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Catholic Italy and Post-Colonial Africa: the New Subjects of an Informal Commitment in the 1960s

Paolo Borruso

Vatican II, Italy and the “new Africa”

- ¹ This paper focuses on an important aspect of Italy’s relations with Africa. In the early 1960s, the independence process in Africa posed new challenges to Italian foreign policy and also favored non-institutional actors who provided renewed momentum to the Vatican and a growing presence throughout the continent. Both traditional missions and the Catholic laity showed their commitment, and they worked together or individually, with different or shared inspirations and objectives. As the seat of the papacy, Italy as a “Catholic nation” has its own specificity and a noticeable presence of Catholicism throughout society.
- Vatican II was opened by Pope John XXIII in Rome on 11 October 1962. Immediately it was clear that it would have international as well as religious and ecclesiastical significance.¹ Its convocation, and the radio message sent by the pope to the opposing powers, helped settle the Cuban Missile Crisis, which threatened to undo the recent detente and possibly trigger a nuclear war. The international situation was marked not only by the Cold War but also by decolonization, which began in Africa in 1956 with the independence of Morocco, Tunisia and Sudan, which was followed by that of Ghana in 1957 and that of eighteen other countries in 1960, the “year of Africa.” In July 1962 the long war of independence in Algeria, which began in November 1954, finally came to an end.
- The presence of African ecclesiastical figures in Rome was something totally new. The media covered them not only as a visible group, albeit a minority one, but also because they represented a new force arising from the ashes of European colonialism. “New Africa” was represented by a significant number of attendees. The meeting on

23 October was attended by 2,381 churchmen; 273 came from Africa. Many were Europeans, but there also were 77 African natives, 67 Latin American bishops and ten Copts. Eleven percent of the participants represented a continent whose Catholic population accounted for 4.6 percent of the world's Catholics. Only thirteen of them, including seven African natives, became members of council commissions (seven were elected and six appointed by the pope) compared to 132 European members. Although the majority of the African bishops were Europeans, 61 were black, coming from 24 countries. Among the most authoritative were Zairean Joseph-Albert Malula, subsequently elected to the Liturgical Commission; Belgian Jan van Cauwelaert, vicar in the Democratic Republic of Congo since 1954; Dutchman Joseph Blomjous, bishop of Mwanza in Tanzania; South African Denis Hurley, archbishop of Durban; South African Emmanuel Mabathoana, a grandson of the founder of the "Basotho nation" (the former name for Lesotho) and expert on Bantu philosophy; and the Tanzanian Laurean Rugambwa, who in 1960 became the first African to be appointed cardinal.²

- 4 At the council, which was continued by Pope Paul VI after John XXIII's death in June 1963, the African bishops discussed issues related to independence. Jean Zoa, archbishop of Yaounde (Cameroon) since 1961, highlighted the value of human dignity.³ This subject was promoted by other prelates too, such as Malula and the Mozambican Sebastião Soares de Resende, bishop of Beira, who spoke about racial discrimination and ethnic clashes, and the need for women's dignity and social justice.⁴ Other members, such as Paul Zoungrana, archbishop of Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso), tackled the issues of economic, social and political development.⁵ Without hiding the complexity of the different issues and the difficulties of intervention in such different contexts, they hoped to be able to keep a balance and that the increasing role of the Church might help preventing recourse to violence. With regard to South Africa, Hurley's address in October 1965 did not rule out conflicts with civil authorities for the defense of rights and religious freedom.⁶
- 5 The council revealed a new, global Church, and the African episcopate's high expectations were overt.⁷ In October 1964 Paul VI canonized twenty Catholic martyrs from Uganda. This was a noteworthy event in a context marked by difficulties encountered by missionaries in independent Africa. It was the dawn of an era for missionaries, who faced new political situations arising from the ashes of colonialism but also inescapable problems. During the 1960s, the missionary presence and the future of African Christians were affected by violence and persecution.⁸ Missionaries' challenges, addressed for the first time in a council, were reflected in the decree *Ad Gentes*, issued on 7 December 1965, when the Second Vatican Council was about to end, and significantly promoted by the African bishops.⁹ Taking inspiration from the basic contents of the twentieth-century encyclicals *Maximum illud*, *Rerum Ecclesiae*, *Evangelii Praecones*, *Fidei Donum* and *Princeps Pastorum*, the document restates that the "missionary nature" is an essential dimension of the Church. It also provides a new vision and perspective of missionary activity. The Church eliminated its overriding identification with "European civilization," driven by its desire to maintain dialogue with native cultures, and it set evangelization as the primary goal of missionary activity.¹⁰ Based on this document, Pietro Rossano noted that the reflection on the relations between African culture and the Gospel was still in its initial stages and that innovations would result from the proclamation of the Gospel.¹¹ In the 1980s, the Cameroonian Jesuit Engelbert Mveng, who was murdered by an unknown assailant in 1995, stressed the importance of the openness of African cultures to receive the Gospel

