

Spain, Sectarianism and Social Memory in Cold War Queensland

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Introduction

The study of memory and the projection of identity have increasingly preoccupied scholars in recent years.¹ Yet, there has been far less attention given to the interaction of identities and places which share little direct contact. Identity narratives that are associated with an abstract place act in a markedly different manner to those with which direct contact is maintained. Despite its distance from Australia, Spain was at the nexus of Protestant British and Catholic Irish identity during the Cold War in Queensland. Spain's international position and reputation was a point of social contention, and marked boundaries between the two religious and ethnic groups. Empathy with Spain also provided continuity to local Catholics, whose identity hitherto had been defined by Irish ethnicity but became increasingly associated with anti-communism.

Spain was profoundly isolated at the end of the Second World War, and was subjected to intense pressure for regime change, as the apparent sole survivor of Fascist Europe. Subjects throughout the British Commonwealth viewed developments in Spain with intense interest, and Queenslanders' reactions are especially revealing. Social attitudes to Spain act as a prism to display the changed negotiation of sectarian boundaries that historically had been determined by Anglo-Irish rivalry. British Protestants were sensitised to the threat Spain posed to Gibraltar, and by extension to the emerging Commonwealth. Spain's iconic Catholicism resonated with Queensland's Irish community, who saw parallels between Spanish international isolation and their own perceived social marginalisation. This resonance became associated with Catholic anti-communism, and provided continuity to local Catholics, whose identity was in the process of rapid change.

The post-war international community was hostile towards Spain's military government. One of the first draft resolutions from the inaugural UN Security Council sought to reconcile geo-strategic stability with former Allied countries' hostility towards Spain's nationalist government.² The debate was initially taken to presage a likely armed intervention that would restore Spain's Republican government-in-exile, but any real chance of invasion quickly receded. The Soviet

consolidation in Eastern Europe convinced the United States of the need for a strong government in Madrid that could act as an anti-communist bulwark. In contrast the British government was significantly more reticent, and hesitated to rehabilitate Franco. However fearful of Moscow, London possessed core strategic interests in the Iberian peninsula, and opposed a strong, rearmed Spain. Australia's position as a British Commonwealth member on the Security Council ensured it was at the forefront of the debate. Security Council discussions prompted domestic comment on the best response to Spain's position, as well as to Australia's relationship with the British Commonwealth.³

Hostility to Spain had long underpinned narratives of English identity, and much of the Commonwealth shared London's suspicions. Antipathy towards the Spanish derived from a notion of shared English ethnicity and social norms that was particularly pronounced in Australia. Brisbane's *Courier-Mail* articulated the sense of threat when it wrote with foreboding that '[s]o long as [Franco's Spain] exists, there will always be the danger of a treacherous blow, whilst its whole conception of the new Europe is in direct opposition to our own.'⁴ These views were not replicated amongst Queensland's Catholics. Instead, they prioritised their Irish identity and rejected outright any hostile analyses of Spain. Brisbane's *Catholic Leader* showed little restraint in lampooning London's attitude to Franco.

Before interfering in the domestic affairs of a Catholic nation—now prosperous and free from the curse of war—it would be well for Great Britain to pay attention to the dictatorship within her own Dominions, indeed at her own very door step. We refer to the cruel dictatorship of the Northern Ireland Government, under which Catholics suffer continual hardships and disabilities—and this fascist government, with headquarters at Belfast, is and always has been subsidised by England.⁵

Sectarian identity remained a powerful social signifier in post-war and Cold War Queensland. The overwhelming majority of Queensland's Protestants were of British descent, although there were also significant numbers of Protestant German, Dutch and Scandinavian descendants. Protestant British norms and preconceptions dominated the social construction of public space, and public events continued to memorialise British civic and religious norms. The Church of England's Procession of Witness on Passion Sunday, for example, traced major thoroughfares throughout Brisbane city centre and culminated in the central King George Square, opposite City Hall. Catholics comprised a high proportion of the state's population, and dominated the powerful Labor Party in the state parliament.⁶ Yet whilst their political influence was a source of pride, Irish Catholics felt little empathy for a civic loyalty so overtly conditioned by British patriotism. Their construction of social space and memory was instead focussed on periods of Anglo-Irish contest.⁷

Spain was often associated with social narratives hostile to communism. Queensland's geography and society rendered it particularly receptive to such fears. The state's vulnerability to external threat had been clearly demonstrated during the Second World War. Relatively under-developed and with a low population density outside the state's south-east, Queensland watched Asian communism's apparently inexorable post-war advance with trepidation. The Communist Party of Australia had successfully embedded itself in the social and political fabric of the state's vulnerable far north, and a sense of crisis increased as many of Queensland's most important industries were paralysed by communist-inspired strikes.⁸ Queenslanders feared the impact of this political extremism on their security, but their responses to the threat were conditioned by religious denomination.

