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**From immigrants to emigrants:
Salesian education and the failed integration of Italians in Egypt, 1937-1960**

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**From immigrants to emigrants:
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Abstract: With Italy's entry into the Second World War, Anglo-Egyptian authorities repatriated Italian diplomats from Egypt, arrested around 5,000 Italians, and sequestered both personal and business accounts. Italian institutions were indefinitely closed, including the Italian state schools. Hope for a future in Egypt among the roughly 60,000 Italian residents faded. The Salesian missionary schools, whose goal since the late-nineteenth century had been to inculcate nationalist-religious sentiment in Italy's emigrants, remained the only active Italian educational institution by claiming Vatican protection. As such, the missionary schools assumed a central role in the lives of many young Italians. After the war, these same young Italians began to depart Egypt en masse, in part driven by the possibilities opened by their vocational training. Building on diplomatic, institutional and private archives, this article demonstrates how the Salesian missionary schools attempted and failed to integrate Italian immigrants into the Egyptian labour force through vocational training. This failure combined with socio-economic and geopolitical changes to propel Italian departures from Egypt, making emigrants out of immigrants.

Keywords: Mediterranean, Emigration, Educational Reform, Salesian Missionary Schools, Transnational Italy

On the eve of the Second World War, around 60,000 Italians resided in Egypt. Most had arrived there after the British occupation in 1882 and before the formal end of the British Protectorate in 1922. Some traced their origins to the influx of Europeans that contributed to Mehmed Ali Pasha's early-nineteenth century infrastructural projects, and still fewer to communities established by the Italian Maritime Republics. Italians concentrated predominantly around urban centres in Cairo, Alexandria and in the Suez Canal zone (Port Said, Ismailia, and Suez). After 1945, their numbers began to decline sharply. The 1960 census in Egypt counted 14,089 Italians — a drop of over 13,000 since 1947 (Amicucci 2000, 82).

In this article, we distance ourselves from the nostalgic literature written by Egypt's departed Italians. There, the impetus of mass departure is placed almost exclusively on Gamal Abdel Nasser's nationalist policies during and after 1956.¹ We argue, instead, that transformations in Italian educational institutions, and the Salesian missionary schools in particular, played an active role in driving Italian departures from Egypt. Although much attention has been given to departures that took place after 1956, here we contend that processes internal to the Italian community during the late-interwar and immediate post-war years reshaped possible futures for the Italians in Egypt. Between 1937 and 1960, shifts in educational practices and policies at the state level combined with 'Egyptianisation' – a regulatory strategy that entailed the incorporation of Egyptian workers into the workforce, and aimed to transfer control over Egypt's economy away from foreigners (Karansou 1992, 7-18). This combination deprived Italians (as well as other non-Egyptian minorities, Dalachanis 2017; Deeb 1978) of work opportunities. Indeed, following the Second World War, the most pressing question for the Italian community and its political leaders centred around how Italian residents would remain in Egypt stripped of the work opportunities available to previous generations.

The changing economic realities demanded an extensive restructuring of the institutions built to support Italian immigrants in Egypt. Anticipating an increase in 'Egyptianisation' regulations, in 1939 Italian diplomats stressed the importance of investing in the vocational training offered by the Salesian missionary schools for Italian residents, noting that 'only specialised workers will be able to look... towards a future in Egypt.'² This adaptation, however, would only be realised in the wake of the war when, as educational reform restructured the community, it paradoxically made new emigrants from old immigrants. Post-war emigration

from metropolitan Italy generally followed state-sanctioned patterns, in marked distinction from the village- and familial-oriented networks that had facilitated travel for earlier generations. These emigration flows were often centered around the economic needs of receiving countries. Thus, rather than integrate Italians in post-war Egypt, vocational training made them more viable candidates for emigration and relocation to countries seeking workers (especially in South America and Australia; Gabaccia 2000, 153-160).

These processes have yet to be amply studied in the context of Italians living in territories undergoing decolonization, such as Egypt. Building on diplomatic, institutional and private archives, we show how educational reform combined with socio-economic and geo-political processes to propel Italian departures from Egypt. This article demonstrates the convergence of several historical trajectories. First, we look at the consequences of Italy's entry into the war for the Italian residents. We then trace the broader narrative of the confessionalisation (*confessionalizzazione*) of Italian schools in Egypt, demonstrating how the conditions of war centralised the Salesian missionary schools, and their model of vocational training, in the Italian community. In the third section, we consider how the repercussions of the war — specifically the delay in re-establishing diplomatic relations between Italy and Egypt — structured uncertainties and rendered emigration an appealing option for Italians. Finally, we consider the direct role played by the Salesian schools in facilitating the departure of Italians from Egypt into the 1960s.

Isolating the Italians: the Second World War in Egypt

When Mussolini announced Italy's entry into the Second World War, the community of Italians in Egypt, constituted mostly by working-class clerks, labourers, and artisans, found itself on precarious grounds.³ Mussolini's speech itself never arrived there, yet despite his assurances that Egypt would not be pulled into the sphere of war the declaration set into action a series of events that would definitively transform possibilities for the Italians to remain in Egypt. Mussolini's declaration, by no means an unanticipated event, confirmed rumours that had been circulating within and around the Italian community (Rossi 2005, 273; Killearn 1972, 118-119). Several months prior, Italians began to filter money out of the country; Italian consulates 'bought' Egyptian currency from residents and then credited their Italian accounts with Italian *lire*. British authorities worried that the accumulated wealth of the Italian consulates would be used for Fifth

Column activity—to feed the anti-British movements of Egyptian nationalists.⁴ They also feared insurrection from the large number of organised Italians, distinguishing the attitude of a ‘moderate’ elder generation of immigrants and Italian Jews from the ‘aggressive mentality’ of younger Italians who had been raised within the folds of fascist propaganda in Egypt (Petricioli 2007, 374).

Among members of the Italian elite and the larger immigrant community it was known that, during the Ethiopia campaign in 1935, British authorities had recommended an ‘internment en masse’ of Italians in Egypt under the so-called ‘Tombak Plan’ (Vogliano 1939). As its eventual outcome, the plan aimed at the arrest, disarmament and internment of Italians, intending to forestall any potential political subversion. It consisted of three steps: first, the registration and limitation of travel within and outside of Egypt for all Italian subjects; second, the internment of all Italian males of military age; and third, the formation of an Anglo-Egyptian committee to manage the internment camps. British calculations estimated that around 12,500 Italians should be indefinitely interned ‘in the interest of military security.’ Of these, 5,800 were card-carrying members of the National Fascist Party (*Partito Nazionale Fascista*, PNF), while the remainder included males (and around 30 women) of military age or individuals loosely defined as ‘enemy aliens.’ During the Ethiopia campaign, however, the British had been unable to follow through with the plan due to the jurisdictional limitations enforced by the capitulations.