message. Highlighting the traditional connection between the Holy Scriptures and Africa from the story of Moses, he saw the proclamation of the Gospel as the fulfillment of Africa's deepest aspirations.¹² The decree also recalls the theme of laymen's apostolate, already addressed in the *Apostolicam Actuositatem* of 18 November 1965, and opens new paths of missionary commitment beyond traditional religious congregations.¹³ These positions marked a significant change for the "new Africa."

- 6 The council had a significant impact on Italy in its dimension as Catholic nation and home to the papacy.¹⁴ This dimension went beyond state-church relations; it was a cross-cutting issue for those components of civil society open to listening to the council's message. After the last trace of Italy's colonial legacy, Somalia, was removed in 1960 and the ruling political class began to deal with more global processes, such as African decolonization, Italian Catholics showed renewed enthusiasm towards Africa¹⁵. With regard to foreign affairs, there was increasing attention to the processes of independence, such as in Algeria (1962) and to the Congolese crisis in 1961, with the massacre of Kindu, where thirteen Italian airmen working for the United Nations were killed.¹⁶ It is especially important to recall in this context the activity of the Christian Democrat Mario Pedini, who put all his efforts in the 1960s toward the foundation of the European African Association, provided for by the Treaties of Rome in 1957.¹⁷ The events concerning new Africa were also reflected in several Catholic journals, especially due to the role played by leading members of the Church including the archbishop of Algiers, Leon-Etienne Duval, who promoted a model of multiracial and multireligious coexistence for Algerian independence and overtly denounced the use of torture by French authorities.¹⁸ Scholars such as Ettore Passerin d'Entreves analyzed the Algerian question.¹⁹

Missionary networks: between renewal and challenges

- 7 The new sensitivity of the council primarily concerned missionaries in the context of decolonization.²⁰ The first efforts focused on what in the 1960s came to be called emerging countries (EC). The most emblematic case was that of the Combonian Missionaries of the Heart of Jesus, heirs of Daniel Comboni, who were entirely devoted to Africa. The council represented a turning point in the Combonians' commitment in the different African regions where they were present. This was reflected by the magazine *Nigrizia*, which reported on events including the increase in the number of African episcopates. In May 1960, attention focused on the tragedy of apartheid in South Africa and on the massacre carried out by local policemen against black demonstrators in Sharpeville.²¹ The magazine also gave room to influential scholars, who analyzed specific contexts or movements concerning the fight for independence, such as the Africanist historian Teobaldo Filesi, who recalled the developments of Pan-Africanism and revealed the basic contradiction between unattainable hopes and historical situations.²² In October 1961 the Combonians organized a conference in Venice called "Africa and contemporary civilization," which was attended by artists and scholars from Africa, Asia and the West. At the meeting, Africa was analyzed from a perspective of equality.²³ Between 1962 and 1965, *Nigrizia* became a key Catholic observatory of African "rebirth" in the context of the council; the publication saw the council as a marking an era of new communication between Christianity and African cultures, in terms of culture and values.²⁴

