Spain’s Catholic Internationalists

In the summer of 1958, dozens of Spanish social experts, medical professionals, and welfare workers visited the Universal Exposition in Brussels, the first such event held since the Second World War. The Spanish visitors were primarily drawn by the Vatican pavilion and the events organized around it by a group of Catholic NGOs, known at the time as international Catholic organizations (ICOs). Spanish doctors, nurses, and pharmacists took part in the first Catholic World Health Conference, debating the role of Catholics and Catholic values in modern medicine.¹ Leaders of the Spanish welfare organization, Caritas, attended the annual meeting of Caritas Internationalis, where they discussed the Pope’s call to strengthen Catholic development work in Africa and to spread their activities beyond national borders.² The Universal Exposition provided Catholics, both from Spain and abroad, with the chance to share their Christian-inspired visions of the future and to debate the role of Catholics in the modern world. Their activities formed part of an influential, although often overlooked feature of the post-war international landscape: the organizations and networks pursuing a distinct model of Catholic internationalism.

As we saw in Chapter 4, the Francoist social state was conceived and presented as a project defined by Catholic values. In a pseudonymously authored article published in 1947, for example, Franco made the link between the social state and Catholic faith explicit. ‘In opposition to social anarchy,’ he wrote, ‘Spain offers a true social State… [s]ocial laws inspired by the strictest Catholic orthodoxy are building up social security under a doctrine which nourishes and animates all parts of the State.’³ The link between Catholicism and the social state reflected the National-Catholic ideology which lay at the core of the Francoist system, and the centrality of an arch-conservative Catholic faith to all sectors of the Francoist coalition, including the Falange.⁴ It was also a function of the prominent role which Catholic organizations played within the Francoist health and welfare system, and the traditional dominance of the Church over social and charitable

work in Spain. But as had been evident through their work in Africa and Latin America, the involvement of Spanish social experts in the Catholic events surrounding the Universal Exposition demonstrated that the idea of a Catholic-inspired Francoist social system also had an important international dimension, particularly in the context of the early Cold War.

Isolated diplomatically after 1945 and under pressure over his wartime ties with the Axis powers, Franco had boosted the role of Catholics within his cabinet, largely at the expense of the Falange. In order to sell these changes to the outside world, Franco appointed Alberto Martín Artajo as foreign minister. The head of the lay activist group Catholic Action, Martín Artajo, had been active in Catholic politics both inside and outside of Spain for decades. At a time when western European politics was dominated by Christian democratic parties, many of whose leaders were also Catholic Action members, he was able to use his international ties and reputation as a relative moderate to present Spain as a responsible, Christian member of the international community, particularly to Catholic-majority states in Europe and the Americas.⁵ As the Cold War developed the regime sought to portray Franco’s Spain as the ‘spiritual reserve of the west’, its global status resting on a combination of its anti-communist credentials and its unique adherence to Christian (Catholic) values. It was an image which aligned with contemporary ideas about the ‘Abendland’ or Christian west which were popular among conservative Catholic politicians elsewhere in western Europe, and which defined the Cold War west as a Christian community united by its shared history, faith and culture, and by its opposition to communism.⁶ Within this context, ICOs and networks like those meeting around the Universal Exposition in 1958 provided an ideal forum for lay Spanish Catholics to promote a positive image of Franco’s Spain to the global Catholic community.

Although it drew on theological ideas about the unity of mankind under God and on the supranational traditions of the Church, post-war Catholic internationalism was not a purely religious phenomenon. Rather, it represented a specific response to developments in the post-war world, building on over a century of Catholic engagement with the secular international order.⁷ Since the early nineteenth century, both lay and religious Catholics had worked together in transnational networks beyond the formal structures of the Church, mobilized by

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political campaigns in defence of Catholic interests, or by social and humanitarian causes. The international networks of Catholic voluntary organizations which emerged during this period expanded rapidly during the 1940s and 1950s. An increasing number of international Catholic lay organizations brought together intellectuals, students, politicians, scientists, and professional groups to formulate a Catholic response to the issues facing modern society, particularly in the fields of social work and humanitarianism. During the same period, Catholics played an active role in global debates around human rights and economic development, as well as the emergence of secular international organizations such as the UN and the European Communities.

Many Catholics were enthusiastic advocates of post-war internationalism. But others saw secular international institutions as a threat to global Catholicism, worrying about their ‘material’ values, the growing emphasis on technical development, and the promotion of population and birth-control policies by organizations such as the WHO. In response, they established, reinvigorated, or expanded a wide range of ICOs through which they aimed to cement Christian values at the heart of the international system. Through these organizations, they hoped to mobilize the world’s Catholics against the global threat of materialism, and to strengthen Catholic influence within secular international organizations. ‘Catholics also have their message to transmit to the world,’ argued one Spanish visitor to the Universal Exposition. ‘One must not try only to improve it, but to save it, providing the means necessary to achieve eternal happiness . . . Man today has more need of a solid moral base than of machines and technology.’

Engaging with Catholic internationalism was one of the primary ways through which Franco’s Spain interacted with the outside world during the immediate post-war period. Spanish intellectuals and experts were warmly welcomed within these Catholic international structures, unlike in many of their secular equivalents. The historical prestige of Spanish Catholicism, and the global Catholic mobilization in support of Francoist forces during the civil war, ensured a broad sympathy for the Franco regime amongst the global Catholic community after 1945. Although international Catholic support for the Franco regime was far from universal, it was strengthened by the emergence of the Cold War, which helped to legitimize the Francoist emphasis on Spain’s Catholic and anti-communist identity. This favourable political context, combined with the intellectual and theological underpinnings of Catholic internationalism—the universality of

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8 Los católicos en la vida internacional (Madrid: Vicentius Tena, 1960).
mankind under God, the supranational authority of the Church, and the idea of solidarity among the global Catholic community—allowed Spanish Catholics to stake a claim for their inclusion within ICOs.

This did not mean, however, that Spanish engagement with Catholic internationalism was a purely top-down phenomenon or a mere extension of Francoist cultural diplomacy. Despite their ambiguous attitude towards the post-war international system, many Spanish Catholics were genuinely engaged with international debates. Spanish Catholic elites used international networks and events to discuss key developments in the post-war world, from human rights and the welfare state, to the process of European integration. By acting internationally they hoped both to demonstrate the unity and strength of the global Catholic community, and to maximize Catholic influence within international organizations in order to counter what they saw as the malign influence of atheists, Protestants, and communists. But they also aimed to strengthen Catholic influence within Spain itself. Lay groups such as the mass-membership Catholic Action and the elite National Catholic Association of Propagandists (Asociación Católica Nacional de Propagandistas; ACNP) were anxious to maintain an autonomous ‘Catholic space’ within the Francoist state, despite the ideological dominance of National Catholicism.¹² They were particularly concerned with neutralizing the influence of the Falange by ensuring the dominance of Catholic institutions in key areas of social and economic life. This engagement with international affairs was dominated by members of the lay Catholic elite. But it also spread beyond those traditional groups to mass-membership professional and lay organizations, including nursing and women’s groups.

This chapter examines Spanish involvement in post-war Catholic internationalism and its impact on Spanish political and social organizations. It begins by exploring the political context of Catholic internationalism in Spain through the work of the ACNP. Senior figures in the ACNP used their positions within a wide range of ICOs, from the student group Pax Romana to the peace organization Pax Christi, to promote the reputation and influence of the Franco regime among Catholics abroad. The second section uses the case study of the Spanish nursing association, Salus Infirmorum, to show how Catholic organizations helped to promote Spanish involvement in both religious and secular forms of international health. The Church’s focus on social work meant that professionals in these fields were prominent in Spanish involvement with post-war Catholic internationalism. This was particularly the case in the nursing profession, where Catholics around the world were united in their often critical engagement with the work of organizations such as the WHO. The section also

argues that Catholic forms of international cooperation provided Spanish women with one of the few opportunities to develop influential public roles on the world stage. Spanish nurses actively engaged in international debates about health, birth control, and the nursing profession, despite Francoist efforts to limit Spanish women to the domestic sphere. Their work highlights the ways in which Spain influenced ICOs and movements, but also how Catholic internationalism affected life in Spain.

The final section explores Spanish involvement in post-war Catholic humanitarianism. The thousands of Spanish missionaries serving around the world, many of them women working in the fields of health and education, came under increasing pressure from both the Spanish state and the Church after 1945 to professionalize their work and respond to the global interest in ‘international development’. Lay welfare organizations such as Caritas formed part of international networks of Catholic organizations, providing support for victims of natural disasters and Christian refugees abroad. Their humanitarian work, however, reflected the interests and ideology of the Franco regime. International aid programmes were focussed on Catholics who were perceived to be victims of communism, and Caritas was used by the Spanish state to channel US social aid following the Pact of Madrid in 1953. Their work highlights the ambiguous position of Spain’s Catholic internationalists, genuinely engaged with debates and developments in the post-war world, but firmly tied to the interests and outlook of the Franco regime.