Spain has been associated with various ethnic and sectarian narratives throughout history. In early Cold War Queensland however, Spain was placed at the nexus of complex social tensions as memories of the Spanish Civil War were revisited in a very different local and international context. The association of community memory with Spain engaged the novel and threatening international situation with successful community action in the 1930s. Moreover, the link between religious identity and Spain across several decades mitigated the shock of rapid change to ethnic and religious identity. Social memory is highly subjective, and is conditioned by the recognition afforded to a group's identity by others in society.⁹ The interaction and anger surrounding Protestant and Catholic debates on Spain reveal the local reception of international affairs, and its role in the maintenance of boundaries between the two groups.

Spain was central to the projected relationship between Catholic and Protestant identities in the tense Cold War atmosphere. For Protestant descendants of British settlers, Spain symbolised a threat to the resurgent Commonwealth. For Queensland's Irish Catholics, Spain symbolised their perceived social marginalisation. It also bridged a Catholic identity hitherto defined by Irish ethnicity, but increasingly directed towards anti-communism. Narratives associated with Spain altered by the late 1960s, as sectarianism's social relevance declined, and Spain's place in religious narratives ceased to resonate in Queensland society.

Gibraltar and the Cold War

Protestant British Queenslanders associated political and social stability with Australia's continued association with a resurgent Commonwealth. British weakness had been revealed infamously in the fall of Singapore, and was re-emphasised as communism advanced throughout South-East Asia. Debate on the British Commonwealth's future intensified during India's independence in 1947, and the nascent British Commonwealth appeared as the sole guarantor of Queensland's

elusive security. On his return to office, Sir Robert Menzies emphasised harmony with London to reassure voters, and to enable a domestic consensus based firmly on Anglophile identity.¹⁰ The United States was a key ally, but security cooperation remained limited to lengthy discussions whilst Australia was perceived as defenceless in an increasingly perilous South Pacific.¹¹ Many Australians anticipated a powerful and invigorated Commonwealth. Such hopes grew apace as news leaked that British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin was attempting to coordinate Commonwealth states' foreign policy.¹² Gibraltar was the symbol of this independent and powerful confederation of states, and linked an imperial past with contemporary strategic security.

Gibraltar's significance was accentuated by its vulnerability to Spanish attack, which recalled Singapore's traumatic fall in 1942. During the Second World War, the Spanish had emphasised their claim to Gibraltar and applied diplomatic and populist pressure on the British. Acutely aware of the danger this posed, London simultaneously cultivated Madrid and hastily prepared contingency plans for alternative bases. The British remained anxious about Spanish intentions after the war, and consistently resisted either Spanish membership of NATO or joint military exercises. Throughout the Cold War, the British characterised the U.S.-Spanish detente as a purely bilateral relationship.

In line with London and despite the United States' gradual rapprochement, Canberra remained hesitant towards Franco. Liberal Senator John McCallum warned that relations between Australia and Spain would be predicated on amoral expediency alone, and that regime change must occur in Madrid before anything approaching a 'union of hearts' could eventuate.¹³ A year later, in the wake of a raft of U.S. and Spanish economic and military agreements, the fervently left-wing Senator Donald Grant also continued to urge against formal Australian recognition of Franco.¹⁴ Catholic politicians were characteristically more enthusiastic, and saw the U.S. position as a vindication of their long-standing argument that the defeat of communism was the pre-eminent international priority. The Queensland Labor politician Senator John Armstrong typified Catholic responses when he commented in the 1950s that '[i]t is rather strange that people who speak of Franco in friendly terms are often regarded as fascists, although it is quite all right, apparently, to have dealings with Tito.'¹⁵ The Queensland Catholic Liberal Senator Michael O'Sullivan cast back to memories of the Spanish Civil War when he re-stated the familiar Catholic refrain that the British Commonwealth was beholden to Franco. He questioned whether 'had the Communists not been defeated in Spain, would we have won the North African campaign? Would not Western Europe be under the heel of Communism? Of course, Gibraltar would have been.'¹⁶

Similar tensions towards Franco existed at a state level in Queensland. The establishment broadsheet *Courier-Mail* overtly associated Franco with the wartime Axis, and made few references to his pivotal identification with Catholic anti-communism. The serialisation in gripping installments of Ambassador Samuel Hoare's wartime diaries from Madrid confirmed Franco's suspected Axis sympathies for thousands of Queenslanders. Hoare's 'ceaseless fight against Axis intrigue and Franco's enmity and double dealing' became an embedded characterisation in mainstream media.¹⁷ Throughout the 1950s, cartoons in the non-Catholic media continued to insinuate that Franco's earlier connection to Mussolini and Hitler rendered him a sustained threat to Commonwealth security.¹⁸ Cartoonists did not suggest Spain was inherently expansionist, but focussed on Franco's apparently obsessive desire for Gibraltar.¹⁹ Cartoonists deliberately undermined Franco's attempts to appear an important international statesman, and conventionally portrayed him as short, stupid and overweight. Critically, the dictator was an anachronism, engaged in the continuation of his fascist heroes' duplicity and repression.²⁰ The counterpoint, that Britain was at the centre of a new world order, is not surprising since most of the cartoons in Queensland broadsheets were syndicated from a British cartoonist—Vicky of the *London Daily Mirror*.

