

# Human smuggling to/trough Italy

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# THE IRREGULAR IMMIGRATION INDUSTRY ON THE NORTH-EAST BORDER

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The most widespread image the subject of illegal immigration into Italy conjures up in the minds of the Italian and foreign public is that of the “boat landings” on the southern coast of the country. The arrival of rotting boats crowded with hundreds of individuals exhausted by a difficult crossing experienced in wretched conditions, is an image which has a strong impact, an image which has become codified in the mass media. The impression that the landings on the southern coast are *the* channel for illegal immigration is further confirmed by the fact that in political debate, the spotlight is directed mostly onto boat landings and *scafisti*, the pilots of the boats which arrive. In political discussion there is continual reference to the problems of controlling the thousands of kilometres of coastline which form part of the Italian border. Even the Italian Interior Ministry helps to reinforce this idea, given that the press releases and statistics it issues almost always refer exclusively to boat landings and counter-measures implemented in the regions of southern Italy.

Given the geographical characteristics of Italy, the attention paid to its maritime borders is not in itself surprising. The land border of Italy represents only 20% of its total external border. A long stretch of this border is shared with Schengen countries (918 km) or Switzerland (740 km), so that only a small part - less than 300 km - divides Italian territory from Slovenia, one of the states which seceded from the Yugoslav federation. This represents the only “external” border of Italy, at least until the process of enlargement of the European Union is completed.

The continual reference to boat landings has a high media value but little objective value, however. The illegal crossing of land borders is also a very important phenomenon in Italy, both with regard to its external border and its borders with other Schengen countries. The Regional Observatory on Integration and Multi-ethnicity for the region of Lombardy carries out an annual survey of a large sample of foreigners (N=8,000) present in the region [Blangiardo, 2003]. The 2002 survey also included a question asking through which region the interviewee entered Italy. The analysis of the answers underlines the existence of significant influxes through both the external border and the borders with Schengen countries. It is true that these figures refer only to foreigners present in the region of Lombardy, which could overestimate the numbers entering through mainly “northern”

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geographical routes, but these figures still give us a quite clear idea of how land routes are also important in illegal influxes of immigration into Italy (see Table 1).

The two kinds of land border present very different situations, however. The north-west borders are marked by a two-way movement of illegal immigration. In this area, most illegal entrants to Italy have previously entered Europe through another country in the Schengen area. When they enter Italy, however, their visas are usually still valid and have not yet run out. In the opposite direction – given that Italy has a particularly strict visa policy – the most common case is crossing the same borders by aliens who have entered Italy as clandestines with the intention of moving on to other Schengen countries or the United Kingdom. This explains why the number of deportations from Italy to France or Switzerland are notably less than those in the opposite direction.

**Table 1 - Region of entry into Italy by entry channel used**

	<b>Tourist visa (%)</b>	<b>Long term visa (%)</b>	<b>Without visa (%)</b>	<b>Other (%)</b>	<b>No.</b>
<b>Apulia, Calabria, Sicily</b>	11.2	9.4	73.1	6.3	594
<b>North-East border</b>	31.3	16.1	44.2	8.4	956
<b>North-West border</b>	27.3	14.6	52.5	5.6	1175
<b>Lazio</b>	48.6	31.4	13.8	6.2	1041
<b>Lombardy</b>	37.2	41.5	16.0	5.3	217
<b>Other regions</b>	32.8	19.9	38.3	9.0	3717
<b>Total interviewed</b>	32.8	29.3	31.9	6.0	7700

*Source:* 2002 Survey, Regional Observatory for Integration and Multi-ethnicity, Lombardy.

The north-eastern border, on the other hand, is mainly the object of attempts at illegal entry into Italy<sup>1</sup>. Here there are three important elements in play: the fact that this border is an external border of the Schengen area, the proximity to several important sending areas, and the impact of geopolitical changes which have affected Eastern Europe and the Balkans over the last fifteen years. It is not surprising, therefore, that the north-east border of Italy plays an important role in the geography of illegal migratory inflows, and that it has seen the birth and development of an thriving “industrial district” of organisations involved in smuggling immigrants into Italy, either as a final destination or as a transit place before moving on to other European countries. As will be seen, the migrant-smuggling business in this area has a long history which reflects in various ways changes in both the structure of the flows of illegal immigrants and the planning and implementation of immigration controls and counter-trafficking measures.

<sup>1</sup> Along this border there is also a limited but not negligible flow of illegals who have entered European countries clandestinely and are trying to cross the border to return temporarily or permanently to their country of origin.

## 2. THE EVOLUTION OF THE PEOPLE-SMUGGLING INDUSTRY ALONG THE NORTH-EASTERN BORDER

The north-east border is characterised by a complex and controversial history. For the entire history of Italy as a nation-state, the eastern border has been a continuous and inflamed place of conflict, with frequent changes in the demarcation of borders and numerous transfers of populations, which have almost always been forced. The present situation, which emerged after the second world war, is a land border which crosses towns and cities, woods, farms – even cemeteries – and a maritime border which is relatively easy to navigate<sup>2</sup>. This configuration makes the border areas quite difficult to control, especially as they separate two regions which are, socially and economically, relatively interdependent. A significant part of the population on both sides of the border has relationships and interests on the other side of the border, a large number of people cross it for work, and many businesses have clients on both sides. Even in times of political tension, there has been a large volume of transborder exchanges, which has made strict controls of entries and exits impossible (Buratti, 1971; Sambri, 1970)<sup>3</sup>.

For a large part of the post-war period, the border was both a border between states and a frontier which separated the “free world” from the communist bloc, given that the Iron Curtain ended a few hundred metres east of the port of Trieste. The combination of internal conflict and geopolitical conflict has made the border area a place with a high concentration of military and intelligence operators, and one of the most well-guarded and controlled areas of Europe. At the same time, it is not surprising that this configuration has favoured the emergence of a thriving black economy centred on the management of the border area. Since the beginning of the post-war era, the Venezia-Giulia region has been the base for several economic circuits specialising in the supply of services for avoiding border controls. The smuggling of goods has always been big business, at times on a massive scale. Illegal operations connected to arms and drug trafficking, as well as the smuggling of other contraband goods, were recorded with a certain continuity between the immediate post-war era and the Balkans conflicts of the 1990s. The forging of documents – both for personal identity and the transport of goods – is another speciality of the area. Particularly sophisticated organisations were already operating at the end of the second world war, when the city of Trieste was one of the main gathering points for people trying to get out of Europe. The most important Italian refugee camps, created to house refugees from Istria and Dalmatia but later used for refugees from eastern Europe fleeing across the Yugoslav border and other minor influxes of refugees up until the ‘70s, were also situated along this border. Finally, after the war the area provided a base for middle-men offering transport services both for people fleeing from Yugoslavia or other countries of the communist bloc, and communist activists trying to enter Iron Curtain countries without leaving traces of their movements. The port of Trieste, even if its importance declined after the war, still remained one of the crucial cogs in the wheel of the logistics system of the Adriatic, and maintained its character as a point of contact for people working in the economy – legal or otherwise – of the whole area.

The presence of this underground border economy – together with the professional skills built up over the decades – represent an important background for the development of illegal migratory flows, which were recorded in the Venezia-Giulia area from the 1970s onwards. For example, the bodies of three immigrants from Mali and the Ivory Coast were found in Val Rosandra in October

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<sup>2</sup> A detailed geographical and historical description of the north-eastern border of Italy is given by Giorgio Valussi (1972).

<sup>3</sup> The basis for the regulation of mobility across the border area between Italy and Yugoslavia was definitively established with the Udine agreement in 1955, which codified and ratified what had already been agreed by an exchange of notes in September 1949. Exchanges intensified especially in the period between 1965 and 1969, when nearly 16,000,000 foreigners crossed this border, as well as 5,516,000 transits of residents in the border area.

1973. They had frozen to death while trying to cross the border along a disused railway track. Two other Mali nationals, who admitted to being part of the same group of illegal immigrants, were stopped several hours later on Italian territory. Investigations showed that a specialised organisation, whose contact was arrested while trying to get in touch with the victims' group, "recruited" citizens of these two countries who wanted to work in France and who could afford to obtain a passport in their native country. At this point, the organisation provided transport to Yugoslavia, taking advantage of the improved communications between the main African capitals and the leader of the movement of non-aligned countries. The migrants were then accompanied across Italy to France, where they could find work in manufacturing companies, and part of their wages was used to repay the cost of the journey to the organisation<sup>4</sup>. The tragic consequences of the October 1973 incident caused an outcry when it became news. However, investigations revealed that illegal border crossings were a relatively rare but not unknown event at that time, and were inserted into pre-existing operations of illegal migratory flows towards European countries which were traditional importers of labour, especially France, Germany and Belgium. Only a few days later, a shooting by the Yugoslav border guards brought to light the activities of some Italians – resident in France or close to the French border – involved in the smuggling of another group of Mali citizens to France.

This kind of flow – which exploited the possibility of reaching Yugoslavia in a relatively simple and legal way – continued throughout the following years, growing in response to the increasing difficulty of entering Western Europe created by the adoption of restrictive policies in the mid-1970s. Reports in local newspapers show that from the mid-1970s onwards there was a convergence of different kinds of influx along the border. To the "traditional" illegal entry of refugees from Eastern Europe – who crossed the border illegally mainly to avoid Yugoslavian border guards – and Yugoslavs who were seasonal workers in Friuli-Venezia Giulia and the Veneto area – were added new flows of migrants from Asia and Africa heading towards the traditional European importers of labour. In the second half of the 1970s, there was already also the beginning of a sizeable influx of illegal immigrants coming to Italy as a place to settle rather than as a transit country. Migrants from Turkey and China who were heading for Germany and Austria, but also Italy, had already started to be reported in the second half of the 1970s. Investigations carried out at the time show that illegal organisations were generally engaged in the transport of migrants who were recruited in various ways, often in bars and other such places in the main Yugoslav cities near the border zone. Once close to the border, the migrants were sent off to cross it following a particular route, occasionally guided by an escort. Meanwhile the driver of the vehicle (usually a hired vehicle), crossed into Italy legally, picked up the immigrants at a previously agreed place on the other Italian side, and took them to the nearest railway station. Alternatively, the immigrants were transferred by sea from the Julian march coast to Italy, where they were picked up and taken to a railway station, from where they continued their journey independently. Payment was usually made at the beginning of, or during, the journey, even if one can assume that in at least some cases migrants were helped by other people-traffickers later on.

The traditional underground operators on the border areas controlled these inflows, and ran them side-by-side with the smuggling of contraband such as cigarettes - sold on the Italian market - or coffee, jeans and electrical components to be sold in the countries of the communist bloc. For example, in 1986 two people from Trieste were arrested for transporting Chinese, Sri Lankan and Turkish nationals by boat from the coast of Istria to Italy. They were found to be criminals who worked in different sectors of the illegal border economy. One had even been involved previously in smuggling Calvi, the director of the Ambrosiano bank, out of Italy. He had been re-arrested one year later for involvement in cigarette smuggling from the Dalmatian coast to the coast of

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<sup>4</sup> The organisation also operated in the refugee camps of Padriciano (Venezia-Giulia) and Fara Sabina (Lazio), where it organised entry to France for refugees given temporary shelter in the camps in exchange for a cut in their future incomes.

Romagna. In other cases, the organisation of the journey involved several stages and was entrusted to a fellow-countryman of the immigrant. This was usually someone who was already a legal resident of the target country and who collaborated with one or more inhabitants along the border area. Again, in the summer of 1986, an investigation carried out by the Trieste police resulted in the arrest of two Sri Lankan nationals, one legally resident in Italy and the other in France, who were responsible for recruiting fellow-countrymen in Sri Lanka and settling them in at their destination. Also in this case, however, the part of the journey which involved the illegal crossing of the border was entrusted to Italians who had previous convictions for a wide range of illegal activities in the border areas.

The increase in illegal entries does not necessarily mean, however, that there is a corresponding increase in the number of entries aided and abetted by traffickers. Newspaper articles of the time also contain reports of a large number of illegal crossings which seem to have been made independently, as well as a substantial number of entries where assistance was given by family members or friends who had already followed the same route. In some cases, it was potential employers from the same country as the immigrant, generally people running restaurants, who selected migrants in the country of origin and collected them in Lubyana or Belgrade to bring them to Italy, often using their own passports to pass through border controls. Cases have also been recorded of illegal immigrants living in Europe who have illegally crossed the border to leave Italy in order to visit their country of origin<sup>5</sup>.

The existence of these illegal migratory flows was not unknown to the police, who had already begun increasing controls and patrols along the border areas in the mid-1980s, mostly out of fear that Middle-Eastern terrorists would use it as a point of entry. In the same period, controls were also extended to railway stations situated near to border areas, where migrants who had successfully crossed the border were often stopped. The increase in controls at these stations quickly led to a change in the services offered by smugglers, who began to supply transport to railway stations further away from the border areas – Mestre near Venice, or Padua – and no longer only to nearby stations. The increase in counter-measures also led to an increase in the usefulness of specialised knowledge for illegal migrants, both to reduce the risk of being apprehended by patrols at the border, and to avoid the need to wait in suspected areas immediately over the border.

The growth in illegal immigration, however, remained quite limited for many years. Italy, which was already an important country of settlement, did not require entry visas from the main countries of origin, and the same applied to many European countries where the policy regarding visas was, with few exceptions, absent or weak. A substantial number of migrants could therefore enter legally without the need for assistance. Up to the end of the 1980s, the countries of Eastern Europe and the Balkans applied strict restrictions on the movement of their citizens, which also greatly reduced the potential “natural” migration over the north-eastern border. The demand for services was therefore relatively small and the profits to be made in satisfying this demand were relatively limited. People smuggling was consequently just one activity among others, carried out when the opportunity arose or when other, more lucrative, operations like cigarette smuggling suffered from a fall in demand.

The situation changed rapidly, however, with the geopolitical transformation of the area at the end of the 1980s. In the space of a few years, communist countries abolished restrictions on movement, and European countries, which slowly came to include Italy, introduced stringent policies of visa requirements to reduce the number of potential asylum seekers. Another factor was the beginning of the conflict in Yugoslavia which would eventually lead to its break-up. In this context, the crucial role the Yugoslav area traditionally played in the flows of illegal migration towards Western Europe increased greatly in importance. It would continue to maintain this role for the whole of the

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<sup>5</sup> Given the way controls were carried out at the time, illegal re-entry was not, however, a way to avoid checks on the previous illegal residence in a European country. It was generally connected to the problem of taking savings back to communist countries avoiding currency controls.

final decade of the twentieth century. The first consequence was that large flows of both refugees and workers left Eastern Europe and the Balkans for the countries of Western Europe. Secondly, geopolitical transformation turned the area into an ideal transit place for inter-continental flows of illegal migrants: controls at airports were lax and border controls were decidedly rudimentary in the new states, civil wars created opportunities for smuggling many kinds of goods, and corruption was often endemic<sup>6</sup>. Figures available relating to the first half of the 1990s are too inaccurate and rough to go into great enough detail on the changes which took place in illegal migratory patterns. Data on deportation, one of the few control instruments available to police forces at the time show, however, that there was a rapid increase in deportations from a few hundred in the 1980s to over 2,000 in 1992, 3,000 in 1993, 4,000 in 1994, and nearly 5,000 in 1995 (see Table 2). The figures show a very rapid growth which was notably above the national average, and in a period when there was no significant increase in police controls on the border. We can therefore hypothesise that there was an increase in illegal migratory pressure in the region at this time.

We should not assume, however, that these geopolitical changes – and the increased pressure of illegal migration – were reflected *sic et simpliciter* in business opportunities for migrant-smugglers on the north-eastern border. On the contrary, these geopolitical changes had a negative impact on individual organisations and operators at first. This was because these changes also resulted in an increase in competition as the size of the market increased. The number of routes from where it became possible to enter Western Europe from Eastern Europe and the Balkans multiplied. Some of the illegal flows which originated in communist Europe – where Yugoslavia represented the most liberal place for controls of people leaving the country – lost importance because the routes used could be substituted by easier ones across land borders with Germany and Austria. Migratory flows originating in the Balkans found a route which was just as easy, and less costly, in the maritime route across the Mediterranean. The intensification of the conflict in Yugoslavia also made it possible for people to enter Western Europe by asking for political asylum at the border, which led to a reduction in the need for the service of smugglers in certain sectors of the market.

**Table 2 - Deportation from Friuli-Venezia Giulia (1992-1998)**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Deportations (orders issued )</b>	<b>Deportations (coattively executed)</b>
<b>1992</b>	1594	738
<b>1993</b>	2686	1238
<b>1994</b>	3222	1601
<b>1995</b>	3315	1580
<b>1996</b>	2385	803
<b>1997</b>	<b>3528</b>	<b>966</b>
<b>1998</b>	2841	792

Source: Interior Ministry

Neither should it be forgotten that an increase in migratory pressure also implied the entry into the market of new operators. Old smugglers, drivers, lorry drivers, residents of the area – even pensioners and a few housewives – entered the market, taking advantage of their knowledge of the border. This was also because the penalties for aiding and abetting illegal entry, set down in law 39/90 in Italy, were relatively light and the offence often difficult to prove.

The growth in competition led to a rapid re-organisation of the migrant smuggling industry along the border with Slovenia, marked by a more diversified organisation. On one side traditional operators, side by side with other new operators, dealt with increasing demand by standardising means of transport which could carry more people at a cheaper cost. The traditional “taxi drivers” bought mini-buses, and numerous organisations offered less reliable but low cost transport, which

<sup>6</sup> For a synthesis, see J.Widgren (1999).

stopped near or immediately after the border. As we have said, this type of activity was often casual, and arranged where and when the occasion arose. Inside this market segment, however, decision-making power and the majority of the profits shifted progressively from the transporter to the recruiter, that is, to the person able to contact migrants looking for illegal entry, fix the prize, and subsequently drive the migrants or choose a driver for each journey. Following the same logic, other operators reacted to the loss of income by trying to penetrate – or expand in – the market of “all-inclusive” journeys, running migrants from the point of departure to the place where they would eventually settle.

Besides geopolitical changes, another important factor was the change in repressive policies. As we have seen, in the 1980s the Italian police developed policies to tackle illegal immigration based on border patrols and especially controls at nearby railway stations. To these were added controls of forged documents, used on many occasions since the 1970s. This system of controls was based on two implicit assumptions. The first was the restricted mobility of East European and Balkans citizens; the second was the consequent “physical recognisability” of potential illegal migrants trying to cross the border in comparison to normal border flows. Controls were therefore increased especially for migrants who could easily be distinguished from inhabitants of the border areas by their physical appearance<sup>7</sup>.

**Table 3 - People refused entry and apprehended on the North-Eastern border (1996-2003)**

	Refused entry at border	Deported by police	Apprehended
1996	643		888
1997	544		1306
1998	943	96	2039
1999	2888	357	4416
2000	2916	357	9592
2001	2861	817	4902
2002	4303	455	3838
2003*	1540	346	1675

Source: Zone IV Border Police. Co-ordination and Planning Office.

\* First six months of 2003.

Both of these implicit assumptions collapsed at the beginning of the 1990s. Eastern European countries became places of origin for strong migratory flows, and illegal migrants coming from these countries were not easily distinguishable at first sight from the normal influx of people crossing the border every day. To this was added the fact that with the secession of Slovenia, a considerable part of the illegal flow across the border was made up of people using the border country as a transit place, and it was no longer their country of origin. The possibility of “returning” migrants who were apprehended therefore became more problematic and uncertain. These changes meant that a reorganisation of the system of border controls was needed, and as a result border controls were intensified and there was an attempt to achieve some kind of co-ordination with the border country. In 1995 Italy introduced - later than all the other Schengen countries - visa requirements for all the countries in the Balkans. To counteract the increase in illegal entries, Italy signed a deportation agreement with Slovenia in September 1997, which was aimed at appreciably reducing the attraction of the north-eastern route<sup>8</sup>. In March 1998, with the passing of Law 40/98,

<sup>7</sup> The Italian forces of law and order do not have *de facto* or effective legal constraints relating to racial profiling. Checking of documents can take place at any time at the discretion of the police.

<sup>8</sup> This agreement was often difficult to apply, however. A critical point was in 2000, when only 3,500 deportation requests out of a total of 18,000 were accepted by the Slovene authorities. The discrepancy can be explained by the high number of nationals of third-party states apprehended in Friuli-Venezia Giulia, for whom it was difficult to establish

the penalties for aiding and abetting illegal entry were significantly increased in Italy, making this offence “attractive” from the point of view of the police and judicial authorities. Law 40/98 also gave powers to police chiefs to deport aliens apprehended near the border or in the period immediately after crossing the border with an accelerated procedure (*respingimento da parte dei questori*).

This procedure was particularly suitable for operations conducted on land borders, and was applied especially in the Friuli-Venezia Giulia area, as can be seen from the rapid increase in deportations and apprehensions recorded in the period immediately after the approval of the law (see Table 3). The context in which the organisations studied on the following pages operate is therefore characterised by a marked increase in activities to counter migrant-smuggling.

### **3. THE MIGRANT-SMUGGLING BUSINESS: THE FLOWS**

Given the nature of the phenomenon, the information available does not allow us to estimate accurately the size of illegal flows of illegal immigration and the percentage of illegal entries which used some form of professional assistance. The information available, as well as documents issued by the Interior Ministry, show strong agreement on the assumption that these flows increased significantly in the 1990s, and that their composition modified over time in the direction of a growing heterogeneity regarding the country of origin of illegal immigrants and the kind of service used by them. It is also assumed that the percentage of “assisted” entries increased in this period. These appear to be reasonable hypotheses, but as will be seen, these assumptions do not take into account both the absence of adequate information regarding the past – which is nearly always implicitly simplified in the comparisons which are made – and the actual knowledge of the size and characteristics of the phenomenon at the time.