Catholic Internationalism and the ACNP

Much of the Spanish participation in post-war Catholic internationalism revolved around the leadership of the elite Catholic group, the ACNP.¹³ Their efforts were closely aligned with Francoist foreign policy. In the immediate post-war era, Spanish involvement in the Catholic student organization, Pax Romana, was used by Francoist diplomats to underline Spain’s international credibility during the debates about the Franco regime at the UN. The regular series of International Catholic Conversations (Conversaciones Católicos Internacionales), held in San Sebastian from the late 1940s, helped to build ties between Francoist Catholic elites and their European counterparts, as well as promoting an open and

outward-facing image of Franco’s Spain to the outside world. Following the regime’s alliance with the US and entry into the UN in the mid-1950s, its increasing focus on European integration was reflected in Spanish involvement with European Catholic organizations aiming to forge a more right-wing, anti-communist alternative to the liberal Europeanism emerging from Brussels and Strasbourg. Although a number of the ACNP members involved in these groups would later move towards the internal anti-Francoist opposition, during the 1940s and 1950s their international engagement did not necessarily reflect any disagreement with the regime.¹⁴ Rather, they were driven by a Catholic-inspired commitment to international collaboration, combined with a desire to promote the interests and image of Franco’s Spain on the world stage.

Formed in 1909, the ACNP brought together leading Catholic intellectuals and lay elites dedicated to the ‘re-Christianization’ of society through the work of a select minority of lay Catholics working in the fields of politics, business, law, education, and the media. The organization played a leading role in Catholic politics and the press during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship, the Second Republic, and the civil war, particularly through its control of the newspaper El Debate. Although a number of ACNP members were included in the first Francoist cabinets, their role was constrained during the Second World War by the power of the Falange. But the ACNP’s influence was greatly enhanced after the end of the war, not least in the field of foreign policy where one of its leading members, Martín Artajo, was appointed foreign minister.¹⁵

At the centre of the ACNP’s international engagement was Joaquín Ruiz-Giménez, president of the ICO Pax Romana. Ruiz-Giménez was a senior figure within the Franco regime during the immediate post-war period, acting as one of the key conduits between the regime and the international Catholic community. During the 1930s he had been active in Catholic student politics, and after the civil war had held a senior position within the Francoist student organization, the Sindicato Español Universitario. He was the first director of the ICH and was appointed as ambassador to the Vatican in 1948, initiating the negotiations which would eventually result in the Concordat. In 1951 he was appointed as minister of education before being dismissed during the student protests of 1956, gradually moving towards the internal Christian democratic opposition and establishing the influential journal Cuadernos para el Diálogo in the 1960s.¹⁶

Pax Romana had originally been founded as an international Catholic students’ association in 1921, later branching into two distinct sections for students and intellectuals.¹⁷ Although based in Freiburg, Switzerland, Spanish Catholics had always played an important role in the organization. Ruiz-Giménez had begun his involvement with the group during the 1930s. In September 1939 he attended the Pax Romana annual congress in Washington alongside Martín Artajo, where it was agreed that Zaragoza would host the subsequent conference in 1940, and where Ruiz-Giménez was appointed president.¹⁸ The 1940 conference was postponed as a result of the war, but Ruiz-Giménez maintained contact with Catholic groups abroad throughout the conflict, attending a Catholic students’ congress in Montpellier in 1942 involving students from France, Spain, and Switzerland. In 1943 he visited Rome alongside his fellow ACNP member, Alfredo Sánchez Bello, where he discussed the future of Pax Romana with Pope Pius XII, emphasizing the important role it could play in re-establishing international ties between Catholic students and intellectuals after the war.¹⁹

The organization was quickly reactivated after the end of the conflict. Ruiz-Giménez attended Pax Romana meetings in both Freiburg and London during 1945, reaffirming Spain’s claim to host the next international conference. His efforts were successful, and the conference took place in Salamanca and El Escorial during the summer of 1946. Its scale involved considerable cost, much of it borne by the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. But at the height of Spain’s diplomatic isolation it succeeded in drawing over 225 foreign students and intellectuals from thirty-three countries, as well as leading representatives of the Spanish Church and lay Catholic organizations.²⁰

The themes of the conference were designed to emphasize the historical commitment of Spanish Catholics to international cooperation. The official topic of debate was the legacy of the Spanish Dominican scholar, Francisco de Vitoria, whose work in sixteenth-century Salamanca focused on the nature of international society and cooperation among nations.²¹ Along with figures such as Hugo Grotius, he is often cited as one of the founders of international law.²² As such he was a well-known figure among twentieth-century internationalists and international organizations, with one of the main council chambers in Geneva’s Palais des Nations named in his honour. As well as drawing links between secular

¹⁸ Barreiro Gordillo, Historia de la Asociación Católica de Propagandistas, 82–4.
¹⁹ Ibid., 153–90.
²¹ American Catholic History Research Center and University Archives (ACUA), US Conference of Catholic Bishops Office of the General Secretary, Box 156, Folder 49, ‘XIX Congreso Mundial de Pax Romana’.
internationalism and the history of Catholic philosophy, the conference also discussed ways to strengthen cooperation between Catholics worldwide. In particular, it raised the plight of Catholic students from eastern Europe who had been forced to flee Soviet occupation. In Spain these calls prompted the creation of new groups and institutions to support such students, which by 1960 were funding the university studies of over 600 eastern European students in Madrid.²³

For the Franco regime, Spain’s prominent role in Pax Romana was key to its post-war foreign policy. The Martín Artajo-era Ministry of Foreign Affairs provided both practical and financial support for Spain’s involvement with Pax Romana from 1945. The 1946 conference, taking place at the height of Franco’s diplomatic isolation and the UN crisis, was eagerly seized upon by Spanish diplomats as evidence of Spain’s international respectability. Writing to its ambassadors in June 1946 encouraging them to make use of the conference in their discussions on the UN, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs argued that it provided a ‘magnificent example of the potential of Catholic culture, and demonstrates to illustrious foreign visitors the development and energy which these studies and these principles have in our country today’.²⁴ Ruiz-Giménez was intimately aware of the diplomatic importance of Spain’s leadership of Pax Romana. Writing to a Spanish ambassador in Latin America, he argued that the success of the 1946 congress was important ‘as much from a national as a Catholic point of view, beset [as we are] in recent months by the continuous libels launched against our nation’.²⁵

It was far from clear, however, that Spanish involvement in Pax Romana served to boost the prestige of the Franco regime among Catholics abroad. Even before the 1946 conference, there had been those outside of Spain who were critical of the organization’s accommodation with the Franco regime. At the 1945 London meeting attended by Ruiz-Giménez, the plan to host the next conference in Spain was criticized both by French Catholics and by Spanish Basques in exile in Britain. At the 1949 Pax Romana conference in Mexico, Spanish attendees reported that leading Pax Romana figures openly criticized the regime and its isolationism.²⁶ These attitudes soon began to erode the support of the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which as the post-war diplomatic crisis receded, was less willing to allocate scarce resources to the organization. By the early 1950s, Spain’s improved bilateral ties and its agreement with the US meant that Spanish diplomats were no longer as reliant on Catholic intellectuals to do their work for

²⁴ AGA (10)91 54/11850, Caracas Embassy, MAE circular, 26 June 1946.
²⁵ AGA (10)89 54/10099, Ruiz-Giménez to Montevideo Ambassador, 3 April 46.
them, and their interest in Pax Romana as a foreign policy tool rapidly diminished.²⁷ Spanish Catholics continued to play a role in Pax Romana. But 1946 represented the high point of Spanish intellectual and political engagement with the organization.

Aside from Joaquín Ruiz-Giménez, the other key figure in the ACNP’s international work was Carlos Santamaría. Born in the Basque Country in 1909, Santamaría trained as a mathematician and meteorologist, and prior to the civil war was active in the Basque scientific and educational communities.²⁸ In 1935 he was involved in the short-lived ‘International Catholic Courses’ held in San Sebastian, which brought together Catholic students and intellectuals from Spain and abroad to promote, among other things, debate about the nature and form of ‘Catholic internationalism’.²⁹ In 1946 he helped to revive these courses as the International Catholic Conversations, which ran until 1959 and acted as one of the chief meeting points between Catholics from Spain and their international colleagues during the immediate post-war era. Santamaría was also closely involved with other ICOs such as the peace movement Pax Christi, and in 1950 was appointed as head of the ACNP’s new Secretariat for International Relations.³⁰

The International Catholic Conversations in San Sebastian aimed to bring together European Catholics to discuss the challenges posed by the post-war world.³¹ The events took place every year and lasted for a week, with themes changing annually. During the late 1940s and early 1950s the Conversations focussed on the relationship of Catholics to both national states and to the newly developing international institutions, with discussions on European unity, the rights and responsibilities of individuals to the modern state, human rights, and internationalism. Attracting Catholics from over thirty countries, the majority of foreign participants in the Conversations came from France, Italy, and Belgium. A number of representatives from Latin America attended with the financial support of Ruiz-Giménez’s ICH, alongside eastern European Catholics who had fled into exile in Spain following Soviet occupation. Broadly speaking, the participants were drawn from the European Catholic right. Some participants, such as the French intellectual Achille Dauphin-Meunier, had been involved with the Vichy regime or with other European collaborationist governments during the war. Others, however, belonged more clearly to the liberal, Christian democratic mainstream within post-war European Catholicism, including the Belgian theologian Jacques Leclercq and the British editor of The Tablet, Douglas Woodruff.³²