The attention the non-Catholic media gave to Spain was disproportionate to the threat posed. Queensland's main daily broadsheet, the *Courier-Mail*, featured Spain twenty-nine times in the first half of 1946, twenty-four times in the second half of 1953 and nineteen times in the first half of 1957. Such levels of reporting correlate to periods when Spain appeared more powerful and potentially threatening, but were quite out of proportion to the minimal direct interaction between Spain and Australia. No other European country had media exposure comparable to Spain in either scale or duration. Articles developed the perception of a maverick state through the focus on Spain's military and industrial development, and even suggested Spain possessed a nuclear capability.²¹ References to Gibraltar exceeded those to other British colonies, but few articles outlined general developments in the colony, and preferred instead to document bellicose Spanish acts.²²

The Australian public's antipathy to Southern Europeans offers one means to understand attitudes to Spain (although attitudes to Spaniards should not be confused with attitudes to Southern Europeans in general). For example, mainstream newspapers tended to characterise Italians as irrational, a fact that was used to explain post-war Italy's propensity for interminable political crises.²³ Attitudes to Spaniards did possess some similarities with this. The media frequently portrayed a country that had barely developed beyond the days of Don Quixote. Journalists revelled in descriptions of pharmacists fudging the difference between bicarbonate

of soda and penicillin, workers spending their years drinking red wine in a haze of rural illiteracy, and superstitiously parading donkeys dressed in cardboard wings.²⁴

Hostility towards Southern Europeans was not homogenous, however, in either its application or construction. Portugal is a good example of the importance of British attitudes to the negotiation of Queenslanders' national stereotypes. Anglo-Portuguese friendship was long-standing, and historically had sought to counter-balance a powerful Spain. Mainstream newspapers consistently described Portugal as a model democratic state. Reporters avoided descriptions of Salazar as a dictator, and instead emphasised the limited multi-party elements in the Portuguese constitution.²⁵ During the 1957 visit of Queen Elizabeth II to Lisbon, the Portuguese 'Mediterranean temperament' and flamboyance were seen as a fitting tribute to the youthful Queen.²⁶ The Queen's arrival in Lisbon was deliberately juxtaposed with the Duke being forced to wait for his wife in Gibraltar, to avoid antagonising the more troublesome Spanish.

Although antagonistic towards Franco personally, non-Catholic commentators did seek to balance British interests in Gibraltar with Soviet containment. As such they conceded that renewed Spanish instability risked increased communist influence in the peninsula. The journalist Colin Bingham conceded 'that a great number of people "go along" with the present regime because there is no practicable alternative.'²⁷ Bingham could see no viable substitute for Franco, and dismissed the few remaining Resistance fighters in northern Spain as 'half-bandit, half-patriot anarchists who hate government in any form.'²⁸ Hostility to Spain was predicated on the implications of Spanish militarism for the Commonwealth. Yet, this tension between British interests and Spain's anti-communist utility antagonised Queensland Catholics, who criticised what they perceived to be an inherently selfish British foreign policy.

Anti-communist crusaders

Catholic identity relied heavily on imagery that was substantially associated with Spain. Catholics had been exposed to a barrage of information on Spain during the seismic reaction to the Spanish Civil War from 1936 to 1939. The Catholic Church had successfully characterised the Civil War as a conflict between Catholicism and communism, and as one exasperated anti-Franco campaigner, the literary figure Nettie Palmer, wrote in her diary, most 'saw two internationals at work, the Red and the Black (R.C.)! Simple.'²⁹ Spanish Republicans' reliance on Soviet aid had only confirmed Catholics' arguments that their religion was the natural and universal norm in Spain, with any foreign fascist support reflective of social consensus.³⁰ Catholic media had portrayed the war as a microcosm of global ideologies that could change the fate of the world. The war was not therefore one between Spanish

Catholics and others, but one which engaged Catholicism globally. In her biography of the Australian-based communist Jean Devanny, Carole Ferrier notes the Civil War provided Catholics with the 'emotional charge' to project medieval Crusader narratives onto organised Catholic action within Australia.³¹ The duration and intensity of Catholics' anti-communist campaigns in Australia during the 1930s ensured the Civil War remained integral to Catholic identity for decades to come. By the Cold War, Catholics associated Spain with the most defining Christian struggle in modern history.

The Civil War had confirmed Australians' long-standing association between Spain and Catholicism. As Patrick O'Farrell comments, 'Spain was special in the Catholic mind—tough, hard, unyielding, a splendid Catholicism (not the whining soft Italian variety, or the moist Irish kind) but the stuff of heroes.'³² After the Second World War, clergy and Catholic schoolteachers manipulated Spain's past to suggest the nation was an historic bedrock of Catholic orthodoxy.³³ Australian Catholic schoolchildren were taught to recite from memory G. K. Chesterton's paean to Catholic Spain, *Lepanto*. Its apparent references to Franco's anti-communist crusade were thought to be self-evident.