The main sources available on flows of illegal immigrants are police records, which synthesise the information collected in the course of operations to counter trafficking by the Italian police, and in more recent years, by the police in Slovenia. These sources, besides being one of the few sources available, are undoubtedly useful as reference points to give a general picture of the phenomenon, as long as it is kept in mind that they are characterised by strong intrinsic limits to knowledge. With regard to the size of the flows recorded, an increase or decrease can be caused by an increase or decrease in the actual flows, but also by the strengthening or relaxing of counter measures. The same variations are also influenced by counter measures for a second reason. As a particular means of entry gradually becomes widespread, it attracts the interest of the authorities who develop appropriate counter measures to tackle it. This pushes migrants and smugglers to seek different methods, who then move to different areas or adopt different techniques of entry, which can prove more efficient thanks to the greater concentration of controls in the area of the previously used channels. The identification of each channel of entry by the police therefore leads to a rapid increase in the number of migrants apprehended in certain months, followed by a similar rapid decrease in the following months, so that it cannot be concluded that these variations reflect the global trend of the phenomenon<sup>9</sup>.

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their transit through Slovene territory. Joint Italian-Slovenian patrols of the border were organised, in order to reduce the potential lack of trust arising from deportation requests.

<sup>9</sup> Alternatively, the composition in the flows of migrants stopped can be observed. The channels where controls are concentrated show a decreasing percentage of migrants helped by smugglers and an increase in the percentage acting independently.

The figures provided by the border police, as can be seen in Table 3, show how the different measures employed to tackle illegal immigration follow quite different dynamics<sup>10</sup>. Turning back migrants at the border is a classic form of refusal of entry to foreigners at the borders who cannot satisfy the requirements established by the Italian state for entry to its territory. The figures show that the number of people turned back increased greatly in the period under consideration, from a few hundreds to several thousand. It is interesting to note that only a small percentage of people turned back – 0.3% to 1.1% - were trying to enter Italy using forged documents or visas<sup>11</sup>. The majority of people were refused entry because of lack of documents, insufficient documents (including not having a visa), or the inability to demonstrate the availability of sufficient funds for their stay. A further reason for refusing entry is a previous deportation order issued by the Italian state (2% to 5% of refusals of entry) or other Schengen countries (18% to 23% of refusals). In the latter case, these are presumably aliens who have been expelled by another Schengen country and are trying to return there using Italy as a transit country.

The dynamics relating to the people apprehended - that is, aliens stopped while trying to enter the country illegally - is the problem which mostly interests to us. The figures available seem at first glance to show a rapid increase in the period 1996-2000, with an equally rapid decrease in the following years. The strong peak recorded for 2000 was, however, linked to a particular influx of immigrants. Over 70% of this number is represented by the strong increase in attempts at illegal entry by Iranian nationals in that year, which was not recorded in the previous or following years. If we ignore this influx, which was presumably linked to the ease of entry to Bosnia-Herzegovina for Iranians, the number of people apprehended seems to indicate a large increase in the number of people trying to enter Italy illegally in the period 1996-1999, which then stabilised at relatively high levels over the following years. The information presented up to now represents the total volume of detected illegal flows across the border between Italy and Slovenia. However, similar numbers can be recorded even when there are considerable changes in the internal composition of these flows. In particular, it is important to understand whether or not the foreigners stopped trying to enter Italy illegally form part of distinct migratory patterns, and if and to what degree changes are recorded in the relative importance of these migratory patterns. Unfortunately, the only information available which is potentially useful for this end regards the nationality of aliens apprehended (Table 4).

The analysis of the nationality of aliens apprehended in the period 1996-2003 shows the presence of many and different illegal migratory flows attempting to enter through the north-eastern border. Some of the flows originate in distant countries, while others originate in bordering or nearby countries. As stated in the previous paragraph, this simultaneous presence of peoples of different origin is not a new phenomenon, having already been recorded at the beginning of the 1970s. It is true, however, that there was a substantial rise in the heterogeneity of illegal migratory flows across the border during the 1990s. The countries of the former Yugoslavia had by then become a corridor through which a multiplicity of often small migratory flows from all parts of the globe passed. In terms of percentages, this led to a significant redistribution of the figures. The Balkans, which represented 72%-82% of migrants stopped in the mid 1990s, slipped down the table in the

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<sup>10</sup> As regards the north-eastern border, we should also underline that the data available show notable differences even with reference to similar procedures and time-scales. Given that illegal flows along land borders receive markedly less attention compared to those across maritime borders, data regarding the results of counter measures are rarely made known, and are often not comparable. For example, the Interior Ministry does not provide centralised detailed data on aliens apprehended while trying to enter the country except – for certain years – in the case of landings on the coast of Apulia, Calabria and Sicily. It was therefore decided to request data available from the Co-ordination and Planning Office of zone IV of the border police, which covers Friuli-Venezia Giulia and Veneto. Data produced by this office, which is responsible for controlling all the border area, are the most extensive and detailed among those available for number of people turned back from 1991-2003, and for apprehensions and deportations from 1996 to June 2003.

<sup>11</sup> The only exception to this rule was recorded in 2002, when 18% of those turned back were trying to use fake visas. The fact that these belonged to a restricted number of nationalities and at a restricted number of checkpoints leads one to think of an organised process. In the first six months of 2003, the number of people turned back for using forged documents returned to 0.4% of the total.

following years, while the Middle East and Asia became a substantial part, in some years even representing the areas where the majority of migrants originated. It would be erroneous, however, to treat these figures as an indication of a radical change in the make-up of migrant flows, that is, as a tendency of migration from nearby countries to be supplanted by migratory flows from more distant countries using Italy only as a transit country<sup>12</sup>. These are in fact two different systems which have co-existed for a long time in the area, sometimes using the same services, and sometimes acting independently. It is more correct to see in these illegal migratory flows the presence of a constant base made up of “traditional” border crossings originating in the different countries of south-east Europe and the Balkans. These flows show a significant continuity and stability over time, and are present in significant if variable numbers for every year. To these migratory patterns must be added other flows which originate in different parts of the world and use the region as a transit place. These flows are influenced by highly specific factors, ranging from conditions in the country of origin to opportunities offered by trans-national networks to settle in another country. They are sometimes made up of large numbers of people in certain periods, but they are relatively unstable, being influenced at times both by counter-trafficking measures and alternatives which open up along other corridors. As can be seen in Table 4, flows of this type can dominate the statistics in certain periods, but rarely maintain continuity over time<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> Nor should we forget that variations in the percentages are affected by considerable differences in the total number of people stopped in different years. In 2000, the year in which immigration from the Balkans appears to be at a historical low (seen as a percentage of the total), the absolute number of migrants from this region was still nearly double the number stopped in 1997, the year in which this region dominated the statistics.

<sup>13</sup> As can be seen from the case of Iran, which was very significant between 1999 and 2001, but almost negligible in the years before and after. Another example is Egypt, important in 1996 but which practically disappeared in following years.

**Table 4 - Main nationalities of migrants caught while trying to enter illegally the country across the North-Eastern border**

	1996	1996	1997	1997	1998	1998	1999	1999	2000	2000	2001	2001	2002	2002	2003*	2003*
	Values	%														
<b>Afghanistan</b>	0	0,0	0	0,0	6	0,3	6	0,1	339	3,5	221	4,5	154	4,0	22	1,3
<b>Albania</b>	59	6,6	20	1,5	43	2,1	24	0,5	58	0,6	17	0,3	32	0,8	16	1,0
<b>Bangladesh</b>	9	1,0	3	0,2	73	3,6	221	4,9	460	4,8	128	2,6	70	1,8	51	3,0
<b>Bosnia-Herzegovina</b>	6	0,7	11	0,8	15	0,7	100	2,2	147	1,5	58	1,2	44	1,1	6	0,4
<b>Bulgaria</b>	35	3,9	106	8,1	35	1,7	35	0,8	30	0,3	24	0,5	76	2,0	62	3,7
<b>China PR</b>	0	0,0	1	0,1	34	1,7	68	1,5	74	0,8	42	0,9	75	2,0	68	4,1
<b>Egypt</b>	38	4,3	14	1,1	6	0,3	38	0,8	42	0,4	10	0,2	8	0,2	2	0,1
<b>India</b>	3	0,3	0	0,0	14	0,7	38	0,8	131	1,4	144	2,9	148	3,9	61	3,6
<b>Iran</b>	7	0,8	8	0,6	14	0,7	252	5,6	4064	42,2	275	5,6	37	1,0	9	0,5
<b>Iraq</b>	5	0,6	29	2,2	95	4,7	141	3,1	411	4,3	740	15,1	416	10,8	66	3,9
<b>Liberia</b>	19	2,1	24	1,8	1	0,0	5	0,1	1	0,0	0	0,0	2	0,1	0	0,0
<b>FYR Macedonia</b>	99	11,1	194	14,8	268	13,1	309	6,9	213	2,2	316	6,4	190	5,0	24	1,4
<b>Morocco</b>	6	0,7	10	0,8	2	0,1	10	0,2	10	0,1	37	0,8	10	0,3	3	0,2
<b>Moldova</b>	6	0,7	5	0,4	10	0,5	70	1,6	371	3,8	157	3,2	141	3,7	95	5,7
<b>Pakistan</b>	0	0,0	6	0,5	85	4,2	78	1,7	103	1,1	67	1,4	60	1,6	29	1,7
<b>Palestine</b>	0	0,0	0	0,0	0	0,0	0	0,0	16	0,2	37	0,8	46	1,2	10	0,6
<b>Rumania</b>	404	45,5	631	48,0	508	24,9	1.044	23,3	1171	12,2	763	15,6	714	18,6	634	37,9
<b>Russia</b>	3	0,3	11	0,8	3	0,1	20	0,4	42	0,4	27	0,6	41	1,1	17	1,0
<b>Sri Lanka</b>	5	0,6	4	0,3	19	0,9	15	0,3	18	0,2	2	0,0	3	0,1	3	0,2
<b>Turkey</b>	57	6,4	35	2,7	109	5,3	355	7,9	1178	12,2	975	19,9	679	17,7	41	2,4
<b>Ukrania</b>	4	0,5	18	1,4	32	1,6	32	0,7	110	1,1	35	0,7	83	2,2	142	8,5
<b>Yugoslavia</b>	81	9,1	121	9,2	608	29,8	1.436	32,0	321	3,3	554	11,3	515	13,4	151	9,0
<b>Other</b>	42	4,7	64	4,9	63	3,1	187	4,2	327	3,4	273	5,6	294	7,7	163	9,7
<b>Total</b>	888	100,0	1.315	100,0	2043	100,0	4.484	100,0	9637	100,0	4.902	100,0	3.838	100,0	1.675	100,0

*Source:* Our elaboration on data from the Ufficio coordinamento e pianificazione, IV zona Polizia di frontiera.

\* Data refer to June 30th 2003.

Nationality, however, only provides one particular piece of information useful for analysing the dynamics of illegal migration<sup>14</sup>. Neither can the data on people apprehended be used *sic et simpliciter* to estimate the size of the illegal migration business. As we will see in the following paragraphs, there are valid reasons to reject the hypothesis which is often made that it is possible to estimate the total volume of illegal flows from the use of some multiplier on the number of people apprehended. Even if we accept this hypothesis, however, the simple number of illegal immigrants intercepted, or their distribution according to nationality, would not be sufficient to formulate a hypothesis relating to the percentage of migrants who use the specialised services of smugglers. A certain number of crossings at every border point are made individually, on the basis of instructions immigrants receive or on previous experience. Other migrants cross the border guided by relatives or other acquaintances who have already made the same journey without recourse to any of these services<sup>15</sup>. In order to investigate the recourse to professional services more detailed information at an individual level is required.

It has been decided, therefore, to analyse a sample of interrogations of illegal immigrants who were apprehended on the border in the province of Trieste between June 2001 and March 2003. A sample of 610 statements was taken into consideration, relating to preliminary interrogations of aliens apprehended by the police in this province<sup>16</sup>. It is possible to extract much useful information about the journey immigrants make by looking at these interrogations, even if the analysis of the data must take into account the situation in which this information was obtained. In police interrogations the interrogator does not follow a standard model of procedure, and it is in the interest of suspects to leave out crucial information if this could damage their position or favour their re-patriation<sup>17</sup>. Finally, we should keep in mind that 85% of these interrogations were carried out with the help of an interpreter, thus introducing another layer of interpretation between the actual experience and the re-telling of the facts.

As can be seen in Table 5, a large majority of the illegal immigrants interrogated admitted to using the services, in the course of the journey, of at least one middle-man. Not all forms of illegal migration, however, seem to use professional services in equal measure. Migrants from more distant countries are much more likely to have used the services of middle-men during their journey. In particular, the use of middle-men is especially widespread among people from areas where there are, or were, difficulties involved in leaving the country, or where migratory flows are discouraged by counter-measures in the country of origin or transit. For migrants in this situation, the use of the service of middle-men is fundamental not only for entry to Western Europe, but also for help in leaving their own country. On the contrary, the forms of migration where recourse to middle-men seems less widespread are those which are more numerous and stable, where the migratory flows are less selective and where knowledge relating to illegal migration is sufficiently widespread to make independent organisation of the crossing possible.

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<sup>14</sup> Nor should it be forgotten that many of the flows which appear as “national” in the statistics are in reality the simple sum of distinct migratory patterns which are not interconnected, which link specific places in the country of origin with specific destinations in the target country.

<sup>15</sup> One could even assume that land borders have a natural process whereby they would experience a decrease in the importance of people smugglers as a sufficient number of migrants directly acquire the know-how necessary to cross the border, leaving aside changes in counter-trafficking measures. See analyses presented by Singer and Massey (1998) relating to the Mexico-US border.

<sup>16</sup> The choice of the province of Trieste is due to two factors. The first is the importance of migratory flows across the section of the border running through this province. The second is the existence of a specialised group working on crimes relating to people trafficking in the area, based at the prosecution office in Trieste. The group asked all police authorities from November 1997 to interrogate the people apprehended on “the circumstances of their entry, place and country of destination, people who helped them (in all relevant stages), who and how they paid, the people (or groups) who were in the event instructed to take charge of them once they reached Italian territory”.

<sup>17</sup> For example, illegal immigrants rarely give information about their social networks, relatives or friends waiting for them in the target country, employers who could offer them a job etc. At the same time, information on itineraries followed and services used is generally given and is usually quite reliable, given that this does not constitute a crime for the person interrogated or his social network.

**Table 5 - Recourse to middle-men by country and area**

	<b>Declares middle-men not used (%)</b>	<b>Used several operators (%)</b>	<b>Single Service As far as Italy (%)</b>	<b>Values</b>
<b>Afghanistan</b>	11.1	44.4	44.4	27
<b>Albania</b>	37.5	0.0	62.5	24
<b>Africa and Middle East</b>	18.8	43.8	37.5	16
<b>China, India, Bangladesh</b>	26.7	33.3	40.0	15
<b>Bosnia, Croatia and Macedonia</b>	16.7	36.7	46.7	60
<b>Romania</b>	48.7	14.5	36.8	76
<b>Bulgaria*, Moldova and the rest of Eastern Europe</b>	54.5	13.6	31.8	22
<b>Turkey</b>	23.8	2.4	73.8	42
<b>Turkey (Kurds)</b>	13.0	11.1	75.9	54
<b>Iraq</b>	11.9	50.0	38.1	42
<b>Iraq (Kurds)</b>	8.8	43.9	47.4	57
<b>Serbia and Montenegro</b>	16.3	41.9	41.9	43
<b>Kosovo</b>	7.1	31.0	61.9	126
<b>Total</b>	20.0	28.1	51.8	604

*Source:* Analysis of a sample of 610 statements made by illegal immigrants apprehended in the province of Trieste.

\* Until 1<sup>st</sup> January 2002

Recourse to middle-men can take many forms, however, many of which are not related to each other. Professional middle-men offer a wide variety of services, from the organisation of the journey to the provision of false documents, and from assistance and accommodation in the transit country to escorts for the actual crossing of the border, not to mention particular cases where they will provide names and addresses of useful contacts or loan the money necessary for the journey. Many of these services can be combined with (or substituted by) services provided by legal operators – for example transport services in a transit country – or help from members of the social network of the migrant such as relatives, friends, or fellow-countrymen. It is therefore useful to distinguish here between two different kinds of trafficker or middle-man: those who provide a single service (for example, the crossing of a particular border or shelter for a night or two), and those who manage the whole journey for the illegal migrant. Some categories of illegal migrant can, for geographical reasons or experience, make the journey independently. Other sectors of the illegal migratory flows proceed in several stages, making use of middle-men to buy certain services along the way which are from time to time necessary. Still others leave their country of origin independently or with the help of local traffickers, arriving in particular cities in Mediterranean countries or the Balkans which act as collecting places. Here the migrants get in touch with specialist organisations which arrange the rest of their journey. Yet others leave their countries accompanied by a professional escort who handles the complete journey. These different relationships migrants have with people involved in the trafficking business are reflected in the different ways of paying for their services. Migrants wanting a complete service as far as Italy pay in advance in their country of origin or, less often, at their destination<sup>18</sup>. On the other hand, those who combine the services of different middle-men pay for their services as they need them, generally after their use<sup>19</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> In cases where migrants' journeys are financed by third parties, the financier often chooses the operator the migrant should contact.

<sup>19</sup> This is the easiest way to reduce the risk of being cheated by middle-men who are not well-known.

There are different reasons for thinking that, given the possibility, recourse to a single organisation is the best solution from the point of view of the migrant. Firstly, a single organisation guarantees an increased possibility of success of the operation of entry, given that periods of waiting at the different stages are reduced and there is no need to look for the necessary contacts at each stage of the journey. At least in some cases, this security extends to the guarantee of a second chance to attempt entry if the first one fails, without any increase in the cost<sup>20</sup>. There is the example of a group of 15 illegal migrants from Romania who were stopped by the Italian authorities in the area of Tarvisio, from where they were deported to Austria and then to the Czech Republic. On their return they quickly contacted the organiser of the journey to ask for a refund. Instead the group received the offer of a second journey to the same destination, without any extra expense. The second journey took place a few days later and they were once again apprehended.

Secondly, recourse to a single organisation seems to keep down the cost of illegal migration. Even if individual journeys do not require the services of many specialised middle-men, the illegal crossing of different places involves considerable expense which it is difficult to reduce. The cost of illegal migration also depends on the complexity of the itinerary, the number of borders to cross, the means of transport used and the greater or lesser difficulty of travelling through certain countries. The illegal immigrants who were interrogated claimed that the total cost of an illegal journey varied from 250-400 euros for a mainly overland journey from countries such as Romania or Moldova, to an average of 4,000 euros from Asia. However, these averages hide considerable differences which depend on the methods used. In general, those who are able to organise their own journeys can certainly save a considerable sum wherever they come from. Immigrants acting independently say they spend about a quarter of what other immigrants from the same country spend. However, contrary to what one might think, those who make arrangements with a single operator for the whole journey seem to spend considerably less than those who act semi-independently, picking up contacts on the way. In the case of migrants from the former Yugoslavia, for example, those who used a single operator for the whole journey claim to have spent 70% of the amount that those who acted semi-independently said they spent. In the same way, for migrants coming from countries of the Middle East, the Fertile Crescent and central south-east Asia, the cost of the journey from their own countries to Istanbul – the traditional place for establishing agreements for the next stage to Western Europe – is often considerable, even compared with what they pay for the next stage. The use of a single operator, therefore, means not only that the journey is guaranteed, but it is also cheaper. These traffickers can be compared to legal tour operators who save time and money for the tourists who are their customers. If we add to this that the use of a single “all-purpose” organisation also means a considerable reduction in the time taken for the journey, we can conclude that resort to different operators, and making agreements one after another, does not give customers more independence and bargaining power, but instead causes them more problems in that they have to obtain a satisfactory agreement with each specialist organisation.

A final piece of information which can be obtained from these interrogations pertains to the destination which was the objective of the illegal immigrants who were apprehended. The north-east border is crossed both by people heading for Italy and those for whom Italy is a transit country before moving on to other European countries. Unfortunately, only 310 of the 610 interrogations analysed contain information on the final destination of their journey. Of these, 54% declared that they were trying to reach another European country, mainly Germany and France, while 40% said that their final destination was Italy, especially Milan or Rome<sup>21</sup>. The coexistence of flows of immigrants who are either aiming to settle in the country under consideration or use it as a transit place is a further element to bear in mind when analysing the services offered by the operators in

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<sup>20</sup> The same conditions have been noted among the organisations which provide analogous services through the Otranto channel.

<sup>21</sup> The rest were immigrants stopped while trying to reach their native countries illegally, after spending a longish period of time in Italy or another European country.

the area. For immigrants wanting to settle in Italy, resort to middle-men often ends once they cross the border (at least if they paid in advance for the journey). This does not apply for migrants on their way to another country, who often use the same organisation for the successive stages of the journey.

#### **4. THE PEOPLE-SMUGGLING INDUSTRY: ROUTES UP TO THE BORDER**

Interrogations of the illegal immigrants apprehended confirm that two kinds of migratory flow intersect on the north-east border of Italy. The first kind is made up of flows which originate in south-eastern Europe (often in countries which were formerly part of the Yugoslav federation), and which travel overland to Italy or other countries in western Europe. The second kind is made up of inter-continental flows which often find an initial collecting point in Turkey or north-eastern Europe, and use the area of the former Yugoslavia as an entry point – crossing Italy or Austria – for all the countries of western Europe.

In the first case, illegal migrants leave their own countries and follow a fairly predictable route and time-scale. The journey is usually made in the company of fellow-countrymen they already know, with few and limited changes during the journey. Only in a few cases was it found that smaller groups split off and followed different routes at different stages of the journey (integrating with others), or were subdivided into smaller groups.

In the second case, the routes are much more heterogeneous. Some of the migrants are loaded onto lorries which make their journey through Turkey or Greece and unload in Trieste. Others fly to countries of the former Yugoslavia. Still others cross south-east Europe overland, or arrive from East European countries or Russia. Finally, a certain amount arrive in the Balkans through different routes, and from there seek an organisation to help them cross the border to the Schengen area. Here the main difference is in migrants who use an organisation which helps them from the beginning – for whom the area is only a transit place – and migrants who spend some time in the area before they can find a way to gain entry.

The considerable heterogeneity of these flows – and the demand they represent – explains why there has been the growth in the area of an assortment of middle-men and organisations which are very different in terms and quality of services offered, methods used and fees charged. What unifies this market is the problem which all these flows have to face, that is, how to literally get over the border and enter the Schengen area without being stopped by Italian border controls.