- 8 After the council there was increasing interest in the creation of a “black” theology arising from a new idea of Africanness. The study of African cultures, in the perspective of a dialogue with Christianity, was fostered by the Combonian missionaries, as is clear from the attention paid by a young Franciscan, the Congolese François Marie Lufuluabo, to the meeting of Christianity and Bantu culture.²⁵ The key issue concerned a new conception of the presence of the Church in post-colonial Africa in terms of cooperation with national governments, despite ideological pressures such as nationalism or socialism.²⁶ The Combonians’ remarks and interests seemed to go beyond traditional missionary issues, although they felt the need to review the methods of evangelization and of missionaries’ role. One of the issues was to face underdevelopment and support efforts to reduce the gap between Africa and Europe, renewing the perspective opened by the Treaties of Rome in 1957 with the European African Association.²⁷ In the opinion of Louis-Paul Aujoulat, known for his medical commitment in Africa and for being the founder of *Ad Lucem*, health and medical care remained areas influenced by Christianity.²⁸ Among the subjects studied by Africanists were changes in the structure of African societies such as the institution of the family, affected by modernization resulting from development, and polygamy, challenged by women’s growing emancipation with independence.²⁹
- 9 The Xaverian Brothers also considered the Second Vatican Council to be an occasion to discuss the role of missions in a deeply changing historical context and in the perspective of “Christianization of cultures.”³⁰ Operating in Congo and Sierra Leone, the Xaverians are particularly attentive on taking roots in the areas targeted by missionaries, especially at the cultural and religious level.³¹ Along with other missionary organizations, they participated in weeklong meetings devoted to missionary studies, which began at the Università Cattolica in Milan in the 1960s. There they discussed political, social and religious transformations in the new Africa and the emerging role of Catholic laymen.³² The theme of laity was seen to be highly urgent also by representatives of the young African Churches, such as the Congolese Joseph Malula, the then auxiliary bishop of Leopoldville.³³ In light of the council, the independence processes were considered to constitute a “kerygmatic period”, favorable to the proclamation of the Gospel message and to the evangelization of African cultures that called for evangelization of African cultures, especially in relation to those contexts characterized by exacerbated nationalism and the emergence of phenomena that Catholics perceived as deviance such as non-Catholic sects that apparently spread and disseminated beliefs not only against Catholicism but also against the presence of non-African foreigners³⁴. Amidst the issues faced by Catholic missions in the post-council period, the martyrdom of missionaries who were persecuted or killed in the processes of independence remained and was dealt with not only as an example of faithfulness to the Gospel message but also in relation to missionary-relevant aspects, namely as a means of evangelization.³⁵ The Xaverians stressed the importance of renewing missionary culture and rediscovering the missionary and ecumenical image of the Catholic Church of the Second Vatican Council; as was stated in *Fede e Civiltà* (“Faith and Civilization”): “The mission is the exercise of catholicity” aimed at rootedness in every culture and civilization.³⁶
- 10 The new African scenarios, with their tensions and crises, fiercely challenged missionaries’ efforts. In 1964 four Combonian missionaries –Remo Armani, Lorenzo Piazza, Evaristo Migotti and Antonio Zuccali– were murdered in the crisis of Congo.

Expelled from Sudan in 1962 during the civil war, when Southern Christian fringes of the army fought against Northern Islamic forces, the four missionaries were sent to Congo to establish an early presence of Combonian missionaries. It was a time of serious and violent unrest caused by Simba rebels as a result of Patrice Lumumba's murder and the secession of Katanga, led by Moïse Tschombe, in January 1961. Abbot Attanasio Joubert, the son of a Breton man and of an orphan hosted in the Mpala mission who became priest of the diocese of Kasongo, died along with the four. One of the few Combonian missionaries remaining in Sudan, the Sudanese priest Barnaba Deng, was murdered by the national army in August 1965 in the first civil war (1955-1972) between the North and the South.³⁷ Also three Xaverian missionaries – priests Giovanni Didonè and Luigi Carrara and the young layman Vittorio Faccin – were murdered in Congo on 28 November 1964 by Simba rebels, who accused them of espionage and collaboration with the government army.³⁸ The missionaries' work was considered to undermine traditional practices of witchcraft, which were used as means of coercion against local populations and a source of income for those who practiced it.³⁹ Near Niangara, the priest Claudio Frini and all local Dominican and Augustinian missionaries were ambushed; they were tortured, forced to dance naked and thrown into a river and eaten by caimans.⁴⁰ Maria Angela Di Schiena, a Franciscan Missionary of Mary, was murdered by Simba rebels in Stanleyville on 25 November along with fifteen more nuns and nine fathers, mainly from Belgium; Francesco Spoto, a Servant of the Poor, was beaten to death in Biringi one month later, on 27 December.⁴¹ The missionaries justified their stay, despite the dangers, not only by their faithfulness to their work but also by their attempt to provide an image of missionaries different from Western and colonial stereotypes.⁴²