Dim drums throbbing, in the hills half heard,
Where only on a nameless throne a crownless prince has stirred,
Where, risen from a doubtful seat and half attained stall,
The last knight of Europe takes weapons from the wall,

...
Holding his head up for a flag of all the free
Love-light of Spain – Hurrah!
Death-light of Africa!³⁴

Post-war articles in the *Catholic Leader* willingly granted Spain a messianic destiny, from the repulsion of the Moors in the fifteenth century to contemporary missionary activity in Latin America.³⁵ Spain's international isolation was portrayed as a consequence of the Spanish people's rejection of Soviet demands to betray Catholicism.³⁶ This was made all the more credible when the 1946 Security Council motion to invade was sponsored by communist Poland and the Soviet Union. The *Catholic Leader* exulted in Spain's status as 'the bastion of faith in the West of Europe [...] the only country which resisted and defeated the godless hordes.'³⁷

Spain's synonymy with orthodox Catholicism provided a framework through which contemporary international relations could be understood. Queensland Catholics denied Spain was a fascist state, and stressed its spiritual basis. Catholics resisted pressure to ostracise Franco, and mounted a forceful counter-campaign to re-emphasise the pre-eminent need to defeat communism. Articles that defended Franco appeared almost weekly in the *Catholic Leader* during the crisis year of

1946, and from January to August when international debate on Spain's future was most threatening, 38 articles were written in his defence. Editorials declared that Franco was 'no Fascist in the sense in which the name is used in Italy, but even if he were, his rule would surely be a thousand times preferable to the wicked liberty-destroying rule of the Communist Republicans.'³⁸ Catholics loudly asserted that any criticism of Franco equated to a refusal to accept the anti-communist priority, and signalled the acceptance of communist propaganda and selfish interests over Christian morality.

The British refusal to countenance Spain's international rehabilitation confirmed the Catholic belief that British anti-Catholic bigotry was hampering the anti-communist cause. Judith Keene rightly notes that as Australians lacked the ability to place Spanish issues in an informed context during the Civil War, the conflict 'played a symbolic role, providing a vocabulary and metaphor in which to speak about local issues.'³⁹ This symbolic role continued in the Cold War, when Catholics felt that the mainstream media's endorsement of British hostility towards Spain reflected local sectarianism.⁴⁰ In a speech at the Irish Club in Brisbane in March 1946, Archbishop Duhig attacked the press for deliberately misrepresenting the situation in Spain.⁴¹ Catholics, said Duhig, supported Spain not only because they felt it was a victimised anti-communist nation, but also because Franco's government was founded on Catholic precepts. British attacks on Franco could only be rationalised by the familiar Catholic refrain of an alliance between anti-Catholics, international capitalists and freemasons.⁴²

A Catholic third way

Spain's importance to Queensland Catholics' identity suggests there was a more enduring identification than scholars have realised. Whilst articles on Australian attitudes to the Spanish Civil War have been published steadily since the war's inception, there has been scant analysis of the war's long-term social repercussions.⁴³ U.S. and French Catholics were deeply divided over the religious justification for the Spanish Civil War, yet Australian Catholics remained remarkably united in their support for the Nationalist rebels. Whilst Spain's legacy to Queensland's Catholic identity was long-lasting, contemporary anti-clerical violence in Mexico failed to be assimilated into local Catholic consciousness in any comparable sense. Spain's enduring importance was a product of local sectarian and religious identity, but more particularly was a product of the association of Irish-Catholic narratives of British hostility towards Catholic nations, and Ireland in particular.

Catholics inverted Spain's status as an international pariah, and eulogised it as the only country that had rejected communism and successfully renewed itself through Catholic precepts.⁴⁴ Catholics presented Spain as a devout and courageous

model nation far more than other European countries like Italy, where subversive communist elements remained. Only Ireland received greater coverage in the diocesan press. Spain's post-war reconstruction was used to portray the Catholic social model as a genuine alternative to both communism and unfettered capitalism. Accordingly, Franco's personal commitment to Catholic teaching was presented as the catalyst for the rapid reconstruction of churches, as well as a genuinely astonishing level of foreign and internal missionary activity.⁴⁵ Catholic newspapers believed increased religious vocations symbolised Spain's national renewal, and reported the increased numbers of clergy with great pride.⁴⁶ Spain was a democratic Catholic nation in transition; just not a liberal materialist democracy of the type that appeared to fuel Communist electoral success elsewhere in Europe.

Queensland's Catholics drew explicit parallels between Spain and their own Irish heritage. Catholics saw De Valera's and Franco's independent foreign policies as indicative of Catholic governments' spiritual conviction faced with international hostility. Implicit in much of the Catholic media's comment was the notion that Spain and Ireland had constructed an alternative system of government based on Catholic principles. Articles emphasised both nations' pervasive religiosity and deep faith. The doughty Catholicism of Ireland appeared a natural complement to sombre Spanish piety, and distanced Spain from negative preconceptions of other southern Europeans. The *Catholic Leader* made parallels between the two countries explicit when it suggested the United Nations' treatment of Franco was the reason why De Valera's Ireland hesitated to join. The editorial postulated that, drawing strength from their mutual isolation and religion, '[i]t is well that there are some strong men in the world who will not have their countries dictated to by Communists and anti-Christian mountebanks.'⁴⁷

