

Wolfram Kaiser, Piotr H. Kosicki (ed.), Political Exile in the Global Twentieth Century. Catholic Christian Democrats in Europe and the Americas, Leuven (Leuven University Press) 2021, 350 p. (Civitas. Studies in Christian Democracy), ISBN 978-94-6270-307-0, EUR 69,50.

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Exile can be a traumatic and challenging experience. People who experience exile may go through the trauma of loneliness, poverty, and face linguistic obstacles and significant culture barriers. On the other hand, exile can also provide an opportunity to fight oppression from abroad and to become involved in transnational efforts and institutions that share similar values and principles. It can be an individual experience of loss and displacement, but it can also give way to collective enterprises and the building up of international networks. The essays gathered in this significant book are the result of a conference funded by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and the Civitas organisation that sought to bring together scholars working on the political exile of Christian Democrats during the 20th century.

There has been increasing interest in the history of exile since the end of the 1970s, with particular attention on exile as part of a larger history of migration and as an important part in the study of political cultures. Studies on exile have adopted national or comparative approaches and have tried to grasp the impact of the exile experience among those who had to live through it, its significance in terms of politics at home and its influence in the affairs of the host countries. More recently, scholars have combined a concern about the international circulation of people and ideas with the transnational nature of forced migration. This edited volume focuses on the diasporic experience of Catholic Christian Democrats and aims to go beyond a national perspective by exploring the global dimensions of political exile.

A thorough introduction by the editors describes the challenges and obstacles that Christian Democrats faced when they were forced into exile and lays out the key themes and perspectives studied and adopted in the book. Like the rest of the contributions, this opening essay can build on a substantial body of studies of both the history of Christian Democracy and the history of exile and offers a comprehensive overview of the paths followed by individuals and groups of Christian Democrat exiles in the (short) 20th century, from the end of the First World War to the end of the Cold War (p. 11). The book then divides into four sections that explore the exile in the United Kingdom and the United States from the 1920s to the end of the Second World War; exiles from Spain following the Civil War throughout the Franco dictatorship; exiles



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from East-Central Europe from the demise of Nazi Germany to the end of the Cold War, and the Chilean exile in Western Europe and the Americas following the 1973 military coup.

Christian Democrat politicians and intellectuals who went into exile not only found it difficult to adjust to life in their host countries, but they also frequently failed to make any significant contribution to the way in which transitions to democracy took place at home while they were abroad. The chapters in this collective book illustrate the efforts invested by the exiles to overcome displacement, deal with cultural differences, and build or get involved in associational networks. As Wolfram Kaiser's article illustrates, national and transnational organizations were significant for the exiles because they helped build networks of contacts and provided a beneficial environment in which to carry out discussions about Christian Democratic politics and the future of the governments-in-exile.

The articles also provide evidence of the wide ideological spectrum that informed the political activities of the Christian Democrat exiles when they had the opportunity to return to their country with few having any impact in this new era of democratic politics, some in alliance with left-leaning parties (i.e., Chile), some supporting an extreme right-wing populist (i.e., Hungary). Moreover, the traumatic experience of exile could also make the exiles reassess the value of the host culture and its political traditions. Exiles and refugees could go through what Peter Burke describes as a process of »deprovincialization« that makes people more aware of their cultural parochialism¹. Hence, the chapters by Paolo Acanfora and Carlo Invernizzi Accetti are significant because, by exploring the exiles of Luigi Sturzo and Jacques Maritain in North America, they help to apprehend the relevance of exile in shaping their ideas, for instance, their views on the United States, its political system and their projects for the establishment of a new international order.

Two final essays focus on the exile of Christian Democrat politicians and activists in Latin America. Both articles concentrate on Chile and agree on the slim relevance that Christian Democrats in exile had in the transition from the Pinochet dictatorship to democracy. Élodie Giraudier's essay in particular embraces the spirit of this collaborative endeavour going beyond the national approach and exploring in detail the interactions and connections between Chilean Christian Democrat exiles and organizations in the host countries. Significantly, the article also analyses the Chilean experience of exile in the light of the broader context of a wave of political exiles in the Southern Cone during the Cold War from the 1960s onwards.

Recent historiography has warned against simplified definitions of political Catholicism and scholars have been aware of the particular



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¹ Peter Burke, *Exiles and Expatriates in the History of Knowledge, 1500-2000*, Waltham 2017.

and specific developments experienced by Christian Democracy around the world, from the interwar period onwards, that defy easy generalizations². The fresh research that supports this book not only contributes to our understanding of the phenomenon of Christian Democrats in exile but also helps us grasp the diversity and complexity of the Christian Democrat political identity and the relevance of the transnational dimension, particularly when it comes to the study of the diasporic experience of politicians, intellectuals, and activists.

² Wolfram Kaiser, *Christian Democracy and the Origins of the European Union*, Cambridge 2007; Tom Buchanan, Martin Conway (ed.), *Political Catholicism in Europe 1918-1965*, Oxford 1996; Martin O. Castro, Diego Mauro (ed.), *Católicos y política en América Latina antes de la Democracia Cristiana, 1880-1950*, Buenos Aires 2021.



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