The capitulations, Ottoman-era treaties originating in the sixteenth century that conferred extraterritorial privileges to some European national communities in Egypt, exempted many foreigners from local Egyptian jurisdiction and taxation throughout the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. This changed in 1936 when the Egyptian government signed the Treaty of Alliance with England, conceding military control to the British in the case of war and setting a date for a conference whose mission was to formally abolish the capitulations. After the 1937 Montreux Conference, communities that had benefitted from the extraterritorial conditions conferred by the capitulations would undergo a process of jurisdictional integration that would continue until 1949, when the treaties were to be fully cancelled and replaced with bilateral agreements between individual European nations and the Egyptian government. In the meantime, the clause of the 1936 Treaty that granted the British authorities control in the event of war effectively removed the protections the Italian community had enjoyed in 1935.

Just days before Italy's entry into the war in June 1940, the Italian consulates prepared extensive lists of the institutions under their protection and administration. These included *fasci*, *dopolavori*, hospitals, charity/assistance associations, the Dante Alighieri Society, veterans' associations, large companies, the Italian Chambers of Commerce in Alexandria and Cairo and, importantly, a range of Italian state schools.⁵ On the evening of the 10th, the Egyptian police, under the administration of the British authorities arrested around 150 Italians in Alexandria.⁶ Arrests were conducted without distinction of race, as described by the Italian Consul in Alexandria, Camillo Giuriati. Around 3am, Egyptian troops surrounded the consulate, occupied Italian institutions and expelled their Italian guards. Telephone lines were cut and calls were interrupted until the afternoon of the 11th. Overnight, Egyptian police made over 600 arrests in Alexandria, Cairo, and in the Canal Zone, while an additional 411 were rounded up in the provinces.⁷ Italian residents rushed to the consulate to understand what was happening. Anglo-Egyptian authorities quickly converted the Italian schools into holding camps for prisoners, while Italian bank accounts, pensions and assets were frozen and put under a conservative sequester.⁸ On the 11th, Serafino Mazzolini, then Minister of Italy in Egypt, wrote:

Our situation is quite strange... [diplomatic] relations are still normalised but we're isolated from the world, deprived of telegraphic and telephone communications and surveilled by the police. During the night, many compatriots (*connazionali*) were arrested.

Mazzolini ordered the burning of the reserved consular archives (Rossi 2005, 276). By 13 June, a diplomatic rupture was enforced between Rome and Cairo: Italian diplomats and around 300 elite members of the community were repatriated. The British embassy pressured the Egyptian government to put the original Tombak Plan into full force (Schewe 2014, 287). On June 16th and 17th, decrees 57 and 58 required the registration of *all* Italian nationals under penalty of imprisonment and the sequestration of their assets (Petricioli 2007, 400). Only subjects from the Italian empire (mostly Libyans and Greek subjects from the Dodecanesi), Jewish Italians and employers with fewer than two employees were exempted from these measures – although in many cases these exceptions were ignored altogether.⁹ Anglo-Egyptian authorities increasingly

tightened measures against the Italian subjects as the Axis forces advanced on the Egyptian border.

Notwithstanding Mussolini's assurances that Egypt would not be 'drawn into the war,' the lives of the Italian residents in Egypt were irreversibly transformed by the ramifications of these events. Italian institutions were indefinitely closed, including the Italian state schools, and many would never reopen (Petricioli 1997, 191). Only the missionary schools remained operative in wartime: these included the Salesian boys' and girls' schools, the Franciscan Institutes and the Combonian schools. Having obtained Vatican 'nationality' through the mediation of the Apostolic Delegation, these schools were safeguarded from closure enforced on all Italian institutions (Turiano 2016, 309). The Salesian missionary schools, which had thus far occupied only a peripheral role in the community and had been deemed largely unsuccessful by the Italian government, grew in importance as a result of these circumstances.

The slow confessionalisation of the Italian community in Egypt (1925-1945)

The Salesian congregation had been founded by Don Giovanni Bosco in the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia in the decades prior to national unification. It soon asserted itself a capable institution that sought to bring the working-class under church influence following the revolutionary wave of 1833-1848. Salesians gave priority to the instruction of the impoverished through the foundation of arts and crafts schools and oratories. At the same time, the congregation took part in the missionary awakening of the long-nineteenth century (Mayeur et al 1995, 6; Dogan and Sharkey 2011, xii). The first Salesian missionaries had left for Argentina in 1875. These 'pioneers,' as they were called, pursued two main goals: the evangelization of remote populations (the Patagonian 'indigenous' populations) and the pastoral care of Catholic migrants. Above all, they concentrated their attention on Italian emigrant communities, who, they claimed, were at risk of losing their ties to the Catholic Church (Rosoli 1996, 428).

After the British occupation of Egypt in 1882, Salesian missionaries settled in Alexandria to provide assistance and care to the growing number of catholic immigrant workers, a community constituted predominantly by Italians and Maltese. The 1897 Egyptian census counts the Italian community in Alexandria at 11,743.¹⁰ According to Gaudenzio Bonfigli, the Apostolic Delegate to Egypt between 1896 and 1904, these Mediterranean migrants faced a double risk.

First and foremost, they risked being ‘contaminated’ with anticlerical and secularist ideas that were widespread among the *fuoriusciti* who had emigrated to Egypt after the European restoration (Ersilio 1958; for more on this see Khuri-Makdisi 2010).¹¹ These ideological currents strongly influenced emergent Egyptian labour unions, of which many Italians were members (Gorman 2010). The second perceived risk was assimilation: most Italian immigrants lived in poorer quarters and intermingled with a much vaster ‘Muslim population’ (Grange 1994, 507).

In 1897, Salesians thus established a vocational school in Bāb Sidra, a neighbourhood in Alexandria inhabited by many recent migrants from Southern Italy (Turiano 2016b, 343). Within five years it had created substantial training programs in several trades: moulding and mechanics, woodworking, sewing, shoemaking, binding typography. The curriculum was largely practical: the young apprentices spent most of the day in workshops; products manufactured by the students were sold and their proceeds were used to cover the school’s budget deficit.¹² In 1908, 65 pupils attended the Don Bosco arts and crafts school, most of whom were the children of working-class families or orphans.¹³ The Salesians also established primary and commercial schools for boys in which Italian was the primary teaching language and the broader curriculum was, with few exceptions, the same as that applied in similar schools in metropolitan Italy (Turiano 2016a, 133). By opening these additional sections, the missionaries hoped to ‘subtract’ Italian pupils from the ‘secular’ Italian state schools already established in Egypt, providing them instead with a distinctly catholic education. Among the main goals of the Salesians was to resist what they perceived as the main ‘evil’ among the expatriate communities: ‘de-Christianization.’ In reality, Salesian schools were more complementary than competitive with regard to the ‘secular’ Italian schools in Egypt. The former indeed enrolled a majority of catholic pupils. The latter, however, were constituted by an ethnically and religiously mixed student body, and included a large number of Muslim Egyptians (Bardinet 2013, 157). Moreover, while secular schools only enrolled day students, the Salesians-ran boarding schools accepted students from other Egyptian cities, mainly Cairo and the Suez Canal cities.¹⁴