²⁷ Ibid.
²⁸ Archive of the ACNP, Madrid (AACNP), expediente Carlos Santamaría.
³⁰ Juste, ‘La política europea de los católicos españoles en los años 40 y 50’.
³² AACNP, Box 156, 6.13, ‘Conclusiones de las Conversaciones Católicas Internacionales de San Sebastián, 5–8 Sept 1947’. 
The events were underpinned by a specific concept of Catholic internationalism set out by Santamaría in the official journal of the Conversations in 1949.³³ Humanity, he argued, is indivisible under Christ, and it was the duty of Catholics to ensure that unity was reflected in the temporal realm. In the modern era, nations had created ‘artificial dominions of thought’ which had increasingly divided the peoples of the world, including Catholics, from each other.³⁴ The contemporary growth of international organizations and events reflected an admirable attempt to overcome such divisions, and although it was not an easy task, it was the world’s Catholics, thanks to their sense of citizenship and their consciousness of the universality of mankind, who were ‘best prepared for international collaboration’.³⁵ For Santamaría, this collaboration needed to take the form both of international cooperation between Catholics, and active Catholic participation in secular international institutions. Embracing these forms of internationalism should not mean undermining the diversity among nations or imposing a kind of ‘Catholic Kominform’, but required Catholics to recognize the primacy of the ‘essential’ sentiment of humanity over the ‘accidental’ sentiment of nationality.³⁶ Catholic internationalism would therefore be able to forge a path between ‘Marxist monism’ on the one hand, which sought to destroy all natural and spiritual relations between society and the state, and ‘closed nationalisms’ on the other, which shut the door on ‘political fraternity’.³⁷

It is tempting to read into the Conversations a form of early Catholic opposition to the Franco regime, particularly as many of those involved later went on to become influential centre-right opposition figures in the 1960s and early 1970s. Perhaps inevitably, the events brought Spanish Catholics into contact with foreigners critical of the Franco regime, and with very different views about the role of the modern state from those commonly advocated in Spain. Discussions of human rights and the relationship of the individual to the state clearly risked inviting opinions critical of the Franco regime. Many of the foreign participants promoted the idea of a secular state in which the Church should play a non-political role, in direct contrast to the avowed clericalism of the Francoist state.³⁸ Some leading Spanish Catholics refused to attend the Conversations on account of the distrustful and reproachful atmosphere caused by political and religious disagreements between French and Spanish Catholics.³⁹ Articles critical of the Franco regime linked with some of the high-profile participants at San Sebastian appeared in foreign Catholic periodicals.⁴⁰ Some French participants complained directly to the organizers of the Conversations in 1947 when the Spanish

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³⁴ Ibid., 90–1. ³⁵ Ibid. ³⁶ Ibid., 97–8. ³⁷ Ibid., 100.
³⁹ AACNP, Box 156, 6.13, Conversaciones Católicos Internacionales de San Sebastián, Enrique Calabia to Fernando Martin-Sanchez, 22 February 1948.
⁴⁰ AACNP, Box 156, 6.13, Carlos Santamaria to Fernando Martin Sanches, 24 April 1948.
government censored a regional Catholic Action publication which had published an article in the Basque language.\textsuperscript{41}

The idea of the Conversations as a site of opposition should not, however, be overstated. The events were heavily funded and promoted by the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministries of Education and Propaganda, and the ICH, all of which saw them as a way of promoting Spain’s international reputation during the height of Franco’s diplomatic isolation. In promoting their cause to government officials, the organizers of the Conversations presented them as a means to build Catholic unity in the face of ‘the threat of international materialism’.\textsuperscript{42} The organizers made efforts to predict where discussions would prove politically sensitive, and to arrange sufficient representation of conservative Spanish intellectuals and theologians to ensure that the National-Catholic view was sufficiently represented.\textsuperscript{43} The format of the events also meant that a greater than usual range of opinion could be tolerated. Restricted to a relatively small number of Spanish and foreign intellectuals, public communication of the debates could be closely controlled by the organizers to effectively guide public opinion. Abroad, demonstrating a degree of tolerance for open discussion would help to counter allegations about the ‘supposed intransigence’ of the Franco regime.\textsuperscript{44}

Indeed, the Spanish organizers and participants in the Conversations were keen to emphasize that their vision of internationalism was compatible with the National-Catholic principles of the Francoist state. Writing in 1949, for example, Carlos Santamaría framed the question of international cooperation around a Christian notion of ‘humanity’:

This meaning of humanity which we defend, in no way stands in opposition to the just and authentic sense of nationality, only to that which is unjust and narrow. The motives of nationality can neither supersede those of humanity, nor be an obstacle to social and friendly coexistence with the other countries of the world. And a political ideology which doesn’t attend to the absolute principles of the spirit can in no way be the cause of distance between peoples, whose social, cultural and religious communication precedes any particular political forms.\textsuperscript{45}

For Santamaría, ‘unjust’ forms of nationalism risked undermining the natural unity of mankind and international cooperation between people of different countries. But far from being a criticism of Francoism or the Franco regime, his argument suggested that the spiritual and religious basis of Spanish nationalism, or at least the version promoted by Spanish Catholics, placed it firmly within the family of ‘just’ and ‘authentic’ national sentiment. This echoed the arguments used by the Franco regime in support of its membership of the UN and its place within

\textsuperscript{41} AACNP, Box 156, 6.13, unsigned letter to Carlos Santamaría, 27 September 1948.
\textsuperscript{42} AACNP, Box 156, 6.13, José Ángel Lizasoain to Director General de Propaganda, 18 May 1948.
\textsuperscript{43} AACNP, Box 156, 6.13, ‘Informes’, 1948.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{45} ‘Notas para el diálogo’, Documentos: Conversaciones Católicas Internacionales, 3 (1949), 98.
the post-war international community. Franco’s Spain, its propagandists argued, was a fundamentally Christian country governed by a political system based firmly on Catholic values and a commitment to social justice. Those who denounced it as a fascist-inspired opponent of the post-war international community were wrong. Spain was not governed by a closed and narrow form of nationalism, but by an open and outward-looking patriotism rooted in spiritual principles, and committed to international cooperation and coexistence.

The Conversations were far from the only international activity Carlos Santamaría was involved in. Over the course of the 1940s and 1950s he was an official observer at various UNESCO conferences and took part in numerous associations, events, and initiatives bringing together European Catholics.⁴⁶ Most notably, he served as the International Secretary of the Catholic peace organization, Pax Christi, which emerged under the tutelage of French and German bishops in 1950 as a forum to discuss Catholic responses to the emerging Cold War and ways to promote peace, while maintaining a firmly anti-communist stance. His involvement in these organizations and his trips abroad were partly funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for whom his wide-ranging contacts among European Catholics, his access to the key debates and decisions within that community, and his ability to act as a ‘moderate’ advocate of the Spanish cause proved diplomatically useful. He was appointed as the ACNP’s first secretary of international affairs in 1949, and from 1950 was utilized by Martín Artajo as Spain’s informal representative within international Catholic congresses and organizations.⁴⁷

From the mid-1950s, the ACNP’s international activities moved away from international organizations towards new forms of anti-communist Europeanism, reflecting the increasing European focus of Spanish foreign policy following the normalization of relations with the UN in 1955. Leading members of Catholic Action and the ACNP gained prominent roles in organizations aiming to use anti-communism, either to forge cooperation between European Catholics, or to promote a specific vision of European integration to the right of those emerging from Strasburg and Brussels. One of the first manifestations of this trend was the anti-communist organization, the Committee for the Defence of Christian Civilization. The committee had been established by a group of former Vichy sympathizers around the French Catholic intellectual Paul Lesourd in 1947, and although its vision of Europe was substantially to the right of the Christian democratic mainstream, it attracted high-profile support from Catholic political leaders in West Germany and elsewhere, including the Belgian foreign minister Paul van Zeeland.⁴⁸ The Spanish committee formed one of the most active

⁴⁶ AACNP, Carlos Santamaría folder.
⁴⁷ AACNP, Relaciones Internacionales box, Sánchez Julia to Santamaría, 30 June 1950.
⁴⁸ AACNP, Relaciones Internacionales box, ‘Comité de Defensa de la Civilización Cristiana’.
branches of the organization, led initially by Joaquin Ruiz-Giménez and his fellow propagandist Alfredo Sánchez Bella.⁴⁹ Despite its prominent circle of members and supporters, the committee was never able to develop a substantial diplomatic role other than providing a forum for informal policy discussion, and ultimately came to focus on producing and disseminating anti-communist propaganda.⁵⁰

Alfredo Sánchez Bella also played an important role in a similar organization of more lasting significance to Francoist Europeanism, the European Centre for Documentation and Information (Centro Europeo de Documentación e Información; CEDI). Originally founded in Munich under the leadership of Otto von Habsburg, the organization opened a Spanish branch and moved its General Secretariat to Madrid after 1953, funded by the ICH and the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁵¹ Like the Committee for the Defence of Christian Civilisation, it aimed to become a hub for Catholic cooperation within Europe, and to promote its vision of a conservative, ‘spiritual’ European community in opposition to the liberal model of economic integration offered by the EEC. Anti-communism was at the heart of its programme, with early debates focussing on how western Europe should manage relations with the USSR and its European satellites.⁵² The CEDI provided an important forum for the Catholic elites around Martín Artajo’s ministry to discuss European affairs with their counterparts abroad, particularly in Germany, where the CEDI attracted influential members of the Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union.⁵³ From the 1960s it also increasingly attracted French Gaullists, and remained a useful Francoist counterweight to the European activities of the anti-Francoist opposition abroad.

