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An Analysis of Foreign Diplomatic Aid to the Catholic Clergy during the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939)

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Abstract: During the European crisis of the thirties of the twentieth century, the most significant persecution of the Catholic Church in the history of Spain was generated. With the ultimate goal of saving lives, the Foreign Diplomatic Corps provided many humanitarian services, the most important of those the massive granting of diplomatic and consular asylum to more than 11,000 people, including Catholics and clergy. This article analyzes the genesis and realization of this fact and its consequences, which were supposed to maintain and facilitate a clandestine Catholic cult in the Spain of Popular Front.

Keywords: Spain-Civil; War-Religious persecution; Foreign Diplomatic Aid; pastoral work

1. Introduction

The Spanish Civil War (1936–1939) gave rise to an unprecedented phenomenon in the history of international relations, which had to that time not been foreseen in any treaty of international law: the extension of the right to diplomatic exile for more than 11,000 men, women, children and elderly persons¹. This extraordinary state of affairs is a reflection of the extent and depth of repression in the rearguard and the outbreak of religious persecution in Republican Spain from the very first weeks of the conflict [1]. While it is true that foreign consulates in numerous provinces tried to protect and evacuate many families in order to avoid their indiscriminate murder, it was the outbreak of disproportionate repression in Madrid, which led to mass asylum-seeking with the support of many

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foreign diplomats who had their own reasons for alarm in view of the executions of honorary consuls in various cities.

At the end of July 1936, the republican authorities in Madrid set up the Records Section (“Control de Nóminas”), the aim of which was to centralise all files that had been confiscated from the offices of right-wing and centrist parties. These files furnished different sections of the administration with details about civil servants who belonged to such political organizations. As a matter of course, information was soon being provided to any official or department of the General Board of Security that requested it. However, during the first six months of war, any member of the militia or of Popular Front organizations was able to go to the Control and ask for reports about this or that person, with no risk of their requests being turned down. Thus, it was that Party Prisons (“Checas”), libertarian cultural centers, political parties, unions and other elements in the organised network of repression helped themselves to information about the political background of those they had arrested or of families they wished to imprison. As a consequence, repression increased as well, particularly in the form of robberies and murders [2]. The foreign diplomatic corps, accredited as it was before the Republic, decided to organise itself as a united body and chose the Chilean ambassador to be their senior representative. Regular meetings started to be held, with minutes taken of these meetings and agreements reached. From the very start, all agreed on the need to undertake a wide range of humanitarian actions, with a view to mitigating the pain and disastrous effects of the war on the civil population.

By February 1937, the foreign diplomatic corps had secured 19 concessions of freedom from the fearsome Madrilenian *checas*, and another 288 releases from prison, while 45 had been rejected and 58 were under way. In the Popular Tribunals, guarantees from the diplomats helped achieve 32 acquittals, while 4 received sentence and another 12 cases were in progress. No guarantees were needed for another 214 concessions of freedom in the same courts, as against 24 rejections. The diplomats ascertained the whereabouts of 388 individuals and enquired after another 165 whom they were unable to find. They had no success in relation to 393 cases of murder, disappearance or accusations of fascism ([3], p. 352). Furthermore, though the number is difficult to calculate, foreign representations helped the families of prisoners, handled search requests or gathered news about missing people together with the Red Cross, made all kind of assistance available to brigade members from their own countries, distributed food from their own stores, took part in several health campaigns or charity drives in Republican Spain, and so forth. One member of the Cuban Embassy staff estimated that his representation alone had executed 15,000 actions during the three years of war². Among all such humanitarian activity, what stands out most is the application of the right to asylum. The driving force behind this was the Hispano-American embassies, in part due to tradition and in part because they considered it the only possible response given that, in other conflicts between American countries, Spanish Embassy staff had been called upon to act as conciliators and peacemakers in the Society of Nations [4]. The European diplomats who backed them also did so in the belief that their support was the natural reply to the humanitarian action carried out by Alfonso XIII and the Spanish government during World War I.

² Archive of the Ramón Estalella Foundation (hereinafter AE), Confidential Reports folder, confidential no. 4, 9 May 1939.

The war broke out in the heat of 18 July 1936, and most foreign Legations and Embassies decided to offer diplomatic aid from the very start. Not only were thousands of people protected, but they were also granted security and given food to eat, a roof over their heads, and the chance to be evacuated to Republican Spain.

2. Religious Persecution and the Diplomatic Protection of the Catholic Clergy

Just as alleged or actual sympathisers of Nationalist Spain were persecuted, so too were the Catholic clergy, who were harried, imprisoned, tortured, condemned or killed. Accusations against the Church and its ministers were constant, as were enquiries to seek out the highest number possible of priests, monks and nuns who, simply for being what they were, deserved to stand trial in the opinion of broad sectors of the political left. In the first few weeks of the conflict, many fell victim without trial or investigation of any kind. Rapid judgements were passed on them by one or other of the Popular Front committees or the groups that were set up to defend the Front in almost all the towns and villages of Republican Spain. In his classic study of religious persecution published in 1961, Father Antonio Montero Moreno wrote that 6,382 people with a religious calling were murdered in the religious persecution unleashed in the Spain of the Popular Front (4,184 secular clergy, 2,365 monks and 283 nuns). Ever since, researchers have corrected and increased the tally of victims: the number of nuns murdered, for example, has risen to 296 [5,6].

On 27 July 1936, the Ministry of Public Instruction decreed the seizure of schools and sacred buildings run by members of religious orders who “*had been related directly or indirectly*” to the military uprising. That ambiguous wording led to all kinds of outrageous and violent acts since it authorised religious persecution without any need to check the truth of accusations: churches, convents, schools were attacked, razed, occupied or seized. Once sacked, the leftist militia transformed them into barracks, prisons, warehouses and *checas* or gave them over to be used by Popular Front organisations. At the same time, the celebration of religious services was prohibited in the greater part of Republican Spain, a state of affairs given the stamp of legality by the republican decree of the following 17 October.

This situation prompted the decision of many diplomats—whether honorary or career professionals—to offer refuge and protection from republican repression to Catholics and clergy, as well as other social and professional groups, under the guarantee of extraterritoriality. The foreign diplomatic corps was convinced of the virtues and necessity of such a measure when it learned of the murder of seven Colombian brothers of San Juan de Dios in Barcelona at the hands of the republican militia. One consequence was the flight to France of the Consul General in Barcelona and the Minister of Colombia in fear of their lives. Alarm increased at the beginning of August with the murder in the environs of Madrid of 226 people from Jaén, including Jaén’s bishop, Manuel Basulto, his sister, the dean and the vicar general of the diocese [7]. Atrocity followed atrocity and, on 23 September, the Chilean ambassador was witness to the shooting of 6 priests besides the main road to Alicante ([1], p. 139).