Nevertheless, during their early years in Egypt, the Salesian missionaries faced opposition from the anticlerical Italian milieu, which was outwardly antagonistic to religious initiatives, especially in matters of education. This mirrored political debate in Italy and among other Italian emigrant communities, where a vigorous anticlericalism spread after 1848

(Sanfilippo 1997, 139, 144; Rosoli 1996, 406). In Egypt, Salesians were repeatedly accused of being anti-patriotic. In 1903, several Italian periodicals launched an anti-missionary campaign when the news of the transfer of an Italian school in Cairo to the Salesians circulated among Italian residents.¹⁵ Missionaries were depicted as ‘enemies’ of the ‘Italian nation.’¹⁶ Coinciding with growing unrest among Italian industrial workers in Egypt, the anti-missionary campaign forced Italian authorities to temporarily renounce the transfer of the state school to the Salesians (Bardinet 2013, 216).

The First World War, however, represented a turning point in the perception of missionaries. Namely, important transformations took place among the elite classes of the Italian communities in Egypt. The ‘old Italians’ – referring to those who settled in Egypt after the European Restoration – were replaced by a younger generation that had been won over by overlapping of nationalist and imperialist ideas (Bardinet 2013, 265). These new elites were openly supportive of the Italian government’s clerical policy, which protected and financially backed the missionaries’ initiatives. Concurrently, the missionaries became increasingly convinced of the advantages of being both morally and financially linked to the Italian state. While they unambiguously declared their patriotism, Salesians began to be widely seen and described as effective guardians of *italianità* for Italian immigrants in Egypt (Turiano 2016a, 160).

The Fascist regime took this further in declaring outright support for religious institutions abroad. Seeking to render the Mediterranean ‘an Italian lake,’ the regime sought to put the educational network of the missionaries at its service in implementing its imperialistic policy. It was within this framework that, during the incipient years of fascist foreign policy, the Italian government decided on the confessionalisation (*confessionalizzazione*), a process intended to contemporaneously foster nationalist and religious identification, of the Italian schools in the Suez Canal region (a strategic area on the route to East Africa).¹⁷ Missionaries were thus appointed to direct Italian state schools in Port Said in 1924, Suez in 1925, and Ismailia in 1926 (Turiano 2016a, 199). In the schools of the Canal Zone, the Salesians offered primary courses.¹⁸ In Port Said, they added a commercial section, seeking to train accountants and employees for the numerous foreign firms and industries established that had been established along the canal.¹⁹ The Salesian mission also received financial backing from the Italian state to build a new institute in Cairo.

Nevertheless, the results of the confessionalisation of the Italian schools in the Suez Canal were limited. After an initial increase in enrolment, the number of pupils in the Salesian-run schools remained stationary (for example, in Port Said), and in some cases even decreased (for example, in Suez, the numbers dropped from 87 in 1933 to 74 in 1937).²⁰ The Italian curriculum (Italian was the teaching language in all Salesian schools in the Suez Canal) was less attractive to many Italian families than the ones offered in French or British schools. Importantly, the French and British schools offered broader prospects for future employment and represented symbolic entryways into the colonial elite.²¹ In Cairo, educational outcomes were more reassuring for the missionaries. The Don Bosco Institute opened in 1931, combining both primary school preparation and vocational training. In the vocational school in Alexandria, the Salesian school of mechanics was particularly successful in the 1930s, as shown by the fast increase in enrolments (the numbers rose from 35 in 1931 to more than 200 in 1939).²² Given this success, the Salesian superiors contended that the mission should prioritise vocational training over classical or commercial education.²³

With Italy's entry into the war in 1940, the Salesian schools were initially closed with all other Italian institutions. Using a legal loophole in claiming Vatican nationality, however, they reopened their doors as the sole refuge for Italian pupils. Don Bosco Institutes in Cairo and Alexandria enrolled many students who had previously attended the Italian state schools. To adapt to these students' needs, new classes and programs were created. The mission found itself in urgent demand of a teaching staff. Some teachers from the state schools were hired; most were female, as male teachers and many priests were being held among the roughly 5,000 civilian Italian prisoners in the Fayed internment camp.²⁴ By 1941, the number of students had doubled: they were 600 in Cairo and a few more in Alexandria.²⁵ The Swiss Legation — which had been entrusted with Italian interests in Egypt during the diplomatic rupture between Italy and Egypt — provided subsidies to the missionary schools. Around 1943, as these funds declined, credits were drawn from the Italian properties under sequester by the Egyptian government to finance the schools.²⁶ Concurrently, Salesian schools were strictly controlled by the Egyptian Ministry of the Interior and Ministry of Education. In 1941, a special committee (the Directorate of Italian Schools, *idara al-madaris al-italiyya*) was created by Anglo-Egyptian authorities to censor textbooks containing fascist propaganda.²⁷ The Salesian schools, which had benefited from near

complete autonomy under the capitulations until 1937, struggled to accept this new external interference in its affairs.²⁸

After the war, questions regarding the state of Italian education in Egypt were inseparable from the growing sense that Italian days in Egypt were numbered. Salesian missionaries exerted continuous effort to maintain the monopoly over education they had acquired in wartime. They pleaded with Italian diplomats, highlighting the crucial role they had played in ‘safeguarding’ Italian national identity during the war.²⁹ Inadvertently aiding their cause, delays in re-establishing diplomatic relations between Italy and Egypt — in part caused by the struggle to settle reparations owed to Egypt from damage caused by Italian air raids in 1941 — led the Italian government to postpone reopening its state schools. According to Cristoforo Fracassi, the first Italian Ambassador in Cairo after relations had been re-established in 1947, the only foreseeable solution that would connect Italian residents to the ‘patria’ was to increase financial support to the religious schools.³⁰ This was also done conscious of the fact that the autonomy conferred upon foreign state schools under the capitulations was soon to come to an end. New classes and programs created during the war were thus officially recognised by the Italian government and the Salesians began to formally grant Italian diplomas to its pupils.³¹ The mission maintained a monopoly over Italian male education in Alexandria and Port Said; only in Cairo did an Italian state school eventually reopen.³² The confessionalisation of Italian schools in Egypt occurred, therefore, largely through the convergence of these historical circumstances: it was not driven by the explicit policies of the institution’s leadership.

