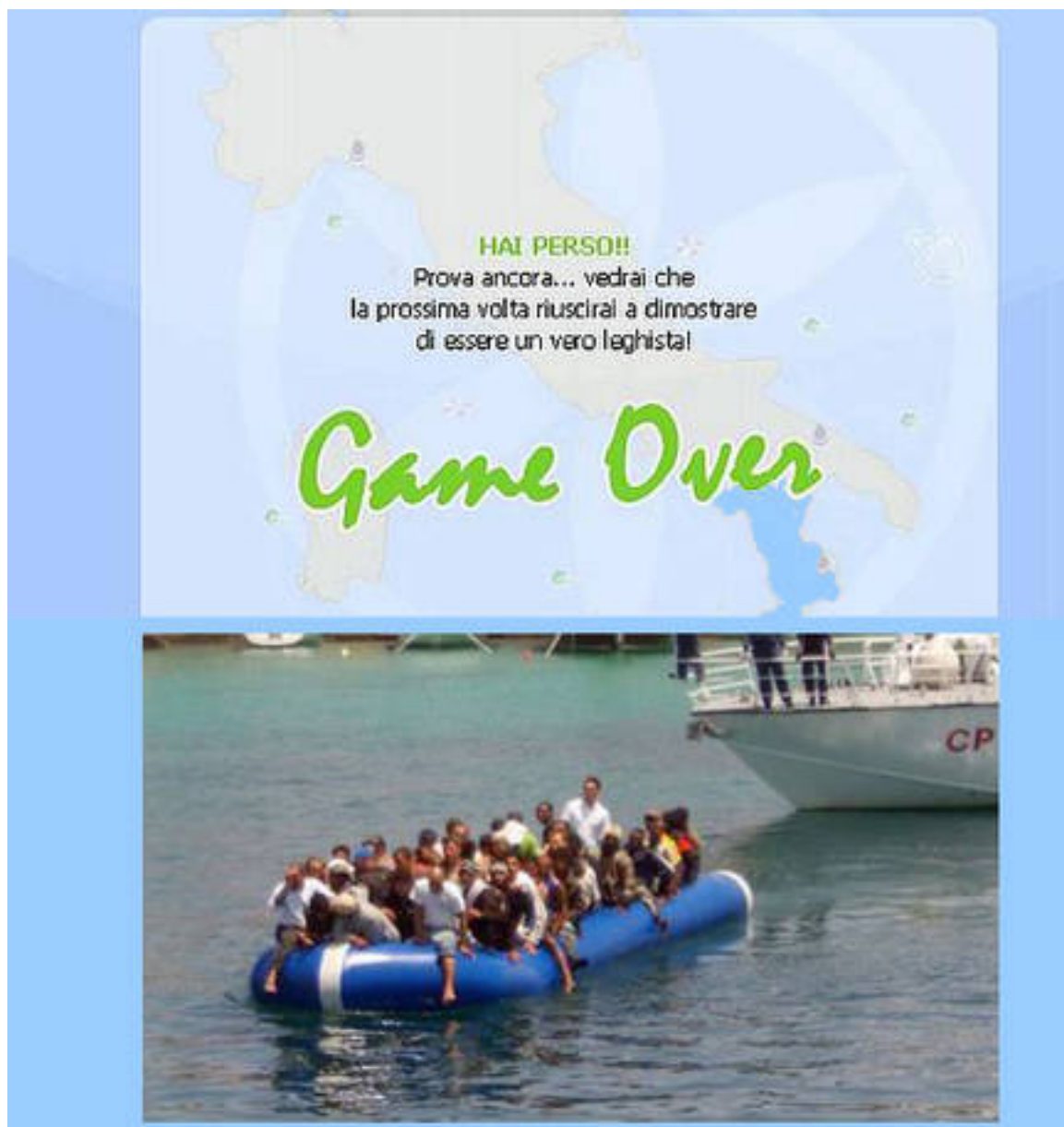


“Bounce the Illegal Immigrant”. The Lega Nord’s Discriminatory Propaganda Becomes a Game on Facebook

Marina Melchionda (August 24, 2009)



The game “Rimbalza il clandestino” (Bounce the illegal immigrant) has been published on Italy's Northern League's Facebook page. Its aim is to mouse-click on boatloads of immigrants approaching the Italian coast and make them disappear. It has now been canceled by the portal's administrators,



but...