As a result, the doors were opened at Legations, Embassies and annexed premises, above all in Madrid, Zarauz ([1], p. 79), Valencia, Alicante and Barcelona, the cities that had been established due to the vicissitudes of the war. In another act unprecedented in diplomatic history, the Consulates also decided to extend the right of asylum. This was mainly applied in Madrid, but also to a lesser extent in

cities of the Levant, which were the principal points of embarkation for foreign vessels involved in evacuating the asylum-seekers who arrived from the capital. It is worth recalling that the Madrid-Alcalá diocese recorded 435 victims among the secular clergy, equivalent to 38.8% of the total for that collective and the highest figure of all dioceses (followed by Valencia with 327 victims) and more than 10.3% of the total number of assassinations in Spain ([8], p. 103).

Successful entry into asylum was never easy and, at times, ended in tragedy since the humanitarian activities of the foreign representations were soon discovered by the government and Popular Front organizations. More than once, just as they were about to enter diplomatic premises, many asylum-seekers were arrested by the police or the militia. One such was Franciscan Sister Asumpta who was taken prisoner at the entrance to the Chilean Embassy and led away together with a married couple that accompanied her to the notorious “Fomento” *checa*, from where they would later be taken out and murdered ([6], pp. 42–43). Father Anastasio Arnáiz accompanied another nun to the French Lycée in Madrid where she found refuge; but on leaving, he was arrested by militia members, imprisoned and then shot at Paracuellos.

When the two sisters of the Honorary Consul of the Republic of Uruguay were assassinated together with the mother superior of the School for Scolapian Nuns on 19 September 1936 in the outskirts of the city, a major diplomatic crisis broke out with Uruguay breaking links with the Popular Front Spain. Dolores and Consuelo Aguiar were former pupils of the Scolapians who, when religious persecution got under way, decided to help their erstwhile teachers by hiding them in various flats around the capital. As they were in possession of diplomatic papers and armbands identifying them as Uruguayan citizens, they thought they enjoyed full immunity and did nothing to conceal their assistance of the nuns. Some members of the militia network, which had been organized to repress the rearguard duly took notice and decided to use their murder as a scare tactic to send a message of warning to the foreign diplomatic representations which afforded shelter and protection. When the facts became known, the foreign diplomatic corps denounced before the Republican government the absence of any guarantees for foreign citizens settled in Spain and the deaths of Spaniards at the hands of the militias, who acted on the orders of the machinery of repressions organized, consented and authorized by the Ministry of Governance and, therefore the Government itself ([6], pp. 106–07). After this rupture in diplomatic relations, the Uruguayan Embassy was shut up and its 257 asylees were placed under the protection of the Argentinean Embassy. The Uruguayan consulate, however, continued to operate and gave protection to some nuns –mothers Nazaria March, Delia Beramendi, Guillerma Acaro-, the Augustinian Miguel de la Pinta³ and two priests, Román Gómez Gutiérrez and Vicente Capilla Buiza. The nuns were evacuated in the latter months of 1936, but the rest never managed to be moved outside Republican Spain⁴.

³ Miguel de la Pinta Llorente, O.S.A., administered the last rites to the popular dramatist Serafín Álvarez Quintero during the war, entering the Uruguayan legation in August 1936 where he performed an active pastoral mission among the asylees.

⁴ National Historical Archive, General Cause, Embassies and Legations (hereinafter NHA, GC, E&L), Response of the Legation Uruguay in Spain to the points set down in the note of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 11 December 1941. Also, lists of asylees in Archive of Ministry of Foreign Affairs (hereinafter AMFA). 673/17, 4 September 1937.

3. Distribution of Clergy Granted Asylum in Embassies and Legations

There are several difficulties attached to ascertaining the exact number of clergy members who were granted asylum. To begin with, it needs to be borne in mind that during the early months of the war the foreign missions protected and evacuated hundreds of people through Spanish ports, including priests, monks and nuns. As this was done discreetly, with identities and conditions being concealed at times, exact data cannot be given regarding the number of these first evacuees. From autumn 1936 onwards, the republican Ministry of State required of the foreign diplomatic corps precise lists of those they had granted asylum to, giving names, surnames, age and a photograph. Most representations took their time to supply the lists due lest the Popular Front overruled their permission to be evacuated or demanded the immediate handing over of some or other of those they were protecting. It was therefore not until 1937, and in some cases 1938, that the lists started to be delivered up. Some made no attempts to conceal the social and professional condition of the asylees, but others had no choice but to do so ([9], p. 339). Thus, according to the testimony of one refugee ([10], pp. 225–27), in order to be able to evacuate a group of nuns taking refuge the Norwegian Legation concealed their condition. The Polish Legation also gave shelter to Monsignor Alfonso Toda y Nuño de la Rosa, who had been the private secretary of the nuncio Federico Tedeschini, but his name does not appear in the official lists of asylees sent to the Ministry of State⁵. The Brazilian Embassy waited until 1938 to send in their list of 68 asylees, much to the irritation and desperation of the republican staff; the lists included 34 men, only 3 of whom claimed to be members of the clergy: the priest José González Prieto, the monk Ricardo Fernández Martínez and the Salesian Father Buenaventura Bravo Cosgaya⁶.

The Popular Front authorities generally denied professional soldiers or clergy permission to leave their territory in accordance with how diplomatic relations stood with each country. They also carefully reviewed the list of women and men in the age of enlistment (18 to 45) because they had no wish to send soldiers across to national Spain. Since they had taken possession of the archives of the main right-wing political parties, the police and the republican apparatus of repression were able to ascertain the political affiliation of many refugees, as they pointed out in their reports to the Ministry of State, where they also drew attention to some asylees' membership of Catholic Action, which they took to be as serious as belonging to a conservative party. This proves the persecution of lay Catholics, above all during the Second Republic, who had tried to further the cause of what Pope Pius XI regarded as the most important association for the rechristianisation of the world. It was in the light of these reports that Ministry of State staff had to decide whether or not to permit the evacuation of these people.

On the basis of these premises and conditioning factors, together with personal testimonies, memoirs and books written by asylees, an attempt can be made to hazard the number of clergy and members of religious orders given shelter in some embassies and legations. Nonetheless, the following

⁵ Monsignor Toda y Nuño de la Rosa was canon of St Peter's, Rome and after the war continued to work in the Madrid Nunciature. See *ABC*, 14 February 1932, p. 11 and 10 November 1949, p. 21. The Polish legation afforded protection to between 350 and 400 refugees, NHA GC, E&L, verbal note of the Polish Legation to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1 February 1942.