The aftermath of war: unemployment, uncertainty and emigration

The relief that came with the end of the Second World War and the release of imprisoned Italians was short-lived. It quickly became apparent to many within and around the Italian community in Egypt how little post-war Egypt — and the broader realm of post-war Mediterranean politics — would resemble the recent past. After over four years of internment and unemployment, freed Italians were, as described by an English delegate from the Holy See, ‘living in complete destitution.’ He continued, ‘in the [Italian] colony, poverty has provoked a flooding of moral degradation and prostitution alongside a troubling confusion of spirits.’³³ The isolation imposed by the internment tore families apart. Around 500 cases of marriage annulment

were brought to the local religious authorities in the months following the camp's closure, and the delegate noted that, accompanying the low morale, many individuals refused to confess in church.³⁴ As early as 1944, the Italian government had expressed concern over the situation in Egypt. The unremitting arrival of details of the conditions of the Italian residents caused great alarm. The captain of an Italian ship passing through Egyptian ports observed, 'a community that just yesterday resonated with admirable and prosperous patriotism... is today viewed as undesirable and lives precariously... on the boundaries of destitution.'³⁵

The implications of the community's decline went far beyond the familial; they posed unsettling political questions at the state level. Initially without formal diplomatic ties, Renato Prunas, then Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Badoglio government, failed to intervene on behalf of the Italian community with the Anglo-Egyptian authorities. The Egyptian government delayed action, which was in large part attributed to their desire to renegotiate the terms of the 1936 Treaty of Alliance with the British. This, wrote one Italian diplomat, 'indirectly provoked a sense of disinterest towards any other question of foreign policy.'³⁶ Requests to send a delegation from Italy to reconnect Italian residents with metropolitan Italy, and to attempt to alleviate some of the pressing concerns of Italian residents, went unanswered.³⁷ Finally, in 1945, Prunas obtained permission to send a mission to Egypt on the condition that they would occupy themselves *only* with concerns internal to the Italian community. Giovanni de Astis arrived in Egypt on 23 September 1945, where he remained until 19 December. No attempts, however, to re-establish diplomatic ties between Italy and Egypt were to be made; this would be reserved for the Paris talks in the autumn of 1946 (Pizzigallo 2008, 13-14).

The agreement settled between Italy and Egypt on 10 September 1946, intending to mend diplomatic relations between the two countries, was once again delayed. At the heart of negotiations rested two sensitive questions: reparations due to Egypt and the release of Italian assets.³⁸ On the ground, the situation was critical. The governing body in charge of the sequestered assets of the Italian community announced the suppression, starting from July 1946, of the subsidies provided to poor families. The distribution of funds was to be halted until a formal settlement between the countries was reached. The Swiss *chargé d'affaires*, who had handled Italian interests during the war, declared that the Swiss Legation would no longer anticipate the subsidies without a written statement of reimbursement from the Italian

government, as Swiss funds were themselves running low (Petricioli 2007, 462). This news contributed to the climate of uncertainty that plagued most Italian residents. The prospect of securing futures in Egypt, which had been discussed before the war within the halls of the Italian consulates, again became a central concern.

Addressing these uncertainties, in late 1946 the Italian Consul in London wrote to the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He drew their attention to the incumbent Plenipotentiary Minister of Emigration in Rome, a Salesian priest from Argentina. Argentina had solicited around four million Italian immigrants and the Consul suggested that encouraging the relocation of Italians might allay the urgency of the question of ‘displaced persons,’ exacerbated by the Italians ‘returning’ from Egypt and those intending to do so.³⁹ It was also a subtle reminder that Italy was ill-prepared to accept an influx of unemployed repatriates — from Egypt and elsewhere in North and East Africa (Rainero 2015) — when the country already struggled to employ its population.

Concurrently, *Il Mattino della Domenica* (the only Italian newspaper published in Egypt at the time) began to publish advertisements and articles detailing the experiences of Italian emigrants in Belgium, France, Switzerland and Venezuela.⁴⁰ The paper made various attempts to expedite large number of requests for repatriation. They noted that Italian residents would effectively be filing for ‘definitive repatriation,’ relinquishing their residential rights in Egypt, but in doing so they would have greater opportunities for emigration (Italians in Egypt were not eligible for state-sponsored emigration, but would become so upon their arrival in Italy).⁴¹ Passport renewals with requests for ‘repatriation’ or ‘emigration’ flooded Italian consulates.

By the late 1940s, economic instability was widespread among foreign communities living in Egypt. In 1947, the Egyptian government enacted the so-called ‘Company Law’ to further ‘Egyptianise’ the workforce, establishing strict quotas for foreign workers in different industries. This was part of an ongoing process that aimed to break down colonial legal structures that privileged foreigners at the expense of Egyptians (Tignor 1987). Although the law was not strictly implemented, and some companies resorted to deceit in order to circumvent it, employment prospects for foreign residents steadily declined (Dalachanis 2011, 133).⁴² One of the few employers of Italians in the immediate post-war years was the British Labour Corps, an auxiliary service of the British Army. They hired hundreds of Italians, specifically from the Canal Zone, upon their release from the internment camps after 1945.⁴³ But this, too, was short-

lived: by the early 1950s, British troops began evacuating the Suez Canal, and the vast majority of these Italians returned to unemployment.⁴⁴

Indeed, it was during this period that most Italians decided to leave Egypt. The Italian Consul in Alexandria indicated that 655 families departed between 1946 and 1951 from his consular district. This number is deceiving, however, as it only records the number of ‘official’ repatriations and neglects the much larger population of Italians that travelled to Italy and elsewhere without for ‘temporary’ visits without relinquishing their residency in Egypt.⁴⁵ Emigration became the sole alternative to chronic unemployment for Italian residents. While many attempted to ‘return’ to Italy, others sought destinations in Australia, South America, and elsewhere in Europe. The range of destinations generally reflected the patterns of emigration from metropolitan Italy after the Second World War. In 1950 and 1951, reports published in *Italiani nel Mondo* estimated that as many as 6,000 Italians had left Egypt since the end of the war, searching in ‘other locales the security of a future more prosperous and serene.’⁴⁶ In the same magazine, one resident of Port Said wrote of an ‘exodus’ from the Canal Zone: ‘those who can get out (*andarsene*), do!’⁴⁷

Integration through education: shaping emigrants into the 1950s

Already in 1931, Fausto Cignolini, the director of the *Fascio* in Alexandria, had advised the acting Italian diplomats that the opening a technical school for Italians in Cairo was crucial to the survival of the larger Italian community. A population composed predominantly of working-class Italians, Cignolini saw vocational training as the best means to ‘fight against unemployment... and meet the growing demand of technicians.’⁴⁸ Technical education, however, necessitated a sizable investment from the state, which was not easily procured in the tight economic milieu of the early 1930s. Rather than establish new schools, diplomats decided to subsidise existing schools: the Salesian missionary schools in Alexandria and Cairo received the bulk of this financial support. The Italian Consul at the time, Morganti, wrote: ‘the valorisation of Salesian professional schools has become an urgent matter, the workers from these schools will always find employment in Egypt as specialised labourers.’ The Consul proposed an increase in governmental subsidies to the schools hoping to ‘modernise them [and] to

provide them with... appropriate pedagogical materials and a more experienced technical team.’⁴⁹ Most diplomats shared Morganti’s perspective.