The centrality of ACNP elites to the Franco regime’s engagement with post-war Catholic internationalism shows the extent to which Spanish Catholic internationalism was aligned with the interests of Francoist foreign policy. Although ICOs and networks often discussed ideas and deployed language alien to Francoism and National Catholicism, the involvement of Spanish Catholics did not imply or encourage opposition to the regime. However, Spanish participants trod a fine line between pursuing their religious-inspired commitment to international cooperation and trying to develop alternative networks of Catholic

⁴⁹ AACNP, Carlos Santamaría folder, ‘Comité Español de Defensa de la Civilización Cristiana’.
⁵³ German attendees at early CEDI conferences included the Bundestag president Eugen Gerstenmaier, and his vice-president and future justice minister Richard Jaeger, who would later serve as CEDI president. See Ibid.
internationalism to the right of the Christian Democratic European mainstream which were more compatible with Francoist worldviews. Their difficulties in doing so reflected the extent to which, despite the rhetoric of Spain as the ‘spiritual reserve of the west’, Franco’s Spain was semi-detached from the realities of post-war international Catholicism.

**Salus Infirmorum and International Nursing**

Spanish Catholic internationalism, was not, however, confined to political elites. It also had an important social dimension, with Spanish experts engaging particularly enthusiastically with emerging forms of Catholic international health. Their involvement spanned the range of medical disciplines, from doctors and psychologists to medical researchers and students. It was most pronounced, however, in the field of nursing. At the forefront of this international engagement was María de Madariaga, the founder and president of Spain’s Catholic nursing association, Salus Infirmorum. For Madariaga and her colleagues, the need to act internationally was an unavoidable response to the increasingly globalized post-war world. This did not mean that they viewed the international arena in a positive light. Indeed, they regarded post-war international institutions, particularly the UN and the WHO, as threatening tools of anti-Catholic materialism, devoid of spiritual values, and bent on spreading dangerous and damaging practices across the globe. Catholics, they believed, needed to respond to this threat by uniting both within and across national boundaries to ensure their voices were heard, and to fight for representation within secular international bodies in order to promote Catholic values from the inside.

Salus Infirmorum’s leaders shared these goals with the international Catholic nursing body, CICIAMS (International Catholic Committee of Nurses and Medico-Social Assistants; Comité International Catholique des Infirmières et Assistantes Médico-Sociales), in which they played a leading role in the immediate post-war era. Their work was supported by the Franco regime and by the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Spanish nurses on the international stage saw themselves as representatives both of the Francoist state and of the Spanish nation. Acting internationally, however, also provided these nurses with the opportunity to promote the position of the Church, and their own status as professional women, within Spain. Their high profile and much publicized work on the world stage helped to raise the profile of Catholic medical associations at the expense of their rivals, primarily the Women’s Section of the Falange, and provided a rare opportunity to develop high-profile, autonomous careers within a society where women’s professional freedom was severely restricted. As time went on, it also increasingly provided a platform for nurses to criticize, even if only obliquely, the policies of the Franco regime.
Madariaga had first set up a nurses’ movement within the female youth wing of Catholic Action in 1935. During the war she had worked as inspector of hospitals in the rebel zone. In 1941 she was asked by the archbishop of Madrid to establish a new Catholic nursing organization, and founded Salus Infirmorum the following year, bringing together representatives of nurses working within the military health corps, the Red Cross, the Falangist welfare organization 18 de julio, and the Spanish rail operator RENFE. The organization ran its own network of urban health clinics (dispensarios) and provided nursing training courses. During the 1940s and early 1950s it established over thirty clinics in parishes across Madrid, primarily in the poorer working-class suburbs where state health services were almost entirely absent. Its first nursing school was established in Madrid in 1942 under the leadership of Gregorio Marañón, with additional schools set up in Cadiz in 1952 and Tangier in 1953, later spreading across Spain in the 1960s. In addition to technical training and work placements, SI schools emphasized the religious and moral education of nurses, and insisted that recruits provide evidence of their religious faith and education, their good standing within the Church, and their ongoing behaviour and deportment. The organization aimed to recruit nurses from across the Spanish health system, and by the early 1950s was widely represented within all branches of the fragmented Spanish nursing profession.

Despite the partial international isolation of the Spanish government and Spanish health profession, Madariaga and Salus Infirmorum were deeply involved in international Catholic nursing after 1945. Madariaga had personal experience with Catholic lay internationalism through her pre-war involvement with the International Union of Catholic Women’s Leagues and the International Council of Catholic Action. Salus Infirmorum’s international work was channelled through CICIAMS, which had originally been established in Lourdes in 1933. Salus Infirmorum was incorporated into the organization at the first post-war conference held in 1947, and Madariaga was appointed vice-president of the 1950
In 1958 she was elected as head of the CICIAMS permanent commission on professional ethics and played a prominent role in the 1962 conference, leading the committee’s work on professional ethics and domiciliary care. Her involvement with the organization stretched well into the 1970s, alongside that of her colleagues within the Salus Infirmorum leadership and that of its sister organization, the Federación Española de Religiosas Sanitarias. In addition to these formal roles, Madariaga developed a wide range of international experience, touring Latin America and studying in the US during the late 1940s.

But the engagement of Salus Infirmorum with international Catholic nursing, and with Catholic internationalism more generally, extended well beyond the personal efforts of Madariaga. The group set up a dedicated foreign affairs service in the late 1940s to coordinate its relationship with international and foreign nursing associations, and to disseminate knowledge of these links throughout their ranks. Large groups of Salus Infirmorum nurses regularly attended international nursing conferences and worked with international health and nursing organizations, both Catholic groups such as CICIAMS and secular ones such as the International Council of Nurses (ICN) and the WHO. Its quarterly journal contained regular reports on international developments and the involvement of Spanish nurses in international conferences and organizations. Both the Salus Infirmorum journal and the SI leadership actively encouraged its nurses to study and work abroad, promoting scholarship opportunities to foreign institutions and providing information and support for nurses travelling to work as lay missionaries in Latin America and Africa. Latin America was central to the organization’s international activity, with Madariaga’s role as international vice-president linked to the specific goal of promoting the work of CICIAMS and supporting Catholic nursing associations across the continent. In 1950, Salus Infirmorum established a dedicated Hispano-American Committee to pursue this goal, which became the coordinating body for CICIAMS activity in Latin America and which successfully encouraged the foundation and affiliation of Catholic nursing associations in a number of states.

The degree to which Salus Infirmorum nurses actively engaged with international health went far beyond that of other Spanish medical organizations prior to the mid-1950s. Their willingness to transcend Spain’s cultural and scientific isolation reflected their awareness of the extent to which the post-war

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61 Conde Mora, Dª María de Madariaga y Alonso, 56–62.
64 Cuarta Asamblea, 29–30.
world was being shaped by new forms of secular international cooperation. In 1951 the Salus Infirmorum foreign secretary, María Rosa Cardenal, published an article in the organization’s journal introducing and comparing the work of CICIAMS and the secular ICN, part of an attempt, as she described it, to give all of Spain’s nurses ‘a clear idea of the importance that the international world [sic] has’. ‘At the present time,’ she argued, ‘everything is related to the international level [todas las cosas se tratan sobre el plano internacional], and our profession is no exception to this worldwide law.’ Cardenal’s deputy, Mari-Trini Gutiérrez, told Salus Infirmorum nurses at their 1950 conference that ‘the fact of the immense importance of international agreements brings with it the necessity for Catholics to be present within international associations’. Acting internationally was, in this view, not necessarily something intrinsically positive, but was a necessary response to the modern world shaped so obviously by the forces of globalization and secular internationalism.

Indeed, the specifically Catholic forms of international associationism practised by Salus Infirmorum and its nurses were at least in part a response to the perceived threat of post-war internationalism. The desire to unite with Catholic nurses abroad was underpinned, or at least justified, by traditional ideas of the universality of the Catholic faith, the unity of mankind under God, and the apostolic duty to spread the word of God to all corners of the world. These ideas, however, were combined with a sense that modern societies, and particularly the international organizations and networks which played an increasingly prominent role in them, were dominated by ideas and values inimical to the Catholic faith. For many leading Salus Infirmorum nurses, these impressions drew on the history and rhetoric of the Spanish Civil War, and on fears about the supposed global threat of atheism, communism, and materialism. In her report on the annual CICIAMS conference in Amsterdam in 1949, María Rosa Cardenal warned of ‘the danger of freemasonry which dominates the world’ and the increasing global influence of Protestantism. A report on the 1951 CICIAMS conference in Rome published in the Salus Infirmorum journal described the need for Catholics of the world to unite ‘in the face of the wave of materialism which threatens to engulf everything’.

Global anti-Catholic forces, according to this view, were gaining power and influence through their domination of the international organizations. At the fourth Salus Infirmorum assembly in Madrid in 1950, the Chilean nurse Veronica de la Fuente described to her Spanish colleagues the plight of Catholics in Latin America, increasingly surrounded by ‘freemasonry, Protestantism . . . materialism,

65 María Rosa Cardenal, ‘CICIAMS y la ICN’, Salus Infirmorum, 16 (1951), 16.
66 Cuarta Asamblea, 27.
American modernism and, to finish with the “isms”, atheistic Communism.⁶⁹ These ideologies, she argued, gained force from the willingness of their adherents to unite on both national and global scales. ‘We are in the century of the “Popular Fronts”, of the Trade Unions, Cooperativism, Leagues, Federations, etc. The whole world and all of mankind looks to unite to defend its rights and achieve financial and political benefits.’⁷⁰ In response to the growth of these forms of anti-religious internationalism, she argued, it was the duty of Catholics to come together in the same way and to unify in the fight to defend their faith and their values.