⁶ AMFA, R. 672/6, List of Asylees. These entered asylum between 20 July 1936 and 20 December 1937.

data are incomplete for the number of genuine asylees was greater than that of official asylees (). Furthermore, they do not include the number of nuns who were given protection and evacuated.

Table 1. Number of Total Asylees and Clergy Afforded Protection in Diplomatic Representations in Madrid (1936–1939).

<i>Diplomatic Representation</i>	<i>Total Asylees</i>	<i>Clergy granted asylum</i>
Germany ⁷	80	3
Argentina	428	-
Austria	137	-
Belgium	287	5
Bolivia	124	-
Brazil	71	3
Colombia	8	-
Cuba-Haiti	600	12
Czechoslovakia	204	-
Chile ⁸	2,000 ⁹	26
Dominican Republic	82	4
France ¹⁰	900	213
Hungary	18	-
Mexico	807	7
Norway	900	65
Netherlands	137	-
Panama	847	4
Paraguay	322	6
Peru	600	3
Poland	350–400	1
Rumania	718	5
Sweden	174	2
Switzerland	85	-
Turkey	923	25
Uruguay	257	6
Yugoslavia	21	4
Total	11,130	394

Source: National Historical Archive (Madrid), General Cause, Embassies and Legations folder and end bibliography.

⁷ Number of refugees when the German Embassy was stormed and closed down in November 1936. Previously, other asylees had been evacuated in secret.

⁸ Including the asylees of the Legations of Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala, under the Chilean flag after their respective governments broke off diplomatic relations with the Republic.

⁹ The Guatemala Mission protected 200, Honduras 36.

¹⁰ The French Embassy presented the Ministry of State with a list of 2,570 people for the purposes of evacuation. This included many who had come from other Legations, private addresses or Red Cross protection. The number of their own asylees stood at around 900.

According to the files held at the Archive of the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (AMFA), no member of the clergy appears to have been among those refugees given protection at the diplomatic representations of United States, Switzerland, Hungary, Austria, Bolivia, Colombia, Czechoslovakia, Netherlands, El Salvador, Guatemala or at the Nunciature. In regard of the latter, after the departure of the nuncio Tedeschini, the Nunciature official Monsignor Silvio Sericano remained in charge of relations with the Holy See in Madrid. On the outbreak of war and religious persecution, some ad hoc actions were taken such as the release from San Anton prison of Father Juan Postius, the general assistant of the congregation of the Sons of the Heart of Mary Missionaries, who was taken in by the Nunciature at the prompting of the papal Secretary of State, Cardinal Pacelli, in Rome. However, two days later Monsignor Sericano decided to shut down the Vatican's representation in Madrid and left the capital on 4 November 1936 after being tipped off by the French Embassy that there were plans to assassinate him. Bereft of diplomatic status, Father Postius was to all intents and purposes left in solitary charge of the keys to the Nunciature until he managed to evacuate from Popular Front territory and make it to Rome. The Holy See may also have arranged one or two other evacuations by means of its Paris Nunciature and collaboration with the French Embassy in Madrid. The Nunciature's offices were moved to a new address, but to date nothing is known of their activity, which must have been negligible given that the Holy See never reopened its Nunciature in the Republican zone during the war ([11], pp. 331–36). For its part, the United Kingdom decided against any official granting of diplomatic asylum, though some British Embassy staff did protect Spanish people and assets. What is more, the British government agreed to assist in the evacuation of refugees, often organized with the cooperation of the International Red Cross, and its vessels took part in many humanitarian actions during the Civil War.

In Father Antonio Montero's study of religious persecution, the Norway Legation appears to have sheltered the highest number of clergy and members of religious orders: 33 priests, 20 nuns and 12 Jesuits; as a result the rest of the asylees renamed it "The Headquarters of the Company of Jesus" ([5], p. 204). Yet it was actually the French Embassy that succoured most clergy since, as is explained below, it afforded protection to many buildings run by religious orders. It is worth pointing out that Rafael García Tuñón, rector of the largest seminary in Madrid, managed to take refuge in apartments under the protection of the Honorary Consul of Norway, Felix Schlayer; as did Father Manuel Rubio Cercas, from where he was able to carry on his work as Vicar General of Madrid in during the first part of the war, and José Utrera, rector of the lesser seminary at Alcalá de Henares and canon of that city's magistral cathedral. Together they managed to reorganize the dioceses from hiding, regulating the Holy See's instructions regarding worship and maintaining contact with Bishop Eijo y Garay, who was in Nationalist Spain. In spring 1937 Rubio Cercas was evacuated along with other refugees, while his two chief collaborators were transferred to the Hospital of "San Luis de los Franceses" until they finally managed to leave the capital in March 1938 ([7], p. 120). Other refugees included the Jesuit Enrique Martínez Colón who had taken up teaching at a school in Bordeaux on the dissolution of the Company. On his return to Madrid, he worked as a priest among the poorest, gathering funds to maintain schools and families and paying frequent visits to the charity kitchens run by the Sick Board of Santa Engracia. Another who remained true to teaching was Father Felix García Polavieja although with the arrival of the Republic he had had to move to Belgium, where he abided habitually. In contrast, the priest Baltasar Cuartero Huerta was in charge of the offices of the arch-confraternity of St

Isidore and corresponding member of the Academy of History. From time to time the police and Ministry of State received information about these three refugees since the Legation gave them various files with the names, professions and political situation of some –but by no means the majority- of their asylees¹¹.

For their part, officials at the Yugoslavian Legation, fearful of the republican repression they had witnessed in Madrid, took a narrow view of the right to exile. They only offered refuge to 21 people, four of them Slav nuns who managed to be evacuated ([1], pp. 446–47). The Royal Legation of Sweden, on the other hand, took charge of 174 refugees, two priests among them: José Machiñena Austegui and Manuel Cavanillas Rodríguez¹². The Belgians, meanwhile, took in the priests José María Bueno Monreal, a lecturer at the seminary and future Cardinal Archbishop of Seville, and Manuel Martín, parish priest at San Andrés, Madrid –razed on 18 July 1936- and the priests Santiago Monreal and Pablo Manzano. However, the list of evacuation they presented in 1937 only included the Jesuit Father José Pérez del Pulgar, electronics lecturer at the Catholic Institute of Business Administration and Management, who had entered asylum in late August 1936¹³. Many of them, who had been hidden under Belgian protection at the church of St Andrew of the Flemings, achieved evacuation in spring of the same year.