- 11 Despite the harsh challenges they faced, the missionary institutes created a network of interests and perspectives through which Italian public opinion, not only the Catholic one,⁴³ perceived a new image of Africa, free from colonial stereotypes. This context also accommodated the figure of Giuseppe Ambrosoli, a Combonian doctor known for his work at the Kalongo hospital in Uganda from 1956 to 1987. His work became a benchmark for central East Africa as a whole, and in 1963 he was awarded the Doctors Mission Prize, established by the Carlo Erba Foundation. In Kalongo in the late 1960s he personally experienced the issues of famine, reporting the ineffectiveness of Western policy to support developing countries over that decade and calling for the development of more suitable economic strategies at the global level.⁴⁴

The vitality of the Catholic laity

- 12 The council also opened new perspectives to lay Catholics, who proved especially committed to the peripheries of the world, above all in Africa. There was a lively debate on African decolonization. Along with meetings and conferences arranged by the Italian Christian Workers Association (ACLI) aimed at analyzing the causes of underdevelopment, renowned Catholic journals such as *Studium*, curated by graduates of Catholic Action movement, and *Vita e Pensiero*, owned by the Università Cattolica, published reflections of an ecclesiastical, political and social nature inspired by the encyclical addresses *Pacem in Terris* by Pope John XXIII (1963) and *Populorum Progressio* by Pope Paul VI (1967).⁴⁵ The essays and articles aimed to draw attention to the

dramatic issues raised by the two encyclicals in relation to poverty in the new countries and to seek solutions, regardless of the liberal model imposed by the Western powers.

- 13 As Luciano Tosi and Maurilio Guasco have remarked, the Third World drew attention from dissenting Catholics, and the question became highly politicized. Politics and religion overlapped, based on the council's assertions on the "church of the poor," and coinciding with the growth of left-wing parties in Italy, anti-Americanism produced by the Vietnam war and the student rebellions in 1968.⁴⁶ The major interest was towards Latin America and was reflected in solidarity with the forces opposing authoritarian regimes, especially after the 1973 Chilean coup, as was the case of "Christians for Socialism," founded in Bologna in the same year.⁴⁷ Third-World issues also inspired many journals connected directly or indirectly to "Catholic dissent." *Jaca Book*, founded in the context of the *Gioventù Studentesca* movement in 1965, published Marxist texts concerning Latin America and Africa, while the EMI (*Editrice Missionaria Italiana*) editions, created within the missionary context in the 1950s, sought a new concept of missionary commitment in the face of decolonization. The Catholic Church also was present in other international contexts, such as the foundation of the African Asian Bandung movement and the Non-Aligned Movement.⁴⁸
- 14 Catholic Italy received the input of Raoul Follereau, a French journalist who started a mission for the treatment of leprosy in Africa around which one of the most popular Third World youth movements developed. The Italian Association of Friends of Raoul Follereau (AIFO) was established in Bologna in June 1961 as a result of Follereau's appeal on the Eighth World Leprosy Day. In the 1960s, AIFO not only fought leprosy, but also committed itself to international cooperation projects, offering partnerships to missionary congregations, social and community movements, public administrations and educational institutions.⁴⁹
- 15 This network accommodated groups and movements of lay Catholics, seen by missionaries with a widened perspective of humanitarian commitment as a key resource.⁵⁰ One of the first movements to start African missions was the *Focolari* ("hearth") Movement, founded by Chiara Lubich in 1943. In February 1963, a first group settled in the town of Shisong, in independent Cameroon, upon the request of the Dutch bishop of Buea, Julius Peeters, formerly a Mill-Hill missionary. In 1965 he moved to Fontem, a forest village inhabited by members of the Bangwa ethnic group, where they built the *Maria Salute dell'Africa* hospital, a secondary school and a parish and building complex designed to be a "citadel" of fraternity; "mission Africa" it was called by Lubich on a visit in 1966. Beyond medical treatment, the improvement of the Bangwa people's living conditions was intended to convey and share the experience of the "hearth," based on community living, free from religious or secular traditions. This was a unique experience that aimed at "enculturating itself" in the various African contexts.⁵¹
- 16 In 1964, *Mani Tese* was established in Milan in the environment of the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions (PIME). Made up of missionaries and lay young people, in a few months it became one of the most significant groups intended to raise awareness and commitment about famine and underdevelopment-related issues. It received several international awards and contributed to increase the membership of the Combonian Missionaries of Verona, the Xaverians in Parma and the *Consolata* in Turin.⁵² In the late 1960s, fundraising by *Mani Tese* allowed it to implement projects, training and educational courses. The movement enlarged its goals by studying and proposing