During the 1930s, both the economic crisis and the imminent abolition of the capitulations had led the Italian state to reform its educational institutions in Egypt. Up to that point, Italian schools in Egypt followed the same curriculum as metropolitan Italy (they were subject to slight modifications especially in foreign language education, incorporating French and English into their curriculum). Although technical schools were available, most of the Italian state schools followed the classical model. As the position of Italians in Egypt grew less stable, however, the belief that *only* vocational training would secure a viable future for Italians became increasingly common.⁵⁰ Opportunities for employment in clerical work and in the liberal professions sharply declined for non-Egyptians and holders of foreign diplomas. These markets had already faced difficulty in absorbing qualified Egyptian graduates – challenges exacerbated by the large presence of foreign job-seekers. Italian politicians and diplomats thus argued that the industrial and technical sectors were the lone alternative for the Italian workforce, especially given that the Egyptian government began to emphasize the need for skilled workers to sustain its continued industrial development (Meyer 1928, 589).

By the late 1930s, the Salesian schools were described in most consular reports as the ‘only schools [able] to guarantee a future to the young people who would decide to stay in Egypt.’⁵¹ As the future of Egypt’s foreign communities came under question, Italian authorities saw the Salesian schools as key assets in integrating Italians into post-capitulatory Egypt.⁵² Importantly, they had hoped this would ward off what Italian diplomats saw as the ‘spectre of a massive repatriation.’⁵³

As noted above, with Italy’s entry into the Second World War, all subsidies were interrupted and plans for reorganizing the Salesian vocational schools were postponed. It was not until the post-war years that the Italian state – from its office in Rome -- deemed a restructuring of the education of Italian residents in Egypt essential to helping Italian residents compete in the closing Egyptian market. After the 1952 military coup d’état and Nasser’s advent to power in 1954, the reorganisation of Italian schools was once again on the state’s agenda and with greater resolve. The watchwords of the new Egyptian regime were ‘Egyptianisation’ and ‘industrialization.’ First and foremost, this entailed liberating the country from the influence that Europe exerted both on economic and cultural levels. A strong *national* industry could only

depend, according to the new Egyptian leadership, on highly qualified technical professionals (Longuenesse 2003, 177). Strengthening technical education to meet the demands of the labour market therefore became a priority for working-class foreign residents in Egypt. Leading figures in the Greek community – on whom the Italian diplomats often modelled their own positions – considered technical training to be the ‘centrepiece of the Greek educational readjustment program’ (Dalachanis 2011, 206).

Seeking to charm the new Egyptian leaders, in 1953 the Salesians organised a public ceremony to celebrate the centennial of the congregation at the Don Bosco Institute in Cairo. The missionaries invited elite members of Egypt’s new government, including Wagih Abaza, Undersecretary of State and Public Instruction. The Salesians put on display the accomplishments of their professional training. More importantly, however, they appealed to the ideology of the military regime. In a welcoming speech, Padre Ottone, the Director of the Don Bosco Institute, emphasised the ‘military’ values on which the Salesian education system was based. He mirrored the industrialist rhetoric of the military officers:

Here, you can admire the synthesis of Salesian work, which conforms to the slogans of the new Egypt: union, discipline and work... Mechanisation plays a central role in the world and Egypt requires technicians to meet the needs of its growing industries. Our schools have trained, and continue to train, technicians (*techniciens*) and elite workers (*ouvriers d’élites*) who are called upon to render real services to [Egypt].⁵⁴

Ottone underlined the Salesians’ desire to participate in building the new Egypt. To substantiate his arguments, the director emphasised recent efforts to boost Arabic-language training among its students.⁵⁵ Indeed, developing technical education was not the only priority for the Salesians. Incorporating Arabic-language instruction in the new curriculum had become essential to the continued survival of the schools.

Since the establishment of Salesian missionary schools, Italian had always been the teaching language. During the interwar period, Arabic was first offered as a foreign language in the schools of Alexandria, Port Said, Suez and Ismailia — but it had not been required. In Cairo, Arabic-language instruction was never included in the curriculum.⁵⁶ This was largely due to the fact that most companies employing its graduates were of French, British and Belgian origin.

Moreover, most of the teaching staff — both priests and laymen — held Italian or another European nationality and did not speak Arabic fluently. Despite repeated injunctions from the leaders of the Catholic Church, who feared their waning presence and influence in Egypt, the failure to master Egypt's national language meant that Arabic-speaking missionaries remained scarce in the entire Salesian Middle Eastern Province until 1952.⁵⁷

How many among us know Arabic sufficiently to teach the language? It's one of the most pressing questions... the fingers of one hand are enough to count [them]... in the 1952-53 scholastic year, Arabic-language classes were entrusted to a Maronite priest in Bethlehem, in Alexandria only Don de Marco is able to do lessons in Arabic. In the new school in Beirut, no religious brother (*confratello*) can confess in Arabic. In Cairo, there's only Don de Rossi... and no one in Port Said...⁵⁸

After 1942, Arabic had been made compulsory in both public administration and private companies. Mastery of the language therefore became essential to securing employment. The Egyptian government sought to meet the demands of nationalists who wanted to eliminate European cultural and linguistic imperialism, and to promote Arabic as a national language at all levels of society. Part and parcel of the broader policy of 'Egyptianisation,' law 28 of 1948 and law 583 of 1955 required all foreign schools in Egypt to follow the same Arabic-language curriculum as Egyptian governmental schools. By appointing Arabic instructors in each foreign school, and by exerted increasing control over foreign educational institutions, the Egyptian Ministry of Education hoped to enforce the terms of these laws (Abecassis 2000, 741).