The director of Madrid's Greater Seminary, José María García de la Higuera, managed to take refuge for one day in the Cuban Embassy before moving to apartments protected by the Finnish Legation [12], where he remained from 12 August to 3 December, when they were stormed by the police and militia ([7], pp. 43–44). Other priests were to be found there too, such as Felix García ([5], p. 199) or José Luis Peñuela, who did not stint in his preaching and ministering to the refugees. When the building was stormed he was taking confession in the bathroom, the makeshift but much needed confessional, and encouraging all to bear witness to their faith should their assaulters eventually massacre them. However, the apartment they were in was not properly searched and, together with a group of young people, he managed to hide for more than a fortnight in a room whose door had been concealed behind furniture ([7], pp. 125–26). Many refugees under the Finnish flag were removed to a variety of prisons, but thanks to pressure and protests on the part of the Foreign Diplomatic Corps, they were released and taken back to protected buildings, above all the Turkish Embassy. There protection was given to 12 sisters of Our Lady Immaculate¹⁴ as well as, officially, to 11 priests¹⁵. Other refugees there were the Jesuit Fathers Valle y Aspiazu, who managed to organize in the months that followed eleven groups of spiritual exercises among the 923 asylees sheltering in the Turkish representation.

Antonio María Sanz Cerrada, a well-known Mexican priest, didn't enjoy the same luck. After having to flee his homeland during the Cristero War, he moved to Spain where he attacked the

¹¹ AMFA, R. 673/6, Norwegian Embassy, lists of evacuation and typewritten files with data of some refugees, dated between July and September 1937.

¹² NHA, GC, E&L, verbal note of the Swedish Legation to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 7 May 1942.

¹³ In the list of evacuees appears the name "Manuel Martín", owner. Was he the priest of the church of San Ginés concealing his identity? NHA, GC, E&L, response of the Belgian Embassy to the verbal note of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and attached lists, 2 March 1942.

¹⁴ Four managed to evacuate and the rest were captured by the police when storming the apartments, despite the Turkish flag, on 28 January 1938. NHA, GC, E&L, statement of Sister María Bernarda Arista Uribarri, 13 November 1940.

¹⁵ AMFA, R. 673/15. Lists of refugees presented by the Turkish Embassy.

anti-clerical policy of the socialist-left Republican coalition of 14 April 1931 writing pieces for the press, particularly for the Carlist newspaper *El Siglo Futuro*, under the pen-name *The priest of Mixcoac* and, more famously, *Brother Juniper*, in his notorious section *Mesa Cerrada*. She took refuge under the Finnish flag but, after the storming of the Legation, was captured and died a few weeks after the war ended as a result of the privations of prison life¹⁶.

The Royal Legation of Rumania, which gave asylum to 718 refugees in various buildings, mentioned no member of the clergy in the lists is presented to the republican authorities, officially at least¹⁷. Yet Father José Llamas and the Augustinian José Ángel López Ortiz are known to have been asylees. The latter, was released from San Anton prison thanks to the mediation of the Subsecretary of Public Instruction, Wenceslao Roces, and took refuge under the Rumanian flag until the end of the Civil War¹⁸. And it was another priest, Father Faustino Sánchez Céspedes, chaplain of the House of Health of Saint Christine and Official School of Matrons, who after the war proposed to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the Rumanian commercial attaché, Henry Helfant, be awarded some honor for his outstanding role in protecting asylees [13]. Sánchez Céspedes cited among Helfant's merits his decision to rescue a number of refugees from the German Embassy and move them to various other missions when the Foreign Diplomatic Corps learned in November 1936 that the Republican police were about to storm the building. Helfant agreed to take in three priests and also gave succor to a group of Redemptorist monks in his own residence in upper Carabanchel, where they stayed out the war¹⁹.

The French Embassy took charge of its dependencies and of those of the French Lycée, the Hospital of San Luis and the Central Hospital of the Red Cross, as well as some other buildings. From the outbreak of war it helped most French clergy to evacuate to France, above all the nuns who had been settled in Spain since the late nineteenth-century and early twentieth, many of whom were freed from imprisonment at the hands of the militias ([6], pp. 127–30). Nevertheless, some nuns and priests decided to remain in France until the end of the conflict. Thus it was that staff at the French Embassy afforded the protection of the French flag to the French branch of the Daughters of Charity, in their base in Abascal Street, Madrid. As time passed, this became an oasis of freedom for the nuns taking refuge there. They also offered diplomatic protection at their Provincial House, which became a hospital under the French flag where many persons were able to find refuge²⁰. In his memoirs of the Civil War, father Teodoro Cuesta wrote in connection with his stay at the French Lycée that many

¹⁶ His obituary, together with those of other workers for *El Siglo Futuro*, appeared in *ABC* on 22 August 1939. Other clergymen were assassinated for writing in this conservative newspaper, among them José Fernández Montaña (*J. Orós*), Emilio Ruiz Muñoz (*Fabio*) and Ricardo Gómez Rojí.

¹⁷ The lists of refugees under Rumanian protection are to be found in AMFA, R. 1.460/13 and R. 673/12, dated 1937 and 1938; and in NHA, GC, Eand L, verbal note of 12 December 1941.

¹⁸ Brother López Ortiz (1898–1992) was Professor of History of Law, medieval historian, Arabist, Bishop of Tuy and editor of *Arbor* and the *Anuario de Historia del Derecho Español*.

¹⁹ AMFA, Burgos archive, 5.170/50.

²⁰ That did not mean they were freed from persecution, for two Daughters of Mercy of the province of St Louise were assassinated. This congregation was divided into two provinces under the names of St Louise and St Vicent. The former was also known as “the French province” since its nuns answered to the headquarters of the Daughters of Charity in Paris. The latter was known as “the Spanish Province”, 30 of whose sisters in Madrid were assassinated.

members of the regular and diocesan clergy found asylum there and cooperated in sustaining the religious life of the refugees ([14]; [5], p. 201).

The French diplomats also permitted the use of their diplomatic bag to keep up communication between the clandestine church in Republican Spain and the organized church in Nationalist Spain and to send money and clothing to persecuted and imprisoned clergy, and to clergy in hiding, distributed by a *Socorro Blanco*, or clandestine relief organization, for priests ([7], pp. 146–47).