Spain's importance derived from the association of its Catholic strain of anti-communism with narratives that were critical of British interference in Ireland. Archbishop Duhig emphasised parallels between contemporary Spain and Ireland of the 1920s. He referred unambiguously to a misguided but influential group of British politicians who he claimed attempted to marginalise sovereign Catholic states such as Spain and Ireland.⁴⁸ Duhig highlighted the British occupation of Catholic territory, whether Ulster or Gibraltar, and editorials written under his supervision urged Britain and the United States to cease meddling in the internal affairs of sovereign states.⁴⁹ Most inflammatory of all, Duhig claimed that Britain's actions and consequent status as an occupying power made it no different to its wartime fascist enemies. To justify his stance, Duhig thundered against the imposition of Protestant 'fascist government' in Northern Ireland, which he alleged deliberately discriminated against its Catholic inhabitants.⁵⁰ Whilst Britain was an occupying power that denied liberty to the Northern Irish, Franco headed an indigenous

government with majority social support. Such accusations deliberately inverted British criticism of Spain, and set Western values of freedom and sovereignty against Great Britain.

The structures of comparison between Spain and Ireland were extended to the descendants of Irish-Catholic settlers in Australia. Descriptions of Irish missionary priests' training in Spain are one example of inferred comparisons,⁵¹ but direct connections to the Irish in Australia are especially interesting. Archbishop Kelly of Sydney had fixedly maintained the link between persecution experienced in Spain and that witnessed by Irish descendants in Australia.⁵² One article in particular in the *Catholic Leader* referred to Duhig's presence at the centennial celebrations of the Spanish Benedictine monastery at New Norcia in Western Australia. The article contrasted the English claim to have discovered Australia with the 'debt of gratitude to the intrepid sons of Spain', who had discovered Australia in 1606, long before the Englishman Cook. Spain's pioneer spirit of the past was then applied directly to the contemporary Cold War and 'those unscrupulous enemies [who] are trying to crush her.'⁵³

The connection between Spain and Ireland elevated Catholics' historic position in Australia, and in Queensland in particular. The same article on New Norcia recalled the iconic Cardinal Moran's comments that the Spanish discoverer Captain Quirós had celebrated mass at Gladstone in Queensland in 1606, over one hundred and fifty years prior to Cook's arrival. Less contentious descriptions of the Spanish Captain Torres' navigation of the straits to the north of Queensland further elevated the discoverers' importance.⁵⁴ A unique and direct bond between Queensland and Spain was created, and a model constructed for schools whereby Quirós was established 'as a sort of founder-figure in [Catholics'] battle against the Protestant ascendancy.'⁵⁵ The network of empathy between Spanish and Irish Catholics was such that Queensland Catholics perceived assaults on Franco to be an attack on their own identity as marginalised Catholics. Just as Catholics had identified with self-determination for Ireland, they now fought for self-determination against mistaken British interference in anti-communist, Catholic Spain.

The Black Legend

The truth is that the attitude of Britain and France, and until recently of America itself, to Spain is only explicable on grounds of a kind of mass hysteria, developed in times which bear little relation to the realities of the post-war world.⁵⁶

The Black Legend had been used for centuries to structure British national identity around anti-Catholicism. Hostility to the 'tyranny' of the 'scheming' Vatican continued to be influential after the war.⁵⁷ Although the Legend replicated

anti-Catholicism throughout English history, its focus and origin was Spanish Catholicism. The Black Legend derived initially from the sixteenth century Anglo-Spanish hostility surrounding the mythologised Elizabethan Spanish Armada. It developed over several centuries in England to become a characterisation of dour Catholics scheming constantly to thwart liberal English attempts to spread enlightened democracy. Protestants and Catholics both associated Spain and Ireland as examples of a rigidly orthodox Catholicism. Catholicism's role in galvanising opposition to British rule in Ireland reinforced Protestant British hostility towards modern Catholicism. The Black Legend directed British Protestants to juxtapose the Catholic Church with liberal national values, but focussed attention on Spanish Catholicism as the antipathy of British interests.

Queensland's Catholics were aware of the Black Legend and used it to structure their perception of British anti-Catholicism, as well as their perception of local social marginalisation.⁵⁸ Their criticism of British policy towards Ireland had frequently centred on anti-Catholic prejudice. Duhig formulated a familiar refrain for Queensland Catholics to understand international attitudes to Franco, and repeatedly associated the Black Legend with post-war British anti-Catholicism.⁵⁹ Duhig implied Queensland Catholics could explain their own social marginalisation in similar terms of prejudice. A full-page article in the *Catholic Leader* explained to local Catholics that 'the memory of the Spanish Armada has never been lost among the English, and ... handed down until to-day, it is still the cause of unthinking prejudice.'⁶⁰ Catholic anger at the press' treatment of Franco's Spain was succinctly expressed in their complaint of attacks on 'Spain in a press and radio campaign which spits the calumnies and lies of the ominous Black Legend.'⁶¹