“global” and “Christian” solutions to the issues of famine and underdevelopment. It tried to develop a Christian vision of development fully independent from ecclesiastical institutions but according to the principles of the Gospel, Vatican Council texts and the major encyclicals such as *Pacem in Terris* and *Populorum progressio*. Mani Tese does not preclude its membership to believers of other religions or nonbelievers. While rejecting links with political parties, it promotes work with a strong impact on society and politics. Since the late 1960s, Mani Tese has concretely operated in the field.⁵³ Through “microprojets”, the movement both tackles desertification in some areas and boosts development of agricultural and human resources. The most significant initiatives were carried out in Burkina Faso (formerly Upper Volta) between 1968 and 1987, with the establishment of specialized schools in fields including agriculture, crafts and manufacturing, along with companies and cooperatives developed by machinery which was supplied.⁵⁴ Mani Tese operates with the support of the lay congregation Fratelli della Sacra Famiglia, present in the territory for many years and representing a crucial communication channel with village communities.

- 17 Xaverian environments are linked to the International Service Volunteers Association (AVSI), which came out of Gioventù Studentesca, one of the most significant youth groups founded by priest Luigi Giussani in Milan in 1954, a promoter of cultural and charitable initiatives.⁵⁵ Together with the director of *Fede e Civiltà*, the Xaverian Meo Elia, AVSI in the 1970s implemented the Integrated Community Center of Kiringye, in what was then Zaire. This area had plenty of resources but was marked by frequent instability. The center, based on the integration of agriculture and health care, manages the extraction of peanut oil, rice processing, the production of flour, a hospital connected to a number of health care centers, a system of schools and a school for managers, as well as a hydroelectric power station.⁵⁶ The initiative aims to offer a development pilot model involving the indigenous population in a constant dialogue with the local culture, showing their ability to self-manage work in village cooperatives.
- 18 This network includes new ecclesiastical actors and figures, such as Vittorio Pastori, who became famous as Don Vittorione. A former restaurateur in Varese, from 1966 he became a follower of Enrico Manfredini, provost of the San Vittore basilica in Varese, who became bishop of Piacenza in 1969 and entrusted Pastori with the administrative and organizational responsibilities of the diocese. Contact with African bishops led Pastori to seek direct knowledge of the African continent. On his journeys to sub-Saharan countries including Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania, he was able to learn about the social situation and missionaries’ activity, and he committed himself to raise awareness among Italian public opinion about the issues affecting Africa, and collect material and financial resources (food and primary commodities, medical, agricultural, mechanical, health care and education equipment and facilities), to be allocated for the development of these countries and the new African churches. He established “Africa Mission” with Bishop Manfredini in 1972, which would become one of the most popular cooperation movements in the Italian Catholic world, and the Friends of Uganda Committee in Piacenza, in 1979. The remarkable path taken by Don Vittorione, who became a priest at the age of 58 in 1984, illustrates the vitality of Catholic laity and their interest in “new Africa”.
- 19 The year 1972 marked the foundation of the Federation of Christian Organizations for International Voluntary Service (FOCSIV), which, on the basis of the previous