If you write "Lega Nord" in the research bar of Facebook, you will come up with 260 results. Besides the official page of the Northern political party, you will find supporting groups founded by students, organizations, and even religious groups! [The official Lega Nord page](#) [2] has more than 25.000 supporters, many of which promptly participated in playing the game "Rimbalza il clandestino" (Bounce the Illegal Immigrant) - a game in which the player had to mouse-click on boatloads of immigrants approaching the Italian coast, in order to make them disappear. The game was launched on both the official website and the Facebook page of the party just after the terrible tragedy of the 75 Libyan immigrants who died off the coast of Lampedusa on their way to Italy. It was introduced by a very short and clear phrase: "The aim of the game is to maintain control of the number of immigrants that invade Italy".

If the player pushed back enough boats, he was promoted to the next level, and was proclaimed "great padano". On the contrary, if he was not fast enough and allowed too many immigrants to board the Italian costs, a script would appear: "Try again. You will see, the next

time you will be able to prove you are a good Lega supporter".

Denounced by [ARCI](#) [3], the Associazione Nazionale di Promozione Sociale (National Association for Social Promotion), the game was closed by Facebook's administrators on August 23.

"In the face of what's happening in the Channel of Sicily where boats sink and people die for real, the fact that the Lega Nord (the party that has more influence than any other on the government's policies concerning immigration) cynically and without any form of respect for human life jokes about the disappearance of these boats must be considered an incitement to racial hate", explained ARCI's president Filippo Miraglia.

Umberto Bossi's son, Renzo, just 21, and his friend Fabio Betti, 23, member of the political group "[Giovani Padani](#) [4]" created the application. While the former is the web manager of the Lega Nord's official website, the latter is nicknamed "the Facebook man", the guy who updates the official page of the party on Facebook with links, news, articles...and games.

Renzo Bossi is truly his father's pride and joy, and his father defended him by stating during a party organized by Lega Nord: "It was not my son who invented the game. This summer he was in France, to take his little brother to Euro Disney. When my son heard about the scandal, he wanted to denounce those who sullied his name and mine but I told him: 'Justice in Italy is very poor (said the Minister of Institutional Reforms). Leave them alone, they would be acquitted".

Many of the supporters of Lega Nord enthusiastically played the game on Facebook (and we wonder if THIS is the scandal!), but fortunately, three groups were also created by those "disturbed" by the initiative, who invited Facebook users to share their disgust and disdain. On Friday, the first group "[Delete the Leghist game](#) [5]" had more than 4.700 subscribers in just a couple of hours (and is still growing). Aside from the explicit comments against Renzo Bossi, many subscribers denounced those who downloaded the game and "shared" it on their Facebook page. "They are overstepping the limit of decency", "This initiative is ignoble", "The game is the symbol of their ignorance", some of them said. One of the users also proposed: "Let's start denouncing Lega supporters for their own crimes: violation of the Constitution, inciting to racial hate, crimes against humanity".

Obviously, the representatives of the main leftist-oriented Italian political parties released their own declaration of disdain in no time at all. Massimo Donadi, representative of Italia dei

Valori said: "Lega Nord should apologize before the whole nation and our immigrants as well" while Dario Franceschini, leader of Partito Democratico, defined the government as "xenophobe and racist". The group leader of Udc in the Senate, Giampiero D'Alia, urged the "intervention of judiciary



authorities and the Interior Department”. Finally Giuseppe Fioroni of Partito Democratico defined “Rimbalza il clandestino” as the “transformation of human sufferings in a game”.