Queensland Catholics did not accept the disloyalty implicit in the Black Legend, but manipulated Spain's association with anti-communism to emphasise their allegiance to Australia. The worsening Cold War gave Catholics the opportunity to juxtapose their own anti-communism with the British Commonwealth's self-interest. Franco's gradual international rehabilitation fuelled Catholic claims to impeccable anti-communist credentials, compared to British obfuscation. Reports suggested victimisation when the United States and Britain welcomed the Soviet Union to the international community but continued to exclude Spain.⁶² Catholics revelled in the reaffirmation of their rôle as steadfast sentinels who had silently protected the West from Moscow's manipulation. In this capacity, the Blue Division sent by Franco to help Hitler on the Eastern Front was 'not to help Germany against us, but to show Spain's hostility to Communism, which it deemed the greatest menace in the world.'⁶³ Catholics proudly asserted that Franco's victory in the Civil War had prevented a Soviet Spain, which would have signed the Nazi-Soviet Pact and seized Gibraltar by force. Had this happened, the *Catholic Leader* fulminated,

[w]hatever else the British would have been doing today, they would not be playing Stalin's game—and laying down a fuse which could well touch off a charge that would not destroy the last remnants of the civilisation of the West without bringing Britain—and France—down in final ruin.⁶⁴

Queensland Spaniards

Queensland's small but established community of Spaniards was an important foil for the application of ethnic and religious narratives. The mainstream media portrayed Spain as trapped between forces of rapid economic change, and continued social conservatism. Journalists reported the massive infrastructure projects with admiration as national highways were constructed and modern engineering changed the direction of whole rivers. They could not ignore Spain's poverty entirely, and Spanish peasants' living standards were recognised as barely comparable to Western European norms. Ordinary Spaniards were stereotyped as honest to the point of idiocy. Unguarded Spanish prisoners did not run away, and instead 'waited patiently on the step of the prison van' whilst their guards left them and went to arrest others.⁶⁵ As the Cold War became increasingly embedded, the importance of an economically and militarily strong Spain was paradoxically seen as indispensable to European defence just as it was threatening to Gibraltar.

Perceptions of those Spaniards resident in Queensland varied according to levels of contact. The community of pro-Republican Spaniards in the state's far north rarely communicated their despair at Franco's victory,⁶⁶ and a mixture of social pressure and a lack of English skills hampered their engagement in the public arena.⁶⁷ Those who did harbour hopes that Franco would be overthrown struggled to express them through the Australian Community Party, and instead worked in relative obscurity to struggle in trade unions against the anti-communist Catholic Industrial Movement.⁶⁸ In the post-war period, despite Queenslanders' awareness of Spain, local Spaniards remained relatively inconspicuous, and were generally confined to the mass of anonymous, foreign 'Dagos'.⁶⁹ The perception of racism further dissuaded Spanish settlers from engaging in political discussion, and many steadily withdrew in old age.⁷⁰ In contrast, the children of former radicals trumpeted their social conservatism. Many were tempted to fight in Korea, some to expiate their parents' earlier communism.⁷¹

Queensland Catholics had little real contact with the Spanish community. Spaniards tended to live in the state's rural north, and rarely had time to visit church regularly even when they had the inclination.⁷² The rapid expansion of the state's Basque population did superficially confirm Australian perceptions of Spanish Catholicism. Although little interested in formal Catholic theology, Basques remained passionately committed to spiritual and outward manifestations of Catholicism. Basques in urban centres rapidly integrated into parish structures and preferred

local Australian priests to the Spanish migrant chaplains based in Queensland.⁷³ There was little awareness of possible tensions caused by such Spanish priests, although many Spanish clubs fractured under their politicised presence.⁷⁴ Those Basques who attended church confirmed Catholics' perceptions of Spain, whilst anti-clerical Spaniards were marginalised as renegade communists.

Only in the state's heavily populated south-east was there a high degree of contact between Catholics and Spaniards, as a consequence of the Plan Marta. An attempt to redress the gender imbalance amongst the Spanish community, the scheme brought to Australia single Spanish women who had been pre-selected by the Catholic Church in Spain. Once in Australia, they were allocated to Catholic families to work as domestics. Although few women remained in domestic service for very long, Catholic women in Brisbane received them with great enthusiasm.⁷⁵ Ignacio Garcia has traced the pronounced religiosity amongst the Plan Marta migrants in Sydney,⁷⁶ and it seems likely the Plan Marta women who settled in Brisbane were similarly assiduous in their devotions. Many lived and worked in episcopal or church facilities, and a large number married and worshipped in the imposing church at Red Hill.⁷⁷ Although the women's success as domestics was limited, their overt and regular attendance at local churches confirmed Catholics' preconceptions of an orthodox and devout Spain.

Protestants in the state's southeast had little contact with the Spanish community, although those in the far north had more contact with the significant numbers of Spaniards who worked in the sugar industry. Low intensity Spanish immigration over many decades meant Queenslanders' associated Spaniards with hard work in the sugar industry. A comparison between two cartoons in the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the Brisbane *Courier-Mail* from 1958 reveals the impact of such prior exposure. The *Sydney Morning Herald* (where there was little identifiable prior experience of Spanish migrants) satirised a row of physically indistinguishable Spaniards, wearing clothes barely held up by string belts. Examined by doctors, the stunted Spaniards were implied to be the simple-minded dregs of southern Europe.⁷⁸ In the same year, the *Courier-Mail* portrayed virile young men wearing Australian-style clothes. Other than all having a swarthy complexion, the men were portrayed as individuals, who enthusiastically chopped cane, only distracted from their work by the sight of a nearby bull.⁷⁹ The Australian government's insistence that Spaniards came only from northern regions of Spain reassured farmers, who sought workers imbued with the stereotypical northern European work ethic.⁸⁰ With such well-integrated migrants, Spain's apparent antipathy to the British Commonwealth could be attributed solely to Franco's malevolence.