This political hostility towards modern forms of internationalism was combined with specific fears about developments in international health and medicine. Catholics, both in Spain and elsewhere, felt that the post-war focus on technical solutions to international problems ran counter to Christian approaches which prioritized the individual, and which focussed on spiritual as well as material development. In 1955 the national secretary of Salus Infirmorum, Carmen García Victoria, reiterating the need for her members to stay informed about international developments in their profession given that ‘life today takes place more and more… on the international level’, lamented that in many cases international problems related to welfare, health, children, and education were ‘studied from the economic and scientific point of view, but not from the moral or religious’. These concerns reflected wider fears that, even within Spain itself, the trend towards collective and state-led forms of medicine were undermining the focus on the spiritual and material well-being of the individual and the relationship between individual patient and care giver.⁷¹ On the international stage, where Catholic principles held less sway, Salus Infirmorum nurses and other Catholic medical bodies feared that health and welfare programmes were focussing exclusively on materialistic and technical solutions anathema to religious, and particularly Catholic, values.⁷²

Both for Salus Infirmorum nurses and for much of the global Catholic community, these concerns crystallized around specific fears regarding the activities and attitude of the newly formed WHO. In part these were general fears based on the relative weakness of Catholic states within the organization and the lack of specific Catholic representation within its affiliated bodies. The result of this absence, according to the Salus Infirmorum vice-secretary of foreign relations, Mari-Trini Gutierrez Santiago, was that the WHO was pursuing its goals in a ‘negative antireligious way’.⁷³ For the CICIAMS leadership, the WHO’s

⁶⁹ Cuarta Asamblea, 34–5.
⁷⁰ Ibid., 35–6.
⁷¹ ‘Resumen de la Conferencia pronunciada por el profesor Beniamino de María en el “Angelicum” del día 7 de septiembre: orientaciones de la medicina social con respeto a la persona humana’, Salus Infirmorum, 14 (1950), 16–18.
⁷³ Cuarta Asamblea, 26.
conception of nursing was ‘too materialist’, and it needed to be reminded that ‘man is composed of body and soul, and only by attending to both can the nurse fulfil her mission’.⁷⁴

On a more concrete level, their concerns focussed on the advocacy of birth control as a means to limit population size. Leading figures within the WHO, including the organization’s director general Brock Chisholm, advocated birth control to deal with what they perceived to be a global population crisis. During the early 1950s, a fierce debate raged between those who wanted to develop WHO birth-control programmes in countries such as India which were worried about population size, and the Catholic Church and Catholic-majority states which opposed the promotion of birth-control measures.⁷⁵ Salus Infirmorum nurses denounced the proposed WHO measures as ‘eugenics’ and ‘euthanasia’, and argued that they stemmed from an organization in which scientific and technical solutions to social problems were pursued without sufficient concern for moral and religious principles.⁷⁶

Rather than turn their back on ‘antireligious’ forms of international health, however, the response of Catholics both in Spain and abroad was to actively seek ways of influencing their policies from within. Leading ICOs in the US, Europe, and Latin America led a concerted campaign to secure WHO recognition for CICIAMS during the late 1940s and early 1950s, to the extent that the issue became a proxy for the wider struggle between the WHO and the global Catholic community.⁷⁷ The rules governing the affiliation of NGOs were not clarified until the early 1950s. When CICIAMS lobbied for admission after 1946 they were rejected on the grounds that there should only be one affiliated group for each medical profession, and that nurses were represented by the ‘neutral’ ICN.⁷⁸ Although CICIAMS was an active member of the ICN executive board, its relationship with its secular counterpart was complicated, with CICIAMS members consistently lobbying the organization to adopt a more spiritual and religious approach to nursing, particularly in relation to the issue of birth control. In response to the WHO’s rejection, CICIAMS argued that ‘neutral’ organizations such as the ICN only concerned themselves with professional and technical questions, and were therefore unable to represent the moral and humanitarian principles of the Catholic nursing community.⁷⁹ In private the CICIAMS

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⁷⁵ Connelly, Fatal Misconception, 146–53. On the WHO’s post-war approach to birth control and to ‘technical’ solutions in India and south-east Asia, see Amrith, Decolonizing International Health.
⁷⁷ ACUA, US Conference of Catholic Bishops Office of the General Secretary, Series 1, Box 56, Folders 19 and 20.
⁷⁹ Ibid.
leadership suspected a specifically anti-Catholic bias, with the organization’s president arguing that the WHO ‘feared too much Catholic influence’. Eventually the WHO changed its rules, accepting the plurality of representation for each sector, and admitted CICIAMS as an affiliate in January 1954, after which its officials were able to attend World Health Assemblies and take part in expert committees.

These efforts to establish Catholic influence and values at the heart of international health mirrored the domestic priorities of Spain’s Catholic nurses. Nurses were expected to contribute, with the full support of the Church, to the Francoist mission to ‘re-Christianize’ the Spanish medical profession. They were also central to the regime’s pro-natalist policies through their involvement in mother and infant health programmes. Through their roles as visiting nurses and their work in rural areas or poor urban suburbs they were able to influence the private and family lives of large sections of the population.

New legislation concerning the training of nurses mandated a greater focus on religious and moral instruction. Reflecting these priorities, Salus Infirmorum promoted a religiously informed model of nursing training, and worked to ensure that new entrants to the profession demonstrated a sufficient commitment to the Catholic faith and the life of the Church. The organization was able to pursue similar goals on the international stage. Salus Infirmorum leaders, for example, lobbied the WHO and the ICN to reject birth-control policies through their involvement with CICIAMS. Madariaga’s role as chair of the CICIAMS professional ethics committee enabled her to draw up new international codes of conduct for Catholic nurses informed by her organization’s work in Spain and the ideas of Spanish theologians.

Within international Catholic medical associations, Spanish nurses were able to pursue the same aims as they were domestically, promoting their conception of Catholic nursing beyond Spain’s borders.

Efforts to promote Spanish models of nursing abroad reflected the extent to which Salus Infirmorum nurses saw their work on the world stage in national and patriotic terms, a way to promote the reputation of the Spanish nation and the Francoist state to the outside world. Calls from the Salus Infirmorum leadership for nurses to participate in international activities were combined with reminders about Spain’s identity as a uniquely Catholic state, indeed as ‘the Catholic country par excellence’, both in terms of the faith of its people and of the

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80 Ibid.
83 Miralles Sangro et al., ‘Historia de la Escuela de Enfermeras “Salus Infirmorum” de Madrid’.
84 Conde Mora, Dª María de Madariaga y Alonso, 62.
self-proclaimed Catholic identity of its government.\textsuperscript{85} Spanish nurses on the world stage embodied Franco’s discourse of Cold War-era Spain as the ‘spiritual reserve of the west’. Whereas foreign Catholic nursing associations often represented only a small part of their national nursing communities, excluding their Protestant or secular colleagues, the Spanish nursing community was, at least in the eyes of the Salus Infirmorum leadership, 100 per cent Catholic and uniquely committed to practising its profession in accordance with its faith. As a result, descriptions of international congresses, meetings, and organizations were interspersed with patriotic exhortations to ensure that Spain was not left isolated on the international stage, and to demonstrate the faith and glory of the Spanish nation through the commitment and dedication of its nursing profession.\textsuperscript{86}

This patriotic self-assertion on the part of the Salus Infirmorum leadership was actively supported by the Spanish state as part of its attempts to ameliorate Spain’s post-war isolation. Madariaga had a close personal relationship with the foreign minister Martín Artajo, with whom she shared a background in Catholic Action.\textsuperscript{87} The role of Salus Infirmorum in international nursing was of particular interest to those groups working to improve Spain’s ties with Latin America. Madariaga’s various trips to the region were supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the ICH. The director of the ICH, Joaquin Ruiz-Giménez, closely followed Madariaga’s successful struggle to position herself as the conduit for CICIAMS expansion to Latin America, in which Spain’s claim to a special relationship with the region based on ties of hispanidad was challenged by French arguments that a shared Latin history and identity gave them a greater claim to the role than Spain. Writing to the Spanish ambassador in Uruguay prior to Madariaga’s visit in 1949, he lauded the benefits of a new network of Latin American Catholic nursing associations under Spanish tutelage to Spain’s diplomatic work in the region.\textsuperscript{88} For the Franco regime, international Catholic nursing represented another useful tool of post-war cultural diplomacy.