The case also attracted the curiosity of Italian and foreign media. Those who more actively denounced the fact were with no doubts at all the so called “left-oriented newspapers”, such as La Repubblica and La Stampa. The Spanish daily newspaper El Mundo also dedicated a column to the game: “Italian Lega Nord plays at sinking rafts loaded with immigrants”. On the other side, it is almost needless to say, neither RAI, the National Italian Broadcasting System, and Mediaset, the media group owned by the Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, mentioned the episode.

Protests were often not only verbal, but were also followed by concrete initiatives. As an example, the director of the website “[Articoli 21](#) [6]” Stefano Corradino, in a sign of protest, invented the game “Bounce the immature one” (the immature one being Bossi’s son),

downloadable from the magazine’s website. Here is what he satirically said [in his editorial](#) [7] about Renzo Bossi and his game “He could promote a more sophisticated game. However, since he finally passed his high school “maturity” exam, after having failed it three times, I am sure that next time he will not delude us. The Encyclopedia Treccani defines maturity as an ‘advanced level of social and civil development’. But...Does Renzo fit this definition?” [7]

In any case we must point out, unfortunately, that reactions to the game among the population were not always negative. “Rimbalza il clandestino”, indeed, soon became the source of a wider debate in Italy, involving both citizens of the North and the South of the country. When an article on the issue appeared on the website “[Clandestinoweb](#) [8]”, comments to the initiative came as hard and fast as rain and showed how discrimination has grown widely in the country, also involving those who do not traditionally support the Lega party.

Scrolling down the webpage, we could read the comments of people defining immigrants as the “trash of humanity”, “dirty clandestines”, “invaders”. One of the readers, as an example, wrote: “The best immigrant is the one who is buried 4 meters underground”. Another one wrote: “Leftist prissiness disgusts me. I guess they never invited an immigrant for to their home. After having them in your living room, you should call the public hygiene services and ask them to eliminate their terrible smell from your furniture”. Finally, a fervent nationalist said “Don’t even dare to compare that trash to our emigrants of the past. We went away to give our contribution to the well-being of our new country. They are coming here to invade and destroy”.

It’s easy to see how simple and coarse the tone of their language is. It is the same linguistic style used by Lega representatives, a trick they have employed to reach a wider (uneducated/less literate) public in the past elections and “conquer” a new electorate with “hot issues” such as national security and immigration. Obviously, in fact, this is not their first initiative of this kind. The history of the political party’s propaganda is full of cases like the one mentioned above. Let’s just briefly mention the posters affixed throughout Italy during the last political elections : they showed a Native American and the script “They were subject to immigration. Now they live in reservations”.

Even now that the game has been canceled from Facebook, Fabio Betti (maybe unconsciously) confirms his party’s populist strategy by defending his and Renzo’s invention: “Facebook is a tool to reach a very wide audience. With these kind of games people can easily understand our principles and beliefs”, [he stated](#) [9].

Today the link to “Rimbalza il clandestino” has officially “expired”. We just have to figure out to which extent the game is really over and which is the real scandal, to invent the game or to play it?



Source URL: <http://iitaly.org/magazine/focus/facts-stories/article/bounce-illegal-immigrant-lega-nords-discriminatory-propaganda>

Links

- [1] <http://iitaly.org/files/rimbalzaclan1251136110jpg>
- [2] <http://www.facebook.com/search/?q=lega+nord&init=quick#/pages/Lega-Nord/36229958420?ref=search&sid=1609361631.1200225097..1>
- [3] <http://www.arci.it>
- [4] <http://www.giovanipadani.leganord.org>
- [5] <http://www.facebook.com/search/?q=gioco+leghista&init=quick#/group.php?gid=143991190085&ref=search&sid=1609361631.52823266..1>
- [6] <http://www.articolo21.info>
- [7] <http://www.articolo21.info/8851/notizia/giocate-a-rimbalza-il-clandestino.html>
- [8] <http://www.clandestinoweb.com/number-news/18382-dalla-lega-il-gioco-rimbalza-il-clandestino-art.21-lancia-rimbalza-limmaturato-renzo.html>
- [9] <http://www.repubblica.it/2009/08/sezioni/cronaca/immigrati-10/gioco-chiuso/gioco-chiuso.html>