This crucial passage can be made in several ways. The logistical diversity of services offered along the border between Italy and Slovenia is in fact a particular characteristic of the local trafficking business. Migrants have the choice of different services to help them enter Italy, depending on their circumstances and ability to pay. In recent years, the following methods have been used:

- Crossing the land border using forged documents;
- Crossing the border on foot;
- Crossing the border by train or car, after illegally entering Austria;
- Crossing the land border concealed in false compartments of buses or lorries;
- Crossing the maritime border in fishing boats or other small vessels;
- Crossing the maritime border in lorries or cars on ferries to the port of Trieste;
- Crossing the land border hidden in car boots.

The multiplicity of potential channels of entry reflects in part the amount of money the migrants can afford to pay. Acquiring forged documents, for example, is generally more expensive than paying a

middle-man to help cross the border on foot. Similarly, it costs more to cross the maritime border on a boat with an experienced skipper who knows the route well than to cross the same border hidden in the boot of a car. The cost partly reflects how safe and potentially successful the journey is - in terms of personal safety and the likelihood of being stopped - and partly the risks undertaken by the middle-man, who can disappear into the woods or make some plausible excuse if apprehended while crossing the border on foot, while it is more difficult for a car or lorry driver caught red-handed to deny the offence<sup>22</sup>. A boat's skipper risks even greater punishment.

The multiplicity of channels has an important endogenous origin. As outlined above, the people-trafficking business on the north-east border originally developed on the margins of a series of other activities in the border area. The running of the people-trafficking business was grafted onto previous experience, making use of the professional skills and local nature of often legal activities which had already developed there. Fishermen know the places on the coast where security is less stringent or non-existent at certain times or periods of the year, as well as being able to calculate the risks of being stopped at sea. Many inhabitants of the border area know the paths which avoid border checkpoints, and have a deep tacit knowledge of patrol methods, as well as various kinds of useful personal contacts on both sides of the border. Lorry drivers, taxi drivers and many people who commute across the border know the methods used for controlling the checkpoints and can accurately estimate the risks they run in illegally bringing immigrants across the border. Travel agents and transport companies have to deal daily with the problems connected with transport and visits across the border. All the inhabitants, in one way or another, know if and how often a checkpoint is manned, or where police roadblocks are most frequently set up. This tacit knowledge is an indispensable component which is generally taken for granted in the culture of the border area. In the presence of a demand for illegal entry, some individuals use this knowledge to bring one or two immigrants across the border, often as a way to supplement their income from other activities. These first steps into the trafficking business have a long-term effect on its development. The interrogations of the illegal immigrants apprehended in the province of Trieste throw light on the fact that crossing the border on foot is by far the most common method of illegal entry to Italy across the north-east border (Table 6).

**Table 6 - Declared methods used to cross the north-east border**

	V.A.	%
<b>Crossing on foot</b>	238	39.0
<b>Concealed in a lorry on a ferry</b>	106	17.4
<b>Concealed in a lorry</b>	70	11.5
<b>By sea</b>	46	7.5
<b>Hidden in a private car</b>	40	6.6
<b>Crossing an uncontrolled pass</b>	27	4.4
<b>Hidden on a bus or coach</b>	13	2.1
<b>On a coach for tourism</b>	38	6.2
<b>Not declared</b>	32	5.2
<b>Total</b>	610	100.0

*Source:* Analysis of a sample of 610 statements of illegal immigrants apprehended in the province of Trieste.

It can be seen, however, that crossing the border concealed in lorries or cars (taking advantage of the impossibility of checking all the vehicles which pass), as well as using the maritime border, are also important methods. Another fairly common method is to enter Italy using legal means of transport, generally after having evaded border controls in Austria.

<sup>22</sup> The value of the means of transport used is another factor. While many middle-men caught trafficking can hope for a lenient sentence, especially if they have no previous offences or it is difficult to prove the offence, seizure of the vehicle is, however, almost certain.

The different methods used to cross the border illegally are operated independently, often by different middle-men who do not know each other. Many of these middle-men are in fact specialised in one particular channel which some of them use quite frequently and others occasionally. In many cases they will guide one or two immigrants over the border when the opportunity arises, and the experience is often not repeated for long periods of time. As we will see, however, the available information also highlights the existence of specialised middle-men who are able, when necessary, to use the services of individuals working in any of these different fields, just like entrepreneurs act in different fields at the same time. The people-smuggling industry on the north-east border can therefore be seen as a network of individual threads which are potentially interconnected, and where individuals react to the market and the counter-trafficking steps taken by the authorities by developing more or less stable alliances and more or less asymmetrical relationships.

## **5. THE PEOPLE-SMUGGLING BUSINESS: THE ORGANISATION OF THE SERVICE**

How do the organisations and the professionals who provide migrants with the services necessary for crossing the border work? How are trafficking operations run? What kinds of organisations have developed in the border area? And how do these organisations adapt when counter-trafficking measures are intensified? What relationships are there between the different roles involved in the business? Are the organisations centralised and strongly hierarchical or are they networks of independent organisations connected by temporary agreements which are renewed from time to time? These questions are naturally central to any investigation of the migrant smuggling business. They cannot, however, be answered on the basis of the data so far presented, that is, information collected from illegal immigrants apprehended at the border. These data are inadequate for an in-depth analysis of the organisational structure of the trafficking business. Even if the empirical limitations previously discussed could be overcome, these sources would still be unsuitable for at least two reasons. The first is that we cannot forget that this information comes from immigrants who have failed in their attempt to enter Italy illegally, given that its origin is in statements by immigrants who have been apprehended by the police. To assume that we can use these cases to reconstruct the business which produces them would be like trying to reconstruct the structure of the food business on the basis of the cases of food poisoning recorded in hospitals. Even if counter-trafficking measures could effectively give us a representative sample of illegal immigrants (which cannot reasonably be assumed), there would still remain a second, equally important, problem. This is the problem that the knowledge available to individual immigrants is restricted to that of customers using a service, which they only use once, or very rarely. Like the customers for any other service, they know only the individuals who have contact with the public or, in some cases, what the organisation has chosen to tell about itself to its potential customers, presumably for commercial reasons. Trying to reconstruct the organisation from these sources would be like trying to reconstruct the organisation of a supermarket by focusing on what customers say, plus the information contained in a few promotional leaflets. Instead of this, we need sources which will allow us to reconstruct the organisation of these services by focusing on the internal system of relationships and the strategies used by the organisation as a whole. The necessary information should also give us the possibility to study the structure not only of the organisations which are most frequently caught by border controls, but also those which are more successful in evading patrols and identity checks.

The source materials relating to illegal organisations mainly come from judicial enquiries, especially if and when they are based on investigative methodology which aims to reconstruct the

associative aspect of the crime of people-smuggling<sup>23</sup>. Judicial acts are a valuable source of information, as the trial procedures oblige the prosecution to demonstrate the guilt of the accused by supplying a large amount of detailed knowledge about the ways in which the crime under consideration was committed. The analysis presented below is based on the records held by the Trieste and Tolmezzo prosecution services relating to the proceedings of 62 trials for migrant-smuggling. These two prosecution offices are particularly active and have records of hundreds of proceedings started in recent years. In selecting information from these sources, it was attempted to choose those reflecting the range of different types of proceedings, but paying particular attention to those trials where there was recourse to aggravating circumstances and where the prosecution's evidence was the result of investigations rather than the consequence of arrests *in flagrante* during counter-trafficking operations<sup>24</sup>. Starting from trial records, the records from trials which have been concluded, and the sentences given out by the judge for preliminary investigations in the case of plea bargaining, have been analysed. Where possible, preventive custody orders have also been selected for all trials which are still in progress.

Before proceeding to the presentation of the results, it would be useful to underline two specific problems relating to this kind of source material. Firstly, the organisation of judicial archives today varies greatly from one court to another, and access to these archives is granted in many different ways. There is no uniform cataloguing system. At any particular point in time, it is difficult to consult some files and it can even be difficult to find them or discover their existence. It follows that research carried out on archives of different courts has inevitably followed different procedures and is only partially comparable. For reasons relating to access to the archives, the field of investigation was restricted to archives containing details of investigations carried out only from 1999 onwards. The consultation of judicial acts relating to previous years would undoubtedly have strengthened the possibility of discovering more long-term characteristics. Apart from problems relating to the archives, however, the use of judicial acts must take into account that the criteria used to give priority in the investigations are also influenced locally, as they depend on the human resources available and the competition between different investigative requirements in individual prosecution offices. In some cases, investigations tend mainly to "react" to crimes reported by the police forces, in others, the prosecution services set up special investigations which also influence the direction of the work of the police. In some cases, information relating to crimes involving people-smuggling is assigned to different public prosecutors in a more or less casual way, in others it is assigned according to systematic procedures. In some cases, the investigating authorities do not take an interest in the reconstruction of the process of migrant-smuggling up to the time when they reach the Italian border, in others, investigations are extended to the entire route of illegal immigration. These different judicial procedures have a notable effect on the way the phenomenon is seen, and consequently on the possibility of recognising an organised character to the activities discovered. In other words, the judicial sources available today allow the quite detailed in-depth study of organisational characteristics, but are not enough to evaluate the distribution of these forms. This applies not only to the complete number of organisations operating in this field (where the problem is also similar to that regarding information from police sources), but also to the composition of the organisations under investigation<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> For the specific technical characteristics of this type of investigation, see F. Spiezia, F. Frezza and N. M. Pace (2002), especially pages 77-124 and 139-158.

<sup>24</sup> Specifically, the trials for the crime specified in article 12, comma 3 of act (d. lgs. 25 July 1998, no. 286). Wherever possible, basing the analysis on the wrapping up relating to the sentencing, or in the case where proceedings are still pending, on the request for detention while awaiting trial.

<sup>25</sup> Reform and standardisation of the cataloguing system of judicial proceedings is probably necessary. This would not only allow systematic monitoring, but also simply to avoid, as happens, that the position of names which recur in many investigations in one prosecution office is not taken up when the same name reappears in other investigations in other prosecution offices (e.g. Spiezia, Frezza, Pace, 2002, p.81).

The role at the base of the organisation, which emerges from all the judicial acts analysed, is that of the *porteur*. This is the person who actually escorts the immigrants along the paths which cross the border, or who drives the cars or pilots the boats which transport them. It is the most exposed role in the business, that which comes most often into contact with illegal immigrants and which is the easiest to identify in the investigations, given that it is this person who is often caught in the act. The *porteurs* identified in the judicial acts are generally Italians with a good knowledge of the border area, or foreign nationals resident in the border area with a previous record of irregular migration.

In the former case, the people involved are people who, for various reasons (usually connected to the kind of work they do), or because of a reputation built up through previous occasions, have the possibility of contact with illegal migrants wanting to enter Italy. Immigrants, in other words, recruit themselves, making agreements on the cost of the service each time it is offered. The casual circumstances in which the agreement is made give rise to specific problems with regard to the payment for the service rendered. From a criminal law point of view, if investigators can prove that payment has been made, the situation of the *porteur* worsens considerably. It is therefore in the interest of the *porteur* for the payment to be made separately from the journey so that it cannot be detected if they are apprehended. This is difficult, however, in the case of a spot encounter which will not be repeated, and where the immigrants could boast of having money which they do not possess. On the other hand, it is not in the interest of the immigrants to pay in advance on the basis of the word of the middle-man, as they could easily be cheated<sup>26</sup>. Investigations reveal the existence of a method of payment which has the aim of reducing the risks for both sides. The *porteur*, when the deal is made, asks for proof that the immigrant has the necessary cash. He also asks for a deposit immediately after the departure, when both immigrant and *porteur* are already together, and the rest after they cross the border but before the journey ends. This method of payment is relatively common for this kind of crossing, as can be seen from the frequency with which large sums of money are found on some middle-men who are caught red-handed.

The situation of *porteur* who are foreign nationals is different. For their transactions they use the trans-national space through which they keep in touch with their country of origin. In this case, the *porteur* is often in reality an individual organisation, where the same person plays several roles, from recruiter to transporter, from host to banker. One example is the case of N.C., a Romanian resident in a West European country, who was arrested while driving a car carrying several Romanian citizens from the same region of origin. Investigations revealed how N.C. frequently returned to his birthplace, and on several occasions spread information about the opportunities available where he was a resident. In the specific case under investigation, N.C. had made the deal with the immigrants he was transporting on one of these visits. He then personally accompanied them to Hungary and from there escorted them along a path he knew which took them to Austria. After that he returned alone to Hungary for his car, crossed the border legally, picked up the immigrants and was intending to drive them to a town in the Veneto region. He had obtained a large down-payment from the immigrants (about half the total amount agreed, which he did not have on him, however), and was to be paid the remaining sum on arrival at their destination. Presumably the guarantee for this deal, which contained an element of relative trust, was the fact that they were

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<sup>26</sup> This is not just a hypothesis – there is evidence that this is a frequent practice. One example is the case of S. N., who was stopped in an Italian city in 2002 while wandering around near the railway station. According to his account, he left the Sangatte refugee camp in France and found a middleman to take him to the U.K., where he hoped to be reunited with some of his relatives. After making a substantial payment, he was loaded onto a lorry together with other immigrants who did not speak his language. Some hours later, he was told to get off quickly as they had arrived, and the lorry left before S.N. realised he was in Italy and not the U.K. Another kind of trick was played on G.P., who had contacted a middleman in a bar in Slovakia to obtain a passage to Italy. After paying the agreed fee to the middleman, he was taken by car through Austria by a second middleman, who before reaching Italy changed the conditions agreed and said that the payment made to the first middleman was only for the Austrian border, and he would have to pay extra to continue the journey.

from the same place and had many relationships in common. Also important was the fact that it was essential for N.C. to have a good reputation in his birthplace if he wanted to keep open the opportunity for further deals.

Such individual operations only work, however, if and when supply and demand meet in a relatively simple, almost casual, way. Furthermore, this type of illegal entry is largely based on luck. The success of the journey, in fact, depends entirely on a rudimentary calculation of probability, and on the fact that only a small number of paths and vehicles can be controlled at any one time. This kind of activity is therefore only attractive when the consequences, in terms of risk of arrest for the passeur and loss of goods and money for the immigrant, are decidedly less than the expected profit. The risk depends on the counter measures put into operation, which in recent years have included harsher penalties and, as can be seen in Table 7, more energy put into identifying and punishing the passeurs involved<sup>27</sup>.

**Table 7 - Origin of people reported for aiding and abetting illegal entry in Friuli Venezia-Giulia**

	2000	2002
<b>Italy</b>	32	118
<b>Albania</b>	23	13
<b>China</b>	14	13
<b>Unknown</b>	0	50
<b>Morocco</b>	0	20
<b>Romania</b>	33	46
<b>Ukraine</b>	9	22
<b>Yugoslavia</b>	8	28
<b>Slovenia</b>	30	15
<b>Others</b>	49	93
<b>Total number</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>418</b>

Source: Interior Ministry.

The increase in the risks for passeur is accompanied also by an increase in the risks for the illegal immigrants because their arrest leads more and more often to them being included in data banks, which prejudices their chances of legal entry in the future, as has been seen from the analysis of data on refused entries. There is thus a growing pressure for the development of more sophisticated organisational techniques which can significantly reduce the chances of being caught. A relatively simple strategy is to organise transport using a look-out to check the route, who through a series of phone calls can advise on whether or not there are problems along the way. If the crossing takes place by car, the accomplice is usually in a car which precedes the one carrying the immigrants. If the crossing is on foot, the accomplice keeps a watch on the other side of the border. If the crossing is by boat, the accomplice is positioned on the beach which has been chosen for the landing and signals any possible problems which may arise. However, the adoption of these simple procedures already requires the formation of an association, which involves considerable problems of co-ordination. A second precaution which is also relatively simple is to have one or two relatively protected places where illegal immigrants can be “stored” while waiting for the best time for the crossing, or to allow a big group to be split into smaller ones. This technique also needs the collaboration of accomplices because a “guardian” as well as a passeur is required.

Already at this level, therefore, there is a transition from working individually, in a more or less sporadic way, to the development of associative forms, albeit simple ones. This kind of

<sup>27</sup> These sanctions are, in the pure and simple case of individual or occasional aiding and abetting, still relatively light. If the middleman manages to avoid all the aggravating factors, the sentences are still relatively limited for many people who, if they have no previous convictions, can avoid arrest and have a quick trial by plea-bargaining.

collaboration means, first of all, giving up a part of the profits from the activity. Conflicts over how to share the profits of smuggling are endemic to this kind of operation, as can be seen from investigations involving interceptions of phone calls, which show how often traffickers need to renegotiate their terms when faced with unseen events. Establishing such relationships of collaboration, and choosing people with a minimum degree of trustworthiness, is justifiable only if such activity has a minimum of continuity both in terms of time and size of influx. There is therefore the pressure to specialise, which rewards those who manage to establish one or more solid relationships which are reinforced over time by the increase in the frequency of collaboration.

Responding to this pressure for specialisation, however, also causes changes in the relationships between participants in the people-trafficking business. In fact, specialisation mainly rewards those who are able to establish continuous relationships with people who can easily come into contact with potential customers, and point them in the direction of particular middle-men. It is a question of using a wide variety of people, initially those running bars and restaurants, or petty criminals living in the transit place. Later on known individuals with different reputations and fees, who function as reference points for migrants in transit who are seeking entry to Europe, are used. One example is that of B.C., who left Iraqi Kurdistan using his own means of transport to go to a pension in Istanbul which fellow-countrymen living abroad had told him about. After spending a certain period of time there, presumably needed to check up on his “credentials”, he was given the details of a lorry driver who was willing to pick him up at a Greek port in his own lorry, as well as the name of someone who could get him to the port on the agreed day. B.C. paid the owner of the pension for this information and for the organisation of the journey. He arranged with the pension owner - he had previously been told the cost - to pay the fees of the middle-men operating on the two successive parts of his journey separately. In other words, the professionalisation of passeurs corresponds to the professionalisation of the organisers, who control the clientele and make a profit from organising the journey on their behalf.

A process of mutual reinforcement exists between those escorting immigrants over the border and the organisers. The volume of traffic guaranteed by the latter favours the professionalisation of the former, while the growing ability of the former in evading border controls directly increases the reputation of the latter among the clientele. This reciprocal reinforcement is not neutral, however, but represents a form of polarisation. Given that even rudimentary forms of organisation need a certain amount of continuity over time, as well as a certain volume of traffic, those who are able to put migrants in touch with escorts acquire more and more bargaining power compared to those who are only involved in the actual crossing. The organisers have the possibility of choosing between several passeurs and can use this leverage to create competition between them to obtain lower fees, or to keep a larger percentage of the cost of the crossing for themselves. The organiser also runs far fewer risks. Sentences are, in theory, the same or greater than for those escorting migrants, but the likelihood of being discovered is much lower, especially as long as sanctions are mainly the result of being arrested red-handed. It is also in the interest of the organiser to keep control of the running of migrant smuggling, assigning to passeur only the role of escort. In this way, for example, the organiser maintains direct contact with those who are given the job of picking up the migrants after they have crossed the border, whether they are the last purchasers of the journey or other organisers, independently and separately from his own relationships with the passeur involved.

It is true that some passeur seem to have tried to avoid this polarisation by activating independent channels for contact with migrants who could be interested in the services offered. In this way, for example, during an investigation into an organisation operating on the border it was discovered that one of the organisers complained about two of the passeur he was using because they were dissatisfied with the conditions offered them. They had tried, rather unsuccessfully and in a way which attracted attention, to contact potential migrants directly on the streets of Lubyana, thus cutting out the mediation of the organiser. Such attempts, however, are rarely crowned with success. The growing stability of the Balkans has had led to the increasing difficulty of directly

contacting migrants, or at least to do it on such a scale that it guarantees a sufficient number of customers without at the same time attracting attention. As we have seen, a certain number of migrants still arrive in the Balkans or Eastern Europe seeking services of this kind. This is a relatively small number, however, and it is difficult to make contact with them without having a certain reputation and a relatively protected place to operate.

If he manages to succeed in this field, the passeur can end up following the logical progression from being the provider of a service to its organiser, progressively delegating the riskier jobs to others. One example is the case of J.L., who was destined to become one of the most important figures in the migrant-smuggling industry in the whole of the Balkans. He began his career as a smuggler at the beginning of the 1980s while working as a taxi driver, running small groups of migrants from Lubyana to the border. The success of his first operations led him to increase the volume of passengers transported, first buying a minibus and later working for a short time as a passeur taking immigrants across the border himself. When counter-trafficking operations were intensified, J.L. began providing a more integrated service, offering an all-inclusive journey to the border as well as the crossing escorted by a passeur. He made deals with passeur working in the area to this end, who were paid after the crossing took place, and only if it was successful. After a short time, J.L. stopped working directly and no longer made border crossings. He restricted his personal activity to organising groups of migrants and making specific deals for each journey with one or another of the passeur he used. After crossing the border with Italy, they would then deliver the migrants to another of his accomplices who was working independently from the passeurs. With the growth of the business, J.L. ran the whole cycle of the service, including transport, accommodation in transit areas and delivery to destinations in Italy, through sub-contracting to others. To this he added an increase in the number of possible entry points and a network of relationships with passeurs and local organizers which covered the whole area from northern Albania to Hungary.

If a passeur cannot make the transition to the role of organiser, the only alternative if he wants to better his position is to specialise in a particular role which runs the crossings. This involves developing a network of passeurs who can be activated depending on need, and who work under the direction of the main actor. He does not work himself as an escort except in case of emergency. The control of a group of “drivers” means that the former passeur can make deals with several different organisers and make higher profits through the possibility of forming groups of illegal immigrants needing transport made up of migrants managed by different organisers. This seems to have been what happened in the case of A.I., a foreign citizen resident in the border area, who controlled several other operators taking people across the border as well as the transportation of aliens who had already crossed the border within the Italian territory<sup>28</sup>. A.I. organised these operations by dealing with the organisers for each individual journey. Most of his activity, however, was mainly practical, compared to the emphasis on planning of other organisers, and his strong point lay in his ability to activate when necessary the required number of escorts to cross the border, and also to deal with the many contingencies which could arise during the course of the operations. A.I. worked for a number of organisers (he boasted in one intercepted phone call that he was known to all the organisers working in the area), generally on the basis of rather short advance notice. He was paid for the services of his organisation in various ways, often by agreement for each individual job, depending on the type of work and the power relationship between the contracting parties.