But as well as promoting the interests and reputation of the Franco regime abroad, international nursing also provided Spain’s Catholic nurses with the opportunity to buttress their domestic position vis-à-vis rival Falangist and state-led nursing associations. María de Madariaga was particularly keen to ensure that Spain’s overwhelmingly Catholic nursing community was represented by Salus Infirmorum rather than rival groups such as the Women’s Section of the Falange. In this she was supported by the Pope and the Vatican hierarchy, which made continuous calls during the 1940s and 1950s for Catholic medical

\textsuperscript{85} ‘CICIAMS’, ¡Firmes!, 15 (1956), 19.
\textsuperscript{86} See for example ‘El gran Congreso’, ¡Firmes!, 20 (May 1958), 12–13.
\textsuperscript{87} Conde Mora, *Dª Maria de Madariaga y Alonso*, 82.
\textsuperscript{88} AGA (10)89 54/10098, Joaquin Ruiz-Giménez to Montevideo ambassador, 9 August 1949.
professionals to join Catholic, rather than secular, professional groups.⁸⁹ For Madariaga, Spain’s identity as an overtly Catholic state did nothing to diminish the relevance of this message. Addressing the issue in 1956, she argued that:

The existence of state organisations is not enough, however authentically Catholic the nation. In our case, with professional sanitary organisations, even when all the members are Catholics and even when these professional state organisations have, as in many cases, sections dedicated to defending religious and moral rights. It’s not enough, we insist. The Pope promotes, insists and urges the organisation and vigorous existence of professional associations of the Church.⁹⁰

Despite the overtly Catholic identity and values of secular Spanish nursing groups such as the Red Cross and the Falange’s Women’s Section, Madariaga and the Salus Infirmorum leadership saw their organization as the only true representative of Catholic nursing. The active participation of all Catholic nurses in both national and international associations was, Salus Infirmorum leaders argued, vital to ensure that they were strong enough to resist the materialist forces which beset modern society.

As well as helping to promote their interests as Catholics, international nursing also provided an opportunity for Salus Infirmorum members to develop the kind of autonomous, high-profile public roles generally denied to women in Franco’s Spain. One of the priorities of Francoist social policy was to reverse the reforms of the Second Republic which had granted women greater freedoms in family, educational, and professional life, and which had seen women developing an increasingly public role. For the regime, the primary role of women was childbirth and child rearing, and while young unmarried women could pursue careers relatively freely, it was expected, at least for ‘respectable’ middle-class women, that professional ambitions would be subordinated to their duties as wives and mothers.⁹¹ Nurses played an important part in enforcing these expectations through their work in the field of infant and maternal health and their roles as visiting nurses. Paradoxically, however, nursing was one of the few professions in which women were able to forge prominent and influential careers. In many cases, senior figures within professional bodies such as Salus Infirmorum were able to develop influential roles precisely because they remained unmarried, acting in direct contravention of the principles their organizations espoused, but using the freedom this granted them to pursue successful careers. Leading nurses such as María de Madariaga, much like the powerful leader of the Falange’s Women’s

⁸⁹ See for example the call from Dutch bishops urging Catholics not to join the Rotary Club in 1930. ‘Orbis Terrarum’, The Tablet, 16 August 1930, 23.
⁹¹ Blasco, Paradojas de la ortodoxia, 312–22.
Section, Pilar Primo de Rivera, used the freedom available to them as unmarried women to develop highly political and public roles.⁹²

Engaging with international nursing and international health provided further opportunities for Salus Infirmorum leaders to develop their careers and engage in the kind of high-profile work which would have been impossible in other areas of public life. Catholic nurses taking part in international congresses and organizations described their activities in quasi-diplomatic terms, emphasizing the unusual level of responsibility they carried on such occasions. ‘Representing Spain at an international conference,’ wrote one Salus Infirmorum nurse attending the International Congress on the Protection of Infancy in Stockholm in 1948, ‘is a delicate mission for a woman…[but] my fear of impotency in the face of my mission disappeared in the atmosphere of understanding and consideration towards my country.’⁹³ Accounts of Spanish nurses on the international stage often deployed the language of militarized, masculine heroism to describe their exploits. When María de Madariaga undertook a tour of Latin America in 1954 to encourage the formation of Catholic nursing associations across the region, the Salus Infirmorum journal described her role in the language of the conquistadors, ‘passing her days and her nights pondering the way to conquer the entire world for Christ and for Spain’.⁹⁴ By taking part in these international activities, Spanish nurses were engaging in work that was both politically and professionally prestigious, and were able to use female forms of associationism as a route into the male-dominated arena of international health.

The paradox of these autonomous and influential female roles lay in their implied defiance of Francoist restrictions on public activity for Spanish women. International engagement, however, also provided Spanish nurses with opportunities for more explicit criticisms of government policy. In the immediate post-war period such criticism was limited, subsumed within the general patriotic fervour surrounding any Spanish involvement in international activity during the height of the regime’s diplomatic isolation. Even during this period, however, accounts of international congresses and organizations provided an opportunity to express ideas which ran counter to approved Francoist policy. Reporting on a debate about housing policy at an international conference on infancy in 1948, for example, the Salus Infirmorum nurses Milagros Cespedes set out the advantages of collective over individual housing for mothers, partly on the grounds that the more convenient location of shops and services allowed them more time to

⁹² On the public role of the Sección Femenina during the period, see María Teresa Gallego Méndez, Mujer, falange y franquismo (Madrid: Taurus, 1983); Kathleen Richmond, Women and Spanish Fascism: The Women’s Section of the Falange, 1934–1959 (London: Routledge, 2003).
undertake paid work outside of the home. Whilst such salaried work was extremely common for mothers in the poor urban suburbs in which Salus Infirmorum nurses operated, it ran entirely counter to Francoist social policy and discourse around motherhood, and it was rare to find its benefits explicitly outlined in such a way during the period. In this case the policy could be openly expressed as an apparently neutral report on the proceedings of an international conference, legitimized by the prestige which Spanish participation in such forums enjoyed. In this way, international developments in the fields of health and social policy could be disseminated within Spain despite their incompatibility with Francoist ideology.

Like the international work of ANCP members, however, the involvement in Spanish health professionals in post-war Catholic internationalism should not be seen as a form of pseudo-opposition, nor the embrace of the ‘international’ as a rejection of an inward-looking national regime. Although more overt forms of opposition began to appear in international forums from the mid-1960s, during the 1940s and 1950s Spain’s nurses harnessed the idea of a global community of Catholics to oppose the apparently threatening, anti-Christian developments within secular international health organizations. The struggle to ‘re-Christianize’ Spanish medicine, promote the family, and develop a form of modern health care based on Catholic values could be transposed almost wholesale onto the world stage, and pursued within an environment free from the criticism and hostility Spanish experts faced within non-Catholic international organizations.

**Catholic Humanitarianism**

Alongside these forms of Catholic international health, the immediate post-war era also witnessed the rapid development of new forms of Catholic humanitarianism. In response to the increasing global interest in the language and ideas of ‘international development’, Catholics around the world began to discuss what economic and social development meant from a Catholic perspective, particularly in relation to the ‘Third World’. French Catholic intellectuals, for example, promoted their own models of economic development for colonial and post-colonial African states. Catholic missionaries struggled to reconcile traditional, charitable conceptions of missionary work with the ideas of those who saw the ‘mission countries’ as sites to promote new, modern models of Catholic

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development, presented as another ‘third way’ between communist and capitalist materialism. Much of this debate was driven by the expanding ranks of lay Catholic organizations, known at the time as ICOs, operating in the fields of health, welfare, and humanitarianism.

These developments were both driven by, and reflected within, the Vatican and the Church hierarchy. Even before the Second Vatican Council emphasized the global social mission of the Church and of lay Catholics in the early 1960s, the Vatican had been attempting to grapple with the challenges posed by post-war internationalism, the Cold War, and decolonization. Pope Pius XII had regularly addressed the issues of Catholic participation in international organizations and international development from the end of the Second World War. In 1957 the Papal encyclical *Fidei Donum* called on the global Catholic community to focus its attention on Africa, and to support the work of both religious and lay missionaries in promoting spiritual and material development across the continent. The encyclical was prompted both by increasing levels of nationalist agitation in the colonial African states and by Cold War fears about the spread of communism within the continent. It became one of the main discussion points for Catholics meeting at the Universal Exposition in Brussels the following year, including those from Spain.

Spanish Catholics were intensively involved in these debates and were heavily influenced by trends within the international Catholic community. The thousands of Spanish missionaries serving around the world were becoming increasingly professionalized, encouraged to develop the technical skills necessary to shape the social conditions of the countries they lived in, and thus moving beyond their traditional evangelizing roles. Missionary work was also expanding beyond religious communities to include lay Catholics volunteering to serve abroad for limited periods of time, often bringing with them professional skills and experience in the fields of health and education. Catholic welfare organizations such as Caritas were inspired and shaped by the work of similar groups abroad, and formed part of wider ICOs and networks. At the same time, however, Spanish involvement in these forms of Catholic humanitarianism was unique in many respects, shaped by the direct influence of the Franco regime and by the context of Spain’s position in the post-war world. Spanish missionaries were appropriated as

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99 *Los católicos en la vida internacional*.
a tool of Francoist foreign policy, used to bolster Spain’s international reputation and to pursue its cultural diplomacy, while Spanish Catholic welfare organizations focussed on forms of anti-communist humanitarianism which were closely aligned with the policies and discourse of the regime.