experience of the Federation of Organizations of Laity Missionary, operating since 1965 and inspired by the Second Vatican Council and the *Populorum progressio* encyclical, was based on cooperation and was one the main promoters of Italian Law No. 49/1987, which concerns Italian cooperation with developing countries. FOCSIV firmly believes that decisive development action should be based on the connection of commitment and solidarity with professionalism. In June 1972, Mani Tese held a conference in Milan on “The political commitment to the Third World” that was attended by a number of Third-World associations. This was a topic that increasingly concerned Catholic laity as well as the missionary world, as was stated in the PIME magazine, *Mondo e missione*.⁵⁷ Commitment was being politicized by ideological left-wing movements and parties, which resulted from what Agostino Giovagnoli defined as “contamination” between the spirit of the council and the 1968 protests that ended up obliterating or flattening the utopian dimension of Third Worldism.⁵⁸ This was shown by dissenting Catholics and by the evolution of many Catholic magazines representing major and minor groups and movements.⁵⁹ The case of Mani Tese is significant in this context; in the 1970s it experienced the separation of the members of the San Paolo community in Rome, who established Liberation and Development; later on, in 1976, following the withdrawal of the missionary institutes from which it originated, the movement took on the name of Mani Tese 76.⁶⁰

- 20 Also from the world of Catholic laity came the initiative of financial support by Giordano Dell’Amore, president of the Cassa di Risparmio delle Province Lombarde (Cariplo) and dean of Bocconi University, who in Milan in 1967 founded the Center for Financial Support to African Countries (Finafrica), which became the Giordano Dell’Amore Foundation in 1977. Continuing Cariplo’s tradition of devoting part of its income to finance social and cultural projects in developing countries, Finafrica intends to revive rural areas of “new Africa”, where the gap with urban areas is hindering development. It promotes the startup of small and medium-sized enterprises in the craft and commercial sectors capable of creating wealth, and holds vocational training courses for banks and financial operators which also provide for internships at Cariplo agencies.⁶¹
- 21 In the post-Vatican II period, following converging paths or parallel to missionary networks, the new and most significant elements in the Italian Catholic world were secular. They promoted broad-reaching thinking and ambitious initiatives concerning fast, but problematically, changing Africa and laid the foundations of cooperation that would develop in the subsequent decade. Through this complex of diversified experiences, Catholic Italy reveals its dynamism with regard to the projects on the African continent, as well as the hindrance arising from its limited colonial past. Italian Catholicism, particularly sensitive to the papacy’s call of universality, is an important element in the proposition of an extraverted model which is not comparable to other European experiences, which are affected by their long-established colonial past. Italian Catholicism, moreover, possessed an original tendency to extend the boundaries of solidarity beyond national belonging.