In newspaper reports, as well as in many analyses made by intelligence organisations and academics, the relationships between organisers, middle-men and passeurs escorting the immigrants are often described as actual formalised organisations with precise hierarchies and chains of command. The analysis of judicial information, however, shows how the roles mentioned above (the organiser, the person running the transit place, the middle-man and perhaps his accomplices, all

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<sup>28</sup> In certain cases, A.I. also organised journeys for relatives or acquaintances of the people he was in contact with, though these seemed to have had modest results, judging from records of telephone taps.

of them acting as individuals or groups), are instead connected by a network of contracts and expectations which are quite flexible. Three factors which frequently emerge from the investigations reinforce this latter view. The first is that the relationships between these roles are rarely monopolistic; middle-men can work for different organisers, and different investigations show the same organisers involved sometimes with one group and sometimes with another, sometimes playing one role and sometimes others. A second factor is the absence of long-term agreements; even if collaboration is often repeated there are no records of “minimum guarantees” or payments of salaries, and flows of money reflect individual deals quite accurately. The third factor is that the possibility exists for each person acting in these roles to refuse or accept a certain proposal of collaboration without creating particular problems. Several of the investigations show that frequency of collaboration is often a simple statistical regularity – a middle-man soon loses contact with an organiser when he fails to provide an adequate amount of work, while an organiser gradually stops using a certain middle-man if he refuses too many offers or if some of his accomplices working as escorts are arrested<sup>29</sup>.

The difficulty of perceiving these roles as appertaining to a single organisation rigidly controlled by a unitary centre is also evident in their organisational methods. In the first place, the frequency of conflicts in the course of the crossing process is quite high. Investigations reveal a world where conflict is endemic and where there are frequent attempts at deception. Organisers who make deals for a particularly careful journey for some of their migrants later discover that they have been banded together in a large group and transported in very risky ways. Some middle-men see their payments deferred well beyond the stipulated date and find that they have to wait for the organiser to obtain payment from his customers. The accomplices charged with collecting immigrants on the Italian side of the border sometimes keep part of the payment agreed between organisers and middle-men for themselves, or extort extra money from the immigrants. Many cases have been recorded where previous agreements about costs, methods of payment and who to pay have been renegotiated later, exploiting the ambiguous situation of the verbal deals they have agreed on. These continuous sources of conflict are to some extent restrained by the need to protect one’s reputation, or from time to time by threats against deviant partners, but it is difficult to imagine that such frequency would happen inside a unitary organisation, especially as telephone interceptions rarely record threats of recourse to a higher authority. Analogous considerations apply to working practices. One of the fundamental characteristics of this kind of structure of relationships is in fact the constant exercise of discretion. Information flows between the different roles in a very restricted way, and is limited to what is strictly necessary. This does not seem to arise from fear of counter-trafficking measures but rather to the conflict of interests between the various players involved. The organiser has no interest in supplying a middle-man with information which could threaten his own control of the clientele, and, given that he stands more chance of being intercepted, to put him in a condition to know about the successive stages of the process. From his point of view, it is better to treat the crossing as a black box, where it is only necessary to know the point of entry and the point of exit. At the same time, the middle-man has to avoid letting the organiser know his weak points and stop him from developing relationships directly with his couriers. The maintenance of this high level of discretion does, however, mean that a high level of communication is necessary during the course of the operation. According to investigations carried out by the prosecution service in Trieste, every single journey involves an average of 60-80 phone calls, most of them between the middle-man and his couriers, but also between them and the organisers, for example for the last-minute details about where to deliver the immigrants and who will be waiting to collect them.

The development of the role of organiser generally happens in two directions. As regards the operational aspect, some organisers build up their own activities by consolidating their control over several transit places, where immigrants can be accommodated while waiting for others to make up

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<sup>29</sup>On the contrary, a middleman can, at certain times, become mainly a solo agent if the organiser supplies an adequate volume of traffic, or he can himself grow to become an organiser.

a sufficient number, or for the right conditions, and establishing a restricted nucleus of accomplices who work as troubleshooters in the course of operations. The first operation is crucial both for the management of complex flows of migrants, which in certain cases requires quite a long transit period, and to reduce risks. The control of transit places, in some cases run directly by the organisers, in others by agreement with other people, is in fact fundamental to maintaining bargaining power over customers (given that migrants can be kept until the arrival of the guarantees agreed on), and also over middle-men (given that this control allows them to negotiate without excessive hurry). One important aspect of their development, however, concerns the territory which the organiser can have influence over. For example, over the course of time, the organiser can establish similar contacts with other organizers, both on entry, for example from the Czech Republic to Slovenia, and on exit, for example from Slovenia to Italy. But he can also set up collaboration with another organiser in an adjoining country, which in its turn has connections with other middle-men<sup>30</sup>. In this way coalitions are created among organisers which can run a more complex corridor. For example, investigations have registered the existence of coalitions of this kind which for a long period were running a corridor from Eastern Europe to Slovenia, and from there to Italy, connecting up with coalitions which linked China, Russia and the Ukraine to Hungary, as well as a Balkan corridor, which brought migrants from Turkey to the countries of the former Yugoslavia, and from there to Italy or Austria, connecting up with coalitions which linked Turkey with countries in the Middle East, the Fertile Crescent and central Asia. In both cases, the activity became much more complex. It involved running not only a single border crossing, but a whole range of linked crossings as well as transit places where migrants could stop off to wait for a time when they were less likely to be apprehended at controls in the territory of the different countries. This kind of service potentially offers much higher profits, but requires the reorganisation of the operators in the field. It is no longer a question of waiting for a certain number of migrants to ask for a passage over the border in one or more places where smugglers are known to offer their services, rather it becomes necessary to integrate the service vertically, as far up the whole chain of the migrant's journey as possible. This requires more sophisticated forms of organisation which are justified only if they can count on a certain continuity of activity, given that only the continuous character justifies the greater organisational costs and produces a reputation which pays off with international customers. The simplest form of this type of coalition is made up of a chain of contractual agreements, where each organiser involves the next ones and is involved in his turn with the preceding ones. This chain is in principle highly flexible – each organiser who enters into contact with potential customers is free to stipulate with the other organisers along the corridor his own itinerary, negotiating each time he needs their services. Each of these, in turn, is responsible to the organiser-customer for the part of the route he runs, and he has to collect the migrants, accommodate them on his territory and transfer them to the next operator indicated by the customer. This organisational structure explains why, along the journey of many illegal migrants, long waiting periods are sometimes recorded in certain places. These are the result of organisational problems, or problems with the transfer of payments, which are inevitably frequent in an organisation of this kind. For many reasons, frequent use of the same organisers is better. For example, the first organiser has already made a deal with the customer in his country of origin or residence with regard to the total cost of the journey, so the migrant is particularly vulnerable to both problems during the journey and demands for the re-negotiation of the deals with other organisers who control the migrant further along the way. The frequent use of the same “colleagues” means that these risks are reduced, given that prospective future collaboration makes it less likely that agreements will be violated. This need to repeat agreements can lead to greater stability among the different coalitions, and some organisers can acquire a central role on certain sections of the route.

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<sup>30</sup> This factor is another element of asymmetry between organiser and middleman. The latter, because his main resource is localised, can rarely work in several places. On the other hand, the organiser can progressively become the meeting point in a network which extends over a large area and crosses many borders, even if his general role in this network will depend on the importance of the part he can guarantee.

The reconstruction of the flows of illegal Kurdish immigrants by the prosecution service in Trieste in 2002 found that several superimposed coalitions were operating along the route except on one section, where apparently all the coalitions used the services of the same organiser. These coalitions are, however, relatively loose, and similar journeys arranged by the same organiser can involve different organisers each time.

The presence of these coalitions of organisers does not mean, however, that all organisers are the same. On the contrary, one could say that the bargaining power of one person inside the coalition grows according to how near to the source of potential customers he is. The organisers who are nearest to the migrants wanting to use the services which can be supplied by the coalition acquire a growing power inside the coalition itself, given that they can favour certain operators and leave out others. A series of advantages can be derived from this position (lower costs, quicker and better quality services), which guarantees them further advantages in terms of reputation and therefore contacts with potential new customers. The vicinity to potential customers can be based on a variety of factors. The first can be geographical – the operators found in the areas which serve as collecting places for several inflows have a competitive advantage compared to those in areas which are only used for transit, that is, where a considerable number of migrants who cross their territory are already controlled by other organisers. There is also the factor of experience – those who have been working in the field for a longer period generally have more contacts and work with more coalitions, thus reducing their dependence on each individual colleague. One crucial factor, however, is their ability to make deals with organisations and operators who can recruit migrants in their country of origin, or can control the demand for new journeys in places where they have settled. Coalitions between organisers operate only with respect to flows of migrants who can afford to pay a relatively high fee to enter a country illegally, and their services require a level of costs which can only rarely be afforded by migrants. These are therefore flows which have to be financed either by someone in the country of origin (who is willing to advance the necessary amount for the journey as an investment in the migrant's return), or by people who provide financial backing in the settlement country (who could be members of the social network of the migrant or potential investors for profit), or both at the same time. In both cases, the potential demand must be organised and appropriate mechanisms activated in order to guarantee both the financial backer (that the destination is reached) and the middle-man (that the customer can actually pay the agreed amount). According to the investigative sources available, these jobs are carried out by other trans-national actors which are specialised in the organisation of the demand in particular contexts. Some of these actors seem to function in a similar way to that of a finance company investing in a project. The migrants contact an organisation with a proposal for investment in their emigration, and the organisation evaluates the project to see if it can realistically expect the repayment of the amount advanced, plus interest, in the time specified. If it takes on these risks, the organisation also acquires the right to choose the operator who will organise the journey for the migrant.

Other organisations seem to function according to a different logic, however. In this case, their customers are foreigners who are already resident abroad and want to bring in a certain individual who is still resident in the country of origin. In this case, the organisation establishes a fee for this service, which covers both the cost of the journey and its mediation service. This fee, which covers the whole migratory journey from the country of origin, including stop-overs in transit countries and border crossings, up to the time when the agreed amount is repaid, is guaranteed by the customer of the organisation, which chooses the operator or combination of operators who organise the journey. The customer usually agrees to repay the agreed amount providing the journey is successful, but there is also evidence of payment in instalments on some occasions. The main problem regarding this kind of business is naturally the risk of advancing large sums of money without being able to get back the agreed amount from the customer. The customer's financial resources are not only much smaller than the cost of the journey, but a series of events can also cause the customer to be unable or unwilling to pay back the agreed amount. This explains why

these organisations are generally closely incorporated into a specific migratory route and operate through connections both in the country of origin and the country of destination. The risk of non-payment is still possible, however, no matter how close the relationship is. A traditional strategy used to overcome this problem is that of keeping immigrants under control after receiving them immediately after the last border crossing, by using them as hostages until the agreed amount is paid. This strategy is presumably very effective, given that in cases of late payment the organisation can use credible threats. This strategy does have an Achilles heel which should not be overlooked, however, given that all the time the migrants are kept hostage in the receiving country, using a greater or lesser degree of physical constraint, the organisation is highly vulnerable and the risks for the jailers are great. With increasing attention being paid to the phenomenon in the countries of settlement, a second strategy has been developed. During an investigation into some of the flows from central Asia, it was discovered that a customer interested in bring in a fellow-countryman would make a deal with an organisation to pay the agreed amount to a third party (generally someone running a shop), who would keep the money on deposit until the immigrant arrived, when the money would be paid to the organisation. If the journey was unsuccessful, the money would be returned to the customer.

The organisations involved in managing the demand for people-trafficking services represent the key to access to the more complex flows of migrants, and therefore larger profits<sup>31</sup>. Such organisations can in fact shift relatively large volumes of people together. They are also interested in establishing continuing, but not exclusive, relationships with coalitions of organisers who can run the people-trafficking business. Only through continuing relationships is it possible to realistically estimate the costs and make advantageous deals with customers. In particular, the coalitions which are able to guarantee journeys which are less visible and less risky, and which have a greater skill in dealing with contingencies, are systematically preferred because the risk of being apprehended is, at least in part, born by the customer organisation.

The establishment of continuing relationships between a customer organisation and a specific coalition of organisers occurs mainly through the mediation of one of the organisers who forms part of the network. The organiser who controls this connection thus acquires considerable power compared to other members, who find themselves dependent on him for a large part of the traffic. This power of the organiser which is connected to the customers therefore has two roots. The first is the ability to satisfy a range of needs of the purchasing organisations (keeping failures within acceptable limits), in such a way as to become crucial to such organisations and lessen their tendency to have dealings with other coalitions at the same time. The previously mentioned J.L. seems to have managed to establish very close relationships in this way with several customer organisations in the trafficking business, mainly those running immigrants from Asia. Operating in the 1990s, by the end of the decade he was dealing with a considerable percentage of their demand for services. At his high point he could organise channels of entry covering the whole area from Albania to Austria, using different kinds of vehicle and integrating the activation of all the services required in the people-smuggling business<sup>32</sup>. Strong ties with these customers considerably

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<sup>31</sup> They are also the less well-known organisations, however, given that their working methods are more difficult to investigate. The publications of the Interior Ministry on different European countries, like many academic studies, tend to take for granted that these organisations form part of the exotic ethnic “mafias” which are fashionable from time to time. In reality, there is a certain amount of evidence on the frequent recourse to forms of sometimes violent resolution of conflicts both with respect to the migrants brought in and within the organisations themselves. Apart from this, however, there is no judicial evidence at present to attribute an automatic enrolment of these organisations into mafia types of organisation of criminal activity. For example, there is no proof that these organisations aspire to the control of territory or to install a monopoly of this business.

<sup>32</sup> Investigations show that J.L. was able to organise overland crossings on foot or in specially-adapted lorries, sea crossings from Croatia to the coast of Friuli and Veneto, or to Puglia, as well as procuring forged documents, transit accommodation in Slovenia and Italy, and other crossings from Italy to other west European countries. Each of these services could also be adapted to need in the case of particular requests. He also controlled travel agencies and car hire companies (necessary to get back vehicles which were seized), as well as an airline company.

strengthened his position with respect to other operators in the area, and he achieved a predominant role in the business. An indication of the importance of such a connection is the fact that in the operations which he ran, the possibility of contact between customers and the other organisations involved was kept to the absolute minimum, for example by using people directly dependent on him as buffers between one part of the route and another, systematically varying the organisations used along the different parts of the route, and only notifying at the last minute to whom (generally people unknown to them), the organisations involved were to deliver the migrants. This allowed J.L. to considerably reinforce his own position with regard to many operators in the area, and to constantly develop the range of services he could mediate for such organisations. These close ties, however, did not bring about a fusion of different kinds of organisation (which were, moreover, based on very different interests and skills), nor the introduction of an exclusive relationship with respect to the service. In fact, the customer organisations only applied to J.L. for services on a long central part of the route, and dealt directly or through other organisations with the journey of migrants from the country of origin up to the point where they were delivered to the organisations co-ordinated by J.L. The investigations do not reveal that he had any role in the next stage of settling immigrants into Italy, and his services were paid for, in previously agreed ways, for the simple fact of having kept his part of the bargain. The customer organisations also made individual deals for J.L.'s services for each journey, and he then bought the services of other organisers and escorts. This repetition of contracts led over time to a relative stability in the cost of services. Finally, from interceptions of telephone calls it can be deduced that J.L. had great freedom of action in organising transport, as well as sometimes being able to group together in a single journey migrants sent to him by different customer organisations.

In conclusion, the running of an entire people-smuggling route over the north-east border is made possible by the interaction of a number of specialist organisations. The differences between such organisations are both functional and territorial, and the whole network appears to be regulated by frequently renegotiated deals. This decentralised structure is not, however, without asymmetrical relationships. During the course of the evolution of the smuggling industry along the north-east border, changes in migratory patterns and the increase in activities to tackle trafficking have produced a growing differentiation between specialist organisations involved in escorting migrants and those able to attract customers and plan journeys. The latter types of organisation have also become progressively differentiated, with a growth in importance of those able to establish direct relationships with customers of the more complex illegal migratory flows, which are commercially more attractive. This evolution has produced some operators able to co-ordinate, at considerable advantage to themselves, the coalitions of organisations operating in different countries and supplying different services. It has also contributed to the reduction of the vulnerability of the whole coalition in the face of an increase in penalties and the strengthening of counter-trafficking measures, given that passeurs arrested during operations are less and less linked to the people running the whole operation. The increase in organisational stratification in the migrant-smuggling industry along the north-east border does not, however, imply that actual gangs have been formed. Neither can we make simple analogies with Mafia-type organised crime syndicates. At the moment there is no evidence to make one think of the existence of out and out crime syndicates, given that organisations of the same kind operate in the same area independently and often in competition. In the same way, no evidence has been found up to now to make one think that these groups aspire to the control of territory, or try to act as alternative power structures to the state<sup>33</sup>.

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<sup>33</sup> Investigations proved that J.L. actively followed a plan to have someone kill the public prosecutor who carried out the investigations which led to his imprisonment. This action is probably connected, however, to his particular position. The investigations do not point to particular pressure on the forces of law and order, or systematic attempts at intimidation. If and when relations between middlemen and police are recorded, they are referred to as acts of corruption.

## 6. THE FUTURE DECLINE IN IMPORTANCE OF THE NORTH-EASTERN CORRIDOR?

One of the reasons why the importance of the migratory flows across land borders is often undervalued is that they are thought of as being somehow a phenomenon whose days are numbered. The Yugoslav crisis, which formed the direct and indirect background to the marked development of the north-eastern corridor has stabilised, or at least got over its sanguinary phase. Many of the transit countries for these migratory flows are candidates for entry into the European Union, and for this reason will have to tighten up their controls and pay more attention to transit through their territory. In particular, at the end of the 1990s Slovenia introduced a series of measures to tackle the problem of illegal immigration flowing through its territory, which included the formation of mixed Italo-Slovenian patrols, the creation of a specialised counter-trafficking unit in 2002, and the conformation of its border controls to the requirements for its entry into the Schengen convention (Republic of Slovenia – Interior Ministry 2003). As can be seen in Table 8, the result was a large increase in the number of deportations and foreigners apprehended for several years, followed by a sharp decrease in 2002. The states which seceded from the former Yugoslavia and the other countries in the Balkans are also involved in programmes of co-operation which have the explicit aim of controlling the flows of illegal migrants. Visas were no longer compulsory after December 2001 in some of the countries where strong flows originate, for example, Romania, Bulgaria and indirectly Moldova. This led to a predictable change in their illegal migratory patterns from flows of illegal immigrants to flows of overstayers or temporary migrations. This transition will greatly reduce the demand for illegal entry coming from those areas.

*Table 8 – Number of people deported and apprehended by the Slovenian authorities (1995-2002)*

	Refused entries at borders	Apprehended
1995		4,175
1996		3,877
1997	43,791	7,093
1998	38,642	13,740
1999	39,740	18,696
2000	44,908	35,892
2001	59,917	20,871
2002	51,339	6,926
2003*		872

Source: Slovenian Interior Ministry, Office of the chief of police.

\*For the period January-March 2003.

Finally, counter-trafficking measures have been strengthened in the last few years (since 1998), and there has been an increase in co-ordination between the different police forces operating in the border area. These initiatives seem to have had a certain amount of success, given that the Italian Interior Ministry considers that the pressure of illegal immigration on the border between Italy and Slovenia is “in net decline” (Ministero dell’Interno, 2003: 143). As can be seen in Table 3, there has undoubtedly been a certain decrease in the number of people apprehended in recent years. If we make comparisons regarding this phenomenon, however, it does not seem at all certain that this decrease is proof of a contraction in the importance of this channel of entry. Firstly, apprehensions on the border between Italy and Slovenia over time do not seem to be linked to apprehensions on the Slovenian borders, which migrants must have crossed before entering Italy. The number of people apprehended in the two countries did in fact increase considerably in some years, while the strong decline later recorded in Slovenia was only slightly reflected in the situation in Italy. If Slovenia progressively takes on the role of a buffer state which can reduce the pressure of illegal

immigration on its adjacent borders, the figures recorded for apprehensions on both borders should show a negative correlation, which is absolutely not the case. To this must be added that there was a considerable increase in the number of illegal immigrants apprehended on Austrian territory between 2000 and 2002, which to all intents and purposes represents a functional equivalent of Italian territory. The variation in the number of immigrants apprehended, therefore, besides showing only in a small part the sharp fall announced<sup>34</sup>, does not allow an evaluation of whether this decrease was due to the increase in controls (which would mean that more were apprehended even if the actual number of illegal immigrants trying to enter was lower), or to an increase in the numbers transported along the migratory route under consideration.

Similar considerations apply with regard to the migrant-smuggling organisations operating in the area. Also in this case, investigative activities to tackle the problem of migrant smuggling undoubtedly had a significant effect. In the province of Trieste, the number of passeurs sent to prison increased from less than 30 in 1997 to more than 200 in the period 1999-2001. Many trials also led to a significant increase in counter-trafficking activity not only against the actors specialised in crossing the border, but also against all-inclusive organisers working in the area. Collaboration between investigative bodies and the police has also made operating in this field much more complex and risky for traffickers, even for those offering services which were traditionally low risk, such as running transit places. Where it has been recorded, the changeover to a more investigative approach has, besides, made trafficking operations increasingly difficult to carry out, given that they rely on a busy network of telephone communications which are open to interception. This series of measures has certainly made traditional operating methods more difficult, as can be seen from the increase in fees charged by middle-men, and the shift in flows of immigrants towards parts of the border where security is less stringent. Signs of the extinction of this kind of organisation are, however, most likely premature. For decades there has been a considerable build up of professional knowledge and trans-national relationships along this corridor which could be put to good use in new directions. The coalitions of organisations which run the migrant-smuggling business are characterised by flexibility and a considerable capacity to adapt to new situations; for every kind of service offered there is a variety of suppliers, and every organisation can quickly be substituted by another.

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<sup>34</sup> If we add to this that such a decrease was registered in the same years in which a significant proportion of potential illegal migrants started to benefit from the fact that they no longer needed a visa for their countries, we can conclude that it would have been reasonable to expect a much sharper decline in the numbers of illegal immigrants apprehended on the border between Italy and Slovenia, especially as a high proportion of them were immigrants who were not assisted or were assisted by the most rudimentary organisations. It is therefore likely that such migratory patterns were over-represented in the figures on the number of immigrants apprehended.

