampments.

Second, the mapping phase led to the mass collection of biometric data of the Romanian Roma population that, while did not lead to the removal of many people because evidently they were not committing any crime, is likely to be used to monitor their presence and used against them if, after the three months period established by the EU directive on freedom of movement, they cannot prove adequate means of support to continue to stay in Italy. It should be noticed that no other group of EU citizens received similar treatment.

⁶⁴ In the interview at the Ministry of Interior on 21 December 2007, we made a request for the official figures on the enforcement of the decree at the national level and in the four cities which we were monitoring more closely. In particular, we requested the data on the country of origin of the people subjected to expulsion orders and the reasons for the decision. To date, this information not yet being received, we are relying on the less accurate and detailed figures reported in newspapers and by our interviewees. Up to 27 December 2007, the decree had led to 510 removals of EU citizens, of which 181 were for ‘imperative reasons of public security’ (Sole 24 Ore, 28 December).

Third, the decree was understood as the official acknowledgement of an existing 'security emergency' and as a result gave further legitimacy to repressive initiatives by local authorities against Romanian Roma. In particular, the use of evictions followed by the demolitions of settlements as a way of deterring Romanian Roma from staying became even more systematic than it has been before in the cities Milan, Rome and Bologna.

Fourth, a political debate dominated by terms like 'fear', 'security' and zero tolerance', with key politicians not afraid to use a racist vocabulary and demanding mass deportations and the demolitions of shanty towns, opened up political space for extreme Right groups to publicly campaign 'against the Gypsies'.

Fifth, media coverage of the incident in Rome further inflamed the situation. The representation of Romanian Roma as quintessential criminals and the *spectacularisation* of police raids boosted public anxiety towards Romanians and, in particular, Roma.

Sixth, the ethnonym 'rom', which in our previous research on media discourse we found marginally in use compared to other terms such as 'nomadi' or 'zingari' (Sigona, 2006), has been co-opted as part of the media vocabulary.

Finally, with reference to the perception of the Roma of the current situation, most of our Romani interviewees, both from Romania and elsewhere, reported episodes of discrimination and more generally of ethnic tension which contributed to spreading a sense of anxiety among them and led some to return to Romania or to move to smaller towns where they felt safer while waiting for the current alarm to calm down.

While it is hard to get exact data on the dimension and direction of this forced migration, we find confirmation of the phenomenon also in the interviews with NGO workers and in a statement by the mayor of Rome, who claimed that the enforcement of the decree n.181 reversed the migration flow of Romanians to Rome.

Of particular concern is the situation of Romanian Roma children who have been strongly affected by the crisis. As reported by some interviewees, it was mainly children that were sent back to Romania by their parents, who were concerned by the overall situation and alarmed by media hysteria against Romanians. For those who stayed, forced evictions and public hostility made it very difficult to get on with life. In particular there is anecdotal evidence that school attendance dropped visibly.

The research also showed that the impact of the current situation is felt also by non-Romanian Roma and Sinti who reported some episodes of racism and, more generally, a sense of hostility from ordinary Italians. In some cases, people are finding it increasingly difficult to find a job.

Another aspect which should be further investigated concerns the impact of the current crisis on the attitude of the Romanians and Roma towards the Italian State and social integration. In this sense, it is important to point out that while our informants reported episodes of intolerance, and we came across material and statements which could easily be recorded as racist, at the time of our interview at the National Office for Against Racial Discrimination (UNAR)⁶⁵, no complaints of racism had been filed either by Roma or NGOs. In the words of an interviewee,

If we are to limit our understanding of what is going on to what we know through complaints filled to our office, we wouldn't know much really, not even about the poster of Forza Nuova (see introduction).

⁶⁵ Interviews at UNAR were conducted on 13 Dec.

The key question which needs to be addressed then is why this happens: why Roma do not file complaints when they encounter discrimination. There may be various reasons for this. According to another interviewee at UNAR,

People seem disoriented and there is somehow a lack of confidence in the authorities, due perhaps to the barrage of negative statements against Roma which have recently come from key political figures.

While this seems a valid point, it does not reflect what we see as the fuller picture. Previous research (Sigona, 2006) shows that one of the reasons Roma fail to participate in political life is their lack of confidence and their general disillusionment with institutions and politicians. The reasons for this may be twofold: firstly, based on Roma everyday experience, institutions are mainly repressive and intimidating; secondly, there is a lack of social policy aimed at promoting and facilitating Romani social and political inclusion.

We would like to conclude with a statement which for its conciliatory tone and content leaves some space for a positive solution to the current crisis. In a speech given on 20 November, the President of the Italian Republic, Giorgio Napolitano, stated⁶⁶:

We have heard - not only with regard to the Roma but also to the Romanians - that they are evil and therefore we should be scared of them. But we must not be scared. We need to help them to integrate into society [...] and give to children born in Italy citizenship.

⁶⁶ <http://www.quirinale.it/Discorsi/Discurso.asp?id=34424>

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop a joined-up approach among different institutions aimed at facilitating the social inclusion of Romanian Roma and their political participation to Italian society;
- Promote initiatives aimed at opening up a constructive dialogue with Roma and at (re)building their trust in institutions;
- Adopt an inclusive and participatory approach in developing policy for Roma;
- Develop policy for security which addresses also the need for security of new comers, including Romanian Roma;
- Review and enhance existing tools to fight and persecute racial discrimination in Italy;
- Monitor and persecute hatred speech in media, especially if it comes from key public figures;
- Considering the failure of evictions as a medium long term response to the housing needs of Roma, develop suitable housing policy which takes into account their presence in Italy;
- Promote a positive image of Roma through a communication campaign which involves national and local media but also key places of socialisation such as schools.

APPENDIX

Photos by *Stefano Montesi*



Interior of a shack, Tor di Quinto, Rome, November 2007



Demolition of a shack, via Gordiani camp, Rome, November 2007



Shanty town, via Imbrecciato, Rome, December 2007



Homeless Romani family after forced eviction, Ponte Mammolo, Rome, December 2007

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