

# Racist rampage in the Italian election campaign

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Four weeks before the Italian elections, a bloodbath shook the small town of Macerata. On February 3, six young people were shot by a racist gunman, who drove around indiscriminately firing at dark-skinned passers-by.

Among the victims, who come from Mali, Nigeria, Ghana and Gambia, there is also a young woman. All are aged between 21 and 33. Five are still in hospital, one is seriously injured and had to undergo surgery. The gunman, Luca Traini (28), shot at but missed five other migrants during his Saturday morning rampage. He also shot at the party headquarters of the Democratic Party (PD), which currently heads the government in Rome under Paolo Gentiloni.

When the mayor realized there was a shooting spree taking place, he halted public transport and called on people to stay at home. After two hours, Traini was captured by police on the steps of a war memorial and arrested. Wrapped in an Italian flag, he gave a fascist salute and shouted, “Viva Italia!”

Traini, bearing a fascist tattoo on his temple, is known locally as a fascist and racist. In his apartment, as well as Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* and books on Mussolini’s social republic of Salò, police also found a flag with the Celtic Cross, which neo-Nazis consider a symbol of the “supremacy of the white race”. Last year, Traini had run as a candidate of the Lega Nord (Northern League) in the local elections in the neighbouring village Corridonia, but without receiving a vote.

The former separatist party is participating in the general election on 4 March as “Lega”. Its nationalism and unrestrained witch-hunting of immigrants undoubtedly encouraged the perpetrator’s fascist delusions. For example, for days, the newspapers had reported on the statement of Lega member Attilio

Fontana, who said the most important thing now was “to protect our ethnicity, our white race” from extinction by the wave of migration.

Traini justified his action citing a recent murder of a young woman, Pamela M. of Macerata, whose body was found dismembered in two suitcases. Writing about the suspect, a Nigerian drug dealer, the Lega leader and its top candidate Matteo Salvini had said, “What was this WORM still doing in Italy? He was not a war refugee, he brought the war to Italy. The left has bloodstained hands. Deportations, deportations, more border controls and again deportations!”

After Traini’s murderous action, Salvini issued another statement, in which he half-heartedly condemned the shooting, but placed responsibility on a lax immigration policy: “Violence must always be condemned. However, I have a duty to tell the Italians HOW to avoid incidents like those in Macerata. For example? By sending the illegals home.”

The Lega is in a right-wing alliance for the election with Silvio Berlusconi’s Forza Italia and the fascists of Fratelli d’Italia. They hope to replace the ruling Democrats with a mixture of right-wing incitement and fanciful election promises. Polling almost 38 percent in surveys, they are currently ten points in front of the government camp (28 percent).

Silvio Berlusconi is also making targeted use of right-wing demagoguery. In a TV broadcast on Sunday evening about the rampage, he described the offender as crazy and sweepingly charged all refugees of being “a social bomb that can explode at any time”. According to Berlusconi, there are 600,000 irregular immigrants in Italy allegedly living from the proceeds of crime.

As for the third major party, the MoVimento 5 Stelle (M5S, Five Star Movement) of Beppe Grillo, its lead candidate Luigi Di Maio picked up on the slogan of the

“social bomb” and charged that Berlusconi, together with Renzi, was responsible for mass immigration into Italy. For months, the “Grillini” have stood at about 27 percent in the polls, making it the strongest single party.

The policy of the Five Star Movement is just as right-wing, nationalist and xenophobic as that of the other parties. In the EU, it sits in the same political grouping as the far right Alternative for Germany (AfD), the Sweden Democrats and Britain’s UKIP, and also has declared fascists among its VIPs, such as the father of M5S candidate Alessandro Di Battista, who emphasized in front of the camera, “Am I right-wing? No, I’m a fascist.”

In the election campaign, the Five Star Movement benefited from being the only major party that has never been in government. The two other major political camps have been identified for years with the right-wing policies of the banks and the EU. While Berlusconi stands for shameless personal enrichment, the PD restructures the public finances at the expense of the working class.

In a government statement on the bloody crime in Macerata, Gentiloni did not say a word about the racist aspects of the crime but emphasized his confidence in the judiciary and the “sense of responsibility of all political forces.” He concluded his statement with a nationalist appeal, “Hatred and violence will not divide us, the Italian people.”

As a governing party, the PD has long practiced what the right-wing demands: the systematic attack on African migrants. With the active help of the EU, Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni and his Interior Minister Marco Minniti have signed a dirty deal with the Libyan Coast Guard. They finance Libyan Islamists and smugglers in the Mediterranean to keep migrants out of Europe. They consciously accept the fact that people not only drown, but also perish in Libyan torture camps.

In the hospital, one of Traini’s victims, a Mr. Wilson from Ghana, told about his odyssey of war, flight and expulsion. He had arrived in Italy on a dinghy, saying, “I saw people, especially black Africans, being shot or sold. People were treated like cattle there.”

Italy is in a devastating social crisis. Anyone who is in their twenties today has seen nothing but social decline in their lives. Officially, youth unemployment

is at almost 35 percent, and in reality is much higher, especially in the south. Ever-new austerity measures and “reforms” such as Renzi’s “Jobs Act”, the pension reforms, healthcare reforms or the “Buona Scuola” have led to hundreds of thousands of young Italians leaving the country.

All parties, from the open fascists to the PD, are responding to the social crisis by inciting xenophobia and racism to divert social anger and outrage onto the most vulnerable in society, refugees and migrants. This is the dirty mechanism of the Italian election campaign.



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