# MIGRANT SMUGGLING VIA MARITIME ROUTES

*Paola Monzini (CeSPI)*

## 1. INTRODUCTION<sup>\*</sup>

### 1.1 Characteristics of smuggling and typology of migrants transported

It has been estimated that from 1990 to 2000 more than 180,000 people arrived in Europe illegally by crossing the Mediterranean Sea<sup>35</sup>. The number of illegal immigrants arriving via maritime routes to Southern Europe grew enormously in the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; so much so that the Mediterranean Sea has been identified as the main clandestine gateway to the European Union (IOM 2000). The cross-Mediterranean flow of migrants originates on the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean Sea, but includes migration from several continents. Over the last decade of the twentieth century, the main places of origin of illegal migrants have been the Balkans, Africa (North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa), the Middle East (the areas of Anatolia and Mesopotamia), Afghanistan and the Indian sub-continent (especially Sri Lanka and Pakistan). In the majority of cases, the sea crossing is only a small part of a long and eventful journey. The routes form part of the wider flow of illegal migration to Western Europe which crosses several borders by sea, land or air, the final destination often being Germany, England, France or Holland. As the main objective of the sea journey is to cross the most protected border, that of the Schengen area<sup>36</sup>, many countries on both the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean become as transit routes. The movement of migrants without documents does not follow a geographically rational path: as we shall see, long journeys overland or by air which end on the shores from where illegal sea crossings leave are guided by organisations acting as intermediaries which carry out the crossing<sup>37</sup>.

Migrants are seen in this paper mainly as clients of these illegal organisations who form the demand side for the illegal immigration market. They pay for a service and subject themselves to treatment which is often rough and at high risk for their personal safety<sup>38</sup>. The point of view of migrants, their expectations and their individual plans, is not central to this research. Instead, the focus is on the perspective of the forces of law and order and the judicial apparatus, whose evidence and official

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. Pugh (2000:27) for an analysis of the phenomenon in Mediterranean countries.

<sup>36</sup> On this point see Sciortino, 2000: 17-18.

<sup>37</sup> Especially for those coming from more distant places (in particular those who come from Asia by plane to Moscow or cities in the Balkans), but also from African countries. For example, in 2002 Indian migrants paid 10,000 dollars for a mixed journey which included flight to Guinea and the crossing from the Guinea coast to the south coast of Sicily (cf. Proceedings 1119/02 of the Prosecution Office at the Modica Court, file against unknown persons).

<sup>38</sup> According to a recent study, 195 migrants died trying to reach Italy in 2002, of whom 82 were lost at sea. 227 died, of whom 76 lost at sea, up to 20<sup>th</sup> October 2003. The average in 2003 has been of one dead or missing for every 47 migrants landed (1 every 91 in 2002) (Manconi and Boraschi, 2003). It is estimated that at least 1,000 people have died trying to reach Italy by sea since 1996.

records represent the main sources used. As an introduction, however, we should make at least two remarks about the typology of the migrants who choose the maritime passages.

First of all, those who choose this kind of route are above all migrants who cannot afford to pay for the kind of illegal immigration which makes use of forged documents. That is, they do not have the money to pay the direct costs of corruption or to pay for a safe journey. Very often recourse to the people traffickers who control the sea crossings is the cheapest way to reach the "other world". It has been estimated that in the illegal immigration market, for example, the cost of a journey from an African transit point to a European airport using forged documents can be around 7,000 dollars. The same journey overland, ending in the crossing of the Sicily channel, takes much longer (months or even years, with several stages and stop-overs), but can be had at the cheaper cost of less than 3,000 dollars.

Secondly, we should begin by saying that an important component of the phenomenon of maritime crossings is made up of the migratory flows which originate in areas hit by serious political and social crises, or ethnic groups which are persecuted. In fact, the status of the migrant strongly influences recourse to the sea route. More precisely, changes in the policies of reception of immigrants, and the way they are applied, play a determining role in the choice of the type of passage by sea. For example, people coming from countries which have signed extradition treaties with Italy, and who can be repatriated as soon as they land, tend to enter Italy by means of clandestine landings. On the other hand, migrants who have the real possibility of being accepted into the country arrive by means of "open" landings. These are often arrivals in so-called "*carrette del mare*" (boats in poor condition), which take place without any attempt on the part of the traffickers to prevent interception<sup>39</sup>.

In conclusion, migrant smuggling via maritime routes has seen a rapid and impetuous increase for two main reasons: it is the cheapest sector of the market for illegal immigration, and it satisfies the demand coming from the most "urgent" migratory pressures.

## 1.2 The field of research and sources used

The organisations which run the illegal entry routes into Italy via maritime passages use three main methods to bring in immigrants:

- 1) Evading controls at checkpoints in port areas,
- 2) "Clandestine" landings which leave migrants on parts of the coast uncontrolled by coastguards or police,
- 3) "Open landings", usually involving the abandonment of vessels needing assistance in Italian territorial waters.

In the year 2000 at least 4,500 illegal migrants, hidden in lorries, were intercepted at maritime border posts between Greece and Italy whilst trying to gain entry into Italy. Hundreds more migrants have been apprehended at the main Italian ports in recent years<sup>40</sup>. However, this research will focus exclusively on the organisation of illegal border crossings by means of specific maritime passages (points 2 and 3), which requires certain specific, above all nautical, skills<sup>41</sup>.

The Italian peninsular, with a maritime border extending for about 7,400 miles, has become the favourite destination for illegal organisations, at the beginning of the 1990s. The landings, both "clandestine" and "open", take place in various areas. Mostly, clandestine landings have taken place

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<sup>39</sup> For differences in kinds of vessel used, see next paragraph.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Chamber of Deputies- Senate, 2003:4.

<sup>41</sup> See Sciortino, 2000: 13-15, for the specific skills of organisations involved in migrant trafficking.

on the eastern coast of Italy, for example at the Lido of Venice<sup>42</sup>, as well as the coastal areas around Trieste and the Romagna, and the central Adriatic regions. However, the great majority of landings take place in the southern regions. In the ten years from 1991-2001 the highest incidence of the phenomenon was recorded on the Apulian coast; most recently the southern and eastern coasts of Sicily have become the most congested landing areas. In the three years from 1999-2001, as we shall see, even the Ionic coast of Calabria became the destination for numerous landings, both "clandestine" and "open".

This brief study intends to give an initial indicative frame of reference for understanding the evolution of this illegal phenomenon, which up to now has received a lot of media attention but has rarely been the subject of analytical investigation. Our attention will focus on the development of maritime routes and the illegal organisations which control the transport of migrants to the regions of Italy most affected by this phenomenon; Sicily, Calabria and Apulia. In the three regions under consideration, all areas characterised by the strong presence of Mafia-type local organisations, a varied and variable business of illegal sea crossings of migrants has arisen. Over the years main changes occurred in the countries of origin of the migrants and the complex evolution of the routes they follow, as well as in the types of vessel used and the ways in which journeys are organised. The aim of this paper is to illustrate, as far as possible, the dynamics of this particular illegal immigration market by analysing its workings and by focusing attention on the people traffickers who run it.

It is important to remark that illegal organisations' activities are strongly influenced by several factors. These include specific geographical conditions and the objective difficulties of navigation, the size of the flow of migration, the structural changes in other illegal markets, but also and above all, action taken by the authorities. In particular, policies of migration control and reception, the degree of application of laws governing immigration, measures to tackle and to police illegal immigration, as well as the political and diplomatic initiatives, intelligence, and investigative techniques put into practice in Italy and the countries of origin of the journeys, all have a strong influence on the way that traffickers carry out their business.

The essential part played by the various governmental institutions involved clearly emerges in the methodological profile of this study, in that most of the information used has been provided by authorities involved in the control of illegal immigration. In particular, the research is mainly based on both judicial documentation, dating from 1992, and data from the police (mainly the finance police and port authorities), from 1998 onwards. For the objectives of the research, specialist studies on traffickers and organised crime have made it possible to build a better framework of the general co-ordinates of the phenomenon. Other general information was collected from newspaper articles, especially from local newspapers, from 1998 onwards. It should be stated that the reading of reports and accounts from the authorities has only partly reduced the gaps in the knowledge about some of the routes: a lot of information is not available because of its confidential nature.

As regards judicial sources, most of the material was collected during visits to some of the areas most affected by the phenomenon of illegal landings: Lecce, Crotone, Syracuse, Modica, Ragusa and Agrigento. The information collected has been used, as far as possible, making allowance for the fact that it reflects the point of view of the authorities which produced it, and considering therefore the ends and means by which it was produced. In carrying out the research, a great disparity emerged in particular in the kinds of information provided by different prosecution services. Only in some cases was it possible to consult files relating to complex situations where important evidence has been collected from telephone interceptions, interrogation reports, statements from collaborators, and immigrants. Some prosecution services did not send the information requested. In others, most of the proceedings are against unknown persons, and the documentation is lacking in detailed information. The shortage of data is often a result of the refusal

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<sup>42</sup> Where 10 landings were recorded up to July 1999: cf. Frezza, 2001: 29

of people under investigation to collaborate, as well as the complete lack of evidence (such as mobile phones found on crew members, names and documents pertaining to the vessels), which would allow the reconstruction of the preparatory stage of the journey.

More in general, besides reflecting the different degrees of openness to outsiders of individual authorities at a local level, and the willingness on the part of individual officials to provide information obtained by their departments for research, the disparity in the data collected seems to reflect a difference in administrative and bureaucratic procedures (a heavy burden when dealing with large numbers), and action taken in response to the problem in question. The variation in the depth of investigation which was discovered during the research can be attributed to several, often interdependent, factors. These include the methods used by illegal organisations to avoid controls, the length of time a route has been used, the progressive specialisation of some officials in *ad hoc* investigative techniques, the emergence of the problem as a priority at a local and national level, and the degree of judicial collaboration on the part of authorities in the countries where the journeys begin. For example, it was found that the lack of judicial co-operation on the part of the countries where the vessels originate almost always makes it impossible to set up or carry out complex investigations. A lack of co-ordination in the development of different plans of action of the authorities has been perceived. Diplomatic and judicial initiatives are often carried out in parallel, without any unifying strategy. The initiatives taken at government or diplomatic level in negotiations for preventive action with countries where the journeys originate in some cases do not seem to involve - even at a consultative level - the local prosecution services. Finally, one last aspect should be underlined: the areas most affected by the landings, in southern Italy, are at the same time the areas most affected by local Mafia-type organised crime. Controlling and tackling this kind of criminality involves a great amount of work on the part of the investigative and judicial authorities, which are often lacking in personnel and resources.

## **2. THE ROUTES**

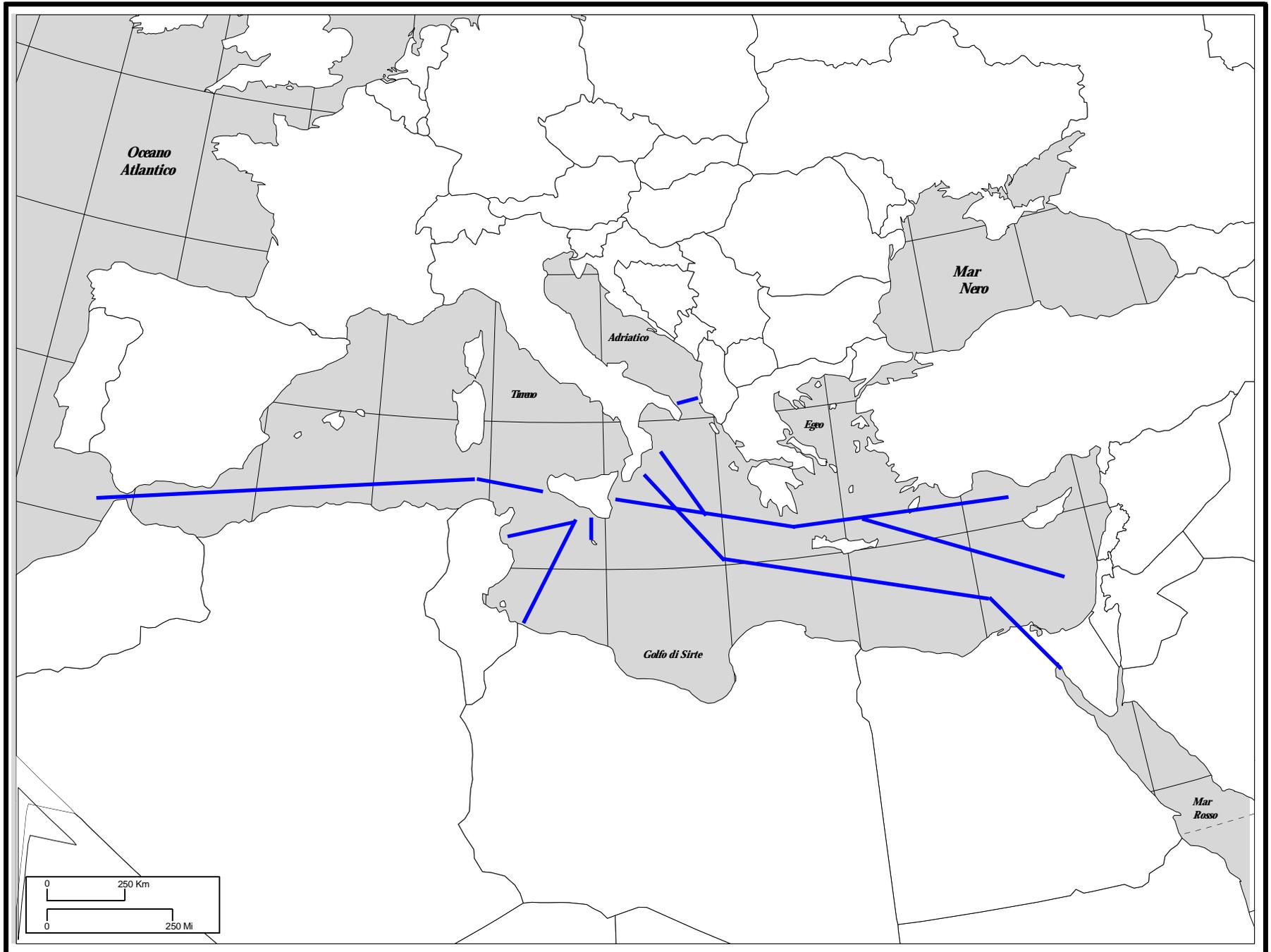
### **2.1. Routes and types of vessel**

A first glance at the map gives us an idea of the complexity of the routes for the illegal transport of migrants to Italy using maritime routes.

Six main routes have been developed since 1991. They can be sub-divided according to the area of origin or embarkation:

1. from the Balkans with landings on the Apulian coast, or to a lesser degree on other coastal areas of the Adriatic, using boats and rubber dinghies;
2. from the eastern part of the Mediterranean, especially Turkey, Lebanon and Syria, with landings on the south coast of Apulia (south of Otranto), on the Ionic coast of Calabria, and in eastern Sicily, using ships and boats;
3. from the Indian sub-continent, mainly the coast of Sri Lanka, arriving on the Ionic coast of Calabria and in eastern Sicily via the Suez Canal, by ship;
4. from West Africa via the Straits of Gibraltar, by ship;
5. from the Maltese archipelago, which functions as a focal point of itineraries originating on the shores of the eastern Mediterranean and North Africa, by fishing boat, rubber dinghy or fast launches;
6. from the North African coast, especially Tunisia and Libya, with landings on the south-east coast of Sicily, the Egadi islands, Pantelleria and Lampedusa, by fishing boat and other kinds of boat.

# MAP OF THE MEDITERRANEAN WITH INDICATION OF THE 6 MAIN ROUTES USED BY TRAFFICKERS



Each of these maritime routes has its own “natural” outlet on a specific part of the Italian coast, which depends on its place of origin. The size of the landing place is in direct proportion to the length of the route: it covers a small area for the journey through the Otranto channel, but is much bigger for the crossings which take a long time. The central Mediterranean routes have a landing area which includes parts of Apulia, Calabria and Sicily. Looking at the map, it is possible to make an initial distinction between long, medium and short crossings.

*Short crossings:* these land only in some parts of Apulia and Sicily. The crossing of the Otranto channel, which is 40 miles wide at its narrowest point (Valona - Lecce coast), can be made in a couple of hours using powerful rubber dinghies. From the Maltese archipelago, the 54 mile crossing to the Ragusa coast takes about two hours using ocean-going rubber dinghies or powerful launches.

*Medium crossings:* these connect the coast of North Africa to the Sicilian coast (Sicily channel) and take about two days sailing on slow vessels. The shortest crossing to Italy arrives at Lampedusa and Pantelleria: the crossing takes at least 10 hours by fishing boat.

*Long crossings:* these have landing places on different parts of the coast of Sicily, Calabria and Apulia, and need several days sailing time and sturdy vessels. The route which leaves from Turkey, for example, goes through Greek territorial waters and can reach the Calabrian coast after 4-7 days sailing without stopping off, depending on the kind of vessel used. The journey is longer for ships which arrive from internal seas - the Caspian Sea and the Black Sea - which reach the Mediterranean via the Dardanelles. More demanding still are the crossings by ship from Asian or African ports which enter the Mediterranean via the Suez Canal or the Straits of Gibraltar. Some routes need stop-offs to take on supplies, and take weeks of sailing<sup>43</sup>. The cost varies depending on the route, the organisation of the journey, and the type of vessel used.

## 2.2 Numbers of landings and regional trends

The actual size of the phenomenon is difficult to estimate: it is impossible to know how many migrants get through without being apprehended by the authorities. The regional statistics relating to the discovery of illegal immigrants at the moment of landing or near to the maritime border<sup>44</sup>, and the data relating to the confiscation of vessels (see below), reflect the work of the authorities and at the same time give us a general idea of the trends relating to the phenomenon and its geographical distribution. If the number of people stopped at the borders is a very general indication, the seizure of vessels is on the other hand a fairly representative indication, especially for smuggling carried out using the method of “open” landings, which end with the seizure of the vessel<sup>45</sup>.

**Table 1 - Illegal immigrants stopped at border points: Apulia, Sicily, Calabria, 1998-2002**

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
<b>Apulia</b>	39065	46481*	18990	8546	3372
<b>Sicily</b>	8828	1973	2782	5504	18225
<b>Calabria</b>	848	1545	5045	6093	2122

\*of whom 22,418 from Kosovo, and 7,448 Rom.

Source: Interior Ministry. Immigration Service and Border Police of the Police Department.

<sup>43</sup> For example, 50 African immigrants landed in Apulia on 7<sup>th</sup> November 1998. They had been put on board a boat at Conakry in Guinea and were then transferred onto the “Zeynep”, a ship which was already carrying 180 migrants (mostly Kurds), off the Turkish coast (Interview, Lecce Prosecution Office, 4<sup>th</sup> November 2003).

<sup>44</sup> The immigrants are registered and then identified by different police forces working on land and/or at sea.

<sup>45</sup> It should be specified that the figures of the Finance Police are only part of the total number: other police forces also confiscate vessels.

The regional figures show, above all, wide variations in the phenomenon in the three regions under consideration. However, the total number of people apprehended has stayed at a considerably high level, more than 20,000 even in 2001, the year in which the lowest number was stopped. There are conflicting trends in the three regions under examination (cf. Table 1). *Apulia* lost first place for the largest number of landings recorded in 2002, with 3,372 immigrants stopped (14.2% of the total). This region has shown a progressive and dramatic fall in the numbers stopped since 1999, an exceptional year due to the war in Kosovo. It should be born in mind that the percentage of the total for the region of Bari was 75.6% in 1998, 93% in 1999 and 70.8% in 2000<sup>46</sup>. The number of landings recorded in *Calabria* has also fallen recently, despite a sharp increase in 2000 and 2001. In 2002 the figure was 2,122 people landed and registered by the authorities (8.9% of the total), which was still higher, however, than the total for 1999. In *Sicily*, on the other hand, the trend is in the opposite direction. The fall recorded in 1999 has been followed by a constant rise, with an exceptional peak in 2002 of 18,225 people stopped, giving this region first place. The statistics collected by the Finance Police<sup>47</sup> up to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2003 confirm the direction of this trend: a dramatic fall in Apulia and Calabria, with continuing, albeit slower, growth in Sicily. (cf. Table 2).

**Table 2 - people stopped and arrested in Apulia, Calabria and Sicily, 1998-2003**

Year	Apulia	Of which arrested	Calabria	Of which arrested	Sicily	Of which arrested
1998	11385	130	261	7	2261	64
1999	17605	236	278	5	533	11
2000	6556	244	2898	30	489	11
2001	4460	125	2633	32	897	16
2002	2855	80	1563	50	4153	100
2003*	926	33	204	4	4159	37

\*Until 30<sup>th</sup> September 2003.

Source: Finance Police, Operational Headquarters.

In all three regions, the number of people stopped follows a trend analogous to that of the number of vessels seized (cf. Table 3). In particular there has been a recent inversion of the trend in Calabria, a net growth in Sicily and a clear fall in Apulia.

**Table 3 - Seizures of vessels in Puglia, Calabria and Sicily, 1998-2003**

Year	Apulia	Calabria	Sicily	Italy
1998	54	2	27	84
1999	143	3	12	161
2000	82	8	10	102
2001	62	12	19	95
2002	21	13	62	99
2003*	8	0	59	68

\*Until 30<sup>th</sup> September 2003.

Source: Finance Police, Operational Headquarters.

N.B. The number of seizures in the rest of Italy are of little relevance: from 1 to 3 cases recorded each year.

In *Sicily* the number of vessels seized grew considerably in 2002 and 2003. It is worth noting that all 34 boats seized (out of a total of 68 vessels of different kinds) in the first 9 months of 2003 were seized in Sicily. There were also landings of lesser importance on the island during the same period. Vessels seized included 2 fishing boats, 12 rubber dinghies, 1 launch and 10 other undefined,

<sup>46</sup> The percentages are calculated on the basis of data given in Caritas, 2003: 144

<sup>47</sup> From a comparison of Table 1 with Table 2, the proportion of the activity carried out by the Finance Police as part of the whole Police Force in 2000-2002 can be inferred.

probably makeshift, crafts. Over the long term in Sicily there has been a consistent number of boats and fishing boats seized, as well as small vessels classified as “other”, which would seem to indicate that the crossings are not well-organised, or are organised by the migrants themselves. In *Apulia* on the other hand, looking at figures in the long term, the vessels seized have been mainly rubber dinghies (7 out of 8 in 2003, whilst in 2000 there were 71 rubber dinghies out of a total of 82 vessels seized), and ships arriving from ports in the eastern Mediterranean. A greater variety of vessels seized in Apulia in 1999, however, reflects the arrival of ships and boats loaded with refugees from Kosovo and Montenegro. In *Calabria* the situation is different; nearly all the vessels seized have been ships, fishing boats and other boats, the majority of which being the so-called “*carrette del mare*”, boats in poor condition used by traffickers to transport Kurdish refugees and often Sri Lankan migrants.