A changed Cold War

The expression of religious and ethnic tensions changed from the late 1950s, and Spain's position in the negotiation of social identity became less pronounced. Attempts to demonise Protestant Britain lacked credibility as Catholics ceased to identify themselves with social discrimination. The Catholic commitment to anti-communism increased, but no longer required reference to Ireland to secure continuity and enthusiasm. In line with global trends, Queensland Catholics steadily distanced themselves from specific anti-communist regimes in favour of individual lay action. Catholic political engagement increased, but eschewed constant references to a distinct Irish ethnic identity. Although it became more controversial over time, Bob Santamaria's early anti-communist Industrial Movement demonstrates the changes that orientated Catholic identity towards anti-communism and away from Irish ethnicity, without a sense of rupture from the past.

Although Franco continued to associate his government with anti-communism, Queenslanders were increasingly confused by his relationship to world trends. Increasingly visible social protests within Spain eroded his image as a force for stability, and reduced his credibility as an anti-Soviet bulwark for both Catholics and Protestants. As the dichotomy between anti-communist and communist in Spain declined, Queensland's mainstream media struggled to decide whether Spanish protests conformed to global patterns of 1960s' social protest or were predicated on separate Spanish issues. Whilst the *Queensland Times* believed Spain's student and working class protests were part of a global campaign of radical left-wing elements, the *Courier-Mail* argued their long-term genesis lay in repressive domestic policies that dated from the early 1950s.⁸¹ Editorial policies on Spain lacked earlier consistency and clarity. Instead, both secular and Catholic newspapers evaluated topics like women's rights, labour rights and the right to religious equality on the basis of each subject's particular merits.

Spain's position in Catholic anti-communist narratives was altered radically by the Church's decision to distance itself from specific political regimes. Differences between Franco and the Spanish Catholic hierarchy were increasingly overt by the 1960s, as the latter hesitated to support continued domestic repression. Catholic media in Queensland reported the tensions implicitly at first, and then with more confidence as the 1960s progressed. Catholics were particularly aware of the Spanish bishop Angel Herrera, whose criticism of the Spanish government was widely reported.⁸² Unlike earlier criticism from the Spanish clergy, which had been marginalised, Herrera's authoritative comments initiated a wide-ranging discussion of Franco's government policies amongst Queensland Catholics. The earlier Cold War attitude that any criticism of Franco signified an acceptance of communist propaganda had collapsed.

Herrera's prioritisation of social justice and lay participation eroded Franco's model for a legitimate anti-communist state. Attention was directed to Spain's enduring poverty, and Queensland's Catholic media focussed on the worsening divide between rich and poor.⁸³ Inflation and the high cost of living were criticised for damning the most vulnerable in society. In line with Queensland Catholics' traditional sympathy for labour policies, articles drew attention to the Church's emphasis on workers' rights and Franco's failure to secure these.⁸⁴ So much of Franco's social policy had been based explicitly on Catholic teaching that Catholics could only explain the continued problems by a lack of commitment from Madrid.⁸⁵ Franco was increasingly seen as a liability in the fight against communism, and fears were raised as to his legacy after his death.⁸⁶

Conclusion

Spain was central to both Protestant and Catholic constructions of the British Commonwealth, and mediated changing emphases in narratives of social identity. Whilst Protestants associated Spain with military opposition to the Commonwealth, Catholics identified the country with the principled prioritisation of communism's defeat in the post-war world. The well-publicised tension between the two positions meant that Spain was central to the construction of social discourse in the early Cold War. Spain was particularly central to Catholic identity, and reconciled narratives that focussed on Irish ethnicity with the emerging predominance of anti-communism. Spain's success in maintaining Catholics' continuity of identity minimised the trauma caused by changed social conditions, and facilitated later Catholic political action in the well-documented initiatives of the Movement.

Notes

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- 2 Boris N. Liedtke, 'Spain and the United States, 1945–1975', in Simon Balfour and Paul Preston (eds), *Spain and the Great Powers in the Twentieth Century*, London, Routledge, 1999, p. 231.
- 3 *Courier-Mail* (Brisbane), 13 April 1946, p. 1.
- 4 *Courier-Mail*, 2 April 1946, p. 6.
- 5 *Catholic Leader* (Brisbane), 7 March 1946, p. 8.