For Spanish Catholics, the modern, secular language of humanitarianism and development was inseparable from the history and practice of Spanish missionaries who had been engaged in health and educational work across the globe since the fifteenth century. Precise figures are hard to come by, but missionaries were by far the largest group of Spaniards involved in any kind of international welfare and humanitarianism during the immediate post-war period. In 1962 the Spanish government estimated that there were more than 26,000 Spanish missionaries working around the world, of whom nearly 16,000 were women.¹⁰³ Over 17,000 Spanish missionaries were based in Latin America, but large numbers also worked in Africa and Asia. Not all these missionaries were involved in providing social and welfare services. Of those that were, the majority worked in the field of education, running missionary schools and colleges. But a significant number were involved in the running of missionary medical services, particularly female missionaries working as nurses. Spanish missionaries ran hospitals, clinics, and maternity units in Bolivia, Brazil, the Philippines, and India, as well as in the African colonies of Spanish Morocco and Spanish Guinea.¹⁰⁴

From the late 1940s, both secular and religious organizations in Spain became increasingly interested in professionalizing missionary work. This was particularly the case in the field of health, where missionary nurses were often required to carry out a broad range of medical tasks without the professional training required to meet the technical demands of modern medical practice. From 1949 the Spanish Council of Missions (Consejo de Misiones) began to fund medical training for missionaries, first at the University of Salamanca and later at the newly formed Spanish School of Medicine for Missionaries in Madrid. Their courses provided both theoretical and practical training for prospective missionaries, 90 per cent of whom were women, who would be responsible for both diagnostics and treatment in missionary facilities which lacked qualified doctors. These efforts were combined with similar schemes organized by the Church, the Order of Malta in Barcelona, and by Salus Infirmorum, and represented a concerted effort to improve the professionalism and quality of missionary health care.¹⁰⁵ The effects should not be exaggerated, however. By 1956 only ninety missionaries had graduated from the school in Madrid, and the total number of missionaries

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 167–214.
attending these courses represented only a small fraction of those providing medical services abroad.¹⁰⁶

These processes of professionalization were also driven by Spanish lay missionaries who were increasingly volunteering to spend periods of time working in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Many of these lay volunteers were nurses whose professional skills were much in demand among overseas missions. The work of lay missionaries was actively promoted by both Salus Infirmorum and by the Church. Salus Infirmorum established a dedicated missionaries’ department in the early 1950s, which coordinated the organization’s missionary training work and requests from foreign missions for volunteer nurses.¹⁰⁷ During the 1950s its nurses volunteered as lay missionaries in Rhodesia, Indonesia, and various Latin American countries. In 1957 the Church hierarchy also established a body to encourage lay Spanish volunteers to work in Latin America, with placements coordinated by local bishops. Volunteers, the vast majority of whom were women, underwent three months of initial training and were recruited in part for their existing professional skills. Although many worked in education, a large proportion of volunteers were nurses, medical assistants, and doctors.¹⁰⁸ These developments were both inspired and actively encouraged by the Vatican. During the 1950s the Pope explicitly promoted the role of lay missionaries, particularly female assistants working in the fields of health and education, in fostering economic, social, and spiritual development around the world. It was his address to the Second World Congress of the Lay Apostolate in October 1957, for example, which prompted Spanish bishops to encourage lay missionary volunteers to Latin America.¹⁰⁹

The professionalization and expansion of missionary work was also encouraged by the Franco regime, which saw missionaries as a tool of foreign policy. The relationship between Spanish missionaries and the Spanish state underwent significant changes after the civil war. The Franco regime increasingly attempted to coordinate and control missionary activity, and to co-opt it as a semi-official form of cultural diplomacy. The Council of Missions, which was instrumental in introducing professional training programmes for Spanish missionaries, had been established by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1940. Its role was to coordinate state support and monitoring of missionaries abroad.

The ministerial order announcing the council’s foundation was clear as to the political importance of missionary activity:

¹⁰⁶ España Misionera, 9, 51 (July–September 1956), 263.
¹⁰⁷ Mercedes de Porras–Isla ‘Cursillo de Formación Misionera’, Salus Infirmorum, 1, 17 (June 1951), 4. See also the various articles on missionaries and tropical medicine in Salus Infirmorum, 1951–6.
¹⁰⁸ ‘Obra de Cooperación Apostólico Seglar Hispano-Americano (OCASHA)’, Cáritas, 59 (July–August 1954), 10–11.
The civilizing action which Spanish missionaries carried out in other eras was not only of historical importance and retrospective value, but continues to play a role in multiple countries today. The current number of our missions and missionaries and their incontrovertible and valuable contribution to the maintenance of the sense of hispanidad amongst the nations which constitute the Spanish Empire attest to this fact. Spanish religious missions and missionaries are spokespersons for the fundamental principles of the tradition salvaged by our holy Crusade [the Spanish Civil War] and of Spanish cultural values.¹¹⁰

The figure of the Spanish missionary chimed with the regime’s identification with the history and values of the Spanish Empire’s ‘Golden Age’, and represented the spiritual and humanitarian counterpart to the martial ‘crusade’ of the civil war. In his 1948 New Year message, Franco described Spanish missionaries as ‘the most beautiful manifestation of the Catholic spirit of the Old Spain’, lauding their work in maintaining ‘the love of the Motherland and demonstrating to the world our Christian spirit of peace and our desire to fight for the eternal values of Humanity’.¹¹¹ At a time when the Franco regime was regularly accused of fascism, repression, and violence by its foreign critics, the thousands of Spanish missionaries serving abroad could play a valuable role in projecting a peaceful, Christian, and humanitarian image of Spain to the outside world. The Council of Missions aimed to integrate the work of missionaries with Spanish diplomatic services, ‘the interpenetration of civil and religious powers to achieve a common goal’, in the words of one of its senior officials.¹¹² Its training courses and educational initiatives were designed to ensure that these Spanish missionaries-cum-diplomats had the expertise necessary to portray a positive image of Spain to the outside world.

The influence of the regime was also evident in the work of Caritas, the most influential Catholic welfare organization in post-war Spain. Spanish Caritas had its origins in the charitable campaigns and institutional structures established by Catholic Action following the end of the civil war.¹¹³ Its initial goal was to coordinate and strengthen the Church’s welfare activities, seen as vital to its efforts to win back the Spanish working classes and to ‘re-Christianize’ Spain in the aftermath of the conflict. Its secretariat brought together representatives from the diocese and the ecclesiastical hierarchies, alongside the various Catholic orders most closely associated with health, social, and charitable work, including the medical confraternity of St Cosme and St Damian. In 1947 Caritas was formally

¹¹⁰ Orden del Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, 5 March 1940, reproduced in España misionera: catálogo de las misiones y de los misioneros españoles, 17.
¹¹¹ Mensaje de fin de año, 31 December 1947.
established as an independent lay organization, although one still affiliated with Catholic Action.¹¹⁴

Spanish Caritas also formed part of an international network of Caritas organizations, and from the very beginning its work was influenced by its counterparts abroad. This influence began even before the end of the Second World War, when Spanish church officials with ties to Germany began to bring back information about the welfare initiatives the Church had managed to maintain in the major German cities throughout the conflict.¹¹⁵ In 1946 the director of Spanish Caritas, Jesús García Valcárcel, undertook a tour of the various European countries where Caritas branches had already been established, primarily Germany, France, and Italy, to inform the development of Caritas in Spain.¹¹⁶ Spanish representatives were involved in the initial discussions around the foundation of an international Caritas organization which took place in Paris in 1947, and in 1951 Spanish Caritas was elected to the executive committee of the newly established Caritas Internationalis. García Valcárcel, who was also a member of the ACNP, was Spain’s chief representative within the organization and would go on to play an important role in its early development.¹¹⁷

On a practical level, however, the international work of Spanish Caritas was shaped, not just by a commitment to Catholic internationalism, but by the fervent anti-communism which characterized Spanish Catholicism under the early Franco regime. Aside from relatively small amounts of funding to support victims of natural disasters abroad, the largest and most high-profile international campaigns of Spanish Caritas were dedicated to helping foreign victims of communism.¹¹⁸ Its first major initiative came in 1949 in the form of support for orphaned refugee children from central and eastern European countries which had fallen under communist control. 20,000 of these refugee children were invited to visit Spain for summer holidays from their new homes in Austria and Germany, and on a few occasions were adopted by Spanish families.¹¹⁹ The pattern was repeated following the Hungarian uprising in 1956. In cooperation with the Spanish government, Caritas coordinated a ‘Help for Hungary’ programme, raising 5 million pesetas to fund supplies of food and clothing for refugees in Austria and Germany, university scholarships for Hungarian students, and employment programmes for Hungarian refugees in Spain.¹²⁰ Three years later a similar programme was established for Cuban refugees fleeing the communist revolution on the island. Between 1959 and 1966, Caritas claimed to have supported almost 10,000 Cuban refugees who had moved to Spain, providing health, housing, and

¹¹⁸ Spending on disaster relief only amounted to 2 per cent of Caritas’ annual budget by 1969. Actividades de Caritas Española (1969), 84.
¹²⁰ ANCWC, OGS Records, Box 197, Folder 63; AANCP, Jesús García Valcárcel file.
educational services with the help of grants from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.¹²¹ During the whole period there was not a single large-scale campaign to support refugees who were not perceived to be victims of communism. International Catholic solidarity appeared to be limited to those cases which were aligned with the political outlook of the Cold War-era Franco regime.