Taken together, the statistics show a progressive shift in landing places towards the west, from the coast of Apulia to that of Calabria, and then to Sicily, as well as a trend towards the use of larger vessels to transport migrants.

As regards the composition of the migratory flows, considering the four large areas of origin previously noted (the Balkans, Africa, the Middle East and the Indian sub-continent), we can see from Table 4 that the flows from Africa and from the Balkans (Albania + Kosovo) arrive via the routes we have described as short or medium crossings: the Otranto channel and the Sicily channel. The recent trend, reflecting a wider trend in patterns of migration, is of a dramatic fall in arrivals in Apulia from the Balkans, and an exponential rise in arrivals in Sicily of Africans. These come mainly from three macro-areas, above all from countries with serious political problems in the Horn of Africa (especially Somalia), but also from Liberia and North Africa.

In Table 4 we can see two distinct trends in the flows from the Middle East. First of all there has been a fall in the arrival of migrants of Kurdish origin. Together with migrants from Afghanistan Iraq and Turkey, there were 727 reported cases in the first nine months of 2003 (550 in Apulia<sup>48</sup> and 177 in Calabria, compared to 1,763 in 2002 and 2,765 in 2001). In the same period, there was almost no immigration from these areas into Sicily. On the other hand, there was a greater movement of Iraqi refugees, as can be seen from the recent increase in their numbers in Sicily and the persistence of landings in Apulia. The increase in the number of landings of Palestinians, previously present in small numbers in Apulia and Calabria, should also be remarked.

Finally, regarding to arrivals from the Indian sub-continent, it should be noted that the arrival of Sri Lankan immigrants on the Sicilian and Calabrian coasts, and to a lesser extent in Apulia, completely stopped in 2002 after the “closure” of the Suez Canal to migrant smuggling following the agreement between the Italian and Egyptian authorities<sup>49</sup>. The route from Sri Lanka saw a considerable expansion in numbers of migrants between 2000 and 2002: the Port Authorities recorded the arrival in Calabria of 890 Sri Lankans on 12 boats between 2001 and 2002, while in Sicily, there were 28 landings of Sri Lankans between 1998 and 2001, for a total of 1,869 migrants, almost all of them in the area of Catania and Syracuse. (The average load was 68 per vessel, with the largest cargo consisting of 373 people).

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<sup>48</sup> Kurdish immigrants who arrived by rubber dinghy in Apulia in 2002 claimed that they did not travel through Albania but came on large ships in groups of 20-30, from which they were transferred directly onto Albanian rubber dinghies (Interview: Lecce Police Headquarters, 20<sup>th</sup> June 2003)

<sup>49</sup> cf. Chamber of Deputies-Senate, 2003

**Table 4 - Illegal immigrants discovered in Apulia, Calabria and Sicily by the Finance Police, by main nationalities, 1998-2003**

	APULIA				CALABRIA				SICILY			
	2000	2001	2002	2003*	2000	2001	2002	2003*	2000	2001	2002	2003*
<b>Afghanistan</b>	43	105	139	61	146	116	/	/	/	/	9	4
<b>Albania</b>	3.196	1.763	593	106	5	4	2	1	14	95	/	2
<b>Horn of Africa</b>	3	1		2	9	27	26	/	/	/	258	1.308
<b>Ethnic Kurd</b>	444	837	969	57	1.526	84	/	177	/	/	4	1
<b>Iraq</b>	836	534	447	412	375	456	3	/	84	/	242	395
<b>Liberia</b>	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	1	405	208
<b>Morocco</b>	19	18	22	5	/	/	1	/	89	55	277	135
<b>Palestine</b>	1	10	48	13	20	21	5	/	38	16	189	697
<b>Sri Lanka</b>	9	10	10	/	/	199	755	/	54	281	988	/
<b>Turkey</b>	298	378	205	20	202	255		/	/	2	5	/
<b>Kosovo</b>	658	183	7	1	1	/	/	/	4	/	/	/

\* Until 30<sup>th</sup> September 2003.

Source: Finance Police, Operational Headquarters.

## **2.3 The organisation of maritime transport**

Up to now we have identified the main routes and the type of vessels needed to sail them, and we have also presented some regional data on the size and origins of the migratory flows which have been intercepted. In the following paragraphs we will try to show how the smuggling is organised on the different routes, with particular attention to the formation of the organisations involved in people-smuggling, and the constellations of criminal organisations which control the three main phases in the process, as identified by Salt and Stein (1998):

- a) mobilization and recruitment of migrants;
- b) their movement en route;
- c) their insertion and integration in transit and destination countries.

The fragmentary nature and the lack of homogeneity in the information available means that it will not be possible to give a complete picture of all three phases: sometimes information on the crossing or the arrival predominates, at other times there are more details on the formation of networks between clients, colleagues, partners or competitors. Given that the routes are run by “constellations” of organisations, formed in turn by independent operators or more stable groups, from time to time we will take into consideration some sub-groups which operate on the route being examined. In particular, individual sections of the macro-routes which have been outlined will be analysed, especially concerning the organisation of three particular crossings: the short crossing from Valona to Salento, the medium crossing from Libya to Lampedusa, and the long crossing from Turkey to Apulia/Calabria.

## **3. SHORT CROSSINGS: THE PASSAGE THROUGH THE OTRANTO CHANNEL**

### **3.1 The main routes**

Looking at the map, it is clear that the crossing which connects the Bay of Valona (from the port of Valona, from Saseno island, from the Arte Lagoon and the peninsular of the Acrocerauni mountains) to the area of Salento between Brindisi and Otranto is the shortest way to reach the Apulian coast from Albania. Controlled by organisations which have twin bases in Valona and on the coast of Italy, this route became the main entry port for illegal travels by sea in the 1990s. According to some estimates, the largest share of international Albanian emigration<sup>50</sup> used this route during the 1990s. Even migrants from other countries travelling via Albania to Western Europe used this route: they numbered around 150-250,000 in the same period (ICMPD 2000: 84). Rubber dinghies equipped with powerful outboard motors, which can make two journeys a night, were the most popular means of transport. The size of the phenomenon was remarkable, as can be seen from Table 5.

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<sup>50</sup> cf. Pastore (1998) for an analysis of the four different phases of the flow of migration from Albania. According to some estimates, at least 5-600,000 people left the country between 1990 and 2000, representing 40% of the population aged between 19 and 40 (ICMPD 2000: 84).

**Table 5 - Illegal immigrants discovered in the province of Lecce, 1995-2003**

Year	N. of people
1995	9,367
1996	6,734
1997	9,168
1998	20,426
1999	26,072
2000	13,793
2001	6,702
2002	3,067
2003*	64

\*Until 30<sup>th</sup> June 2003

Source: Lecce Police Headquarters.

Groups based in Durazzo<sup>51</sup>, Scutari and Montenegro (Bar) which were already involved in smuggling also carried out important people-smuggling operations, especially in periods of strong migratory pressure. Their entry points were on the northern coast of Apulia, north of Brindisi and in the province of Bari, with offshoots as far as the coast in Molise and Abruzzo. We should also remember that an enormous growth in the number of crossings was recorded during the two great exoduses from Albania of 1991 and 1997, and again in 1999 (cf. Table 6) during the Kosovo crisis when at least 500,000 refugees from Kosovo entered Albania, some of them continuing their journey to Italy<sup>52</sup>. At this juncture, tens of thousands of people risked the crossing on all kinds of vessel; from rafts made out of empty oil drums to ships carrying more than a thousand passengers.

**Table 6 - Landings of more than 200 people recorded by the Port Authorities of Brindisi and Bari, 1999**

Date	No. of passengers	Origin of passengers (as recorded by Italian authorities)
31.07	1010	Not specified
28.07	889	Not specified
06.07	804	Kosovar
19.07	762	Slav
20.07	541	Slav
29.05	425	Kosovar(405)Montenegrin(20)
07.06	406	Kosovar
28.04	346	Kosovar
20.05	262	Kosovar/Albanian
26.05	252	Kosovar
12.06	242	Mostly Kosovar
08.06	240	Not specified

Source: Port Authorities.

If the “exceptional” and at times spontaneous organisation of the journeys was caused by migratory emergencies, the better-structured and well-organised forms of smuggling, controlled by established organisations, arose in parallel with the growth of international Albanian emigration.

<sup>51</sup> The crossings from Durazzo, which need refuelling on the journey, were partly made using fishing boats, and partly made using fast rubber dinghies and launches. From Montenegro the crossings were made using fast boats made of wood and fibreglass, loaded with passengers, which were normally used for smuggling tobacco (Interviews: Lecce Police Headquarters, 30<sup>th</sup> June and 6<sup>th</sup> November 2003).

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Pugh, 2000.

### 3.2 The beginnings

The first groups of Italo-Albanian smugglers began to form after Italy adopted a policy of expulsion of Albanian emigrants in the summer of 1991 (cf. Pastore; Pugh, 2000: 30).

Their Italian partners had a strong propulsive role in the start-up and consequent development of this smuggling. For a long period of time, at least up to 1994, Italian contractors of various origin involved in illegal business financed and organised the crossings<sup>53</sup>. In the first phase, the fast launches which shuttled between the two shores belonged to smugglers or were hired in the Lecce area and piloted by Italians. Whilst the exacting business of maintenance of the boats was organised on Italian territory, the recruiting and management of “clients” (using Italian vehicles), was organised in Albania, especially in Valona. Passengers were then transported to the landing points (DIA 1999: 19). Thus the first organisations were trans-national but prevalently Italian - capital, means of transport and technology were all Italian. The part played by Albanians, still lacking in organisational resources, was small. Above all, Albanian partners had the important job of organising the recruitment of migrants. The conquest of greater margins of manoeuvre for Albanians occurred through a rapid progressive growth of their competence in this field. The traffickers from Valona were skilled in the marketing or “public relations” sector which involved the recruitment of passengers. They took advantage of the particular dynamics of the illegal economy in Albania, or more widely, in the Balkans. In particular, the Albanians based in Valona offered themselves as service agencies for other illegal organisations, strengthening the networks of relationships with illegal groups operating in the Balkans and capitalising on their position of go-between with the efficient organisations controlled by Italians. It was their central position as brokers for the traffickers, achieved through the development of extensive networks of relationships, which allowed them, in short, to become independent of their Italian partners.

### 3.3 The Balkan networks of the illegal economy

According to estimates by the DIA (1999: 14), the flow of migrants from Albania had already lost its characteristic aspect of the transport of local people (that is, the transport of Albanian emigrants to Italy), in 1992. It is because his small country, previously closed to the outside world, started to become an important transit point for long distance migratory flows in that year. The success of landing operations managed by Albanian traffickers led some well-established international smuggling organisations to see the passage through Albania as a solution to the problem of entry to Europe<sup>54</sup>. The first groups of traffickers to take advantage of the services of Italo-Albanian transporters were mainly Chinese, who were involved in smuggled migrants from China and the Philippines (by air to Moscow or other Balkan states, then overland, sometimes from Greece) to Europe and the United States, and Turkish organisations, who at this time “managed” mainly Kurdish and Pakistani migrants (crossing Iraq, Turkey, Bulgaria, Macedonia, and Albania by bus or lorry). The situation evolved rapidly; from 1993 onwards thousands of migrants from the Balkans, especially Serbs and Bosnians who were attracted by the opening up of the Albanian “gateway”, arrived independently at the port of Valona to seek entry to Europe. In addition, the town rapidly became the alternative to Slovenia as the bridgehead for the flow of migrants from the Balkans. By the mid 1990s Valona had become the collection centre for migrants from all over Albania. Supply and demand for sea passages from the small town grew to dizzy heights, and the organisations offering their services multiplied.

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<sup>53</sup> cf. for example Criminal Proceedings 1887/93 RGNR, Prosecution Office of the Lecce Court, Criminal Proceedings 316/97 RGNR Prosecution Office of the Lecce Court.

<sup>54</sup> These were the so-called “ethnic organisations”, that is, organisations made up of people from the same place from where illegal migration is organised and which supervise the entire migratory itinerary; cf. Chamber of Deputies, Senate, 2000.

To explain this development it is important to refer to the main changes which occurred in the black economy in the Balkans, and the increasing interdependence of its different branches. The rapid internationalisation of illegal Albanian markets was in fact part of a development which involved a huge area of the Balkan peninsula. Smuggling operations and the black economy developed rapidly in the early 1990s as a response to European sanctions imposed on Yugoslavia, and the Greek embargo against Macedonia. The growth in the importance of Albania as the crossroads for profitable illegal smuggling operations, and the ability of Albanian smugglers to insert themselves in trans-national networks of contacts, were given a further push when the crisis in Bosnia-Herzegovina came to a head in 1993. The war led to the closure of the traditional drug and arms trafficking routes from Turkey to Bulgaria, Romania and Yugoslavia, and their change of course to alternative routes. For the Albanians, this opened up the opportunity to establish profitable contacts with Turkish organisations. In the long run these business relations allowed the Albanian traffickers to become the main importers of heroin into Italy from Turkey<sup>55</sup>.

An efficient network organising illegal entry to Italy from Albania became functional not only alongside the development of the international drug trafficking market, but also together with two other criminal markets which were based in Albania; the production and distribution of marijuana, and the exploitation of prostitution.

As regards the first market, the rubber dinghies based in Valona have been used to export large quantities of marijuana illegally to Italy since 1995<sup>56</sup>. As regards the prostitution market, this was set up by small, family-run groups in the early 1990s and has continued to expand ever since. Young Albanian women, who are often friends or relatives of their exploiters, are brought to Italy and kept in total slavery. This business experienced a rapid growth in the second half of the decade, and also established itself in other countries of central and southern Europe. Albanian traffickers supply the European markets with girls who are particularly appreciated by their clients for their young age and competitive price (Monzini 2002: 62-68). After having organised a structured network of exploitation and more or less drained the catchment area in Albania, the traffickers extended their zone of recruitment for women to other countries. In particular, they directed towards Albania the flow of girls without documents who were leaving their home countries in Eastern Europe in search of fortune, and were trying to enter Europe through the Balkans. Networks specialising in the buying and selling of these girls by auction were set up in Belgrade and Montenegro also in response to the demand for girls by Albanian traffickers. The control of the network of exploitation by the Albanians led to an increase in the value of girls destined for Albania, and consequently the price paid for them to intermediaries. Albania became the obligatory transit country for hundreds of young Moldavian and Ukrainian girls, who were forced into slavery and put on the European prostitution market run by Albanians, using the Otranto channel as the entry point (Monzini, 202a).

The entry of Albanian groups into the drug-trafficking and prostitution markets increased the demand for services offered by organisations which run illegal connections with Italy, and put new capital of Albanian origin into circulation. This allowed the organisations dedicated to smuggling through the Adriatic Sea to rapidly reduce their dependence on Italian partners. Investigations carried out in Apulia confirmed that connections with Italian groups in the illegal drug market tended to strengthen, while those concerned with the organisation of crossings weakened.

### **3.4. The organisations in Valona**

During the second half of the 1990s, more and more of the people who financed human smuggling were Albanian nationals, and they were now able to buy their own transport and modern equipment

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<sup>55</sup> cf. Dorn N, Levi M et al., 2003.

<sup>56</sup> cf. For example Criminal Proceedings 8960/95 RGNR, Prosecution Office of the Lecce Court.

designed to avoid detection (radar and radio equipment which could tune in to the frequencies used by the forces of law and order), which they bought mainly in Greece and Montenegro (DIA; 1999: 19). The organisations in Valona were very successful, and it has been estimated that their annual turnover in 2000 was between 30 and 60 million dollars (ICMPD, 2000: 11). Furthermore, according to local experts (Barjaba, 2002: 119-120), the illegal entry business became one of the main sources of income in the Valona area, so much so that the development of the smuggling networks corresponded to a fall in the number of crimes involving theft, which was previously high in this area. In fact, smuggling involved a multitude of people who had roles at various levels of the business, and who were used in various ways to maintain the flow of migrants. In Albania, the key figures in this “induction”, very often mutually bound by close ties of friendship or family, were:

Owner/owners of the boat/boats, who had the necessary funds to cover the immediate substitution of boats which were confiscated;

- middle-men who were well integrated into the international networks, responsible for recruiting clients and keeping the accounts for the phase involving entry to Valona;
- local middle-men with the necessary contacts to organise the migrants’ stay, usually lasting 3 or 4 days, in hotels or private houses in Valona or the surrounding areas, while they were waiting to embark;
- people responsible for the upkeep of the rubber dinghies and the supply of diesel fuel at the places of embarkation;
- drivers to collect and take clients to the place of embarkation;
- two “look-outs” in the place of embarkation;
- a pilot who – if he brought back the vessel undamaged – earned on average the equivalent of 1,500 euros per trip (Sciortino, 1999: 22);
- an escort for the crossing who, in close contact with a person waiting in Italy, suggested which route to take and arranged for the collection of migrants.

The Albanian organisers thus ran consolidated and by now standardised structures which controlled each phase of the cycle, and which at this point also had the technical skills necessary for the maintenance of the rubber dinghies used. The network of small, flexible businesses that grew up in Valona meant that by the end of the 1990s, at least 150-300 people could be transported every night<sup>23</sup>. It was estimated that about 50 dinghies were being used in 1999. They were about 10 metres long and had been completely emptied out. Some of them were equipped with two engines. Each craft carried 15 to 40 people crouching down and covered with canvas. They all left together at night, travelling in formation so as to be able to offer mutual assistance if necessary, then they would fan out as they approached Italian territorial waters, using the lighthouses of Santa Cesarea Terme, Otranto and San Cataldo as their points of reference. The dinghies were rarely stopped by the Italian authorities, one of the reasons being that they were more manoeuvrable than the boats used by the Italian Finance Police.

At first, the fee for the journey was variable<sup>24</sup>: \$400-\$450 for those dealing directly with the boat-owner, and \$600-\$650 for those who used the services of a middle-man (Perrone, 2003). It seems that group discounts could also be had when negotiating directly with the boat-owners. There were also a couple of free places on each boat which were given to people in need of help. People making the journey organised by the Valona traffickers had the right to a second passage if they were repatriated within 2 or 3 days of landing.

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<sup>23</sup> But the number of people transported every night could reach 400. In one month, according to an annual average, 15 nights have suitable climatic conditions for the crossing (Interview: Lecce Prosecution Service, 6<sup>th</sup> November 2003).

<sup>24</sup> According to Barjaba (2002), the fee requested from other trafficking organisations was over 200 dollars.

### 3.4. Bases and networks in Italy

In Italy, the choice of landing places, and the logistical support necessary to guarantee a successful conclusion to the journey, were ensured by the people on land, usually Italians<sup>25</sup>. These had the task of organising the networks for the dispersal and immediate onward journey of the migrants – by train, van, bus or car – to other regions of Italy or to land borders with other European countries<sup>26</sup>.

The degree of co-ordination of the journey in Italy was variable. Italian investigators have found that migrants were treated differently according to their nationality. The networks involved in the continuation of the journey of Kurdish emigrants were particularly well-organised. When they left the collection point they were guided by telephone instructions to help them to reach border points in northern Italy, and from there move on to other countries<sup>27</sup>. Investigations have revealed that some migrants, for example the Chinese, paid up to \$10,000 to go to Germany, the USA or Great Britain and were enslaved to pay off the debt. These immigrants were collected and put in groups of 10-15 people at a time, then kept in houses in the countryside, from where they were delivered to Chinese middle-men<sup>28</sup>. The women to be used on the prostitution market were kept under strict surveillance by their escorts/exploiters, who generally had accomplices waiting directly at the landing points.

In general, migrants who had the possibility of regularising their position, for example by asking for political asylum, contacted the Italian authorities. Other migrants, who were more numerous, had to get away from the landing place as soon as possible to avoid being apprehended and repatriated. The migrants in the latter category, besides the fee for the crossing, also paid the escort (the person who kept in contact with the landing place in Italy), the fee agreed in advance for the “taxi” which would take them to the train, or the transport which would take them to their destination in Italy.

The journeys were organised in detail for those who, before leaving, had agreed to work in jobs where they were heavily exploited, in order to pay off their “migratory debt”.

The fees charged for transport on Italian territory varied according to the destination: from Apulia, in 1998, it cost 150,000 lira (about \$85) to go to Brindisi, 250,000 lira (\$145) to the Taranto area, and 400,000 lira (\$230) to the Foggia area<sup>29</sup>. In general, it cost 150-200,000 lira (\$85-\$115) to be taken to a railway station (DIA, 1999). The “taxi drivers” generally came from a smuggling background in Apulia, but were also recruited among the unemployed, small businessmen with economic problems, or van owners. “Clean” people (without a criminal record) and whole families were involved in the organisation of the journeys. Cases have also been discovered of people setting themselves up independently as “taxi drivers”, and who patrolled the coastal areas looking for wandering migrants who needed a lift.

As regards contacts with criminal organisations in Apulia, numerous investigations carried out there have shown that it was rare to find members of the *Sacra Corona Unita* (the mafia-type criminal organisation of the region) involved in operations of onward transport of immigrants – the few cases discovered involved people on the margins of the organisation. In general, according to police sources (DIA 1999: 17 and 20), the *Sacra Corona Unita* – which originally feared the impact of new traffickers in the areas they controlled, especially because of the increase in controls by the authorities which would result – developed over time “an attitude of tolerance and participation” (DIA 1999: 15), and began to use the channels set up for direct links with the Balkans for the

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<sup>25</sup> In rare cases, Albanian citizens resident in Italy were used: cf. criminal proceeding 2800/97, Prosecution Office at the Lecce Court.

<sup>26</sup> At first, collecting places near to the landing areas were organised. Later this practice was abandoned, probably to reduce the probability of apprehension and arrest.

<sup>27</sup> Interview, Lecce Police Headquarters, 30<sup>th</sup> June 2003.