The French Embassy also protected the Hospital of St Louis of the French which, together with the church next door, was run by the Lazarist Fathers, although until November 1936 who really called the shots was Sister Gerard, daughter of Charity, who sheltered many victims of militia persecution, admitting them without any signed order from the French consul. After her departure in the company of most of the hospital's nuns, a new Mother Superior was appointed, Sister Pilar, who kept up constant communication in code with Sister Gerard through the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and thanks to assistance from Mme. Neuville, wife of the French consul in Madrid. Heriberto José Prieto Rodríguez, lieutenant-vicar and provost of the dioceses, also took refuge there, where he carried out a great work of coordination with the Bishop and clandestine clergy of Madrid, coming to be appointed Vicar in the second part of the war. As far as was possible, he discharged the functions of diocesan administrator, taking care of the members of the clergy who were in hiding and organizing the celebration of mass. The rector of the church of San Luis, Father Azemar, was also active in the reorganization of the clandestine dioceses; thanks to his French citizenship he could move around freely and, through the French Embassy, liaise between the small curia in hiding and Bishop Eijo y Garay. 36 members of religious orders, including 12 Jesuits, together with 34 priests, 10 secular priests and 140 nuns took refuge in the Hospital of St Louis of the French ([5], pp. 202, 435).

Until war's end the French Embassy continued to carry out a variety of humanitarian activities: aid to hospitals, collaboration with the Red Cross, assistance to French brigade members, and so on. When, in February 1939, the domestic situation made a surrender of the Popular Army of the Republic seems likely, the Francoist authorities ordered the French Embassy to send them a list of the refugees who were still under their protection in Madrid before the imminent rendition of the city. According to this report there were still officially 10 asylees in the Hospital of St Louis of the French, 20 in a neighboring hospital, 30 in the former House of St Isabel, and 40 in former Asylum for the Elderly of the Little Sisters of the Poor²¹.

4. The Protective Effort of the Iberoamerican Diplomatic Representations

Surprisingly, the Mexican Embassy also offered asylum to members of the clergy despite its representing a revolutionary country which was unequivocally sympathetic to the Popular Front and whose recent history was marked by religious persecution and the Cristero War. The Embassy was headed by General Manuel Pérez Treviño, a firm supporter of diplomatic asylum whose wife had previously given refuge to priests at her house in Mexico during the *Cristiada*. The granting of asylum was not, then, an initiative of the Mexican government but of its representatives in Republican Spain.

²¹ AMFA, R. 1.060, exp. 217. Memo of the Subsecretary of Foreign Affairs to the Ministry of Governance, Burgos, 13 March 1939.

Among those who took refuge under Mexican protection were Luis Alonso Muñoyerro, future Archbishop of Sión and Military Vicar General²², but other petitions were turned down, including that of the Dominican Reginaldo Hernández, who ended up being assassinated by militia members ([15], p. 281). These examples lead to the assumption that whether or not clergymen were admitted depended on the functionary who attended to requests at any given time, for Embassy staff was divided between supporters and detractors of the ambassador's policy on asylum. Thus, four lay missionaries of the Immaculate Heart of Mary were accepted as well as one Father Gutiérrez. But the Mexican seminarist Pedro Aldana chose to conceal his condition from all the staff with the result that he managed to evacuate without the ambassador knowing that outside Republican Spain he had decided to carry on with his ecclesiastical studies²³. One paradox of diplomacy is that a small oratory with an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe was permitted in the embassy.

For its part, the Chilean Embassy was one of the most generous in extending the right to asylum. The largest ecclesiastical group it took in were ten priests and students from the Claretian congregation, but the Chilean Ambassador was first moved to clemency by the case of some Spanish nuns, unable to be evacuated from the capital. Their Chilean companions refused to abandon them, and they were granted a safe-conduct, which enabled them to reach the port of Valencia and protection in the form of the British battleship *Repulse* ([1], p. 133). With the passage of time this Embassy would protect 2,000 people, coming to take charge of the asylees of Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala, whose representations encountered increasing economic and logistical obstacles to evacuating those they had taken in.

As mentioned earlier, according to the official lists sent to the Popular Front authorities as late as 1938, the Brazilian Embassy gave protection to two priests –José González Prieto, Ricardo Fernández Martínez- and the monk Buenaventura Bravo Cosgaya²⁴. Nevertheless, in spring 1937 its ambassador, Alcibiades Peçanha, asked the Republican Government to authorize the mass exit of all asylees in foreign representations and more than one thousand nuns who were still to be found in Madrid. This was an indication of his lack of diplomatic tact regarding other diplomats since it revealed the clandestine existence of the latter ([1], p. 268).

Fearful that it might be difficult to arrange their evacuation, the Argentinean Embassy in Madrid, under the leadership of Edgardo Pérez Quesada, decided not to disclose the religious condition of its asylees. Consequently, there is to date no precise figure for their number. Similarly imprecise is the number of those members of the clergy and religious orders who requested diplomatic protection in order to be evacuated to the seat of the Argentinean ambassador, Diego García Mansilla, in San Juan de Luz (France). These included the Mother Superior of Valdecilla; a group of Salesian nuns from Madrid;

²² The granddaughter of General Pérez Treviño still preserves in her family archive a letter to Pérez Treviño's widow from the Archbishop of Sión recalling and expressing gratitude for the protection received during the war years. Letter dated 28 November 1951. Personal Archive of María Elena Laborde y Pérez Treviño, México (AMEL). I am grateful to her for letting me see it.

²³ The story was later published in a North American newspaper, as preserved in AMEL.

²⁴ AMFA, R. 672/6, Mobilization Asylees age . The data may also be imprecise for in the list of men aged over 45, and therefore beyond the age of enlistment, his professions was not stated.

another group of nuns from the Don Bosco Institution, Barcelona; another of Ursulines from Chabañes de Bendedo, Valencia; and various Jesuits from the Pontifical University of Comillas, Santander²⁵.

The advisor to the Peruvian Embassy, Jorge Bailey Lembcke, started by granting asylum to around 200 people in premises and apartments belonging to diplomatic staff. They included Mother Rosalba Rodrigo Eguren, whom he helped safeguard documents and assets from her convent in El Escorial. In late August 1936 most of them were evacuated from Alicante, leaving behind in Madrid around 30 members of the aristocracy who were keenly observed by the militias and republican police. Before evacuating and closing down the embassy once and for all, Bailey explained the exit plan to the remaining refugees, which was to follow the habitual itinerary as far as Alicante where they would board a British vessel. However, the success of the mission could not be guaranteed one hundred percent because of the high profile of the refugees, who would have to travel with Peruvian Passports and under false names. The refugees accordingly requested that a priest administer them the General Absolution before setting out ([16], pp. 139–43). That priest, José Panizo Orbegoza²⁶, was the only member of the clergy who formed part of the expedition. Despite a series of hiccups, he too managed to reach France on 12 September.²⁷ Months later, Peruvian diplomats in Paris, London and Geneva received news to the effect that two Spaniards had set up on their own initiative a Peruvian Consulate in Madrid offering asylum to 400 people ([1], pp. 193–202). In the years to come, this action led to all sorts of problems and difficulties with the Republican government.