The Salesian schools therefore had to make more concerted efforts to remain viable. To the new legislation, the missionaries increased the curriculum hours devoted to Arabic (from two to six hours per week in 1949).⁵⁹ Nevertheless, Arabic continued to be taught as a 'foreign language,' while Italian remained the main teaching language. The teaching of non-vocational subjects (such as history) remained oriented towards Italy: as the schools followed the curriculum of state schools in metropolitan Italy. When attempts were made to introduce the teaching of Egyptian history and geography, their results were limited.⁶⁰

The Italian-oriented curriculum and the teaching language in the Salesian schools offered few prospects for Italians hoping to remain in post-1952 Egypt. After much delay, in 1955 the

Italian Ambassador in Cairo proposed practical steps to restructure Italian educational institutions.⁶¹ Entering into negotiations with the Egyptian Ministry of Education, the Salesians —now formally backed by Italian diplomats — requested legal recognition of their technical schools by the Egyptian government.⁶² The schools needed financial support and they hoped that opening them to Egyptian accreditation would introduce external funding. Additionally, stressing the important role the schools would play in integrating the Italian community into the national economy, the Salesians contended that with Egyptian accreditation all students would have equal opportunities for employment in Egyptian state-run industries.⁶³

The Egyptian government stalled in granting legal recognition to the Salesian diplomas. While it did so, the Italian government, by the ministerial decree 2734 of 1955, legally recognised the Salesian vocational schools in Egypt as equivalent to Italian state-run schools.⁶⁴ After years of uncertainty, Salesian vocational training — which had arguably represented a means to integrate into the *local* economy — was officially brought into the metropolitan Italian educational system. The Salesian schools were thoroughly re-organized around this shift. Studies were now divided into a three-year stage (*corso di avviamento professionale*) and a five-year stage (*scuola tecnica*), according to the structures of the Italian technical education system. Furthermore, the schools began to provide Italian vocational and technical diplomas, and the final exams were held in the presence of an Italian ministerial commission.⁶⁵

The enactment of the 1955 decree deserves a few comments. Its emphasis on technical education was not only linked to the continuation of the presence of Italians in Egypt, but officially connected to questions of ‘repatriation’ and ‘emigration.’ As noted above, by the early 1950s, Italian emigration from Egypt had gained momentum. In this context, technical education became a multi-faceted tool that (purportedly) opened pathways for Italians to integrate into the socio-economic conditions of post-war Egypt *or* to facilitate their definitive departures from Egypt. As Dalachanis (2011, 207) has observed in the case of Greek residents in Egypt, ‘technical trained individuals’ were considered ‘more likely to find a job, *whether they decided to remain in Egypt or to leave*’ [emphasis ours]. The Salesians shared this perspective. With the growing number of departures and the tightening regulations on foreign communities in Egypt, the second option seemed more probable.

In an article published in 1955 by the Don Bosco Institute in Alexandria, the author emphasised the importance of technical education for emigration:

[our students] are animated by an ideal: a distant destination, a land of emigration that will offer them wealth (*di fare fortuna*) if they unite their intelligence and skills with the strength of their labour.⁶⁶

The 1955 decree reflected the belief held among many in the Italian government that the Italian community had no future in Egypt. One diplomat wrote: ‘I see no alternatives [other than] mass repatriation... [or emigration] to countries ready to welcome [Italian workers].’⁶⁷ Italian residents believed the same — the widely read and state-subsidised Italian newspaper published at the time, *Cronaca*, filled its pages with debates about prospects of emigration from Egypt.⁶⁸ Diplomats described the ‘end of immigration’ in Egypt. They estimated that the Italian population had declined by ‘20 to 25 percent.’ Although official statistics showed that 1,086 families left between 1949 and 1954, the numbers were much higher.⁶⁹ Many had left without registering their departures, knowing that registering would signify abandoning their rights to residency in Egypt, where they were leaving friends and family. By the mid 1950s, over thirty percent of the Italian population in Egypt was officially unemployed. Aside from those laid-off as a result of the enforcement of hiring quotas, the gravity of the situation was felt particularly by young Italians seeking their first jobs. The local charity organization (*Società italiana di beneficenza*) struggled to assuage increasing poverty within the community: at least 1,053 families received welfare payments.⁷⁰

Encouraging emigration became a top priority for the Salesian institutions, especially as the rhythm of departures increased after 1956. With the nationalization of the Suez Canal Company, tensions grew between foreign and Egyptian workers. Italian diplomats were convinced that there was no future in Egypt but for a ‘small, elite community’ — which would function as an intermediary between the new Italian and Egyptian republics.⁷¹ Hoping to avoid a mass repatriation, however, Italian authorities directed Italians towards other countries. For both political and economic reasons, the Italian state was unable to integrate the large influx of Italians from North Africa and other former colonial territories (Italian and non-Italian alike; Canepa 2016, forthcoming). To facilitate this relocation, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs collaborated with international organizations such as the newly constituted Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration (ICEM) and the International Catholic Migration Committee

(ICMC).⁷² Impotent when it came to supporting high numbers of impoverished departees, the General Direction of Emigration (Direzione Generale di Emigrazione, DGE) recommended granting refugee status to Italians leaving Egypt. Backed by the Ministry of the Interior, the leadership of the DGE anticipated that refugee status would accelerate the relocation of displaced Italians from Egypt through programs administered by the ICEM and ICMC. This, it was hoped, would reduce the burden of supporting Italian repatriates.⁷³

Conclusion

Italian futures in Egypt had been in question since at least the 1930s. Diplomats and other leaders pursued suitable means for their residents to integrate in Egypt's changing conditions. The abolition of capitulations and the events of the Second World War marked the beginning of the end for Italian and other local foreign minorities. Far from being solely the result of Egyptian nationalism, Italian departures had their roots in this conjuncture of mid-twentieth century historical trajectories. Their departures were propelled by the actions of the Italian government, its representatives in Egypt and leaders of Italian institutions in Egypt.

Despite numerous attempts and adjustments, the Salesian missionary schools failed to integrate Italian students into the quickly changing Egyptian economy. For many Italians of Egypt, a diploma from the Don Bosco Institutes served as a passport. Some destinations only admitted qualified workers, and technical training prepared 'skilled migrants' for their integration elsewhere. The qualifications offered by the missionary schools — notably, electrical and mechanical engineering, and electronics — were even requisites for some destination countries.⁷⁴ By delivering an accredited Italian diploma, the Salesian schools provided facilitated the departure of Italians from Egypt well into the 1960s.⁷⁵ More generally, the mission played a central role in promoting the diasporisation of the Italian community in Egypt. Indeed, in 1961, Cairo's Don Bosco Institute became the national seat of International Catholic Migration Committee. The ICMC provided logistic support to Italian emigrants, rendering 'departure' its new unofficial mission.⁷⁶ Just as the Salesians became increasingly central to the Italian community during and after the Second World War, their mission to serve as a means towards integration into the changing Egyptian market morphed into a vehicle for emigration. Between 1960-1963, when Nasser enacted the series of 'nationalisation' laws dealing a final blow to

foreign residents in Egypt, the so-called ‘exodus’ of Italians had long since begun (Wian 1957). Indeed, by that time, more Italians had departed Egypt than those who remained there. In the post-colonial Mediterranean, the Italians of Egypt had thus been transformed anew from immigrants to emigrants.