<sup>28</sup> The movements of Chinese migrants have been described in detail in Frezza (2001).

<sup>29</sup> cf. Criminal Proceedings 926/98 RGNR, Prosecution Office of the Lecce Court.

importation of arms and, above all, drugs<sup>30</sup>. The few Albanians who are members of the Sacra Corona Unita were recruited as drug traffickers, not people traffickers.

A stronger connection between groups from Valona and other illegal Italian organisations involved in drug trafficking has been found, however. For example, an investigation in 1999<sup>31</sup> showed that Apulian and Albanian groups with bases in Albania acted in partnership to buy rubber dinghies for the transport of people and drugs. Other investigations have led to the break up of mixed Italo-Albanian drug rings involved in smuggling in heroin and marijuana, as well as people, through the Otranto channel. In all the cases discovered, the Italian element was uniquely specialised in the distribution of drugs and/or people on Italian territory. The connections of the illegal transport business in Italy are extensive - the networks which take charge of illegal immigrants on their entry into Italy may be in contact with counterfeiters who will provide forged documents, for a fee, to regularise the position of the migrant, or with employers in the black economy in other regions of Italy. Evidence of this regarding Albanian migrants has been found in Padua, Milan, Turin, Rome and Caserta<sup>32</sup>.

### 3.5 The dying out of the route

Actions to counter people-smuggling have been developed over the years and by a number of stages. Firstly, the Lecce Prosecution Service set up a practice of co-ordination between the different authorities involved in tackling the phenomenon in 1994, which created the possibility of unifying data and investigative information. A policy of co-ordination with the Albanian authorities has been started up as well<sup>33</sup>. Closer co-operation between Albania and Italy began in 1997, when the “Alba” joint forces mission, (a United Nations multinational force of 6,500 men and women under Italian command), was sent to work together with the Albanian authorities to start up a process of institution building. In the same year an extradition agreement was signed between Italy and Albania, and an observation body was set up the *Direzione Investigativa Antimafia* (Antimafia police force) and the *Procura Nazionale Antimafia* (National Antimafia Prosecution Service) to monitor the different kinds of illegal smuggling between the two countries. In 1998 a co-ordinated action between the police forces of the two countries was carried out: units of the coastguards and the Finance Police were sent to Albania and training courses were organised for the Albanian police. The increasing intensification of controls on both shores, reinforced by the intervention of the Navy, progressively reduced the probability of success of the crossings, and led to an increase in their cost. According to estimates of the DIA (1999: 14), the cost was one million lira (\$575) in 1995, but by 1999 the cost varied from one to three million lira (\$575-\$1725). To waive the fee, the migrant could agree to transport 10 kilos of marijuana. According to Italian investigators, by 2000 half of the boats which left Albania were forced to turn round before entering Italian waters, another quarter were apprehended in Italian territorial waters, and only a quarter managed to get through without detection.

The increase in the probability of interception of the boats had a negative effect on the risks for migrants, however, due to the growth in the number of shipwrecks and deaths by drowning. In order to make interception at sea more difficult, which by now also occurred on Albanian shores, departures were arranged when weather conditions were bad, especially in winter. The practice of unloading passengers into the sea without lifejackets as they neared the coast also began, to try to reduce the risk of apprehension on the Apulian coast. This led to a large increase in the number of accidents (for example, people mangled by propellers), and deaths by drowning.

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<sup>30</sup> The landing areas for immigrants are very distinct from the landing areas for smuggled goods: the dividing line passes through Brindisi. On smuggling activities cf. DNA (2002: 37-46).

<sup>31</sup> Interview: Lecce Prosecution Service, 30<sup>th</sup> June 2003. This was the “Helmas” investigation.

<sup>32</sup> cf. Criminal proceedings 3084/96, Prosecution Office at the Lecce Court, and DIA (1999): 15

<sup>33</sup> On Albanian laws and policy with regard to emigration, cf. Albanian Center for Parliamentary Studies, 2002.

The winning strategy developed by the authorities was, in the end, that which hit the heart of the business: the confiscation of boats. In Albania, a law was passed at Italian instigation in 1997 forbidding the production, use, sale and importation of rubber dinghies and outboard motors. The law was not put into practice for a long time, partly because there was a lot of corruption involved in the people smuggling business. In 1999, an important attempt by the Valona police with the support of the Italian authorities to confiscate rubber dinghies failed. A riot involving about 200 people took place, in which the Valona chief of police was taken hostage for several hours, and the confiscated boats were returned to their owners<sup>34</sup>. The law, which eventually resulted in the complete destruction of the fleet of rubber dinghies, was applied more rigorously from 2001 onwards<sup>35</sup>. The destruction of the vessels was completed by the summer of 2002<sup>36</sup>. The last fleet of rubber dinghies in Albania is today located in the extreme south of Albania, in the area around Saranda. The well-camouflaged vessels are mostly used for transporting drugs - mainly marijuana, and to a lesser extent, heroin<sup>37</sup>. About 10 people are transported on each journey, as they are need to unload the drug. The crossing of the Otranto Channel is now rarely used to rich Italy, and still sometimes the travels end in tragedy. Recently, a wide protest meeting has been organized in Valona, following the death of 20 transported migrants. The event demonstrates the end of the local population support to smuggling in migrants – a business openly protected by corrupt officials<sup>38</sup>.

The course of sea smuggling from Valona, which began under pressure from the large-scale migratory demand in Albania, died out together with the reduction in migratory flows from that country. During its course, people smuggling became unarguably the central point around which other illegal markets formed in Albania. It was also central to the birth of modern criminal organisations there, which later became trans-national and European. It has recently been estimated that 25-100 Albanian criminal groups, organised in clans and hierarchies, control 60% of the illegal drugs market in the Balkans (Transcrime, 2003: 31), as well as the largest share of the cheaper end of the prostitution market in Europe.

## **4. MEDIUM-LENGTH ROUTES: THE SICILY CHANNEL CROSSING**

### **4.1 The north-African route and the case of Lampedusa**

The illegal transport of migrants from countries in North Africa, especially Tunisia and Libya, fetches up on the coast of Agrigento and Trapani, and on the islands of Lampedusa, Pantelleria and Egadi. The crossing time with the usual type of vessel used from Tunisia (usually leaving from the stretch of coast between Cap Bon and Sfax) is about 24 hours. From Libya, the journey takes longer; 2 or 3 days of sailing.

At the beginning, the crossings from Tunisia to Italy were carried out by fishing boats flying the Tunisian flag, and by smaller vessels which could reach Lampedusa through the Sicily channel in about 10 hours. The first important landings were in 1993, but the real smuggling business began only in the second half of the 1990s, when the route became better established in response to the need to transport workers from North Africa, or for their (mainly seasonal) emigration to Sicily (Macchia, 1999). In this period, to reach Ragusa or Agrigento to work in fishing, agriculture or the

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<sup>34</sup> cf. Cicone (2003: 72), Macchia 1999.

<sup>35</sup> 350 vessels had already been confiscated in 1999.

<sup>36</sup> Interview: Lecce Prosecution Service, 6<sup>th</sup> November 2003, and Finance Police, 6<sup>th</sup> October 2003.

<sup>37</sup> For example, between February and September 2002, 9 tonnes of marijuana were seized in the province of Lecce in 15 separate police operations. Every 10 metre-long dinghy can hold one and a half tonnes.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. M. Gervasi, "Viaggio disperato in mare: morti 20 immigrati", in *L'Unità* newspaper 11 January 2004, p.15; and "Migliaia sul molo di Valona: Il governo fermi gli scafisti" in *Corriere della Sera*, 13 January 2004, p.21.

<sup>39</sup> Interview: Ragusa Prosecution Service, 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2003.

greenhouses of Sicily, immigrants paid a fee of between 500,000 and a million lira (\$290-\$575) to the people who organised the trip<sup>39</sup>. The flow was drastically reduced after the signing of an extradition treaty between Italy and Tunisia in the summer of 1998. The sharp fall in landings in 1999 can be seen, for example, on Lampedusa (see Table 7). More in general, the statistics relating to landings on this small island allow us to make several remarks about the evolution of the flows of people, and in particular about the alternation of Tunisia and Libya as the main places of departure. The geographical position of Lampedusa makes it the best landing point for journeys from eastern Tunisia and Libya. The rapid growth in landings in 2002 was due to the enormous number of Libyans joining the exodus.

**Table 7 - Lampedusa. Number of people landing/number of landings. 1998-2003**

Year	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003*
<b>No. of people</b>	2846	269	182	490	5374	5106
<b>No. landings</b>	65	23	19	25	124	87
<b>Average no. per landing</b>	44	12	10	20	87	119

\*Until 10<sup>th</sup> November 2003

Source: Port Authorities

From Table 7 one can deduce that there was a reduction in the number and size of landings between 1998 and 2000 (the average number of people per landing fell from 44-1, to 19-1 then 10-1). This can be attributed to the effect of an increase in controls by the Tunisian authorities and a consequent “de-structuring” of the market. The prevalence of small landings indicates a contraction of the market, but could also be related to the increasing tendency of migrants to organise their own journeys independently. In more recent years, however, there has been the opposite trend, which corresponds to the build-up of the Libyan route. The frequency and size of landings have grown to unprecedented levels: out of 119 landings recorded in the first 11 months of 2003 by the Port Authorities, 12 were of more than 150 people of “various” (non-specified) nationalities. The largest “record landing” for the island was of 233 people.

As regards the nationalities of those arriving at Lampedusa, the data provided by the Port Authorities show that up to 2000 the landings were almost all of North African nationals, predominantly Moroccans and Tunisians, and to a smaller extent, Algerians. Out of 107 landings recorded between 1998 and 2000, the Port Authorities report one including 57 Iraqis, three mixed landings of migrants from Sierra Leone or Senegal, several landings of Palestinian refugees, and one cargo of Yugoslavian migrants. The rest of the landings involved people of North African origin, showing that up to 2000 the Sicily channel was crossed above all by flows of a regional nature, which had been coming since the mid-1990s.

A profound change in the composition of nationalities took place in 2002<sup>40</sup>, when there was a remarkable rise in the number of migrants not only from sub-Saharan Africa, but also, to a lesser extent, from Asian countries (Bangladesh, Pakistan, Iraq, Palestine). At the same time, the North African component tends to disappear from the statistics.

These changes were caused essentially by the intensification of departures from Libya, originating in the border areas between Libya and Tunisia but also, using different means, from the border areas between Libya and Egypt. According to investigative sources, several organisations of Libyan and Tunisian origin involved in smuggling exist at present in Libya, with an evident participation of

traffickers from Somalia or Egypt<sup>40</sup>. Significant judicial investigations of these organisations have not yet been carried out, however.

#### 4.2. Internal migrations in Africa, with Libya as transit country

Libya became a destination for illegal migratory flows in the 1970s, attracting people from sub-Saharan Africa. Its desert borders with Niger, Chad and Sudan, with scanty police patrols, are practically uncontrollable, as are its approximately 2,000 kilometres of coastline on the Mediterranean Sea. The present-day estimate of illegal immigrants resident in Libya is of at least 2 million<sup>41</sup>. Information collected by the Finance Police<sup>42</sup> shows that migrants heading for Italy stop off in transit camps 2,000-2,500 kilometres in the middle of the desert, before moving on to Tripoli and then carrying on their journey to the ports of Zliten or Al Zuwara, the areas where boats leave for Sicily.

In sub-Saharan Africa, given the length and complexity of the journeys, it seems that migration to the north in several stages is the very common. In practice the migrant, after an interval of 2-3 months spent working, earns the money necessary to pay for the next stage of the trip and establishes contacts with middle-men in order to continue the journey.

The geography of these migratory flows has had a profound influence on several desert towns. The towns of Tamanrasset and Agades in the Saharan desert, for example, have grown greatly in the last ten years thanks to the arrival of low-cost workers. In particular Agades has become an important transit place for people arriving from the Congo, Cameroon and West Africa heading towards Libya and Egypt. Here, specialist travel agencies (which are absolutely legal) collect up to 100 people at a time for desert crossings by lorry. Dirkou, the last stage before Libya, is another important transit centre. Here too the journeys are carried out using large lorries in convoys of up to 160 people, or more expensively, in minibuses for 25-30 people. Payments to corrupt officials at the border are routine. On arrival in Italy, migrants often speak of their journey across the desert as being the most dangerous part of their odyssey: besides having to face natural dangers, the lorries also have to defend themselves from well-organised groups of bandits. Journeys often end tragically: dozens of abandoned wrecks of lorries have been found in the desert, but there are no existing data regarding the phenomenon<sup>43</sup>.

Italian investigative sources<sup>44</sup> say that Al Zuwara, 56 kilometres from the Tunisian border, is presently the most important base for smuggling across Libya. The statements made by immigrants reported in the files of the Agrigento Court affirm that contacts with Libyan or Tunisian intermediaries take place in certain bars or in the market, and that the journey to Lampedusa costs 1,000-1,300 dollars<sup>45</sup>. Here, as happens on the outskirts of Tripoli, the immigrants from North Africa, the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa are crowded into houses in the countryside for days or weeks, with armed guards to keep them in order, where they await embarkation<sup>45</sup>. After being closed up in these centres sometimes for weeks, the migrants are taken to the coast at night using small buses which have been completely emptied of seats, enabling them to carry up to 50-60

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<sup>40</sup> Interview: *Servizio Centrale Operativo (SCO)*, Central Operational Service of the State Police, 5<sup>th</sup> June 2003.

<sup>41</sup> According to reports by SISMI to the Parliamentary Commission of Control of the Services (Copaco), there are 1 to 1.5 million migrants who are pressing for entry into Europe from Africa; cf. *La Repubblica* newspaper, 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2003. In actual fact, many illegal migrants settle in Libya attracted by jobs there in agriculture or the oil extraction industry. They live in precarious positions, due also to the atmosphere of xenophobia which has given rise in the past to episodes of violence on the part of the local population, and periods of heavy repression of illegal immigration by the Libyan authorities, with mass internment in camps and collective deportations.

<sup>42</sup> Interview: 6<sup>th</sup> October 2003.

<sup>43</sup> A detailed reportage on the land route from West Africa to Libya has been recently published in *Il Corriere della Sera* newspaper: see Fabrizio Gatti, on the 24, 27, 29, 31 December 2003 and 2 January 2004.

<sup>44</sup> Interviews: Finance Police, 6<sup>th</sup> October 2003, and SCO (Central Operational Service), State Police, 5<sup>th</sup> June 2003.

<sup>45</sup> cf. for example the *Giornale di Sicilia* newspaper, 21<sup>st</sup> October 2003.

persons at a time. The passengers are then loaded onto small boats or lifeboats and transferred on fishing boats waiting at anchor, or they are taken directly on board in small ports<sup>46</sup>. After following a stretch of the Tunisian coast, the fishing boats put out to sea, crossing the Sicily channel. In general, migrants do not know the name of the place where they left from. According to newspaper sources, many departures probably originate in Farwa, a small island near the port of Boukameche, 18 kilometres from the border<sup>47</sup>.

### 4.3. The crossing and the crew

The crossings which land on Lampedusa and in the area of Agrigento are single crossings without transfer. Passengers are unloaded on the Italian shore on the island of Lampedusa or in the Agrigento area, and only in a few cases the boats are taken back to base - 90% are in fact abandoned. The risk of shipwreck is very high as the boats sometimes are not even supplied with enough fuel to reach the Italian coast. Their owners rely on the fact that the Italian authorities will tow vessels into port on Lampedusa that they find drifting out at sea<sup>48</sup>. According to the Lampedusa Prosecution Service, in the spring and summer months the most frequent cases involve small boats without professional sailors, which adopt the technique of “rescue at sea”<sup>49</sup>. The boats are “*carrette del mare*” made in north Africa, often without flag and name. In the majority of cases, the skipper and crew claim to be migrants who finance their crossing by sailing the boat. If they are so identified, and caught in the act, they are given a summary trial. However, in nearly all cases, the boats are without documents and their owners are not identified. People of different nationalities have been arrested, especially Libyans, Egyptians, Tunisians and Palestinians. In the period from January 2000-September 2003, all over Sicily the Finance Police arrested 3 Libyan citizens, 11 Liberians, 3 Senegalese, 4 Somalis, and 7 from Sierra Leone<sup>50</sup>.

Independently organised crossings from small ports in Tunisia have also been reported, using very small boats with outboard motors, which often come to tragic ends. According to magistrates, no cases of mother-ships which transfer migrants onto smaller vessels have been reported<sup>51</sup>.

After landing, immigrants are interrogated and taken to centres for identification, often on the mainland. According to investigators, the gangs which organise the journey only sell migrants the service of the crossing as far as the shores of Sicily<sup>52</sup>. It is interesting to note that up to now, no cases have been discovered of traffickers having connections on Italian territory to help with arrivals in Sicily. The investigating authorities also exclude the possibility that Sicilian Mafia families, which are deeply rooted in the areas where landings take place, are in any way involved in the business.

### 4.4. The problems involved in tackling the phenomenon

In 2002 and 2003, when the most serious emergencies arose, special police investigating teams were sent to the island of Lampedusa. However, because of a complete absence of judicial co-operation between the Italian authorities and their counterparts in Libya and Tunisia, investigations have not managed to discover details about organisation levels above the basic level of the crew, even in cases where the crew have collaborated with investigations. Police and magistrates tend to

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<sup>46</sup> cf. for example Criminal Proceedings 1990/2003 of the Agrigento Court.

<sup>47</sup> Bolzoni, Viviano, “My time in the hands of the slave merchants. The odyssey of Abdul the Egyptian”, in *La Repubblica* newspaper, 21<sup>st</sup> June 2003, p.3.

<sup>48</sup> Interview: Finance Police, 6<sup>th</sup> October 2003.

<sup>49</sup> Interview 2: Agrigento Prosecution Service, 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2003.

<sup>50</sup> Besides 35 from Sri Lanka who, however, did not arrive from North Africa.

<sup>51</sup> Interview, Agrigento Prosecution Service, 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2003.

<sup>52</sup> Interview, SCO, 5<sup>th</sup> June 2003.

explain the absence of wide-ranging investigations on the lack of actual organisational networks. Some officials support this hypothesis by stating that no serious organisation would operate taking such risks, given the high incidence of shipwrecks and crossings ending in the deaths of passengers<sup>53</sup>.

Other steps taken recently to improve co-operation between Italy and Libya in the fight against smuggling have had modest results. An agreement was signed between the two countries for joint operations against illegal organisations in July 2003, but still 45 new landings were recorded in the period from August to the 10<sup>th</sup> November 2003, four of which were carrying more than 150 passengers.

## **5. LONG DISTANCE ROUTES: THE TURKEY-ITALY CROSSING**

### **5.1. Organisations working on long distance routes**

Long journeys undertaken by ships loaded with migrants without documents, which leave from eastern Mediterranean ports (in Turkey, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon), or make their entry into the Mediterranean through the Dardanelles (from the Black Sea), the Suez canal (mostly from Sri Lanka) and Gibraltar (from Guinea, for example), make use of a wide landing area in Italy. This includes the lower part of the Adriatic sea, the Ionian sea and the south-eastern coast of Sicily.<sup>54</sup>

Information gathered by the Italian prosecution services<sup>55</sup> on organisations that run these long distance international connections mostly concerns the organisations based in Turkey. It is not possible to make an equally detailed analysis of longer routes because relevant investigative and judicial sources are not available. The most widely known case is still that of the *Yiohan*, a Greek-owned freighter, which was carrying more than four hundred migrants from Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka e Pakistan from the ports of Aden, Alexandria and Damascus. After arriving off the Sicily coast on Christmas night 1996, it collided with the smaller vessel onto which most of the passengers had already been transferred, causing it to sink. Despite the fact that 283 people died in the accident, it has taken years to reconstruct the dynamics of the accident and of the migrants' journey<sup>56</sup>.

Similar landings using "mother-ships" that transfer migrants onto smaller boats keep arriving on the Sicilian coast. Sometimes large ships arrive directly in the ports. According to magistrates, Middle-Eastern migrants and those from the Indian sub-continent are transported to the Syracuse area by ships which are often built in the Ukraine, and which have mixed-nationality crews, mostly Greeks and Lebanese. Arrests of crew members do not appear to have led to wide-scale enquiries. Especially for the crossings which begin in Syria, Libya and Egypt, very little investigative information has been collected.

On the other hand, detailed investigations have been carried out in Calabria and Apulia regarding Turkish flexible organisations but which sometimes work together swapping men and means. They run crossings that leave from Turkish ports and have their natural outlet on the shores of Calabria and Apulia. The Turkish organisations that have brought dozens of ships loaded with immigrants to

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<sup>53</sup> The latest such shocking episode was the retrieval of a boat carrying 17 survivors and 11 dead bodies, all Somalis, in the Sicily channel. Other bodies had been thrown overboard in the three days after the boat broke down. Cf. *La Repubblica* newspaper, 19<sup>th</sup> October 2003.

<sup>54</sup> More exactly from the southern point of Apulia, south of Otranto, to the Sicilian coasts, up to Pozzallo

<sup>55</sup> Three complex inquests have been examined in detail as an example: Criminal Proceedings 4469/01 RGNR, Lecce Court; Criminal Proceedings 4514/2000 RGNR, Crotone Prosecution Service; Criminal Proceedings 3892/2000 RGNR; Reggio Calabria Court. The latter resulted in 54 detention orders being issued.

<sup>56</sup> The case, and the authorities' indifference, are reconstructed in De Zulueta (2000).

these two regions have their bases on the Black Sea, in Istanbul and Smyrna. They have strong connections with international groups that control the arrival of migrants from Kurdistan, as well as links with networks in Bulgaria and Azerbaijan. As for the Albania-Italy route, judicial and police sources can be used to obtain a picture of the way these organisations have been built up and become progressively specialised, as well as the way migratory flows and technical operations have changed, often in response to counter-smuggling measures taken by the authorities. In particular, on the basis of information gathered by Italian investigations from telephone interceptions and the collaboration of some crew members, it is possible to distinguish two different types of organisation in Turkey: single-product and multi-product organisations (Sciortino, 2000).