In the course of the war, the Panamanian Legation protected and evacuated 847 people. Only one priest, Abilio Esteban Arranz, was mentioned among the males over the age of 45 (and therefore more likely to be granted evacuation since they were beyond military age) in the list sent in June 1937. This might give ground for suspicion regarding the honesty of the data in the lists of men of military age where various members of the clergy might be camouflaged, as too nuns, classified as single women in the lists of females²⁸. The following year, in a confidential list of 415 male refugees sent to the Rumanian Legation, the Panamanian diplomats confessed to affording protection to two priests of military age²⁹. In the post-war years, the Panamanian mission would admit before the Spanish authorities that the monk Bernardino de la Concepción had died at their refuge at 83 Goya Street³⁰.

Initially, the representation of the Dominican Republic also maintained an open door policy for the persecuted and sheltered around 82 refugees in apartments protected by their flag. These included the priests Manuel Pombo Angulo, Ángel Sánchez Cámara, Valentín Sánchez Ruiz and Santiago Rebolleda García³¹. However, by 1983 the head of the mission, César Tolentino, decided to unburden

²⁵ NHA, GC, E&L, verbal note and attached papers of the Argentinian Embassy, 14 August 1942.

²⁶ José Panizo Orbegoza (1877–1956) was a Peruvian Jesuit. He moved to Spain on his appointment as Rector of the *Colegio máximo de San Jerónimo*, the school of Chamarín de la Rosa and Superior of the Student's Residence in Seville. Once evacuated to Madrid, he crossed over to National Spain, where he worked as military chaplain.

²⁷ To the despair of the Peruvian diplomats, customs staff at the port of Alicante started arguing amongst themselves when they discovered various religious objects in the passengers' baggage; but at midnight, 11 September, the party was safely berthed on the British vessel.

²⁸ AMFA, R. 673/8. List of asylees of the Panamanian Legation.

²⁹ AMFA, R. 1.460/13.

³⁰ NHA, GC, E&L, verbal note sent 5 January 1942.

³¹ NHA, GC, E&L, verbal note of 11 November 1941.

himself of most of his asylees, leaving some of them in the care of foreign institutions such as the French Hospital or, quite simply, with no protection at all. This led to various complaints in the early post-war period ([1], pp. 304–09).

Diego Angulo Jovellanos, representative of the Eastern Republic of Paraguay during the war housed 322 refugees in various buildings and apartments. However, he made the mistake of submitting several different lists of refugees to the Republican authorities. This aroused great suspicion on the part of the Ministry of State and put the police on permanent alert. No doubt that was why he concealed the religious condition of some of his asylees, even though in regard of the first evacuation expedition of 22 March 1937, he acknowledged the presence of two priests no longer of military age. However, he was at pains to conceal the name of Enrique Miret Magdalena, who was a victim of persecution on account of his presence in the lists of members of Catholic Action and being a candidate for entry into the Company of Jesus³². In a confidential list sent to the Rumanian representation the following year, Angulo stated that he was protecting the Marista José Llanillo García and two priests, Jaime Flores Martín—future Bishop of Barbastro- and German González García³³.

5. Pastoral Work of Clerical Asylees on and off Diplomatic Premises

As proven by post-war testimonies, the presence of members of the clergy served as a catalyst of the Catholic spirit of the thousands of refugees who enjoyed their spiritual attention in circumstances of great desperation and tension. It should not be forgotten that after a first stage of persecution, imprisonment, death threats and assassinations of family and friends, once the short-lived relief at finding refuge had passed the asylee was faced with a second stage marked by shortage of food, lack of space, permanent unease, the frustration of inactivity, claustrophobia, overcrowding and the endless dream of evacuation. That, for hundreds, did not come until the end of the war. The pastoral work of the refugee clergy was a relief for many of them.

At most Legations, Embassies, Consulates, attached buildings and, even, protected apartments, attempts were made to revive worship. Masses were celebrated and occasionally marriages and baptisms; unfortunately, last rites were also given to the dying ([17], p. 129). There is no doubt this activity was carried on quietly and discreetly to avoid neighbors making reports to the police. In August 1936, at the official address of the Chilean Embassy, the first mass was celebrated with the asylees; it was officiated by the Claretian Nicolas Gil, a former lecturer at the Catholic University of Chile ([18], p. 281).

There is abundant testimony to such clandestine worship, some of it from diplomats themselves, like the same Chilean ambassador who authorized the celebration of twelve marriages, twelve baptisms, Holy Communion and religious feasts in his Embassy; the scenes of religious piety left a deep mark on him. One eye-witness record addressed to the Bishop of Madrid describes the extremely

³² Heterodox and autodidact, Enrique Miret Magdalena (1914–2009) was a well-known speaker and lay theologian. Throughout his life he was a tireless writer, teacher and speaker, with expertise in theology, ethics, sociology of religion and sociology of the family and youth. Confirmation of his stay under the Paraguayan flag may be found in AMFE, R. 1.670/3.

³³ AMFA, R. 1.460/13. He also found protection at an apartment at 13, San Agustín Street, the home of a priest, according to the typewritten memoirs of the refugee María Teresa Santa Cruz (*Memorias*).

solemn celebration on 19 March 1937 of the feast day of St Joseph, patron of the Brotherhood of Industrial Engineers of St Joseph and the Holy Family of the Nazareth Workshop. At eleven o'clock in the morning, a mass was held which was attended by a large number of refugees and all the industrial engineers and university students, most of whom took communion ([7], pp. 190–91).

According to Jesuit priest José Maria Llanos, when writing of Father Jiménez Font's time at this Embassy, in the Chilean dean's chapel:

"Mass is held several times a day, exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, night-time worship, four times a month, novenas, tridua, holy hour, monthly retreat, spiritual exercises and reading of the Holy book on Sundays, with homily, etc. In that chapel was organized the Apostolate and the Vigil for the Blessed Sacrament, and a Marian congregation; there too marvelous conversions took place and thousands were confessed. There is no doubt that that chapel was the leading church of red Madrid" ([19], p. 109).