- 6 24.04% of the state's population was Catholic in 1954, whilst the Commonwealth average was 22.94%. *Census of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1954, 8:9, Table 32.*
 - 7 One of the most frequently cited periods of communal memory was the Anglo-Irish War and the conscription debates during the First World War.
 - 8 Douglas Blackmur, 'The Railway Strike, 1948', in D. J. Murphy (ed.), *The Big Strikes: Queensland 1889-1965*, St Lucia, University of Queensland Press, 1983, p. 244.
 - 9 Charles Taylor and Amy Gutmann, *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 1994, p. 25.
 - 10 David Lowe, *Menzies and the 'Great World Struggle': Australia's Cold War*, Sydney, University of New South Wales Press, 1999, p. 20.
 - 11 *Courier Mail*, 22 February 1951, p. 2.
 - 12 C. W. P. Waters, 'Liberal Internationalism in Practice: H. V. Evatt and the Iranian Crisis of 1946', in David Day (ed.), *Brave New World: Dr H. V. Evatt and Australian Foreign Policy, 1941-1949*, St Lucia, University of Queensland Press, 1996, p. 87.
 - 13 *Hansard*, Senate, 27 February 1952, Sen. McCallum, 'International Affairs'.
 - 14 *Hansard*, Senate, 15 October 1953, Sen. Grant, 'Appropriation Bill'.
 - 15 *Hansard*, Senate, 13 October 1954, Sen. Armstrong, 'Appropriation Bill'.
 - 16 *Hansard*, Senate, 9 November 1960, Sen. O'Sullivan, 'Appropriation Bill'.
 - 17 *Courier-Mail*, 25 March 1946, p. 2.
 - 18 *Sunday Mail* (Brisbane), 28 July 1957, p. 20.
 - 19 *Courier-Mail*, 4 June 1946, p. 3.
 - 20 *Sunday Mail*, 28 July 1957, p. 20.
 - 21 *Queensland Times* (Ipswich), 15 May 1946, p. 3.
 - 22 However, in the final quarter of 1953, immediately prior to the Spanish-American Pact, the *Courier-Mail* devoted six articles to the general situation in Gibraltar.
 - 23 *Courier-Mail*, 20 January 1951, p. 4.
 - 24 *Courier-Mail*, 19 January 1951, p. 4; *Courier-Mail*, 14 February 1951, p. 4.
 - 25 *Cairns Post*, 10 November 1953, p. 1.
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- 26 *Queensland Times*, 19 February 1957, p. 3.
- 27 *Courier-Mail*, 13 November 1953, p. 4.
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 Entry in Nettie Palmer's Diary, 9 July 1937, National Library of Australia, Canberra (hereafter cited as NLA), Manuscript Collection, 1174-16-19.
- 30 Aodh De Blacam, *For God and Spain: The Truth About the Spanish War*, Melbourne, Australian Catholic Truth Society, 1936, p. 6.
- 31 Carole Ferrier, *Jean Devanny: Romantic Revolutionary*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1999, p. 143.
- 32 Letter to Amirah Inglis (undated), Noel Butlin Archives Centre, Canberra, Amirah Inglis Collection, Q47-2.
- 33 *Catholic Leader*, 21 March 1946, p. 7.
- 34 G. K. Chesterton, 'Lepanto', in *The Collected Poems of G. K. Chesterton*, London, Burns, Oates & Washbourne Ltd., 1927, pp. 100-01.
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- 36 *Catholic Leader*, 10 January 1946, p. 9.
- 37 *Catholic Leader*, 7 March 1946, p. 8.
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- 39 Judith Keene, 'A Symbolic Crusade: Australians and the Spanish Civil War', in G. Massa (ed.), *La mistica spagnola. Spagna America Latina*, Rome, Centro di Studi Americanistici, 1989, p. 143.
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- 46 *Catholic Leader*, 12 April 1951, p. 7.
- 47 *Catholic Leader*, 14 February 1946, p. 8.
- 48 *Catholic Leader*, 10 January 1946, p. 9.
- 49 *Catholic Leader*, 23 May 1946, p. 7.
- 50 *Catholic Leader*, 7 March 1946, p. 8.
- 51 *Catholic Leader*, 10 May 1951, p. 5.
- 52 Duncan, 'From Ghetto to Crusade', p. 188.
- 53 *Catholic Leader*, 6 June 1956, p. 9.
- 54 Although a Spanish or Portuguese presence in Australia seems likely, Moran's claims regarding Catholic services are largely myth and at best cannot be proved. For more information see Kenneth G. McIntyre, *The Secret Discovery of Australia: Portuguese Ventures 200 Years before Captain Cook*, London, Souvenir Press, 1977.
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- 56 *Catholic Leader*, 4 June 1953, p. 8.
- 57 *Literary Guide* (London), July 1948, James Cook University, Townsville (hereafter cited as JCU), Salvador Torrents Special Collection, ST-5-15.
- 58 *Catholic Leader*, 21 March 1946, p. 1.
- 59 *Catholic Leader*, 21 June 1956, p. 4.
- 60 Ibid.
- 61 *Catholic Leader*, 7 March 1946, p. 8.
- 62 *Catholic Leader*, 18 April 1946, p. 5.
- 63 *Catholic Leader*, 7 February 1946, p. 3.
- 64 *Catholic Leader*, 23 May 1946, p. 8.
- 65 *Courier-Mail*, 23 January 1951, p. 4.

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 - 83 *Catholic Leader*, 26 January 1956, p. 9.
 - 84 *Catholic Leader*, 12 September 1968, p. 10.
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