Acknowledgements:

Joseph would like to thank the American Academy in Rome, the Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa, the Council for European Studies and the Rackham School of Graduate Studies at the University of Michigan for supporting his research and writing. Annalaura’s work has been produced within the Unit of Excellence “Social Sciences and Humanities at the heart of multidisciplinary research for the Mediterranean” (LabexMed). Additionally, her research and writing has been carried out thanks to the A*MIDEX project, managed by the French National Research Agency (ANR). This essay also owes much to the insightful comments of Erica Moretti and Maria Robles Gila.

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Notes:

¹ Italian accounts of departure from Egypt fit within a larger body of nostalgic literature on Egypt’s colonial past. See Hanley (2008), Fahmy (2012, 2004), and Mabro (2002). While the memoirs of Aciman (2007) and Lagnado (2008) have been given attention in these critiques, they and Italian-language accounts (Fishman 2006; Delburgo 2006; Guastamacchi 2012) have yet to be put in dialogue with the longer history of Italo-Egyptian relations (Viscomi 2016).

² Archivio Storico Diplomatico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri [ASDMAE], Archivio Scuole [AS] 1929-1935, Legazione d’Italia in Cairo to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 29 November 1939.

³ Census data from 1936 note that, of the Italians in Alexandria, 73.3 percent were registered as clerks (*impiegati*), labourers, and artisans. In Cairo the numbers were similar, with 61.7 percent registered as labourers and artisans and 22.9 percent clerks (*impiegati*). ASDMAE, Ambasciata Cairo [AC], b.301/ter. Telespresso 11/9/1936.

⁴ Public Records Office [PRO], Foreign Office [FO] 371/24605, Empson to Rasmy Bey, 7 June 1940.

⁵ ASDMAE, AC 1940, B335, 6-8 June 1940.

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- ⁶ ASDMAE, AC 1940, B335 Consolato Generale Alessandria to Legazione Italiana Cairo, 11 June 1940.
- ⁷ PRO, FO 371/24605, Lampson to FO, 11 June 1940.
- ⁸ ASDMAE, AC 1940, B335 Consolato Generale Alexandria to Legazione Italiana Cairo, 12 June 1940.
- ⁹ ASDMAE, Affari Politici [AP], b.33, 'Rapporto sulla colonia italiana in Egitto,' June 1944.
- ¹⁰ Ministero degli Affari Esteri, Commissariato dell'Emigrazione, *Emigrazione e colonie: Raccolta di rapport dei RR. agenti diplomatici e consolari, Volume III* (Rome, 1906): 221.
- ¹¹ Archivio Salesiano Centrale [ASC], b.383, Monsignor Bonfigli to Don Rua, 28 November 1986.
- ¹² *Le scuole professionali salesiane. Programmi didattici et professionali*, 1910.
- ¹³ ASC, F038, Visita straordinaria di Don Bretto, 1908.
- ¹⁴ ASSA, Registri delle pensioni 1900-1920.
- ¹⁵ ASDMAE, AC, b.75 bis, Schiaparelli to MAE, 12 February 1903.
- ¹⁶ ASDMAE, AC, b.75 bis, Supplemento to Commercio Italiano Pro-scuola, 10 May 1905.
- ¹⁷ ASDMAE, AC, b.202, Rapporto alla Direzione generale delle Scuole all'estero sulle scuole coloniali di Mansoura Ismailia, 18 June 1925.
- ¹⁸ Archivio dell'associazione nazionale per soccorrere i missionari italiani all'Estero [AANSNMI], 5/C, Il console di Porto Said to Schiaparelli, 8 November 1924; AANSNMI, 5/D, Rapporto trimestriale sulla scuola di Suez, 1928.
- ¹⁹ AANSNMI, 5/D, Rapporto trimestriale sulla scuola di Suez, 1928.
- ²⁰ ASC, b.711, Cronaca della casa di Porto Said dalla fondazione all'anno 1937; ASC b.727, Cronaca della scuola di Suez dalla fondazione all'anno 1937.
- ²¹ ASDMAE, AS, b.243, Il console del Cairo to MAE, 12 June 1930.
- ²² Archivio della scuola salesiana del Cairo [ASSC], Statistica generale dall'anno 1931 all'anno 1950.
- ²³ ASC, b.038, Visita straordinaria di Don Candela, 1929-1930.
- ²⁴ ASSC, Corrispondenza con la Legazione Svizzera, Breve riassunto della vita scolastica in Egitto durante l'anno scolastico 1940-1941.
- ²⁵ ASSC, Corrispondenza con la Legazione Svizzera, Don Biondi to Brunner, 19 October 1940.
- ²⁶ Archivio della scuola salesiana di Alessandria [ASSA], Corrispondenza con la Legazione svizzera, 1940.
- ²⁷ ASSC, Condizioni per la riapertura delle scuole, 4 February 1941.
- ²⁸ ASC, b.771, Casa del Cairo. Cronaca 1938-1939.
- ²⁹ ASSC, Memorandum di Don Biondi to De Astis, 24 September 1946.
- ³⁰ ASDMAE, AP (Egitto 1946-1950), b.6, La Legazione d'Italia al Cairo al Ministero degli Affari esteri, 29 April 1947.
- ³¹ ASC, F414, Memorandum dell'Ispettore Ferruzzi to Direttore dell'Istituto Don Bosco, 29 November 1946.
- ³² ASDMAE, AP (Egitto 1946-1950), b.6, La Legazione d'Italia to MAE, 29 April 1947.
- ³³ ASDMAE, AP (Egitto 1931-1945), b.33, 'interessi italiani in Egitto', 1944.
- ³⁴ Swiss Federal Archives, E2001-02#1000/111 BD:7, Memoire June 1944.
- ³⁵ Archivio Centrale dello Stato [ACS], PCM 1944-47, 15-3/11222, 'notizie sulla collettività italiana d'Egitto', 21 December 1944.
- ³⁶ ASDMAE, AP (Egitto 1946-50), b.2, Rappresentanza italiana in Egitto to MAE 4 September 1946.