Early in 1937, the Augustinian Evaristo Seijas entered the Chilean Consulate in Madrid where he stayed cooped up in one of the attics together with other members of diverse religious orders until the start of the following year. That did not stop him from evangelizing among the hundreds who shared a roof with him under Chilean protection by fomenting religious talks ([5], p. 200). According to the Claretian Joaquín Alonso, in 1937 there were five priests celebrating mass daily, while at the start of 1938 the Chilean Embassy staff allowed the refugee community of Claretians to share the same room in order to carry on their peculiar and stringent regime of community ([5], p. 201).

In his memoirs, Father Teodoro Cuesta recalled how the celebration of mass at the French Lycée commenced in February 1937 on the feast day of the Our Lady of Candelaria. Thenceforth, a dormitory, its mattresses removed, was made available with a desk acting as altar table and the celebrant donning a threadbare overcoat by way of liturgical robes. Later on, private chapels were organized where the sheltering priests could celebrate mass daily. During one triduum in honor of Our Lady of Miracles, as many as 500 medals with her image were bestowed. Refugee clergy also assisted and participated in the organization of primary and secondary education for a student body numbering as many as 95 ([14], pp. 194–218). Christian feast days such as St Joseph and Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve were celebrated with high numbers of asylees in attendance, while first communions and weddings were organized amidst the overwhelming emotion and passion occasioned by the tension of living in isolation ([14], pp. 200, 241–44). As the Embassies gave protection to large numbers of soldiers, it is not surprising that the most popular religious festivities were those of the patrons of one or other corps (Our Lady of Mount Carmel, St James Apostle, St Teresa and the Immaculate Conception). At the Mexican Embassy, the asylees joined together in several rooms and, if they were able to find a radio, tuned in to the broadcast of the Midnight Mass from Rome; in December 1936, they mounted a small and modest Nativity. The emotions and consolation their faith gave them would be recounted years later to the ambassador's wife by one who attended, José Bastos Ansart³⁴.

These kind of religious experiences were somewhat different from those to be had in private households or prisons. In theory, since every Embassy, together with associated buildings, was territory of the country it represented and ruled by its laws, there was no religious worship in Republican Spain as such. However, the hounding from outside knew no let and diplomatic staff were

³⁴ AMEL, undated letter of J. Basart to Esther González, entitled "Nochebuena 1936" ("Christmas Eve 1936").

at pains to avoid any action or manifestation that might irritate the Popular Front government. That is why religious manifestations were at times supported by those in charge of foreign representations, at other times prohibited, and at others hushed up. In short, the religious activities organized in such places formed part of the clandestine worship of the persecuted church, and not only in Madrid, but also in those cities, ports and villages where expeditions of evacuees passed the night or otherwise had to spend some time ([1], p. 350).

At the Honduras representation, refuge was given to the founder of Opus Dei, José Maria Escrivá de Balaguer, together with his brother Santiago and some members of the *Obra*. From 14 March to 31 August 1937, Escrivá de Balaguer evangelized intensively both within the precarious refuge and outside it. Mass was celebrated daily and the Blessed Sacrament was kept carefully in a casket inside a cabinet for visits from the asylees. Balaguer also maintained links with other members of Opus Dei who had been separated by the war. He devised a plan whereby the meditation he addressed to those in refuge with him in the mornings would be delivered to refugees in other places by a variety of means including the young brothers of Álvaro del Portillo—future priest and prelate—who sometimes delivered the papers on which the meditation was written in their shoes. At the same time, and faced with so many hours of enclosure, Balaguer advised his companions to devote their time to learning languages. In the summer, Balaguer decided to leave the Legation with a letter from the Honduran consul accrediting him as an employee of a diplomatic representation by way of documentation. Thenceforth he threw himself into his clandestine pastoral work, above all among those who had labored with the *Obra* ([7], p. 164). Álvaro del Portillo was prevented from leaving Popular Front territory despite possessing a Cuban birth certificate and ended up transferring to the Norwegian Legation [20]. In a list of 41 refugees dated 7 June 1938, the Honduras representation was, in theory at least, granting asylum to no member of the clergy, who had either moved on to other representations or had taken up with Madrid's underground church³⁵.

The Cuban Embassy protected some 600 asylees. It is difficult to identify the clergy among them, but the identity of presbyter Andrés de las Marias Andreu has been proven; the republican authorities had denied him an evacuation permit despite his advanced age [21]. Although his condition of brother of San Juan de Dios did not appear in the lists of refugees, the identity of Luis Martín Ramos is also known since the letter of gratitude he wrote as a former asylee to the head of Cuban business affairs in the post-war years was found. In any case, there cannot have been any great number of clergymen for a letter survives from one refugee, dated December 1937, in which he asked embassy staff to permit the entry of a priest for his spiritual sustenance³⁶. Nevertheless, one of the apartments protected by the Cuban flag, in fact its main one at 12 Hermosilla Street, was known as the “Cathedral of Hermosilla”. There a group of *Madres Reparadoras* from the convent in Torrijos street had taken refuge under the leadership of Mother Mary, or Mother Muratori, of Our Lady of the Sorrows. The apartment belonged to a soldier and achieved the protection of the Cuban Embassy since one of the nuns had been born in Cuba. Later on, an apartment was rented in the name of a Uruguayan nun. Little by little priests began to frequent it to celebrate mass, organize spiritual exercises and retreats, observe religious festivals and hear confession: the time came when there were up to eight priests administering the penitence

³⁵ AMFA, R. 1460/13.

³⁶ AE, Civil War refugees folder, letter of 20 December 1937.

simultaneously. Particularly from 1937 on, numerous Catholics began to be welcomed, and baptisms, weddings and all sorts of acts of worship were celebrated there. The Jesuit Father Ponce channeled great ingenuity and generosity into this labor, one of his feats being a communion of sodalists attended by over thirty families ([7], pp. 142–43).

In spring 1938, a militia group burst into the apartment bearing arms just as Sunday mass was being celebrated. Using as an argument Cuban diplomatic protection, the Superior, Mother Mary of Our Lady of the Sorrows, managed to fend them off long enough for the other nuns to remove the data from an almost complete file of the Madrid clergy and those who frequented the apartment: the papers were either torn up or eaten. One nun alerted the Embassy by telephone, which in turn contacted the police and other authorities with the result that the stormers finally withdrew ([7], pp. 140–41).