A) Organisations of the first type are small, flexible groups which run only the sea crossing. They recruit migrants through travel agencies or transport companies which have branches in the place of origin of the migrants. Local sources claim that these businesses have detailed knowledge at any moment of the situation regarding ship departures, and have close ties with the different smuggling organisations which control land and sea routes. Payment to the ship owner is made only when the journey has taken place, after the confirmation of the arrival of the migrants. Passengers have the right to all their money back if they do not reach their destination. If the journey is successful, the fee paid by the client is divided 50/50 between the agencies who recruit the migrants and the organisers of the journey<sup>57</sup>.

B) Multi-trade organisations are more complex and are connected to wide-ranging international networks. These organisations, unlike the former, have contacts in the countries of origin of migrants, who provide personal escorts to different countries if requested. These are organisations which operate on different routes - overland, by air or ship - and plan “mixed” journeys. They can also provide forged documents for use on regular shipping lines or even intercontinental air travel, for example, to Canada<sup>58</sup>. The organisers are sometimes owners of travel agencies with headquarters in Istanbul<sup>59</sup>. Information collected about these organisations shows that they have liquid assets and funds deposited in Swiss banks. They are skilled at corrupting the police and have privileged relationships with the managers of several hotels in Istanbul where migrants stay while waiting for their ship to leave. The “package” offered by these organisations can also include assistance in Italy when immigrants are released from centres for asylum seekers. Payment for the journey is 50% in advance and 50% by money transfer when they arrive.

Both types of organisation charge fees which vary according to the place of origin of the journey. Data available show that the minimum is \$2,000 for a simple crossing from Turkey to Italy, and the maximum is \$5,000 for the complete journey from Afghanistan<sup>60</sup>.

## **5.2 The birth of the Turkish route and its shift towards Calabria**

The transport of hundreds of people in large shiploads through Greek territorial waters became an exclusive prerogative of Turkish organisations at the end of the 1990s.

The first phase consisted of traffickers becoming involved in international joint ventures, taking part in journeys over several stages which originated in other countries. The mixed-crew ships left the Black Sea loaded with mostly Asian migrants (from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka), and stopped off at the port of Istanbul to take on migrants from the Middle East, mainly Kurds<sup>61</sup>. In the same way, ships which had left from ports in Syria or Lebanon stopped out at sea near Turkish ports or off the Turkish coast to take on more passengers, (mainly Kurds), who were “managed” by

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<sup>57</sup> Criminal Proceedings 3892/2000 RGNR, Reggio Calabria Court, Preliminary Investigation Judge’s Office, Ordinance 39 ss.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> cf. Criminal Proceedings, Crotona Prosecution Office.

<sup>60</sup> The IOM (1998) discovered cases of payments of up to \$8,000 from Kurdish areas to different parts of Europe.

<sup>61</sup> The cost was about \$3,000.

Turkish organisations. The loading of passengers in the ports of Egypt, Syria, the Black Sea and Turkey was favoured by a high degree of corruption of the authorities in these places, who had no interest in stopping the phenomenon. The multi-product Turkish organisations probably entered this business as clients.

The second phase saw these organisations beginning to specialise. They obtained vessels through contacts with ship owners, recruited crews, and exploited their solid contacts in Turkish institutions to organise journeys from Turkey using independent routes<sup>62</sup>. The first ships which left directly from Turkey were in good condition, and had previously been used as freighters for trade in the Mediterranean. They were bought or hired in Russia, Bulgaria or Romania (therefore making use of networks of contacts previously developed), and used for several journeys<sup>63</sup>.

The first landing was in the Salento area. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1997 a “*carretta del mare*” loaded with 796 migrants, mostly Kurdish refugees, arrived in the port of Otranto. The passengers had been transferred three hours earlier from a so-called mother-ship, the “Cometa”, onto the rotting boat, which landed in Italy. The landing place was probably chosen by the organisers because they had the opportunity to use the services of reliable Albanian partners, who were already well-established in the networks controlling the flows of ethnic Kurd migrants. In fact, the first landings of this kind had the help of Albanian assistants in transferring the migrants from ships onto old boats, or directly onto their own rubber dinghies<sup>64</sup>.

Following on from the first successful landing operations, the Turkish groups seem to have become better organised and more independent of their foreign partners, both with regard to finding ships and organising landing operations. The crews became wholly Turkish, and the Ionic coast of Calabria was used more and more as the favourite landing place. The coastal area between Crotona and Cirò was probably considered the most favourable because of its low population density and less developed road system which meant that controls could not be carried out as carefully as in the Apulia area<sup>65</sup>.

On the Ionic coast of Calabria, landings of migrants from the Middle East (mostly Iraqis and Kurds from Turkey), began on a large scale in 1999, the year in which one of the largest refugee centres in Europe was set up - the “Sant’Anna” centre in Crotona. In many cases the passengers were secretly crowded onto old fishing boats and then transferred onto *carrette* out at sea. They were then landed on isolated beaches, sometimes by means of gangplanks. It was difficult for them to pass unnoticed. According to investigators, after being identified the migrants continued their journey independently, using contacts already set up before leaving. They followed different routes and used different networks depending on their place of origin. Kurdish organisations had a network of centres in Milan and Rome where they could seek assistance, depending on whether they came from Turkey or Iraq<sup>66</sup>. Investigations found that Italy was almost entirely a transit country: the preferred destinations were Germany, the United Kingdom, Holland, Switzerland and France.

### 5.3. The organisation of the journeys

In 2000, investigations carried out in Crotona and Reggio Calabria which led to the arrest of dozens of traffickers (between 2000 and 2003 the Finance Police alone arrested 14 Turkish citizens in Apulia and 52 in Calabria) and the identification of at least four different organisations, shed light

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<sup>62</sup> It seems that corruption in the Turkish police, who did nothing to stop the ships leaving, was widespread especially during the first stage, when ships left directly from the port of Istanbul.

<sup>63</sup> It seems that the people responsible for finding ships would frequently alternate, and some ship owners would hire their ships to other organisations that used them several times on the same route.

<sup>64</sup> Interview: Lecce Police Headquarters, 30<sup>th</sup> June 2003.

<sup>65</sup> In the south of Apulia, however, large-scale landings still took place: two in 1998, two in 2000, one in 2001 and one in 2002 (the last two at Gallipoli).

<sup>66</sup> Interview: SCO (Central Operational Service), State Police, 5<sup>th</sup> June 2003.

on the various stages of the journey. Firstly, the way that passengers were collected together in hotels, houses and warehouses around Istanbul and other ports of loading (mainly Antalya, Cannakale, Bodrum and Smyrna), was clarified. Italian investigations found the same mechanisms used to collect migrants as described in detail in studies of illegal immigration carried out in Turkey (cf. IOM 2003, Narli, 2003). These recent studies show five main specialists who run the business. Firstly there is a cashier, a person who can be relied on by both parties (migrants and traffickers), who receives about \$100 for the work and pays over the migrant's money to the traffickers following the receipt of a coded signal as soon as the journey has been completed. Then there are different kinds of middle-men who - at different stages of the journey - take delivery of the migrants and help them to get over the land borders to Turkey. Next there are the local drivers who wait for the migrants with trucks in Turkish territory and take them to a town in the west of the country. Usually there is an intermediary who takes charge of the migrants and arranges their stay in Turkey, as well as making contacts to organise the continuation of their journey. For reasons of trust, the intermediary always belongs to the same ethnic group as the migrant. His job is to organise homogeneous groups according to itinerary and destination. In Istanbul, there are about 100-150 intermediaries in this role, who earn an average of \$800-\$1,000 per migrant. If not agreed otherwise, the migrant has to pay a ship owner or organiser for the rest of the journey by sea or overland, depending on the itinerary chosen. According to IOM (2003) there are at least 40 organisations involved in bringing migrants to Europe by land, sea or air. They are described as small, flexible organisations without hierarchical structures or long-lasting relationships; the smuggling networks seem to come together at different times when appropriate. The existence of different interchangeable figures and the lack of hierarchies leads to a highly fragmented market which allows it to avoid potential problems caused by interception and the consequent interruption of some crossings (IOM, 2003: 49).

From records of trials in Italy, it can be deduced that for the first journeys, embarkation took place directly in Turkish ports. Later, following increasing diplomatic pressure on the Turkish authorities and the resulting increase in controls, the operations were carried out with more discretion, away from the coast. Once on board ship, the migrants were effectively treated like goods. They were divided up according to sex and ethnic group and locked in the hold of the ship. Food and water, often in insufficient quantities, were distributed through small holes. Conditions of hygiene and lack of space created conditions of terrible hardship for the passengers, and favoured the spread of disease. In Crotona, cases of sexual abuse of women migrants were also found. Some of the migrants had signs of recent surgery, which leads one to think that the practice of selling organs to pay for the journey took place<sup>67</sup>.

The migrants were abandoned once they had landed and left to undergo controls by the Italian authorities, whilst the organisation guaranteed the return trip for crew members. The same people on the ground in Italy who gave indications for the safest landing place (sometimes using radar equipment), helped the all-Turkish crew after landing. In general there were 4-8 crew members, depending on the size of the vessel and the number of passengers<sup>68</sup>. There were usually two helmsmen working alternate shifts, a mechanic for the engine room, a cook, a cabin-boy and a person to serve meals. A member of the group which organised the crossing was always present to check on the course of the journey. The crew was engaged for the single journey on small wages; they were recruited among the kind of people who usually haunt port areas. The captain and his second mate could be engaged for a single journey, or they could be part of the smuggling organisation. After landing in Italy the usual practice was to take the crew to the nearest railway station and put them on a train to Ventimiglia, where Turkish intermediaries who run hotels there took charge of them. They then entered France using forged documents and returned to Istanbul from Germany by air.

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<sup>67</sup> Information from confidential source.

<sup>68</sup> The maximum number was 11, arrested on a ship which landed in Calabria.

Partly because of the “losses” caused by the arrest of many crew members, organisations began using so-called “disposable” ships: they are large ships flying Turkish, Liberian, Greek or Caribbean island flags sometimes used without even the most basic navigational instruments but sailed by very skilful crews. Destined to be confiscated by the authorities, they have recently had their names changed and are making their last voyage<sup>69</sup>. Once they arrive in territorial waters they are abandoned by their crew, who make their getaway on fast boats after damaging the equipment and sending out an SOS. The ships are then rescued at great risk by the Italian authorities, often in terrible weather and sea conditions. In this way the smuggling organisations reduce costs, as they do not have to transfer passengers in international waters and they avoid the risk of arrest of the crew.

Information about back-up in Italy is scarce. At the beginning, it seems that trusted people were sent from Turkey to find vessels suitable to pick up refugees out at sea<sup>70</sup>, but more recently Turkish nationals resident in Italy, occupying “strategic” positions, have been approached<sup>71</sup>. For example, an interpreter for the refugee camps in Calabria (Badolato, Lamezia and Crotona), and a second fellow-countryman who was an interpreter for the courts, were approached and recruited by the organisation to try to get back a ship which had been confiscated. In this case contact was made directly by phone by the head of the organisation in Turkey. However, the choice of partners in Italy does not always seem to be made carefully, and in some cases judicial acts show little trustworthiness among the criminals involved. It is significant that in one case, the person who was given the money to pay the costs of the trial and the lawyers for some people who had been arrested kept the money for himself.

Although some experts believe that Turkish organisations have entered into agreements with Calabrian organised crime syndicates<sup>72</sup>, and many experts believe there is a link between drug traffickers and people traffickers, no precise evidence has been discovered of business relations between Calabrian organised crime (in particular the *'ndrangheta*) and the Turkish organisations in question. The investigative authorities who have reconstructed the organisational chart of the groups of smugglers have found that violence and arms are used, they have a strong capacity for intimidation, and a system of retaliation and vendetta exists for those who betray the group. However, we should underline that up to the present day, no Turkish people traffickers have ever been charged with other offences relating to trafficking in drugs or other illegal markets in Italy<sup>73</sup>. Neither have any connections been discovered between criminal organisations involved in people smuggling and those operating in other illegal markets in Turkey. In particular, according to a study by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM, 2003) the possibilities that people smuggling is linked to arms or drug smuggling are scarce. At the same time, the study recognises the adaptability of the Turkish groups, which are skilled in changing routes and using the most up-to-date communications technology, although it excludes the possibility that they are a branch of structured and centrally organised crime.

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<sup>69</sup> The port in Crotona became the final destination of 33 ships made of iron and wood, used for transporting passengers, between 1997 and 24<sup>th</sup> January 2002. Keeping and eventually destroying these hulks creates problems for the port authorities.

<sup>70</sup> Criminal Proceedings 3892/2000 RGNR, Reggio Calabria Court, Preliminary Investigation Judge's Office, Ordinance: p. 32 on.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., Ordinance: 26

<sup>72</sup> Interview with a Senator who has particular expertise in this area, 28<sup>th</sup> May 2003. Also Ciconte (2003: 160) hypothesises that Calabrian clans allow the Turks to land in return for similar favours regarding drugs, given the strong pre-existing exchange relations between *'ndrangheta* groups and Turkish drug traffickers.

<sup>73</sup> According to statements made by a collaborator, an organisation exists which takes advantage of the journey for the transport of heroin. Cf. Prosecution Service of the Crotona Court, proceedings no. 4514/2000 RG crime data.

#### **5.4. The contraction of the flow along the Turkish route**

The thorough investigations carried out in Apulia and Calabria have certainly contributed to the reduction of the flow of traffic along the long-distance route which, originating in Turkey particularly for the transport of Kurdish refugees at the end of the 1990s, extended to include migrants of different nationalities. The strong contraction of this flow, which can also be seen from statistical data on landings in Apulia and Calabria (see Table 4), was helped by the actions of the Turkish government, which in recent years has put into practice policies to tackle illegal migration from and across Turkey (cf. IOM 2003; Narli, 2003).

The effects of the new policies are visible especially in the field of illegal immigration into Turkey. Since 1979, with the change in regime in Iran, Turkey had in fact become more and more the place which attracted migrants, and became a transit country for the different migratory flows arising from conflicts in the Middle East and the Caucasus<sup>74</sup>. It became one of the main transit points for migrants travelling towards the Schengen area, especially for a large part of the asylum seekers from Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq. In more recent years, other lesser flows have joined from Palestine and African countries, such as Ethiopia, Ghana, Gambia, Nigeria and Senegal, and even from some Asian countries like the Philippines. Recently, however, following the repressive policies against migration put into practice by the Turkish government, there has been a drastic reduction in the number of arrivals, especially from the areas of Anatolia and Mesopotamia, but also from Africa (Narli, 2003). The Turkish state has taken more drastic actions to tackle the phenomenon by increasing sentences for traffickers and adopting strong measures against those who employ illegal immigrants, and has applied the laws more stringently. According to local officials, this strategy has already had the effect of moving smuggling routes from Iran and Iraq towards the north (Iran-Caucasus-Ukraine) and the south (Iraq-Syria-Lebanon), thus avoiding Turkey.

The maritime routes have been progressively reduced: between 1998 and September 2001, 45 ships were stopped after they had set sail from the Turkish coast, with a total of 12,903 migrants heading for Italy and 2,487 heading for Greece (IOM 2003: 52). The number of traffickers arrested has also increased greatly: from 98 in 1998, to 187 in 1999 and 850 in 2000. In 2001, 1,155 people were arrested, evidence of a further increase in controls by the authorities to deal with the phenomenon (IOM 2003: 8).

## **6. CONCLUSION: THE MEDITERRANEAN AS AN INTEGRATED SPACE FOR MIGRANT SMUGGLING**

In the previous pages the analysis of investigative and judicial sources has shown some of the dynamics which have determined the progressive shift in the main landing places on Italian shores towards the west. The shift in the centre of gravity of entry by sea from the coast of Apulia to the coast of Calabria, and finally Sicily, has been related to changes occurring in the organisation of the constellations of traffickers. It has been seen that changes are sometimes linked to important changes in criminal businesses in certain areas, as in the case of Albania, and sometimes precise actions on the part of authorities to prevent and counter smuggling have reduced the importance of some of routes. The meeting of demand (caused by migratory emergencies) and supply (the specialisation of the groups involved) happens in a variable institutional context which gradually has an effect on costs and the techniques and technology used. The cost of the journey for criminal organisations depends on the variation in the degree of control in the emigrant countries (which

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<sup>74</sup> It is estimated, for example, that more than one million Iraqis, mostly ethnic Kurds, have entered Turkey since 1998 (Narli, 2003). At a general level it has been calculated that at least 270,000 migrants entered Turkey in 2000: some of them to stay and ask for asylum, others to continue on their journey (IOM, 2003: 12).

affects the cost of corruption), and the variation in forms of systems of control and reception in areas where migrants arrive (which affects the possibility of success of the migration), as well as the distance and complexity of the route.

### *The strengthening of controls*

If we look at the complete evolution of the scenario, we can see that the shortest crossing routes have been progressively subject to more and more stringent controls. The strengthening of the Italian co-operation - including judicial co-operation - with Albania and Malta has had the effect of increasing risks, and therefore costs, for smuggling organisations. On some of the long distance routes the most effective actions for prevention and control have been ones involving diplomatic agreements and extradition treaties, which have brought about direct intervention and greater controls on the part of some countries (Tunisia, Egypt). We have seen that there has been a dramatic fall in arrivals from seas outside the Mediterranean; the chance of passing through the Suez Canal and the Straits of Gibraltar appears very slim these days. In some cases flows of migrants have been notably reduced when the countries of origin have started to intervene by stopping ships from leaving and, probably, reducing internal corruption (Albania, Turkey and, to a lesser extent, Tunisia). In the case of Albania and Turkey, their recent willingness to re-examine and strengthen their policies of control of migration is certainly connected to internal factors, as well as a policy of opening out internationally and increasing relations with their European partners. Institutional repression and the continual reduction in tolerance of traffickers which has been recorded in Albania are certainly related to a change in the phase of Albanian emigration and the end of the huge uncontrolled exodus which characterised a large part of the last decade of the twentieth century.

### *The emergence of Libya as a transit country*

Looking at the present situation, it seems that the functional specialisation in the field of illegal maritime crossings from Libya has been caused by structural changes in the market occurring at a higher level, on a Mediterranean scale. It has been seen that the recruitment basin of the migrants who arrive in Sicily from North Africa has widened due to wars and political instability, and has its origin in Iraq, Palestine, the Horn of Africa and Liberia. Part of the flow which previously arrived through the Suez Canal now comes through the Sicily channel, and the growing difficulties involved in passing through the Straits of Gibraltar have contributed to an increase in the flow from Libya. The constant adaptation of migratory flows to the availability of opportunities and crossable routes is evident; in Libya, the specialisation of the organisations which control sea crossings has created the opportunity for a widening of the range of nationalities transported.

The evolutionary course which we have traced leads us to a consideration of the comprehensive dynamics of the phenomenon, and the organisations involved in smuggling.

Firstly, the Mediterranean emerges as an integrated space for the illegal transport of migrants by sea. The space for migration by sea has in fact its own systemic dimensions, shaped by three interdependent variables: the policies carried out by the authorities, the actions of the smuggling organisations and migratory pressures. As regards policy, we are seeing a policy transfer whereby counter-strategies are tending to expand on the geographical chessboard. There has been a progressive growth in the measures taken to prevent and tackle smuggling on all routes. This growth has occurred in Italy and in the countries of origin of the migratory flows, which have been subject to increasing pressure to put into action restrictive policies and effective controls.

### *Evolutionary stages of the illegal organisations*

For the smuggling organisations, three distinct evolutionary phases can be distinguished. The first phase is characterised by the growth in their *professionalisation*, which signals the passage from casual and occasional organisation of crossings to the establishment of new routes. The importance of joining up with more structured organisations for these fledgling organisations has been found, for example, in the importance of contacts with Chinese and Turkish traffickers for the groups in Valona, and with agencies and organisations that recruit migrants in their countries of origin for the groups which organise the sea crossings from Turkey. A second phase in the life of the organisations begins with the *articulation of new techniques* in response to the increase in risk caused by the intensification of actions to counter smuggling. One sign of this is the adoption of new techniques of embarkation (in more hidden places) and landing (with the abandonment of the ship, without crew, or the unloading of migrants off-shore). The last evolutionary phase is marked by the withdrawal of the route and the process of skill transfer to other geographical areas. When costs become too high for the organisations, there is a geographical movement of the route. They identify the weakest link in the chain of control policies and physically move the places of embarkation and of landing in other parts of Italy. The process then gives rise to the building up of other organisations which can become independent but which still form part of complex networks.

The identification of an single evolutionary scheme allows us to formulate several hypotheses regarding the dynamics involved. In particular, it gives us a better understanding of the emerging role of Libya. In this country, which is a transit and stopping-off point, not a place of origin of migration (the Libyan component is irrelevant to the flow of migration), the “technical” skills relating to maritime passages have been developed only recently, in response to international traffickers seeking new outlets. The organisation of large landings which leave from Libya, with techniques analogous to those already used by Turkish traffickers, shows that the skills developed during the building up of other Mediterranean routes have not been lost - a process of skill transfer has undoubtedly taken place. The composition of the migratory flows which are transported also indicates that the impulse towards continuous, well-structured crossings probably originates in Libya from the meeting between Tunisian, Egyptian and Turkish traffickers and Libyan intermediaries. The subsequent joining up with other potentially trans-national African organisations, for example the Somali networks, has allowed the widening of the range of nationalities of migrants transported, and their consequent increase in numbers.

In conclusion, the study of landings in southern Italy has shown the existence of extremely flexible organisational structures, similar in structure to those found in other studies of people smuggling. Strong integrated ties with organised crime have not been recorded, except in the case of the Otranto channel. All the organisations operate on a short time-scale, responding to changing problems with flexible solutions. The traffickers are themselves aware of moving on unstable territory and in a situation of continuous change. As one Turkish trafficker observed, “we work as much as possible, knowing full well that our activities can be stopped from one moment to the next”<sup>75</sup>. The alternation of landing areas, and their progressive shift towards the west, are only in part attributable to changes in the composition of the flows of migrants from different places. The picture which has emerged during the research leads to the hypothesis that, for every route, the subsequent expansion after its foundation is due to the building up of networks by the organisations involved in transporting migrants on an international scale. It is the efforts made by illegal organisations and the actions carried out to counter them which determine the “making” of the landings.

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<sup>75</sup> Interview by P. Rumiz, “I, slave-merchant, give a future to illegal immigrants”, in *La Repubblica* newspaper, 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2003, p.1 and p.13.

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