Caritas’ most important international relationship was with the US. Between the mid-1950s and the end of the 1960s, Caritas came to play a vital role in US–Spanish relations. In order to comply with the requirement for US aid to be supplied to ‘non-political’ organizations, the vast amounts of US social aid provided to Spain through the Ayuda Social Americana (ASA) programme after the signing of the Pact of Madrid was channelled through the National Catholic Welfare Conference (NCWC) in the US, and distributed by Caritas in Spain.¹²² The NCWC was the organization representing Catholic bishops in the US, and its overseas humanitarian arm, Catholic Relief Services, was affiliated with Caritas Internationalis. The ASA, and by extension Caritas itself, came to play a vital role in Francoist welfare provision from the early 1950s until it was wound up in 1969. It consisted of surplus food supplies donated by the US government, primarily powdered milk and other foodstuffs, including cheese, butter, and powdered egg, as well as other domestic supplies such as blankets. Caritas was appointed by the Spanish government to transport and distribute supplies, which were provided to children through the schools service, to poor families through organizations such as the Women’s Section of the Falange and Auxilio Social, and to the sick and disabled through the SOE and Department of Health.¹²³ Over the lifetime of the programme the ASA supplied goods worth over 11,000 million pesetas, reaching an estimated 4.6 million Spaniards.¹²⁴ The sheer size of the programme dwarfed Caritas’ other activities, contributing over 60 per cent of its total budget by 1965.¹²⁵

For Caritas and for Spanish Catholics, the ASA helped to establish the Church’s position within local communities and to secure access to working-class neighbourhoods where its influence was weakest. In the context of the Cold War and of the Church’s mission to ‘re-Christianize’ Spain, it was a weapon with which to eradicate the legacies of republicanism and communism, and to win new adherents to the faith. In May 1958, the Cáritas journal reproduced a letter from a

¹²⁴ AACNP, Jesús García Valcárcel file, ‘La Caritas de Jesús García Valcárcel y sus Relaciones con la A.C.N. de P. y el Centro de Fundaciones’, 4.
¹²⁵ ‘De donde procede el dinero que distribuye Cáritas?’, Cáritas, 56–7 (April–May 1965), 8–9.
parish priest in the Catalan town of Gerona which encapsulated Catholic attitudes towards the ASA. In his parish, the priest wrote, lived an old man who, like most of his neighbours, was completely distanced from the Church, and who ‘under the Republic hung the Communist flag from the balcony of his house whenever the occasion permitted’. When he fell ill with cancer, however, the priest had begun to provide him with ASA aid, and this support had gradually encouraged the man to look upon the parish ‘with more benevolence and friendliness’. When his health suddenly deteriorated, the priest visited his home and found that he had constructed a small cross from two toothpicks. Visiting again the next day, the old man insisted on receiving the sacraments, and just a day later he died. The priest was clear about the role that the ASA had played in winning this particular convert from communism to Christianity. ‘God bless the American Aid,’ he wrote, ‘which wins souls for the Lord!’

Caritas and the NCWC played an important role in the developing relationship between Franco’s Spain and the US over the course of the 1950s. The NCWC’s relationship with Franco’s Spain had its roots in the civil war, when it had denounced anti-clerical violence in the Republican zone and helped raise funds for humanitarian relief in the rebel zone. The NCWC began providing aid to Caritas in Spain in 1950, a process initially brokered with the help of Caritas Internationalis and the Vatican. In addition to the ASA, it also provided Caritas with regular donations in response to particular emergencies or natural disasters.

The relationship between the two organizations provided useful to their respective governments. The ASA programme bolstered the image of the US amongst the Spanish population—‘the only way the Spanish poor receive a concrete demonstration of US aid which they can understand,’ as one US embassy official argued in 1955. It also helped to head off any criticism of the favourable treaties which the US had negotiated with the Spanish government. For the Franco regime, the ASA demonstrated to the Spanish people that their country had gained international acceptance and was benefitting from American support in a similar way to Marshall Plan recipients in the rest of Europe. It also provided both countries with a ‘non-political’ way to channel funds they wanted to remain hidden from public scrutiny. In 1957, for example, the USSR repatriated hundreds of Spaniards who had fled to the country after the Spanish Civil War. The Spanish government allowed the US Central Intelligence Agency, whose European office

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129 NARA, Record Group 59, Department of State, 1955–1959 Central Decimal File, Series 852, Box 4622.
130 Ibid., telegram from Madrid Embassy to State Department, 11 March 1955.
was in Madrid, to interrogate the returnees about the military, political, and social situation in the USSR. In return the Central Intelligence Agency agreed to pay 20 million pesetas towards the costs of their reintegration into Spanish society, payments which were channelled secretly through the NCWC and Caritas.¹³¹

Throughout the 1940s and 1950s Spanish forms of Catholic humanitarianism were fundamentally aligned with the diplomatic priorities and ideological outlook of the Franco regime. The Second Vatican Council, however, had a profound impact on the patterns of Spanish Catholic humanitarianism. In important ways it helped to break the link between Spanish Catholics and the Francoist state, adding impetus to the increasing Catholic opposition against the regime within Spain. Although the Church hierarchy and much of the Catholic elite remained loyal to Franco, the international humanitarian work of Catholic organizations was no longer so intimately tied to the interests and policies of the regime. From the 1960s, groups such as Caritas increasingly began to criticize the poverty and social exclusion which accompanied Spain’s economic modernization. Their understanding of international development and the Catholic role in the ‘Third World’ was influenced by debates in the Second Vatican Council, and by the work of Catholic organizations elsewhere in Europe such as the German welfare organization MISEREOR.¹³² At the same time, Catholics began to establish independent NGOs working in the fields of development, humanitarian, and international health, the kind of civil society organizations which had failed to emerge under the early Franco regime but which would form the basis of the vibrant NGO sector which emerged after the transition to democracy.¹³³

Post-war international history is often written in strikingly secular terms. Whereas religious ideas and groups had played an important part in the birth of the modern global community during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, histories of the post-war world emphasize the Cold War battle of economic systems, living standards, and materialist ideologies, and the emerging secular language of human rights. Recent research has begun to reaffirm the influence of Christianity, and Catholicism in particular, on European and international history, but it has tended to focus on the work of the Vatican hierarchy, Catholic politicians, and a few high-profile Catholic intellectuals. The international activities of Spanish Catholics serves to highlight the role of ICOs, and the wider group of lay Catholic elites who dominated them, within the post-war global system. It suggests that a distinct model of Catholic internationalism helped to ensure that religious interests and values retained a dominant role within secular international

¹³³ One such organization was the international health NGO, Medicus Mundi, which is discussed further in the Conclusion.
institutions across a wide range of fields, including the work of humanitarian and social organizations.

But Catholic internationalism was never a politically homogeneous phenomenon. Many of its most influential participants identified with the forms of Christian democracy that dominated post-war western European politics. But not all Catholics had suddenly been converted into liberal proponents of Christian democracy at the end of the Second World War. As the example of Spain highlights, there existed both within and beyond Europe a large proportion of the Catholic population still wedded to pre-war visions of political Catholicism and to the traditions of nineteenth-century Catholic integralism.¹³ In some cases they participated within the same ICOs and networks as their co-religionists, but in other cases they formed their own, more politically and theologically congenial organizations which adopted a more belligerent approach to the post-war secular order. Indeed, if any single factor united these diverse movements, it was antimarxism. As the Cold War developed, all could agree that the USSR and its allies represented the ultimate enemy of the Christian faith and its values, whether they positioned themselves at the heart of the Cold War west, or as a third way between the twin materialisms of Soviet communism and US capitalism.

The relationship between Spanish Catholics and their counterparts abroad was never straightforward. Much of the global Catholic community had been happy to support rebel forces during the Spanish Civil War as the defenders of Christian Spain against the menace of Bolshevism. But the post-war anti-fascist consensus complicated relations with the Francoist state. The fundamental incompatibility between National-Catholic visions of an authoritarian, clerical Spanish state on the one hand, and mainstream Christian democracy on the other, meant that Spanish influence was limited to the right wing of post-war European Catholicism, symbolized by the former Vichy sympathizers and eastern European exiles who attended the Catholic conferences held in Spain. ‘Moderate’ Spanish Catholic elites, who shared many of the same theological and social assumptions as their European counterparts, remained isolated from mainstream European Christian democracy by their inability to reconcile their vision of the Spanish state with liberal democracy. Those in Spain who did embrace Christian democracy from the late 1950s did so by moving towards forms of internal opposition.¹³ Five During the immediate post-war period, Catholic internationalism represented one of the primary means through which Franco’s Spain was able to engage with the outside

world. But the country remained semi-detached from the global Catholic mainstream.

From the 1960s, in contrast, the Church increasingly became a source of both international and domestic opposition to the regime. Many of the Spanish Catholics who had been most exposed to international debates and trends during the 1940s and 1950s began to move towards the internal opposition. Traditional Catholic groups such as the ANCP were superseded by the technocrats of Opus Dei. But despite their commitment to economic modernization and their ties with European business elites, this new generation remained opposed to the political and social liberalization increasingly advocated by Catholics abroad.¹³ Catholic health and welfare organizations in Spain, meanwhile, increasingly began to criticize the poverty and hardship which accompanied economic modernization. The influence of the Second Vatican Council helped to inspire a new generation of Catholic opponents to the Franco regime inside of Spain. Although Catholicism retained its place in the ideology, identity, and discourse of the Franco regime until the dictator’s death in 1975, its ability to lend the regime international legitimacy became a thing of the past.