No formal worship ever came to be organized at the Mexican Embassy where religious fellowship went no further than talks and reflections led by two priests as part of a general cycle of conferences in which refugees spoke about subjects in which they had some expertise. It should be remembered that the religious question was still a potential bombshell for the Mexican Government in the wake of the War of the Cristeros, while ambassador Pérez Treviño understood that priority had to be given above all to asylum and evacuation without triggering the protests of either the Republican Government or his own. However, he also allowed Father Florindo de Miguel to visit the Embassy once a week, with the connivance of two staff members, in order to assist with confession ([22], pp. 80–81). Clandestine visits of priests to buildings under foreign flags was an extremely risky enterprise which put many lives in danger; a case in point is the José Antón Gómez who attended at the Royal Legation of Rumania to officiate mass in August 1936 until he was arrested by the militia and shot ([5], p. 205). In contrast, at the Norwegian Legation the numerous clergy instituted a religious set-up with great pretensions. The priests divided themselves into nine parishes for the 900 asylees who passed through the legation's dependencies, each of which was a center for religious services. The Jesuit fathers alone conducted twelve groups of spiritual exercises, arranging the participants in accordance with age and profession. They also led short courses in liturgy and ascetics ([5], p. 204).

6. The Parallel Activity of the Provincial Consulates

In Catalonia, it was not long before religious persecution reached levels of extreme violence. Accordingly, many foreign consulates decided to save the lives of those who were persecuted for the political opinions they held, the way they dressed, the faith they proclaimed or their membership of social groups targeted by the revolutionary left [23]. With the aid of a few Generalitat functionaries, who were shocked by the extent of the repression, the consular staff—whether official or honorary consuls—granted Passports to the persecuted so that they might escape to France or Italy from the port of Barcelona in parties that boarded vessels from the French or Italian navies, with the protection at times of British boats. More than 7,000 managed to be evacuated to France by this means; among them, naturally, were priests, members of religious orders and nuns. In all this noteworthy humanitarian effort, the Italian Consulate stood out above the rest, for 6,390 managed to find safety on board vessels flying the Italian flag. Setting sail between 24 July and 7 August 1936, the parties on their boats included a good number of clergymen and nuns ([5], p. 474; [6], pp. 192–93). The French Consulate oversaw the evacuation of 6,630, 2,142 of whom were nuns, and many of those resided in

other dioceses ([5], p. 197). On occasion, the consul achieved their release from imprisonment and granted them collective passports ([24], p. 451).

Foreign consulates also assisted in the departure from many ports in Republican Spain of parties of evacuees bound for Gibraltar, among which there were members of religious orders such as around 50 nuns who arrived there from Cartagena ([5], pp. 476–78). Other refugees reached there from Malaga thanks to the good offices of several consuls, one of whom in particular, the Mexican Porfirio Smerdou Fleissner [25,26] managed to save the lives of 567 people, including 15 clergy. Collaborators in this humanitarian Enterprise included the British Royal Navy, the Italian Consul, Tranquilino Bianchi, and the advisor to the French Consulate, Albert Coutelenq. This latter, an honorary French diplomat brought about the evacuation of 313 people between 27 July and 12 October 1936. The last expedition he organized comprised 92 nuns who worked in several of Malaga's schools, hospitals and health centers, and 20 Little Sisters of the Poor³⁷. It should be remembered that religious persecution in the Malaga dioceses meant the death of 177 people, 48% of its priests and 75% of its monks ([27], pp. 48–49).

In Valencia, the Chilean Consulate hid groups of nuns together with other citizens on three occasions, while also attending to the needs of parties of asylees arriving from Madrid for evacuation from the city's port. In Alicante, pride of place goes to the efforts of the Argentinean Consul, Eduardo López Barrera, who managed to save over 20 members of the clergy from the city itself and elsewhere ([28], pp. 112, 153). In the north of Spain, the Consulates in Gijon also carried out noteworthy efforts to save lives ([21]; [29], p. 650).

There may be many other such cases, but there are no detailed studies, which mean there is much research to be done into the humanitarian endeavors of the foreign consulates. That the Republican authorities were not unaware of such actions is demonstrated by the following event: after the repression of the Republican troops in Castellón (June, 1938) and faced with the likely taking of Valencia by the Francoist army, the Foreign Consular Corp in that city offered to mediate for the Republican government and, as proof of its neutrality, to give protection to all women, aged persons, children and sick people who requested it. However, with a view to strengthening their protection in a recognized and respected neutral zone, they asked for French and British marines to disembark in order to escort them, if necessary to their vessels. Once informed of the proposal, the Republican Ministry of State roundly refused to accept any of the consuls' terms, replying that, on the contrary, any meeting they held in future would be regarded as suspicious on the grounds that their idea was defeatist. The honorary consuls were denied the *exequatur* if they attended or took part in collective accords, and other legal measures were enacted against them. As consular premises did not enjoy diplomatic privileges, the Ministry of Governance was reminded that its agents could, if they deemed it appropriate, enter them, with only the consular archive remaining inviolable. What lay behind these measures was the fear of the Popular Front authorities of finding a large population of asylees on their hands. In short, what had been happening in Madrid since the start of the war and had so tarnished their democratic image in the eyes of many countries had to be avoided at all costs in Valencia³⁸.

³⁷ He also saved various priests and cathedral canons, such as the Lazarist Villalain, teacher at the french School, who in the post-war period would become Superior of the Pauls. AMFA, R. 784/16.

³⁸ AMFA, R. 786, exp. 20.

7. Conclusions

In the Spain of the Popular Front during the Spanish Civil War, many members of the clergy were saved from certain death in those cities where Legations, Embassies and Consulates were in a position to carry out humanitarian action. Diplomatic asylum afforded in Madrid saved the lives of at least 394 members of the clergy, a not inconsiderable number bearing in mind that in all 962 were assassinated in the Madrid dioceses³⁹. That said there can be no absolute certainty regarding figures for clerical asylees for the reasons set out in this article; what numbers we do have are approximations requiring further research.

While it is true that Iberoamerican diplomatic representations took the lead in defending the right to asylum, performing humanitarian actions, arranging exchanges and devising strategies of mediation, the representations (France and Norway), which accepted the highest number of refugee clergy, were European, as were the consulates which evacuated the highest number of refugees from persecution (Italy and France). Important factors in this process were geographical proximity together with the need of Spain's Republican Government to be on excellent diplomatic terms with left-wing Governments in Europe. That said, there is an evident need for more research into consular activity in many Spanish cities, much of which is still completely unknown.

Whether wittingly, unwittingly or covertly, during the three years of war the humanitarian activities of many members of staff at foreign representations enabled Catholic worship to persist underground in Popular Front Spain. As we have seen, this labor was performed as well as each individual's realm of possibility, circumstances or strength of will permitted; and it meant that the spiritual needs not only of the thousands of asylees but also of much of the Spanish population could still be administered to.

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