NOTES

1. Andrea Riccardi, "Il caso religioso italiano", in Marco Impagliazzo (ed.), *La nazione cattolica. Chiesa e società in Italia dal 1958 a oggi*, Milan, Guerini e associati, 2004, p. 21-38.
2. Andrea Riccardi, *Il potere del papa. Da Pio XII a Giovanni Paolo II*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 1993, p. 217-222, and Giuseppe Alberigo, *Storia del Concilio Vaticano II*, vol. I, *Il cattolicesimo verso una nuova stagione. Annuncio e preparazione*, Bologna, Società Editrice Il Mulino, 1995, p. 509-512.
3. Giovanni Caprile (ed.), *Il Concilio Vaticano II, Secondo periodo 1963-1964*, Rome, Edizioni La Civiltà Cattolica, 1969, p. 254.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 296, and Giovanni Caprile (ed.), *Il Concilio Vaticano II, Quarto periodo 1965*, Rome, Edizioni La Civiltà Cattolica, 1969, p. 116.
5. Giovanni Caprile (ed.), *Il Concilio Vaticano II, Terzo periodo 1964-65*, Rome, Edizioni La Civiltà Cattolica, 1969, p. 338.
6. Giovanni Caprile (ed.), *Il Concilio Vaticano II, Quarto periodo*, op. cit., p. 165.
7. See Andrea Riccardi, "Da Giovanni XXIII a Paolo VI", in Giuseppe Alberigo, Andrea Riccardi (eds.), *Chiesa e papato nel mondo contemporaneo*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 1990, p. 217-222, and François de Medeiros, "Verso una Chiesa planetaria. Dalle missioni a un cristianesimo universale", *ibid.*, p. 417-484. See also Giuseppe Butturini, "Missioni e concilio. Le istanze missionarie dei vescovi in vista del Vaticano II", in Giuseppe Alberigo (ed.), *Il Vaticano II fra attese e celebrazione*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1995, p. 29-74.
8. Andrea Riccardi, *Il secolo del martirio. I cristiani nel novecento*, Milan, Mondadori, [2000], new edition 2009, p. 348-354, and Jacques Gadille, "Africa", in Maurilio Guasco, Elio Guerriero, Francesco Traniello (eds.), *La Chiesa del Vaticano II (1958-1978)*, XXV/2, Cinisello Balsamo, Edizioni San Paolo, 1994, p. 347-393.
9. Giuseppe Alberigo, *Storia dei concili ecumenici*, Brescia, Queriniana, 1990, p. 445.
10. Sandra Mazzolini, *La Chiesa è essenzialmente missionaria. Il rapporto "natura della Chiesa"- "missione della Chiesa" nell'iter della costituzione "de Ecclesia" (1959-1964)*, Rome, Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1999, 572 p. and Walter Inzero, *La Chiesa è "per sua natura missionaria" (AG2). Origine e contenuto dell'affermazione conciliare e la sua recezione nel dopo Concilio*, Rome, Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 2007, 545 p.
11. Bishop Pietro Rossano had a prominent role at the Secretariat for Non-Christians – established by Pope Paul VI– between 1964 and 1982, first as consultant, then as undersecretary and secretary. See Pietro Rossano, "Vangelo e cultura africana", in Pietro Rossano, *Dialogo e annuncio cristiano. L'incontro con le grandi religioni*, Cinisello Balsamo, Edizioni San Paolo, 1993, p. 269-273 (first published in French in *Bulletin* [edited by Secretariat for Non-Christians], XI (1976), p. 311-315).
12. Engelbert Mveng, *Identità africana e cristianesimo*, Turin, Società Editrice Internazionale, 1990, p. 59-66 (translated from French: *L'Afrique dans l'Eglise. Paroles d'un croyant*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1985).
13. See decrees *Apostolicam Actuositatem* and *Ad Gentes*, in *I documenti del Concilio Vaticano II. Costituzioni, decreti, dichiarazioni*, Milan, Figlie di S. Paolo, 1987, p. 411-447 and 449-504. See also Roger Aubert, "I testi conciliari", in Maurilio Guasco, Elio Guerriero, Francesco Traniello (eds.), *La Chiesa del Vaticano II (1958-1978)*, op. cit., p. 347-393.
14. Andrea Riccardi, "Il caso religioso italiano", in Marco Impagliazzo (ed.), *La nazione cattolica...*, op. cit., p. 21-38.
15. In 1960 –the "Year of Africa"– 17 African Countries gained independence from European colonization. With regards to Somalia, see Antonio Morone, *L'ultima colonia. Come l'Italia è tornata in Africa 1950-1960*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2011, 232 p.

16. Maria Stella Rognoni, *Scacchiera congolese. Materie prime, decolonizzazione e guerra fredda nell'Africa dei primi anni Sessanta*, Florence, Polistampa, 2003, 468 p.; Angela Villani, *L'Italia e l'ONU negli anni della coesistenza competitiva (1955-1968)*, Padua, Cedam, 2007, p. 119-126.
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ABSTRACTS

The Second Vatican Council for the first time brought a large group of African bishops to Rome. They symbolized a new, independent Africa and its problems. After Vatican II, missions were encouraged to rethink their activities outside the colonial framework in which they developed, and post-colonial conflicts and crises created a new environment. The Vatican also promoted lay associations and individuals who, with inventiveness and passion, launched projects inspired by a broad, new vision of Catholicism in the "new Africa." A new vision was born, which has had

important repercussions on the development of political strategies by the Italian Catholic leadership.

Le concile de Vatican II a amené à Rome pour la première fois un grand nombre de prélats africains qui ont renouvelé l'expression d'une Afrique indépendante et de ses problématiques. À la suite de Vatican II, les missions sont incitées à repenser leur action hors du cadre colonial dans lequel elles avaient jusqu'alors travaillé, alors que les crises et les conflits postcoloniaux produisent un nouvel environnement. Le Vatican favorise aussi l'émergence et le développement d'associations laïques et de personnalités qui, avec inventivité et passion, mettent en place des projets inspirés par une vision ample et renouvelée de la présence du catholicisme dans la « nouvelle Afrique ». Une nouvelle sensibilité voit le jour, et cette tendance a d'importantes répercussions sur le développement de stratégies politiques de la part de la classe dirigeante catholique italienne.

INDEX

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