- ³⁷ ASDMAE, AP (Egitto 1931-45) b.33, Memorandum 30 November 1943 (Brindisi) and Memorandum 12 February 1944 (Salerno).
- ³⁸ ASDMAE, AP (Egitto 1946-1950), b.4, Mochi to MAE, 30 January 1947.
- ³⁹ ASDMAE, AP (Egitto 1946-1950), b.1, Console generale a Londra to MAE 'Argentina-Emigrazione', 3 December 1946.
- ⁴⁰ 'I nostri lavoratori e le possibilità d'emigrazione', *Il Mattino della Domenica* 7 July 1946; 'L'emigrazione nel Venezuela è aperta agli Italiani', *Il Mattino della Domenica* 14 July 1946.
- ⁴¹ 'Il rimpatrio dei connazionali', *Il Mattino della Domenica* 10 November 1946.
- ⁴² ASDMAE, AP (Egitto 1955), b.1006, Ambasciata d'Italia al Cairo, Rapporto di fine missione, 3 August 1955.
- ⁴³ ASDMAE, AP (Egitto 1946-1950), b.2, Situazione del mercato del lavoro a Porto Said, 6 November 1946 and Basso to De Astis 7 November 1946.
- ⁴⁴ ASDMAE, AP (Egitto 1955), b.1006, Ambasciata d'Italia al Cairo, Rapporto di fine missione, 3 August 1955.
- ⁴⁵ ASDMAE, AP (Egitto 1955), b.1006, Consolato Generale d'Italia ad Alessandria, Rapporto consolare, 1954.
- ⁴⁶ G.P.d.F. 'Il passato e il presente degli italiani in Egitto', *Italiani nel Mondo*, 25 February 1951.
- ⁴⁷ Giani, R. 'Declino a Porto Said della collettività italiana', *Italiani nel Mondo*, 25 January 1951.
- ⁴⁸ ASDMAE, AS (1929-1935), Rapporto di Cignolini, 4 December 1931.
- ⁴⁹ ASDMAE, AS (1936-1945), b.74, Morganti to MAE, 24 June 1938.
- ⁵⁰ ASDMAE, AS (1936-1945), b.74, La Legazione d'Italia al Cairo to MAE, 29 November 1939, Morganti to MAE, 21 June 1938.
- ⁵¹ ASDMAE, AS (1936-1945), b.74, La Legazione to MAE, 29 November 1939.
- ⁵² ASDMAE, AS (1936-1945), b.74, Giurati to MAE, 16 November 1939.
- ⁵³ ASDMAE, AC, b.312, Rapporto del console generale di Alessandria to Legazione del Cairo, 15 June 1938.
- ⁵⁴ 'Un saint moderne: Don Bosco', *Images*, 23 May 1953.
- ⁵⁵ 'Il y a cent ans, Don Bosco fondait la première école des arts et métiers', *le Journal d'Egypte*, 15 May 1953.
- ⁵⁶ ASC, F771, Cronaca annuale 1936-1937.
- ⁵⁷ ASC, b.040, La congregazione Pro-Ecclesia Orientali ai dirigenti degli Istituti che possiedono delle opere scolastiche nel Vicino-Oriente arabo, 7 March 1945.
- ⁵⁸ ASC, b.037, memorandum di Don Laconi sul Teologato della Provincia Orientale Gesù Adolescente, 1952.
- ⁵⁹ ASSC, Corrispondenza con il consolato 1947-1949, Rapporto sull'attività scolastica, 1948-1949.
- ⁶⁰ ASCC, Cronaca della Casa del Cairo, 1953-1954.
- ⁶¹ ACS, PCM 56-61 MAT, 956/61, 2.3, n. 59993, Rapporto dell'ambasciatore al Cairo (Fornari), 21 December 1956.
- ⁶² ASC, F771, Cronaca annuale 1955-1956.
- ⁶³ ASDMAE, AP (Egitto 1955), b.1006, Consolato d'Italia al Cairo. Rapporto consolare, 1954.
- ⁶⁴ ASDMAE, AP (Egitto 1944-1958), b.65, Il Ministero degli Affari Esteri alla Legazione d'Italia al Cairo, 30 August 1955.
- ⁶⁵ ASC, F771, Cronaca 1955-1956.
- ⁶⁶ ASSC, 'Scuole professionali', *Don Bosco in Egitto*, May 1955.

⁶⁷ ASDMAE, AP (Egitto 1955), b.1006, 'Rapporto Consolare 1954' Alexandria 30 June 1955.

⁶⁸ 'I nostri problemi: una quota di emigrazione anche per gli italiani residenti in Egitto', *Cronaca* 16 April 1955.

⁶⁹ These numbers reflect only 'official' departures: those orchestrated by the consulates.

⁷⁰ This data comes from the archives at the now defunct Consolato Generale d'Italia in Alexandria and the still active Cancelleria Consolare in Cairo.

⁷¹ ACS, PCM 59-61 MAT, 956/61, 2.3, n. 59993, Rapporto dell'ambasciatore italiano al Cairo Fornari, 21 December 1956.

⁷² ACS, PCM 59-61 MAT, 959/61, 2.3, n.59993, La direzione generale dell'emigrazione alla PCM, 14 December 1956, Rapporto dell'Ambasciatore Fornari to MAE, 21 December 1956; On the history of ICEM and its position in the assistance of European refugees during the postwar period, see Elie (2010).

⁷³ ACS, Ministero del lavoro e delle previdenze sociali, DG Collocamento della manodopera - divisione VIII emigrazione verso paesi extracomunitari, b.457, CIME to MAE 26 June 1953, DGE to MI & MLPS 29 May 1953. For more on this topic see Viscomi (2016).

⁷⁴ 'Scuole professionali', *Don Bosco in Egitto*, ND May 1955.

⁷⁵ 'Giusto riconoscimento', *Cronaca*, 1 October 1955.

⁷⁶ ASC, b.035, Rapporto annuale della Provincia Salesiana Gesù Adolescente, 1962-1963. We know little about the activities of this centre, since no substantial archives have been found. In 1967, according to the mission's registries, around 6,000 persons requested assistance. Still, only 1,000 emigrated: 'most lacked professional qualification and a guarantor in overseas countries', ASC, F771, Istituto Don Bosco del Cairo, *Cronaca* quinquennale, 1962-1967.

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Italian Summary:

In seguito all'entrata dell'Italia nella seconda guerra mondiale, le autorità anglo-egiziane rimpatriarono i diplomatici italiani dall'Egitto, arrestarono circa 5.000 italiani e sequestrarono i conti personali e quelli aziendali. Le istituzioni italiane furono chiuse a tempo indeterminato, incluse le scuole statali italiane. La speranza di un futuro in Egitto per i circa 60.000 residenti italiani cominciava a svanire. Le scuole missionarie salesiane, il cui obiettivo fin dal diciannovesimo secolo fu quello di inculcare valori nazionali e religiosi agli emigrati italiani, rimasero le uniche istituzioni educative italiane attive, che si avvalsero della protezione vaticana. Gli istituti salesiani assunsero di conseguenza un ruolo centrale nella vita di molti giovani italiani. Dopo la guerra, questi stessi giovani cominciarono a partire dall'Egitto, in parte spinti dalle opportunità lavorative offerte dalla loro formazione professionale. Basandosi su documenti diplomatici e fonti d'archivio d'istituzioni pubbliche e private, il presente articolo analizza i tentativi delle scuole missionarie salesiane d'integrare gli italiani nella forza lavoro egiziana attraverso la formazione professionale e il loro definitivo fallimento. Oltre ai cambiamenti socioeconomici e geo-politici, questo fallimento favorì le partenze degli italiani d'Egitto, trasformandoli da immigrati in emigranti.